Fit-City 4: Promoting Physical Activity through Design
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**Introduction by Sherida Paulsen, FAIA**

Four years ago – New York City did not have dedicated bike lanes, Times Square was clogged by traffic, and staircases were invisible elements of our building environment. The Fit City conferences have brought together public health professionals with the design community, and neighborhood-scale design opportunities that further the Fit City agenda have become the front-page topics (both print and web) in the public eye. The simple design changes that can help to reduce chronic diseases associated with obesity and inactivity, especially diabetes, heart disease and some cancers, are essential contributions to the livable city that PlaNYC envisions for 2030. The conferences have explored initiatives from the international design playbook, and have helped to build connections that in turn have helped to spur the changes that we now take for granted.

Our civic goals for our streets, buildings and parks have been expanded to include design excellence and sustainability during this administration, and the importance of physical well-being will be added to that agenda with the release of the New York City Active Design Guidelines. The Guidelines, prepared by the City of New York, set forth the many avenues available to architects, landscape architects, interior designers, and urban planners to present healthy and feasible design options to our clients, both public and private. The Guidelines also clearly illustrate the City’s intention to literally walk the walk, or bike the bike!

**Introduction by Rick Bell, FAIA**

During the past three years, we have heard from those whose policies, planning, and projects have redefined the promotion of physical activity through design. Released in January 2010, the City of New York’s Active Design Guidelines set the ground rules for a less sedentary society. Through a participatory process involving many city agencies and individual voices, including a workshop charrette held at the Center for Architecture, the Guidelines took shape. Our Fit City Conferences have been defined by intellectual flexibility and frankness. As is said in Catalan, “To ride a bicycle, you can’t have a straight back.” Fit City 4 takes the outgrowth of scientific research on obesity and physical activity and shapes urban policy to promote design and planning principles that lead to better health. We will learn about the development of the Guidelines that speak to how designers and public health professionals, working together, can create healthier and more livable communities.
Why do we need the Guidelines? 

Today, architects, urban designers, and planners can help address some of the most urgent and widespread epidemics of our time, obesity and related diseases, by implementing the strategies contained in the Active Design Guidelines. Just as design professionals are increasingly embracing green building as an objective, so too should they consider the potential effects of their designs on public health and wellbeing.

Who will use the Guidelines? 

The Active Design Guidelines address all who have a role in the design and construction of the built environment. This encompasses professional designers such as planners, urban designers, architects, landscape architects, and engineers; project sponsors such as government agencies, building owners, and private developers; building managers; and user groups, including bicyclists, city residents, and building occupants. The Guidelines will also serve architects and urban designers in New York City and beyond with a manual for creating healthier buildings, streets, and urban spaces.

Active Design is environmental design that encourages daily walking, bicycling, and transit use, active recreation, and healthy eating. Based on the latest academic research as well as best practices and cost-effective ways to combat these epidemics.

How should the Guidelines be used? 

Readers are encouraged to peruse the Guidelines in their entirety, to get a clear understanding of the health problems addressed and the range of strategies available to address them. The Guidelines also provide checklists that incorporate many relevant Active Design strategies as possible into each project and to incorporate at least some strategies into every project. The more Active Design strategies that are utilized, the more likely a project will increase daily physical activity—and the greater the project’s potential impact on health.

Designers and project sponsors are encouraged to initiate discussions about Active Design issues early on, during a project’s programming and scoping phase. Project partners should meet initially to set goals and to assess which potential Active Design strategies are utilized, the more likely a project will increase daily physical activity—and the greater the project’s potential impact on health.

The Guidelines have four chapters:

1. Environmental Design and Health: Past and Present
2. Urban Design: Creating an Active City
3. Building Design: Creating an Active Daily Physical Activity
4. Synergies with Sustainable and Universal Design

Opening Remarks by Comm. Thomas Farley, MD, MPH
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Physical activity is widely known to be “good for you,” but its value to health is still understudied. While its role in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight, improved health status, and quality of life is recognized, so too is the fact that physical activity has many other benefits. If you start exercising now, you’re going to reduce your risk of chronic health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. You’ll lower your blood pressure, reduce your cholesterol, and improve your heart and brain function, which is a major cause of morbidity and mortality in the elderly. Physical activity reduces your risk of depression and elevates your mood. It also can reduce cognitive decline that can occur with age and may help to prevent Alzheimer’s disease.

How do we incorporate health in our designs? 

Just as we now see architecture as a key to creating healthier environments and encouraging healthier living, we should see architecture as a key to creating healthier environments and encouraging healthier living. This includes healthy food and healthy eating. The good news is that exercise need not involve joining a gym or running five miles a day. Simply walking or biking to work rather than riding the subway or bus—or getting off the bus at an earlier stop and walking the rest of the way—can yield health benefits. So can climbing a flight or two of stairs instead of taking the elevator. The success of these strategies, though, depends on living in a neighborhood and city that support physical activity.

Opening Remarks by Comm. Thomas Farley, MD, MPH
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

A number of strategies contained in the Guidelines can benefit the environment. If people use their own energy to move around, we will burn less fossil fuel. The social benefits, too, must be recognized. By creating attractive streetscapes, people will be more inclined to gather in public spaces, increasing social interaction. Our health in an era of chronic diseases and injuries is influenced by our behavior: whether we smoke, how much physical activity we get, and what we eat and drink. These behaviors are, themselves, influenced by the world around us, including our physical environment. Creating opportunities for everyone to get more physical activity is an essential step in creating a healthier New York
OPENING REMARKS by Comm. David Burney, FAIA
Department of Design and Construction

World-class cities understand that they have to design their streets differently if they are going to thrive in the 21st century. At the Department of Transportation, we are creating safer streets and more interesting streetscapes that will allow more New Yorkers to enjoy the streets on foot or on bike. Many of our initiatives are optional, but they are essential for the long-term health of the city. The department identifies ideas from places like Copenhagen and taking us to the success of Broadway Boulevard and Madison Square to create an incredible new boulevard with some terrific pedestrian openings.

We will soon release our third universal design publication, Inclusive Design Guidelines, concentrating on the success of Broadway Boulevard and Madison Square to create a healthier, sustainable, and dynamic city. This publication will actually become the norm and could be incorporated into regulation in the future.

OPENING REMARKS by Comm. Robert LiMandri
Department of Buildings

At the Department of Buildings, we have the ability to read the building code, interpret the code, and amend the code where we see fit. Already, we have made some changes to encourage physical activity like widening stairwells in new buildings and adjusting stair treads – the ratio of rise – to make it more comfortable to walk up the stairs.

Through the process of compiling the Guidelines, I have been very surprised to see how many opportunities there really are for architects and designers to improve the way people move within the city. It is possible that some of the things that have been identified in the Active Design Guidelines will actually become the norm and could be incorporated into regulation in the future.

OPENING REMARKS by Comm. Janette Sadik-Khan
Department of Transportation

In New York, everyone is a pedestrian at some point. We are facing challenges that face us as a city are more manageable than we may have thought. Thanks to the approach of the Bloomberg administration, many of the public policies have made some changes to encourage physical activity like widening stairwells in new buildings and adjusting stair treads – the ratio of rise – to make it more comfortable to walk up the stairs.

We especially want to inform designers about strategies that encourage mobility, the least well-developed and least understood aspect of design. How do you remove obstacles to make it possible for people with health issues, whether they are senior or diabetic, to exercise more? Sometimes you can use straightforward approaches to narrow street crossings, slow traffic, or increase opportunities for mobility within buildings but some strategies are slightly counterintuitive, such as putting benches along paths in parks.

We have used the International Building Code as a model from which to define building code, interpret the code, and amend the code where we see fit. Already, we have made some changes to encourage physical activity like widening stairwells in new buildings and adjusting stair treads – the ratio of rise – to make it more comfortable to walk up the stairs..

Each of the strategies that emerge from the Guidelines is an opportunity to improve the way people move within the city. It is possible that some of the things that have been identified in the Active Design Guidelines will actually become the norm and could be incorporated into regulation in the future.

OPENING REMARKS by Comm. Matthew Sapelin
Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities have a variety of functional levels. Many will not engage Active Design, while others want to participate to some extent to experience the benefits of Active Design. Recently, my office consulted with a committee for people with disabilities created by the Parks Department about a particular route being planned in a new turnaround. When the committee offered the group a choice between a direct switch-back ramp or an alternative: traveling on a direct switch-back ramp. The group preferred a circuitous route that would meander through a beautiful park space and would provide some exercise compared to the alternative traveling on a direct switch-back ramp. Artistic installations and programming mandated along routes provide landmarks for people who might not travel independently. We will all benefit if the appropriate opportunities are incorporated into longer walks.

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OPENING REMARKS by Comm. David Burney, FAIA
Department of Design and Construction

We probably had enough commission and deputy commissioners and assistant commissioners involved in the creation of the Guidelines to start our own city. What a city that would be: smoke-free and trans-fat-free and low-calorie. And it would be universally designed. We would have parks everywhere. We would have complete streets. We would have a redefinition of city controls, which are the streets and city buildings, but also in a broader context.

Through the process of compiling the Guidelines, I have been very surprised to see just how many opportunities there really are for architects and designers to engage with physical activity through design everywhere in the urban realm, in buildings, and all around the city. It really would be a healthier and a happier city.

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There is no monopoly on good ideas. The Guidelines contain ideas generated both here and adapted from elsewhere. In combination, these ideas will create a healthy, sustainable, and dynamic city.

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Excerpts from Keynote

Architects, urban designers, and city planners create the conditions that increase levels of active transport and physical activity. They can physically alter streetscapes to make them safer for cycling and for walking. They can build active living into daily routines so people improve their physical and mental health effortlessly.

First, we need to promote more walking and cycling for daily travel. This is a matter of social justice. We must provide walking and cycling facilities that are safe and convenient for all income levels, for women as well as men, for all age groups, and for people of different levels of physical abilities.

Less than 10 percent of the trips taken in the United States are on foot or bicycle. In countries like Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Spain, 30 to 40 percent of daily trips are taken by either walking or cycling. Europeans are getting tremendous value from active transportation and physical activity just by going to school, going to work, doing their shopping, and visiting friends.

Surprisingly, New York City has one of the lowest rates of cycling of any city or metropolitan area in the United States, despite its ideal conditions for cycling: flat terrain, dense climate, mixed development, and short distances between places. Cycling doubled in New York City since 2000, yet still less than one percent of trips are made by bike.

Unfortunately, there has been no increase at all in women’s cycling. A survey from the Health Department finds that men are three times more likely than women to be frequent cyclists. More women cycle when you give them safe, convenient, and traffic-separated cycling facilities. In Central Park, 44 percent of cyclists are female as opposed to 25 percent in New York City as a whole. Other countries prove that it is possible to equalize the male-to-female biker ratio. Fifty-six percent of cyclists in the Netherlands are women, 55% in Sweden and Denmark, 50% in Finland, 48% in Germany. Many women are confident biking in European countries along an integrated system of comprehensive cycling facilities that are designed for convenience and safety.

Seniors have health incentives to cycle, yet virtually no seniors in New York ride bikes even occasionally. Twelve percent of all the trips by the German elderly are made by bike and that rate actually increases with age. One-fourth of the trips made by the Dutch elderly are by bike. We must provide facilities to make riders of all ages feel comfortable.

New infrastructure is necessary to make cycling safer and attractive to a wider audience. We need secure bike parking, stricter police enforcement of the existing bike lanes, bike racks on buses, and ample and secure sheltered bike parking at transit terminals. We need full-service bike stations. Commonly found by transit stations in Europe, they wash, rent, repair, and store bikes and provide touring information for visiting cyclists. And we need to limit motorists’ speeds to 10 miles per hour in neighborhoods, a level that reduces pedestrian and cyclist fatalities by 60 to 80 percent.

Traffic education is crucial to acclimate youth to walking and cycling and generally integrating active travel into their daily routines. Children who walk or cycle increase their physical activity levels and their own health, develop habits that promote independent mobility, and reduce the number of household vehicular trips.

Walking and cycling produce many environmental, social, and health benefits to individuals and to broad populations. All of these combined provide an important political rationale and generate public support for promoting safer walking and cycling conditions. The design of our policies and our facilities should cater to a broad range of people as possible: all age groups, women and men, people with different levels of physical abilities, different incomes, and from different racial and ethnic groups. We should be inclusive and make social justice one of the core principles of our transportation policies.
The Active Design Guidelines were created through interagency collaboration. The Commissioners acted as agents of change in creating this public policy document. Next, with the Guidelines in distribution, design and health professionals are needed as the next generation of agents of change to implement the alternative strategies through their professional practices and through their educational preparation. They will choose the most applicable strategies to infuse active living into their designed projects and locally by all of us as part of our daily lives.

I recommend when designing environments that promote health we consider environmental change through both pull and push strategies. Pull strategies promote behavioral change through the use of other information, aesthetic or sensory appeal of the environment. Push strategies by contrast create behavioral change through mandates in environmental design or policy.

Push and pull strategies have proven to be effective initiatives, for example eliminating indoor smoking. In the 1950s and 1960s, the thought that there would be a ban on smoking within buildings was viewed as a crazy idea, yet now, we accept it. Americans smoke 1.5 trillion cigarettes a year. The U.S. Surgeon General to first place warning stickers on cigarettes. Later, anti-smoking campaigns aimed at dissuading people from smoking were common in public media. This change in public opinion began with the initiative of the push strategy of legislating smoking bans in buildings has achieved significant reductions in smoking through research studies but use established precedents or existing practices. They are considered likely to be effective in achieving a desired outcome. The Guidelines employ a graphic system to inform design professionals about the relative strength of the evidence of each strategy to increase physical activity.

There are some very simple principles attached to most pull strategies. For example, the physical environment is where it stays. If we cannot provide all of these principles to a particular feature, such as stairs or bike paths or walking paths, we are not too likely to see the benefits. In Active Design, we can include some push strategies, such as skip-stop elevators. While allowing people with disabilities elevator access to every floor, Morphosis’ Caltrans headquarters building in Los Angeles operates elevators that stop at every third floor for able-bodied people; you have to go one or two flights up or down of every floor. A study of this building indicated that skip-stop elevator/stair design resulted in 33 times more stair use by skip-stop users than those riding in traditional elevators. Seventy-two percent of the CalTrans employees reported daily use of the stairs at an average of six flights a day in 13-story building. We have evidence that providing access to recreational facilities decreases obesity. In some respects, this is a pull strategy. Designers and developers create these spaces to attract people to them. However the failure to provide facilities that promote physical activity can also be viewed as a push strategy. When we fail to provide space for people to be active, we are basically mandating that people will not have access to physical activity. This especially affects those who cannot afford access to private facilities, thus driving up their risk of becoming overweight. The Active Design Guidelines also have synergies with other strategies, including environmental sustainability and Universal Design. LEED has already recognized existing points for bike storage and showers, public transportation, and connectivity and walkability, and recently added the opportunity for an innovation credit for incorporating Active Design. In 2009, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene received this innovation credit for the Riverside Health Center innovation that included physical activity promoting design in elevator/stair design and in operations, and increased access to recreational facilities for staff! I hope that more architects will want to utilize the strategies in this innovation credit to both promote physical activity in building occupant and achieve credit toward LEED certification.

Tying a wider vision, the creation of a better environment where everybody has the opportunity to be physically active is actually a means of promoting a healthier New York.
In the 19th and early 20th centuries architects and urban reformers in New York City and elsewhere helped defeat infectious diseases like cholera and tuberculosis by improving buildings, streets, neighborhoods, clean water systems, and parks. In the 21st century, designers can again play a crucial role in combating the biggest public health epidemics of our time: obesity and related chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers.

Guiding Principles Excerpts from Fit City

“Today, physical inactivity and unhealthy diet are second only to tobacco as the main causes of premature death in the United States. A growing body of research suggests that evidence-based architectural and urban design strategies can increase regular physical activity and healthy eating.”

Karen Lee, MD, MPH, FRCPC, Director, Built Environment, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

“New York City is following national health trends. The rate of obesity has risen to 26 percent of adults and diabetes rates increased from 3.7 percent of adults in 1995 to nine percent in 2007. Diabetes is a devastating epidemic that starts with our daycare-age children, only half of whom are currently at a normal weight.

Aspects of our city’s design have a profound influence on obesity and other chronic diseases. At the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, we have found an inverse ecological association between active transportation and obesity. Part of the public health challenge of building a healthier city is to extend Active Design strategies to neighborhoods with populations at high risk for obesity and diabetes.”

Lynn Silver, MD, MPH, Assistant Commissioner, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

“In addition to the health crisis, we have two demographic trends that are really troubling. Our incredibly aging population is not going to be able to access their cars as easily as they were in the past and, similarly, we have a crisis in affordable housing. All of the agencies came together to put this document in place and detail the initiatives that we need for all people to get there from here, literally, and to improve the quality of life of all residents.”

Com. Janet Sadik-Khan

Active Design Guidelines

The City of New York Summary of Vital Statistics (2005)

The City of New York Summary of Vital Signs (2005)

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Community Health Survey

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Pentagram

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Pentagram
CHAPTER 2: Urban Design: Creating an Active City

The Guidelines present strategies for designing neighborhoods, streets, and outdoor spaces that encourage active transportation and recreation, including walking and bicycling. Key recommended measures include:

- Design accessible, pedestrian-friendly streets with high connectivity, traffic calming features, landscaping, lighting, benches, and water fountains;
- Facilitate bicycling for recreation and transportation by developing continuous bicycle networks and incorporating infrastructure like safe indoor and outdoor bicycle parking;
- Develop and maintain mixed land use in city neighborhoods;
- Improve access to transit and transit facilities;
- Improve access to plazas, parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities, and design these spaces to maximize their active use where appropriate;
- Improve access to full-service grocery stores and fresh produce.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES  Excerpts from Fit City 4

“At the Department of Transportation, we are building transit-oriented development into the design of the city. The evolution of the city came around its transit system. We are going back to the future one hundred years later and looking at what we can do to create more livable, walkable cities.”

- Comm. Janette Sadik-Khan

“New York City is ideal for bike-share. The city is essentially flat and most trips are less than three miles. First, we have been working to build out the bike network. More needs to be done to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists to accommodate New Yorkers in a cycling culture that will enable a bike-share program.”

- Comm. Janette Sadik-Khan

“Spaces and venues should be usable and animated with programmed activities that invite all visitors to walk or move about. Benches, pots, railings, and artwork create environments that universally entice people to engage in physical activity when traveling to or through a place.”

- Comm. Matthew Sapolin

“Active Design comes down to the basic principle of planning for pedestrians, transit and bikes first, and then accommodating cars second. Cars, after all, have the most mobility built into them. In all we do, the continuity of the pedestrian experience is key to the walkability of the street.”

- Alex Washburn, AIA, Chief Urban Designer, Dept. of City Planning

“Fairly simple changes to streets and public spaces have shown that a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly city can achieve many goals at once – mobility, health, environmental sustainability and economic efficiency.”

- Wendy Feuer, Assistant Commissioner, Urban Design and Art, Dept. of Transportation
CHAPTER 3: Building Design: Creating Opportunities for Daily Physical Activity

Opportunities for incorporating regular physical activity into daily life can be found not only outdoors but inside buildings as well. Architects can help building occupants incorporate physical activity into their daily routines through the following measures:

- Increase stair use among the able-bodied by providing a conveniently located stair for everyday use, posting motivational signage at elevators and escalators to encourage stair use, and designing visible, appealing and comfortable stairs;
- Locate building functions to encourage brief bouts of walking to shared spaces such as mail and lunch rooms;
- Provide appealing, supportive walking routes within buildings;
- Provide facilities that support exercise such as centrally visible physical activity spaces, showers, locker rooms, secure bicycle storage, and drinking fountains;
- Design building exteriors and massing that contribute to a pedestrian-friendly urban environment and that include maximum variety and transparency, multiple entries, stoops, and canopies.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES Excerpts from Fit City 4

“Sometimes, in order for public policy to push a group of people forward, we need to be proactive. Prescriptive guidelines and financial incentives are important elements that can result in policy changes. That is exactly why we are enabling bicycle parking in buildings; commuters are disinclined to ride a bike to work if they do not have anywhere to store them when they arrive.”
— Comm. Robert LIMandri

“The actual steps to promote activity in the built environment are simple—prominent stairways, inviting corridors, engaging views or visuals, etc. — they would all be considered good design. But we’re showing in the Guidelines that taken together these small moves will have an important impact on the health of a building’s occupants.”
— Victoria Milne, Director of Creative Services, Dept. of Design and Construction

“Often times, the built-environment contributes to decisions we make in our daily routines. The decision to bike to work is made easier if bicycle storage and shower rooms are available on the premises. Also, many stairways are used as exit stairs only. There is an opportunity to promote physical activity by designing stairways that are visually welcoming and proportionally comfortable while at the same time, meeting fire and life safety requirements in the code.”
— Keith Wen, RA, Director, Code Development, Dept. of Buildings
Active Design promises benefits not only for public health but also for the environment and for advancing universal design. Design strategies that increase physical activity and improve health—for example, measures that promote walking over driving, stair over elevator and escalator use for the able-bodied, and active recreation over television-watching—also tend to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, Active Design can assist not only people able to climb stairs daily, but users of all mobilities, ages, and backgrounds. A diverse, active, healthy population and a sustainable planet are synergistic.

The fourth chapter describes the importance of value creation and cost-effectiveness, as well as points of synergy between Active Design strategies and a number of local, national, and international initiatives, including the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating system, PlaNYC—New York City’s strategic plan for sustainability, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s Take Care New York program, and efforts by the City’s Departments of Transportation and City Planning to expand New York’s bicycling infrastructure.

The LEED Innovation Credit “Design for Health through Increased Physical Activity” that includes stair, elevator, and recreational space strategies is also presented.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES Excerpts from Fit City 4

“Very little land is available for new buildings in New York. We should pay attention to the Mayor’s plan for retrofitting existing buildings. PlaNYC predicts that eighty percent of the buildings that exist today will still be around in 2030. Existing structures are the ones that we really have to deal with, in order to make an impact on CO2 emissions. These buildings—the places where we live, work and spend most of our time—are where small design interventions can have a large impact on our daily amount of physical activity.”

– Nancy Biberman, President, WHEDCo

“A universal addition to a ramp, for example, could include a railing for a child. A more inventive solution might have also include a Star Trek-like proximity finder for people who are blind that would beep to tell me when I have reached the top of a ramp and that Starbucks was on the right. The opportunities for technology, marketing, and sponsorship for these kinds of ideas are enormous in design, and only creativity will either get us there or hold us back.”

– Comm. Matthew Sapolin

“To build Active Design into the DNA of the city requires an exponential kind of penetration into the community and the city as a whole. People who believe in the concept need to talk to their clients, neighbors, and others. You have to let people know why a bike lane can be better for the collective street activity than a parking space.”

– Alex Washburn
Active Design Charrette

Once the Guidelines were in preliminary draft form, the creators asked how to evaluate how the project worked or could work in the context of the Guidelines. I found that charting the flow of each of the 23 abandoned buildings used by WHEDCo as a development corporation (whedco) in the Bronx, New York, was a useful tool to help us focus on the process of evaluating the benefits of Active Design. To facilitate this, we created an Active Design Charrette, where experts in the field could meet in small groups to discuss ways to incorporate Active Design principles into their work.

The participants then broke into small groups to explore ways to integrate such features into existing buildings and site design examples, coming together at intervals to discuss what works and what needs work. Examples studied included existing and proposed low- to mid-rise, high-rise, high-rise commercial buildings, health facilities and hospitals, cultural institutions and libraries, and public spaces. Each session focused on a particular case study and generated ideas that could be inserted into as yet unbuilt plans, and for renovations of existing buildings and streetscapes, an even more difficult retrofit.

Participants included design professionals, planners, urban designers and landscape architects—as well as representatives of the various cooperating agencies (NYC Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene, Design and Construction, Planning, Transportation, and the Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget). These planning and design professionals were recruited by Ernest Hutton, co-founder of the Active Design Collaborative (ADCC), in consultation with the Active Design Guidelines consortium of NYC city agencies, the AIA New York Chapter hosted a “charrette,” an intensive, one-day design workshop, to test the Guidelines against actual building and public space design—both for proposed new construction and for renovation of the interior spaces in existing buildings. Careful notes were taken by the Guidelines’ authors in order to refine the standards based on the real-world evaluation. At the end of the day the group as a whole evaluated the exercise and the potential representation of the Guidelines through education, example, suggestion and regulation.

Ernest Hutton, FAICP, Associate, AIA, AANY

“The Active Design Charrette was extremely useful for understanding Active Design roles, principles, and strategies. Five groups each worked with a project in the morning, and a project in the afternoon, and each of the sessions presented findings to the other four groups about how the project worked or could work in the context of the Guidelines. I found that charting the flow of each of the 23 abandoned buildings used by WHEDCo helps to facilitate this. We wanted to enable designers to establish a meaningful connection between their own practices and the case studies found in the Guidelines.”

–Linda Pollak, AIA, ASLA, Principal, Marpillero Pollak Architects

Nancy Birensky, President, Women’s Housing & Equality Development Corporation (WHEDCo)

When first arrived in the Bronx in 1989 (and before WHEDCo was founded) I directed the development of 25 abandoned buildings and created six wet-socket parks. This project was one of over a half dozen comparable in scale, a big initiative at the time to restore and reclaim vast swaths of abandoned buildings and vacant land. On the block where WHEDCo’s first eight wet-socket green buildings. Intervale Green, Greenway, Spuyten Duyvil, and Prentice have created a new retail and restaurant amenity, there is an increase in unreported crime—violent crimes, drug-related crimes, and gang-related crimes that are basically drug-related crimes—at the earlier exercise and I went home on the streets. Insecurity is truly a deterrent to active living. What can a designer do? At Intervale Green, we placed footprints in the circular inner courtyard and posted information that tells people how many loops around the courtyard it will take to walk a mile, how many calories they burn each revolution, and how much energy they expend. Since we had already built the space, the addition of this information added no significant expense to the building.

We tried to do more than promote stair use in this building. We were deliberate in our “growing” efforts in many ways to improve the experience of stair use. We measured everything from stair prompts to stair access to the buildings and we even looked at stair access to the buildings and we even looked at stair access and stair design, as well as elevator and health. Bicycle storage within buildings, exercise facilities, open space, bike lanes and streetscapes could function as a gym as well as an auditorium), in place of traditional auditoriums to improve academic performance by bringing a greater flow of oxygen to the brain. The test prep and drill bogging down of young people throughout the Bronx are overweight and over obese. The former Borough President of the Bronx Adrian Carrión studied infrastructure in Bronx schools before leaving for a federal post as the Director of the White House Office of Urban Affairs. He found that 23 percent of Bronx schools have no indoor gym, 22 percent have no outdoor facilities, 25 percent have no certified physical education instructors; and 90 percent of elementary schools and 50 percent of secondary schools failed to provide sufficient hours to meet minimum New York state-mandated physical education requirements. We have to change what is going on inside of these buildings. As found in the Active Design Guidelines, the young Construction Authority is now creating gymnastics (interchangeable spaces that can function as a gym as well as an auditorium), in place of traditional auditoriums to improve academic performance by bringing a greater flow of oxygen to the brain.

Even though the stairs are prominent, we posted bilingual stair prompts at elevator call areas and signs on the staircase. The Health Department sent representatives to count stair use in the building before and after the prompts went up and found a significant and natural increase in stair use due to signage.

Stairwells are the bare property of management in affordable housing. They are typically places where kids later and where drug uses take place. We can reverse a common approach to building security that otherwise discourages the use of stairwells by designing attractive stairwells, and by converting stairwells into areas and outside the stairs on each floor. The Health Department sent representatives to count stair use in the building before and after the prompts went up and found a significant and natural increase in stair use due to signage.

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landing to the seat of a free bicycle. We have also assessed the design of the bike paths ferry queue, which simplifies the process of bringing a bicycle to the island. For those possibly the longest in New York. We also have dedicated a cyclist-only section at the attractive and hassle-free. First, the ferry to the Island has a 125-space bike rack, the island fun and accessible.

GIPEC offers a variety of free and fee-based cycling options for adults and children, and its car-free environment invites exploration by a mile long, and its flat and barren and transform it to create an undulating landscape. The design team envisions a new topography at the southern portion of the island that will give people a dynamic environment to explore. Throughout the island, we are offering benches

The Active Design Guidelines include great common sense suggestions for designers to enhance the pedestrian experience. Throughout the island, we are offering benches, restrooms and drinking fountains, and wayfinding. In 2009 we installed finger signs with time estimates, which provide a marked and measured path for pedestrians. Visitors can now navigate from one end of the island to the other without getting lost.

The guidelines urge designers to create or preserve natural terrain for outdoor play areas. At Governors Island, the design team is going to take a place that is quite flat and transform it into active outdoor space.

There are a lot of suggestive suggestions contained in the Guidelines, but the qualitative experiences are also real opportunities for architects and landscape architects to design spaces that invite and facilitate these different types of activities. The activities that we have on the island inform us how well we are making forwards to create an appealing public space.

The Active Design Guidelines are relevant to that work? How do we promote physical activity in the planning of a large-scale mixed-use project? For example, Renzo Piano Building Workshop and FXFOWLE Architects emphasized the benefits that Active Design brings to the New York Times building and encourage movement throughout the vertical campus. Visible tracking mechanisms will show students and teachers the building’s energy usage, the amount of energy generated from the photovoltaics, and how much rainwater has been harvested by the stormwater capture system. This transparency will help all students understand why Sustainability and Active Design are important in their school building and community and to see how their building and their actions positively affect the environment and their own health.

The Promenade is the place we are specifically talking about when we ask whether it makes sense to design a green project or a project that incorporates Active Design. As designers, we know that it is good design, we know that it is the right thing to do, and it is necessary to our clients.

Active Design will require more than traditional marketing for wide-scale adoption. We will need to effectively communicate the value of its incorporation in our work and projects. As we promote the concept by providing examples and testimonials, the momentum will grow, and more and more designers and clients will feel proud to be a part of this important movement.
Innovative materials can be effective tools in promoting more active living, and ways to feature signage. One example is glazing. By selecting glazing that contains lights within it, you can make a space seem more open. Designers can use simple strategies to increase the light that reaches otherwise dark spaces. They can set test and maps within passing stairs that are not just retro-reflected, but not bright, but also photoluminescent. Thus, no matter what time of the day or night, information is easily accessible. The messages become durable because they are embedded into the material of the stone and will last through the life of the paving. Light pipes embedded within certain areas also allow you to create special spaces, walkways to areas that are normally blocked off using impervious, opaque concrete.

Modern lighting based upon LED technology requires very low power that small integral solar panels may be used to generate enough energy to power them all night. Materials that use photoluminescence or slip-resistant, solar-panel–lit flooring are appropriate and easy to install. At Material Connexion, we have sourced materials and products that enable lighting along walkways to be available continuously with an external power required. Light and visibility create safe and inviting conditions for people to use walkways and stairwells that would otherwise be spooky and treacherous.

Finally, some concrete paving is actually Teflon–impregnated as a way of increasing the surface resistance of the surface. Maintenance of this pavement is simple since the material is both graffiti and easy to wipe clean of debris and ice. When sourcing materials for your design, you must keep it very simple, keep it very well signed.

CASE STUDY: COOPER SQUARE
Jean Ooi, Architect, Morphosis
Cardiovascular fitness is no longer an inadvertent byproduct of spatial organization; space actively promotes people, and movement across space. At Morphosis, we strive to create connective spaces that engage movement and flow, to foster social interaction, health and wellbeing. Connectivity contributes to generating urban density at a range of scales, shaping the life of the city and its inhabitants.

PROGRAM
The new Cooper Square was driven by two primary factors—zoning and program. As Cooper Union’s aspiration to create an iconic and innovative academic building. The central stairs and atrium were conceived as a vehicle to foster increased physical activity and impromptu meeting opportunities. In the central stair system, elevator stop in the fifth and eighth floors; stairs traverse the atrium leading up and down a level from the fifth and eighth-floor sky lobbies. The ADA-service elevator and the skip-stop elevators are centrally located; operating in close proximity, the elevators further democratize the social environment while enhancing comfort and wellbeing.

ENCOURAGING FITNESS THROUGH CIRCULATION
The grand stairs are coupled with a skip-stop circulation strategy, to encourage increased physical activity and impromptu meeting opportunities. In the central stair system, elevator stop in the fifth and eighth floors; stairs traverse the atrium leading up and down a level from the fifth and eighth-floor sky lobbies. The ADA-service elevator and the skip-stop elevators are centrally located; operating in close proximity, the elevators further democratize the social environment while enhancing comfort and wellbeing.

CONNECTIVITY TO EXTERIOR CONDITIONS AND ACTIVITY
In the spirit of the institution’s dedication to free, open and accessible education, the building is designed to open the city to the institution to the public. Designing public to engage in social and creative activities within the building. Visual transparencies and engaging accessible public spaces connect the institution to the physical, social and cultural fabric of its urban context.
The Designers called the main access points “Slow Stairs” — “slow” in that elongated open space to walk. Transitions between 14th Street and 15th Street is a gathering place with visitors make that transition from the sidewalk to the elevated park. The flights are wide enough to allow two people abreast. They are airy. They are safe and highly visible. They are stretchy out so to you enjoy them and then emerge into the sunshine. There are 15 staircases in all spaced every two blocks, two them are the slow stairs.

VARIED PROGRAMMING
The High Line is a rich collection of experiences that encourage a prolonged stay. It has water features (some newly designed) and bathrooms, and benches for resting or doing all kinds of the other. The sun deck water feature between 14th Street and 15th Street is a glistening place with food and drink.

This park can exist in adaptive reuse as well as an active imagination, imagined by David and Josh, who never blanched at every fundraising opportunity. Neither did the citizens of New York, who supported this remarkable opportunity to walk. grasses and perennials. The concrete pavers evoke the rail and wildflowers growing up through the ballast. The uniqueness of the elevated rail’s height and location create unusual viewpoints of the city. Common, controversial, and unapologetic architecture are part of this city government that pays attention to good ideas and other commodities into New York City from upstate and from the barges coming across the Hudson from New Jersey. It escaped demolition for years after the freight service was decommissioned. The structure runs from 30th Street to the wide enough to allow two people abreast. They are airy. They are safe and highly visible. They are stretchy out so to you enjoy them and then emerge into the sunshine. There are 15 staircases in all spaced every two blocks, two them are the slow stairs.

variations of the city. Common, controversial, and unapologetic architecture are all in close view at different points along the High Line, providing a walk, a rest and open space to walk.

TRANSITIONS
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