

Active Living Plan

Winona County, MN



Introduction

Communities make decisions every day that affect public health. Incorporating health early in decision making sets a community up for achieving strong results. The first step toward building healthy places is creating a physical environment that encourages walking and other physical activity by everyone.

What is Active Living?

Active Living is really a partnership between health and planning and incorporates physical activity into daily routines such as walking and bicycling for recreational, occupational, or purposeful transportation reasons which replaces inactive trips in vehicles. Certain populations are disproportionately impacted by access/mobility and the Active Living Plan is an opportunity to increase access to jobs, social activities, goods and services for immigrants, children, and older adults, if programming, resources, messaging and policy, system, and environmental change is targeted towards the populations that would benefit the most. On an individual level, the goal is to accumulate at least 30 minutes of activity each day for adults and at least 60 minutes each day for children and adolescents. A variety of activities can be engaged in to accomplish this goal; bicycling for transportation, exercising for pleasure, playing in the park, working in the yard, taking the stairs, engaging in walkable/running sports, and utilizing existing recreational facilities.

Active Living is important because it:

- Improves physical and mental health
- Decreases risk of chronic disease and associated medical costs
- Improves quality of life
- Reduces transportation costs
- Improves air quality
- Builds safer, stronger communities
- Reduces costs borne by the general public

Winona County Active Living Vision Statement

The Winona County Active Living Vision promotes healthy lifestyles through fostering a culture of an active living community in the Winona County area by:

- Being a regional leader in providing healthy lifestyle opportunities.
- Creating a wide range of active living benefits through infrastructure, policy, and environmental changes:
 - Safety of users
 - Improved health
 - Quality of life
 - Broad opportunity
 - Youth impact, early age engagement
- Encourage and empower Winona County communities to implement active living strategies to create a county- wide initiative of active living.

- Transform current lifestyle systems to cultivate and support a way of life that makes the active/healthy choice, the easy choice.

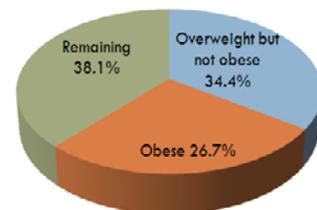
Active Living Plan Advisory Committee

In February of 2014 the Active Living Plan Advisory Committee was established. This group of leaders, practitioners, and advocates from the County, cities, schools, businesses, health care, non-profits, community groups, and local residents began the work of creating ways to enhance the built environment, influence policy, and transform systems to cultivate and support a way of life that makes physical activity in our communities safer and easier.

The Health Crisis: Inactivity and Poor Nutrition

In 2010, more than one-third of adults in the United States and almost 17 percent of youths were considered obese. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines obese as having a weight that is generally considered unhealthy for a given height. Medical costs associated with obesity were estimated at \$147 billion per year; on average, annual medical costs for people who are obese were \$1,429 higher than for individuals of normal weight. In the state of Minnesota we know that less than half of adults get the recommended amount of physical activity. Most Minnesotans live where it is not easy to get the recommended amount of physical activity. Even the most trivial errands require the use of a car.

In Winona County, based on results from a 2013 Community Health Needs Assessment done in partnership with Winona County Community Services and Winona Health, 61% of the adult population is classified by Body Mass Index to be overweight or obese. At the same time 62% of the population responded that they get less than 4 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Winona County residents also ranked obesity among adults, obesity among children, unhealthy eating habits for adults and children, and lack of exercise by adults and children, as the top 6 moderate to serious problems in Winona County. Approximately 42% of respondents reported that they achieved recommended levels of moderate physical activity (30 or more minutes per day on 5 or more days per week) and 34% achieved recommended levels of vigorous physical activity (20 or more minutes on 3 or more days per week). When moderate and vigorous physical activity were combined, approximately 56% reported that they met guidelines. According to more recently updated physical activity guidelines, the rate goes up to 72% who achieved recommended levels of moderate or vigorous activity. Respondents indicated that they primarily used walking trails, bike paths and parks, playgrounds, or sports fields in their community. Most respondents usually exercised at home or outdoors. Only 21% exercised at a health club and 10% exercised at a rec center. Major barriers to being physically active included lack of time, cost and lack of willpower. Approximately 81% of respondents to the Winona County Health Needs Assessment Survey felt that lack of exercise/physical activity was a moderate or serious problem for both adults and children in Winona County.



The Built Environment and Public Health

Physical design affects human behavior – buildings, neighborhoods, communities, and regions. The places in which we live, work, and play can affect both our mental and physical well-being.

Communities, like Winona, are facing obesity and chronic diseases. Our built environment offers both opportunities for and barriers to improving public health and increasing active living. Communities designed in a way that supports physical activity – wide sidewalks, safe bike lanes, accessible recreation areas – encourage residents to make healthy choices and live healthy lives. In turn, healthy places create economic value by attracting both younger and older workers and also appeal to a skilled workforce.

One of the more important determinants of physical activity is a person's immediate environment. Most people who live in neighborhoods and cities with parks and trails are twice as healthy as people who live in areas without such facilities. Those who participate in regular physical activity experience lower mortality rates; lower risk for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes; and improvement in emotional well-being. Proximity and access to areas with parks and trails for a wider segment of the population is likely to improve overall community health.

How will we get there?

Goals

The following four goals suggest ways to promote active living and development of the built environment to realize the Winona County active living vision:

Goal 1- Regional Leadership

Being a regional leader in providing healthy lifestyle opportunities.

Objectives

- Foster relationships within city/county/state to leverage resources to implement infrastructure project/improvements.
 - Partner with city/county/state as necessary for the adoption of Complete Streets Policies
 - Tier 1
 - City of Winona
 - City of St. Charles
 - City of Goodview
 - City of Lewiston
 - Tier 2
 - Remaining Winona County communities with an established government entity.
- Active Living Plan: Support with funding.

- Establish a long term funding mechanism for programming as well as active living infrastructure construction and maintenance.
- Pool grant resources and coordinate between cities and counties.
- Involve cities, schools, county organization, and private organizations in this effort.
 - Sponsor active living programs
- Look at all aspects of a healthy lifestyle, including exercise, food choices, and overall way of life, to include the entire population, not just a specific group or age category.
 - Design and Administer a KAP Survey (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices).
- By affiliating numerous groups to work toward the common goal of active living throughout the region
 - Establish an Active Living Advisory Committee to advise City/County elected officials on active living issues.
 - Establish an Active Living Subcommittee to work on Active Living opportunities/activities in Winona County.

Goal 2- Create a Wide Range of Active Living Benefits

Creating a wide range of active living benefits through infrastructure, policy, and environmental changes:

- Safety of users
- Improved health
- Quality of life
- Broad opportunity
- Youth impact, early age engagement

Objectives

- Open communication from various entities/organizations to ensure a project is completed for the betterment of community resulting in a non-selfish view of projects and policies
- Develop policies/construction projects that take into account active living in bridge, highway/street design, park/playgrounds, and residential developments budgets to maintain environmental recreation as a primary design intent.
 - Ensure pedestrians and bicyclists feel safe crossing streets/highways through enforcement and education around public safety laws
 - Partner with city/county/state as necessary for the adoption of Complete Streets Policies
 - Tier 1
 - City of Winona
 - City of St. Charles
 - City of Goodview
 - City of Lewiston

- Tier 2
 - Remaining Winona County communities with an established government entity
 - Review existing trails plan to determine if an update is needed. If deemed necessary, update the plan with an active living lens to support an increase in bicycling and walking through changes in policy, systems and the environment. Complete the update in accordance with the 5 E's (Evaluation, Education, Encouragement, Engineering, and Enforcement) Connect with the City of Winona about their Bicycle Friendly Community work. Review the feedback report from the League of American Bicyclists and identify next steps and priorities from their recommendations.

Goal 3- Community Initiative

Encourage and empower Winona County communities to implement active living strategies to create a county- wide initiative of active living.

Objectives

- Connect Winona County communities with resources on Best Management Practices and assistance schemes for implementing and transitioning to active living strategies, emphasizing the importance of being healthy.
- Create an outreach campaign to encourage local leadership to champion active living opportunities in the county.
 - Implement an initiative to create walkable/bikeable communities utilizing time tested and new innovative tactics that are realistic and achievable.
 - Create a walkable/bikeable communities map made available to the public
 - Host walk/bike audits across the county. Make sure different size communities are considered, including unincorporated villages.
- Support programming that promotes active living within the county wide park, trails and open space systems.
 - Designate program dollars for the Winona County Trail plan to create inclusive bike lanes on existing county roads that currently have 8' wide shoulders that are paved. The County Engineer should refer to AASTHO standards for safety when designing the inclusive bike lanes.
 - Note: There are very few county roads with 8' wide shoulders and they are almost exclusively within city boundaries.
 - Partner with city/county/state as necessary for the adoption of Complete Streets Policies

- Tier 1
 - City of Winona
 - City of St. Charles
 - City of Goodview
 - City of Lewiston
 - Tier 2
 - Remaining Winona County communities with an established government entity
 - Create meaningful incentives to both public and private entities who engage with, participate in, and promote active living programs
 - Inform/educate the community, including leaders, worksites, and schools, about the benefits of living an active lifestyle and living in an active community (and the consequences of being sedentary).

Goal 4- Transform Lifestyle Systems

Transform current lifestyle systems to cultivate and support a way of life that makes the active/healthy choice, the easy choice.

Objectives

- Change the mindset of “this is how we always have done it”
 - Educate community/business leaders to advocate for active living
 - Develop and promote community-wide messaging on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle
- Implement infrastructure plans/facilities that make active living the easy choice.
 - Partner with city/county/state as necessary for the adoption of Complete Streets Policies
 - Tier 1
 - City of Winona
 - City of St. Charles
 - City of Goodview
 - City of Lewiston
 - Tier 2
 - Remaining Winona County communities with an established government entity
- Identify champions to lead the charge, creating fun and easy programming for the entire county to participate in.
 - Establish an Active Living Subcommittee to work on Active Living opportunities/activities in Winona County.
- Attract and retain community members, businesses and lifestyle movements that promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

- Establish and sustain an Active Living Subcommittee to work on Active Living opportunities/activities in Winona County for the long term.
 - Identify potential partners that are not currently a part of the Active Living Subcommittee and invite them to join.
- Partner with the private sector development community to include active living amenities in new development and redevelopment projects by defensible return on investment strategies.

Next Steps and Action Items

The following are concrete actions that can be taken to further active living throughout Winona County. Many of these were produced as a result of the Health Impact Assessment conducted by staff from the Minnesota Department of Health:

1) Collaborate with city, county and state to develop a safe, convenient system for bicyclists and pedestrians

- **Action 1.1 – Document the existing system and conduct an analysis of gaps:** By June 2015, the Active Living Subcommittee will complete a map of the bicycle system in Winona County that is currently under development. By September 2015, Winona County GIS Department will partner with the cities to develop a countywide sidewalk inventory.
- **Action 1.2 – Identify major bicycle and pedestrian safety concerns:** By September 2015, the Active Living subcommittee and Winona County engineer/public works/planning will identify where there may be pedestrian safety concerns or unsafe biking conditions, such as heavier vehicular traffic, frequent driveways, high travel speeds, crash locations, condition of streets (potholes, metal plates, and debris), etc. The HIA Technical Assessment¹ provides a list of locations of bicycle crashes and pedestrian crashes in the city of Winona, and areas of concern for both bicycles and pedestrians that were identified in the survey responses and focus groups across Winona County. Additionally, the Winona County GIS Department will develop a mobile application (app) for users to report poor or unsafe conditions to augment the infrastructure inventory and crash data.
- **Action 1.3 – Determine best management practices for the areas selected:** By October 31, 2015 the Active Living subcommittee and Winona County engineer/public works/planning will use the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure inventory and assessment of unsafe conditions to select streets that need sidewalk improvements or on- and off-road bicycle facilities and determine the best management practices that should be implemented on

¹ [HIA Technical Assessment \(www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hia/winona.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hia/winona.html)

those selected areas. The HIA project team developed a list of possible strategies to promote the safety and comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists that is available upon request. Additionally, starting in 2016, the Active Living Subcommittee should participate in the annual review of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which is the five-year plan that allocates funding to various infrastructure projects, and develop a toolbox of alternative sources of funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

- **Action 1.4 – Incorporate Complete Streets and other design guidelines:** To institutionalize safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in future roadway design and construction, starting after October 31, 2015, the County should investigate developing countywide design guidelines for County roads that incorporate Complete Streets concepts and best practices when updating and constructing roads. The County should consider coordinating with the cities to develop complementary guidelines that accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians.
- **Action 1.5 – Utilize feedback from Winona’s Bicycle Friendly Community application process:** Review Winona’s Bicycle Friendly Community application feedback from the League of American Bicyclists. Identify action items from the report that can be used to update plans and policies at all levels of government.

2) Develop and promote community-wide messaging on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle

- **Action 2.1 – Craft the Message:** By October 31, 2015, the Active Living Subcommittee and partners will develop consistent messaging on healthy lifestyles and wellness. The message(s) will include how active living and physical activity affect mental health.
- **Action 2.2 – Disseminate and Evaluate the Message:** By October 31, 2015, the Active Living Subcommittee and partners will develop a Dissemination and Evaluation Plan and starting November 1, 2015, they will begin to disseminate the healthy living and wellness messaging using this Plan.

Dissemination: The Plan will identify the audiences who receive the message, the strategies and tactics for disseminating the message, and the parties responsible for disseminating the message, such as the county staff working in public health and other departments, the Active Living Subcommittee, WSU staff and students, the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses and employers, clinics and health care providers, etc. Key audiences for messages include the more vulnerable groups in the community; for example, high school freshman girls are a key audience for mental health messaging due to their higher rates of mental health issues than students of other grade levels and genders.

Evaluation: The Plan will assess whether the message gets out and if it is effective. Evaluation will use the Community Health Needs Assessment survey results as a baseline and then evaluate if there has been change in behavior and awareness using results from subsequent surveys, which are conducted every three years. The evaluation will also assess whether the county has implemented health-promoting policies and whether it needs new health-promoting policies.

3) Formalize the Active Living Subcommittee and broaden membership

- **Action 3.1 – The Active Living Subcommittee will implement the Active Living Plan:** The Winona County Active Living Subcommittee should become the official working group to implement the Active Living Plan and advance the work around healthy lifestyles in Winona County and pool resources and broaden participation, including but not limited to interested members from the Winona County Active Living Plan HIA Advisory Committee and the Active Living Plan working group, participants from district and parochial schools, colleges and universities, representatives from across the county, and participants representing a youth perspective.
- **Action 3.2 – Assess current membership:** By January 31, 2015, the Active Living Subcommittee should meet to assess current membership and ensure that 25 percent of participants are from outside the city of Winona. *Has this already been completed?
- **Action 3.3 – Explore the opportunity to add a youth member:** By March 31, 2015, the Active Living Subcommittee should investigate the possibility of adding a youth member to the Subcommittee, and invite new members from across the county.
- **Action 3.4 – Identify one or multiple champions:** Identify champions to lead efforts that advance active living by creating fun and easy programming that can be used across the county. Encourage elected officials from city and county government as well as other local leaders to assume this role.