

Coachella General Plan Community Health and Wellness Element Wellness Advisory Committee Meeting #1 Minutes - July 19, 2011

The California Endowment’s (TCE) Building Healthy Communities program awarded the City of Coachella a grant to include public health analysis and a Community Health and Wellness Element (CHWE) in its General Plan update process. As part of this process, the City of Coachella formed a Wellness Advisory Committee (WAC) comprised of stakeholder and technical experts to advise and provide feedback to the City throughout the CHWE process. The City expects to convene a total of seven WAC meetings over the course of the next year and a half. For additional information about the General Plan update process, the CHWE, and the WAC, please see the PowerPoint presentation from the WAC #1 meeting.

Linda Guillis, City of Coachella Development Services Director opened the meeting with some background on the project. Next, Mayor Eduardo Garcia welcomed participants and expressed his enthusiasm for this process and its importance for the City’s future. Participants went around the room and introduced themselves stating their name and organization or affiliation.

Attendees

Eighteen WAC members, six California Endowment Partners, and five project staff attended the meeting. The following is a list of meeting attendees’ names and organizations.

WAC Committee Members in Attendance ¹	
Organization	Name
Coachella Valley Rescue Mission	Olga S. Betancourt
Coachella Valley Unified School District	Sara T. Resler
Desert Recreation District	Barb Adair
	Joey Acuna Jr.
Galilee Center	Gloria Gomez
Hidden Harvest	Christy Porter
	Sandra Carroll
Imperial Irrigation District	Patrick Swarthout
John F Kennedy Memorial	Jeff Van Hoy
Office of Assemblymember V. Manuel Perez	Carlos Gonzalez
	Jacqueline Lopez
Planned Parenthood	Jacqueline Vargas
Sunline Transit Agency	Eunice Lovi
UCR School of Medicine	Raul Ruiz MD
Walgreens	Christine Ramos
	Mark Lardenoit
Youth representative (Esperanza Youth and Family Center/ICUC)	Ashley Mendoza
Youth representative (ICUC)	Elizabeth Arce

¹ Attendees who failed to sign in at the meeting are not included in this list.

The California Endowment Building Health Communities ECV Partners	
Organization	Name
California Rural Legal Assistance	Cristina Mendez
	Laura Massie
Inland Congregations United for Change	John Rodriguez
	Yvonna Cazares
Riverside County Department of Public Health	Claudia Limon
	Miguel A. Vasquez
Community Health and Wellness Element Project Staff	
Organization, Role	Name
City of Coachella, Development Services Director	Linda Guillis
City of Coachella, Principal Planner	Luis Lopez
City of Coachella, Senior Planner	Gabriel Perez
City of Coachella, Planning Intern	Marcos Coronel
Raimi + Associates, General Plan and Community Health and Wellness Element Consultant	Beth Altshuler

Visions

After Beth Altshuler or Raimi + Associates gave a presentation on the process and the connections between public health and city planning, meeting participants discussed their vision for a healthy Coachella. Participants responded to the prompt, “What is your vision for the ideal healthy city? What physical, social, and/or economic aspects of Coachella influence your mental, emotional, and physical health?” Below are the responses from the discussion.

- **Youth are leaders of tomorrow** and teens feel supported in pursuing their dreams
- Coachella is like Disneyland where everyone feels **safe and happy** all the time
- There are ample **healthy food** options for everyone
- The City owns and maintains first class **recreation facilities** – especially one that has indoor sports facilities with air conditioning
- Residents have access to high quality, accessible, and affordable **primary and urgent care health facilities in the City**
- **Teens have places to hang-out** – including specific interest in a mall with fashionable stores or a recording studio
- Residents have access to **preventive health programs and education**
 - Programs reach people in their homes and including issues such as food safety, exercise, and nutrition education
- People have access to **meaningful employment opportunities**, that pay family supporting wages
- The City helps coordinate community services
 - City provides complementary **social and health services that are clustered** in a few targeted locations and easily accessible by public transportation.
 - When new community services submit permit and/or license proposals, the City collaborates with Sun Line Transit to ensure important social services are well-served by public transit.

- Community members can take transit, walk, and or bicycle to access day-to-day basic **goods and services**
- Coachella provides ample opportunities for **adult education** – ranging from basic English language and life skills courses to professional development and holistic/preventative health education
- The City creates environments that provide ample **opportunity and space for social interaction**
- The City supports and seeks opportunities, programs, and public and private spaces for **arts, culture, and beauty**
- Residents feel **empowered** and have a voice in their community
- The City works with social service providers to expand resident access **substance abuse / addiction rehabilitation facilities**
- The City makes appropriate changes and enhancements in order to enable **better response times from police and fire services**
- Residents feel a sense of **pride in their city**

Assets and Opportunities for Improvement

WAC participants had a discussion about what assets and issues support or hinder good health outcomes and behaviors in Coachella. The results of the conversation are organized around the following seven health topic areas:

1. Complete neighborhoods and access to goods and services
2. Environmental health
3. Jobs and a healthy economy
4. Active living
5. Supportive social services and environments
6. Healthy institutions and public infrastructure
7. Healthy housing²

1. Complete neighborhoods and access to goods and services

Assets

- Residents who are actively engaged and committed to their community
- A walkable downtown
- A lot of undeveloped land provides an opportunity for the City to be a “laboratory for positive change” through smart land use decisions which can create the foundational infrastructure for a “healthy” city
- Future farmers’ market will increase access to locally grown healthy foods

² At the meeting “Jobs, housing, and a healthy economy” was presented as one health topic area. However, since there was so much enthusiasm around that topic, project staff decided to create two distinct health topic areas: “Jobs and a healthy economy” and “Healthy housing”. The meeting minutes reflect this new framework.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Improve access to medical care for all, including mental health and preventative care possibly through neighborhood clinics that can be accessible by alternative forms of transportation
- Expand healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate retail food options
- Better resident access to locally grown food
- Secure access to healthy food options for farm workers and other low-income residents
- Provide healthier food in schools
- Increase access to pediatrics, neonatal, and specialty medical care providers (such as orthopedics, chiropractic, etc.)

2. Environmental health

Assets

- A climate that provides a great opportunity to produce more renewable energy

Opportunities for Improvement

- Collaborate with local utility providers to institute access to energy audits and affordable upgrades
- Increased community education on the health impacts, symptoms, and safety related to industrial and personal pesticide usage, especially with farm workers, their families, and residents who live adjacent to agricultural fields
- Ensure access to clean and safe water and investigate issues related to water quality changes related to storage tank chemistry
- Prevent heat related impacts in the senior population especially due to electricity outages.
- Reduce asthma rates by improving air quality, specifically reduce exposure to PM₁₀ and wind-borne toxics

3. Jobs and a healthy economy

Assets

- Coachella's agricultural industry provides local jobs and economic activity
- Casinos provide jobs for residents as well as social spaces for residents and visitors
- College-educated young adults are returning to Coachella to improve their home-town community
- Empowerment/Enterprise Zones provide the City with access to Federal resources to increase economic activity
- The City's close proximity to the railroad provides an opportunity to expand the manufacturing industry

Opportunities for Improvement

- Seek local jobs that provide a living wage and a meaningful contribution to society
- Reduce the potential negative impacts of Casinos such as, alcohol, gambling, etc.

- Explore creative ways for the City of Coachella, residents, and local businesses to benefit from the influx of the annual Coachella Musical Festival attendees
- Explore opportunities for live/work medical facilities in mixed-use residential neighborhoods, for instance through potential and creative reuse of existing structures to expand health care facilities

4. Active living

Assets

- Ample open space to simultaneously accommodate future development and sustain the area's natural environmental character
- Community members already practice alternative modes of transportation, regardless of the sub-par facilities

Opportunities for Improvement

- Improve public transportation efficiency and frequency by designing centralized, walkable, and higher density areas that encourage more residents to use public transit
- Enhance the City's pedestrian environment by providing pedestrian amenities (sidewalks, crosswalks and island), implementing traffic calming measures to reduce vehicle speeds, and designing a pedestrian scale environment, with shorter blocks, smaller parcels, street lights and sidewalk trees

5. Supportive social services and environments

Assets

- Hidden Harvest, local health clinics, and other NGOs help low-income households with needed living essential, but they are spread thin
- Churches offer a place for worship, social interaction, and community functions as well as establish strong community bonds

Opportunities for Improvement

- Establish partnerships with prominent medical institutions like the University of California Riverside School of Medicine, to create programs that offer incentives for medical professionals to practice in Coachella
- Highlight positive community news and reduced negative perceptions of public safety
- Reduce illegal activities, especially those related to gangs, violence, drugs, and prostitution
- Create plazas, community centers, and other social spaces for community functions and meetings

6. Healthy institutions and public infrastructure

Assets

- The City of Coachella has a rich history that needs to be highlighted and preserved.
- The City of Coachella is fortunate to have an active youth population that is interested in community improvement

- University of California Riverside School of Medicine is opening soon with the goal of serving underserved communities
- Highly utilized Senior Center is an asset to the community but needs to be expanded to serve the growing senior population

Opportunities for Improvement

- Expand library facilities and programs

7. Healthy housing

Assets

- Housing is relatively affordable
- Residents have opportunities to become homeowners

Opportunities for Improvement

- Establish higher quality housing through more specific building requirements, proactive building inspection, and potentially the use of form-based codes
- Create incentives to increase housing investments and development in order to alleviate overcrowding