

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

### **Design to Move Initiative**

*July 29, 2016*

**Need, problem or challenge.** The national epidemic of physical inactivity and related health concerns is particularly pronounced in Wisconsin, where 22% of Wisconsin adults do not engage in *any* leisure-time physical activity. The percentage of physically active students in grades 9–12 is only 19%. Lifestyle patterns, especially those related to health, are set in early childhood, and there is clear evidence that children are also key players in influencing adult behavior changes. (Example: recycling efforts in the 1970's led by children). Childhood obesity rates and corresponding inactivity, are especially pronounced in our community's low-income neighborhoods, where lack of sufficient, fun, well designed and open ended, physical play opportunities exist for children. If current trends continue, nearly half of Wisconsinites will be obese in our lifetime.

Research shows that the way we design and build our communities can have a positive or negative impact on health. Healthy and active lifestyles can be encouraged by the way we design our streets, parks, and buildings; where we locate our homes, schools and retail areas; and how we think about movement between destinations in our buildings, neighborhoods and communities. This has been verified by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2010 in its report 'Global status report on non communicable diseases'. WHO identified seven interventions to address the prevalence of chronic diseases, of which four of them specifically relate to increasing programs for physical activity and playfully designing the built environment to promote physical movement:

- School-based physical activity programs for children
- Workplace programs for physical activity and healthy diets
- Community programs for physical activity and healthy diets
- Designing the built environment to promote physical activity

Building opportunities to increase physical activity into daily routines, by altering the environment to encourage movement, is a proven strategy to address these challenges. Over the next decade, Madison Children's Museum (MCM), American Children's Family (AFCH), and a host of community partners propose to model a creative approach to changing behavior and increasing physical activity—especially for children, through redesigning our public spaces and urban environment to incorporate playful, creative movement opportunities into daily life.

**Activities and Timeline.** The first two years of the project, MCM and AFCH will focus specifically on urban stairwells as places that will be transformed into creative environments and play opportunities. This segment of the project, *Design to Move: Stair Trek*, will create whimsical play opportunities for children and families in staircases throughout the community, specifically targeting places where low-income families live, work, play and congregate. By specifically altering existing, code-required stairwells, often the most underused and least engaging space in a building, it is possible to help encourage new trends and behaviors. Imagine a museum, hospital, parking garage, homeless shelter or community building where taking the stairs, the healthy choice, was also the most desirable choice by design. Imagine that choosing the stairs over the elevator could fill you with joy as you play vertical hopscotch down the stairs, or hear the voices and laughter of children making music as you head up the beautifully designed and inspiring parking lots stairs.

Over first two years of *Design to Move: Stair Trek*, MCM and AFCH, along with a robust group of community partners, propose to model a creative approach to changing behavior—that is, increased physical activity—through redesigning existing stairwells throughout the community, creating incentive programs for stair users, and creating complementary community programming and resource guides. This public health, equity and arts initiative will engage community partners as diverse as the Madison Fire Department (MFD), Dane Arts, Madison Arts Commission, the Healthy Kids Collaborative and the Madison and Dane County Departments of Public Health, Bayview Foundation, The YWCA, and One City Early Learning Center, in an effort to change public health through design, and demonstrate the kinds of health impacts that creative design can make on a population.

In Year 1, MCM and AFCH will launch the project, establish a steering committee, conduct formative evaluation and gather pre-project data, organize project partners, establish community goals, evaluate existing building codes, create and evaluate a low or no-cost staff incentive program for stair users at MCM, AFCH and MFD, to motivate employees to use the stairs instead of the elevator. Planning for a robust and ambitious larger scale project throughout the community will be well underway in year one as well, including plans for an larger artist generated stairwell redesign at MCM, and the creation of a tool box for turning dingy stairwells into vibrant artistic showcases that encourage use. Additionally, we will facilitate a community-generated artwork for a prominent stairwell at MCM, comprised of elements made by the public that are installed over time, but enhanced with a changing surprise that keeps people coming back.

In Year 2, MCM and AFCH and partners will select local artist(s) through collaboration with museum staff, city/county arts commissions, and the university art department to create a compelling, artistic stairwell installation at MCM. MCM and AFCH will help seed six artist and community designed stairwell projects in the community, which will all be fully completed, along with the prominent stairwell at MCM in collaboration with Gallery night in May, 2017. Community stairwells will be also completed by May 2017. Between November 2016 and May 2017, all newly designed stairwells at Madison Children’s Museum and in the community will be rolled out to public. MCM will work with Dane Arts and Madison Arts Commission, community partners and host stairwell sites to select artists and advertise the project. The Stairwell Tool Box, which will include building code regulations, ideas for incentives and simple redesign ideas, will be launched during year two. Finally, an evaluation of the project will be conducted throughout the process, with completion after all of the stairwells are completed.

All of these activities will be supported and publicized by a strategic community-wide marketing campaign that simultaneously encourages stair use and disseminates information on the health benefits of stair-taking.

**Intended results, measurement of success.** Through its *Design to Move* initiative, MCM and AFCH will produce three examples of permanent stairwell transformation: one with professional artists, a second through community art participation, and a third through programmatic incentives. Through a coordinated marketing campaign and accompanying toolkit, MCM and AFCH will increase both public awareness of stair use and related health benefits. MCM and AFCH will also demonstrate our roles as agents of social change and community anchors by modeling a best practice (increased stair use through design), communicating that practice (through a marketing campaign, pop-up exhibits and toolkit), and engaging diverse collaborators (artists/designers, building code enforcement, and the health care community) to positively change public behavior.

We have engaged outside evaluator, Jennifer Nunez, Ph.D., from the UW-Population Health Department to oversee all aspects of a comprehensive evaluation effort. We will measure success through completion of the stairwells themselves, quantified frequency of before/after stair use, through numbers of participants in the community stairwell projects, number of participants in MCM community built stairwell art project, extent of marketing dissemination, and before/after interviews regarding behavior change in playtime, stair use, and attitude about physical activity. Interviews and surveys with participants before, during and after the project's completion, in neighborhood design charettes, and with our community partners and at all stair transformation locations, will help us increase our chances of success.

**Public benefit.** *Design to Move* will provide public benefit by increasing opportunities for play for children in underserved communities, by increasing playful, joyful physical play environments (disguised in stairwells), with a resulting change in behavior and attitude toward both physical activity and stair use. Increased physical play and increased stair use both promote physical fitness, which results in improved health through a decrease in obesity-related diseases.

Importantly, increasing the opportunity for community members to engage in creative, whimsical spaces, and the collaborative making of those spaces, increases the feeling of well-being, of joy and happiness. While change in attitude, or appreciation of a space is harder to quantify, we know that physical and psychological well-being are both at the root of community health.

Public buildings also benefit from increased stair use. Vertical circulation in buildings is improved with stairs as a desirable alternative to the elevator. Less frequent elevator usage increases energy savings, and enhances elevator availability for those who need it. MCM and AFCH hopes that as visible community anchors committed to children's health, positive public reaction to transformed stairwells and incentive programs will inspire similar "design to move" efforts in other public buildings, with a resulting culture change that celebrates Madison taking physical fitness—literally—to the next level.