

# Northern Healthy Cities & Communities Project

Working with seven local governments in Northern Melbourne to assess their policies related to 'walkability'

Melissah Edwards, Deakin University, 2006



# LG's Role in Encouraging Walkability

- 'Walkability' may be conceptualised as the extent to which characteristics of the built and natural environment and land use planning processes may or may not be conducive to people in the area walking for either recreation or transport.
- LG's role is to plan & design communities that are walkable to contribute to a more healthy, active & vibrant communities.



# Integration of Walkability



➤ All Councils consider walkability from a number of different perspectives & it is incorporated into various policies, strategies & plans across a range of Council departments.

➤ The main areas of focus in the encouragement of walkability are:

## **Environment**

- Sustainable Transport
- Land Use

## **Health**

- Physical Activity
- Recreation / Leisure

## **Social**

- Social Connectedness
- Perceptions of Safety

## **Economic**

- Tourism
- Local Expenditure

# Policy Integration of Walkability Cont...

➤ Councils address walkability in different ways with some Councils having specific walking strategies developed whereas others have specific clauses relating to/addressing walkability throughout various policies, strategies & plans (or both).

➤ Councils with specific walking/pedestrian strategies:

- Darebin City Council
- Moreland City Council
- City of Whittlesea
- City of Yarra

# Identified Barriers to Encouraging Walkability



- Lack of resources (funds, staff & time)
- Funding limited for the recreation/health side of walkability
- Lack of knowledge of other departments policies/plans
- No legislative support
- Old, run-down infrastructure
- Limited data available (both objective & subjective)

# Identified Enablers to Encouraging Walkability



- Staff commitment
- Resources (internal & external funds & HR)
- Walkability Project Officer allocated
- Working from an integrated planning approach
- High level support & endorsement from Council senior management
- Data on existing infrastructure availability / status
- Understanding of walkability & healthy design principles within all Council departments
- Networks with external agencies with a common agenda
- Existing structure of municipality

# Integrative Approach to Walkability

A decorative horizontal line with a dashed center, surrounded by various colored squares (green, blue, orange, grey) scattered above and below it.

- Recent health promotion side of walkability has given an integrative approach more impetus.
- Integration between policies/plans moderate but improving for all Councils
- Collaboration between departments moderate but improving for all Councils

# Monitoring & Evaluation

A decorative graphic consisting of a horizontal dashed line with various colored squares (blue, green, orange, grey) scattered above and below it, extending across the top of the slide.

## ↗ Tools available to all Councils:

- GIS mapping
- Community surveys
- Census data

↗ Evaluation processes are poor due to limited resources.

# Future Directions



- Enhance communication between Council departments to facilitate an integrative approach to planning.
- Develop an across Council agreement of walkability & each departments role in its promotion
- Promote the benefits of supporting walkability for each department; ‘what’s in it for them?’.
- Educate & engage higher level staff in Council to adopt walkability/healthy design principles as core Council business.

EDUCATE & PROMOTE

within all levels of Council

# Walkability Indicator Development



- The next stage of the project requires the selection of indicators & a preferred data collection strategy.
- Consider the following criteria: policy relevance, reliability/validity of data, sensitivity to change, accessibility, availability, geographic specificity, format, affordability, cost effectiveness, ease of comprehension, political considerations, comprehensiveness & redundancy.

# Walkability Indicator Development Cont...

➤ Broad areas for consideration:

- Within Council:
  - Communication
  - Resources
  - Integration of Policy
- Built Environment
  - Footpaths
  - Street/Path Connectivity
  - Facilities (benches, public toilets, drinking taps)
  - Crossings
  - Lighting
- Natural Environment
  - Parks/Reserves
  - Walking Tracks
  - Open Space
- Community Perceptions
  - Safety
  - Access
  - Facilities
  - Aesthetics
  - Barriers to Walking