

Creating healthy and active communities: mandatory provisions for neighbourhood design



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Introduction

Our streets, blocks, footpaths and street trees are the key foundations of every residential neighbourhood.

The layout of streets and footpaths and presence of street trees have a major influence on whether residents will walk or ride either within, or to and from, their neighbourhood. While the buildings on these blocks will change over time, these key design elements provide the foundation of our communities.

Some local governments recognise the importance of these design elements and are taking the necessary steps to retrofit neighbourhoods with street trees and footpaths. While this is beneficial, it is important that walking infrastructure is provided upfront as part of new residential development, so that communities can benefit immediately.

Providing the walking infrastructure upfront also means local government will not need to retrofit existing neighbourhoods at a higher cost.

This important walking infrastructure should be provided upfront as part of new residential development, so that communities can benefit immediately, and local government will not need to retrofit existing neighbourhoods at a higher cost.

The Queensland Government is setting minimum standards for new residential development to advance healthy and active communities by requiring:

- › street trees on both sides of all streets
- › footpaths on at least one side of residential streets and both sides of main streets
- › access to parks and open space
- › maximum street block lengths of 250 metres
- › connected street patterns that respond to the landscape of the local area - this does not exclude cul-de-sac streets.

In the planning framework, there are minimum requirements for land use planning and development for matters of importance to our community, such as protecting vegetation or preserving places of cultural heritage. Our community's health and wellbeing must also be given this same importance.

What we've learned

On 21 July 2019, the model code for neighbourhood design was released and consultation occurred on what elements of the code should be mandated.

More than 20,000 responses were received from community, industry and local government across Queensland, demonstrating support for the policy principles and concepts of the model code.

We heard that neighbourhood design across Queensland can be and should be improved.

We learned:

- › the current policy settings do not prioritise the establishment of walkable neighbourhoods in a consistent manner across Queensland
- › the community is asking the state government to take a leadership role and work with local government to see consistent improvements to neighbourhood design.

The strong support for walkable communities has confirmed the Queensland Government is on the right track to ensure all Queenslanders are able to live in an environment that makes active choices easier.

Continuing the conversation

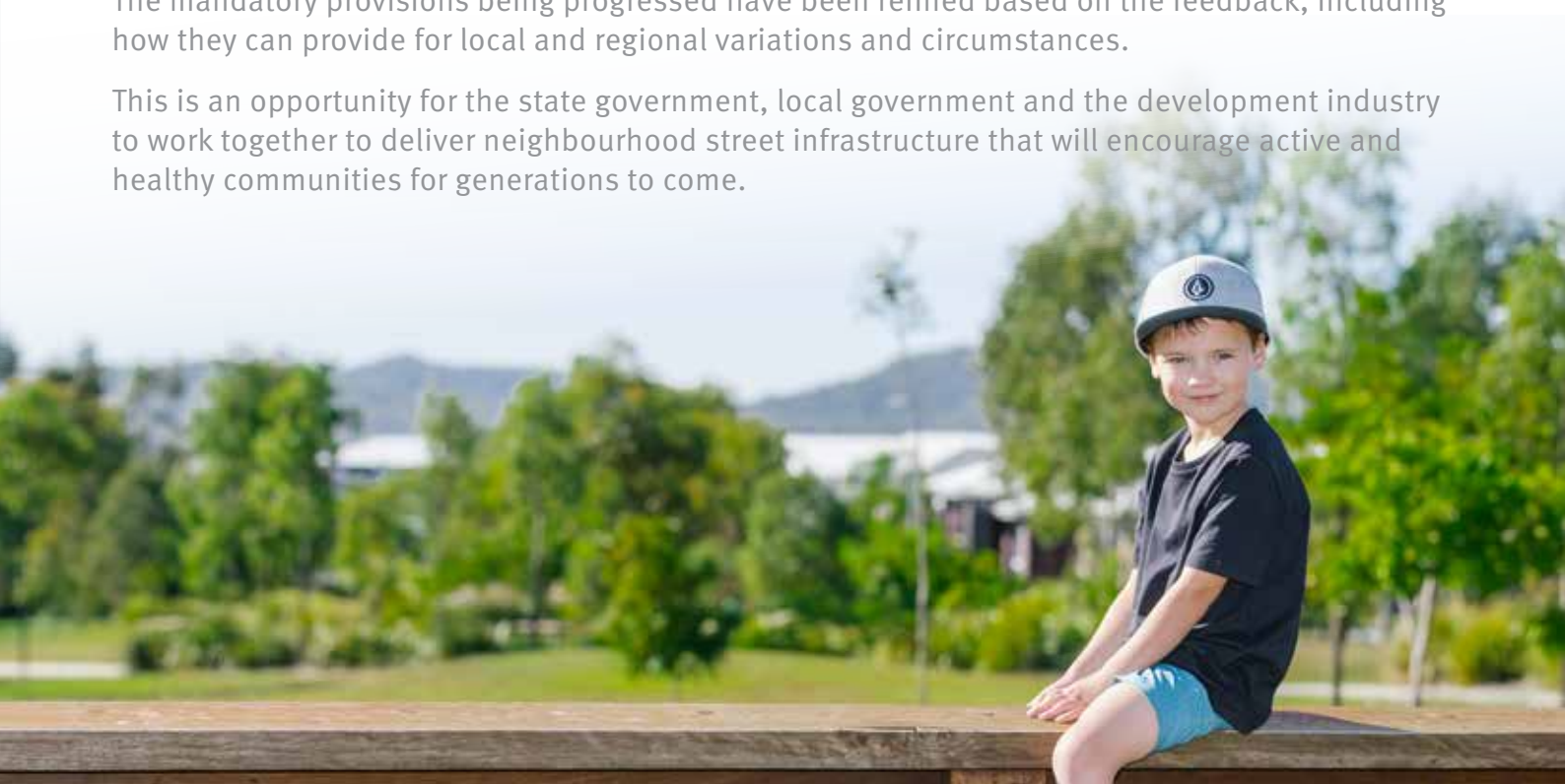
The development industry and local government requested we continue discussions about where and how the mandatory provisions will be implemented. This next step in the conversation is about technical refinements and implementation aspects of the proposed mandatory provisions.

There was also strong support from the community and health-related industry groups and organisations for better neighbourhood design to support healthy and active communities.

We listened to all the feedback received and the Queensland Government has committed to ensuring cul-de-sac streets are not excluded from neighbourhoods through design requirements to promote walkability.

The mandatory provisions being progressed have been refined based on the feedback, including how they can provide for local and regional variations and circumstances.

This is an opportunity for the state government, local government and the development industry to work together to deliver neighbourhood street infrastructure that will encourage active and healthy communities for generations to come.



Mandatory provisions

The Queensland Government is progressing amendments to the Planning Regulation 2017 to require assessment managers to assess certain new residential development against specific assessment benchmarks that support walkable neighbourhoods.

These amendments mean developers and local government must consider how neighbourhoods are designed for walking when preparing and assessing development proposals for new neighbourhoods.

Queensland is vast and diverse, with each of our regions and communities having unique challenges and opportunities. The ability to provide for local and regional variation is an important contributor to our sense of place. These assessment benchmarks prioritise people and walking in new neighbourhoods and do not remove the need or ability to respond to local variation, it simply ensures the foundations are right.

The proposed mandatory provisions for neighbourhood design, alongside the model code itself and an updated version of the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia Queensland's (IPWEAQ) *Street Planning and Design Manual: Walkable Neighbourhoods* are about getting the fundamentals of new development right, in a consistent manner, across the state.

Together, this suite of tools provide a valuable resource for local authorities, engineers, planners, designers, practitioners and decision makers involved with planning and design of residential neighbourhoods.

State Planning Policy

Purpose:

- State Planning Policy (SPP) is statutory instrument
- SPP states 17 state interests in land use planning and development, including 'liveable communities' whereby 'liveable, well-designed and serviced communities are delivered to support wellbeing and enhance quality of life'.
- SPP policies must be appropriately integrated in local government planning schemes



Mandatory provisions

Purpose:

- mandatory provisions proposed to be included in the Planning Regulation 2017
- new residential development must be assessed against 'assessment benchmarks'
- provides consistency and clarity of minimum standards for new residential development



Model code

Purpose:

- voluntary code provisions to support walkable residential neighbourhoods
- applies in development assessment if local government chooses to include in schemes
- can be amended to suit local context



IPWEAQ manual

Purpose:

- technical guidance for residential streets
- engineering drawings and standards



Where the provisions will apply

Feedback received during the last round of consultation informed where and how the mandatory provisions would apply.

Applicability of the mandatory provisions

PROPOSED PROVISIONS

The mandatory provisions would apply to a development application for the reconfiguration of one or more lots where:

- the reconfiguration is the subdivision of the lot into more than one lot
- the created lots are primarily for a residential purpose and
- the lot(s) that is to be reconfigured is in, or partly in, any of the following zones:
 - › a residential zone (that is not a rural residential zone) or
 - › a centre zone or
 - › an emerging community zone or
 - › mixed use zone and
- the reconfiguration of the lot(s) will result in the creation or extension of at least one road (including public roads, private roads and no-through roads, but excluding driveways).

RATIONALE

The mandatory provisions are intended to apply to development that creates new residential neighborhoods that provide for the foundation elements.

In most cases this will apply to greenfield or larger scale proposals in established suburbs or towns. It is also not intended to apply to acreage/lifestyle lots in rural residential areas.

The mandatory provisions apply if the development proposes to create or extend at least one road, as an alternative way of defining development by scale, density, greenfield, infill or other high growth or low growth criteria.

The provisions must be clear and easy to determine when they are to be applied.

Assessment benchmarks

The mandatory provisions will consist of assessment benchmarks relating to five key elements that the assessment manager must assess the development against, to the extent relevant. These assessment benchmarks will apply to code and impact assessable development and to variation applications.

It is intended that local government planning schemes may, while not conflicting with the assessment benchmarks, include provisions that have different requirements. For example, where a higher rate of street tree provision is met.



Element 1

Street trees on both sides of all streets

PROPOSAL

An average of one street tree provided every 15 metres on both sides of all streets.

RATIONALE

The provision of shade to encourage walking is important for Queensland's climate. Research indicates the more street trees along the footpath network, the more likely residents are to walk for 60 minutes each week.¹

The proposed provision is a minimum requirement that a street tree is provided every 15 metres on average. This approach is intended to allow some flexibility with how street trees are provided, recognising that the verge is a competitive space, particularly for smaller lot frontages.

Local governments will be best placed to determine appropriate shade tree species, responsive to the local climate and character of the area.

1: Hooper, P., et al. 2015. The building blocks of a 'Liveable Neighbourhood': Identifying the key performance indicators for walking of an operational planning policy in Perth, Western Australia. Health & Place 36: 173–183.



Element 2

Footpaths on at least one side of residential streets and both sides of main streets

PROPOSAL

A footpath is provided:

- on both sides of access and collector streets; and
- on one side of local access streets

RATIONALE

Queenslanders consistently tell us they would walk more if there were more footpaths and the footpaths were wide, even-surfaced and more connected.

Following feedback received, the provisions establish which street types require two footpaths and which, only one. These street typologies align with the IPWEAQ Street Design Manual Walkable Neighbourhoods – a commonly referenced document by many local governments and engineers.



Element 3

Access to parks and open space

PROPOSAL

Each created lot is 400 metres from the nearest boundary of an existing or committed local, district or regional park or other open space area (for example, linear park, esplanade, forest reserve, watercourse, coastal foreshore, habitat and wildlife corridors).

RATIONALE

Research indicates, 'adults with a wide range of green spaces around their home report 37 per cent lower hospitalisation rates and 16 per cent lower self-reported rates of heart disease or stroke.'²

In response to feedback, the proposed provision expands and clarifies that a 'park' is not just limited to a local park, it includes green and open spaces that may not have embellishments but are accessible and usable for the community. This is reflective of the benefits that come from providing community access to a diverse range of parks, nature and open space.

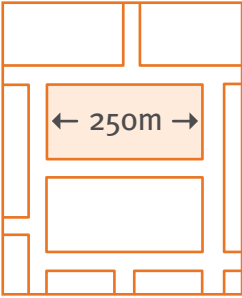
The distance is to be calculated from a boundary of a created lot to the edge of a park or other open space area as radial distance, not walking distance. The requirement also means that a created lot may be 400 metres from a park or other open space area that is outside the boundary of the lot(s) to be reconfigured.

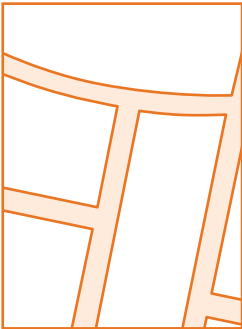
This provides some flexibility so that individual assessments can still factor in site specific scenarios where the 400 metre radial distance is separated by a pedestrian barrier (i.e. a major highway, rail line, river or other topographical feature), to achieve a reasonable walking distance to a park.

The provision also reflects that where there is a commitment to a funded or approved future park, these are also relevant considerations that can be factored into assessments.

2: Pereira, G., et al. (2012). "The association between neighborhood greenness and cardiovascular disease: an observational study." BMC Public Health 12: 466.



	Element 4 Maximum street block lengths of 250 metres
<div data-bbox="371 696 505 728">PROPOSAL</div> <p>Street block length is a maximum of 250 metres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from the centerline to centerline of intersecting roads; or • from the centerline of the intersecting road to the furthest lot boundary of the block, where there is only one intersecting road. <div data-bbox="134 918 268 947">RATIONALE</div> <p>Feedback received indicated that 130 metre maximum street block lengths or 200 metre maximum street blocks with a mid-block pedestrian link did not provide enough variation for block design.</p> <p>The 250 metre maximum is reflective of block design practices and represents a maximum block circumference between 500 and 600 metres, which is a comfortable five minute walk around the block.</p> <p>It is important that the provisions are clear about how the length of a block is actually measured. The measure from centerline to centerline is consistent with engineering standards in road standards.</p> <p>In response to feedback, there will no longer be a requirement that a mid-block pedestrian link is needed for block lengths over 200 metres.</p> <p>Mid-block pedestrian links remain a useful tool to assist in achieving a legible, connected pedestrian layout and would be encouraged as best practice. These are best considered based upon the specifics of the proposed design, mix of uses and locations of existing or proposed public transport stops – where there are natural pedestrian desire lines.</p>	

	Element 5 Connected street patterns that respond to the landscape of the local area
<div data-bbox="371 1536 505 1568">PROPOSAL</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The layout of the street network is a connected and legible grid-like pattern that is responsive to topography. • The layout demonstrates pedestrian and cyclist connectivity. • The layout provides for connection to existing and future adjoining land development where relevant. <div data-bbox="134 1792 268 1821">RATIONALE</div> <p>Connected streets encourage walking and cycling and make places easier to navigate. The grid-like network allows for easy navigation, the ability to ‘walk around the block’ or within or between neighbourhoods.</p> <p>A grid-like network does not need to be the iconic straight lines and 90-degree angles. A grid-like pattern can have diversity in the street layout, responding to topography and natural features.</p> <p>The use of cul-de-sac streets is not excluded and councils can determine standards suited to their local areas.</p> <p>Grid-like streets don’t have to mean increased speed and unsafe streets. There are many effective street calming design solutions that manage through traffic and provide clear signals to drivers they are in a residential area. Neighbourhoods designed for people, not cars incorporate these features.</p>	



Have your say

Consultation on technical refinements and implementation of the proposed mandatory provisions is open until 31 January 2020.

You can provide feedback on the five proposed mandatory provisions and how they are intended to be implemented by:

Email: planningpolicy@dsdmip.qld.gov.au

Post: Policy and Statutory Planning
Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning
PO Box 15009 City East, Brisbane, QLD 4002

Online: qld.gov.au/healthycommunities

Find out how we're invested in planning for healthy and active communities at qld.gov.au/healthycommunities

Contact us

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