



Show Me the Money

Financing Health-Oriented Developments

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Healthy living is playing a bigger role in property developments, from neighborhood facelifts to community-wide improvements. And finding a creative way to finance these projects — to secure the money to marry well-built with well-being — is critical to their success.

Integrating health-promoting elements into projects can range from increasing natural light in an office building to installing wide, well-lit sidewalks so families can safely walk or bike to a public park. Many communities are adding more greenery to provide

places for people to rest or play amid expanses of uninviting asphalt and concrete.

Leaders in the movement are experimenting with incentives, financial or otherwise, as well as a mix of funding sources to encourage health-minded projects.

SPOTLIGHT
COMMUNITY

National Western Center Making the Old West New

The National Western Stock Show in Denver is getting a new home after 110 years. The new National Western Center (NWC) provides a case study in cross-sector collaboration and creative financing for a major project.

The NWC promises to become a year-round destination, fusing entertainment and education with safer and greener neighborhoods. It will feature better pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists, a cleaner South Platte River, farmers markets, and 46 acres of public outdoor space. It promises to connect and revitalize the isolated Globeville, Elyria and Swansea neighborhoods.

The project's leadership includes government (Denver), higher education (Colorado State University), nonprofits (the Denver Museum of Nature and Science and History Colorado), and local residents and business owners. The multi-use design that includes a focus on health helped the NWC secure funding from a diverse set of backers.

Colorado visitors will also chip in. Denver voters in November 2015 approved Measure 2C, which extended a hotel and rental car tax to help fund the project. This "tourism tax," combined with major investments from CSU, the Western Stock Show Association and the state's Economic Development Commission, allowed the NWC to meet its fundraising goal of more than \$1 billion.



Plans for the National Western complex call for open, walkable spaces.

Here's a look at some carrots — and sticks — that are being used to promote safe and healthy places:

- Communities and philanthropic organizations are supporting health-focused elements through **grants or subsidies**. And **tax breaks** — in the form of exemptions, deductions or credits — save developers money in return for features that promote health. Tax incentives are available for renovating buildings, and states are offering tax credits to encourage the redevelopment of “brownfields,” contaminated former industrial sites, into clean and safe places.



Participants in the Healthy Places Initiative in Lamar.

- **Example:** The Colorado Health Foundation has supported communities such as Lamar and Denver's Westwood neighborhood with funding and planning through its multimillion-dollar Healthy Places initiative.
- Organizations are offering help in navigating the often-complicated **permit process**, or providing **free technical or marketing assistance** for desirable initiatives. Local governments also are cutting red tape in return for health-oriented features. Cities and counties are granting **waivers** from some regulations, such as building heights or lot density.
 - **Example:** The Health Links program at the Colorado School of Public Health supports businesses that champion worksite wellness and safety. The program also provides free advising for small businesses.
- **Donating land**, either permanently or temporarily, so that it can be converted into a vibrant public space is gaining traction.

Making a BID for Better

Many cities are creating Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to help fund local improvement projects such as bike lanes, enhanced lighting, flower pots and street cleaning. BIDs levy an additional tax on businesses in a defined area to pay for amenities that make areas more attractive to residents and shoppers. Downtown Denver's BID, launched in 1992, now includes more than 400 private commercial property owners. It pays for such things as sidewalk sweeping, trash clean-up and graffiti removal. Learn about it at www.downtowndenver.com/category/about-the-bid.



- **Example:** The city of Philadelphia has had great success with this strategy, turning vacant lots into pop-up gardens that offer live music, yoga and other outdoor activities each summer.
- Providing **recognition** — from small tokens of appreciation to naming rights — is becoming an attractive incentive. Everyone enjoys a pat on the back, especially in front of an audience. Additionally, **designations** under widely recognized programs are increasingly sought-after by developers.
 - **Example:** The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program and the WELL Building Standard award healthy buildings. Colorado ranks among the top states in the country for LEED construction, with 95 new certified projects in 2015. WELL considers criteria in seven categories, including “nourishment,” “fitness” and “comfort.”
- As much as carrots are getting the job done, sometimes there's a need for the “stick.” Communities are combining **regulations and penalties** with incentives. They are requiring things like clear crosswalks and bike paths and threatening to penalize builders when their projects are inaccessible or unsafe.

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20-60%

Children who live in neighborhoods with no access to sidewalks, parks or recreation centers have a **20 percent to 60 percent** higher chance of being overweight.

Source: The Colorado Health Foundation