

# Chapter 35

## Culture of Learning Cities: Connecting Leisure and Health for Lifelong Learning Communities

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter contributes a conceptual framework for addressing the health of communities through the synergy of leisure, public health, and continuing education systems at a localized city level. The culture learning cities offers a broader setting and case for implementing solutions that increase the overall health of communities. Key built environments within learning cities, such as parks, can serve as nontraditional continuing education structures, where people can learn and share their differences and experiences that continually improve qualities of the individual, community, and society.*

### INTRODUCTION

Synergy across professions represents a creative solution to complex problems in society. The culture of learning cities is an authentic example of such synergy and collaboration across diverse communities. Learning cities can describe extensions of education and learning beyond schools, colleges and universities for addressing the overall life, health and well-being of citizens. Two aspects that can be advanced are public health and leisure within a culture of learning cities. A practical U.S. example of learning cities involves strategic land-usage, from the historic land-grant legislation of American colleges and universities to the significant allocation of parks and recreation areas. This chapter will consider a comprehensive role for promoting learning cities for building healthy and healthful communities including

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enhanced relationships among professionals and practitioners, scholars and researchers, also citizens and lifelong learners for improving our community, our health, and our overall quality of life.

Learning cities describe an emerging concept about how communities can collectively support multiple, even conflicting initiatives for the good of all citizens. Such collaboration considers how environmental structures, such as parks, serve as nontraditional systems for leisure, public health, and lifelong learning. Professionals interested in advancing environments should consider diverse leisure activities that account for differences in age, race, and other societal identities, and incorporate such diversities into community education and broader notions of ecological health, social justice, and collective participation. Thus, healthy parks within healthy community synergism exemplify an important function within the context of learning cities.

This chapter contributes a conceptual framework for addressing the health of communities through the synergy of leisure, public health, and continuing education systems at a localized city level. We attempt to highlight the importance of health in advancing environments and contextualizing social concerns. We introduce conceptual models for leisure and recreation issues to account for tensions, conflicts, and negative aspects of shared experiences in communities. Race and culture differences have also been considered through the context of community education and lifelong learning-for-all. Within a comprehensive framework of learning cities, diversity and differences have been surveyed and addressed, which may lead toward every person's quality of life being enhanced.

Thus, learning cities can offer a broader setting and case for implementing solutions that increase the overall health of communities. In this chapter, the framework of learning cities describes parks, as nontraditional continuing education structures, where people can learn and share their differences and experiences that continually improve qualities of the individual, community, and society. Given that there is no one-size-fits-all conception of health, professionals and practitioners, along with park and recreation managers, even public health and continuing education practitioners, must begin reconstructing parks for the multiple concerns and challenges for becoming healthy communities.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH IN ADVANCING ENVIRONMENTS**

Learning cities can harness collaborative synergy when combining public health and built environment perspectives to address complex problems in society. Formed to increase public health, the collaborations across communities and professions are among the best examples of advancing environments through multifaceted approaches. At individual and societal levels, individuals exercise personal care and social responsibility towards healthy outcomes. Figure 1 shows a conceptual framework for the drivers and burdens of health in a learning city. Among some of the most complex problems facing individuals and communities are the environmental burdens of confronting obesity, violence, and health care access. At the community level, education, lifestyle, and the built environment are shared resources driving positive health outcomes. In this framework, community level drivers are necessary to overcome and combat individual level burdens. Increases in community health status, or comparative health status between communities, are conceptualized as a function of the advancement of these drivers. This chapter will use parks and recreational initiatives to exemplify this function in action.

In this age of population health, learning cities incorporate education and justice into a broad notion of ecological health in which the built environment is as important to health status as the provision of care. Public health system goals directly impacted by the various drivers and burdens shown in the

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