

LIVEABLE CITIES

DESIGNING FOR AN AGEING POPULATION

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Introduction

People aged 65 and over constitute Australia's fastest growing age group. In 2013 they represented almost 15% of Australia's population¹, with growth projected to continue into the foreseeable future as living standards and the quality of public health continue to rise. It is vital, therefore, to create 'age friendly' cities and towns.

Age friendly cities and towns improve physical and mental health outcomes, promote greater social participation, and enhance quality of life as people age. In response to the need to consider an ageing population worldwide, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has established a framework of eight interconnected domains that recognise older persons' needs in the urban environment. WHO's global network of age-friendly cities and communities aims to make communities a great place to grow old in and to share mutual learnings and support.

Key issues

The WHO approach stresses the importance of accessible transport for older people within cities, including access to public transport, parking and accessible driving conditions. Affordability and access to health care services is also crucial to keep older people independent and active in the community. Appropriate housing design in proximity to services can reinforce social participation. Another key issue is the importance of social inclusion in the social, civic and economic life of the city.

AILA position

While a number of these broader social issues are beyond the scope of landscape architecture, the profession has a key role to play in influencing urban development and creating age friendly urban environments. Public spaces, outdoor environments, and access options that encourage independence, community engagement and positive health outcomes can provide opportunities to continue to engage with society and maintain quality of life.

AILA believes:

- Age friendly city design should be inclusive and accommodate people with disabilities or limited mobility in an integrated way that encourages engagement with the community.
- Age friendly city design should allow for public spaces that encourage people to support one another, promote intergenerational engagements and create sustainable neighborhoods that provide opportunities for everyday social interactions.

In addition, AILA believes age friendly design for outdoor spaces and access ways should be supported by:

- Clean environments with enforced regulation for environmental protection
- Greenspaces and walkways that are well maintained and safe with adequate shade, toilets, seating and accessible walkways
- Ample outdoor seating that is well sited and managed
- Pavements that are well maintained and accessible to wheelchairs or people with impaired mobility
- Buildings that are accessible
- Streets that prioritise pedestrians
- Safe and well lit places
- Spaces that are programmed to encourage social interactions around everyday activities, including intergenerational engagement

Cities and communities should consider becoming part of the WHO's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities. To date eight Australian cities have joined the network, committing to its principles.

Case Studies of WHO Global Network members

Toronto, Canada

The City of Toronto *Seniors Strategy* supports the concept that designing for the young excludes the old, but designing for the old includes everyone. The Seniors Strategy sets goals for the city to improve wayfinding through public spaces and to create more accessible footpaths and walkways and increase safety of public areas.

www.toronto.ca

Banyule City Council, Melbourne, Victoria

City population: 125,503, 22% over 60

Banyule City Council became a member of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities in December 2014. This time also marked the commencement of the inaugural Banyule Age-friendly Advisory Committee (BAFCAC) which brings together residents, government and local agencies to support Banyule in being an age-friendly City. The BAFCAC advises Council on a range of issues that may influence policy, service and program development as it affects older people. This advice will assist Council to identify, articulate and respond appropriately to new and emerging issues and to develop and implement plans that benefit the community.

Supporting research/links

Brisbane City Council Seniors Strategy 2012-2017: Delivering a Seniors Friendly City, Brisbane City Council 2012

Global Friendly Cities Guide, World Health Organisation 2007

Age-friendly World website, <http://agefriendlyworld.org/en/>, World Health Organisation, accessed July 2015

Cities and Aging, University of Toronto, Sept 2013

8-80 Cities website, www.8-80cities.org, 8-80 Cities, Toronto, Canada, accessed July 2015

Human Responses to Vegetation and Landscapes, landscape and Urban Planning, Ulrich, R S 1985

Comparing Responses to Horticultural-Based and Traditional Activities in Dementia Care Programs, Shannon E. Jarrott, PhD and Christina M. Gliotti, PhD 2010

<http://aja.sagepub.com/content/25/8/657.full.pdf>

Healthy Places and Spaces <http://www.healthyplaces.org.au/site/index.php>



Other position statements

To come

Further information

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