

2018–2023

Strategic Framework

OUR STORY, VALUES, VISION, AND GOALS



**HEALTHY
PLACES
BY DESIGN**

**Your strategic partner in
community-led health.**

Healthy Places by Design advances community-led action and proven, place-based strategies to ensure health and wellbeing for all. We envision a nation of healthy, equitable communities where everyone reaches their full potential.

© 2018 Healthy Places by Design

Our Story

When we launched in 2002 as a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we were at the forefront of the “active living movement,” a new paradigm that contributed to a multi-sector understanding of health. This new approach asked how individuals’ choices were being affected by external forces.

Since then, we have partnered with foundations and communities across the country to help shift the conversation toward one that recognizes how the places where we live affect our health. Together, we have demonstrated that by reshaping policies, systems, and environments, multi-sector community partnerships can help everyone achieve their full health potential.

Our work with local leaders in 35 states has underscored the importance of community context. We recognize that community members’ experiences often reveal which policy, environment, or systems changes will have the most impact and be the most sustainable. We have championed authentic community engagement as an essential practice for lifting up and learning from local realities.

And equity has formed the foundation of our approach from the start: we focused on populations at highest risk for obesity and other chronic diseases based on factors such as race, income, and geographic location.



Advancing community-led action is equity in action. Local leaders have shared the need for a more expansive understanding of what makes communities healthy. This mutual learning informed our organization's initial expansion from an active living focus to one that included healthy eating.

We've also worked with coalition members who cite violence as the biggest drain on their community's health. Others mention concentrated poverty and lack of economic opportunity. Still others suffer from isolation and loneliness.

These conversations, on-the-ground experience, and a growing body of research helped us build an understanding that, while active living and healthy eating are key strategies to sustain healthy change, they alone are not enough.

As communities' demand and capacity for change have grown, we've evolved alongside them to support coalitions that are addressing housing, community safety, restorative justice, and many other issues.

Community-led and equity-driven, our organization has embraced a new name that reflects this evolution:

Healthy Places by Design.

HEALTHY PLACES

People + Space = Place.

Spaces become places when people live, work, learn, and play in them, when they infuse their histories, cultures, stories, and visions of their futures into them.

Our vision is that every person, no matter who they are or where they live, can reach their full potential for health and wellbeing. We know that every place is unique, and that every community has assets and opportunities. We believe in the power of people to harness those assets and reshape their communities into healthier places to live.

BY DESIGN

Over the last 16 years, we've learned that not only does authentic, community-led, and sustainable change take time, but that it also can't happen without a strategic approach. Everything we do—from facilitating collaborative learning and networking among community coalitions and peer groups of foundations to strategic planning and program development with those investing in community-led change—is by design. We can't help but be intentional.

During a time of intensifying social and economic inequality, the gap between thriving communities and vulnerable communities widens every day. Right now, decisions are being made that could mend—or worsen—that gap for decades to come. That's why our work and yours is so urgent. And that's why we're committed to partnering with you to ensure that every community is a healthy place by design.



Risa Wilkerson, Executive Director
Healthy Places by Design

Values

EQUITY

We believe that health and wellbeing are essential human rights. We seek to create impact where it is most needed, respecting and honoring the voices of people who face the starkest health disparities and whose stories too often go unheard.

COMMUNITY

We believe in the power of people to reshape their communities into healthier places to live. We put communities first, honoring people's lived experiences and unique contexts to improve health and wellbeing with strategies that make the most sense for them.

INTEGRITY

Trusting, honest, and authentic relationships are vital to creating lasting impact. That's why we walk the talk, committing ourselves to the same values and practices that we encourage in others. We don't ask our partners to do anything we wouldn't do ourselves.

COLLABORATION

We enter partnerships as abundance thinkers, believing that when people work together, their collective ideas and efforts catalyze more than the sum of their parts. We look for "both/and" solutions and seek partners in unexpected places.

Vision

Our vision is a nation of healthy, equitable communities where everyone reaches their full potential.

Mission

Our mission is to advance community-led action and proven, place-based strategies to ensure health and wellbeing for all.

We are strategic partners for communities and those who invest in them, helping turn visions of health into equitable and lasting impact. At local, state, and national scales, we connect community leaders with inspiring success stories, lessons learned, and each other to deepen their capacity as changemakers. Drawing on our experience supporting hundreds of partnerships, we strengthen assets and enhance efforts to grow an enduring culture of health and wellbeing.

Accelerating Equity



GOALS & STRATEGIES

1 Everyone achieves their full potential for health and wellbeing.

- Identify communities with populations that are most vulnerable to health disparities and prioritize collaborating with them.
- Advocate for healthy community strategies that improve equity through technical assistance to community leaders and funders.

2 Our organization has the capacity to understand diversity, practice inclusion, and strive for equity.

- Invest time in team-wide learning about diversity, inclusion, and equity so that we understand where impact is most needed and are better able to support others.
- Implement an intentional equity assessment of all organizational practices and policies and monitor our progress.

3 Every funder, partnership, and community leader we serve gains a deeper understanding of health equity and addresses it with intention.

- Build capacity with resources and trainings on how to practice a health equity focus.

- Enrich conversations and elevate health equity as a priority issue in all interventions.
- Share stories of how communities across the country are addressing health equity.

4 The people most affected by health disparities are empowered to advance action in their communities.

- Coach community leaders and partnerships through shifts in power and help established leaders become *facilitative* leaders.
- Listen to and lift the voices of those most impacted by health disparities.
- Increase the diversity and number of residents who are authentically engaged in healthy community change initiatives.
- Anticipate and guide partners through unintended or negative consequences of shifts in power.
- Move engagements along a spectrum of community engagement, so that decisions are made by and with residents rather than for them.

Advancing Action



GOALS & STRATEGIES

1 **Communities and partners have the capacity to take meaningful, lasting action to improve health and wellbeing.**

- Serve as a strategic partner, coach, and technical assistance provider, working with changemakers to select and implement strategies that lead to impact—as proven by research and communities' lived experiences.
- Design and manage initiatives that advance healthy communities through policy, systems, and environmental changes.
- Build capacity to take action, lead advocacy efforts, and sustain thriving, community-led coalitions.
- Provide organizational support to partners in the field, including grant management, meeting planning, strategic communications, key informant interviews, evaluation, and research.
- Tailor our support to meet community leaders, partnerships, and funders where they are, focusing on progress and action.

2 **Organizations that fund healthy community change make effective and appropriate investments that support successful initiatives and partnerships over the long-term.**

- Provide funders with strategic and sustainability planning for healthy community initiatives, emphasizing the importance of ongoing funding and capacity building for community leaders.

- Shift funding practices and norms to increase equitable investments and sustainable impact.
- Share perspectives from communities that have improved collective health through policy, systems, and environmental changes.

3 **Our impact on the partnerships and communities we serve is clearly demonstrated.**

- Use specific impact indicators to assess our work.
- Document and share the progress being made by partnerships and communities we serve.
- Practice an internal culture of learning and professional development so our team can adapt to changes and best support communities and our partners in this work.
- Adjust and improve our services to maximize positive impact in communities and with funders.

4 **We contribute to knowledge in the healthy communities field.**

- Conduct presentations and workshops on the Community Action Model and six Essential Practices for lasting community change.
- Curate and disseminate case studies, toolkits, and other field-building resources.
- Share our expertise and experience with mission partners and deepen their networks to advance the healthy community movement.

FOCUS AREA 3

Lifting Leaders



GOALS & STRATEGIES

1 Every funder, partnership, and community we serve develops facilitative leadership skills.

- Increase facilitative leadership capacity through resources, trainings, and thought leadership.
- Seek out and support emerging leaders.
- Develop intentional processes that make room for those most affected by health disparities to lead.

2 Community leaders become life-long changemakers.

- Build confidence in leaders to take bold, decisive action, ensuring that they emerge from our work together with the capacity to sustain it.
- Identify growth opportunities in the field and support leaders to pursue them.
- Lift leaders' stories and advocate on their behalf.

3 The network of leaders who understand the Community Action Model is expanded, and all are able to tailor it to their use and unique contexts.

- Create opportunities for leaders to share their experiences and connect with other leaders through collaborative learning and networking.
- Develop methods for tailoring the Community Action Model so that it is relevant for a variety of disciplines and issues that affect community health.

Enhancing Collaboration



GOALS & STRATEGIES

1 Diverse partnerships between organizations that are working to create healthier communities are forged and sustained.

- Strengthen and bridge connections between funders and investors, resource and technical assistance providers, community leaders, residents, and partners, and other community change agents.
- Guide partnerships through strategic communications processes that help generate mutual understanding and shared commitment to action.

2 Collaborative learning opportunities are expanded.

- Design and manage comprehensive, cross-sector, multi-component, and tailored collaborative learning services that include both formal and informal learning opportunities.
- Plan, host, facilitate, and assess in-person and virtual conferences, meetings, webinars, and learning exchanges to spark generative thinking, develop new partnerships, and share wisdom and resources that inspire action.
- Support collaborative learning between funder groups, especially those who are new to healthy community change investments.

3 We inspire effective partnership by being good partners ourselves.

- Model honesty and transparency in relationships, allowing others to share, build trust, and invite connection.
- Maintain a multi-disciplinary, cross-cutting team with diverse experiences.
- Contribute to the field by participating in regional, state, and national advisory groups that are working to improve community health and wellbeing.