

# CULTIVATING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

## STRATEGIES TO SUSTAIN HEAL CAMPAIGN GOALS IN MARYLAND & VIRGINIA CITIES & TOWNS

Your municipality joined the HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign to create a community where it's easy for your residents to eat better and move more. By passing a HEAL Resolution, your city or town articulated the unique priorities of your community and the goals you wish to accomplish to encourage active communities, improve access to healthy food, and promote a healthy municipal workplace. Municipalities should continue to use the resolution as a guiding document to facilitate new and creative policies, practices, and environmental changes that address the evolving needs of your community. From incorporating health goals into your city or town's long-term planning to developing new community partnerships to address health inequity, your municipality can facilitate sustainable change that creates a lasting impact on the health of your community.

### IMPLEMENTING PRACTICES FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE:

- **Include a health focus in a comprehensive plan** – There are multiple ways to integrate health into a comprehensive plan update, from a stand-alone section to including provisions related to health throughout other sections of the plan. **Analyze and evaluate** your city or town's plan to determine best practices to improve residents' health outcomes.
- **Convene a HEAL workgroup** – Host regular HEAL workgroup meetings to evaluate health policy goals. Members of the workgroup should conduct an annual **Policy Assessment** to determine opportunities and prioritize policies that meet the evolving needs of the community. Members of the workgroup should regularly report to your city or town council with progress updates or new policy proposals.
- **Start a resident health advisory committee** – A resident or community health advisory committee provides advice, direction, and information to improve the health of a community. **Launch** a resident advisory committee to help address the unique issues facing the health of your community.
- **Connect with local corporate foundations** – Establish relationships with corporate partners that can help sponsor or promote health goals in your community. **Collaborate** with foundations and partners interested in supporting community health projects like new playgrounds or even funding for city or town staff positions.
- **Apply for a State Main Street Program** – State Main Street initiatives are designed to improve infrastructure for a city or town's main street. Selected municipalities receive comprehensive support and funding to enhance streetscapes, grow tourism, develop business opportunities, and improve sustainability. Programs are available for both **Maryland** and **Virginia** cities and towns.
- **Work with local community colleges and universities** – Establish connections with local schools and institutions to **facilitate partnerships** that support experiential learning and student involvement in your community. From student internships with local government to class projects to



evaluate the impact of comprehensive plan goals, academic partnerships can help cultivate new opportunities for both students and local governments.

- **Connect with local churches and faith-based organizations** – Increasingly, churches and faith-based organizations are exploring health ministries and programming that supports their congregation’s spiritual and physical health. There are [state-level groups](#) and [national coalitions](#) working to support faith-based organizations committed to health.
- **Connect with hospitals with community benefit programs** – All nonprofit hospitals are required to implement community benefit programs that provide services, funding, and initiatives to improve community health. In addition, hospitals are required to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to identify priority health needs. Connect with local hospitals to provide input in the CHNA process and identify areas where community benefit dollars could [support](#) the needs of your residents.
- **Standardize a Health In All Policies (HiAP) approach to policymaking** – [HiAP](#) is an approach to ensure local government officials and policymakers are informed about the health consequences of any and all policy implementation. While a [Health Impact Assessment](#) can be used to evaluate the impacts of individual policies, a HiAP approach is a more comprehensive interdepartmental strategy to promote health and equity in all aspects of government decision making.
- **Start a Farm to School (or School Gardens) program** – Farm to School has three components: school gardens, nutrition/food systems education, and procurement of locally grown foods. From working with schools to launch a school garden program to providing local food at the cafeteria, Farm to School [provides](#) a holistic approach to supporting the health of students and the local economy.
- **Designate a Health and Wellness Coordinator** – Municipal staff are busy and often do not have time to handle the administrative tasks to implement a city or town’s health and wellness strategies. By designating a full or part-time staff position, municipalities can further these initiatives. Hyattsville, MD is one [example](#) of how a municipality is implementing health goals through support from the Health and Wellness Coordinator.

## RECOGNITION PROGRAMS FOR HEALTHY CITIES & TOWNS:

HEAL cities and towns have been hard at work implementing policies and practices to make communities healthier places to live, work, and play. Highlight your municipality’s successes by applying to recognition programs or leadership institutes that acknowledge these achievements.

- America Walks - [The Walking College](#)
- City Health - [Small & Mid-Size City Program](#)
- Go Green Virginia - [Green Government Challenge](#)
- League of American Bicyclists - [Bicycle Friendly America](#)
- Maryland Municipal League - [Banner City Town](#)
- National League of Cities - [The All-America City Award](#)
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation - [Culture of Health Prize](#)
- Strong Towns America - [Strong Towns Contest](#)
- STAR Communities - [Certified STAR Communities](#)
- Sustainable Maryland - [Sustainable Maryland Certification](#)
- Virginia Municipal League - [Innovation Awards](#)

## SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

The HEAL Campaign is one of many organizations working to support health policies and practices in cities and towns. The list below includes state and national organizations and partners that offer resources to address the health goals of your community.

### General Plans:

- ChangeLab Solutions
- Design for Health
- Form Based Codes Institute
- Plan for Health/American Planning Association

### Workplace Wellness:

- Center for Science in the Public Interest
- Rand Corporation
- Well Simplified

### Active Living and Complete Streets:

- Active Living Research
- America Walks
- League of American Bicyclists
- National Recreation and Park Association
- Safe Routes Partnership
- Smart Growth America/National Complete Streets Coalition

### Broader Health Organizations:

- American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
- Building Healthy Places Network
- American Heart Association
- ChangeLab Solutions
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- Community Commons
- County Health Rankings and Roadmaps
- Healthy Places by Design
- Institute for Public Health Innovation
- National Association of County and City Health Officials
- Partnering 4 Health
- PolicyLink
- Rural Health Information Hub
- Salud America

### Healthy Eating and Healthy Procurement:

- Community Food Forests
- Food Research & Action Center
- Growing Food Connections
- Healthy Eating Research
- Healthy Food Access
- Maryland Farmers Market Association
- National Farm to School Network
- Virginia Farmers Market Association

**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).

