

10

Social Services and Public Health

Introduction

The American Public Health Association (APHA) defines public health as “the practice of preventing disease and promoting good health within groups of people”.¹¹⁰ Many master plan documents may not typically include a section on public health. However, by doing so a community can analyze health data and determine what actions need to be taken to improve overall health within the community. Public health as a planning consideration is important in the context of rising obesity, lung cancer, and asthma rates. Master plans can address public health concerns by encouraging the development of active transportation options, improved environmental health and safety, and access to healthy foods.



Social services cover the wide range of services offered by a community, such as elderly services, veterans’ affairs, disabilities/mobility services, homelessness prevention, human relations and human rights, youth services, literacy campaigns, and neighborhood and community outreach. The Senior Center in Hudson is a local example of a social service that benefits the Town’s aging

¹¹⁰ American Public Health Association. *What is Public Health?*
http://www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/C57478B8-8682-4347-8DDF-A1E24E82B919/0/what_is_PH_May1_Final.pdf

population. Establishing social services that support the needs of the community is important for society's quality of life.

This chapter describes the current level of social services and public health in Hudson, while also suggesting and recommending ways to improve social services and public health systems.

Social Services and Public Health Goals

Overarching goals related to the Town of Hudson's social services and public health systems have come out of this master plan process. These will be explained throughout this chapter and include the following:



- Improve water quality in order to maintain safe and clean drinking water resources.
- Increase access to local and healthy foods.
- Improve pedestrian amenities to encourage walking, running, bicycling, and public transit.
- Develop additional programming and capacity related to public health and social services.

Public Health Relationship to Land Use Planning and the Built Environment

Overlap exists between public health issues and land use planning, as many planning goals and initiatives can be directly correlated with the public health of a community. For example, increasing access to local and healthy food sources can result in decreased diabetes and obesity rates. Development of bike lanes, sidewalks, rail trails, and other pedestrian amenities decreases automobile use which results in improved air quality and contributes to lower asthma rates. Development of these amenities also increases opportunities for active exercise, assisting with multiple public health concerns already mentioned. Improvements to pedestrian crossings and roadway networks increase public health and safety overall, as this can decrease the rate of pedestrian/bicyclist collisions.

Encouraging active transportation, enhancing local and healthy food access, addressing health issues such as substance abuse, tobacco use, mental health, and pediatric asthma are pressing issues that are being addressed by the Town's Public and Community Health Services Department to improve the Town's overall public health. In addition, providing better management of solid waste

and maintaining safe living environments for seniors are key concerns for the Town. Active transportation is synonymous with sustainable transportation, as it emphasizes “self-propelled transit modes, such as walking and bicycling,”¹¹¹ unlike single occupancy travel by automobile which consumes resources. This physical activity reduces obesity rates. “In a 2009 report, Samimi [the author] found that a one percent decrease in automobile use is correlated with 0.4 percent reduction in obesity.”¹¹² Even increasing public transportation contributes to positive health benefits, as it has been found that light rail usage contributes to a 1.18 decrease in Body Mass Index (BMI) and reduces one’s chance of obesity by 81 percent.¹¹³ Increasing active transportation, carpooling or car sharing programs, and public transportation are positive ways to decrease obesity and other health issues, through development of sidewalks and trails, increasing the amount of public transit, and educating the general public of the benefits of decreasing automobile use and instead turning to more active options.

How buildings are constructed and sited on the property can have important public health and environmental implications. Employing green building standards can result in efficient use of energy, water, and other resources; protect occupant health and improve employee productivity; and reduce waste. New construction can incorporate materials that are reused, recycled-content, or made from renewable resources; create healthy indoor environments through reduced product emissions; and feature landscaping that requires minimal water usage. Properly sited buildings can also enhance the connectivity of streets and sidewalks.

Conventional food systems today rely heavily on big-box retail corporations to provide food and household needs in one spot. The issues surrounding this system relate to the fact that these primary stakeholders span great distances from each other, requiring most residents/shoppers to drive to these locations. Food deserts are defined as low-income census tracts where a substantial number or a share of residents have little access to a supermarket or large grocery store. Low-access to a healthy food retail outlet is defined as households that are more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store in urban areas and as more than 10 miles from a supermarket or large grocery store in rural areas.¹¹⁴ While the Town of Hudson does not have food deserts following this definition (Downtown is underserved, especially for those residents without cars), the Town can avoid these issues in the future and develop a healthier food system by:

- increasing access to local and healthy food options particularly within the Downtown area;

¹¹¹ Tufts University and VHB. *Community Planning Guide for Public Health*. May 2013.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ MacDonald, John M., Robert J. Stokes, Deborah A. Cohen, Aaron Kofner, and Greg K. Ridgeway. 2010. *The effect of light rail transit on body mass index and physical activity*. American journal of preventive medicine 39: 105-112.

¹¹⁴ United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/documentation.aspx#_U_t_z9NIo69I. Accessed January 29, 2014.

- encouraging fast-food restaurants and convenience stores to switch to healthier and more affordable food products; and,
- educating the public of the importance of choosing healthier diets.

Hudson's Social Services and Public Health Programs

Hudson is an active community in promoting public health and social services. With the Hudson Board of Health, Senior Center, and Hudson Veterans Services Department, the community is able to advance various initiatives to work towards a healthful environment and active community programs. Additionally, the Hudson Housing Authority provides housing to people that require social services and it refers people to service providers as needed. This section describes the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's (DPH) role, the roles of the Hudson Board of Health, Senior Center, and Veterans Services, and grants and programs Hudson is involved in related to public health initiatives.

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

DPH's mission is to "prevent illness, injury, and premature death, to assure access to high quality public health and health care services, and to promote wellness and health equity for all people in the Commonwealth."¹¹⁵ Through grant funding and other programs and initiatives DPH works to advance public health in the state.



Community Transformation Grant and MetroWest Moves

Community Transformation Grants (CTG) are administered by the Centers for Disease Control in order to help states and local communities address chronic health issues such as smoking, poor diet, and lack of physical activity. In 2011, DPH and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council partnered to develop the CTG application to promote health and wellness in Middlesex County. DPH was awarded \$1.6 million for its grant application and goal efforts. DPH created the statewide Mass in Motion program to promote healthy eating and active living in order to create healthy communities across the Commonwealth. The Town of Hudson is now receiving funding each quarter as a result of its active involvement in the grant application. The Town also secured a matching grant from the MetroWest Health Foundation for the tri-community collaborative

¹¹⁵ Massachusetts Department of Public Health. <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/welcome12.html>. Accessed September 2013.

(MetroWest Moves). The MetroWest Moves program is described further in the next section.

For more information on Hudson's involvement in MetroWest Moves and the Tobacco Control Program see the *Hudson Board of Health* section below.

Hudson Board of Health

The Town of Hudson's Board of Health is the municipal entity responsible for promoting healthier choices in the community in order to create a safer and healthier quality of life for its residents. Its mission is to "promote the health of the people through the prevention and control of disease and injury. We work to insure the quality of our food, check the safety of homes, and protect the environment from damage and pollution."¹¹⁶ The Board of Health is managed by a Director of Public and Community Health Services, and an Assistant Board of Health Agent. A three-member board, elected every three years by town residents, oversees the Board of Health and assists in making decisions related to the Board's responsibilities. The Town currently does not have a public nurse on staff, and contracts with the VNA Care Network and Hospice (VNA) for appropriate services. Hudson's Board of Health actively manages many programs areas related to community health including:

- Solid Waste Management
- Food Protection
- Waste Water Management
- Mental Health
- Healthy Aging (in conjunction with the Senior Center)
- Housing
- School Health
- Emergency Preparedness, Planning and Response (emergency shelters)
- Environmental Health (mosquito control and waste management)
- Grants Application and Management
- Community Outreach and Education
- School Health Services Collaboration
- Regular Health Clinics for Residents (flu, blood pressure, bone density, and rabies)

In addition to these program areas the Board of Health is actively involved with five programs including MetroWest Moves, Health Needs Assessment, Hudson Youth Substance Abuse Prevention, Tobacco Control Program, and Communicable Disease Investigations, which are described further below.

¹¹⁶ Town of Hudson Board of Health website. http://www.townofhudson.org/Public_Documents/HudsonMA_Health/index. Accessed July 2013.

MetroWest Moves

With the CTG funding, Framingham, Hudson, and Marlborough collectively formed MetroWest Moves, “a tri-community Mass in Motion initiative that creates opportunities for people who live, work, and play in Framingham, Hudson, and Marlborough to engage in healthy eating and active, smoke-free living.”¹¹⁷ MetroWest Moves is also supported by a matching grant from the MetroWest Health Foundation. As Hudson is MetroWest Moves’ host community, Hudson’s Board of Health is actively involved with the Town’s MetroWest planning priorities, initiatives and strategies. MetroWest Moves’ primary strategies focus on promoting healthy eating, active living, and tobacco control in order to address public health issues such as obesity, diabetes, asthma, and cancer rates among residents.

Complete Streets is a design approach to plan and develop streets in a safe, convenient, and comfortable way for all types of roadway users of all ages. A Complete Street takes into consideration pedestrians, automobile drivers, bicyclists, and public transit riders through design elements such as raised crosswalks, median crossing islands, dedicated bike lanes, bicycle parking, public transit accommodations (bus lanes, shelters), and traffic calming measures (street trees, face-out parking spaces).

Additionally, Hudson, Framingham and the Marlborough received a \$75,500 Community Innovation Challenge (CIC) grant from the state in February 2014 to develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Tool with MetroWest Moves and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Hudson is the lead community in this effort. As part of its public health approach, MetroWest Moves works to promote community design standards and “Complete Streets” guidelines to ensure that transportation planning and development takes into account the needs of all road users: pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers (see Chapter 8 – Transportation for more information on complete streets). The Complete Streets Prioritization Tool that will be developed and implemented through this grant will assist in identifying opportunities for walking, bicycling, and other modes of healthy transportation within each municipality. The product of this grant will create a ranking system that will enable the three communities to improve capital expenditure decision making by prioritizing roads that have the maximum utility for bike and pedestrian access.

MetroWest Moves is also working on a Worksite Wellness Initiative, which addresses healthy lifestyle choices in the workplace. In addition to raising awareness, these programs include behavioral changes such as weight reduction and smoking cessation programs; injury prevention; vending and cafeteria changes; health screenings; and employee wellness incentives. The initiative includes a Healthy Dining Initiative in which 15 restaurants have been recruited thus far to participate in downtown Hudson. In order to help Framingham, Hudson, and Marlborough establish safe streets for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists and public transit users, MetroWest Moves assists in developing community design standards such as Complete Streets. MetroWest Moves analyzes current conditions and traffic on existing transportation features (sidewalks, trails, walking paths) in order to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent residents from walking and biking to school, work, transportation hubs,

¹¹⁷ Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Mass in Motion website. MetroWest Moves. <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/community-health/mass-in-motion/community/mim-communities/metrowest.html>. Accessed July 2013.

parks, shopping areas, and other destinations. It also works to ensure any new development incorporates sidewalk and bike lanes into the design. To address tobacco use, the organization is working on a Tobacco Control Initiative by committing to increase smoke-free multi-unit housing.¹¹⁸

Health Needs Assessment

The Hudson Board of Health collaborating with state-wide healthcare entities, the MetroWest Health Foundation, and other local towns in the MetroWest region, has recently completed a Community Health Assessment published September 2013. This is a comprehensive report that examines demographic trends, social and physical environmental attributes, and health data for 22 cities and towns in the MetroWest region. Using data analysis, surveys and focus groups, the Community Health Assessment examines existing public health data and how residents in the area perceive health needs in the MetroWest region and each community involved, including Hudson.¹¹⁹ The following are some of the key conclusions of the assessment:

- Obesity and access to physical activity and healthy food were concerns identified by focus group participants and survey respondents.
- Mental health and substance use were identified as pressing needs by assessment participants, and current services were largely seen as inadequate.
- The aging of the region's population was noted by many, and concerns about seniors were prominent.
- Across all issue areas, transportation was identified as a challenge for many residents to accessing services.
- The region is seen as having a strong health care infrastructure, but there are concerns about access.
- As the health system increasingly faces challenges and health reform is implemented, residents saw the great need for increased efforts focusing on prevention.

Some of the health indicators for Hudson show that the Town has fallen behind others in the MetroWest region. They include:

- Hudson has the highest obesity rate in the MetroWest region (20.2%), although it is slightly below the state average. Among 4th graders, Hudson had the highest rate of obesity (44.9%) while rates among 7th and 10th graders were significantly lower and well below the state average.
- Inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption was highest in Hudson (77.9%).
- Adults were less likely to exercise in Hudson.
- Hudson reported the highest incidence of adult asthma in the region.

¹¹⁸ MetroWest Moves website. <http://metrowestmoves.org/>. Accessed September 2013.

¹¹⁹ MetroWest Region, Massachusetts – 2013 Community Health Assessment, Fall 2013, see <http://www.mwhealth.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/CommunityHealthNeedsAssm2013.pdf>

- Hudson residents reported feeling depressed or in poor mental health more often than residents of other communities in the region.
- Hudson had the greatest proportion of its population reporting they were smokers (12.8%), but below the statewide average of 15.9%.
- Hudson teenagers had the third highest childbirth rate in the region.
- 8% of all births were considered to have a low birth weight, second highest in the region and potentially indicative of a relative lack of prenatal care.

Hudson Youth Substance Abuse Prevention

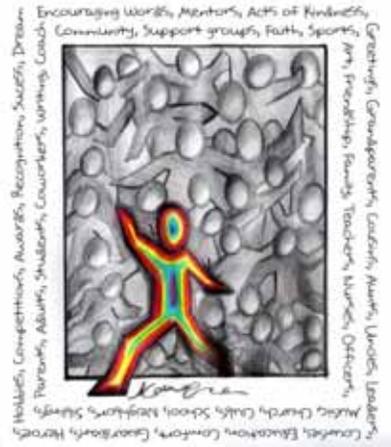
The Hudson Board of Health received a three-year grant from the MetroWest Health Foundation in 2012 in order to work towards initiatives for addressing youth substance abuse prevention, intervention, and increase access to treatment (related to alcohol, marijuana, prescription drugs, and tobacco). What resulted from this funding was the Hudson Youth Substance Abuse Prevention program and coalition. The coalition contains representatives from various community sectors including Hudson Public Schools, the Hudson Police Department, healthcare providers, the Hudson Board of Health, the arts and business communities, and substance use advocacy groups.

By being active in the community, developing continuous partnerships, and through various programs and activities, the group increases town-wide awareness and are better able to reach their goals. For example, the group runs a medication take-back kiosk to dispose of unwanted medications, and is involved in the National Drug Take-Back Day and the American Medicine Chest Challenge. School-based programs are especially important to the Hudson Youth Substance Abuse Prevention as these activities specifically target youth in the community. With a new Hudson High School wellness curriculum to begin in 2013-2014¹²⁰, screenings for youth substance use, prevention, intervention, and treatment referrals, peer and family support groups, and involvement in Red Ribbon Week drug prevention activities, the group and Town are taking great strides toward preventing youth substance abuse in the community.

For more information on the Hudson Youth Substance Abuse Prevention along with their current activities and events, visit their informative website at <http://preventhudsonsa.org/>.

Tobacco Control Program

The Board of Health also leads the extensive Tobacco Control Initiative aimed at enforcing existing tobacco sale regulations, promoting smoke-free housing, and discouraging the use of tobacco by residents. It supports the goals of the MetroWest Moves program, which aims to encourage smoke-free environments at multi-unit housing complexes. The Hudson Board of Health works with landlords of multi-housing units in the community to create smoke-free



Original Hudson student artwork which inspired the Hudson Youth Substance Abuse Prevention logo

“The community of Hudson will work to measurably transform adolescent substance use by building community capacity and supporting substance abuse prevention, early intervention, and treatment.”

Hudson Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Mission Statement

¹²⁰ This curriculum emphasizes the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, environmental, and occupational aspects of healthy living. See <https://sites.google.com/a/student.hudson.k12.ma.us/hudson-wellness/in-the-community>.

environments within their units. After collaborating with the Hudson Board of Health, the Hudson Housing Authority voted to go smoke-free at their housing units in 2013 and smoke-free units such as the Brigham Circle and Glen Road housing complexes will be in effect by August 2014. In February 2014, the Board voted to increase the minimum age for buying cigarettes to 21.

The Board of Health is partnering with other local communities to form a regional tobacco control district. Including Hudson, the district will be made up of eight communities in the region. The district's primary purposes will be to better enforce the existing tobacco sale regulations in the area and to promote smoke-free living, smoking cessation, and use prevention among minors. The Town is also working on revising their own local tobacco control regulations in order to reflect existing conditions on the market, such as new products (e-cigarettes, dissolvable tobacco oral pouches, etc.). Some of these new products are marketed toward youth through flavor choices and concealment appeal, making these products especially important to regulate at the community level. Hudson's current tobacco regulations are approximately eight years old and are in need of updating as they do not currently reflect recent products on the market.

Communicable Disease Investigations

Communicable diseases are illnesses that can be spread from one person to another (also known as infectious diseases and transmissible diseases). Hudson is part of a state-wide disease surveillance and case management system called Maven. When a communicable disease outbreak occurs in the area, DPH notifies the Hudson Board of Health and VNA (since they are registered as an agent for the BOH for communicable disease case management). Traditionally the Hudson Board of Health will then investigate the disease and any findings and notes obtained are reported back to Maven allowing the state to collect information on the communicable disease. The Maven system allows crucial communication between communities such as the Town of Hudson, the VNA, and state healthcare entities in response to communicable diseases and not so common infectious diseases.

Hudson Veterans Services Department

The Hudson Veterans Services Department is knowledgeable on an array of federal, state, and local benefits to which veterans and dependents may be entitled. Some of these benefits include Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.) Chapter 115 public assistance¹²¹, Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, social security, disability, burial, transportation, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Department's goal is to help veterans living in Hudson learn about, apply for, and receive these benefits. The Veterans Services Department is run by the Veterans Agent who coordinates local benefits and related activities for Hudson's veterans.



Veterans Clubs and Organizations

Various veteran clubs and organizations are located in Hudson each containing their own events and programming. The American Legion Post 100, containing approximately 70 members, are sponsors of the annual American Legion Baseball Tournament, hold an annual pancake breakfast in May, are members of the Hudson Veterans Council, and administer a scholarship program. Amvets Post 208 has a membership of 252 people and run programs such as the "Home Alone For the Holidays" program, an annual holiday party, annual fishing derby and barbecue, annual motorcycle ride to support local families in need, annual scholarship for nursing students, and are also members of the Hudson Veterans Council. Lastly, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 1027 in Hudson has a membership of 245 members. VFW performs "Flags In" services, sells buddy poppies in which the proceeds are donated to non-profit organizations, holds a monthly lobster shoot which raises money for veterans and their family members, administers a scholarship program, and are additionally members of the Hudson Veterans Council.



Memorial Day 2014
Photos by Ed Karvoski Jr., Community Advocate

¹²¹ M.G.L. Chapter 115 is a need-based program of financial and medical assistance for veterans and their dependents. Qualifying veterans and their dependents receive necessary financial assistance for food, shelter, clothing, fuel, and medical care. Applications for the program are available at the Hudson Veterans Services Department at Town Hall.

<http://www.mass.gov/veterans/benefits-and-services/chapter-115.html>

VetRides

Funded by private donations from local veteran service organizations, local businesses and individuals, and annual fundraisers, the VetRides program provides free transportation to veterans and their caregivers to local and Boston area VA hospitals for appointments and treatments. In calendar year 2012 alone, 178 rides were provided to veterans. The transportation is currently provided by volunteers but grant funding through MetLife and the Ford Foundation are being sought in order to obtain a dedicated vehicle for the program. A dedicated vehicle would help to cover the current volunteer costs. This program is beneficial for local veterans as it is difficult to find public transportation within Hudson.

Council on Aging/Senior Center

The Council on Aging and the Senior Center provide advocacy and support systems empowering older adults to maintain their independence, improve their quality of life and prepare for life change. The Council provides social services; wellness and fitness programs; information



and referral services; case management; health promotion and prevention activities; socialization; volunteer opportunities; advocacy; and associated support systems. The activities, programs, and services of the Senior Center are designed to: empower older adults to maintain independence; support frail elders in their homes; improve quality of life; provide some supportive services for individuals of all ages with disabilities; inform and assist families considering life change decisions concerning elder family members; and provide preventive health programming, advocacy, education, social, and leisure opportunities for active adults.¹²²

One of the most important programs the Senior Center coordinates is Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders (SHINE), which provides free and objective health insurance information to Medicare beneficiaries, screens people for

¹²² Town of Hudson 2013 Annual Report

subsidy programs to help them save on prescription drugs and medical costs, and assists people with MassHealth applications. In addition, home visits are made and needs assessments are formulated to help the elderly remain in their own homes. The Center is an official intake site for the fuel assistance and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).

The Center has two vehicles including a new 14 passenger van equipped with a wheelchair lift and space for two wheelchairs, and a 14 passenger van without a lift. Seniors needing transportation for medical appointments, shopping, banking, etc. between Hudson and Marlborough can call the Center to arrange for transportation. It also coordinates the Meals on Wheels Program, which is managed by BayPath Elder Services, which serves thousands of meals each year.

The Senior Center currently serves 5,517 seniors aged 55 and older, which comprises 27 percent of Hudson's total population. This segment of the population is expected to follow national trends and continue to rise over the next several decades. For example, the number of people 65 years of age and over in the U.S. increased from 35 million in 2000 to 41.4 million in 2011 (an 18 percent increase) and is projected to increase to 79.7 million in 2040, which includes the Baby Boom generation. Those 85 years and older stand at 5.7 million in 2011, with a projected increase to 14.1 million by 2040.¹²³

In the 2013-2-14 fiscal year, the Center served 1,769 individual people, for a grand total of 37,776 duplicated visits or participation in the programs/events mentioned above. Since opening the new Senior Center in 2010, attendance and program participation has tripled.

Friends of the Hudson Senior Center, Inc. are a non-profit, tax exempt organization with a goal of raising funds for improvements and renovations to the Hudson Senior Center. Through events such as raffles, dances, and suppers, funds are raised and used for renovating the building, and purchasing equipment and vehicles used in the transportation program.¹²⁴

There are a number of issues that continue to concern the Council on Aging. As Hudson's population continues to age, these issues are likely to be on the Council's agenda for years to come. They include affordable housing options for senior citizens, transportation for basic errands and medical appointments, helping establish financial security as people age through workshops and education, and the stigma associated with mental illness as our aging population expands.

¹²³ Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services

¹²⁴ Town of Hudson Senior Center website. http://www.townofhudson.org/Public_Documents/F00014246/Index. Accessed July 2013.

Public Health Data and Trends

Various public health data is available for both Hudson and the MetroWest region in order to describe trends in the community. The MetroWest Health Foundation is a key resource for public health related data. The Foundation “provides financial support to community-based and community-driven programs to meet the unmet health needs of twenty-five communities in the MetroWest area of Massachusetts”.¹²⁵ Through various grants, scholarships, initiatives, and analyses the MetroWest Health Foundation is able to assist the 25 communities in the MetroWest region (including Hudson) with improving their individual health statuses.¹²⁶

Data from the Foundation’s Community Health Data Center is collected from several state and federal resources and can be viewed for each community or the region as a whole. Evaluating data related to cancer, smoking and drinking, asthma, obesity, and more help to determine the issues a community faces related to its public health. The following table displays select public health data for the Town of Hudson compared to the MetroWest region and Massachusetts.

Table 10-1 Select Community Health Data – Hudson, MetroWest, and Massachusetts, 2013

	Town of Hudson	MetroWest Region	Massachusetts
Lung Cancer Rate¹	87.8	66.7	72.2
Lung Cancer Mortality ¹	54.6	45.1	50.7
Adult Smoking Rate	12.8%	10.3%	N/A
High School Smoking Rate	15.1%	12.1%	N/A
Diagnosed Asthma	9.0%	8.5%	10.1%
Obese Residents	20.2%	18.1%	21.8%
Obese high schoolers ²	26.8%	23.0%	32.1%

Source: MetroWest Health Foundation. Community Health Data Center.

<http://www.mwhealth.org/Default.aspx?TabId=257>. Accessed September 2013.

¹ Age adjusted rate per 100,000 people

² Grade 10 students

According to the MetroWest Health Foundation, Hudson has higher rates of lung cancer, lung cancer mortality, and adult and high school smoking rates compared to the MetroWest region and the state. Asthma and obesity rates are typically higher in Hudson than the region, but lower than the state averages. Developing programs targeted towards decreasing smoking rates could in turn potentially reduce lung cancer and lung cancer mortality incidences (and even

¹²⁵ MetroWest Moves. Community Health Data. <http://metrowestmoves.org/in-your-community/health-data/>. Accessed September 2013.

¹²⁶ MetroWest communities include: Ashland, Bellingham, Dover, Framingham, Franklin, Holliston, Hopedale, Hopkinton, Hudson, Marlborough, Medfield, Medway, Mendon, Milford, Millis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, Northborough, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, Wayland, Wellesley, and Westborough

asthma rates). Establishing more active recreation programs, especially those for high school students, could lower the obesity rates for Hudson’s residents. Although these statistics show Hudson residents have higher rates of certain health risks, the Town and MetroWest region are thriving in other health factors. For example, MetroWest residents are least likely to report fair or poor health (9 percent), least likely to report not having health insurance (2 percent), least likely to report being a current smoker (13 percent), and residents above the age of 50 are more likely to have received the shingles vaccine (15 percent) compared to other residents in any other region.¹²⁷ This data is shown in the table below.

Table 10-2 Select Community Health Data – Massachusetts Regions, 2011

	MetroWest Region	Western Region	Central Region	North East Region	South East Region	Boston Region
Reports of fair or poor health	9%	17%	15%	13%	16%	16%
No health insurance	2%	6%	4%	5%	6%	5%
Current smoker	13%	21%	20%	19%	21%	18%
Shingles vaccine, Age 50+	15%	10%	8%	10%	10%	8%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Since 2006, the MetroWest Health Foundation has administered a MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey every other year to students in communities involved. Students at the Hudson High School and JFK Middle School have completed the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey most recently in 2012. The purpose of the survey is to learn about adolescents’ attitudes and behaviors on health issues in order to help school districts provide the best possible health education and related services to students.¹²⁸ The anonymous survey assesses teen attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol, tobacco and other drug use; violence and safety; nutrition and physical activity; sexual behaviors; and mental health. The following table displays some of the results of the most recent 2012 survey for the two Hudson schools involved in the program. Full survey results can be viewed on the Hudson Public Schools’ website.

Table 10-3. MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Results - Hudson Public Schools, 2012

	Hudson Middle School (Grades 6-8)	Hudson High School (Grades 9-12)
Substance Use	Total (%)	

¹²⁷ Massachusetts Department of Public Health. *A Profile of Health Among Massachusetts Adults, 2011. Results from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.* <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/behavioral-risk/report-2011.pdf>

¹²⁸ MetroWest Moves. *Community Health Data.* <http://metrowestmoves.org/in-your-community/health-data/>. Accessed September 2013.

	Hudson Middle School (Grades 6-8)	Hudson High School (Grades 9-12)
Lifetime cigarette smoking	6.8	26.3
Lifetime alcohol use	14.0	59.8
Rode with driver who had been drinking (lifetime)	13.7	17.9
Lifetime marijuana use	4.7	38.6
Violence		
Physical Fighting	39.2 (lifetime)	13.8 (past 12 months)
Carried a weapon	12.3 (lifetime)	5.9 (past 30 days)
Bullying Victimization		
Bullying victim (past 12 months)	37.4	25.6
Bullying victim on school property (past 12 months)	29.8	21.6
Mental Health		
Depressive symptoms (past 12 months)	13.0	20.8
Considered suicide	11.1 (lifetime)	14.5 (past 12 months)
Attempted suicide	2.5 (lifetime)	5.1 (past 12 months)
Physical Activity and Body Weight		
Exercise Frequency	78.9 (exercised for ≥20 minutes on 3 or more days/week)	44.1. (exercised for ≥60 minutes on 5 or more days/week)
Overweight or obese	29.0	24.3

Source: MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey. Key Indicator Report. Hudson Public Schools. 2012.
<http://www.hudson.k12.ma.us/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Kp-A1rLmQag%3d&tabid=675>

Public health issues that Hudson faces such as high lung cancer rates, smoking rates, and obesity can be directly correlated with poor health behavioral actions such as smoking, lack of exercise, and lack of access to healthy foods.

Figure 10-1 Poor Health Behaviors Correlated with Poor Health Results



Programs and initiatives to work towards resolving these issues and in turn improving Hudson’s public health would aim to reduce smoking rates, increase opportunities for exercise, and advance access to healthier and local food options in the community.

Public Health Needs

Transportation

Hudson has only recently become a member of a state regional transit authority, but it has not received services yet so there are no public bus transit stops within the Town at this point in time. Additionally, “the Town requires that new developments construct sidewalks, but does not require the necessary connections to other sidewalks.”¹²⁹ This leads to gaps in the sidewalk system, and has left some neighborhoods disconnected from the sidewalk system. Lack of alternative transportation options, such as public transit and a comprehensive sidewalk system forces residents to consistently travel via automobile daily even for short trips, although some public transit service is expected in the near future. This constant use of automobile traveling contributes to poor air quality and does not promote healthy exercising normally associated with alternative transit modes. Partnering with a regional transit authority in order to bring bus routes and stops to Hudson would be beneficial to the community’s overall public health. Examining the sidewalk network in Hudson to develop an interconnected network of pedestrian access would also promote public health in the Town.

¹²⁹ Tufts University and VHB. *Community Planning Guide for Public Health*. May 2013.

Drinking Water

Drinking water used by residents is obtained from surface water at Gates Pond in Berlin and five groundwater wells located throughout Hudson. Two of the groundwater wells, Kane and Cranberry wells, have been tested for elevated concentrations of iron and manganese which surpass the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) limits for these natural elements that exceed DEP guidelines. The Town has decided to pursue an option that entails conveying raw water from the Kane and Cranberry wells to the Chestnut Street Water Filtration Facility (an existing facility that treats the three other groundwater wells in Town), has constructed a pipe system from the Kane well and is constructing one from the Cranberry well to the filtration plant. Although, the Town is taking appropriate measures for resolving this water quality issue, it is important to note for public health reasons as the high levels of iron and manganese in drinking water supplies could affect the public health of some residents with sensitivity to iron and manganese. See Chapter 5 – Natural Resources and Chapter 7 – Community Facilities for more information.

Healthy Food Access

Hudson is well-served by five supermarkets in Hudson, including BJ's Wholesale Club, Hannaford Supermarket, Super Stop & Shop, Wal-Mart Supercenter, and Market Basket. These grocery stores provide affordable and healthy food options to the community. Supplementing these stores at the neighborhood level with additional smaller scale food entities that also sell local, affordable, and healthy food products would improve the Town's food access. The community garden and food pantry provides an additional resource.

Neighborhood level stores within walking distance of most Hudson residents would fill in any future food system holes. Access to local, healthy, and affordable food for everyone is key in developing a sustainable food system and addressing public health concerns related to food access. Currently, there are no farmers markets in Hudson. Establishing community supported agriculture (CSA) programs and weekly farmers markets during the growing season is another step Hudson can take towards improving the community's food system.

Lung Cancer and Smoking

As Hudson has higher lung cancer rates, lung cancer mortality rates, and smoking rates than regional and state averages, there is a need for educational programming of the effects smoking can have on one's health. Brochures, informational sessions, advertisements and other forms of media are ways to

educate the community, especially youth and high school students, of the consequences of smoking and rates of smoking, lung cancer and lung cancer mortality in the Town compared to other areas. Tobacco control programming in place could potentially help to reduce smoking rates and in turn, reduce lung cancer and lung cancer mortality rates.

Healthy Aging

Like many communities, Hudson can expect its population of senior citizens to increase dramatically over the next 10 to 20 years. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 10,000 “Baby Boomers” per day will turn 65 years of age. Thus, it is increasingly important to address the need to establish programs and a comprehensive approach to helping older adults live longer, high-quality, productive, and independent lives. Both the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and DPH have programs that focus on injury prevention, disability prevention, and adult immunizations. Through health promotion and disease prevention, the goals of such efforts are to improve the overall health and quality of life for older adults, and to slow the expected growth of health care and long-term costs for this and future generations. Important services include health promotion and education, preventive services, mental health counseling, caregiving, decision making at the end of life, emergency preparedness, and chronic disease management. See <http://www.cdc.gov/aging/about/index.htm>.

Public Input

At a Public Health and Social Services public forum in April of 2013, residents were polled on the current and future status of the public health and social services systems in Hudson. They indicated the desire for an assisted living facility, programs to help seniors retrofit their homes in order to support aging in place, and education to help seniors age in place were the most important goals to achieve in Hudson. Elder services were also the highest rated social service program that participants felt Hudson should prioritize in the next several years.

Public Health Recommendations

As mentioned earlier, many goals and objectives that come out of a master planning process are directly correlated with public health concerns. As the Town of Hudson has higher smoking, asthma, and adolescent and adult obesity rates than the MetroWest region averages, those goals and objectives that can improve these issues are even more important. The following are some goals and recommendations the Town should take in order to improve its public health

and social services issues. Some of these may overlap with goals from other elements of this master plan.

Goal 1: Improve water quality in order to maintain safe and clean drinking water resources, include the water quality of private drinking water wells. See Chapter 5 – Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources for more recommendations.

- SSPH-1. Investigate property, such as those on River Road and near the Cranberry Well, for Town acquisition to better protect drinking water supplies from contamination.
- SSPH-2. Identify future sites for water wells, including options in adjacent communities if financially beneficial to Hudson.

Goal 2: Increase access to local and healthy foods.

- SSPH-3. Consider development of a farmer to schools food program, an agreement through which local farms grow and provide food to the Hudson Public Schools for healthy student meals.
- SSPH-4. Actively identify and recruit a medium-sized grocer to locate in the Downtown area.
- SSPH-5. Develop a food hub near Downtown to serve as a farmers market and regional community supported agriculture location that utilizes agricultural opportunities from surrounding towns.
- SSPH-6. Identify and target areas for agricultural development and revise zoning bylaws to encourage this development in these areas.
- SSPH-7. Work with local convenience stores and fast-food restaurants to offer healthier food choices at lower costs to consumers.
- SSPH-8. Continue to work towards the MetroWest Moves initiatives: worksite wellness, and healthy dining initiatives.

A **food hub** is a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.

Goal 3: Improve pedestrian amenities to encourage walking, running, bicycling, and public transit. See Chapter 7 – Transportation for more recommendations.

- SSPH-9. Continue to support and promote the Safe Routes to School¹³⁰ or Walking School Bus¹³¹ program community-wide in order to increase the amount of students safely walking to school. These programs would also help to identify pedestrian amenities that may be lacking in crucial areas.
- SSPH-10. Maintain existing and develop additional sidewalk connections. Create a sidewalk management program and a Complete Streets Committee to improve the sidewalk network and prioritize connections to schools, recreation spaces, and primary transit locations.

¹³⁰ National Safe Routes to School Program. <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>.

¹³¹ National Walking School Bus Program. <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/>.

- SSPH-11. Encourage and support Complete Streets policies and strategies for current or future projects that involve Hudson's roadways by amending the Town's Site Plan Review and Subdivision Rules and Regulations. Target existing roadways for Complete Streets development.
- SSPH-12. Require alternative transportation infrastructure in new or existing developments to promote alternative transportation usage. For example, require bicycle corrals, racks, cages, and lockers for certain types of development.
- SSPH-13. Require all new developments to include bike lanes and/or interconnected sidewalks for pedestrians.
- SSPH-14. Incorporate healthy community design into Hudson's planning process in order to make healthy choices easier for the Town's residents. The concept of healthy community design links the traditional planning concepts including land use, transportation, community facilities, parks, and open space with health themes such as physical activity, public safety, healthy food access, mental health, air and water quality, and social equity issues.

Goal 4: Develop additional programming and tasks related to public health and social services.

- SSPH-15. Educate Hudson residents of the importance of public health and its issues related to food access, transportation, and tobacco use through school programs, informational brochures, community workshops, mailing flyers, and through electronic media.
- SSPH-16. Continue to actively support the MetroWest Moves initiatives such as the Hudson Youth Substance Abuse Prevention program and coalition and tobacco control program.
- SSPH-17. Update the Town's Tobacco Products Regulations to include recent products on the market.
- SSPH-18. Implement educational programs to help seniors retrofit their homes in order to support aging in place.

Goal 5: Increase technical and administrative staff and support for the Hudson Board of Health and Veterans Services Department.

- SSPH-19. Hire a public health nurse on staff. Hudson currently contracts through VNA to do communicable disease follow-up. A public health nurse on staff would be better for planning and programming to address health issues occurring in Town.
- SSPH-20. Hire a full-time public health inspector to enforce state and local sanitary codes, and inspect establishments, such as restaurants, public swimming areas, and public housing, to

ensure that they are clean, healthy and up to the local health codes.

SSPH-21. Evaluate the amount of public health funding compared to the Town's population to other communities in the area to ensure parity with other communities, and develop alternative funding mechanisms to expand the programs and services for the Hudson Board of Health to address chronic health conditions and wellness promotion.

SSPH-22. Develop a new Community and Social Services Coordinator (social worker) position for the Town to provide technical assistance on coordinating outreach, town resources, and social service programs for Hudson. Consider establishing a committee to monitor what additional social services may be needed.

SSPH-23. Increase administrative staff and support for the Hudson Board of Health and Veterans Services Department.



Downtown Assabet River Area, Hudson, MA