The role of placemaking in supporting healthy lifestyles

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Overview

• It is increasingly recognised that place and space have an impact on human health and wellbeing and that individual actions to improve lifestyle or health status are likely to be influenced by the environmental and socioeconomic context in which they take place.

• The built environment includes several material determinants of health, including housing, neighbourhood conditions and transport routes, all of which shape the social, economic and environmental conditions for which good health is dependent.

• Within urban areas, the imaginative integration of built and natural features can help to create environments which are unique and interesting enough for people to lead varied and healthy lives.
The determinants of health and well-being in our neighbourhoods
Figure 4.1  The impact of neighbourhood upon our live chances and quality of life

- Quality of education
- Employment opportunities
- Access to housing
- Access to essential services and amenities
- Leisure and recreational facilities
- Access to green spaces
- Pollution and other environmental hazards
- Social status, identity and sense of belonging
- Social inclusion and opportunities to participate in local decision-making
- Risk of being a victim of crime
- Social mobility
- Family relationships and social networks
Poor quality design and layout - streetscape
Poor quality design and layout – car dominated
Poor quality design and layout – car dominated
Disregard for simple design features
Lack of integration with outside assets/features
Active travel an afterthought
Bland use of standardised house hyps
“Left-over” areas of land
Green space – but not fit for play space
Growth of restrictive signage
Quality of life & health-encouraging environments
The built environment and health: an evidence review
Direct Health Impacts of Good Placemaking

• Traffic measures which reduce speeds or divert traffic away from busy streets and spread the flow more evenly across built-up areas.

• Policies which reduce levels of harmful transport emissions (e.g. promoting active travel and providing a networked infrastructure which enables active travel).

• Increasing the number of permeable surfaces within built-up urban areas to reduce levels of surface water runoff.

• Mitigative climate change action such as transferring to active forms of travel, recycling, improving fuel efficiency, and locally producing food.

• Assessment of the design and situation of buildings in terms of their vulnerability to climate change.
Indirect Health Impacts of Good Placemaking

• Health promoting neighbourhood conditions include; choice and diversity; well-kept environments; affordable and efficient public transport; safe and sociable play areas; high quality greenspace; well-lit and pedestrian-friendly footpaths and socially enhancing street patterns.

• Having a strong, supportive social network is important for maintaining mental wellbeing, and built environment features can facilitate or reduce opportunities for social activity.

• The density of the built environment can impact upon levels of trust and social capital, and lower density forms of development can stratify communities into distinct social class groups.

• Excess car use and the absence of local amenities can diminish the role of communities in enabling social activity to take place.

• Well maintained, distinctive, attractive and safe-feeling public spaces and routes enable social activity and can encourage people to prioritise community-oriented behaviour over individualism.
Encourage Walking

• Footpaths & drop kerbs.
• Lighting.
• Seating.
• Rubbish bins.
• Signage/wayfinding in time, not distance.
• Dog-related infrastructure.
• Home Zones.
• Inclusive and safe – 20 mph limits.
• Discourage pavement parking.

“A place that permits 30 mph on a residential road will never be child friendly and will deter physical activity”

*Rod King CBE, 20 Is Plenty Campaign*
Encourage Cycling

- Segregated, high profile bike paths & routes on main roads & in street design.
- Advisory routes and quietways on residential streets.
- Bike racks near shops, parks and public places.
- Play space that encourages cycling.
- Safe bike parking/lockers at public transport stops and workplaces.
- Bike lockers.
- Wayfinding signage in time, not distance.
Encourage Social Interaction

- Seating, shade, shelter.
- Equipment that encourages activity – green gyms, tables, games.
- Attractive open space.
- Provision for dog walking.
- Reduce traffic speeds.
- Priority of pedestrians/cyclists over motor vehicles – remove PGR and other street clutter.
Encourage Recreation

- Seating.
- Play Streets.
- Play equipment.
- A range of recreation facilities for all ages.
- Well designed and attractive open space.
- Remove barriers to open space – less fencing.
- Remove potential for the “no’s” to creep in – i.e. “no ball games, “cyclists dismount”.

![Image of playground equipment]

![Image of people exercising on outdoor fitness equipment]
Age friendly environments?

• Seating space.
• Dropped kerbs.
• No bushes on pedestrian access-ways (due to visibility, ASB potential).
• Can provide good opportunities for social interaction and security.
• Links with Lifetime Homes principles.
Dementia-friendly design
Evidence-Based Recommendations

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
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
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
Some common themes...

- Use Building for Life 12 principles, Manual for Streets and Lifetime Homes concepts.
- No rear gardens backing onto public spaces – they need to *front* public spaces.
- Connectivity to local assets from development.
- Resist excessive use of standardised house types in a uniform fashion.
- Design out “left-over” areas of land.
- Incorporate cycle storage and/or shared electric vehicle charging.
- Step-free access.
- Encourage street play.
- Highways shouldn’t dominate character of development.
- Permeability and enabling convenient walking/cycling access to surround areas/facilities rather than just via a road access to the surrounding highway network.
- Incorporate novel uses of green infrastructure in design.
Summary

• Placemaking is key to enabling a health-encouraging environment.
• Need to design-out mistakes of the past – highways orientated/dominated development is not healthy development!
• Built environment has both direct and indirect impacts on human health.
• A healthy neighbourhood includes many features but they are straightforward to incorporate early-on in masterplanning process – but need to make vision clear.
• Use of Supplementary Planning Guidance can help set the scene for good quality placemaking – also link with wider planning/placemaking/sustainability agendas (i.e. electric cars, green infrastructure, access to services, access to green/blue space).
• Some of these common themes can be incorporated into this work (within reason and practicality).
Thanks for Listening!

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