healthy planning guide

This guide is intended to help public health and planning departments collaborate on strategies to promote healthier communities. Each page links health risks to aspects of the built environment, outlining ways to ensure that neighborhoods are designed to support health equity and community well-being.

Growing evidence demonstrates a strong relationship between our health and the environments in which we live. The way our neighborhoods, streets, and homes are designed affects whether children can play outside and walk to school, whether families can access basic goods and services, and even whether neighbors can socialize and look out for one another.

Our neighborhoods are shaped by specific policies that guide development and, consequently, our well-being. The disproportionately high rates of heart disease, asthma, diabetes, and other chronic diseases among residents living in high-poverty neighborhoods – often disproportionately residents of color – can be linked to many aspects of the built environment, including access to healthy foods and physical activity, quality affordable housing, and transportation options.

Health inequities frequently reflect the socioeconomic divide between poor and affluent neighborhoods: a recent San Francisco Bay Area report showed that residents in poor neighborhoods can expect to live at least ten years less than those living in other areas (see Health Inequities in the Bay Area, available at **www.barhii.org**).

The Healthy Planning Guide was developed to help public health departments engage in the planning process and work with planners to develop policies that can create healthier environments and support health equity. The information is organized according to key risk factors, highlighting some associated health outcomes and how they relate to the built environment. For each major risk factor, we suggest policies to consider in the planning process and ways for public health professionals to get involved. We also list a cadre of public agencies and community partners for potential collaboration on policy solutions.

This guide is designed to be illustrative, not exhaustive, providing a broad overview of development strategies for healthier communities. For more information about the connections between planning and community health, see **www.changelabsolutions.org.**

Download additional copies of the Healthy Planning Guide and other related products at **www.barhii.org**.

Photo by Lydia Daniller

BARHII
Bay Area Regional Health
Inequities Initiative

ChangeLab Solutions
Law & policy innovation for the common good.

poor or inadequate nutrition

Negative Health Outcomes	Relation to Built Environment	Policy Recommendations	Action Steps for Public Health	Partners
¨ Cancer ¨ Diabetes ¨ Hunger ¨ Heart disease ¨ Learning difficulties ¨ Obesity ¨ Stroke	**COMMUNITY ACCESS** ¨ Limited access to grocery stores, farmers' markets, and community gardens ¨ Concentration of fast food, liquor, and convenience stores **MARKETING** ¨ Proliferation of unhealthy advertising	**GENERAL & AREA PLANS** ¨ Prioritize access to healthy foods including specific goals for increasing access in underserved neighborhoods **ZONING** ¨ Provide fast-track permitting for grocery stores in underserved areas ¨ Identify sites for farmers' markets and community gardens ¨ Encourage farmers' markets and other healthy food retailers to accept federal nutrition programs such as WIC and SNAP (food stamps) ¨ Avoid a concentration of unhealthy food outlets within neighborhoods and near schools ¨ Adopt pedestrian-friendly design codes to improve non-motorized access to healthy foods **REDEVELOPMENT** ¨ Prioritize land assembly for grocery store development ¨ Provide façade improvement and other incentives to small food retailers looking to upgrade offerings ¨ Advocate for health criteria, including obesity and diabetes rates, in state redevelopment law **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ¨ Provide grants and loans to help retailers increase healthy options. ¨ Require developers receiving economic development incentives to document how project meets food access goals **TRANSPORTATION** ¨ Offer bus service from underserved neighborhoods to healthy food retail ¨ Invest in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure	**ASSESSMENT** ¨ Map food access for all communities ¨ Identify transportation routes to food retail ¨ Assess impact of poor food access on community health and the local economy **OUTREACH & EDUCATION** ¨ Develop incentives for small store owners to stock healthy options ¨ Educate policymakers on connections between food access and nutrition **PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESS** ¨ Review existing planning documents to assess whether healthy food access is included	**PUBLIC AGENCIES** ¨ Planning department ¨ Economic/community development department ¨ Redevelopment agency ¨ Local elected officials ¨ Local/regional transportation agencies ¨ U.S. Department of Agriculture ¨ State and local WIC agencies **COMMUNITY PARTNERS** ¨ School districts ¨ Parent advocacy organizations ¨ Hunger coalitions ¨ Food policy councils ¨ Cooperative extension ¨ Local/regional farming organizations

lack of physical activity

Negative Health Outcomes	Relation to Built Environment	Policy Recommendations	Action Steps for Public Health	Partners
¨ Attention deficit disorder ¨ Cancer ¨ Depression ¨ Diabetes ¨ Heart disease ¨ Obesity ¨ Stress ¨ Stroke	**COMMUNITY ACCESS** ¨ Limited or no open space or parks ¨ Limited access to parks or open space due to distance to or from transit ¨ School land unavailable for recreation after school hours **SAFETY CONCERNS** ¨ Poorly maintained parks ¨ Physical activity discouraged by neighborhood safety issues ¨ Outdoor activity limited by air pollution **AUTO DEPENDENCY** ¨ Separation of jobs, housing, schools, and essential services means time spent commuting diminishes time for other activity ¨ Public transit is inefficient or expensive	**GENERAL & AREA PLANS** ¨ Create convenient, safe physical activity opportunities for residents of all ages, abilities, and income ¨ Promote transit-oriented and compact, mixed-use development **ZONING** ¨ Adopt mixed-use residential, commercial, and office zoning where appropriate ¨ Adopt complete streets design guidelines ¨ Require walking, biking, and wheelchair facilities in new developments **REDEVELOPMENT** ¨ Develop parks and open spaces accessible to all users **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ¨ Incentivize mixed-use, compact development **TRANSPORTATION** ¨ Plan for and invest in pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure and transit-oriented development ¨ Adopt design guidelines that enhance street connectivity ¨ Reduce parking requirements for transit-oriented developments ¨ Establish parking **maximum** (vs. minimum) requirements ¨ Expand Safe Routes to Schools programs **PARKS & RECREATION** ¨ Ensure access to safe, well-maintained parks and recreation facilities ¨ Pursue joint use agreements to share facilities with schools ¨ Establish and fund a high "level-of-service" maintenance standard for parks **SCHOOLS** ¨ Develop joint use agreements to provide access to school land after hours	**ASSESSMENT** ¨ Map walkable routes and transportation options ¨ Compile evidence base linking public transit use to health outcomes **OUTREACH & EDUCATION** ¨ Provide testimony and data to decision-makers on link between built environment and physical activity **PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESS** ¨ Establish an official advisory role for public health in planning processes ¨ Work with school boards and administrators to promote small schools and joint use agreements ¨ Collaborate with local agencies to implement Safe Routes to Schools programs ¨ Work with local jurisdictions to adopt bike and pedestrian master plans ¨ Partner with law enforcement and neighborhood watch groups to reduce crime	**PUBLIC AGENCIES** ¨ Planning department ¨ Economic/community development department ¨ Redevelopment agency ¨ Local/regional transportation agency ¨ School boards ¨ Parks and recreation **COMMUNITY PARTNERS** ¨ Neighborhood watch groups ¨ Community-based organizations ¨ Nonprofit groups ¨ Community benefit organizations

alcohol and tobacco use

Negative Health Outcomes	Relation to Built Environment	Policy Recommendations	Action Steps for Public Health	Partners
¨ Alcoholism ¨ Cancer ¨ Communicable diseases ¨ Heart disease ¨ Liver disease ¨ Mental health problems ¨ Teen pregnancy ¨ Violence	**COMMUNITY ACCESS** ¨ Concentration of liquor stores, convenience stores, and bars **MARKETING** ¨ Proliferation of alcohol and tobacco advertising	**GENERAL & AREA PLANS** ¨ Reduce concentrated exposure to alcohol and tobacco **ZONING** ¨ Restrict approvals of new retailers selling alcohol for off-site consumption near high-crime areas, schools, and parks ¨ Enforce compliance with community standards through conditional use permits and "deemed approved" ordinances ¨ Create smokefree workplaces, multiunit housing, and outdoor spaces to eliminate secondhand exposure **REDEVELOPMENT** ¨ Incentivize the development of healthy retail outlets in all neighborhoods as an alternative to alcohol and tobacco vendors **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ¨ Provide incentives to small stores who limit alcohol and tobacco and offer more healthy choices **PARKS & RECREATION** ¨ Adopt smokefree ordinances for parks and recreation areas **SCHOOLS** ¨ Mandate universal smokefree campuses **LICENSING** ¨ Ensure that California's Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) and local planning commissions limit the number of off-sale liquor stores in overconcentrated areas ¨ Mandate use of public health criteria in ABC licensing process ¨ Enact local licensing ordinances to control location and operations of tobacco retailers **LAW ENFORCEMENT** ¨ Enforce laws regulating storefront and window signage	**ASSESSMENT** ¨ Work with community groups to identify stores that sell alcohol and tobacco products in neighborhoods **OUTREACH & EDUCATION** ¨ Educate community members and policy makers on relationship of built environment to alcohol and tobacco use **PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESS** ¨ Coordinate work with timelines of local plan updates, redevelopment, and community meetings ¨ Work with small corner stores to shift to healthier business models ¨ Integrate public health injury prevention with tobacco and alcohol prevention programs	**PUBLIC AGENCIES** ¨ Planning departments ¨ Economic/community development department ¨ Redevelopment agency ¨ California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) **COMMUNITY PARTNERS** ¨ Local business organizations (e.g., Chambers of Commerce) ¨ Community-based organizations ¨ Local schools and universities ¨ Neighborhood and community clinics

unsafe streets

Negative Health Outcomes	Relation to Built Environment	Policy Recommendations	Action Steps for Public Health	Partners
¨ Injuries and fatalities ¨ Inactivity and associated outcomes, including obesity ¨ Stress	**STREET DESIGN** ¨ Focus on auto use yields fewer lanes for bicycles, high traffic speed and congestion, noise pollution, and inadequate sidewalks **PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLIST FEATURES** ¨ Lack of or poorly maintained pedestrian, wheelchair, and stroller amenities such as walkways, crosswalks, and islands ¨ Lack of or poorly maintained bicycle lanes and bicycle parking ¨ Absence of buffer separating cars from pedestrians, wheelchairs, strollers, and bicyclists	**GENERAL & AREA PLANS** ¨ Create a balanced transportation system that provides for the safety and mobility of pedestrians, bicyclists, strollers, and wheelchairs ¨ Incorporate Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans into the circulation element of the general plan **ZONING** ¨ Ensure zoning for bicycle and pedestrian routes ¨ Use traffic-calming techniques to improve street safety and access ¨ Require facilities for walkers, bicyclists, and people using wheelchairs in all new developments **REDEVELOPMENT** ¨ Develop pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure in project area ¨ Advocate for the inclusion of public health criteria, such as obesity, in state redevelopment law **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ¨ Require developers receiving economic development incentives to build "complete streets" **TRANSPORTATION** ¨ Adopt policies that require investment in public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure ¨ Coordinate bicycle and pedestrian routes with adjacent municipalities ¨ Plan for and fund transit-oriented development and "complete streets" **SCHOOLS** ¨ Implement Safe Routes to Schools programs **PARKS & RECREATION** ¨ Ensure safe streets, walkways, and bike paths around parks or open spaces ¨ Establish and fund a high "level-of-service" maintenance standard for parks	**ASSESSMENT** ¨ Map neighborhoods for connectivity to essential services ¨ Conduct walkability and bikability assessments ¨ Review existing language in general plan for safe streets objectives ¨ Compile evidence on link between safe streets and health **OUTREACH & EDUCATION** ¨ Educate planners and decision makers on link between safe streets and health **PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESS** ¨ Participate in Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) regional planning processes ¨ Develop and support Safe Routes to Schools programs ¨ Support adoption and implementation of "complete streets" policies that accommodate all users of the road ¨ Advocate for pedestrian and bike facilities	**PUBLIC AGENCIES** ¨ Planning department ¨ Economic/community development department ¨ Redevelopment agency ¨ Local/regional transportation agency ¨ Law enforcement ¨ Parks and recreation **COMMUNITY PARTNERS** ¨ Bicycle coalitions ¨ Neighborhood groups ¨ Disability rights groups

unsafe neighborhoods

Negative Health Outcomes	Relation to Built Environment	Policy Recommendations	Action Steps for Public Health	Partners
¨ Lack of outdoor or physical activity due to fear of crime ¨ Social isolation ¨ Stress ¨ Violence	**NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN** ¨ Spatially and racially segregated housing ¨ Concentration of alcohol and tobacco retailers ¨ Limited access to essential services (grocery stores, banks, health services) ¨ Lack of parks or safe places to play and congregate ¨ Underutilization of public transportation due to safety concerns	**GENERAL & AREA PLANS** ¨ Support "lifecycle housing" and "aging in place" programs to ensure access to housing for residents of all ages and economic means ¨ Build compact, mixed-use development to encourage walking and eyes on the street **ZONING** ¨ Require developers to provide for a mix of housing types and affordability levels ¨ Use policy tools such as conditional use permits and "deemed approved" ordinances to enforce compliance with community standards ¨ Limit approvals of liquor stores and tobacco outlets **REDEVELOPMENT** ¨ Adopt "crime prevention through environmental design" (CPTED) principles in redevelopment plan ¨ Pursue agreements with developers for community benefits such as parks, local hiring policies, and living wages ¨ Rehabilitate blighted properties **ECONOMIC/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** ¨ Create workforce development opportunities ¨ Promote new commercial and industrial development ¨ Adopt local hiring policy **TRANSPORTATION** ¨ Develop safe transportation options to educational facilities, places of employment, and essential services **PARKS & RECREATION** ¨ Increase access to parks and recreational facilities in underserved communities ¨ Pursue joint use agreements to share facilities with schools to increase availability of safe places to play	**ASSESSMENT** ¨ Engage community residents in "community safety assessments" mapping neighborhoods, gathering data and giving testimony at public hearings **OUTREACH & EDUCATION** ¨ Educate planners on relationship between community design, health, and safety issues ¨ Share models from other cities and regions for creating safer neighborhoods ¨ Engage community residents in neighborhood policing efforts **PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESS** ¨ Support policies that fund community policing, neighborhood watch, and walk and bike police patrols ¨ Advocate for policies that support locally owned businesses	**PUBLIC AGENCIES** ¨ Planning department ¨ Economic/community development ¨ Redevelopment agency ¨ Employment agencies ¨ Parks and recreation ¨ Local schools ¨ Elected officials ¨ California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) ¨ Law enforcement **COMMUNITY PARTNERS** ¨ Local schools ¨ Youth groups ¨ Job training organizations ¨ Neighborhood watch groups ¨ Anti-violence groups ¨ Community organizing groups ¨ Community development corporations

polluted air, soil and water

Negative Health Outcomes	Relation to Built Environment	Policy Recommendations	Action Steps for Public Health	Partners
¨ Asthma ¨ Birth defects ¨ Cancer ¨ Heart disease ¨ Lung disease ¨ Neurological disorders ¨ Reproductive disorders	**NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN** AIR ¨ Proximity of "sensitive sites" (schools, housing, pedestrian andbike paths, parks andrecreation) to sources of air pollution ¨ Lack of green space or trees to buffer or filter pollution ¨ Auto-oriented housing development exposes residents to air pollution WATER ¨ Lack of quality drinking water or recreational water ¨ Runoff in impervious areas contributes to air and soil pollution SOIL ¨ Proximity of sensitive sites to brownfield development, horticulture, and agriculture areas ¨ Presence of contaminated sites	**GENERAL & AREA PLANS** ¨ Provide protection from outdoor sources of air pollution at schools, work sites, and homes ¨ Prioritize the reuse and remediation of brownfields ¨ Promote transit-oriented and compact, mixed-use development **ZONING** ¨ Maintain buffer zones separating industrial or transportation corridors from sensitive sites ¨ Adopt urban tree requirements ¨ Adopt building codes that improve indoor air quality in schools, work sites, and homes ¨ Increase zoning for mixed-use, compact development ¨ Locate sensitive uses at least 500 feet from highways ¨ Update building codes to incorporate green building principles **REDEVELOPMENT** ¨ Support remediation and reuse of brownfields ¨ Provide incentives for green building **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ¨ Support remediation of brownfields ¨ Provide incentives for green building **TRANSPORTATION** ¨ Ensure grade separations at rail crossings ¨ Isolate trucking and freight routes	**ASSESSMENT** ¨ Map locations of sensitive sites relative to transportation corridors ¨ Map problematic traffic patterns and idling issues **OUTREACH & EDUCATION** ¨ Share research and develop partnerships with environmental justice groups **PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESS** ¨ Advocate for implementation of the state's greenhouse gas reduction plan (AB32) ¨ Track SB375 provisions that require coordination of transportation planning and the housing element of general plans ¨ Work with Air Resources Board and ports to enforce cleaner goods-movement emissions policy ¨ Participate in the review of environmental impact reports ¨ Advocate for and participate in health impact assessments	**PUBLIC AGENCIES** ¨ Port agencies ¨ EPA/CalEPA ¨ Planning department ¨ Economic/community development department ¨ Redevelopment agency ¨ Local/regional transportation agencies ¨ Environmental/occupational health department ¨ National Resources Conservation Service ¨ State departments of pesticide regulation/toxic substances control/ integrated waste management ¨ Regional water quality control board ¨ County agricultural commissioner ¨ Water districts ¨ California Air Resources Board **COMMUNITY PARTNERS** ¨ Farming organizations ¨ Environmental and environmental justice groups ¨ Local schools ¨ Community-based organizations ¨ Healthy planning coalitions

poor housing conditions

Negative Health Outcomes	Relation to Built Environment	Policy Recommendations	Action Steps for Public Health	Partners
¨ Asthma and asthma-related conditions ¨ Communicable disease ¨ Lead poisoning ¨ Respiratory illness ¨ Skin disease ¨ Stress ¨ Psychosocial ill-ness	**HOUSING DESIGN** ¨ Unhealthy construction practices ¨ Unhealthy building materials ¨ Poor maintenance practices ¨ Insufficient air ventilation ¨ Lack of quality affordable housing ¨ Substandard public housing ¨ Overcrowded conditions	**GENERAL & AREA PLANS** ¨ Prioritize the development of high-quality affordable housing and safe neighborhoods ¨ Include higher percentage of quality rental housing **ZONING** ¨ Streamline permit process for green, affordable projects ¨ Establish more health-protective housing and health codes that address indoor air quality **REDEVELOPMENT** ¨ Target the 20 percent affordable housing set-aside to under-housed populations **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ¨ Develop local home repair, construction, and green building companies ¨ Provide incentives for green building and lead abatement	**ASSESSMENT** ¨ Provide community assessment and testing sites for housing-related illnesses (blood lead levels, respiratory health, skin disease) **OUTREACH & EDUCATION** ¨ Build and disseminate an evidence base showing the relationship of poor housing conditions and to health outcomes ¨ Educate policymakers on green building practices **PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESS** ¨ Participate in update of the General Plan's housing element ¨ Advocate for project approval processes that reflect the housing element's housing-needs allocation for all income levels ¨ Participate in health impact assessments of proposed housing developments	**PUBLIC AGENCIES** ¨ Local housing authority ¨ California Environmental Protection Agency ¨ Planning department ¨ Economic/community development department ¨ Redevelopment agency ¨ Code enforcement agencies or housing and building inspectors **COMMUNITY PARTNERS** ¨ Tenants' rights groups ¨ Private and nonprofit housing developers ¨ Healthy planning coalitions ¨ Affordable housing membership organizations

unaffordable housing

Negative Health Outcomes	Relation to Built Environment	Policy Recommendations	Action Steps for Public Health	Partners
¨ High stress ¨ Mental illness ¨ Poor community cohesion ¨ Psychosocial illness ¨ Health concerns associated with displacement or homelessness	**RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT** ¨ New market-rate housing too expensive for neighborhood residents ¨ New higher-end developments contribute to rising rents and potential evictions **RETAIL DEVELOPMENT** ¨ New commercial uses inappropriate for needs of lower-income residents **INCREASED COMMUTING** ¨ Affordable housing located far from home, increasing commute time & distances	**PLANNING** ¨ Zone for mixed-use, compact and transit-oriented development ¨ Implement incentives for developers such as reduced plan check fees and/or expedited review process for higher percentage of below-market-rate units or housing for residents with outstanding needs (seniors, low-income, mental health) **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ¨ Advocate for higher percentage of quality rental housing ¨ Direct resources to homeownership, rent control, and eviction limits ¨ Pursue partnerships with community development corporations and other developers to attract appropriate housing and mixed-use projects **FEDERAL FUNDING** ¨ Restore the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development budget and increase affordable housing funding sources	**ASSESSMENT** ¨ Assess vulnerability to displacement ¨ Assess health impacts of foreclosures **OUTREACH & EDUCATION** ¨ Educate policymakers and constituents on health effects of displacement **PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESS** ¨ Lobby state and federal government for budget and financing sources	**PUBLIC AGENCIES** ¨ Rent board ¨ Redevelopment agency ¨ Economic/community development – California Affordable Housing Agency ¨ Planning agency ¨ Housing authorities **COMMUNITY PARTNERS** ¨ Affordable housing advocacy groups ¨ Nonprofit and for-profit developers ¨ Tenants' rights groups

social isolation

Negative Health Outcomes	Relation to Built Environment	Policy Recommendations	Action Steps for Public Health	Partners
¨ Acute and chronic stress ¨ Increased vulnerability to natural disasters and epidemics ¨ Mental illness ¨ Substance abuse ¨ Reduced life expectancy ¨ Violence	**NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN** ¨ Long commutes ¨ Few public gathering spaces ¨ Lack of access to goods and services **TRANSPORTATION** ¨ Lack of access to public transit **HOUSING** ¨ Housing instability promotes highly transient home occupancy	**GENERAL & AREA PLANS** ¨ Encourage neighborhoods that sustain mental health and promote social capital ¨ Support "lifecycle housing" and "aging in place" design to ensure access to housing for residents of all ages and economic means **ZONING** ¨ Promote increased public space, walkable neighborhoods, and mixed-use development ¨ Use "crime prevention through environmental design" (CPTED) techniques in new and existing development **REDEVELOPMENT** ¨ Develop public venues, including parks, open spaces, libraries, cultural facilities, and pedestrian corridors **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** ¨ Define standards and develop vibrant commercial corridors in partnership with local businesses **TRANSPORTATION** ¨ Increase affordable and reliable transit options to essential services **PARKS & RECREATION** ¨ Improve parks, recreation facilities and open spaces for community mingling	**ASSESSMENT** ¨ Research evidence linking social isolation to specific health outcomes ¨ Map public gathering spaces **OUTREACH & EDUCATION** ¨ Educate decision makers on the link between social support and health **PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESS** ¨ Provide training for neighborhood residents to participate in boards and commissions ¨ Support funding for community policing and neighborhood watch programs	**PUBLIC AGENCIES** ¨ Local housing authority ¨ Redevelopment agency ¨ Planning departments ¨ Economic/community development department ¨ Local transportation agency ¨ Parks and recreation **COMMUNITY PARTNERS** ¨ Community groups engaged in violence and substance abuse prevention ¨ Multicultural groups ¨ Neighborhood groups ¨ Renters' associations