Chapter 2

COMMUNITY HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND RESILIENCE

COMMUNITY HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND RESILIENCY

"The best six doctors anywhere, and no one can deny it, are sunshine, water, rest, air, exercise, and diet". – Wayne Fields

What This Element Will Do

Growing evidence suggests where people live, work, learn, worship, and play impacts personal health far more profoundly than previously recognized. Healthy communities are sourced in healthy environments and built on face-to-face contact between residents. Purposeful planning, supportive infrastructure, and thoughtful urban landscapes stimulate social ties and physical activity. Social ties and physical activity, in turn, elevate community health, wellness, and resilience. Longer, healthier lives positively impact our economy and our ability to adapt and recover from adversity.

In this section we describe our vision, existing conditions pertaining to certain factors impacting healthy environments, and establish meaningful goals and policies to further the public's health, wellness, and resilience.

What Drives This Element

We envision a future where every community member's physical, emotional, social, and spiritual health is manifest, adaptable, and resilient. We are committed to providing supportive environments to further the public's health, safety, and welfare. We will strive to make all feel welcome and to provide for the well-being of all individuals. We will continue to build the "fabric of community" and a general feeling of successful economic well-being for all. We are committed to exploring, learning, and understanding complex, interrelated issues unfolding locally and in a larger geographic context.

Healthy Active Living

The World Health Organization defines 'health' as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being"; in other words, 'health' is comprised of physical, mental, and social well-being. The 'health' of our community depends on a fit environment, social health, and a functional healthcare delivery system. A fit environment is one that supports, sustains, and nurtures healthy lifestyles. Social health refers to how individuals get along with others, how others react to individuals, and how individuals interact with society in general. A functional healthcare delivery system is one that consists of clinicians, hospitals and other health care facilities, insurance plans, and purchasers of health care services operating interacting efficiently in a meaningful manner.

Fit Environment

A healthy, active lifestyle is a way of living that lowers the risk of being seriously ill or dying early. Regular physical activity can reduce the risk of premature death, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, and the risk of falls. Physical activity can also decrease body fat, improve bone health, improve muscular strength, and prevent chronic disease.

We can support and encourage healthy, active living by adding parks/trails, providing for recreation opportunities, encouraging healthy eating, curbing smoking, and inspiring healthy habits.

Social Health

Increasing evidence reveals people who are well integrated in their community tend to live longer and recover faster from disease. Conversely, social isolation has been shown to be a risk factor for illness. Studies suggest older adults who participate in what they believe are meaningful activities, like volunteering in their communities, report feeling happier and healthier.

We can support and encourage social health by building community capacity for involvement and inclusivity in all activities, events, and policies. We can provide opportunities for involvement in community/volunteer activities, encourage people to get out and about, and support physical environments that reduce barriers and accommodate all ages and abilities.

Functional Healthcare Delivery System

A functional healthcare delivery system presumes healthcare providers, patients, insurers, and policy makers interact in an efficient manner. Policy discussions at state and federal levels are on-going and appropriately held at those levels. Of primary local concern is ensuring access to family care providers, specialists, rehabilitation services, long-term care providers, and palliative care services for all community members. Disease prevention and personal health management may also be influenced at a local level.

Access to health care providers and network specialists is provided through two medical clinics in the City, one affiliated with Mayo Health Systems, the other with Ridgeview Medical Center. Urgent care is being established at the Ridgeview Belle Plaine Health Campus. Three hospitals are located within twenty miles of the City in Waconia, New Prague, and Shakopee. Level I trauma centers are located in Minneapolis/St. Paul, less than one hour from Belle Plaine. Mental health services are provided by Behavioral Health Services and through local clinics. Rehabilitation services are provided by local specialists affiliated with, among others, The Lutheran Home Association (TLHA) and Ridgeview. Palliative care services are accessed through local providers, including TLHA. Chiropractic, vision, dental, and hearing services are offered locally through a variety of providers.

We can support and encourage a functional healthcare delivery system by understanding the needs of health care providers, by investing in development of care facilities, and by providing a variety of life-cycle housing for healthcare workers. We can also seek gains in disease prevention and individual's management of their health through sensible urban design and policy choices.

Food Environment

A plethora of research has demonstrated food choices available at a local level are important factors in determining health outcomes. Access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food are hallmarks of a sustainable food system. Food planning is not just a health issue, it is also a cornerstone of sustainable community development and an opportunity to make good on social equity goals.

Examination of food "deserts" and "swamps" are primary indicators of a failure in access to healthy food choices. Food deserts are geographic areas marked by limited healthy food options; swamps are geographic areas with high volumes of unhealthy food options. Food deserts and swamps are found throughout urban and rural areas and apply not only to where people live but also where people spend time, like workplaces.

Food Deserts

Figure 2.1

The United States Department of Agriculture describes food desserts as areas where at least 500 people and/or at least 33% of a Census tract's population is more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery stores (in rural Census tracts the measurement is ten miles). The USDA has mapped food desserts nationally. The mapping illustrates food desserts exist in rural areas of the state, including perhaps Le Sueur County, just south of Belle Plaine.

No Car and No Supermarket Store Within a Mile

In 2016, Scott County Planning and GIS Staff mapped food access in Scott County. The mapping assists in: (a) informing healthy eating initiatives advanced through the Statewide Health Improvement Plan; (b) providing access to information for inclusion in local comprehensive plan updates; and (c) cross-jurisdictional planning efforts. The mapping indicates most persons within the County do not live in a "food desert".

Food Swamps

Figure 2.2

Low Income or Low Access at 1 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural)
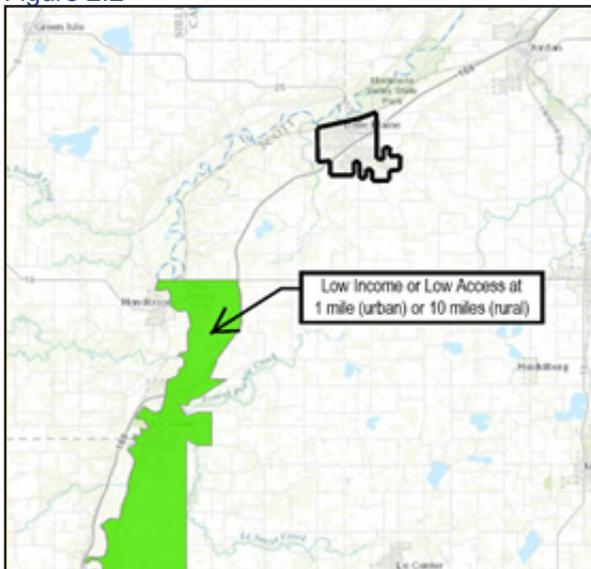
There is not an agreed upon, calculable definition of a food "swamp". In general, food swamps are described as localized areas with high concentrations of highly processed, low-nutrient food often combined with disproportionate advertising for unhealthy food. Studies have documented a correlation between convenient and more affordable food choices being both less healthy and more available in high density areas with lower income profiles. Oftentimes highly processed, low-nutrient food options are located adjacent to high traffic (vehicular and pedestrian) corridors and commercial zones adjacent to high density residential options and/or employment centers. A reliable data source specific to concentrations of 'fast food' type venues and meaningful norms are not available at a local level at this time.

Community Capacity Building

Working to confront complex, interrelated, challenging issues is a tremendous task for any community. Resilient, sustainable communities are able to leverage community capacity to measurably 'move the needle' on multifaceted challenges. Community capacity building can be described as enhancing our ability to develop, implement, and sustain our own solutions to our own problems which we collectively identify. Said problems could be related to active living, economic development, affordable housing, mental health, or any number of other issues.

Building blocks of community capacity include: a sense of community and connectedness; a shared sense of responsibility among community members; the ability to organize and take action to solve problems; and access to economic, human, physical, and political capital.

We can support and encourage community capacity by: identifying and cultivating leadership; improving the quality of relationships, staying flexible and continuously adapting; creating structures and multiple paths to what we value most; assessing the effectiveness of our efforts; and, sharing resources and opportunities.

Public Safety

We have historically fostered a high level of public safety through investment in quality personnel, facilities, equipment, and technology. Partnerships and agreements with other agencies, innovative programming, and a drive for excellence in service standards propel public safety to the forefront as a prime local resource. Policies and processes integrate public safety concepts in the development review process addressing development-related issues such as safety in development design, code compliance, and crime prevention.

The Belle Plaine Police Department consists of a police chief, detective sergeant, school resource officer, six full-time officers, five part-time officers, and two administrative support staff. Department staff are dedicated to offering the highest quality of police service to the community. Impartiality, integrity, ethics, and professionalism are held as keys to increasing community safety, protecting life and property, and reducing crime and the fear of crime. The department and its individual members, both civilian and sworn, are committed to the pursuit of excellence and vow to strengthen a partnership with the community to resolve problems, and strive to improve the safety and quality of life in our City.

Belle Plaine Fire Department volunteers have been serving the City of Belle Plaine and surrounding townships since 1894. The current roster is made up of 30 members, nearly half of whom are certified first responders. Members are all on call and respond in the event of an emergency.

Emergency medical services are provided by Ridgeview Medical Center and consist of paid and volunteer professionals. Advanced life support service is available 24/7.

We can support and encourage continued gains in public safety by prioritizing investments, addressing multi-faceted, complex challenges, and encouraging continuous dialogue.

Social Services Network

Social services including, but not limited to, employment/training services, social assistance services, education services, and child care are crucial to improving quality of life and social protection. Local, county, state, and federal agencies together with organized philanthropic organizations, informal volunteer groups, and faith communities provide services crucial to the well-being of the community.

Emergency assistance, food support, resource identification/procurement, adoption, child welfare, disability assistance/programming, treatment programs, transition programs, and employment support services are provided locally and accessed through organizations in the City and through Scott County.

Elementary and secondary educational services are provided by locally the Belle Plaine School District and private, faith-based institutions. Home schooling and open enrollment options are also exercised locally. Attendance at post-secondary institutions, other than those accessed on-line, requires travel external to Scott County.

Childcare services are provided by a variety of entities from the public school to faith-based institutions to for-profit in-home and childcare center operators. Adult daycare services are available in regional settings within Scott County.

We can support and encourage gains in quality of life and social protection by embracing the vital role social service agencies, educational institutions, and care service providers play in creating a resilient community fabric. We can further support and encourage gains in our community by striving to ensure every resident, employee, and business has equal access to resources, opportunities, and outcomes available through our social service network.

Hazard Mitigation

Planning for and protecting our community from natural and man-made hazards enhances quality of life, sustains our way of life, and cultivates community resilience. The Police Chief serves as the Emergency Management Director for Belle Plaine. A county-wide hazard mitigation plan was placed into effect in 2010 and updated in 2016.

As contained in the 2016 Scott County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan, the following natural hazards as reflected in Table 2-1 were assessed, profiled, and rated as to probable risk (low, medium, high) and mitigation potential (low, medium, high).

The Hazard Mitigation Plan also addressed man-made technological hazards, terrorism, and pandemic, epidemic, and vector-based events. Technological hazards include incidents that may arise from human activities such as the manufacture, transportation, storage, and use of hazardous materials. Terrorism is broadly defined in the mitigation plan and includes: biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological weapons; arson; incendiary, explosive, and armed attacks; industrial sabotage and intentional hazardous materials releases; and cyber attacks. Pandemics occur when disease affects large numbers of the population worldwide. Epidemics occur when large numbers are affected in a more localized area such as a city, region, state, or nation. Vector-based threats - bacteria, insects, and animals are threats that pose a direct or indirect hazard to humans, their food supply, or the economy.

Table 2-1

Hazard	Probability	Mitigation Potential
Flooding	High	High
Tornadoes	High	High
Hail	High	Medium
Coastal Erosion	High	Medium
Severe Winter Storms	High	Low
Blizzards	High	Low
Ice and Ice Storms	High	Low
Landslides	Medium	Low
Sinkholes and Land Subsidence	Medium	Low
Earthquake	Low	Low
Drought	High	Low
Wildfire	High	High
Extreme Temperatures	High	Low
Lightning	High	Low
Windstorms	High	High
Windstorms	High	High

In addition to assessing and profiling hazards, the mitigation plan also analyzes jurisdictional capabilities and itemizes mitigation strategies. Mitigation techniques include: prevention activities; property protection; natural resource protection; structure mitigation projects; emergency service measures; and, public education and awareness campaigns.

We can enhance our quality of life, help sustain our way of life, and cultivate community resilience by being mindful of hazard mitigation and embracing mitigation strategies addressed in the Scott County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Community Development

The term 'community development,' although a common phrase, is often viewed only through the lens of land use and management of growth and redevelopment. Community development is actually much better described as empowerment of the community and development of a higher quality of life. Community development is an expansive and comprehensive process which seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with skills needed to effect positive change, tackle complex challenges, manage change, and pursue a common agenda. The United Nations defines community development as "a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and fullest possible reliance upon the community's initiative".

Community development efforts range from small initiatives involving a few community members to expansive initiatives with participation by broad swaths of the community. Conscious community development helps individuals, social networks, and the broader community: learn new skills; build human, fiscal, and financial capital; expand networks and change attitudes; rethink problems and create new approaches to challenges; develop options; maximize community assets; capitalize on existing skills/strengths, and preserve culture and character.

We can participate in conscious community development by committing to: empowering individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them; supporting participation of community members in decision making; being purposefully inclusive recognizing some people may need additional support to overcome challenges; allowing people to make their own choices; and, recognizing that many different groups, organizations, entities, and people can and should contribute to community development.

Resilient City, Resilient People

100 Resilient Cities defines urban resilience as: "The capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience".

We will strive to be a resilient city and endeavor to enhance community resilience: by recognizing that resilience resides within individual community members and the collective community; by examining linkages and interactions between complex issues presently at the forefront without losing our view of an ever-changing backdrop; by recognizing when and how to adapt and respond to challenging issues; by having the courage to seek wholesale change when just adapting isn't enough; by ensuring that meeting the needs of the present doesn't compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; and, by confronting challenging issues and taking responsibility for our collective futures.

ENHANCING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

- Embrace and lean-on individual and collective capacities for renewal, reinvention
- Think long-term, big-picture systems connectivity and interrelatedness but don't lose sight of the here and now
- Be flexible, be fluid, adapt
- Seek wholesale change if adapting isn't enough
- Listen, learn from the past, be tenacious, and sustain (then repeat)
- Work together for the collective well-being and with minimal regard for self-interest, have the courage to confront seemingly unsolvable issues

Our Goals and Policies

The City accepts and embraces a need for supportive environments to further the public's health, safety, and welfare. As we strive to make all feel welcome and to provide for the well-being of all individuals, we commit to the following goals and policies.

HW 1.   Increased physical and mental health, safety, and wellness of all within the Belle Plaine community.
- 1.1   Work with regional partners to research and create a meaningful method of evaluating community health goals with specific metrics.
- 1.2   In conjunction with regional partners, conduct public information campaign to promote awareness of mental health issues, including, but not limited to, acknowledging mental illnesses are real, can be screened, diagnosed, and treated effectively in affordable ways.
- 1.3   Join area elected officials in advocating for immediate and lasting action to create a broadly available, functional, and comprehensive mental health service delivery system including adequate resource funding, program integration, and coordination of services.
- 1.4   Promote preventative health initiatives which include public information and education regarding current health issues.

1.5 Encourage participation in age and risk based preventative health care tests, screenings, and practices.

1.6 Lead the development of a "Healthy Living Guide" for public distribution with participation from regional jurisdictions, local health care providers, educational partners, and businesses.

1.7 Understand and embrace the vital role of social service agencies, educational institutions, and care service providers have in supporting and nurturing individual resilience.

1.8 Strive to make sure every resident, employee, and business has equal access to resources, opportunities, and outcomes available through our social service network.

HW 2. Become an ever-resilient City.

2.1. Work to increase the capacity of individuals, communities/community, institutions, businesses, and systems within Belle Plaine to survive, adapt, and grow regardless of what chronic stresses and acute shocks are experienced.

2.2. Design systems and ensure they function in a manner that can withstand, respond, and adapt to chronic stresses and sudden shocks by embracing seven characteristics of resilient systems (as defined by 100 Resilient Cities):

2.2.1. Reflectiveness: Use knowledge of the past to inform current decisions.

2.2.2. Resourcefulness: Identify other ways to use resources.

2.2.3. Robustness: design, invest, and create thoughtfully constructed and managed systems.

2.2.4. Redundancy: purposefully create capacity in community systems so as to accommodate disruptions.

2.2.5. Flexibility: be willing and able to adopt alternative strategies when faced with shifting conditions.

2.2.6. Inclusivity: seek broad input and create ownership in decision-making process.

2.2.7. Integrated: bring together a variety of distinct systems and institutions.

2.3. Identify and invest in opportunities for staff, appointed officials, elected officials, and the public to learn about and grow awareness of community resiliency concepts.

HW 3. A community with safe and sanitary work, play, and housing environments.

3.1. Invest in community education efforts providing a variety of easily accessible recreational programs and opportunities available at little or no cost to participants.

3.2. Provide safety training and education for all staff, appointed, and elected officials focused on recognition and de-escalation of conflict situations and personal safety strategies.

3.3. Support increasing employer/work site initiatives offering nutrition education, weight management, stress reductions and/or wellness programs, including physical activity.

3.4. Partner with business groups to promote work sites that offer health and wellness programs.

3.5. Promote opportunities for and encourage community participation in programs to reduce the prevalence of sedentary lifestyles in all age groups and across all residential neighborhoods.

3.6. Promote tobacco-free environments.

3.7. Support sanitary conditions and practices in accordance with public health, rental, and environmental health codes and regulations.

3.8. Support safe and sanitary housing conditions through enforcement of codes and regulations to reduce presence of radon and lead hazards, carbon monoxide poisoning, infestation by pests/rodents, and other environmental health concerns.

HW 4. Reduce burden of illness, injury, and disability, and improve the health and functioning of those living, working, and visiting Belle Plaine.

4.1. Support efficient delivery of high quality health care.

4.2. Support and assist with recruiting, retaining, and replacing of quality health care and medical professionals, especially in occupations with a shortage of skilled health workers.

4.3. Promote health, safety, and wellness by developing and helping to establish access to community
programs including oral, mental, and physical health.
4.4. Encourage the presence of specialty outpatient medical services in Belle Plaine.
4.5. Support access to community mental health treatment on an equal basis with medical treatment for individuals with mental illness delivered in a timely and confidential manner.

HW 5. A City with a strong capacity to fortify skills, abilities, and confidence of people and community groups to be able to take effective action and lead in solving problems, sustaining solutions, and shaping and exercising control over our physical, social, economic, and cultural environments.
5.1. Build the capacity of the Belle Plaine community to develop, implement, and sustain solutions to complex and multifaceted challenges.
5.2. Identify social and civic networks, leaders in formal and informal settings, core institutions, and existing effective strategies for mobilizing as a means of defining a baseline for existing community capacity.
5.3. Identify cultural strengths, physical or place-based assets, wisdom that has grown out of struggles, and shared histories, achievements and meaning which are foundations of community capacity.
5.4. Build a common understanding of the issues residents seek to address, items that impact the issues residents seek to address, and the issue's relationship to our history and current policies.
5.5. Build capacity through group education and training, action-oriented learning opportunities, and network building with key organizations and potential agents of change.
5.6. Continuously and actively cultivate and assemble community knowledge, skills, cohesion, commitment, networks, and resources that support effective decision making and taking action on seemingly insurmountable issues over time.

HW 6. Universal access to healthy, safe food.
6.1. Improve proximity to healthy food and support food related business activities.
6.2. Increase food production and access to healthy food and meals in residential settings by encouraging backyard gardening, authorizing community gardens on public property, and expanding the range of allowable urban farming activities.
6.3. Communicate gardening practices and observations to the public as a means of fostering a gardening culture.
6.4. Allow edible and pollinator friendly landscapes on residential property.
6.5. Purchase healthy foods from local businesses when catering events, meetings, and other gatherings.
6.6. Encourage rooftop and sidewalk dining and food production.
6.7. Manage urban growth so as to preserve farmland to maintain capacity of local food production.
6.8. Facilitate, assist, and support development of small and mid-sized processors of healthy food.
6.9. Identify mechanisms to support existing grocery stores while encouraging upgrades in the prominence and marketing of healthy foods they offer.
6.10. Support the health of pollinators through improvements to municipal practices, supporting property owners in establishment and expansion of pollinator-friendly landscapes, review management of public property to determine potential to contribute to pollinator health, and communicate with local residents and businesses regarding the importance of pollinator health.

HW 7. A safe and prepared community.
7.1. Ensure a high level of public safety by providing police and fire protection, and emergency services and preparedness.

7.2. Maintain development standards to promote efficient use of police and fire personnel, facilities, equipment and communication resources, and to allow police and fire personnel to respond to public safety needs within targeted response times.

7.3. Review proposed development to promote provision of adequate police and fire protection.

7.4. Review site plans and development requests carefully to help ensure:

    7.4.1. Adequate fire hydrant locations and sufficient fire flows

    7.4.2. Emergency vehicle access, structure access, and building identification.

    7.4.3. Adequate lighting for safety and security.

    7.4.4. Crime prevention best-practices.

7.5. Minimize impacts and risk to life and property from natural hazards and disasters.

7.6. Administer site design and development standards to decrease and minimize the possibility of flooding and instability of bluffs and steep slopes.

7.7. Promote awareness and implementation of the Scott County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan through coordination between departments, programs, agencies, and jurisdictions.

7.8. Work with Scott County and other agencies to maintain updated hazard inventories that inform potential development.

7.9. Minimize development in hazard areas by promoting innovative site design, building design, and density transfer.

7.10. Locate new infrastructure, public functions, major structures, and hazardous facilities in non-hazard areas whenever possible.

7.11. Reduce the vulnerability of the City's critical facilities and infrastructure.

HW 8. Great Governance, as defined by the National Academy for Public Administration.

8.1. Embrace economic reality when governing:

    8.1.1. Limit tax levy increases.

    8.1.2. Fund defined and agreed upon priorities while working within limited budgets.

    8.1.3. Make prudent and wise investments to support vision of Belle Plaine.

    8.1.4. Continue tradition of fiscal responsibility, maintain credit rating.

    8.1.5. Pursue wise investments in neighborhoods.

8.2. Embrace efficiency in governing/operations:

    8.2.1. Strive to get more done with less.

    8.2.2. Investigate technological improvements to improve efficiency.

    8.2.3. Strive to be a 'one-stop-shop' for service delivery.

    8.2.4. Strengthen ties between departments, cross-train employees to ensure critical operations/services are continuously available regardless of personnel/staffing status, and mentor future staff leaders.

    8.2.5. Seek continuous improvement resulting in shorter wait times and staff response times.

8.3. Reflect often on effectiveness of governance:

    8.3.1. Be mindful of goals, regularly reassess progress toward achieving goals; adjust approach to goals as needed to ensure progress.

    8.3.2. Provide for the basic functions of local government: public safety, economic development (job creation and reduction of poverty), provision of services/transportation, and access to local government administrative services.

8.4. Provide and develop services, resources, facilities, and policies which are equitable:

    8.4.1. Nurture and provide for diverse neighborhoods and business opportunities.

    8.4.2. Ensure every resident, employee, and business has equal access to resources, opportunities, and outcomes that improve quality of life and enable them to reach their full potential.

8.4.3. Be an inclusive and welcoming community.
8.4.4. Commit to fair and equitable management of institutions serving the public, distribution of public services, and formation/implementation of public policy.

HW 9. Conscious community development.
9.1. Actively and purposefully foster community participation in learning about and understanding complex and challenging issues.
9.2. Engage community members so as to deeply understand and share information about potential economic, social, political, and environmental impacts associated with alternate courses of action.
9.3. Commit to taking deliberate actions designed to empower and enable all community members to meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives.
9.4. Build community capacity.
9.5. Invest in creative placemaking to grow community fabric and entrepreneurship.
9.6. Invest in community "coaching" (i.e. community organizing) as a means of getting people to work together to solve their own problems, promote leadership, nurture life skills, and positively affect change.