

Health, Equity and Sustainable Development Toolkit



**Baseline Needs Assessment report
June 2013**

Puget Sound Regional Council
PSRC

Purpose of Baseline Needs Assessment report

The purpose of the Health, Equity and Sustainable Development Toolkit (hereafter “Toolkit”) is to facilitate the integration of healthy, equitable and sustainable planning goals into local land use and transportation plans and decision making-processes through the creation and promotion of a best practices healthy planning resource toolkit.

The Baseline Needs Assessment was conducted to help guide PSRC research into the content and design of the Toolkit. This report summarizes the results of research and inquiry into recent programs and initiatives, existing resources and survey responses on jurisdictional planning needs in addressing issues of public health, equity and sustainable development.

This report is comprised of four sections:

- I. A summary of local government policies, programs and resources developed as part of the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant program which focused on the role of active transportation in addressing health and equity issues.
- II. Results from jurisdictional interviews intended to identify the types of resources that would best assist planners seeking to address public health disparities in the Community Transformation Grant intervention area (see Figure 1 below).
- III. A review of existing planning toolkits that deal with health, equity and sustainable development in order to understand the content and format of resources available that may be applicable to planners from intervention area jurisdictions.
- IV. Conclusions and findings for the Toolkit’s content development.

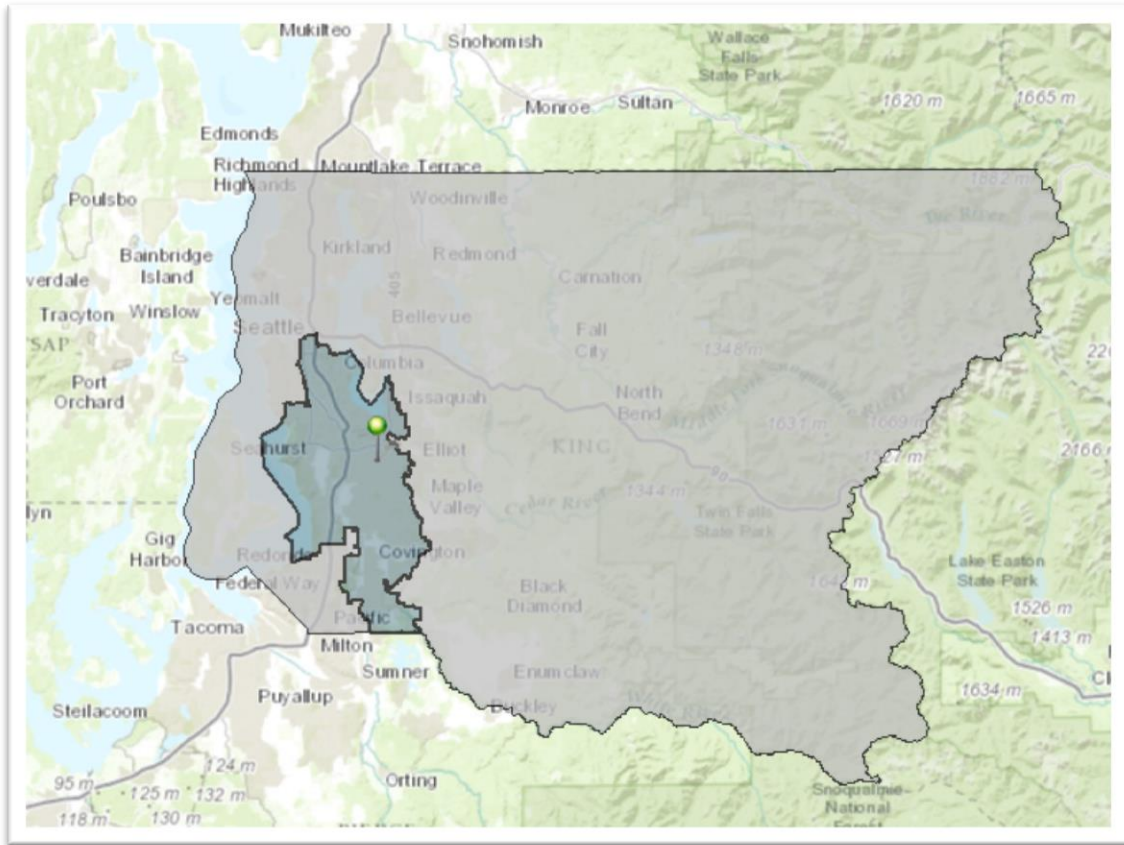


Figure 1. The Community Transformation Grant intervention area includes the cities of Auburn, Burien, Des Moines, Kent, Renton, SeaTac, Tukwila, a portion of Seattle and unincorporated areas including North Highline and West Hill.

I. Building from Communities Putting Prevention to Work

Communities Putting Prevention to Work, or CPPW, was a grant program from the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (the federal stimulus) supporting local jurisdictional policies, systems and environmental changes to reduce obesity and tobacco use. Funding for the program began in 2010 and ended in 2012. Locally, grants were awarded to Public Health – Seattle King County (PHSKC) and distributed to fund projects at more than 50 organizations working in South King County, where community health disparities are among the most profound in the county. The Community Transformation Grant funding in King County is designed to build on the CPPW investment by changing institutional systems and building capacity for public health agencies.

Summary of jurisdictional CPPW projects

Given the purpose of the Toolkit to provide resources to planners in local government within South King County in the context of the Community Transformation Grant (CTG), the CPPW grant activities of local government grantees in the CTG intervention area are described below.¹ All activities were conducted between 2010 and 2012.

Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) developed guidance detailing land use and transportation planning approaches to promote physical activity. The resulting report, the [Active Communities Guidebook](#), summarizes planning resources that promote active transportation, with a focus on pedestrian and bicycle planning. The guidebook provides examples of planning approaches from various Puget Sound area jurisdictions, as well as other resources. The guidebook includes results from surveys and reviews of comprehensive plans with regard to health and equitable outcomes.

City of Burien used CPPW funds to research nonmotorized transportation and food access issues. This research informed policies that were adopted by the city council in 2011, including Complete Streets policy, healthy eating and active living principles, and revised transportation policies. Burien also updated its zoning code to reflect the resulting changes to the city's comprehensive plan.

City of Des Moines used CPPW funds to convene an advisory group and develop a healthy planning initiative. A number of best practices and reports were developed in partnership with other agencies, including a report on Des Moines' Food Landscape and a Safe Routes to School Project Prioritization Report. In 2012, Des Moines City Council adopted a "Healthy Des Moines Element" as part of its comprehensive plan. The city was recognized as a local health champion by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for its work under CPPW.

City of Kent used CPPW funds to begin work on Let's Go Kent, its park trail plan to promote walking and biking. Additionally, planning staff developed draft food access policies for inclusion in the city's comprehensive plan.

City of SeaTac used CPPW funds to complete its draft Safe & Complete Streets Plan, which will be incorporated into SeaTac's comprehensive and transportation plans. Additionally, the city created a map of existing pedestrian facilities and trails to promote recreational walking. Also under CPPW, planning staff developed a number of policies promoting healthy food access; these policies were adopted by the SeaTac City Council in 2012.

City of Seattle used its CPPW funds across several departments and projects.

- The Seattle Department of Planning and Development received funding for a project to improve access to locally grown food, assess healthy living at a neighborhood level and increase access to healthy foods at transit stations.

¹ For a full list of CPPW grantees, visit <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/partnerships/CPPW/whosinvolved.aspx>

- Seattle’s Human Services Department, Aging and Disability Services Division used CPPW funds to support a cooperative purchasing program to promote the use of healthy foods by meal programs for seniors and children.
- The Human Services Department’s Youth and Family Empowerment Division improved its child care program assessment tool by incorporating best practice standards for healthy eating and physical activity. Child care program staff were trained in these standards through CPPW funding.

King County used CPPW funds to develop programs within several departments and agencies.

- The County Department of Natural Resources and Parks created “FoodScore,” a tool to analyze and display how access to healthy food varies across King County.
- The King County Housing Authority developed new physical activity and nutritional standards for their in-home child care units and after school programs, as well as youth programming contracts.
- The [King County Food and Fitness Initiative](#) launched Safe Routes to School bicycle clubs at two Seattle schools and enrolled food retailers in the Healthy Foods Here Program to promote healthy food access in the Delridge and White Center areas.

The Northwest Center for Livable Communities at the University of Washington worked with jurisdictions throughout King County to develop food access policies and “Food Landscape Assessment” reports. Their work is summarized in the [Food Access Policy and Planning Guide](#).

The Healthy King County Coalition was formed by jurisdictions and other grantees under CPPW as the CPPW Coalition and served as a forum for sharing ideas and developing policies around health and equity issues among community-based organizations and jurisdictions. Since the end of CPPW, the coalition continues to meet under its new name and is pursuing 501(c)3 status. Its members include many of the current Community Transformation Grant recipient organizations.

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Jurisdictions’ work under CPPW was characterized by bolstering plans and policies to address active transportation and healthy food access as approaches to preventing obesity. The work focused on creating new plans and partnerships, while establishing standards for service delivery around existing programs.

The Community Transformation Grant builds on CPPW grant activities by focusing on the future needs of communities and providing resources to build capacity, share ideas across jurisdictions and support program implementation. Resources that can build on policies adopted during CPPW would help these communities strengthen plan outcomes and build capacity for further policy work to address health inequities.

II. Baseline Needs Assessment Jurisdictional Interviews

In conjunction with members of its Toolkit Interagency Working Group, PSRC developed a brief, general interview to identify the types of resources that would best assist planners seeking to address public health disparities in the Community Transformation Grant intervention area. PSRC staff reached out to planners for each of the jurisdictions that had been identified in the process of convening the Working Group. Interviews were conducted through a combination of in-person meetings, phone calls and e-mail correspondence.

As of July 2013, not all jurisdictions have responded to requests for interviews. PSRC will continue outreach to these communities and will amend this document as more responses are gathered. Additionally, PSRC may interview planners from outside of the CTG intervention area to compare baseline needs among Puget Sound region jurisdictions.

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

Findings are organized around four questions:

1. Which issues do you consider as important in your community's planning approach to public health? What other public health issues are important?
2. What policies, programs, regulations or other initiatives have your communities developed to promote public health that you think could be well-utilized by other cities and towns in the Puget Sound region?
3. Given limited resources such as budget and staff constraints, what are the barriers you face in implementing, strengthening or otherwise making program and policy decisions around the public health issues identified above?
4. Please tell us which of the following types of resources would best address public health issues in your community:
 - Model development regulations or policy language
 - Programs and best practices
 - Public engagement or informational outreach
 - Analytical tools and methodologies
 - Data (e.g., indicators related to health, land use, transportation....)
 - Research information/examples
 - Other

Questions were provided to interviewees with a summary of public health data from [PHSKC City Health Profiles](#). The data was provided to help frame the interview discussion around the linkages between planning and public health outcomes.

Auburn

Notes from a conversation conducted by phone, July 15, 2013, between Elizabeth Chamberlain, Planning Manager, City of Auburn, and Zachary Howard, PSRC.

Healthy Planning Issues

Staff was not familiar with specific public health issues, but understood the general socioeconomic and health disparities between lower and higher income neighborhoods within the City of Auburn.

Current Practices

Public health remains a relatively new priority for the city's planning department. There is an interest in exploring policies to promote public health as part of the comprehensive plan update. Currently, the city has several policies and partnerships that promote healthy living, including:

- Grants to low-income families for YMCA memberships,
- Partnerships with the YMCA and local non-profit farms to provide classes on eating healthy on a budget,
- Complete Streets and Safe Routes to Schools policies
- Progress towards greenhouse gas reduction goals as outlined in the City's policies and developing a climate action plan
- A goal of updating the city's 2010 greenhouse gas inventory

Additionally, Auburn has applied for a portion of King County's Community Transformation Grant to develop a Health Impact Assessment as part of the city's comprehensive plan update.

Barriers to Implementation

While staff believes that political support for public health and sustainable development is there, the city council's prioritization of economic development has been more of a focus with flexible development regulations. Additionally, development efforts have been focused on the city's downtown, where denser land use patterns produce a more consistent return on investment. Where traditional suburban land use patterns limit opportunities for active transportation, change within these areas will be slower. There may also be a lack of public support for certain health and sustainability interventions, though the city will be conducting more extensive and informative outreach to the community as part of the comprehensive plan update.

Identifying Useful Resources

Staff is most interested in case studies of successful policies and programs. Demonstrated outcomes will better inform the public and councilmembers during the plan update process. Additionally, data and analytical support from PSRC will be a critical part of the plan update; staff specifically mentioned an on-line health policy toolkit from another jurisdiction which included a one-stop shop for planners' data support needs. Staff also requested resources on innovative means for public engagement.

Burien – interview not yet conducted

Des Moines

Notes from a conversation conducted by phone, June 4, 2013, between Denise Lathrop, Senior Planner, City of Des Moines, and Zachary Howard, PSRC.

Healthy Planning Issues

None identified.

Current Practices

The Healthy Des Moines Movement Outcomes and Partners Report highlights the city's successes under CPPW, demonstrating connection between planning activity and public health outcomes.

Des Moines recently adopted nutritional standards for city-sponsored events. The city is adapting and continuing this work under CTG to develop physical activity standards for before-/after-school and summer school programs. A nutritionist and physical education specialist has been hired as a consultant to perform this work.

Des Moines enjoys a strong working partnership with the Highline School District and is a member of the Healthy Highline Communities Coalition, an idea-sharing group of South King County elected officials and city planners formed under CPPW.

Barriers to Implementation

In addition to staff turnover and the limits of a two-person planning department, Des Moines has limited time to research new and innovative ideas in general; planners are looking for resources that bring new ideas to them fully researched.

Des Moines City Council has identified its own priority issues that limit the agenda on policy-making around public health and planning.

Des Moines is characterized by suburban development, automobile-oriented commercial areas and a lack of funding for transit and active transportation treatments.

Identifying Useful Resources

Des Moines is seeking a compendium of best practices for developing a comprehensive plan that better addresses public health issues – policies and programs that are actionable, visionary, and use the best available science. Additionally, PSRC could hold topical workshops for planners that identify available planning resources. Topics of interest to Des Moines include urban agriculture and public health planning for suburban environments.

Kent – interview not yet conducted

King County (Highline) – interview not yet conducted

Renton

Responses were recorded in a conversation held May 13, 2013 at Renton City Hall.

Respondents: Terry Higashiyama, City of Renton; Erika Conkling, City of Renton; Liz Nolan, Valley Medical Center; Caren Adams, Public Health Seattle King County

Facilitators: Zachary Howard and Ivan Miller, PSRC

Healthy Planning Issues

- Childhood obesity and general health of the next generation
- Suburban development (specifically, its incompatibility with current best practices in planning for public health)
- Influx of poverty
- Lack of affordable housing

Current Practices

City of Renton has taken on a leadership role in developing a forum on community wellness across South King County. The “I” CANN forum will be held this September, with participation from more than 300 stakeholders identified as part of Renton’s outreach. The forum will showcase innovative and technology-driven resources in public health, and serve as a means for communities to share ideas on addressing public health issues.

Barriers to Implementation

Staff are often asked whether it is appropriate for government to engage in public health programs. Staff feel that they can provide options and information to the public, but can’t institute long-term life-saving changes, as these are seen as matters of personal choice and not a role for government influence. Staff believe there is no program or policy model for long-term, sustainable benefits on public health.

Additionally, many of the public health and sustainability resources being developed – such as walkable neighborhoods, Safe Routes to School and others – can be challenging to implement in areas like Renton, where the existing development pattern is medium-density, more car-dependent and suburban, and there are development pressures to continue this pattern.

Identifying Useful Resources

- Resources that reframe public health as a collective responsibility as opposed to traditional frameworks of individual lifestyle choices.
- Similarly, resources that emphasize the benefits of public health that extend to all aspects of a community, not just those with the greatest health disparities.
- Public health policy is lacking a framework for success – are there examples of truly successful programs that can serve as models?
- Resources that would allow Renton and its partners to address public health regionally and work more closely with neighboring jurisdictions for more of an impact.
- Resources that empower lower-income communities and households.

- Resources from areas outside of the Puget Sound region.

SeaTac

Responses were recorded in a conversation held May 21, 2013 at SeaTac City Hall.

Respondents: Kate Kaehny, Senior Planner, and Steve Pilcher, Planning Division Manager

Facilitators: Zachary Howard and Liz Underwood-Bultmann, PSRC

Healthy Planning Issues

- Traffic congestion, especially around the international airport, exacerbates the lack of pleasant places to walk or bicycle
- Low fresh food access due to distribution of supermarkets (Note: SeaTac learned through the CPPW grant evaluation that the city has a relatively high number of ethnic markets in comparison to other cities in the area)
- Economic diversity of SeaTac residents compounds these issues in many neighborhoods

Current Practices

City of SeaTac was able to capitalize on the Community Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant program, which supported their completion of a draft Safe & Complete Streets Plan, city walking map and a number of food access policies that received City Council endorsement in 2012. SeaTac is also receiving CTG funds to strengthen community engagement as part of the Angle Lake Station Area planning process, and to conduct a pedestrian and bicycle connectivity study. City of SeaTac enjoys a strong working relationship with the Highline School District.

Barriers to Implementation

Staff described a divergence of opinion in the community regarding appropriate non-motorized transportation infrastructure improvements needed to promote more active transportation options. Like many suburban cities, a number of residential streets are private roads that do not fully connect between parallel arterials. Some residents are resistant to new sidewalk infrastructure on their property.

Staff also discussed the King County Road Design and Construction Standards, which SeaTac and other smaller cities use to govern road widths and public safety requirements such as sidewalk design standards, and indicated that those standards do not currently reflect best practices in active living street design.

Staff also cited the airport and travel-related services industry as having significant influence on transportation decisions and an inflationary impact on land values. The airport produces a good deal of traffic and greatly affects land use options. It was also noted that SeaTac has multiple physical barriers which impede connectivity including the airport, Angle Lake and Bow Lake, International Boulevard (Pacific Hwy/SR99), SR518, I-5, steep slopes to the east and a typical suburban mega-block built environment throughout most of the city.

Identifying Useful Resources

- Suburban-appropriate resources
- Resources to help inform elected officials and the community
- Local and national examples of best practices
- Resources that help communities plan for long-term changes associated with the introduction of light rail and other transit improvements
- Examples of ordinances or legislation – “the mechanics of planning”
- Demographic data on the city’s changing populations

Seattle – interview not yet conducted

Tukwila

Responses were submitted by e-mail on May 13, 2013 with additional information collected by phone on June 10, 2013

Respondent: Moira Bradshaw, Senior Planner

Facilitator: Zachary Howard, Puget Sound Regional Council

Healthy Planning Issues

One of Tukwila’s chief concerns is the lack of healthy food markets in the city. Additional concerns include the lack of funding for nonmotorized infrastructure, and difficulty designing and implementing context-based nonmotorized infrastructure that provides more than the minimum standard (i.e., wide sidewalks in the urban center, cycle tracks, etc.) to encourage use of active transportation options.

Current Practices

City staff cited several strong working partnerships with community organizations such as the Global to Local Partnership, Tukwila School District and the Community Schools Collaboration. These and other partnerships are supported politically and financially by city government.

Through its Community Development department, the City of Tukwila has been working on “placemaking” as a means to address a number of community-level issues at once as well as neighborhood level nonmotorized transportation improvements. They have also been collaborating on new outreach techniques to non-English speaking members of the community.

The city also runs popular, culturally appropriate exercise programs for women.

Barriers to Implementation

Tukwila is looking for ways to better subsidize operating costs of its recreational programs and provide transportation and childcare subsidies to support low-income residents who wish to participate.

The city is characterized by a number of physical and land use barriers, including freeways, topography and SeaTac International Airport; these may have an impact on certain types of economic development.

Tukwila also lacks public health data that demonstrates linkage between capital facility, municipal service programming and regulatory standards, making it difficult to address public health issues through traditional land use planning services. The Community Development department has a limited influence in economic development, which the respondent believes limits ability to solve some of the food access issues facing the community.

The city has deficiencies in its sidewalk system, including some of its most densely populated neighborhoods located outside the urban center. However, criteria for grant funding often target Tukwila's urban center or the Manufacturing/Industrial Center because these are the locations where significant employment and residential growth are planned (as supported by regional plans).

The City has been working on a multi-modal level-of-service (LOS) in order to incorporate nonmotorized improvements into its concurrency model. However, the HCM methodology used does not yet work for pedestrians, and needs to be modified. Infill development is small scale and does not end up filling in the gaps in the sidewalk system. Additionally, there are many competing priorities for general funds.

The City relies on minimum standards to construct new nonmotorized infrastructure, including the MUTCD, AASHTO, and the WSDOT Manual. Additionally, many innovative designs require an application to the FHWA for an experiment. Areas around schools and other large origins/destinations could benefit from facilities that provide more than the minimum standard to encourage walking and biking. These types of facilities are difficult for the City to implement if they are not in the WSDOT Manual.

Identifying Useful Resources

Tukwila is looking for best practices and innovative ideas to fund nonmotorized infrastructure, including guidance on adopting a multi-modal level of service that takes into account the underlying land use context, and incentives or other encouragement for cities to build more than the minimum standard to support active transportation options. The City is specifically looking for a model multi-modal LOS or recommended methodology for developing one.

Additionally, they are looking for information on market analysis for grocery stores, including resources on convening land-use developers to better understand their decision-making process. The hope is to identify means of encouraging or incentivizing grocery stores to locate within the city and provide better food access to the community. Tukwila is also looking for best practices and innovative ideas for funding recreational programs.

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Certain general themes have emerged from the interviews. Regarding questions about public health issues, planners were less likely to address aspects of health such as childhood obesity

or rates of diabetes, but instead referred to transportation and land use issues, such as traffic congestion, lack of supermarkets or access to nutrition, and medium-density suburban development.

Innovative programs identified by planners included grant-funded initiatives such as those under CPPW and current CTG efforts. Additionally, planning departments pointed to their partnerships with school districts and other organizations as a means to foster innovation around public health policy.

Barriers for communities in implementing additional health policies or programs centered on staff and financial limitations of a small-city planning department. In terms of the political process, a number of planning departments described a debate over the role of government in addressing public health. This was expressed as a lack of prioritization of health policy by elected officials, or community resistance to land use changes and other interventions.

Resources sought by the planning departments included model plan policy language, development regulations and municipal code that have been successful in other communities. Many pointed to a need for strategies that are appropriate for suburban, medium-density communities, and for ideas to leverage funding.

III. Toolkits and Planning Resources

As part of the CTG effort, PSRC conducted a review of resources such as planning toolkits and programmatic case studies that address issues of public health, active transportation, healthy food access and sustainability through planning. These resources were identified through research and web searches for state, local and MPO-produced toolkits for planners and elected officials that address health, equity, and sustainable development.

An annotated bibliography of the resources reviewed for this assessment is below, followed by a summary of themes observed across different resources.

While many comprehensive plans include policies on public health, the varying characteristics of plans across jurisdictions can make them difficult to compare.² For this reason, the review is limited to resources that inform planners and public officials, rather than the plans themselves.

An annotated bibliography of resources reviewed for this assessment follows.

City-level plans and resources

[Healthy Chicago Plan Annual Report 2012](#) – Summarizes city-wide progress on indicators for 12 health priorities, with 193 specific calls for action in terms of policies, programs and educational outreach. This report includes numerous case studies for implementation.

[Racial Equity Strategy Guide](#) (Portland, Ore.) - For city bureaus and institutions, strategies to develop programs, decision-making processes and questions for planners to view projects through equity lenses. Includes case studies.

[Portland Plan, Human Health and Safety](#) - Examines multiple human health and safety issues through an existing conditions report; identifies policy examples from other cities.

[Health Equity in Comprehensive Planning](#) (Portland, Ore.) - Various resources and collaborations regarding comprehensive planning for public health and equity.

[Healthy Planning Toolbox](#) (Philadelphia) – A set of three assessment tools (health indicator assessment, bike environment assessment and walkability assessment) designed to assist planners in identifying opportunities to improve public health.

MPO and other regionally oriented public health planning toolkits

[Metropolitan Area Transportation Planning for Healthy Communities](#) (U.S. Department of Transportation) – A framework for MPOs to integrate health into their transportation planning activities, including federal and state regulations, policies, funding programs and case studies.

² See Ricklin, A., et al. 2012. Healthy Planning: an evaluation of comprehensive and sustainability plans addressing public health. Chicago: American Planning Association.

[Model Comprehensive Plan Language on Complete Streets](#) (ChangeLab Solutions) guides local governments in the incorporation of Complete Street policy language.

[Tri-County \(Colo.\) Health Department Framework for a Healthy Comprehensive Plan](#) - A CPPW project, includes draft policy language to support public health outcomes.

State-level resources

[Healthy Planning Policies: A Compendium of California General Plans](#) (ChangeLab Solutions) – An exhaustive list of policies, categorized as either “traditional” or “innovative,” appearing in jurisdictional general plans throughout the state. Policy topics include land use, transportation, health care and prevention, equity, healthy food access and environment.

[Healthy Communities: Comprehensive Plan Assessment](#) (Del.) - A planning resource for local governments, includes model policy language, case examples and a plan prioritization checklist.

[Sustainable Jersey](#) - A scorecard-based certification program – municipalities earn certification by completing a variety of actions from a “menu” of programs and activities. These cover a wide variety of environmental, social and economic sustainability issues, including support for local food economies, alternative energy ordinances and community planning. The program provides resources, step-by-step tutorials and best practices from jurisdictions which have achieved certification.

[Eat Well, Play More Tennessee](#) - Identifies strategies, collaborative partners, does not provide model policy language or best practices.

Washington State Department of Health Healthy Eating Active Living Program – The state's [Active Community Environment Toolkit](#) provides local planners with the steps needed to create settings where people of all ages and abilities can be physically active on a daily, routine basis. The [Growing Nourishing Food Systems](#) guides local governments in the use of policy strategies to increase healthy eating in their community.

Partners in Action (Wash.) – An ongoing initiative to promote nutrition and active living in Washington State. Includes toolkits for food system improvement and rural obesity prevention. The [food system toolkit](#) highlights the needs of planners by outlining general strategies and giving examples of policy language from jurisdictions throughout the northwest. The [rural obesity prevention toolkit](#) is designed for local coordinators and practitioners, and [highlights case studies](#).

[Example Comprehensive Plan Policies to Support Physically Active Communities](#) (Wash.) – A 2007 document compiling land use, capital facility, parks and recreation and transportation policies from various comprehensive plans.

PSRC planning toolkits

[Active Communities Guidebook](#) – Provides land use and transportation approaches from throughout central Puget Sound to promote physical activity, focusing on bicycle and pedestrian planning.

[Food Policy Blueprints](#) – Recommendations for local governments interested in addressing the local food economy and food access through policy and programs.

[Housing Innovations Program](#) – Planning resources for local governments in the Puget Sound region to promote housing affordability and smart growth.

[Integrating Food Policy in Comprehensive Planning: Strategies and Resources for the City of Seattle](#) – A PSRC report on opportunities for the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan to better address food policy using examples taken from other central Puget Sound jurisdictions.

Federal, national and international guides and toolkits

[Built Environment and Health](#) (Prevention Institute) – A collection of 11 case studies highlighting neighborhood-level land use changes that promote community health.

[Clean Cities Coordinator Toolbox](#) (U.S. Department of energy, Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Program) – A resource for structuring community programs to address energy efficiency and renewable fuels from an economic perspective. Lacks discussion on health impacts and equitable policy outcomes.

[Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices](#) (American Planning Association) – A compendium of best practices, elements of complete streets policies and state and local government planning resources.

[Creating Healthier Suburbs](#) (ChangeLab Solutions) – A guide for public health advocates to influence planning in suburban cities, this brief guide may inspire planners but lacks specific policies or case studies.

[Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit](#) (Rosalyn McKeown) – While it focuses on educational institutions and curricula, this guide offers a variety of resources on coalition building, public participation models, and barriers to implementation.

[Equitable Development Toolkit](#) (PolicyLink) – This online resource features 27 tools to “reverse patterns of segregation and disinvestment, prevent displacement, and promote equitable revitalization.” Topics include affordable housing, economic opportunity, health equity and place, and land use and environment.

[Healthy Cities and the City Planning Process](#) (World Health Organization) – An international guide to city planning and health including case studies of projects in cities around the world.

[Health Equity and Prevention Primer](#) (Prevention Institute) – An online training for healthcare practitioners on policy advocacy, health inequities and cross-organizational engagement.

[Healthy Urban Development Checklist](#) (New South Wales Department of Health, Aus.) – A step-by-step guide to plan development for local governments, focusing on early public participation and feedback. In addition to checklists to help strengthen policies, the guide includes best available science on key aspects of health policy, such as food, housing, open space and physical activity.

Integrating Planning and Public Health (American Planning Association) – A guide to overcoming barriers to the planning approach to public health, highlighting strategic collaboration, design and assessment tools and case studies.

[Livability in Transportation Guidebook](#) (U.S. Department of Transportation) - A collection of case studies and best practices on incorporating livability into transportation planning, programming and project design. The livability principles identified by federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities include increased transportation choices, equitable and affordable housing, enhanced economic competitiveness, support for existing communities, regard for communities and neighborhoods and coordination of policies and leveraged investments.

[Safe Routes to Schools Local Policy Guide](#) (Safe Routes to School Partnership) – Helps local communities and schools create, enact and implement policies to support active communities and encourage physical activity by children.

[Steps to a Walkable Community](#) (America Walks) – A guide for citizens, planners and engineers, featuring step-by-step instructions for advocacy work, as well as tools for policy development and evaluation, design guidelines and best practices. The guide begins with a section on the health, safety and social equity benefits of a walkable environment.

[Sustainability Planning Toolkit](#) (ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability) – A guide to developing sustainability plans for cities and counties, including tools for assessment, goal-setting, implementation and evaluation.

[Talking Trees: An Urban Forestry Toolkit for Local Governments](#) (ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability) – Facts, successful policy language, tools and case studies for city and community governments. Lacks discussion on equity or social justice implications.

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Through a comparison of these resources, PSRC staff made a number of observations:

- Equity is not always a specific goal of public health toolkits or resources. When substantive consideration is given to equity, it is usually in relation to the planning process rather than the policies themselves. There are notable exceptions:
 - o The Portland Plan and accompanying Racial Equity Strategy Guide describe equity as “the means to healthy communities.”
 - o The New South Wales Healthy Urban Development Checklist includes an equity assessment as a “pre-checklist” activity in policy development, indicating equity’s importance in considering policy outcomes.
 - o Healthy Planning Policies by ChangeLab Solutions features policies from various California jurisdictional general plans that address equitable distribution of opportunity and risk, environmental justice and vulnerable populations.
 - o Development and implementation of the Sustainable Jersey program is informed by a Diversity and Equity Task Force to ensure equitable perspectives across communities.
 - o PSRC’s Active Communities Guidebook features examples of policies in place to consider equity, chiefly within partnership building and other stages of the planning process.
 - o PolicyLink’s Equitable Development Toolkit was unique among the reviewed toolkits in explicitly addressing equitable policy, health, and the built environment.
- The focus of toolkits ranges from prescriptive, top-down programs to descriptive compendiums of policies or case studies. Planners interviewed as part of the baseline needs assessment identified the need for resources that could be adapted to their communities’ specific needs.
- There is a lack of toolkits specifically tailored to the needs of suburban or rural communities.
- The link between health policy and the built environment mainly refers to opportunities for active transportation, such as the availability of sidewalks, bike facilities, and walkable transit networks. There is a less explicit connection between public health and land use considerations, such as livable communities and a mix of amenities within walking or biking distance.
- While many toolkits acknowledge a link between health policy and equitable outcomes or sustainable development, there do not appear to be resources that address these three topics holistically.
- The term “living document” (or other language indicating continual updates to resources) appears in many policy toolkits, but it is unclear how frequently the toolkits are updated, or by whom. None of the documents indicated that they have been updated since their initial publication.

IV. Conclusions and Findings

By reviewing grant activity under the CPPW and CTG grant programs, interviewing jurisdictional planners on their needs and priorities, and reviewing existing planning resources, PSRC has begun to explore the issues of health, equity, and sustainable development affecting the grant intervention area and other communities in the central Puget Sound region. PSRC staff have identified three structural aspects around which to design the Toolkit in order to ensure its success and relevance to the intervention area communities.

The Toolkit should be developed as part of an ongoing conversation among planners, community groups, and other agencies who are seeking to improve public health and create equitable policy outcomes.

- The Toolkit project's commitment to equitable health outcomes and sustainable communities is founded on the ability to share resources across jurisdictions. Planners agreed that coalition building will increase their capacity to draft policies appropriate for their community.
- The Toolkit working group is a growing forum for sharing ideas across jurisdictions. The support of the Healthy King County Coalition's Built Environment subgroup has brought a number of strong equity, health, and sustainability advocates to the table. Feedback from the working group will be instrumental in creating a strong Toolkit for a multi-jurisdictional audience.
- Whenever possible, the Toolkit should support collaboration among the many CTG grant recipients within the intervention area. The Toolkit may feature some of the programs implemented under CTG as a resource.
- Furthermore, the Toolkit should highlight model policy language or other resources that encourage collaboration across jurisdictions, with examples of how to build coalitions and share ideas.
- Ultimately, the Toolkit's relevance beyond the life of the CTG program is dependent upon a strong collaborative underpinning that defines its continued ownership and relevance to South King County and other communities. The Maintenance Plan component of the project will help outline long-term strategies to keep the Toolkit up-to-date in years to come.

The Toolkit should provide its audience prescriptive, actionable, outcome-oriented policies while acknowledging the need for capacity building in existing programs.

- Review of CPPW shows successes that rest on an increased capacity to craft policy, implement programs, and strengthen plan outcomes.
- Planners suggested that examples of successful, outcome-oriented policies and programs would be more likely to affect the decision-making process of elected officials.
- Existing resources do not provide the means to adapt successful policies to better address community needs, something that intervention area planners are looking for; the Toolkit needs to allow for differences between communities when providing examples of policy.

More specifically, the Toolkit should prioritize suburban-oriented resources.

- Planners suggested, and the literature review supported, that there is a lack of resources for medium-density suburban environments.
- Addressing traditional suburban land use barriers to health are not sufficiently addressed in existing resources. Intervention area planners also spoke of the need to address community-specific land use issues, such as street connectivity and the effect of major employment centers on land use decision-making.
- Additionally, planners seek resources that speak to framing public health and sustainable outcomes as indicators of community well-being; these types of resources will help planners in the public outreach and planning process, as well as in their work with elected officials.