



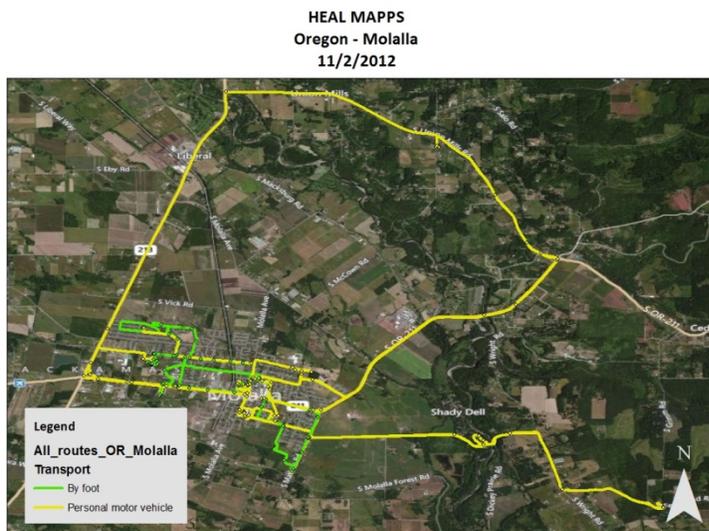
## Molalla Community HEAL MAPPS™ Report

Molalla is a rural community located in Clackamas County, OR. The city is situated 30 miles south of Portland in the Willamette Valley. Molalla is home to 8,100 residents.<sup>1</sup> The city is surrounded by farmland and forest, and Molalla's economy has historically been based on agriculture and logging. The city was named for the nearby Molalla River.<sup>2</sup>

Fifty eight percent of Molalla families include children under 18. The population is 82% white and 15% Latino. The median income is \$49,524 and the median age is 31.4.<sup>3</sup>

The area is served by the Molalla River School District, which includes 4 elementary schools, 1 middle school, 1 high school and 2 charter schools.<sup>4</sup> Recreational opportunities include hiking, biking, fishing and wildlife watching in the Molalla River Corridor. Molalla is also home to the

Buckeroo Rodeo, which includes various family events during the week of July 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>5</sup>



### Generating Rural Options for Weight Healthy Kids and Communities

(GROW HKC) is a USDA-funded, participatory childhood obesity prevention study conducted by Oregon State University's Extension researchers in partnership with rural residents and communities. GROW HKC and the Molalla community have

partnered to map features of the local environment and discuss residents' perceptions of the community supports and barriers to regularly eating healthy and being physically active, particularly for children and families. Community members were mobilized and trained to use HEAL MAPPS™ (Healthy Eating Active Living: Mapping Attributes using Participatory Photographic Surveys), our community resource and readiness tool, to assess community resources for and readiness to improve and implement healthy eating and physical activity supports – environmental and policy actions to make easier these obesity preventing behaviors.

<sup>1</sup> [www.cityofmolalla.com](http://www.cityofmolalla.com)

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molalla,\\_Oregon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molalla,_Oregon)

<sup>3</sup> <http://oe.oregonexplorer.info/rural/CommunitiesReporter/>

<sup>4</sup> [www.molallariv.k12.or.us](http://www.molallariv.k12.or.us)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.molallachamber.com/>

HEAL MAPPS™ projects conducted in partnership with rural communities across several Western States (AZ, CO, NM, NV, OR, WA) will provide evidence and insights that will drive the development of a rural obesity prevention model. The model will be used as a framework for rural community actions aimed to promote healthy eating and physical activity behaviors, environments, and policies to prevent overweight and obesity among children and families.

The problem of obesity in children is in the forefront of nationwide research efforts and there are documented physical and mental health outcomes associated with childhood obesity that contribute to lifelong chronic health problems which may disproportionately affect people living in rural places. Rural residency tends to increase the risk of overweight and obesity for children and adults; the prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity is higher among children living in rural areas.

To date, most evidence-based strategies to combat the childhood obesity epidemic have been developed and tested in non-rural settings and target either individuals or environments. The overall goal of the GROW Healthy Kids and Communities (HKC) project is to learn more about the factors influencing health behaviors in rural places in order to prevent obesity in rural children **by improving their behavioral environments – at home, in school, and in the community** – to make healthy eating and activity options their easy and preferred choice.

### **Relevance for Molalla Community**

Eighty nine percent of adult Clackamas County residents have at least one risk factor for chronic disease, including current smoking, overweight or obesity, physical inactivity, or low fruit and vegetable consumption. Forty five percent of Clackamas County adults do not meet the CDC recommendations for physical activity, and 75% do not consume the recommended 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Fifty nine percent of Clackamas County adults are overweight or obese.<sup>6</sup> Although these statistics represent adults, studies show that children with overweight or obese parents are more likely to be afflicted with similar health problems.<sup>7</sup>

Helping children develop healthy habits and providing healthy eating and activity supports to balance their energy intake with energy expenditure is an important aspect to maintaining healthy weight, preventing overweight and obesity, and minimizing chronic disease risk. Because obesity prevention among rural populations requires an understanding of the supports and barriers to healthy eating and active living within and among rural communities, we are

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.oregonhealthinfo.com/oregon\\_health\\_by\\_region\\_display\\_data.php?OHPRGeo=clackamas](http://www.oregonhealthinfo.com/oregon_health_by_region_display_data.php?OHPRGeo=clackamas)

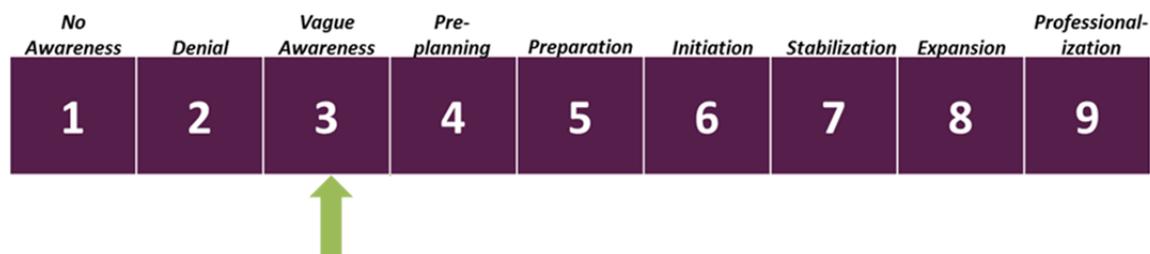
<sup>7</sup> <http://www.yalemedicalgroup.org/stw/Page.asp?PageID=STW001880>

pleased to provide this report of resources and readiness to prevent childhood obesity for the community of Molalla.

### Methods and Preliminary Results

A HEAL MAPPS™ team (n=10) comprised of Molalla community members with an interest in creating a healthier community volunteered and were first trained to individually photograph and map the Molalla community features that they perceived as either supports or barriers to eating healthy and being physically active most every day. Collectively, over 115 photographs were taken and mapped along 12 routes that represented the community’s active (i.e. walking, bicycling, skateboarding, etc.) and motor vehicle transportation system. The ‘mappers’ covered approximately 80% of the land area included within the 1.9 square miles of the city of Molalla and included features in the surrounding unincorporated areas (see Figure 1).<sup>8</sup> The HEAL MAPPS™ team reconvened to discuss the photographs and maps during a focus group meeting. The most relevant 55 photographs, based on group consensus, were included in a presentation to provoke a larger community conversation. Over thirty Molalla residents and stakeholders attended and participated in a community dinner and discussion held at Molalla Elementary School on November 7, 2012. The community conversation was facilitated by a member of the GROW HKC team trained to conduct HEAL MAPPS™ processes. Following the community dinner, photographs were displayed, participants were polled as to whether the feature made eating healthy or being physically active easier or harder for themselves or others in the community, and discussed their thoughts and feelings that led to their ratings.

### Stages of Community Readiness



### Community Readiness

Communities differ in many ways including their readiness to take action on an issue and implement relevant programs. The level of community readiness is a major factor in determining whether a particular program can be effectively implemented and supported by a

<sup>8</sup> The ‘mappers’ individually determined the community boundaries as within the city and unincorporated land approximately served by the Molalla River School District.

community. Assessing the level of readiness for changing environments and policies that promote a community culture of habitual healthy eating and physically active lifestyles is thereby a critical component of childhood obesity prevention program planning and evaluation.

The Community Readiness Assessment Model is a tool we used to gain an understanding of the Molalla community's resources and readiness for obesity prevention efforts. The assessment is divided into six dimensions that influence a community's readiness to take action on an issue. The six dimensions are: community knowledge about the issue; community efforts; community knowledge of the efforts; local leadership; community climate; and local resources related to the issue. Questions representing each dimension were asked during the Molalla Community Conversation and the participants shared their perception of Molalla's readiness and preparedness for change. Each dimension was then scored by three independent evaluators and combined to identify the overall stage of readiness. Several Molalla community organizations emerged as supports for healthy eating and physical activity, including Molalla Communities That Care, Relay for Life, the Molalla Running Club, and TEAM, among others. These organizations contributed positively to the readiness score of the community.

Barriers to physical activity were identified in the areas of active transportation, including few or no options for walking or bicycling to/from destinations as well as pedestrian and cyclist safety concerns, and active leisure, including lack of indoor active recreation/exercise facilities and accessible outdoor trails and parks that are well maintained and resourced, reflecting a community culture and leadership that are only vaguely aware of the need to prioritize resources and institute policies that make a healthy, active lifestyle the easy and default choice for all community members.

Barriers to habitual healthy eating were identified in the areas of access to healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables, neighborhood availability of affordable, healthy food/beverage options, seasonal influence on access, availability, and affordability of locally grown/produced foods, and the absence of a local food resource center bridging local food production with distribution.

The overall community readiness score reflects both the community supports and barriers to healthy dietary and physically active lifestyle habits across all six dimensions. Molalla's stage of readiness to implement environmental and policy strategies to prevent obesity falls approximately at the "Vague Awareness" stage as indicated by the arrow on the Stages of Readiness graph. "Vague Awareness" indicates that a few individuals or groups recognize the need to initiate some type of effort but there is generally no/low intensity and direction of efforts toward the issue – preventing overweight and obesity among youth and their families.

Based on the Community Readiness Assessment Model, community efforts should focus on: 1) raising awareness that the community can do something about the problem, and 2) providing suggestions on where and how efforts should be focused based on resident input and identified barriers. Present information at local community events and to unrelated groups; launch a media campaign - post flyers, posters, and billboards. Begin to initiate events and present information on the issue. Work with GROW Healthy Kids and Communities team to gather more information from other community people, publish newspaper articles and editorials with general information related to local situation. Build and communicate community capacity to change – *Our Community can GROW Healthy Kids*.

For more information about the Community Readiness Model, stages of community readiness, and stage-based strategies to increase community readiness to address health issues visit: <http://www.colostate.edu/Dept/TEC/article3.htm>.

## **Summary of Results based on Molalla Community Conversation**

### ***Physical Activity***

#### Supports

- Facilities that support physical activity for all ages include the aquatic center, bowling alley, Molalla BMX track, and skate park.
- Multiple public parks and playgrounds are used for community events and offer activities for all ages, some include restrooms and water fountains.
- School supports include Burghardt Stadium track/field, tennis courts and play structures which are open to Molalla residents.
- Some natural landscape features including paths, trails, and the Molalla River.
- Some sidewalks and crosswalks.

#### Barriers

- Lack of sidewalks, crosswalks, and shoulders restrict walkability and accessibility to businesses.
- Poorly maintained sidewalks, bike lanes, and roads.
- Participants perceive a lack of support regarding road maintenance and recreational facilities from county leaders.
- Lack of parking available at public parks and trailheads.
- Highway is perceived as unsafe for both cyclists and drivers.
- Perceptions of safety concerns at public parks due to illegal activity.

- Lack of indoor physical activity resources and facilities.

## ***Healthy Eating***

### Supports

- 1 full service grocery store in town (Safeway) with a natural food section.
- Some healthy food (eatery) options, including Subway.
- Efforts are in place to establish a Farmers Market.

### Barriers

- No local food options.
- Safeway is perceived as expensive and difficult to access due to a lack of sidewalks and crosswalks.
- Multiple convenience stores with limited healthy food options.

## **Resident-Informed Recommendations for Community Change**

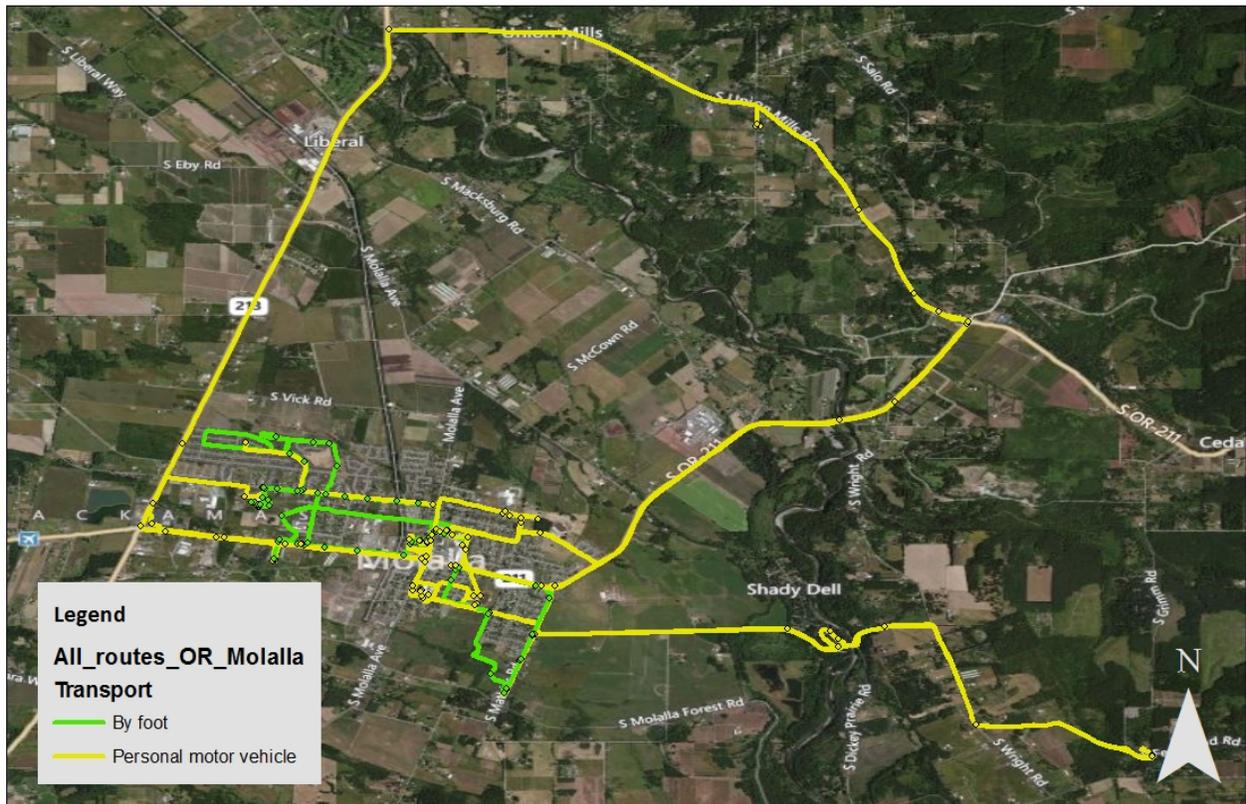
The following recommendations emerged from the data generated during the Molalla conversation and represent those of the Molalla community members who shared their ideas during the facilitated discussion of the photographed community features. These recommendations do not represent those of the GROW Healthy Kids and Communities project members or Oregon State University.

- Residents suggest connecting the trail on Mathias road to logging road to extend the walking path.
- Create hiking and biking path from Bear Creek to Ivor Davies Park and into town.
- Participants suggest that a community effort, along with working with ODOT, to improve roadway infrastructure will result in positive changes to the physical environment.
- County should partner with City to improve roads.
- Replace condemned track at middle school.
- Residents should take ownership of their community and residence. As one participant stated, “There are all kinds of things that everyone can do to help things get better.”
- Construct a bridge over Hwy 211 for pedestrian use.

Figures 1 through 3 represent the routes navigated by local residents as they mapped the environmental features of the Molalla community using participatory photographic survey methods.

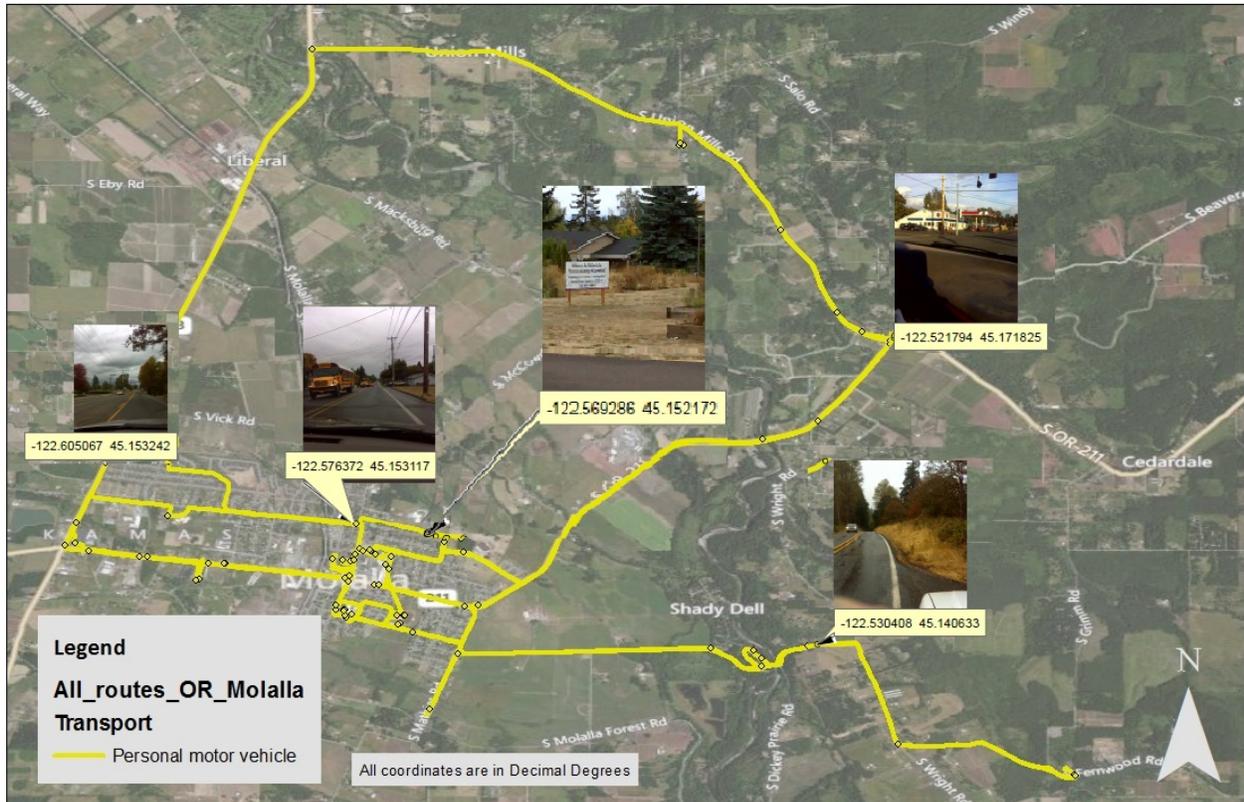
Figure 1. Represents all routes generated by the Molalla community mappers.

**HEAL MAPPS**  
**Oregon - Molalla**  
**11/2/2012**



**Figure 2.** Represents all routes generated by mappers using a personal motorized vehicle. All photograph location coordinates are in decimal degrees.

**HEAL MAPPS  
Oregon - Molalla  
11/2/2012**



**Figure 3.** Represents all routes generated by mappers while walking, and some of the features encountered that enable or hinder habitual healthy eating and/or physical activity.

**HEAL MAPPS  
Oregon - Molalla  
11/2/2012**

