

Healthy Toronto by Design

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Foreword

Healthy cities are cities that are prosperous, liveable and sustainable. They are cities with high quality culture, education, food, housing, health care, public transit, recreation, and built and natural environments.

Healthy cities don't just happen. They result from creative vision, strategic decision-making and thoughtful implementation that respects the health needs and challenges of all residents. They happen by design – through intentional and thoughtful investment and provision of infrastructure, programs and services with health in mind.

This is no small task in a city as large and diverse as Toronto. It is even more difficult in the shadow of global economic stress. But it is a task that leading cities around the world are undertaking through investments in public programs and services that keep pace with current needs as well as anticipate future needs and population growth; through holistic approaches that recognize the interconnectedness and co-dependency of the private and public sectors; and by fostering equity and social inclusion of all people.

The Healthy City concept, which originated in Toronto more than 20 years ago, has been tremendously influential in steering cities worldwide along a path of social, economic and environmental vitality. The Healthy City approach challenges local governments to be aware of health issues embedded in all policies, programs and services. While local public health units provide leadership in promoting health in the city, all parts of municipal government, business and the community play a vital role in enabling and supporting positive health outcomes for everyone. This report is about rediscovering the Healthy City and its relevance to Toronto today.

Dr. David McKeown
Medical Officer of Health
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Executive Summary

Cities are important centres for innovation and economic growth. About 80 percent of the population of Canada now lives in urban areas. The Toronto region generates almost 20 percent of Canada's and 45 percent of Ontario's gross domestic product. The region is also home to 40 percent of the nation's business headquarters. Cities that are great places to live, learn, work and play in are also healthy cities.

Many socio-economic and environmental factors affect health. These include: air and water quality, culture, education, employment, housing, income, and social supports. These factors are also important for creating vibrant and thriving cities that attract business and foster economic development.

Many of the investments in public health in cities in the past focussed on communicable diseases. These diseases have become much less important as housing conditions improved and safe water and sanitation infrastructure helped combat water-borne diseases. Universal immunization programs have also greatly reduced diseases that used to be very common. While continued vigilance is needed to control communicable diseases, the 21st century challenges to health include many chronic conditions, such as heart and lung diseases, cancer, and diabetes. The way cities are built and how well they perform on economic and social factors are critical in providing an environment where people can stay healthy and lead productive lives.

Healthy and prosperous cities do not arise on their own; they are the result of purposeful and thoughtful decisions and actions by a large number of actors. They are created by design.

Given the number of factors that influence health, it is only possible to achieve optimal health when all sectors of government and society are involved. Local governments have a central role in fostering an economic viable and healthy city. They adopt policies and provide programs and services that support quality natural and built environments, efficient transportation infrastructure, affordable housing, adequate income and employment, access to education, food security and health services.

There are three main ways in which local governments influence the future health and prosperity of a city: visioning and strategic policy, urban and social planning, and program delivery. In addition, monitoring, evaluation and assessment of programs and services can help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a city's operations.

Governments help people sustain a good quality of life through program and service delivery and education, as well as through their role as regulators, facilitators, and partners. Effective local interventions recognize and respond to the diverse needs of the population, with specific attention to the most vulnerable.

Good health is a key ingredient of a vibrant and liveable city that meets the social and economic priorities of the community. Since the conditions where we live, learn, work, and play influence well being, it is important to consider how policies and programmes could impact health when making decisions. The Healthy City approach challenges local governments to be aware of health issues embedded in all of their policies, programs and services. It encourages collaboration among various city departments and the public to develop and implement holistic responses to the challenges a city faces.

This report outlines the major impacts of cities and their design on health and highlights the role local governments have in creating healthy, liveable and prosperous cities.

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Introduction

Canada is mostly urban, with about 80 percent of Canadians living in cities and this proportion is expected to rise. Cities and the regions around them are the centres of the global economy. As the largest city in Canada, and the fifth most populous in North America, Toronto is a driver of the Canadian economy. The Toronto region generates almost 20 percent of Canada's and 45 percent of Ontario's gross domestic product.¹ Toronto's future economic success in the competitive global economy may likely depend on how well the city attracts and retains talented and skilled professionals, newcomers and migrant workers as well as businesses.²

With their concentration of population, cultural diversity, social and physical infrastructure, economic activity, and institutions, cities are places of opportunity and prosperity. Cities offer unique opportunities for residents to benefit from education, health and social services and to optimize their health and quality of life. Yet at the same time as offering unique opportunities, cities also have features that are a challenge for keeping a good quality of life. Sprawling development, increasing concentration of poverty in certain neighbourhoods, and the growing income gap between the rich and the poor create social, health and environmental challenges that are common to many cities. Air, water, noise pollution, crowding or poor housing conditions, urban sprawl and congestion, and effects of climate change can also contribute to poor health.

Cities present both opportunities and challenges for health and prosperity

These challenges are not experienced equally across the population. For example, people who are unemployed or underemployed have lower income and lower levels of education tend to have poorer health and well-being. Vulnerable groups such as low-income individuals and families, recent immigrants and racialized communities, children and seniors are more likely to experience the adverse effects from exposure to many environmental factors.

Since conditions where we live, learn, work, and play influence well-being, cities and their government have an important role in protecting and promoting health. The report is divided into three sections: the first outlines the features of a great city, one that attracts people to live in it. The second discusses the ways in which cities impact on health and provides examples demonstrating how cities have addressed some of the determinants of health. The last section identifies opportunities and strategies that municipal governments can use to foster a prosperous, liveable and healthy city.

Qualities of Great Cities

Factors that make a city healthy also make a city liveable for residents and good for business³ – cities where people like to live are cities that provide businesses with more customers and potential employees. Several organizations rank cities with respect to their quality of life or environment for business. While the results of each of these are different because of the difference in the methods used, they include common factors that are considered important when assessing a great city (see box below).

First there is employment. Most people depend on employment to earn an income. Cities that have high employment are considered more desirable places to live.⁴ Also important is the quality of those jobs – cities with a higher proportion of people in high quality jobs are more likely to be ranked high because people have more disposable income which has a ripple effect on the economy and contribute to higher employment in the area.

Education is another important factor. Cities with good schools and universities are more desirable as places to work and to do business. Parents want the best education for their children. The presence of universities and colleges means that there is a pool of highly educated workers in the community, which attracts business who benefit from a more productive workforce.⁵

Cities with affordable housing are considered better places to live because people can find a residence of good quality and still have sufficient resources to cover food, education, recreation and other needs.⁶ Mixed-use neighbourhoods also contribute to the quality of life – housing that is close to schools and commercial areas with retail and other services makes life more convenient and reduces travel distances.⁷

A good transportation system makes it easier for people and goods to get to their destination in less time. This means that people can spend less time commuting to work or travelling to other places in the city.⁸ It also means that goods can be transported more efficiently, which lowers the cost of doing business. Given the size and density of cities, public transit

What Makes a Great City?

- Access to health care
- Affordable housing
- Clean environment
- Employment opportunities
- Food security
- Good governance
- Good transportation system
- Quality education
- Recreational opportunities
- Safety
- Sanitation
- Social inclusion
- Vibrant culture

is a core component of an urban transportation system. More and more, infrastructure for non-motorized transport and walking is considered a feature of a good place to live. Transportation infrastructure that meets the needs of people with lower mobility (such as children, seniors and people with disabilities) makes a community more accessible to all.⁹

People value a quality environment. Homes on streets with trees or near parks have a higher market value than comparable homes in other areas of a community. Clean air, green space and natural areas are features that people want in their community. Urban green spaces have a number of environmental benefits such as protecting biological diversity, regulation of urban climate, pollution control, and nature conservation.¹⁰ At the same time, they offer space for social interaction, recreation, and play.

The availability of recreation facilities – trails, sports fields, playgrounds, gyms, rinks, swimming pools – makes a community more attractive. A great city includes special places to visit, public spaces and buildings, special events and cultural facilities such as libraries, cinemas, theatres, museums, and art galleries enrich the day-to-day life of people.¹¹

People want to feel safe where they live.¹³ A safe city with a low crime rate and good pedestrian and road safety is more liveable. Access to health care and the availability of clean drinking water, good sewage treatment and waste management systems are additional features that are important for a city to have.

Good governance is transparent, accountable, effective, efficient, and follows the rule of law.¹⁴ This contributes to a good business climate. It is also participatory and inclusive, engaging the public in the decision-making process to build consensus and foster equity. This results in all residents having a stake in the community and the future of the city.

Like governance, social inclusion is made up of many different aspects. In a city that is inclusive everybody feels they belong. It provides for a strong sense of pride in the city and helps people feel engaged with the community around them. It also means that a city makes the best use of the available human capital. Inclusion is fostered when there is less disparity in income, less discrimination and more participation in society.¹⁵

Toronto's Rankings

There are many different quality-of-living surveys. Toronto often ranks among the best cities.¹⁶ However, maintaining these top rankings requires the City to continually invest in remaining an attractive place to live and do business in. The Toronto Board of Trade Scorecard on Prosperity compares 25 global cities.¹⁷ In 2011, Toronto ranked 8th, down from 4th in 2010 and 2009.^{18,19}

Toronto ranked high on various economic indicators such as level of professional employment, overall tax burden and the number of

"the state of our cities determines Canada's social and economic health."¹²

- Charles Coffey, former
Executive Vice-President RBC
Financial Group

residential permits issued, which is a sign of confidence in the economy. On indicators of labour attractiveness, which relate to quality of life, Toronto ranked high for its large proportion of immigrants, good teacher-student ratio in schools, population with higher education, and a relatively low crime rate. Toronto rated reasonably well for housing affordability because of the high cost of living in other major cities in the world. However, it was the second least affordable Canadian city with Vancouver being the least affordable.

These findings point to areas of strength that Toronto needs to maintain in the future. Toronto did poorly on other indicators. On the economic side, the Board of Trade continues to express concern about productivity and innovation. As well, the Toronto region ranked at the bottom with the longest commute times of the 25 cities assessed, which reduced its overall labour attractiveness. The Scorecard also notes that Toronto's Gini coefficient (a measure of equality) is the lowest among Canadian metropolitan areas.

Cities and Health

The recognition of the impacts of cities on health has a long history. Modern-day public health has been traced back to Edwin Chadwick, secretary to the Health in Towns Commission established by the British government in 1843.²⁰ Since healthy workers were needed, the Commission looked at how to improve the health of the working poor who had flocked to rapidly industrializing cities. This led to the establishment of public health measures such as health regulations, housing standards, safe drinking water supplies and creation of sewer systems. These interventions had a dramatic effect on public health in Britain in a very short time.

In 1909 Canada established the Commission on Conservation.²¹ Its Public Health Committee identified good town planning as integral to the preservation of the environment and people's health. Thomas Adams, advisor to the Committee from 1914-1919 was instrumental in the development of town planning legislation across the country.

Toronto was one of the first cities in the world to begin chlorination of drinking water in 1910, which by 1915 was followed with chlorination of sewage and water filtration.²² In July 1915, Maclean's magazine declared Toronto the healthiest of large cities in the world.²³ This high level of public health was achieved due to the leadership of Dr. Charles Hastings, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, the political commitment of city council, and support of the community. Under the tenure of Dr. Hastings, the work of the public health department addressed health in the workplace, social welfare, housing, school health, community health education, diet and nutrition, child rearing, and care for the sick.²⁴ These public health interventions and those that followed, such as universal immunization and food safety programs, have greatly reduced the burden of illness from communicable diseases and helped make Toronto the city it is today.

Good city building
helped reduce
communicable diseases

In the past several decades, the risks to health have been changing. Chronic diseases are now the leading cause of death and disability in Canada. These diseases include respiratory ailments, coronary heart disease; non-insulin dependent diabetes (Type II), overweight and obesity, high blood pressure and stroke, osteoporosis, cancers, stress and depression. There is substantial evidence that these diseases as well as their risks are not distributed evenly across the population. In the 2008 report *The Unequal City*, Toronto Public Health demonstrated that areas of Toronto that have a greater proportion of people living with low income experience more risk factors for illness (for example, physical inactivity, overweight/obesity, smoking), higher rates of disease and death at an earlier age compared with higher income areas.²⁵

It is well-recognized that the conditions in which people live, work, learn and play shape health and that inequity in these conditions are largely responsible for producing health inequities.²⁶ Urban health inequities are not just harmful to those who are most vulnerable^{27,28} – there are also substantial social and economic costs associated with them.²⁹ This means that the way cities are built and how well they perform on these factors are critical not only for the health of residents but also for the social and economic well-being of cities.³⁰ The sections that follow highlight features of the physical and social environment of cities and their relationship to health.

Natural Environment

Factors in the natural environment such as air and water quality, sanitation, waste and green space are important contributors to health.

Healthy cities have good air,
soil and water quality

The importance of water and sanitation for good health has been known for many years. Contaminated drinking water, improper wastewater treatment and poor sanitation can cause illness through water-borne and microbial diseases such as cholera and typhoid.^{31,32} These diseases can spread particularly quickly in crowded populations. Events such as Walkerton, Ontario in 2000 are a reminder the importance of effective water treatment to protect health.³³

The management of solid waste and wastewater is important for protecting the health of cities.³⁴ Homes and businesses produce hazardous waste that can present a risk to people and the ecosystem if improperly stored or handled. Waste, such as used oil, batteries, fuel, pesticides and cleaning products can be explosive, corrosive, flammable and/or poisonous. Discarded electronics and fluorescent lights can contain heavy metals, and syringes and needles can transmit disease and present a physical hazard. Health risks can arise from direct exposure through accidents or handling by residents and waste management staff, or through the release of these substances to air and water during storage, transport or leakage at waste facilities.³⁵

Transportation, burning of fossil fuels for heating and pollution coming from elsewhere contribute to the mix of air pollutants in the city. The adverse health impacts of air pollutants commonly found in cities are well known. In 2008 the Canadian Medical Association estimated that 21,000 Canadians die from the effects of air pollution each year – mostly in Ontario and Quebec – and predicted that premature deaths associated with chronic exposure to air pollution could to rise 83 percent between 2008 and 2031.³⁶

Parks, gardens and other public green spaces play an important role in the health of our city and our residents. These areas provide opportunities for exercise, physical activity and relaxation. There is evidence that contact with nature is associated with health benefits such as lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, enhanced survival after a heart attack, more rapid recovery from surgery, fewer minor medical complaints and

lower self-reported stress. In children with attention disorders and in teens with behavioural disorders, contact with nature has resulted in significant improvement.³⁷ Living near green space has also been found to benefit mental health.^{38,39}

Parks also build healthy communities by contributing to stable neighbourhoods and strengthening community development. Research shows that residents of neighbourhoods with greenery in common spaces enjoy stronger social ties.⁴⁰ Increasingly, parks are also being used for community gardens which provide residents with healthy, affordable food and opportunities for physical activity and socialization. As an ecosystem, green space – particularly trees, but also grass, perennials, shrubs and other vegetation – also provide benefits to health by improving air and water quality and mitigating the health impacts of

Green spaces have health, social, ecological and economic benefits to cities

Creating Healthy Environments

Tackling Climate Change

- Vancouver's [Green Capital Plan](#) and Toronto's [Clean Air, Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Action Plan](#) are examples of municipal strategies that outline local investments to address climate change and stimulate sustainable business and community transformations.

Programs to Increase Urban Forests

- The [Urban Forest Management Strategy](#) of Regina, Saskatchewan, aims to maintain Regina's urban forest through policies and regulations such as plant diversity goals, procedures for plantings and removals on public and private property, tree donation programs and heritage tree designation.
- [Town of Oakville Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan](#) sets out a 20-year (2008-2026) plan to protect and enhance its forest canopy on public and private land. The plan is informed by an extensive audit of tree populations, the health benefits of the urban forest and factors influencing forest health. The plan includes recommendations to recognize trees as "green infrastructure" in the town's Official Plan, set targets for forest expansion, and strengthen bylaws to protect trees.

The Health and Ecological Benefits of Trees

- Toronto has about 10.2 million trees – 60% (6.1 million) grow on private property while 35% are in parks/natural areas and 6% are "street trees" on roadways. The report [Every Tree Counts A Portrait of Toronto's Urban Forest](#) estimates that Toronto's urban forest provides at least \$60 million in ecological services each year:
 - removing 1,430 metric tonnes of air pollution
 - storing 1.1 million metric tonnes of carbon (the equivalent of annual carbon emissions from 733,000 automobiles)
 - sequestering 46,700 metric tonnes of carbon
 - intercepting 1,430 tonnes of air pollutants
 - reducing the energy used by 41,200 MWH reducing storm water runoff in the Don River watershed by an average of 23.8%.

climate change. Heat contributes to an average of 120 premature deaths per year in Toronto and the likelihood of mortality increases on each day of a heat episode.⁴¹ As Toronto experiences hotter days and longer heat episodes, the impact of heat on health is expected to increase. Certain populations, such as the frail, elderly and isolated, are more vulnerable to heat than others.

Built Environment

The way we plan, design
and build our cities
influences our health

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are among the many institutions that have recognized that the way we plan, design and build our communities can influence our health.^{42,43} There is a connection between the built environment and factors influencing our health such as physical activity, injuries, nutrition, air pollution, water quality, risk of traffic collision, and community social networks.⁴⁴

Many of the health effects of the built environment are related to the heavy reliance on automobiles as a result of sprawling development.⁴⁵ Dispersed, low-density, single-use (that is, separation of residential, commercial, and employment areas) land uses mean that people have to travel further, often requiring the use of automobiles to get to work and school, to shop, and to access services and recreational opportunities.

Areas that are more dense,
walkable, connected, and
close to a mix of services
can encourage physical
activity

Land use and urban design characteristics can influence physical activity by encouraging or discouraging walking, biking, playing in parks, driving cars or taking public transit. Physical inactivity and obesity are a significant health and economic burden. The direct and indirect costs in Canada were estimated to be \$5.3 for physical inactivity and \$4.3 billion for obesity.⁴⁶ Individuals who live in more walkable areas, with greater land-use mix, residential density, and street connectivity, are more likely to be physically active^{47,48} and less likely to be obese or overweight.⁴⁹ These types of neighbourhoods are also associated with higher levels of social and community engagement (that is, social capital), which is associated with more positive health outcomes.⁵⁰

Building Walkable Cities

The [Toronto Pedestrian Charter](#) is an initiative of the [Toronto Pedestrian Committee](#). The Charter reflects the principle that a city's walkability is one of the most important measures of the quality of its public realm, and of its health and vitality. This is the first pedestrian charter in North America, and the first approved by a municipality anywhere. The Charter was intended to serve as a reminder to City and community decision-makers that walking should be valued as the most sustainable of all forms of travel, and that it has enormous social, environmental and economic benefits for the city. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities named Toronto's [Walking Strategy](#), adopted in 2009, as the best transportation plan in Canada.

Transportation

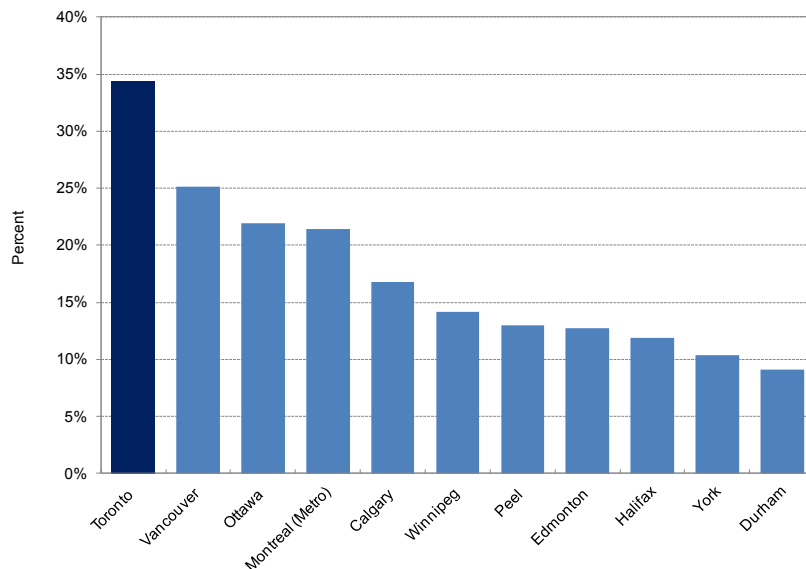
The transportation system impacts health through effects on physical activity, injuries, air pollution, noise, access to services, and social cohesion. Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of active transportation for health including reduction of injury and fatality.

Studies have found that individuals who cycle or walk to work are fitter and less overweight or obese,^{51,52} experience significant improvements in cardiovascular indicators of fitness⁵³ and have reduced cardiovascular risk than those who use motorized modes of transportation.⁵⁴ Better access to public transit has been found to be associated with an increased likelihood of physical activity. For example, Canadians living in areas where more people use bicycles or take public transit to work were less likely to report being overweight or obese than those living in neighbourhoods where fewer people use active modes of transportation.⁵⁵

While pedestrians and cyclists face higher risks of fatality or injury per distance travelled than people who travel by car, bus, or rail, these negative impacts decline significantly in countries with better walking and cycling infrastructure.⁵⁶ Injury and fatality rates also decrease when the proportion of people who walk or cycle increases.⁵⁷

Making cities great places to walk and cycle can improve health

Figure 1: Proportion of Commuters using Public Transit, 2006



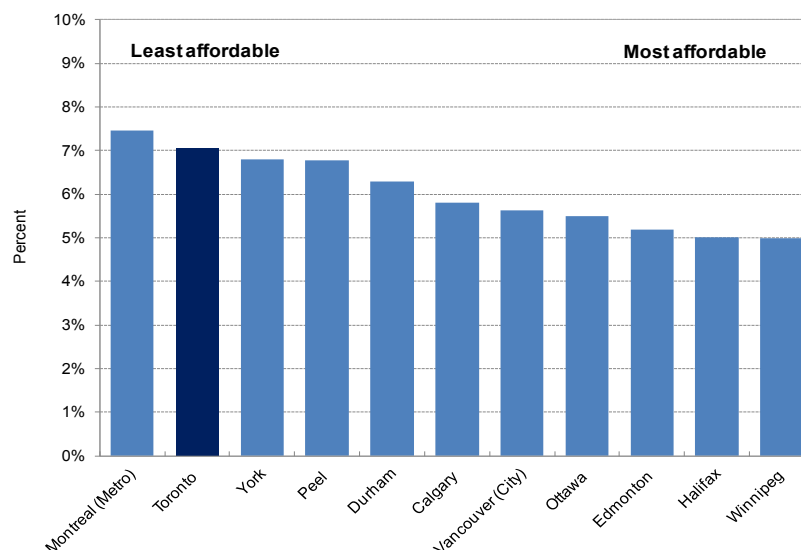
Source: Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life Reporting System. Ottawa, Ontario.
Prepared by: Toronto Public Health

Figure 1
Of cities in Canada, Toronto has the largest proportion of commuters who use transit to get to and from work

Accessible and affordable public transit connects people to jobs, education, services, recreation and community, which is important for health

Accessible and affordable public transit enables access to factors which are important for health, such as employment and educational opportunities, health and social programs and services, cultural and recreational opportunities, and healthy food. Transit can also encourage greater social interaction and social inclusion,⁵⁸ particularly for vulnerable groups such as low income individuals, the elderly, and people with disabilities who may have limited financial resources and/or depend heavily on public transport.⁵⁹ In Toronto, the lowest income neighbourhoods are concentrated in the inner suburbs.⁶⁰ These areas have the poorest access to transit, putting people on low-income living there at greater disadvantage.

Figure 2: Transit Affordability (Cost of a Monthly Transit Pass as a Proportion of Monthly Minimum Wage Income), 2009



Source: Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life Reporting System. Ottawa, Ontario.
Prepared by: Toronto Public Health

Figure 2
Transit is more affordable for low-income earners in most other cities in Canada

Planning and Designing for All Modes of Transport

The City of Waterloo's [Transportation Master Plan](#) supports a healthy and sustainable city that includes a more balanced transportation network for walking, cycling, public transit, goods movement and auto travel. It accomplishes this with an overarching complete streets policy where all streets in the City are to be planned, designed, operated and maintained to enable safe access for all users.

The City of Seattle is working to increase the safety and accessibility of its streets for everyone. Aspects of their transportation planning include:

- a [Complete Streets policy](#) which requires design of streets to consider all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, vehicles, freight, and
- a [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) to increase walkability by achieving safety, equity, vibrancy and health; a [Transit Master Plan](#) and a [Bicycle Master Plan](#).

Many cities have introduced a **bicycle sharing** scheme. A [study](#) that examined air quality, physical activity and road accidents of the "[Bicing](#)" program launched by the City Council of Barcelona (Spain) concluded that:

- bicycle sharing initiatives have greater benefits than risks to health and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.
- Barcelona's scheme reduced emissions of carbon dioxide by an estimated 9,000 tonnes and prevented about 12 deaths a year mostly associated with greater physical activity.

Making Transit Affordable for Low Income Individuals

In the Waterloo region, individuals with income that falls below Statistic Canada's low income cut-off (LICO) are eligible for discounts on an adult monthly bus pass. Under the [Transit for Reduced Income Program \(T.R.I.P.\)](#) an adult monthly bus pass costs \$35 instead of \$63 for unlimited bus rides for the month.

Since 2009, the [City of Kingston's Municipal Fee Assistance](#) program helps make Kingston Transit more affordable for low-income households. Adults, youth, and seniors with an income below the LICO are eligible for the **Affordable Transit Pass**, a renewable reduced-cost monthly transit pass at a 32% discount that is good for a full year after approval. Reduced-cost access to municipal and community sports, wellness, cultural, and other recreation and leisure opportunities is also available through the same program.

In both cities, children under 5 years old ride for free.

Housing

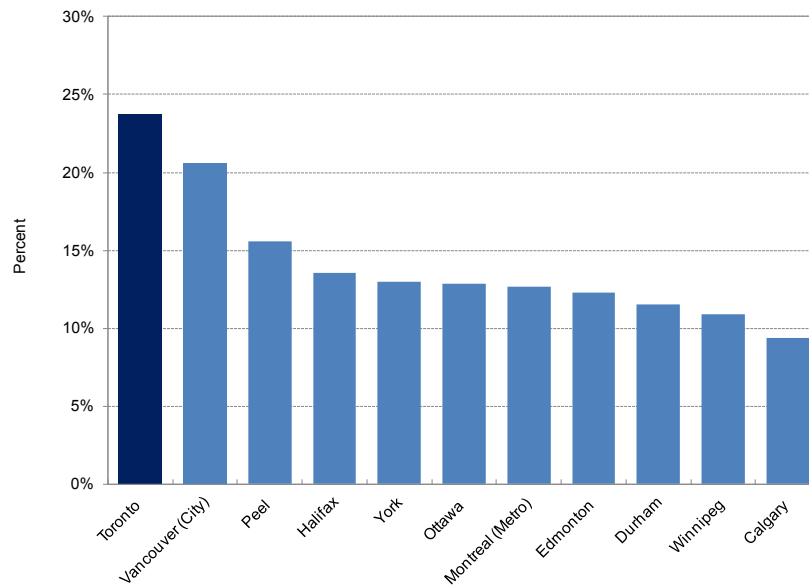
Housing and homelessness are important determinants of health. Housing is more than just shelter. It is multi-dimensional as it includes: the physical structure, its design and characteristics; the social and psychological aspects of the home; the immediate physical area around the building; and the social characteristics and range of services in a neighbourhood.⁶¹

Stable, quality, and affordable housing is important for health

Poor housing conditions are associated with a wide range of health conditions, including respiratory infections, asthma, lead poisoning, injuries, and mental health.⁶² Children are particularly vulnerable to hazardous physical conditions such as lead, mould, damp and cold conditions, vermin, cockroach allergen, and overcrowding.⁶³ A report from the Canadian Council on Social Development found that low-income children in Canada are more than twice as likely to live in substandard housing as children in high-income families. Stable, safe and secure housing is associated with positive child outcomes in areas of health, development and well-being.⁶⁴

Housing affordability is closely linked to poverty and income insecurity. Spending a large or disproportionate amount of income on housing reduces the money available for food, child care, educational opportunities, and health promoting opportunities. Inadequate income also limits the housing and neighbourhood choices available to individuals, often forcing lower income families to live in socially and economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Figure 3: Proportion of Households in Core Housing Need, 2006



Source: Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life Reporting System. Ottawa, Ontario.
Prepared by: Toronto Public Health

Figure 3
Nearly 25 percent of households do not have adequate housing, the highest rate in Canada

Homelessness is also a health issue. The association between homelessness and poor health has been documented in numerous studies.⁶⁵ Homeless people are at increased risk of death and suffer from a wide range of health problems, including seizures, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, musculoskeletal disorders. They are also at an increased risk of tuberculosis, poor nutritional status, and AIDS.⁶⁶ The prevalence of mental illness and substance abuse is also higher among the homeless.⁶⁷ The relationship between homelessness and health is complex. Homelessness can directly impact health. For example, crowded shelter conditions can result in exposure to tuberculosis or infestations with scabies and lice. Long periods of walking and standing may result in prolonged exposure of the feet to moisture and cold which can lead to cellulitis, venous stasis and fungal infections.⁶⁸ Many of the risk factors for homelessness, such as poverty and substance use, are also risk factors for ill health. Health conditions, particularly mental illness, may contribute to and be exacerbated by homelessness.

Addressing Affordable Housing

In the City of Edmonton (Alberta), the Cornerstones Plan (2006–2010) has a number of grant programs to assist with housing affordability.

- Building grants for new long term affordable housing projects
- Grants for the purchase or renovation of existing housing stock
- A municipal fee rebates program for new multi-unit affordable housing projects, and
- A rent supplement pilot program

To help persons with limited mobility find accessible housing, the City of Gatineau (Quebec) partnered with a community organization to create a directory of properties — both for rent and for sale — appropriate for clients requiring accessible and adaptable housing.

- “Entre-Deux-Roues” makes it easier for people to find homes that are suited to their needs and gives property owners an incentive to make available units that are adaptable and accessible.
- It helps the loss of the existing accessible and adaptable housing stock and encourages renovations in support of accessibility.
- It improves the return on investment both for private property owners and government agencies offering financial assistance.

[Nishnawbe Homes Dundas Street Project](#)

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Aboriginal Housing Program will deliver \$20-million in new affordable rental units, homeownership loans and home repairs for low-income Aboriginal households in the Greater Toronto Area. The province is working in partnership with local Aboriginal housing providers and Miziwe Biik Development Corporation, to deliver the GTA Aboriginal Housing Program. The City of Toronto facilitated the development of these affordable homes by waiving development fees and charges, and exempting the development from property taxes for 25 years.

"Affordable housing is also smart economic policy."⁶⁹

- TD Bank Financial Group

Organizations such as the Toronto Board of Trade,⁷⁰ the Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance,⁷¹ and the Conference Board of Canada⁷² have called attention to the importance of housing for building healthy and prosperous communities which contribute to the overall economic success of a city. Good quality housing has positive influences on health which can reduce health care costs and improve participation, productivity and performance in the workplace.⁷³ Housing can also influence access to education, nutrition, recreation and employment opportunities which can lead to better health outcomes.⁷⁴ An adequate supply of affordable housing can attract business investment and employment to an area which has an overall impact on the social and economic conditions of an area.⁷⁵

Neighbourhoods

The neighbourhoods within which we live can shape our health. Social and economic features of neighbourhoods have been linked with mortality, self-rated health, disability, birth outcomes, chronic conditions and their risk factors, mental health, injuries, and violence.⁷⁶ There is evidence that neighbourhoods with greater concentrations of low-income residents, inadequate and unaffordable housing, lack of public and private goods and services, and high rates of social disorder are high-risk environments where residents experience poor quality of life and negative short and long-term health consequences. A Canadian study found that residents of Toronto neighbourhoods with higher-than-average median income and greater proportion of postsecondary graduates are more likely to report better health than residents of less affluent neighbourhoods.⁷⁷

Where we live matters
to our health

The ways in which neighbourhoods affect health are complex. Opportunities and constraints presented in communities with different socio-economic conditions can shape the educational attainment, employment prospects, and income level of individuals which, in turn, can influence health.⁷⁸ Features of the physical, service, and social neighbourhood, over and above the individual socio-economic characteristics of residents, can also play a role in shaping health.^{79, 80}

Revitalizing Communities

[Kilbourn Park and the Milwaukee Riverfront](#)

Active and former industrial areas are often accompanied by degraded environments and little community presence. In the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the local government has re-connected the community to its downtown Milwaukee River that had once been host to breweries and tanneries. The City partnered with community and business stakeholders to invest in a "River Walk" of landscaped walking trails and terraces, sailing and canoeing schools, and cultural events along the river's edge.

[Sugar Beach and Sherbourne Commons, Toronto](#)

Toronto's new waterfront parks like Sugar Beach and Sherbourne Commons have brought trees, lawns and sand back to neglected areas, and have drawn businesses and residents to the waterfront.

Building Strong and Safe Communities

The [City of Salinas, California](#) launched a comprehensive, multi-sectoral plan to prevent violence, which was seen as contributing to the deterioration of families and communities.

- The plan included the mayor, grass roots activists, local businesses, the faith community, and major city and county leaders from various sectors, including law enforcement and health.
- Initiatives include literacy, youth employment and parental participation in schools. The library was one example of a non-traditional partner. Multiple partners such as land use and transportation planners, businesses, and schools were involved in the healthy eating and active living approaches.
- About \$10 million in grants were allocated to local projects and groups. Salinas has seen a decrease in violence rates and local residents noted improved perceptions of safety since launching this plan.

The [City of Gatineau's Youth Commission](#) has several initiatives that engage youth, for example:

- A fund "[Manque pas ta chance](#)" to support individual youth or groups of young people to undertake a project, for example to create a theatrical or dance performance, or renovate their youth association headquarters.
- In partnership with a non-governmental organization, local police and the public works department a Graffiti Walls project has built graffiti walls in parks.

Recognizing the Diverse Interests of Communities

Cricket is one of the fastest growing sports in Toronto and is played in more than 100 countries across the world. Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation created the Toronto Cricket programs - Operation Cricket, [Thackeray Park Cricket Ground](#), and Cricket cross the Pond – to engage communities through the sport of cricket. The programs:

- offer a safe and welcoming environment for children, youth and adults to learn about cricket and experience the sport
- provide opportunities to connect with other players, families and teams
- bridge the generation gap between seniors and youth in the community
- transformed a barren property into a vibrant green space

As noted previously, physical environments such as air pollution, traffic patterns, street design, and housing stocks can influence the health of residents. Access to and quality of neighbourhood services and amenities such as stores offering healthy food options, recreational opportunities, and health and social services can also influence health.

The level of violence, safety, and social cohesiveness of a neighbourhood can influence health and well-being in numerous ways. Unsafe

neighbourhoods as a result of high crime and/or hazardous conditions can affect health directly through bodily harm and injuries. Concerns about violence and crime in communities can affect health by increasing stress, restricting free movement and social interaction, preventing the health-promoting practice of walking, cycling, playing in parks, and access to services essential for health.⁸¹ In cities such as Toronto, studies have found an increasing concentration of poverty in certain neighbourhoods.^{82,83} A report by the United Way documented the geographic concentration of poverty in high rise buildings in poorer neighbourhoods of Toronto.⁸⁴ The concentration of poverty in these areas makes it increasingly difficult for individuals to escape poverty, threatens social and community cohesion, and can lead to a cycle of neighbourhood deterioration and disinvestment.

Income and Employment

One of the most well-documented and enduring associations in public health has been the relationship between socio-economic status and health – individuals with higher socio-economic status (people with higher income, better employment, and good education, etc.) have higher levels of health.⁸⁵ The relationship between individual income and health is not confined to the lowest income groups – health improves with each step up the socio-economic ladder.

People who are employed and have higher income tend to have better health

Figure 4: Proportion of Total and Recent Immigrant Population with Income below Low Income Cut-Off (LICO), 2006

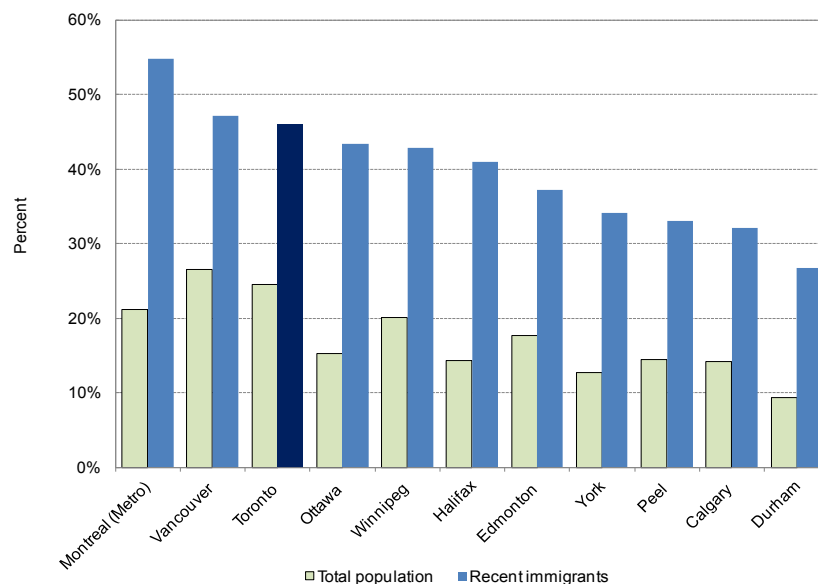
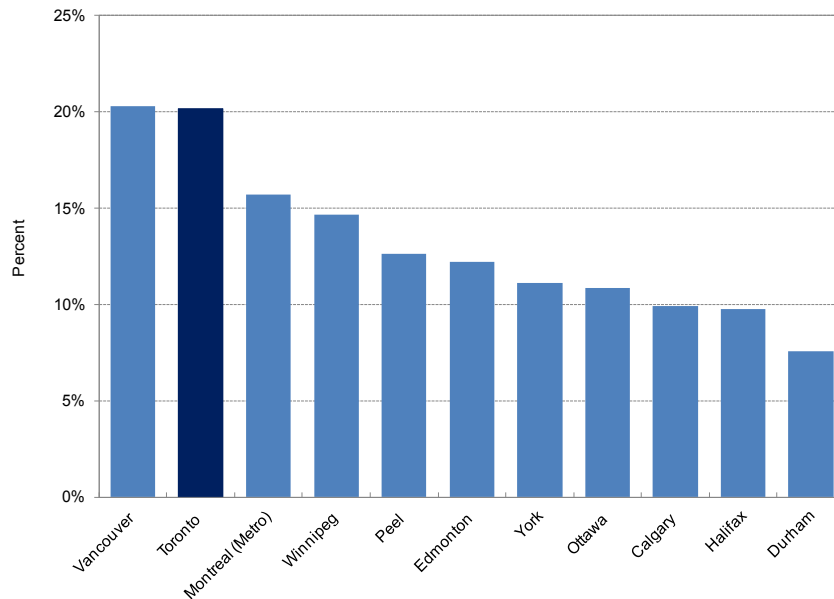


Figure 4
The income of 46 percent of recent immigrants in Toronto is below the low income cut-off, about twice that for the population as a whole

Source: Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life Reporting System. Ottawa, Ontario.
Prepared by: Toronto Public Health

Figure 5: Proportion of Families with Income below LICO, 2006



Source: Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life Reporting System. Ottawa, Ontario.
Prepared by: Toronto Public Health

Figure 5

In Canada, larger urban centres like Toronto tend to have higher rates of poverty than other areas

Income enables access to resources such as quality housing in a desirable neighbourhood, nutritious foods, clothing, transportation and higher education. It also enables access to health and social services, quality childcare, as well as leisure time, cultural, and other health promoting activities. Economic hardship can also affect health through its impact on family and social relationships, parenting, and self-esteem.⁸⁷ Lack of income to participate in various social, cultural, and recreational activities can result in social isolation.⁸⁸

"it is the City of Toronto ... where some of the deepest income polarization in the country has occurred."⁸⁶

- United Way, 2011

While lack of income affects health, employment itself is important not only because it provides income but also because it provides a sense of identity and purpose, social interaction, and opportunities for personal growth.⁸⁹

In Canada, poverty is concentrated in large urban areas. Poverty rates are disproportionately higher among Aboriginal people, visible minorities, recent immigrants, lone-parent families (particularly female lone-parents), children, women, low-wage workers, people with disabilities and seniors.⁹⁰ Income disparity between the rich and the poor has also been increasing.^{91,92,93} The negative implications of widening inequality for health,⁹⁴ social cohesion, and economic growth⁹⁵ have been documented in a number of reports. The interrelationship between health and socio-economic development has also been noted; improving socio-economic conditions such as income, employment and working conditions, education and literacy are important not only for improving health but also for cost-savings and economic benefits.⁹⁶

Education

There is a strong relationship between health and level of education. Individuals with higher levels of education tend to have better health. There is also a substantial body of evidence indicating that children who participate in high-quality early childhood education and care programs experience a range of short and long-term health and educational benefits.⁹⁷

People with higher levels of education tend to have better health

Education affects health through other factors such as income, employment and working conditions. Education can increase opportunities for employment and income security as well as upward socio-economic mobility. Education can also increase the likelihood of attaining an occupation with higher status, greater autonomy and control in decision-making, greater job security, and safe and non-hazardous working conditions. Education can also influence health by providing greater access to and understanding of information regarding health promoting choices and behaviours. It can also increase one's ability to optimize use of health services.⁹⁸

Education is considered one of the best investments in human capital and development. Economists and business leaders have long recognized the importance of human capital for economic growth. Investments in early childhood education and care programs, in particular, are considered to be one of the most cost-effective human capital interventions. Their importance for a productive workforce and prosperous economy has been recognized by organizations such as the World Bank⁹⁹ and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.¹⁰⁰ Such investment has economic, fiscal and social returns such as greater success at school and higher graduation rates, higher employment earning, better health outcomes, reduced social assistance dependency, lower rates of crime, greater government revenues and lower expenditures.¹⁰¹ The provision of child care also contributes to the economy by enabling parents' participation in the labour force.

Food Security

A nutritious diet and adequate food supply are central for good health. Food security means having the physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences that allow for an active and healthy life.¹⁰² Food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food in the context of financial constraints.¹⁰³ In Canada, food insecurity is more prevalent in urban areas compared to rural areas.¹⁰⁴ In Toronto, 10.8% of households reported moderate or severe food insecurity.¹⁰⁵

Food insecurity has been associated with a range of poor physical and mental health outcomes such as lower self-rated health, restricted activity and multiple chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, food allergies, and major depression and distress.¹⁰⁶ Poor nutrition in childhood has been associated with long-term physiological

and psychological development as well as a range of behavioural, emotional and academic problems.¹⁰⁷ Food insecurity also has an impact on health services, as individuals with nutritional deficiencies tend to be less resistant to infections, recover more slowly, have more diseases, longer hospital stays, and incur higher health care costs.¹⁰⁸

Food insecurity is related to other socio-economic factors. Low-income individuals are disadvantaged as they are already limited in their ability to purchase healthy food and the high cost of housing reduces the amount of money left over for purchasing foods. The Canadian Community Health Survey found that food insecurity was higher in households with children (particularly below the age of six) led by female lone parents, lower income households, households receiving social assistance or worker's compensation/employment insurance, households with low levels of education, Aboriginal households, households with recent immigrants, and households in which the dwelling was not owned.¹⁰⁹

There is also increasing recognition that the built environment can influence access to affordable and healthy food. A 2010 report by the Martin Prosperity Institute showed that areas where people experience physical and economic barriers to accessing healthy food are becoming a prominent feature within Toronto's inner suburbs and priority neighbourhoods, neighbourhoods that experience higher rates of poverty, unemployment and lack of access to public transit.¹¹⁰ Many grocery stores in these areas are located a considerable distance away from where people live making them difficult, time consuming and more costly to get to.

The built environment
can influence access
to affordable and
healthy food

Building Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems

Healthy Communities Program

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a long history of investing community health and quality of life through policy strategies that create sustainable systems and environments. Through the Healthy Communities Program it has partnered with municipalities to improve access to healthy food.
 - Montgomery County, Alabama created nine community gardens in rural area parks and schools to increase access to fruits and vegetables for children and seniors.
 - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania improved the access to fresh fruits and vegetables to under-resourced communities by offering them at YMCA after-school programs.
 - Santa Clara County, California was the first in the country to pass an ordinance that prohibits restaurants from using toys and other incentives for kids' meals that are high in fat, sugar, and calories.

Toronto's Food Strategy

- Food Connections promotes a health-focussed food system in Toronto with six objectives:
 - support food-friendly neighbourhoods
 - make food a centerpiece of Toronto's new green economy
 - eliminate hunger in Toronto
 - connect city and countryside through food
 - empower residents with food skills and information
 - urge federal and provincial governments to establish health-focused food policies

Toronto's Community and Allotment Gardens

- The Community Gardens Program is cultivating a dynamic community gardening movement across Toronto. Working in partnership with a wide variety of community groups, the program draws on the collective heritage of gifts from Toronto's distinct cultures. Community gardens benefit everyone by creating safe and healthy recreational activity within our parks system, and on other city-owned lands.
- Newcomers to Canada who farmed in their homelands are particularly interested in community gardens. It gives them easy access to affordable food when supermarkets may not be close by.
- Toronto manages 50 community gardens in parks and two in hydro corridors. It also manages 12 allotment gardens.

Health Services

Health services, particularly those intended to maintain and promote health, prevent disease, and restore function contribute to health.¹¹¹

Access to health services as well as the quality of those services can affect health. The health system influences health through its capacity to promote equitable access to health care and inter-sectoral action to improve health status.¹¹² Although Canada's has a publicly funded health care system, barriers exist in terms of physical accessibility, geographic isolation, sociocultural issues, and the cost of non-insured health service.¹¹³ Many low and moderate-income Canadians have limited or no access to health services such as eye care, dentistry, mental health counselling and prescription drugs.

Health services also include many health promotion activities and disease prevention measures such as vaccination to reduce communicable diseases, food safety programs to prevent outbreaks of food-borne diseases, and vector control for reduce the incidence of vector-borne diseases.

Making Cities Healthy

The social, economic and environmental conditions that make a city liveable also make it prosperous; these same conditions shape people's health. Health contributes to the prosperity of the city because to drive innovation and economic growth, businesses depend on a productive workforce – well educated and healthy men and women. Considering health implications early in policy or program development and investing in initiatives to prevent poor health outcomes can help contain health care costs in the long term for all taxpayers and contribute to the prosperity of the city. While prosperity is important for health, for a city to grow and prosper, it needs to consider health in its decision-making.¹¹⁴

For a city to grow and prosper, it must be healthy

Healthy lives are the result of the influences of many different and interacting factors. Cities themselves are complex and the result of decisions and actions taken by local, provincial and national governments, the private sector, civil society, and individuals. They are also affected by events around the world.

Local governments' areas of responsibility – policing, firefighting, transportation, sewage, drinking water, waste management, planning and development, infrastructure, social welfare services, parks, recreation and cultural services – have the most direct effect on people's lives and provide local government with important opportunities for influencing people's health in urban setting.^{115,116}

The *City of Toronto Act* recognizes the unique status of Toronto in Canada and Ontario and provides a permissive legal framework that gives the City a broad mandate for fostering the economic, social, health, safety and environmental well-being of the city and its people.

Participation of business and citizens in decision-making helps build a healthy and prosperous city

In the end, a healthy, prosperous city does not happen without support and contributions from a number of key stakeholders. This means that while local public health units may assume a significant leadership role in promoting health in the city, all city departments, other orders of government, business and the community play a role in protecting and promoting health for everyone. Involvement of all stakeholders, including local residents and citizen groups and developing partnerships across local government departments, with provincial and federal governments, community organizations and the private sector is an important way to help achieve a healthy and prosperous city.

The Importance of Municipal Governments

A municipal government plays a number of roles including service provider, investor, leader, champion, convener, partner and model employer.¹¹⁷ It carries out many activities: it passes by-laws; adopts budgets, finances projects; generates revenue from taxes, fees, and other sources; develops, facilitates, delivers and administers programs and

services; as well as regulates and enforces standards. There are four main ways in which local governments influence the future health and prosperity of a city: visioning and strategic policy; urban and social planning; program delivery; and monitoring, evaluation and assessment of programs and services, which help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a city's operations.

Visioning / Strategic Policy

While there is no one single way to arrive at a vision for the city, generally a strategic policy process is used which involves determining priority issues and guiding principles, ways of doing things and steps to reach a desired goal. The activities that support the visioning process can be an appropriate forum for raising health issues, concerns and implications to elected officials and other decision-makers. It is important to note that while health is central to achieving a prosperous city, it does not necessarily mean that health is at the centre of the vision or policy statements; rather, it is that decision-makers are simply aware of health and health implications when developing and implementing public policies.

Supporting dialogue and engaging people in the city's visioning and strategic policy processes can take many forms. However, to ensure that a city is for everyone, efforts need be made to include people who are representative of the city's diverse communities and to eliminate barriers to people's participation. For some people, participating in city consultations requires supports or accommodations such as childcare or interpretation. For harder-to-reach populations or groups outside established networks or communities, a strategic approach for outreach may be necessary.

City governments
show leadership by
creating a vision

There are a number of strategic policy frameworks that already inform Toronto's vision, strategies and plans. Toronto's Official Plan spells out the direction for the city and other key strategic plans and policies such as the Social Development Strategy, Economic Development Strategy, Environmental Plan, Cycling and Pedestrian Master Plan support its implementation. Individual plans may have their specific objectives, but to create a healthy, liveable and prosperous city, they should ideally support and at least not conflict with the ultimate goal of creating conditions that enable good health for everyone.

Urban and Social Planning

Through land-use and transportation planning, a municipality can guide the development of the built and physical environments to improve communities and neighbourhoods for inclusiveness and sustainability.¹¹⁸ Planning and designing healthy environments involves a wide range of city interventions in the areas of infrastructure, transportation, roads, sewers, waste disposal and water as well as social planning for housing, social or employment services. Planning also includes urban renewal strategies that turn previous neglected and decaying areas into active, vibrant spaces.

Planning influences people's health in various ways through its focus on urban spaces. For example, planning for "complete communities" which are "well-designed, offer transportation choices, accommodate people at all stages of life and have the right mix of housing, a good range of jobs, and easy access to stores and services to meet daily needs"¹¹⁹ can help decrease people's exposure to environmental health hazards such as smog, pollution, heat stress and /or extreme weather.

Planning and designing well-connected, safe, and accessible streets for all users (including parents with strollers, children, seniors, and people with disabilities for example) can help prevent injuries due to traffic collisions or pedestrian falls. "Complete streets" is an approach that actively considers the needs of all road users – pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders – of all ages and abilities.¹²⁰ It encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes of transport. Strategies to increase "walkability" and physical activity require a coordinated planning approach to transportation, public transit, zoning, housing and park locations.

The goal of planning with health in mind is to encourage physical activity and social interactions by ensuring availability of services, shops and facilities, access to programs, parks and green spaces based on the local needs of people in the community.

Program Delivery

City governments
address inequity
through programming
and financial support

As a service provider, a city has responsibility to develop, manage and deliver programs and services at the local level. These initiatives include recreation, social assistance and employment supports, children's programs, subsidized childcare, public health, and community arts and culture. Local governments are also involved in the delivery of health promotion and illness prevention programs like nutrition, chronic disease prevention or communicable disease awareness initiatives and dental care for people in financial need. Some city programs are targeted at particular populations based on need, for example, affordable housing, emergency shelter, and subsidized childcare. Other programs or services, such as policing, public transit, waste management services, drinking water, libraries, and recreation serve the whole population, though there may be some specific programs or initiatives to better serve people who are more vulnerable.

A key feature of a liveable city is its use of public policies, including but not necessarily limited to, health-specific initiatives to strengthen communities where healthy personal and lifestyle choices can be made. Social programs and services can support people during life transitions (for example, when raising children, entering the labour force, or reaching retirement) which can reduce their adverse health impacts.¹²¹ Early childhood education and care shape health outcomes directly as children experience healthier physical and social development later on in life. Employment supports and child care which help people attain and maintain jobs is important for their health.

The city may deliver the program or service directly, or it may flow funding for community organizations or other partners to deliver it. In any case, an increasing number of people are expected to rely on the social and health program and services that make up the city's "safety net" or social infrastructure. In part, this increased reliance stems from program cuts and gaps at the provincial and federal levels in social assistance, employment insurance and social housing.¹²²

Monitoring / Evaluation / Assessment

For program evaluation, governments generally conduct some systematic collection and analysis of evidence on program outcomes to judge their relevance and performance, and to examine alternative ways to deliver them or to achieve the same results. Evaluation or monitoring activities can support accountability to the public and decision-makers in that programs are giving "value for money," help manage expenditures and improve policy and program efficiency and effectiveness.

Health impact
assessment helps
decision-making

Various evaluation tools align with building a great city. Program evaluations focused on implementation issues can lead to better service integration, coordination and holistic service delivery models that consider health impacts and that best meet specifically identified local needs and capacities. Local governments also evaluate and monitor programs by conducting research, collecting and analyzing population data on health issues and social trends, developing health profiles and reports to inform future program development. Health impact assessment, which use various methods to estimate potential effects of a proposed policy or program on the health of a population, produces evidence-based recommendations to inform decision-making.

Assessing Potential Health Impacts of Proposals

- In 2008, Solid Waste Management Services collaborated with Toronto Public Health to undertake a [health impact assessment](#) (HIA) of options to treat mixed residual waste – the portion of waste that remains after materials for other city waste diversion programs, such as the Blue Bin (recycling) or Green Bin (composting), have been separated by Toronto residents and businesses. This waste still contains materials that can be diverted so that it is not disposed of in a landfill.
- The HIA looked at five categories of factors that affect health: physical environment, social and economic environment, lifestyle, access to services and equity.
- When compared to landfill and other approaches, this assessment found that diverting waste using mechanical-biological treatment with anaerobic digestion was the option with the lowest health impact.

Building a Healthy City

One way to ensure a liveable city is to apply the notion of the Healthy City developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). Conceived in Toronto in the mid-1980s,¹²³ the Healthy City emphasizes the important role that local governments play in creating the conditions for health. The goal is to improve individuals' and communities' health by optimizing city conditions and environments.¹²⁴ Health is seen to be influenced by social, economic and environmental conditions and not just the result of disease or bio-medical factors (see Figure 6). It is not just the presence of these conditions that are important for maximizing health but the *quality* of these conditions. The community must be convivial, equitable and liveable.¹²⁵ The economy must be adequate and socially sustainable and prosperity must be distributed equitably within the community.¹²⁶ Finally, the environment needs to be sustainable, viable, and liveable.¹²⁷

Figure 6: The Healthy City Model

An inclusive community, a quality environment and a strong economy create an equitable, liveable, and sustainable city which is a healthy city



Source: Trevor Hancock

The Healthy City supports thinking about the connections and implications for health of policies, programs and services in a holistic way. It encourages creating alliances across sectors, encouraging public participation in local decision-making and applying health impact assessments to inform decision-making. It also draws attention to the fact that decisions, strategies and plans of city departments and agencies are interconnected and have collective effects on people's health.

A healthy city is “one that is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential.”¹²⁸ A healthy city aims to provide:

- **Caring and Supportive Environments:** a city for all its citizens – inclusive, supportive, sensitive and responsive to their diverse needs and expectations;
- **Healthy Living:** a place with conditions and opportunities that support and foster healthy lifestyles and behaviours; and
- **Healthy Urban Environment and Design:** physical and built environments that support health, recreation and well-being, safety, social interaction, mobility, a sense of pride and cultural identity and that is accessible to the needs of all its citizens.

The Healthy City recognizes several principles to create cities that are healthy for all citizens:

- **Collaboration** between various departments within the city, collaboration between various actors in society (such as other government institutions, the private sector, and community or other civil society organisations).
- **Engagement** of all citizens by bringing together different stakeholders and increasing participation in decision-making.
- **Accountability** to all stakeholders using an open process of governance.

The Healthy City challenges local governments to be aware of health issues embedded in all of their policies, programs and services. The creation of a healthy city is a process that increases health awareness among all decision-makers, advocates strategic planning, mobilizes partnerships and enables collaboration between all sectors, encourages the community's participation, promotes change and innovation, and ensures that public policy protects and promotes health to create a healthy, liveable and prosperous city.

Conclusions

Great cities are cities that are prosperous, liveable and healthy. They are cities with access to high quality culture, education, employment, built and natural environments, food, health care, housing, recreation, public transport, and water and waste services. They also foster inclusion and promote safety. Urban environments influence every aspect of health and well-being, including what we eat, our employment status, the working environment, housing, quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink, access to health services, and the risks we are exposed to. A healthy and prosperous city provides a good economic, physical and social environments in which to live, learn, work and play.

Although all orders of government, business and the community play a vital role in enabling and supporting positive health outcomes for everyone, municipal governments are in a unique leadership and strategic position, with power to protect and promote their residents' health and well-being. The decisions they make across the whole of government in areas such as urban planning, economic development, housing, parks, forestry and recreation, and transportation have impacts on health and equity.

The Healthy City challenges local governments to be aware of health issues embedded in all of their policies, programs and services. It is therefore important to work collaboratively among various city departments and the public to develop and implement holistic responses to the challenges a city faces. Including an assessment of the impact on health into the decision-making process when creating new policies and designing new projects or programs can provide decision-makers with the information needed to make the best choice. By taking into account the impact on health when making decisions, municipal governments can ensure that public policy will protect and promote health to create a liveable and prosperous city.

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