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Letter to the Editor

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Over the past thirty years we have built sprawling new suburbs on the fringes of our cities which are totally car dependent (Denser is better say planners, 29.04.2011).

Across a similar period of time the national obesity epidemic has emerged because we don't do enough exercise.

These new suburbs are mostly devoid of any local facilities - shops, community centres and fast, frequent public transport - and to buy a loaf of bread, litre of milk, a coffee or a newspaper you have to drive either to a major indoor mall or a petrol station on a major arterial road kilometres away.

This means that residents are less active in their streets and it discourages community connectivity. What it does encourage is the potential for opportunistic crime because the streets are deserted.

Since founding Neighbour Day in Melbourne in 2003 (in my letter on these pages) I have continued to discover people need and want spaces to get together, to meet their neighbours and actively participate in the local community. The demand is very strong and the evidence is there in Melbourne's inner city suburbs and in regional communities.

The concept of the town square is real, it's alive and in demand. Just look at the communities devastated by Black Saturday and you'll see how critical such facilities are in their rebuilding plans.

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