A new study in King County mapped food deserts by looking at grocery cost and the time it takes on foot or public transportation to get to a store rather than simply distance. They found that, for those without vehicle access, food deserts were fairly widespread across the county, leaving only about three percent of the vulnerable populations with reasonable access to a low-cost supermarket.

In this 2012 survey, researchers found the vast majority of seniors plan to stay in their current homes for the next five to ten years, but many worry for their long-term health and financial situations.

Communities built with thoughtful design to incorporate health considerations are often linked with more active communities and overall healthier lifestyles. This fact sheet lists examples of design elements and programs meant to foster active living, policy recommendations, and other key research in the field.

In light of the lead poisoning crisis in Flint, Michigan, communities across the country are examining their own lead toxicity issues. However, the state of Washington remains uncompliant to federally mandated lead screenings for children on Medicaid, who are more likely to live in old buildings containing lead-based paints. The state argues that lead poisoning is not a pressing issue in Washington, but many believe the lack of testing makes sources on lead exposure risk unreliable.

http://atlantaregional.org/aging_and_health/.
This overview describes the Atlanta Regional Commission’s strategic plan to address the changing needs of the region’s aging population. The plan’s priorities include transportation, housing, caregiver support and long-term services and support, enabling people to age in their own homes.

This article argues that parks are a key tool in improving both physical and mental health. It also addresses the socioeconomic disparities in park access and therefore the health benefits they provide. As a call to action, it suggests considering the health services provided by parks when valuing them in budget actions and changing the way citizens think of parks.

Cascade Bike Club, the state of Washington’s largest bicycle non-profit, advocates for programs and policies working to make streets safer for all users.

This website has information on ‘universal design’, an orientation to design with a focus on mobile equity. It encourages the design of urban spaces usable by all people, regardless of disability or age, to the extent possible.

In a study on the link between the built environment and barriers to mobility for older adults living in urban areas, researchers found seniors living in more accessible environments were more likely to be mobile.

According to this briefing, four main factors should be considered when planning health care policy for aging populations. These factors are eldercare workforce capacity, financing care services, community-based coordination of care post-hospitalization, and urban planning, including transportation, environmental and land use planning.

This study tested how the presence and density of trees affected the social use of outdoor spaces near public housing developments. Areas with trees consistently saw traffic from larger groups and more diverse groups of people.


Dow, Liz. 2017. “Mapping a More Playable Future | ArcNews.” Esri. Accessed July 25. http://www.esri.com/esri-news/arcnews/spring15articles/mapping-a-more-playable-future. KaBOOM! is a national non-profit dedicated to increasing children’s access to active play. This article addresses play deserts via mapping, using data such as playground access, density of children in the area, and income levels to determine ‘play need’. These play desert maps can then be used to analyze and prioritize new play opportunities for neighborhoods.


Franklin, Deborah. 2012. “How Hospital Gardens Help Patients Heal.” Scientific American, March. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/nature-that-nurtures/. Scientific studies show that interactions with the natural world are proven to reduce stress and pain levels, boosting immune systems and making treatments more effective for hospital patients. Many hospitals have adopted the practice of building gardens as part of their design and, ultimately, treatment programs.

Gibbs, K, SJ Slater, N Nicholson, DC Barker, and FJ Chaloupka. 2012. “Income Disparities in Street Features That Encourage Walking.” Chicago, IL: Institute for Health Research and Policy. http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org/_asset/02fpi3/btg_street_walkability_FINAL_03-09-12.pdf. This brief discusses walkability based on a 2010 study performed in communities across the country. The results showed that low-income communities were less likely to have sidewalks, adequate street lighting and other factors that impact walkability. The brief ends with policy recommendations for state and local governments.

Kawachi, I., B. P. Kennedy, and R. Glass. 1999. “Social Capital and Self-Rated Health: A Contextual Analysis.” American Journal of Public Health 89 (8): 1187–93. State-level variables of social capital, such as social trust and group membership, were compared with individual-level results from self-administered health surveys to compare social
capital and personal health risk. When individual-level barriers to health were filtered out, it became clear that social capital has health advantages.


Kondo, Michelle, Bernadette Hohl, SeungHoon Han, and Charles Branas. 2016. “Effects of Greening and Community Reuse of Vacant Lots on Crimes.” *Urban Studies* 53 (15): 3279–3295. doi:10.1177/0042098015608058. Two types of treatments were tested on vacant lots in order to record their effects on crime. The first treatment was a cleaning and greening ‘stabilization’ treatment and the other was a ‘community reuse’ treatment, often in the form of a community garden. The study found that the addition of either treatment type reduced several categories of serious crime, including burglary and assault based on the type of treatment used.

Langston, Jennifer. 2011. “Northwest Food Deserts?” *Sightline Institute*. http://www.sightline.org/2011/06/02/northwest-food-deserts/. This article argues that regional agricultural production and the presence and prevalence of food deserts are unrelated. It goes on to discuss the limits of the USDA food desert definition, but puts stock in the concept none the less. The article also links to other resources, such as the federal Food Desert Locator.

Lund, Hollie. 2002. “Pedestrian Environments and Sense of Community.” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 21 (3): 301–12. doi:10.1177/0739456X0202100307. Lund explores how resident’s sense of community is affected by both the objective and subjective variables of the pedestrian environment. The study’s results supported both the hypothesis that sprawling, automobile-oriented neighborhoods have less of a sense of community and the hypothesis that pedestrian environment factors influence sense of community.


The World Health Organization (WHO) created a ‘Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities’, along with a guide and checklist for cities interested in improving their age-friendliness, including topics such as housing and community support. This article discusses the pros and cons of these guidelines and what could be added to make them more holistic.


———. 2016. “Healthy Places - Health Impact Assessment (HIA).” Center for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm. A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a decision-making tool meant to evaluate the potential public health effects of a plan, project or policy before it is implemented. This overview contains more in-depth explanations, examples and evidence supporting HIA’s role as a valuable assessment tool.

National Center for Healthy Housing. 2013. “2013 State of Healthy Housing.” National Center for Healthy Housing. http://www.nchh.org/policy/2013stateofhealthyhousing.aspx. The State of Healthy Housing report’s goal is to inform policymakers and other advocates of the state of their community’s housing conditions. This website provides an interactive map linking to metropolitan centers all over the country with in-depth housing reports. The metrics include problems such as water leaks and signs of rats.


National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH), and American Public Health Association (APHA). 2014. “National Healthy Housing Standard.” National Center for Healthy Housing. http://www.nchh.org/Portals/0/Contents/NHHS_Full.Doc.pdf. Because of housing’s proven status as a major determinant of health, the National Healthy Housing Standard was created as a tool to set minimum performance standards for healthy, safe housing through a cross discipline approach, bridging the housing, building code and public health fields. This standard of care would improve housing conditions and therefore health outcomes.

In 2011, the state of Washington passed a Complete Streets grant program. This program targets all street users, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users and truck drivers. This report summarizes different ways to make these modes of transportation safer and more accessible, the state’s major goals for the program and projected benefits of adopting Complete Streets.


Healthy Kids-Healthy Schools is a grant with OSPI funding from 2015 through 2017 that aims to help schools overcome barriers to improved student health. The grant categories are nutrition, physical activity and drinking water.


The National ParkRx Initiative works to support Park Prescription programs across the nation through partnership and resource sharing. These programs urge people to use parks and other open green space in order to improve both individual and community health outcomes.


In an international study, data on neighborhood walkability, public transportation access and park access were compared with data on resident’s physical activity levels. Researchers concluded that the design of the given urban environment could have a substantial impact on physical activity.


Passed in late 2015, Levy to Move Seattle is a nine year levy meant to fund major safety improvements to existing transportation infrastructure as well as invest in new travel options for the expanding metropolitan area.


Sound Transit 3 was a ballot measure during Seattle’s 2016 elections that proposed the addition of 62 miles of light rail, expanded capacity and service of train lines, both rapid and express bus services and improved ease-of-access stations. The measure passed with a timeline ending in 2041 and certain projects in operation by 2024.
Transportation Improvement Board (TIB). 2017. “Complete Streets Award Selection.” Transportation Improvement Board. http://www.tib.wa.gov/grants/completestreets/2017%20Complete%20Streets%20Awards.pdf. Complete Streets is a policy approach advocating safe access for all street users in order to create livable communities. In order to incentivize the adoption of Complete Streets, the TIB presented monetary awards to agencies across the state for their Complete Streets projects.


The Healthy Housing initiative aims to address environmental factors causing poor health outcomes by improving housing conditions. Exacerbated asthma symptoms, lead poisoning, falls, fires and other health issues are all preventable via home-based preventions. This strategic plan covers the current state of the issue, target populations, mechanics of the program, and strategic goals.

The Department of Health provides statistics on obesity across the state, including correlation to age, income, education level and race/ethnicity.

This guide from the Department of Transportation provides resources and examples from Complete Street projects across the state.

The WSFMA is an organization meant to support and promote farmers markets across the state. This report summarizes the WSFMA’s 2015 accomplishments, 2016 goals and current financial status. It also provides a list of members.

Researchers compared park and green space data with race-ethnicity and income census data to look at spatial disparities of access to green space. They found that low-income residents and people of color were less likely to live nears parks and more likely to have a low percentage of green space coverage in urban areas. They concluded that, while associations vary across urbanization levels, race, ethnicity and poverty levels do correlate to green space spatial distribution.

Small green spaces have a myriad of benefits, including rain catchment, mood and attitude improvement, stress reduction, social capital building, and improved mental health, mindfulness and creativity.