WHAT IS A HEALTHY PLACE?

An environment that promotes healthy behaviour like walking, cycling, socializing, playing and healthy eating for those of all ages, incomes, genders and cultural backgrounds.
Why Healthy Places?

We are facing a new health crisis: diabetes and obesity are on the rise, and we are increasingly sedentary. Adapting the built environment can improve health and health equity. Healthy places have many benefits: they are age-friendly, climate-friendly, and good for the economy.

Healthy Places are climate-friendly. Developing walkable communities is the most effective way to reduce household greenhouse gas production. Not everyone can drive. Children, seniors & people with mobility issues rely on other modes of transportation. By 2031, 1 in 5 Albertans will be a senior. Research tells us that community design plays a role in how happy and productive they will be.

Alberta is the #1 producer of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.

Healthy Places are age-friendly. Communities experiencing low-incomes are more likely to have poor infrastructure: less green space, fewer sidewalks, and less connectivity. The result, they disproportionately experience poor health.

1 billion volunteer hours provided by seniors in Canada yearly. Without access to their city and community, seniors cannot make these contributions.

Physically active children are better students. They have better academic achievement, concentration, and classroom behaviour.

Health for All Ages

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Healthy Economy

Healthy design can reduce health care and congestion costs, and increase productivity. Commercial districts and home-owners benefit from healthy design through increased property values and sales.

Congestion cost $2.3-3.7 billion to the 9 largest Canadian cities in 2006

$2 billion lost to San Francisco businesses annually through employees stuck in traffic.

$700-3000 U.S. dollar increase in home values alongside a 1 point increase in WalkScore™.

10% the environmental footprint of a commuting cyclist compared to someone who drives to work.

2/3 of household greenhouse gas emissions are from transportation in Canada.

In Alberta

37% of Albertans are sedentary 10+ hours per day.

39% increase in diabetes 2003-2014.

15 km/ hour decrease in residential speed limit (from 45-30km/hour) can increase survival in pedestrian collisions from 50 to 90%.

1 billion vehicle miles travelled annually.
What do Healthy Places look like?

Sustainable Calgary’s Active Neighbourhoods Canada program has been developing design schemes based on community feedback for the past six years. These aim to promote more liveable, walkable and vibrant communities. What do healthy places look like? Here are some of our ideas!

Laneway + Parkway, Marlborough, Calgary

Green walking networks, parkside living and gentle density make walking/cycling safe and attractive, and increase use of local parks.

Mercer Trail and Pedestrian Bridge, High River

A north-south pedestrian link across the river connects residents to each other and to local businesses.

Landscape LRT Bridge, Bridgeland-Riverside

The green bridge creates an oasis above city traffic and helps connect three popular communities that each have missing amenities.

Re-imagining Bonaventure Drive, Acadia

Behind almost every commercial street in Calgary sits another street that does the ‘dirty work’: loading, shipping, and dividing commercial from residential. What if it became a walkable main street?

Acadia Pop-Up Plaza

A neighbourhood gathering space is also a traffic calming strategy. A prototype of the Pop-Up Plaza turns unused parking stalls into an “outdoor living room”, with outdoor furniture, espresso, pop-up bookstore, bocce ball, ping pong, board games, arts & crafts, snacks, and simple traffic calming.

Acadia Pop-Up Plaza

Reimagine Catwalks Project

How can we take advantage of great existing infrastructure? Catwalks are pedestrian pathways that provide shortcuts to schools, parks, stores and bus stops.

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**Time to scale up!**

We want to start a conversation about healthy places in Alberta with a set of provincial policy recommendations that emerged from what we heard from communities, subject matter experts, and from our experiences with the co-design process.

Let’s start a conversation about investing in #healthyplaces in Alberta

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**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

All new provincial infrastructure projects will demonstrate their support for healthy and equitable built environments, as outlined in new guidelines.

1. **Health:** The Ministry of Health supports and broadens the role of Alberta Health Services’ Public Health Professionals, such as public health inspectors, health promoters and medical officers of health, who already work collaboratively in local communities providing expertise on healthy built environments. They and public health academics are engaged in developing inter-ministerial policy guidelines and tools for designing and evaluating healthy built environments.

2. **Infrastructure:** All new healthcare facilities, schools, roads, bridges, and seniors’ and affordable housing investments will demonstrate how they support a healthy and equitable built environment.

3. **Transportation:** (a) Roads and bridge projects will demonstrate how they support healthy and equitable built environments. (b) An Active Transportation group is created to advise the Ministry and local communities on infrastructure projects, and liaise with other ministries. (c) A fund for active transportation projects for Alberta communities is created in partnership with the Ministry of Environment.

4. **Affordable Housing:** New affordable housing projects funded by the province are located in healthy and affordable places.

5. **Seniors’ Housing:** New seniors’ housing projects funded by the province are sited in healthy and age-friendly places.

6. **Education:** (a) The Ministry of Education invests in walking school buses and bike-to-school programs, and (b) incorporates healthy place-making into curriculum. (c) The Ministries of Education and Transportation collaborate with municipalities and towns to create active transportation infrastructure around schools, and contribute to healthy behaviour and successful learning environments.

7. **Tourism:** The Ministries of Tourism and Transportation collaborate on investments in regional active transportation infrastructure that meet the needs of local communities and tourists alike.

8. **Environment:** The Ministry of Environment and Parks will demonstrate how Land Use Frameworks support public health and collaborate with Municipal Affairs to enhance support for brownfield development.

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**ABOUT SUSTAINABLE CALGARY**

Our mission is to encourage and support community-level actions and initiatives that make Calgary a safer, healthier, more sustainable city. Projects are based on our State of the City reports, which identify where interventions are needed. Recent work with communities focuses on municipal design and planning processes. Our expertise is producing credible research, and engaging with communities to participate in research, discussion and action. We would love to work with you!