



# Improve the Health of Your City: *Design Your General Plan for Health*

Decisions surrounding planning and community design can have a significant impact on the physical, social and mental health of community members. Local leaders can influence health impacts when making decisions related to the general plan, zoning, conditional use permits, environmental review and health impact assessments.

## Implementing these practices can improve residents' health outcomes:

### DEVELOP FARMERS' MARKETS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS



Establish land-use and zoning policies to promote, expand and protect farmers' markets and community garden sites, including vacant city-owned land and unused parking lots. In addition to affordable produce, these options provide sites for community building and socialization for residents.

### IMPROVE THE NUTRITION ENVIRONMENT

Restrict fast-food establishments near schools and playgrounds through smart land-use policies and regulate the density of fast-food outlets in residential communities. Increase access to free drinking water to encourage water consumption over sugary drinks. Consider adopting building codes that require maintenance and access to water fountains.



### PRESERVE OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAYS



Open spaces improve air quality and quality of life while fostering a sense of community and improving residents' physical and mental health. Create and protect trails, urban forests, farms, community gardens, paths and greenways to provide attractive destinations and recreation spaces.

### IMPROVE HOUSING CONDITIONS

Prioritize the development of high-quality affordable housing and safe neighborhoods in your general plan. Providing incentives for developers such as reduced plan check fees and expedited review-processes create a higher percentage of below-market-rate housing for residents with additional needs.



### ENCOURAGE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION



Provide a mix of moderate and high density development within walking distance of transit stops to increase the use of public transportation. Reduce auto dependency and roadway congestion by creating hubs of commercial activity within walking distance of one another.



# Improve the Health of Your City: *Design Your General Plan for Health*

## INCREASE PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY



Modify general plans, zoning codes and other planning requirements to increase the safety and feasibility of walking. For example, cities can install traffic calming improvements such as expanded sidewalks and bulb-outs to slow and channel auto traffic and improve pedestrian safety.

## Implementing Healthy General Plans the Mid-Atlantic:

### VIRGINIA:

**The Town of Scottsville:** The Town of Scottsville, VA completed a Comprehensive Plan update in 2018. Over the course of a year, the Town Council and Planning Commission updated the Plan's strategies and supporting data while conducting meetings, public hearings, and surveys to solicit community input and participation. The Town leveraged its HEAL Resolution and commitment to HEAL policy goals as a framework to develop objectives focused on health-driven economic development. The updated Plan includes strategic and actionable priorities such as improving street safety and traffic calming, encouraging the development of more walkways and bikeways in future road improvements, enhancing the farmers market pavilion, and encouraging future community gardens and urban agriculture. Further, Scottville leveraged community partners and technical assistance to create supplement resources to advance the goals and strategies included in the Plan. These resources include a mixed-use, mixed-income market assessment, a park improvement action plan, and conceptual design ideas (including a focus on health and wellness) produced by students from the University of Virginia. Through collaboration and partnerships with universities and organizations, the Town of Scottsville completed a Comprehensive Plan update featuring wide-ranging and actionable goals that support healthier residents and a robust economy.

### MARYLAND:

**The City of Rockville:** In March 2019, the City of Rockville and Planning Commission released a Draft Comprehensive Plan. The plan includes overarching goals, policies, and recommendations to help guide the City of Rockville through the year 2040. Through numerous citywide forums, open houses, listening sessions, and community meetings, the Draft Comprehensive Plan is informed by diverse perspectives and recommendations that illustrate action-oriented planning for a healthy, prosperous, and sustainable city. The Rockville Comprehensive Plan update has taken a new and more modern approach to long-term city planning that incorporates issues of sustainability, health and wellness, community resiliency, and equity. After receiving community testimony during a public comment period, the Planning Commission will facilitate further work sessions before issuing the approved Plan to the Mayor and City Council.

Fact sheet created with support from Kaiser Permanente, a founding partner of the HEAL Cities Campaign

Icons by Gan Khoon Lay, Atif Arshad and Pham Thi Dieu Linh from the Noun Project and by Freepik from flaticon.com