

# Addressing Barriers to Improve Active Transportation Amongst Seniors in Ridgely, Tennessee

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## Introduction

Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD), brings together and leverages programs, resources, and organizations to protect and ensure the quality of life and independence of older Tennesseans and adults with disabilities.

TCAD received a grant from the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) to improve the ability for seniors to access active transportation to visit the Ridgely Senior Center (RSC). Partners include Northwest Area Agency on Aging and Disability, RSC, TDH, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## Aims

All activities focus on “The Five E’s” - Evaluation, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering

1. Assess barriers that older adults face when traveling
2. Provide educational programming to increase knowledge of health benefits related to walking and confidence
3. Improve the publicly-accessible infrastructure in order to increase walkability and pedestrian friendly streets surrounding the RSC

## Design

- Surveyed demographics, extent residents leave their home, and social interactions with other individuals
- Established programming and activities to encourage active transportation
- Described infrastructure (schools, town center, churches) around the RSC to determine if it could support an active lifestyle
- Completed a Walking Assessment from the Camelot Manor and Ridgely Manor/Reelfoot Village to the RSC (Figures 1. and 2.)
- Determined sidewalk completeness/continuity, path condition/maintenance, sidewalk width, cleanliness/maintenance, path obstruction, and lighting

## Results

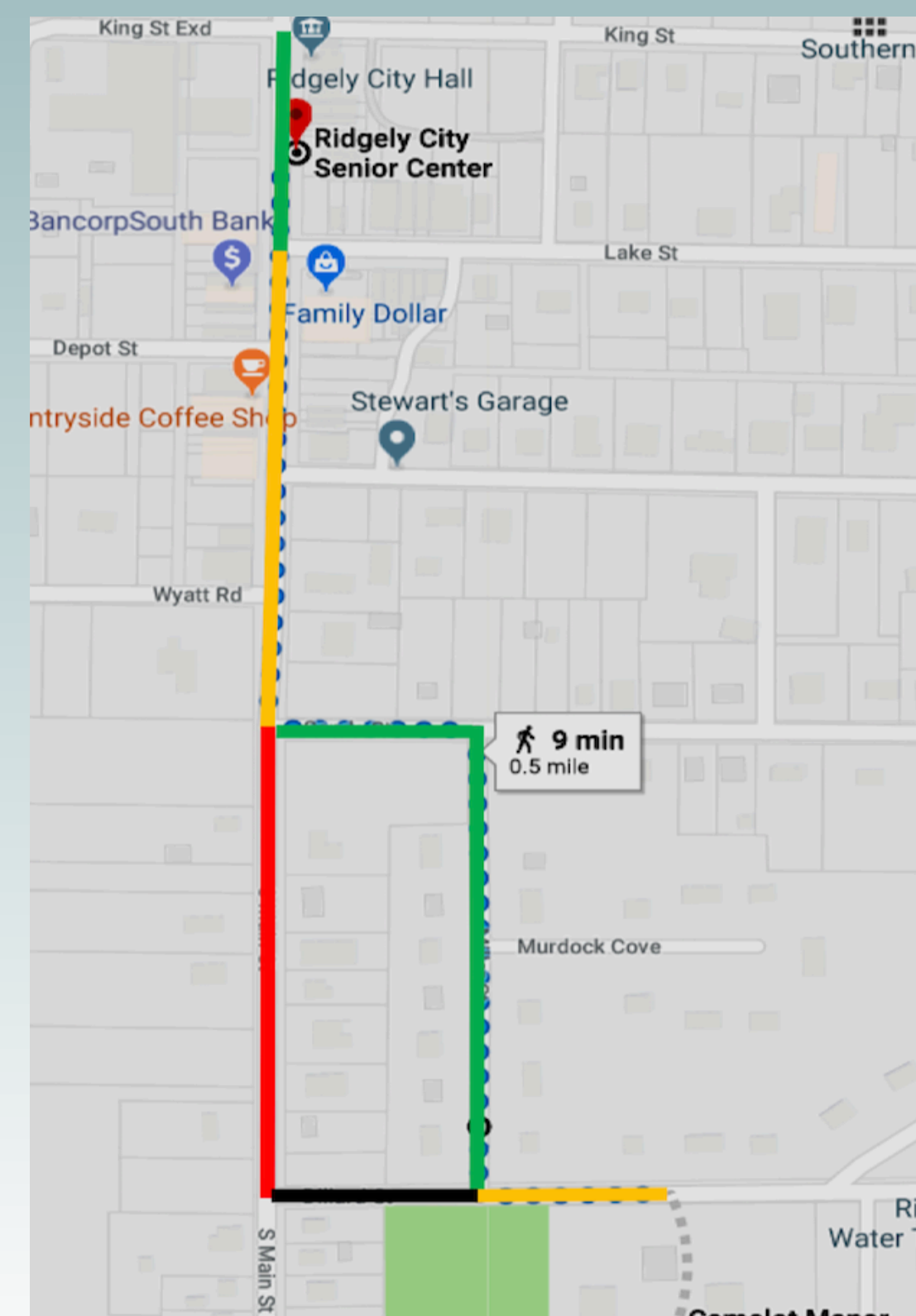


Figure 1. Walking Path Condition and Maintenance from Camelot Manor to RSC

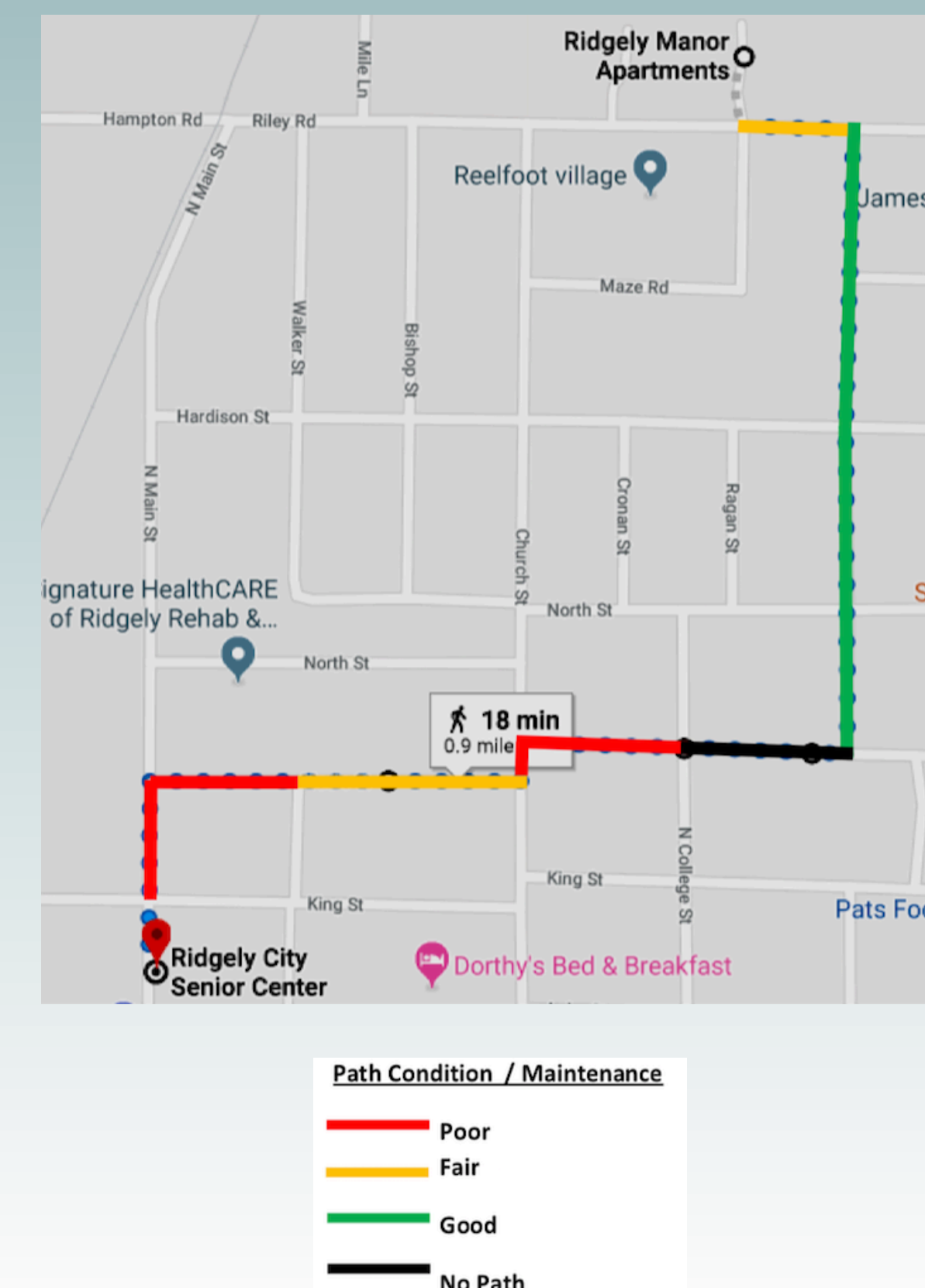


Figure 2. Walking Path Condition and Maintenance from Ridgely Manor Apartments to RSC

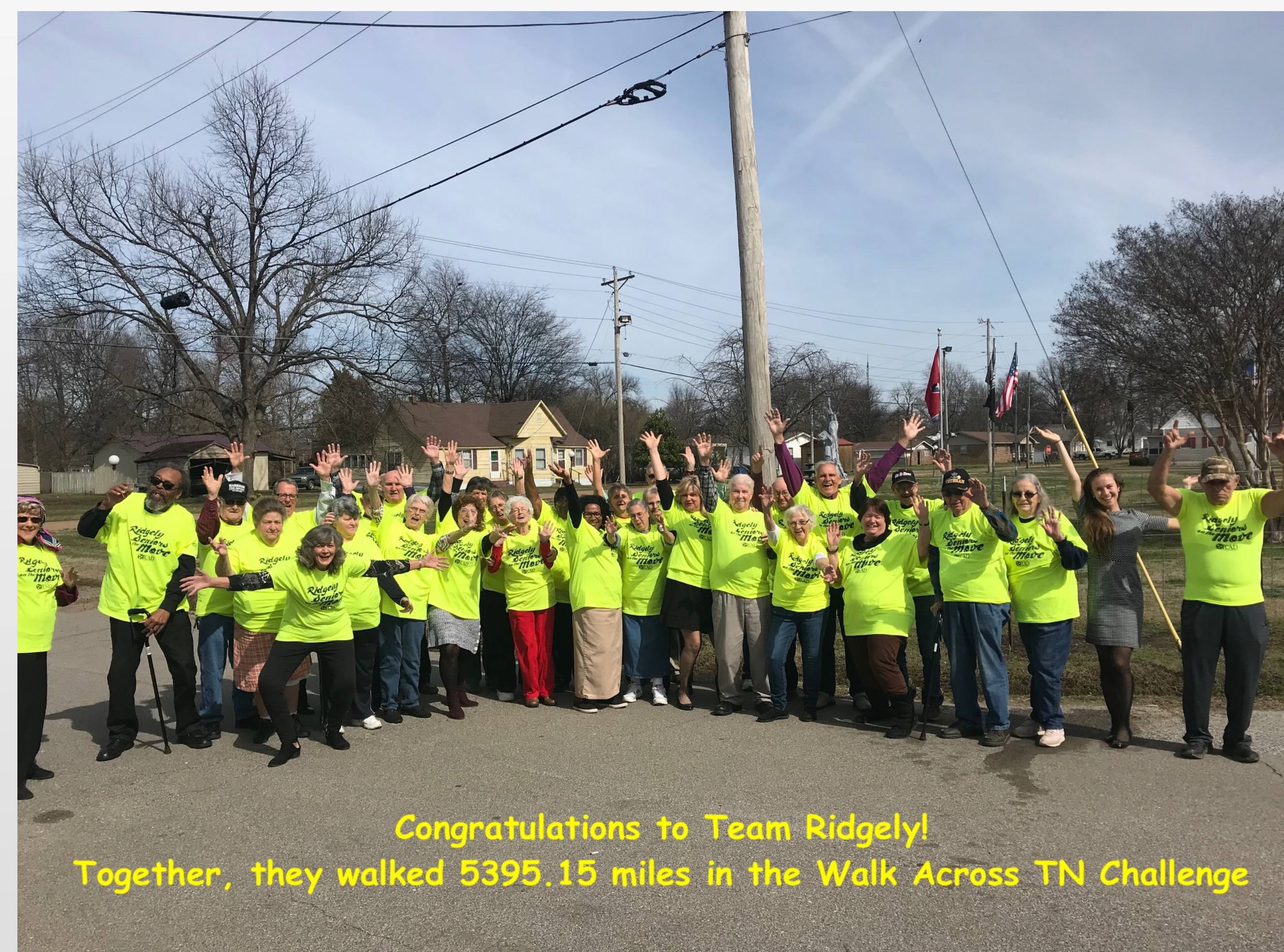


Figure 3. Announcement of Ridgely Seniors on the Move (RSM) winning. RSM participated (N=33) in the Walk Across TN program and totaled 5395.16 miles during the 8-week challenge. They intend to participate in this event yearly.

## Discussion

When improving the healthcare of older adults in rural areas, it is essential to approach the subject with a multifaceted solution. This can be expanded to all areas of healthcare – focusing on “preventative” rather than “reactive” healthcare.

The primary barrier was lack of access to indoor and outdoor exercise areas. Initial programming requests were for increase indoor and outdoor walking activities (e.g. walking clubs), access to treadmills, and an outside walking track behind the RSC.

## Conclusions

- Increase opportunities for exercise and access to safe, indoor exercise areas and activities.
- Add equipment for physical activity in indoor and outdoor places and build connections outwards
- Increase lighting in area surrounding residential areas to connect these areas to town center.
- Improve infrastructure by clearing obstructions, adding lighting, and repairing and maintaining sidewalks and curb cuts.
- Continue to provide project updates quarterly to stakeholders and local government

## Acknowledgements

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