

HEAL Cities and the Sustainable Communities Strategy: Alameda County

“Cities that are more bikeable, that are more walkable, are cities that are more liveable.”¹

In the process of updating transportation and housing plans to meet regional targets for future population growth, cities can adopt policies and plans that will help combat obesity and related chronic diseases, and improve health. The Bay Area’s Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) proposes that the co-benefits of land use plans that create mixed-use, complete communities—where housing is located near commercial areas, transportation hubs schools and parks, and where there are safe routes for walking and biking—include healthier people, cleaner air and local economic development. Recent studies have demonstrated the following specific benefits of such plans:



Photo courtesy of the East Bay Bicycle Coalition.

The Co-Benefits of Complete Communities

Health Benefits

- People who commute to work via public transit are more likely to meet their daily requirements for physical activity (30 or more minutes per day) by walking to and from the transit stop than people who drive to work.²

Air Quality, Health and Economic Benefits

- The American Lung Association of California projects that mixed-use communities that are created now have the potential for multiple health benefits in 2035, reducing air pollution in California by as much as 132,000 tons, preventing as many as 140 premature deaths, avoiding up to 16,550 lost work days, and eliminating as much as \$1.66 billion in health care costs.³

Economic Benefits

- Caltrans estimates that mixed-use residential developments designed to maximize access to public transit can help local governments reduce overall costs for construction, expansion, and maintenance of infrastructure by up to 25 percent.⁴
- Mixed-use developments near transit hubs can generate five times as much property tax revenue per acre as sprawling, single-use developments, including “big box” retail malls.⁵



The Healthy Eating Active Living Cities Campaign provides training and technical assistance to help city officials adopt policies that improve their communities’ physical activity and retail food environments. Supporting healthy choices is essential to address obesity and physical inactivity among California’s children and adults, currently costing the state more than \$41 billion annually in healthcare and lost productivity. The Campaign is a partnership of the California Center for Public Health Advocacy and the League of California

Cities. It is funded by Kaiser Permanente and The San Francisco Foundation.

This fact sheet is one in a series providing background and policy ideas for healthy cities. It draws upon “Healthy Places, Healthy Regions: A Closer Look at Opportunities to Invest in Health and Sustainability in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties,” authored by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, ChangeLab Solutions and Brian Fulfrust & Associates.

www.HealCitiesCampaign.org

Healthy Eating Active Living Policies for Health and Sustainability

The Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Cities Campaign has worked since 2008 with city officials to help identify pathways to health through three policy areas: Land Use, Healthy Food and Worksite Wellness. Policies in these three areas, identified by city officials themselves, are being pursued by municipalities across the state as a means for improving economic opportunity, creating complete communities and promoting health. The Sustainable Communities Strategy gives HEAL Cities an added context in which to plan for health, and added resources to implement health policies and plans.

Here are some steps that communities can take now to improve health and sustainability:

▪ Adopt & Implement Complete Streets Policies to Support Active Transportation

To provide people with choices about what type of transportation they want to use, streets need to be designed so they are safe and convenient for everyone in the neighborhood — whether one is walking, cycling, riding public transit or driving. These “Complete Streets” include such features as sidewalks, bike routes, special bus lanes, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, and comfortable and accessible public transportation stops. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) will require cities to adopt complete streets resolutions to qualify for the OneBayArea grant funding.

▪ Integrate Health Goals into Land Use Planning

The built environment greatly affects a community’s health, and cities have a significant role in shaping that environment through land use planning. Cities can promote health by creating more opportunities to walk,

bike and play safely, to purchase and grow healthy food, and to access important services like healthcare. The Sustainable Communities Strategy gives cities opportunities to transform existing areas into healthy neighborhoods in a number of ways: by updating general and specific/area plans, by rewriting zoning codes to encourage mixed-use and transit-oriented development, and by instituting health impact assessments and limiting future unhealthy uses, such as tobacco and alcohol outlets.

▪ Create Complete Neighborhoods

Complete neighborhoods are those that encourage compact, walkable, mixed-use developments where a variety of housing types are located close to offices, grocery stores, schools, services, and public spaces that meet people’s needs. Complete neighborhoods support daily biking and walking, and they attract investment and increase municipal revenues through real estate taxes. Including a range of housing types to accommodate residents with a variety of income levels is a key way to ensure that seniors and children can remain in the community and not have to move away to find housing they can afford.

▪ Adopt a Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Cities Campaign Resolution

More than 130 cities across California have adopted HEAL Cities Campaign resolutions and committed to implement policies that improve opportunities for people to live healthier lifestyles. By adopting a HEAL Cities Campaign resolution containing policies to improve the physical activity and food environments for all residents, your community will become part of a statewide movement endorsed by the League of California Cities.

Alameda County			
Childhood Obesity 2010 ⁶	2010 ⁷ Population	2030 Population	Projected New Households in 2040 ⁸
34.48%	1.5 million	1.9 million	154,000

Resources

ChangeLab Solutions

- www.changelabsolutions.org/healthy-planning/search-tools

Healthy Eating Active Living Cities Campaign

- www.healcitiescampaign.org

Local Government Commission

- www.lgc.org/index.html

National Complete Streets Coalition

- www.completestreets.org

OneBayArea

- www.onebayarea.org

Safe Routes to School California

- www.saferoutescalfornia.wordpress.com/2012/07/13/complete-streets-policies-required-in-the-bay-area

References

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