



Active Transportation in Hopkins

Existing Conditions: Environment, Access, and Attitudes

Draft Summary for Review

February 9, 2015



a people-centered,
asset-based approach to
sustainable mobility and place
community design group



Report Contents

This report includes the following sections:

1. Introduction

An Introduction to Active Transportation concepts.

2. Hopkins Community Health

A summary of overall health indicators for Hopkins, and a comparison to health indicators of Hennepin County as a whole.

3. Active Transportation in Hopkins

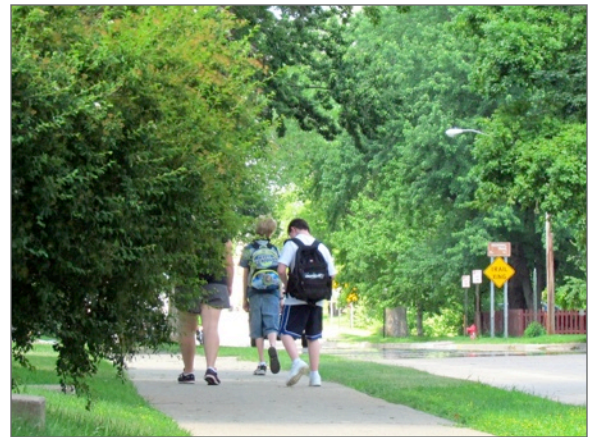
A description of existing conditions for Active Living in Hopkins as they relate to Active Transportation such as walking and biking, and to the perceptions and realities of Hopkins residents.

4. Health Disparity Communities

Discussion of health disparity communities and their presence in Hopkins.

5. Conclusions and Next Steps

Summary of the report and its implications for future Active Living and Active Transportation efforts in Hopkins.



Comfortable and convenient walking and biking infrastructure invites users of all ages and abilities to walk and bike as part of their normal, everyday routines.

How do Hopkins residents get to work?

According to recent US Census data, Hopkins residents walk at the same rate as, but bike less than, residents in Hennepin County overall:

Means of travel	Hopkins	Hennepin County
Drove alone	71.8%	73.7%
Carpooled	15.2%	8.2%
Public transit	4.9%	7.4%
Walked	3.2%	3.2%
Biked	0.8%	1.6%
Other	0.5%	0.8%
Work at home	3.7%	5.0%

US Census 2009-2013 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates.



1. Introduction

Active Living policies and initiatives seek to make physical activity (like walking or biking) a useful, easy, fun and normal part of everyday life for a community's residents.

An Active Living approach is multi-disciplinary, and recognizes that policies and initiatives to foster and support active communities must occur in several policy spheres—from transportation to land use, from community and economic development to public health and beyond.

Active Living is important for a community because it can:

- Improve physical and mental health;
- Reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and reduce transportation costs for families;
- Build safer, stronger communities; and
- Decrease the risk and severity of chronic disease and medical costs.

Developing a Baseline Understanding

To make recommendations for improving a community's orientation to Active Living, it's important to first understand that community's current conditions—its overall level of health, its residents' socioeconomic conditions, and the relative ease with which they can access health-promoting behaviors, including access to Active Transportation (walking, biking and transit).

Access to Active Transportation (where residents can easily incorporate physical activity into their everyday travel routines) is a key component for Active Living. Active Transportation, in combination with improved land-use, placemaking, access to healthy food, and other elements, support an Active Living approach.

The Role of Active Transportation

Walking is a foundation for individuals' health, well-being and sense of connection. Walking is free and



Being able to walk and bike safely and comfortably facilitates access to community destinations, and contributes to a healthy community with a high quality of life.

Why was Hopkins selected for this project?

The City of Hopkins was selected for this work by Hennepin County due to existing work the City has begun or completed, including:

- An adopted Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan;
- An adopted Complete Streets policy;
- SWLRT (Southwest Light Rail Transit) Station planning has begun;
- Safe Routes to School work for local schools in Hopkins; and
- The City wants to develop the 8th Avenue Artery to provide seamless walking and biking connections between Mainstreet and the future SWLRT station.

Active Living: Existing Conditions



accessible for people through the widest range of ages, income levels and physical abilities. It is the most basic form of transportation—at some point during every trip, everyone is a pedestrian. Like walking, bicycling offers mobility and connectivity at a relatively low cost for residents young and old alike.

Communities that provide safe, comfortable and convenient facilities for Active Transportation enjoy increased levels of health and equity, as more people are able to access school, transit, employment, services, recreation, and everyday needs.

Communities that don't provide comfortable walking and biking infrastructure, or where dispersed land use patterns, perceptions and realities of crime and public safety, and other factors are present, typically have lower rates of walking and bicycling. These lower rates negatively impact a community's residents, especially among health disparity communities.

This document provides a baseline understanding of Active Living conditions in Hopkins through a compilation of information derived from Hennepin County's SHAPE (Survey of the Health of All the Population and the Environment) surveys, Census data, and other resources.

Residents' Decision-Making for Travel

A variety of factors affect an individual's decision to walk or bike, including access to comfortable facilities, proper equipment, availability of nearby destinations, and attitudes and perceptions. Examining these factors is essential to understanding why people choose to walk and bike, or not to walk and bike.

Hopkins Community Health Status

In general, the Hopkins population is slightly less healthy than the rest of Hennepin County, in part due to slightly lower physical activity rates, higher rates of being overweight, and greater populations experiencing health disparities.



A marked crosswalk and small pedestrian refuge help indicate the importance of the Minnesota River Bluffs Trail crossing at this intersection with 5th Avenue South.



A separated trail along Minnetonka Mills Road connects portions of Hopkins on either side of Highway 169.



2. Hopkins Community Health

2.1 - Overall Health Status

Every four years, Hennepin County conducts a Survey of the Health of All the Population and the Environment (SHAPE). The goal of SHAPE is to report on the health of Hennepin County residents. SHAPE collects information in the following areas:

- Overall health;
- Health care access and utilization;
- Healthy lifestyle and behaviors; and
- Social-environmental factors.

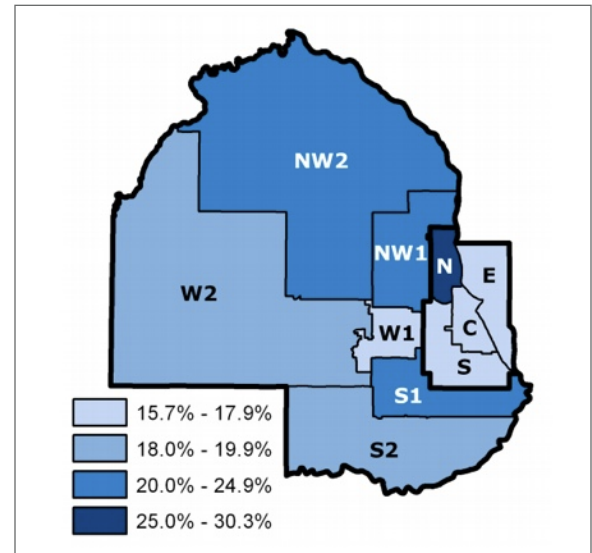
For data reporting purposes, Hopkins is included in the “W1: West Suburbs - Inner Ring” geographic area, with St. Louis Park.

Reviewing the most current (2010) SHAPE report for each of these areas provides a basic understanding of the health of Hopkins relative to the rest of Hennepin County.

A few comparisons have been selected for their impact on Active Living work. In general, Hopkins residents, compared to the rest of Hennepin County, are:

- Less likely to meet physical activity guidelines;
- Equally likely to have walked or biked for recreation or transportation purposes; and
- Slightly more likely to be overweight (BMI >25 and <30), but less likely to be obese (BMI >30).

Adult Obesity Rate



The obesity rate (percent of adults with Body Mass Index - BMI greater than 30) in area W1 (17%) is lower than for Hennepin County as a whole (20%). Hopkins is in geographic reporting area W1. Source: 2010 Hennepin County SHAPE.

Comparing Hopkins to Hennepin County

Hopkins is similar to Hennepin County in many of its health status indicators. According to 2010 SHAPE data, however, Hopkins residents are less likely to meet moderate or vigorous physical activity guidelines.

SHAPE Survey: Selected resident health data, 2010	W1/Hopkins *	Hennepin County
Health Conditions		
High blood pressure	18.1%	16.8%
Depression	22.5%	24.3%
Diabetes	5.5%	5.3%
Health Behaviors		
Overweight	34.9%	32.8%
Met moderate or vigorous activity guidelines	70.9%	76.8%

*Source: 2010 Hennepin County SHAPE. * Hopkins results are for SHAPE area W1.*



3. Active Transportation in Hopkins

3.1 - Introduction

Many factors affect an individual's decision to walk or bike, including access to comfortable infrastructure, appropriate equipment, availability of nearby destinations, and attitudes and perceptions. Examining these factors is essential to understanding why people choose to walk and bike, or not to walk and bike.

3.2 - The Walking and Biking Network

The physical environment, including walking and biking facilities, plays an important role in determining whether someone will choose to walk or bike. Hopkins is compact with a significant grid street network, a thriving commercial district, and numerous walking and biking amenities.

Walking and biking assets in Hopkins include sidewalks, local multi-use trails, bike lanes, and four regional trails: the North Cedar Lake Trail, the Cedar Lake Trail, the Minnesota River Bluffs Trail, and the Lake Minnetonka Trail.

The Hopkins Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan

The 2013 *Hopkins Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* identifies barriers to walking and biking in the city, and proposes infrastructure solutions for improving walking and biking conditions in the city. Hopkins can become a place where residents can meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute journey on foot (even less time on a bike). Key destinations—including access to schools, parks, workplaces, libraries, and access to the SWLRT (Southwest Light Rail Transit) station areas (and the rest of the region)—could be comfortably and safely accessed within a short walk from every Hopkins residents' home.

Based on extensive community engagement, the *Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* identifies existing barriers to walking and biking in the city, including Minnesota Highway 7, Blake Road, and Excelsior Boulevard/County Road 3. See Section 2.3 for more discussion about walking and biking access.

Walking and Biking Connections



Hopkins has an extensive existing sidewalk network (shown in solid red). Four regional trails (shown in purple) converge in Hopkins.

Shared-use paths further connect the city (dotted-red lines). Three future SWLRT stations (shown in orange) are planned within Hopkins.

Active Living initiatives in Hopkins

The City of Hopkins has completed several important initiatives to advance walking and biking in the city, including:

- A citywide Complete Streets policy
- The 2013 Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan
- Bicycle-Friendly Community Honorable Mention
- Planning for pedestrian and bicycle connections to SWLRT stations
- Safe Routes to School (SRTS) improvements near city schools
- Police Department bicycle safety education program
- Planning and development of the 8th Avenue Artery to provide seamless walking and biking connections between Mainstreet and SWLRT



The Artery

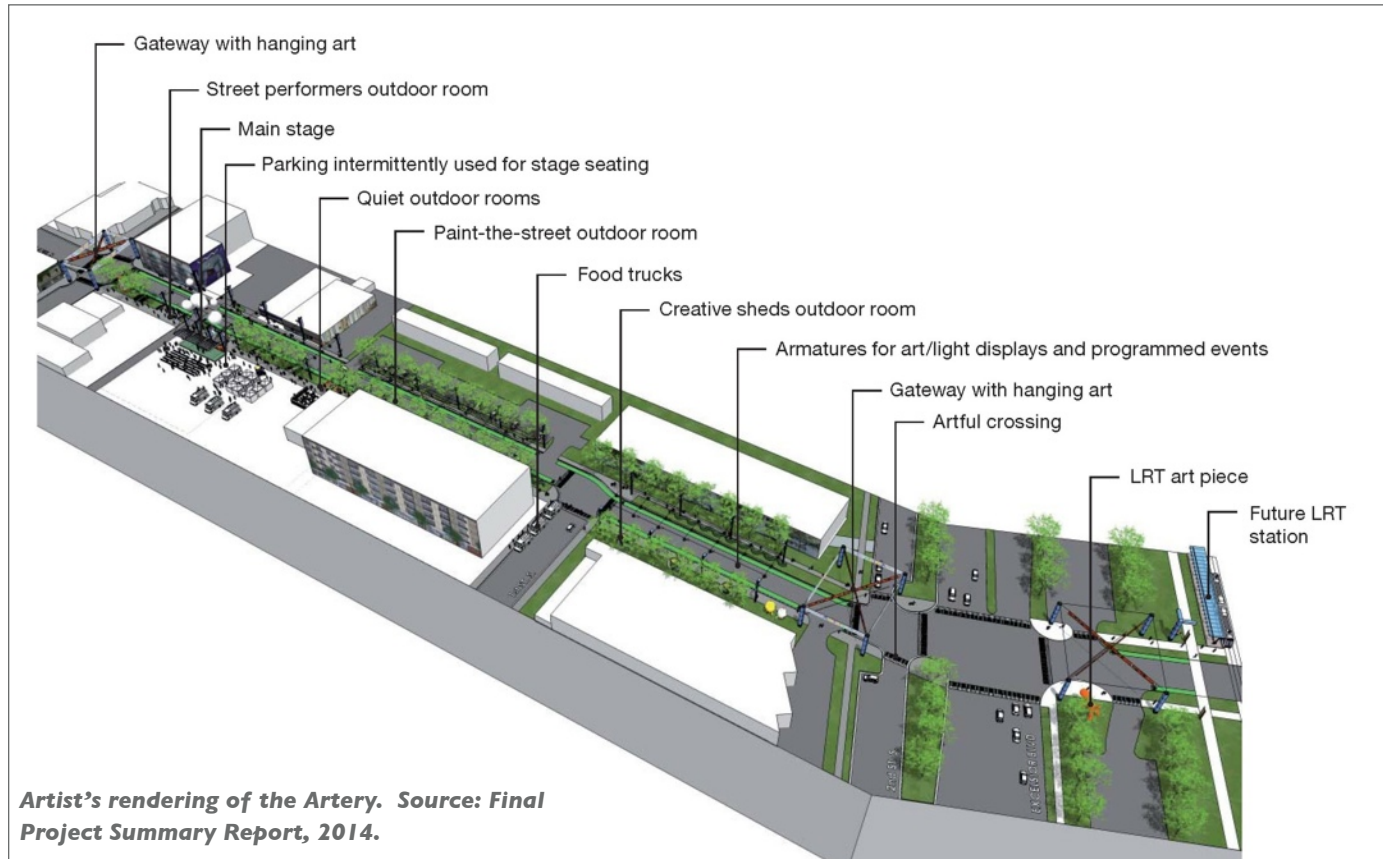
The Artery is to be an arts-infused, pedestrian-, bicycle- and people-friendly space that will draw and seamlessly connect residents, visitors and transit riders between Mainstreet and the SWLRT station along 8th Avenue South.

The Artery would serve as the main north-south connection between Excelsior Boulevard and Mainstreet, and would be a one-of-a-kind public space that addresses the long-identified need to improve movement between Excelsior Blvd and Mainstreet for pedestrians and bicyclists while attracting transit riders to Downtown Hopkins. The Artery would provide important walking and biking connection to SWLRT and to regional walking and biking corridors and could thus make a significant contribution to the city's Active Living orientation.

Building on the success of Hopkins's 2014 Park(ing) Day, a project to build a pilot implementation of the Artery in summer of 2015 has been initiated.



Artist's rendering of a public performance space along the Artery.





3.3 - Walking and Biking Access to Destinations

Existing Rates of Walking and Biking

The figure to the right compares resident experiences with walking or biking for recreation and for transportation. The percentage corresponds to how many respondents answered the question, “During an average week (when weather permitted), I walked/biked...” Hopkins residents reported walking or biking at similar or slightly higher rates than Hennepin County residents as a whole in all three cases.

While Hopkins residents have relatively high walking and biking rates, rates could be increased further by addressing connectivity gaps in the walking and biking network.

Ability to Walk to Destinations in Hopkins

According to the *Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan*, city residents would like better walking and biking access to many destinations, including schools, parks, and shopping. Improved walking and biking access to more destinations allows residents to more easily incorporate physical activity into daily routines.

Existing barriers for pedestrians and cyclists come in many forms and require a variety of solutions. Although Hopkins does not have natural or topographical barriers, several barriers exist within its built environment in the form of intersections, wide roads and highways, and an incomplete pedestrian and bicycle network.

Excelsior Boulevard/County Road 3, Minnesota Highway 7, and Blake Road are prominent barriers to connectivity in the city. These barriers make it more difficult for residents to walk and bike for transportation and recreation. This negatively affects children, health disparity and low income populations who may not have access to an automobile, and those with physical limitations. Excelsior Boulevard, in particular, cuts off the southern portion of Hopkins from the amenities in Downtown Hopkins.

Comparing Walking and Biking

In an average week, I ...	W1/ Hopkins *	Hennepin County
Walked or biked for recreation	79%	79%
Walked for transportation purposes	49%	48%
Biked for transportation purposes	20%	20%

Source: 2010 Hennepin County SHAPE.
* Hopkins results are for SHAPE area W1.



The *Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* identifies weaknesses or problem areas (shown in red) identified by city residents. Blake Road is identified as being a major corridor in Hopkins that is difficult to cross.



Excelsior Boulevard acts as a barrier to connectivity for walking and biking in Hopkins.



Access to Information and Equipment

Other elements of access that may affect lower-income residents of Hopkins include:

- Access to bicycles and helmets; and
- Access to information on where to walk or bike.

The *Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* proposes wayfinding signage and locations to improve walking and biking travel throughout Hopkins. Printed and online walk/bike maps and Earn-a-Bike programs are examples of initiatives that could reduce these barriers and improve access to active transportation among health disparity communities in Hopkins. (Earn-A-Bike programs aim to overcome economic barriers to bicycle access. These programs help expand access to active transportation to the wider community.)

3.4 - Potential Infrastructure Solutions

A few of the potential solutions already existing in Hopkins' toolbox (as identified in the *Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan*) are highlighted below and on the following page.

What are Hopkins residents saying about walking and biking?

About walking and biking facilities

- The trail system is good, but could be improved;
- More pedestrian and bicycling facilities are needed, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and other dedicated bicycle space; and
- Crossing wide streets is difficult in some locations.

About access to walking and biking

- More bike racks and bike storage is needed at apartments, businesses, and other locations;
- Poor lighting is a problem, especially in the neighborhoods; and
- Better wayfinding is needed, particularly for routes that connect to regional trails.

Source: Hopkins Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan.



The Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon, or HAWK (in combination with crosswalk/crossbike treatments) would help people walking or on bicycles to cross major corridors such as Excelsior Boulevard.



High-visibility crosswalk and “crossbike” treatments, bicycle and walk signals, and ADA-compliant curb ramps could improve Artery connections to SWLRT.



A cycletrack along the 8th Avenue Artery will increase rider comfort and create a direct connection from SWLRT to other destinations in Hopkins.



A vision for major corridors in Hopkins: Narrower travel lanes for motor vehicles allow for other road uses such as bike lanes, street trees and enhanced sidewalk space.



3.5 - Attitudes about Walking and Biking

In addition to infrastructure, wayfinding, and access to equipment, personal attitudes and perceptions can affect rates of walking and biking. These attitudes and perceptions may relate to lighting, public safety / crime rates, and safety concerns related to motor vehicles.

Public Safety and Crime

According to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Crime Book, the violent crime rate is lower in Hopkins than in Hennepin County as a whole (see figure to the right).

Attitudes and Perceptions of Safety

A lower rate of residents in the W1 geographic area—which includes Hopkins—have fear of violence at night than Hennepin County residents overall. However, a slightly lower rate of residents feel their children are safe in their neighborhood when compared to Hennepin County as a whole (see figure to the right). This fear may contribute to a reduction in parent comfort and a decrease in walking rates among children for travel to school, parks, and other destinations.

Negative perceptions of safety related to exposure to crime while walking and biking may keep people from integrating walking and biking into healthy everyday routines, even if these perceptions do not reflect actual conditions. Perceptions of safety are important to monitor as Hopkins continues its Active Living initiatives. An increase in walking and cycling rates can also lead to a stronger sense of community connection as a result of increased interpersonal contact between residents, and to improved feelings of safety through the addition of more “eyes on the street.”

Comparing Crime Rates

Violent Crime Rates	Hopkins	Hennepin County
Crime Rate per 100,000 people	2,696	3,753

Source: 2013 Minnesota Department of Public Safety Crime Book, Part I Crime Rates.

Perception of Safety

Perceptions of Safety	W1/Hopkins *	Hennepin County
Rate of fear of violence at night	13%	21%
Rate of feeling children are safe	44%	45%

Notes:

“Violence at night” percentage listed is how many respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement, “People in this neighborhood are afraid to go out at night due to violence.”

“Children are safe” percentage is how many respondents strongly agreed with the statement, “Children are safe in this neighborhood.”

Source: 2010 Hennepin County SHAPE.

*** Hopkins results are for SHAPE area W1.**



4. Health Disparity Communities

4.1 - What is a Health Disparity Community?

Health disparity communities are those that experience differences in health outcomes and/or status when compared to the general population. Population groups that experience health disparities can differ from the general population by race or ethnicity, income, disability, or other factors. Health disparities are a known problem affecting ethnic minorities such as African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos. Health disparities also impact the elderly, immigrants, and people with disabilities.

These groups are at higher risk of being uninsured, have more limited access to care, and experience lower quality of care. This leads to a higher prevalence of chronic conditions and less favorable health outcomes when compared with the general population. Active Living efforts in Hopkins seek to increase awareness of health disparities in the city and develop sustaining programs to close the gap in health outcomes.

4.2 - Health Disparity Communities in Hopkins

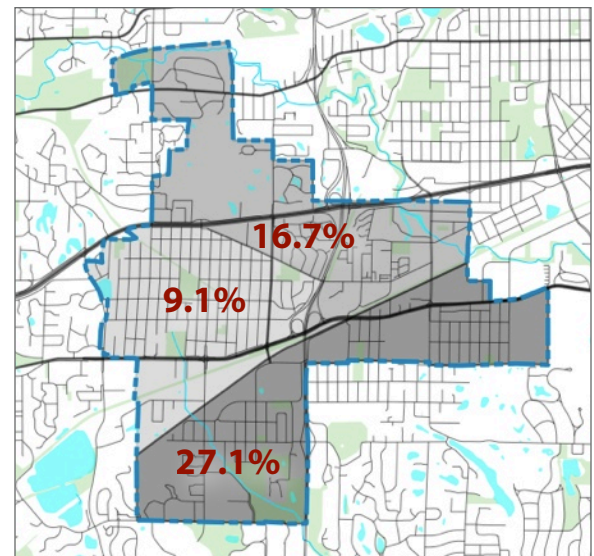
Ethnically Diverse and Immigrant Populations

According to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, Hopkins is an ethnically and racially diverse community with a population of 62% white and 38% non-white, including Latinos, Africans, and African Americans. Hennepin County as a whole has a population that is 29% non-white. Census information indicates an increasing population of ethnic and racial minorities in Hopkins over time. Africans and African Americans make up 12% of Hopkins' population, while Latinos make up 10% and Asians make up 8%.

Poverty in Hopkins

Hopkins and other suburban areas in the region have experienced a rise in poverty rates. Since 2000, the rate of Hopkins residents living below the poverty rate has almost doubled. Almost 18% of Hopkins residents live in poverty, compared to almost 13% for Hennepin County.

Poverty in Hopkins



Poverty is unevenly distributed in Hopkins. Southwestern and southeast portions of the city have higher poverty rates than other parts of the city. Almost 18% of all residents in Hopkins live below the poverty level.

Source: 2009 - 2013 U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

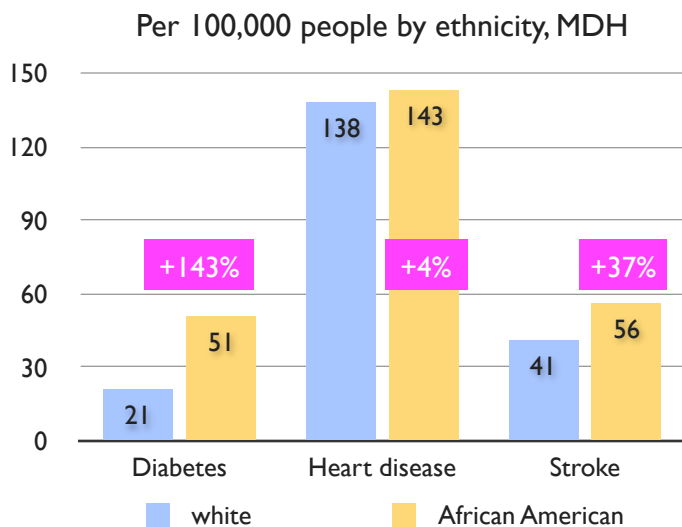
Obesity has significant impacts on health disparity communities in Hennepin County

According to Hennepin County data, obesity disproportionately affects many population groups, including seniors, residents with low income, African Americans, Latinos, and older residents with a disability.



4.3 - Adverse Health Outcomes in Disparity Communities

The differences in health outcomes between disparity communities and the general population are real and often significant. Three conditions that result in reduced quality of life and increased mortality are diabetes, heart disease and stroke. The chart below notes differences in the prevalence of these conditions between Minnesota residents who define their ethnicity as African American and those who define their ethnicity as white:



The difference in rates at which African American residents experience these conditions in comparison to white residents is shown in the magenta box. Diabetes, heart disease and stroke are strongly correlated with lower levels of physical activity. More opportunities to walk or bike may increase resident participation in these modes. This can lead to more favorable health outcomes for individuals and for communities overall. Physical infrastructure improvements, combined with new non-infrastructure investments (programming, information and outreach), may lead to improved outcomes for health disparity communities in the city.

Physical activity and health

Some facts related to proven health benefits of regular physical activity, at moderate and low intensities (like walking and cycling):

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days per week to maintain health
- In 2005, only half of all Minnesotans met the CDC recommendation
- Three hours of bicycling per week reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke by 50%

Development patterns and health

The predominant pattern of auto-oriented development that exists in many communities in the US make walking and biking more difficult. Dispersed land uses make accessing destinations challenging, particularly for health disparity populations with lower incomes, with no or less reliable automobile access, and with disabilities. Even in cities that have a more compact, historical form (like Hopkins), large arterial streets with high traffic speeds and volumes create barriers to walking and bicycling.



5. Conclusions and Next Steps

This document provides a baseline understanding of the Active Living framework of Hopkins as it relates to walking and biking: the health of its residents, the current state of walking and biking, and the factors that affect walking and biking rates in the city. Opportunities exist in Hopkins to improve walking and biking, including the following:

Addressing physical barriers to connectivity

- Improve crossing treatments
- Implement the Artery pilot project
- Experiment with the infrastructure recommendations identified in the *2013 Hopkins Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan*

Addressing barriers related to access

- The implementation of an Earn-a-Bike program will increase access to bicycling by providing free or low-cost bicycles
- The development of printed and online walk/bike maps will improve city wayfinding and increase access to the walking and biking network
- Increased police engagement can help to improve the perception of safety by residents

Addressing barriers related to policy

- All future Active Living programs and policies in the city should continue to actively engage members of health disparity communities within Hopkins
- Policies can help influence the form and function of the built environment so that it is more walkable and bikeable
- Future 2014 SHAPE data can be compared with the 2010 SHAPE data to measure progress

Continued efforts, programs, and policies that make Hopkin's built environment more conducive to walking and biking will foster a culture of healthy daily physical activity among its residents, which will lead to great gains for residents' health, prosperity and overall quality of life.



The City of Hopkins installed a temporary parklet downtown as part of Park(ing) Day 2014. The parklet was experiential and interactive, and helped residents and businesses think creatively about 8th Avenue. The City will install temporary streetscape and pedestrian and bicycle improvements along several blocks of 8th Avenue in 2015.

Best Practices Toolbox

A Best Practices for Active Living Toolbox has been developed for Hopkins as part of this project. The Toolbox includes sections on Infrastructure, Policy, Planning, Programs, Placemaking, and Pilot Projects.



A potential vision of Blake Road (from the Hopkins Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan).