

PHYLLIS L. MURDOCK, DIRECTOR
MARK A. LUNDBERG, M.D., M.P.H., HEALTH OFFICER

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ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

BUTTE
COUNTY
DEC 12 2008
DEVELOPMENT
SERVICES

December 5, 2008

Tim Snellings, Director
Department of Development Services
7 County Center Drive
Oroville, CA 95965

Re: General Plan and Public Health

Dear Tim,

The Butte County Department of Public Health greatly appreciates the opportunity to participate in the creation of the Butte County General Plan 2030. It is increasingly recognized that the decisions and planning for how our communities grow and develop have a significant impact on our health and wellbeing. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) states that... "the interaction between people and their environment, natural as well as human-made, continues to emerge as a major issue concerning public health."

There are numerous important public health concerns that are impacted by decisions about zoning, development, and transportation. A partial list of these concerns would include: traffic safety, air pollution, water quality and quantity, obesity and chronic disease, physical activity, crime and violence, social capital, elder health and mobility, mental health, and health disparities.

Consider the issue of obesity. It is a major public health concern that has serious impacts and children and adults. We believe that decisions about zoning, development, and transportation will make a significant difference in obesity rates in Butte County.

Obesity is approaching epidemic proportions. Medical experts agree that obesity increases the risk for a number of health hazards, including heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, some cancers and depression. The economic impact of obesity in terms of chronic disease risk factors reaches \$21.68 billion a year in California, including \$10.2 billion in medical care, \$11.2 billion in lost employee productivity, and \$338 million in workers' compensation costs. These impacts will be devastating if left unchecked. The problem of obesity is particularly acute among population groups in low income and

underserved communities. These groups generally have less access to nutritious and healthful foods and fewer opportunities for physical activity.

Butte County statistics give reason for concern. 2006 statistics show that one in five low income Butte County children age 5-19 are obese. An additional 18% are overweight, and are considered at risk for obesity in adulthood. Physical fitness statistics from Butte County public schools for 2006/07 show that 27.8% of Butte County 9th graders do not meet fitness criteria for aerobic capacity. The percentages are even higher for 5th and 7th graders at 39.8% and 37.1% respectively. School nurses in Butte County are alarmed at the number of students who are diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes in their elementary years, a disease that used to afflict only adults. It is frightening to think of what the future may hold for our communities when these children face diabetic complications of blindness, limb loss, and renal failure in their early to mid adulthood.

One of the most important contributing factors in the obesity crisis is our country's decreasing physical activity rates. Land use and transportation patterns have a strong influence on people's lifestyles and in promoting healthy communities and physical activity. Land use patterns and housing types that provide walk able access to daily needs, conveniences, and employment in a safe, inviting environment create the underpinnings for increased physical activity. Safe, convenient, and connected walking paths, trails and bikeways, and neighborhood-based park and recreational options promote physical activity and exercise. Evidence has shown that sprawling development has been associated with decreasing rates of walking, increased hypertension and increased obesity. Physical activity and exercise has many additional benefits. It is associated with a decrease in cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, breast cancer, and colon cancer. It is associated with an increased life span and improved mental status and mood.

Another important contributing factor in the obesity crisis is availability of nutritious foods. Here we also believe that the General Plan can play an important role particularly in the encouragement of farmers markets throughout the County.

Below are some possible goals, policies, and recommended actions to consider for new development within Butte County:

GOAL

Create a physical infrastructure in our communities that helps prevent and reduce obesity by maximizing access to opportunities for physical activity and nutritious foods.

Policy

Promote opportunities for physical activity such as walking and biking, and encourage patterns of new development that promote physical activity and discourage automobile dependency.

Recommended Action

Adopt zoning codes and development standards that require the creation of a network of pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths, as well as parks and open space, in all newly developed neighborhoods.

Recommended Action

Adopt zoning codes and development standards that ensure adequate lighting and shade for newly developed streets, sidewalks, bike paths, parks, and recreation facilities to promote their use.

Recommended Action

Implement traffic calming measures to reduce traffic speed and ensure pedestrian and bicyclist safety in all newly developed neighborhoods. Assure that projects include safe routes to school, including depressed curbs that act as ramps for people with disabilities, raised street crossings, voice/visual clues at crosswalks.

Policy

Encourage farmers' markets and patterns of development that provide ready access to healthful and nutritious local foods.

Recommended Action

Adopt zoning codes that encourage strategic setting of farmers' markets, local produce stands and other opportunities for access to local nutritious foods.

GOAL

Create communities where there is a sense of well being; communities where families and neighbors can socialize, interact, and play.

Policy

Encourage connectivity and a sense of community in all newly developed neighborhoods.

Recommended Action

Consider safety concerns like adequate lighting and crosswalks. Parks, community centers, or lawn areas could be viewed as a gathering area for a community. Assure that residential developments are built with plans to access food, retail, and schools within safe walking/biking distance of residential developments.

GOAL

Create a General Plan that can change to meet new and emerging health challenges.

Policy

Ensure that the Butte County General Plan 2030 is kept up to date to address the emerging health and safety needs of Butte County's citizens.

Recommended Action

County Development Services staff will report back to the County Board of Supervisors regularly with recommendations on ways that the county may amend the general plan to address newly emerging public health concerns.

Recommended Action

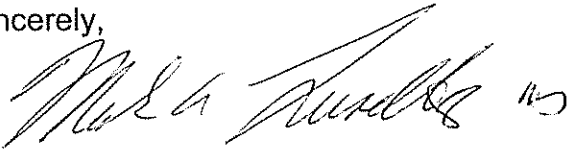
Create indicators of successful, healthful development and measure these indicators regularly.

Recommended Action

Department of Development Services will meet regularly with the Department of Public Health to review emerging health issues that may be impacted by development planning.

Finally, we thank you again for allowing the Butte County Department of Public Health to participate in the creation of the General Plan 2030. We look forward to our work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark A. Lundberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small mark at the end that could be a flourish or a date.

Mark A. Lundberg, M.D., M.P.H.
Health Officer, Butte County Public Health Department

Cc: Phyllis Murdock, Director of Public Health

Reference List

- (1) General Plans and Zoning: A Toolkit on Land Use and Health- Planning for Healthy Places in partnership with the California Department of Health Services through the *California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families*.
- (2) Designed for Disease: The Link Between Local Food Environments and Obesity and Diabetes- California Center for Public Health Advocacy
- (3) Reaching For a Healthier Life- Facts on Socioeconomic Status and Health in the U.S. – Nancy Adler
- (4) Captive Kids: Selling Obesity at Schools – California Project Lean
- (5) Nutrition and Physical Activity in California- The Landscape of Funding and the Role of State and Local Health Departments- Healthy Eating and Active Communities
- (6) Center for Disease Control- Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System
- (7) California Department of Education Physical Fitness Reports