

An aerial photograph of a park. In the center is a large, paved parking lot filled with many cars. To the left of the parking lot is a playground with a green-roofed shelter. To the right is a baseball field with a dirt infield and grass outfield. Further right is a soccer field. The park is surrounded by lush green trees. In the foreground, there is a grassy area with a winding path. The text "HEALTH & WELLNESS" is overlaid in large white letters on the bottom half of the image. There are also decorative geometric shapes in the top left corner: a teal triangle and a grey triangle.

# HEALTH & WELLNESS



# EMPOWERING HEALTH & WELLNESS

**“Together we will build a community with strong, high-quality mental, physical, and social health programs.”**

A community's health is tied to the collective well-being of its residents, including the physical, social, and mental aspects of their lives. Focusing on a community's health and wellness can impact educational achievement, safety and crime, financial well-being, life expectancy, and the overall happiness of residents. The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion also found that the impact of health on quality of life does not just stop at the individual, but it can also lead to higher participation in civic duties including voting, social functions, and leisure activities. Communities which are attentive to the health and wellness of their residents can even help reduce inequality by reducing the gaps in healthcare services which may be caused by location, social status, income, ethnicity, and other factors that impact healthcare access.

Improving the health and well-being of Scott County is not limited to existing healthcare providers but should include the various public and private organizations within the greater community. While it may ultimately fall on those healthcare providers to increase the number of services available to residents, local governments, schools, businesses, and non-profits can coordinate efforts which improve access to healthcare facilities or expand programming and infrastructure which supports active living. Trauma training for teachers and childcare workers, new bike routes connecting destinations within the county, and awareness campaigns about the dangers of substance abuse are all components which can be achieved through partnerships and collaboration.

## WHY IS THIS GOAL IMPORTANT TO SCOTT COUNTY?

- ☐ Scott County ranks 90 of 92 Indiana counties for health outcomes, 80 of 92 for health factors, and 91 of 92 for length of life.
- ☐ 19% of Scott County residents are in poor or fair health.
- ☐ In 2015, Scott County had the largest HIV outbreak the U.S. has seen in a rural community, with a 5% infection rate.
- ☐ Research shows that people with multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (from among the list of 10 ACEs) are more likely to experience a wide range of negative outcomes in education, employment, health, and mental health.
- ☐ Increased access to affordable, high quality, trauma informed mental health care is needed to address negative health issues, disease prevention, and drug use in the county.

## HOW CAN WE MOVE THIS GOAL FORWARD?

Many organizations and groups are working towards improving health within Scott County. The following action items work towards the goal of a strong health system that addresses mental, physical, and social aspects. Some of these items are currently being addressed by one or more organizations while other action items were identified as gaps that need to be solved. Two catalyst projects were identified for Health and Wellness that will build momentum, address critical and immediate needs, and create a sound base for future action steps.

### Action Items

1. Continue coordination to help limit the use of controlled substances and alcohol through educating students on the dangers of substance abuse.
2. Identify strategies for better prevention and response to substance abuse and related crime.
3. **Work with local healthcare providers to expand services offered within the community.** *Catalyst Project*
4. Work with regional partners to identify and build trails within Scott County that connect destinations and allow for recreation.
5. Work with local healthcare providers to develop programs, treatment options, and support networks centered on mental health within the county, including depression and co-occurring diagnosis, for all age groups.
6. Expand training and programs for childhood mental wellness and early childhood health initiatives.
7. **Construct sidewalks to connect neighborhoods, local destinations, and downtown areas to improve physical activity, emphasizing ease of access and safety.** *Catalyst Project*
8. Expand programs that focus on nutrition and provide access to healthy food options.
9. Provide trauma-informed training and care to healthcare providers, emergency response crews, social workers, and the larger community.
10. Develop bicycle infrastructure, including bicycle lanes and bicycle parking areas connecting key destinations within the county.

### CATALYST PROJECT - ACTION ITEM 3: Work with local healthcare providers to expand services offered within the community.

Rural residents often encounter barriers to healthcare that may limit their ability to obtain the care they need, such as primary care, dental care, emergency services, and mental healthcare. These barriers are often related to lack of facilities and longer travel times to regional healthcare centers. Even when there are adequate healthcare facilities within a community, other factors can become barriers to receiving services. Healthcare can be hampered by financial difficulty, insurance coverage, or health literacy and can all contribute to gaps in services. Improving quality healthcare within Scott County can help reduce poor health behaviors, such as excessive drinking, drug use, smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, and teen birth rates.

#### WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT TO SCOTT COUNTY?

Health and wellness impact every aspect of a resident's physical, social, and mental health. Access to quality primary care services plays a key role in preventative services and improves a community's health. Primary care often serves as an entry point into the health system, which can be crucial to rural residents and minorities who may experience barriers to accessing healthcare. Scott County currently falls behind state levels in access to providers with 2,387 residents per Primary Care Physician (1,511 per physician at the state level), 2,171 residents per mental health provider (623 per for the state), and 3,980 residents per dentist (1,777 for the state).

Reducing the barriers to healthcare within a community is crucial for the overall health of residents. Working with local providers to expand services and locations within the community can help provide additional healthcare options for residents while cutting costs associated barriers. Alternatives could include a wide variety of programs such as a mobile clinic or telehealth services but efforts should also include creating a trauma-informed community. A trauma-informed community can benefit not only physical and mental health of residents, but it can also reduce long-term reliance on social assistance.

#### WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

- ☐ Improve the overall health of the community through more quality primary care services, providers, and programs within Scott County with a priority on mental health and substance abuse.
- ☐ Create a trauma-informed community.
- ☐ Reduce poor health behaviors, such as excessive drinking, drug use, smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, and teen birth rates.
- ☐ Improve access to health food options and physical fitness options.

#### WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

1. **Immediate:** Identify the current gaps in healthcare services in Scott County with a focus on treatment options/facilities for substance abuse, mental health services, and transitional housing.
2. **Short:** Partner with local providers and gauge their ability and expand the missing programs and services in the community. Identify incentives that can be provided by the local governments to attract these services and professionals to the county.
3. **Short/Mid:** Identify ways to market these services county-wide through trusted networks (such as faith-based organizations or minority groups) with a focus on the most vulnerable populations.

## WHO ARE THE POTENTIAL PARTNERS?

**Scott County Community Foundation / Health Department:** These organizations will assist in and lead coordination efforts between entities within Scott County who will be part of this catalyst project and work to draw new professionals to the county.

**Scott Memorial Health / Private Healthcare Providers:** These groups will help promote the various service options for residents within the county and work to expand their availability.

**Community Organizations / Non-Profits:** These groups will coordinate with other organizations to help fill the gaps in Scott County's healthcare needs.

**Scott County Schools / Local Governments:** These organizations will provide assistance in initiatives focused on improving the health of their communities through promotion and access to services.

**Get Healthy Scott County / CEASe:** These organizations are already heavily involved in improving health within the community and will continue to provide support through their specific services.

## WHERE HAS THIS BEEN DONE SUCCESSFULLY?



Source: Wake Forest Baptist Health

Mobile health clinics work to bring services directly to patients and reduce the amount of traveling required for the patient. This form of clinic is not only helpful for those who may be unable to travel, but it also allows healthcare providers to target low-income or minority populations who are hesitant or unable to visit a traditional clinic.

The McNabb Center in Knoxville, Tennessee is working to overcome the issues of distance and lack of resources within rural Tennessee counties using mobile health clinics. The program uses a renovated bus to bring doctor's office services to underserved counties in the region. The mobile unit provides necessary medical, mental, and substance abuse care and

allows staff to assess the needs of each patient to determine if treatment can be done within the mobile unit or if additional services will be needed at a later date. The program is funded by the state Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services through a federal grant provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Many hospitals are taking the initiative to improve accessibility to services and bring rural residents the care they need. Indiana also took a similar approach to deploy COVID vaccinations to rural areas, and similar programs could be used within Scott County and the Southern Indiana region.

### **CATALYST PROJECT - ACTION ITEM 7: Construct sidewalks to connect neighborhoods, local destinations, and downtown areas to improve physical activity, emphasizing ease of access and safety.**

One of the ways rural communities are beginning to capitalize on their natural assets and destinations while working towards improving the health of residents is through sidewalks, trails, and greenways. Sidewalks and trails bring often overlooked benefits to a community in terms of personal wellness, entertainment, and economic impact and allow for residents and visitors to safely access various destinations without the need of a car. They can be used to connect destinations within Scott County and the greater region, such as cultural assets, recreational areas, downtowns, retail centers, healthcare, centers of employment, and residential neighborhoods.

#### **WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT TO SCOTT COUNTY?**

The economic benefits from well-connected, regional trail systems can be seen across the state and nation by increasing visitors traveling to use the trail systems and bringing outside dollars into the community. Scott County has the opportunity to draw upon visitors from throughout Southern Indiana, bringing tourists to the community and boosting the local economy. Sidewalks and trails are also often crucial recreational and quality of life amenities used to attract and retain residents and businesses, and they can become drivers of economic growth within a region and allow people to access destinations and amenities without the need of a vehicle.

Additionally, sidewalks and trails bring a number of recreational, entertainment, and environmental benefits and can even promote a community's history and culture. Greenways protect important habitats, provide corridors for both people and wildlife, and reduce pollution by encouraging more people to walk or bike. They also have the power to connect people of all ages to their local heritage by preserving historic sites and allowing for quick and easy access.

#### **WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?**

- ☐ Connect destinations within Scott County and the larger region, such as cultural assets, recreation areas, downtowns, retail centers, healthcare, and neighborhoods.
- ☐ Improve the health of the county by providing active recreation options.
- ☐ Provide an entertainment option for all ages.
- ☐ Protect natural and environmentally sensitive areas.

#### **WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?**

1. **Immediate:** Create a county-wide trails plan that connects destinations and residential areas within the county and identifies connections to adjacent counties.
2. **Immediate/Short:** Actively participate in the READI Regional Trails Master Plan to ensure that destinations within Scott County are connected to the larger region.
3. **Short/Mid:** The creation of a Scott County Trails Plan should be developed based upon the READI Regional Trails Master Plan, building the local connections a regional plan may miss.
4. **Mid/Long:** Prioritize segments of the Scott County Trails Plan that provide the most benefit and connections for design and construction.



## WHO ARE THE POTENTIAL PARTNERS?

**Scott County Community Foundation:** This organization will assist in and lead coordination efforts between entities within the Scott County who will be part of this catalyst project.

**Align Southern Indiana:** This group will assist in regional coordination efforts to connect local trail systems to other destinations within Southern Indiana.

**Local Governments of Austin, Lexington, and Scottsburg:** These groups will coordinate with county-wide organizations to link their own trail and sidewalk infrastructure to other communities and regional destinations.

**Scott County Schools / Scott Memorial Health:** These organizations will provide assistance in initiatives focused on expanding trail and sidewalk access within their communities.

## WHERE HAS THIS BEEN DONE SUCCESSFULLY?



The Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail is an example of how a trail network can be used to connect a community. The 17-mile-long trail network links Mishawaka, South Bend, and Niles, Michigan, passing through numerous recreational sites and linking residents and visitors to urban and rural destinations. The trail system also connects schools and universities, hospitals and healthcare facilities, historic and cultural sites, entertainment venues and downtowns. The trail connections between the three communities funnel residents and visitors into each city, collectively growing the potential for tourism and new businesses along the system. The trail has been an ongoing effort since 2008 and is supported by residents, businesses, and local officials from all three cities and the counties.

Scott County has the potential to create a similar network that links each community within the county and connect to a larger regional system in Southern Indiana and Kentucky, allowing residents and visitors to travel freely across the region. Collaboration between the various partners within Scott County, as well as those within the larger region, are needed to develop a regional trail network that would link Scott County to regional destinations and bring in new residents and visitors. The Our Southern Indiana READI Work Plan included a five-county regional trails master plan for Scott, Clark, Floyd, Jefferson, and Washington counties.