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The Healthy Campus

The presentation will address four of the conference themes-

_Next generation learning spaces and pedagogy

_Environment and Sustainability

_ The Staff Experience

_ The Student Experience

How can University Campuses and their buildings contribute to a healthy lifestyle?

All developed countries around the world are grappling with an   explosion of preventable chronic illness. Disease of the heart, obesity, mental illness and diabetes are a massive cost to society. In order to combat these issues it is now recognized that it is as important to prevent as to cure.

Since lifestyle and environment is inextricably linked to health, the focus has moved over the last two decades onto how improvements to the environment can improve health. The environment of the campus contributes to the mental and physical health of its users. The presentation will examine how campus design can promote exercise, increase wellbeing and reduce stress.

The talk will have three parts, an introduction, followed by an examination of which factors are important regarding health, firstly at the macro-level of the campus, but also the micro-level of individual buildings.

Introduction

There will be a short historical introduction showing how 19th Century Planning, engineering and design concentrated on preventing infectious disease, and how the focus has now changed to combating chronic disease.

A European city example over three centuries will show how the shape of the city has changed partly as a result of disease. Melbourne will provide a current example of the issues

faced by a modern Australian city and the planning scenarios being considered for the next thirty years to prevent further sprawl and improve health.

Planning a Healthy Campus

Modern city planning recognizes that livable, healthy cities have certain key attributes. It is interesting to examine some of these attributes to see how they apply to a University campus-

Density- suburban Melbourne has a density of around 30 persons/hectare whereas Vienna has 900 persons/ hectare. Increased density means that there are more facilities within walking distance. However, too high a density is as bad as too low. The location and scale of student housing should promote walking. Similarly, walkability is important in campus design, too low a density will not stimulate activity.

Connectivity- The city of Vancouver has made a revolutionary decision in planning policy. They decided to reverse the normal hierarchy of transportation planning to put pedestrians as the top rather than the bottom priority. Many campuses have a high regard for pedestrians, cyclists and good public transport. But many are also dominated by cars. What would happen if a similar rule was applied to all campus design?

Mixed Use- great cities have developed planning solutions and buildings which are diverse and allow change over time. Historically, universities were embedded in cities. In some ways the introduction of the campus was a retrograde step and has divorced universities from their cities. How can this be reversed?

Sustainability- many of the attributes of a healthy campus are environmentally sustainable.

A sense of place- valuing history, nature and materiality, all contribute to the 'genius loci' or sense of a particular place. Cities become loved and used. Campuses are no different, good campuses are a pleasure to use and contribute to our wellbeing.

Designing Healthy University Buildings

Promoting health outcomes in building design is in its infancy from a research perspective. The best current activity is probably 'Active Design Guidelines' by New York City.

A range of factors will be discussed for healthy buildings. These will include the relationship to streets, the design of entrances, environmental sustainability, spaces that promote social interaction, stairs, exercise and leisure, grouping of shared functions and comfort and wellbeing.

Examples will be provided of different University building types such as laboratories, teaching and learning, social and leisure buildings and how design for health can be considered both for refurbished and new buildings.