Advancing Obesity Solutions through Investments in the Built Environment

Roundtable on Obesity Solutions
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Throughout human history, cities were built for people. Even in the 20th century, people could still use the streets.
Then cities and streets were turned over almost completely to cars.
Zoning laws separated residential, commercial, and industrial uses.
The same trend can be seen with small towns. Initially walkable.
Now many are not walkable
Spread out along highways
Food environments have obviously changed.
What is the impact of the built environment on obesity?

- This question was rarely asked until the 21st century
- Answering it requires
  - New conceptual models
  - New collaborations
  - New measures, methods, and skills
- This workshop is a survey of a young field
- Our goal is to accelerate action to improve built environments
Percent of nutrition, physical activity, and obesity abstracts at Society of Behavioral Medicine conference abstracts containing environmental or policy content
What is the built environment?

• Everything people construct
• Food environments include
  – Community level
    • Food stores, other stores where food is sold, restaurants, kiosks, farmer’s markets, signage, advertising
  – Consumer level (in the stores and restaurants)
    • Choices available, placement, promotion, pricing
Healthy food environments
Many Environments Encourage Overeating
Physical Activity Environments Include These Settings

1. Open Spaces/Parks
2. Urban Design/Land Use
3. Transportation
4. Schools
5. Buildings/Workplaces
Urban Design
A highly connected network has many possible routes between destinations and as a result a more direct path.

Images from Lawrence Frank PhD, Professor, University of British Columbia.
The majority of new areas in the last 60 years zoned as single use, with areas dedicated exclusively to either residential, commercial, or industrial uses. Greater Diversity = More Types of Destinations
Environments for safe bicycling: Indianapolis
Pedestrian zones reverse the priority: Boston
What’s a community without a park? Boston Common
Cultivating New Partnerships

- Food Retail
- City Planning
- Urban Design
- Real Estate
- Transportation
- Architecture
- Landscape Architecture
- Parks & Recreation
- Criminology
- Economics/Law/Policy
- Advocacy
- Public Health
Impact on Science

“Systematic designing of cities to enhance health through active transport promises to be a powerful strategy for improvements in population health on a permanent basis.”

2016
Cross-Sector Impact
Task Force Finding (December 2016)
The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends built environment approaches that combine one or more interventions to improve pedestrian or bicycle transportation systems with one or more land use and environmental design interventions based on sufficient evidence of effectiveness in increasing physical activity.

The finding is based on evidence from longitudinal studies of people exposed to coordinated built environment approaches (16 studies). Evidence from additional cross-sectional comparisons shows that combinations of activity-supportive built environment characteristics are associated with higher levels of transportation-related physical activity, recreational physical activity, and total walking among exposed people (74 studies).
We are still building places that we have evidence contribute to ill health
Today’s workshop is designed to encourage action that will improve built environments

• SESSION 1: Built Environments, Obesity, and Health Overview
  • Moderator: Governor Parris Glendening, Smart Growth America

• SESSION 2: Progress in Improving Built Environments—Examples from Communities and Cities
  • Moderator: Bill Purcell, former Mayor of Nashville, Tennessee

• SESSION 3: Challenging and Promising Strategies for Achieving Equitably Healthy Environments
  • Moderator: Shiriki Kumanyika, Drexel University

• SESSION 4: Open Discussion of Next Steps
  • Moderator: Monica Hobbs Vinluan, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Your Involvement

• Index cards are at registration table. Submit questions for Session 4.
  – What resources would be helpful?
  – What are questions about working across sectors?
  – What next steps will you or your organization take?
  – What are your ideas for creating healthier and more equitable built environments?

• Deposit cards in box or submit online before 3pm.

• Be ready for activity breaks!

• Feel free to stand
“DEPEDEDESTRIFICATION”