

Chapter 40

Developing a Competitive City through Healthy Decision-Making

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the challenges and opportunities associated with planning for a competitive city. The chapter is based on the assumption that a healthy city is a fundamental prerequisite for a competitive city. Thus, it is critical to examine the local determinants of health and factor these into any planning efforts. The main focus of the chapter is on e-health planning by utilising Web-based geographic decision support systems. The proposed novel decision support system would provide a powerful and effective platform for stakeholders to access essential data for decision-making purposes. The chapter also highlights the need for a comprehensive information framework to guide the process of planning for healthy cities. Additionally, it discusses the prospects and constraints of such an approach. In summary, this chapter outlines the potential insights of using an information science-based framework and suggests practical planning methods as part of a broader e-health approach for improving the health characteristics of competitive cities.

BACKGROUND

For the past few decades, there has been emerging evidence of a close relationship between health and place. The Healthy Cities movement (WHO, 1999) is a good example of the effort that is now being

put into the creation of places that can promote health and wellbeing. This initiative was officially introduced in 1986 by Ilona Kickbusch at a conference of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Copenhagen, Denmark. To date, according to Health Cities Illawarra (2010), “since 1985 over 3000 healthy cities, towns, villages and islands have been established throughout the world”

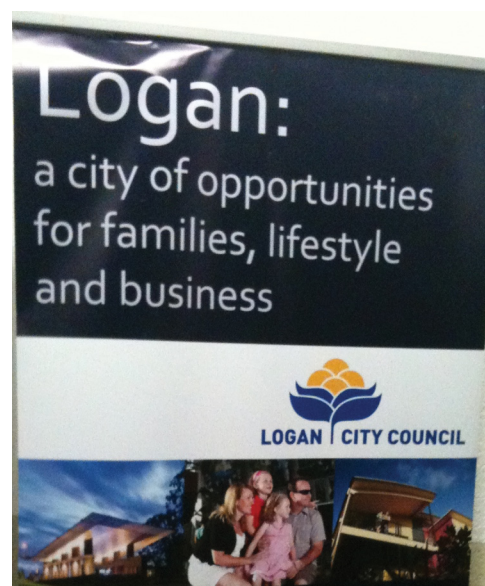
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A healthy community is a critical component of a competitive city (Johnson, 2002). The qualities that reflect health can make a 'location' more attractive and, therefore, competitive in comparison to global standards. The term 'competitiveness' has been well defined by Webster and Muller (2000, p. 1): *"The ability of an urban region to produce and market a set of products (goods and services) that represent good value (not necessarily lowest price) in relation to comparable products of other urban regions. Non-tradeables, e.g., local services, are part of the competitiveness equation. An urban economy that produces goods and services for local people of high value relative to price, supports the export economy of the city, making it more competitive, as well as directly raising the quality of life and standard of living for people living in the urban region"*. Thus, like the healthy cities movement, the call for competitive cities is based on the notion of better city lifestyles. The economic competitiveness of a city is defined by the prosperity of its citizens. A competitive city is known as 'a city of opportunities for families, lifestyle and business' (See Figure 1 as an example). Similarly, a healthy city is *"one that is continually creating and improving [its] physical and social environments and strengthening the community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and achieving their maximum potential"* (Flynn, 1996, p. 300).

It is not surprising, then, that the task of applying knowledge to the process of building a healthy and competitive city has become an important focus for urban planners. However, there is evidence that planners require a new approach to enable them to respond to this agenda. Specifically, they need timely access to local information, collaborative planning processes and mechanisms for engaging the public in decision-making. The WHO has concluded that e-Health systems hold great promise for both low- and high-income countries. The benefits of an online approach to health planning apply not only to

effective and efficient health-care delivery, but also to public health governance, finance, education, research, and health-related economic activities (WHO, 2008). The purpose of this chapter is to examine an online approach to planning that can respond to the call for healthy and competitive cities. In this chapter, we will first review competitive cities in the context of health. Then, we provide discussion on e-health decision support systems in the context of collaborative health planning practice. Next, we present our suggested conceptual framework for planning healthy and competitive cities. Subsequently, and to apply this framework in practice, we introduce a participatory model for implementing collaborative health planning. In summary, we conclude that e-health Geographical Information System (GIS) based Decision Support System (DSS) can contribute to the development of healthy and competitive cities, particularly if the challenges presented by an online environment can be addressed.

Figure 1. A promotional tool of Logan, Australia



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