

Lake Wales Cited for Community Health Possibilities

By [Robert Connors](#)
Managing Editor



[Share](#)
[Tweet](#)
[Pin](#)
[+](#)
0 Comments

Last updated 9/22/2023 at 3:31pm



Courtesy 1000 Friends of Florida

Dr. Joanna Lombard led the discussion of health outcomes associated with different living environments on the panel discussion, citing the presence of parks, sidewalks, street trees, bike tracks, and proximity to shops, restaurants, and services among the key factors.

Lake Wales will become a healthier city if traditional neighborhood design standards are applied to future development proposals here, according to studies shared by Dr. Joanna Lombard of the University of Miami.

Lombard, who has dual appointments to the university's medical school and the school of architecture, was the lead panelist on a webinar hosted this week by 1000 Friends of Florida to discuss the health and wellness impacts of where we live. The significant increases in health and longevity due to neighborhood qualities has been confirmed in multiple studies, she told a large audience.

Lake Wales was mentioned more than once during the 90-minute presentation entitled "The Intersection Between Community Design and Public Health," which may be viewed online [here on Gotowebinar.com](#).

Traditional neighborhood design, or TND, is a growing tool used to create highly-livable cities, assuring that new developments are equipped with sidewalks, street trees, and bike tracks. Access to parks, street trees, and real front yards give them appeal.

Relegating cars and garages to the rear of homes allows them to have real front porches, an important factor that allows interaction with neighbors and passers-by.

"Loneliness is associated with multiple negative health outcomes," Lombard told an audience including planners, attorneys, and health professionals. She cited examples of elderly residents unable to move about who could still help neighbor children with homework after school, giving both generations important interaction.

Lake Wales was held as an example of a town that offers real TND neighborhoods, such as those in historic residential areas west of Lake Wales. They are within easy walking distance of downtown, allowing access to restaurants and services without requiring vehicle traffic.

Lombard cite statistical data gathered from across the nation that compared the sharp differences in health and quality of life under different community designs. Those most dependent upon automobiles typically ranked far lower than those featuring walkable neighborhoods.

Lombard was joined by planner Victor Dover, who pointed out the importance of parks, noting that many cities have far more acreage consumed by street rights-of-way than they do parks and greenspace.

Dover is a principal of the Dover, Kohl & Partners firm which is leading the development of a set of guidelines for [Lake Wales Envisioned](#), a planning document that should guide new development in the area for "10, 25, and 50 years."

Dover explained that strictly separating commercial from residential uses was "an experiment rolled out on a continental basis" that had never been tested. It has resulted in more traffic and worse health outcomes, because people can no longer reach services by walking or biking.

"People use the infrastructure you build," Dover said. "If you build sidewalks and bike tracks and transit, people use them. If you build highways and expressways, they'll use those too."

Dover suggested that among the possible actions that may be considered by the city is the creation of a "health village" based upon Lake Wales Hospital, which would include a mixture of housing types and medical uses.

Lombard reacted to Dover's suggestion by saying that healthcare "is a trusted neighbor."

The [Lake Wales Envisioned](#) process has been shaped by extensive community input gathered through a series of surveys, public meetings, and planning charrettes. The process was initiated by the city commission after a prior effort at future land-use planning met a hostile reception from residents.

The [Envisioned](#) plan is utilizing a set of eight "aspirations" adopted by the commission in January to guide the process. The work product will be presented to the city commission and the public at the regular meeting of the board on October 17. That meeting will begin at 6:00 pm at the city administration building and will allow the public to address the proposals.

Webinar host 1000 Friends of Florida is a widely-respected group that has, since 1986, advocated for positive steps to maintain Florida's economic, environmental, and human qualities as it grows.



Courtesy Dover, Kohl a& Partners

Award-winning city planner Victor Dover participated in the panel, citing Lake Wales for its original community designs and enhancements by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the efforts of Lake Wales Heritage, a local non-profit, to recreate the original "Garden City" amenities.

