

# Availability of Street-Level Supports for Walking — US Virgin Islands, 2016

## REPORT SUMMARY

### What was the purpose of this project?

To assess the prevalence of community and street-scale design features that promote walking among streets in the US Virgin Islands (USVI).

### Why is this project important?

Chronic diseases and physical inactivity are significant public health concerns in the USVI. In 2010, 1 in 3 adults in the USVI were physically inactive, which is higher than in most other states and territories. Physical activity can be supported through community and street-scale design features that promote walking where people live, work, and play.



An example of a road without sidewalks observed during on-the-ground assessments in the US Virgin Islands.

### How was this project performed?

The USVI Department of Health (DOH) requested assistance from the CDC to conduct an observational audit of streets in May 2016 to measure street-level supports for and barriers to physical activity. To complete the on-the-ground assessment, 26 staff members from the USVI DOH were trained on the audit method. A total of 46 estates were randomly selected across the territory, and a sample of 1,114 street segments were assessed. This represented 15.9% of total street length.

### What were the key findings?

- **88.6%** of street length had no sidewalk
  - A continuous sidewalk was present on 4.3% of street length
  - A non-continuous sidewalk was present on 7.0% of street length
- **78.2%** of street length had no walkable destinations (e.g., shops, restaurants, parks)
- **46.7%** of street length had no lighting
  - 50.8% had some lighting
  - 2.4% had ample lighting
- Only **4.8%** of street length had a public bus stop present
- Only **3.1%** of street length had a mix of residential and commercial land use



An example of a continuous sidewalk along the Christiansted Bypass.



A pedestrian-friendly area on St. Thomas with walkable destinations and ample street lighting.

# Improving Walkability in the USVI

## Potential Action Steps

Using the goals of *Step It Up! The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities* as a framework, the following are potential steps that the USVI Department of Health could take in partnership with key stakeholders to improve walkability and promote walking in the territory. This list summarizes some of the more detailed action steps outlined in the full report.\*

1

### Make walking a territory-wide priority

- Form a cross-sector Active Living Coalition that will work together to promote walking on each island

2

### Design communities that make it safe and easy to walk

- Collaborate with key sectors to identify priority areas and develop a community action plan
- Encourage the development and implementation of Complete Streets policies

3

### Promote programs and policies to support walking

- Encourage the implementation of walk-to-school programs
- Increase access to community locations for walking (e.g. trails, parks)
- Promote community-based walking programs

4

### Provide information to encourage walking and improve walkability

- Share findings of this project widely with local partners while also educating about walkability
- Facilitate cross-sector training on how to promote walkability

5

### Fill surveillance, research, and evaluation gaps

- Make user-friendly data easily available to decision makers
- Conduct ongoing surveillance of the built environment, physical activity, and chronic disease
- Include plans and resources for evaluation when implementing interventions

\* Availability of Street-Level Supports for Walking – US Virgin Islands, 2016. A report for the US Virgin Islands Department of Health. By the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Physical Activity and Health Branch.

