



Kansas Health Foundation

From the work of Kansans:

Most Effective Messages for Healthy Eating & Active Living

A crowd-sourced document compiled from the experiences and recommendations of health professionals, community advocates and state agencies across Kansas.



Contribution / Thanks



Information Compiled By:

Kansas Health Foundation (KHF)

Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)

Contributors/Editors:

- Lindsey Spiess, KHF
- Chase Willhite, KHF
- Laurie Harrison, KDHE
- Ginger Park, KDHE

Special Thanks To:

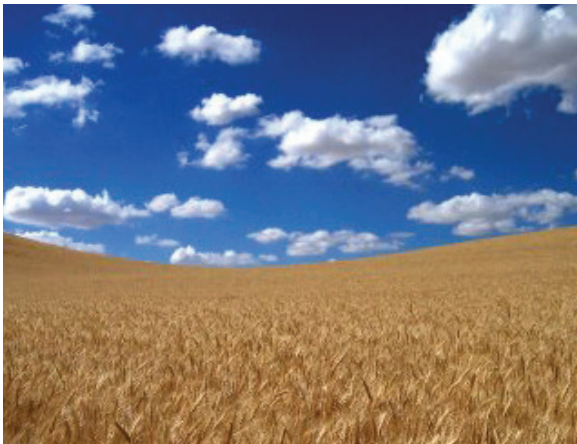
- Misty Lechner, American Heart Association and Kansas Alliance for Wellness
- Helen Schoes, Douglas County Food System
- Katie Uhde, Kansas Department of Health and Environment
- Alissa Rankin, Sedgwick County Health Department
- Shelley Rich and Becky Tuttle, Medical Society of Sedgwick County
- Public Health Law Center
- Blythe Thomas
- Representatives from the 20 communities involved in the Kansas Health Foundation Healthy Communities Initiative (HCI) Grant
- All individuals interviewed for content recommendations

Developed in partnership with the
Kansas Department of Health and Environment



Table of Contents

- Contributors/Thanks** 2
- Purpose** 4
- Background Information and Statistics** 5
- Jargon Words and Possible Alternatives** 6
- Potential Messages** 7
 - Food Hubs 8
 - Food System Assessments 9
 - Local Gardening Efforts 10
 - Farmers’ Markets 11
 - Food Sold in Public Places 12
 - Food Councils 13
 - Biking/Walking Paths 14
 - Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Councils 15
 - Local Planning 16
 - Safe Routes to School Initiatives 17
- Endnotes** 18-19



Purpose



By and large, Americans know exercise and proper nutrition are important. Public health leaders have worked for decades to raise awareness about the importance of healthy eating and active living for our residents and communities. However, more Americans are dying from preventable diseases than ever before.

What motivates someone to change his or her behavior? And, how can we talk about these issues in ways that lead to long-term, sustainable and healthy changes?

With these questions in mind, we asked health professionals, community advocates and state agencies across Kansas to share what works in their conversations with individuals, community leaders, public officials, business leaders and others. Their answers, along with reputable national groups such as the Voices for Healthy Kids initiative, shaped the messages in this guide.

This guide highlights messages for 10 healthy community topics and policy areas that Kansans have found to be effective for specific audiences. For example, when speaking to parents and families, sharing the benefits of safety, cost and health promotion may fit best. Or, when talking with a county commissioner or city manager, sharing the benefits of economic growth may fit best.

In addition to the messages for the 10 topics and policies, we've included a collection of statistics highlighting why this work matters. Also, to simplify potential conversations, you'll find a chart showing common jargon words/phrases matched with possible alternative language.



Background Information and Statistics

There is no shortage of facts and statistics on the importance of healthy eating and active living. Below are just a few numbers that could be used.

- Kansas spends more than \$1 billion (\$1,131,865,039) each year treating chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer.¹
- For every \$1 spent on healthcare, 75 cents goes to treat preventable chronic disease.²
- Up to 40 percent of all deaths every year in the United States could be prevented. Preventable diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer could be reduced if communities created environments that offered residents access to healthy foods and opportunities for active living and exercise.³
- American's sedentary lifestyles, combined with unhealthy diets, are responsible for 300,000 early deaths each year. Even modest increases in activities such as walking and bicycling can have significant health benefits and help people lead longer, healthier lives.⁴
- Community health groups from across the state are making changes in their communities to create healthier environments where people live, work and play.
- A person's zip code, not genetics, is a better predictor of his or her health.⁵
- Health starts – long before illness – in our homes, schools and jobs.⁶
- Fewer than 2 percent of Americans today live on farms and ranches. Perhaps because of this disconnect, American consumers have a growing interest in learning more about where their food comes from and connecting with farmers and ranchers in their region.⁷
- Local food sales represent a small portion of the total food market. More than \$77 billion worth of food was imported into the United States in 2007, while local food sales totaled slightly less than \$5 billion in 2008.⁷
- During the past 10 years, there has been a surge in demand for locally produced foods. The availability and amount of local food products are unprecedented.⁷
- Many consumers and policymakers define local as being within a 100-mile radius of one's home, while others feel that 200, 300 or 400 miles can still be considered local food.⁷



Jargon Words and Possible Alternatives

The average American today has an attention span of eight seconds. It's important to be as clear and concise as possible. Below are some commonly used words and phrases and alternatives to consider using with the public.

Jargon Words	Possible Alternatives
Food hubs	Food hubs could be described as businesses or organizations that collect, distribute and market local and regional food
HEAL	Instead of the acronym, talk about healthy eating and physical activity
Active living	Consider using physical activity instead
Active transportation	This general topic could more specifically be referred to as human-powered transportation or walking and biking
Chronic disease	When possible, use specific examples such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease
Sugar-sweetened drinks	Refer to these instead as sugary drinks, and discuss type 2 diabetes, heart disease and tooth decay, and the overwhelming amount of sugar consumed by children
Obesity	This word infers an individual problem, as opposed to a community health problem that all can help address. Instead, discuss potential outcomes from diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease
Built environment	The physical part of where we live and work (homes, buildings, streets and open spaces), which influences a person's level of physical activity. This term can also refer to the places where we get our food such as farmers' markets and grocery stores.
Food desert	Discuss communities and/or areas that have limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly in low-income neighborhoods and communities
Food Policy Council	These are diverse groups of people who come together to identify solutions for improving their community's food options and availability. Other names that could be used are Food Council, Food Advisory Council, Food Advisory Committee, Food and Farm Council, Farm and Food Alliance and Healthy Food Task Force
Regulations	Regulations may also be referred to as legally enforceable policies
Government	More specific words to use are services or partnerships
Food swamp	These are areas where there is an overabundance of high-calorie and/or unhealthy food available which may prevent people from choosing healthier options
Food security	This term refers to having a reliable source of healthy and affordable food



Potential Messages

10 Talking Points

FIVE THINGS TO REMEMBER FOR MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT:

Here are five steps to consider when crafting your message, using the information in this guide:

1. Pick the issue on which you want to make progress.
2. What audience are you trying to influence? Be specific! Think of specific people or sectors, avoiding "all community members." Different messages will resonate with different groups.
3. What types of benefits will resonate with your identified audience?
Choose from those listed: cost, safety, etc.
4. Choose from the examples provided, combining the talking points with real-world examples from your community. It is best to focus on only one or two messages during any particular conversation or speech.
5. How can your audience be part of the solution? Include a specific call to action.



1 Food Hubs



A food hub is a business or organization that collects, distributes and markets local and regional food.

COST BENEFITS

- By working with farmers, food hubs simplify food distribution and purchasing for schools, restaurants and other institutions that purchase food.
- Farmer-specific benefit: Food hubs help farmers reduce time spent marketing by selling food into wholesale markets.

SAFETY BENEFITS

- Food hubs help consumers to know where their food comes from by promoting local farmers.
- If a food quality or safety issue arises, food from food hubs is easier to track because the food goes directly from the farmer to the food hub.
- Farmer-specific benefit: Food hubs can help farmers improve their food safety practices.

ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS

- Food hubs make it easier to distribute fresh local foods within communities.
- Food hubs can develop creative partnerships to improve access to healthy foods for low-income families, seniors and families.
- Farmer-specific benefit: Food hubs can provide a more stable market for farmers.

HEALTH PROMOTION BENEFITS

- When food hubs participate in farm-to-school programs, they help children have fresher-tasting healthy foods in cafeterias and classrooms.
- Food sold through food hubs is fresher and retains more nutritional value because it travels shorter distances and is harvested and sold in a shorter timeframe.
- Food hubs help move fresh nutritious food quickly from farmer to buyer.
- Farmer-specific benefit: Food hubs help expand fruit and vegetable production in the region.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Food hubs can reduce the number of miles needed to transport fresh fruits and vegetables from other states or countries.
- Farmer-specific benefit: Food hubs can increase the visibility of farms that use diverse cropping and grazing systems.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION BENEFITS

- Food hubs build strong relationships and connections, helping to strengthen the future of communities.
- Food hubs are a bridge between food producers, consumers, grocery stores, restaurants and wholesale buyers, which provides a mutually beneficial relationship across the local food system.
- Food hubs help communities rebuild their collection and distribution infrastructure which is necessary for vibrant local and regional food systems.
- Farmer-specific benefit: When people know where their food comes from it builds excitement, consumer confidence and support in local farms/farmers.

ECONOMIC GROWTH BENEFITS

- Food hubs create new jobs to support a growing local food system, such as transportation, warehouse, delivery, marketing and purchasing.
- Food hubs keep and attract dollars spent within a local community, securing economic stability.
- Food hubs create a dynamic marketplace for professional food buyers and sellers to research, connect and do business with local farmers.
- Food hubs present an opportunity for communities to make healthy food profitable.
- Farmer-specific benefit: Food hubs expand market opportunities for farmers, supporting job creation, job security and increase food production.

2 Food System Assessments

Food system assessments measure the whole food system including production, distribution, processing, consumption and waste management. This tool is typically used to measure the assets and needs in communities, cities and regions regarding food security, the productive capacity of the land, and economic development. Food system assessments can give policymakers and citizens research and data to support the work of food councils and others working to improve a community's food system.

COST BENEFITS

- Food system assessments offer support for local farmers by identifying opportunities for improvements by analyzing and maximizing resources.
- Food system assessments offer suggestions to increase a community's level of food availability and potentially suggestions for lowering food costs for consumers.

SAFETY BENEFITS

- A food system assessment provides recommendations on how local farms can improve the quality and quantity of food.
- Food system assessments provide information about the food sources in a community so if a food quality or food safety issue arises, it is easier to track the source.

ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS

- A food system assessment's ultimate goal is to develop a regional food system that increases access to local healthy foods.
- Food system assessments evaluate the capacity of rural and agricultural land to support the local food production economy.
- Food system assessments aim to reduce hunger and inequity in local food systems.

HEALTH PROMOTION BENEFITS

- Food system assessments survey citizens on barriers to healthier diets in their community, leading to citizen-desired solutions.
- Food system assessments identify community-specific opportunities and solutions to increase access to healthy foods for all citizens.
- Results from a food system assessment can be used to identify action steps to improve the community food environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Food system assessments evaluate the ways in which communities can employ local farms to produce locally grown food.
- Food system assessments can raise awareness of food waste and aim to reduce the amount of waste in landfills.
- Food system assessments measure viable land to support food production in rural and urban areas.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION BENEFITS

- Food system assessments help create a regional growth framework developed through community engagement and build on existing conditions, future plans and needs, and potential strategies to acquire food.
- Food system assessments contribute to the long-term stability and strength and growth of community farms and the local farming industry.

ECONOMIC GROWTH BENEFITS

- When citizens are informed about where and how their food is acquired, they are empowered to make better informed purchasing decisions, support their food system and improve their communities.
- Food system assessments measure rural and agricultural lands that support the local economy.
- Food system assessments identify stakeholders who can help with solutions and food transportation.
- Communities with vibrant local food systems may be more likely to attract and retain young families and business professionals.



3 Local Gardening Efforts

Local gardening efforts are gardens and orchards planted in local communities to grow healthy produce (fruits and vegetables) in private backyard spaces, churches, public community gardens (“shared gardens”), school gardens, employer-sponsored gardens and other organizational gardening properties.

COST BENEFITS

- Citizens can save money if they grow their own high-quality nutritious food.
- Home gardens can save time, money and gasoline by not driving to a grocery store for food purchases, particularly in places where fresh nutritious foods are not easily accessible.

SAFETY BENEFITS

- Community gardens are recognized by law enforcement as an effective community crime prevention strategy by helping neighbors meet each other and increasing eyes on the street.⁸

ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS

- Gardens are places for people to grow fruits and vegetables that may not be locally available.
- Community gardens may offer programs to help educate residents about topics related to growing and preserving food.

HEALTH PROMOTION BENEFITS

- Community gardens in Kansas have donated thousands of pounds of fresh produce to food pantries and helped provide food security and reduce hunger.
- Exposure to green space reduces stress, and increases a sense of wellness and belonging. Studies have shown that gardeners and their children eat healthier diets than non-gardening families.⁸
- Community gardens provide rich learning environments that promote healthy eating.
- Gardening can be a great workout and provides endurance, flexibility and strength.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Gardens can filter rainwater, helping to keep lakes, rivers and groundwater clean.
- Gardens restore oxygen to the air and help reduce air pollution.
- Gardens with compost piles reduce waste and provide natural fertilizer for plants.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION BENEFITS

- Gardens can foster a sense of community and investment in neighborhoods.
- Community gardens can bring people together from a range of backgrounds all working side-by-side toward a common goal of growing food.
- Gardens teach children math skills, the origins of their food, their environment and life skills.

ECONOMIC GROWTH BENEFITS

- Urban agriculture can be 3-5 times more productive per acre than traditional large-scale farming.⁸
- Local market gardening supports farmers’ markets and keeps money within a community.



4 Farmers' Markets

A farmers' market is a physical retail market featuring foods sold directly by farmers to consumers. Farmers sell fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy products, and sometimes prepared foods, beverages and other items to local consumers. Interest in farmers' markets is growing across Kansas, with the number of markets increasing more than four-fold in the past two decades.



COST BENEFITS

- Farmers' markets are often located in a centrally accessible location in a community, saving local residents transportation time when buying food.
- Reduced transportation costs saves farmers money.

SAFETY BENEFITS

- Consumers can ask farmers about their food growing and handling practices.
- The State of Kansas regulates food sold at farmers' markets for food safety.

ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS

- Many farmers' markets across the country operate in neighborhoods underserved by supermarkets, grocery stores and other food outlets.
- Farmers' markets can provide a larger variety of fresh local produce to communities that have minimal selection in local grocery stores or corner stores.

HEALTH PROMOTION BENEFITS

- Farmers' markets contribute to the health of residents by improving the availability of fresh, nutritious and affordable produce within communities.
- Farmers' markets can provide minimally processed, fresh produce, picked right before it is sold at the market.
- Farmers' markets can be a source for nutrition information and food preparation instruction for fresh produce.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Most of America's food travels an average of 1,500 miles to get to a dinner plate, using large amounts of natural resources contributing toward pollution. Farmers' markets provide locally grown produce to communities, reducing negative environmental impacts.
- Meats, cheeses, and eggs sold at farmer's markets often have been raised without non-therapeutic antibiotics.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION BENEFITS

- Farmers' markets can engage farmers, shoppers and local policymakers around common goals such as access to healthy food.
- Farmers' markets with expansion programs may offer price-matching benefits for low-income individuals and families to increase opportunities to purchase healthy food.
- A farmers' market can create a lively family-friendly event that promotes healthy food and physical activity.

ECONOMIC GROWTH BENEFITS

- Farmers' markets provide local farmers with an outlet to sell their products in the community where they live and work.
- Farmers' markets contribute to the local economy by keeping farmers' dollars in the community, which supports other people and businesses in the community.

5 Food Sold in Public Places

Healthy food is provided and sold in public places, including concession stands, sports arenas, vending machines, schools and community recreation centers.

COST BENEFITS

- Pricing strategies can be used to ensure that healthy food costs the same or less than non-healthy food sold in public places.
- Consumers want to purchase reasonably priced food that is nutritious and healthy.

ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS

- Healthy food options sold in public spaces provide quick, accessible options when time between meals gets too long, or there are no other options to purchase food nearby.
- It is recommended for public spaces to offer people the option to purchase healthy foods.

HEALTH PROMOTION BENEFITS

- Healthy food sold in public places supports healthy lifestyles.
- Healthy options sold in public places can support people who have special dietary needs.
- Healthy drinks sold in public places help people stay hydrated.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION BENEFITS

- Providing and selling healthy foods in public places shows people that their community supports healthy lifestyles.
- Events that showcase healthy food in public places can bring community members together around a positive opportunity.

ECONOMIC GROWTH BENEFITS

- There is consumer demand to have nutritional foods in public spaces.



6 Food Councils



A Food Council (also known as Food Policy Council, Food and Farm Council, Food Advisory Committee, Healthy Food Task Force) is a group of individuals representing broad interests who are appointed to provide recommendations and guidance to improve the local food system. These individuals often represent agriculture, public health, economic development, education, food service and other sectors in a community.

COST BENEFITS

- Food councils can have specific duties, such as proposing and reviewing cooperative purchasing agreements in local public institutions to improve access to healthy food.

SAFETY BENEFITS

- Food councils can build initiatives that enhance food safety, can recruit kitchens with equipment for safely processing food that are open to the community, describe the need for group Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification, and propose training programs to ensure small-scale producers, processors, and retailers may remain in compliance with state and federal food safety regulations.

ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS

- Food councils may seek to enhance the number and variety of markets available to food producers, such as grocery stores, corner stores, restaurants, other retail outlets, farmers' markets, food hubs, schools, community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, and other institutions.
- Food councils may take on the task of increasing access to healthy, local foods by identifying needs and propose solutions. Solutions could include the development of community gardens, farmers' markets, and bringing in food retail opportunities in underserved areas.
- Food councils often seek to build partnerships to make locally grown fruits and vegetables more readily available throughout the community.
- Food councils may bring policymakers and producers together to address concerns about food insecurity.
- Food councils may address zoning and planning issues, and support healthy food in after-school programs and summer meals for children.

HEALTH PROMOTION BENEFITS

- Food councils can seek to increase SNAP and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program acceptance at farmers' markets for healthy, locally grown foods.
- Food councils may seek to change government food purchasing policies to include healthy food nutrition standards.
- Food councils may seek to improve health for all residents by making food retail locations (farmers' markets, etc.) accessible by bus, walking routes and bike lanes.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Food councils may encourage the city to increase food availability by using abandoned properties for community gardens.
- Food councils may raise awareness of water and land use resources and policies.
- Food councils may build partnerships to reduce food waste by connecting producers and food purchasers with food banks, food pantries or similar organizations.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION BENEFITS

- Food councils can help communities build and improve their food system.
- Food councils help people in communities work together to ensure there is enough affordable, accessible and nutritious food for everyone.
- Food councils' diverse memberships can give more sectors in the community an amplified voice in the community's food system.

ECONOMIC GROWTH BENEFITS

- Food councils may work to make sure farmers' markets thrive in the community.
- Food councils may market and promote local food, which can be an indicator of a community's overall health and vitality – which is increasingly attractive to young professionals and families.
- Food councils can identify opportunities for entrepreneurs who wish to develop food-related businesses.

7 Biking/Walking Paths



Biking/walking paths are routes designed for travel, exercise and recreation. They are usually built with the support of local and/or state government, and often include input from community members, businesses and non-profit organizations.

COST BENEFITS

- Walking is a free method of physical activity.
- Walking and biking can reduce the cost of vehicle ownership, saving in areas such as fuel, maintenance, repair and depreciation.

SAFETY BENEFITS

- Biking/walking may be safer than driving a car in some areas.
- Fewer cars are present in school zones when children walk to school using biking/walking paths.

ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS

- Biking/walking can allow people to access places that vehicles cannot.
- Biking/walking paths offer an opportunity for individuals using wheelchairs and other mobility devices to exercise and enjoy the outdoors.
- Biking/walking paths that connect parts of a community (for example, paths from residential areas to downtown) encourage walking and biking.

HEALTH PROMOTION BENEFITS

- Walking is the easiest form of exercise.
- Walking is convenient because it can be done almost anywhere and at anytime.
- Walking and biking substantially improve mental and physical well-being by increasing metabolism and burning fat, strengthening bones, preventing type 2 diabetes, strengthening the heart and lung capacity, helping control appetite, slowing aging, improving intestinal regularity and relieving chronic back pain.⁹
- Cycling is the second most popular outdoor activity in the United States.¹⁰
- Cycling is good for cardiovascular health, muscle tone, coordination, mental health, the immune system and increases a person's life span.
- Being outside strengthens immunity and improves mental health and positivity.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Use of sidewalks, bike paths, lanes and trails help reduce vehicle emissions, fuel consumption and traffic congestion.
- When residents bike and walk, there is less physical impact on existing roadways.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION BENEFITS

- Communities that build biking/walking paths help foster relationships by creating a space for neighbors to interact.
- Biking/walking can be a social opportunity between family and friends.

ECONOMIC GROWTH BENEFITS

- Studies have shown that homes closer to biking/walking paths are more valuable.¹¹
- Potential new community residents, business professionals and new businesses evaluate a community's quality of life including "walkability/bikability" when deciding where to move for a career, raise a family or build a new business.
- Visiting tourists often desire walkable paths to visit the city on foot.
- Bicycling contributes \$133 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supports nearly 1.1 million jobs across the U.S., generates \$17.7 billion in annual federal and state tax revenue, produces \$53.1 billion annually in retail sales and services, and provides sustainable growth in rural and urban communities.¹²

8 Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Councils

Bicycle and pedestrian advisory councils (also called Active Transportation Board/Council/Committee, Master Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Board/Council/Committee) are groups of individuals appointed to provide advice and guidance to local city government about the physical landscape related to being physically active – such as access, use, safety, new construction, repair of existing landscape and landscape changes.

COST BENEFITS

- Advisory councils gather information about the existing conditions of walking, biking and wheelchair access in a community and provide advice, insight and information about current community needs and opportunities.

SAFETY BENEFITS

- Advisory councils are well-positioned to identify community-specific safety needs of people who walk or bike, and can bring attention to areas of concern.

ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS

- Advisory councils provide a voice for the diverse accessibility needs of all community members including individuals with disabilities, seniors, and families with young children.
- An advisory council's goal is to improve access to existing, or build new biking/walking paths for all residents, regardless of the neighborhoods in which they live.

HEALTH PROMOTION BENEFITS

- Advisory councils aim to improve the quality of life within a community.
- Advisory councils can provide recommendations to local officials about encouraging the use of existing biking/walking paths, as well as creating new paths, to increase opportunities for community members to be physically active.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Sidewalks, bike paths, lanes and trails help reduce vehicle emissions, fuel consumption and traffic congestion.¹³
- When residents bike and walk, there is less physical impact on existing roadways.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION BENEFITS

- Advisory councils build civic and community engagement through collaboration of its members, members' organizations, local leaders and local citizens.
- Advisory councils can seek out under-represented or non-represented community members to communicate their needs to local government for accessible and safe biking/walking.

ECONOMIC GROWTH BENEFITS

- Advisory councils provide feedback and ideas to local government regarding long-term economic growth and continuous improvements in the community related to active transportation such as biking/walking paths.
- Advisory councils can offer guidance, share insights and help identify current community needs related to biking/walking paths to local government with an eye toward economic growth.



9 Local Planning

Local community planning can address long-term goals and values that relate to active transportation, land use and economic development. Master bicycle and pedestrian plans can be part of a community's comprehensive planning process, which is used by local government to create policy directives, evaluate existing laws and allocate budgets. "Complete Streets" policies can also be included in this kind of planning. These policies refer to guidelines regarding roadways designed for all uses including pedestrians, bicyclists, individuals using wheelchairs and drivers.¹⁴

COST BENEFITS

- Developing plans for future walking or biking infrastructure could make them more likely to be included in other transportation projects, saving money by combining them together instead of doing each separately.

SAFETY BENEFITS

- Careful active transportation planning helps ensure that people who bicycle or walk in a community are safe.

ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS

- A plan/policy can increase the accessibility of existing landscapes for all pedestrians, bicyclists, individuals using wheelchairs and drivers.
- A plan/policy can prioritize the construction of pathways that allow residents to access businesses, schools, churches, parks, and homes by foot or bicycle.

HEALTH PROMOTION BENEFITS

- A plan/policy may help improve the quality of life and health of citizens by ensuring that individuals have access to jobs, medical care, healthy food, educational opportunities, other necessities and amenities, regardless of their mode of transportation.
- The ability for community members to be active reduces isolation and improves mental health.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- A plan/policy that encourages use of biking/walking paths can decrease air pollution by reducing the number of vehicles on the road.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION BENEFITS

- A plan/policy creates the expectation for physical landscapes that connect community members with each other and enhances the sense of community.
- In order to develop a plan/policy, a city must evaluate existing streets, intersections and transportation routes, and also listen to the community's needs and ideas for solutions that best fit the community.

ECONOMIC GROWTH BENEFITS

- A plan/policy enhances economic strength by supporting multiple ways to travel such as walking, bicycling, using public transit and driving.
- A plan/policy offers connectivity to communities by requiring lower-cost transportation options and safe access to jobs and businesses.¹⁵
- A plan/policy benefits local economies by decreasing transportation costs, increasing property values, decreasing health care costs, increasing employment and enhancing tourism.¹⁶
- Communities that develop plans for active transportation infrastructure are more likely to attract funding by being ready for opportunities that come their way.



10 Safe Routes to School Initiatives

Safe Routes to School initiatives or plans can be used to promote walking and bicycling in the community. These initiatives encourage children to walk or bicycle to school and promote safety in or around school zones. Safe Routes To School programs can support the development of safe infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists, and increase cooperation between local stakeholders (such as school districts, cities or counties).¹⁷

COST BENEFITS

- Safe Routes To School plans provide an opportunity for children to safely walk/bike to school, which may reduce the need for buses.
- Safe Routes To School programs offers a cost-saving alternative for school districts and parents by reducing fuel costs.

SAFETY BENEFITS

- The Safe Routes To School planning process assesses the environment and identifies safe walking paths for children to travel to/from school.
- Safe Routes To School plans focus on infrastructure improvements, student traffic education and enforcement of traffic laws that can improve safety for children.
- Children walking on roads without sidewalks are twice as likely to be struck by a vehicle.¹⁸
- Safe Routes To School projects often use adult volunteers to ensure children are safe as they walk or bicycle to/from school.

ACCESSIBILITY BENEFITS

- Safe Routes to School projects can improve the accessibility sidewalks and crossings, making them safer for all children, parents and older adults to use.

HEALTH PROMOTION BENEFITS

- Children today are not getting enough physical activity, contributing to preventable health problems such as type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, asthma and heart disease.¹⁹
- Safe Routes To School initiatives help increase children's physical activity in a fun, organized and safe way.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Safe Routes To School programs can increase the number of children walking and bicycling to school, which may reduce the number of cars on the road.
- Reducing traffic at schools can improve the quality of air that children breathe in and around their schools.²⁰
- Children exposed to traffic pollution are more likely to have asthma, permanent lung deficits, and a higher risk of heart and lung problems as adults.²¹

COMMUNITY CONNECTION BENEFITS

- Safe Routes To School projects connect parents, neighbors, children and volunteers to support healthy behaviors.

ECONOMIC GROWTH BENEFITS

- Neighborhoods can be more enticing for new homebuyers when local children can walk safely to school.
- Property values may actually increase for homes in walkable neighborhoods.²²
- Safe Routes To School projects can foster the growth of communities when community members come together to support improvements that benefit their town and the future of their children.
- New businesses can be attracted to areas where community members are dedicated to health and innovative ways to create a connected culture.¹⁹



Endnotes



¹ Healthy America – The Obesity Index: The Cost of Obesity by State

<http://healthy-america.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Obesity-Index-The-Cost-of-Obesity-by-State.pdf>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – The Power of Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/pdf/2009-Power-of-Prevention.pdf>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2014/p0501-preventable-deaths.html>

⁴ Public Health Law Center – Active Living

<http://publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/active-living>

⁵ Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/zip-code-better-predictor-of-health-than-genetic-code>

⁶ Robert J. Wood Foundation – A New Way to Talk About the Social Determinants of Health

<http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2010/rwjf63023>

⁷ USDA Economic Research Service – The Role of Food Hubs in Local Food Marketing

<http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/sr73.pdf>

⁸ Gardeners in Community Development – Benefits of Community Gardening

<http://www.gardendallas.org/benefits.htm>

⁹ The World of Walking and Running - Importance of Walking: Benefits, Statistics, Case Studies, and Goals

<http://campus.albion.edu/walkingandrunning/2011/11/17/importance-of-walking-benefits-statistics-case-studies-and-goals/>

¹⁰ Outdoor Foundation, Outdoor Participation Report 2014

<http://www.outdoorfoundation.org/pdf/ResearchParticipation2014.pdf>

¹¹ American Trails

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/economic-benefits-trails-macdonald.html>

¹² Adventure Cycling Association

<https://www.adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/us-bicycle-route-system/benefits-and-building-support/economic-impact/>

¹³ WalkBikeNC

http://www.walkbikenc.com/environment_post/benefits

¹⁴ Public Health Law Center

<http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/active-living/complete-streets/resources>

¹⁵ National Complete Streets Coalition: Smart Growth America

<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/changing-policy/policy-elements>

Endnotes (cont.)

¹⁶ National Recreation and Park Association – Active Transportation and Parks and Recreation
http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications_and_Research/%20Research/ActiveTransportation_Final.HIGH.pdf

¹⁷ Kansas Department of Transportation – Safe Routes to School
https://www.ksdot.org/bureaus/burTrafficEng/sztoolbox/Safe_Routes_to_School.asp

¹⁸ Safe Routes Partnership – Quick Facts and Stats: Safety
www.SafeRoutesPartnership.org

¹⁹ National Center for Safe Routes to School – Safe Routes to School Guide, Introduction to Safe Routes to School: the Health, Safety and Transportation Nexus
http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/pdf/SRTS-Guide_Introduction.pdf

²⁰ Safe Routes Partnership – Quick Facts and Stats: Bus Transportation Costs
<http://saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/101/facts>

²¹ Safe Routes Partnership – Quick Facts and Stats: Environment
<http://saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/101/facts>

²² ChangeLab Solutions – Move This Way: Making Neighborhoods More Walkable and Bikeable
http://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/MoveThisWay_FINAL-20130905.pdf





Kansas Health Foundation

In partnership with:

