



**CITY OF
PERTH**
City of Light

TOWARDS 2036

In 1994, Gehl conducted Perth's first Public Spaces and Public Life (PSPL) survey—one of the first of its kind in the world.

Why Perth in 1994?

Following the successful "City Challenge" Conference held in Perth in September 1992 the State Government and City of Perth invited Jan Gehl to carry out a study of public spaces in Perth.

Jan Gehl has been a trailblazer in transforming how we understand urban life, pioneering research on the quality of city environments and the ways people truly engage with them. He has authored several influential books on the subject and was the obvious choice to do a deep dive on how the city was performing.

The findings were eye-opening. Our city centre was described as "tiny" with "no invitation for walking".

Perth in 1994 functioned more like an oversized department store than a vibrant urban hub.

Perth in 2009

Fast forward to 2009, and the progress was remarkable. Gehl's follow-up study revealed:

13% increase in people walking

74% more people spending time in the city

57% increase in outdoor café seats

1,576 more street trees

These improvements were the result of deliberate, people-centric planning and design inspired by Gehl's recommendations. However, challenges remained. The 2009 study highlighted areas for improvement:

Low weekend and nighttime pedestrian activity

Lack of spaces for children, youth, and older people

The persistence of a “shopping centre” concept rather than a “people centre” concept

Underutilisation of Perth's unique topographical and architectural features

Post 2009 transformational projects such as the development of Elizabeth Quay, the Riverfront Masterplan, Perth City Link reconnecting the CBD with Northbridge were all informed by Gehl's work.

Towards 2036

Now in 2025 as we look to the future, we must build on this progress.

The Towards 2036 study focuses on Central Perth and started in 2024 to future-proof Perth's liveability as we continue to grow. This is particularly important as we strive to increase the number of people living in the city centre to 55,000 by 2036.

The first phase of the project—Research and Analysis—is now complete. The key output from this phase is a report card which compares current and previous data, identifying key challenges and opportunities for further investigation.

The report card identifies opportunities to make the City even more attractive such as improving the connection to Kings Park, reducing the reliance on cars, continuing to improve the tree canopy, providing reasons for workers to stay in the City after work and making the streets more bicycle friendly.

It will form the basis for further consultation with industry, government, designers, and Traditional Owners which will help create the long-term vision for Perth.

This publication can be requested in alternative formats: audio, braille, Word or accessible PDF.



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