



The Green Door

January 2005



The Green Door is a monthly newsletter of sustainable living and real estate geared to present and future homeowners.

"It's not the Answers that show us the way but the Questions". - Rainer Maria Rilke

Healthy Cities

There is growing interest in how physical inactivity, obesity, and related chronic health problems are affected by environmental factors. Urban planners and transportation researchers are expanding their horizons, giving increased attention to how their fields affect human behavior and health. The conditions in which we live and work, our access to facilities and services, our lifestyles, and our ability to develop strong social networks are all influenced by the plans, policies and initiatives of urban planners and related professions. At the same time, these issues are key in determining the health, well being and quality of our life in cities. Healthy urban planning is about planning for people and their communities. Some of the health issues as related to community design are; Physical Activity; Respiratory Health & Air Pollution; Children's and Elder's Health & the Built Environment; Injury; Mental Health; Social Capital; Accessibility and Water Quality. *

Walkable cities mean less obesity. Despite the health benefits of physical activity, 74% of U.S. adults do not get enough physical activity to meet public health recommendations and about one in four adults remain completely inactive during their leisure time. Health professionals are now attributing this, in part, to our community design. Since the 1940's, we have been designing our cities for cars and not for walking. In many parts of Seattle for example, one has to walk an extra half mile just to find a place to legally cross the road. Studies have repeatedly shown that people who live in high sprawl areas-relying on cars since their homes, work and stores are far apart-weigh more than people who live in compact cities. One study found that urban and suburban residents living in homes built before 1946 were more likely to walk long distances with some frequency than those living in newer homes. This was due to the greater likelihood of sidewalks, densely interconnected streets, and a mix of business and residential uses in older neighborhoods.

Why aren't our cities walkable? It is often unsafe to walk in many places in U.S. cities. Few people realize that approximately one in seven motor vehicle crash fatalities in the U.S. have involved a pedestrian. What we are also discovering is that once you lose the qualities of a street that make it walkable, you lose the social space and you lose the interchange that normally takes place on the street. So now we're seeing more serious security problems along the streets and more violence on the streets. A lot of school-age children no longer walk to school and the few who choose to do it find that the bullies have taken over the street.

People, when they are on foot, are the most passive and tolerant of all the users of our transportation system. People think nothing of sidewalks that simply end or are blocked because of construction or some other obstruction. Pedestrians put up with things that you wouldn't dream of encountering, let alone tolerating in a car.

Public planning and transportation agencies have got to be held accountable for providing a friendly environment for people on foot. When people walk out the front door of their home, school or place of work, they should have a choice about whether they want to walk, take a bicycle or take their car and the majority right now don't have that choice. <http://www.tfsrc.gov/safety/pedbike/articles/walkable.htm>

The Origins of Public Health and Urban Planning

Both the public health and urban planning professions came out of a desire to prevent urban outbreaks of infectious disease. During the late 1800's European cities industrialized rapidly. Serious health problems resulted from this urbanization and industrialization. Smoke, soot, noxious odors, contaminated water. And generally unhygienic conditions contributed to the blight of the urban areas and the poor health of many residents. Improvements in the urban condition required attention to the relationship between one's urban environment and one's health.

<http://www.asu.edu/caed/proceedings99/LUND/LUND.HTM>

In "Natural Health's" survey of America's Healthiest Cities, Seattle ranked third.

Natural offerings, physical health, healthy environment and sense of community were all considered. Seattle's highlight's were water quality and Naturapaths per capita. Air quality and toxic dumping kept Seattle from a higher rating.

Seattle Ranked 1st in a survey conducted by "Men's Fitness Magazine" of America's Fittest Cities. Buff It Up Boys!!

<http://www.mensfitness.com/>

Jim Verhey's Project Management Maxim:

There is nothing so wasteful as doing with great efficiency that which does not have to be done at all!!

"When I see an adult on a bicycle, I do not despair for the future of the human race".

- H.G. Wells

Living in the Pacific Northwest, the residents of King County have an incredible array of ways to be physically active. Hiking, biking, rollerblading, kayaking, walking, and team sports are just a few of the ways to get off the couch and get moving. But not everyone is taking advantage of these activities. For some it is as simple as not knowing what activities are available to them and their family. But for others, the reasons for inactivity are much more complicated: working parents with little free time; living in unsafe areas; living in areas with no access to sidewalks; low income families without funds to send a child to camp or buy a bike; and living with a chronic illness or disability. To learn more go to <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/exercise>

Our health in our cities is related to our means of transportation in other ways as well. Transportation is the single largest source of air pollution in the United States. Combustion of fossil fuels results in the emission of hazardous air pollutants including **carbon dioxide**, which contributes to global climate change, **nitrogen oxides & volatile organic compounds**, which combine with NOx to create smog, **particulate matter**, which causes lung irritation and reduces the body's ability to fight respiratory infections, **hazardous air pollutants (toxics)**, which have been linked to cancer and birth defects, and **carbon monoxide**, which interferes with oxygen transportation in the blood. Effects of exposure to high levels of these pollutants can result in an array of health problems including allergies, difficulty breathing, cancer, heart attacks and damage to the immune system, respiratory system, reproductive system, and nerves.

On average, an adult breathes over 3,000 gallons of air every day and children, although their lungs are smaller, breathe even more air per pound of body weight, making them more susceptible to air pollution. Children also tend to spend more time outside being active during the peak pollution hours.

Air pollution can trigger heart attacks. Brief exposure to elevated levels of fine particulate air pollution, for as little as two hours, can temporarily increase the risk of a heart attack by 50 to 70 percent. The groups of people who are most vulnerable are those already at risk for heart disease. This would include elderly individuals and people who have other risk factors for heart disease, including being overweight, smoking cigarettes, having a poor diet (particularly high in fat) and people who know they have high blood pressure.

"A healthy community as described by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Healthy People 2010 report is one that continuously creates and improves both its physical and social environments, helping people to support one another in all aspects of daily life and to develop to their fullest potential. Healthy places are those designed to improve the quality of life for all people who live, worship, learn and play within their borders—where every person is free to make choices amid a variety of healthy, available, accessible and affordable options".

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/>

Excerpts from CDC's Dr Richard Jackson's Seminar at GreenBuild. On the average Americans take in twice the calories needed. The fastest growing surgery is stomach stapling. One third of all soft tissue tumors are related to obesity. The average 11 year old is 11lbs heavier than in 1973. If current weight trends continue, it is estimated that 1 in 2.5 girls will become diabetic and boys are right behind them at 1 in 3. In the last 20 years we have gone from 50% to 7% of kids walking or biking to school. America's greatest threat is managing our wealth—the supersizing of America; houses, neighborhoods, land consumption, automobiles, roads & highways, impervious surfaces and commuting distances.

The Green Door is brought to you by Cally Fulton and Danielle Johnson, both Real Estate Associates with GreenWorks Realty, Seattle and is written by JR Fulton, Architect and LEED Accredited Professional. To save trees and expand the opportunity to share information, please provide us with your e-mail address and the address of others interested in making their homes more sustainable. If you or someone you know would appreciate our real estate services please call- **Cally Fulton(206)786-5061** or **Danielle Johnson(206)679-0185**
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January Websites

<http://www.apa.org/monitor/jan04/walkable.html>
Walkable Cities, Less Obesity.

<http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/facts/obesity/en/>
Obesity facts.

<http://greennature.com/article490.html>
Air Pollution & Heart Attacks.

<http://trianglecleancities.org/health.htm>
Health Effects of Air Pollution.

<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/healthreportpr2.html>
Preventing Sprawl.

The best solution for depressive disorders is social contact. Many urban policy decisions made have done as much as possible to decrease social contact.

Seattle Sustainable Residence Diary-Entry #6 The permit for our Capital Hill house has been submitted to the City for review. Thankfully I was able to complete it and submit it in the correct planning year. There will probably be some corrections required. Now I have to get a final estimate, drawings and final contractor's estimate to our lender. Will the estimate be at our target of \$100/sqft? We are now also collecting sedum, thyme and moss plugs for our partial green roof. It's 20' by 20' and will require 900 plugs!!
Yowsah!! **JRF**

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