Public Spaces & Public Life Study
CITY OF ADELAIDE 2011
Introduction

Client
City of Adelaide
Colonel Light Centre
25 Pirie Street, GPO Box 2252
Adelaide
SA 5001
Australia

5000+ & Adelaide City Council
Adelaide City Council is a partner of 5000+, the Integrated Design Strategy for Inner Adelaide
The Integrated Design Strategy for Inner Adelaide is supported by the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and is a joint initiative of the South Australian Government and the Adelaide City Council, in association with the seven councils adjoining Adelaide City

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Special thanks to the Integrated Design Strategy Team and Adelaide City Council for delivering mapping and other inputs.
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Introduction
Foreword by Lord Mayor Stephen Yarwood

I am passionate about the role that cities will play in our future, and believe that breathing life into cities is a challenge faced around the world. Having analysed public life and space for national and international cities from Sydney to New York and London, Gehl Architects is uniquely placed to bring insights from the world’s cities to Adelaide in this report.

Adelaide must always keep its character and authenticity, but we can learn from the strengths and successes of the great cities of the world. Projects such as the Adelaide Oval redevelopment, the new hospital and medical research centre, and the reinvention of Rundle Mall and Victoria Square provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity to revitalise our capital.

At this pivotal point in the city’s development and as we start to see the future Adelaide take shape, this report will help us to see our city in a new light. The major projects on Adelaide’s horizon provide an opportunity to unlock the potential of our streets and spaces.

The work of Gehl Architects brings a fresh perspective to the way we see our city, and has explored ideas close to my heart. Many of the recommendations in the report reflect a global movement in which cities are starting to recognise that it is people, not cars, that bring a city to life.

A revolution is under way; we want our cities to be exciting gathering places for people that invite exchange of ideas and nurture creativity and community. Charles Landry, a former Adelaide Thinker in Residence, describes the art of city making as like a jazz jam session – with innovation and improvisation essential elements to a creative result. This report gives us ideas for some of the building blocks we need to foster activity and energy in our public space.

Gehl Architects’ vision for a future Adelaide also encourages us to embrace and celebrate the features that make Adelaide unique; the city squares; our wide, boulevard streets; and the incredible natural assets of the river and Park Lands. It also challenges us to rethink the way that cars and parking dominate our environment.

Plans that work towards a vibrant and exciting Adelaide cannot be left on the shelf. We will need to work together to build even stronger partnerships and collaboration with local and state government and the residential and business community to bring the heart of Adelaide to life. This collective political and community will is what will give us the drive and ambition we need to build a great future for Adelaide.

Stephen Yarwood
Lord Mayor
City of Adelaide
Gehl Architects has been invited to conduct a follow-up study to the *Public Spaces & Public Life in Adelaide 2002*. Gehl Architects’ work is based on the extensive public space research of Jan Gehl. With the ‘human dimension’ as a starting point, Jan Gehl has, over four decades, worked to improve city environments in Denmark and abroad.

The book ‘Life Between Buildings’, originally published in 1971 and translated to 21 languages, has become required reading in numerous architecture schools worldwide. ‘Life Between Buildings’ describes the life which takes place in the public realm, in both cities and suburbs, and advocates for a stronger effort from planners and architects to understand and create a framework which will enhance public life in the best possible way.

The objective of Gehl Architects is to create a stronger coherence between the life in the city and planned or existing building structures. Public life is at the top of the agenda and great care is needed to accommodate the people using our cities.

As part of its working tools, Gehl Architects has developed the ‘Public Spaces and Public Life’ (PSPL) methodology, which has been applied in different contexts around the world. In Copenhagen, PSPL surveys have been conducted every ten years over the past forty years. The surveys have provided empirical evidence of the significant improvement in city life resulting from the increase in public space quality over the past four decades. Additionally, follow-up surveys have enabled the municipal government to gather information, as well as inspiration, for the further development of the public realm, whilst the general public has acquired valuable understanding and interest in public spaces and public life.

This method of working has over the years been taken up by cities in many parts of the world. Besides Stockholm and Copenhagen, Gehl Architects has performed follow-up surveys in Perth in 2009 (follow-up to a 1994 survey) and Melbourne in 2004 (follow-up to a 1994 survey). In both cases, Melbourne in particular, PSPL studies have shown that public realm improvements have the potential to significantly impact the public life of the city. Such evidence has proven to be vital to maintaining public interest in further improvement projects, as well as general satisfaction amongst citizens who can see quantifiable evidence of improved city quality.

The ‘Public Spaces and Public Life’ methodology has been used for the two Adelaide surveys in 2002 and 2011. This makes it possible to trace changes in public life over the intervening years and compare the current situation with other cities.

**Overview of some of the Public Spaces and Public Life surveys conducted in the period 2000-2010 in other cities**

- **Melbourne** - 1994 and 2004 - 3 million inhabitants
- **London** - 2003 - 75 million inhabitants
- **Adelaide** - 2002 - 1.3 million inhabitants
- **Stockholm** - 1990 and 2005 - 1.2 million inhabitants
- **New York** - 2007 - 8 million inhabitants
- **Hobart** - 2010 - 200,000 inhabitants
- **Copenhagen** - 1986, 1995, 2005 - 1.3 million inhabitants
- **Wellington** - 2004 - 0.3 million inhabitants
- **Sydney** - 2006 - 4 million inhabitants
- **Perth** - 1994 and 2009 - 1.4 million inhabitants
**Study area - the urban layout**

**The core study area**
The extent of the 2011 study area was determined in collaboration with the City of Adelaide and 5000+, the Integrated Design Strategy for Inner Adelaide. The core study area includes the original study area from the 2002 study, but is expanded to the south towards the Park Lands. The boundaries of the core study area are North Terrace, East Terrace, South Terrace and West Terrace.

**The extended study area**
In the 2011 study, North Adelaide has been included.

**Scale of the study area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2002 Study Area</th>
<th>1,575,000 m²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 Core Study Area</td>
<td>4,050,000 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 Extended Study Area</td>
<td>1,930,000 m²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study area is approx. 5,980,000 square metres in size.

**Adelaide central city characteristics**
Adelaide is the capital and most populous city of South Australia, and is the fifth-largest city in Australia.

The Adelaide city centre was planned by Colonel Light in a grid fashion and is noted as one of the last great planned metropolises. The city's grid layout, with alternating wide and narrow streets, interspaced with six public squares, has made it an ideal modern city, able to cope with traffic. The Park Lands that surround it provide a "city in a park" feel.

Light’s plan consisted of a city of one square mile, completely surrounded by park land, and with five additional small parks in its centre. That plan survives today and sets Adelaide apart from the other capital cities which, although not lacking in green spaces, seem to have had them positioned as an afterthought. In fact, Adelaide is regarded as one of the best planned cities in the world.
Understanding the grid

**Adelaide central city:**
- has a clear and legible rectangular grid
- generous street widths of 20-40 metres
- the typical block is approx. 500 m east-west by 130 m north-south, creating fewer streets running north-south.
- laneways running north south through the large blocks servicing the early warehouses and factories.
- consecutive laneways creating continuous movement patterns.
- the geographical centre of the city is Victoria Square.

**Comparison with other cities**
Studies of other cities will be used for comparison and will act as the frame of reference in this study. Comparisons will be based on similar studies carried out in Melbourne (2004), Sydney (2006), Perth (2009) and Copenhagen, Denmark (2005).

A comparison with these cities will provide insight into the public life of other cities of comparable or somewhat bigger size. While Copenhagen is a medieval city with the characteristics this implies, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth are younger cities with some of the similar problems as Adelaide. Copenhagen is used for comparison because of the example the city provides based on 40 years of improvements.

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**Melbourne, Australia**
- Study area 2,300,000 m²
- 12,000 residents in the study area (2006)
- 52 residents per hectare
- (3.5 million residents in the metropolitan area)

Inner city area 2.3 km²

**Sydney, Australia**
- Study area 2,200,000 m²
- 15,000 residents in the study area (2006)
- 68 residents per hectare
- (4 million residents in the metropolitan area)

Inner city area 2.2 km²

**Perth, Australia**
- 2,200,000 m² (2009 core study area)
- Approx. 1,450 residents in the study area (2006)
- 7 residents per hectare
- (1.4 million residents in the metropolitan area)

Inner city area 2.2 km²

**Copenhagen, Denmark**
- Study area 1,150,000 m²
- 7,600 residents in the study area (2005)
- 66 residents per hectare
- (1.2 million residents in the metropolitan area)

Inner city area 1.15 km²

**Adelaide, Australia**
- Study area 4,050,000 m² (2011 Core study area)
- 12,760 residents in the Core study area
- 35 residents per hectare
- (1.28 million residents in the metropolitan area)

Inner city area 4.05 km²

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1) Calculation based on 2008 core study area excluding freeway interchange 1,950,000 m²
Introduction

Major potentials

1. The Park Lands
   - The planned city in a fantastic green setting.
   - The Park Lands is a unique gift from the past.

2. The riverfront
   - Proximity to the River Torrens.
   - A wonderful setting for recreational activities.

3. The streets
   - A clear and strict city grid.
   - Generous wide streets.
   - Consecutive laneways creating continuous movement patterns.

4. The squares
   - Grand public squares.
   - Green oases in the city grid.
Introduction

- Gehl Architects • Public Spaces and Public Life Adelaide 2011

Major achievements 2002 - 2011

1. A growing bicycle culture
   - More focus on bicycles, with cycle lanes has increased the cycle population and increased awareness.
   - Upgrading of the free bicycle system.

2. An upgraded North Terrace
   - North Terrace has continuously been upgraded since the last study in 2002. The result has been extraordinary positive change in the north-eastern part, where benches and new street trees have been introduced.

3. A new tram line
   - Improved access by more energy-efficient modes of transportation, such as extension of the light rail, new light rail carriages and new facilities (stops) is a valuable upgrade of the public transport.

4. More people in the city
   - More people living in the city centre (+103% increase in population from 2002-2011)
   - More students in the city (+74% increase from 2002 - 2011)
   - The city centre as workplace. (+36% increase from 2002 - 2011)
   - City life is more spread out: +15% more daytime pedestrian traffic (weekday) since 2002 and +20% more daytime pedestrian traffic (Saturday) since 2002 and +43% more daytime staying activity since 2002
Major challenges 2011

1. **Unprogrammed Park Lands**
   - The magnificent setting is not explored to its fullest potential.
   - An under-utilised Park Lands.
   - Lack of synergy between Park Lands functions.
   - Divided from the city by traffic barriers.
   - Cut up into small isolated areas by traffic.
   - Park Lands deserted during weekdays.
   - Perceived as unsafe at night.

2. **Unintegrated river front**
   - The city is still turning its back on its river.
   - Hidden and difficult pedestrian links.
   - A challenging topography.
   - Few water related activities.
   - Monotonous use of the riverfront.

3. **A lack of street diversity**
   - 70% of all streets are taken up by vehicles.
   - Streets as traffic corridors.
   - Poor orientation and lack of street identity and legibility.
   - Under-utilised laneways.

4. **Squares downgraded by traffic**
   - The public squares are torn to pieces by traffic.
   - A uniform use of the squares as intersections and car parks.
   - Severe issues with traffic, noise and parking.
A traffic dominated city

- An unbalanced road use with too much vehicular traffic.
- Extensive parking invites traffic.
- Dysfunctional ring road generates more through traffic.
- An underdeveloped public transport system.
- Disconnected bicycle network.
- Weak pedestrian network with delays on walking routes and frequent footpath interruptions.

A large monofunctional inner city area

- A functionally divided city.
- Lack of residents in the central area.
- Few facilities providing local service for residents.
- Evening activities concentrated in certain precincts with weak pedestrian connections in between.

A city centre with a small heart

- A confined city heart around the shopping streets.
- The majority of street frontages are inactive outside the small heart.
- Weak links to destinations outside main pedestrian routes.

Low quality/ tired public spaces

- Indifferent character and lack of identity of the squares.
- Few facilities for children.
- Few events take place in the squares.
- An uneven distribution of public seating.
- Lack of a green framework and a core with very few trees.
Introduction

Recommendations 2002

The Public Spaces and Public Life study from 2002 delivered a number of recommendations for Adelaide. In order to build upon and acknowledge what has been done in Adelaide, the 2002 recommendations have been listed and their current status has been evaluated by Adelaide City Council in regard to whether they have been partially or fully implemented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capitalise on the unique qualities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take advantage of the unique opportunity to create a delightful people-oriented city centre by making the most of its climate, the many natural qualities from the coast and the Adelaide Hills to the Park Lands and its riverfront setting that holds wonderful recreational potential.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Enforce the clear zone from the building line for street furniture to free a walking zone for pedestrians.
- Make a better acoustic environment by avoiding the trend of encouraging microphone sales people in Rundle Mall and by reducing the level of music coming from the shops.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A better city for walking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create good walking routes with few interruptions and short waiting time at traffic lights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove the push buttons at pedestrian crossings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide ‘green waves’ for pedestrians, accommodated to normal pedestrian speed in order to minimize waiting periods at crossings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide minimum waiting times at pedestrian crossings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide wider and better footpaths on central city streets e.g. Rundle Street and Hindley Street.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide places to rest in squares and along streets at reasonable intervals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide good quality lighting for the city streets to improve safety and to upgrade the quality of the public spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure good quality and interesting ground floor frontages where people walk to create an interesting, lively and safe street environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage more diverse activities by reducing traffic in the north-south connecting streets and the connection from the Market to the railway station, identifying them as primary pedestrian links.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create an inviting pedestrian network with pedestrian priority streets that connect important destinations in the city, including North Terrace, Hindley Street, Rundle Street, Grenfell Street and King William Street.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid footpath interruptions by taking footpaths across side streets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve pavements, make a paving strategy following a street hierarchy system.</td>
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</table>

- Improve possibilities for resting by providing more public benches and placing them in nice locations with a good view and shade and shelter from the wind.
- Provide more places to rest by the waterfront.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A better city for staying</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve the five city squares and make them an integrated part of a general pedestrian network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade the squares by rejoining the different parts of the squares into one whole. Create an overall strategy for redevelopment of the five squares.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade the squares to create a sense of ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocate parking in the squares as it creates a generally unpleasant recreational environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create possibilities for a multitude of uses; sports, recreation, music, resting, talking, meeting e.g. and for food outlets and outdoor cafés on the squares.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove public toilets from the squares.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve conditions for children in the city with possibilities to play in close connection to public spaces where parents are most likely to stay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide traffic regulated areas where children can play.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations ticked off have fully or to a certain degree been followed between 2002 and 2011.

Recommendations for which work has commenced are denoted by an exclamation mark.
**4 Reduce through traffic**

Adopt a policy of progressively reducing the amount of through traffic.

Reduce through traffic by establishing an effective ring road.

Reduce, progressively, the road and car parking capacity in the inner city.

Introduce traffic calming measures, phased traffic lights and reduced speed on selected routes.

Give higher priority to pedestrians at traffic signals.

Establish a distinct street hierarchy of main streets, traffic calmed streets and pedestrian streets and clarify the system through paving, street furniture, planting, city lighting and signage.

Invite people to cycle in the city through a general improvement of conditions for cyclists and through campaigns.

Replace cycle lanes to run between parking lanes and footpaths to ensure a safer position for cyclists.

Make cycle lanes more visible by adding colour to the lanes, by separating cycle lanes from traffic on a raised level, by adding specific cycle traffic lights.

Educate people to look out for cyclists.

Educate cyclists to follow the rules and watch out for pedestrians.

Promote public transport to and within the city centre.

Extend the free bus service to reach important connections.

Provide more frequent running bus lines to more areas.

Extend the existing tram line through the city centre to the main train station and add more lines if possible to include the suburbs in a tram network.

Provide distinct bus lanes in more locations to ease access for public transport through the city centre.

Ensure good bus shelters in safe locations near other city functions.

**5 A beautiful city**

Strengthen the history and the architectural heritage.

Respect the original city plan and the qualities it holds.

Require that new buildings fit in with their neighbours, by considering their relationship to scale, building heights and address the surrounding public spaces.

Replace heavy canopies along building fronts with light elegant Australian bullnose type canopies.

Remove out of place vertical signs on the older buildings and signs which obscure the details of the architecture of the buildings.

Develop regulations for canopies, signage etc. in order to prevent unfortunate elements destroying the architecture and the street environment.

Improve the quality of street signs and street furniture in the city.

Encourage better standards in shop signs and lettering.

Create a policy for paving materials and look after these. Use paving of high, durable quality.

Create a local design profile for Adelaide to create a strong image and a sense of ownership of the public spaces, including benches, litter bins, signs, lamp posts and introducing city colours.

Develop an overall lighting plan for the city centre as part of a strategy to reduce crime and to contribute to the feeling of a safe and friendly street environment.

Use the lighting strategy to enhance the understanding of the street hierarchy with different lighting policies for the four types of streets in the city: Main streets, city streets, traffic calmed/residential streets and pedestrian streets.

Improve pedestrian access points to the market by creating transparency in the ground floor frontages.

**6 A diverse, safe and lively city**

Encourage more activities in the city, both organised and spontaneous events to improve the vitality and liveliness of the city centre.