Social Determinants of Health: Neighborhood and Built Environment
What Makes A Neighborhood Healthy?

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PICO QUESTION

How does the neighborhood and built environment affect the physical wellbeing of adults?

BACKGROUND

- The "built environment" refers to the physical characteristics of a neighborhood and its surroundings (Gomez et al., 2015).
- Structures of neighborhoods can promote physical activity or inactivity; therefore, the built environment correlates with chronic diseases' prevalence (Gomez et al., 2015).
- Research suggests that "the burden of chronic disease in the population can be reduced through an active lifestyle, proper nutrition, and reduced exposure to toxic conditions" (Perdue et al. 2003, para. 9).
- Accessibility to resources, violence and crime rates, neighborhood location (rural, suburban, and urban), socioeconomic status and environment all have affects.

CONCLUSION

There are many components to a neighborhood and environment that can positively or negatively influence a persons' health and quality of life. The public health and humans' wellbeing is closely correlated to neighborhood's design, affordability, safety, accessibility to nutritious food and other vital health resources.

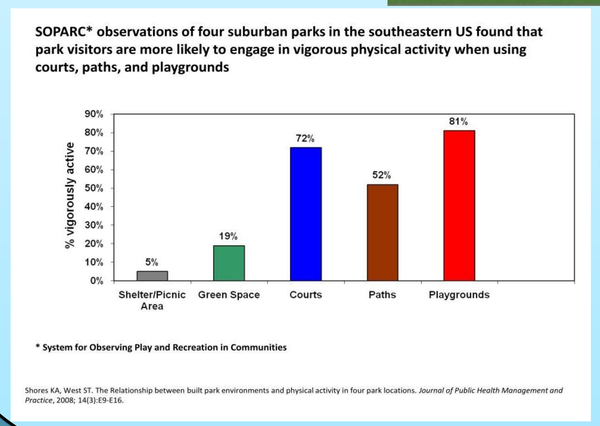
SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH DEFINED:

"Social determinants of health are conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks" (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d., para. 4).

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

In the U.S., "many urban and suburban environments are not well designed to facilitate healthy behaviors or create the conditions for health. Convenience stores and establishments that serve fast food may vastly outnumber grocery stores where people can purchase nutritious food" (Perdue et al., 2003 para. 9). Liquor stores may also influence unhealthy behaviors (Gomez et al, 2015). Community amenities such as grocery stores, parks, gyms, and walking trails promote health by increasing levels of physical activity and access to healthy food (Gomez et al, 2015).

https://activelivingresearch.org/blog/2012/06/in Pubfographic-role-communities-promoting-physical-activity Public Domain

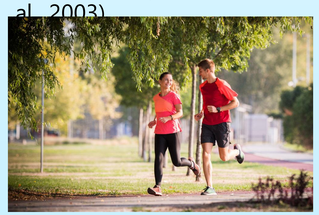


In cities and some suburban areas, more gyms and other group exercising facilities, like spin classes and CrossFit have been available to the general public to promote physicall activity (Mundell, 2019). Rural environments have limited access to resources, but community trails provide the best opportunities for physical activity to residents in the area (Park et al., 2017).

EFFECTS AND OUTCOMES

A Neighborhood's characteristics highly influence health behaviors of its residents:

- The distance and connectivity among the different resources in the community influence the people's choices if to bike or walk to places or to drive (Saelens et al., 2003). Rural areas have issues of low population density, long distances between destinations, and have a lack of facilities nearby (Christman et al., 2015). People who live in highly dense areas are more likely to walk to places than people who live in low-density areas, which is correlated with the proximity of the resources, making it convenient or inconvenient to walk to shops, work, parks, and to family or friends' homes (Saelens et al., 2003).



- Frank et al. (2004) noticed a correlation between the walkability of a community and a reduction of air pollutants per capita, which suggests that promoting outdoor physical activity is vital for environmental improvements.
- Individuals of low SES neighborhoods have less time and energy to participate in physical activity due to long work hours and hard labor jobs (Stalsberg & Pedersen, 2018). Estabrooks et al. (2003) discovered that high SES neighborhoods have more access to free-for-use physical activity facilities. Kealey (2011) found that low SES neighborhoods have much shorter block lengths, high housing density, and more businesses creating a barrier for physical activities, like walking.
- Fear of crime was shown to be a barrier to engaging in health promoting physical and social activities. People who reported greater fear were more likely to suffer from depression and less likely to exercise and participate in social activities (Stafford et al. 2011).

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