

Recreation and Culture



Leave all the afternoon for exercise and recreation, which are as necessary as reading. I will rather say more necessary because health is worth more than learning.

Thomas Jefferson

Throughout this book, health risks, health care and health outcomes as well as economy, education, crime and safety are discussed as aspects of overall quality of life. These topics are strongly related to the health of communities and individuals. Other factors that contribute to quality of life are opportunities for residents to seek recreation, to visit parks, participate in the arts, cultural, and historical activities, and explore other areas of Louisiana. Often there is a relationship between these activities and improved physical and mental health. For example, a small increase in the percentage of trips that are walked rather than driven could result in significant public health benefits.¹

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These factors also contribute to a healthy economy, generating money that can lead to civic improvements that in turn can lead to a better infrastructure supporting programs and facilities that have a health component such as parks and trails.

Numerous national economic development studies indicate that new or relocating businesses take into consideration the overall quality of life—which subsequently includes the presence of cultural institutions, recreation and open spaces.²

Many, if not most, recreational and cultural facilities and programs are local, i.e. developed and maintained by the parish or municipality. While it varies from parish to parish, in general the range of services includes parks, trails, sport facilities and programs, boating, fishing, swimming and a wide variety of museums, cultural exhibits and libraries. Some parishes have a parish wide parks and recreation organization; others have special districts, municipal operated systems and/or a combination of the three.

At the state level there are several agencies and programs that support communities in the development and maintenance of these opportunities—the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, the Louisiana Governor’s Office of Rural Development, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and the Louisiana Department of State to name a few.

The Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (CRT) helps citizens and visitors enjoy the incredible natural, historical and cultural assets that make up Louisiana’s unique quality of life and are so important to the state’s economic well-being. The department strives to deliver programs and services to residents and visitors that will inform, educate, and entertain while shining the light on Louisiana’s unique and unparalleled assets. CRT is made up of the Office of Tourism, the Office of State Parks, the Office of State Museums, the State Library of Louisiana, and the Office of Cultural Development. All work together to make educational resources available; to conserve and interpret Louisiana history; to promote and support Louisiana’s arts and cultural community; and to develop recreational opportunities.

The goal of the Governor's Office of Rural Development is to assist Louisiana's rural communities with resources to help them grow and benefit the lives of their citizens. One program that the office oversees is the Recreation Trails Program (RTP). This grant-based program funds local government and non-profit groups in the development and maintenance of recreational trails. To date, this program has funded trails in sixty-three of Louisiana’s sixty-four parishes.³

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is the state agency responsible for management of the state's renewable natural resources including all wildlife and aquatic life and enforcement of hunting, fishing, and boating safety laws. In this capacity, LDWF offers numerous activities and services to individuals, families, and communities promoting outdoor life skills, safety, and law enforcement and education programs.

DID YOU KNOW?

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Project WILD is a national conservation and environmental education program for schools, community groups, and private industry. They currently work with the school systems and 4-H club members in Terrebonne, Bossier and Caddo parishes to offer field instruction in aquatic and wildlife science and management.

The Department of State, under the administration of the Secretary of State (SOS), maintains an extensive depository of records for the state and local areas. The SOS administers several programs supporting the culture and history of our state—including the Louisiana State Archives and several outstanding museums throughout the state. SOS also provides public access to thousands of hours of film and video footage relevant to Louisiana's culture through the *Louisiana Multimedia Archives*, a computer-based archival system located in Baton Rouge at the State Archives. Previews of selected newsreels and oral histories are accessible online at

<http://sos.louisiana.gov/multimedia>

This chapter looks at ways in which communities can use these and other resources to enhance the quality of life for their citizens through recreation, libraries, museums, parks and other aspects of cultural experience related to the health and well-being of individuals and the communities in which they live.

Recreation

An often repeated misconception is that you have to go somewhere to recreate, i.e., a vacation to the mountains or to the beach. In fact we have recreational opportunities in our neighborhood, parish, and state. The state system of parks and wildlife management areas, community recreation departments, and local interest groups all offer facilities, expertise, and opportunities for individuals and families to just get out and recreate. According to health studies, there is a positive relationship between leisure time and positive health outcomes. Spending time with friends and family also provides positive health benefits.⁴

Walk to Recreate

Getting regular exercise is a mainstay of the Healthy People 2010 objectives. Walking can be everything and anything from a hike through nature to a stroll in the mall. Of all the ways to recreate, walking is the least expensive way for the community and the individual to become active. Even though walking is a moderate form of exercise, it offers a substantial health benefit.⁵ Utilizing the community resources of hospitals, youth groups, service clubs, and faith-based organizations, community leaders and planners can foster the development of walking interest groups in neighborhoods and at worksites.

DID YOU KNOW?

Louisiana has more than 50 hiking trails providing recreational opportunities to hikers from the most experienced to the slowest walker. For a book on hiking in Louisiana try 50 Hikes in Louisiana: Walks, Hikes and Backpacks in the Bayou State by Nina Baxley.

Grant dollars are available to construct trails, urban and rural, that can be used for all kinds of recreational uses from hiking to horses and skating to four-wheeling. In addition to the previously mentioned federally funded, state managed Recreation Trails Program (RTP), the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is a non-profit organization dedicated to building trails and supplying technical know-how. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy supports local efforts to transform the dream of a trail into a tangible community asset. This organization is interested in helping communities develop successful strategies to overcome barriers in building trails of all types for all uses. For more information on trails visit the Web site at www.railtrails.org or www.rurallouisiana.com.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Office of State Parks also provides technical assistance to local governments in the development of outdoor recreation places. In addition, it assists with grant applications for acquiring and developing state parks.

Get a Hobby-Get Active

In addition to walking, the community can utilize its natural resources to foster other recreational activities and hobbies such as canoeing and kayaking, bird watching, bicycling, and mountain biking. Some local activity interest groups may even participate in fund raising events, teaching or sharing their expertise, and area/trail maintenance in exchange for a location in which to participate in their hobby.

Play to Recreate

The Louisiana State Park system is composed of 19 parks, 16 historic sites and one preservation area. The Office of State Parks is responsible for planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining the system. State Parks are chosen for their scenery and recreation potential. Each has a waterfront location, campsites, and picnic areas. Some have cabins or group camps, walking trails, sports fields, and bodies of water for recreation and exercise. Louisiana parks host more than 2 million visitors yearly. According to the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, visitors to Louisiana State Parks provide more than \$65 million in economic impact to the state. For a complete listing of state park locations, fees, and facilities, visit the Web site at www.lastateparks.com.

Taking Care – Taking Control: Building Trails

The Tammany Trace is Louisiana's first and only rail-to-trail conversion. The trail is a scenic 31 mile recreational corridor for pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, rollerbladers and joggers. The trail runs along the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

Baton Rouge Mountain Bike Trails – the Baton Rouge Area Mountain Bike Association (BRAMBA) in cooperation with The Baton Rouge Recreation and Park Commission (BREC) built two mountain bike trails on parcels of undeveloped BREC land. BRAMBA supplied the labor, design, trail building, and trail maintenance to create and maintain more 16 miles of mountain bike trail in the middle of the city.

Monroe Walking Trail – The City of Monroe has received a Louisiana Recreation Trails Program Grant to complete a recreational walking trail serving patrons of the Ouachita Council on Aging. It is projected that the walking trail will serve approximately 750 senior citizens who visit the Ouachita COA facility each week.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) manages 51 Wildlife Management Areas and Refuges located throughout the state. Each of the areas is unique, offering different types of terrain for hunting, boating, hiking, bird watching, fishing, and other outdoor activities. LDWF offers a wide array of classes for the novice as well as the seasoned outdoorsman. Educational programs are offered for children as young as three, men and women of all ages, families, school groups, beginning boaters, hunters and fisherman, and experienced individuals wishing to improve or learn a new skill. For locations of Wildlife Management Areas and a list of educational programs, visit the LDWF web site at <http://www.wlf.state.la.us>.

Increasing Community Recreational Capacity

Smart growth means that a community has considered the quality of life issues such as recreation, as well as all of the traditional issues such as health, safety, and transportation. Community leaders and planners should recognize the relationship between health and recreation and maximize the recreational assets of their community. Citizens are looking to their community leaders to utilize tax dollars in providing culture and recreational opportunities in keeping with today's lifestyles.

What is your community's "recreation assessment"? In this case, an assessment is a recreational inventory, of what you have, what you need, and what recreational opportunities exist in your community. Listed below are several suggestions for community and neighborhood leaders to begin an assessment by identifying the community's recreational assets.

1. Conduct a "walk-ability assessment" of a neighborhood, downtown area or an historical site, listing barriers such as lack of sidewalks, inadequate street lighting, and dangerous pedestrian crossings.
2. Inventory potential areas for walking trails such as green spaces and paths along waterways.
3. List school tracks and gyms that are available to the public when school is not in session.
4. Make a list of organizations/churches/schools offering youth sports programs for boys and girls.
5. Gather a list of special hobby groups such as hiking and biking clubs.

Surveys, such as the recreation assessment, and "town meetings" are ways to determine what the citizens want and/or need. Once this information is gathered, community leaders, planners, grant writers, and other stakeholders can direct their attention and efforts to improving the ways and places for citizens to recreate. After all, we are aware of the need to get active, but there is much to learn and educate about the how and the where we recreate.

Cultural Development

Cultural development includes exposure to visual arts, theatre, music, folk art, and all media of expression available to people. It also includes the preservation and maintenance of archaeological sites and the promotion and protection of historic buildings and education. The importance of art and culture has been dramatically illustrated with youth and child development. Consistent exposure to the arts is correlated with better test scores in school, a reduced likelihood of dropping out, and reduced risk behaviors in youth.⁶ These are important factors in the health of a community.

The Office of Cultural Development is responsible for promoting an appreciation for the preservation of Louisiana's rich heritage. Within the office, there are three divisions: Division of the Arts, Division of Historic Preservation, and Division of Archaeology.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Division of the Arts awards more than \$4 million in grants per year to organizations in the areas of crafts, dance, design arts, folk life, literature, media, theatre and visual arts.

Each division identifies, protects, and makes accessible the state's cultural resources and traditions. State historical sites are selected for their cultural, historical, or archaeological importance. These areas tell their story through museums, artifacts, outdoor displays, and interpretive programs. Some of the sites offer special living history and educational events.

Communities and individual citizens can get assistance from the Division of Historic Preservation. The division governs a federal tax credit and the Louisiana Main Street Program which helps to encourage restoration of historic properties. In addition, owners who wish to have their properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places can get help from this division. For more information on Cultural Development visit the Web site at www.crt.state.la.us/crt.

Museums

The preservation and shared understanding of local history are strongly linked to a community's capacity to expand educational opportunities, increase an appreciation of the local culture, and provide exposure to the arts for its citizens. In addition to museums located at universities and the state museum system, communities and private organizations have established museums, local attractions and art galleries, taking advantage of local cultural opportunities. In addition, many communities in partnership with individuals and non-profit organizations celebrate their culture through the restoration of period homes and pilgrimage festivals. The furnishings, paintings and insight into the past all highlight the culture of the local community.

The Office of the State Museum is responsible for preserving Louisiana's past through its historic landmarks, artifacts and works of art. The State Museum is composed of nine buildings in the New Orleans French Quarter as well as the Wedell Williams Memorial Aviation Museum in Patterson; the Old Courthouse Museum in Natchitoches; the E.D. White Historic Site in Thibodaux; and the Louisiana State Museum in Baton Rouge (scheduled to open in May 2005). Five of the institution's New Orleans sites, the Cabildo and Arsenal, the Presbytere, the 1850 House, the Old U.S. Mint, and Madame John's Legacy are open to the

public. They feature exhibits that explore the state's history, and they show aspects of its diverse and fascinating cultural legacy. State Museums are among the state's most prominent heritage attractions, and every year they draw hundreds of thousands of citizens and tourists.

Additional State Museums are maintained and operated by The Louisiana Department of State. The State Museum Program currently operates museums located in all geographic parts of the state offering an interesting look at the culture and diversity that make Louisiana such a unique place to live or visit. These sites include: The Delta Music Museum – Ferriday, The Coach Eddie G. Robinson Museum – Grambling, The Garyville Timber Museum – Garyville, The Old Arsenal Museum – Baton Rouge, The North Louisiana Military Museum – Ruston, The Louisiana State Cotton Museum – Lake Providence, The Louisiana State Exhibit Museum – Shreveport, The Louisiana State Oil & Gas Museum – Oil City, Mansfield Women's College – Mansfield, and The Tioga Heritage Museum and Park – Tioga. Additional information on the many museums in Louisiana can be found online at www.crt.state.la.us and www.sos.louisiana.gov.

DID YOU KNOW?

Museums are not just state institutions and big city attractions. Abita Springs, in St. Tammany Parish, is home to one of Louisiana's most eccentric—the UCM Museum (“you-see-em-mu-se-um”). The museum is housed in a group of buildings including the House of Shard, the old Creole cottage, a 1910 gas station, exhibit hall, voodoo shack, and features thousands of found objects, and home made inventions. Open 10-5 everyday ucm@ucmmuseum.com.

The Secretary of State maintains an online listing of museums that are owned/operated by local governments, civic organizations and other private enterprises at www.sos.louisiana.gov/museums/museums/museums-other.htm.

To have your museum's web address listed on the site, contact the SOS Webmaster at www.sos.louisiana.gov/email.htm.

Public Libraries

Libraries are public sources of information on all aspects of living, including information about health conditions and positive health behaviors. Local public libraries have programs that address literacy, personal health, adolescent health, hygiene, parenting, and other health-related topics. This information is available free or for very little cost to the public. Local libraries also serve communities by providing meeting facilities and access to a wide variety of educational and cultural events and exhibits.

The State Library supports not only the local libraries, but also provides collection material and reference service directly to state government employees and officials. The library's extensive collection includes information about Louisiana's political, social, and economic status. State library resources can also be accessed by the general public either on-site or through their local library system. The State Library provides more than 20 online databases on a wide variety of subjects. The databases contain full-text information from books, magazines, and other sources (including information about prescription drugs and health care) and are accessible online to every resident with a Louisiana public library card.

Louisiana citizens receive library service through 67 main libraries, 271 branches and 31 bookmobiles.

Through grants and aid from the State Library, there are now more than 2,300 computers in Louisiana's public libraries that offer free access to the Internet, offering endless sources for research, learning, and self-improvement. While computers are in most schools, there are still many families who rely on the libraries for internet access. In addition, the State Library directly serves Louisiana residents with visual or physical handicaps by providing recorded books and books in large-print and Braille formats by mail free of charge. It also assists state correctional and mental institutions in establishing libraries for staff and residents.

The Louisiana Center for the Book, a program of the State Library, encourages reading by providing a cultural focus on Louisiana's rich literary heritage. The Library's Youth Services Section provides programs that promote reading for children and young adults and encourages use of libraries by children and their families. In 2003, youth services programs reached more than 810,000 children and teens. The State Library's Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped provide free library services to more than 7,000 residents across the state. The program serves any Louisiana adult or child who is unable to read or use standard print due to temporary or permanent limitations such as blindness, visual impairment, reading disability or physical handicap. For more information on state and local libraries, visit www.state.lib.la.us.

Public Libraries Lafayette Parish	
Collection Size	346,161
Circulation	1,087,750
Library Visits per Year	650,786
Branches	8
Main Office:	
Lafayette Public Library Main Library	
301 W. Congress St.	
P. O. Box 3427	
Lafayette, LA 70502-3427	
TEL: 337-261-5775	
FAX: 337-261-5782	

Source: State Library of Louisiana, 2005

Taking Care – Taking Control: Get Real, Get Fit!

Jefferson Davis Parish and Vermilion Parish Libraries were both selected for participation in Get Real, Get Fit!, a national library-based program promoting physical fitness and healthy eating for teens.

The program enables libraries to bring together teens and their parents for discussions and activities that emphasize the importance and benefits of fitness and healthy eating—offering opportunities to increase physical activity and adopt healthy eating habits. Through library collaboration with community partners, Get Real, Get Fit! also aims to promote awareness and use of public libraries as key resources for health and wellness information.

The program is sponsored by the Americans for Libraries Council and made possible by a grant from MetLife Foundation. For more information, visit www.americansforlibraries.org.

The Community Can ...

“Environmental and policy approaches are designed to help people adopt healthier behaviors. The creation of healthful physical and organizational environments is attempted through development of public policy that supports healthy practices, creation of supportive environments, and strengthening of community action. Studies have shown that the availability of exercise equipment in the home and the proximity and number of places for physical activity within neighborhoods are associated with physical activity levels. Other neighborhood and environmental characteristics such as safety lighting, weather, and air pollution also affect physical activity levels, regardless of individual motivation and knowledge.”^{7,8}

Create or enhance access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach activities.⁹

- Change the local environment to create opportunities for physical activity.
- Create or enhance access to places for physical activity by building trails or facilities and by reducing barriers (e.g., reducing fees or changing operating hours of facilities).
- Provide training in use of equipment, other health education activities, and incentives such as risk factor screening and counseling.

Toolkits & Guides:

Increasing Physical Activity through Community Design: A Guide for Public Health Practitioners, National Center for Bicycling and Walking. May 2002,

www.bikewalk.org/technicalassistance/resources_information/publications/ipa_guide/IPA_full/index.htm

Increase the amount of time for school-based physical education¹⁰

- Modify curricula and policies to increase the amount of time students spend in moderate to vigorous activity while in physical education classes.
- Increase the amount of time students are active by increasing the amount of time spent in PE class or increasing the amount of time students are active during already-scheduled PE classes.

Toolkits & Guides:

Guide to Preventive and Community Health Services,

www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/pa-int-school-pe.pdf

Support social interventions in community settings that focus on:¹¹

- Changing physical activity behavior through building, strengthening, and maintaining social networks that provide supportive relationships for behavior change, specifically physical activity. This can be done either by creating new social networks or working within pre-existing networks in a social setting outside the family, such as the workplace. Interventions typically involved setting up a "buddy" system, making "contracts" with others to complete specified levels of physical activity, or setting up walking or other groups to provide friendship and support.

Toolkits & Guides:

Running your worksite's physical activity program. Some ideas and resources to help you set up your physical activity objective.

www.tompkins-co.org/wellness/worksite/workwell/paprogram.html

Does the Built Environment Influence Physical Activity? Examining the Evidence - reviews the broad trends affecting the relationships among physical activity, health, transportation, and land use; summarizes what is known about these relationships, including the strength and magnitude of any causal connections; examines implications for policy; and recommends priorities for future research. – Transportation Research Board of the National Academies,

trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=4536

Individually-adapt health behavior change programs¹²

- Tailor programs to the individual's specific interests, preferences, and readiness for change.
- Teach participants the behavioral skills needed to incorporate moderate-intensity physical activity into daily routines.
- Create planned (e.g., a daily scheduled walk) and unplanned (e.g., using the stairs when the chance arises) behavior opportunities.

Toolkits & Guides:

Increasing Physical Activity: A Report on Recommendations of the Task Force on Community Preventive Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr5018.pdf

The [Healthy People 2010 Information Access Project](#) provides pre-formulated PubMed searches for selected objectives for physical activity. Current information and evidence-based strategies related to these objectives are presented. The National Library of Medicine also provides links to available references. www.healthypeople.gov/Document/HTML/Volume2/22Physical.htm

Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices

Post "Point-of-Decision" prompts¹³

- Motivational signs placed by elevators and escalators to encourage people to use nearby stairs for health benefits or weight loss.
- Reminders to take the stairs and offer information about a health benefit from using the stairs.
- Increase the number of people using stairs rather than escalators or elevators.

Toolkits & Guides:

Physical Activity and Health Branch/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

depts.washington.edu/obesity/confdec2001/seattle2.gwh.ppt#386,22

Support community-wide campaigns.¹⁴ They are proven to be effective to:

- Sustain efforts with ongoing high visibility.
- Deliver messages promoting physical activity using television, radio, newspaper columns and inserts, and trailers in movie theaters.
- Use many components and include individually-focused efforts such as support and self-help groups; physical activity counseling; risk factor screening and education at worksites, schools, and community health fairs; and environmental activities such as community events and the creation of walking trails.
- Increase knowledge about exercise and physical activity, and in intentions to be physically active.

Toolkits & Guides:

National Guidelines Clearinghouse: Recommendations to increase physical activity in communities, www.guidelines.gov.

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