

SE 122nd Avenue Planning Study Health Impact Assessment

Executive Summary



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Partners:

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Executive Summary

In 2010, Oregon Public Health Institute (OPHI) partnered with Portland Bureau of Planning & Sustainability (BPS) and many other stakeholders to conduct a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of the SE 122nd Avenue Pilot Study, a neighborhood planning study led by BPS. The purpose of the Pilot Study was to explore ways to help create a 20 minute neighborhood by addressing land use, transportation, connectivity, and development design issues in the study area along SE 122nd Avenue between SE Division Street and SE Foster Road in East Portland. It was considered a pilot project because it was not meant to lead to an adopted plan, but to help inform the city's current efforts to develop a long term strategic plan called the Portland Plan that will help guide the city's update of its comprehensive plan. The Pilot Study produced a set of recommendations, ranging from aspirational goals to specific actions designed to move the community closer to its goals. While some of these recommendations will wait for consideration during the comprehensive plan update process, others are actionable in the short term, depending on continued political and stakeholder support and involvement, and availability of resources.

The overarching goal of an HIA is to make more explicit the health impacts of social decisions and help shape them to improve a population's health. Given the central role that the city is giving to the 20 minute neighborhood form as a greenhouse gas reduction strategy and a social and economic improvement tool, and given the substantial changes to the built environment in East Portland that would come with a conversion to a 20 minute neighborhood model, it is worth considering how this urban form, and the transition to it that is being explored in the SE 122nd Ave Pilot Study, would likely impact the health of neighborhood residents.

BPS focused the Pilot Study on four topic areas that would need to be addressed in order to move the community towards a more complete 20 minute neighborhood:

- Accessibility, connections, pedestrian comfort and safety
- Convenience and availability of services
- Residential infill development and design
- Community amenities and livability

These four topic areas served as the framework for discussions with the community and the development of final recommendations.



Planning and Health

Early in the process BPS determined that the Pilot Study would also be a good opportunity to expand its emerging partnerships with public health stakeholders and pilot activities aimed at integrating health considerations into the BPS and community planning process. A large factor in this decision was an increased understanding amongst planners, other city officials and agencies, and the general public in recent years that there are numerous links between the built and social environments and health that have not been routinely considered in the city's urban planning and development practices. OPHI has been working since 2005 promoting healthy urban planning and community development in other southeast neighborhoods, and in 2009 received funding from the Northwest Health Foundation and Kaiser Permanente to become formal partners in the planning study.

As part of this partnership, OPHI became part of the lead project team to advise BPS on strategies to integrate health information and stakeholders in the process. In June 2009, BPS and OPHI formed a Health Partners Working Group (HPWG), an advisory group consisting of medical and public health practitioners and advocates tasked with helping project staff identify and assess project-specific health issues, and help evaluate and inform the study's outcomes. Members of the HPWG included the local and state health departments, non-profit health advocacy groups, health system representatives, physicians, and health researchers. Throughout the project, OPHI also participated on the Community Working Group (CWG) and the study's three community workshops, presenting information on the relationships between health and the built and social environments and on the possible health impacts of different design and development options as they were considered, as well as on the study's recommendations. In addition, OPHI also used these venues to get input from community residents and stakeholders about their community-related health concerns and priorities.

In 2010, OPHI received funding from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Network of Public Health Institutes to develop a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) report on the study findings, which allowed OPHI to more formally assess the positive and negative health impacts of the study recommendations and produce this HIA report. As part of the HIA, OPHI contracted with two local community groups: OPAL Environmental Justice and Russian Speaking Network of Oregon to conduct community-based surveys that would inform the HIA.



Assessment

OPHI focused its assessment on the study outcome's potential for impacting the following five health determinants:

- Opportunities for physical activity
- Exposure to outdoor air pollutants
- Bicycle and pedestrian traffic safety
- Opportunities for social cohesion
- Opportunities for accessing healthful foods

The methods used for gathering and analyzing relevant information for an HIA vary from project to project and are determined by staff and stakeholder capacity and resources. Assessment of the SE 122nd Ave Pilot Study's health impacts employed the following methods:

- Collection and analysis of demographic, land use, and urban form data
- Review of health research literature establishing links between the built environment and health
- Soliciting community input on neighborhood health issues at project workshops and workgroup meetings
- Review of recent previous local efforts to gather community input related to a wide variety of livability and health-related issues
- Field visits and site observations of the combined study area
- Partnering with local community-based organizations to solicit input from the combined study area's under-represented groups, including renters, low-income residents, transit riders, immigrants, and communities of color

The key outcomes of the assessment component of this HIA include an assessment of the existing conditions of the scoped health determinants in the combined study area as well as qualitative estimates of the positive and negative, and direct and indirect impacts, of the proposed Pilot Study recommendations on the scoped determinants, and of the potential for the recommendations to disproportionately impact vulnerable populations in the study area. The HIA also offers additional recommendations for either mitigating negative impacts on health determinants, or for further improving positive impacts. These additional recommendations are based on known best practices or existing research documenting their likely effectiveness.

What follows is a summary of the Pilot Study recommendations' impacts on the five scoped health determinants, along with additional recommendations for improving the Pilot Study's impacts.

Opportunities for Physical Activity: Summary of Plan Impacts and Additional Recommendations

Potential Positive Impacts:

- The Pilot Study's recommendations directly and indirectly address the primary barriers to physical activity in the combined study area.
 - Most of the "Accessibility, Connections, Pedestrian Comfort and Safety" recommendations would directly and positively impact bike facilities, pedestrian network connectivity, the pedestrian realm, and access to open space, and would indirectly impact retail mix, transit use, and park and open space access.
 - Many of the "Convenience and Availability of Services" recommendations would directly encourage physical activity by providing new walking and biking destinations for community residents.
 - Most of the "Residential Infill Development and Design" recommendations would directly improve the pedestrian realm and would produce various indirect positive impacts on other physical activity supports.
 - Many of the "Community Amenities and Livability" recommendations would likely result in direct improvements to the area's pedestrian realm, and would indirectly and positively impact the other physical activity supports as well.
- The Pilot Study's set of recommendations will likely increase walking, biking, and active recreation levels in the area. This change in behavior would improve health outcomes related to physical activity, including lower rates of obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, colon cancer, and premature death, as well as improved musculoskeletal and mental health.
 - Resulting increases in physical activity would also likely improve the health of community residents by improving social cohesion and reducing accident rates for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- The improvements resulting from these recommendations will likely benefit all neighborhood residents.



Potential Negative Impacts:

None.

Additional Recommendations:

- Prioritize improvements in pedestrian infrastructure and pedestrian network connectivity, particularly near main arterials. This would include Pilot Study recommendations 1A-1F which address improved pedestrian routes; 1I-1K which address street connectivity; 1L-1N which address improved street conditions; and 1P which addresses improvements in pedestrian infrastructure around transit stops. Based on existing research, such improvements are likely to have the greatest impact on physical activity rates in the combined study area.
- Involve the neighborhood's immigrant groups and communities of color in designing and improving public spaces such as parks and community gardens to ensure that these spaces meet their needs and preferences, as well as those of other area residents. Existing research on park use indicates that different cultural groups have different preferences for park amenities [12-15]. In order to ensure that park improvements more fully meet their preferences, they need to be involved in the planning of these spaces.
- Work with Tri-Met to address the concerns of low-income and minority transit riders. Input from low-income and minority residents indicates that these groups face additional barriers to transit use that need to be addressed in order for them to more fully benefit from the study recommendation's proposed improvements to station area conditions, route connections, and service levels.
- Work with developers and development agencies in order to ensure that commercial and multi-dwelling units provide site amenities supportive of physical activity such as adequate storage for bicycles, strollers, and carts, and pedestrian pathways safely linking units with public rights-of-way.

Exposure to Air Pollutants: Summary of Plan Impacts and Additional Recommendations

Potential Positive Impacts:

- If implemented, many of the Pilot Study's recommendations from all four topic areas would likely cumulatively lead to lower per capita vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) and related per capita pollutant emissions from automobiles as a result of increased walking and biking rates in the area.

- If lower per capita VMT results in improved outdoor air quality, all neighborhood residents, particularly vulnerable populations, would likely experience decreased exposure to outdoor air toxics, and a decreased likelihood of suffering from multiple cardio- respiratory illnesses, including asthma and heart disease.

Potential Negative Impacts:

- Increased commercial activity in the combined study area might increase the number of people accessing the area by car and produce higher overall VMT in the area.
- Increased walking, biking, and outdoor recreation rates would likely increase people's exposure to outdoor air pollutants, particularly when these activities take place on or near the area's main arterials.
- If increased commercial activity and outdoor physical activity results in higher total VMT in the area and thus increased exposure to outdoor air pollutants, the health of all neighborhood residents, particularly vulnerable populations, might be adversely impacted.

Additional Recommendations:

- Prioritize those Pilot Study recommendations that would lead to improvements in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and bicycle and pedestrian network connectivity. Such improvements would facilitate movement through the neighborhood while also minimizing exposure to air toxics by reducing the need to walk and bike along main arterials which generate localized air pollution and safety issues. The Pilot Study recommendations that would best accomplish this include recommendations 1A-1M which address improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and connectivity; 1L-1N which address improved street conditions; and 1P which addresses improvements in pedestrian infrastructure around transit stops.
- Work with DEQ to develop a monitoring program to assess changes in levels of exposure to outdoor air toxics as the neighborhood develops in order to determine the overall positive or negative impacts of the recommendations on exposure to outdoor air quality.



Bicycle and Pedestrian Traffic Safety: Summary of Plan Impacts and Additional Recommendations

Potential Positive Impacts:

- The Pilot Study's set of recommendations will likely increase walking, biking, and active recreation levels in the area.
- The Pilot Study's recommendations will likely lead to lower crash rates for both bicyclists and pedestrians.
 - Many of the "Accessibility, Connections, Pedestrian Comfort and Safety" recommendations would directly improve bike and pedestrian safety by providing mode-specific infrastructure designed to minimize the potential for bicyclists and pedestrians to be struck by cars.
 - Many of the recommendations in the plan's other three sections would indirectly improve bike and pedestrian safety by encouraging higher walking and biking rates in the area, which typically lead to lower crash rates for these modes.
- The improvements resulting from recommendations 1A-1Q will likely benefit all neighborhood residents.

Potential Negative Impacts:

None

Additional Recommendations:

- Prioritize improvements in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and pedestrian network connectivity, particularly near main arterials. Improved bicycle and pedestrian network condition and connectivity near arterials would facilitate movement through the neighborhood and access to retail and commercial services and transit on main arterials while minimizing time spent walking along the main arterials themselves which generally have higher crash bicycle and pedestrian crash rates than local streets. The Pilot Study recommendations that would best accomplish this include recommendations 1A-1F which address improved pedestrian routes; 1G-1H which address improved bicycle infrastructure; 1I-1K which address street connectivity; 1L-1N which address improved street conditions; and 1P which addresses improvements in pedestrian infrastructure around transit stops.

- Continue to support bicycle and pedestrian encouragement and education programs such as PBOT’s Safe Routes to School and SmartTrips programs. Such encouragement programs have proven effective in increasing walking and biking rates, and can be tailored and targeted to specific groups.

Opportunities for Social Cohesion: Summary of Plan Impacts and Additional Recommendations

Potential Positive Impacts:

- The Pilot Study’s recommendations would improve opportunities for social cohesion in the combined study area.
- Many of the “Accessibility, Connections, Pedestrian Comfort and Safety” recommendations would create more sidewalks where people could interact, and would encourage more people to use these spaces.
- Many of the “Convenience and Availability of Services” recommendations would encourage the creation of neighborhood retail operations which could serve as gathering places.
- Most of the “Residential Infill Development and Design” recommendations would improve the pedestrian realm and thus encourage people to walk about their neighborhoods and frequent local businesses.
- Many of the “Community Amenities and Livability” recommendations would result in improvements to parks, schools, community gardens, and open spaces where people could gather, and would encourage use of these sites by improving their access and safety.
- The opportunities for social cohesion created by the Pilot Study’s recommendations would be available to all area residents.

Potential Negative Impacts:

None.

Additional Recommendations:

- Support community development efforts such as the EPAP civic engagement committee that are actively working to develop a more engaged and empowered citizenry in East Portland.
- Involve the area’s immigrant groups and communities of color in designing and improving public spaces such as parks and community gardens to ensure that these spaces meet their needs and preferences, as well as those of other area residents.



- Continue to support programming such as Portland Parks and Recreation programs, Sunday Parkways, and the East Portland Expo, that are intended to activate public and private gathering spaces.
- Work with BPS and the Portland Development Commission to identify and recruit retail businesses that will provide gathering spaces for neighborhood residents.

Accessing Healthful Foods: Summary of Plan Impacts and Additional Recommendations

Potential Positive Impacts:

- The Pilot Study's recommendations would increase food retail and community gardening opportunities and improve accessibility to these resources.
 - Many of the "Accessibility, Connections, Pedestrian Comfort and Safety" recommendations would support improved food access by making it easier for people to walk, bike, and take transit to existing and future food retail sites.
 - Many of the "Convenience and Availability of Services" recommendations would encourage the creation of neighborhood retail operations which could include new food retail sites.
 - Most of the "Residential Infill Development and Design" recommendations would improve the pedestrian realm and thus encourage people to walk about their neighborhoods and frequent local businesses.
 - Some of the "Community Amenities and Livability" recommendations would result in improvements to community gardens where people could grow their own produce.
- The benefits of improved food access created by the Pilot Study's recommendations would accrue to all residents, particularly if new food retail catered to the area's ethnically diverse population.

Potential Negative Impacts:

- If implemented, the Pilot Study's recommendations, particularly the "Convenience and Availability of Services" recommendations 2A-F that are designed to create more retail opportunities in general, could possibly create more opportunities for unhealthy food retail establishments such as convenience stores and fast food restaurants, potentially near schools, parks, and other public places.

Additional Recommendations:



- Conduct a Community Food Assessment to determine how to best improve the availability and affordability of healthy foods that match community preferences.
- Work with PDC to identify and recruit neighborhood-scale healthy food retail businesses to the area that would likely be supported by the community.
- When re-zoning areas for commercial uses, develop and apply a “healthy food zone” ordinance that would prevent unhealthy food retail activity from being established near parks, schools, and other public places.
- Develop and disseminate an inventory of available land and commercial space that would be suitable for new food retail and urban agriculture opportunities in order to help potential users better identify existing opportunities.



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Community Working Group

- Mark White, Powellhurst-Gilbert Neighborhood association
- John McDonald, Powellhurst-Gilbert Neighborhood association
- Lauree Carlson, Powellhurst-Gilbert Neighborhood association
- Annette Mattson, David Douglas School Board
- David Edwards, Midway Business Association
- Jose Pinomesa, East Portland Chamber of Commerce
- Jennifer Will-Thapa, ROSE CDC
- Han Tran, ROSE CDC
- Jean DeMaster, Human Solutions
- Jill Kuehler, Zenger Farm
- Kevin O'Dell, Organizing People, Activating Leaders
- Erin Kendrick, At Large—Neighbor
- Rhonda Richardson, At Large—Neighbor
- Sue Gillean, At Large—Neighbor
- Michelle Lohn, At Large—Neighbor
- Jim Braet, At Large—Neighbor/Business Owner
- Sue Stahl, At Large—Public Health Impacts
- Pascal Maboko, At Large—IRCO/Africa House
- Oscar Campos, At Large—Architecture & Design



Health Partners Working Group

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- Steve White, Oregon Public Health Institute
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- Molly Haynes, Kaiser Permanente
- Meg Merrick, PSU Institute for Metropolitan Studies
- Amy Rose, Metro—Transportation Planning
- Tammy VanderWoude, Oregon Food Bank

As part of the HIA, OPHI contracted with two local community groups: OPAL Environmental Justice and Russian Speaking Network of Oregon to conduct community-based surveys that would inform the HIA. OPAL staff, Joseph Santos-Lyons and Lisa Serrano, helped engage the community on transit issues. Russian Speaking Network staff helped with engaging the area's Russian speaking population.

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