



2024 – 2027 Strategic Framework

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.



**HEALTHY
PLACES
BY DESIGN**

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Much has changed since we published our last Strategic Framework.

The coronavirus pandemic laid bare the vulnerabilities of our underfunded public health and complicated healthcare systems, magnifying systemic disparities that have negatively impacted people for too long. Social isolation, loneliness, and risks for poor health outcomes were exacerbated by being kept apart from each other and the places that evoke a sense of community. These rippling impacts demonstrated how our community systems are intertwined: when one sector functions poorly, it impacts others.

The Healthy Places by Design team talked about these changing conditions and challenges. We agreed that achieving our mission is more important than ever, as is our commitment to advancing equity, enhancing collaboration, and accelerating action. We felt an urgent need to bring people together through positive experiences, build skills for collaborative community transformation, and highlight social connection as both a determinant of health and a strategy for thriving communities. So, we challenged ourselves to be even more strategic about equipping community leaders to grow an enduring culture of health and wellbeing.

We've made progress, and we remain hopeful.

ENHANCING COLLABORATION

We developed a curriculum and training designed to build the capacity of current and future leaders to work across sectors and positions to take meaningful and sustainable action to improve health in their communities. The Collaboration Lab was developed in partnership with the Danville Regional Foundation and the Tamarack Institute and has already reached more than 100 people from multiple states who feel more equipped to effectively partner and take action in their communities.

CULTIVATING CONNECTION

We also developed and deepened our support for socially connected communities. We hosted a series of peer learning conversations on social isolation that spotlighted gaps in the national conversation and co-created a report, *Solutions for Social Isolation*, to amplify the root causes of, and systemic solutions to, social isolation. We formalized a Socially Connected Communities Network that helps leaders reduce social isolation and strengthen social ties in their communities, especially for those who are most marginalized. We hosted county- and state-level workshops on socially connected communities and co-developed Transformative Narratives for Socially Connected Communities. We also partnered with the Foundation for Social Connection to create several field-building projects and new resources, and we co-hosted the first in-person national conference on social connection.

ACCELERATING ACTION

We provided strategic guidance and technical assistance to help communities make policy, systems, and environmental changes with a health equity lens to address tobacco-related inequities, improve access to healthy food and physical activity, and meaningfully engage community members. We took a scalable approach by working with state-level partners such as nonprofits, philanthropies, and local communities within their networks.

This approach deepened capacity to address root causes of health inequities at both grassroots and institutional levels. For example, organizations that traditionally focused on direct education are now integrating policy, systems, and built environment strategies into their work.

We still believe that meaningful change happens at the community level, and that we cannot fully thrive or advance equity until we unite across differences and leverage our interconnectedness as humans.

Through these and other initiatives, we continue to be inspired by community leaders who are rising above ongoing challenges and choosing to pull together rather than apart.

We are encouraged that people are recognizing the importance of social connection and taking systems-level approaches to improve community conditions for health and wellbeing. We celebrate this progress while acknowledging the collective work that must be done to reach a tipping point when all people can thrive.

Our updated strategic framework outlines how our team will contribute to a nation of healthy, equitable communities where everyone reaches their full potential. We are committed now more than ever to ensuring that every community is a healthy place by design.

As you read these goals, we hope you see yourself in them, too. Please join us in partnering for a brighter future. We can make a difference together! Email hello@healthyplacesbydesign.org today.



Risa Wilkerson, Executive Director
Healthy Places by Design

VISION

We envision a nation of healthy, equitable communities where everyone reaches their full potential.

MISSION

We 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 change-makers. Drawing on our experience supporting hundreds of partnerships, we strengthen assets and enhance efforts to grow an enduring culture of health and wellbeing.

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 with strategies that make the most sense for them. We put communities first, respecting their lived experiences and unique historical and cultural contexts.

INTEGRITY

We believe that trusting, honest, and authentic relationships are vital to creating lasting impact. That's why we commit 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 believe that when people work together, their collective ideas and efforts catalyze more than the sum of their parts. As abundance thinkers, we look for “both/and” solutions and seek partners in unexpected places.

GOAL 1

Enhance collaborative leadership through Collaboration Lab and other tailored services.



- **Enrich and expand Collaboration Lab to help more people create community-led transformation.**

We will bolster our services to meet the differing needs of groups and individuals and cultivate partnerships with organizations committed to building collaborative leadership in communities.

- **Strengthen equity-focused content in Collaboration Lab and collaboration services to deepen impact within and across communities.**

We will integrate equity expertise into our services while incorporating financial practices that ensure equitable access to tools and resources.

GOAL 2

Cultivate a movement to integrate social connection as a vital component of healthy and equitable communities.



- **Help philanthropic and nonprofit organizations integrate social connection strategies into their healthy communities work.**

We will be strategic partners in formalizing objective and subjective evaluation indicators of socially connected communities initiatives to improve their impact and demonstrate their value.

- **Develop and implement socially connected communities initiatives across diverse geographic areas.**

We will launch tailored, field-tested socially connected communities initiatives in new places with a focus on strengthening tested approaches and reducing disparities.

- **Build and sustain HPbD's Socially Connected Communities Network and its contribution to the field.**

We will offer capacity-building opportunities for community members across the country that appeal to different learning styles and engagement preferences, including hosting webinars and discussion groups, facilitating peer connection sessions, and producing resource guides.

GOAL 3

Advance community-driven transformation by building capacity for sustainable policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes.



- **Develop and implement tailored programming, coaching, and technical assistance to community leaders and coalitions to advance their capacity to make PSE changes.**

We will partner with philanthropic and nonprofit organizations and the communities they support to design services that help them assess, develop, and implement policy, systems, and environmental strategies.

- **Help build knowledge and capacity across sectors by creating and disseminating resources that advance healthy communities.**

We will produce and collaborate on original content and resources that emphasize the importance of policy, systems, and environmental approaches in growing and sustaining the healthy communities field.

GOAL 4

Exemplify organizational integrity and effectiveness by fostering a culture of learning, strategic communication, collective leadership, operational excellence, and work-life harmony.



- **Implement a communications strategy that integrates marketing, branding, and funding efforts.**

We will maintain an effective external presence through our website, newsletters, and social media to demonstrate our role as a field-builder and strategic thought partner.
- **Optimize internal collective leadership and capacity with opportunities for professional growth.**

We will enhance internal collaboration and integrate equity and social justice into our practices through ongoing cross-training.
- **Bolster organizational processes, services, and practices through learning opportunities and continuous improvement.**

We will encourage and incorporate feedback from community members, partner organizations, and our advisory board to better understand the impact of our work and strengthen our services.