



The HEAL Cities Campaign: Improving walkability in small town Oregon



HEALTHY EATING
ACTIVE LIVING
CITIES
CAMPAIGN

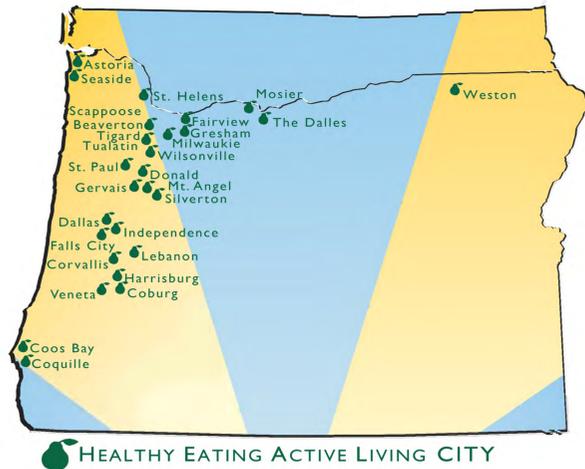
Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Campaign

Five states (California, Oregon, Colorado, Maryland and Virginia) are part of the movement to improve community health and combat childhood obesity.

The HEAL Cities Campaign has four key components:

- Educate civic leaders about the how to enhance the health of their residents and address health disparities.
- Offer a menu of HEAL policy choices to create healthy communities.
- Provide free technical assistance to participating cities.
- Manage a HEAL Small Grants program to for implementing HEAL policies.

292 HEAL Cities have adopted and/or implemented
421 HEAL policies affecting
17.2 million people.



The HEAL Campaign in Oregon

The Oregon HEAL Cities Campaign was initiated in 2012 and is a joint initiative of the League of Oregon Cities and the Oregon Public Health Institute. To date, 29 cities have passed a HEAL resolution and adopted/implemented 80 policies.

Cities of any size can find policies that fit their community. Many of Oregon's HEAL cities are rural, and 80% have populations under 16,000 residents. Often small cities do not have the resources to adopt and implement HEAL policies without HEAL technical assistance.

**Increasing walkability and biking is the
#1 HEAL policy.**

Health Equity

An important Campaign goal is to promote health equity. Throughout Oregon, low-income people and people of color at every income have significantly poorer health outcomes, such as rates of obesity or preventable chronic diseases. The environment plays a significant role in health disparities: low-income people and communities of color live in environments with fewer parks, sidewalks and safe crossings, less access to public transportation, and fewer places to buy fresh produce and healthy food.

HEAL Cities Small Grants Program

In June 2014, OPHI released a call for applications for their inaugural Small Grants program, aimed at encouraging cities to join the Campaign and implement HEAL policies. Kaiser Permanente provided \$35,000 to fund the Small Grants program. The community-based selection committee reviewed 11 applications with \$110,000 in funding requests.

Five cities were awarded funds for projects ranging from farmworker youth gardening curriculum to a midblock bike and pedestrian crossing. Four of the five projects funded focused on increasing physical activity, including promoting walking in two rural HEAL cities.



Veneta

The City of Veneta has a population of 4,561 and covers 2.5 square miles. Veneta received \$7000 to develop a plan and study for a walking and biking path that will connect with the nearby town of Elmira. The two communities share a middle school and high school in Elmira, and a library, pharmacy, grocery store, farmers market, and community pool in Veneta, but there is no safe way to walk between them. The only option is driving or biking on a busy state highway, the only direct connection between the two cities.

Veneta worked with an engineering firm to design the new multi-use path. While this was the initial outcome of HEAL funding, it is only the beginning of what the future holds for the Veneta-Elmira Multi-use Pathway.

How does this help walkability?

The multi-use path is the first step in creating a safe route for both Veneta and Elmira residents to access healthy food and activity, and travel along a normally dangerous route. This project will allow for increased bicycle and pedestrian traffic to the regional shopping center, recreational areas, senior center, food bank, medical facilities, and pharmacy.

Veneta also received encouragement from Lane County Transportation and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to pursue completion of the project, and they intend to assist in finding additional funding. The City will be applying for ODOT funding in November, 2015.

"This path will provide a healthier option to travel to the area's only schools for Veneta students, and provide Elmira residents with pedestrian access to Veneta's local stores, clinics, farmers market, library, and pool. Veneta is very appreciative of the support Oregon's HEAL Campaign has given to our city."

-Mayor Sandra Larson, Veneta



Falls City

The City of Falls City, a small town of 947 residents, received \$9600 to repair and replace a set of 100-year old steps. The 119-step deteriorating staircase links the lower part of the hillside community to the upper part of the city where there are more homes and the elementary school.

Because the town is small, walking is a common practice here for physical activity, recreation, and transportation. The staircase was used daily by students, sports teams and community members for physical activity. As it deteriorated, students, parents, and school employees had to walk an unsafe route to school and their homes.

How does this help walkability?

The Falls City stairway revitalization project has been a great success in building a sense of community and re-establishing a walking path. Various school groups, the High School Football team, the volunteer Fire Department, and over 25 regular volunteers, ranging in age from 11 to 67, have helped with weeding, pouring concrete, and installing handrails. A local artist will design and paint a waterfall going down the stairs. Three benches made from recycled materials have been installed on landings along the staircase.

Students, parents, and school employees are now able to safely walk to school using the new staircase, and residents are once again using the staircase for walking and socializing.

"This project has been a great community-building exercise, and has opened up more opportunities to help educate other policymakers, residents and community leaders in importance of health oriented policies, such as a community garden."

-Mayor Terry Ungricht, Falls City



For more information or to join the HEAL Cities Campaign, visit:

www.HEALCitiesNW.org
or
www.ophi.org