Health, Wellness, and Safety

WHAT ARE THE CITY'S CURRENT VALUES?

Health, wellness, and safety are not simply factors attributed to individuals within our community, but they are also topics that help to shape the overall community's appeal, viability, productivity, and economic stability. *City Plan* envisioned Fort Collins as a safe, healthy, and nonthreatening community, yet these topics were woven in as pieces of the plan elements (such as Transportation, Housing, and Land Use), and not directly addressed. *Plan Fort Collins* builds on the vision of health, wellness, and safety of *City Plan*, as well as the ideas contained within the *Transportation Master Plan*, and from the City's health, wellness, and safety partners, to address these topics comprehensively. Health, safety, and wellness are increasingly recognized as important aspects of a sustainable community.

Values related to health, wellness, and safety, expressed in current plans and policies include:

- Opportunities to lead active, healthy, and engaging lifestyles;
- A safe and non-threatening community environment;
- Access to healthy foods;
- Equity and fairness in the distribution of opportunities;
- Respect for diversity and unique heritage; and
- Opportunities for fulfillment and happiness.

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CITY COLLABORATIONS IN HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLNESS

A number of City departments work to advance community health, safety and wellness through:

- Affordable Housing and Human Services programs
- City Wellness program
- Neighborhood Services programs
- Parks and Recreation programs
- Police Department programs
- Transportation programs

The new Mason Trail provides a safe north-south bicycle route and whimsical signage to remind users of the benefits of physical activity. (art by Mario Echevarria)

There are many partners involved in creating a healthy and safe community including engaged residents and numerous service providers.

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COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLNESS

The City also works with organizations throughout the community to foster health, wellness, and safety:

- Coalition for Activity and Nutrition to Defeat Obesity (CanDo)
- Colorado State University
- Food Bank of Larimer County
- Health District of Northern Larimer County
- Larimer County
- Poudre Fire Authority
- Poudre School District
- Poudre Valley Health System

WHAT HAS THE CITY ACCOMPLISHED?

The City and its partners have made much progress in establishing a safe and non-threatening environment that provides opportunities for recreation, active living, and overall well-being. Major health, wellness, and safety-related accomplishments include:

Recreation Programs

Increased opportunities for recreation throughout the community

The fitness and recreation programs offered through the City's Recreation Department at Edora Pool Ice Center (EPIC), Mulberry Pool, the Senior Center, and Northside Aztlan Community Center (NACC) continue to provide myriad opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to engage in healthy activities. (See the Open Lands and Recreation Snapshot for Parks and Outdoor Recreation.) In recent years, the City has provided several new and improved recreational facilities. It has:

- Added a second sheet of ice at EPIC in 2003.
- Opened the seasonal outdoor downtown ice arena in Old Town in 2005.
- Opened the new Northside Aztlan Community Center (NACC) in 2007, which replaced the old facility that had been in existence 30 years and was experiencing structural problems. The new facility is twice as large, offers three full-size gyms, a running track, weight room, class rooms, and meeting rooms for larger community gatherings and special events.

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CITY'S 2008 CITIZEN SURVEY:

In the 2008 Citizen Survey, community members weighed in on the City's recreation facilities and offerings. The results indicated:

- 85% satisfaction with the availability and diversity of recreation opportunities;
- 94% believe recreation facilities in Fort Collins are safe.

The new Northside Aztlan Center expanded recreation and fitness opportunities in the northern portion of the community.

Active Living

Promoted and provided opportunities for residents to lead active lifestyles

Bicycling in Fort Collins has become a major recreational activity as well as a key mode of transportation for many people. The City's comprehensive bicycle facilities and programs earned recognition from the League of American Bicyclists, when Fort Collins was designated as a gold-level bicycle-friendly community in 2009. Many bicycling events, sponsored by the FC Bikes Program, also bolster safety, enthusiasm, and support for bicycling, such as the:

- Resources for Bicycling in Fort Collins event;
- 'City Streets Crits' bike races;
- Bike to Work Days (winter and spring); and
- Bicycle safety and education programs through Colorado State University and Poudre School District.

Additionally, the Safe Routes to School program has coordinated and improved traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian safety to encourage active transportation to and from neighborhood schools. This program has also provided bicycle and pedestrian education for more than 4,000 students since 2007.

Increased opportunities for active lifestyles have also been supported through:

- The Complete Streets Policy (adopted in 1999) to ensure that future streets are designed to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians in addition to vehicles;
- The City's snow plowing policies that ensure trails and most bike lanes are accessible throughout the year; and
- Funding and support from the North College Urban Renewal Authority to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety conditions along the North College Avenue corridor.

Health and Wellness

Made progress in increasing the overall health and wellness of the community

Fort Collins has made significant progress towards becoming a nationally-recognized Well City. This is a designation given by the Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) to communities that demonstrate excellence in the area of worksite wellness, and satisfy certain requirements. An application for the award is expected to be submitted in 2012. Only nine cities in the US have received this designation.

In addition to its achievements related to worksite wellness, the community is showing signs of progress related to increased health and activity levels, including:

- A 4.8% decrease from 2008 to 2009 in lifestyle and health risk factors that attribute to chronic disease among City employees (City Wellness program); and
- An increase in the number of adults reaching recommended activity levels, (*Larimer County Compass)*, as demonstrated in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1 - NUMBER OF ADULTS REACHING RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY LEVELS

ACTIVITY LEVEL	2004	2007
Moderate	44.3%	49.2%
Vigorous	38.3%	40.2%

Food

Ensured the community's food is safe to consume

The community's food supply also contributes to the overall health and wellness of residents. The City coordinates with the Larimer County Health Department, which provides routine regulations and inspections of food establishments to ensure that the community's food is safe to consume.

Increased the availability of healthy and local food options

The availability of and access to locally produced food has also gained momentum, with increasing numbers of food cooperatives, farmers markets, community supported agriculture programs (CSAs), neighborhood gardens, and individual gardens and animal operations.

Health and Human Services

Coordinated with and supported health and human service providers to assist those in need

The clustering of many health and human service providers in the northern part of the community (such as the County Health Department and Sister Alice Murphy Center) has provided services for resident well-being and health in an area where many of these services were needed.

Additionally, a significant portion of CDBG funds (15%, or over $1.5 million) has been allocated to public/human service programs that support lower income residents, including job training, day care services, and housing counseling. Further support for public and human service programs is provided by the Human Services Program (funded through the City's General Fund). Since 2000, over $4.2 million has been allocated to the Human Services Program.

Community Engagement

Engaged residents to improve neighborhood relationships

Fort Collins has worked hard to develop a strong sense of community and to improve relationships between the student population and established neighborhoods. Successful programs and activities

that have helped to engage residents and improve relationships include the Party-Patrol, Neighborhood Night Out, Adopt-A-Neighbor, Party Registration, CSU Community Welcome, Noise Workshop and Party Partners, Landlord and Home Owner Association (HOA) trainings, Community Mediation, and partnerships between the City's Community Liaison and CSU's Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services. Key milestones and outcomes related to these programs and activities are listed below:

- Party Patrol has nearly eliminated incidents of large parties with more than 300 participants and greatly reduced party and noise complaints.
- Approximately 100 neighborhoods registered for the 2009 Neighborhood Night Out event.
- More than 600 students participated in 100 neighborhood projects during the Adopt-A-Neighbor Fall Clean-Up event in 2009, making them feel like a part of the larger community.
- Neighborhood dialogues, and the Community Welcome programs have helped the behaviors of students living in neighborhoods.
- In 2009, of the 274 parties that were registered in the Party Registration Pilot Program, 32 received complaints, 28 of which shut down within 20 minutes without police intervention.
- Approximately 436 of 639 requests for community mediation services in 2009 were resolved.

Safety

Fostered a safe and non-threatening community

In 2007, the new Police Services building opened—the first new facility in Fort Collins' history built solely for police services. In recent years Fort Collins has also been considered one of the safest cities in Colorado, according to the Colorado Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) Crime Rankings. Crime levels have remained relatively stable between 2004 and 2008 (approximately 5,060 total crimes in 2004, and 5,244 total in 2008), despite a growing population. Additionally, the ratings of personal safety among Fort Collins residents have generally remained high and better than national and Front Range averages.

Community clean-up and welcome events engage residents and help to increase neighborhood safety and relations.

Listed below are some major programs and accomplishments that have helped to foster these feelings of safety:

- Police Districting has increased police presence Downtown and in the northeast part of town, and has helped enhance the economic vitality and perceptions of safety Downtown.
- The Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program and enhanced traffic enforcement have helped reduce speeding.
- The Eyes & Ears Program continues to assist residents in need by linking them with trained drivers in marked vehicles who will contact emergency services.
- The Safe Kids Coalition, a service of Poudre Fire Authority (PFA), has improved child car seat safety by providing proper car seat installation instructions.
- The City's FC Bikes and Safe Routes to School programs educate adults and children about bicycle safety, helmets, and maintenance.
- The Graffiti Abatement Program has successfully resulted in the rapid removal of graffiti, reducing the potential for vandalism and other criminal activity.
- Routine bicycle trail maintenance, and the installation of additional street lights and traffic control measures have increased safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training has provided neighborhoods with the knowledge and skills to assist their residents in times of disaster or emergency.
- The Neighborhood Watch Program has continued neighborhoods/police coordination to improve safety.

WHAT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES REMAIN?

While many challenges remain in improving the overall health, wellness, and safety of the community, *Plan Fort Collins* presents opportunities to address these challenges directly, and through their relationships to other topics, such as transportation and land use. Some of the key opportunities and challenges for the community's health, wellness, and safety include:

Active Living

Reducing barriers to and improving opportunities for physical activity and active lifestyles

Many of the community's physical barriers to active living occur in areas that are already developed. For example, the lack of sidewalks and safe pedestrian environments in many of the community's northern areas reduces the desirability of walking in those areas. It will be important to identify these barriers and challenges and seek ways to reduce them as new development and redevelopment occur.

Health and Wellness

Improving the health and wellness of the community, especially at-risk populations

In Larimer County, the obesity rate has doubled in the last decade. The rates of obesity and overweight persons are important indicators, because they also help to indicate rates of heart disease, diabetes, certain types of cancer, depression, and a host of other physical ailments. Groups that are most at-risk for obesity include children and those with lower-socio-economic status. Opportunities exist to increase the overall health and wellness of everyone in the community, and it will be important be especially mindful of the needs of at-risk and vulnerable populations.

Health and Human Services

Addressing accessibility and provision of communitywide health and human services

The clustering of health and social services in one location makes it a challenge for people in other parts of the community to access them. As the community continues to grow, health and human services may need to expand to other areas to serve and be accessible to populations in need, and they should be coordinated with other programs and services such as affordable housing, transit, and disabled and elderly services. In addition, human services organizations are in the mode of being resourceful to cover increasing demands for services with fewer resources. The economic downturn has affected many families and individuals in the community. The lack of permanent and guaranteed local funding is a challenge.

Community Engagement

Engaging a broad range of community members

As community issues arise, such as the Occupancy Ordinance, which limits the number of people who can reside in a dwelling unit, it will be important to seek diverse input and opinions in order to address concerns and retain a sense of community. Likewise, as the community's demographics shift, it will be important to ensure that a variety of demographic groups are engaged and informed in community matters.

Retaining a sense of community and heritage as change occurs

It will be important to involve neighborhoods and a diverse mix of residents to ensure that growth or changes benefit the community and are compatible with neighborhoods.

Safety

Satisfying community safety needs and expectations with limited resources

A Police Services Staffing Study conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum and updated in 2009 shows that an additional 48 sworn and civilian positions are needed to provide the police services our community needs and expects. As the

community's population and number of crimes grow, police resources will not likely be able to keep pace. Currently, officers and dispatchers are working overtime on every shift just to fill minimum coverage. Likewise, as the City's policing territory expands with annexations of new areas currently not within the city limits, it will be increasingly difficult to provide adequate police staffing and resources.

The community hosts many successful events like the New West Fest, Taste of Fort Collins, Irish Festival, and Brewfest that attract people from all over the country. Some of these events attract well over 15,000 people. Traditionally off-duty police officers are utilized to address traffic control and provide for public safety during these events. These large events stretch the ability of the police department to meet the demand for services, and will be an increasing challenge as events continue to grow.

Like the Police Department, Poudre Fire Authority faces challenges related to limited staffing. As the community continues to grow, this issue will also increase, which will not only impact the safety of firefighting personnel during emergencies, but will also impact the quality and timeliness of service provided to the community.

Addressing safety as multiple modes of transportation share roads

As more types of vehicles are sharing the community's roadways (including bicycles, motor scooters, wheelchairs, and possibly future neighborhood electric vehicles [NEVs]), there are increasing safety issues and potential for conflicts. Certain areas in the City, such as the area around Colorado State University, tend to have more conflicts because of the high number of bicyclists and pedestrians sharing the major roadways with motorists.

WHAT ARE THE CROSS-CUTTING TOPICS?

This Snapshot contains a number of topics with relationships to other snapshots. The topic of a healthy community is becoming a focus area in many new comprehensive plans. This is in part because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have documented costs associated with not getting enough physical activity and poor diets leading to obesity. Active living can be greatly improved through urban design that supports bicycling and walking and places destinations together (e.g., schools within neighborhoods with safe walkways). Interrelated topics include:

- Active Living/Complete Streets: Building streets and a transportation network that allows for safe, comfortable, and convenient walking and bicycling for all people (including seniors, youth, disabled, low-income population), can positively affect community health. Parks, recreation, and programs that support active living are important, too.
- Local Food Production and Security: Supporting greater access to farmer's markets throughout the year, organic food production, and community gardens and agriculture can contribute to community health and well-being.
- Safety and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design: Using a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through design can increase outdoor physical activity, visibility, and social interaction.
- Housing and Human Services Coordination: Coordinating location of housing for seniors, disabled people, and low income households near services and transit will continue to be important, as well as equitable distribution.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Sources

- CanDo School BMI Project (2008-2009)
- City of Fort Collins FC Bikes Program
- City of Fort Collins Citizen Survey (2006 and 2008)
- City of Fort Collins Community Scorecard (2008 and 2009)
- City of Fort Collins Neighborhood Services Department
- City of Fort Collins Safe Routes to School program
- Colorado Bureau of Investigations Unified Crime Reports (2004-2008)
- Health District of Northern Larimer County Community Health Survey (2007)
- Healthy Hearts Club Report (2008-2009)
- Larimer County Compass (2004 and 2007)