ABSTRACT

This report of peer-reviewed research offers evidence-based guidance, recommendations, and numerous case studies to which health institutions, community organizations, and other partners can refer in order to create places that support health and well-being.

Five key themes listed below emerged. For each, we explored the role of placemaking, disparities between low and high-income neighborhoods, research findings, and specific ways to take action from engaging local residents to building long-term capacity.

THE UNIQUE ROLE OF HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS

By utilizing their facilities, land, funding capacity, employees, political power, and other resources to support placemaking, the healthcare sector and its civic partners have a special opportunity to promote health and well-being in their communities.

 aggravating factors.

  • Using Community Health Needs Assessments to identify potential placemaking projects and strategies.
  • Utilizing Community Health Workers to engage local residents in placemaking efforts.

PLAY & ACTIVE RECREATION

People who play together stay together! Local parks and play areas contribute to developing social support and offer opportunities to interact. They also provide a setting that helps you stay active and fit.

How do we help people play more and stay active?

We develop unique parks and recreation systems and provide high-quality programming that helps people learn to take full advantage of all that those systems have to offer. When you have the opportunity to continue to play throughout your life and across ages, you have a better chance of avoiding many health concerns.

GREEN & NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Connecting with nature changes everything. And you don’t have to be completely immersed in the forest to gain the benefits.

How do we support more interaction with green and natural environments?

We work in communities to find unique ways to bring nature back into urban spaces. Community parks, roof-top farms, water conservation gardens, natural play spaces, all help enhance our mind and memory functions, improve our water quality, feel a sense of peace, and can minimize stress and anxiety levels.

HEALTHY FOOD

Our food system offers many different opportunities for community transformation. Local food production can introduce a new economic model into a neighborhood, and making fresh and affordable food available improves diets and reduces health concerns.

How can healthy foods help improve the health of a community?

We create a local food system that ensures the availability of more high-quality foods, that generates entrepreneurship, and that supports environmental sustainability. Combined, these opportunities positively impact our health and well-being in many different ways.

WALKING & BIKING

Walking and biking are healthier for both people and the environment! Developing community destinations where walking and biking become an easier option than jumping in a car and driving from place to place reshape transportation decision-making for everyone.

How can we encourage more walking and biking?

We create destinations for people to walk and bike in addition to the recreational greenways, and we introduce safety features and traffic calming design to improve the safety and aesthetic of streets.

LINKING PLACE & HEALTH

A growing body of research over the last several decades has shown the connections between “place” and health, and it is well documented that a person’s zip code can be a more reliable determinant of health than his or her genetic code. From obesity and chronic disease to depression, social isolation, or increased exposure to environmental toxins and pollutants, communities around the world face pressing health challenges that are much more significant than those we’ve experienced in the past.

The process of PLACEMAKING results in more walkable and bikeable streets, actively used parks and squares, farmers markets and community gardens that provide fresh food and employment opportunities, and a livelier public realm at large that helps foster healthier lifestyles.

The “MAKING” of places also builds a sense of belonging that improves mental health, and increases our capacity to address collective challenges.

THE CASE FOR HEALTHY PLACES

IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES THROUGH PLACEMAKING

FINDINGS & ACTIONS

SOCIAL SUPPORT & INTERACTION

Your understanding of the world changes when you feel a place where you belong and feel valued. When you positively and regularly connect with neighbors, family, and friends, you feel a sense of belonging and you create social ties that are available to help you through both the good and the bad times.

How do we encourage more social interaction and connectedness in our communities?

We empower and build public and common spaces that create opportunities for people to gather, to socialize, to discuss big ideas, and to come together to address community issues. When you are socially and emotionally connected to others in your community, you feel safer, crime goes down, and you are more likely to feel positive rather than negative stress.

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PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

is a research planning and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger, healthier, and livelier communities. Through placemaking, PPS helps citizens and others to identify, prioritize, and implement projects and policies that give their city neighborhoods a more livable, inclusive, and vibrant character.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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