

4. Built Environment

Why is this broad determinant important to a thriving community?

The built environment is the part of the physical environment built by people (e.g. our system of buildings, roads and other transportation, how utilities are delivered, and how zoning affects the location of work areas, residences, and industrial areas). How a neighborhood is designed, planned, and built results in infrastructure that affects its economic vitality as well as residents' access to jobs, educational opportunities and basic human needs.

Built environment decisions also impact residents' health. For example, individuals with greater and easier access to safe locations in which to do physical activities report better physical and mental health, and less stress.^{1 2 3} Lack of access to bike lanes, walking paths, parks, and green space reduces the likelihood that a person will be physically active and thus contributes to poor health outcomes such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Lack of accessible fresh produce in a neighborhood is also an obstacle to proper nutrition and a risk for chronic diseases. Fewer opportunities for walking and biking (whether to work, to shop for food, or for recreation), promotes motor vehicle usage, which increases our region's chronic air pollution problems. Polluted air can lead to breathing problems including asthma and other chronic respiratory diseases.



Few citizens fully understand the complex public planning processes that determine how a neighborhood is designed and built. Community planning typically involves a series of decision making steps by multiple agencies and organizations. All too often, residents who participate in the planning process by providing input do so near the end of the process, when plans are nearly finalized rather than being involved from the beginning.⁴ An educated and involved citizenry is the hallmark of a thriving community. Involved residents are more likely to use the built environment in ways that benefit their health and well-being as well as adding to the overall livability and economic vitality of our community.

¹ Maas J et al: Morbidity is related to a green living environment. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 2009, 63:967-973.

² Kaplan R: The nature of the view from home: Psychological benefits, *Environment and Behavior* 2001, 25(6):725-742.

³ Van den bag A, Hartig T, Staats H: Preference for nature in urbanized societies: stress, restoration and the pursuit of sustainability, *Journal of Social Issues* 2007, 63:79-96.

⁴ Public Health Law and Policy Institute, *Rebuilding Healthier Neighborhoods*, 2010. Accessed from <http://www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning/podcast/rebuilding-healthier-neighborhoods>.

Community Result 1: Stanislaus County’s infrastructure will support the health and well-being of its residents.

Population Outcome Measures:
 ✓ TBD

Goal 1-1: Improve Stanislaus County roads and sidewalks to promote safety and active modes of transportation.

Planned Activities	Participating Organizations
Build sidewalks, curbs, gutters and additional infrastructural improvements through the Safe Routes to School grant program around four Stanislaus County Schools	City of Modesto
Improve the safety and walkability of the Highway 108 corridor through a Sustainable Communities grant	City of Oakdale , City of Riverbank , City of Modesto
Update general plans, zoning ordinances and other codes to comply with SB375 and AB32 requirements, including measures designed to comply with Federal and State Green House Gas emission thresholds, through Prop 84 Sustainable Communities Grant funding	Stanislaus County Planning and Community Development Department , City of Modesto / Community and Economic Development Department , City of Turlock / Planning Division
Plan for increased walkability and bikability in downtown Modesto through the Smart Valley Places initiative and the downtown core zone project	City of Modesto / Community and Economic Development Department
Build the Helen White Memorial Trail to provide a safe and convenient location for physical activity in West Modesto	West Modesto King Kennedy Neighborhood Collaborative (WMKKNC), City Ministries Network , City of Modesto Parks and Recreation Department , Modesto Irrigation District
Build a bridge on the Virginia Corridor trail over Briggsmore Avenue to provide pedestrians and bicyclists a safe, extended location for physical activity	City of Modesto

Community Result 2: Stanislaus County residents will be educated about and participate in important planning decisions affecting their health and well-being.

Population Outcome Measures:
 ✓ TBD

Goal 2-1: Involve Stanislaus County residents and organizations interested in improving health in built environment planning and policy making processes

Planned Activities	Participating Organizations
Involve experts in the built environment, including business people (e.g. builders and real estate agents) and planners, in discussions with HSA staff about the health impact of the built environment and ways to improve it – the Built Environment Advisory Group	Health Services Agency (HSA)
Update the County's General Plan to include health language and other health-friendly changes recommended by the Planning Department and the Technical Advisory Committee	Stanislaus County Planning and Community Development Department , Stanislaus County Planning Commission
Educate local residents about how planning decisions are made in our communities and how to get involved in them through the Smart Valley Places initiative	City of Modesto / Community and Economic Development Department , City of Turlock / Planning Division , Stanislaus County Planning and Community Development Department , Ceres Partnership for Healthy Children , Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program / California State University, Fresno