

The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation Annenberg Foundation

A Place for Health: Land Use Strategies to Create Vibrant Los Angeles Communities

LAND USE FUNDERS FORUM ~ OCTOBER 8, 2013



On October 8, 2013, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation and the Annenberg Foundation convened Los Angeles area foundations and informants involved in land use to explore roles for funders in supporting healthy land use.

This was the second such meeting hosted by The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation. In the first, in 2011, the Foundation assembled experts to consider ways to create healthier environments for physical activity and access to healthy food in Los Angeles County. That meeting was summarized in a previous report (<http://www.thegilbertfoundation.org/websiteresources/HealthySpaces.pdf>). The 2013 meeting reported here—co-hosted with the Annenberg Foundation, a long-time supporter of creating community spaces for physical activity and play—grew out of The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation’s ongoing commitment to engage colleagues in the philanthropic sector around the needs and opportunities for healthy land use.

Parks and Health

There is an important correlation between physical health and parks and open space: where there are few places for physical activity, children are less healthy. The dramatic increase in overweight and obesity among low-income children can be linked, in part, to the fact that many of these children do not have safe outdoor places to play and exercise. Overweight and obese children have a greater risk for diabetes—now seen in alarming rates among low-income youth—and other lifelong health problems.

Since the late 1970s, children nationwide have lost 25 percent of their playtime and 50 percent of their unstructured outdoor activity. These losses are themselves partly due to a lack of safe places for children to be out-of-doors. One meeting participant

put it succinctly: “Access to an apple, or to a safe place to play, are a greater determinant of health than genetic influences or access to health care.” Indeed, children living within two-thirds of a mile of a park with a playground are five times more likely to maintain a healthy weight.

Foundations and “Healthy Communities”

Foundations have long supported programs that help communities become more engaged in their future, aiding them to develop their voice and define their needs, engage policy makers and community members in economic and community development, and develop leadership among adults and youth. Providing spaces for physical activity that contribute to healthy communities and individuals requires these same activities. In fact, work on healthy land use can be a strategy to address issues of community empowerment. “*Healthy communities* is a very powerful framework,” said one meeting participant. “For projects at the intersection of land use and health, non-health folks are jumping in to collaborate.”

Projects that fit this model include residents transforming blighted vacant land into urban parks and gardens that inspire pride throughout a community; community organizations, university departments, and government offices partnering to help under-resourced neighborhoods create neighborhood-serving open space; production of toolkits that describe best practices for creating small urban recreation spaces; and groups networking to advance a unified policy agenda on land-use issues.

Opportunities for the Philanthropic Community

Recommendations for the philanthropic community bring to light important roles philanthropy can play in supporting healthy land use activities.

OFFER DIRECT FUNDING

- **Policy:** Support policy efforts that facilitate healthy land use. Policy projects educate the public and elected officials on issues and policy needs, set policy agendas, and promote policy solutions that provide funding and governmental support for long-term sustainability. Policy efforts can focus on the city, county, state, or federal level.
- **Parks:** Support projects that develop, restore or maintain community spaces to create access to safe, appealing physical activity.
- **Healthy food access:** Support projects that improve access to healthy food and train low-income community residents to produce or sell healthy food, contributing to community economic development.
- **Best practices:** Support projects in disseminating best practices for healthy land use.

PROVIDE INDIRECT SUPPORT

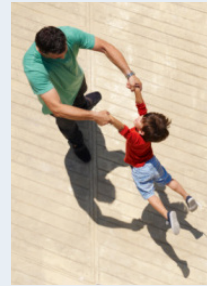
- **Advance policy:** Talk with policy makers about policies and regulations that obstruct healthy land use rather than facilitate development of parks and open space. These discussions can be starting points for creating stronger policies or amending weak ones.
- **Support replicability:** Elevate and disseminate best practices and successes in underserved areas that serve as visible pilots that other municipalities could replicate, including policy solutions that fix broken systems at the local level.
- **Build capacity:** Help build capacity at the community level so that local residents become decision makers not only for activities in community spaces but also for broader city or county-wide engagement.

- **Build bridges:** Facilitate connections between grassroots community organizing efforts working on local projects and land use policy improvement efforts.
- **Encourage collaboration:** Assist collaborative projects promoting healthy land use to facilitate communication among a wide array of stakeholders.

MAXIMIZE FUNDER IMPACT

Funders can also collaborate among themselves in both leading efforts and bringing leverage to advance healthy land use in Los Angeles County. Some suggested actions:

- **Optimize information sharing:** Develop a Web-based repository focused on land-use organizations and initiatives, with updated information and resources, listings of projects and organizations foundations are funding, and a calendar of meetings for funders.
- **Co-fund projects:** Design cooperative funding that helps build a larger base of support while decreasing the risk on an individual foundation for innovative but untested approaches.
- **Coordinate seed money:** Pool small amounts to provide seed funding for grassroots initiatives.
- **Advance public education:** Promote education on the intersection of policy and community engagement, demonstrating the benefits of healthy land use policy.



BECOME MORE ACTIVE

To receive updates about meetings and developments, request a presentation to inform board and staff about current healthy land use projects, or learn about organizations working on healthy land use, contact Lisa Craypo (lisa@adlucemconsulting.com).

Land Use Funders Forum Participants

INFORMANTS

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MEETING PLANNER AND FACILITATOR

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FUNDERS

Annenberg Foundation	Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
California Community Foundation	The Rosenthal Foundation
Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities	The California Endowment
Goldhirsh Foundation	The California Wellness Foundation
Kaiser Permanente	The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health	Wildspaces



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