

# HEALTH, HISTORIC PRESERVATION & WALKABILITY: 10.7.21

## Health, Walkability, Historic Preservation and Community Design

- On physical activity: “It’s the closest thing we have to a wonder drug.” Source: [Tom Frieden, epidemiologist & former director of U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, AARP Bulletin, April 2016](#)
- Excerpts from [Urban Sprawl & Public Health: Designing, Planning, & Building for Healthy Communities](#), by Howard Frumkin, Lawrence Frank, & Richard Jackson. Island Press.
  - “The experts identified several factors as being most important [in determining people’s walking & bicycling behavior]. These included safety factors, **attractiveness of the streetscape**, the presence of destinations (for walking)...” (p. 99)
  - “Research has identified many determinants of physical activity. These include **overall neighborhood design features**, density, land use mix, the presence & quality of sidewalks & foot paths, **enjoyable scenery**, the presence of other people who are physically active, and safety.” (p. 99)
  - “The high-walkable neighborhoods are characterized by high density...high connectivity, good walking infrastructure, **pleasing aesthetics**, and safety, whereas the low-walkable neighborhoods lack most of all of these features.” (p. 100)
  - “**People are more likely to get out & be active in places that are attractive & aesthetically appealing.**” (p. 103)
- Excerpts from [Health & Community Design: The Impact of the Built Environment on Physical Activity](#), by Lawrence D. Frank, Peter O. Engelke, & Thomas L. Schmid. Island Press.
  - “...how people get around...[is] a direct product of how communities are designed. This book is about how our communities influence one important type of behavior, physical activity, & the health outcomes that are associated with it.” (p. 1)
  - “The fact is that most Americans don’t get enough physical activity to meet the health recommendations set by public health agencies...[only about 5% of the population – one person in 20 – gets enough physical activity through vigorous exercise to satisfy public health standards.” (p. 4)
  - “Moderate physical activity [e.g., walking] can be purposive, meaning that it can be integrated into daily living habits, & as a result it should be more attractive to people who don’t have the necessary free time to work out at a gym or go mountain biking in the woods.” (p. 5)
  - “...urban design characteristics influence how people perceive the built environment. **Design plays a large role in determining whether an environment is perceived as hostile or friendly, attractive or ugly, & vibrant or dull.**” Urban design denotes small-scale features of the built environment that impact how people feel about being in specific places.” (p. 7)
  - “Regular, moderately intensive physical activity...helps maintain normal muscle strength & joint structure & function, lower high blood pressure, relieve depression & anxiety, lower obesity levels, and is necessary for normal skeletal development during childhood. Physically inactive people are almost twice as likely to develop coronary heart disease as people who engage in regular physical activity. This risk is almost as high as several well-

known risk factors such as cigarette smoking, high blood pressure & high cholesterol.” (pp. 40-41)

- “...more than half of American adults are categorized as being overweight or obese.” (p. 45)
- “Shortening distances is a necessary strategy for increasing utilitarian physical activity [like walking], but it is not sufficient; other factors, such as urban design variables & transportation system characteristics, are fundamental as well.” (p. 110)
- “**Streets that have bland architecture** & that are dominated by long featureless horizons **will not only be less interesting to the non-motorist but will also increase the perception of the distance that one needs to cover** to reach a particular designation.” (p. 163)
- “It is generally asserted that in order for a building **to encourage pedestrian activity**, it needs to...have **an interesting façade** with design treatments that encourage interaction between the interior & exterior of the structure (such as doors, windows, stoops, porches, etc.), and not be inordinately tall or wide. P. 173)

- Excerpts from articles by [Steven Mouzon, author of \*The Original Green\*](#):

- “...the world's great cities have streets that are so good that you'll happily walk for miles.” <http://www.originalgreen.org/blog/2012/walk-appeal.html>
- “The more frequently you change someone’s view as they walk, the better you entertain them. Entertaining those who are walking means they’ll likely keep walking...[T]here are few things more boring if you’re walking than passing along a blank building wall... Things that border the sidewalk are the most important measurable means of enhancing Walk Appeal.” <http://www.originalgreen.org/blog/2012/walk-appeal-measurables.html>

- Excerpt from “[Walking & Cycling in Western Europe & the United States: Trends, Policies, & Lessons](#), by [Ralph Buehler & John Pucher](#). TR News, May-June 2012

- “The energy that walking and cycling require is provided directly by the traveler, and the use of that energy offers valuable cardiovascular exercise... Many European cities have implemented people-friendly urban design to create a safe, convenient, and **attractive environment** that facilitates cycling and walking into city centers.”

## Density

- Excerpts from [Visualizing Density](#), by [Julie Campoli & Alex S. MacLean](#) (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy):

- “**One byproduct of monotony is an uneasy sense of disorientation** that one feels moving through a setting where everything looks the same. The architecture is not distinctive enough to register in our memories & serve as landmarks. **As human beings, we have an innate desire to know where we are & how to find our way around. This is easier when our environment is varied & has a comprehensive structure.** In a neighborhood setting this requires an assortment of buildings & a coherent street network. (p. 19)

- “There is such a thing as ‘bad’ density – that which is poorly planned and designed without an understanding or concern for human needs. Much recent development has proven to be a poor model of how to live closer together.” (p. 11)

## **Mental Health**

- “...it’s clear that beauty in the therapeutic environment plays a role in healing.” Source: <https://www.archdaily.com/911737/what-is-beauty-in-architecture-today-and-are-we-afraid-of-it/>, by Mark Alan Hewitt, February, 22, 2019
- “...merely walking past a newly planted lot in an urban neighborhood lowered the participants’ heart rates. Smaller unrelated studies have found lower blood-pressure readings and lower cortisol levels among participants who spent time in nature.” Source: [“More Trees, Happier, People,” op-ed by Margaret Renkl in 10.7.18 New York Times](#)
- “...trees... remove carbon, including greenhouse gas emissions, from the air. They cool the surrounding area, offsetting the heat impact of asphalt and combustion engines. They absorb and filter storm water. They lower energy costs for nearby buildings.” Source: [“More Trees, Happier, People,” op-ed by Margaret Renkl in 10.7.18 New York Times](#)
- “...access to even small green spaces can reduce symptoms of depression for people who live near them, especially in low-income neighborhoods.” Source: [“Replacing Vacant Lots with Green Spaces Can Ease Depression in Urban Communities,”](#) National Public Radio segment on 7.20.18
- “...studies show that green spaces are “equigenic,” or equalizers of socioeconomic disparities in health. People from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have worse mental and physical health outcomes. But when exposed to green spaces, ‘people who start out worse have more improvement, says [Mike] Rogerson [a professor at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom]. It’s a leveler across society.” Source: [“Replacing Vacant Lots with Green Spaces Can Ease Depression in Urban Communities,”](#) National Public Radio segment on 7.20.18
- “Lining city streets with trees reduces physiological symptoms of stress in humans. The thicker the tree cover, the lower the stress levels, [the] study finds.” Source: [“Study: The More Trees We’re Surrounded By, The Lower Our Stress Levels”](#)
- “...as a physician I take my patients to gardens whenever possible...In 40 years of medical practice, I have found only two types of non-pharmaceutical ‘therapy’ to be vitally important for patients with chronic neurological diseases: music and gardens...I have seen in my patients the restorative and healing powers of nature and gardens, even for those who are deeply disabled neurologically. In many cases, gardens and nature are more powerful than any medication.” Source: [“The Healing Power of Gardens,”](#) op-ed by Oliver Sacks, a neurologist, in the 4.21.19 New York Times
- “While we have long understood that toxins in air, water, and food are harmful to human health, public health practitioners are now realizing that the design of communities and the distribution of resources within them can have dramatic consequences for chronic diseases that are today’s most

pressing health problems.” Source: [\*Built Environment Atlas: Active Living, Healthy Eating, Multnomah County Health Department, June 2011\*](#)

### **Oregon Statistics**

- “In Oregon, obesity contributes to the deaths of about 1,400 Oregonians each year, making it second only to tobacco as the state’s leading cause of preventable death.” Source: “[Oregon Overweight, Obesity, Physical Activity and Nutrition Facts](#), 7.8.2015
- “Today, about 60% of Oregon adults are overweight or obese...In Oregon, medical costs related to obesity among adults were estimated to have reached \$1.6 billion in 2006...[O]bese persons are estimated to have annual medical costs that are \$1,429 higher than non-obese persons.” Source: “[Oregon Overweight, Obesity, Physical Activity and Nutrition Facts](#), 7.8.2015