

HOUSING, LIVABILITY, AND HEALTH

LOCAL PLANNING HANDBOOK

A city can encourage housing stock that enhances the health and livability of a community. While these efforts may go beyond what a city can require, city policies can and do support active, inclusive communities. Below are some of the policy approaches and programs a city might use to enhance health and livability.

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE HOUSING

Our region is and will be racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse with residents of all backgrounds and preferences. Culturally sensitive housing acknowledges the many ways people live their lives, including how they cook, eat, worship, and socialize in their homes. Communities can encourage Culturally Sensitive Design of new residential construction or rehabilitation through design guidelines, technical assistance, or in Requests for Proposals for the development of publicly owned land. For more information, see the report [Toward Culturally Enriched Communities](#).

Another way to address cultural housing needs is to ensure that new immigrants are aware of their rights and responsibilities as renters. Rental rules and norms in the United States may be different from other places. The video [A Good, Safe Place to Live](#), available in five languages, explains not only tenant roles but landlord rights and responsibilities as well. Providing access to this video for new immigrant communities could help prevent or minimize misunderstandings, tensions, or conflict in your community. Some communities have also used prepared printed resources for tenants, available in multiple languages, such as [Corcoran](#).

ACTIVE LIVING

Urban design standards and other tools such as [Health Impact Assessments](#) can be a part of a community's overall infrastructure and land use plans to address active living at the neighborhood level.

Rehabilitation or new construction of housing also presents opportunities to encourage active living on a smaller scale. In multifamily housing, welcoming and visible stairwells (along with accessible, but not central elevators) can encourage more residents to take the stairs. Providing secure bicycle storage (or even maintenance support) can encourage increased bicycle usage. Creating active first-floor uses and quality outdoor spaces within the site can encourage pedestrian activity from the building as well as for the surrounding area. For more ideas, visit [Hennepin County's Active Living Design Checklist](#).

RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTIONS PROGRAMS

Many communities in the region have rental housing inspections programs, including [Bloomington](#), [Blaine](#), and [Rosemount](#). Rental housing inspections programs, usually a part of a rental licensing program, can improve the health and safety of your community's rental housing by reviewing units for issues such as mold, functioning smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, or electrical concerns.

Most counties also have environmental programs for residential health hazards such as lead or radon contamination. Connecting your residents, especially vulnerable populations, with such resources can make a difference in the health of your community. Find out more in the [Effective Housing Referrals](#) resource sheet.

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