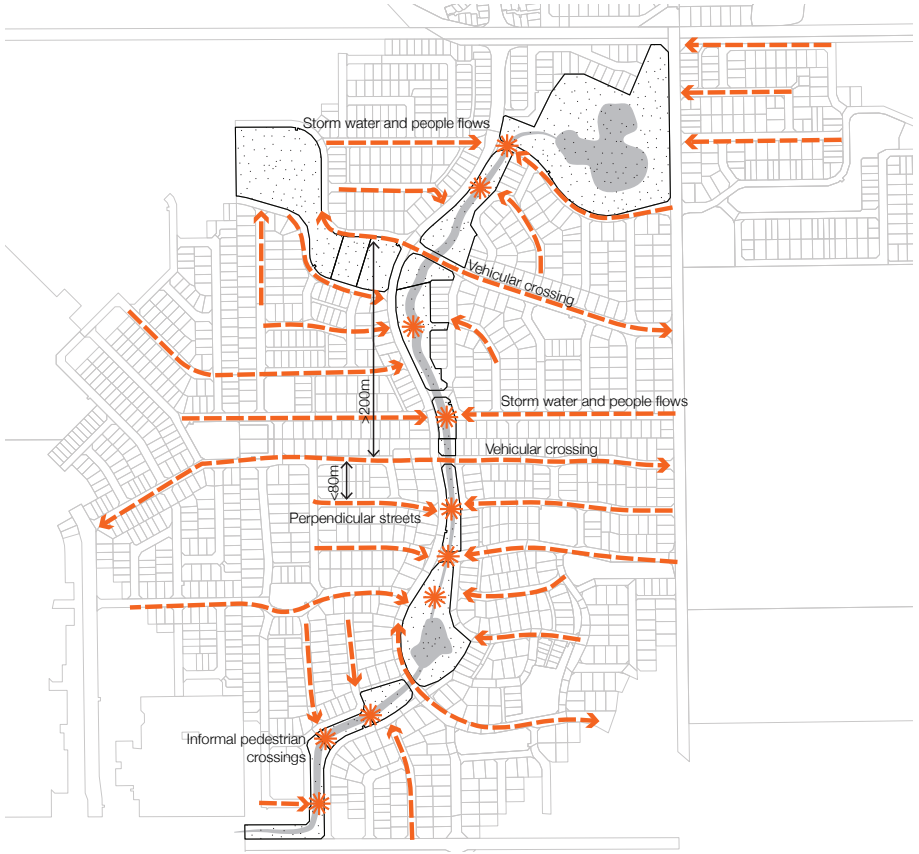
AUDRC Research Note

Living Streams for Living Suburbs



How do you design Living Streams as truly public open space?

AUDRC Australian Urban Design Research Centre

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Background

• The Swan Coastal Plain geological unit is characterised by a complex system of rivers, estuaries, lakes, swamps and geomorphic wetlands. Since European colonisation, more than 200,000 hectares of wetlands have been drained for agriculture and urban development on the coastal plain.

• Perth is currently urbanising into seasonally waterlogged land on two major development fronts. One result is that many new greenfield developments are adopting Living Stream-orientated Public Open Space systems to cope with the related drainage issues.

• Despite the widely held belief that Living Streams enhance the amenity of an urban area, there remains some controversy about their role as POS in the Perth greenfield context.

• Accordingly, this project scoped the research question, how can Living Streams be optimised, from an urban design perspective, to provide greater amenity?'

Key findings

The project ventured urban design strategies for maximising the amenity of Living Streams. These included:

• Integrate Living Streams with regional destinations: this should result in a high amenity, regional scale active transport network in which hydrological systems are used to connect places of activity such as schools and commercial areas that are woven together into one connected matrix.

• Integrate Living Streams with local, neighbourhood, district and regional POS Types: Living Streams should form part of an integrated POS system. This integration means that the spatial experience and dimension of the Living Stream is varied, thus creating a more diverse and engaging experience for users and allowing the burden of flood management to be shared.

• Integrate Living Streams with the street network: Maximising the number of streets running perpendicular to the Living Stream is essential to funnel movement and activity towards the Living Stream.

• Integrate density around Living Streams: The amenity of Living Streams should be 'leveraged' to achieve higher residential densities.

• Provide a natural experience: Living Streams should provide an ecologically rich, diverse, immersive, loose-fit, wild, messy, and informal conception of nature, which allows for exploration and play, particularly by children and provides a window on the ecology of running waters.

Links to publications

Bolleter, J. (2017). Living Streams for Living Suburbs: How urban design strategies can enhance the amenity provided by Living Stream-orientated Public Open Space. Journal of Urban Design, 23(4), 518-543. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2017.1362953

Contact

For further information, publications, media, and presentation opportunities, please get in touch with Dr Julian Bolleter at julian.bolleter@uwa.edu.au.