

Built Environment and Population Health in Small-Town America

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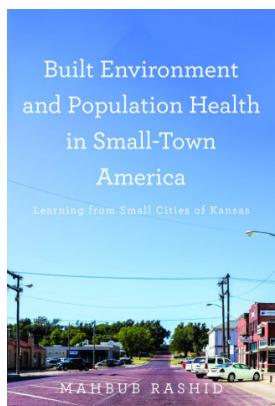
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Book Title: Built Environment and Population Health in Small-Town America

Author: Mahbub Rashid, PhD

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Built Environment and Population Health in Small-Town America explores how community design, housing quality, transportation systems, and environmental factors influence public health outcomes. Mahbub Rashid, PhD, dean of the School of Architecture and Design at the University of Kansas, speaks from the unique lens of rural health, highlighting the critical role of key factors in shaping well-being and emphasizing strategies for creating healthier communities through policy, planning, and health care integration.

By including insights from urban planning, public health, and social sciences, the book contributes to a growing body of evidence advocating for interdisciplinary approaches to creating healthier communities. With its relevance toward contemporary family medicine, it offers valuable insights into the environmental and social factors that influence patient health. By understanding how factors such as housing conditions, neighborhood design, and access to green spaces impact physical and mental well-being, primary care clinicians can better identify risk factors, tailor care plans, and connect patients with appropriate community resources. This knowledge also can equip physicians, educators, and learners alike to advocate for environmental improvements that promote public health, aligning with the growing emphasis on preventive care and social determinants of health. Educators in both public health and medical education can use the book's insights to teach students about the complex relationship between environmental factors and population health, encouraging future professionals to consider broader social and environmental contexts in their work.

Relevant to primary care, the book explores management of chronic diseases and promotion of preventive care by addressing lifestyle factors influenced by the environment. By understanding local conditions such as access to parks, safe walking paths, and healthy food options, family physicians can guide patients toward healthier choices or provide alternative strategies in less supportive settings. Social determinants of health, such as housing quality and transportation, are increasingly integrated into care, with physicians screening for these factors to identify barriers to well-being. Family physicians can connect patients with community resources such as food banks, fitness programs, and mental health services to improve overall health outcomes. They also can advocate for policies that create healthier environments, especially for vulnerable populations facing unstable housing or unsafe neighborhoods. Moreover, the author encourages those that can to leverage telehealth to support patients in underserved areas, ensuring access to care despite transportation challenges.

The overall structure of the book seems to be designed more for the classroom than for leisurely reading or personal professional development, with the contents laid out in an organized way that leads to curricular development around the book. The text explores similarities and contrasts with more widely published themes known to urban communities and aligns with broader literature that examines how social determinants of health, particularly environmental and structural factors, shape population well-being. Similar to works by Jackson on healthy communities¹ and Frumkin's publications on healthy places,² this text emphasizes that factors such as walkability, housing quality, and green spaces are essential for reducing chronic disease risks and improving mental

health. To appeal to an audience outside of university settings, Dr. Rashid could consider a more concise structure with elimination of redundant themes. However, this text serves as excellent reference material for further manuscripts and academic works.

REFERENCES

1. Jackson RJ, Sinclair S. *Designing Healthy Communities*. Jossey-Bass; 2011.
2. Frumkin H. Healthy places: exploring the evidence. *Am J Public Health*. 2003;93(9):1451-1456. doi: [10.2105/AJPH.93.9.1451](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.93.9.1451)