

## Policy and Environmental Changes to Promote Active Living and Healthy Eating

### A. Enhance Concentrated Mixed Use Development

**Offer health language for the municipal plan.** Municipalities are not required, but are encouraged, by state statute to develop and adopt a municipal plan. The municipal plan – generally referred to as the town plan – is the principal policy document that guides many municipal government decisions; it establishes the vision and goals of the community and determines the means of achieving the goals. The plan is the foundation for local land use regulation, the capital budget, natural resource conservation strategies, and a range of community and economic development programs. *Health-promoting language in the town plan therefore, provides an essential foundation for future community decisions and investments.*

**Propose changes that will support concentrated mixed use development into following documents that a municipality may have (a community assessment will help grantees identify which of these exists). These are documents and tools that support municipal plans:**

- **Supplemental plans** – examples include a community wellness or health action plan, physical plans that convey a vision for future development and improvements such as a village growth plan, downtown master plan or a public improvements plan (street network, sidewalks, paths, parks, public buildings etc.).
- **Capital Budget, Capital Plan and Associated Reserve Funds** – to schedule and fund physical improvements/infrastructure, including land acquisitions, parks, playgrounds, sidewalks, trails, etc. When the Capital Plan is designed to support a vision for public investments in a compact center, it becomes a powerful tool for supporting smart growth development as well as the livability and health of existing neighborhoods and villages.
- **Zoning and subdivision regulations** –include allowed uses/activities, densities of development, subdivision and settlement patterns, infrastructure requirements (e.g., sidewalks), and could include health impact assessment for some development.
- **Design review standards** or Form-Based Codes – regulate the physical form of development including streetscapes, building design, signs, lighting and landscaping to produce a better built environment.
- **Land acquisition/conservation measures** – such as purchase of land, land easements to enable recreational use and community gardens
- **Official map** – depicts the location of planned public facilities, new roads, trails, parks, playgrounds based on a vision plan; it is a regulatory tool that can be used

to require any new development to incorporate the public streets and other features depicted on the map, into the development plan.

## **B. Create a Bicycle and Pedestrian Friendly Community**

**Offer health promoting language to the municipal plan** to promote bicycle, pedestrian and trail facilities in the objectives, land use, transportation plan, program for implementation and official map.

**Create a bicycle and pedestrian master plan and propose to town for adoption** to specify future plans and qualify for state and federal funding. Master plans include: an analysis of the community needs for bicycle and pedestrian facilities; maps of existing trails and sidewalks; and develop a plan for a network of streets, trails and other improvements. Rough cost estimates and strategies for implementation from the plan can be incorporated into the Capital Plan (Improvement Program), reserve fund allocations, and the Official Map.

**Adopt pedestrian/bike friendly provisions in local land use regulations and ordinances** in particular zoning and subdivision regulations. State statutes enable towns to review development projects for adequate bicycle and pedestrian facilities under the site plan review, planned unit development (PUD) and subdivision review processes. Local road or public works ordinances may also be relevant for new development and in determining how existing roads, sidewalks, etc. are maintained.

**Establish, and propose to town for adoption, design guidelines** for rights-of-way, driveways, curbs and sidewalks, signs, landscaping and lighting to improve safety for walking and biking

**Propose plan for financing bicycle and pedestrian facilities** so that resources are available when they are needed:

**Incorporate facilities for walking and bicycling into existing budgets** including the town highway budget, capital budget and program, and reserve funds.

**Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian facilities in scheduled municipal infrastructure projects** such as roadway, municipal utility, and conservation projects.

**Collect special municipal funds** through development impact fees, special assessment districts, or property owner tax to fund maintenance and spot improvement projects. **Use permitting provisions** to require developers to either construct the facilities shown on the official map or to put money in escrow to build such facilities at a future date.

### **Other bike/pedestrian actions:**

- Slow motor vehicle travel
- Create safe and convenient crossings
- Build more and better sidewalks
- Make streets more inviting to pedestrians
- Make streets and roads more bicycle- friendly

### C. Improve Access to Parks, Recreation Facilities and Open Spaces

**Offer health-promoting language in the municipal plan** to provide access to parks, recreational facilities and open space for people of all ages and abilities, ideally within walking distance of most homes.

#### **Preserve Open Space**

In Vermont land use planning, preserving undeveloped land in a community as “open space” is a primary goal for the purposes of land conservation, wildlife protection, and public access *and recreation*. **Open space must be addressed in a municipal plan’s goals, resource protection and land use sections.**

Propose a town *Open Space Plan* to provide additional information to guide public and private conservation strategies.

**Propose land use regulations, local standards and incentives for public dedication of lands** to preserve open space.

#### **Establish Trail Networks**

**Propose change in town policy** to promote open space and trails in the municipal plan and subdivision ordinances; require incorporation of open space and trails in new developments; and provide easements to the town for use and maintenance.

#### **Establish Recreational Facilities and Safe Public Parks**

**Create or improve public facilities for recreation** – including ball fields, tennis courts (indoor and outdoor), skate parks, ice-skating rinks (indoors and out), swimming pools, tracks, and public golf courses.

Public parks tend to be less formal and concerns about safety can be a barrier to their use and creation. **Work with public safety officials to consider options for increasing real and perceived safety:** lighting, trees, benches, and other aesthetic qualities encourage more people to frequent an area and can foster a sense of safety.

#### **Establish Joint Use Agreements to Use School Grounds and Facilities**

### D. Increase Access to Fresh and Healthy Food

**Offer health-promoting language in the municipal plan** to expand access to healthy foods through retailers, community gardens, farmers’ markets; support of agriculture enterprises and protection of primary soils.

**Propose municipal policies** that require that only healthy food and beverage options are offered in municipal venues (e.g., town offices, recreational fields) and at municipal events (e.g., sporting events, meetings).

**Draft a community resolution** to set the stage for later policy changes and local action in support of community gardening.

<http://www.burlingtongardens.org/GardenResolution.html>

**Make public facilities and spaces available for markets and gardens.** This will cost the municipality very little while reducing the initial start-up costs for the markets and gardens.

**Establish operational support for farmers' markets and community gardens** such as signage for the market on municipal land that will comply with local ordinances, parking, garbage collection, safety of foot traffic and vehicular flow to ensure safety, advocate for a bus stop to make it more accessible to residents who don't drive.

**Work with local farmers and businesses to establish Community Supported Agriculture.**