Nature for Health in Cities & Towns: the importance of trees

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WHO Health Definition

A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (1946)
Social Determinants
KING COUNTY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING MEASURES

credit: Public Health Departments, City of Seattle & King County
Outline

1. City Trees & Health: the evidence
2. Nearby Nature & Health: the evidence
3. Goals & Measures
4. Reflections
Urban Forests and Newborns
the natural environment may affect pregnancy outcomes . . .
10% increase in tree-canopy cover within 50m of a house
= lower number of low weight births (1.42 per 1000 births)

Donovan et al., Health & Place 2011; Hystad et al., Env Health Perspectives 2014
Trees & Physical Activity

- school children in cities grades 6 to 8
- relationship of tree cover to outside-of-school physical activity
- 5% increase in treed area cover = 5% increase in free-time physical activity

Sacramento Study :: LIDAR x CHIS data
7,900 adults, 250 m buffer, covariates

more tree cover = better overall health = better social cohesion

EAB Tree Loss & Public Health

1990 to 2007, 1,296 counties in 15 states infected areas vs. no bugs
15,000 more deaths from cardiovascular disease
6,000 more deaths from lower respiratory disease
controlled for demographic, human mortality, and forest health data at the county level

Toledo, Ohio in 2006, pre EAB

2009, EAB in neighborhood

photo credits: Dan Herms, Ohio State U
Improving Depression

20 adults with major depression walk in a park setting and a built setting

- 50-minute walks one week apart
- before-after testing:
  - Mood: Positive and Negative Affect (PANAS)
  - Cognition: Backward Digit Span (BDS)

Berman et al. 2012. Journal of Affective Disorders

cognitive and affective improvements after walking in a nature setting
City Trees & Human Health

newborn & infant health
increased physical activity for kids
overall adult health
social cohesion
respiratory & cardiovascular health
reduced depression
Literature Review – City Trees & Human Health
USDA Forest Service, U of WA, Health Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Tree Fund

182 peer-reviewed articles

in publication review
- do not duplicate or distribute -

figure credit: Sharon Lam
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Metro Nature & Human Health

NEARBY NATURE INCLUDES A VARIETY OF SPACES AND PLACES

- Urban Forest Canopy
- Biophilic Design
- Parks and Gardens
- Green Stormwater Infrastructure

IMAGE BY MIG / SVR
Green Cities: Good Health
www.greenhealth.washington.edu

Sponsors:
USDA Forest Service,
(U&CF Program + Pacific NW Research)
University of Washington
NGO partners

Thanks!
to U of WA students:
Katrina Flora
Mary Ann Rozance
Sarah Krueger

Research Reviews & Summaries
Local Economics

Trees in cities are not grown and managed for products that can be bought and sold on markets, but they do provide many intangible services and functions! This article serves two purposes. First, it introduces valuation methods that are used to convert intangible benefits to dollar sums. Then, it shows how nonmarket valuations can support local decision-making.

Fast Facts

- The presence of larger trees in yards and as street trees can add from 3% to 15% to home values throughout neighborhoods.

- Averaging the market effect of street trees on all house values across Portland, Oregon yields a total value of $1.35 billion, potentially increasing annual property tax revenues $15.3 million.

- A study found 7% higher rental rates for commercial offices having high quality landscapes.

- Shoppers claim that they will spend 9% to 12% more for goods and services in central business districts having high quality tree canopy.

- Shoppers indicate that they will travel greater distance and a longer time to visit a district having high quality trees, and spend more time there once they arrive.
Science Review

evidence of nearby nature & human health

> 40 years
> 5,000 publications
Green Cities: Good Health
database of >4,200 peer reviewed publications
strength of evidence; causal mechanisms?

Introduction

Writers, philosophers, and naturalists have praised the benefits of nature for human health, happiness, and well-being for centuries, but only relatively recently have researchers begun studying and quantifying the complex relationship between human health and nature.

In 1954, Roger Ulrich, professor and director of the Center for Health Systems and Design at Texas A&M University, published the results of a pioneering study that looked at the recovery rates of gall bladder surgery patients in relation to the views from their rooms in a Texas hospital. Some of the patients looked out over a garden and grove of trees, while others had a view of a brick wall. Ulrich found that patients with a natural view spent fewer days in the hospital and used fewer pain medications (Ulrich 1984).

Ulrich’s study helped open the door to a new field of inquiry focused on illuminating the ways that nature influences our physical, mental, and social lives. More than three decades later, a broad and diverse body of scientific literature describes the human health value of nature, confirming that trees, parks, gardens, and other natural settings are as essential to livable and sustainable cities as the other critical systems that keep their residents moving and working.

Findings from the current literature indicate the wide range of effects.
Causes of Death in Washington

source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH, 2013</th>
<th>TOTAL DEATHS</th>
<th>DEATH RATE***</th>
<th>STATE RANK*</th>
<th>U.S. RATE**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Heart Disease</td>
<td>10,524</td>
<td>138.2</td>
<td>46th</td>
<td>169.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cancer</td>
<td>11,928</td>
<td>156.1</td>
<td>36th</td>
<td>163.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases</td>
<td>2,933</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>34th</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Accidents</td>
<td>2,826</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>39th</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Stroke</td>
<td>2,652</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>30th</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Alzheimer’s Disease</td>
<td>3,277</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Diabetes</td>
<td>1,616</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>25th</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Influenza/Pneumonia</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>48th</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Suicide</td>
<td>1,027</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>27th</td>
<td>12.6</td>
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</table>
## Economics! 2014 data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Washington</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>annual per capita spending (USD)</td>
<td>$7,913</td>
<td>$8,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Domestic Product GDP</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State ranking (1 is least expensive)</td>
<td>19 out of 50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **high**: Maine @ 22.3%; **low**: Wyoming @ 9.3%

Kathleen L. Wolf, Ph.D.

also in Spanish! and Arabic!

design: milepost
author:
printing:
The Nature Conservancy
Nearby nature experiences are important across the entire life cycle, from cradle to grave.

Research about nature benefits and economic value is fairly new. Some of the quantified health benefits of nature in cities are easier to convert to economic value than others. Here are some preliminary valuations - estimated for the entire US, on an annual basis.

**INFANTS**

**BIRTH WEIGHT**

**POTENTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE:** $50,000 SAVINGS ON ANNUAL HEALTH CARE COSTS.

Birth weight influences long-term childhood health and development, and has been linked to some serious diseases. Low birth weight is associated with both short- and long-term health care costs, such as longer hospital stays and increased illness. Pregnant women who have more tree canopy and green space near their homes generally have babies with healthier birth weights.

**IMMUNE FUNCTION**

**POTENTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE:** IMMUNE STRENGTHENING LEADS TO REDUCED ILLNESS AND CHRONIC DISEASE ACROSS A LIFETIME.

We are most vulnerable in the early months of our lives, when the body and mind are growing and developing at an astonishing rate. The "greenhouse effect" suggests that outdoor contact with nature encourages the development of a healthy immune response.

**FAMILY DYNAMICS**

**POTENTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE:** IMPROVED FAMILY DYNAMICS, PERHAPS REDUCING MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT AND COUNSELING SERVICES.

An infant’s parents and siblings adjust their lives after a baby arrives, and the changes can bring on stress and anxiety. Nature walks and outdoor activities can help reduce these conditions and improve interactions between people within the household.

**ADHD**

**POTENTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE:** $15,000 SAVINGS ON MEDICATIONS PER YEAR.

Millions of children ages 5-18 are treated for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in the U.S. Nature exposure in a potential outdoor treatment, studies show that activity within nature or green spaces, such as play or just 20 minutes of walking, can reduce symptoms.

**CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE**

**POTENTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE:** $8,000 SAVINGS ON MEDICINES PER YEAR.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of premature deaths in the U.S. People who live in nature-rich areas have lower blood pressure levels than those with poorer nature exposure.

**CRIME & SAFETY**

**POTENTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE:** $10,000 INCREASE IN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES’ LIFETIME ANNUAL INCOMES.

School performance affects both short-term wellness and long-term success. Having green views from classrooms and common areas near schools improves students’ capacity to thrive and feel less stressed. Green high school campus landscapes are linked to higher graduation rates.

**DEPRESSION AND STRESS**

**POTENTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE:** $10,000 SAVINGS ON HEALTH CARE COSTS FROM MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS.

Many highly scheduled lifestyles take their toll. Nature enhances mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Nature exposure supports key mental and physical skills.

**MOBILITY & QUALITY OF LIFE**

**POTENTIAL ECONOMIC VALUE:** $15,000 SAVINGS ON HEALTH CARE COSTS REDUCING DISEASE TREATMENT COSTS.

Nature exposure increases aerobic fitness and reduces disease treatment costs and improves mobility.

**CONTRIBUTING ANALYSTS:**

Dr. Stephen Grado & Marcus Measells, MSU; Dr. Alicia Robbins, Weyerhaeuser
healthy trees.
happy people.
Outline

1. City Trees & Health: the evidence
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4. Reflections
Story: Human Health Benefits Across the Life Cycle
ADHD and nature contact

- 96 children aged 7-12 diagnosed ADD or ADHD
- Parents gave postactivity attentional functioning ratings (PAAF) –
  
  4 measures:
  - Can’t stay focused on unappealing tasks (homework or chores)
  - Can’t complete tasks
  - Can’t listen and follow directions
  - Easily distracted

Faber Taylor. 2001. *Environment & Behavior*
ADHD and nature contact

- 17 children aged 7-12 with diagnosed ADHD
- 20-minute guided walks
  - Park
  - Neighborhood
  - Downtown
- Pre-walk puzzles
- Post-walk cognitive test

Faber Taylor & Kuo. 2009. *Journal of Attention Disorders*
Healthy Microbiome

- control obesity & asthma
- boost immune function
- improve mental health

need contact with ‘Old Friends’

put aside the Hygiene Hypothesis

Bloomfield et al. 2016 Perspectives in Public Health
~10 to 100 trillion microbes in healthy gastrointestinal (GI) tract
Create Forests!
Fiddleheads Forest School
Washington Park Arboretum (Seattle)

cognitive
social &
physical
learning
CDC moderate activity recommendations

parks, active living, active transit
Walking Programs

children
elders
families
Walking Meetings

creativity, energy, communication, health
Parks Prescription

Rx for Health

Date: _______________________

Dr: _______________________

Name: _______________________

I recommend:

☐ Walking

☐ Other: _________________

______________ minutes a day

______________ days per week

* Health Canada suggests moderate activity of 30 minutes per day | 5 days a week

Benefits of daily activity

• Improve overall physical and mental health
• Maintain a healthy weight
• Reduce the risk of diabetes and other chronic conditions
• Lower cholesterol levels
• Manage stress and anxiety

Signature: ____________________
Parks Prescription

1. Get a prescription for ParksRx from your healthcare provider.
2. Visit www.REACHforbetterhealth.com
   2. Enter your zip code
   3. Click
3. Pick your park
4. Exercise in the park and share outcomes with your healthcare provider.

PARKS RX
Your Prescription For Better Health

www.REACHforbetterhealth.com/ParksRx
Made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This information is provided for educational purposes and is not to be considered medical advice.
Green Streets for Walkability

evidence of lower frustration and higher meditation when moving into the greener streets

A PLACE TO MEND HEARTS & HEAL MINDS

STROLLS FOR WELL-BEING

Experience the restorative powers of nature and join us for Strolls for Well-Being, a free 10-week program offered at Bloedel Reserve. If not already a member, participants are given a temporary membership to

DAY-USE STROLLS:
Since introducing the Strolls for Well-Being program in 2014, hundreds of people have benefited from the healing effects of nature.
Shinrin yoku (forest bathing)

- extensive research
- restorative experiences
- workers retirees
- networked system, 52 bases in Japan
The medicine of being in the forest

We are the leading global voice for forest bathing and forest therapy

Santa Rosa, California
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Vegetation & Mental Health

• vegetation cover and afternoon bird abundances

• lower prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress:
  - depression, more than 20% cover,
  - anxiety, more than 30% cover,
  - stress, more than 20% cover

  “dose” at which health issue is lower

Canopy Cover & Stress

images of canopy cover varied 0-60%

Summary: Knowledge to Practice

• nearly 40 years of research: city trees, nearby nature

• critical mass of evidence – now what?

• integrate greening and health programming

• integrate urban forest goals with broader urban systems needs
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Gulfport, MS :: Hurricane Katrina survivors
England’s Ancient Oaks
England’s Ancient Oaks
Ascending the Giants, Portland OR
Human Dimensions of Urban Forestry and Urban Greening

featuring research on peoples' perceptions and behaviors regarding nature in cities

What's New?

Nature and Consumer Environments
Research about how the urban forest influences business district visitors.

Trees and Transportation
Studies on the value of having quality landscapes in urban roadsides.

Civic Ecology
Studies of human behaviors and benefits when people are active in the environment.

Policy and Planning
Integrating urban greening science with community change.

Urban Forestry and Human Benefits
More resources, studies and links...

Green Cities: Good Health
human health & well-being research

Projects Director
Kathleen L. Wolf, Ph.D.