

Built Environment:

Healthy Development Index and Health Background Study Framework

Traditional suburban, automobile-oriented development is associated with low levels of physical activity and increased burden of chronic disease. Peel's built environment agenda works toward improving the health promoting potential of local neighbourhoods. Effecting change in this area requires significant efforts to amend historic trends in planning policy and development, while also creating a shift in social norms.

In 2009, the Healthy Development Index (HDI) was created with the intent to provide a systematic method for public health staff to inform planning decisions. The HDI is a body of research evidence that identifies the elements and quantifiable measures associated with health through their impact on promoting community walkability. The elements include:

1. Density
2. Service Proximity
3. Land Use Mix
4. Street Connectivity
5. Streetscape Characteristics
6. Parking

From here, in 2011, the HDI was developed into a planning implementation tool known as the Health Background Study Framework (HBSF). This user-friendly tool for health professionals and planners acts as a guiding document to evaluate land use planning applications to achieve the core elements and minimum standards from the HDI and to promote active transportation within land use design.

Accomplishments and On-Going Initiatives:

Peel Public Health policy milestones include:

- Regional and area municipal Council directives
- Policy amendments to the Regional Official Plan

Peel Public Health is currently working with its partners and using the HBSF to:

- Advocate for the creation of healthy communities throughout the Region of Peel
- Influence policy reviews at the local, regional and provincial level
- Enhance regional buildings to promote physical activity
- Evaluate development proposals, plans and projects, including:
 - Town of Caledon - Mayfield West Phase II Secondary Plan
 - City of Brampton - Transportation Master Plan
 - City of Mississauga – Ninth Line Corridor
 - Region of Peel Actively Designed Buildings project
- Integrate health promoting elements into new and existing evaluative tools and documents, including:
 - Sustainable Community Development Guidelines
 - Caledon East Community Improvement Plan
 - Initiatives under the Peel Public Health Active Networks, Parks and Playground Workgroup

A Quantifiable Tool to Assess Development

The elements in the HBSF are quantifiable components that are statistically associated with specific physical activity outcomes.

Element	What is it?	What is the relationship to health?
Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development density refers to the number of people, dwelling units, and/or jobs that will be accommodated in a specific area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher density creates demand and support for a broader variety of services (e.g., employment, transit, destinations/facilities) Increased number of services within closer distances creates opportunity for active transportation
Service Proximity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The distance between where people live and where they access three types of services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public transit Neighbourhood community and retail Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affects the travel distance between daily destinations and influences the choice to use active transportation vs. driving a car Makes the community more equitable and inclusive for those who cannot drive
Land Use Mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The composition of housing types and services, and employment in an area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A range of housing types creates equitable communities Allows for residents to stay in the comfort of their community as changes in lifestyle needs occur
Street Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The directness of travel and the number of route options between any two destinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High street connectivity reduces route distances and promotes active transportation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing route options and convenience Dissipating vehicular traffic throughout the network Characterized by smaller block sizes and grid like patterns to increase walkability
Streetscape Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users along the public right of way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-designed streetscape improves the safe, comfort and convenience for the pedestrian and cyclist Streetscapes promotes physical activity, community interaction and accessibility while reducing incidence of crime and road fatalities
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to reduce the supply of car parking and increase bicycle parking Efficient use of parking (e.g. shared parking spaces, preferential parking for car pool) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discourages automobile use and promotes walking, cycling and public transit Can have a negative effect on proximity, density and public realm making an unpleasant pedestrian experience Reduces the environmental and aesthetic impacts of large surface parking lots

For more information on the HBSF or our current initiatives please visit:

www.healthypeelbydesign.ca