



## WORKING SMARTER NOT HARDER

**Focusing planning efforts around people means working differently, not working more.** True, planners are being asked to respond to an ever growing, sometimes overwhelming, list of community issues. Planning for People – health, equity, community engagement – isn't about adding new work but rather exploring ways to improve processes, find efficiencies, and ultimately, to make a larger impact. It's the same work from a new perspective and a more nimble, comprehensive approach. This may involve replacing outdated, inefficient, and ineffective ways of doing work with more effective approaches, a renewed sense of purpose and stronger focus on community-centered outcomes.

### FACT

- Each county in Minnesota has a health professional who can assist with planning for people and planning for health through the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership coordinators – <http://www.health.state.mn.us/ship/>

### RESOURCES

- Advancing Health Equity in Minnesota, 2014 - [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/che](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/che)
- Minnesota Food Charter Network, 2014 – [www.mnfoodcharter.com](http://www.mnfoodcharter.com)
- APA Planning for Public Health - [www.planning.org/research/publichealth](http://www.planning.org/research/publichealth)

For more information on Planning for People and the full report, go to:  
<http://www.planningmn.org/planningforpeople>



With assistance from Lindsey Alexander Consulting

# APA MN

## PLANNING FOR PEOPLE

### PLANNING FOR PEOPLE: An Initiative of APA-Minnesota

Most people think of health as the outcome of a visit to the doctor. Our health, however, is shaped mostly outside the doctor's office. The physical, economic, social, and natural environments in which people live and interact have a significant impact on their ability to live healthy, safe lives.

A vibrant and prosperous community is a healthy community. The most successful communities are planned in partnership with community members and with the strategic and thoughtful guidance of elected officials and planning professionals. A community is only truly vibrant and prosperous when all its residents share in the experience of health, safety, and well-being. As we know all too well, environments vary greatly from place to place, neighborhood to neighborhood, creating areas with fewer choices and opportunities for people.

By making people the primary lens through which we make planning decisions, we can more effectively and efficiently work towards supporting and maintaining strong communities for all people. Locally, planners are leading the way to healthier Minnesota communities. This document clarifies the connection between health and planning and provides proven messaging frames you can use in your own community to make the case for planning for people.



## THRIVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MAKE STRONGER COMMUNITIES

**People are our chief asset.** We intuitively understand that investing in people, particularly in children, is an investment in the future. Yet we don't always connect this to how we build our communities. As planners, we know that investing in assets like streets can extend street life and result in long-term cost savings. Investing in and for people works much the same way. If we work towards communities where people feel safe, healthy, and welcomed, they are more likely to stay in the community, invest in the community—and perceive a strong value in the work of local government. This can lead to improved civic participation, investments in business and private property and increased civility; as well as to health-supporting gains in educational attainment, homeownership rates, property maintenance, mental health, access to parks and less crime. Investing in projects that improve quality of life and build community pride produces dividends for families and for communities.

### FACT

- Greater tree cover resulted in lower crime. Essentially, greater tree planting in a neighborhood suggests that the community is cared for and that the residents value it enough to call the police if they see an act of vandalism or other neighborhood crime. Source: Troy A.J. (2012) *The Relationship between Tree Canopy and Crime Rates Across an Urban-rural gradient in the greater Baltimore region.* Landscape & Urban Planning. Vol. 104 Iss 3 pp.262-270



## PLACE MATTERS

**Economic and health outcomes are closely correlated with the places where people live.** Unfortunately, poor health and economic outcomes tend to be concentrated in areas with reduced access and choice. These are neighborhoods with fewer job opportunities, limited transportation options, few or no healthy food options, underfunded schools, higher crime rates, and unsafe housing conditions. Without a level playing field, it can be very difficult for the people that live in these neighborhoods to access the basic income and resources needed to live a healthy life. To achieve its full potential, a community must ensure that all people have the opportunity to live in a safe and healthy place.



### FACT

- A Minnesotan who earns minimum wage would need to work 91 hours/week to afford a 2- bedroom apartment at fair market rent.



## PENNIES NOW, DOLLARS LATER

**The places that are addressing community health and prioritizing people today will be the most successful communities in the future.** The consumer market has dramatically shifted in the last few decades and the forces that drove the markets of the past no longer hold true today. People are choosing where they live, work, and play based on community design, bikeability and walkability, vibrancy, liveliness, and feelings of being connected to their neighbors. Communities addressing today's market demands are attracting employers, high-quality workforce, new development and investment from the private market, and are growing their tax base. Communities that do not address these issues will struggle to remain economically competitive in the future. The time to invest in people-centric amenities is now.

### FACT

- In 2017, the hottest real estate markets were those close to urban amenities with easy access to shopping and transportation and a supply of reasonably-priced housing. Source: Johnson D. (June 2017) *The 25 cities Where Millennials are Moving*. Time - <http://time.com/4797956/cities-millennials-moving/>

## PLANNING HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT HEALTH

**Planners already embrace some concepts related to healthy communities.** Modern planning has its historic roots in public health, growing out of the need to address the issues communities faced at the dawn of the 20th Century – overcrowding, poor infrastructure, improper waste disposal, access to air and light, and communicable diseases like tuberculosis and influenza. Planners played a critical role in addressing these issues. Today, our world faces different threats – traffic congestion, housing affordability, preventable diseases like heart disease and diabetes, large and growing inequities, and more volatile weather due to a changing climate. Planners must rise to the occasion by working to make healthier and safer communities for the people of the 21st Century.

### FACT

- The state of Minnesota authorizes communities to use zoning for the purpose of promoting public health, safety, morals, and general welfare.



## WE NEED TO TALK...

**Planners need to get comfortable talking about health disparities.** Conversations about disparities, especially those related to race, can be uncomfortable, difficult, and polarizing. As a profession dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of the public, we need to focus our work on addressing the unacceptable inequalities our fellow Minnesotans face whether by age, race, income, geography, or physical ability. As leaders and facilitators, we can play a critical role advancing conversations in our communities.

### FACT

- Between now and 2040, 74% of Minnesota's population growth will come from people of color.

