



The Natural Learning Initiative's 6th Annual

Growing IN Place Symposium | Prospectus

Design for Children, Families, and Nature in the City

Pathways, places, participation

February 21, 2013 | 9:00am - 4:30pm

SPEAKERS

Opening

Robin Moore, DiplArch, MCP, Hon.ASLA, Director, The Natural Learning Initiative; Professor of Landscape Architecture, College of Design, NC State University.

Gene Bressler, FASLA, Professor and Head of the Department of Landscape Architecture, College of Design, NC State University.

Ed Johnson, RLA, ASLA, President, North Carolina Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects.

Grant Meacci, MLA, ASLA, Division Manager, Urban Design Center, Raleigh Department of City Planning, Raleigh, NC.

Mitchell Silver, AICP, PP, Chief Planning and Development Officer and Director, Department of City Planning, City of Raleigh; President, the American Planning Association (APA).

Presentations

Vikas Mehta, PhD, School of Architecture & Community Design, University of South Florida, author of the forthcoming: *The Street: A Quintessential Social Public Space*.

Creating Lively Community Streets

As the urban renaissance continues, more young professionals and retirees are discovering the joys of urban living, obsolete sections of town are being redeveloped and restored as economically productive places to live, businesses are increasingly scoring livability as a key criteria for relocation or expansion ... and streets are increasingly seen as a key to improving quality of life in the urban public realm. How can we ensure that new forms of multimodal "street" serve users of all ages, abilities, cultural backgrounds, and income levels?

As a street researcher, **Vikas** will help us understand design and building code parameters that can transform neighborhood commercial streets into genuine community streets attractive to families and children. What are some of the physical form, land use mix, density, motorized and non-motorized transportation, street dimensions, furnishings, and landscape attributes required to support "lively, intergenerational" streets? What types of management strategies help support success of community streets across different types of communities and contexts?

Lauren Blackburn, AICP, MURP, Bike/Ped Division Director, NC Department of Transportation.

Active Transportation for All

From the early 1990's until now, Federal Highway Program funding for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure has increased fortyfold to current levels of just under a billion dollars annually. This means "active transportation" is increasingly seen as a politically viable built environment strategy for supporting healthy lifestyles, reducing road congestion, conserving transportation investment, maintaining air quality, and enhancing community quality life, including recreation needs of children and families. North Carolina is a leading state in this arena, relative to population size.

Lauren will describe development of pedestrian and bicycle policies in North Carolina and elsewhere, related particularly to the recreation needs of children and families. How can we literally connect the dots so that children can walk and bike to "meaningful destinations" to meet friends, play and learn? How can ped/bike pathways be designed and managed as compelling recreational urban greenways and trails, "pulling" kids off couches and away from screens, encouraging them to engage in healthy active play-along-the-way?

Ed Johnson, RLA, ASLA, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, NCDOT, Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation, President, North Carolina Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects.

Implementing Safe Routes to and from School in North Carolina

North Carolina is one of seven jurisdictions participating in the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) state network project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in support of the SRTS National Partnership (a network of more than 500 organizations, government agencies and professional groups). The NC program goal is to advance state-level policy reform, resulting in federal transportation funds for street-scale improvements and joint-use agreements. The program is managed by NCDOT. The SRTS National Partnership mission is to advocate for safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, in daily life to improve the health and wellbeing of America's students, and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities.

Ed will describe progress of SRTS in North Carolina, discuss policy reforms supporting SRTS implementation strategies, present examples of child-and-family-friendly street improvements, and examine the positive results of joint use agreements to extend use of school facilities. What are the lessons learned in various types of communities? How was success achieved in the most outstanding examples? What are the most common barriers to be overcome? How can landscape design help to make safe routes TO and FROM school playfully comfortable for children and accompanying adults?

Kathy Bull, Director of Marketing and Development, Children and Nature Network; Chair, North Carolina Children and Nature Coalition.

Bringing Nature to City Kids: Update on the Children and Nature Movement

Publication of *Last Child in the Woods* (Richard Louv, 2006) spawned an almost instant "children and nature" movement including a broad range of enthusiasts, advocates, and engaged professionals, which continues to gather momentum and strength from grassroots to federal agencies and everywhere between. The children and nature movement has touched a raw nerve in the American populous. Many are deeply concerned about the implications of childhood withdrawal from nature both for individual children and society at large if we lose understanding about our home in the Universe.

Kathy will introduce the national organization, Children and Nature Network, and its promotion of engagement of children with nature in urban communities, illustrated with examples from the SE United States. Closer to home, the North Carolina Children and Nature Coalition (NC CAN) will also be introduced.

Liz O'Brien, PhD, Deputy Head of Social and Economic Research Group, Centre for Human and Ecological Sciences, Forest Research, UK

Creating Playful, Family-friendly Urban Green Infrastructure Programs and Policies

Green infrastructure is a relatively new idea, developing in the UK, USA, and Canada. Authors Benedict and McMahon define green infrastructure as “an interconnected network of green space that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions and provides ... the ecological framework needed for environmental, social and economic sustainability,” which the Conservation Fund sees as “strategically planned and managed” systems. A growing number of US cities are developing Green Infrastructure Plans, which at neighborhood level, could offer fine-grained, interlinked nature play and learning areas suitable for children and families – indeed, replicating neighborhood places where kids used to play – and still do when circumstances permit.

Liz will describe the UK Forestry Commission and other European agencies’ research-driven policies and programs to entice children and families into managed urban woodlands and other forms of green infrastructure. Social assessment of programs will be discussed.

Laura Lawson, PhD, Professor and Chair, Department of Landscape Architecture, Rutgers State University of New Jersey. Coauthor. *Urban Community Gardens: Greening the City and Growing Communities in Seattle*. Author, *City Bountiful: A Century of Community Gardening in America*.

It's Not Just About Food: The Multiple Roles of Urban Community Gardens

Since the 1890s, providing places for people to garden has been an inventive strategy to improve American urban conditions. Vacant-lot gardens, school gardens, Depression-era relief gardens, victory gardens, and community gardens each represent an impulse to return to gardening during times of social and economic change. Rarely considered as simply places to grow food and flowers, gardens and their associated programs provide multiple benefits; nonetheless, they remain an ambiguous land use not completely accepted as permanent open space. Few cities include community gardens in city planning processes.

Laura will touch on the evolution of urban garden programs and the values associated with gardening, describe their multiple roles as educational resources engaging children, youth, and families, and in counteracting food deserts in low-income and minority communities. Planning and design strategies, construction, and stewardship utilizing volunteer community participation to create a sense of community and program sustainability will be addressed. Arguments will be presented for gardens as permanent land uses including their contribution to active-living policies, and as components of pedestrian/bicycle community networks and family destinations.

Pamela Wridt, PhD, Co-Director, Children's Environments Research Group, The Center for Human Environments, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Engaging Children and Youth in Neighborhood Change

Genuine participation has long been a fundamental principal of development professionals who work in planning and design on projects where children and youth have a direct interest (or indirect as future adults). Indeed, the right to such participation is included in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (an individual younger than 18). Substantial evidence from field research

and practice demonstrates the value of participation because it creates a sense of ownership, respect, and understanding for results on the ground. Participation provides an educational vehicle for children to learn basic democratic skills such as compromise, teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration.

Pamela will introduce and discuss uMAP, a participatory community mapping process to facilitate social action and neighborhood change in a way that is based on young people's everyday lives, perceptions, values, assets and needs. uMAP was developed to engage youth and other residents living in urban areas in the planning, design and development of their neighborhoods and communities. It relies on young people's perceptions of the spaces and programs important to them in their neighborhood and the city and provides a unique model for assessing citizen perceptions of community quality-of-life indicators, for identifying problem areas, and for taking corrective action in areas such as infrastructure, safety, housing, and social services. uMAP is particularly useful for addressing health promotion issues to find out how young people use their community for play and recreation, to learn how neighborhoods can support or prohibit use of spaces and programs important for health and well-being.

Robin Moore, DiplArch, MCP, Hon.ASLA, Director, The Natural Learning Initiative; Professor of Landscape Architecture, College of Design, NC State University.

Designing and Managing New Models of Healthy Lifestyle Family Spaces

New realities of family life and dramatic changes in community lifestyles; the growing urban population and demographic shifts by age and ethnicity; ever-widening income disparity, economic upheavals, and continuing economic uncertainty; all affect present day thinking about how to plan, design, and manage meaningful, functional spaces for children and families. Two overarching, themes emerging in recent years are the obesity crisis and the children and nature movement. Their intersection is producing new models of health-promoting places that motivate physical activity, where children can playfully engage with nature and in some cases edible landscapes. As existing health and safety norms or maintenance protocols or risk management approaches do not cover these new types of environments, new systemic procedures must be developed for site managers.

Robin will discuss NLI's latest thinking about environmental site management concepts, procedures, and assessment, including risk management, using case examples from recent projects. The national *Nature Play and Learning Area Guidelines* (working title) being developed by NLI with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) with support from USFS will be introduced for discussion.