

PLANNING AND PUBLIC HEALTH

A BRIEF HISTORY

Urban planning and public health have been intertwined for most of their histories. The birth of planning in the United States originated from a public health purpose; it was rooted in the need to reduce congestion, and support social reform in housing and sanitation. Rapid urbanization of cities resulted in overcrowded housing, noxious industrial uses, human and animal waste, and outbreaks of infectious diseases.

To assist in addressing the issues that resulted from rapid urbanization, local governments created a series of policies related to sanitation, zoning, housing, and transportation. These policies have had lasting impacts on the ways in which we develop the built environment.

Over time, however, the professions began to diverge. Rather than overtly addressing issues related to health and safety, planners' attention focused more on land use and transportation. In contrast, public health professionals took the lead on addressing health and safety concerns.

CHANGING TIMES

Decisions made by municipalities regarding land use, community design, and transportation affect local air quality, water quality and supply, traffic safety, physical activity, mental health, social interactions, and exposure to contaminated sites. These decisions are linked to some of the most intractable public health problems, including adult and childhood obesity, cancer, respiratory problems, inactivity, and environmental justice. As community health concerns rise to the fore, public health specialists and planners are beginning to work together again.

Planners can contribute to creating built environments that support healthy living throughout all stages of life. Across the U.S., local governments are beginning to include goals and objectives that promote public health into their comprehensive plans. These long-term plans impact how people make choices of where to live and how to get around, their ability to access healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity, and affect broader issues of social equity, clean air and water, and more.



Burn Calories,
Not Electricity



PLANNING FOR BETTER HEALTH

The Urban Land Institute's *Building Healthy Places Toolkit* outlines 21 practical, evidence-based recommendations to promote health at the building and project scale. The release of the report in February 2015 was in response to declining health trends in the United States and other countries around the world, with many of the conditions linked to past land use decisions that limited options for healthy, active living environments.

"In many communities around the world, the healthy choice is not the easy choice," said ULI Global Chief Executive Officer Patrick L. Phillips. "We know that the built environment has a profound impact on health outcomes. ULI is aiming to encourage development practices that promote health and wellness, physical activity and social interaction. Increasingly, the ability of developers and communities to deliver on health is translating into market value for projects."

According to the ULI Report:

- Seventy-six percent of Millennials think walkability is important in where they choose to live;
- More than half of Americans (51 percent) want to live in a community that has transit. 53 percent want to be close to shops, restaurants, and offices.
- Homes located in neighborhoods with good walkability are worth \$34,000 more on average than similar homes in neighborhoods with average walkability.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- 1 Incorporate a mix of land uses
- 2 Design well-connected street networks at the human scale
- 3 Provide sidewalks and enticing, pedestrian-oriented streetscapes



- 4 Provide infrastructure to support biking
- 5 Design visible, enticing stairs to encourage everyday use
- 6 Install stair prompts and signage



- 7 Provide high-quality spaces for multigenerational play and recreation
- 8 Build play spaces for children

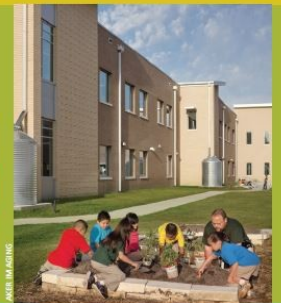
HEALTHY FOOD AND DRINKING WATER



- 9 Accommodate a grocery store
- 10 Host a farmers market
- 11 Promote healthy food retail



- 12 Support on-site gardening and farming
- 13 Enhance access to drinking water



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

- 14 Ban smoking
- 15 Use materials and products that support healthy indoor air quality
- 16 Facilitate proper ventilation and airflow



- 17 Maximize indoor lighting quality
- 18 Minimize noise pollution
- 19 Increase access to nature



- 20 Facilitate social engagement
- 21 Adopt pet-friendly policies

