

# Response to Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 3 proposals

Belfast Healthy Cities



# Belfast Healthy Cities

## Our Vision

Our vision is to be a leader in creating a healthy and equitable city

## Our Role and Mission

Our mission is to reduce inequalities in health and enable people who live and work in Belfast to achieve their full health and wellbeing potential by:

- Inspiring and facilitating innovative partnership action
- Sharing learning and leadership from WHO Europe
- Sharing evidence and building capacity on health equity and wellbeing
- Introducing and piloting innovative concepts and approaches
- Maximising partners' impact on health equity
- We provide a direct link between Belfast and WHO Europe



# Healthy Urban Environments

- A core theme of our work: aims to support people centred policy and decision making
- Child friendly and age friendly key sub themes – demonstrating potential of people centred design
- Focus of work
  - Building capacity and sharing evidence on links between planning, design and health
  - Supporting collaboration between built environment and health professionals
  - Demonstration projects to explore elements of healthy places

# Rationale of response

- Focus of design should be on creating **places** that encourage and support a range of uses by a range of population groups
- Child and age friendly places offer seating, legible vistas, informal surveillance and safe access
- This response is intended to outline elements of healthy, people friendly and successful places and show examples of good practice

# Place making and successful healthy cities

High quality places encourage people to:

- Meet and socialise: building social cohesion and promoting mental wellbeing
- Associate: creating shared space and encouraging links between generations
- Linger: promoting economic opportunities
- Enjoy the city: highlighting unique quality of place and attracting visitors

**High quality open and public space is critical to support and encourage city centre living**



# Flexible use of space – New Road, Brighton





# Programming and place – Gillett Square, London



Play space now daily feature during school holidays

Play equipment stored in container – permanent feature of square



KidsSpace – a pop up child and family friendly city centre space

- Key event of Culture Night Belfast since 2011
- 1000+ visitors





# KidsSpace - feedback from parents&children

- *‘Much more of this kind of activities – art & gardening workshops, juggling workshops, roller blade hire’*
- Interactive street art and play structures dotted around – support street play
- *‘Use what we have effectively’* – eg fountains in Custom House Square, play areas in big shops, pocket parks
- *‘Child friendly spaces and events would attract us to the city’*



# Age friendly places – WHO checklist of essential criteria

## Outdoor spaces and buildings

- Public areas are clean and pleasant.
- Green spaces and outdoor seating are sufficient in number, well-maintained and safe.
- Pavements are well-maintained, free of obstructions and reserved for pedestrians.
- Pavements are non-slip, are wide enough for wheelchairs and have dropped curbs to road level.
- Pedestrian crossings are sufficient in number and safe for people with different levels and types of disability, with non-slip markings, visual and audio cues and adequate crossing times.
- Drivers give way to pedestrians at intersections and pedestrian crossings.
- Cycle paths are separate from pavements and other pedestrian walkways.
- Outdoor safety is promoted by good street lighting, police patrols and community education.

- Services are situated together and are accessible.
- Special customer service arrangements are provided, such as separate queues or service counters for older people.
- Buildings are well-signed outside and inside, with sufficient seating and toilets, accessible elevators, ramps, railings and stairs, and non-slip floors.
- Public toilets outdoors and indoors are sufficient in number, clean, well-maintained and accessible.

## Transportation

- Public transportation costs are consistent, clearly displayed and affordable.
- Public transportation is reliable and frequent, including at night and on weekends and holidays.
- All city areas and services are accessible by public transport, with good connections and well-marked routes and vehicles.



# Informal green space

- Creates attractive environment: encourages lingering and informal social interaction, enables free & active play
- Reduces air pollution: reduces health risks to people with respiratory and cardiac conditions
- Boosts productivity: helps concentration, offers stress relief for city centre workers
- Boosts property values and creates economic opportunities

**Informal, flexible space is essential to invite variety of users and uses**



# Building on success – informal use of City Hall grounds





# Creative use of green space



# Flexible green space – Peace Gardens, Sheffield



# Softening hard landscape, inviting life - Leeds





# Paris - Street Bollards as Micro Gardens





# Network of Places

City should be network of places:

- Encourages movement through city: legibility and permeability
- Can offer sense of discovery: stand alone attraction and programming opportunity
- Promotes safety: encourages ownership, design can deter anti social behaviour

**Creating different types of place is vital to invite and facilitate children, families, older people, visitors**



# Integrating interest – encouraging use



# Flexible street furniture - Leeds

Albion Place Seating



# Incorporating active elements – Houston, Texas





# Traffic Barriers used as football goals, in Sofia, Bulgaria



# Lucerne, Switzerland Turns Trash Bins into Opportunities for Street Ball



# Lamp Posts as Rainy Day Refuge Umbrellas





# Tree Planter Boxes as Public Platforms for Creativity in Toronto





# Street Signs as Public Music Instruments in Ceara, Brazil



# Street Library, Manhattan





# Child friendly street furniture



# Age friendly seating, Newcastle





# The opportunity to create a liveable city centre

- Belfast Healthy Cities would urge that Streets Ahead Phase 3 is used to enhance the liveability and attraction of the city centre by:
  - Focusing on a green ‘oasis’ at Cathedral Gardens – seating, lighting, green informal space
  - Exploring creation of elevation/mound within the gardens to encourage active play
  - Integrating playable elements, eg. sculptures to climb on, bollards that can be used as ball game goal posts
  - Providing basic facilities – public toilet
  - Providing pedestrian and cycling priority on York Street
  - Exploring developing Royal Avenue as green corridor through city centre, enhancing existing street trees and seating

