**Healthy Active by Design WA**

*Urban design guidance for planners, designers, engineers and developers to activate healthy spaces and places*

**Why Activate Places**

The design of the built environment plays an important role in active living - a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines. A 2009 survey undertaken by the Physical Activity Taskforce found that over 40 per cent of Western Australian adults were not active enough for good health.\(^1\) We need to design places that encourage and support people to be active (walking, cycling, and getting outdoors and being social) to deliver the range of benefits that active living provides to individuals, families and communities. Active communities have healthier residents, are more connected, cohesive and productive, and reduce the environmental impacts of car dependence.

Planners and designers play a lead role in designing and maintaining the built environment to promote active living. Acknowledging this, the *Healthy Active by Design* project, commissioned by the Physical Activity Taskforce and Heart Foundation, aims to guide planners, urban designers, engineers and developers to develop and retrofit new and existing neighbourhoods to promote active living. This fact sheet provides a snapshot of solutions to encourage and support the design of active neighbourhoods.

**How to Activate Places**

*Healthy Active by Design* supports the vision of *Directions 2031 and Beyond* to create a liveable city that is green, vibrant and more compact and accessible with a unique sense of place. The key factors of focus to achieving this and to deliver an active place are:

- **Compactness** considers the proximity of each destination to other destinations such as shops and amenities to provide easier access, more affordable travel options and encourage incidental physical activity. Compact communities include increased residential density, mixed land-use, multiple destinations and efficient use of spaces.

- **Connectivity** considers street networks that allow for more direct routes to and from destinations as well as the inter-connection between neighbourhoods to encourage active transport (walking, cycling and use of public transport). Connected environments include greater transport links and public transport as well as infrastructure for safe crossings and streets designed for traffic calming. A well connected environment provides various route options and reduces travel distances.

- **Conducivity** considers the personal experience of users in the built environment and includes basic needs such as safety (road and personal) and infrastructure for comfort (shade and lighting) through to places of interest, multi-functional open space, opportunities for social interaction and a choice of experiences that support play, recreation and sport. Conducive environments include such features as welcoming paths, signage, end of trip facilities and appropriate street furniture, including trees and seating.

**Guiding Principles**

- **Access** - Neighbourhoods, facilities and services should be provided that optimise accessibility for all users and provide convenient access for people with disabilities.

- **Equity** - Urban planning and design should consider the long and short-term needs of communities with regards to access, affordability, inter-generational equity and geographical location.

- **Engagement** - Fair, open and participatory processes should be used to consult and collaborate on the planning and design of neighbourhoods, facilities and services.

- **Life Course Approach** - The diverse needs of children, families, workers and seniors are considered in the planning and design of neighbourhoods, facilities and services.

- **Sustainability** - The provision of neighbourhoods, facilities and services should support reduced environmental impacts as well as contribute to community wellbeing.

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\(^1\) Rosenberg M, Mills C, McCormack G, Martin K, Grove B, Pratt S and Braham R. Physical Activity Levels of Western Australian Adults 2009: Findings from the Physical Activity Survey. Health Promotion Evaluation Unit, The University of Western Australia, Perth, 2010
## Design Features for Active Living

The initial phase of *Healthy Active by Design* has proposed eight design features. These features and supporting evidenced based considerations, taken from the national *Healthy Spaces and Places*, are outlined below including a link to the corresponding *Liveable Neighbourhoods* (LN) element. These are provided to support all sectors to work together to design and build active and healthy communities.

### 1 Local Access

**LN Element 3: Lot Layout**

Outlines requirements for residential lots in a planning context where a mixture of compatible uses is encouraged.

**To increase residential density, intensity of land-use and active transport networks to support local businesses, employment, education, cultural and recreational opportunities and frequent accessible public transport.**

- Locate higher residential densities near activity centres and along public transport routes to maximise access and convenience to services.
- Locate medium density development in areas of high amenity, which may coincide with activity centres or neighbourhood parks, as well as in close proximity to public transport routes.
- Provide mixed density residential development within walking distance of public areas including open space and a variety of places for social interaction; key destinations, such as shops, schools and medical centres; and accessible public transport.
- Mixed density developments should be integrated with surrounding development, public transport and with supporting infrastructure including walkways, public areas and cycle paths.

### 2 Co-Location

**LN Element 7: Activity Centres and Employment**

Provides for massing for centres and mixed-use activity.

**To encourage groupings of key destination points within close proximity of each other to improve accessibility, integrated facilities and multiple uses of space and travel networks.**

- Provide a range of development types and densities (including residential) that allow for a mix of day and night time activities.
- Integrate new development with existing developments and surrounding transport networks.
- Pay attention to lighting, street furniture, signage, footpath treatment and safe road crossings to ensure a safe and convivial space is provided for all users.
- Provide open space and recreation areas especially for children and their carers.
- Locate developments within walking distance of bus or tram stops (400 m) or train stations (up to 800 m).
- A mix of land uses, including residential, and access to the shops and services required for daily living that is well integrated with public transport, designed to maximise surveillance and designed to be safe from traffic will support the use of active forms of transport.

### 3 Traffic Management

**LN Element 2: Movement Network**

Outlines requirements and design solutions for street types and traffic management.

**To manage vehicle traffic to provide safe environments for walking, cycling and other physical activities.**

- Prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport above car use in transport policy.
- Design streets that promote vehicle speeds of no more than 30 km per hour in residential streets, strip shopping and around major trip generators (e.g. schools).
- Provide high quality pedestrian and bicycle facilities to service major trip generation locations such as schools, hospitals and shopping precincts.
- Encourage on-street car parking to calm traffic speeds, support retail and commercial businesses and provide a buffer between pedestrians and roads.
- Provide street crossings on busy streets and in the vicinity of major trip generators including schools, hospitals, shops, parks and public transport stops.

### 4 Welcoming Paths

**LN Element 6: Utilities**

Covers street trees and lighting.

**To provide an accessible, attractive and welcoming street environment, with well maintained footpaths for all users.**

- Make walking and cycling the preferred mode of transport by providing:
  - high levels of amenity, especially to key destinations such as workplaces, schools and shops
  - mixed land uses and densities to support active transport, and
  - choices of destinations.
- Focus the structure planning process around the needs of active transport at the regional and local level to ensure active transport is the base from which the access and movement strategy is built.
| LN Element 1: | To create connected street networks that allow pedestrians and cyclists to take more direct routes to and from destinations. Make travel between neighbourhoods easier by ensuring pedestrian and cycle networks are inter-connected and provide access to frequent accessible public transport services. |
| Community Design | ✓ Provide a variety of local destinations within easy walking distance (400 m is a comfortable walking distance for most people). |
| Outlines how towns and neighbourhoods should be structured, including street networks. | ✓ Design street layout based on grids with spacing of 80-100 m to provide an optimum network for pedestrian and vehicular needs. |
| | ✓ Provide off-road pedestrian and cycle networks in non-grid or curvilinear street layouts. |
| | ✓ Provide interconnected network of walking and cycling routes to service local destinations. |
| | ✓ Provide active transport routes along predictable paths of travel, such as to schools, recreation facilities and shops. |
| | ✓ Mixed development neighbourhoods should cover a 400 m radius (about 5 minutes walk). |

| LN Element 8: | To design and locate schools to facilitate young people’s active transport to school, and physical activity while at school. |
| Schools | When identifying new sites or designing new schools, the school should be: |
| Advocates for flexible site responsive design and location. | ✓ centrally located for the school catchment with appropriate design of surrounding roads, and pedestrian and cycle networks to provide safe access to routes to the school |
| | ✓ on accessible and through streets but not heavily trafficked to minimise traffic congestion around the school |
| | ✓ linked to public transport where suitable, especially for secondary schools |
| | ✓ co-located with other community facilities (sports facilities, libraries and performing arts) to develop a focal point for the community |
| | ✓ co-located with and sharing with public playfields. |

| LN Elements 4 & 5: Public Parkland & Urban Water Management Create public parkland through careful structure planning and water-sensitive design. | To design multi-purpose public open spaces that are functional and accessible and cater for the needs of children, adolescents, adults and seniors of all abilities. |
| | ✓ Provide good quality open space that protects and enhances the environmental, cultural and heritage values of an area. |
| | ✓ Ensure parks and open space are safe, well maintained and actively managed. |
| | ✓ Increase usability by ensuring that open space is: |
| | - of a sufficient size and shape to cater for the intended use of the site |
| | - adaptable and maximises the range of possible uses available ensuring equitable opportunities for all users |
| | - shared with a number of user groups (e.g. school ovals form a part of the open space network and are available out of school hours for community use, allowing for the efficient use of land). |

| LN All Elements and Designing Out Crime Planning Guidelines. | To create communities where people feel safe in their homes, in the local streets and neighbourhood public spaces. |
| | ✓ Ensure that routes have good sightlines to entrances and exits with landscaping pruned to ensure that sightlines are clear. |
| | ✓ Light public spaces and routes used at night to improve safety and surveillance and increase usage. |
| | ✓ Active frontages: Design buildings to provide natural surveillance of the street (e.g. windows overlooking footpaths and building entrances facing the street that are easily visible and accessible from the street). |
| | ✓ Locate parks, play areas and public open spaces so they are visible from adjoining buildings such as houses, streets and schools. |
| | ✓ Consult with community, service providers, government agencies and the private sector about the type and level of facilities required in the community to support active living. |
**Key Facts**

- People have about 60 minutes to spend travelling per day for utilitarian purposes.
- 35 persons and jobs per hectare is required to make a high quality transit service viable thereby presenting opportunities to link transit and walking trips; and create communities that are both origins and destinations, and walkable.
- Having more people on streets contributes to active and lively communities where people meet and interact, a neighbourhood characteristic which is becoming increasingly valuable.2
- 64 per cent of people say that being within easy walking distance to a range of local services would be extremely or very important to them when deciding where to live.3
- Walkability relates to the walkable catchment around destinations. This is typically 400 m to 800 m (or a 5 to 10 minute walk) for transit, and about 1.5 km for other utilitarian destinations.
- Perth residents make 250,000 private car trips daily that are less than one kilometre, which takes only ten minutes to walk.4
- Five destinations form a credible measure of daily travel. The mix of destinations would include basic daily retail and food activities for utilitarian walking.
- Speeds of 30 km per hour are considered safe for roads which have possible conflicts between cars and unprotected road users (e.g. cyclists and pedestrians).
- For children and adolescents, living within 800 m of parks or sports centres increases the likelihood that they will use these facilities, and walk or cycle to/from them.
- Access, proximity and functionality of public open space is essential to support leisure-time physical activity to enable people to actively access public open space rather than drive and to increase accessibility for people who don’t drive.
- Compact mixed use developments can contribute to physical activity through the promotion of cycling, walking and less use of the car.

**Useful Links and Tools**

- **Healthy Spaces and Places**: a national guide to designing places for healthy living [www.healthyplaces.org.au](http://www.healthyplaces.org.au)
- **Centre for the Built Environment and Health at UWA** – lists specific research in the design of neighbourhoods and its impact on physical activity and health: [www.sph.uwa.edu.au/research/cbeh/projects](http://www.sph.uwa.edu.au/research/cbeh/projects)

**Further Information**

If you would like to find out more about the *Healthy Active by Design* project or the Physical Activity Taskforce, please contact Louise Atherton, Senior Policy Officer, Ph: 9492 9633, Louise.Atherton@dsr.wa.gov.au or visit [www.beactive.wa.gov.au](http://www.beactive.wa.gov.au)

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3 Heart Foundation, Creating Healthy Neighbourhoods: consumer preferences for healthy development, 2011

4 Perth and Regions Travel Survey, Department of Transport (formerly Department of Planning and Infrastructure)