

Healthy Communities Draft Policy Guide (7/13/17)

This Guide reconnects planning and public health. Moving from urban reform and preventing infectious disease outbreaks during the 19th century, planners took on land use, infrastructure and development issues and public health professionals focused on public health and safety. We now recognize the importance of integrating our approaches and concentrating on the built environment and its impacts to human health.

As such this policy sets out a definition of “Health Community”

A healthy community, as a concept and goal, may have varying meanings and approaches depending on the purpose and mission of the organization. For the purpose of this guide, healthy communities are defined as places where all individuals have access to healthy built and natural environments that give them the opportunity to live to their fullest potential regardless of their race and ethnicity, gender, income, or age. The healthy communities policy guide addresses challenges derived from our built environment and provides recommendations for policies to address the social determinants of health by improving access to food, opportunities for physical activity, and environmental justice.

In sum, “The Built Environment is a Key Determinant of Community Health.”

Rationale & Key Facts include:

Non-medical factors matter for health

Improving health requires addressing poverty at its roots

People who have a stronger sense of belonging to their local community tend to live healthier lives and have fewer mental health challenges than those with a weaker sense of belonging.

Guiding Policies:

Evidence based and informed practices

Design for healthy neighborhoods and communities

Access to health care

“Health in All” policies

Engage and empower the public

Funding and Incentives

Cross sector collaboration

Specific policy outcomes are detailed, such as creating more walkable communities, siting healthcare facilities near transit stations, creating opportunities to share resources across sectors such as health care, transportation, social services and bolstering public outreach efforts.

Measuring success and metrics are provided through the APA publication “Metrics for Planning Healthy Communities.”

References, case studies and a glossary are included in the document.