THE URBAN ATLAS of PORTLAND, OREGON USA
a quality of life study addressing wellness in the Northwest Neighborhood

Portland Urban Architecture Research Lab

Jenny Cestnik, M.ARCH Candidate
Hajo Neis, Ph.D.
University of Oregon Portland
Happiness and wellness, regardless of person or city, is an emotional state rather than a quantitative element. While we understand that a successful city must be active and dense, it must accommodate the needs of its residents through restorative settings and community environments. Not only must they be present, but they must be visible and easily accessible for both public and private use.

Restorative settings blend into urban morphologies and are as diverse as the people who reside within their typologies. The development of cities presents the opportunity to address different design biases while celebrating their similarities. Portland, Oregon’s block is a small module with a block size of two hundred by two hundred square feet. The sixty foot wide street width thought the city is much more typical between morphologies. This grid, that avoids a hierarchy, was used throughout the city in commercial, residential, and industrial areas. In Northwest Portland, the rectangular block structure maintains the small but oblong block, and short cross streets. The resulting residential and commercial neighborhood offers a quality of life that is conducive to wellness and activity.
Using Quality of Life as a means of analysis

This research project addresses the Northwest Neighborhood in Portland, Oregon within a quarter mile radius of Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital. A protocol for studying the quality of life within the neighborhood has been developed. This can be used to readdress previously studied atlas components in the square, rectangular, and irregular blocks, as well as included in all research neighborhood areas.

The study of the quality of life regarding wellness within an urban area can be divided into two components.

Physical Happiness and Wellness
- Hospitals and clinics
- Wellness centers
- Gyms / Pools / Dance Studios / Yoga
- Parks / Gardens

Mental / Emotional Happiness and Wellness
- Places of worship
- Places of meditation
- Schools and places of education
- Places of knowledge
- Community centers and libraries

Many consider hospitals as places for sickness and emergency, but their presence in urban areas can also foster places for activity and wellness.
Using Quality of Life as a means of analysis

Wellness depends on meeting the following criteria in the neighborhood:

1. Visible and accessible sources of wellness and healthcare must extend beyond the traditional hospital facility.

2. These spaces must be present for users regardless of age, gender, race, or creed.

3. They must be accessible at different times of the day and year, and some spaces must be open for use around the clock.

4. In order for the neighborhood to be successfully healthy, it must have a strongly routed history that has addressed wellness in the early stages of development.
Northwest Portland is bounded by geographic and constructed boundaries. To the north by NW Industrial Road, to the east by I-405, to the south by W Burnside street, and to the west by the West Hills.
A quarter mile radius around Legacy Good Sam Hospital (about 3 - 5 blocks in each direction) offers a more focused area of study for the quality of life within the neighborhood.
Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital was founded in Portland in 1875 as a 25 bed inpatient facility for the city as well as housing a school of medicine and nursing since 1890. As the neighborhood developed and the demand for permanent facilities for heath care became greater, Legacy expanded from a single building to a three block campus.
Quantitative Demographics

Urban Population = 9,825

Including:
- 280 mentally disabled residents
- 250 physically disabled residents
- 113 self-care disabled residents
- 28 in abused and neglected children home
- 25 nursing home residents
- 8 residents in other group homes
- 8 residents in homes for the mentally ill
- 4 people in homes for physically handicapped

Walk Score

97 / 100

A number based on an algorithm that calculates the proximity of amenities surrounding a specified address, in the case of this study: Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital. It is otherwise explained as the ease in which errands can be accomplished on foot in the neighborhood. Many people can get around without owning a car, due to the closeness of a myriad of shops as well as access to public transportation.
Existing Physical Wellness Nodes

- a legacy good sam hospital
- b lovejoy surgicenter
- c oregon sleep associates
- d portland indstrl & travel clinic
- e orthopedic & sports medicine center of oregon
- f eye health northwest
- g head & neck surgical associates
- h clinical office
- i clinical office
- j nw foot and ankle
- k clinical office
- l allergy, asthma, & dermatology
- m portland dermatology clinic
- n executive cardiology
- o westover heights clinic
- p clinical office
- q clinical office
- r oregon dermatology & research center
- s pediatric associates of the northwest
- t clinical office
- u clinical office
- v clinical office
- w an hao office
- x oregon reproductive medicine
- y devers eye institute
- z metropolitan pediatrics
Existing Social Wellness Nodes

Grocery:
a  Lovejoy Grocery
b  Store to Door Grocery
c  City Market
d  Trader Joe’s
e  Food Front Co-op

Schools:
f  Linfield College School of Nursing
g  National College of Naturopathic Medicine
h  Metropolitan Learning Center

Parks:
i  Couch Park
j  Wallace Park

Libraries and Bookstores:
k  Health Science Library
l  Theosophical Society
m  Multnomah County Library
n  Child’s Play
o  New Renaissance Books

Fitness:
p  Center Flow Pilates
q  Core Power Yoga

Drug Stores:
r  Oregon Clinic
s  Apex Pharmacy
t  Pharma Care
Combining Wellness Types to Find the Void

When clinical offices and facilities are mapped with social wellness spaces the overall wellness of the neighborhood is seen. The predominate cluster of activity surrounding Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital as quantitative data is now visible graphically, and one can see how the long standing hospital has fostered the development of places of wellness within close proximity.

There are only two parks in the neighborhood, Wallace and Couch. While it is not atypical for the neighborhood, which predominately embodies the turn of the 20th century architectural Queen Anne, and shingle style single family residences which emphasize privacy, the current lack of public green gathering spaces open and accessible throughout the day is obvious.
Given that the quality of life in this neighborhood is already successful, it is difficult to suggest what else could be added to improve upon the existing urban fabric. Towards the southern edge of the neighborhood, the blocks between Burnside and Irving, there are currently a lack of wellness nodes mapped into the setting, making it an ideal location for future architectural projects that implement wellness into the basis of the design.

Consisting predominately of residences, there are few locations for new construction. Two major parking lots are located in the neighborhood, one at NW Everett Street between NW 22nd and 23rd and the other at NW Flanders between NW 20th and 21st. Future projects in either of these sites would likely include underground parking in the design proposal.
Any new construction must carefully respond to the surrounding buildings and context in terms of height, material, and proportion. It must also be screened behind street trees and parking.

An open façade of a small market blends the shop into the street.

Windows maintain the existing residential character of the street and use illumination, especially at night, to suggest the products and goods being sold without resorting to flashy graphics.

Regardless of location, this part of the neighborhood is lacking a place for small scale shopping for medicine, sundries, and perhaps a specialty clinic for local use. By creating a design that implements small scale strategies, coupled with basic amenities for day to day life and wellness, the program should be successful. People of all ages will be able to benefit from the building, much like the traditional drug store of small towns.

Contextual cues will mandate that the new building be relatively short, no more than four stories, and limited to the footprint of the parking lot and appropriate setbacks. Rather than a traditional storefront or shop, having large doors that open onto the street and sidewalk will be a method in which the small buildings can feel larger. By opening the façade into the community, it will be more welcome for people to drift in. As the neighborhood is so walkable already, the majority of traffic will likely been on foot. Having a place for a bit of shelter from the numerous rainy days in the city could be an added attractor.

Ultimately urban wellness is achieved through harmonizing mental and physical health in environments that make people happy. Northwest Portland has been a model for this notion, and with a bit of thought in the planning process, can continue with all future development.


Nob Hill Neighborhood Association
http://www.portlandneighborhood.com/nobhill.html


Northwest Portland Walk Score Database

Portland Maps Detailed Demographic Report
http://www.portlandmaps.com/

Photographs from flickr.com