Build Healthy Places Network

Principles for Building Healthy and Prosperous Communities
For work across sectors in low-income communities to improve health and wellbeing.
Online at www.build.health/Principles

Principle 1:
Collaborate with the community

Interventions should be conducted *with* a community, rather than *for* a community. Through an inclusive and fair process community members should inform and share in ownership of the work.

A community-led approach to building healthy and prosperous places:

- Amplifies the voices of diverse community leaders, families, and residents
- Leverages and builds upon existing community assets and capacity
- Focuses on priorities identified by the community
- Builds trust while strengthening and developing community leadership
- Celebrates and incorporates the cultural history of the community
- Creates a transparent process to resolve friction and conflict

Principle 2:
Embed equity

Persistent discrimination and bias against people due to race, ethnicity, income, ability, gender, sexual identity, and other attributes leads to unfair and avoidable health and economic disparities. Integrating equity into policy, funding, and programs will help narrow these gaps, whether in rural, suburban, or urban communities.

An equitable approach to building healthy and prosperous places:

- Overcomes entrenched barriers to opportunity by confronting structural racism, discrimination, and disenfranchisement
- Incorporates equity into all processes and desired outcomes
- Measures disparities before, during, and after interventions to track progress toward equitable outcomes
- Ensures that members of low-income communities and communities of color are full partners in planning and implementation
- Strengthens community resilience and community assets

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Principle 3:
Mobilize across sectors

The roots of poor health and poverty are complex. A siloed approach is inefficient and ineffective. To be successful, work must intentionally engage multiple sectors to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities.

An integrated approach to building healthy and prosperous places:

- Forges new partnerships and encourages learning across sectors
- Coordinates sectors (e.g., education, employment, housing, transportation, and health care) that can influence improvements in health, prosperity, and equitable opportunity
- Leverages public and private resources and existing community assets
- Advances equitable policies (e.g., federal, state, and local)
- Includes members of the community as partners in cross-sector coalitions

Principle 4:
Increase prosperity to improve health

Health and wealth are deeply intertwined, with financial struggles limiting opportunities to live a healthy life and poor health limiting opportunities to build wealth. True transformation mandates systems-level interventions, policy changes, and multi-sector investments that aim to break the cycle of poverty and poor health for children and families.

A holistic approach to building healthy and prosperous places:

- Recognizes that wealth has accrued unevenly due to barriers such as geography, disinvestment, structural racism, discriminatory hiring practices, and inequitable educational opportunities
- Builds wealth with a focus on low-income people, without leaving anyone behind
- Works to change systems, policies, and practices that perpetuate income inequality
- Appropriately harnesses market forces and regulatory power to create opportunities (e.g., in housing, transportation, small business, and other sectors)
- Measures and monetizes impact to induce additional investments that create equitable outcomes
- Underscores the belief that American values of prosperity, opportunity, and economic mobility should be accessible to all

Principle 5:
Commit over the long term

Quick fixes and one-off projects will not lead to sustained health improvement or lasting prosperity in low-income communities. Poverty and poor health are enduring problems, requiring a long-term commitment among funders, stakeholders, community members, government, and business.

An outcomes-focused approach to building healthy and prosperous places:

- Articulates the lasting change sought
- Innovates and adjusts based on the evidence of what works
- Plans for and mitigates against unintended outcomes, such as displacement
- Compares how more and less advantaged groups are faring over time
- Embeds learning, flexibility, and community accountability
- Establishes measurable short-, medium-, and long-term objectives and continually tracks progress toward those objectives