

## INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT - FOLLOW-UP INQUIRY

**Organisation:** NSW Department of Planning  
**Name:** Mr Tom Gellibrand  
**Position:** Deputy Director-General Plan Making and Urban  
Renewal  
**Telephone:** 9228 6500  
**Date Tabled:** 31 March 2010  
**Hearing Number:** 1  
**Hearing Location:** Waratah Room

---

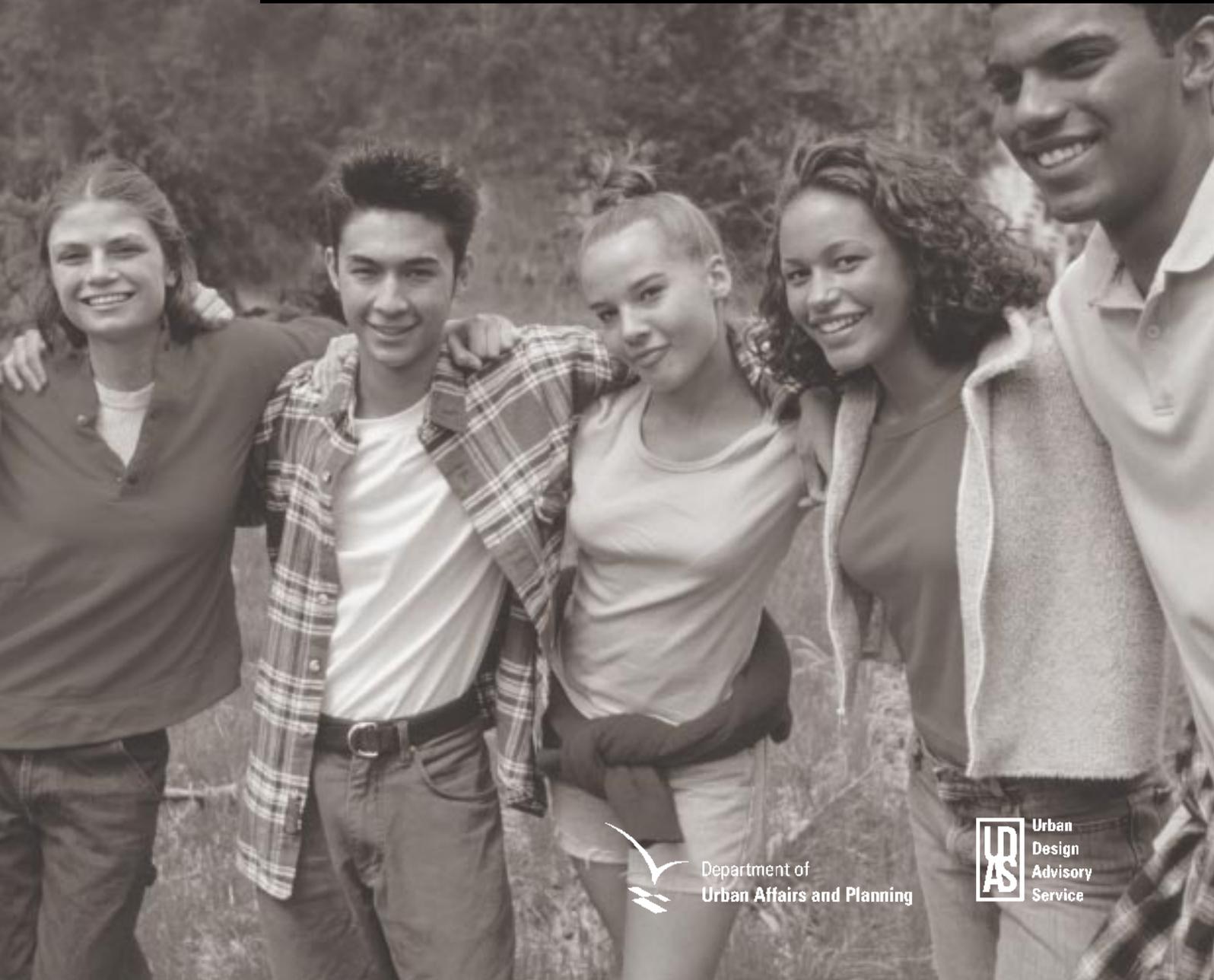
**Document Title:** Urban Design Guidelines with Young People in Mind  
**Author:** Department of Urban Affairs and Planning  
**Publication Date:** September 1999

# Urban Design

## GUIDELINES

SEPTEMBER 1999

**with** young people in mind



Department of  
Urban Affairs and Planning



Urban  
Design  
Advisory  
Service



## URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

### WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN MIND

**are for people interested in making public areas more youth friendly.**

The age group in mind is 12 to 18, however the guidelines could be used to make public spaces more attractive and welcoming for everybody.

The guidelines were drawn up by the Urban Design Advisory Service (UDAS), a business unit of the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. The Department commissioned UDAS to prepare a "planning for youth" guide as part of Focus on Young People, the State Government's Youth Policy released by the Premier in 1998.

Additional sponsors of this project were NSW Local Government & Shires Association and Hastings Council.

The project is supported by the Office of Children and Young People and the Youth Action and Policy Association.

UDAS held a workshop in Port Macquarie for young people, planners, youth workers, police and retailers, in May 1998. It also researched

approaches to youth planning in other locations and conducted a survey of the relevant literature.

The result was a research report, *Young People Today ... Planning for their Needs in Public Spaces*, (1998). The report suggests that young people have needs in public spaces which are similar to other community members, and that they would prefer to share space with other people rather than be isolated from them.

Activities such as skateboarding are however recognised as having particular spatial requirements, and particular potential for conflict with other public space users. Designated spaces are preferred for these uses, but they should still be visible to other users, both for their spectator value and for casual surveillance.

This is a summary of the research results and design guidelines.

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Spaces which are popular with a wide range of users are usually popular with young people too; for example, parks and public spaces in the middle of town or busy retail centres. The presence of young people, particularly in groups, is however considered threatening by some people, including older people and retailers. Young people themselves frequently also experience harassment from authority groups, despite being in public space.

**UDAS research found that the “problem” of young people in public and community spaces can be looked at from many angles:**

### CRIMINALS OR VICTIMS?

- Young people may make others feel insecure. Their clothing is distinctive and can make them look intimidating.
- In some places such as commercial districts there is a concern with security which creates “social control districts”.
- Gathering in public places is perceived as a problem rather than a social and urban opportunity.
- There is a lack of free, accessible recreational activities for youth.
- Unemployed young people have few places to gather.
- Young people are both victims and perpetrators of crime, sometimes interchangeably.

### CONSUMERS VERSUS HANGERS OUT

- Young people may feel they are only welcome in shopping centres when they are buying something.
- Complaints about young people are often business-related and reflect the view that young people are bad for the image of an area and discourage other consumers.

### PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC SPACE

- Relocation of traditional town centre activities to privately-owned shopping complexes is a recent trend.
- Privately owned spaces such as shopping malls may manage times of access, dress, manner and behaviour, and engage security patrols.
- Varied and lively town centres with quality public spaces should be encouraged as well as shopping centres.

### POOR DESIGN

- Too often public spaces are simply the places left over between buildings.

### LIVELY PLACES ATTRACT LIVELY PEOPLE

- CBDs are major attractions for young people who go there to meet and spend time with friends. This is where there is public transport, cinemas, shops and where everybody else goes.

### ACCESSIBILITY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- Young people are often dependent on public transport.
- Safety can be a problem for young people and other commuters at rail stations, while travelling on trains and waiting for buses.

### DEVELOPING PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Being in public spaces has a useful social and personal function for young people, enabling them to relax and enjoy themselves, and form romantic attachments and friendships.
- “Street frequenting” is a habit of young people who spend considerable amounts of time in public spaces, including recreational facilities such as amusement parlours. For these young people the practice of street frequenting has become part of their identity.
- All young people including those of non-English speaking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin view public space as a place to meet friends and spend time in groups. It is considered culturally acceptable and may be promoted by their families.
- Skate bowls or basketball courts are popular facilities and can help develop physical skills.



## THE URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

These urban design guidelines have been prepared to provide direction for people designing new projects or refurbishing existing centres. They reflect themes of access and circulation, inclusive design, mixed uses (and users), safety and surveillance, separate but visible areas, performance needs and basic services.



### GETTING THERE AND GETTING AROUND

#### ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

# 1

##### OBJECTIVE

**To allow young people to get to activities, meeting places, services and facilities.**

**Public transport is preferred, but where this is irregular or not available, lifts are often sought from friends or family members. Alternative means of transport such as cycles and skateboards are also used to get to meeting places.**

##### DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Maximise public transport such as rail, buses and taxis.
- Locate pick-up and drop-off points for public transport and taxi ranks as close as possible to public spaces and young people's activities.
- Locate short stay (ten minute) parking areas within or as close as possible to meeting places as pick-up and drop-off points for lifts.
- Pick up and drop-off points should be well-lit and include seating. They should be positioned in active locations where casual surveillance opportunities exist. Increasing the area of public space around school bus stops will help accommodate active young people and their school equipment and back packs.
- Provide walking and cycle paths along routes which are well-lit and where surveillance opportunities exist.
- Sometimes people have to move through a busy public area to get to a specially designed youth facility such as a skateboard ramp, basketball court or beach. Safe, easy to use, connecting routes need to be provided.



# DESIGNING FOR ALL USERS

## INTEGRATING A RANGE OF USERS

# 2

### OBJECTIVE

**To integrate rather than segregate young people from the wider community.**

**Young people usually enjoy the liveliness of busy places and shouldn't be seen as anti-social or problematic.**

**An inclusive design process enables designers to be better informed of young people's needs. Involvement in design and implementation encourages young people to take ownership of and responsibility for public spaces and features that they have assisted in creating.**

### DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Design public spaces which are flexible and can accommodate a wide range of users. Larger spaces and wider paths offer more opportunities for a range of activities. A path four metres wide for example can accommodate three people walking abreast as well as a wheeled item such as a stroller, wheelchair, cycle or skateboard.
- Provide seating in public for young people to gather as well as for other user groups. The provision of seating areas helps legitimise "hanging out" as an activity rather than an obstruction.
- In public streets, seating is ideally positioned at the edge of footpaths where through movement is not blocked, seats can be easily observed and there are opportunities for watching passers by while shop windows remain visible.
- In pedestrian malls and arcades, seating should be positioned centrally so as not to obstruct shoppers or obscure shop windows, but still providing opportunities for observing passing activity.
- Where facilities specific to young people are provided, such as youth cafes, these should be integrated into the urban fabric and positioned where there is passing life and activity, for example in street level shopfronts.
- Involve young people in planning initiatives for public space. A formal point of contact with the local council is helpful. The process outlined below indicates when to include consultation.

## PARTICIPATIVE DESIGN PROCESS

This is a method for involving young people in planning and urban design processes to achieve youth involvement and ownership. This method draws on techniques of consultation, mediation and group discussion in order to facilitate understanding between different groups about their common needs and differences in the use of public spaces. The method is applicable to a wide range of projects and locations, including town centres and shopping malls.

Steps in the Participative Design Process are:

### 1. ANALYSE EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Urban framework – streets, blocks and lots
- Types of built form, including heritage items
- Types of public spaces
- Circulation and access
- Topography and vegetation
- Magnet uses for young people

### 2. CONSULT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

- Identify interest groups, including young people, and their objectives
- Translate group objectives into design options
- Present the design options at workshop where young people and other interest groups are participants
- Select preferred option/s for further development in consultation with stakeholders

### 3. PREPARE A DESIGN FRAMEWORK

- Refine preferred options
- Prepare overall design strategies and detailed plans

### 4. IMPLEMENT

- Prepare action plan
- Tender documents to include design guidelines
- Prepare capital works program

**Throughout this process there should be monitoring, review and evaluation in terms of stakeholder's objectives.**

**The more detailed UDAS report, *Young People Today ... Planning for their Needs in Public Spaces*, describes how this model was applied in Port Macquarie.**

## BUILDING LIVELINESS

### MIX OF USES

# 3

#### OBJECTIVE

To encourage a range of uses in order to ensure diversity, liveliness and a choice of activities, particularly in public areas such as CBDs.

The range of uses should also include “magnets” for young people such as fast food outlets and cafes.

#### DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Consider the widest possible range of uses in the CBD and promote the vitality of existing centres. Encourage a mix of retail, commercial and entertainment activities as well as Government agencies and community services.
- Encourage residential uses within or in close proximity to the town centre to facilitate activity at a range of times. Residential uses within the centre should aim to include active, non-residential uses at the ground floor such as shopfronts.
- Enhance the accessibility of the CBD by improving public transport and providing limited but well-designed, integrated parking facilities.
- Links between uses are important as young people will move between different magnets.



## MAKING SAFER PLACES

# 4

#### OBJECTIVE

To improve the perception of safety in public spaces.

Spaces should be well lit, with opportunities for casual surveillance to discourage criminal activity.

#### DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Avoid extensive blank walls at ground level. “Active edges” such as glazed shopfronts are preferable and provide casual surveillance opportunities.
- Maximise the number of entries to buildings from the street to assist in activating the public domain.
- Rear lanes offer convenient short cuts and pedestrian routes. Lighting of such lanes is essential. Overlooking and casual surveillance opportunities should also be maximised.
- Landscaping of public spaces should not obscure pedestrian eye-level sight lines or sterilise large areas of space.
- Facilities which attract people, such as public phones, should be maximised in public spaces to reinforce levels of activity.

## THE PUBLIC STAGE

### PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT, EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION

# 5

#### OBJECTIVE

To assist young people seeking outlets for self-expression, there should be venues for public entertainment and opportunities for public communication.

#### DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Design formal and informal spaces for public entertainment. These provide a meeting point, focus for activity and outlet for expression.
- Design street furniture to be multi-functional – for example a flat bench may become an informal plinth for performance artists. Street furniture should also be easy to maintain and long lasting.
- Design spaces which are large enough to accommodate a range of users – they can then also accommodate public performances, markets and other communal activities.
- Public notice boards or poster kiosks provide a forum for young people to communicate to each other and the wider community, and to promote youth activities. They also assist in formalising and controlling bill posting.
- Public art created by young people offers a medium for self-expression as well as a channelling outlet for graffiti. Such art works may be sculptural (three dimensional) or two dimensional (walls, murals, paving).

## KEEPING PUBLIC SPACE PUBLIC

### PRIVATISATION AND PUBLIC ISSUES

# 6

#### OBJECTIVE

To ensure that spaces remain which are public, that is they are free to enter, are open at all times, not governed by security guards or surveyed by CCTV.

#### DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Provide for spaces in the public realm in addition to those provided privately, such as malls.
- Avoid over-management of public spaces by security patrols or through the use of CCTV.
- Avoid cluttering public spaces - keep them simple and flexible. Prevent cars parking in public spaces.

## SEPARATE BUT VISIBLE

### ACTIVITIES WHICH SHOULD BE SEGREGATED

# 7

#### OBJECTIVE

To ensure that potentially conflict-generating activities, such as skateboarding, are physically separated from other uses, but remain visible.

Such visibility reinforces the spectator value of exhibition activities and also provides informal surveillance opportunities.

#### DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Provide skateparks or skateboard facilities in public areas in locations that are visible to other public space users, but separate from main paths of movement.
- Consider designing such facilities as stages for the display of physical feats.



## BASIC SERVICES

### PUBLIC PHONES, PUBLIC TOILETS AND SANITARY DISPENSERS

# 8

#### OBJECTIVE

To provide services such as public phones, toilets and sanitary dispensers in locations that are discreet but accessible to young people.

#### DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Provide services such as public phones and public toilets where they are easy to find and where surveillance opportunities exist.
- Provide appropriate sanitary facilities in discreet, but public locations.
- Consider co-locating these basic service items.



#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

The guidelines have been prepared for local councils, developers, architects, and planners to use. Youth workers, community service officers and police will also find the guidelines helpful.

Copies of these guidelines are available at the following web sites:

[www.duap.nsw.gov.au](http://www.duap.nsw.gov.au) [www.youth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.youth.nsw.gov.au)  
[www.lgsa.org.au](http://www.lgsa.org.au) [www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au](http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au)

The detailed report of the UDAS Port Macquarie workshop, **Young People Today ... Planning for their Needs in Public Spaces** (1999) containing practical design ideas is available from UDAS (\$40).

**Phone 02 9338 9300 Email [udas@www.nsw.gov.au](mailto:udas@www.nsw.gov.au)**

More information on Government youth policies, programs and publications is available at [www.youth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.youth.nsw.gov.au)

