



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 potential for health and wellbeing.

Our work with local leaders in 42 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, and 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 two decades, 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.

FOCUS AREA 1

Advancing Equity



GOALS & STRATEGIES

1 Our organization advances diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- Invest in our team's capacity to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Maintain a multi-disciplinary team with diverse professional and lived experiences.
- Incorporate intentional internal and external practices and structures that advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Regularly assess how our organizational practices and policies support equity, and monitor our progress for continuous improvement.

2 We help every funder, partnership, and community leader we serve advance equity.

- Enrich conversations by elevating health equity as a priority in all projects and initiatives.
- Share stories of how communities and funders across the country are addressing health equity.

3 We leverage what privilege and power we have by connecting to, collaborating with, and supporting organizations that represent or are led by people who are most affected by health disparities.

- Deepen partners' capacity for community engagement so that decisions are made by and with residents rather than for them.
- Advance community-change strategies that ensure people of color, people with low incomes, and other marginalized groups achieve their full potential for health and wellbeing.
- Share funding opportunities with people who are often left out of traditional funding pathways.

Accelerating Action



GOALS & STRATEGIES

1 We build the capacity of community members and partners to take meaningful, lasting, and community-led action to improve health and wellbeing.

- Coach healthy place-makers through collective action to achieve policy, systems, and environmental changes.
- Tailor our support to meet community leaders, partnerships, and funders where they are, focusing on progress and context-appropriate action.
- Provide strategic and sustainability planning for healthy community initiatives, emphasizing the importance of sustaining funding, leveraging existing resources, and building capacity for community members.

2 We share our expertise with the healthy-communities field.

- Conduct presentations and workshops on our Community Action Model and six Essential Practices for lasting community change.
- Curate and disseminate case studies and other field-building resources.
- Offer insights and lessons learned from two decades of experience to help others improve their work.

Enhancing Collaboration



GOALS & STRATEGIES

1 We spark, strengthen, and sustain collaboration between diverse organizations that strive to create healthier communities.

- Draw from our diverse network to forge strong connections between community leaders, funders, investors, residents, technical assistance providers, and other community change agents.
- Generate mutual understanding and shared commitment to action through our strategic communication processes.

2 We expand collaborative learning opportunities.

- Manage 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 that spark creative thinking, create and strengthen partnerships, and share wisdom and resources that inspire action.
- Support collaborative learning between and among philanthropic and nonprofit organizations, especially those that are new to healthy community change investments.

3 We inspire effective partnerships by being good partners ourselves.

- Model honesty, authenticity, and transparency in relationships, which builds trust, reinforces existing connections, and allows others to share their perspectives.
- Respect how partners prefer to communicate and interact, and continuously adjust our services to enhance impact for communities and funders.
- Provide a platform where our partners, clients, and community leaders can tell their own stories of progress.