

URP 552: HEALTHY CITIES

Fall 2025

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The physical and social forms of cities have significant public health consequences. Infrastructure shapes exposure to environmental toxins, natural disasters, and infectious diseases. Land use patterns and zoning laws determine who has access to healthy food and spaces for physical activity. The design details of streets, buildings, and plazas influence mobility patterns, mental well-being, chronic illness, and violent crime. Additionally, the built environment was one of the most important focus areas during the first year of the coronavirus pandemic. In this graduate-level seminar, students will prepare for their professional careers by learning how to design healthier cities. With this knowledge, students will have a foundation for effectively assessing the health risks and wellness opportunities associated with various urban forms, as well as for designing built environment interventions for improving human health and wellness in urban contexts.

Learning Goals:

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate comprehensive understanding of the intersections between urban planning and public health, including the socio-economic determinants of health, environmental health factors, and the role of built environments in shaping health outcomes.
- Apply theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence to analyze urban planning strategies aimed at promoting health equity, including the identification of vulnerable populations, assessment of health disparities, and evaluation of interventions to address systemic inequities in urban environments.
- Develop proficiency in designing and implementing evidence-based planning interventions that prioritize public health and health equity considerations, through the synthesis of interdisciplinary approaches, stakeholder engagement, and the utilization of quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to review all recommended readings before each class session and to actively participate during in-class learning activities. Grades are determined by a combination of in-class learning activities, public awareness writing assignments, and a self-selected case study.