

# Blue Zones

“If it came from a plant, eat it. If it was made in a plant, don’t.” – Michael Pollan, American author, journalist and professor

## A built environment made for pedestrian and bicycle safety



Bike safety and pedestrians. SPECIAL TO THE NAPLES DAILY NEWS

**Sebastien Saitta**

### How it Impacts our Community Well-Being

Many have seen the headlines in recent years recognizing Naples as earning the top spot in the nation for well-being. In fact, this has happened four years in a row! According to Gallup, well-being is a concept that captures the important aspects of how people feel about and experience their daily lives—encompassing more than just physical health or economic indicators, well-being includes five elements: **purpose, social, financial, community and physical**. While residents can give personal testimony to what makes them thrive across these elements, it is important to note how a built environment that encourages safe walking and biking contributes, especially as they continue to rise in popularity for transportation and recreational purposes. Here’s how.

#### **Social — having supportive relationships and love in your life**

Bicycling and walking provide additional opportunity for social interaction and creating stronger bonds with family and friends.

#### **Financial — Managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security**

Money not spent at the doctor’s office means more money in your pocket. Walking and biking are great exercises to help fight obesity, lower incidence of high blood pressure, diabetes and other chronic disease. This in turn helps keep away unnecessary medical expenses. In fact, obese individuals spend \$2,741 more on health care than individuals who aren’t obese<sup>1</sup> and adults with high blood pressure are estimated to pay al-

most \$2,000 more in annual healthcare costs compared to those without high blood pressure<sup>2</sup>.

It is also worth noting that homes located near safe bicycling and walking trails typically sell faster and at higher prices, and realtors often highlight them as an amenity. In a survey of new homebuyers conducted by the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Homebuilders, walking and bicycling trails were cited as the second most important community amenity<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Community — Liking where you live, feeling safe and having pride in your community**

Knowing that you and your family can walk or bike safely to your destination contributes to a greater sense of community. Adding separate bike lanes and sidewalks for pedestrians can help ensure safety. A report listed on the U.S Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration website suggests that providing walkways separated from the travel lanes could help to prevent up to 88 percent of “walking along roadway” crashes<sup>4</sup>. It also suggests that paved shoulders provide an increased level of comfort for bicyclists, and a stable surface off of the roadway for pedestrians to use when sidewalks cannot be provided or are overcrowded.

#### **Physical — Having good health and enough energy to get things done daily**

It is no secret that walking and biking have numerous benefits that include more energy and better physical health, and can even help you to live longer. At least one study found that spending one hour a day on a bike can reduce your risk of death by 18 per-

cent<sup>4</sup>. Adding an extra half an hour to your routine can drop your risk of death by nearly 28 percent. Another study found that adding extra steps can reduce the risk of death by 39 percent<sup>5</sup>.

A large-scale storm water outfall project is planned for Gulf Shore Boulevard (GSB) between 8th Avenue North and 2nd Avenue South. On Feb. 18 at 1 p.m., the Naples City Council has created a time-certain public meeting during the City Council Workshop and is seeking public input on the design elements for the GSB project such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, buffered bicycle lanes, automotive travel lane width, and greenspace, along with any concerns the public may have regarding topics such as safety, aesthetics, and the preservation of culture/appeal. The meeting will be at City Hall, 735 Eighth St. South, Naples

By Sebastien Saitta

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22094013>

<sup>2</sup> <https://newsroom.heart.org/news/adults-with-high-blood-pressure-face-higher-healthcare-costs>

<sup>3</sup> National Association of Realtors and National Association of Home Builders, Consumers’ Survey on Smart Choices for Home Buyers (Washington D.C.: NAHB, April 2002)

<sup>4</sup>[https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/tools\\_solve/walkways\\_trifold/](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/walkways_trifold/)

<sup>5</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/ja-maininternalmedicine/fullarticle/485349>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/study-shows-walking-an-hour-a-day-achieves-greatest-longevity-benefit.html>