



## PARKS AND RECREATION: BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND A HEALTHY NATION

### BACKGROUND:

Administered by the CDC, the Healthy Communities Program (HCP) provides funding to communities of all sizes—small, medium, large, rural, urban, and suburban. It places a strong emphasis on providing information to make policy changes that lead to improved health outcomes. Local resources have leveraged an average of three dollars for every one federal dollar invested making the program highly efficient. Funding HCP at \$22.7 million represents the same funding level as FY08 and is half of what the program received in FY05.

The President's FY12 budget proposes terminating the Healthy Communities Program and integrating it into the newly authorized Community Transformation Grants (CTGs). However, there is no assurance that the Healthy Communities Program will continue to exist. Despite the fact that since 2003 HCP has helped more than 300 communities commit to improve health outcomes by making significant policy, systems, and environmental changes at the local level.

Parks and recreation agencies are essential to implementing changes that promote healthy, active lifestyles and preventing chronic disease such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. NRPA's ACHIEVE Program is directly funded through the Healthy Communities Program. While NRPA supports the concept of CTGs, it should not be at the expense of the Healthy Communities Program. The President has proposed \$222 million for the CTGs in FY12, which is more than enough to continue the Healthy Communities Program if firmly included in the Community Transformation Grants or another CDC prevention program.

**NRPA urges Congress to maintain funding for the Healthy Communities program at \$22.7 million in FY12 with funding provided through the Community Transformation Grants Program.**

### WHY CONGRESS SHOULD ACT:

Chronic diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, are the leading causes of death and disability in the U.S. In fact, nearly half of all Americans suffer from chronic disease. As a result, chronic disease is now a national epidemic.

Even those of us who do not suffer from chronic disease are impacted by it through increased healthcare costs.



Treatment for people with chronic conditions accounts for more than 75 percent of the \$2 trillion spent on U.S. medical-care costs annually.

According to the CDC, lack of physical activity, poor diet, and tobacco and excessive alcohol use contribute to the development and severity of many chronic diseases. These are all preventable risk factors. Effectively preventing chronic disease is central to the future of our nation's economy, healthcare, and the well-being of every American.

### PARKS BUILD HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

- **CHICAGO, IL:** Implemented a safe park zone law around Humboldt Park to create safe access for bicyclists and pedestrians, including seniors, families with young children, and persons with disabilities. In addition, they changed vending machine policies to provide healthier options at all Chicago Park District facilities.
- **LONGVIEW, WA:** Introduced a city policy of tobacco-free parks, which will help create a culture of nonsmoking, a cleaner environment, and healthier spaces for the community to engage in free opportunities for physical activity.
- **MONTGOMERY, AL:** Provided walking and biking routes in the county and promoted their use. Installed walking trails around the perimeter of the county's nine pocket parks and started a walking program that has led to the development of walking groups.
- **NORTH MIAMI, FL:** Created a policy of healthy snacks for meetings and vending machines, and promoted physical activity through a stairwell and walking campaign.

