



Coachella Fiesta de la Salud #1 Summary

Community Health and Wellness General Plan Element Public Workshop September 20, 2011

Project Overview

The City of Coachella is updating their General Plan, which includes a Community Health and Wellness Element. California state law requires every city and county to have a general plan which sets the policies for how cities and counties use and manage their physical, social, and economic resources. General plans documents the community's shared vision of tomorrow and sets the policies and programs to achieve that vision. While the state requires that general plans address the following seven topics:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Conservation
- Circulation (transportation)
- Open Space
- Noise; and
- Safety

cities and counties are allowed to write additional "optional" elements on topics that are important to the success of the community. In Coachella, The California Endowment has funded the City's efforts to include a Community Health and Wellness Element (Health Element) in their forthcoming general plan update.

The City of Coachella recognizes that city planning policy and design decisions directly and indirectly influence the community's health outcomes through the physical, economic, and social environment. This general plan update, and especially the Health Element will set a framework for a future healthy Coachella. As part of this process the City is working with other community partners funded by the California Endowment including:

- California Rural Legal Assistance
- Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC)
- The Riverside County Department of Public Health

The consulting firm Raimi + Associates is supporting the City's efforts on the entire General Plan Update Process including the Community Health and Wellness Element.

Workshop Purpose and Overview

The Fiesta de la Salud took place on Tuesday, September 20, 2011 from 6:00pm-8:30pm in the Bobby Duke Middle School Cafeteria. One hundred twenty-four (124) participants signed-in. There may have been more people in attendance since, some families in attendance only had one person sign in. The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Provide information and education on health programs and assets in the community;
- Ensure that community members understand the General Plan Update process;
- Gain an understanding of the purpose and benefits of a Community Health and Wellness Element; and
- Clarify key health issues and opportunities in Coachella.

The evening began with dinner, live mariachi music, children's activities, and an open house with the following organizations conducting outreach and providing information.

- Assemblymember V. Manuel Perez
- California Rural Legal Assistance
- Certified Farmers Market
- Coachella Valley Housing Coalition
- Coachella Valley Community Trails Alliance
- Desert Recreation District
- Esperanza Youth and Family Center
- Hidden Harvest
- Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC)
- Jon Benoit Youth Advisory Council
- Planned Parenthood
- Raices Cultura
- Riverside County Department of Public Health
- The California Endowment
- Walgreens

The meeting portion of the meeting began with opening remarks from Mayor Eduardo Garcia and Planning Director Linda Gullis. Matthew Raimi, Principal from Raimi + Associates, invited the large group to share some of their visions for a healthy Coachella. Carlos Gonzalez, a Coachella resident and Naphtali, a Coachella youth resident read the vision statement for a healthy Coachella in both Spanish and English.

The Vision Statement reads as follows:

Coachella envisions a future which includes thriving physical, emotional, and spiritual health for the entire community; Coachella is committed to providing a supportive physical, social, and economic environment so this can occur. The City's distinctive and family-friendly neighborhoods will inspire an appreciation of Coachella's history and create unity among community members. Neighborhoods will provide opportunities for residents to improve their physical and mental health while meeting daily needs – walking to the store, meeting friends, bicycling to school, taking transit to work, and having access to nutritious and affordable foods that can be purchased or grown in the neighborhood. The City will find innovative solutions to ensure its streets, parks, and public spaces are safe, accessible, and inviting for all users. There will be ample choices for walking, bicycling, team sports, and exercise programs for people of all ages, and positive social interaction in public spaces.

The City will encourage local businesses that pay living wages and offer safe and meaningful employment for people of all ages and abilities. Residents will have access to educational opportunities that expand their professional skills, foster their creativity, and provide tools to support a healthy lifestyle. When preventive health is not enough, residents will be served by first class health providers and social services in the City. Coachella acknowledges that a healthy planet directly improves human health, and the City is committed to clean air, water, and soil; conservation of resources; and the protection of natural areas. Youth are honored as leaders of tomorrow and are an integral part of the City's robust community planning and civic engagement process. The City will consider health and equity in its actions and decisions, supporting the concept that all community members can live healthy, meaningful lives.

Mr. Raimi provided an overview of general plans and the “healthy cities movement” and then reviewed the types of topics to be addressed in the Health Element and explained how each topic relates to health.

After the presentation Beth Altshuler, Public Health Planning Specialist from Raimi + Associates explained the small group discussion activity. Community leaders from a variety of public and non-profit organizations facilitated the small group discussions. The questions to guide the evening's discussion included:

◆ **Assets:**

⇒ What are the strengths/assets of Coachella that support health?

◆ **Issues:**

⇒ What are the issues facing Coachella today and in the future that impact health?

◆ **Opportunities for Improvement:**

⇒ What are your ideas to make Coachella a healthier place to live, work, and play?

⇒ What other cities, neighborhoods or places should we look to as examples for Coachella's future?

After the discussions each small group shared highlights of their discussion with the larger group. The following is a summary of notes from facilitators, individual written comments, and verbal comments.

Assets

- Well-used parks
- Some locally-owned businesses
- Good recycling program
- Quality after school programs (e.g., Boys and Girls Club) – but we need more
- Small, community-friendly library
- Affordable health clinics
- Local agricultural economy
- Historic agricultural heritage

Issues

- Healthy Community and Social Networks
 - Family ties need to be strengthened
 - Many individuals lack a community support system
 - Disconnect between citizens and what the community has to offer – communication needs to improve
 - Lack of youth opportunities
 - Lack of security for the elders (safety, social, financial, etc.)
 - Police and their gear can be intimidating
- Environmental Health
 - Extreme heat is a health hazard and barrier to outdoor physical activity and safe working conditions
 - Cigarette smoking in public spaces is a problem – it smells bad and it's not healthy
 - Location of agriculture uses
 - Concern of the health impacts of pesticides on agricultural workers, their families, and the people who live near farms
 - Poor quality living conditions are unhealthy for many residents
- Parks and Active Living
 - Vandalism and tagging in parks makes them feel unsafe and not cared for
 - Violence and crimes around and in schools and parks need to stop
 - Lack of a community gym facility
- Access to Healthy Foods
 - Limited after school opportunities for youth
 - Unhealthy food in schools is a problem, especially for students who consume two meals a day
 - Mismatch between knowledge and access
 - Healthy food is expensive and junk food is cheap
- Transportation
 - Some busy streets don't have street lights which makes walking feel unsafe
 - Street that lack sidewalks also feel unsafe, especially for children
- Healthy Economy
 - Food produced in Coachella is shipped out and the community see little economic benefit (need to grow our local economy)
 - Few opportunities for youth-oriented employment

Opportunities

- Healthy Community and Social Networks
 - Coachella is a tight knit, small community this characteristic needs to remain as our population grows
 - Encourage more of the Coachella youth population to become involve more in community matters and the public decision making process
 - Educate and provide opportunities for youth to help clean-up Coachella
 - Need to increase access to and the location of medical health services in Coachella
- Environmental Health
 - Improve people's trash and recycling behaviors
 - Provide a safe work environment
- Parks and Active Living

- Provide more parks that are clean and safe
- Build a Community Center for residents of all ages
- Create more / better soccer leagues
- Encourage youth to be more active and get more exercise both inside and outside of school
- Access to Healthy Foods
 - Work with the School District to Improve the school lunch program
 - This is a big opportunity since the program already exists and it just needs enhancements
 - Encourage existing food stores to carry healthier food and ensure new ones are healthy
- Transportation
 - Create a safer street programs
- Healthy Economy
 - Create more “complete neighborhoods” that have parks, school, healthy food stores, child care and other retail close to residential neighborhoods
 - Provide desirable housing
 - Help local farmers to expand their production
 - Encourage farm owners to provide better tools and protective equipment for agricultural workers so they don’t get sick and miss work (which leads to lost income)
 - Creatively link the farmers market, agriculture, and tourism
 - Create more employment to improve the economy
 - Including youth employment opportunities
 - Educate residents on financial literacy and how to save money and budget
 - Find a way to attract snowbirds, which brings businesses
 - Encourage tourism
 - Support local stores