

# Built Environment Policies that Affect Physical Activity

Planning, zoning, and transportation policies directly impact the overall health of all people. That's why it is important to make sure that policy makers are accounting for the long-range and far-reaching effects that planning decisions can have on making physical activity opportunities safe and accessible. By working with local planners to make your school and community more active, you can help ensure that polices that are in place support, encourage, and sustain healthy lifestyles.

## Policies That Affect Physical Activity at School

- *School Siting:* A school's location can have the single biggest impact on accessibility to people walking and biking. Locating new schools within walking or bicycling distance to homes allows more children to be active on a regular basis.
- *Sidewalks and Pathways:* Find out if the sidewalks and pathways on school property properly connect to other sidewalks and pathways. If not, work with the school and local planners to figure out ways to improve connectivity.
- *Bike Racks at School:* Students are more likely to bike to school if they have a safe and secure place to keep their bikes while they are in class.

## Policies that Affect Physical Activity in the Community

- *Parks and Open Space:* Policies that support funding of parks and open space throughout the community directly impact active lifestyles in the community.
- *Bike Racks Around Town:* Bike racks throughout the community will make it easier for all people to participate in active transportation.
- *Zoning:* Zoning codes that only allow for one type of use drastically decrease the ability of most people to walk or bike around the community.
- *Crosswalk Painting:* Paint can easily transform an overlooked crosswalk into a safe and visible area.
- *Street and Sidewalk Maintenance:* Work with the public works department to create a policy stating that maintenance priority will be given to areas in which children frequently walk.
- *Complete Streets Policies:* The design of streets is essential to the livability of the area around the school. A Complete Streets Policy can encourage your community to design and maintain roads for all modes of travel, and ensure that sidewalks and bike lanes are integrated into the roadway network.

### Additional Resources

<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resourcecenter/research/the-influence-of-the-built-environment-on-travel-behaviors>

[http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/barrier\\_policy\\_tip\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/barrier_policy_tip_sheet.pdf)