

## **Executive Summary**

Nationally, there is a growing recognition among public agencies, decision-makers, advocacy groups and other stakeholders that land use planning and all policy decisions significantly impact the physical and social environments that influence health. The assessment of potential positive and negative health impacts of developments and planning initiatives up front, including the potential distribution of these impacts by race, can help inform planning, development and policy decisions.

With funding from the Boston Strategic Alliance for Health grant, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) formed a “Health in All Policies” Workgroup, with the goal of partnering with other City agencies to ensure that human health impacts and racial equity are more deliberately factored into all development, planning and policymaking processes, through the development and use of analytical tools such as Health Impact Assessments.

The purpose of this report is to describe the value and opportunities for more deliberately incorporating health and racial equity into City of Boston planning processes through an interagency working group. One goal of this work will be to explore the potential for applying Health Impact Assessments (HIA) to developments, plans, and policies. A HIA is a tool that uses process and methods to systematically judge the potential effects of a policy, plan, or project on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population, as well as identify appropriate actions and recommendations to manage those effects.

As an initial step in advancing the conversation about health and planning with partner agencies, BPHC retained an outside consultant, EnviroHealth Consulting, to conduct interviews with City agencies and organizations and review participant feedback from a series of open events convened by BPHC and City partners. Both revealed overwhelming support for bringing health into the planning process and that many City partners are interested in more tools, training, expanded partnerships and continuing a dialogue to identify and implement further action steps.

This report summarizes best practices for incorporating health and planning from other cities, and recommends both short and long-term action steps. Some highlights include:

### Short Term Recommendations

- Expand the HIA work group outside BPHC to include other disciplines or create an additional work group to support an interdisciplinary approach.
- Hold future training/brown bag lunches for future presentations and to keep agencies and those most directly working on these issues up to date about development projects.
- Work to incorporate health language in master plans or request for proposals (RFP) or other planning and design documents.
- Partner with Massachusetts Department of Public Health to participate in regional HIA trainings.
- Improve data sharing across agencies.
- Establish a contact person within each agency, with clearly defined roles, particularly within BPHC.

### Long Term Recommendations

- Support changes to policies that restrict healthy eating and active living policy improvements.
- Consider using the Minimum Elements and Practice Standards for Health Impact Assessment, Version 2, November 2010 when beginning to conduct HIAs.
- Obtain other agency input on how to best insert additional health considerations into other agencies' updates or current guidelines
  - Prepare checklist or other suggested guidance as many agencies are in the process of revising policies (Environment, Transportation).
- Conduct survey of planners within the BRA, DND, BTM, about level and types of comments provided by the BPHC to identify ways to improve the usefulness and effectiveness of engagement, and to build relationships with the planners.
- Conduct evaluation of completed HIAs to demonstrate their value, and how outcomes and process can be improved and conducting HIAs can be more effective.

- Establish internships at local universities for graduate or undergraduate students working on planning, landscape architecture, health, etc. to assist with HIAs, etc.
- Consider the use and customization of the Healthy Development Measurement Tool (HDMT) as a tool for BPHC and broader City of Boston when incorporating health into planning.