



HEALTHY, ACTIVE, CONNECTED ARIZONA

PINNACLE'S PREVENTION'S NEW RURAL & TRIBAL BUILT ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE

Thanks to a grant from the Vitalyst Health Foundation, Pinnacle Prevention is working on an initiative to create healthier, more active, and better-connected communities throughout rural and tribal Arizona.


For the next three years, we will be working as a team with Living Streets Alliance, Arizona Alliance for Livable Communities, Health by Design and the Arizona Partnership for Healthy Communities to discover innovative ways to expand access to active transportation (walking & biking) options, parks and recreation facilities, trails, natural areas and more.

The team plans to engage and work closely with members of Arizona's rural and tribal communities to co-plan and co-design infrastructure improvements to the built environment that are unique to each place's culture and history.

How does the Built Environment Impact Health?

The evidence is clear that the health of individuals and communities is inextricably tied to place. The quality and conditions of the places where we live and spend most of our time, not just the quality of our healthcare, contribute greatly to how healthy we are and how long we will live. These places include not only our home environment and our school/work environment but also the built environment within our communities.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT:



Nighborhoods that are planned and built in ways that allow people to safely walk, bike and roll for recreation purposes and also to get where they need to go see better health outcomes than those neighborhoods that are designed primarily for moving cars.

Access to quality parks and recreation facilities as well as well-maintained natural areas such as trails and forests is associated with greater levels of physical activity and lower levels of stress.

Both active transportation facilities and parks/trails facilities help to improve the quality of the air and produce cooling effects to the atmosphere.

As people utilize these active spaces, they strengthen social connections with one another, increasing trust and reducing crime. A well-connected community is a healthy community.

Why a focus on Rural Arizona?

There is much to appreciate in rural and tribal communities, including rich histories, innovation, resilience, and a neighbor helping neighbor mindset. However, living in rural and tribal communities also comes with health risks that are partially a result of the planning and design of the built environment.

In Arizona, the top four counties with the worst health outcomes are mostly made up of small and rural communities. While there are many reasons for poorer health outcomes in these communities, barriers that make it difficult for residents to be physically active and socially connected are important contributors.

1.45
MILLION

NEARLY 20 PERCENT, OR
1.45 MILLION ARIZONANS
LIVE IN RURAL ARIZONA
AND THE STATE'S TRIBAL
NATIONS.

Consider, for example, that many of Arizona's small towns are located along state and county highways and roadways that have been built in favor of high-speed, auto-oriented traffic. This makes it difficult to use active modes such as walking, biking and rolling as a means of transportation, recreation or leisure. The root of the issue, however, is the fact that rural and tribal communities face barriers to building communities that encourage physical activity due to limited federal and state level investment, smaller local government budgets and a lack of dedicated staff to work on these issues as compared to larger urban areas.

WHAT'S THE PLAN OF ACTION?

Despite some of the barriers currently faced by rural and tribal communities, we have been encouraged to see more interest from stakeholders and community members to work together with us to drive the changes needed to create healthier built environments. Our efforts will be statewide, but for the next three years, we will be working most closely with the three pre-determined communities of Globe/Miami, Prescott and Bisbee/Sierra Vista.

Our focus will be to:



Foster partnership and collaboration around built environment, active living, recreation, trails and land use issues.



Identify assets, needs and wants through holding community listening sessions and engaging with stakeholders.



Equip local champions and community members to understand and become involved in community planning and development processes.



Build capacity of local champions and community members to increase overall grassroots support.



Assist with grant applications, engage in advocacy and help to develop policy that paves the way for additional funding sources for rural and tribal communities.

Ultimately, these actions will drive the work forward to reach the goal of increased infrastructure improvements around the state that help to create a healthier, more active and better-connected Arizona.

Get Involved! Email kennethsteel@pinnacleprevention.org to be added to future communications about the initiative.