

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

Campus News Archive

Campus News, Newsletters, and Events

9-16-2010

Mumford, assistant professor of biology, promotes green urban spaces at conferences in China

University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news

Recommended Citation

University Relations, "Mumford, assistant professor of biology, promotes green urban spaces at conferences in China" (2010). *Campus News Archive*. 1545.

https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news/1545

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Campus News, Newsletters, and Events at University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. It has been accepted for inclusion in Campus News Archive by an authorized administrator of University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. For more information, please contact skulann@morris.umn.edu.

Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Mumford, assistant professor of biology, promotes green urban spaces at conferences in China

Summary: Mumford's research shows green developments make urban areas more adaptive to climate change and shifting demographics.

(September 16, 2010)-Karen Mumford, assistant professor of biology and environmental studies, recently presented two papers in China that reflect her interest in land use policy and community development: "Understanding Park Use for Healthy Cities" at the International Association of China Planning (IACP) conference hosted by Tongji University in Shanghai, and "Greening Urban Development to Accommodate an Aging Population" at the China Planning Network Urbanization Summit in Nanjing.

International Association of China Planning

The IACP is a professional organization made up of academics, students, and practitioners interested in planning. The conference brought together researchers, planners, and other government officials from China and around the world to exchange ideas germane to the theme "Better Cities, Better Life." Sponsors included the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

With fast urbanization, made acutely visible by 25 percent of the world's active construction cranes in Shanghai alone, and 20 percent of the world's population, emerging questions about the environment have pressed China into new thinking about sustainable development, housing, and employment. Planners are converging on the country to watch these developments.

Drawing upon concepts presented in the public health and epidemiology class she teaches at Morris, Mumford's paper addressed a new world phenomenon. Urbanization often leads to more sedentary lifestyles. The term "globesity" now symbolizes an increasingly overweight planet with 2.3 billion people projected to be overweight by 2015, creating potentially increased health risks and social problems. Parks, Mumford asserts, are part of the solution. Public greenspace in urban settings not only provides fitness benefits but also has the advantage of being free, she says.

China Planning Network

Intrigued by her findings, the CPN invited Mumford to be a delegate to its 2010 summit, "Low Carbon City, Low Carbon China." Co-created by Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, CPN brings together two groups of world scholars and professionals from China and the West, one focusing on energy and low carbon technology and policy and the other on cities and urban development to address energy and urbanization problems.

CPN facilitates the exchange of ideas and expertise between Chinese and western planners to develop innovative approaches to China's urbanization challenges. CPN delegates engage Chinese governmental and party officials in discussions of sustainable development strategies, Mumford says.

As a researcher in the area of the summit's low carbon theme, Mumford is right on trend. Students in her environmental problems and policy course at Morris learn that greenspace takes up, or sequesters, carbon dioxide (CO₂), actually pulling it out of the air and reducing CO₂ emissions that can contribute to climate change.

Mumford's presentation advocated for green infrastructure to mitigate the effects of a warming climate that is likely to increase heat-related morbidity and mortality. The cooling and shade provided by parks support physical activity, especially among older adults in urban areas, possibly averting a public health crisis. Mumford aims to illustrate this in her current research. She is completing an analysis of the physical environments of mixed-use housing developments in the Atlanta, Georgia region to assess whether these settings support physical activity and use of transportation alternatives.

Mumford observed that her Chinese colleagues were equally eager to learn from the sustainability initiatives occurring in other countries and enthusiastic about sharing with others their goals and initiatives. Solutions, says Mumford, will involve green infrastructure both passive, such as trails and bike paths, and active or programmed, such as sports fields. All sides welcomed continued dialogue toward a thoughtful, informed response to the challenges of urbanization, noting that the successful integration of greenspace with the built environment is intended to mitigate climate change and improve the livability of urban areas.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.