

The *new* case for bike paths: Community health and the built environment

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How much does your city's built environment contribute to the health of your citizens? It's a question asked frequently as local leaders recognize the connection between planning and public health. Sidewalks, parks, and bike paths are no longer considered superfluous. They are seen as having real impact on the well-being and productivity of citizens, and on the image and the economic strength of communities.

The connection between planning and public health has been slowly building steam. In fact, an analysis of the built environment is emerging as an indicator in public health scorecards. The Pennington Biomedical Research Center's "Louisiana's Report Card on Physical Activity and Health for Children and Youth," released in September, is one. The state earned an overall grade of D, and we performed especially poorly in "built environment and community design."

The report found that in Louisiana 38 percent of young people live in neighborhoods without sidewalks or walking paths, and that children who lived below the poverty level had less access than others to parks and playgrounds. It also revealed that only half of the

state's high-school students attended physical education classes five days a week, and that only six percent of them biked or walked to school. These factors and others have contributed to a grim statistic: One-third of Louisiana adolescents are overweight or obese. Many will remain in this category as adults, and will be more likely to acquire preventable diseases like Type II diabetes, heart disease, and some forms of cancer.

Transforming our communities into places that facilitate better health won't happen overnight, but taking small steps now can move us forward. As you consider public projects like placement of parks, updates to recreational facilities, community master plans, and land use plans, do so with an eye toward health and wellness. You might:

- Invite the public health community to educate city planners about local health statistics. Such discussions can create strong information



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exchanges and help your team make informed decisions about how planning can help curb top health issues.

- Consider a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), a tool growing in popularity nationwide which helps cities and towns benchmark the built environment's impact on public health. Another helpful tool is the recently released "Louisiana Human Development Report," which evaluates the quality of life of everyday people in our communities. See www.measureofamerica.org to examine how your parish is faring.

- Begin to map parks and recreational facilities in relation to income level. Very often, a community's best parks are located in affluent neighborhoods, while those in low-income neighborhoods have languished. This trend is partly due to the belief that parks attract illegal behavior. However, developing young people who live in high-crime areas need positive outlets, and we know that design elements,

like lighting and placement of parking lots, can improve safety significantly and ensure parents participate.

- Focus on an infill approach to older neighborhoods. Density means savings to the municipality, which can free up funds to improve parks and install sidewalks in these areas over the long term.

- Encourage developers to implement amenities that facilitate exercise, including sidewalks, peripheral paths, or walking trails. Pennington researchers have found that people benefit significantly from exercise in smaller increments, including three 10-minute walks a day.

In the past, the examination of public health has fallen to public health experts, but the issues are so pervasive that we need an all-hands-on-deck approach. When municipalities begin to integrate health goals into the built environment, we will start to move the needle.

(Editor's Note: Patrick C. Moore is principal of the Moore Planning Group, LLC, landscape architects and site planners, with offices in Alexandria and Baton Rouge. The firm's website is www.mooreplanninggroup.com.)

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which will present substantive workshops featuring experts and experienced city officials and staff sharing the latest information on solutions to the challenges that affect your municipality as well as the most current facts and analysis of national and regional trends that are shaping communities. Professional development training sessions will address local concerns and strengthen leadership skills. You'll also have the opportunity to compare costs and services among some 200 vendors which provide services and programs that serve the needs of cities and towns.

In addition, the event will feature more than 20 Leadership Training Institute seminars offering in-depth professional development and skills training.

cost to LMA for breakfast meals in these prestigious hotel facilities has steadily increased in recent years, and LMA has borne additional expense by keeping the per-delegate cost affordable at \$25.00. Beginning next year, however, it may be necessary for LMA to charge its members the full cost of this meal.

More information about the program, registration, hotel accommodations, and exhibits is posted at www.nlccongressofcities.org. First-time attendees can take advantage of the \$375 first-time attendee rate.

Important Note: The LMA received an alert from NLC advising that a company called "Convention Expo Travel" has contacted NLC delegates stating that in order

BROWNFIELDS: *continued from page 1*

Conference registration is free! Conducted for the 13th consecutive year, this conference is the largest and most comprehensive conference focusing on cleanup and redeveloping abandoned, underutilized, and potentially contaminated properties in the nation. Officials from federal, state, tribal, and local governments as well as leaders from industry, environmental, and community-based organizations will attend this event.

This year, the conference affords opportunities to gain information on revitalization, "greening" cleanup and redevelopment projects, as well as communicating the environmental and economic benefits of brownfields revitalization.

Speakers include Lisa P. Jackson, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Majora Carter, president of Majora Carter Group LLC; Honorable C. Ray Nagin, mayor of the City of New Orleans; and Christopher

Leinberger, a metropolitan land strategist and developer with expertise in working with real estate developers in the building of sustainable walkable urban places.

Louisiana municipal officials can learn much about the Brownfields mission to clean up, revitalize, and promote the sustainable reuse of Brownfields properties. **The deadline to register electronically has ended, but interested mayors and municipal officials can register onsite at The Morial Convention Center.** There's no cost to register for this conference, and with this event occurring in New Orleans, it is definitely a must-attend! For more information, go to www.brownfields2009.org. You are responsible for your own hotel reservations.

Details: Tonia Biggs, Brownfields Conference Coordinator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, (214) 665-8551, www.brownfields2009.org, biggs.tonia@epa.gov.



LMA Room Block, Delegation Breakfast

The LMA room block of 60 rooms at The Hilton Palacio del Rio Hotel has expired, so all housing requests made now are subject to general assignment among all of the hotels hosting NLC delegates.

The LMA Delegates Breakfast will be held at 7:30 a.m. Thursday, November 12, at this hotel, and NLC will provide a guest speaker for this event. The LMA staff is sending information to all Louisiana delegates on NLC's registration list about this event. The cost of the breakfast is \$25.00 per delegate. It should be noted that the

to confirm their housing they must fax their credit-card information to Convention Expo Travel. That company is NOT associated with NLC or the Congress of Cities. Therefore, should you receive a telephone call or any contact from Convention Expo Travel, do not give them your credit-card information. Any questions or concerns about the NLC Congress of Cities should be directed to the Registration and Housing Center, (888) 319-3864, nlcregandhousing@jspargo.com.

Details: Cami Barlow, LMA Office Administrator/Executive Assistant, (225)344-5001, (800) 234-8274, cbarlow@lma.org.

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ordered flags at the State Capitol to be flown at half-staff in remembrance of the former governor. "He was a true statesman with a servant's heart, and his desire to improve our state was only surpassed by his kindness and humility."

In 1979, Mr. Treen was Louisiana's first Republican governor since Reconstruction. He launched a pay incentive program for teachers, established the Department of Environmental Quality, and appointed more minorities to state government than any of his predecessors.

A native of Baton Rouge, Mr. Treen attended public schools in East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, and Orleans parishes. A Tulane University graduate, he received his law degree with honors from its Law School and served in the U.S. Air Force before beginning his law career in New Orleans and moving to Metairie.

Elected to Congress in 1972 to represent the Third Congressional District which stretched from New Orleans to New Iberia, Mr. Treen was instrumental in successful

passage of legislation to overhaul the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act of 1953. The reform legislation consolidated permitting decisions and gave states a more thorough review of what oil and gas companies intended to do before beginning offshore oil drilling on the Gulf Coast. Mr. Treen also succeeded in amending the Small Business Act of 1974 to enable fishing interests to apply for financial assistance from the Small Business Administration.

Mr. Treen is survived by his son and two daughters. His wife, Dolores "Dodie" Brisbi Treen, died in 2005.

Mr. Treen, it can be said, was the rare kind of politician and public servant – a man whose unflinching principles, deep commitment, kindness, honesty, and integrity are worthy of emulation by anyone and everyone in public service who seek to serve their constituents with distinction. His sterling character and accomplishments will long endure the test of time.

Dave Treen, rest in peace in the eternal city of heaven.