

How Do Local Governments Improve Health and Community Well-being?



Healthy People



Healthy Society



Healthy Environments

A Resource Guide for Local Governments

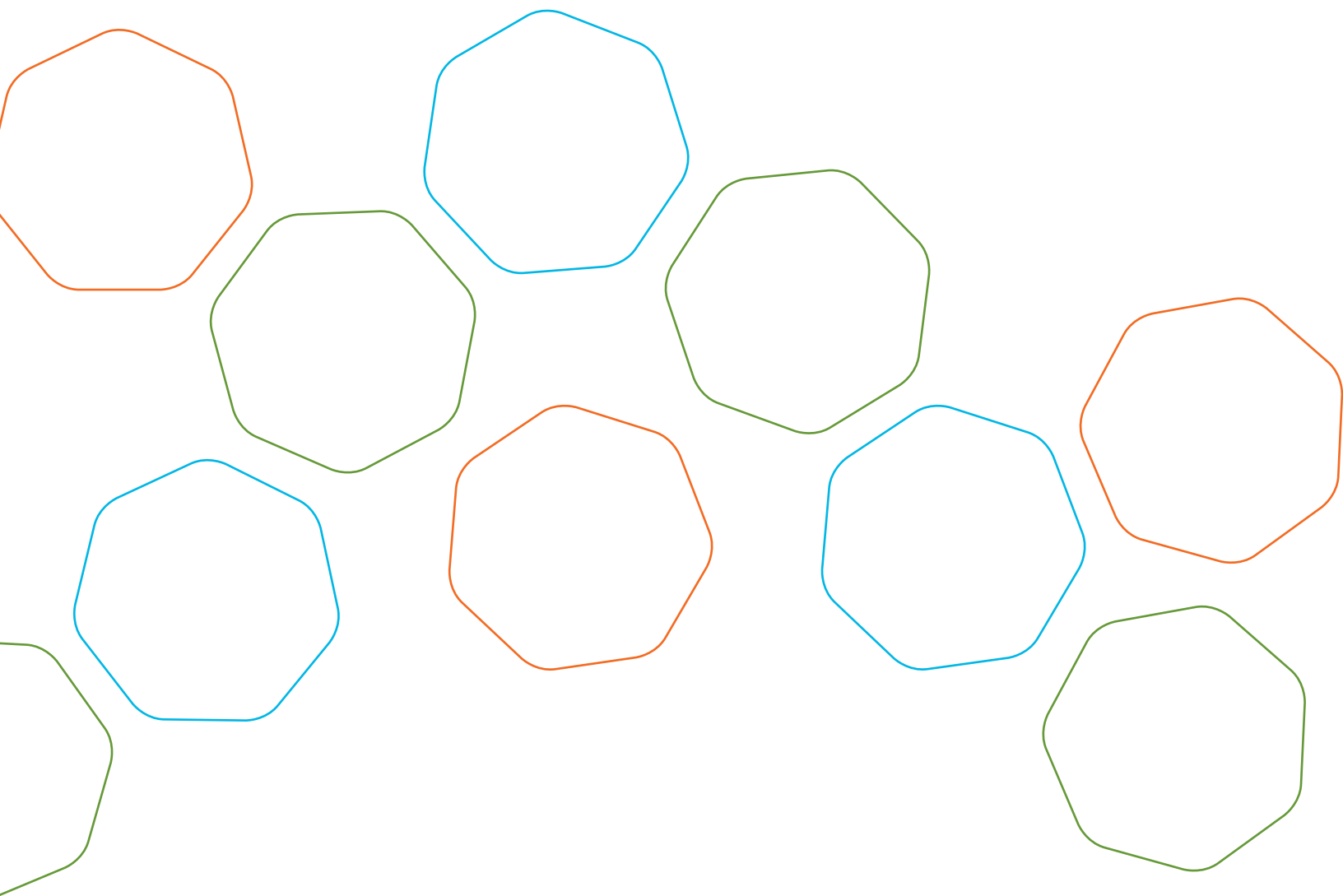


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Forward

Even though communities across the province are so diverse, one thing that all local governments aspire to achieve is a healthy community. This new guide highlights the important role that local governments can play in promoting health and supporting healthier communities for all.

Promoting healthy communities is at the heart of what local government is about. It means creating places and spaces that cultivate belonging, inclusion, connectedness and engagement. It means creating a well-planned built environment that supports healthy behaviours and choices. It means a vibrant social environment in which people can live, work, learn and play. In short, it means striving to create the conditions in which all citizens, no matter where they are in life, can thrive, now and in the future.

While there are many influences on our lives today, it is at the local level where policies and plans are made and can directly affect the health and well-being of our citizens. Local governments have a unique role to shape the local conditions that have an impact on the health of individuals and communities. My hope is that together we can build healthy communities across British Columbia.



Judy Brownoff

*Municipal Councillor,
District of Saanich
President and Chair,
BC Healthy Communities Society*

“Strong communities provide the essential social infrastructure necessary for individuals and families to attain well-being. Social well-being encompasses two components: basic needs such as nutrition, housing, sufficient income, and public health and safety; and, opportunities for learning, faith, recreation, creativity and artistic expression, community identity, citizen engagement and co-operation. To help meet these needs, local government, senior governments, and community stakeholders must continue to work in partnership¹.”

Official Community Plan, District of Saanich



What is the Purpose of this Guide?

Local governments in B.C. play a lead role in community building. Each year councils and boards make thousands of important decisions about community planning, programs, policies and partnerships that affect their residents. Many of these decisions have the potential to affect community health and well-being.

Although the primary responsibility for health services in the province rests with the Province of British Columbia, local governments have the potential to significantly affect the health and well-being of citizens at the community level.

The purpose of this guide is to articulate how the decisions local governments make play an important role in building healthy communities, which in turn help citizens to live healthier lives.

This guide was produced for elected officials and senior staff in local governments, to help them:

- recognize the importance of their role in building a healthy community
- understand how the decisions they make can improve the health and well-being of their citizens
- learn from the experiences of other communities in B.C.
- take action to make their community a healthy one

Read on for more about.....

- how local governments are building on their historic role in promoting health
- how community planning and design affects the health and well-being of citizens
- programs and policies you can implement to promote health and well-being
- how you can build stronger partnerships with regional health authorities, the Province, and community organizations to build a healthy community
- examples from B.C. communities committed to promoting health and building healthy communities

“ Many would be surprised to learn that the greatest contribution to the health of the nation over the past 150 years was made, not by doctors or hospitals, but by local governments. Our lack of appreciation of the role of our cities in establishing the health of the nation is largely due to the fact that so little has been written about it.²

— Dr. Jessie Parfitt

photo: City of Kamloops

Changing Health Challenges in British Columbia

Why not continue business as usual?

The health of British Columbians is changing, and not for the better. One in three British Columbians is living with at least one chronic condition,ⁱ and one in four British Columbian adults is obese.³ What is truly alarming is that these numbers are on the rise as our lifestyles become more sedentary and we make fewer healthy food choices. To compound the problem, the cost of health care in our province is escalating. In the last decade, health care costs have doubled to consume over 40% of the provincial budget.⁴ The bottom line is that we need to start building the conditions that support all British Columbians to lead healthier lives. These conditions for health begin in our communities—where people live, work, learn and play.

What is meant by health and well-being?

The World Health Organization describes health as, "... a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."⁵ Well-being refers to the presence of the highest possible quality of life including good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture.⁶

Why focus on healthy communities?

The "Healthy Community approach," which originated in Canada and later became a World Health Organization program, considers the social, economic, environmental, and physical factors that influence the health and well-being of individuals. It is based on five strategies that build on a community's existing capacity to improve community health and well-being: political commitment, healthy public policy, multi-sectoral collaboration, community/citizen engagement, and asset-based community development. Communities have embraced the healthy community approach because it recognizes that many factors contribute to what makes a community and its citizens healthy. It encourages leaders, citizens, and communities to work together to build on existing assets to improve local health and well-being.

ⁱ "Chronic health conditions are long lasting conditions that can be controlled, but continue to persist and recur. Chronic diseases are a leading cause of death and include: heart disease, stroke, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes." Centre for Health Policy and Research. Chronic conditions and co-morbidity among residents of British Columbia 2005 p. 1.

What the data says:



Chronic disease is pervasive

— One in three British Columbians is living with one or more chronic conditions, which consume approximately 80% of B.C. health care budgets.⁷



People are not active enough

— 50% of adults and 91% of children and youth do not get recommended levels of physical activity.⁸



Obesity is on the rise

— 26% of children in Canada are overweight or obese.⁹ Canada's childhood obesity rates are among the highest in the developed world — rates have almost tripled since 1978.¹⁰



Our population is aging

— By 2031, seniors in B.C. will account for 25% of the total population.¹¹



Our communities are designed to have us use our cars instead of our feet

— Research shows that suburban developments tend to be built with low-density, single-land use neighbourhoods and street networks that are poorly suited to walking.¹²



Many of us struggle to buy healthy local food

— Research shows some populations in B.C., particularly low-income, single-parent, aboriginal, and rural populations, have difficulty accessing healthy, fresh, locally produced food.¹³



Changing Health Challenges in British Columbia *continued*

This document is not intended as a comprehensive guide to the healthy community approach, focusing instead on some key areas where local governments play a vital role in building healthy communities and supporting the health and well-being of citizens. The key areas addressed in this guide include local government community planning, programs, healthy policies, and partnerships.

Communities across B.C. are taking up the challenge of building healthier communities. Meeting the challenge involves making political commitments, adopting healthy public policies, engaging citizens and working with health partners. For elected officials, meeting the challenge means taking a leadership role in health promotion, thinking about the health impacts of decisions you

make, and knowing that the most effective results will be achieved when you work in partnership with other sectors.

Why is collaboration important?

Building healthy communities is complex; it involves many institutions, organizations, government agencies and individuals. Although it can seem confusing at times, all of the partners have a role to play and no single partner can do it alone. Collaboration results in positive synergies and combined and focused resources that get more accomplished. If we collaborate and work together we can meet the challenge and build healthier communities for our citizens.

Local Government's Role in Improving Health and Community Well-being

How have BC local governments been involved in increasing health and well-being in the past?



From the earliest days of community building in British Columbia, cities and towns were concerned with community health. The first local government legislation in B.C., the Municipality Act (1872) listed "the preservation of public health," as one of 31 areas of local government responsibility.¹⁴ This act also gave municipal councils the dual responsibility to be local boards of health. At the time, the focus of local government public health efforts was on the prevention of infectious diseases like smallpox, diphtheria, typhus,

cholera, and tuberculosis. From these public health efforts grew many of the basic local government services that we know today, such as public works, community planning, housing, building inspection, fire protection, police and parks.¹⁵

As communities grew, local governments focused on providing clean drinking water, building sewers, disposing garbage, separating residential areas from noxious industrial areas, and providing parks and recreation spaces. Historically these services were at the very heart of local government responsibilities and very much related to building healthy and safe communities.

During the early years of the twentieth century, B.C. local governments had direct responsibilities for public health. By mid-century, national health programs evolved, provincial ministries of health grew in importance, and the formal legislated role of local governments in health waned.¹⁶

The 1980s brought a renewed interest in health promotion at the community level and the growth of the Healthy Communities movement.

During the 1990s, regional health boards and community health councils existed across the province to enable local involvement in health. This system of health boards and councils was reformed in 2001 and the responsibilities were transferred to the newly established regional health authorities. Today, local governments continue to express interest in having a voice and playing a role in improving the health and well-being of citizens.¹⁷

How is the role of local government changing?

At the turn of the twentieth century, local governments focused on the provision of clean drinking water and sewers as major contributors to health promotion and disease prevention. Today, local governments are leaders, policy makers, and partners in promoting the health and well-being of citizens and building healthy communities. Community planning in communities across B.C. addresses a broad range of policies and services that focus on the social, economic, environmental and physical aspects of communities. Each of these has a direct effect on the conditions for all citizens to thrive—socially, physically, economically and mentally.

Why focus on prevention and health promotion?

Today the health threats to our citizens are not so much infectious diseases but chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease. At first glance many local governments may think health is not a local government responsibility, however, local governments have the ability to promote health in their communities through healthy community design, parks and recreation facilities and healthy living programs, health-related policies, and building partnerships with non-profit and community organizations. When you look closely you see what an important role local government can play in preventing chronic diseases, just as they did in preventing infectious diseases a hundred years ago.

Who does what in the health world?

Sometimes it is not clear who does what in delivering health services and promoting health in B.C., and there are fears that local governments will be asked to deliver services that they do not have resources to support. So let's take a moment to consider who does what in the health world.

In B.C., the key players in the health arena are the Ministry of Health, the Provincial Health Services Authority, and five regional health authorities.

Primary responsibility for health care rests with the Ministry of Health and six health authorities. The ministry's mandate is to manage health services across B.C.; its view is high level, broad, and necessarily concerned with the full range of services across the province. The Ministry of Health creates health-related legislation and regulation for the province. It distributes funding to health authorities and sets province wide goals, standards, and performance levels for health service delivery by the regional health authorities.

The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) is one of six health authorities; the other five health authorities serve geographic regions of B.C. PHSA's primary role is to ensure that B.C. residents have access to a co-ordinated network of high-quality, specialized health care services.¹⁸

Regional health authorities in B.C. govern, plan and deliver health services within their large regional jurisdictions. They are responsible for identifying health needs, allocating resources and delivering health services in their area.

Additionally, B.C. has a First Nations Health Authority (FNHA). FNHA is a non-profit legal entity constituted under B.C.'s Society Act. It is representative of and accountable to B.C.'s First Nations and is governed by the FNHA Constitution and its board of directors. The mandate of the FNHA is to plan, design, manage, deliver, and fund First Nations health programs and to carry out other health and wellness functions, working closely with its partners.

Except for their role in regional hospital districts under the Hospital District Act, **local governments have no formal role in health care delivery in B.C., however, they have an important role to play in building healthy communities, creating the conditions for citizens to make healthy choices and working with partners to promote health and well-being.**

“ In simple terms, the Ministry of Health and health authorities focus on the delivery of health services and health promotion while local governments play an important role in health promotion and prevention. ”

Local government’s role in improving health *continued*



What is the role of local government elected officials and senior staff?

In local government, elected officials have an important role to play as leaders, policy makers, and partners in building healthy communities. For example, elected officials make important decisions that impact the health of their citizens in: community planning and the built environment, parks and recreation facilities and their programming, health-related policies, and partnerships.

Senior staff can support their elected officials by learning about the role local government can play in health promotion and ensuring their elected officials receive current information and professional advice.

Local governments routinely make decisions and allocate resources for roads, sidewalks, land use, public gathering places, housing, public transit, parks and recreation. Many local governments also adopt policies related to food security and tobacco use in public areas. These decisions and policies all contribute profoundly to the health and well-being of citizens.

WHO DOES WHAT IN THE HEALTH WORLD?				
	Province wide Health Services & Health Promotion	Regional delivery of Health Services & Health Promotion	Health promotion	Local healthy community planning, policies & programs
BC Ministry of Health	✓			
Provincial Health Services Authority	✓	✓		
Regional Health Authorities		✓	✓	
Local Governments			✓	✓

This table illustrates graphically the different areas of responsibilities and accountabilities of the players in health services delivery and promotion in British Columbia. Province-wide responsibility for health services delivery and promotion are within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health, Provincial Health Services Authority and regional health authorities. Both regional health authorities and local governments share a role in local health promotion. Local community planning, programs and policies are the responsibility of local governments.

² Except for their role in Regional Hospital Districts under the Province of BC Hospital District Act.

Community Planning and the Built Environment

How we plan and build our communities makes a difference in how active and healthy our residents are. Simply put, the physical form of our communities affects how healthy we are.

Planning and health professionals both agree we need to build neighbourhoods which are more compact, connected and walkable, with a mix of uses, housing types and people.

Community characteristics that can have a positive impact on health and well-being include:

- safe pedestrian and cycling facilities
- neighbourhood walkability
- easy access to public transit
- clean air and water
- access to healthy foods
- public spaces for social interaction and inclusion
- noise abatement
- access to public infrastructure and facilities
- access to affordable and safe housing¹⁹

Locally elected officials can make a major contribution to the health of citizens by making decisions that incorporate healthy community characteristics into their official community plans, policies and infrastructure.

Research shows that the traditional pattern of suburban neighbourhoods creates auto-dependent communities and discourages the use of active transportation like walking and cycling, and using public transit. If we want our citizens to be active and healthy, we need to change the way we plan and build our communities.

All of the characteristics of healthy communities contribute to making the lives of citizens easier and healthier, and in many cases make tax dollars go further:

- In compact communities, schools, recreation spaces, shops and services are close by and ideally within walking distance of home, which encourages people to walk and be more active. Compact communities make more efficient and cost-effective use of infrastructure like roads and services.
- When schools are well connected with sidewalks and trails children can walk or cycle to school. This increases activity levels of young people and decreases car trips and carbon emissions.
- Easy access to transit increases ridership, which makes better use of services already supported by local tax dollars.

Building a healthy community is especially important to citizens who are more vulnerable to health challenges than others. In particular, seniors, children, and low-income urban and rural populations face greater challenges if they do not have access to safe pedestrian environments, public transit, high-quality fresh food, and affordable housing. If access to healthy choices is limited, vulnerable populations have fewer options to maintain and improve their health and are at greater risk of chronic disease. For these groups in particular, community planning can have a direct and significant impact on health.

Local government leaders are the most important decision makers when it comes to the physical design of communities. The decisions you make today about planning and land use will impact the health of current residents and future generations.

Community Planning and the Built Environment *continued*



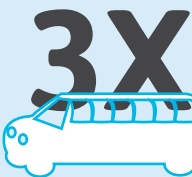
Improving a neighbourhood's walkability (by providing safe pedestrian infrastructure) by 5% gets people 32% more active in their travel.²⁰



Each additional hour spent in a car per day was associated with a 6% increase in the odds of being obese, while each additional kilometre walked per day was associated with a 5% reduction in the odds of being obese.²¹



People who live in neighbourhoods with sidewalks are 47% more likely to be active at least 30 minutes per day.²²



Transit users are three times more likely to meet the daily minimum of recommended physical activity.²³



Burns Lake Downtown Revitalization
Photo: D'Ambrosio Architecture + Urbanism

What is the built environment?

The built environment refers to buildings and spaces like homes, schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods, parks, recreation areas, and commercial and industrial areas and the infrastructure that supports and connects them.

"As you know, evidence has been growing to support the notion that the broader determinants of health—those conditions in which we live, work, play and learn—have as great an impact on our health and well-being as genetics and lifestyle choices. More importantly, asking people to make healthier choices—eat better, be more active, quit smoking—without also changing the physical, social and economic conditions in which they live is proving to be a losing proposition."²⁴

Local Government Participant, BC Healthy Communities Society Local Government Advisory Groupⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱ The BC Healthy Communities Society Local Government Advisory Group was created to provide feedback on the development of learning and capacity building opportunities to address health and well-being in communities. Input from the group was received through an online survey and two focus groups convened in 2012.

Village of Burns Lake

In 2011, the Village of Burns Lake committed to revitalizing its downtown. The Village worked with the community and created a plan for revitalization to make the downtown more attractive and promote tourism and business development, community pride and active transportation. The project created a community meeting place used for activities such as a farmers' market, outdoor performances and recreation events. The improvements also include the addition of sidewalks, bike paths, and parking areas that promote safety and active living.

Local Government Programs

Physical activity is critical to individual health and can help to build community connections and reduce social isolation. The benefits of an active lifestyle include improved physical and mental well-being as well as reduced risk for obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and other chronic conditions.^{25, 26}

Communities across B.C. invest heavily in recreation facilities and programs—but there's more to be done! We need to ensure all residents— young and old, urban and rural, advantaged and low-income—have ready and easy access to programs and places where they can be active. In addition to providing safe places to walk, trails, cycling paths, outdoor play spaces, sports fields, skateboard parks, tennis courts and recreation complexes, local governments can be leaders in developing programs to engage all citizens in physical activity. Once engaged, citizens are more likely to continue to make healthy choices and to become more physically active.

Local governments are in the best position to work with their citizens to assess what is needed to promote active lives for all citizens.

For people who live on low incomes or experience other barriers, leading an active lifestyle is not always easy. Local governments, through their parks and recreation organizations, can engage diverse groups and support their involvement in physical activity.²⁷ Many local government recreation programs, such as the L.I.F.E. Program in Saanich and other municipalities in Greater Victoria, and the Leisure Economic Access Policy Program in Kitimat, provide support by reducing the cost for low-income residents to make recreation programs more affordable.^{28, 29}

In many communities, local government recreation programs reach out to the community to promote increased activity levels. Some examples of how local governments and their recreation staff can be leaders in engaging their citizens to be physically active include:

- policy support for making recreation programs accessible for all citizens
- awareness and marketing that promotes the benefits of physical activity
- joint-use agreements with school districts to maximize the use of both local government and school district recreation facilities and programs
- partnerships with a regional health authorities to promote the benefits of physical activity
- partnerships with the BC Recreation and Parks Association to promote the benefits of physical activity
- support for local events that promote being active
- policies and facilities that encourage local government employees to be active

Did you know?



Only 58% of adults in B.C. get the recommended **30 minutes** of physical activity per day.³⁰



The most recent Canadian Health Measures Survey found that **only 7% of Canadian children and youth** get the recommended amount of physical activity.³¹



As much as half of the functional decline between the ages of 30 and 70 is due not to aging itself but to an inactive way of life.³²

“[Healthy communities] are about changing people’s attitudes to what recreation and activity are... It’s not just going to a recreation centre anymore, it’s making recreation and exercise part of your life, i.e., riding your bike, not taking your car to spin class!”³³

Local Government Participant, BC Healthy Communities Society Local Government Advisory Group

Local Government Policy

Local governments are in the business of making local policy that responds to the needs and preferences of their citizens. The kinds of policies local governments make can have a very real impact on the health of citizens. Below are a few examples of the kinds of policies local governments in B.C. are creating to promote health and well-being in their communities.

Community Planning Policies

Some communities in B.C. include broad general policies in their official community plan (OCP) or sustainability plan to recognize their role in and commitment to the health of their citizens. For example, the 2012 City of Campbell River Sustainable OCP includes a policy that states,

“Campbell River is a healthy and creative community. Our City offers healthy, affordable choices for the basic needs of residents such as housing, food and water. Residents enjoy meaningful opportunities for work and diverse cultural expression and enjoy a high quality of life.”³⁴

In addition to laying a policy foundation for health and well-being, local government can play a specific role in creating policy and regulation in areas such as tobacco use in public spaces and food security.

“ We are currently developing a comprehensive Healthy City Strategy that will pull together all of these disparate parts and try to take more of a ‘health in all policies’ approach. This includes three big interconnected strategic areas of healthy people, healthy communities, healthy environments, and 20 interconnected building blocks of a healthy city for all.”³⁶

Ali Grant, Social Planner, City of Vancouver

Campbell River



City of Campbell River Sustainable OCP Policies.³⁵

The City's Role: While major social development programs, policies and funding is the responsibility or jurisdiction of the provincial government, local governments can assist in advancing social objectives through: regulation of land use and design; guidance on developer-provided amenity contributions; taxation and incentives; programs and facilities; and co-ordination and facilitation of collaborative partnerships.

11.4 Improve health and build on existing well-being.

11.4.1 Programs, partnerships, services, and infrastructure that support the health and well-being of all segments of the population, including seniors, youth, families, newcomers and other minorities, and vulnerable groups, are encouraged.

11.4.2 Transportation, land use, and physical design decisions will support active transportation and recreation opportunities as a means to integrate daily activity and exercise into the lives of residents.

Tobacco Reduction

Tobacco use remains the single most preventable cause of disease and death in Canada; in British Columbia, 6,000 people die each year from tobacco-related causes.³⁷

Surrey City Council approved a Surrey Public Health Protection Bylaw to reduce the impact of second-hand smoke in public spaces by approving the toughest anti-smoking restrictions in the region.

Restrictions include a ban on smoking within 7.5 m of doors, windows, air intakes and patios in the city and a ban on smoking in vehicles with minors. The bylaw also restricts smoking on outdoor patios.

“This is an important step towards improving the health and comfort of all of our citizens,” said Mayor Dianne Watts. “With what we know about the effects of second-hand smoke, we have a responsibility to protect the health of our residents.”³⁸

For more information see the Local Government Action Guide on Tobacco Reduction at www.planh.ca

Since the 1980s, local governments have led the way in reducing tobacco use in public spaces by adopting policies and bylaws that prohibit smoking in local government work places and in outdoor public spaces. More recently, local governments have passed bylaws to prohibit the use of tobacco in public recreation spaces including parks and playgrounds. These policies limit the negative impacts of secondary smoke on non-smokers and reduce the negative role-modelling that occurs when adults smoke in the presence of youth and children.

Although the Tobacco Control Act sets provincial baseline regulations, local governments have the option of expanding the protections to suit their community preferences and priorities by prohibiting smoking in restaurants and patios, in outdoor public spaces, on local government property, and on health care and post-secondary sites.

“ Although the Provincial Tobacco Control Act sets provincial baseline regulations, local governments have the option of expanding the protections to suit their community preferences and priorities. ”



Local Government Policy *continued*

Healthy Eating and Food Security

In recent years, local governments in B.C. have become increasingly concerned with the food security of their citizens. Food security refers to ready access to affordable, healthy food that is safe, culturally appropriate and provides for nutritional needs. Today it is estimated that 7.7% of B.C.'s population is food insecure.³⁹ The challenges of food insecurity are not just the concern of big cities with low-income populations, but are also the concern of communities in remote and rural areas of B.C.

Local governments have a role to play in food security and improving access to healthy, affordable food through partnerships with the provincial government and with support for local projects, such as farmers' markets and community gardens.

For more information see resources and tools on healthy eating and food security at www.planh.ca

City of Victoria 2012 OCP

"...the plan proposes a co-ordinated approach to address food-related issues. This requires the City to work in partnership across departments and with senior levels of government, the health authority, other agencies, organizations and individuals to consider the connections among different parts of the food system. Within its mandate, the City's efforts can focus on increasing urban food production, strengthening key food system infrastructure, supporting access to healthy foods, and supporting the recycling and re-use of organic waste."

Broad Objectives

The food systems policies of this plan collectively address five broad objectives:

17 (a) That planning for the food system is comprehensive and integrated at various scales.

17 (b) That the opportunity for urban food production is increased on private and public lands.

17 (c) That local food system infrastructure is strengthened.

17 (d) That citizens have access to affordable, healthy and local food.

17 (e) That more food waste is recovered and re-used for productive purposes.⁴⁰



photo: City of Victoria



photo: City of Kamloops

City of Kamloops Sustainability Plan Targets

- Implement the recommendations of the Social Plan as they pertain to food security.
- Work with developers to encourage the integration of community gardens into new multi-family developments.
- Help facilitate the expansion of the Food Share program to ensure that all excess perishable food from commercial businesses, community gardens, and private gardens is diverted to the Food Share program.
- Increase knowledge within the community of the environmental, social, health, and financial benefits of locally sourced food supplies.
- Achieve four to five community garden plots per 1,000 residents.
- Integrate policies regarding food security into the City's pending Agriculture Plan, slated for updating in 2010.⁴¹

BC Food Facts

There are about 100 farmers' markets in B.C. (2011).⁴²



A 2008 Canadian study of farmers' markets found \$1.03 billion in annual sales and a total economic impact of up to \$3.09 billion.⁴³



Across B.C., 33 programs (2010/11) were involved in providing farm-fresh foods to an estimated 10,000 school children.⁴⁴

Local Government Partnerships

Local governments have a long history of building partnerships to further the goals and aspirations of their citizens. Whether it is building infrastructure with senior levels of government, developing soccer fields with local sports organizations, or working with community and non-profit organizations to build affordable seniors' housing, local governments understand the value and power of partnerships.

If we want to help our citizens to live healthier and longer lives, all levels of government, non-profit organizations, community groups and the private sector need to work together.

Why build partnerships with your local health authority?

Regional health authorities have responsibility to govern, plan and deliver services that focus on health care, health promotion and public health within their region. Health authorities provide a range of health services and are specialists in health. Local governments, on the other hand, provide a vast array of services across a broad range of service areas, including governance, public works, parks and recreation, community planning, libraries, policing and fire protection. Most local governments in B.C. have limited professional expertise and experience to understand the health challenges in their communities and the potential of health promotion. This is where the regional health authority can play a significant and meaningful role as a partner to local government.

Under provincial legislation, local governments and health authorities must designate liaison staff members to facilitate communication, problem solving, and collaboration between local government and the health authority. Designating staff liaisons is an important step in building a partnership and collaborating on projects to develop a healthier community.

Health professionals working for your regional health authority understand the health challenges in your region. They have access to local health data, funding, expertise and resources that can help you to better understand and address the health challenges in your community.

Public health staff can work with local government to help create health-promoting and health-protecting built and social environments. For example, the City of Richmond and the City of



Vancouver each partnered with their regional health authority to develop wellness plans for their municipality.

Another example is Fraser Health Authority's Healthier Community Partnership, which created a series of videos to showcase a variety of partnerships with local governments in the Fraser

City of Vancouver and Vancouver Coastal Health Partnership Agreement

The City of Vancouver is working with its key partner Vancouver Coastal Health to develop a formal commitment to enhance collaborative efforts in seven priority areas:

- healthy housing options
- food security and sustainable food systems
- early care and learning
- active living and getting outside
- healthy services
- social connectedness
- healthy built environment⁴⁶

Valley Health Authority region—including the Village of Harrison, District of Kent, and City of Chilliwack. The videos showcase new activity programs, trails and community events, all focused on improving health and well-being locally.⁴⁵

What other organizations and institutions can local governments partner with to develop healthy communities?

There are numerous natural partners for local government when it comes to promoting healthy communities. Local schools and school districts frequently partner with local governments to develop joint-use agreements to maximize the use of community facilities and playfields. Other potential partners include educational institutions like community colleges and universities, many of which have food, agriculture and recreation programs interested in partnering with local governments to promote healthy lifestyles, activities and projects.

Why build partnerships with non-profit and community organizations?

In many communities across B.C., services and projects are made possible only through partnerships with community groups and non-profit organizations.

City of Richmond Community Wellness Strategy

“The Community Wellness Strategy was created in cooperation with three local public agencies: the City of Richmond, the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, and the Richmond School District. Community stakeholders were also involved.”⁴⁷

“It should be emphasized that this Community Wellness Strategy falls under the jurisdiction of all agencies and groups. No one agency is responsible for the success of this strategy. So the creation of strong partnerships, open communication and collaborative programs, all under the guidance of this framework, are essential for success.”⁴⁸



Collaboration with NGOs [non-governmental organizations] is a vital component in the formulation and delivery of many public health programs. NGO involvement elevates the profile of critical health issues, improves reach and access, provides additional capacity and expertise, and improves opportunities for integration into the broader community. For example, the Canadian Diabetes Association developed Food Skills for Families, which provides hands-on weekly cooking programs that teach healthy eating, shopping, and cooking skills to at-risk populations.⁵⁰

BC's Guiding Framework for Public Health



Local Government Partnerships *continued*

Measuring Up The North Initiative (MUTN)

The Measuring Up The North Initiative began in 2007 in Northern British Columbia with the goal to assist over 40 communities to become livable, age-friendly, disability-friendly, universally designed, inclusive communities for all residents and visitors. The partnership included the North Central Local Government Association (NCLGA) and the BC Paraplegic Association (BCPA), with supporting partners such as BC Healthy Communities, 2010 Legacies Now, Ministry of Health, and Northern Health's Healthy Community Development Program.

The initiative was supported by funding from a variety of sources, including 2010 Legacies Now, BC Real Estate Foundation, Vancouver Foundation, United Way of Northern BC, Nechako Kitimat Development Fund Society, and NCLGA communities.

MUTN successes include:

- changes to town policies, bylaws, official community plans, and local government attitudes and knowledge
- changes to town-owned and privately owned buildings
- construction of new structures that incorporate universal design (small airports, recreation centres, housing developments)
- changes to business premises and the way business is conducted
- changes to outdoor recreation areas, like accessible trails and transportation

Also, collaboration has increased between and among generations, local governments, tourism associations, economic development associations and local business owners.⁴⁹

Take the Lead to Build a Healthier Community!

The time to build healthy communities in B.C. is now. As local elected officials and senior staff, you can lead your communities to a healthier future.

We know what we need to do to support the health and well-being of citizens. We can plan our communities to promote healthy living. We can build on the excellent parks and recreation programming that exists in our communities to make them accessible to all citizens. We can adopt healthy policies in our communities to champion health promotion, reduce tobacco use, and address concerns about access to healthy food. And we can build strong and meaningful partnerships with regional health authorities, schools, community groups, and non-profit organizations so that we can combine our efforts to build healthier communities.

The time is now to take up the challenge and join other communities in B.C. to ensure your community is a healthy community.

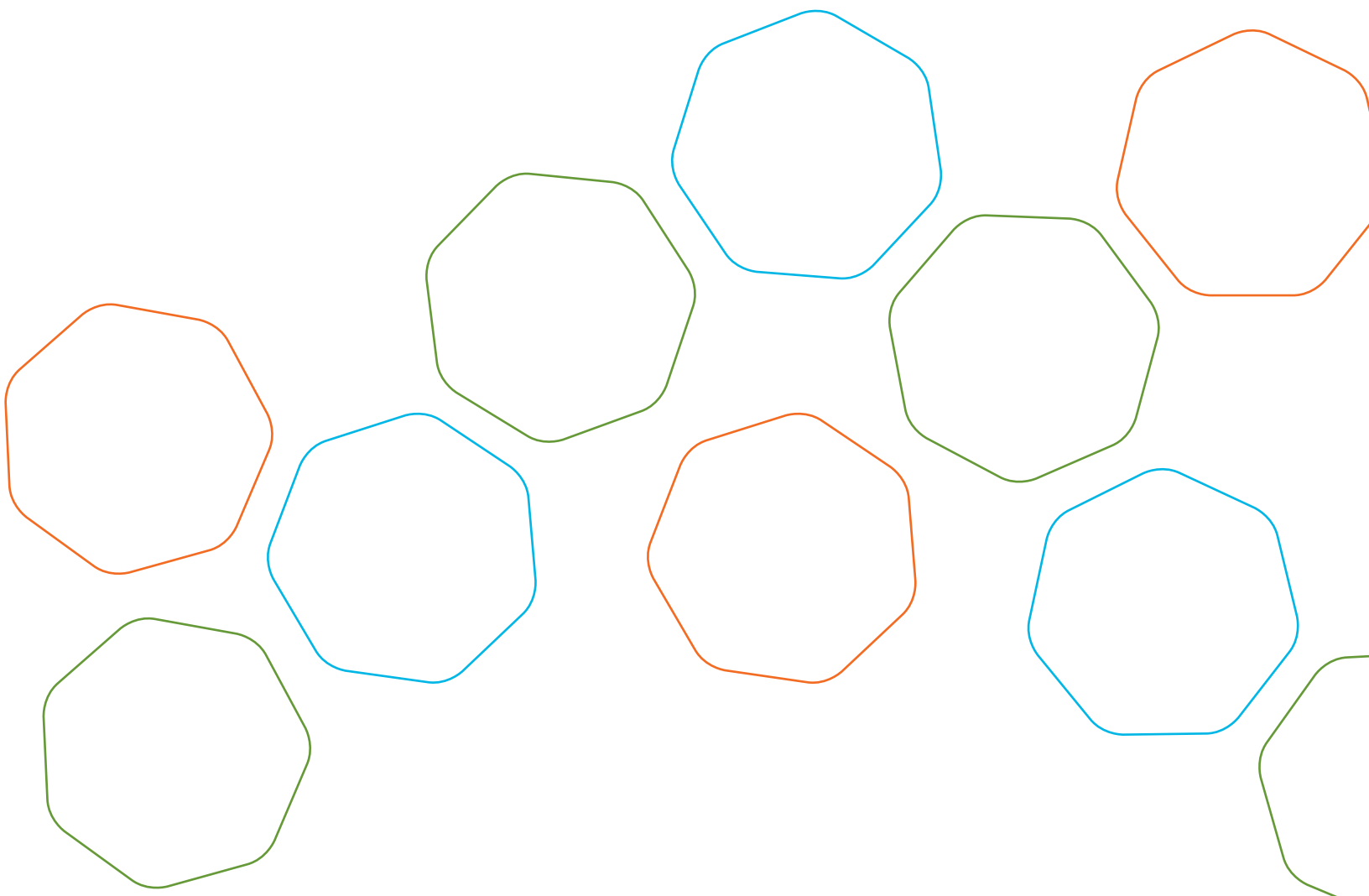


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PlanH supports local government engagement and partnerships across sectors for creating healthier communities, and provides learning opportunities, resources, and leading-edge practices for collaborative local action. PlanH is a partnership between BC Healthy Communities Society and Healthy Families BC.

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