

health happens here



In Neighborhoods

BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

# Walk this Way

## National grant will improve walkability and health in South Sacramento neighborhoods

BY MIKE BLOUNT

Research shows that living a more active lifestyle can reduce the risk of chronic disease. But what if the neighborhood you live in isn't conducive to safely walking, riding a bicycle or participating in other healthy recreational outdoor activities?

Through a \$150,000 national grant from the American Planning Association, nonprofit WALKSacramento will help address this issue by bringing together local health advocates and design professionals to talk about how to prioritize health in the planning process and improve health and safety in Sacramento communities.

WALKSacramento Project Manager Kirin Kumar says the grant will specifically help update neighborhoods and streets that are currently not designed for pedestrian traffic.

"Especially in South Sacramento, we have streets like Fruitridge Road and 65th Avenue that are really wide and primarily focused on automobile traffic," Kumar says. "There are opportunities there for redesigning the street with an

emphasis on getting around on alternative transportation like biking or walking."

Kirin says improving the safety on these streets could include things like adding light fixtures, bicycle lanes, more crossing opportunities or protected sidewalks.

**"WE WANT EVERYONE TO HAVE COMMUNITIES THAT ARE PLANNED FOR HEALTH."**

*Kirin Kumar, project manager for WALK Sacramento*

But safety is only part of the focus. As a Building Healthy Communities partner, WALKSacramento will also conduct focused outreach to encourage residents to be more active to improve health outcomes in the community and combat chronic diseases. In particular, obesity is a significant health problem. According to a Sierra Health Foundation report, in 2009, 1 in 4 adults was obese in Sacramento County.

Ultimately, Kumar says the goal is to build communities in South Sacramento

that are mixed use, safer and healthier for residents to live in.

"The main focuses of the grant are safety, combating chronic disease and improving economic opportunity," Kumar says. "Communities that are mixed use perform better than traditionally designed communities and bring in private investment. Millennials and older folks are also choosing to move into communities that are more mixed use."

Kumar says encouraging residents to utilize alternative modes of transportation, like riding a bicycle, using public transit and walking, also helps to address the impact of climate change by reducing the prevalence of driving.

"We're trying to create change on two levels," Kumar says. "We want to get planners and health professionals to have more effective conversations with each other on how to incorporate public health into the planning process, and we want to encourage advocacy for healthy communities. We want everyone to have communities that are planned for health."



Kirin Kumar, project manager for WALK Sacramento, says a recent \$150,000 grant will help address walking and biking issues in South Sacramento, leading not only to safer streets, but better health outcomes for residents. Photo by Laura Marie Anthony

### BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.

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Your ZIP code shouldn't predict how long you'll live – but it does. Staying healthy requires much more than doctors and diets. Every day, our surroundings and activities affect how long – and how well – we'll live.

Health Happens in Neighborhoods. Health Happens in Schools.  
Health Happens with Prevention.

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