

# Use of HIA in Rural Transportation Planning and Suburban Redevelopment

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## Improvements to Highway 550 Can Enhance Health and Safety Cuba, New Mexico



### Background

- Rural Village of Cuba, NM
- 12,500 residents within 40 miles of Village center
- Major 5-lane federal highway serves as Village main street
- High traffic volume and speed
- Some sidewalks exist, no buffers between traffic/pedestrians, no safe crossings
- \$492,000 NM Department of Transportation (DOT) sidewalk/lighting project in planning phase (inclusion of traffic calming probable but not certain)
- **Community walkability advocacy group requests assistance in documenting health/safety concerns (HIA)**
- **Stakeholders:** Community members, Village Council, DOT, PRC Staff

### Screening

- **Purpose of HIA:** to document possible impacts of highway design decisions on health and safety of Cuba community
- **Potential use:** to inform community members and Village Council, for community members and Village Council to use in advocacy efforts with DOT
- Rapid HIA determined as most feasible and appropriate method
- Data and literature exist to provide meaningful analysis

### Scoping

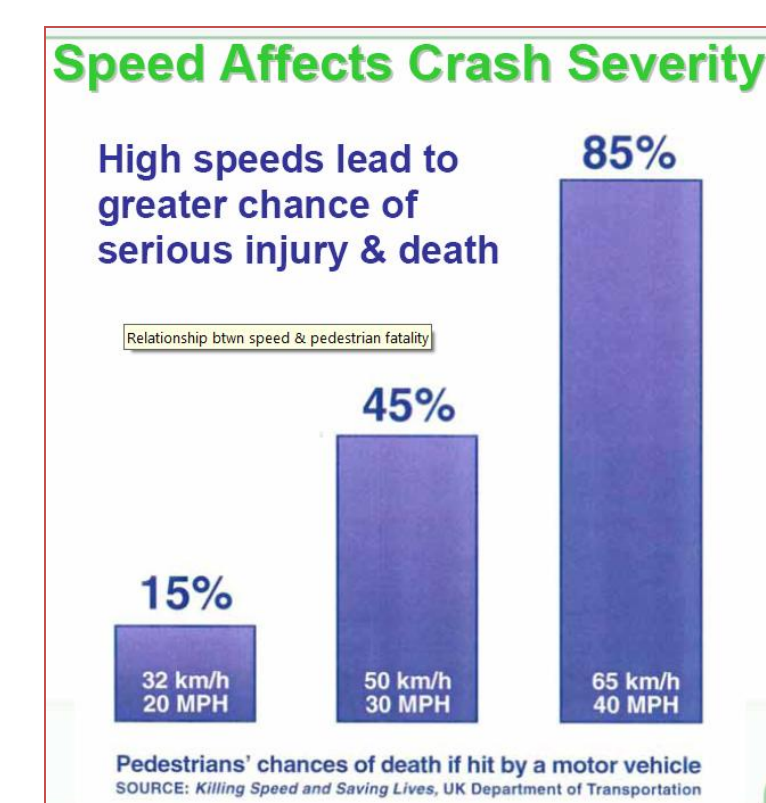
- **HIA documents impacts of traffic calming on Highway 550 with regard to:**
  - \*Community walkability and health
  - \*Pedestrian safety
  - \*Community connections/cohesion
  - \*Economic development
- Project staff summarize literature and existing data

### Acknowledgements

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- Theresa Cruz, UNM PRC Epidemiologist
- Step Into Cuba Alliance

References:  
(1) Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center <http://www.walkinginfo.org/engineering/roadway-sidewalks.cfm> (2) Ewing R. *Traffic Calming: State of the Practice*. Washington: Institute of Transportation Engineers;1999.  
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### Assessment



- Improvements to Highway 550 may encourage more people to walk
- \*Pedestrian-friendly places encourage people to walk
- \*More people walking around downtown Cuba can boost the economy and community pride
- Traffic calming slows vehicle traffic, shortens crossing distances for pedestrians, and enhances motorist and pedestrian visibility (1)

- Traffic calming may result in fewer crashes, and reduce the risk of serious injury (2)
- Successful strategies used in other rural communities include: speed feedback signs, median islands, gateway signs that identify entrance to community and slower speeds

### Quantitative data:

- From 2006-2008 there were 24 documented traffic crashes on 550 within Cuba (UNM Division of Government Research)
- In 2008, the estimated Average Daily Traffic (ADT) on US 550 in Cuba was 4,500 vehicles (NM DOT Consolidated Highway Database system, 2008).

*"To improve Highway 550 would improve the atmosphere of the community, the quality of life and the environment...the entire community would benefit."*

*People often share with me as a council member that Cuba is beautiful but the downtown environment lacks so many upgrades such as sidewalks and lighting."*  
~Cuba Village Council Member & Highway 550 business owner

### Reporting

- **Draft HIA summary provided to walkability advocacy group to solicit feedback**
- **Communication strategy:**
  - \*2-page summary for community members and Village Council
  - \*More extensive report available upon request

### Next Steps

- Present draft HIA to Village Council, request feedback
- Provide as insert in Cuba News (local newspaper)
- Mobilize community for action

## Health Impacts of South Hill Redevelopment Puyallup, Washington

### Background



- Puyallup 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in Pierce County
- Two Regional Growth Centers (RGC)- Puget Sound Region designation based on anticipated housing, employment growth & requires meeting standards
- South Hill area (one RGC) experiencing tremendous commercial growth and doesn't meet RGC requirements for jobs, housing, or urban form

- Area bisected by 6 lane state highway
- Primarily commercial/big box retail and low density single family residential
- Extreme auto-orientation, few non-motorized facilities
- **HIA originates from relationship between Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (TPCHD) staff and Puyallup planning staff**
- **Stakeholders:** TPCHD Staff, Planning Commission/Staff, Community members

### Phase 1: Attempt at Comprehensive HIA 2006-2008

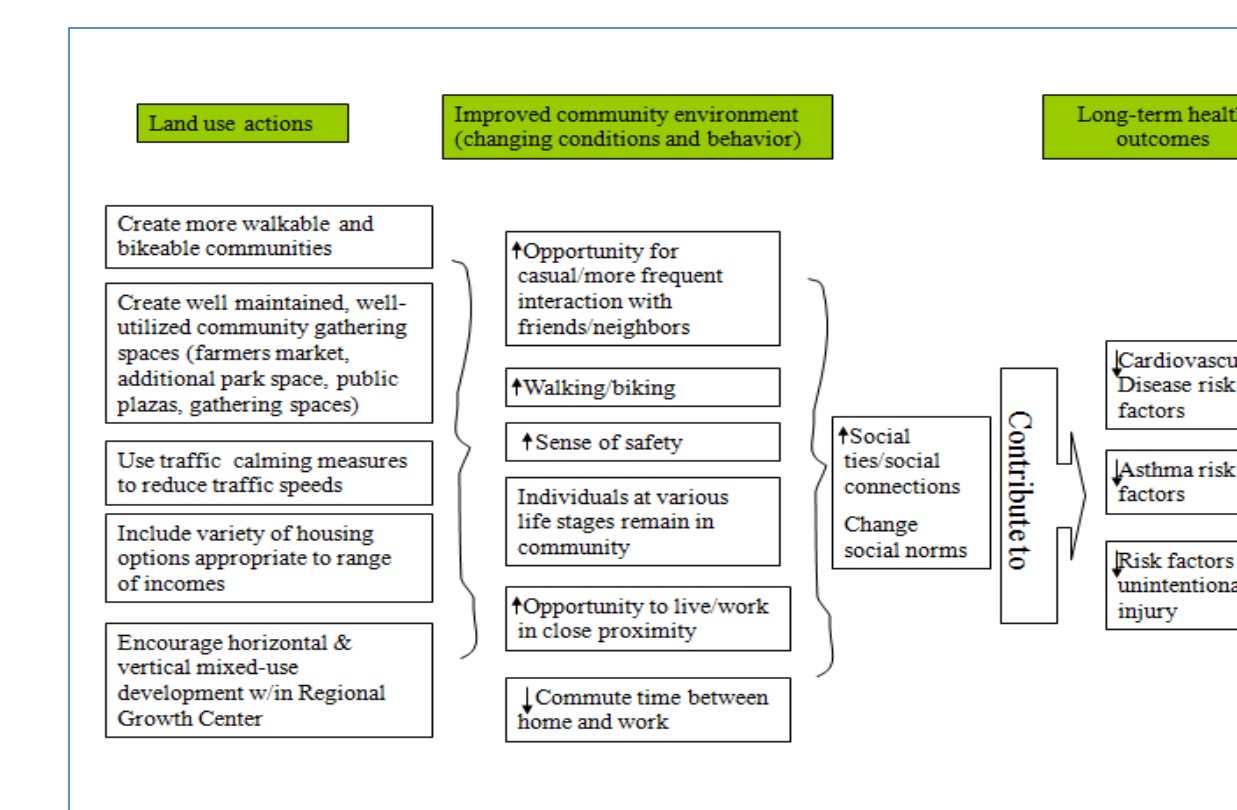
### Screening

- **Purpose of HIA:** to assess potential health impacts of proposed redevelopment plan for South Hill
- **Anticipated use:** to inform decision-makers and further shape proposed plan

### Scoping

- **This HIA documents impacts of development decisions on:**

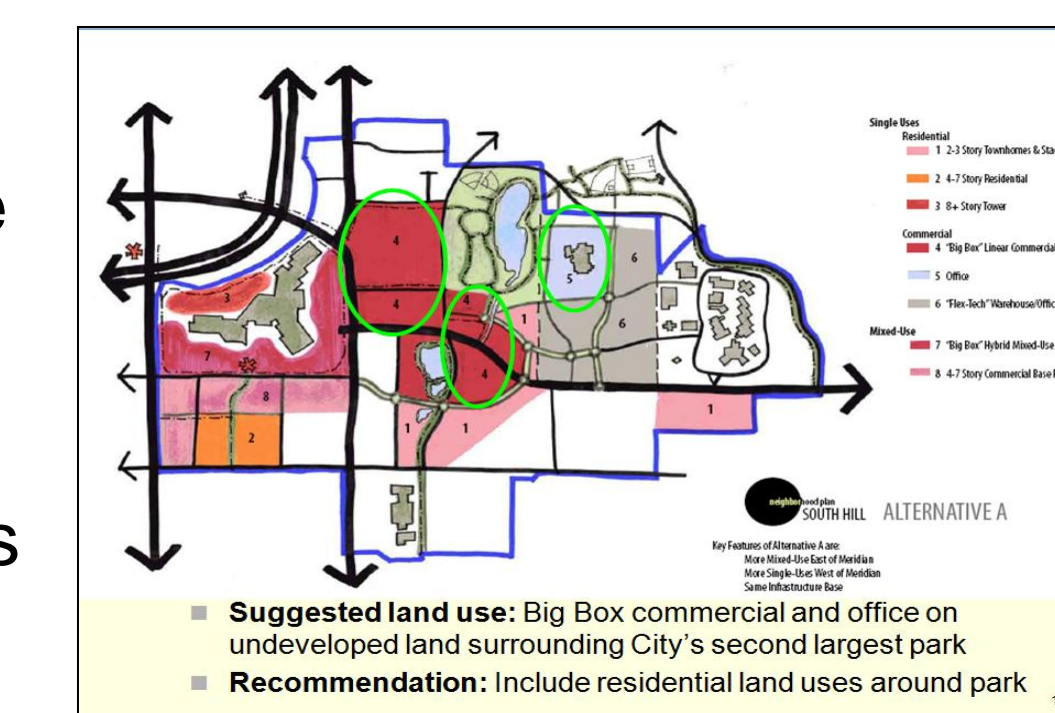
- \*Access to healthy foods
- \*Crime and safety
- \*Injury
- \*Physical activity
- \*Transportation
- \*Sense of Community



### Assessment

#### Recommendations:

- Encourage horizontal and vertical mixed-use development
- Create well-maintained gathering spaces
- Include housing options for range of incomes
- Develop "complete street" network
- Use traffic calming measures to reduce traffic speeds
- Designate "transit oriented development" along major transit routes, or at nodes along a transit route.



### Observations/Lessons Learned

- Public health implications not routinely considered in planning processes
- The HIA process is political
- There is no "one size fits all"
- Seek any and all opportunities to cultivate an audience for the health/land use connection

*Due to delay in Planning Commission attention to issues, public health staff turn-over and complexity of HIA, new approach taken*

### Phase 2: Rapid HIA July 29-30, 2009

- Four carefully planned half-day sessions
- Representation from diversity of sectors (County, City, planning, public works, law enforcement, community college, business, aging and long-term services)
- Engaged planners and consultants in planning for rapid HIA

#### Focus areas:

- \*Transportation
- \*Access to Services (includes assessment of gathering spaces, access to healthy food, cultural services for diverse populations)
- \*Physical Activity
- \*Crime and Safety

### Reporting/Monitoring/Next Steps

- Summaries of rapid HIA sessions provided to planners/consultants
- HIA used to inform South Hill Neighborhood Plan Policies
- Brief/non-academic report is being written
- Anticipating public health partners and planning commission will monitor use of HIA in policy development and implementation (lack of funding might make follow through less likely)
- Due to economic downturn, Health Department staff downsized significantly including built environment staff

### Observations/Lessons Learned

- Cannot control priorities of City Council or Planning Commission
- The timing needs to be right
- Be sensitive to who you are working with
- Critical to have the right partners present throughout duration
- Be persistent because the political climate changes
- As you cultivate the knowledge and understanding of the issues, some champions rise up

### Acknowledgements

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