

Food+ Research Symposium
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Faculty Abstract

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Neighborhood Food Environments and Beyond.

ABSTRACT: My work focuses on the social aspects of physical planning, urban design, and urban development. The big issue behind this research and practice is how to make more sustainable and healthy cities and the site of most of that research has been in suburbs and smaller cities. In my professional work as a planner and urban designer, and in my research, I have come at this problem in several ways—studying places, developing tools, and reflecting on practices.

In the area of healthy places, I started with an interest in walking and physical activity, and transitioned from there to food, making most of my contributions in the area of measuring neighborhood environments. I have created a number of new tools and methods in planning—an urban design inventory, GIS protocols, health impact assessments, survey instruments, and participatory planning techniques. However, neighborhood design, while important, makes a modest contribution to healthy eating and physical activity. This has led me to interested in many other connections between health and place—exposures to contaminants and irritants, accessibility to resources of healthy living, and environmental supports of healthy behaviors. I have worked to translate some of this research for practioner, while highlighting the need to supplement these environmental characteristics interventions at other spatial scales and in programming, education, policy, and pricing.