



## National Fact Sheet

### Surrounding Our Kids with the Opportunity for Physical Activity

Opportunities for children to get safe and healthy physical activity have largely been engineered out of our communities. Multi-lane roads have replaced sidewalks and bike paths and play spaces are far away or unsafe. The result is that children's obesity and disease rates are rising. Designing communities so that children have ample opportunity for physical activity is vital to improving children's long-term health.

#### Sidewalks and Bike Paths

- Seventy percent of Americans live in areas where there are no bike paths or lanes.<sup>1</sup>
- According to a 2002 survey, nearly one-third of Americans polled live in communities without sidewalks.<sup>2</sup>
- Children's opportunities to walk to school or ride a bike safely are limited when communities forsake sidewalks and bike paths for high-speed roads.
- Only one-quarter of children walk or bike to school. Even among children living less than one mile from school, less than one-third walk or bike to get there.<sup>3</sup>

#### Play Spaces

- Less than half of American children have a playground within walking distance of their home.<sup>4</sup>
- More than 60 percent of Americans say that simple lack of access to a playground is the largest barrier to their children playing on one.<sup>5</sup>
- Half of Americans say their nearest playground is not in good condition.<sup>6</sup>

#### Health Consequences of Less Physical Activity

- Only about half of children age 12 to 21 engage in regular, vigorous physical activity.<sup>7</sup>
- The percentage of school-age children that are overweight more than doubled between 1970 and 2000.<sup>8</sup>
- Childhood obesity increases the risk of developing diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure. Unless current exercise habits change, one-third of the children born in the U.S. in 2000 will become diabetic.<sup>9</sup>
- Childhood obesity increases health care costs. Hospitalizations among children and adolescents for diseases associated with obesity increased dramatically between 1979 and 1999. Hospital costs more than tripled, from \$35 million to \$127 million.<sup>10</sup>

1 "How Bike Paths and Bike Lanes Make a Difference," Bureau of Transportation Statistics, [http://www.bts.gov/publications/issue\\_briefs/number\\_11/html/entire.html](http://www.bts.gov/publications/issue_briefs/number_11/html/entire.html).

2 "Sidewalks Promote Walking," Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2004, [http://www.bts.gov/publications/issue\\_briefs/number\\_12/](http://www.bts.gov/publications/issue_briefs/number_12/).

3 "Public Health and the Built Environment," American Institute of Architects, [http://www.aia.org/liv\\_TP\\_health](http://www.aia.org/liv_TP_health).

4 "KaBOOM! and The Home Depot Commission First Gallup Survey on Playground Use in the United States," KaBOOM!, 2003, [http://www.kaboom.org/News/Press\\_Room/Gallup2002.html](http://www.kaboom.org/News/Press_Room/Gallup2002.html).

5 "KaBOOM! and The Home Depot Commission First Gallup Survey on Playground Use in the United States," KaBOOM!, 2003, [http://www.kaboom.org/News/Press\\_Room/Gallup2002.html](http://www.kaboom.org/News/Press_Room/Gallup2002.html).

6 "KaBOOM! and The Home Depot Commission First Gallup Survey on Playground Use in the United States," KaBOOM!, 2003, [http://www.kaboom.org/News/Press\\_Room/Gallup2002.html](http://www.kaboom.org/News/Press_Room/Gallup2002.html).

7 "Public Health and the Built Environment," American Institute of Architects, [http://www.aia.org/liv\\_TP\\_health](http://www.aia.org/liv_TP_health).

8 "Childhood Obesity," The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, <http://www.healthinschools.org/sh/obesityfs.asp>.

9 "Public Health and the Built Environment," American Institute of Architects, [http://www.aia.org/liv\\_TP\\_health](http://www.aia.org/liv_TP_health).

10 "Childhood Obesity," The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, <http://www.healthinschools.org/sh/obesityfs.asp>.