

# BUILDING HEALTHY AND EQUITABLE CITIES AND TOWNS

## RESOURCES FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS

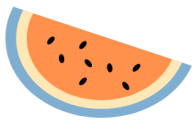
In cities and towns throughout the county, residents are actively seeking environments that help foster a healthier lifestyle.<sup>1</sup> Cities and towns can leverage this interest through policies and practices that enhance the built environment to include pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and healthy food enterprise, such as local grocery stores, community agriculture, and farmers markets. These amenities can transform streets, neighborhoods, or even entire cities, by encouraging increased tourism, higher property values, and new employment opportunities.<sup>2,3</sup> As cities and towns experience economic changes, municipal leaders are uniquely positioned to help encourage *equitable* economic development that promotes a thriving city/town for *all* residents. **This resource sheet provides tools for municipal leaders to advance healthy eating and active living policies while promoting equity, economic inclusion, and sustainable growth.**

### ***What is equitable economic development?***

“Equitable economic development unlocks the full potential of the local economy by dismantling barriers and expanding opportunities for low-income people and communities of color. Through accountable public action and investment, it grows quality jobs and increases entrepreneurship, ownership, and wealth. The result is a stronger, more competitive city.”

-- Policy Link <sup>4</sup>

## BUILDING EQUITABLE FOOD ENVIRONMENTS:



Healthy eating policies and practices can facilitate opportunities for food enterprise and dramatically shift the local food environment through an influx of high quality grocery stores, community gardens, and farmers markets. While these changes can help increase healthy food access, stimulate regional farm and food economies, spur job growth, raise property values, and boost tax revenue,<sup>2,5</sup> cities and towns must facilitate place-based strategies that ensure *all* residents, particularly low-income and under-resourced communities, are able to remain in place and take advantage of new amenities and their associated economic opportunities. Local policies can help residents and small businesses remain in place as rental and housing prices increase, while programs and community engagement practices can help ensure new investments are responsive to existing residents' needs and create a more accessible and inclusive food environment.<sup>6</sup>

### **Commercial Food Retail**

- Pass local municipal policies that protect small business owners from displacement.<sup>6</sup>
- Develop zoning ordinances and incentives that a) support existing food retailers and b) considers how new development proposals will impact existing food retailers.<sup>6</sup>
- Require new development receiving subsidies to hire low-income city residents and/or pay workers a living wage.<sup>7</sup>
- Support community benefit agreements with supermarket chains to support local hiring and affordable pricing.<sup>7</sup>
- Encourage local developers to meet community food needs by incorporating plans for grocers, community gardens, and cooperative kitchens.<sup>6</sup>

### **Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens**

- Provide long term or permanent municipal tenure for community gardens/urban farms and require reallocation of suitable land should land parcels be developed.<sup>6</sup>
- Pass a resolution or policy that prioritizes urban agriculture resources and investment in low-income, underserved communities.<sup>8</sup>

### **Community Driven Food Systems Infrastructure**

- Support food cooperatives and local buyers' clubs to reduce food-purchasing costs in underserved neighborhoods.<sup>9</sup>
- Support the development of community kitchens that link healthy procurement with food preparation and job training programs.<sup>10</sup>

### **Develop a community food systems plan!**

“Through the food systems planning process, local and regional governments develop and implement a variety of public policies to influence and shape how food is produced, processed, distributed, accessed, purchased, consumed or disposed. These policies provide direction and guidance on how to address opportunities and challenges faced by the community's food system.”

—Growing Food Connections<sup>11</sup>



## FURTHER ACTIONS FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION:

As a municipal leader and decision maker, your actions can have intended and unintended consequences. Remember to consider how policies can impact all residents and community members. Work with your residents, staff, and fellow municipal leaders to help prevent negative impacts and create more inclusive and equitable decision-making processes to enable all residents to participate fully in the social, economic, and political life of your city or town.<sup>12</sup>

- Help elevate community input and voices by holding public and participatory city/town meetings. Host listening sessions in communities or in less formal venues like a weekly walk with the mayor.
- Conduct a health impact assessment to understand the impacts of policy or planning decisions.
- Integrate a health and equity framework into general and comprehensive plan updates.<sup>13</sup>



## TOOLS FOR POLICY CHANGE:

- Healthy Food Access Portal, The Food Trust, the Reinvestment Fund, and PolicyLink. Access at: <http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/>.
- Economic and Community Development Outcomes of Healthy Food Retail, PolicyLink Access at: <https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/economic-and-community-development-outcomes-of-healthy-food-retail>
- Incentivizing the Sale of Healthy and Local Food: The local government's role in promoting accesses to and purchase of good food, Growing Food Connections. Access at: [http://growingfoodconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/11/GFCHealthyFoodIncentivesPlanningPolicyBrief\\_2016Feb-1.pdf](http://growingfoodconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/11/GFCHealthyFoodIncentivesPlanningPolicyBrief_2016Feb-1.pdf)

### ABOUT US:

The HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living) Cities and Towns Campaign of the Mid-Atlantic provides free technical assistance to local government leaders to help them create healthy, prosperous communities by adopting policies and practices that improve their communities' physical activity and food environments. HEAL is a project of the Institute for Public Health Innovation, in partnership with the Maryland and Virginia Municipal Leagues, and funded by Kaiser Permanente, founding partner. For more information, visit the HEAL website at [www.healcitiesmidatlantic.org](http://www.healcitiesmidatlantic.org) and contact HEAL Campaign Manager Sydney Daigle at [sdaigle@institutephi.org](mailto:sdaigle@institutephi.org)



### References:

- <sup>1</sup> SmartGrowthBC. *Promoting public health through Smart Growth: Building healthier communities through transportation and land use policies and practices*. Accessed at: [http://www.vtqi.org/sgbc\\_health.pdf](http://www.vtqi.org/sgbc_health.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> PolicyLink, The Food Trust. *Access to Healthy Food and Why it Matters: A Review of the Research*. 2013. Accessed at: [https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/GROCERYGAP\\_FINAL\\_NOV2013.pdf](https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/GROCERYGAP_FINAL_NOV2013.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> National Complete Streets Coalition. *Complete Streets Stimulate the Local Economy*. Accessed at: <https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/cs/factsheets/cs-economic.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> PolicyLink. *Equitable Economic Development: They Why and the How Presentation*. 2017. Accessed at: [http://www.lisc.org/media/filer\\_public/65/a6/65a6e5f3-ec78-4b3e-a90c-6a38b3153778/mary\\_lee\\_equitable\\_economic\\_development.pdf](http://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/65/a6/65a6e5f3-ec78-4b3e-a90c-6a38b3153778/mary_lee_equitable_economic_development.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> Hinkle-Brown, D., Bell, J., Yael, L. *Access to Healthy Food Improves Health, Brings Economic Benefits*. *Huffington Post*. 2014. Accessed at: <https://bit.ly/2Kltfw6>
- <sup>6</sup> Cohen, Nevin, CUNY Urban food Policy Institute. *Feeding or Starving Gentrification: The Role of Food Policy*. 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.cunyurbanfoodpolicy.org/news/2018/3/27/feeding-or-starving-gentrification-the-role-of-food-policy>
- <sup>7</sup> Partnership for Working Families. *Policy & Tools: Living Wage*. Accessed at: <https://www.forworkingfamilies.org/resources/policy-tools-living-wage#policies>
- <sup>8</sup> Wolch, JR., Byrne, J., Newell, JP. *Urban green space, public health, and environmental justice: The challenge of making cities 'just green enough'*. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 125. 2014. Accessed at: <https://cloudfront.escholarship.org/dist/prd/content/qt8pf8s47q/qt8pf8s47q.pdf>
- <sup>9</sup> Cooperative Development Institute. *How Cooperative Grocery Stores Bringing Food Access to Low-Income Neighborhoods*. Accessed at: <http://cdi.coop/food-coops-food-deserts-low-income-communities/>
- <sup>10</sup> Institute of Medicine (US), National Research Council (US) Committee on Childhood Obesity Prevention Actions for Local Government. *Local Government Action Plans to Prevent Childhood Obesity*. National Academies Press (US). 2009. Accessed at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK219682/>
- <sup>11</sup> Growing Food Connections. *Community Food Systems Planning*. Accessed at: <https://growingfoodconnections.org/about/community-food-systems-planning/>
- <sup>12</sup> City for All Women Initiative, Ottawa. *Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities*. 2015. Accessed at: <http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/publications/advancing-equity-inclusion-web.pdf>

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### *What is equitable economic development?*

"*Equitable* economic development unlocks the full potential of the local economy by dismantling barriers and expanding opportunities for low-income people and communities of color. Through accountable public action and investment, it grows quality jobs and increases entrepreneurship, ownership, and wealth. The result is a stronger, more competitive city."

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## BUILDING EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENTS FOR EXERCISE AND ACTIVE TRANSIT:



Demand for more active, compact, and connected communities has encouraged city planners and developers to design more walkable and bikeable communities in close proximity to public transportation. One of the most popular approaches is known as "transit oriented development" (TOD), a form of compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented design where residents experience more active, sustainable, and connected lives<sup>4</sup> and municipalities experience economic growth through increased property values and tax revenue and decreased expenditure on public services.<sup>5</sup> As cities and towns experience economic changes, policy makers and transportation planners play an important role in helping create environments where all residents can access safe, reliable, and active transportation options. Municipal leaders should work with local community members to implement active transportation infrastructure and sustainable, compact mixed-use development that benefits all residents.

### ***Transit Oriented Development***

- Provide local incentives and tax abatements for projects that include dense, affordable housing and community benefits.<sup>4</sup>
- Set up land/housing purchase funds for the purpose of building/preserving affordable housing within a development district.<sup>4</sup>
- Ensure that affordable housing is written into zoning for transportation plans.<sup>4</sup>
- Encourage financial incentives for homeownership and work with local organizations to provide ownership resources.<sup>4</sup>
- Encourage the use of form-based codes to encourage opportunities for small developers in development and transit districts.
- Require a community benefit agreement for new TOD developments.

### ***Parks and Green Space***

- Apply a "just green enough approach" that facilitates and encourages the development of parks and green space while reducing the potential impacts of speculative development, rapid growth, and displacement: A) Incorporate urban agriculture and community gardens in existing or developing parks to further serve local concerns about healthy food access and job creation. B) Scatter green space interventions to provide greater access to more residents instead of concentrating development in one urban area.<sup>6</sup>
- Target communities experiencing health disparities for park improvements; implement upgrades in collaboration with long-standing community groups.

### ***Complete Streets and Bike and Pedestrian Plans***

- Include equity-related principles in a Complete Streets policies or Bike and Pedestrian Plans by developing frameworks that address issues of access in your municipality.<sup>7</sup>
- Include social equity strategies in municipal bike share programs to ensure station sitting is equitably distributed, messaging tools are geared towards all users, and payment plans are financially accessible.<sup>7</sup>
- Increase awareness about transportation options by offering bilingual information sessions, public signage, or bike training workshops.<sup>7</sup>



## How can municipalities incorporate social equity strategies?

**Resource:** *Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities* (City for All Women Initiative, Ottawa). Access at: [http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/publications/advancing-equity-inclusion-web\\_0.pdf](http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/publications/advancing-equity-inclusion-web_0.pdf)

**Example:** The City of Philadelphia's Bike Share Strategic Business Plans includes a "Social Equity Strategy" that identifies plans for achieving social equity and equitable access to active-transportation options. Philadelphia's Bike Share Strategic Plan can be accessed at: [www.bikesharephiladelphia.org/philastudy/completenessbusinessplan.pdf](http://www.bikesharephiladelphia.org/philastudy/completenessbusinessplan.pdf)

## FURTHER ACTIONS FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION:

As a municipal leader and decision maker, your actions can have unintended consequences. Remember to consider how policies can impact all residents and community members. Work with your residents, staff, and fellow municipal leaders to help prevent negative impacts and create more inclusive and equitable decision-making processes to enable all residents to participate fully in the in social, economic, and political life of your city or town.<sup>8</sup>

- Help elevate community input and voices by holding public and participatory city/town meetings. Host listening sessions in communities or in less formal venues like a weekly walk with the mayor.
- Conduct a health impact assessment to understand the impacts of policy/planning decisions.
- Integrate a health and equity framework into general and comprehensive plan updates.<sup>9</sup>

**FIND MORE  
RESOURCES ONLINE:**

<http://bit.ly/2XjhGwg>

## TOOLS FOR POLICY CHANGE:

- Complete Streets in Delaware: A Guide for Local Governments. Delaware Department of Transportation. Access at: <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/a/390/files/2013/12/CompleteStreetsGuide-web-2h5f132.pdf>
- Pursuing Equity in Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning, US Department of Transportation. Accessed at: [http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/cms/downloads/PBIC\\_WhitePaper\\_Equity.pdf](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/cms/downloads/PBIC_WhitePaper_Equity.pdf)
- Healthy Development Without Displacement: Realizing the Vision of Healthy Communities for All, Prevention Institute. Access at: <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/publications/healthy-development-without-displacement-realizing-vision-healthy-communities-all>

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- <sup>2</sup> PolicyLink, The Food Trust. *Access to Healthy Food and Why it Matters: A Review of the Research*. 2013. [https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/GROCERYGAP\\_FINAL\\_NOV2013.pdf](https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/GROCERYGAP_FINAL_NOV2013.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Smart Growth America. *Complete Streets Stimulate the Local Economy*. Accessed at: <https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/cs/factsheets/cs-economic.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> PolicyLink. *Equitable Development Toolkit: Transit Oriented Development*. 2008. Accessed at: <https://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/tool-policylink-TOD.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> AARP Livable Communities *Economic Development: A Livability Fact Sheet*. Accessed at: <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/livable-documents/documents-2014/Livability%20Fact%20Sheets/Economic-Development-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- <sup>6</sup> Wolch, JR., Byrne, J., Newell, JP. *Urban green space, public health, and environmental justice: The challenge of making cities 'just green enough'*. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 125. 2014. Accessed at: <https://cloudfront.escholarship.org/dist/prd/content/qt8pf8s47q/qt8pf8s47q.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> US Department of Transportation. *Pursuing Equity in Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning*. 2016. Accessed at: [http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/cms/downloads/PBIC\\_WhitePaper\\_Equity.pdf](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/cms/downloads/PBIC_WhitePaper_Equity.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> City for All Women Initiative, Ottawa. *Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities*. 2015. Accessed at: [http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/publications/advancing-equity-inclusion-web\\_0.pdf](http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/publications/advancing-equity-inclusion-web_0.pdf)

# BUILDING HEALTHY AND EQUITABLE CITIES AND TOWNS

## RESOURCES AND POLICY EXAMPLES

Supporting Healthy, Equitable Economic Development	Example Municipal Policies	Supporting Documents & Resources
<b>BUILDING EQUITABLE FOOD ENVIRONMENTS</b>		
<b>Commercial Food Retail:</b>		
Pass local policies that protect small business owners from displacement.	New York, New York - Special Enhanced Commercial District Upper West Side Neighborhood Retail Streets	Affordable Space How Rising Commercial Rents Are Threatening Independent Businesses, and What Cities Are Doing About It, Institute for Local Self Reliance
Develop zoning ordinances and incentives that a) support existing food retailers and b) consider how new development proposals will impact existing food retailers	Brattleboro, Vermont: Zoning ordinance to protect small business owners	Licensing and Zoning: Tools for Public Health, ChangeLab Solutions
Require new development receiving subsidies to hire low-income city residents and/or pay workers a living wage		Key Reforms: Job Quality Standards, Good Jobs First
Support community benefit agreements with supermarket chains to support local hiring and affordable pricing	Community Benefit Agreement for Ballpark Village Project	Policy & Tools: Community Benefit Agreements and Policies in Effect, Partnership for Working Families  Good Food and Good Jobs for All, Applied Research Center
Encourage local developers to meet community food needs by incorporating plans for grocery stores, community gardens, and cooperative kitchens		Planning Food Cities: Providing Guidance to Developers, Sustain
<b>Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens:</b>		
Provide long term or permanent municipal tenure for community gardens/urban farms and require reallocation of suitable land should land parcels be developed	Land Use & Planning, Cleveland - Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition	Establishing Land Use Protections for Community Gardens, Public Health Law and Policy
Pass a resolution/policy or include language in a comprehensive plan update that prioritizes urban agriculture resources and investment in low-income, underserved communities	A Plan for Managing Growth 2015-2035: City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan	Growing Urban Agriculture: Equitable Strategies and Policies for Improving Access to Healthy Food and Revitalizing Communities, PolicyLink
<b>Community Driven Food Systems Infrastructure:</b>		
Support food cooperatives and local buyers' clubs to reduce food-purchasing costs in underserved neighborhoods	City of Cleveland, Green City Growers	A Black-Led Food Co-op Grows in Detroit, CityLab



Support the development of community kitchens that link healthy procurement with food preparation and job training programs	What Feeds Us: Vancouver Food Strategy, January 2013	
<b>BUILDING EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENTS FOR EXERCISE AND ACTIVE TRANSIT</b>		
<b>Transit Oriented Development:</b>		
Provide local incentives and tax abatements for projects that include dense, affordable housing and community benefits	American Planning Association's Smart Codes: Model Land Development Regulations, American Planning Association	Affordable Housing and Smart Growth: Making the Connection, Smart Growth
Set up land/housing purchase funds for the purpose of building/preserving affordable housing within a development district		Equitable Development Toolkit: Transit Oriented Development, PolicyLink
Ensure that affordable housing is written into zoning ordinances for transportation plans		
Encourage financial incentives for homeownership and work with local organizations to provide ownership resources and education		
Encourage the use of form-based codes, when feasible, to encourage opportunities for small developers and businesses in development and transit districts		Building Better Communities with Transit, Smart Growth America
Require a community benefit agreement for new TOD developments	The City of Atlanta, Georgia Development Ordinance	Policy & Tools: Transit Oriented Development (TOD), Partnership for Working Families
<b>Parks and Green Space:</b>		
Incorporate urban agriculture and community gardens in existing or developing parks to further serve local concerns about healthy food access and job creation.	<p>The City of Fayetteville, Arkansas - Community Gardens in the Parks</p> <p>Urban Agriculture Activity Plan Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board</p>	
Ensure existing or renovated parks are accessible and for all abilities and ages (children and older adults).	New York City Parks Department - Playground Accessibility Level Updates and Definitions	<p>Why Cities Need Accessible Playgrounds, Curbed</p> <p>What Do Seniors Need in parks?, Smart Cities Drive</p> <p>The Complete Parks Playbook, ChangeLab Solutions</p>
Scatter green space interventions to provide greater access to more residents instead of concentrating development in one urban area.	Case Study: Pavement to Parks; San Francisco, USA, Global Designing Cities Initiative	Safety, Growth, and Equity: Parks and Open Space, PolicyLink

<i>Target communities experiencing health disparities for park improvements; implement upgrades in collaboration with long-standing community groups</i>	City of Toronto, Parks Plan: 2013-2017  City of Minneapolis, 20 Year Neighborhood Park Plan	Green Infrastructure and Park System Planning   Great Urban Parks Campaign Briefing Papers, American Planning Association  New South Carolina Park Is Furthering Equitable Development in the Deep South, Next City
<b>Complete Streets and Bike and Pedestrian Plans:</b>		
<i>Include equity-related principles in a Complete Streets policies or Bike and Pedestrian Plans by developing frameworks that address issues of access in your municipality</i>	The Best Complete Streets Policies of 2018, Smart Growth America	Pursuing Equity in Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning, US Department of Transportation  Complete Streets in Delaware: A Guide for Local Municipalities
<i>Include social equity strategies in municipal bike share programs to ensure station sitting is equitably distributed, messaging tools are geared towards all users, and payment plans are within financial reach of low-income residents</i>	Philadelphia Bike Share Strategic Plan, 2013, The City of Philadelphia	Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities, (City for All Women Initiative, Ottawa
<i>Increase awareness about transportation options by offering bilingual information sessions, public signage, or bike training workshops</i>		How to Engage Low-Literacy and Limited-English-Proficiency Populations in Transportation Decisionmaking, US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration
<b>GENERAL RESOURCES FOR EQUITABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>		
The Anti-Displacement Policy Toolkit, Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development		
Dealing With Gentrification Toolkit		
Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide For Municipalities, City for All Women (Ottawa)		
AARP Livability Factsheets: The Complete Collection, AARP Livable Communities		
From Start to Finish: Health in All Policies, ChangeLab Solutions		
Action Toolkit: To Advance Health Equity, County Health Rankings & Roadmaps		

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