

# ASSESSING THE BARRIERS TO ACTIVE LIVING IN EASTSIDE GAINESVILLE

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## ABSTRACT

*Background:* A previous needs assessment in 2010 rated each Alachua County zip code based on Medicaid paid births and other health indicators. The results revealed that Eastside Gainesville (zip code 32641) had the highest rates of heart disease, stroke, childhood obesity, and other health complications, with 82% births of being covered by Medicaid, which is an indicator for barriers accessing transportation, healthcare, and a qualifier for other low-income social service programs. Northwest Gainesville (zip code 32606), the second healthiest zip code, showed some of the lowest rates of health complications and only had 21% of births covered by Medicaid.

*Objective:* The goal of this project is to study if the built environment of Eastside Gainesville, which is the man- made infrastructures such as buildings or streets, may have contributed to the poor health rating and if it is a barrier to engaging in physical activity for residents, which could help reduce health risks. This study will compare the built environment and residents' perceptions of Eastside Gainesville to Northwest Gainesville to establish any differences in the built environment between the two rated zip codes.

*Methods:* This study used Pedestrian Environmental Data Scan, a walking audit, to examine a random sample of street segments and used the Neighborhood Environment Walkability Scale to collect survey data on residents' perceptions of their neighborhood.

*Result:* This project was successful at identifying barriers to active living in Eastside Gainesville, but was unable to establish a correlation if these barriers contribute to the health ratings of the zip codes. The results of both survey tools revealed that both zip codes lack sidewalks, lighting, crosswalks, and having stores within walking distance. Eastside Gainesville residents' also reported dissatisfaction with the amount of litter, car speed, attractiveness of buildings, and had negative perceptions towards their community. Northwest Gainesville survey participants reported dissatisfaction with bike trails, access to parks, and volume of traffic.

*Conclusion:* Eastside Gainesville did have features that support active living, but is not perceived as a community that can be used for physical activity. It is recommended that the changes to the built environment be addressed, including installing more crosswalks, addressing speed, lighting, cleanliness of environment, and resident's attitudes be changed in favor of viewing Eastside as a location for active living.