

# Metro Healthy Comprehensive Plans Workgroup

The Metro Healthy Comprehensive Plan Workgroup was established in 2016 as a resource for city and county planners and public health staff who were working on their jurisdiction's comprehensive plan to help provide the knowledge, tools, motivation, and support to create plans that make healthier communities. Grounded in the [social determinants of health](#) (SDoH), the workgroup connected participants to subject matter experts from a variety of disciplines and sectors, and created shared tools and examples of how to advance health through planning and implementation.

The Workgroup met 20 times from 2016 through 2020. The meetings covered topics ranging from:

- Resiliency, sustainability, and health
- Local approaches to healthy comprehensive plans
- Creative tools in planning, arts, and placemaking
- Local examples of plan language
- Incorporating community input, themes, and vision
- Connection between health and comprehensive plans
- Community engagement and equity
- Walking tours of health-supporting development

These workgroup meetings provided the building blocks for many of our city and county partners to identify strategies to integrate health more fully within their comprehensive plans.

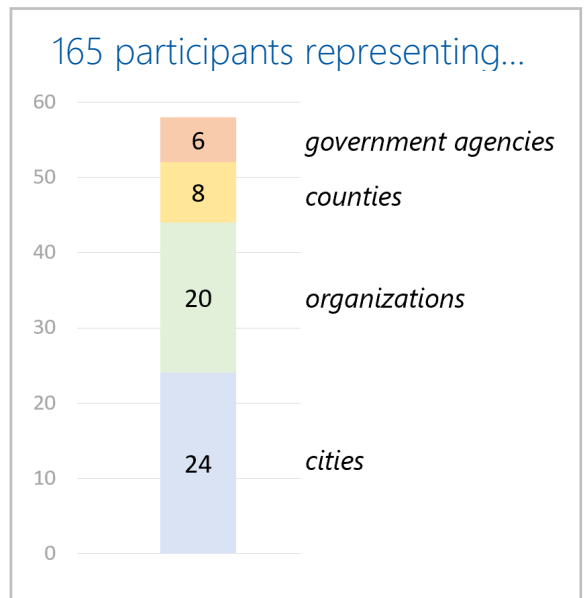
## Tools and Resources

The workgroups also helped create resources to assist cities with their comprehensive plan processes.

- [Healthy Comprehensive Plans Checklist](#): a tool created by the Workgroup to assess plans for health supporting policies and practices, as well as other resources.
- [Planning for Healthy Community](#): a Workgroup-created resource for city and county staff with talking points and steps for addressing health in their plans.

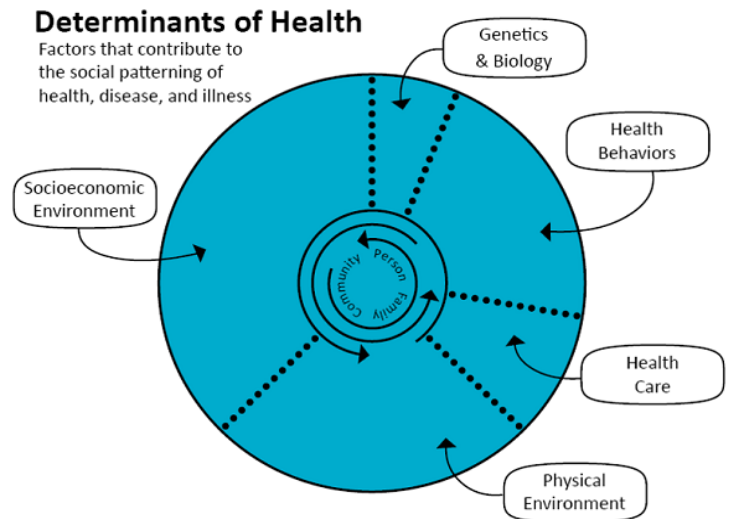
In addition, city and county Workgroup partners shared their expertise or used the group as a resource in integrating health into their plans.

- [City of Osseo: Planning through a public health lens](#)
- [City of Hopkins Take it 'em: Inspiring community engagement](#)
- [City of St. Louis Park: Advancing racial equity](#)
- [Washington County: Resilience and sustainability chapter](#)



## Communities and health

*The health and vitality of people and the communities they live in are interdependent. Around 80 percent of our total health results from our built, natural, social and economic environments. Since the practice of community planning plays a significant role in shaping these environments, local planning can have significant impacts on increasing community health, and in reducing health disparities, which are differences in health that stem from the built and social environment. Planning and designing communities with health in mind, specifically through the local comprehensive plan, can lead to improved community health, wellness, and quality of life for all residents.*



Source: Minnesota Department of Health

## Lessons learned

The workgroup was an important component of Hennepin County's technical assistance to communities. It created conditions for success, established connections, and helped grow partner capacity not only in comprehensive planning, but for future collaborations to implement health-supporting policies. The following are takeaways from the Metro Healthy Planning Workgroup experience.

### Peer learning helped grow conditions for success

- Planners and policy makers did not always realize their work connected so strongly with health until they had some exposure to the topics and heard the results of engagement in their own communities.
- Some boards and policymakers show a disconnect in approaches to policies in the built environment versus in health and human services – so policies in one area may undermine actions and funding spent on health.
- Sharing resources, guides and examples was important in helping leverage existing resources, reduce workload, increase staff capacity, spark ideas, and build off proven concepts and practices.
- Active collaborations with public health made a difference in cities considering health and equity in plans.
- Jurisdictions that were most effective in creating health-supportive policies had some experience in healthy planning practices and/or took new approaches to engagement, document structure and the planning process.

### Keeping interest and momentum required flexibility, adjustments – and group interaction

- It is important to have a conversation about values and priorities early on and to keep checking back regarding expectations.
- Successful meeting agendas needed to be weighted towards planners' needs; agendas needed to have a clear benefit and relevant topic to draw attendance.
- Member surveys indicated community assessments, measuring progress and impact of actions taken, talking points for working with elected officials, and funding sources are ongoing areas of need.
- Having a final meeting to celebrate success was an important part of closing out the process.

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