



2014-2015 MPHA “Public Health Matters” Policy Forum Series



**Zip Code Matters!**

Zip Code Matters!...Where we play: Jan 23, 2015

Opening remarks by Kristen Godfrey Walters, MPHA President

Moderator: Dave Golden, Boynton Health Center, UMN and MPHA Past President

Panelists:

Judith McDowell, Three Rivers Park District

Hilary Reeves, Transit for Livable Communities

Raintry Salk, Met Council

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Dave: Access to parks for me as a child was crucial. I learned to paddle a canoe at a park as a rental canoe. Our parks are a huge gift. However, disparities in access exist. Introduced panelists---

Opening remarks:

Hilary: MN got federal funded for bicycling communities-- Worked with Mpls and 15 other cities. 100 miles of new sidewalks. Funded Community Bike Centers, one at UMN. Purpose was to increase access to bikes, especially among communities of color. Currently working on MoveMn campaign. As we rebuild roads, we have an opportunity to rebuild in a way to increase access by “all modes”.

Raintry: I’m a parks researcher. Park use leads to many health benefits, mental and physical. Park use leads to active lifestyle, combats obesity, and longer life. Parks disproportionately benefit Caucasians. Park use is dependent on SES status and regional characteristics. Met Council Study in 2008 found that 90% of park users are Caucasian. Focus groups with communities of color found that participants said that their favorite outdoor activities include walking and picnics, but barrier is awareness and access to resources.

Judith: Three Rivers Park District (est. 1957) is a separate Govt agency. 10 million visitors a year. Where our parks are located are in outer suburbs where the land was available. Regional trails are a way to get land available

in inner suburbs and cities. 75 miles in inner tier suburbs. However, trails are not enough. Program planning: getting out to people....including community gardening, farm to school programs, and scholarships (e.g., Somali community and Bryant lake park)

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Panelist Questions:

*Equity. Trying to reduce inequity is incredibly important. What things do you know about that our happening to lesson that disparity?*

Raintry: 2040 Regional Parks Policy plan includes 15 policies that seek to mitigate disparities that exist. How to increase awareness of parks? Need to plan for built environment that is attractive for broad audience. 62 parks in 7-county regions.

Judith: We are doing community engagement in a way we haven't done before. Maybe a nature preschool in Brooklyn Park? Trying to figure out what people really want to do.

Hilary: Transportation is a high cost for family budgets. How can we make it possible for people to get to parks without a car? Importance of a network for people to get to parks is critical to make them accessible.

*Increased pressure to engage subjects and community in development. When you look at trends over 10 years, what changes have you seen in use and development?*

Judith: Use of regional trails increasing. Importance of partnerships to make things happen. Partnering with schools to teach bike safety to kids.

Raintry: How are built environment and green space are used. Info is typically gathered from Caucasian users so we have come to need to understand diverse user groups. Biking and hiking are used by less than 10% of African Americans.

Hilary: Bicycling has increased faster among Latinos and African Americans in last 10 years. Community Bike Centers have been great and very helpful, working with local schools. Are trails made for white folks to travel through communities? Many NiceRide stations, Mpls is setting a standard nationally.

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Audience Q&A:

*What are your parks doing about tobacco-free policies?*

Judith: Hyland ski area is smoke-free but unsure on main policy.

Raintry: Mpls park board – no tobacco on any park land (almost a full policy).

Hilary: Can't smoke on the bus. Trying to get bicyclists and pedestrians to co-exist on mixed-use trails.

*Safety in parks----How do we address relative gear? Helmet use? Crime?*

Raintry: One of top 3 barriers to use – is safety. Lots of fear about use of some of the spaces. Generally they are safe places to be. But the perception is real. Fear about being in undeveloped areas. Some folks want to see their car at all times at a park (to feel safe).

Hilary: Midtown Greenway provides safety focus especially for women at night. It is a concern.

Judith: Three Rivers is engaged in education about trails. Need rules of trails about co-existing. Handing out bike bells to increase safety. Recently hired a regional trails manager to handle some of these things regarding safety. We do have relatively safe parks.

*Is there an organized way to integrate park development and trails?*

Hilary: Increasing effort to integrate efforts. Working with cities to know when rebuilding streets and sewers and construction is occurring.

Judith: So much happening, we are really open to partnering.

*Are there successful models you have used from other states? Or are we leading the way?*

Raintry: The regional parks system in MN is like no other us U.S. 10 agencies partnering together is very unique. A lot of what we do is novel. With guiding legislation.

Hilary: We used to always look to Europe, Amsterdam and Copenhagen. Some look now to NYC how to re-appropriate public space and roads. A lot of energy in this field around the world.

Judith: National Association we work with – social equity, conservation, and health and wellness. We hear about national models.

*How can public health world help push your agenda?*

Judith: Connections with communities where you see health disparities. In discussions with Allina about community gardens, healthy eating.

Raintry: Disparities exist, in part, due to governmental policies. Hold park professionals accountable. How to policies reinforce disparities?

Hilary: Transportation funding. Access to parks. Economic upside to these things. Some action at legislature this session: transportation action. Ongoing: community meetings. How to bring all voices together. Voices matter. You do have a lot of power.

Dave: Thanks to our panelists. Time in green space is essential on our health. Need to reduce disparities and play better together.

Kristen Godfrey Walters: Thank you to Dave. Please use Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Upcoming events: Day on the Hill March 25<sup>th</sup>. Annual conference May 28/19 in Duluth.

Next forum is March 13. MPHA looking for new leaders. Please join MPHA! Thank you –

**Next events:**

**March 13 ...Where we learn**

**May 8: ...Where we eat**

**May 28 & 29: “Where you Live Matters” in Duluth, MN. Annual Conference.**