



American Planning Association

Making Great Communities Happen

Healthy Communities Policy Guide

Summary

planning.org/policy

Introduction

The Healthy Communities Policy Guide was approved by the APA Delegate Assembly on September 24, 2017, and ratified by the APA Board on October 24, 2017. APA develops policies that represent the collective thinking of our members on positions of both principle and practice. A policy guide is APA's official position on issues central to building communities of lasting value. To date, APA has adopted 27 member-driven policy guides on a wide range of issues. (planning.org/policy/guides)

Definition

Healthy Communities are defined as places where all individuals have access to healthy built, social, economic, and natural environments that give them the opportunity to live to their fullest potential regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, income, age, abilities, or other socially defined circumstance.

The Healthy Communities Policy Guide



Enabling numerous social and mental health benefits. »



Helping policy makers at all levels of government better integrate health considerations into planning processes and outcomes. »

» Improving opportunities for regular physical activity.

» Improving access to healthy food.



For more information about the integration of planning and public health go to planning.org/nationalcenters/health.

Overview

The Healthy Communities Policy Guide addresses challenges derived from our built, social, economic and natural environments, providing policy recommendations that address the determinants of health by:

- improving opportunities for regular physical activity
- improving access to healthy food
- enabling numerous social and mental health benefits
- helping policy makers at all levels of government better integrate health considerations into planning processes and outcomes

Planning activities need to address public health impacts and affirm that how a community is planned and designed has a direct effect on

the health of its residents. Understanding how the planning environment affects public health is a vital component in the creation of vibrant, active spaces and places that have a strong positive impact on community health.

By adopting these guiding policies, APA and its Chapters and Divisions affirm that planners need to play a crucial role in advancing the health of individuals and the overall communities in which they work.

For more information about the integration of planning and public health go to planning.org/nationalcenters/health.

The following section provides a summary of APA's Guiding Policies and their Policy Outcomes to help create and maintain healthy communities.

Guiding Policies and Outcomes

<p>Policy A ENGAGE AND EMPOWER THE PUBLIC</p>  <p>Support planners and decision makers in the meaningful engagement and empowerment of the public in planning for healthy communities.</p> <p>Why: Strengthen the capacity of ALL segments of the population to address health inequities</p> <p>Policy Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive and robust public engagement • Community-driven planning processes • Collaboration among different populations and communities • Leveraged assets to strengthen healthy outcomes 	<p>Policy B CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION</p>  <p>Encourage planners and decision makers to seek the involvement of professionals within sectors whose work directly impacts community health.</p> <p>Why: Build coalitions to align and activate community health goals and outcomes</p> <p>Policy Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from other organizations and diversify skill sets • Development of strategic agendas for collaboration • Development of more complete planning documents • Opportunities for ongoing partnerships, programming and leveraged funding 	<p>Policy C HEALTH-IN-ALL-POLICIES FRAMEWORK</p>  <p>Institutionalize considerations of health, equity and sustainability as a standard part of decision-making processes across a broad array of sectors.</p> <p>Why: Integrate public health and planning perspectives in decision making</p> <p>Policy Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public health and planning linked to create healthier communities • Shared resources/knowledge to bring together diverse perspectives • Fully informed decision making to address challenges and opportunities • Diversified policy tools for equitable community development
<p>Policy D EVIDENCE-BASED AND-INFORMED PRACTICES</p>  <p>Incorporate evidence-based and evidence informed practices when considering the advancement of healthy community design efforts.</p> <p>Why: Consistently and measurably improve health outcomes based on best practices</p> <p>Policy Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework to implement and measure the success of healthy communities • Systematic use of data and information for informed decision making • Identify community benefits, harms, and costs • Justification for the prudent use of scarce resources • Continuous review and reflection to update practices based on 	<p>Policy E DESIGN FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES</p>  <p>Encourage planners and decision makers to prioritize planning practices that help create vibrant, equitable, and safe places to live, work and play.</p> <p>Why: Support the physical, social, and mental well-being of all residents</p> <p>Policy Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities that meet residents' daily needs within walking distance • Planning for people first through equitable, healthy community design • Complete communities that address underlying causes of gentrification and displacement • Safe, efficient, and comfortable options for greater use of active transportation • Access to healthy foods is widespread in all communities • Environmental impacts on marginalized communities are minimized 	<p>Policy F FUNDING AND INCENTIVES</p>  <p>Seek and designate funding that supports the incorporation of health findings and recommendations in development projects and infrastructure to promote healthy outcomes.</p> <p>Why: Adequate funding is critical to the creation of healthy communities</p> <p>Policy Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public funding prioritized to support active transportation • Infrastructure performance measures that incorporate health outcomes • Incentives for healthy living community design in all development • Regulatory frameworks that promote a sense of place and healthy living