

PLANNING THROUGH A PUBLIC HEALTH LENS

The City of Osseo took a unique approach to its [2040 Comprehensive Plan](#) by writing it through a public health lens. Public health is a comprehensive, prevention-based approach to promoting human wellbeing. It acknowledges the influence of medical care and biology, but asserts that social and environmental factors also play a significant role in determining health. Throughout the Plan, the City highlights five [health themes](#) that demonstrate its goals for the future: access to healthy food, physical activity and active living, community safety, social health and equity, and healthy natural and built environment. These themes emerged from community input during the engagement process. The City also used the [Social Determinants of Health](#) as a framework for developing these themes.

The City decided to take this approach to planning due to its desire to improve community health and vitality. It believes it can achieve this goal by promoting health across a broad spectrum of city life and services. As a result, the City hopes Osseo will be a healthy place to live for all generations—now and in the future.

WHAT MAY HELP OTHER COMMUNITIES?

Community Engagement

In the years leading up to its 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the City employed a variety of engagement efforts to determine the community's vision for the future. These efforts included pop-up events, community visioning meetings, and steering committee feedback. Throughout this process, the City listened to personal accounts of people's experiences living and working in Osseo. Despite the broad range of feedback, the community's responses often revolved around a common topic: health. This pattern drove the City's decision to frame the comprehensive plan from a public health perspective. Throughout the Plan, the City clearly presents the influence of community voices on its proposed policies. Most chapters have a "What We Heard" section that lists the community's top priorities as determined by the City's engagement efforts. By incorporating the community perspective, the City personalized its vision for the future in a way that prioritizes its residents' health and wellbeing.

Putting the Plan in Perspective

Planning through a public health lens allowed the City to address the complexity and intersectionality of health in the context of its community. Long-range planning occurs at a high level and it can be difficult for people to connect with a twenty-year vision.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT

COUNTY: Hennepin
POPULATION: 2,753

Osseo:

- was organized in 1852 and is one of the oldest communities in Hennepin County.
- offers a small-town feel with a variety of housing, a walkable street grid, and proximity to retail and services.
- has implemented planning strategies through a public health lens to promote the health and wellbeing of its residents.

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OTHER RESOURCES:

- [Statewide Health Improvement Program \(SHIP\)](#)
- [Active Living Hennepin County](#)



Boerboom Veterans Memorial Park across from City Hall offers open space perfect for walks, picnics, and other community gatherings.



As part of the "Step To It" challenge, the City mapped out 1- & 2-mile walking routes to promote active living. This sign is in Boerboom Veterans Memorial Park.



The City encourages residents to lead active lifestyles. They have worked to improve the walkability, bikability, and overall connectivity, especially in the Downtown area.

In response to this reality, the City attempted to bridge this gap by using a public health lens to demonstrate the Plan's direct impact on the community and on individual residents. This decision stems from the fact that health is an extremely personal concept to which all people can relate. As a result, this approach not only fosters community engagement, but promotes better understanding of the implications and importance of long-range planning. Increased community involvement in the planning process also acts as an accountability measure for the City to help ensure the implementation of action items outlined in the Plan.

Applying Health to All Plan Elements

The City's approach to planning through a public health lens demonstrates the applicability of health across a range of plan elements including land use, [transportation](#), housing, parks, and water resources. Regarding land use, the City plans to limit the number of fast food retailers and work to attract businesses with a health-promotion focus. In its Parks and Community Facilities section, the City discusses its plans to encourage adding community garden plots in conjunction with high-density development, develop health-related education and programming, and support initiatives to integrate health, nutrition, and cooking education in local schools.

The City also plans to address growing concerns around food insecurity in the community. It believes that ensuring adequate nutrition is an essential first step to progressing other health indicators. In 2017, the City partnered with local non-profits to create the [Osseo Orchard](#), a fruit tree and berry orchard located on the south end of the Osseo Public Works building site. The orchard will provide a wealth of health benefits to the community as residents are welcome to visit the orchard and take advantage of ripe produce. The remaining produce will also be distributed to local food shelves. Space remains available at the site for future community planting or recreational activities.



These icons represent the health themes highlighted throughout the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan.



The City partnered with a local nonprofit, The Food Group, to create the Osseo Orchard. The community orchard promotes access to healthy, locally-sourced food.

Collaboration and Partnerships

The City's efforts to promote public health were supported by the [Creating Healthier Communities](#) project, a financial and technical assistance program sponsored by [Active Living Hennepin County](#) and the Minnesota Department of Health's [Statewide Health Improvement Partnership](#) (SHIP). This project took a broad approach to promoting community-wide health in Osseo by examining the influence of policies, systems, and environments. The City later used this information to inform the framework for its comprehensive plan and the development of its five health themes. These efforts were also guided by a community leadership team comprised of city and county staff, residents, officials, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders.

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