

# The Built Environment and Health

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## Built Environment, Activity, and Health

**Critical Assessment of the Literature on the Relationships Among Transportation, Land Use, and Physical Activity.** Susan Handy. TRB Special Report 282. [trb.org/downloads/sr282papers/sr282Handy.pdf](http://trb.org/downloads/sr282papers/sr282Handy.pdf)

This report provides a theoretical framework for discussion and to review and evaluate empirical evidence regarding the relationship between the built environment and physical activity behaviors. Handy describes the studies that have been done and makes recommendations regarding the problems she found in examining current research into the built environment and physical activity.

**Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health.** Richard J. Jackson, MD, MPH, and Chris Kochtitzky, MSP. [www.sprawlwatch.org/health.pdf](http://www.sprawlwatch.org/health.pdf)

Jackson and Kochtitzky outline the importance of exercise on health and in the reduction of obesity. They describe the housing characteristics, land use patterns, transportation choices, or architectural or urban design decisions as potential health hazards and make recommendations for ways public health professionals can get involved in supporting research into the effect of changes in the built environment on health.

**Special Report: Measuring the Health Effects of Sprawl.** Barbara A. McCann and Reid Ewing. Smart Growth America. 2003. [www.smartgrowthamerica.org/report/HealthSprawl8.03.pdf](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/report/HealthSprawl8.03.pdf)

In the first such national study, health researchers “found that people who live in counties marked by sprawl-style development tend to weigh more, are more likely to be obese, and are more likely to suffer from high blood pressure.” The report provides an executive summary, an introduction to the problem, a methodology section, and an extensive findings section that discusses how sprawl relates to weight, physical activity, and chronic disease. It also discusses the need for further research and makes recommendations for develop-

ers to consider health when planning communities.

**Does the Built Environment Influence Physical Activity: Examining the Evidence.** Report Summary. Transportation Research Board, Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. January 2005. [gulliver.trb.org/publications/sr/sr282summary.pdf](http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/sr/sr282summary.pdf)

The report reviews the broad trends affecting the relationships among physical activity, health, transportation, and land use; summarizes what is known about these relationships, including the strength and magnitude of any causal connections; examines implications for policy; and recommends priorities for future research.

**How Land Use and Transportation Systems Impact Public Health: A Literature Review of the Relationship Between Physical Activity and Built Form.** Lawrence D. Frank, PhD, and Peter Engelke. ACES: Active Community Environments Initiative Working Paper #1. [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/pdf/aces-workingpaper1.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/pdf/aces-workingpaper1.pdf)

This lengthy document reviews the literature broadly and offers the reader conclusions drawn from this literature review. The document includes an executive summary.

**Public Health and the Built Environment: Historical, Empirical, and Theoretical Foundations for an Expanded Role.** Wendy C. Perdue, Lawrence O. Gostin, Lesley Stone. *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, Winter 2003 v.31(4) p.557 (8358 words). Special issue on Emerging Issues in Population Health: National and Global Perspectives. [www.aslme.org/aslmesecure/shop/show\\_product.php?prod\\_id=178](http://www.aslme.org/aslmesecure/shop/show_product.php?prod_id=178)

This article argues that there is a demonstrable connection between public health and the built environment and as a result of this connection, government has and continues to intervene in the built environment. It concludes that such intervention is appropriate and supported by theory as well as historical practice and empirical evidence.

## Healing Landscapes

**Therapeutic Landscapes Database.** [www.healinglandscapes.org](http://www.healinglandscapes.org)

The Therapeutic Landscapes Resource Center is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing information to the public about restorative landscapes, healing gardens, wellness gardens, and other research-based health care design. The database provides Web-based information and creates a forum for discussion.

**Casitas: Gardens of Reclamation.** Daniel Winterbottom. Environmental Design Research Association Conference Proceedings, April 1998. [www.caup.washington.edu/larch/people/faculty/dan/publications.php](http://www.caup.washington.edu/larch/people/faculty/dan/publications.php)

This article describes the community garden spaces that have been created by individuals and groups on city-owned land or on vacant private property. Combining a small structure, landscape such as garden plots, open space, and pathways, as well as art, the casitas form a social focus for the community.

## Daylight

**A Literature Review of the Effects of Natural Light on Building Occupants.** L. Edwards and P. Torcellini, Golden, Colorado: National Renewable Energy Laboratory, July 2002. NREL/TP-550-30769 [www.ornl.gov/sci/hybridlighting/pdfs/NREL\\_TP\\_550\\_30769.pdf](http://www.ornl.gov/sci/hybridlighting/pdfs/NREL_TP_550_30769.pdf)

This technical report discusses the effects of light on the body and goes into detail about daylighting in offices, schools, retail establishments, health care facilities, and industrial environments. The conclusions state, “With properly installed and maintained daylighting systems, natural light has proved to be beneficial for the health, productivity, and safety of building occupants.”

## More Resources Online

See more annotated resources online at [www.nwcphp.org/nph/f2004/](http://www.nwcphp.org/nph/f2004/).

## Authors

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