

Slide 1



Why Built Environment?

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Slide 2

**Suburbia, 1 a.m. You're walking home again.
Shopping bags and broken glass, I hate going
through the underpass.**

**I wish there was some other way round but you got
beaten up by the playground, and it's no use, we'll
have to go through the deserted shopping centre.**

**Pedestrian walkways – I thought they were meant to
make things better, but it's just emptier, and scary at
night time. Hatfield at that time.**

**This is the place I live. Where is everyone? Are we
the only ones? This is the place I live and so does
everyone, so does everyone.**

(Hatfield 1980 - Tracy Thorn & Ben Watt)

Slide 3

Hatfield 1980, I'm seeing my first knife, my first ambulance ride. I hold your hand the whole way, crying, get home the next day. Police have already been. Well you can imagine the scene.

And if I'm going home I better change my clothes, I better change my clothes.

This is the place I live. Where is everyone? Are we the only ones? This is the place I live and so does everyone, so does everyone.

When I'm looking back I look for everyone. And when I fall down I fall for anyone.

(Hatfield 1980 - Tracy Thorn & Ben Watt)

ISSUES RAISED IN SONG:

Dilapidated public space

Emptiness – lack of people to keep an eye of shared space

Community safety: fear, violence

Playground unsafe

Unanticipated consequences of poor urban design

Lack of citizen involvement in design



The Physical Environment...

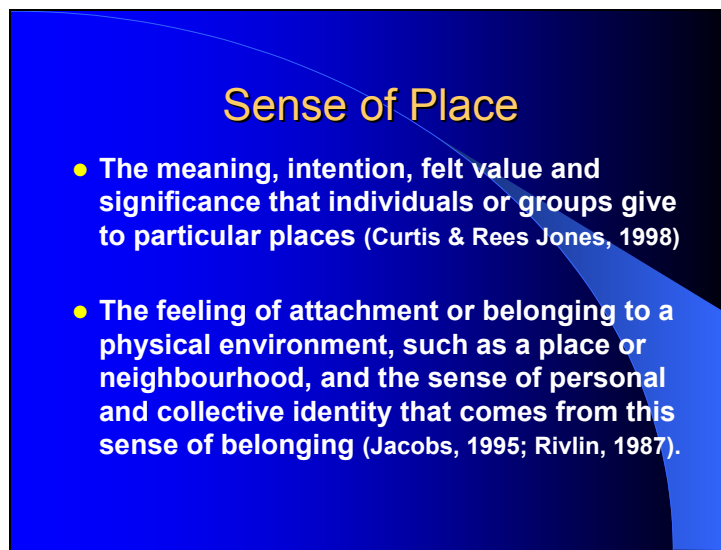
- Provides the setting and backdrop by which we live our lives
- Impacts on our:
 - Senses
 - Emotions
 - Sense of place and belonging
 - Sense of community
 - Participation in physical activity
 - Participation in civic life
 - General health and wellbeing

Research on place and community has shown the interconnectedness of attachment to place with a sense of community, and the likelihood of citizen participation in helping to maintain or enhance the places to which they feel attached.

Participation has a direct relationship with wellbeing. By participating in the decision making in the institutions that affect them, people have been shown to help to make improvements to their community, develop stronger social relationships, and increase their individual and collective sense of confidence and political power.

Citizens need to participate in planning for both health and urban amenity:

- To ensure that health programs and urban spaces reflect citizen's aspirations and build on local assets
- To ensure a match between local needs and priorities
- Because participation itself is health promoting.
- Participation is an investment in social capital, and from a public health perspective, is as important as investing in physical infrastructure.



Sense of Place

- **The meaning, intention, felt value and significance that individuals or groups give to particular places (Curtis & Rees Jones, 1998)**
- **The feeling of attachment or belonging to a physical environment, such as a place or neighbourhood, and the sense of personal and collective identity that comes from this sense of belonging (Jacobs, 1995; Rivlin, 1987).**

Sense of place is defined as the meaning, intention, felt value and significance that individuals or groups give to particular places. People do not simply look out over a landscape and say 'this belongs to me'. They say, 'I belong to this'. When cherished places, spaces, and settings are destroyed or irrevocably changed beyond our control, we feel a sense of loss and grief, similar to that felt at the loss of a personal relationship that was expected to last indefinitely.



Sense of Community

- **A feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together (McMillan and Chavis, 1986)**
- **Geographical component (place) and relational component (people)**

Sense of community emerges from the common symbols people use to designate their sense of belonging to and shared membership in a particular territory, as well as designating their particular personal territory. Features of the neighbourhood can foster this sense of place, which in turn contributes to sense of community.

Sense of community not only arises from the ways in which communities are physically constructed, but also from their social construction. Whereas the traditional concept of 'community' has referred to a geographical region, such as a neighbourhood, town or city, the term increasingly has come to reflect the reality of industrial society in which people, due to their increased mobility and communications technology, relate to each other outside of any territorial boundary by their shared interests and skills.

When we consider sense of community, we often overlook the enduring impact of terrain, and tend to focus more on the people that make up a community.

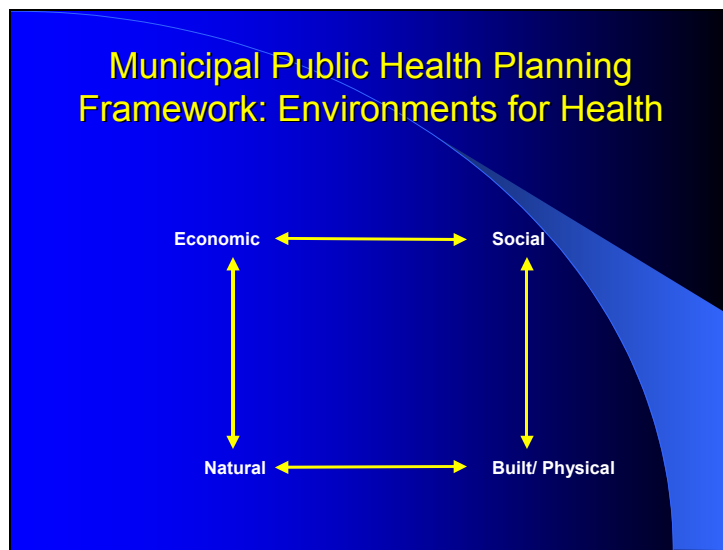
The Save Our Suburbs phenomenon was driven at least in part by the perceived threat to the physical components that contributed to people's sense of community. Many people experienced emotional distress at the changes to their neighbourhoods over which they felt they had no control.



Architectural and urban planning features may foster communication and a sense of shared ownership amongst residents, reduce crime, and encourage socializing and community participation. Sense of community has been found to be positively affected by urban planning that encourages visual coherence, diversity and attractiveness of houses and other buildings; affords sufficient privacy; ensures residents have easy access to amenities, parks, recreation facilities and the town centre; offers pedestrian-friendly spaces; provides streetscapes so that houses have views of the neighbourhood; encourages open porches and low fences in order to encourage social interaction; and restricts motor traffic

To foster community building, people need to have a meaningful involvement in urban planning decisions, particularly around:

- Identifying and explaining the features of their neighbourhoods to which they feel attached, and which contribute to their sense of personal and collective identity;
- Ensuring that these features are protected or developed sensitively;
- Creating new spaces and landmarks which build on built and cultural heritage, and contribute to cultural identity;
- Identifying ways of improving urban amenity – eg., street lighting, physical access, shops, services, vegetation, public transport provision, physical access, maintenance of public transport infrastructure, ‘walkability’, etc.



Slide 9

Environmental Dimensions			
Environmental Dimensions	Components	Characteristics	Council Action Areas - Examples
Built/Physical	Transport – roads, rail Housing Amenities – parks, street lighting, footpaths, shops	Liveable	Land use planning Industrial development MSS, EES, works approvals
Social	Demographics Social capital Community facilities and services	Equitable Convivial	Community support services Community safety Cultural development
Economic	Economic policy Employment Resources	Sustainable	Community economic development EES, Works approvals Access and equity
Natural	Climate Air quality Water quality	Viable	Water quality Waste management Energy consumption

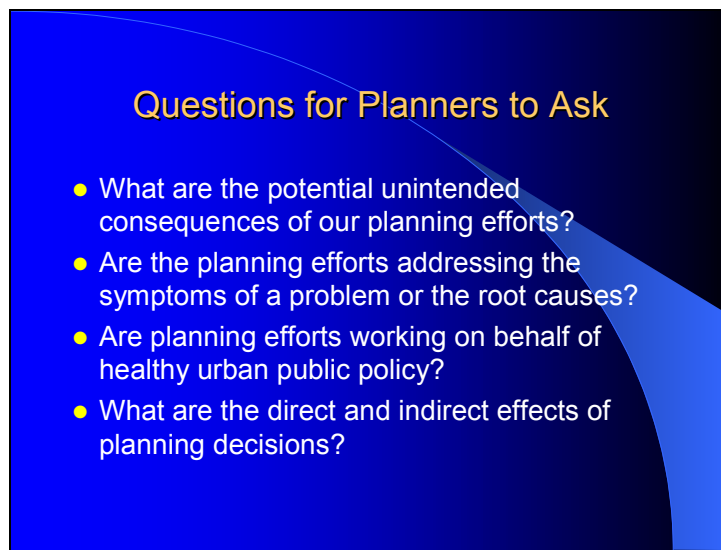


Municipal Public Health Plans and Place

- MPHP provides an integrated planning framework for health based on population and place
- Urban planning and other functional areas of local government are linked to health planning
- Opportunity to consider impacts on health and community wellbeing when councils engage in strategic / urban planning
- MPHPs are a whole-of-municipality approach to health planning, with council providing leadership and advocacy

The MPHP provides a useful framework for approaching place making because:

- The geographical boundaries of local government areas, and the place-based communities of interest within those boundaries;
- Strengthening Communities and Creating Healthy Environments are best situated within a place, with the involvement of residents, local governments, local businesses and other key stakeholders
- Local governments have a Governance role – fostering community participation, skill development and democracy – all of which have been linked to health and wellbeing
- Environments for Health encourages integrated planning – for instance of the MPHP, MSS and Corporate Plan



Planners must understand and accept that their decisions have consequences, both intended and unintended, that could potentially lead to ill health within communities. However, there are techniques and skills that planners can use to promote the building of strong, healthy neighbourhoods, towns and cities. For example, some universally applicable questions that can be asked of urban planners are:

- What are the potential unintended consequences of the planning efforts?
- Are the planning efforts addressing the symptoms of a problem or the root causes? For example, are housing programs that are aimed at the poor simply displacing this population, or are they truly working to solve the underlying issues behind the scarcity of safe, clean, affordable housing?
- Are planning efforts working on behalf of healthy urban public policy? A system must be in place that enforces checks and balances between policy-makers, policies and plans.
- What are the direct and indirect effects of planning decisions? How will these decisions affect the physical, social, political and economic environments? Politicians, planners, government officials and citizens must all be able to understand fully the reasoning and implications behind policies, that is, asking questions that look at the whole picture, not just one part.



'Planning and Health' Seminars

- Advances implementation of *Environments for Health*
- Builds capacity to achieve integrated planning
- Promotes collaboration and action within and between local governments and partners
- Seminars planned collaboratively
- Two more seminars planned for Planning Week, November 2002

Acknowledgements:

This forum is the result of collaborative input from the Local Government Team, DHS Southern, Casey, Cardinia, PIA, VicHealth, Bernadette George, Kelvin Walsh, presenting Councils...