

# Regional Plan Association

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FROM: Regional Plan Association

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## **RPA GATHERS WITH CDC AND TOP THOUGHT LEADERS TO DISCUSS HEALTHY COMMUNITY DESIGN**

*Panel suggest steps to increase awareness of the health impact of community design and land use decisions*

(Atlanta, GA – October 20, 2009) – Regional Plan Association president Bob Yaro joined other design and land use experts from around the country on September 21 and 22 at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta to help establish a practice of considering health impact when making land use, transportation planning and other community design decisions.

Recognizing that collaboration among multiple sectors is critical to making healthy community design and land use decisions a standard practice, the CDC brought together top thought leaders whose organizations represent those who play a direct role in creating the built environment through action and policy -- developers, architects, planners, builders, academia, public health professionals, and government officials. The workshop discussion and recommended next steps will be released in a report later this year.

“Smart community design, which includes transportation oriented development and better open space planning is key to more efficient and healthier living,” said Bob Yaro, president, RPA. “We are happy to join with other leaders around the country to develop a set of guidelines to further this longstanding RPA mission.”

As our nation’s health care system grapples with skyrocketing rates of chronic diseases like obesity, asthma and diabetes, increasing scientific evidence suggests that community design characteristics can have a significant impact on health. The importance of considering public health factors, such as physical activity, respiratory and mental health, water quality, social equity, healthy aging, and social capital when creating the built environment has grown over the last several years. As a result, CDC established the Healthy Community Design Initiative ([www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces)).

In the months ahead, participants will continue to refine action steps for expanding awareness of the health impact of community design decisions and identify the research needed to support these steps.

**- more, more, more -**

In 5-10 years, CDC hopes that the strategies developed from this workshop will lead to:

- Architects, planners, and transportation planners receiving an increased awareness of public health in their training
- Public health professionals recognizing that collaborating with architects, planners, transportation planners, and developers is key in furthering healthy community design
- All relevant parties considering the objective evaluation of the potential health effects of a project or policy before it is built or implemented.

Other organizations represented at the two-day workshop included the American Planning Association, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, The American Institute of Architects, the National Association of Home Builders, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Congress for the New Urbanism, Urban Land Institute, International City/County Management Association, Local Government Commission, National Association of City and County Health Officials, National Conference of State Legislatures, Pew Charitable Trusts, Regional Plan Association, U.S. Access Board, and the U.S. Green Building Council.

For more information on the workshop and CDC's Healthy Community Initiative, contact Charles Green, at 770-488-0626, [clg8@cdc.gov](mailto:clg8@cdc.gov). For more information on the Initiative, go to [www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces).