

# HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES BEST AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICES



## SUMMARY

Health in All Policies recognizes that health is determined not only by genetics, health care, and individual behaviors but by a complex set of social, economic and environmental factors. HiAP is a collaborative approach to engage all sectors and branches of government to ensure that the potential health consequences are identified and considered during decision-making processes.

### THE GOAL OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document draws upon the best practices and innovative approaches in the energy sector that advance positive health outcomes.

The document describes current action in Vermont and outlines approaches for future planning to synergistically meet community development and health goals.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Community planning is essential to creating places that: support active living (walking, biking, recreation); expand access to healthy and affordable foods; have tobacco and substance free spaces; and protect people's safety, air and water quality – all of which are essential for good health. "Healthy community design" changes the physical environment, community infrastructure and local policies to create such an environment. Healthy community design means planning and designing communities to make it easier for people to live healthy lives.

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## SECTOR - LAND-USE PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### MISSION

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) helps Vermonters improve their quality of life and build strong communities.

### VISION

ACCD encompasses three major state departments and many programs that serve the Vermont public by enhancing the Vermont business climate, marketing Vermont to tourists and others, and strengthening our communities in a wide variety of ways.



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**BUDGET**

**CONCENTRATED  
MIXED-USE  
DEVELOPMENT AND  
SMART GROWTH**

Continue to provide financial incentives for state designated Downtowns, Village Centers and Growth Centers – all of which are compact, mixed use, and smart growth.

Continue to prioritize state investments in public buildings, transportation, and other infrastructure improvements in state designated centers where it leverages the most benefit.

Increase tax, finance, and permitting incentives for private development projects in state designated areas to “level the playing field” and educate the community about these efforts.

Allocate resources to Department of Housing and Community Development and the regional planning commissions to create and disseminate model zoning that enable smart growth, increase housing opportunities and healthy activity through the *Zoning for Great Neighborhoods program*

**BICYCLE- AND  
PEDESTRIAN-  
FRIENDLY  
COMMUNITIES**

Continue to provide funding opportunities and incentives for regional and municipal plans and projects that support and promote active transportation (walking and biking) for all users.

Target, align, and prioritize funding in areas of Vermont that are in greatest need of increased biking and walking (areas where there are poor health outcomes and limited access to walking and biking).

**PARKS,  
RECREATIONAL  
FACILITIES, AND  
OPEN SPACE**

Continue to identify and preserve open public spaces and make them available for recreation through local and regional planning processes.

**HEALTH EQUITY**

Continue to prioritize grant applications (evaluation criteria) for development in distressed regions and low-income areas.

Fund projects that integrate land use, community development, and equitable transportation in areas that have worse health outcomes and health disparities.

Continue to provide incentives for community development projects in state designated areas that help to revitalize the economy and increase access to goods, services, and jobs, especially for low-income communities and communities of color.

**POLICY**

**CONCENTRATED MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT AND SMART GROWTH**

Continue to support state, regional, and local placemaking initiatives that activate under-utilized public spaces to improve public health, build social capital and community cohesion

Provide guidance and support to the regional planning commissions regarding state health goals and smart growth principles and using these goals in developing regional plans.

Support the regional planning commissions in providing technical assistance to municipalities regarding smart growth land use planning and development and including health in town plans.

Offer financial, tax, permitting, and other incentives to the private sector for development decisions that result in smart growth and concentrated downtown, mixed use development in municipalities/towns.

Work with the Department of Health to develop and offer health impact assessment training, tools, and guidance for use in regional and local land use and community development decisions.

Consider adding the use of health impact assessment (HIA) for priority projects (such as the siting of schools, grocery stores, and housing) to existing regulatory processes. Target HIAs for significant development and public investments that are proposed in remote or auto-oriented locations.

Continue to work with other state agencies (e.g., Departments of Health, Agriculture, Transportation) to support Vermont's land use goals of compact centers surrounded by working lands (which also helps to decrease vehicle miles traveled and car emissions) through funding or other incentive opportunities.

Continue to support an interagency task force to work with the Agency of Natural Resources to address sewage solutions to encourage growth, business and community development potential for Vermont villages that lack wastewater treatment facilities.

Continue to work across agencies to help meet Vermont's climate and energy goals; e.g., through concentrated development and decreasing vehicle miles traveled (and decreasing harmful emissions).

**BICYCLE- AND PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES**

Fund local and regional bicycle and pedestrian master plans to identify and coordinate future investments and to maximize benefits to the community (before investments are made).

Continue interagency work with the Department of Transportation and other relevant agencies/departments including the Department of Health to improve active transportation (walking and biking), especially in combination with land use and community design interventions (such as mixed land use, downtown and dense residential development, proximity to parks and recreation) to promote physical activity and improve access to goods and services, economic development, and the environment.

**PARKS, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, AND OPEN SPACE**

Continue to support municipal plans that aim to preserve undeveloped land in a community as open space for land conservation, wildlife protection, public access, and recreation.

Develop trails and networks for recreation but also help increase access to services especially in low-income communities.

Continue to support the use of schools and school grounds for community gatherings, events, and physical activity for the whole community.

**FRESH AND HEALTHY FOOD**

Continue to support regional planning commissions in approving town plans that are consistent with state planning goals regarding agriculture and forest industries, and encourage strategies to protect long-term viability of agricultural land and forest lands, maintain low overall density, and target public investments to alleviate development pressure on agricultural and forest land.

Support access to healthy and local food by helping municipalities and regions develop robust food system plans.

**HEALTH EQUITY**

Engage the Department of Health in the development and review of regional plans to consider incorporating current 2020 Healthy Vermonter goals and health disparities (e.g., obesity and the need to include physical activity, mental health, access to services and goods).

Support the formation of an interagency collaboration (that includes VDH) on collecting and analyzing health data related to land use patterns and transportation to better understand and map areas with the greatest health inequities within the state.

**PROGRAM**

**CONCENTRATED MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT AND SMART GROWTH**

Continue to work with other Agencies and programs to use the state designation programs (Downtowns, Village Centers, New Town Centers, Growth Centers, and Neighborhood Development Areas) to provide incentives, align policies, and give communities the technical assistance needed to encourage new development and redevelopment in compact, designated areas for both the public and private sector.

**These include:**

- tax credits for historic building rehabilitations and code improvements; permitting benefits for new housing;
- funding for transportation-related public improvements; priority consideration for other state grant programs.

Continue to work across agencies to provide support for public and private investment in designated areas that enables coordination among state, regional, and municipal planning

Continue and expand programs (training/marketing, funding, tax, and regulatory incentives) that support concentrated and mixed use downtown and village development (includes public services, business, retail, and housing).

**BICYCLE- AND PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES**

Continue to support programs that assist municipalities in creating safe places to walk and bike (through good design and access e.g., sidewalks) for all users by:

- focusing funding for designated areas (through grant eligibility or selection process) and creating and improving funding for special programs such as Downtown Transportation fund, Better Connections, and Bike/PedGrants.
- providing support to municipalities in identifying projects and obtaining funding (RPCs, technical assistance, helping to pay staff)
- modeling bylaws for municipalities to use in requiring bike and pedestrian-friendly development

Coordinate state funding programs – such as Municipal Planning Grants, Bike/Ped program, Better Connections, Clean Water Fund, VCDP – to make best use of funding and assistance available for bike/ped improvements.

**PARKS, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, AND OPEN SPACE**

Support school programs that promote health such as Safe Routes to School, Farm to School, and schools as places for physical activity and community gathering and events.

Continue to support state, regional, and local placemaking initiatives and programs to activate under-utilized public spaces in communities to increase physical activity, build social capital, and reduce social isolation.

**FRESH AND HEALTHY FOODS**

Work with Farm to Plate, Agency of Agriculture, and the Department of Health to help planners include food systems plans as part of their local or regional plans to ensure support for local agricultural economy and access to healthy and local food.

**HEALTH EQUITY**

Provide tools and resources (maps, audits, checklists) to help towns and citizens assess how well land use and community development decisions support health, active living, and access to healthy food especially for those most vulnerable.

Support the use of community health assessments in planning and development decisions, and projects that ensure all residents have access to goods and services (especially low income and seniors).