

## Public Health Crossroads: Sustainable Growth for Healthier Kern Neighborhoods

California's groundbreaking Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SB 375) offers the San Joaquin Valley region an exciting opportunity to embark on a healthier, clean air future. By adopting and acting on strong Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS), local communities can become vibrant and healthy places for people to live, shop, work, play and study.

With community planning that prioritizes walking, biking, transit and infill development, Kern County residents could see significant reductions in respiratory health impacts and costs related to traffic pollution. A new vision for healthier growth is necessary and should prioritize investment in existing communities and real transportation alternatives to driving, through more walkable, bike-friendly, diverse housing and transit-accessible neighborhoods.

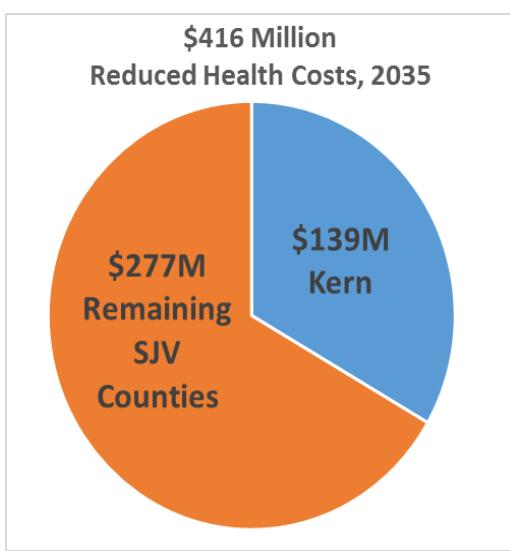
### What is SB 375?

Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg), known as the **Sustainable Communities Act**, promotes healthy growth by requiring a blueprint for coordinated land use and transportation planning called a **"Sustainable Communities Strategy"** (SCS). This June, Kern County's Council of Governments will adopt a plan of **locally generated strategies** to reduce climate pollution and meet regional emission reduction targets.

### More walkable Kern County communities could reduce pollution-related health impacts by \$139 Million

The American Lung Association in California has compiled new data on health outcomes and costs based on the Council of Infill Builders' 2013 *A Home for Everyone* report, and compares a scenario with a greater emphasis on growth that is more walkable and interconnected with existing neighborhoods compared to a business as usual scenario. A future in which new growth in Kern County is 60 percent more walkable could reduce traffic-pollution health costs by \$139 million in 2035 alone. Valleywide, this healthier future growth scenario could reduce these health costs by \$416 million compared to historical planning. Growth that revitalizes existing neighborhoods, emphasizes active transportation and locally accessible services supports good health for all.

San Joaquin Valley leaders have a choice. They can set a new course for healthier development, or follow the past trend of inefficient growth that will cement asthma-causing traffic pollution, obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic illnesses into the fabric of our communities, and particularly into communities that can least afford it.



### Healthier Growth will benefit San Joaquin Valley Residents Reduce Health Damages by \$416 Million in 2035

**A focus on making existing communities more vibrant with real walking, biking and transit opportunities could help reduce pollution-related health costs in Kern County in 2035:**

- \$139 Million in reduced traffic pollution-related health and economic impacts
- 4,829 fewer asthma attacks and other respiratory health impacts
- 759 fewer lost work days

*Health incidences include only traffic pollution-related health impacts and deaths (e.g. asthma attacks, bronchitis and other respiratory symptoms, ER visits, hospitalizations, heart attacks, work loss days). Impacts reported here do not include the significant physical activity-related health conditions or deaths (e.g. obesity, diabetes, heart disease, mental health, cancers) or traffic safety related injury or deaths (e.g. bike, pedestrian, motorist) that can be avoided through safer, more active community designs.*

## WHY WE NEED HEALTHY GROWTH

### Kern County faces serious air pollution and illness burdens related to the built environment

**Air Pollution:** San Joaquin Valley communities face air pollution challenges unparalleled in the United States. Bakersfield ranks as the American city most impacted by deadly particulate pollution. It is well documented that air pollution burdens Valley residents, impacting children's genetics and immune systems, including \$6 billion in annual costs to the economy, \$135 million in annual hospitalization charges for asthma, and taking the lives of 1,500 Valley residents per year.

- **All Valley Counties** have higher than state average rates of asthma
- **15.6 percent of Kern County residents have been diagnosed with asthma**

#### **State of the Air 2013** Most Polluted Cities in America by Short-term Particulates

City	US Rank 2013
<b>Bakersfield</b>	<b>1</b>
Fresno	2
Hanford	3
Modesto	4
Merced	6
Stockton	12
Visalia	14

**Watch for State of the Air 2013: April 30, 2014**

Illness Rates	Obesity	Childhood Obesity	Asthma	Diabetes
<b>California</b>	23.5	36.5	13.7	7.7
<b>Kern</b>	28.8	41.4	15.6	7.7

Sources: California Department of Public Health, San Joaquin County Dept. of Health

**Chronic Disease:** Beyond air pollution-related impacts, Valley residents are disproportionately impacted by chronic disease burdens that are related to the built environment, including heart disease, diabetes and obesity.

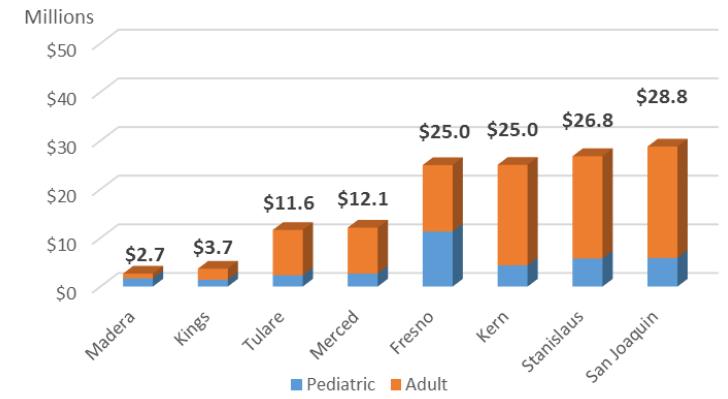
- Over 40 percent of children in **Kern County** are obese.
- **Kern County** has the state's highest rate of death due to heart disease and second worst rates of death due to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and diabetes.

*"In my practice, I see patients every day dealing with asthma, COPD, diabetes, heart disease and obesity-related problems related to how our communities have been designed.*

*We need a community plan that balances health in planning to reduce unhealthy air days and increase healthy walk days."*

**Alpha J. Anders, MD, Bakersfield**  
**President, Kern County Medical Society**

#### **Asthma Hospitalization Charges, 2010**





## WE CAN PLAN FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

**Kern County residents deserve healthier neighborhoods than past plans have delivered**

As the Kern Council of Governments moves toward adopting its initial SCS plan in 2014, it is critical that our elected leaders seize the opportunity to plan for a healthier future:

- Recognize that we can't afford another generation of unhealthy planning
- Adopt a strong plan that moves beyond "business-as-usual" planning of the past
- Plan a more balanced housing mix that limits over-investment in inefficient large lots and preserves natural and agricultural lands
- Prioritize growth and transportation investments to serve existing downtowns and community cores, rather than fringe areas or new towns
- Front-load investments that enhance walking, biking and transit options
- Promote infill, transit oriented development, access to transit, and other innovative cleaner air transportation options
- Focus investments to "fix it first" maintenance, rather than building expensive new roads
- Support more efficient and zero- and near-zero emission freight strategies
- Invest in planning models such as UrbanFootprint that can estimate health impacts and benefits of future planning scenarios