

# Promoting Health & Wellness:

## *A Memorandum of Understanding Among Metro Denver's Cities and Counties*

WHEREAS, Colorado's statistically low obesity and high physical activity rates position our citizens among the nation's most fit, and

WHEREAS, our metro Denver economy benefits from our healthy and physically active populace in that our citizens are more energetic and productive employees and place fewer demands on the healthcare system, and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there has been a dramatic increase in obesity in the United States during the past 20 years. In 2006, only four states had a prevalence of obesity less than 20%, and

WHEREAS, obesity may soon supplant smoking as the number one cause of preventable death in the United States, and

WHEREAS, although our state has enjoyed one of the lowest obesity rates in the nation, Colorado's trends are heading in the wrong direction as they mirror the troubling national trend of declining physical activity and increasing rates of overweight and obesity, and

WHEREAS, if current trends continue, by 2020, 47% of Coloradans will be overweight, 29% obese, and only 24% will be at a healthy weight, and

WHEREAS, beyond the negative impact on quality of life and productivity, obesity is linked to chronic, yet preventable, diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, hypertension and cancer, and

WHEREAS, as elected officials we shape the communities that shape our lives, and

WHEREAS, research shows the positive link between community design and increased physical activity in that even those who dislike being active are more active when they live in compact, walkable areas, as are children that live close to parks and to their school, and

WHEREAS, a critical step towards a healthy and active populace is making walking and cycling safe within our communities by adopting appropriate street standards for transportation infrastructure to be used in new developments and in street reconstruction, and

WHEREAS, our decisions also impact the ease and safety with which our residents can walk or bicycle to and from school, work, the local grocery store, and to other daily activities and recreation, and

WHEREAS, our land use decisions impact the location, availability, and accessibility of healthy foods and we can improve our citizens' access to healthy foods by working proactively to site stores, markets, gardens and farms within our communities, and

WHEREAS, we recognize that many locally grown foods place fewer demands on the natural environment and have significant economic benefits to Colorado's local economies, and

WHEREAS, we wield great influence with the employers in our community who can work with us as partners, taking their own steps to make the work environment healthier for employees, and

WHEREAS, we are partners with our school districts in caring for our greatest legacy: the children in our communities, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the undersigned Mayors and Boards of County Commissioners (hereinafter referred to as "we") agree to act in a strategic and concerted effort to impede and reverse these negative trends in Colorado by promoting policies and programs and by pursuing environmental changes that encourage healthy eating and promote active living. To further these goals we intend to take voluntary actions, individually and collectively. Such actions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

**IMPLEMENTING OR PARTICIPATING IN PROGRAMS OR PROJECTS THAT PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING & ACTIVE LIVING BY:**

- a. Hosting a healthy community forum or designating a citizen advisory committee to identify local efforts to advance healthy eating and active living;
- b. Cosponsoring or being involved in active living events such as family fun runs and walks, periodically closing certain streets or parks to motorized vehicles, and other fitness or outdoor recreation activities;
- c. Conducting and implementing a food needs assessment with citizens and planning staff to identify areas in our communities currently underserved by markets and stores that offer healthy fresh produce and other foods;
- d. Promoting citizen participation in community based health awareness and educational screenings, such as the 9HealthFair;
- e. Participating in community based healthy eating and active living programs such as "LiveWell," "America on the Move" and "Fit for Colorado";
- f. Mapping out and promoting healthy eating and active living resources and events, including national health awareness programs, such as National Fruit and Vegetable Month, in our community and making this information available to citizens through newsletters, maps, online resources, etc.;
- g. Raising awareness of healthy eating among lower income and vulnerable populations, who are at higher risk for obesity and related chronic diseases, and underscore that food stamp and assistance programs are available to help meet their basic nutritional needs;
- h. Implementing elements of a worksite wellness program for our employees, such as;

- ❖ *Offering a weight loss and weight management support through our healthcare provider and/or a consultant;*
- ❖ *Participating in the Wellness Councils of America’s “Healthy Workplace Awards Initiative” program;*
- ❖ *Providing access to smoking cessation programs;*
- ❖ *Developing and strongly promoting an annual Health Risk Assessment and/or wellness assessment program for employees;*
- ❖ *Promoting walking and cycling as commuting options and break-time activities to our employees and when practical providing supportive facilities such as access to recreation centers, lockers, showers and bike racks;*
- ❖ *Supporting a pedometer or fitness challenge among government departments or staff with incentives for participation such as massages, water bottles, new bike helmets, t-shirts, etc.*

**ADOPTING POLICIES THAT PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING & ACTIVE LIVING BY:**

- a. Establishing healthy meeting guidelines that promote healthy and portion controlled fare at government meetings and promoting a “stand and move” time as a break or while conducting business during meetings more than 1.5 hours;
- b. Instituting a policy that vending machines on city property must contain a significant percentage of healthy food options and, when practical, that these selections be labeled as “healthy” and promoted at eye-level;
- c. Encouraging consumption of fresh, local, healthy foods in government buildings for example by posting information about healthy eating or by working with local producers to provide fresh and healthy foods to city employees ;
- d. Supporting efforts by state legislators and school districts to implement policies to ensure that snacks and cafeteria fare meet appropriate nutritional guidelines;
- e. Supporting the Metro Denver Health and Wellness Commission by collaborating on the drafting of letters and adoption of resolutions that support healthy eating and active living legislation at the state and federal levels;
- f. Hosting meetings that engage public health, planning and transportation officials to fostering collaboration and promote information sharing on best practices;
- g. Making access to healthy foods and recreation opportunities community development priorities;
- h. Encouraging the adoption and implementation of land use and/or transportation changes that allow for access of residents at all incomes to grocery stores, farmers markets, corner stores and other sources of fresh, healthy foods; and

- i. Incorporating language in the comprehensive, land use, transportation, and/or parks and recreation plans and regulations that implement policies to promote “active living environments” that enable people of all ages and abilities to obtain physical activity as part of their daily routines.

**CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTIVE OF HEALTHY EATING & ACTIVE LIVING BY:**

- a. Supporting bike-to-work and bike/walk -to-school programs and events;
- b. Working with our parks departments, recreation districts and school districts to co-locate facilities within our communities in order to promote pedestrian and bicycle access;
- c. Working with local schools and school districts to coordinate community use of school gymnasiums, ball fields and exercise facilities;
- d. Creating a community agenda on play and demonstrating our commitment to the healthy development of all children by earning the designation of “Playful City USA;”
- e. Hosting or supporting local farmers markets that improve access to healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables and partnering with the food stamp program;
- f. Working with the planning and parks departments and with community groups to develop and support community gardens, particularly in poorer neighborhoods or those that lack access to fresh produce;
- g. Partnering with coalitions and advocacy groups such as Bicycle Colorado, Colorado Walks, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, AARP, Operation Frontline, Share Our Strength, Colorado Anti-hunger network and others that can provide resources or logistical support for healthy eating and active living efforts;
- h. Working with the Colorado Department of Transportation and with agencies, such as the Regional Transportation District and the Denver Regional Council of Governments, to promote pedestrian and cyclist connections to activity centers and rapid transit and to implement comprehensive complete streets and safe intersection design and redesign standards at both the local and state levels;
- i. Inviting citizens of all ages and members of our planning and transportation staff to join us on a “walkability” and/or “bikeability” audit to identify barriers to walking in our communities, discuss opportunities for positive change and plan next steps;
- j. Partnering with a public health department, university, or nonprofits in conducting a health impact assessment as part of our development review in an effort to develop and implement a healthy foods access plan.

**EXECUTION IN COUNTERPARTS.** This Agreement may be executed in counterparts, each of which shall be effective and which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.