



## **La Mesa Community Wellness Program**

### **“Health is Wealth”**

Our nation is facing a growing health crisis. This health concern is the obesity of our citizens. As a nationwide problem, it also becomes a community problem. Obesity leads to complications of cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes.

The La Mesa Wellness Task Force is a coalition of community members dedicated to promoting and supporting wellness opportunities in the City of La Mesa. The Wellness Task Force is made up of representatives from the City, area school districts, hospitals, non-profit organizations, and community volunteers.

The coalition has accomplished a number of tasks in its one-year history. The Task Force provided support for the development of the Grossmont Union High School District Wellness Policy, creation and funding for “Walk La Mesa,” a nutrition education program at Kids Care Fest and has contributed support to the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Action Plan.

Now, the Task Force is requesting support from the La Mesa City Council for the **“ La Mesa Community Wellness Program.”** This document highlights ways the City of La Mesa can create a thriving and healthy community. The La Mesa Wellness Task Force appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with the City on ways to promote active living.

## **La Mesa Community Wellness Program**

The La Mesa Wellness Task Force respectfully asks that the La Mesa City Council support and encourage:

### **A. Developing design strategies that support an active lifestyle.**

1. Promotion of a pedestrian friendly walkable community. A walkable community is defined as a place where residents of all ages feel that it is safe, convenient, efficient, and pleasurable to walk. Realizing that funding is an issue we recommend a priority list of project improvements as outlined below and as proposed in the Walkability Study dated February 2006.

The following areas of the City are considered priorities for upgrades to ensure walkability. Streets and corridors:

- Within one-quarter mile of elementary schools
- within one-quarter mile of a senior center or residential complex for seniors
- within one-quarter mile of retail that is pedestrian orientated
- within one-third mile of a middle school
- within one half mile of a trolley station or bus routes
- within one-quarter mile of parks/recreational centers
- within one-half mile of a high school
- within one-quarter mile of the downtown civic center

2. Secure funding for the following targeted school locations according to the Walkability Study dated February 2006 that require improved suggested school routes:

- Lemon Avenue school
- University Avenue from Yale to Parks (serving Helix Charter High School)
- La Mesa Dale Elementary and La Mesa Middle School
- El Paso and Jackson Drive (near Murray Manor School)

3. Support the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District's efforts to improve students' ability to safely walk/bicycle to and from school by providing planning and law enforcement staff to serve on advisory school-based safety committees serving La Mesa children.

4. Revitalize La Mesa's urban community by incorporating pedestrian-friendly design principles in all new developments such as wide sidewalks, street-facing windows, well- marked crosswalks, short block or mid-block alleys and paths, medians in streets, landscaped streets and landscaped parking separating sidewalks from the curb/street in addition to adequate lighting.

5. Create a thorough "way finding" signage system in the town center to encourage pedestrian walking in the downtown area.

6. Support the completion of the La Mesa Arts Alliance's "La Mesa Walking Art Trail Utility Box Project" as a way to encourage walking and to view La Mesa's public art in the downtown.

### **B. Expansion of park green spaces by improving the quality, access to and, possibly increasing park acreage in La Mesa.**

1. Fund and develop a master plan for the park system. This master plan will outline and prioritize a list of upgrades to existing park systems and target underserved neighborhoods for future parks. Special attention will be paid to small urban parks in newly revitalized neighborhoods or parks in underserved areas of the City.

2. Work with regional transportation providers to ensure parks and recreation centers are accessible by public transit.

### **C. Promoting varied recreational opportunities for citizens of all ages.**

1. The City's Department of Community Services will sponsor and promote opportunities for children and their families to engage in physical activities. The Department will focus on the following:

- Direct and focus wellness programs to areas of the City and to specific populations that have the greatest need to improve health
- Programs for underserved areas of La Mesa
- Programs that teach life-long participation in physical fitness
- Programs that utilize community partners with specific expertise
- Creation of more family oriented special events targeting physical fitness
- Intergenerational opportunities
- Programs that are both fee based and free
- Programs that are both non-competitive and competitive

2. The City will collaborate with community partners to promote opportunities for fitness and health education, including the La Mesa Wellness Task Force, the County's Childhood Obesity Action Plan and other non-profit partners.
3. Include space in each La Mesa FOCUS dedicated to wellness and fitness for La Mesa residents as an ongoing educational opportunity.
4. Feature in the community calendar "a park a month" or a map/listing of La Mesa parks to educate residents about places for leisure activities.
5. Utilize existing programs as a way to provide education on healthy lifestyles i.e.: Kids Watch, Small Friends, Summer Day Camps, and Teen Scene.

**D. Publicizing awareness of low and no cost health insurance programs by supporting the League of Cities, "Cities for Healthy Kids Program."**

1. Provide outreach information about qualifying for and ways to sign up for low or no cost health insurance.
2. Collaborate with the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District and other community partners to inform residents about low and no cost health insurance programs.
3. Utilize existing special events to further provide outreach to the community about low or no cost health insurance.

**E. Healthy snack choices.**

1. Encourage all City owned facilities to eliminate carbonated beverages and unhealthy snacks in vending machines.
2. Food provided at City-sponsored special events is recommended to meet the healthier food options.
3. Snacks and lunches provided in recreational programs are recommended to meet healthy food choices.
4. The Athletic Council in collaboration with the athletic leagues are recommended to offer healthy choice alternatives in their snack bars at City owned fields.

**F. Encouraging wellness opportunities for City employees.**

1. Promote the opportunity to use the municipal pool at no charge to City employees.
2. Develop a wellness section for employees on the employee intranet.
3. Encourage healthy food and snack options at City meetings/events.

**G. Creating accommodations for breastfeeding.**

1. Protect a mother's right to breastfeed in public by developing reasonable accommodations in new facilities for private breastfeeding in publicly owned facilities

**H. Support efforts to educate the public regarding the existence of smoke-free parks in La Mesa.**

**I. Evaluating La Mesa's Wellness program**

1. Direct appropriate departments to include applicable action items in the City's Targets for Action.
2. Gather outside information and data on the community's current health to help determine program focus areas.
3. Recommend the Community Services Commission request a bi-annual report on the progress of the wellness effort. Measurement of the results will be tied to the applicable City Targets for Action.
4. Report to the City Council annually as to progress on the wellness effort.

**J. Coordinating the wellness effort on a regional, state and national level.**

1. The City's program is recommended to work in concert with other regional, state, and national efforts.

Approved July 2006