



Background Report 1 of 3: Healthy Community Element, Insights from Other Communities

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THOMAS JACOBSON, FAICP, ALEX HINDS, LOIS FISHER, LEED ND (FISHER TOWN DESIGN)

Healthy Communities Elements in General Plans: Insights from Current Practice and Considerations for the City of Vallejo

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**Center for Sustainable Communities
Sonoma State University**

**Thomas Jacobson, FAICP, Director, Center for Sustainable Communities
Travis Bradley, CSC Student Research Assistant
Sara Farrell, CSC Student Research Assistant
Nathan Coelho, CSC Student Research Assistant**

Introduction

Including healthy community elements in California general plans is an increasingly widespread, though not universal, practice. This paper explores the practice to date, particularly as may be relevant to the City of Vallejo and the healthy community element being developed as part of Vallejo's current general plan update.

The purpose of this paper is not to provide a survey of general plan policies related to public health. Such collections exist (see, e.g., *Healthy Planning Policies: A Compendium From California General Plans*¹) and can be valuable in matching identified goals with steps to advance them. Rather, this paper is intended to use the tool of analyzing a set of healthy community elements to identify key components of such elements, with the end of informing development of a strong and effective healthy community element for Vallejo.

This paper considers four healthy communities elements, two from cities and two from counties:

- City of Richmond
- City of San Pablo
- Riverside County
- Santa Clara County

It is limited to general plans that have specific healthy community elements, rather than those that, instead, “infuse” a variety of general plan elements with healthy community goals, policies, and implementation measures. That is not to say that the elements considered here do not draw connections to the other elements in the general plans in

¹ ChangeLab Solutions, 2012, <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/healthy-planning-policies>

which they are found. In fact, how healthy community elements make those connections is a critical topic and is discussed with regard to each of the four elements addressed here.

Six key questions are considered for each of the elements discussed below:

A. What is the scope of the element (i.e., which topics are addressed)?

One of the things that characterizes healthy community elements is their lack of a uniform scope. The range of potential topics is virtually endless and a critical step in developing an element is determining which topics to address. As illustrated in Appendix 1, “Healthy Community Element Topics,” the four elements reviewed for this paper share certain topics (e.g., active transportation, healthy eating). There are also topics that are unique to a more limited group of elements (e.g., violence and crime, mental health).

B. What data sources were used in developing the element?

A defining characteristic of healthy communities planning is a reliance on data, an influence of the public health profession and its important role in healthy community planning. Therefore, this paper identifies the various data sources relied on in developing each of the elements.

C. What are some of the noteworthy policies and implementation actions included in the element?

As noted above, there are useful collections of general plan policies that address various aspects of public health. This paper provides a more focused selection of policies and implementation actions, intended to illustrate some of the targeted and innovative approaches to the health topics addressed in each element. The intent is not to suggest specific measures that Vallejo should adopt, but to show how communities have come up with strategies tailored to their own needs and aspirations. In this, rather than the specific content of the identified policies and implementation actions, they may serve as a model for Vallejo’s healthy community element.

D. How does the healthy community element address public health topics treated in other elements?

Another defining characteristic of healthy community elements is their relationship to other general plan elements, both those that are legally mandated (land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, safety, and noise) and other, “optional” elements (e.g., urban design, economic development, energy).

This is an especially important topic with regard to healthy community elements for at least two reasons. First, various planning issues with significant implications for health (e.g., urban form and its implications for “walkability”) are often addressed in other elements. Second, the health benefits associated with healthy community planning (e.g.,

promoting bicycling) may have associated “co-benefits” (e.g., for traffic, energy, noise, and air quality), which should be recognized.

The elements addressed in this paper take a variety of approaches to this. For instance:

- Richmond includes both: 1) policies and implementation actions found in other elements of the City’s general plan; and 2) policies and implementation actions found only in the Community Health and Wellness Element.
- San Pablo provides that, “The [Health] Element augments the traditional policy framework in a General Plan to fill in the gaps where health issues are not fully addressed elsewhere.” At the same time, it includes tables of policies from other elements that address the key topics in its Health Element.
- Riverside County notes that, “Because health is such a comprehensive issue, the policies in this element may at times overlap with the policies in other General Plan Elements. When such overlap occurs the policies included herein are intended to work in concert with and complement the policies in the other elements.”
- Santa Clara County’s element does not expressly cross reference policies in other elements of the County’s general plan.

Each of these approaches is described in more detail in the discussion of individual elements, below.

E. How does the element address collaboration?

As with many planning fields, health community planning typically relies on collaboration – between government entities at various levels, with the business community, with a wide range of non-profits, with the faith-based community, and so forth. Healthy community planning often adds County public health departments, the medical services sector, agriculture and other food-related groups, mental health organizations, and so forth. The discussions of individual elements that follow illustrate this point.

F. Are there aspects of this element that may be of particular interest to Vallejo?

Each of the elements reviewed for this paper offers approaches and content that may be of particular interest to Vallejo, in some cases because of alignment with the adopted Guiding Principles for Vallejo’s current general plan update. A selection of these approaches and contents is presented for each element.

1. City of Richmond: Community Health and Wellness Element **(<http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/8579>)**

Richmond adopted its Community Health and Wellness Element in 2012. It is frequently pointed to as a leader in this field.

Fundamental to the element is its recognition of the disproportionate number of Richmond residents, compared to the rest of Contra Costa County, that are at high risk of poor health. Richmond has the highest proportion of deaths from diabetes, a higher than average rate of children requiring hospitalization due to asthma, and the second highest rate of hospitalizations for mental health disorders and substance abuse. In addition, Richmond residents are disproportionately affected by heart disease, cancer, and stroke.

Also noteworthy is this general plan's broad definition of public health to address factors that result in health disparities, such as socioeconomic conditions, environmental quality, and the quality of the built environment.

A. Scope of the element (which topics are addressed)

Richmond outlines ten different “determinates” of healthy living environments and describes conditions in Richmond related to those determinants.

- Parks and Recreational facilities
- Healthy Foods – Sustainable Local Food
- Medical Services
- Walking, bicycling
- Use of public transit
- High quality and affordable housing
- Economic opportunities
- Walkable neighborhoods
- Environmental Quality
- Sustainable Development

The element then establishes one goal with regard to each of these ten determinates and adds an eleventh for, “Leadership in building healthy communities.”

B. Data sources used in developing the element

- “Community Health Indicators for Selected Cities and Places in Contra Costa County,” March 3, 2005. Contra Costa County Hospital Council.
- “Community Health Indicators for Contra Costa County 2007, Executive Summary.” Contra Costa County Health Services Department.
- “2005 San Francisco Collaborative Food System Assessment.” San Francisco Food Alliance.
- U.S. Census, 2000.

- Various Richmond urban forest statistics from the Center for Urban Forestry and Research, University of California, Davis.

C. Some noteworthy policies and implementation actions included in the element

Improved Safety in Neighborhoods and Public Spaces

Policy HW8.2 – Activated Streets and Safe Public Spaces

Promote active use of public spaces in neighborhoods and commercial areas at all times of day to provide “eyes on the street.” Provide an appropriate mix of uses, high-quality design and appropriate programming of uses to facilitate natural surveillance in public spaces. Improve the sense of safety for potential users by providing amenities and services such as restrooms, street furniture, street lighting, trees for shade, public art and secure bicycle parking and by restricting or prohibiting uses that are incompatible with community needs and priorities including, but not limited to, liquor stores and smoke shops.

[This policy also appears in the Land Use and Urban Design Element as Policy LU1.4]

Action HW8.C – Liquor Store Ordinance

Strengthen City Council Resolution 59-06 by developing an ordinance that restricts the location and concentration of liquor stores in all of the City’s neighborhoods, and within 500 feet of schools and parks. Include an incentive program to facilitate the transition of liquor stores to food markets and local grocery stores. Consider restricting stand-alone liquor stores similar to smoke shops.

Expanded Access to Healthy Food and Nutrition Choices

Policy HW2.1 – Quality Food

Promote the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and quality foods, especially in underserved neighborhoods. Continue to attract a wide range of healthy food choices such as full-service grocery stores, ethnic food markets, farm stands, community gardens, edible school yards, and farmers markets. Partner with Contra Costa Health Services to encourage stores to accept Federal Food Assistance Program dollars such as WIC and SNAP in order to increase access to healthy food for all Richmond residents. Encourage convenience stores, supermarkets, liquor stores, and neighborhood and ethnic markets to carry fresh produce, meats and dairy, 100% juices and whole grain products, especially in low-income and underserved neighborhoods.

Action HW2.A – Healthy Food Store Incentive Program

In collaboration with the Contra Costa County Health Department and community organizations, develop and implement a program to encourage new and existing convenience stores, supermarkets, liquor stores, and neighborhood and ethnic markets to stock fresh produce, meats and dairy, 100% juices, and whole grain products. Identify stores that are willing to participate in the program. Target the program in key neighborhoods that have a high concentration of liquor stores and convenience stores but lack fresh and healthy food options.

An Integrated System of Parks, Plazas, Playgrounds and Open Space

Policy HW1.1 – An Integrated System of Parks, Plazas, Playgrounds, and Open Space
Provide a comprehensive and integrated system of parks, plazas, playgrounds, trails, and open space. The community’s current and future needs for quality outdoor space can be met by improving existing parks, creating linear greenways in established neighborhoods, and creating new parks, plazas, and open space in new developments. A comprehensive, integrated system should include parks, playgrounds, community greens, greenways, and trails. Ensure adequate maintenance of these facilities to encourage safe and active use.

Action HW1.H – Public Safety Design Guidelines

Develop and adopt design guidelines that deter criminal activity in neighborhoods, streets, and public areas. Include guidelines for design of play areas, parks, sport facilities, streets and sidewalks, plazas and urban pocket parks, and housing and commercial sites, among others. Require early intervention of crime prevention strategies in new development and redevelopment projects, including the involvement of the Police Department in the review of major projects in high-crime areas of the City. Include guidelines for parks and recreation facilities with particular focus on the following areas:

- Design and orientation of buildings
- Restrooms and parking areas
- Defensible space with no hidden areas or structures that block visibility and natural surveillance
- Ownership and control over public space
- Cameras and other technologies
- Lighting and signage

Complete Neighborhoods

Policy HW7.2 – Neighborhood-Serving Retail

Support development of small-scale neighborhood nodes that provide a range of neighborhood-serving retail, public amenities and services to residents within walking distance of their homes. Can reduce dependency on cars, improve access to daily goods and services, promote small business development and increase opportunities for social interaction, and reduce crime by increasing street use and natural surveillance.

[This policy also appears in the Economic Development and Land Use and Urban Design Elements as Policies ED6.3, ED7.4, and LU2.3]

D. How the healthy community element addresses public health topics treated in other elements

The Richmond Community Health and Wellness Element includes both: 1) policies and implementation actions found in other elements of the City’s general plan; and 2) policies and implementation actions found only in the Health and Wellness Element. Thus, for

example, Policy HW8.2 also appears in the Land Use and Urban Design Element as Policy LU1.4. However, Action HW8.C – Liquor Store Ordinance, appears as an implementation action only in the Health and Wellness element.

E. How the element addresses collaboration

The Richmond Community Health and Wellness Element relies heavily on collaboration in various forms, with:

- transit agencies
- operators of recreational facilities and community centers
- environmental and other non-profits
- Contra Costa County Health Services Department
- medical services providers
- neighboring cities and Contra Costa County
- the business community
- school districts and post-secondary institutions
- social services agencies
- developers
- unions
- neighborhood associations
- law enforcement agencies
- the Bay Area Air Quality Management District
- state and federal agencies concerned with environmental hazards
- landowners
- the County Office of Emergency Services
- regional/state/federal park agencies

Examples include:

Policy HW1.7 Access to Large-Scale Natural Areas

Work with transit agencies to improve access to open space and recreation facilities from all Richmond neighborhoods.

Action HW1.G Joint-Use Agreements

Pursue joint-use agreements with West County Unified School District, East Bay Regional Parks, neighboring cities, other public agencies, private entities and non-profits to allow more convenient public access to needed facilities, create more space for recreational programming, and create strategic partnerships that can provide the opportunity to share renovation, development, maintenance, and operational costs.

Action HW1.I Urban Greening Initiative

Support and encourage citywide initiatives to increase opportunities for contact with nature, working with Groundwork Richmond and others.

Policy HW2.1 Quality Food

Promote the availability of fresh produce and quality foods, especially in underserved neighborhoods. Partner with Contra Costa Health Services to encourage stores to accept Federal Food Assistance dollars to increase access to healthy and quality foods.

Policy HW2.3 Quality of Restaurant Food

Continue collaboration with health agencies to encourage availability of healthy foods in restaurants while supporting businesses that offer healthy food.

Action HW2.A Healthy Food Store Incentives Program

In collaboration with the Contra Costa County Health Services Department and community organizations, develop and implement a program to encourage local convenience stores, liquor stores, supermarkets, and neighborhood and ethnic stores to stock fresh produce and other healthy foods.

Action HW2.B Healthy Food and Nutrition Choices

Collaborate with Contra Costa County Health Services Department to develop information to assist residents in nutritional assessment of local food choices.

Action HW2.C Nutrition Standards for Vending Machines on City-Owned Property

Consult with Contra Costa County Health Services Department in creating an ordinance requiring nutritional standards for vending machines on city-owned property.

Action HW2.D Sustainable Urban Agriculture Assessment

Work with non-profits and regulatory agencies to explore the potential for creating, expanding and sustaining local urban agriculture, including community gardens, orchards and farmers' markets.

Policy HW3.1 Public Transit Access to Medical Facilities

Collaborate with transit services to increase accessibility to medical services for those who are transit dependent.

Action HW3.A Medical Facilities Access Plan

Work with medical providers, transit agencies, private transit providers and community representatives to develop an access plan to provide service to major medical facilities.

Action HW3.B Regional Medical Services Coordination

Continue collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions including the CCCHSD to address issues regarding emergency and preventative medical services.

Action HW3.C Health Coverage Guidelines

Collaborate with local trade organizations to update health coverage guidelines.

Policy HW4.1 Expanded Affordable Public Transit

Coordinate with regional transportation agencies and support expansion of public transit to improve mobility options.

Action HW4.C Safe and Convenient Public Transit Options

Continue collaboration with regional transit providers and major employers in Richmond that provide shuttle services to explore the potential for future transit expansion.

Action HW4.D Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans

Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions to ensure links to the regional trail network and the County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Action HW4.F Safe Routes to School Program

Collaborate with West Contra Costa Unified School District and other educational institutions to improve walking and bicycling access and safety to schools.

Policy HW5.5 Service for Homeless

Work with social services agencies to provide an integrated system of care for the homeless.

Action HW5.H Homeless Plan

Collaborate with the Homeless Continuum of Care Advisory Board to develop a plan to provide transition facilities and services for people facing homelessness, substance issues, and mental health issues.

Action HW5.I Community Land Trust Study

Collaborate with developers to explore the feasibility of establishing a community land trust to encourage affordable housing projects.

Policy HW6.2 Workforce Training and Recruitment

Collaborate with educational institutions, employers, unions and local workforce development programs to strengthen services for Richmond youth and adults.

Action HW6.A Green Business Strategic Plan

Work with local business support agencies, the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency and community stakeholders to develop a strategic plan to attract innovative “green” companies to Richmond. Work with State and local agencies to develop criteria for green business certification for new and existing businesses.

Action HW7.A Corridor Improvement Plans

Collaborate with regional agencies, neighboring jurisdictions, and the County to develop plans for key commercial corridors in the City.

Action HW7.B Neighborhood Revitalization Plans

Collaborate with community leaders and organizations, neighborhood councils, and neighboring jurisdictions to develop neighborhood revitalization plans.

Action HW 8.D Inmate Re-Entry and Transition Program

Work with law enforcement and social service agencies to develop a re-entry and transition program to support released prisoners and parolees as they transition back into the community.

Policy HW9.1 Air Quality

Work with businesses and industry, residents and regulatory agencies to reduce the impacts of air pollution. Continue to work with stakeholders to reduce air quality impacts on disadvantaged neighborhoods and continue to participate in regional planning efforts with nearby jurisdictions and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to meet or exceed air quality standards

Policy HW9.2 Toxic and Contaminated Sites

Continue to work with local, state, and federal agencies to promote the clean-up of contaminated sites. Work with property owners and regional agencies to mitigate soil and water contamination from industrial operations, the Port and other activities that use, produce or dispose of hazardous or toxic substances.

Policy HW9.3 Water Quality

Work with public and private property owners reduce stormwater runoff in urban areas to protect water quality.

Policy HW9.7 Habitat and Biological Resources Protection and Restoration

Work with public and private landowners to protect natural habitat and biodiversity and preserve biological resources.

Policy HW9.8 Noise Levels

Work with regulatory agencies to monitor and enforce noise standards.

Action HW9.A Air Quality Monitoring and Reporting Program

Work with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and other government agencies to establish and identify funding for a citywide air quality monitoring and reporting program. Collaborate with CCCHSD, BAAQMD, and state agencies to establish baseline exposures and document health effects associated with them, and develop provisions to hold businesses and operations financially responsible for their impacts on the environment or community.

Action HW9.C Engine Replacement and Retrofitting Program

Work with BAAQMD to develop a program to fund diesel engine retrofitting or replacement in existing vehicles.

Action HW9.D Port Emissions Reduction Plan

Collaborate with the Port, local industry, and regulatory agencies to develop a comprehensive emissions reduction plan for ship-operated emissions.

Action HW9.H Truck Routes Plan

Work with business operators and other stakeholders to develop a plan to re-route diesel trucks away from neighborhood streets and sensitive uses.

Action HW9.I Emergency Alert System

Collaborate with the County Office of Emergency Services to develop and implement a reliable emergency alert system.

Action HW9.O Open Space Plan

Collaborate with the East Bay Regional Park District and the National Park Service to maintain facilities and programs at national and regional parks.

Action HW9.P Habitat Conservation Plans

Work closely with Contra Costa County and East Bay Regional Parks to develop habitat conservation plans.

Action HW9.Q Habitat Restoration

Work with other jurisdictions, public and private property owners to restore sensitive habitat that has been degraded, but has potential for rehabilitation.

Policy HW10.5 Energy Efficiency and Conservation

Collaborate with partner agencies, utilities and business to support a range of energy efficiency, waste reduction, and conservation measures.

Action HW10.E Waste Reduction and Recycling

Work with joint power authority or solid waste facility franchise holder to expand recycling programs and reduce the generation of solid wastes.

Policy HW11.1 Organizational Capacity for Change

Partner with Contra Costa Health Services, community-based organizations, foundations and other regional agencies to build capacity among City staff, boards and commissions and elected officials with regard to health and its relationship with the design of the built environment.

Policy HW11.2 Monitoring and Tracking

Collaborate with Contra Costa Health Services to track health outcomes and their relationships with City policies and programs.

Action HW11.A Training and Capacity-Building

Collaborate with Contra Costa Health Services, experts and non-profits to develop training programs for elected officials, boards and commissions and City staff to build capacity for implementing the Community Health and Wellness Element.

Action HW11.C Health Tracking Program

Collaborate with Contra Costa Health Services to develop a program that measures health outcomes over time to assess the effectiveness of City policies and programs.

Action HW11.D Healthy Choices Public Information Campaign

Work with Contra Costa Health Services and community stakeholders to identify creative ways to promote healthy lifestyle choices.

F. Are there aspects of this element that may be of particular interest to Vallejo?

The Richmond Community Health and Wellness Element expressly addresses safety, not true of many healthy community elements. Safety is identified as one of the Guiding Principles for Vallejo's general plan update: "Vallejo is a safe place for everyone. Residents and businesses in every neighborhood collaborate with each other and with responsive law enforcement to promote personal safety." (Guiding Principle 3)

Richmond's extensive reliance on collaboration aligns with Vallejo's successful experience in this regard, reflected in Vallejo's Guiding Principle 5, "Collaborative Civic Engagement: Vallejo identifies its challenges and takes constructive actions to address them. It is a place with strong, collaborative partnerships between government, residents, and local businesses and where challenges are addressed proactively, drawing on lessons learned from their own experience and from other communities."

2. City of San Pablo

(www.sanpabloca.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/669)

San Pablo adopted its Health Element in 2011 as part of its “San Pablo General Plan 2030.” The Health Element has received awards from the American Planning Association (National Award for Achievement in Environmental Planning, 2013) and APA’s Northern California Section (Focused Issue Award, 2012).

This element expressly recognizes the full range of factors affecting health – including income, education, employment and working conditions, access to health services, nutrition, and the quality of physical environments, in addition to the actions of individuals, such as health behaviors and lifestyle choices.

It goes on to say that, “The overarching goal for the entire General Plan is to put people, and their health, first and foremost.” (Section 8.1)

A. Scope of the element (which topics are addressed)

Compared to many other healthy community elements, San Pablo’s addresses a relatively limited set of topics:

- Healthy Transportation and Physical Activity
- Healthy Food Access and Equity
- Access to Services and Planning for People First
- Crime Reduction and Perceptions of Safety

B. Data sources used in developing the element

- “County Health Status Profiles 2014.” California Department of Public Health, Office of Health Information and Research.
- “State and County Quick Facts.” U.S. Census Bureau.
- “Community Health Needs Assessment Solano County 2013.” Sutter Health.
- City Data for San Pablo, CA (<http://www.city-data.com/city/San-Pablo-California.html>).
- “Community Health Indicators for Contra Costa County” (2007). Community Health Assessment, Planning and Evaluation Group, Public Health Division, Contra Costa County Health Services Department.

C. Some noteworthy policies and implementation actions included in the element

Rather than policies and implementation actions, this element is structured around “Guiding Policies” and “Implementing Policies.”

Healthy Transportation and Physical Activity

Implementing Policy HEA-I-2

Improve signage directing residents and visitors to public parks and recreational facilities from all parts of the community. Integrate parks signage with bikeway and pedestrian-oriented signage system throughout San Pablo.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-5

Link park facility improvement priorities to a ranking system keyed to public health and recreational goals.

Healthy Food Access and Equity

Implementing Policy HEA-I-12

Use zoning and redevelopment programs to establish incentives for locating healthy food grocery stores at the center of neighborhoods and to increase communitywide healthy food access.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-19

Work with residents, Contra Costa Community College, and community organizations to plan and implement a San Pablo Community Gardens program, which will not only provide a source of fresh produce to gardeners, but will also offer learning opportunities for young and old alike.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-22

Adopt zoning controls to limit the number of fast food outlets and drive-through restaurants near schools and pedestrian priority areas.

Access to Services and Planning for People First

Implementing Policy HEA-I-24

Explore the feasibility of a program of health clinics or workshops, run by medical service providers or Contra Costa Health Services, but hosted in local neighborhoods facilities such as schools, parks, or even businesses or parking lots.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-27

Assist with conversion of liquor stores to other retail that better meets community needs. Give priority to the conversion of those within ¼ mile of schools and parks.

Crime Reduction and Perceptions of Safety

Implementing Policy HEA-I-35

Enforce property maintenance and environmental design regulations for businesses, especially “corner stores,” including regulations for alcohol and tobacco advertisements. Within redevelopment project areas identify low-cost solutions to maintenance issues and provide financial assistance to qualifying businesses.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-34

Incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles and best practices into the Zoning Ordinance and project review procedures for new development and major renovations. Guidelines and checklists should include concepts such as natural surveillance, natural access control, natural territorial reinforcement, maintenance, and shared facilities.

D. How the healthy community element addresses public health topics treated in other elements

The Health Element recognizes that while all of the General Plan’s policies have a role in achieving health-related goals, the Health Element plays a unique role. Thus, the Element identifies each of the other general plan elements and describes whether it strongly supports health-related concern or only has a moderate or weak relationship to them. It also offers a chart of “Relationship between Health and Other Plan Elements.” (Table 8.2-1)

At the same time, the Health Element provides: “The Element augments the traditional policy framework in a General Plan to fill in the gaps where health issues are not fully addressed elsewhere.”

To further knit the Health Element with the rest of the general plan, at the end of each “Key Theme” of the Health Element, there is a table of policies in other elements that relate to that key theme.

E. How the element addresses collaboration

The San Pablo Health Element identifies potential collaborations with:

- Contra Costa County Health Services Department
- school districts
- non-profits
- Community Supported Agriculture programs
- Contra Costa Community College
- medical services providers
- businesses
- law enforcement agencies

Implementing Policy HEA-I-3

Work with Contra Costa Health Services and the school district to implement the Safe Routes to School program.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-7

Work with community members and organizations to develop an exercise circuit.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-8

Collaborate with the school district to enhance community wide access to pools and sports/recreational facilities.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-14

Support the formation of a West County Food Policy Council in cooperation with Contra Costa County, Contra Costa College, the school district, neighboring communities, and other entities.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-18

Seek ways to partner with regional Community Supported Agriculture to create more sources of fresh produce.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-19

Work with Contra Costa College, community members, and community organizations to plan and implement a San Pablo Community Gardens program.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-20

Work with the school district and Contra Costa Health Services to improve student nutrition.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-23

Collaborate with Contra Costa Health Services to monitor and maintain health outcomes and risk data in order to inform policy decisions.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-26

Work with Doctors Medical Center and the County to locate new outpatient facilities in underserved neighborhoods, if feasible.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-29

Work with interested organizations and residents to create a youth job development partnership.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-31

Coordinate with local businesses, organizations, Contra Costa College, and the school district to create a year round calendar of community events in City parks.

Implementing Policy HEA-I-39

Continue to involve residents in neighborhood improvement efforts.

F. Are there aspects of this element that may be of particular interest to Vallejo?

San Pablo's element includes "health indicators" (see Table 8.3-5). These 11 indicators are intended to help the City measure progress toward health goals against baseline conditions. Examples include: population within ¼ mile of a supermarket or grocery store; violent crime rates; and rates of obesity and overweight among adults and children. Health indicators will be developed as part of Vallejo's Healthy Community Element under the requirements of the California Strategic Growth Council Grant funding the element.

San Pablo's element has a focus on crime prevention and perception of safety. Safety is identified as one of the Guiding Principles for Vallejo's general plan update: "Vallejo is a safe place for everyone. Residents and businesses in every neighborhood collaborate with each other and with responsive law enforcement to promote personal safety." (Guiding Principle 3)

3. Riverside County

(http://www.rivcoph.org/Portals/0/pdf/FINALHCE3_23_2011.pdf)

Riverside County adopted its Healthy Communities Element in 2011. It is featured in the California Planning Roundtable web resource, “Reinventing the General Plan” (<http://reinventingthegeneralplan.org>).

The element points out that the General Plan Vision speaks of the importance of promoting a healthy living environment for all residents. It goes on to say that, “The Healthy Communities Element provides a framework for translating the General Plan vision for a healthy Riverside County into reality by identifying policies to achieve that vision.”

A. Scope of the element (which topics are addressed)

Riverside County’s Healthy Communities Element states that it addresses areas where public health and planning intersect, including transportation and active living, access to nutritious foods, access to health care, mental health, quality of life, and environmental health. It addresses these topics:

- Overall Health - Policies that outline the overarching principles of planning for Healthy Communities. These policies are intended to address the multidisciplinary nature of health issues and recognize that the efforts of many different County departments and agencies affect health outcomes.
- Land Use and Community Design
- Healthy Transportation System
- Arts and Culture
- Social Capital – Policies that seek to elevate social capital for the purposes of building a strong platform upon which communities will thrive.
- Parks, Trails, and Open Space
- Access to Healthy Foods and Nutrition
- Healthcare and Mental Healthcare
- Schools, Recreation Centers, and Childcare
- Environmental Health

B. Data sources used in developing the element

- “Strategic Plan.” Riverside County Department of Public Health.
- “American Community Survey, 2007.” U.S. Census Bureau.
- “Census 2000 Block-Level Demographic Data for Riverside County.” U.S. Census Bureau.
- “Community Health Profile, 2008.” Riverside County Department of Public Health.

C. Some noteworthy policies and implementation actions included in the element

Land Use and Community Design

Policy HC 2.2.c

Promote increased physical activity, reduced driving and increased walking, cycling, and public transit by encouraging the development of neighborhood grocery stores that provide fresh produce.

Transportation System

Policy HC 5.4

Consider pedestrian safety and crime prevention measures in major transit centers and high pedestrian traffic generators such as schools, community centers, etc.

Parks, Trails, and Open Space

Policy HC 10.6

Address both actual and perceived safety concerns that create barriers to physical activity by requiring adequate lighting, street visibility, and defensible space.

Healthcare and Mental Health Care

Policy HC 12.1

Provide a wide range of healthcare and mental health facilities that are transit-accessible and pedestrian-friendly.

D. How the healthy community element addresses public health topics treated in other elements

Riverside County’s element provides: “Because health is such a comprehensive issue, the policies in this element may at times overlap with the policies in other General Plan Elements. When such overlap occurs the policies included herein are intended to work in concert with and complement the policies in the other elements.” (Introduction, Healthy Communities Element)

As a more specific explanation of this element’s approach, the Land Use and Community Design discussion in the Healthy Communities Element provides: “Many of the land use and community design policies relevant to health are addressed in other elements of the General Plan, most particularly the Land Use Element. Therefore, only additional policies, specifically related to health are included here.”

E. How the element addresses collaboration

While the Riverside County Healthy Communities Element generally supports the principle of collaboration, specific examples of this in the Element's policies are limited:

Policy HC 6.1

Coordinate with transportation service providers and transportation planning entities to improve multimodal transportation options.

Policy HC 6.2

Coordinate with transportation service providers and transportation planning entities to address the location of civic uses, commercial corridors, and medical facilities so that they are accessible by public transit.

Policy HC 6.3

Coordinate with transportation service providers and transportation planning entities to ensure transportation facilities are located near residential areas.

Policy HC 10.9

When feasible, coordinate with public entities to allow easements to be used as parks and trails.

F. Are there aspects of this element that may be of particular interest to Vallejo?

Like Santa Clara County (discussed below), Riverside County's Healthy Communities Element identifies mental health as a topic. This is an area receiving increasing attention within healthy communities planning.

Riverside County's Healthy Community Element also identifies environmental health as a topic. Environmental quality in its various dimensions (air, water, noise, etc.) is a well-recognized determinant of public health.

"Social capital" (described in the element as, "an integrated system of family, community, and civic networks that is the underpinning and core fabric of social communities") is also included in Riverside County's Element. The element describes how research shows that among the benefits associated with social connectedness are improved cardio-vascular and mental health and faster recovery from illness. A commitment to building social capital is reflected in the Guiding Principles for Vallejo's general plan update, including Principle 2, "Strong Community Bonds – Vallejo builds strong community bonds at the neighborhood level, with activities and recreational opportunities for youth, local festivals, and a strong culture of volunteering, positive role models, and leadership programs"; and Principle 6, "Active, Participatory Community – Vallejo supports and depends on active community participation. Vallejo provides timely and understandable information on planning issues and projects, and community members participate directly in shaping plans and policies for the city's future."

4. Santa Clara County Draft Element

Santa Clara County is currently in the process of developing and adopting a Health Element for its general plan. The new Health Element is, for the most part, new subject matter, only replacing some content of the existing general plan's Health and Safety Element. The current public review draft element (August 2014) was used for this paper.

The element is based on nine "Guiding Principles":

- Prevention
- Leadership
- Community Empowerment
- Equity and Inclusion
- Sustainability and Co-Benefits
- Strategic Roles
- Responsibility
- Healthy Choices
- Promote the Public Interest

The element adopts a "Health in All Policies" approach, "infusing awareness and purpose in all governmental programs, functions, and responsibilities to address and promote community and personal health, not as an afterthought."

This element points out that Santa Clara County, according to some assessments, ranks as the second healthiest county in California. The element, however, goes on to point out that within the County, significant health disparities and inequities exist. And this attention to health disparities within the County is reflected in the element's recognition of "social determinants of health," described as, "social and environmental conditions including income, years of education, race/ethnicity, immigration status, and the physical conditions in the neighborhoods where they live, play, work, and age."

A. Scope of the element (which topics are addressed)

Santa Clara County addresses a wide range of topics in its Health Element. Some are typical components of a healthy community element (e.g., active transportation, healthy eating) while others are less common (e.g., social and emotional health, violence prevention).

- Health Conditions, Equity, and Access
- Social and Emotional Health
- Land Use and Urban Design
- Active and Sustainable Transportation
- Recreation and Physical Activity
- Healthy Eating, Food Access, and Sustainable Food Systems
- Air Quality and Climate Change

- Healthy Housing
- Violence Prevention and Safety

B. Data sources used in developing the element

As part of preparing the County’s Health Element, the County developed a “Community Health Existing Conditions Report.”

In addition, these sources are identified in the element:

- “Santa Clara County Health Profile Report 2010.” Santa Clara County Public Health Department.
- “Status of Latino/Hispanic Health,” 2012. Santa Clara County Public Health Department
- “Strategic Plan 2012-2015.” Santa Clara County Public Health Department
- “Santa Clara County Seniors Agenda: A Quality of Life Assessment,” April 2012. Commissioned by Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors.
- “Santa Clara County Quality of Life Survey Report,” 2012. Raimi + Associates.

C. Some noteworthy policies and implementation actions included in the element

The element is organized using “Strategies” (similar to goals), in some cases “Sub-strategies,” and “Policies.” The following are some illustrative policies, grouped by the element’s nine topic areas.

Health Conditions, Equity, and Access

Policy HE-A.34 – Effective community service

Champion and provide expanded opportunities for youth and older adults to engage in community service that integrates community health and improvement.

Social and Emotional Health

Policy HE-B.7 – Aging population needs

Combat social isolation, and address the various needs of an aging population to reduce depression and other behavioral health problems that may be more common among seniors.

Policy HE-B.15 – Density and location of alcoholic beverage outlets

Encourage and support cities to restrict the number of alcoholic beverage outlets near schools and in areas with a high density of alcoholic beverage outlets.

Land Use and Urban Design

Policy HE-C.7 – Complete communities

Create more complete communities that afford greater access to a range of goods and services with comfortable walking and biking distance of homes, schools, and jobs.

Policy HE-C.21 – School siting and design

Promote school and community facilities to serve as hubs or centers for health and human potential.

Active and Sustainable Transportation

Policy HE-D.5 – Traffic calming measures

Provide traffic calming and traffic slowing measures on roads and at intersections in the County and cities with a high level of existing or planned pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle activity and/or collisions.

Policy HE-D.17 – Transit advocacy for underserved communities

Advocate for increased levels of transit service, particularly in areas of the County with a lack of transit access that experience health and socio-economic inequities.

Recreation and Physical Activity

Policy HE-E.1 – Parks and services for communities of concern

Prioritize the development of new parks and other recreational services, including low impact facilities and equipment for older adults and the disabled in underserved neighborhoods and areas with large numbers of communities of concern.

Policy HE-E.10 – Safety concerns

Address actual and perceived safety concerns that create barriers to physical activity, by requiring adequate park lighting, appropriate landscaping, and defensible spaces.

Healthy Eating, Food Access, and Sustainable Food Systems

Policy HE-F.13 – Promote healthy food retail establishments

Encourage development and access to healthy food outlets, including grocery stores, corner stores, farmers' markets, restaurants, and mobile vendors through programs, regulations, and strategies that incentivize new healthy food retail and limit unhealthy retailers. Provide special considerations to promote healthy retail outlets in underserved areas.

Air Quality and Climate Change

Policy HE-G.9 – Healthy infill development

Promote more stringent building performance standards and air filtration for infill development to protect residents from air and noise pollution.

Healthy Housing

Policy HE-H.8 – Neighborhood engagement for housing conditions

Engage citizens, neighborhood councils, associations, and community groups to convene and address health and related housing condition issues within defined neighborhoods of each municipality and unincorporated communities.

Violence Prevention and Safety

Policy HE-I.3 – Built environment and safe passages

Promote the development and implementation of strategies that foster safe passages in neighborhoods and around schools with high crime and gang activity to ensure that all residents can travel with confidence and without fear. ... Train county and other public agency staff in principles of “Crime Prevention through Environmental Design” to evaluate and modify proposed designs for public and private developments.

Policy HE-I.6 – Community policing

Support approaches and policies that integrate violence prevention and crime reduction models with public health and community policing approaches. Support city and County law enforcement agencies’ efforts to improve real and perceived safety concerns in communities most impacted by crime and violence through neighborhood-based strategies that engage residents and youth in problem solving.

D. How the healthy community element addresses public health topics treated in other elements

The draft element does not expressly cross reference policies in other elements of the County’s general plan.

E. How the element addresses collaboration

The element recognizes the importance of collaboration in taking a comprehensive approach to healthy community planning. In its Strategies, Sub-strategies, and Policies, it identifies collaborations with:

- cities
- neighborhood organizations
- Hospital Council
- schools and colleges
- trade schools and organizations
- non-profit scholarship organizations
- faith-based organizations
- business groups and major employers
- mental health organizations
- regional transportation authority and other transit providers

- private shuttle providers
- Caltrans
- bicycle organizations
- County Health Department
- Traffic Safe Communities Network
- food banks
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District
- media
- state and local agencies responsible for vector control

Policy HE-A.4 Community health collaborations

Collaborate with cities, community-based organizations, the Hospital Council and neighborhoods to programmatically address community health needs.

Policy HE-A.13 Workforce development training

Work with local schools, colleges, trade schools, and non-profit scholarship organizations to create K-16 career pathways.

Policy HE-A.31 School based partnerships

Partner with and utilize local schools and school-based organizations to promote educational and school linked services.

Policy HE-A.33 Workforce/workplace wellness

Support policies, initiatives and workforce collaborations that drive improved employee health.

Policy HE-B.3 Role of faith and community

Coordinate with faith-based organizations and other community groups to address emotional/ social wellness needs within the community.

Policy HE-B.5 Work/life/play balance

Explore and encourage with business groups, trade organizations, and similar groups the fullest possible array of options to reduce employment-related stressors.

Policy HE-B.26 Community level integration

Coordinate with community behavioral and mental health services organizations to better integrate and provide services.

Policy HE-C.5 Health planning coordination

Maintain and enhance coordination with the cities to incorporate and emphasize health considerations in general plans, area plans, and new urban development.

Policy HE-C.20 Public facilities siting and design

Work with local jurisdictions, school districts, County agencies, and other public agencies to site and design public facilities as models for health.

Policy HE-D.15 Safe Routes to Schools

Support and expand the Safe Route to School Program in the County through collaboration between VTA [regional transit agency], Traffic Safe Communities Network, cities, school districts, Caltrans, bicycle groups and the County Health Department.

Policy HE-D.18 Coordination with transit agencies

Coordinate with transportation service providers to improve transit service and access in the County.

Policy HE-D.19 Transit to essential needs/services

Collaborate with VTA and other transit providers to review and improve transit services to medical and social service facilities in the County.

Policy HE-D.22 Employee shuttles and bus services

Support coordination between private shuttle providers, major employers, and local agencies to improve overall effectiveness of shuttle systems.

Policy HE-E.4 Public easements

Coordinate with public entities to construct new parks and open space on easements and public property to be used as parks and trails.

Policy HE-F.11 School/community gardens

Work with school districts to expand school yard agriculture and allow community gardens on school property.

Policy HE-F.15 Collaborative efforts

Support and collaborate with organizations that implement practices and policies designed to increase access to healthy food and beverages (e.g., schools/afterschool programs, childcares, retail establishments, churches, community-based organizations).

Policy HE-F.17 Food assistance programs

Expand participation in federal food assistance programs through partnerships with public agencies, food banks, and community-based organizations.

Policy HE-G.2 Coordination with regional agencies

Coordinate with the Air District to implement stationary and area source emission measures.

Policy HE-G.8 CARE Communities focus

Assist the Air District in tracking and reducing emissions from all sources in CARE communities.

Policy HE-G.15 Public information

Promote coordination among public entities, private entities, and the media to communicate the necessary measures to protect workers and residents from extreme heat.

Policy HE-G.19 Vector control coordination

Continue coordination between the Department of Environmental Health, Public Health Department, and other state and local agencies to ensure vector populations are managed.

Policy HE-G.21 Pre-planning and response to infectious disease outbreaks

Work with the public health sector to reduce risks of infectious diseases by planning for emerging diseases and ensuring adequate health care service capacity.

Policy HE-G.25 Health facility and hospital readiness

Work with the hospital industry to create more sustainable and resilient hospitals and clinics in the face of climate change.

Policy HE-H.4 Tobacco-free multifamily housing

Coordinate with cities and other stakeholders to establish tobacco free housing in multi-family residential developments.

Policy HE-H.8 Neighborhood engagement for housing conditions

Engage citizens, neighborhood councils, associations, and community groups to convene and address health and related housing condition issues.

F. Are there aspects of this element that may be of particular interest to Vallejo?

Santa Clara County's Health Element addresses violence protection and safety; Vallejo's Guiding Principles similarly identify safety as a consideration (Guiding Principle 3: "Safe City – Vallejo is a safe place for everyone. Residents and businesses in every neighborhood collaborate with each other and with responsive law enforcement to promote personal safety.").

Santa Clara County's element identifies healthy food retail in underserved areas as an important topic. Vallejo's Guiding Principles also identify access to healthy food for all Vallejo neighborhoods as being critical to a healthy community (Guiding Principle 7: "Healthy Community – Vallejo promotes the health of its residents and recognizes the value of a proactive, preventative approach to health. All Vallejo neighborhoods have easy access to healthy food, including organic food and locally grown food from school and community gardens.").

Conclusion

Healthy community elements are becoming increasingly common as “optional” elements in California general plans. But their content varies widely, as the topics addressed and approaches taken reflect the interests and aspirations of the adopting community.

By using six questions to frame the discussion of the four healthy community elements covered in this paper (topics addressed, data sources relied upon, noteworthy policies and implementation actions, connecting with other general plan elements, approaches to collaboration, and content that may be of particular interest in Vallejo), this paper focuses attention on key aspects of developing and implementing a healthy community element for the City of Vallejo.

