

CITY OF BEVERLY  
BURLINGTON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

MASTER PLAN  
HEALTHY COMMUNITY PLAN ELEMENT  
Adopted March 22, 2017



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*An original copy of this document is signed and sealed and filed with the municipal clerk.*

**Introduction:**

As part of its community development mission to maintain and enhance the quality of life in the City, the City of Beverly Joint Land Use Board has adopted this Healthy Communities element to its City Master Plan. Although it is not one of the Municipal Land Use Law's enumerated Master Plan elements, the Joint Land Use Board believes that a Healthy Community Master Plan element is a legitimate and essential element if Beverly is to fulfill the first purpose of the Law: to encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands in this State, in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare. The following document is not a public health plan, but a municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of land in Beverly to promote public health.

If an individual's health is greatly affected by his or her environment and the nutritional and exercise choices he or she makes every day, then the character of the public physical environment and its opportunities for making healthy nutritional and exercise choices is critical to public health. There is only so much a municipality can do to promote public health, for example, it cannot control or regulate individuals' dietary and exercise regimens.

However, a municipality can regulate changes in building and landscape forms and functions and can provide incentives to residents, business owners and developers that incorporate health-oriented designs and technologies. It can also take direct action by including health-oriented designs, technologies, projects and programs in public properties and infrastructure, thus providing greater opportunities for the public to make better nutritional and exercise choices. This would mean making Beverly's public buildings, schools, parks, waterfront, and street network "healthier" places. Perhaps one of the most important things a municipality can do to promote public health is to provide opportunities to educate people about nutrition and physical activity.

This Healthy Community Master Plan element contains a vision statement describing how Beverly is a health-oriented community in the future. It has three basic municipal public health goals, which the Joint Land Use Board recommends to promote the identified public health issues that the City can help change for the better. The plan's objectives identify actions that Beverly can take to address them. The goals and objectives in this document were developed with a local sub-committee that comprised members of the Joint Land Use Board and the Governing Body. They are realistically achievable, given local authority and resources, and were designed to:

- Implement multiple recommendations,
- Be relatively low in cost,
- Be high in understandability,
- Be legally viable,
- Be short in implementation timeframe, and
- Are likely to generate a favorable response from the public.

**History:**

Beverly is a relatively small, waterfront community of one-half square miles with about 2,600 residents, surrounded by suburban Delanco and Edgewater Park townships. Beverly incorporated as a borough in 1850 and became a city in 1857 within the much larger, rural Willingborough Township.

Residential, commercial, industrial and civic developments began soon after the Camden and Amboy Railroad came to town in 1834 and the Delaware River steamboat in 1847. Its main arteries were the railroad and the steamboat. Industries grew along the railroad, commercial development was focused on the downtown Five Points intersection, and civic institutions sprung up along Warren Street. Small and large homes were built in walkable neighborhoods. Most of the town was developed between 1850 and 1900, and nearly built-out by the beginning of Great Depression. The depression also spelled the end of steamboat traffic and the beginning of the City's waterfront neighborhood deterioration.

Much of this changed after World War II, when residential and commercial development moved to the suburban areas outside the City limits and out along the US Route 130 corridor, aided by the omnipresent automobile. Passenger railroad service stopped along the Burlington County riverfront in 1963. The shift away from local manufacturing in the 1970s and 1980s meant the closing of many industrial employers. Commercial uses have also moved away from Five Points to locations on US Route 130 with ample free automobile parking. Soon, every household needed at least one car to get around, which makes parking difficult in a city developed mostly without driveways and off-street parking.

Passenger rail service was restored in 2004. Redevelopment planning began in Beverly in 2005 with assistance from Burlington County's economic development and regional planning office. The City completed a redevelopment plan for the waterfront, Five Points and railroad corridor area in 2007. In 2014, the City revised and updated its Master Plan Land Use Plan element.

### **Planning Issues:**

Although public health is an extremely broad topic, this Healthy Community Plan element is a municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of land in Beverly to promote public health. For this reason, this element is focused on the three main community health issues targeted by the New Jersey Department of Health's Shaping NJ program: obesity, nutrition and physical activity. The program, simply stated, advises that "Good eating habits, proper nutrition and physical fitness are essential for good health."

The Shaping NJ website lists the following points for these three major health issues:

- Obesity has tripled among adolescents in the past 30 years. Obese youth are more likely to have prediabetes and risk factors for cardiovascular disease and are at greater risk for bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, and social and psychological problems such as stigmatization and poor self-esteem. Adults who are obese are at increased risk of morbidity from hypertension, high LDL cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, and osteoarthritis.
- Fruits and vegetables contain essential vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients that may help prevent many chronic diseases. Compared with people who consume a diet with only small amounts of fruits and vegetables, those who eat more generous amounts as part of a healthful diet are likely to have reduced risk of chronic diseases, including stroke and perhaps other cardiovascular diseases, and certain cancers. Fruits and vegetables also help people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, because they are relatively low in energy density.
- Physical activity can help reduce overweight/obesity and the risk of several chronic diseases including asthma and diabetes. Research has shown that physical activity also increases life expectancy.

Generally, master plan elements are based on demographic data, when available. There are numerous national and state-level measurements on public health issues ranging on a variety of topics. Health and wellness statistics are not available at a municipal level, but some statistics for Burlington County related to overall health, physical activity, and obesity are.

For example, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>) indicates that Burlington County is in the top one-third of New Jersey counties in terms of overall health. Adults reporting poor or fair health was only 11% in Burlington County compared to 16% in the State. About 76% of adults surveyed included physical activity as part of their leisure time, which was the same as the State average. However, the County's 27% rate of adult obesity is slightly above the State's 25% rate.

Some statewide statistics on obesity, nutrition and physical activity from the New Jersey State Health Assessment Data report are also worth noting:

### **Obesity**

- In 2013, about 10% of NJ high school students were obese, compared to about 15% in the US.
- In 2013, about 25% of NJ adults were obese, compared to about 27% in the US.

### **Nutrition**

- In 2011 about 20% of NJ high school students consumed recommended daily fruits and vegetables.
- In 2011 about 25% of NJ adults consumed recommended daily fruits and vegetables.
- In 2013 about 10% of NJ high school students consumed one or more soda drinks per day, compared to about 30% in the US.

### **Physical Activity**

- In 2011 about 50% of NJ high school students participated in 60 minutes or more of activity at least 5 days a week, including daily physical education classes.



Source: [healthyeating.org](http://healthyeating.org)

### **Community Design and Function:**

Shaping NJ encourages municipalities to adopt healthy community design practices in their master planning agenda. It describes healthy community design as "... planning, designing and building sustainable communities that encourage people to live healthier lives by making it easier to walk, bike, and incorporate mass transit opportunities. It puts fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods and beverages within easy reach of all neighborhoods."

It lists the following benefits of incorporating healthy community design in municipal plans, policies and projects:

- Increases sense of social connectivity & sense of community belonging
- Produces positive economic outcomes for developers, homeowners and local governments
- Ensures social equity for all community residents
- Promotes good mental health
- Incorporates physical activity into our daily lives
- Creates safe environments
- Lowers the risk of traffic-related injuries
- Increases access to healthy, locally grown food
- Improves air and water quality

The following narrative lists and describes the six key ingredients, or objectives, of healthy community design, according to the New Jersey Association of County and City Health Officials and Shaping, NJ. It then correlates these objectives with "on the ground conditions" in Beverly and identifies opportunities for improving the City's healthy community design plans, policies and projects.

1. Compact, inclusive and active communities - Compact inclusive communities locate homes, businesses, stores, schools, houses of worship, and parks close to each other to promote walking, biking, and transit use. They are accessible and socially equitable for all residents. Active communities incorporate physical activity into daily life. Not all communities are the same, but opportunities to make your residents more active exist through good community design.

*Beverly is a compact community, primarily laid out and developed before automobiles became a dominant force in our culture. Local businesses, house of worship and parks are all within walking distance to most homes. The City is a walking elementary school district. Due to its relatively small size, Beverly does not have municipally-supported recreational programs, but many of its residents use local and nearby parks and participate in community sports programs.*

2. Diverse employment activities - Healthy communities provide for a diverse economy that offers a range of employment opportunities. Planning and zoning should promote jobs that enable all residents to live more productive and healthier lives.

*Beverly has always been a primarily residential community. Historically, there were several merchants at Five Points and large industrial employers along the*



railroad tracks. Other residents worked in nearby Burlington or Riverside or other locations served by mass transit. Unfortunately, many of these businesses have closed, and the average one-way commute time is almost 30 minutes. The City's planning and redevelopment agenda supports revitalization of commercial development at Five Points and along the railroad.

3. Complete streets -

Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users - pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Sidewalks, bike lanes, and convenient transit stops along well-lit streets encourage people to leave their cars at home. They promote safe routes to schools and improve air quality by promoting energy conservation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



Beverly is a walkable community with good sidewalks along well-lit streets. Many street corners have handicapped curb cuts and ramps. The City has a program to upgrade intersections to become handicapped accessible. Automobile traffic is managed by maintaining 25 mph speed limit on all roads, except Warren Street, which is 30 mph west of Five Points and 35 mph to the east, and by having on-street parking, because many Beverly homes were built without driveways. This means that there is very little room left over for dedicated bicycle lanes. The 2014 Burlington county Bicycle Master Plan recommends "share the road" facilities and signage" on several county and local roads, such as Broad Street (Route 626), Cooper Street (Route 630), and Warren Street (Route 543) and along the riverfront.

Children and adults share the road with automobiles. Burlington County is committed to upgrading its roads in Beverly: Broad Street, Cooper Street, and Warren Street, to become "complete streets". Passenger train service between Trenton and Camden is available from the New Jersey Transit station on Cooper Street. Termini connections provide Beverly residents easy access New York and Philadelphia cities, and to points beyond.

4. Neighborhood parks and greenways - Parks and greenways provide areas for people to enjoy a wide range of physical activities. Open spaces should be evenly distributed throughout the community so people have access within one-

half mile of their homes and businesses. In addition, open spaces provide wildlife habitat and reduce flooding by absorbing stormwater.

*Beverly has several local parks: two along the waterfront, one near the Light Rail Station, one opposite the city hall and another at the elementary school. As a compact community, most residents live within one-mile of a local park or recreation area. Because it is mostly built-out, there are no natural open spaces, except the dredge spoils reclamation area, which is not accessible to the public. Maintaining tree cover is an important issue in Beverly, as is developing a promenade along the waterfront. The City could install outdoor stationary exercise equipment for children and adults at one of its parks. It could also designate a walking / jogging route through the community to encourage daily exercise and encourage communal outdoor exercise in its park, such as yoga or tai-chi.*

5. Urban agriculture - All residents need access to healthy foods. Transforming underutilized and vacant lots into community gardens, urban farms, and farmers' markets enhances neighborhood character and provides access to healthy, affordable, fresh, locally grown food. They offer an opportunity for children to learn the importance of healthy, sustainable foods and where it is grown.

*Beverly has a community garden at Penn Street and Magnolia Street, which is available to all City residents. It has hosted a successful farmers market on Thursday afternoons at the Saint Joseph's church parking lot for several years. The City could make opportunities available for the County Agricultural Extension Office and the Department of Health to provide literature about nutritional choices, home gardens, and other public health issues.*

6. Healthy buildings - Americans spend about 90 percent of their time indoors, where concentrations of pollutants are often much higher than outside. Healthy buildings reflect good choices in design, materials, ventilation, and consumer products such as household furnishings, personal care items, and cleaning products.

*Beverly can provide property owners and developers educational materials about healthy building choices or refer them to similar materials online. The Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) and the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) does not permit municipal regulation or enforcement of policies that require these types of healthy building practices. The MLUL, however, can be used to encourage the development of energy-efficient and healthy buildings, which use materials and products that support healthy indoor air quality. It can do so by providing density bonuses or requiring these practices when it grants other variances. It can also do so as part of a redevelopment agreement, in a designated redevelopment or rehabilitation area when incorporated in a redevelopment plan.*

The US Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Environmental Health (Center) also encourages healthy community design in existing and new communities. It defines healthy community design simply as "planning and designing communities that make it easier for people to



live healthy lives." The Center identifies the same types of health benefits as Shaping NJ does for healthy community design. The following are the Center's seven basic design principles for healthy community design and comments on Beverly's consistency with them.

1. Encourage mixed land use and greater land density to shorten distances between homes, workplaces, schools and recreation so people can walk or bike more easily to them. – Mixed land uses are recommended in the City's master plan and redevelopment plan in the downtown Five Points area and along the railroad corridor.
2. Provide good mass transit to reduce the dependence upon automobiles. – Passenger rail service may be accessed at a train station on Cooper Street. Sen-Han transit service is available for elderly and handicapped residents.
3. Build good pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, including sidewalks and bike paths that are safely removed from automobile traffic as well as good right of way laws and clear, easy-to-follow signage. – Beverly has a comprehensive sidewalk infrastructure of well-lit streets.
4. Ensure affordable housing is available for people of all income levels. – Housing in Beverly is available for people of all incomes.
5. Create community centers where people can gather and mingle as part of their daily activities. – Beverly uses its Free library, municipal building and municipal parks as community centers. Local churches also offer their spaces for community organizations.
6. Offer access to green space and parks. – Most homes in Beverly are within a short walk to a local green space or City park.
7. Create outlets for fresh fruits and vegetables, such as community gardens and farmers markets. – Beverly hosts a weekly seasonal farmers' market and community garden.

The Urban Land Institute, a non-profit land use and community development research organization, also promotes health community design by recommending the 21 practices in three main categories: physical activity, healthy food and drinking water, and healthy environment and well-being. The following narrative lists those practices and then explains Beverly's consistency with them.



### **Physical Activity**

1. Incorporate a mix of land uses – Beverly's planning and redevelopment agenda provides for mixed uses in the Five Points downtown district and along the rail-road corridor.
2. Design well-connected street networks at the human scale – Beverly's street network was designed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries at a human-scale. It has short walkable blocks with multiple intersections.
3. Provide sidewalks and enticing, pedestrian-oriented streetscapes – Beverly's streets all have safe sidewalks, most of them are well-lit. Many intersections have handicapped-accessible curb cuts and ramps.
4. Provide infrastructure to support biking – Beverly's narrow streets and predominant on-street parking patterns decrease traffic to a safe speed, but make dedicated bicycle lanes difficult to implement.
5. Design visible, enticing stairs to encourage everyday use – This is a site-specific building design issues, about which the City has minimal influence.
6. Install stair prompts and signage – This is a site-specific building design issues, about which the City has minimal influence.

7. Provide high-quality spaces for multi-generational play and recreation – Beverly's parks have play spaces for children and some athletic fields or youth and adults. The City has the opportunity to incorporate exercise multi-generational equipment in its waterfront parks and a walking / jogging circuit through its neighborhoods. It can also encourage programming at public parks for exercise, yoga, tai-chi, etc. events.
8. Build play spaces for children – Beverly has two centrally located playgrounds and another at its elementary school.



### **Healthy Food and Drinking Water**

1. Accommodate a grocery store – Beverly's zoning allows for a local grocery store, but off-street parking requirements and other real estate market factors has made this a difficult land use to realize.
2. Host a farmers market – The City has hosted a farmers market for several years.
3. Promote healthy food retail – To the extent that it can, Beverly could encourage small convenience stores to sell healthy food that is reasonably priced and easy to prepare, as well as farm-to-table venues at local eateries.
4. Support on-site gardening and farming – The City has a community garden site. It could work with the Burlington County Agricultural Extension office to encourage more home gardens and composting.

5. Enhance access to drinking water – The City could provide outdoor drinking fountains at its public buildings and parks for seasonal use.

### **Healthy Environment and Social Well-Being**

1. Ban smoking – In New Jersey, smoking is banned in public schools and buildings, as well as all places of public accommodation. Smoking is also prohibited in City parks, playgrounds and recreation areas.
2. Use materials and products that support healthy indoor air quality - This is a site-specific building design issues, about which the City has minimal influence, except for its own properties. The City could encourage the development of energy-efficient and healthy buildings, which use materials and products that support healthy indoor air quality, natural lighting, and noise reduction.
3. Facilitate proper ventilation and airflow – See above.
4. Maximize indoor lighting quality – See above.
5. Minimize noise pollution – See above.
6. Increase access to nature – Most homes and businesses are within a short walk to the City's waterfront, which is the area with the most natural resources. (The adjacent Dunes dredge spoils reclamation area west of the sewage treatment plant is not publicly accessible.) The City provides numerous opportunities for seating and rest at its waterfront parks. Beverly could explore working with a non-profit tree planting organization to replenish its street tree green infrastructure network.
7. Facilitate social engagement – Beverly supports a number of community events, such as the Annual Fishing Derby, Community Day, and the Summer Concert Series. The City could encourage programming at public parks for exercise, yoga, tai-chi, etc. events and explore installation of static outdoor exercise equipment stations.
8. Adopt pet-friendly policies – Beverly should provide animal waste bags in its waterfront parks.

**Vision Statement:**

The City of Beverly is a healthy community. Its residents are physically active, fit and healthy. People walk, bike, play and exercise outside along its sidewalks and in inviting neighborhood parks and playgrounds. They have convenient access to nutritious food and water, either from local stores, farm markets or grown in their own back yards or community gardens. Community health concerns are integrated into local decision-making, policies and programs. Contaminated brownfields are remediated and redeveloped. New, energy-efficient buildings incorporate "green" designs and materials that promote healthy indoor environments. Investments in the City's green infrastructure: its parks, playgrounds, trees, and waterfront, have improved overall environmental quality and overall quality of life in Beverly.

**Applicability:**

The City of Beverly will consider the positive and negative impacts to public health and wellness when implementing municipal policies, programs and projects that involve:

- Construction/occupation of new buildings,
- Retrofit and upgrade of existing buildings,
- Delivery of municipal services,
- Maintenance, enhancement, and operation of municipal facilities and properties,
- Maintenance, enhancement, and operation of our homes and commercial, industrial and institutional properties, and
- Consumption and disposal of products, and education of our children and residents of our community.

**Goal and Objectives:**

The Healthy Community Plan element of the City of Beverly's Master Plan has the three following goals and associated objectives:

1. Promote opportunities to be physically active and lifestyles that integrate physical activity into daily routines:
  - a. Adapt existing streets and sidewalks to make it safer and easier to walk or bike to school, shops, transit and other daily destinations.
  - b. Maintain schools, libraries, parks, playgrounds and other public facilities within easy walking or biking distance of where people live and work.
  - c. Reduce the dangers of crime, traffic and other hazards that interfere with walking, biking or playing outside.
  - d. Maintain clean and safe neighborhood parks, playgrounds and recreation centers and encourage their use for multi-generational play and recreation.
  - e. Provide a marked walking loop route(s) in the City and encourage its use for multi-generational exercise.



2. Provide opportunities to access healthy food and drinking water:
  - a. Increase the City's ability to produce and distribute healthy foods and beverages, including support of farmers' markets, farm stands, community-supported agriculture, food markets, school and community gardens and food pantries.
  - b. Encourage small convenience stores to sell healthy food that is reasonably priced and easy to prepare.
  - c. Promote access to clean water and public drinking fountains in parks and at public buildings.
  - d. Encourage farm-to-table venues.
  - e. Encourage home gardens.
  - f. Encourage home composting.
  
3. Increase exposure to healthy environments with a high degree of social interaction:
  - a. Promote brownfield clean up and redevelopment to improve environmental quality, promote community development goals, and address equity concerns.
  - b. Use green infrastructure to improve environmental quality for public health benefits. Work with a non-profit tree planting organization to replenish the City's green infrastructure..
  - c. Encourage the development of energy-efficient and healthy buildings, which use materials and products that support healthy indoor air quality, natural lighting, and noise reduction.
  - d. Continue to reduce the negative health effects of air, noise and light pollution through policy, regulation, and environmental strategies.
  - e. Encourage programming at public parks for exercise, yoga, tai-chi, etc. events and explore installation of static outdoor exercise equipment stations.
  - f. Continue to host events with participation from the County Health Department and the County Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service.