



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Windsor's Town Plan Update Includes Healthy Community Design

New Health Community Design Resource Now Online



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WINDSOR – Bordered by a wildlife preserve and tucked between a river, lake and pond, Windsor is perfectly positioned for healthy community design, according to a 20-year resident who has been deeply involved in developing the town's master plan.

"The town lends itself to walking, you can go days without getting into a car if you don't want to," said Robert Haight, an architect and the executive director of the Windsor Downtown Committee. "One of the projects is a proposal for a walking and biking trail that runs along the river, which would be absolutely beautiful and should be easy to accomplish."

The Vermont Department of Health has championed healthy community design to support healthy behaviors with grants to communities, and created a new "Active Living & Healthy Eating" online resource that provides an overview of the state's land use planning process, steps to creating healthy communities, action strategies and a toolkit.

Town planners in Windsor have worked to expand corridors and access to places for walking, organic gardens, and farmland that are unique to the area and invite the community to get outside and be active.

"We need to build physical activity into our everyday lives, and this requires the involvement of government, leaders, organizations, groups and community members," said Susan Coburn, nutrition and physical activity chief for the Health Department. "Improvements in how communities are designed increases opportunities to make healthy choices for everyone, regardless of age or income."

Sixty percent of Vermonters are overweight or obese. Research shows that healthy community design, such as improved access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity, supports lifestyle and behavioral changes, and can have more of an impact on health than medical care.

A survey of 400 residents of Windsor and the surrounding community showed that 42 percent of residents cited I don't have the time as a barrier to exercise, and 14 percent said they had no access to facilities or equipment, according to Melanie Sheehan, director of Community Health Outreach at Mt. Ascutney Hospital.

"The role of town planners is critical to our health goals," Sheehan said. "Windsor town planners have done a great job because they clearly see the value in healthy design and health promotion."

[View the Active Living & Healthy Eating Resource](#)

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