**Leadership for Healthy Communities**
Advancing Policies to Support Healthy Eating and Active Living

# ACTION STRATEGIES TOOLKIT

A Guide for Local and State Leaders Working to Create Healthy Communities and Prevent Childhood Obesity

Leadership for Healthy Communities is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## Dear Colleagues,

You may have heard the prognosis–if the obesity epidemic in America continues unchecked, this generation of young people may be the first in U.S. history to live sicker and die younger than their parents' generation. The magnitude of the epidemic means that everyone has a role to play in its reversal, especially because the solution requires policy and environmental changes on many levels.

For example, while parents can be good role models and create healthy environments at home, and the food and beverage industry can take greater responsibility for the nutritional content of the products it offers and promotes, policy-makers are the ones who have the power to make important decisions that affect people's opportunities to eat healthy foods and be physically active within their communities.

Research shows that where we live can impact how well we live. Today, many of our communities are unhealthy. Too frequently, families lack access to full-service grocery stores that stock affordable healthy foods, and children don't have safe places to play or even walk. We want to work together to create environments that pave the way for healthier lifestyles. Healthy communities provide families with convenient access to affordable healthy foods; safe places to walk, ride a bicycle and play; and schools that offer nutritious foods and plenty of opportunities for physical activity. Across the country, policy-makers, community leaders and people in the private sector are collaborating to build such neighborhoods, but we still have a long way to go.

In the United States, more than 23 million children and adolescents are overweight or obese. That means nearly one in three young people are at a higher risk for serious, even life-threatening health problems, such as asthma, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. In addition, it is important to emphasize that childhood obesity rates are highest among Latino children and African-American girls.

These trends are likely to create additional pressures on our nation's overburdened health care system. Studies estimate the obesity epidemic costs the country more than $117 billion per year in direct medical costs and indirect costs related to reduced productivity and absenteeism.

The need for action is clear.

To help meet this need, the Action Strategies Toolkit was developed by *Leadership for Healthy Communities* in close collaboration with the following organizations:

- American Association of School Administrators;
- Council of State Governments;
- International City/County Management Association;
- Local Government Commission;
- National Association of Counties;
- National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund;
- National Association of State Boards of Education;
- National Conference of State Legislatures;
- National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, & Families;
- National School Boards Association; and
- United States Conference of Mayors.

Leadership for Healthy Communities, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, was created to support local and state leaders nationwide in their efforts to promote healthy, active communities and access to affordable healthy foods. The strategies in this toolkit include promising and evidence-based practices that advance these goals and build upon the work in which policy-makers are already engaged.

Through daily decisions about budgets, laws, regulations or zoning, policy-makers can help develop healthier and more viable communities. For example, government leaders can facilitate land-use policies, such as mixed-use development, and support public parks and transit options, including walking paths and bicycle lanes. They can create incentives to attract supermarkets and farmers' markets to underserved communities and improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages in schools.

Putting the strategies in this toolkit into action will take strong, coordinated leadership by policy leaders nationwide. Through collaboration among states, counties, cities and schools, policy-makers can meet their constituents' demand for healthy living as they take steps to reduce health care costs and improve health care performance in their communities. As the leaders of policy-maker organizations at every level of government, we believe that the strategies presented in this toolkit have tremendous potential to change the trajectory of our children's future.

When policy leaders unite for a common purpose, it enables communities to tap into a larger network of social and financial resources. Together, we can support healthy schools, healthy communities and healthy children.

**David Adkins**
Executive Director
Council of State Governments

**Donald J. Borut**
Executive Director
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**Anne L. Bryant**
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Executive Director
National Association of State Boards of Education

"The dramatic rise in childhood obesity has implications for health care spending and quality of life. As states fund programs from nutrition to long-term care, they must responsibly act to affect the lifestyle choices of individuals to curtail the costs of providing those services."

**New Jersey Assemblyman Herb Conaway, chair of New Jersey's and the National Conference of State Legislatures' health committees**

© Photo: New Jersey Assembly Democratic Office

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# DESIGNING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: THE POLICY-MAKER ROLE

"Absolutely, childhood obesity reduction should be a priority issue. It is becoming a real health epidemic and it's something that leaders have to address. This is not just an obesity issue but a future-of-our-children issue."

**Miami Mayor Manuel "Manny" Diaz,**
**President, United States Conference of Mayors**

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## The Childhood Obesity Epidemic

Across all age groups, obesity has been on the rise for decades. During the past four decades, in fact, the percentage of children ages 6 to 11 who are obese has more than quadrupled (from 4.2% to 17%), and obesity prevalence has more than tripled for adolescents ages 12 to 19 (from 4.6% to 17.6%).[1] According to a national poll, parents now rank childhood obesity as the number one potential threat to their children's health–topping drugs, alcohol and tobacco use.[2]

Research has found that obese children and adolescents are much more likely to become obese adults. An obese 4-year-old has a 20 percent chance of becoming an obese adult, and an obese older teenager has up to an 80 percent chance of remaining obese 10 years later as an adult.[3,4] In addition, overweight children are at greater risk for a host of other serious illnesses, including heart disease, stroke, hypertension, asthma and certain types of cancer. As more children become obese, type 2 diabetes–a disease that was once called "adult-onset diabetes" and can lead to blindness, loss of feeling and circulation in the extremities, amputations and death–is found in younger and younger age groups.[5]

The financial consequences also are significant–obesity costs the United States $117 billion each year in direct medical expenses and indirect costs, such as lost productivity.[6]

"State and local leaders have the policy levers to address this issue, but successful interventions require knowledge, teamwork and careful planning."

**Brenda L. Welburn, Executive Director,**
**National Association of State Boards of Education**

© Photo: National Association of State Boards of Education

## Reversing Childhood Obesity Requires Changing Policies and Local Environments

Given that an unhealthy environment is an important contributor to the childhood obesity epidemic, reversing the trend will require policy action at all levels of government. Policy actions are necessary to eliminate the barriers to physical activity and healthy eating options, and provide more opportunities for children and families to engage in those behaviors.

There is significant evidence available indicating that many children don't have opportunities to be physically active or access to healthy foods on a daily basis. Moreover, the environmental barriers to healthy behaviors are even larger in lower-income areas.

Communities with high levels of poverty are significantly less likely to have places where people can be physically active, such as parks, green spaces, and bicycle paths and lanes.[7] And although easy access to supermarkets that offer fresh fruits and vegetables is associated with lower body mass index, many neighborhoods in racial and ethnic minority, lower-income and rural areas tend to have more access to fast-food restaurants and convenience stores rather than grocery stores.[8]

In addition, fewer than 4 percent of elementary schools provide the weekly recommended 150 minutes of physical education to all students for the full school year.[9] At the same time, youth have become more sedentary during their out-of-school hours. On a typical school day, 35.4 percent of adolescents in grades 9 to 12 spend three hours or more watching television.[10]

According to William Dietz, director of the division of nutrition and physical activity at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "The environmental factors are much more compelling toward obesity than they were 30 years ago."[11]

## Racial and Ethnic Minorities, Lower-Income Families Are at Greatest Risk for Obesity

Although obesity affects people of all demographics, the prevalence rates are more alarming for racial and ethnic minorities, lower-income families and people in the Southeast region of the United States. Compared with 31 percent of white youths ages 2 to 19, 34.9 percent of African-American youths and 38 percent of Mexican American youths of the same age range are overweight or obese.[12] Moreover, 22 percent of children ages 10 to 17 from families below the poverty line are overweight or obese, compared with 9 percent of children in families making four times that amount.[13]

In the last two annual reports by Trust for America's Health, Mississippi, the poorest state in the nation, was ranked as the most obese. In 2007, Mississippi was the only state with an obesity rate above 30 percent. By 2008, it had been joined by West Virginia and Alabama–with obesity rates of 30.6 percent and 30.1 percent respectively. Seven of the states with the highest poverty rates are also in the top 10 states with the highest obesity rates.[14]

Although there are many reasons that these disparities exist, a major factor is that lower-income populations, which include many minority or rural communities, lack adequate opportunities for safe physical activity and access to nutritious foods, compared with higher-income populations.

"Latinos have among the highest rates of obesity, overweight and type 2 diabetes. The health of our communities and the future of our nation depend on policy-makers' ability to create a healthier, livable environment for our children."

**Arturo Vargas, Executive Director, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund**

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## Policy Action Can Help

State and local budgets are tight, particularly during difficult economic times. Fortunately, many of the action strategies outlined in this document are inexpensive and even provide a return on the investment in the long run. With nearly one-third of American youth either obese or overweight, the stakes are too high to do nothing about the direction of our children's health.

Policy action in particular can help expand opportunities for physical activity and access to healthy foods both in schools and communities. Initiatives led by policy-makers and community leaders at all levels and of all party affiliations play an important role in supporting healthy children. By highlighting policies and programs that can impact the health of children in schools and communities, this document encourages policy-makers to collaborate in order to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic and create healthier communities.

We cannot afford to ignore the childhood obesity epidemic. The health of our children is the future of our nation.

# ACTION STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHIER KIDS AND COMMUNITIES

This document is a result of the collaborative efforts of 11 policy-maker organizations, which represent public officials from the state and local levels of governance. For more than a year, representatives from these organizations have been engaged in a variety of activities including training leaders in strategies to promote healthy eating and active living policies; providing technical assistance to state and city-school teams; and working with rural policy-makers to identify strategies for promoting healthy eating and active living.

## How to Use the Toolkit

The strategies outlined in this document are divided into several policy areas in order to increase awareness of the promising and evidence-based policy options to reduce childhood obesity. To facilitate ease of use among policy-makers with various jurisdictions and areas of expertise, this toolkit has been organized into two main sections–Active Living and the Built Environment, and Healthy Eating–each of which is further divided into subsections. Each subsection recommends targeted strategies based on the environmental setting, identifies key stakeholders, outlines policy and program options, provides concrete directions on how to start programs, describes resources that can help inform the process, and includes examples of how other states and localities have achieved progress.

Because the toolkit includes such an extensive list of Web-based resources, it is available online at *www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org*. The resources, examples and the related URLs in the online toolkit were up to date as of April 10, 2009. To see the latest updates, visit the Leadership for Healthy Communities Web site. Please note that resources that apply to more than one of the sections will appear in more than one place.

## Process for Developing this Toolkit

Leadership for Healthy Communities, a $10-million national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, works with major policy-maker organizations to support state and local leaders in their efforts to reduce childhood obesity through public policies that promote active living, healthy eating and access to healthy foods. The program's efforts are focused especially on children from racial and ethnic minority groups and those who live in lower-income and rural communities.

The policy approaches and resources within this toolkit represent a collection of current best approaches that have been identified, reviewed and selected by Leadership for Healthy Communities and the 11 policy-maker organizations participating in the program.

The policy options and resources were assessed using data and research from the publications, toolkits and databases of the following organizations: Active Living Research, Active Living by Design, Albemarle State Policy Center, Healthy Eating Research, Institute of Medicine, PolicyLink, Transtria LLC, Prevention Institute, Public Health Law & Policy, Healthy Eating Active Living Convergence Partnership, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Trust for America's Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and program grantee organizations.

Most of the policy options were reviewed based on a scan of more than 100 research articles that linked specific policy actions to positive outcomes in healthy eating and physical activity behaviors, with a focus on research in vulnerable communities. In addition, recognizing that states and municipalities are offering new and innovative solutions to childhood obesity prevention on a continuous basis, we also have included promising practices that Leadership for Healthy Communities and its program grantees believe to be important approaches to childhood obesity prevention. These beliefs are based in part on more than two years of experience providing technical assistance to state, city, county and school officials who are implementing these policies and practices in their localities.

Policy and childhood obesity experts who reviewed this toolkit include: the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity, National Policy and Legal Analysis Network, Public Health Law & Policy, Prevention Institute, The Food Trust, Active Living Research, San Francisco Department of Public Health, Safe Routes to School National Partnership, District of Columbia Office of Planning and Leadership for Healthy Communities co-chairs who are state, local and school district policy leaders.

# PART 1: ACTIVE LIVING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Active Transportation
Land Use For Active Living
Open Spaces, Parks And Recreation
Quality Physical Activity In And Near Schools
Safety And Crime Prevention

"For the first time in American history the next generation is expected to have a shorter and sicker life as a result of the obesity epidemic. To conquer this epidemic, leadership will be required. In order to find the creative solutions necessary to address this challenge, we must embrace the strength found in diversity. Each of us comes to the obesity epidemic with different perspectives, cultural norms, expertise and experiences. Let's work to create opportunities for state leaders to come together to find solutions and reverse this tragic trend."

**David Adkins, Executive Director,**
**Council of State Governments**

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# ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

GOAL: To make bicycling and walking more viable transportation options in communities to help reduce childhood obesity rates. Policy-makers can increase opportunities for physical activity by creating a built environment that supports safe, active transportation.

Photo: Getty Images/Image Source

## 1. Improve Safety for Bicyclists and Pedestrians

**The Issues and the Research:** There is a significant body of evidence linking transportation, planning and community design to increased physical activity.[15] To increase physical activity opportunities in neighborhoods and combat some of the safety issues, many communities have adopted Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs and complete streets policies, with positive results. An analysis of 33 studies demonstrated that children in neighborhoods with sidewalks and controlled intersections were more physically active than children in neighborhoods with road hazards and unsafe intersections.[16] Another study found that adding and improving bicycle lanes, traffic signals, sidewalks and crosswalks increased the number of children walking or bicycling to school. Students were three times more likely to start walking or bicycling on routes that included improvements than they were before these improvements were made.[17]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Transportation officials
- Planning officials
- County and city health officials
- Law enforcement agencies
- Community-based organizations
- Community member

## Policy and Program Options

***State funding and support of active transportation***

State policy-makers can actively support legislation that promotes safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. They also can provide funding for state and local transportation initiatives that include safe, active living components.

***Active transportation plans, complete streets***

Local governments can develop or re-evaluate long-term transportation plans that explicitly set "active transportation" goals for walking or biking as modes of transportation. As part of these goals, they can implement complete streets in neighborhoods. The following list includes some complete streets measures that improve safe walking and biking options in communities:

- Develop a pedestrian and/or bicycle master plan that assesses the environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, and makes infrastructure improvements that enhance safety and walkability.
- Establish separate traffic lanes for bicyclists and sidewalks for pedestrians.
- Promote moderate traffic speeds, especially on local residential and commercial streets, by designing narrower streets, sidewalk curbs, raised and clearly painted crosswalks, raised medians, wide sidewalks and **streetscaping**, which can include adding trees, hedges and planter strips.
- Employ other critical safety measures including appropriately timed lights, pedestrian signals, crossing guards near schools and sufficient street lighting at night.
- Retrofit existing roads or integrate improvements as new roads are designed.

***Walk to school/Safe Routes To School***

State and local leaders in communities and schools can support Walk to School and Safe Routes to School programs. (See "Support Walk-to-School and Safe-Routes-to-School Programs," page 45.)

**TERMS:**

**Complete streets** are streets designed to function in ways that enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and bus riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street.

**Streetscaping** includes improving traffic management, adding landscaping, sidewalks, building fronts and street amenities, such as garbage cans and benches.

**Traffic calming** involves changing street alignment, and adding barriers to reduce traffic speeds and/or cut-through volumes in order to improve street safety and functionality for pedestrians.

## Getting Started

- State legislators can introduce transportation legislation that dedicates funding streams toward projects that would increase pedestrians' and bicyclists' safety. State and local bicycling and walking projects are eligible for funding under nearly all federal transportation programs. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), the federal surface transportation legislation, promotes the integration of bicycling and walking with transportation systems. Under this bill, states may be required to match a percentage–typically 20 percent–of federal financial assistance. States can generate funds from the motor vehicle fuel tax, motor vehicle registration fees, taxes or special license plate sales.
- Local policy-makers and school district decision-makers can collaborate with community partners, such as city planners and health officials, to identify streets or improve multi-use pathways that would result in increased bicyclist and pedestrian use.
- Local governments can conduct a **walkability audit** to identify places for improvement and assess the degree to which their community enables active living. They can also use **geographic information system mapping** to determine safe routes to school or improvements to sidewalks, bicycle lanes, trails and street connectivity.
- Local school and policy-makers can begin developing Safe Routes to School programs by working with parent organizations, students, school administrators and teachers, local law enforcement, city planners, health officials and other stakeholders to identify barriers that make it difficult for students to travel to school safely. Note: The federal Safe Routes to School program provides 100 percent funding to states without requiring states to match the funding stream.

## Resources

### Active Living Resource Center

This Web site provides policy-makers with resources and tools to help them incorporate walking and bicycling into their communities. Active Living Resource Center operates with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
*www.activelivingresources.org*

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, KIDSWALK-to-School Program

This Web site provides information about KIDSWALK-to-School, a community-based program to promote regular physical activity by encouraging students to walk to and from school in groups accompanied by adults. The program emphasizes community partnerships with schools, parent-teacher organizations, local businesses and other groups to promote areas that are conducive to walking or bicycling.
*www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/Dnpa/kidswalk*

### Council of State Governments, *Community Design for Active Living, Talking Points*

These talking points highlight why state legislators should be concerned about the impact of community design on residents' mental and physical health. The document also encourages the use of **Health Impact Assessments**, which allow policy-makers to evaluate design projects and policies in terms of their health implications. Health Impact Assessments can provide policy-makers with findings that help strengthen local partnerships, reduce health disparities and encourage public participation in the community design process.
*www.healthystates.csg.org/NR/rdonlyres/B30AFBC3-5428-4F2D-B980-C961E4EE2093/0/HealthyCommunityLiving_screen.pdf*

**TERMS:**

**Walkability audit** is an unbiased examination/evaluation to identify concerns for pedestrians related to the safety, access, comfort and convenience of the walking environment. The audit also assesses potential policy, educational or enforcement alternatives or solutions.

**Geographic information system (GIS) mapping** is a technological tool for capturing, managing, analyzing and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information. In the form of maps, globes, reports, and charts, GIS mapping allows one to view, question and interpret data in many ways that reveal relationships, patterns and trends.

**Health Impact Assessments** are a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, program or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population.

### Local Government Commission, Community Design, Health and Physical Activity

This online resource provides community design tools and information for local elected officials and community leaders dedicated to promoting healthier communities. This organization helps communities become healthier and more livable by creating walkable and bicycle-friendly neighborhoods with a mix of uses and nearby destinations.
*www.lgc.org/issues/communitydesign/health_physical_activity.html*

### National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW)

This Web site provides information about the NCBW, a program of the Bicycle Federation of America, Inc. NCBW provides community-based workshops, consulting services, training programs for public and transportation agencies, and economic development and tourism planning analysis.
*www.bikewalk.org*

### National Complete Streets Coalition

Complete street policies direct transportation planners and engineers to consistently design streets with all users in mind. Policy-makers can use the information and resources on this site to improve the way their roads are planned, designed and constructed.
*www.completestreets.org/policies.html*
*www.completestreets.org*

### National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN), Built Environment

NPLAN's Web site provides leaders in the childhood obesity prevention field with focused legal research, model policies, fact sheets, toolkits, training and technical assistance to explain legal issues related to public health. For example, they offer relevant sets of talking points about complete streets, zoning and Safe Routes to School.
*www.nplanonline.org/focus/community-environment*

### Public Health Law and Policy, *How to Create and Implement General Healthy Plans*

Public Health Law and Policy's Planning for Healthy Places program aims to include public health advocates in community planning projects. While this toolkit was developed for local governments in the state of California, policy-makers nationwide can use the information to promote healthier environments in their cities.
*www.healthyplanning.org/toolkit_healthygp.html*

### The Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) National Partnership

The SRTS National Partnership is a network of more than 400 nonprofit organizations, government agencies, schools and professionals working to advance the SRTS movement. The project can help policy-makers and other stakeholders work with state departments of transportation to increase physical activity in schools, make the best use of available federal SRTS funds, and remove policy barriers to walking and bicycling to schools.
*www.saferoutespartnership.org*

### Surface Transportation Policy Partnership (STPP)

This Web site provides tools and information about surface transportation policy and issues. STPP is a nonprofit organization founded with the goal of promoting transportation policies and projects that protect the environment, benefit the economy, promote social equity and support livable communities.
*www.transact.org*

### U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration: Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation, Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)

This Web site provides a variety of materials, including the full text of the SAFETEA-LU legislation and the related congressional report, fact sheets on the programs and provisions, plus funding tables showing SAFETEA-LU authorizations.
*www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/index.htm*

## 2. Expand Trails, Bicycle Lanes and Connections

**The Issues and the Research:** Over the past 30 years, aspects of our built environment have made it difficult for children and families to walk or ride a bicycle outdoors for recreation or transportation. However, research shows that well-connected trails providing residents with access to community destinations is a low-cost intervention that reduces some barriers individuals face in being physically active–cost, inconvenience and inaccessibility.[18] In a survey of rural Missouri residents, more than half said that they walked more after a nearby trail opened.[19] Similarly, a 2007 study of planning directors and residents of 67 North Carolina counties showed that more sidewalks; bicycle lanes and trails; more **walkable**, mixed-use development; and strong planning policies were associated with higher levels of physical activity.[20] In fact, residents of counties with active living environments were more than twice as likely to ride a bicycle or walk than residents in other counties, and this association was even stronger among lower-income residents.[21]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Transportation officials
- Planning officials
- Parks and recreation officials
- Community-based organizations
- Community members

## Policy and Program Options

***Open space policies to encourage activity***

State and local policy-makers can support policies that create **open spaces** that can include recreational **greenways**. Because evidence also suggests that aesthetics and safety are important considerations when increasing biking and walking around town, policy-makers may want to consider including landscaping and safety measures in open-space policies.

***Trail connectivity to increase walking and biking***

State and local policy-makers also can support policies and funding that build trails through neighborhoods to connect homes with schools, which would allow children to ride a bicycle or walk to school without having to cross busy, unsafe streets. State and local policy-makers can consider policies that ensure sidewalk continuity and direct

**TERMS:**

**Walkable** communities facilitate pedestrian transportation by locating homes, businesses, schools, shops and other services, which are connected by sidewalks, bicycle lanes and trails, within an easy and safe walk from each other.

**Open space** is land that has been set aside for public use. It is typically void of any man-made structures.

**Greenways** are linear open spaces that link parks and communities around the city, such as paths or trails. They provide public access to green spaces and opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to be physically active.

routes for pedestrians and bicyclists, including connections between dead-end streets and culs-de-sac. Ideally, trails and sidewalks should connect to a variety of town resources, such as schools, grocery stores, libraries and other facilities.

***Rails to trails for recreation and transportation***
State and local public officials can work together to convert out-of-service rail corridors into trails using **rail banking.**

***Trail accessibility***
State and local policy-makers can support policies that increase access to walking trails.

## Getting started

- State and local policy-makers can re-evaluate comprehensive plans and develop a bicycle master plan to identify ways to expand trails and connections. They also can integrate the connection of paths, sidewalks, trails, services and facilities into broader transportation planning.
- Local policy-makers can call for the use of geographic information systems to determine land-use trends and walkability characteristics, such as street connectivity and sidewalks.
- Local policy-makers can partner with health officials to ensure that comprehensive plans incorporate physical activity opportunities.
- State and local policy-makers also can order a health impact assessment.
- State and local policy-makers can access federal funding for bikeways and trails through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation, Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) programs, such as the **Transportation Enhancement Program**.
- State and local policy-makers can consider methods for land acquisition, easements and partnerships with conservation groups–all of which would facilitate the development of open spaces.

## Resources

### Council of State Governments, *Community Design for Active Living, Talking Points*

These talking points highlight why state legislators should be concerned about the impact of community design on residents' mental and physical health. The document also encourages the use of Health Impact Assessments, which allow policy-makers to evaluate design projects and policies in terms of their health implications. Health Impact Assessments can provide policy-makers with findings that help strengthen local partnerships, reduce health disparities and encourage public participation in the community design process.
*www.healthystates.csg.org/NR/rdonlyres/B30AFBC3-5428-4F2D-B980-C961E4EE2093/0/HealthyCommunityLiving_screen.pdf*

**TERMS:**
**Rail banking** is the practice of leaving the tracks, bridges and other infrastructure intact for potential use as trails or to preserve railroad rights-of-way.

**Transportation Enhancement Program** is a program authorized through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) that designates approximately 10% of the state's Surface Transportation Program apportionment to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic and environmental aspects of the nation's intermodal transportation system

### National Association of Counties, *Transportation Solutions to Create Active, Healthy Counties: Collaboration for Childhood Obesity Prevention*

This issue brief focuses on the causes and implications of childhood obesity and stresses the role that local transportation leaders play in addressing these issues. For example, leaders play a crucial role in enhancing bicycle and pedestrian safety, building bikeways and trails, improving public transportation systems and increasing safety along student routes to and from schools.
*www.naco.org/Template.cfm?Section=New_Technical_Assistance&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=27724*

### National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW)

This Web site provides information about the NCBW, a program of the Bicycle Federation of America, Inc. NCBW provides community-based workshops, consulting services, training programs for public and transportation agencies, and economic development and tourism planning analysis.
*www.bikewalk.org*

### Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Trail Building Toolbox

This toolbox provides basic information communities need to build trails. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is a nonprofit organization working with communities to preserve unused rail corridors by transforming them into trails.
*www.railstotrails.org/whatwedo/trailbuilding/technicalassistance/toolbox/toolbox_index.html*

### Sustainable Communities Network, Smart Growth Design Tools

These tools help policy-makers visualize community design, land-use and transportation issues in their planning processes.
*www.smartgrowth.org*

### Smart Growth, Smart Energy Toolkit

This toolkit provides policy-makers with useful information on model bylaws, case studies and other information on topics such as inclusionary zoning and environmental justice.
*www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/how-to-SG.html*

### U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

This Web site provides policy-makers with information about RTP, which gives funds to states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. The RTP funds are distributed to states by legislative formula: half of the funds are distributed equally among all states and half are distributed in proportion to the estimated amount of non-highway recreational fuel use in each state.
*www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails*

### U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration: Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation, Equity Act: A Legacy or Users (SAFETEA-LU)

This Web site provides a variety of materials, including the full text of the SAFETEA-LU legislation and the related congressional report, fact sheets on the programs and provisions, plus funding tables showing SAFETEA-LU authorizations.
*www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/index.htm*

## Examples of Implementing Active Living Transportation

### STATE

#### Public Land in North Carolina Open for Bicycling and Walking

North Carolina law requires that any land purchased or leased with state funds must provide access to bicyclists and pedestrians (unless it damages the environment or a pre-existing law prohibits it).
*http://ftp.legislature.state.nc.us/Sessions/2007/Bills/Senate/PDF/S1383v4.pdf*

### LOCAL

#### Columbia Connects the Town Through Trails and Bicycle Lanes

Columbia, Mo., received a $25-million federal grant from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to develop a non-motorized transportation system that connects businesses and shopping centers to parks, schools, neighborhoods, nature trails and other facilities through a comprehensive system of walkways and bikeways. Columbia received the grant money as part of a FHWA non-motorized transportation pilot program that involved three other communities. The more than 100 miles of new bikeways, pedways and sidewalks in Columbia allow people to rely less on cars. The five-year project, called GetAbout Columbia, includes funds to develop a Web site and online bike maps, and conduct special events and trainings. Funding for these and other active living projects in Columbia comes from a variety of sources, including city sales taxes, private foundations and federal government grants. Columbia earmarks funds from a five-year renewable sales tax for improvements to its sidewalk and trail system, and it has received a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant through the Foundation's *Active Living by Design* national program.
*www.getaboutcolumbia.com*

#### Chicago Adopts Complete Streets Policy to Improve Bicycle Safety

Chicago adopted a complete streets policy mandating that the "safety and convenience" of pedestrians and bicyclists be considered in all future transportation projects. The complete streets policy is part of a more comprehensive Safe Streets for Chicago program, which includes enforcement, infrastructure and safety technology. Some safety technology includes public awareness efforts; countdown crossing signals; and policies and design standards, which include the development of a long-term pedestrian plan.
*www.biketraffic.org/content.php?id=1024_0_16_0_C*
*www.usmayors.org/chhs/healthycities/documents/guide-20080306.pdf*

#### Shelby Connects Trails to Town Facilities

With a population of 3,327, the city of Shelby in Eastern Montana is small and isolated. With the help of several outside funding sources, Shelby Mayor Larry Bonderud and a committee composed of city workers and residents planned a six-mile paved walking and biking trail that links the business district, residential neighborhoods, civic center, hospital and schools to public lands. Funding sources included the city of Shelby; the Community Transportation Enhancement Program; the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Urban Recreational Trails Program; and in-kind contributions of labor and materials. In 2006, Shelby received a $4,000 planning grant from the Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases (NAPA), funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
*www.nwpublichealth.org/docs/nph/s2008/baehr_s2008.pdf*

"We are all aware that the rapid rise in obesity rates—particularly among youth—foreshadows serious health problems. For local leaders, the trend also presents quality-of-life and fiscal challenges. That is why a growing number of city and county officials and school administrators see the urgency to collaborate to address this epidemic by making it easier for all residents to live more active lives and eat healthy food."

**Robert J. O'Neill, Jr., Executive Director,**
**International City/County Management Association**

© Photo: International City/County Management Association

# LAND USE FOR ACTIVE LIVING

GOAL: To increase opportunities for physical activity, help reduce pollution and improve economic development by providing more green space and walkable, mixed-use development.

Photo: Getty Images/David Buffington

## 1. Re-Evaluate Urban Design and Comprehensive Land-Use Plans to Improve Active Living

**The Issues and the Research:** A walkable neighborhood means that residents can easily walk or ride a bicycle from home to places they need to go, such as schools, shops and workplaces–whenever and as often as they want. A large number of studies have shown that adults living in walkable neighborhoods are more physically active.[22] Evidence also suggests that youth get more regular physical activity when they have opportunities to walk or ride a bicycle from home to school or other destinations.[23] Not surprisingly, residents are more likely to walk or ride a bicycle if they have access to public transportation, and live in a city center, close to a grocery store, drug store or other businesses.[24] In fact, according to one study, residents of communities with a mix of shops and businesses within easy walking distance have a 35 percent lower risk of obesity than residents of communities that do not have these services within easy walking distance.[25] Furthermore, researchers who analyzed data from more than 3,000 youth in

Atlanta determined that young people ages 5 to 18 are more likely to walk if they live in mixed-use neighborhoods with nearby schools, parks and businesses.[26] A 2003 study of 448 metropolitan counties found that people who live in compact, higher-density counties are less likely to be obese and spend more time walking than people who live in more sprawling counties.[27]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Transportation officials
- Planning officials
- Parks and recreation officials
- County and city health officials
- Housing officials
- Economic (re)development officials
- Business owners
- Community members

## Policy and Program Options

***Urban planning approaches***

Local policy-makers can consider urban planning approaches that promote walkable communities and enhanced community access to bicycle facilities and transportation elements that prioritize the interconnection between walking, bicycling and mass transit. For example, plans can assess the connection between public transit stations, sidewalks and bicycle routes to encourage public transit, walking and biking.

***Mixed-use development***

Local policy-makers can work with planners to foster walkable, safe communities by locating businesses, recreation centers, parks, libraries and other facilities near public transportation and major roads. Local policy-makers, planners and school districts officials can consider siting new schools within a 15-minute walk to residential areas. If schools, offices and retail outlets are situated in proximity to each other, children and their families are more likely to have multiple transportation options.

***Active transit-oriented development***

Local and state policy-makers can consider adopting ordinances or implementing programs that encourage **transit-oriented development** (TOD), which promotes the development of compact, pedestrian-friendly housing, offices and retail shops in close proximity to transit stations or stops. State policy-makers can adopt legislation that provides incentives to TOD. At the local level, policy-makers can adopt zoning overlays that provide density bonuses around transit, can lower parking requirements and provide other incentives to support higher density development that takes advantage of the investment in transit.

**TERMS:**

**Mixed-use neighborhoods** are communities that include buildings or a set of buildings that are zoned for a variety of uses. They can include some combination of residential, commercial, industrial, office, institutional or other land uses.

**Transit-oriented development** is a development pattern created around a transit facility or station that is characterized by higher density, mixed uses; a safe and attractive pedestrian environment; reduced parking; and direct and convenient access to the transit facility.

*Form-based zoning codes*
Local and state policy-makers can consider form-based zoning codes, which have become an increasingly popular approach to encourage the creation of communities where people want to live, work and play.

*Additional incentives, ordinances for active living*
Another option is a **traditional neighborhood development** ordinance or an **overlay zone** that encourages walkability and accessibility. Local policy-makers can consider using **Transfer of Development Rights** programs, where development rights are transferred from one district to another. Local policy-makers also can provide incentives and zoning ordinances to encourage the development of a variety of housing options, such as **multi-family units**. They can provide developers with incentives, such as **density bonuses** and fee waivers, and require developers to provide mixed-income housing opportunities.

## Getting Started

- Through the authorization of financial incentives, state legislatures can play a role in supporting mixed-use development.
- Local policy-makers, who are responsible for developing comprehensive land-use plans and making facility siting decisions, and developers, who make the financial investments, can:
  - host roundtables or town hall meetings to invite the public to review land-use plans and zoning ordinances;
  - identify areas underserved by retail;
  - use geographical information systems to determine land-use trends and walkability characteristics, such as street connectivity and sidewalks;
  - partner with health officials to ensure that public health is part of comprehensive plans or community planning;
  - call for a health impact assessment; and
  - incorporate physical activity opportunities.
- State and local policy-makers can raise funds to support activity-friendly development or improve a community's infrastructure using **Tax Increment Financing** programs.
- Local governments can participate in a **Business Improvement District**.
- Local and state government policy-makers can revisit comprehensive plans when any type of major infrastructure is built in order to integrate feasible enhancements. For example, policy-makers can consider enhancing bikeways if street improvements are being made.
- Local policy-makers can expand active living opportunities for youth and adults by establishing a **joint-use agreement** between communities and schools, including colleges and universities.
- School district officials can consider the convenience of biking or walking to school when deciding whether to renovate an existing school or to build a new school.

**TERMS:**

**Form-based zoning codes** concentrate first on the visual aspect of development: building height and bulk, façade treatments, the location of parking, and the relationship of the buildings to the street and to one another. Simply put, form-based codes emphasize the appearance and qualities of the public realm, the places created by buildings. As such, they provide an opportunity to create a high-quality environment that works for all users, including pedestrians. Form-based codes have been applied in new growth areas, in existing neighborhoods, in limited situations to special districts, and in wholesale code revisions for entire communities.

**Traditional neighborhood development** is a compact, mixed-use neighborhood, where residential, commercial and civic buildings are within close proximity to each other.

**Overlay zoning** is additional or stricter standards to existing zoning that can be used to protect particular natural or cultural features.

**Transfer of Development Rights** programs use the market to implement and pay for development density and location decisions by allowing landowners to sever development rights from properties in government-designated low-density areas. This makes it possible for development to be sold to purchasers who want to increase the density of development in areas that local governments have selected as higher-density areas.

**Multi-family units** are free-standing buildings composed of two or more separate living units, with each unit having its own bedroom, kitchen and bathroom facilities.

*terms continued on next page*

## Resources

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Impact Assessment Tool

Policy-makers can use the information on this Web site to improve their understanding of the Health Impact Assessment process, which examines a policy, program or project in terms of its potential health impact on a population. It incorporates public health issues into areas that traditionally fall outside of this realm, including transportation and land use.
*www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm*

### Council of State Governments, *States Promote Transit-Oriented Development*

This article examines the emergence of state-promoted transit-oriented development. Transit-oriented developments are centered around mass transit systems in order to encourage walking, bicycling and mass transit ridership. It eliminates the need for automobile usage, which benefits the environment and reduces traffic and congestion.
*www.csg.org/pubs/Documents/sn0803SmartGrowth.pdf*

### Local Government Commission, Community Image Survey CD

The Community Image Survey CD is a tool for helping policy-makers and their constituents address community design, land-use and transportation issues. It uses images to help participants evaluate the existing environment and envision their community's future. Tailored for the needs of each community, the survey provides a foundation for planning and implementation efforts.
*www2.lgc.org/bookstore/list.cfm?categoryId=1*

### Local Government Commission, *Creating Great Neighborhoods, Density in Your Community*

This report addresses the need to consider community density during the design process. According to the report, when density is properly incorporated into design projects, there is an increased potential to foster a sense of community, preserve open spaces, provide housing options, achieve local economic development goals and create walkable neighborhoods.
*www.lgc.org/freepub/docs/community_design/reports/density_manual.pdf*

### International City/County Management Association, *Creating a Blueprint for Healthy Community Design, A Local Government Guide to Reforming Zoning and Land Development Codes*

Designed for local government officials, this guide provides a strategic framework for reforming zoning and related development codes to encourage the design of more compact, vibrant and healthy communities.
*http://icma.org/upload/library/2005-08/%7BB0B1B25D-AF97-4432-967C-4174F1213716%7D.pdf*

### Leadership for Healthy Communities, Tax Increment Financing: *A Tool for Advancing Healthy Eating and Active Living*, Policy Brief

This policy brief examines the promise of Tax Increment Financing as a means of funding initiatives that promote healthy kids and healthy communities.
*www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org/images/stories/lhc_policybrief_tif_31.pdf*

**TERMS:**

**Density bonuses** allow developers to build more units and exceed limits established by the zoning district, if the additional units provide other public benefits. For example, communities have used density bonuses to protect open spaces and provide mixed-income housing.

**Tax Increment Financing** (TIF) can function differently in each state, but the approach generally involves local governments subsidizing costs by raising funds for development projects through the issuance of bonds guaranteed by future increases in property tax revenue. The increased revenue is generated as a result of the new development and/or as a result of pay-as-you-go notes financed by accumulated TIF fund tax revenues.

**Business Improvement Districts** are public-private partnerships among property owners and commercial tenants who collectively contribute to the maintenance, development and promotion of their commercial district.

**Joint-use agreements** are agreements between a school district and another entity, such as a city, county, nonprofit or private organization, regarding the sharing of capital, operating costs and responsibilities for a facility.

### Smart Growth, Smart Energy Toolkit

This toolkit provides policy-makers with useful information on model bylaws, case studies and other information on topics such as inclusionary zoning and environmental justice.
*www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/how-to-SG.html*

### Starting a Business Improvement District (BID), a Step-by-Step Guide

This report highlights the importance of BIDs and also outlines the necessary steps in establishing one. While this tool was published by the New York City Department of Small Business Services, it can be used by any community interested in developing a BID.
*http://home2.nyc.gov/html/sbs/downloads/pdf/bid_guide_complete.pdf*

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and CDBG Toolkit on Cross Cutting Issues

This Web site provides information about the CDBG program, which provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs. The toolkit provides information about financial management; the environmental review process; federal labor standards; rules of fair housing and non-discrimination practices; and statutes, regulations, forms and other documents that guide the acquisition and relocation process for state and local governmental organizations.
*www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/toolkit/index.cfm*
*www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs*

## 2. Improve Community Design Features to Encourage Physical Activity

**The Issues and the Research:** Almost two-thirds of youth fall short of the U.S. Surgeon General's recommendation for 60 minutes of physical activity on most days.[28] An analysis of studies in six communities found that, on average, residents in highly walkable neighborhoods took twice as many walking trips as people in less walkable neighborhoods–mostly to work or to run errands.[29] The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has determined that the number of people who exercise at least three times weekly can increase by 25 percent if leaders create and improve places to be active.[30]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials

***Others Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Planning officials
- Parks and recreation officials
- County and city health officials
- Community members

## Policy and Program Options

***Street and sidewalk accessibility***

State and local policy-makers can improve the pedestrian experience in downtown areas and retail centers, and make entrances to civic buildings, such as schools, directly accessible for pedestrians. They can adopt a complete streets (see page 16) policy, develop a pedestrian master plan and/or a bicycle master plan, and examine the funding mechanisms to increase investment in pedestrian facilities.

***Design guidelines to encourage activity***

Local and state policy-makers can develop guidelines aimed at providing wider sidewalks, trees that shade parks and paths, benches for people to rest, off-street parking and walkways from parking to sidewalks–efforts that can contribute to higher rates of physical activity. In addition, state and local governments can lead efforts to create walkable environments around historic and cultural features of the community. Local policy-makers can adopt design and construction guidelines that make stairs more appealing and encourage people to use them. Signs could be placed near both elevators and stairs as well as in shopping malls, train and bus stations, schools and libraries.

## Getting Started

- State and local policy-makers can work with their departments of transportation to balance the needs of motorists with those using other modes of transportation, such as bicyclists. Local policy-makers can consider the ratio of building height to **street right-of-way** width to create a comfortable pedestrian experience (ideal ratio: 1:3 to 1:2); ensure that roadways and crossings are adjacent; and consider traffic volume, speed and crossing distances.
- Local officials can conduct a walkability audit to identify locations that are not safe or comfortable for walking and places for improvement.

## Resources

### International City/County Management Association, *Active Living and Social Equity: Creating Healthy Communities for All Residents. A Guide for Local Government*

This report examines the link between health and the built environment, and it describes a number of ways that local governments can remove barriers and promote health equity. Solutions include increasing walkability and pedestrian safety; providing safe bicycle pathways and open spaces; improving transportation infrastructure; and increasing food access and affordability.
*http://icma.org/upload/library/2005-02/%7B16565E96-721D-467D-9521-3694F918E5CE%7D.pdf*

### Local Government Commission, Land-Use Planning Tools

This site provides tools that can be used to increase public participation in community and land-use planning. Tools include a computer simulation to allow the public to conceptualize what the redesigned area will look like; a visual survey allowing the public to rate an image on a scale of one to 10; and land-use mapping that allows the public to create different development strategies using board games or computer software.
*www.lgc.org/freepub/community_design/participation_tools/index.html*

**TERMS:**
**Street-right-of-way** is publicly owned land that contains both the street and a strip of land on either side of the street that holds appurtenant facilities (i.e., sidewalks, sewers and storm drains).

### National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW)

This Web site provides information about the NCBW, a program of the Bicycle Federation of America, Inc. NCBW provides community-based workshops, consulting services, training programs for public and transportation agencies, and economic development and tourism planning analysis.
*www.bikewalk.org*

### National Conference of State Legislatures, *The Legislative Role in Healthy Community Design*

This report examines state legislation during a two-year period that encourages physical activity and access to healthy food. Much of this legislation was collaborative and required state and local governments to come together to fund, implement and oversee projects.
*www.ncsl.org/programs/pubs/summaries/0143580004-sum.htm*

### National Complete Streets Coalition

Complete street policies direct transportation planners and engineers to consistently design streets with all users in mind. Policy-makers can use the information and resources on this site to improve the way their roads are planned, designed and constructed.
*www.completestreets.org/policies.html*
*www.completestreets.org*

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and CDBG Toolkit on Cross Cutting Issues

This Web site provides information about the CDBG program, which provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs. The toolkit provides information about financial management; the environmental review process; federal labor standards; rules of fair housing and non-discrimination practices; and statutes, regulations, forms and other documents that guide the acquisition and relocation process for state and local governmental organizations.
*www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/toolkit/index.cfm*
*www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs*

## Examples of Improving Land Use and Development for Active Living

### STATE

#### Washington State Growth Management Act

To promote physical activity, Washington has established the following requirements:

- The land-use element of each county and municipal comprehensive plan must consider urban planning approaches that promote physical activity.
- The transportation element of each county and municipal comprehensive plan must include a pedestrian and bicycle component that includes collaborative efforts to identify improvements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and corridors that encourage community access and promote healthy lifestyles.
- Each county and municipal transportation program must include enhanced bicycle or pedestrian facilities that promote non-motorized transit.
- The State Parks Commission must maintain policies that increase the number of people who have access to free or low-cost recreational opportunities.

*www.cted.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=4567&MId=944&wversion=Staging*

### LOCAL

#### Escondido Becomes Vibrant, Mixed Development Including Parks, Walkways, Beauty

A five-acre site in Escondido, Calif., that was once a crime-ridden trailer park is now a mixed-use, mixed-income development serving a vibrant community. Located along a main corridor, the site provides 72 affordable apartments, 10 single-family homes and nine shopkeeper units. The aesthetics include artistically painted buildings, and native architecture and landscaping. A park, which includes a large playground, tot lots, cobblestone paths and trees, wraps around the development.
*www.ci.escondido.ca.us/depts/cs/housing/2006-cra-award.pdf*

#### Seattle Transforms Dilapidated Neighborhood into Vibrant Community

The Seattle Housing Authority worked closely with community members to rebuild a formerly crime-ridden and dilapidated hilltop neighborhood into a mixed-use, mixed-income and environmentally sensitive community. The mixed-income neighborhood is composed of half rental units and half owner occupied units, and the new development includes parks, a public library, a health clinic and retail space. The more than 1,700 new units are expected to consume less water, electricity and natural gas than the community's previous 716 units. In addition, the 600 rental housing units built by the Seattle Housing Authority are all certified to be environmentally friendly at the highest standards. This project is the nation's first Energy Star-rated rental housing development.
*www.smartgrowth.org/library/articles.asp?art=3315&res=1024*

#### Cities and Counties Work with School Districts to Focus School Construction in Walkable Communities

During the past decade, a growing number of local governments–from California, to North Carolina–have started working closely with school systems to develop processes to ensure that schools are located in pedestrian-friendly settings. In some cases, local governments have worked directly with school districts to discuss land-use and growth plans, while in other cases, one or both partners have worked at the state level to ease rules related to minimum acreage requirements and other standards that make it difficult to build or keep schools in older neighborhoods that are walkable.
*http://icma.org/documents/SGNReport.pdf*

# OPEN SPACES, PARKS AND RECREATION

GOAL: To encourage fitness, creativity and enjoyment of the outdoors so that people become more physically active. Policy-makers can strengthen policies and programs that provide more open spaces, including parks and recreation facilities.

Photo: Getty Images/Mike Powell

## 1. Increase Access to Recreation Facilities and Open Spaces, Including Parks and Community Gardens

**The Issues and the Research:** An increasing body of evidence suggests that children who live in communities with open spaces–such as parks, ball fields, nature centers, picnic areas and campgrounds–are more physically active than those living in areas with fewer recreation facilities.[31] One study that evaluated the relationship between access to a variety of built and natural facilities and physical activity found that the people with the greatest access were 43 percent more likely to exercise for 30 minutes on most days compared with those with poorer access.[32] Furthermore, a 2006 study of more than 1,500 teenage girls found that they achieved 35 additional minutes of physical activity weekly for each park that was within a half mile of their homes.[33] Another study showed that adults who live near recreation facilities or have aesthetically pleasing places where they can be active have higher levels of recreational physical activity.[34, 35] For example, the results of a 2007 study

of low-income areas found that people who live within one mile of a park exercised at a rate 38 percent higher than those who lived farther away, and were four times as likely to visit a park at least once a week.[36]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Transportation officials
- Planning officials
- Parks and recreation officials
- County and city health officials
- Economic (re)development committees
- Private businesses (physical fitness centers)
- Local colleges and universities
- After-school programs leaders
- Community garden associations
- Community members

## Policy and Program Options

***Connectivity for increased activity***

State and local policy-makers can approve construction of new recreation facilities along trails or public transit routes to make them more accessible to residents. Local governments and developers can consider locating new schools near parks and recreation facilities.

***Open spaces for active living***

State and local policy-makers can develop policies favoring open spaces that can include recreational greenways. Open spaces can be developed through land acquisition, easements and partnerships with conservation groups. Policy-makers can integrate greenway plans, trails and parks with land-use, transportation and economic development plans, and advocate for subdivision ordinances that require reserving a portion of land for trails and greenways. State and local officials also can increase funding for parks, trails and greenways.

***Rehabilitation of blighted areas to create healthier environments***

State and local policy-makers can enact policies that assess the viability and sustainability of redeveloping blighted areas and vacant lots into productive economic and recreational opportunities. Policy-makers can call for the conversion of vacant lots into community gardens, parks and other green spaces. Local and state policy-makers can use U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development **Community Development Block Grant** funding, which targets development projects in vulnerable communities.

**TERMS:**

**Community Development Block Grant** (CDBG) program provides communities with resources to address community development needs. The program provides annual grants on a formula basis to 1,180 general units of local governments and states, which includes entities of states and municipalities that have the power to levy taxes and spend funds.

***Park expansion and maintenance in order to provide safe places to play***
Local policy-makers can support policies that maintain and create new neighborhood parks and **pocket parks** in close proximity to residents' homes.

***Joint-use agreements that increase activity options***
School and local government officials can develop joint-use agreements that allow community members to use school-owned recreation facilities. In turn, communities can offer facilities to schools, such as swimming pools.

***Rails to trails for recreation and transportation***
State and local government officials can work together to convert out-of-service rail corridors into trails using rail banking.

## Getting Started

- State and local policy-makers can identify potential spaces that could be turned into areas for physical activity. Policy-makers can meet with urban designers, planners, engineers and school and community leaders to evaluate the availability of open spaces and develop a common vision for the community's physical environment.
- State policy-makers can establish statewide strategies for streamlining cleanup processes and provide financial incentives to investors and developers. Local governments can partner with local businesses to sponsor the cleanup and maintenance of parks–highlighting the partnership at city-wide events held at the parks.
- Local policy-makers can create a public-private partnership with local gyms and recreation facilities to provide lower-income residents with greater access to facilities at a significantly reduced cost. They can also ensure that the hours of community recreation facilities are extended.
- Through joint-use agreements, local policy-makers can collaborate with service and volunteer organizations; faith- and community-based organizations; local colleges and universities; and elementary, middle and high schools to provide recreational activities during after-school hours. In developing a joint-use agreement, leaders can create a steering committee consisting of representatives from each party in the agreement. The committee can review suggestions from residents and community organizations. In addition, all parties can enter into cost-sharing agreements to ensure that additional costs (i.e., utilities and supplies) are fairly distributed. They can support programs that provide training on equipment.

## Resources

### International City/County Management Association (ICMA), *Active Living and Social Equity: Creating Healthy Communities for All Residents. A Guide for Local Government*

This report examines the link between health and the built environment, and it describes a number of ways that local governments can remove barriers and promote health equity. Solutions include increasing walkability and pedestrian safety; providing safe bicycle pathways and open spaces; improving transportation infrastructure; and increasing food access and affordability.
*http://icma.org/upload/library/2005-02/%7B16565E96-721D-467D-9521-3694F918E5CE%7D.pdf*

**TERMS:**
**Pocket parks** are small parks accessible to the general public, frequently developed on a vacant lot or irregularly shaped piece of land. They can be part of a large building project's public space requirement.

### Local Government Commission, Land-Use Planning Tools

This site provides tools that can be used to increase public participation in community and land-use planning. Tools include a computer simulation to allow the public to conceptualize what the redesigned area will look like; a visual survey allowing the public to rate an image on a scale of one to 10; and land-use mapping that allows the public to create different development strategies using board games or computer software.
*www.lgc.org/freepub/community_design/participation_tools/index.html*

### National Conference of State Legislatures, *The Legislative Role in Healthy Community Design*

This report examines state legislation during a two-year period that encourages physical activity and access to healthy food. Much of this legislation was collaborative and required state and local governments to come together to fund, implement and oversee projects.
*www.ncsl.org/programs/pubs/summaries/0143580004-sum.htm*

### Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Trail Building Toolbox

This toolbox provides basic information communities need to build trails. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is a nonprofit organization working with communities to preserve unused rail corridors by transforming them into trails.
*www.railstotrails.org/whatwedo/trailbuilding/technicalassistance/toolbox/toolbox_index.html*

### The Trust for Public Land, *The Excellent City Park System*

This report examines the role of parks in residents' lives and makes suggestions for the creation of more effective park spaces. It outlines "Seven Factors of Excellence" in evaluating parks including a clear expression of purpose; a continued planning and community involvement process; and sufficient assets in land, staff and equipment.
*www.tpl.org/content_documents/excellentcityparks_2006.pdf*

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Community Development Block Grants Toolkit on Cross Cutting Issues

This Web site provides information about the CDBG program, which provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs. The toolkit provides information about financial management; the environmental review process; federal labor standards; rules of fair housing and non-discrimination practices; and statutes, regulations, forms and other documents that guide the acquisition and relocation process for state and local governmental organizations.
*www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs*
*www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/toolkit/index.cfm*

### U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

This Web site provides policy-makers with information about RTP, which gives funds to states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. The RTP funds are distributed to states by legislative formula: half of the funds are distributed equally among all states and half are distributed in proportion to the estimated amount of non-highway recreational fuel use in each state.
*www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails*

## Examples of Supporting Active Parks and Recreation Facilities

### LOCAL

#### New York's Parks Department Helps Convert Vacant Lots into Gardens

A program of the New York Parks and Recreation Department, GreenThumb, supports more than 600 gardens that serve nearly 20,000 people. A majority of the gardens, which are located in underserved neighborhoods, used to be vacant lots. Funding came from Community Development Block Grants.
*www.greenthumbnyc.org*

#### Jogging Path Motivates Boyle Height Residents to Exercise More

Community members in Boyle Heights, Calif., have long struggled to be active and safe in their community. Boyle Heights is a predominantly lower-income Latino community and like many other disadvantaged communities, its residents had little access to open spaces. The local government worked with a coalition of community members and advocacy groups to install a rubberized jogging path modeled after one in a wealthier, nearby city. The new path is now used by Boyle Heights residents and people from neighboring communities.
*www.preventioninstitute.org/pdf/BE_full_document_110304.pdf*

#### Atlanta Adopts BeltLine Initiative to Interconnect Parks, Trails and Light-Rail Routes

The Atlanta BeltLine Initiative will create a 22-mile corridor of interconnected parks, trails and light-rail routes that surround the downtown area in order to address issues of urban sprawl, particularly traffic and lack of green space. The completed project will connect 45 neighborhoods and nearly 1,300 acres of new green space, plus improvements to 700 acres of existing parks. Funding for this project included federal dollars, the creation of a **Tax Allocation District**, which was the primary local funding source, as well as private funding sources.
*www.beltline.org/BeltLineBasics/BeltLineHistory/tabid/1703/Default.aspx*
*www.usmayors.org/chhs/healthycities/documents/guide-20080306.pdf*

#### Miami Dade County Establishes New Principles to Revitalize Parks, Streets and Neighborhoods

The Miami-Dade County parks master plan establishes new principles to guide how the county plans parks and public places, and designs streets and sidewalks to encourage more people to walk and ride a bicycle. According to the master plan, the county's vision is to create a new, interconnected framework for growth that results in a more livable, sustainable community. The system of parks and open spaces also will facilitate the revitalization of neighborhoods. For example, included in the plan is a 40-mile loop connecting Biscayne and Everglades national parks along the southern end of the county, and a north-to-south recreational and ecological zone along the eastern edge of the Everglades.
*www.planetizen.com/node/30158*
*www.miamidade.gov/greatparksummit/library/OSMP_FINAL_REPORT_entiredocument.pdf*

**TERMS:**
**Tax Allocation Districts** are defined areas where real estate property tax money gathered above a certain threshold for a certain period of time (typically 25 years) is used for a specified improvement. The funds raised from a tax allocation district are placed in a tax-free bond where the money can continue to grow. These improvements are typically for revitalization and especially to complete redevelopment efforts. TAD is a geographic area in which TIF can be used.

"How can we expect to succeed in confronting childhood obesity if we eliminate recess, serve unhealthy lunches in our schools, ignore the need to work with other groups and reduce physical education classes? We need to come together, focus on the problem and put our kids first."

**Randy Collins, President,**
**American Association of School Administrators**

© Photo: Stephen Charles Photography

# QUALITY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN AND NEAR SCHOOLS

GOAL: To increase physical fitness and reduce childhood obesity rates by increasing the frequency, duration and intensity of physical activity in and near schools. Policy-makers can have an important impact on improving opportunities for physical activity during and after school.

Photo: Charlie Schuck

## 1. Offer at Least 30 Minutes of Quality Physical Activity Daily

**The Issues and the Research:** Children and adolescents spend a good portion of their days in school, and state and local governments and school districts can help them meet the U.S. Surgeon General and the Department of Health and Human Services' recommendations, which suggest children and adolescents should be physically active for at least 60 minutes on most days. According to one study examining middle schools, schools that provided more facilities, equipment and supervision saw more daily activity among their students.[37] By increasing the required amounts of vigorous physical activity in schools, elementary and high school students in 13 studies conducted from 1983 to 1999 had consistently improved fitness levels.[38]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Parks and recreation officials
- County and city health officials
- Nonprofit organizations such as Sports4Kids, Alliance for a Healthier Generation and Action for Healthy Kids
- Teachers

## Policy and Program Options

***Physical activity requirement***
State policy-makers can consider making 30 minutes of quality daily physical activity a requirement for all schools.

***Integrate physical activity throughout the school day***
School officials can consider creating a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program that includes opportunities to engage in daily physical activity, such as classroom breaks, and integrates educational components in the exercises to encourage sustainable healthy behaviors.

***Health curriculum***
School officials can consider integrating aspects of the health curriculum within other curricula (e.g., science, reading), so that children can learn about health throughout the day.

***Joint-use agreements***
Local policy-makers and school officials can develop joint-use agreements that allow community members to use recreation facilities. In turn, communities can offer facilities to schools, such as additional meeting spaces.

***Staff wellness policies***
School officials can adopt policies and programs that promote and support school staff wellness programs so that they set good examples for students.

***Before- and after-school programs***
As part of a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program, school officials can provide before- and after-school programming that increases students' physical activity levels.

***Recess***
School officials can offer regular recess that is properly supervised by trained staff to provide additional opportunities for students to engage in physical activity. Recess before lunch has been shown to improve student behavior and performance in the classroom.[31] State policy-makers can implement policies and programs supporting recess as a necessary component of the school day.

***Facilities and equipment***
State policy-makers can ensure that there is funding available for the construction and maintenance of gymnasiums, playgrounds and fields. They can also make sure that schools have funding to supply their gymnasiums with an adequate amount of equipment for physical activity.

## Getting Started

- School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs) at the school district and school levels can recommend policies and practices for increasing daily physical activity.
- School officials can evaluate existing policies related to recess, create before- and after-school opportunities for physical activity, encourage staff wellness and integrate physical activity into the whole curriculum.
- School officials can use ideas and resources from rigorously evaluated fitness programs, such as CATCH and SPARK, to develop a district-wide or statewide physical activity lesson bank that can be used to incorporate physical activity across the curriculum.
- Local government policy-makers and school officials can create a city-school team to cultivate stronger partnerships among education, municipalities and health professionals.
- School officials can collaborate with local businesses or community organizations to develop cost-effective exercise campaigns or programs.
- School officials can conduct site visits of exemplary city-school projects. School district leaders and other school officials can ask local athletes or fitness experts and physical education teachers to serve on school wellness committees.
- Schools can join the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Healthy Schools program to receive resources and customized support to implement changes that promote physical activity. Schools can partner with local and national organizations, such as Sports4Kids or Action for Healthy Kids, which provide physical activity resources, equipment, supervision, training and technical assistance.
- School officials can increase opportunities for students to be physically active by offering a variety of sports (including team sports), life-long fitness activities, such as walking and dancing, and other extracurricular programs that involve physical activity.

## Resources

### Action for Healthy Kids
This Web site provides tools and resources about addressing the childhood obesity epidemic by making changes in schools. Action for Healthy Kids is a public-private partnership composed of more than 50 national organizations and government agencies representing education, health, fitness and nutrition.
*www.actionforhealthykids.org*

### Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Healthy Schools
The Alliance is a partnership between the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation to fight childhood obesity. The Healthy Schools program, which is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, provides information and resources for schools to increase opportunities for students to exercise and eat healthier foods. It also provides resources for teachers and staff to become healthy role models.
*www.healthiergeneration.org/schools.aspx*

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Make a Difference at Your School*

This report proposes 10 strategies for schools seeking to reduce and prevent obesity. Some recommended strategies include creating a Coordinated School Health Program, maintaining an active student health council, assessing school policies, and developing a plan to strengthen the school's physical activity and nutrition programs.
*www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/KeyStrategies/pdf/make-a-difference.pdf*

### Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH)

This Web site provides information about CATCH, an evidence-based Coordinated School Health Program designed to promote physical activity and healthy food choices, and prevent tobacco use in elementary school-aged children. It provides resources, tips and training.
*www.catchinfo.org*

### The Council of State Governments, *Preventing Disease Through Physical Activity, Legislator Policy Brief and Talking Points*

This report examines the consequences of physical inactivity and the need for legislative intervention.
*www.healthystates.csg.org/Publications/#adolescentschoolhealth*

### National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), *Position Statement, Comprehensive Physical Activity Programs*

This document provides school officials with NASPE's position statement on quality physical activity programs in schools ranging from K to 12. According to NASPE, a quality physical activity program includes daily physical education, regular recess and opportunities for physical activity before, during and after school, as well as involvement by school staff, parents and the community.
*www.aahperd.org/naspe/pdf_files/cspap_online.pdf*

### National Association of State Boards of Education, State School Healthy Policy Database

This health policy database contains laws from all 50 states and the District of Columbia regarding more than 40 different health topics. A brief description of laws, legal codes, rules, regulations and mandates are included.
*www.nasbe.org/index.php/shs/health-policies-database*

### National School Boards Association, *Physical Activity 101 Packet*

This packet provides fact sheets, research, sample policies and other resources that examine the need for and benefits of physical activity in schools, and it propose ways to implement effective policies.
*www.nsba.org/MainMenu/SchoolHealth/101Packets/PhysicalActivity101.aspx*

### North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Energizers: Classroom-Based Physical Activities

Energizers, typically a 10-minute burst of classroom physical activity, allow teachers to integrate physical activity into academic concepts to keep students active and engaged. This Web site provides a description of how to conduct energizers and provides examples of how to incorporate them into existing curricula.
*www.ncpe4me.com/energizers.html*

### School Nutrition Association, Eat Smart, Get Moving

This Web site provides information about Eat Smart, Get Moving!, a school-based personal wellness challenge that motivates staff members to eat well and become more active. For 30 weeks participating staff form teams, earn points and compete to meet the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
*www.eatsmart-getmoving.org*

### SPARK

This Web site provides information about SPARK, a research-based organization that develops, implements and evaluates PE programs that promote wellness.
*www.sparkpe.org/pricesEarlyChildhood.jsp*

### Sports4Kids

This Web site provides information about full-day play and physical activity programming–during lunchtime, recess and after school–taught from a framework of youth development. The programming works in public elementary schools where at least 50 percent of the student population is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Each Sports4Kids' site coordinator works at his or her school five days a week, throughout the school day and after school.
*www.sports4kids.org*

### Take 10!, Curriculum Tool for Classroom-Based Physical Activity

Take10! is a tool that allows teachers to incorporate physical activity into the classroom curriculum for K to 5 students. This curriculum compliments existing physical education courses and instills in students a lasting commitment to healthy behaviors.
*www.take10.net*

### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

This report contains science-based guidelines to help children and adults improve their health through physical activity. Policy-makers can use it to help inform physical activity policies. It is meant to complement the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, which provides nutritional recommendations.
*www.health.gov/PAGuidelines*

## 2. Consider Requiring Standards-Based Physical Education Classes Taught by Certified PE Teachers

**The Issues and the Research:** For children in underserved communities, physical education (PE) at school may be one of the few places where it's safe to play outdoors. Additionally, it may be the only way that they are introduced to certain sports and activities that could provide lifelong enjoyment. Unfortunately, fewer than 4 percent of elementary schools provide daily physical education or its recommended equivalent (150 minutes per week) to all students for the full school year.[40] This trend is especially discouraging given that there also is a link between increased physical activity in schools and improved academic performance. Studies have shown that students who spend more time in PE or other school-based physical activity can improve scores on standardized achievement tests–even if the students spend less time in the classroom.[41] For example, students in a 1999 California study who received enhanced PE received better test scores on several tests compared with other students in the control groups.[42] In fact, 11 of 14 studies that analyzed 58,000 students' physical activity levels and test scores from 1967–2006 confirmed a link.[43]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Nonprofit, advocacy organizations such as Action for Healthy Kids, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and the American Heart Association (AHA)
- Parents and teachers

## Policy and Program Options

***Physical education as a core requirement***
State policy-makers can consider including physical education as a core requirement in the school curriculum and set time standards (e.g., 150 minutes per week in elementary schools).

***Physical education standards***
State policy-makers can adopt high-quality state PE standards based on national standards (such as those from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education or American Heart Association), and local school leaders can look to both state and national standards when developing their physical education curriculum. State and local school officials can consider requiring minimum levels of regular, high-quality PE per school day. They also can ensure that students are active in at least half of the time they spend in PE.

***State funding for physical education***
State legislatures can increase funding to school districts so that they may provide high-quality PE classes and teachers.

***Health curriculum***
School officials can encourage PE teachers to work with other subject area teachers to integrate the core curriculum into their classes. For example, PE teachers can ask students to use math skills by measuring their heart rates and graphing the data.

***Teacher training and development***
State policy-makers can require that PE teachers are adequately prepared by adopting high quality certification standards. Schools can ensure that teachers receive ongoing professional development and support.

***Skills-based activities***
School officials can offer skills-based activities within the PE curriculum that go beyond competitive sports and appeals to a variety of students. This approach could help students develop life-long active behaviors and lifestyles. Some examples of non-competitive activities include yoga, tai chi and dance.

***Facilities and equipment***
State legislatures can ensure that there is funding available for the construction and maintenance of gymnasiums, playgrounds and fields. Schools also can equip their gymnasiums with an adequate equipment for safe physical activity.

## Getting Started

- School district officials can review their district's existing PE curriculum using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (PECAT) to assess its alignment with state and national standards.
- School officials can look to state, local and national organizations that provide physical education resources, equipment and other assistance.
- State and local school officials can contact the National Association for Sport and Physical Education to learn more about national standards for physical education and guidelines on developing state and local standards.

## Resources

### Action for Healthy Kids, Wellness Policy Tool

This tool helps schools create a local wellness policy that meets their districts' unique goals for nutrition and physical activity, and put the policy into action to positively impact students' health and lifelong choices. Action for Healthy Kids is composed of more than 50 national organizations and government agencies representing education, health, fitness and nutrition.
*www.actionforhealthykids.org/wellnesstool/index.php*

### American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAPHERD)

This Web site provides information about AAPHERD–the largest organization of professionals supporting and assisting those involved in physical education, leisure, fitness, dance, health promotion, education and all specialties related to achieving a healthy lifestyle. They provide policy-makers with standards, guidelines and other tools.
*www.aahperd.org*

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Make a Difference at Your School*

This report proposes 10 strategies for schools seeking to reduce and prevent obesity. For example, some of the strategies recommend creating a Coordinated School Health Program (to promote student health and learning), maintaining an active school health council, assessing school policies, and developing a plan to strengthen the school's physical activity and nutrition program.
*www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/KeyStrategies/pdf/make-a-difference.pdf*

### Centers for Disease Control, Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (PECAT)

The PECAT will help school districts conduct a clear, complete and consistent analysis of written PE curricula, based on national PE standards. Results can help school districts enhance existing curricula, develop their own curricula or select a published curriculum for the delivery of quality physical education in schools.
*www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/PECAT/index.htm*

### Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH)

This Web site provides information about CATCH, an evidence-based Coordinated School Health Program designed to promote physical activity and healthy food choices, and prevent tobacco use in elementary school-aged children. It provides resources, tips and training.
*www.catchinfo.org*

### National Association for Sports and Physical Education, *Moving into the Future: National Standards for Physical Education*

This document describes national physical education standards, which include motor skills competency, movement concepts and strategies, a healthy fitness level, respect and a learned value of physical activity.
*www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=publications-nationalstandards.html*

### National Association of State Boards of Education, State School Healthy Policy Database

This health policy database contains laws from all 50 states and the District of Columbia regarding more than 40 different health topics. It includes a brief description of laws, legal codes, rules, regulations and mandates.
*www.nasbe.org/index.php/shs/health-policies-database*

### National Conference of State Legislatures, Examples of Physical Education (PE) Legislation

This Web site provides an update on legislative measures taken to promote health and physical activity among students. Much of this legislation was aimed at increasing physical activity and improving nutrition among students in order to prevent obesity and the related diseases.
*www.ncsl.org/programs/health/ChildhoodObesity-2007.htm*

### National School Boards Association, *Addressing Wellness Policies 101*

This document provides background information on the prevalence of student obesity, guidance and policy-development tools, highlights of wellness policies in several states and additional external resources about wellness policies.
*www.nsba.org/MainMenu/SchoolHealth/101Packets/AddressingWellnessPolicies101.aspx*

## 3. Support Walk to School and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programs

**The Issues and the Research:** The national percentage of youth ages 5 to 18 who walk or ride a bicycle to school dropped from 42 percent in 1969[44] to only 16 percent in 2001.[45] A growing body of research, however, has found that walking to school is associated with higher overall physical activity throughout the day.[46, 47] Federal SRTS grants can be used to create safer walking and biking routes to school. For example, a SRTS program in Marin County, Calif., which included both safety improvements and encouragement to walk to school, increased the number of children walking to school by 64 percent in two years.[48] In addition, the findings from 33 studies in 2006 showed that children were more physically active when connected sidewalks provided access to destinations such as schools, but less likely to walk if they were confronted with traffic hazards and unsafe intersections.[49]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Law enforcement agencies
- Local businesses
- Safe Routes to School National Partnership
- Local nonprofit organizations
- Parents

## Policy and Program Options

***Safe Routes to School (SRTS)***

Local government and school policy-makers can adopt a SRTS program, which includes the 5Es (evaluation, education, encouragement, enforcement and engineering). State policy-makers can apply for funding and ensure that the funding is made available to local communities in a timely manner.

***Walking school buses***

Local government and school policy-makers can support walking school buses–a group of children walking to school together with supervision by more than one adult, particularly along unsafe routes.

## Getting Started

- State, local and school policy-makers can jointly apply for SRTS funding through federal surface transportation legislation that supports the integration of bicycling and walking.
- Local governments can use mapping and/or survey tools to assess the feasibility of routes and to identify problem areas.
- Local government and school officials can develop and coordinate walk-to-school routes with law enforcement agencies and public works departments.
- Local government and school officials can work with community members interested in developing school walking routes and convene a jurisdiction-wide meeting of parent groups, school and transportation officials, community leaders and local police.
- Local government and school officials can collaborate with local business to provide light-weight, brightly-colored neon vests to students who use the walking school bus. Local government policy-makers can adopt SRTS infrastructure improvements as part of their capital improvement plans.

## Resources

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, KidsWalk-to-School Program

This Web site provides information about KidsWalk-to-School, a community-based program to promote regular physical activity by encouraging students to walk to and from school in groups accompanied by adults. This program emphasizes community partnerships with schools, parent-teacher organizations, local businesses and other groups to promote areas that are conducive to walking or bicycling.
*www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/Dnpa/kidswalk*

### Local Government Commission, *Safe Routes to School*, Fact Sheet

This fact sheet provides policy-makers with examples of communities that have implemented a Safe Routes to School program. Inspired by successes in Canada and England, California undertook its own version of the program in order to address a number of state-specific concerns.
*www.lgc.org/freepub/docs/community_design/safe_routes_to_school.pdf*

### National Center for Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

This Web site provides information about the federal SRTS program and offers a variety of resources, such as marketing and promotional items, education tools, training manuals, evaluation forms and progress reports.
*www.saferoutesinfo.org*

### The Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) National Partnership

The SRTS National Partnership is a network of more than 400 nonprofit organizations, government agencies, schools and professionals working to advance the SRTS movement. The project can help policy-makers and other stakeholders work with state departments of transportation to increase physical activity in schools, make the best use of available federal SRTS funds, and remove policy barriers to walking and bicycling to schools.
*www.saferoutespartnership.org*

### U.S. Department of Transportation, Safe Routes to School Overview and Safe Routes to School Classroom Activities

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) site provides an overview of the SRTS program, as well as specific program guidance to the states in the administration of SRTS funds. SRTS classroom activities combine fun activities with practical lessons about the effect of certain transportation choices on the environment, community and individuals. The classroom activities provide teachers and students with safety tips and advice on how to walk or ride a bicycle to school.
*http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes*
*www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/Safe-Routes-2002/classact.html*

### Walking School Bus

This Web site provides information about the walking school bus, which is a group of students who walk to school accompanied by one or more adults. Starting a walking school bus is fairly simple and involves contacting interested students, locating a route, identifying adult supervisors and finalizing the logistics.
*www.walkingschoolbus.org*

## 4. Facilitate Joint-Use Agreements

**The Issues and the Research:** According to the Institute of Medicine, increasing opportunities for regular physical activity and supporting the efforts of families to incorporate physical activity into their lives are important strategies for reversing the childhood obesity epidemic.[50] Policy-makers at the local and school district levels can increase physical activity opportunities at a low cost by entering into joint-use agreements. These agreements, typically made between municipalities and educational institutions, can allow community members to use school facilities, such as gymnasiums, when school is not in session, as well as allow students and faculty to use community facilities when they are not available in schools.

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Parks and recreation officials
- County and city health officials
- Businesses (sports centers)
- Colleges and universities
- Civic organizations
- Teachers

## Policy and Program Options

***Joint-use agreements that increase activity options***

School officials can work with local government policy-makers to allow community residents to use school facilities for physical activity and students and faculty to use community facilities. For example, school officials can allow dance, yoga and martial arts instructors to use the gymnasium and other facilities for community classes before and after school.

## Getting Started

- Local government and school officials can work with instructors, community members and volunteers to develop clear standards for the care and use of school equipment and facilities. For example, school and local government officials together can provide programs and funding for training on the equipment.
- Local government and school officials can enter into cost-sharing agreements to ensure that costs (utilities, supplies, etc.) incurred from the use of a facility are shared appropriately.
- Local civic and service organizations can collaborate with local government and school officials to provide supervision and organized physical activities after school. They can develop a partnership among community recreation program coordinators, schools, businesses and community groups to ensure that lower-income children have access to facilities for physical activity programs.

- School officials can plan for increased communications among agencies involved and clearly outline individuals' roles and responsibilities.
- Some cities, school districts and institutions of higher education can arrange to share the maintenance and security costs of joint-use facilities such as running tracks and parks. This arrangement also allows participating parties to increase student and community access to facilities essential for physical activity. For example, by working with the city, a school can make use of nearby parks and open spaces as play areas for students during the school day.

## Resources

### Center for Cities and Schools and Public Health Law and Policy, *Joint-Use Partnerships in California: Strategies to Enhance Schools and Communities*

This report describes how school districts and local jurisdictions throughout California are using joint-use agreements to accommodate school and community needs. It also provides an accessible, detailed discussion of what joint use is, why local entities partner, and how these partnerships are formed and implemented.
*http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/CC&S_PHLP_2008_JointUse_execsumm.pdf*

### National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities

This site examines a number of joint-use agreements between schools and communities, highlighting those that open up school yards for public use and those that create joint-use gymnasiums. It provides resources that examine the benefits of joint-use agreements, and their legal implications and necessary considerations.
*www.edfacilities.org/rl/joint_use.cfm*

### National League of Cities, Sample Joint-Use Agreements

This site examines various types of joint-use agreements between schools and communities in a number of cities nationwide. For example, in Broomfield, Colo., the government uses fees from certain construction activities to fund joint-use facilities at area schools.
*www.nlc.org/iyef/education/K-12_school/jointuse.aspx*

### National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN), Joint-Use Legal Tools

This Web site provides legal tools to help communities form joint use agreements. Tools include a 50-state chart of laws allowing community use of school facilities and model joint use agreements. NPLAN provides leaders in the childhood obesity prevention field with focused legal research, model policies, fact sheets, toolkits, training and technical assistance to explain legal issues related to public health.
*www.nplanonline.org/news/nplan-releases-legal-tools-create-joint-use-agreements*

## Examples of Enabling Physical Activity In and Near Schools

### STATE

#### Mississippi Requires Increased Physical Education

In 2007, Mississippi enacted legislation that requires the following elements:

- 150 minutes per week of physical activity-based instruction and 45 minutes per week of health education for grades K to 8;
- one semester of physical education or physical activity for grades 9 to 12;
- school wellness plans that promote increased physical activity, healthy eating behaviors and other healthy lifestyles choices into core subject areas; and
- the position of a state physical activity coordinator at the Mississippi Department of Education.

*www.healthyschoolsms.org/ohs_main/MShealthystudentsact.htm*

#### Delaware Strengthens Physical Education (PE) and Physical Activity Efforts

Delaware requires students in grades 1 to 8 to be enrolled in a PE program. The state established a physical education/physical activity pilot program in at least six of Delaware's public elementary, middle or high schools to determine the potential for future expanded use in all of the state's public schools. Each school in the pilot program is required to provide at least 150 minutes per week of a combination of physical education and physical activity for each student. Physical education and physical activity may include PE classes, recess and planned classroom breaks. The state also required each school district and charter school to assess the physical fitness of each student at the elementary-, middle- and high-school level, and provide the results to students' parents or guardians.

*http://nasbe.org/index.php/shs/health-policies-database*
*www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/staff/ci/content_areas/files/Reg503PhysicalEducationDec2006.pdf*

#### North Carolina State Board of Education Promotes Physical Activity

North Carolina's Board Policy (HSP-S-000, 2005) requires schools to provide a minimum of 30 minutes of daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity to all students in grades K to 8. This may be completed through regular physical education, physical activities, recess, dance, classroom energizers or other curriculum-based physical education. The physical activity must involve physical exertion of at least a moderate-to-vigorous intensity level and for a duration that is sufficient enough to provide a significant health benefit to students. Another board policy prohibits taking away structured and unstructured recess and other physical activity from students as a form of punishment. In addition, it prohibits using severe and inappropriate exercise as a form of punishment for students.

*http://nasbe.org/index.php/shs/health-policies-database*
*www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/healthfulliving/*

#### The Utah Department of Transportation Creates Software to Map Safe Routes to School

To help students walk to school safely, the Utah Department of Transportation created software called the Student Neighborhood Access Plan (SNAP). Under Utah law, elementary and junior high schools are required to create a routing plan that informs students of the safest way to get to and from school. Schools can use SNAP software to create these safe routes and share them with students and their families.

*www.udot.utah.gov/kids/parent.php*

LOCAL

## Delano Union School District Implements New Policy to Increase Physical Activity

The Delano Union School District in Delano, Calif., implemented a K to 8 standards-based PE curriculum and adopted a district-wide theme of "Healthy Minds and Healthy Bodies Lead to Success." This initiative provided resources, such as PE equipment and staff development for teachers, and featured "Station PE," a Web-based PE lesson plan and assessment site. It also created a Physical Education Resource Teacher position to develop collaborations among school and PE staff, and ensure that physical education across grades and schools is consistent, standards-based and interactive. In addition, the district implemented a new wellness policy with improved strategies for physical activity and nutrition, and it is developing a before-and after-school program to increase student physical activity.

*www.nmsa.org/Advocacy/WellnessPolicy/SuccessStories/Delano/tabid/1100/Default.aspx*

# SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION

GOAL: To improve the safety of neighborhoods and residents' perceptions of safety in their neighborhoods so that children and families become more physically active.

Photo: Getty Images/Granger Wootz

## 1. Keep Communities Safe and Free From Crime to Encourage Outdoor Activity

**The Issues and the Research:** While unsafe environments are usually associated with violence, they also can include dilapidated, inadequate physical infrastructure that is unsafe for physical activity. Parents' perceptions of safety in their neighborhoods, from concerns about traffic to strangers, can determine the level of activity in which their children engage.[51, 52] Women in lower-income and African-American and Latino neighborhoods, in particular, feel unsafe more often and therefore spend less time outdoors. For instance, women who perceived that their neighborhoods were unsafe walked 20 percent less than those who said their neighborhoods were safe.[53] Another recent study found that adolescent girls in high-crime areas were less active outdoors than those in neighborhoods with lower crime rates.[54] A study of Chicago residents demonstrated that youth living in safer neighborhoods engaged in physical activity for an additional 49 minutes per week than youth living in unsafe neighborhoods.[55] In underserved communities, access to safe places to play, such as school playgrounds during after-school hours, improves the likelihood that children will be physically active.[56, 57]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Public health officials
- Law enforcement agencies
- Nonprofit organizations and federal programs such as Safe Routes to School, alcohol prevention programs and Community Oriented Policing Services
- Local businesses
- Community volunteers and neighborhood associations (community coalitions)

## Policy and Program Options

***Street patrol***
Local policy-makers can increase policing in high-crime areas, pedestrian walkways and parks. Police departments can work with communities to receive input on danger zones.

***Safe Routes to School***
State, local and school officials can support Walk to School or Safe Routes to School programs (see "Support Walk to School and Safe Routes to School Programs," page 35).

***Watch groups***
Local policy-makers can work with community members to employ alternative policing strategies, such as **neighborhood watch groups**.

***Problem-oriented policing***
Local policy-makers can adopt problem-oriented policing, which promotes the systematic analysis of problems to identify potential solutions and partnerships with organizations and communities to reduce crime.

***Community design and aesthetics***
Local policy-makers can adopt community design strategies that discourage crime. For example, they can ensure safe, attractive walking environments by providing appropriate lighting, building design features that promote eyes on the street (such as front porches and active storefronts with windows overlooking sidewalks), and pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and streets. They also can rehabilitate vacant properties and clean up gang graffiti and debris.

**TERMS:**
**Neighborhood watch groups** are a crime prevention strategy that engages citizens to organize themselves and work with law enforcement to keep a trained eye and ear on their communities.

## Getting Started

- To maximize resources and increase effectiveness, local government crime prevention plans can include collaboration among different departments, agencies and community groups, including public health, housing, economic development, law enforcement, probation, faith- and community-based organizations and schools.
- Local policy-makers, community members and schools can partner to create safe routes to school or other school safety efforts.
- State legislatures and local governments can provide funding to local law enforcement departments to ensure law enforcement officers can provide assistance to community policing organizations.
- Local and state government agencies, including those with jurisdiction over health, probation, economic development and law enforcement can partner and develop joint crime-prevention strategies.
- Local and state government officials can work with the police departments and other city agencies to increase patrol in high-crime areas. They can tailor interventions to the setting and desired type of activity, and focus on the worst areas first.
- Local government and school officials can meet with community members, including faith-based community organizations, to form neighborhood watch groups.
- Law enforcement agencies can apply for start-up funding for community programs from the **Community Oriented Policing Services** program.
- Local governments can also apply for Community Development Block Grants to revitalize blighted areas and clean up vacant lots.
- Local government officials and community groups can work together to identify existing coalitions in the community, and to offer support and strategies to focus their efforts beyond law enforcement solutions.

**TERMS:**
**Community Oriented Policing Services** (COPS) was created through the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 to advance the practice of community policing as an effective strategy to improve public safety. COPS awards grants to tribal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

## Resources

### American Planning Association, Safe Growth Checklist

The American Institute of Certified Planners and the Professional Institute of the American Planning Association developed this checklist to promote discussion about enhancing neighborhood safety. It will ultimately serve as a guide for identifying unsafe conditions and forming a plan of action to rectify them.
*http://myapa.planning.org/symposium/pdf/SafeGrowthAmericaChecklist.pdf*

### Bureau of Justice Assistance, Center for Program Evaluation

This Web site provides information about Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, which involves strategies to modify the environment in order to reduce crime rates.
*www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/psi_cp/cpted2.htm*

### National Center for Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

This Web site provides information about the federal SRTS program and offers a variety of resources, such as marketing and promotional items, education tools, training manuals, evaluation forms and progress reports.
*www.saferoutesinfo.org*

### National League of Cities, *Vital Partners, Mayors and Police Chiefs Working Together for America's Children and Youth*

This report examines the need for a collaborative effort among mayors, police chiefs and other city agencies to promote and ensure the well being of children and youth. Through a collaborative effort, these individuals can reduce and prevent problems, such as bullying, gang activity and street violence.
*www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/ric/Publications/e0207659_vital%20partners.pdf*

### National Sheriff's Association, Neighborhood Watch Program

This Web site provides information and resources to help communities develop neighborhood watch programs in their localities. According to this site, a neighborhood watch group working closely with law enforcement can be an effective tool in deterring crime and promoting community safety.
*www.usaonwatch.org*

### The Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) National Partnership

The SRTS National Partnership is a network of more than 400 nonprofit organizations, government agencies, schools and professionals working to advance the SRTS movement. The project can help policy-makers and other stakeholders work with state departments of transportation to increase physical activity in schools, make the best use of available federal SRTS funds, and remove policy barriers to walking and bicycling to schools.
*www.saferoutespartnership.org*

### U.S. Department of Justice Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS)

This Web site provides resources and funding information for communities and law enforcement agencies interested in the COPS program. The program was created through the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 to advance community policing to improve public safety. COPS awards grants to tribal, state and local law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime-fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies.
*www.cops.usdoj.gov*

## Examples of Crime Prevention Efforts

### LOCAL

#### Unique Program in Utah Enlists Community Volunteers to Help Fight Crime

In Utah, the Draper Police Department formed a volunteer Mobile Neighborhood Watch including community leaders, business owners and church group members in an effort to increase safety in a mountainous area experiencing fast population growth. With the support of federal COPS funds, the volunteers were trained to patrol the rough areas using all-terrain vehicles, horses, mountain bicycles and foot patrols.
*http://citizencorps.utah.gov/USAonWATCH.html#Draper*

#### Community Design Helps Reduce Crime in Cincinnati Neighborhood

Using elements of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, which incorporates design principles in community planning in efforts to deter crime, leaders in Cincinnati, Ohio, promoted collaboration between the Cincinnati Police Department and community organizations to reduce crime rates in the city's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. Efforts included cleaning up the neighborhood, creating green spaces, adding outdoor art, transforming a previously crime-ridden abandoned lot into a landscaped butterfly garden and increasing policing in high-crime areas. The police department and community organization enhanced a park with planters, benches, lighting and trashcans to encourage social interaction and discourage littering, loitering and drug crimes. Following these efforts, Cincinnati experienced a 22 percent reduction in crimes including murder, rape and robbery. The city also experienced 15 percent reduction in crimes for non-aggravated assault including vandalism and drugs. Additionally, community involvement with the police department has almost doubled.
*www.lisc.org/content/publications/detail/6963*

# PART 2: HEALTHY EATING

Quality Nutrition in Schools
Supermarkets and Healthy Food Vendors
Farm-Fresh Local Foods
Restaurants
Food and Beverage Marketing

"Healthy students make better learners. Overweight children not only tend to become obese adults, but these adults are taxing our health care system…Schools did not create the childhood obesity crisis. But schools can either contribute to it or help to end it."

**Anne Bryant, Executive Director,**
**National School Boards Association**

© Photo: National School Boards Association

# QUALITY NUTRITION IN SCHOOLS

GOAL: To help children and adolescents maintain a healthy weight by increasing healthy options in schools, incorporating nutrition education into school curricula and limiting access to unhealthy food.

Photo: Charlie Schuck

## 1. Ensure That Students Have Appealing, Healthy Food and Beverage Choices In Schools

**The Issues and the Research:** The school food environment can have a large impact on the dietary intake of children and adolescents–up to 50 percent of total daily energy intake can be consumed at school. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides meals to children in about 95 percent of public schools and many private schools throughout the nation through the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. USDA sets nutrition standards for these school meal programs, but has only limited authority to set nutrition standards for **competitive foods** sold à la carte, in school stores and in vending machines. Although most schools that sell competitive foods offer some nutritious food and beverage options, less nutritious alternatives also are common. For example, in one study, 70 percent of the beverage options available in vending machines were high in sugar, only 12 percent of the beverage slots were for water, and only 5 percent were for milk.[58] While the availability of junk food is greatest in high schools and middle schools, it is common at all school levels in à la carte lines, vending machines, snack bars and student stores.[59] Studies have shown that pricing and promotion strategies can increase students' purchases of fruits, vegetables and low-fat foods.[60, 61, 62, 63] A single study that evaluated a policy requiring school snack bars to offer only individual portions of foods and beverages also demonstrated that changes in school food policies could reduce consumption of empty calories and potentially reduce excess weight gain over time. [64]

**TERMS:**
**Competitive foods** are foods offered at school other than meals served through USDA's school lunch, school breakfast and after-school snack programs. These foods can often be obtained from à la carte cafeteria sales, vending machines and school stores.

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- Federal, state and local elected and appointed officials (e.g., federal and state legislators; city, county, township and other local level policy-makers)
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- School food vendors
- Nonprofit organizations such as the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and Action for Healthy Kids
- Teachers and cafeteria workers
- Parents and students

## Policy and Program Options

***Healthy school food and nutrition legislation***

State legislatures can support bills, amendment and state boards of education policies that improve access to and the quality of school meals. State boards of education can consider adopting comprehensive statewide nutrition standards for foods in schools. They can provide sample policy language, including key nutrition requirements, which can be incorporated into school wellness policies (see the National Association of State Boards of Education's model policies to encourage healthy eating in the Resources section on page 62).

***Strong local wellness policies***

State boards of education, local school districts and individual schools can enforce strong local wellness policies that ensure healthy school food environments by limiting low-nutrient, energy-dense foods in vending machines, à la carte lines, school stores and during school celebrations, as well as by offering healthy snacks. These policies also can encourage fundraisers and classroom rewards that are healthy or do not involve food. Policies can address the availability of healthy foods for school meals and before- and after-school programs, and incorporate cafeteria staff training. Districts can use the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* or the *Institute of Medicine Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools* as guides for developing nutrition standards for competitive foods in schools. There are many examples of states that have set standards for competitive foods or beverages served or sold at school that are stricter than federal requirements.

***Vending policies***

School and school district officials can adopt vending machine policies that either prohibit the sale of unhealthy foods and beverages in school facilities or restrict vending machine sales to healthy snacks.

***Nutrition education***

School officials can include nutrition education in school curricula, which can include experiential learning through school gardens and farm-to-school programs, as well as other educational components that can include parents.

## Getting Started

- School district officials can review their district's **local wellness policy**, and monitor and evaluate its implementation.
- School district officials can review their food service and food and beverage vendor contracts, and work with their vendors to offer healthier options.
- Policy-makers at all levels can champion state, district or school policies that prohibit the sale or distribution of high-fat, high-sugar snacks during school celebrations, before or during mealtimes and as fundraisers.
- Local government and school officials can partner with universities to provide assistance in implementing and evaluating local wellness policies. For example, local health departments and school districts can work with public health professors to recruit students interested in evaluating such policies.
- State policy-makers can provide funding to schools for nutrition education in the context of health education and for investing in improvements to school food services, such as oil-free cooking equipment.
- School district officials can develop policies encouraging cafeterias to display healthy side items and snacks at eye level on shelves and positioned near the point of purchase. Additionally, they can request that cafeterias move less healthy options to the back of food displays.
- School district officials can encourage individual schools to work with parents and extracurricular groups to implement healthy fundraisers.
- School district officials can convene a school wellness committee to develop an action plan to meet measurable goals related to nutritious foods and health education. They can invite local chefs and nutrition and health experts to serve on the committee.

## Resources

### Action for Healthy Kids, Wellness Policy Tool

This tool helps schools create a local wellness policy that meets their districts' unique goals for nutrition and physical activity, and helps them put the policy into action to positively impact students' health and lifelong choices. Action for Healthy Kids is composed of more than 50 national organizations and government agencies representing education, health, fitness and nutrition.
*www.actionforhealthykids.org/wellnesstool/index.php*

### Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Healthy Schools

The Healthy Schools program provides information and resources to increase opportunities for students to exercise and eat healthier foods in schools. It also provides resources for teachers and staff to become healthy role models. The Alliance is a partnership between the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation to fight childhood obesity. The Healthy Schools program receives funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
*www.healthiergeneration.org*

**TERMS:**
**Local wellness policies** are required by federal law for each local educational agency participating in the National School Lunch Program or another child nutrition program. Developed with input from a broad group of stakeholders, these policies set goals for nutrition education, physical activity, campus food provision and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness.

### Center for Science in the Public Interest, *State School Food Report Card 2007, A State-by-State Evaluation of Food Policies in Schools*

This document ranks states by their policies governing the nutritional quality of foods sold through their school's meal plan and also through vending machines, fundraisers and à la carte options.
*www.cspinet.org/2007schoolreport.pdf*

### Center for Science in the Public Interest, Sample Vending Contract

This vending contract between the Dallas Independent School District and the North Texas Coca-Cola Bottling Company can serve as a model for other districts interested in taking the same action.
*http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/soda_contract.pdf*

### Center for Science in the Public Interest, *Sweet Deals: School Fundraising Can Be Healthy and Profitable*

This report proposes alternative, creative and healthier fundraising options for students. Some proposed fundraisers include book fairs, non-food product sales, sale of school-related items, car washes and auctions. These healthier options for fundraisers can be, in many cases, equally, if not more, profitable.
*www.cspinet.org/schoolfundraising.pdf*

### Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH)

This Web site provides information about CATCH, an evidence-based Coordinated School Health Program designed to promote physical activity and healthy food choices, and prevent tobacco use in elementary school-aged children. It provides resources, tips and training.
*www.catchinfo.org*

### Council of State Governments, *School Wellness Policies*, Legislator Policy Brief

This brief provides information on the need for legislator intervention in school wellness policies. For example, legislators may demand accountability from schools and help schools identify funding sources.
*www.healthystates.csg.org/NR/rdonlyres/C87EB28D-B2F6-4399-B1BD-BC5617940019/0/SchoolWellnessPoliciesFINAL.pdf*

### Council of State Governments, *Using School Nutrition to Address Obesity,* Talking Points

School food policies vary widely, and many schools allow the sale of unhealthy items, such as chips and cookies. Legislators can work with food and beverage companies to find healthy snack alternatives and also can offer financial incentives to improve the availability of produce and high-quality foods in schools. These talking points outline the ways in which legislators can become involved.
*www.healthystates.csg.org/NR/rdonlyres/290CC6D9-D67D-4D3B-B350-0A453699E9A1/0/SchoolWellnessSources.pdf*

### Institute Of Medicine, *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools*

This report explores the sale of competitive foods and analyzes their content, nutritional value and ability to generate revenue.
*http://iom.edu/CMS/3788/30181/42502.aspx*

### National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity, Model School Wellness Policies

These model school wellness policies call for school officials to form health councils, set standards for food and beverage sales, teach and encourage healthy eating and physical activity, provide students with physical activity opportunities and evaluate the success of their programs.
*www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org*

### National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity, Model Vending Agreement and Model Vending Policy

The Model Healthy Beverages Vending Agreement is a tool that provides guidance for school administrators negotiating vending machine contracts, encouraging tactics shown to result in the best possible outcomes for students. The model vending policy advises schools to aggressively negotiate strong vending contracts in order to achieve three primary goals: to ensure that their wellness policies are fully implemented; to hold vendors legally accountable for their promises to provide healthy snacks; and to maximize the school's profits.
*www.nplanonline.org/products/model-healthy-beverage-vending-agreement*
*www.nplanonline.org/products/district-policy-establishing-healthy-vending-program*

### U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* has been published jointly by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the USDA every five years since 1980. The guidelines provide authoritative advice for people two years and older about how good dietary habits can promote health and reduce risk for major chronic diseases. They serve as the basis for federal food and nutrition education programs. The most recent dietary guidelines were published in 2005 and an updated version will be available in 2010.
*www.health.gov/DietaryGuidelines/dga2005/document/default.htm*

### National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), Model Policies to Encourage Healthy Eating

This site provides research-based best practice model policy language on various school health topics. The model polices were developed by NASBE in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Adolescent and School Health and other school policy experts. States, districts and schools can adopt these model policies or adapt them to local circumstances.
*www.nasbe.org/index.php/component/content/article/78-model-policies/122-policies-to-encourage-healthy-eating*

### National Association of State Boards of Education, *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn, A School Health Policy Guide*

This guide is intended to help schools create policies that promote health and prevent obesity and other chronic diseases. It calls for schools to teach students health literacy skills and encourages staff to model healthy behaviors. This guide also stresses the importance of health education courses taught by well-qualified staff.
*www.nasbe.org/index.php/shs/53-shs-resources/396-fit-healthy-and-ready-to-learn-a-school-health-policy-guide*

### National School Boards Association, *Addressing School Wellness Policies 101* and *Healthy Eating 101*

The Addressing School Wellness Policies document provides background information on the prevalence of student obesity, guidance and policy-development tools, highlights of wellness policies in several states and additional external resources about wellness policies. Healthy Eating 101 provides resources on nutrition and healthy eating policies in schools.
*www.nsba.org/MainMenu/SchoolHealth/101Packets/AddressingWellnessPolicies101.aspx*
*www.nsba.org/MainMenu/SchoolHealth/101Packets/HealthyEating101.aspx*

## 2. Support Farm-to-School and School Garden Programs

**The Issues and the Research:** A growing number of states and school districts are turning to farm-to-school programs to increase the quality and availability of fresh, healthy foods for their students. This program has been in existence in the United States for nearly a decade, and as of March 2009, more than 2,050 farm-to-school programs were in existence in more than 40 states.[65] School garden programs are another way to connect youth with fresh, healthy foods. A study in Tucson, Ariz., found that children who participated in their school garden program improved their perceptions of healthy foods, and in fact, had placed a high intrinsic value on the vegetables they had grown.[66] According to another study, after students completed their gardening program, their perceptions of vegetables significantly improved, as did their preferences for fruits and vegetables–no such improvements were evident in the control group.[67]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- State and local agriculture departments
- Parks and recreation officials
- Local government extension agents
- Local farmers, businesses and chefs
- Nonprofit and federal programs, such as *FarmtoSchool.org*
- College and university agriculture and public health departments
- School or community gardens
- Parents, teachers and students

## Policy and Program Options

***Farm-to-school programs***

State and school district officials can develop policies and programs that support farm-to-school programs. Farm-to-school programs encourage schools to use locally grown produce for school cafeteria meals, thereby improving nutrition while also providing lifelong lessons in health and nutrition. These programs also support local farmers and therefore can be beneficial to local economies, particularly in rural areas.

***School gardens***
School officials can create edible school gardens that integrate gardening and fresh seasonal cooking into curricula, culture and food programs. In addition to the health benefits, edible school gardens involve students in all aspects of farming the garden–including preparing, serving and eating the food.

## Getting Started

- State legislatures can fund pilot projects to implement farm-to-school programs and target schools with large numbers of vulnerable students.
- State and local agriculture departments can partner with local farmers or farming organizations, nearby universities and colleges, nonprofit organizations and the national Farm-to-School organization to develop a program.
- School officials can convene teachers from various disciplines to develop a curriculum that incorporates math, science, nutrition, physical education and other subjects into school garden activities. For example, students can develop and perform taste tests on food from the garden.
- School officials and community representatives can develop a team to support food service directors implementing farm-to-school activities.
- School officials can invite representatives from the farming community to serve on the school wellness committee. They can integrate locally grown foods into school food programs.

## Resources

### Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC)
CFSC is an organization of social and economic justice, environmental, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, community development, labor, anti-poverty, anti-hunger and other groups. They provide a variety of training and technical assistance programs for community food projects, support the development of farm-to-school and farm-to-college initiatives, advocate for federal policies to support community food security initiatives and provide networking and educational resources.
*www.foodsecurity.org*

### National Gardening Association, *Kidgardening.org*
This Web site provides extensive educational and funding resources about how to establish school and youth gardens.
*www.kidsgardening.org*

### Farm to School
This Web site provides pertinent resources about the farm-to-school program broken down by state, including guides, reports and implementation strategies. It also includes state and local policy recommendations aimed at fixing the current school meal programs to incorporate fruits and vegetables from local farms.
*www.farmtoschool.org*
*www.farmtoschool.org/policies.php*

## 3. Implement a Standards-Based Health Education Program Taught by Teachers Certified in Health Education

**The Issues and the Research:** Health education in school can encourage healthy behaviors that can last a lifetime, especially when it is combined with moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. When asked which standards need to be addressed in the school curriculum, 74 percent of Americans felt health was "definitely necessary."[68] In fact, health standards received the highest overall rating in the same survey.[69]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- County and city health officials
- Parents, teachers and students

## Policy and Program Options

***Health education course***

School district officials can incorporate a comprehensive K to 12 health education course that includes lessons about nutrition and physical activity. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coordinated Health Program, school health curricula should address the physical, mental, emotional and social dimensions of health. In addition, they should "motivate and assist students to maintain and improve their health, prevent disease, and reduce health-related risk behaviors," while also allowing students to increase their "health-related knowledge, attitudes, skills and practices."[70]

***Nutrition education component***

State boards of education can include nutrition education as a component of a comprehensive health core requirement in the school curriculum and adopt high-quality statewide standards.

***Teacher training and development in health education***

State policy-makers can require that health education teachers are adequately prepared by adopting high-quality certification standards for teachers. School officials can ensure that teachers receive ongoing professional support and development.

***Health throughout the day***

School district officials can encourage the integration of health education into other subjects.

## Getting Started

- School districts can establish a partnership between the school wellness committee and the local health department to ensure school curricula meet state and national health education standards and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's characteristics of effective health education.
- School wellness committees can use the Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool to review a current or new health education curricula to determine if it aligns with state or national standards and criteria for effectiveness.
- School district officials can ensure health teachers have access to resources and support (local, national and Web-based) to develop and teach the curriculum.

## Resources

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)

The CDC's HECAT allows schools to evaluate and revise health education curricula based on 14 different criteria. HECAT is based on the guidelines and recommendations set by the National Health Education Standards and the CDC's Characteristics of Effective Health Education Curricula. The tools are customizable based on the needs of a particular school or district.
*www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/HECAT/index.htm*
*www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/SHER/characteristics/index.htm*

### The Food Studies Institute, *Food is Elementary*

Food is Elementary is an interactive experience that educates students about the relationship between food choices and disease prevention while encouraging students' creativity. It involves the entire community in school meals, murals and garden projects.
*www.foodstudies.org*

### National Association of State Boards of Education, *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn, A School Health Policy Guide*

This guide is intended to help schools create policies that promote health and prevent obesity and other chronic diseases. It calls for schools to teach students health literacy skills and encourages staff to model healthy behaviors. This guide also stresses the importance of health education courses taught by well-qualified staff.
*www.nasbe.org/index.php/shs/53-shs-resources/396-fit-healthy-and-ready-to-learn-a-school-health-policy-guide*

## Examples of Promoting Nutrition and Health Education in Schools

STATE

### Vermont Promotes Farm-to-School Programs

The Vermont General Assembly passed a law increasing the use of local farm products in school meal programs, regulating child-care programs and enabling a local foods mini-grant program with awards of up to $15,000. Schools, school districts and consortiums of schools and school districts may use the mini-grant awards to purchase equipment, resources and materials that will help to increase use of local foods in the school food

service program. Additional items covered by the awards include local farm products, which will help teachers use hands-on educational techniques to teach children about nutrition and farm-to-school connections. The awards also help provide professional development and technical assistance to increase teachers' capacity to educate students about nutrition and farm-to-school connections. The law includes outreach and education to farmers and training for food service personnel as well.
*www.farmtoschool.org/VT/programs.htm*

### West Virginia Board of Education Adopts Model Nutrition Standards

Board Policy 2520.5 (2008) requires students in grades K to12 to receive instruction in identifying characteristics of healthy and unhealthy foods, describing and understanding the value of the food pyramid, analyzing menus from fast-food restaurants and culturally different restaurants for nutritional value, and developing decision-making processes to set goals for making healthy food choices. Board Policy 4320 (2001) also recommends, if grant funds are available, that nutrition education programs be provided for students.
*http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p4321.1.pdf*
*www.nasbe.org/index.php/shs/health-policies-database*

### California School Food and Beverage Acts

In 2007, California passed new legislation aimed at providing nutritious foods and beverages to school children. The state set nutrition standards for the foods that schools can sell outside of meal programs. The standards limit the fat, saturated fat, sugar and overall calories contained in competitive foods sold in schools. They also limit the types of beverages that can be sold, allowing schools to sell only water, milk, certain juices and electrolyte replacement beverages.
*www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr08/yr08rel124.asp*
*www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/mbnsdsnp082008.asp*

## LOCAL

### Five Philadelphia Schools Scale Back on Junk Food

Five Philadelphia elementary schools replaced sodas with fruit juice, cut back on snacks and eliminated candy. They encouraged healthy eating by handing out raffle tickets to children who made wise food choices and spent hours teaching kids, their parents and teachers about good nutrition. A comparative analysis found that after two years, the overall number of overweight students at the five schools dropped about 10 to 15 percent. At the no-change schools, the number of overweight children rose by up to 20 percent.
*www.thefoodtrust.org/php/press/news_detail.php?id=73*

### Pioneering California Counties and Cities Implement Healthy Vending Machine Policies

Three counties (Contra Costa, Marin and Santa Clara) and two cities (Berkeley and San Jose) passed healthy vending machine policies and the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation has healthy vending machine policy, which is required for all its sites. In addition, a policy in Baldwin Park requires that vending machines in youth facilities, such as teen and community centers, family service centers, pubic pools and city parks, carry healthy food.
*www.banpac.org/healthy_vending_machine_toolkit.htm*

"Municipal officials increasingly recognize the impact of childhood obesity on healthy youth development, quality of life and health care costs for communities and local governments. The Leadership for Healthy Communities Partnership has enabled us to share our dedication to preventing childhood obesity and promoting community wellness"

**Donald J. Borut, Executive Director,**
**National League of Cities**

© Photo: National League of Cities

# SUPERMARKETS AND HEALTHY FOOD VENDORS

GOAL: To increase access to grocery stores and markets that sell affordable fresh fruits and vegetables, which will improve the diets of children, reduce their body mass index (BMI) and contribute to a community's economic development.

Photo: Tyrone Turner

## 1. Attract Grocery Stores That Provide High-Quality, Healthy, Affordable Foods to Lower-Income Neighborhoods

**The Issues and the Research:** Eating a healthier diet that includes more fresh fruits and vegetables helps to reduce the risk of obesity and chronic diseases.[71] Unfortunately, many communities across the United States lack access to healthy food options. One study of white and black Americans found that adults living in areas with one or more supermarkets were more likely to meet dietary recommendations for fruits and vegetables than adults living in areas with no supermarkets.[72] In addition, research suggests that greater access to supermarkets may be related to a reduced risk of obesity, while greater access to convenience stores may be related to an increased risk for obesity.[73,74,75,76,77] Policy-makers can incentivize supermarkets to open stores in underserved areas, which can have a positive effect on children and their families' health and the local economy.

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Local and state public health officials
- Local economic or redevelopment agency officials (including zoning boards)
- Food policy council
- Supermarket industry
- Nonprofits
- Community members

## Policy and Program Options

***Food policy council***

State and local government leaders can pass a resolution for a **food policy council** or task force that advances healthy food options and includes supermarkets.

***Comprehensive plans, healthy food access***

Local policy-makers can consider adding specific language to their comprehensive plans to identify grocery stores as important considerations for developing and redeveloping neighborhoods. During the review and negotiation process for planned unit developments and mixed-use development proposals within commercial zones, leaders should consider and analyze possibilities for including food retail. Furthermore, planning staff can initiate shared parking options for grocery stores and other property owners.

***Financial incentives for supermarkets***

State and local policy-makers can provide grants and loan programs, small business development programs and tax incentives that encourage grocery stores to locate in underserved areas.

***Zoning to encourage supermarkets to move in***

Local policy-makers can relax zoning requirements that make it difficult for supermarkets to move into densely populated urban and rural areas. They also can provide parking subsidies. Local zoning boards or other local officials can implement policies that ensure recently closed grocery stores can be replaced by another one as quickly as possible.

**TERMS:**

**Food policy councils** are designed to support local agricultural economies and provide fresh produce to communities and schools. Food policy councils convene citizens and government officials to examine state and local food systems. They make recommendations about policies and programs that include food policies, local food procurement, farm-to-school programs and community gardens. Food policy councils are engaged in a number of areas that intersect with the current interests of local governments, including sustainable development, hunger and food security, health disparities and the nation's obesity epidemic. Since they are composed primarily of volunteers, their administration costs are generally low and may be paid in part by private sources.

## Getting Started

- State and local policy-makers can develop a food policy council that includes state government officials, retail industry leaders, state and local health and zoning boards, nonprofit organizations and economic development or redevelopment officials. The food policy council may also want to include officials from agriculture departments and schools. Supermarket strategies may need to be part of a more comprehensive food retail development program, which could include farmers' markets, specialty food stores and other direct marketing programs and specialty food stores.
- State and/or local policy-makers can engage in public-private partnerships with developers to identify and assemble parcels of land to be developed for grocery retail.
- Through neighborhood planning grant programs, local governments can help neighborhood associations gain financial support for administering market surveys because the results may help recruit grocery stores.
- Local officials can use redevelopment agencies to access unique financing mechanisms that otherwise would not be available to cities and counties. The most important of these is Tax Increment Financing (TIF), which allows the redevelopment agency to use the increased property and sales taxes that result from redevelopment projects to repay debts incurred in financing such projects. For example, redevelopment agencies can provide land, grants or investment capital to induce the development of supermarkets. They can provide business financing to support small store improvement projects. When plans for TIF districts are reviewed, local governments can consider grocery store access.
- State and local governments can partner with nonprofit organizations (such as the Reinvestment Fund that created the Fresh Food Financing Initiative in Philadelphia) that provide loans, grants and technical assistance to provide incentives to supermarkets to relocate in lower-income areas.
- State and/or local policy-makers and/or government agencies can arm themselves with market analyses and data on spending patterns and health issues in underserved areas. For example, local governments and/or food councils can conduct assessments of citywide and neighborhood-level demand for food and identify supermarkets that can be competitively recruited. They also can map the health issues in those neighborhoods to determine if greater access to healthy food and supermarkets can lead to improved health outcomes. Community organizations, for instance, can recruit volunteers to conduct a survey, and city agencies, such as health clinics and food banks, can distribute the survey to clients.
- Local policy-makers can help facilitate negotiations among grocery stores and land owners.
- Local policy-makers can provide a stipulation in local government land leases that favors leases for supermarkets.
- Within a local government's capital revolving loan program, funds could be dedicated to existing grocery stores for equipment upgrades and façade improvements.
- Local government officials can evaluate transportation needs in areas with a high concentration of residents without vehicles to determine if additional transportation options are needed.

## Resources

### Council of State Governments, *Diet Deserts: States Address Supermarket Shortages in Low-Income Communities*

This article explores the lack of supermarkets available to lower-income communities. A number of localities, including Philadelphia, are offering incentives to supermarkets to encourage them to relocate to the areas where they are most needed. Philadelphia once ranked second-to-last in the number of supermarkets per capita, but through the work of State Representative Dwight Evans on the Fresh Food Financing Initiative, supermarkets are now encouraged to locate in underserved areas. According to The Food Trust, a nonprofit organization involved in the project, the initiative is funding 69 supermarket projects in 27 Pennsylvania counties, creating or preserving 3,900 jobs.
*www.csg.org/pubs/Documents/sn0805DietDeserts.pdf*

### The Food Trust, Supermarket Campaign

This Web site provides information about The Food Trust's Supermarket Campaign, which works to reduce the number of diet-related illnesses in lower-income areas by increasing the number of supermarkets that provide fresh produce in these areas. This campaign's strategy encourages economic development, establishes public/private partnerships, advocates strong public policies and performs in-depth research demonstrating the need for accessible supermarkets.
*www.thefoodtrust.org/php/programs/super.market.campaign.php*

### Healthy Eating Research, *Bringing Healthy Foods Home: Examining Inequalities in Access to Food Stores,* Research Brief

This brief examines disparities in access to healthy foods and the relationship between access to healthy foods and rates of obesity.
*www.healthyeatingresearch.org/images/stories/her_research_briefs/her%20bringing%20healthy%20foods%20home_7-2008.pdf*

### International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Economic Development Journal, *Realizing the Inner-City Retail Opportunity: Progress and New Directions*

This issue of the IEDC Journal includes case studies in economic development, strategies for economic development and analysis of different communities' attempts at creating and sustaining jobs. IEDC is an international organization devoted to promoting economic development both in the United States and abroad. IEDC offers a number of resources, including a twice-monthly newsletter and quarterly journal.
*www.icic.org/atf/cf/%7BC81898B2-76E9-4A18-B838-A3F65C9F06B9%7D/EDJ_winter07_final.pdf*

### Leadership for Healthy Communities, *Tax Increment Financing: A Tool for Advancing Healthy Eating and Active Living,* Policy Brief

This policy brief examines the promise of Tax Increment Financing as a means of funding initiatives that promote healthy kids and healthy communities.
*www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org/images/stories/lhc_policybrief_tif_31.pdf*

### PolicyLink, *Community Mapping, Using Geographic Data for Community Revitalization*

This report provides policy-makers with information about community mapping, which is emerging as an effective tool in promoting equitable development across different areas.
*www.policylink.org/Research/Mapping*

### PolicyLink, Healthy Food Retailing Toolkit

This toolkit focuses on the three most effective ways to increase access to retail outlets that sell nutritious, affordable foods in lower-income communities of color.
*www.policylink.org/EDTK/HealthyFoodRetailing*

### Public Health Law & Policy, Funding Sources for Healthy Food Retail

This guide provides an overview of the range of federal funding programs available to support healthy food retail. It also provides funding programs available in California.
*http://healthyplanning.org/foodretailfunding.html*

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Economic Development

HUD offers programs to fund businesses in distressed locales, job training opportunities to individuals living in housing projects and mentorship opportunities to youth. The HUD Web site also offers resources on economic development including statistics, reports, publications and webcasts.
*www.hud.gov/economicdevelopment/index.cfm*

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Tour RC/EZ/EC by State

This Web site presents detailed maps, contact information, annual reports and other information for each renewal community (RC), empowerment zone (EZ) and enterprise community (EC) designated by HUD or the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Renewal communities and empowerment zones are distressed urban or rural areas where businesses are eligible for tax incentives.
*www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/economicdevelopment/programs/rc/tour*

## 2. Encourage Convenience Stores and Bodegas to Offer Healthier Food

**The Issues and the Research:** Many underserved urban and rural communities do not have grocery stores, and many lower-income and minority residents without cars rely on corner stores and bodegas to feed their families. Unfortunately, many of these stores are typically able to stock and serve only unhealthy pre-packaged foods, snacks and sodas. Two studies that examined associations between children's diets and access to different types of food stores[78,79] found that youth who had greater access to convenience stores consumed fewer fruits and vegetables. There also are strong links between the availability of healthy food in neighborhood stores and residents' diets.[80,81,82,83] Three studies found that greater availability of healthy food in stores was related to greater availability of healthy food at home and increased consumption of healthy foods at home.[84,85,86] Providing alternative methods for lower-income communities to access healthy foods through corner store development programs is one way that policy-makers can help to address the childhood obesity epidemic in their communities.

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Economic (re)development officials
- Food policy councils
- Nonprofits
- Community-based organizations
- Corner store owners
- Community members

## Policy and Program Options

***Food policy council***

State and local policy-makers can pass a resolution for a food policy council or task force that advances healthy food options and includes healthy corner stores.

***Incentives for healthy options***

Local government officials can encourage convenience store and bodega owners to provide affordable healthy options by offering incentives.

***Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)***

Local policy-makers can encourage or require store owners to accept EBT cards for **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** benefits as a form of payment. In addition, city governments can develop a technical assistance program to help small and large stores get approved as WIC vendors as an incentive for them to provide fresh produce (as required in WIC guidelines).

***Marketing healthy options***

Local policy-makers, government agencies and/or food policy councils can consider encouraging store owners to limit the marketing of unhealthy food in corner stores that are located near schools. They also can encourage point-of-purchase shelf labeling and prompts for healthy foods.

## Getting Started

- State and local policy-makers can develop a food policy council that includes state government officials, retail industry leaders, state and local health and zoning boards, nonprofit organizations and economic development or redevelopment officials. Although food policy councils may take a variety of forms, they are typically commissioned by state or local government. Some boards include officials from agriculture departments and schools. Healthy corner store strategies may need to be part of a more comprehensive food retail development program.
- Within a local government's **capital revolving loan** program, funds could be dedicated to existing corner stores for equipment upgrades and façade improvements.
- Local government officials can facilitate partnerships between city agencies, community-based organizations and private businesses in order to package incentives for corner store conversions. For example, partners can help to set up a distribution system for fresh fruits

**TERMS:**

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** is the new name for federal food stamps.

**Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** is a federal program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that, through grants to states, provides nutritious foods, nutrition education and referrals to health and other social services to low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk.

**Capital revolving loan** funds are a gap financing tool for small business development and expansion. Funds are typically used for businesses that don't qualify for traditional funding, and they can target specific areas such as minority business development.

and vegetables and provide equipment, such as refrigerators, so that store owners can stock healthier options, such as fresh produce, fruits and vegetables.

- Local government officials can help store owners promote healthy food options by developing a citywide marketing and branding campaign that acknowledges the changes. They also can design a poster or seal for the participating stores to display.
- Local government officials can provide technical assistance to stores to help them market healthy foods in displays near the check-out counter or simply locate them at eye level and in prominent places. For example, members of local chambers of commerce, with their marketing expertise, can provide assistance in food promotions and store design to emphasize healthy items.
- Local government agencies or task forces can provide technical assistance to store owners to help them become approved vendors for the WIC program.

## Resources

### The Food Trust, Healthy Corner Store Initiative

This Web site provides information about The Food Trust's Healthy Corner Store Initiative, which encourages corner store owners to promote healthier snack options to youth who frequent their businesses. One success has been its Snackin' Fresh marketing campaign, which educates youth about the importance of choosing healthy snacks.
*www.thefoodtrust.org/php/programs/corner.store.campaign.php*

### Healthy Corner Stores Network

The Healthy Corner Stores Network convenes community members, local government officials and nonprofits to work towards the common goal of bringing healthier foods into corner stores in lower-income and underserved areas.
*www.healthycornerstores.org*

### Healthy Eating Research, *Bringing Healthy Foods Home: Examining Inequalities in Access to Food Stores,* Research Brief

This brief examines disparities in access to healthy foods and the relationship between access to healthy foods and rates of obesity.
*www.healthyeatingresearch.org/images/stories/her_research_briefs/her%20bringing%20healthy%20foods%20home_7-2008.pdf*

### Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for Human Nutrition, Healthy Stores

The goal of the Healthy Stores project is to improve health and decrease rates of obesity in lower-income areas. Healthy Stores focuses on intervention strategies developed from research in educational psychology, medical anthropology and health communication.
*www.healthystores.org/index.html*

### Literacy for Environmental Justice, Good Neighbor Program

This Web site provides information about a program in San Francisco's lower-income Bayview-Hunters Point area that rewards merchants who promise to increase their stock of fresh produce and simultaneously decrease tobacco and alcohol advertisements. Merchants who agree to these practices are known as "Good Neighbors." In 2007, this program was adopted as a statewide model.
*www.lejyouth.org/programs/food.html*

### PolicyLink, Healthy Food Retailing Toolkit

This toolkit focuses on the three most effective ways to increase access to retail outlets that sell nutritious, affordable foods in lower-income communities of color.
*www.policylink.org/EDTK/HealthyFoodRetailing*

### Public Health Law & Policy, Funding Sources for Healthy Food Retail

This guide provides an overview of the range of federal funding programs available to support healthy food retail. It also provides funding programs available in California.
*http://healthyplanning.org/foodretailfunding.html*

### The State and Local Food Policy Project, Drake University

This Web site provides information about the State and Local Food Policy Project, which facilitates the growth of food policy councils by providing support and resources to these groups. This project offers legal perspectives, case studies and in-depth analysis.
*www.statefoodpolicy.org*

## 3. Establish Healthy Mobile Markets

**The Issues and the Research:** Local governments can help increase the availability of fresh, healthy and affordable food for children and families by promoting mobile food carts. For residents living in food deserts, mobile food carts can offer fresh produce, such as carrots, bananas, apples and berries. Because the food choices that people make are limited by foods that are available and convenience is an important factor that influences healthy eating behaviors, individuals living in areas with few food choices may be more likely to adopt an energy-dense diet. The green cart project in New York was fueled by a Health Department study of Harlem, which determined that the community has 30 percent fewer supermarkets than the Upper East Side. In addition, only 3 percent of corner stores in Harlem–compared with 20 percent on the Upper East Side–carried leafy green vegetables.[87] The city's actions are compatible with research on healthy food availability: food environments that offer a greater variety of healthy food options at affordable prices may lead to healthier food choices.[88]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Food policy councils
- Community-based organizations
- Local farmers
- Local business owners and vendors

## Policy and Program Options

***Food policy council***
State and local policy-makers can pass a resolution for a food policy council or task force that advances healthy food options and includes mobile markets.

***Provide permits/licenses and incentives***
Local policy-makers can provide incentives to locate mobile markets (e.g., green carts and trucks) that offer convenient and affordable healthy food in lower-income communities with limited or no access to healthy food.

## Getting Started

- State and local government officials can develop a food policy council that includes state government officials, retail industry leaders, state and local health and zoning boards, nonprofit organizations and economic development or redevelopment officials. Although councils may take a variety of forms, they are typically commissioned by state or local government. Some boards include officials from agriculture departments and schools. Mobile markets may need to be part of a more comprehensive food retail development program.
- State legislatures can offer grants to communities to improve residents' access to healthy food in underserved areas. Local governments can offer grants for mobile refrigeration units and traffic provisions that make it easier for mobile sales (e.g., designated curbside locations, and access to restricted parking areas).
- Local policy-makers can require licensing and certification of healthy mobile markets to ensure that they meet high standards of food safety (e.g., temperature control).
- Local government officials can provide periodic security checks to ensure healthy carts are operating within the law.
- Local government agencies can develop healthy mobile market promotional campaigns to increase awareness about the program.

## Resources

### Healthy Eating Research, *Bringing Healthy Foods Home: Examining Inequalities in Access to Food Stores,* Research Brief
This brief examines disparities in access to healthy foods and the relationship between access to healthy foods and rates of obesity.
*www.healthyeatingresearch.org/images/stories/her_research_briefs/her%20bringing%20healthy%20foods%20home_7-2008.pdf*

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*www.statefoodpolicy.org*

## Examples of Increasing Community Access to Healthy Foods

### STATE

#### Pennsylvania Provides Financial Incentives to Attract Grocery Stores

Pennsylvania Public Health and Human Services, the Philadelphia City Council Committee and The Food Trust, a nonprofit organization, created a Food Marketing Task Force to help grocery stores reinvest in lower-income areas. With legislative assistance, the task force convinced the state to commit $30 million for the development of grocery stores. The Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition, the Reinvestment Fund and The Food Trust have formed a public-private partnership to administer the Fresh Food Financing Initiative funding, which consists of $30 million in state and $90 million in private funding.
*www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0510ACTIVELIVINGPA.PDF*

#### Nevada Offers Tax Breaks for Grocery Stores Willing to Locate in Lower-Income Urban Communities

Building on prior legislation, which provided a temporary tax incentive for locating or expanding businesses that are or are willing to become grocery stores within the Southern Nevada Enterprise Community, a Nevada law allows developers to apply for a partial abatement of the taxes imposed on necessary capital equipment.
*www.leg.state.nv.us/74th/Bills/SB/SB352_EN.pdf*

#### California Helps Lower-Income Earners Shop at Farmers' Markets

Through the state's Farmers' Market Program, lower-income earners who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can use their electronic benefit transfer cards in nontraditional markets, including farmers' markets, produce stands and similar open-air markets. Started as a pilot project in 2003, the program is now available statewide.
*www.ebtproject.ca.gov/farmers.aspx*

### LOCAL

#### Gary Offers Tax Incentives to Attract Supermarkets

In Gary, Ind., the city combined market analysis with a package of tax abatements, **empowerment zone** benefits, and assistance with land assembly to attract supermarkets. The city council used data from a **marketing assessment** to successfully attract a nationally recognized grocery franchise–County Market, owned by SuperValu–to develop a site that had been vacant for seven years.
*www.thefoodtrust.org/pdf/SupermktReport_F.pdf*

#### Grocery Bus in Austin Provides Latino Residents Access to Supermarkets

Some communities have developed public transportation routes that make it simple for people to access supermarkets outside of their neighborhood. The Austin, Texas Capital Metro, working with the Austin/Travis County Food Policy Council, started a grocery bus line to improve food access for lower-income residents from the Latino Eastside. This bus line links this neighborhood with two supermarkets.
*www.ncsl.org/programs/health/publicHealth/foodaccess/transportation_policies.htm*

**TERMS:**

**Empowerment zones** are U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development designations for urban communities. Businesses that locate in these areas are eligible for tax credits and other financial incentives for hiring local residents.

**Marketing assessments/ market analyses** are documented investigations of a market that identify demographics, competitors, market trends, consumer needs, spending patterns and other information that firms can use to plan decisions around expansion, relocation and other investments.

### New York City Develops Green Carts and Healthy Bodegas Campaign

New York City has established an innovative mobile markets initiative that has put "green carts" full of fresh fruits and vegetables in lower-income areas that have the least access to fresh produce. New York City partnered with a nonprofit small business lender to provide low-interest loans to green-cart vendors.[89] The loans cover start-up costs, such as equipment and inventory. Consequently, green cart legislation covers neighborhoods where residents reported the lowest consumption of fruits and vegetables.[90] In a related measure, the city's health department launched a Healthy Bodegas Initiative, whereby the city helps neighborhood bodega owners promote the offering of low-fat milk and fresh produce in communities that have the highest rates of poverty and diet-related diseases in the city.

*http://council.nyc.gov/html/releases/011_022708_prestated_greencarts.shtml*

### Troy Increases Access to Healthy Foods Through Veggie Mobile Program

Troy, N.Y., is increasing access to nutritious foods in underserved communities. Through its Veggie Mobile program, fresh foods, such as herbs, fruits and vegetables, are delivered to Troy residents who lack nearby supermarkets. The Veggie Mobile is funded through a New York State Health Department grant. Every Wednesday, a "Taste and Take" program is available in public housing complexes, where residents can taste different healthy foods and receive free fresh produce.

*www.cdcg.org/VeggieMobile.html*

### New Orleans Increases Access to Healthy Foods Through a Corner Store Initiative

Following Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans area lost 21 of 36 major supermarkets, forcing many residents to do their grocery shopping at corner stores. In response, the city has launched the Corner Store Initiative to encourage local convenience stores to carry healthier food options. Stores receive free in-store displays to promote healthy food items, stickers to identify new, healthier items being stocked, health information handouts for customers, newspaper and/or radio advertising promoting the store as a "Steps Corner Store" and promotion at community gatherings, including local farmers' markets or clinics.

*www.stepsla.org/home2/section/3-153/the-corner-store-initiative*

### New York Offers a Greenmarkets Program for Lower-Income Residents

New York City established 10 new farmers' markets through the Greenmarkets program in an effort to bring more affordable healthy foods to lower-income residents. Several of the sites are located on the grounds of public housing complexes. Shoppers are able to use senior coupons, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) coupons and electronic benefit transfer cards (EBT) for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits at many of the markets for purchasing produce. In a related effort, the city's health department runs the Health Bucks Program, which distributes vouchers redeemable for produce at farmers' markets. The vouchers are distributed at community events in neighborhoods with high rates of obesity and diabetes.

*www.mbpo.org/uploads/FoodInThePublicInterest.pdf*

# FARM-FRESH LOCAL FOODS

GOAL: To increase the availability of fresh, local fruits and vegetables for children and families while supporting rural and urban economies, and in some cases, providing a space for neighbors to socialize.

Photo: Tyrone Turner

## 1. Support Farmers' Markets

**The Issues and the Research:** Improving the availability and accessibility of farmers' markets is another strategy to increase fresh, healthy food options for children and families. At least two studies have demonstrated that the Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs for elders and lower-income women in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children may lead to improvements in their intake of fruits and vegetables.[91, 92]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Parks and recreation officials
- County and city health officials
- Food policy councils
- Local farmers/farmers' market organizers
- Community members

## Policy and Program Options

***Food policy councils***
State and local policy-makers can pass a resolution for a **food policy council** or task force that advances healthy food options and includes farmers' markets.

***Administration of farmers' markets***
A city-run farmers' market can provide benefits to the community and revenue to local governments. Local policy-makers can develop an ordinance that outlines rules and regulations that govern the market. Local governments can also dedicate staff people to manage the markets and/or they can develop a local farmers' market commission and/or advisory board.

***Financial incentives to market operators***
Local and state policy-makers can support underserved communities and local farmers by providing incentives, grants and subsidies to create farmers' markets in those areas. Local government officials can also support farmers' markets by aiding in their development and promotion.

***Coupons and lower-income incentives***
Local and state governments can encourage farmers' markets to accept **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children** (WIC) and **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP) participants. For example, governments can provide subsidies to farmers' markets to accept electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards from SNAP. Local policy-makers can encourage market managers to offer residents in lower-income areas products that are affordable by providing financial support to farmers' market operators at the outset. Market managers can then agree to lower vendor fees to farmers so they can offer lower prices.

## Getting Started

- State and local policy-makers can develop a food policy council that includes state government officials, retail industry leaders, state and local health and zoning boards, nonprofit organizations and economic development or redevelopment officials. Some FPCs include officials from agriculture departments and schools. Farmers' markets may need to be part of a more comprehensive food retail development program.
- State policy-makers can introduce and pass legislation that provides grants for farmers' markets.
- Local policy-makers can support local farmers' markets by designating public land for markets and providing logistical support, such as traffic control and cleanup.
- Local officials can provide additional support in the form of a steering committee, dedicated staff positions, a centralized source of support within the city administration, or policies that encourage the growth of new markets.
- State and local policy-makers can implement programs that provide support for the purchase of wireless electronic benefit transfer (EBT) devices at farmers' markets to increase sales among EBT card users. They can also require that all new farmers' markets accept EBT cards.

**TERMS:**

**Food policy councils** are designed to support local agricultural economies and provide fresh produce to communities and schools. FPCs convene citizens and government officials to examine state and local food systems. They make recommendations about policies and programs that include food policies, local food procurement, farm-to-school programs and community gardens. Food policy councils are engaged in a number of areas that intersect with the current interests of local governments, including sustainable development, hunger and food security, health disparities and the nation's obesity epidemic. Since they are composed primarily of volunteers, their administration costs are generally low and may be paid in part by private sources.

**Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children** (WIC) is a federal program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that, through grants to states, provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, and referrals to health and other social services to low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** is the new name for federal food stamps.

## Resources

### International City/County Management Association (ICMA), *Community Health and Food Access: The Local Government Role*

This report examines the need for local government intervention to ensure that all citizens have access to healthy food. According to the report, legislators can intervene by supporting farmers' markets or community gardens, using zoning laws to restrict fast-food restaurants and supporting supermarket development in lower-income areas.
*http://icma.org/upload/library/2006-09/%7B5CD4101C-2803-4655-9A51-465461B3C897%7D.pdf*

### National Association of Counties, Healthy Counties Database

This database contains an extensive list of policies, programs and initiatives that have been enacted to promote wellness and healthy living.
*www.healthycounties.org*

### National Conference of State Legislatures, Healthy Community Design and Access to Healthy Food Legislation Database

This database compiles and summarizes state legislation that increases access to healthy foods or promotes physical activity. Searches can be performed by state, topic area, year and bill type. It is updated bi-monthly from January to May and monthly the remainder of the year.
*www.ncsl.org/programs/environ/healthyCommunity/healthycommunitydb.htm*

### U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Farmers Market Promotion Program Guidelines

This document provides the guidelines for entities seeking funding from the USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Program. Eligible entities include local governments, nonprofit corporations, agricultural cooperatives, and other domestically-located entities whose main source of income results from producing and selling produce directly to consumers.
*www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5067826&acct=fmpp*

### Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

This Web site contains information about WIC FMNP, which provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding post-partum women and to infants and children up to 5 years of age who are found to be at nutritional risk. Recipients are issued FMNP coupons that they can use at approved farmers' markets or stands.
*www.fns.usda.gov/wic/FMNP/FMNPfaqs.htm*

## 2. Support Community Gardens

**The Issues and the Research:** An increasing number of community gardens have been established on vacant lots in inner cities. In fact, more than 10,000 community gardens already exist in the United States, according to the American Community Gardening Association, with New York City having the most of any city.[93] In addition to increasing residents' access to fresh produce, community gardens provide residents with environmental education, green space and significant savings on their food.[94] For example, community gardeners in Philadelphia reported an annual savings on food bills of $700 per family.[95]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Parks and recreation officials
- County and city health officials
- Land-use planning and economic development committees
- Community-based organizations and national programs such as the American Community Gardening Association
- Community members

## Policy and Program Options

***Food policy councils***

State and local policy-makers can pass a resolution for a food policy council or task force that advances healthy food options and includes community gardens.

***Conversion of blighted areas to community gardens***

Local governments can convert neglected areas into green spaces that can be used for community gardens or provide community garden grants and support. A community garden provides green space in urban areas and encourages food production by providing gardeners a place to grow vegetables, fruits and flowers.

## Getting Started

- State and local government officials can develop a food policy council that includes state government officials, retail industry leaders, state and local health and zoning boards, nonprofit organizations and economic development or redevelopment officials. Although food policy councils may take a variety of forms, they are typically commissioned by state or local governments. Some food policy councils include officials from agriculture departments and schools. Community gardens may need to be part of a more comprehensive food retail development program.
- Suburban sprawl has left some inner-city neighborhoods with vacant parcels of land. Local policy-makers can partner with private land owners to buy/lease unused land for community gardens and promote and protect community gardens through resolutions, land-use plans or zoning ordinances.

- Local policy-makers can issue bonds to nonprofits to transform vacant lots.
- Local policy-makers can further promote gardens by providing city resources to nonprofit groups who run community gardens, reducing or waiving plot fees or locating the gardens within walking distance of lower-income neighborhoods.
- Local policy-makers can start an initiative to redevelop and clean up vacant land that can be transformed into community gardens.

## Resources

### American Community Gardening Association

This organization works to promote community gardening across the United States and Canada. Community gardening allows people to come together while beautifying their neighborhoods, getting physical activity and producing quality fruits and vegetables. This association supports community gardening initiatives, encourages research into the benefits of gardening and hosts educational training programs.
*www.communitygarden.org*

### Northeast-Midwest Institute, Summary of Notable Federal Brownfield and Vacant Property Programs and Initiatives

This document highlights a number of programs and loans available to help increase economic development and housing and neighborhood revitalization in cities, states and urban counties.
*www.nemw.org/Brownfields&VacProp_NEMWFedCommRevitProg2006.pdf*

### U.S. Department of Agriculture, Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program

This program provides funding for community-based food and agriculture projects nationwide. Eligible projects help increase access to food for lower-income people, increase a community's ability to provide for its own needs, promote comprehensive responses to local nutrition or food needs and meet specific needs for long-term viability in infrastructure improvement and development.
*www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/fundview.cfm?fonum=1080*

## 3. Support the Procurement of Locally Grown Food

**The Issues and the Research:** It is not a coincidence that childhood obesity rates in the United States increased at the same time the food environment experienced profound changes. In fact, it is estimated that more than one-third of calories consumed by Americans come from junk food.[96] Perhaps an even more thought-provoking fact is that agricultural, distribution and retail practices may be drivers of our overconsumption. Policy-makers have an opportunity to rethink how **food procurement** impacts production and consumption. In many communities, particularly lower-income neighborhoods, it can be very difficult to find foods that are not low-nutrient and energy dense. Policies that increase local sources of food will provide consumers with healthier choices, farmers with more marketing opportunities and communities with powerful economic development opportunities.[97]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- School officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- County and city health officials
- Food policy councils
- Local businesses (e.g., restaurants and supermarkets)
- Local farmers

## Policy and Program Options

***Food policy council***

State and local policy-makers can pass a resolution for a food policy council or task force that advances healthy food options and includes local food procurement.

***Procurement policies***

State and local officials can encourage school and government procurement policies that favor local, healthy foods in government-supported facilities, schools, cafeterias, etc. The resolution can also support small farms and direct farm-to-institution relationships.

***Financial incentives to support local food procurement***

State and local officials can support farm-to-cafeteria opportunities, farmers' markets and other regional food initiatives, and provide processing and distribution financial assistance to regional produce farmers.

**TERMS:**

**Local food procurement** is the purchasing (by institutions) of fruits and vegetables that were grown by local farmers, often for nutritional and economic benefits.

## Getting Started

- State and local officials can develop a food policy council that includes state government officials, retail industry leaders, state and local health and zoning boards, nonprofit organizations and economic development or redevelopment officials. Although food policy councils may take a variety of forms, they are typically commissioned by state or local governments or are grassroots efforts. Some food policy councils include officials from agriculture departments and schools. Local food procurement may need to be part of a more comprehensive food retail development program.
- Local government agencies can work with schools and school districts as well as local supermarkets and restaurants to develop a food distribution plan that incorporates local, farm-fresh produce in school cafeterias, restaurants, supermarkets and other entities.

## Resources

### Farm-to-School Program

This Web site provides resources about the farm-to-school program broken down by state. It includes guides, reports and strategies. The site also includes state and local policy recommendations aimed at fixing the current school meal programs to incorporate fruits and vegetables from local farms.
*www.farmtoschool.org*
*www.farmtoschool.org/policies.php*

### The FoodRoutes Network

FoodRoutes Network is a nonprofit organization that provides information about promoting community-based food systems.
*www.foodroutes.org*

### International City/County Management Association, *Community Health and Food Access: The Local Government Role*

This report examines the need for local government intervention to ensure that all citizens have access to healthy food. According to the report, legislators can intervene by supporting farmers' markets or community gardens, using zoning laws to restrict fast-food restaurants and supporting supermarket development in lower-income areas.
*http://icma.org/upload/library/2006-09/%7B5CD4101C-2803-4655-9A51-465461B3C897%7D.pdf*

### Northeast-Midwest Institute, Summary of Notable Federal Brownfield and Vacant Property Programs and Initiatives

This document highlights programs and loans available to help increase economic development and housing and neighborhood revitalization in cities, states and urban counties.
*www.nemw.org/Brownfields&VacProp_NEMWFedCommRevitProg2006.pdf*

### The State and Local Food Policy Project, Drake University

This Web site provides information about the State and Local Food Policy Project, which facilitates the growth of food policy councils by providing support and resources to these groups. This project offers legal perspectives, case studies and in-depth analysis.
*www.statefoodpolicy.org*

### U.S. Department of Agriculture, Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program

This program provides funding for community-based food and agriculture projects nationwide. Eligible projects help increase access to food for lower-income people, increase a community's ability to provide for its own needs, promote comprehensive responses to local nutrition or food needs and meet specific needs for long-term viability in infrastructure improvement and development.
*www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/fundview.cfm?fonum=1080*

## Examples of Increasing Access to Farm-Fresh Local Foods

STATE

### Washington Adopts Healthy Kids Act

The Washington Healthy Kids Act eases state and school procurement restrictions to enable school districts and state entities to choose local food by:

- eliminating low-cost bidding requirements for school purchases of Washington-grown food to allow schools to adopt price preferences for local food;
- requiring development of food procurement procedures for state entities to encourage and facilitate purchasing of Washington-grown food to the maximum extent possible;
- requiring all state food contracts to include a plan to maximize the availability of Washington-grown food purchased through the contract;
- establishing a Farm-to-School program;
- creating the Washington Grown Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program, which provides $600,000 per year in grant funds to elementary schools with high numbers of low-income students to make available a locally grown fruit and vegetable snack program;
- authorizing schools to grow food to be eaten in their regular snack and meal programs, and requiring school garden programs to include education about organic and conventional growing methods;
- establishing a Farmers' Market Technology Program that provides $50,000 to allow farmers' markets to accept both electronic benefit transfer cards and credit cards;
- expanding and increasing funding for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program; and
- requiring the Department of Health to establish rules for farm stores to participate in the program, and providing an additional $200,000 in coupons to allow lower-income seniors and women with infant children to shop at farmers' markets.

*http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2007-08/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/6483-S2.PL.pdf*

## LOCAL

### Harford County Farmers' Market Coupon Program Helps Residents "Buy Local"

In Maryland, the Harford County Farmers' Market Coupon Program promotes new farmers' markets in the county and encourages participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables. The program also supplements the cost of produce and creates an incentive for families to choose healthier meal options.
*www.naco.org/PrinterTemplate.cfm?Section=Publications&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=27820*

### Ann Arbor, Mich., Increases Role in City-Run Farmers' Market

Ann Arbor, Mich., has been running its farmers' market since 1919, but a 1998 ordinance formalized the rules and regulations that govern the market. Another ordinance established a Farmers' Market Commission, which serves as an advisory board to guide daily market operations. Prospective members are nominated by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. In addition, the city employs a full-time market manager who is based in the Department of Parks and Recreation.
*http://bookstore.icma.org/freedocs/E43398.pdf*

### Tohono O'odham Nation Donates Land for Farming

The Tohono O'odham Nation, a Native-American reservation just west of Tucson, Ariz., which is larger in size than Connecticut, has one of the highest rates of diabetes in the world. More than 50 percent of adults on the reservation have the disease, according to the Indian Health Service. In response, the Indian Health Service, in collaboration with the Tohono O'odham Health Department, established community-and school-based diabetes prevention projects and the Tucson Indian Center now offers nutrition education to residents. The Tohono O'odham Nation also provided 100 acres of land to Tohono O'odham Community Action, a grassroots organization, to establish a farm for the production of fresh produce.
*www.whyhunger.org/component/content/article/35-food-security-learning-center/735-tohono-oodham-community-action-sells-az.html*

# RESTAURANTS

GOAL: To encourage people's food choices to shift to healthier items by providing more nutrition information. In order to offset the increase in the availability of fast food, policy-makers can help consumers make healthier choices by encouraging restaurants to offer healthier menu items, decrease portion sizes and post nutritional information on their menus.

© Photo: Getty Images/ Hola Images

## 1. Encourage Restaurants to Offer Reasonably Sized Portions and Low-Fat and Low-Calorie Menus

**The Issues and the Research:** Americans' average daily caloric intake increased from 2,000 to 3,000 calories between 1971 and 2000.[98,99,100] Representing about 74 percent of all restaurant traffic nationally, fast food has more per-serving calories than food prepared in the home,[101,102,103] and three analyses show a direct association between fast-food availability and obesity rates.[104,105,106] Furthermore, fast-food restaurants often promote larger sizes as selling points and chain restaurants also promote large-size items on their menus.[107] This situation is especially problematic for children who, according to one study, can find clusters of fast-food restaurants within walking distance of schools,[108] particularly in lower-income areas. For example, one study found that twice as many fast-food restaurants were located in racially-mixed neighborhoods in Mississippi, North Carolina, Maryland and Minnesota, compared with white neighborhoods in those states.[109] In addition, restaurants that offer the most low-nutrient, energy dense foods and the least amount of healthy menu items, according to researchers, are located in lower-income areas.[110,111] For example, only 27 percent of restaurants in lower-income areas offered five or more healthy options compared to 40 percent of restaurants in affluent neighborhoods.[112]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- County and city health officials
- Food policy councils
- Restaurants

## Policy and Program Options

***Healthy food promotional campaigns***

State and local policy-makers can create programs and policies to help restaurants promote healthier foods and beverages and reasonably-sized portions. For example, local officials can offer a "healthy eating" designation or stamp of approval. They can publicize specific restaurants on Web pages and also describe the government's own programs to promote healthy eating and active living. They can support public service announcements and provide prompts that display nutrition information and healthy messaging and, through financial or other incentives, they can encourage restaurants to offer healthier foods and provide price reductions for such offerings.

## Getting Started

- Local policy-makers or local government agencies can meet with restaurant owners and provide incentives (e.g., free advertisements on buses) for them to offer healthier food.
- Local governments can establish voluntary agreements with restaurant owners who serve healthier options and educate them on the potential fiscal benefits of promoting healthier foods and reasonably-sized portions. Local governments can formally acknowledge participating restaurants through community events, Web sites, etc.

## Resources

### Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), *Kids Meals: Obesity on the Menu*

In this report, CSPI examines children's menus at a number of restaurants to determine their nutritional value and their impact on health.
*http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/kidsmeals-report.pdf*

### Howard County Maryland Government, Healthy Howard Initiative

Healthy Howard attempts to promote prevention and wellness techniques among Maryland's Howard County residents. As part of the Healthy Restaurants Initiative, restaurants voluntarily agree to be trans fat-free, display nutritional and caloric information, offer at least two healthy menu options and pass food and hygiene inspections without substantive violations.
*www.howardcountymd.gov/Health/HealthMain/Health_HealthyEatingEstablishments.htm*

## 2. Encourage Restaurant Menu Labeling

**The Issues and the Research:** Marketing research has shown that providing nutrition information affects consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior. Researchers have determined that consumers consistently underestimate the nutrient levels in food items and overestimate the healthfulness of restaurant items.[113] Yet, when consumers are made aware of nutrition information at point-of-purchase, there is an increase in their perception of disease risk, and their intent to buy unhealthy foods decreases.[114,115] Studies have also indicated that nutrition information on restaurant menus empowers consumers and influences food choices.[116] Furthermore, research indicates that consumers want this information. Six nationally-representative polls have found that between 62 and 87 percent of Americans support the idea of requiring restaurants to list nutrition information.[117,118] In summary, increased awareness about nutrition information may change consumer purchasing decisions and lead to fewer calories consumed. At the same time, restaurants may then have a greater incentive to reformulate their menus based on changes in consumer preference for healthy foods.[119]

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- Restaurants
- County and city health officials
- Food policy councils

## Policy and Program Options

***Nutrition and/or calorie information***

Local policy-makers can consider adopting policies to require fast-food and chain restaurants to provide calorie or nutrition information in their establishments.

## Getting Started

- Since most menu labeling occurs at the local level, local governments can establish a community task force to develop local policies. To ease the burden on restaurants, some public health organizations are advocating for calorie labeling as a first step to more comprehensive menu labeling.
- Local policy-makers can implement policies requiring restaurants to provide menu labeling, and work with restaurants to list healthier choices on menus.
- Local policy-makers can involve local universities or community-based groups to advocate for the support of menu labeling.

## Resources

### American Heart Association, Policy Position Statement on Menu Labeling

This Web site has a policy position statement on menu labeling and resources that support calorie labeling for chain restaurants with standardized menus.
*www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3054233*

### Center for Science in the Public Interest, Menu Labeling Resources

This Web site offers a number of resources including fact sheets, polls and studies. These resources provide background information on menu labeling, provide consumer opinions of this practice and also provide case studies relevant to menu labeling.
*www.cspinet.org/menulabeling/resources.html*

### County of Los Angeles Public Health Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, *Menu Labeling as a Potential Strategy for Combating the Obesity Epidemic: A Health Impact Assessment*

This document explores the severity of the obesity epidemic and proposes menu labeling as a way to battle it. According to the report, implementing menu labeling could prove effective in reversing the obesity trend in light of the fact that many restaurants do not currently provide nutritional information on menus and many consumers seriously underestimate the caloric content of restaurant items.
*www.publichealthadvocacy.org/printable/CCPHA_LAPHmlaspotentialstrategy.pdf*

### Sample Menu Labeling Ordinances in Three Localities

- **Philadelphia:** Labeling laws in Philadelphia call for chain restaurants to provide nutritional information on foods sold at their establishments. Restaurants are required to provide nutritional information including the number of calories, grams of trans and saturated fat and milligrams of sodium. Restaurants must make this information easily identifiable by placing it in a size and print similar to that of the rest of the menu.
*http://webapps.phila.gov/council/attachments/5677.pdf*
- **New York City:** This document examines the correlation between eating out and obesity and examines attempts to hold restaurants accountable by forcing them to make nutritional information readily available. This regulation intends to make consumers aware of the calories of foods they purchase and consequently make them less likely to purchase foods they know are higher in calories.
*http://nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/public/notice-adoption-hc-art81-50.pdf*
- **Multnomah County, Ore., Policy Order:** This policy order requires chain restaurants in Multnomah County to accurately provide the total calories, saturated fat, trans fat, carbohydrates and sodium for each menu item offered.
*www.co.multnomah.or.us/health/chronic/documents/PolicyOrder-08-114.pdf*

### National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity, *Preemption and the Obesity Epidemic: State and Local Menu Labeling Laws and the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act*

Ongoing litigation in New York City provides an early glimpse of judicial interpretation of whether state and local menu labeling laws are preempted by the federal Nutrition Labeling and Education Act (NLEA). This article, which appeared in the Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics, explores these preemption issues, arguing that appropriately written and implemented menu labeling laws should not be preempted by the NLEA.
*www.nplanonline.org/taxonomy/term/16*

## Examples of Promoting Healthier Foods Choices in Restaurants

### STATE

#### California First State to Pass Menu Labeling Law

California was the first state to pass a statewide menu labeling law. The bill applies to fast-food and other chain restaurants that have 20 or more outlets in California. It also applies only to standardized menu items, not daily specials or customized orders. Before the bill goes into full effect in 2011, restaurant chains will be required to provide nutritional information through in-store brochures. This new ban preempts previous local laws in San Francisco and other municipalities.
*www.cspinet.org/new/200809301.html*

### LOCAL

#### Philadelphia Passes Menu Labeling Law

The Philadelphia city council passed a menu labeling law that has been described as the strongest in the nation. The measure requires that local units of restaurant chains with at least 15 stores nationwide post calorie counts on menus and menu boards starting January 1, 2010. It goes farther than the mandates enacted by New York City and several other jurisdictions by requiring that trans fat, saturated fat, sodium and carbohydrate contents be listed on printed menus, in addition to calories.
*www.philly.com/inquirer/health_science/daily/20081107_What_s_new_on_menu__Labeling.html*

#### Boston BestBites Campaign Urges Restaurants to Promote Healthy Menu Options

Restaurants participating in this campaign in Boston, Mass., advertise their healthier foods options as "BestBites" menu items. Restaurants that want to be certified must submit their menus for a nutritional analysis by the city. If a recipe does not meet the nutritional guidelines, a nutritionist works with the restaurant to consider healthier ingredients or preparation methods. Participating restaurants receive specially-designed materials that they can use to promote the program and will also be featured in advertisements highlighting the Boston BestBites program. The program has been endorsed by the American Heart Association of Massachusetts.
*www.bphc.org*

#### Los Angeles Limits Fast-Food Restaurants in Vulnerable Community

The Los Angeles City Council passed a one-year moratorium on new fast-food restaurants opening in the lower-income area of South Los Angeles. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health stated that the reasoning behind the ban is that 30 percent of adults in the South Los Angeles area are obese, compared with 19.1 percent in metropolitan Los Angeles and 14 percent for the affluent Westside of Los Angeles. As in most cities, minorities are disproportionately affected–28.7 percent of Latinos and 27.7 percent of African Americans are obese in South Los Angeles, compared with 16.6 percent of whites in the area. A study found that 73 percent of South Los Angeles restaurants were fast-food outlets, compared with 42 percent in West Los Angeles.
*www.foodsecurity.org/CFSCNEWSSP07_FNL.pdf*

# FOOD AND BEVERAGE MARKETING

GOAL: To increase the chances students will adopt healthier behaviors that will last a lifetime by eliminating the marketing of junk foods to children while encouraging healthy food consumption.

Photo: Charlie Schuck

## 1. Regulate the Marketing of Unhealthy Food In or Near Schools and Other Youth Facilities

**The Issues and the Research:** Food and beverage marketing intentionally targets children who are too young to tell advertising from the truth–and most encourages them to eat low-nutrient, energy-dense junk foods.[120] According to the Institute of Medicine, food and beverage marketing practices geared to children and youth are out of balance with healthful diets and contribute to an environment that puts their health at risk."[121] Furthermore, a 2008 Federal Trade Commission report found that 44 companies reported spending a total of approximately $870 million on food marketing directed to children under 12, and more than $1 billion on marketing to adolescents. A majority of this advertising was for sugary beverages and energy-dense foods.[122] Coupled with the increased availability of **competitive foods** in U.S. schools, increased food and beverage marketing to children can have detrimental effects on children's food choices.

**TERMS:**
**Competitive foods** are foods offered at school, other than meals served through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's school lunch, school breakfast and after-school snack programs. These foods can often be obtained from à la carte cafeteria sales, vending machines and school stores.

## Potential Stakeholders

***Policy-makers***

- State and local elected and appointed officials
- Schools officials (e.g., state boards of education, local school boards and school administrators)

***Other Government and Community Stakeholders***

- County and city health officials
- Food policy councils
- Food and beverage vendors

## Policy and Program Options

***Vending policies***

School district officials and state and local policy-makers can adopt vending machine policies that prohibit the marketing and sale of unhealthy foods and beverages in youth centers, school facilities, and parks department facilites, as well as other facilities owned or operated by state and local governments. In addition, many vending contracts have stipulations that allow the vendor to market/advertise in schools. Policy-makers can ensure that these clauses be restricted.

***Advertising in and near schools***

School district officials can decline offers from food and beverage marketers to sponsor before- and after-school programs, and they can turn down donations (e.g., a new scoreboard with a beverage company logo on it or new uniforms for sports teams with food and beverage logos). School officials can limit or restrict vending machine covers, book covers and other "giveaways," etc., from food and beverage companies.

Many communities already have ordinances that restrict alcohol and tobacco billboard advertisements near schools and youth centers, state and local policy-makers can consider ordinances that restrict advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages near schools, youth centers and other areas where youth gather.

## Getting Started

- School district officials and schools can conduct a self-assessment of school health policies, curricula and services.
- School district officials can coordinate with state boards of education, school adminstrators and teachers to assess nutrition policies.
- State and local policy-makers and advocates can establish a task force or food policy council with state and local representation to draft policies and recommendations on marketing food and beverages to children.

## Resources

### Action for Healthy Kids

This Web site provides information about addressing the childhood obesity epidemic by making changes in schools. Action for Healthy Kids is composed of more than 50 national organizations and government agencies representing education, health, fitness and nutrition.
*www.actionforhealthykids.org*

### National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity, *District Policy Restricting the Advertising of Food and Beverages Not Permitted to be Sold on School Grounds*

School districts know that students' health-related choices are influenced by many factors, but that advertising plays a key role in their decision making. This sample policy can help further a school district's goals of maintaining a school environment focused on learning, protecting and promoting students' health and welfare, and minimizing the commercial exploitation of its students. It can be a tool to help create and maintain a learning environment that minimizes commercial distractions.
*www.nplanonline.org/products/district-policy-restricting-advertising-food-and-beverages-not-permitted-be-sold-school-gro*

## Examples of Food and Beverage Marketing Policies

### STATE

### Maine Restricts Advertising and Marketing

Despite the fact that consumer advertising and marketing is regulated at the national level, Maine enacted a bill prohibiting brand-specific advertising of foods or beverages in school buildings or on school grounds except for food and beverages meeting standards for sale or distribution on school grounds. Excluded in the law is broadcast and print media advertising, as well as brand-name clothing worn on school grounds and product packaging ads.
*www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-a/title20-Asec6662.pdf*

### LOCAL

### Wellness Policy of Rural California School District Bans Food and Beverage Marketing

The Temecula Unified School District's wellness policy, as of 2006, bans marketing and advertising of non-nutritious foods and beverages through signage, vending machine fronts, logos, scoreboards, school supplies, advertisements in school publications, coupon or incentive programs.
*www2.tvusd.k12.ca.us/StudentNutrition/brief.pdf*

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