

OPEN STREETS AND LOCAL ECONOMIES

Author: Shayla Spilker, MSPH Candidate, 2016 UCLA Fielding School of Public Health

Advisors: Christina M Batteate, MPH; Alyssa Bird, MScPl; Dr. Aaron Hipp, PhD; Andrea Torres, PhD Candidate

What are Healthiest Practice Open Streets programs?

'Open Streets' programs temporarily open selected streets to people by closing them to cars. By doing this, the streets become places where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can come out and improve their health.

With well-planned routes, health-focused activity hubs, and frequently occurring program dates Open Streets programs have the power to change a city's culture of health. We call this kind of Open Streets program 'Healthiest Practice Open Streets'. By participating in Healthiest Practice Open Streets regularly, people can begin to change their habits and a city can change its culture of health.

This fact sheet is part of a series to promote the benefits of Healthiest Practice Open Streets programs. Find them all at www.healthiestpracticeopenstreets.org

Contributing to the Local Economy

Healthiest Practice Open Streets programs focus on opening streets for physical activity using existing infrastructure – that includes local streets and the businesses that characterize them. Therefore, purchases made at Open Streets take place at the businesses along the route. Healthiest Practice Open Streets programs do not typically line the streets with food trucks, art markets, or put tents up in front of local businesses, however pop-up retail can be beneficial in more barren areas of the route.

By slowing the pace on streets typically dominated by high speed traffic, these programs encourage participants to visit and shop at local establishments that might not be noticed while driving. In fact, business owners who participated in various programs indicate that they benefitted from increased foot traffic as a result of participating in the programming and would be willing to do so again.¹

Economic Impacts: By the Numbers

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| 70.6% of businesses felt participation in Open Streets was worthwhile. ⁴ | Fort Collins, CO |
| 84% of respondents shopped or purchased food and said they would return to the neighborhood ³ | San Diego, CA |
| 73% of participants spent money at a store or restaurant; 68% of participants became aware of a new store/restaurant ⁵ | St. Louis, MO |
| 82% of respondents spent money, with over half spending more than \$10.00 ⁶ | St. Louis, MO |
| Nearly 82% of the Open Streets participants anticipated spending \$10.00 USD or more at Atlanta Streets Alive. ⁷ | Atlanta, GA |
| The net increase in average revenue on an Open Streets Sunday compared to a non-open streets Sunday was \$466 ² | San Francisco, CA |



*Example of sandwich board use to attract potential customers at Open Streets

Necessary Considerations

By bringing local business owners into the planning process, Open Streets implementation teams foster opportunities for increased interaction between local business and participants. Regular implementation of Open Streets programs, coupled with the following considerations, can result in programs that benefit local economies and communities over the long-term:

Engage business owners from the get-go to ensure buy-in and participation²

Intentionally routing Open Streets programs through commercial areas and actively working with business owners to meet their needs can produce economic advantages for local economies, particularly in areas of pedestrian scale. Strategies to engage business owners include clear communication about the program logistics, coordinating marketing tactics with business, and ensuring that road closures do not hinder customers' ability to access the location.³

Improve permitting so that local businesses can easily interact with participants on the sidewalks and streets.²

Ensuring that restaurants and businesses can interact with participants helps secure business-owner buy-in. Allowing restaurants to use sidewalk chalk, sandwich boards, or street games helps them attract potential customers. Working with local city officials is one way to improve permit access and encourage new restaurants to participate in the programming. *see example above

Develop sales tracking tools and accurately measure the effects on local businesses.¹

While anecdotal evidence from business owners indicating that their sales improved may help encourage other business owners to participate in Open Streets programs, accurate tracking of sales data, foot traffic, or other economic indicators such as tourism dollars should also be conducted.



Citations

¹ Eyler, A. A., Hipp, J. A., & Lokuta, J. (2014). Moving the Barricades to Physical Activity: A Qualitative Analysis of Open Streets Initiatives Across the United States. *American Journal of Health Promotion*.

² Zieff, S., & Chaudhuri, A. (2013). Sunday Streets SF: An Economic Impact Assessment (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. ID 2367453). Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. Retrieved from <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2367453>

³ Carlson, J., Sallis, J., Engelberg, J., Black, M., Sanchez, J., & Ryan, S. (2014). Evaluation of San Diego's First CicloSDias Open Streets Event. Retrieved from http://sallis.ucsd.edu/Documents/Pubs_documents/cicloSDias%20full%20report%20FINAL%202_13_2014.pdf

⁴ Heimann, N. (2014) Evaluation of Open Streets: A comprehensive report of Fort Collins' first Open Streets event. Colorado School of Public Health. <http://www.fcgov.com/openstreets/pdf/2014-comp-eval-report.pdf>

⁵ Hipp JA, Eyler AA, Casey C, et al. Open Streets Evaluation Report. St. Louis, MO: Washington University in St. Louis; 2012.

⁶ Hipp, J. A., Eyler, A. A., & Kuhlberg, J. A. (2012). Target Population Involvement in Urban Ciclovias: A Preliminary Evaluation of St. Louis Open Streets. *Journal of Urban Health*, 90(6), 1010–1015.

⁷ Torres, A., Steward, J., Strasser, S., Lyn, R., Serna, R., & Stauber, C. (2015). Atlanta Streets Alive: A Movement Building a Culture of Health in an Urban Environment. *Journal of physical activity & health*.