Health and Urban Planning in Auckland
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Theme for Abstract
Health Impact Assessments and Urban Planning

Healthy Cities (HC) is a World Health Organisation (WHO) initiative. The international HC movement began in 1986, and is based on a comprehensive social environmental model that is guided by the Ottawa Charter of Health Promotion and more recently WHO’s Healthy Cities Phase V (2009 – 2013). It aims to put health high on the political and social agenda of cities and promotes comprehensive and systematic policy and planning with a strong emphasis on inter-sectorial collaboration/action for health and addresses the social, economic and environmental determinants of health.

Dahlgren and Whitehead Model (1991)
Amended version

The Healthy City approach was adopted by the Manukau City Council in 1988. Manukau the Healthy City (MHC) has since had 23 successful years of working within local government through a process of political commitment, institutional change, capacity building, partnership-based planning and innovative projects.

Healthy Cities (HC) recognises that the 21st century’s complex social, economic, environmental and epidemiological problems cannot be solved with 20th century approaches. Healthy Cities requires strategic solutions that address the determinants of health in all spheres where they impact on health, including housing, education, transport, urban planning, employment, income and welfare.

To date MHC have been highly successful in working in all of these spheres to positively influence health and wellbeing. More recently, MHC has embedded better health practices into council operations, policy and planning, with the greatest success to date being embedding health into the built environment team.
HC is based at a strategic level looking at the development and implementation of effective and relevant policy, plans and projects that create the conditions for a healthy lifestyle and help to reduce the number of quality life years lost in a population due to disease and illness.

There is worldwide evidence and research showing that a comprehensive socio-environmental approach to public health is effective. 80 per cent of premature heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes is preventable, while 40 per cent of cancer is preventable. (WHO, 2010). Chronic disease can be prevented. Healthy Cities provides a strategic, innovative model to reduce disease and increase the health and wellbeing of the population.

Ill health has a high cost directly and indirectly to society and is a complex, multi-faceted area that requires a complex and multifaceted approach. The social environmental approach to health will increase the health and wellbeing of our communities, reduce chronic disease, reduce the number of quality life years lost and build a more sustainable, healthy, physical, social and cultural environment.

A direct example of MHC’s work for 2010 includes the completion of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) on the Wiri Draft Spatial Structure Plan. This was designed by the Urban Planning team of the former Manukau City Council and funded by The Ministry of Health. The Urban Design team from the former Manukau City Council commissioned the first draft of the Spatial Structure Plan (SSP) for the Wiri area. It built on the success of the Manukau City Centre Spatial Structure Plan and Health Impact Assessment that was completed in 2009. The Healthy City Advisor in the council’s Community Services Department led and managed the HIA in partnership with Urban Design and HIA specialists Synergia.

This HIA has been used to help gauge the impact of the urban design for Wiri on people’s health and wellness. The aims and objectives of this HIA were to inform the guidelines and controls, which determine the built form and spatial system of Wiri and support the vision for the Wiri area to be a vibrant extension of the Manukau City Centre.
It is well documented that urban design can fundamentally affect the choices people make in how they live, work, learn and play. This in turn has a significant effect on a population's health and wellbeing. Therefore the council wanted to develop urban structures that support good health, wellness and sense of place, and this required good design, quite often with a long term view (sometimes up to 50 years).

This particular SSP had the potential to build more active lifestyles as a part of daily life, supply diversity of buildings and structures and create a safer experience for people living and working in the area.

Through this HIA process the Wiri community and organisations expressed and developed key themes (pictured above) and a vision for the community, some of which is captured in a “healthy community urban design map” below. This builds on one of the urban design maps developed for the SSP and proved to be a useful tool to illustrate requested changes.
Community consultation was completed as part of the HIA process in June and July 2010 through two key appraisal workshops for stakeholders, interested agencies, community members and businesses. A parallel Maori Whanau Ora Health Impact Assessment consultation, managed by Hapai Te Hauora Tapui, was completed to ascertain the impact on Maori health and assist in addressing inequality.

Additional consultation and engagement with several population groups included children and youth from Wiri Primary School and Manurewa High School, Pacific youth population from the Dream Youth Centre Extreme group and older people living in Wiri.

Some of the other agencies involved in this HIA included:
- Housing New Zealand
- Counties Manukau District Health Board
- Ministry of Social Development
- Auckland Regional Public Health Service
- NZ Police

Some of the key findings of this Health Impact Assessment were: having strong support for the urban plan to encompass provision for open space and develop extended walkways along the Puhinui stream; this in turn could increase physical activity, which can result in the reduction of chronic disease such as type two diabetes.

Emphasis was put on nurturing the cultural diversity of Wiri, to make planning and development more relevant and sustainable. Youth had identified the need for the creation of leisure/recreation centre and future planning needed to keep space for such future developments.

Healthy housing would be a priority to accommodate the diverse size and makeup of the families and whanau who live in Wiri. Additionally, it was just as important to ensure building orientation and streetscape be designed to improve and promote health and safety. Transport within and to Wiri was also identified as a key area to ensure Wiri residents could easily access amenities and services and reduce the physical isolation from the rest of Manukau.

The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) was endorsed by the council in October 2010 and the learning’s from this HIA are being used to inform other local urban developments. The next version of the Spatial Structure Plan will be completed by the Urban Design Team and monitored by Healthy Cities. This will ensure that the community aspirations are at the forefront of urban planners’ minds when developing the final Urban Plan. Further community consultation will then take place.

Investigation into the viability and cost of the recommendations, ongoing communication with key stakeholders and landowners and alignment of other key plans and projects in the area continues to date.

HIA has been demonstrated on several occasions around New Zealand and internationally as an invaluable tool for ensuring we are considering the impacts of planning on our communities.

As a result of these projects the Healthy City Advisor has been able to embed Health Impact Assessments into Auckland Council processes and practices and continues to provide expert public health advice and support to the council through the development of expertise hubs.

Healthy Cities is now expanding to cover the whole of the Auckland Council region. Healthy Cities strives for collaborative efforts, continued community involvement and political commitment to health and wellbeing in all planning, policy and strategy. We will continue to collaborate and work inter-sectorially to make our city safe, healthy, beautiful, appropriate and sustainable. Working collectively towards Auckland being the most ‘liveable’ city in the world.
I challenge you all to encompass health into your planning processes to ensure we reduce the negative health outcomes that may occur due to decisions made today, for the communities of tomorrow.