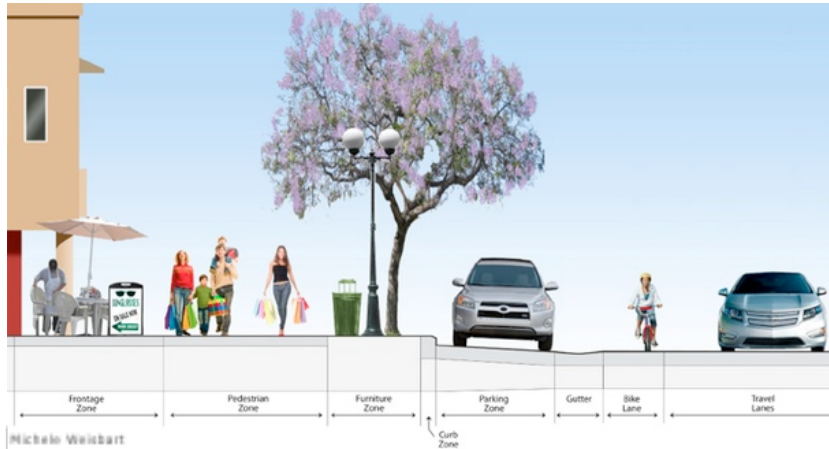




Combating Obesity with Street Design

NATE BERG OCT 06, 2011 2 COMMENTS



Almost a quarter of adults in Los Angeles County [are overweight](#). It's a problem the local public health department is trying to solve in various ways, from healthy eating campaigns to physical activity programs. Now, officials are taking that fight to the streets. Literally.

Today, the county's Department of Public Health is releasing its "[Model Design Manual for Living Streets](#)," a guide intended to make streets more active, usable, and healthy for residents. Essentially it's urban planning as an anti-obesity measure, and its authors want every city to use it.

The idea that the built form of a city influences the health of its residents has been taking hold in a lot of cities recently. The design of streets is particularly relevant. For example, a street designed with no sidewalks, no crosswalks, and six lanes of cars rushing by at 60 mph will discourage pedestrians from walking there. Streets with wide sidewalks, shaded areas and safe distances between cars, on the other hand, are more likely to see people walking.

"A street isn't just curb to curb," says Madeline Brozen, program director for the UCLA Complete Streets Initiative at the Luskin Center for Innovation, which collaborated with the county to create the manual. More than 60 contributors helped write and produce the document, which was funded through the Department of Health and Human Services with money from the federal stimulus package.

The purpose of the design manual is to curate a set of best practices that designers and officials can turn to in order to encourage more healthy use of public spaces like streets and sidewalks. It was crafted during a two-day charrette this spring that brought together local and national experts in transportation engineering, planning, landscape architecture, and public health.

Originally it was intended to serve as a manual for the cities within L.A. County, but the scope was eventually widened. At their core, street design issues are fairly universal in the U.S., so there are lessons and ideas within the manual that can be applied almost anywhere. With 15 chapters covering a range of densities and users, the manual offers a nuanced and comprehensive look at the variety of street design choices available to meet different needs.

"The manual recognizes that the role of streets is dependent on the land use," says Brozen.

The manual is being made freely available to any city or government that wants it. Also, Brozen says, the fact that it was funded with stimulus money helped influence the decision to share the knowledge.

"Any city can take it, adopt it, plagiarize it, whatever," she says.

Keywords: Los Angeles, Street Design, Public Health Obesity, Streets



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Real-time updating is **paused**. (Resume)


 **TAPman** 4 days ago

WHY, WHY, WHY (!) can't we put the bike between the sidewalk and the stored 2-ton personal property like all the successful bicycle countries do??

Like Reply

 **Joe McGrew** 1 month ago

How about we remove all roads and replace them with beautiful natural surroundings, maybe transform where we live into a nice place to go for walks and generally be active. Keep the roads leading out of the city and provide rental cars on the outskirts or even better. high speed, efficient, public transport to any other beautiful cities we want to visit. Unfortunately, we're too caught up on ownership, status and consuming to realise this. Also, the car industry doesn't care about anything but selling ever more cars but we buy right into this madness meaning our cars spend most of the day sat around doing nothing. It's not ok. Now where did I put that jackhammer?

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