

September 12, 2011

Councilmember Zachary M. Klein  
90 W. Broad Street  
Second Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Councilmember Klein,

The Columbus Public Health Healthy Places program has a mission to increase healthy and active living by establishing development policies and practices to reduce negative health impacts and by creating places that foster physical activity as a part of everyday life. Neighborhood plans are a key component to ensuring the future built environment includes active living features through pedestrian and bicycle amenities, infrastructure and design.

This letter is to express Columbus Public Health's support for the Near Southside Area Plan. This plan is tentatively scheduled for a second reading on September 19, 2011. The Healthy Places program has reviewed the plan and found several positive and innovative development principles, guidelines and strategies that support a built environment for safe active living.

Active living is important to Columbus Public Health for a number of reasons. First, there is an increase in obesity and chronic diseases- both of which can be reduced or prevented with physical activity. Second, an active living lifestyle means people are driving their cars less. This improves air quality which is good for everyone, but especially for those with respiratory diseases. In addition, as we improve infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists we make the built environment safer and therefore reduce injuries and fatalities. Finally, while we want everyone to adopt an active living lifestyle by choice, for some there is not an option. Improvements to make it easier to walk, bike and use public transportation also make it easier and safer for those residents who do not have access to a car.

The Near Southside neighborhood statistics show 60.0% of neighborhood adults are obese or overweight and 10.2% have diabetes. The prevalence is higher than Franklin County which is 59.1% and 7.3% respectively. The asthma prevalence for the neighborhood is 8.3% for adults, which is on par with Franklin County (8.0%). Additionally, 54.9% of Near Southside residents meet the recommended amount of exercise (30 minutes a day on five or more days of the week). The Near Southside Area Plan contributes to improving public health by preserving and enhancing a built environment that fosters physical activity. The ability to be physically active in your neighborhood reduces the need for a car and increases physical activity. Examples of this include:

240 Parsons Avenue  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-5331

Teresa C. Long, MD, MPH  
Health Commissioner

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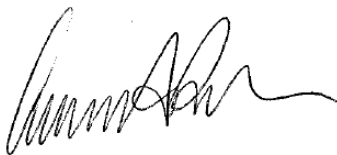
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- Mixed use development should be common on the Near Southside Area's primary corridors (Livingston and Parsons Avenues) and include multifamily housing, retail, offices, and other services. The Plan highlights 2 mixed use development opportunity sites at Champion and Livingston. Mixed use development encourages walking and biking to daily destinations.
- Highest residential densities should be focused on the area's primary corridors in order to support transit and neighborhood retail, encourage a more walkable environment, and preserve the nature of the existing neighborhoods.
- Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements are recommended to build upon the existing street grid.
- The plan has recommendations to adopt the Urban Commercial Overlay and the Community Commercial Overlay for specific streets. These overlays ensure provisions for pedestrians and cyclists as the area develops.
- A neighborhood park, community park, or recreation facility (public or private) should be located within one - half mile of all residents. One-half mile is a very walkable or bikeable distance.
- The Plan includes New Urban Design Guidelines, which promote aesthetic improvements throughout the area. Aesthetically pleasing places are perceived as being safer, encourage social interaction and are therefore more walkable.
- Principal 5 states "People will be able to get around by walking, car, transit or bicycle." The Principal places an emphasis on guidelines to make walking and biking safer and more convenient for pedestrians and cyclists and well as the cars they share the road with.
- Development Principal 6 states "Development and public improvements should be designed to be walkable and bikeable and encourage personal interaction and active lifestyles."

Moreover, it is important to note that the Near Southside neighborhood had a large public input component. The fact that residents of the Near Southside neighborhood asked for these active living principles shows our community is ready and waiting for improved infrastructure and development that supports pedestrian and cyclists activity.

I look forward to seeing this plan come to fruition and making Columbus even more of an active, vibrant city.

Sincerely,



Betsy A. Pandora, MCRP  
Healthy Places Coordinator

cc: Dr. Teresa Long, Health Commissioner, Columbus Public Health  
Vince Papsidero, Administrator, Planning Division, Department of Development  
Hearcel F. Craig, Health, Housing & Human Services Chair, Columbus City Council