



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

Health

An Emerging Issue for Regional Councils



NARC

Building Regional Communities

National Association of Regional Councils

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Regional councils across the nation have begun to address public health in a systematic and effective way. They are examining the built environment and its impact on cities, counties, and the residents who live there – and then developing programs and policies to address many of the health consequences that arise from living in such an environment.

Regional council work has been driven by two considerations: (1) planning for future development to improve public health and (2) mitigating the negative consequences of the existing built environment.

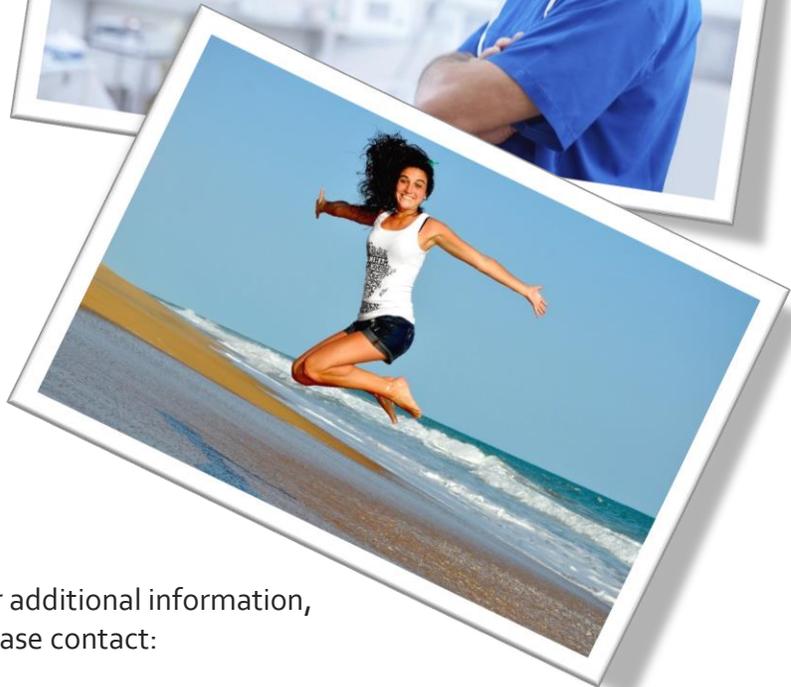
Regional councils across the country are taking the following steps to improve health outcomes:

- ✓ Developing transportation plans that ensure greater pedestrian safety.
- ✓ Planning for and implementing bicycle paths that enable residents to commute to work using alternative forms of transportation.
- ✓ Looking at ways to address traffic congestion to improve air quality and reduce stress.
- ✓ Exploring multiple strategies, including working with local agriculture to reduce fertilizer runoff for improved water quality.
- ✓ Working on strategies to provide better health care to its rural residents, including the use of telemedicine to get health care services to people residing in remote areas.
- ✓ Supporting healthy eating programs and educating residents on where they can access healthy local foods and how they can improve their overall health.
- ✓ Increasing access to community resources to ensure better health.
- ✓ Working with local officials to address the long-term shortage of affordable housing, ensuring lower income individuals and families have access to a safe, dependable, and stable home.

The diversity and complexity of responses by regional councils demonstrate the commitment they have made to ensuring that the cities and counties they serve, and the residents who live there, have access to a broad range of elements that contribute to the health and well-being of the entire region.

To ensure that regional councils continue to have the flexibility to address public health, NARC urges Congress to:

- ✓ Recognize that regional councils can very effectively deliver health services to their member cities and counties in a cost-effective and efficient way;
- ✓ Enact legislation that includes sufficient flexibility for states and localities to designate regional councils as the provider of health-related services;
- ✓ Direct the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to involve regions in national health policy decisions;
- ✓ Support programs, policies, and practices that encourage and facilitate healthy living and appropriate behavioral change; and
- ✓ Enhance federal assistance and increase funding to local governments for continuous health planning and services.



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