

WASHINGTON APA'S GAME CHANGING INITIATIVE  
HEALTH AND PLANNING WORKING GROUP

# RESOURCE GUIDE FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITY PLANNING

FRAMING QUESTIONS AND LINKS TO DATA



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## Big Ideas Initiative

The Washington American Planning Association's (APA's) Game Changing Initiative intends to help planners bring about far-reaching and fundamental change around our state's most critical challenges. This Initiative is organized around Ten Big Ideas, which include addressing climate change, rebuilding infrastructure, protecting ecosystems, growing economies, and supporting sustainable agriculture. Planning to improve community health is one of the Ten Big Ideas.

The Health and Planning Working Group believes planners could benefit from resources to start a conversation with decision-makers, build support, and jump start efforts to incorporate health into planning. To this end, the Working Group has developed a user-friendly resource guide to make it easier for planners to incorporate health considerations into their work.

# INTRODUCTION

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The following pages contain a series of framing questions and corresponding links to resources. Each question is from the perspective of a planner wanting to incorporate health into planning. This section also includes a few case study examples and messaging ideas, which outline possible talking points when communicating the importance of health in planning.

## Framing Questions

|                                                                                       |    |
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## Top Picks

Resources noted with a ★ are especially comprehensive, while a 😊 indicates that a resource is particularly user-friendly.

# FRAMING QUESTIONS AND RESOURCES

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## WHY SHOULD MY COMMUNITY INCORPORATE HEALTH INTO PLANNING?

The built environment and living conditions in a community influence the health of its residents. The good news is that thoughtful planning policies and design can improve community health, which is the core of a healthy economy, environment, society, and leads to increased quality of life, greater social engagement, and longer lifespans.

### **Built Environment and Public Health Clearinghouse**



<http://www.bephc.gatech.edu/>

This site provides academic and professional training resources that address all aspects of health in planning, engineering, and transportation. Built Environment and Public Health Clearinghouse provides webinars, training, funding sources, and databases that address the intersection of health and the built environment.

### **Tacoma Pierce County Health Department Community Planning Toolbox**



<http://www.tpchd.org/environment/planning-healthy-communities/healthy-community-planning-toolbox/>

This website provides tools to help planners incorporate health into comprehensive planning documents. It also includes a Self-Assessment Tool to evaluate and direct the integration of health policies into other community plans.

### **APA GCI Policy on Healthy Community Planning**

<https://apawa.memberclicks.net/ten-big-ideas-page>

This Policy explains why creating healthy communities is important for jurisdictions and agencies to help ensure everyone's right to health. There are also policies and actions to help planners partner with local health agencies and interested groups to address local, regional, and national public health challenges.

## 2 HOW SHOULD I BEGIN? WHAT DATA SHOULD I GATHER AND HOW CAN I TRACK PROGRESS?

Fortunately, there are any many sources available that enable planners to get information on health. Information already exists at both the county and city level to help planners start organizing information in their own community.

### **Community Commons**

<http://www.communitycommons.org/>

Community Commons is an interactive mapping, networking, and learning utility for the broad-based healthy, sustainable, and livable communities' movement. Registered users have FREE access to thousands of map-able geographic information systems (GIS) data layers and tables displayed at varying geographies for all communities in the United States. The Commons is a democratized learning and innovation platform for further a systematic approach to make public data accessible for all with easy-to-understand visualizations such as maps, reports, charts, dashboards and animations, etc. Community Commons is an initiative of Advancing the Movement, and powered by Institute for People, Place and Possibilities (IP3).

### **Center for Disease Control (CDC)**

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/default.htm>

Designing and Building Healthy Places provides a comprehensive resource site for healthy communities planning, including a Healthy Community Design Checklist.



<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/toolkit/>

Community Health Status Indicators is an interactive web application that produces health profiles for every County in the United States. The tool allows you to see a variety of health indicators from access to food, transportation, and more. Counties can also be compared side by side.



### **APA Planning and Community Health Center**

<https://www.planning.org/nationalcenters/health/>

This is a comprehensive resource site for research, tools, and programs focused towards local government planning.

## County Health Departments

County level data is often more comprehensive than city data. It typically includes health indicators and statistics, as well as toolboxes to integrate health with planning. Below are a couple of examples.

<http://www.tpchd.org/environment/planning-healthy-communities/healthy-community-planning-toolbox/>

Tacoma Pierce County Health Department. This department provides a useful toolbox for merging health and planning for jurisdictions of various sizes.

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/healthyplaces.aspx>

Public Health Seattle and King County. This site provides an overview of healthy places, resources and health indicators. It also contains community health data by jurisdiction.

## American Public Health Association (APHA)

<http://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/healthy-communities>

The APHA site has Programs, resources and strategies for creating more healthy communities.

## Change Lab Solutions

<http://changelabsolutions.org/>

ChangeLab Solutions provides community-based solutions for America's most common and preventable diseases like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and asthma. Our solutions promote the common good by making healthier choices easier for everyone.

## Healthy People

<http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/default.aspx>

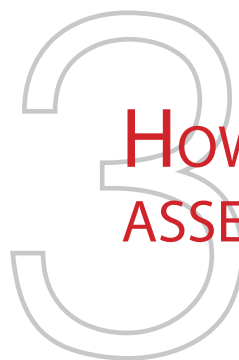
Healthy People provides science-based, 10-year national objectives for improving the health of all Americans. For three decades, Healthy People has established benchmarks and monitored progress over time in order to encourage collaborations across communities and sectors, empower individuals toward making informed health decisions, and to measure the impact of prevention activities. This site contains many useful indicators to measure changes.

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## Actions

to help  
streamline  
messaging and  
communication  
around health

- A list of opportunities, issues, and/or concerns about the project that you need to consider as you proceed
- A picture of how people get their information in your city
- Recommended techniques to inform and involve various audiences including events, meetings, media, locations to distribute materials, post information
- What languages you may need to translate or interpret at events
- Suggestions on who else you should talk to
- Modification of key messages if needed based on input. What 3-4 main points about this story do you want your audiences to understand? Key messages may answer the questions "Why is this important?", "Why should I care?", "What should I do?", and "How can I learn more?"



## HOW SHOULD I COMPLETE A BASELINE ASSESSMENT IN MY COMMUNITY?

There are a variety of ways that planners can assess the built environment’s effect on health. Getting a clear picture of the existing conditions in a community is the first step towards tracking progress and making changes.

### Leadership for Healthy Communities

<http://www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org/resources-mainmenu-40/databases-mainmenu-117>

The Leadership for Healthy Communities web site provides links to databases that track healthy eating, active living and childhood obesity prevention policies and programs nationwide.

### Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

★ [brfss@health.state.ny.us](mailto:brfss@health.state.ny.us).

An annual statewide telephone surveillance system designed by the CDC, BRFSS monitors modifiable risk behaviors and other factors contributing to the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the population. New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) generated BRFSS Summary Reports are available in electronic format from 1995. Previous reports are available upon request by sending an e-mail message to

### US Census Data

US Census Data and the American Communities Survey Data provide information at the census tract and block group levels that include some data related to certain chronic disease risk factors, such as % minority, % Hispanic, and with income below poverty line, % zero car households, % low English proficiency, % children and seniors, and others.

## Example Messaging

- Environmental factors beyond the control of individuals such as safe places to walk, play, and be active, contribute to increase obesity rates, especially in our children.
- Local governments can enact policy and environmental initiatives that support healthy eating and active living that benefits all people including children and aging populations.
- Planning and design that encourages and enables easy access to walking, bicycling, transit, and other means of exercise in safe and inviting environments provides residents with ways to be active and get places every day.



## Local Jurisdictions

Local jurisdictions can provide a wealth of GIS data related to healthy community planning. Some hospitals can share community health data and some jurisdictions can provide mapping services while others may provide data only. Simple GIS analysis is an easy way to find basic spatial information on health in a city. For example, data is often available to determine proximity to parks, trails, grocery stores, etc. Useful data would include:

- Crime and injury data (Police Departments)
- Accident locations and data (Police and/or Public Works/Transportation Departments)
- Healthy food data (business licenses for food establishments, farmer's market, and community gardens data)
- Barriers to physical activity and parks, recreation, and open space distribution and use data (Parks Departments)

## Local Health Department Data

Local Health Departments can provide data such as community profiles with population data, health outcomes and risk factors.

## Walkability Audits

Identifying sites which have poor pedestrian infrastructure are a way that cities can start to prioritize necessary improvements. A walkability audit is a simple way to give an area a score by answering easy questions such as “did you have room to walk?” and “did drivers behave well?”

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## Example Messaging

- Everyone in our City has the right to live in a community where they can find healthy food and safe places to walk and exercise.
- The City plans to increase access to healthy food by creating space in our parks for community gardens.
- We want our children to have access to healthy fruits and vegetables.





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## HOW/WHY SHOULD I ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY COMMUNITY?

Studies have shown that increased physical activity leads to better overall health; thoughtful planning and interdepartmental collaboration can influence opportunities for activity. Provision of green space, walkable neighborhood connections, bike facilities, and informed siting of vehicular infrastructure can help to reduce vehicle dependence, obesity, and air pollution related cardiovascular diseases.

### **National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)**



<http://www.naccho.org/topics/HPDP/chronicdisease/>

NACCHO provides a comprehensive offering of background information to support healthy communities. It offers fact sheets, policy statements, a list of useful research resources, and examples of success in disease prevention through policy and design. It also includes access to user-friendly infographics which distill the research into easily understandable illustrations.

### **The Community Guide, Increasing Physical Activity**

<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/index.html>

The Guide provides informational, behavioral, and policy approaches to encourage physical activity for groups of all ages. The recommendations are based on systematic literature reviews that evaluate the effectiveness of each strategy. Brochures summarize the findings and provide specific steps to promote physical activity at the community level.

### **Active Living by Design (ALBD)**



<http://activelivingbydesign.org/>

Through action, leadership, and collaboration, ALBD works with all types of organizations to build healthy communities through community development and planning. This website provides examples of successful projects across the country that have increased physical activity through policy, design, strategic planning, and effective partnerships. This is a great resource for community engagement ideas and connection with funding sources.

### **Active Living Research**

<http://activelivingresearch.org/toolsandresources/all>

Divided by topics including schools, transportation, communities, and parks and recreation, this site provides tools and resources to help advocate for more activity-friendly environments. Observational surveys and other measures are offered to collect data, and practical impact stories can help inspire policies for change.



# HOW CAN I IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD?

Increasing community access to healthy food is another way to promote health.

## Policy Link, Healthy Food Access



<http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/>

This site provides a comprehensive source for funding options, community level food access mapping, and recent policy successes. Its regional search mechanism allows users to better understand the needs of their community, while providing details on the funding and policy options that are available at the state level.

## ChangeLab Solutions, Dig, Eat, & Be Healthy



<http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/dig-eat-be-healthy>

This resource guide focuses on methods for using public space to support community agriculture. It provides a legal framework, sample agreements, and success stories to encourage innovation in the use of public land for growing healthy food.

## American Planning Association (APA) Food Interest Group

<https://apafig.wordpress.com/>

This group promotes food system planning activities related to education and professional development, research, community organizing, policy, and advocacy. This resource is a good starting point for connecting with planners who are focused on healthy food access.

## Growing Food Connections

<http://growingfoodconnections.org/>

Growth Food Connections provides research, education, and policy in support of food systems planning. This resource addresses the connections between farmers, local government, retailers, and consumers using a policy database and soon-to-be-released community guide and policy toolkit.

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## Case Study

Regulations can sometimes inhibit the ability to establish farmers markets and community gardens. Updating municipal codes can promote food production and retail facilities. For example, the City of Cleveland included “Urban Garden Districts” in their code to ensure urban gardens are appropriately located and promote community health.





# HOW SHOULD I INCORPORATE HEALTH INTO MY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE?

Improving the health of a community relies heavily on public policies and community design. Public policies within comprehensive plans can help or hinder the development of community’s design that is conducive to healthy living. They are especially important because the design of our cities and towns determines how people use them.

## The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department Healthy Communities Planning Toolbox

<http://www.tpchd.org/environment/planning-healthy-communities/healthy-community-planning-toolbox/>

This toolbox is designed to help planners create healthy communities by integrating health in planning documents. Each community can “right-size” or customize tools to fit their unique community context—needs, aspirations, health priorities, disparities, and existing resources.

## Healthy Communities: The Comprehensive Plan Assessment Tool

<http://www.ipa.udel.edu/healthyDEtoolkit/docs/CompPlanAssessmentTool.pdf>



This is a checklist-based tool designed to guide municipalities in creating comprehensive plans that clearly articulate goals and strategies for providing their residents with more opportunities to live healthier lifestyles.

## Healthy Zoning Regulations

[http://www.healcitiescampaign.org/healthy\\_zone.html](http://www.healcitiescampaign.org/healthy_zone.html)

The Healthy Eating Active Living Cities Campaign provides training and technical assistance to help city officials adopt policies that improve their communities’ physical activity and retail food environments.

## Case Study

Rural Humboldt County, California (population 125,000). When updating their comprehensive plan, Humboldt County used a health impact assessment (HIA) to integrate health considerations into three alternative growth scenarios. Health Impact metrics included vehicle miles traveled, proximity to elementary schools, and pre-existence of infrastructure where growth is planned.



# 7 HOW CAN I PROVIDE FAIR ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY?

Strengthening the social fabric of a community and providing fair access to livelihood, parks and nature, transportation and housing choices, education, and services and resources can positively influence public health outcomes.

★ **The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**  
[http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/equitable\\_development\\_report.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/equitable_development_report.htm)

This source provides a menu of land use and community design strategies that bring together community-based organizations, local and regional decision-makers, developers, and others to use to revitalize their communities. The publication provides a brief introduction to each strategy and examples of how it has been used.

😊 **Policy Link**  
<http://www.policylink.com/>

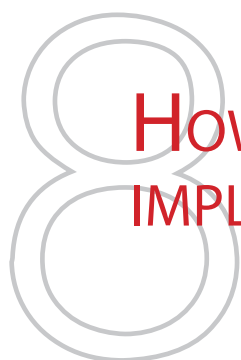
Policy Link's work is grounded in the conviction that equity must drive all policy decisions. This source provides comprehensive resources for equity-based programs, publications, partnerships and equitable food access resources.

**Health Impact Project**  
<http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/health-impact-project>

Health impact assessment (HIA) is a fast-growing field that helps policy makers identify the potential health effects of proposed new laws, regulations, projects, and programs by considering social, economic, and environmental influences. Health Impact Assessments bring community members, business interests, and other stakeholders together to consider whether certain impacts may affect vulnerable groups of people in different ways.

**School Siting**  
<http://www.caactivecommunities.org/our-projects/school-siting/>

California Active Communities works to support built environment policies that promote opportunities for incidental, everyday physical activity through general plan elements, zoning controls, community redevelopment, and school siting.



## HOW DO I INCORPORATE HEALTH INTO MY IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS?

Besides policies, planners need resources to incorporate health into community design.

### **Strategies for Enhancing the Built Environment to Support Healthy Eating and Active Living**

[http://www.calendow.org/uploadedfiles/publications/publications\\_stories/builtenvironment.pdf](http://www.calendow.org/uploadedfiles/publications/publications_stories/builtenvironment.pdf)



With a background framing the health issues that can be impacted by the built environment, this comprehensive document provides several implementation suggestions for improvement of health indicators in a community. The topics include: Active Transportation, Public Transit, and Land Use Planning.

### **Atlanta Regional Commission, Community Choices Toolkit**

<http://atlantaregional.com/local-government/implementation-assistance/best-practices>

Some examples of best practices include: Active Living by Design, Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning, Aging in Place, and Crime Prevention & Safety through Community Design. Implementation Guidelines are included with each toolkit, as well as case studies and sample policy language. These provide a framework for action and the likely steps to take in order to effectively implement the policy.

### **Washington State Department of Transportation, Developing a Safe Routes Project**

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/LocalPrograms/SafeRoutes/planning.htm>



WSDOT provides some no-cost assistance to help implement safe walk and bike routes to local schools. This resource provides a safety review, design assistance, potential funding sources, and evaluation criteria.

### **National Complete Streets Coalition**

<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation/planning-for-implementation>

Complete Streets provide opportunities for increased physical activity by incorporating features that promote regular walking, cycling, and transit use. This site provides policy and implementation guidance for the creation of streets that are friendly to all users. In addition to suggested activities and best practices, several current state and local plans are provided as examples.

### **Healthy Development Measurement Tool (HDMT)**

<http://www.denverhousing.org/development/SouthLincoln/Documents/HDMT%20Summary%20Brochure.pdf>

Started by the City of San Francisco, the Healthy Development Measurement Tool is now used by many municipalities to evaluate and monitor health-supporting conditions in a community. HDMT is a collection of metrics, policies, and standards that can be used to support plans for improvement.

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## Example Messaging

- We are creating a healthy and safe place to live and work by making improvements in our City.
- We are providing safe, comfortable places to walk and affordable, healthy food.
- We are providing more choices on how to get around the City.
- We strive for a county with neighborhoods where it's safe to walk or bike, where fresh, affordable and culturally appropriate food is easily available, where schools and childcare settings provide healthy food and drinks and plenty of physical activity, and where we all can breathe smoke-free air.
- The City plans to increase access to opportunities for physical activity by creating a pedestrian and bike master plan, improving routes to schools, developing better park facilities, etc.
- The City wants your input on how to improve opportunities to walk, ride bikes, or participate in outdoor recreation.