



Center for Civic Partnerships

California Healthy Cities and Communities

SPECIAL ISSUE

Executive Editor's Note: This special issue of Connections highlights the leadership and progress of three California cities in promoting healthier eating and active living. The Cities of Riverside, Selma and Loma Linda have developed programs and policies reflecting the assets and needs of their communities. We encourage readers to consider components of these profiles that may be adaptable to their com □

Improving Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in California Cities

Californians are often portrayed in the media as slim and athletic. This image is associated with living in a state with temperate weather that lends to year-round outdoor recreation, and a rich agriculture base that has promoted the fresh, lean cooking style known as “California cuisine.”

Yet, Californians are no more likely than other Americans to eat well and stay physically active.

Unhealthy eating and physical inactivity together are responsible for at least 400,000 preventable deaths each year in the country, second only to tobacco use.¹ Over the last decade, California’s incidence of adults who are overweight or obese has increased to about 20%.² Data from the national

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System for 2000-2003 indicate that among adults in California:

- Over 70% *do not* eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day; and
- Over 70% and nearly 55% *do not* meet the recommended guidelines for vigorous and moderate physical activity, respectively.

Cities are well-positioned to promote physical activity and healthier eating because they have the responsibility for many health determinants.

As part improving quality of life for residents, many California cities and communities are encouraging residents to be more physically active. A growing number of these cities are also making the link to healthy eating.

Cities are well-positioned to promote physical activity and healthier eating because they have: responsibility for many health determinants (e.g., open space, safety, economic development); stewardship of resources; and the

ability to make environmental changes and enact local policies. Establishing and sustaining farmers’ markets, installing walking/biking trails, improving safety in parks, and converting vacant lots into community gardens are a few examples. Such efforts also strengthen and revitalize neighborhoods.

California Healthy Cities and Communities has partnered with the California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families of the Cancer Prevention and Nutrition Section at the California Department of Health Services to promote healthy eating and physical activity in several California Healthy Cities. Participating cities have been awarded three-year grants

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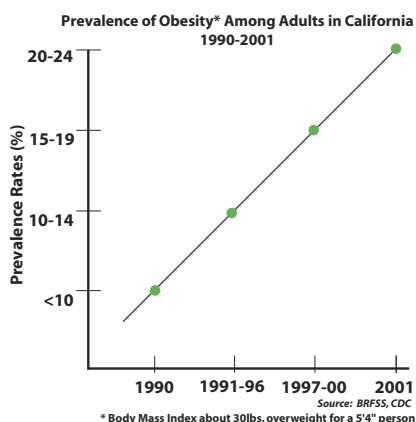
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of up to \$25,000 per year through funding from the United States Department of Agriculture. Funding has been significantly leveraged by local financial and in-kind resources.

The following three California Healthy Cities illustrate innovative approaches to build strong partnerships, leverage local resources, and engage diverse residents in healthier eating and physical activity.

Riverside's Older Adults and Youth Get Movin', Eat Better

In 1996, local leaders in the City of Riverside (pop. 274,000) were alarmed by a report on heart disease and stroke ranking Riverside 4th highest for heart disease deaths statewide, and first in the Inland Empire. The report inspired Mayor Ron Loveridge and city leaders to make primary prevention of heart disease a community priority.

Walking Program Engages Older Adults, Has Easy Access

Riverside became a California Healthy City in 2000. Riverside has a broad-based committee that guides the city's physical activity and healthy eating initiatives. Mayor Loveridge inspired *Walk Riverside*, a program that encouraged residents to participate in walking groups and activities. Over 200 surveyed residents identified walking as a favored form of physical activity. Friends to walk with and safe routes were also important parts of a physical activity program.

A grant from The California Wellness Foundation allowed the program to expand into the *Riverside Walkers for Health and Fun* to incorporate physical activity into the daily activities of residents age 50 and older. *Riverside Walkers* has over 500 registered residents, and 20 volunteer

leaders who help organize walking group activities. The groups walk in neighborhood-based areas, including community center parks and senior housing sites. Over 80% of the registered participants walk three times a week for at least 30 minutes.

Youth Nutrition and Physical Activity Program Yields Promising Results

In 2003, funding from the California Nutrition Network allowed Riverside to integrate nutrition education into city-sponsored recreation activities for youth. Over 250 middle school students at two schools in the Riverside and Alvord Unified School Districts participate in the PRIME Time after-school program and learn how to eat healthier and increase their

“If we want to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity, this program gets us one step closer to that goal.”

-Ralph Nunez, Director of Park & Recreation

physical activity. Interactive activities engage youth in healthy snack demonstrations, tasting fresh produce, and building skills for making healthier food choices.

Ralph Nunez, Director of Park and Recreation, says, “The program helps to raise kids’ awareness – to know how to choose healthy foods. If we want to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity, this program gets us one step closer to that goal.”

Introducing a wide variety of fruits and vegetables to the students also helped correct cultural misunderstandings they held. “Kids associated many fruits and vegetables with different cultural and ethnic groups,” says Robin Metz, Recreation Superintendent. “Trying new foods opened them up to healthy snacks that

they really liked.” The program has replaced unhealthy snacks with sliced fruits and vegetables.

The program also provides recreation activities such as jump rope, basketball, and “new games,” which engage students of different athletic abilities while teaching leadership skills.

The program’s effectiveness is measured through surveys completed by the students, and there are promising results. The percentage of students who eat fruits and vegetables at least 4-6 times per week increased from 53% to 60%. Students reporting being physically active at least one hour per day on most days of the week increased from 47% to 77%.

Garden Leads to Stronger Community Partnerships

In 2004, the City of Riverside and Riverside Unified School District approved a joint-use agreement to establish a community garden on a one-acre site at Emerson Elementary School. “We figured we could give Eastside residents access to the garden through an entrance separated from the school’s playgrounds,” said Principal John McCombs.

Over 250 Emerson Elementary School students, their parents, city staff and community members participated in the dedication ceremony. Festivities included a spaghetti dinner, outdoor movie and sleepover at the school, followed by a breakfast sponsored by the Emerson PTA and Starbucks.



Intergenerational efforts help to establish Eastside community garden.

“The school district loaned us equipment to dig 200 yards of trenches, and we had parents, students, a local bike club, and other community members help install the irrigation system.” says McCombs. Pumpkins,

“This was more than just trying to plant a garden – it was about forming new partnerships and strengthening our community.”

-John McCombs, Emerson Elementary School Principal

fruit trees and other seedlings have been planted. “This was more than just trying to plant a garden – it was about forming new partnerships and strengthening our community,” adds McCombs.

Troy Brown, Assistant to the City Manager, says, “We’re helping residents combat heart disease. Our efforts are consistent with the City’s goal to *‘preserve and improve our quality of life.’* It comes down to doing something well, getting tangible results and following up with good public policy.”

Riverside’s Program Results

- Over 80% of 500 older adults walk 3 times a week for at least 30 minutes.
- Increased fruit/vegetable consumption (53%-60%), and physical activity (47%-77%) in 250 youth.
- Joint-use agreement between the City and School District to establish a community garden.

Selma Increases Access to Fresh Produce, Physical Activity

The City of Selma (pop. 21,800) is located in the Central Valley along Highway 99. Recently, Selma has become the “hub” of growth for the south valley, with agriculture continuing to be the bedrock of the region’s economy.

Selma became a California Healthy City in 1998. City officials and a diverse committee convened over 80 community members to participate in the Community Compass©, a community visioning, assessment and action planning process developed by the Center for Civic Partnerships. Youth development was among the priorities identified by the group. The city subsequently established a self-sustaining youth performing/visual arts program. Through annual reviews of the action plan by the City Council and staff, open space and trails, healthy lifestyles, and leadership development have emerged as community priorities.

Farmers’ Market Promotes Healthy Lifestyles, Strengthens Economic Development

Funding from the California Nutrition Network in 2002 supported the development of Selma’s multi-pronged strategy to improve community nutrition and physical activity. A farmers’ market feasibility study found that Selma is well-suited for a farmers’ market, and could link it to the city’s Friday night street fair, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

“The farmers’ market gives us access to fruits and vegetables that are grown here, but not always sold locally.”

-D.B. Heusser, City Manager

Incorporating the market into the fair expanded the diversity of local businesses who display their products and services, and increased access to fresh produce for residents. “One of our farmers grows special nectarines that are normally shipped out of state,” says D.B. Heusser, City Manager. “The farmers’ market gives us access to fruits and vegetables that are grown here, but not always sold locally.”

Over 200 residents attend the fair.

Positive turnout, good produce sales, and publicity by the city have increased grower participation from five to eight. “We talked about having a farmers’ market since 1990, but we’ve never been able to bring it to fruition,” says Huesser. “Funding [from the California Nutrition Network] has allowed us to make a start.”

Trail Meets Demand for Safe Walking and Jogging

With other resources, Selma completed a .25 mile walking/jogging trail that surrounds a children’s playground in a local park.

“There was a real demand for a place where residents could walk safely.”

-Mikal Kirchner, Director of Recreation and Community Services

With its gentle grade and paved surface, the trail is accessible to residents of all ages and abilities.

“Many [people] were walking at the high school track - until the field was closed - or at the cemetery and on the roads. There was a real demand for a place where residents could walk safely,” says Mikal Kirchner, Director of Recreation & Community Services. Trail users can easily gauge their



Community members try new trail.

distance by counting the number of laps they complete. Parents can watch their children on the playground while they exercise in a safe environment.

“People have told us that they really like the trail because they can make good use of their time,” says Kirchner. “Kids can play and parents can exercise – everyone is happy.”

Selma also initiated a Trail Guide program with volunteers who share physical activity tips and resources at the trail. “One of our guides marketed the trail to community members at our Friday night street fairs,” says Roseann Galvan, Community Volunteer Coordinator. “She also hands out pedometers to trail users.”

Summer Camp Makes “Unknown Produce” Part of Healthy Choices

Funding from the California Nutrition Network also supported a youth summer day camp. Over 150 youth ages 6-14 years, have participated in interactive nutrition education and physical activity. Educational games, healthy snack tasting and demonstrations are provided. “Some fruits and vegetables were unknown to the kids,” says Susan Dayton, Recreation Supervisor. “The camp exposed kids to new foods and taught them about making healthy choices.”

Camp participants learned at least one new fact about improving nutrition or physical activity; tried at least one new fruit; and demonstrated an understanding of the importance of eating five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Unhealthy snacks at concession stands at the camp and local pool have been replaced with healthier options (e.g., trail mix, power bars). Youth didn’t complain about the new snacks. City staff attributed the youth’s receptiveness to the camp’s success.

Selma’s Program Results

- Established farmers’ market.
- Improved knowledge of, and access to healthy food for over 150 youth.
- Completed a walking/jogging trail.

Loma Linda Improves Nutrition, Adopts Active Living Policy

The City of Loma Linda (pop. 21,000), located near the foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains and anchored by two medical centers, is a national hub for health and wellness research.

In 2001, the city began working with the North Central Neighborhood (NCN) to address community issues and enhance quality of life. *Grants for Blocks*, a community beautification program, awarded residents with small grants to improve their front yards. The program strengthened city-community relations, reduced code violations, and led to the establishment of a community garden. The city purchased a vacant lot centrally located in the NCN, and set up 53 gardening sites with a tool-lending library for residents.

Garden Builds Skills, Improves Healthier Eating

In 2002, Loma Linda became a California Healthy City. Funding from the California Nutrition Network supported a nutrition education program at the garden. The NCN committee which includes residents,



NCN Community garden outfitted with gathering space and tool-lending library.

city staff, and faculty and students from the Loma Linda University School of Public Health oversees the program.

The city recruited NCN residents to participate in skill-building workshops on gardening and healthier eating.

“... the garden has produced a system of mutual support that meets the needs of the community.”

-Dennis Halloway, City Manager

Within two years of being established, the garden is operating at full capacity. “There is a real mix of people who come to use the garden, including families, young children and seniors of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds,” says Joanne Heilman, Project Coordinator.

Gardeners exchange fruits and vegetables from their sites, thus increasing the variety of fresh produce they take home and eat. “I appreciate the city’s interest in the garden,” says Ruth Kuester, a resident. “We carry off bags of produce, which we share with our neighbors, friends and members of our church.”

Over a two-year period, over 150 gardeners have participated. The overall consumption of fruits and vegetables among gardeners increased from slightly higher than one serving per day to nearly three servings per day.

Dennis Halloway, City Manager, is pleased with the results of the garden. “We have a great relationship with the NCN residents and the School of Public Health,” he says. “It’s been a win-win because the garden has produced a system of mutual support that meets the needs of the community.”

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Local Policy Supports Active Living

The garden's success has spawned additional efforts to improve community nutrition and physical activity. A local volunteer built two raised-bed gardens and a shed for ergonomic tools at the senior center. The tools make it easier for persons with limited hand and wrist strength to garden. "There were seniors who could benefit from fresh fruits and vegetables, but didn't have transportation to the [NCN] community garden," says Heilman. "So we thought, 'Why not bring the garden to them?'"

In 2003, the City Council adopted a policy to "allow interim uses of public property for community benefit." The policy authorizes the use of vacant public land for community benefit, including gardens and recreational uses that support healthy, active living and city beautification for Loma Linda residents.

Also in 2003, a Trails Committee spearheaded the development of an

exercise station course on the Edison easement trail. The nearly 2-mile course, supported by city resources, includes stretching equipment and 15 exercise stations.

Loma Linda's Program Results

- Established two community gardens.
- Increased fruit/vegetable consumption among 150 residents.
- Adopted interim land-use policy to support healthy, active living.

Elements of Success

The featured cities share several elements, which have contributed to their successful promotion of community nutrition and physical activity. These include:

- **Strong champions within city leadership and inter-departmental collaboration;**
- **Commitment to city-community partnerships;**
- **Skilled program staff and trained community volunteers;**
- **Broad-based committees whose members have wide community networks;**

- **Recognition of leverage opportunities in existing successful programs; and**
- **Investing in sustainability via policies, formal agreements and environmental supports.**


¹ Mokdad, A., Marks, J., Stroup, D., & Gerberding, J. (2004). Actual Causes of Death in the United States, 2000. Journal of the American Medical Association, 291(10), 1238-45.

² Obesity Trends Among U.S. Adults BRFSS, Between 1985 and 2002. Available at http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/trend/maps/obesity_trends_2002_508.pdf.

Contacts for Featured Cities:

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SAVE THE DATE 2005 Healthy Cities and Smart Growth Conference

Building on last year's theme, the 2005 conference will promote dialog across sectors to advance the understanding and sharing of best practices on issues related to the built environment and the public's health and well-being.

The opening keynote will be Richard J. Jackson, MD, MPH, State Public Health Officer, California Department of Health Services. Dr. Jackson has done extensive research on issues related to environmental health and the impact of the built environment on shaping behavior and health.

The conference will be held April 21-22, 2005 at the Doubletree Berkeley Marina in Berkeley, CA. The room rate is \$105 for Garden View and \$115 for Bay View. Make your reservations while these rates are available!

Call (800) 243-0625 or go online www.berkeleymarina.doubletree.com. Conference registration will begin in January 2005.

In keeping with smart growth principles, the conference location offers various transportation options. Attendees can carpool, use Amtrak, or take BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) within the San Francisco Bay Area, and from/to the San Francisco International Airport. Hotel shuttle service is available upon request from/to the BART stop.

We will continue to post conference updates on our website at www.civicpartnerships.org, so visit often! 



Connections is a publication, published three times per year, of California Healthy Cities and Communities (CHCC). CHCC is conducted by the Center for Civic Partnerships, Public Health Institute, under Contract #04-35633 with the California Department of Health Services, supported by the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

California Healthy Cities and Communities (CHCC) assists cities and communities with developing, implementing and evaluating inclusionary, community-driven programs, policies and plans, which address environmental, social and economic determinants of health. CHCC advocates a broad definition of health: a shared vision; widespread community participation; system reform; collaborative partnerships; engaging local assets; and a means to measure progress and base improvements upon results.

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Connections

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A Center of the Public Health Institute

Events & Resources

WEBSITES

Center for Civic Partnerships. See Tools & Resources at www.civicpartnerships.org for nutrition and physical activity tools and tips.

California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families. Visit www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdoc/cpns/network/ for resources, including publications, educational and funding opportunities.

United States Department of Agriculture. Visit www.usda.gov/FoodAndNutrition, and www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/ for the Fitness and Nutrition Information Center, which has links to nutrition information.

Prevention Institute. Visit www.preventioninstitute.org/sa/enact.html for the Environmental Nutrition and Activity Strategies Tool (ENACT), designed to help communities make positive changes in their nutrition and activity environments.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity. Visit www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/.

PUBLICATIONS

Belza, B., Walwick, J., Shiu-Thornton, S., Schwartz, S., Taylor, M., & LoGerfo, J. (2004). Older Adult Perspectives on Physical Activity and Exercise: Voices For Multiple Cultures. CDC. Copies of the article are available at www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2004/oct/04_0028.htm.

Center for Civic Partnerships (2002) and (2003). Fresh Ideas for community nutrition and physical activity, and From organizational practices to public policies: Local Strategies to Increase Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. Sacramento, CA: Public Health Institute. Contact CHCC for complimentary copies of each publication.

Frumkin, H., Frank, L., & Jackson, R. (2004). Urban Sprawl and Public Health: Designing, Planning, and Building for Healthy Communities. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Gordon, P., Zizzi, S., & Pauline, J. (2004). Use of a Community Trail among New and Habitual Exercisers: A Preliminary Assessment. CDC. Copies of the article are available at

www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2004/oct/04_0058.htm.

Twiss, J., Dickinson, J., Duma, S., Kleinman, T., Paulsen, H., & Rilveria, L. (2003). Community Gardens: Lessons Learned From California Healthy Cities and Communities. American Journal of Public Health, 93 (9), 1435-1438. Copies of the article are available at www.ajph.org.

EVENTS

California Chapter of the American Planning Conference
October 17-20, 2004
Palm Springs, CA
www.calapa.org

Center for Weight and Health, U.C. Berkeley. 2005 California Childhood Obesity Conference
January 9-12, 2005
San Diego, CA
<http://nature.berkeley.edu/cwh/>.

4th Annual New Partners for Smart Growth: Building Safe, Healthy and Livable Communities Conference
January 27-29, 2005
Miami Beach, FL
www.NewPartners.org