

Placemaking

exploration, research and reflection on cities , public space, urban design , urban planning and landscape design

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Sunday, November 17, 2013

Wellbeing and Placemaking

Ten Principles for Building Healthy Places provides practical steps that communities can adopt to have a positive impact on the health of their people. It is based on recommendations from a workshop of multidisciplinary experts convened last summer, which distilled findings from three ULI Advisory Services panels conducted last spring in Colorado to recommend strategies for fostering active living. The Colorado Health Foundation funded those panels and is a partner of the Building Healthy Places Initiative. The ten principles are:

1. Put people first.

One of the strongest health/land use correlations is between obesity and the use of automobiles. For decades planners and developers have designed places for cars rather than people. The report recommends designing in a way that minimizes automobile dependence by mixing land uses and offering safe, convenient options for getting from one place to another. The report recommends making healthy living a priority and integrating it into the planning process.

2. Recognize the economic value.

Compact, walkable, mixed-use communities provide economic benefit to developers through higher property values, enhanced marketability, and quicker sales and leasing. The report points to the likelihood that these communities will hold their value during economic downturns, noting that the economic viability of these communities is underpinned by their popularity with two of the largest demographic groups—baby boomers and millennials.

3. Empower champions for health.

Community engagement is a powerful vehicle in highlighting the link between health and local land use, and in bringing about change. The report encourages local champions to communicate the benefits of healthy places, promote grassroots action, broaden the base of support, and forge collaborations and partnerships with stakeholders who share an interest in healthy communities, such as medical professionals.

4. Energize shared spaces.

Places with high levels of social isolation often suffer from declines in well-being and increases in health costs. The report advocates incorporating public gathering places into the built environment and, where appropriate, using the "living street" concept, which gives priority to pedestrians and cyclists over cars and provides recreational space.

5. Make healthy choices easy.

Make the healthy choice the one that is SAFE—safe, accessible, fun, and easy. Communities need to plan their environment to remove barriers that lead people to default to an unhealthy practice.

6. Ensure equitable access

. Make healthy choices accessible to all income and demographic groups. Neighborhoods should have housing options for all ages, enabling people to age in place, and communities should make facilities accessible through a holistic transit plan that reduces reliance on the automobile.

7. Mix it up. Integrate a range of residential, commercial, cultural, and institutional uses.

Mixed-use development is more likely to create walkable or transit-oriented communities and mixed-income, cross-generational communities.

8. Embrace unique character.

Places that are different, unusual, or unique can be helpful in promoting physical activity and emotional well-being. The report cites a Knight Foundation study concludes that the most important factor creating bonds between people and their communities is not jobs, but the community's "physical beauty, opportunities for socializing, and a city's openness to all people." Communities should rediscover existing assets such as waterfronts or historic neighborhoods and embrace the unique character of their area to boost physical and mental health among the population.

9. Promote access to healthy food.

Because diet is a major contributor to human health, access to healthy food should be considered as part of any development proposal. The report notes that when considering what constitutes a healthy community, planners and developers seldom assign food the same prominence as transit, open space, and housing mix. The report advocates rethinking the modern grocery store to make it more accessible for cyclists and pedestrians, considering use of mobile food markets, and employing historic markets to create a destination to encourage economic development and health eating.

10. Make it active.

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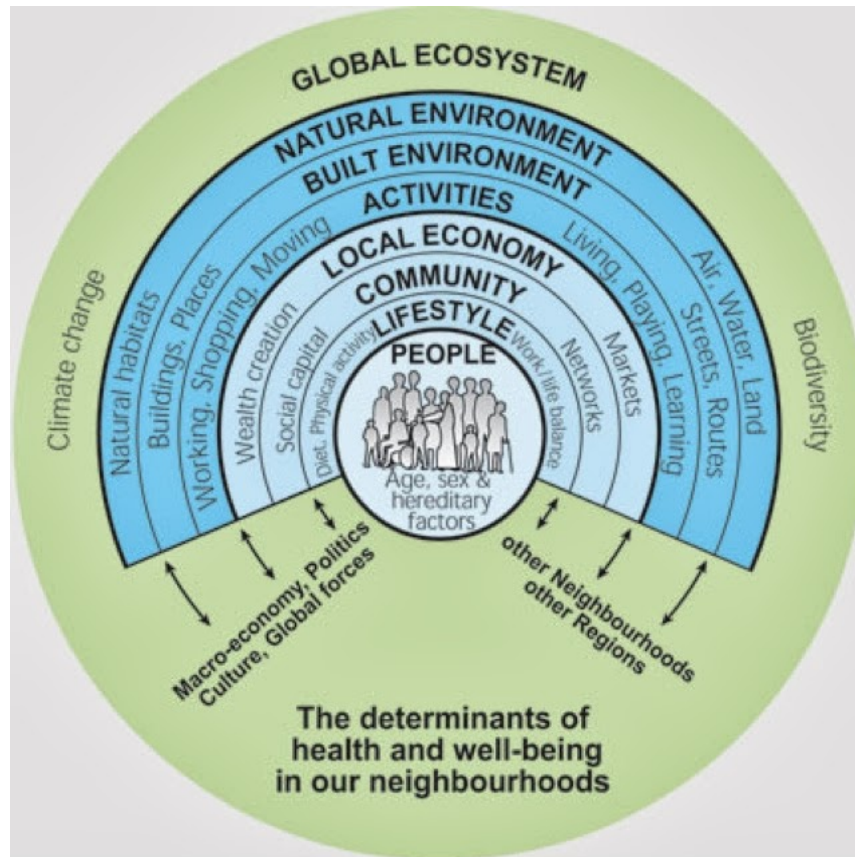
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Urban design should be used to create an active community, boosting physical activity and reducing reliance on the car. Amenities for adults and children should be located together to serve both groups; for instance, adult exercise equipment should be provided near children's playgrounds, enabling parents to exercise while supervising their children. Walking should be encouraged by looking at the provision of sidewalks and crosswalks, while cycling can be encouraged through bike-share schemes.

Adapted from uli guide on healthy communities



Posted by [nadine bitar chahine](#) at 9:32 AM

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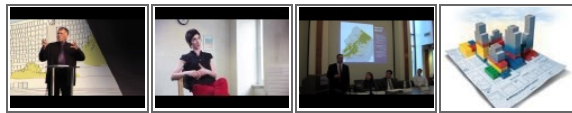
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