



#### ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES CASE STUDY

## Integrating public health and planning in Florida

Collaboration is crucial to integrating Health in All Policies (HiAP) at the state level. One particularly successful effort has been in Polk County. As one of the fastest growing counties in Florida, Polk County has faced significant land use challenges, especially as they relate to the county's health outcomes. In response, the local and state offices of the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) began working in partnership with the local planning departments to insert health considerations and language into the local comprehensive planning and implementation plans. This partnership has grown to include not only Polk County, but the City of Lakeland as well.

In 2007, the FDOH in Tallahassee began an outreach program focused on incorporating health considerations into the planning process across the state. Initial efforts involved using the Smart Growth principles to promote these efforts and build capacity in the 67 local health departments.

In the first year, 23 Florida county health departments received training in this area. In turn, those county health departments educated their local communities and policymakers about the important role of public health in community planning.

These training sessions targeted local health and planning staff, encouraging dialogue among various state and county agencies. One particularly successful effort occurred in Polk County in Central Florida.

FDOH in Polk County successfully collaborated with the Polk County Office of Planning and Development as they updated their local comprehensive plan, which serves as a policy guide for local land use and development practices.

The cooperation between the two agencies resulted in a new comprehensive plan that incorporated health considerations throughout the policy document adopted by the Polk County Board of County Commissioners.

This process resulted in greater community awareness among citizens and decision-makers, which led to further changes in the land development regulations that implement the comprehensive plan at the local level.

*Turn for more»*

In July 2012, the City of Lakeland prepared a report on healthy communities for the Livable Polk coalition that details the need for to be health considered in land use policies and implementation.

At the same time, a group of community partners were brought together by Polk Vision to work towards the goal of reducing the obesity rate in Polk County.

This Initiative is called “Building a Healthier Polk” and is a three-year plan to reduce obesity base on six key strategy areas, one of which incorporates the Livable Polk goals.

As a part of its launch, Building a Healthier Polk initiative presented the goals of the Initiative to local governmental entities to garner support. The City of Lakeland passed a resolution in support of reducing the obesity rate in Polk County.



Following the resolution in May 2013, the City of Lakeland Commissioners adopted a revised plan that incorporated significant changes into their comprehensive plan that placed an emphasis on creating healthy communities.

In Polk County, there are several initiatives addressing the important role of public health in community planning. These initiatives are working collaboratively and include:

- » FDOH/Polk.
- » Polk County Office of Planning and Department.
- » The city of Lakeland.
- » The city of Winter Haven.
- » Community leaders.
- » Citizens.

This has been a sustained effort over five years to bring health into local decision-making.

Details on the Building a Healthier Polk initiative can be found online at <http://polkvision.com/building-a-healthier-polk/>.

For more information, please contact:

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Health in All Policies is a collaborative approach that integrates and articulates health considerations into policymaking and programming across sectors, and at all levels, to improve the health of all communities and people.

FIND OUT MORE: [www.astho.org/hiap](http://www.astho.org/hiap)

