
PRESS RELEASE

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Designing healthy cities fosters healthy urban city dwellers

The pandemic has greatly affected health in general, and the way we live, work and communicate. It has raised awareness of the importance of designing cities to promote the health and well-being of the people living in them. On average only 10 per cent of time is spent outdoors – so by the time you are 80, you will have spent 72 years indoors.

There is a complex link between the environment, our social systems and our health, both physical and mental. A green, inviting city that promotes movement, and healthy buildings with indoor and outdoor environments closely connected, are crucial for our health and well-being.

In a new report, Sweco engineers and architects have come together to offer a three-component vision based on the green city, healthy buildings and educated citizens.

“Studies show that people who had views of green areas during the pandemic had a more positive emotional situation and showed lower symptoms of anxiety and depression than people without such views. This shows the importance of designing cities with more green areas per inhabitant and higher-quality green areas,” says Camilla Julie Hvid, engineer and landscape architect at Sweco in Denmark.

The second component of the vision recognises a close connection between the outdoor and the indoor environments. The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the importance of a healthy indoor environment.

“We spend 90 per cent of our time indoors, and there is a clear connection between our health and the indoor design and climate of buildings that we live and work in. As an example, employees exposed to natural light in the office sleep on average 46 minutes longer per night during the workweek compared to those exposed to artificial lighting only,” says Daniel Hojniak, senior sustainability and well-being consultant at Sweco in Poland.

Thirdly, our future cities and buildings should inspire people to make the healthiest choice when they move around. To accomplish this, engineers and architects have got to focus on designing outdoor public space as an intricate network with connecting places that offer interaction and activity.

"Healthy buildings, cities and you" is the second in a series of Urban Insight reports from Sweco on the topic of Urban Health and Well-Being, in which experts highlight specific ideas, solutions and scientific findings needed to plan and design safe and resilient future urban environments.

For additional information, please contact:

Johnny Nylund, Head of Press Sweco Group, +46 73 773 5189, johnny.nylund@sweco.se

Sweco plans and designs the sustainable communities and cities of the future. Together with our clients and the collective knowledge of our 17,500 architects, engineers and other specialists, we co-create solutions to address urbanisation, capture the power of digitalisation, and make our societies more sustainable. Sweco is Europe's leading engineering and architecture consultancy, with sales of approximately SEK 21 billion (EUR 2 billion). The company is listed on Nasdaq Stockholm. www.swecogroup.com.