

Healthy Canada by Design – Evaluation Highlights

What is Healthy Canada by Design (HCBD)?

- HCBD is a joint initiative of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, the Urban Public Health Network, the Canadian Institute of Planners, the Canadian Institute of Transportation Engineers, the National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy, 11 regional health authorities and public health organizations across Canada, several universities, and two NGOs.
- Phase 2 – evaluated here – was funded by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer from 2012 to 2014.
- HCBD aimed to bolster Canada's capacity to prevent chronic diseases by creating built environments that support and foster physical activity and active transportation.

What was done in HCBD?

- Six regional public health organizations worked with an embedded Planning Facilitator (trained urban planner) and a healthy built environment expert to: identify strategic opportunities to influence land use and transportation planning processes at a local level; facilitate relationship-building with planning and transportation professionals; and build capacity among public health professionals on how to influence built environment policy. They worked to bring health considerations into local policies through documents such as Official Plans, Active Building Design Criteria, Complete Streets Policies and Implementation Guidelines, and Active Transportation Plans.
- National organizations, universities and other partners conducted projects to address gaps in knowledge and experience.
- All partners were also part of a national community of practice that shared information, participated in peer to peer mentoring, and collaborated on KTE activities.

What results were achieved?

- **HCBD helped to accelerate the rate at which the participating organizations were able to influence local policies needed to create built environments that support physical activity** to lower risk of chronic disease. There was a durable net gain in the capacities of the public health organizations to work collaboratively with municipal and regional planning functions:
 - Public health organizations acquired a great deal of expertise about planning processes and the factors that influence planners' decisions.
 - Municipal planning departments gained new expertise about their role in shaping community health.
 - Tools were developed and adapted to support integration of health into planning processes.
 - New and deepened alliances were developed: between public health and municipal planning practitioners and with universities. Existing relationships were realigned in improved partnerships. Much was learned about alignments with the community/advocacy sector.
 - New regions and communities became engaged in process to improve their built environments.
- Achieving actual changes to the built environment is well beyond the time horizon of HCBD. Nonetheless, **changes in the enabling conditions for in healthy built environment policies and practices, attributable to HCBD, were documented.**