

Design for Health Comprehensive Plan Review Checklists

Design for Health, 2007

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These Comprehensive Plan Review Checklists summarize the key points of the Design for Health (DFH) background and health impact assessment (HIA) materials. Topics match the plan elements required by the Twin Cities Metropolitan Council but are relevant in many locations.

The questions are based on research summaries that are provided on the Design for Health web site (see below). At the end of each Key Questions Research Summary document there is a set of thresholds and associations that provide the basis for both these checklists. Two of the Design for Health companion health impact assessment tools—the Preliminary Checklist and Threshold Analysis—are also based on these summaries.

These checklists were designed for comprehensive land use plans, transportation plans, and neighborhood plans. They are appropriate for different kinds of locations—metropolitan or not. Interested readers might also look at the Threshold Analysis HIA that has similar questions and provides some discussion of rural situations.

More Information

- Health topics from air quality to noise:
<http://www.designforhealth.net/techassistance/generalhealthissues.html>
- Research summary sheets that explain the research basis of the checklist:
<http://www.designforhealth.net/techassistance/researchsummaries.html>
- Health impact assessment information including links to the Design for Health Preliminary Checklist, Rapid Assessment, and Threshold Analysis:
<http://www.designforhealth.net/techassistance/healthimpact.html>

Introduction Added June, 2009

Design for Health Checklists for Comprehensive Plan Elements

Land Use Plan

Questions for All Sections

	Yes	No	NA	Comment
Is there explicit language connecting the plan element to human health?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Where are there areas where explicit language could be added?				
What other health topics, if any, could be incorporated into this section?				
Is there an implementation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Essential to Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Are all residential areas planned for an average of 4 (preferably 7) units per gross acre?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Accessibility
Is regular transit service planned for all residential and employment areas (preferably within 1200m of all residential areas).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Accessibility
Are all residential areas, schools, day care facilities, playgrounds and sports fields required to be more than at least 200 m (656 ft) from a major road (AADT>40,000)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Air Quality
Is the off-street trail system planned to serve all residential areas, preferably with 400-600m of all residential areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Physical Activity
Are planned residential uses located in areas with existing water and sewer infrastructure or where it is planned to occur with development?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Water Quality
Are there existing or planned vegetated buffers along all water bodies (preferably 20m to 50m) to prevent non-point pollution from impervious surfaces?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Water Quality
Do planning policies for redevelopment include evaluation of lead-bearing substances in exposed surfaces of dwelling units, child care facilities, schools, or recreation facilities used by children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Environment and Housing
Are there plans to ensure that there are supermarkets/fruit and vegetable stores located throughout the municipality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Food
Are complete street, shared street and traffic calming concepts incorporated into the future land use plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Safety
Are there plans or policies to provide adequate street lighting along all major streets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Safety

Design for Health Checklists for Comprehensive Plan Elements

Land Use Plan

Essential to Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Are at least 50% of residential units affordable to persons at or below the medium household income, and/or is there at least a 20% ownership and 20% rental unit housing mix?					Social Capital
Does the land use plan incorporate neighborhood commercial and/or mixed-used development to encourage transportation related walking?					Accessibility, Physical Activity
Are mixed-use centers included as alternatives to the conventional suburban style office and research park type employment center?					Accessibility
Does the plan allow for clustering of different activities together (to make it easier to access a variety of services at one stop via public transit, bicycling, walking, and by car)?					Accessibility
Does the plan incorporate a variety of housing densities? Variety of housing cost?					Social Capital
Does the plan provide separation between heavy industrial (potentially contaminating) uses and residential uses?					Environment and Housing
Does the plan provide separation between natural resources and potentially contaminating land uses or businesses?					Environment and Housing; Water Quality
Does the plan identify brownfield locations that may be opportunities for infill development if cleaned up?					Environment and Housing
Are there policies or incentives that regulate the brownfield cleanup?					Environment and Housing
Does the plan link existing and future housing development with employment and services?					Accessibility
Does the plan identify existing and plan for future opportunities for local food production (i.e. community gardens, protection of agricultural land)?					Food
Has a community food security assessment (USDA ERS) been created to establish barriers to healthy food, income levels, lost farmland, community gardens and farmer's market availability within urbanized areas?					Food

Design for Health Checklists for Comprehensive Plan Elements

Land Use Plan

Good for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Are there policies that encourage the inclusion and maintenance of the natural environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Mental Health
Are there policies that require that all developments have views of greenery for mental health benefits?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Mental Health
Have principles of CPTED been incorporated into the plan to create a sense of safety? (i.e. information and orientation, interaction and socialization, ownership and stewardship, seeing and being seen, land use and design, activity and programming, management and maintenance)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Safety
Has a safety checklist been consulted for standards on pedestrians and bicyclists, health/accessibility, motor-vehicle and transit riders, building, home and workplace, public facilities, and the natural environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Safety, Accessibility
Have educational materials been distributed to farmers, developers, landowners and the general public about the options and alternatives to sprawl (i.e. TDR, PDR, conservation subdivisions)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Water Quality
Are ground and surface water protected through tools like a reservoir protection overlay zone, prohibiting storage, treatment, production, or disposal of federally-recognized hazardous materials (excluding dry cleaning, photo processing, service stations, or junkyards)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Water Quality, Environment and Housing

Design for Health Checklists for Comprehensive Plan Elements

Transportation Plan

Questions for All Sections

	Yes	No	NA	Comment
Is there explicit language connecting the plan element to human health?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Where are there areas where explicit language could be added?				
What other health topics, if any, could be incorporated into this section?				
Is there an implementation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Essential for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Is residential and commercial density discussed in this chapter to encourage walking, bicycling and transit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Accessibility
Is regular transit service planned for all residential and employment areas (preferably within 1200m of all residential areas).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Accessibility
Does the transportation plan incorporate neighborhood commercial and/or mixed-used development to encourage transportation related walking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Accessibility, Physical Activity
For pedestrian/bicyclist safety, are speed limits set at or below 35 mph (optimally 20 mph) for 70-90% of streets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Safety, Physical Activity
Are there plans or policies to provide adequate street lighting along all major streets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Safety
Are complete street, shared street and traffic calming concepts incorporated into the future transportation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Safety
Is the off-street trail system planned to serve all residential areas, preferably within 400-600m of all residential areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Physical Activity
Is there a multimodal transportation plan that connects all residential areas to services (i.e. employment centers, grocery stores, hospitals, etc)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Accessibility

Good for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Are there a variety of nearby destinations for residents (e.g., employment, health care, grocery stores, etc.) and can these destinations be reached by a variety of transportation modes (e.g., bicycling, walking, automobile, transit)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Accessibility
Are there policies/plans aimed at supporting cycling and walking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Physical Activity
Are there policies/plans that prioritize the transportation needs of underserved populations (e.g., seniors, children, persons with disabilities, low-income residents, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Accessibility

Design for Health Checklists for Comprehensive Plan Elements

Transportation Plan

Good for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Are there plans to create transit oriented developments (TOD) districts (or overlay zones)?					Accessibility
Are the TODs incorporated into a multimodal transportation system?					Accessibility
Does a TOD enable use of Planned Unit Developments to provide the flexibility to provide mixed uses closes to transit station areas and residential areas?					Accessibility
Does the plan use pedestrian overlay zones?					Accessibility
Do the pedestrian overlay zones include polices that encourage walking and bicycling through streetscape amenities, such as benches, trash receptacles, planters, pole lights, kiosks, telephones, newsstands, drinking fountains and bike racks?					Accessibility, Physical Activity
Are there urban design guidelines that relate to sidewalk width and materials, lighting, signage, landscaping, way finding, crosswalks, curb ramps, refuge islands, corner radii, and signals?					Accessibility, Safety
Do pedestrian plans provide protection through parallel parking, bollards and street trees as features?					Safety, Mental Health, Physical Activity
Are there traffic calming measures incorporated into the plan?					Safety
Do they include: altering the terrain vertically (i.e. speed bumps, road texture), altering the terrain horizontally (i.e. traffic circles, roundabouts), and altering the terrain linearly (half-closures, cul-de-sac)?					Safety

Design for Health Checklists for Comprehensive Plan Elements

Water Resources

Questions for All Sections

	Yes	No	NA	Comment
Is there explicit language connecting the plan element to human health?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Where are there areas where explicit language could be added?				
What other health topics, if any, could be incorporated into this section?				
Is there an implementation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all residential areas planned for an average of 4 (preferably 7) units per gross acre?				

Essential for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Are planned residential uses located in areas with existing water and sewer infrastructure or where it is planned to occur with development?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Water Quality
Are there existing or planned vegetated buffers along all water bodies (preferably 20m to 50m) to prevent non-point pollution from impervious surfaces?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Water Quality
Are industrial parks and roads located away from (down gradient or side gradient) from well areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Water Quality
Are EPA ground- and surface-water protection overlay districts created using land use geographic zone categorizations (i.e. Zone 1 – within 1000 feet of the public well supply)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Water Quality

Good for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Are brownfields inventoried through a shared database providing liability resources? Does the plan identify or inventory brownfield locations? Are there policies or incentives that regulate the cleanup?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Environment and Housing
Does the plan provide separation between potentially contaminating uses and surface water bodies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Environment and Housing, Water Quality
Are GIS maps consulted to overlay brownfield locations (DNR provided) with current land use and watershed maps to identify areas in danger of pollution?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Environment and Housing, Water Quality
Has water quality been integrated into traditional planning tools like environmental resources and conservation, public infrastructure, parks and open space?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Water Quality

Design for Health Checklists for Comprehensive Plan Elements

Water Resources

Good for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Are there development and landscape design standards for water (i.e. green roofs, encouraging rain gardens, buffer thresholds, ordinances for pervious pavement)?					Water Quality
Will educational programs be used such as the NEMO (Nonpoint, Education, for Municipal Officials) Program?					Water Quality
Are there surface-runoff policies/plans that require diversion and collection of water to natural drainage and filtration areas (detention ponds, infiltration pits, swales berms, green strip filters, gravel beds and French drains)?					Water Quality
Are parking lots and driveways required to use porous materials and containment strategies (avoid isolated permeable areas, grades of property to divert flow to permeable area, etc.)?					Water Quality
Are decentralized wastewater treatment systems addressed through regulations about design options, site conditions, operations and maintenance requirements, inspections monitoring and financial support (EPA 2005)?					Water Quality
Are density limitations assigned to septic tanks and drain fields?					Water Quality
Are ground and surface water protected through tools like a reservoir protection overlay zone, prohibiting storage, treatment, production, or disposal of federally-recognized hazardous materials (excluding dry cleaning, photo processing, sevice station, or junkyards)?					Water Quality
Are site development reviews provided for developments within 1000 feet of wells (site conditions, management practices, minimized grading/vegetation removal)?					Water Quality
Are public education and incentive for water quality provided, such as recreational water resources guide, incentives and technical resources for rain gardens, and septic tank management program loans?					Water Quality

Design for Health Checklists for Comprehensive Plan Elements

Parks and Open Space

Questions for All Sections

	Yes	No	NA	Comment
Is there explicit language connecting the plan element to human health?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Where are there areas where explicit language could be added?				
What other health topics, if any, could be incorporated into this section?				
Is there an implementation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Essential for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Is there a tree planting/tree canopy plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Mental Health
Are there policies that require that all developments have views of greenery for mental health benefits?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Mental Health
Are all existing and planned residential areas located with 600m (preferably 400m) of playing areas, parks, and trails?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Physical Activity
Is adequate lighting required in parks so that pedestrians on paths see other pedestrians at least 200 meters away?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Safety

Good for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Does the plan provide for a variety of natural areas that can accommodate a variety of uses (parks, plazas, landscaped areas) ranging from highly maintained to more wild areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Mental Health
Are greenways incorporated to provide natural, non-motorized open space corridors (often following roadways, ridge tops and waterways)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Physical Activity
Does the plan require that at least a small amount of green space be provided for all development?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Mental Health

Design for Health Checklists for Comprehensive Plan Elements

Urbanization, Redevelopment, Economic Development

Questions for All Sections

	Yes	No	NA	Comment
Is there explicit language connecting the plan element to human health?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Where are there areas where explicit language could be added?				
What other health topics, if any, could be incorporated into this section?				
Is there an implementation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Essential for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Are there plans to ensure that there are supermarkets/fruit and vegetable stores located throughout the municipality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Food
Does planning policy for redevelopment include evaluation of lead-bearing substances in exposed surfaces of dwelling units, child care facilities, schools, or recreation facilities used by children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Environment and Housing
Are at least 50% of residential units affordable to persons at or below the medium household income, and/or is there at least a 20% ownership and 20% rental unit housing mix in a neighborhood or census tract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Social Capital
Are polluting sources regulated locally and well as by state and federal governments (evaluating businesses that disproportionately pollute within neighborhoods like dry cleaners, automotive paint shops, manufacturing)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Air Quality
Are there existing or planned transit stops for all residential areas in urbanizing or redeveloping areas (ideally within 1200m)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Accessibility
Are all residential areas planned for an average of 4 (preferably 7) units per gross acre?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Accessibility
Is a tree canopy provided in parks, open space, and streetscapes to establish a 50% to 100% canopy coverage in the redevelopment area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Mental Health
Are all residential areas, schools, day care facilities, playgrounds and sports fields required to be more than at least 200 m (656 ft) from a major road?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Air Quality

Design for Health Checklists for Comprehensive Plan Elements

Urbanization, Redevelopment, Economic Development

Good for Health

	Yes	No	NA	Comment	DFH Topic
Has a community food security assessment (USDA ERS) been created to establish barriers to healthy food, income levels, lost farmland, community gardens and farmer's market availability within urbanized areas?					Food
Are there appropriate ordinances or policies used for mixed-use design of neighborhood, village, town, and city centers?					Accessibility
Have educational materials been distributed to farmers, developers, landowners and the general public about the options and alternatives to sprawl (i.e. TDR, PDR, conservation subdivisions)?					Water Quality
Does the plan include "buy local" campaigns supported by marketing efforts, and local food distribution?					Food
Is public financing provided for infill development and alternative uses for contaminated sites?					Environment and Housing
Will Environmental Impact Assessments and public information disclosure about toxics be used as tools to mitigate health hazards?					Environment and Housing
Are dangers of heavy metals, inorganic solvents, pesticides, crowding and transportation noise, considerations when evaluating housing quality?					Environment and Housing
Is water quality connected to planning for industrial centers and roads in relation to well location?					Water Quality
Are brownfields inventoried through a shared database providing liability resources?					Environment and Housing
Does the plan identify brownfield locations that may be opportunities for infill development if cleaned up?					Environment and Housing
Are there policies or incentives to encourage the development of brownfield sites?					Environment and Housing
Are assistance programs provided for lead-paint testing, removal, coverall or tenant relocation provided?					Environment and Housing
Have principles of CPTED been incorporated into the plan to create a sense of safety? (i.e. information and orientation, interaction and socialization, ownership and stewardship, seeing and being seen, land use and design, activity and programming, management and maintenance)?					Safety