

Case Study: Fremantle, Western Australia



Version 1.1

DESIGN FOR HEALTH is a collaboration between the Metropolitan Design Center at the University of Minnesota and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota that serves to bridge the gap between the emerging research base on community design and healthy living with the every-day realities of local government planning.

METROPOLITAN
DesignCenter

College of
Design

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Metropolitan Design Center
1 Rapson Hall
89 Church Street
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612.625.9000
www.designcenter.umn.edu

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Metropolitan Design Center
College of Design
University of Minnesota

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The following people were involved in the development of the Case Study Series:

Contributors: Dr. Ann Forsyth, Dr. Kevin Krizek, Dr. Carissa Schively, Laura Baum, Amanda Johnson, Aly Pennucci,
Copy Editor: Bonnie Hayskar
Layout Designers: Anna Christiansen, Tom Hilde, Kristin Raab, Jorge Salcedo, Katie Thering, Luke Van Sistine
Website Managers: Whitney Parks, Joanne Richardson

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Introduction

Design for Health has issued a series of case studies to explore the emerging trend of incorporating public health into comprehensive planning. The second of these case studies is the City of Fremantle (Fremantle) in Western Australia. Like King County, Washington (see case 1), the Fremantle case primarily focuses on integrating one critical dimension of public health—physical activity—into its planning framework.

This case study has three objectives. It:

- identifies the regulatory framework and key players in linking planning and health in Fremantle,
- outlines the approach that Fremantle uses to prioritize health within its planning framework, and
- offers insights for other communities seeking to model a planning approach based on Fremantle.

This case study is informed by research done by the Design for Health team. The team has developed a series of documents for planners that discusses varying approaches to integrating health into comprehensive planning and helps sort out evidence-based research from common misconceptions about health and planning. These documents include:

- Information Sheet Series
- Key Questions Series
- Health Impact Assessment
- Technical Assistance Library

These materials are available at www.designforhealth.net.

Overall, the Fremantle case shows how a city can take a multifaceted approach to increasing physical activity. While it uses physical planning strategies to increase options, it also provides programming support for walking and biking (e.g., a free bike program, a 10,000-steps program).

Key Players & Policy Framework

Fremantle is a major commercial port city on the edge of the Indian Ocean in the southwest corner of Australia (City of Fremantle 2006a). It is located in the metropolitan area of Perth and contains the largest metropolitan retail center outside of the central city of Perth. The city and its surrounding communities account for approximately 200,000 residents (City of Fremantle 2006a). Fremantle is part of the “rapidly expanding southwest urban corridor, which is now the fastest-growing region in the metropolitan area” and the city itself covers an area of 18.7 square kilometers and has 28 km of river foreshore and coastline” (City of Fremantle 2001). The suburbs in the municipality are Fremantle, North Fremantle, South Fremantle, White Gum Valley, Hilton, Beaconsfield, O’Connor, and Samson.

Fremantle’s efforts to link the built environment and public health were spurred by physical activity mandates at the executive level in the State government. This top-down approach resulted in the gathering of resources and cross-departmental expertise that aided local communities in pursuing policy change, educational programs and plan implementation. The key players are:

- Department of Premier and Cabinet (executive level)
 - Premier Dr. Geoff Gallop
 - Physical Activity Taskforce (PATF)
- City of Fremantle (municipal level)
 - Urban Management
 - Community Services

Their involvement is more fully explored below.

Executive Level

In June 2001, State Premier Dr. Geoff Gallop (equivalent to a United States governor) created the Premier’s Physical Activity Taskforce (PATF), an advisory group, in response to growing health concerns about obesity. PATF was charged with developing a physical activity plan for the State of Western Australia (PATF 2006a).

In October 2001, PATF released the strategic direction report “Getting Western Australians More Active.” Its goal was to increase the number of people who participate in enough physical activity to experience a health benefit by 5 percent from 58 percent to 63 percent over 10 years (PATF 2006b). The rationale for this initiative included the following points (PATF 2006b):

1. The lack of physical activity is the second leading contributor to the overall burden of disease among Australians.
2. The costs attributable to the six major diseases (heart disease, stroke, non-insulin diabetes, colon cancer, breast cancer, and depression disorders) due to physical inactivity is \$36 million a year in Western Australia.
3. Lack of physical activity is also a major cause leading to an epidemic of overweight and obesity, with more than half of Australians now considered overweight or obese.

The development of PATF was in response to research conducted by the Western Australia State Department of Sport and Recreation, the Western Australia State Department of Health and the University of Australia that explored decreasing involvement in physical activity by Western Australians (PATF 2006b). Taskforce representatives included senior officials from the Departments of the Premier and Cabinet; Education; Health; Planning and Infrastructure; Sport and Recreation; the Western Australian Local Government Association; Healthway, a statutory body started under the Tobacco Control Act 1990 that funds health-related activities; Lotterywest, which is a State lottery that raises funds to support nonprofit organizations; an academic and a community representative.

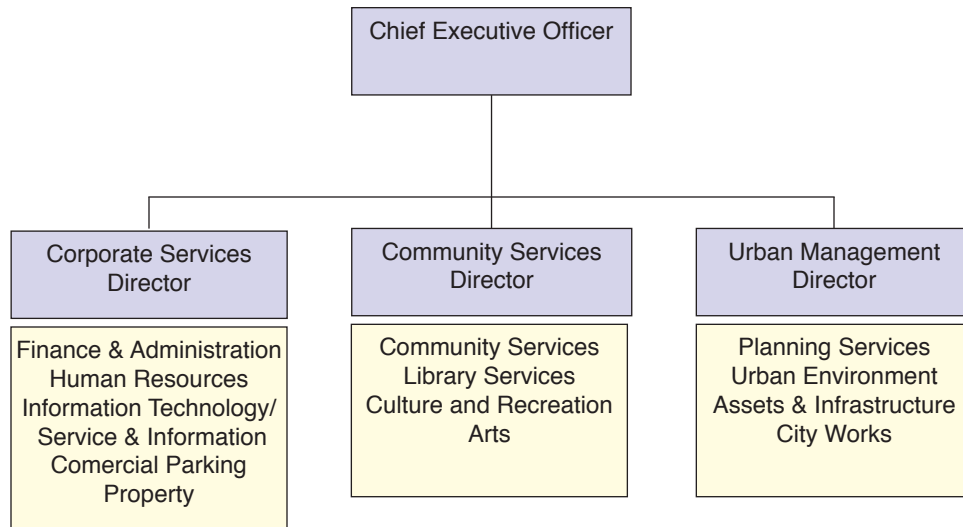
The taskforce is structured into three working groups: communications, evaluation and monitoring and local government, where each advises on its respective areas of expertise (PATF 2006a). For the purposes on this case study, it is important to note that senior representation from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure sat on two of three working groups: evaluation and monitoring and local government (PATF 2006a). The local government group was charged with the following responsibilities (PATF 2006a):

- Contribute to the development of the Physical Activity Strategy for Western Australia 2002 - 2011.
- Develop recommendations, models of best practices and evaluation models relevant to local and State government, for PATF consideration.
- Implement strategies that will enhance and build on the physical activity progress already made by local government.
- Implement strategies with local government that will showcase a coordinated approach to the development and implementation of a physical activity strategy across Western Australia.
- Promote strategies that encourage local government to incorporate physical activity into their strategic planning and budgetary processes.

As mentioned above, one of their goals was to develop a series of best practices for local governments. In conjunction with the participation of 10 local government representatives (including a planning representative from Fremantle), some of the following best practices were identified (PATF 2003, 5):

- having government leadership that supports “a multi-action approach that is aimed at short- and long-term impacts through cross government coordination, workforce development, community involvement, overarching communication and evaluation strategies, and regional involvement;”
- implementing strategies that build on existing physical activity initiatives on the local level; and
- implementing coordinated strategies with local government across Western Australia.

This working group also created a series of web-based resources that communities can access, including: case studies (reports on local government programs), “how to” guides (includes checklists for such programs as walking groups), and fact sheets (details existing programs like Active Transport, TravelSmart School, etc.). In addition, it programs events and provides matching grants to local governments for amounts between \$5000 and \$30,000.

Figure 1: Organizational Structure of Fremantle

Source: City of Fremantle 2007a

Information about these various educational and financial resources is available at <http://www.beactive.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=localGovt#resources>.

PATF laid out the groundwork at the executive level for communities to be able to incorporate physical activity into land use and transportation decisions through such educational and financial resources. PATF funded Fremantle to develop a strategic plan for physical activity, for example, that included an emphasis on changes to the built environment. The information below looks at how different municipalities, like Fremantle, approach health and planning.

Municipal Level

Fremantle is divided into six wards: North, South, East, City, Hilton, and Beaconfield, and the City Council has 13 elected officials including the mayor (City of Fremantle 2007b). The council establishes policies and the management team (typical city administration work) implements these policies (City of Fremantle 2007a). The organizational structure of this management team includes a chief executive officer and the following three departments: corporate services, community services and urban management (Fig. 1) (City of Fremantle 2007a). The health and

planning sectors are housed in the Community Services Division and the Urban Management Division. The approach towards health and planning will be explained later in the case study; however, Fremantle's planning documents will be discussed here.

Fremantle follows three major policy documents:

- Town Planning Scheme No. 4 (statutory zoning and development control)
- Fremantle Planning Strategy (FPS) (planning and land use – strategic framework)
- Fremantle Strategic Plan (formerly the Fremantle City Plan) (community vision)

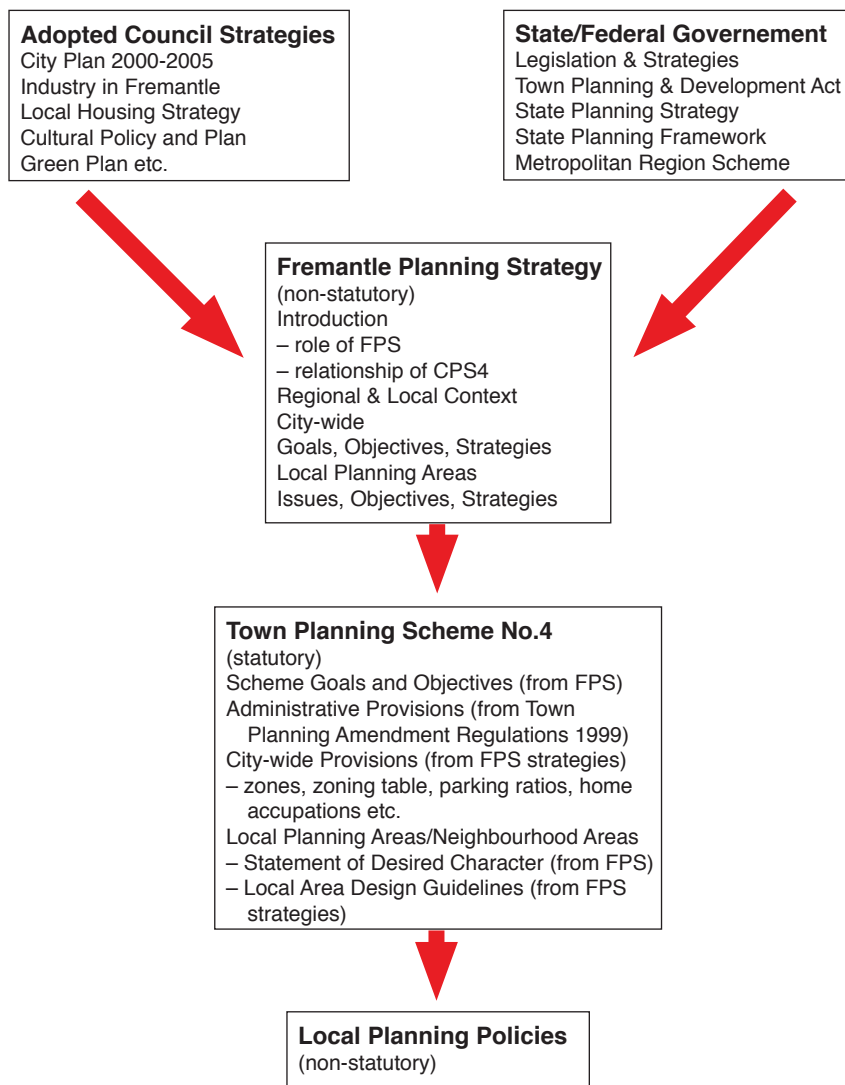
The Town Planning Scheme is a policy document required by the State legislature's Town Planning and Development Act where all local municipalities must develop statutory requirements (City of Fremantle 2001, 14). The Fremantle Planning Strategy (FPS) is the key strategic-planning document that is read in conjunction with the Town Planning Scheme No. 4 and the Fremantle Strategic Plan (City of Fremantle 2001, 7) (Fig. 2). FPS looks 10-15 years into the future while the Fremantle Strategic Plan has a 5-year timeframe. The FPS plays the following role; it (City of Fremantle 2001, 7):

- sets the framework implementing and interpreting State and regional policies for Fremantle;
- provides the planning context for the zones, reservations and statutory provisions contained in the Town Planning Scheme; and
- provides the strategic direction of future population and employment; the broad strategies for housing, employment, shopping and business activities; and proposals for transport, parks, regional open space and other public uses.

As outlined in Figure 2, the FPS addresses the following issues (City of Fremantle 2001, 12):

- a description of the key characteristics of the municipality, its regional context and major planning issues;
- a statement of goals explaining the strategic land- use directions that the council is seeking to pursue;
- land-use or development issues that provide a context for local planning decisions;
- the links between strategic planning in the municipality, the State and regional planning context;

Figure 2: Framework for Fremantle Planning Strategy and Town Planning Scheme No. 4



Source: City of Fremantle 2001, 14.

- strategic-policy statements about issues such as housing, business and industry, open space and recreation, transport, infrastructure, and environment;
- more detailed strategies for particular areas or specific issues contained in the strategy; and
- an outline of how the strategy will be implemented including reference to any Local Planning Policies and guidelines that may be required, planning-scheme measures and proposals of the State government and council to facilitate development including capital works.

In other words, the FPS mirrors the comprehensive plans for most communities in the United States. In Australia, strategic planning is long term as opposed to “statutory” planning, which is development control, although Fremantle has both a plan strategy (10-15 years out) and a strategic plan (5 years)! FPS principles include: ecological sustainability, preservation of heritage, community and cultural diversity, economic development/employment areas, regional center, residential mix, managing vehicle-use management, open space, and community consultation and decision making (City of Fremantle 2001, 9).

Other council strategies that are intended to work with, guide and/or supplement the FPS include the draft Transport Strategy (transport and movement); Economic Development Strategy (investment); Fremantle Green Plan (open space); Recreation Policy and Strategy (recreation); Blueprint (infrastructure and public space for the central-city area); Cultural Policy and Plan (culture and identity); and Youth and Aged Strategies (community). The Physical Activity Strategy for Fremantle is comparable to these various council strategies; such that, they are designed to supplement the FPS document.

The policy framework of both the executive and municipal level provides an important foundation for understanding how Fremantle was able to accomplish its work with physical activity and the built environment from a policy and a plan implementation level.

Approach

As mentioned above, the push from the executive level acted as a catalyst for Fremantle’s work with physical activity and planning (Raphael and Stoneham 2007). In 2003, the Cabinet approved a four-year implementation plan for 2003/2004-2006/2007 based on five specific outcomes (PATF no date, 1-15):

- Programs and services, which encourage and facilitate community involvement in physical activity, will be re-oriented and integrated.
- Physical and social environments will support physical activity and healthy lifestyles and contribute to building social capital.
- Education, training and support will enable the development of networks and strategies that will increase the level of physical activity in the community.
- The State government will provide leadership and statewide coordination for a physical activity strategy.
- State government legislation and regulation supports improved physical activity outcomes.

One of ways that the State government provided financial leadership was by offering a series of matching grants for communities. Fremantle capitalized on this opportunity by applying for a grant to develop a strategic plan for physical activity at the local level; they received a total of \$42,000 over a three-year period from PATF and Fremantle committed an additional \$42,000. One of the first decisions that Fremantle made was to hire a consultant, Dr. Melissa Stoneham, to facilitate this project on a part-time basis. She was hired by the Community Services division; however, she worked directly with environmental planner, Caroline Raphael, in the Urban Management Division, having first met in the local working group that the City created in 2004. The working group’s role was to advise on public health and planning issues and it included the following individuals: community members, local business group leaders, an academic from the University of Notre Dame, a representative from the National Heart Foundation, as well as a City representative from Parks & Gardens and Planning. The chairperson of the working group was a council commissioner. The diversification

of participants was based on the goal of trying to get buy-in from a large constituency of stakeholders (Raphael and Stoneham 2007).

In February 2005, the Fremantle City Council approved the “Physical Activity Strategic Plan: 2005-2009” to create a set of objectives that would help “to plan, develop, implement and evaluate physical activity programs and services into the future” (City of Fremantle 2005, 4). As outlined in Design for Health’s Information Sheet 1, there are four general approaches to integrating health into a community’s comprehensive plan: comprehensive plan update, corrective/ selective amendments, revised codes or ordinances, and separate health-related plans. Fremantle’s approach is a combination of the latter two, which are also supported by a series of educational programs and community-based initiatives. As a separate health-related plan, the physical activity strategic plan:

- extends beyond the scope of required comprehensive plan content and elements,
- relates to issues unique to the community or focuses on sub-areas in the community or it responds to issues of public concern, and
- influences decisions made in the overarching comprehensive plan and, in some cases, is adopted as an extension of the comprehensive plan.

The plan is similar to a typical issue-specific plan in the sense that it has the following elements:

- Methodology
- Physical Activity Strategic Plan Context within the City of Fremantle
 - Guiding Principles for the Physical Activity Strategic Plan
 - Themes for the Strategic Plan
- Why Should Local Government be Involved in the Promotion of Physical Activity
- Inventory of Physical Activity Programs and Services within the City of Fremantle
- Factors that Affect Physical Activity Levels
- Physical Activity Objectives and Strategies
- Implementing and Monitoring the Strategic Plan

In this case study, we will go into greater depth on methodology, inventory and analysis, and implementation; however, due to its complexity,

we recommend that communities review the plan at http://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/council/resource/Physical_Activity_Report.pdf in order to learn more about the document in its entirety.

The chapter on methodology is an element that is not typically seen in issue-specific plans or it is somewhat woven into the public participation side (e.g., number of people that showed up to a community meeting to discuss the issue at hand). Here, it is a much more substantive part as it explains how this plan came together, and it includes: literature searches, the creation of a working group, a draft audit tool, and a community consultation component (City of Fremantle 2005, 6). Throughout Fremantle’s plan, it focuses on making this link between research and practice. The inventory and analysis discusses statistics related to physical activity. It states, for example, that “four out of ten West Australians do not undertake sufficient physical activity to have any positive impact on their general fitness or health” (City of Fremantle 2005). As is described later in the section on implementation, research is also tied to various other projects that stem from this plan.

The inventory and analysis section is a major component of the plan, and it includes a public-participation section, audit of existing facilities and review of physical-activity-based literature that was framed in the context of the City of Fremantle. The public-participation component includes discussion groups and telephone and in-person surveys. Topics include: identifying positive attributes for living in Fremantle; gathering current levels of physical activity; a listing of daily inhibitors to participating in physical activity; and recommendations for ways to change the built environment to influence changes in physical-activity behavior (City of Fremantle 2005). A scenario was also created in which participants were asked to think of themselves as property developers who wanted to design a new suburban neighborhood to be more physically active.

As mentioned above, a draft audit tool was developed to ensure a consistent approach to review all physical-activity programs, services and spaces. It was piloted on a range of public

facilities (City of Fremantle 2005, 6). It included both public and private facilities, such as parks, gardens, open space, sporting facilities, school facilities, trails, bike routes, playgrounds, etc. It covered all ages and capabilities; and contained a description of all council facilities, locations, times available, costs and a contact person (where relevant); and included information on gaps in services. It detailed the following for all facilities: state of repair, type of activity, attractiveness, safety, ease of parking or travel to and from site (e.g., links with public transport), and equity issues (cost, access, child care, disabled access, flexibility of hours, etc.). The analysis included some of the following results (City of Fremantle 2005, 23): lack of “end-route facilities” like bike racks, showers, lack of signage, increasing concerns about safety, and strong links to public transit.

The inventory and analysis informed the chapter on plan objectives and strategies, which included (31-46):

- to ensure council’s approach to policy development is more oriented towards physical activity;
- to ensure resources are invested to encourage people to be more active participants rather than passive spectators;
- to provide information on opportunities for, and personal benefits of, physical activity that will be clear, current and readily available to the community; and
- to ensure that investment will be skewed towards developing and maintaining a wide range of appropriate local and district facilities, services and programs rather than a few major venues and programs.

Each objective and the corresponding strategy included an action leader, budget, time frame, and priority designation. For an example, please see chapter 9 of the plan.

In late 2006, Fremantle, in response to the objectives outlined in the PASP, released a draft of a Physical Activity Impact Assessment Framework (PAIAF), which focuses on plan implementation through working with existing development codes and the development review process. This will be discussed later

in the case study; however, it is important to note that this makes Fremantle unique from other communities, which tend to focus more on policy-based work. Its purpose is to “provide a framework for the assessment of development impacts on those aspects of the physical environment that support physical activity as part of the land-use planning and development process” (City of Fremantle 2006b, 1). It is designed as a systematic tool that will be a “conscious action of balancing the trade-offs between impacts and benefits of development outcomes on the health of individuals” (City of Fremantle 2006b, 1). Short-term impacts include: awareness, increased communication between council departments, creation of local partnerships, media coverage, and initial integration of public-health and planning practices (City of Fremantle 2006b, 2). Long-term outcomes include: development of planning code that will guide developments and assist the City in making decisions under the planning scheme.

It is divided into two design categories: Local Areas and Place. One focuses on scale (spatial area) and the other on complexity (range of uses) of the development and associated planning and assessment processes (City of Fremantle 2006b, 3). It has developed health and wellbeing, desired physical activity and desired environmental criteria for over 57 different planning themes (Table 1). Examples of these themes include: bicycle parking, pedestrian access, public open and civic spaces and facilities for recreation, pathways, alternative transportation options, streetscape amenities and sense of place, private open space for recreation, bicycle infrastructure, to name a few.

In addition to focusing specifically on development impacts, Fremantle also launched a series of educational programs. Within three years, it developed the following programs: a walking program that centered on a 10,000-step challenge with neighborhood businesses; a travel-smart guide that included a map of Fremantle with various physical activity opportunities (open space, public transit routes, etc.); and a bike program where the City gave bikes to people if they used them for a specific

period of time. In addition, Fremantle used these programs to help create an “Active Freo” marketing brand. These various implementation efforts demonstrated that Fremantle was determined to take its separate health plan and embed it within various City initiatives. They include a number of programs—such as the 10,000 steps and free-bike programs—and not just physical planning. In the next section, we highlight certain points that communities should consider when using Fremantle as a guide.

Considerations for Other Communities

Comprehensive Plan Integration

While the plan is independent of the Fremantle Planning Strategy, it is designed specifically to run parallel with the strategies and priorities

identified in the Fremantle Strategic Plan—all which need to be consulted when preparing the Fremantle Planning Strategy. It is considered comparable to the supplemental plans like the Bicycle Network Plan, Seniors Policy, Sport and Recreation Plan, Green Plan, Disability Services Plan, Sustainable Transport, Community Safety Plan, and the Travel Smart Action Plan (City of Fremantle 2005, 10).

Traditional comprehensive plans and public-health officials tend to look at human-health issues in terms of facilities and services; Fremantle, however, expands beyond this normal thought process and states that, “The City has the potential to increase physical activity within the community as it has a key role in providing and managing environments, facilities and services. Providing footpaths and walking and cycling tracks, safe and appealing environments, ensuring the availability of

Table 1: Example from the Physical Activity Impact Assessment Framework

Local Area Design Criteria	Health Objective	Desired PA Outcome	Desired Environmental Outcome	Reference Standard
Efficient & Compact Land Use	To be able to leave a house or place of work on foot or by bicycle to access daily needs and services within the local area	Walking without the local area; Adults participating in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day; Children participating in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day; Cycle paths lead to major destinations; End of route facilities at all major destinations	Footpaths on at least one side of every street with high interconnectivity and safe crossing to a universal standards; destination uses are within a 400 metre or 800 metre ped shed distance, depending upon hierarchy of functions; footpaths regularly maintained to avoid collections of debris on footpaths	Livable neighborhoods; Australian Standard AS 1428.1-Design for Access and Mobility. Australian Standard AS2890.3-Parking Facilities Part 3: Bicycle Parking Facilities. City of Fremantle Bike Plan. City of Fremantle Green Transport Plan. City of Fremantle Physical Activity Plan.

Source: City of Fremantle 2006b, 4.

sporting facilities and recreational activities are current strategies of the council that increase and promote physical activity” (City of Fremantle 2005, 7). It is important to note that this approach focuses purely on physical activity; however, there are a variety of health-related themes that could be considered by communities. For more information, please visit www.designforhealth.net.

Collaborative Approach

Fremantle is particularly interesting because of the different types and characteristics of collaborative behavior. Fremantle collaborated with its executive level (Department of Premiere and Cabinet) in a variety of ways: it had a representative on the local government working group; it received funding for its local physical activity plan; it used the resource library that was created by the taskforce; and more indirectly, the executive level attention to physical activity helped create a support system for local communities interested in pursuing strategies to impact health and planning.

Fremantle also recognized the importance of collaboration at the local level and some examples include: the local working group consisted of both municipal and community stakeholders; the consultant in community services directly worked with an environment planner in the urban management division; the plan itself was designed to be read in conjunction with plans from other departments (Just Walk It, Travel Smart Action Plan, Bicycle Network Plan, Transport Strategy, City Plan). These collaborative efforts encourage a holistic local government approach to physical activity, rather than it being owned by one specific department. It should be noted that while it was a collaborative effort, the work was managed by an outside consultant with a background in public participation and governmental infrastructure. This made the consultant uniquely qualified to maneuver within various departments.

Connecting Research with Planning

As the approach section details, the strategic plan and the impact assessment framework both make a special effort to link existing research with planning. These comments are cited and annotated, moreover, within each document. It is important to note that recent research on physical activity has shown a more complex and ambiguous picture than what is stated in both the plan and assessment framework. To understand this complex issue, please refer to the Physical Activity Key Question. This highlights the importance of research in such efforts.

Implementation

As discussed in the approach section, Fremantle has designed a series of tools and educational programs to turn policy into actual implementation efforts. It developed a Physical Activity Impact Assessment Framework, for example, that is used in conjunction with development and redevelopment projects, because Fremantle committed to working with developers to ensure that future developments “create environments and spaces that enable people to be physically active” (City of Fremantle no date, 1-3). It assesses the “development impacts on those aspects of the physical environment that support physical activity as part of the land-use planning and development process.” Eventually, the goal is to develop a comprehensive PAIAF acceptable to the city planners that enables them to place conditions of approval on development applications that are supportive of physical activity; establish an accreditation system that will engage and educate developers about the best approach in designing environments that are supportive of physical activity; and integrate the PAIAF into the higher order policies at the City of Fremantle (2-3). Moreover, Fremantle has brilliantly used marketing (e.g., Active Freo) to help raise awareness in the community as opposed to focusing specifically on technical language within policies that are not always accessible to the average citizen.

Since these implementation efforts are at the beginning stages, it is unclear as to the impact that they will have on the built environment or in relation to human health. In addition, a majority of the funding for these programs came from the executive level; therefore, it is unclear as to whether or not these programs would have occurred without it. What we do know is that the consultant hired to facilitate the development of a plan and policies has worked closely with both public-health and planning officials to create opportunities to turn policy into reality.

Final Thoughts

Fremantle has taken a progressive approach to link health and planning—most of which is spurred by actions initiated at its executive level of government. While it is too early to examine its impact, it provides insight for communities interested in creating separate health-related plans to deal with human health.

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