

Architecture is the 'New' Gym - How Buildings Can Help You Lose Lbs

Written by Amanda Savage

Last month, the PHX Architecture team headed to the 2013 American Institute of Architects Arizona Convention at Wild Horse Pass in Chandler, Arizona. The topic for this year was "Creating Community" and brainstorming ways in which Architects could improve our cities and neighborhoods which includes how buildings are designed.



The PHX Architecture team was most influenced by the fact that many cities and buildings in the United States do not promote an active and healthier lifestyle. There is an over-abundance of fast-food restaurants, elevators, escalators, and public transportation. These designs, while convenient for getting Americans from point A to point B, don't necessarily promote healthy and physical lifestyles.

Did you know that Arizona ranks 25 in overall prevalence with 30.6% of children considered either overweight or obese, and more than 64% of Arizonians are affected by excess weight? According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a shocking one-third of U.S. adults are obese, and the rates are ever climbing. Studies show that obesity can be the cause of various diseases, including cancer and diabetes.

Now, there are several factors which play a role in these upsetting statistics, such as poor nutrition and lack of exercise, but every little bit helps. "If you are obese, losing even 5 to 10 percent of your weight can delay or prevent some of these diseases," says the NIH (National Institute of Diabetes). That being said, utilizing architecture to promote and encourage an active lifestyle could be very beneficial in helping reverse the recent trends in obesity in the U.S. By emphasizing physical action while designing we can encourage people to move more throughout the day. Increasing the convenience of biking and walking and making staircases more appealing can prove a great improvement to our cities and neighborhoods. Some projects are beginning to eliminate elevator stops at every floor, and moving connecting stairs front and center. Not only does this provide health benefits but it reduces building costs.

Erik Peterson AIA, and Principal of PHX Architecture agrees that designing buildings with staircases as the focal point or as major design element is a good way to go. "Staircases are usually tucked away in the corner", Peterson says, "While elevators are one of the first things you see when you walk into a building."

"Instead of hiding staircases back in a corner, let's bring them out and have fun, let's design and create an environment that is more appealing. People won't even realize they are being more active, and the pounds will disappear." To learn more about Healthy Lifestyle Design call PHX Architecture.