



CITY OF EL PASO

Safety and Wellbeing in Neighborhoods

Natalia Flores, MPH, CHES®, CHW
Department of Public Health

MISSION



Deliver exceptional services to support a high quality of life and place for our community.

VISION

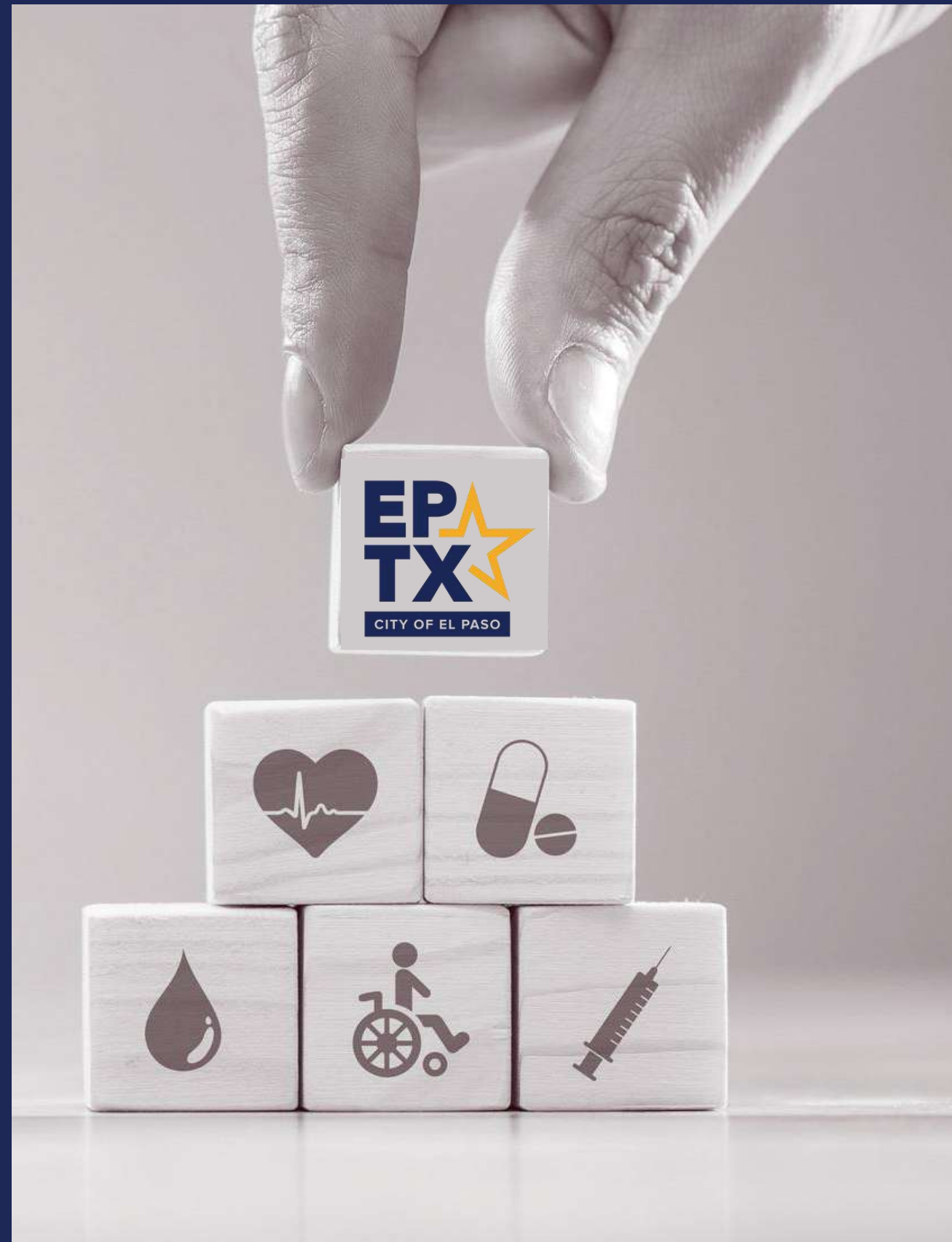


Develop a vibrant regional economy, safe and beautiful neighborhoods and exceptional recreational, cultural and educational opportunities powered by a high performing government.



VALUES

Integrity, **R**espect, **E**xcellence,
Accountability, **P**eople

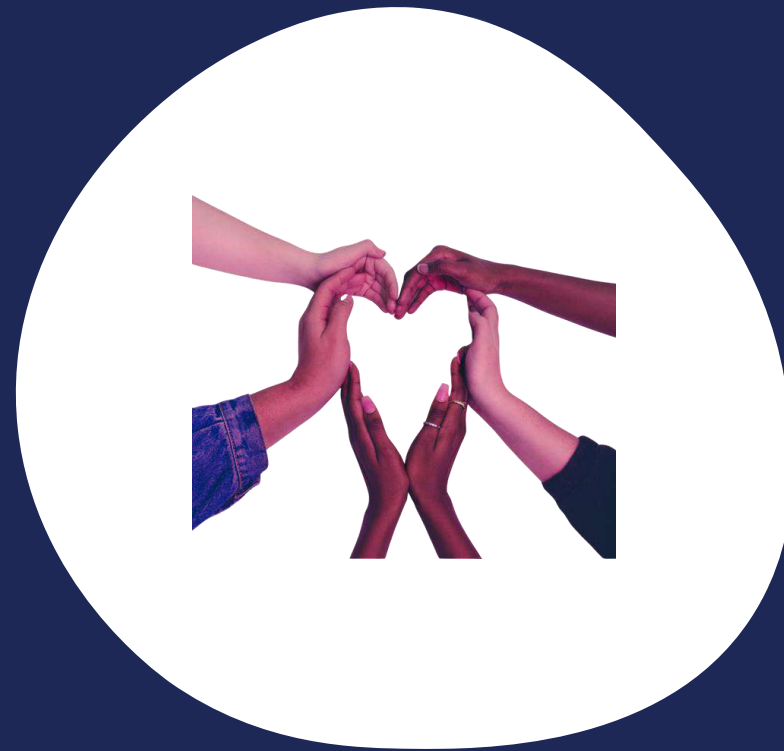


WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH?

- Public Health is the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities.
- This work is achieved by promoting healthy lifestyles, researching disease and injury prevention, and detecting, preventing, and responding to infectious diseases.



Community
Safety & Public
Health



Social
Wellbeing



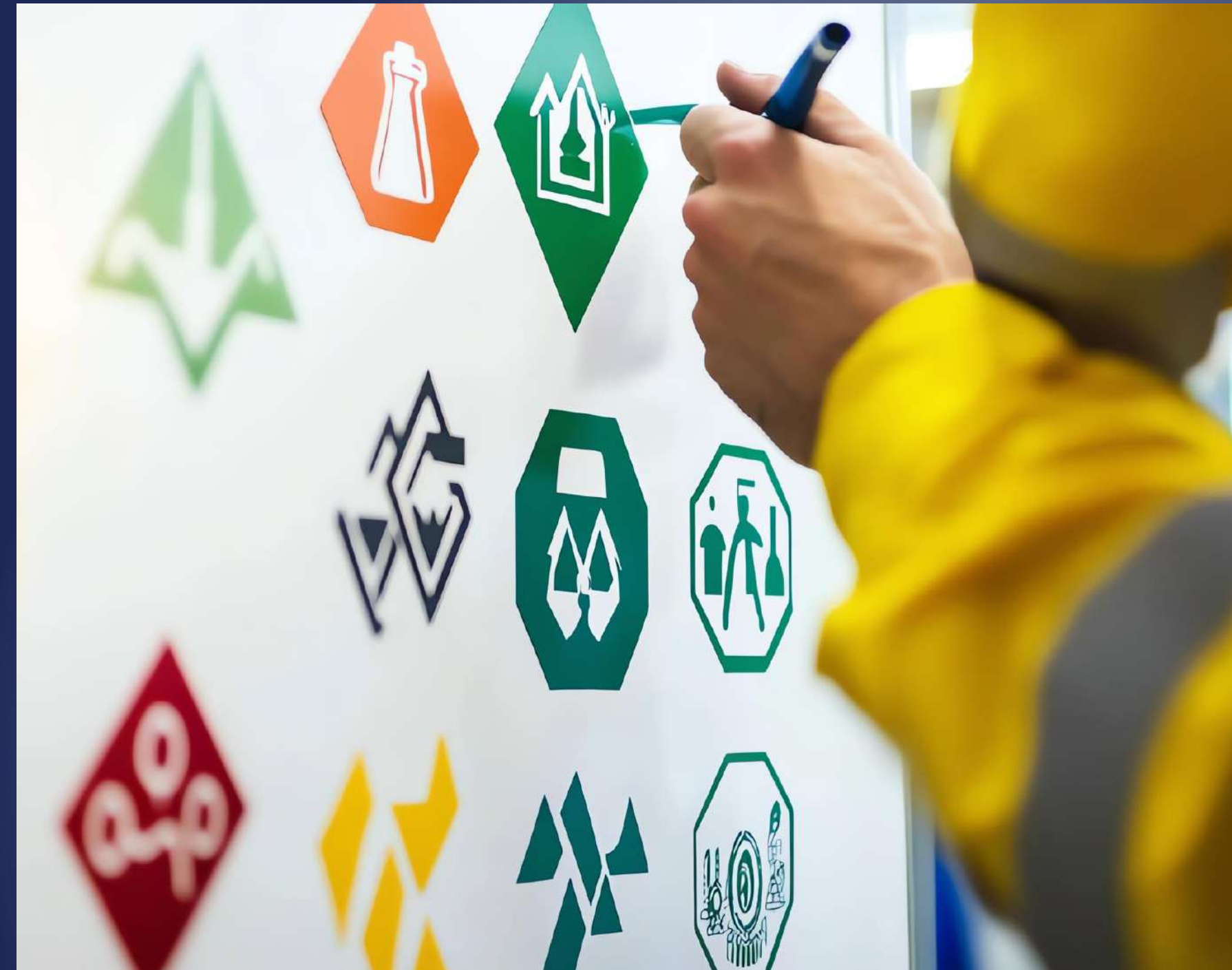
Health &
Wellbeing



Housing &
Environment

Community Safety & Public Health

- Crime Prevention & Violence Reduction → Less exposure to violence decreases trauma, stress, and injuries.
- Emergency Preparedness → Planning for floods, fires, or disease outbreaks prevents deaths and reduces strain on hospitals.
- Traffic & Pedestrian Safety → Safe streets lower car accidents, promote walking/biking, and reduce chronic diseases linked to inactivity.
- Lighting & Infrastructure → Well-maintained, well-lit areas discourage crime, encourage physical activity, and support mental wellbeing.



Health & Wellbeing

- Access to Healthcare → Public health ensures equitable access to clinics, vaccines, and mental health resources, reducing health disparities.
- Environmental Health → Clean air, water, and safe housing prevent asthma, lead poisoning, and other environmental diseases.
- Active Living → Safe parks and trails help prevent obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.
- Food Security → Access to affordable, nutritious food addresses malnutrition and chronic illnesses like hypertension and diabetes.





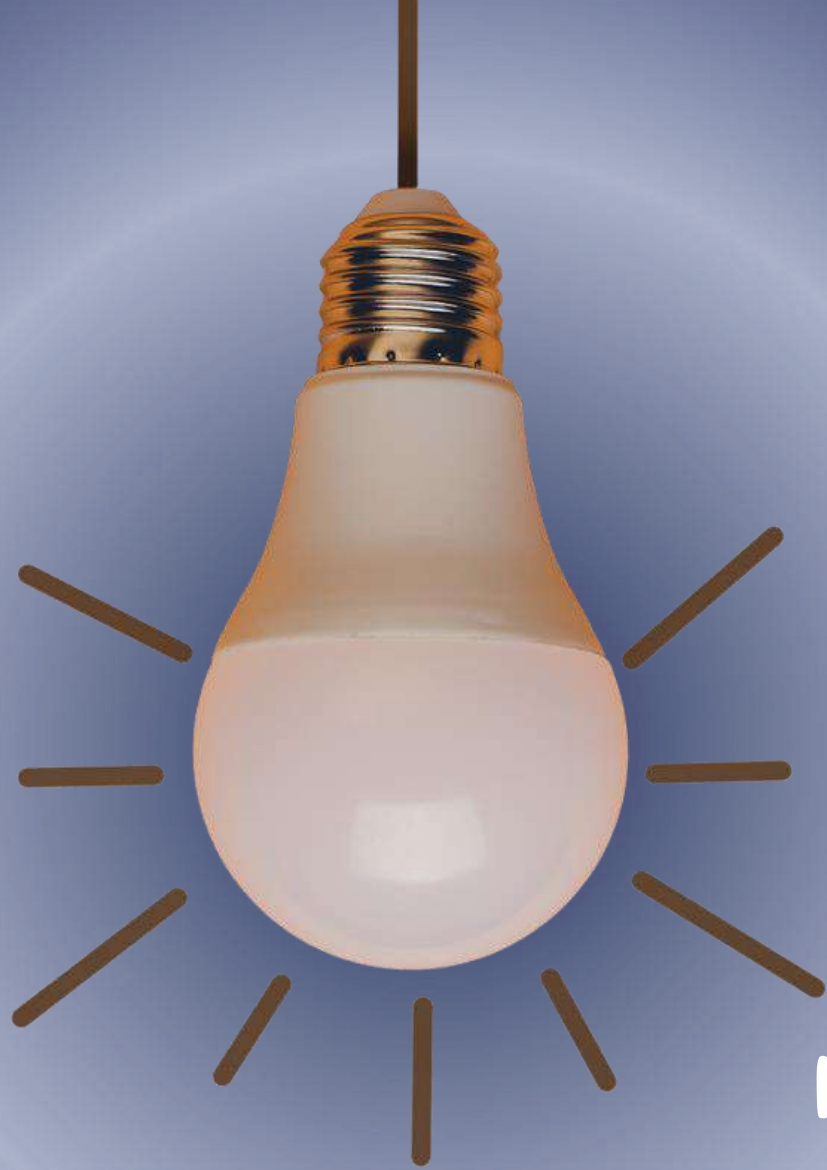
Social Wellbeing

- Community Connection → Strong social ties protect against loneliness and depression, improving mental health outcomes.
- Youth Engagement → Safe, structured programs keep teens away from risky behaviors (substance use, violence) and promote lifelong healthy habits.
- Elderly Support → Fall prevention, check-ins, and inclusion reduce ER visits, isolation, and age-related health decline.
- Diversity & Inclusion → Reducing stigma and promoting equity are key in addressing health disparities among marginalized groups.

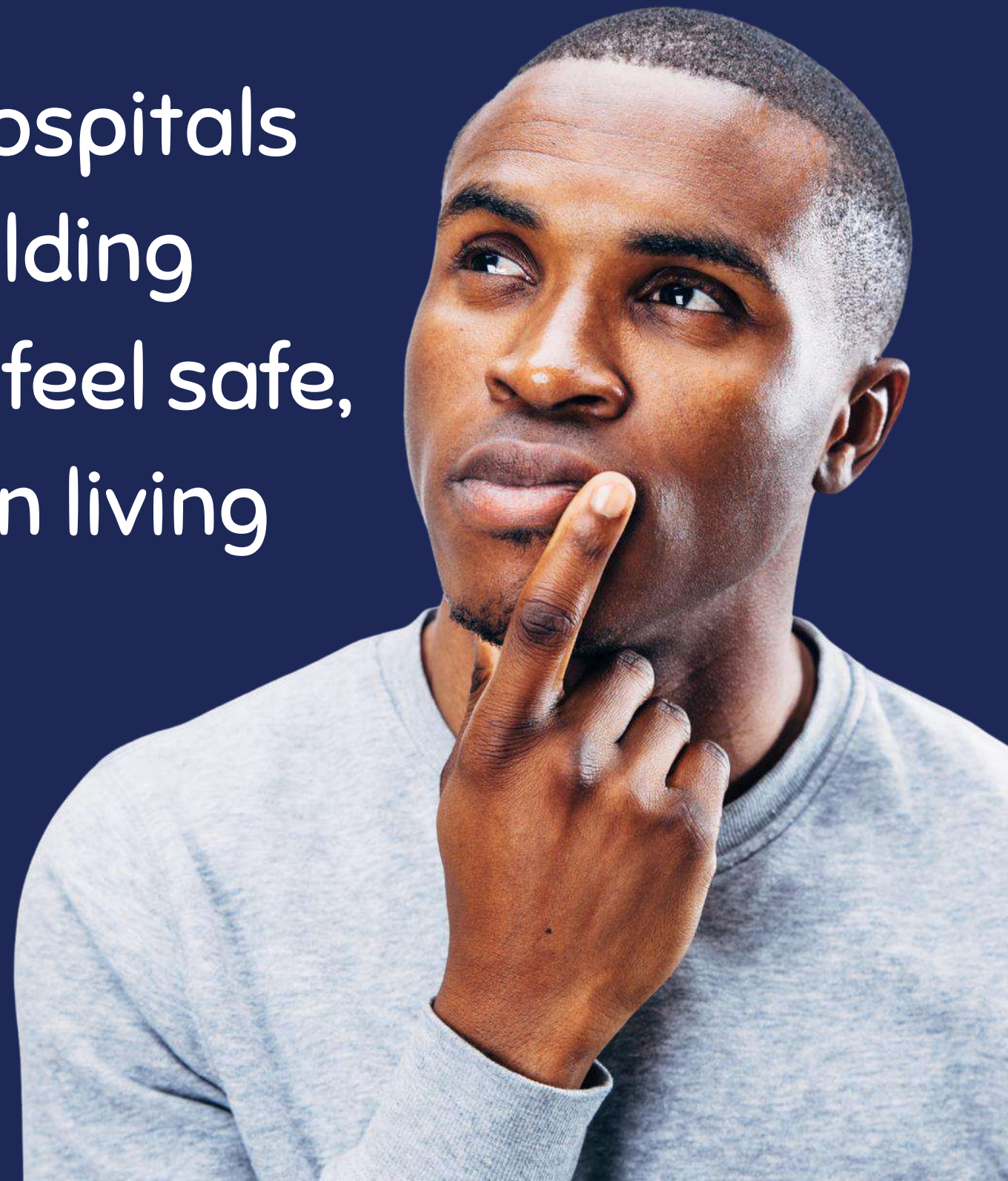
Housing & Environment

- Safe Housing → Prevents respiratory illnesses, injuries, and long-term health issues.
- Affordable Housing Access → Reduces homelessness, which is closely tied to poor health outcomes and limited access to care.
- Disaster-Resilient Communities → Climate preparedness is essential to protecting health during extreme weather (heat illness, waterborne disease, smoke inhalation).



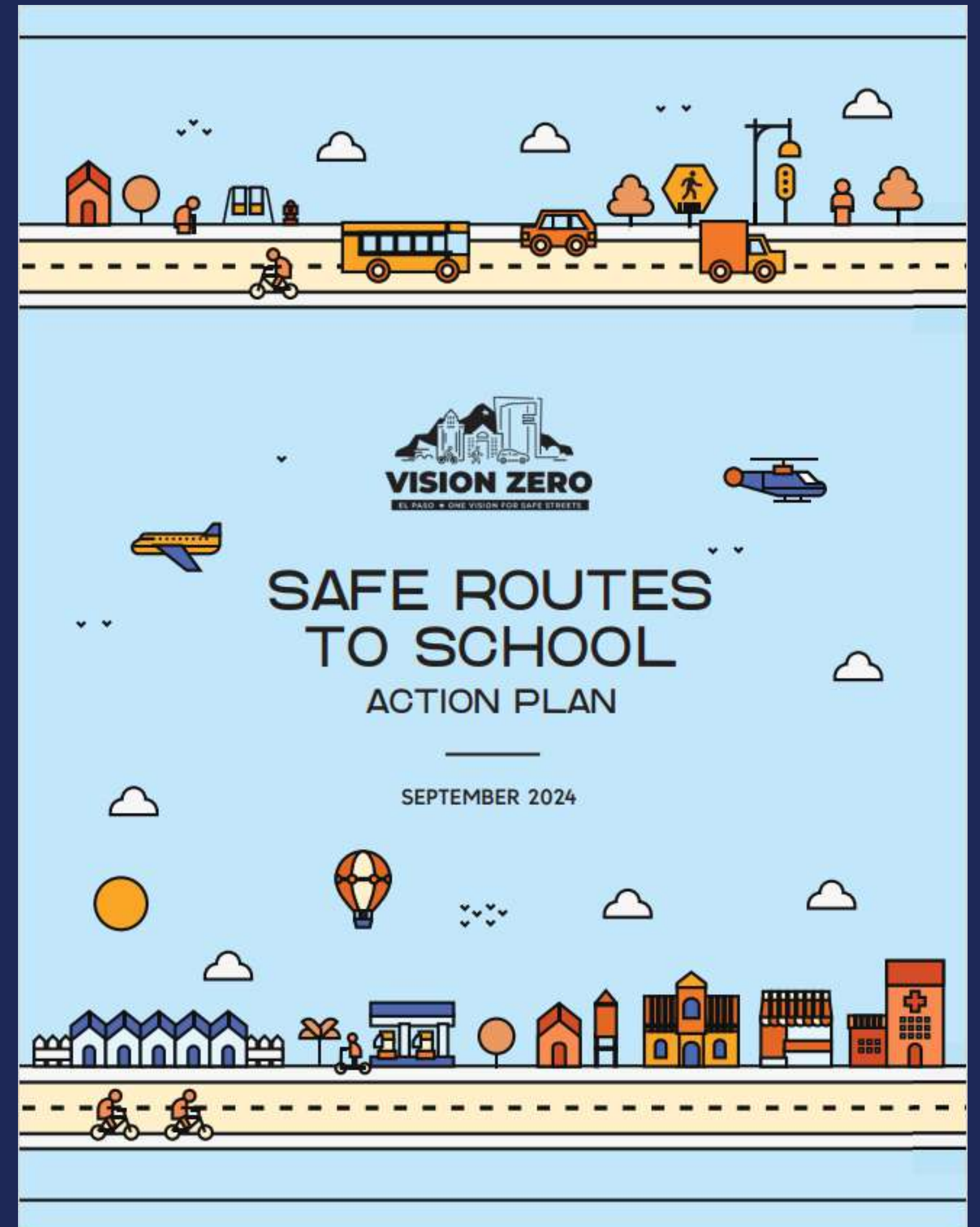


Public health is more than hospitals
and clinics – it's about building
neighborhoods where people feel safe,
connected, and supported in living
healthy lives.



Safe Routes to School in El Paso

- An initiative that focuses on infrastructure improvements, education, community engagement, and policy changes to make walking and biking to school safer and more appealing.
- The city adopted a Safe Routes to School Action Plan (August 2024) as city-wide policy.
- Schools in El Paso are being designated as “Safe Routes to School” when they participate in safety education, walking/biking events, mapping safe routes, or other program activities.



Safe Routes to School and Public Health



- Our department actively supports Safe Routes to School (SRTS) through ongoing efforts in partnership with the Texas Healthy Communities program.
- We collaborate with schools and community organizations to host events that encourage safe, self-powered transportation such as walking and biking.
- Past events have included community “Bike to School” days and health fair-style activities.



Active Living

By making walking, biking, and rolling to school safer (better sidewalks, crossings, infrastructure), more students can engage in daily physical activity. This helps reduce risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease. The Action Plan notes that walking or biking daily can provide most of the CDC's recommended daily activity.

Equity & Social Wellbeing

Prioritizing “areas that are at risk, underrepresented, and highly utilized” for improvements ensures that communities with fewer resources also benefit. Community input and school participation help ensure design reflects real local needs.



Environmental Health & Air Quality

Fewer car trips for school drop-off/pick-up reduces vehicle emissions near schools, which helps with air pollution. El Paso is in an area designated by the EPA as non-attainment for some pollutants. SRTS can reduce traffic congestion and emissions during peak school travel hours.



Injury Prevention & Safety

Infrastructure improvements, reduced vehicle speeds, better crosswalks, safer crossings all reduce risk of pedestrian injuries. There is a modeling study for El Paso showing SRTS policy implementation would yield fewer pedestrian injuries and deaths, along with fewer cardiovascular disease (CVD) incidents in the long term.



When we work together to make our neighborhoods safer and more connected, we build communities where children can walk and bike to school with confidence, families can enjoy healthier lifestyles, and everyone feels a stronger sense of belonging. Safe Routes to School is just one example of how small changes in our built environment can lead to lasting improvements in health and wellbeing.



Thank You!

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