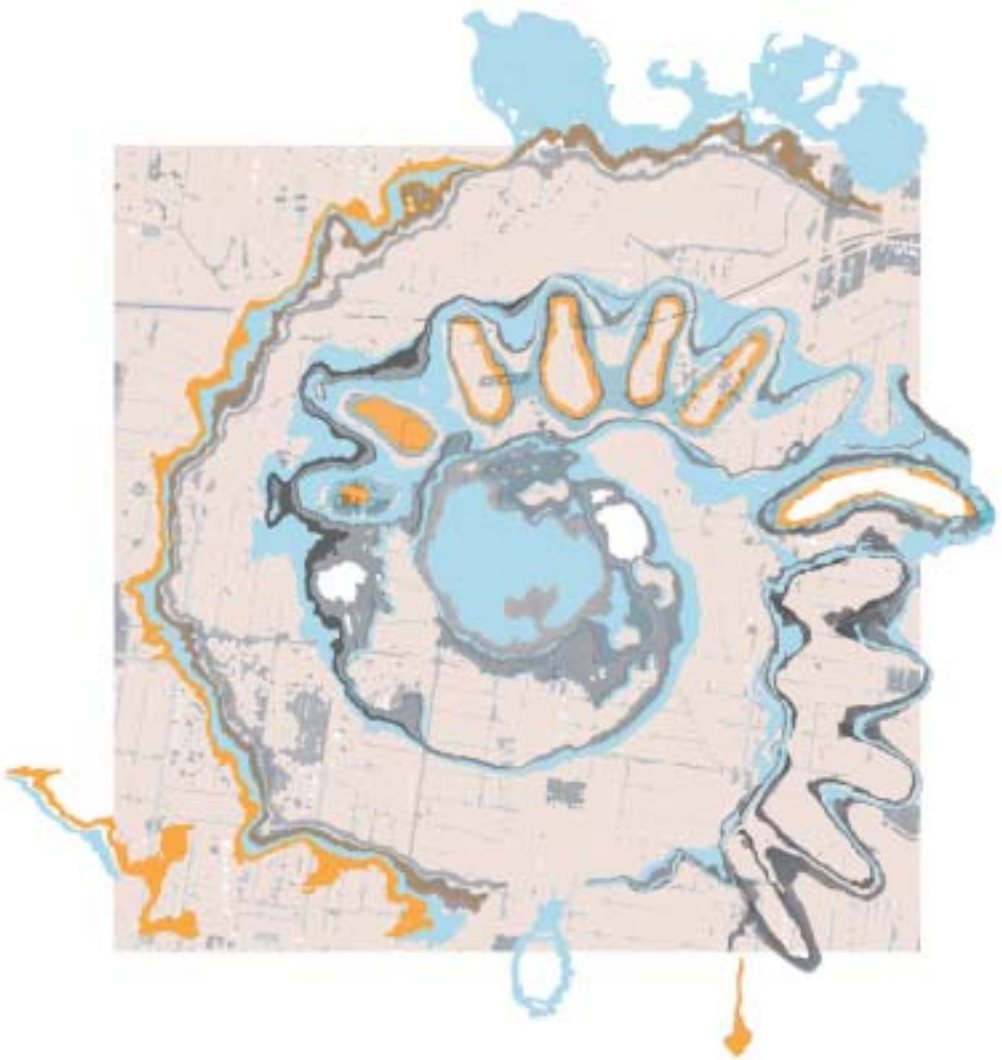
UNEP

Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities



United Nations Environment Programme
Division of Technology, Industry and Economics

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

Integrative Management Series No.1

Preamble

Cities are fundamental for economic opportunities and social interaction, as well as cultural and spiritual enrichment. However, cities also damage the natural environment and exploit natural resources in an unsustainable manner which can jeopardise long-term prosperity and social wellbeing. This is of global concern, as more than half of the world's population lives in cities and trends indicate that this will increase.

The transformation of cities to sustainability will require cooperation between various levels of government, resource managers, the business sector, community groups and all citizens. Their collective and individual contributions are essential in achieving a common purpose. Improving the sustainability of cities will not only benefit their inhabitants, but also significantly contribute to improving the wellbeing of people around the world.

A Vision for the Creation of Sustainable Cities

To create environmentally healthy, vibrant and sustainable cities where people respect one another and nature, to the benefit of all.

Objectives of the Melbourne Principles

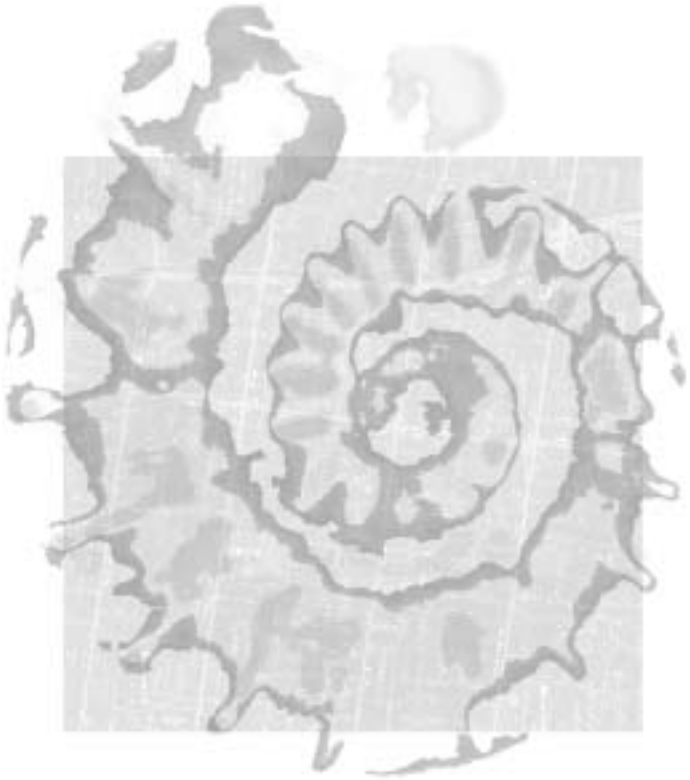
Sustainable development is defined by the Brundtland Commission as 'development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities have been developed to assist cities that wish to achieve this sustainable development objective. The Principles provide a simple set of statements on how a sustainable city would function.

The Melbourne Principles are intended to guide thinking and provide a strategic framework for action. The Principles are not prescriptive. They allow cities to develop sustainable solutions that are relevant to their particular circumstances. They can help to bring together citizens and decision-makers, whose participation and cooperation is essential in transforming our cities to sustainability.

The Principles also provide cities with a foundation for the integration of international, national and local programmes, gaps to be identified and addressed, as well as realising synergies through partnerships.

For the Melbourne Principles to add value, they will need to be supplemented by relevant case examples and decision support tools to assist cities on their journey towards sustainability.

Principle 1



Provide a long-term vision for cities based on: sustainability; intergenerational, social, economic and political equity; and their individuality.

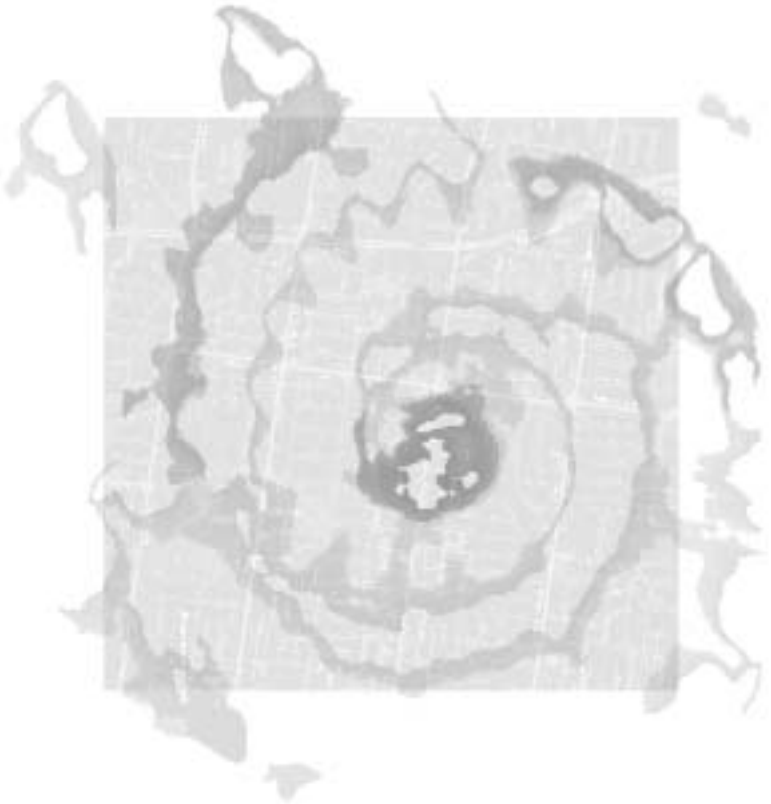
Elaboration

A long-term vision is the starting point for catalysing positive change, leading to sustainability. The vision needs to reflect the distinctive nature and characteristics of each city.

The vision should also express the shared aspirations of the people for their cities to become more sustainable. It needs to address equity, which means equal access to both natural and human resources, as well as shared responsibility for preserving the value of these resources for future generations.

A vision based on sustainability will help align and motivate communities, governments, businesses and others around a common purpose, and will provide a basis for developing a strategy, an action programme and processes to achieve that vision.

Principle 2



Achieve long-term economic and social security.

Elaboration

Long-term economic and social security are prerequisites for beneficial change and are dependent upon environmentally sound, sustainable development.

To achieve triple bottom line sustainability, economic strategies need to increase the value and vitality of human and natural systems, and conserve and renew human, financial and natural resources. Through fair allocation of resources, economic strategies should seek to meet basic human needs in a just and equitable manner. In particular, economic strategies should guarantee the right to potable water, clean air, food security, shelter and safe sanitation.

Cities are the locus of human diversity; their policies, structures and institutions can significantly contribute to fostering cohesive, stimulating, safe and fulfilled communities.

Principle 3

Recognise the intrinsic value of biodiversity and natural ecosystems, and protect and restore them.

Elaboration

Nature is more than a commodity for the benefit of humans. We share the Earth with many other life-forms that have their own intrinsic value. They warrant our respect, whether or not they are of immediate benefit to us.

It is through people's direct experience with nature that they understand its value and gain a better appreciation of the importance of healthy habitats and ecosystems. This connection provides them with an appreciation of the need to manage our interactions with nature empathetically.

Just as humans have the ability to alter the habitat and even to extinguish other species, we can also protect and restore biodiversity. Therefore, we have a responsibility to act as custodians for nature.

Principle 4

Enable communities to minimise their ecological footprint.

Elaboration

Cities consume significant quantities of resources and have a major impact on the environment, well beyond what they can handle within their borders. These unsustainable trends need to be substantially curbed and eventually reversed. One way of describing the impact of a city is to measure its ecological footprint. The ecological footprint of a city is a measure of the 'load' on nature imposed by meeting the needs of its population. It represents the land area necessary to sustain current levels of resource consumption and waste discharged by that population. Reducing the ecological footprint of a city is a positive contribution towards sustainability.

Like any living system, a community consumes material, water and energy inputs, processes them into useable forms and generates wastes. This is the 'metabolism' of the city and making this metabolism more efficient is essential to reducing the city's ecological footprint. In reducing the footprint, problems should be solved locally where possible, rather than shifting them to other geographic locations or future generations.

Principle 5

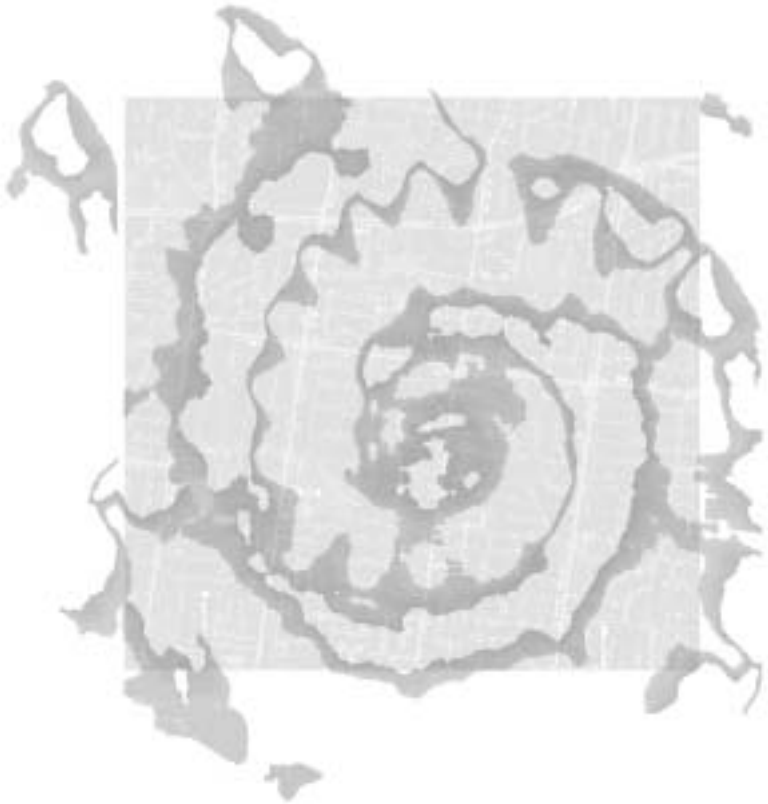
Build on the characteristics of ecosystems in the development and nurturing of healthy and sustainable cities.

Elaboration

Cities can become more sustainable by modelling urban processes on ecological principles of form and function, by which natural ecosystems operate.

The characteristics of ecosystems include diversity, adaptiveness, interconnectedness, resilience, regenerative capacity and symbiosis. These characteristics can be incorporated by cities in the development of strategies to make them more productive and regenerative, resulting in ecological, social and economic benefits.

Principle 6



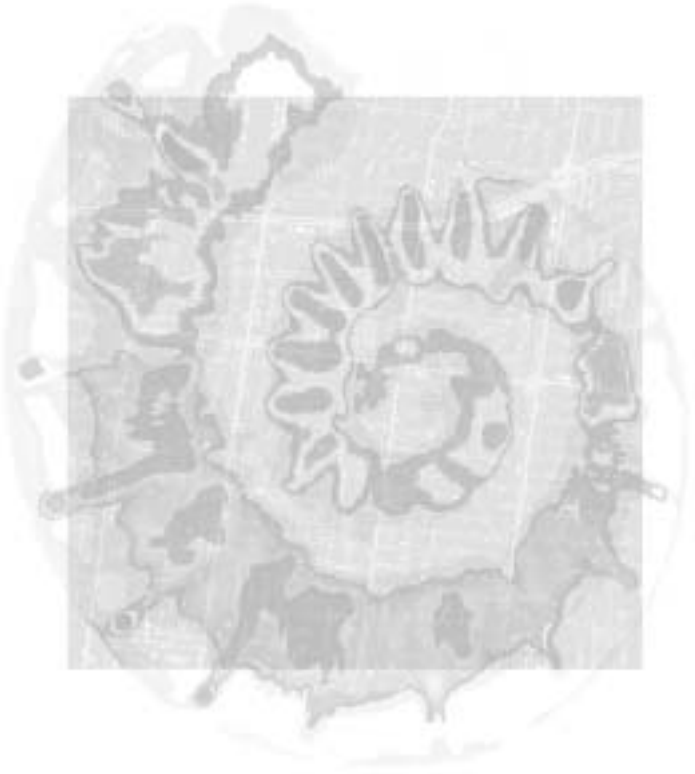
Recognise and build on the distinctive characteristics of cities, including their human and cultural values, history and natural systems.

Elaboration

Each city has a distinctive profile of human, cultural, historic and natural characteristics. This profile provides insights on pathways to sustainability that are both acceptable to their people and compatible with their values, traditions, institutions and ecological realities.

Building on existing characteristics helps motivate and mobilise the human and physical resources of cities to achieve sustainable development and regeneration.

Principle 7



Empower people and foster participation.

Elaboration

The journey towards sustainability requires broadly based support. Empowering people mobilises local knowledge and resources and enlists the support and active participation of all who need to be involved in all stages, from long-term planning to implementation of sustainable solutions.

People have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect them. Attention needs to be given to empowering those whose voices are not always heard, such as the poor.

Principle 8

Expand and enable cooperative networks to work towards a common, sustainable future.

Elaboration

Strengthening existing networks and establishing new cooperative networks within cities facilitate the transfer of knowledge and support continual environmental improvement.

The people of cities are the key drivers for transforming cities towards sustainability. This can be achieved effectively if the people living in cities are well informed, can easily access knowledge and share learning. Furthermore, the energy and talent of people can be enhanced by people working with one another through such networks.

There is also value in cities sharing their learning with other cities, pooling resources to develop sustainability tools, and supporting and mentoring one another through inter-city and regional networks. These networks can serve as vehicles for information exchange and encouraging collective effort.

Principle 9

Promote sustainable production and consumption, through appropriate use of environmentally sound technologies and effective demand management.

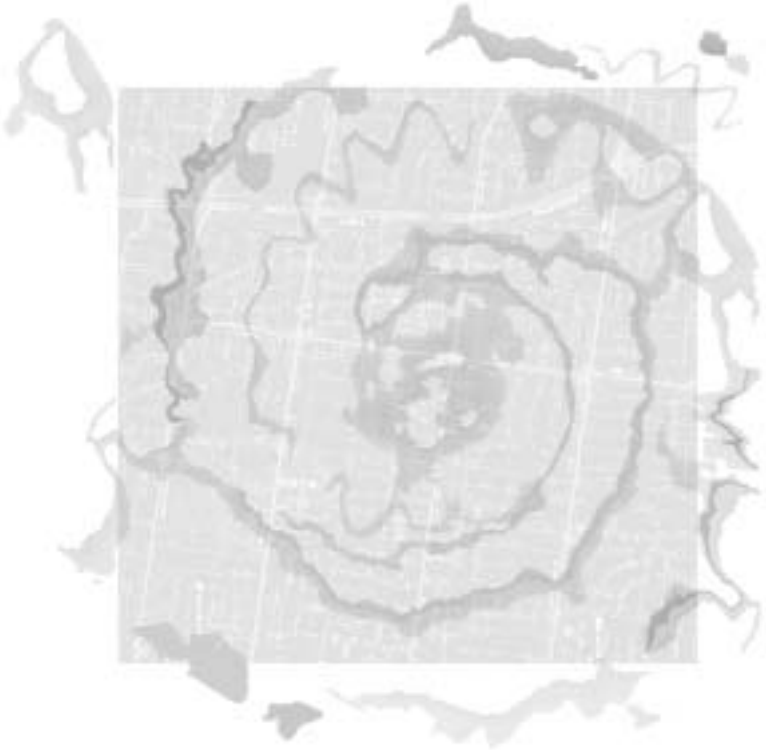
Elaboration

A range of approaches and tools can be used to promote sustainable practices. Demand management, which includes accurate valuations of natural resources and increasing public awareness, is a valuable strategy to support sustainable consumption. This approach can also provide significant savings in infrastructure investment.

Sustainable production can be supported by the adoption and use of environmentally sound technologies which can improve environmental performance significantly. These technologies protect the environment, are less polluting, use resources in a sustainable manner, recycle more of their wastes and products and handle all residual wastes in a more environmentally acceptable way than the technologies for which they are substitutes.

Environmentally sound technologies can also be used to drive reduced impacts and enhance value along a supply chain and support businesses embracing product stewardship.

Principle 10



Enable continual improvement, based on accountability, transparency and good governance.

Elaboration

Good urban governance requires robust processes directed towards achieving the transformation of cities to sustainability through continual improvement. While in some areas gains will be incremental, there are also opportunities to make substantial improvements through innovative strategies, programmes and technologies.

To manage the continual improvement cycle, it is necessary to use relevant indicators, set targets based on benchmarks and monitor progress against milestones to achieving these targets. This facilitates progress and accountability and ensures effective implementation.

Transparency and openness to scrutiny are part of good governance.

The Principles for Sustainable Cities were developed at an International Charrette held in Melbourne (Australia) between 3 and 5 April 2002, organised by the United Nations Environment Programme International Environmental Technology Centre, and the Environment Protection Authority Victoria. Over 40 experts from around the world contributed to the preparation of the Principles; their support throughout this process is appreciated.

The International Environmental Technology Centre also thanks all those who were involved in the International Workshop on Cities as Sustainable Ecosystems (CASE) which took place in Toronto (Canada) on 18 and 19 March 2002, organised by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. It would also like to thank Environment Canada, which was the sponsor. The CASE Workshop was instrumental in defining many of the concepts which ultimately led to the development of the Melbourne Principles.

Melbourne City Council was a major sponsor of Charrette that formulated the Melbourne Principles. On 2 May 2002, the Council formally adopted the Principles as a guiding framework for making Melbourne a sustainable city.

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Designed by Noga Freiberg & Luda Zhugalo

www.unep.org
United Nations Environment Programme
P.O. Box 30552 Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: (254-2) 621234
Fax: (254-2) 623927
E-mail: cpinfo@unep.org
web: www.unep.org

UNEP

UNEP
International Environmental Technology Centre

United Nations Environment Programme
Division of Technology, Industry, and Economics
International Environmental Technology Centre
2-110 Ryokuchi Koen, Tsurumi-ku, Osaka 538-0036 Japan
Tel: +(81-6) 6915-4581
Fax: +(81-6) 6915-0304
Web: http://www.unep.or.jp/

·I·C·L·E·I·

International Council for
Local Environmental Initiatives, European Secretariat
Eschholzstrasse 86
D-79115 Freiburg Germany
Tel: +(49-761) 368-9220
Fax: +(49-761) 368-9229
Web: http://www.iclei.org/

EPA VICTORIA

Environment Protection Authority
EPA Victoria
40 City Road Southbank
Victoria 3006 Australia
Tel: +(61-3) 9695-2722
Fax: +(61-3) 9695-2785
Web: http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME - DIVISION OF TECHNOLOGY, INDUSTRY, AND ECONOMICS - INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY CENTRE (UNEP - DTIE - IETC)

Osaka Office
2-110 Ryokuchi koen, Tsurumi-ku, Osaka 538-0036 Japan
Telephone: +(81-6) 6915-4581
Telefax : +(81-6) 6915-0304

Shiga Office
1091 Oroshimo-cho, Kusatsu City, Shiga 525-0001 Japan
Telephone: +(81-77) 568-4581
Telefax : +(81-77) 568-4587

URL : http://www.unep.or.jp/
Email : ietc@unep.or.jp