



Photo of the Loop in Tucson, Arizona. / Visit Tucson



WILLAMETTE PARTNERSHIP

Tucson

Health and Outdoors Opportunities Assessment

More Access to Green Space, Better Health

Did you know your zip code determines more of your health than your genetic code? Where and how we live in and around Tucson makes a difference in how long we live and the cost of our healthcare. When more people have access to trees, trails, parks, and other natural areas, there are measurable improvements in mental health, physical activity, social cohesion, air quality and other social determinants of health (See Fig. 1). **This report summarizes how partners in Tucson can plan, build, and maintain green spaces in ways that promote better health.**



Figure 1. Social determinants of health refer to the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, and work. Health organizations are increasingly looking upstream to these determinants to create community wellness, prevent chronic disease, and increase health care effectiveness.

PRIORITY HEALTH NEEDS FOR PIMA COUNTY

Since 2010, the Pima County Health Department has collaborated with nonprofit organizations, governmental entities, tribal governments, local hospitals, community health workers, and other key community stakeholders to develop health needs assessments for Pima County. The county's 2015 Community Health Needs Assessment identified the following as health priorities for the county:

- Anxiety and Depression
- Substance Misuse and Mental Health
- Injuries and Accidents
 - Youth violence prevention

- Fall prevention among older adults
- Road safety for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians
- Diabetes

To address the priority health needs of the County, a community-based initiative called Healthy Pima was launched. The initiative leverages support from a wide array of over 400 diverse community partners to improve health outcomes through collaboration and collective impact.

OPPORTUNITIES TO LINK GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE TO HEALTH

In 2016, Tucson’s nonprofit hospitals spent an estimated \$11,448,675 on community health improvement. Hospitals and the county health department are already spending money on activities such as:

- The Healthy Pima Initiative supports improvements to local infrastructure that promotes the health and wellbeing of drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, and other roadway users.
- Pima County recently completed The Loop, a 131-mile multi-use trail that spans the metropolitan area, allowing cyclists, pedestrians, joggers, and equestrians an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful Sonoran Desert on paved, vehicle-free pathways.
- The City of Tucson recently adopted a Complete Streets policy. The Pima County Health Department and the Healthy Pima Initiative are currently supporting measures to adopt and implement a Complete Streets policy for Pima County.
- In 2016, Tucson’s nonprofit hospitals spent an estimated \$11,448,675 on community health improvements. These investments in the community are contributing to a variety of programs focusing on health promotion and community wellness.
- A new Community Health Needs Assessment for Pima County is currently underway. A major focus of this assessment will be exploring the social determinants of health, which will include the upstream factors that influence the health of residents in Pima County.

Rank	Hospital	Total Allocated for Community Health Improvement
1	Tucson Medical Center	\$5,552,765
2	Carondelet St. Mary’s	\$2,947,955 (Estimate*)
2	Carondelet St. Joseph’s	\$2,947,955 (Estimate*)

* Carondelet hospitals’ dollar figures are based on 2014 reports regarding their three hospitals, one of which is not in Tucson.

With some adjustments to existing programs, more and better access to green space could create improved health outcomes. The following are some examples of recommended actions:

- Expand partners with multi-sector organizations when exploring the impact of green stormwater infrastructure investments on population health.
- Begin to frame green stormwater infrastructure through a public health lens.
- Conduct health needs assessments to examine health disparities and health issues that affect green stormwater infrastructure.
- Engage in participatory planning that includes community members to design and implement green stormwater infrastructure that ensures physical and cultural accessibility.

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