

PLANNING AND PUBLIC HEALTH

At first glance, it may not seem that the fields of planning and public health have much in common. One is focused on the geographic realm of communities (land use, transportation, design) and the other on disease prevention and management, right? These fields have become more intertwined in the past 20 years due to a crossover in the way we see our cities, suburbs and small towns. And a host of organizations, large and small; private, public and governmental have gathered around the central idea that our communities are better when they encourage and inspire activity. Transportation planning alone can help improve air quality, encourage physical activity, prevent injuries and promote wellness.



In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, planning and public health enjoyed close association because of threats to the safety and health of citizens in urban areas. In 1854, British physician John Snow used geographic mapping of an outbreak of cholera in London to identify a public water pump as the outbreak's source. Frederick Law Olmsted bridged the gap between the fields by advancing the concept that community design contributes to physical and mental health; serving as President Lincoln's U.S. Sanitary Commission Secretary; and designing hundreds of places, including Atlanta's Druid Hills neighborhood. In 1926, the U.S. Supreme Court, in validating zoning and land-use law as a legal government authority in *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty*, cited the protection of public health as part of its justification. Jane Jacobs, a well-known urbanist, spoke on the linkages between community design and pedestrian modes of transportation and interaction. Many plans, from the regional to neighborhood level, now include some element of planning for green space or other pedestrian components to encourage other modes of transportation.

Today, many public health and planning professionals see the benefits of working together to improve communities. Whether the issue is access to healthy foods, space for active recreation or safe street crossings, there are many ways to ensure citizens enjoy long, healthy and active lives. Below are several groups and initiatives that bring together the fields of planning and public health.

Recent **Congress for the New Urbanism, Rx for Healthy Places** —Atlanta, GA

This conference focused on how to integrate concerns for green design, transportation, public space, code reform, finance and implementation, affordability, accessibility, aging populations, and strategies for retrofitting suburbs. More information on this organization and the recent conference may be found online at www.cnu.org.

Healthy Places Research Group—Atlanta, GA

A collaborative effort of the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health, the Georgia Tech College of Architecture and the Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development, this group examines the relationship between the built environment and healthy communities. Participation is open to anyone seeking to explore these connections. More information can be found online at www.cggrd.gatech.edu/proceedings/hprg/index.php.



HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

In 2010, Congress approved \$150 million to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide grants to improve regional planning efforts that integrate housing and transportation issues, livability and sustainability. This is carried out in partnership with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency. More information on this program can be found online at www.hud.gov.

Upcoming Events

DCA Community Planning Institute

July 13-14, 2010—Helen, GA

For more information call **404-679-5279**

ACCG Summer Regional Training

July 16, 2010—Gainesville and Tifton, GA

For more information visit www.accg.org

GAZA Summer Conference

July 21-23, 2010—St. Simon's Island, GA

For more information visit

www.georgiazoning.org