Planning for a Healthy Holland Township

Holland Township Begins Its Plan4HealthNJ Journey

What makes a community a healthy place to live?

For Holland Township, the answer goes well beyond access to doctors and medical care. Health can also be influenced by the places where we live, the roads we travel, opportunities to walk and be active, access to healthy food, housing, our natural environment, and the ways residents connect with their community.

Holland Township is excited to begin exploring those connections through Plan4HealthNJ, an initiative of the American Planning Association – New Jersey Chapter that brings public health and community planning together.

The Township has received a $20,000 Plan4HealthNJ grant that will allow us to take a closer look at how planning decisions can support the health, well-being and quality of life of Holland Township residents.

Why Planning and Health Belong Together

Where we live can affect our health in ways that may not always be obvious.

Can residents safely walk or bicycle to places they want to go? Are recreational opportunities accessible to people of different ages and abilities? Do residents have access to healthy foods? How do housing choices affect different members of the community? How might environmental conditions affect health? And are residents given meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions that shape their community?

These are the types of connections Plan4HealthNJ encourages municipalities to examine.

The statewide initiative is helping New Jersey communities incorporate public health considerations into municipal planning and ultimately into the decisions, policies and investments that shape the places where people live.

Looking at Health Through a Rural Lens

Holland Township brings an important perspective to this effort.

We are a rural community characterized by farms, preserved landscapes, homes, local businesses, community facilities, parks and recreation areas, and a road network very different from those found in New Jersey's more densely developed municipalities.

Those characteristics are part of what makes Holland Township special. They can also create different opportunities and challenges when we think about health and planning.

Plan4HealthNJ gives us an opportunity to ask what a healthy community looks like specifically for Holland Township rather than assuming that solutions developed for larger or more urban communities will necessarily work here.

What Will Holland Township Be Looking At?

As part of the project, Holland Township will begin using Plan4HealthNJ's planning and public-health tools to explore several interconnected areas:

Active Living & Transportation – How our roads, recreational facilities and other community features affect opportunities for walking, bicycling, physical activity, mobility and access.

Healthy Food Access & Agriculture – The role of farms, local food, agriculture and access to healthy food in our community.

Housing – How housing options and community planning relate to the needs of residents.

Environment – The relationship between environmental conditions, land use, natural resources and community health.

Policy & Civic Engagement – How municipal policies and meaningful public participation can help create a healthier and more connected community.

These topics overlap, and that is an important part of the Plan4HealthNJ approach. A decision involving transportation, for example, may also affect physical activity, access to food or services, environmental conditions and opportunities for community connection.

The Most Important Part: Listening to Our Community

Data and maps can tell us a great deal about a community, but they cannot tell the entire story.

The people who live, work, volunteer, farm, operate businesses, raise families and grow older in Holland Township have firsthand knowledge that is equally important.

That is why community engagement will be a central part of Holland Township's Plan4HealthNJ project.

We have been reaching out to residents and community stakeholders through surveys, conversations and community events. We want to learn what residents value about living in Holland Township, what makes it easier or harder to live a healthy life here, and what opportunities they believe deserve further consideration.

Building on Work Already Underway

Plan4HealthNJ also gives Holland Township an opportunity to connect this new work with other community planning efforts already underway.

Rather than looking at public health as a stand-alone issue, we can consider how health and quality of life intersect with broader Township priorities involving recreation, agriculture, environmental stewardship, transportation, community facilities, resilience and long-range planning.

The goal at this early stage is not to begin with predetermined answers. It is to ask good questions, gather useful information, listen to our residents and identify practical opportunities appropriate for Holland Township.

We Want to Hear From You

This is just the beginning.

Over the next several months, we will share updates about the project and opportunities for residents to participate. Community input will help us better understand Holland Township's strengths, challenges and opportunities and help guide the ideas that emerge from this work.

Watch for surveys, community outreach events and Plan4HealthNJ updates on the Township's website and social media.

What does a healthy Holland Township look like to you?

We hope you'll help us answer that question.

Here is the link for the survey:

https://us.maptionnaire.com/q/plan4healthnj2

Here is the QR Code for the survey.