

# The Healthy City

## *What Makes a Healthy City?*

The most important factor in a healthy city is an atmosphere that promotes pedestrianism. An environment that is conducive to residents and visitors to actively engaging with the city is crucial to the city's well-being. The components of such an atmosphere include: destinations, safety, and sociability. Pedestrian activity is an indicator of a city's liveliness, so a setting that supports this activity is a vital factor in city health.



The first component of promoting city exploration is the presence of attractive destinations. They are locations and scenes that incite interest and further observation and exploration. Destinations are not necessarily businesses, but include spaces in the city that individuals are inspired to connect with. Art, usable space, greenness, and cleanliness are components of destinations that contribute to an atmosphere that promotes pedestrianism.

Destinations may be as simple as sites of urban art or murals. Sites of urban art, such as the decorative doors of the Old City in Philadelphia, draw people into the city, provoking interest in continued exploration. Art brings excitement to city exploration; preventing a city from being perceived as boring or mundane. Walking through the Old City of Philadelphia, constant appealing visual stimulation instills the pedestrian with a desire to continue investigating the city.



Apart from passing points of interest, art in cities may be destinations where residents are drawn to linger. In the YouTube video of Murals in Philadelphia, a neighborhood resident explained how the presence of a mural drew residents to spend time there. The space was a work of art itself and the art's beauty drew people to the public space. Pieces of urban art and murals are manifestations of city pride and inspire more city pride. Recognizing the dignity of one's space brings positive social outlook to residents and such an attitude promotes a safe environment. Destinations of art promote pedestrian engagement both directly and indirectly.

Usable public space is another category of destination that stimulates involvement with the city; it may or may not include art. During presentations of Philadelphia Janes Walks, the significance of usability of public space was discussed. "Touristy" public spaces are manufactured to be destinations, but may not be assets to the city if residents are not able to engage in/with them. In "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces," William H. Whyte suggested the presence of other people and seating are success factors public spaces. His research suggests that regarding space preferences, people like to be around other people. This does not necessarily mean direct interaction, but the opportunity to people watch is enough to consider a public space a publicly engaging atmosphere. If the intent of a space is for people to linger, seating is vital in order to promote

comfortable enjoyment. Areas where children play are examples of attractive and usable public space. Such places encourage appreciation of the city's resources as well as sociability and continued exploration. Public spaces can motivate people to leave their homes and engage in their community; attractive and usable public spaces inspire pedestrianism.



Destinations are sites that stimulate movement throughout the city. Urban art is one sort of destination, wherein residents are incited to set out for and linger among the artistry, or art may be points that heighten interest of passerby, encouraging further exploration. Usable public space is also an example of how destinations promote pedestrianism. Greenness and cleanliness contribute to the success of destinations. Both make the city more aesthetically pleasing, which inspires further engagement with it. Greenness also promotes health by connecting people to their "species being." (Marx 65) Part of being human is interaction with nature and interaction with other humans; green spaces that stimulate pedestrianism address both of these components of the species being and thus promote the spiritual health of city residents.

Safety is a significant component of an engaging pedestrian-friendly city. It is related to factors of the urban environment that "make residents feel comfortable navigating the cityscape." (Lafayette Technology Clinic 7) Navigability is an important component of safety; it prevents pedestrians from feeling in danger of being lost and experiencing the discomfort of disorientation. Obvious traffic patterns and the availability of maps make residents and

visitors confident in their explorations. As observed in Philadelphia Janes Walks, features such as cobblestone roads may slow automobile traffic, which makes pedestrians feel less in danger of reckless driving.



"Sidewalks [that] accommodate pedestrians actively and comfortably" are necessary for safety as well. (What Makes a Great Street?) The presence of friendly pedestrians is crucial for a safe city environment. Such friendliness makes visitors confident in exploring, because it ensures they will receive help if they become disoriented; it also instills confidence in one's physical safety while exploring the city. In "The Murals of Philadelphia," one resident explained that prior to the neighborhood's transformation, "you couldn't stand here like we're doing now, you might get mugged or something." The presence of impending crime or danger must be negligible in order for an atmosphere to encourage engagement with the city. Safety is intertwined with the components of destinations and sociability, which compose the vital factor of an atmosphere that promotes pedestrianism in a healthy city.

Neighborhood sociability leads to engagement with the city. Due to the human inclination to interact with other humans, a social city motivates residents to leave their homes to explore and connect with others in the community. The connection between sociability and public spaces is clear: public spaces provide residents and visitors with an arena in which to be social. A safe space that is social is a welcoming environment and in





its nature promotes diversity. The presence of welcoming and usable space may be an avenue for cultural dialogue and awareness within the city; public spaces and pedestrianism “let[s] birds fly.”(Friedman 4) Such exchange is vital in order for a city to benefit from its diversity; thus pedestrianism allows a city to fully reap the benefits of its diverse population. Social ties within the community encourage continuous interaction in the city.



Destinations, safety, and sociability all develop city pride among residents. In an interview with Active Living Network, Jane Jacobs emphasized the importance of a sense of dignity in place, in order to create attachment to the neighborhood. An atmosphere that invites people to walk through the city promotes this sort of

attachment by promoting engagement with the city. The more connected a resident is to the city, the more he/she will feel compelled to positively contribute to its health. An environment that promotes pedestrianism, therefore, is not only the primary indicator of a healthy city, but also the source of perpetuating the city’s health. Through physical interaction with the city, residents learn of the significance of a healthy city and are motivated to actively promote the city’s wellbeing.



An atmosphere that promotes pedestrianism creates a city in which the pulse runs steadily from the inviting heart of the city through safe and navigable streets and public spaces. The components of such an environment include destinations, safety, and sociability. A city that encourages pedestrianism is truly healthy, for it empowers its residents to develop a relationship with nature, the urban setting, and other people in the city.

## Business

### *Pedestrian Traffic “Boosts Local Economies”*

In a city where the atmosphere encourages walking around, pedestrians encounter the city's businesses along their walks. A city that invites residents and visitors to explore its streets invites them to support its businesses as well. Residents may also feel more connected to the local economy if they are interacting with the community physically and socially. A safe and walkable city with usable public space is inviting to tourists, which stimulates the city's economy. An environment that promotes pedestrianism is truly crucial to city health.





## Sports



### *Recreational Public Spaces*

Destinations like this skate park are usable public spaces that promote sociability engagement with the city. They motivate residents to leave their homes and interact in the city's public areas. This skate park

addresses a specific community need for a safe area for youth to skateboard and rollerblade. Meeting this need stimulates pride in the assets of the community which creates an attachment to the neighborhood and commitment to the health of the city



# Science and Health

## *The Heart of the City*

The most important factor of a healthy city can be likened to the human circulatory system. This system keeps the blood flowing through the body, as a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere keeps residents and visitors exploring the city. Pathways within the city that promote popular intersections create popular public spaces, promoting the sociability and opportunity for diverse interaction in the city. Veins and arteries lead to the heart much like streets and pathways lead to such an intersection within the city, filling it with life.

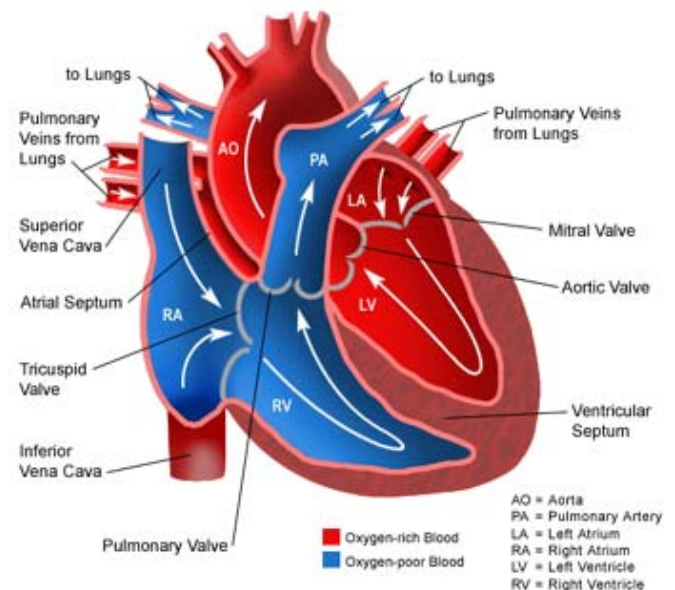
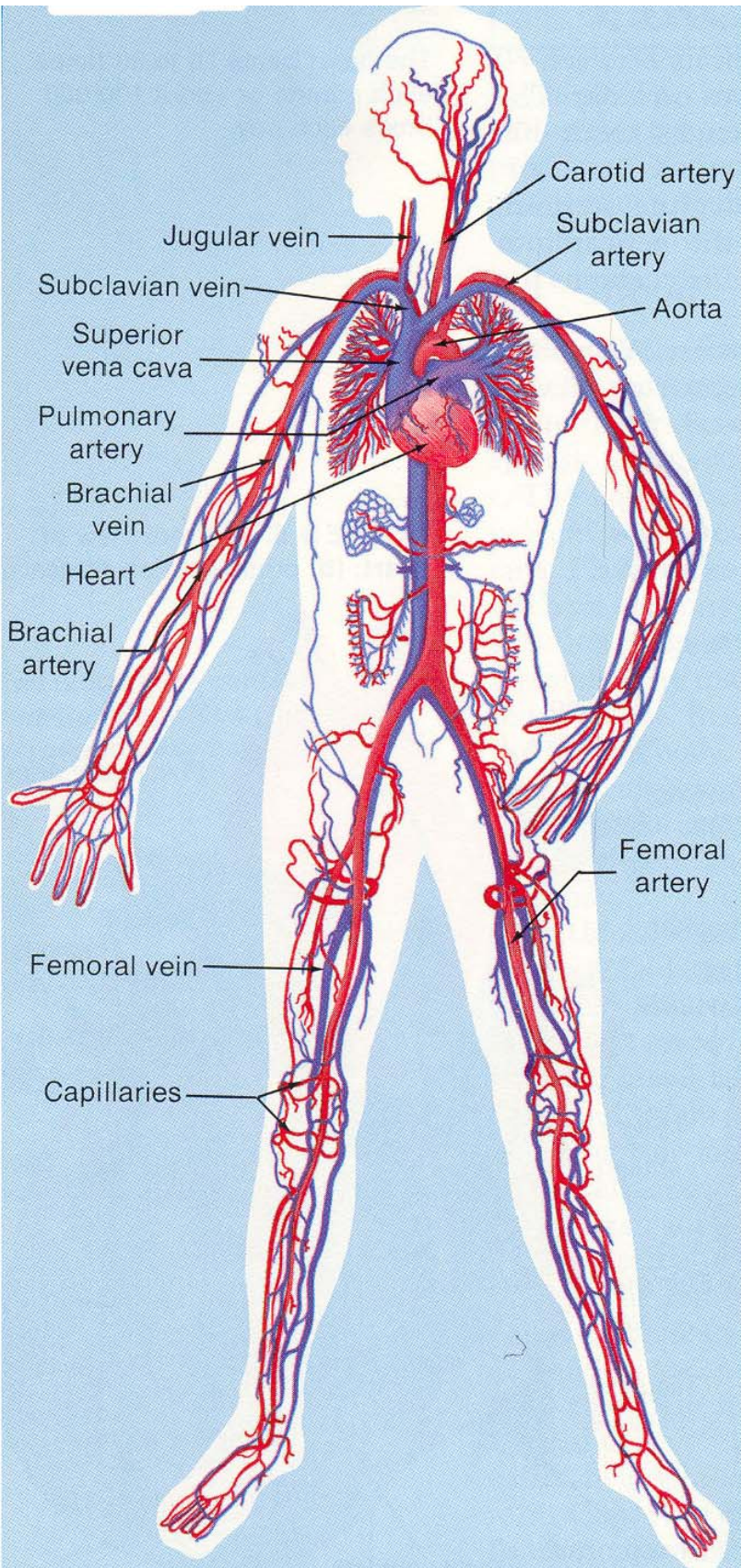


Figure 2.7: Circulatory system



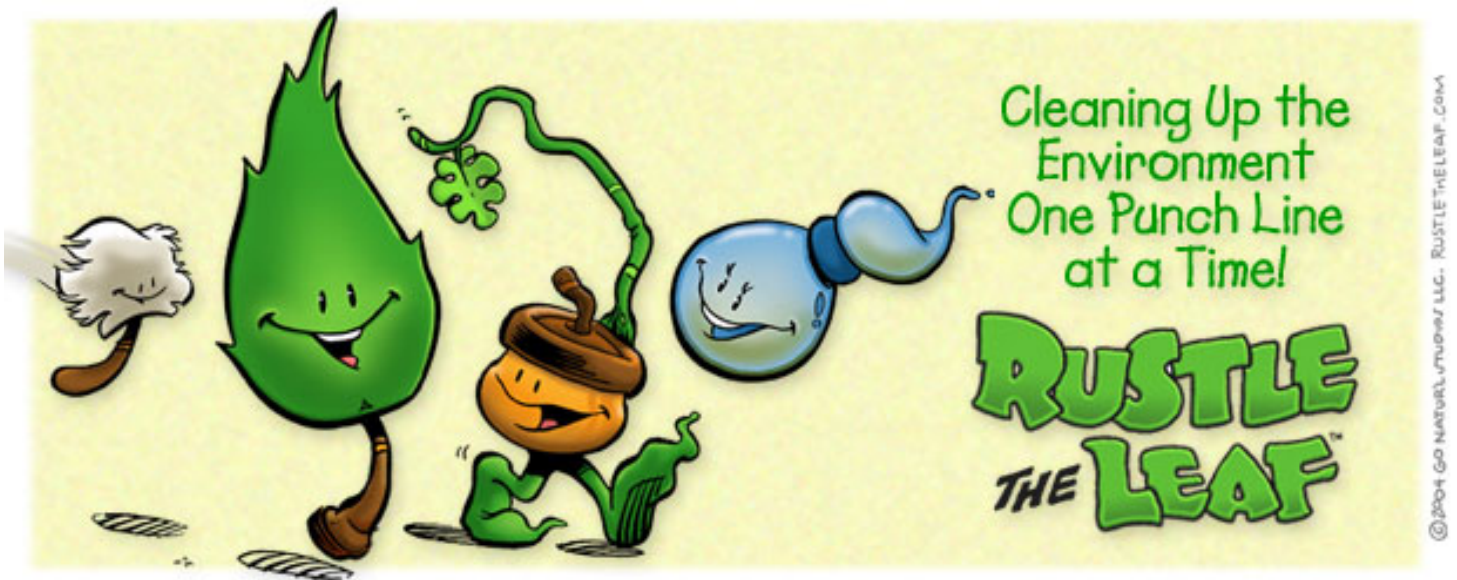
# Arts

## *Murals and Urban Art*

Urban Arts and murals in cities encourage pedestrians to engage with their city. Urban art along the streets provides points of interest, making a casual walk through the city enjoyable and thought-provoking. Art develops pride and ownership in the city. It is most powerful when it is a contribution of the city's residents, for in this instance the residents attachment to the city is strengthened and they are compelled to continue positive interactions with and within the city.



## Comics



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An atmosphere that promotes pedestrianism brings children and families out into their neighborhood!