

HEALTHY Comp Plans

PARKS



November 2016

This document represents best practices, not Dakota County policies.

VISION

We support safe, healthy, sustainable places for people to play and interact with nature.

We support the natural environment and maintaining and protecting it.

We support healthy food access for all.

PARKS AND HEALTH

Parks can enhance health and help prevent chronic disease. They can promote active living, access to healthy foods and tobacco-free environments. Enjoying green space and nature improves mental health and reduces stress. Greenways and bicycle/walking paths encourage **active living** as a part of daily life and provide safe, easy ways to enjoy park resources. Studies show that people who live closer to parks are more active and adolescents living near parks are less prone to being overweight. Parks can increase **access to healthy food** when they include community vegetable gardens and fruit trees. They can support pollinators - critical contributors to food production - with native plants and other pollinator-friendly plants. Clean air is also an important component of health. **Tobacco-free environments** reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and litter that can be harmful to children and animals. City policies that address access to parks, park programs, park maintenance practices, and park policies are all guided in a city's comprehensive plan.

PARKS AND EQUITY

Parks are an integral part of the community, and provide opportunities for social cohesion and shared identity. When well maintained, parks perform an important role in fostering equitable communities by providing a safe space for everyone to play and be active. Parks are plentiful and free resources in Dakota County. On average, neighborhoods in Dakota County have 2.4 parks located within a half-mile.

Nationally, older adults, women, and African-American and Latino adults are at higher risk for not getting enough physical activity. Additionally, people living in poverty have higher rates of chronic disease higher smoking rates, and have insufficient access to healthy food. They may have fewer opportunities for safe physical activity and are less likely to use a health club or gym because of the cost. Improving access to parks promotes health by providing free, natural places to be active and relax in nature, increases access to healthy food such as fresh fruits and vegetables, and provides smoke-free environments that can improve health for all.

Community engagement can help identify park amenities that are important to the local community and changes that could create safer, more accessible, and more attractive park environments. Community engagement affords people an opportunity to identify their needs, contribute to solutions and influence their environment. Authentically engaging community members, especially those most impacted by chronic disease or inequities, in the decision-making process can contribute to improved conditions, health and well-being.

SUPPORTING DATA

Active Living – Adults and youth are not meeting minimal physical activity recommendations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 150 minutes of physical activity per week for adults and 60 minutes per day for children and adolescents.

- In 2010, only 78% of Dakota County adults engaged in regular physical activity (150 minutes or more of moderate or vigorous physical activity per week).
- In 2013, only about one fifth of Dakota County students met the recommendations for physical activity: 5th grade (21%), 8th and 9th grade (20%), and 11th grade (17 %).

Healthy Food Access – Adults and youth are not eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables. Food insecurity is increasing.

- In 2010, 41% of Dakota County adults reported eating the recommended five or more fruits and vegetables the previous day.
- Fewer than one-fourth (17-21%) of Dakota County students reported consuming fruits or vegetables (including fruit juice) five or more time per day in the previous week.
- An estimated 8% of county residents (33,400) and 13% of children (13,300) were food insecure (meaning they lacked reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food) in 2012.
- The percent of county households accessing food stamps (7%) has steadily increased from 2008-2013 (up from 2.5% in 2008).
- In 2012, the county served 11,098 in the Women Infant and Children (WIC) program. This represents 10% of the population of women of childbearing age and children 0-5 years in Dakota County.
- During the 2014-2015 school year, 28% of students in charter and public schools in the county received free or reduced price lunches, up 16% from the 2005-2006 school year.

Tobacco-Free Parks – Smoke-free environments protect everyone.

- In 2010, 12.5% of Dakota County adults were current smokers. The highest rates were among these groups: females, 65-74 years old, people with less than a college education, and those with incomes at 200% of poverty or less.
- Children model adult behaviors and those who see adults using tobacco may assume it is acceptable.
- Tobacco-free policies encourage young people to make healthy choices. When a community provides more tobacco-free environments, there are fewer opportunities for youth to start smoking.
- Secondhand smoke is dangerous. Secondhand smoke near children, youth and adults participating in or watching recreational activities is unhealthy and harmful to the health of others. Secondhand smoke levels in outdoor public places can reach levels as high as those found in indoor facilities where smoking is permitted.
- Cigarette litter is harmful. Discarded cigarettes pollute the land and water and toddlers, pets, birds or fish may ingest them causing serious health concerns.

POLICIES TO CONSIDER

Active Living

Goal: We will create a park, trail and open space system that provides for recreation and leisure needs of all residents and supports non-motorized transportation.

- Ensure convenient access to parks, recreational facilities and programs.
- Locate parks within a half-mile of all residents.
- Support programming that promotes active living within the park system.
- Provide high quality, diverse recreation program offerings for all ages.
- Ensure public safety in parks.
- Connect neighborhoods to parks with trails, bikeways and sidewalks.
- Require that the siting, design and funding of parks and open spaces be an integral feature of the development process.

Healthy Food Access

Goal: We support the establishment and maintenance of community gardens throughout the community to provide residents with easy access to healthy food.

- Review and update regulations governing community gardens and fruit-bearing shrubs and trees in city and county parks to foster an expansion of healthy food production in the community.
- Encourage edible and pollinator-friendly landscapes on park property.
- Provide park land for community gardens and farmers' markets.
- Provide healthy choices in concessions and vending machines.

Healthy Environment

Goal: We will demonstrate and encourage healthy choices in our parks.

- Adopt a comprehensive tobacco-free parks ordinance that outlines the rationale, locations and products covered and an enforcement

mechanism to protect visitors from secondhand smoke and accidental ingestion of litter by children and animals.

- Demonstrate and encourage healthy choices by offering nutritious foods in park vending and at events, emphasizing local food where possible.
- Locate community gardens within a city's park system.
- Improve and expand community education programs about nutrition and food preparation.
- Incorporate healthy food options into festivals and events.

Equity

Goal: We will ensure equitable and affordable access to parks and recreation opportunities.

- Increase program locations to provide access to recreation programs within a half mile of low mobility residents (young, old, and those without vehicles).
- Evaluate parks for universal accessibility and make needed improvements.
- Illustrate the community's history from diverse perspectives in parks.
- Remove cultural barriers to participation by involving residents in the design and planning process, actively recruiting minority residents and recent immigrants as volunteers and interns, establishing a park liaisons program, reducing language barriers, and more actively marketing activities and events.
- Ensure equitable financial access to programs through: low/no cost options, sliding scale fees, tiered pricing, scholarships, and subsidized rentals.

RESOURCES

Dakota County:

- Lil Leatham, Planner: Lil.Leatham@co.dakota.mn.us
- Mary Montagne, Public Health: Mary.Montagne@co.dakota.mn.us
- Jess Luce, Communities for a Lifetime: Jess.Luce@co.dakota.mn.us
- www.co.dakota.mn.us/Government/publiccommittees/CFL/Pages/default.aspx

Blue Cross Blue Shield Center for Prevention:

- Nadja Berneche, Healthy Comp Plan Consultant: nadja@terrasoma.com
- Eric Weiss, AICP: Eric.Weiss@bluecrossmn.com

Smoke Free:

- Live Smoke Free – Association for Non-Smokers MN (ANSR): <http://www.mnsmokefreehousing.org/>

General:

- Homegrown South: <http://homegrownsouth.org/>
- Food Access Planning Guide (pp. 20-21): <http://mnfoodcharter.com/planningguide/>
- Design for Health: <http://designforhealth.net>
- APA Policy Guide on Planning: https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy_resources/research/publichealth/pdf/healthyplanningreport.pdf
- Minnesota Department of Health: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/topics/places/plans.html>
- ChangeLab Solutions: <http://www.changelabsolutions.org/healthy-planning>
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/>

Parks:

- Making the Case: Parks and Health: <http://www.nrpa.org/ParksandHealth/>
- http://activelivingresearch.org/sites/default/files/ALR_Brief_SafePlaygrounds_0.pdf
- Smart Collaboration: How Urban Parks Can Support Affordable Housing: <http://www.tpl.org/smart-collaboration-how-urban-parks-can-support-affordable-housing>
- From Fitness Zones® to the Medical Mile: <https://www.tpl.org/fitness-zones-to-medical-mile>
- Park Use Among Communities of Color 2014: <https://metro council.org/Parks/Publications-And-Resources/PARK-USE-REPORTS/Park-Use-Among-Communities-of-Color-2014.aspx>

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