

SUCCESS STORY

Zapata County joins Texas A&M AgriLife's Working on Wellness Environments program to address connectivity in the community



About 30% of the population in Zapata county is living with obesity. The Zapata County Agent and local advocates are participating in the Texas A&M AgriLife WOW-E program to engage local advocates in technical assistance for planning healthier environments to support walking, biking, and access to healthier foods.

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION



Working on Wellness Environments is a program of Texas A&M Agrilife Extension made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE

According to County Health Rankings, Zapata County is ranked among the least healthy of the 254 counties in Texas (213th for Health Outcomes and 239th for Health Factors). After conversations with local stakeholders, a lack of infrastructure for safe walking and physical activity was identified such as lack of sidewalks, presence of stray dogs, and need for shade.

APPROACH

Through technical assistance opportunities provided by the WOW-E experts, Zapata county local leaders:

- Developed support materials for the AARP Community Challenge grant.
- Designed and collated support materials for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside program.
- Collected citizen perception data on walkability and bikeability in partnership with the local Rise and Grind Bike Challenge.
- Created two Intents to Participate in the Community Challenge.
- Local Extension Youth Health Ambassadors also participated in the WOW-E Youth Planning Action Institute --a five part, virtual program.



SUSTAINING SUCCESS

WOW-E team members will be working with the local community agent, Health Ambassadors, SHAC, and Bike and Grind participants to develop sustainable partnerships and local capacity.

WOW-E experts will continue to provide technical assistance for current projects. And, WOW-E Specialists will develop educational resources on planning processes and implementation.

"I think our goal is just to make the park safer and more accessible to those in the community."

Youth Health Ambassador

RESULTS

- AARP grant application submitted to enhance a local community site with improved garden beds, add shade pavilion, and a walking path with signage. (NOT FUNDED)
- TxDOT grant application materials developed including: maps, budgets, scope of work, support letters, and official Resolution passed on May 24, 2021 and certified on June 4, 2021 supporting:
 - 1 mile of planned sidewalk and 1 mile of planned bikes lanes installation connecting 1 church, 1 ISD admin building (major employer), 1 sports field, 2 parks, 2 schools, and residential areas while also closing a gap in the existing sidewalk loop.
 - Requested \$533,283.00 from TxDOT (in round two review).
- Developed an understanding of the need for education and technical assistance for local leaders on basic planning processes and implementation.
- Submitted two Community Challenge *Intents to Participate*
 - SHAC looking at out-of-school time access to healthy vending and concessions
 - Youth Health Ambassadors plan to address connectivity to and safety within Romeo T. Flores Park