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Healing Cities Working Group

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The healing process in the human body is the ability to rebuild, repair and regenerate cells, tissues and organs. Regeneration draws upon the body's innate intelligence to heal itself. What would it then mean for a city to be "healed," and eventually to reciprocate and be healing and heal itself, its inhabitants and visitors. Furthermore, what methods and processes would support cities to facilitate healing in the context of sustainability planning? How might the built form and natural spaces of the city nurture and develop its residents' holistic health – to include addressing physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual needs? This "healing cities" project explores how to address planning processes and to design cities in a self-reflective way that may foster greater connectivity both to the world around us, and to ourselves – and to thereby make us healthier and more whole. Specifically, the healing cities approach seeks to develop a framework for building and shaping communities in a manner that fosters natural, physical, social and spiritual healing. Planners, designers and health practitioners have an opportunity to open up a dialogue about how different conceptualizations of holistic healing may interact within the healthy cities framework. This article is a foundation statement upon which we are planning to build research in support of our thesis that spiritual health is a vital and important contribution that urban design can make and enhance in the holistic spectrum of healing.

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