



## Sharing Local Knowledge through Pictures and Stories

### Background

This project helped researchers understand how residents of St. Paul saw their community's built (or physical) environment. This project looked at features in St. Paul that helped or prevented people from being physically active and eating healthy food. All of the pictures for this project were taken in the summer of 2009.

### Pictures are Worth a Thousand Words!

How did the researchers do this project? They asked residents to take photos of their community. The residents then told researchers why those photos helped to describe physical activity and healthy eating in their community. This kind of project is called photovoice.

### The Photo-takers

Ten people participated in the project from the St. Paul community. Photo-takers were recruited through posters, e-mail and word-of-mouth by other community members. Photo-takers included men, women, and teenagers ranging in ages from 14 to 65+. The photo-takers had lived in the community from 11 to 65+ years, with most of them reporting that they had lived in St. Paul all their lives. Researchers tried to ensure that all residents of St. Paul had the chance to be a part of the project. Despite this, the group of photo-takers interviewed represented only a small range of community residents.



It is a nice playground, newly rebuilt and is open to the public. It is used by a lot of young elementary school aged kids as it part of the school. It is clean, in good shape and it has more things for the kids to play with.



I don't remember the exact location of this vending machine but similar ones like this in my school were replaced with vending machines that offered healthier choices like juices and water. Some students were upset at first but it is not a big issue now.



## The Photo-takers' Journey

- (1) Each of the photo-takers met with the researcher one-on-one to talk about their community.
- (2) The photo-takers were provided with digital cameras and were shown how to use them.
- (3) The photo-takers were given two weeks to take pictures. The pictures helped them talk about opportunities and barriers to physical activity and healthy eating in their community.
- (4) The pictures were printed.
- (5) Each of the photo-takers met one-on-one with the researcher. During this time, the photo-takers told their stories about each picture.

## Bringing it All Together

After photo-takers shared their community stories, summaries were created for the top five pictures from every photo-taker. All of the photo-takers had the chance to review the summaries for their photos and provide input. These summaries were used (with permission from the photo-takers) to create a presentation and a summary report to share with community members and local decision-makers. Residents and researchers hope that the pictures and stories will help other community members gain insight into the St. Paul community.



You can't beat the taste of home grown produce. We don't use chemicals, fertilizers or sprays, so it is 100% organic. This root cellar built into the hillside—it is where we store potatoes and other vegetables over the winter—they last almost a whole year without sprouting! Several other neighbours and friends stored theirs here as well.



People go walking on the trail and some take their dogs up there and let them loose. The trail is clean because they have dog mitts to dispose waste as well as garbage cans around for people to dispose their garbage. The area lacks recycling bins.





The soccer field is very close to my house and quite convenient for me to walk to. The field is maintained by the town of St Paul; access is monitored so not just anyone can use the field. It is not yet lit for soccer at night but it's getting there. There are a number of soccer fields available in the community so various leagues comprised of kids (of different ages, talents, and sizes) have soccer fields they can use.

## Overview of the Photo-takers' Stories

The photo-takers of this project generally viewed the physical features and facilities of their community as very good and more than adequate to meet community needs. Photo-takers did not perceive the community environment as limiting access or presenting significant barriers in decisions to be physically active or eat healthy food. However, many photo-takers acknowledged the potential that some individuals, such as seniors and the physically disabled, may have difficulty accessing some of the communities' physical features (e.g., medical clinics) and facilities. The difficulty accessing these services was usually expressed in terms of transportation issues, such as not having access to a vehicle, or the lack of a public transit system in the community.

Photo-takers talked about a number of different things when describing their community. The key topics are highlighted below:

- ethnically and culturally diverse community;
- increased community development;
- physical activity facilities;
- the "heart" of the community – downtown;
- Upper Therien Lake;
- community trail system;
- soccer as a popular community activity;
- active transportation;
- car culture;
- motivation for physical activity;
- free or "unstructured" play;
- seasonality and physical activity;
- grocery stores and local markets; and,
- community restaurants and fast food.



The skateboard park was built by the Knights of Columbus. It is a very accessible facility that provides a non-organized activity for the kids to just drop in and do their own thing or meet other kids there.

The full stories are available in the summary report. The summary report can be found on the DVD included with this package.



## Thank You!

The researchers and community stakeholders would like to thank all of the photo-takers for sharing their stories. Project participants took all of the pictures in this document and the full summary.

The Community Garden is a good combination of physical activity and healthy eating. People can build their gardens and then go to the farmers market and sell the vegetables and other crops which they've grown. It is a community project. The gardens are well publicized to raise awareness in the community.



This is a nicer neighborhood called Spring Park. The subdivision was developed by the town. Take note that they don't have sidewalks. I think they left the sidewalk out to cut costs. (I don't think a private developer should get away with this.) It is reasonably safe to walk/stroll on the side of the street as this is not a high traffic area, but it doesn't promote mobility in the winter.



I took this picture because it represents the many little playgrounds that St Paul has. These parks are all similar, well taken care of, and well utilized. I think it is important to have these little parks / playgrounds for children to play at. There are quite a few of these parks throughout the community so they are quite accessible.

