



Spartanburg, SC

▲ Community Example from Chapter 1 of "Lessons for Leaders:"
Lessons in Community Capacity Building

Community Background

Prior decades of deindustrialization and subsequent job losses took a significant toll on the economic health of Spartanburg County. Once a booming textile center and transportation hub in northwest South Carolina, this downturn also affected the physical health of Spartanburg residents. Advocates were already trying to improve Spartanburg's well-being when they received the *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* grant, which enabled the partnership to focus on increasing access to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities within four target areas: Boiling Springs, Pacolet, Woodruff and the City of Spartanburg.

Community Action

Work in Woodruff benefitted from a motivated city manager and a city council that had established some active living priorities years before with no results. They worked with the partnership to make quick, significant progress towards its goal. An advisory team of committed residents and city staff prioritized actions to become a more bicycle-friendly community by following criteria established by the League of American Bicyclists. Work began to develop a greenway trail on the city's sewer right-of-way that would connect the downtown area to the county park facility and Woodruff Middle School.

The need to stay flexible emerged when the city manager left and his replacement brought a vision that primarily focused on economic development in downtown Woodruff. After receiving a grant to build the greenway trail, organized opposition among some of the property owners along the proposed trail prevented the city from

gaining all necessary agreements. As a result, the city returned the grant. In addition, the city council denied a proposal to create a Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission.

The partnership adapted to these changing priorities. Rather than lose sight of its goals, the partnership redesigned the trail to extend almost a mile through the neighboring woods to connect with the middle school without affecting property owners. With funding from the county's parks department, and with a grant from the Recreational Trails Program, the trail is now under construction, and includes trailheads and parking at both ends.

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The City of Woodruff continues to focus on economic development initiatives to implement a Main Street program. Members of the city's advisory team participate in the design committee and the promotion committee in order to bring a focus on health to these efforts. In addition, Woodruff has started to look at a bike rack program where business owners buy racks and the city installs them free of charge, which is a low-cost way to support the goals of the Main Street program and Woodruff's interest in becoming a more active community.