

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Partnership between public health and green building industry promotes healthy behaviors

**May 28, 2013, Washington, DC**— When public health organizations and the green building industry work together, the result can be more than better buildings. Increased collaboration between public health and the green building industry can also improve health outcomes, such as reducing childhood obesity, by driving changes in the design of buildings and outdoor space to promote physical activity and healthy eating, according to a new article published in the latest issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine (AJPM)*.

“A partnership between investigators in the fields of green building design and public health can not only help establish the evidence for what factors are important in developing healthy and environmentally sustainable buildings and communities, but can also help promote transdisciplinary research in this arena, said Dr. Rachel Ballard-Barbash, associate director of the Applied Research Program in the National Cancer Institute’s Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, and co-author of the study. “Such research has the potential to increase the availability and evaluation of built-environment projects designed to promote health.”

To facilitate this partnership, the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) and the National Academy of Environmental Design (NAED) co-sponsored a 2011 two-day workshop in partnership with the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). The workshop aligned with a green health research initiative NCCOR members developed in 2010 and included government researchers such as Ballard-Barbash, as well as academic, nonprofit, and private sector researchers and practitioners from urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and law. Participants examined how environmental design strategies can be used to promote physical activity and healthy eating in school environments.

“The workshop allowed us to assemble professionals from a broad range of design, public health, and environmental sustainability disciplines at the table to learn about each other’s priorities and how they could be combined. It also laid the groundwork for the *AJPM* article, which describes a set of recommended strategies for green health environmental design research and practice,” said NCCOR contributor Dr. Matthew Trowbridge, the primary author of the study.

These seven recommendations, designed to guide the emerging field of green health research and practice, are the result of the discussion about green health partnerships that began in 2010 through NCCOR:

- Continue to develop evidence-based design guidelines and certification credits focused on improving physical activity and food environments for use within the green building industry.
- Use school environments as a joint focus for childhood obesity prevention and green building research.
- Foster green health environmental design research across a wide array of built-

- environment contexts and design disciplines such as architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and graphic design.
- Support development of distributed health and environmental surveillance systems for use within green health environmental design research
  - Encourage application of systems science research frameworks and methodologies to accelerate progress within green health environmental design research and practice.
  - Increase rapid-response research funding to better enable evaluation of green health environmental design “natural experiments.”
  - Develop cross-disciplinary core competencies for use within training programs that address green health environmental design and health promotion.

“The field of green health research is emerging, inspired by the desire to understand, create, and promote buildings that actively contribute to human health and well-being. This transformation is motivated by a growing body of scientific evidence and inspired by compelling new opportunities for data-driven, evidence-based practice.” said study co-author Chris Pyke, vice president of research at USGBC.

NCCOR’s fifth “goal area” is to work with non-health partners on synergistic initiatives that integrate childhood obesity priorities and promote trans-disciplinary research. This goal area has resulted in a special partnership and portfolio of innovative “green health” activities.

For more information about this article and to view an infographic related to the recommendations, visit NCCOR’s Green Health project webpage:  
<http://nccor.org/projects/greenhealth>.

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The National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) brings together four of the nation’s leading research funders – the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) – to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and application of childhood obesity research, and to halt – and reverse – childhood obesity through enhanced coordination and collaboration.

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