



## **The Heart Foundation submission to City of Adelaide Shaping Streets and Green Spaces**

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### **National Heart Foundation of Australia**

The Heart Foundation is the leading Australian not for profit organisation working to improve the design of our cities, towns, streets and buildings to make it easier for Australians to lead heart-healthy lives.

For 60 years the Heart Foundation has been working to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and help our communities achieve optimal heart health through our work in prevention, support and care, and research.

The Heart Foundation warmly welcomes the opportunity to make a written submission regarding the development of a policy for the future planning and upgrade of public realm and green spaces in the City of Adelaide.

The Heart Foundation is the leading Australian not for profit organisation working to improve the design of our cities, neighbourhoods, streets and buildings to make it easier for Australians to lead heart-healthy lives.

In particular, the Heart Foundation advocates for policy, practice and initiatives of Local Government that facilitate and encourage physical activity, active living, liveability and better access to healthy food for health and wellbeing.

Taken as a whole the Adelaide City Council will be the largest medium to high density development in the metropolitan area, with unique challenges such as student housing, and limited private open and green space.

An improved green space system in Adelaide will strengthen the resilience of the city to climate change and water scarcity. It will also reduce the urban 'heat island' effect, assist with rainwater infiltration and mitigation of flooding and providing improved visual amenity. Further challenges presented with the growing population will include health and wellbeing, and the need to address chronic disease and address the priorities of the State Public Health Plan<sup>i</sup>.

Heart Foundation supports the councils plan to develop a policy to respond to the growing demand for open space, and plan for a city that will both promote and protect the community and environment's health.

Key points:

- The Heart Foundation supports the provision of open and green space within easy safe walking distance (within 150-300m) of all dwellings, suited to the needs of the community.
- The Heart Foundation supports a network of green open spaces within the City of Adelaide, including gardens, walking paths, grassed areas, recreational areas, dog parks, water features, nature areas and small pocket parks or urban greening – active and passive spaces – on all levels – to provide a cool, comfortable and pleasant living and a supportive pedestrian environment.

## **Do you think that there is enough or too little open space?**

*How do we know what is “enough”?*

Council has already appeared to review the Charles Sturt-led, LGA funded, multi-agency project *Best Practice Open Space in Higher Density Development Projects*.<sup>ii</sup> This research is still applicable and consistent with previous and further studies examining ideal open space provision in medium to higher density development projects.

Various reviews of evidence by the Heart Foundation<sup>iii</sup> show that having sufficient open space, particularly green space is a major component in making higher density development a pleasant and health promoting place to live. Access to high quality open and green spaces has been shown to deliver higher levels of physical activity in residents, and the perception of quality of open spaces is a key factor in resident satisfaction.

Our research and the consistent finding of other studies is that there is no set formula for amounts of open space, and that provision should be needs based after contextual analysis including distance to spaces. However best practice guidelines generally recommend:

- a linked network of open spaces within conducive walkways between open spaces and other popular destinations;
- a mix of sizes within close walking distance of a residence;
- a mix of open space with different purposes/type across the entire City of Adelaide responding to demographics of the population and community engagement;
- High quality design including Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to enhance safety, and accessible to all members of the population;
- Spaces that meet a various range of needs and ages including formal sport, multi-use courts, green areas, plaza/forecourts for meeting and sitting, adventure playgrounds for young children.

Our understanding is that the City of Charles Sturt led study found that 12.5% is considered a base amount with further to be provided dependent on contextual analysis. Context is particularly relevant within Adelaide where development is undertaken on small sites within an existing urban fabric surrounded by extensive parklands – accessibility, useability and safety become key.

Additionally, the Heart Foundation would like to see a mechanism within the policy that would acknowledge cumulative open space. This would avoid the sub-optimal outcome of there being *enough* open space and some residences being in close proximity of many pocket parks at the expense of being within walking distance to good quality, large public open space.

*Open space must be accessible*

The consultation paper questions whether there is easy and safe access to quality open space within a short distance of existing homes within Adelaide. This is not possible to ascertain from the maps and information provided. Although the Council has provided a map labelled ‘open space excluding the Park Lands’ the map in question appears to show catchment areas around both ‘city squares’, and possibly some (but not all?) sites in the Park Lands. A number of housing developments are adjacent to dedicated recreation spaces in the Park Lands, separated by roads (including parts of South and East Terrace) classified as local level streets in Council’s transport strategy. A refining of the existing

map to include distances to these spaces would ascertain the true catchments to open space and recreation opportunities for residents.

Our Healthy by Design<sup>iv</sup> guidelines generally recommend that dwellings be within 150-300m safe walking distance of a small local park and 500m to a large park (over 1ha). An examination of the map showed that housing in some locations, particularly in the South East corner of the CBD, is located greater than the recommended distance from open space, in a traditionally residential area of the CBD.

**The Heart Foundation supports the provision of open and green space within easy safe walking distance (within 150-300m) of all dwellings, suited to the needs of the community.**

### **Are the draft Principles of Public Value fit for purpose to guide Council's decision making on new open spaces and pedestrian/cycling links?**

The existing Principles of Public Value statements appear to cover most aspects of best practice principles.

We would also refer council to Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) SA's recent paper on quality green space, and their 10 Proposed Aspirations of Good Quality Open Spaces.<sup>v</sup> AILA SA proposes the following 10 key aspirations for defining the key qualities of successful open spaces within South Australia:

1. Nature and Landscape: Good quality open spaces support local flora and fauna and provide people with the opportunity to reconnect with the natural environment through welcoming and attractive landscapes.
2. Health and Wellbeing: Attractive, functional open spaces can improve the physical and mental health of the local community by improving the cooling and comfort of local neighbourhoods and providing safe settings for active and passive pursuits.
3. Community Activation: Well-designed open spaces create unique settings that respond to the needs and aspirations of the local community. They help build a sense of community, enabling greater social interaction and positive behaviours that reflect local history, identity and aspirations.
4. Adaptability: Good quality open spaces can adapt to the community's changing social, physical or environmental needs over time.
5. Accessibility and Connectivity: Well-planned open spaces are easily accessible and can contribute to a wider network of open spaces for people to move through and to experience as a destination.
6. Urban Context: Well-planned open spaces integrate with their surroundings and create positive relationships between natural landscapes, active building edges and other community infrastructure.
7. Universal Design: Well managed open spaces are welcoming and inclusive settings that can be enjoyed by people of all ages, needs, abilities and cultures
8. Resilience: Well-designed open spaces incorporate natural systems to mitigate the effects of a changing climate and provide greater health benefits to the local community and Greater Adelaide.
9. Economic Benefit: Good quality open spaces contribute positively to the economic health of our city and our communities. Along with high quality built form, it enables the creation of communities that are attractive, productive places to live, work, play and visit.

10. Environmental Benefit: Well-planned open spaces contribute towards habitat creation in our cities and can lower temperatures in the built environment caused by the urban heat island effect.

Although the proposed Public Value Principles are to be applied to open space within the city grid only and not the Park Lands, for a genuine needs-analysis the adjacent dedicated recreation spaces on low traffic streets should be included. A more comprehensive analysis would reveal whether new open spaces are needed or whether the existing amount of open space is sufficient and could be upgraded to meet the passive and active recreation needs of existing and future residents. Analysis could include (but not limited to):

- the current catchments when recreation spaces within the Park Lands adjacent to housing in local level streets is included;
- The location of new and predicted medium/high density housing, particularly student housing;
- Whether the available space is of a size and configuration to provide the necessary passive and active requirements of existing/new residents (based on social planning and community feedback);
- The requirements to meet other objectives such as urban cooling/Water Sensitive Urban Design. Is greening the existing street and link network going to sufficiently cool current and future hot spots? Are some 'pocket spaces' with greenery and seating sufficient for breaking up the urban form and providing gathering points/ refuge from city pavement? Our understanding is that CoA has heat mapping showing existing hot spots in the city which would benefit from extra tree cover and the provision of green landscaping. It is essential that up to date heat mapping is considered in the process of this policy development.

The Heart Foundation views it as critical that the policy include a mechanism to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the open spaces. In order to maximise the investment of public open space by encouraging facilities to be utilised year-round and by our diverse community, the responsibility of managing adequate maintenance must be considered. We propose that this can be built in to existing Open Space Levy payments or other contributions to the Open Space Fund.

**New links are likely to be prioritised in areas dominated by large blocks whilst open space is likely to be developed in areas of most need (areas of poor provision or where there is high demand). Can you identify areas where links would be beneficial?**

Heart Foundation particularly supports walking for transport and recreation as the most universal, low cost form of physical activity and incidental activity across the population. Existing and potential new residents will be pedestrians (including those that need assistance with mobility) and many will be cyclists. The consultation documents note that many pedestrian links are not comprehensive and numerous pathways within the CBD are incomplete.

Our understanding is that Council has previously mapped areas of pedestrian demand as part of a 'Link and Place' assessment in the current Transport and Movement Strategy. We expect that this will be reviewed and updated as a new strategy is developed. The Heart Foundation also supports the rollout and refinement of the current wayfinding signage strategy as part of all new street design projects.

The Heart Foundation would strongly support identifying links and movement networks within the catchment areas around the 16 primary, secondary schools and colleges in the City of Adelaide, as

well as the Universities, to support active travel to school. Encouraging students to engage in active travel will increase physical activity and has the potential for profound positive impacts on education outcomes, physical and mental health.<sup>vi</sup>

The Heart Foundation supports the creation of new links in areas dominated by large blocks, particularly where they provide greater connectivity in areas of high pedestrian demand. We also support various Adelaide policy documents that recognise the importance of urban design and green infrastructure when retrofitting or providing new links, as our research shows that design of links is critical to promoting walking.

**Design to encourage walking.** Among adults, local streets and quality footpaths are consistently reported as the biggest enablers of walking and the most frequently used facilities for physical activity<sup>vii</sup>. However well-designed pedestrian facilities also help to promote mental health and social connectedness. There is comprehensive evidence that shows that well designed movement networks support the community's health by:

- Encouraging physical activity through walking and cycling for transport and recreation;
- providing safe and easy access to needed services;
- reducing social isolation; and
- providing places for social interaction.

All of these are critical in areas of medium to high density housing when there is a higher incidence of adults, particularly older adults, living alone.

There is strong evidence<sup>viii-ix</sup> that the aesthetic presentation of streets promotes walking by making the experience more attractive, convenient, functional, comfortable and safe. The infrastructure needed includes:

- Trees and Shade
- Seating
- Signage
- Lighting
- Shade and planting
- Dog-walking facilities
- Drinking fountains.

**Importance of street trees.** The Heart Foundation notes the Adelaide Design Manual: Green Infrastructure Guidelines and support its implementation across new and existing links.

Our research<sup>x-xi</sup> shows that shady street trees are critical to promoting health:

- The presence of trees encourages people to walk for both exercise and transport and is associated with reduced incidence of heart attack and type 2 diabetes.
- Trees planted along the kerb, especially if closely spaced; define a pedestrian zone separated from traffic, creating a sense of safety both physically and psychologically.
- The perception of safety is an important component of walkability, and there are safety aspects of tree planting in the verge between the footpath and roadway. This includes an increased perception of safety, by separating pedestrians and moving vehicles, and by creating a protective barrier which reduces the risk of being hit by a 'run-off-the-road' vehicle.
- Trees (low-allergen) absorb considerable quantities of airborne pollutants which has been shown to cut childhood asthma levels.

Street trees encourage walking:

- Trees reduce the urban heat island effect on the broad scale and at the individual level. Temperature under tree canopies is reduced by 5-15°C improving the thermal comfort and air quality for pedestrians. This is particularly important in areas with hot climates, such as Adelaide; where both an increase in density of buildings and climate change leading to warmer CBD temperatures.
- Street trees on routes to school encourage children to walk to school and promote walking and cycling in adolescents and adults. With more housing available in the city, and the building of an in-demand new city high school; child pedestrian numbers will be increasing.
- It is important to ensure that the provision of both footpaths and mature street trees can be accommodated in all new links.

### **What type of open space do you think should be provided?**

As previously discussed, the Heart Foundation would support the creation of new open space where spatial mapping, social planning, and community input reveal it is most needed. This also applies to the types of open space that should be provided.

Higher density environments differ from suburban developments in that open space must provide some of the functions traditionally served by private open space. The Charles Sturt-led research review found that there is no 'typical' higher density housing resident. The current that the current Residential High Density Zone in Development Plans allows for no provision of private open space for studio apartments. For other size apartments there is a private open space square metre requirement, but with no minimum width. There is also the possibility to reduce even the small areas required if the housing is to be 'affordable housing'.

Balconies and terraces (at ground floor level) allow space for access for fresh air and greenery, ability to entertain guests, children to play (in a limited fashion) supervised outdoors, and the opportunity for pet ownership. Developments aimed at students are largely studio apartments; which limit resident outdoor activity to public spaces (except for some small communal courtyards).

The resulting lack of private open space may drive new demand for facilities in public parks; such as BBQ's; serviced picnic areas; play spaces and multi-use court space as outdoor entertaining within the home is not possible.



*Example: Atira Student Living, Waymouth St. No private open space and limited communal space is available to residents. Light Square is close but does it meet the needs or aspirations of residents? Image: sensational-adelaide.com*

**Make being active an easy choice.** The Heart Foundation supports facilities to encourage active recreation for all ages and abilities whether these are bike/scooter/jogging tracks, multi-sport courts or adult exercise equipment. With an influx of international residents, community engagement might reveal demand for sports and recreational facilities that are not currently standard in parks such as table tennis, soccer goalposts (even if no pitch), badminton nets, or tennis courts. These do not have to be large facilities. In our experience even housing aimed at seniors living welcomes play spaces to encourage younger family and friends to visit. In order to compliment the City of Adelaide’s vision to be welcoming to people at all stages of life, this needs to be a consideration.

Adelaide City Council already has excellent community engagement processes, and we would encourage engagement with the residents of existing housing and the likely demographic of new housing in the planning of any spaces adjacent their properties.

**The Heart Foundation would support a network of green open spaces within the City of Adelaide, including gardens, walking paths, grassed areas, recreational areas, dog parks, water features, nature areas and small pocket parks or urban greening – active and passive spaces – on all levels - as identified, to provide a cool, comfortable and pleasant living and a supportive pedestrian environment.**

#### **Could some formal sporting provision be made via rooftop space?**

The provision of rooftop space as part of a mix of open spaces could also be considered as part of a developer application. The provision of rooftop facilities such as sporting grounds is common in highly urbanised cities overseas and has precedent in the construction of the above ground playing fields at Christian Brothers College. This option is being considered by other inner-city Councils to remove current pressures to convert existing passive spaces to active spaces as their residential population expands.



*“People say you can drive out to the outer suburbs to play sport, but what every report shows is that the more people have to drive or commute then the less they play sport” City of Melbourne quoted in the Herald Sun<sup>xii</sup>*



Christian Brothers College rooftop space. Image: cbc.sa.edu.au



Car parking + sports field <http://www.smma.com>

### **Would land under consideration be suitable for indoor facility?**

A needs analysis considering the open space provision for the CBD might consider the need for greater indoor recreation space to complement or substitute for new/retrofitted open space. Indoor space can support active and passive recreation in all weathers and may be a preferred option over outdoor open space at night. Indoor spaces could create opportunities for students, particularly interstate and overseas students, to create social connections and also support ageing populations. It is our understanding that Council conducts a [resident wellbeing survey](#) that could also assist in planning for the health and recreation needs of residents.

**Would you prefer that Council improves the standard of existing open spaces instead of creating new ones?**

The Heart Foundation supports retrofitting of existing open space and existing walking and cycling links as well as creating new ones to improve walkability in the city. As previously discussed; quality design, safety and tree canopy are all critical to promote walking by existing and new residents, students and workers.

As discussed earlier only a more in-depth analysis will reveal whether improving existing open spaces may be sufficient, and retrofitting a more economical option, than creating new spaces – especially when current recreation spaces adjacent housing in the Park Lands are considered. When determining the economic viability, it is critical that the ongoing maintenance of open spaces is considered and protected.

The mapping provided on page 7 of the consultation document show that the open spaces closest to housing (excluding the Park Lands) are the City Squares. Council's own documents (i.e. [SmartMove Interim Action Plan](#)) comment that the six squares currently do not play a noticeable role in City life, and that there should be better access to both the Park Lands and squares. The Council's Open Space Plan has a priority of strengthening the role of all the squares with activation and provision for activities and improve accessibility. However, this conflicts with Council's [Community Land Management Plan](#) to retain the urban character of the squares and have informal recreation only (which appears to only provide for sitting on park benches or the grass).

**An example: Hurtle Square:** The Heart Foundation concurs and observes that in some cases such as Light Square the park functions as a traffic island with limited extension of the existing street pedestrian network. However some squares, such as Hurtle Square, has sections bound by low trafficked streets and rear-loaded housing. It is located within a residential corner of the city, is bound by existing housing, and is home to three recent multi-storey housing developments. The park is generally empty with not recreation facilities and is mostly used as part of a pedestrian network.

There is the possibility to create a shared space street design<sup>xiii</sup> around parts of the square to reduce the barrier and provide a seamless experience from housing to park, rather than housing to street. In this case improving the current space may provide for new residents over trying to create a new park in a tightly held area. We note that the Adelaide Park Lands Management Strategy foreshadows future master-planning of Hurtle Square and hope that engagement would tease out if adjacent residents use the open space, and if not why not? What would make them use it? It may be time for the original vision of Colonel Light that the City Squares are contemplative spaces to be usurped if new residential development requires more activation of those spaces.

Another option is to make better use of existing community facilities. Examples of community facilities that may have green space would be: Schools (there are at least 16 in the CoA), Neighbourhood centres and places of worship. For example school facilities and grounds could be used outside of school hours and the squares/parks should be able to support activities at all times of the day or night (much of the park lands is not suitable for night time use).

See case study: <http://www.healthyactivebydesign.com.au/case-studies/northey-street-city-farm>

**Would you be interested in participating in a workshop to help Council plan future open spaces?**

The Heart Foundation would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with Council, residents, and other stakeholders to discuss open space planning.

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