

November 9, 2012

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 that reduce negative health impacts and by creating places that foster physical activity as a part of everyday life. Updates and amendments to neighborhood plans are key 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 South Linden Plan Amendment. This plan is tentatively scheduled for a second reading on November 12, 2012. 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 and 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 lifestyle means people are driving their cars less. This improves air quality which is good for everyone, but especially for those with respiratory diseases. Additionally, as we improve infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, we make the built environment safer, therefore reducing injuries and fatalities. Finally, while we want everyone to adopt an active living lifestyle by choice, for some there is no other 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, thereby improving health equity in our community.

The South Linden neighborhood statistics show that 65% of neighborhood adults are overweight or obese and 15.8% have diabetes. The prevalence is higher than totals for Franklin County which are 63.9% and 9.8%, respectively. The asthma prevalence for the neighborhood is 8.9% for adults and is slightly higher than Franklin County (8.0%). However, only 47% of South Linden residents get the recommended amount of physical activity (30 minutes a day on five or more days of the week), with 22% reporting that they are not physically active at all.

The South Linden Plan Amendment contributes to improving public health by preserving and enhancing a built environment that fosters physical activity. The ability to be physically active in one's neighborhood reduces the need for a car, improves air quality, and reduces chronic diseases.

Examples include:

- Recommendations for sidewalks, bike lanes or other connections to the proposed Westerville to Arena District bike trail proposed within the planning area. These recommendations add to a built environment that encourages biking and walking in daily life.

- Recommends that gardens be supported and operated by nearby residents are encouraged in appropriate locations and sustainable numbers. This allows the community to further develop a local healthy fresh food source and is an important tool to combat chronic disease.
- The Plan has recommendations to adopt the Urban Commercial Overlay or Community Commercial Overlay for E. Hudson Street west of Homestead Drive. These overlays ensure provisions for pedestrians and cyclists as the area develops and supports a continued mix of uses. Mixed use development encourages walking and biking to daily destinations.
- The Plan includes urban design recommendations, which promote aesthetic improvements throughout the area. Aesthetically pleasing places are perceived as being safer, encourage social interaction and are therefore more walkable.

Moreover, it is important to note that the South Linden neighborhood had a large public input component. The fact that residents of the South Linden neighborhood asked for these active living principles shows our community is ready and waiting for improved infrastructure and development that supports pedestrian and cyclist 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  
Columbus Public Health

cc: Dr. Teresa Long, Health Commissioner, Columbus Public Health  
Vince Papsidero, Administrator, Planning Division, Department of Development  
Priscilla R. Tyson, Health and Human Services Chair, Columbus City Council

