

# LiveWell Colorado Guide to Integrating Healthy Eating and Active Living into Colorado's Rural and Small Town Communities

LiveWell Colorado supports policy efforts and initiatives that prevent and reduce obesity in Colorado by promoting healthy eating and active living in the places we live, work, learn and play.

## Guide Overview

Providing action strategies and ideas around healthy food access, physical activity, and mobility, LiveWell Colorado's *Guide to Integrating Healthy Eating and Active Living into Colorado's Rural and Small Town Communities* serves as a helpful resource to spark interest and action across Colorado.

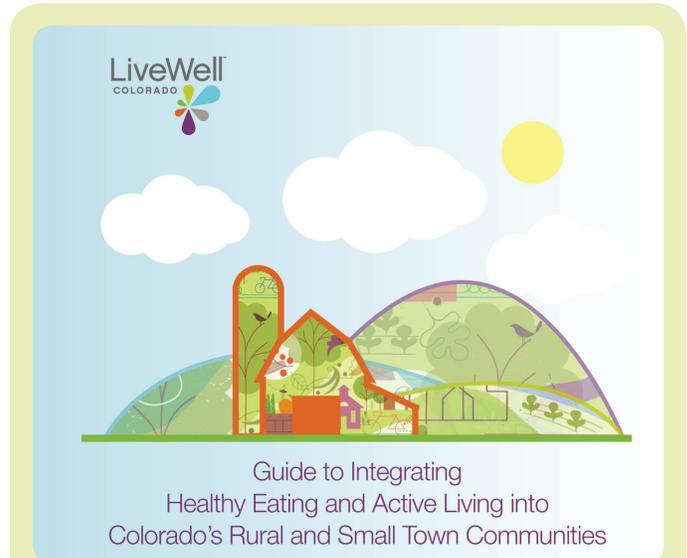
The development of the Guide follows and builds on LiveWell Colorado's previously published Food and Built Environment Policy Blueprints. This Guide is one of a two-part series that focuses on the realities of specific geographic contexts in Colorado, both in rural and small towns, as well as urban and suburban communities.

The phrase "built environment" encompasses all buildings, spaces and products that are created, or modified, by people. It is important to recognize the impact that the built environment has on access to opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating in Colorado's rural and small towns. For example, land uses and development may range from agriculture, to large-lot residential, commercial, resorts, and large parcels of state and federal lands, to name a few. Our rural communities and towns face common challenges to promoting and supporting healthy eating and active living (HEAL): significant health disparities, a lack of tools to address barriers to HEAL, and limited resources due to smaller scale.

This Guide identifies three primary areas (Healthy Food Access, Physical Activity and Mobility) that impact HEAL and provides recommended strategies, resources and partners for state agencies, foundations, and nonprofits to promote HEAL through the built environment.

*This Guide brings light to the challenges that rural and small communities are facing in fighting the obesity epidemic. However, it also shines a spotlight on the numerous Colorado communities overcoming these challenges. We hope that this Guide provides recommendations and tools so that every community can help provide their residents a healthier lifestyle.*

—Maren Stewart, *LiveWell Colorado President and CEO*



## HEAL Guide Recommendations

The Guide serves as a helpful menu of ideas and action items to promote environments conducive to healthy eating and physical activity across our state.

### Local Action Strategies include:

#### Healthy Food Access

1. Identify, preserve and promote land for human food production
2. Make every kitchen a community kitchen
3. Promote healthy food retail of all shapes and sizes

#### Physical Activity

4. Create centers of activity through existing facilities
5. Develop sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities

#### Mobility

6. Support trail building and regional connections
7. Support fun and functional biking

Additionally, it is important to recognize that state-level nonprofits, foundations and government agencies must continually learn from local communities regarding which recommendations and implementation strategies are successful, as well as to identify challenges to implementation, and use these to guide their work. The report also includes **State Recommendations** for LiveWell Colorado and its partners, as well as six **Overarching Strategies** that were identified as opportunities to more broadly allow, support, encourage and lead built environment strategies to promote health.

## Learning from Best Practices

Although Colorado has many different types of rural and small communities, there are strong common themes impacting their ability and capacity to incorporate HEAL into the built environment.

This Guide demonstrates that many rural and small communities, organizations and agencies are making great strides in advancing access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity. The Guide highlights numerous successful initiatives already occurring throughout Colorado, including several in our LiveWell Communities:

- Showing the strength of collaboration, Bent County and the City of Las Animas recently updated their 2002 Comprehensive Plan – a leading policy document that helps guide development and growth decisions – to include principles of healthy eating and active living.
- Durango rebuilt one of its busiest city-maintained streets as a Complete Street to better accommodate a variety of users and modes of transportation, including pedestrians, cyclists, buses, the disabled and cars. Now designated as a Safe Route to School, the corridor includes clearly designated five-foot wide bike lanes, a 10-foot wide multi-use sidewalk, new pedestrian crossings and more.

In addition to case studies, for each recommendation, the Guide offers best practices, resources and partnership opportunities from which the rest of the state can learn. These are the basis for the strategic community-level, state-level and overarching recommendations provided.



### Download

To learn more about LiveWell Colorado's policy efforts, please visit [www.livewellcolorado.org](http://www.livewellcolorado.org). To learn more and download the *Guide to Integrating Healthy Eating and Active Living into Colorado's Rural and Small Town Communities*, please visit [www.livewellcolorado.org/ruralhealguide](http://www.livewellcolorado.org/ruralhealguide).



### Advocate for Change

LiveWell Colorado is actively engaged in legislation at the local, state and federal levels. Your voice is critical in ensuring public policy efforts support healthy eating and active living. Become an advocate for change by joining LiveWell Colorado's Grassroots Advocacy Power Program (GAPP). To sign up, visit [www.livewellcolorado.org](http://www.livewellcolorado.org) and click the GAPP button.

## About LiveWell Colorado

LiveWell Colorado is a non-profit organization committed to preventing and reducing obesity in Colorado by promoting healthy eating and active living. Leading a comprehensive approach, LiveWell Colorado inspires and advances policy, environmental and lifestyle changes that aim to provide every Coloradan with access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity in the places they live, work, learn and play. For more information about LiveWell Colorado, visit [www.livewellcolorado.org](http://www.livewellcolorado.org).



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