Rural Active Living Assessment 2013
Chester, South Carolina

Introduction:

The Rural Active Living Assessment is a method for community groups to better understand whether their environments are supportive of active lifestyles. It is a 3 part assessment that looks closely at the opportunities within a community to be physically active as well as identifies other amenities within a community that encourage or hinder active living (Hartley et al., 2009). These 3 surveys can be found on the Active Living Research website along with the RALA Codebook with explanations for conducting and filling out each section (Hartley et al., 2009). The results from RALA can help influence building policies or plans, roadwork policies or plans, and enhance an understanding of ways to improve the quality of life and health of residents.

The first piece, the Town-Wide assessment, looks at the town’s topography, road and sidewalk patterns, locations of public schools, and recreational amenities (Hartley et al., 2009). Chester, South Carolina, located in Chester County is 3.17 square miles with a population of 5,607. The town is characterized as hilly with “no distinguishable” street pattern. It is from this piece that smaller segments are identified for a more in depth assessment. As physical activity is not the sole concern of the Eat Smart Move More, ESMM Chester County agreed to test a nutrition assessment created in partnership with South Carolina’s Department of Health and Environmental Control and Eat Smart Move More South Carolina. Nutrition assessment questions were added to both the Town-Wide and Segment Assessment pieces to be completed in conjunction with these tools. These questions were designed to increase the amount of information gathered while conducting RALA that could be useful to ESMM chapters. The creators of RALA offer a Scoring Tool to assess active living based on 5 distinct areas; school location, trails, parks and playgrounds, water activities, and recreation facilities.
### RALA Town-Wide Scoring Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Column A Domain/Items</th>
<th>Assigned Points</th>
<th>My Town’s Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>School Location</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td>There is an <em>elementary</em> school in my town that children can walk to. (pg.1 , Q14)</td>
<td>Yes (6 points) No (0 points)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td>There is a <em>middle</em> school in my town that children can walk to. (pg.1 , Q14)</td>
<td>Yes (5 points) No (0 points)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td>There is an <em>high</em> school in my town that children can walk to. (pg.1 , Q14)</td>
<td>Yes (4 points) No (0 points)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Score: School Location → 15**

**Suggestion(s):**
- Chester Elementary and Middle School are not walkable, consider utilizing Safe Routes to School (SRTS) ideas for non-walkable schools
- Host a Walk-to-School event at walkable schools
- Consider bicycle education for schools with students who do or could bike to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.</th>
<th><strong>Trails</strong></th>
<th>Assigned Points</th>
<th>My Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td>There is a <em>Hiking or Walking Trail</em> (pg. 3, Q1)</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (8 points) Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (5 points) No (0 points)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td>There is a <em>Biking Path</em> (Pg.3, Q2)</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (8 points) Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (5 points) No (0 points)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td>There is some <em>Other</em> type of Trail* (pg.7-9, Q14-18)</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (4 points) Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (1 points) No (0 points)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Score: Trails → 12**

**Suggestion(s):**
- Consider improving trails by adding a bicycle trail in the community or improving current trails to better accommodate cyclists and pedestrians
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Parks and Playgrounds</th>
<th>Assigned Points</th>
<th>My Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Park (Pg.4, Q3)</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (8 points) Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (5 points) No (0 points)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Playground <em>(If playground is within park, assign points to both)</em> (Pg.7, Q12)</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (8 points) Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (5 points) No (0 points)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Playground (Pg.7, Q12)</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (7 points) Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (4 points) No (0 points)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other** (Pg.7-9, Q14-18)</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (2 points) Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (1 points) No (0 points)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Score: Parks and Playgrounds → 25**

**Suggestions(s):**
- Consider obtaining a Joint Use Agreement with the school district to allow children and guardians legal and definitive access to playgrounds after school hours (i.e. Chester Elementary)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Water Activities</th>
<th>Assigned Points</th>
<th>My Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items 4</td>
<td>Public Use Swimming Pool (Pg.4, Q5)</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 15 miles of town center (4 points)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No (0 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items 5</td>
<td>Swimming Beach (Pg.4, Q4)</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 15 miles of town center (4 points)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No (0 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items 6</td>
<td>River with Canoe/Boat/Water-sport Access (Pg.5, Q6)</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 15 miles of town center (1 points)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No (0 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items 7</td>
<td>Other** (Pg.7-9, Q14-18) *** “Other” can include a different type of water activity amenity, or another public use swimming pool, beach or river access venue</td>
<td>Yes, w/in 15 miles of town center (1 points)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No (0 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Score: Water Activities → 6

**Suggestion(s):**
- Are there organized water sport leagues during the summer months for youth or adults?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Recreation Facilities</th>
<th>Assigned Points</th>
<th>My Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Items | Town Recreational Center (town-owned or YMCA) (Pg.6, Q10) | Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (10 points)  
         Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (7 points)  
         No (0 points) | 10 |
| | Playing Field or Courts (Pg.7, Q13) | Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (7 points)  
         Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (5 points)  
         No (0 points) | 7 |
| | Skate Park (Pg.5, Q7) | Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (7 points)  
         Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (5 points)  
         No (0 points) | 0 |
| | **Score up to 3 of these remaining Recreation Facilities, at 2 points each (total = 6 points)** | | |
| | **Private Fitness Facility (e.g. Gold’s, Curves) (Pg.6, Q11)** | Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (2 points)  
         Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (1 points)  
         No (0 points) | 0 |
| | **Roller Skating Rink (Pg.6, Q9)** | Yes, w/in 15 miles of town center (2 points)  
         No (0 points) | 0 |
| | **Ice Skating Rink (Pg.5, Q8)** | Yes, w/in 15 miles of town center (2 points)  
         No (0 points) | 0 |
| | **Other ^^ (Pg.7-9, Q14-18)** | Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (2 points)  
         Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (1 points)  
         No (0 points) | 2 |
| | **Other ^^ (Pg.7-9, Q14-18)** | Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (2 points)  
         Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (1 points)  
         No (0 points) | |
** Other ^ (Pg.7-9, Q14-18)

^ “Other” can include a different type of recreational facility (e.g., yoga/dance studio, sledding hill, etc.), or another recreational facility if more than one that is already listed

| Yes, w/in 5 miles of town center (2 points) | Yes, 5-15 miles of town center (1 point) | No (0 points) |

(Note: Maximum points for Recreation Facilities domain = 30 points)

| Total Score: Recreational Facilities → 19 |

| Grand Total → 77/100 |

Suggestion(s):
Town-Wide Nutrition Assessment

Segment Assessments
The segments chosen can be highly populated areas, school zones, or parks where people may have an opportunity for physical activity or where a possibility for such exists. The ESMM Newbery County chapter chose 5 locations to assess. These areas included city parks and the surrounding neighborhoods and food sources.

Segment 1: Highway 9 Segment in Chester
The first segment encompassed Highway 9 Bypass in the city of Chester from the IGA to the Bi-Lo Grocery Store. The day was a clear, sunny, winter day in January. This area is mostly flat terrain used predominately used for commercial purposes. The road is a major thoroughfare for the town. Sidewalks are present intermittently on this road from the Bi-Lo to the McDonald’s on one side, appearing again from the Chinese Restaurant to the CVS. A shoulder buffer exists on only portions of the roadway, specifically from Bi-Lo to the Chesterville Commons. There is no shoulder buffer, however, from the Commons to York Road. There are some signaled crosswalks on the road, but only one side has complete sidewalks. Sidewalks that do exist, were not well kempt on this day as they were covered with dirt and rocks. There are some town offices in this segment as well as churches and food retailers. Due to intermittent sidewalks, this area is not as walkable as it could be with complete streets.

In addition to housing some light industrial areas, this segment is mainly a food retail hub. There are a number of grocery stores, IGA, Bi-Lo, Food Lion, and Save A Lot that offer fresh fruits and vegetables. Bi-Lo appeared to have the best selection. This segment also contains a Wal-Mart and a McDonald’s.

Picture 1 (left): This picture shows the end of the sidewalk that begins at the intersection below Bi-Lo and ends at McDonald’s.
Picture 2 (right): Intersection at McDonald’s in need of clearly marked crosswalk for pedestrians
Picture 1 (left): Bi-Lo Parking lot with new curbcuts but dirty sidewalks and no crosswalk present. Picture 2 (right): IGA parking lot with no pedestrian signage or crosswalks.

Picture 1 (left): Sidewalks present on both sides of the street, but no crosswalks from one side to the other. Picture 2 (right): Industrial area that connects to food retail locations without complete sidewalks.
Picture 1 (left): Sidewalks around Save-A-Lot and housing development across the street, no crosswalk or pedestrian crossing safety features in place, inconsistent lighting.
Picture 2 (right): Sidewalks in front of Save-A-Lot in good condition, but inconsistent lighting. Crosswalk light farther up the road, not convenient for housing development across the street.

Picture 1 (left): Crosswalk painted on street at light to Wal-Mart.
Picture 2 (right): Pedestrian crossing signage in Wal-Mart parking lot to increase safety.

**Suggestions:**
- Ensure groceries offer good selections of fruits and vegetables and other nutritious foods at reasonable prices
- Ensure all groceries accept EBT/SNAP/WIC and that recipients have access to these locations
- Work with DOT and city planning to complete sidewalks on opposite side of the street around food retailers and connect to any nearby neighborhoods
- IGA and Food Lion need sidewalk access
- Wal-Mart sidewalks do not extend around the entire parking lot….should they?

- Work with Public Works Department to keep sidewalks clear for pedestrians and ensure ADA accessibility
- Ensure street lights are in working order and highlight crossing areas
- Would any stores be interested in completing a project for ESMM like the Wal-Mart in Kershaw?
- Would fast food restaurants be interested in having ESMM promote healthy menu options?
- Add and/or refresh crosswalks with reflective paint for safer pedestrian crossing locations
- Ensure Stop Signs are in good condition and present where necessary
- Handicap designated parking spaces are available at Bi-Lo, Wal-Mart, and Save-A-Lot ensure other stores offer these as well.
  - Are entrances to all stores ADA accessible?
- Save-A-Lot is near a housing development work towards ensuring safe passage from the development to the store
  - Add pedestrian crossing signs in this area?
**Segment 2: Richburg, SC**

The second segment assessed was the Highway 9 Interstate Corridor from the Dollar General to the Crenco Food Store in Richburg, SC in Chester County. This area is primarily commercial with a flat terrain and is a thoroughfare to Richburg. This segment was assessed on a partly cloudy weekday in January. Sidewalks exist on both sides of the road and they have buffers. There are stop signs at most intersections and newly added traffic lights and solar powered street lights as part of a rejuvenation of the area. One additional improvement could be the addition of clearly marked reflective crosswalks at intersections and multi-way stops where necessary.

This area has a high number of food retail locations and hotels. Food sources include IGA, Crenco, Bob’s Foodmart, and PB. The IGA offers fresh fruits and vegetables, but no locations offer public transit such as buses or vans. In addition to grocery locations that can offer fresh fruits and vegetables for sale, this segment also houses the restaurants Front Porch, Waffle House, and Country Omlet. The final food retailers include a Bojangle’s, McDonald’s, Subway, Taco Bell/KFC combination location, and a Burger King.

**Suggestions:**
- Add a multi-way stop at intersection with only one stop sign to help traffic flow more smoothly.
- Connect existing sidewalks to enhance walkability and access to all food retailers.
- The road is 55 mph, should pedestrian crossing signs be added to alert drivers at intersections?
- Would restaurants and fast food establishments be interested in highlighting ESMM “healthy options” on their menus?
- Could Subway be a potential partner want to work with ESMM to promote healthy eating in Richburg/Chester County?

**Segment 3: Great Falls, SC**

The third segment was in Great Falls, SC in Chester County. The assessment took place on an overcast weekday in February. The segment of Great Falls assessed consisted of Highway 97, Sunset Avenue, and Dearborn Avenue. The terrain is flat in some areas and hilly in others with winding roads. The area is the “business corridor” of Great Falls and houses multiple commercial and civic buildings including an elementary school, community center, fire station, churches, athletic fields/courts and playgrounds. Sidewalks in this segment are intermittent and despite buffers and defined shoulder sections, some are only in fair condition. Pedestrian signage is present throughout the segment along with crosswalks, signals, and public lighting. Existing sidewalks connect to some other areas but improvements can be made. This segment also has multiple food retailers. The only grocery store is the Piggly Wiggly which offers public transit via Senior Services. Other retailers include Crossroads 2, Dollar General, Homeplace, and Montgomery Mart none of which offer fresh fruits and vegetables as a part of their food selections.

**Suggestions:**
- Do any of the convenience stores accept EBT/SNAP/WIC?
  - If they do, can we work with them to get them to offer fresh fruits and vegetables?
- Can any Farmers’ Market vendors from Chester or Fort Lawn offer stands in Great Falls?
• Will the Senior Services vans or automobiles take passengers to the new Farmers’ Markets?
• Complete sidewalks to improve connectivity with local neighborhoods to the food retailers to improve access and help businesses increase revenue
• Extend trails that provide connectivity even more
  o Are any a part of the Carolina Thread Trail and could the town apply for grant money to work on the trails?
• Add reflective paint sidewalks where needed to increase pedestrian safety especially near school
• Conduct a walkability assessment of the schools as well to reinforce the need to safe crossing for students
• Does the school have a Joint Use Agreement in place with the city?
Program and Policy Assessment

The final piece is the Program and Policy Assessment section which evaluates those policies and programs that do or do not support physical activity within the community. Information gathered during the Rural Active Living Assessments should help community groups focus on areas that need immediate attention or can be considered “low-hanging fruits” that are easily fixed as well as projects that will require more long-term planning.

RALA Program & Policy Assessment (PPA) Scoring Tool

**Corresponding page and question numbers from the original RALA PPA are included in Column A for cross-reference**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Column A DOMAIN/ITEMS</th>
<th>Column B ASSIGNED POINTS (If it snows in your town)</th>
<th>Column C ASSIGNED POINTS (If it does NOT snow in your town)</th>
<th>Column D MY TOWN’S POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>TOWN POLICIES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town Has policy requiring bikeways/pedestrian walkways in new public infrastructure projects.  (Pg.1, Q1)</td>
<td>Yes (7 points)</td>
<td>Yes (10 points)</td>
<td>+_<strong>7</strong> Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town regularly clears snow from sidewalks. <em>(if applicable)</em>  (Pg.1, Q2)</td>
<td>Yes (3 points)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>+_<strong>3</strong> Points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggestions:
- Utilize the policy on walkways to improve bikeability and walkability in the town

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.</th>
<th>TOWN PROGRAMS</th>
<th>ASSIGNED POINTS</th>
<th>MY TOWN’S POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town has a <em>public recreation department</em>.  (Pg.1, Q3)</td>
<td>Yes (10 points)</td>
<td>+_<strong>10</strong> points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town has a <em>private recreation organization</em> <em>(e.g. YMCA)</em>.  (Pg.2, Q4)</td>
<td>Yes (4 points)</td>
<td>+_<strong>4</strong> points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Either <em>public or private department/organization</em> <em>(or both)</em> offers physical activity programming for youth. <em>(Pg.1, 3a or Pg.2, 4a).</em></td>
<td>Yes (4 points)</td>
<td>+_<strong>4</strong> points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Either <em>public or private department/organization</em> <em>(or both)</em> allows resources/facilities to be available for local resident use outside of programming. <em>(Pg.1, 3e or Pg.2, 4f).</em></td>
<td>Yes (4 points)</td>
<td>+_<strong>4</strong> points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Either **public** or **private department/organization** (or both) provides scholarships/sliding fee scale for lower income residents (Pg.1, 3f or Pg.2, 4g).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (4 points)</td>
<td>+ 4 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (0 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are organized transportation options (either public or private) that help children get to/participate in physical activity opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (4 points)</td>
<td>+ 4 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (0 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

= **30** (TOTAL SCORE: TOWN PROGRAMS)

**Suggestions:**
- Work to improve transportation for youth to organized sporting activities
  - Offer fee for service transportation or “free” transportation (cost included in program fees)
  - Help organize parent carpools
  - Does the Chester County Connector stop at any program locations?
- Work to increase scholarship/sliding fee scale opportunities to involve more youth in programs
- Help support YMCA in their efforts to offer scholarships/sliding fees for youth and adults to participate in physical activity programs or use facilities
- Work with YMCA to improve access to their buses for all youth community members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>SCHOOL POLICIES</th>
<th>ASSIGNED POINTS</th>
<th>MY POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools in the town allow public access to their recreation facilities after school hours (Pg.4, Q9).</td>
<td>Yes (15 points)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No (0 points)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public schools offer a late-bus option for children that stay after school for sponsored activities (Pg.4, Q10).</td>
<td>Yes (15 points)</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 0 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No (0 points)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

= **15** (TOTAL SCORE: SCHOOL POLICIES)

**Suggestions:**
- Work to set up a “late-bus” option for children participating in school sponsored activities (clubs, sports teams, etc.) to increase participation rates.
  - Chester County Connector
  - Help parents set up a car pool
  - Would PTA/PTO be interested in working on this as well?
- Do the schools have a Joint Use Agreement with the town for facilities usage or is it an agreed upon deal?
  - If no JUA exists, consider working with the schools to create them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>SCHOOL PROGRAMS</th>
<th>ASSIGNED POINTS</th>
<th>MY POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| There are “Walk to School” programs or other programs that encourage children to walk or bike to school (Pg.3, Q6). | Yes (15 points)  
                     No (0 points) | +0 points       |           |
| Schools are participating in other activities (excluding “Walk to School” programs) that are included in the National “Safe Routes to School” program (Pg.3, Q7). | Yes (5 points)  
                     No (0 points) | +0 points       |           |
| Schools offer other sponsored physical activity initiatives for students (do not include gym/phys-ed classes) (Pg.3, Q8). | Yes (10 points)  
                     No (0 points) | +10 points      |           |

\[ \text{GRAND TOTAL} = 65/100 \]

**Suggestions:**

- As schools do no offer sponsored physical activity initiatives for students on a consistent basis, work to make these initiatives occur more often.
  - Girls on the Run
  - CATCH Programs/After-school programs
- Improve utilization of Safe Routes to School Coordinator and program ideas for schools that are not walkable.
- Conduct walkability assessments for walkable schools (e.g. Charter School in Chester and schools in Great Falls) to work towards increasing the number of students walking to school.
- Consider a Bike Rodeo with SRTS to increase bike safety knowledge.
- Help walkable schools participate in Walk to School Days.
References
