



Healthy Communities by Design Program

What is the Healthy Communities by Design Program?

The HCBD program aims to design healthier communities through policy, systems, and environmental change by integrating health and equity considerations into land use and transportation decisions. In collaboration with community partners, we will develop a series of policy recommendations to ensure that decision-makers consider how land use and transportation projects and policies affect opportunities to be physically active. Incorporating a public health perspective to land use, community design, and transportation planning can help create communities that enable people of all ages, income level, race/ethnicity, and ability to access healthy food and to be physically active.

Why do we need a public health perspective in land use and transportation decisions?

Historically, urban design in Multnomah County, as in most of the country, has focused on the efficient movement of motorized vehicles like cars and trucks. As a result of these policy decisions, Americans are leading more sedentary lifestyles, which is a contributing factor to increased rates of obesity and overweight.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children and adolescents should be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day and adults should engage in at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity. However, many people in Multnomah County have limited opportunities to meet this minimum recommendation because their communities lack resources and infrastructure, making it difficult and dangerous to walk, bike, or take public transit. Having access to public facilities where people can congregate, exercise and socialize will lead to healthier communities.

Program Goals

Through a collaborative process, community-based organizations and city and county agencies will work to create community environments that support active living and increased opportunities for physical activity. A priority of this work will be to assure that policy decisions promote health equity and equitable distribution of resources to underserved communities.

Together we will:

- Promote physical activity by identifying sustainable revenue streams to provide funding for development and maintenance of parks, recreational facilities, and community gardens.
- Prioritize modes of active transportation over projects that favor cars and trucks by increasing funding for sidewalks, bike paths, trails, and public transit projects.
- Prioritize allocation of resources for Safe Routes to School programs in low-income communities that encourage students and families to walk and bike to school.
- Strengthen civic engagement policies to increase participation of leaders representing low income communities and communities of color in decision-making processes related to community design.
- Develop tools to assess the impact of policies on population health and equity

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