

**SUMMARY REPORT:**  
White Bluff Elementary School  
Childhood Obesity Prevention Program  
*Healthy Savannah – Summer 2016*

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the leading causes of health disparities in Georgia today is obesity. Although it and resulting consequences, such as diabetes, have typically been associated with adults, its impact has since expanded to children. With such an early onset of health issues, future health problems are more likely to follow. This alarming trend and the future outlook of children's health begs the question, "*How can we reverse this trend?*". Addressing this question means tackling two major contributors to the problem, children's eating habits and physical activity. While we hope to impact eating habits through other Healthy Savannah projects, the scope of our work focuses on how physical activity can be positively impacted by altering the immediate environments in which children live, play, and learn.

As such, these environments include schools and the surrounding attendance zones. More specifically, the Childhood Obesity Prevention Program (COPP) focuses on ten Title I elementary and middle schools, including the following: Brock, Butler, East Broad, Gadsden, Hodge, Hubert, Pulaski, Shuman, White Bluff, and Windsor Forest. At each location, Healthy Savannah utilized GIS mapping, community meetings, and on-site surveying to clarify and pinpoint the barriers keeping children from being actively engaged in their communities. With your help, as well as the community's, we can begin overcoming these barriers and providing safe and accessible spaces for children to engage in physical activity.

In this report, we have compiled information that can help us better understand how we can take on this task for White Bluff Elementary (WBES). By pairing Healthy Savannah observations and community input with GIS data, we hope to illustrate both the big picture and community-specific issues that are in need of change.

## MAKING IMPROVEMENTS | COMMUNITY INPUT

At the WBES community meeting, participants assessed issues they perceive to be hindering their children’s ability to be physically active. Of the themes ranked at the White Bluff Elementary Community Meeting pedestrian infrastructure, traffic calming/control, and crime/safety were ranked as the top three important (**Table 1**). Those who were present completed response cards, and one to two rounds of discussion, during which they mapped out and/or listed proposed solutions to the challenges they face in being more active in their community. **Figure 1**, on the following page, provides a map of the issues that were mentioned.

| TOP THREE ISSUES + CONCERNS/SOLUTIONS                 |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| [1]   | [2]  | [3]  |
| Pedestrian Infrastructure                             | Traffic Control/Calming                          | Police/Crime Safety                        |
| Not enough sidewalks                                  | Traffic (including Montgomery XRoads)            | Safety                                     |
| Walking Safety  | Safety for kids with traffic + Driving Safety    | Unsafe roads/crime                         |
| Sidewalk in front East side of White Bluff            | White Bluff is narrow and has heavy/fast traffic | More police presence during to/from school |
| Sidewalk on other side of White Bluff                 | Truman Pkwy increases traffic on White Bluff     |  |
| Children walking south on White Bluff against traffic | Make school entrance further from road           |  |
| Crosswalk at Montgomery XRoads                        | Need a turning lane into the school              |  |
|   | Blind spots                                      |  |
|   | Speed bumps                                      |  |
|   | Update Pavement Markings                         |  |
|   | Ticketing/ Traffic Control on White Bluff        |  |
|   | Turnoff for traffic flow                         |  |

**Table 1** indicates contributing factors of and/or possible ways to address the top three issues preventing WBES children from being active in their communities.

## MAKING IMPROVEMENTS | PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

For WBES, the number one issue is pedestrian infrastructure (**Table 1**). Meeting attendees pointed out their concerns, including the need for more sidewalks in the community and on the front east side of WBES, ensuring walking safety, especially of students walking south against traffic on White Bluff, and a crosswalk at Montgomery Crossroads.

# MAKING IMPROVEMENTS | WBES MAP

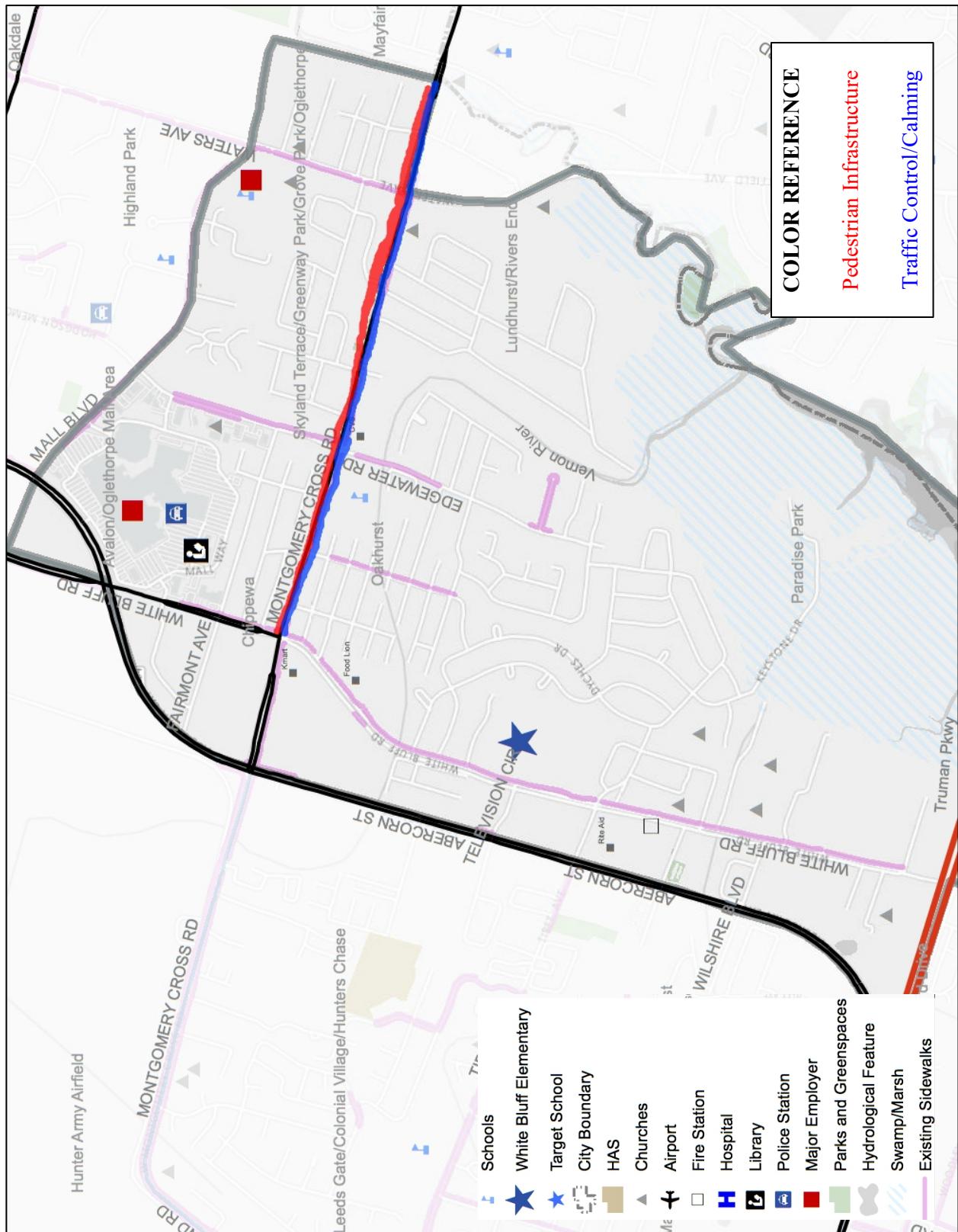


Figure 1 maps out some of the WBES community concerns and proposed solutions.

Healthy Savannah looks towards City of Savannah Traffic Engineering and SCCPSS Facilities Maintenance. With their help, children can be provided the opportunity to walk to and from their school without the dangers community members' fear they face today.

#### **MAKING IMPROVEMENTS | TRAFFIC CONTROL/CALMING**

For traffic control/calming, attendees called for more focus on the following: traffic on Montgomery Crossroads, traffic safety for kids, driving safety for adults, the heavy and fast traffic on White Bluff, including that of which comes from Truman Parkway, a school entrance that's further from the road, a turning lane into the school, speed bumps, lessening blind spots, updating pavement markings, a turnoff for traffic flow, and ticketing/traffic control on White Bluff (**Table 1**). The community believes that improvements in these areas will lend itself to increased activity amongst WBES students, and at Healthy Savannah we believe that City of Savannah Traffic Engineering and Savannah-Chatham Metro Police Department (SCMPD) can help make progress in these pursuits.

#### **MAKING IMPROVEMENTS | CRIME/SAFETY**

According to attendee's responses at the WBES Community Meeting, crime/safety was the third of WBES's top three issues (**Table 1**). During the meeting, though, attendees also pointed out two major ways Healthy Savannah, and possibly SCCPSS Campus Police and SCMPD, can address it. The first of these ways is improving safety through monitoring unsafe roads and crime. Along with this, they suggested an increase in police presence during the students' commutes to and from the school grounds. In making these changes, parents and students can be more sure of their safety when/if they decide to bike or walk to and from school.

## **ON-SITE OBSERVATIONS**

In addition to the compiled sidewalk data, Healthy Savannah conducted on-site surveys for each Title I School. These were limited to the school property and the surrounding major and minor streets. By looking for indicators of pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure and provision for appropriate traffic control, we were able to better understand the situation at each school. The goal was to take note of potential barriers to children walking and/or biking to and from school.

Of the observations that were made, the first was how narrow the sidewalks were nearing Skyline Dr. along White Bluff Rd. After arriving on-site, it was apparent that the lines in the school parking lot should be updated. Even more, though there was one available crosswalk in the parking lot, there were several other points where they could be added in. Upon leaving the school, it was noted that there are only sidewalks on one side White Bluff Rd. all the way up to Montgomery Crossroads, which end completely a bit before reaching Abercorn.

## **CONCLUSION**

All things considered, the ways in which the WBES community believes we can help alleviate some of the issues preventing their students' from consistent physical activity are the following:

- More sidewalks and a crosswalk on Montgomery Crossroads
- Walking and driving safety for pedestrian students and drivers
- Updating the streets with a school turning lane and improved pavement markings
- Speed control through SCMPD ticketing and speed bumps
- More police presence to and from the school to address unsafe roads and crime

Because the community has taken note of the barriers preventing their children from utilizing safe and accessible places to walk, bike, and play, ensuring that those barriers can be surmounted

is of utmost importance. The current status of childhood health and nutrition in Savannah is in need of change and we can be proponents of it by being present and contributing to the communities that need it most. In making strides towards noticeable change, the future of Savannah’s youth can be altered and the community at large will experience the benefits of such a structural and cultural change.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION | CONTACTS**

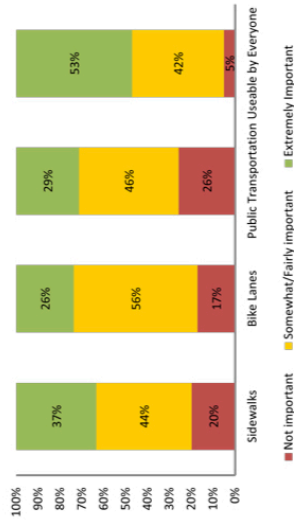
| <b>Position</b>           | <b>District</b> | <b>Name</b>        | <b>Email</b>   | <b>Phone</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--|--------------|
| Principal                 |                 | Christopher Jacobs | <a href="mailto:christopher.jacobs@sccpss.com">christopher.jacobs@sccpss.com</a> | 912.395.3325 |
| PTA President/<br>Contact |                 | Angela Hupert      | <a href="mailto:a.hubert@hotmail.com">a.hubert@hotmail.com</a>                   | 904.625.7914 |
| Alderman                  | 4               | Julian Miller      | <a href="mailto:jmiller03@savannahga.gov">jmiller03@savannahga.gov</a>           | 912.220.3550 |
| County<br>Commissioner    | 1               | Helen L. Stone     | <a href="mailto:helen_stone3@hotmail.com">helen_stone3@hotmail.com</a>           | 912.692.0950 |
| Captain                   | Southside       | Terry Shoop        |  | 912.351.3400 |
| SCCPSS Board<br>Member    | 1               | Julie M. Wade      | <a href="mailto:julie.wade@sccpss.com">julie.wade@sccpss.com</a>                 | 912.233.3313 |
| Healthy<br>Savannah       |                 | Paula Kreissler    | <a href="mailto:paula@healthysavannah.org">paula@healthysavannah.org</a>         | 912.272.9494 |



**Complete Streets Ordinance**

Complete Streets ordinances are a way for communities to make sure that the street network is useful for all drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. These ordinances make sure that roads and streets are safe and useful for people of all ages and abilities (school children through senior citizens).

Savannah residents have indicated that it is important to have sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transportation and that these options should be useable by everyone.<sup>1</sup>



Despite the perceived importance of sidewalks and bike lanes, 31% think that most or all roads are NOT bike or pedestrian friendly<sup>2</sup> and 46% said that bike lanes are EXTREMELY important for getting to school<sup>2</sup>



Less than a quarter indicated that Savannah is very supportive of sidewalks and trails that allow for physical activity.<sup>1</sup>

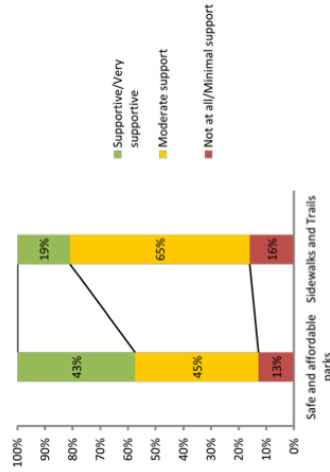
The majority think that a complete streets ordinance is important or extremely important for Savannah.<sup>1</sup>

**Truman Linear Park Trail**

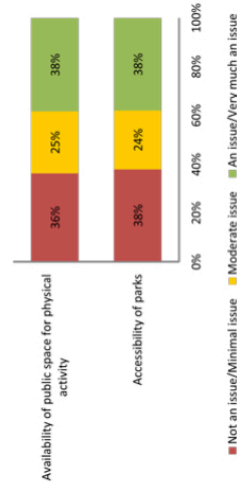
The Truman Linear Park Trail is a transportation project supported by Federal Highway funds to build an approximately 6 miles trail that will connect Daffin Park with Lake Mayer Community Park at Montgomery Cross Road, running parallel to Truman Parkway. The trail will be suitable for biking, walking, and running.

While 76% did not know about the Truman Linear Park Trail, 53% indicated they would use the Truman Linear Park Trail.<sup>1</sup>

Community members feel that the city is generally supportive of parks and sidewalks/trails.<sup>1</sup>

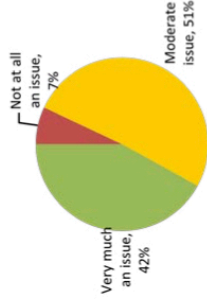


Over half of the community members indicated that accessibility of parks and availability of public space for physical activity is an issue in Savannah.<sup>1</sup>



**Healthy Children/Childhood Obesity**

Almost all community members feel that childhood obesity is an issue in the Savannah community.<sup>1</sup>

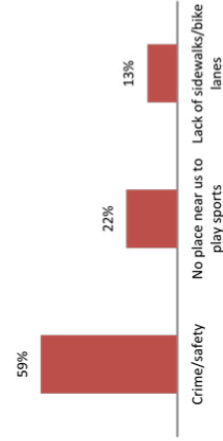


How can Healthy Savannah help address healthy children in Savannah?<sup>1</sup>

Work with the schools planning meals and exercise programs/ home and schools

Most of the families that Healthy Savannah has talked to want to become more active, however crime and safety concerns as well as a lack of sidewalks and bike lanes are barriers to this activity.<sup>2</sup>

**Barriers to Activity**



The information presented in this summary was developed, collected, and are reported as part of the evaluation for the Healthcare Georgia Foundation Grant that Healthy Savannah received in 2014. Data is drawn from over 58 community surveys<sup>1</sup> and 59 audience response<sup>2</sup> from the community meeting on March 2015. For more information about the grant, the evaluation, or Healthy Savannah please contact Darin Krueger at [naula@healthysavannah.org](mailto:naula@healthysavannah.org)

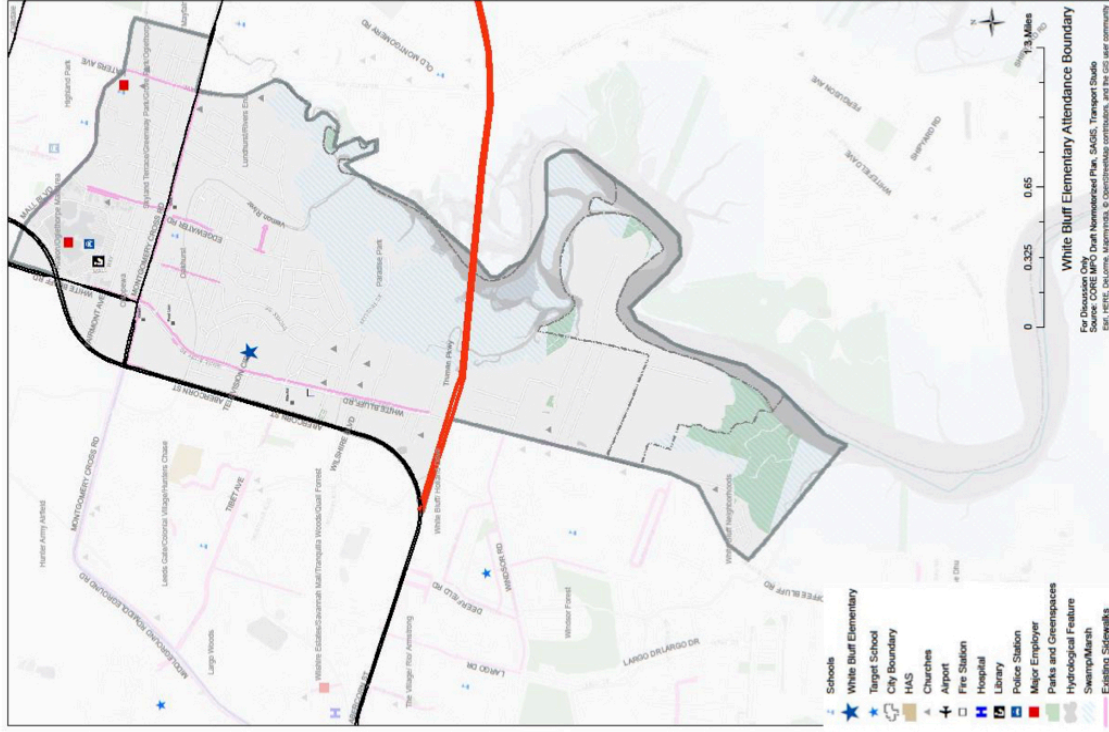
# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION | HEALTHY COMMUNITY KIDS CAMPAIGN

There were 55 attendees signed in at the community meeting at White Bluff Elementary. The attendees at the community meeting were asked to discuss and rank the challenges that they faced in being more active in their community. In terms of importance (ranked 1 to 3), the most important issue was pedestrian infrastructure. There were 48 responses from cards completed by those who participated in the meeting and provided rankings of the challenges. The average rank shows the perceived level of importance. The higher the rank the more important the theme was to participants.

| THEMES                      | #  | %   | Avg. Rank |
|-----------------------------|----|-----|-----------|
| Pedestrian infrastructure   | 9  | 19% | 2.4       |
| Traffic/calming             | 20 | 42% | 2.3       |
| Crime safety                | 3  | 6%  | 2.3       |
| Other                       | 3  | 6%  | 2.0       |
| Community engagement/school | 6  | 13% | 1.3       |
| Physical activity access    | 7  | 15% | 1.5       |



- Items included in each of the categories include the following:
  - Pedestrian infrastructure** – sidewalks, safe walking areas
  - Traffic/calming** – Traffic, speed bumps, traffic control
  - Crime/safety** – unsafe roads, crime, police presence
  - Other** – educating children on road safety
  - Community engagement** - neighborhood activities, walking school bus
  - Physical activity access** – open playgrounds, more public play grounds



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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION | THREE MAIN ISSUES BREAKDOWN**

| <b>TOP THREE ISSUES + CONCERNS/SOLUTIONS</b>          |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| [1]   | [2]  | [3]  |
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|   | Speed bumps                                      |  |
|   | Update Pavement Markings                         |  |
|   | Ticketing/ Traffic Control on White Bluff        |  |
|   | Turnoff for traffic flow                         |  |
| <b>LEGEND</b>   |  |  |
| <b>Response Card * Maps * Discussion</b>              |  |  |