



INTEGRATING HEALTH INTO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Comprehensive planning includes making decisions around land use, transportation, water resources, and parks and trails. In turn, these choices have the ability to affect the physical and mental health of people of all ages. Addressing health in your comprehensive planning process can expand beyond tacking on a public health subchapter. Health can be incorporated at every stage of the planning process from background data collection to final implementation. The Minnesota Department of Health created the [Minnesota Healthy Planning How-To Guide](#) to serve as a tool for integrating health into comprehensive planning. This guide offers tips and strategies for creating a healthy and sustainable community. In your next plan, consider strategies to achieve these eight positive health goals:

- **Design healthy housing for all household sizes and incomes.** Consider the housing cost burden of residents. Affordable housing should account for no more than 30-40% of a family's monthly income. Calculate "true affordability" with the [Housing & Transportation Affordability Index](#).
- **Provide access to affordable healthy foods.** Studies have shown that people who live near grocery stores are more likely to eat recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables and less likely to be obese or have a diagnosis of diabetes. Use the [Community Food Security Assessment](#) from the United States Department of Agriculture, to assess food accessibility in your community.
- **Reduce exposure to air pollutants, hazardous materials, and nuisances.** Brownfields can lead to the loss of property values and may adversely affect public health. Explore [case studies](#) from the US Department of Health and Human Services for innovative ways to clean up and reuse brownfield sites in your community.
- **Increase physical activity.** Research suggests that the built environment, including parks and trails, can positively influence physical activity. Create a pedestrian and bicycle plan to ensure that there is a complete network of infrastructure to support walking and biking transportation. Utilize crash data from the [Minnesota Department of Public Safety](#) to identify unsafe intersections and major roads that can use improvements.
- **Increase access to greenery.** Viewing nature offers positive psychological and physiological benefits on people in a range of different settings including offices, schools, and hospitals. Calculate the views of greenery in your community, and [create a map](#) of important existing sightlines that should be preserved.
- **Increase safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.** Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death of people from ages 1 to 34. Alternative design methods, such as [traffic calming techniques](#), can help reduce the number of conflicts between automobiles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
- **Increase personal safety and security.** Community design can play a significant role in creating environments where residents feel safe to walk for leisure or as a means to get to destinations. Reduce the opportunity for crime by implementing [Crime Prevention through Design](#) strategies.
- **Create climate resilient communities.** Regional and local climate changes are expected to have substantial impacts on public health. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to improve public health and slow the impacts of climate change. Consider creating a [Greenhouse Gas Inventory](#).

For more information and a list of strategies to achieve these eight goals, visit the *Minnesota Healthy Planning How-To Guide* and other healthy planning resources at the Minnesota Department of Health's [Healthy Places](#) website.

