



The First 5 years.
Make them count.

November 13, 2009

Andrew Crabtree
Principal Planner
Department of Planning, Building, & Code Enforcement
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Health Policies are Vital in Encouraging and Supporting Resident Health in the City of San Jose

Dear Mr. Crabtree and Members of the General Plan Task Force:

On behalf of FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, I am writing to express our support for adding health and wellness elements in the development of the City of San Jose General Plan.

As you may know, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County leads an Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Collaborative that follows a strategic plan that aims to reduce childhood obesity and improve the health of children and parents in our community. We understand that the City of San Jose and the General Plan Task Force will utilize its November meeting to take a focused look at how to include policies and ideas that promote and support healthy behaviors among all residents. As the Task Force proceeds in updating the General Plan, we encourage you to look at land use policies that will help our residents make healthy choices regarding eating and physical activity. We believe that by incorporating the following aspects into San Jose's General Plan, this can be achieved. Our Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Strategic Plan promotes many of the strategies listed below which will help children and parents live healthier lives.

1. Ready Access to Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture

The benefits of community gardening and urban agriculture are vast, especially as they relate to health and wellbeing. Research conducted by Lackey and Associates has shown that community gardeners and their children eat healthier, more nutrient rich diets than do non-gardening families. In creating health policies focused on community gardening and urban agriculture, we would encourage you to embrace innovative solutions, including what other cities have successfully initiated.

2. Equitable Access to Fresh and Affordable Produce Supports Optimal Health for Residents

The American Journal of Preventive Medicine reports that the presence of a supermarket in a neighborhood is linked to higher fruit and vegetable consumption and a reduced prevalence of overweight and obesity. When revising the General Plan, we urge you to incorporate language that supports the creation of supermarkets in San Jose.



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3. Promotion of Active Transportation

The American Journal of Preventive Medicine reports that almost one-third of Americans who commute to work via public transit meet their daily requirements for physical activity by walking as part of their daily life, including to and from the transit stop. People living in highly walkable, mixed-use communities are more than twice as likely to get 30 or more minutes of daily exercise as those living in auto-oriented, single-use areas.

As you move through the November and December General Plan meetings we ask that you consider these facts and how you can structure a General Plan that helps ensure maximum walkability and bikeability in San Jose.

3. Support for Children and Older Adults

Children must be kept at the forefront when creating health policies. Research shown in the Journal of Air and Waste Management Association reports that children living near heavily trafficked roads experience decreased lung function, greater rates of hospitalization for asthma attacks, and greater risks for all types of cancer.

Please also consider the older adult population in our city. Mobility of older adults is affected as they age. In a recent AARP poll, 40 percent of adults 50 years and older said they do not have adequate sidewalks in their neighborhoods, while 47 percent said they cannot cross their main roads safely. Policies in the General Plan can greatly impact the safety and health of both older adults and children.

We encourage you to keep the above facts in mind as you consider adding health elements into the city's General Plan. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jolene Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jolene Smith
Executive Director

Cc: General Plan Task Force Members