



“Get fit” and make healthy choices

What’s working

Minneapolis’ physical infrastructure complements healthy living.

- The Midtown Greenway has gone from nothing to a well-used amenity. People use it every day. There’s a perception of safety because it’s well maintained, and you see other people walking and biking.
- People can run and walk around our lakes.
- There is a lot of health infrastructure in place — both indoors and outdoors. Examples include: trails, organized recreation, farmers markets, canoe rentals, co-ops, etc.
- We have a great park system.
- If you can find child care that’s close to home,

you can be a one-car family because you can walk or bike to work and child care.

New and continuing initiatives are promoting healthy choices.

- More work is being done to get kids to walk and bike to school.
- The smoking ban reduces exposure to secondhand smoke.
- The City offers health programs to its employees.
- We’re working to encourage more farm stands.
- The Steps Program is responding to peoples’ interests. People are asking for free exercise opportunities.

What isn’t working

There are disparities in our health infrastructure.

- Compared to other parts of the city, north Minneapolis doesn’t have as many places to exercise or buy healthy food.
- Biking is not in Northsiders’ heads. There are gaps in peoples’ attitudes and cultural norms.
- The disparity in safety or perceived safety is pretty profound among some neighborhoods. For example, the Corcoran neighborhood is not as safe to run in at night as other neighborhoods.
- Funding gaps prevent low-income people from being more active. Poor families can’t afford to sign up for recreation programs.
- There are very few recreational activities for kids after the preteen years.

- Our “work harder” culture, combined with a bad economy and lack of time, increases stress and makes it difficult to make behavioral changes. Employees don’t have enough time or freedom to take advantage of exercise activities offered through work.
- You can exercise if your life is together, but if you’re stressed and working two jobs, you can’t do it.
- Our emphasis on individualism doesn’t promote peer support for making behavioral changes.

Our culture doesn’t help us lead healthy lives.

- We’ve engineered activity out of our lives.
- There’s a shift in our culture away from active play and the expectation that kids should play outdoors.
- Schools have cut or reduced recess time and physical education. There’s too much emphasis on tests.
- There is structured activity for kids but not enough unstructured outdoor play.
- Today, we worry about the safety of letting kids just go outside and play. Although it’s about as safe as it was years ago, the news media has increased our perception of risk. These days, you could be scorned for letting your kid ride to the park.
- Our “don’t tell me what to eat” attitude can be a barrier to healthy eating.
- We place too much emphasis on television and computers.

Winter weather and infrastructure problems impede physical activity.

- Sidewalks are important to health outcomes, but there are areas with no sidewalks or space to walk. We need a complete redo in some areas, but it’s expensive to fix past redevelopment errors.
- Snow removal is a big deal when pushing a stroller or biking to work, daycare or the store.

There’s a “disconnect” between our goals and what we actually do.

- There’s a disconnect between worksite wellness and the health services we buy for our employees.
- We offer drivers’ education but not bikers’ education.
- Fitness deliverers, nonprofits and public health agencies are each service delivers unto themselves. There’s not much crossover connecting these entities.
- It’s a challenge to work with the Park and Recreation Board. They have buildings but too few programs. And, the quality of park programs isn’t real good.
- We’re missing deliberate connections between health and urban agriculture — especially in low-income areas.
- Seniors love to exercise, yet we forget them.

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What should be done next

Make it easier to walk, bike and be physically active.

- Make bike sharing available so you can bike, rather than drive, to meetings and appointments.
- Make activity fun and different: we don't need one more “chore.”
- Capitalize on redevelopment to fix or build sidewalks and infrastructure that encourage walking and biking.
- Help people find neighbors they can walk with. Online information could help people find a walking buddy. Encouraging more neighborhood walking would provide health, social and safety benefits.
- Teach kids how to bike safely on the street.
- Create a healthy environment in daycare, pre-kindergarten programs and K-12 schools by offering nutritious food, incorporating physical activity and involving families.
- Have more neighborhood schools. Kids would be more likely to bike or walk to school if the school is in their neighborhood.

- The Park and Recreation Board needs to be part of the solution and offer more programs.

Make it easier to eat healthy.

- Work with restaurants to offer smaller plates and menu labeling.
- Align City resources with the University of Minnesota to support the growing of produce in the city.
- Amp up education around nutrition.

Work on changing attitudes.

- Take advantage of the economic downturn to promote walking and biking.
- Instead of promoting an “eat at your desk” work culture, give employees the time and freedom to take advantage of physical activities.
- Use a work site coordinator to help people engineer activity into their lives.
- Encourage coworkers to serve as peers for one another and support healthy activities.

“Biking to work is now seen as a mainstream transportation option. Biking isn't just for exercise anymore.”

- Health and Family Support employee
