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Public Health a Winner in Lake Wales Envisioned Plan

By John Simmerman
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John Simmerman is a health promotion professional with over 30 years of experience, concentrating on how the built environment influences human behavior related to active living and active mobility.



Editor's Note: This guest Commentary is the third of a series of guest editorials that will address the effort known as *Lake Wales Envisioned*.

Public health will be a big winner if the Lake Wales City Commission adopts the *Lake Wales Envisioned* plan. It is a comprehensive, community-led vision for the next 10, 25, and 50 years that Olmsted would be proud of.

As a health promotion professional with over 30 years of global experience focusing on the intersection of our built environment and well-being, I am particularly impressed with the commitment to preserving critical open spaces through strategic land conservation efforts, creating easy access to parks and trails, and designing for natural daily activity for all ages and abilities.

These activities include the ability to walk or cycle to meaningful destinations like work, school, shopping, and dining, or just heading out on the town with family and friends.

When it comes to creating a culture of activity within a community, details like a healthy urban tree canopy, slow, safe streets, and wide well-managed pathways and trails matter a great deal.

In my research on communities that do this well, the ones I call Active Towns, I've found that efforts like *Lake Wales Envisioned* can make an enormous difference. This is because low to moderate levels of physical exertion become part of the DNA of the place and establish it as a desired, healthful, and vibrant location and destination for current and future generations.

The *Lake Wales Envisioned* plan is a positive next step in the right direction for a more prosperous future.

John D. Simmerman, MS, is the founder of Active Towns.