A Resource Guide for Built Environment

A Resource Guide for Planning, Designing, and Incorporating Health Elements for Healthier Communities

Message from Community Vital Signs Co-chairs

Dear Community Vital Signs Partners,

Community Vital Signs (Vital Signs) is leading communitywide efforts to improve the health and wellness of all county residents. In 2015, Vital Signs released the San Bernardino County Community Transformation Plan as a roadmap to guide the county into improving wellness and the quality of life for San Bernardino County residents.

Transformation requires capitalizing on the opportunities provided by innovative collaboration, diverse partnerships, and the adoption of Health in All Polices to find solutions for obtaining greater health equity and sustainability throughout our county.

An important element that impacts quality of life for our residents, is the Built Environment – the buildings, parks, and work spaces. To support implementation efforts, Vital Signs has developed this *Resource Guide for the Built Environment* to provide models, best practices, and strategies for incorporating and promoting health elements in the development of built environments. This resource guide will direct planning professionals and health practitioners in regionally addressing complete streets and health element in a city's general plans.

We hope that you will find this guide to be a useful tool in the adoption of Health in All Polices within the Built Environment, establishing community environments that promote and foster health and wellness of our communities.

Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare,
Community Vital Signs Co-chair
San Bernardino County Department of Public Health

Barbara Alejandre,
Community Vital Signs Co-Chair
San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

Acknowledgments

Vital signs would like to thank the members that serve on the Steering Committee for their valuable time and expert counsel.

Steering Committee Members

- Barbara Alejandre — San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
- Juan Carlos Belliard — Loma Linda University Health
- Sarah Eberhardt-Rios — San Bernardino County Behavioral Health
- Diana Fox — Reach Out
- Mike Gallo — Kelly Space and Technology
- Peggi Hazlett — Ontario Chamber of Commerce
- George Lamb — Faith Advisory Council for Community Transformation
- Josh Lee — San Bernardino County Transportation Authority
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- Scott Rigsby — San Bernardino County Public Health
- Dr. Deanna Stover — Community Clinic Association of San Bernardino County
- Dr. Monica Wilson — San Bernardino County Behavioral Health Commission

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Introduction to Resource Guide

Since 2015 the San Bernardino County Community Vital Signs Initiative has been charged with implementing the Wellness Element of the Countywide Vision. The Countywide Vision calls for community collaboration across all sectors to create a vibrant, physically, and economically healthy county in the next 20 years.

Vital Signs, a communitywide initiative, is using a collective impact approach to address priority health and social issues through social, systems, and policy change. Much of the efforts have included planning and engagement with key community stakeholders, multi-sectoral partners, and community residents.

Vital Signs understands the value of incorporating the Health in All Polices (HiAP) approach to embed health considerations into decision making processes across a broad array of sectors. In 2015 Vital Signs released the San Bernardino County Community Transformation Plan which serves as the roadmap to health and wellness for all of the county's residents.

Vital Signs is currently completing the Implementation Action Planning stage of the San Bernardino County Community Transformation Plan which incorporates the HiAP approach. This approach will engage diverse partners and stakeholders to work together to promote health, equity, and sustainability needed for implementation.

Public health departments and health care agencies alone do not have the authority to make the systemic and policy based changes that affect the social determinants of health. Those areas of influence usually reside within sectors such as: education, transportation, housing, criminal justice, and the built environment. The HiAP approach therefore allows for the community planning process to support the health considerations of the San Bernardino county residents.

A key goal for Vital Signs is to develop a resource guide which allows partners and stakeholders to utilize identified tools and resources supporting efforts to improve community health by improving and influencing the built environment.

Purpose of Resource Guide

The purpose of this community resource guide is to highlight a collection of publications which can be used by cities, special districts and communities to strengthen healthy communities. This guide, which includes three toolkits, is designed to allow the principle user the ability to promote, incorporate, and implement health elements while planning, designing, and developing essential physical environments within the community.

Description of Tools

This resource guide contains three toolkits that provide:

- Progressive how-to guides and research materials regarding healthy general plans
- Compiled data and analysis
- Needs assessment models
- Valuable local and national sourced information, including case study examples that define the roles of all contributors to the process including planners and health officials

The three toolkits:

1. San Bernardino Associated Governments: Complete Streets Strategy
2. Health in All Policies: A Guide for State and Local Governments
3. How to Create and Implement Healthy General Plans

The information within this resource guide is broad in nature which aims to allow the user to:

- Make key, evidence based decisions that incorporate principles of health
- Encourage dialogue between public health professionals, city planners, land use developers
- Make the economic argument for considerations such *Active Transportation* in the Built Environment
- Adopt policy language - providing examples of sample policies and templates
- Navigating users to funding sources - providing sample text for grant applications
- Implement performance measures and monitor returns on investments - maintaining policy fidelity and integrity

What is the Built Environment?

The term *built environment* refers to human constructed or modified physical surroundings in which people live, work and play.

These spaces and structures include homes, schools, work places, parks and recreation areas, business districts and transportation systems and infrastructure. The built environment also includes features such as sidewalks, bike trails, street lights, traffic, pedestrian crossings, and safety from crime.

These structures and features may promote or discourage healthy activity depending on planning use and implementation. Therefore the challenge for planners and community designers is to also consider any new or existing development through a health lens while balancing the needs of all stakeholders and beneficiaries associated with the building project or development.

Features of a healthy Built Environment

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, community features for the built environment can be identified by four categories:

- **Recreational resources** include walking trails, parks, and other open spaces. These do not include private or public indoor facilities such as gyms and pools as these are not part of the outdoor community environment.

- **Land use** addresses residential and employment density. It also characterizes the types of businesses, services, and buildings that are in the community environment in terms of land use mix. Street connectivity addresses the nature of how streets interconnect whether in a grid pattern, or broken up by cul-de-sacs and their proximity in terms of destinations to local commerce, employment, and services.

- **Neighborhood form** includes the availability of sidewalks and the completion sidewalks where required. The availability of street lighting is also of concern.

- **Community environment** refers to the contextual features of the environment including overall aesthetics, cleanliness, traffic, crime and safety.

(Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2007) Research Synthesis Report NO. 11)

Mike's Story

Mike is married, has two children, and is a homeowner. Both Mike and his wife commute to the neighboring county by car for work. Mike's children could walk or ride bicycles to school but Mike is concerned for their safety due to incomplete sidewalks and the traffic congestion around the school. Mike and his wife take turns dropping off their children at school in the morning and picking them up from their after-school programs.

Many local grocery stores have closed so Mike has to drive to the neighboring city to shop at a large grocery chain. The lack of locally available grocery stores causes Mike and his family to utilize the abundance of fast food options near their home during the week out of convenience.

Mike would like to take his children to the park on the weekends more often, but unfortunately there are none within reasonable walking distance from his home. Mike's children would love a dog but Mike is concerned that the street lighting around his home is not adequate as the dog would need to be walked before and after work.

As a result, Mike is concerned about the built environment around his home and his family's health.

Physical Features of a Healthy Built Environment

Healthy Transportation Networks	☐ Enable diverse mobility options for all ages and physical abilities ☐ Prioritize active transportation making it safe and convenient ☐ Encourage use of public transit ☐ Prioritize overall safety

Healthy Housing	☐ Promote active transportation accessibility and connectivity to parks, trails, schools and local amenities ☐ Provide affordable housing free of hazards that impede health – Environmental Justice element

Healthy Natural Environments	☐ Prioritize natural environments integration within the built environment ☐ Preserve and connect open space and environmentally sensitive areas ☐ Maximize opportunities to access and engage with the natural environment

Healthy Food Systems	☐ Increase access to healthy foods in all communities ☐ Improve community-scale food infrastructure and services ☐ Incentivize and support healthy grocery stores and restaurants ☐ Promote locate Farmer's Markets

Healthy Neighborhood Design	☐ Enhance neighborhood walkability ☐ Create mixed land use ☐ Enhance connectivity with efficient and safe networks (SRTS & Complete Streets) ☐ Prioritize new developments within or beside existing communities

Improving healthy communities through the Community Transformation Plan

One of the goals identified in the Community Transformation Plan (Priority area: Access to Health and Wellness), is the need to increase the number of residents engaged in active living activities.

This goal will be operationalized via the Implementation Action Plan which includes the promotion of HiAP as it relates to the built environment. The three toolkits identified in this document incorporate and adopt all the *Physical Features of a Built Environment*; healthy transportation networks, healthy housing, healthy natural environments, health food systems, and healthy neighborhood design. These features individually or in combination promote the following elements from the Access to Health and Wellness Implementation Action Plan:

- Promote health elements in city general plans
- Promote environmental justice elements
- Promote Active Transportation Plans (ATPs)
- Promote the Safe Routes to Schools program to ensure students have a safe environment to and from school
- Promote the adoption of Complete Streets Policies in additional cities
- Increase the use and access to farmer's markets
- Promote policies that address zoning for equitable food access and limits on tobacco and alcohol facilities
- Identify model programs that promote designation and awareness of healthy menus in retail food facilities.

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice seeks to mitigate and equalize the impact of environmental hazards on all residents regardless of race, culture, or income level. These considerations within city and county general plans influence the impact of land use decisions and patterns. Elements of environmental justice seek to ensure that people have healthy home environments while reducing the impact that the built environment puts on natural resources through land and water use, and energy resources.

Toolkits

1. ### San Bernardino Associated Governments: Complete Streets Strategy *
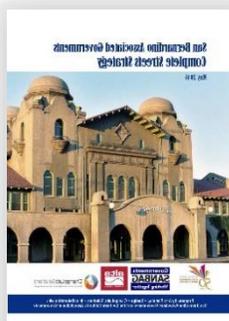
Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. The **San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) Complete Streets Strategy** aims to help local jurisdictions implement Complete Streets policies and projects in their communities. The Strategy will help jurisdictions comply with Assembly Bill (AB) 1358, also known as the Complete Streets Act of 2008, which requires consideration of complete streets with any substantive revision to general plan circulation elements. *Please note to access the Complete Street Strategy the user will need to scroll to page 278.*

2. ### Health in All Policies: A Guide for State and Local Governments
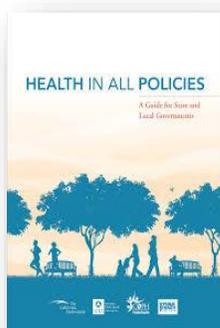
In this discussion paper, which was prepared for the Institute of Medicine Roundtable on Population Health Promotion, Dr. Linda Rudolph and colleagues explain the need for **Health in All Policies** approaches to confront complex and current health challenges in the population and provide an overview of California's pioneering experience with cross-sectoral collaboration to address the social determinants of health. The paper includes an analysis of key challenges and opportunities likely to arise when communities undertake health in all policies efforts.

3. ### How to Create and Implement Healthy General Plans
A Toolkit for Building Heathy, Vibrant Communities
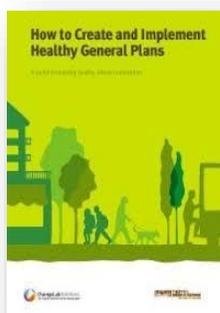
How can public health advocates and city planners' work together to create healthy, sustainable communities? This toolkit provides a progression of steps focused on the general plan, the key land use policy document for California cities and counties. The toolkit details a wide range of strategies, from building relationships and assessing existing conditions to creating and ultimately implementing policy language. Model health language is included to provide specific ideas for how to address health concern through general plan policies.

Additional Resource Support

The intent of this resource guide is to provide the user a starting point as they consider planning efforts to improve and create a healthier neighborhoods and community. It is meant to direct the user to toolkit publications that will prove invaluable as they cover a broad scope of HiAP concepts and considerations.

It is not meant to be an all-encompassing and Vital Signs understands the importance of having additional support for resources, information, and having a direct point of contact to provide clarification, strategies and/or best practices.

San Bernardino County Vision

- http://cms.sbcounty.gov/cao-vision/Home.aspx

Community Vital Signs

- Tel: 909-387-9107
- http://www.communityvitalsigns.org/

Health in All Policies: a Guide for State and Local Governments

- http://www.phi.org/uploads/files/Health_in_All_Policies-A_Guide_for_State_and_Local_Governments.pdf

How to Create and Implement Healthy General Plans

- http://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Healthy_General_Plans_Toolkit_Updated_20120517_0.pdf

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – Healthy Communities

- http://www.rwjf.org/en/our-focus-areas/focus-areas/healthy-communities.html

San Bernardino Associated Governments: Complete streets Strategy

- http://www.gosbcta.com/plans-projects/plans/NMTP-RevisedMay2015.pdf

San Bernardino County Transportation Agency (SBCTA)

- http://gosbcta.com/