

# BUILT

## Environment & Health



Strong Partnership

  
*York Region*



Clear  
Process



Effective  
Promotion



Supportive  
Policies

# Action Plan Primer

# HEALTHY

# YORK

# REGION



The consulting team are deeply grateful to the York Region staff on the Project Advisory Committee who supported this process, provided invaluable feedback, and contributed to the creation of this Action Plan.

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The built environment is part of the overall physical environment, and encompasses all of the buildings, spaces, and products that are created, or at least significantly modified, by people (Health Canada, 1997). The built environment is informed by the land use planning and policies that impact our communities in urban, rural, and suburban areas. Over the past decade, the relationship between our built environment and human health is one that has been a growing area of focus for healthcare providers, community builders, and public health professionals.

In York Region, in an effort to respond to the need for more healthy built environments, York Region Public Health (YRPH) teams active on the built environment came together to form a Building Healthy Communities (BHC) Workgroup. In 2014, the BHC Workgroup identified the growing need to develop a *Built Environment & Health (BE&H) Action Plan* to direct their complex, collaborative partnership, and to ensure that the activities being undertaken by YRPH would meaningfully contribute to the creation of healthier environments in York Region. In 2015, YRPH retained a team of consultants to support their vision to develop a *Built Environment & Health (BE&H) Action Plan*.

## Goal

**To enhance the health and well-being of York Region residents by supporting our partners in developing policies and implementing practices that promote better population health outcomes.**

## Key Objectives

- 1** To develop and enhance partnerships between YRPH, and regional and municipal planning and transportation departments, as well as with other key regional, municipal and provincial departments, organizations and stakeholders,
- 2** To provide health research and data that support our partners to advance the design and development of healthy communities in York Region, and
- 3** To support the development and enhancement of health-supportive policies, programs, and projects led by our regional, municipal, and provincial partners, agencies and organizations.

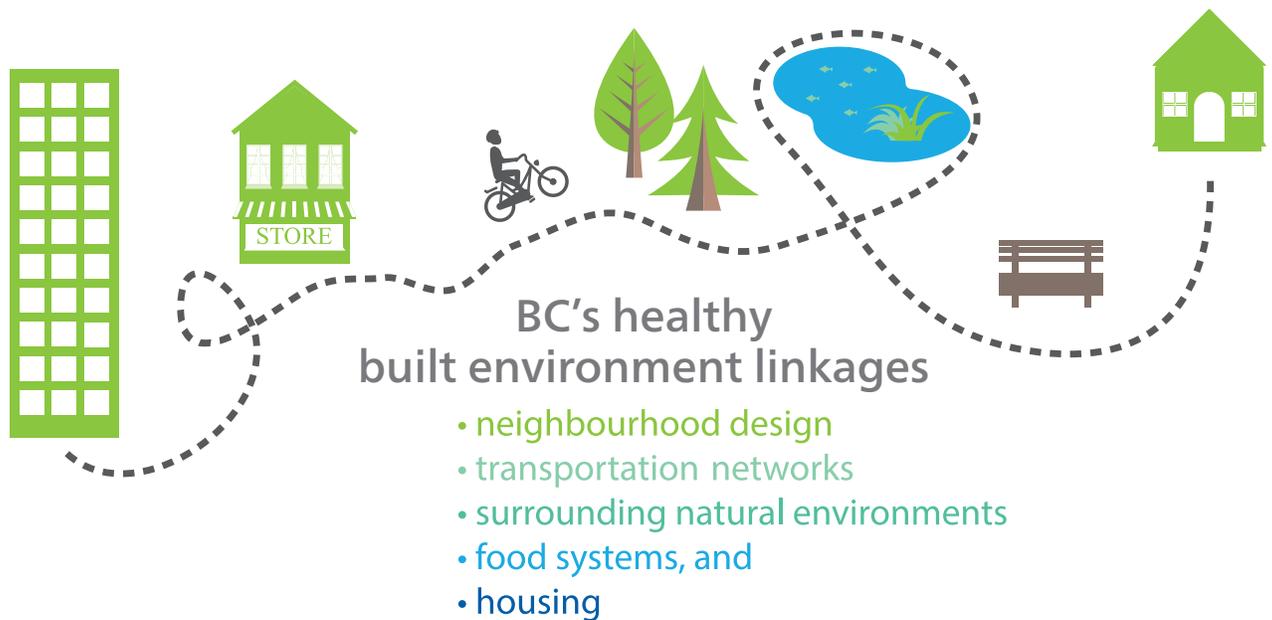
The *Action Plan* development includes four (4) key steps:

1

## Research

Utilizing the British Columbia Provincial Health Services Authority's Healthy Built Environment Linkages Report as a framework, an extensive literature review was conducted to learn more about the five Linkage themes and how these relate to the York Region context. These themes are: neighbourhood design, transportation networks, natural environment, food systems and housing.

The results of the literature review were considered in conjunction with the 2015 YRPH Built Environment and Health Priorities Project Report, which identified key health outcomes in York Region linked to the built environment.



2

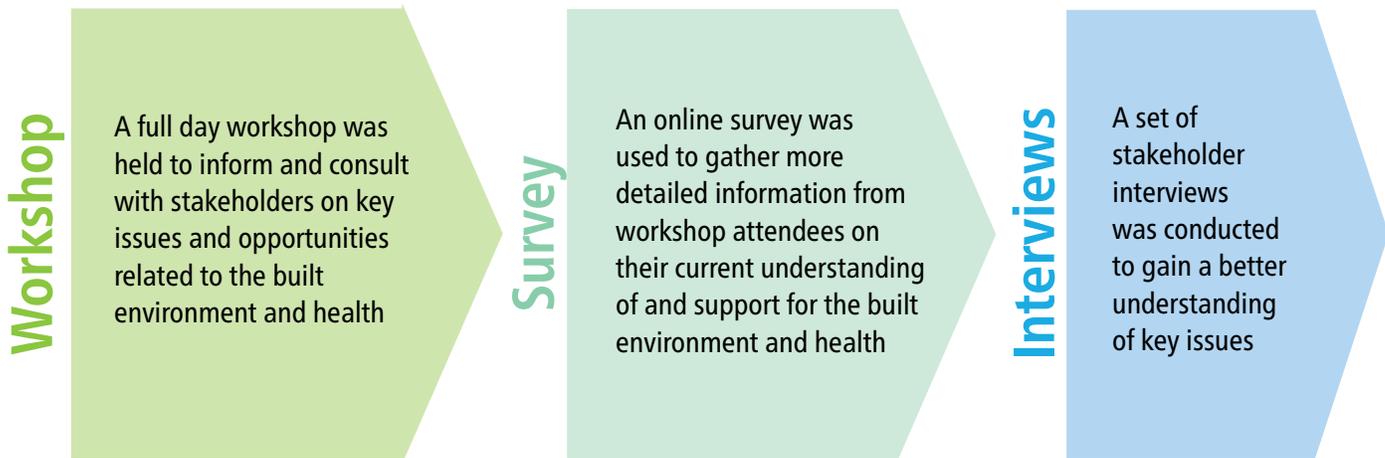
## Environmental Scan

An extensive environmental scan was conducted of other public health units across Ontario to gain a better understanding of the types of strategies that they employ to address built environment and health. The results of the environmental scan helped to inform the identification, and ultimately the selection, of the strategic actions. The information gathered also provides a detailed inventory of current promising practices throughout Ontario, which can be utilized by YRPH as they proceed with the implementation of the actions.

# Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation



A comprehensive consultation program was undertaken to learn from and consider the opinions and interests of York Region staff and its partners. A number of consultation tools were employed over the course of the project. The information gathered through the consultation activities informed the identification of potential actions to include in this *Action Plan*.



## Strategic Action Plan



The culmination of the information gathered through each of the steps noted above was themed and categorized. What emerged was a set of specific actions that can be implemented by York Region. The *Action Plan* is intended to be used by York Region and its partners to facilitate:

- A greater understanding of roles and responsibilities for key agencies;
- Internal and external changes and processes;
- The identification of key resources and supportive tools;
- The sharing of promising practices and resources; and
- The implementation of the strategic recommendations and related actions.

The proposed action plan is a long-term strategy that will be implemented over the course of a 6-year horizon. Each of the actions will assist YRPH to move from a plan on paper to a comprehensive program that includes strategic resource allocation and decision-making. Many of the proposed actions are dependent on others being initiated or additional coordination between YRPH and other stakeholders. An overview of the proposed actions and the timeline for implementation is presented on the following page.



# Strategic Action Pathway

## Short-term

0 - 6 months

## Medium-term

6 months - 2 years

## Long-term

2 - 6 years

**Action 1**  
Continue to fund a staff position to coordinate the implementation of the *BE&H Action Plan* and to work with staff in other departments

**Action 2**  
Identify built environment and health priorities to guide the type of work, initiatives and partnerships that are pursued

**Action 3**  
Establish new / expand existing committee comprised of internal and external stakeholders to implement the *Action Plan* recommendations

**Action 4**  
Work with other departments and stakeholders to understand and identify built environment and health data that is needed to inform policies, plans and initiatives throughout the Region and share data with its partners

**Action 5**  
Develop education and communications campaigns to increase awareness about built environment and health priorities through staff and internal / external champions

**Action 6**  
Develop measurement and evaluation criteria to assess impacts of implemented built environment and health initiatives

**Action 7**  
Ensure an accessible online location for public health information - specifically built environment and health data / resources

**Action 8**  
Develop tools for a health-supportive-design review of development plans and applications

**Action 9**  
Actively promote the work of YRPH and clearly document the individuals that regional and local municipal staff should contact for key issues

**Action 10**  
Consider providing input into the development of high-level regional and local municipal policies - such as Official Plans and Secondary Plans - using the tool(s) developed in Action #8

**Action 11**  
Develop an approach to engage the private sector to better understand trends and identify opportunities for collaboration and policy development

**Action 12**  
Explore research opportunities with academics and external organizations on topics related to healthy built environments

**Action 13**  
Explore and identify key roles YRPH can play in supporting and informing other Regional and local staff in planning and designing communities

**Action 14**  
Monitor effectiveness of *BE&H Action Plan* using criteria developed in Action #6

**Action 15**  
YRPH Senior Management to collaborate with senior management from other Community and Health Services Branches and Departments to regularly update Regional Council



The *BE&H Action Plan* for York Region is intended to be a guide for future coordination, collaboration, and implementation.

The results of this document demonstrate the opportunities that are available to YRPH staff from a partnership, coordination, process, consultation, engagement, planning, and design perspective. The contents of this *Action Plan* are unique and tailored to York Region, its local area municipalities, and broader communities, and also align with the Provincial standards that guide the work of public health units in Ontario.

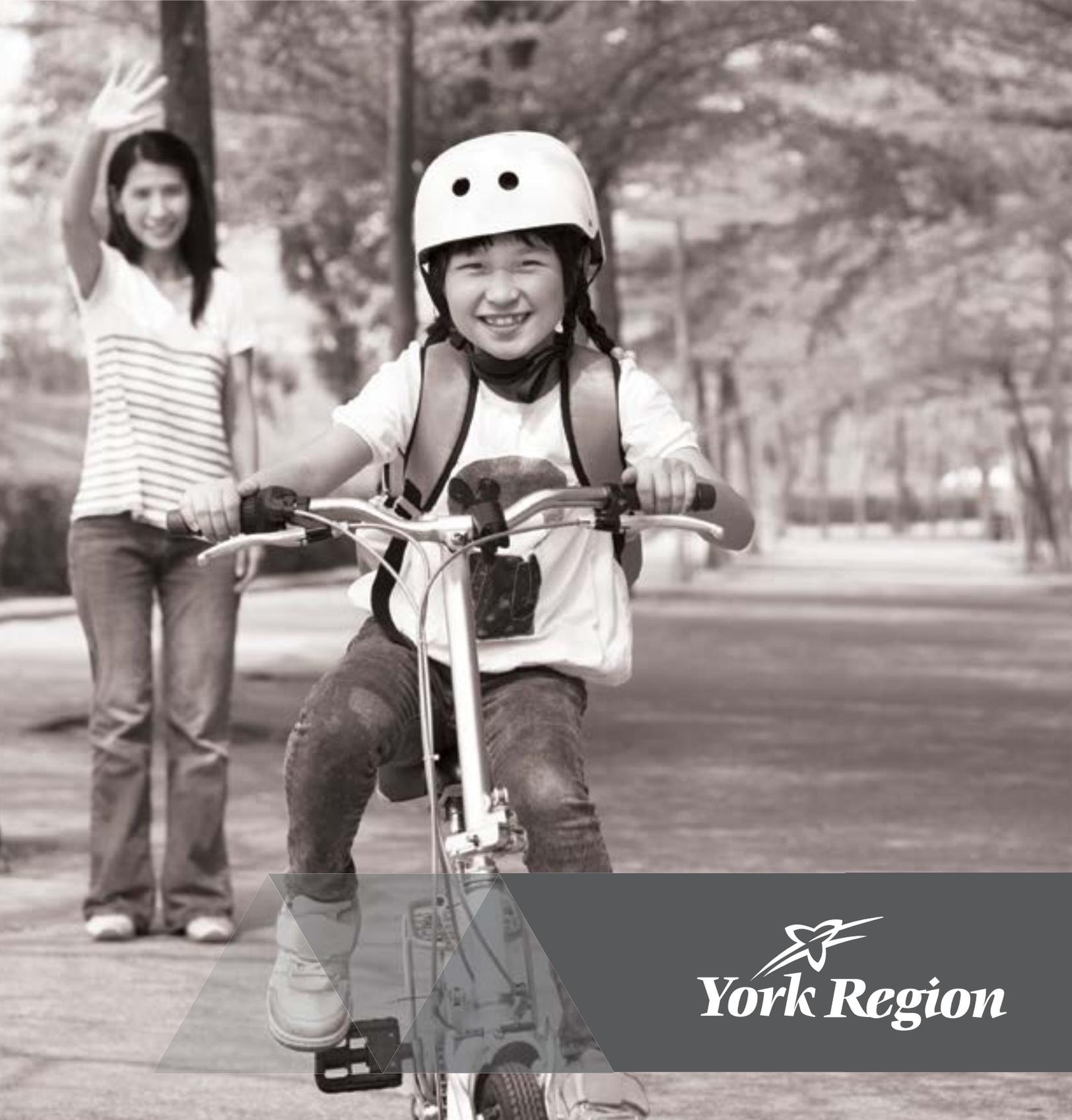
Since initiating this project in September 2015, YRPH has worked to identify a set of initiatives that make up a *Built Environment & Health Action Plan* which:

1. Aims to mitigate some of the challenges currently experienced by Public Health and its partners;
2. Addresses the inputs and interests of regional staff, local municipal staff, and key stakeholders;
3. Builds on the work that has been completed by the Region;
4. Aligns with major provincial and regional policies and initiatives; and
5. Learns and adapts from work completed by comparable jurisdictions.

Through the implementation of this *Action Plan* and the continued work of YRPH and its partners, the goal is to support the creation of communities and populations that enjoy social, economic, environmental, and physical health.

It is through the collaborative effort of YRPH, the consulting team, the regional and local staff, and stakeholders that this *Action Plan* has been developed. And, it is through their continued coordination, that the *Action Plan* will meaningfully inform and advance future efforts to improve York Region's built environment to support health.

**BUILT**  
Environment &  
**Health** Action Plan



  
**York Region**