

# WARRENTON

## 2016 HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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- Margaret W. Eastham, MPH Candidate

## SUMMARY

Following the 2015 adoption of Healthy Eating Active Living [HEAL] Resolution, the Town of Warrenton began an informed discussion about the health of its residents. The necessity of a Health Impact Assessment was realized in wanting to both promote and design a healthier, more active community. Better infrastructure and a sustainable built environment are drivers toward better health. This HIA assesses health status within these parameters in terms of ongoing activities by the Town of Warrenton and community organizations in meeting the benchmarks set forth by HEAL - a function of the Institute for Public Health Innovation.

The following recommendations will push the Town of Warrenton toward full and equitable resolution compliance, which include but are not limited to: a HEAL branding campaign, a revitalization of the town farmers market, CSA promotion, walkability and bikeability audits, and enhanced departmental policies. The Health in All Policies campaign has identified a series of standards that will enable the Town to move forward not only with these recommendations, but in pursuing more rounded policy across the board.

Warrenton is well-positioned to push wellness initiatives forward: with an engaged public, new council, and wealth of health-centric activity in the community, the Town is on the edge of becoming a health destination.

## INTRO

On December 8th, 2015, the Town of Warrenton adopted the Healthy Eating Active Living [HEAL] Resolution, which sought to improve the health of Warrenton residents through a series of benchmarked activities. In an effort to foster resolution adherence, a Health Impact Assessment [HIA] was proposed to start a discussion about the current health status of Warrenton residents, audit measures being pursued by area organizations and the Town as they relate to HEAL, and make recommendations for campaigns and initiatives that will best fit the needs of constituents.

The World Health Organization [WHO] argues that health is not merely a state, but a fundamental human right. In fact, researchers have found sedentary lifestyles to be twice as deadly as obesity [12]. As a result of the HEAL Resolution, the Town is tasked with finding a leverage point in an established community - where suburban sprawl meets the preservation of place and the motivation of its people [45].

By investing in health, Warrenton is investing in the quality of life of its residents. In order to make that investment, it is important to look at the growing move toward health-based planning: the nexus of which is designing communities that cater to their constituents' wellbeing. This emerging field is changing how we create policy, respond to community needs, and promote the welfare of citizens.

Warrenton has the potential to become the face of health in Virginia. Through better allocation of wellness resources and the advancement of social capital, residents will be able to thrive within the community. The Institute for Public Health Innovation's HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign motivates municipalities to strive for continued achievement - from resolution adoption to implementation. With ongoing monitoring and evaluation, Warrenton can expound on existing achievements in the pursuit of improved population health.



# HEALTH

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

- World Health Organization



Few tools are as effective as a Health Impact Assessment in gathering data to inform policy decisions. Legislation in Warrenton, Virginia is no different: evaluating the town's wellness efficacy will inform stakeholders as to how the recent adoption of HEAL will foster change in a small town atmosphere.

The WHO definition of health is a standard in the field: it is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity [54]. Health is commonly understood as solely the physical – but ensuring that the mental and social components are factored into any analysis is critical to a more holistic view of population health. Physical health is material wellbeing, while mental is a more psychological soundness. Social health implies that the connections we have with those around us are part of a dynamic and satisfying human experience. Creating an environment that stimulates those connections will improve population health.

Health as a function of policy implies that legislation enhances responsible health-directed behaviors. It ensures that all individuals have equal opportunities to achieve the highest level of health, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Measures need to be taken through policy and planning initiatives to ensure collaboration across all sectors in the formation of health-centered policy.

"Adopt policies that stem the obesity epidemic and create healthy, prosperous communities."

- HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign

The HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign is an initiative by the Institute for Public Health Innovation promoting healthy eating, active lifestyles, and workplace wellness. The campaign provides assistance and support to elected officials and their staff "to adopt policies that stem the obesity epidemic and create healthy, prosperous communities" [19]. Not only are HEAL initiatives health-based in nature, but they ultimately translate into economic and social development through enriched community vitality.

Healthy eating proposals focus on assisting municipalities to adopt policies that promote healthy food access, often in the form of farmers markets, community gardens and healthy food retail. Active lifestyle initiatives aim to assist municipalities in adopting policies promoting activity via joint use of facilities, complete streets and comprehensive plan updates. Workplace wellness objectives work to assist municipalities in implementing policies that create a healthy workforce through healthy vending, open stairwells, and nutrition standards.

Our actions are often the product of the environments we engage in, but policy has the potential to mitigate unhealthy community design sustainably. Youth are gaining weight at an unprecedented rate, costing municipalities a fortune in medical expenses for often preventable conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure. Bringing the HEAL campaign to Warrenton is an opportunity for the Town to improve the quality of life of its constituents while enhancing civic engagement and community interaction [20].

# POLICY





# HIA

Health Impact Assessments - or the evaluation of policy in terms of health outcomes - are comprised of seven steps:

- > Screening determines if an HIA is an appropriate method of evaluation, often by means of checklists or surveys
- > Scoping identifies the goals and objectives of the HIA while gauging already available resources
- > Assessment evaluates how the population may be affected by the proposal, policy or project
- > Recommendations express suggestions via acquired data
- > Reporting is the process of condensing findings into a final report
- > Monitoring tracks the outcomes of the decision informed by the HIA
- > Evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the HIA itself

HIAs generally encompass multiple public health and planning themes: health equity, public space, social capital, urban planning and others. Each of these factor into the Warrenton equation through informing responsible policy design, leading to their ultimate incorporation into the comprehensive plan. Engaging an interested cohort of citizens and stakeholders throughout the HIA process is key to gathering evidence and data from all parties that will be affected by or have extensive knowledge of the proposal.

The value of an HIA is attained from the evidence gathered, stakeholder engagement, and multidisciplinary involvement [32]. With detailed evidence, decisions are better informed, prompting healthier land use and design through equitable, community driven planning. HIAs are participatory by design, meaning that the stakeholders involved have an increased understanding of the policy, project or program being evaluated. Broader community engagement incorporates public perception via focus groups, surveys and word of mouth. This evidence gathered at every level creates a more impartial and robust HIA. In short, an HIA is an opportunity to practice comprehensive master planning activities - a baseline profile that allows local governments to develop better plans and policies for sustainable growth and change.

## FRAMEWORK

Screening implies that we follow a checklist or survey to ensure the necessity and appropriateness of an HIA. In the case of Warrenton, HEAL legislation has already been passed. However, "an HIA may evaluate an existing program or policy in order to inform a prospective decision or discussion" [3]. There is sufficient time and resources available to pursue a rapid HIA, as it will be concisely evaluating the current health status and potential effects of the HEAL Resolution on town residents.

An assessment of HEAL has the potential to affect both environmental and social determinants of health through its focus on healthy eating, active lifestyle, and workplace wellness. By analyzing determinants of health, health inequities will be addressed through community wide inclusion in all policies. Impacts of the proposal will be recognized immediately and over time, based on the initiatives enacted as a result of HEAL - likely affecting each of the nearly 10,000 Warrenton residents both directly and indirectly.

After an initial town audit, initiatives will be proposed specific to the current state of Warrenton in terms of the benchmarks delineated by HEAL. As outcomes research in other HEAL communities has shown, the impacts of this legislation are both clear and imminent: improved health planning and policy have a relatively immediate result. This HIA is an opportunity to connect local government, community leaders, urban planners and others to create the most rounded stakeholder and constituent oriented initiatives possible.

"HEAL encourages us to capitalize on what has been done: the building of community."

- Brian Henshaw, Former Haymarket Town Manager

These initiatives have the potential to empower community members through improved health consideration processes in policy-making. Public concerns can be better voiced through enhanced engagement in policy proposals, in which transparency is critical to success. Stakeholders involved in the HIA process have both the capacity and expertise to effectively use HIA findings in the informing and influence of the decision making process. This is best achieved through open forums, where residents are invited to collaborate and voice their opinions throughout the post-HIA process of building better policy.

While federal law mandates Environmental Impact Statements for actions "significantly affecting the quality of the human environment" or traffic impact analyses in review of land use decisions affecting the public right of way, HIAs are not required by law [33]. However, they offer a wealth of insight not otherwise available through standard planning activities, informing lawmakers of how to best adopt policies that will improve both the environment and the human experience.

What is key within all of these frameworks is clear: collaboration. Engaging the community at every level allows us to discern the biggest issues, as well as how to best target them. Conducting an HIA in Warrenton will allow the Town to determine which HEAL benchmarks to target first, how to address them, and what the outcomes will look like for the community. Warrenton is the perfect candidate for an HIA: an interested audience exists; a policy has been passed; and information regarding health outcomes needs to be collected in order to best adopt plan and policy provisions appropriately.



# BASELINE PROFILE



9907 POPULATION

78.1 PERCENT WHITE  
13.6 PERCENT BLACK  
6.8 PERCENT HISPANIC  
2.3 PERCENT ASIAN

[51]

8.6 PERCENT BELOW POVERTY LINE  
9.4 PERCENT UNINSURED  
3.8 PERCENT UNEMPLOYED  
197 FEDERALLY ASSISTED HOUSING UNITS  
3 FEDERALLY ASSISTED HOUSING PROJECTS

IN THE LAST 30 DAYS:  
175 YOUTH ABUSED PRESCRIPTIONS  
574 YOUTH USED AN ILLICIT DRUG

AMONG 4450 STUDENTS IN GRADES 7 - 12 SURVEYED

[28, 51, 52]



80 PERCENT OF ADULTS &  
87.5 PERCENT OF YOUTH

CONSUME LESS THAN THE  
FEDERALLY RECOMMENDED  
AMOUNT OF FRUITS &  
VEGETABLES

[9]

60 PERCENT OF ADULTS &  
26 PERCENT OF YOUTH  
ARE OVERWIGHT OR OBESE

47 PERCENT OF ADULTS &  
14 PERCENT OF YOUTH  
DO NOT GET ENOUGH ACTIVITY

[9]





# PROFILE



"HEAL policies can greatly impact the way people live - and improve both the physical and fiscal health of a community."

- HEAL Cities & Towns Campaign [19]

Health outcomes are a product of the environments we live and engage in. Classic determinants of health might include education, housing, income and public safety, among others. There are more tertiary factors, however: how we interact with the built environment, our social networks, geographic isolation, and ample employment opportunities all inherently contribute to health. Being mindful of these determinants allows policy to best serve town constituents.

By analyzing the distribution of effects created by HEAL, the Town will be able to identify actions that mitigate any potentially negative health outcomes. Ensuring that policies are applied and enforced equally is a fundamental of equity. Moreover, recognizing those potentially isolated from policy improvements will allow Warrenton to better cater initiatives to those most in need.

## SOCIOECONOMIC

Warrenton is a unique setting in which to perform a traditional HIA: as a relatively affluent community with few "classic" vulnerabilities such as large minority or low income populations, it begs an analysis to go further to understand its intricacies. Warrenton is a microcosm of Fauquier County, illustrative of countywide factors in a more succinct sphere. Fauquier is ranked 15th in health outcomes of 134 counties and municipalities in Virginia: indicative not only of relative wealth, but of quality of life - ranked 7th in the state [10].

Median household income is 73,062 USD in Warrenton - miles ahead of the national median of 51,939 USD. In terms of poverty, 14.5 percent of individuals across the United States live below the poverty line. In Warrenton, the rate is only 8.6 percent of adults and 10.2 percent of children. Unemployment is 3.8 percent - nearly a full percentage point below the national average of 4.7. Forty percent of homes are renter-occupied at a median rate of 1,168 USD a month - further telling of the high cost of living in a largely affluent town [All: 51]. In addition, there are three federally assisted housing projects and 197 federally assisted housing units [52].

## FREE & REDUCED LUNCH

Of the five public schools within town limits [C. M. Bradley, James G. Brumfield, W. C. Taylor, Warrenton Middle and Fauquier High], the average percentage of children eligible for free and reduced lunch is 22.3 percent - but 49.6 percent nationally in 2011 [53]. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, "children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those from families with incomes that are between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals" [35]. In comparing these statistics to national averages, it is imperative to identify vulnerable populations outside of these demographic factors.

## EMERGENCY SHELTER

Next to the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office is the Fauquier Emergency Shelter, which provides refuge for an average of 30 individuals at a time - most often the homeless between the ages of 35 and 60. Those that find themselves there have usually lost their job or their car - necessities to maintain an income in a rural community. In order to stay for a full 90 day term, adults must find some form of employment within 14 days of admittance. Nearly every resident is on a prescription to treat mental illness - something affecting the majority of the homeless population nationwide [39].

The goal for those admitted to the Emergency Shelter is to move toward transitional housing, such as that at Vint Hill northeast of town.



By fostering self-sufficiency within the shelter, individuals are better equipped to live independently. Following the screening process, case managers do an initial assessment of residents to better augment resources and support. Additionally, the shelter offers support programs to assist them in budgeting, nutrition, life skills and other fields [39].

Once the 90 day period has passed, residents must move on to a new shelter, transitional housing or a permanent residence. At Vint Hill Transitional Housing, individuals and families can stay for up to a year in a safe, community oriented environment. If they instead move to a different shelter, they must wait a year before returning to the Emergency Shelter.

## MENTAL & SOCIAL

Beyond the physical realm, it is necessary to ensure that the mental and social components of health are able to thrive. Mental health is gaining attention nationally as people begin to grapple with its complexities and diminish the stigma that surrounds the topic. "Mental health promotion involves actions to create living conditions and environments that support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles" [56]. By contrast, social health has to do with our personal networks and relationships - how our interactions with others contribute to our unique human experience.

Social health is enhanced by family owned and occupied residences. In Warrenton, some of the most thriving neighborhoods are those that are multi-generational [36]. A prime example is Haiti Street, where individuals are more frequently outside after work sharing stories than behind closed doors. This connection to place is integral to social health and in establishing shared space. The promotion of social health is done by bringing individuals together around a shared experience - for example, coffee on Main Street or an event at the park.

The United States suffers from shortage of psychiatrists and psychologists. The state ratio of population to mental health provider is 680 : 1 - in Fauquier County, that number is 1390 : 1 [10]. Warrenton is in dire need of psychiatrists - not only can they address therapies for patients, but can do so in combination with medicine. Over 50 percent of primary care physicians are readily prescribing complex mental health medications - yet are without the expertise to do so in combination with other treatments and therapies that are often necessary for improvement [30].

Locally, individuals suffer primarily from anxiety and depression - something that affects one in five nationally [22]. While oft cited, only 4.2 percent of the population suffers from a severe mental illness: a "mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities" [34]. In the nine month period between the beginning of October 2015 and end of June 2016, the Fauquier Hospital Emergency Room saw 378 patients in need of psychological care [48]. There are significant gaps in the allocation of mental health care: without more professionals - especially ones that accept Medicare and Medicaid - Warrenton residents are at a severe disadvantage.

The 2015 Pride Survey focusing on adolescent drug use administered to Fauquier County Public School students in grades 7 - 12 identified many of the problems plaguing area youth. Nationally, one in five adolescents will experience a mental health challenge each year. In Fauquier, 16 percent of

youth surveyed indicated bouts of depression, while 16.5 percent identified feelings of anxiety. The Pride Survey steering committee - composed of school officials, police, and mental health advocates - identified a number of goals addressing some of the issues established by survey findings: increase early identification, implement prevention programs, increase access and availability of treatment services, and support families. Mental health challenges tend to go unrecognized or underdiagnosed. However, with a community support network, Warrenton individuals and organizations will be better equipped to meet the needs of those in crisis or struggling.

Beyond the school setting, the Warrenton Police Department has reported 41 incidents labeled "Assist Citizen - Mental / ECO / TDO" from January 1st to June 30th [2]. An ECO is an Emergency Custody Order in which law enforcement can detain an individual with a mental illness or suffering from a mental health crisis that may cause "serious harm to himself or others, is in need of hospitalization or treatment, and is unwilling or incapable of volunteering for hospitalization or treatment" for up to eight hours, while a Temporary Detention Order is analogous, but can only hold individuals for up to 72 hours following patient examination and stabilization [8]. Of those 41, 23 were voluntarily transported to Fauquier Hospital for mental health evaluation; three of which resulting in a TDO. Of the 18 others, six also resulted in a TDO. The Sheriff's Department has responded to 101 'mental health' events in the same timeframe [14]. This somewhat broad category includes everything from dealing with dementia patients to responding to a suicide attempt - but with the underlying theme of mental health at play.

Both Town Police and the Sheriff's Department have completed Crisis Intervention Team [CIT] training, which assists law enforcement in reacting appropriately to individuals with mental illness or a developmental disability - enhancing their ability to work with those in peril. FCPS staff and individuals in the community have participated in Mental Health First Aid training - giving them tools to understand the needs of those suffering from mental health issues. "It will help enlighten our community about moving more and more people toward recovery and removing the associated stigma," asserts Carolyn Lamm, the school system's Supervisor of Student Support Services [28].

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE

In recent months, the public has grown aware of problems surrounding substance abuse. The 2015 Pride Survey reported stark findings, estimating that 400 youth are potentially addicted to substances. 79 students had used heroin within the last year, with 19 using daily. In the 30 days leading up to the survey, 175 had abused prescriptions and 574 had used an illicit drug.

The progression from abuse to dependence to addiction is hugely damaging to health. In order shift the life course trajectory of area youth, actions need to be taken to halt the growing trend. More and more overdoses [ODs] have been reported, with locals voicing concern in the Virtual Town Hall portal online. One respondent wrote, "heroin addiction [is] devastating our young people." Another fears "the drug scene taking over the old motels as it is now." With users having exhausted other options, the transient nature of hotels and motels has lent itself to the problem. Moreover, the large percentage of renters has created informal tenant communities - often hubs for substance abuse [36].



Within the town, there have been three ODs year to date [Battle]. The county - 651 square miles and 57,000 more people - has certainly fielded more: as of June 30th, the Sheriff's Department had responded to 34 ODs in addition to 85 DUIs [14]. "There is no demographic," asserts Police Chief Lou Battle. An ER nurse at Fauquier Hospital estimated that they see at least one OD a week [1] - between October and June, the record shows 112 self-inflicted and accidental drug related visits [48]. With varied systems of records management between law enforcement, the health department and the hospital, differences in data is expected. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind what exactly an overdose includes - not only illicit drugs, but also alcohol and accidental medication or prescription misuse.

Earlier in 2016, the PATH Foundation allocated two separate grants to outfit deputies and officers with revival kits to respond to individuals suffering from an opioid or heroin overdose - kits that have saved a number of lives since their distribution this spring. These kits act as a quick response to an overdose situation - but the community is in need of long term solutions to combat the abuse epidemic.

This baseline profile is an evaluation of the current health status and vulnerabilities of Warrenton residents: a major component of the screening process. Going further, screening determines whether policy has or will have a significant impact on health potentially overlooked by policymakers - either explicitly or abstractly. This is done by evaluating potential health outcomes, particularly health determinants.

## DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Health is the byproduct of the larger environmental context: "factors such as where we live, the state of our environment, genetics, our income and education level, and our relationships with friends and family all have considerable impacts on health" [55]. These determinants need to be examined in an HIA as we consider what makes some healthy and others not.

Classic determinants of health include:

- > Built Environment
  - > Housing
  - > Industry
  - > Natural Environment
  - > Public Safety
  - > Social Networks / Support
  - > Socioeconomic Conditions
  - > Transportation

Each of these dictate how we interact with the larger environment mentally, physically, and socially. There are "multiple causal pathways through which determinants influence each other," as well as varied levels of influence: individual, interpersonal, community and societally [27].

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Every three years, Fauquier Health and the PATH Foundation are required by The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 to assess the health needs of the community and adopt an implementation strategy to address the needs identified. The 2014 Community Health Needs Assessment found the following:

### ADULTS

- > 60 percent overweight or obese
- > 80 percent consumed less than the recommended amount of fruits & vegetables
- > 47 percent do not get enough physical activity
- > 21 percent smokers
- > 11 percent have diabetes
- > 17 percent fair or poor health status

### YOUTH

- > 26 percent overweight or obese
- > 87.5 percent consumed less than the recommended amount of fruits & vegetables
- > 14 percent do not get enough physical activity
- > 22 percent use tobacco
- > 33 percent use alcohol
- > 25 sad or hopeless feelings

In terms of survey results, respondents found the following to be of great concern: adult obesity [69 percent], depression [55 percent], mental health conditions other than depression [54 percent], diabetes [53 percent], childhood obesity [51 percent], and substance abuse [both illegal and prescription drugs: 50 percent]. In terms of community service gaps, the vast majority of respondents identified behavioral health services [including mental health and substance use] to be severely lacking.

Interview results were particularly enlightening. When asked to define a "healthy community," responses themed around an expectation of health, engagement in health improvement both physically and behaviorally, access to services, empowerment to make healthy choices, and a physical environment that supports health. In identifying at-risk populations, responses included socioeconomic and environmental risk factors, chronic disease and disability, mental health conditions, behavioral risk factors, geographic isolation and a lack of health insurance.

Looking forward, respondents identified issues of concern: increases in the working poor / uninsured, substance abuse problems, mental health needs, aging, and chronic disease. Community assets include caring / engaged residents, good community programs and services, committed health care providers and support for **healthy eating and active living**.

The findings from the Community Health Needs Assessment reach far beyond Warrenton, but are illustrative of issues affecting town residents - particularly as Warrenton is the largest township in the region covered. Much can be garnered from this assessment in devising HEAL policies that better target Warrenton residents holistically.



# VIRGINIA HEAL COMMUNITIES

The following townships are just three of the 24 HEAL communities in Virginia. They were selected as "case studies" given their relative proximity, likeness and culture - allowing Warrenton a handful of cohort communities to learn from.

At just over 2,000 residents, the Town of Crewe in central Virginia was the first in the state to adopt HEAL policy. "Our economic health is tied to the physical health of the community," says councilman Phil Miskovic. The idea was not to take a 'Bloomberg approach' [i.e. comprehensive] - instead, the Town of Crewe assembled a task force charged with leveraging resources and engaging local stakeholders. Their vision is simple: to create a healthier community that is more desirable to visit, own or operate a business, and raise a family [29].

"Capitalizing on the low hanging fruit is what builds momentum," explained Miskovic. Each month, the Town posts a HEAL tip on their Facebook page to continually connect with the community. Because their park property is privately owned and leased back to the Town, Crewe was able to prohibit smoking on premises. These smaller, achievable initiatives have motivated locals to invest in their health: linking them to healthy opportunities without limiting their options.



The Town of Haymarket adopted HEAL policy in the fall of 2013 in an effort to capitalize on existing capital improvement plans and initiatives. Better infrastructure is a driver toward better health, with walkability and bikeability among some of the efforts being pursued by the Town. Their Street Scape Project was part of the enhancement equation prior to the adoption of HEAL, yet a major facet of the complete streets benchmark [21].

Former Town Manager Brian Henshaw suggested that HEAL is not necessarily about checking all the boxes - instead, it is capitalizing on what the Town has already done in the broader building of community. Haymarket is comprised of less than 2,000 individuals. The benchmarks created by HEAL are not necessarily geared toward such small populaces, but they point governing bodies of any size toward the same end goal: healthier residents.

North of both Haymarket and Warrenton is the Town of Middleburg - just inside the Loudoun County line, the edge of what many consider the metropolitan DC area. Unlike northern Virginia, however, Middleburg is shy of 800 residents and prides itself on its small, locally owned storefronts and businesses. By October 2016, the Town plans to complete a traffic calming plan on Route 50 with curb extensions, crosswalks, and dark sky friendly lighting - inviting more opportunities for walkability through the main thoroughfare.

Middleburg's Town Council does annual assessments to monitor progress toward their HEAL goals since the adoption of the policy in 2013. Their focus has largely been on the built environment, as is evident with the traffic calming measures. Though similar to Haymarket, Middleburg is even smaller and far more rural - but prides itself on being a walking destination. In tying both active lifestyle and workplace wellness strategies together, the Town Police Department converted an extra room in their office to an in-house gym. Efforts by the Town are moving Middleburg toward recognition as a healthy community without necessarily checking all the boxes: another rural take on HEAL benchmarks.





# HEALTHY EATING



The healthy eating component of HEAL focuses on three guiding benchmarks: farmers markets, community gardens, and healthy food retail. While it is possible for Warrenton to check at least two of the three, an HIA begs to focus on questions of equity: are these outlets affordable? Are they accessible? Are they promoted?

Education is the first step: not only in informing the consumer, but in informing those behind the policy. Where is Warrenton in terms of having an accessible, affordable, walkable farmers market? Can residents partake in community gardening activities, or point to fresh produce at the grocery store as a superior option?

## FARMERS MARKETS

The Warrenton Farmers Market began in 1975, currently in its 41st season. In addition to the weekly market on Saturdays in a downtown municipal lot, there is a smaller Wednesday market off Hospital Drive. The Saturday market drives business downtown: a source of local, sustainable economic development.

The Market Manager - typically the Town Planning Director - deals with the groundwork that goes into market operations. The Head Vendor operates as a liaison between the Town and vendors, managing the day to day of the market. The Farmers Market Board is made up of a handful of vendors who assist in the formulation and adoption of policies and procedures, as well as in reviewing vendor applications. The Wednesday market is advertised to hospital employees, but remains out of the way for others working downtown or out of town given its location and hours of operation [1].

The average Saturday morning off 5th Street is buzzing with familiar faces around the market. Coffee in hand, these individuals are part of a routine - neighbors, farmers, and friends that not only support the vendors, but drive economic development to Old Town. The Warrenton Farmers Market is a weekly destination for many from May till October in community with agrarian roots.

## CSA PROGRAM

In 2016, the Town offered a CSA - Community Supported Agriculture - opportunity for both employees and locals. The Warrenton Aquatic & Recreation Facility [WARF] is a weekly drop off location for produce shares from Willowlyn Farms, with other seasonal harvests available to anyone for purchase. The program attracted 12 subscribers, though owner Matt Eustace caters to clients at other locations regionally and from his farm in Catlett. One subscriber noted that the CSA allowed her family to try vegetables they might not have elected to eat before [43]. "I could see the it growing two or threefold," says Eustace of the WARF CSA. "The setting is ideal to promote a better lifestyle."

## HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL

The Food Marketing Institute, or FMI, is the "trade association that serves as the voice of food retail" - a membership organization that evaluates food safety, public affairs, education, research, and industry relations for food retailers and wholesalers. In Warrenton, each of the five major grocery stores are members: Food Lion, Giant, Harris Teeter, Safeway and Walmart. FMI offers members a wealth of information on food safety and industry topics - including health and wellness resources. One such publication - *Shopping for Health 2016* - "examines the various ways in which health & nutritional concerns affect food buying and eating decisions; gauges food shoppers' awareness, interests & attitudes regarding food, health & nutrition; understands efforts to manage eating & diets; and measures parents' attitudes and activities regarding meals for children."

Because all major food retailers in town are members of FMI, they have access to this and other resources promoting the healthy merchandising of goods. FMI is by no means alone - they are but one of many industry groups that local grocers reference. Fauquier prides itself on being an agricultural community, and merchants jump on the opportunities this designation presents: in promoting local produce and meats, stores like Giant are putting local dollars back into the local economy.

"Merchandising is so important," posits Judy Jones, former Giant General Manager [GM]. When consumers spend an average of two minutes in the produce department, Jones harped on the importance of marketing to keep them there longer. Giant is a special case - in being a grocery chain unique to the DC area, Jones had a little more agency than most GMs in how her store operated. "We had no-candy checkouts, and reused produce when possible." Reusing included day-old oranges for the fresh-squeezed orange juice machine, peanuts for fresh peanut butter, and french bread for croutons. This "consciousness of being healthy" drove sales for Jones - and likely many other retailers in Warrenton.



## COMMUNITY GARDENS

Local government is not responsible for anything that could be classified as a community garden within town limits. Although they have entertained the prospect, many of the locations considered were also considered for a public dog park - something that took precedence given a rather vocal public [43]. However, there are a number of community gardens just beyond town limits, in addition to the Culinary and Healing Garden at Fauquier Hospital that serves as a working garden for the Bistro. While the larger community can engage in horticultural activities at the Healing Garden, its harvests are used in the kitchen to prepare wholesome meals for both patients and the public - something so revolutionary in hospital cafeterias that it received national recognition on NPR [44].

## FAUQUIER EDUCATION FARM

The Fauquier Education Farm off Meetze Road is an outdoor classroom for individuals, school groups, clubs and others. A large percentage of those volunteering are from Prince William County, driving half an hour or more to be a part of the experience. "Volunteering here is a service to the community," says farm manager Jim Hankins. Their mission is sweeping: to promote agricultural education and social responsibility in the community it serves. The farm operates on ten acres, seven of which are actively cultivated. The property is owned by the County and leased for a dollar a year, supported largely by donations from community members and organizations [17].

"In my first year, we harvested 15,730 lbs. of vegetables." As he expanded the variety of goods cultivated, Hankins more than doubled production in year two. "My personal mission is to grow the highest quality of produce. This year, my goal is 50,000 lbs." With the help of over 300 individuals a year, Hankins is able to grow, harvest and distribute these goods to area food banks - first in Warrenton, and more broadly as yields allow. "We are taking care of Fauquier first. It's a community effort."

Throughout the growing process, Hankins sets up teaching opportunities as a part of the experience. By offering ten workshops a year on farming techniques, locals are able to both volunteer and garner skills they can take back to their own gardens [17]. This hands on learning model has allowed the Education Farm to flourish and those that rely on food banks to maintain healthier lifestyles.

## LOCAL FOOD PROJECT: AIRLIE

Behind the Ivy Hill development on the edge of town lies Airlie - an accommodation, conference and events venue. The Local Food Project at Airlie was established in 1998: a four acre organic garden that has supplied the conference center with over 4,000 pounds of herbs, vegetables and flowers annually since its inception [57]. Excess harvests are donated to the Fauquier Community Food Bank. In 2013, Airlie opened up part of the garden to the public free of charge to manage their own plots, with events throughout the growing season to bring lessees together over potlucks and meetings. Member retention has been astounding since the Project began, leaving few - if any - beds available for use. Head Gardener Katelyn Wietor made their mission clear: "the garden is meant for the community."

Beyond these three benchmarks, other healthy eating initiatives are gaining traction across the community:

## FRESH PROGRAM

In 2015, the PATH Foundation awarded Fauquier County Public Schools a one year planning grant to develop a program focused on the enhancement of school health. The result is fostering wellness through a culture of health and fitness - in practice, FRESH: Fauquier Reaches for Excellence in School Health. Their vision is threefold: to support healthier lifestyles across school settings in partnership with school staff, parents and community organizations; to encourage positive health messaging and supports in the classroom, cafeteria, school, home, and community settings; and to enhance healthier lifestyles as evidenced by student knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors related to healthy eating and active living.

## FCCC

Fauquier Community Child Care - or FCCC - is a before and after school program for kids in elementary and middle schools offered across the county. In 2013, FCCC received a grant from a local private funder to provide healthy morning snacks to students. "There is an assumption that low socioeconomic households can't afford breakfast. Money is not necessarily the issue: time is" explains Melissa German, executive director of the program. FCCC serves approximately 500 kids during the school year, and 300 during their summer camp. During the summer camp, kids can participate in weekly yoga and zumba classes, as well as the Little Chefs cooking skills program - something that will continue into the school year. Newsletters are sent home to parents with recipes for the things their children prepared at camp or after school - extending the educational component beyond the program and into the home [16].

Given the huge success of these initiatives at FCCC, German said that their next target is staff wellness. Of those who work full time, hours that fulfill before school and afterschool commitments demand convenience eating - a burden on their health. A healthier staff will lend itself to a healthier student body, which is critical to improving overall health outcomes.

## FARM & FOOD PLAN

In October 2015, the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission created the Rappahannock-Rapidan Farm & Food Plan, focused on strengthening the local food economy in order to retain more dollars within the region [including Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties]. In addition, the plan seeks to promote citizens' health, encourage the preservation of farmland, and enhance farmers' quality of life. Of the four primary findings, one stands out in light of HEAL: the need for local food promotion, consumer education, and preserving the integrity of truly local foods.

The agriculture industry is a key driver in the regional economy, including direct to consumer sales such as CSAs and farmers markets. Though these sales represent only 1.3 percent of farm product sales in the region, it is still four times the national average [42]. Through better policy, places like Warrenton and the Rappahannock-Rapidan region more broadly can incentivize farmers to enhance these direct sales with tax breaks and less rigid food safety policies.



# ACTIVE LIVING

Active Lifestyle initiatives have made headway across town in recent years. Between a largely accessible recreational facility and an ongoing comprehensive plan update, Warrenton has been responding to citizens in tailoring policy to meet their needs.

Walking - and physical activity more generally - is both an economic and experiential activity. In sharing the outdoors with those around us, we are creating a positive social environment in which to engage with others. A healthy population is a public good, where we reap a "shared gain from a shared good," writes Dr. Sandro Galea, Boston University dean and professor [15]. By creating opportunities for bike and pedestrian friendly streets or shared active environments, the Town will continue to promote the health of its people.

## JOINT USE

Joint use of facilities implies that Town owned and operated facilities are accessible to the public for physical activity and shared social space. In Warrenton, the only place that explicitly fits this definition is the WARF. Opened in the fall of 2007, the WARF caters to Warrenton residents of any age and ability. Moreover, they have the second certified Boundless Playground in the state [43].

WARF management actively encourages the use of day passes - from as little as \$3 or \$4 a day for a town resident, contingent on age. In terms of annual membership rates for town residents, constituents will spend either \$220 as a youth or senior or \$295 for an adult; either 60 or 80 cents a day. The Town of Warrenton maintains five public parks and a trail - two of which have facilities that residents can rent for a half [55 USD] or full [80 USD] day.

In addition to the WARF, there are a number of privately owned recreational facilities within town limits. One tends to stand apart from the rest: the Fauquier Health Wellness Center, a medical fitness facility. As a cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation facility, the Wellness Center tends to attract (and retain) an older crowd. While many start as rehab patients, they stay for the individualized support they receive from trainers, dieticians and exercise physiologists. The free coffee is a nice perk, too.

## FAUQUIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Fauquier County Public School System is an outlet for groups seeking a venue for gathering or recreation - though at a cost contingent on length of use, rooms needed, etc. Though a public institution, this series of facilities is available to town residents as long as the basis of which is in accordance with protocol. FCPS policy 2-4.1 reads:

"The primary purpose of school facilities is for the support of the instructional program. The Fauquier County School Board encourages the use of school facilities by the public for worthwhile community, education, recreational, civic, and cultural activities when such use will not interfere with the basic purposes of the educational program. For the purposes of this policy, "school facilities" are defined as buildings, grounds and equipment owned or operated by the School Board. The School Board and the administration retain exclusive authority to terminate uses that become disruptive."



## COMPLETE STREETS

On July 12th, 2016, the Town of Warrenton authorized Town Manager Brannon Godfrey to execute a Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] with the PATH Foundation to undertake a Healthy Lifestyle-Complete Streets and Active Transportation project. With a 100,000 USD grant allotted by PATH for the contracting of consulting and professional services, the Town has added capacity for both their comprehensive planning process and in the allocation of a complete streets guide. Services rendered by professional consultants include a trails plan update, walkability audits, community engagement and stakeholder education events, and the subsequent complete streets assessment and recommendations.

## SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

The integration of the Healthy Lifestyle-Complete Streets and Active Transportation grant and the Comprehensive Plan will be hugely beneficial for the Town in condensing resources to create a pedestrian and bicycle friendly community. In a similar vein, FCPS has started working with the federally-funded Safe Routes to School [SRTS] project in Bealeton. The Fauquier County Board of Supervisors approved the SRTS grant for Cedar Lee Middle School infrastructure improvements in September 2012. At present, bidding is open for architecture firms to take on the project.

Pam Pulver, FCPS Coordinator for Science, Health & Physical Education, cited the SRTS project in Bealeton as something the school system hopes to pursue in other areas - including Warrenton. With federal funding opportunities and support from the Town's Community Development Department, integrating SRTS and the Active Transportation MOU will promote the longevity of both.



## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

"The comprehensive plan is an official public document that serves as the community's guide for future decisions regarding development, preservation, public facilities and other key components of community life" [49]. Section 15.2-2200 of the Code of Virginia establishes the legislative intent of planning and zoning authorities through encouraging local governments to:

"Improve the public health, safety, convenience and welfare of the citizens; plan for future development with adequate highway, health, recreational and other facilities; recognize the needs of agriculture, industry and business in future growth; preserve agricultural and forestall land; provide a healthy surrounding for family life in residential areas; and provide that community growth be constant with the efficient use of public funds" [11].

As it relates to this HIA, components of the existing Comprehensive Plan can be broken down into the following topics: community facilities and services, economic resources, growth management, land use, natural environment, town design and transportation. Many of the existing goals will change in future revisions – not only as targets are attained, but also as the Town adapts to newer needs and technologies, often reflective of cultural shifts. This HIA will inform what many of the existing needs are and likely forecast imminent ones.

Section 15.2-2223 explains that the comprehensive plan shall "...in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities." In order to better tailor the 2040 Comprehensive Plan to the needs of every Warrenton resident, Town Planner Denise Harris is working to enhance public engagement throughout the process – including a Virtual Town Hall portal online. By establishing a forum in which residents can voice their thoughts and concerns about Warrenton, the Comprehensive Plan can address both the policy and the community.

In the Memorandum of Understanding submitted to Town Council on July 12, 2016, Harris wrote, "By coming together proactively during the comprehensive planning process, the Town of Warrenton and PATH Foundation would establish a framework for how communities can place health at the center of their planning process to implement policies that support high quality of life."

The American Planning Association [APA] published the *Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans* in 2015 to assist municipalities in creating sustainable communities. The document outlines three primary roles of comprehensive plans: principles (statements of intent),

processes (planning activities), and attributes (plan-making design standards) that together formulate best practices. Principles in the document include: a livable built environment, harmony with nature, resilient economy, interwoven equity, healthy community, and responsible regionalism. Interwoven equity and a healthy community are particularly poignant to the HEAL Resolution, as they advance benchmarks set forth by the policy. In terms of processes, authentic participation by the community and transparent, accountable implementation by officials are critical to carrying out successful comprehensive plan activities.

## FAUQUIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Other projects in the county have furthered health innovations outside of these three HEAL benchmarks. In January 2016, a fourth grade teacher at Mary Walter Elementary in Bealeton was awarded a grant for fitness balls to replace chairs in her classroom. By removing the expectation for students to sit still, they are able to engage in the classroom with limited distraction [38].

Following the renovation of Fauquier High, students must take the stairs between classes unless they have a medical waiver, prompting physical activity breaks between classes. The building is LEED Gold certified, meaning that the materials, efficiency, and performance of the building promote enhanced occupant comfort [24]. As reported:

"Various design elements promote healthy activity within the school and serve as teaching tools for green design. The project earned the USGBC pilot credit, 'Design for Active Occupants,' which encourages movement within the building by including an open four-story central staircase with seating / activity areas near the stairs on each floor" [37].

Of the two schools, only Fauquier High is in Warrenton – however, projects going on throughout the school system function as case studies for others to learn from in the promotion of daily activity. The Fauquier Outdoor Lab recently received a 96,500 USD grant to restore their facility – a frequent field trip destination for students in FCPS schools [5]. The lab is an experiment in active learning: engaging with the environment outside of the classroom.

## WALK YOUR WARRENTON

In July 2016, interns at the PATH Foundation hung 'guerilla wayfinding' signs as part of a campaign entitled "Walk Your Warrenton." By promoting the safety and walkability of downtown, this project is part of a larger conscious placemaking initiative as it capitalizes on community assets and, subsequently, citizen wellbeing. The Walk [Your City] project is a walkability advocate: as their website touts, "it's not too far to walk."



Photos Courtesy Tyler McGilvery, PATH Foundation Intern



# WORKPLACE WELLNESS



As detailed in HEAL policy, workplace wellness is geared toward initiatives created by the Town of Warrenton as an employer. The three goals identified in this bracket are largely focused on more urban municipalities; certainly less malleable in rural environments.

The Town offers an Employee Wellness Program called Commit to be Fit, which includes a free WARF membership, punch card to earn a free personal training session, and a steep discount on regular personal training. Health, Parks and Recreation employees are largely obligated to use the WARF - for example, the aquatics staff must complete a monthly swim test to maintain their certification.

Neither the Greater Warrenton Chamber of Commerce nor the Fauquier Chamber explicitly promote wellness initiatives to member organizations. The Fauquier Chamber cited individual members as potential hosts of wellness workshops, but has not done anything in that vein on their own accord.

## HEALTHY VENDING

As a Town facility, the WARF has stickers on the vending machine that identify which snacks are healthier choices. These designations follow the 35-10-35 nutrition standard: less than 35 percent of calories from fat, less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat, and less than 35 percent of calories from sugar by weight. This standard also bans trans fat and advocates for the avoidance of high fructose corn syrup.

## OPEN STAIRWELLS

There are only three Town facilities that have an elevator: the Visitor Center, the WARF, and the Warrenton Volunteer Fire Company [WVFC]. While the Town does not own the WVFC facility, employees there are employees of the Town.

The elevator at the Visitor Center is key-operated, meaning it is only used by those who cannot physically take the stairs. The WARF has a grand staircase in the center of the building, drawing members down to the pool or locker rooms. The elevator is out of a direct line of sight, away from the main thoroughfare. At the WVFC, the public rarely goes past the first floor. As one firefighter noted, the company "takes the stairs 95 percent of the time" [6].

While there is no explicit "open stairwell" policy at these locations, there seems to be little need for one - the three elevators are largely tucked away or used only for those with disabilities.

## NUTRITION STANDARDS

Town facilities were sent a memo on January 15th, 2016 requiring them to post a nutritional infographic from the USDA "Choose My Plate" initiative, which promotes healthy and balanced diets. They were posted on or near the refrigerator in each department facility, informing employees about appropriate food group portions.

Without any Town sanctioned cafeterias or meal plans, staff must be creative in promoting healthier eating in the workplace. Meetings are encouraged to serve salads in addition to sandwiches, or fruit alongside pastries.



# LET'S MOVE!



The Let's Move! Cities, Towns and Counties [LMCTC] campaign is "dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation." In June 2016, Warrenton was awarded five gold medals for initiatives including CSA, playground mapping, the promotion of healthy eating in Town facilities and WARF on Wheels. The next step is to become an All-Star Community, meaning that the Town enacts at least four of the following eight strategies identified by LMCTC:

- > Create a more bicycle friendly community
- > Develop & implement design guidelines promoting physical activity
- > Establish slow zones near parks, schools and rec centers
- > Adopt & implement healthy meeting guidelines
- > Develop a recognition program for businesses with wellness policies
- > Expand the number & utilization of farmers markets
- > Increase access to community gardens & urban agriculture
- > Develop & implement breastfeeding policies in city / county facilities in accordance with state and federal law

Strategies one, two and three both explicitly and implicitly relate to the complete streets and comprehensive plan update benchmarks under Active Living. Strategies four, five and eight correlate more broadly with Workplace Wellness, while six and seven directly correspond to the farmers market and community garden facets of Healthy Eating. Regardless of which four strategies the Town chooses to pursue, they will each forward the HEAL mission in the promotion of wellness.

## HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES

"Our greatest health challenges – for example, chronic illness, health inequities, climate change, and spiraling healthcare costs – are highly complex and often linked" [40]. Health is incorporated into policy decisions through several channels: addressing social determinants of health, advancement of intersectoral collaboration, engagement of stakeholders and multiple partners, and the creation of structural or process change [40]. The takeaway is simple: how to best incorporate health considerations into decision-making.

Integrating HIA findings into health-conscious policy is challenging, yet attainable through benchmarking goals. First, policy must meet the basic needs of all, which includes making health services, healthy food, recreational facilities and housing both accessible and affordable. Next, policy should maintain the quality and sustainability of the environment – preserving clean air, soil and water, ensuring tobacco and smoke free environments, and sustaining green and open spaces. Policy should safeguard adequate levels of economic and social development through a living wage, job opportunities and high quality, accessible education. Lastly, policy must advocate for the creation of health and social equity through supportive social relationships, including robust civic and social engagement, socially cohesive relationships, and safe, crime-free communities.

In addition to the benchmarking of goals, health in all policies can only be managed through the engagement of the community. With an active group of stakeholders and interested parties, creating policy that is tailored to the community and mindful of health is possible. Local policy has a direct effect on the determinants of health: being mindful of the connection between the two will enable policymakers to ensure that its impact is positive.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

Moving forward, Warrenton is well-positioned to adopt initiatives promoting wellness among its constituents:



## IMPROVED POLICY

Creating Health-Conscious, Solutions Minded Policy will positively affect health outcomes both explicitly and inherently.

Warrenton is strategically positioned to improve the health outcomes of its residents. This rudimentary synopsis of how the Town currently measures up to HEAL benchmarks is a starting point for discussions on how to continually advance policy and health. The following recommendations are the result of discussions with other HEAL communities, interviews with residents, and a sweeping literature review.

To start, a HEAL steering committee ought to be created to ensure adherence to the goals outlined by the Resolution. This committee - composed of both residents and members of local government, such as the Committee for Health, Parks and Recreation - will regularly audit Town performance in accordance with policies adopted as a result of the HEAL Resolution. They will brand and market the initiative specific to Warrenton needs, ensuring no gaps exist in the understanding of legislation and that the distribution of effects are equitably felt.

This committee should work in harmony with other policies and campaigns being pursued by the Town, such as the Let's Move! All-Stars or Health in All Policies projects. There is ample opportunity for collaboration in the creation of a healthy, safe community that empowers its residents to make better and more health-conscious choices.

## HEALTHY EATING

### FARMERS MARKET & CSA

In its current state, the Warrenton Farmers Market will likely maintain its status quo. However, minimal investment and a dedicated team could alter that outcome in favor of market revitalization. Elizabeth Borst, Executive Director of



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Bottom-Up Community Empowerment gives the public agency to voice their visions and concerns for the town imminently and over time.

The Farmers Market.co and Spotsylvania Farmers Market Manager, has analyzed the Warrenton market from afar. "It's well-positioned," she says, "but needs the investment."

A restructuring process should be first on the agenda: diversifying the board and appointing a market manager. This person would act as a liaison between the board and the Town, and manage the day to day of market activities with a guiding focus of meeting consumer needs. A board composed of community members, vendors, Town officials and other interested parties could take advantage of grant opportunities that foster innovation. Thereafter, it would be possible to enact more structural change: for example, applying for USDA grants that would allow vendors to accept government assistance programs like SNAP or WIC.

The farmers market is an inherently social experience, where people come together to engage in a common activity. The Wednesday market is less conducive to that atmosphere given its location and time - but an evening market could change that. With ample parking and an easily accessible location, the WARF would be an ideal venue for an "after hours" market during the week. Farmers lose hours out of their workday if they sell in the morning - evenings, on the other hand, are more traditional buying times for consumers getting off work and minimizes the loss of working daylight hours for farmers. With a few food trucks and a local band, an evening market could become a recurring destination event that promotes the health of residents and fuels money into the local economy.

As Matt Eustace noted, there is huge potential to grow the CSA program at the WARF going forward. With more direct to consumer marketing online or via social media across a variety of platforms, there is opportunity for the Town to promote better eating practice - and its very own recreational facility.



## COMMUNITY GARDEN

Warrenton has long entertained the idea of a community garden, though action has remained on the back burner in light of projects with more vocal public engagement. There are lessons to be learned from each of the examples discussed in this HIA that will shed some light on best practices going forward - but a key takeaway is in taking ownership of the garden. This would not only be in terms of identifying shared resources or rules, but in the organization and preservation of the facility. Those who take ownership bear the cost of the program, thus are tasked with laying out the code of conduct for users. Community gardens are community building: ensuring that the code reflects this is important to assuring garden longevity.

## HEAL BRANDING

As a small town, Haymarket has promoted wellness outside of the HEAL benchmarks - most notably by encouraging local restaurants to publish 'HEAL menus.' With healthy options clearly identified, making better choices as a consumer becomes less of a challenge. In Warrenton, a similar campaign could take on a life of its own - by branding the HEAL Resolution, the public would recognize a symbol or logo as being a health-conscious option. This could be in the form of a green leaf or heart - something that would symbolize "health" to an individual, whether or not they were familiar with HEAL.

## ACTIVE LIVING

### PARKSCORE / BLOS

The Trust for Public Land's Parkscore methodology is a tool for municipalities to use in better understanding how they measure up in terms of park accessibility and quality. Similarly, the American Planning Association's *Safe Routes to Parks* guide ensures that green space is accessible to all. Bicycle Level of Service [BLOS] indexes evaluate cyclist comfort given mixed traffic scenarios, and allow towns to create better bike infrastructure. The League of American Bicyclists is an advocacy group working to promote safer roads and a bike friendly culture.

All of these resources stress a common message: access to the outdoors and active transportation are determinants of health and wellbeing. In addition to the measures being pursued by the MOU with PATH on Active Transportation, the Town should employ some of these practices or resources in creating a more mixed transportation friendly community. Between complete streets and other comprehensive plan additions, these actions will help to

legitimize the walking and biking movement as the Harrisonburg & Rockingham Bike-Walk Summit has done.

The H&R Bike-Walk Summit is a partnership between the city, county, planners, Shenandoah Valley Bike Coalition, and James Madison University. In their third year, they had two goals in mind: to explore how the community could benefit from a bike / walk culture, and to determine how they could create a community brand. The result was a comprehensive report that has allowed Harrisonburg to deem itself the "Bike Capital of Virginia" - a branding model that is not out of Warrenton's reach in becoming a health leader.

## WORKPLACE WELLNESS

There are few things to be said for Workplace Wellness outside of creating departmental resolutions. These might include stricter policy on what food is served at Town sanctioned events, or to balance buffets based on the Choose My Plate guidelines. Further, this could also include signs posted next to the lift at the WARF advocating for users to take the stairs instead, as they are able.





# MONITORING & EVALUATION

Going forward, it is important that the Town of Warrenton continues to monitor progress toward each of the HEAL benchmarks. In light of the recommendations proposed, this monitoring process should evaluate how the HIA affected health outcomes both immediately and over time. As stated in the HEAL Resolution adopted by Town Council,

"Be it further resolved that the head of each affected agency or department should report back to the Town of Warrenton Town Council annually regarding steps to implement the Resolution, additional steps planned, and any desired actions that would need to be taken by the council."

This monitoring and evaluation process should be done in combination with the Health in All Policies initiative in order to foster a more expansive culture of health. By promoting health and wellness through legislation, individuals will be afforded more opportunities to alter their health behaviors. This form of bottom-up community empowerment allows the public to identify issues of importance organically and pursue solutions alongside policymakers.

# STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS

This HIA is the product of nine weeks of data collection, interviews, research and writing. The methods used in this assessment will serve as a guide for future policy and research initiatives in the Town of Warrenton.

The relationship the author had with the community serves as both a strength and limitation: a strength in knowing many of its stakeholders, but a limitation in curbing biases.

As a result of the limited time and resources with which to complete this HIA, the quality of evidence and research presented is finite in nature. Due to the timeframe, the HIA is considered "rapid" instead of "comprehensive." Given the numerous facets of HEAL policy, this assessment only scrapes the surface of each.

As previously mentioned, the data presented is secondary. Without focus groups, there was no formal community wide engagement. Moreover, it is difficult to quantify health impacts without more primary data. Instead, qualitative summaries are presented. Lastly, the conclusions are contingent on Town adherence to the HEAL Resolution.

If further research is to be done on HEAL, it should delve into each of the policy benchmarks individually. This would offer a more exhaustive well of resources unable to be attained by this assessment alone. However, as the Town moves beyond HEAL and pursues other health conscious initiatives such as the Comprehensive Plan or Health in All Policies, this HIA will serve as a source of baseline aggregate data.

# CONCLUSIONS

Following the adoption of HEAL policy in December 2015, the Town of Warrenton needed to start an informed discussion about the health of its residents. With an interested audience of community members and stakeholders wanting information concerning both current health status and potential health outcomes, the necessity of an HIA was realized. This assessment has given the Town an overview of its health status and identified potential concerns and areas for improvement - things that will allow Warrenton to make strides toward becoming a more active, healthier community.

Going forward, the Town should entertain the recommendations set forth in this HIA, including but not limited to: a branding campaign, a revitalization of the town farmers market, CSA promotion, walkability and bikeability audits, and enhanced departmental policies.

It is imperative that we maintain our commitment to health in the larger sense - not just the physical, but in addressing the mental and social determinants of which as well. The Health in All Policies campaign is the perfect medium to pursue these standards through as we look past the HIA toward a more rounded vision for the town. By forming a steering committee that would guide future HEAL activities and work collaboratively with other groups and projects, it is possible to further engage the public in a conversation about how to move the town forward in promoting health and wellness for all.

Warrenton is well-positioned in every sense of the term: with an interested public, new council, and wealth of health-centric activity already happening in the community, the Town is just a few paces away from making history as the healthiest town in the state of Virginia.



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