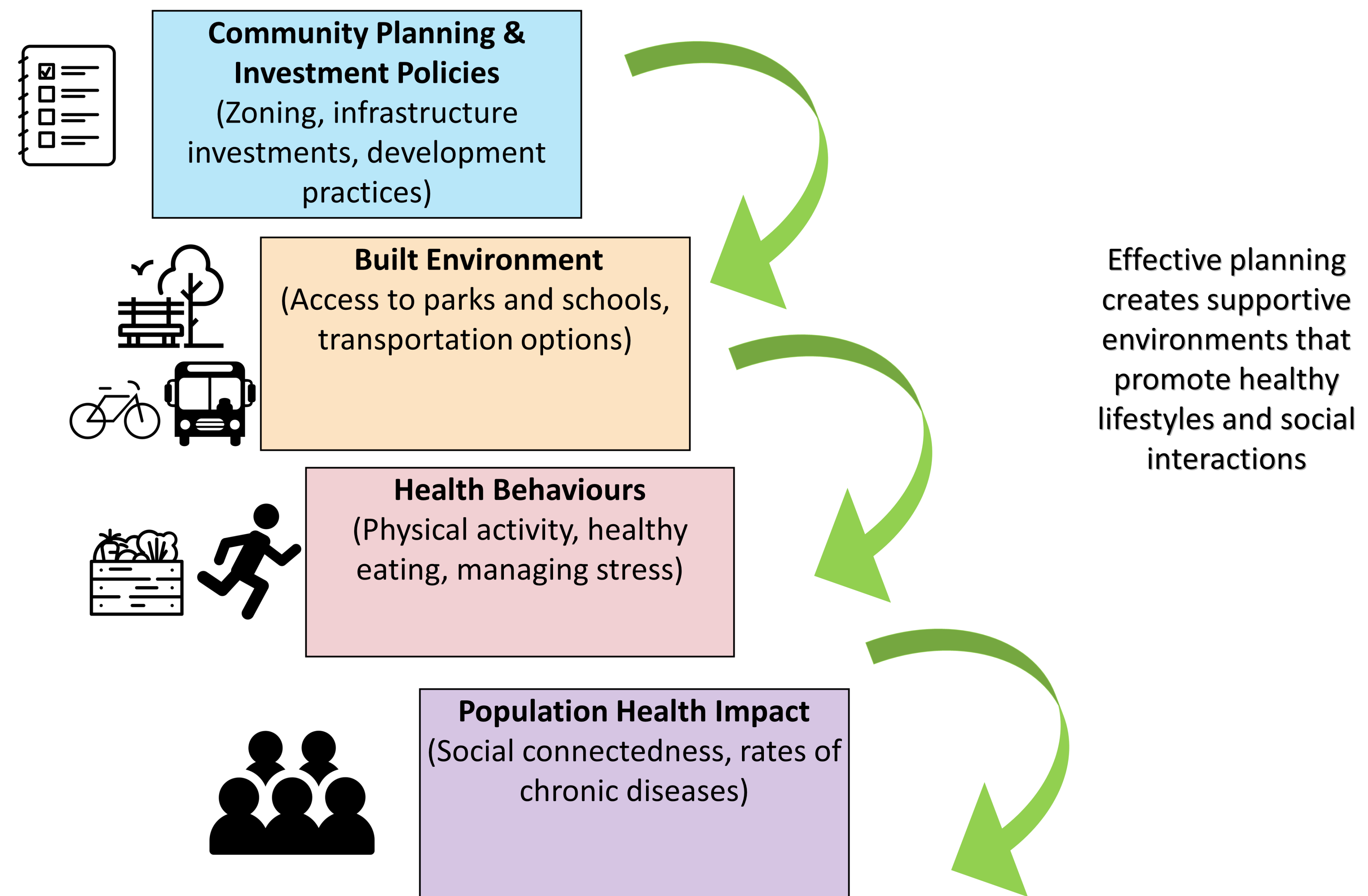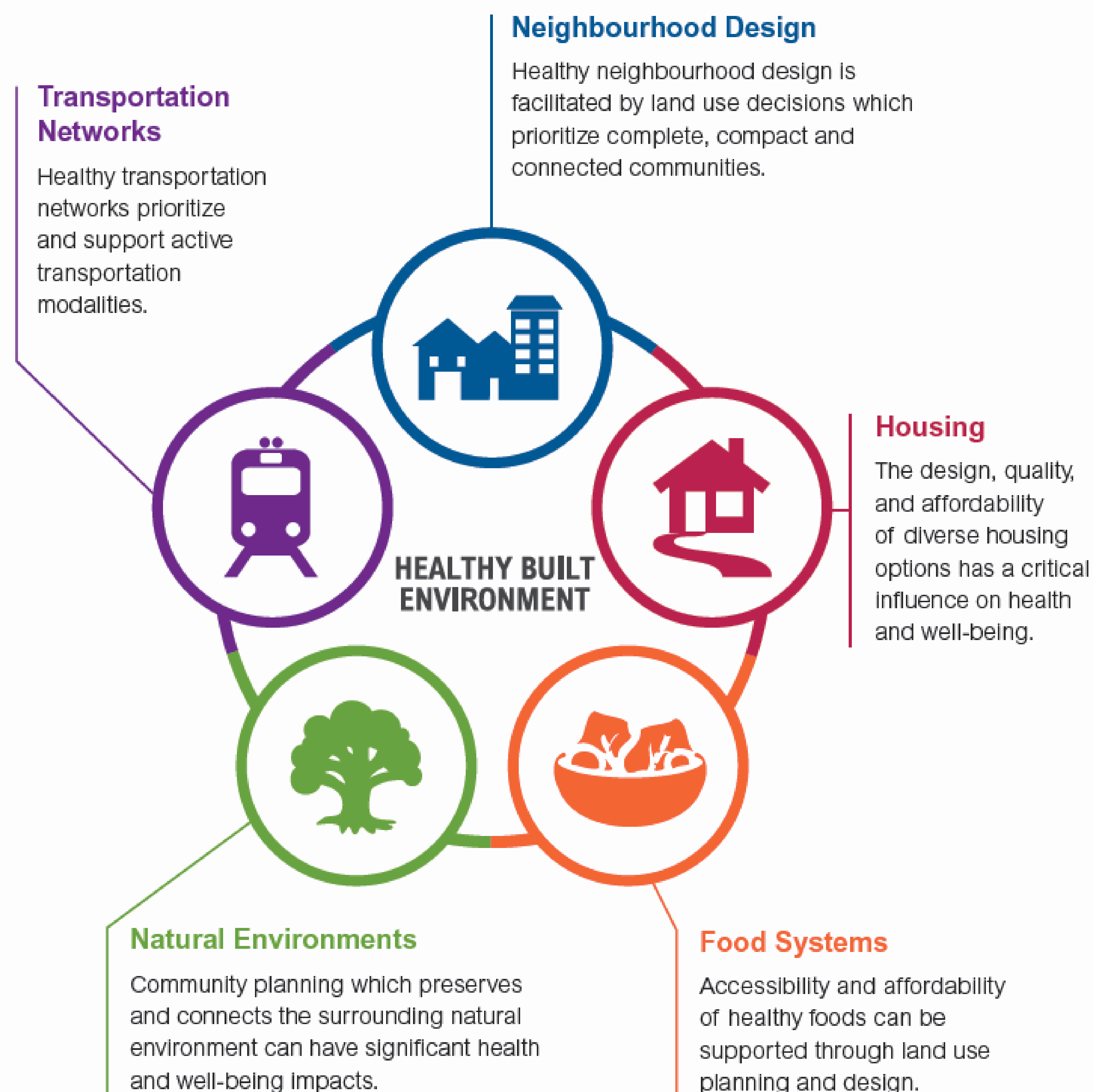# How does community planning support our health?

The **Healthy Communities Approach** considers the social, economic, environment and physical factors that influence the health and well-being of individuals and build on a community's existing capacity. An Official Community Plan can influence these factors and support a **healthy built environment**. The **healthy built environment** refers to the human-made and modified physical surrounding which people live, work and play. This includes places and spaces such as our homes, schools, transportation systems, and park and recreation areas.

Community Planning & Investment Policies
(Zoning, infrastructure investments, development practices)

Built Environment
(Access to parks and schools, transportation options)

Health Behaviours
(Physical activity, healthy eating, managing stress)

Population Health Impact
(Social connectedness, rates of chronic diseases)

Effective planning creates supportive environments that promote healthy lifestyles and social interactions

HEALTHY BUILT ENVIRONMENT LINKAGES
A TOOLKIT FOR DESIGN · PLANNING · HEALTH

Neighbourhood Design

Healthy neighbourhood design is facilitated by land use decisions which prioritize complete, compact and connected communities.

Transportation Networks

Healthy transportation networks prioritize and support active transportation modalities.

Housing

The design, quality, and affordability of diverse housing options has a critical influence on health and well-being.

HEALTHY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Natural Environments

Community planning which preserves and connects the surrounding natural environment can have significant health and well-being impacts.

Food Systems

Accessibility and affordability of healthy foods can be supported through land use planning and design.

Healthy Neighborhood Design

Neighbourhoods are the places where we live, work and play. **How we design our neighbourhoods is vitally important to our health and well-being.** Land use decisions such as zoning, transportation systems and neighbourhood design significantly influence health. Think of the "three Cs" of healthy neighbourhoods: **complete, compact**, and **connected**.
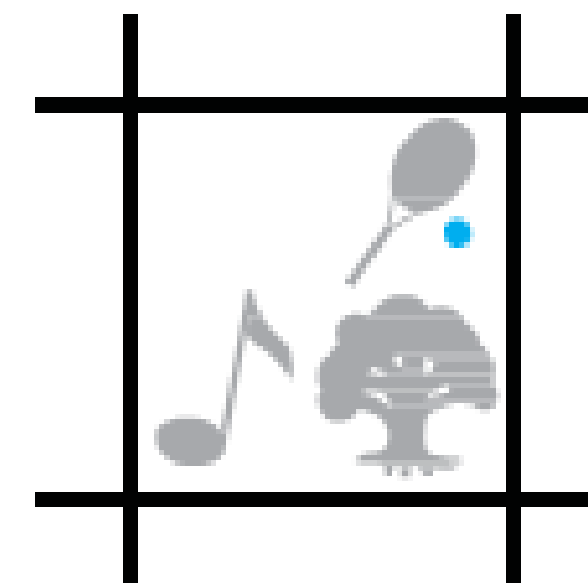
Planning principles which health research has demonstrated support health:

1. Enhance neighbourhood walkability
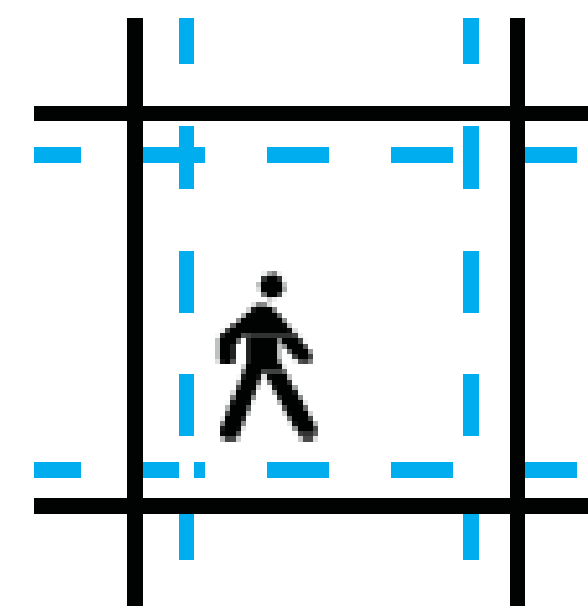
Walkable neighbourhoods are typically characterized by higher residential density, increased mixed land use, and high connectivity.

2. Create mixed land use

Create neighbourhoods with access to: schools, civic services, green space, retail, employment opportunities, and housing.

3. Build complete and compact neighbourhoods
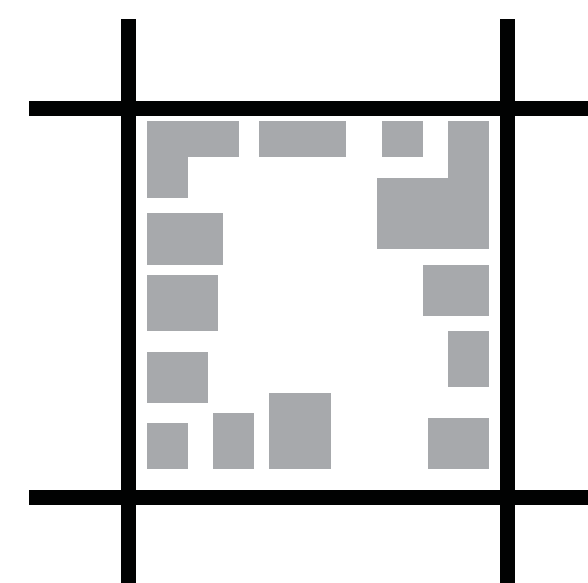
Compact neighbourhoods have high residential and employment density.

**4. Prioritize new developments within or beside existing communities**
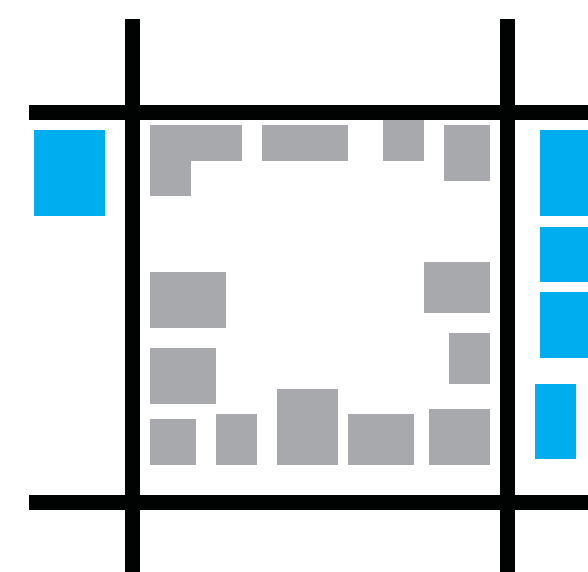
Utilize infill and brownfield reclamation to avoid sprawl.

Healthy Transportation Networks

Transportation networks enable us to travel from place to place as we go about our daily lives. **How we design our transportation networks can have a significant impact on our health.** In the public realm, land use decisions influence the choices people make in how they move around.
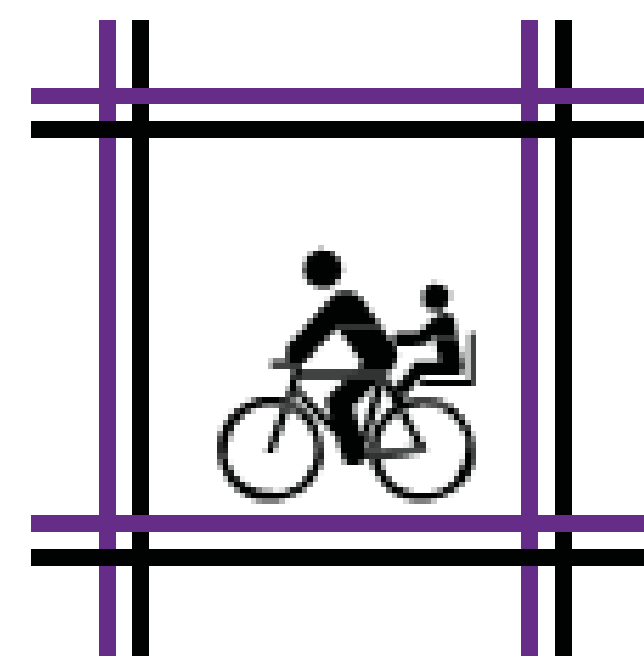
 Planning principles which health research has demonstrated support health:

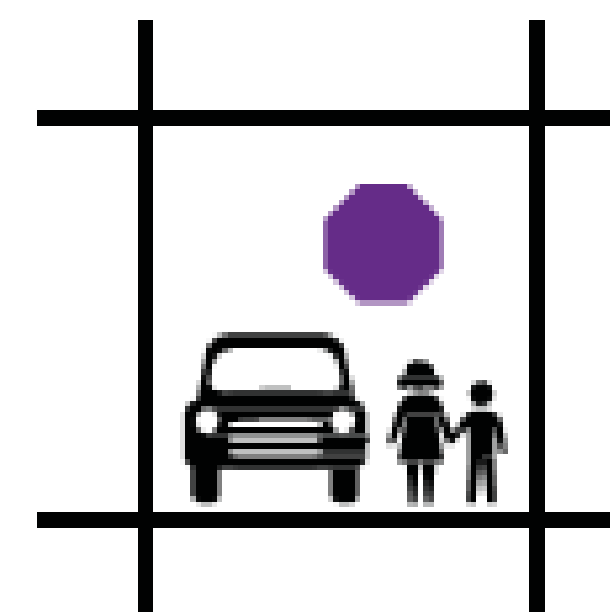**1. Enable mobility for all ages and abilities**
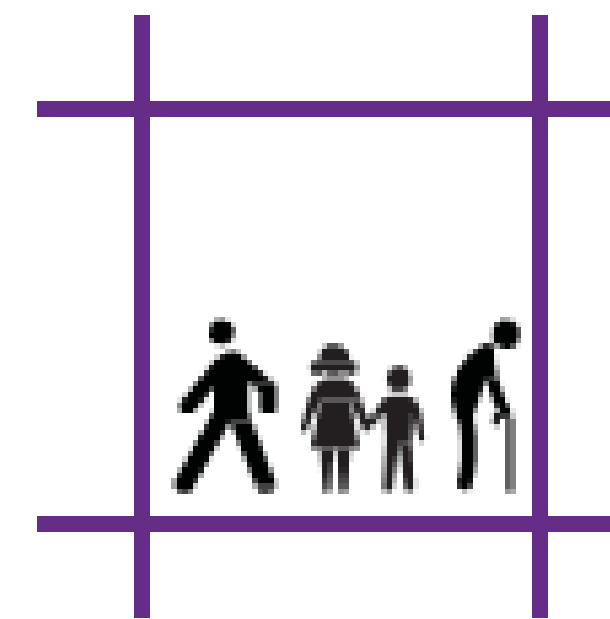
Promote safer streets and encourage physical activity .

2. Make active transportation convenient and safe

Encourage the decision to cycle, walk, or use transit through smart infrastructure and engineering choices.

3. Prioritize safety

Establish a hierarchy of street users, giving priority to walking, cycling, and public transit, rather than private vehicles.

Healthy Natural Environments

Natural environments contain the ingredients that enable life as we know it. **The way we design our lives to fit within the natural environment is fundamental in determining our health and well-being.** Our health stands to improve when land use decisions enhance the ability of natural environments to mitigate negative health impacts associated with development.
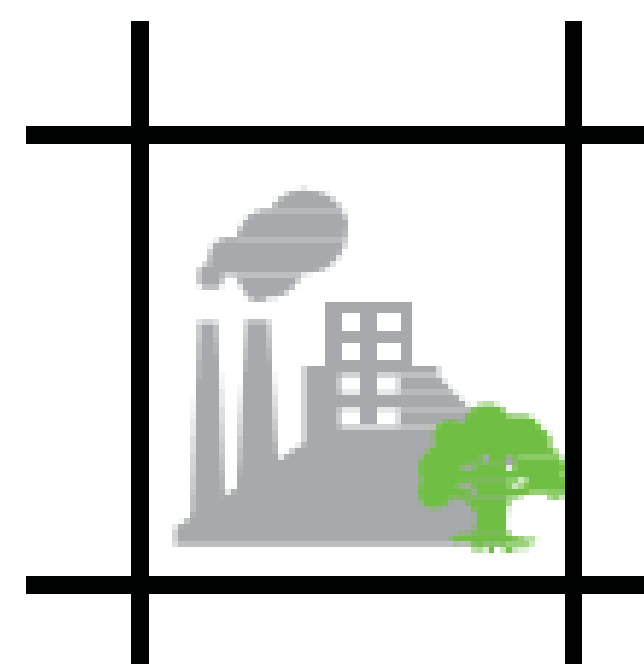
Planning principles which health research has demonstrated support health:

1. Maximize opportunities to access and engage with the natural environment
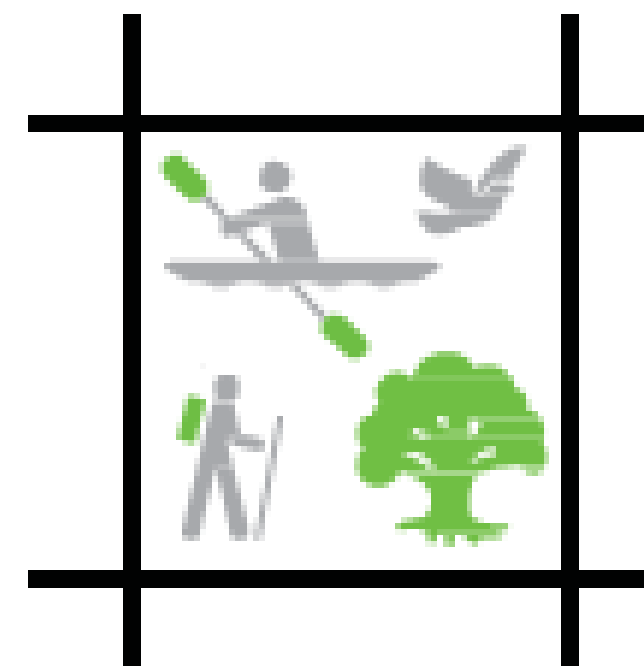
Enable natural environments to be experienced and accessed by all.

2. Reduce urban air pollution

Careful community planning can limit production of, and exposure to air pollution.

3. Expand natural elements across the landscape

Increase vegetation across the built environment including in developments, neighbourhoods and transit hubs.

Healthy Food Systems

Food systems determine how we choose food and what food we have access to. **The food we eat is critical to our health.** Land use decisions can influence food production which can thereby impact the accessibility, quality and variety of food available to us.
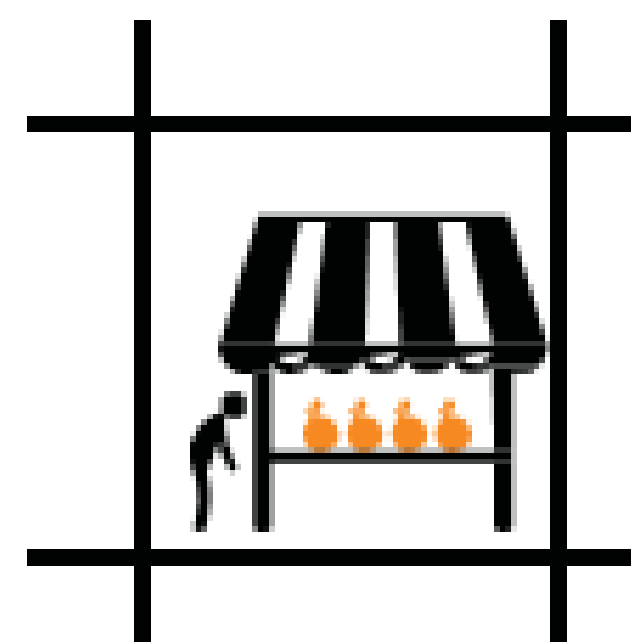
Planning principles which health research has demonstrated support health:
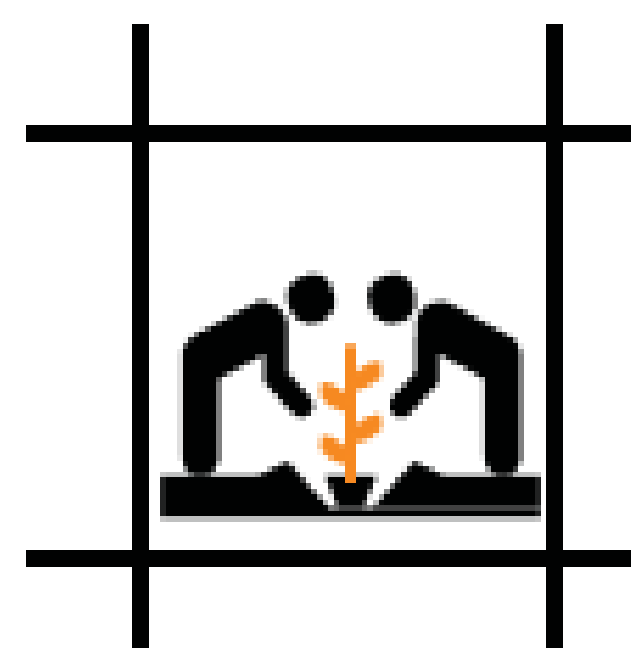
1. Enhance agricultural capacity

Provide space and opportunities to grow food in agricultural areas and in urban/ semi-urban settings.

2. Increase access to healthy foods in all neighbourhoods

Increase access to healthy food retail and services within all neighbourhoods.

3. Improve community-scale food infrastructure and services

Strengthen community- scale food system supports, such as community kitchens and school gardens.

Healthy Housing

While housing is considered a basic human right, not all housing is created to meet the same standards. Differences in housing, such as quality, accessibility, and affordability all have impacts on the health of the people who live there. These impacts can positively or negatively affect our health, both over the short and long-term. This is why **how we design our homes is critically important to our health and well-being**.
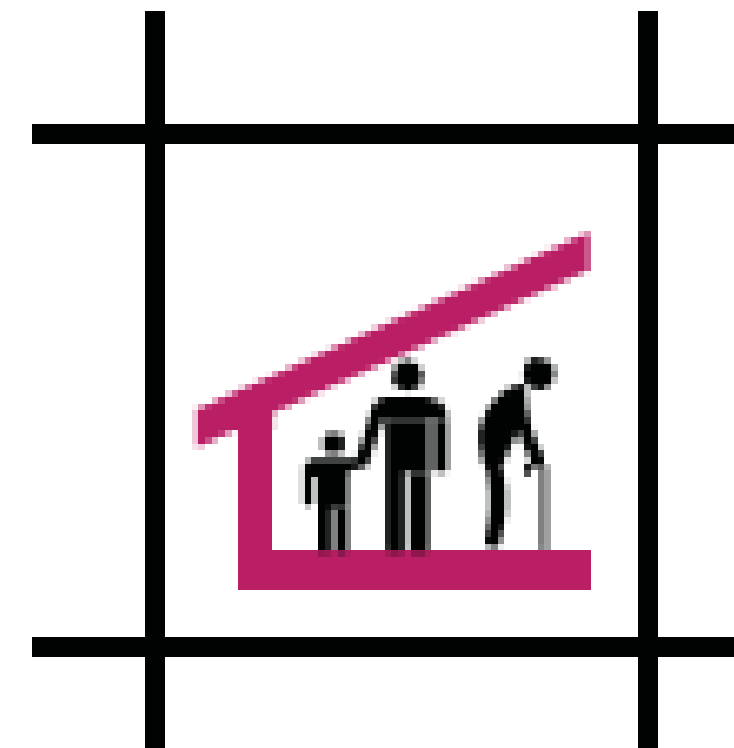
Planning principles which health research has demonstrated support health:

1. Increase access to affordable housing through provision of diverse housing forms and tenure types
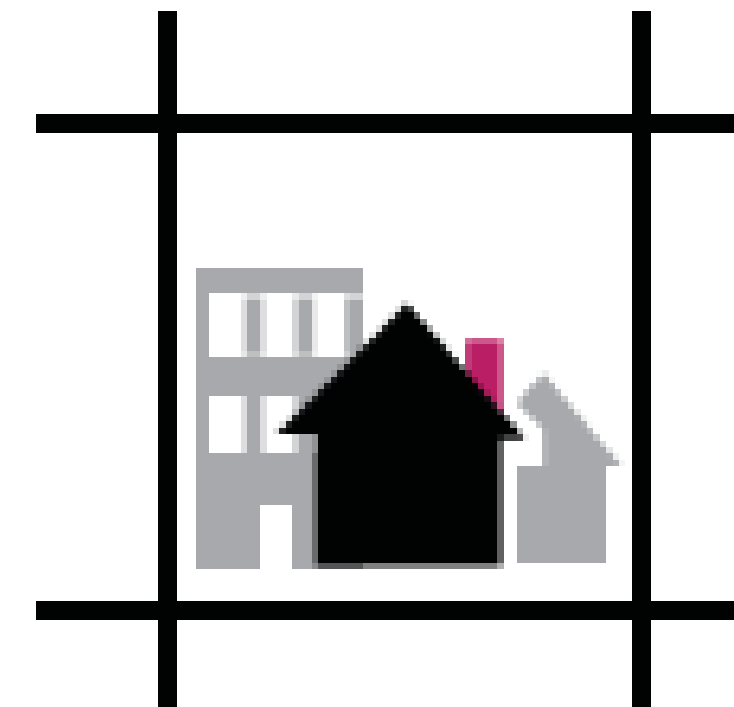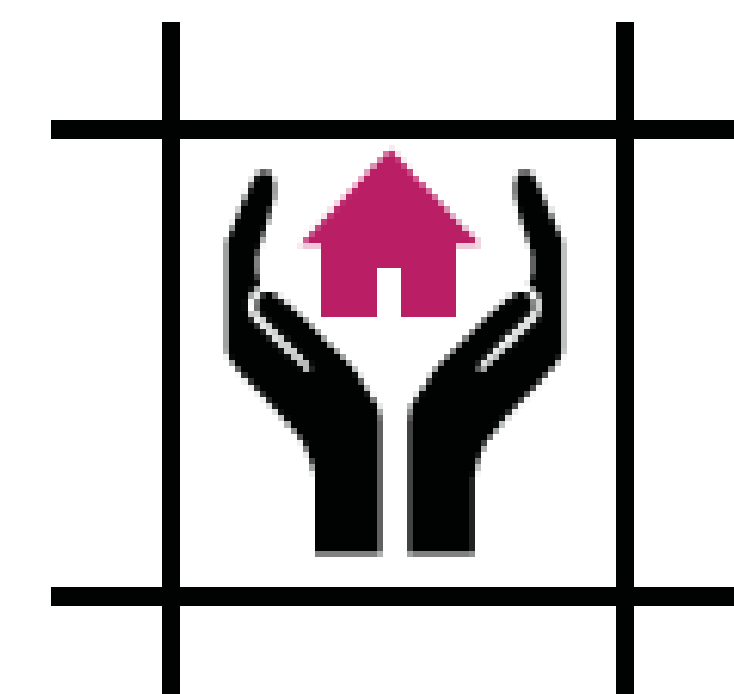
Provide subsidized and affordable housing programs, and mixed- income housing developments.

2. Ensure adequate housing quality for all segments of society

Ensure good quality housing structure, heating, insulation, and ventilation.

3. Prioritize housing for the homeless, elderly, low income groups and people

Prioritize housing for vulnerable populations.

How is our health impacted by the healthy planning principles?

Improves:

Mental Health

Mood

Diet Quality

Food Skills

Social Support

Decreases:

Obesity

Unintentional Injury

Stress

Depression

Chronic Disease

Questions? Contact hbe@interiorhealth.ca