

Community Development + Health

A Health Impact Assessment to Inform the Community Investment Tax Credit Program

Executive Summary

This Health Impact Assessment (HIA) examines the potential health impacts that could result from implementation of the Community Investment Tax Credit (CITC) program, which will provide Community Development Corporations (CDCs) with access to additional funding opportunities in the State of Massachusetts. The assessment was conducted to determine what activities are performed by CDCs, the characteristics of the populations that they serve, and consequently, how changes in CDC activities due to the CITC could impact the health of the people and areas that they serve.

The HIA findings are intended to inform elements of the CITC program - which is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development - including the annual notices for funding, the tax credit allocation process, and the measures that will be used to evaluate the program's impact.

Additionally, early in this HIA, it was identified that the activities performed by CDCs are closely linked to the determinants of health in the communities they serve, such as where people live, where they work, and where they gather. So, a secondary goal of the HIA was to understand how community development activities as a whole affect health. This understanding will provide useful and actionable information that can be used locally by the CDCs as they conduct and promote their work, and can be incorporated at regional, state, and national levels as part of the wider dialogue about the health impacts of community development.

Community Development Activities

This HIA found that CDCs perform a multitude of activities depending on their mission, capacity, and constituency. Using the definition of community development provided in the CITC legislation and stakeholder feedback, the types of activities advanced by the CDCs were organized into four categories.

These categories were used to illustrate the steps through which community development activities influence health outcomes and chronic conditions such as obesity, stress, mental health, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and injuries. The links between each category of activities and health are called pathways. Graphic representations of these pathways can be found on the following pages.



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
AND COMMUNITY PLANNING



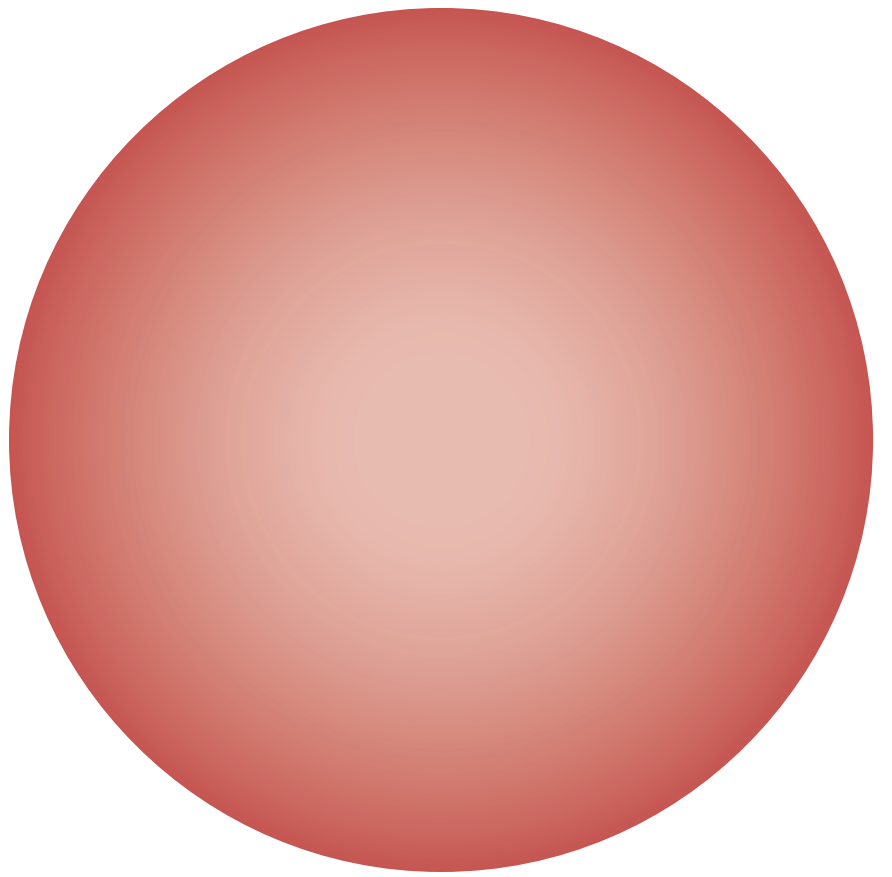
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

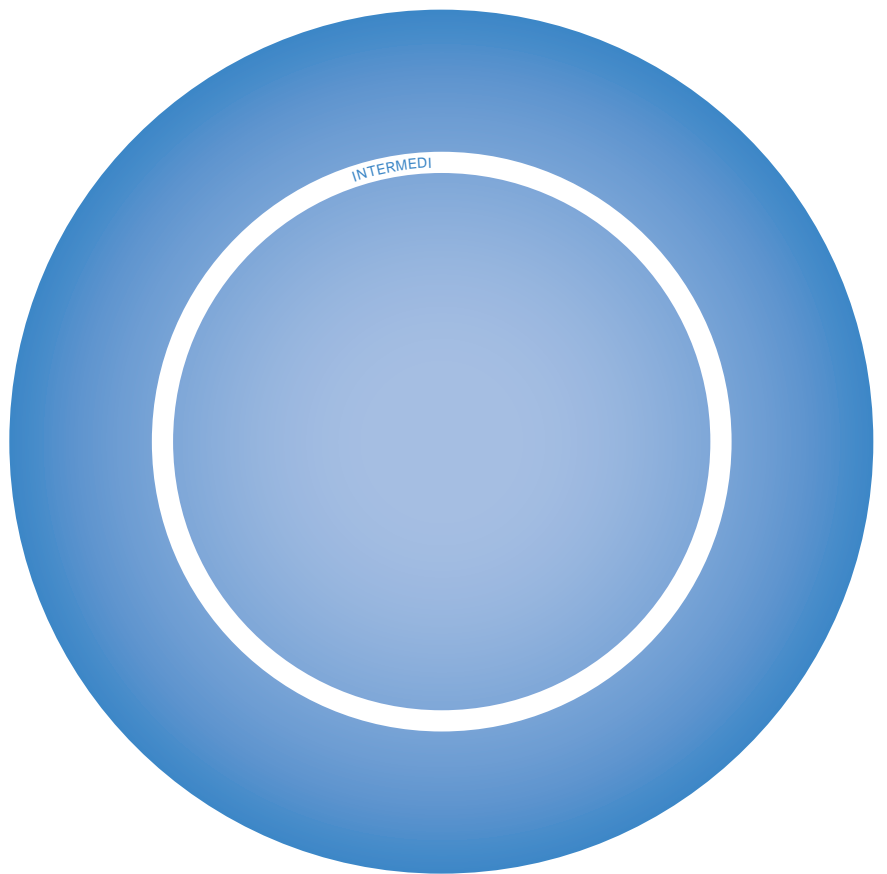


ASSET DEVELOPMENT



COMMUNITY ORGANIZING,
BUILDING, AND EMPOWERMENT





Assessment

Recommendations

This HIA provides recommendations to maximize the consideration of health determinants and the possible health outcomes that could result from the program. The following are key recommendations for the administration of the CITC program.

- Include Community Organizing and Leadership Development activities in the regulatory definition of community development in order to recognize CDCs' current and desired future work to deeply engage the residents and businesses that they serve.
- In future Notices of Funding Availability, modify the Community Investment Plan description to incorporate prompts for the inclusion of local health data and outreach to health care and public health organizations as stakeholders in the CDC service area.
- Consider the use of an existing surveillance tool for monitoring and evaluation of the CITC program. Include the tracking of health related activities in the monitoring program, such as programming to increase healthy behaviors, support service programs that address mental health, and programming to support elder residents.

This HIA also provides recommendations for CDCs and others performing or supporting community development work through the CITC program. These recommendations provide guidance and action steps for incorporating health into community development work, engaging



A resource to assist in considering impacts and approaches for physical development projects is the Healthy Neighborhoods Equity Fund (HNEF) Health Impact Assessment (HIA), which examined the potential health impacts that could result from Transit Oriented Development projects. Although the HNEF HIA aims to inform the health related metrics of the proposed fund, the

assessment methods and findings can be used to understand the social and economic impacts that could result from development projects. The HIA also highlights best practices that can be used to enhance positive or mitigate negative health impacts of a proposed project. More information about the HNEF HIA can be accessed here: WWW.MAPC.ORG/HNEF

Conclusion

The purpose of the CITC is “to enable local residents and stakeholders to work with and through community development corporations to partner with nonpro t, public, and private entities to improve economic opportunities for low and moderate income households and other residents in urban, rural, and suburban communities across the Commonwealth.” Based on this HIA, it is apparent that work has occurred over the past decade by CDCs to improve economic and housing choices for these households. However, it is just as apparent that the activities which are supportive of these choices and provide long term stability, like tenant services and community empowerment, have not received the level or consistency of support as has physical development work.

This HIA finds that the CITC has the potential to change this scenario. While physical and economic development will likely continue at the current pace, activities that empower low- and moderate-income populations may grow. By bringing these activities into balance, the CITC could reduce inequity, promote health equity, and improve health outcomes among those who face the most difficult personal and family circumstances in the Commonwealth.