FitNation/DC

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

THROUGH DESIGN

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School of International Service, American University
Credit: Prakash Patel

INTRODUCTION

Fit Nation DC brought together public officials, health professionals, architects, developers, and others to address how building, site, and neighborhood design and policy decisions can increase physical activity and access to healthy food and beverages.

Fit Nation

Fit Nation DC, held on February 2, 2011, was the first in a series of national conferences examining how design of the built environment can create opportunities for increasing physical activity and improving public health. Building from a series of Fit City conferences organized over the last five years at AIA New York's Center for Architecture, Fit Nation DC brought together public officials, health professionals, architects, landscape architects, urban designers, developers, and planners to address how building, site, and neighborhood design and policy decisions can increase physical activity and access to healthy food and beverages. Obesity is the second leading cause of deaths in the U.S. after tobaco, and physical inactivity is the fifth leading cause. Physical inactivity also contributes to the second, third, and fourth leading causes of deaths—respectively, obesity, high blood pressure, and high blood glucose. These risk factors are linked to chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, some cancers and asthma.

Co-hosted by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the American Institute Architects New York Chapter (AIANY), AIA | DC, AIA National, and the American Architectural Foundation, Fit Nation DC featured national and local policymakers, as well as design and health practitioners, who are working to create healthier communities through design. This publication includes highlights from the event's presentations and speakers' remarks.

Made possible by funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Margaret O'Donoghue Castillo, AIA, LEED AP, 2011 President, AIA New York Chapter
As architects we believe that the design of our built environment, our streets, our buildings, our neighborhoods and the spaces they form have an enormous impact on people's behavior and their lives. We expanded the reach of Fit City meetings to fit several Fit Nation conferences this year because we know that while New York City is unique in many ways, we all want many of the same things in cities, big and small, across the country. This starts with great neighborhoods that are healthier and more sustainable.

Markku Allison, AIA, Resource Architect, AIA National
On behalf of the American Institute of Architects, I applaud the Fit Nation and Fit City initiative. It is a very complementary effort to some new work going on at AIA National, where I head up an effort called America's Design and Health Initiative. It's a very exciting program focused on the connections between physical activity, obesity and design.

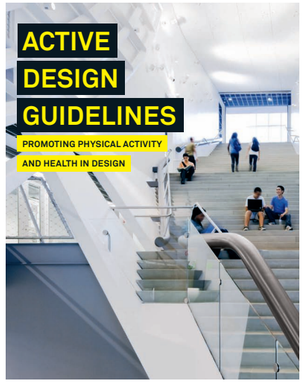
Ronald E. Bogle, Hon. AIA, President & CEO, American Architectural Foundation
This event marks the start of an important national movement that provides direction to local leaders who are trying to deal with health issues in their communities. Elected officials and their advisors are beginning to realize that we have designed our way into many of the problems that we currently face. We need to figure out how

to design our way out of them. Fit Nation DC is a promising first step.

Yolanda Cole, AIA, 2011 President, AIA|DC Chapter
I was stunned by the statistics on the growth of obesity in the U.S. over the past several decades, which make it clear that architects have a role in designing communities that promote physical activity, sustainable practices and healthy habits. We can also encourage local governments to enact policies that support these goals, and perhaps incentivize developers to incorporate innovative design concepts into our projects. I was pleased to see this concept being explored by agencies at the federal level, by the District of Columbia in the Office of Planning and the Department of Health and by the AIA in their local chapters. On behalf of AIA|DC, we are happy to support Fit Nation going forward.

Panel on New York City's *Active Design Guidelines*
Credit: Laura Trimble

ACTIVE DESIGN: BUILDING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES



Active Design is environmental design that encourages stair climbing, walking, bicycling, transit use, active recreation, and healthy food and beverage consumption. In January 2010, the *Active Design Guidelines* (www.nyc.gov/adg) were released, which present design strategies for neighborhoods, streets, and buildings to help facilitate healthier lives for residents.

Obesity and type 2 diabetes are now epidemic throughout the country, and both problems have been growing worse rapidly over recent decades. Mounting scientific evidence, as referenced in the *Guidelines*, demonstrates the important impact that design of the built environment has on physical activity and nutrition. Today, architectural and urban design too often support unhealthy rather than healthy diets, and sedentary rather than active daily lifestyles. The *Active Design Guidelines* aim to reverse these trends, by providing architects, landscape architects, urban designers, planners, building owners and managers, and other real estate professionals with a manual for creating healthier buildings, streets, neighborhoods, and urban spaces. At the same time, the *Guidelines* synergistically improve environmental sustainability, universal accessibility, and create more vibrant, desirable places to live.

Lynn Silver, MD, MPH, Director of the Office of Science and Policy, NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
Faced with evidence that the obesity epidemic was caused by changes in our food and physical activity environments, we started looking for ways to make sustainable changes to our environment that would make physical activity easier for large numbers of people. We realized that we needed to lead by working with the design community to identify effective measures, educating design professionals about these issues, advocating for policies in our communities that promote active design, and by building active design into contractual frameworks and other opportunities.

THE HEALTH CASE FOR ACTIVE DESIGN

Cost of Rising Obesity Rates in the U.S.

34%
PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT & OBESE CHILDREN AGES 10–17

68%
PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT & OBESE ADULTS

$147
BILLION
ESTIMATED ANNUAL COSTS OF OBESITY

$900
BILLION
PROJECTED ANNUAL COSTS OF OBESITY BY 2030

$174
BILLION
ESTIMATED ANNUAL COSTS OF DIABETES

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Karen K. Lee, MD, MHSc, FRCPC, Director, Built Environment and Active Design Program, NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the types of conditions that were plaguing U.S. cities were infectious disease epidemics, which were propagated by environmental conditions. In lower Manhattan, for example, there was severe overcrowding – about 114,000 people per square mile, which is an average density nearly twice that of today. There were inadequate systems for garbage, water, and sewage disposal. The types of diseases that were epidemic were diseases spread by crowding, such as tuberculosis, water borne diseases like cholera, and vector borne or insect borne diseases like yellow fever.

After multiple cholera epidemics New York City decided to create a new drinking water supply, a new water system that we are still using today. Almost immediately, those cholera epidemics went away. We created parks like Central Park, and established the Department of Sanitation to clean the streets. We passed the Tenement House Act, which banned the construction of dark, airless tenement buildings, and later passed a zoning ordinance that required buildings to be stepped back from the street allowing light and air not just into buildings but also into the streets.

These environmental interventions were overwhelmingly successful. In 1880, almost 60 percent of our deaths in New York City were caused by infectious diseases. By 1940, after changes to the environment like the ones mentioned only 11 percent were due to infectious diseases. Today chronic diseases such as heart disease, strokes, cancers and diabetes account for 75 percent of deaths. These diseases are shaped by physical inactivity, unhealthy diets, and tobacco. In the 19th century infectious diseases were controlled by the way we built our physical environments. Urban and building design, once again, can help address today's most pressing health epidemics.

In New York City, nearly 60 percent of adults and 40 percent of elementary and middle school children are overweight or obese. This situation is worse than that in the rest of the country where about 30 percent of elementary and middle school children are overweight or obese.

Two of the main risk factors for obesity are poor diet and physical inactivity. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommendations state that adults get 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity every week and that children get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily. Surveys show that less than half of U.S. adults meet those recommendations; when measured, an even fewer number of people meet these requirements.

The design elements of everyday life are important. Calculations have shown that just two minutes of stair climbing a day would burn enough calories to prevent the average annual U.S. weight gain. In one study of Harvard alumni men, those who climbed 20 to 34 flights of stairs per week – an average of 3 to 5 floors per day – had a 29 percent lower risk of stroke. People cycling just 15 minutes a day to and from work can burn off 10 pounds of weight per year, more than the average weight gain.

DESIGNING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BACK INTO OUR LIVES

In 1974, 66 percent of children walked or bicycled to school. By 2000, only 13 percent did. What's changed? Growing evidence confirms that the design of communities and buildings make a difference in physical activity levels, and obesity rates. Sprawling neighborhoods that are less walkable, combined with buildings that encourage elevator or escalator use over climbing stairs, have helped design physical activity out of our daily lives.

Research has demonstrated that a diverse mix of land use, a well-connected street system with pedestrian infrastructure and amenities, transit access, access to parks and recreation spaces close to homes and worksites, and buildings that encourage stair usage through design and well-placed point-of-decision signs at escalators and elevators, all tend to increase physical activity in residents. An Atlanta study, for example, found that each quartile increase in a neighborhood's land use mix, contributing to walkability, was associated with a 12 percent reduction in the likelihood of obesity, while motor vehicle use and air pollution were also reduced.

American street without safe walking or bicycling accommodation
Credit: www.pedbikeimages.org / Libby Thomas

Today, chronic diseases such as heart disease, strokes, cancers and diabetes account for 75 percent of deaths. These diseases are shaped by physical inactivity, unhealthy diets, and tobacco.

ACTIVE DESIGN GUIDELINES

In January 2010, the *Active Design Guidelines* were released. They present design strategies for healthier neighborhoods, streets, and buildings to help facilitate healthier lives for residents. A product of New York City's Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene, Design + Construction, Transportation, and City Planning, the *Active Design Guidelines* were developed following a two-year process that involved more than 12 New York City agencies, the American Institute of Architects New York Chapter (AIANY) as well as academic partners, community organizations, professional associations and private sector partners.

Download the *Guidelines* at: www.nyc.gov/adg

Chapter 2: Urban Design: Creating an Active City

The *Guidelines* present strategies for designing neighborhoods, streets, and outdoor spaces that encourage active transportation and recreation, including walking, bicycling, and active play. Key recommended measures include:

- Develop and maintain mixed land use;
- Design accessible, pedestrian-friendly streets and neighborhoods with high connectivity, traffic calming features, landscaping, lighting, benches, and water fountains;
- Facilitate bicycling, transportation and recreation by developing continuous bicycle networks, and incorporating infrastructure such as safe indoor and outdoor bicycle parking;
- Improve access to transit and transit facilities;
- Improve access to plazas, parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities, and design these spaces to maximize their active use;
- Improve access to full-service grocery stores and fresh produce.

Alexandros Washburn, AIA, Chief Urban Designer, NYC Department of City Planning

The purpose of the *Active Design Guidelines* is pretty simple – it's aimed at getting people to walk, ride their bikes, take the stairs and eat their vegetables. These are very simple goals, but to turn that into a DNA code that then gets built into the city can present a tough challenge. But as illustrated in NYC, by working across sectors, it can be done.

Bicycling in New York City
Credit: www.pedbikeimages.org / Tiffany Robinson

Chapter 3: Building Design: Creating Opportunities for Daily Physical Activity

Opportunities for incorporating regular physical activity into daily life can be found not only outdoors but inside buildings as well. The following measures can help building occupants incorporate physical activity into their daily routines:

- Increase stair use among the able-bodied by providing conveniently located stairs, posting motivational signage at elevators and escalators to encourage stair use, and designing visible, appealing and comfortable stairs;
- Where feasible, incorporate ramps for active vertical circulation;
- Locate building functions to encourage walking to shared spaces such as mail and lunch rooms and provide appealing, supportive walking routes within buildings;
- Provide facilities that support active recreation and transportation such as centrally visible physical activity spaces, as well as showers, locker rooms, secure bicycle storage, and drinking fountains;
- Design building exteriors and massing that contribute to a pedestrian-friendly urban environment and that include maximum variety and transparency, multiple entries, stoops, and canopies.

Active Design in Action: Kaiser Permanente, San Leandro, California

Jessica Vogel, AIA, LEED AP, Project Designer, Senior Associate, Ellerbe Becket, Inc., an AECOM company

Kaiser Permanente has been a great advocate for creating a complete health environment. The company has a farmers' market initiative in the open plaza at their hospital in San Leandro, California. It's a great platform to teach people how to make healthy choices and help improve access to great food. Kaiser has also provided a walking trail with exercise stations on the site to encourage the staff, members and community to stay active. There's also a labyrinth for staff and members to spend contemplative time outside the hospital near the emergency department. A healing garden in the interior courtyard of the hospital provides a place for respite or a spot to eat lunch while viewing lush landscaped plantings and listening to a calming water feature. Since hospital environments are often stressful, these elements are great places to educate staff and get them outdoors, active and breathing in the fresh air, rejuvenating them so that they can provide the best care.

Rendering of Farmers' market at Kaiser Permanente in San Leandro, California Credit: AECOM

ACTIVE DESIGN IN ACTION: NEW YORK CITY

Event announcing the opening of the first FRESH grocery store in New York City
Credit: Randi Rosenblum

Rick Bell, FAIA, Executive Director, AIANY
The Fit City initiative, started in New York City at the AIANY's Center for Architecture by the NYC Deptartment of Health and Mental Hygiene and AIANY has led to our City's *Active Design Guidelines*, now being implemented in neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs. The *Guidelines* encourage, explain and extol bicycle commuting, walking, stair use and the provision of healthy food through design, planning and zoning incentives, through work across multiple city agencies. The AIANY applauds and supports these efforts of our muncipal agencies.

Encouraging Healthier Food in NYC's Food Deserts

A study conducted for the NYC Mayor's Food Policy Task Force by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, NYC Department of City Planning and the NYC Economic Development Corporation, shows that many neighborhoods across the city are underserved by grocery stores. The resulting lack of nutritious, affordable fresh food in these neighborhoods has been linked to higher rates of diet-related diseases, including heart disease, diabetes and obesity.

In response, the City has established the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) program. FRESH provides zoning and financial incentives to promote the establishment, retention and expansion of neighborhood supermarkets in underserved communities throughout the five boroughs. The first FRESH supermarket opened in the Bronx in August 2011.

For more information, visit:
www.nyc.gov/fresh

Increasing Bicycle Commuting & Usage: Safe Bike Parking

Bicycling is on the rise in New York City, thanks in part to NYC Department of Transportation's work to build a bicycle network and provide safer bicycle facilities. More than 390 lane-miles of bicycle routes have been installed since 2002, and commuter cycling is up 262 percent since 2000. Improved bicycle infrastructure has also led to safer streets; the average risk of a serious injury to bike riders declined by 72 percent since 2000.

The NYC Department of City Planning passed a new zoning provision in 2009 that requires indoor, secure, long-term bicycle parking in new multi-family residential, community facility, and commercial buildings. Studies and surveys by multiple city agencies have found that the lack of a safe and secure bicycle parking facility is a leading factor discouraging people from cycling to work. In addition, a lack of bicycle storage facilities in residential buildings can make bicycle ownership impractical given small apartment sizes. By promoting secure, indoor bicycle parking facilities, this zoning provision is supporting bicycle ridership throughout the city as well as encouraging new cyclists to start riding. NYCDOT has also installed sheltered bike parking stations and new bike racks throughout the city.

Times Square pedestrian plaza in New York City
Credit: NYCDOT

Creating More Recreation Opportunities for Residents

To reach NYC's goal of ensuring that all New Yorkers live within a 10-minute walk of quality open space, the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation is working to construct new parks, improve existing facilities, and open up limited-use facilities to residents. As a part of this effort, the NYC Parks Department, the Department of Education (DOE), and the non–profit Trust for Public Land (TPL) are working together to improve 189 schoolyards in the city in the Schoolyards to Playgrounds program. The playgrounds will be opened after school, on weekends, and during school breaks for community use. The playground design process has included children, parents, and teachers from each school, along with community residents, so that each playground matches the needs of the school and the surrounding neighborhood.

To complement the parks and recreation facilities built by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, the NYC Department of Transportation's Plaza Program seeks to re-invent New York City's public realm with additional smaller open spaces. NYCDOT works with selected not-for-profit organizations to create neighborhood plazas throughout the city by transforming underused streets into vibrant, social public spaces. The City prioritizes sites in neighborhoods that lack open space, and partners with community groups that commit to operate, maintain, and manage these spaces as vibrant pedestrian plazas.

ACTIVE DESIGN IN ACTION: NEW YORK CITY

In addition, the New York City Departments of Health & Mental Hygiene, Transportation, Parks and Recreation, and Education, working with community partners, are addressing children's physical activity and obesity through the Playstreets program. Playstreets are single blocks of quieter streets that are closed to cars and opened up to children and families for active play. Schools are using Playstreets to create more active playspaces for recess and physical education. Community Playstreets are also occurring during the summertime to provide children and families with safe, active playspaces in underserved neighborhoods. New York City's long term sustainability plan, PlaNYC, sets a goal of opening 15 Playstreets each year where they are needed most and providing 40 schools with access to a Playstreet so children have places to play during recess.

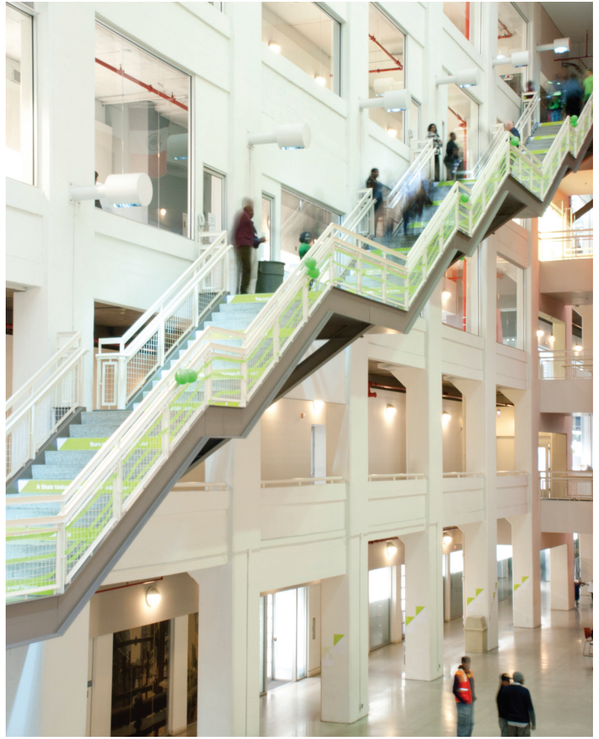
Increasing Access to Tap Water to Promote Health and Sustainability Goals

In 2008, NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn convened a group of industry professionals and city policy makers to develop a set of proposals with the goal of making the city's buildings healthier and more sustainable. The resulting Green Codes Report included a recommendation to increase New Yorkers' access to city tap water in order to simultaneously reduce consumption of sugary beverages and plastic bottles, which has since been adopted into law by the City Council. This Local Law 55 requires that all drinking fountains, which are already mandated by the NYC Plumbing Code, include a regular spout for drinking along with a separate faucet that is designed for filling water bottles or other containers. The law also no longer allows required drinking fountains to be replaced by vending machines that dispense bottled water. The City is working to promote the use of these new standard drinking fountains in recreation facilities, schools, office buildings, and other locations. Water fountains have been installed on the High Line park in Manhattan, for example, making it easier for those walking, running, or playing in the area to drink free, calorie-free water instead of a sugary beverage in a plastic container.

Encouraging Active Design at the NYC Department of Design + Construction

David Burney, FAIA, Commissioner, NYC Department of Design + Construction

We had a Stair Week event at our office this year and are very fortunate to have a large atrium in our office with an open stair connecting five floors. We created signage on the stairs, promoted Stair Week in advance, outlining the associated health benefits, and gave people healthy prizes for climbing to the top of the staircase. We are also working to incorporate Active Design strategies into all our agency's projects.



Stair Week at the NYC Department of Design + Construction
Credit: NYC Department of Design + Construction

NYC Police Academy rendering
Credit: Perkins+Will

ACTIVE DESIGN IN ACTION: NEW YORK CITY

Joyce Lee , AIA, LEED AP, former Director, Active Design Program, NYC Department of Design + Construction

The variety of projects at DDC that have adopted active design strategies include health clinics, libraries, training facilities, municipal garages, plazas, and streets with steps. In conjunction with housing and education projects, we are putting a strong focus on children's recreation spaces and programming to address childhood obesity.

LEED Design for Health through Increased Physical Activity Innovation Credit

A new Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Innovation Credit for green real estate projects and developments has been developed in tandem with the *Active Design Guidelines*. The LEED Design for Health through Increased Physical Activity Innovation Credit was created to promote the health and fitness of building occupants while also achieving environmental benefits. The credit includes building and site strategies to support and promote active vertical circulation (such as stair and ramp use), active transportation, and active recreation. The credit is being incorporated into LEED projects in NYC and across the U.S. Projects include the NYC Police Academy and The Melody, an affordable housing development in the South Bronx.

Active Design in Action: NYC Police Academy

Joan Blumenfeld, FAIA, IIDA, Design Director and Principal, Interiors, Perkins + Will

The Police Academy project is a horizontal skyscraper with about 700,000 square feet of internal space, connected by a series of pedestrian walkways and stairs. Because it is spread out rather than up, it is easier to visually and physically connect the various spaces and functions through walking rather than riding in an elevator. Both horizontal and vertical circulation paths are always visible so that recruits, staff and visitors can navigate the space easily. Wherever there is more than one level, there is always a stair that is easily accessible that will connect those floors. The stairs are celebrated as a part of the architecture so that they are appealing.

Stairwell of The Melody, an affordable ownership building in the South Bronx, New York City Credit: Reena Agarwal

Active Design in Action: The Melody

Les Bluestone, Partner, Blue Sea Development Company

The Melody is an affordable housing building in the South Bronx, which received the first LEED for Homes Design for Health through Increased Physical Activity Innovation credit. The project includes small 'fitness centers' on a walking trail in the courtyard. We also thought about and included opportunities for children's fitness indoors and outdoors. One of the things I'm hoping will be a big hit are two stationary bicycles on which kids bike through a video game and can compete against others via the internet. Our building is in an area with a very rich musical legacy. A lot of jazz, a lot of salsa, doo-wop, and R&B came from the neighborhood. We commissioned a local artist to design artwork that will be in the stairwells going up and down to create some visual interest, something better than just plain old concrete block. We also equipped the stairwells and fitness center with music, but not the elevator. The *Active Design Guidelines* sound so simple, but it does require a change in thinking and habits on behalf of architects, developers, and others.

ACTIVE DESIGN IN ACTION: WASHINGTON, DC

Tackling Growing Obesity Rates in the Nation's Capital

LaQuandra S. Nesbitt, MD, MPH, former Senior Deputy Director, Washington, D.C. Department of Health

In the District of Columbia, 33 percent of the deaths are due to tobacco use, physical inactivity, or poor nutrition. Twenty-two percent of adults are obese and 33 percent are overweight. Over 35 percent of our children are either overweight or obese. We estimate healthcare costs to be $400 million due to DC residents' obesity and overweight levels.

We have developed a leadership team and a community coalition to support our larger Live Well DC Program. Our leadership team has representatives from the DC Departments of Health, Health Care Finance, Parks and Recreation, Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Planning, representatives from the school system, DC Housing and Community Development, as well as the DC Housing Authority. DC's Obesity Action Plan, which is a report that guides the District from 2010 to 2015 around our approach to tackling obesity, was developed with significant input from community stakeholders.

Our goal is to make sure that we're finding common ground and creating partnerships. If we continue to work in silos, if we continue to only protect our part – I'm only health, I have no role in planning, I have no role in housing, I have no role in the environment – then we're not going to be successful. We need to all embrace this concept of shared accountability so that we are identifying more opportunities for partnerships and realizing that we are all responsible for making sure that we live in communities that promote healthy living and allow our residents to be successful in their efforts to live healthy lives.

Harriet Tregoning, Director, Washington, D.C. Office of Planning

There are lots of reasons why the U.S. has a national problem with obesity and poor health outcomes. Washington, DC is a lot like New York and many other cities in that we are actually two cities. There are enormous disparities across almost every kind of indicator you'd want to look at, including health, between the people who live west and east of the river that runs through the District. So how do we begin to address those disparities?

As individuals and families, we need to design our lives so that getting physical activity is part of our daily routine. We do not need to make an appointment to do it. We don't have to drive 30 minutes to go to the gym so that we can work out.

How do we make physical activity just part of what we do every single day? In Washington, we have a lot of assets that we're building upon, including our transit system and our parks, but we also have barriers in parts of the city that we are seeking to address and overcome. Just to give you an idea of the progress we're making – between 2005 and 2008 when DC's population went up by about a percentage and half and our median income went up by 24 percent, vehicle registrations for motorcycles and cars dropped by

Obesity in Washington, DC

22%
PERCENTAGE OF OBESE ADULTS

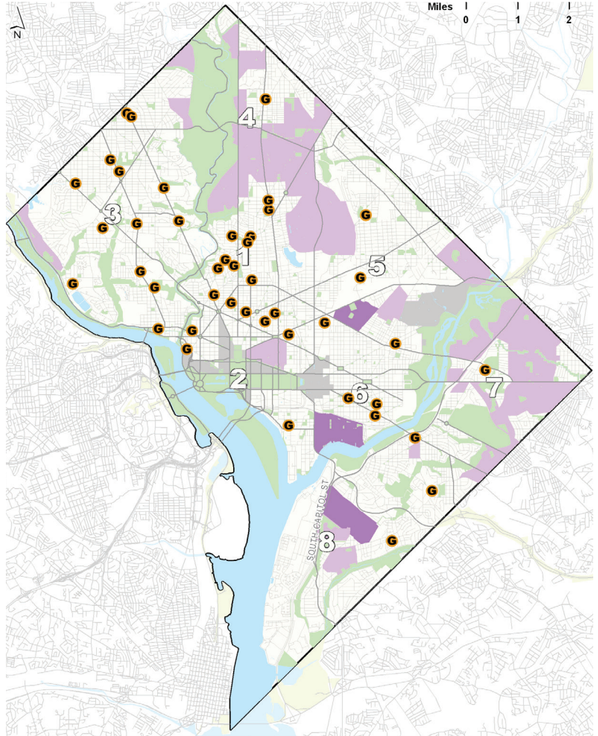
33%
PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT ADULTS

OVER **35%**
PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE CHILDREN

$400
MILLION
ESTIMATED HEALTHCARE COSTS DUETO OBESITY AND OVERWEIGHT LEVELS IN WASHINGTON, DC

Food Deserts in the District of Columbia

- Food Deserts
- Food Deserts & High Poverty
- Parks
- Zero Population (2000 Census)
- Grocery Stores



Data Sources:
Food Deserts Analysis–DC Hunger Solutions/Social Compact, December 2009
Poverty Rates*–2000 Census Block Groups
Percent poverty=over 66% of the population is within 200% poverty.

Office of Planning
Government of the District of Columbia

This map was created for planning purposes from a variety of sources. It is neither a survey nor a legal document. Information provided by other agencies should be verified with them where appropriate.

ACTIVE DESIGN IN ACTION: WASHINGTON, DC

11 percent. We attribute this very directly to our own investments in walkability, transportation choices, and neighborhood conveniences like grocery stores.

Attracting Grocery Stores & Healthier Food Choices

Many of Washington, DC's poorest neighborhoods are located in food deserts, lacking places to purchase fresh produce and unprocessed foods, which contributes to obesity rates. A lack of grocery stores also results in more than $100 million annually in lost revenue for the city — and the hundreds of jobs that are supported by that sector. Since 2006, the City has helped attract nearly a dozen new grocery stores. The City is changing its zoning regulations to encourage small commercial uses in residential areas, such as corner stores, and also passed the FEED DC Act (Food, Environmental, and Economic Development in the District of Columbia Act) in 2010. That legislation creates a public/private partnership to attract and renovate grocery stores in the District's food deserts. It designates a 'grocery ambassador' in the Deputy Mayor's office to help grocers navigate through the bureaucratic hurdles of opening new stores and will help existing corner stores sell fresh produce and healthy foods.

Bringing BikeShare to DC

Capital BikeShare is a regional bike sharing program with 1,100 bikes at 116 stations in Washington, DC and Arlington, VA and over 17,000 annual members and 58,876 24-hour and 5-day members since the system's inception in 2008.

Elevating Stairs in Real Estate Projects: American University's School of International Service

Carl Elefante, FAIA, LEED AP, Principal and Director of Sustainable Design, Quinn Evans Architects

Our project at American University has a grand stair that connects the two main public areas where the classrooms and lecture rooms are located and where the stair also becomes an amphitheater. The design was largely based around daylight and natural ventilation. It was also about encouraging movement throughout the space, getting people out of their chairs. We've created an environment where you can see somebody across not just the hall, but across the building. When you are sitting in an office on the west side of the building you can actually see out of the windows on the east side of the building; that is how transparent this building is. The 2000's were about environmental sustainability, understanding the environmental consequences of our design. I think the second decade is going to be about the social responsibility aspects of design and about whether we are creating buildings that are great and healthy for people.

Pennsylvania Avenue bicycle lanes in Washington, DC
Credit: www.pedbikeimages.org / Elvert Barnes

ACTIVE DESIGN IN ACTION: WASHINGTON, DC

**Tommy Wells,
Councilmember,
District of Columbia
Credit: Laura Trimble**

Tommy Wells, Councilmember, District of Columbia

When I first ran for the DC City Council, my goals for the District were encapsulated in a single theme: a livable, walkable city. I asked long-term residents why they stayed in DC during the late 1980s and 1990s, when the city went broke and many of their neighbors were leaving. And I asked new arrivals why they chose the District instead of its suburbs. Their answers formed the basis of my campaign and the guideposts for my service on the Council: to support and build on the reasons people love living in DC, and in cities generally.

Sometimes I call it 'five minute living.' That means residents can access all the services and amenities they need within five minutes. You do not need to get in a car to reach these places. They are either in walking distance or within five minutes on mass transit. The aging in place initiative is part of the future of DC because five minute living is particularly attractive to retirees who retire and want to stay fully engaged in the community.

To expand our multimodal transportation options, the District has been building new bike facilities, including one next to Union Station, a multimodal hub that enables people to get almost anywhere in the world and in DC. Placing a wonderfully designed bike share facility at Union Station is a way to show that we value bicycles and we want people to use them in Washington.

I've also been one of the main proponents for expanding streetcars in the District. We are putting the tracks down for a streetcar line that goes from Union Station down H Street, NE—a once-thriving corridor that is one of the city's main traffic arteries. H Street was one of the centers of looting in the city, for those who remember the Life Magazine pictures taken after the riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King. The movement toward urban living is bringing H Street back to life, and the streetcar line will help further that revitalization to bring economic development back. Eventually that streetcar will cross the Anacostia River to reach some of the poorest neighborhoods in Washington, connecting them with the rest of DC's economic development and opportunity.

I'm a big supporter of the *Active Design Guidelines*—a perfect complement to public transit— because they are about creating great places for people and encouraging them to be outside and active. When Eastern Market, a historic gathering place in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, caught fire in 2007, one of my challenges as a councilmember was to keep the space moving and activated while the market was being repaired. So we moved the vendors that were on the sidewalk into the street, and we closed the streets surrounding Eastern Market on Saturdays and Sundays.

We had an extraordinary debate on whether we would open the street again after we had reopened the market. You had folks from a certain older demographic saying streets are for cars and parking—and it would hurt the businesses if the streets remained closed. Now we were only talking about 15 to 20 parking spaces, so the debate was really symbolic. You also had the younger families at the debate, with their kids along, saying they were pushing baby carriages, they had children running around, and it was wonderful to be able to go to a place and not be worried about cars zipping by, no matter how slowly they moved.

So we did keep the street closed to cars on Saturdays and Sundays. And now I think there would be an uprising if we tried to open them to cars again on weekends. That's just one example of reclaiming some of the public space of streets, but even for just one and a half blocks it was not easy.

The *Active Design Guidelines* are very exciting to me, because they give me something tangible to discuss with developers, architects, city planners, and folks that are involved in neighborhoods—people who are trying to imagine some of these areas that we are developing. They embody the goals of five-minute living.

**Eastern Market
in Washington, DC
Credit: Wikipedia /
AgnosticPreachersKid**

ACTIVE DESIGN: A FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE

Let's Move logo

Over the last two years, two efforts have dramatically expanded federal leadership on active design issues: First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign and the Sustainable Communities Partnership, a federal multi-agency effort to support more livable, healthier communities.

First Lady's Let's Move! Initiative Tackling Childhood Obesity

Let's Move! is a comprehensive initiative, launched by First Lady Michelle Obama in February 2010, dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation. Combining comprehensive strategies with common sense, Let's Move! aims to put children on the path to a healthy future during their earliest months and years by giving parents helpful information and fostering environments that support healthy choices, providing healthier foods in schools and in communities, and helping kids become more physically active.

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, one in three children in America are overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher in African American and Hispanic communities, where nearly 40 percent of the children are overweight or obese. Without change to these trends, one third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives. Many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and asthma.

As a complement to Let's Move!, President Barack Obama established the first-ever Task Force on Childhood Obesity to develop and implement an inter-agency plan that details a coordinated strategy, identifies key benchmarks, and outlines an action plan to end the problem of childhood obesity within a generation. The goal of the action plan is to reduce the childhood obesity rate to just five percent by 2030 — the same rate before childhood obesity first began to rise in the late 1970s. In total, the report presents a series of 70 specific recommendations. The report's section on increasing physical activity includes a chapter on the built environment that overlaps with many of the strategies included in the *Active Design Guidelines*.

First Lady Michelle Obama
Credit: Eddie Gehman Kohan/Obama Foodorama

ACTIVE DESIGN: A FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE

The magnitude of this issue is so large. It is really about the future of this country. Our response has to match the magnitude. And we can't do it alone. We have to cross-pollinate.

Robin Schepper, former Executive Director of Let's Move!, now a senior advisor at the Bipartisan Policy Center

Before I started working for the First Lady, I was a 'type A' PTA mom with kids in a Washington, DC school. One of the things that I found is that I wanted to walk to school with my kids. I live in DC, off Connecticut Avenue, and there was no sidewalk from my home to the school. I applied to the Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School Program and received a grant for our school. We were able to get a sidewalk and then some bike racks, and it was a transformation for the school and the people in my neighborhood. It was very exciting because I realized that if we build it - if we build sidewalks or bike racks - people will use them and demand even more.

I'm very excited that you are doing this and I'm hoping that there's going to be Fit Nation conferences in every city around the country. How are we creating communities that encourage an active life by design? How do we make it easier to ride a bike, or take a walk with your family after dinner, so that these become the default option? Through Let's Move! Cities and Towns, we now have almost 500 mayors who have signed up around the country and committed to tackling child obesity issues in their communities.

The magnitude of this issue is so large. It is really about the future of this country. Our response has to match the magnitude. And we can't do it alone. We have to cross-pollinate. We have to work with all the federal, state and city agencies, foundations, and community groups. When we just work within our own silos, we will only chip away at this issue slowly. We just do not have that much time.

Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities

On June 16, 2009, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) joined together to help communities nationwide improve access to affordable housing, increase transportation options, and lower transportation costs while protecting the environment. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities works to coordinate federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure investments to make neighborhoods more prosperous, allow people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution.

One of the many important outcomes of this coordinated approach are neighborhoods that encourage greater physical activity including walking and bicycling. In October 2010, the Partnership for Sustainable Communities announced a series of grants and other funding assistance totaling $409.5 million to support livability investments in more than 200 communities across the country. Many of these grants include the creation of more active transportation infrastructure such as bike lanes and trails.

HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan announced in May 2010 that HUD would adopt the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) system to evaluate applications for its $3.25 billion in discretionary funding. Funded by EPA and developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Congress for New Urbanism, and developed with input from national public health experts including those from NYC, LEED-ND is a system for rating and certifying neighborhoods that integrate housing with jobs and services. It encourages walkable communities and transportation choices, as well as access to nearby active recreational amenities and incorporates green building and sustainable infrastructure.

Robin Schepper, former Executive Director of Let's Move!
Credit: Laura Trimble

ACTIVE DESIGN: A FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE

If we are going to provide the foundation for people to live healthier and more active lives, we need to take new steps...so that those kinds of investments, both by the public sector but particularly from the private sector, can more happen easily.

Shelley Poticha, Director, Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
It is so great to have a meeting of people who care about cities and urbanism and physical activity and the culture of communities all in one fell swoop. In so many ways that is what the new Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities at HUD is all about. It is about thinking comprehensively about our agenda and evaluating how the federal government's rules or funding decisions are either helping or hurting us in getting towards healthy outcomes for communities.

Tackling all our problems individually will not get to the kind of outcomes that we're looking for, whether it's about economic prosperity, or the environment and reducing our impact on global warming, or the lives of people that live in our communities. Places all over the country are using better health outcomes as the reason for looking at the way that they plan and design their cities. I think some of the most interesting examples are coming from even the smallest places. I was able to go to the announcement for one of our combined grants in Ranson, West Virginia, a small town. Ranson is working to turn a fast moving arterial street through their community into a walkable, bikeable boulevard. We also asked grant applicants to report on some basic metrics of the quality of life in their communities. These included health outcomes like asthma rates, the availability of fresh food opportunities for people with low incomes, and the extent to which people can get around by walking and biking without having to drive for every trip.

We are seeing across the country that if we are going to provide the foundation for people to live healthier and more active lives, we need to take new steps, we need to change the rules of the game so that those kinds of investments, both by the public sector but particularly from the private sector, can happen more easily. In the spirit of making sure that we are integrating health and well-being into built environment decisions, we have formed within HUD a health task force that is looking comprehensively at all of the ways that our various programs evaluate and impact health.

Shelley Poticha, Director, Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Credit: Laura Trimble

RESOURCES

Active Design Guidelines
http://www.nyc.gov/adg
Fit City 1 Report
http://www.aiany.org/fitcity1
Fit City 2 Report
http://www.aiany.org/fitcity2
Fit City 3 Report
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Fit City 4 Report
http://www.aiany.org/fitcity4
Fit City 5 Report
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NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
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Made possible by funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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