

Insights for a Healthy, Equitable New Downtown

Creating Together | Postcard Project

Presented by Imagine Deliver
January 14, 2021



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What is the Postcard Project?

Imagine Deliver launched the Postcard Project* in November 2021 through early January 2022 to learn what community members, patients, and Hennepin Healthcare team members envision for the hospital system's 8-block Downtown campus. Hennepin Healthcare and Imagine Deliver collected insights on health and wellness in Downtown Minneapolis by organizing tabling events, activating community partnerships to distribute postcards, and soliciting input on the [Our Future webpage](#). Participants were asked:

- What would you build in Downtown Minneapolis to improve your health and wellness? Draw and label it.
- What 3 improvements, concepts, or features would make you feel like Downtown Minneapolis was built for you?

Highlights



187

Participants



10

Outreach Events*



5

Major Themes



62%

of participants identified as Black,
Indigenous, or People of Color (n=132)



59%

of participants were under the age
of 40 (n=136)








41%

of participants were age 40 or
older (n=136)

*Locations included: Hennepin Healthcare Downtown Campus, University of Minnesota East and West Bank, and North Minneapolis.

Summarized Insights by Theme

Theme	Description
 <p data-bbox="237 259 490 279">Make Public Use a Priority</p>	<p data-bbox="614 259 1870 358">Participants imagine a Downtown that truly feels open and accessible to the public. Participants who live in, work in, or visit Downtown envision opportunities to be in community with one another in both organic and intentional ways. Participants imagine Downtown Minneapolis to be a place that embodies the rich diversity of the area with public events, community-created works of art, and access to charging stations.</p>
 <p data-bbox="237 401 548 445">Invest in Abundant Recreational and Green Spaces</p>	<p data-bbox="614 401 1870 472">Participants dream of more ways to be active and enjoy leisure Downtown, especially as temperatures drop in the winter months. They imagine green indoor and outdoor recreational, multi-use areas that include spaces for play, exercise equipment, meditation rooms, yoga studios, and fitness classes.</p>
 <p data-bbox="237 516 568 560">Focus on Community Strengths to Increase Resource Utilization</p>	<p data-bbox="614 516 1870 642">Participants envision a Downtown that invests in community members who are historically undervalued. Communities that thrive have a number of key features such as equitable access to affordable housing and employment opportunities with a livable wage. Participants imagine an 8-block campus that harnesses Downtown Minneapolis' and Elliot Park's community strengths of diversity and resilience. This can be achieved by investing in resources such as programs that distribute affordable, healthy food, and low-barrier mental healthcare supports like clinics and support groups.</p>
 <p data-bbox="237 685 452 705">Make Navigation Easy</p>	<p data-bbox="614 685 1870 811">Participants envision a Downtown Minneapolis with a robust and efficient city navigation system that minimizes exposures to pollutants, decreases feelings of anxiety, and helps residents plan their travel time more effectively. A couple of the solutions they offered were large multilingual signage and skyways that are more accessible from the street level. Participants also dreamed of opportunities to increase access to and attractiveness of public transportation for low-income patients by offering subsidized public transportation with their healthcare visit.</p>
 <p data-bbox="237 855 529 898">Lead the Nation in Anti-Racist Safety Design</p>	<p data-bbox="614 855 1870 980">Participants dream of a Downtown that is safe and welcoming to all by considering how identity can play a role in creating solutions for safety and security. They believe partnerships with community leaders and governmental bodies to advocate for community lead initiatives and policies will be key for improving safety and addressing systemic issues that criminalize historically undervalued populations. Some of their ideas included utilizing street safety advocates and hiring trained mental health professionals to accompany police to mental health crisis calls.</p>

Postcard Project Themes



Make Public Use a Priority

ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACE

Participants imagine a Downtown that truly feels open and accessible to the public. Participants who live in, work in, or visit Downtown envision opportunities to be in community with one another in both organic and intentional ways. Participants imagine Downtown Minneapolis to be a place that embodies the rich diversity of the area.

IDEAS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Community members shared ideas and features that would help public space in Downtown feel more accessible including:

- More places to sit outdoors
- Art and murals that draw people to the space
- Telecommute spaces
- Public restrooms
- Public water fountains
- Public electrical outlets
- Organized community gatherings

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Respondents dream of Downtown Minneapolis being a place they choose to spend time in. Activities and sociability are major factors that contribute to making a public space feel welcoming. Successful public spaces are inclusive of the diverse local residents and create a social space that encourages participation.^{1,2}

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PUBLIC SPACE DEVELOPMENT

Truly equitable development that embodies the surrounding communities' needs and occurs in collaboration with community members. Ongoing engagement ensures that public spaces shift in step with the changing priorities of the communities who access them.



In Their Own Words

Make Public Use a Priority

"Community potluck. [We can] gather to share food. [Have a] "cook night" get-together."

"Cultural center [with] poetry"

"Summer-long art market."

"Add public art on the streets."

"Monuments of historical BIPOC individuals (from MN)"

"Creative placemaking."

"Firepits and seating"

"An amphitheater for outdoor concerts with [a] playground, more of a 'central park.'"

"Encouraged public gatherings."

"More open space to work in (school work, remote work) with coffee."

"Downtown should be where we gather for healing and to provide comfort and restore spirits."

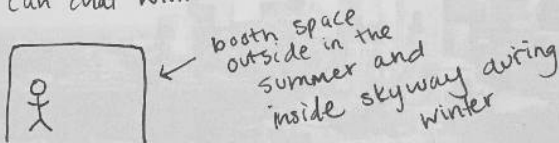
"More public bathroom access and water filtration stations."

Let's Imagine a Healthier Downtown Minneapolis Together!

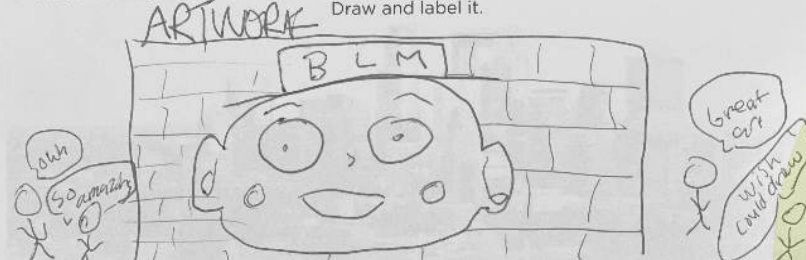
What would you build in Downtown Minneapolis to improve health and wellness?

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Draw and label it.

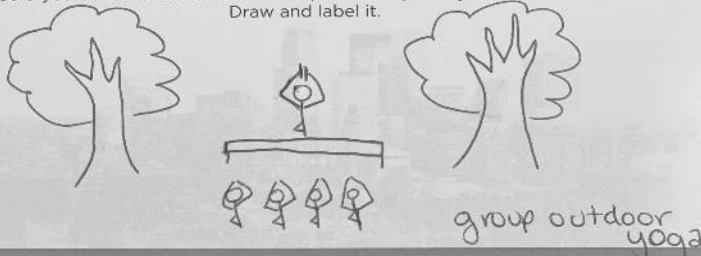
mental health
checkpoints with fun activities, candy, and people you
can chat with



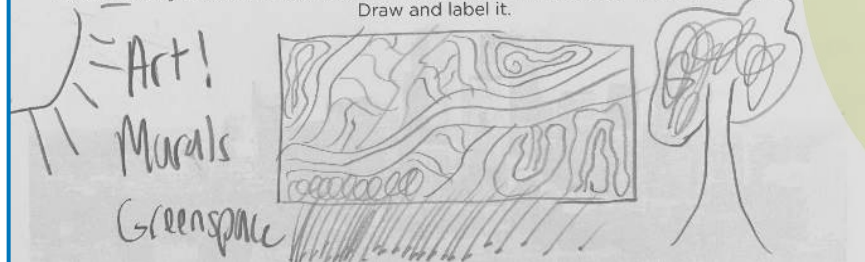
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Invest in Abundant Recreational and Green Spaces

RECREATIONAL & GREEN SPACES

Participants dream of more ways to be active and enjoy leisure Downtown, especially as temperatures drop in the winter months. Multi-use spaces are of particular interest because community members imagine being able to access multiple forms of recreation at once.

They imagine green indoor and outdoor recreational and multi-use areas that include spaces for play, exercise equipment, meditation rooms, yoga studios, and fitness classes.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Green spaces not only support the beautification of urban spaces; they also have a positive impact on mental health. Providing organic places for communities to gather creates more opportunities to engage in recreational activities and mitigate some of the effects of climate change.^{3,4}

CONSIDERATIONS FOR RECREATIONAL SPACE

It is important to make sure these spaces and opportunities are accessible to people with disabilities, such as smooth pathways, ramps, handrails, and assessment of noise pollution.⁵ Increasing access for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color could look like waiving entrance fees to parks, renting or subsidizing outdoor equipment, and featuring community organizations that lead recreational activities.

IDEAS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Community members shared ideas and features that would help public space in Downtown feel more geared toward recreation and greenery:

- Running tracks on top of buildings
- Summer programming for adults
- Indoor parks for year-round recreational opportunities
- Outdoor gyms for adults
- All female and non-binary owned gym
- Rooftop gardens/greenhouses
- Water features like waterfalls
- More trees to provide shade
- Inner-city park with streams
- Dog parks/dog-friendly areas
- Equipment that community members can rent
- Plants and trees with edible fruits and nuts

In Their Own Words

Invest in Abundant Recreational and Green Spaces

"A building that has free exercise equipment."

"Roller skating with round systems so people can open skate and learn from one another."

"All female and non-binary owned gym!"

"Place to dance (no drinking involved)."

"Walking/bike trail like [the ones] around lakes."

"Ramp[s] to be able to join in playground programs like summer camp [and] waterpark[s] for adults and kids."

"Trees, grassed areas, non-concrete surfaces — make it softer and places to feel safe."

"I would build canopies over the sidewalks to provide shade during hot summer days."

"Waterfalls, natural plantings, clean and maintained."

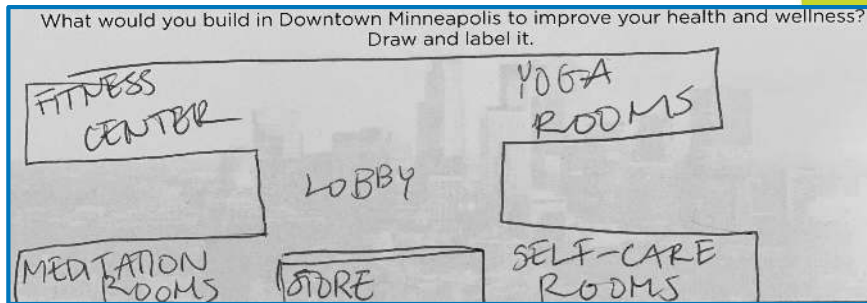
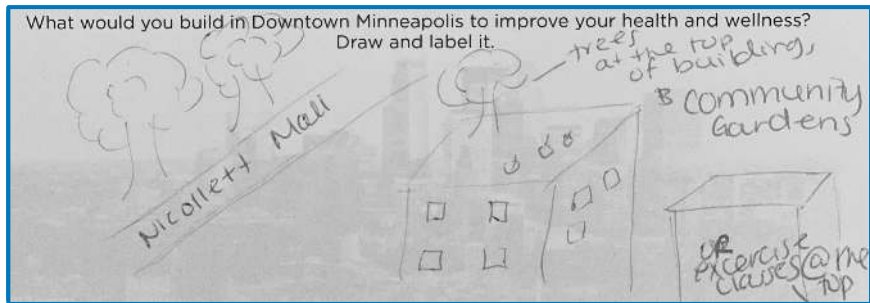
"A community garden where food is free to all passing through."

"A culturally artistic green space that welcomes [people of] all backgrounds and all ages."

"Means Park in Downtown St. Paul has a stream — would be cool if Minneapolis had that."

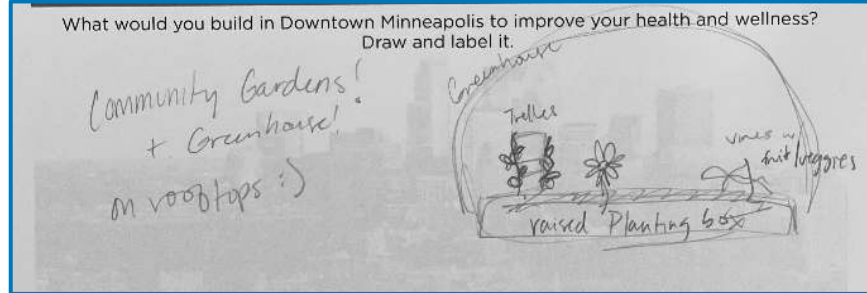
Let's Imagine a Healthier Downtown Minneapolis Together!

What would you build in Downtown Minneapolis to improve health and wellness?



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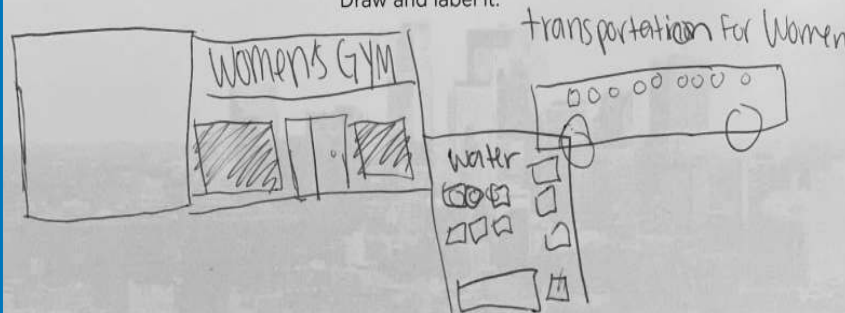
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Draw and label it.



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Focus on Community Strengths to Increase Resource Utilization

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Participants envision a Downtown that invests in community members who are historically undervalued. Communities that thrive have a number of key features such as equitable access to affordable housing and employment opportunities with a livable wage. Participants imagine an 8-block campus that harnesses Downtown Minneapolis and Elliot Park's community strengths of diversity and resilience.

IDEAS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Community members shared ideas and features that would help increase the knowledge and utilization of community resources.

- Increased access to timely mental health
- Computer/tablet rentals
- Affordable rental spaces for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color entrepreneurs.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Many of the community resources mentioned are considered to be social determinants of health. Hospitals and healthcare systems play an important role in mitigating community-level harm and risk — reducing health disparities and reducing healthcare costs.⁶

CONSIDERATIONS FOR INCREASING RESOURCE UTILIZATION

Community members imagine themselves in roles where they can help others navigate shared resources, but need affordable career preparation and liveable wages. Local employers, like large healthcare systems, can consider how to help community members enter understaffed career paths and what partnerships they would need in order to be successful.



In Their Own Words

Focus on Community Strengths to Increase Resource Utilization

"More places for [the] homeless, heat and cold shelters. Housing with dignity."

"A community center or common place where people can easily go for shelter, food, or assistance if needed."

"More mental health resources and housing for the homeless."

"[More] affordable housing/shelter. [As well as] food shelf resources."

"Give more scholarships to people so that we can all go to school."

"Affordable rental spaces for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color entrepreneurs."

"Grocery stores [with] healthy and organic [options]."

"Reduce focus on Eat Street and [the] bar lifestyle."

"Invest more in [those who are] homeless and employ [people for] work at local level."

"Basic nutritional assistance for kids [in after-school facilities]."

"More desirable employment opportunities."

"More grocery [stores] that aren't Whole Foods (or, I guess, a way to make Downtown less expensive)."

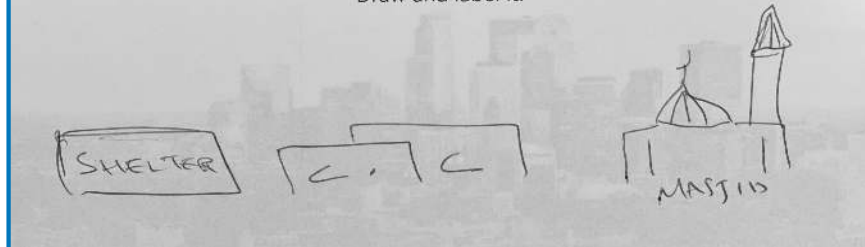
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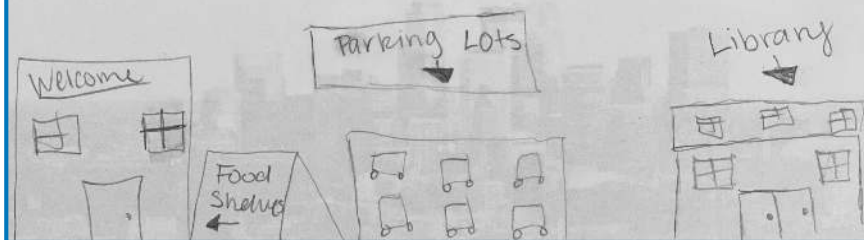
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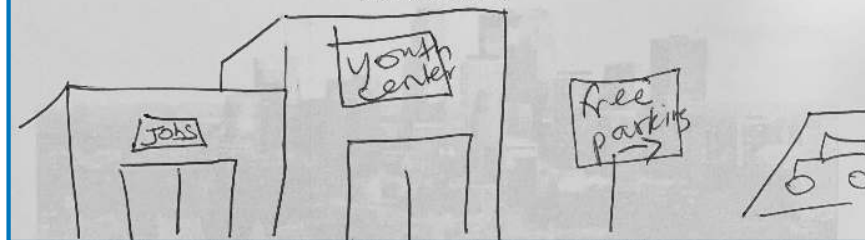
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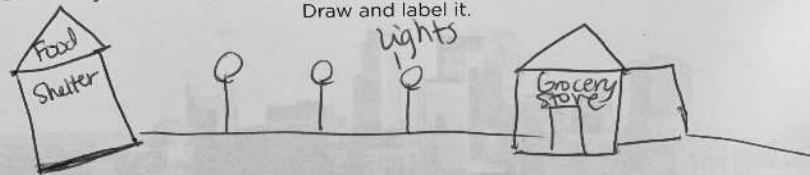
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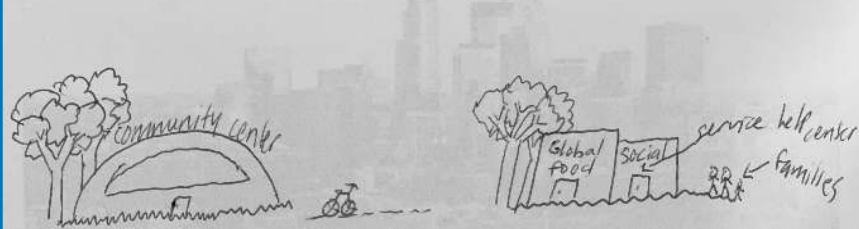
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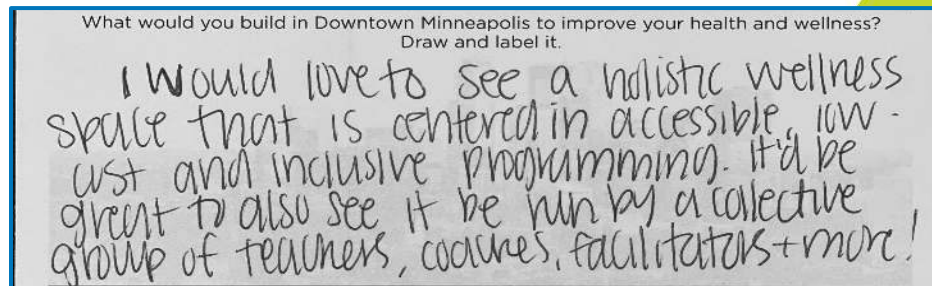
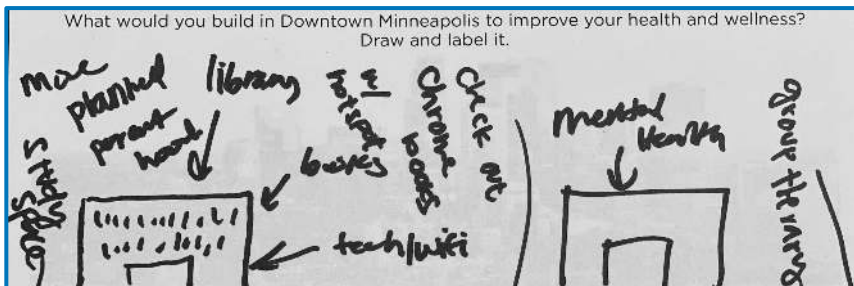


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Make Navigation Easy

NAVIGATING DOWNTOWN

Participants envision a Downtown Minneapolis with a robust and efficient city navigation system that minimizes exposures to pollutants, decreases feelings of anxiety, and helps residents plan their travel time more effectively. Participants also dreamed of opportunities to increase access and attractiveness of public transportation for low-income patients by offering subsidized public transportation with their healthcare visit.

IDEAS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Community members shared ideas and features that would help Downtown feel easier and less stressful to navigate.

- Mall directory style maps throughout Downtown
- More pedestrian and bike lanes
- Offer subsidized public transportation with patient visits
- More crosswalks with lights

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The Minneapolis 2040 Plan has outlined a need for “complete neighborhoods,” which will be supported by a robust public transportation system and minimizing exposure to pollutants that are harmful to communities and the environment.⁷ There is an opportunity for Hennepin Healthcare to collaborate with the City of Minneapolis to prioritize the health and wellness of those who navigate Downtown.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, low-income residents and unhoused populations are disproportionately affected by adverse environmental conditions exacerbated by the heavy use of personal vehicles. Prioritize these groups in planning for transportation changes.



In Their Own Words

Make Navigation Easy

"Downtown [should be] pedestrian only! [Make] public transportation free."

"[There should be] better parking, more malls/more stores, [and] bigger roads/less traffic."

"[There should be] more accessible and cheap public transportation."

"[There should be] special smooth paths for wheelchairs. [I] can't press [the] light to get streetlight to change."

"[There should be] bilingual/multilingual signs."

"Light rail[s] doors, sometimes, [won't] open automatically and [I] need to ask for people to help."

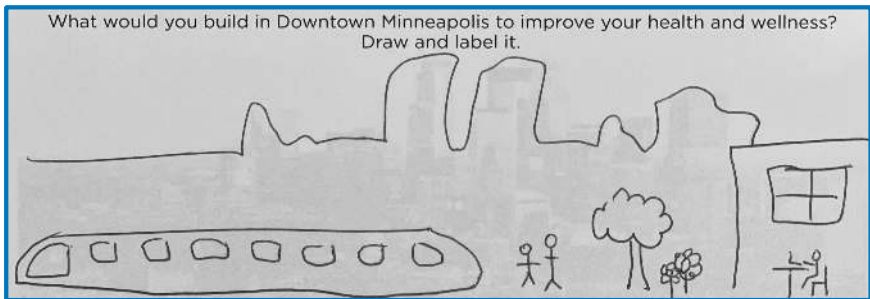
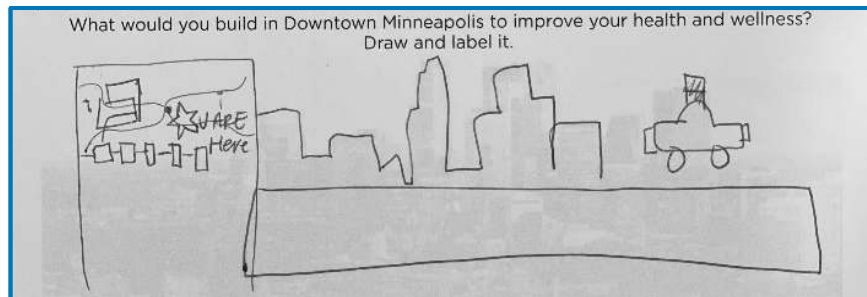
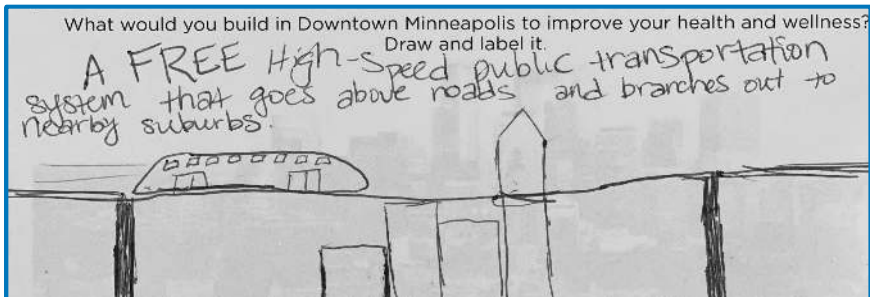
"More easily accessible skyways."

"Underground tunnels."

"Friendlier street signs [decorated with] art designs."

Let's Imagine a Healthier Downtown Minneapolis Together!

What would you build in Downtown Minneapolis to improve health and wellness?



Lead the Nation in Anti-Racist Safety Design

SAFETY

Participants dream of a Downtown that is safe and welcoming to all by considering how identity can play a role in creating solutions for safety and security. They believe partnerships with community leaders and governmental bodies to advocate for community-led initiatives and policies will be key to a sense of safety and addressing systemic issues that criminalize historically undervalued populations.

IDEAS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Community members shared ideas and features that would help Downtown feel safer and more welcoming.

- Social workers to accompany police officers
- Better-lighted streets and walkways
- Street safety advocates
- More businesses on the street level

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Public safety is a complex issue that requires collaboration across communities, public, and private sectors. Generally, communities that are the safest are ones that have their basic needs met. Healthcare systems can act as advocates to improve social conditions for safer communities.^{8,9}

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ANTI-RACIST SAFETY DESIGN

When reflecting on what safety means to community members as individuals, it is important to consider how suggested safety measures might make an environment or system more dangerous for others, especially those with various intersecting identities who already experience adverse health, social, and economic outcomes.



In Their Own Words

Lead the Nation in Anti-Racist Safety Design

"Social workers [should] accompany police."

"[There should be] more lamps at night and brighter streets."

"[We should] add public safety to police dept. Police should deal with crime, not [those who are] mentally ill."

"[We need to] make [sure] women feel safe [at] gyms, buses, and trains."

"[We need] better public safety (properly trained) [so there is] less stress."

"[We should] continue staff security [well]... more access to security to and from work."

"Security — [we should] make [sure] people feel safe. Even nonprofit [options], like 'peacekeepers' law officer."

"[We need] more of the street [safety] ambassadors around."

"[It is currently] not safe - [I am] very careful when walking around. [We need] more people looking out for each other."

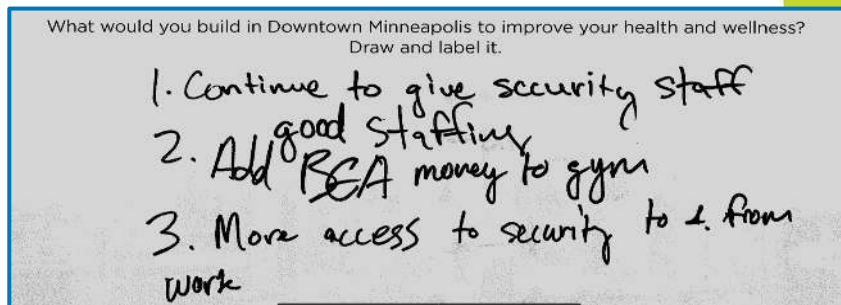
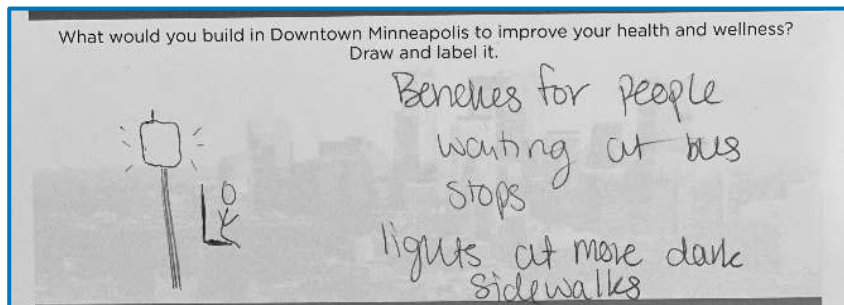
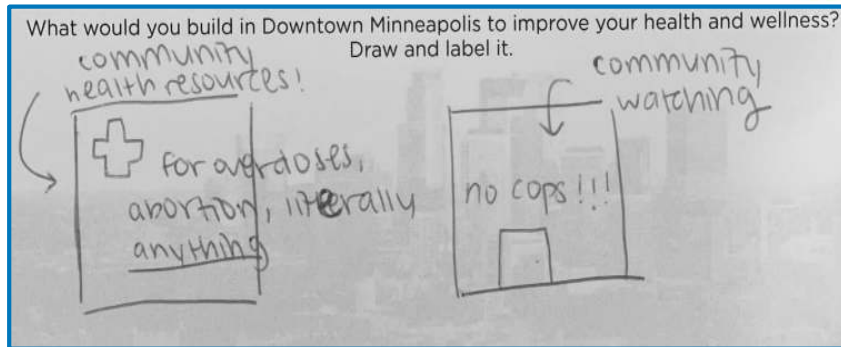
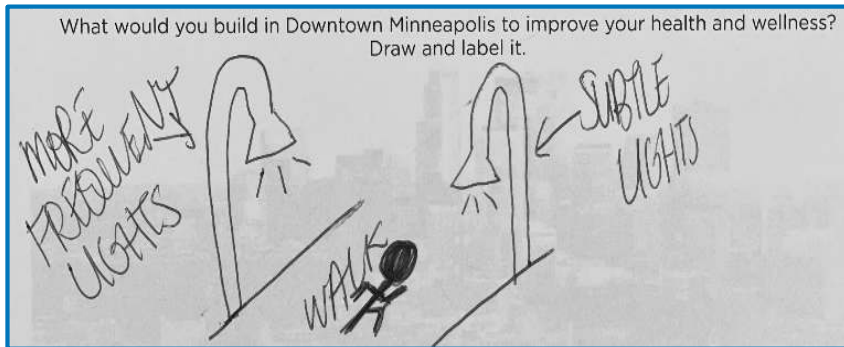
"Community health resources for overdose, abortion, literally anything."

"Community watching... no cops."

"I am scared to cross the streets around HCMC. People tear around corners and I'm in the crosswalk. [We need to] offer employees lights or color[ed] vests."

Let's Imagine a Healthier Downtown Minneapolis Together!

What would you build in Downtown Minneapolis to improve health and wellness?



References

1. [What Makes a Successful Place?](#)
2. [The Importance of Public Spaces](#)
3. [Green Spaces in Cities Can Help People Live Longer](#)
4. [The Health Benefits of Small Parks and Green Spaces](#)
5. [Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails](#)
6. [Social Determinants of Health Series](#)
7. [Minneapolis 2040: Complete Neighborhoods](#)
8. [What Keeps us Safe? How Social Conditions Create Community Safety](#)
9. [Community Safety: A Building Block for Healthy Communities](#)