



## Healthy Places Summit: Conversation on Healthy Communities

The [Healthy Places Summit](#) functioned as a community conversation about our urban environment's effect on health. The event offered a space for critical observation of the intersects between urban design and public health. Through open conversation we aimed to identify and define design and policy interventions to improve the safety, health, and quality of life of our urban spaces, focusing on how improved walkability in the built environment and active transportation can support overall quality of life for Memphians. Dialogue from this event will help in directly influencing public policy that supports the development of safer, more walkable places within the Mid-South region, improve public health endeavors, and enhance the accessibility of mobility for all community members.

The Summit was hosted by the UMDC and the *Memphis Walks* partners. The partners include: UofM School of Public Health; UofM Departments of Civil Engineering and Crimology & Criminal Justice; Crosstown Arts; Livable Memphis; Church Health Center; Memphis and Shelby County Office of Sustainability; and Shelby County Health Department. Additional partners include Innovate Memphis, the Nashville Civic Design Center, the Memphis Medical District Collaborative, and Memphis Tilth.

Taking place on May 4, 2016 at the J.K. Lewis Senior Center located on the corner of North Parkway and Bellevue the **Healthy Places Summit** featured a variety of topics related to public health and urban design, often bridging the gap between the two disciplines. From the the Provocation Address by Gary Gaston of the Nashville Civic Design Center (Nashville CDC) to the Commute Options and Solutions Workshop by Jessica Buttermore of the UofM and Suzanne Carlson of Innovate Memphis to the Access to Healthy Food Workshop by Dr. Micah Trapp, UofM/Memphis Tilth, and Ann Langston from Church Health Center. Each element of the Summit had unique qualities which provided needed elements of discussion around healthy communities, often in how to get there and what communities need to truly be healthy in all ways possible.

### **You Make Me Sick! Reconnecting Urban Design and Public Health**

The Summit began with an introduction between where and how we live, noting how health and design are mutually connected. Dr. Charles Santo, Chair of the UofM department City & Regional Planning, began with a brief overview of how planning has historical roots and foundations within the realm of public health, highlighting John Snow's diagnosis of the 1854 Cholera outbreak in London and moving from there to various eras in planning history. He then moved to focus directly on how our environments affect our health, for the good and for the bad, as it has historically done so. From this, Dr. Santo introduced the Provocuer Gary Gaston, Executive Director of the Nashville Civic Design Center. Gary then began talking in earnest about the direct links between design and health, speaking upon his experiences at the Nashville Civic Design Center where he has been able to use the two aspects to form healthier communities throughout Nashville in various ways.

Gary began by talking about certain issues which are evident within cities and their surrounding regions which arise as a detriment to forming a healthy place. Particularly, he focused on the way which design and planning had helped to create communities which are often lacking elements necessary to being truly healthy communities, whether it is lack of infrastructure or presence of singular land uses or various other characteristics. The Nashville CDC has deeply focused on these types of issues which can easily be mitigated through planning and design interventions. When looking at resolving issues six built environment and health factor groups become a necessary priority for understanding: Neighborhood Design and Development; Transportation; Walkability and Pedestrian Safety; Housing; Food Resources; Open Space and Parks. These six factors are important elements which are needed to focus on when addressing healthy communities in urban environments. Gary went on to discuss the use of the transect model for evaluating how design and planning interventions should be enacted within communities, since each transect has different environmental conditions which manifest upon the landscape. Each transect zone then becomes a unique area where design elements surface, and interventions are specific to the needs of that transect and the community needs. During the presentation, Gary showed many examples of what these transformation do and could look like to for healthier communities. One of the biggest outcomes from the use of the transect model in helping to develop healthy places was in how it helped to directly affect school siting issues within the Nashville area. Gary spoke about the major issue of school siting, especially as to how it relates to policy and is counter intuitive to building healthy communities. Work by the Nashville CDC help to mitigate some of those issues by adding connections for surrounding communities within a certain distance to the school.

Further for building healthy communities is prioritizing features which directly benefit health. These are often common aspects of design and the built environment which are overlooked, such as placing prominence upon stair cases in buildings. Even with this, the aesthetics of buildings and store fronts can create healthy places. Along with this thinking Gary provided examples of where the awnings of storefronts doubled as a shelter for the bus stop, which then allowed the storefronts to sell out of the front of the building. This shows the important for connecting design and health through the activation of public spaces. Often this can be done through simple inexpensive projects which beautify and enhance spaces while engaging communities and build social capacity.

Gary began to wrap up the provocation address by providing information about a community assessment checklist and questionnaire to help individual communities do a self assessment. These assessment goes along with the publication *Shaping the Healthy Community: The Nashville Plan*. The book is a detailed resource when it comes to shaping healthy places, providing information about all the different aspects of health and design and how to implement them within communities. With this, Gary ended his provocation address allowing the conversation to begin about Healthy Places. Following the Provocation Address by Gary, the panel discussion took place featuring professionals from various areas of health and design. The panelists included Gary: Alisa Haushalter, Director, Shelby County Health Department; Sharon Moore, Wellness Education Supervisor at Church Health Center; Tommy Pacello, President, Memphis Medical District Collaborative (MDC); Todd Richardson, Cofounder/Coleader, Crosstown Arts & Crosstown Concourse. Dr. Santo was the moderator for the discussion.

The discussion began with an introduction to who the panelists are, what they did, what they believed about healthy communities, and why healthy places matter. Alisa Haushalter spoke upon the importance of transportation among healthy communities, particularly as how it relates to safety and food security/access. Regarding this, accessibility within a neighborhood or city to a multiplicity of elements is needed for a healthy lifestyle especially to food and jobs. Collaboration between political and social will, along with monetary incentives, is necessary for providing access among communities, including investment into those access systems.

Tommy Pacello talked about healthy communities in relation to what is happening currently in regards to the Memphis Medical District (MD). Tommy focused on what does not make a healthy community in regards to the MD, where a monoculture of land uses has become the norm. The MDC is looking to enhance the type of uses present within the district, encouraging infill and a healthy lifestyle. It is looking to capitalize on the 24,000 employees and students which live and work within the district, to help stem the severe population decline from 36,000 to 15,000 residents

from the past 15 years. Tommy along with the MDC is hoping to create using elements of healthy places to be a guide for Memphis on what a healthy community is.

Sharon Moore brought attention to Church Health Center's Model for Healthy Living, with its self reporting function and having participation in multiple areas of one's life such as social, faith, personal, and others. She iterated the importance of knowing neighbors and having trust, even if there is conflict among residents, it can still lead to social cohesiveness and community. She placed a major priority upon education, especially as it pertained to cooking and culinary knowledge. She mentioned that access and availability are not mutually exclusive, where healthy food could be available to someone, but they may not know what to do with it or that it is healthy.

Todd Richardson is the only panelist who works in a field which is not health or design/planning related. He is an art historian and professor which provides him with a unique perspective among the panelists. Todd spoke about the connection which art, health, and design all play within a community, helping to mold what the area may or may not be. Crosstown and the Concourse are perfectly located to be in a place where the unexpected lead to a grand outcome. This entire outcome is centered around the idea community with the "urban vertical village" helping to form that vision. In Crosstown Concourse there will be an ArtLab workshop that will function as a creativity gym, providing access to technology and inspire creativity. Todd sees creative expression as an important factor for one's health and wellness.

### *Feedback and Notes Regarding the Panel Discussion*

- Memphis has many spaces for physical activity but limited to no access to many of those locations
- Partnerships, dialogue, and collaboration are important for achieving goals, address issues, and finding creative solutions to problems
- The Medical District Collaborative is poised to make many changes within the Medical District due to the vast resources and an annual investment of \$2.3 billion for reshaping the MD into a healthy, prospering area.
- Psychological and social factors can directly influence health as they relate to the built environment through neighborhood place perceptions, providing correlation with environment and health
- Crosstown Concourse is all about building community. The idea or sense of community and type of community is still up for debate as Concourse continues development and shapes the surrounding area.
- Expression of art, creativity, and/or design are all processes which are directly related to health and wellness within a community and individual.
- Design and planning interventions can often cause social friction which helps to provide social enhancement through interactions, as that frictions helps communities understand themselves more fully, and allows for a healthy social atmosphere.
- Memphis has most often worked in a post-political context, where public enhancements and inputs are not always there, but focused and directed from private or non-profit agencies with government backing. Within Memphis, political support is paramount to create real change within the city.
- With no place for the city, where do we start? It then boils down to basic elements of supply and demand; gathering all things which are happening on the map, highlighting the success and learning from failures, and sharing those stories; and building an overall vision for the future to work towards with directed, leveraged investments for real change.
- Nashville Next became the narrative of the city from such a planning process: Obtained through years of working, but with major political and social buy-in and individual connections lead to a collective narrative vision.
- Important to remember for the future is that 1000 projects do not make a place and helps set up an arena for failure.

Following the panel discussion a healthy lunch from Midtown Crossing Grill was provided for participants of the **Healthy Places Summit** where conversation around the days topic continued. Following lunch various workshops were held looking at elements of walkability, health, and safety as they relate to the built environment and health places.

### *Safer Neighborhoods Workshop*

BY Simone Tulumello (University of Lisbon/UofM City & Regional Planning) and K.B. Turner (UofM Criminology & Criminal Justice)

This workshop on “public safety” adopted a methodology of using future scenarios to create a space for collaborative discussion on creating a long-term strategy in dealing with structural issues that form the roots of crime and violence in Memphis. The presenters developed two scenarios using an online survey with initiatives that helped fulfill the future possibilities. During the workshop, the workshop group collectively discussed the initiatives that come out of the recommendations, and which policies and practices would work best and which of the future scenarios is preferred for Memphis.

### *Commute Options and Solutions Workshop*

BY Suzanne Carlson (Innovate Memphis) and Jessica Buttermore (UofM School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy)

This workshop asked participants to examine their current commute patterns, desired commute choices, and real and perceived barriers to taking alternate forms of transportation outside of an automobile. The organizers then offered suggestions and provided information on how participants could embark on making small steps and changes towards their desired commuting options. The workshop was able to engage participants in long-term strategies toward navigating autocentric environments and how they could contribute to the development of healthier places.

### *Memphis Walkability Toolkit Workshop*

BY John Paul Shaffer and Essence Jackson (Livable Memphis)

This workshop is designed to provide participants with a tool for making and managing pedestrian infrastructure within neighborhoods. The Livable Memphis Walkability Toolkit is designed to give residents a way of enhancing walkability within their area. Participants learned about the critical importance of pedestrians and safety related issues. The workshop helped residents understand how to use the toolkit for assessing walkability and advocating for sidewalk repairs and better infrastructure for pedestrians with property owners, city officials, and neighborhood non-profit groups.

### *Access to Health Foods Workshop*

BY Ann Langston and Sharon Moore (Church Health Center) and Dr. Micah Trapp (UofM Anthropology/Memphis Tilth)

This workshop functioned as a way of informing participants about organization in Memphis that are addressing the issues of access to healthy foods. The workshop looked at elements of healthy food access that are often overlooked, like how to prepare healthy meals and what all foods can be made a part of those meals. This topic was related back to not knowing what is healthy versus not having access. Lack of access was addressed with the issues of food deserts also being addressed and how participants can overcome those barriers.













