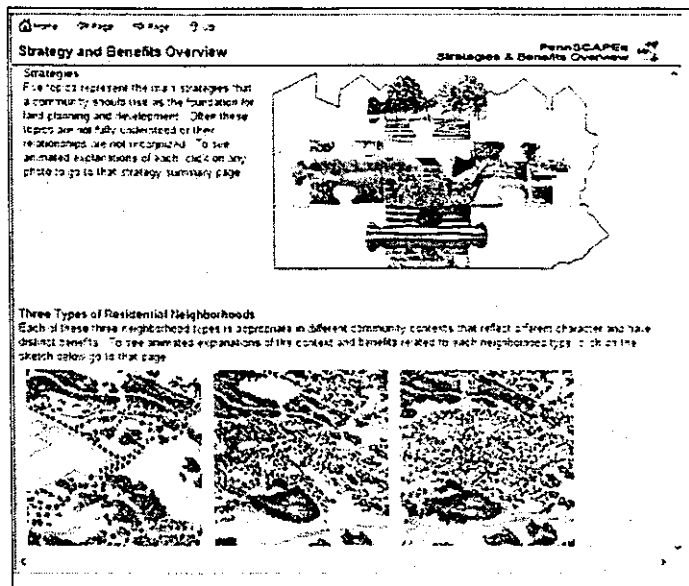


Multimedia Communication to Encourage Physical Activity-Focused Communities

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There is growing evidence that the built environment has a significant impact on public health, and specifically, that sedentary lifestyles are linked to living patterns. Over the past 50 years the pattern of development in the United States has become increasingly dispersed, which necessitates a growing dependence on the automobile. At the same time, these settlement patterns often lack readily accessible, comfortable places for active and passive recreation. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced in March 2004 that the combination of physical inactivity and poor diet now constitutes the second-most preventable form of death in the United States. Nationally, 65% of adults are overweight or obese, and unfortunately, Pennsylvania ranks near the top with nearly 70% of Pennsylvanians at risk for health problems related to a lack of physical activity.¹ These statistics point to a strong need to assist communities in learning about the interrelationships between land use, transportation, and physical activity, and how to more effectively plan for healthy-community design.

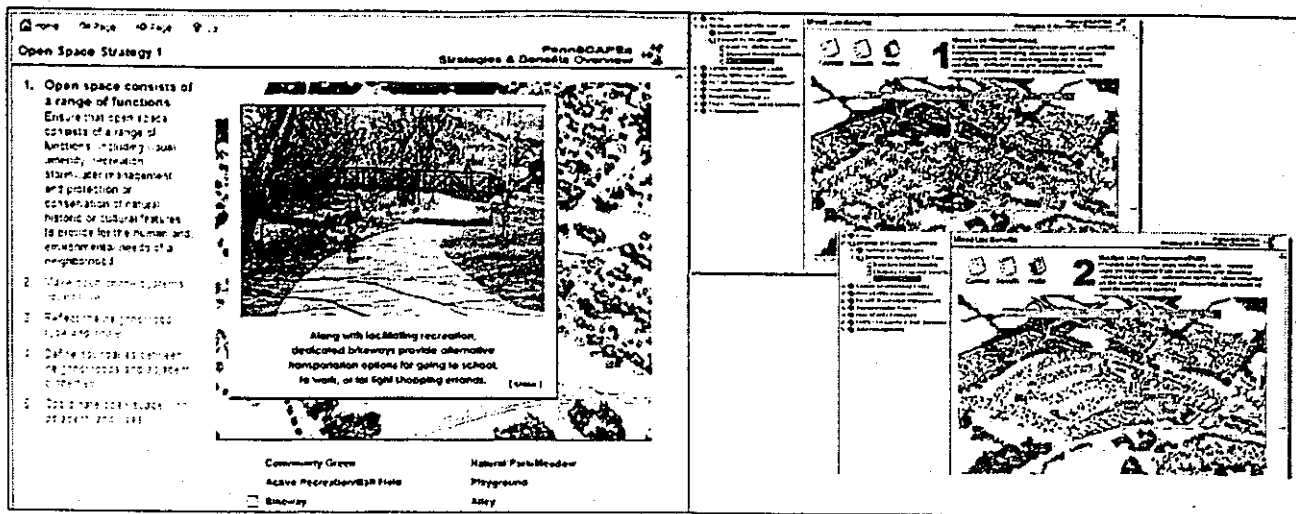
To address these issues a multidisciplinary team created PennSCAPEs (Pennsylvania Strategies, Codes And People Environments)². It is a multimedia education and empowerment tool to assist communities in creating physical activity-focused communities. PennSCAPEs special communication format, with numerous graphics, interactive explanations and direct cross-reference links between related information, provides an engaging delivery system that makes these topics more accessible and understandable to citizens and local municipalities.



Members of the core research team included landscape architects, planners, and architects. This diverse perspective resulted in an integrated structure that addresses five key "building blocks" of neighborhood design: Open Space, Stormwater Management, Streets and Blocks, Lots and Buildings, and Building Performance. These are called "strategies" in PennSCAPEs. Realizing that communities are diverse, these strategies are illustrated and discussed within three different community contexts, which increase in intensity of development: Rural, Cluster, and Mixed- Use.

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/trend/maps/index.htm>

² Hamer Center for Community Design Assistance, June 2003 www.pennscapes.psu.edu



Another dimension to PennSCAPEs is that all of the information is presented in both an educational mode – key strategies and benefits -- as well as sample codes, which communities can incorporate into their own regulations. The goal is to demonstrate how PennSCAPEs codes can be a desirable replacement or alternative to low-density residential zoning that increases dependence on automobiles and provides few opportunities for physical activity.

While planners and designers realize that planning issues are not “dry” – bringing them to life and making them comprehensible for a lay audience has often been a challenge. PennSCAPEs specially designed, highly-graphic, multimedia format is widening the audience of who becomes engaged in planning within a community.

Details about PennSCAPEs to be presented include:

- How the benefits of healthy community design are uniquely portrayed and explained through specially created multimedia – users view information in a game-like manner.
- How dynamic comparisons with conventional approaches to development are used to clarify why a community should make the effort to switch to these physical activity-focused approaches to development.
- How the issues illuminated in PennSCAPEs are transferable to many locations and communities facing challenges to adopting healthy community design.