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Manhattan's Paley Park, which opened in 1976, has successfully married aesthetics with practicality: Its 20-foot-tall waterfall not only serves as a beautiful backdrop, but also disguises nearby noise pollution.

PALEY PARK, BY ERCWTYNN, FLICKR (CC BY-ND 2.0)

Setting the Stage for Our Urban Public Spaces

BEST PRACTICES

CENTRAL PARK, OUR first and arguably most influential public space, was purposefully designed as a social experiment. It was intended to encourage the wealthy in their carriages to cross paths with strolling workers and their families as they all enjoyed the park together—to take on new roles and interact with new characters—reflecting our common desire to see and be seen, and thus attempting to overcome the social stratification of the time.

Design thought about public space has evolved since, particularly during the modernist movement in the middle of the 20th century, when new ideas drew us toward more art-focused statements. But the outcome is a somewhat mixed bag. We've struggled to reach a balance between the establishment of attractive spaces for human interaction and the creation of meaningful works of art in landscape. We are at our best when we remember that the whole play's the thing, not just the stage.

William H. Whyte, a social researcher working in the 1970s, shed considerable light on the inadequacies of public spaces, primarily by pointing out how those built during the heyday of the modernist movement failed to address basic human desires and activities. Using time-lapse photography, Whyte showed that people avoided expensive, designer-created spaces unless they met a few simple criteria: No wide-open, windswept places. Seating options, perhaps even a few visitors can rearrange. Water features. Less dense vegetation (it makes visitors feel worried, not cozy). And, perhaps most importantly, food.

Whyte's withering critique of high mid-century public space design underscored that the best places are not always the most striking from a design standpoint—and the most sculptural are sometimes the worst for human interaction.

Ready, set, action

Grady Clay, one of my favorite urban philosophers and the former editor of *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, has tackled these same issues. In his essay "What Makes A Good Square Good?" he answers the titular question with a single word: action. Clay (and Whyte) notes that when planners create more opportunities for people to be part of both the show and

Despite its award-winning design, Martha Schwartz Partners' take on Jacob Javits Federal Building Plaza failed to attract visitors in New York City.

the audience, the more successful and loved the public space will be.

Take, for example, the continuing saga of Jacob Javits Federal Building Plaza in New York City. The complex was built in 1969, with the plaza added as a zoning amenity that allowed greater density on the rest of the site—the same sort of density-bonus zoning that created so many of Whyte's examples of windswept, vacant public spaces. As originally constructed, Javits Plaza was notably empty most of the time and devoid of trees or other vegetation, having been constructed atop an underground parking deck. In 1979, the National Endowment for the Arts funded a project to introduce sculpture to public spaces and commissioned sculptor Richard Serra to create an artwork for Javits Plaza. His sculpture *Tilted Arc*, a political statement manifest in a long wall of Cor-Ten steel, was introduced to the plaza. Immediately, a tenant review board recommended its relocation, and it was removed in 1989.

When the waterproofing atop the underground deck failed in 1992, Martha Schwartz Partners was commissioned to redesign the plaza into another work of high art, a series of half-globe-shaped hillocks topped with mist fountains and surrounded by sinuous benches and black pavement. Schwartz's visually striking design won a 1997 American Society of Landscape Architects Honor Award—but still, people avoided the space.

When the waterproofing again needed replacement in the late 2000s, the U.S. General Services Administration decided not to replace the Schwartz design, and instead commissioned a new scheme from Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates in 2009.

Michael Van Valkenburgh, the company's president and CEO, is optimistic this will be the design that sticks. "It has to strike the right balance between open and enclosed" to be appealing to potential visitors, he says.

"We added small trees to provide shade and used the plant beds to create a scale that humans can relate to. It's not a garden and it's not an open plaza—it's a hybrid." He has one regret: "The GSA was forced to turn off the water fountain for energy conservation reasons. The water comes out of the pavement in a sunny location where the light will play off the water and where the sun warms the space. Since it's been turned off, kids have stopped coming, and the ambient sound the water provided is now missing."

In stark contrast to the Javits Plaza process, Silver Spring, Maryland, took a very simple step to establish interim use of a vacant downtown parcel while awaiting funding for a permanent public space: They paved it with artificial turf.

The interim space became startlingly successful. People flocked to it, laid around on it with friends, played Frisbee and soccer, and listened to jazz on it. The space—and more specifically, the turf—became so beloved that when the permanent project was finally funded and the turf was scheduled for removal, a "grass"roots "Save the Turf" movement arose and gained some traction before the redesign was ultimately implemented as Veterans Plaza.

The new plaza is carefully designed to support a variety of activities, including a seasonal outdoor ice skating rink and summertime farmers market. It's kept what its predecessor had: action, though the action is now programmed, rather than spontaneous.

"All the world's a stage," Shakespeare wrote in *As You Like It*, "and all the men and women merely players." That goes for parks, too. Our communities are best served when we build living, active stages—sets with pieces that can be repurposed, that support mobile people switching from actor to audience—rather than crafting permanent, static art. We need to find ways to populate these spaces with action, repeatedly, until they become meeting places, areas to see and be seen by others.

That's not to say simple spaces cannot exist as works of art; look at brilliantly designed places like Paley Park in New York. When design embraces a healthy understanding of what people seek—each other—we will be more successful at creating public spaces that are expressions of art made for people, not just magazine covers. ■

—Daniel Howe, FASLA, AICP

Howe is a writer and consultant in Raleigh, North Carolina.

MARTHA SCHWARTZ - JACOB JAVITS CONVENTION CENTER PLAZA BY JPHILIPS FLICKR (CC BY 2.0)

Recognizing Climate Change as a Planning and Law Challenge

LAW

MORE AND MORE CITIES across the globe are beginning to recognize the impact they have in developing regulations and programs to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

While the international community continues to be unable to establish a binding greenhouse gas emissions reduction framework to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, and the U.S. Congress has not created the type of comprehensive legislation needed to significantly reduce domestic emissions, municipal governments have aggressively and creatively stepped in to fill this regulatory void. With the authority to promulgate regulations like building codes and land use, local governments have a significant—if not the most important—role in the reduction of our carbon footprint.

However, this bottom-up regulatory approach to global climate change is not without its challenges and critics. The chief legal question about such an approach seems to be whether local regulation is preempted by state or national law (or even an international treaty). If not, parochial decisions made at the local level may still muddle the regulatory environment and impede important projects, suggesting that such actions are more appropriately taken at the state or federal level. For example, Cape Wind, a proposal to build 130 wind turbines in Cape Cod, has been stymied by more than 25 local legal challenges.

Some may question how far municipal regulations may proceed under the police power banner. States like Florida and California have created planning regimes specifically geared toward climate change mitigation and smart growth. In other states, where legislatures have not explicitly given municipalities the mandate or authority to mitigate climate change, the ability of local governments to impose such regulations remains unclear.

Cities' tool of choice in this arena has been the climate action plan. Yet there is little certainty about whether these efforts will effectuate the necessary GHG emissions reductions. There is even less evidence that municipal governments have used comprehensive planning and zoning to systemically reduce GHG emissions. While cities have patched together piecemeal regulations—green roof requirements, low-impact development ordinances, traditional neighborhood design ordinances, form-based codes, and transit-oriented development overlays—no municipality has adopted an integrated approach to climate planning, comprehensive planning, and zoning.

Barriers to integration

A zoning ordinance may not explicitly discuss climate change mitigation and adaptation for many reasons. First, a primary purpose of a comprehensive plan is to define community-supported visions, goals, and objectives. Even if comprehensive plans include climate change mitigation, they are not generally on equal footing with other goals and objectives. Comprehensive plans (and thus zoning ordinances) generally prioritize economic goals that often compete with climate change mitigation and adaptation.

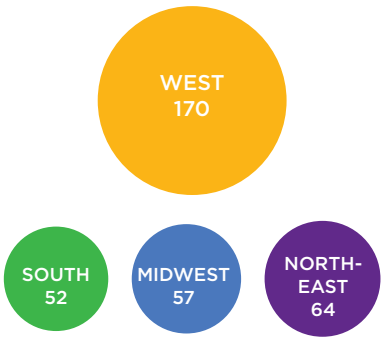
Secondly, many cities pursue a range of zoning "best practices" like Unified Development Ordinances/Codes, often with smart growth elements. These cities may feel as though they are sufficiently addressing climate change by requiring or incentivizing sustainable development.

Finally, planners might see the zoning ordinance as a tool ill-suited to the task of mitigating and adapting to climate change. Simply put, cities and planners do not yet seem to recognize climate change mitigation and adaptation as zoning best practices. A narrow view of the usefulness of zoning drives to the heart of what planners' roles are—and should be—in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Municipalities Moving Slow on Climate Action Plans

To study whether municipalities have been fighting climate change via comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances, Brett Peanasky compiled a list of 1,131 cities—in all but four states—that took some form of public action between 1991 and 2015. Of those cities, only 343 adopted climate action plans, with 31 percent located in California—resulting in a West-heavy portrait of regional sustainability.

CLIMATE ACTION PLANS, by region



SOURCE: BRETT PEANASKY/PLANNING AND LAW DIVISION

If urban policy makers view energy-efficient building design, for example, as more important than land-use changes to GHG emissions reductions, then planners are at risk of being squeezed out of meaningful roles in municipal adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Municipal efforts

I recently completed a study that assessed whether cities have sought to implement climate action through their comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances by compiling a list of 1,131 municipalities that have taken public action on climate change. As of March 2015, 343 of these cities had adopted and published climate action plans.

After removing cities that adopted climate action plans after 2012 (to account for the lag between the adoption of a climate action plan and the point at which

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a city may adopt recommended changes), I randomly ordered the remaining cities and selected a sample of 47 that had published a searchable climate plan, comprehensive plan, and zoning ordinance. I then searched for references to land-use planning or zoning, the comprehensive plans for references to climate change, and the zoning ordinances for references to climate change or GHG emissions.

Most of the sample cities consider land-use changes important to their climate action goals. In 79 percent of the cities, the plans present land-use recommendations or strategies. These strategies can, in general, be included under the umbrella of smart growth. The widespread inclusion of such strategies in climate action plans demonstrates that cities understand the need to reform their land-use planning practices and regulations to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

However, in the sample cities, climate action plans and comprehensive plans are generally not well integrated. Discussing climate change in a comprehensive plan is not as widely accepted—slightly less than half of the comprehensive plans discuss climate change. Only 45 percent of the cities recommend land-use or zoning changes in their climate action plans.

Unfortunately, not one of the 47 sample cities has explicitly integrated climate change into its zoning ordinance. No provisions in the studied zoning ordinances have codified a city's goals, whether stated in a climate action plan or a comprehensive plan, to mitigate or adapt to climate change or reduce GHG emissions. The fact that none of these zoning ordinances explicitly discusses climate change does not mean that cities never codify climate action plan recommendations in zoning ordinances, however.

To determine how often cities codify climate action recommendations in zoning ordinances, I examined in more detail the climate action plans and zoning ordinances of 10 cities in California. For each specific zoning recommendation in a city's climate action plan, I searched the city's zoning ordinance for a matching provision. These 10 cities implemented the proposed zoning action only 24 percent of the time. This demonstrates that policy makers are not very successful in translating the recommendations contained in climate action plans into zoning provisions, even when the climate action plan proposes specific zoning changes.

Promoting integrated plans

To reassert their relevance in this key area of municipal policy and regulation, planners must establish climate change mitigation and adaptation as at least equal goals (and ideally, the primary goals) in the comprehensive planning process and zoning ordinance. The current ideological and functional separation of climate action planning, comprehensive planning, and zoning rewriting prevents the full integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation into the zoning ordinance.

Cities could address this fundamental disconnect by beginning the comprehensive planning process with the GHG emissions analyses typically associated with climate action planning. The steps of climate action planning and comprehensive planning would then become cumulative; a GHG emissions inventory and target would provide inputs that lead to holistic and complementary outcomes in the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance. This unified process would reorient the ideology and philosophy of comprehensive planning and zoning in a way that prioritizes climate change mitigation and adaptation. The goal of the produced plan would be singular: to ensure that the community adequately reduces its contributions to global climate change and responds to the unavoidable local impacts of global climate change.

The comprehensive climate plan's singular purpose could lead to a number of modifications to the zoning ordinance. Initially, the plan would provide the municipality with the legal authority to state climate change mitigation and adaptation goals within the zoning ordinance's purpose clause, and would provide justification for stricter land-use controls. For example, development standards in the zoning ordinance could mandate that every development proposal demonstrates specifically how it would contribute to stated mitigation and adaptation targets. Similarly, a municipality threatened by sea-level rise would have a stronger basis for imposing waterfront setback and floodplain development restrictions or even exactions related to adaptation. Future research should examine such opportunities for zoning language and mechanisms in more detail.

While this process would emphasize land-use regulations, it would not foreclose the use of other strategies. In fact, the inclusion of climate mitigation and adaptation in a comprehensive climate plan could promote implementation of all strategies, as the plan presents a broadly supported vision. Perhaps more concerning is that a more integrated process would provide no guarantee that the city would make dramatic zoning changes. The hope is that by enshrining climate change mitigation and adaptation as the purpose of the comprehensive plan—and by extension the ordinance or zoning—communities will develop and enforce more restrictive regulations.

Municipal governments have other policy and regulatory tools at their disposal, such as building codes, renewable portfolio standards, and incentives for renewable energy generation. In addition, zoning cannot change present development patterns; growth, no matter how climate-sensitive, will still add GHG emissions to a municipality's total. Perhaps the real task for cities, then, is quantifying the GHG emissions reductions and adaptive benefits promised by various strategies and pursuing the most cost-effective among them. An integrated comprehensive climate plan would be a useful tool to guide such decision making. ■

—Brett Peanasky

Peanasky is an associate with Klehr Harrison Harvey Branzburg, LLP in Philadelphia. He was the APA Planning and Law Division Daniel J. Curtin, Jr. Fellow from 2014 to 2015. Another version of this article appeared in *Planning & Law*, the newsletter of APA's Planning and Law Division: tinyurl.com/y8tvuqpq.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission invited residents to share their ideas for healthier living on postcards displayed at a Camden public arts festival.

PHOTO COURTESY DELAWARE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Planning Equitable and Safe Routes to Healthy Food

PLANNING TOOLS

APA'S PLAN4HEALTH PROJECT includes 35 coalitions in 27 states working at the intersection of planning and public health. From the development of Indianapolis's first pedestrian plan to the launch of a healthy corner store program in Fort Worth, Texas, planners have engaged in strategies to increase access to healthy food and increase opportunities for physical activity.

While Plan4Health defines nutrition and active living as two separate focus areas, this distinction disappears in daily routines. If bus routes don't stop near supermarkets or if areas surrounding healthy corner stores don't feel safe, it's not any easier for community members to walk, bike, or access fruits and vegetables.

Recognizing that the challenges facing communities are interconnected, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership (saferoutespartnership.org) is working toward a holistic solution with hundreds of partners.

Their mission is a familiar one: "At the National Partnership, we see an opportunity to work together with our partners focused on food access to identify strategies that make it convenient and affordable for people to walk, bicycle, or take public transit to access nutritious foods at prices they can afford. We're calling the work of overcoming the transportation challenges to healthy food access Safe Routes to Healthy Food."

A lead with the Voices for Healthy Kids Community Consortium, the National Partnership has collaborated with The Food Trust to create a task force to co-develop the field of practice. APA's Planning and Community Health Center has joined Active Living by Design, ChangeLab Solutions, Prevention Institute—and many more—to recommend strategies for stakeholders to make it easier, safer, and more convenient for people to walk, bike, and take transit to where they access food.

The planning connection

While Safe Routes to Healthy Food is an exciting contribution to the healthy communities movement, what does this mean for planners? Amy Verbofsky, senior planner with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (dvrpc.org), shared her experiences working at the intersection of nutrition and physical activity with the task force, highlighting two key plans:

EQUITY THROUGH ACCESS. An update of the region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, Equity through Access (dvrpc.org/ETA) seeks to improve economic and social opportunity in the region by expanding access to essential services for vulnerable populations — those who are more critically impacted by barriers and gaps in infrastructure, service coordination, and policies.

CULTIVATING CAMDEN. As the Camden, New Jersey's food economy strategy, Cultivating Camden (dvrpc.org/reports/15058.pdf) seeks to build off existing assets by identifying opportunities to increase food access and economic opportunities in the city. It analyzes the current food system and food economy, acknowledging the challenges that residents face in accessing healthy food, while at the same time making recommendations to grow food as an economic sector; increase opportunities for food entrepreneurs; engage Camden's institutions; and support organizations already working to increase access to healthy food, health care, and job opportunities.

As DVRPC continued to work with other Campbell's Healthy Communities Investees to implement strategies from Cultivating Camden, they frequently heard from on-the-ground partners that transportation was a significant barrier

for many Camden residents in accessing healthy amenities like grocery stores, safe places to be active, and doctor's offices.

To better understand what people need to be healthy, where they go to be healthy, and the challenges they face in getting there, DVRPC hosted multiple workshops across Camden. Although a few Camden residents attended the workshops, the majority of participants were stakeholders who worked with residents.

DVRPC received good feedback from the workshops; however, they still wanted to ensure that residents currently experiencing challenges accessing healthy food had an opportunity to voice their concerns—and to propose solutions. Leveraging Camden Night Gardens, an annual nighttime public arts festival hosted by the city of Camden and Cooper's Ferry Partnership, DVRPC went to the community. Taking the time to connect directly with residents, the team listened to and learned from community members.

"It made such a difference for us to meet community members where they were and to integrate our efforts into an existing event. And, we tried to make things fun and accessible," says Verbofsky. "We had residents write ideas on postcards and then attached the postcards to a string of twinkle lights."

Integrating feedback from residents with responses from stakeholders, DVRPC identified a series of possible solutions to increase the number of safe routes to healthy food: Work with paratransit and employer shuttles, complete a sidewalk inventory, and develop a health element for the *Camden City Master Plan*.

"This is the type of planning we want," Verbofsky says, "planning that helps residents create the kind of communities *they* want." ■

—Elizabeth Hartig

Hartig is project associate for APA's Planning and Community Health Center. This story was developed in partnership with Marisa C. Jones, the healthy communities manager of Safe Routes to School National Partnership, and Amy Verbofsky, senior planner for the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Another version of this article appeared on APA's blog: planning.org/blog/blogpost/9131754/

HISTORY

'You had to howl like a gut-shot panther.'

—J. CLARK SALYER II (PICTURED BELOW) ON THE SECRET TO SECURING FEDERAL FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM.

The Father of the National Wildlife Refuge System

J. CLARK SALYER II is the unsung hero of American conservation efforts. As the head of the National Wildlife Refuge System, he increased the amount of federally protected wildlife habitats from 1.3 million acres in 1934 to nearly 30 million acres by the time he retired in 1964. While a national system of refuges was born out of ideas championed by President Theodore Roosevelt and his Boone and Crockett Club in the early 1900s, it was Salyer's unyielding tenacity and ability to navigate the politics of Washington that grew the NWRS into its current success.

Today, the NWRS protects 150 million acres of land and water, providing habitats for more than 380 threatened or endangered plants and animals.

COURTESY U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE VIA WIKIMEDIA

—Ben Leitschuh

Leitschuh is a community development specialist for DuPage County in Illinois.

RESOURCE FINDER

Providing and maintaining equitable access to healthy foods are vital to creating a healthy community.

APA RESOURCES

Recipe for Resiliency, Sheila Martin and Megan Horst
Planning, August/September 2017: planning.org/planning/2017/aug/recipeforresiliency

Eat Better, Move More, Work Together, Marya Morris, FAICP
Planning, February 2017: planning.org/planning/2017/feb/eatmovework

Community Food System Assessments, Kara Martin, AICP, and Tammy Morales
PAS Memo, November/December 2015: tinyurl.com/ya8natal

WEB RESOURCES

Mind the Gap: Using Public Transit to Connect Neighborhoods and Grocery Stores
Safe Routes to School National Partnership, 2017: tinyurl.com/yatfv6vl

Safe Routes to Healthy Food: Where Food Access and Active Travel Intersect
Safe Routes to School National Partnership webinar, 2016: tinyurl.com/y7psgqmj