



HEALTH BY DESIGN

A Coalition Progress Report



Health by Design

creating built environments to foster healthy living

an ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH PROMOTION initiative

www.healthbydesignonline.org

HEALTH BY DESIGN *A Coalition Progress Report*





Letter from the Executive Director

On behalf of the Alliance for Health Promotion and its primary initiative, I am proud to report on the accomplishments of the Health by Design (HbD) coalition. Since its creation in August of 2006, HbD has played a leading role in the movement to support healthy, active living and environmental protection in Central Indiana and beyond. This report chronicles the efforts that HbD has made to-date in the areas of advocacy, education, and evaluation. Within these pages, you will learn more about why HbD's work is important, what we have accomplished, where we are headed, and how you can assist in building a healthier community.

Some of the highlights from our first few years include:

- Coordination of the quarterly Urban Planning Scholar Series
- Two full-day conferences
- Several published articles in various media outlets
- The addition of on-street bike lanes and increased requirements for building sidewalks in Marion County
- Development and implementation of a neighborhood walkability survey
- Significant advocacy work related to transit options and funding

Despite these successes and an increasing awareness of the benefits of healthy living, we still have a lot of work ahead of us. More than 65% of Central Indiana residents are overweight or obese, and nearly 25% do not engage in any physical activity in a given month. Although these are sobering facts, we are confident that there is much we can accomplish in the coming years with the momentum we have created.

HbD's success would not be possible without the financial commitment of the Marion County Health Department and the volunteer leadership, sponsorship support, and in-kind contributions of numerous other partner organizations. Thank you for your passion and participation!

Sincerely,

Kim Irwin, MPH, CHES
Executive Director
Alliance for Health Promotion

What is Health by Design?

Health by Design (HbD) is a coalition of community and transportation planners, designers, architects, builders, advocates, public and environmental health personnel, and citizens focused on creating a built environment that encourages physical activity and promotes well-being.

HbD works toward the integration of physical activity into the daily routine of Central Indiana residents. Rather than solely addressing obesity as an individual health problem, the coalition's effort focuses on how policy and systems change at the level of the built environment can promote healthy, active living.

Mission

The mission of HbD is to create an environment that promotes physical activity and protects the environment through education, advocacy, and action.

Priority Goals for HbD

- Increase walking, biking, and other public transit options
- Encourage land use decision-making that promotes public health
- Increase neighborhood, city, and regional connectivity
- Reduce dependency on automobiles

HbD Committees

There are three committees within the HbD coalition. Each committee focuses on a particular area of involvement.

- Policy and Advocacy: Explores policy options, recommends policy changes, and mobilizes coalition members and the general public to advocate for policies that support HbD priority goals.
- Education: Develops and delivers messages, educational programs, and events to increase understanding of how the built environment can positively (or adversely) impact community health.
- Evaluation: Collects information about the built environment and physical activity levels to support the need for progress toward the coalition's goals.

HbD Partners

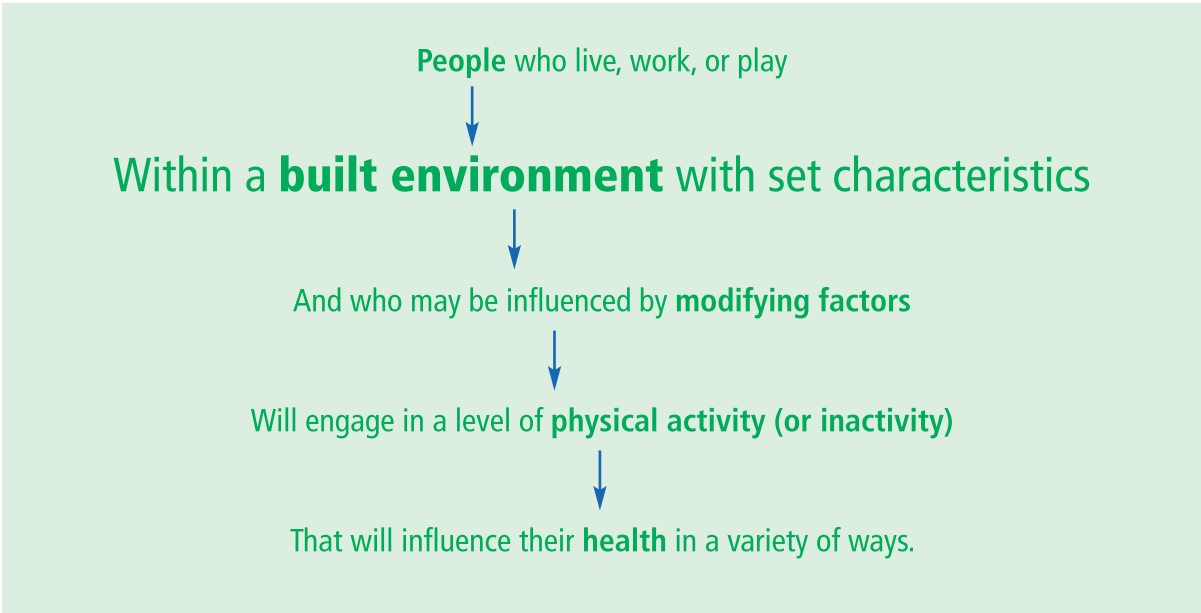
Since 2006, the HbD coalition has grown to include more than 450 members and 200 organizations. These partners provide significant assistance to the effort, and their passion leads to the fulfillment of our mission. Volunteer leadership has been invaluable throughout these early years of coalition formation and development, and HbD will forever be indebted for the time, energy, and dedication of many.



The Built Environment

The built environment refers to everything in a community that is built or modified by humans: the features and placement of the buildings where we live, work, learn, and shop; streets, sidewalks, trails, and pathways; parks and open space; as well as all the lights, signs, painted lines, and aesthetics. The key elements of the built environment, as it relates to physical activity, include urban design, land use, connectivity, and transportation options.

The framework below shows the interrelationship of several key factors that ultimately influence health outcomes. While each of these dimensions is important, it is at the level of the built environment that HbD seeks improvements.



Why is the Built Environment Important?

Over the past half century, physical activity has been engineered out of many parts of American life. The United States (U.S.) has become a society known for modern conveniences designed to improve quality of life and to make us more productive. An unintended side effect of these conveniences is an increasingly sedentary society.

Additionally, communities have expanded beyond the urban center and stretched into surrounding towns and villages creating large metropolitan areas. As a result, American society has become heavily reliant on automobiles. Over the past several decades, communities have been increasingly designed to only accommodate motor vehicle traffic, at the expense of safe and convenient options for walking, biking, and using transit. In turn, most Americans get little-to-no physical activity as part of their daily travels.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 150 minutes of physical activity each week. Walking or biking to school or work, and while completing daily activities and errands, make this goal more easily achievable. When citizens use public transit, they typically walk to stops, stations, and to/from their destination. However, barriers in the built environment often limit such options.

HbD is dedicated to reversing the inactivity trend among Hoosiers and adapting the built environment into one that promotes active, healthy living. This is in addition to the benefits of economic development, access, reduced congestion, safety, and community engagement that come with wise land use and mobility choices.

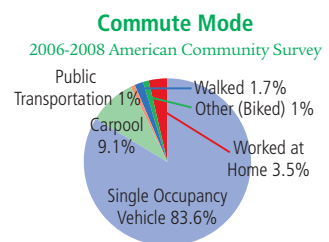
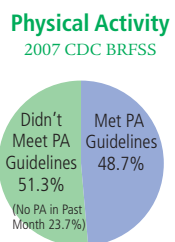
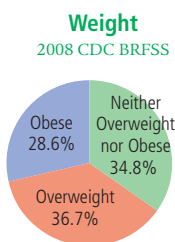
A Glimpse of the Issues

There are several measures of Central Indiana that can provide some indication of the impact of the built environment and how it may promote or limit physical activity.

- As the graphs on the opposite page illustrate, nearly two-thirds of residents in the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) are either overweight or obese and less than one-half meet physical activity guidelines.
- The vast majority of residents in the Indianapolis MSA drive alone to work; only 1% use public transit and less than 3% walk or bike to work.
- Within the City of Indianapolis, road miles outnumber sidewalk miles by a ratio of more than 2 to 1, and there are more than 40 road miles for every mile of bike lanes or paths.



- Only 4.8% of land in Indianapolis is used for parks, and the city spends \$47 per capita on park-related expenditures annually. These figures are each approximately half of the average among the 50 largest U.S. metro areas.
- Air quality in Central Indiana is poor. Indianapolis consistently ranks among the worst 25 cities in the nation for particle pollution; Marion and surrounding counties struggle to be in attainment of health-based standards for both fine particle and ground-level ozone pollution.
- In just one generation, the number of children walking or bicycling to school throughout the U.S. has dropped significantly, from approximately 50% in 1969 to just 15% in 2001; this trend is representative of Central Indiana, too.



Advocacy

The HbD Policy and Advocacy Committee explores policy options, recommends policy changes, and mobilizes coalition members and the general public to advocate for policies that support HbD priority goals.

Marion County Sidewalk Ordinance

HbD organized testimony and provided education to the Mayor and members of the City-County Council about the need to improve sidewalk infrastructure and the corresponding health and community benefits. The sidewalk amendment passed in April 2008 and has since resulted in both additional installations and funding for priority sidewalk projects.

Transit in Indiana

HbD helped organize grassroots efforts throughout the state to support improved transit and additional funding options, and has played a leadership role in the development of the Indiana Citizens' Alliance for Transit (ICAT). Additional efforts included creating fact sheets, authoring recruitment letters in favor of the locally preferred alternative, supporting IndyGo and the Central Indiana Regional Transit Authority, and communicating with state legislators and the governor about transit project options and funding.

Federal Authorization

HbD monitors activity and advocates for federal policies and funding priorities that support a balanced transportation system. These efforts have included meetings and communication with congressional members and staff. HbD is an active member of Transportation for America and other allied national organizations.

Complete Streets

HbD and several key partners are coordinating efforts to develop and implement state and local complete streets policies throughout Indiana. Complete streets are those designed and operated to enable safe access for all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation riders of all ages and abilities – in moving along and across roadways.

Education and Events

The HbD Education Committee develops and delivers messages, educational programs, and events to increase understanding of how the built environment can positively (or adversely) impact community health.

Mayor's Bike Ride

HbD worked with the Marion County Health Department and the City of Indianapolis Office of Sustainability to organize a bike ride event with Indianapolis Mayor Gregory Ballard. More than 12 partner organizations and 35 volunteers helped to plan and manage the May 2009 event; over 700 individuals registered to participate and 150 helmets were given away to promote safety. The family-friendly event celebrated recently installed bike lanes on Michigan and New York Streets through downtown Indianapolis, provided information and resources, and helped promote cycling as a legitimate form of transportation. More than 30 print and TV news stories, ads, newsletters, and websites promoted and covered the ride.



Dr. Virginia Caine, Director, Marion County Health Department and Mayor Gregory Ballard, City of Indianapolis

In addition to the Mayor's Bike Ride, HbD has been very active in the general promotion of bike lanes and trails, safe biking, and other related issues.



Conferences

HbD has hosted two statewide conferences with large, diverse audiences. The conference titles were *Balanced Transportation for Healthier Communities* and *Physical Activity and the Built Environment: What Works?* Highlighted research, case studies, policy initiatives, and speaker panels enhanced the professional expertise of HbD partners.



Presentations and Exhibits

Since its inception, HbD has given more than 25 presentations and exhibited at dozens of conferences and events to local, state, and national audiences, most notably the 2008 annual meeting of the American Public Health Association.

Other examples include the annual meeting of the Indiana Public Health Association, INShape Indiana Health Summits, Indianapolis Bike to Work Day events, Indiana Black Expo Summer Celebration, Dump the Pump, state and regional conferences of the American Planning Association, and Senator Richard Lugar's Annual Health Fair.

Media

HbD has worked through local media to educate the public and influence decision-making about needed changes in the built environment. HbD priorities were discussed in five news articles and one editorial in *The Indianapolis Star*. Coalition members have published four Letters to the Editor, participated in three news conferences, and represented HbD on three television and radio news segments. Ten partners' newsletter articles have addressed HbD's work and the links between community design, transportation, and health.

Urban Planning Scholar Series

The Urban Planning Scholar Series (UPSS) creates a vision for land use and transportation planning in Indiana. UPSS launched in April of 2006 and became an official education program of HbD in 2008. Each event is designed to raise awareness of frequently overlooked issues in community and transportation planning and to educate professionals and policy-makers about the critical effects on public health, the environment, and quality of life.

Past UPSS topics and speakers have included:

- Health Impact Assessment (Candace Rutt)
- Complete Streets (Randy Neufeld)
- Walkable Communities (Dan Burden)
- The Benefits of Transit and Transportation Options (Vukan R. Vuchic, Kumares Sinha, Robert Bullard, and Robert B. Cervero)



The fall 2009 UPSS event, *Neighborhoods: Inspiring Place, Improving Health*, was part of the 14th annual Spirit & Place Festival and featured Ethan Kent, of Project for Public Spaces.

Evaluation

The HbD Evaluation Committee collects information about the built environment and physical activity levels to support the need for progress toward the coalition's goals.

Baseline Report

The first research project for HbD resulted in the report *Mapping the Intersection of Physical Activity and the Built Environment: A Baseline Profile of Indianapolis*. This report examines the relationship between the built environment and the ability of Indianapolis area residents to be physically active in their daily routines.



The profile report introduces best practice strategies for helping citizens become more physically active and how community-scale urban design and land use policies can help achieve improvements. Other areas of the report include demographic information; travel habits and connectivity; population density; land use statistics; modifying factors such as weather, crime, and air quality; and physical activity statistics and rates of chronic disease.

Walkability Assessment

With invaluable assistance from graduate students at Ball State University's College of Architecture and Planning and the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, the HbD Evaluation Committee developed and piloted a walkability assessment toolkit. This project helps raise awareness of the benefits of walkability, allows citizens to evaluate the conditions in their own neighborhoods, and provides guidance for using the results to advocate for improvements.

ICE Survey

In December of 2008, HbD conducted a survey, in partnership with IndyGo, to learn more about the travel habits of IndyGo Commuter Express (ICE) riders and to examine the public health and policy implications of these findings. The analysis looked at riders' related physical activity, cost savings, and reduced transportation-related pollution.

Get Involved and Contribute

HbD welcomes your enthusiasm and participation as we work toward achieving our priority goals. Your contributions – whether volunteer, in-kind, or financial – help us educate citizens, community leaders, and decision-makers about the important links between community design, transportation, health, and quality of life.

For additional information, to get involved, or to contribute resources toward our effort, please contact us or visit us online at www.healthbydesignonline.org. Thank you for your support as we move forward in creating built environments to foster healthy living!



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