MEMORANDUM

TO: CITY COUNCIL
FROM: WHITNEY McDONALD, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION
AGENDA ITEM 11.a. – MARCH 10, 2020 CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION APPROVING THE
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTYWIDE REGIONAL COMPACT TO
ADDRESS HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS AND
AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO SIGN THE COMPACT

DATE: MARCH 9, 2020

Attached is correspondence received today regarding the above-referenced agenda item.

cc: City Manager
    City Attorney
    City Clerk
    Public Review Binder
Mayors and Councilmembers  
Cities of San Luis Obispo County  

Subject: Letter of Support for San Luis Obispo Countywide Regional Compact  

Dear San Luis Obispo County Mayors and Councilmembers:  

It is our privilege to address your councils on an issue of significant importance to the future of our region. Formerly known as the Hourglass Project, our organization is called REACH – a Regional Economic Action Coalition. As an Economic Impact organization, we are uniting public, private and civic leaders across the Central Coast of California, from Vandenberg Air Force Base to Camp Roberts, encompassing 12 cities, 2 counties and about a half a million residents to ensure current and future generations have the opportunity to thrive on the Central Coast. 

Housing and infrastructure are critical to the future of our region, because the talented members of our workforce and our private sector job creators depend on long-range, regional planning, prioritization and investment in infrastructure and housing. These are the foundations of our community and our economy.

In December 2018, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors approved a historic housing package that addressed a number of key policies that impact housing in our region. One of these items was the adoption of a county-led regional infrastructure and housing strategic planning effort. This effort was resourced by the board with a full-time equivalent position to focus solely on this countywide collaborative effort.

Over the past year, the administrative officer directed the actions of the principal analyst charged with working within the county, with cities and multiple partner organizations to set a vision for this bold and critically important effort. This effort has resulted in a framework and broad support among government and private sector stakeholders, alike.

The compact under your consideration is enthusiastically supported by the REACH Board of Directors, and key business leaders from San Luis Obispo County and Northern Santa Barbara County.

We urge your support for the compact. By signing this compact, your demonstrated leadership and commitment to working together will have a lasting impact on the long-term interests of our community. As this regional planning work progresses, we encourage the Cities and San Luis Obispo County to include North Santa Barbara County in this important effort, because jobs and housing are independent of our city/county boundaries. By broadening this countywide effort, together, we can take a necessary step in realizing our full potential to create a Central Coast where residents have an opportunity to thrive.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 805-476-0412, or Andrew Hackleman at 805-391-4580.

Sincerely,

Melissa James  
President/CEO  
REACH
Dear Ms. Wetmore,

The Healthy Communities Work Group would like to submit the attached letter of support for item 11A on the 3/10/20 City Council Agenda: *Consideration of Adoption Of Resolution Approving The San Luis Obispo Countywide Regional Compact To Address Housing and Infrastructure Needs and Authorizing the Mayor to Sign the Compact.*

We request that our comment is distributed to Council Members ahead of tomorrow’s meeting.

Thank you,

**Kayla Rutland**  
**Community Wellness Health Education Specialist**  
County of San Luis Obispo Health Agency | Public Health  
(805) 781-1560 | krutland@co.slo.ca.us  
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City of Arroyo Grande Council  
215 E Branch Street  
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420

RE: San Luis Obispo Countywide Regional Compact

Dear Council Members of Arroyo Grande,

The Healthy Communities Work Group is a collaboration between public health officials, local planning and transportation officials, community-based organizations, academia, and community members, working to improve health through community design. We provide research and evidence-based recommendations from a health perspective on proposed land use projects, ordinance and general plan amendments, and special projects.

The Healthy Communities Work Group strongly supports the adoption of the San Luis Obispo Countywide Regional Compact.

Lack of housing availability and affordability negatively impacts physical and mental health (see attachment, “Health and Housing”). In light of the critical connection between health and housing, San Luis Obispo’s Community Health Improvement Plan has identified this issue as a key priority, and set a community goal to “improve access to affordable, attainable, safe and supportive housing”¹.

The Regional Compact provides a united regional framework to address housing and infrastructure challenges. The compact sets the tone and goals for future plans and actions among the local agencies. It recognizes that people, water, transportation, connectivity, and housing form the foundation of the region’s healthy, livable communities and thriving economic opportunity. We agree that prioritizing investment in infrastructure and housing will be key to meeting the State’s requirements.

The Healthy Communities Work group urges the City Council to adopt the Regional Compact in an effort to unite around common infrastructure and housing goals, and ultimately advance the wellbeing of all residents.

Sincerely,

Chuck Stevenson

Chuck Stevenson, AICP  
Chair, Healthy Communities Work Group

¹SLO County Community Health Improvement Plan,  
http://www.slohealthcounts.org/tiles/index/display?alias=CHIP
RE: San Luis Obispo Countywide Regional Compact

Dear Council Members of Arroyo Grande,

The Healthy Communities Work Group is a collaboration between public health officials, local planning and transportation officials, community-based organizations, academia, and community members, working to improve health through community design. We provide research and evidence-based recommendations from a health perspective on proposed land use projects, ordinance and general plan amendments, and special projects.

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1SLO County Community Health Improvement Plan, http://www.slohealthcounts.org/tiles/index/display?alias=CHIP

HEAL-SLO is a community coalition addressing complex and overlapping health challenges through integrated solutions. In carrying out that mission, a subcommittee called the Healthy Communities Work Group provides responses to Planning staff from a healthy community’s perspective on proposed land development projects, ordinance and general plan amendments, and special projects.
Health and housing are directly connected. In San Luis Obispo County, housing affordability is a crisis that shapes home and neighborhood conditions and affects the overall ability of residents to make healthy choices.

Neighborhood Conditions: A neighborhood’s physical attributes can enhance health by facilitating walkability/bikeability and access to public transportation, parks, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Social and community attributes, such as segregation and the concentration of poverty, can negatively impact health.

- The accessibility, availability, and affordability of healthy food options increases likelihoods that residents will have a balanced, nutritious diet.
- Pedestrian and bike-friendly neighborhood design reduces car usage, supports transit ridership, and improves air quality.
- In addition to promoting individual health, social cohesion fosters community health by building community trust; therefore increasing neighborhood safety, reducing crime, and increasing pedestrian activity.
  - In San Luis Obispo County, only 28.8% of adults walk regularly (150 minutes a week or more) [3].
  - The California Office of Traffic Safety ranked San Luis Obispo County as the 6th worst county in the state for bicycle safety based on collision numbers [4].

Housing Affordability & Stability: Access to affordable housing enables families to spend more on food, health care, and medical insurance, which improves health outcomes. Housing stability encourages residents to develop roots and build community.

- Adults living in unaffordable housing are more likely to describe themselves as being in fair or poor health compared to similar individuals living in affordable housing.
- Unstable housing and crowding are linked to elevated stress levels, depression, an increase in behavioral and mental health issues, and an increased exposure to infectious disease.
- In San Luis Obispo County, 51.8% of renters spend 30% or more of household income on rent [1].

San Luis Obispo County ranked as the 6th least-affordable housing market in the nation in 2018.

National Association of Home Builders & Wells Fargo [2]

Conditions within the Home: Well-constructed and well-maintained housing can reduce health issues associated with poor-quality housing, including: physiological health (lead, radon, mold, extreme temperatures); psychological health (noise, inadequate light, security); and safety (falls, fires).

- Unaffordable housing forces some residents to accept unhealthy or unsafe housing conditions, causing negative health outcomes such as asthma, lead poisoning, burns and falls.
- Researchers have documented that the current housing stock is ill-equipped to accommodate the growing share of older and impaired adults, indicating an increasing need for home modifications that allow for maximum residential mobility as homeowners age.
- In San Luis Obispo County, 23.7% of residents face “severe housing problems”, meaning one or more of the following: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen, or lack of plumbing [5].
“Now, in light of the growing body of evidence about the many ways that housing can affect health, it is clear that strategies must be multifaceted — focusing on improving the physical quality of housing, on strengthening health-promoting social as well as physical conditions in neighborhoods, and on increasing access to affordable housing for all Americans.”

–Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Healthy Communities Work Group presents the 5 P’s framework as a starting point for cities and communities in San Luis Obispo County to limit housing instability and improve the health of our residents:

1. **Protection** of existing residents by ensuring renters can remain in their homes instead of facing the health impacts of housing instability or displacement.

2. **Preservation** of existing housing at all affordability levels despite changing economic conditions. By rehabilitating aging or substandard housing, residents can remain active and engaged in the communities they call home.

3. **Production** of new housing units at a diversity of affordability levels. Local jurisdictions can make balanced housing production a priority through regulations and incentives for developers and by using public resources for housing development. By implementing creative solutions, such as repurposing underutilized properties, housing can be made available at a range of affordability levels.

4. **Participation** of residents and community leaders in decision-making processes that impact their housing stability. When residents are engaged and invested in the planning process, health outcomes improve.

5. **Placement** of housing near transit, jobs and amenities. Homes in SLO County must support residents’ health in a comprehensive, holistic way by providing easy access to healthy food and physical activity opportunities and acting as a buffer from sources of pollution.

There are many solutions to our community’s diverse housing challenges. By implementing a multifaceted approach, San Luis Obispo County can improve the wellbeing of residents through equitable access to healthy housing.

Citations:

1. American Community Survey. Data Collected 2012-2016. SLO Health Counts
2. National Association of Homebuilders & Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity Index.

Resources:

Healthy Communities Dashboard, SLO Health Counts


Housing and health: new opportunities for dialogue and action. National Center for Healthy Housing.

The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Health: A Research Summary. Center for Housing Policy. 2015

To learn more about the Healthy Communities Work Group visit www.HEALSLO.com or call 805-781-1560