



Perris, CA: *Growing A Healthy Thriving Community*

Background

Perris is a 108-year-old city in the center of Riverside County with a population of about 75,000. To address rising obesity rates the city passed a resolution in 2011 to adopt preventative measures and programs to combat obesity and work with existing community health and wellness stakeholders. In 2013, Perris took this effort to the next level and joined the HEAL Campaign.

"Health is not viewed as a core service by many cities, but it is now becoming a priority in Perris because we understand that the overall health and success of the city begins with the health of individuals in our city."
- Isabel Carlos, Assistant City Manager

Live Well Perris

Live Well Perris was established through the adoption of the HEAL resolution. Initially started as a grassroots effort without city or grant funding, Live Well has developed into a city-wide health initiative focused on improving health equity among the city's underserved communities. The initiative has expanded yearly.

- Year 1 – Focused on programs and activities that promoted physical activity.
- Year 2 – Expanded efforts to include a nutritional education component.
- Year 3 – Introduced a systemic approach by advancing health promoting policy and systems changes as well as changes to the built environment.



Live Well Perris inspires healthier lifestyles in our community by promoting healthy diet and nutrition, by sponsoring physical fitness programs and activities and through the adoption of City design and planning principles that support healthy neighborhoods into its built environment.

Live Well Perris offers free work-out sessions, healthy cooking and nutrition classes, senior citizen walking club, community hikes, and more family-friendly community events all accessible to the Perris residents.

With the support of our residents, together we can build a healthier community. Because health matters!

<http://www.cityofperris.org/livewell/>

Accomplishments

Grow Perris Initiative – The city identified access to healthy foods as a major local problem. Grow Perris establishes community gardens and open classrooms to provide healthy food, education and resources to its residents. This centerpiece initiative of Live Well aims to improve health outcomes and health equity through urban farming and creating platforms to promote healthy behaviors. Grow Perris has the following goals:

- Increasing accessibility and affordability of healthy foods to underserved communities.
- Developing 31 food gardens throughout the city to create sustainable platforms of crop development, sale, and health education.
- Creating platforms for promoting healthy behaviors through collaboration with community-based organizations and city health education programs at community garden sites.

Grow Perris also promotes community engagement and education through a range of programs:

- Junior Master Program Gardner Program - An 8-week educational certification program focused on building the knowledge and leadership of youth on environmental science, horticultural and nutrition.
- Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Program – A USDA grant funded program that provides nutrition education, physical activity and gardening basics to children, youth and adults in the community.
- Chef in the Garden – A healthy cooking program and on-site demonstration provided by a local chef using fresh produce from the garden.
- Yoga in the Garden – A program that promotes physical activity and education in the garden.

“It is more than a community garden, it is about building relationships and community in the sites where the garden is located.” – Crystal Lopez, Public Health Supervisor

Perris Green City Farm

The farm exists as a community garden demonstration center on the City Hall Campus. It serves to educate residents about environmentally responsible drought friendly gardening for urban environments. The city grows 10 tower gardens that use up to 90 percent less water and 90 percent less land.



Healthy Community Element – The purpose of the Healthy Community Element is to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the Perris’s residents, workers, and visitors. The Healthy Community Element, developed through community input, provides a framework to implement the General Plan’s vision for a healthier sustainable Perris. This element will address areas where public health and planning intersect, including transportation, active living, access to nutritious food, access to health care, mental health, and environmental health.



Healthy Beverage Ordinance – Perris became the third city in California to pass a “default beverage ordinance” making 100-percent juice, water or milk the “default” beverage in kid’s meals sold at restaurants in the city.

Empowering Your Mind Initiative – The initiative highlights mental health as an aspect of community healthy and focuses on reducing the stigma and risk factors associated with mental illness by increasing awareness through education and programing. The initiative partners with local school districts and community organizations

Getting Employees to Actively Ride (GEAR) – Perris also seeks to lead by example and has implemented a program that promotes active transportation encourages employees to cycle during work to meetings or during lunch by providing access to electronic bikes with the goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the City

“The Live Well Perris mission has become indoctrinated into the community’s values and is engrained into the design of our everyday projects and community resources including the planning of parks and overall city landscape development.

– Richard Belmudez, City Manager



Lessons Learned

- House HEAL in the office of the City Manager to act as a central coordinating hub across the city agencies and departments.
- Seek funding for regional and partnership level collaboratives. As the Live Well initiative garnered grant funding it has also been able to obtain increased investment from the city.
- Foster city leadership support for health initiatives. Live Well has grown over the years as elected officials have engaged with the initiative and received positive feedback from residents.
- Actively seek community feedback on programs and policies through public forums, community outreach, and surveys.
- Develop partnerships and promote collaboration across a range of stakeholders. Live Well partnerships include residents, city and county leaders, educators, community organizations, businesses, and health care providers and systems.

