

Siena Youth Center

TRIPS FOR KIDS: SAFE ROUTES TO GREEN SPACE

CASE STUDY | 2015



THE NEED: KNOWLEDGE

North Fair Oaks is located in an unincorporated portion of San Mateo County, surrounded by Redwood City, Atherton, and Menlo Park. Fifteen thousand residents live in less than 1.2 miles, many in multi-use apartment building. Nearly three-quarters of residents are Hispanic or Latino (71.5%) and nearly half are low-income (49%). In 2011, the North Fair Oaks Community Plan created a long-term planning vision for the area, and identified the need for more parks, play areas, and open space. The Plan also showed the many physical and safety barriers to walking and bicycling in the community.



The Trips for Kids Program is about health and community building, helping kids ages 11-18, learn about bicycle safety, maintenance, and active lifestyles.

“This program made me feel like my voice mattered.”
- Jorge Calvillo



With Get Healthy SMC funding, Trips for Kids expanded to engage youth in developing a survey and video series to educate youth and families on biking, equipment maintenance, and access to local trails. At the [2nd Annual NFO Bike Rodeo](#), youth created bike maintenance and repair videos [on how to fix a flat](#), [how to check and change brake pads](#), and [how to check axles and derailleurs](#). Participants also collected survey data on access to green space and safe bike routes in NFO.

THE SOLUTION: TEACHER TRAINING

The Siena Youth Center is North Fair Oaks (NFO) residents' refuge for youth, providing after school programs, including academic support and the arts, as well as physical activity. In 2015, the Center's program director, Rafael Avendano, saw an opportunity to provide more green space to NFO residents by expanding the center's bicycle program Trips for Kids.



THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT FOR SUCCESS: COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

Based on survey data, participants developed three separate bike routes to reach green space safely in NFO. Participants presented their proposal for safe routes to open space as well as signage design ideas to the North Fair Oaks Community Council. They addressed the importance of safe access to green space and the dangers of biking in the neighborhood due to lack of signage compared to other areas in the county. [Watch the meeting video here](#). Next steps are for the North Fair Oaks Community Council to decide on which of the safe routes should be approved to provide more open space for the community.

“I had a lot of fun fixing bikes for the community and for our classmates.” Jonathan Ramos

The Trips for Kids program was a success due to the high level of program interest. Participants were able to exhibit leadership skills and be part of a decision-making processes, setting the tone for future participants and youth-led research.

“This program helped me fight for my community.” Aaron Gonzalez

Parents of participants also became involved with the program by biking with the group, attending community meetings and safety trainings, and learning new bicycle skills.

CHALLENGE: TIMELINES

The project timeline was a challenge, with the Trips for Kids expansion running through the summer months when many youth are out of school and their normal routines. Many program objectives needed all youth to be involved in weekly meetings to help make decisions about the program and build a cohesive group.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The program was a huge success not only for participants, but also the entire North Fair Oaks community. When participants advocated for green space it created a space for policymakers to discuss and create signage for safer routes.

Rafael suggests that if others were to take on a project similar they should plan for January through June to be the most extensive program period so all deadlines are met and the most youth can participate. As far as 2016 program participants, youth are proposing a bike park in NFO's Flood Park and attending Flood Park Redesign meetings to request sharrows. They also plan to expand upon their role in the Bike Rodeo in 2017 year.

To learn more about the Trips for Kids project, visit: www.sienayc.org/trips-for-kids/biking-advocacy

