

Local News

\$1M grant to expand sidewalks, bike lanes in Ruston

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RUSTON, La. - The City of Ruston has been awarded a \$1Million grant by the Lincoln Health Foundation to expand the network of sidewalks and bike lanes that will connect to the Rock Island Greenway.

Lincoln Health Foundation joined the City of Ruston in the effort to fill the most critical gaps in Ruston's active transportation infrastructure and reduce the harmful health outcomes related to chronic inactivity.

Ruston's transportation system is extremely car-centric, which contributes to chronic inactivity; restricts access to health care, jobs, education, and other everyday needs; and helps give rise to a sprawling development pattern that reinforces car-dependency.

In response, Ruston's plan, part of Moving Ruston Forward initiative approved in 2016, is to build a city-wide network of shared-use paths, sidewalks and bike lanes. This project, supported in part by a million dollar Collective Impact Grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Louisiana, is strategically targeted at improving community health.

Work is underway on the Rock Island Greenway, a shared-use path that will run through the middle of town. "The greenway is the centerpiece of Ruston's new bicycle/pedestrian network, it is helping make Ruston a safer, healthier, and more appealing place to live for all types of people" said Mayor Ronny Walker.

"Lincoln Health Foundation's mission is to improve healthcare and healthcare access for residents of Lincoln Parish by funding health-related initiatives, programs and services that improve quality of life. The long-term benefits derived from this project and its potential impact on improving access to healthcare services and promoting exercise are significant. This project not only improves access to healthcare services, but it also enhances the services provided by existing LHF grantees and ensures the Foundation's ability to achieve it's mission," said Norman Hanes, Chief Executive Officer of Lincoln Health Foundation.

"The greenway, and the Lincoln Health Foundation funded connectors, will establish unprecedented opportunities for people to comfortably walk or bike around town," added Mayor Walker "This grant will enable the City to build safe and pleasant ways for people to walk and bike along Vaughn Avenue, Line Avenue, and Mississippi Street and will connect schools, parks, childcare and medical services to underserved neighborhoods. This initiative will also establish safe routes for students from the Louisiana Center for the Blind as they walk between their apartments and downtown classrooms" said Ammen Jordan, Director of Development, Office of the Mayor, City of Ruston

To learn about the Lincoln Health Foundation, visit www.lincolnhealth.com. To learn more about the Rock Island Greenway visit www.ruston.org/rock-island-greenway.php

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