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HEALTH ASSESSMENT TOOL 2

HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES CHECKLIST (HOC) FOR SITES, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND TOWNS



Photo by Ann Forsyth

Version 1.2

The HEALTH AND PLACES INITIATIVE (HAPI) investigates how to create healthier cities in the future, with a specific emphasis on China. Bringing together experts from the Harvard Graduate School of Design (HGSD) and the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH), it creates a forum for understanding the multiple issues that face cities in light of rapid urbanization and an aging population worldwide.

Health and Places Initiative
<http://research.gsd.harvard.edu/hapi/>
Harvard Graduate School of Design

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INTRODUCTION

WHY USE THIS TOOL?

According to the classic Gothenburg Consensus Paper, Health Impact Assessments (HIA)s are a “combination of procedures, methods, and tools by which a policy, program, or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population” (European Centre for Health Policy, 1999). We use the broader term health assessment (HA) for this tool, to indicate that it can be used in a variety of situations including evaluating existing places, not only proposed policies, programs, or projects¹.

A checklist tool helps you identify areas of concern and of potential benefit. For a user familiar with the plan or place it allows them to identify areas where it could be improved.

This tool is focused on urban development and redevelopment at a site and neighborhood scale in core cities, suburban areas, and towns. It can be adapted to use for larger scale urban plans, programs, and policies, or for rural areas, but will need some modification. Similarly, it can be used for building-level assessments, again with modifications.

It is a **diagnostic tool** to help identify areas of strength to retain or enhance, and potential problems to mitigate or resolve.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

A separate document contains instructions about how to use the tool and more detail about the logic behind the various questions. In general, however, the tool contains nine parts. Each part can stand alone or they can be combined to create a more comprehensive assessment. Not every question is relevant to every project but each one gets at an important topic and are designed encourage users to identify additional connections between health and place.

For each question you can select whether the dimension mentioned in the question is present (yes), is partially present (sort of), is not (no), or is not applicable. A comments column allows users to reflect on dimensions of the project or place that may be particularly positive or negative, or to make notes about topics to investigate further.

It is recommended that the data source, page number, or weblink used to answer the question be documented in the comment column for easy reference. For example, if a zoning map was reviewed to respond to a question about land-use, include a note about which map was used and where it can be found. Adding these details may be useful if multiple staff are working together on the health assessment. Please refer to page 7 in the How to Guide for further instructions about filling out this column in the checklist.

The column titled HAPI Research Brief Topic, indicates which topical research briefs provide additional context for the survey questions. The purpose of this column is to highlight the multiple connections between health and place, how many of these topics intersect with one another, and illustrate how one aspect of a proposal, plan or place may influence or benefit other areas of health. The research briefs are available online (<http://research.gsd.harvard.edu/hapi/research/research-briefs/>).

1. For more information on Health Assessments or Health Impact Assessments, a detailed course is available at <http://advance.captus.com/planning/hia2/toc.aspx>.

INTRODUCTION

In addition, while questions are organized by broad planning and design issue, such as “general layout,” there is overlap with other topics so even if you are assessing a fairly narrowly defined project or issue, it may well be worth reviewing some of the other parts of the checklist.

HEALTH ASSESSMENT VS. HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This tool is based in the tradition of health impact assessment. However, that body of work tends to focus on proposals, while this tool can equally look at existing conditions.

PART 1: BASIC DATA

Part 1 of HOC helps you collect the necessary data to conduct health assessments. These basic data can be used in the later steps to decide whether a health assessment should be carried out, depending on potential health impact, interests, and the ability to conduct one. Please refer to the How To Guide for information on where to get this data.

PART 1A: BASIC DATA FOR A **PROPOSAL OR PLAN**

TOPIC	ANSWER	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	DON'T KNOW
1A.1 Title of Project			
1A.2 Type of Project urban plan, urban development, urban redevelopment, infrastructure, program, other			
1A.3 Physical Area of project in hectares, square miles, or square meters			
1A.4 Number of People directly affected (e.g. living/working in planning area, to live/work in project)			
1A.5 Project Lead Organization + Contact Person			
1A.6 HIA Organizer (if different from project lead)			
Total Don't Know			

If you answered “Don’t Know” to three or more questions, go back to gather data before proceeding.

PART 1: BASIC DATA

Part 1 of HOC helps you collect the necessary data to conduct health assessments. These basic data can be utilized in the later steps to decide whether a health assessment should be carried out, depending on potential health impact, interests, and the ability to conduct one. Please refer to the How To Guide for information on where to get this data.

PART 1B: BASIC DATA FOR AN EXISTING PLACE

TOPIC	ANSWER	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	DON'T KNOW
1B.1 Place name			
1B.2 Type of place mainly residential, mainly employment, mainly open/green space, mixed use, other			
1B.3 Physical area of place in hectares, square miles, or square meters			
1B.4 Number of people directly affected (e.g. living/working in area)			
1B.5 Demographics of people directly affected (e.g. by age, income, cultural background, gender)			
1B.6 Specific organizations that could implement changes (e.g. city government, community group)			
Total Don't Know			

If you answered “Don’t Know” to three or more questions, go back to gather data before proceeding.

PART 2. GENERAL QUESTIONS

The questions in Part 2 cover the general connections between the proposal or plan (Part 2A), place (Part 2B), and health content, implementation plans, or health related organizations.

PART 2A. FOR A PROPOSAL OR PLAN

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>
2A.1	Is there any explicit mention of human health?					
2A.2	Does the explicit mention of human health do more than just recite phrases like "protect health, safety, and welfare" but make a more substantial link to health, backed up by evidence and linked to the proposal?					

GENERALLY GOOD TO DO						
2A.3	Is there an implementation plan?					

PART 2B. FOR AN EXISTING PLACE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>
2B.1	Are there organization(s) concerned with the health of this area?					
2B.2	Has a health assessment of this area been previously conducted?					

PART 3. GENERAL LAYOUT AND SITE

The questions in Part 3 address urban form, infrastructure, access, and buffers.

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
Urban Form							
3.1	Is the site part of a centralized community with town center(s) and compact urban form, part of a comprehensively planned extension at the neighborhood scale, or a comprehensive new town?						Climate Change, Physical Activity, Accessibility, Safety, Housing
3.2	Does the land use plan incorporate neighborhood commercial and/or mixed-used development?						Mental Health, Social Capital, Accessibility, Physical Activity
Infrastructure							
3.3	<p>a. Are there emergency access roads and other critical infrastructure (sewage, drainage)?</p> <p>b. If so, is the infrastructure designed to cope with disasters (e.g. flood zones, storm paths)?</p>						Climate Change, Disasters
3.4	Are sidewalks present along busy roads?						Accessibility, Physical Activity, Universal Design, Social Capital

PART 3. GENERAL LAYOUT AND SITE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
3.5							Accessibility, Physical Activity, Universal Design
3.6							Accessibility, Physical Activity, Universal Design
Access							
3.7							Accessibility, Physical Activity
3.8							Food Options

PART 3. GENERAL LAYOUT AND SITE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
3.9 Are community resources (e.g. healthcare, recreational facilities, shopping, food, green space) accessible from residential areas by walking, cycling, or transit? Suggested distances to community resources are walking (<300–600m), cycling (<10km) or transit stops (< 500m).							Accessibility, Physical Activity
3.10 Is average travel time to healthcare facilities <30 minutes, and dental health <40 minutes away, by available transportation? In rural areas, travel times of 1 hour for emergency services, 2 hours for hospital services, and <4 hours for core speciality services may be used.							Healthcare Access
3.11 Is there accommodation for those unwilling or unable to drive to medical appointments (e.g. public or private transit service)?							Healthcare Access
3.12 Are health services comprehensive, with available emergency services, acute in-patient hospital services, and core specialty services?							Healthcare Access
3.13 Is there adequate access to first responders: fire, police, and ambulance?							Access

PART 3. GENERAL LAYOUT AND SITE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
Buffers							
3.14							Air Quality, Noise, Housing
<p>a. Are residential areas, schools, day care facilities, playgrounds, and sports fields located away from highways, dusty roads, or industry? For best health outcomes, these areas should be buffered by more than 500 meters.</p> <p>b. If buildings are closer, are they designed to limit dust and noise?</p>							
3.15							Noise
<p>a. Are schools, residences, or workplaces separated (or have noise barriers) from heavy traffic or airplane flyovers?</p> <p>b. Are average noise levels at these sites below 55–60 dB(A)?</p>							
3.16							Accessibility, Air Quality
<p>Are potentially contaminating industrial sites, such as refineries, waste sites, and nuclear power plants separated from residential neighborhoods? For best health outcomes, these areas should be buffered by 2–3 km.</p>							

PART 3. GENERAL LAYOUT AND SITE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
3.17							Water Quality
3.18							Climate Change, Disasters, Housing
3.19							Disasters
GENERALLY GOOD TO DO							
Urban Form							
3.20							Air Quality, Climate Change, Physical Activity, Universal Design, Social Capital, Accessibility
3.21							Food Options

PART 4. LAW, POLICIES, AND ACTIVITIES

The Questions in Part 4 include topics such as pollution, disasters and climate, social issues, behaviors, and food policy.

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
Pollution							
4.1	a. Are biomass fuels such as wood, charcoal, or dung used for cooking and heating? b. If so, are there plans to move away from the use of such energy sources in indoor settings?						Air Quality, Toxics
4.2	a. Is there a smoke free policy? b. If so, is it enforced?						Air Quality, Housing, Toxics
4.3	Are there policies in place to clean up water pollutants?						Water Quality
4.4	Are there plans to assess, monitor, and manage the safety of the local water supply (e.g. regulation of vendors, local ecosystems, and stormwater)?						Climate Change, Water Quality
4.5	Are there active radon air mitigation strategies in place, such as active soil depressurization?						Housing

PART 4. LAW, POLICIES, AND ACTIVITIES

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
4.6							Housing
Disasters and Climate							
4.7							Climate Change, Disasters
4.8							Climate Change, Housing
4.9							Disasters
Social Issues							
4.10							Housing

PART 4. LAW, POLICIES, AND ACTIVITIES

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC	
4.11							Social Capital	
4.12							Health Access	
4.13							Health Access	
Behaviors								
4.14							Physical Activity	
Food								
4.15							Food Options	
GENERALLY GOOD TO DO								
4.16							Food Options	
	a. Are healthy food systems goals included in comprehensive and sustainability plans?							
	b. If so, do these include lowering the costs of healthy food?							

PART 5. PUBLIC SPACES

The questions in Part 5 relate to vegetation, connectedness, and access.

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
<i>Vegetation</i>							
5.1							Accessibility, Mental Health, Physical Activity, Social Capital
5.2							Aging, Mental Health, Physical Activity, Safety
5.3							Accessibility, Physical Activity
5.4							Air Quality, Climate Change, Disaster, Mental Health, Water Quality
5.5							Climate Change

PART 5. PUBLIC SPACES

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
5.6							Disasters, Water Quality
5.7							Disasters
Connectedness							
5.8							Accessibility, Safety, Universal Design
5.9							Accessibility, Safety, Universal Design

PART 5. PUBLIC SPACES

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
5.10							Aging, Universal Design
5.11							Aging, Universal Design
5.12							Accessibility, Aging, Universal Design
5.13							Safety
5.14							Safety
5.15							Safety

PART 5. PUBLIC SPACES

GENERALLY GOOD TO DO

5.16	Are greenways incorporated to provide natural, non-motorized open space corridors (often following roadways, ridge tops, and waterways)?		Air Quality, Climate Change, Disaster, Mental Health, Water Quality
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PART 6. TRANSPORTATION

The questions in Part 6 address connectivity, access to community resources, multimodal options, and traffic safety.

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
6.1							Climate Change, Disasters
6.2							Accessibility
6.3							Accessibility, Physical Activity, Safety
6.4							Accessibility, Aging, Universal Design
6.5							Aging, Physical Activity, Safety, Universal Design

PART 6. TRANSPORTATION

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
6.6	For streets with high rates of pedestrian/ bicyclist use, are speed limits set at or below 30 mph (optimally 20 mph)?						Noise, Physical Activity, Safety
6.7	Are there plans or policies to provide adequate street lighting along all major streets?						Safety
6.8	Are there traffic-calming interventions in place (e.g. narrow roads, trees, and all way stops)?						Safety

PART 7. WATER SYSTEMS

The questions in Part 7 relate to water infrastructure, sanitation, preventing contamination, protection plans, monitoring, and clean up.

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
7.1							Water Quality
7.2							Climate Change, Disasters, Water Quality
7.3							Disasters, Housing, Water Quality
7.4							Water Quality
7.5							Water Quality
7.6							Water Quality

PART 7. WATER SYSTEMS

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
7.7 Are there low impact development/ green infrastructure strategies in place (e.g. bioretention/rain gardens, permeable pavements, swale systems)?							Water Quality
7.8 Are measures being taken to increase ground water recharge and water conservation?							Water Quality

PART 8. BUILDING SCALE

Part 1–7 are focused on the neighborhood scale. The questions in Part 8 cover elements at the building-scale, such as technologies, set backs, landscaping, indoor toxics and air quality, sanitation, disaster prevention, noise, safety, and universal design. Though the responses to these questions may vary from building to building or may not be all relevant, they are designed encourage users to identify additional connections between health and place. Please use the comment column to describe how buildings may vary in the place of interest.

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
8.1							Air Quality
8.2							Air Quality
8.3							Air Quality (Human comfort)
8.4							Air Quality, Climate Change, Housing
8.5							Air Quality, Climate Change, Housing, Toxics

PART 8. BUILDING SCALE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
8.6 a. Are new buildings lead free? b. For existing buildings, do redevelopment plans include lead testing of facilities used by children (dwelling units, child care centers, schools, or recreation facilities)?							Housing, Toxics
8.7 a. Is the project free from asbestos and materials that give off VOC? b. If not, can these toxins be removed?							Housing, Toxics
8.8 Are carbon monoxide (CO) and smoke alarms present and working?							Housing
8.9 Is there access to adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities in the households within the area of interest (e.g. running water, working indoor plumbing)?							Housing, Water Quality
8.10 a. Is there an inventory of the current housing stock and infrastructure? b. If so, can the inventory be used to identify sites and groups that would be more at-risk in extreme weather events?							Climate Change, Disasters, Housing

PART 8. BUILDING SCALE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
8.11							Disasters
8.12							Disasters
8.13							Disasters
8.14							Noise
8.15							Noise

PART 8. BUILDING SCALE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
8.16							Noise
8.17							Aging, Universal Design
8.18							Safety
8.19							Aging, Universal Design
GENERALLY GOOD TO DO							
8.20							Housing, Toxics
8.21							Housing

PART 9. CITY, REGIONAL, OR NATIONAL SCALE

Although most of the HOC is focused on the neighborhood scale, Section 9 discusses plans at the city, regional, or national scales. These policies or plans may impact the neighborhood scale, and are therefore good to know about. However, local planners and policy makers are likely unable to make changes to these plans or policies so they should remain outside the realm of the Health Assessment.

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
General Layout and Site							
9.1	Are traffic pollution, road dust, and industry emissions monitored and regulated?						Air Quality, Toxics
9.2	Are polluting sources regulated in a substantial way (e.g. businesses that disproportionately pollute within neighborhoods like dry cleaners, automotive paint shops, manufacturing)?						Air Quality, Toxics
9.3	Are universal design principles established in the local codes/ordinances?						Accessibility, Safety, Universal Design
9.4	Do existing programs and policies promote housing security and long-term tenancy, such as home ownership promotion or eviction prevention?						Housing, Social Capital
9.5	Is the community food system considered in the plans or policies for the area? By this we mean food production, distribution, retailing, consumption, and waste production.						Food Options

PART 9. CITY, REGIONAL, OR NATIONAL SCALE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
9.6	Are there regulations in place to ensure food safety (e.g. vendor licensing and production (farm) management)?						Food Options
9.7	Are health food promotion or policy programs in place? (e.g. as providing nutritional facts in restaurants, and regulating marketing of unhealthy foods to children)						Food options
9.8	Are there programs and/or regulations in place to control noise such as deed restrictions or noise control ordinances?						Noise
Public Spaces							
9.9	Are existing regional forests, ecosystems, wetlands, and vegetative cover preserved, especially around water supplies and stream networks?						Air Quality, Climate Change, Disasters, Water Quality
9.10	Are there firebreaks at an urban design scale (e.g. a buffer zone between heathlands and urban areas)?						Disasters

PART 9. CITY, REGIONAL, OR NATIONAL SCALE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
Transportation							
9.11	Does the current transportation system address noise (e.g. by altering flight paths, soundproofing construction, or erecting noise barriers on highways)?						Noise
9.12	Is there a multimodal transportation plan that connects all residential areas to services (e.g. employment centers, grocery stores, hospitals, etc.)?						Accessibility, Universal Design
9.13	Is regular transit service available (or planned) for all residential and employment areas? Research recommends that transit stops/stations be located within 800m (or 10-15 minutes) of all residential areas.						Accessibility, Universal Design
9.14	Are there policies/plans that prioritize the transportation needs of underserved populations (e.g. seniors, children, persons with disabilities, low-income residents, etc.)?						Accessibility, Universal Design

PART 9. CITY, REGIONAL, OR NATIONAL SCALE

IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH	YES	SORT OF	NO	DON'T KNOW	NOT APPLICABLE	COMMENT <i>Add source, page number, or weblink details</i>	HAPI RESEARCH BRIEF TOPIC
9.15							Accessibility, Physical Activity, Safety
Water System							
9.16							Toxics, Water Quality
9.17							Water Quality
9.18							Water Quality