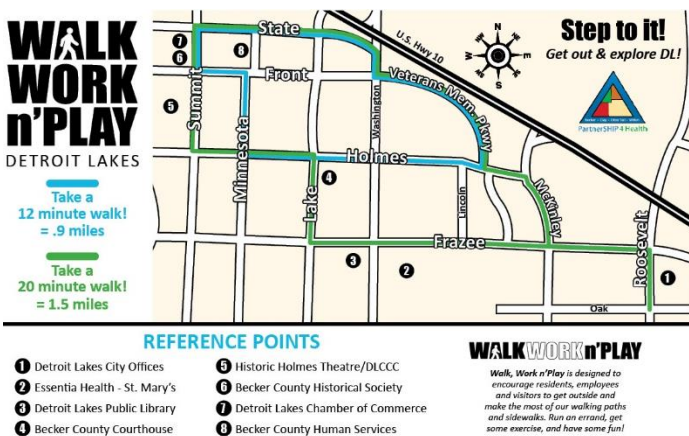


# Employers Team Up to Encourage Walking

## Grant Drives Collaboration in Fergus Falls and Detroit Lakes

Walking is one of the easiest ways to add physical activity to your day. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adults should get at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week. Dividing that time into small chunks, such as brisk 10-minute walks, provides the desired health benefits.<sup>1</sup> With funding from the CDC's Community Wellness Grant, PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H) facilitated a two year pilot program designed to help businesses increase walking among their employees and customers. The pilot began in 2016 in Fergus Falls with A Center for the Arts, Springboard for the Arts, Victor Lundeen Company, and Lake Region Arts Council. When the project moved to Detroit Lakes in 2017, worksite partners included Becker County Human Service Center and Community Health, Becker County Museum, Detroit Lakes Regional Chamber of Commerce, Essentia Health St. Mary's, Holmes Theatre, and MnDOT District 4.



Sample walking map from Detroit Lakes

The pilot had two main components. First, PS4H staff conducted a sidewalk inventory of the downtown area using GPS equipment borrowed through collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The inventory included data on sidewalk and curb ramp conditions from which staff created maps showing the status of the pedestrian network. The maps and data were given to participating worksites to help plan walking routes and to city staff to inform future sidewalk planning. Next, PS4H recruited businesses and provided guidance to produce both individual and joint action plans for increasing walking among employees and customers. Individual action plans

included items such as starting a walking challenge, designing indoor or outdoor walking routes, updating the employee handbook to encourage walking breaks, and providing equipment for employees to track their steps. In both communities, the joint action plan included the creation of walking maps for employee use and distribution across the community.

## Outcomes and Next Steps

“PS4H’s Walkability Fergus Falls was a great opportunity for Lake Region Arts Council,” stated Executive Director Maxine Adams. “It allowed us to expand awareness of the arts into a much wider population. We were able to join physical activity with the Arts in our Gallery Exhibit ‘The Aesthetics of Walking’ featuring the work of Trygve Olson. Without PS4H’s leadership and recruiting LRAC to be a partner, we would have missed out on a great opportunity.” Becker County Museum Programs Director Emily Buermann also shared a few observations from the project: “Our employees reported several positive benefits to our temporary walking changes. Our employees were sleeping better, generally feeling better, reporting better productivity after their walk breaks, feeling positively about our company’s concern for their well-being, and drinking more water. Our employees reported that they would like to continue our walking programs after the close of the study, so we made permanent changes to our Employee Handbook. Our employees now have access to 30 minutes of paid time each work day if they use those minutes for walking.”

Participating businesses in Fergus Falls and Detroit Lakes noted an increase in walking among their employees and patrons. Over 11,000 walking maps have been printed and distributed between the two communities. PS4H is currently working with both communities to implement wayfinding signage to complement the walking routes and encourage walking. Building a culture of walking brings communities one step closer to establishing healthier communities for all.

View and download walking maps for Fergus Falls and Detroit Lakes: <http://partnership4health.org/resources-active-living>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/adults/index.htm>