



Age friendly Urban places



Te Tari Kaumātua
Office for Seniors

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Ngā tū wāhi tāone pai mō te hunga kaumātua

Creating age friendly urban places

This resource aims to improve urban outcomes for older people through the design of public places, land use, spatial planning and design guidance.

Ngā kōrero o roto i tēnei rauemi

What this resource covers

This is a technical resource targeted at local and central government urban planning practice to help improve outcomes for older people. We recognise that there are other influences that shape urban environments that are not addressed here.

Download the age friendly urban places graphic on the Office for Seniors Website

Designing inclusive environments for people of all ages means:

- enabling multiple functional abilities
- giving effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi
- being inclusive of our culturally diverse communities, and
- encouraging early engagement with our communities of interest.

Planning guidance in this resource is broken down into four sections:

- Streets and spaces
- Accessibility and movement
- Housing
- Community connections

He aha whakahoahoa ai mō te hunga kaumātua? Why design for older people?

E kaumātua haere ana tō tātau taupori Our population is ageing

Between 2020 and 2048:

- the number of people aged 65+ is expected to increase from 790,000 to 1.4 million in 2048 (around 24 percent of all New Zealanders)
- the number of people aged 85+ is predicted to increase rapidly from 88,000 to over 300,000

(<https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/national-population-projections-2020base2073#fig-7>)

E kanorau haere ana te hunga kaumātua Our older population is becoming more diverse

Older people do not represent one homogenous group within the population. New Zealand is home to people of many different cultures and ethnicities, who may have different needs as they age.

Our Treaty relationship with Māori informs our bicultural foundation.

The term older people is used in this resource to represent all people, including kaumātua, with varying needs and abilities that are progressing through the later stages of their lives.

E pai ana mō tātau katoa It's good for everyone

Currently our urban places are generally not well designed to meet the needs of older people, and often do not enable older people to participate or be included in public life.

Environments that have been designed to include and be comfortable for older people are good for the whole community.

Ngā tiriti me ngā ātea

Streets and spaces

Designing streets and spaces with older people in mind helps foster community connections and can have health and wellbeing benefits for everyone.

Whakamanahia ngā tūhono hāpori

Enable community connections

Spaces that encourage positive socio-cultural activity – whether it's passive or active – are good for the wellbeing of individuals and for community cohesion.

Designing outside spaces that are useable for older people allows them to be involved in the activity on the street or in the park and build connections in the community. As they are more likely to be present during the day, they can also act as eyes on the street for the community.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa

Design tips

- When designing street furniture such as seating, ensure there are backs and arm rests and that the seat is not too close to the ground. This will provide functionality for people of all abilities.
- Make spaces engaging and fun for both older and younger people to be in together. For example, The Hamilton Lake Domain contains walking tracks that link with playgrounds and a café and gardens with clear views across the lake. It also connects with the city's cycle path and public transport links. Read the Hamilton Lake Domain's Management Plan on the Hamilton City Council website
- Use collaborative processes during the design phase so older people get a say in how spaces can be used.
- Collaborate with older people to come up with ways to adapt spaces to support projects they can participate in. This may be through 'greening' projects like community gardens, programming events, and temporary or 'tactical urbanism' projects.

- Work with kaumātua and kuia from local iwi and hapū to create opportunities within public spaces to reinforce the relationship between people and the landscape. This helps to provide a sense of place and belonging for all people. Kaumātua and kuia will often have an in-depth knowledge of the local landscape and its history and a desire to share these stories. A great example of this is Nga Whāriki Manaaki, woven mats of welcome in Christchurch which can be found on the Ōtākaro Limited website
- Co-design and configure existing spaces and streets as connected ‘loop’ networks that allow for active movement like walking and cycling, to suit both shorter and longer range capability.

Kia hāneanea, kia haumaru Provide comfort and safety

If spaces are comfortable and safe they will be well used, respected, and the community will take ownership, giving a sense of place and identity. People act as informal guardians of spaces they like to spend time in, so maintenance is also likely to be easier.

Comfort and safety comes from:

- warmth
- shade in summer
- shelter
- separation from noisy traffic
- ergonomic seating
- senses interest such as from trees and foliage colour, and
- easily interpretable spatial layouts.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa

Design tips

- Design busy streets with a cross section of zones. Create plenty of room for pedestrians, furniture, signs and lights. Ensure that the width allocated for pedestrian movement and for furniture is clear. Place signs and lights at the edge.
- Position new parks and orientate streets to retain and reflect local landmarks and distinctive features (eg, historical and cultural references).
- Ensure parks and streets are orientated to views and have comfortable seating that allows people to look out over the area and see what's going on.
- Co-design 'dwelling' spaces and streets for comfort.

Ngā hua hauora

Health benefits

Proximity to parks, green spaces and neighbourhood streets can:

- help to increase activity levels
- increase vitamin D levels through healthy sun exposure
- reduce stress.

Whakamahinga

Useability

Making outdoor spaces easy for people to get around and spend time in enhances their confidence and independence and enables them to participate in their communities. This is especially important for people with dementia, sensory and physical disabilities who may find it more difficult to negotiate environments.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa

Design tips

- Identify the streets and spaces that are intended for people to move through, spend time or 'dwell' in and design these streets and spaces to match this.
- Make it easy to negotiate streets and spaces. Rationalise the positioning and numbers of signs and street furniture installations eg, group bins, seats, and lighting. Think about where e-vehicle charging stations are placed – avoid trip hazards and check they won't block the view of oncoming traffic or pedestrians.



Spaces that allow people of all ages to participate in public life and adapt them together builds community.



Seating designed to allow rest and playfulness – sheltered from sun and mixes suitability for all ages – Cincinnati.

Encouraging social interaction in street design.

Āheitanga me te nuku haeretanga

Accessibility and movement

Urban spaces should be designed so that everyone's needs are met – older people can get where they need to go and feel included.

Āheitanga mā te katoa

Make it accessible for everyone

Accessible urban places:

- give people of all ages and life stages access to work, education, community facilities, and social opportunities
- are culturally inclusive
- provide a sense of belonging – people feel welcome and included and have their needs met.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa

Design tips

- Prepare an accessibility plan in collaboration with older people (as well as disabled people) before undertaking spatial planning so that local accessibility needs are understood and provided for.
- Consider the demographic and ethnic composition of the community when designing local signage and include appropriate languages, accessible and culturally appropriate font types, and messaging.
- Apply universal design standards to new streetscapes and buildings so that they are accessible for all people. Include features that help with wayfinding and making environments legible for everyone, such as
 - signalling doorways and access points (for example, by using use colour themes)
 - orientating people to corners
 - using facade articulation to highlight building features such as windows and entrances.

- Provide options that enable people to live in a variety of ways based on their cultural and personal needs. Plan for different housing choices that reflect this, such as multigenerational living, papa kainga, living with carers.
- Enable older people to live in proximity to support services, employment opportunities, shops, social and cultural networks.
- Consider the placement of accessible public toilets on a network basis, including the distance between each.

Whakahoahoa e māmā ai te nuku haere

Design for mobility

Mobility gives people a sense of independence and purpose. Transport options that allow people to move about in the community or between different towns and cities are a key aspect of mobility.

Older people may have mobility restrictions, no access to a car, limited income to run a car, or no family support to assist with transport. When there are no other transport options, older people can be isolated and disconnected from the community and this has a negative impact on their wellbeing.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa

Design tips

Design public transport waiting spaces with seats and signage to make using transport easier for people with restricted mobility. Ensure there is a clear line of sight to approaching vehicles so that passengers can prepare to alight. Consider including:

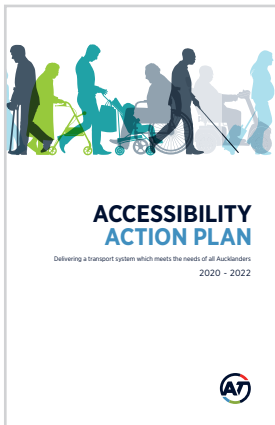
- audio messaging
- seats with backs and arm rests
- protection from the weather
- space and access for wheelchairs
- sufficient space to avoid crowding and pushing.
- Street width allocation should provide for a range of modes of movement. Main transport routes should provide ample room for mobility scooters, e-bikes, walking and other active modes of transport as well as strategically located mobility car parks.
- Electrical charging points for e-scooters and other e-vehicles should be provided without causing trip hazards. It is also important to consider the quietness of e-vehicles as a safety risk.
- Plan and create movement networks that simplify routes and link them with common destinations that meet people’s needs. For example, consider bus routes to access libraries, health care, parks, swimming pools, supermarkets, workplaces and other destinations.



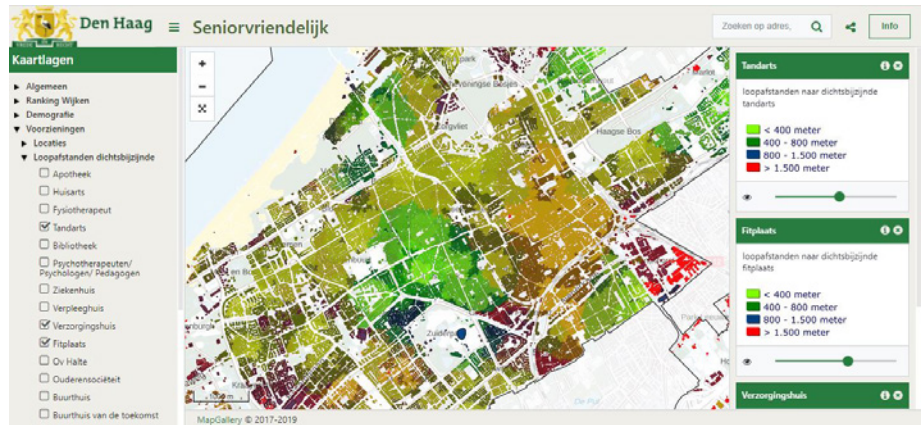
Street crossing - colour and material differentiation, Hamilton.



Accessible Public Transport vehicles and street infrastructure.



Accessibility Action plan Auckland Transport.



Web portal showing walking distances to services for older people used to plan senior living, The Hague Netherlands.

Ngā kāinga

Housing

Housing needs to cater for a range of needs, designed so that people can feel connected to the community and have different options over time.

Kia whānui ngā whiringa kāinga

Provide a range of housing options

People live differently depending on their individual needs and preferences, family situation, and cultural background. Enabling a range of living options through universal design is important to give older people choices (just like anyone else).

Cultural factors that may influence housing needs include:

- household size and composition
- the need to have a flexible housing space
- proximity to whānau
- traditional food gathering sources
- marae
- other community infrastructure.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa

Design tips

- Provide for a mix of residential densities within urban environments that provide choices for people to remain in the same neighbourhood as they age and move through different life stages.
- Encourage choice in housing and ownership types eg, (semi)-communal, co-housing, independent, papakāinga, serviced) and provide for this in urban development.
- Provide for housing formats that reflect the range of cultural practices, norms and preferences in the community. Consider the demographics of your current and future community.

Kia tāwariwari **Enable flexibility**

Housing needs to be flexible. This provides people with options to change their house and remain in their community if they want to. Community connections can be maintained and people's wellbeing and independence are supported.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa **Design tips**

- Design residential and mixed use living environments that can be adapted over time, for example by adding a smaller unit as part of a main dwelling.
- Enable adaptation of existing houses, in residential and mixed use areas to allow for increased density of living.

Kia tūhono pai ki ngā tiriti me ngā ātea **Provide connectivity to streets and spaces**

Living in housing that provides visual and physical connectivity to streets and spaces helps people feel present and part of a community.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa **Design tips**

- Require a percentage of new housing to orientate living spaces to streets and public or shared open space. Discourage units that may be likely to be occupied by older people where there is no visual connectivity to public or shared spaces.
- In multi-unit design, ensure ground floor units have proximity to shared and public open spaces. Older people are more likely to be present during the day and easy access to these areas enables them to use these spaces and connect with others.
- Circulation and wayfinding that provides a clear line of sight to destinations is important when designing multi-unit developments. Use colour for identification of units, doors and natural light placement as well as level changes.
- Encourage housing for older people (including smaller unit types) close to public space, schools, libraries and other community facilities including transport hubs and work places.



Moa Crescent Kaumātua Village, Hamilton, Toolkit, He Keteparaha – He Kainga Pai Rawa Project (2017 - 2019).



Clustered units with balance between private and communal living. Health services on ground floor, Ørestad, Copenhagen.



Subsidised senior flats with supported living services, Papaoeia, Palmerston North.



Co-housing development which includes people of all ages, Newtown, Wellington.

Ngā tūhono hāpori Community connections

Design new urban developments in a way that enables older people to stay active and present in their communities.

Kia whai angitūtanga ki te korikori tinana Provide opportunities to stay active

Many people are active for most of their lives and at older ages have more time to contribute to public life and their own pursuits.

Enabling older people to participate and be included in the community has benefits for everyone. Consider how they can be involved in areas like:

- parks and community space
- schools and younger play spaces
- sports grounds and other places of activity.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa Design tips

- Co-design open spaces to create opportunities for activity, such as walking loops and informal exercise spaces. Make spaces flexible so that they can be adapted for different activities. For example, consider installing seating that can be moved to create space for 'pop-up' events, markets, concerts, sports and other gatherings.
- Design active sports environments to enable older people to be present – for example, include seats, shade, and shelter. Ensure there is good visual proximity and views orientated towards activity.
- Partner with older people and undertake community audits to understand how age friendly neighbourhoods are. Consider developing a citizen science project, or other creative ways to engage the community in this work. For more information, see our [\[LINK\]Age friendly toolkit](#).
- Include older people in urban planning processes to bring their perspectives to spatial planning. Ensure that your engagement reflects the diversity of the community and seek out the voices of different groups, including Māori, Pacific people, disabled people, people living in social housing, and migrants.

Kia āhei ai ngā ratonga te tomo Ensure services are accessible

Support services, such as community, health and education services, should be distributed within neighbourhoods so they're easy to get to. This improves people's access to these services, and provides networks of familiarity with local providers. It also limits the need to travel long distances to get to essential services.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa Design tips

- Plan spaces for health services, community facilities and other community support providers in new urban growth areas. Consider how these services will be accessed in relation to public transport nodes.
- When developing housing, include landmarks and character elements in the neighbourhood that will support wayfinding and build familiarity.

Āwhina te hunga kaumatua kia puta ki te hapori Help older people be present

Enabling people to be more present within their community means that they can form social connections beyond family groups and be part of public life. This is especially important for those living alone.

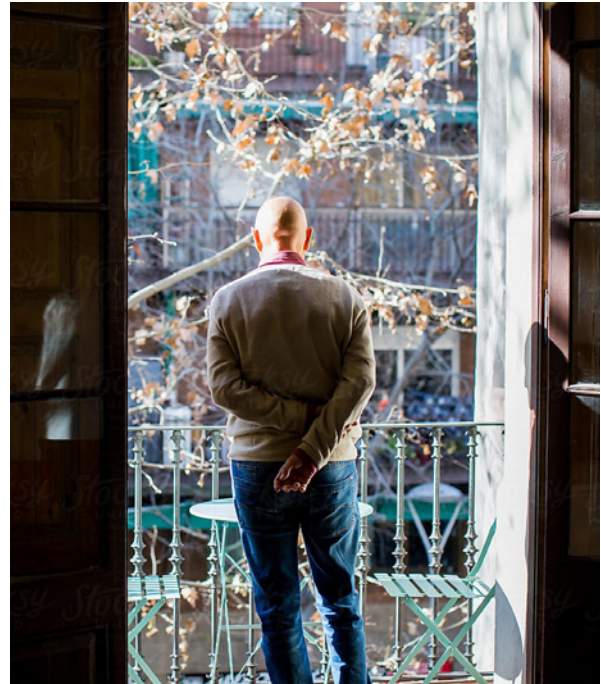
Presence may be enabled by a well-placed seat, or a living space that looks to the street without a high fence in between.

Hei whakaaro whakahoahoa Design tips

- Locate housing for older people in places where there are good levels of visual and physical connection to shared or public spaces.
- Create neighbourhood spaces that encourage social interaction, for example small parks, walkways and paths.
- Create public spaces and meeting places for older people to mix with people of all generations. Make these spaces attractive and accessible to all.



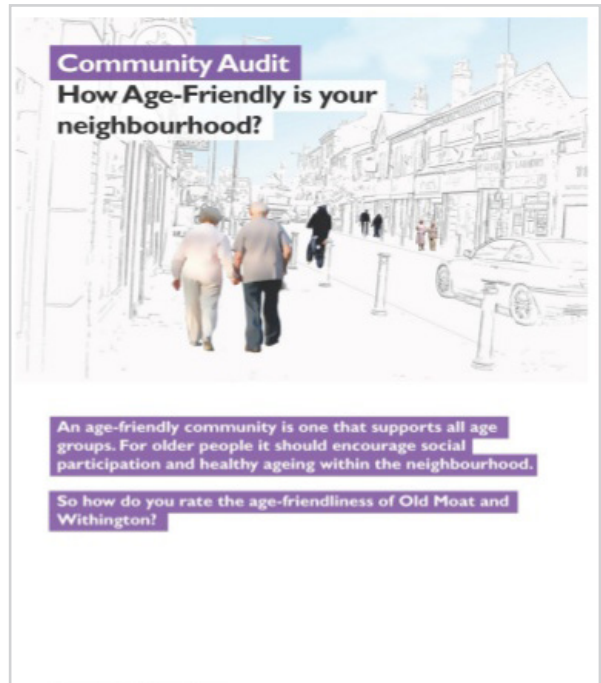
Provide seating that assists presence and at visual interest points.



Visual connection from house to street.



Good levels of visual connection to street from houses assists presence.



Audit of Age Friendly-ness – Manchester.

Hei rauemi pai

Useful resources

A collection of resources to support age friendly urban planning and design.

He rauemi nō Aotearoa

Resources from Aotearoa New Zealand

- [Alzheimers New Zealand – Dementia Friendly Communities Toolkit](#) – a toolkit to help communities to create environments that enhance the participation of people with dementia.
- Office for Seniors | Te Tari Kaumātua - ‘Better Later Life - He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034’ – Aotearoa New Zealand’s strategy to make life better for people as they age. Includes information about 5 areas for action including:
 - Making environments accessible
 - Creating diverse housing choices and options.
- [National Science Challenge: Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities | He Kainga Pai Rawa Atu Mō Ngā Kaumātua – A really good home for our Kaumātua \(PDF 8.5MB\)](#) – A toolkit for kaumātua housing
 - There is also a [discussion paper about developing housing projects for kaumātua \(PDF 4.9MB\)](#).
- [Waka Kotahi | NZTA – Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide](#) – A guide to designing pedestrian friendly streets and other outside spaces (to be replaced by the Waka Kotahi Pedestrian Network Guidance 2021).
- [Waka Kotahi/NZTA – Innovating Streets for People](#) – Tactical urbanism webpage including links to case studies and resources for local projects.

He rauemi nā ngā kaunihera ā-rohe Local government resources

- [Tāmaki Tauawhi Kaumātua | Age-friendly Auckland Project – Community Engagement Findings Report \(2020\)](#)
- [Auckland Council - Auckland Design Manual](#) – A practical guide with a wide range of design advice about how to create good quality development in the urban environment. It includes sections on Universal Design, Mixed Use Development and Case Studies.
- [Canterbury Community and Public Health - Integrated Planning Guide and Covid-19 Pandemic Supplement](#)
 - Integrated Planning Guide for a healthy, sustainable and resilient future 3.0
 - Integrated Planning Guide: Pandemic Supplement
- [Waimakariri – He Hoa Ahakoa Ōu Tau – Age friendly Waimakariri \(12,239 KB\)](#)
- [Te Rautaki Hapori Manaaki Taipakeke – Horowhenua Age friendly Communities Strategy](#)
- [Nelson City Council Accessibility Guide](#)

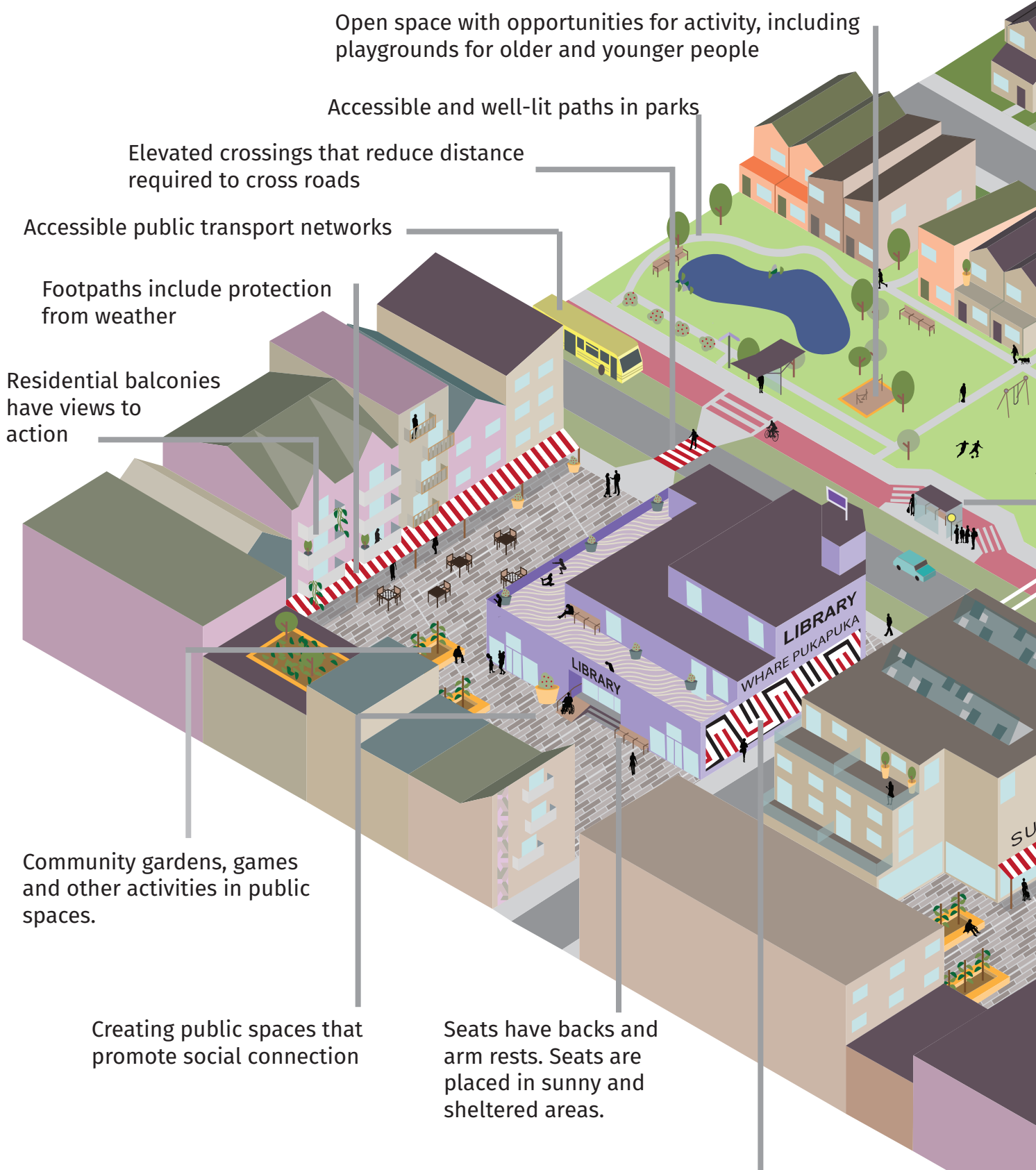
He rauemi nō te ao International resources

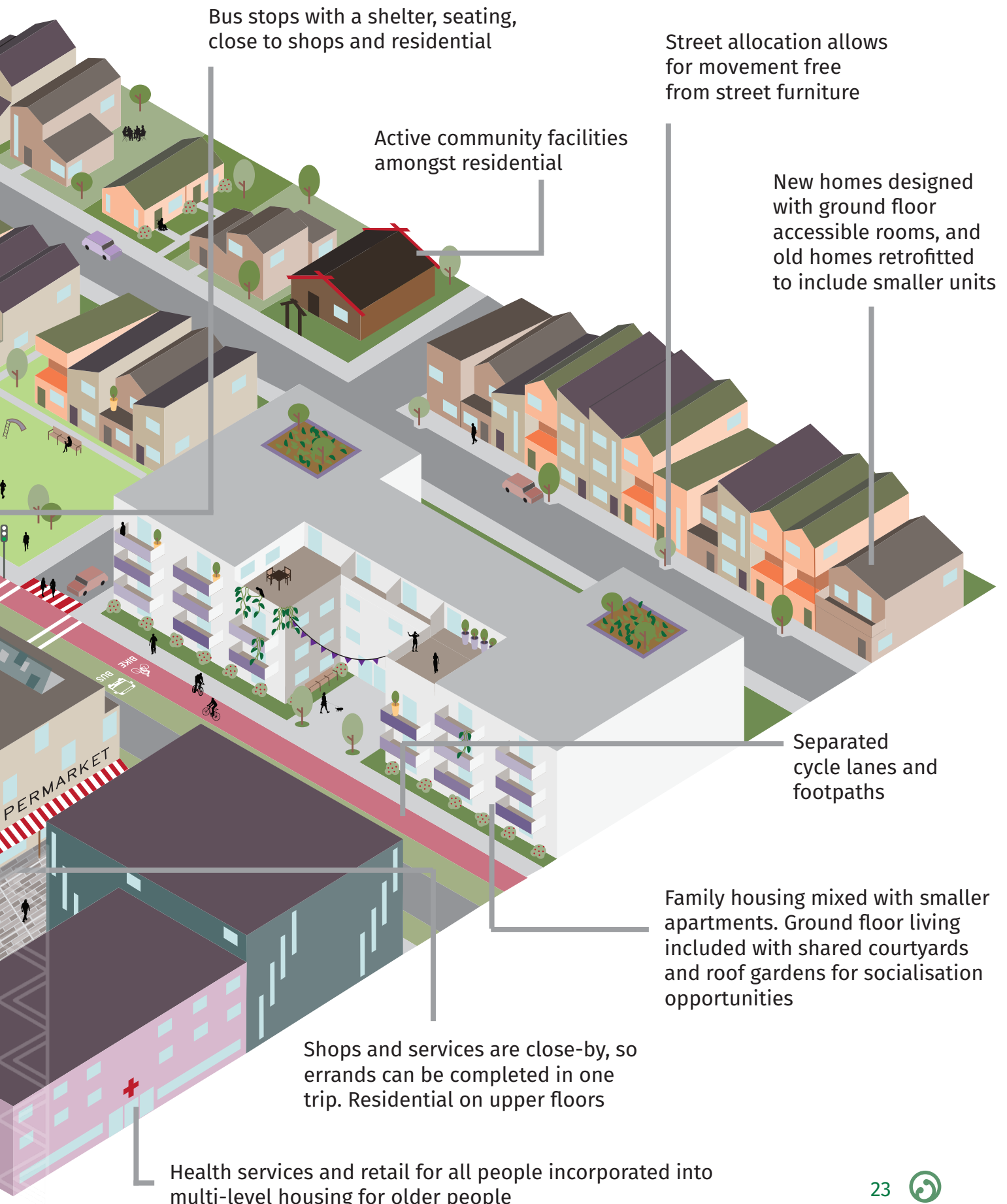
- [World Health Organization – Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide](#) – The World Health Organization’s (WHO’s) Global Age friendly cities: a guide provides a detailed description of what age friendly cities, towns, and communities look like based on its Age Friendly Model.
- [ARUP - Cities Alive: Designing for Ageing Communities](#) – ARUP has developed this comprehensive guide that identifies the specific needs of older people and proposes strategies and actions that cities can take to make communities more age friendly.
- [University of Sheffield – The DWELL Project](#) – This website includes interactive guides to help with designing housing and neighbourhoods to facilitate mobility and wellbeing for current and future generations of older people.
- [UK Government – Housing for Older and Disabled People](#) – The UK government has produced guidance for urban planners about how to create planning policy to support housing for older and disabled people.
- AARP
 - [AARP Policy Book, Chapter 13 Liveable Communities](#) – This chapter provides guidance about how to create inclusive communities for older people. It includes sections on ‘Effective Planning’ and ‘Creating liveable and sustainable communities’.

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- AARP and CNU – Enabling Better Places – A Handbook for Improved Neighbourhoods provides a toolkit to guide local councils/planners.
 - AARP – Equity by Design: Principles in Action – Case studies of innovation in the design of urban spaces, housing and community participation.
 - AARP – Where We Live: Communities for All Ages – Case studies of age inclusive design and planning.
 - The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, Ireland have many resources available to support the use of universal design in urban spaces including:
 - Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland
 - Dementia Friendly Dwellings for People with Dementia, their Families and Carers
 - Shared space, shared surfaces and Home Zones from a Universal Design Approach for the Urban Environment in Ireland
 - Age Friendly Ireland supports cities, counties and towns across Ireland to prepare for the rapid ageing of Ireland’s population. Guidelines and toolkits include:
 - Age Friendly Planning Guidelines & Recommendations
 - Age Friendly Pre Planning Guidelines for Long Term Residential Care
 - Age Friendly Parking Toolkit
 - Age Friendly Seating Toolkit

Appendix 1

Ngā tū wāhi tāone pai mō te hunga kaumātua Creating Age friendly urban places





Bus stops with a shelter, seating, close to shops and residential

Street allocation allows for movement free from street furniture

Active community facilities amongst residential

New homes designed with ground floor accessible rooms, and old homes retrofitted to include smaller units

Separated cycle lanes and footpaths

Family housing mixed with smaller apartments. Ground floor living included with shared courtyards and roof gardens for socialisation opportunities

Shops and services are close-by, so errands can be completed in one trip. Residential on upper floors

Health services and retail for all people incorporated into multi-level housing for older people

Author: Office for Seniors and Boffa Miskell

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