

Public Health Crossroads: Sustainable Growth for Healthier Fresno Neighborhoods

California’s groundbreaking Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SB 375) offers the San Joaquin Valley region an exciting opportunity to embark on a healthier, clean air future. By adopting and acting on strong Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS), local communities can become vibrant and healthy places for people to live, shop, work, play and study.

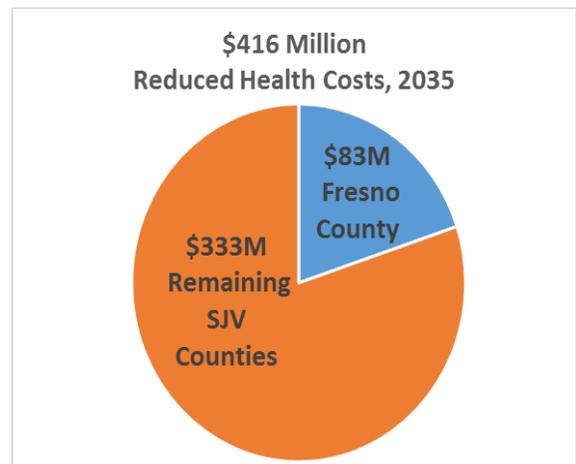
With community planning that prioritizes walking, biking, transit and infill development, Fresno County residents could see significant reductions in respiratory health impacts and costs related to traffic pollution. A new vision for healthier growth is necessary and should prioritize investment in existing communities and real transportation alternatives to driving, through more walkable, bike-friendly, diverse housing and transit-accessible neighborhoods.

What is SB 375?

Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg), known as the **Sustainable Communities Act**, promotes healthy growth by requiring a blueprint for coordinated land use and transportation planning called a **“Sustainable Communities Strategy”** (SCS). Fresno County’s Council of Governments will adopt a plan of **locally generated strategies** in June to meet regional climate pollution reductions targets.

More walkable Fresno County communities could reduce pollution-related health impacts by \$83 Million

The American Lung Association in California has compiled new data on health outcomes and costs based on the Council of Infill Builders’ 2013 *A Home for Everyone* report, and compares a scenario with a greater emphasis on growth that is more walkable and interconnected with existing neighborhoods to a business as usual scenario. A future in which new growth in Fresno County is 40 percent more walkable and interconnected with existing built neighborhoods, compared to the currently considered Fresno SCS scenario, could reduce traffic-pollution health impacts by 27 percent. Compared to historical planning, this scenario could reduce health costs by \$83 million in 2035 alone. Valleywide, this healthier future growth scenario could reduce these health costs by \$416 million compared to historical planning. Growth that revitalizes existing neighborhoods, emphasizes active transportation and locally accessible services supports good health for all.



San Joaquin Valley leaders have a choice. They can set a new course for healthier development, or follow the past trend of inefficient growth that will cement asthma-causing traffic pollution, obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic illnesses into the fabric of our communities, and particularly into communities that can least afford it.

Healthier Growth will benefit San Joaquin Valley Residents

Reduce Health Damages by \$416 Million in 2035

A focus on making existing communities more vibrant with real walking, biking and transit opportunities could help reduce pollution-related health costs in Fresno County in 2035:

- \$83 Million in reduced traffic pollution-related health and economic impacts
- 4,600 fewer asthma attacks and other respiratory health impacts
- 789 fewer lost work days

Health incidences include only traffic pollution-related health impacts and deaths (e.g. asthma attacks, bronchitis and other respiratory symptoms, ER visits, hospitalizations, heart attacks, work loss days). Impacts reported here do not include the significant physical activity-related health conditions or deaths (e.g. obesity, diabetes, heart disease, mental health, cancers) or traffic safety related injury or deaths (e.g. bike, pedestrian, motorist) that can be avoided through safer, more active community designs.

WHY WE NEED HEALTHY GROWTH

Fresno County faces serious air pollution and illness burdens related to the built environment

Air Pollution: San Joaquin Valley communities face air pollution levels unparalleled in the United States. Fresno ranks as the second-most polluted American city by deadly particulates. It is well documented that air pollution burdens Valley residents, impacting children's genetics and immune systems, including \$6 billion in annual costs to the economy, \$135 million in annual hospitalization charges for asthma, and taking the lives of 1,500 Valley residents per year.

- **All Valley Counties** have higher rates of asthma than the state average
- 23.6 percent of **Fresno County** children have been diagnosed with asthma

State of the Air 2013 Most Polluted Cities in America by Short-term Particulates	
City	US Rank 2013
Bakersfield	1
Fresno	2
Hanford	3
Modesto	4
Merced	6
Stockton	12
Visalia	14

Watch for State of the Air 2013: April 30, 2014

Illness Rates	Obesity	Childhood Obesity	Asthma	Childhood Asthma	Diabetes
California	23.5	36.5	13.7	15.4	7.7
Fresno	29.4	40.4	17.3	23.6	9.0

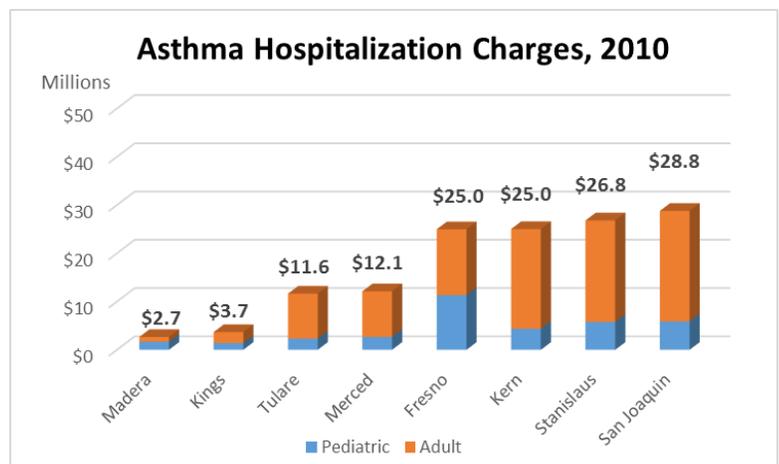
Sources: California Department of Public Health, San Joaquin County Dept. of Health

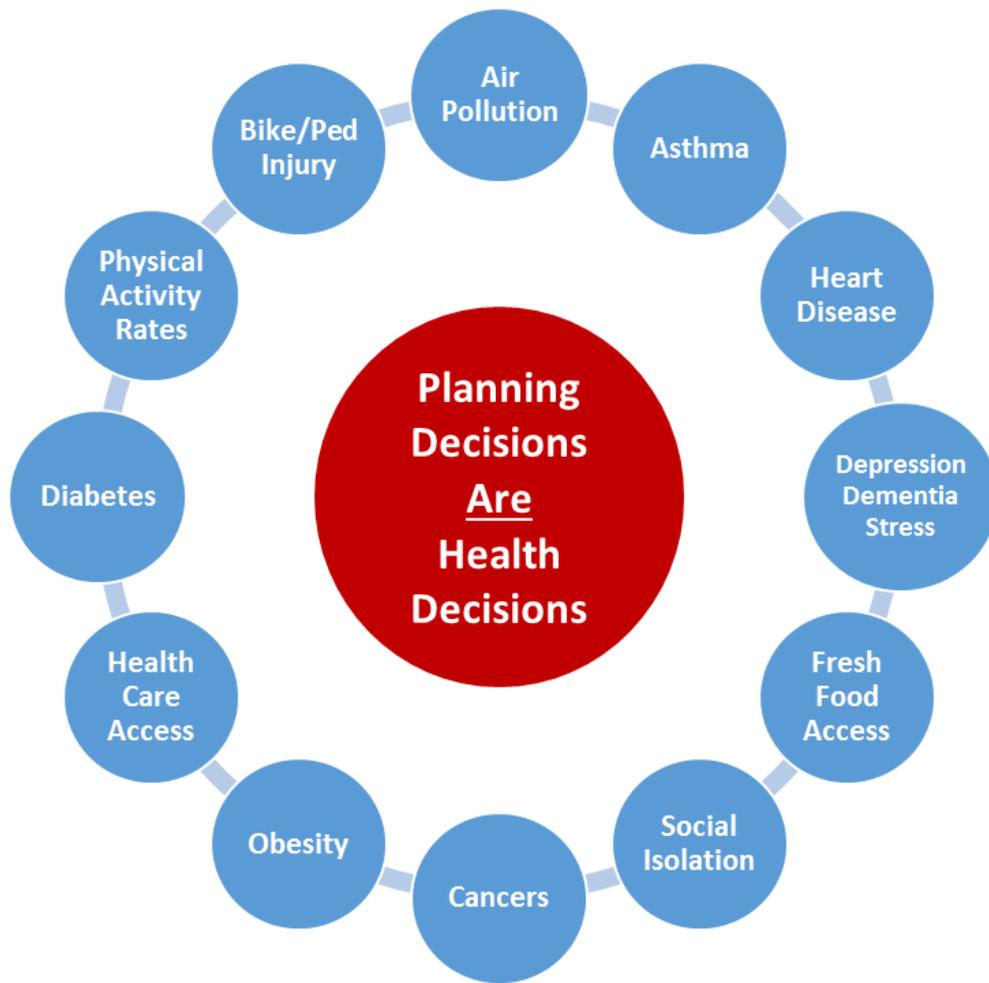
Chronic Disease: Beyond air pollution-related impacts, Valley residents are disproportionately impacted by chronic disease burdens that are related to the built environment, including heart disease, diabetes and obesity.

- Forty percent of children in **Fresno County** are obese.
- **Fresno County's** death rate due to heart disease is higher than the state average and has the 7th highest rate of death due to diabetes.

"As an asthma and allergy specialist, I see the undue burden of air pollution on my patients' health. It is critical that we grow healthy communities that reduce the need to drive and provide more transportation options to create cleaner air and improved breathing for everyone."

Dr. Praveen Buddiga, MD, Fresno





WE CAN PLAN FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

Fresno County residents deserve healthier neighborhoods than past plans have delivered

As the Fresno Council of Governments moves toward adopting its initial SCS plan in 2014, it is critical that our elected leaders seize the opportunity to plan for a healthier future:

- Recognize that we can't afford another generation of unhealthy planning
- Adopt a strong plan that moves beyond "business-as-usual" planning of the past
- Assess active transportation infrastructure needs in disadvantaged Fresno County communities lacking healthier transportation options
- Support a local government grants program to help make existing neighborhoods more walkable, bikable, and transit friendly
- Prioritize growth and transportation investments to serve existing downtowns and community cores, rather than fringe areas or new towns that encroach on critical natural and agricultural resources
- Promote infill, transit oriented development and access to transit, Bus Rapid Transit and other innovative cleaner air transportation options for people of all incomes
- Focus road investments on "fix it first" maintenance, rather than building expensive new roads
- Front-load investments that enhance walking, biking and transit options
- Support more efficient and zero- and near-zero emission freight strategies
- Invest in planning models such as UrbanFootprint that can estimate health impacts and benefits of future planning scenarios

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