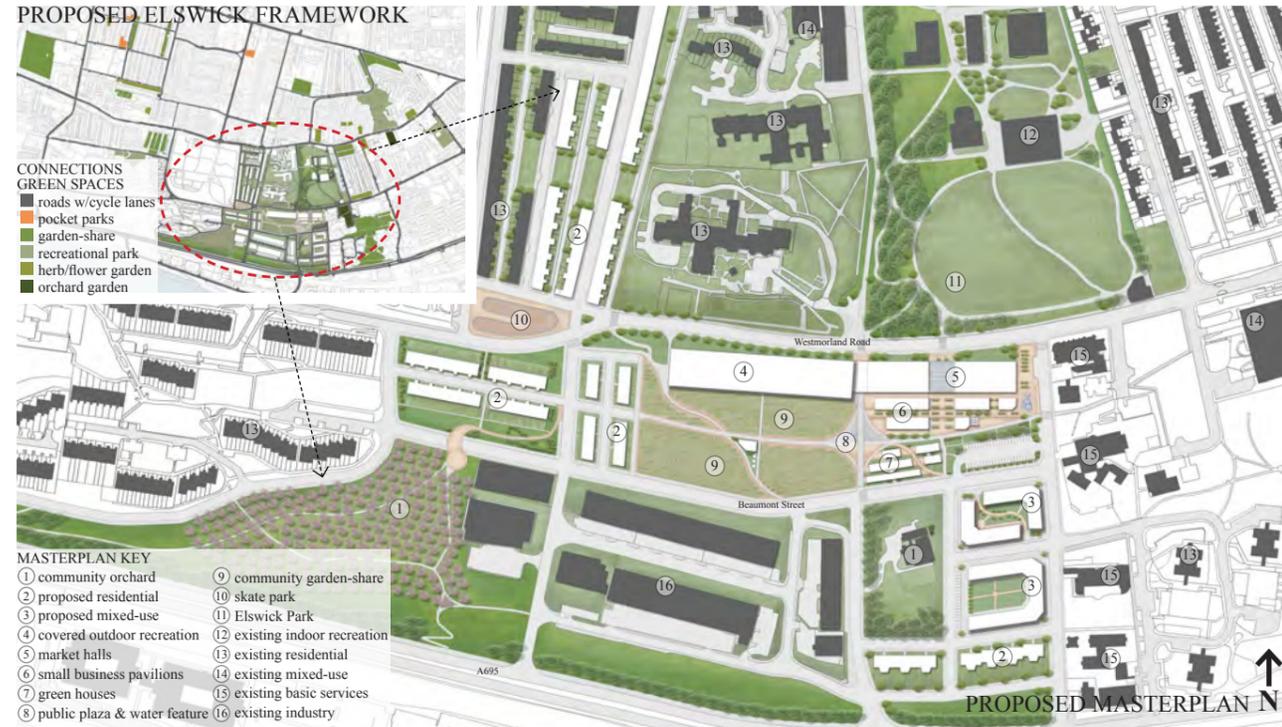


DESIGNING INCENTIVES FOR HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Elswick Ward, Newcastle Upon Tyne

Promoting food access, physical activity, and social interaction through design

By: Sarah Cawrse



ANALYSIS

In the UK, approximately 66% of adults are either overweight or obese. Reasons for public health concerns of rising obesity are higher risks of diseases, decreased life expectancy, and a loss in health-related quality of life. The built-environment has tangible and quantifiable elements with a correlation between people and their overall health, so by understanding these elements through examining urban environments and socio-spatial processes, some problems

contributing to decreased health can be solved through alterations in the urban fabric.

The ward of Elswick in Newcastle, UK was chosen to examine because its residents suffer from high unemployment, low education, low life expectancy, poor eating habits, and limited food access. The ward is lower-class, which is directly related to a higher risk of obesity, negative health impacts, and is inclusive to and subject to the trends of food access in deprived areas.

OBJECTIVES

Research and analysis was integrated into the design by creating a program to satisfy the objectives of promoting physical activity, food access, and social interaction, which are related to overall-health. The three objectives were parameters determining the form of the physical interventions on the site and how they were interwoven with the surrounding areas. The design also sets guidelines to give incentives for a healthy lifestyle, community, and economy.

DESIGN APPROACH

A four-step approach is taken to develop a framework within the ward of Elswick:

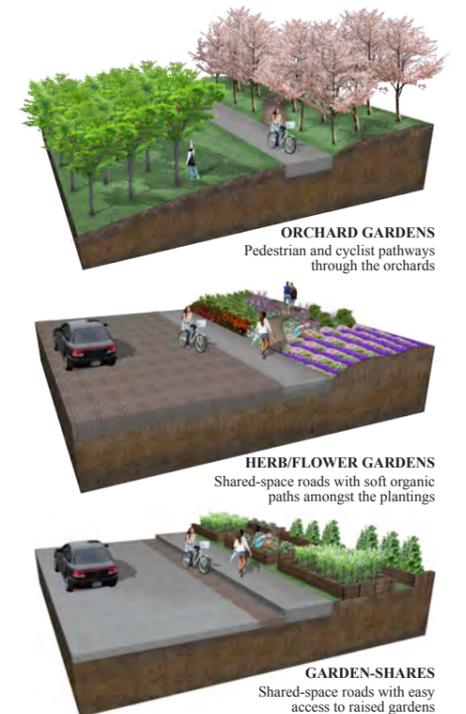
1. Identify vacant, unproductive, or poorly maintained green space that has potential to become productive and support various activities.
2. Transform green spaces into garden-shares, orchards, pocket parks, herb/flower gardens, and recreational spaces.
3. Create connections to green spaces focusing on access for pedestrians and cyclists, which also promotes active and sustainable transport.
4. Develop a central site design that implements new social and recreational community facilities, mixed-use, and residential buildings. The design links green spaces together by providing areas to sell goods and produce for local vending and mending. Connections are integrated from the broader community into the site for efficient access.

Through this four-step approach the ward of Elswick transforms unproductive land into spaces that generate a stronger sense of community where social and physical activities may occur. The design expands the existing Elswick Park by connecting additional recreational and green space from the southern edge of the park down to the A695 road that also has access to the National Cycle Route. A large covered recreational space, modeled after Parco Dora in Torino, Italy, is designed as a simple structure with a concrete base

to be adaptable for various uses. Two large Market Halls, modeled after the Torvehallerne Markets in Copenhagen, Denmark, provide ample space to sell produce and products. Smaller vending and mending pavilions also provide space for classes and knowledge sharing focused on food, health, and urban gardening. Urban gardens and a large orchard are connected by paths for pedestrians and cyclists, which increases the walkability of the area. Mixed-use buildings and residential buildings surround the community facilities and green space, ensuring its safety and use. A garden-share scheme will be developed and run by an organisation that offers volunteers to work in the gardens, market halls, and pavilions in return for credit towards 'Elswick Coins,' which can be used to buy healthy food and products at the pavilions and market halls. Successful implementation of the objectives will generate incentives for healthy lifestyles and create a robust and sustainable economy.

LESSONS LEARNED

Differences between socio-economic classes proves those in the lower-class may not have the options or choices to live a healthy lifestyle, therefore, good urban design practices can give residents of deprived neighbourhoods equal opportunities to improve their quality of life in a multi-dimensional way. Promoting physical activity, food access, and social interaction involves proper planning, designing, and implementation



to ensure community participation, which was explored in the design process.

The design reveals how a physical design and social schemes can be simultaneously implemented as top-down and bottom-up approaches where both satisfy community and economic needs while providing healthy incentives. By realising how urban design impacts our overall-health, we can begin to understand how to design healthy communities that support strong sustainable economies.

