



# Active Living in Communities at a Glance

## About this strategy

The objective of the active living strategy is to increase physical activity – primarily walking and bicycling – in the community and school settings. A comprehensive approach through policy, systems and environmental changes is known to increase access to physical activity opportunities and support behavior changes. Active living integrates physical activity into daily routines such as walking or bicycling for recreational, occupational or purposeful (transportation) reasons. Active living provides safe, desirable and convenient opportunities for physical activity. When choosing this strategy grantees should address active living through the six E approach: equity, evaluation, engineering, enforcement, education and encouragement.

## What does the evidence say?

Active living policies and practices in community design, land use, site planning and walking/biking facility access are proven to increase levels of physical activity. Physical activity plays a large role in prevention strategies to improve both physical and mental health for all ages.

## Activities

Three activities are defined under this strategy: master or comprehensive plans; land use zoning and regulations; and increased access to facilities and opportunities.

Typical work done as part of this strategy's defined activities include:

- Assemble a team to conduct a community assessment related to walking and bicycling.
- Review existing data related to population demographics and inequities. Collect additional data through community engagement.
- Determine the existence and location of community stakeholders, organizations and resources related to active living.
- Assess the opportunities and gaps of the community's walkability and bikeability.
- Summarize and analyze the assessment data to select priority populations and partners to work with on active living within the community.
- Create an action plan to address inequities and engage a broad range of partners to collaborate on improving walking and biking within the community.

## Priority populations

Populations less likely to meet physical activity recommendations are at greater risk for other health conditions and experience greater health disparities. Nearly half of Minnesota adults do not meet physical activity recommendations. The prevalence of inactivity is greatest in rural areas, among people of color, older adults, persons with disabilities, women, those with lower education attainment and those in lower income groups. Therefore, it is important to recommend and prioritize improved active living in areas with a high concentration of populations, in both urban and rural areas.

## Requirements

- Active living focuses on walking and bicycling only.
- When choosing this strategy, grantees should address active living through the six E approach: equity, evaluation, engineering, enforcement, education and encouragement.
- Grantees must contract for planning services or partner with planning staff if working on comprehensive/master plans or land use zoning regulations strategies.
- Engineering improvements should be the start of this strategy through creating plans or adopting Complete Streets policies prior to focusing on other E's.
- It is appropriate to implement this strategy across neighborhood, municipal, county or multi-county levels.
- Participate in Minnesota Walks implementation, which may include collecting pedestrian and bicycle count data.

## Important dates

- Planning for Pop. Heath Coffee Calls – 1st Wednesday of every month from 9:30-10:30 a.m.
- MN Safe Routes to School Network – 3rd Thursday of every month from 10-11 a.m.
- Bike MN Educators Network – 3rd Wednesday of the odd numbered months 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
- Bike MN Advocates calls – 3rd Wednesday of the even numbered months 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

## Resources

- Small Towns and Rural Design Guide: <http://ruraldesignguide.com/>
- Walk Friendly Communities: <http://www.walkfriendly.org/index.cfm>
- America Walks: [www.americawalks.org](http://www.americawalks.org)
- MN Walks: Framework for Action: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/plan/>
- Active Living Research: [www.activelivingresearch.org](http://www.activelivingresearch.org)
- MN Food Access Planning Guide: <http://mnfoodcharter.com/planningguide/>
- Communities for a Lifetime: [www.mnlifetimecommunities.org](http://www.mnlifetimecommunities.org)

- Minnesota Department of Health – Comprehensive plans  
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/topics/places/plans.html>
- Minnesota Department of Transportation  
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds>  
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike>  
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/traffic-counts/index.html>
- Bicycle Friendly Communities  
<http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/communities/index.php>  
<http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/communityscorecard>
- Minnesota Bicycling Handbook  
<http://www.bikemn.org/education/minnesota-bicycling-handbook>
- MN Safe Routes to School  
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes/>  
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/pdf/toolkit/saferoutes-checklist-guide.pdf>  
[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MnDOT\\_SRTS20120906](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MnDOT_SRTS20120906)

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