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Chapter 10: Healthy Communities Element

Introduction

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Riverside County General Plan includes an optional Healthy Communities Element, which provides policy direction for creating a healthy built environment for Riverside County residents. The General Plan Vision speaks of the importance of promoting a healthy living environment for all residents. The Healthy Communities Element is an essential step in reducing our communities' risk factors and improving health outcomes. The Element provides a framework for translating the General Plan vision for a healthy Riverside County into reality, along with strategies, policies and implementation actions to achieve that vision.

This Healthy Communities Element addresses the major intersections of public health and planning, including transportation and active living, access to nutritious foods, access to health care, mental health, quality of life, and environmental health. Because health is such a cross cutting issue, the policy areas covered in this element at times overlap with the other Elements in the General Plan. Where such overlap occurs, health policies reference and reinforce the appropriate Element rather than repeating language included elsewhere.

BACKGROUND

Riverside County is geographically the fourth largest county in California, stretching nearly 200 miles across and covering 7,200 square miles. The population is currently estimated at 2.1 million after increasing 44% in the last decade. Riverside County has frequently been ranked as the fastest growing county in the state. If current projections hold true, the County population will reach 4.7 million by 2050, making it the second most populous county in the state. Much of this growth has occurred in unincorporated areas as commuters and retirees from neighboring counties have come in search of affordable housing.



While infectious diseases often receive much publicity, the real and continually growing threat to our community's health is due to chronic disease.

While infectious diseases often receive much publicity, the real and continually growing threat to our community's health is due to chronic disease. The diseases and health conditions that currently reduce the quality of life and years of productivity from Riverside County citizens are intricately entwined with daily routines. Daily routines are shaped by the circumstances our residents encounter in their homes and by the neighborhoods and streets that surround and connect



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our citizens to their jobs, retail outlets, and each other. The risk from being physically inactive, eating poorly, breathing bad air, and having stress and depression does not immediately result in poor health. However, these risks, when accumulated over a number of years, manifest themselves in data that illustrates the leading causes of death and illness for our community.

As one example, as obesity levels rise, so too will the number of Riverside County residents who die from the current leading causes of death: 1) heart disease, 2) cancer, and 3) stroke. The death rates for all of these conditions were higher in Riverside than in California, as were death rates for lung disease (COPD) and unintentional injury. With heart disease strongly linked to lifestyle and individual behavior, it is of particular concern that Riverside County is ranked 53rd for heart disease mortality among its population out of the 58 counties in California. Other illnesses like diabetes, asthma, and lung disease are also related to the direct and indirect effects of built environments that discourage physical activity, promote unhealthy eating habits, and increase exposure to environmental toxins in the air, water, and soil.



Refer to Technical Appendix M for additional information concerning Riverside County's Health Data. Additional Health Data may also be located on the following webpage: www.rivcohealthdata.org.

HEALTH INDICATORS

In order to show the need for policies that will shape community design and the health of future generations, it is important to document the current health of residents in a measurable and discrete manner so that as changes are adopted and the environment changes, progress toward achieving health goals can be monitored at the population level. A compilation of health, social, and environmental indicators is provided in the Technical Appendix. The indicators are grouped into meaningful topic areas and are meant to provide support and justification for the policies of this Health Element.



Setting

EXISTING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES



*The following webpage contains additional information concerning the Riverside County Department of Public Health "Livable Communities" objectives:
<http://www.rivco-buildhealth.org/>.*

Riverside County has been recognized nationally for efforts to integrate health into land use and transportation planning. As one of the fastest growing counties in the nation, the county also has high rates of chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes and physical inactivity (Figure HC-1). The rapid growth has also resulted in concerns about urban sprawl and poor air quality, both of which have health impacts. To address these health concerns, Riverside County Department of Public Health incorporated "creating more livable communities" as a goal in the department's Strategic Plan. To accomplish this goal a multi-disciplinary public health team was formed and works closely with what were considered non-traditional partners including departments of Planning, Transportation, Parks, Economic Development, Fire, Associations of Government, City Officials and Developers integrated health and safety factors into main stream planning efforts.

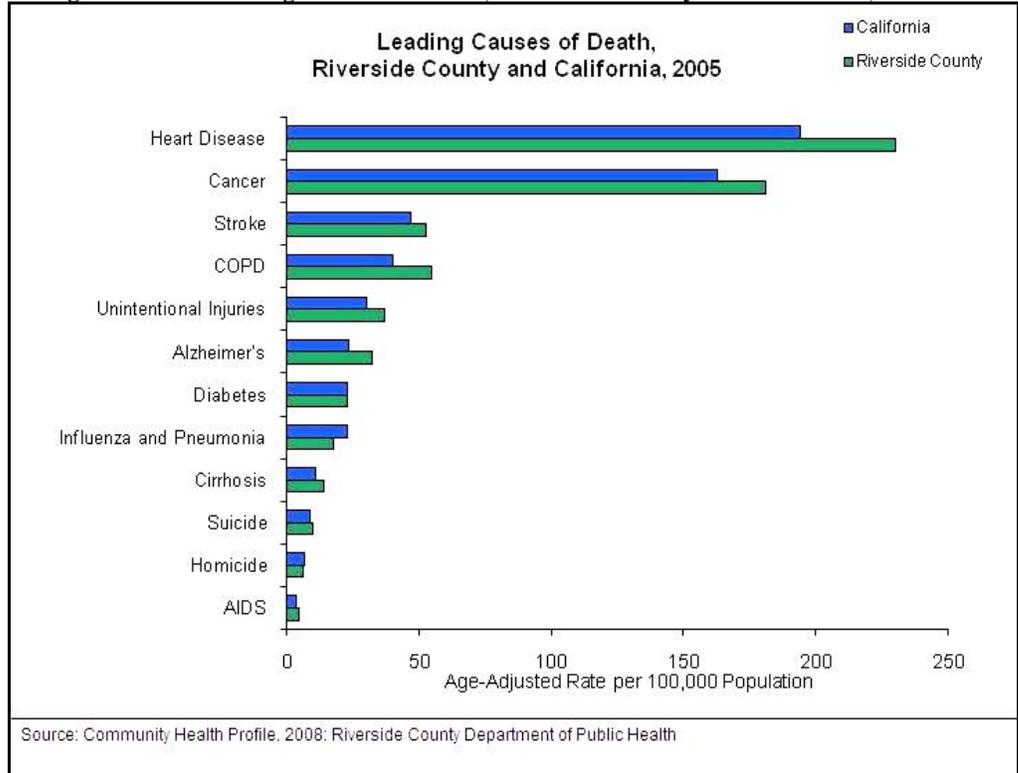
Over the past several years many programs have been implemented to improve access to healthy foods and increase opportunities for physical activity that improve health outcomes. Research continues to show that environmental changes and policy level decisions can improve health outcomes. Pedestrian and bicycle plans have been developed in cities to improve safety and increase walking and biking. Public health has sponsored a variety of trainings and walkable community workshops countywide. Public health data has been provided to cities and various county departments on a variety of topics including obesity, physical activity levels, access to healthy foods, park inequities, crash data, and pedestrian injuries. This data has made a compelling case for improvements in the built environment that affect health. The Public Health Department has worked closely with county agencies on a number of efforts including: reviewing design guidelines for new developments, participating on the trails committee to review development applications, serving on task forces and steering committees, preparing joint grant applications, creating a trails map for the Coachella Valley and providing technical assistance to cities to secure Safe Routes To School funding to increase the safety and walkability around schools.

A variety of educational programs from multiple departments are in place to improve the health and safety of Riverside County residents as well. Some examples include Nutrition Services, Injury Prevention, County Parks, Office on Aging, Family Care Clinics, Mental Health, and Worksite Wellness all working across the spectrum of age and ethnicity countywide.

These efforts have all led to the support from County departments and community partners to make policy level decisions that will improve the health and safety of County residents. The Healthy Communities Element policies and implementation actions will be instrumental in institutionalizing these initial efforts.



Figure HC-1: Leading Causes of Death, Riverside County and California, 2005





Issues and Policies

The issues and policies in the Healthy Communities Element are intended to address Riverside County's key health issues and challenges with the goal of fostering the overall health and well-being of County residents. The policies here are designed to improve the health of all residents. In addition, particular attention is paid to those residents that are considered especially vulnerable to public health risks, including children, the elderly, the disabled, recent immigrants, and those in poverty.

The policies in this element address a wide range of issues that affect public health including:

- Overall health
- Land use and community design
- Healthy transportation system
- Arts and culture
- Social capital
- Parks, trails and open space
- Access to healthy foods and nutrition
- Healthcare and mental health care
- Schools, recreational centers and childcare
- Environmental health

The policies in this element are intended to work in concert with policies in the rest of the General Plan. Because health is such a cross cutting issue, the policy areas covered in this Element at times overlap with the other Elements in the General Plan. Where such overlap occurs, policies reference and reinforce the appropriate Element rather than repeating language included elsewhere.

In each of the following sections, the policies are grouped by topic and/or subtopic and are preceded by a brief discussion of the issues pertaining to the topic. As discussed in the Introduction to the General Plan, following some policies is a reference number indicating the applicable Action Items as listed at the end of this Element or in the General Plan Appendix K: Implementation Program. The Action Items listed for this Element are incorporated into Appendix K: Implementation Program of the General Plan.



Unless otherwise specified, the County Government, through its departments and staff, are responsible for carrying out the policies in this section.

When used in the Issues and Policies section, "County" refers to County staff or departments.



OVERALL HEALTH

A primary role of government is to protect the health and safety of its citizens. The Healthy Communities Element not only seeks to avoid harm to citizens through the prevention of crime and injuries, it takes the County's role further to espouse a goal of fostering the overall health and well-being of residents. In this role, the County has taken up the task of encouraging the creation of a built environment that supports healthy choices and, whenever possible, preventing the conditions that cause chronic health conditions.

The following policies address countywide issues that are general in nature and may apply to various locations. These policies address the multidisciplinary nature of health issues and recognize that the efforts of many different County departments and agencies affect health outcomes. Policies also anticipate the need to understand the nature and extent of health issues and to track trends over time in order to maintain effective policies and programs to promote public health.

“

Riverside County residents are encouraged to participate in a wide range of physical and cultural activities through an extensive recreational activities program. County activities will promote recreational, cultural and educational opportunities to all residents in a safe and welcoming environment.

”

-RCIP Vision

Policies:

- HC 1.1 Foster the overall health and well-being of County residents, particularly the most vulnerable populations. (AI 126, 128)
- HC 1.2 Promote an understanding of the connections between the built environment and the on-going health challenges in Riverside County. (AI 127, 129)
- HC 1.3 Educate the public about the health benefits of physical activity, nutrition, and other healthy lifestyle issues.
- HC 1.4 Use County activities to improve the overall health conditions in Riverside County. (AI 130, 131, 132)
- HC 1.5 Encourage healthy living through County-sponsored programs and events. (AI 133, 134)
- HC 1.6 Promote the adoption of wellness programs and practices. (AI 133, 134, 135)



LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

Land use patterns – how the land uses are arranged and the urban form is constructed – are critical to the health and well being of residents because they affect such things as levels of physical activity, access to nutritious food, and the creation and exposure to pollutants. Healthy land use patterns can be achieved by encouraging infill, focusing development in mixed use districts and along major transit corridors, avoiding leap frog development, constructing a diverse mix of uses throughout the County and encouraging land use patterns that promote walking, bicycling and transit use.

Riverside County is very diverse; it has many urban communities which range widely in terms of densities, uses and scale. There are also many agricultural communities and rural settlements as well as large areas of open space that include significant natural and agricultural resources. The County has grown rapidly in recent decades, thus there are many new communities being built that present an important opportunity to create new healthier development patterns for generations to come.

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Communities are developed so that they can support and encourage residents to be more physically active; achieved by increasing the number of and access to active parks and trails, creating new passive open spaces, working with schools to open up school yards as parks, and promoting well balanced transportation networks with an equity between vehicle, public transit, bicycling and walking networks.

”

-RCIP Vision

The goal of this section is to create policies that will encourage land use patterns that promote increased physical activity and healthy lifestyles in all of the communities in Riverside County. Many of the land use and community design policies relevant to health are included in other elements of the General Plan, most particularly the Land Use Element. Therefore, relevant policies are referenced and only additional policies, specifically related to health are included here.

Countywide Land Uses

These policies are relevant to all land uses in the County and apply to all types of communities. They articulate the overarching land use policies the County is undertaking to improve the health and well being of residents, wherever they live.

Policies:

- HC 2.1 Encourage a built environment that promotes physical activity and access to healthy foods while reducing driving and pollution. To do this the County should consider: (AI 136, 137)
- a. Continuing to identify and educate the public about the links between public health outcomes and the built environment.
 - b. Evaluating the impacts of development on public health outcomes. Such programs might include a Development Application Health Checklist, Health Impact Assessments or other tools the County deems effective.
 - c. Incorporating health as an important criterion for approving new development applications and other County policies.



HC 2.2 Promote increased physical activity, reduced driving and increased walking, cycling and transit use. Such policies include those which: (AI 14, 21, 26)

- a. Target new growth to existing, urbanized areas while reducing new growth in undeveloped areas of the County.
b. Minimize the conversion of county agricultural lands to urban uses. (AI 9)
c. Support the development of compact, transit-adaptive, and pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly development patterns. (AI 3)
d. Reduce driving and increase opportunities for active transportation (walking and biking) and transit use.
e. Increase access to nutritious foods.
f. Reduce air and water pollution.
g. Require the incorporation of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in new development and on all new and renovated transportation facilities built and/or managed by the County.
h. Evaluate development based on its impacts to the environment, economy, infrastructure, and services.

Refer to The Land Use Element for additional Countywide policies and Land Use Designation Policies.

Community Development Land Uses

Community Development Areas are described in the Land Use Element as “the appropriate location for urban and suburban development” and are intended to include: “a breadth of land uses that foster variety and choice, accommodate a range of life styles, living and working conditions, and accommodate diverse community settings.” They are also intended to provide a quality physical environment achieved through a range of community design options that respond to varied lifestyle choices with a high regard for the environment, community character and safety. These areas are intended to have a balance of jobs, housing, and services within each community to help achieve mobility, open space, and air quality goals described in the General Plan vision. Many of these same characteristics are important for creating healthy environments for living and working.

Policies:

HC 3.1 Recognize and actively promote policies that achieve positive health outcomes in the Community Development areas. These include policies that: (AI 27, 28, 136)

- a. Promote and support high-density, mixed use development near existing and proposed high-frequency transit service.
b. Promote the creation of communities with a balanced mix of uses and regional transportation facilities within walking distance where residents will be able to walk to meet their daily needs.
c. Encourage pedestrian oriented design and the use of bicycles and walking as alternatives to driving and as a means of increasing levels of physical activity.
d. Provide for a range of housing options to accommodate a range of income levels and household types.
e. Foster a robust, sustainable economy that provides an

Refer to The Land Use, Circulation, Multipurpose Open Space, Housing and Air Quality Elements for additional Countywide policies, and policies concerning Community Center, Transit Centers, Pedestrian Facilities, Trails, and Job-Housing Ratio.



adequate balance of jobs and housing, and a decent living wage for all residents. (AI 17, 18, 19)

Open Space, Rural, Rural Community and Agriculture Land Uses

These policies are intended for Open Space, Rural, Rural Community, and Agriculture areas, which were designated in this General Plan to preserve the rural lifestyle that is an integral part of the character and appeal of Riverside County. Agriculture defines the unique character of many communities in Riverside County, and helps to define the edges of and provide separation between developed areas. Widespread and diverse agricultural lands are one of Riverside County's most important land uses in terms of historic character, economic strength and human health. When local agricultural products are grown and distributed locally, people have better access to high quality, nutritious food. In addition, local food sources are closer to local retailers and thus require less in terms of transportation costs and fossil fuel. The goal of this section is to encourage development patterns in Rural and Agricultural areas that are consistent with the vision in the RCIP and which promote healthy lifestyles.

Policies:



- HC 4.1 Implement the policies that encourage healthy land use patterns in the open space, rural and agricultural areas of the County. These policies include: (AI 29, 30, 31)
- Preserving rural, agricultural and open space areas, where possible.
 - Preserving land for local agriculture and scenic resources.
 - Preventing inappropriate development in areas that are environmentally sensitive or subject to severe natural hazards.
 - Creating incentives, such as transfer of development rights, clustered development, development easements, and other mechanisms, to preserve the economic value of agricultural and open space lands.
- HC 4.2 Consider services that reduce the need for residents to drive to meet their daily needs. Such services might include: shopping shuttles to nearby retail districts, retail near residential, and mobile or virtual health clinics. (AI 136)

Complete Communities

This section includes policies to improve the overall quality of life for community residents by encouraging the creation of complete, economically robust, safe, beautiful and culturally diverse communities. Complete communities provide for the basic needs of individuals including food, shelter and safety within a cohesive, attractive environment. In addition, basic services like childcare, dry cleaning, and regional public transportation facilities are available within easy walking distance, thus promoting physical activity, healthy



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nutrition and social interactions. In addition to these basic human needs, complete communities support a balance of uses that encourage job and neighborhood stability, encourage the creation of social capital and nurture spiritual, mental and cultural health as well.

Safety is an important component of a complete community. Fear of violence is a leading cause of anxiety and is a major reason people choose not to walk, use recreational facilities, or allow their children to play outside. The physical features, layout and design of many aspects of communities influence crime prevention and other crime-related outcomes, such as neighborhood deterioration and residents’ fear of crime. When neighborhoods are designed to provide “defensible space,” “natural surveillance,” and a “sense of order”, research shows a decline in street crime and, as importantly, a decline in residents’ fear of crime. The following policies draw upon the principles described above to improve public safety throughout Riverside County through the creation and support of defensible, orderly and well-cared for neighborhoods.



Defensible Space is an area that residents feel they control.

Natural surveillance is the ability to see what’s happening around an area.

A sense of order is found in places that are well tended and lack visible signs of deterioration.

Policies:

HC 5.1 Encourage the development of complete neighborhoods that provide for the basic needs of daily life and for the health, safety, and mental well-being of residents.(AI 3, 136)

HC 5.2 Ensure that new development will provide the infrastructure, public facilities and services required by the projected population.

HC 5.3 Build neighborhoods with safe and attractive places for recreational opportunities.

HC 5.4 Recognize and actively implement policies in the Land Use Element that provide for adequate police, fire and other safety personnel and facilities.

HC 5.5 Promote safe neighborhoods and streets by implementing policies that improve the safety and perceptions of safety of the built environment such as: providing adequate lighting, eyes on the street, and designing for defensible space.

HC 5.6 Allow neighborhood retail, service and public facilities within walking distance of residential areas, whenever appropriate.

HC 5.7 Recognize that poverty, affordable housing and access to economic opportunity for all citizens are critical public health issues and take steps to address these issues through ongoing County plans, programs and funding. (AI 13, 17, 18, 19)



Refer to the Land Use Element and Circulation Element for additional Countywide policies, and policies concerning Community Center, Transit Centers and Pedestrian Facilities



HEALTHY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The County aspires to create a multimodal transportation system that supports active living and healthy lifestyles. The transportation system should promote walking, cycling and transit use while also minimizing the need to drive long distances to get basic daily needs or to get to work. The transportation system should be designed in close coordination with land use patterns and the urban form so that all transportation facilities encourage people to drive less, walk more, and have greater access to jobs, healthy food, and community resources. In addition to focusing development in community development areas and clustered rural settlements, and locating near major transit corridors, healthier transportation networks can also be achieved by creating attractive and safe facilities for all users, including vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists and by promoting high-quality transit service.

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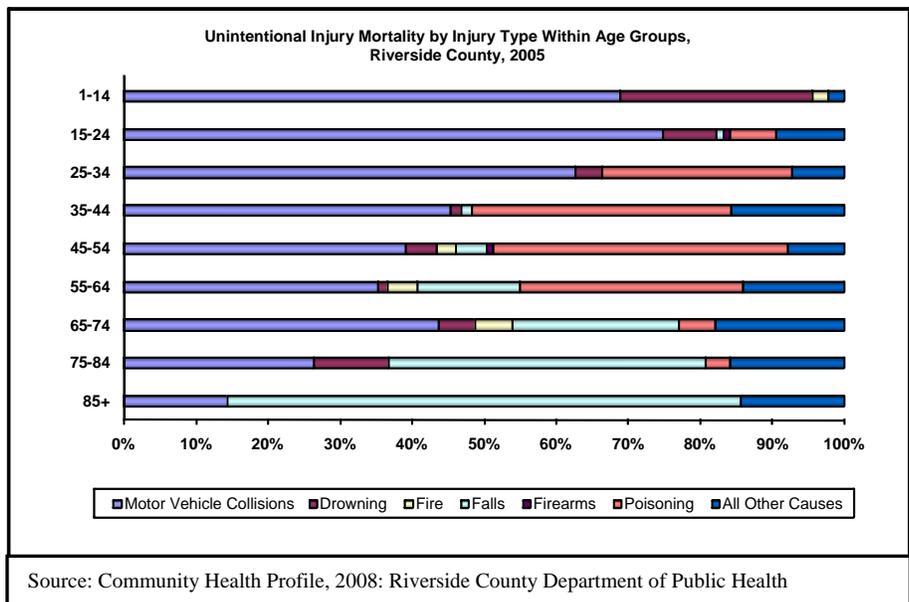
The need for safe and efficient access to jobs, housing, commerce, and public services for residents of all ages, income groups, and physical abilities is reflected in the comprehensive transportation network serving the County.

”

-RCIP Vision

Many transportation policies relevant to health are included in other elements of the General Plan, especially in the Circulation Element. The following policies are intended to supplement language elsewhere with a focus on health related transportation issues.

**Figure HC-2: Unintentional Injury Mortality by Injury Type Within Age Groups
Riverside County, 2005**





Safe Transportation System

Motor vehicle crashes are one of the leading causes of death in Riverside County and there is a high number of pedestrian/vehicle accidents along the County’s largest streets (Figure HC-2). This is especially true of areas with high pedestrian and vehicle traffic. Rural areas also experience safety issues, particularly on rural roads where drivers do not expect to encounter pedestrians or bicyclists but where these users may be present.

A safe transportation system is one in which all users – motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, wheelchairs, strollers – of the roads and public transportation facilities feel safe. The goal of these policies is to improve the overall safety of the transportation system by encouraging context-sensitive design solutions and improving access for and visibility of non-motorized roadway users.



Policies:

- HC 6.1 Provide a balanced transportation system that provides for the safety and mobility of all users through. (AI 138, 140)
 - a. Roadway design improvements for safety.
 - b. Evaluation of the transportation system to identify traffic safety issues and locations with a high degree of traffic incidents.
 - c. Prioritizing funding and completion of Transportation Improvement Program projects that reduce the risk of pedestrian/vehicle and bicycle/vehicle collisions, particularly in areas that have a high incidence of traffic accidents, particularly pedestrian/motor vehicle and bicycle/motor vehicle crashes.
- HC 6.2 Consider pedestrian safety, comfort and crime prevention in the design of transportation facilities, major transit centers and high pedestrian traffic areas, as well as connections to the surrounding area. (AI 140)
- HC 6.3 Support education campaigns on traffic, bicycle and pedestrian safety.
- HC 6.4 Create targeted pedestrian safety polices for children.
- HC 6.5 Proactively implement the requirement for adequate and safe sidewalks on all new streets because sidewalks are an important safety measure. (AI 141)
- HC 6.6 Implement “context sensitive solutions” for traffic calming and traffic slowing measures on roads with a high level of pedestrian activity.



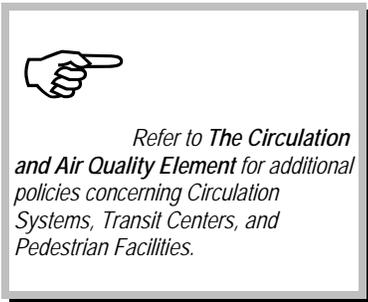
Multi-Modal Transportation Network

Many areas of the county experience severe traffic congestion. A large portion of county residents experience long commute times, and the hours and miles spent driving continue to rise. Increased driving rates are a source of physical, economic and environmental stress. Driving has been linked with negative health impacts, including higher rates of traffic crashes and increased levels of stress and anxiety. In addition, more vehicle miles and vehicle hours spent traveling by motor vehicle translate into greater amounts of air pollution, which in turn has health impacts.

Driving is likely to remain the main form of transportation in Riverside County for the near future, particularly in the rural areas of the County. However, the County is also striving to create a balanced, multi-modal transportation system, one which gives people choices about how to get to their destinations and at the same time increase their physical activity and reduce pollution. To do this, the following policies and those in the Land Use, Circulation, Air Quality, and Multi-Purpose Open Space elements of the General Plan endeavor to improve access to and the effectiveness of alternative transportation modes, such as bus, train, bicycles and walking, for all parts of the County. As a result, a high priority should be placed on transportation projects that are expected to improve the multi-modal network and encourage transit use, bicycles and walking as major forms of transportation.

Policies:

- HC 7.1 Improve access to multi-modal transportation options throughout the County, including public transit. (AI 34, 139)
- HC 7.2 Make key civic uses – such as schools and government buildings, commercial corridors, and medical facilities – accessible by public transit. (AI 45, 46)
- HC 7.3 Provide public transportation facilities that are located a convenient distance from residential areas.
- HC 7.4 Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle components in to all Area Plans and new specific plans. (AI 141)
- HC 7.5 Develop policies that reduce residents’ reliance on cars while encouraging the use of transit, bicycles and walking as alternatives to driving and as a means of increasing levels of physical activity. (AI 34, 47, 48)





ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and cultural activities are an essential part of a complete, healthy community. Arts and cultural activities contribute to the creation and sense of place, augment local economies, enhance the urban environment and engage citizens in productive dialogue about important and moving issues. A thriving arts and cultural experiences contribute to emotional and social development and provide educational opportunities for residents.

Policies:

- HC 8.1 Recognize the importance of arts and culture in the overall mental and physical health of Riverside County residents by: (AI 142)
- a. Encouraging the provision of public art.
 - b. Preserving cultural and historic resources.
 - c. Creating educational programs.
 - d. Increasing access to existing cultural resources.
- HC 8.2 County policies, land use regulations and design guidelines should encourage opportunities for the provision of arts and culture in education, government, health, shopping and business. (AI 143)
- HC 8.3 Encourage partnerships among government, business and educational institutions to promote arts and culture programs.
- HC 8.4 Encourage art and cultural programs to help support community identity and pride.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Communities that encourage the formation and maintenance of social capital are healthier and provide a higher quality of life for all residents. Community design that promotes equality, access, diversity, mobility and social interaction results in building social capital with improved physical and mental health. An important neighborhood component for encouraging the creation of social capital is the creation of places for residents to meet, organize, learn and socialize.

Social capital is defined by a durable network of family, community, civic and institutional networks. Studies show that social connectedness with improved cardio-vascular and mental health results in faster recovery from illness.

The policies in this section reflect the County's goal to foster strong family, community and civic networks to increase social capital. They are intended to work with policies in the Land Use, Circulation, Multi-Purpose Open Space and Air Quality Elements.

Policies:

- HC 9.1 Promote social capital through development patterns and policies that: (AI 18)
- a. Reduce commute times.



- b. Provide community services, employment training, rental assistance, and other supportive services to enable households to be self-sufficient.
 - c. Implement clean streets and graffiti abatement programs.
 - d. Improve empty properties and reinvest in neighborhoods.
 - e. Build diverse public spaces that provide places for people to congregate and interact socially.
 - f. Provide safe and attractive environments.
 - g. Encourage civic participation.
- HC 9.2 Support social service programs that reduce homelessness, and ensure that children have safe and stable homes.
- HC 9.3 Implement the policies of the Housing Element that promote a range of housing types and affordable housing units integrated into mixed-income neighborhoods throughout the County.
- HC 9.4 Support cohesive neighborhoods, especially with lifecycle housing opportunities.

PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE

Increasing access to parks, trails and open space amenities is an important healthy community strategy to increase physical activity. Physical activity reduces the risk of chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease, and obesity – all major health issues affecting Riverside County residents. Additional health benefits of easy access to physical activity include increased mental health and psychological development. Studies show that people who live within a ¼ mile of a park are 25 percent more likely to meet the minimum weekly physical activity.

An additional indicator of how much people use recreational facilities is the perception of safety. Therefore, providing for safe, well-lighted environments within easy access of a wide range of people is also important to create a useful and accessible multi-use open space system.

Riverside County has many diverse open space resources ranging from national and regional open spaces to local and neighborhood parks. However, access to these resources differs throughout the county. The following policies articulate the County’s commitment to providing a sustainable, accessible multi-use open space system that is accessible, safe and enjoyable for every Riverside County resident.

Policies:

- HC 10.1 Create convenient and safe opportunities for physical and recreational activities for residents of all ages and income levels. (AI 33, 144)
- HC 10.2 Recognize that the multi-use open space network provides critical resources to improve health benefits in the County, particularly



Refer to *The Land Use, Circulation and Multipurpose Open Space Elements* for additional Countywide policies and policies concerning Multipurpose Recreational Trails, Renewable Resources, Open Space, Parks and Recreation.

related to obesity, diabetes and mental health. (AI 9)

- HC 10.3 Increase access and use of open space resources, through policies that: (AI 35)
 - a. Encourage a diversity of passive and active open spaces throughout the County.
 - b. Increase transportation routes to existing recreational facilities.
 - c. Locate parks in close proximity to homes and offices.
 - d. Require the development of parks, trails, and open space resources as part of the development process.
- HC 10.4 Promote physical and community activities through the expansion of recreational programming and facilities. Such efforts could: (AI 144, 145)
 - a. Support recreational programs for all residents, especially for youth seniors and disabled populations.
 - b. Expand or add new facilities and amenities in neighborhood and regional parks, where appropriate.
- HC 10.5 Incorporate design features in parks, trails and open space resources that reflect the sense of place and unique characteristics of their community, as directed by the local jurisdiction.
- HC 10.6 Address both actual and perceived safety concerns that create barriers to physical activity by providing adequate lighting, eyes on the street, and designing for defensible space.
- HC 10.7 Encourage collaboration between regional and local open space providers.
- HC 10.8 Consider locations where new parks can be located with other community facilities as schools, senior centers, recreation centers, etc. (AI 145)
- HC 10.9 Wherever appropriate, consider entering into joint-use agreements with school districts to open school properties for public use during non-school hours.
- HC 10.10 Seek opportunities to construct new parks and open spaces in existing urbanized areas. (AI 145)
- HC 10.11 Where appropriate, work with public entities to use public easements as parks and trails.

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS AND NUTRITION

A healthy, varied diet is a critical component to a healthy life. Poor diet is a primary risk factor in many of the major chronic health issues facing Riverside County, California and the nation, including: heart disease, diabetes, obesity, cancer and stroke. Nearly 2 out of 3 adults and 15 percent of youth are overweight or obese in Riverside County. There are many adults and children



that live with diabetes in the County as well. As of 2005, there were over 115,000 adults diagnosed with diabetes living in Riverside County, an increase of roughly 40,000 people since 2003. At the same time, 80% of teens, 50% of adults, and 50% of children do not eat the recommended five fruits and vegetables a day and over 40,000 teens and children report eating fast food two or more times a day.



The percent of overweight of obese teens and adults increased 2% from 2003 to 2005. Nearly 2 out of every 3 adults in Riverside are overweight or obese. (See Appendix M for more information).

Residents in Riverside County often do not have access to local, affordable healthy food outlets. Convenience stores, fast food restaurants, gas stations and car-oriented strips are more prevalent and accessible large parts of Riverside County. The average community in Riverside County has nearly twice as many fast food outlets and convenience stores as grocery stores and produce stands and several communities have more than 3 times as many unhealthy food choice options as healthy options. A balanced retail food environment provides choices and adequate nutritional information so that consumers can access healthy foods and make informed decisions about the meals that would be best for them.

In addition to the traditional food retail outlets, farm- and garden-scale urban agriculture has benefits for public health, including encouraging people to consume fresh products and involving city dwellers in healthy, active work and recreation. Urban agriculture also contributes to the creation of safe, healthy, and green environments in neighborhoods and the reuse of otherwise vacant or underutilized land.

The following policies articulate the County's program for increasing access to and information about healthy food choices. These policies are intended to complement policies in the Land Use and Circulation Elements.

Policies:

- HC 11.1 Promote access to healthy food and nutrition throughout the County. (AI 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152)
- HC 11.2 Encourage safe, and convenient opportunities to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables and healthy foods. (AI 149)
- HC 11.3 Encourage the production and distribution of locally grown food. (AI 152)
- HC 11.4 Encourage an increase in the number of food establishments that provide healthy food options. (AI 148, 149, 150)



HEALTHCARE AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Affordable and accessible healthcare and mental health care provide timely intervention with health issues and preventive services to reduce the impact of illnesses. Preventive measures – such as screening for common health problems like diabetes and respiratory illnesses, dental care, vaccinations – have been shown to reduce incidences and severity of illnesses. Stress and high blood pressure are associated with increased risk of several chronic illnesses including stroke, obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Anxiety is also associated with increased risk of aggression, depression and substance abuse. Similarly, attributes of the built environment, including the amount of driving, access to green space and nature, and the condition of the built environment, can affect mental health by impacting levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

The following policies articulate the County’s program for increasing access to healthcare and mental health care. For additional policies see the Department of Public Health 2007-2011 Strategic Plan.

“

Critical community facilities, such as parks, schools, healthcare and mental health facilities, as well as civic institutions, are distributed throughout the county in both urban and rural areas so that they are accessible to and benefit all residents.

”

-RCIP Vision

Policies:

- HC 12.1 Improve access to healthcare, medical and mental health facilities for County residents.
- Coordinate with public transit agencies to improve transit access to health clinics and hospitals.
 - Explore the use of mobile or remote health care (e.g., E-Health Care; Clinics on Wheels, co-location of new facilities, one-stop health care centers).
 - Create an impact fee or land dedication program to offset the costs of constructing new, county-sponsored healthcare and mental health facilities.
- HC 12.2 Locate a wide range of healthcare and mental health facilities throughout the County that are Equitable, transit-accessible and pedestrian-friendly as well as in fast-growing areas of the community.
- HC 12.3 Provide social and mental health care support that reduce recidivism and prevent criminal behaviors.

SCHOOLS, RECREATIONAL CENTERS AND CHILD DAY CARE CENTERS

A community that is designed to serve the full lifecycle requires a range of facilities that serve all ages and vulnerable populations. Child day care centers, senior centers, schools and other recreational centers are important civic institutions that contribute to the overall well being of residents. These services function best when they are centrally located and evenly distributed. These policies set a framework for encouraging the provision of those services.



Policies:

- HC 13.1 Work with school officials to promote the use of schools as recreation facilities.
 - a. Work with local school boards to locate and design schools to be focal points of community life.
 - b. Advocate for school siting requirements that allow smaller neighborhood schools and allow new schools to be constructed in existing urbanized areas.
 - c. Wherever appropriate, consider entering into joint-use agreements with school districts to open school properties for public use during non-school hours.

- HC 13.2 Ensure the safety of children travelling to school by foot or bicycle by: (AI 153, 154, 155, 156)
 - a. Implementing “Safe Routes to School” programs whenever applicable.
 - b. Implementing traffic calming in areas immediately around schools.
 - c. Identifying areas around schools with a high incidence of traffic crashes, particularly those with pedestrians and cyclists.

- HC 13.3 Encourage the development of recreational centers to serve all phases of life (e.g. kids, young professionals, families, and older residents).

- HC 13.4 Child day care centers, senior centers, schools and other recreational centers should be equitably located throughout the County and should be easily accessible by public transportation.

- HC 13.5 Support the provision of child day care services, employment training, rental assistance, and other supportive services to enable households to be self-sufficient.

- HC 13.6 Support school health services at school sites.

★
Additional provisions for child care services and facilities are incorporated into the Land Use Element of the General Plan and Zoning Classification of the “Land Use Ordinance” (GPA 883, Ord. 348.596) to allow for the development of child care facilities throughout the County.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

People today are exposed to an unprecedented amount of harmful substances ranging from particulate matter and emissions from auto and industrial sources to toxic pesticides and ingredients with some toxicity found in every day household and pharmaceutical products. These harmful substances enter into our air and water supplies and accumulate in our bodies causing a range of health effects such as increased incidences of respiratory illnesses, cancer and other chronic health problems. Consequently decisions about the location and mix of land uses, transportation investments, design and building practices and building materials can all have an impact on the environment and human health. Policies in this section address air quality (both indoor and outdoor), water quality, and



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exposure to industrial waste products and toxic products used by households and farms.

Motor vehicles are the principal source of particulate matter and other pollutants that contribute to poor air quality and associated respiratory illnesses. In general, the number of vehicle miles traveled in a region, the worse the air pollution. Factories, concentrated in heavily industrial areas are equally problematic. Heavy industrial areas have the potential for toxic releases resulting in increased incidences of cancer, respiratory illness, reduced school performance, or other negative health impacts.

Even building materials can impact human health. There is growing research linking many of the chemicals in building products with negative human health effects. Some of the commonly used building materials in health care facilities may contain formaldehyde (a known human carcinogen), be made from PVC (implicated in dioxin formation during production, manufacture, and disposal) and/or include toxic chemicals found increasingly in human breast milk, blood, and urine. Recognizing this, health care providers, such as Kaiser Permanente, are taking the lead in addressing this issue by adopting policies to use materials in their structures that do not contain these toxic products.

Ground water and the environment are affected by the products that we use to maintain landscaping. The widespread use of pesticides and herbicides to maintain parks, roadsides, and other public spaces may result in unhealthy levels of exposure to toxins over time for the people – particularly children – who use these public spaces. The misuse of pesticides can contribute to the contamination of rivers and streams.

Swimming pool entrapment describes tragic incidents where bathers using swimming pools are entrapped by suction from the recirculation system of a swimming pool or spa. There have been over 150 entrapment related injuries and deaths over the last two decades and nearly all of them happened because a pool or spa was not maintained to a safe standard. The Virginia Graeme Baker pool and spa safety act addresses this hazard. This Federal Act is being considered for adoption by the State at the time of this writing. Responsible construction of new spas and pools that adhere to the requirements of the Federal Act can save lives and avoid expensive retrofits that will be mandated once the California legislation is passed.

The following policies strive to achieve good air quality and improved respiratory health, to ensure clean water in adequate quantity and quality for drinking, washing, and sanitary purposes, to protect against the harmful effects of hazardous materials and waste, and to facilitate the building of safe swimming pools, spas and restaurants.


Refer to The Air Quality, Circulation, Land Use and Multipurpose Open Space Elements for additional policies concerning Sensitive Receptors, Energy Efficiency, Job and Housing; as well as Renewable Resources Conservation.

Policies:

- HC 14.1 Pursue a comprehensive strategy to ensure that residents breathe clean air and drink clean water in adequate quality and quantity.
- HC 14.2 Reduce air pollution and the incidence of respiratory illness through the land use planning process.
 - a. Strive to avoid siting homes, schools and other sensitive



receptors near known or expected new stationary sources of air pollution.

- b. Evaluate and consider alternative siting of new municipal facilities that may produce harmful air pollution near existing populations.
- c. Promote the construction of new buildings that provide for healthier indoor air quality.

- HC 14.3 Recognize and actively promote policies in the Land Use, Air Quality, Circulation and Multipurpose Open Space Element that:
- a. Reduce emissions of air pollution and improve air quality and respiratory health.
 - b. Recognize and actively promote policies to create a multi-modal transportation system that reduces solo driving.
 - c. Protect sensitive uses from the encroachment of land uses that would result in impacts from noxious fumes or toxins.
 - d. Encourage the reduction of air pollution from stationary sources.
 - e. Ensure conservation of and access to clean and adequate drinking and surface water.
 - f. Continue to minimize Riverside County residents' and employees' exposure to the harmful effects of hazardous materials and waste.

★
The cancer risk from diesel soot and other toxic air pollutants increased 2 percent in Riverside County between 1998 and 2005, a period in which the regional risk dropped by 8 percent. (See Appendix M for more information).

- HC 14.4 Improve air quality and respiratory health through County programs and operations that reduce overall energy use and increase the use of clean and renewable energy sources through programs such as:
- a. Encourage energy conservation such as maximizing the use of nature lighting and motion sensing lighting
 - b. Providing on-site clean energy generation such as solar panels.

- HC 14.5 Reconsider and evaluate the use of pesticides in the county. Programs to accomplish this task might include:
- a. Evaluate alternatives and if needed encourage the use of herbicides to control roadside vegetation, parks and other public areas.
 - b. Evaluate alternatives and if needed limit the use of pesticides near sensitive receptors (e.g. schools, homes, parks, etc.).
 - c. Design flood control basins is minimize the harborage of vectors such as mosquitos which should reduce the use of pesticides in the area.
 - d. Integrate the design, construction and maintenance of retention/ detention/ flood control basins to be consistent with the guidelines expressed in "Best Management Practices for Mosquito Control on California State Properties" (CDPH), and "Managing Mosquitoes in Stormwater Treatment Devices", University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

- HC 14.6 Continue to expand presentations to builders for food facilities on



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structural requirements for clean and safe preparation of food sold to the public. (AI 135, 148)

- HC 14.7 Plan Check program partners with builders to facilitate the construction of food facilities that will provide the highest level of sanitation for food preparation and storage.

- HC 14.8 Plan Check program partners with pool construction companies to build pools, spas and other recreational facilities that are compliant to current California regulations for pool sanitation, anti-suction and anti-drowning features.

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Implementation Actions

(The Implementation actions are available here for a quick reference; however, this section will be removed once the Healthy Communities Element is adopted. Please refer to the Draft Appendix K- Implementation Program to see how the action items will be incorporated.)

Type	Action Item #	Element Activities/Programs	Policy Reference #	Consultant Rec	Source	Target Date	Funding Source	Primary Resp.	Support Resp.
		Healthy Communities							
		<u>Overall Health</u>							
	AI 126	Continue building Partnerships with other departments of the County.	HC 1.1						
	AI 127	Regularly update the Riverside County Department of Public Health Strategic Plan to respond changes in health concerns related to the built environment and to reflect the policies in the General Plan.	HC 1.2						
	AI 128	Include agencies that address health in the program to coordinate with other jurisdictions and agencies created by AI 4.	HC 1.1						
	AI 129	Continue the County Healthy Community Working Group meetings to increase intra-agency/department collaboration and to address issues of common concern.	HC 1.2						
	AI 130	Create a program to offer Transit Passes or commuter checks for employees.	HC 1.4						
	AI 131	Where possible, include bicycle lockers and shower facilities in all new or renovated County office facilities.	HC 1.4						
	AI 132	Evaluate County procurement practices and create and update a program to increase the number of healthy/non-toxic products that the County buys.	HC 1.4						
	AI 133	Organize or sponsor a yearly Health Fair for	HC 1.5, HC 1.6						



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		County residents.							
AI 134		Develop a packet that provides County employers guidance and information on adopting healthy living programs and standards for providing nutritious foods at employer-sponsored events.	HC 1.5, HC 1.6						
AI 135		Create a Healthy Business Certification/Recognition Program in coordination with other county departments.	HC 1.6, HC 14.6						
		<u>Land Use and Community Design</u>							
AI 136		Implement a program to evaluate the impacts of new development on public health outcomes. Such a program might include a Health Impact Assessments or other tools. Once created, the tool should be used as part of the evaluation and approval process for development proposals.	HC 2.1, HC 3.1, HC 4.2, HC 5.1						
AI 137		Incorporate measures of a project’s health impacts into the Project Review Checklist developed by AI 3.	HC 2.1						
		<u>Healthy Transportation System</u>							
AI 138		Regularly analyze and map the location of cyclist and pedestrian injuries and develop a plan to mitigate problem locations.	HC 6.1						
AI 139		Establish and implement multi-modal level of service standards.	HC 7.1						
AI 140		Establish standards for neighborhood connectivity in Community Development areas. Neighborhood connectivity is a measure of both how direct and how far a pedestrian or bicyclist must travel from their home to their destination for most trips. A highly connected street network offers a safer and a friendlier environment for pedestrians.	HC 6.1, HC 6.2						
AI 141		Create a program to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle improvements into scheduled capital	HC 6.6, HC 7.4						

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		projects, whenever possible.							
		<i>Arts and Culture</i>							
AI 142		Explore the creation of a promotion, marketing, and funding program to bring arts and cultural activities to communities throughout the County.	HC 8.1						
AI 143		Create an incentive program for the inclusion of public art in development projects.	HC 8.2						
		<i>Parks, Trails and Open Space Policies</i>							
AI 144		Adopt a Parks and Recreation level of service standard that addresses the number of park acres per 1,000 residents desired and sets maintenance and facilities standards. Such a standard should account for the needs of a range of communities from Community Development to Rural Community areas.	HC 10.1, HC 10.4						
AI 145		Conduct a detailed analysis to determine where park deficiencies exist within the County and develop a plan to add parks to underserved areas.	HC 10.4, HC 10.8, HC 10.10						
		<i>Access to Healthy Foods and Nutrition</i>							
AI 146		Create a program to provide healthier food choices and to minimize the sale of carbonated beverages, processed foods, and foods containing partially hydrogenated oils at County Facilities and County Events.	HC 11.1						
AI 147		Continue to implement and periodically update County programs to improve nutritional intake, such as the County Nutrition Action Plan, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program and Food Stamps, and Champions for Change.	HC 11.1						
AI 148		Create a certification system to certify restaurants and food stores that do not serve trans fats.	HC 11.1, HC 11.4, HC 14.6						
AI 149		Conduct a study of county areas lacking full-	HC 11.1,						



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		service grocery stores and develop an economic development strategy to attract stores to deficient areas.	HC 11.2, HC 11.4						
	AI 150	Develop and implement an education campaign to inform food purveyors about healthy food sources.	HC 11.1, HC 11.4						
	AI 151	Develop and implement an educational campaign around nutrition and physical activity. Activities could include: presentations to school children, health fairs, checklists of healthy and unhealthy foods, etc.	HC 11.1						
	AI 152	Develop a program to allow community gardens on appropriate parcels in community development areas.	HC 11.1, HC 11.3						
		<i>Schools, Community Facilities and Child Day Care Centers</i>							
	AI 153	Create a program to designate School Safety Zones (SSZ). A SSZ is a designated area around a school (e.g. 1,000 -2,000 feet from the school site) where additional safety measures are put into place to reduce accidents. Such measures could include additional signage, slower speed limits, humps and bumps or other traffic calming measures. The SSZ program should identify responsibilities for County departments, a process for designating SSZs, a mechanism to incorporate SSZs into the area planning process, and a plan to collaborate with relevant school districts.	HC 13.2						
	AI 154	Establish a regular meeting between the Planning and Transportation Departments to identify high priority transportation investments to increase safety around school zones.	HC 13.2						
	AI 155	Implement a “safe routes to school” program for Community Development Areas in the county.	HC 13.2						
	AI 156	Identify areas around schools with a high	HC 13.2						

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		incidence of accidents, particularly those involving pedestrians and cyclists.							
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