

Healthy Works / Communities Putting Prevention to Work Project

Checklist of Policy and Implementation Tools for Local Jurisdictions

Building Healthy Communities

Where we live, work and play affects our health. As communities in the San Diego region explore ways to improve the quality of life and health outcomes of residents and workers in their jurisdiction, the following list of options can provide a guide for selecting strategies that are appropriate for each community. While the list below is a compilation of best practices and models from across the nation, SANDAG does not endorse any one particular approach. These are ideas for residents, elected officials, community-based organizations, businesses, and public agencies to consider as part of local policy and planning efforts.

The checklist is organized by the following three sections:

- Policies and Plans
- Implementation Tools
- Decision-Making Process

1. Policies and Plans

- Healthy General Plans* – Health policies could be included in a stand-alone health and wellness element of the general plan, or integrated throughout the document in other elements. The general plan element may encompass all the other components listed throughout this document.
- Area Plans* – Similarly, a range of other local policy and planning documents could include health goals and objectives, such as community plans, neighborhood plans, specific plans and station area plans, etc.
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plans* – Master plans could establish priorities for new parks and recreational facilities as well as for upgrading existing ones to address safety, access, health disparities and opportunities for physical activity. These plans could also encourage joint use agreements which expand accessibility while making efficient use of existing public amenities.
- Public Facilities Master Plans* – Public facilities such as libraries, community centers, agency offices, schools and university campuses can have a significant impact on surrounding neighborhoods. Master plans for these facilities could ensure that new and existing facilities are well-integrated into the adjacent neighborhood, and include green building and active design components.
- Complete Streets Policies* – All local jurisdictions are required by state law (Assembly Bill 1358, the California Complete Streets Act of 2008) to include complete streets policies in their general plan circulation elements. The implementation component of the policy could address a range of issues such as traffic impact assessment guidelines (metrics, thresholds of significance, and mitigations measures), project checklists, interdepartmental coordination, and the process for prioritizing projects for the Capital Improvement Program, among others.
- Safe Routes to School Policies and Programs* – SRTS programs could be coordinated with the schools and school districts with an emphasis on “5 Es” (engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation). SRTS policies could also be included in the local general plan circulation element.
- Safe Routes to Transit Policies* – Similarly, Safe Routes to Transit programs could promote pedestrian and bicycle safety and accessibility around local and regional transit stops.
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans* – Master plans for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and amenities could address safety and access at a neighborhood or regional scale. A more comprehensive approach that included a range of strategies including complete streets, traffic calming and SRTS, among others could be included in an Active Transportation Plan.

- i. *Streetscape and Pedestrian-Scale Lighting Plans* – Plans for streetscape improvements could promote components such as street trees, seating, pedestrian-scale lighting, signage and public art, among others that make walking and bicycling a more pleasant and comfortable experience.
- j. *Affordable Housing Policies* – Policies in local plans could ensure that residential neighborhoods are socio-economically diverse and are located close to jobs and services. These plans could also address affordability, overcrowding, homelessness, housing quality and displacement.
- k. *Education Policies* – Educational attainment is one of the most consistent predictors of health outcomes. In addition to ensuring educational quality, policies at the school and school board level (such as a school board resolution or a local school wellness policy) could include goals for physical activity, joint use of facilities, nutrition, local food procurement and Safe Routes to School.
- l. *Economic Development Policies* – Individual and household income is one of the strongest predictors of individual and household health outcomes. Local jurisdictions and economic development agencies could expand economic opportunities to under-served populations through small business development and workforce training. These policies could also promote high-quality primary education, local hiring practices, living wages and quality jobs for local residents.
- m. *Local and Urban Agriculture Policies* – Policies in local plans could promote urban agriculture, farmers’ markets, school gardens, community gardens, and other programs that improve access to healthy foods.
- n. *Healthy Food Policies* – Policies in local plans could promote the availability of healthy food choices in the community and restrictions on the concentration of unhealthy food options. These policies could also address food available in vending machines at schools and public facilities.
- o. *Urban Greenery Master Plans* – Plans could promote the use of street trees and vegetation to reduce the urban heat island effect, calm traffic, improve the pedestrian environment and improve air quality. The use of native and drought-tolerant plants to implement these plans could support water conservation and improve water quality.
- p. *Climate Action Plans* – Action plans could include goals, policies and targets to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the transportation, energy and building sectors. Frequently, reductions in GHG emissions have the added benefit of reducing other toxics in the environment that impact health outcomes.

2. Implementation Tools

- a. *Zoning Codes (or Land Development Codes)* – Zoning codes define the type and intensity of uses allowed by right or with conditions in different areas of a jurisdiction, and are required to be consistent with a community’s general plan. Zoning codes operationalize the goals and policies of a general plan and could promote health-supporting built environments. For instance, codes in many communities may not support urban agriculture and farmers markets.
- b. *Ordinances* – Like zoning codes, ordinances are the primary tools to enforce local policies. Examples of ordinances that promote healthy communities include:
 - i) *Healthy Foods Ordinances*
 - Local and sustainable food procurement requirements for public agencies
 - “Healthy food zone” designations that restrict concentration of fast food restaurant
 - Standards for restaurant toy giveaways
 - Regulations on the price and size of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (SSBs)
 - ii) *Active Transportation Ordinances*
 - Complete streets policies and requirements
 - Bicycle parking standards
 - Pedestrian district overlay zone designations

- iii) Parks and Recreation Ordinances
 - “Parklet” permits that allow the conversion of parking spaces into street-side green space (for example, San Francisco’s “Pavement to Parks Ordinance”)
 - “Street Parks” permits that allow the development and maintenance of community-managed open spaces on unused or vacant public land
 - Quimby Ordinance to require developers to provide park and open space or pay an in-lieu fee
- iv) Tobacco and Controlled Substance Ordinance
 - Restrictions on smoking and second-hand smoke exposure in public areas, multi-family housing and recreational areas
 - Restrictions on the concentration of tobacco and liquor retailers
 - Restrictions on alcohol-related nuisances around liquor stores
- v) Other Ordinances
 - Affordable housing set-aside requirements for new development
 - Living wage standards
 - Local hiring requirements for new businesses
- c. *Healthy Development Checklists* – Development checklists could be used to evaluate whether a proposed project or plan meets the communities’ goals for healthy and sustainable development. One such tool is the Healthy Development Measurement Tool which was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health.
- d. *Resolutions* – Resolutions are non-binding statements issued by a legislative body that express a position or sentiment on an issue, which in some circumstances may be intended to influence state or federal policy. For example, communities could pass a resolution on obesity prevention, or on the farm bill (like the City of Seattle).
- e. *Design Guidelines* – In addition to regulations, communities could develop guidelines to promote health and safety goals. Examples include Active Design Guidelines developed by New York City, and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).
- f. *Enforcement* – Strict enforcement of local ordinances on graffiti, traffic violations, illegal dumping, housing code violations and nuisance abatement can support health-promoting environments by removing deterrents to active living in the community.
- g. *Licensing and Permits* – Communities could modify their requirements or processes for licenses and permits to encourage or require practices that support healthy communities, and restrict those that do not. Examples of licenses and permits that could be affected include:
 - Healthy food retailer licensing
 - Tobacco retailer licensing
 - Conditional use permits for potentially unhealthy land uses
- h. *Financial Incentives* – Incentives such as low-interest loans, grants, tax relief and other incentives can encourage a diverse range of retail and services in their community. Similarly, taxes can be used to discourage consumption (as in tobacco and alcohol) and to generate funds for mitigation programs. Examples of financial incentives in other communities include:
 - Incentives to attract grocery stores to under-served areas
 - Incentives to provide healthy foods at corner stores
 - Taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages
 - Sales tax measures to fund capital projects, such as transportation, school facilities and open space
- i. *Procurement Guidelines* – Public agencies routinely contract with providers for a variety of services and goods. The agency’s procurement guidelines could require or encourage healthy, local, and /or sustainable choices.

- j. *Joint Use Agreements* – Public agencies could jointly own, maintain and /or operate public facilities and amenities to maximize community use of scarce resources. These joint use facilities could be used for recreation, education or urban agriculture.

3. Decision-Making Process

- a. *Health Benefits and Impact Analysis Tool* – The HBIA tool can assist elected officials, residents, businesses, and local groups in making more informed decisions based on an understanding of health issues and opportunities associated with a proposed policy, plan, program, or project.
- b. *Environmental Assessment* – Most projects in California must undergo environmental review to assess the proposed project's impact on the environment and human populations. Projects that are projected to have an impact on air quality or toxic emissions routinely undergo a "health risk assessment" to address toxicological risks. Similar analyses could also be conducted at the local level.
- c. *Equity Analysis* – In response to concerns that transportation planning must account for impacts on vulnerable populations, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in most regions now conduct equity analyses as part of new plans and projects. Similar analyses could also be conducted at the local level.
- d. *Health in All Policies* – In February 2010, the Governor convened a Health in All Policies (HiAP) Task Force at the state level to recommend ways that health goals could be integrated into policy decisions across the state. Though these recommendations are not binding on local jurisdictions, they could adopt the HiAP as a guiding framework for decision-making at the local level.