



**To:** Place Directorate

**From:** Adrian Davis

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**Subject:** Essential Evidence on a Page No. 157: Liveable Neighbourhoods and evidence for increased walking

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Top line: In designing new neighbourhoods a unique policy experiment has highlighted the importance of implementing the community design element above and beyond that of the movement network and lot layout elements alone. A result is that walking for transport and particularly walking for recreation increased for new residents of a liveable neighbourhood.

In implementing sustainable communities there has been much discussion but less by way of attempts to implement what might be considered the principles. A driver for implementing more sustainable communities is the low levels of routine physical activity that are commonplace in low density urban sprawl settlements across the globe. A range of alternative housing developments have emerged to counter urban sprawl and encourage travel by active modes including Transit Oriented Developments, developments designed using New Urbanist principles, and Smart Growth. These developments are based on the premise that residents of pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods with higher residential density, mixed land use, and accessible shops and public transport are more likely to use non-motorised forms of transport than those living in conventional suburbs poorly served with these characteristics.

In 1998, the Western Australian State Government began trialling the 'Liveable Neighbourhoods Community Design Guidelines (LNG)'. This was introduced to replace the conventional design codes and facilitate the development of sustainable suburban communities. The LNG is a local interpretation of New Urbanism. From 1998 to 2008 the LNG provided developers and planners with a voluntary alternative to the existing policies that dictated land development practices. A key aim of the LNG is to reduce urban sprawl and car dependence and encourage more sustainable transport use. The LNG consists of six design topics, four of which provide more compact, self-sufficient, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods, with local destinations and public transport links. These are: community design; movement networks, lot layout; and public parkland.

The introduction of the LNG provided a unique opportunity for a natural experiment. In 2003 the RESIDE (Residential Environments) project commenced. The aim was to assess the impact of the policy on the walking, cycling and public transport behaviours of residents moving into new suburban greenfield developments.<sup>1</sup> The results showed that despite a lack of full policy implementation, positive impacts were observed for both transport and recreation walking behaviours. The change in walking behaviour was associated with increased levels of implementation of the LNG policy after a certain time exposure. LNG has now been formally adopted by the Western Australian Planning Commission. It is now the preferred operational policy for the design and assessment of structure plans (regional, district & local). It is also used for subdivisions, for new urban and suburban (predominantly residential) areas in metropolitan and rural centres, on greenfield and large brownfield and urban infill sites.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Giles-Corti, B. et al 2013 The influence of urban design on neighbourhood walking following residential re-location, *Social Science & Medicine*, 77: 20-30.

<sup>2</sup> Giles-Corti, B. et al 2015 The influence of urban design and planning on physical activity, in Barton, H. et al (Eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Planning for Health and Wellbeing*, Abingdon: Routledge.