

# Planning Active Community Environments Training (PLACE) June 2007

Final Evaluation Report

July 16, 2008

Prepared by Leanne Jeffers, RIHEL



## Summary Comments

Nine months after the implementation of the Planning Active Community Environments (PLACE) Training, an online evaluation was conducted to assess the impact of the training on four core areas:

- Opportunities to apply skills/knowledge gained in the training
- Incorporating active community environment strategies into funding proposals
- Development of new relationships
- Future Training and Technical Assistance

Twenty seven (27) respondents completed the survey. Responses came primarily from training participants, with a few additional responses from training facilitators. Respondents indicated they were from the following disciplines: 19 Public/Environmental Health; 6 Planning; 1 Transpiration; 1 Community Organizer. In addition, 18 of the respondents represented a *LiveWell Colorado* or *Steps to a Healthier Colorado* community.

Overall, the results show that the PLACE Training did increase the capacity and confidence among participants to apply ACE strategies in their communities. Participants were presented with opportunities to which they could and did apply the concepts and skills gained in the training. Since the training, most had formed at least one new relationship to someone connected to planning active community environments activities. A majority also indicated that they plan to, or already have included active community environment (ACE) strategies into funding proposals. The multiple requests for training follow up in the form of ACE success stories and case studies, illustrates the participants' commitment to applying and being successful with ACE activities in their own communities.

### Opportunities to apply skills/knowledge

Over 80% of respondents indicated that they have had opportunities to apply the skills and knowledge they gained from the PLACE Training. Case examples of this application included: planning walkable communities; developing community gardens; incorporating active community environment strategies into a comprehensive plan and development code; developing new relationships with planning and economic development staff; and conducting walkability and bikability audits. The primary reasons given for not applying the skills/knowledge to an opportunity was lack of funding or lack of interest from target audience.

### Incorporating active community environment strategies into funding proposals

About 70% of respondents said that as a result of the PLACE Training, they did already, or plan to incorporate ACE strategies into funding proposals. The remaining respondents indicated that applying for funding was not a part of their work, or that they did not intend to apply for funding. The kinds of strategies and

activities identified in these funding proposals included: planning and developing an exercise loop; developing community gardens and farmer's markets; educating public officials and city and county staff about Safe Routes to School, Smart Growth and Complete Streets principles; creating new staff positions to provide ACE technical advise; working toward policy change at City and County levels; and working more closely with planning departments to have public health input on development plans.

#### Development of new relationships

A majority of respondents indicated that since the PLACE Training, they have developed new relationships relevant to planning active community environments. The majority of new relationships were formed with public health professionals/advocates and Planners, but close behind that many new relationships were also formed with environmental health professionals/advocates, elected officials, transportation planners, engineers, public works professionals and others. Only 22% of respondents indicated that they had formed no new relationships.

#### Future Training and Technical Assistance

When asked about additional training, development or support that would be useful to developing active community environments, responses included: more specific technical training around road redevelopment; training with region-wide emphasis; workshops for planners, city and county staff, and elected officials on Smart Growth and ACE; information on grant funding for ACE projects; training geared at first tier suburbs; conducting walkability and bikeability audits; and case studies showing success in implementing ACE strategies. A large portion of respondents (81%) noted that technical assistance around implementing or applying ACE strategies in their community would be useful to them. Some of the types of technical assistance that they indicated would be useful include: online user groups; case examples and best practices from other communities; outside expertise to inform elected officials; assistance with putting ACE into land use documentation, laws and procedures; and current information refreshers.

The Goals of this PLACE Training were:

1. To provide public health professionals (managers, environmental health, others) and advocates the **knowledge** and **skills** to actively participate in the land use planning and development review process to create "smart growth" active living environments.
2. To develop productive working **relationships** between the public health community (government and advocacy) and local government officials engaged in the land use planning and development review process.

The results of this 9-month post-training evaluation indicate that the PLACE Training was successful in achieving these two goals. The PLACE Training does

result in real-world application of the skills gained in the training, new relationships among professionals (relevant to PLACE activities), and the potential for a long-term impact on producing ACE activities and results in local communities. These evaluation results also continue to support the earlier training assessment results that attention be given to enhancing the training and repeating the session at a future date.

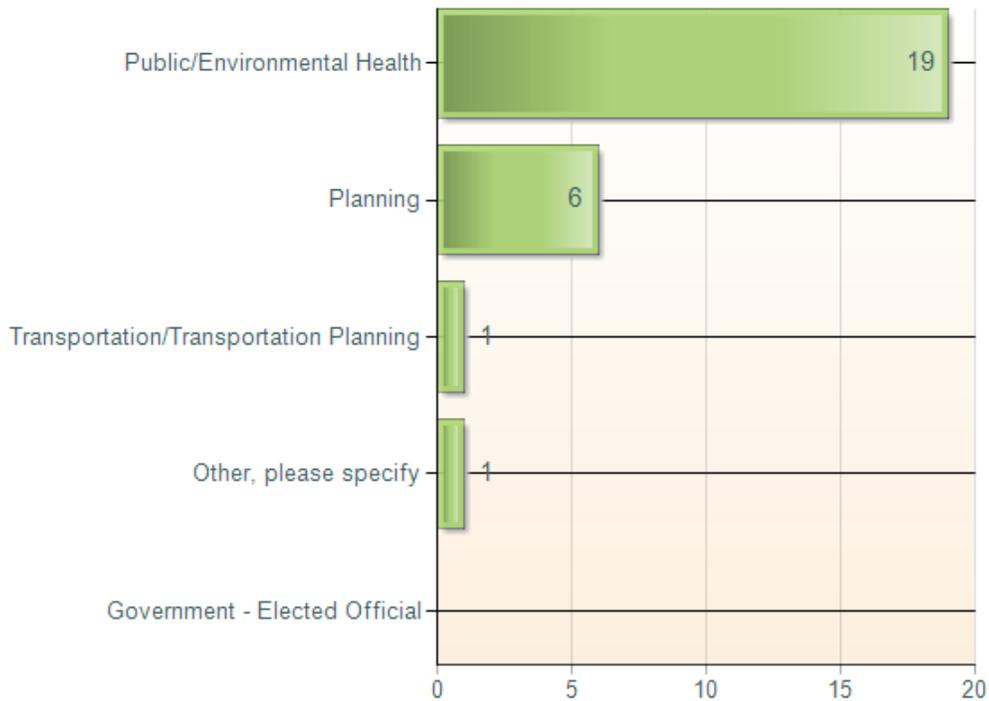
## **Respondents**

Respondents attended the PLACE Training as a:

Participant	23	85%
Facilitator	4	15%
Other, please specify	0	0%
Total	27	100%

The majority of respondents were from the Public/Environmental Health Field.

**Which of the following best describes your profession/field of work at the time you participated ...**



*\*Other: Community Organizer*

Participants represented:

A LiveWell Colorado Community	13	48%
A Steps to a Healthier Colorado Community	5	19%
Neither of the above	9	33%
Total	27	100%

## Responses

### APPLICATION OF PLACE TRAINING:

**3. Since the PLACE Training, have any opportunities presented themselves to you to which you could apply the skills/knowledge you gained at the PLACE Training? (Whether or not you actually did apply them).**

Yes	22	81%
No	5	19%
Total	27	100%

**4. For the cases where YOU WERE ABLE TO APPLY the skills/knowledge you gained from the PLACE Training, please BRIEFLY list/describe EXAMPLES of these applications and any results they may have produced to date.**

18 Responses

- Applied training as city Planning Board member to make more relevant comments on proposed overall development plans and plats especially related to active living environments. Developers seem to be including pedestrian, bike and trail options in their planning. 2) Able to integrate Livewell Fountain into pre-development planning process. Process is on-going. 3) Also using in my environmental management job to create a sustainable development checklist. Results to be determined.
- Added a walking trail to an office facility looping around the property.
- Connectivity of open space and public-use trails; preservation of large tracts of land for public open space under a conservation easement; safe routes to schools on detached sidewalks.
- development review applications, results not yet available
- Encouraged facility changes. Some flew, some didn't.
- General knowledge for working with community representatives/explaining the concepts and premises behind it.
- Grant applications; Recently provided input on a development project; In process of revising comprehensive plan - PLACE training helped
- I have the luxury of being able to work with Tri County Health Department on a regular basis on the LiveWell grant, Derby project, and general case submittals.
- In my profession, I'm able to ask for detached sidewalks, pedestrian paths, and easier pedestrian connections for healthier living.
- Met with local policy makers and planners and could speak intelligently on Smart Growth.
- No results yet-  
work in our city is much needed on safe route to schools, addressing

walkability in many of the oldest neighborhoods in town where the streets are wide and side walks are narrow and not sufficient.

We need more bike lanes and wider sidewalks to accommodate parents with small children, etc.

- Our department has started to meet with planning and economic development folks in order to integrate health strategies into their plans.
- Our Department has submitted comments on several proposed developments. As a result, one developer met with us to discuss implementation of the recommendations.
- Participation in the 2008 Boulder County Food Summit, which convened participants to discuss healthier local food options and healthier communities in general.  
Beginning discussions on how to incorporate ACE goals/policies into a comprehensive plan and development code.
- Planning walkable developments... incorporating greenbelts and trails into design
- The county is in the process of creating a long range plan for growth and we are trying to be a part of the process by providing Smart Growth booklets to city/county officials, meeting with county/city elected officials to explain the built environment and Public Health. We are sponsoring some Smart Growth webinars for local planners as well.
- The skills I gained gave me the confidence to begin a strategy in my work that will do a walkability and bikability audit of our city and then to work towards Complete the Streets. We are also creating relationships with planners in order to incorporate public health language into plans for our community.
- Working with City Council on development of community gardens.  
Working with Parks and Recreation to re-establish the Adopt a Park program.

**5. For the cases where you were NOT ABLE TO APPLY the skills/knowledge you gained from the PLACE Training, please BRIEFLY list/describe the factors that contributed to this (What were the reasons for this?).**

8 Responses

- Can't think of any where I was not able to apply learning.
- I would love to apply further principles such as bike lanes and more walkable pedestrian choices for some of the commercial projects that I do but unfortunately, a lot of the projects are too suburban to accomplish some of the principles.
- I've never had any issues with applying these skills to my job and my collaboration with Tri County.
- lack of funds
- Lack of interest or buy-in from the intended receiver

- The lessons that I learned at the PLACE training helped me to better understand the perspective of the planner in the development of land instead of just focusing on the public health perspective.
- Walkability assessments and evaluation.
- We have just begun our implementation process in our community; we have been in the planning stages prior.

## **INCORPORATING ACTIVE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT STRATEGIES INTO FUNDING PROPOSALS:**

Among LiveWell Colorado and Steps to a Healthier Colorado respondents:

<b>7. As a result of the PLACE Training, did you incorporate/do you plan to incorporate active community environment strategies into your LiveWell, Steps, or other funding proposals?</b>			
Yes	16	89%	
No	0	0%	
N/A - will not/did not apply for subsequent LiveWell, Steps or other active community environment related funding	2	11%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>	

### **8. If you answered "YES" above, please briefly list or describe the strategies/activities you plan to include or have already included in these proposals.**

13 Responses

- Created an ACE Technical Advisor position for our county, working to propose language changes to the Comp Plan, working with Towns to help them understand/implement the concepts as requested
- Livewell Fountain grant applications include gardening, safe routes to school, and other initiatives related to active living environment.
- Partnering with Open Space and Trails, Parks and Recreation and local school to assist in re-development on an empty space.
- Walkability Bikability audit; Complete the streets; Public health language into planning documents
- Retrofit small area with a new wide sidewalk section to better serve the area needs was accomplished in 2007. Exercise loop area is much needed in an area for 2008 and beyond to assist a much underserved area.
- Safe Routes to School, Smart Growth and Complete Streets principles and philosophy, addressing public health issues in all forms of the built environment by educating public officials and city and county staff.

- Submitted a grant proposal for community wide development of community gardens, adopt a park and farmers market in 3 low-income areas.
- The majority of the grant we will receive in 2008 focuses on public health benefits of a corridor plan we are developing.
- We are hoping to be planning and bringing into fruition an exercise loop with numerous exercise stations for residents of all ages. This will be in an area easily accessed by nearby private and public schools the public visiting the nearby park and ball field, plus nearby neighborhood and low income apartment complexes all needing free exercise opportunities.
- We have ACE initiatives going on in the communities we work with and will continue to work with local government to include public health into planning new developments, enhance existing neighborhoods, and create more walkable communities.
- we have an exercise loop added into a park
- Working more closely with local planning departments to have Public Health input when development plans are submitted.
- Working toward policy change at City and County levels

Among NON LiveWell Colorado and Steps to a Healthier Colorado respondents:

**10. As a result of the PLACE Training, did you incorporate/do you plan to incorporate active community environment strategies into funding proposals?**

Yes	3	33%
No	1	11%
N/A - will not/did not apply for funding that relates to this	5	56%
Total	9	100%

**11. If you answered "YES" above, please briefly list or describe the strategies/activities you plan to include or already included in these proposals.**

2 Responses

- Public access to a conservation easement-protected area.
- As part of the grant, we will incorporate some active living or environmental strategies to combat obesity.

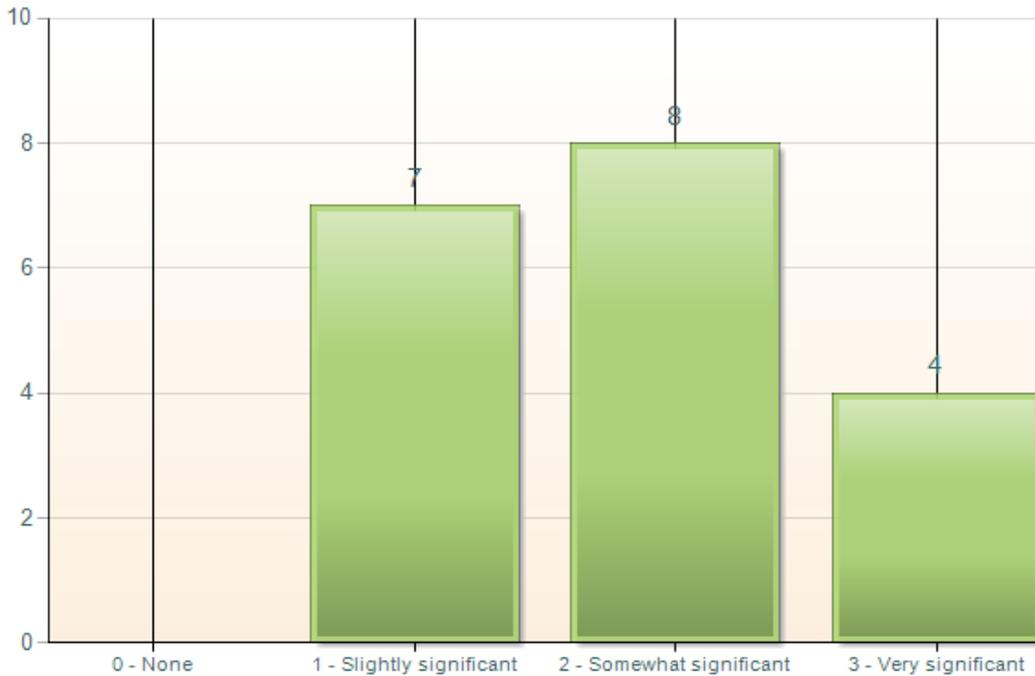
**12. If you answered "NO" above, please briefly describe why.**

4 Responses

- rarely do funding proposals
- Did not apply for funding
- I am not in charge of funding proposals and do not apply for funding in my current position.
- Our Department has not had the opportunity to seek funding.

**13. How significant a role did PLACE play in encouraging or supporting you to include active community environment strategies/activities into your funding proposal(s)?**

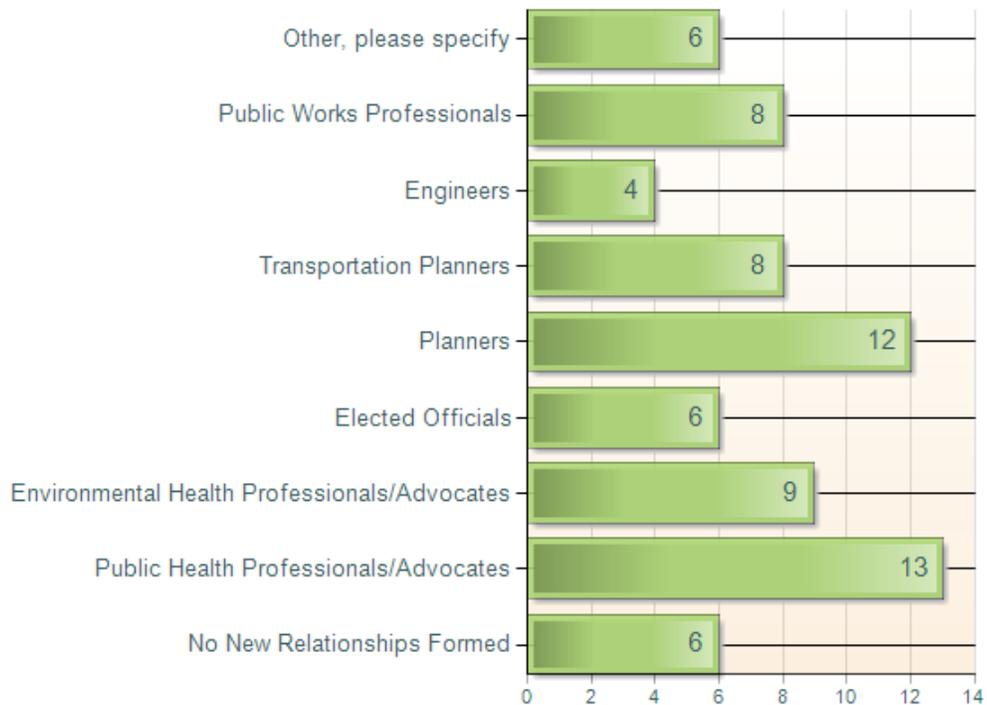
**How significant a role did PLACE play in encouraging or supporting you to include active communit ...**



## RELATIONSHIPS:

14. Since the PLACE Training, have you developed new relationships (relevant to PLACE related activities) with any of the following people? Please check all that apply.

Since the PLACE Training, have you developed new relationships (relevant to PLACE related activities) ...



*Other:*

- citizen wellness advocates
- Environmental and conservation professionals
- Parks and Recreation
- Safety advocates
- The developers engineers and planners on 1 project
- We are working on it this year

## FUTURE TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

### 15. What training, development or support would now be useful to you related to public health, land use planning and developing active community environments?

11 Responses

- Continued efforts to train more planners, public health folks, and engineers will be the only way we learn to address our issues with the built environment and transportation.
- Having a local workshop for planners, city and county staff and elected officials about Smart Growth, ACE and land use planning that incorporates public health issues.
- How to do walkability likeability audits
- I believe that case studies that show "successes" in implementing active community environments are useful as selling tools.
- I would love to see a presentation geared at 1st tier suburbs rather than techniques for more urban areas. Could some of the training focus on making a better suburbia?
- Interest in grants and funding for land use retrofits, e.g. establishing complete streets, adding nonmotorized transport amenities, widening/completing sidewalks, etc
- More training in other disciplines outside of health to understand how to influence planning decisions.
- phase 2 ... I would like to see the training go beyond what I would consider and introduction
- Place training with a region-wide orientation based on agency, city-county-wide focus
- Safe walk to schools. More on how to retrofit existing roads to accommodate walking and bicycling. More on accessing the best resources available to provide durable, long lasting exercise opportunities for the public of all ages and disabilities.
- Who to contact and how regarding land use planning/development

### 16. Would technical assistance around implementing or applying active community environment strategies in your community be useful to you?

Yes	17	81%
No	4	19%
Total	21	100%

### 16. If yes, please briefly list or describe these technical assistance needs:

10 Responses

- Case studies would be helpful to resolve disagreements.
- Extremely useful!!
- How other communities are "doing" ACE, workshops, webinars, how to put ACE into land use documentation and make it law.
- I believe presenting active community living to the City of Aurora as a proposal before the Planning Commission and City Council would be wonderful. We need someone from the outside to inform our elected officials about these exciting opportunities.
- Learning how to be more active in my community, through committees, meetings, etc. Basically getting involved.
- Methods of involving more of the general public in the planning and implementation process
- new coordinator for livewell community would benefit from this training/information/assistance
- Not sure
- online user groups, blogs, feedback
- Our agency has the general idea and understanding. On certain complex projects, it might be useful to consult with experts in the field.

## GENERAL COMMENTS:

### 17. Any other comments regarding PLACE that you'd like to share with us at this time?

10 Responses

- Fort Carson is also implementing a pedestrian and bicycle study in order to improve opportunities for these travel modes on the Installation.
- It was an excellent training and though I have not applied anything specific, I intend to continue trying to be active
- It was very good to get some public health folks on board who were having difficulty grasping general concepts of public health and built environment
- Keep it up! Keep expanding!
- No but thank you for the opportunity to attend this event!
- No.
- Really enjoyed the PLACE training.
- Thanks for a great training!
- The format of having an expert planner at the table was very helpful
- Very inspiring - would like more of a rural slant included.