

Addressing the Health Impacts of Climate Change and the Co-Benefits Through Partnerships

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Abstract: The Built Environment and Land Use program (BELU), housed in Environmental Health, Public Health Seattle-King County, addresses a wide array of issues related to the environment's effect on health including obesity-related chronic illness such as diabetes and heart disease as well as issues around climate change. These complex challenges require intense and interdisciplinary collaborations but surprisingly have overlapping solutions.

Climate change poses an eminent threat to life on Earth and is of particular concern to the environmental health practice. In 2007, King County Executive Ron Sims mandated the creation of a countywide climate change plan. This plan called out the formation of an interdepartmental team and delegated specific tasks for participants. This team has worked collaboratively to leverage opportunities and share resources to effectively accomplish the goals outlined in the plan.

Recently, a report released by Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington outlined likely impacts of climate change in the Puget Sound region in the coming decades. Other studies have found that transportation is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the Puget Sound and therefore it is essential to reduce vehicle miles traveled to curb climate change. This informs Public Health's adaptation and mitigation strategies and aligns with the BELU's goals of promoting dense, urban live and work areas that are vibrant.