

NACCHO PROGRAMS

Integrating Public Health into Land Use Decision-making

Land Use Planning

Updated on 10/09/2003

Because land use decisions influence the underlying determinants of environmental and community health, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is striving to assist local public health agencies (LPHAs) to integrate public health considerations into land use planning via its Land Use Planning Project. This initiative is funded by the National Center for Environmental Health and the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (CDC).

Upcoming Events

- [TCDDM V:Information Technology in Action](#) Dec.11-13, 2003
- [3rd Annual New Partners for Smart Growth: Building Safe, Healthy, and Livable Communities](#) Jan.22-24, 2004

Designing and Building Healthy Places

The ultimate goals of NACCHO's land use project are to: raise the awareness of local public health officials, so that they can proactively participate in land use planning decisions, and to educate community members, so that they can influence the planning process within their locality or region and make informed decisions concerning housing and development. With these goals in mind, NACCHO has begun to assess to what degree health officials are aware of the links between land use planning and health, whether they are actively engaging in land use planning decisions, and the barriers to their involvement in the planning process.

Recently Released Publication [NACCHO Exchange, Spring 2003](#)

As first steps in achieving a local land use planning process more inclusive of LPHAs, NACCHO has actively engaged in forming partnerships, conducting research, initiating information sharing among LPHAs and other agencies and [Policy development](#). Since its inception in January 2001, NACCHO's Land Use Planning Project has had numerous accomplishments including:

- **Formation of a land use planning team** within NACCHO to link NACCHO's land use-related projects.
- **A series of focus groups** to determine LPHA roles in land use planning, barriers to achieving full integration in the process, and to understand how NACCHO and CDC can assist them in integrating into land use planning. Data from additional focus groups will be available in December 2003.
 - [Exploring Land Use Planning: Local Public Health Officials Focus Groups](#)
 - [The Role of Local Public Health Agencies in Land Use Planning & Community Design: Chronic Disease and Environmental Health Focus Groups](#)
- **Information sharing** among LPHAs and other agencies through media, publications, and discussions with the NACCHO Environmental Health and Prevention Advisory Committee.

- NACCHO assisted in the review and release of **CDC's Report**, [Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health](#)
- NACCHO has begun to collect information from LPHAs that are on the cutting edge of land use planning. For example, **Ingham County (MI) Health Department** issues periodic [land use planning newsletters](#) to their community, and **Tri-County (CO) Health Department** has developed a [checklist for planners and health officials](#), which NACCHO staff will soon make interactive. Users will soon find links from each separate category to health data or other related resources.

Current Land Use Activities

To-date, our land use planning research is showing that despite the need for the LPHA presence in local planning decisions, their role is less proactive and more localized than would be ideal. There are numerous causes for this lack of integration in the planning process, ranging from a lack of awareness on the part of health officials, to health officials with a desire to integrate with planning initiatives, but a lack of resources, authority, or understanding of how to become more involved. Fortunately, there are also concrete methods for bridging this gap between health officials and land use planners. In the coming years, NACCHO will be undertaking several strategic steps to advance the integration of public health and land use planning. These include:

- focus groups, including one that will target traffic injury prevention, funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) at Department of Transportation, and another that will concentrate on health disparities;
- collection and dissemination of model ordinances that promote good land use practices and collaboration with LPHAs;
- through a partnership with American Planning Association, workshops for land use planning stakeholders will be conducted, which will ultimately result in the creation of a "Planning 101" guide for LPHAs and "Public Health 101" guide for planners;
- funding for LPHAs to create innovative means of achieving better integration of public health issues into land use decision-making; and
- **PowerPoint presentation** and **factsheet** about the role of LPHAs in land use/community design and based on data from focus groups.
(Download [PowerPoint presentation](#) [290KB], or in [PDF format](#) [589KB])

For further information about NACCHO's land use planning project, contact Heidi Urquhart, Program Manager, at (202) 783-5550 x 252. For questions related to specific topic areas, the following NACCHO Staff can provide further information about the connection between Land Use and their related program areas.

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