

CDC's Built Environment and Health Initiative: Why Invest?



HEALTHY COMMUNITY DESIGN

Fact Sheet Series

The way we design and build our communities affects our health. Learn how CDC's Built Environment and Health Initiative (also known as the Healthy Community Design Initiative) promotes health by helping communities create transportation systems that increase physical activity, reduce motor vehicle fatalities, and reduce exposure to air pollution.

Why support healthy community design across the Nation?

By working in communities where people live, work, and play, we can increase opportunities for physical activity. We can also reduce the risk for road traffic injuries, asthma, and heart disease. Safety and infrastructure improvements to transportation systems can also improve access to everyday needs like healthy foods, health services, and recreational opportunities, helping people live healthier lives.

Less than half of U.S. adults get enough physical activity to be healthy. Healthy community design strategies help increase physical activity levels.

A CDC-funded **health impact assessment (HIA)** in Omaha, Nebraska, focused on Adams Park, a 68-acre green space next to the Malcolm X birth site in a section of Omaha that has fallen on economic hard times. The HIA led to the development of new trails and entrances to the park, allowing walkers and bikers easy access to the park—boosting physical activity levels. The HIA also led to use of the park's field, pool, and other resources by schools and community groups for after-school and summer activities.

Healthy community design can reduce motor vehicle fatalities involving pedestrians and bicyclists.

- A CDC-funded HIA in Crook County, Oregon, resulted in policy and infrastructure changes that improved pedestrian and bicycle safety around schools and road crossings.
- A CDC-funded HIA in Douglas County, Nebraska, led to the county reducing the number of lanes on a dangerous street, which improved the safety of the 15,000 people who use it each day and potentially reducing motor vehicle crashes by 50 per year.

What is CDC's Built Environment and Health Initiative's role in healthy community design?

We are the only federal program whose primary purpose is to improve the health of all Americans through evidence-based changes in the built environment.

- **We led the way in funding or providing technical assistance to one-quarter of the more than 300 HIAs conducted in the United States to date**—and we continue to do so.
- We also
 - » Assist health and planning departments in **engaging communities to build infrastructure** that maximizes good health. For example, we provided technical assistance to the Nashville Metropolitan Planning Organization to help them change the criteria they use to select transportation projects. As a result, the percentage of funded transportation projects in Nashville that included pedestrian or bicyclist infrastructure increased from 3% to > 70%.
 - » Educate local decision makers on **how proposed projects can affect community health**.
 - » Form **strategic partnerships** to maximize our efforts including collaborative programs with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the National Park Service.

What is the built environment?

The built environment is the buildings, roads, utilities, homes, fixtures, parks, and human features that form the physical characteristics of a community.

What is healthy community design?

Healthy community design is planning and designing communities that make it easier for people to live healthy lives.

What is a health impact assessment (HIA)?

HIA is a process that helps evaluate the potential health effects of a plan, project or policy before it is built or implemented. This helps communities make informed choices about improving public health through community design.

Learn more about this work at
www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces.