Healthy Planning – Making connections from evidence to practice

Translating Evidence into Policy
Susan Thompson
Walk21
21-23 October 2014, Luna Park, Sydney
Focus

The Healthy Built Environments Program (HBEP)

Program links planning and health

Initial core funding from NSW Ministry of Health ($AU1.5m over 5 years)

Situated in the City Futures Research Centre, Faculty of the Built Environment at UNSW

HBEP partnership includes academics, health NGOs, NSW health professionals, local councils, planning consultants
Can we create a built environment that supports all people being healthy as part of everyday living?

What’s the research evidence?
Healthy Built Environments: A review of the literature

Project to bring relevant evidence together

Systematic, comprehensive and rigorous

Links research and policy to underpin actions

Proposes three main ‘domains’ of built environment influence on health
Focus of the Review

Three key domains of the built environment and health:

- The Built Environment and Getting People Active
- The Built Environment and Connecting and Strengthening Communities
- The Built Environment and Providing Healthy Food Options

Address major risk factors for chronic disease:

- Physical inactivity
- Social isolation
- Obesity
While higher density areas generally display environments conducive to physical activity, increasing residential densities alone will not necessarily encourage increased physical activity.
Density, mixed use and micro-design elements in some combination are most likely to influence levels of physical activity.

Short trip distances are associated with higher densities and support active transport, which in turn encourages greater physical activity.
A mix of social, economic, political and built environment policies will positively influence levels of physical activity.
BE & Getting People Active

Education on how to use facilities, as well as health and well-being benefits of being active
BE & Getting People Active

Well maintained and connected footpaths, bike paths and open spaces encourage physical activity
BE & Getting People Active

Policies to make environments safe (and perceived to be safe) from crime and traffic will encourage physical activity - especially for children
Visible and well signposted stairways encourage physical activity
The location and treatment of green and open spaces facilitates contact with nature, as well as contact with community.

Good quality and sufficient green open space is critical for physical and mental health.
Community gardens have important community building benefits.
Casual encounters with community can occur anywhere.

Provide comfortable waiting at public transport stops to encourage incidental interactions.

Provide opportunities for inclusive community building.
When increasing densities, ensure adequate provision is made to protect individual privacy.

Accompany increases in density with other community building programs.
BE & Healthy Food Options

There is a clear link between exposure to healthy food options and healthy eating.

Most convincing research concerns the co-location and advertising of unhealthy food options near schools.

Reduce fast-food exposure in the vicinity of schools, including the advertising of fast food and the use of land for fast food outlets.
BE & Healthy Food Options

Retain viable agricultural lands close to population centres to ensure a nearby healthy source of food
BE & Healthy Food Options

In rural areas support markets and roadside stalls for ready access to fresh local food
ARC Linkage Research

Planning and building healthy communities

Research partners from health and the built environment

Four sites being examined

Detailed healthy neighbourhood audits

Compilation of health data

Qualitative in-depth interviews and focus groups
Core research question

How do these neighbourhoods support people being healthy as part of every day living?
AHURI Investigative Panel

Researching the complex housing-health relationship

What’s healthy housing?

Focus on Australasian research

New areas of housing-health research - HBEs

The policy research interface: engaging built environment & health professionals in collaborative partnerships
Embedding the evidence

Using the research created in education and leadership and advocacy for policy and practice
Translation into policy

Federal Urban Policy
Health - an important component of the liveability of Australian cities
Translation into policy

Healthy Planning Policy
State, regional, local

Healthy Urban Development Checklist
A guide for health services when commenting on development policies, plans and proposals

“...”

Kiama Health Plan
2011–2017

Creating Environments For Health and Sustainable Living...
Town Country and Coast

UNSW The University of New South Wales
Built Environment

NSW Health
Translation into policy

Overarching local plans, policies and strategies for food

- NSW Local Government Act
- Community Strategic local plan
- Sets direction for the local area
- Provisions for health & active living
Education

Seminars, workshops, special lectures, forums

E-resources on website

University, metropolitan, rural and remote locations

Focus on building partnerships in participation, training and speakers
Education

Courses at UNSW

UG Healthy Planning

PG Healthy Built Environments

Pro-bono places for NSW Health professionals

Mix of theory, research, policy and practice based learning
PIA New Planner
Healthy Built Environments column since 2010

Other practice journals in health and built environment
Leadership & Advocacy

Advisory Board
Key HBE stakeholders

Media engagement

Submission writing
Strategic Leadership

Health - a significant inclusion in NSW Planning Bill 2013

Engagement with key HBE stakeholders

Single message - consistently communicated

Only example in Australia

Only 2 internationally

Future?
Conclusion

Building Australian research to inform policy and practice

Interdisciplinary ways of working and engaging are evolving

Building strategic alliances - impacting on policy across built environment and health

Interdisciplinary education - professional development and university based courses

Health objective in NSW Planning Bill - great opportunity
Further Information

Visit the HBEP website

http://www.be.unsw.edu.au/programmes/healthy-built-environments-program/about