

NOVEMBER 2021



The official newsletter of Texas A&M Agrilife Extension's Working on Wellness Environments

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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WELCOME!

BY: VALERIE JAUREGUI

Welcome to the November Issue of the Working on Wellness Environments official newsletter. In this issue, you can read about what WOW-E communities have been up to. You will also find resources related to COVID-19 and physical activity. As always, you can reach out to us at valeria.jauregui@ag.tamu.edu or check out our website at wowe.tamu.edu!



Rio Grande City Comprehensive Planning Public Meetings



The Working on Wellness Environments team is working with the City of Rio Grande City and Texas Target Communities to begin its comprehensive planning process. The groups, with the help of the local task force known as team ¡Adelante Rio Grande!, have conducted 3 public meetings with members of the local community to gather input. Citizens highlighted needed improvements in active and healthy infrastructure, pollution, preservation, and more. This is the first of many feedback opportunities that will help guide and create the city's comprehensive plan. For more information on how we can support your community with healthy planning and engagement, visit wowe.tamu.edu.



Rio Grande City Comprehensive Planning Public Meetings

Planning

the
Rio Review

11

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IT'S ALL PART OF THE PLAN

The City of Rio Grande City is working with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension on a Municipal Comprehensive plan that aims at targeting strategic growth, leaving a lasting impact in Rio Grande City for years to come. One may ask, what is a comprehensive plan? It is an official planning document that must be adopted by city ordinance that links existing city plans, regulations, and initiatives. A comprehensive plan becomes the basis for policy and zoning. The first meeting with Team Adelante was held September 21st in the Economic Development conference room. A cocktail of sixteen community members make up Team Adelante.

The planning process has four phases and the city is currently in phase 1-- Visions and Values. The remaining phases are 'Big Ideas, 'Land Use and Development' and 'Recommendations and Presentations'. Each phase of the planning process will have one public meeting, in three separate locations creating three opportunities where community members may participate.

During the first phase of the Comprehensive Plan, three open public meetings are scheduled for the evening of Monday, October 25th at Rio Grande City High School Cafeteria at 5:30 PM, Tuesday, October 26th at South Texas College at 12 PM and the evening of Tuesday, October 26th at Ringgold Elementary Cafeteria at 5:30 PM, tentatively. The public is encouraged to attend and provide insight on community concerns and provide feedback.

In total, there will be 12 general open public meetings covering the four phases. Looking to the future, the next Team Adelante task force meeting is on Tuesday, October 12th.

WHO USES THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?



Texas Target Communities
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

The Comprehensive Planning Process was featured in the Rio Review, the City of Rio Grande City's official newsletter, highlighting what a comprehensive plan is and the phases needed to complete the plan. Click [here](#) to read the feature.

Pilot-testing traffic calming, bike lanes, and crosswalks at Romeo T. Flores Park in Zapata



After attending the Youth Planning academy held this summer, youth health ambassadors from Zapata County saw the opportunity to make improvements to their local park. Working with the WOW-E team, the youth health ambassadors conducted a basic site inventory and observations. The group was able to pilot-test crosswalks, curb extensions, a bike lane, a protected walking lane, and wayfinding. Youth ambassadors, law enforcement, and local park-goers noticed a change in vehicle speed once the temporary infrastructure was in place. Next, the health youth ambassadors will work with the WOW-E team to create a report to present to the county commissioner's court.



Pilot-testing traffic calming, bike lanes, and crosswalks at Romeo T. Flores Park in Zapata

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Sammy Luera



Zapata Health Youth Ambassadors Demonstrate Potential Traffic Calming Improvements at Romeo T. Flores Park

This past Saturday and Sunday volunteers from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Health Youth Ambassadors worked with AgriLife Extension Agent Sammy Luera and members of the AgriLife WOW-E (Working on Wellness Environments) team to demonstrate five interventions around and within Romeo T. Flores Park in an effort to try and better their community park.

June 2021 the Ambassadors completed an online Youth Planning Academy. They applied what they learned this past weekend to conduct site inventories, observations, and citizen input at the Park. Isabelle, one youth volunteer, "liked getting input from the people and seeing what they liked about the Park." Based on such feedback, the volunteers pilot tested crosswalks, curb extensions, a bike lane, a protected walking lane, and wayfinding.

On the northeast side of the Park, the youth demonstrated a crosswalk and protected walking lane. Two youth volunteers explained, "all the cars that pass by go really fast so it is kind of scary for the people that are here at the Park or walking around here. We think that maybe by adding a crosswalk with

the word 'slow' it might slow them down so people will not feel so scared at the Park." Many citizens expressed their concerns about the speed of traffic in and around the Park.

A local law enforcement representative supporting the effort noted, "this is a great spot for a crosswalk considering there is a park entrance and the cars go too fast." Youth Ambassadors said, "we actually noticed a change once we put down the crosswalk and the cars started slowing down."

Dr. Jamie Rae Walker, Texas A&M AgriLife



Extension's Urban and Municipal Park Specialist and WOW-E team member, explained, "the youth are using the demonstrations as a pop up—a quick way to show themselves, the community, park users,



decision makers, and local advocates what it can look like if you make some simple changes to enhance parks, connectivity to parks, and usability of parks. The end goal is not only to get people to use the



park and feel more comfortable at the park, but to also get more people to be more physically active."

Victoria and Nadina, Youth Ambassadors volunteering at the

demonstration, hope these changes will become permanent not only here but other places in the community. They said "it was a great experience to be here and be part of it so we can eventually do something in the future. Now we know what to do and what to expect to better the community."

The Youth Ambassador volunteers felt the demonstration was pretty successful. Kristal said, "it felt good to contribute and give back to the community. I hope the citizens liked the changes, would come back, and that they felt safer at the park."

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's WOW-E program, supported in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, empowers a community-driven collaborative approach to promoting increased physical activity levels and improved access to healthy foods. This project prioritizes local solutions and transformative change to health-related challenges in Texas

communities. To learn more about the WOW-E Community Challenge, visit wowe.tamu.edu.

For more information about our projects and demonstration in Zapata County contact Health Agent, Sammy Luera at the Zapata Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office at (956) 765-9820 or email samuel.luera@ag.tamu.edu.

ZAPATA COUNTY CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)



Tests Conducted

19,562

Confirmed Positive

1,759

Negative (-) Results

17,803

Probable Cases

462

Recovered (Estimate)

1,949

Active (Estimate)

131

The health youth ambassadors pilot-test was featured in the Zapata County News.

Rio Grande City Public Library StoryWalk (TM)



In partnership with Texas A&M Agrilife Extension's Working on Wellness Environment's team, the Rio Grande City Public Library held its first-ever StoryWalk(TM). The event was held at Miriam S. Vale Municipal Park in Rio Grande City, TX. StoryWalk(TM) combines literature and physical activity and places a children's story along a walking path. The WOW-E team worked with local librarian Norma Fultz, the City of Rio Grande City, and community volunteers to bring the StoryWalk(TM) to life. To read more about StoryWalk(TM) click [here](#). If you would like more information on how you can start a StoryWalk(TM) in your community, reach out to a WOW-E team member.



Pilot-testing Walkability from local Middle School to the Park



In collaboration with Rio Grande City Parks and Recreation and Working on Wellness Environments, RGCCISD Veterans Middle School Student Council worked to pilot-test walkability between their middle school and Miriam Vale Park. This area currently lacks some sidewalks, crosswalks, and walkways. Rio Grande City Parks and Recreation applied for a WOW-E Community Challenge to pilot-test the infrastructure. Pilot-testing occurred for one week. The Parks Department is currently Working with WOW-E Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to develop design concepts for more permanent changes.



"I know parents have been calling in regards to the sidewalks. Following this project, kids have already told me they feel safer."

Frank Eguia
Rio Grande City
Parks and Recreation
Director

Funding Opportunity

America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) is offering \$20,000-\$200,000 grant awards. The funding aims to improve access to healthy foods in underserved areas. The Working on Wellness Environments team can provide basic grant writing technical assistance to anyone interested in applying!

There are 2 parts to the application:

- First phase: submit a Letter of Interest by Tuesday, December 7, 2021
- Second phase: eligible applications submit a full application

More information is online, including links to the request for application, eligibility, submitting Letters of interest online (look for "Apply Now" button), frequently asked questions, and more.

ReInvestment Fund, in its capacity as National Fund Manager for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative at USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service, requests applications for America's Healthy food Financing Initiative Targeted Small Grants Program for 2021. At least \$4 million is available for grants for innovative fresh food retail and food system enterprises that seek to improve access to healthy food in underserved areas. Grant awards may be from \$20,000-\$200,000. Eligible applicants include for-profit, nonprofit, and cooperatively owned businesses, institutions of higher education, state, and local governments, and tribal governments. LOI due: December 7.

RESOURCES



INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH COMMUNICATION PLANNING COURSE

Are you interested in learning about creating health communication plans? Texas A&M Agrilife Extension has a course on health comm planning free for WOW-E counties. Read more [here](#).

NEW COVID-19 GUIDELINES FOR ECE PROGRAMS

CDC has released new COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs. Read more [here](#).



7 WAYS THE NEW INFRASTRUCTURE PACKAGE INVESTS IN PLANNING

More than just a highway bill, the legislation is injecting billions of federal dollars into environmental justice, climate action, and local planning efforts. [Here's how it all shakes out.](#)



COVID-19 VACCINES

Have you been waiting for full FDA approval to get vaccinated? It's time to schedule your appt! Now that the FDA has issued full approval for the first COVID-19 vaccine, we can all be even more confident that these vaccines work and are safe. Learn more: <https://dshs.texas.gov/covidvaccine/>



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR ALL WOMEN

Physical activity is important for all women throughout their lives. Read on for ways you can change your physical activity routine to fit your needs based on your age, stage of life, or physical abilities. Read more [here](#)



HOW SHOULD PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MAKE YOU FEEL?

Howdy Health, an initiative of Texas A&M Agrilife Extension has a mini video on how you feel before and after physical activity matters. Watch it [here!](#)

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