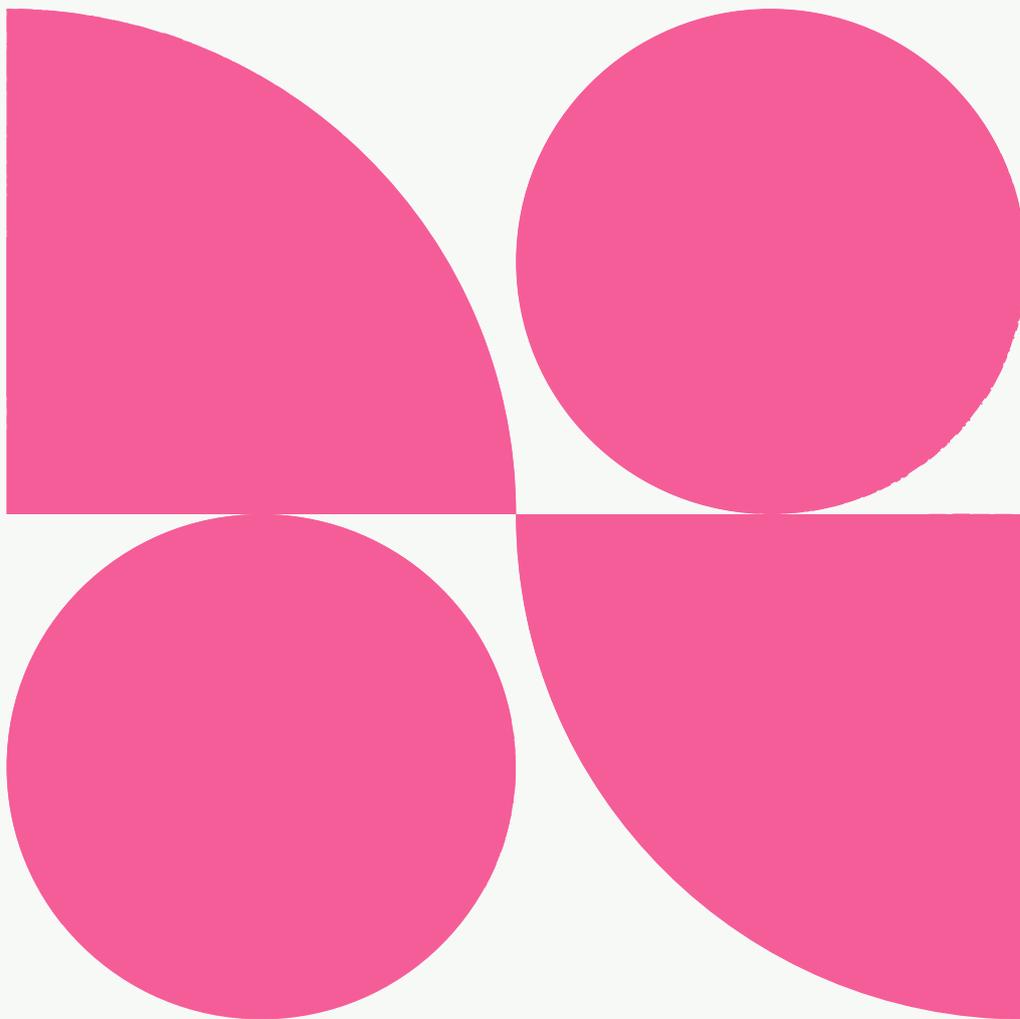


Winter 2022

URP 556: Healthy Cities Integrative Seminar

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# Cross-Disciplinary Urban Health Collaboration Guidebook



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# Executive Summary

## What is a healthy city?

Healthy cities are a network of people, places, and spaces where the physical, social, and mental well-being of diverse communities can thrive.

Our health, as we have learned during our time completing the Healthy Cities Certificate, is achieved through a blend of interconnected internal and external factors—ranging from daily individual choices to choices outside of our control—such as equitable access to education, primary care providers, affordable housing, healthy food systems, connected transportation systems, and walkable streets.

Just as our understanding of health is multi-dimensional, so should the strategies that we, as planners and public health professionals, will implement to address urban health challenges.

Of course, such complex challenges cannot be unpacked by one perspective or professional sector alone, but rather by nuanced, strategic partnerships; partnerships that use both local and national knowledge to rewrite history, guide the future development of cities, and prioritize the health and wellbeing of all communities.

This guidebook is designed as a tool for anyone navigating the challenges and benefits of cross-disciplinary strategies. We hope this guide provides useful insight for successful collaborative work.

Divided into eight sections, this guide covers the following topics:

- The need for cross-disciplinary approaches
- Principles for successful partnerships
- Navigating challenges
- Tips for young professionals
- Inclusive collaboration
- Case studies
- Frameworks and Initiatives
- Resources

# Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration is the result of collective thinking and shared conceptual frameworks. Collaborators from across various disciplines provide their expertise, perspectives, and experiences to work toward a shared solution to a problem of interest. While initiating and maintaining cross-disciplinary collaborations can be challenging and time-consuming, these collaborations are crucial for successful innovation, development, and implementation of projects, policy proposals, and interventions.



# Principles for Successful Partnerships

01

## Build Trust

"It takes time to build partnerships when you move at the speed of trust. But its so worth it!" Lesli Hoey

Trusting members of your team allows for a collective sense of safety. When team members feel safe with one another, they are able to open up, take appropriate risks, and expose vulnerabilities, fostering a collaborative atmosphere.

02

## Create a Collaborative Environment

Meet partners and team members where they are and work from there to build relationships across any knowledge or communication gaps that may exist. Its important to develop a common understanding of each other's work, strengths, and weaknesses.

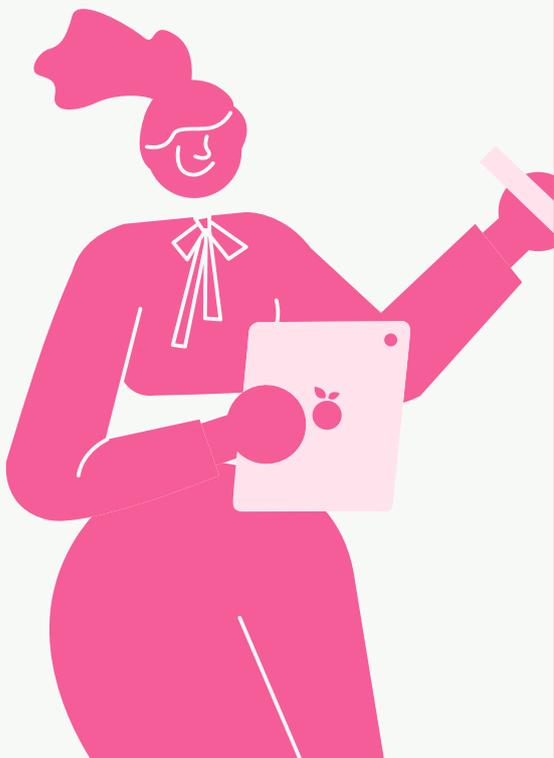
"Collaboration is adaptive and always changing, its not static"  
Elizabeth Gerber

03

## Establish Effective Communication

"Collaborations are relationships and determining if a relationship or partnership is going to work depends on honest communication"  
Roshanak Mehdipanah

Definitions, measures, and research approaches change across disciplines. When collaborating, its important to learn each others language, jargon, values, and knowledge gathering approaches. Who do you need to collaborate with whom? Why?



# Principles for Successful Partnerships

04

## Be Transparent

"People can tell when you are doing something for the right reasons"

Samantha Henstell

Frame whatever the topic is in a way that makes sense and is meaningful to everyone else. Be honest about your goals and intentions. Transparency with yourself and others can help you to fundamentally assess what you want to accomplish and why.



05

## Trust Your Expertise

"Know yourself and your partner. Know enough to ask questions. And share your knowledge generously"

Elizabeth Gerber

Disciplines are valuable and its important to own your specialization. What do your partners need and want? Can you provide skills that will help the collaboration succeed? You are the expert in your field, use that!

06

## Know Your Strengths & Weaknesses

It is fundamentally important to group dynamics for each person to recognize which skills they do or do not have and to delegate accordingly. No one person can do it all. No one person has every perspective. Ask: do you have the right people at the table?

"Recognize when you don't have someone at the table. Invite them in."

Joy Knoblauch

# Navigating Conflict

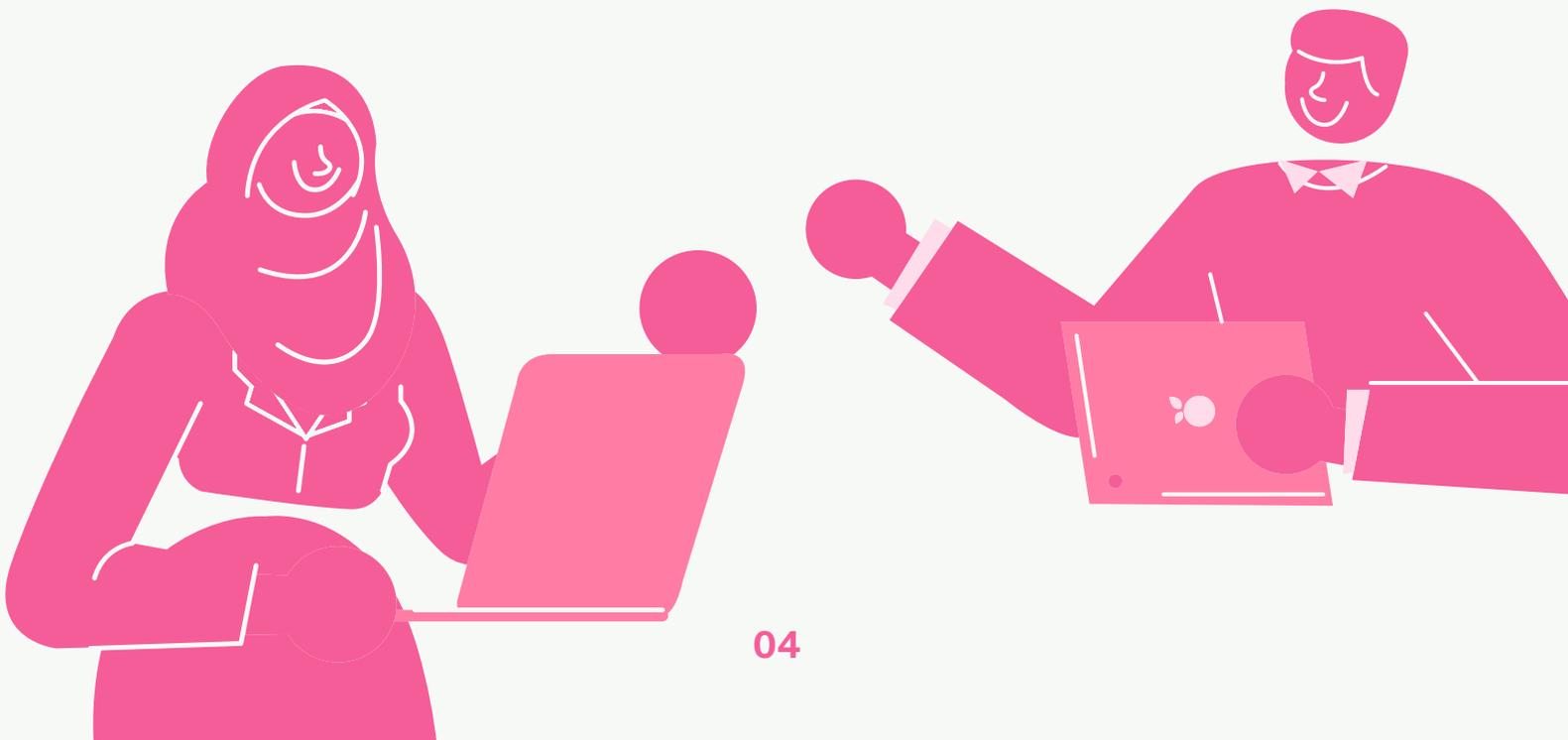
Conflict is a necessary and largely inevitable component of collaboration that should not be avoided and may even aid in promoting honest discussion among group members. This is particularly true when a collaboration consists of professionals from varying backgrounds and areas of expertise. Members of any cross-disciplinary team should acknowledge that conflict can be healthy and beneficial when handled correctly and should aim to contribute toward designing conflict resolution procedures to achieve productive outcomes.

## Try these strategies

Work early-on to develop group process and operating norms that establish guidelines for equitable communication, participation, decision-making, and conflict resolution.

Understand that collaborators can have different values, preferences, expectations, and goals. It may be difficult to find balance and manage various work styles, timelines, capacities, and publishing requirements that often differ by field.

It must also be acknowledged that not all collaborations are successful. You should be prepared to ask yourself: *Why* and *how* are we collaborating? Is this collaboration working for all of us? It is crucial to know when it is time to move on from a collaboration that has run its course.



# For Young Professionals

Whether your background is in Public Health, Public Policy, Urban Planning, or another field, there are certain strategies you should consider as a young professional seeking out opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration.

## Specialize!

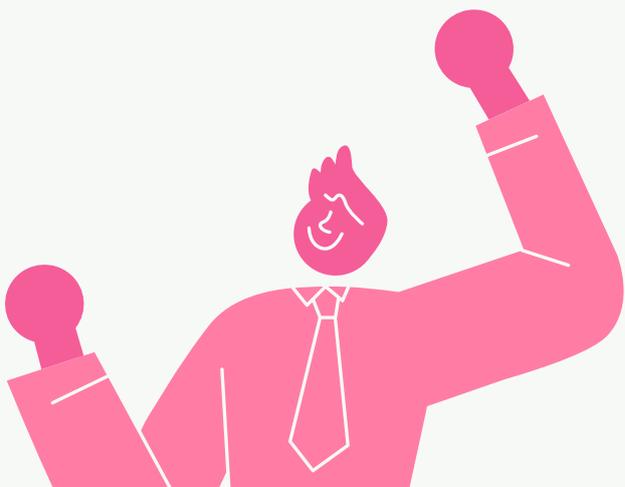
Developing your expertise in a specific field will allow you to confidently approach collaborations knowing what strengths and skills you contribute to the team.

## Network!

Seek out opportunities to meet colleagues in other fields - you never know who could become your next collaborator. Foster a diverse network with an array of skills, goals, and backgrounds.

## Patience!

As we've highlighted, it takes time to build extensive networks and develop successful, sustainable partnerships. Start small and remember that no team can succeed without trust.



# Inclusive Collaboration

Building a culture of inclusivity is an essential part of collaborating with others. Inclusive collaboration helps everyone within the group feel valued and empowers them to bring their best ideas to the table. These tips can help establish inclusive collaboration.

## Recognize Your Biases

Implicit biases are negative associations expressed automatically based on people's identities and characteristics that may uphold and reinforce oppressive systems. Recognizing your biases can help you avoid making harmful decisions, policies, and procedures.

## Understand Your Positionality and Social Identities

Your positionality and social identities may afford you social power and privileges, allowing you greater access and control of resources, which can put you at an unfair advantage over others. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power and privilege operate.

## Develop Cultural Competency

Cultures develop unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors, and communication styles. Cultural competency helps broaden your understanding of others which can support collaboration. Key elements to becoming more culturally competent are respecting others and being open to learning from them.

## Establish Group Commitments

Make group commitments to engage, challenge, and critique each other with respect. Decide on a course of action in the event that conflict interferes with the health or well-being of your group, collectively or as an individual. Consider centering the experiences of communities historically excluded and those most impacted your work.



# Inclusive Collaboration

## Pronounce Names Correctly

Pronouncing names correctly is an important element in creating an inclusive environment. Needing to constantly teach people how to pronounce your name can be exhausting. In some cases, this may result in a lack of trust and can communicate disrespect. Make an intentional effort to pronounce names correctly. Everyone deserves to be called by their name.

## Respect Pronouns

Respecting pronouns shows respect for others. Being misgendered can be an invisibilizing experience. Always include pronouns during introductions, and make space to display pronouns next to names. Correct misgendering when it is witnessed.

## Embracing Distributed Settings

Provide multiple ways for people to engage and participate. During virtual meetings, allow participants to speak up or use the chat. Provide captioning when possible.

## Leave Room for Growth

Getting to know your team is necessary for inclusive collaboration. Assess your group's individual needs and make appropriate accommodations.

Assess your group's individual needs  
and make appropriate  
accommodations.



# Initiatives & Frameworks

## **Global, national, and local strategies to design and plan Healthy Cities: Three Unique Initiatives**

City planners and public health professionals are already working together to solve urban health challenges. What have they learned so far and how can we continue this cross-collaboration that will guide design and policy priorities focused on health? What sort of goals and frameworks should this collaboration consider to ensure that future urban health policies are positively impacting all urban populations, especially those who are most vulnerable? Below, we discuss some unique initiatives that highlight cross-disciplinary collaboration and innovation



# Initiatives & Frameworks

## Strategies and innovative approaches to designing Healthy Cities

### 1 World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy Cities Network

#### Initiative goals

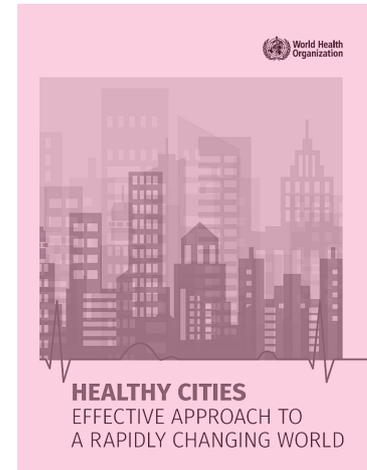
To place health high on the social and political agenda of city planning by promoting health, equity, and sustainable development through innovation and multisectorial change.

To recognize the importance of action at the local, urban level and of the key role of local governments.

#### Reach: International

#### Method:

1. Promoting health and equity in all local policies impacting social determinants of health (SDH) and fully aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. Creating environments that support health, well-being, healthy choices, and healthy lifestyles.
3. Providing UHC, and social services that are accessible and sensitive to the needs of all citizens.
4. Investing in health promotion and health literacy.
5. Investing in a healthy start in life for children, and providing support to disadvantaged groups such as migrants, the unemployed, and people living in poverty.
6. Strengthening disease prevention programs, with special focus on obesity, smoking, unhealthy nutrition and active living.
7. Promoting healthy urban planning and design.
8. Investing in green policies, clean air and water, as well as child- and age-friendly city environments, and addressing climate change-related issues such as by lowering emissions and identifying climate-resilient pathways.
9. Supporting community empowerment, participation and resilience, and promoting social integration, peace, inclusion and community-based initiatives.
10. Strengthening the city's public health services and capacity to respond to public health emergencies.



# 2

## Urban Land Institute (ULI) Building Healthy Places Initiative

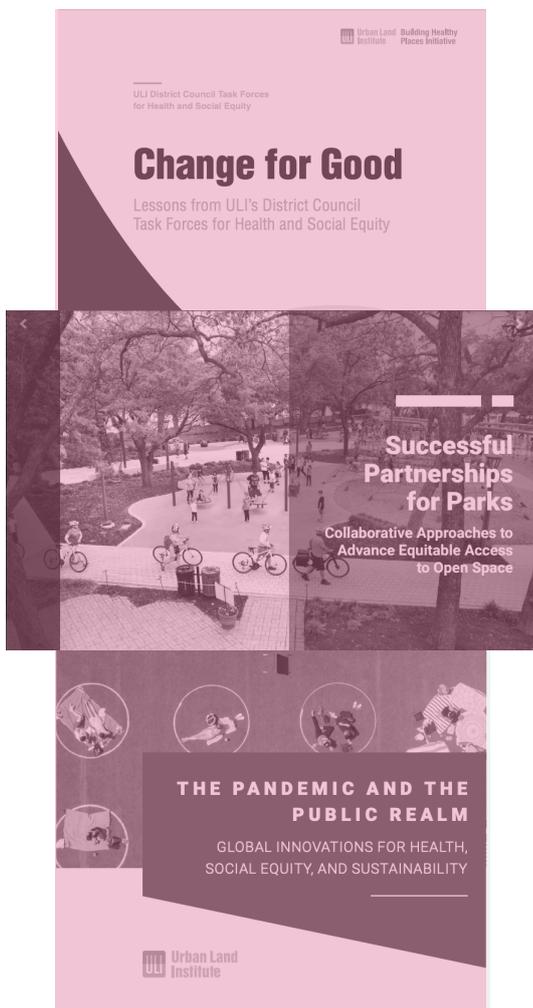
### Who is ULI?

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to connect, inspire, and lead innovation and policy reform to address equitable and sustainable land use through content, education, convening, mentoring, and knowledge sharing.

### Initiative goals

- To leverage the power of the Institute’s global networks to shape projects and places in ways that improve the health of people and communities.
- To make health and social equity mainstream considerations in real estate practice.
- To offer several resources and guides for leveraging power for health equity and growing from lessons learned.

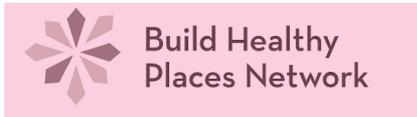
### Reach: International



## Focus Areas

- Leadership and Learning
- Healthy Housing
- Healthy, equitable, and sustainable transportation
- Industry, building, and community
- Equitable parks and open space
- Food and real estate

# 3 Build Healthy Places Network Healthy Neighborhood Investments



## Who is the Build Healthy Places Network?

Founded in 2014, The Build Healthy Places Network sits at the intersection of community development, finance, public health, and healthcare. The network positions partnerships across sectors to leverage community-centered investments to reduce poverty, improve health, and advance racial equity.

## Initiative Goals

- To promote community development and healthcare partnerships as the go-to sustainable model in California for addressing the social determinants of health (SDOH)
- To advance health and racial equity in historically marginalized communities.
- To better understand barriers to collaboration, tailor technical assistance based on what we learn, and work to embed capacity within local organizations to address those barriers.

## Reach: California

## Investment Areas

- Service-enriched affordable housing
- Childcare Facilities
- Grocery stores in food deserts
- Policy Development



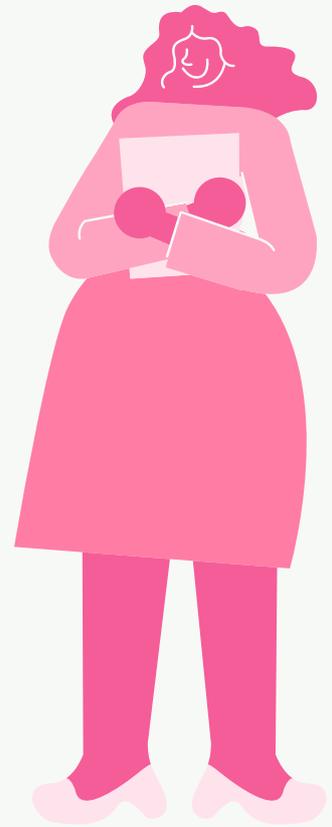
# Resources

Resource Type	Purpose	Resource
Interdisciplinary Professionals	Seeing the work of professionals working in interdisciplinary contexts can provide a better understanding of impact and career paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Roshanak Medipanah</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Elizabeth Gerber</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Joy Knoblauch</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Lesli Hoey</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Felix Kabo</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Samantha Henstell</u></a></li> </ul>
University of Michigan Events and Initiatives	The University has many events, classes, and lecture series to help foster urban health-focused collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Michigan Integrative Well-Being and Inequality (MIWI) Training Program</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Interdisciplinary Health Club</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Health Policy Case Competition</u></a></li> </ul>
Interdisciplinary organizations, firms, & companies	Understanding companies and organizations working in urban health can better assist career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Healthy Environments Partnership</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>International Society for Urban Health</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Gehl</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>The Center for Urban Design &amp; Mental Health</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Healthy Building Network</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Bloomberg Associates</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Health Begins</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>cityhealth</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Placemaking X</u></a></li> </ul>



# Acknowledgements

We thank the Healthy Cities Certificate program for allowing us to expand our knowledge of cross-disciplinary collaborations toward creating design and policy strategies that prioritize public health and equitable development.



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Laura Melendez: [melendla@umich.edu](mailto:melendla@umich.edu)



# Sources

## **Inclusive Collaboration**

[Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#)

[Implicit Bias: What it is. Why it matters. What can be done about it.](#)

[Misgendering and Respect for Pronouns](#)

[Taubman College's Phonetic Name Initiative](#)

## **Initiatives and Frameworks**

[Build Healthy Places Initiatives](#)

[The ULI Building Healthy Places Initiative](#)

[Building Healthy Places Toolkit \(pdf\)](#)

[Healthy Cities Effective Approach to a Changing World](#)