

# Recommendations for Communities and Neighborhoods

It is true that in most cases an individual's health ultimately boils down to the individual choices he or she makes. But, the surrounding environment, values, and culture play a large part in influencing those choices. This is where communities and neighborhoods can collectively begin to play a part and impact the health of its members. An environment and culture that values, promotes, and provides opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating choices will be a healthier, and happier, community.

Here are some tips to help your community or neighborhood establish a culture and environment that values and provides opportunity for movement and healthy eating. Every neighborhood is different and has different needs and resources. Use ideas that fit your community best and change other ideas to better fit your population and area. Better yet, put on your creative thinking caps and create changes of your own

- Create a local environment that is conducive to outdoor activity and exercise. This can often be done by forming neighborhood partnerships, lobbying groups, and coalitions to address the concerns and needs of the community. Many of these tasks could also be done through community mobilization projects which involve the residents themselves. Organize work-bees and event days to tackle projects and to enlist the continued involvement of the community which will also encourage a sense of pride and ownership in their community.
  - Protect, create, and restore physical feature in the environment that encourage physical activity.
    - Playgrounds
    - Wide sidewalks
    - Basketball/Tennis courts
    - Green spaces
  - Research has shown that attractive and safe environments are more frequently used for exercise. Create a more aesthetically pleasing environment and one that is safe for the community to use.
    - Pick-up litter days
    - Replace graffiti covered surfaces with murals by local talent
    - Use a local gardening club or group of seniors to help teach kids about gardening while creating more green areas and features in the environment
    - Organize community watch groups
- Encourage and provide opportunities for activity in the community
  - Organize community sports leagues and teams for all ages
    - Roller hockey
    - Softball

- Basketball
  - Ultimate Frisbee
- Routinely schedule events that are centered around activity
  - Monthly supervised and guided walks, skates, or rides
  - Organize a walk night - Choose one night of the week to walk through/around your neighborhood. Create flyers and notify all in your vicinity of the new night and the new opportunity to walk and talk and get healthier
  - Block party game nights
    - Musical chairs
    - Ping Pong
    - Scavenger hunts
    - Twister
    - Dance Revolution
- Encourage and provide chances for healthier eating by area residents
  - Lobby and encourage grocery stores to open a branch near the neighborhood
  - Host baking and cooking competitions as one component of a block party or other community event that feature healthy recipes
  - Serve only healthy foods at community meetings and events
  - Set aside an area in the community for garden plots. Utilize a local gardening club to teach residents about growing their own fruits and vegetables
  - Include information about local farmers markets, healthy restaurants, and healthy recipes in community newsletters

Remember, a community that values and provides healthy alternatives can go a long way toward improving the health of its citizens!