Children, Physical Activity and the Built Environment
October 9, 2008

NC Childhood Obesity Task Force

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Project Officer
“Environments that are **human modified**, including homes, schools, workplaces, highways, urban sprawl, and air pollution.”

– Samuel H. Wilson, MD, Deputy Director, NIEHS

2004 Summit: Obesity and the Built Environment

**Includes:**

- Public policy, urban planning, access to healthy food
- sidewalks, parks in neighborhoods, trails/greenways
- lack of fresh fruits and vegetables in neighborhoods, fast food outlets
The Built Environment Matters

It influences:

• What activity happens where

• How we move

• Access to opportunities and choices

• Community character
Children and Physical Activity

• Access to facilities like parks and time outdoors is associated with more activity for both children and adolescents

• More children walk to school where there are sidewalks and safety improvements

• Elementary and middle school students are more active at school with more facilities, equipment and supervision

• Parental concerns about traffic and “stranger danger” are clearly linked to children’s activity levels; schools afraid of liability.

Public Health Synergies
Safety and Physical Activity

- Safety in numbers: increasing the number of pedestrians reduces injury rate

Jacobsen, 2003
Trend: Focusing on the Built Environment

1996

- CDC
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Active Living RESEARCH
- Physical Activity and Health

2008

- Food & Fitness
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Nemours
- BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina
- North Carolina Health & Wellness Trust Fund
- fit together
- fit community
- BlueCross and BlueShield of Minnesota
- Kaiser Permanente
- The California Endowment
- Mobile and Active Communities
- Many More State and Local Health Departments

A Report of the Surgeon General
Convergence Partnership for Healthy Eating and Active Living

2008

www.convergencepartnership.org
Trend: Focusing on the Built Environment

• The science base is building re: the role of the built environment for physical activity

“Changing the built environment to increase children’s physical activity for recreation and transportation… can help provide long-term solutions to the childhood obesity epidemic.

Unlike the often-transitory effects of motivational and educational approaches to addressing obesity, changes in behavior prompted by changes in the built environment should be long lasting.

Given the urgency of the childhood obesity epidemic, we cannot wait for optimal evidence and must instead base actions on the best available evidence.”

- Jim Sallis and Karen Glanz, 2006

“The Role of Built Environments in Physical Activity, Eating, and Obesity in Childhood” The Future of Children, Vol. 16/No. 1/Spring 2006
Increase safe opportunities for active travel – i.e. walking/bicycling

1. To/from school
2. Around their community
3. Walkable destinations

Increase safe opportunities for play and physical activity

3. Creating new parks
4. Maintaining existing parks
5. Shared use of schools for recreation after hours / weekends
Recommended Direction for North Carolina

Increase safe opportunities for active travel

1. To/from school
   - Safe Routes to School
   - Liability/legal protection for schools for SRTS efforts
   - Site selection in favor of neighborhood schools

Source: 1969 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (USDOT, 1972) and 2001 National Household Travel Survey (analyzed by S. Ham DNPA, Spring 2005)
2. Around the Community

- Creating Ped/Bike master plans
- Funding for implementing Ped/Bike master plans
- “Complete Streets” policy

Recommended Direction for North Carolina
Increase safe opportunities for active travel

PITTSBORO PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN
the town of pittsboro, north carolina | 2008

Prepared for:
The Town of Pittsboro, NC and
The North Carolina Department of Transportation,
Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

Prepared By:
Greensways Incorporated

DRAFT | 8.28.08
Recommended Direction for North Carolina
Increase safe opportunities for active travel

3. Walkable Destinations
• Creating close-knit communities
• “Smart Growth” strategies, e.g. planning, zoning
Recommended Direction for North Carolina

Increase safe opportunities for play and physical activity

4. Creating new parks
   • Funding for parks and trails master plans
   • Funding for smaller parks and play facilities
   • Increase funding to communities for large parks (PARTF)
5. Maintaining existing parks

- Funding for existing parks upkeep and enhancements
- Citizen involvement and surveillance for safety
Recommended Direction for North Carolina

Increase safe opportunities for play and physical activity

6. Shared use of schools for recreation
   • Funding for shared use of facilities, e.g. utilities, staffing
   • Joint use agreements for school facilities after-hours
Collaboration is Key

- Children’s health >> beyond the clinic and the school
- Health is in part, determined by elected officials, planners, public works, parks, transportation
- Encourage communities to work across sectors

- N.C. Department of Transportation DOT: Div of Bicycle & Pedestrian Transportation…
- Town of Cary: Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources…