



March 31, 2011 Workshop Report: Executive Summary

Housing + Transportation + Health:
Connecting Ideas and Practice
for Healthier Communities



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Copies of this Executive Summary and the full workshop report can be obtained at:
http://www.act-trans.ubc.ca/hcdc_event.htm

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Housing + Transportation + Health:
Connecting Ideas and Practice for Healthier Communities
March 31, 2011 Workshop
Surrey, BC

Introduction and Purpose

The March 31, 2011 workshop titled “Housing + Transportation + Health: Connecting Ideas and Practice for Healthier Communities”, was held in Surrey, British Columbia. This was the second of two such workshops held in early 2011 with the goal of increasing awareness and understanding of healthy built environment (HBE) concepts. The full report summarizes the events of this workshop. It is intended to share information about how this particular workshop was planned, the agenda and logistics, as well as the main themes and outcomes of the event for those unable to attend, and those who may be considering planning a similar type of event in the future.

Topics outlined in the full report include: workshop objectives; audience and participation; agenda; key messages and themes; summary of evaluation; next steps and follow up actions; and, appendices, including but not limited to information about event logistics such as the invitation list, funding and budget, location and workshop materials.

Overview

The workshop topic “Housing + Transportation + Health” was selected because it is a key multi-sector challenge in the region for affordability, equity, energy efficiency, and health. The workshop was developed for a diverse audience of professionals whose work impacts housing, transportation and health.

An existing multi-agency group, the Healthy Community Design Collaborative (HCDC), organized the workshop. The HCDC includes representation from the three lower mainland health authorities (Fraser Health, Vancouver Coastal Health, and Provincial Health Services Authority), UBC, TransLink and Metro Vancouver¹. It was recently formed to enable, support, and maintain the development of healthy, low-carbon, and equitable communities across British Columbia’s Lower Mainland, and is intending to do more work on this theme throughout 2011.

The workshop was held in the City of Surrey. This quickly growing and dynamic city is particularly relevant to the workshop topic due to its opportunities, challenges, and regional context. The City of Surrey is currently working on projects and initiatives with many agencies (e.g. housing, transportation, and health) and provides rich context for practical discussion and application.

Of the 150 participants, 136 came in-person and 14 participated by webinar. Participants were from the following geographic regions: 59 from FH; 27 from VCH; 10 from VIHA (via webinar); 25 Regional/both; and, 29 neither or don’t know. 93 people stayed to participate in the afternoon session. Registration for the afternoon session reached capacity very quickly and a waiting list had to be developed.

The target audiences (i.e. those to whom invitations were sent) were professionals in urban planning, housing, public health, sustainability, transportation, engineering, research, policy, consulting, government, and academia. Among the 136 people who attended in-person, there were a wide range of sectors represented: 44 health; 35 community planning & social planning; 22 transportation (planning or engineering); 9 housing; 6 research; as well as, 20 other & unknown.

¹ HCDC members include the following: Dr. Helena Swinkels (FH), Claire Gram (VCH), Tannis Cheadle (PHSA), Dr. Larry Frank & Andrea Procyk (UBC Active Transportation Lab), Lyle Walker (TransLink), Janet Kreda & Lee-Ann Garnett (Metro Vancouver).

The agenda for the day progressed as follows: beginning with a presentation of large scale ideas and concepts; moving on to discussion of regional relevance and roles; and finally discussion of organizations' and individuals' sphere of action to create better connections and on-the-ground results in communities. A theme that was woven throughout the workshop was that true collaboration requires that we think differently about challenges and problems which often results in a reallocation of available resources. Participants expressed strong interest in building relationships and alliances between different sectors and particular individuals who they can connect with in the future to create change and benefit.

Workshop Objectives

The individual agenda items were chosen specifically to address each of the workshop objectives. Preliminary evaluation findings, informal feedback and high attendance numbers suggest that the workshop was a success in terms of choosing a topic of relevance and interest to a wide variety of people and providing a venue to advance the workshop objectives.

The workshop objectives were as follows:

- To explore the interconnection between housing, transportation and health.
- To introduce the Healthy Community Design Collaborative (HCDC) theme for 2011: housing, transportation and health.
- To provide networking opportunities for participants.
- To provide participants with key resources on the theme that they might refer to in their everyday work.
- To provide participants with knowledge about the topic, lessons learned from other programs in the region, a tool for assessing their organization's readiness and capacity to collaborate on healthy built environment work, and an opportunity to apply knowledge from the workshop to real-life collaborative planning topics.

Key Messages

Some of the key messages highlighted at the event through the presentations, panel discussion and small group work include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The health and environmental costs of NOT investing in transit-oriented communities are astronomical; given the magnitude of our transportation costs (\$30 trillion over the next 30 years in this region), we should invest wisely to create attractive and healthy communities
- Our collective resources are often hidden, scattered and poorly utilized - to remedy this, housing and transportation policies need to be combined and collaboratively created and implemented
- Agreement regarding the need to "do things differently" - suggestions include:
 - ✓ Educating the public re: the "real" cost of housing once transportation, time and quality of life are factored in
 - ✓ Designing creative housing solutions to increase density - home ownership is an addiction in North America
 - ✓ Supplying more affordable housing near transit – demand will only increase with an aging population
 - ✓ Investing a proportion of public transit dollars into communities that demonstrate transit oriented development (performance-based approach)
 - ✓ "Playing the game" more effectively with the private sector developers - an important instrument of change toward healthy and affordable communities

Tools exist to support all sectors in working more collaboratively with each other towards healthier built environments and some of those were highlighted in the afternoon. Also featured were two successful local case studies. While they described very different projects, both provided information on lessons learned and challenges faced.

Networking opportunities were provided over lunch and throughout the workshop so that participants could meet new people and make important contacts.

InSource, a Vancouver-based health services and population health research group, was hired by PHSA to conduct an evaluation of this workshop, as well as the workshop conducted in Vernon on Feb 24, 2011 for Interior and Northern Health. After this event, participants were asked to complete feedback forms, and the planning team met to debrief. These processes combined with a participant observation conducted by a skilled evaluator formed the basis of a full evaluation report compiled by InSource.

Some of the key evaluation findings include the following:

- The overall success of the event as rated by the participants was high – a great majority of participants rated the event quality as good or excellent (83%, n=59/71).
- An overwhelming majority of participants rated the morning agenda very positively. Most of the workshop participants also rated the afternoon presentations positively, although not to the same extent that they did for the morning. The majority of participants also found the afternoon exercises valuable. Overall, the evaluation determined that the workshop was successful and met its stated objectives.
- It was also concluded that the workshop was successful at achieving the overarching short-term objective articulated in the Health 201 project proposal which was to increase awareness, understanding and skill amongst planners with respect to healthy built environment concepts as measured by the following indicators:
 - ✓ Increased awareness and understanding of the link between health and the built environment
 - ✓ Increased knowledge and understanding of health's role and contribution in creating healthier built environments
 - ✓ Increased awareness of strategies and recognition of opportunities to work with local health professionals
- The majority of respondents (76%, n=54/71) indicated that they are likely to use the knowledge and links from the workshop; and 80% (n=57/71) said they are likely to participate in events similar to this one.
- In response to an open-ended question about what participants intended to implement, three main themes emerged: 1) developing their relationships and networks; 2) working toward changes in the built environment; and, 3) pursuing learning.
- In the feedback form, participants were also asked open-ended questions about what other topics they would like to learn more about, what additional research might be needed, and what tools need to be developed.

The full evaluation report includes more information about learnings from the event, as well as a thorough list of considerations for those wishing to deliver similar events in the future. A list of workshop participants is also included in the full workshop report.

See www.act-trans.ubc.ca/hcdc_event.htm for copies of both documents.

The interest and relevance of this topic and event were demonstrated through strong attendance rates and thoughtful engagement by participants on the day, as well as strong evaluation feedback. The workshop planning team will be meeting to identify next steps for events to build on the interest and momentum generated by this successful workshop.