

# Local Walking Paths Promote Physical Activity in Yonkers, New York

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## At A Glance

The Westchester County Department of Health (WCDH) worked with community partners to support greater use of two city walking paths with signage, maps, distance markers, and walking events. The 1-mile outdoor walking path allows residents to combine physical activity and a healthy shopping experience by connecting residents to the local farmers' market. About 6,200 of Yonkers' 200,000 residents live within 5 miles of the path. An indoor walking path at Yonkers YMCA provides members and staff with an easy option for physical activity.



## Public Health Challenge

Physical activity can help control weight and lower the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that adults get 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity and 2 or more

days of muscle-building activity each week to improve their health. Only 20% of New York adults met those recommendations in 2015. Yonkers is in Westchester County, NY, where the obesity rate is 20%, according to the 2017 County Health Rankings.

## Find Out More

Learn more about Westchester County's initiatives to support healthy eating and active living by visiting

<http://health.westchestergov.com/keep-healthy-materials>.

The New York State Department of Health, through funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's State and Local Public Health Actions to Prevent Obesity, Diabetes, and Heart Disease and Stroke (DP14-1422PPFH14), supports this project.

*The Yonkers Food Walk events are exciting opportunities to bring community members together for a local healthy experience! Folks are able to meet others trying to get their steps in for the week and locate some good healthy eats.*

- Nathan Hunter

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## Approach

Walking is a cheap and easy way for most adults to include physical activity in their everyday lives. WCDH worked with Yonkers on the Move, Hudson Valley Groundwork (HVGW), Living Your Fullest Everyday (LYFE) Coalition, and Yonkers YMCA to support greater use of existing walking paths in the heart of the city. For a 1-mile outdoor walking path, WCDH provided signs, banners, and maps to mark the paths and distance. They also support guided Food Walk events to the local farmers market. These events promote use of the path and educate residents about local healthy food options. For the Yonkers YMCA indoor path, WCDH provided new signs to guide members through the 1-mile course.

## Results

The new signage, maps, and Food Walk events encourage use of the 1-mile outdoor walking path. Of the nearly 200,000 residents of Yonkers, 6,200 live within 5 miles of the path. The path also provides residents with opportunities to healthy food options throughout the community and visit the self-sustaining greenhouse on the Yonkers Science Barge. The indoor walking path at the YMCA is available to more than 500 Yonkers YMCA members. It includes several sets of stairs as well as an indoor track. After installation of the signage for the indoor walking path, YMCA staff report more people now walk daily.

## What's Next

Maintaining current relationships with local community organizations is the key to sustaining successful physical activity promotion. These partnerships created a stable and inviting environment for community members to participate in physical activity. Preserving paths and walking routes will also sustain success. Hudson Valley Groundwork and Yonkers YMCA will maintain their respective path signage and keep the routes safe and clean. WCDH will continue to develop connections with new organizations to promote additional walking opportunities throughout the county.