

Program Spotlight: Leadership for Healthy Community Design

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Over the past decade, I have been exploring the intersection of planning, community health and environmental quality. I've attended workshops and conferences, participated in local healthy design projects, and attempted to include innovative practices into my work. Last August, I embarked on the 15-month Leadership for Healthy Community Design (LHCD) program with the intent to strengthen my skills and capacity to lead, plan and execute healthy community design projects. I was drawn to the program for several reasons. It provides an opportunity for me to build and strengthen collaborative relationships with colleagues and community partners. The program also offers training and development in both advanced leadership concepts and healthy community design principles. Finally, the program provides a unique forum to network, learn, and engage with professionals from around the state who represent a wide array of disciplines, all having a connection to healthy community design.

Everyone in the program participates as a member of a community team. I am a member of a team representing Boulder County. My 32 other classmates make up five other teams representing Mesa County, Eagle County, Adams County, the cities of Fort Collins and Loveland, and the neighborhoods of Northeast Denver. They are a diverse group that contributes not only different regional perspectives, but also professional and cultural insights and wisdom. As a group we challenge each other to engage, while thinking critically and strategically.



In May, I will attend the fourth of five program training retreats. Although the program does not end until September, my experience has already been extremely rewarding and worthwhile. As a result of our participation in the program, my Boulder County team has begun working on a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to determine the health benefits and impacts of a community-wide Eco Pass in Boulder County. In addition to gaining experience working on this HIA, being part of the LHCD program has helped me develop leadership skills that I feel will make me a more effective community planner and leader.

Through the program we are using what we learn to push ourselves to improve our communities. As one of my classmates put it, "The most important thing that I learned from this session is that leadership is ongoing, it doesn't end. I push myself to apply the concepts learned every day!"

The faculty are knowledgeable and very engaging; they represent a tremendous asset to the program. I've come away from each session with intentional actions and practical skills that I've begun using almost immediately. I've also learned a tremendous amount about some of the great work going on in Colorado around community planning, health and environmental quality. The networking portion of the program has provided a wonderful opportunity to build and strengthen relationships with community leaders from around the state.



I am honored to be a participant in the inaugural class of the Leadership for Healthy Community Design Program offered by the Regional Institute for Health and Environmental Leadership. Community planning projects, programs and initiatives that foster health, environmental quality and community vibrancy will continue to be critically important in our communities. Our success hinges on our ability to collaborate with multiple disciplines, engage with communities, and implement effective community design strategies. The Leadership for Healthy Community Design program provides a powerful and effective means to build our professional competencies in these areas. I highly recommend the program to planning professionals and community leaders across the state.

The Leadership for Healthy Community Design Program is offered by the Regional Institute for Health and Environmental Leadership (RIHEL). Plans to run a second cohort of the program are already underway. For more information about the LHCD program, visit www.rihel.org, or contact the Program Director, Leanne Jeffers, at leanne.jeffers@du.edu.