

**Active City: Designing for Health**

<b>Date:</b>	May 7, 2014
<b>To:</b>	Board of Health Planning and Growth Management Committee
<b>From:</b>	Medical Officer of Health, Toronto Public Health Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

**SUMMARY**

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The *Active City: Designing for Health* report (attached) focuses on the city's physical built environment to create healthy places that encourage active living for Torontonians. The report outlines design principles to guide changes to neighbourhoods, streets and buildings that allows people of all ages and abilities to incorporate physical activity in to their daily routines.

Toronto Public Health (TPH) collaborated with City Planning (CP) and Transportation Services (TS) in the creation of the *Active City: Designing for Health* report. Financial support for the project was provided by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Healthy Communities Partnership funds.

The report is intended to inform decision makers, planners, architects, builders and others associated with the development community about the importance of the built environment on health.

Future work focuses on building partnerships and increasing awareness of the health benefit of an Active City and how to achieve it. Toronto Public Health along with City Planning and Transportation Services will consider ways to implement the active city principles, including hosting an Active City Forum. The goal of the forum is to encourage, engage and stimulate partnerships across the city and to strengthen city policies with active design in mind.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Medical Officer of Health and the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning recommend that:

1. The Board of Health request the Medical Officer of Health, in collaboration with the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning and the General Manager of Transportation Services, to host an Active City Forum with the intention of increasing collaboration and engagement between multiple sectors and stakeholders on the implementation of the Active City Principles.
2. The Planning and Growth Management Committee receive this report for information.

### Financial Impact

No financial impact from the adoption of this report.

### DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of October 17, 2011, the Board of Health considered the report *Healthy Toronto by Design* and requested the Medical Officer of Health to work with heads of divisions to identify and promote measures to protect and promote population health. (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.HL8.1>).

In April 2012, the Board of Health adopted the *Road to Health: Improving Walking and Cycling in Toronto* (<http://www.toronto.ca/health/hphe/pdf/roadtohealth.pdf>), a report in the "Healthy Toronto by Design" series. This report reviewed the health evidence related to active transportation and the Board of Health requested the Medical Officer of Health and the General Manager of Transportation Services to jointly examine specific approaches to enhance active transportation in the city. (<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.HL13.1>).

### ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Ontario Public Health Standards provide guidelines to health units for the provision of mandatory health programs and services. The guidelines highlight the important role the built environment plays in supporting physical activity to prevent chronic diseases. The guidelines direct Board of Health to work with municipalities to support healthy public policies and the creation or enhancement of supportive environments in recreational settings and the built environment.

In early 2013, (TPH) collaborated with CP and TS in hosting an Active City Forum which included a wide range of city divisions including Economic Development and Culture, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Technical Services and Environment and Energy. The forum highlighted the need for cross divisional and complementary built environment policies at the City of Toronto.

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided Healthy Communities Funds to support the creation of the attached report, *Active City: Designing for Health*. TPH collaborated with City Planning and Transportation Services in the creation of this report and related consultation report.

## COMMENTS

The *Active City: Designing for Health* report focuses on the city's physical built environment to create healthy places that encourage active living for all Torontonians. The report outlines design principles to guide changes to neighbourhoods, streets and buildings that allows people of all ages and abilities to incorporate physical activity in to their daily routines without extra costs for physical exercise.

The city is not developed uniformly due to historical development patterns some areas are more activity friendly than others. This is particularly important in areas like the inner suburbs, where neighbourhood design is less walkable and bikeable. Compact neighbourhoods with a good mix of land use and streets that are designed for all users make it easier for people to maintain health through physical activity.

Studies indicate that socioeconomically disadvantaged residents, who tend to experience higher rates of chronic disease, are further deprived by living in areas with fewer opportunities for physical activity. Changing the built environment to support active living is seen as a great equalizer – providing mobility, transit and walking opportunities regardless of ability or socio-economic status. The Active City Principles envision communities that are inclusive to all. They support Official Plan policies and other city initiatives such as the Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, Tower Renewal, Age-Friendly Cities and Youth Equity Strategy.

The following are the 10 design principles identified in the *Active City: Designing for Health* report.

### **An Active City:**

1. Shapes the built environment to promote opportunities for active living;
2. Has a diverse mix of land uses at the local scale;
3. Has densities that support a good provision of local services, retail, facilities and transit;
4. Uses public transit to extend the range of active modes of transportation;
5. Has safe routes and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists;
6. Has networks which connect neighbourhood, to city-wide and region-wide routes;
7. Has high quality urban and suburban spaces that invite and celebrate active living;
8. Has opportunities for recreational activities and parks that are designed to provide for a range of physical activities;
9. Has buildings and spaces that promote and enable physical activity; and

10. Recognizes that all residents should have opportunities to be active in their daily lives.

These principles can be applied in combination, as many of the design features overlap. Research has shown the most effective approach for influencing physical activity rates is to implement multiple interventions to different aspects and features of the built environment.

### **The Supportive Framework for Creating an Active City**

Toronto's Official Plan supports the Active City principles. It sets out the vision for the city and the goals, objectives and policies to manage and direct changes to the built environment and its effects on the social, economic and natural environment. The Official Plan vision is for an attractive and safe city where people of all ages and abilities can enjoy a good quality of life. It details a city with vibrant neighbourhoods that are part of complete communities; with green spaces of all sizes and public squares that bring people together; and with a wealth of recreational opportunities that promote health and wellness. These are all features of an Active City.

Transportation Services and City Planning are working on the development of Complete Streets Guidelines policy for the City of Toronto that will influence the way streets are designed, delivered and managed. Complete Streets take in to consideration all ages, abilities and modes of travel when being designed or retrofitted. For more information, see the council report on the Complete Streets Guidelines at: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/pw/bgrd/backgroundfile-67628.pdf>.

A number of other policies, plans, guidelines, strategies and standards (Table 1) already exist within the city divisions and support the development of the Active City Principles. Together the Official Plan, Transportation Services' Strategic Agenda and the Active City principles provide a vision of a city that promotes health.

**Table 1: Examples of City Policies that Support an Active City**

Legislative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Official Plan</li> </ul>
Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban Design Streetscape Manual</li> <li>• Vibrant Streets Guidelines</li> <li>• Performance Standards for Mid-Rise Buildings</li> <li>• Tall Building Design Guidelines</li> <li>• Infill Townhouse Design Guidelines</li> <li>• Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines</li> <li>• Design Criteria for 'Greening' Surface Parking Lots</li> <li>• Guidelines for the Design and Management of Bicycle Parking Facilities</li> <li>• Draft Urban Design Guidelines for Site with Drive-through Facilities</li> <li>• Shade Guidelines</li> </ul>
Plans/Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking Strategy</li> <li>• Traffic Calming Policy</li> <li>• Toronto Bike Plan</li> <li>• Bikeway Trails Implementation Plan</li> <li>• Parks Plan (2013-2017)</li> <li>• Recreation Service Plan (2013-2017)</li> <li>• Sustaining and Expanding the Urban Forest: Toronto's Strategic Forest Management Plan</li> <li>• Diabetes Strategy</li> <li>• Youth Equity Strategy</li> <li>• Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy</li> <li>• Seniors Strategy</li> </ul>
Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development Infrastructure Policy and Standards</li> <li>• Construction Standards for Road Works</li> <li>• Toronto Green Standard</li> <li>• Standards for Traffic Control Devices</li> </ul>

## **Building Partnerships is the Key to Creating an Active City**

The *Active City: Designing for Health* report is intended to inform decision makers, planners, architects, builders and others associated with the development community about the importance of the built environment on health. It is hoped the report will build support for implementation of the active design principles.

Achieving an Active City needs the involvement of municipal and provincial governments as well as investors, developers, employers, community organizations and residents. The municipality and province have responsibility in the policies they develop and the funding models they offer. Investors, developers and architects have the opportunity to design and develop with the Active City in mind. Employers can influence through the design spaces by making stairs a more prominent and inviting to use. Community organizations and residents can work together to provide support for changes proposed in their neighbourhoods and take advantage of the active city elements.

Toronto Public Health along with City Planning and Transportation Services will be hosting an interdivisional workshop to strategize on ways to implement the active city principles. Toronto Public Health plans to develop a knowledge exchange framework, to disseminate and share this information to relevant partners and stakeholders, such as planners, developers, community building agencies, building owners, architects and Business Improvement Areas. One method will be by a holding an Active City Forum, supported through the provincial Healthy Communities Fund, to encourage, engage and stimulate partnerships across the city with active design in mind.

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## **SIGNATURES**

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Medical Officer of Health

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

Active City: Designing for Health, Toronto Public Health, 2014