

2016

Laredo Active Living Plan

Laredo Active Living



Eat Smart | Be Active | Prevent

MAYOR'S WELLNESS COUNCIL

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Mission

The mission of the Laredo Active Living Plan is to promote nutrition, physical activity, and prevention simultaneously at all levels, for the individual, for families, within institutions and organizations, and through public policy and environmental change.

Vision

The vision of Laredo Active Living Plan is to promote and support healthy places to live, work and play.

Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council

The Laredo Active Living Plan is a product of the Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council. This plan is designed to be a living document that can adjust to the needs and desires of the community of Laredo, Texas.

The Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council members are volunteers who have multiple levels of health and wellness knowledge of Laredo. Through their direction, we have been able to focus our efforts into the priority areas of our community.

The Laredo Active Living Plan was made possible because of the leadership of the following community partners:

Julie Bazan – Area Health Education Center

Roberto Cuellar, Jr. – Laredo Independent School District Foodservice

Sister Rosemary Welsh, RSM – Mercy Ministries of Laredo/Casa Esperanza

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Executive Summary

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are many benefits of physical activity. Physical benefits include weight control, and a reduction of the risks for cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers. Physical activity also helps build muscle and strengthen bones. Mental benefits include an improvement in mental health and mood. Furthermore, regular physical activity increases the chances of having a longer and healthier life.¹

Sedentary behavior, regardless of physical activity, is also linked with a significant increase in the risk of type 2 diabetes as well as obesity. Therefore, it is not enough to avoid physical inactivity, but to simultaneously limit sedentary behavior.²

The 2015 County Health Rankings identify 31% of Webb County residents as obese, 17% as smokers, 27% as physically inactive, with a total of 35% medically uninsured; all of these statistics are higher than state and nationwide averages.³ In 2012, the percentage of adults who have diabetes in the Laredo Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was 23% compared to 11% for the State of Texas. This fact translates to the annual per 100,000 number of deaths attributed to Diabetes of 55 in Laredo's MSA compared to 23 for the State of Texas.⁴ The Texas State Data Center has released projections for diabetes incidence and Webb County is expected to experience a 243% increase over the 2000-2040 period potentially increasing both morbidity and mortality levels.⁵

As such, the recommendations listed in the Laredo Active Living Plan focus on the key areas of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Prevention. It is our goal to create a tool that documents healthy living as a priority for the community of Laredo.

The target audience for the Laredo Active Living Plan includes policy and decision makers, physical activity practitioners and advocates, healthcare providers, educators and students, and anyone interested in creating a healthier community.

Priority Areas and Goals

There are three priority areas for Laredo. These include:

- Nutrition
- Physical Activity
- Prevention

These priority areas have been selected after various meetings with a variety of stakeholders and community representatives from Laredo.

Introduction

This Active Living Plan is a creation of the Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council. This council will work together to join local leaders and citizens to deliver solutions and provide opportunities that are tailored to our community's unique cultural needs.

This council consists of representatives from the community of Laredo who are dedicated to creating a healthier environment. This plan, as does the National Physical Activity Plan, aims to create a culture that supports healthy eating, physically active lifestyles, and a community knowledgeable in preventive health.

This Active Living Plan follows the same order as the recommended sectors in the National Physical Activity Plan. These areas include:

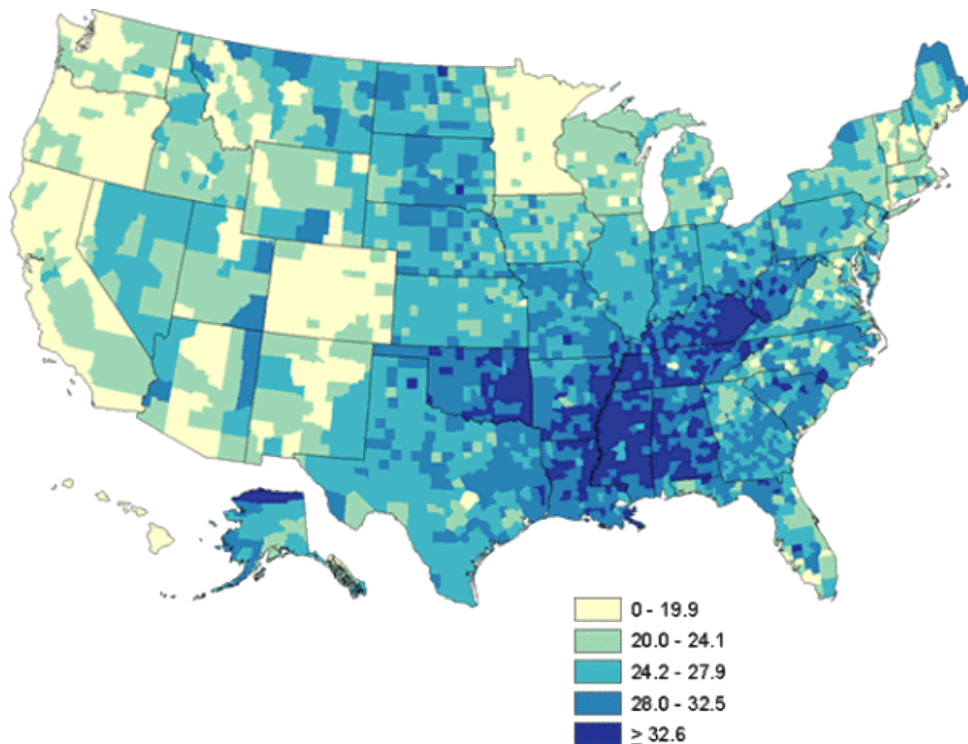
- Business and Industry
- Education
- Health Care
- Mass Media
- Parks, Recreation, Fitness and Sports
- Public Health
- Transportation, Land Use and Community Design
- Volunteer and Non-Profit

Each area mentioned herein will be explored and evaluated as to what resources and activities are available within our community that can be related to the Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council. It is our hope that when possible, direct input from community members will be used as a mechanism to ensure that our plan is logical and appealing to the community. This participation will safeguard that this document will be sustained for future generations.

State and National Data

The CDC estimates that nationally only 48% of adults meet the national guidelines for physical activity. Furthermore, less than 3 out of 10 high school students participate in 60 minutes of physical activity daily. Disparities exist between different populations and age groups. More non-Hispanic white adults meet the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity than non-Hispanic black adults and Hispanic adults. Men are more likely than women to meet the guidelines for aerobic activity, and younger adults are more likely to meet the aerobic activity guidelines than older adults. Adults with more education are more likely than those with less education to meet the guidelines, and adults whose family income is above the poverty level are more likely to meet the guidelines than adults whose family income is at or below the federal poverty level.⁶

2008 Age-Adjusted Estimates of the Percentage of Adults Who Are Physically Inactive⁵



As the map indicates, Texas compares unfavorably with regards to physical activity nationwide. According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, the prevalence of physical activity participation in Webb County lists 27% as physically inactive.

Social Ecological Model of Behavior Change

This data indicates a clear need for physical activity interventions, from policies to communities to individuals. Because physical activity does rely on both external, environmental factors as well as internal influences, we use the Social Ecological Model for Behavior Change to describe the process necessary to facilitate physical activity in Laredo, TX.



Individuals: Addressing physical inactivity implies changing everyday behaviors. This means changing knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. This doesn't happen alone: formal and informal social networks often provide the motivation needed to engage in physical activity.

Interpersonal: Spouses, friends, family, peers, and coworkers represent potential sources of interpersonal influences. Interpersonal groups can facilitate individual behavior change by giving support and guidance to start making healthy lifestyle changes.

Organizations: Schools, workplaces, volunteer networks—these all have the capacity to help individuals make physical activity a part of their day through policy changes and promotion of healthy individual behaviors.

Communities: A community is essentially a large organization and consists of groups, residents and organizations that can work together to implement physical activity friendly changes to the area. For instance, communities can impact the connectedness and design of an area by designing parks, passing complete streets policies, or building trails.

Society: Society reflects how all other components work together to create change. Policies and legislation supporting physical activity on a large scale helps individual, interpersonal, organizational, and community-wide programs to function successfully.⁷

The following chapters contain interventions which will try to encourage physical activity on all levels; the responsibility of being physically active falls as much on society and the environment as it does on the individual. This guide strives to show how each component of Laredo community can work towards a more active population.

Strategies, Objectives, and Evaluation

The vision of Laredo Active Living Plan is to promote and support healthy places to live, work and play.

Business and Industry

The current trend in the workplace is that with the rise in technology, physical activity on the job has decreased. The consequences of a sedentary workday are many, including an increase in the likelihood of health problems. Money is then lost through decreased productivity, absenteeism, and health care costs.

Businesses are in a unique position given their proximity to employees. Simple policy changes or incentives can go a long way in improving employee physical activity both on and off the job.

Priority Area - Nutrition

The community has a number of areas that avail themselves to the promotion of access to Healthy Foods. In terms of Business and Industry, our main focus will be on ensuring that Healthy Foods are promoted first and foremost.

INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT

The City of Laredo has adopted a Vending Machine Product Offering Policy. This document regulates snack vendors to provide healthy options in vending machines located on all City of Laredo facilities. Healthy options are defined at <http://www.fitpick.org>

Priority Area - Physical Activity

Physical Activity in the workplace is an area of interest for our community. As such we intend to create campaigns including use of media and technology to bring physical activity awareness to the business and industry sector of the job market.

- Optimize the use of social media to create messages encouraging physical activity during the work day and after hours
- Create County-wide competitions giving the business and industry sector opportunities to encourage each other to live a healthier lifestyle
- Locate supporting media outlets to distribute daily or weekly health related tips and strategies
- Recognize businesses that are taking steps toward creating a healthier working environment

Priority Area - Prevention

The area of prevention in the business and industry category is especially important for businesses and the community. We shall work to:

- Participate in local wellness programs and statewide competitions and events
- Provide support for employers in developing, implementing, and evaluating comprehensive employee wellness programs

Education

In the US, around 45 million students are enrolled in elementary and secondary schools.⁸ On average, these students spend around 1,300 hours per year in school.⁹ Because of increasing pressure on academic achievement paired with the constant threat of budget cuts, programs involving physical activity within schools are often short-changed.

Research indicates that physical activity improves academic performance. Teachers, coaches, administrators, and district officials should all take a leadership role in increasing the physical activity levels of their students. Fortunately, there are many evidence-based interventions which focus on increasing physical activity within the realm of education. Some of the tactics and strategies from the National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP) include the following:

- Provide access to and opportunities for high-quality, comprehensive physical activity programs, anchored by physical education, in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 educational settings.
- Provide access to and opportunities for physical activity before and after school.⁹

Related to these strategies are the World Health Organization's intervention recommendations for physical activity. After reviewing the published information available, they conclude that physical activity is increased in schools when the following criteria are met:

- Physical activity curriculum is taught by trained teachers,
- There exists a supportive school environment,
- There is parental/family involvement in physical activity programs.¹⁰

Incorporating these findings, the following objectives seek to address the importance of assessment, well-equipped school environments, school support, and family participation to increase physical activity in educational environments.

Priority Area - Nutrition

As all local schools are regulated through state and national nutrition guidelines, we shall focus on the individual student's nutritional education. We will work with school districts and encourage the use of school newspapers, handouts and social media to bring awareness to healthy food choices both during and after school.

Priority Area - Physical Activity

As all local schools are regulated through state and national physical activity guidelines, we shall focus on the individual student's physical education outside of the school environment. We shall utilize school newspapers, handouts and social media to bring awareness to the need for physical activity both during and after school.

Priority Area - Prevention

For this area we shall focus on the student's education and knowledge of preventive health practices to influence their own health choices. We shall utilize school newspapers, handouts and social media to bring awareness to the need for a preventive health approach.

Health Care

The health care sector is our nation's largest industry. While traditionally the focus of health care providers has been on treatment, many are recognizing the importance of prevention. Health care providers have a unique relationship with their patients, in that they have access to and insight explaining an individual's particular health status. Due to this access and understanding, providers can potentially cause great behavior change.

Some of the strategies discussed in the National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP) include the following:¹¹

- Make physical activity a patient “vital sign” that all health care providers assess and discuss with their patients.
- Establish physical inactivity as a treatable and preventable condition.
- Encourage societies of health care professionals to expand their efforts to support physical activity policies and programs at local, state, and federal levels.

The World Health Organization (WHO) provides a set of commonalities in successful physical activity interventions from the health sector:¹²

- Interventions focus on those who are at-risk for non-communicable diseases (persons who are inactive, are overweight, or have a family history of obesity, heart disease, cancer and/or type 2 diabetes).
- Interventions include at least one session with a healthcare professional followed by a brief goal-setting session, and then follow-up consultation with qualified personnel.
- Interventions are coordinated with other stakeholders (sports organizations or mass media physical activity campaigns).

Priority Area - Nutrition

Support the healthcare community's efforts to provide nutrition/dietary interventions to persons who are inactive, are overweight, or have a family history of obesity, heart disease, cancer and/or type 2 diabetes.

Priority Area - Physical Activity

Support the community efforts to advocate for an increase in physical activity through the following:

- Marketing of low cost or no cost physical activity venues for people of all ages
- Provide education and referrals for age appropriate physical activity
- Support local activities which promote physical activity

Priority Area - Prevention

Provide education and awareness about the importance of the individual's responsibility to obtain a "Medical Home" for personal healthcare.

Mass Media

Mass media refers to both traditional and newer routes of widespread communication, including (but not limited to) TV, billboards, social networking sites and text messaging. Due to its pervasiveness in American culture, it can be a useful tool to help create changes in behavior and attitudes.¹³

The Community Guide notes that while mass media is a powerful tool, its effectiveness has not been demonstrated to improve physical activity levels when used independently.¹⁴ The World Health Organization adds that mass media campaigns are best used in conjunction with “upstream” (policy) and “downstream” (community-based) activities.¹⁵ The Laredo Active Living Mayor’s Wellness Council will focus on integrating mass media into community-wide campaigns in order to reap synergistic benefits.

Priority Area - Nutrition

Support the push for better nutrition in the community by using mass media to promote healthy lifestyles. Along with our partners, we shall conduct public awareness campaigns that highlight the need for better dietary decisions.

Priority Area - Physical Activity

Mass media will be the main avenue for communicating the importance of physical activity and physical activity programs and events in the community. This will allow residents to gain information on opportunities to be active within the community.

Priority Area - Prevention

Mass media will be the greatest resource for conveyance of prevention messages that will educate the community on the importance of individual healthcare.

Parks, Recreation, Fitness and Sports

The parks, recreation, fitness and sports (PRFS) sector of society is designed to provide fun and meaningful channels by which individuals can engage in physical activity. From playgrounds to community sports groups to trails to gyms, this sector contributes to physical activity in a variety of ways.¹⁶

Unfortunately, these services disproportionately increase physical activity in affluent areas, as opposed to low-income areas. Therefore, those living in poor neighborhoods are often at greater risk for physical inactivity than those living in higher-income communities.¹⁷

Priority Area - Physical Activity

Physical Activity is of utmost importance to creating a healthier community.

- The Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council will encourage community groups and organizations to utilize the communities existing resources for physical activity.
- The Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council will support events that promote a healthy lifestyle through physical activity for the entire community.



Public Health

According to the American Public Health Association, there are three primary goals of public health:

1. Prevention: Preventing disease and promoting healthy habits and good health.
2. Policy Development: Advocating for evidence-based policies which promote health.
3. Surveillance: Monitoring health of populations and keeping track of trends or epidemics (such as obesity).¹⁸

The National Physical Activity plan notes the importance of public health- both as a profession and as a practice- with regards to physical activity interventions. There are several strategies offered within this sector which the Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council would like to pursue.

The first strategy is to disseminate tools and resources important to promoting physical activity. In addition to this physical activity plan, the Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council is working closely with many community public health providers. This partnership will facilitate dissemination between evidence-based

research on increasing physical activity and physical activity practitioners or interested individuals.

The second strategy is to monitor policies developed on the local or state-wide level, and advocate those which promote active lifestyles. In order to advocate for policy implementation, an advocacy team including representatives from public health, the volunteer community, and concerned communities will form. This team will keep track of positive proposals, as well as advocate to keep these proposals active.^{19,20}

Recently, there have been a number of proposed physical activity policies within the City of Laredo; these include transportation (safe routes to school, complete streets), education (before and after school physical activity programs, physical education programs), and business and industry (worksite wellness incentives). One policy which we would like to highlight is the following:

City of Laredo Vending Machine Policy – This policy requires City of Laredo’s Vending Machines to offer healthy choices in at least 30% of vending machine products.

Priority Area – Nutrition

The Laredo Active Living Mayor’s Wellness Council will encourage the community to choose healthy foods as often as possible.

- Mass media campaign targeting all sectors of the community will provide educational messages stressing the importance of good nutrition.

Priority Area – Physical Activity

The Laredo Active Living Mayor’s Wellness Council will encourage physical activity in the community in all forms.

- The Laredo Active Living Mayor’s Wellness Council, through its members, has plans in place to ensure that the importance of physical activity is relayed to residents of the community of all ages.
- Through the use of Local Health Statistics, the Laredo Active Living Mayor’s

Wellness Council promotes the need for physical activity for the improvement of overall health.

Priority Area – Prevention

The Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council will encourage prevention in the community to improve overall health.

- The Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council will provide free educational opportunities to learn about the message of prevention and to aid the community to find ways to live healthier lives.

Transportation, Land Use and Community Design

One of the great transportation challenges of Laredo is facilitating the transition from passive transport (transportation in a personal vehicle) to active transport (walking, biking, or including some measure of one or both). The option to use active transport depends on several factors: time and motivation, availability of a car, and community design. If a person has a car but it is safe, convenient, and pleasant to walk or bike, the likelihood of active commuting increases. Furthermore, if a person's only option to get to work is to walk through an unsafe neighborhood to get to a bus stop, the likelihood of active transport is increased, but so is the level of unease.

Our goal, then, is to encourage people to actively transport not because they are forced to, but because they want to. In situations where passive transport is not an option, we would like to make active transport as pleasant as possible -in order to encourage more physical activity beyond when it is absolutely necessary.

There are several paths, both short-and long-term, to increasing active commuting. One is the creation of complete streets- streets that allow room for cars and busses, but also bicyclists and pedestrians. Often, bicycle and pedestrian friendly streets include a number of traffic-calming devices, such as bump-outs, changes in street color and texture, and medians. These measures calm the flow

of traffic, making it safer and more convenient for active commuters to reach their destinations.²¹

Priority Area - Physical Activity

The Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council will encourage the community to use active transportation as much as possible.

- The Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council will work with school districts to encourage students who attend schools within walking distance to walk to and from school if possible.
- The Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council will work with business partners to encourage employees that live within walking distance of their jobs to walk if possible.
- Promote the use of bicycling as a form of transportation as well as promote the importance of awareness and safety of bicyclists on the roads.
- The Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council will work with the City of Laredo Planning and Zoning Department to advocate for the development of bike trails in new developments.

Volunteer and Non-Profit

For many people, a physically active lifestyle is fraught with obstacles. Unsafe neighborhoods, limited access to parks or recreational areas, social barriers, and individual physical barriers prevent healthy levels of physical activity.²²

Recognizing that non-profit organizations and volunteer groups often have the capacity and willingness to work with marginalized populations, this section of the Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council Active Living plan focuses on both using this group as advocates for physical activity policy, as well as internal interventions ensuring that these groups are reaching physically inactive people within their organizational scope.

Laredo Active Living Mayor's Wellness Council is fortunate enough to have a very active body of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and volunteer groups which seek to provide physical activity opportunities to those who want them.

These groups include:

Area Health Education Center

City of Laredo Health Department

City of Laredo Parks & Leisure

Doctor's Hospital Laredo

J&S Photo Studio
Laredo Fire Department
Laredo Independent School District
Laredo Medical Center
Mercy Ministries of Laredo/Casa Esperanza
Texas DSHS Office of Border Health
United Independent School District

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