

# New Jersey Health Impact Collaborative

# Want to Improve Community Health? Build a Greenway!

## Middlesex Greenway Access Plan Health Impact Assessment

### Introduction

A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is an innovative tool that uses data, community outreach and stakeholder input to identify and investigate positive and negative health consequences of new plans, policies and decisions. This HIA examined health impacts of increased access and use of the Middlesex Greenway, a 3.5 mile trail through Metuchen, Edison and Woodbridge.

### Goals of the Greenway Project



Develop recommendations to maximize health benefits



Increase Equity and Engage Stakeholders



Assess current and future health impacts

|         | Areas of Impact                          | Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Healthy | Physical Activity                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Physical Activity of Residents</li><li>Poor Mental Health and Physical Health Days</li><li>Obesity-related disease rates</li></ul>                        |
|         | Environmental Exposure                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Asthma and allergy rates</li><li>Animal bites</li><li>Poor Mental Health Days</li></ul>                                                                   |
| Safe    | Perceived Security                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Number and type of reported crime</li><li>Perceptions of security</li></ul>                                                                               |
|         | Traffic Safety (collisions and Injuries) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Number and type of crashes</li><li>Reported injuries</li></ul>                                                                                            |
| Vibrant | Social Cohesion                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Self-reported preferences for social engagement</li></ul>                                                                                                 |
|         | Economy                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Revenues for businesses within .5 mile of Greenway</li><li>Job growth for businesses within .5 mile of Greenway</li><li>Elevated housing prices</li></ul> |

### Outreach a Huge Success!

Many activities and formats were used for community outreach.

- Steering committee meetings
- Public Open Houses
- Roundtable discussions
- Expert/informant interviews
- Community survey



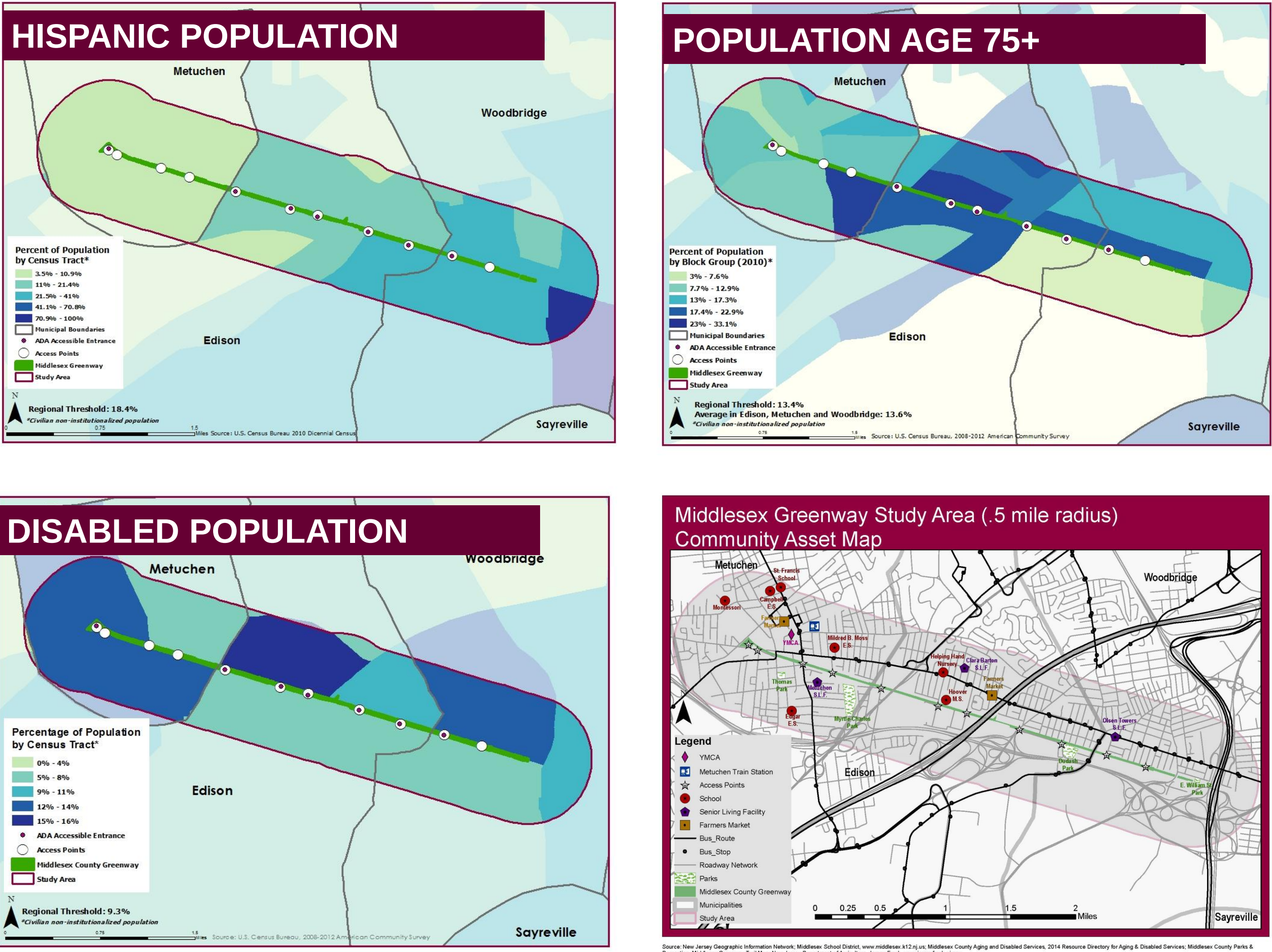
### Impacted Communities

Residents of neighborhoods within walking or bicycling distance of the Middlesex Greenway are the most likely to use the trail on a regular basis for exercise, socializing or fitness.

### These include:

- Senior Citizens
- Disabled Individuals
- Hispanic Population
- School Children
- Local Businesses

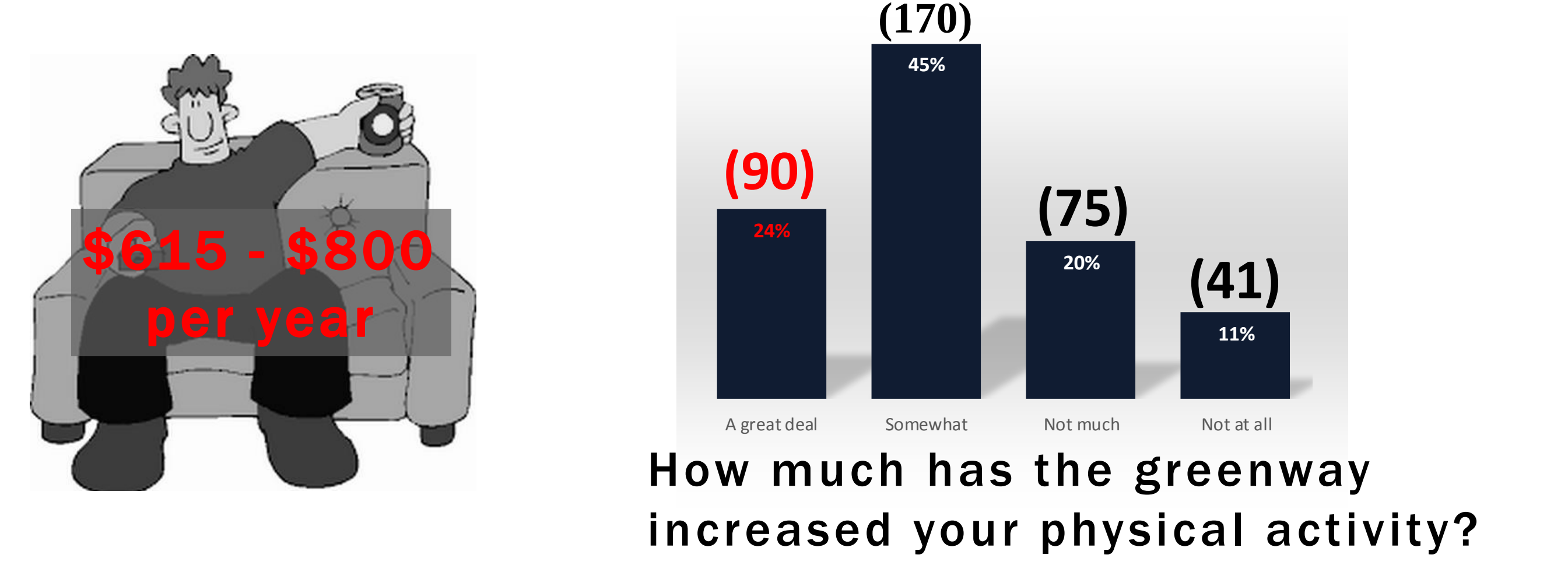
If any subpopulations within these groups are unable to access or use the Greenway due to limited ADA access, perception of isolation or crime or other real or perceived barriers, the benefits of the Greenway will not be community-wide.



### Health & Economic Benefits

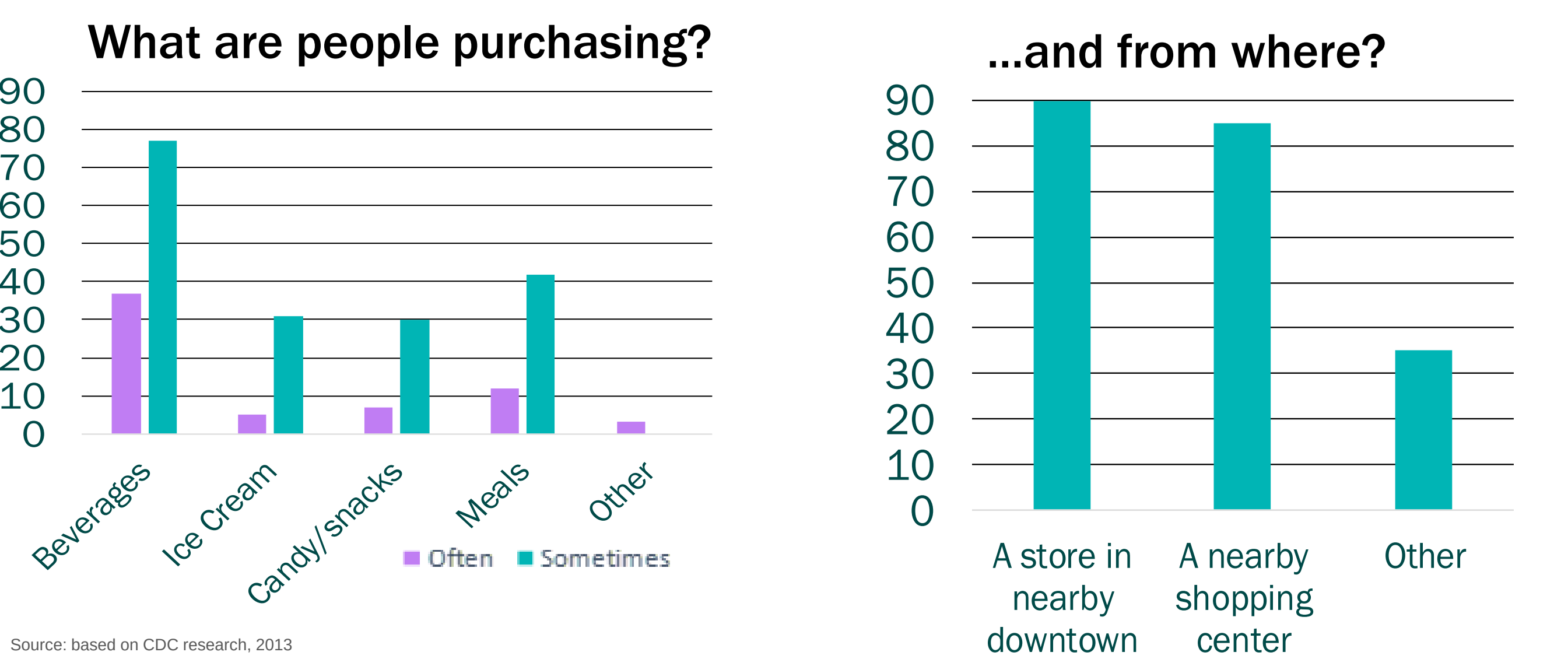
#### MEDICAL SAVINGS

The cost of a couch potato begins at \$615 per year. The greenway has gotten at least 90 people moving in 2014. That is a cost savings of over \$55,500! The study estimates that at least 2,800 people could gain health benefits from trail use



#### BOOST TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Our survey respondents reported making an estimated 23,777 trips on the Greenway in a year, which could amount to a boost of \$118,885 to local businesses.\*



### Positive Changes from HIA

- PARK BENCHES**  
County is considering placing movable park benches at strategic locations.
- GRANT PROPOSAL**  
Woodbridge used HIA in successful grant proposal for funding to extend Greenway to connect with local park.
- EXERCISE STATIONS**  
Considering exercise stations in adjacent park.
- SIGNAGE**  
Greenway Coalition is considering a special committee to develop robust signage.
- ACTIVITY LOOPS**  
County will put activity loops that include the Greenway in its master Plan Open Space element.
- PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTH**  
County is considering launching a "Greenway Prescription for Health" program with local doctors.