

## Healthy community design toolkit

*New tools empower people to include health in decisions about where they live, work and play*



The Healthy Community Design Toolkit, a resource and website that provides information and education materials for individuals, local and public health officials, and planners to use in creating healthy communities, was released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Your address can play an important role in how long you live and how healthy you are,” said Arthur Wendel, M.D., M.P.H., head of CDC’s Healthy Community Design Initiative in the National Center for Environmental Health. “The physical design of your neighborhood affects your health every time you step out your front door. It’s hard to be physically active when you don’t have access to sidewalks, parks, clean air, or safe areas, and eating right is hard if healthy foods are not available.”

Physical inactivity and obesity are leading risk factors for high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and heart disease. Obese individuals spend 77 percent more money for necessary medications than non-obese persons. Just as characteristics of the environment create unsafe conditions or foster chronic diseases, certain aspects of the environment may promote health and well-being. For example, “designing walking trails and popup farmers markets throughout our communities can promote increased physical activity and healthy eating,” Wendel said.

Since 2003, CDC has developed tools and techniques that educate people about how changing the physical design of their neighborhood can lead to healthier communities. The free online toolkit provides a variety of resources that are easy to read, understand, and use. They include:

- A checklist of questions for individuals, to help them consider and understand healthy community design elements, such as the building of homes and businesses near each other to encourage walking and biking to work and school, and shorter car trips.
- A customizable PowerPoint presentation on healthy community design that explains to individuals how the physical makeup of their neighborhood affects their health. The presentation also explains how people can use the checklist during land use discussions with local officials, planners, real estate agents, and health professionals. Subjects include healthier and more affordable food choices, to open spaces and parks that encourage people to get outside and be more active.
- A guide to CDC’s [Environmental Public Health Tracking Network](#) and other online resources to find health data on a community. The data will help identify the most urgent health issues in a community, such as rates of asthma, heart disease, cancer, alcohol consumption and access to healthcare.
- A resource guide listing other audit tools, websites, checklists and pamphlets that can help residents, planners, public health and local officials create vibrant healthy neighborhoods.



“The scientific evidence is clear—physical characteristics of a community can affect an individual’s physical and mental health,” said Robin Ikeda, M.D., M.P.H., acting director of CDC’s National Center for Environmental Health. “The Healthy Community Design Checklist Toolkit is the result of research that has progressed into a series of action steps. It gives individuals the power to make sure that physical changes in their community will enhance their health and the livability of their neighborhoods.”

CDC developed the toolkit in partnership with the American Planning Association’s (APA) Planning and

Community Health Research Center to ensure that the kit would be a resource for everyone who wants to learn how planning can support better health.

Planning and public health have historically worked together to improve sanitation, water, and food systems. The toolkit is another way to connect these community needs. The toolkit, along with case studies of communities using the checklist and its principles, will be presented in April 2014 at the American Planning Association's National Conference in Atlanta.

The toolkit advances the National Prevention Strategy's commitment to healthy & safe community environments. The [National Prevention Strategy](#), called for by the Affordable Care Act, envisions a prevention-oriented society where all sectors contribute to the health of individuals, families, and communities.

To learn more about CDC's Healthy Community Design Toolkit, Environmental Public Health Tracking Network or the agency's efforts to combat obesity please visit:

[Healthy Community Design Checklist Toolkit](#)

[CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network](#)

[CDC DNPAO](#)