

Residents 'Grade' Tyler Area With a Walk Through

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The El Monte Community Services Department has the lead role in changing the look of the and feel of what it's calling the Tyler Corridor. Area residents were asked to give their input at a community workshop held last Saturday, May 9.

"The City was one of five cities that was awarded a grant for \$335,000 over three years to develop a health and wellness initiative," said El Monte Community Services manager Marian Last.

Of 25 applications for the grant, El Monte was among the five that received the PLACE Program Grant along with the Culver City, Pacoima Beautiful, Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition and the City of Long Beach.

The PLACE Program lead agency, The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, stated that it recognizes that chronic disease prevention is a crucial element in protecting the public's health.

"The PLACE Program recognizes that our community and our environment affect our health," said El Monte's PLACE coordinator, Arpine Shakhbandaryan. "The design and structure of our cities, communities, neighborhoods, work sites, schools, and streets can impact how much physical activity we get, what we eat, and the quality of the air we breathe. How we choose to design or improve various aspects of our environment plays an important role in preventing many chronic conditions - such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes and asthma."

"Our goal was to actively and seriously address the epidemic of obesity leading to chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension and cancer," said Last.

It appears the biggest culprit in El Monte is inactivity. Thirty three percent of its youth and 42 percent of El Monte's adults do not exercise even remotely, said Last.

At the workshop residents were given a tour book and in six groups walked a one mile circuit from Tyler Avenue at the Community Center, across the street from Tony Arceo Park to Bodger. The groups travelled west to Santa Anita, north to Mildred and back to the Community Center.

At selected points residents were asked to judge the types of improvements needed in the area. They were to judge the area on issues of safety, mobility, aesthetics such as shade and comfort which included the availability of benches. They were also asked the types of signage that could be placed to let walkers know of close by amenities, transit, or educational facilities such as museums, historical landmarks and area schools.

"The initiative, while being mindful of busy lifestyles, will impact how we physically design our streets, parks, buildings and other infrastructures," said Last. "It is the city's intent to help our residents embrace some type of daily physical activity and healthier eating that will result in improved health. We know that this is a lifetime process and along with the city's other eight elements of the general plan will become part of El Monte's vision in promoting the quality of life for its residents."

"Based on the walk bonnet, today, it seems there is great potential to promote walking in the Tyler Corridor section of El Monte," said Director of Public Health for Los Angeles County, Dr. Jonathan Fielding.