

Suffolk Partnership for a Healthy
Community
Healthy Citizens Through
Community Design: Forum Report
Mobilizing for Action through
Planning and Partnerships

On October 28, 2008, over one hundred persons from Suffolk participated in a half-day forum at the Hilton Garden Inn that was hosted by the Suffolk Partnership for a Healthy Community. Participants included Suffolk's city government, non-profit agencies, churches, businesses and residents who gathered to discuss what it would take in Suffolk to create a healthy community for everyone, while improving upon health and quality of life issues. This collaborative meeting allowed participants to be creative while identifying both the positive (community assets and developments) and negative (barriers to care, disparity among the population) aspects of Suffolk.

The meeting included an introduction of the Partnership, its Board members and what it has accomplished since its formation in 1998. The Partnership's stated mission is to: *"Coordinate the resources of our community in a collaborative effort to improve the mental, physical, socioeconomic, and spiritual health all of its citizens."* Through its efforts, the Partnership, in collaboration with the Western Tidewater Community Services Board, successfully established the Western Tidewater Free Clinic in June 2007 and was recently awarded additional funding from the Obici Healthcare Foundation.

Going forward, the Partnership described that it will initiate a community-wide strategic planning process to identify resources and prioritize issues that the public health system can, and should, address. The tool used to guide this process is called **MAPP - Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships** – and involves wide-ranging community involvement, calling on agency heads, city government leadership, non-governmental organizations, healthcare providers, advocacy groups and residents to determine ways to improve Suffolk's public health system.

The MAPP process involves several assessment meetings and key activities:

- 1) **Visioning**, where residents share their personal perspectives on what is necessary to reach their full potential as a healthy community. This activity produces a community vision and identifies several key values the residents feel are essential elements to achieve the highest quality of life.
- 2) The **Community Themes and Strengths Assessment**, which identifies issues that interest the community and gathers perceptions about quality of life, community assets and barriers to services.
- 3) The **Local Public Health System Assessment**, which measures the capacity and performance of the ten essential services of public health.
- 4) The **Forces of Change Assessment**, where trends and events that impact the community are identified.
- 5) The **Community Health Status Assessment** that demonstrates the health status and main risk factors throughout the population.
- 6) **Strategic Issues and Goals**, where participants develop realistic goals and action steps around strategic public health issues felt to be priorities.
- 7) The **Action Cycle**, where involved agencies and citizens implement activities and evaluate the community improvement process on a continuous basis.

The activities of the MAPP assessment are estimated to take up to 18 months and to execute it, the Partnership engaged The Planning Council, a private, not-for-profit agency with over sixty years' experience planning, developing and managing human services in Hampton Roads, Virginia.

The keynote presentation was conducted by Richard Killingsworth, who is a recognized pioneer in emerging efforts to plan healthy communities based on the built and natural environments. Mr. Killingsworth's inspirational slide show and lecture demonstrated the simplicity of incorporating healthy lifestyle choices into the development of neighborhoods, business centers, city streets, and at home. He emphasized the necessity to educate parents and children about nutrition and how to live an active lifestyle. Some examples in his slides showed construction barriers that exist across the United States to simple, daily tasks like walking across streets, riding your bike and playing in neighborhood parks. The presentation successfully drew attention to the fact that to build a healthy community, one must be concerned with internal and external factors, in all types of neighborhoods and across all socioeconomic borders.

After the presentation, small group work was conducted in which a facilitator at each table presented several questions to the participants and walked them through a visioning exercise. A key topic was selected at each table for discussion that focused on matters of interest to the Partnership and city agencies. They included:

- Healthy Eating
- Physical Activity/Fitness
- Child/Youth Issues
- Senior Issues
- Health Care Access
- Housing
- Community Design (city infrastructure)
- Personal Safety/ Security and Pedestrian Safety
- Education (general and wellness education)

Halfway through the session, participants were asked to change tables and offer their perspectives on a different topic, as well. The summary of responses is found at the end of this report.

Based on the various table discussions and key issues raised by the forum participants, a Vision Statement was developed. This vision represents the ideal future for Suffolk as a healthy community.

Vision

A healthy community is achieved when all citizens enjoy lifelong health through access to health care, recreational activities, good nutrition, community engagement, age-appropriate services and opportunities to high quality education and employment, all in a safe environment.

The forum ended with a description of future directions of the Partnership, beginning with the MAPP assessments. The staff of The Planning Council was introduced and participants were thanked for their time and energy spent to launch this collaborative initiative.

(See a summary of the group exercises on the following pages.)



Suffolk Partnership for a Healthy Community

October 28 Forum

Report from Table Discussions

1. CHILD / YOUTH ISSUES

**Facilitators: Katie Humphrey, The Children's Center, and Corrie Leary,
Western Tidewater Community Services Board**

What does a healthy community look like?

- play opportunities and locations
- availability and affordability
- safety
- recreation facilities
- sports activities
- reliable transportation
- interaction
- appropriate for variety of ages
- quality childcare

Suffolk will have achieved its goal of becoming a healthy community when it has done what?

- support ECDC and Office of Youth
- youth representation and involvement
- raise funds
- bicycle and walking trails
- expand recreation opportunities
- neighborhood parks
- accessibility to recreation
- community involvement

What are the most prominent barriers for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

- money
- community size

- childcare issues
- different community experiences
- teen pregnancy prevention and schooling issues
- transportation
- child-parent relationships/home environment
- single parenthood
- grandmothers raising grandchildren
- mentoring programs

What are the greatest strengths and/or assets for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

- early childhood development coalition
- Kid Zone park → various needs
- Office of Youth
- programs (i.e.: H.S., early H.S., Smart Beginnings, Early Intervention, YMCA, WIC, PN)
- collaboration and partnership
- passion
- YMCA → safe haven

2. COMMUNITY DESIGN

Facilitators: Selena Cuffee-Glenn, City of Suffolk and Leonard Horton, Department of Social Services

What does a healthy community look like?

- activity
- people visible
- access to healthy eating
- family-oriented (all ages)
- greater park system in city park
- social interaction/community engagement

What are the most prominent barriers for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

▪

companies that are not family-oriented (do not encourage family engagement)

- Live, Work, Play, Grow – all in the community
- personal safety/feelings of security
- transportation and connection/accessibility
- funding
- must be a family/community priority

What are the greatest strengths and/or assets for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

- land/open space
- natural resources: lakes/rivers, etc.
- citizens: strong history
- commitment of citizens
- diversity in business sector
- Obici Healthcare Foundation (asset)

What is the role of government in helping Suffolk to be healthier?

- encourage companies to promote healthier lifestyles
- back initiatives that encourage healthier lifestyles (Smart Beginnings, Healthy Communities, etc.)
- ensure safety and security of community
- enhance communication and participation in advisory groups
- pattern of language to carry the vision/message
- encourage civic involvement

Who are other organizations/individuals who should be a part of this process?

- churches
- business community, especially HR representatives
- non profits and local foundations
- collaborator/partnerships with other localities for recreational activities

3. HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Facilitator: Bobbie Chapman, Suffolk Partnership for a Healthy Community

1. Transportation

- Transportation is an issue that prevents many from getting to health care providers
- There are resources: buses until 5:00, Medicaid cabs, Angel Wings, etc., but many are not aware of what transportation is available
- Need to create awareness of resources
- Some don't have money to pay the fare
- Consider having a certain number of tickets per month or per person available at a reduced cost

2. Mental Care

- There is a critical need for psychiatric resources in the Suffolk area
- Agencies are overwhelmed with needs to refer patients to psychiatrists and due to the supply being so limited there is nowhere to refer them
- Suggestion that perhaps the psychiatrists with the school system might be tapped as a resource to help fill the need

3. Barriers

- Lack of awareness/knowledge in many segments of the community about the resources that are available in the city
- Great need to have a directory of resources in all areas of health support, health and wellness, support services, city services, etc. available to the community at large
- One example of a service that is available is the UP Center/ Understanding People/Understanding Problems which assists citizens in need of psychological counseling and psychiatric medical needs

4. HEALTHY EATING

Facilitators: Karen Brower, Health Department and Janice White, Suffolk Public Schools

What is the most important issue in design a community to support health, especially active living?

- Healthy eating would lead to healthier citizens which could lead to increased person volunteering for community service
- Access to open places needed: bike trails, fishing, walking trails
- More facilities to encourage activity; no recreation centers
- Church needs to have organized sports activities
- YMCA membership not affordable for many people; cost prohibits use be average person
- New developments should be required to support green way: playgrounds, not just sidewalks
- A grocery store should be located within senior communities.
- Healthy build environment lead to healthier choices; mind set will begin to change.

5. HOUSING

Facilitator: Clarissa McAdoo, Suffolk Housing and Redevelopment Authority

What does a healthy community look like?

- housing should not cause harm (i.e. no lead base paint)
- safe for children inside and outside the home
- need safe places for children to play
- more afterschool programs in community center for youth and elderly

Suffolk will have achieved its goal of becoming a healthy community when it has done what?

- community “safe person” or “neighborhood captain” where children can go
- adopt a kid/adopt a grandparent: connect seniors with children
- build houses with front porches so people can sit outside; promotes neighborhood safety
- need to connect and secure “dead corners” of neighborhoods (normally where drugs deals take place)

- build neighborhoods from family on out so ownership of community belongs to the families
 - Family→Neighborhood→Community
- more assisted-living facilities to make seniors feel more secure and independent
- environmentally friendly buildings

What are the most prominent barriers for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

- age segregated populations
- lack of multi-generational dwellings
- lack of mixed usage zoning

6. PERSONAL SAFETY / SECURITY AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Facilitator: Chief William Freeman, Police Department

What does a healthy community look like?

- Visual interactions between generations
- Access to health care for everyone
- Coordination of services
- Transportation

Suffolk will have achieved its goal of becoming a healthy community when it has done what?

- Early childhood education to prevent unhealthy lifestyles
- Complete online resource guide
- Physical activity at school

What are the most prominent barriers for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

- Fear of stigma
- Safety
- Education
- Created culture of mass production which has eliminated physical fitness activity

What are the greatest strengths and/or assets for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

- People
- City incorporated into building codes for all to include sidewalks

7. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND FITNESS - A

Facilitator: Lakita Frazier, Department of Parks and Recreation

What does a healthy community look like?

- more church involvement
- get religious institutions involved in physical activity/fitness
- get church/home/YMCA to get together and train individuals about physical activity and healthy eating

Suffolk will have achieved its goal of becoming a healthy community when it has done what?

- Tabernacle Christian Church
 - provide transportation
 - behavioral education
 - one year free membership
 - Why haven't they come?
 - need to change the culture
- employers who promote physical activity (i.e. GlaxoSmithKlein)
- get the word out and make it a priority
- provide childcare and education for parents

What are the most prominent barriers for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

- the need to define healthy community
- effective communication process
- bridge the gap of older and newer communities when it comes to perception

8. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND FITNESS - B

Facilitator: J.B. Matthews, Suffolk Partnership for a Healthy Community

What does a healthy community look like?

- sidewalks and bike trails
- access to walking and play areas
- green space

- access to facilities offering physical fitness programs
- more community facilities offering programs
- better transportation (bus) service
- activities for seniors and a way for them to get there
- supervised after school activities for children
- quality programs and leadership where there are facilities
- build safety into infrastructure for walkers and bikers

What is the most important issue in designing a community to support health, especially active living?

- put facilities offering active living programs where the people are
- provide better public transportation
- reclaim some of the older neighborhoods and provide space and activities there such as is being done in a lot of the newer communities

What are the most prominent barriers for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

- infrastructure and financing
- lack of access

What are the greatest strengths and/or assets for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

- land mass
- room to expand/dream with
- existing parks (i.e. Lake Mead, Peanut Park)

9. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY / FITNESS - C

Facilitator: Gloria Seitz, Sentara Healthcare

What is the most important issue in design a community to support health, especially active living?

What are the most prominent barriers for Suffolk in becoming a healthy community?

- Need neutral sites to extend to smaller communities (i.e. Chuckatuck, Holland)
- Change name of activity to something that sparks interest and sounds like fun

- Must involve parents with children and youth
- Perception of physical activity is that it is inconvenient and it hurts
- Transportation
- Funding: shared responsibilities (government, Partnership, etc.)

Suffolk will have achieved its goal of becoming a healthy community when it has done what?

- Involve churches for communication in programs and also use churches as a site
- Sell people on why physical activity is important; sell over and over (repetition is important)
- Show/demonstrate to parents why it's important to health of children
- Use old Obici property for activities
- Teach kids how to cook
- Consider a partnership between YMCA and public/private schools

10. SENIOR ISSUES

Facilitator: Dr. Lisa McCoy, Health Department

As a senior here in Suffolk, what does a healthy community look like to you?

- Affordability and safe for the seniors
- Not a lot of people congregating on the corners in groups – this makes elders feel unsafe
- Resources to help in staying as independent as possible; seniors don't want to lose their independence - like giving up driving your car
- Ability to stay in your own home as long as possible
- People don't like to call on others for help or sometimes family members are working
- Need better public transportation - you can sometimes call and get a ride from handicapped ride transportation system, but that often takes a long time and is not dependable
- A care plan would also help with resources to access necessary medications

- Safety in the home – perhaps community watches or “each one, care for one” initiative where neighbors adopt a senior to look in on them /each other from time to time.
- Community activities and access to intergeneration activities
- Need to know what is available

Some of the barriers to staying at home include:

- No one available to assist with daily tasks; working children cannot stay home with you
- Assisted living centers can help with maintaining a quasi-independent status
- Lack of resources for stabilization in the home
- Hard to find good options for healthy eating; healthy meals often hard to find in many restaurants
- The city council members are often misinformed about resources within Suffolk; councilmen need good information sources to pass on to constituents.
- NEED BETTER MORE RELIABLE INFORMATION ON RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR SENIORS!!

Ideas for creating healthy communities for seniors

- Nursing homes and childcare centers should be next to each other – facilitates intergenerational activities
- Workshops and other activities in the community for seniors
- Better designed assisted care facilities. For instance, Lake prince has a continuum of care available ranging from highly independent residents to those needing skilled care /nursing care services
- Friendship Manor was suggested as another well-designed assisted living center. This facility offers:
 - Social outlets – day trips, workshops, arts and crafts, swimming pools and trips
 - 17 buildings, 30 apartments in each building so lots of other seniors to interact with
 - Nice community room
 - Buses to provide transportation to outside shops
 - Dialysis on site
 - Roanoke hospital sends patients there for rehab
 - Tenants association

- Create a resource book that is frequently updated
- Have a one-stop center to coordinate access to resources for seniors,
- Legislature should require that only 30% of income when federal \$\$ are used
- Would help to have skilled people to assist with developing care plans (plans or blueprints that cover the next 5 – 10 – 15 years of your life, anticipates needs and identifies resources to meet them)
- Similar idea to above: Life coach or navigators program accessible to them to assist with personal planning in a range of areas

Attachment C

Summary Report on MAPP community health assessment

A. VISIONING A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

The Suffolk Partnership for a Healthy Community conducted a community visioning process on October 28, 2008 at the Hilton Garden Inn with over 100 participants. This event allowed for various break-out groups with special focus on elderly issues, access, nutrition, education and more to identify and brainstorm around opportunities and barriers that currently exist within Suffolk. The keynote speaker, Mr. Richard Killingsworth, presented slides and a framework for what a healthy community can look like when it's conceived and built correctly, allowing for fluid mobility and easy access to all things within a community for all populations.

A community vision was developed based on the participant feedback about what the important elements of a healthy community should include.

“A healthy community is achieved when all citizens enjoy lifelong health through access to health care, recreational activities, good nutrition, community engagement, age-appropriate services and opportunities to high quality education and employment, all in a safe environment.”

A full report on the October ‘Visioning’ Forum is found below as **Attachment A**.

A. ASSESSMENTS

• Community Themes and Strengths

The Planning Council began to implement various data collection methods in order to gather broad community input on what citizens consider to be the level of quality of life in Suffolk, as well as the gaps and barriers. This assessment provides a deep understanding of what residents feel is most important and by participating at a community Resource Fair, distributing a community needs survey, conducting focus groups and individual interviews with community leaders, comprehensive questions

were posed that allowed for this information to be gathered. A summary of each activity conducted to date is found below.

Key Informant Interviews

Twenty-one interviews were conducted with key leaders and activists in Suffolk with the purpose of gathering opinions, concerns and experiences that provide insight into the quality of life and community assets within Suffolk. For each interview, eight questions were posed that gathered a broad range of perspectives on what makes a community healthy, which barriers they encounter in their work and life, and what resources are needed to allow for improvements to happen.

Clearly the most important elements agreed upon for everyone envisioning a healthy community included safety, access to medical care and social services, opportunities for employment and economic development, citizen involvement and the availability of recreational activities. Respondents felt that key assets in Suffolk included the sense of community and diverse population, as well as constructive collaboration taking place between city government, local agencies and the business and faith communities.

When asked which partnerships and collaborations are happening in Suffolk to make a change, the Suffolk Partnership for a Healthy Community was named by almost every person interviewed. The Partnership's successful establishment of the Western Tidewater Free Clinic and opportunities for networking and linking smaller providers with larger ones was felt to be a major step towards improved community health. Residents also felt that there were vital relationships between the schools, hospital and city departments of Health, Human Services and Parks and Recreation that were benefiting children's health.

Issues that were noted the most urgent to address included the lack of education around nutrition and exercise, leading to a very high rate of obesity among the population. The lack of recreational space, such as parks, biking and hiking trails, was apparent to everyone. It was felt that the biggest barriers to improving the quality of life for Suffolk's citizens included a limited public transportation system, low salaries and few job opportunities within the city, and the fact that Suffolk has a high dropout rate among youth.

There were strong suggestions to require building sidewalks, walkways and bike trails as a part of all new development projects to enhance opportunities for healthy living. Those interviewed felt that any progress towards improving the community – especially in poorer neighborhoods – would greatly improve citizen engagement and action. When asked to list policies or funding priorities that were needed to do this, respondents suggested more recreational programs for youth, focus on education and teen pregnancy, expansion of the transportation system as well as health services.

Community Health Surveys

173 surveys were completed by residents from around the City. In addition to placing the survey online on the City of Suffolk website, they were also available at the Obici Hospital, the Western Tidewater Free Clinic, three city library branches and the Health Department.

The demographics collected in the surveys included Neighborhood, Race and Ethnicity, Age, Gender, Employed Status, Marital Status and Household Income. A sample of some preliminary results is found below.

- ✓ The following community issues were the Top Five named by respondents:

Question	Number of 'Yes' Responses	Total Number of Responses	Percent
Please tell us if these are a problem for you.			
Unemployment / Underemployment	79	167	47.3
Access to Affordable Medications	76	168	45.2
Access to Dental Services	76	169	45.0
Access to Affordable Medical Care	72	169	42.6
Access to Safe, Affordable Housing	71	167	42.5

- ✓ Of particular concern is that over half of 163 (51.5%) responses answered positive to the question 'Has a doctor told you that you have a chronic illness, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, cancer or other?'
- ✓ 40% (66 persons) responded that they do not have any form of health insurance.
- ✓ Almost 28% of the respondents confessed to using tobacco in the past 30 days, which is the same rate across the nation.
- ✓ 68% (113) of those who responded felt that there are not enough jobs in Suffolk.
- ✓ When asked to rate Suffolk a healthy community, safe community, and a place to raise children and grow old, respondents overwhelmingly chose 'Good'.

Focus Groups

Several focus groups will be arranged to ensure that certain populations have a chance to provide their perspectives on community strengths, gaps and barriers. It is planned to hold these focus groups in spring and summer for the faith community, homeless, patients of the Western Tidewater Free Clinic and elderly.

• Local Public Health System Assessment

This assessment focuses on the delivery of the 10 Essential Public Health Services within the community. Approximately fifty persons will participate on April 24, 2009 and work in small groups to discuss the extent of each activity within the ten services. The services are:

1. Monitor the health of the community
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems
3. Inform, educate and empower people
4. Mobilize community partnerships
5. Develop policies
6. Enforce laws and regulations
7. Link to / provide health services

8. Assure a competent workforce
9. Evaluate quality
10. Research for new insights

Those attending represent city government, city departments, non-profit agencies, private providers and the business and faith-based communities. Each of the five break-out groups will be facilitated by a staff member of The Planning Council. Once each activity has been rated either 'No Activity', 'Minimal Activity', 'Moderate Activity', 'Significant Activity' or 'Optimal Activity', the results will be uploaded to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A full report with descriptions around activity levels with comparison charts and tables will be presented to the Suffolk Health Department as well as the Virginia Department of Health.

- **Forces of Change Assessment**

This assessment meeting is planned for June 2009 and will identify various forces that influence health and quality of life in a community, including: science / technology, environmental, socioeconomic, legal, economic and political. Opportunities and threats related to each force will be listed so that future plans around major community issues consider these events.

B. RESOURCE INVENTORY

A community resource inventory has begun to be developed that will include contact information for major health and human service resources around Suffolk. This guide will be available online for the Suffolk Partnership for a Healthy Community to update and distribute as needed.

C. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The assessments for the MAPP Suffolk project are ahead of schedule due to the high level of collaboration within the City and timeliness of those who are willing to participate. Because of this, the final meeting to review assessment results and identify Strategic Issues with Action Plan should be held in October 2009, allowing for the final report to be completed by November.