

Healthy Communities



I had the opportunity a few weeks ago, along with several of you, to attend a presentation by Dr. Richard J. Jackson on Designing Healthy Communities sponsored by the AIA Las Vegas and the Urban Land Institute. Dr. Jackson is a physician, served as a director at the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and currently teaches at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. His extremely interesting presentation preached the importance of experiencing nature for our own physical and mental health. Our cities have moved away from providing regular opportunities for us to enjoy the outdoors in place of sitting and staring at man-made walls or computer screens.

Dr. Jackson presented many interesting facts that clearly show that we need to get outside everyday if we want to be healthy. Here are just a few:

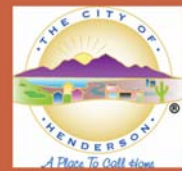
- The leading cause of death in people ages 4-34 are traffic crashes.
- Over 30% of people living in low income regions are obese.
- There are 2.4 high calorie, fat producing, unhealthy fast food restaurants per square mile in low income neighborhoods compared to only 1.5 per square mile in higher income areas... see the preceding bullet point.
- Over the last 30 years the percentage of New Onset Type II Diabetes in adolescence has increased from 3% to 50%.
- Children who walk or bike to school have increased concentration, stay alert, have improved memory and learning, and are more creative.
- A national tax of 1 cent per ounce on sugar-sweetened beverages would decrease the consumption by 23% and raise \$14.9 billion the first year! We drink a lot of soda... and it's not good for you.
- People with Pre-Diabetes who walked five times a week for 30 minutes lost 6% of their body weight and reduced their risk of Diabetes by 58%.
- Brain scans of 120 older adults over one year showed that the 60 that walked three days a week for 45 minutes had a 1.5% increase in their brain size while the 60 in the control group that did not walk had a decrease of 1.5% in their brain size.

You can watch the four episode PBS special by Dr. Jackson at www.designinghealthycommunities.org. The Urban Land Institute has created a Building Healthy Places Toolkit available at www.uli.org/toolkit.

As designers, we cannot make anyone experience nature and exercise but we do have the responsibility to design spaces that provide that opportunity. Happy walking!

Consultant of the Month

We would like to congratulate Eddie Dichter, a Principal Planner with the City of Henderson, on being selected as our consultant of the month. Eddie is always professional and friendly while proving to be a helpful resource to those he works with. He has particularly established himself as an asset during the design and submittal processes by offering valuable information and a fresh perspective. Eddie is a pleasure to work with, his service is greatly appreciated, and we look forward to working with him in the future.



"The earth laughs in flowers."
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

FAVORITE FLORA: HYPERICUM CALYGINUM- CREEPING ST. JOHN'S WORT



A native to sunny locations in southern Europe and southwestern Asia, this month's favorite flora, Creeping St. John's Wort (*Hypericum calycinum*) is more at home in shade filled landscapes here in Las Vegas. This evergreen groundcover grows only to about 5 inches tall but can spread 2-3 feet in diameter. It has dark green leaves that can form a dense carpet-like mat which, in midsummer, will be accented with yellow flowers. The leaves can redden during the fall providing seasonal interest. Creeping St. John's Wort is related to the more common St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) which can be found in herbal remedies. The timing of its blooms around the summer

solstice and the feast of St. John instilled supposed healing properties as well as gave these plants their name.

Photo of the Month

In a more favorable climate Creeping St. John's Wort can be very invasive; however the Las Vegas weather subdues these qualities. This groundcover is drought tolerant once established and requires little maintenance. Prune back any stems that yellow after a cold snap during winter. This is a great plant to use under shade trees where other plants may have trouble. Pair with plants such as Lemon Bottlebrush (*Callistemon citrinus*), Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*) and Iris and/or Tulip bulbs for a rich, classic landscape.



Lookout from Fortification Hill
Arizona
Stan Southwick