

Liveable Communities: Building a Better Future for All

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In the quest for sustainable development, the concept of liveable communities has emerged as pivotal in urban and regional planning in both Australia and the wider world.



Liveable communities prioritise the well-being of their residents by fostering accessible, inclusive, and sustainable environments. From vibrant green spaces in Melbourne to community-centred neighbourhoods in Copenhagen, these communities are transforming the way we live, work, and interact.

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What Are Liveable Communities?



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A liveable community ensures its residents have access to essential services, affordable housing, reliable public transport, and recreational opportunities. This concept also emphasises environmental sustainability, safety, and inclusivity, promoting a high quality of life for everyone, regardless of age, ability, or socioeconomic status (Gehl, 2010).

Australian Examples

Melbourne: A Benchmark in Liveability

Consistently ranked among the most liveable cities globally, Melbourne epitomises the benefits of liveable communities. The city boasts extensive public transport networks, pedestrian-friendly zones, and ample green spaces, including the Royal Botanic Gardens. These features have not only improved residents' quality of life but have also enhanced economic productivity and environmental health.

The 20-Minute Neighbourhoods Initiative (click to play)



Victoria's "20-Minute Neighbourhoods" initiative aims to create communities where residents can access work, schools, and services within 20 minutes by walking or cycling. Such initiatives reduce reliance on cars, improve public health, and strengthen local economies (Victoria State Government, 2022).

Global Innovations

Copenhagen: Cycling as a Way of Life

Copenhagen's transformation into a cyclist's paradise exemplifies a liveable community. With over 62% of its population commuting by bike daily, the city has reduced carbon emissions and traffic congestion, creating a healthier and more connected urban environment (City of Copenhagen, 2020).

Rush hour in Copenhagen (click for the excitement)



Bogotá: Urban Mobility and Social Inclusion

In Bogotá, Colombia, the implementation of the TransMilenio Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system demonstrates the impact of inclusive public transport. This system has not only improved accessibility for lower-income residents but has also significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions (World Resources Institute, 2016).

For a critique addressing the issues related to social exclusion and inclusion please see [this article](https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/bogota-colombias-tranmilenio-how-public-transportation-can-socially-include-and-exclud/95236/) (<https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/bogota-colombias-tranmilenio-how-public-transportation-can-socially-include-and-exclud/95236/>)

Why Are Liveable Communities Essential?



Economic Benefits

Investing in liveable communities can stimulate local economies. For instance, accessible urban designs encourage businesses to thrive, attracting both consumers and talent.

Environmental Sustainability

Green infrastructure, such as parks and urban forests, mitigates the heat island effect and reduces urban flooding. Melbourne's integrated water management systems are a testament to this approach, ensuring sustainable water use in a growing metropolis (Melbourne Water, 2023).

Social Cohesion

Liveable communities foster inclusivity by ensuring that public spaces are accessible to everyone. For example, shared spaces in Singapore's Housing Development Board (HDB) estates encourage social interaction among diverse populations, strengthening community bonds.

Steps toward building liveable communities

Community-Centred Design

A truly liveable community reflects the needs and aspirations of its residents. Engaging local communities in urban planning and design fosters inclusivity and ensures projects align with their values and priorities. For instance, the City of Melbourne's Urban Forest Strategy involved extensive public consultation to select tree species and identify areas for greening. Globally, Denmark's Aarhus River Restoration Project successfully revitalised urban spaces by involving citizens in decision-making processes. This participatory approach creates a sense of ownership and ensures the long-term success of community projects.

Invest in Public Transport

Reliable, affordable, and accessible public transport is a cornerstone of liveable communities. In Australia, Brisbane's Metro Project aims to provide a high-frequency, zero-emissions public transport system that reduces congestion and promotes equity by connecting underserved suburbs. Similarly, Singapore's MRT system exemplifies how investing in integrated and efficient transport networks enhances urban mobility, reduces reliance on private vehicles, and fosters social inclusion particularly removing the need for car ownership as well as enabling better mobility for those with any form of disability.

Green Infrastructure

Incorporating green infrastructure into urban landscapes is essential to combating climate change and improving residents' quality of life. Initiatives such as Sydney's Green Grid, which links parks, waterways, and green corridors, demonstrate how urban ecosystems can enhance biodiversity, mitigate urban heat, and provide recreational opportunities. Internationally, Singapore's Gardens by the Bay illustrates the transformative potential of eco-friendly urban development, combining lush greenery with cutting-edge sustainable technologies.

Affordable Housing

Housing affordability is a critical factor in maintaining inclusive and diverse communities. Australia's Big Housing Build in Victoria aims to deliver 12,000 new social and affordable homes to address housing shortages. Globally, the Vienna Model is often cited for its commitment to social housing, with over 60% of the city's population living in affordable and high-quality government-supported accommodations. Ensuring affordable housing safeguards against socio-economic segregation and displacement.

There is a largely unchallenged mind-set embedded in Australian US and UK culture that house ownership trumps any other consideration. This has led to a catastrophic series of decisions and policy, removing commitments to social housing thus creating oases of privilege and inequitable distribution of necessary infrastructure and resources including green spaces.

Technological Integration

Embracing smart city technologies can optimise resource management and enhance urban living. In Adelaide, the Ten Gigabit Adelaide Network supports innovation and connectivity, positioning the city as a global leader in digital infrastructure. On an international scale, Barcelona's Smart City Program uses IoT sensors to monitor air quality, manage waste, and streamline public transport, improving efficiency and residents' quality of life. Smart solutions not only address immediate urban challenges but also lay the foundation for future resilience.

Liveable communities are more than a vision—they are a necessity for our future. By adopting inclusive, sustainable, and people-centred approaches, we can build environments that not only meet the needs of today but also safeguard resources and opportunities for generations to come.

Creating a world of liveable communities requires collective effort. Governments, urban planners, businesses, and residents must collaborate to make this vision a reality. Only then can we ensure that everyone, everywhere, can thrive in a community that truly feels like home.

References:

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2. Victoria State Government (2022). *20-Minute Neighbourhoods*.
3. City of Copenhagen (2020). *Bicycle Account 2020*.
4. World Resources Institute (2016). *TransMilenio: Bogotá's BRT System*.
5. Melbourne Water (2023). *Integrated Water Management*.