

OPEN STREETS AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

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What are Healthiest Practice Open Streets programs?

'Open Streets' programs temporarily open selected streets to people by closing them to cars. By doing this, the streets become places where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can come out and improve their health.

With well-planned routes, health-focused activity hubs, and frequently occurring program dates Open Streets programs have the power to change a city's culture of health. We call this kind of Open Streets program 'Healthiest Practice Open Streets'. By participating in Healthiest Practice Open Streets regularly, people can begin to change their habits and a city can change its culture of health.

This fact sheet is part of a series to promote the benefits of Healthiest Practice Open Streets programs. Find them all at www.healthiestpracticeopenstreets.org

Building Community by Opening the Streets

Open Streets initiatives are typically recognized for creating a fun and inviting outdoor environment for physical activity. A less commonly acknowledged benefit is the social one—when implemented regularly, these programs can enrich the social fabric of communities and enhance quality of life for participants.

Participants who may not frequently travel in their neighborhood on foot or by bike have the chance to engage in physical activity without safety concerns while also mingling with neighbors and friends.⁴ Open Streets programs can facilitate increased interactions among neighbors, which can strengthen community cohesion and improve well-being. Open Streets programs can also develop social cohesion by improving safety and perceptions of safety, both important factors when encouraging individuals to engage in more physical activity in their neighborhood parks or walkways.^{5,6}

Social Impacts: By the Numbers

- **89%** of respondents in St. Louis, MO said Open Streets programs positively impacted their feelings for their city.¹
- **91%** of respondents in St. Louis also felt very safe along their route.¹
- **15%** of respondents in Chicago, IL chose social networking as their favorite part about Open Streets.²
- **26.4%** of respondents in Fort Collins, CO came to Open Streets to build community.³

Necessary Considerations

Open Streets programs present an opportunity to impact mental health and well-being by enabling social interaction. Programs that are regularly implemented can best support communities by keeping in mind the following key considerations:

Intentionally plan routes through diverse neighborhoods in order to link communities and engage a variety of populations.¹

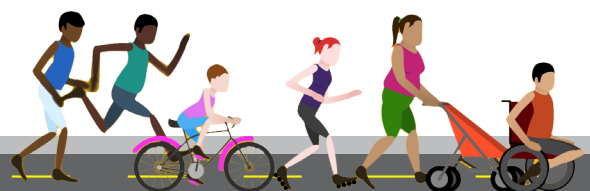
Previous Open Streets programs have intentionally designed routes to link diverse neighborhoods, even if the route only runs a few miles.^{2,7} This creates opportunities for a culturally and economically diverse array of community members, young and old, to enjoy their own streets and to venture into other neighborhoods. Routing through diverse communities also creates easy access to programming for those individuals who may be most at risk for chronic health conditions, and are also most likely to experience health inequities and limited access to health, financial, and physical activity promoting resources.

Involve community residents and local organizations in the planning and selection of programmed activities.⁸

Working with community members to determine the best route and programming can increase feelings of investment in a program's success. This participation can also empower and motivate individuals to advocate on behalf of broader community health issues beyond the Open Streets initiative.² Additionally, allowing community members to select the programming can ensure that activities selected are culturally appropriate and more widely utilized by participants.⁹

Engage in effective and culturally appropriate outreach so that residents know that these programs are designed for everyone.¹⁰

Some communities experiencing changes as a result of gentrification may be less inclined to participate in an Open Streets program if they believe it is "exclusive" or intended for another population.¹¹ Promoting the program to underrepresented communities, through both trusted partners and culturally-specific media, is a way to ensure program inclusiveness and diverse program participation.¹²



Citations

¹ Hipp, J. A., Eyler, A. A., & Kuhlberg, J. A. (2012). Target Population Involvement in Urban Ciclovias: A Preliminary Evaluation of St. Louis Open Streets. *Journal of Urban Health*, 90(6), 1010–1015.

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³ Heimann, N. (2014) Evaluation of Open Streets: A comprehensive report of Fort Collins' first Open Streets event. Colorado School of Public Health. <http://www.fcgov.com/openstreets/pdf/2014-comp-eval-report.pdf>

⁴ Rios, R., Aiken, L. S., & Zautra, A. J. (2012). Neighborhood contexts and the mediating role of neighborhood social cohesion on health and psychological distress among Hispanic and non-Hispanic residents. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 43(1), 50-61.

⁵ Open Streets: A Healthy Epidemic

⁶ Wilson, D. K., Kirtland, K. A., Ainsworth, B. E., & Addy, C. L. (2004). Socioeconomic status and perceptions of access and safety for physical activity. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 28(1), 20-28.

⁷ Engelberg, J. K., Carlson, J. A., Black, M. L., Ryan, S., & Sallis, J. F. (2014). Ciclovía participation and impacts in San Diego, CA: The first CicloSDias. *Preventive Medicine*, 69, Supplement, S66–S73.

⁸ Hipp, J. A., Eyler, A. A., Zieff, S. G., & Samuelson, M. A. (2013). Taking Physical Activity to the Streets: The Popularity of Ciclovía and Open Streets Initiatives in the United States. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 28(sp3), S114–S115.

⁹ Hipp, J. A., Eyler, A. A., Zieff, S. G., & Samuelson, M. A. (2013). Taking Physical Activity to the Streets: The Popularity of Ciclovía and Open Streets Initiatives in the United States. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 28(sp3), S114–S115.

¹⁰ Carlson, J., Sallis, J., Engelberg, J., Black, M., Sanchez, J., & Ryan, S. (2014). Evaluation of San Diego's First CicloSDias Open Streets Event. Retrieved from http://sallis.ucsd.edu/Documents/Pubs_documents/cicloSDias%20full%20report%20FINAL%20_13_2014.pdf

¹¹ Gomez-Feliciano, L., McCreary, L. L., Sadowsky, R., Peterson, S., Hernandez, A., McElmurry, B. J., & Park, C. G. (2009). Active living Logan Square: joining together to create opportunities for physical activity. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 37(6), S361-S367

¹² Open Streets 2011. (2011). Open and shut: the case for Open Streets in St. Louis. Retrieved from http://activelivingresearch.org/files/Hipp_GrantUpdate_OpenStreets2011_PolicyBrief.pdf