

**PROPEL**  
**VALLEJO**  **GENERAL**  
**PLAN**  
GENERAL PLAN UPDATE



# General Plan Update Healthy Community Element, Provisions for a Healthy Vallejo

August 2016

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES  
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**City of Vallejo  
General Plan Update:  
Healthy Community Element and  
Provisions for a Healthier Vallejo**

**Prepared by  
The Center for Sustainable Communities  
Sonoma State University  
August 2016**

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	<b>3. “City of Vallejo Report on Topics for the Healthy Community Element,” Sonoma State University Center for Sustainable Communities (October 2015)</b>	

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## **I. Introduction**

By utilizing its General Plan Update to address the relationship between community development and health, Vallejo joins a small but growing number of leading cities in California and across the nation.

This report frames and describes Vallejo's efforts in this regard. It identifies a set of underlying realities – some unique to Vallejo – that have shaped these efforts. It includes a discussion of the existing conditions and the community outreach that informed the development of Policies and Actions under the General Plan's Goal CP-1, "Healthy Community: Promote the health of all Vallejoans." It identifies existing community partners critical to implementing this portion of the General Plan and attracting funding and other resources important to its implementation. It addresses "co-benefits" – economic, social, and cultural – in addition to intended health benefits. And it notes some of the other provisions of the General Plan with implications for community health.

## **II. Underlying Realities**

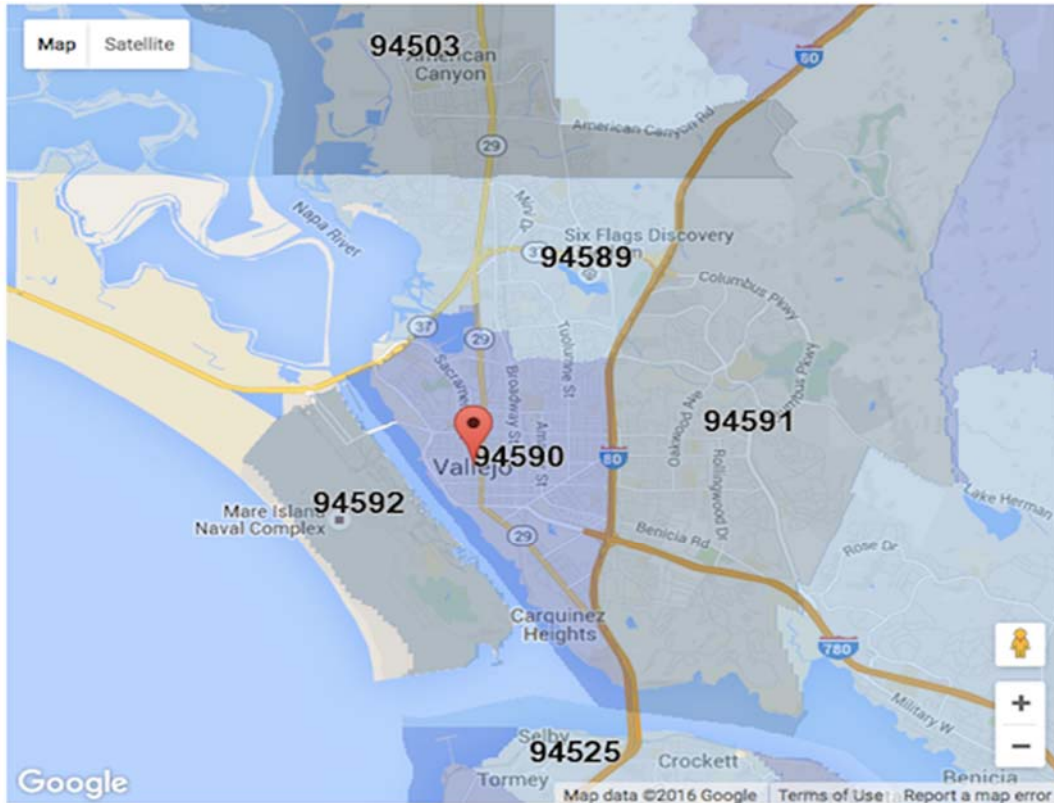
Certain fundamental ideas underlie the Vallejo General Plan’s Goal CP-1 – Healthy Community: Promote the health of all Vallejoans. Among these are:

- Vallejo is committed to being a healthy community. In 2011, its City Council adopted a “Resolution Advocating and Supporting the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) Cities Campaign” and, in particular, identifying the City’s General Plan as a tool to promote those goals. And Guiding Principle 7 of the Propel Vallejo planning effort and its General Plan Update program states: “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.”
- While genetics, healthcare, and lifestyle choices are factors affecting health, so are aspects of the built environment (land use patterns, transportation infrastructure, open space, etc.), community programs, and other general plan topics.
- Economic, educational, and other social factors have a relationship to health. The Healthy Community component of the Vallejo General Plan recognizes these factors and the entire General Plan focuses on strengthening these community characteristics.
- And, while economic and other social factors can affect health, community health can support a stronger local economy. For example, there are positive associations between health and educational attainment in children. And a healthier community places fewer demands on a variety of social services.
- Vallejo has a significant network of existing facilities and programs to promote the health of its residents.
- Collaboration – between government agencies; involving non-profits, community groups, schools, colleges, and universities; engaging the business and faith-based communities – is an important part of Vallejo’s culture and plays a fundamental role in the General Plan’s treatment of community health.
- Policies and Actions related to healthy community topics often have other community benefits. Many of these “co-benefits” are identified below.
- Components of this General Plan in addition to the Policies and Actions under Goal CP-1 can improve community health, and many of them are identified below.

## **III. Vallejo’s Existing Health Conditions**

Health issues in Vallejo center on heart disease, cancer, stroke, asthma, diabetes, mental health, and substance abuse. Unintentional injury (including motor vehicle crashes and pedestrian injuries) and crime present other health concerns.

In many cases, there are health disparities based on location within Vallejo and associated social factors. Vallejo’s ZIP Codes 94589 and 94590 show significantly poorer health characteristics than ZIP Code 94591.



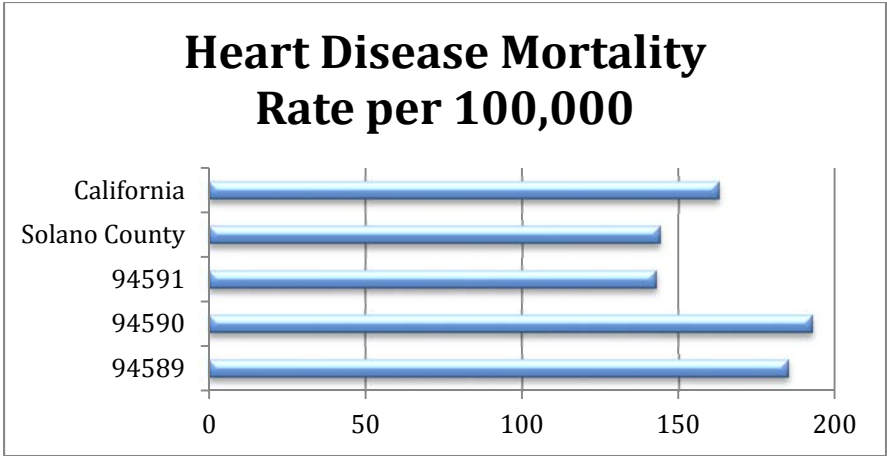
Vallejo Zip Codes; [UnitedStatesZipCode.org](http://UnitedStatesZipCode.org)

In ZIP Code 94590, approximately one out of every four residents is below the federal poverty line. Both ZIP Codes 94589 and 94590 show higher percentages of elderly in poverty, children in poverty, and unemployment than Solano County as a whole or than the State of California. In many cases, the percentages are twice that of the County average. A higher percentage of residents living in these two ZIP Codes are also without health insurance or are living with a disability.

### Heart disease, cancer, stroke

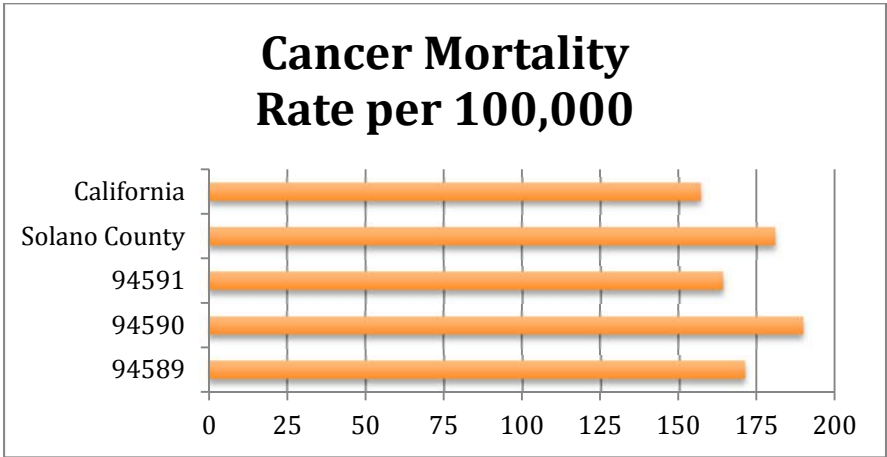
The two leading causes of death in Vallejo are heart disease and cancer, with stroke another significant cause.

Vallejo ZIP Code 94591 has a similar mortality rate for Ischemic Heart Disease (heart problems caused by narrowed heart arteries) as the Solano County rate. However, both ZIP Codes 94589 and 94590 have higher rates



California Department of Public Health, 2010-12

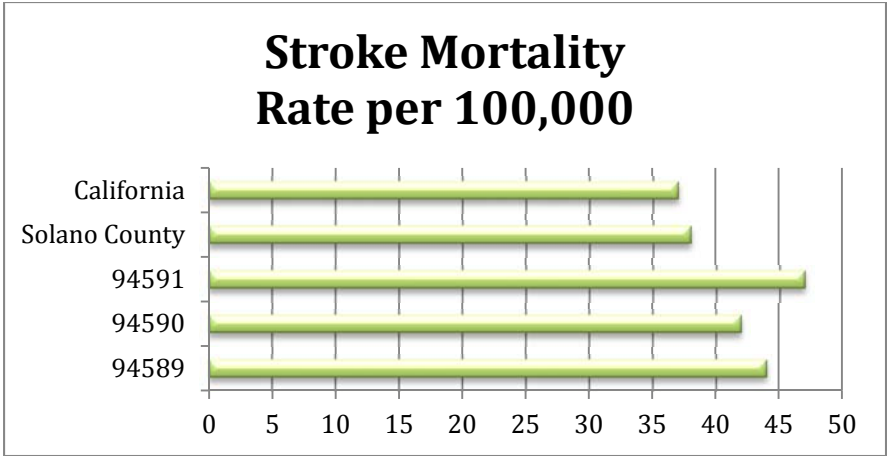
Cancer mortality for ZIP Codes 94589 and 94591 are lower than the Solano County rate, however, Zip Code 94590 exceeds the County rate. Rates of visits to the emergency department for lung cancer in Vallejo exceed those of the County and far exceed the statewide rates.



California Department of Public Health, 2010-12

All three Vallejo ZIP Codes exceed the Solano County rate of death from stroke.



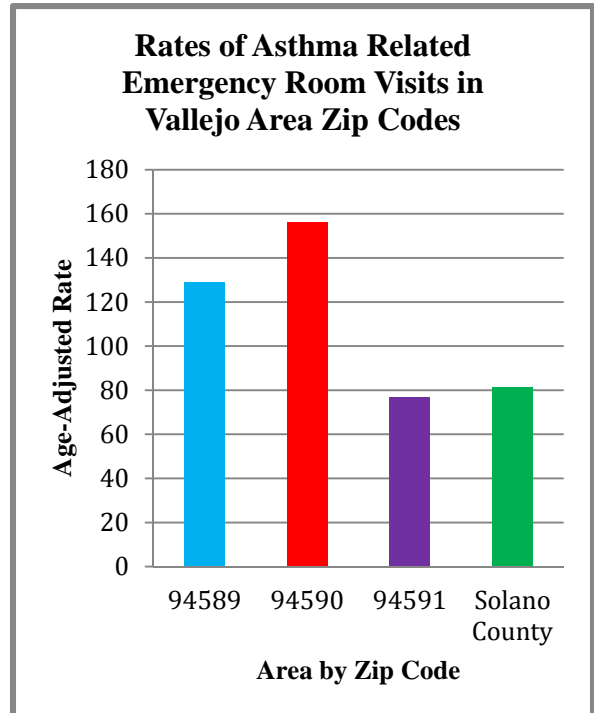
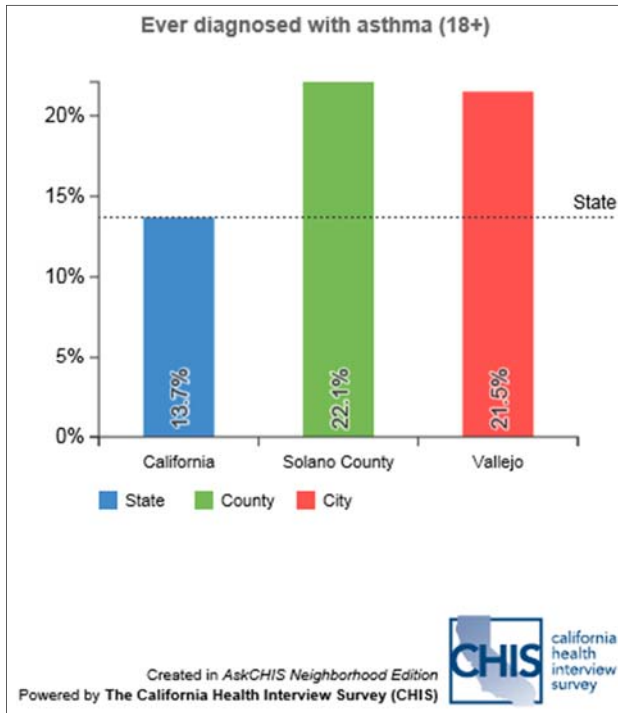


California Department of Public Health, 2010-12

Four modifiable health risk behaviors – lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, tobacco use, and excessive alcohol consumption – are significant contributors to illness and early death from heart disease, cancer, and stroke.

Asthma

Asthma is an increasingly common chronic disease that occurs in all age groups, affecting roughly one in nine Americans. 21.5% of adults in Vallejo have been diagnosed with asthma (compared to 13.7% of all California adults) and 16.1% of children have been diagnosed with asthma, roughly 1% percent higher than Solano County as a whole. And, the rate of asthma-related emergency room visits was almost twice as high in Zip Code 94590 than that of Solano County. (California Dept. of Public Health, 2014).



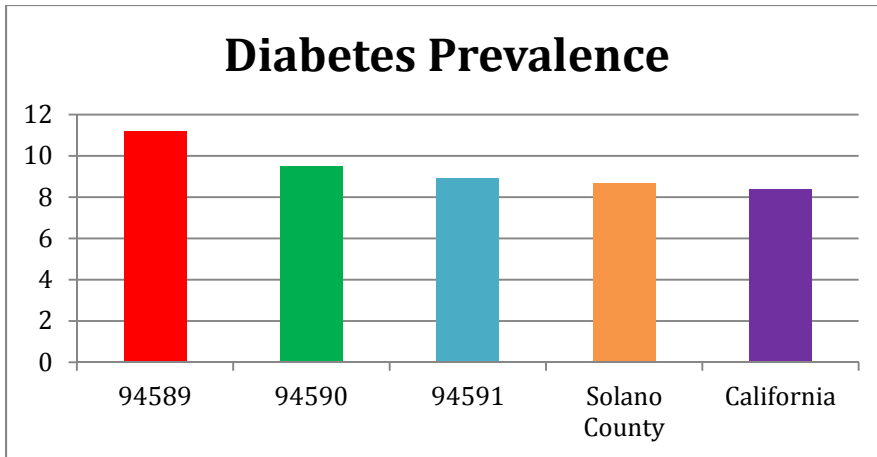
California Health Interview Survey, 2014

Indoor air quality, air pollution, allergens, and secondhand smoke are all factors that affect individuals with asthma. New development that meets current EPA standards and that is located away from major highways or areas with high concentrations of air pollutants such as particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and ground level ozone can reduce the incidence and prevalence of asthma. Reducing secondhand smoke exposure and implementing smoking bans can also improve conditions that trigger asthma and asthma attacks.

### Diabetes

Diabetes is becoming more prevalent in the United States. The current prevalence of adults ever diagnosed with diabetes in Vallejo is higher than Solano County and statewide rates (CHIS, 2014).

Prevention is key to decreasing incidence of diabetes, and diet and exercise can be important factors in prevention.

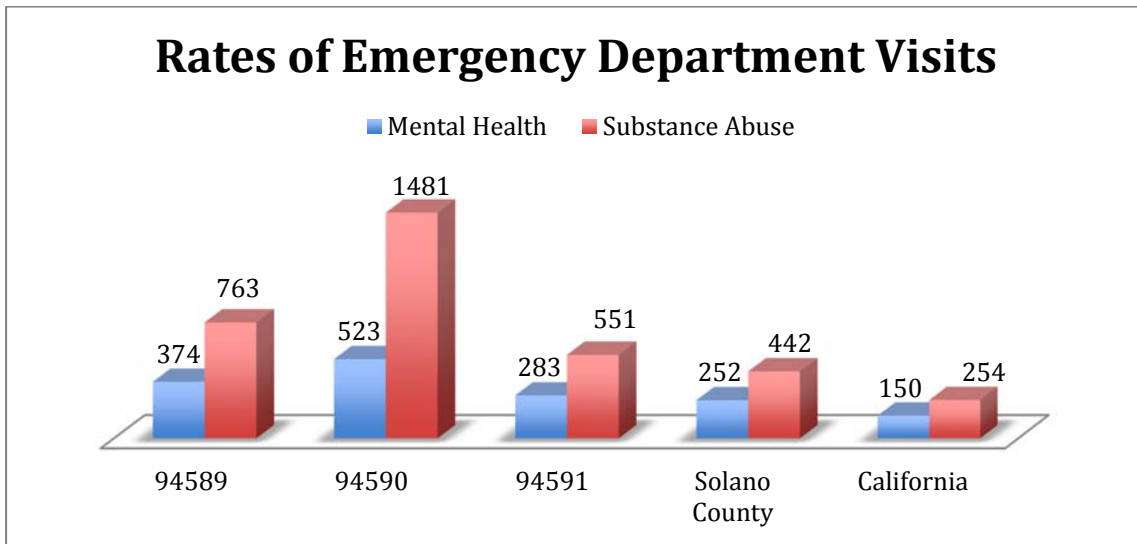


California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), 2014

### Mental Health and Substance Use

Vallejo residents identify mental health and substance abuse as health issues in Vallejo. Emergency department usage for those two conditions illustrate the extent of the problem.

While the causes of mental health problems are varied, the significance of the built environment, access to open space, and similar factors as means of addressing those problems is well documented.



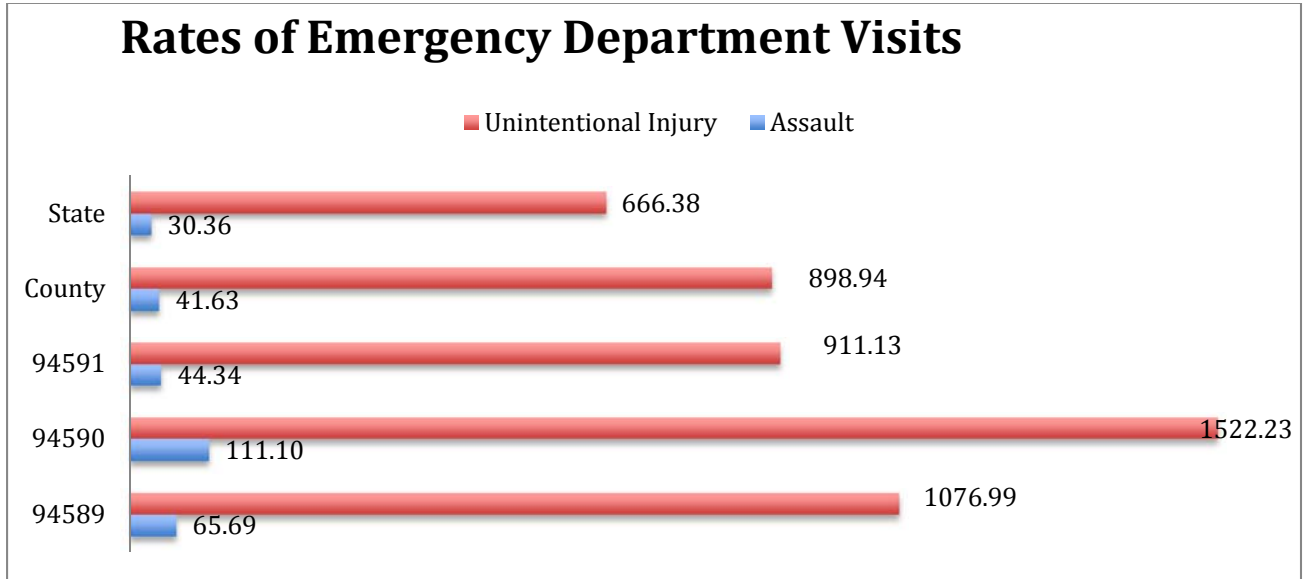
California's Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD), 2011-2013

### Unintentional Injury (including motor vehicle crashes and pedestrian injuries), Assault, and Homicide

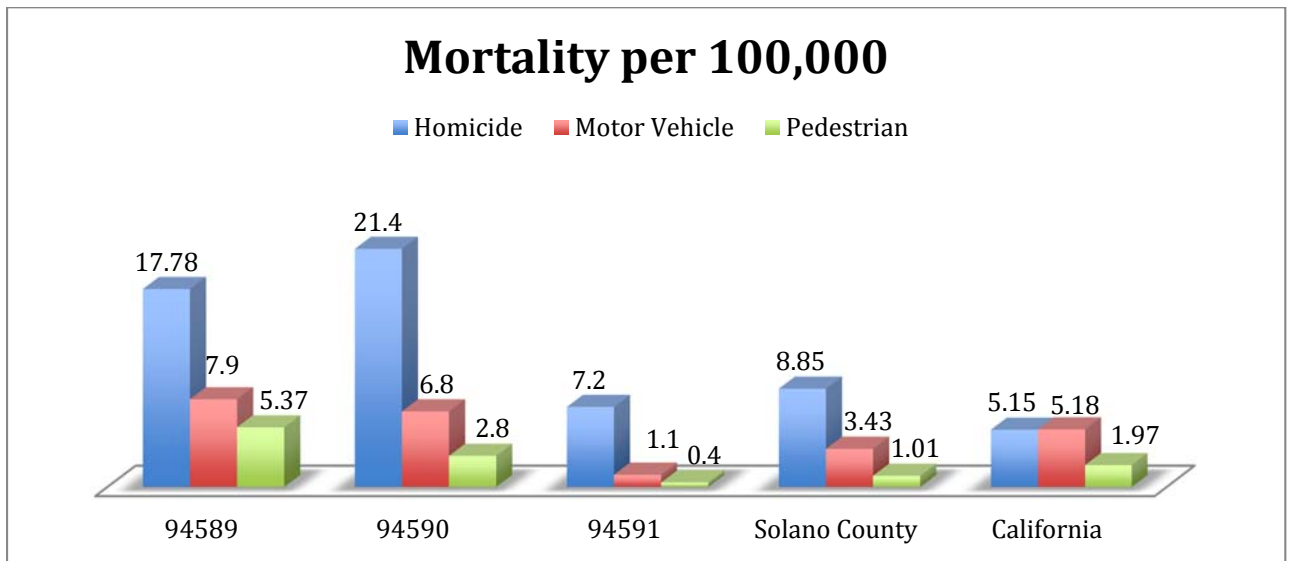
The rates of emergency department use for unintentional injury, including motor vehicle crashes and pedestrian injuries, and assault illustrate the disparities across Vallejo's ZIP

Codes. Solano County has higher rates than the state and ZIP Code 94591's rates are similar to the County's rates. However, significantly higher rates are seen for ZIP Codes 94589 and 94590.

Vallejo's rates may be higher in part because of higher emergency department use in general, but the discrepancies are also illustrated in mortality data; Vallejo has high rates of death from motor vehicle accidents, pedestrian accidents, and homicides. Pedestrian mortality in ZIP Code 94589 is five times the County rate.



California's Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD), 2011-2013



California Department of Public Health, 2010-12

These rates could be improved through safer pedestrian and motor vehicle environments and a reduction in violence.

#### **IV. Community Health Concerns**

In addition to the review of Vallejo’s existing community health conditions summarized above, a variety of outreach activities formed the basis for the General Plan Update’s treatment of community health. They included:

- Community Workshops leading to the City Council’s adoption of the Guiding Principles to guide the Propel Vallejo planning effort
- Meetings with the City’s General Plan Working Group and Economic Vitality Commission
- Interviews with a variety of community members, City and other professional staff, and representatives of non-profits and the faith-based community
- A Health Impact Assessment for South Vallejo, including a series of community workshops
- Health Surveys conducted by Solano County Public Health

Each of these outreach activities is described in detail in the “City of Vallejo Report on Topics for the Healthy Community Element.”

#### **V. Topics Addressed Under Goal CP-1 – Healthy Community: Promote the health of all Vallejoans**

Together, the review of existing conditions and results of community outreach resulted in selecting a range of topics under Goal CP-1.

- Healthy Eating
- Active Living
- Urban Greening and Community Health
- Social Factors Affecting Health
- Tobacco and Alcohol
- Healthy Environment

Each is discussed below, including the nature of the topic, examples of partners working on it in Vallejo, co-benefits of the community health initiatives identified under Goal CP-1 for each topic, and other places in the General Plan where the topic is addressed.

##### **Healthy Eating**

Nutrition influences the incidence of obesity, diabetes, and a variety of other diseases; school achievement; and quality of life generally. And general plans hold the potential for affecting the eating habits of a community.

Access to healthy food is not an issue for all Vallejo residents, but it is for portions of the city. And while ensuring access to healthy food is a goal of virtually every general plan healthy community element, the policies and actions that accompany those goals typically vary to reflect local circumstances. For Vallejo, community outreach, and reviews of existing conditions and community resources identified these as areas of particular interest:

- Retail food sources
- Locally grown food
- Healthy eating programs

### ***Collaboration***

In Vallejo, as elsewhere, ongoing success in addressing this topic will require collaboration between government and a range of community partners. Fortunately, Vallejo can build on an existing network engaged in this task. It includes:

The Solano County Food Policy Council is a partnership of food, agriculture, educational, and other organizations with the goal of fostering a sustainable, equitable food system.

Vallejo's Participatory Budgeting program funded a Community Gardens and Nutrition Education project, including nine gardens across Vallejo – safe spaces to grow food, beautify neighborhoods, educate young people, and decrease crime.

Vallejo People's Garden promotes health and wellness through educational opportunities and local agriculture.

St. Vinnie's Garden established a community garden in the St. Vincent's Hill neighborhood, partners with Food Rescue (a community program that gathers unused food from fruit trees and farmers markets in Vallejo) to provide produce to local shelters, works with schools, and provides adult education.

Emmanuel Temple Apostolic Church of Vallejo is the site of a Community Garden that distributes food to area soup kitchens and food pantries and the location for regular food distributions with the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano.

The Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano holds regular Free Produce Days.

Kaiser Permanente sponsors a year-round, weekly farmers market, among a variety of community health initiatives.

Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association sponsors the year-round, weekly Vallejo Farmers Market.

### ***Co-benefits***

In addition to the health benefits associated with the Healthy Eating Policies and Actions under Goal CP-1, they can strengthen the local economy, improve educational outcomes, and enhance vitality in a range of Vallejo neighborhoods.

### ***Policies/Actions elsewhere in the General Plan***

The Mobility, Transportation, and Connectivity Chapter's Action MTC-2.9C calls for exploring opportunities and funding mechanisms for the development of para-transit, neighborhood shuttle, pedi-cab and other services. Similarly, Action MTC-2.10A calls for conducting a mobility needs assessment and identifying solutions to better serve the needs of seniors and people with limited mobility in Vallejo. These enhanced transportation options can serve the food shopping needs of non-drivers, also reflected in Goal CP-1's Action CP-1.1E.

### **Active Living**

Physical activity is critical to health. And, there are many dimensions to active living – in recreation, transportation, and other aspects of daily life – that can be affected by the built environment and associated programs. As with healthy eating, almost all healthy community elements recognize how planning efforts can promote physical activity. But the specifics should reflect the particular needs and aspirations of the community. For Vallejo, reflecting existing conditions and community concerns, this has translated into these topics related to convenient and safe opportunities for active living:

- Active recreation facilities
- Active recreation programming
- Active transportation network

### ***Collaboration***

Success in this area will require collaboration between government and a range of community partners. Vallejo has the benefit of a strong network of existing partners, including:

Greater Vallejo Recreation District operates parks and community centers throughout Vallejo.

Vallejo's Participatory Budgeting program funds parks and recreation improvements.

Solano Transportation Authority included an Active Transportation Element in its 2014 Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

Vallejo City Unified School District/'Safe Routes to School' Program promotes "walking school bus" programs in portions of the city.

Vallejo Housing Authority, in collaboration with Fighting Back Partnership, promotes safer walking and biking routes and parks by reducing crime “hot spots” through increased street lighting, etc.

Fighting Back Partnership, a non-profit, works with businesses, residents, and government to improve neighborhoods, strengthen families, and support youth development.

Neighborhood Watch, a presence in many Vallejo neighborhoods, promotes opportunities for active recreation and transportation by working toward safer neighborhoods.

### ***Co-benefits***

In addition to the health benefits associated with the Active Living Policies and Actions under Goal CP-1, co-benefits include improved educational attainment, reduced crime, and a stronger community.

### ***Policies/Actions elsewhere in the General Plan***

In addition to the Policies and Actions for Goal CP-1, active recreation is promoted by Policies and Actions elsewhere in the General Plan. For example, in the Mobility, Transportation, and Connectivity Chapter, Policies MTC-1.5 and MTC-1.6 and accompanying Actions address completing the regional trail network in Vallejo and promoting public access to open space and trails, respectively.

In the Nature and the Built Environment Chapter, Policy NBE-1.4 speaks to the restoration of riparian corridors and waterways throughout the City, which can provide recreational opportunities. Similarly, Policy NBE-1.6 addresses conserving and enhancing natural open space areas in and adjacent to Vallejo and its waterfront, with the potential for expanding opportunities for active recreation.

Action CP-3.7F in the Community and People Chapter calls for pursuing joint use agreements with the Vallejo City Unified School District and other educational institutions to provide additional recreational opportunities.

Active transportation is addressed extensively in the Mobility, Transportation, and Connectivity Chapter. The concept of “complete streets,” recognizing the needs of the entire array of users, including pedestrians and bicyclists, is reflected in Policy MTC-2.7 and associated Actions, and reflects many of the General Plan’s Active Living concerns. Policy MTC-3.4 supports expanding the bicycle and trail network, and Policy MTC-3.5 speaks to the importance of a well-designed, interconnected, pedestrian-friendly environment in the downtown/waterfront area. Policy NBE-4.3 and Action MTC-1.5A address trail development and developing a portion of the Bay Trail, respectively.

Active recreation and transportation involve more than having appropriate and convenient facilities. In every community, such facilities must be safe and be perceived as safe in order to be well used. In addition to the provisions under Goal CP-1, creating safer active recreation facilities through design is addressed in Policy CP-3.6 and Actions



CP-3.6A, CP-3.6B, and CP-2.2D. And the safety of transportation facilities is addressed in Policies MTC-2.1 and MTC-2.2.

### **Urban Greening and Community Health**

There is a recognized relationship between well-designed urban green space and physical and mental health (recent research, for instance, found that living in an urban area with green spaces has a longer-lasting positive impact on people's mental well-being than winning the lottery<sup>1</sup>). Concerns expressed during the outreach efforts for Goal CP-1 reflected the need for improved green space in Vallejo.

#### ***Collaboration***

Collaboration will be fundamental to success in this regard. Existing partners include the Solano Resource Conservation District, which works closely with a wide variety of partners throughout the County on urban greening and related projects.

#### ***Co-benefits***

In addition to the health benefits associated with the Policies and Actions under Goal CP-1, co-benefits include economic development, improved aesthetics, and community building.

#### ***Policies/Actions elsewhere in the General Plan***

Policy NBE-1.7 in the Nature and the Built Environment Chapter calls for encouraging green infrastructure, including permeable pavement, rain gardens, constructed wetlands, grassy swales, rain barrels and cisterns, and green roofs. In addition to its benefits in treating stormwater, attenuating floods, and increasing groundwater recharge, this has the potential of adding to the City's green space, with related community health benefits.

Policy NBE-1.8 speaks to the benefits of expanding the city's urban forest by planting street trees and other landscaping. In addition to beautifying the city and distinguishing major thoroughfares, these improvements will promote the community health benefits of urban greening.

### **Social Factors Affecting Health**

The connections between a host of social factors – such as education and employment – and health are well established.

#### ***Collaboration***

Recognizing important existing partnerships and in light of funding constraints, increased collaboration between the City, educational institutions, the business community, social service providers, and community organizations will be critical to promoting community

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<sup>1</sup> “Green spaces have lasting positive effect on well-being,” BBC News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-25682368> (accessed September 15, 2015).

health by addressing these social factors.

### ***Co-benefits***

In addition to the health benefits associated with Goal CP-1's Policies and Actions, economic development is a co-benefit.

### ***Policies/Actions elsewhere in the General Plan***

Addressing various topics that will strengthen the social factors that relate to health is a theme throughout the General Plan. Examples include the Economy, Education, and Training Chapter's Policies EET-2.4 (increase community workforce preparedness for a wide variety of sectors) and EET-2.5 (enhance primary and secondary education, increase high school graduation rates, and improve workforce-readiness for youth), and Action EET-2.5D (re-integrate drug and rehabilitation program graduates and the formerly incarcerated into the community and workforce).

### **Tobacco and Alcohol**

Tobacco (smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke) and alcohol can have negative effects on community health and general plan policies and actions can reduce some of these outcomes. And smoking rates are high in Solano County and in Vallejo. According to the UCLA Community Health Interview Survey, 20.5% of the adult populations in Vallejo are current smokers, higher than the average for Solano County at 14%.

Existing conditions review and outreach efforts for Goal CP-1 identified these concerns:

- Exposure to secondhand smoke
- Location of tobacco and alcohol sales

### ***Collaboration***

Vallejo has the benefit of a strong network of existing partners working on tobacco and alcohol related matters, including:

- Solano County Public Health is involved with a variety of programs to reduce smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke.
- Fighting Back Partnership, a non-profit community group, is involved with tobacco-related topics, as well as alcohol issues.
- Solano County's Tobacco Prevention and Education Program works to:
  - Reduce exposure to secondhand smoke
  - Reduce availability of tobacco
  - Promote tobacco cessation services
  - Build local assets to support tobacco control efforts
  - Provide information and technical assistance on current tobacco issues, policies and legislation, health effects, and community campaigns
  - Develop educational materials
- The Tobacco Education Coalition advises the Tobacco Prevention and Education Program. Its mission is to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke in Solano County.

## **Healthy Environment**

Vallejo residents want a healthy environment. Based on existing conditions and community input, these concerns are reflected under Goal CP-1:

- Clean air
- Clean water
- Healthy economic development

### ***Collaboration***

A variety of federal, state, and regional agencies address air and water quality issues.

### ***Co-benefits***

In addition to the health benefits associated with these topics, they are important to the City's economic development and community vitality.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **VI. Conclusion**

By including Goal CP-1 – Healthy Community: Promote the health of all Vallejoans – in its General Plan, developing Policies across a range of healthy community topics, and identifying specific implementation Actions, Vallejo has taken important steps toward a healthier community. It has established a foundation on which strong partnerships with existing and new partners can promote the health of all Vallejoans.

## **VII. Background Documents (under separate cover)**

1. "Healthy Communities Elements in General Plans: Insights from Current Practice and Considerations for the City of Vallejo," Center for Sustainable Communities, Sonoma State University (January 2015)
2. "South Vallejo Health Impact Assessment," Center for Sustainable Communities, Sonoma State University (October 2015)
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