EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Healthy Peel by Design Symposium was held on October 19, 2012 and attended by approximately 400 people. Regional and Municipal Senior Management and Councillors, staff from a range of Regional and Municipal departments, and community partners attended the symposium to learn of New York City’s (NYC) initiatives in creating a healthier city through design. Following the morning’s plenary sessions, the afternoon workshops provided participants with a chance to explore issues in more detail and to identify opportunities for creating a healthier Peel.

The epidemic of obesity reflects the normal response of normal people to an abnormal environment. Massive changes have occurred over time in the food environment while physical activity has disappeared from most daily activity. Currently, healthy choices are not the easy choices. While the challenge is large, it is not larger than those faced in the latter half of the 19th century when massive societal changes were required to address the infectious disease epidemics of that time. Design was used then through the use of building codes, planning and infrastructure to effectively improve the health of residents and these new policies were normalized into the fabric of cities. There is a similar need to address the leading causes of death and disability in modern society through the use of design.

There is a growing body of evidence for improving health through building, street and neighbourhood design that foster physical activity and healthy eating. That evidence is reinforced by the comprehensive set of initiatives pursued by NYC over the past eight years that have led to increases in cycling, stair use, public transit use, fruit and vegetable consumption and job creation in high needs areas with a concomitant decrease in traffic fatalities and traffic volumes. Furthermore, NYC has begun to see early signs of the reversal of childhood obesity trends.

The NYC experience illustrates the inter-agency collaboration required to achieve healthy design. The plenary presentations and workshops provided insights into the strategies and challenges in pursuing active design. Just as NYC needed to tailor what it learned from the successes in Copenhagen and other jurisdictions, Peel will similarly need to tailor strategies to its own context. To support this knowledge exchange, Peel Region will be working with the Center for Active Design, which is an organization that has grown out of an inter-disciplinary partnership among NYC agencies (http://centerforactive design.org/) and has mentored and continues to mentor communities throughout the United States and the world. Over the next year, the experts from NYC will be engaged to support application of their learning and experience for the benefit of Peel residents. Participants highlighted a number of opportunities...
to be pursued to harness the interest and enthusiasm demonstrated at the symposium. Now it’s time for action and we look forward to learning as we progress and work with NYC and our many partners to create more supportive environments for the health and wellbeing of Peel residents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge Dr. Brent Moloughney, Public Health Consultant, in the development of this summary report. We would also like to thank the experts from the City of New York who shared their insights on how they and others have created healthy food and active environments. We look forward to the continued consultation support that will build on the ideas outlined in this report.
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INTRODUCTION

Place clearly matters and Peel Region is determined to build healthy, active communities for all its residents. As part of the Healthy Peel by Design initiative, a symposium was hosted on October 19, 2012 to bring together a range of regional, municipal and external partners to hear experts from New York City (NYC) share their initiatives and insights into creating a healthier city. The purpose of this report is provide a summary of key points and identified opportunities for moving forward to create a healthy Peel, by design.

For reference, the slide decks from the symposium are available at: http://www.peelregion.ca/health/resources/healthbydesign/conf-presss-new.htm.

Structure of the Symposium

The day-long symposium was split into two main parts. In the morning, a series of plenary presentations provided an overview of how big of a health challenge we are facing; what are the causes behind this challenge and how design can be part of the solution.

In their welcoming remarks, Councillor Pat Saito and Mayor Hazel McCallion spoke to the importance of preventing chronic disease and the commitment of Council to support the changes needed to create a healthy environment and sustainable health-care system.

The impacts the built environment has on health was addressed by Peel’s Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David Mowat and Dr. Karen Lee, Adjunct Professor with the Schools of Public Health at the University of Toronto and University of Alberta, also the Director of Built Environment and Active Design at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. These presentations were then followed by an overview of NYC initiatives to improve health through the built environment.

The afternoon session was comprised of a series of small workshops with local regional and municipal staff, community partners and experts from NYC. The five workshops focused on specific aspects of the built environment providing an opportunity for participants to reflect on NYC’s experience and to identify potential opportunities for action in Peel. Experts from NYC, through the newly established Center for Active Design, will be working with Peel over the next year to support Peel’s efforts. A copy of the day’s agenda is provided in the Appendix.
MORNING SESSION

Greetings and Welcome

Regional Councillor Pat Saito welcomed participants to the symposium on behalf of the Region of Peel highlighting the collective concern for rates of obesity and diabetes in Peel, and the interest in learning from NYC’s successful experience. Councillors and Commissioners recognize the need to make the prevention of obesity a priority, specifically as it is a Term of Council Priority. Achieving this will require the involvement of a diverse range of fields, elected officials and community groups and these groups are represented among the symposium’s participants.

In her opening remarks, Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion stressed the importance of learning from both the positive and negative experiences of others. She highlighted the changes that have occurred over time in how people live their lives. While these changes have brought many benefits, they have also brought with them adverse effects on people’s health. Mayor McCallion emphasized that the changes being proposed are needed for people to be healthy and to sustain our health-care system.

Health Perspective
Supportive Environments for Healthy Living

Dr. David L. Mowat, Medical Officer of Health
Region of Peel – Public Health

Dr. David Mowat, the Region of Peel’s Medical Officer of Health, welcomed symposium participants by highlighting the many people who are already involved and concerned about the built environment and its relationship to health. He welcomed the involvement of colleagues from NYC so that symposium participants could learn from and be inspired by their efforts and success to date.

The motivation for hosting this symposium, Dr. Mowat explained, is the extent of the problem faced by Peel and other regions across Canada. In Peel, over half of the adult population is overweight or obese. One in 10 people currently have diabetes and it is projected to increase to one in six by 2025 if no change occurs. Half to two thirds of children in Peel are not fit. This situation poses a major risk to the health of current and future generations. In response, Peel Public Health will be presenting its strategy to Regional Council in order to create supportive environments for health in Peel. The key theme of this strategy is ‘changing course’ to respond to the massive changes that have
occurred over time in the food environment and in the removal of physical activity from most aspects of people’s lives.

The obesity epidemic reflects the normal response of normal people to an abnormal environment. In Peel at the current time, the healthy choices are not the easy choices – and this needs to change. Due to the myriad of influences on daily life, the extent of the challenge is large. However, the challenge is no larger than those faced in the latter half of the 19th century when massive societal changes were required to address the infectious disease epidemics of that time. Neither the magnitude of the challenge nor the length of time it will take to address the challenge, should stop us from taking action. Many of the great works in human history were started by those who knew they would not see the project’s completion. The foundation is being built now and Peel Public Health is looking forward to learning more about NYC’s experiences and working with others to seek more supportive environments for health.

Introduction to Successful Initiatives in New York City and Elsewhere

Dr. Karen Lee, Adjunct Professor, Schools of Public Health, University of Toronto and University of Alberta; Also, Director of Built Environment and Active Design, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Dr. Karen Lee, Adjunct Professor with the Schools of Public Health at the University of Toronto and University of Alberta, also the Director of Built Environment and Active Design at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, highlighted that while people make resolutions every year to eat healthier or be more physically active, they often fail. A key reason is that the environment that people live in makes it difficult to make the healthy choice. The value of using design to address today’s health epidemics is supported by the success that was achieved by our predecessors. In the 19th century, building codes, planning and infrastructure were used as weapons against the massive epidemics of infectious diseases. These policies for water, sanitation, housing, zoning, and public transportation were effective and were built into the city fabric. The 21st century epidemic of chronic diseases caused by physical inactivity and unhealthy eating will also need to be addressed by changes in design. To be effective, they will have to be an invisible, pervasive and an inevitable part of life.
To a large degree, today’s epidemic of chronic diseases can be thought of as “diseases of energy” as a result of too many calories in and not enough being used by activity. Over the past eight years, NYC has been working on how to translate what is known about the causes of chronic diseases into non-health strategies and policies to support health. There is a growing body of evidence for improving health through building, street and neighbourhood design. This includes increasing stair use, improving street safety and aesthetics, having sidewalks and bike paths connect to destinations, incorporating mixed land use and high population density into city plans to increase physical activity. Efforts to influence the food environment have been initiated in order to increase access to healthy foods and beverages, decrease exposure to unhealthy foods and beverages, and provide point-of-decision information where foods are selected and purchased.

Since public health does not directly build our buildings, streets or neighbourhoods it is critical to create partnerships with those who do. Finding synergies and co-benefits among partners and finding common ground on their perspectives is critical. For example, having biking or walking paths for active transportation to work, school and shops not only supports increased physical activity, but also reduces fuel and electricity use and improves air quality. Co-benefits can also be identified for stair use, active recreation, safe tap water and fresh produce (see Table 1).

Table 1: Co-Benefits of Active Design: Improve the Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fuel / Electricity Use</th>
<th>Air Quality / Landfill</th>
<th>Obesity/Diabetes/Heart Disease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biking or walking rather than automotive transport</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stairs rather than elevators and escalators</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active recreation rather than television</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe tap water rather than bottled and canned beverages</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh produce rather than unhealthy processed foods</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There are also additional benefits including:

- Reducing infrastructure costs for water and sewer lines and road lanes with more compact, walkable development patterns.
- Saving people money by reducing personal transportation costs when living in walkable, transit-rich neighbourhoods.
- Creating more desirable places to live, work and play.
Emphasis needs to be on using evidence-based strategies, using annual conferences to highlight successes (e.g., Fit City Conferences), and encouraging peer-to-peer partnerships and mentoring among municipalities. Currently, 14 other cities in the U.S. are involved in a built environment and health partnership. Among these, the most common inter-governmental partners include public health, planning, and transportation.

Table 2 summarizes the comprehensive set of NYC initiatives and the impacts observed to date. Improvements have been observed in a wide variety of behaviour and injury outcomes and initial indications of a reversal in childhood obesity trends are now being observed.

Table 2: NYC Initiatives and Impacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NYC Initiatives</th>
<th>Example Components</th>
<th>Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Improving Children’s Environments       | Introduced and improved child-care regulations for physical activity time, healthier foods and beverages, limits to TV | ↑ fruit and vegetable consumption  
↑ Initial indications of a reversal of childhood obesity trends |
|                                         | Improved school foods and beverages (added salad bars, water jets, 1% milk)         |                                                                        |
|                                         | Increased physical activity opportunities in schools (replaced auditoriums with gymatoriums, added school playstreets, trained teachers to add physical activity throughout the day) |                                                                        |
| Improving Food and Beverage Environments | Inacted laws banning trans fats, requiring calorie postings and limiting sugary drink sizes in restaurants | ↑ fruit and vegetable consumption  
↑ job creation in high needs areas through new supermarket development |
|                                         | Increased tap water drinking facilities in municipal buildings and public places     |                                                                        |
|                                         | Introduced tax and zoning incentives for supermarkets in food deserts               |                                                                        |
|                                         | Increased access to farmers markets                                               |                                                                        |
|                                         | Adopted food standards for foods served at and by city agencies                    |                                                                        |
| Improving Environments for Physical Activity | Developed and implementing Active Design Guidelines                            | ↑ commuter cycling (289%)  
↑ bus and subway ridership (10%)  
↑ stair use with prompts in city buildings; 40% increase at 9 mos in 10-story low-income housing  
↓ traffic fatalities (40%)  
↓ traffic volumes (2.4%)  
↓ car registrations (5%) |
|                                         | Posted “Burn Calories, Not Electricity” stair prompts (30,000 distributed to commercial and residential buildings) |                                                                        |
|                                         | Improved urban realm for walking, cycling, transit                                |                                                                        |
|                                         | Increased children’s play spaces and co-located adult recreation spaces (schoolyards to playgrounds; summer streets and community play streets) |                                                                        |

NYC Initiatives to Improve Health through the Built Environment

David Burney, Commissioner
New York City Department of Design and Construction

Skye Duncan, International Urban Design Consultant
Also, Associate Urban Designer at the Office of the Chief Urban Designer, New York City Department of City Planning

Wendy Feuer, Assistant Commissioner for Urban Design and Art
New York City Department of Transportation

In this panel session, experts from NYC described their initiatives in greater detail.

David Burney, the Commissioner for NYC Department of Design and Construction, focused on the history of active design in NYC. He noted that the obesity epidemic is a global phenomenon. While the contexts of one city are different from another, the issues are fundamentally the same. When you look at it from the people-scale level – where people live, how they get from their home to work, how they get to recreation – the issues are really the same. Similarly from a planning perspective, it is the same urban planning issues, the same urban design, the same public health issues experienced in New York and in Peel.

Action to address active design emerged from looking at the extent of the problem of obesity that NYC faced and the quality of city life in order to attract and retain talent in the city. Health and the built environment need to be addressed locally, because it is unlikely to happen any other way.

As they began to understand the link between the built environment and the public’s health, they saw that as designers, they could make a difference. They realized they had been complicit in contributing to a sedentary lifestyle and therefore obesity, but more importantly that they could now be part of the solution. In fact, there were already a number of synergies between what they had already been doing – working to update transportation policy for complete streets, reduce congestion, and expand universal design – and the types of interventions needed to support health.

NYC’s department of design and construction was already working with the department of transportation to create policy supporting the complete streets program. They started to see a coming together of different policies that end up arriving at the same
place. The department of transportation is interested in the movement of people and began to understand that it wasn’t just about cars but we needed to reduce congestion and improve air quality by getting people walking and cycling and have a more complete street. And of course at the same time it leads to the public health benefits on the obesity side.

NYC was already committed to universal design making environments barrier-free and accessible for all. But it’s not just about the disabled but the parents with the stroller, the elderly. The elderly, for example, will walk more if the route that they are taking is barrier free and there are benches for resting.

Once again NYC staff saw synergies between what they were doing in terms of universal design and health policy.

The Fit City Conferences provided an opportunity to bring in academics and a range of professionals creating evidence-based design that is reflected in the Active Design Guidelines (ADG). An increasing number of partners from public and private sector have become involved. There was commitment from at all levels of NYC, from the Mayor’s office to staff-level professionals who began to see opportunities for positive outcomes. Both of these aspects allowed the creation of an inter-agency task force to cut across the departmental silos. Now, as NYC designs public buildings, they are reviewing every aspect for addressing the evidence-based strategies in the ADG. Many of these strategies are either “cost neutral” or can be implemented at very little cost.

*Skye Duncan*, an International Urban Design Consultant and also an Associate Urban Designer at the Office of the Chief Urban Planning at the NYC Department of City Planning, spoke of the policies and regulations that shape the built environment. These decisions provide the parameters within which communities are designed, built and cultivated. Key points included:

- As an urban area evolves and changes, so must our thinking, our regulations and our policies. NYC’s last design change was 50 years ago, in response to the automobile.
- In making changes we can be:
  - proactive in planning, designing and shaping the built environment; and/or;
  - reactive in reviewing or evaluating projects.
In order to make the necessary changes we need to:

- borrow and share from others to adapt and morph ideas into what makes sense for Peel; and
- recognize the different stakeholders and what they have at stake and look at the tools and mechanisms that are at hand to help shape change.

Changing policies can be challenging – it can take a long time to change policy and it make take years to see the benefits. However, without change, our current problems will only get worse.

Both Peel and NYC are planning for significant growth. In anticipation of the growth in their city, NYC was interested in “smart growth” thereby focusing the development of growth to be near public transit access and to create “complete neighbourhoods” with an interest to blend housing for all, businesses, local retail and open space. The toolbox of policy mechanisms includes:

- Incentivising certain practices (e.g., increased density near transit; fresh food access, public plazas, affordable housing, urban arts and culture).
- Protecting desired features: preserve neighbourhoods with distinct character; preserve multi-store and active retail character where it exists.
- Adopting a mandate in which proposed development must comply with these requirements in order to move forward with building (e.g., adding street trees, greening of commercial parking lots, ensuring waterfronts are publicly accessible, integrating residential streetscape); as well as providing relief from mandates (e.g., providing discounts on developer fees when they are required to have bicycle parking). Allowing and encouraging desirable elements (e.g., awnings and signage; sidewalk cafes; ground floor residential uses).
- Removing impediments. Sometimes regulations were adopted long ago and are now outdated (e.g., segregated land uses and excessive parking requirements) and should be replaced by regulations that support car share; allow green buildings.
- Establishing and supporting design guidelines: privately owned public spaces (seating variety, trees, groundcover, lighting, etc.).
- Partnering with other agencies and jurisdictions.

Regardless of the scale of the project, it is always about people coming first and to judge projects (whether skyscrapers or sidewalks) from the pedestrians’ perspective.

Wendy Feuer, Assistant Commissioner for Urban Design and Art at the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT), emphasized that “it’s not impossible to change a city”. NYC faced traffic gridlock, overcrowded sidewalks, and a projected increase in population of a million more people. The City’s strategic plan, PlaNYC, speaks of “re-imagining” the public realm to improve public spaces throughout the city. This involves a paradigm
Median refuge islands are used to reduce crossing distances in large intersections. A general principle is that if we make it safer for seniors, people with disabilities and children to get around, it will be safer for everyone.

The net result has been a reduction in traffic fatalities and increases in bus ridership and commuter cycling (see table 2).

shift. Instead of moving cars, they are moving people, and treating streets as public spaces for all users.

The City’s form is being transformed in various ways by the Department of Transportation (DOT) including capturing underused, confusing or dangerous spaces and transforming them into pedestrian-friendly spaces. The plan involves creating or enhancing a public plaza in every community to create safe and attractive spaces for walking and sitting. Times Square is the largest example and was initially implemented as a pilot to test if it worked and to ease concerns around issues like lost profitability, pedestrian safety, and traffic congestion. The premise is that if people feel safer they will be more active. To encourage cycling, the City is developing interconnected bikeways (with physical barriers and secure bike parking) and promoting their use.

Other changes that have been pursued include:

- Making public transit the easy, fast and pleasant option. Building a transit infrastructure that people use, means creating a Bus Rapid Transit system for more convenient and faster travel. Bus ridership has gone up; while the time it takes to get where you’re going has gone down.
- Installing attractive and sheltered seating to encourage bus use.
- Advertising what we are doing to improve traffic flow (e.g., bike promotion campaigns).
- Installing a wayfinding system to make it easier for pedestrians and cyclists get around the city.
- Making walking and bike routes more inviting. Use urban art program to create attractive corridors, enliven plazas, activate public space and green the streetscape;
- Running marketing campaigns that encourage pedestrian safety (urging pedestrians to “Look!” before crossing and motorists to drive slower).
- Engaging the community to enliven their spaces by: painting protective bike barriers so that it an attractive part of the city; and identifying streets to be closed for pedestrian use and events and locations for plazas and slow zones.
- Using community programming to attract people to public spaces (e.g., plazas like Times Square and summer street closures for events and easy pedestrian access to shop and street vendors).
Key Discussion Points: NYC Initiatives to Improve Health through the Built Environment

Following the panellists presentations, there was an opportunity to take questions from the floor. Key points included the following:

**Change in Perspective**
- Take the pedestrian-cyclist perspective. We need to get out into the community and walk the streets and sidewalks to see the opportunities (e.g., plant trees along sides of streets; add median refuge islands). Pedestrians need to have something interesting to look at every 9 meters (30 feet) to keep them engaged, otherwise walking becomes a monotonous experience and they are more likely to drive.
- Think outcome not square feet - growth provides opportunity. Development is not just about how many square feet we need, the first question should be what type of place are we trying to create; in many places in Peel where development is coming, engaging in active design planning now could be quite transformative for the future.

**Prepare for Change**
- Dialogue with key partners: the health evidence exists, but public health doesn’t make buildings, streets and neighbourhoods or the amenities within them. In NYC, we started with a conference like this one to share ideas among many partners and explore how we can reach the types of desired changes and policies and realize those ideas through continued partnership.
- Empower designers through training: Provide training and guidelines for designers to pursue healthy designs.
- Involve people in the solution: Engage community members to help them identify how their built environments can be improved to support the health of their community. For example, involve students in planning for active transportation to schools.

**Implement and Maintain**
- Consider costs: Consider using design guidelines that are more or less cost neutral.
- Prepare for resistance and stay the course for acceptance: There may be initial discomfort with proposed changes; this is normal. If you push through with the change, there is typically acceptance and people over time come to like the things they originally opposed. In the interim, prepare for the resistance, you may need to conduct surveys, address myths, pilot to test and reassure, measure to assess impacts, etc.
AFTERNOON SESSION

The afternoon session was structured into a series of breakout workshops for regional and municipal staff and partners to hear additional details from NYC staff and discuss potential opportunities for projects to pursue in Peel.

Workshop: Healthy Land-Use Planning and Transportation Infrastructure

Moderator  
Gary Kocialek  
Area Lead - Transportation Planning for the Region of Peel

Assistant Moderator/ Panellists  
Haiqing Xu  
Manager of Policy & Sustainability, Development Approval and Planning Policy Department for the Town of Caledon

Henrik Zbogar  
Acting Director of Planning Policy and Growth Management, Design & Development Department for the City of Brampton

Wendy Alexander  
Director of Transportation and Infrastructure Planning for the City of Mississauga

NYC Presenters  
Skye Duncan  
International Urban Design Consultant  
Also, Associate Urban Designer at the Office of the Chief Urban Designer, New York City Department of City Planning

Wendy Feuer  
Assistant Commissioner for Urban Design and Art, New York City Department of Transportation

Presentation Key Points

Skye Duncan

The presentation by Skye Duncan discussed the framework for the *Active Design Guidelines* (ADG) to promote physical activity and health in design, as well as the aligning of NYC policies from a zoning and planning perspective.

The ADG were a collaborative undertaking between four NYC departments: design, planning, transportation and health. Evidence was central to the development of the ADG with each of the included strategies marked with an icon indicating whether the level of supporting evidence is strong, emerging, or best practice.*
As shown in the Figure, the ADG are divided into four mutually supporting chapters.

**Environmental Design and Health: Past and Present**
- We have used design before to address epidemics
- In 19th century, building codes, planning and infrastructure were used as weapons against the massive epidemics of infectious diseases.
- Policies for water, sanitation, housing, zoning and public transportation were effective and were built into the city fabric
- 21st century epidemic of chronic diseases will also need to be addressed by changes in design

**Urban Design: Creating an Active City**
- Land use mix: rich mix of uses; promote local walking, supermarkets, farmers’ markets
- Parks/play areas/plazas: active utilization; design for local cultures and age groups; mix of trees, lighting, fountains, movable/fixed seating
- Pedestrian environment safe and attractive spaces for walking and sitting; median refuge islands; street cafes; public art in streetscapes
- Bicycle network and infrastructure; bicycle parking; interconnected bikeways
- Transit access: attractive/sheltered seating; separate bus lanes

**Building Design: Creating Opportunities for Daily Physical Activity**
- Bicycle parking and storage
- Recreational programming
- Stairs: accessibility, visibility, convenience
- Stairs: aesthetics, natural daylight, art
- Stairs: signage and prompts
- Building exteriors: maximize variety, detail, texture and continuity

**Synergies with Sustainable and Universal Design**
- Accessibility goals
- Improve the environment
- Strengthen economy
- Job creation
- Preference of people to live in compact communities
- LEED Physical Activity Innovation Credit

*Definitions:

**Strong evidence**: Indicates design strategies are supported by evidence concluding a direct relationship between the suggested built environment change and increased physical activity.

**Emerging evidence**: Indicates design strategies are supported by an emerging pattern of research, but the research is not yet definitive.

**Best practice**: Indicates design strategies are supported by theory, common understanding of behaviour and practice experience.
To align the ADG with existing and newer City policies, New York City has participated in a variety of activities including:

- Adding a public health chapter in the 2011 update to PlaNYC (the City’s strategic plan).
- Using zoning and tax incentives to increase access to fresh produce through the FRESH (Food Retail Expansion to Support Health) initiative.
- Zoning and discounting developer costs for bicycle floor areas to provide safe and secure bicycle parking.
- Revising outdated guidelines to encourage privately owned public spaces to have more trees, lighting, signage, groundcover, seating options etc. to make it more people-friendly.
- Releasing a new comprehensive waterfront plan that recognizes multiple demands and uses, but identifies specific goals for expanding public access, enlivening the waterfront and supporting the working waterfront, etc.
- Creating more opportunities for active frontage of buildings and continuous sidewalk, on-street parking, and street trees.
- Removing old zoning impediments by establishing a definition of, and rules for, the quantity and location of car sharing.
- Working with surrounding communities to develop liveable communities and growth centres around the region’s commuter rail network.

Wendy Feuer

Wendy Feuer discussed the use of active design to create a safer, active and healthy city. Guided by PlaNYC and the “reimagining” of the city to create world class streets, the Department of Transportation (DOT) has a series of strategic goals to drive their actions. While NYC was influenced by what they saw in Copenhagen, they recognized the need to apply concepts to the NYC context. Peel will need to do the same tailoring for its context.

**“Reimagining” a City**

A key paradigm shift has been in redefining what a street is and what it is going to be. Streets are not simply for vehicles, but are a form of public space requiring

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**Department of Transportation Strategic Goals:**

- Cut annual traffic fatalities by 50% (from 2007 level)
- Implement system of rapid bus lines
- Double bicycle commuting in five years (2007-2012)
- Institute complete-street design policy
- Institute programs to treat streets as public space
- Reduce agency energy and vehicle use.
consideration of cyclists and pedestrians. A *Street Design Manual* establishes a design for “liveability” and is the standard against which NYC assesses designs.

**Designing a Safe City**

Safety is a primary concern. This is reflected in the creation of “slow zones” and public education campaigns to encourage slower speeds for pedestrian safety and efforts to increase pedestrian awareness (“Look!” campaign available at [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/look.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/look.shtml)). To increase bicycle use, cyclists need to feel safe for themselves and their bicycles. This has resulted in the establishment of physically protected bikeways and well designed bike racks to secure bikes.

**Designing an Active City**

Under-utilized space is being converted into community plazas. Communities are involved in applying for a plaza, just as they are to have a “slow zone.” The DOT builds them and the community is responsible to maintain and program them. Programming is an important aspect to support people coming out to enjoy spaces. Similarly, the DOT provides paint to community groups each year to paint the “jersey barriers” protecting bike lanes. Other initiatives include the creation of “summer streets” whereby a street is closed for pedestrians and cyclists. “Pop-up” cafes on the sidewalk are also allowed for six months of the year.

**Creating Healthy Outcomes by Design**

There is a strong culture at NYC of being data driven. Proposed changes are seen as a risk and consequently are met with opposition. To reduce the fear of risk and gain acceptance, many projects are initially implemented as pilots to demonstrate the positive outcomes and to show that the catastrophic predictions did not occur. For example, the creation of the large plaza at Times Square met considerable resistance from the business community and drivers. However, the data showed that not only did travel times and air quality improve but there was also an increase in retail shopping.

Overall, with changes implemented to-date, NYC has seen:

- Increase in annual bicycle counts of 109% (2006-2010)
- Motorist injuries down 64%
- Pedestrian injuries down 35%
- 70% of theatre-goers say the plazas have had a positive impact on their experience
- Improvement in local travel time (15% on 6th Ave. and 4% on 7th Ave.)
- Increase in average urban bus speeds.
Points Raised in Discussion

- Encouraging Walking by Design
  - Develop design criteria to make it easier and more pleasant for people to choose walking instead of driving. While one aspect is to link walking to a destination, great streets and sidewalks are a destination in themselves.
  - Consider the following questions when planning a residential neighbourhood:
    - What needs to be there as a destination (e.g., park or school)?
    - Are there any impediments to putting in a café or store? If so, how can these be addressed?
    - What are the implications for land use? A critical density is required for local stores to survive.
  - Think about the underlying assumptions to modelling and urban design:
    - Modelling should be based on what we want to happen. It should not be based on supporting trends generated by background data (i.e., more and more cars), but on achieving a vision of less cars, more pedestrians, and better health. All NYC models based on the latter in their strategic vision, goals, etc.
    - Good urban design should result in a net positive impact not just avoid a significant negative impact (e.g., not simply add more car parking because there will be more people and cars).

- Supporting Voluntary Guidelines, such as Active Design Guidelines (ADG)
  - Take advantage of opportunities to apply the ADG in public properties such as municipal buildings, fire halls, schools, library etc. (e.g., link the ADG to the Request for Proposal form and use the ADG as a checklist to measure the quality of the proposal.
  - Encourage the use of the ADG in the development of private properties by:
    - training municipal planning staff who are reviewing proposals;
    - negotiating design changes if a proposal seeks change to land use – the earlier these conversations occur the better;
    - increasing awareness of the ADG (promote and add incentives like the LEED active design credit); and
    - providing strong senior leadership support to communicate that project approval depends upon good design.
Using Design to Support Access to Fresh Food
- Increase access to fresh foods through the development of greenhouses, green roofs, urban farming, etc.
- Promote farmers’ markets in different neighbourhoods and introduce green carts (an initiative to sell fresh food instead of less healthy choices, such as hot dogs, on streets and street corners).
- See the Food Environment Policy Workshop for further details.

Designing for the Suburban Context
Peel has some significant challenges. The model we have now is not working and if we don’t change, we will continue to create communities that support sedentary lifestyles and obesity. To take up this challenge, we need to:
- Rethink suburbs, rethink the malls and recreate small main streets.
- Consider transportation in conjunction with planning. Peel’s transit system (e.g., GO train hubs, bus rapid transit and considerations for light rail transit) contains important opportunities for making decisions about density around transit nodes with the potential for walking, biking and public transit acting as a system for getting around.
- Plan and create higher density developments. The good news is that Peel isn’t starting from nothing. The Mount Pleasant development in Peel is a promising example of a higher density development that includes a town square. But, it has been an un-replicated pilot with some initial challenges that will require additional support. Replication of this type of development will also require federal funding and a willing land owner.

Addressing Status Quo, Standards, and Safety Concerns
Cities change. Decades-old standards may no longer be relevant. Through evidence, research, and pilot testing, we can do things differently and make positive changes. Some steps to start that change include:
- Questioning ‘why’ something can’t be done. Standards often provide some flexibility for tailoring (e.g., developing narrower roads to create more room for bike lanes is within standards, so if we can make it safe, we can do it.)
- Showing how design changes can create safer environment for pedestrians, increase cycling and improve traffic flow.
- Involving the community is important to see what it is they want and using that input to inform decision making in areas they want to see changes (e.g., community plazas, slow zones, summer streets).
Emerging/Expanding Areas of Work - Healthy Land-Use Planning and Transportation

Two project ideas for further consideration emerging from the workshop included:

- Working with NYC, using local case studies, to develop design guidelines specific to suburban issues.
- Reviewing and updating existing policies and codes related to land-use and transportation infrastructure for Peel.
Workshop: Food Environment Policy

Moderator  
Sandra Almeida  
Healthy Eating Supervisor for the Region of Peel Public Health

NYC Presenters  
Candace Young  
Senior Associate with The Food Trust. Former Director of Physical Activity and Nutrition at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

**Presentation Key Points**

There has been a significant shift in the past decade from a focus on individual behaviour to addressing the environmental context that has been driving the obesity epidemic. The challenge is how to translate what we know is a healthy diet (e.g., dietary guidelines) into policy that makes it easier for people to eat healthy, flavourful foods. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend several possible strategies.

### Recommended Food-Related Strategies to Prevent Obesity (CDC 2009)

- Increase availability of affordable and healthier food and beverage choices in public venues
- Restrict availability of less healthy foods and beverages in public venues
- Institute smaller portion sizes in public venues
- Discourage sugar-sweetened beverage consumption
- Reduce agency energy and vehicle use.

NYC has pursued a wide range of interventions including:

- Requiring calorie counts to be displayed on menus.
- Child-care legislation for food served to children.
- Increasing public access to healthy foods – support of farmers’ markets, incentives for supermarkets, green food carts, subsidies for purchase of fresh produce, outreach to corner store owners.
- Restricting portion size of sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Creating a policy to improve the food provided and sold in public buildings.

Policy interventions need to be evidence-based, effective, feasible, and implementable with a scale depending on time, funding level and willing/available partners. There are several overarching policy questions to consider.
The presentation outlined five main phases of food procurement policy: background, policy development, policy adoption, implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation. The CDC has produced a highly useful guidance document on using standards for food purchased, provided, or made available by a government entity.

There remains the opportunity of tailoring standards to particular populations (e.g., preschool, school, etc.).

NYC started with the school setting. They not only looked at the foods being purchased and served but made the commitment to elevate the food service itself (e.g., training and support in food preparation, recipes). They looked product by product to identify cost neutral changes (e.g., white bread → at least 50% whole wheat; 2% chocolate milk → skim chocolate; etc.).

Policy development needs a core team of staff from public health and other departments who will implement or be affected by the policy as well as representatives from executive office and purchasing/procurement department. Strong executive leadership is critical. A workgroup or advisory committee is needed that is comprised of food contractors, food service vendors; subcontractors/agencies that provide food; and representatives from the community (e.g., advocacy organizations, health-care providers and nutritionists, parents, community members affected by health disparities).

There are a range of possible mechanisms to establish the policy. In some instances, the Board of Health was able to pass administrative regulations under the Health Code (e.g., regulate trans fat and restaurant menu labelling). In the case of the food procurement policy for municipal business and properties, the NYC Mayor issued an Executive Order addressing:

- Standards for meals/snacks purchased and served by City agencies
- Standards for beverage vending machines contracted by City agencies
- Standards for food vending machines on City property
Drafting the policy is the first step; it must be supported with a good implementation plan which includes working with settings, providing training, testing and provision of recipes. Overall, NYC required approximately 1.5 to 2 FTEs to support their food procurement policy work.

Following a decade of work, NYC has begun to observe some first steps of improvement in obesity trends. However, it is not practical to rely on tracking BMI to monitor and evaluate policy interventions. The types of indicators used for procurement policies include:

- monitoring changes in food choices and vending machine contents (starting with baseline data on existing food choices);
- tracking levels of nutrients in meals served (e.g., a nutritional analysis of menus);
- measuring changes in types of purchases and costs;
- recording program costs (e.g., time, money, and materials spent to implement the policy); and
- measuring changes in the health of participants.

The political will of the Mayor and the involvement of the interagency task force were important driving forces. While City-owned and/or operated facilities account for a small percentage of the food environment, the success NYC has had in making changes to their own facilities has set a positive example for other settings (such as hospitals and worksites) that have begun to adopt the changes voluntarily.

**Points Raised in Discussion**

- **Incentives versus Restrictions**
  - There is evidence for using both incentives and restrictions. To create and implement a food environment policy that supported the national dietary standards, NYC:
    - Created opportunities for buying fresh, healthy, flavourful foods by introducing green carts; engaging corner stores to provide healthy foods.
    - Reduced access to unhealthy foods (e.g., beverage vending standard restricts serving size, number of choices, portion size of sugar-sweetened beverages in restaurants; setting maximum amount for sodium; restricting trans fats food). Other cities are looking at regulating corner stores for what they could sell and advertise.
Importance of Data
To inform program decisions, NYC:
- Created maps showing patterns of disease, behaviour and health determinants to address the areas of highest need. These areas were prioritized for placing local public health offices to build connection to community and for providing interventions to those areas (e.g., green-cart vendors, supermarket development supports, etc.).
- Captured baseline data to understand the issue to inform intervention, to gain support, and to track changes following policy implementation. Types of indicators municipalities might consider include changes in:
  - portion size;
  - food formulation (e.g., reduction in trans fat);
  - sales data (e.g., changes in types of purchases);
  - food access (e.g., number/location of farmer markets);
  - food items being served (e.g., healthier food choices offered in vending machines); and
  - consumer behaviours.

Compliance:
NYC tailored their approach for enforcing food environment policy to different groups and interventions.
- Incorporated compliance checks within existing restaurant inspections for specific interventions (e.g., trans fat ban).
- Assisted City agencies in incorporating products that meet the standards into contracts. There was an expectation of adherence since the executive order came from the Mayor; therefore the focus has been assisting agencies to adopt the changes.

As a result of increased public demand for products that meet the trans fat regulation, there has been a trickle down effect on the entire supply chain. For example, now that calorie labelling is required in some restaurants, some food chains are taking initiative to promote healthier options on their menu (e.g., ‘skinny menu’).
Corner Stores and Grocery Stores:
NYC is developing a report to address in-store marketing in grocery stores. The food industry already knows what works and the intent is to utilize these principles (price, promotion, product and placement) to guide healthier food choices.

Other NYC activities in this area include having:
- Created an outreach strategy to corner stores whose owners are typically approachable since their attitude is that if it sells, they will stock it.
- Involved different tiers for support depending upon how many and what types of products are sold. In some areas, local school children have become involved in adopting a local store and advocating for a healthy snack shelf.

Schools:
In NYC, there is a close working and structural relationship between the Departments of Health and Education which helped them make significant changes in the schools food environment. Some considerations when improving the food environment in schools include:
- Changing the school cafeteria means more than changing the food it includes updating cafeteria staff uniform to look more professional (includes chef hat), advertising health messages and cool foods on overhead screens; and addressing the set up in cafeterias to nudge the healthier option (e.g., fruit and vegetables promoted as first options; marketing healthier choices; placing healthier choice products at eye level).
- Engaging youth is an important strategy – helping kids understand where food comes from (e.g., community gardens), encouraging healthy choices in local stores, and testing recipes on kids are effective strategies to increase student buy-in.
- Keeping initial steps for food procurement cost neutral helps to make it successful. There may be slightly increased costs to comply for contractors, but the sizes of the contracts are so large that it is still worthwhile and profitable. To support greater fruit and vegetable content have increased subsidy funding by a small amount per meal, and provided training and recipes that work for providing food on a large scale.
- Exploring opportunities to involve key stakeholders. One idea is to engage designers in finding solutions to the challenges we face in the food environment (e.g., sponsoring a design competition to spark new ideas and new ways of designing).
Emerging/Expanding Areas of Work – Food Environment Policy

Potential project ideas for further consideration emerging from the workshop included:

- Continuing to support the Province’s School Food and Beverage Policy in Peel Region.

- Implementing the Council Resolution regarding food sold/served in regional buildings.

- Looking at other areas where food policies could be introduced (e.g., recreation centres).

- Exploring potential food and physical activity policies for child-care centres.
NYC has been pursuing active design since 2006. Leadership from the Mayor and the Health Commissioner were critical. With improving health as the underlying driver, political decisions were based on numbers, economics, and the ability to have strategies that would have positive health outcomes. The Fit City Conferences were an opportunity to identify and address barriers to issues and celebrate successes. Interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration have been essential since we all have to work on this together.

The Active Design Guidelines (ADG) were a product of the Fit City Conferences where it became clear that people were dealing with a similar set of issues. The creation of the ADG helped to raise the level of discussion and was a key strategy to market the concepts. Most recently, the Centre for Active Design (http://centerforactivedesign.org/) has been established to better support dissemination of concepts across the U.S. and the world.

The ADG are just the start and NYC is currently developing a series of accompanying documents to provide more direction on ‘how-to’ achieve the things we aspire to and what steps we need to implement, etc. The first document, which was prepared by Johns Hopkins’ School of Public Health, is on injury prevention. The next document will focus on the design of sidewalks (to be released in 2013 with others to follow).

There are several inter-related building design strategies. By applying these strategies to municipal buildings, we can gain experience with pragmatic challenges and demonstrate the “doability” of these strategies.
Stairs are critically important and are one of the easier ways to get people moving and achieve a quick win. Every building over a single story has stairs and stair use alone can be sufficient to improve health.

- Just 2 minutes (about 6 floors) of stair climbing a day burns enough calories to prevent average U.S. adult annual weight gain.
  

- Men climbing 20-34 flights of stairs per week have a 29% lower risk of stroke.
  

Over time, stairs have been marginalized and mainly used for fire exits. NYC has implemented a range of policies to make stairs more visibly acceptable and to promote their use (e.g., stair signage). A number of challenges were addressed including fire safety, building security, and concerns for injuries. Work has also been required with building code staff so that additional space used towards ornamental staircases is rewarded in building designs.

Building design can also support cycling through accessible and secure storage. The health benefits of cycling are large with just 15 minutes of cycling (2.5 miles) twice a day burning the equivalent of 10 pounds per year. However, giving up lucrative space on the main floor for bike storage is not always welcomed by developers so it is important to provide incentives for developers (e.g., providing discounts on developer fees when they have bike storage).

One approach to encourage buy-in with designers has been to emphasize the synergies with existing design philosophies including: universal design, sustainable design (LEED), City policy initiatives, and NYC Green Codes. Early adopters of these philosophies are most likely to be receptive of active design. In some instances, developers have reworked their designs when learning of the ADG. Development of a LEED Physical Activity Innovation Credit provided an additional incentive for considering active design particularly since all NYC buildings are designed for LEED and now need to apply this credit if feasible.
The range of impacts observed to-date include the following:

- 15,000 copies of the Active Design Guidelines have been distributed nationally and internationally.
- LEED Innovation Credit for Physical Activity credit approved in 10 public/private projects to date.
- 7 Fit City Conference, 3 Fit Nation conferences, Fit World Conference.
- Mentored 14 U.S. cities and communities in building capacity and policy to support Active Design.
- Trained over 3,000 design, planning and real estate professionals around the country, with 87% reporting intention to use the strategies in future projects.
- 30,000 stair prompt signs distributed in NYC to over 1000 buildings.
- 21 Play Streets for NYC public schools since 2010.
- 11 Supermarkets approved for FRESH incentives in high need, low income neighbourhoods.
- Active Design strategies are included in the NYC Green Codes.

**Points Raised in Discussion**

- Importance of Collaboration
  - Meeting on common ground: health is an issue that affects everyone and as such can be unifying. Similarly, we can look at the issue of chronic diseases as ‘diseases of energy’ because many participants think about energy use all the time, but only recently from a health angle.
  - Modelling inter-agency and interdisciplinary collaboration: NYC presenters are professionals from diverse backgrounds who are successfully working together toward a common goal.
  - Providing strong leadership: Value of supportive leaders to identify work as a priority and create a cross-agency task force to develop strategies. This fostered communication and took people away from their day-to-day focus to provide support from all levels of the organization.
  - Building supports to make it happen: Training and education is important to help staff understand why we need to make changes and what role they play.
  - Learning from past practices to move forward: NYC planners and designers recognized that they had been part of the problem because they had made it
easy for people to be sedentary all day – but they also realized they could be part of the solution going forward.

- Engaging the community: We need to seek the input of the client in building design (note: tools and resources of Tamarack Institute).

- Stairs
  - Dealing with safety and security concerns:
    Peel has actively promoted stair use in the past and ran into concerns for people tripping and falling, and more recently, concerns regarding the security of opening access to staircases and floors.
    NYC faced similar issues and acknowledged that there are reasons the stairwells have been locked – it is just not healthy for us. It is important to explain the rationale and discuss any concerns first before opening up staircases. If you implement an open-access staircase without doing this groundwork, then you risk failure which will be even more difficult to overcome than the original resistance.

    Some buildings in NYC are using internal staircases to link floors of individual agencies. The NYC Mayor will be mandating a new code requiring every City-owned building to have stair access to every floor. NYC staff expect there will need to problem solve cases where people feel they cannot do it.

- Sophistication of New Designs
  - The level of technology and sophistication of buildings has increased tremendously and is increasingly outstripping the ability of those managing these buildings. Increasingly, NYC is outsourcing building management for complex building systems.

- Voluntary versus Mandated Strategies
  - NYC has been implementing the ADG for three years in most City buildings and having learned about many issues, will be mandating them in the remaining City buildings. It’s easier to work with City buildings since NYC can mandate the use of ADG on their own buildings.
  - NYC has worked to get buy-in before imposing any strategy (limited enforcement capacity). NYC has been working with schools for years in adopting active design concepts, and schools now want to apply the ADG to their buildings.
NYC has spent a lot of time troubleshooting issues. For example, resolving a code problem with installing a rooftop greenhouse required many discussions with multiple agencies, which finally resulted in a favourable interpretation of the code. Almost everything that has been accomplished in NYC has had these types of challenges.

- Design for New versus Older Buildings
  - The strategy in creating new buildings is to appeal to the designers indicating that the ‘staircase is back’ and there is an ‘opportunity to do something interesting’. The LEED innovation credit is also an incentive.
  - The focus for older buildings, which have greater challenges, is to make improvements. For example, improving staircases with better lighting, signage, and art can make the space more inviting. New materials such as fire-rated glass can also bring more visibility. For more extensive retrofits, inserting central staircases to link floors can improve functionality and increase physical activity.

- Brainstorming

Building on ideas that we have implemented or have started internally:
  - Expand bicycle parking (note: the Region and Mississauga currently exploring).
  - Promote using the stairs.
  - Consult with existing committees.
  - Promote and ramp-up staff events (e.g. weekly exercise classes, take the stairs week, bike-to-work week).

Ideas we might want to explore to improve the design of municipal buildings and facilities:
  - Explore the use of skip-stop elevators.
  - Make stairs more inviting.
  - Developing areas beside buildings so employees can be active at lunch and during breaks.
  - Look for opportunities in existing municipal and public spaces – For example, encourage parents to walk around the field/arena while their kids are at team practice.
Ideas of what staff can do for themselves:

- Take the stairs.
- Hold stand-up and walking meetings.
- Standing up to give presentations.
- Conduct meetings outdoors.
- Stand up when applauding (i.e., active applause).
- Everyone can lead by example from senior level, middle managers, and staff.

Emerging/Expanding Areas of Work – Actively Designed Buildings

Potential project ideas for further consideration emerging from the workshop included:

- Increasing and promoting stair usage in Region of Peel and other municipal buildings.
- Redesigning the outdoor space at the Region of Peel’s 7120 Hurontario building.
- Using Active Design Guidelines (ADG) for Region of Peel’s affordable housing projects.
Workshop: Active Parks and Playgrounds

Moderator: Jocelyn Cann, School Health Charge Nurse for Region of Peel Public Health

NYC Presenters: Andy Stone, Director with The Trust for Public Land – NYC Program
With Suzanne Nienaber, Partnerships Manager with the Center for Active Design

Presentation Key Points

From a public health perspective, parks offer three opportunities to promote health and wellness:

- reduce obesity and chronic diseases (via physical activity);
- reduce stress; and
- Improves learning about healthy eating through school and community gardening.

Three main types of neighbourhood spaces were discussed in the workshop:

- streets and greenways;
- neighbourhood parks and playgrounds; and
- Community and school gardens.

Collaboration between groups overseeing design, maintenance and programming is needed in all three areas.

Streets and Greenways

Greenways are a linear open space (e.g., path or trail) that links parks and communities. The Caledon Trail is a local example. Greenways expand recreational opportunities for walking, jogging, biking and inline skating. Both streets and greenways providing bicycle access increase access to a park 16-fold over walking. However, there needs to be a safe and appealing bike ride to the park for it to be used. Similarly, street designs need to provide safety for cyclists (e.g., protected buffers and physical barriers).

Another strategy is to use “traffic calming” as a means to reconfigure streets that restrict through-traffic by using traffic diverters or islands. Doing so encourages pedestrians and cyclists to use streets, which creates a more neighbourly environment encouraging people to come outside of their homes. Temporary street closings also encourage people to use streets in a different manner encouraging activity and socialization.
The orientation of greenways and paths to schools facilitates walking and biking to school. In their absence, a ‘walking school bus’ can be utilized by which children are supervised by one or two adults as they walk to and from school.

**Neighbourhood Parks and Playgrounds**

Three strategies for parks and playgrounds include:
- creating new spaces,
- transforming existing spaces, and
- programming existing spaces.

There needs to be a purpose for people to go to the park – preferably with multiple uses and at different times of day. NYC experienced significant safety concerns with its landmark parks in the past. The parks were reclaimed through a combination of design, operations and maintenance, and programming.

Neighbourhood squares are mainly gathering places although there are sometimes playgrounds in them and paths running through them. A local Peel example is the Mount Pleasant Village development which includes a town square.

Neighbourhood parks and playgrounds provide opportunities for active recreation often including play structures, trails for jogging and increasingly, adult gym equipment (e.g., Lake Aquitaine Park). The adult gyms often include 8-10 pieces of equipment for aerobic and strength training that can cost relatively little. By locating fitness zones adjacent to playgrounds, adults can be active while kids play. Recreational programming is important to give people a reason to come to parks and spaces (e.g., bring trainers out to site locations as a programming initiative).

**Community and School Gardens**

In NYC, communities claimed empty neighbourhood space to establish community gardens. The primary benefit is community development as neighbours get to know each other while tending these gardens. Through gardening children learn how fresh food is grown. The gardens may also supplement the diet for a limited number of families and allow immigrants to grow fresh produce they enjoyed in their country of origin.

**School Yards to Playgrounds**

This initiative has been quite successful in NYC. In Peel, many schools are adjacent to municipal parks. Many NYC neighbourhoods lack parks per capita. Since there is no new
space available to build parks, the focus has been on transforming school playgrounds (177 so far) through the use of artificial turf, paint and basketball nets. Extensive analysis is conducted to assess neighbourhoods and identify where there is the greatest need for parks. Priority is given to areas with high proportions of youth, low income households, and little to no recreation opportunities. For the successful implementation of such an initiative, there needs to be a combination of the school’s commitment to maintain the site, funding, community buy-in and care, and an active community group to program it after hours. A key feature is the extent of community engagement that occurs in planning the sites including children becoming actively involved in the design as they are the primary users of parks.

**Points Raised in Discussion**

- **Governmental Collaboration:**
  - The NYC experience shows what is possible when different city agencies work together towards a common goal. While Peel faces the same challenge of growing obesity and diabetes rates, we have more work to do to get the right people from different regional and municipal departments to work together in inter-departmental and inter-agency groups. There is a need to continue opportunities in bringing people together like at this workshop and consider the structure needed to encourage collaboration among regional and municipal staff.
  - Incentives from the provincial government could help to develop adult playgrounds in municipalities as a long-term investment to reduce health costs.

- **Private-Public Partnerships**
  Interest was expressed in:
  - Exploring opportunities for private-public partnerships could help create the changes that need to happen.
  - Using tax incentives and explore cost sharing with businesses to assist with the establishment of walkable paths in business parks.
  - Using NYC’s experience with a range of partnering approaches with private, non-governmental and community partners to inform our work in designing and funding healthy public parks in Peel. Suggested to have a NYC workshop for community members, Peel staff and local businesses to learn more about this area of work.
The Liability Barrier
- School administrators will be concerned about who is responsible for any injury that occurs with a ‘walking school bus’ - a barrier for schools becoming involved.
- Multiple successful local examples at partnering (e.g., city and school board building an upgraded football field with surrounding track – benefits the school during the day and, with permits, the community at night and during weekends). The City of Mississauga has a program of affiliated groups that use space in community centres and the City’s 3rd party liability policy covers them.

Assessing the Health Outcomes
Since the changes to parks and playgrounds are only a part of a larger, long-term strategy, it will take time to see the health benefits. The focus should be on documenting increases in activity, types of activities, and characteristics of users (e.g., their age and gender).

Emerging/Expanding Areas of Work – Parks and Playgrounds
Potential project ideas for further consideration emerging from the workshop included:

- Identify a few schools where routes to schools can be mapped and existing playgrounds assessed to identify infrastructure and active design improvements.
- Explore partnerships for governmental, non-profit, and businesses in building support for parks.
- Choose particular issue or opportunity and work collaboratively to address liability concerns. Example: Explore liability issues and policy barriers for child-care centres to use municipal parks and playgrounds for children.
This workshop provided an opportunity for Regional and Municipal elected officials, senior staff in health and in planning, and NYC representatives to discuss opportunities for short- and longer-term activities. Unlike the other workshops, no formal presentation preceded the group discussion.

**Invigoration and Sense of Do-ability**

There was an overall sense of revitalized hope of being able to seek improvements in the design of communities to support the health of local residents. While resolving the challenges of our built environment will take time, pursuing these longer-term goals (e.g., big transportation issues and the movement of goods) can start today by creating committees and/or a task force. It is also important to note that there are a number of smaller issues that may be solved more readily such as increasing pedestrian safety by building sidewalks and meridians to reduce the number of lanes of traffic one has to cross and creating safe routes to schools.

Participants expressed how inspired they felt to hear about NYC’s success and in particular NYC’s approach to incentivize change, integrate planning and bring different agencies together. The group also discussed examples where previous municipal councils have made good decisions regarding land use (e.g., Port Credit) when establishing communities.

Some discussion was focused on the undesirable proliferation of the large lots seen in suburban communities. While these lots were initially created in order to support septic systems, unfortunately they have become normalized and marketed as a desirable lifestyle choice and status symbol.
While there are significant challenges ahead, even in cities such as Copenhagen, it took concerted efforts over a period of decades to establish the active transportation city that exists today.

Involvement and Collaboration

Throughout the workshop the importance of collaboration and involvement between government agencies the business community and the community was seen as being pivotal to future activities and success.

A key feature of NYC’s process is that all of the key departments involved in making the necessary changes, report directly to that office of the Mayor who has executive powers. The establishment of the inter-agency task force was a critical step to support working towards a common goal. Something similar is needed in Peel since the lack of collaboration is problematic (e.g., building a bridge and road without considering children’s routes to school requiring retrofits that are more costly than if the initial design had considered the needs of vehicles and pedestrians).

Many participants spoke of the need for greater community involvement in design issues. A strength of the Active Design Guidelines is that it considers all users (i.e., pedestrians, cyclists and motorists) in designs. There is a need to look for more ways to ask people and communities for their perspectives and to consider barriers, such as safety concerns, to more active living. Experiencing one’s communities and neighbourhoods from a pedestrian or cyclist perspective can aid understanding safety and other barriers. Engaging parents and children in the design of schoolyards and playgrounds not only leads to better designs they will actually use, it also builds a constituency to help push through resistance to new approaches. Similarly, there is a need for greater engagement of clients in seeking their involvement in the design of their buildings.

Engagement with the business community is also needed. Incentivizing desired types of businesses is a planning consideration. NYC has used such incentives to encourage specific types of needed businesses with specific attributes (e.g., supermarkets providing fresh produce). Some retailers such as Walmart have indicated a willingness to work with communities to figure out how they might adjust their operations to fit into a smaller space. In Peel, airport-area businesses are experiencing staffing challenges due to traffic issues in the area. This could be an opportunity to work with local businesses on a specific issue of concern to them.
Stairs and Buildings

Opportunities exist to improve and promote stair use throughout municipal and regional buildings such as:

- Painting a trail to the staircase.
- Getting costing and ensuring the fire code is met in opening up staircases.
- Showcasing ADG strategies used on municipal and regional buildings that are either under construction or being renovated. These projects allow for opportunities to promote sustainability, reduce energy consumption and achieve LEED certification.
- Incentivizing developers to use healthy design parameters and achieve LEED certification. In NYC, they are planning to put in a certification system for active design to aid getting buy-in from developers.

Schools

The group felt there was a need to:

- Continue with, and expand, initiatives such as Peel Safe and Active Routes to School (PSARTS).
- Provide some option to “mega-schools” that serve a large community and have long commuting distances (e.g., children could still be dropped off away from the school and walk at least part of the way).
- Address the liability concerns regarding walking school bus programs and use of school playgrounds as a park outside of school hours. NYC has model language for contracts to outline terms of using school playgrounds and they also have arrangements by which Parks takes over maintenance for after-school uses.
Barriers and Problem Solving

There were many examples provided by NYC staff of how they addressed barriers and solved problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue-Barrier</th>
<th>Background &amp; Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to break down silos across agencies</td>
<td>• Established task force with Department of Health and brought in a wide range of organizations to work through issues</td>
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| How to address trans fat | • Alternate products are available – NYC provided technical assistance to adjust recipes  
• When education resulted in no wide-spread change, created a level playing field among restaurants by passing regulation |
| Calorie posting | • Public wanted information  
• Made it requirement that calories appear in same size font as the price  
• Once implemented, only a handful of restaurants objected |
| Business response to new requirements | • Be prepared for criticism and potential legal action |
| Provincial/State Policy constraints | • NYC has experienced these constraints as well and has gone to the State to obtain permission or negotiate around the issue |
| Cost concerns for opening up stairwells | • Fire-rated glass is available, albeit expensive. To keep costs down, you could phase in the renovation by installing the fire-rated glass initially on high traffic floors  
• Magnetic hold opens are another approach that close if there is a fire alarm |
| Transforming school yards – getting buy-in | • Common concern that unused school yards were an issue  
• Dept of Education reports to Mayor  
• Use of school playgrounds and facilities can be tried as a pilot  
• School Board representatives in attendance at workshop – opportunities working with specific community groups, where new schools being built |

Institutionalizing Change

It was noted that it is Regional or Municipal staff who approve plans. There are existing processes that could be used to incorporate active design strategies including the training of staff who:

- work on regional or municipal planning and transportation projects;
- review development applications;
- develop the official plan; and/or
- participate in the review committee that considers all applications.

In addition, regional and municipal governments could look for opportunities to implement the ADGs active design strategies in their facilities and agencies that are licensed or funded by them. NYC will be publishing an ADG supplementary document on affordable designs for affordable housing that may also be of assistance.
NEXT STEPS

Evaluations of the afternoon workshops were completed by a total of 74 participants. Enthusiasm for the day was near universal, with many participants looking forward to future workshops and hearing about the progress being made. Interest in moving forward was indicated by several participants who wanted future workshops or ongoing meetings to address the problems identified and possible solutions discussed in the small-group working sessions.

There are a number of project ideas that could be pursued by various departments in Peel Region working together and with external partners in the near term. These ideas are highlighted below for further analysis and discussion.

Placeshaping Region’s 7120 Hurontario Building

Home to Peel Public Health and other regional departments, there is interest in improving the grounds at this building to make it more conducive to physical activity. Not only would this benefit staff in the building, it would provide an opportunity to see the affects of these changes which could be applied to other sites. Minor changes have been made to date including the installation of some benches and bike storage; however, additional site improvements are needed.

Stairs and Elevator Projects in Regional and Municipal Buildings

Leveraging NYC’s experience, design elements and signage is needed to encourage stair use. First we need to assess the current use of stairs to be able to measure the affects of the changes we make. Discussion with, and buy-in from, relevant stakeholders will need to be pursued. Infrastructure changes will also need to be examined to encourage stair use (e.g., security doors at base of stairwells, lighting, etc.).

The private sector can be a leader in advancing healthier design and development. To encourage this, in the longer-term, Peel Public Heath could use their initial learning’s along with NYC’s expertise in conducting outreach and training to work with design professionals, and collaborating with the development community on other buildings projects within Peel.

Healthy Foods in Regional Buildings

Regional Council has provided direction to establish healthy food standards comparable to those in schools in all regional buildings. As an initial pilot, it makes sense to initially address 7120 Hurontario St. and the contract with the food vendor for that building was not finalized anticipating this work.
Given the strength of Peel’s food policy work, the adoption of food procurement standards may just be a starting point. With support from the NYC team, the Region of Peel could develop a broader vision for enhancing the community’s food culture. There may be opportunities to engage restaurants and other food service establishments, or adapt other NYC-based models such as green carts.

Creating and Promoting Active Parks and Playground Spaces

There is widespread agreement that we need to increase physical activity for pre-school and school-aged children. Exactly how and when to do this (e.g., in-school and/or before/after school including transport) is unclear. A small working group is needed to identify pilot projects throughout Peel Region to pursue. For example, this might be looking at neighbourhood areas where walking to and from schools or park areas is most feasible and work to address any community design issues (e.g., pave an informal path and/or create a short-cut through subdivision), and to promote then promote changes through social marketing promotion and tools/supports to school and community officials, teachers and parents. This would also be an opportunity to explore liability concerns.

Suburban Land-Use and Transportation Infrastructure

While potentially more challenging, changes to land use and transportation are fundamental to achieving a healthy Peel by design. Improvements to food availability, building and school design alone are unlikely to achieve the overall change required. Furthermore, considering the rapid growth occurring in the region, decisions being made now will have long-term implications. One possibility is the development of design guidelines for suburban contexts. Such guidelines would highlight what can be done to support designs that support health. NYC is planning to develop sub-division guidelines so there may be an opportunity for Peel to act as a case study in their work.

There is an additional opportunity to support the use of the sustainability guidelines being developed by the City of Brampton and learn from the projects using the guidelines and share this learning. These guidelines incorporate the healthy development guidelines developed by Peel Public Health and its partners. And finally, Peel Public Health is involved in reviewing national engineering standards through a joint national funding grant. There is the potential to support a mix of stakeholders to discuss opportunities for improvements needed to the standards to enable the types of
Recognizing and Rewarding Innovation

This is not a stand-alone project, but rather a cross-cutting theme for all of the other projects. The preceding projects are about public service and doing good, but they are also examples of innovation and doing things differently. As such, people will face a variety of barriers related to attempting to modify the status quo. Achieving change and having an affect needs to be identified and rewarded. This might include recognition in regional communications, publication of professional/technical papers, and presenting at healthy design conferences such as Fit City.

Council Direction and Partner Support

As requested by Regional Council, a report on the initiatives that NYC has implemented to increase use of public transit, to increase physical activity, and to increase fruit and vegetable consumption was tabled at the November 8, 2012 Council meeting. Peel Regional Council passed progressive resolutions to support the projects resulting from the Healthy Peel By Design Symposium. These resolutions include:

- The Region of Peel will continue to be a model employer in improving Regional buildings to promote physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour.
- Peel Public Health will work with school boards and municipalities on pilot projects, such as a project to increase the number of children who are active in school and who walk or bike to school.
- A Councillor consultation committee be established with representation from Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga.

These resolutions expand Regional Council’s direction for Peel Public Health to work on serving and selling healthier foods in all Regional buildings, and direction from Caledon, Brampton and Mississauga City Councils for Peel Public Health to work with the municipalities in implementing healthy design criteria into planning and transportation projects to improve local infrastructure.

Finally, several partners have expressed strong interest in working together with the Region of Peel on these issues. Representatives from the area municipalities, Peel’s school boards, and cultural associations have come forward with interest to work on specific projects. Healthy Cities Stewardship Centre Mississauga has formally requested to partner with Peel Public Health to implement active workplace initiatives among the organizations involved.
APPENDIX

Healthy Peel By Design Symposium
CONFERENCE AGENDA

October 19th, 2012
Living Arts Centre
4141 Living Arts Drive, Mississauga

Participant registration starting at 8:00 am

Master of Ceremonies: Regional Councillor Pat Saito

9 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. Welcome and Introductions

Supportive Environments for Healthy Living
Dr. David L. Mowat, Medical Officer of Health
Region of Peel – Public Health

9:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Introduction to Successful Initiatives in New York City and Elsewhere

Dr. Karen Lee, Adjunct Professor, Schools of Public Health, University of Toronto and University of Alberta;
Also, Director of Built Environment and Active Design,
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

10:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. NETWORKING BREAK

10:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Overview of New York City Initiatives to Improve Health through the Built Environment

Introductions provided by: Dan Labrecque, Commissioner of Public Works for the Region of Peel

David Burney, Commissioner
New York City Department of Design and Construction

Skye Duncan, International Urban Design Consultant
Also, Associate Urban Designer at the Office of the Chief Urban Designer, New York City Department of City Planning

Wendy Feuer, Assistant Commissioner for Urban Design and Art
New York City Department of Transportation

11:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Closing and Next Steps
Healthy Peel By Design Symposium

CONFERENCE AGENDA
October 19th, 2012

Living Arts Centre
4141 Living Arts Drive, Mississauga

AFTERNOON AGENDA
(VIP code holders only)

12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. LUNCH
Location: The Staging Room

Welcome and Overview
Gayle Bursey, Director of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. WORKSHOP SESSION – Part 1

2:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. NETWORKING BREAK

2:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. WORKSHOP SESSION – Part 2

3:15 p.m. to 3:30 pm Closing and Next Steps

WORKSHOP LOCATIONS

Actively Designed Buildings
Location: CN Room

Healthy Land Use Planning and Transportation Infrastructure
Location: Bank of Montreal – South

Food Environment Policy
Location: Bank of Montreal - North

Playgrounds and Parks
Location: Canon Digital Room

Senior Leadership Discussion (1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.)
Location: Glaxo-Smith-Kline

Hosted by Peel Public Health with support from Regional and Municipal Planning and the Healthy Cities Stewardship Centre Mississauga. Funded in part by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC).