



Heart
Foundation

Healthy
Active
by Design™

Healthy Active by Design

Introductory Training Resource

www.healthyactivebydesign.com.au

What will you learn in the Healthy Active by Design Introductory Training Resource?

This Introductory Training Resource offers an overview of the Healthy Active by Design digital toolkit.

Upon completion, you will be able to:

- Describe the evidence-based Healthy Active by Design digital toolkit and its offerings
- Discuss the link between health and planning
- Identify ways to apply Healthy Active by Design in your work and/or role
- Navigate the Healthy Active by Design resources



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What is Healthy Active by Design?

The Heart Foundation's Healthy Active by Design digital toolkit is a practical guide to incorporating health and physical activity into the design of our built environment.

This useful resource offers the best-available evidence and advice to assist with the development of healthy and active neighbourhoods.

Partnership and collaboration with stakeholders in planning, health, transport and local government sectors have enabled the completion of an evidence-based national Healthy Active by Design toolkit.

This toolkit assists planners, policy makers, public health practitioners, allied professionals and the general community to advocate for, and contribute to improving community health and well-being in Australia by considering planning for active living approaches.

Healthy Active by Design is helping to pioneer the inclusion of physical activity and health into the design of streets, buildings, urban spaces, towns and cities.



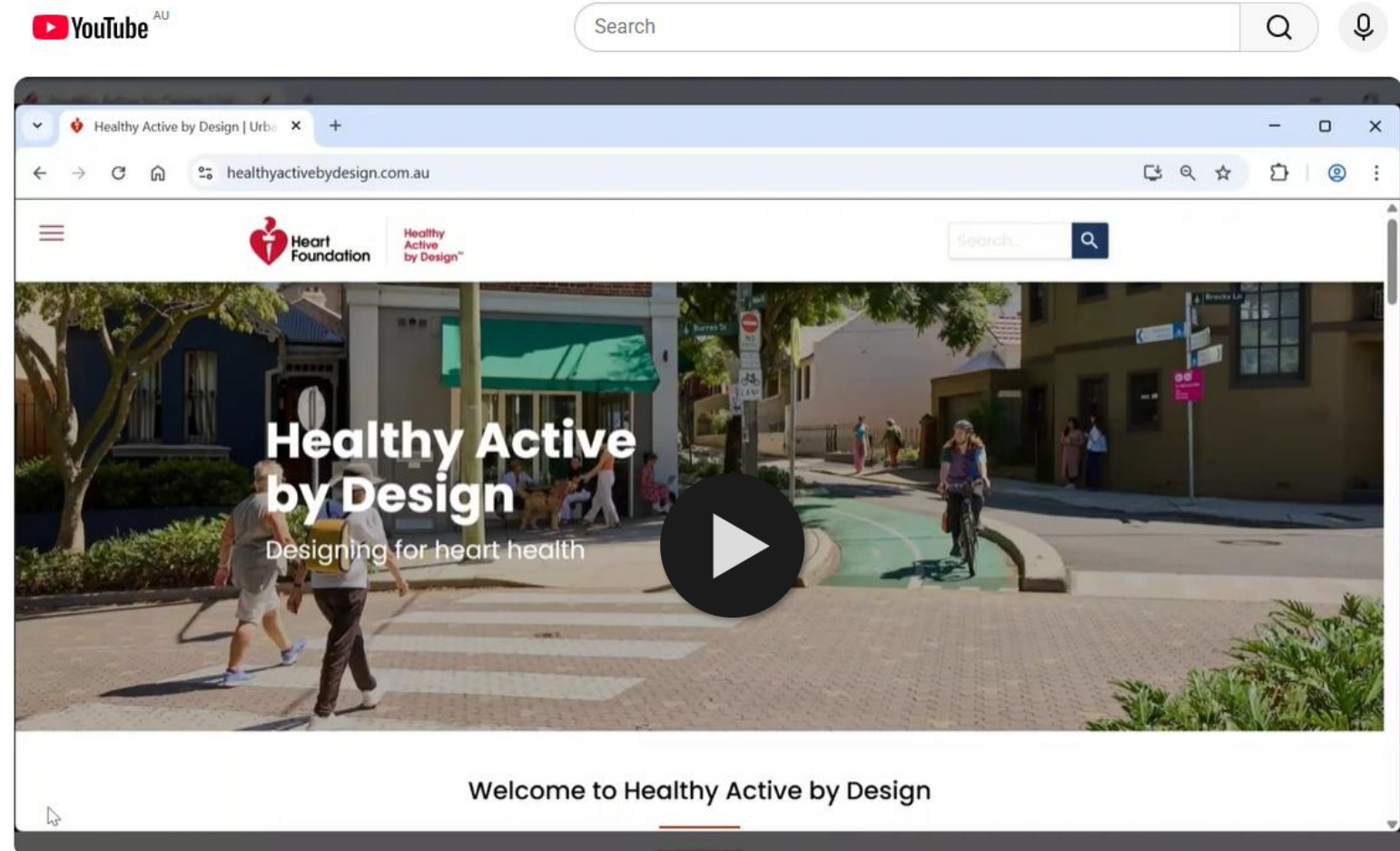
What is Healthy Active by Design (cont.)?

Healthy Active by Design is a digital toolkit that informs the design of healthy and active communities. It is structured around eight design features and supporting modules, and comprises the following:

- Linked evidence summaries and health impacts
- Checklists of considerations
- Interactive related policy
- National and international resources
- State and Territory policies and guidelines
- Infographics and videos
- Continually updated case studies and news articles; and
- Evidence Papers

View the website:

www.healthyactivebydesign.com.au



[Watch via YouTube](#)

Trevor Shilton on Healthy Active by Design

Adjunct Professor Trevor Shilton is a public health practitioner and researcher, as well as the former Director of Active Living at the Heart Foundation. He remains a strong advocate for Healthy Active by Design.

In this video Trevor explains the Healthy Active by Design toolkit and how to use it to design communities that enable and promote health and well-being.



[Watch via YouTube](#)

Who is Healthy Active by Design for?

The health and well-being of all people living in Australia concerns many professional groups – not just the medical and allied health professions. The designers, planners and managers of our natural and built environment can contribute to improving community health status and well-being. Potential users of Healthy Active by Design include:

- Planners / urban designers / transport engineers within government agencies and public bodies – when assessing masterplans, development proposals and to inform planning policies and schemes.
- Developers, designers and consultants involved in development proposals - by informing design choices in delivering healthy and active communities.
- Community development professionals through raising the priority of infrastructure development or guiding strategic decisions.
- People undertaking advocacy work for improved healthy built and natural environments.
- Elected officials when assessing and making determinations on development and policy proposals and funding priorities.
- Community members to guide responses to proposals out for public comment and initiate change to current policy.



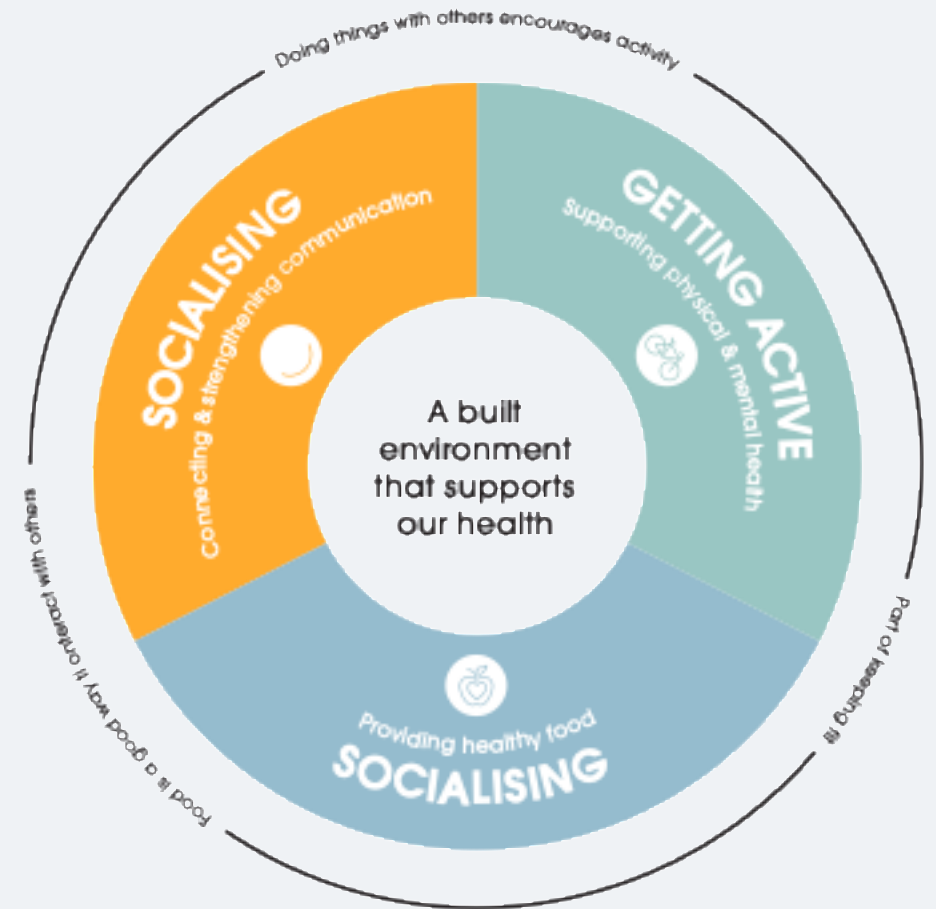
Case study image Yagan Square courtesy of Development WA

Health and planning

The built environment in which we live, work and play, has a critical role in shaping our health.

The Healthy Active by Design digital toolkit focuses on how the built environment supports physical activity and the availability of healthy food (to reduce obesity and the risk of heart disease) and social interaction (to reduce the risk of mental illness, particularly depression).

Healthy built environments are about putting the needs of people and communities at the heart of the urban planning process and encouraging decision-making based on human health and well-being.





Physical activity and planning

The role that regular physical activity has in managing and reducing the risk factors of many preventable diseases is well established. ¹

Research indicates that regular physical activity improves people's physical and mental health and well-being. ²

Neighbourhoods and cities that are designed to encourage active lifestyles can improve health by providing more opportunities for being active, including walking, wheeling, bike riding and using public transport.

The Healthy Active by Design toolkit can be used for advocacy and resource sharing to address physical inactivity.

¹Anderson E and Durstine J.L, 2019, Physical activity, exercise and chronic disease: A brief review, *Sports Med Health Science*. doi: 10.1016/j.smhs.2019.08.006.

² Mahindru A, Patil P and Agrawal V, 2023, Role of physical activity on mental health and well-being: A review, *Cureus*, doi: 10.7759/cureus.33475.

Integrating health and planning

The links between health, urban design and transport are gaining greater prominence and recognition. In September 2016, the Heart Foundation's award-winning Healthy Active by Design program was showcased in a Special Issue of The Lancet, as part of a Series on Active Transportation and Health. ¹

This Series quantifies the health gains that could be achieved if cities incentivised the shift to active-friendly environments including more focus on walking, cycling and public transport.

Sign up to The Lancet for free to [view the Special Issue](#): Use of science to guide city planning policy and practice: how to achieve healthy and sustainable future cities.

¹ Sallis J, Bull F, Burdett R et al., 2016, 'Use of science to guide city planning policy and practice: how to achieve healthy and sustainable future cities, *The Lancet*, doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(16)30068-X

THE LANCET

September, 2016

www.thelancet.com

Urban design, transport, and health



"Systematic designing of cities to enhance health through active transport promises to be a powerful strategy for improvements in population health on a permanent basis."

A Series by The Lancet

What makes a healthy active place?

The way the environment is designed, planned and built can affect how physically active people will choose to be.

Towns and cities, neighbourhoods, public spaces and places, shopping areas, and town and neighbourhood centres designed for all stages of life will result in greater use and physical activity and provide for increased social interaction and inclusion.

This can result in improved health outcomes, especially greater levels of general well-being and fitness.



Source: Active Living Research (2012). Promoting Physical Activity through Shared Use of School and Community Recreational Resources. San Diego.

What makes a healthy active place?

Healthy Active by Design outlines the design features to consider when designing and planning for health and well-being benefits.

Making places more supportive of walking and cycling or using public transport requires street connectivity, mixed density and mixed land use.

People walk more if they perceive streets are safe and aesthetically pleasing.

The built environment can also influence food access and availability, which can shape people's healthy choices.



Source: Besser LM, et al (2005). Walking to Public Transit: Steps to Help Meet Physical Activity Recommendations. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 29(4): 273-280.

Billie Giles-Corti on the benefits of density

Professor Emerita Billie Giles-Corti is a distinguished researcher and thought leader in public health and urban planning. With a career spanning decades, she has made significant contributions to understanding the connections between the built environment, physical activity and health outcomes

Billie discusses how we should be planning and providing the right mix of infrastructure to cater for a population that will double in the next three decades.

The planning and design decisions we make now will have an impact on the future liveability of our cities and towns.

[Watch via YouTube](#)




Healthy Active by Design Checklists

For each design feature and supporting module, Healthy Active by Design offers a Checklist which includes the following:

- Purpose & objectives:** The purpose and rationale of the design feature for supporting active living and health, based on the extensive review of existing health, active living and planning literature
- Principles:** Key areas of action / Design Principles supported by evidence summaries
- Considerations:** Questions to ask when creating, preparing, assessing or commenting on proposals and/or policies. These considerations have strong supporting evidence and reflect best practice

These Checklists have been designed to support policies, planning and projects in existing and proposed built environments


Healthy food

Purpose
 The advocacy primer is designed to highlight research-based considerations and opportunities for the delivery of Healthy Built Food Environments (HBFE) for a range of community and built environment professionals and decision makers. It can be used where:

- formulating policy to guide development decisions relating to Healthy Built Food Environment
- designing new or adapting existing neighbourhoods, park systems, street networks, centres or
- promoting community awareness as to the benefits of Healthy Built Food Environments
- assisting community based organisations to establish Healthy Built Food Environments
- considering governance arrangements for public space used for Healthy Built Food Environment

Objective
 Neighbourhoods that encourage healthy food choices, through the planning and design of form and accessibility to healthy food, making for healthier communities.

The Healthy Food design feature complements the existing Healthy Active by Design framework to achieve a successful Healthy Built Food Environment. Implementation is required across a range of elements different to other Healthy Active by Design elements as its primary audience and engagement. For this reason, advocacy guidance has been prepared, as opposed to a checklist. The current town planning regulatory framework does not enable the enforcement of many Healthy Active by Design concepts proposed below.

Healthy Active by Design Master Checklist


Public open space

Objective
 Provide a range of public open spaces that contribute to the recreational, physical and social needs of all members of the community.

Principle	Considerations	Strength of evidence	Yes	No	N/A
Access Public use of open spaces can be improved by ensuring that they are easily accessible to, and by, all members of the community	Do all community members have at least one open space within a 400m - 800m walk?	***			
	Are there clear pedestrian and cycle routes, designated crossings, and suitable ramps to, and within, the open space?	***			
	Are the public open spaces accessible to people of all ages, genders and cultures, including those with disabilities and limited mobility?	***			
Function Open spaces assist in meeting the physical, recreational and social needs of a community.	Have the open spaces been designed to meet the diverse needs of the community? How were those needs identified?	***			
	Are there a range of uses that promote physical activity and community interaction? How do these uses generate activity throughout the week and day and night?	***			
	How are the open spaces and supporting infrastructure managed and maintained?	***			
Design Open space designs that respond to their surrounds can enable a strong connection to the community and the environment.	Does the open space reflect the cultural heritage and identity of the site, and the character of the surrounding community?	***			
	How well do the surrounds contribute to safety? Do nearby buildings and streets overlook the space? Is there adequate lighting within the space?	***			
	How does the open space respond to existing environmental conditions such as drainage, slopes and retaining trees?	***			

Process considerations: Establish linear connections and access along the coast, public breathers, wetlands and waterbodies to enhance opportunities for physical activity. Undertake a community needs assessment to identify open space needs. Consider role and functions within public open spaces holistically to resolve needs across the open space network.

Healthy Active by Design Master Checklist

Healthy Active by Design Case Studies

Case studies have been collated from around Australia, which showcase how Healthy Active by Design principles can be applied and structured in terms of health, economic, environmental, social and use values. These case studies reflect best-practice design initiatives in urban, regional and rural contexts.

A search function allows the selection of a case study based on typology and location.

We welcome the submission of new case studies at any time and have developed a web form to make it easy for you to do this - https://heartfoundation.formstack.com/forms/Healthy Active by Design_case_study



Health value



Economic value



Environmental value



Social value



Use value



HOUSING DIVERSITY, INFRASTRUCTURE

The Commons

Victoria | Urban



COMMUNITY FACILITIES, MASTERPLAN

Playford Alive

South Australia | Urban



HOUSING DIVERSITY, MASTERPLAN

The Hermitage

New South Wales | Urban



DESTINATIONS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

Barcaldine's Main Street

Queensland | Urban



MOVEMENT NETWORKS, INFRASTRUCTURE

Clarence Foreshore Trail

Tasmania | Urban



HOUSING DIVERSITY

WGV at White Gum Valley

Western Australia | Urban

Healthy Active by Design Infographics

Infographics for each design feature provide a pictorial graphic to communicate key evidence that supports the Healthy Active by Design principles. Download an infographic of interest:



[Public Open Space](#)



[Movement Networks](#)



[Community Facilities](#)



[Housing Diversity](#)



[Buildings](#)



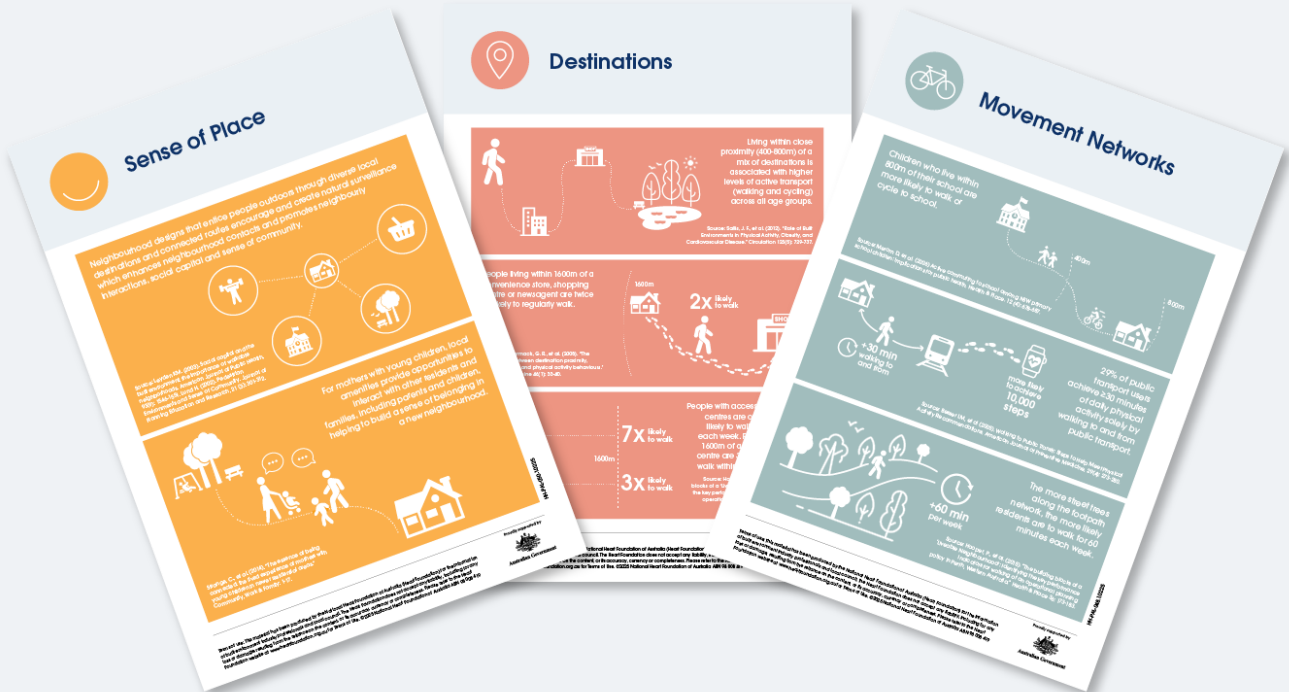
[Sense of Place](#)



[Destinations](#)



[Healthy Food](#)



Other Healthy Active by Design Web Based Resources

The Healthy Active by Design digital toolkit contains other multimedia materials, a glossary and publication links which are continually being updated with a capacity to include new resources.



[Interview videos](#)



[Case Study videos](#)



[Glossary](#)



[Publications](#)



Healthy Active by Design Guide – A Printed Resource

To support the Healthy Active by Design digital toolkit, the Healthy Active by Design Guide has been prepared to support practical application and consultation with stakeholders.

It offers:

- A tool to aid practice, with a focus on planning frameworks.
- Summary lists of the most important and effective design feature considerations/strategies when creating, preparing and assessing a new development or policy.
- Guidance to assess the impact of the proposal on health and well-being.

Download the guide [here](#).

Email HealthyActivebyDesign@heartfoundation.org.au to request printed copies.



Healthy Active by Design™



David Doy on using Healthy Active by Design

David Doy manages the Place Planning team at the Town of Victoria Park and has broad experience across a range of Strategic Planning, Urban Design, Economic Development, Events and Place Governance projects in the Perth Inner City.

In this video David shares his passion for delivering great places for people to create healthy communities.



[Watch via YouTube](#)

Making it happen: When to use Healthy Active by Design

Everyday decisions have implications for designing healthy places.

Planning for active living calls for a commitment to applying healthy planning principles to all levels of the planning system, at every stage of the planning process and in every planning project and policy initiative.

These principles can be applied no matter what the scale, in metropolitan or regional contexts, from local neighbourhoods in regional, rural and remote communities to large scale centres.



Making it happen: When to use Healthy Active by Design (cont.)

Partnership and collaboration have enabled Healthy Active by Design to bring together this evidence-based national guide.

It showcases that planners, public health practitioners, allied professionals and the general community have an opportunity to contribute to improved community health and well-being in Australia by adopting planning for active living approaches.

This is best demonstrated by over 175 Healthy Active by Design [case studies](#).



Further Resources

Our [Publications and Policies page](#) contains a range of evidence papers, publications, policies and more including:

- Walkability and the built environment, evidence paper (2026)
- Good for business (2025)
- Designing for density (2025)
- The heart of road use (2025)
- Active School travel (2025)
- What Australia Wants, Neighbourhood design (2025)
- Blueprint for an active Australia: National Heart Foundation of Australia (2019)



Key terms and concepts – Planning

Accessibility - The degree to which the numbers of people have access to a location, facility, program, open space, and cycle and walk networks.

Active transport - Walking, cycling or using public transport. Active transport is an alternative to car travel and can provide benefits, such as increasing daily physical activity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Ancillary benefits can also include an increase in the sense of community and improved mental health.

Built environment - The structures and places in which we live, work and play, including land uses, transportation systems and design features.

Urban design - A design-based approach to shaping urban environments and optimising the performance and efficiency of neighbourhoods, towns and cities, paying particular attention to the way urban spaces work, interface between public and private realms and natural environment, cultural values, integrated movement systems and built form.



Key terms and concepts – Health

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) - Diseases that affect the heart and blood vessels. The most common and serious CVDs in Australia are coronary heart disease, stroke and heart failure.

Health - A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organisation, 1946).

Non-communicable diseases - A non-infectious chronic health condition, usually developing over a significant period of time, that can cause death, dysfunction or impaired quality of life.

Physical activity - Bodily movement produced by the contraction of skeletal muscles that increases energy expenditure above the basal level and can include walking, running, organised sport, household chores, gardening etc.





Congratulations on completing the Healthy Active by Design Introductory Training Resource!

You can access your certification of completion [here](#)

We encourage you to download your certificate
and share with your professional networks on LinkedIn



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