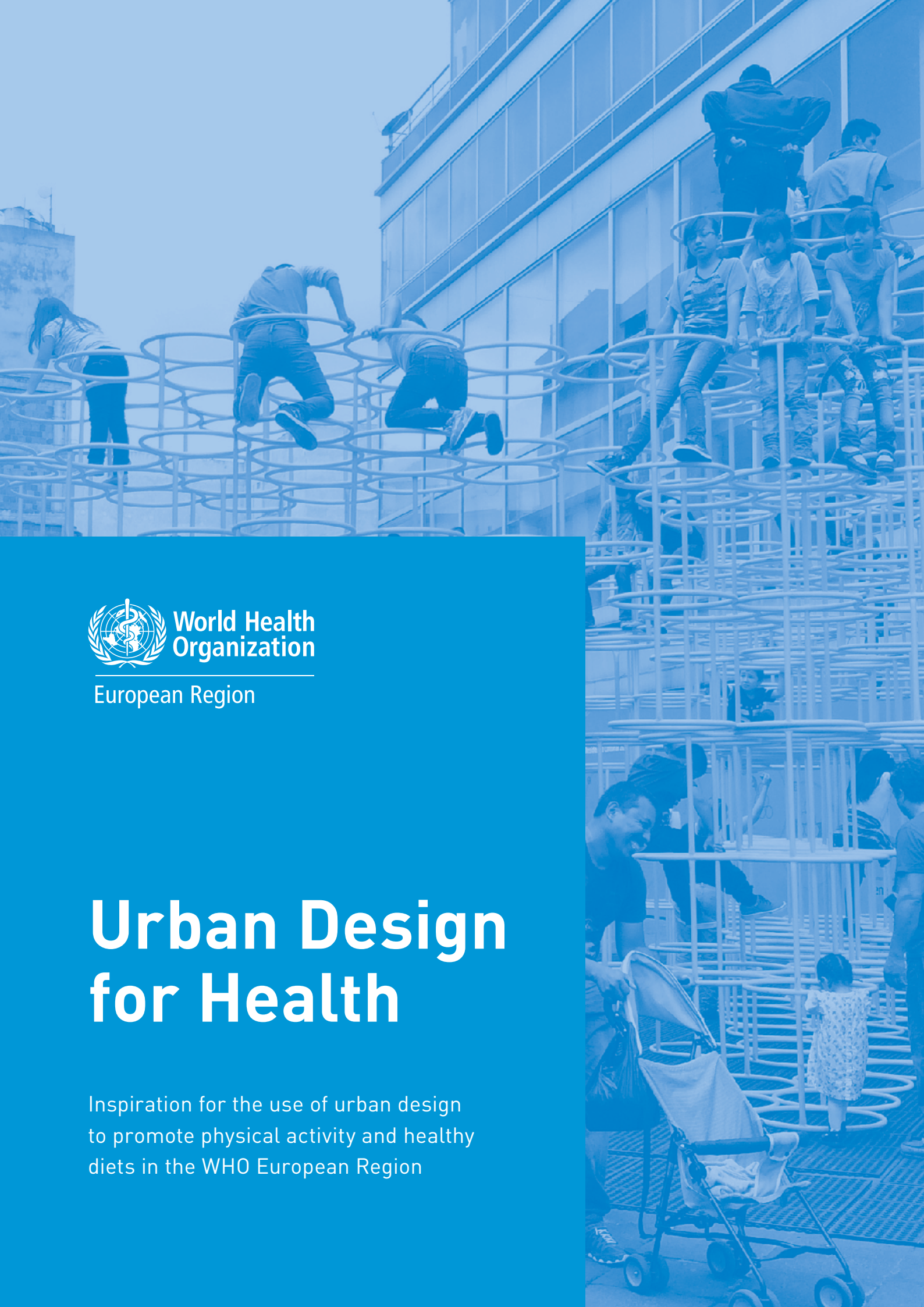**World Health Organization**

European Region

Urban Design for Health

Inspiration for the use of urban design to promote physical activity and healthy diets in the WHO European Region

Urban Design for Health

Inspiration for the use of urban design to promote physical activity and healthy diets in the WHO European Region

Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Noncommunicable diseases are a major cause of death and disability around the world. The design of our urban environments limits people's ability to be active in daily life and limits access to and the availability of healthy food options. Outlets selling alcohol and tobacco products are exacerbating the epidemic in many cities.

Research has shown that design can impact today's greatest challenges to the physical, mental and social well-being of communities around the world. How can we best move from ideas to action? And how can we best integrate interventions that put the health and well-being of people at the centre of planning and designing cities? Those were the central questions explored during a virtual symposium held by WHO Regional Office for Europe in collaboration with Gehl in April 2021.

The symposium explored how to advance concrete actions in support of healthier environments and behaviour in cities through urban planning and design, with a focus on physical activity and health diets. This was done through:

→ Tools for action

The symposium focused on frameworks and tools for inspiring innovative means to encourage physical activity and healthy eating through urban design. The methods and tools presented comprised:

- analytical tools to assess the current situation and to translate behavioural trends into design decisions, policy and planning of interventions;
- decision-making tools to ensure that investments pay off;
- tools for engaging various types of stakeholder, including citizens, to ensure a broad sense of ownership and buy-in; and
- measures for evaluating the success of projects.

→ Inspirational examples

Experts and researchers presented concrete examples of strategies, policies or projects being implemented in different parts of the world and in different types of urban settings to inspire action and to showcase examples of the impact achieved through the various initiatives.

→ Workshops

Workshops were held with participants in four selected cities (Cherepovets, Cork, Lisbon and Tbilisi) to connect health and urban design professionals with practitioners and local city teams to advance specific, real initiatives.

→ Physical activity

- Reduces the risks for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, dementia and several cancers
- Contributes to weight management: preventing and controlling overweight and obesity
- Improves mental health by reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Results in better overall quality of life, especially for older adults
- Reduces the impact of the physical and mental health consequences of COVID-19
- Promotes walking and cycling for transport
- Contributes to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, air pollution and noise
- Demands better urban planning and people-friendly cities

→ Healthy diets

- Reduce and prevent diet-related NCDs and the physical and mental health consequences of COVID-19
- Promote access to good nutrition and sustainable diets for all ages and socioeconomic groups
- Require well-designed, healthy food and drink environments, both physical and digital
- Are achieved by a transition to sustainable food systems
- Require active policy coordination among different actors and sectors
- Recognize the complexity, dynamics, risks and vulnerabilities in the food environment and implications for urban environments
- Increase environmental sustainability by demanding systemic changes in the food environment
- Differ nationally and locally, with local systems necessary to access knowledge and share challenges and practices

TAPADA
DA AJUDA
-
ALCÂNTARA

Advancing actions for urban health

Various approaches and tools were presented for supporting healthy diets and physical activity on different scales, ranging from policy level to concrete design of the built environment.

The urban environment as a system to influence health

The urban environment shapes human health and well-being throughout the life-cycle. Urban design and planning influence public health and human behaviour by limiting or providing access to healthy foods and active lifestyles, which have profound effects on people's physical and mental health.

In the WHO European Region, environmental risk factors are estimated to cause at least 1.4 million deaths per year, approximately half of which are linked to air pollution, which is a major contributor to the increase in NCDs. One in four cases of ischaemic heart disease and strokes and one in five cancers are estimated to result from environmental exposure.[1] The strong relation between urban environments and NCDs was not, however, recognized until quite recently. It is crucial to find the best approaches to address these risk factors in urban settings, and this is a priority for WHO at both global and regional levels.

Cities are dynamic contexts that are constantly reshaped by drivers that are exacerbated by the measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cities can be understood as places where everything comes together and where local officials are expected to react and interact with drivers and complex feedback mechanism operating at the same time, such as economic development, urbanization, demographic change, NCDs, migration and climate environmental changes.

Cities are places where it all comes together.

The WHO European Region differs from other regions of the world in that more than 70% of its population lives in cities and settlements of fewer than 500 000 inhabitants.[2] This provides many cities in Europe with unique opportunities to make interventions that might be more difficult in mega cities.

Inequality in environments and health manifests differently in different cities and is found in various aspects of urban living, from work settings, housing conditions, availability of and access to basic services and transport. For instance, less affluent neighbourhoods experience more traffic, a greater risk of road traffic injuries and exposure to more polluted air and noise, which in turn increase the risks for poor health and a higher incidence of NCDs.

---

1   Preventing disease through healthy environments. A global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018 (https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/204585).
2   The world's cities in 2018. Data booklet. New York City (NY): United Nations; 2018 (https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2018_worldcities_databooklet.pdf).

....

The complex, interconnected food system[3]

Source: Reproduced with permission from Parsons K, Hawkes C, Wells R. Brief 2. What is the food system? A food policy perspective. In: Rethinking food policy: A fresh approach to policy and practice. London: Centre for Food Policy; 2019.

Creating and enabling equal access to nutritious, safe, sustainable foods is a current challenge in many cities in the WHO European Region. Although some cities implement policies to provide access to healthy food environments and some countries have national plans to reformulate products high in sugars, salt and trans-fats, other cities are seeking direction on the actions that can be taken to improve urban food environments.

Cities are making a concerted effort to reduce the burden of preventable diet-related NCDs, including overweight and obesity, throughout the life-course. Examples in the Region include reducing unequal access to healthy foods between higher- and lower-income neighbourhoods and providing access to healthy food beyond urban areas and, in collaboration with urban planners and local regulations, to exclude fast foods retailers and vendors from zones around schools.

It is important to recognize that the food system is an interconnected system that is influenced by all the activities involved in bringing food from the farm to the fork. The food system is complex, including health, economic, social, political and environmental components that directly or indirectly influence policies to improve the food environment.

A systematic approach is therefore necessary to build a holistic understanding of the food environment and its relation to health, well-being and urban environments and to design interventions that are coherent and synergistic. Such an approach encourages a participatory, coordinated role for stakeholders and government in sectors such as land planning, transport, industry, agriculture and transport, which are generally not involved in health policy but the participation of which is necessary for policy coordination and systemic changes in the food environment to ensure availability, affordability and quality locally, nationally and regionally.

---

[3]   *Source:* Reproduced with permission from Parsons K, Hawkes C, Wells R. Brief 2. What is the food system? A food policy perspective. In: Rethinking food policy: A fresh approach to policy and practice. London: Centre for Food Policy; 2019.

Tool #1

Public Open Space

A smartphone app to evaluate the quality of public open spaces for physical activity. Provides users with features or data such as ranking, monitoring, pre- and post-intervention assessment, national and international comparisons and socio-spatial inequalities in the distribution of public open space. An open-source app, it creates linkages with individual studies (cohort, case–control, cross-sectional, surveys).
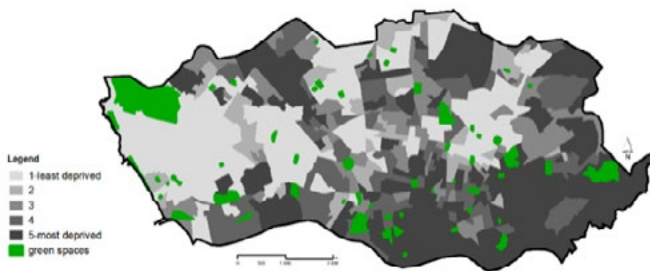
Mapping green spaces and social inequalities in Porto, Portugal
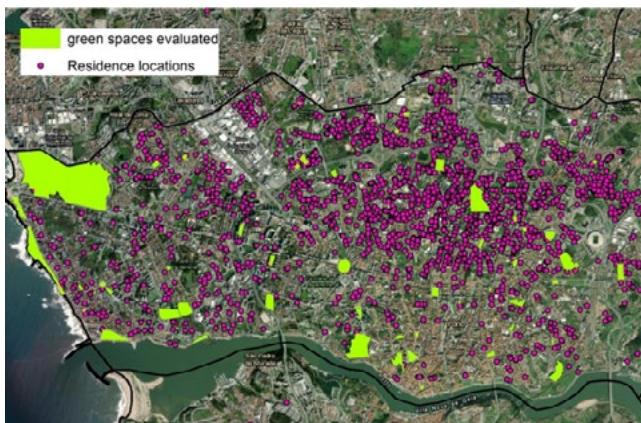
Mapping green spaces and individuals in cohort data, Porto, Portugal

Source: All figures reproduced with permission from Ana Isabel Ribeiro
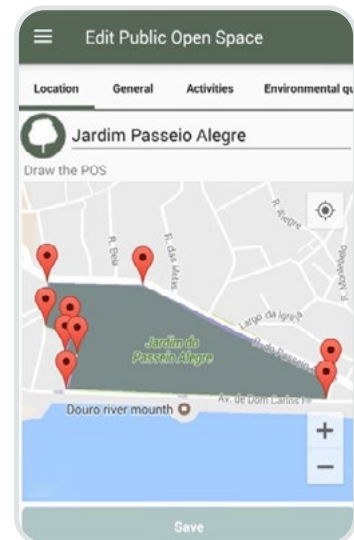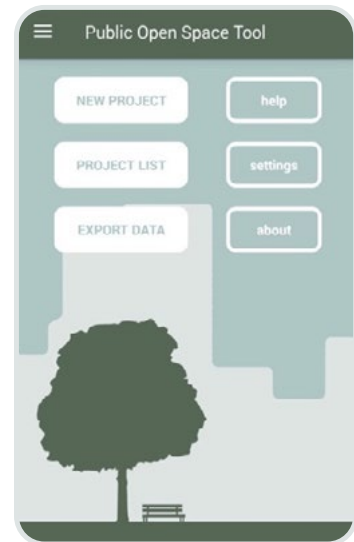
Public Open Space App

Tool #2
Place Standard

A simple, free, easy-to-use, online tool developed in 2012–2015 to assess the quality of a place. By addressing 14 factors that affect health and well-being, the place standard tool facilitates conversations among communities, organizations, businesses and decision-makers. It identifies priorities for action and initiates ideas on how to address problems.
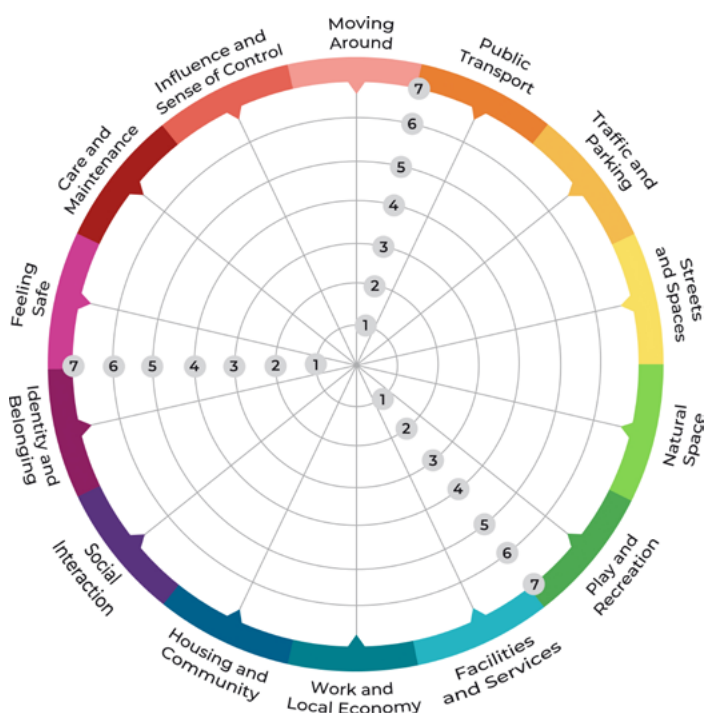
Place Standard

Source: Reproduced with permission from Sandy Robinson

Digital food environments[4]

The online food delivery sector exploded during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital food environments are the online settings through which flows of services and information that influence people's food and nutrition choices and behaviour are directed. They encompass a range of elements, including social media, digital health promotion interventions, digital food marketing and online food retail. This environment is of concern in the context of cities, as the out-of-home food sector tends to be unhealthy and often consists of energy-dense, nutrient-poor processed foods. As the convenience offered by digital food delivery apps has rapidly extended this food environment, it is vital to ensure that it develops in a healthy, sustainable way, although, currently, the sector is subject to minimal regulations.

Other concerns include the safety of the drivers delivering the food: "I can't bear the thought of someone dying delivering me a McFlurry".[5] Furthermore, cities are struggling to cope with the increasing food packaging waste and the greenhouse gas emissions from cars delivering meals. Consideration of these changes in systems approach can help to identify interconnections and understand their impact in other policy areas networks of connections of food policy coexists.

4 Digital food environments: factsheet. Copenhagen: World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe; 2021 (https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/342072).

5 Tovey J. I quit food delivery apps – the absurd convenience was not worth the cost. The Guardian, 10 February 2021 (https://www.theguardian.com/food/2021/feb/11/i-quit-food-delivery-apps-the-absurd-convenience-was-not-worth-the-cost).

The power of policies

Urban design is only one aspect of what is necessary to make cities healthy places to live and grow up in. Participants noted an urgent need for strong policies in the same direction in various sectors, each of which offers its own skills, experience and values.

Healthy streets approach
A street that works for people is a street that is good for long-term health and well-being. The healthy streets approach is a system of policies and strategies for a healthier, more inclusive city in which people choose to walk, cycle and use public transport. The approach is centred on improving 10 evidence-based indicators of what makes streets appealing, accessible to all and healthy.

Changing the street environment and people's behaviour
In the early 1900s, streets were everyone's affair, but the proliferation of private cars led to a car-centric view of the street, with new regulations and a change in the primary purpose of the street to the movement and parking of private motor vehicles. Much of the responsibility for managing street space was transferred to traffic engineers, whose objective was to facilitate driving and parking. As a result, decision-making on the design and management of streets became restricted to a few stakeholders. The negative consequences include many environmental challenges, like increased carbon emissions, urban heat island effects and loss of biodiversity. The social impacts include transport poverty, lack of access to services, community severance and the impacts on human health of noise and air pollution, road traffic injuries and less physical activity. The scale and breadth of these issues require a new collaborative approach.

> **We need to use simple language that everyone can understand and relate to.**

Benefits of cross-departmental collaboration
Redesigning streets is often considered the single solution to these issues; however, many other factors influence how streets look and feel, and a wide range of institutions, structures and individuals (not just traffic engineers) determine how streets function, including businesses, utilities, local communities, education and health-care services.

Communication among sectors is often difficult because each has its own technical language, processes and priorities. The healthy streets approach helps people from different sectors to identify shared interests and how they can contribute to make streets healthier. It may be a challenge to ensure that all parts of the system work collectively to change how street environments look and feel, pulling in the same direction to deliver benefits all round rather than focusing on single issues or working at cross-purposes. Use of the 10 healthy streets indicators as a framework results in a coherent approach that balances and prioritizes important factors.

Furthermore, it is easy for citizens to engage in the process, because the healthy streets indicators are easy to understand and create a common language and goal. This is fundamental for building collaboration and trust. The public is an important partner, and common understanding is necessary to transform car-centric streets into streets that foster a healthier environment. The healthy streets approach is a shared framework based on a common language for all sectors involved to strengthen trust and work holistically to improve street in ways that benefit the whole community.

The 10 Healthy Streets Indicators
Source: Reproduced with permission from Lucy Sanders

Examples of food policies

- Economic development initiative to attract fresh food retailers to underserved urban and rural communities, e.g., by creating incentives for local businesses to use healthy foods products.
- Transform abandoned and neglected spaces such as underground parking lots and rooftops into commercial food production.
- Ensure fast food-free zones around schools.

Tool #3
The healthy streets approach

The approach is supported by a number of tools developed with and for each stakeholder group to enable them to assess, measure and make improvements in the 10 healthy streets indicators. The healthy streets index is used for large-scale, long-term strategic planning. The healthy streets design check is used for detailed design of street projects. The healthy streets evaluation framework is used to monitor the impact of policies and projects, and the healthy streets qualitative assessment is used to engage communities in assessing their streets.

Tool #4

Food Policy Council

This tool brings together community members and local government agencies to promote the social, economic and environmental health of local and regional food systems. They are created through governmental action resulting from grassroots efforts. The approach encourages the contributions of diverse stakeholders in various segments of the local food system.

Tool #5

Health Economic Assessment Tool[6]

An online resource developed by WHO Regional Office for Europe to estimate the economic benefits of preventing deaths by increasing physical activity, such as by regular cycling and walking. The tool can be use in planning new cycling and walking infrastructure, estimating the results and comparing the costs of different interventions for benefit–cost analysis for use in making a case for investment in active mobility infrastructure.

DTU-mobile food vendor[7]

Transit hubs provide unhealthy foods high in sodium, sugars and unhealthy fats, which are risk factors for NCDs. In Denmark, 57% of people want to eat healthily, but a survey conducted in Copenhagen central station showed that only 30% considered that the food in transit hubs is healthy.

The food vendor initiative seeks to make food transit hubs places that provide healthy food by a circular, holistic approach to create more sustainable environments. The idea is to collect fresh food that would otherwise be thrown away (i.e., food discarded for aesthetic reasons) from supermarkets and local shops and use it to make ready-to-eat salads, sandwiches and wraps with ingredients that are low in sugar and salt and have no unhealthy fats. The food is brought to consumers at transit hubs by a mobile vendor (cargo bike). The prices are affordable in order to compete with fast-food chains.

Tool #6

Food Asset Mapping Tool

Food assets includes the local food infrastructure that sustains food-secure communities and regions – farms, processing and distribution companies, food enterprises, markets, retailers, community gardens, urban farms, community kitchens, student nutrition programmes, emergency food distribution and community food organizations.[8] The Food Asset Mapping Tool promotes food security and food resilience in cities. It provides a baseline estimate of a city's food assets and identifies local infrastructure that can ensure food security in communities.

[6]   Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) for walking and cycling. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (https://www.heatwalkingcycling.org/#homepage).

[7]   Ditte Lyngholm Petersen, DTU Skylab Foodlab, personal communication.

[8]   Baker L. Food asset mapping in Toronto and Greater Golden Horseshoe Region. In: Cabannes Y, Marocchino C, editors. Integrating food into urban planning. London: University College London Press; 2018 (https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10061454/1/Integrating-Food-into-Urban-Planning.pdf).

....
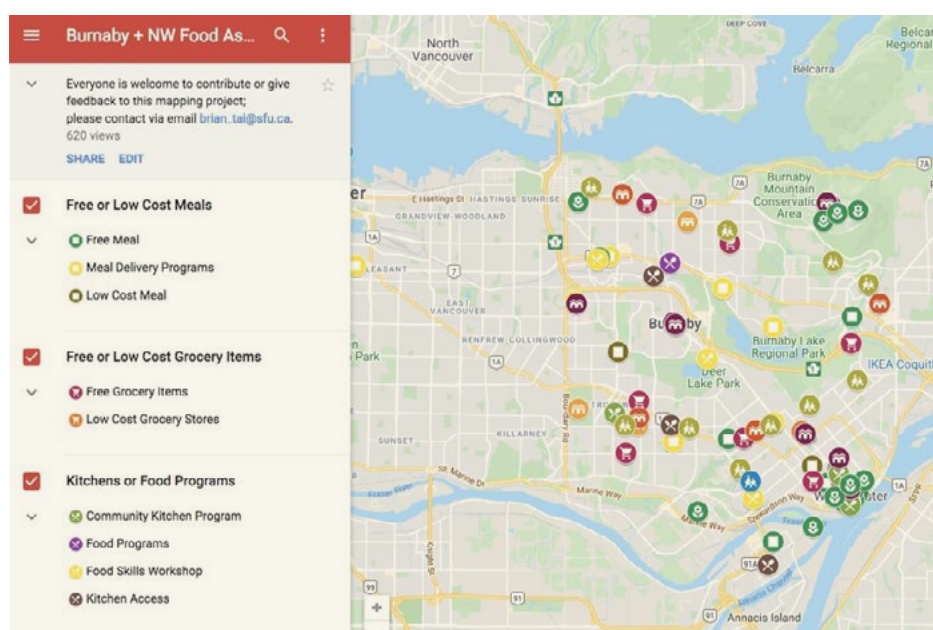
Food Asset Mapping Tool[9]

Source: Reproduced with permission from Tammara Soma

COVID-19: responses and new opportunities

COVID-19 pushed health and environmental issues to the centre of cities' agendas, including changing traditional public spaces for people to move around. Many cities took advantage of the pandemic to alter urban transport and mobility, manage the increased production of waste, ensure access to urban nature and green spaces (linked directly to physical activity and mental health) and improve housing and indoor conditions. The pandemic led to a drastic increase in cycling and walking, which required cities to rapidly adapt, manage and provide measures to protect people's safety, ensure adequate space to prevent infections and keep them physically active.

Cities must increase urban resilience, address systemic failures and reduce inequality as part of a healthy, sustainable recovery plan. They can begin by consolidating the lessons learnt during lockdowns, rethink urban and transport planning (better location and distribution of the public space) and reconsider the value of urban nature and green and blue spaces. Active mobility should be the cornerstone of sustainable urban development and resilience. Possible interventions include policies and financial instruments to ensure safe infrastructure, facilitate mobility and teleworking, flexible timetables to reduce "peak hours" occupancy of public transport, home deliveries and access to nearby services, goods and amenities. WHO supports these efforts through its "Manifesto for a healthy recovery from COVID-19", which reflects the momentum for improving the environment and health in cities.

A flexible, context-specific approach is necessary because of the diversity of countries in the WHO European Region in terms of environment and health, political priorities, means and capacity.

---

9   *Source:* Soma T, Li B, Shulman T. A citizen science and photovoice approach to food asset mapping and food system planning. J Plann Educ Res. doi.org/10.1177/0739456X221088985.

Starting with people

Planning and designing urban environments that effectively encourage and promote healthy eating and physical activity must be based on understanding people, their needs and how healthy habits can best be integrated into their everyday lives. As time is often a rare resource in people's lives, convenience is an important principle.

How can healthy choices be made not only attractive but also the easy choices? How can planners better understand convenience in different urban contexts and for different communities? The participants presented various approaches for understanding and people and their needs and integrating their knowledge into planning and designing health initiatives.

"People data"

One approach is to reconsider the type of data that can inform planning strategies and design. With the ambition of making people more visible in planning, Gehl has developed methods and tools for collecting "people data". These include how people move and spend time in a city. While many transport and planning departments collect data on car traffic, Jan Gehl conducted studies of people's patterns of movement by foot or bicycle for understanding

how physical activity can become integrated into people's everyday lives.

Informed decisions on strategies and design become possible with these and other data sets, including aspects of the built environment such as air pollution, quality of green spaces and security conditions that either encourage or discourage movement or spending time in the city.

Asset mapping

Another approach is to include people's knowledge and insights more directly. A study in Vancouver, Canada, demonstrated that many food places that are important to people are not recognized as such by policy-makers, while others are experienced as inaccessible by certain communities. Understanding and addressing such barriers are crucial for creating a more just food system in cities.

Tool #7

Gehl Public Life app

The Gehl Public Life app is an online platform for systematic collection of data on people's activities in public spaces based on direct observations. The app includes surveys on both movement patterns and types of activity in public spaces, which can be collected according to gender and age. The tool can be used in analyses and for continuous monitoring and evaluation of how new interventions and infrastructure are used by people.

" How can we become better at identifying all the important, but often hidden assets, that the city has to offer?

The Gehl lens
Source: Reproduced with permission from Gehl

Action-oriented planning

Policies and strategies are often developed and implemented over a long time, and other tools and approaches are necessary to ensure that planning of healthy urban environments is more action-oriented.

Pilot projects

To accelerate action and test new solutions, many cities are conducting pilot projects, which can serve many purposes:

- as effective tools for dialogue among stakeholders and sectors, as they make the issues and the possible solutions concrete and tangible;
- as means to test solutions on a smaller scale or temporarily before significant investment to ensure a return on investment when resources are limited;
- to leverage and highlight the unrecognized potential of a site in a city and identify new benefits of an intervention; and
- as an effective means of "early activation" of re-thinking of a new (or old) area.

Pilot projects take many forms, ranging from events to small or large physical installations, with various degrees of permanence.

Pilot projects should be used strategically. Thus, those who will benefit should be mapped and engaged, and possible networked funding opportunities should be identified and leveraged for possible scaling up at a later stage.

Everything can seldom be done at the same time in a pilot project, and a baseline assessment of the current situation is important to identify the purpose of the project. This can also make it possible to monitor and make various measurements throughout the project to determine what is working and not working, document the impact for communication as well as refine the solution if necessary.

Action-oriented planning in pilot projects
Source: Reproduced with permission from Gehl

Tool #8

Hackathons

An event-based tool to generate ideas and solutions with a group of people within a short time:

· **Formulate the challenge.**
· **Announce and promote the challenge.**
· **Form teams.**
· **Set the time for addressing the challenge.**
· **"Pitch" ideas.**
· **Implement the best ideas.**

Shifting urban diets, Copenhagen, Denmark

In Copenhagen, a city that has committed itself to be climate neutral by 2025, the role of food has become increasingly important to achieving its goal. In 2019, the city released a new food strategy for the provision of healthy food in institutions. These include the project "Shifting urban diets", a 3-year project supported by the European Union Climate KIC and developed and implemented in a collaboration among Gehl, EAT Foundation, the City of Copenhagen, City University London, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and the World Resources Institute. The aim is to operationalize Copenhagen's commitment to the C40 Good Food Declaration[10] by making the EAT Lancet Planetary Health Diet[11] applicable to the Copenhagen context and ultimately help change what people eat.

The role of Gehl was to determine how the city's "foodscape" – where public space, public life and food places converge – influence food choices and to design interventions to promote healthier eating. Focusing on urban youth, two pilot projects were conducted in the summer of 2019 that comprised design, new food offers and campaigns with local supermarkets to provide lessons on food. This action-oriented approach went beyond educating people about the "right" food choices, emphasizing how the built environment can actively support healthier food choices by making them the most convenient and at the same time reducing the attractiveness of unhealthy food options.

..............
Shifting urban diets Copenhagen, Denmark

---

[10] 14 cities commit to sustainable food policies that will address the global climate emergency. Press release. C40, 10 October 2019 (www.c40.org/news/good-food-cities/).
[11] The EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health. London: The Lancet; 2019 (https://eatforum.org/eat-lancet-commission/the-planetary-health-diet-and-you/).

"Splash Jam", Lexington (KY), USA

The project Splash Jam in Lexington, Kentucky, USA, was a pilot project for reimagining
a public space for play. The project was a collaboration between Lexington Downtown Development Authority and Gehl, with the aim of bringing life to downtown Lexington. Surveys of public life in the urban spaces were used to understand the everyday life and the needs of the city.
The survey showed that local children often played in a water fountain in Thoroughbred Park. Rather than restricting this otherwise unlawful behaviour, Gehl worked with stakeholders to identify the demand for water-play and to locate a site for play during the sweltering summer months.
A site was identified that intersects four neighbourhoods of differing socioeconomic demographics, which presented an opportunity to test water-play as a catalyst for social mixing among disparate groups.
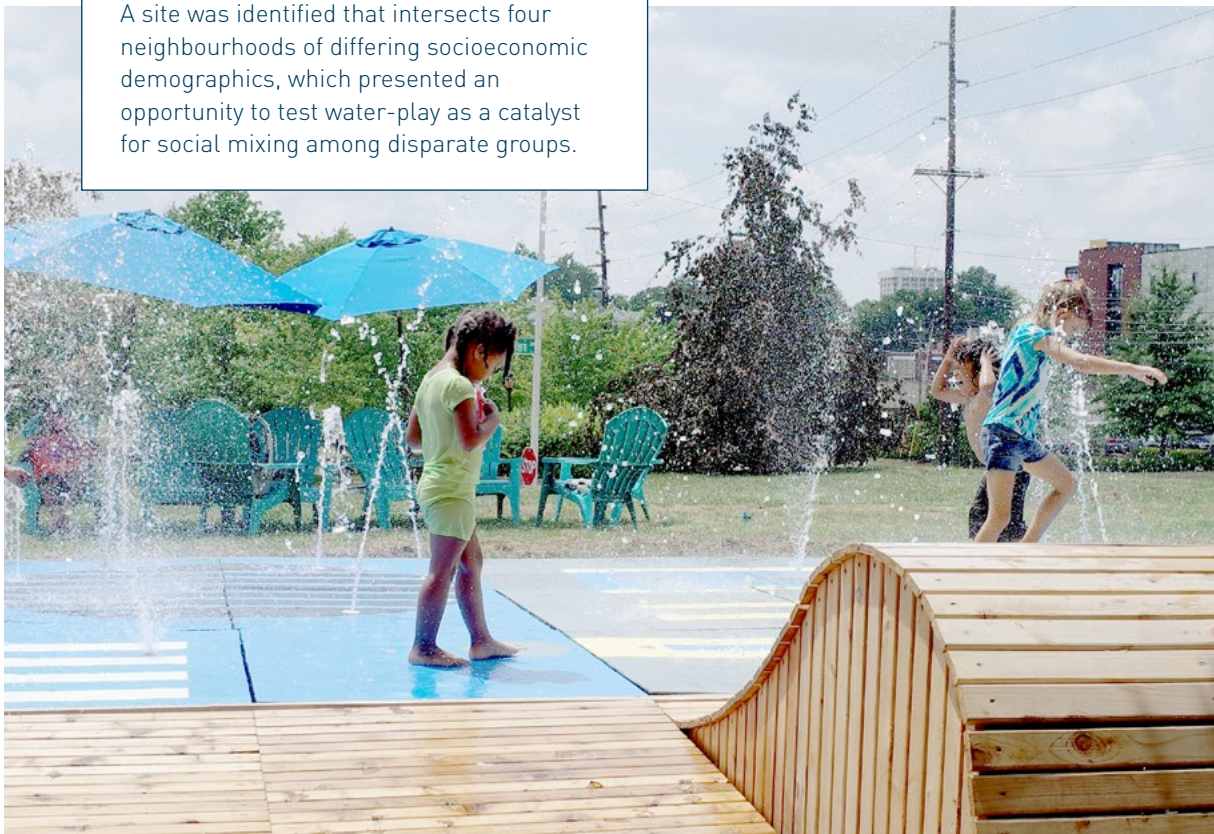
Splash Jam, Lexington (KY), USA

16th Street Mall, Denver (CO), USA

At the beginning of the programme, Denver's pedestrian mall, 16th street, was a space for moving through, often on the free bus. Because of a weak retail environment and anti-social behaviour, however, few people walked and very few spent any time. With the City of Denver and Denver Downtown Partnership, Gehl initiated a process to change views of what 6th Street was and could be by creating a 1-day festival in 2014, with the street closed to traffic.
The pilot project evolved over several years, with measures of its impact and taking stakeholders on walks to experience the street first-hand, resulting in an increasing number of festival days. In 2017, planning for a permanent design was initiated, with US$ 150 million committed to redesign of the street.

. . . .
16th Street Mall, Denver (CO), USA

City
inspiration

Before attending the workshop at the symposium, delegations from cities identified projects or programmes on which they would like to work. With inspiration from the tools and approaches presented during the symposium, the workshop identified actions to advance thinking and planning for urban health in each city.

Tbilisi, Georgia

WHERE: **Adam Mitskevichi Street**

WHO: Multi-generational group

OBJECTIVE(S):   To change streets into pedestrian areas and to design streets according to three main challenges to health in Tbilisi: air quality, physical inactivity and mental health.

Main Issues Identified

- The transport system is not pedestrian-friendly and lacks buses and cycling infrastructure. Tbilisi is car-depended, resulting in traffic congestion and air pollution.
- Pedestrian areas are seen considered possible only in tourist areas and are therefore not found in resident neighbourhoods.
- The existing green urban facilities are insufficient.
- The quality of open public spaces should be improved, providing the city not only with a higher ratio of green coverage but also more choices for civil activity.
- There are no gender-sensitive or socially inclusive spaces.
- Access to healthy food is limited.
- Primary streets should be identified in each neighbourhood to facilitate implementation and convince the relevant political officers.
- The impact should be maximized at the minimum cost.
- Promote public transport by redesigning streets for buses.
- Enhance the pedestrian experience by reclaiming car-dominated spaces.
- Acquire baseline data for project implementation.

Opportunities identified

- The European Commission offers support to European cities to increase urban mobility through the European Platform on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans.
- Tbilisi City has implemented strategic projects and policies for restructuring the public transport network, infrastructure and zonal parking.

Proposed actions

- Set up a good communication strategy, conduct a communication campaign and involve the public in planning. The public campaign should demonstrate the health indicators and drivers.
- Use data to scale up projects and ensure political will.
- Raise awareness about physical activity.
- Introduce more opportunities for social interaction.
- Promote access to healthy food products.
- Study feedback from users of existing projects and learn from previous mistakes. Measure and evaluate economic growth and the increase in numbers of user when streets in neighbourhoods are "pedestrianized".

…………..

Adam Mitskevichi Street, Tbilisi

→ CITY HIGHLIGHTS

Several events have been organized to promote public awareness of the damage due to emissions from traffic. One was to close down the Adam Mitskevichi Street (pilot area) for a few days, to familiarize citizens with a different perception of use of the street. From the first hours that the street was dedicated to the public, children arrived with music and started dancing, and some people enjoyed cycling and skateboarding. For the City this was a driver for pushing the idea forward. Currently, drawings are being prepared to refurbish the street.

Cork, Ireland

WHERE: **Cork city centre**

WHO: Sedentary population, children, older adults,
families within 5 km of the city

OBJECTIVE(S): More clearly define programmes for newly pedestrianized streets to prevent them from becoming clusters of only restaurants, and consider Cork city centre as a civic playground.

Main issues identified

- As Cork is dominated by cars, air quality is a problem.
- Limited green spaces jeopardize air quality and limit outdoor spaces for physical activity.
- Lack of seats, play elements, social spaces and well-programmed green spaces limit healthy use.
- More initiatives are necessary to prevent social exclusion and reduce health inequity in pedestrianization.
- Overweight and obesity should be addressed by transition to a more human-oriented urban design.

Opportunities identified

- A number of revitalization plans are to be realized by the municipality in the near future. For example, Cork city has invested in 10 "parklets" as pilot projects.
- A number of pilot "Pop Up Play" (Open for Play) initiatives have had good outcomes.
- During COVID-19, people realized the importance of reimagining Cork city, and Active Cork City is addressing this through urban design to encourage a healthier, safer living environment.
- Many potential partners in Cork are working on build healthier, more playful street environments.

Proposed actions

- Urban orienteering design is crucial to achieve greater accessibility.
- By connecting blue and green spaces in the city centre, increase the attractiveness of the city centre for all.
- Build tree trails, fairy trails and parklet trails, so that families and adults can navigate and move around the city easily in areas with seating and play items. Create food, nature and biodiversity trails along the river to rebuild the boundaries of the city, increase access to the natural environment and raise awareness of climate change.
- Increase use of the interactive app for exploring the city's green spaces.
- Set up "kindness rocks" and messages to help improve mental health.

- Change a city parklet into a play parklet that includes some game elements. Offer more entertainment equipment in urban spaces. Use mobile pot plants to close streets to cars. Ensure more permanent play elements at suitable locations.
- Many aspects will be evaluated, such as participation in physical activity, air quality, observation of pedestrians, cyclists and commuters, healthy streets, "photo-voices" before and after) and qualitative feedback from target groups.

....

First Parklet, Douglas Street, Cork City

....

Community growing project in Clashduv public park, Togher, Cork City

→ CITY HIGHLIGHTS

A "Playful culture trail" was launched in July 2021 in partnership with Cork City Council and cultural centres all over the city to encourage active, playful movement between and within the locations. Stickers showing Bláithín, the Irish lizard, was a playful addition incorporated by each of the cultural facilities for children to find. Feedback on the trail has been beneficial, and a second cultural play trail has been proposed for summer 2022.[12]

A play street is being planned for Cork City centre. A pedestrianized street will be transformed into a permanent, freely accessible play street for everyone to enjoy and explore their play capacity. Funding has been secured, and safety measures have been agreed.

The pedestrianized streets in Cork were declared a clean air zone on 30 March 2022.

Cork Healthy Cities supports awareness-raising on the importance of clean air for health through play streets and an anti-idling (diesel and petrol engines) campaign near schools in partnership with Masters students at Munster Technological University Cork.[13]

---

[12] For full details, see https://purecork.ie/plan-your-trip/blog/2021/july/play-trail.
[13] To view national television reporting, see https://twitter.com/VirginMediaNews/status/1512403635338199041.

Lisbon, Portugal

📍

WHERE: **Tapada da Ajuda**

WHO: Urban farmers, local boroughs, local families, local elementary schools and parents' associations

OBJECTIVE(S): Build more connections between local citizens, especially children, and the urban allotment gardens that will be built on the site. Promote a more active connection between nature and a healthy educational, and engage more local communities in this ecological best practice. Make the area easier and safer to walk and bicycle.

Main issues identified
- Tapada da Ajuda is located on hilly terrain, and the steep topography makes it difficult to ensure easy access for children.
- The surrounding streets are not safe for children because cars are parked on some sidewalks.
- The condition of pedestrian crossings in the surrounding streets should be assessed to ensure the safety of walking.
- More traffic-calming measures are necessary to make the streets safe.
- The maintenance of the allotment gardens may be difficult.

Opportunities identified
- The site is in the city centre, with schools only 500 m away, providing an opportunity for more interactions between children and farmers.
- Promote use of the new public allotment garden in Tapada da Ajuda, in partnership with the local borough and elementary schools.
- Take children to the allotment garden to learn how vegetables grow and the importance of vegetables to a healthy diet.
- Promote safe active routes to the allotment garden (500 m), by pedibus or bicycle, organized car parking and traffic-calming measures.
- Create a weekend farmers' market in Tapada, and promote events for families.
- All objectives are backed by municipal initiatives. Programmes have been conducted, such as safe neighbourhood, safe school, A Rua é Sua (the Street is Yours), school gardens, urban allotment gardens, environmental education and One plaza in each neighbourhood, to ensure local support for the project.

Proposed actions
- Arrange meetings with local authorities such as Alcântara and Ajuda boroughs and the School of Agronomy to discuss technical and political issues.
- Present proposals and programmes to local public and private schools, parents' associations, families, municipal police and firefighters in participatory sessions, with focus groups for specific topics.
- Find companies to create safe routes from schools to Tapada. The Portuguese Institute for Sports and Youth and the rugby club of the School of Agronomy are potential collaborating partners in this phase.

- Create events for Tapada Open Day, and engage local social media.
- Means for measurement and evaluation of the impact of the initiative should be identified. The aims of the project should be visits by 50% of local students, 10% more total visitors, 0 accidents on the safe route and 10% more consumption of locally produced organic food.

Tapada da Ajuda, Lisbon
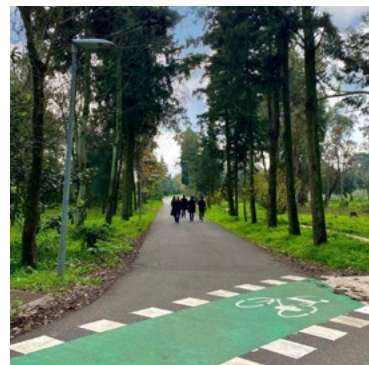
Cherepovets, Russian Federation

WHERE: Embankment of the Galsky estate

WHO: People of all ages and groups

OBJECTIVE(S): Involve people in healthy urban planning by adapting spaces to their needs. To ensure a healthy industrial city, residents want a more human-centred, environmentally friendly, liveable environment. We are working to improve the social and physical environment and provide healthier opportunities for positive outcomes on the physical and mental health of our community.

Main issues identified

- The main sites of attraction, which are in demand by citizens, require comprehensive reconstruction.
- Continuous green surroundings in the city are necessary to ensure connection and integration of the territory and land.

Opportunities identified

- Bring together the cultural, environmental and social values and current priorities to create a link between the past and the future.
- Environmental urban design is a recent concept in Cherepovets, but the residents want a modern, friendly, sustainable, safe, ecological, healthy city.
- Start by instituting pedestrian and cycling networks, green spaces and other infrastructure to promote physical activity.
- Russian people love the winter and use public spaces all year round. If they cannot cycle because of the weather, they engage in winter sports such as skiing.

Proposed actions

- Create pathways by which children and adults can access water and a lake house that has been furnished for both summer and winter.
- Create areas for use for various purposes such as picnics, play and running.
- Create various zones, including one where people practise yoga and other outdoors activities.
- Build an artificial pond where people can engage in various recreational activities and relax.
- Encourage healthy eating and active lifestyles in new commercial spaces.
- Assign new spaces in car parks for people with disabilities and limited mobility. Improve access and infrastructure for this population to make travel more comfortable and inclusive. We work closely with people living with disabilities and take their feedback into consideration.

....
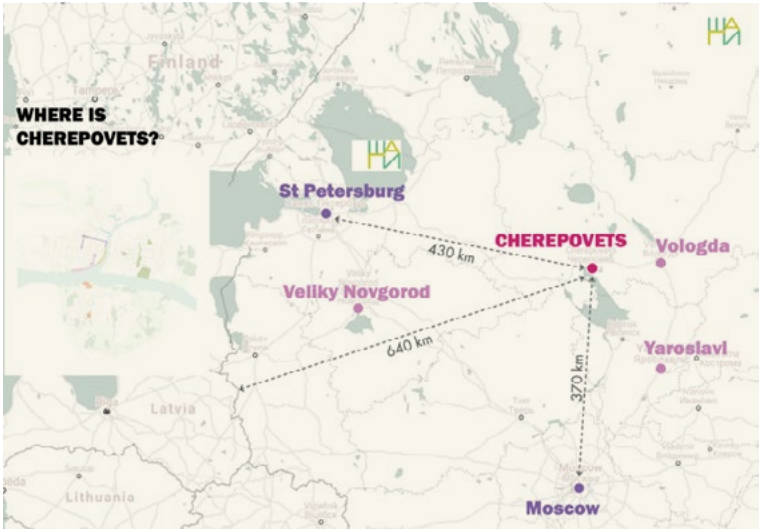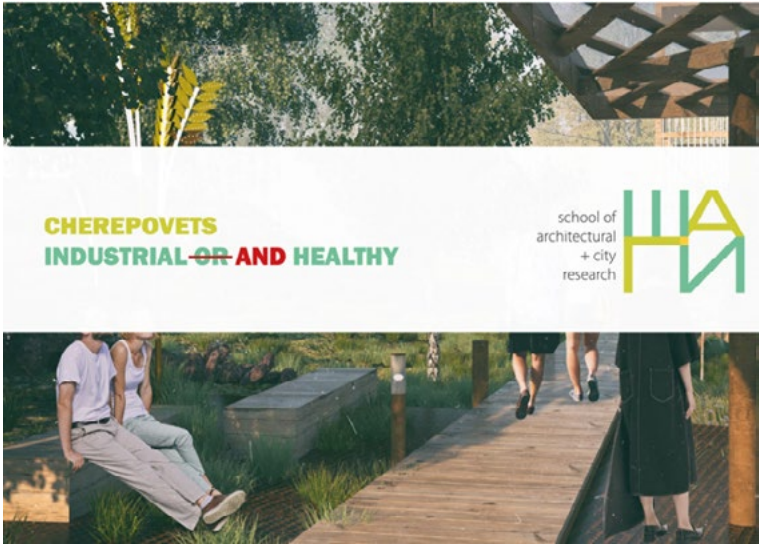
Cherepovets

....

Cherepovets

→ CITY HIGHLIGHTS

The City hall of Cherepovets has devised a strategy for the development of public spaces in the city, which highlights the main points of attraction for residents. A comprehensive reconstruction project was prepared to ensure an accessible, healthy, comfortable urban environment.

The aim is to build a continuous green frame for the city, ensure the accessibility and inclusiveness of healthy urban environments and ensure connectivity among sites. The main pedestrian and transport links are therefore also being comprehensively reconstructed or modernized. The complex reconstruction is to be conducted in 2020–2023.

The project for improvement of the Galsky estate embankment provided a site for testing new ideas, encouragement, inspiration and fresh insights about the interaction of health care and urban planning by showing that planning influences a variety of living conditions in the city that contribute to people's health.

After the symposium, the Nightingale Grove project was developed, which laid down the principles for providing an accessible, user-friendly environment for people with limited mobility and establishing the "lungs" of the city and the conditions for promoting the mental health and well-being of citizens, which are important aspects of a sustainable, heathy life.

Conclusion

Urban design is a key determinant of physical activity and healthy diets, contributing to the prevention and control of NCDs and improving global health. A number of actions are being implemented in the European Region, and the tools, policies and initiatives presented in this report should inspire governments, communities and civil society organizations to improve urban design.