Healthy Development Checklist
A Practical Tool for Healthy Planning in the Inland Empire Region

Key Themes | Active Transportation, Social Connection & Safety, Environmental Exposures, Food Access & Healthy Food Systems, Health & Human Services, Health & Economic Opportunities, Health & Climate Change

SUMMARY

The **Healthy Development Checklist (HDC)** was developed to provide guidance on how to improve health outcomes through designing a built environment that is conducive to health in the Inland Empire. The Checklist includes a series of questions followed by detailed criteria for 6 topics: Active Design, Connectivity, Public Safety, Environmental Health, Community Cohesion, and Access to Food, Services, and Jobs. The goal of the checklist and criteria is to encourage developers, city officials, and decision makers to use this tool to help guide the development of neighborhoods that promote physical and mental health, encourage community engagement, and improve quality of life for all. The HDC is a healthy design guiding tool for anyone involved in planning, as such, it is not a mandate.

LEAD AGENCY AND PARTNERSHIPS

» Lead: Riverside University Health System | Public Health (RUHS-PH)
» Principal Funder: Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG)
» Ancillary Funder: The California Endowment (TCE)
» Consultant: Raimi + Associates
» Partner: San Bernardino Association of Governments (SBCOG) formerly known as San Bernardino Association of Governments (SANBAG)
» Partner: San Bernardino Department of Public Health (SBDPH)

DRIVERS

The main reasons or drivers for the development of the HDC derive from changes in Riverside County Planning Policies, grant funding opportunities, and support from the Healthy Riverside County Initiative:

RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING POLICIES

First, in 2011, the Riverside County Department of Public Health (re-branded as Riverside University Health System-Public Health or RUHS-PH) achieved two important milestones supporting the integration of health into planning:

» The Board of Supervisors adopted the Healthy Riverside County Resolution; and

» Adopted a General Plan Amendment for the incorporation of a Health Element into the County's General Plan that included language that encouraged a built environment that promotes physical activity, access to healthy food, and reduces driving and air pollution. Additionally, the policy suggested the use of tools that would be effective to evaluate the impacts of development on public health including survey tools such as a Development Application Health Checklist.

» RUHS-PH developed a health checklist for a proposed master plan development to evaluate its public health merits. This work served a template for the initial development of the HDC.

BEYOND GRANT FUNDING

The second driver was the opportunity to apply for grant funding from WRCOG's BEYOND grant. This unique financial assistance mechanism is tied to one of WRCOG's energy efficiency programs known as HERO. Although it is a non-competitive grant opportunity, applicants must demonstrate alignment with components of WRCOG's Economic Development & Sustainability Framework (ED&SF) which includes a "Health Agenda." This section, explicitly expresses the desire and need "to make Western Riverside County known as a healthy place for residents to live, work, and invest in the future." To achieve this vision, communities should focus on four areas:

1. A health system offering the full range of health services that are accessible and affordable to residents.
2. An environment that is safe from health hazards in the air, water, and soil.
3. A "built" environment that fosters health through transportation, land use, housing, parks, and recreation.
4. Opportunities for healthy lifestyles, such as healthy eating, public safety, and active living through changes to the region.

These drivers provided for the opportunity to develop a customized tool: the HDC. To accomplish this, RUHS-PH commissioned a consultant to prepare the HDC. This checklist is intended to be an efficient and effective processing resource for planning stakeholders for addressing health considerations through the development review process, and planners using the HDC should also be able to determine if new proposals comply with criteria for the BEYOND grant or not.

THE HEALTHY RIVERSIDE COUNTY INITIATIVE (HRCI)

Additionally, since 2011, the HRCI has been the guiding light to "promote safe and healthy communities through changes to our physical environment that improve the quality of our environment through safe spaces to live, learn, work, and play." To this end, the Riverside County Health Coalition and the Riverside County Healthy Cities Network have continuously supported collaborative opportunities for the development of programs and tools, like the HDC, that will help meet such a goal.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The HDC was developed by Raimi+Associates staff with guidance from RUHS-PH leadership. The process for developing the final draft included conceptualizing and formulating the content and format from a series of one-on-one interviews with a wide array of planning and public health practitioners operating in the Inland Empire. This group of stakeholders played a pivotal role in shaping the final checklist, including defining language, identifying topic areas, and developing criteria and standards.

They included representatives from the following organizations:

»   American Planning Association, California Chapter, Inland Empire Section – John Hildebrand III
»   California Baptist University – Marshare Penny, PhD
»   ChangeLab Solutions – Eric Calloway
»   City of Coachella – Luis Lopez
»   City of Rancho Cucamonga – John Gillison, JD, MPA
»   City of Jurupa Valley – Councilmember Laura Roughton
»   City of Palm Desert – Lauri Aylaian & Ryan Stendell
»   City of Riverside – Al Zelinka, FAICP, CMSM
»   City of Victorville – Michael Szarzynski
»   Claremont Graduate School – Kimberly Morones, MPA, CHES
»   Coachella Valley Association of Governments – LeGrand Velez
»   Health Assessment and Research for Communities –Jenna LeComte-Hinely, PhD
»   Lewis-San Antonio Healthy Communities Institute-Angelica Baltazar, MSW
»   National Community Renaissance - Alexa Washburn, LEED AP, MPP&A
»   Partners for Better Health – Evette de Luca, MSI
»   Prevention Institute – Rachel Bennett, MPH, MURP
»   Public Health Alliance – Carla Blackmar, MCP
»   San Bernardino County Public Health Department – Corwin Porter, Trudy Raymundo, MPH & Scott Rigsby
»   San Bernardino County Land Use Services – Tom Hudson, AICP, Karen Watkins, MS & Linda Mawby, MUP
»   San Bernardino Council of Governments (Now San Bernardino Transportation Commission) – Josh Lee
»   Riverside County Transportation & Land

Management Agency – Steve Weiss
»   Western Riverside County of Governments – Jennifer Ward & Andrea Howard, MCUCRP

Prior to the HDC publication, presentations and updates on the subject have been provided to planning working groups at WRCOG and SANBAG during 2017.

Now that the HDC has been published, capacity training workshops have taken place during the spring of 2018 in four key localities through Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. These trainings have been done in collaboration with the American Planning Association, California Chapter-Inland Empire Section, WRCOG, SBCOG, and others.

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND/OR CLIMATE IMPACT AREA

Health is a critical part of Western Riverside County's future. Secure jobs, good neighborhoods, a clean environment, and quality housing are important priorities for every city, but their benefits are lost if we are living in poor health. Integrated planning programs– which recognize the linkages between land use, transportation, housing, health, economy, and the environment—hold the potential to not only reduce congestion, improve mobility, and expand the region's infrastructure for all modes of travel, but also to provide housing choices, preserve our natural resources, improve our health, and enhance Western Riverside County's overall quality of life. According to the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, San Bernardino and Riverside County are rated 55 and 56 for Physical Environment as a factor conducive to health. What this means is that air pollution, severe housing problems, and long commutes are linked to the widespread traditional car-centric/single family home development patterns found in the Inland Empire. Active transportation within communities can increase opportunities for physical activity, improve health and mental health, reduce GHG emissions, and promote cleaner air. The HDC is intended to encourage infrastructure and patterns that equally take into consideration all modes of transportation, a proper mix of uses, and closer proximity between trips origins and destinations.

Additional legislation has also been passed, such as AB 1358, the Complete Streets Act, that complements AB 32 and SB 375 by focusing on local planning processes and ensuring the provision of local roadway infrastructure that is designed and operated to accommodate all roadway users, including bicyclists, public transit riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. While compliance with this recent legislation presents near term challenges, extraordinary opportunities exist for long term regional sustainability. Integrated planning programs– which recognize the linkages between land use, transportation, housing, health, economy, and the environment—hold the potential to not only reduce congestion, improve mobility, and expand the region's infrastructure for all modes of travel, but to provide housing choices, preserve our natural resources, improve health, and enhance Western Riverside County's overall quality of life.

More recently, SB1000, the Healthy Communities Act, will require the majority of jurisdictions in Riverside and San Bernardino County to create policies that ultimately improve health outcomes for all communities, but focuses on communities identified as disadvantaged. The HDC serves a tool that is readily available for cities that would want to start developing policies and implementation of healthy communities' strategies to comply with SB1000.

FUNDING SOURCE

As part of the Western Riverside Council of Government's (WRCOG) BEYOND grant in 2016, RUHS-PH found an opportunity to pay for the development of the HDC. As mentioned above, BEYOND is a unique funding mechanism for WRCOG's member jurisdictions tied to its energy efficiency program HERO and WRCOG's Economic Development & Sustainability Framework.

Ancillary funding was provided through the Building Healthy Communities Grant by The California Endowment. See more discussion above under the Drivers section.

RESEARCH AND DATA

The Checklist lays out criteria by topic and is supported by empirical evidence and best practices, including books, reports, and peer-reviewed journal articles. The publications represent diverse urban expertise, including technical knowledge, and where available, direct references to issues of equity.

In developing a Checklist relevant to the Inland Empire, the team conducted background research to identify specific health concerns across the region, including state and county data tools (e.g., CalEnviro Screen, California Health Interview Survey, SHAPE Riverside Community Dashboard, San Bernardino Community Vital Signs); Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIP) for Riverside and San Bernardino Counties; and a survey of existing health-related planning documents (e.g., Health Elements, Healthy City & County Resolutions). By translating evidence-based research and practice, the Checklist aims to inform development decisions that are connected to tangible health and equity outcomes.

The structure of the Checklist allows each project to identify level of compliance for each question, in addition to comparing performance across the following six topic areas:

1. Active Design
2. Connectivity
3. Public Safety
4. Environmental Health
5. Community Cohesion
6. Access to Food, Services, and Jobs

The format is very similar to a California Environmental Quality Act Initial Study checklist that evaluates level of impacts on the environment. The HDC evaluates levels of compliance in the following way:

» "COMPLIES WITH ALL CRITERIA" (if a project meets all criteria)
» "COMPLIES WITH SOME CRITERIA" (if the project meets some, but not all of the bulleted criteria)
» "DOES NOT COMPLY" (if the project does not meet any of the criteria)
» "N/A" (if the criteria do not apply to this project)

The HDC can serve as a guide for the developers to reflect and include public health considerations before submitting a plan to a city or county. Many of the checklists topics are typically reviewed as part of compliance with the General Plan and other ordinances, but not every jurisdiction is the same. The HDC provides for an opportunity to level the playing field for the sake of improving our built environment that is more conducive to improving health.

THE HDC
— IS A —
HEALTHY DESIGN GUIDING TOOL
— FOR ANYONE —
INVOLVED IN PLANNING

CHALLENGES

Throughout the process of preparing the HDC, several challenges were encountered:

»   A lack of healthy communities planning knowledge amongst planning practitioners and elected officials;

»   The difficulty of making a case for the inclusion of health considerations into planning to planners or appointed and elected officials who are used to the current car-centric development paradigm;

»   Identifying who the audience would be --developers, planning professionals, or decision makers;

»   Limited funding for outreaching a larger pool of stakeholders;

»   Concerns from the development sector that the HDC can become of an additional layer of requirements affecting the entitlement process;

»   The diverse suburban/urban/rural landscape in the Inland Empire, but only one checklist was being developed;

»   Developing a concise checklist limited to 30 questions (the list could have been much longer).

Given the challenges that arouse several solutions were created:

»   Collaboration between agencies to maximize and align efforts;

»   A Focus on evidence-based practices and issue-based outcomes to the 6 topics-- Active Design, Connectivity, Public Safety, Environmental Health, Community Cohesion, and Access to Food, Services, and Jobs-- was established;

»   A flexible checklist was created (ex. A Not Applicable category was established for questions that do not pertain, and gave a range of compliance levels that would qualify as complying with each item);

»   Creation of a HDC User Curriculum and a series of training workshops; and

»   Emphasizing that the HDC is tool and not a mandate.

OUTCOMES

The work on the HDC checklist, which is now published, provided for a unique opportunity for RUHS-PH to start collaboration across counties between both public health departments and respective council of governments. As a result of this collaborative process, the HDC was created to promote physical and mental health through the built environment. It is also intended to be used during planning efforts within the entire Inland Empire region as San Bernardino and Riverside counties share similar development patterns. Additionally, although the HDC was not developed to specifically address SB1000, it can be a useful complementary design review resource for jurisdictions across the State. Recently, the American Planning Association-Inland Empire Section, recognized the HDC with the 2018 Best Practices Award. Furthermore, the Riverside and San Bernardino Public Health Departments and two regional planning organizations—WRCOG and the San Bernardino Council of Governments—are leading the charge to encourage their member cities to consider using this tool. The next step for the HDC is to develop the HDC 2.0 version which would take into account different land use contexts and uses (i.e. urban, suburban, rural, conditional use permits, plot plans, etc.).