



MAKING HEALTHY PLACES DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions are designed for use by faculty and students to further discussion about the topics described in each book chapter.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Healthy Places

- Give three examples of the tensions between public goods (such as parks and roads) and private entitlements (such as freedom to use one's land for any desired purpose) that may be confronted in public health decisions and in urban planning decisions.
- What types of information might a community collect when conducting surveillance related to the health effects of the built environment and community design? From what sources could such information be obtained?
- Because financial profitability plays a major role in most private sector decisions, how might health concerns be made a part of the bottom line for private developers and for private banks that finance developments?
- Consider a study that evaluates the health of people in two communities, one with sidewalks and one without. The study authors find that the rate of lung cancer is higher in the community without sidewalks, and conclude that sidewalks protect against lung cancer. What concerns would you have about accepting this conclusion?
- What information about the health implications of their work should land use and transportation planners be taught during their initial or subsequent training?

Chapter 2: Community Design for Physical Activity

- Describe the differences between physical activity for transportation and physical activity for recreation. How do features of the built environment affect these types of physical activity differently?
- Identify five key findings from research on the relationship between the built environment and physical activity. How could you use these key findings to design active communities in rural, in suburban, and in urban settings?
- Which attributes of the built environment could you target to make changes in physical activity quickly, given financial, political, and other challenges? Which attributes could you target to support long-term increases in physical activity?
- Given limited resources, what changes to the built environment could you make in a disadvantaged, low-income community to promote physical activity? What outcome would you expect from such changes?
- For each of the environmental attributes documented to be related to physical activity, identify the decision-maker groups with authority to make changes. For each type of decision-maker, identify some of the scientific, community, advocacy, and business groups who could be involved in educating and influencing these decision-makers.

Chapter 3: Food Environments

- Describe your area's local food environments, identifying elements of food production, distribution, and marketing, and indicating how these elements vary within your city, county, or state. Which of these elements are likely to promote health and which are likely to be detrimental to health?
- How might the distribution of food outlets (such as supermarkets, restaurants, farmers' markets, and convenience stores) contribute to the development of health disparities among communities?
- While zoning can encourage healthy food outlets to be built, store owners typically decide where to locate their stores based on the likelihood of profitability at any given site. What incentives or other approaches can be used to encourage supermarkets and other sources of healthy food to build in an area that lacks healthy food outlets?
- What kinds of policy changes can favorably influence built environment aspects of the food environment to improve a population's health?
- How do major U.S. agricultural policies and systems influence the built environment in ways that affect the health of the population and the health of the natural environment?

Chapter 4: Community Design and Air Quality

- What are the primary air pollution sources in urban environments?
- How do everyday activities contribute to air pollution exposures in cities?
- How is regional air pollution related to other health and environmental issues?
- What are some examples of success in reducing air pollution emissions in cities?
- Which populations are most susceptible to adverse health effects from air pollution, and what can individuals in susceptible populations do to reduce their exposure to air pollution?

Chapter 5: Injuries and the Built Environment

- What are the most important elements in the built environment for protecting people from injuries?
- What are some actions city planners can take to protect bicyclists and pedestrians from injuries? Are these actions the same for bicyclists and pedestrians or do they differ?
- Why might changing the built environment be a more effective injury prevention strategy than trying to change human behavior?
- Identify a specific design element of the built environment in your community that protects residents from injury and explain how it has been effective.
- Why do engineers, city planners, architects, and manufacturers have a responsibility to design for safety?

Chapter 6: Community Design for Water Quantity and Quality

- What are the key features of *green infrastructure*, and how do they relate to stormwater management?
- What are some options for addressing land loss and other damages associated with sea level rise in U.S. coastal cities such as Miami?
- Identify an example of graywater reuse in the United States. How did its proponents overcome opposition and gain public acceptance for this approach to addressing water scarcity?

- What are the ramifications of the failure of metropolitan areas to address water-related infrastructure issues, such as increased runoff associated with expansions in impervious surface area? Consider issues such as who pays for infrastructure upgrades and how insurance coverage might change.
- Namibia made a major investment in the water conveyance infrastructure in Windhoek. What are ways in which countries with fewer financial resources can engage citizens in conserving or reusing water?

Chapter 7: Mental Health and the Built Environment

- Considering your own experiences, identify the important characteristics of an urban setting that is vibrant and exciting. Then identify the important characteristics of an urban setting that is tranquil and peaceful.
- When you were last mentally fatigued, to what kind of place were you drawn? What features of this place supported your recovery from mental fatigue?
- Assume that a developer of a large office building in a northern city is concerned about the employees in windowless offices who will have little exposure to daylight, which is especially problematic during the shorter days of winter. What advice might you give this developer about the design of the building so the employees would be less likely to experience seasonal depression?
- What changes to the physical environment would have increased the strength of social ties and enhanced social capital in the neighborhood in which you grew up?
- Discuss why crowding can have negative consequences, but social interactions and the development of social ties from being with other people can have positive consequences.

Chapter 8: Social Capital and Community Design

- What lessons about influencing social capital can be learned from the design of existing planned communities? How do these lessons differ in urban areas and suburban areas?
- What are some cost-effective design strategies that might enhance social interactions in communities?
- What types of shared spaces might best promote social interactions, and why do they do so?
- What kinds of policies can be enacted to improve social capital at the local level?
- Research shows that social people tend to live in places that enable social interaction. How might this finding complicate the assessment of the effect of the built environment on social capital?

Chapter 9: Vulnerable Populations and the Built Environment

- Name three potentially vulnerable populations. For each one, explain why it is “vulnerable,” and describe the specific health implications it faces as a result of community design choices.
- What issues would you need to consider before approaching individuals in a vulnerable population to engage in a dialogue about existing macro and micro environmental barriers in their community?
- What issues would you need to consider before approaching such individuals about design features in a new project that might have positive or negative impacts on the vulnerable population?

- At what points in a planning or building project is it most critical to engage vulnerable populations in order to consider possible health impacts represented by the project? What tools and processes might you use to identify these points and the related actions needed?
- What are examples of (a) vulnerabilities that can be avoided through community design, and (b) mitigation of unavoidable vulnerabilities?

Chapter 10: Transportation and Land Use

- What features of the built environment encourage physical activity? What features discourage physical activity?
- How do development patterns impact environmental quality?
- What policies facilitate development that is consistent with the 5Ds of development? Of these, which are most feasible for your city or region and why?
- Why might some land use and transportation planners be reluctant to incorporate health considerations into their decisions?
- How can more interactions between public health departments and planning departments be encouraged?

Chapter 11: Healthy Homes

- What are the ways in which housing conditions affect health? What health outcomes are most closely linked to housing conditions?
- What interventions are effective for addressing substandard housing conditions?
- Give an example of a housing program that promotes health and describe how it works.
- What are some policies that improve housing conditions?
- How can investments in healthy housing be financed?

Chapter 12: Healthy Workplaces

- What workplace design elements might be most effective in protecting workers from injury? Which elements might be most effective in promoting the overall health of workers? Which elements might affect both worker safety and worker health?
- What policies and programs can be used in workplaces to maximize worker interaction with the built environment in order to promote health?
- What are the limitations of the built environment in promoting the health and safety of workers?
- Workers have fewer work-related injuries today as a result of laws, regulations, and enforcement policies. What are the benefits, risks, and barriers to using mandatory interventions to promote the overall health of workers both on and off the job?

Chapter 13: Healthy Health Care Settings

- In what ways can the design of a health care facility affect the health of patients, of staff, and of patients' family members?
- Why should hospitals be concerned with sustainability?
- How can evidence-based design be used in built environment settings other than health care facilities, such as schools, office buildings, and community design on a larger scale?
- What opportunities exist for professionals and staff in health care settings to try to influence the design of the communities in which they work and live?

Chapter 14: Healthy Schools

- Assume that an aging school in your community has problems with a leaky roof and mice in the kitchen area. How would you (a) assess the full extent of environmental health hazards in the school, (b) prioritize the hazards for attention and remediation, and (c) build support among staff, teachers, students, parents, and the Board of Education for making needed repairs?
- Old, inner-city schools are likely to be more hazardous than recently constructed suburban schools. Do you agree or disagree and why?
- Health goals and environmental goals often reinforce each other, but not always. Give one example of this reinforcement in a school setting. Give a second example of health and environmental goals coming into conflict in a school setting.
- Why are children more susceptible to environmental hazards than adults are?
- Why does the process of creating safe and healthy school environments need to consider factors beyond the walls of the school?

Chapter 15: Contact with Nature

- What kinds of contact with nature have you experienced in the last three days? Did you seek these contacts out, or were they incidental to other activities? How did these contacts make you feel?
- Describe three design changes that might be carried out in your community to try to increase nature contact for those who live there.
- Describe design changes that might be carried out in buildings at your school or workplace to try to increase nature contact for those who work, study, or visit there.
- Develop a hypothesis about the health benefits of nature contact and describe how you could test it.

Chapter 16: Resiliency to Disasters

- What design elements should be incorporated in the redevelopment of an area devastated by a hurricane (such as Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans) or an earthquake (such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake) to minimize damage from future disasters?
- How and why is social resilience an important part of overall community resilience?
- What types of educational information and programs for citizens (adults and children) can help enhance community resilience to disasters?
- Give some examples of built environment designs that maximize passive survivability. How can a large dense city dependent on elevators, underground subways, and other energy requiring systems, incorporate elements of passive survivability?
- What is the role of land-use planning in creating a resilient community?

Chapter 17: Behavioral Choices and the Built Environment

- Name three behaviors in which individuals may engage that are beneficial both to the individual and to the community.
- How might these beneficial behaviors be encouraged through modifications to the built environment?
- How might an individual's characteristics facilitate or impede these behaviors?
- What are some strategies that might be tried to bring about changes in the built environment that would result in a more supportive context for sustainable lifestyle behaviors?

- Identify a specific current community issue and explain how social marketing could be used to address that issue and achieve change.

Chapter 18: Policy and Legislation for Healthy Places

- What are the ways in which policy and legislation are different?
- How might approaches to affecting change differ at the different levels of government?
- What are Complete Streets and why should communities have policies that favor them?
- What are some of the barriers to siting community schools that provide excellent education for all?
- What is the largest federal housing finance program? What is the policy rationale behind it?

Chapter 19: Community Engagement in Design and Planning

- Select a built environment project in your community and identify the ways in which community engagement might help achieve better outcomes related to health and other community concerns. What are the challenges to successful community engagement and how can these barriers be overcome?
- In what ways are the community engagement challenges and strategies in disenfranchised communities different from those in empowered ones? Is it equally (or more) important to work toward engagement in these disenfranchised communities?
- What do the examples in this chapter demonstrate about factors that contribute to successful community engagement projects? What lessons can be taken from these cases?
- What are some strategies that can be used to ensure community engagement efforts are sustainable?
- What policies, tools, or strategies can be used to counteract potentially negative impacts of changes to the built environment?

Chapter 20: Measuring, Assessing, and Certifying Healthy Places

- What are some types of measures of health-related components of the built environment in a community? Why is it difficult to obtain ideal measures?
- Why do standards such as LEED-ND have great potential to promote healthy community design?
- Identify five different walkability or park audit tools available at www.activelivingresearch.org. How do the tools differ in content and emphasis?
- In what kinds of settings are health impact assessments (HIA) particularly useful for assessing the likely effects of proposed projects and policies on people's health?
- What barriers may prevent an HIA from influencing a decision about a proposed project or policy?

Chapter 21: Training the Next Generation

- What are some examples of vocabulary and communication constructs (e.g., acronyms) that are used in urban planning or in public health that frequently need "translation" in the course of interdisciplinary collaboration to promote healthy places?
- What are the tangible benefits of multidisciplinary research and practice collaboration? What are some strategies for organizing and supporting collaborative projects in academic and/or practice environments?
- What are the core competencies that should be acquired by students who will be future

leaders engaged in promoting healthy places from urban planning or public health positions?

- What are some examples of successful collaborations to promote healthy places in your community? What kinds of people and collaborative processes made these projects successful?
- How are the goals for planners and public health officials similar and how are they different? What are some examples of jobs or projects that would benefit from cross-trained staff?

Chapter 22: Healthy Places Research: Emerging Opportunities

- Why is conclusive proof of a link between a particular built environment design and a specific health impact seldom available?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using *natural experiments* to document links between health and the built environment?
- How can case studies be used to guide future community design decisions?
- What are some examples of data collected for purposes other than healthy community design that might be useful for conducting research on links between health and the built environment?
- Suppose you were given sufficient resources to conduct a research project on any one of the emerging opportunities described in this chapter. Which topic would you select and how would you design a research study to provide new information on the subject?

Chapter 23: Urban Health in Low- and Middle- Income Countries

- The process of urbanization has evolved rapidly over the past decades. How might urbanization continue to change over the next century and what effect would these changes have on urban health?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages to investigating or intervening in the upstream factors that are often important determinants of urban health in low-resource settings?
- In the past, environmental and humanitarian agendas have often competed for resources and attention. How should urban health leaders evaluate the short- and long-term gains of these approaches?
- What are some of the methodological challenges to studying urban health in low- and middle-income countries, where the burden of disease tends to be high and the level of research low? What are some possible solutions or approaches to these challenges?
- In providing an overview, this chapter considers low- and middle-income countries as a single category. If you examined countries individually, what might be some important differences in urban health between low-income countries and countries that have recently entered the global economy (middle-income countries)?

Chapter 24: Built Environments of the Future

- Calculate your personal ecological footprint (<http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/>). Identify areas for improvement. Does your built environment present barriers to your changing to a more sustainable way of living? How could these barriers be removed?
- If powered by electricity produced from renewable sources, electric vehicles produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions than conventional motor vehicles, but do they promote health? What are the implications for motor vehicle injury and for physical activity of increased use?

of electric vehicles? What might be the role of electric cars in transport systems of the future?

- How can you personally improve the availability of healthy transportation mode choices (transit, bicycling, and walking) in your city? With whom could you work to achieve change?
- Assume that a friend is moving to your city from another state and asks you for advice on where to live. Develop a list of priorities to consider in the decision about where to live. Identify potential direct and indirect health impacts of the decision.
- Imagine that an aging relative is coming to stay with you for an extended period. Would your home and your neighborhood suit an older person? Would your relative be able to meet his or her daily needs without having access to a private automobile?