

# LOOKING AT POLICIES THROUGH A HEALTH LENS



Good health doesn't start just at the doctor's office. Where we live, learn, work, and play can influence healthy behaviors.

An Institute of Medicine workshop explored how **different sectors can work together** to advance their own aims while supporting behaviors intended to lead to better health.

SEE HOW POLICIES CAN IMPACT HOW PHYSICALLY ACTIVE WE ARE:

While an individual can take steps to change her behavior—for example, to exercise more—it takes individuals and organizations working together to reshape the physical environment, such as through **policies** related to playgrounds and reliable public transit, to help **create healthy, vibrant neighborhoods**.

**WHICH POLICIES COULD HELP YOUR COMMUNITY PUT HEALTH ON THE MAP?**

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## 1 TRANSPORTATION

Sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic lights and bike paths can increase kids' physical activity by allowing them to walk or cycle to school. For example, kids that walk or bike to school instead of being driven can get 16 more minutes of physical activity each day.<sup>1</sup>

**Policy examples could include:** land use planning, "complete streets" (e.g., with sidewalks, crosswalks), transit-oriented development.

## 2 SCHOOLS

Mandatory physical education classes can increase physical activity by about 23 minutes per day.<sup>1</sup>

**Policy examples could include:** integration of physical activity across the curriculum, school revitalization, school redesign (e.g., green playgrounds), "joint use agreements" (e.g., of school playgrounds).

## 3 ENVIRONMENT & PARKS

Being close to parks and walking trails—especially those with nice scenery—can increase people's level of physical activity.<sup>2</sup>

**Policy examples could include:** urban forestry, trails projects, air quality, water management and quality.

## 4 NEIGHBORHOODS

Neighborhoods where homes, stores, businesses, and recreational facilities are all close together are associated with increased walking.<sup>2</sup>

**Policy examples could include:** inclusionary zoning, affordable housing, economic development, mixed use development.

NOTE: This graphic lists statements and policy examples suggested by individual participants in a workshop hosted by the IOM Roundtable on Population Health on September 28, 2013. Statements, recommendations, and opinions expressed—other than those with source information (below)—are those of the individual participants and are not necessarily endorsed or verified by the IOM or the roundtable, and should not be construed as reflecting any group consensus.

SOURCES: <sup>1</sup> IOM. 2013. Educating the student body: Taking physical activity and physical education to school. <sup>2</sup> IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2005. Does the built environment influence physical activity? : Examining the evidence.

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