Vermont Healthy Community Design Resource

Active Living & Healthy Eating

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Vermont Healthy Community Design Resource **Active Living & Healthy Eating**
is available online at **www.healthvermont.gov**

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Introduction

As Vermonters, we take great pride in our quality of life, strong communities, natural places and commitment to healthy living. We share a common goal: to ensure that our state continues to be one of the healthiest and best places in the U.S. for all of us to live, work and play.

Despite our reputation for good health, over half (60%) of Vermonters are above a healthy weight, and therefore at risk for serious chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea and some cancers. Communities that are built to support physical activity, safe walking and biking, use of public transportation, and easy access to fresh and healthy foods help people lead healthier, more active lives.

Healthy community design:

- Links traditional concepts of planning (land use, transportation, community facilities, parks and open spaces) with health themes (physical activity, public safety, access to nutritious food, air and water quality, mental health and social equity).
- Influences the overall health of a community by making the healthiest choice the easiest and most accessible choice for all — regardless of age, ability and income.

Implementing healthy community design strategies requires strong engagement, understanding and action by a wide variety of community partners. It requires us to find opportunities to connect our shared visions for the best future of our communities. Working together, we can succeed in improving health through healthy community design.

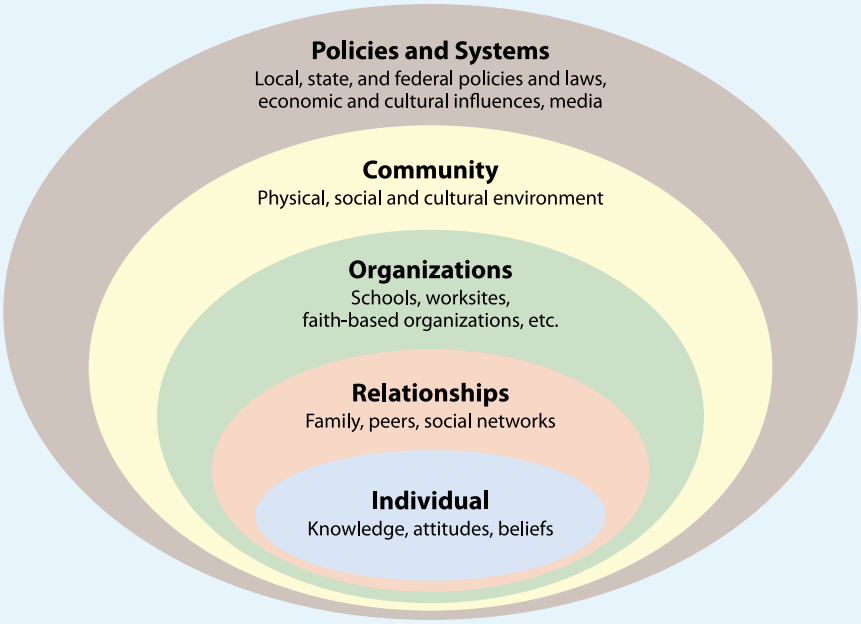
About this Guide

This guide is for health professionals, planners and anyone seeking to make their community a place that supports active living and healthy eating. People who are new to healthy community design will want to begin with Chapters 1, 2, and 3. Readers with an understanding of the planning process, who are ready to take action, will find the information in Chapter 4 and the Toolkit section useful for making your plans a reality.

In the following pages you will find information, tools and resources to successfully navigate the worlds of land use planning and public health — and help communities enhance concentrated mixed-use development, create bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly pathways, and improve access to parks, recreational facilities, open space and healthy foods. Here you will find:

- key concepts, rationale and evidence for healthy community design (Chapter 1)
- overview of Vermont's land use planning process (Chapter 2)
- steps you can take to create healthy communities (Chapter 3)
- action strategies (Chapter 4)
- tools and resources to support your work (Toolkit)

The Vermont Prevention Model



Vermont's Prevention Model, based on a five-level Social-Ecological Model, describes multiple levels of interventions aimed at improving health. This model recognizes that, although individuals are ultimately responsible for making healthy choices, behavior change is more likely and more sustainable when the environment supports individual efforts. Comprehensive prevention and health promotion programs, to be most effective for the long term, and to reach the largest number of people, should address multiple levels of the model.

The ultimate goal is to implement interventions that make it easier for people to make the healthy choice, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing community and policy/system level strategies.