



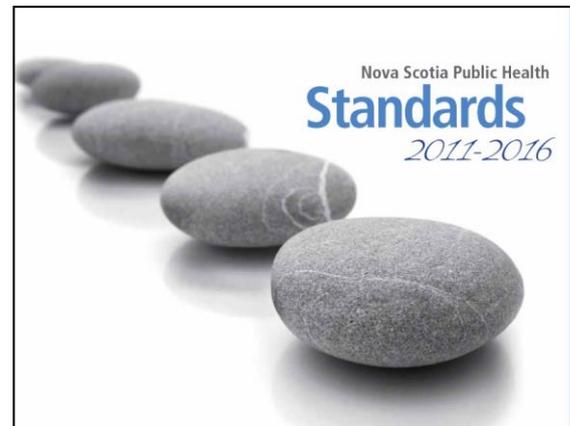
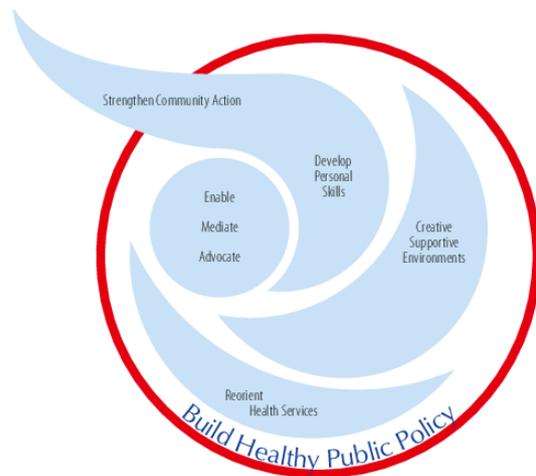
# **Rapid Health Impact Assessment of the Regional Centre Plan**

**Presentation to Community Design Advisory Committee**

**January 26, 2017**

# PUBLIC HEALTH

- Public Health works to **UNDERSTAND** the health of our communities and **ACTS TOGETHER** to improve health
- Our commitment is to improve the conditions within communities that help people reach their maximum potential and lead a flourishing life.



# HEALTHY PLANNING POLICY



Opportunity to create supportive policies at each level of the planning policy hierarchy.

MACRO

MICRO



## HIA PURPOSE

1. To inform decision-makers of the potential for the Centre Plan to create healthy communities and to decrease health disparities, with an emphasis on preventing **chronic disease**, supporting **mental wellness**, and improving **quality of life** for all residents.
2. To provide recommendations about how to increase the health-promoting potential of the new plan and mitigate any unanticipated negative health consequences based on evidence found in relevant literature and expert opinion.

# HIA TEAM



# RAPID HIA METHODOLOGY

**1** SCREENING

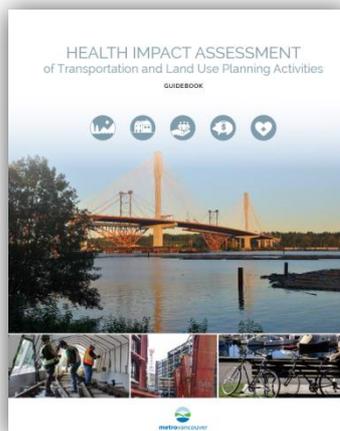
**2** SCOPING

**3** ASSESSMENT

**4** RECOMMENDATIONS

**5** REPORT

**6** MONITOR + EVALUATE



Centre de collaboration nationale  
sur les politiques publiques et la santé  
National Collaborating Centre  
for Healthy Public Policy

# SCOPE



**MOBILITY**



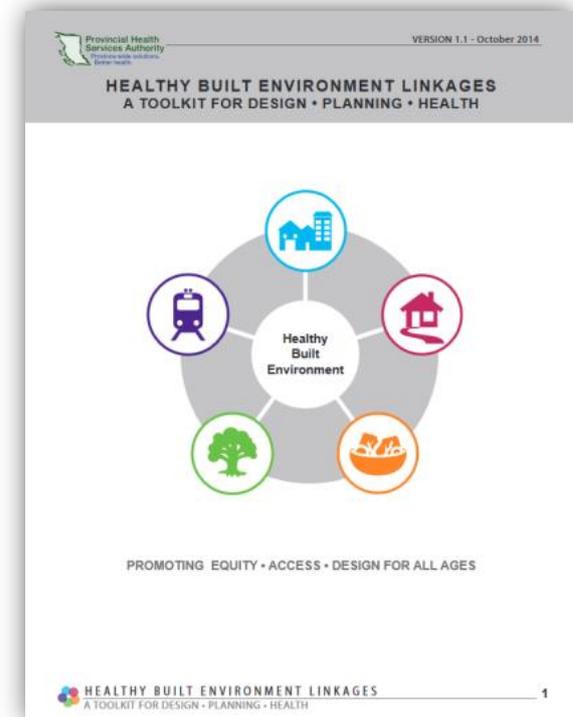
**SUSTAINABILITY**



**HOUSING**



**FOOD SYSTEMS**



## SCOPE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES



- Enable mobility for all ages and abilities
- Make active transportation convenient and safe
- Encourage use of public transit



- Preserve and connect open space and environmentally sensitive areas
- Maximize opportunities to access and engage with the natural environment
- Reduce urban air pollution
- Mitigate urban heat island effects
- Mitigate winter extreme weather-related effects on Halifax microclimate
- Reduce likelihood of flooding and infrastructure damage from extreme weather events, storm surges and sea level rise

## SCOPE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES



- Enhance urban agricultural capacity
- Increase access to healthy foods in all neighbourhoods
- Improve community-scale food infrastructure and services



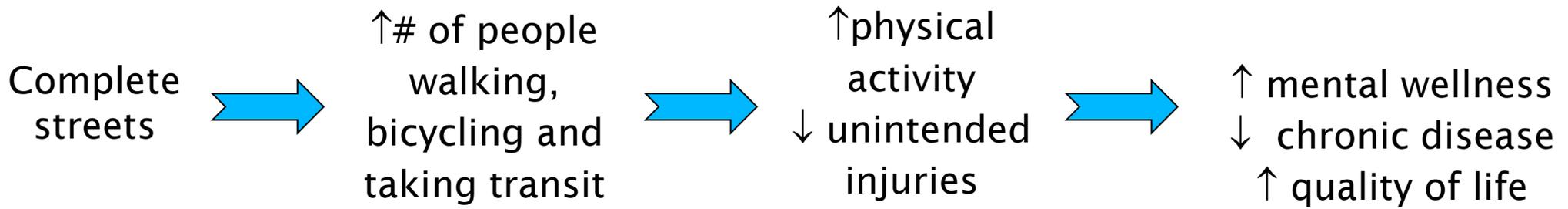
- Increase access to affordable housing through provisions of diverse housing forms and tenure types
- Ensure adequate housing quality for all segments of society
- Prioritize housing for the homeless, elderly, low income groups, and persons with disabilities
- Site and zone housing developments to minimize exposures

## MOBILITY: SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

- Policy statements that support complete communities, compact development, human-scaled urban design better enable active mobility for all ages and abilities.
- Shifting transportation decisions to prioritize pedestrians and complete streets create supportive environments for AT and have the potential to reduce severity of traffic related injuries.
- Policy statements that support access to public transit may impact a number of social determinants of health through increasing access to important destinations – including grocery stores, schools, jobs, family, health centres, etc.



# LOGIC



## MOBILITY: MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

- Lower speed limits on residential streets and streets with significant destinations, such as parks and playgrounds.
- Include an equity analysis in decision-making around infrastructure investments across neighbourhoods.
- Establish street classification system that incorporates both context with function of a street.
  - In addition, a clear vision for each street (beyond current conditions) needs to be determined in order to inform retrofit designs.
- Attention must be paid to how shifting traffic patterns from residential streets toward Corridors may impact health inequities.



## SUSTAINABILITY: SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

- Many policy statements that support the mitigation of urban heat island effect (e.g., green roofs, urban forest canopy, parks and open spaces, etc.)
- Policy statements that create new green spaces, ensure access to existing green spaces and prioritize connection to and between these important natural areas have the potential to greatly impact community health.
- Shifting from vehicular traffic to more sustainable modes of transportation has been seen to have a positive effect on local air quality.
  - In addition, certain type of vegetation has been shown to improve air quality.



## SUSTAINABILITY: MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

- Consider addition of objective to protect urban air quality.
- Consider including an equity analysis as part of the decision making process to determine how policy statement 2.3.1 a might be achieved.
- Mitigate the negative health effects of traffic related air pollution from major highways in close proximity to higher order residential (e.g., Mic Mac Mall, Graham's Grove) through buffers (200-400m), urban design, landscaping and vegetative features.
- The Parks and Open Space chapter might benefit from a similar policy statement as 2.1.1 e) Complete Communities Funding, but specifically tailored to supporting community groups to animate and steward public spaces.

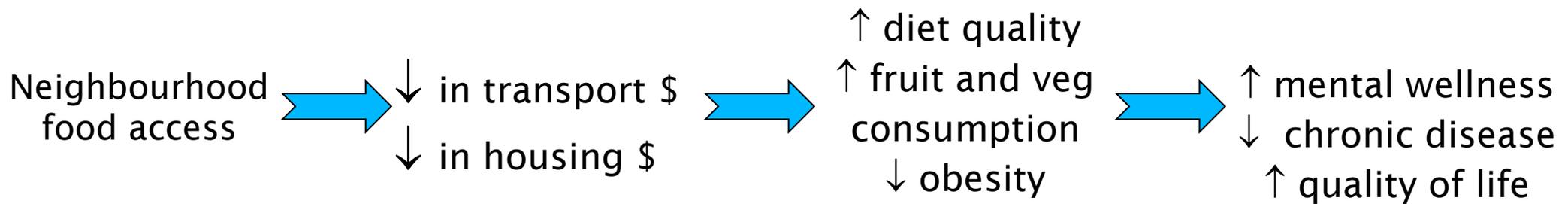


## FOOD SYSTEMS: SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

- Many policy statements that have the potential to increase agricultural capacity within the regional centre.
- Strong relationship between exposure to nature and the reduction of stress, depression, chronic disease, anxiety and can lead to improved concentration and cognitive functioning
- Policies that support reductions in the cost of housing, shelter and transportation can impact one's ability to afford a healthy diet
- Many policies (land use, parks and open space, and sustainability) have the potential to ensure that healthy food is available in all neighbourhoods.



# LOGIC



## FOOD SYSTEMS: MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

- Opportunity to include a statement about food businesses and small-scale healthy food retail.
  - Evidence shows that healthy food retail is associated with increases in diet quality, decreases in obesity and improved food literacy
- Consider including a statement around streamlining the permit and license processes for food-related businesses (and others).
- Consider including a policy that restricts developments that would create food deserts (limited food access) or food swamps (limited healthy food access; high density of fast food).



## HOUSING: SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

- Several policies conducive to increasing access to affordable, suitable housing, enabling people to live comfortably without overcrowding and within an appropriate temperature and humidity range.
  - Adequate housing also positively impacts a range of health conditions including respiratory infections, asthma, lead poisoning, injuries, and mental health
- Increasing the diversity of housing forms and tenures to ensure safe, affordable housing may be especially important for vulnerable populations such as people with low incomes, persons with disabilities and seniors.



## HOUSING: MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

- Include a statement that ensure housing units remain affordable after the repairs or renewals.
  - Evidence shows the implementation of healthy housing renovations decreased adult and child rates of acute hospitalization (Jackson, et al, 2011). Renovations to improve housing quality were noted to cost less than improved clinical outcomes and corresponding health care costs (Fabian, et al, 2014; Takaro, et al, 2011).
- The Plan would benefit from more of an emphasis on providing supports for our most vulnerable populations.
- including all elements of a “complete community” under Family-Oriented Housing (i.e., grocery stores and parks).
- Work with the Province to ensure 100% of units in smoke free multiunit buildings are smoke free.



## CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Rapid HIA provided wonderful opportunity to explore in detail the Centre Plan *and* HIAs at the same time!
- Overall, the Centre Plan contains many positive promising policies that we believe have the potential to contribute to improving population health.
- Many of the policies are aligned with supporting vulnerable populations particularly in relation to housing, transit, and food availability.
- Looking forward to continued discussions and opportunities to work with Municipal staff and committees to create healthy communities in the Halifax region!



THANK YOU!

*Any questions, comments or suggestions, please get in touch!*

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“When the history of public health is seen as a history of how populations experience health and illness, how social, economic, and political systems structure the possibilities for healthy and unhealthy lives, how societies create the preconditions for the production and transmission of disease, and how people, both as individuals and social groups, attempt to promote their own health or avoid illness, we find that public health history is not limited to the study of bureaucratic structures and intuitions but pervades every aspect of social and cultural life”

- Elizabeth Fee (A History of Public Health, 1953)