

Heart Times Call for Hard Measures

Health Equity Council

Executive statement

Heart disease is the #1 cause of death in Bernalillo County, NM. Societal factors such as health threatening policies, housing insecurity, and environmental racism are triggers of the disease.

Background

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a public health matter in Bernalillo County, NM. The International District of Albuquerque currently has the highest rates of cardiovascular disease (8.4%) in the County. In 2019 there was ~319 heart attacks total in the county. Particle pollution has been determined a direct link to plaque buildup leading to a CVD event. The South Valley has disparately more frequent episodes of higher PM10 in the atmosphere. The disparate impact results in higher cardiac events in the SW & SE corridors of Bernalillo County. Unhoused persons and those that are housing insecure are three times more at risk for CVD. The South Valley, Albuquerque had the highest rate of evictions in 2020.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Zoning is important to preserve safety and health in a community.

Implement form based codes or Form based zoning for dense urban areas of city. Form based codes or zoning focuses on physical form vs segregation of use as seen in commercial and industrial zoning. This designation supports a community decision making model to prioritize walkability to access amenities, increase in community gardens, and more areas of respite.

Recommendation 2: Local air quality monitoring in vulnerable communities

Work with healthcare providers to add exposure assessment in screening for CVD. The EPA has acknowledged that there is a direct link between particulate matter exposure and the genesis of heart disease. Improving air quality monitoring at a neighborhood level, household, and individual level will increase management of exposure.

Recommendation 3: Housing security settles the heart

Expand the zoning code to permit accessory dwelling units (ADU) in areas of city where single family units are too expensive and housing burden cost is greater than 50%. Currently ADU amendments reside in neighborhoods in the city where housing burden is <36% and the average listing price is \$308,000.

Recommendation 4: Housing Quality for Healthy Hearts

Screen home improvement eligibility in low income communities that lack the resources to make improvements to homes in relation to code enforcement, ordinance compliance, and energy related improvements. Bernalillo County has high measures of radon per housing units. The SW & SE corridors of Albuquerque have a greater percentage of housing units with more people than rooms.

Recommendation 5: Neighborhood Greenness

Include community input for community creation of conservation easements in communities that have limited green space. Neighborhoods are 'ecological units' for health and access to shade from extreme heat are some protective area level characteristics to prevent CVD. The CDC has linked extreme heat as a trigger for heart disease and death.