



Building Healthy Communities: Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

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Purpose of Session

1. To increase our understanding of the built environment, our different roles and how we can work together on this topic.
2. To understand how to apply the concept of land-use policies and practices in rural communities.
3. To build momentum on the link between health and the built environment.



Introductions

Who is in the room?



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Ontario Public Health Standards
Government of Ontario
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
Ontario Professional Planning Institute
Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition
OHHP-Taking Action for Healthy Living
Partnerships

Are talking about the built environment!



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Planners' Principles of Community Land Use

1. Land uses should be located such that their activity characteristics *do not conflict* with one another.
2. The pattern of land uses should *provide for the integration* of all functions and areas.
3. The *circulation system should support* the land-use pattern



Planners' Principles of Community Land Use

4. *Social cohesion* should be promoted through mixed land use.
5. Residential areas should be *safe, attractive and well drained*, and have variety in their design.
6. *Housing* should be provided in a range of types to suit the income structure of the community.
7. *Commercial and service areas* should be located so as to be convenient and safe.



Planners' Principles of Community Land Use

8. *Traffic* with different movement, speed, and volume characteristics should be separated from one another.
9. The *downtown area* should be considered the social and business heart of the community.
10. The community's built environment and its *natural ecosystem* should be planned jointly so that they may function harmoniously.

(Hodge & Gordon,

2008)

How do you view your community land use/environment?

Community land use/environment can be the municipality that you primarily work in or live in.

What are some of the features present that reflect the *Planners' Principles of Community Land Use*?

What are some of the features you don't see?



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Healthy Community Concept



Healthy Community Concept

Shift from traditional institutionalized health care.

Emphasis is on environmental supports and policy



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Community Efforts

- Access to food and food insecurity issues
- Municipal land use planning and development
- Air quality
- Water quality
- Transportation issues
- Active Communities



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How are they engaging in this work?

- Conducting literature reviews
- Publishing position statements
- Engaging in community-based research
- Developing tools and resources
- Aligning with other community stakeholders
- Engaging in partnership development
- Using evidence to develop a strategic direction



Developing Collaborative Partnerships

Who are they working with?

- Provincial stakeholders
- Municipal Decision-makers (elected and staff)
- Chamber of Commerce
- Economic Development Departments
- Universities
- NGO's
- Business



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Characteristics of Collaborative Partnerships

Think of a time in the past when you collaborated with others on a project and accomplished meaningful work. What were the key factors/elements that contributed to the success of the collaboration?



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Using the concept of designing active communities to model how work is being done to make a difference to increase the health of residents.

What is being done in rural communities?



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Summary of Findings

1. Adopt a **vision** for active communities.
2. Identify **values and principles** needed to implement these types of communities.
3. **Engage** key stakeholders, interest groups and residents.
4. Provide municipal staff and elected officials with **training sessions** to increase their knowledge on active communities.
5. Engage in dialogue about a maintenance program to **ensure sustainability** of infrastructure.



Designing Active Communities

- Built and social environments support and enable healthy active living.
- Created when community stakeholders place value on and work towards: the health, safety and quality of life for all individuals to develop healthy, safe and environmentally sustainable neighborhoods.
- Vibrant and economically successful because they encourage healthy activity, social interaction and citizen engagement.



Active Communities

Provide the overriding framework. This includes the promotion of:

Walkable Communities

Cycling Friendly Communities

Active Transportation

Non-motorized waterway activities

Trails

Municipal Master and Official Plans

It is the “glue” that binds the different interest groups together for a common goal!



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Active Communities Charter

A Roadmap for Policy Development

Describes the principles and values characteristic of active communities and provides a rationale for adopting a focus on creating active communities.

By adopting the Charter, municipal councils have demonstrated that they are “on-board” with the new planning policies developed by the Government of Ontario.



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The Active Communities Charter provides a useful, convenient and evidence-based “container” that can help generate a vision and plan that will benefit all residents.



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The “How” Community Members Work Together

The Concept of Alignment

Creates an environment that allows the shared responsibility of decision-making. We eliminate the duplication of local program delivery and we are responsive to the needs and issues raised by the community by linking broad provincial strategies with creative alignments and programs at the local level.



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Community Collaboration

Community collaboration is the act of working together to support a common goal through partnership.

It is not about “merging” but finding **common ground** to build awareness, education, environmental supports and healthy public policy.

Working towards SUSTAINABILITY is key!



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What has been done in Haliburton?

- “Park the Car and Get Movin’!” campaign
- Research: on active transportation behaviour & identification of “hot spots”
- Resource Development: map and signage concept
- Vision: illustrations for hot spots
- Presented recommendations to council



What has been done in Haliburton?

- Active and Safe Routes to School
- Advocacy: adoption of Active Communities Charter as a tool for guiding decision making
- Development of plan and recommendations for best route to Haliburton school/hospital zone



Challenges of Active Transportation in a Rural Environment

- Most writing on AT is in urban context
- Rural “car culture”
- Limited tax base but extensive road network to keep maintained
- Lack of experience/expertise at staff and council in planning for active transportation
- Transportation = Roads = Vehicles
- Mix of municipal, county, provincial roads/highways means split responsibility for maintenance and improvements
- Villages were not located/planned for growth
- One county planner, only 1 municipality has a planner

(Kate Hall, April 25, 2007 presentation)



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Tips and Tools

- Learn all that you can about the municipal and county planning.
- Make a friend with a municipal staff person.
- Engage in “mapping” the built environment.
(Physical Activity Resource Assessment Instrument (PARA))



Municipal Briefing Tool

Increases your knowledge about the function and process of the municipal government.

You could add other questions related to healthy communities.



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Developing and Promoting Community Hubs

A community “hub” is an area that residents “naturally” attend. Community hubs in rural areas are very diverse.

Example of possible sites of community hubs are:

- Arena
- Ball diamond or soccer field
- Elementary school
- Church



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Draft Checklist for Planners

To encourage the development of communities that support and promote physical activity opportunities.

It offers specific principles and criteria that work towards increasing the design of active communities.

Designed to reflect the “gold standard” of municipal planning decisions for the creation of active communities.



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Checklist reflects the Theory

“If you go through the criteria listed in the checklist you will meet the provincial requirements to build healthy active communities”



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Sample of Questions

STREET CONNECTIVITY

- a) Review street pattern, pedestrian and cycling linkages. Consider rectilinear grid pattern or modified grid pattern for streets.
- b) Block lengths should generally range from 200 to 250 metres.
- c) Where blocks are > 200 or 250 metres due to topography, do you recommend mid-block pedestrian walkways or parkettes?



Key Messages.....



- When planning put “cars” in perspective. **Make it about PEOPLE!**
- Develop a unified strategy for your community.
- **Political Will** is an important feature.
- Designing Active Communities in **rural settings** is possible.



“Mapping Out”

1. Identify where are each of the communities at with the concept of building a healthy community?
2. What is currently happening? (projects, activities, partnerships)
3. What are the challenges of engaging in this type of work?



- From your experience working/living in your community, can you identify **opportunities** to engage in promoting aspects of healthy communities? **WHAT** aspects and **WHO** would it be promoted to and **HOW** could it be done?
- See Worksheet

