

12 HEALTHY DES MOINES ELEMENT

12-01 GOALS

12-01-01. Participate in the Healthy Highline Communities Coalition to coordinate with surrounding communities to improve access to physical activity and healthy foods, and facilitate the long-term implementation of the Healthy Des Moines Initiative.

12-01-02. Develop public, private and non-profit partnerships to support the goals of and sustain the Healthy Des Moines Initiative.

12-02 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In the past decade, there has been an overall increase of obesity and chronic diseases in King County. Data show that people living in South King County bear a disproportionate burden of poor health and poverty compared to other parts of the County.¹

In 2010, the City of Des Moines partnered with Public Health Seattle and King County; the cities of Burien, SeaTac and Normandy Park; and the Highline School District, to form the Healthy Highline Communities Coalition (HHCC). The HHCC is working to coordinate healthy resources available in our communities and to help our citizens take the necessary steps to become healthier by consuming more nutritious foods and engaging in more physical activity.

12-02-02 Des Moines' Healthy Community Gaps

Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity are primary risk factors for obesity and chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. While people's health is influenced by personal decisions, it is also shaped by how our community is designed and built, such as land use, the transportation systems, and the location of parks, recreation facilities, public buildings, and other services. National research has shown that in communities where healthy food options like fresh fruits and vegetables are available, residents have better diets and lower rates of obesity and diet-related chronic disease. Similarly, people tend to be more active when they can easily access key destinations such as parks, schools, workplaces, and shops by walking and biking.

Assessment data show that Des Moines has an “unbalanced food environment” – that is, there are far more opportunities to buy junk food and fast food than “healthy food.” From a public health perspective, this means that Des Moines residents have a higher exposure to unhealthy foods than to nutritious foods.² In addition, there are low income areas that are not within reasonable walking distance (i.e., > one-half mile) of a grocery store or market that provides fresh food.

¹Public Health – Seattle & King County website, Burien/Des Moines Health Planning Area data and maps available at: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/partnerships/cppw/kcprofile.aspx> (last accessed 8/22/11)

² Martin, Kara E., et al., *The Food Landscape in Des Moines, Washington*. September 2011.

A current conditions assessment for Safe Routes to School near Des Moines' elementary schools (Midway, Des Moines, North Hill, Woodmont, and Parkside) shows that some improvements along the roadside, such as sidewalks or even widened shoulders are needed to make it easier and more comfortable for children and their families to safely walk and bike to school.³

12-02-03 Bridging the Gaps through Policy, Systems and Environment Changes

The City of Des Moines' policies relating to land use, food access and the transportation system have a strong influence on people's lifestyles and in promoting a healthy community. Goals, policies and strategies within the Healthy Des Moines Element as well as those within Chapter 2 – Land Use Element, Chapter 3 – Transportation Element, and Chapter 6 – Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element provide a framework and identify the actions for making the necessary changes to build a healthy, vibrant Des Moines that fosters an environment for healthy eating and active living within our community.

12-03 POLICIES

12-03-01 Support policy, systems, and environmental changes that result in increased access to healthy foods, with an emphasis on school-age children.

12-03-02 Provide healthy food and beverages in City-sponsored meetings and programs and at City facilities to promote balanced food choices.

12-03-03 Continue to support the Des Moines Food Bank, Farmers Market and other organizations that help provide food assistance to low-income residents so that all families, seniors, schools, and community-based organizations are able to access, purchase, and increase intake of fresh fruits, vegetables, and other non-processed food.

12-04 STRATEGIES

12-04-01 Adopt a Healthy Food Resolution and create a long-term action plan.

12-04-02 Implement nutritional standards and healthy food procurement policies in City owned and operated facilities and across departments.

³ SvR Design Company and Alta Planning and Design, *Safe Routes to School Project Lists/Communities Putting Prevention to Work* August 2011.