

Co-creating Public Spaces for Healthy Cities towards Sustainable Development

1. Definitions

1.1 City in this project means areas in sub-district municipalities, city municipalities, metropolitan municipalities, the Bangkok Metropolitan, Pattaya City and areas under Local Administration Organizations that have an urban context.

1.2 Public space for health means space in a community/city created or shared for common public benefits in the community/city, by promoting activities that are conducive to good health. These public spaces can be created on public or private lands in various forms and with various service levels, depending on user groups, locations, and service provision responsibilities, for people to come together and engage in common activities. Public spaces have three levels of classifications: 1) **Community level**, meaning public spaces for common use of people in a community or neighborhood such as a small sports ground, a children playground; 2) **Zone level**, meaning public spaces with more varieties of activities to respond to the requirements of residents in the zone such as pavements, district public parks, a sports center, a stadium, and commercial lanes and zones; and 3) **City level**, meaning public spaces that respond to urban activities and diverse, sophisticated activities such as space for cultural expressions, city public parks, waterfronts, and spaces for vibrant urban activities.

2. Situation, problems, and importance of creating public spaces for healthy cities

Creating opportunities for common utilization of urban spaces and turning them into public spaces is an important element of a city that promotes quality of life and good health. To accommodate diverse urban requirements, a good city must give importance to its residents' well-being and induce vibrancy to the city. The way people are able to fulfill their life in a holistic way comes partly from access to good public services without any economic conditions. For example, having a variety of good activities in a public park is not only for recreation, but also to use the park as a creative space for people to take a walk delightfully, for outdoor entertainment, for art in the park, and for shopping. A waterfront space can be used for family activities, for children and youths to display their creative expressions, and for the elderly's group activities for recreation. People of all groups should be able to have options on how they want to spend their public life.

UN-Habitat indicates the important fundamental principles of having good public spaces (Global Public Space Toolkit, 2015) that should be added to urban planning and designing urban public spaces as follows:

1) ***Being vibrant public spaces with diverse activities***, which mean that when a city can facilitate a variety of public activities to encourage people to come out to use outdoor space and interact with one another, it is partly a result of having good activities. Diverse activities depend on the flexibility of urban spaces that can accommodate public activities. One example is the way a public park, an urban plaza, a sports/recreation ground can be transformed into venues for other activities at some other times, e.g. as a market in the garden, a pedestrian zone on a cultural road, traditional events organized at waterfronts, an art festival in the city, etc.

2) ***Facilitating walkability in the city*** means the fact that a city can help to create public spaces for pedestrians in the city, especially in the inner city and commercial zones, and areas connecting urban areas to public mass transit services and public utilities.

3) ***Accessible to people of different economic status*** means the fact that a city increases opportunities for people from all walks of life to have access to public spaces at no cost.

1 At present most public spaces require people to buy goods and services to gain access to utilize
2 the space.

3 Public spaces for healthy cities are therefore part of shaping and expressing common
4 values of city dwellers and part of the city's personality, from green spacesⁱ to spaces for
5 common physical exercise/recreation of city dwellers, etc. Public space distribution does not
6 cover all areas, resulting in lack of opportunities for all people to access public spaces. One of
7 these limitations was that the limited number of state regulated lands. Some are in agencies not
8 responsible for promotion of the environment and healthy cities, and some deserted areas in the
9 city belong to private owners that lack creative effort to make it favorable to being spaces for
10 common utilization for well-being. Moreover, pavements in several big cities are not pedestrian
11 friendly enough for walking or cycling. Thus the city lacks the opportunities to create its
12 economic and social interaction among its residents.

13 Some research works using findings from 87 research articles published in international
14 journals from 1990-2010 illustrate the relationship between public spaces and well-being. Such
15 research findings reflect empirical evidence of four benefits of public spaces to good health,
16 namely: 1) Physical benefits (e.g. directly from physical exercise); 2) Benefits to mental health
17 and quality of life, (e.g. creating interaction among people in the community and connecting
18 small social systems; 3) Socioeconomic benefits (e.g. creating more equal opportunities for low-
19 income earners to have access to physical activities); and 4) Environmental benefits (e.g. creating
20 balance between natural spaces and spaces with buildings/structures). These findings concretely
21 show that having good public spaces has significant implications to urban people's well-being
22 (Lee and Raheswarn 2011:212-22).

23 So far several agencies have attached importance to management of public spaces to be
24 livable, clean, safe, and of benefit to the public. One of the UN Sustainable Development Goals
25 requires that human settlements be inclusive, safe, and sustainable. Goal 11.7 emphasizes the
26 importance of public spaces with the key message being "by 2030, provide universal access to
27 safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children,
28 older persons, and persons with disabilities". This is complemented by implementation of the
29 Healthy City concept of the World Health Organization that has led to tangible results in
30 management of public spaces that are conducive to well-being of people in the community,
31 through a participatory process of parties involved at the local level, from the public, civil
32 society, academic and private sectors, in particular local administration organization networks at
33 the municipality level that play a part in strengthening the community's public conscience and
34 take joint responsibility to solve problems and create public spaces, including defining policies or
35 enforcing relevant laws to protect people's rights and create orderliness in the community.

36 Creating public spaces for health cities is also consistent with the New Urban Agenda
37 (NUA). The Third UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (HABITAT III) in
38 2016 adopted the New Urban Agenda, with the key essence being a new practical approach in
39 urban development that gives importance to local agencies. Besides housing design and town
40 development so that there will be enough housing facilities for all, it also focuses on promoting
41 access to public spaces for healthy cities. These public spaces include roadways, pavements,
42 bicycle paths, squares, gardens, improvement of natural and cultural heritage, protection and
43 promotion of infrastructure and cultural sites, museums, and indigenous languages, as well as
44 creating connectivity between urban and rural areas, and connectivity of socioeconomic and
45 environmental dimensions with sustainable urban development. The Ministry of Social
46 Development and Human Security and the Ministry of Interior have played an important role in
47 driving forward the New Urban Agenda. The Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment
48 set a framework for implementation of policies under the 20-year Strategy of the Ministry of
49 Natural Resources and the Environment (2017). Goals were clearly defined regarding public

ⁱ According to WHO standard, a city should have green spaces of 9m²/person. However, several cities are found not to have adequate (public) green spaces, e.g. 6m²/person in the case of Bangkok Metropolis.

1 spaces within the urban areas in order to increase green spaces, forest areas in the city, and forest
2 areas for learning, under the “Pracharat Forest Park for the Happiness of Thai People” Project,
3 which was implemented by the Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation,
4 the Royal Forest Department, and the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources. Moreover
5 the Office of Natural Resources, the Environmental Policy and Planning drew up the Policy
6 Action Plan on Sustainable Urban Green Spaces Management, which was approved by the
7 cabinet on 10 July 2007, based on the resolution of the National Environment Board No. 7/2550
8 on 23 May 2007. The said plan defines the guidelines and measures to increase, promote, and
9 support community sustainable urban green space management, e.g. by creating green spaces in
10 the premises of government agencies, educational institutions, and places of worship. A draft
11 guideline to make headway for sustainable green space management, which the National
12 Environment Board, during the meeting on 1 August 2018, passed a resolution to approved in
13 principle. It is now being presented to the cabinet for approval in order to be used as a guideline
14 for moving forward.

15 **Concrete examples of creating public spaces for healthy cities**

16 Several case studies in Thailand show concrete examples of the way local administration
17 organizations and agencies have created public spaces for healthy cities and achieved tangible
18 results, even without any support policy. The Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth) is
19 an agency that has expanded the healthy city concept through local activities/projects, focusing
20 on the people’s well-being according to age group, and the concept of urban environment
21 management for livable and safe communities. For that reason, management of public space for
22 healthy cities becomes one of the important ingredients that serve as a catalyst that contributes to
23 a sustainable urban development process in every dimension, i.e. health, social, environment and
24 economic dimensions. It also encourages parties at local, community and organization levels to
25 participate in creating public learning spaces for sustainable well-being of the community.

26 Public spaces for healthy cities can be created at several levels, from the community level
27 to the zone and city levels. One example at the zone level is the Lan Kilaphat 1 Project in a
28 neighborhood of the National Housing Authority community. The project was accomplished
29 with the concerted effort of land owning agencies, local agencies, and a participatory approach to
30 work together to create good activities. These activities are characterized by the opportunities for
31 community residents to reflect their land utilization requirements through a participatory process
32 with consideration given to people in every age group and every social status, so that they can
33 make diverse use of the land at different periods of time. Activities are managed by the Lan
34 Kilaphat Committee comprising representative(s) from each community. This approach reflects
35 inclusive opportunities whereby different community organizations can play a role in defining
36 and managing the activities to foster flexibility to respond to local residents’ requirements at
37 different periods of time. Another example at the zone level is the Lan Kilaphat 2 Project. By
38 creating new activities, deserted land under the expressway was transformed into a public space
39 for local residents, with a sports/activity ground, to be used by children, youths, and people in the
40 nearby neighborhoods. An example of how a public space can be created through activities in the
41 form of a festival is the Bangkok Design Week Project, with the support of the Thailand Creative
42 & Design Center (TCDC). The project could transform some parts of the land belonging to
43 government agencies into the city’s public recreational spaces through activities organized across
44 the zone, resulting the use of connected pavements at the zone level, which means creation of
45 walkways that stimulate local economy as well as the contents that attract people to come out and
46 spend their public life outdoors. Examples at the city level are the cases of Bang Sean,
47 Wonnapha, and Leam Thaen beaches implemented by Tambon Saen Suk Municipality, Chonburi
48 Province. Bang Sean Beach has become a public space for healthy cities without economic
49 barriers where all people can access the beach at no cost. Activities organized at Wonnapha
50 Beach have transformed the beach area into public spaces in various forms to suit the needs of
51 different groups at different times. Spaces are provided for youths, old people, and people who

1 enjoy physical exercise by creating them to be conducive and attractive to people, who will
2 decide on their activities the way they like at. At Leam Thaeen, parking space becomes a
3 commercial space in the evening, for example.

4 Public spaces for cities need not to always be in public lands or organized by the
5 government sector. The private sector also plays a creative role to increase public spaces and
6 public activities. At present, a number of entrepreneurs have allowed open access to their
7 premises to be used by people in nearby areas for physical exercise and recreation at no cost.
8 Thus, public spaces for healthy cities can be created regardless of the ownership status, but are
9 created from sharing to create public spaces for healthy cities during the time that the owners are
10 not utilizing the space. Such public spaces return to their normal state during business hours.
11 This can be seen in the case of outdoor activity plazas or rooftop decks of some department stores
12 that allow people who are not their customers to use them for physical exercise or for recreation.
13 Religious sites, such as temples also play a role in increasing public spaces for healthy cities.
14 Besides traditional festival events, the temples allow people the opportunities to carry out
15 activities other than merit making, all of which are creative social activities in other dimensions.
16 For example, spaces are used for Buddhist art exhibitions or to offer opportunities for Dhamma
17 learning.

18 **The essence of concrete examples can be summarized as follows:**

19 1) *Creating a good process to set objectives in creating public spaces for health cities*

20 Improvement of the waterfront at the Chom Nan Park by the city municipality of
21 Phitsanulok is aimed to create a public space for physical exercise, recreation, and as commercial
22 space. It also creates inclusive equal opportunities for children, youth, working people, families
23 and people with disabilities to access a public space. Diverse and flexible activities are
24 organized, with emphasis on creating a good design process, and a good environment in the area.
25 Another example is the Lan Kilaphat 1 that is managed by the Lan Kilaphat 1 Committee, which
26 is part of the community committee that coordinates with local agencies in defining activities
27 that are flexible, diverse, and allow equal access of people in the nearby areas.

28 2) *Creating opportunities for public common use*

29 Examples include the fact that some department stores allocate space and give
30 opportunities to people in the surrounding neighborhoods to use it at no cost for physical exercise
31 in the morning before opening hours; creative design of a zone, supported by Thailand Creative
32 & Design Center (TCDC), to create a public space for healthy cities at the zone level in areas
33 around Charoenkrung Road by using a design festival to motivate outdoor activities of urban
34 people; the opening of green spaces and activity spaces for the public under the Lan Kilaphat 2
35 Project, using areas under the Express way, with the cooperation of the Expressway Authority of
36 Thailand, to be used for physical exercise; or on the temple grounds of Wat Suthiwararam and
37 Wat Chonlaprathan Rangsarit to be used as space for spiritual recreation.

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39 **3. Relevant policies, laws and mechanisms**

40 3.1 **Congruity with international policies that Thailand has adopted:** Promotion of
41 having access to urban public places is an issue embraced by international policies that countries
42 have agreed to jointly implement, such as:

43 1) The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with its 17 goals, which Thailand
44 has already adopted. For example, Goal 11 aims at building cities and human settlements that are
45 comprehensive, safe, resilient and sustainable within 2030. The Goal 11.7 aims at providing
46 universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women
47 and children, older persons and persons with disabilities, with the indicator being the average
48 share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all.

49 2) The New Urban Agenda (NUA), adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on
50 Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (HABITAT III) in 2016, which is mainly about
51 serving as a guideline for urban development by attaching importance to local agencies, housing

1 design and town development so that there will be enough housing facilities for all, and emphasis
2 on promoting access to public spaces for healthy cities, namely roadways, pavements, bicycle
3 paths, squares, and gardens. The cabinet passed a resolution on 11 October 2016 to approve the
4 NUA principles and assigned the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and the
5 Ministry of Interior to be the lead agencies working with other relevant agencies to prepare a
6 new city development plan, reorganize and systematize town plans, especially in the case of cities
7 with a high growth rate in each region, in order to achieve sustainable development, while taking
8 into consideration connectivity with the existing town plans.

9 **3.2 Congruity with the 20-year National Strategy:** Promoting public spaces for healthy
10 cities in line with the 20-year National Strategy (2017-2036) through several strategic plans, such as:

11 1) A strategic plan in an aspect of developing human resource capacity. It states about
12 environment conducive to well-being, with the goal being Thai people enjoying good health through
13 the life course;

14 2) A strategic plan in aspect of creating equal opportunities and social equality. It states that
15 empowering the role of local administration organizations, the people, private and academic sectors,
16 and government agencies involved in local development, aiming to decentralize socioeconomic
17 growth in order to include all sectors to play a part in the country's development, and to allow
18 communities to be capable of self-management to create a quality society where there is security in
19 accessing public services and welfare characterized by quality, fairness, and inclusiveness.

20 3) A strategic plan in aspect of growing with the quality of life and living in an environment
21 friendly. It states about the development of sustainable livable city that urban and rural areas as well
22 as agriculture and industry shall be developed in balance under the carrying capacity of ecology. An
23 ecological landscape plan shall be managed in a sustainable manner.

24 **3.3 Mechanisms connecting public space creation at local level to provincial and
25 regional levels and to National Strategy:**

26 1) The National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCSDD) is a national mechanism
27 with the authority to formulate policies and strategies for the country's sustainable development,
28 covering economic, social and the environment aspects that are well-balanced and their integration.
29 Chaired by the Prime Minister, the NCSDD has the National Economic and Social Development Board
30 serving as its Secretariat. The NCSDD has the duty to recommend policies and strategies for the
31 country's sustainable development, linking them to the sufficiency economy philosophy, and also
32 serving as a central agency that coordinates with other agencies involved in collecting data and
33 comments, or taking any action to support NCSDD's operations, including follow-ups and evaluation
34 of the performance of other agencies. The Ministry of Interior together with the Ministry of Social
35 Development and Human Security are the key agencies assigned to be in charge of moving forward
36 Goal 11 (sustainable cities and permanent settlements) to achieve the results according to the
37 indicators, which include the development or urban public spaces.

38 2) Regulations of the Office of the Prime Minister on Integrated Spatial Management,
39 B.E. 2560 (2017) stipulate that there shall be the Committee on Integration of Regional
40 Development Policies, having the authority to integrate plans of state agencies and local
41 development plans. The aim is to implement plans in the premises of ministries/departments to be
42 consistent with their capacity or with local issues, and linking them to the National Strategy, the
43 National Economic and Social Development Plan, and the government policy. They will be the
44 mechanism to align local public space development plans with all other plans at the same level in
45 order to become One Plan.

46 3) Regulations of the Office of the Prime Minister on Quality of Life Development at
47 Local Levels, B.E. 2561 (2018) and Regulations of the Office of the Prime Minister on Health
48 Zones for People, B.E. 2559 (2016), which serve as mechanisms to support and link health and
49 quality of life development with creation of local public spaces at different levels through
50 collaboration of local agencies. This will link indicators of sustainable development in other
51 aspects to those of urban development with respect to public spaces

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2 **3.4 Laws, regulations and other measures relevant to opportunities to create public**
3 **spaces:**

4 1) Laws and regulations on spatial management: Local administration organizations
5 from the municipality level and upward can stipulate that public spaces be their policy and
6 mission in order to improve the quality of life of people in the community. The Act Determining
7 Plans and Process of Decentralization to Local Government Organizations Act B.E. 2542 (1999)
8 delegates authorities and duties to provide public services to provincial administrative
9 organizations, municipalities, the City of Pattaya, Sub-district Administration Organizations and
10 the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. The law stipulates that these agencies have the
11 authorities and duties to provide public services as assigned to them and that the government
12 allocate subsidies and money from allocation of taxes and duties to ensure that public services are
13 carried out with efficiency. The missions transferred from the central government to local
14 administrative organizations can be divided into four main areas: public services related to the
15 infrastructure; promotion of quality of life; maintaining order of the community and society and
16 peacekeeping; and investment, resources, the environment, and art and culture.

17 2) Urban planning tools and measures, and support to land utilization to create public
18 spaces: Development of tools and measures that will contribute to formation of public spaces for
19 healthy cities. If there is an effort to bring about understanding on their utilization, as well as to
20 have measures to promote their utilization in preparing land utilization requirements, preparing
21 spatial development plans, preparing the spatial charter, and preparing a guideline to define
22 criteria for support that will result in having public spaces in terms of requests to use public
23 lands; more opportunities for sharing the guidelines and urban planning tools to create public
24 spaces for healthy cities will be created.

25 3) Opportunities to access financial resources: At present Section 23(4) of the
26 Environment Act, B.E. 2535 (1992) states the duty of the Environment Fund to support projects
27 that promote and conserve the quality of the environment, which is the opportunity to create
28 public spaces for healthy cities as the urban environment for common use of the public.
29

30 **4. Issues for analysis in terms of processes and methods to result in creation of public spaces**
31 **for healthy cities**

32 Having good public spaces positively and significantly affects the well-being of urban
33 people. Findings from studies on the current situation, tangible examples of public spaces, and
34 relevant policies and mechanisms show that:

35 1) Good case studies conducted by several agencies that own the spaces reflect the fact
36 that creating good public spaces is a process that comes from participation of communities and
37 civil society, by integrating them to existing mechanisms, from the community level to the zone
38 and the city levels.

39 2) Based on past practical guidelines, defining the nature of activities at public spaces for
40 healthy cities mostly requires methods to create the issues to resolve and good public space
41 designs to respond to specific needs of local people in each area, or corresponding with people's
42 changing behavior. This will allow several public spaces to be used to their full potential and
43 with sustainability.

44 3) Creating good public spaces is one of the ingredients toward urban people having
45 quality of life. However, at present, there is lack of clarity in linking creation of public spaces for
46 healthy cities to the mechanisms to drive forward the policies at all levels, from the community
47 level to local, provincial, and national levels, to facilitate moving towards the action planning
48 levels of the agencies involved.

49 4) To ensure process sustainability, creation of public spaces for healthy cities should
50 connect overall developmental mechanisms of all public spaces in each town/city. There should
51 be support for having proactive measures to create public spaces for healthy cities. These

1 measures include activities that meet the requirements of local people; an appropriate
2 participatory process of the people and agencies involved in management of creation of public
3 spaces for healthy cities in various aspects, e.g. defining good activities of public spaces that are
4 consistent with the specific requirements and context of each particular area. Also including
5 appropriate and adequate channels for public participation in acknowledging and managing
6 public spaces, using resources and budget, and implementing projects to create public spaces in
7 different dimensions.

8 5) At present agencies involved have urban planning tools that can induce cooperation
9 in adopting these measures to utilize them for the purpose of creating public spaces for healthy
10 cities. By fulfilling such tools to become measures and details that can define public spaces, and
11 creating and developing knowledge relevant to creation of public spaces for good health, namely,
12 procedures to create a process to have activities for good public spaces, tangible examples that
13 lead to awareness and alertness; effort to define measures and tools to create motivations for
14 creation of public spaces, all of which contribute to an increase in opportunities to create good
15 public spaces for healthy cities.

16 **5. Guidelines for problem solving**

17 **5.1 Community and local participation in setting directions and goals to create** 18 **public spaces for healthy cities**

19 1) Requiring that there shall be mechanisms or guidelines for creation of public spaces for
20 healthy cities through a participatory process, by creating and connecting networks of all parties
21 involved at all levels, including the government sector, local administration organizations,
22 community organizations, the private sector, educational institutions, academic and civil society
23 sectors, involving them to take part in setting the guidelines for creating, operating, evaluating,
24 and maintaining the public spaces for healthy cities.

25 2) Creating mechanisms to involve the community and local entities and agencies
26 concerned to plan and prepare programs for management, maintenance, and utilization of public
27 spaces for healthy cities, regardless of whether they are green spaces, public parks, roadside
28 spaces, or spaces to create activities for townspeople, youths, children, older persons, etc. through
29 an inclusive design approach that is appropriate and in alignment with their context.

30 3) Promote and support civil society networks and community organization networks to
31 take steps to create activities, projects, manuals, or implementation guidelines that aim at creating
32 sustainable public spaces for healthy cities, with the cooperation and support of local
33 administration organizations, the private business sector, government agencies and other relevant
34 sectors at the local level.

35 **5.2 Connecting policies and mechanisms to integrate creation of public spaces for**
36 **healthy cities to the development plans according to the National Strategy and Sustainable**
37 **Development:** To support guidelines to create public spaces for health, it is necessary to carry
38 out the following three main tasks:

39 1) Promote and support efforts to have mechanisms to define directions, policies, or a
40 holistic view for creation of public spaces for healthy cities and proactive measures to result in
41 sustainable public spaces for healthy cities. Examples include plans for the development of
42 public spaces in urban planning at different levels; using mechanisms, measures, tools or
43 guidelines to provide support that contributes to land utilization for the public, with participation
44 of all sectors; support for creation of public spaces for healthy cities as an important mission of
45 local agencies and public agencies at the local level. Budgets must be allocated to local
46 administration and a tax incentive system must be created in order to use local revenues to create
47 public spaces for healthy cities.

48 2) Increase opportunities to access sources of funds to invest in creating good spaces for
49 common utilization of the public for good health and make use of measures to use some types of
50 land to create activities in public spaces of the communities and cities.

1 **5.3 Support efforts to create education, research and innovation processes to identify**
2 guidelines for creating public spaces for healthy cities, in accordance with the structure of the
3 system, the context of the community/society, the people, and local cultural life, including
4 research development in support of tax measures to be in effect in the future.

5 **5.4 Prepare a pilot project to create public spaces for health cities** in order to have a
6 concrete an example that leads to learning, and to create the body of knowledge that can be put
7 into practice that is appropriate for each setting or area, by designing mechanisms that enable true
8 participation of the public.

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10 **6. Issue for consideration of the National Health Assembly**

11 The National Health Assembly is requested to consider Document NHA 11/Draft Resolution
12 2: Co-Creating Public Spaces for Healthy Cities towards Sustainable Development

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