

What Ventura County can do to Become the Healthiest County in the Nation by 2030: The 67,000 ft. Initiative

A collection by Dr. Robert Levin, Ventura County Health Officer

The following is a collection of ideas. These ideas are intended to be a list of accomplishments that when achieved, would make Ventura County the healthiest county in the nation Your input is appreciated. If you have any ideas, please put them forward; do so in colored font or on hard copy and send them to Robert.Levin@Ventura.org. Some of the ideas that follow may be excluded from the final document. Some of your ideas may be added. Remember: Good public health is controversial. Effective public health takes courage.

We are asking you, the public to look at this. We are asking for people to sign up to work on one or more of these projects. We anticipate that a few people will sign up for each of these projects and we will encourage them to work together. It may be that some of these projects are already being worked on by existing groups or organizations in our county or the State. Let us know if that is the case and we will contribute to their efforts. Some projects are relatively small and can be accomplished with local and limited resources.

When the projects that have been claimed by local resources are removed from the mix, the remaining and presumably larger projects will be prioritized.

Safe and healthy transportation (including walking, bicycle & public transportation).

1. Improve mass transit.
2. Add more buses and bus lines. If buses are not filled, move to smaller buses.
3. Add a comprehensive network of safe bicycle paths while minimizing impact on traffic flow.
4. Consider adding a 2nd set of train tracks.
5. Add sidewalks with parkways throughout inhabited areas of the county.
6. Prepare for arrival of autonomous vehicles.
7. Develop Vehicle Miles Traveled policies.
8. Explore first/last mile (FMLM) public transit options. FMLM is used to describe passenger travel in the context of getting to/from bus and rail stops. Examples of this are the use of walking, bicycles or Segways.
9. Reduce impacts of freight and truck routes on residential areas.
10. Promote expanded transit options (examples of this include walking trails, dedicated bus lanes, light rail lines, reconfiguring bus routes, bike share, real-time data on all public transportation modalities and subsidizing a percentage of Uber/Lyft riders for sharing rides).
11. Install 1,500 electric vehicle charging stations for use by the public by the year 2030.

Safe, healthy and affordable housing and neighborhoods.

12. End development in agriculturally useful land. Rejuvenate city centers and industrial areas.
13. Change zoning laws to allow for additional units to be built on what are now single unit lots.
14. Increase the range of housing types available including tiny homes, modular housing options, co-housing,

and multi-family residential housing.

15. Change zoning laws so housing, retail stores, offices, light industry and recreational facilities are no longer kept separate from one another. This creates more walkable neighborhoods thus promoting physical activity and lessening automobile use.
16. Don't put new schools up against farms. This will put a buffer between children and agricultural pesticides.
17. Balance development and capital investment between the central city and its periphery, between the old town and the new.
18. Include local public health as a participant in zoning and building permit approvals. (Public Health must keep in mind that it is not at the table to add complexity to the process but rather to point out when a project or an aspect of a project will jeopardize the public health or to shape a project in a direction that is beneficial for human health.) This is part of the implementation of a vigorous and effective program of Health in all Policies throughout the county.
19. Create more affordable housing. Create incentives for developers.
20. Change zoning laws to allow corner grocery stores, especially in food deserts.
21. Limit fast food restaurants and liquors stores, especially in food deserts.
22. Develop programs to minimize homelessness.
23. Provide public housing and housing assistance to qualifying low-income residents. Use federal housing choice voucher program.
24. Develop programs that diminish social isolation and loneliness.
25. Expand broadband (high-speed internet) access to unserved and underserved areas.
26. Plan for parks and green spaces within walking distance from homes and workplaces.
27. Explore policies that increase options for aging in place.
28. Provide multiple levels of long-term care.
29. Ensure that local infrastructure is built into housing developments to promote walking.
30. Train baggers at grocery stores to observe customer's feet, especially elders, to make sure their shoelaces are tied. If they are untied, offer to help them before they leave.

Economy and governmental affairs.

31. Create expanded job training. Focus on local job availability.
32. Foster deeper understanding and collaboration across County agencies by more consciously and consistently inviting partner agency staff to participate in training opportunities.
33. Identify and reconcile important but competing public policy goals (e.g., food safety and use of school garden produce; controlled burns and air quality; open space and affordable housing).
34. Promote countywide coordination/leadership for affordable housing initiatives.
35. Increase minimum wage to a living wage.
36. Improve overall standard of living.
37. Reduce county poverty rate by 90%.

38. Planners to modify land use and zoning barriers to improve and allow disadvantaged neighborhoods to flourish.
39. Implement planning using crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).
40. Utilizing the Active Design Guidelines, a product of the Centers for Disease Control-sponsored program Fit Nation, utilize design strategies that promote active living. These guidelines for architecture, urban design, and planning should lead to increased use of active transportation, improved social cohesion, and a healthier population.
41. Plan for repair/replacement of aging infrastructure.
42. Provide job training/re-training for people out of work due to injury and disability.
43. Incentivize projects which utilize zero emission technologies in goods movement and construction operations.
44. Explore policies for rebuilding in hazard-prone areas.
45. Explore the provision of additional emergency and fire protection services in rural/mountain areas.
46. Do not site projects with significant emissions or other risks adjacent to homes.
47. Establish countywide coordination/leadership for economic development.
48. Create policies that facilitate development of strategic industry clusters in the unincorporated County.
49. Identify policies that encourage economic spin-off opportunities and local business support services for Naval Base Ventura County and the Port of Hueneme.
50. Encourage *micro* business development such as the cottage food industry, micro-kitchens and other emerging economic opportunities.
51. Address military compatibility. Military activity and operations impact neighboring communities while civilian activity impacts military operations.
52. Incorporate and codify a Right to Farm Ordinance.
53. Further the goals of the Economic Vitality Strategic Plan.
54. Provide continued support for and protect SOAR.
55. Identify underserved areas that do not currently have parks and correct this imbalance.
56. Find ways to maintain both wildlife corridors and a robust agricultural economy. To the degree that there will be increasing pressure to maintain wildlife corridors, mutually acceptable solutions must be found to preserve our county's agriculture.
57. Resolve issues of solar and renewable energy siting.
58. Make Ventura County the first county in the nation to be prepared for a nuclear event in a neighboring county.

Agriculture.

59. Support local food producers through the development of food value chains.
60. Find a method for small and local farmers to consolidate produce in a hub(s) in order to sell to institutions like schools or local grocery stores.

61. Bring together growers, the Agriculture Commissioner, Public Health and concerned members of the community to address the issue of pesticides use and set promising and achievable milestones. Consistently move in the direction of fewer and less toxic pesticides in food production. As an example of what this group should decide, the use of agricultural chemicals should be reduced from 2020 levels by 50% by 2040.
62. Support local agriculture both in terms of easing local laws and regulations (but not lessening pesticide safety or anything else that has a negative impact on public health) and promoting a positive public image and opinion.
63. Turn Los Angeles County into a major market for Ventura County agricultural goods, thus decreasing the carbon footprint of product transportation and increasing the freshness of produce for Los Angeles residents.
64. Require food products produced in Ventura County to be branded with Ventura County as the site of production.
65. Make healthy locally produced products (e.g., those produced organically or through integrated pest management) more affordable and more available to the poor.
66. Local government should enact policies as necessary that are supportive of regenerative and sustainable agriculture aimed at preserving agriculture as having a prominent place in the economy and quality of life.
67. Provide greater opportunities and incentives for growers and livestock producers to participate in Williamson Act programs.
68. Maintain water resources for agricultural production, both in quality and quantity so as to prevent the loss of agriculture due to competition for water with urban and suburban development.
69. Allow the transfer of entitlements between parcels to accommodate agricultural facilities and farmworker housing and encourage larger parcels to remain in agricultural production.
70. Provide value-added marketing opportunities for agricultural commodities produced in Ventura County.
71. Explore adaptation policies for agricultural practices to address climate change.
72. Increase organic and integrated pest management-based farming. Organic acreage in the county should be at least one third of the total by 2040.
73. Incentivize soil and land conservation.
74. Explore the ways in which the County Agriculture Commissioner can be given additional powers to impact local use of pesticides beyond those mandated by the State. Find out whether these additional powers may be granted by the Board of Supervisors.

Activity.

75. Free Zumba (or other fitness) classes at various community parks.
76. Promote the use of social media to share group physical activity opportunities.
77. Increase public participation and community engagement in arts and culture.
78. Create opportunities that promote and increase social bonding and interaction.
79. Create safe play environments for children.
80. Develop/expand after-school athletic programs that are affordable for all children (and free for children from families with low income).

81. Create safe passage zones to and from school.
82. Place exercise equipment in parks – bars, manual, elliptical, benches for sit-ups.
83. Create greater park access for the handicapped (currently sand or bark surfaces are not wheelchair friendly).
84. Implement Parks After Dark (as seen in Los Angeles County).
85. Exercise/Physical Therapy for groups of elderly indoors and outdoors in their own communities led by trained personnel.
86. Free bowling in the summer for teens.
87. Build more skateboard parks.
88. Free Junior Lifeguard programs.
89. A bus to the beach from Fillmore, Santa Paula.
90. Increase book clubs and discussion groups.
91. Have yearly or monthly “read-the-same-book” events in Ventura County.
92. Promote outdoor chores and gardening to increase physical activity and movement.
93. Increase free public gathering places.

Healthy, affordable, available foods.

94. Promote families eating home-cooked meals (dinner at a minimum) together at home.
95. Implement salad bar programs and trade tables in all school lunch rooms. Schools should be teaching healthier food choices and to not waste food.
96. Get soda and candy machines off school campuses. Sell healthful locally grown fruit; locally-made, healthy snacks; and water, not soda in vending machines.
97. Incorporate locally grown produce into public and private institutions and grocery stores. “Buy fresh, buy local.”
98. Increase the number and frequency of farmers’ markets each week in various locations throughout the county.
99. Increase community gardens by identifying potential sites for gardens at schools and in the community.
100. Offer cooking classes and demonstrations stressing the use of seasonal crops.
101. Establish local nutrition standards for foods and beverages available in recreation centers and parks. Children should be offered only healthy options.
102. Make it easier for school cafeterias to serve food grown in school gardens, including identification of best practices for safe use of school-grown food.
103. Promote and support food security programs such as food banks in Ventura County.
104. Promote county-wide farm-to-school programs to increase fresh produce offerings in school breakfast and lunch programs.
105. Establish a farm-to-school county coordinator at the Superintendent of Schools to facilitate the development of farm-to-school programs.

106. Promote school and community garden and orchard programs (and incorporate into learning curriculum) and explore funding streams to support this (for example The United States Department of Agriculture has specialty crop block grants).
107. Promote (and change regulations if necessary) farmers' markets in neighborhoods that lack access to fresh produce.
108. Promote grocery stores and corner grocery stores in the "food deserts" in Ventura County and use local tax incentives as one way to achieve this.
109. Provide food stamps that can only be used at farmers markets.
110. Make breastfeeding to 6 months of age the norm and the expectation.
111. Encourage front yard gardens.
112. Educate the public to switch household kitchenware to 10-inch plates and tall narrow glasses.
113. Cook meals at home.
114. Allow community and individual produce stands.
115. Support Waste Free VC (Waste Free Ventura County), a program to decrease food waste and carbon production, and to feed the food insecure.
116. Establish neighborhood bins for unwanted canned food and dry goods for anyone to take.
117. Screen patients for food insecurity at medical provider practices and hospitals and show them how to find places where they can eat meals or find groceries to take home to prepare themselves. A county-wide app should be developed that shows the nearest locations of available food banks.

Safe and healthy environment. "We shape our environment; thereafter it shapes us."

118. Eliminate tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke and associated unhealthy air contaminants, including e-cigarettes, in outdoor recreational environments and multi-unit housing environments.
119. Plant 2 million trees throughout the county in residential and commercial areas. Plantings should preferentially favor underserved and economically depressed areas. Trees reduce urban heat islands, reduce storm water runoff which adds to the groundwater table, improve air quality, provide shade (↓UV radiation), reduce air temperature, lower energy demand and costs and promote social interactions by providing comfortable reassuring spaces.
120. Don't put new schools among or up against farms.
121. Regional planning should include cities and the County government.
122. Expand mass transit, bike lanes, and safe sidewalks to increase active commuting.
123. Support green space programs.
124. County and city planners should determine the appropriate rate of growth for our county, not developers.
125. Make trash cans more available.
126. Develop a compost pick-up program at homes throughout the county.
127. Increase the number of public toilets.
128. Decrease food waste in the production and service sectors (farms, canning and packaging, restaurants, cafeterias, etc.) and decrease food waste at home.

129. Improve protective gear for farmworkers, including clothes, masks, headcovers, etc.
130. Growers should comply with State and local regulations which protect farmworkers during high smoke, high pollutions conditions.
131. Reclaim and develop greenways throughout the county.
132. Adopt a beach/park program that cleans up refuse, encourages volunteers and teaches not to litter.
133. Increase opportunities for regular social interaction.
134. Develop a program of family mentorship between longstanding residents in the U.S. and disadvantaged or recent arrival families.
135. Evaluate the county with the goal of providing 10 acres of park/1000 residents. "Parks" include playgrounds, playfields and major and minor parks.
136. Maintain parks so they are safe, welcoming and usable.
137. Clean up sites contaminated with toxic waste and refuse that present a danger to surrounding residents.
138. Make Ventura County a two language County on all public signage (English and Spanish).
139. Support sensible and evidence-based measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
140. Work with Los Angeles to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Ninety percent of Los Angeles emissions are from motor vehicles. Encourage and support the use of more electric motor vehicles in Los Angeles and other methods of reducing emissions.
141. Support sensible and evidence-based measures that reduce air pollution generated within Ventura County.
142. Promote reductions in mobile and stationary source emissions to improve air quality.
143. Improve wildfire and related air-quality and safety by employing controlled burns and removal of thick underbrush where appropriate and reasonable.
144. Prevent and control the entrance and spread of invasive species, be they plants, animals, pests, insects, plant pathogens, and human diseases.
145. Promote and retrofit buildings to be green and net zero. Increase maximum residential building height.
146. Promote mixed-land use, where homes, shops, schools, and places of work are closer together in all locations in the county. The ideal community should be a high-density, humanely scaled (walkable, nearby stores) environment.
147. Consider policies that allow for more flexible Live/Work spaces in specified locations of the County.
148. Promote countywide coordination/leadership for water management. Limited clean water impacts individual and countywide economic security and by extension our health status.
149. Explore additional sources of water (excluding State water pursuant to Board of Supervisors direction at the April 17, 2018 Work Session).
150. Incentivize reduction in household, industrial and agricultural water use.
151. Utilize Low Impact Development techniques.
152. Capture and use reclaimed water and support with one-time property tax discounts for equipment and installation.
153. Support use of in-stream water flow for groundwater recharge.
154. Explore eventual need for and feasibility of a desalination facility.

Healthcare.

155. Universal healthcare. This would have a significant impact on quality of life and life expectancy in Ventura County.
156. Provide emancipated minor status to unaccompanied children younger than 18 years of age with minimal paperwork and without a court process so these children can enjoy full-scale Medi-Cal.
157. Provide ongoing education, assistance, and support to community members on how to use health insurance and health services effectively.
158. Implement techniques that have been shown to reduce the use of Emergency Rooms for primary care.
159. Link all Ventura County residents to a primary care provider.
160. Start a syringe replacement program (SRP) in Camarillo. (Ventura County already has SRPs in Oxnard, Santa Paula, Ventura and Simi.)
161. Implement ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) screening throughout county with ample treatment availability.
162. Develop a comprehensive suicide prevention program for the county.
163. Develop a program where failed suicides of young LGBTQ people can be better accepted by their families for their gender identification or sexual preference.
164. Make mental health services more plentiful and more available.
165. Encourage pets for the elderly.
166. Learn a new musical instrument or a language.
167. Raise immunization rates to 99% at all ages. Immunizations in those who have legitimate contraindications would be exempted. Providers' licenses would be at risk for not following Center for Disease Control guidelines.
168. All providers should be utilizing the State CURES Registry.
169. Make naloxone kits for opioid reversal rescue available in households of opioid abusers, with all public health visiting nurses and in all nightclubs and bars in the county.

Public information.

170. Require all movie theaters in the county to precede all films with up to 2 minutes of public health-related PSAs in the movie trailers.
171. Increase community awareness of mental illness among both residents of the county and community-based organizations, including how to get help and ways to promote mental health in order to connect people with services and reduce the stigma of mental illness.
172. In order to decrease food waste in people's homes, develop a home waste reduction public information campaign.
173. Never use the expression, "While you're up, would you please get me....". Get it yourself.
174. Designate a day and time each year to "Get Inside. Stay Inside. Stay Tuned." for nuclear preparedness much as the Great California Shakeout is practiced each year for earthquakes.

175. Encourage individuals to establish and partake of preventive health care.
176. Implement a dietary public information campaign aimed at soft drinks; high calorie, processed foods; low nutrient foods.
177. Implement an alcohol public information campaign to decrease abuse by all but especially for young people.
178. Encourage “community” interaction in order to overcome social isolation; this could be social, faith-based or otherwise (walking, boating, politics, cinema, book club, etc.).
179. Increase voter turn-out to 70%.
180. Support the 67,000 Foot Initiative.
181. Promote universal literacy in the county and provide free adult literacy education.
182. Launch a drug education and prevention program for the adult population of the county. Such programs already exist in the schools.
183. (Public information campaigns will be needed as a part of many of the other projects mentioned in this document.)

Childhood education.

184. Educate new parents with targeted materials and resources that promote active play for infants and young children at home.
185. Increase the number of words that all disadvantaged children hear in the first 3 years of life (children in advantaged families currently hear 3-30 million more words by the age of 3 than do children in disadvantaged families or families that are unaware of the importance of growing children hearing spoken language). Children exposed to more spoken language in the first 3 years of life achieve their highest potential in school.
186. Provide language-appropriate children’s books to needy families throughout the county and promote the value of children being raised in households where they see both books in the home and parents and siblings who read.
187. Encourage parents reading to children.
188. Reintroduce/expand physical education in schools.
189. Expand music programs in schools. Music training should be free for children in our county.
190. Expand home economics in schools targeting both girls and boys.
191. Civics and citizenship education should be a part of the curriculum in schools.
192. Extend recess time in schools.
193. Start the school day for adolescents at 9:00 am or 10:00 am.
194. Promote adequate sex, AIDS/HIV and other STD education in grammar schools, junior high schools and high schools.
195. Make condoms available in high schools.
196. Support/implement free Pre-School-for-All for 3 and 4-year-olds.
197. Change discipline policies to keep kids in school and on track to graduate. Increase high school graduation rates.

198. Encourage lifelong learning as a value.
199. Examine the current availability of scholarship funds and identify potential funding needs for post-secondary education. Anyone who wants to go to college should be able to go to college.
200. Teach finance management for children.
201. Require mandatory Physical Education – no “testing out.”
202. Develop a program where elders read to children.
203. Expand after school programs (which include tutoring).
204. Increase food standards at schools (kids eat 19-50% of their calories at school).
205. Universal school breakfast programs.
206. Schools to offer food program even in summer.
207. Expand school athletic programs.
208. No universally available school buses within 2 miles of school. Exceptions will be made for special needs children.
209. Create and maintain safe routes to school.
210. Develop nutrition standards for school meals and snacks (and for all food otherwise sold to children).
211. Schools should be required to serve fruits and vegetables with every meal.

Law Enforcement.

212. Employ crime prevention through Environmental Design.
213. Support community-level efforts to engage and convene stakeholders to develop data-informed action to build violence prevention capacity. This is applied to domestic violence and to violence in a community in general.
214. Develop a model jail system that prevents recidivism including education, training, psychological services, drug detoxification, employment referral.
215. Work with foundation, private sector and State agency partners to increase resources for a Probation Resource Center to support probation departments’ efforts to implement evidence-based practices to decrease recidivism.
216. Increase access to domestic violence shelters.
217. Tighten local gun control laws in Ventura County.
218. No sales of marijuana to anyone under 25 years of age in Ventura County.
219. Implement geographic policing model (community policing) throughout the county: patrolling a neighborhood and talking to its residents is not enough. A critical element of community policing is problem solving. Officers are expected to be proactive and creative not only in addressing, but in preventing, problems.

NOTE: For footnotes and citations, please go to <http://venturacountylimits.org/>