

HEALTH ELEMENT

2.13 INTRODUCTION

Health Element organization. The City's role in supporting health in Arcata is aiding in the creation of physical and social environments that afford its residents the greatest possible opportunities for wellbeing. This charge includes the provision of safe and affordable housing and transportation, as well as opportunities for economic prosperity, physical activity, recreation, education, and community connection.

While this Health Element was developed for the General Plan 2045 the City of Arcata's recognition of its responsibility to positively affect health and wellbeing in its jurisdiction is not new. Decades of City policy codify the City's continuous commitment to acting in service of community health. For example, the 1976 *Physical Design Recommendations for Achieving Community Social Goals* report establishes objectives such as: provide for a healthful environment, provide for personal safety, provide for a socially diverse community, promote a sense of community membership and social worth, and more—goals that are reflected and updated in the policy priorities of this Element.

Many of the City's responsibilities that support health are also detailed in other General Plan Elements (including Housing, Infrastructure and Public Facilities, Transportation Open Space, and Parks and Recreation), and language related to health is integrated throughout them. However, to prioritize Arcatans' wellbeing, this Element is dedicated to health-specific goals and policies.

This Element also focuses on health equity. Disparities in health and wellbeing outcomes correlate with lower socioeconomic status, race and skin color, and disability status. Some residents face disproportionate barriers to health and wellbeing due to these factors, which should not be determinants of health. This Element includes policies to reduce inequitable health outcomes.

Guiding principles and goals.

- A. Ensure all residents can enjoy physical, social, and mental health and wellbeing, regardless of their race, age, gender, sexual orientation, social position, economic position, culture, background, or any other factor of identity.
- B. Understand that a community's socio-economic, built, and natural environments influence every resident's health. Recognize both the integrated nature of these systems¹ and the City's responsibility in ensuring that its actions promote physical, social, and mental health and wellbeing.
- C. Partner with and promote local agencies, nonprofits, and community-based organizations that are already working to support the health and wellbeing of Arcata residents.

- D. Eliminate the disproportionate and unjust barriers to health that some Arcata residents face based on neighborhood and/or factors of identity.
- E. Support healthy eating and active living programs and facilities to enable them.
- F. Increase opportunities for community engagement.

Overview of health and wellbeing in Arcata. Health is defined by the World Health Organization as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing rather than merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Health is shaped by the cultural, social, political, economic, ecological, and physical settings in which we live, work, and play. These “social determinants of health” dictate daily experiences, physical and emotional wellbeing, how long we live, and our ability to change the quality and course of our lives.

“Health equity” refers to efforts to ensure that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives while respecting differences in identity. These differences include, but are not limited to, culture, language, race, gender, sexuality, economic status, citizenship, ability, age, and religion.²

Arcata is home to Mad River Hospital, one of four hospitals in Humboldt County. The community is also served by Open Door Clinic, United Indian Health Services (UIHS), approximately 8 dental providers,³ and mental health care providers offering a range of therapy and counseling services. Furthermore, there are many businesses and organizations in Arcata that support physical health and community gathering—including gyms, yoga studios, bike shops, and running clubs.

Some neighborhoods in Arcata have a disproportionate concentration of barriers to healthy living. The Valley West neighborhood specifically is disconnected from many of Arcata’s assets in terms of healthy living. Compared to those nearer to Arcata’s downtown, Valley West residents have decreased access to safe open spaces and healthy food options.

The City of Arcata envisions a community that is a safe and healthy place to live, work, play, and learn. This Health Element contains policies intended to ensure that Arcata’s economy, education, health services, built environment, and social context all support the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of all its residents.

Barriers to health and wellbeing in Arcata. As in many rural areas across the country, Humboldt County residents face barriers to accessing affordable medical, dental, and mental health care services. One of the primary obstacles to increasing the availability of these services is Arcata’s lack of affordable housing, which impacts the security and mental health of Arcata residents as well as the community’s ability to retain health professionals. The city’s housing shortage also affects the mental and physical health of its residents; when a household spends a disproportionate amount of its monthly income on housing costs, their ability to purchase medications, healthy foods, and other items important to health and wellbeing is impacted.

² <https://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/6999>

³ <https://findadentist.ada.org/search-results?address=Arcata,California&distance=5>

Among other consequences, Arcata's lack of accessible care providers prevents many residents from accessing necessary medical and dental services (much less seeking preventative care, such as cancer screenings). Similarly, the lack of mental health care resources means that some Arcatans with diagnosed mental health disorders are unable to get necessary medication due to the inaccessibility of local psychiatrists able to write prescriptions.⁴

As there is specific difficulty in finding a primary care provider, dentist, or mental healthcare professional that has availability for new patients, access to care is an issue that disproportionately affects students and other Arcata residents new to the area.

In addition to the challenges faced in seeking healthcare, many Arcata residents struggle to afford healthcare costs. Census data shows that the number of Arcatans living below the poverty line is far higher than the state average. Beyond the difficulty poverty presents in accessing health services, economic insecurity inherently results in mental and physical stress. Poverty and low-income status are associated with various adverse health outcomes, including shorter life expectancy and higher death rates.⁵

The limited transportation options between Arcata, Eureka, and McKinleyville also make it difficult for Arcata residents who do not own reliable personal vehicles to get to appointments in neighboring communities or outside the area.⁶ As in many rural areas nationwide, Humboldt County residents frequently travel hundreds of miles for medical or dental appointments. This contributes travel expenses to the cost burden faced by those seeking care.

Another barrier to health in Arcata faced by those with lower incomes and limited transportation options is access to healthy foods. Healthy foods are usually more expensive, and it is difficult for residents that do not live near downtown to access places that sell them.

Low-income status also makes it difficult to access stable and safe housing, especially in Arcata's high-cost, high-demand rental market. Living unsheltered poses difficulties to maintaining a healthy diet, securing and showing up for medical appointments, and properly storing medication. For those with conditions that require daily management and attention—such as diabetes—this can make living unhoused immediately life-threatening.⁷

Racism and discrimination present another barrier to health within the Arcata community on individual levels—such as stress and housing discrimination—as well as structural levels like differential access to goods, services, and opportunities.⁸

Assets to health and wellbeing in Arcata. Arcatan's health and wellbeing benefit from the city's unique natural resources and the community's commitment to protecting them. Open space lands support public health by providing accessible and low-cost public recreation

⁵ <https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/poverty-health.html>

⁷ Open Door Community Health Centers

⁸ [What is Health Equity?](#) | [Health Equity](#) | [CDC](#)

opportunities to all, regardless of income. Furthermore, they allow for community gardens which can increase access to fresh local produce.

Arcata's small-town nature and the time and energy that its residents put into building community also support health. Loneliness and social isolation have been linked to increased risks of premature death, dementia, heart disease, and stroke, as well as higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide.⁹ The wide variety of community classes, recreation activities, events, and other programming offered by the City and other local organizations expands and deepens community connections in Arcata by bringing together people of shared interests. These connections benefit residents of all ages, but especially Arcata's seniors; the CDC has found that many adults aged 50 and older are socially isolated or lonely in ways that put their health at risk.¹⁰

Furthermore, Arcatans' health and wellbeing is supported by Cal Poly Humboldt and the educational, social, and cultural benefits that the university brings to the community. Lifelong learning has been linked to cognition and memory, social connection, and self-esteem.¹¹ The opportunities for learning that the university gives to the community—through events, community classes, and the perspectives of its students, faculty, and staff—set Arcata apart from other towns of its size.

Finally, the nonprofit organizations and community groups working to make Arcata a more equitable place to reside—decreasing violence and discrimination related to race, class, gender identity/expression, and sexual orientation and increasing support and opportunities for all Arcatans—are a benefit to the health of the community.

2.14 POLICIES

The Health Element contains the following policies areas.

- H-1 Community Health
- H-2 Healthy Behaviors
- H-3 Community Culture
- H-4 Healthy Government

POLICY H-1 Community Health

Objective. Increase accessibility of medical and mental healthcare for all Arcatans. Prioritize groups experiencing differential health outcomes.

- H-1 a **Identify Determinants of health.** Work with the community and stakeholders in medical, mental, and dental healthcare fields to identify social determinants of health in the Arcata community that impact health and wellbeing (e.g. Humboldt County trends reports showing communitywide data), paying specific attention to factors affecting specific groups or demographics disproportionately. Facilitate access to

⁹ <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>

¹¹ <https://extension.usu.edu/mentalhealth/articles/the-benefits-of-being-a-lifelong-learner>

financial and professional resources to document and utilize necessary epidemiological and health care data.

- H-1 b **Access to health services.** Work with stakeholders in medical, mental, and dental healthcare fields to identify barriers to healthcare access and affordability. Explore ways in which the City can aid in reducing those barriers. Work with community partners to aid individuals and families in accessing health resources.
- H-1 c **Health equity.** Strive for health equity by identifying and reducing barriers to health faced disproportionately by vulnerable groups within Arcata, including those with lower socioeconomic status as well as children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals. Explore ways to partner and support equity initiatives in the local hospital system.
- H-1 d **Support unhoused community members.** Increase City coordination with/support for organizations that provide resources and health services for those living unsheltered in Arcata. Work with partners to aid unhoused individuals and families in accessing health-supporting resources such as insulin and medication.
- H-1 e **Retain existing healthcare institutions and resources located in Arcata.** City policies should strongly support retention of existing healthcare institutions, facilities, and services located in Arcata, including Mad River Hospital, Open Door Clinic, United Indian Healthcare, and other more specialized medical practices.

POLICY H-2 Healthy Behaviors

Objective. Develop and support systems conducive to physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Design an environment in which the healthiest choice is the easiest choice.

- H-2 a **Daily physical activity.** Ensure that residents of all neighborhoods, ages, incomes, and abilities have access to opportunities for daily physical activity. Develop convenient access to safe and attractive outdoor spaces and places throughout the city. Make access to spaces, events, and programs that support affordable and convenient access to physical activity.
- H-2 b **Opportunities for healthy eating.** Support City and community programs that improve opportunities for nutritional health, food security, food sovereignty, and healthy and culturally-appropriate eating among residents of all races, neighborhoods, ages, genders, incomes, and abilities.
- H-2 c **Opportunities for community connection.** Create opportunities to strengthen the sense of community in Arcata through connection, relationships, and trust. This includes expanding offerings of community classes and events, as well as increasing their accessibility and affordability. Engage Arcata residents to identify actions the City can take to help define, share, and support community expressions of Arcata culture.
- H-2 d **Commercial tobacco.** The City shall prioritize smoke-free environments to reduce airborne toxins and exposure to second- and third-hand smoke. The City shall review and address factors to reduce such usage and mitigate the production and aggregation of tobacco product waste in Arcata. The City shall also review, create,

and implement a plan to address electronic cigarettes and vapor products and their disposal as well as other tobacco product waste. Discourage the use of commercial tobacco. Commercial tobacco use and exposure are linked to many serious health problems including but not limited to asthma, cancer, COPD, diabetes, tooth loss, heart disease, stroke, and negative birth outcomes.

- H-2e **Alcohol misuse.** Reduce the misuse of alcohol and the prevalence of alcohol-related accidents and injuries, paying specific attention to groups that may be at higher risk for alcohol misuse. Alcohol misuse is linked to injuries, violence, unsafe sexual behavior, adverse birth outcomes, blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, cancer, and decreased emotional wellbeing. The City shall consider the impact of land use and transportation policies, including public transit service access, availability, and frequency near alcohol serving establishments, and programs on alcohol misuse.
- H-2f **Substance use disorders.** Humboldt County's rate of drug overdose deaths is higher than the State and National rates. The City shall work with partners to reduce the prevalence of substance use and overdose deaths in Arcata, increase support for those struggling with substance use, and decrease stigmas. People who feel stigmatized by their struggles with substance use disorders may be less willing to seek treatment and may feel more socially isolated. ¹²

POLICY H-3 COMMUNITY CULTURE

Objective. Encourage a healthy, cohesive community culture. The strength of relationships and the sense of shared identity between members of a community are linked to emotional wellbeing, safety, and higher levels of investment in health-promoting community resources. This section outlines desired community cohesion outcomes and addresses how the City can support and contribute to a strong, diverse, and collective Arcata identity.

- H-3a **Healthy and equitable schools.** Work with schools to improve and sustain programs that support mental, physical, emotional, and social wellbeing. Childcare and school environments influence the foods children eat and drink outside the home, rates of physical activity, and social and emotional development. Educational attainment is also linked with lifespan. Increase the ways in which Arcata's schools contribute to students' health and wellbeing through:
1. Integrating physical activity into students' daily educational experience through programming, design of school sites and structures, and linkages with City facilities.
 2. Integrating the arts into students' daily educational experience.
 3. Supporting walking and biking to school.
 4. Ensuring students have access to healthy foods on school sites.
 5. Leveraging schools to remove mental health and safety barriers to physical activity among youth.

¹² <https://nida.nih.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals/health-professions-education/words-matter-terms-to-use-avoid-when-talking-about-addiction>

6. Encouraging schools to ensure that classrooms and curriculums integrate and dialogue with historically excluded knowledge sources, empower and support students of all races, ethnicities, and cultures, and represent/appreciate all cultures respectfully.
- H-3b **Healthy workplaces.** The City shall seek to support resources to increase opportunities for healthy behaviors on workplace sites. Support walking and biking to work. Increase opportunities for racial equity training in workplaces. Increase opportunities for cross-agency/industry professional development training, which provide Arcata's professionals continuing educational opportunities in leadership and facilitate community connections within/between workplaces.
- H-3c **Support Arcata arts & artists.** Support artists, arts organizations, and arts endeavors as a means for building and healing community in Arcata. Arcata's artists lead the way in welcoming and celebrating diversity, supporting local businesses, caring for community health & wellness, bringing residents into community with one another, fostering pride of place, igniting community conversations, and much more. Support formal and informal temporary artistic and cultural events.
- H-3d **Community consciousness of racial equity.** Encourage community dialogue around historic and current systems of advantage and exclusion. Cultivate a collective consciousness of equity and inclusion. Work to make Arcata a welcoming, safe, and racially equitable community by working to erase racial disparities for all people of color in all aspects of community life including housing, health, education.
- H-3e **Community belonging.** Improve resident's perceptions of safety and community belonging through acknowledging and educating staff and residents on history of systemic discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender. Encourage spaces for dialogue and discourse on systemic racism and anti-racism as well as generational oppression and trauma.

POLICY H-4 HEALTHY GOVERNMENT PRACTICES & PROTOCOLS

Objective. Engage and collaborate across City departments, partner agencies, local nonprofits, and the community to develop and achieve a collective vision for a healthy, equitable community. Elected officials and municipal staff play central roles in creating and implementing the policies, programs, and services in a long-range plan. This section addresses practices and protocols that the City of Arcata will implement to ensure the promotion of health and equity throughout its regular activities.

- H-4a **Healthy and equitable City operations.** Ensure City-wide knowledge of, and commitment to, core principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and continue to support the equity arcata network as a key partner in achieving the goals of this policy. Integrate trauma-informed practices into City operations and services. Utilizing trauma-informed practices involves considering the following six principles when interacting to provide programs, services, and activities:

1. Safety

2. Trustworthiness and transparency
 3. Peer support
 4. Collaboration and mutuality
 5. Empowerment, voice, and choice
 6. Factors such as race, culture, and gender identity
- H-4b **Transparent and responsive government.** Increase government transparency and build trust among Arcatans of all ages, races, identities, and income levels. Demonstrate the City's credibility, reliability, openness, and community orientation through establishing a coordinated set of proactive channels for community-wide engagement between City departments, stakeholders, and the public. Respond promptly, reliably, and openly to criticism of City operation and administration from members of the public. Continue this engagement on an ongoing basis regardless of specific plans or projects underway. Evaluate implementation of plans, projects, and programs to ensure that established policies are being carried out. Monitor how implementation is serving different groups within the community and respond to community critiques.
- H-4c **Health in all policies.** Identify and address existent inequities in City policy that are resulting in disparities, increase equity at the systems and structural levels. Build relationships with community partners to identify ways in which policies can take health outcomes into consideration. Implement procedures that allow the City to prioritize community health in all programs and practices. Educate the community and other stakeholders about Arcata's overall health goals and actions.
- H-4d **Collaborative community planning.** Involve and collaborate with residents and community organizations in the development of plans, projects, and programs that affect their health. Establish a coordinated set of proactive, ongoing, and inclusive ways that City departments communicate with the public to discuss health-related issues and values. Make specific efforts to engage Arcata's young people in long-range community planning.
- H-4e **Health data.** Establish metrics and develop/adopt tools for measuring community health. Partner with a network of organizations and agencies, including the County Departments of Public Health and Health & Human Services, to begin collecting community health data on an ongoing basis.
- H-4f **Funding for health.** Identify, pursue, and dedicate funding streams that support actions to improve community health outcomes. Incorporate health considerations into City budget and project funding decisions.
- H-4g **Youth engagement.** Build capacity among Arcata's youth to advocate for healthy changes in their community.
- H-4h **Senior Engagement.** Support capacity and initiatives by Arcata's senior citizens and residents to advocate for changes in Arcata's infrastructure, programs, and City operations to help seniors remain healthy and active.

- H-4i **Engage with Arcatans of multiple abilities.** Support capacity among Arcatans of differing abilities and disabilities to represent their interests and concerns to the City regarding City infrastructure, programs, and operations that can improve possibilities for people of different abilities to pursue healthy, active, mobile lives in Arcata.

2.15 IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

#	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIME FRAME
H-1	<p>Access to services</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify opportunities to cross-promote local health resources on the City website and in City facilities. 2. Identify opportunities for Arcata City Council and staff participation in coalitions and stakeholder groups addressing health within Arcata and the North Coast Region. 3. Pursue partnerships to create centers equitably distributed throughout the City that provide resources to the community and makes residents feel connected, welcome, supported, and cared for. 4. The City shall work with existing healthcare institutions and medical practices in Arcata to retain services and improve access to them. 	City Manager's Office and Community Development Department	Ongoing

#	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIME FRAME
H-2	<p>Health equity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Support the development of a Health Equity working group within equity arcata to coordinate with medical facilities and healthcare organizations. Encourage facilities to provide equity, diversity, inclusion, bias, and/or cultural competency training to all doctors, nurses, and support staff on an annual basis.2. Encourage community partners that work frequently with Limited English Proficiency populations to collaborate with medical facilities and healthcare organizations to provide translated resources on healthcare, insurance, and mental health/dental/medical care.3. Routinely engage people knowledgeable about needs of people of varied abilities to ensure that City facilities, programs, and practices serve people of varied abilities and disabilities. Strive for universal design in all City facilities.	City Manager's Office, Equity Arcata	Ongoing

#	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIME FRAME
H-3	<p>Opportunities for healthy eating</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate with food system partners, such as the Humboldt Food Policy Council, the North Coast Growers' Association, Cal Poly Humboldt, the California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP), Arcata House Partnership, and the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services to strategize approaches the City can consider to support a healthy food system in Arcata. 2. Support local agricultural projects such as community gardens and farmers' markets in areas of Arcata beyond downtown. Ensure zoning allows a range of urban agriculture activities in all districts with relevant operating standards. 3. Building off past efforts by the Food Policy Council and California Center for Rural Policy, collaborate with local partners to develop a community food assessment to analyze challenges and opportunities related to Arcata's local food system. The assessment should pay particular attention to which neighborhoods and/or groups within Arcata may be lacking access to healthy food at higher rates. 4. Work with existing commercial businesses to improve access to healthy food. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. 	Community Development & Environmental Services	Ongoing

#	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIME FRAME
H-5	Support Arcata arts & artists <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement the Arcata Strategic Arts Plan (ASAP) with intermittent re-evaluations of priority projects. 2. Identify and pursue sources of funding that could be used to support arts organizations and endeavors in Arcata. 3. Explore funding sources and possible locations for the development of artist housing/live-work spaces in Arcata. 4. Prioritize support of intersectional arts and equity projects/collaborations in Arcata area schools. 	City Manager's Office and Community Development	Ongoing
H-6	Equitable City operations <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide equity, diversity, inclusion, bias, and/or cultural competency training to City staff and elected/appointed officials on a regular basis. 2. Continue supporting the equity arcata network. Alter job descriptions to include involvement with equity arcata in key City staff positions that integrate well with the collective's working groups. 3. Scope and initiate an inclusive, community-driven process to update the Draft Solution Set addressing current racial inequities in Arcata, and assessing progress made since its initial drafting. 	City Manager's Office - Personnel	Ongoing

#	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIME FRAME
H-7	<p>Community Engagement Protocol</p> <p>Building on the work that the Community Development Department undertook with the Institute for Local Government through the BOOST Program over the course of 2020, establish a Community Engagement Plan that outlines how the City engages community-based organizations, other partners and stakeholders, and the public on proposed plans, projects, and programs. Update the Plan and “Community Landscape” list periodically to ensure its continued relevancy.</p> <p>Ensure the following concepts are integrated into the Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilize the “Community Landscape” list in outreaching to identified stakeholders and community groups as appropriate and update list on an annual basis. 2. Prioritize outreach to neighborhoods and populations facing disproportionate barriers to healthy living. Prioritize outreach to groups historically excluded from City and community planning processes, such as Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, Asian, LEP, and disabled residents. 3. Continue to pursue opportunities for partnership with Arcata schools (specifically high schools) to present on long-range planning projects and solicit student feedback. 4. Respond promptly and openly to critiques of City operations and decisions, including those made through administrative channels, and especially to those engaging with City committees, the Planning Commission, and City Council. 	Community Development Department	<p>Community Landscape List update- Annually</p> <p>Community Engagement Protocol- Every 10 years starting in year 2</p>

#	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIME FRAME
H-8	Health data As part of the City's Annual General Plan Progress Report submitted to the State Office of Planning and Research, include applicable information from departments, residents, and other stakeholders about how improvements to support health, or changes in programs, policies and services that threaten it, have affected residents. Give specific attention to discrepancies faced by specific neighborhoods and groups.	Community Development Department	Ongoing
H-9	Health in all policies Develop criteria for health and equity project review. Integrate health and equity review into decision-making processes for policy updates and capital projects. Update these review criteria periodically to ensure continued relevancy.	Community Development Department, City Manager's Office	Every 10 years starting in year 2
H-10	Discrimination-free, accessible housing Collaborate with agency partners to establish financial and other incentives for landlords and property managers that go through City-endorsed anti-discrimination trainings such as the Humboldt Tenant Landlord Coalition "Living in Community" Training. ¹³	Community Development Department	Ongoing

#	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIME FRAME
H-11	Commercial Tobacco. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Create and implement proximity and/or density restrictions of tobacco product retailers, as they relate to youth-oriented facilities, other retailers, and locations zoned for housing (e.g., mixed-use and residential).2. Explore the development of incentives for landlords and/or properties that implement voluntary smokefree policies in residential properties.3. Survey community members to assess the need and support to expand the “Smoke-Free Arcata Policy” to include smoking prohibitions in multi-unit housing dwelling units.	Community Development Department	Year 5