

Health and Wellness Element

Vision

La Mesa is the healthiest and most livable city in the San Diego region. It is a city that promotes an active lifestyle, social interaction, and healthy eating for all citizens, and where gardening and other types of urban farming are encouraged.

A City where every-day trips can be accomplished by walking, biking, or taking transit.

A City where children are safe to play in their neighborhoods, and where parks and recreational programming for all ages are available for all residents.

A City that encourages sustainable development principles to foster economic vitality, and the health of the community and the natural environment.

Health and Wellness Goals:

Goal 1: A community where residents feel safe and secure.

Goal 2: Access to fresh produce and other safe, nutritionally sound food.

Goal 3: Active living and healthy eating in La Mesa, with progress tracked to measure success.

Goal 4: Increase children's physical activity and nutrition to benefit their short- and long-term health and improve their ability to learn.

Goal 5: Programs and services that support the health and well being of residents through community-based collaboration with a range of partners.

Goal 6: Reduced obesity, increased physical activity, and improved nutrition.

Introduction

The Health and Wellness Element describes the measures La Mesa will take to make the health of the community a key priority and achieve its vision of being the healthiest and most livable city in the San Diego region. It offers policy guidance that will enable La Mesa's residents to achieve an active lifestyle, have access to healthy food choices, enjoy a safe, livable community, and raise healthy, active children. La Mesa is projected to add approximately 8,000 residents in the period between 2010 and 2030. As this growth occurs, the City will keep health and wellness a priority in its decision-making processes.

In recent years, La Mesa has been working closely with the County of San Diego Public Health Department and the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District and others to promote wellness within their jurisdictions. In 2007, an average of 31 percent of students tested in the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District and Grossmont Union High School District did

not meet State healthy fitness criteria. In addition, the County Health Department identified the La Mesa/Spring Valley Area as having the highest childhood obesity rates in the County. Concern for the health impacts of these troubling statistics led to the formation of the “ready...set...Live Well” (Live Well) Initiative (2005), which is a collaborative cross-jurisdictional program to promote wellness in the La Mesa-Spring Valley area. Live Well focuses primarily on environmental change and policy strategies to support healthy eating and physical activity. Five major goal areas are identified, including: 1) neighborhoods; 2) schools; 3) public health, health care and fitness; 4) community engagement; and 5) initiative promotion, tracking, and evaluation.

In early 2009, a Strategic Plan was prepared for the Live Well Initiative. One of the recommendations from the Strategic Plan was to prepare a Health and Wellness Element (HWE) as a part of the City’s update of its General Plan to provide a policy framework for the implementation of the Strategic Plan and to demonstrate the importance of this topic for the future of the City of La Mesa.

Purpose

The purpose of the Health and Wellness Element is to provide the policy framework to guide La Mesa’s decisions, programs, processes, infrastructure improvements, and development activities. The overarching goal of the Health and Wellness Element is to improve community health and well-being of La Mesa’s residents by encouraging and supporting their healthful behaviors and choices.

Benefits and outcomes of implementation of the Health and Wellness Element and interrelated goals in the other General Plan elements include:

- Reduced rate of chronic diseases and obesity
- Improved quality of life and livability
- A built environment that supports good health
- Strong sense of public safety
- Reduced health care costs
- Enhanced environmental sustainability
- Stronger social ties and community cohesion
- Better health for children
- Improved productivity of both adults and children
- Stronger economy



Stairs in Mt. Nebo Neighborhood

The Health and Wellness Element also demonstrates La Mesa’s commitment to taking a community-based approach to improving public health and sets the stage for evaluating and monitoring improvement over time.

Organization and Content

The Health and Wellness Element includes an overview of health-related characteristics and conditions; six goals with related objectives and policies; and a discussion of topics upon which the City will focus efforts to improve the health and wellness of its residents. A Glossary of terms is located in the final pages of this element.

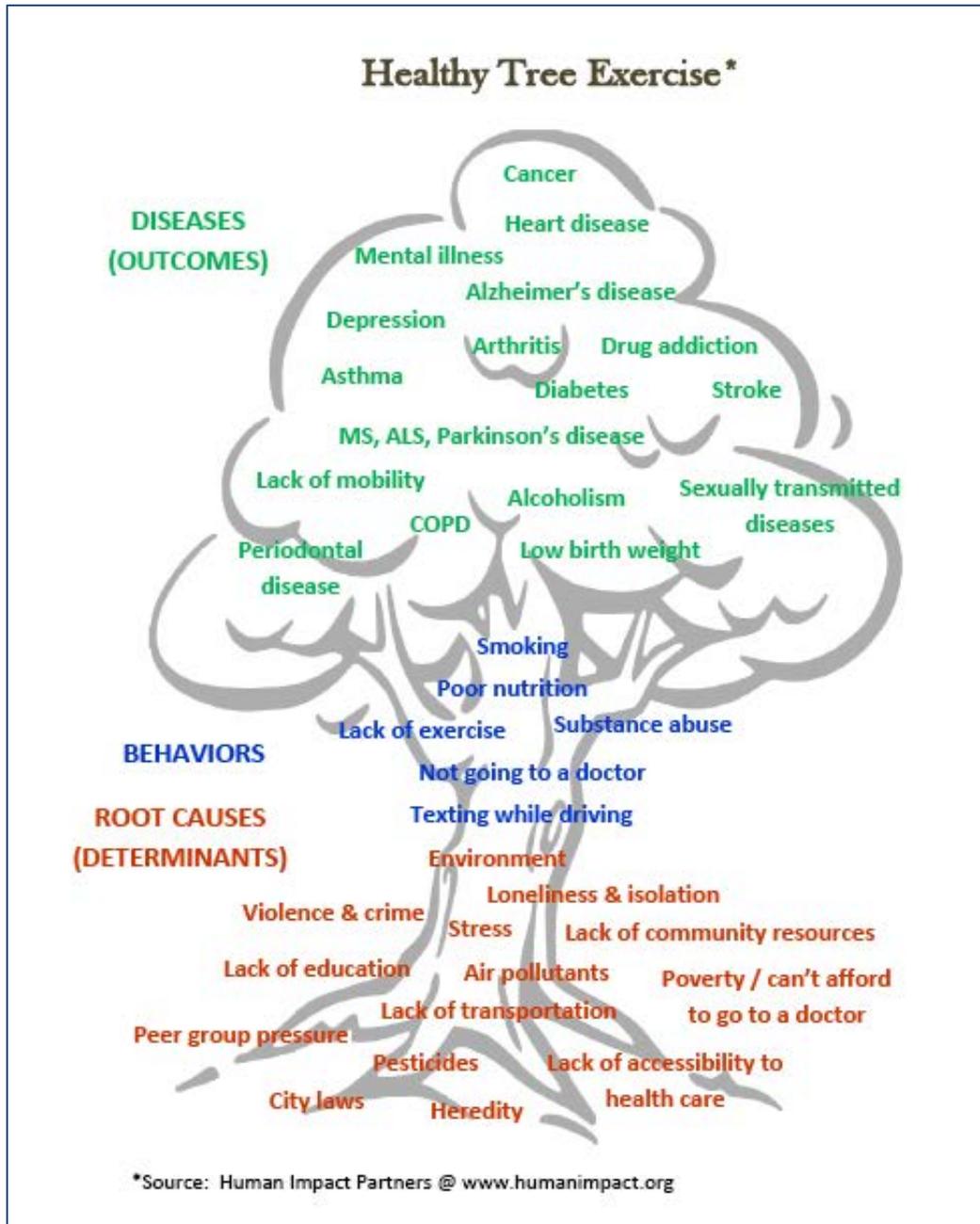
Community Outreach

Community input provided the foundation for preparation of this element. Many of the City’s Boards and Commissions received presentations regarding the General Plan Update and provided their thoughts as to what should be included. The Environmental Sustainability Commission, Youth Advisory Commission, and Community Services Commission each hosted a special presentation regarding the Health and Wellness Element and offered valuable insights and suggestions.

The City of La Mesa held several community-wide workshops and open houses to inform the public about the General Plan, including the Health and Wellness Element, and to provide the opportunity for citizens to comment and provide input. An interactive workshop specifically focused on the Health and Wellness Element was held April 7, 2011. Several methods were employed to engage and gain feedback from the 50+ participants.

A visioning exercise was conducted to describe the health of La Mesa in 20 years, for the purpose of developing the Vision Statement to support the Health and Wellness Element. Other activities included audience polling with instant results through the use of an audience response system (ARS) and discussion of focused topics for community health and wellness, including parks and recreation, access to fresh foods, active transportation, how design has an influence on the health of a community, and the importance of community connections and involvement.

One activity was a “Healthy Tree” exercise, which illustrates how diseases are a product of individual behaviors and social, environmental, and economic factors (see following page). Participants were asked to first identify diseases (outcomes), individual behaviors that could contribute to some diseases, and potential root causes of diseases (or determinants). The purpose was to demonstrate how certain factors and behaviors can lead to disease, and to stimulate discussion as to how General Plan goals and policies could address some of the root causes and enable people to make healthier choices.



There was general consensus that workshop attendees feel the City's attention to health and wellness is very beneficial. Participants expressed concern about the health statistics for the eastern portion of the County where La Mesa is located, and particular apprehension regarding the health of the school-age children in the community. Participants voiced interest in creating more parks and park programming and the importance of feeling safe in the City's parks. Benefits of safe walking and biking routes to parks, schools and grocery stores, and other services used on an everyday basis was emphasized. The importance of the social aspect of wellness was discussed, including neighborhood cohesion, comfortable

gathering places, and opportunities for participation in government. Retaining La Mesa’s livability and having clean, well-landscaped and well-maintained neighborhoods and public areas were emphasized.

Access to fresh, healthful foods was a high priority for the workshop attendees. There was considerable interest in backyard and community gardens. Some residents encouraged the City to explore allowing poultry and other farm animals in all single-family neighborhoods. The potential for the City to facilitate the collection and distribution of excess produce from residents’ fruit trees and gardens was suggested, as was the idea of the City planting fruit trees as street trees.

Relationship to Other General Plan Elements

The Health and Wellness Element focuses on specific topics to improve overall community health and wellbeing and address typical health disparities. However, due to the broad and interdisciplinary nature of health issues, La Mesa’s General Plan features goals and polices related to health and wellness in each of the elements of this General Plan. Shared topic areas are summarized below and graphically represented in Table HW-1.

Table HW-1: Relationship with Other General Plan Elements

Health and Wellness Topic Areas	Elements								
	Noise	Conservation/ Sustainability	Land Use and Urban Design	Housing	Circulation	Open Space/ Recreation	Historic Preservation	Public Services and Facilities	Safety
Community Safety	X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Community Gardening and Food Security		X	X	X		X			X
Active Living/Healthy Eating		X	X	X	X	X	X		
Children’s Physical Activity and Nutrition	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Community-based Collaborations			X	X		X		X	
Reduce Obesity, Increase Physical Activity and Improve Nutrition			X		X	X			

Community Health Awareness and Guidance

The Health and Wellness Element is not required under the California Government Code; however, Section 65303 of California Government Code authorizes local jurisdictions to adopt other elements or address additional topics when they relate to the physical development of the jurisdiction. Once adopted, an optional element carries the same legal weight as any of the mandatory elements and must be consistent with the other elements.

While there is currently no adopted legislative guidance for cities desiring to prepare plans specifically focused on health and wellness, there is urgency on several levels. Nationwide obesity levels have increased among adults, and concerns have been growing about the burgeoning childhood obesity epidemic. One in four children in San Diego County is overweight or obese; this is slightly higher than the national average¹. In a community often referenced as "Paradise," many may be surprised to discover an obesity rate in San Diego County that surpasses the national average. La Mesa's location in the east county region of San Diego County places it in an area with the highest obesity rates in the County. From the national to local level, efforts are underway to address obesity issues. A sampling of current efforts is summarized below.

Let's Move: Let's Move is a comprehensive initiative, launched by First Lady Michelle Obama in February 2010, dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation so that children born today will grow up healthier and better able to pursue their dreams. Let's Move is an effort to put children on a path for healthy living from their earliest days by giving parents helpful information and fostering environments that support healthy choices. Efforts include promoting healthy school environments, ensuring access to healthful nutrition, and encouraging daily physical activity. This initiative emphasizes the importance of collaboration by parents, elected officials from all levels of government, schools, health care professionals, faith-based and community-based organizations, and private sector companies.

Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW): CPPW was created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and is led by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). It is an effort to address chronic diseases since they are the most common, most costly, and most preventable of all health diseases. Lack of physical activity and poor nutrition—the two modifiable risk factors for obesity—and tobacco use are responsible for much of the illness, suffering, and death related to chronic disease. CPPW is intended to be a locally driven initiative supporting 50 communities nationwide over a two-year period to tackle obesity and tobacco use. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) promotes healthy community design as one way to address obesity and related

health concerns and has made grant funding available to many regions in the nation to fund improvements.

Healthy Works: In March 2010, the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) received a \$16 million CDC grant from the CPPW program to promote and fund healthy community projects. Healthy Works is a component of the County of San Diego's "Live Well, San Diego! Building Better Health" initiative is a 10-year strategic vision for improving health and wellness and combating the toll of chronic diseases, including obesity and tobacco use. Funded in part by the CPPW grant discussed above, Healthy Works engages San Diego County residents, businesses, and community leaders in approaches such as farmers markets, community gardens, bike-to-school and work programs, school exercise and nutrition programs, as well as changes to land use and transportation. Administered by the County HHSA, Healthy Works involves the collaborative effort of many local entities, including the Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP), the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative, and the San Diego County Association of Governments (SANDAG), among others.

SANDAG: HHSA partnered with SANDAG to implement the components of the Healthy Works project related to regional planning, active transportation, and safe routes to school. This work is supported by \$3 million in grant funds and will be completed by February 2012. Six initiatives comprise SANDAG's Healthy Works efforts: Healthy Impact and Assessment, Regional Comprehensive Planning Policy, Healthy Communities Campaign, Safe Routes to Schools Implementation, Active Commuter Transportation Campaign, and Regional Bicycle Implementation Campaign. As a Healthy Works partner, SANDAG awarded over \$1 million through four pass-through grant programs to local agencies, tribal governments, community programs, and school districts to incorporate public health considerations in planning, active transportation, and safe routes to school projects. La Mesa has received funds from this grant for Safe Routes to Schools, Safe Routes to Transit, and a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This infrastructure will encourage walkability within the City.

San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative (COI): The COI is a public-private partnership whose mission is to reduce and prevent childhood obesity in San Diego County by creating healthy environments for all children and families through advocacy, education, policy development, and environmental change. To fulfill its mission, the COI creates, supports, and mobilizes partners from multiple sectors; provides leadership and vision; and coordinates county-wide efforts in the prevention and reduction of childhood obesity. The advocacy efforts of the COI with respect to local government include:

- promoting local sustainable food production through urban agriculture and community gardens;

- building partnerships between public health and redevelopment agencies to promote sustainable, healthy communities; and
- promoting the incorporation of health and wellness goals and policies into General Plan updates.

Complete Streets Act (CA Assembly Bill 1358): The Complete Streets Act was passed in September 2008 by the California legislature and became law in January 2011. The law requires cities and counties to ensure that General Plans, when updated, provide for roadway design to account for the safe use of all roadway users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and those with disabilities, in addition to motor vehicles.

Walking and biking have decreased more than 40% during the past 3 decades, partly because of unsafe routes and poor walking conditions. ⁱⁱ

Private Foundations: Private foundations such as the Kaiser Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation have made our nation’s health and wellness a priority and play an important role by providing funding for efforts by La Mesa and other local governments to make both systems and long-term policy changes to create more livable and healthy communities. This Health and Wellness Element is made possible by a grant from the Kaiser Foundation.

Health-Related Characteristics and Conditions

This section summarizes community characteristics and conditions that describe and have an impact on the health of those who live and work in La Mesa.

Demographics

The demographic profile of a community can be one of the predictors of the health of its residents. Research indicates that race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and education have implications for health-related outcomes, both at the individual and community levels. Age plays a role as well, as older residents tend to have higher rates of chronic disease.

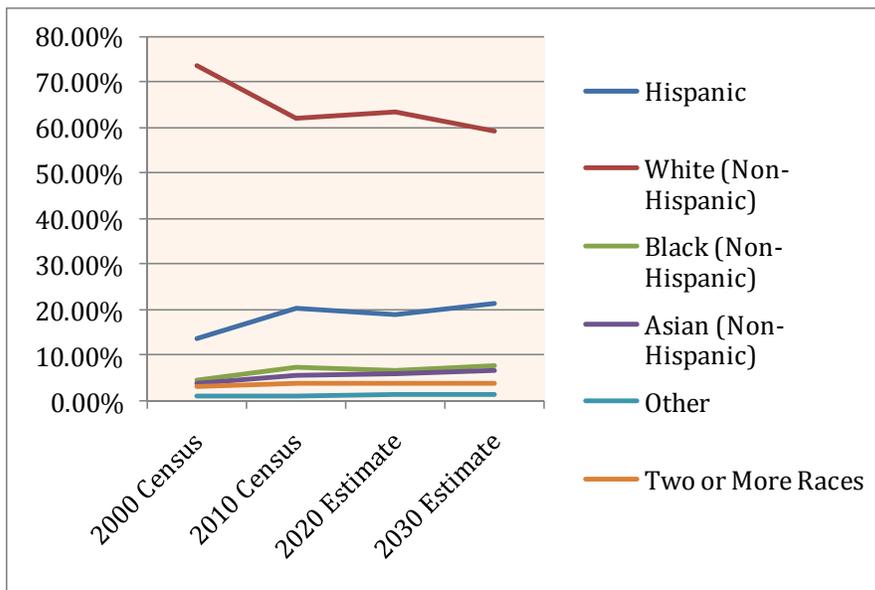
According to the 2010 Census, La Mesa has a population of 57,065 residents. Non-Hispanic white persons account for approximately 61.9% of residents, while Hispanic residents make up approximately 20.5% of the population. The percentage of Black and Asian persons is approximately 7.2% and 5.5%, respectively, and the remainder of the population is made up 1.2% of American Indian, Hawaiian and Pacific Islander and other ethnicities, and 3.7% for those of two or more races.

As indicated in Figures HW-1 and HW-2, the composition of La Mesa’s population will become both more diverse and older over the 2030 planning period. These trends mean that the City and its health and wellness partners will need to consider factors such as culture, language, and mobility constraints associated with age when they plan for and

institute programs, resources, and services to influence healthy behaviors and health outcomes. For example, health facilities should be encouraged within walking distance of transit stops for those who must rely on transit. Sources of culturally appropriate food should be accessible and affordable to all residents. An aging population will require

Figure HW-1: Population Trend by Race and Ethnicity

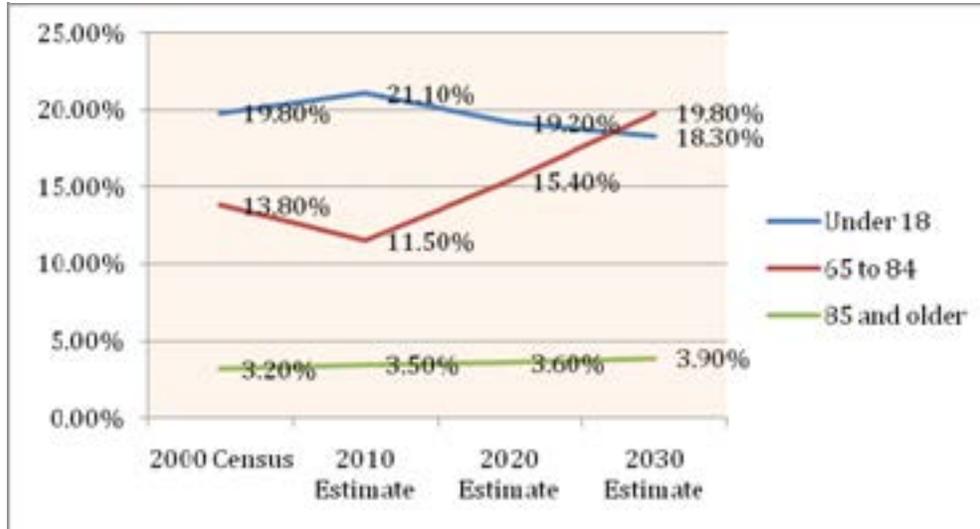
recreational programming that supports the specialized needs of seniors, as well as infrastructure improvements that consider those with physical limitations and disabilities.



Sources:
 Census 2000 Profile,
 SANDAG,
 constructed from U.S.

Census Bureau's 2000 Census Summary Files 1 and 3
 U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Tables P1, P2, P3, P4, H1.
 SANDAG 2050 Regional Growth Forecast.

Figure HW-2: Population Trend by Age



Sources:

Census 2000 Profile, SANDAG, constructed from U.S. Census Bureau’s 2000 Census Summary Files 1 and 3
 U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census. 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Tables P1, P2, P3, P4, H1.
 SANDAG 2050 Regional Growth Forecast.

Health Outcomes

There are many factors that influence individual and community health. According to the Institute of Medicine, individual factors—such as genetics, age, existing health conditions, and access to healthcare—account for approximately 30 percent of health outcomes. Other determinants that contribute to health outcomes include:

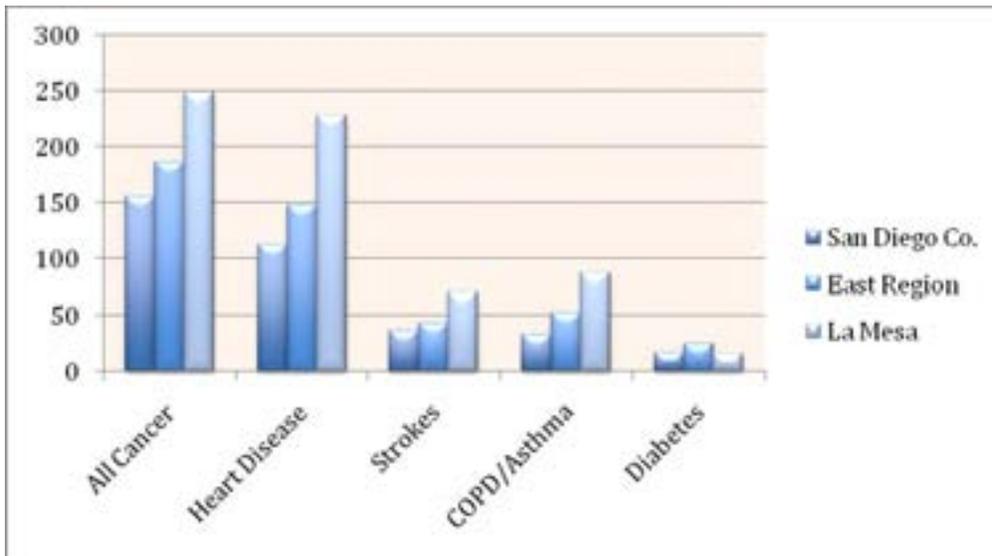
- access to services and infrastructures other than healthcare (such as parks and recreational facilities, education, community centers, and transportation);
- living and working conditions (such as housing, access to purveyors of healthful food, employment, and environmental quality); and
- social, economic, and political factors (such as poverty, racism, social cohesion, and political participation).

According to the CDC, chronic diseases account for 70 percent of all deaths in the U.S., and also cause major limitations in daily living for almost one out of 10 Americansⁱⁱⁱ. The U.S. National Center for Health Statistics characterizes chronic diseases as those that last three months or more. They generally cannot be prevented by vaccines or cured by medications, do not just “go away,” and tend to become more prevalent with age. Chronic diseases include heart disease, cancer, cerebrovascular diseases (including hypertension

and stroke), diabetes, and respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD and asthma).

Chronic diseases account for the majority of the leading causes of death for the state of California, San Diego County, and the East Region of San Diego County, of which La Mesa is a part. (The East Region is one of six regions in San Diego County that were created by the HHSA for the purpose of collecting and analyzing community data.) Although chronic diseases are among the most common and costly health problems, they are also among the most preventable. According to *3-4-50: Chronic Disease in San Diego County* (prepared by HHSA), three behaviors—poor nutrition, lack of physical exercise, and tobacco and substance use—contribute to four chronic diseases (cancer, heart disease and stroke, type 2 diabetes, and respiratory conditions), which result in over 50 percent of deaths in San Diego County^{iv} and over 55 percent of deaths in the East Region. Figure HW-3 shows how death rates from five chronic diseases compared in 2007 for La Mesa, East Region, and San Diego County.

Figure HW-3: Deaths Due to Selected Chronic Diseases, 2007 (Rates per 100,000 Population)



Source: County of San Diego, HHSA, Community Health Statistics, 4/12/2010

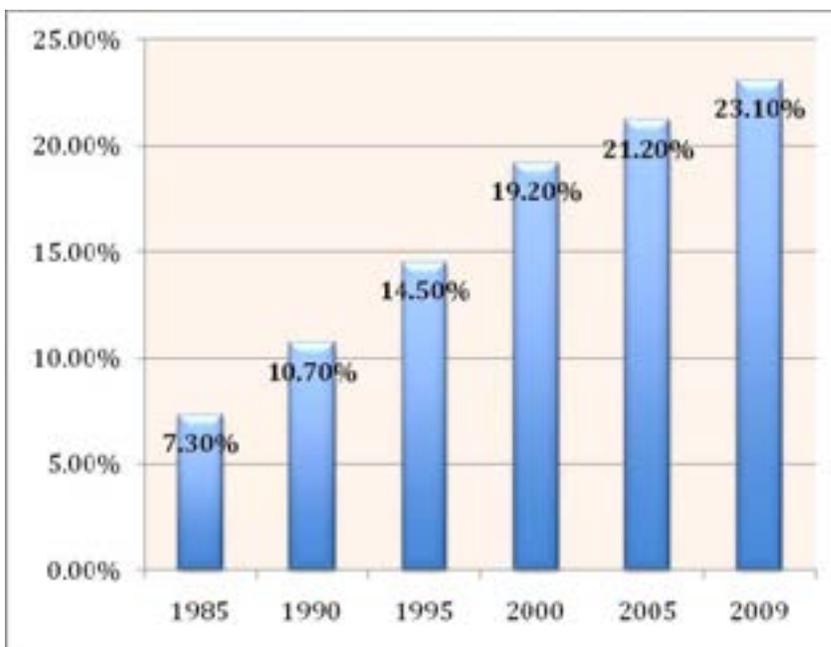
While the death rates in the East Region exceed those of San Diego County for all chronic diseases shown, the death rates in La Mesa exceed those of both the East Region and San Diego for all chronic diseases shown except diabetes. *3-4-50: Chronic Disease in San Diego County* identifies possible risk factors for each of the six HHSA regions. Although cities or communities are not discussed individually, the risk factors for East County may shed some light on reasons why La Mesa’s death rate from chronic diseases is high.

According to 3-4-50: *Chronic Disease in San Diego County*:

- Adults in the East Region were more likely to have ever smoked and more likely to be current smokers than most other regions.
- East Region residents had poorer nutrition than the rest of the County.
- East region adults were more likely to be overweight or obese than adults in other regions in the County.
- Other socio-economic determinants, such as age, also are likely to contribute to the higher death rate due to chronic diseases for La Mesa.

Obesity is a significant public health challenge that is linked to many chronic diseases. Obesity rates for adults have doubled and rates for children have tripled in the U.S. since 1980; today, more than 34 percent of adults and 16 percent of children are now considered obeseⁱⁱ. The CDC observes that “American society has become ‘obesogenic,’ characterized by environments that promote increased food intake, nonhealthful foods, and physical inactivityⁱⁱⁱ.” While not as high as the U.S. percentage, the percentage of adults in San Diego County has increased significantly as well, from 7.3 percent in 1985 to 23.1 percent in 2009. Figure HW-4 shows the increase in the obesity trend for adults in San Diego County from 1985 to 2009. As noted earlier in this Element, the high rate of obesity in children is what prompted the Live Well Initiative in La Mesa.

Figure HW-4: Obesity Trend for San Diego County Adults, 1985 - 2009



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Obesity Trends Among U.S. Adults, by State, CDC

According to obesity data collected between 2001 and 2007 for San Diego County by the CHIS, African Americans have the highest obesity rate, followed by Hispanics, Whites, and Asians. The City’s projected changing ethnic composition should be considered when La Mesa health and wellness partners consider policies and programs to reduce obesity rates.

Being overweight or obese during childhood and adolescence has both short-term and long-term health-related consequences. In the short-term, it increases the risk of developing high cholesterol, hypertension, respiratory ailments, orthopedic problems, depression, and type 2 diabetes as a youth. In the long-term, overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults, which increases to 80 percent if one or more parent is overweight or obese^{viii}.

Making healthful choices, such as being physically active, eating nutritious foods, and avoiding tobacco use, can prevent or lessen the serious effects of many chronic diseases^{ix}. For example, regular physical exercise reduces the risk of premature mortality, coronary heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, hypertension, and osteoporosis; improves mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety; and, in conjunction with a healthy diet, plays an important role in preventing overweight and obese adults, adolescents, and children^x.

Built Environment

The quality, conditions, and design of the built environment—including buildings, roads, trails, public and private infrastructure, and parks—can have both direct and indirect effects on a community’s health. Land use patterns and densities can influence opportunities residents have for making healthful choices, such as the amount of physical activity people get and the overall livability of the community. The integration of land use and transportation planning can create environments that reduce reliance on the use of personal automobiles and encourage more active modes of transportation. The location of parks and their distance from residential neighborhoods correlates to the amount of physical activity people get each week. The built environment also has an impact on the ways people interact with each other and their community, which influences community connections and social well-being.

People living in highly walkable, mixed-use communities are more than twice as likely to get more than 30 or more minutes of daily exercise as people who live in more auto-dependent neighborhoods.^{xi}

As part of its efforts to address health and wellness and promote active living, the City has prepared a number of studies to understand the existing conditions and barriers that must be overcome related to the built environment and to prepare plans for future improvements. These Plans are described below. Implementation requires funding; La

Mesa has been highly successful with attaining grant funding and leveraging scarce resources in making improvements to its built environment that will result in health benefits.

- A **Walkability Plan** was prepared in 2006 to help La Mesa achieve its goal of becoming a more walkable city and allow residents to make every-day trips without the use of the personal automobile. The Walkability Plan features a comprehensive look at the existing barriers to walking experienced by pedestrians and presents an equally comprehensive plan to improve the City's pedestrian environment.
- A **Sidewalk Master Plan** was adopted in 2008 to identify where sidewalks need to be extended and connections made and to prioritize future improvements.
- Several **Safe Routes to Schools** projects have been accomplished to improve the pedestrian and bicycling environment for school children. A **Safe Routes to Transit** project was completed in 2011 to identify and prepare strategies to address barriers to transit use.
- La Mesa's existing bicycle route network is sparse, particularly in the older part of the City south of I-8, and many of the bike routes are not connected. A **Bicycle Facilities Plan and Alternative Transportation Plan** was adopted in 2012 to address the existing deficiencies, provide a framework for the future development of the City's bicycle network, and to ensure La Mesa's bicycle routes connect to the regional bicycle network.

Even though La Mesa is nearly built out, opportunities exist through market-driven reuse and recycling of existing development to incorporate public health considerations into both new and infill development, including pedestrian- and transit-oriented development, improved connectivity, and improved access to parks. Although many of these future efforts and opportunities are also addressed in other elements of the General Plan, they are brought together and highlighted in the Health and Wellness Element to demonstrate how implementation of the General Plan will improve the built environment in a manner that supports La Mesa's vision of becoming the healthiest and most livable city in the region.

Pedestrian- and Transit-Oriented Development: The arrival of trolley service in La Mesa in 1989 brought about an effort to concentrate the City's planning efforts around the trolley stations, including the application of a mixed-use urban overlay zone to the City's transportation corridors, which can support and are designated for higher density development. In order to accommodate the projected population increase and protect La Mesa's single-family residential neighborhoods, the City will continue to intensify the corridors identified for mixed use and higher density development near the transit stations and along the City's transit corridors. New infill development is encouraged near each of La Mesa's five transit stations. There is potential for compact redevelopment along the City's main mixed-use corridors of El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue, where

revitalization should include improving walkability, landscaping, safety, and circulation. As a major node, La Mesa's Downtown Village and Civic Center will be enhanced with new streetscapes and uses for increased pedestrian mobility. The Grossmont Center and Grossmont Medical Campus represent a major district in La Mesa and will continue to develop with new uses in future years, representing opportunities for innovative, sustainable, pedestrian- and transit-friendly design.

Improved Connectivity to Increase Physical Activity: The City is roughly bisected into four quadrants by two freeways, Interstate 8 and SR-125, which provide excellent automobile access, but present challenges for pedestrian and bicycle access, and barriers to connectivity. Sidewalks are well-connected and complete in some areas of the City, while in others they are not present, exist on only one side of the street, and/or gaps are present and connectivity is lacking. The City's topography presents challenges to connectivity as well, since the existing development pattern makes constructing new sidewalks or closing gaps difficult due to homes constructed close to the street, winding roadways, and a resulting lack of available right-of-way. It is also the choice of residents near the county border to maintain their neighborhood's character and not have sidewalks.

As funding becomes available, the Sidewalk Plan, Walkability Plan, and Bicycle Facilities Plan and Alternative Transportation Plans will continue to be implemented to improve opportunities for active transportation. The City will also look for opportunities to construct streetscape improvements similar to the project along Allison Avenue in the Civic Center area of La Mesa (completed in 2010-2011), which is an excellent example of using the guidance from Complete Streets legislation to improve the street environment to accommodate all users. The project included widening the sidewalks, providing safer crossing for pedestrians, enhanced transit stops, improved accommodation for bicyclists, and attractive landscaping for an overall more pleasant experience.

Improved Access to Parks: Although most of La Mesa's residents live within one-half mile of a park, the City desires to provide even better access to parks to encourage residents to engage in regular physical activity. In 2011, the City received a grant to prepare a Citywide Parks Master Plan. As part of this plan, the City has set a standard for all residents to have access to a park within a 15-minute walk of their homes. Implementation of the Parks Master Plan will ensure better access to the City's parks, and added and expanded facilities, activities, and programming for residents.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The following goals, objectives and policies provide the framework for the Health and Wellness Plan, which follows this section. The direction provided will guide the City’s efforts to incorporate health considerations into policies, programs, decisions, and development activities, and will strengthen the relationship between planning decisions and improved public health outcomes.

- **Goal HW-1: A community where residents are healthy and feel safe and secure.**
- ***Objective HW-1.1: Ensure that public and private development and infrastructure is designed, constructed, and maintained to maximize safety and security and reduce opportunities for criminal activity.***
 - **Policy HW-1.1.1:** Encourage developers to incorporate building and site design techniques that reduce crime, such as utilizing Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) design strategies.
 - **Policy HW-1.1.2:** Increase safety and security in public places—such as parks, recreation facilities, sidewalks, transit stops and facilities, and trails—by providing adequate lighting, maintaining landscaping to maximize visibility and reduce hiding places, removing graffiti immediately; removing trash, debris, weeds, etc. from public areas with ongoing maintenance of those public areas; and conducting regular police and volunteer (crime watch) patrols.
 - **Policy HW-1.1.3:** Design for seniors, children, and those with disabilities by incorporating amenities such as shaded benches at frequent intervals, wheelchair accessible street corners, audible street crossing signals, and adjusting traffic signal timing to ensure adequate time for them to cross streets.
- ***Objective HW-1.2: Improve community health through the reduction of unintentional injuries and violence.***
 - **Policy HW-1.2.1:** Identify and take actions to reduce the rate and severity of unintentional injuries, such as from falls; vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian accidents; drowning; poisoning; and suffocation.
 - **Policy HW-1.2.2:** Continue to develop and implement Safe Routes to Schools and Safe Routes to Transit.

Policy HW-1.2.3: Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety through implementation of La Mesa’s Walkability Plan and Bicycle Master Plan, and evaluate and implement other plans and programs, as appropriate.

Policy HW-1.2.4: Work with community partners to increase awareness of and reduce crimes against persons, such as elder, domestic, and child abuse.

Policy HW-1.2.5: Enhance communications between law enforcement and La Mesa’s youth and support programs that deter youth-related crimes.

Policy HW-1.2.6: Encourage opportunities for residents, groups, agencies, businesses, La Mesa Police and Fire Departments, and other safety-related agencies work together to improve safety and security.

Goal HW-2: Access to fresh produce and other safe, nutritionally sound food.

Objective HW-2.1: Increase accessibility, availability, affordability and identification of fresh, locally grown food for La Mesa’s residents.

Policy HW-2.1.1: Encourage outlets that offer fresh locally grown food such as La Mesa Farmer’s Market.

Policy HW-2.1.2: Consider creating a Community Gardening Program to support existing and create additional community gardens. Identify existing and potential community garden sites on public property, such as parks, senior and community centers, public easements and rights-of-way, and surplus property, and allow for their use.

Policy HW-2.1.3: Promote backyard gardens and urban farms; and provide information and resources to encourage gardening.

Policy HW-2.1.4: Encourage multifamily residential developments to identify appropriate outdoor space to allow garden plots for residents.

Policy HW-2.1.5: Allow residents to raise poultry (excluding roosters) in all single-family residential zones, subject to appropriate health, safety, and nuisance regulations.

Policy HW-2.1.6: Encourage nutritional programs and food services for vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly and low-income residents.

Policy HW-2.1.7: Encourage restaurants to serve locally grown or produced foods.

Goal H&W-3: Active living and healthy eating in La Mesa, with progress tracked to measure success.

Objective HW-3.1: *Employ a range of methods to communicate and track community health and wellness information.*

Policy HW-3.1.1: Use the City’s website, printed materials, social media and other means to encourage residents to be physically active through publicity about opportunities in the community for physical activity.

Policy HW-3.1.2: Promote opportunities to participate in coordinated walks, runs, bike rides, dance nights and other sponsored events involving physical activity.

Policy HW-3.1.3: Work with various community organizations and local agencies to provide health information, classes and events.

Policy HW-3.1.4: Develop benchmarks and indicators to track success of the health and wellness program.

Objective HW-3.2: *Adopt a wayfinding program to direct those who live and work in La Mesa to the City’s sites that provide opportunities for health and wellness programs and activities, such as designated routes for walking and biking, stairs, and parks and recreational facilities.*

Policy HW-3.2.1: Enhance the City’s urban walking trails including the city stairways.

Policy HW-3.2.2: Ensure bike routes are clearly designated.

Policy HW-3.2.3: Ensure that all City park and recreational facilities are well-marked and visible from streets, sidewalks and bike paths.

Policy HW-3.2.4: Encourage the City’s hospitals, clinics and other health service providers to provide well-maintained and visible signage.

Goal HW-4.0: Children’s physical activity and nutrition to benefit their short- and long-term health and improve their ability to learn.

Objective HW-4.1: *Provide children with safe and appealing opportunities for walking and bicycling to school in order to encourage exercise and healthy living habits.*

Policy HW-4.1.1: Support the completion of infrastructure upgrades that improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety to and from school (e.g., implementation of Safe Routes to Schools recommendations, etc.).

Policy HW-4.1.2: Collaborate with the school system to support volunteer programs to increase adult supervision during times when children are walking to and from school, such as Walking School Buses, Bicycle Trains, and neighborhood “eyes on the street.”

Policy HW-4.1.3: Locate parks near schools when possible.

Policy HW-4.1.4: Continue to pursue joint use agreements with local schools to allow school property to be available for public use outside of school hours.

Objective HW- 4.2: Partner with local schools to improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages served or available in schools, and to encourage healthy eating.

Policy HW-4.2.1: Support programs that encourage youth to consume healthy foods that they are involved in producing, such as through edible schoolyards, school gardening programs, and food preparation classes.

Policy HW-4.2.2: Encourage local schools to offer healthful food for before school programs, breakfast and lunch programs, and after school programs and to decrease the amount of sodium in foods served in schools.

Policy HW-4.2.3: Encourage local schools to adopt a vending machine policy to limit the sale of beverages to water only, and to require 100% of food offered to be considered healthful.

Policy HW-4.2.4: Work with local youth sports organizations to understand and implement healthy eating policies at snack bars and for team snacks.

Goal HW-5: Programs and services that support the health and well being of residents through community-based collaboration with a range of partners.

Objective HW-5.1: Build on local collaboration to promote and sustain community wellness.

Policy HW-5.1.1: Continue opportunities for inclusive and meaningful community involvement and leadership throughout La Mesa, in support of community wellness.

Policy HW-5.1.2: Participate in regional and/or county collaborative health and wellness initiatives.

Goal HW-6: Reduced obesity, increased physical activity, and improved nutrition.

Objective HW-6.1 *Develop and/or adopt protocols to evaluate the impact of policy, environmental/design, programmatic, and infrastructure changes on community health and wellbeing and the behaviors that influence health.*

Policy HW-6.1.1: Utilize County of San Diego data sets to benchmark and assess community needs and health-related trends.

Policy HW-6.1.2: Develop performance measures to track improvements and trends in La Mesa’s health and wellness outcomes.

Implementation

The Health and Wellness Element provides the policy framework for implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Live Well Initiative and future implementation programs, plans, and other actions. This section describes how implementation of the goals, objectives, and policies of the Health and Wellness Element can improve opportunities for residents to make appropriate choices that are necessary for good health. It also illustrates how the interrelationship of goals, objectives, and policies throughout the General Plan can influence factors that affect community health. This section demonstrates the City’s commitment to taking a community-based approach to improving public health by working with community partners to make public health and wellness priorities for the community, such as through the Live Well Initiative.

The topics in this section include:

- Access to Healthful Food and Food Security
- Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles
- La Mesa’s Focus on its Children
- Safety and Security
- Community-Based Collaboration for Health

A healthy community is one that embraces the belief that health is more than merely an absence of disease; a healthy community includes those elements that enable people to maintain a high quality of life and productivity. ^{xii}

One of the goals of both the Strategic Plan and the Health and Wellness Element is to evaluate the degree to which individual behaviors are changing and community health and wellness outcomes are improving as a result of implementation of these policies, strategies, and programs. This requires collecting and assessing data to measure progress over time. La Mesa can evaluate how health outcomes in the community are changing by identifying and tracking a variety of indicators, such as rates of obesity in adults and children, chronic disease rates, the number of miles added to the City’s bicycle network, the percentage of

people who live within 15 minutes walking distance to a park, and the number and location of community gardens. Indicators also can help the City measure its progress compared with other cities in San Diego County, in California, and the nation. Much of the information included in the Health Outcomes and Built Environment sections and many of the objectives and policies of the Health and Wellness Element can form the basis for indicators. The indicators may be measured by readily available data, such as those currently collected by the City and San Diego County, while others may require preparation and administration of surveys or other data collection methodologies. Identifying and tracking indicators will assist the City and its community partners in measuring progress over time and fine-tuning its policies, strategies, and implementation programs. Figure HW-5 depicts graphical representations of potential physical indicators La Mesa may use to measure progress in achieving changes to the built environment.

GENERAL PLAN

HEALTH AND ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Legend

- Proposed Bike Network
- Existing Sidewalks
- Proposed Sidewalks
- Public Parks
- Public Schools
- Mixed Use Overlay
- Lakes
- Light Rail Transit
- Light Rail Station
- Bus Stop

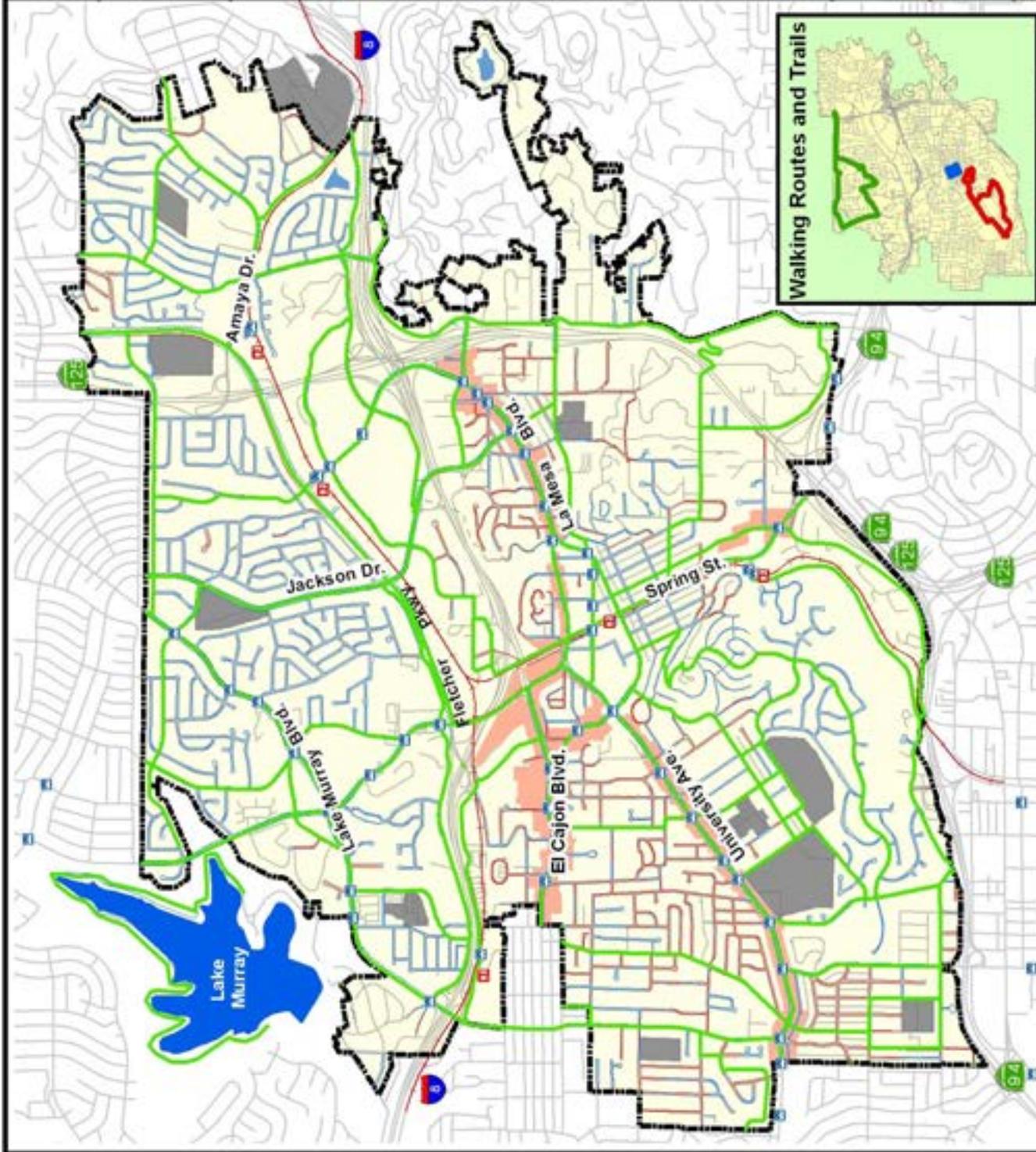


0 1,400 2,800 4,200 Feet



Data Sources:
SanGIS
City of La Mesa

Figure HW-5



Access to Healthful Food and Community Food Security

La Mesa will strive to ensure all residents have access to healthy food on an equitable basis and improve the security of the city’s food system. Community food security is achieved when all community members can obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice. Community food security also involves creating and/or supporting local, regional, and family-scale farmers and linking consumers and growers.

Although La Mesa is well-served by outlets offering healthful food options, such as grocery stores and healthy food outlets, the Health and Wellness Element supports many forms of urban agriculture, which can greatly increase the City’s food security. Community gardens on public or private property and gardening plots incorporated into



La Mesa front lawn transformed into a garden. (Photo courtesy of Harold Bailey)

the common areas around multi-family developments give everyone the opportunity to grow healthy food for themselves and their families. Backyard gardens and edible landscaping make productive use of private land. To discourage waste, excess produce should be collected and distributed to vulnerable populations including children, the elderly and low-income residents. The City supports residents raising poultry (no roosters) in backyard areas and provides nuisance regulations to protect neighbors.

Additional methods to support opportunities for residents to make healthful food choices include encouraging outlets that offer fresh, locally grown produce, such as La Mesa’s Farmer’s Market and restaurants, to sell and/or serve locally grown products. The City provides gardening education programs for residents and local schools, and encourages nutritional programs to benefit those vulnerable populations that have the greatest need, such as children, seniors, and low-income residents. Planning for La Mesa’s first community garden began in 2011 as a joint-use project between the City of La Mesa and Helix Charter High School. A grant received by the City provided the “seed money” to collaborate with the school district and allow both the students and the community to participate in raising fresh, nutritious food. Building on the success of La Mesa’s first community garden, the City has the opportunity to expand its efforts in promoting and providing accommodation for better community food security by supporting more community and school gardens.



La Mesa’ Farmer’s Market

Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles

Every day, millions of Americans make the choice to live healthier lives. The City of La Mesa recognizes it can serve an important role by providing residents with information they can use to practice healthy living. Some of the methods employed by the City include using the City’s website, printed materials, signage, maps and other means to educate and inform residents of the varied and abundant opportunities to take part in physical activity in La Mesa and the surrounding areas. In addition to promoting City-sponsored programs and sporting activities offered in La Mesa’s parks, joint-use areas, Community Center, and Adult Enrichment Center, the City can expand efforts to find creative ways to offer fun activities that also provide physical activity, such as sponsoring community walks targeted specifically for segments of the community with common interests, like teens, families, seniors, cultures, and ethnicities.

People who live within walking distance (e.g., ¼ mile) of a park are 25 percent more likely to meet the minimum weekly exercise recommendation of three times a week. ^{xiii}

La Mesa’s efforts to promote healthy lifestyles, when combined with the efforts of others—like the Kaiser Foundation, who places TV and radio announcements promoting physical activity, healthful eating and active living—will help instill the value that individual, family, and community health is important and should be the norm.

Social media has come to play an important role in the way Americans access information, and it can be an effective mechanism for disseminating promotional material about active living and nutrition. This trend is expected to continue. Social media refers to web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue. Young adults in particular are more likely to get their news from the social media sites they frequent than traditional methods such as newspapers, television, or radio news. The City has an adopted social media policy and will continue to monitor and expand its use when appropriate.

La Mesa will consider adopting a “Wayfinding Program” to connect residents with the activity centers in the City, including the parks, stairs, bicycle paths, trails, schools, Community Center, Adult Enrichment Center, and non-profits that provide recreational programming such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club and Joan Kroc Community Center located just west of La Mesa’s city boundary. Wayfinding is essentially a signage program to convey directions to travelers. Signage should be easily read, clearly identified, feature a consistent look and feel, and should be prominently displayed. The City can also ensure that signage for health care providers is easy to read, clear of obstruction by other structures or vegetation, and is visible to those using modes of transportation other than the personal automobile.

A Community Physical Activity Plan (CPAP) is an action plan to promote physical activity. It comprehensively identifies the places and programs in a given geographical area to participate in physical activity and provides information to residents as to how to connect with and participate in those activities. A CPAP is also a motivational tool to encourage those inactive members of the community to take part in active living, recognizing that increased physical activity leads to improved quality of life. The City will consider preparing a CPAP as part of its promotional efforts for healthy lifestyles.

La Mesa’s Focus on its Children

Obesity is one of the most pressing health concerns for children in our country. It is complicated by vehicular-dominated transportation systems, a pedestrian-unfriendly built environment, and poor nutrition habits. La Mesa is located in an area of San Diego County that has been identified as having the highest rates of childhood obesity in the county. In the 2007-2008 school year, 30% of 5th graders and 32% of 7th graders in the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District were outside the Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ), a measure of body mass index. The percentage of 9th grade students not in the HFZ at high schools serving La Mesa ranged from 22% - 48%.

The City of La Mesa values its children and recognizes this plan represents their future. Children’s health can be improved by changing the environment so that children will move more and eat well. Much can be done to improve the physical environment in the City and on or near school campuses to offer more abundant opportunities for physical activity. The plan to increase access to healthful food and increase community food security is refined further in this section to focus specifically on La Mesa’s kids.

La Mesa has established a collaborative relationship with some local schools to improve children’s health, and will continue to expand these efforts. Children spend more time in school than any other environment except the home. The Safe Routes to Schools program focuses on making walking and biking a safe alternative school commute—one that can help incorporate exercise into a student’s school day. La Mesa will continue to improve the sidewalks, bike lanes, intersections, and will adopt safety programs near schools to encourage more children to walk and bike to school.

Active living research has shown that kids who are physically active and fit are likely to have stronger academic performance.^{xiv}

Locating parks near schools and continuing to adopt joint-use agreements between the City and local schools can expand the availability of fields for both organized and free play activities. Coordinating use of school and park amenities also helps build community and extends the ability to offer a broader range of park and recreational programming options through the use of an expanded range of facilities.

The YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and Joan Kroc Center are organizations that offer a wide variety of health-related programming and activities to La Mesa’s kids, and provide

opportunities for collaboration with the City. Each of these organizations has local recreational facilities and offer classes, camps, sports, educational activities, trained staff, and more. Partnering with such organizations expands the ability of both the City and the particular organization to promote active living, in particular for children.

Nutrition and learning go hand in hand. Kids who are nutritionally fit are more likely to have the energy, stamina, and self-esteem that enhance their ability to learn. Teaching children how to eat healthful foods will enable them to establish a foundation of good nutrition and healthful lifestyle habits that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. The City will continue to expand its partnerships with local schools with the joint goal of improving the nutritional health of La Mesa’s students. Encouraging local schools to plant edible landscaping and involving school children in the care, harvesting, and consumption of fresh produce can help bolster healthy eating habits. School gardens offer opportunities for fun and physical activity while also serving as an important educational tool to help students understand how healthy food is produced and where their food comes from. Current research suggests that, when used as part of a nutrition education strategy, school gardens can increase knowledge of fruits and vegetables and influence behavioral change among children. Leading by example, and promoting school programs that offer healthy school meals, limiting beverage vending machines to water only, and working with local youth sports organizations to implement healthy eating policies are additional ways the City of La Mesa can promote healthy lifestyles for the City’s youth.

School and community gardens teach children that vegetables come from someplace other than the grocery store. Community gardens are the coming together of “community” to garden together.^{xv}

Safety and Security as it Relates to Health

Increasing healthy outcomes is dependent on an environment where residents both *are* and *feel* safe and secure. People are more likely to choose active transportation options of walking and biking to school, work, the store, and transit stops when they perceive that those routes are safe. For example, parks, community gathering spaces, transit stops, and residential developments with overgrown landscaping or that have been designed without “eyes on the street” can affect both real and perceived safety. Incomplete sidewalks mean people must walk in the street, which results in a real increased physical safety risk, while walking on a connected sidewalk network that is isolated by adjacent property may result in a perceived safety risk. The Health and Wellness Element supports the Safety, Circulation, and Land Use and Urban Design Elements by addressing the ways in which improving the safety of the City’s public infrastructure, crime and violence prevention, design for special pedestrian populations (children, seniors, and those with disabilities), and violence prevention can positively affect healthy behaviors and choices.

The manner in which the built environment—such buildings, sidewalks, streets, parks, and landscaping—is designed and maintained can impact both the legitimate use of the

environment and opportunities for crime. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through the design of the built environment, including buildings; parking lots and garages; parks, open spaces, plazas, and courtyards; transit stops and stations; exposed uses such as ATMs; and landscaping. It applies relatively simple design techniques to the built environment in both the public and private realms to increase the legitimate use of a space and deter crime. CPTED encourages the use of design techniques to promote the creation of defensible space; fostering a sense of ownership of a space; promoting opportunities for informal and formal surveillance; employing appropriate types and quantities of lighting; and utilizing landscaping to both provide an attractive environment that generates pride and ownership and allow visual observation. The City’s implementation of CPTED techniques will help ensure that new and redeveloped private and public buildings, infrastructure, and developments are active, inviting, secure spaces that incorporate techniques to deter crime.

Even the ideally designed space will not promote actual or perceived safety if it is poorly maintained—conditions such as litter, weeds, graffiti, broken windows, and boarded up buildings give the impression that a place is abandoned and not safe. La Mesa’s implementation of policies and programs to abate graffiti and promote property maintenance will enhance the perception of safety and may deter vandalism, loitering, and gang activity.

The City is committed to increasing opportunities for people to make safe active transportation choices. Implementation of the Walkability Plan and Sidewalk Master Plan will reduce existing barriers to walking, especially in the geographic areas that are considered challenging for pedestrians, and will result in the closure of gaps in sidewalks and increased connectivity. Children will be more likely to walk or bike to school and commuters will be encouraged to walk or bike to bus and trolley stations through implementation of the Safe Routes to Schools and Safe Routes to Transit projects. Implementation of the Bicycle Facilities and Alternative Transportation Plan will improve the safety of bicyclists by addressing the deficiencies in the existing bicycle route network. The Health and Wellness element also includes policies to ensure the specialized mobility needs of children, individuals with disabilities, and an aging population are met in the design and construction of public improvements.

Children who walk or bike to school have better cardiovascular fitness than do children who do not actively commute to school. However, parental perception of traffic dangers prevented an estimated 20 million children (nationwide) from actively commuting to school.^{xvi}

Prevention of violence and crimes against persons and property also has an effect on overall physical and mental health. There is a growing body of research that shows that both the experience of victimization and the anxiety or fear of crime have impacts on health by causing symptoms such as stress, sleeping difficulties, loss of appetite, depression,

and health-harming “coping” mechanisms (e.g., alcohol and tobacco use and abuse)^{vii}. The City’s violent crime rate, FBI Index Crime Rate, and property crime rate (per 1,000 population) have decreased between 19 and 22 percent between 2006 and 2010. However, its crime rates in all three categories are higher than the average for the entire San Diego region (all cities and the County)^{viii}. The City will continue to improve the safety and security of those who live and work in La Mesa through its emphasis on community policing and other safety programs and services. Examples include the following:

- The City’s Crime Free Multi-Housing crime prevention program, which is a cooperative partnership between Police Department staff and owners and managers to enhance the quality of life for residents living in apartment complexes throughout La Mesa. The program includes an inspection of the property to assess any recommendations for crime prevention measures, training for owners and managers, organizing meeting with tenants, the use of a “Crime Free” lease addendum, and periodic follow-up meetings.
- Business Crime Prevention and Residential Crime Prevention presentations, which are available through the Crime Prevention Unit at no charge.
- The City’s Anti-Graffiti Program and Crime Stoppers Tagger Tip Line.
- Kidz Watch, a free safety academy for children ages 6 to 11 offered by the La Mesa Police Department.
- Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol or "RSVP," where active seniors donate their time to patrol the City, conduct vacation security checks, visit elderly and homebound citizens, and provide information and services to the public.

Community-Based Collaboration for Health

La Mesa’s Live Well initiative, described in the Introduction to this element, demonstrates the City’s commitment to a cross-jurisdictional, collaborative approach to wellness. A policy team with members from government, education, healthcare, public works, public health, parks and recreation, academia, faith, and youth and family coalitions was formed and prepared a strategic plan to create communities (La Mesa and Spring Valley) that are the healthiest in the region. Live Well features a Community Ambassador (CA) program to support grassroots involvement in policy and systems change in both La Mesa and Spring Valley. The CA program is also intended to facilitate broad-based participation and leadership. CAs may be part of existing community groups, such as PTA, Neighborhood Watch, or youth groups, or they may simply have an interest in engaging their neighbors on health topics. As funding becomes available, the Live Well initiative will continue to expand efforts aimed at creating healthy communities.

A number of organizations with facilities, programs, and activities that promote health are presently located in or near La Mesa. The YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Joan Kroc Center are discussed in the La Mesa’s Focus on Its Children section of this Element.

Partnerships already exist with some of the local schools and health care providers. The City has made it a priority to work with the County HHSA on region-wide health and wellness initiatives and will continue to do so.

Community-based collaborations can offer a solution to many problems, like competition between similar types of organizations for resources, disjointed services in the community, issues that require more than one approach, or when there are more community needs than available resources. At their best, collaborations do not just add, but multiply each organization's strengths, allowing them to do together what they could not have accomplished alone.

Glossary

The terms and definitions in this glossary are commonly found in “healthy community” literature.

Active Living: Active living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines, like walking to the store or biking to work.

Benchmark: As standard against which things may be compared or assessed.

Bicycle Train: Program in which children are accompanied by adults when riding bicycles to school.

Childhood Obesity: Overweight is defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) at or above the 85th percentile and lower than the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex. Obesity is defined as a BMI at or above the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex.

Community Cohesion: The aspect of “togetherness” and “bonding” exhibited by members of a community; the “glue” that holds a community together; a sense of common belonging.

Community Food Security: A condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.

Community Identity: Both the physical environment and the activities, institutions and culture that comprise a community’s character.

FBI Index Crime Rate: Includes homicides, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft.

Indicator: An indicator is something that points to an issue or condition. Its purpose is to show you how well a system is working. If there is a problem, an indicator can help you determine what direction to take to address the issue.^{xix}

Joint-Use Agreement: A formal agreement between two separate governmental entities - often between a school district and a city or county - setting forth the terms and conditions for the shared use of public property or facilities.

Neighborhood “Eyes on the Street”: Neighbors keeping watch on sidewalk and street activity from windows and porches of homes and businesses to improve safety.

Obesity: For adults, Obesity is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of ≥ 30 , or approximately 30 pounds overweight for a 5’-4” person.

Safe Routes to Schools: Program to improve the pedestrian and bicycle environment around schools to address safety concerns and encourage families to allow their children to walk or bike to school.

Social Justice: The idea of a government that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity, that understands and values human rights, and that recognizes the dignity of every human being.

Urban Agriculture: Urban agriculture is the practice of cultivating, processing and distributing food in, or around, a village, town or city. It can take many forms, such as community and school gardens, backyard or front yard gardens, rooftop gardens, edible landscaping, and fruit trees planted in the public right-of-way.

Walking School Buses: Program in which children are accompanied by adults when walking to school.

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