



BEST PRACTICES AROUND THE WORLD
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Best food forward: One community's strategies for steering the food environment towards health

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Abstract: Accessibility to healthy food may have a greater influence than nutritional knowledge and attitudes on how people make food-related decisions. Recognition of this and its health consequences has led to food environment factors being increasingly addressed both as public health and city planning concerns. In a small city internationally renowned for its population's vibrant longevity, efforts to prevent an influx of fast food restaurants expanded to incorporate analyses and strategies addressing the wider food environment. Community workshops visioning for long-term local and regional health prioritized areas of concern including inadequate healthy dining options and access to farmers' markets and community gardens. Use of the Retail Food Environment Index (RFEI) to analyze retail food outlets within city bounds revealed limited options that result in community members

frequently driving across city limits for wider dining options, illuminating the need for making healthy food choices within the city accessible, attractive, and ubiquitous. Developing such meal options within walking distance from major activity hubs would additionally benefit the local economy, reduce traffic, and help create a community culture and identity synonymous with well-being. Strategies to implement local policies limiting unhealthy retail food venues and incentivizing healthy, sustainable businesses are also called for. A coalition committed to bridging the interests of city officials and community members continues to play a key role in advancing these food environment goals. Combined civic and public health efforts to create environments where healthy food choices become the easy, default options have great potential to impact long-term community health.

About Healthy Loma Linda and the San Bernardino County Healthy Communities Initiative:

- **Healthy Loma Linda**, founded in 2012, is a community-guided initiative to retain, improve and promote community health in and around Loma Linda, California that strives to involve all members of the community - those who live, work, study, invest in and/or visit Loma Linda - in visioning and decision-making processes.
- **The three community-identified priority areas** that Healthy Loma Linda is currently working to address are: (1) biking and walking safety and active transportation, (2) the food environment, and (3) the desire for a town center or university village. Working groups have been formed for each of these areas.
- Healthy Loma Linda's vision and goals fit into the wider health priorities set by the County through the Healthy Communities Initiative, by the State of California through Health in all Policies (HiAP), and by the federal government through the Healthy People 2020 objectives.
- Created in 2006, the **Healthy Communities of San Bernardino Initiative** is a county-wide strategy to create healthier environments and promote healthful lifestyle choices for all county residents, with a particular emphasis on access to nutritious food, physical activity, and appropriate health care. Over 22 communities are currently part of the Healthy Communities Initiative.

References and additional resources:

Get Healthy Loma Linda updates:

www.facebook.com/HealthyLomaLinda

Map food outlets within walking distance:

www.walkscore.com

Formula-based fast food ordinance in Cotati, CA:

www.healcitiescampaign.org/document.html?id=6

Old Grove Farm Share (Redlands, CA):

www.oldgrovefarmshare.com

Healthy Communities:

www.sbcounty.gov/dph/publichealth/programs_services/healthy_communities/healthy_communities.asp

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California Center for Public Health Advocacy. (2007). *Searching for Healthy Food: The Food Landscape in California Cities and Counties – RFEI Press Kit*. Retrieved from www.publichealthadvocacy.org/RFEI/presskit_RFEI.pdf

California Center for Public Health Advocacy, PolicyLink, and the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. (2008). *Designed for Disease: The Link Between Local Food Environments and Obesity and Diabetes*.

Cohen, D., & Farley, T. A. (2008). Eating as an Automatic Behavior. *Preventing chronic disease*, 5(1).

Russell, W. S., & Zepeda, L. (2008). The adaptive consumer: shifting attitudes, behavior change and CSA membership renewal. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 23(2), 136-148.

Story, M., Kaphingst, K. M., Robinson-O'Brien, R., & Glanz, K. (2008). Creating healthy food and eating environments: policy and environmental approaches. *Annu. Rev. Public Health*, 29, 253-272.

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