

Healthy Built Environment Linkages

A Toolkit For Design • Planning • Health

Planning Principles for a Healthy Built Environment

What is the built environment?

The phrase “built environment” refers to the human-made or modified physical surroundings in which we live, work and play. These places and spaces include our homes, communities, schools, workplaces, business areas and transportation systems, and parks/recreational areas, which vary in size from large-scale urban areas to smaller rural developments.

What is the Healthy Built Environment (HBE) Linkages Toolkit?

The toolkit is a groundbreaking evidence-based and expert-informed resource that links planning principles to health outcomes. It is a simple summary of reliable health data that can support your daily work and help to encourage healthier built environments for your community.



Who should use the HBE Linkages Toolkit?

The toolkit is a resource for everyone who shares a responsibility to promote active living and to shape healthier built environments in order to promote good health. This includes land-use and transportation professionals, community planners and designers, public health professionals, and staff or decision-makers in municipal and regional governments.

How should I use the HBE Linkages Toolkit?

This toolkit is intended to help support conversations between planners, public health professionals, and local governments. We anticipate that people might use different parts of the toolkit depending on their setting, audience, and purpose. Some specific uses might be:

- Planners might use the Toolkit to inform the development of funding proposals, briefing documents, or background papers to obtain support for HBE work.
- Local government representatives might use the Toolkit to provide and organize background information for reports on certain policy and program issues (e.g., new community gardens, new subsidized housing developments) or to share with developers to ensure proposals consider HBE principles.
- Public health professionals might use the Toolkit to engage and support partners working on activities that are important to the community, but fall outside the direct role of health (e.g., new school programs, delivery of community food security programs).

Is the information in the HBE Linkages Toolkit right for my community?

When deciding if interventions are right for your community, you should consider your community’s population and location, whether it is urban or non-urban, existing community health issues, community preferences, and the context supporting the research interventions. These considerations help to determine if the planning approach can be successfully implemented in your community by providing a starting point to ask the right questions in your local context.

Can I trust the information in the HBE Linkages Toolkit?

Toolkit content was developed under the guidance of, and in consultation with planners, public health professionals, researchers and local government representatives. Our team used research to link features of the built environment with health evidence, but there still remain gaps in the literature. With that said, the toolkit is a reliable source of information that has been based on evidence from the literature and informed by experts in the field.

Where can I find the HBE Linkages Toolkit?

This resource was developed in partnership with BC’s Healthy Built Environment Alliance - a network that provides leadership for healthier, more livable communities. Additional HBE resources are available from PHSA Population & Public Health at www.phsa.ca/populationhealth. Feedback on the toolkit or questions regarding its use can be sent to pph@phsa.ca.



Healthy Built Environment Linkages

A Toolkit For Design • Planning • Health

Planning Principles for a Healthy Built Environment

Healthy Neighbourhood Design



1. Enhance neighbourhood walkability
2. Create mixed land use
3. Build complete and compact neighbourhoods
4. Enhance connectivity with efficient and safe networks
5. Prioritize new developments within or beside existing communities

Vision: Neighbourhoods where people can easily connect with each other and with a variety of day-to-day services.

Healthy Transportation Networks



1. Enable mobility for all ages and abilities
2. Make active transportation convenient and safe
3. Prioritize safety
4. Encourage use of public transit
5. Enable attractive road, rail and waterway networks

Vision: Safe and accessible transportation systems that incorporate a diversity of transportation modes and place priority on active transport (e.g., cycling, walking and transit) over the use of private vehicles.

Healthy Natural Environments



1. Preserve and connect open space and environmentally sensitive areas
2. Maximize opportunities to access and engage with the natural environment
3. Reduce urban air pollution
4. Mitigate urban heat island effect
5. Expand natural elements across the landscape

Vision: A built environment where natural environments are protected and natural elements are incorporated, and are experienced by and accessible to all.

Healthy Food Systems



1. Enhance agricultural capacity
2. Increase access to healthy foods in all neighbourhoods
3. Improve community-scale food infrastructure and services

Vision: A built environment that can support access to and availability of healthy foods for all.

Healthy Housing



1. Increase access to affordable housing through provision of diverse housing forms and tenure types
2. Ensure adequate housing quality for all segments of society
3. Prioritize housing for the homeless, elderly, low income groups, and people with disabilities
4. Site and zone housing developments to minimize exposure to environmental hazards

Vision: Affordable, accessible, and good quality housing for all that is free of hazards and enables people to engage in activities of daily living while optimizing their health.

The order in which the physical features and principles are listed is not necessarily an indication of their priority or strength of evidence.

