



Age-friendly cities; what will help to double older walkers?

Louise Thornley
Quigley and Watts Ltd



Overview

- 1) Health benefits for older walkers
- 2) Age-Friendly Cities initiative
- 3) Suggestions for what works

- Thanks to Public Health Advisory Committee



Older people & activity



- Never too late
- Feasible to take part in a wide range of physical activity



10-day tramps at
70 years



Health benefits of walking for older people

- Enhanced physical & cognitive functioning
- Reduced onset of chronic illness
- Reduced risk of falls
- Improved muscle strength
- Enhanced sleep quality
- Increased life satisfaction
- Reduced depression

Older people in NZ

- Doubling of older people by 2039
- Older people are over-represented among walkers
- Diversity of older people
- Shared experiences, e.g. physical or personal mobility decline, disability, time spent in current neighbourhood

Decline in activity

- General levels of physical activity tend to decline with age
- Barriers to older people's physical activity:
 - Actual and perceived safety e.g. unsafe or congested footpaths
 - Accessibility
 - Ageism
 - Isolation

Factors linked with increased walking by older people

- Mixed land use
- Walkable environments, including safe footpaths & crossings
- Easy access to local shops, services & recreational facilities
- Access to green space
- Neighbourhood safety & attractiveness
- Social support



World Health Organization initiative – age-friendly cities

- 1500 older people were active participants in the project
- 750 caregivers & service providers
- 8 areas of city living including outdoor spaces & buildings, transport, housing, social & civic participation
- = one of 1st research studies on ageing across culturally diverse countries
- Wide audience & user-friendly

What is an “age-friendly” city?

- Optimise opportunities for health, participation & security as people age
- Adapts its structures & services to be accessible to & inclusive of older people with varying needs & capacities
- Active ageing is a lifelong process
- Friendly for all ages
- Design for diversity = prime characteristic
- Culture of respect for older people
- Solidarity between generations

Checklist for age-friendly cities

- Any city can use it to improve or monitor any aspect of urban living
- Easy & affordable ways to make a city more age-friendly



Checklist – examples

- Outdoor spaces & buildings – green spaces & outdoor seating, footpaths well maintained & non-slip
- Transportation – public transport accessible, specialised transport for disabled people
- Housing – affordable housing close to services
- Social participation & inclusion – accessible venues & meeting times, positive media, school curriculum
- Civic participation & employment – flexible options for older workers & volunteers
- Communication & information – clear print & oral communications, wide public access to Internet
- Community & health services – wide range accessible

What works to ↑ walking in older age?

- Integration btwn land use & transport policies
- Provision of green space
- Inclusive & tailored recreation programmes
- Social support – walking groups
- Address safety issues for older pedestrians

Critical success factors

- Design for diversity
- Collaboration & integration across sectors
- Inclusive processes including involvement from older people
- Social support important in encouraging more older people to walk

Examples from overseas

Inclusive design processes

- State-wide planning for age-friendly urban design (e.g. Hawaii)
- Citizen-derived design principles (Indiana)

Programmes to increase social support

- Urbanwalks (UK nationwide programme)
- Mall Walking programmes (Canada)

Conclusion

- Need changes to the urban physical environment & social/cultural changes
- Walkability, mixed use, density, safe footpaths, attractive areas, green space
- Involvement of older people in planning & attention to safety issues
- Cities that are more age-friendly will be better for everyone;
“We are all ageing”



Design for the young and
you exclude the old;

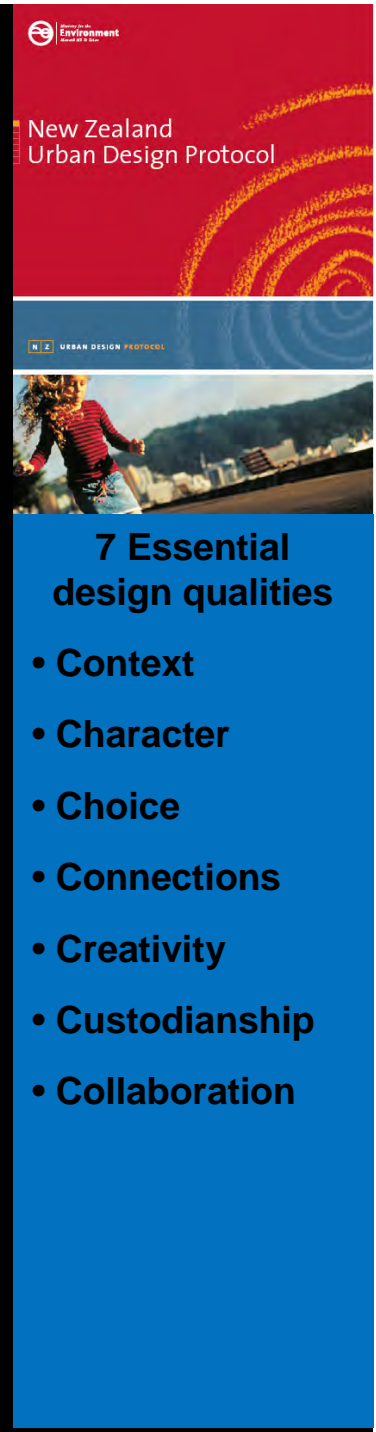
design for the old and you
include the young

- Bernard Isaacs



Contact information

- Louise Thornley, Quigley and Watts Ltd
04 4720138
louise@quigleyandwatts.co.nz
- Signatory to the NZ Urban Design Protocol



7 Essential design qualities

- Context
- Character
- Choice
- Connections
- Creativity
- Custodianship
- Collaboration