

to jobs throughout their metropolitan area, (see the “Fresno Works for Better Health” case study.)

Another economic challenge for lower-income residents comes from the high costs of housing, with the potential added pressures of gentrification and displacement as some neighborhoods become more appealing to those who can pay more. In San Francisco and a number of other cities where this kind of dislocation is a persistent problem, the consequences of neighborhood

change are being factored into the assessment of community health. The Healthy Development Measurement Tool, designed by the local public health department in conjunction with leaders of the Eastern Neighborhoods, is now used to estimate the health consequences of alternative redevelopment plans, and the methodology is also being explored in Richmond, Oakland, and several other California cities.<sup>49</sup>



### **Metro Denver Health and Wellness Commission:** A Broad Coalition to Address Health in Schools, Worksites, and Communities

*Factors: Economic, social, physical, service*

The Metro Denver Health and Wellness Commission (MDHWC) wants to make metropolitan Denver the healthiest region in the nation. It seeks to boost economic growth by improving health, lowering healthcare costs, and increasing productivity.

In its recently released strategic plan, the MDHWC suggests area schools offer physical education/activities and nutrition classes and provide healthy food to improve test scores and concentration, reduce disruptive behavior and absenteeism, and lower depression. The MDHWC also wants large and small employers to start worksite wellness programs and provide health insurance incentives to promote healthy lifestyle choices. Their hope is that these efforts will lower absenteeism, improve safety and morale, and decrease health costs. Finally, the commission wants to see the development of a transportation system in metropolitan Denver that supports physical activity and to improve access to parks, trails, and healthy foods. The commission hopes these projects will reach 425,000 young people, 1.3 million employees, and 2.6 million metro-area residents.

The commission is a coalition of over 80 community leaders from government, nonprofits, business, and education. Members of the MDHWC include local mayors, foundation and business executives, school district employees, consumer health advocates, and groups that serve low-income communities and communities of color. The commission is chaired by Colorado’s lieutenant governor and co-chaired by the executive vice president of the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation, the director of the Center for Human Nutrition at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, and the mayor of Broomfield, Colorado.

In forming the commission, staff and the co-chairs worked hard to make sure they had representation from organizations across many sectors. They recognized that diversity of membership and the involvement of government, nonprofit, and business leaders could uniquely situate the commission to make a real difference in the health of their community. The commission has begun implementation of the strategic plan with resources from local businesses and foundations committed to making the vision a reality.

