

Insights in Dedham Today for Public Health and Livability

Current events and research underline the importance of taking public health into consideration when making planning decisions; the built environment of our neighborhoods impact individual health and well-being. [footnote or link to a definition of SDoH - don't think that is necessary to spell out in the summary.] Medical research indicates that planning decisions influence social, environmental, and behavioral factors within communities where residents live, work, and play account for 60% of health outcomes. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance and urgency to strengthen a high performing and coordinated municipal public health system to ensure Dedham is prepared for future emergencies.

PH1 Local public health capacity

The Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) tool provides an outline for public health services that should be present in any jurisdiction. FPHS include two areas: foundational areas (i.e. specific activities and services) and foundational capabilities (i.e. skills). A scan and an assessment was conducted by BME Strategies to evaluate Dedham's FPHS readiness. Although it is clear that certain capabilities and services are being offered by the Health Department, COVID-19, fragmented municipal structure, and internal communications pose significant barriers. Conversations with local public health stakeholders reveal that current challenges faced by Dedham's Health Departments include: capacity, leadership, and communication.

PH2 Aging population

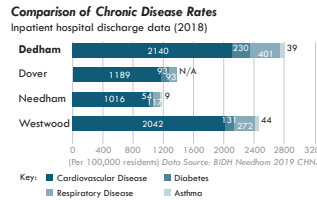
The older adult population, residents aged 60+, is projected to grow by more than 60% by 2030. Housing affordability and options, walkability, and community programming are the biggest factors impacting the ability to age in place.

PH3 Youth population priorities

In Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital (BIDH) Needham and New England Baptist Hospital (NEBH) community health needs assessments (CHNA), youth were explicitly identified as a priority population. The CHNA's identified that the most common health issues youth are struggling with include: 1) Mental health: 22% of Dedham High School students report experiencing depressive symptoms in the last 12 months and 16% seriously considered suicide in the last 12 months; 2) Substance Use: 54% of Dedham High School students report alcohol use and 31% report e-cigarette use; and 3) Obesity: 19% of Dedham students (grades 1, 4, 7, 10) considered obese. This is higher than state average of 15.9%.

PH4 Rates of chronic diseases

Dedham is within the primary service area of three major health systems: BIDH Needham, NEBH, and Norwood Hospital (NH). Data from each hospital's most recent CHNA indicates Dedham residents experience moderate to higher rates of chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory disease, and asthma, when compared to regional and state levels.

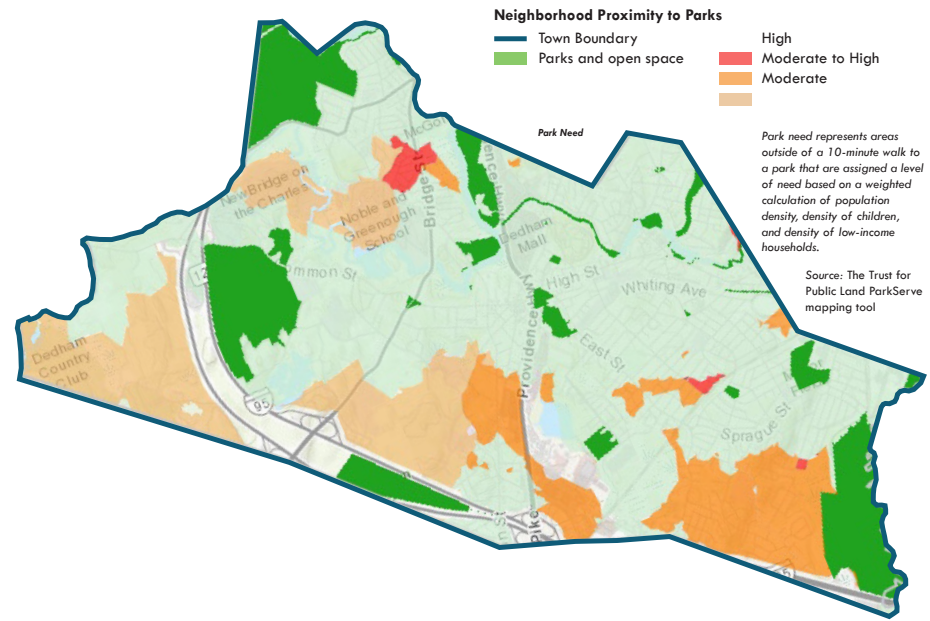


PH5 Shared health priorities

Across all three of the most recent CHNAs, the top five most common community health priorities were: 1) Social determinants of health (SDoH), 2) Mental health, 3) Substance use, 4) Chronic and complex conditions, and 5) Access to care. SDoH became a prominent theme and priority across all three CHNAs. The assessments revealed determinants such as poverty, employment opportunities, housing, violence, transportation, racial segregation, social support, and community integration disproportionately impact older adults, low income individuals or families, racial/ethnic minorities, non-English speakers, and those with disabilities or with chronic and complex conditions.

PH6 Environmental justice concerns

Environmental justice is based on the principle that all individuals have a right to be protected from environmental pollutions and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthy environment. It also recognizes that specific racial and economic groups have disproportionately lived in areas where there are greater exposures to environmental hazards. 12.3% of Dedham residents live within 200 meters of a high-traffic road (more than 25,000 vehicles). This is higher than the State average of 8.1%. Residents who live near high-traffic roads are exposed to exhausts and other emissions that can increase risk of heart disease, respiratory disease, and neurological conditions. Noise pollutions can lead to chronic stress and disturbance of night sleep.



Draft Goals and Strategies Public Health and Livability

PH1 Goal 1: Invest in Dedham's Health Department's core public health services, cross-sector partnerships, and projects to reduce health risks, particularly for vulnerable residents

Massachusetts' fragmented local public health system has presented significant barriers to local health departments' ability to efficiently and effectively meet their current state statutes as well as expand their capabilities and capacity. Barriers from a fragmented public health system are not unique to Dedham's Health Department and COVID-19 has highlighted shortcomings. Dedham should progress toward a high performing "Public Health 3.0" department that leads and advances preventative health initiatives, responds to health threats including threats from climate change, and works toward health equity.

Strategy PH1.1: Fund core services in the Dedham Health Department (i.e., housing inspections, restaurant inspections, Public Health Nursing, etc.) according to the State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) core capabilities and credentialing frameworks

Strategy PH1.2: Continue regional collaboration with Norfolk County 8 to foster delivery of public health services through shared municipal initiatives and cross-sector partnerships (hospitals, faith-based community, high education, etc.)

Strategy PH1.3: Develop and implement 5-year strategic plan for Dedham Health Director

position as Chief Health Strategist which will enable the department to transition into a Public Health 3.0 service model and implement more holistic and health promoting interventions

Strategy PH1.4: Develop and implement communications strategy for Dedham Health Department to inform residents, businesses and municipal staff on existing health

PH2 Goal 2: Reduce environmental exposures that adversely affect the health of Dedham residents

The pattern of uses, buildings, roads, infrastructure and natural features contribute to health outcomes. These patterns should be reconsidered to promote health, foster formal and informal connections among neighbors, and provide connected and convenient access to a high density of activities and services. This will result in more livable neighborhoods and a healthier community.

Strategy PH2.1: Implement actions within the Public Health and Safety section in Sustainable Dedham Climate Action and Resiliency Plan and prioritize action items

Strategy PH2.2: Provide age-friendly home remodeling guidance (e.g., AARP Home Fit Guide, Universal Design Guidelines) through the Building Department and pair with waived permitting fees, streamlined permitting process, or low interest municipal loans to provide assistance to make the changes more affordable to elderly residents

Strategy PH2.3: Continue to conduct regular compliance checks to create a mechanism to

identify, warn, and educate alcohol outlets that are in violation of alcohol sales to underage individuals

Strategy PH2.4: Define mitigation measures to reduce health impacts for locations near high volume traffic roadways, particularly the locations that overlap with Dedham's Environmental Justice Block groups to identify potential air quality mitigation measures

PH3 Goal 3: Support the mental and emotional wellness of Dedham residents, specifically youth and children, to mitigate conditions that contribute to harmful behaviors

Strategy PH3.1: Strengthen communication and coordination between organizations who work with youth and families (e.g., Dedham Organization for Substance Awareness (DOSA), Dedham Youth Commission, Riverside, Dedham Police Department, INTERFACE, Dedham Public Schools) and municipal offices to raise awareness and knowledge of available resources to Dedham residents, families, and youth (See Goal XX in Governance chapter)

Strategy PH3.2: Support DOSA and Dedham Youth Commission on the following efforts:

Strategy PH3.3: Inventory local, regional, and state mental health resources available to Dedham residents. Resources can help provide support in the interim for residents while they are waiting for mental health treatment.

Ensure that residents have equitable access to resources and information so all residents can achieve their greatest health potential.

PH4 Goal 4: Foster community connectedness and intergenerational ties by breaking down barriers

Access to green and open space is linked to numerous health benefits including increased social interactions, perceptions of safety, improved mental health outcomes, and increased physical activity. Providing programming that caters to the needs of Dedham residents, especially older adults, can help prevent issues such as social isolation. Dedham should designate existing indoor and outdoor spaces for physical improvements (using universal design), and provide intergenerational programming for connectedness and physical activity.

Strategy PH4.1: Identify or develop publicly accessible spaces as physical community hubs in each Dedham Neighborhood

Strategy PH4.2: Designate spaces in existing community buildings (e.g., Town Hall, Library, etc.) for physical improvements, using universal design principles, to host inter-generational community programming

Strategy PH4.3: Implement Dedham's 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan and prioritize objectives

PH5 Goal 5: Enact policies and programs that foster inclusive civic and social engagement and expand the outreach and communication for services available to residents

Advancing racial equity can only be achieved when the voices and lived experiences of Dedham residents are heard and factor in during planning and Town decision making. In order to ensure that all Dedham residents feel heard and included, Town decision making should involve residents from a variety of economic, racial, ethnic and age groups. Dedham should also continuously think about how to engage difficult to reach populations to ensure varied perspectives to inform Town decisions.

Strategy PH5.1: Pilot use of Race Forward's Choice Points to Advance Equity framework in residential development decision making processes (e.g., Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals) for one year. Track and evaluate outcomes to assess use of framework in other municipal development decision-making

Strategy PH5.2: Establish trainings about requirements and good practices such as Open Meeting Law compliance, email and communication norms, and decision-making processes. This may include regularly connecting board and committee members with existing resources such as the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative

PH6 Goal 6: Support daily physical activity and eliminate risk of traffic related injuries and fatalities

Walking and biking are not only desirable forms of transportation but also provide opportunities for residents to engage in physical activity. Dedham should prioritize active living, open space, and connectivity investments to reduce the risk of acute, chronic disease,

injury and premature death and ensure that all residents have access to safe outdoor recreational areas.

Strategy PH6.1: Adopt a Vision Zero strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries by implementing the core priorities: managing speeds, centering equity, and engaging communities

Strategy PH6.2: Use MAPC's Local Access Score to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian capital investments that connect residents to health destinations such as grocery stores, commercial districts, recreation destinations, transit, and schools

Strategy PH6.3: Ensure the Dedham Council on Aging is recording unmet transportation and trip requests to help develop revised transportation services

Strategy PH6.4: Develop multi-lingual guides to parks and public lands that show trails, special features, and access points for pedestrians and vehicles