Healthy Rural Communities: Strategies and Models of Practice

Research Team

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RURAL SYMPOSIUM ■ MARCH 2019 ■ SHARON WAN

AGENDA

- **Project Background**
- **Research Objectives**
- **Methodology**
- **Phase 1: Healthy Rural Communities Toolkit**
- **Phase 2: Knowledge, Transfer, Translation (KTT) with workshops**
- **Phase 3: Healthy Rural and Small Town Communities course**
- **Q&A**

PROJECT BACKGROUND

- Best planning practices can improve **population health** outcomes related to physical activity, nutrition, air quality, water quality, safety, and social cohesion (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2009)
- Most of the best practices and policies are **urban context focused**
- Not directly transferable in rural and small town communities setting because of different **built environment, social norms**, community and financial **capacity, resources, population density, land use, livelihoods, culture** and **incomes**(Black, 2008; Edwards, 2007).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Identify evidence-informed strategies and models of practice for land use planning policies, procedures and designs for the built environment to improve population health outcomes in rural communities.

METHODOLOGY

- Literature review
- Survey of community leaders across Ontario
- Key informant interviews
- Focus groups

PHASE 1; Healthy Rural Communities Toolkit (2012-2014)

- Funded by Public Health Ontario as part of the Locally Driven Collaborative Projects program
- Healthy Rural Communities Project Team Members from different Health Units
- OPPI

Healthy Rural Communities Toolkit

- Process – The toolkit was prepared based on feedback from municipalities from across the province.
- Outcomes - the two main components of the toolkit focus on key actions and case studies

Toolkit – ‘Action Items’ Identified from Research

Toolkit—‘10 Key Things to Do’

1. Development of Planning Policy for individual towns and hamlets.
2. Create understanding of relationship between planning and health, social, and environmental benefits.
3. Measure impact and change of a planning initiative or practice on a community.
4. Encourage partnerships between municipalities and community groups.
5. Encourage collaboration between the municipality and health unit.
6. Develop safe spaces for dialogue and opportunities for community members to contribute.
7. Build council and senior staff buy-in.
8. Identify champions for projects.
9. Partner with a committee or community-based group to whom the initiative is important.
10. Focus on something manageable.

Toolkit–Project ‘Case Study’ Innovations

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Title

City of Kawartha Lakes

Theme: Community Design and Land Use Planning

Population: 73,214

Contact

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Photo Source: <https://www.facebook.com/WalkFriendlyOK>

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Have the goal to be vibrant
- Encourage community support, education and involvement
- Not ‘plan in a box’

Initiative

Rural communities achieving walkability through community design and land use planning.

Context

The City of Kawartha Lakes has recently developed a variety of policy documents that focus on creating active and healthy rural communities:

- the City of Kawartha Lakes Official Plan (2012);
- five Community-based Secondary Plans (one for each population centre);
- the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP);
- a Growth Management Strategy and a Food Charter.

Official Plan Amendment Policy:

18.13.1. "It is the policy of this plan to consider urban and community design as an integral component of new development and redevelopment in the settlement areas. The preparation of a set of community design guidelines for settlement areas to ensure that new development is attractive and consistent with the policies of this Plan is encouraged".

Innovative Features

Activating Kawartha Lakes

- This initiative consisted of walking audits with Dan Burden, who is considered an expert in pedestrian and bicycle design; he is a consultant that focuses on walkability.
- Community members and stakeholders were invited to take part in scheduled walks with Dan Burden that took place in downtown Lindsay and Fenelon Falls.
- The goal was to create awareness about issues for both pedestrians and cyclists relating to the built environment and walkability, as well as to explore potential solutions.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Develop Community-based Secondary Plans for individual towns and hamlets.
- Encourage collaboration between the municipality and health unit.
- Gain the support of Council.
- Have the goal to be vibrant and encourage community involvement in the process of policy development.
- Educate community members and work together.
- Don't 'plan in a box' and be open to new and innovative ideas.

Initiative

Context

Official Plan Policy

Innovative features

Key lessons and tools

PHASE 2: Knowledge, Transfer, Translation (2016-2018)

- Funded by OMAFRA
- Municipality-based workshop: planners, public health officers, residents
- Healthy Rural Communities' website: <https://www.ruralhealthycommunities.ca>

PHASE 3: Healthy Rural and Small Town Communities Course (2018-Now)

- Open to public health and planning students
- Video materials: Interview with planners, public health officers, community activists, researchers and students
- Online and in-class meeting
- Innovative student practices: walkability audit
- All course videos available on Youtube at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCG3CIIKo3vUBpEav7BYPWeA/videos?view_as=subscriber
- and Healthy Rural Communities website:
<https://www.ruralhealthycommunities.ca/healthy-rural-and-small-town-commun>

Healthy Rural Communities website:

THANK YOU!

We would like to thank Public Health Ontario and OMAFRA for their support as well as the numerous public health professionals, planners and staff whose assistance was integral to the project. More project materials are available at:

<https://www.ruralhealthycommunities.ca/healthy-rural-and-small-town-commun>

Presenter

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