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► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [Ask the CEO](#)

► [CEO Forum](#)

► [Employee Recognition](#)

► [Employee Activities](#)

► [Metro Projects](#)

► [Facts at a Glance](#)  
(web)

► [Archives](#)

► [Events Calendar](#)

► [Research Center/ Library](#)

► [Metro Classifieds](#)

► [Bazaar](#)

#### Metro Info

► [30/10 Initiative](#)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Photo by Bill Heard



## Obesity Now at Alarming Rates in LA County, Health Experts Say

<Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky called for planners to include options for healthy lifestyles during a health conference at Metro Headquarters.

- Conference at Metro Headquarters seeks ways to improve health

(May 23, 2006) County health officials, medical professionals, transportation planners and public officials attended a conference at Metro Headquarters, Tuesday, to discuss an alarming rise in obesity in LA County and ways to provide an environment that would encourage improved health.

Earlier this year, the County Health Department released a study that showed the rate of adult obesity rising, with one in five adults in LA County now obese. The average adult gained six pounds between 1997 and 2005, collectively making the county 44 million pounds heavier, the study said.

The conference, titled "Built Environment and Transportation: Impacts on Public Health," featured such speakers as Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and CEO Roger Snoble, along with discussion panel members who included Metro Chief Planning Officer Carol Inge.

In an eight-year period ending in 2005, the prevalence of adult obesity in the county increased from 14 percent to 21 percent. By 2010, the study said, the rate is expected to reach 25 percent.

Noting that communities can play an important role in improving their residents' health, County Health Officer Jonathan Fielding said, "Communities that foster walkable neighborhoods, access to healthy foods, parks and green space, and encourage physical activity . . . have the potential to greatly impact the rising trend of obesity, as well as diabetes and other chronic diseases."

Conference sessions covered such topics as health issues, protecting the public from air pollution, smart community growth, healthy

lifestyles, and planning communities that include options for healthy, active living.

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