



Assessment and Planning Tool

Introduction

This assessment and planning tool is for anyone interested in healthy homes and communities. Use it to look at the broad picture of possible actions and see what role you might play. The tool can:

1. Provide a structure for community assessment;
2. Classify and map current and possible future work;
3. Identify overlaps and gaps; and,
4. Help everyone understand their role in effectively and efficiently providing healthy homes and communities.

The tool begins with **definitions**. This provides some common understanding of the characteristics present in both healthy homes and healthy communities.

Next a **framework** identifies seven areas of action, defined as “a field or a space where activity to create healthy homes and communities takes place.” Some are physical places, such as space based communities and residential properties. Others are abstract, such as financing standards and health care reimbursement regulations. These areas of action are intended to be *all inclusive*.

The other axis of the framework lists four broad groupings of activities, also intended to be all inclusive. There are two main categories, physical changes and behavioral changes. These two types of changes are then focused on individual dwellings or families, or on neighborhoods and communities.

Following the framework are some ideas on how to use the framework to assist with activities such as asset identification, gaps analysis, identifying opportunities, and program planning.

This tool highlights the holistic, integrated nature of effectively and efficiently creating healthy homes and communities. The broad, multidimensional nature of the topic encompasses countless possible actions, and addressing all of the options can become overwhelming. The goal of the tool is to provide a structured, accessible pathway to engage in providing healthy homes and communities. This tool is scalable, and can be used for a neighborhood or the entire state. It can be used to address a single aspect of healthy homes and communities, to change policy, or to develop a holistic approach.

A Definition of Healthy Homes and Communities

A healthy home is sited, designed, built, maintained, and renovated in ways that support the health of its residents.”

—Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes—2009

A healthy community provides the economic, social, and physical environment that allows all people the opportunity to achieve and maintain physical health, well-being, and a high quality of life.

A Definition of Healthy Homes and Communities *(continued)*

Healthy Homes and Communities have the following characteristics:

A Healthy Home is:

- Dry
- Clean
- Pest-free
- Contaminant-free
- Well-maintained
- Well-ventilated
- Safe
- Energy-efficient
- Affordable to the occupant

A Healthy Community has:

- Transportation Choices ¹
- Clean Air and Water
- Safety ²
- Social Connectedness ³
- Healthy Housing Choices ⁴
- Opportunity for Physical Activity ⁵
- Healthy Food and Health Services ⁶
- Economic and Educational Opportunity ⁷
- Affordability ⁸

Framework

Area of Action: A field or a space where activity to create healthy homes and communities takes place.

Type of Activity: What can be done to create healthy homes and communities.

Area of Action	Type of Activity			
Problem	Physical Changes		Behavioral Changes	
	Residences	Neighborhoods	Individuals/Families	Communities
Space Based Communities ⁹				
Affinity Based Communities ¹⁰				
Rental Buildings				
Owner Occupied Buildings				
Financing Standards ¹¹				
Policy and Regulation ¹²				
Health Care Provision and Purchasing ¹³				

Using the Framework

Follow these steps for using the tool. Not all of the described steps are needed for all uses of the tool. Depending on whether you are assessing current activity or designing future efforts, or both, you might skip some steps. You may also leap ahead or loop back, depending on what you learn in the process and where that leads you.

1. Identify your objective for using the Assessment and Planning Tool.

Possible objectives include:

- Community assessment and planning
 - Mapping current work
 - Identifying overlaps and gaps
 - Planning future efforts
- Planning to address an identified problem in the community, such as lead poisoning, obesity, safety hazards, and or food deserts.
- Identifying the opportunities your organization has to create healthier homes and communities.

2. Define your goals.

What results are you seeking? How will you recognize success once you have completed your project?
Who or what are you trying to influence?

3. Identify the Areas of Action that your group can address.

Be specific about which communities, what buildings, which standards, what policies or regulations, which providers or purchasers you plan to influence.

4. Identify the activities you are now doing, if any.

What are you doing? Who is affected? What are the results? What is missing?

5. Explore how the activities you have identified interact with the other aspects of healthy homes and communities that are not your key area of focus.

Consider whether there may be partnerships or opportunities for furthering your goals.

6. Identify what areas of action you may be missing, and what activities you need to develop in order to implement effective strategies to meet your goals.

7. Develop a plan of action based on the information you have gathered using the framework.

Bibliography

¹ Transportation choices allow people to choose whether walking, transit, driving alone or carpooling, bicycling, or some other option is the best way to get to a given destination. There is safe space for people of all ages using any transportation option.

² Safety includes low accident and injury rates both inside and outside the home, as well as streets that are safe from crime and violence.

³ Social connectedness reduces emotional and mental health stresses. Connectedness can be built when there are community gathering places like recreation centers, schools, libraries, coffee shops, or front porches—places to spend time and meet other people. Healthy communities are also welcoming to a variety of people.

⁴ Healthy Housing, at a community level, provides a variety of housing choices for people throughout all stages of their life, from young people just starting their adult lives through seniors. It includes homes of different prices, sizes, building types, and both rental and ownership opportunities. Businesses to take care of the households needs, like hardware stores and laundry, are found nearby.

⁵ Opportunity for physical activity includes green space and trails providing access to recreational opportunities. It also provides the chance to choose physical activity in everyday life through walkable, bikeable streets to access close-by destinations like clothing stores, banks, adult and child care, schools, clinics, libraries, and entertainment.

⁶ Healthy foods and health services are options more likely to be chosen when they are readily available in the community and physically accessible to everyone.

⁷ Economic and educational opportunities are abundant when there are good jobs and good schools nearby, transportation options, and housing residents can afford. Financial, business, and community services like banks, post offices, and senior and day care are also important to healthy communities.

⁸ Housing affordability is often defined as costing no more than 30% of a household's income.

⁹ For example, a neighborhood, city, or county.

¹⁰ For example, a religious group, civic group, employees of a company, or other theme or activity people organize around.

¹¹ For example, property standards required to receive grant or loan funding.

¹² For example, building, housing, or zoning codes; priorities for budgeting; or fast-track permitting.

¹³ For example, doctors, insurers, health care networks, employers, or an insured group of people.



The Alliance for Healthy Homes and Communities is a partnership of Sustainable Resources Center, Minnesota Housing Partnership, Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership, and the Minnesota Green Communities initiative of the Family Housing Fund and Greater Minnesota Housing Fund with the goal of creating a statewide alliance to promote healthy homes and communities in Minnesota. The Alliance was formed through a planning grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation. www.alliancehhc.org