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# Building Healthy Communities



by

**Linda Helland, Health Educator**  
**Mendocino County Department of Public Health**  
For the  
**Healthy Lifestyles Action Team of the**  
**Mendocino County Public Health Advisory Board**



oranges apricots celery



golfing swimming dancing



grapes broccoli

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## The Problem:



- Average 11-year old boy today is 11 pounds heavier than in 1973
  - More than 2/3 of adults are overweight or obese
  - Almost 40% of Mendocino County children are overweight or obese
- 1999-2000 NHANES, CA Dept. of Health Services. Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System 2002.





## The Problem:

### For children born since the year 2000:

- Girls have a 38% lifetime risk of diabetes
- Boys have a 1 in 3 lifetime risk of diabetes
- **Half** of all children of color will develop diabetes



-CDC, V. Narayan et al: JAMA  
8 Oct 2003



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## The Problem:

In 2000, poor diet and physical inactivity caused about 310,000 deaths in the US, second only to tobacco.



Today, it is likely the number one preventable killer of Americans. Children born today may be the first generation in modern history to live shorter lives than their parents.

—Dr. Richard Jackson, former CA State Health Officer, Ali Mokdad, et al, JAMA 2004

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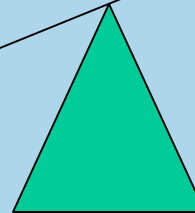
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Basically it's a problem of more calories consumed than burned

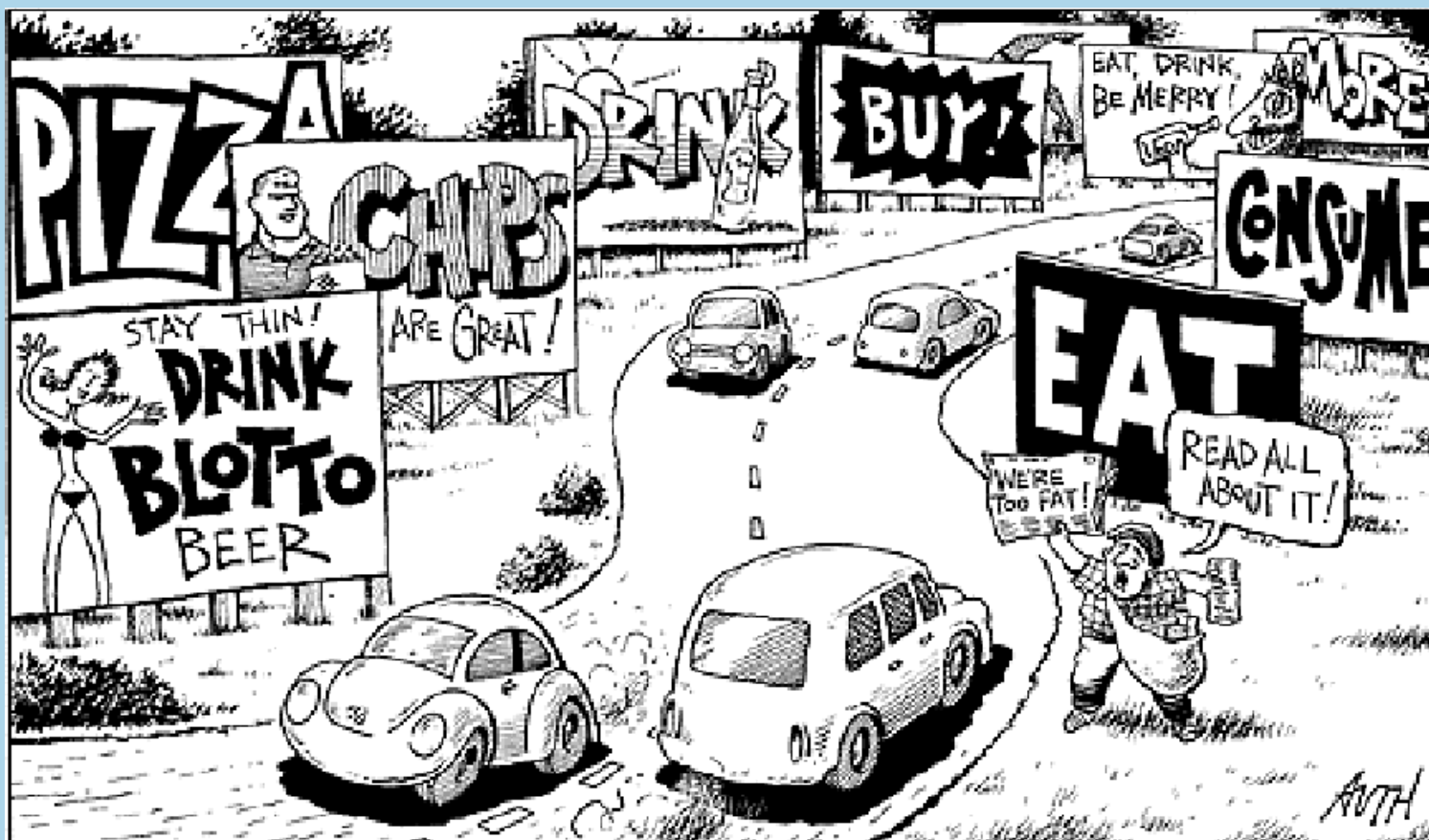






## Why has this happened in the last 20 years?

It's not because we don't have enough willpower.  
It's because our society makes it easy to eat junk  
food and be sedentary.





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## Why?

In the US, the average household makes 12 trips a day. Nearly 25% of all trips are less than 1 mile, but more than 75% of these short trips are made by automobile.



30% of morning commute traffic is parents taking kids to school.

-S. A. Ham, unpublished calculations from the 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey, US Department of Transportation, Volpe Research Center, Cambridge, MA, 1998.



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## Why?

Only 10 percent of all trips to school are made by bicycling or walking – a 40% drop from the 1980 rate.



-Local Government Commission





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## Why?

\$11 billion is spent yearly advertising junk food and alcohol.



Almost 1/2 of Americans' food dollars are spent at restaurants, often on fast food.

-Marion Nestle, Food Politics



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## Why?

### **An increase in screen time:**

the average American watches 4 hours of TV a day.

That's 2 months nonstop TV watching a year, or 9 years in the life of a 65 year old .

In four hours of Sat. morning cartoons, a child will see 202 ads for junk food.



## Why?

Folks are working harder and harder for lower wages and less job security.

Medieval Peasants  
**WORKED LESS**  
Than you do!



•Over the past twenty years Americans' working hours have increased by 163 hours a year - the equivalent of working one month extra every year! – Juliet Schor, *The Overworked American*

Working so hard makes it a challenge to go home and cook a healthy meal from scratch – especially for single parents.



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## Why?

Industrial agriculture and crop subsidies make processed, low-nutrition foods shipped from thousands of miles away cheaper than produce from local farmers.



High fructose corn syrup and hydrogenated vegetable oils—products that did not even exist a few generations ago but now are hard to avoid—have proliferated thanks to artificially cheap corn and soybeans.



## Why? We've supersized!

- Increased caloric intake by 220 calories from 1970 to 1990
- Increased portion sizes



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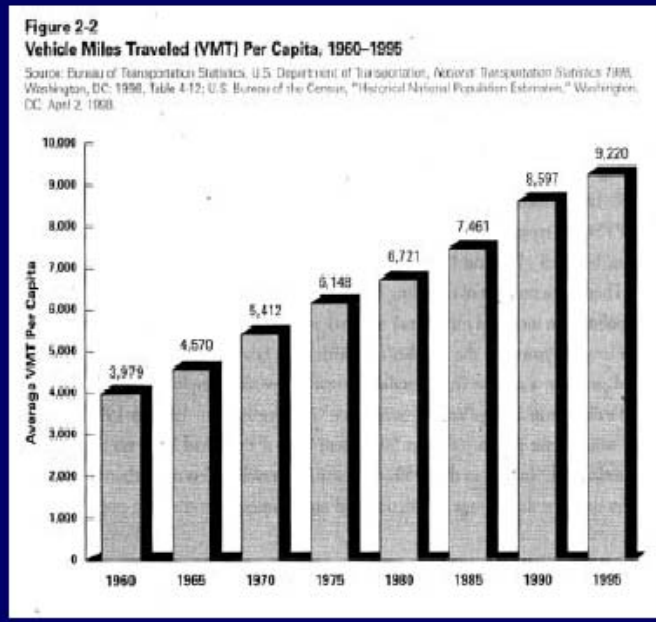


# Why?

We've super-size our communities...



our vehicles...and our miles traveled.



Miles per Capita: 1960 to 1995

From 4000 to 9200  
VMT per person

from Dr. Richard Jackson, former CA State Health Officer

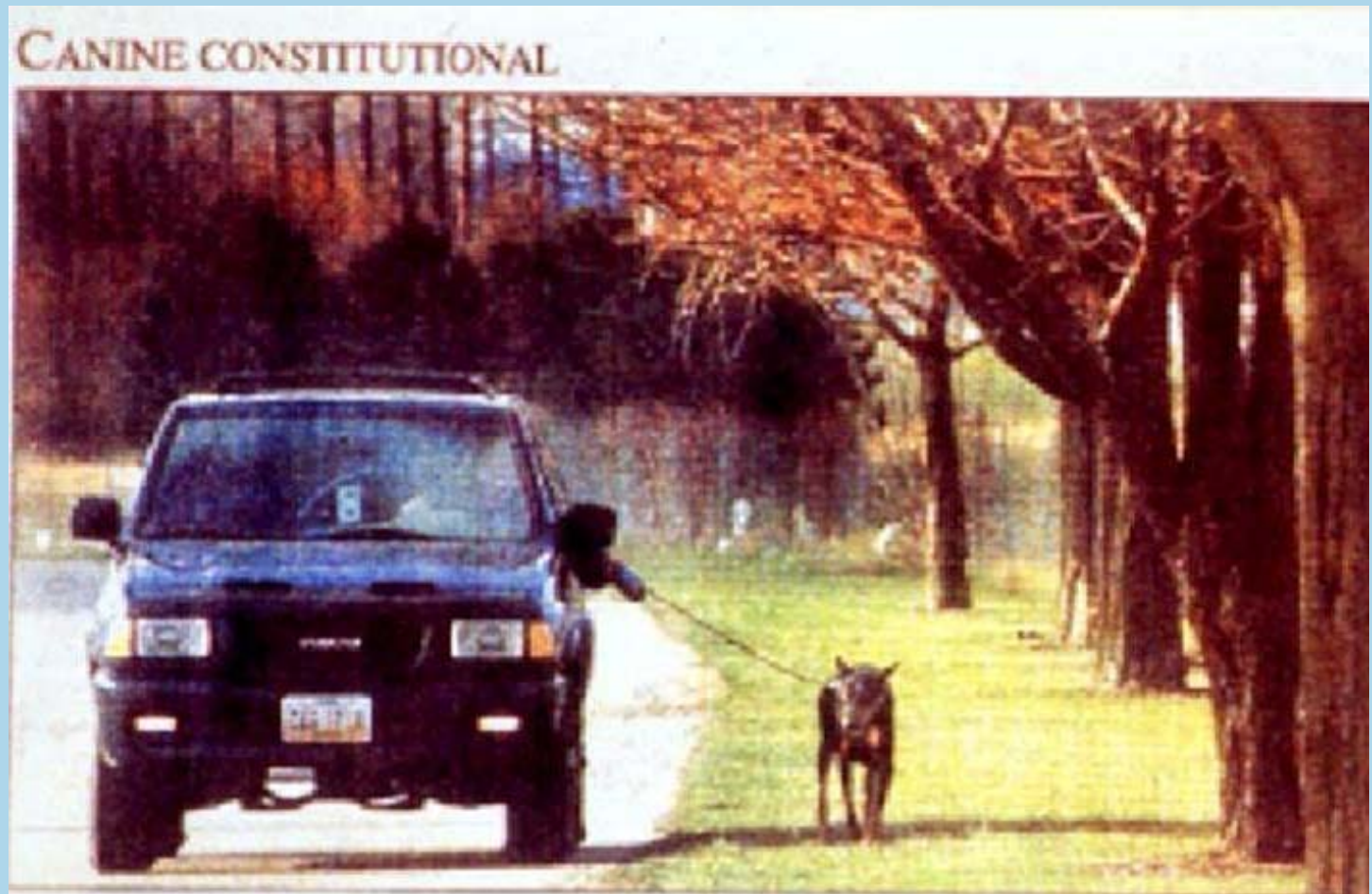


  
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# Why?



We've engineered the daily activity out of our lives.



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## What are the economic costs?

In 2005, inactivity, obesity and overweight cost California \$28 billion in direct and indirect medical care, workers compensation and lost productivity.



*-The Economic Costs of Physical Inactivity, Obesity and Overweight in California Adults: Health Care, Workers' Compensation, and Lost Productivity. California Dept. of Health Services, April 2005*





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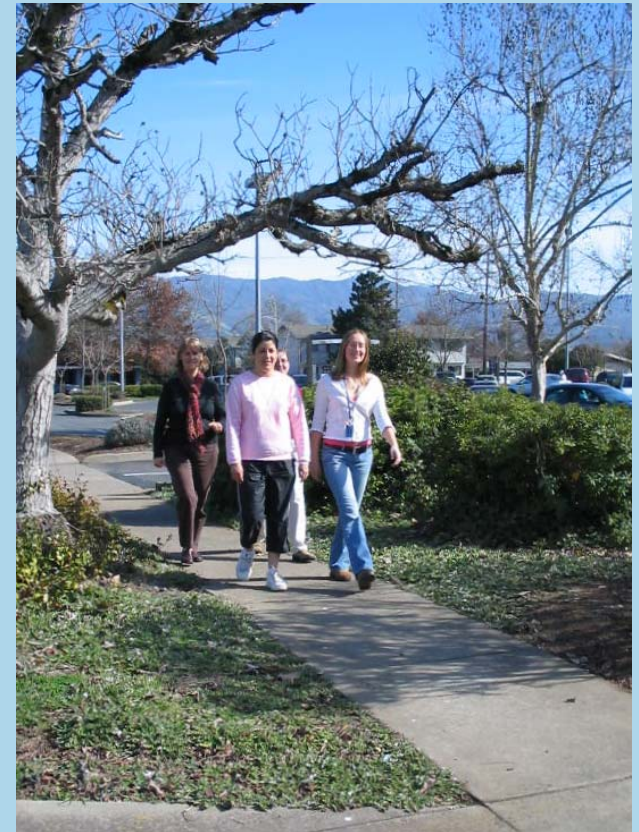
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## So Let's Get Moving

### Surgeon General's 1996 Physical Activity Recommendation

- 30 minutes of activity per day (60 for children)
- Can be broken up
- Reduces risk for obesity, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, depression, some forms of cancer
- Burns about 15,600 calories/year, or enough to lose 4 ½ pounds!





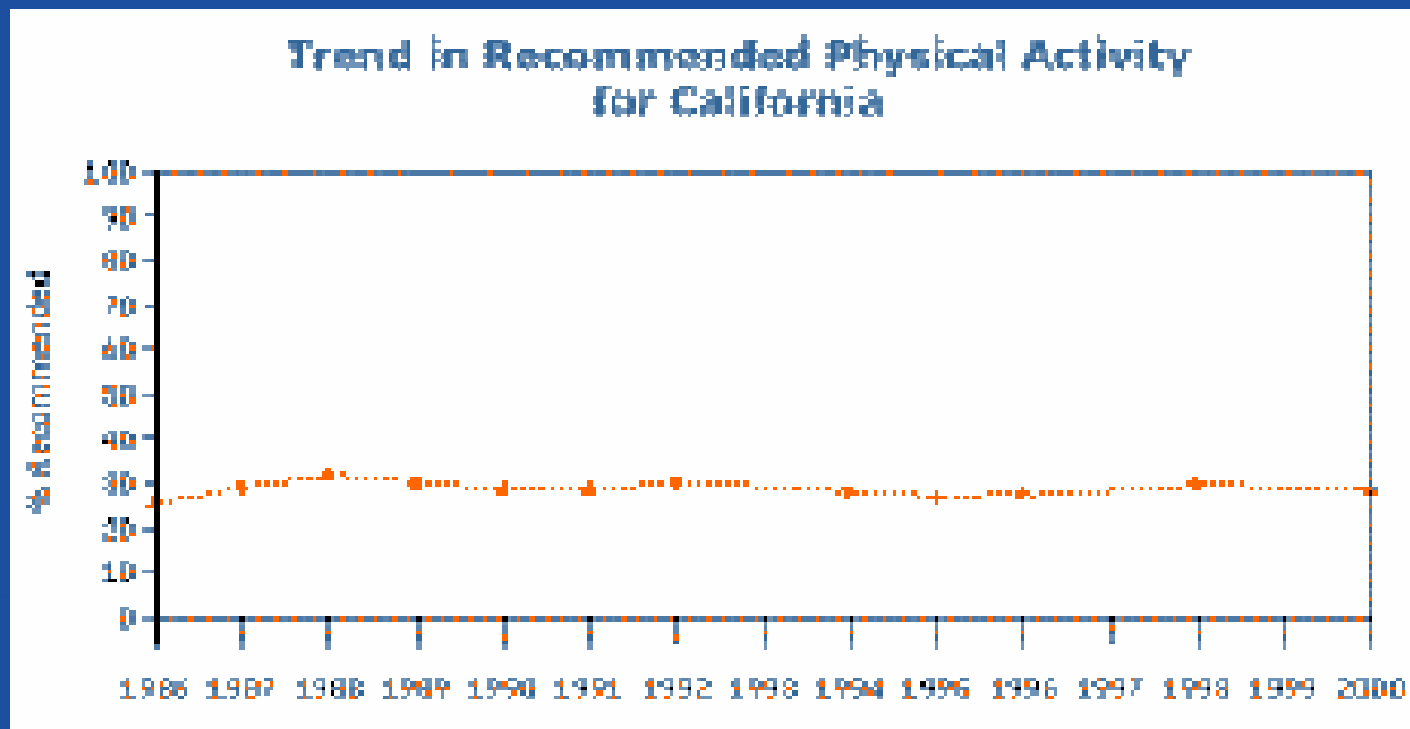


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We health educators have been telling people to exercise for decades now. What changes have we seen?

## Promoting exercise has not worked



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

None. Californians' exercise rates have remained the same since the 1980s.

-Slide courtesy of Drs. Richard Jackson and Alex Kelter



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## So What Solutions Work?

- street-scale urban design and land use changes, and community-scale urban design/land use changes lead to an increase in physical activity, and
- community-wide campaigns, school-based PE, and enhanced access (to sidewalks, bike trails, etc) with outreach lead to more physical activity.
- There is **insufficient evidence** to conclude that classroom-based health education leads to an increase in physical activity.

- Stephen Hooker, PhD, Director of Prevention Research Center, Arnold School of Public Health, University of S. Carolina presented at California Center for Physical Activity Conference: Creating Opportunities for Everyday Physical Activity, Sacramento, CA, Nov, 2004



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## We want to walk!

More than 1/2 of Americans say that their communities lack shops and restaurants within walking distance, and 1/3 of the public sees changing to less drive-necessary communities as the answer to traffic and some health problems.

- Belden Russonello & Stewart  
October 2002, cited by the  
Surface Transportation Policy  
Project







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## Economic Benefits of Pedestrian-Oriented Communities

### Property values rise:

- Homebuyers pay a \$20,000 premium for homes in compact, pedestrian-friendly communities, compared to similar houses in surrounding areas.
- A 5-10 mph reduction in traffic speeds can increase adjacent residential property values by roughly 20%.



*-Valuing the New Urbanism: The Impact of the New Urbanism on Prices of Single-Family Homes, Mark J. Eppli and Charles C. Tu, 1999, Urban Land Institute, Evaluating Traffic Claming Benefits, Costs and Equity Impacts, Todd Litman, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 1999*



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## Walkability Promotes Retail Sales

When walking is safe and appealing, people are more likely to shop at the stores that line the street.



For example, when Lodi gave itself a \$4.5 million pedestrian-oriented overhaul, 60 new businesses sprang up, the vacancy rate dropped from 18 to 6%, and the downtown saw a 30% increase in sales tax revenues.



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## Walkable Towns Draw Tourists

Think of a thriving tourist destination – San Francisco, Carmel, Paris, Amsterdam, New York, Yosemite – and you’ll conjure up a pedestrian-friendly place.







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## Walkable Communities Save Money

A 10% improvement in rates of physical activity and healthy weight over 5 years could save California \$13 billion in health care, workers' compensation and productivity.



*-The Economic Costs of Physical Inactivity, Obesity and Overweight in California Adults: Health Care, Workers' Compensation, and Lost Productivity. California Dept. of Health Services, April 2005*



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## Walking Saves on Consumer Transport Costs

Households in automobile-dependent communities devote 50% more resources to transportation than households in pedestrian-friendly communities.

-Barbara McCann, *Driven to Spend; The Impact of Sprawl on Household Transportation Expenses*, Surface Transportation Policy Project, 2000





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## Mixed Use Development Promotes Physical Activity, Community and Public Safety

When shops, schools and other services are located close to housing, people walk there, getting to know each other and putting more “eyes on the street” to deter crime.



Cities and counties are adopting “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” or “SafeScape” ordinances requiring site plan reviews with crime prevention, safety and community in mind.

See <http://www.ncpc.org> for more information on CPTED

Photo from Paul Zykofsky, Director, Land Use/Trans. Programs, Local Government Commission





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## We Know How to Get There

The land-use patterns and changes that make a community pedestrian-friendly are well-documented.



It just requires organization, foresight and political will to implement them.



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## Safe streets are appealing for walkers:

- Slow traffic
- Good Sidewalks
- Safe intersections
- Interconnected networks of streets with short blocks



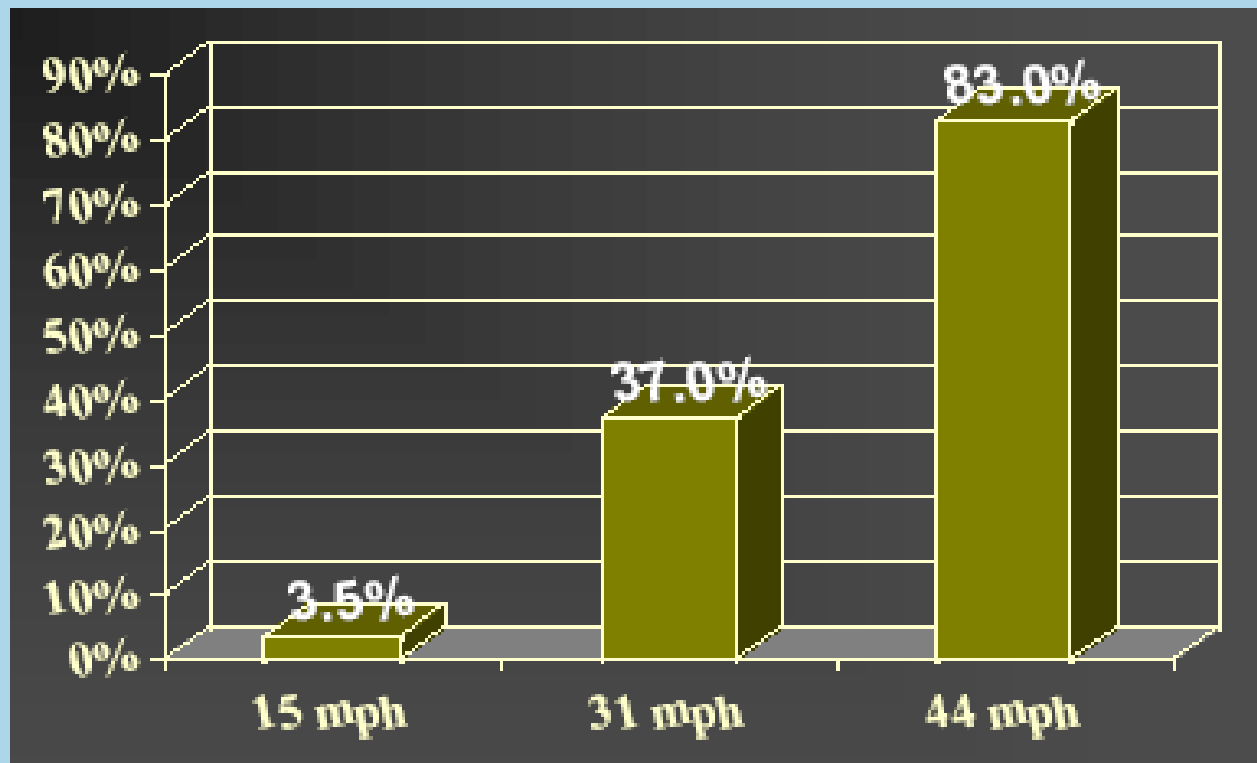


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# What Environmental Changes Promote Walking?

Slower streets are safe streets:



The probability of a fatal injury increases dramatically when an auto hits a pedestrian at higher speeds. -Paul Zykofsky, Director, Land Use/Transportation Programs, Local Government Commission





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## Connectivity: Direct Ways to Get There



Traditional neighborhoods promote walking & biking with sidewalks and interconnected networks of streets.

Conventional suburban development prizes cul de sacs but doesn't provide incentive to walk or bike.



People want the most direct route, so they need short blocks and many intersections.



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## Higher Density Housing = Healthier Communities

People living in dense communities weigh an average of 6 pounds less than those living in sprawling communities.

-**"Relationship Between Urban Sprawl and Physical Activity, Obesity, and Morbidity"**, Sept 2003 *American Journal of Health Promotion*: Reid Ewing et al.



Downtown Ukiah has a new high density, mixed-use apartment complex next to businesses.





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## Mixed Use Development

When people live in walking distance to shops, they are more likely to focus their spending on local business rather than driving to distant retail outlets.



Businesses thrive when nearby housing density is at least 7 units per acre, providing a steady stream of consumers.

-Don Chen, Executive Director, Smart Growth America





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## Infill Development leads to Housing Density

Infill development is the process of developing vacant or under-used parcels within existing town areas that are already largely developed.



Infill development helps preserve open space and agricultural land, and saves on road construction, and sewer and water lines.



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## Human Scale, Local Businesses

People drive to big box stores with their sprawling parking lots, and are more willing to walk to small stores located in downtowns.





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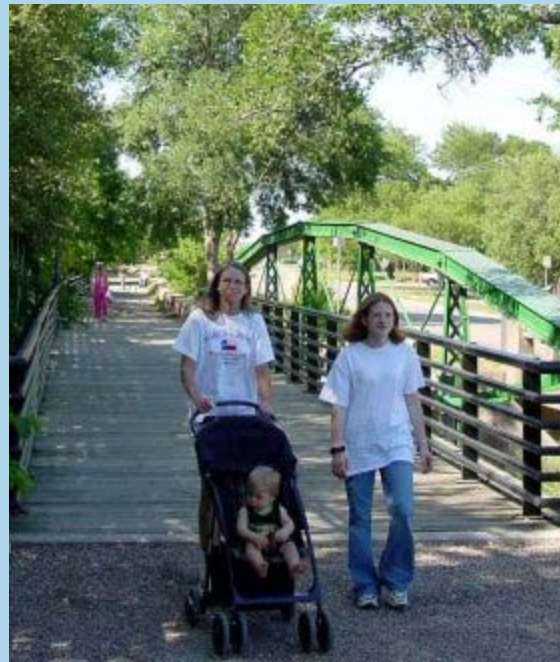


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# Development Standards for Recreation

We need codes requiring pocket parks in neighborhoods...



and play areas, open space, trails and short blocks in new developments.

Proximity to greenways, rivers, and trails can increase property value by up to 32%.

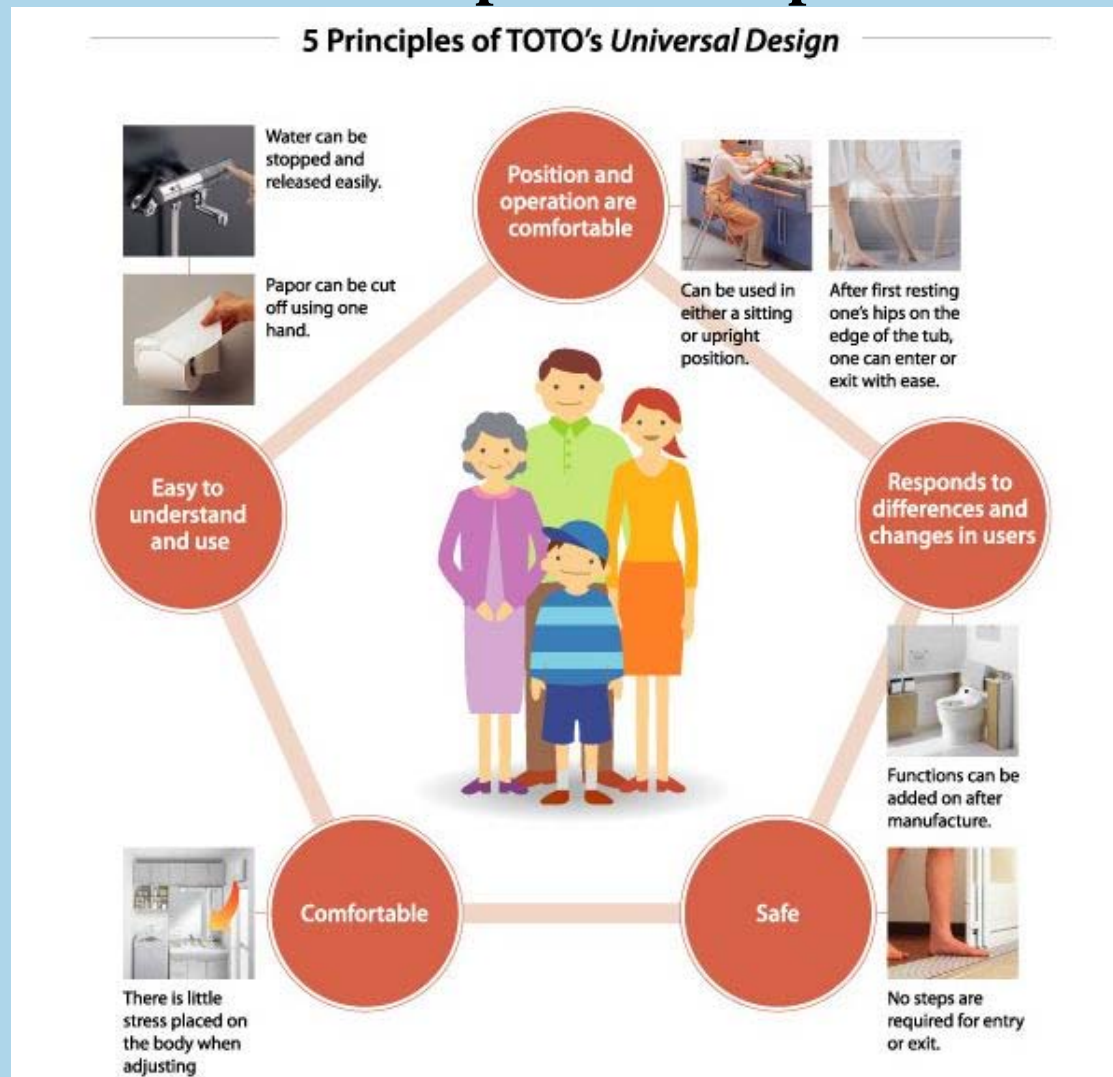
-Correll, Lillydahl, and Singell, 1978, from Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors, available at [http://www.nps.gov/pwro/rtca/econ\\_index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/pwro/rtca/econ_index.htm)





## Universal Design:

The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.





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## Green Building Standards

Air quality is usually worse inside buildings than outside, due to commonly used toxic building materials.

The US Green Building Council has developed LEED Building Standards: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, to certify homes, structures, and entire neighborhoods as environmentally sustainable and energy efficient.



Minimal increases in upfront costs of 0-2% to support green design will result in life cycle savings of 20% of total construction costs.

- California's Sustainable Building Task Force



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## Low income housing: Ensuring that nice neighborhoods aren't only for the wealthy

Income is the number one determinant of health status.

Communities are healthier and safer when low-income housing is dispersed with middle and higher-income housing, rather than being clustered apart.







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## The Healthy Lifestyles Action Team urges the implementation of plans and zoning codes that promote

- Slow, interconnected, pedestrian-friendly, bike-friendly streets to get people out of their cars
- A mix of housing types, especially very low-income housing interspersed with housing for higher income levels
- Mixed-use development, so residents can walk or bike to school, work, shopping, etc.
- Compact infill development that results in dense housing to support local business and preserve open space and agricultural land.
- Zoning and tax incentives for farmers' markets, farm stands and supermarkets to increase access to fruits and vegetables.

Changing the built environment – the physical structure that defines our lives – can improve not only the health of Americans, but can also bolster our local economy.



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## Join the Healthy Lifestyles Action Team!

We meet once a month at the Public Health Department in Ukiah to coordinate action on these issues.

Come to the meetings or just get on the email list.

Contact:

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472-2727

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