Socially Connected Communities

Solutions for Social Isolation

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Strong social connections and networks can boost a person's lifespan by 50 percent.

Scientific American

A meta-study of more than 300,000 participants across all ages reveals that strong social networks are linked to longer lives.

Loneliness

The **feeling** of being **alone**, regardless of the amount of social contact.

vs.

Social Isolation

A **lack** of social **connections** and sense of **community**.

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Who experiences social isolation?

➔ New mothers and those with young children

➔ LGBTQ and other at-risk youth

➔ Recent immigrants

➔ Older adults

➔ Those reentering society after being incarcerated

➔ Rural communities

➔ Patients and their caregivers

What are the health risks?

✓ Like smoking 15 cigarettes/day

✓ Twice as harmful as obesity

✓ Linked to:
- depression
- poor sleep quality
- accelerated cognitive decline
- impaired immunity
- Increases in suicidal ideation/attempts

✓ Increased risk of stroke; coronary heart disease

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Social isolation is not a personal choice or individual problem, but one that is **rooted** in community design, social norms, and systemic injustices.
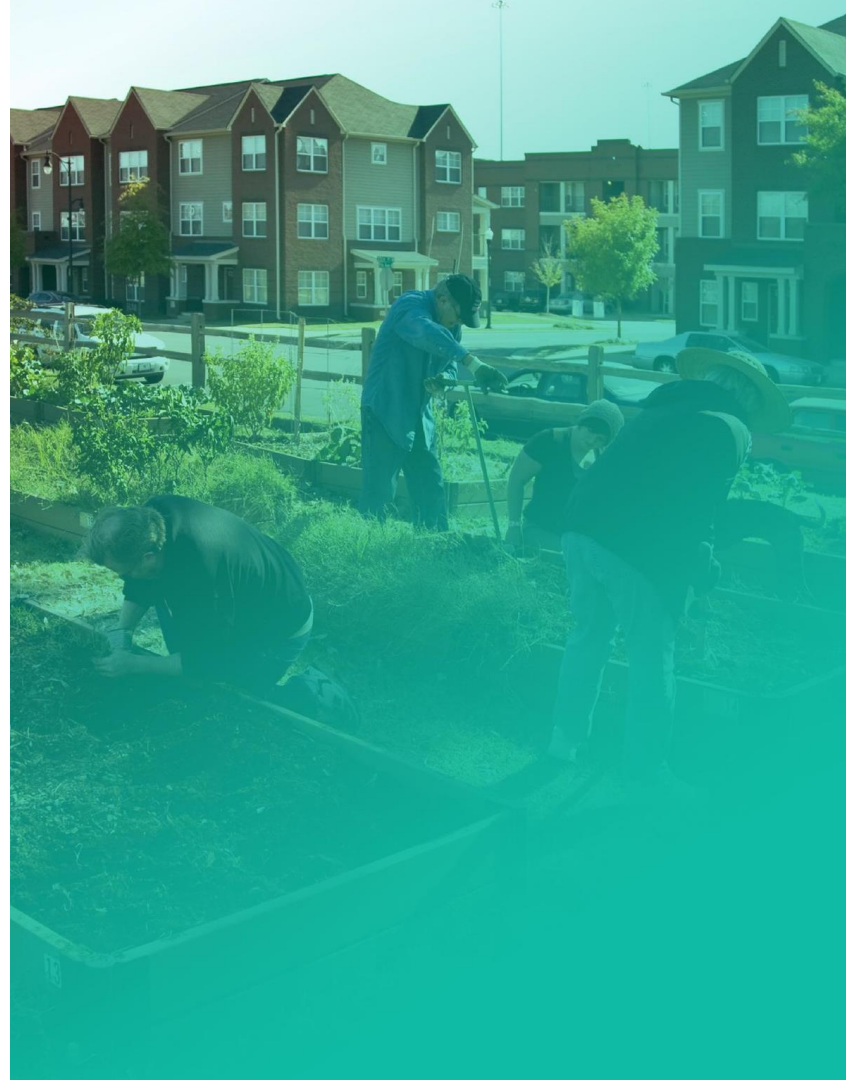
System Designs that Lead to Isolation and Oppression

- Culture
- Education
- Health Care
- Housing
- Internet Access
- Public Space
- Justice
- Security
- Transportation

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Public Spaces

- Inaccessible buildings and public spaces reduce connection and engagement in civic life.

- Historical symbols and artwork that favor certain races and worldview can feel unsafe or unwelcoming.

Photo by Steven HWG on Unsplash

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Housing

- Racially segregated neighborhoods produced extreme wealth disparities.

- U.S. laws have made homelessness and poverty a crime.

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Transportation

- Highway development split communities.

- Using bicycles and busses is often stigmatized.

- Pedestrian fatality rates are disproportionately racialized.

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"What have you learned from the communities you work with about the structural drivers of social isolation?"

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Recommendations

1. Design, Maintain, and Activate Inclusive Public Spaces

2. Prioritize Connection in Transportation Systems

3. Construct Housing Environments that Build Community

4. Invest in Inclusive Practices and Community-led Solutions

5. Make Social Connectedness a Community Norm

View the full report: **bit.ly/h93r**

Public Spaces

- Co-create inclusive, healthy public spaces

- Design safe places for all ages to gather

- Equitably maintain the quality of public spaces

- Activate public spaces to encourage healthy social interaction

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Housing

- Strengthen and safeguard inclusive, affordable housing

- Include spaces specifically designed for gatherings

- Zone to encourage diversity

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Transportation

- Think "people first"

- Use policy levers to promote health and equity

- Support elements that enhance public life

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Community-Led Solutions

- Shift power to community members

- Elevate practices rooted in culture

- Harness creative communications channels

- Create universal broadband access

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Community Norms

- Use a "social in all policies" framework

- Implement trauma- and resilience-informed practices

- Declare community values

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We bring people together to transform mobility and public space

Three rights

Right to Mobility

Right to Public Space

Right to Participate
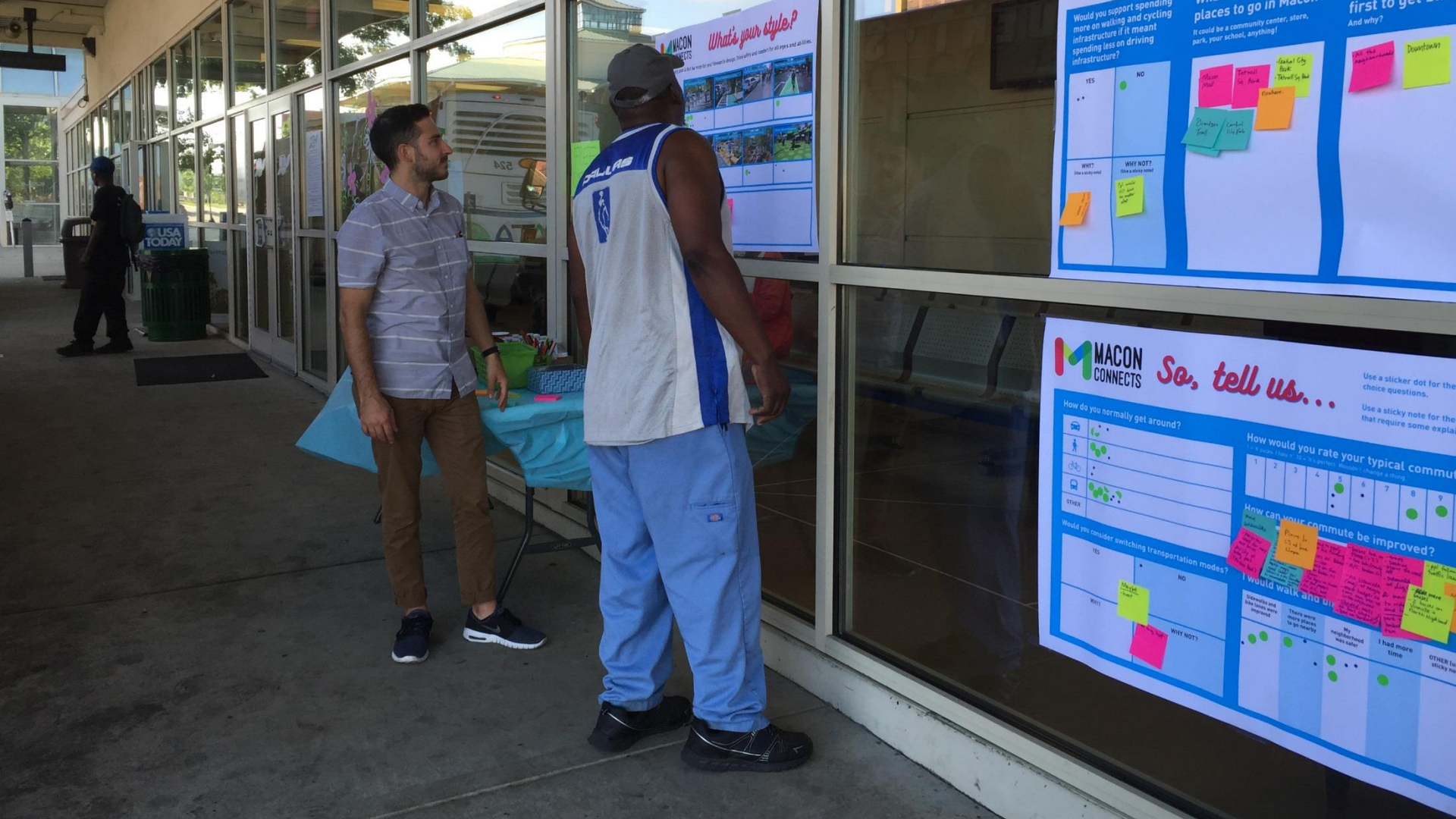
Would you support spending more on walking and cycling infrastructure if it meant spending less on driving infrastructure?

What's your style?

YES   NO

WHY?   WHY NOT?

MACON CONNECTS

So, tell us...

Use a sticker dot for the choice questions.

Use a sticky note for that require some explanation.

How do you normally get around?

OTHER

How would you rate your typical commute?

How can your commute be improved?

Would you consider switching transportation modes?

YES   NO

WHY?   WHY NOT?

I would walk and bike...

Public space that excludes

Public space
that includes

ASSET & EQUITY-BASED APPROACH

WHAT'S ALREADY WORKING?

- Build on existing community assets, programs, policies
- Increase promotion and awareness raising activities
- Reduce red tape

WHO ISN'T BENEFITTING?

- Identify systemic barriers
- Engage underrepresented groups & develop targeted approaches
- Work across departmental and sectoral silos
- Link efforts to broader policy change

Imagine

Imagine

Imagine

Get Started in Your Community

- Share the report and action guides

- Host conversations in your community

- Implement community-level solutions

- Share your stories and feedback with us:

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