

City-Level Shape-Up

Gavin Newsom

I launched Shape Up San Francisco to make it easy, fun, and desirable to exercise and eat healthy. While San Francisco has a reputation as a fit and walkable city, there is still much we can do to make it even better. According to the California Health Interview Survey (www.chis.ucla.edu), more than half (54%) of Latino adults and 73% of African American adults in San Francisco are overweight or obese. The same survey found that among San Francisco teens (age 12–17 years), 22% of the population is overweight or obese. Health inequities become apparent when analyzing data for African American and Latino teens: nearly half, 45%, are overweight or obese.

Shape Up San Francisco is not about the size jeans you wear, it's about healthy behavior. It's hard to make healthy choices, however, when you have limited options. My initiative acknowledges that our social, political, and economic environments shape our behaviors. To that end, addressing chronic disease is far more complicated and nuanced than simply asking people to eat their fruits and vegetables and start exercising 30 minutes a day. To ask people to make those 'simple' changes, we must consider how their behaviors are shaped by their environment.

As mayor, I have introduced numerous programs and policies to help make that change. Our 2008 Sunday Streets program, in which we opened 4.5 miles of car-free space, was a great success. Every day more than 15,000 people participated and were provided a safe space for bicycling, yoga, and dancing, and an opportunity to

remember the joy and satisfaction that comes from physical activity. We know that as a result of Sunday Streets we have more regular bicycle commuters, dancers, and walkers. We expect to continue this series in 2010.

San Francisco will also soon be offering free bicycles for short distance trips in the city. Based on a Parisian model, we know that making it easy for people to hop on a bike instead of using their car is crucial to a more physically active population. Partnering with private entities, the program is expected to be cost-free to the city.

We have a very extensive bicycle plan, which, pending environmental review and approval, will allow us to stripe more bike lanes. My Better Streets Plan details how we will make our streets more walkable, by integrating a complementary set of tools such as economic development, street furniture, greening, and more.

I issued an executive order requiring all city departments to examine their daily practices and consider how those practices might be changed to support healthy eating and active living environments. That includes our Real Estate Office, for example, ensuring that any new city offices have open stairwells, safe bike storage, and are located close to public transit. Or that our public transit system makes announcements encouraging passengers to depart a couple stops early for a bit of exercise. There are many ways, large and small, that mayors can create healthier cities.

Newsom is the mayor of San Francisco, CA.