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# Slavic Village

## Incorporating Active Living into Community Development Through Partnerships

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- Background:** The Slavic Village neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio, is a diverse community of 30,524 residents that is struggling economically yet strong in tradition. The neighborhood is located just south of downtown and adjacent to the city's industrial valley. Slavic Village Development (SVD) works with local and state partners to improve the quality of life for its residents, including low-income and market-rate housing developments, economic development, community organizing, and greenspace planning.
- Intervention:** Using the Active Living by Design framework (ALbD), SVD developed strong partnerships to address preparation, promotions, programs, policy, and physical projects. Efforts were focused on Safe Routes to School, neighborhood activities, asset mapping, worksite wellness, and social marketing.
- Results:** The ALbD project changed both the physical environment of Slavic Village and its marketed image. The initiative built cross-disciplinary partnerships that leveraged individual strengths to implement strategies to make Slavic Village a vibrant, healthy, family-friendly neighborhood that promotes active living.
- Lessons learned:** There is a strong connection between health and community development. When partners from multiple disciplines work together on a common goal, it is easier to leverage resources and create change. Resource development will always be a challenge.
- Conclusions:** Through the leadership of SVD and its strong ties in the community, the ALbD initiative has re-engaged residents and businesses in efforts to restore the vitality of the community. The partnership in Cleveland has successfully incorporated health into community development, a model of collaboration that can be replicated in other communities.  
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### Introduction

Slavic Village Development (SVD) was formed in 1998 when the Broadway Area Housing Coalition and Slavic Village Broadway Development merged to strengthen their housing and commercial development activities in the neighborhood ([www.slavicvillage.org](http://www.slavicvillage.org)). The merger enabled them to better carry out a shared mission to preserve, empower, and advance Slavic Village as a thriving and diverse neighborhood through real estate-based development. The development agency uses an entrepreneurial and proactive approach to resolving issues and enhancing neighborhood assets to sustain a compatible co-existence of residents, business, and industry.

For years, SVD focused on enhancing the neighborhood housing stock. With housing growth emerged a vision for improved pedestrian infrastructure to revital-

ize business districts and create recreational opportunities. The development agency became interested in the Active Living by Design (ALbD) grant as an opportunity to expand on planned greenspace and infrastructure projects. The grant offered SVD a mechanism for leveraging funds and building partnerships to advance development within the neighborhood.

The Slavic Village Partnership set out to create a healthy, vibrant, family-friendly neighborhood that promoted active living. Based on the strengths of the founding members, the partnership aimed to: (1) develop and maintain dedicated bicycle lanes and paths and support alternative transportation modes; (2) ensure adequate neighborhood greenspace; (3) encourage employers and employees to develop convenient opportunities for physical activity; (4) support high-quality, innovative, daily physical education in schools, community recreation centers, and senior housing developments; and (5) develop municipal projects, policies, and plans that encourage physical activity. These goals were mutually agreed upon by the partnership as they met monthly to develop the project plan. The shared vision created a synergistic effect

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in how work progressed at each agency and across the city in health promotion and community development.

## Methods

### Settings and Populations

Slavic Village is a 6-square-mile community located south of downtown Cleveland with a population of 30,524.<sup>1</sup> The community is adjacent to the city's industrial valley. The low-income, "working class" neighborhood was originally settled by Polish, German, Czechoslovakian, Irish, and Welsh immigrants. Over the past few decades, Slavic Village experienced a shift in demographics as racial and ethnic minorities move into the neighborhood (Table 1). In 2004, nearly half of Slavic Village residents reported that they were physically active 5 days or fewer each month. Health disparities increased as obesity levels rose and access to resources diminished.

More than half (59%) of middle school students in Cleveland reported participating in the recommended amounts of vigorous physical activity, and slightly over 50% reported playing on a sports team.<sup>2</sup> In 2008, 33.8% of Clevelanders were obese (38% of women, 29% of men), with the highest levels among those aged 55 to 64 years (39%).<sup>3</sup> Less than half (48%) of adults reported getting adequate physical activity.<sup>3</sup>

Over the past 10 years, Slavic Village underwent social and economic transitions. The community experienced major job loss due to business and industry relocations and closures. The number of abandoned and vacant homes and buildings skyrocketed due to foreclosure and predatory lending. Perceptions of safety worsened as the number of vacant properties doubled from 670 in 2006 to 1917 in 2008.<sup>4</sup> In 2008, Slavic Village averaged two foreclosures a day.<sup>1</sup> Active living activities in Slavic Village were intended for the economic, social, and health benefits of the community.

### Active Living by Design Community Action Model

**Preparation.** In 2003, SVD formed the Connecting Cleveland Communities partnership. As the lead agency, the development agency offered expertise and experience in community organizing, engagement, and development. A steering committee was formed from the larger partnership. This committee met on a monthly basis and provided updates to the advisory board on a quarterly basis. Steering committee members were originally charged with initiative decision making and monitoring progress. Over the course of the 5-year grant, the steering committee evolved into a "think tank" for the cross-disciplinary group, providing space to build bridges between neighborhood and citywide projects. A 5P work plan<sup>5</sup> ([www.activelivingbydesign.org/our-approach/community-action-model](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/our-approach/community-action-model); preparation, promotion, programs, policy, and physical projects) was developed by the steering committee with attention to partners' strengths and resources

**Table 1.** Slavic Village Development Service area/north and south statistical planning areas statistical snapshot (% unless noted otherwise)

	Slavic Village		Cleveland	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Population (n)</b>	30,314	31,061	505,647	478,403
Aged 0–17 years	25.5	30.9	26.9	28.5
Aged ≥65 years	15.6	10.6	13.9	12.5
<b>Racial/ethnic composition</b>				
African-American	3.0	26.0	46.0	51.0
White	95.0	71.0	49.0	42.0
Latino	2.0	4.0	4.0	7.0
<b>Living in poverty</b>	24.0	27.0	28.0	26.0
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	11.0	12.0	14.0	11.0

Note: Data from the NEO CANDO system, Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development, MSASS, Case Western Reserve University ([neocando.case.edu](http://neocando.case.edu))

(Table 3). The work plan incorporated evidence-based programming (e.g., Safe Routes to School) and the socioecologic model.<sup>6</sup> This model emphasizes interventions over multiple levels of influence, specifically interpersonal, intrapersonal, community, organizational/institutional, and public policy. The Slavic Village initiative focused primarily on physical projects and programs at the interpersonal and community levels, building a neighborhood infrastructure that supported active living and creating neighborhood-based opportunities for physical activity.

Over time, the partnership was integrated with similar efforts funded in the community (e.g., Steps to a Healthier Cleveland) and changed its name to Broadway: Community on the Move. A large, informal community advisory board met periodically during the project in an advice-and-consent role. Each of the partnership members possessed expertise in at least one of the 5Ps and included city and county government agencies, institutions of higher learning, healthcare organizations, community organizations, faith-based organizations, and schools (Table 2).

Slavic Village Development worked with Case Western Reserve University to conduct a series of surveys and focus groups to learn about residents' perceived barriers to physical activity, their desired programs, and their opinions about initial physical activity messaging. The results of the assessments allowed the development agency to tailor its efforts, specifically programs and promotions, to residents. For example, escorted walking school buses were included in the Safe Routes to School program in response to residents' concerns about violence.

**Promotion.** The partnership's promotion activities included social marketing, community engagement, a neighborhood asset map, walking maps, and organized neighborhood events.

In Year 2 of the ALbD project, the Cleveland Department of Public Health received a Steps to a Healthier Cleveland (Steps) cooperative agreement award from the CDC. The Steps staff, who were involved with the ALbD initiative from its inception, took the lead in creating social-marketing messages about health and implementing health programming in Slavic Village. A communications workshop sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and Spitfire Communications served as the catalyst for developing the Clevelandwide Community on the Move social-marketing

**Table 2.** Slavic Village partnership

Partner	Role	Area of expertise
Cleveland Department of Public Health—Steps to a Healthier Cleveland <sup>a</sup>	Steering committee member	Chronic disease prevention and health promotion
Broadway Boys and Girls Club	Steering committee member	Youth programming
Clevelanders in Motion—Greater Cleveland YMCA <sup>a</sup>	Steering committee member	Map creation, social marketing, and programming
Cleveland Planning Commission	Steering committee member	Planning
Eco City Cleveland	Steering committee member	Policy
Cuyahoga Planning Commission	Steering committee member	Planning
Ohio City Bicycle Co-op	Partner	Bicycle education
University Settlement	Partner/mini-grant recipient, served on original advisory board	Youth and senior programming, community outreach
Jones Road Congregational Church	Partner/mini-grant recipient, served on original advisory board	Youth programming, community outreach
Willow School	Partner/mini-grant recipient	Youth programming
Mound School	Partner/mini-grant recipient	Youth programming
Cleveland MetroParks	Partner/served on original advisory board	Park design and maintenance
Block Club Partnerships	Representatives served on the original advisory board	Community outreach
Stella Walsh Recreation Center	Partner/served on the original advisory board	Physical activity programming, community outreach

<sup>a</sup>Partner also funded initiative

plan, a neighborhood-based health communications plan modeled after the work in Slavic Village and replicated in other Cleveland neighborhoods through Steps programming.

A second key partner in providing health promotion was the Greater Cleveland YMCA/Clevelanders in Motion initiative. Clevelanders in Motion developed a targeted health promotion campaign using light-hearted messaging, such as “Water Is Cool,” to encourage Cleveland residents to change their behavior.

Slavic Village youth helped create a neighborhood asset map activity to promote physical activity opportunities in the neighborhood (e.g., walking routes, local businesses, current and future bike and walking paths, greenspace, schools). The teens walked and biked each route to gauge safety. A bike co-op partner worked with teen leaders to design the maps. The maps include safe walking routes in the community, future bike trails, and destinations such as local schools and businesses. Maps were distributed at a neighborhood festival and to local businesses, recreational centers, and a nature center. An electronic map was also added to the SVD website.

**Programs.** The partnership conducted programs in community, school, and worksite settings. Slavic Village Development did not have the capacity to implement broad-reaching programs to engage all residents in physical activity. Instead, the partnership leveraged the ALbD dollars to generate funding to set up a small community-based grant program. This allowed the partnership to provide mini-grants (up to \$2000) to neighborhood groups to support physical activity programming for youth and seniors. This strategy was possible because of a strong base of formal and informal community groups, such as block clubs, already present in Slavic Village. A request for proposals was announced to the community through the local newspaper. Project staff also spoke with neighborhood groups to solicit proposals, which were then reviewed by a community committee for funding. This

program both supplemented and sustained existing programming and assisted with the startup of new activities. For example, a mini-grant supported the startup of the Slavic Village Walking Club, an organizing effort to engage residents in healthy activity and help residents feel more comfortable and safe on the streets.

Slavic Village was a founding member of the citywide Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Coalition and used those early relationships to enhance the program in the neighborhood. Working with the health department and Steps, Slavic Village Development piloted an SRTS program in Slavic Village neighborhood schools. The SRTS program was supported by promotion activities to engage parents and neighborhood residents (e.g., Walk to School events) and planned physical projects to improve pedestrian safety around Slavic Village schools (e.g., countdown signals, sidewalks, restriping). Students also received bicycle safety and “stranger danger” education.

Slavic Village Development initiated a pilot worksite wellness program as a way to gain firsthand experience with worksite wellness promotion and programming. The development agency joined the Healthy Cleveland Business Council to partner with other businesses engaged in worksite wellness programs. Over the 5-year funding period, staff participated in worksite walks, introductory yoga and Pilates classes, and worksite wellness challenges.

**Policy and physical projects.** The partnership recognized that policy and community-wide system changes were needed to sustain efforts to improve individual and community health. Physical projects and planning are integral to the everyday work of SVD and the long-term sustainability of the neighborhood. Strategies to create policy change included advocating for active living principles, engaging policymakers, and promoting new policies for street design and school physical activity. In terms of organizational policy, SVD

**Table 3.** Slavic Village Active Living Partnership activities and strategies

Category	Activity	Partner
<b>Promotions</b>	Communities on the Move marketing strategy	Cleveland Department of Public Health/Steps to a Healthier Cleveland
	Morgana RUN! 5K walk/run	Third Federal Saving and Loan
	Morgana Run Trail branding	Cleveland Public Art and ParkWorks
	Broadway: community on the Move Active Living map	Cleveland Department of Public Health/Steps to a Healthier Cleveland, Greater Cleveland YMCA/Clevelanders in Motion, Ohio City Bicycle Co-op
	Eight neighborhood walking maps	Cleveland Department of Public Health/Steps to a Healthier Cleveland, Greater Cleveland YMCA/Clevelanders in Motion
<b>Programs</b>	Urban Trailblazers and Friends of the Trail formed to promote and encourage use of the trail	Ohio City Bicycle Co-op and Cleveland EMS
	Safe Routes to School—Walking School Bus, International Walk to School Day events: this applies to all 5 P's	Steps to a Healthier Cleveland/Cleveland Department of Public Health, Greater Cleveland Safe Kids Coalition, Mound K–8 School, Willow K–8 School, AB Hart K–8 School
	Funding was leveraged through local foundations to offer small physical activity grants to local organizations working with youth and elderly residents to incorporate physical activity programming into their current offering	Boys and Girls Club, Jones Road Church, Morgana Little League, Willow School, University Settlement, Mound Leadership Club, Village Grace Mission Center, Harvard Village, and Broadway Place
	Organized community summer and fall walks around a series of eight walking maps	Cleveland Department of Public Health/Steps to a Healthier Cleveland, Greater Cleveland YCMA/Clevelanders in Motion, Slavic Village Walking Club
	Workplace Wellness	Cleveland Department of Public Health/Steps to a Healthier Cleveland
	Active Living Village at the Harvest Festival	Boys and Girls Club, OSU Extension, Greater Cleveland YMCA/Clevelanders in Motion, Greater Cleveland Safe Kids Coalition, Cleveland Department of Public Health/Steps to a Healthier Cleveland, First Tee of Greater Cleveland
	Friends of Morgana Run Trail	Community residents organized around programming and promotion of the Morgana Run Trail, Ohio City Bicycle Co-op
	– HalloGreen	
	– Bike safety rodeos	
	– Neighborhood bike rides	
<b>Policies</b>	Urban Trailblazers	Community residents trained in bicycle safety and trail etiquette who have committed to monitoring the trail
	Complete Streets Resolution	Eco City Cleveland, Cleveland Planning Commission
<b>Physical projects</b>	Slavic Village Development adoption of “living active” as a neighborhood brand	
	Morgana Run Trail	Ohio and Erie Canal Way, City of Cleveland, Ohio Department of Transportation, Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency, ParkWorks
	Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative—Master Greenway Plan for Slavic Village	Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency, ParkWorks, City of Cleveland, Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency
	Brownfield Conversion Projects: Washington Park Reservation and the First Tee Golf Course, South High Athletic Field, The Yard at Mill Creek	City of Cleveland, Cleveland MetroParks, First Tee of Greater Cleveland, Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency, ParkWorks

worked to integrate worksite wellness activities into its internal culture to encourage systems change. Community-based policy efforts focused on drafting a Complete Streets resolution to be enacted by the Cleveland City Council. Partnership members educated council members on the importance of complete streets and the value of designing neighborhoods

for active living. For example, key partners traveled Chicago to examine a comprehensive network of effective bike lanes across a large urban area.

Funds from the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency permitted SVD to hire a consultant to develop the Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative, a master greenway

plan. The final plan outlined a long-term vision for neighborhood trail development and connections as well as signed bike lane routes, park development, and initial streetscape design standards for Broadway Avenue, the main thoroughfare through the neighborhood. A separate neighborhood planning committee reviewed the plan through its development to ensure city and county approval. The city's planning department adopted SVD's master greenway plan, and the trails on the plan are linked to the city's master development plan, *Connecting Cleveland 2020*.

The partnership worked with partners to conduct two feasibility studies examining a dangerous intersection and a key merchant district in Slavic Village. From the studies, a pedestrian safety plan was developed that incorporated changes such as bike lanes and street-calming measures.

For the ALbD project, physical projects were developed and/or implemented for schools, community greenspace, and streets. Key to the partnership work plan was the creation of active and passive greenspace. City, county, and regional partners were instrumental in helping fund and build the Morgana Run Trail, a rails-to-trails project that repurposed unused industrial railroad tracks in the community. This 2.5-mile trail was intended for use as a safe place for transportation and recreation. The partnership also developed plans to connect the trail to other local trails.

## Results

### Impact of Safe Routes to School Efforts

Safe Routes to School programming was conducted at three separate schools. Over 600 neighborhood children grades K–8 have been reached through Safe Routes programming by participating in a morning walking school bus, practicing safe walking with their class during school hours, or participating in stranger-danger courses at school. The development agency was recently able to obtain SRTS funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation through the Cleveland Department of Public Health to implement infrastructure changes around one neighborhood school. Based on the lessons learned from the pilot programs, SVD worked with the health department to develop SRTS Walk to School toolkits and distribute them citywide. Challenges to implementing SRTS included gaining administrative support from the school and engaging parents in volunteering to lead walking school buses.

### Broadening the Trail Network

Upon its completion, the Morgana Run Trail became the first rails-to-trails project in Cleveland. The trail connects two key MetroPark facilities with a broader network of trails that take pedestrians and cyclists to the Ohio and Erie Canalway Reservation and Towpath Trail. The Towpath Trail extends into Southern Ohio and will eventually reach into downtown Cleveland and the lakefront. Community residents use the trail for a range of activities, including recreational

walking, commuting to work and school, and running errands.

### Creation of Neighborhood Greenspace

The increase in vacant properties in Slavic Village renewed the need to find ways to re-integrate abandoned land into the community fabric to maintain the integrity and vitality of the neighborhood. Over the course of the grant, the partnership reclaimed three brown fields and turned them into a par-three golf course, an outdoor education area and park, and an athletic field. Slavic Village Development leadership and other members of the partnership were involved in creating a document called *Re-Imagining Cleveland*, which provides blueprints to revitalize and integrate vacant properties back into the neighborhood.

### Worksite Support for Physical Activity

Slavic Village Development's worksite wellness activities were largely successful at increasing internal awareness of active living. Physical activity challenges have been incorporated into regular team-building strategies at the development agency, and discussion of health and nutrition have become common in the lunch room. As SVD increases its institutional awareness and capacity, it is able to serve as a resource and example for other worksites that intend to develop wellness programs.

### Promotion of Community-Wide Physical Education

The Community on the Move social-marketing campaign was not completed due to staff turnover at the health department; lack of time dedicated to the final development of the campaign, including store front promotional materials; and lack of partnership within the designated neighborhoods. The goal was too ambitious and the partnership was unable to launch it. While the campaign was only partially implemented in Slavic Village, the process of creating the social-marketing message changed the overall marketing approach used by the development agency. Slavic Village Development has adopted a new language to describe the neighborhood, including the following key words: living active, vibrant, family-friendly, and healthy.

Five thousand copies of the Neighborhood Asset Map were distributed in Slavic Village through local businesses and recreation centers and at neighborhood events ([Figure 1](#)). The mapping project served as a successful marketing and informational tool, but the process of developing the maps served as a leadership building activity for area youth. Through the leadership at Steps to a Healthier Cleveland, the asset mapping concept was replicated in other Cleveland neighborhoods. Later, in partnership with the Clevelanders in Motion and Steps, eight pocket-sized walking maps



highlighting individual routes were created and widely distributed.

Safety is both a real and perceived fear for residents of Slavic Village. The key to addressing this challenge was integrating basic community organizing. The partnership quickly realized that people feel safer in numbers and when accompanied by someone official. Involving the Clevelanders in Motion and Steps program staff in the neighborhood walks not only helped build a stronger partnership and unified message about physical activity but also helped people feel more comfortable walking in the neighborhood. Many residents noted that they enjoyed walking in the neighborhood but would have never initiated it themselves. In addition to community walks, International Walk to School Day events were held to raise awareness of SRTS at the schools. As the number of people walking in the community increased, residents' anecdotes indicated they felt safer and had an increased sense of control over the neighborhood's image.

### Policies and Plans to Support Active Living

While the Cleveland City Council has not yet enacted a Complete Streets Resolution, it has taken steps to make the city more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly. The city passed legislation to require bike parking in all new parking facilities, worked to create an inner city trail network, and promoted active living at citywide events.

The city received a Bicycle Friendly City honorable mention award from the League of American Bicyclists in 2008. The partnership was important in helping keep the issue of Complete Streets and bicycle safety current by hosting bicycle safety rodeos, helping sponsor Cleveland Bikes Week, and leveraging dollars to fund a bike/pedestrian intern for the city's planning department.

Due to economic slowdown, the current market for traditional bricks and mortar development has diminished. Recognizing the success of integrating community health as a component of community development, SVD intends to turn major community challenges (e.g., the foreclosure crisis) into opportunities for community development. Future neighborhood development plans include strategic land assembly for active and passive greenspace, community gardens, a skate park, and a velodrome.

### Discussion

#### Build a Diverse Partnership

Developing a strong and diverse partnership was a key to success. From the beginning, SVD made a concentrated effort to invite key community players to join the partnership, including nontraditional partners for community development such as the MetroHealth Medical Center, Cleveland Department of Public Health, and Case Western Reserve University School of

**Table 4.** Project funding

Source	Purpose	Amount (\$)
Hazen Foundation (2003)	Teen mapping project	14,000
Ohio and Erie Canal Association (2004) <sup>a</sup>	Morgana Run Trail	120,000
Gund Foundation (2004) <sup>a</sup>		18,000
Rapid Transit Authority (2005) <sup>a</sup>	Printing of the active living map	3,000
Kaiser Permanente (2005) <sup>a</sup>	Printing of the active living map	7,000
Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (2005)	Transportation and Greenway studies	55,000
Cleveland State University (2005)	Safe Routes to School	10,000
Medical Mutual of Ohio Charitable Foundation (2005) <sup>a</sup>	Small grant dollars to promote youth physical activity programming	20,000
Saint Luke's Foundation (2005) <sup>a</sup>	Social marketing	44,000
The Cleveland Foundation—Neighborhood Connections (2005–2008) <sup>a</sup>	Trail activities, bike safety rodeos, skateboarding events, Trailblazer training and equipment	16,400
Progress Inc (2007) <sup>a</sup>	Way-finding signage and mural	50,000
Parkworks (2007) <sup>a</sup>	Way-finding signage, mural and park programming	53,000
Cleveland Wirecloth (2007)	Paint to remove graffiti	198
Clevelanders in Motion/YMCA (2007–2008) <sup>a</sup>	Policy and partnership work—staff time	20,000
Steps to a Healthier Cleveland/Cleveland Department of Public Health (2005–2008) <sup>a</sup>	Safe Routes, marketing and partnership work—staff time	14,500
Third Federal Savings and Loan (2007–2008)	Sponsorship of the Morgana RUN! 5K	10,000
Dominion East Ohio (2006, 2008)	Award money	30,000
Subtotal		485,098
In-kind donations from City of Cleveland, MetroParks, corporate volunteers, Court Community Services, local business, and many others	Hands-on volunteer clean-ups, design and engineering support, direct donation of land for the trail, incentives for programming, and consulting support	700,000
Total		1,185,098

<sup>a</sup>Denotes monies that were obtained as a result of leveraging Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funding

Medicine. Engaging partners from the health sector underscored the connection between public health and community development. In addition to pooling resources, knowledge, and experience, securing buy-in from multiple people and organizations on multiple socioecologic levels increased the likelihood of the success of the partnership's activities.

### **Allow for Flexibility**

Building a successful and vibrant active-living community required broad systems and cultural changes, which take time. Early in the Slavic Village project, the execution of work plans took longer than expected because more time was needed to raise awareness, funds, and support to complete the tasks. As with any multi-dimensional project, many external factors influenced timelines and outcomes. For example, a change in leadership at the organization or a housing crisis of national impact can quickly divert resources and alter priorities. The development of a solid work plan is critical, but only with the understanding that priorities and resources can change.

### **Connections Through Community Organizing**

Partnerships cannot underestimate the importance of community organizing. In a changing environment with frequent resident turnover, community organizing is beneficial in building relationships among residents as well as building community capacity and leadership. Slavic Village Development's strategy for engaging residents and building relationships across cultural differences is through community events, such as concerts in parks and walking clubs.

Slavic Village Development's history of working with residents to address community concerns provided a foundation of trust that allowed staff to engage residents in discussions about their priorities and desires for the community. For many residents, the need to feel safe in Slavic Village took priority over the need to be more active. However, the creation of walking clubs and the promotion of Safe Routes to School encouraged collective, highly visible activity and gave them a greater sense of control over their environment.

### **Staff Turnover Can Create Opportunity**

The Slavic Village initiative was challenged by staff turnover. It had three directors over the course of the 5-year funding period. Strong, active partners can mitigate the effects of staff turnover as planning and historical knowledge are shared among many members rather than possessed by one person. The national technical assistance network was key in addressing knowledge gaps. New project staff worked closely with the ALbD national program officer and a strong network of colleagues in other ALbD communities. Each new project director brought a unique

set of skills and expertise to expand partnerships and enhance activities.

### **Leveraging Resources Can Build Sustainability**

Resource development continues to be a challenge. The partnership was able to leverage the name and funding from the RWJF to obtain additional support to sustain paid partnership staff and expand partnership activities (Table 4). Similarly, partners were able to leverage local resources and skill sets to implement neighborhood-specific programming and pilot small projects before expanding them into other Cleveland neighborhoods.

### **The Evolution of an Organization**

During the grant period, SVD experienced an internal transition. Initially, the development agency viewed ALbD as one program among the many within the organization. As the initiative grew and the link between community development and health became clearer, the initiative's overarching goals and principles became a guiding framework for the organization as a whole. Specifically, SVD incorporated the principles of active living and the 5P model into everyday business.

Over the course of the grant, the development agency transitioned from an organization focused on bricks and mortar projects to an organization focused on building community partnerships to create a community that promotes healthy lifestyles. Using the socioecologic model, SVD continues to work with partners from a variety of disciplines to create new and innovative solutions for this neighborhood in transition. Slavic Village is no longer marketed only as a neighborhood steeped in ethnic heritage; its new image is as a family-friendly, active living community.

### **Conclusion**

The development of community assets requires both community buy-in and organizational- and policy-level support. Incorporating health into traditional community development can have a powerful impact through intrapersonal actions, interpersonal relationships, and community engagement. Engaging multiple sectors of a community ultimately affects the organizational and institutional level through systems change and policy decisions. Ultimately, the most powerful change occurs when decision makers recognize that policy and environmental approaches are needed to create sustainable change. The relationships developed and lessons learned during the ALbD initiative in Slavic Village set a foundation for the integration of health and community development in Cleveland.

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