



OCT  
20-21

LOWRY  
MEDIACITY | Salford  
GREATER MANCHESTER

- > RESEARCH
- > POLICY
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# CALL FOR PAPERS

**Breakdown or breakthrough?**

New strategies for healthier cities



Submission deadline: 1 April  
Submit at: [www.healthycitydesign.global](http://www.healthycitydesign.global)

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# Breakdown or breakthrough?

## New strategies for healthier cities

Cities are changing fast. At Healthy City Design 2026, we're seeking out bold ideas that turn urban breakdowns into breakthroughs. Share your research, projects, or strategies and be part of the movement shaping healthier, smarter, more equitable and resilient cities.

Cities across the world are navigating a period of profound instability. Economic uncertainty, geopolitical turbulence, climate fragility, migration patterns, social divisions and health inequalities are converging to create a uniquely challenging urban agenda for city leaders, developers, planners and policymakers.

Faced with so many pressures that could fracture urban systems, it would be easy to de-prioritise the role of health in making our cities greener, fairer and more inclusive. But that would be a mistake. Far from being a sideshow to urban development, the healthy city is central to it.

A healthy society and healthy urban environments are not peripheral ambitions; they are foundational conditions for long-term prosperity. Cities that prioritise health create the platform for climate resilience, social cohesion, innovation and economic productivity.

Thriving urban environments attract talent, stimulate creativity, reduce public spending burdens, and enable inclusive growth. Without health, there can be no sustained competitiveness, no dynamic workforce, and no resilient economy.

The question facing city leaders, investors, planners, designers and policymakers is stark: will our cities drift towards fragmentation and decline – or will they achieve breakthrough transformation?

From healthy homes and neighbourhoods to sustainable infrastructure and green mobility, from community impact and social value to digital innovation and population health, the programme will examine how integrated, cross-sector collaboration can deliver measurable improvements in both human and planetary wellbeing.



Healthy City Design 2026 returns to the Lowry in Salford, Greater Manchester on 20–21 October 2026 under the theme “Breakdown or breakthrough?” The Congress will explore bold strategies that place health at the centre of urban transformation – bringing an interdisciplinary focus across research, investment, development, design, planning and public health.

### Fighting back

The question of breakdown or breakthrough has particular resonance in the context of the UK's policy framework, which emphasises cross-sector *Health in All Policies*, the

building of New Towns, and the fast-tracking of high-density housing around well-connected transport hubs. The NHS is committed to switching health services from hospital to the community, from analogue to digital, and from treatment to prevention. The fightback is on.

But this fundamental wellbeing challenge facing cities extends globally, crossing continents and cultures. When the Congress was first established a decade ago, the aim was to encourage designers and planners of the built environment to collaborate more closely with public health professionals. That objective remains of paramount importance today.

### Salford celebrations

This year is a special one for our host city, Salford, Greater Manchester. As it celebrates 100 years of city status – with a forward-looking programme of cultural, civic and environmental initiatives – Salford provides an ideal living laboratory for exploring how health-led development can shape the next century of urban progress.

We invite proposals for papers, workshops and Video+Poster presentations that address the theme of “Breakdown or breakthrough?” and demonstrate how health-centred approaches can drive equitable, resilient and economically productive cities.

Abstracts of 400 words should clearly state background, purpose, methods, results and implications, and be submitted via [www.healthycitydesign.global](http://www.healthycitydesign.global) by 1 April.



**Professor Jeremy Myerson**  
Academic director and co-founder, Healthy City Design; Professor emeritus, Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, Royal College of Art, UK

# Submission process

Healthy City Design 2026 (HCD 2026) International Congress & Exhibition is a global forum for the exchange of knowledge on the research, policy, investment and practice of designing healthy and sustainable cities and communities.

Organised by SALUS Global Knowledge Exchange in partnership with the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, Royal College of Art, an international research hub for inclusive design, this year's Congress will be held at Lowry, MediaCity in Salford, Greater Manchester.

Attendees will develop their knowledge of the political, social and economic context, new policy directions, emerging practice, latest research findings, and skills and core competencies in designing, planning and commissioning city services, technology, infrastructure, impact investment and real estate development that improve people and planetary health. We are delighted to invite you to submit abstracts on the themes listed on page 5.

Authors are invited to submit abstracts of 400 words in English for in-person presentation in the following formats: a) themed paper; b) video+poster; c) workshop. The abstract should clearly state the background, purpose, methods, results and conclusions/implications.

Presentations in all formats can be focused on research,



practice or policy. For full abstract guidelines and the submission form, visit [www.healthycitydesign.global](http://www.healthycitydesign.global).

Each presentation will be delivered to an interdisciplinary audience. All abstracts will be subject to a rigorous blind peer-review process by the HCD 2026 programme committee. A select number will be chosen for oral presentation with a wider number presented as videos + posters. Proposals must be submitted using the abstract proposal form and MUST include the following:

- a) presentation type (themed paper, poster or workshop);
- b) knowledge focus (research, practice or theory);
- c) congress theme (plenary or stream);
- d) title, author(s), organisational affiliation and three learning objectives.

Abstracts of the papers selected for presentation will be published online. Please note: the author(s) and/or co-author(s) are required to register and pay the registration fee to participate and present the paper at the Congress. All speakers are expected to participate 'in person'.

Information on the conference venue, hotels and the registration fee will be available at [www.healthycitydesign.global](http://www.healthycitydesign.global) in March. The Preliminary Programme will be published in May. All abstracts should be submitted online by 1 April. Enquiries should be sent to: [info@salus.global](mailto:info@salus.global).

## Who should participate?

- City governance & policymakers
- Community leaders & voices
- Urban designers & planners
- Public health practitioners
- Commercial property developers
- Health and social care planners
- Sustainability & ESG practitioners
- Academics & researchers
- Economists & social scientists
- Business leaders
- Occupational therapists
- Institutional investors
- Technology leaders
- Real estate investors
- Senior public servants
- Environmental groups
- Architects & engineers
- Housing developers

## Provisional timetable

### February 2026

Launch of Call for Papers

### March 2026

Launch of Awards Call for Entries

### 1 April 2026

Deadline for Congress abstracts

### April 2026

Deadline for Awards entries

### May 2026

Launch of the Preliminary Programme

### June 2026

Awards shortlist announcement

### July 2026

Awards LIVE judging webinars

### September 2026

Deadline for early-bird, speaker registration and manuscripts

### 20 October 2026

08.00-18.00: HCD 2026 Congress & Exhibition  
18.00-22.00: HCD 2026 Awards Ceremony + Dinner

### 21 October 2026

08.00-17.00: HCD 2026 Congress & Exhibition

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## About the venue:

### Lowry

Named after the early 20th-century painter, L.S. Lowry, known for his paintings of industrial scenes in North West England, Lowry is one of Britain's 12 landmark projects for the Millennium and is commonly regarded as a triumph of civic will and enterprise.

Opened on 28 April 2000, the theatre and gallery complex in Salford Quays, Greater Manchester, was the flagship project of Salford City Council's regeneration plan in 1988 for the redevelopment of the derelict Salford docks as a leisure, cultural and tourism area.

Costing £106 million, Lowry, which was designed by Michael Wilford, is built on a triangular site at the end of Pier 8 and has a triangular plan. A promenade encircling the building provides views of the Manchester Ship Canal, MediaCity and the Salford Quays developments. The complex is close to the Imperial War Museum North and the Old Trafford football stadium, and it's served by the MediaCityUK stop on the Metrolink tram network. In 2010 and 2011, it was Greater Manchester's most visited tourist attraction.

The regeneration of Salford Quays with Michael Wilford's Lowry as its centrepiece has led to references in the media to the "Bilbao effect"—the phenomenon where the creation of a new, architecturally striking cultural amenity, such as Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, brings economic improvement to areas of urban decay.



## About the city:

### Salford at 100:

## A Living Laboratory for Healthy Urban Futures

As Salford marks 100 years since being granted city status, it stands as one of the UK's most compelling examples of urban reinvention. Once characterised by post-industrial decline and immortalised as a "dirty old town", Salford has undergone a profound transformation – emerging as a dynamic, investment-ready city that is redefining the relationship between economic growth, urban development and health.

Over the past two decades, regeneration across Salford Quays, Salford Central and the wider city centre has reshaped the city's physical, social and economic fabric. Today, Salford is projecting economic growth of more than 46 per cent, supported by an ambitious long-term vision to deliver 40,000 new homes and 40,000 new jobs by 2040 across four strategic growth locations: Salford City Centre; The Quays and MediaCity; the Greater Manchester Western Gateway; and Salford's towns.

This growth is being guided by a commitment to creating a fairer, greener, healthier and more inclusive city. Investment in sustainable transport, active travel networks and the proposed development corridor along the Manchester Ship Canal are designed not only to drive economic productivity but also to improve connectivity, environmental performance and population wellbeing.

Salford's approach is grounded in strong public-private partnership and meaningful community engagement. Regeneration is not conceived solely as physical renewal, but as social and health infrastructure – shaping neighbourhoods that support wellbeing, equity and long-term resilience.

Together with Manchester, Salford forms part of the Central Growth Cluster – a ten-year plan to accelerate city centre expansion, deliver tens of thousands of homes and jobs, and strengthen Greater Manchester's position as

a globally competitive city-region. As Mayor Andy Burnham has stated, this initiative aims to deliver transformative regeneration that benefits communities across the region.

At the heart of Salford's transformation is MediaCity – an international hub for technology, innovation and the creative industries. Home to the BBC, ITV and a growing ecosystem of digital and tech enterprises, MediaCity is set to double in size through a £1 billion expansion, including more than 3200 new homes and 800,000 sq ft of commercial space. Generating approximately £1.4 billion annually for the Greater Manchester economy, it is a powerful example of how health-supportive urban environments can underpin a productive and creative economy.



As Healthy City Design returns to the Lowry at MediaCity during Salford's centenary year, the city provides more than a venue – it offers a living laboratory. Here, delegates can examine in real time how investment, infrastructure, housing, culture and community engagement are being aligned to shape healthier urban futures.

Salford's next century will be defined not simply by growth, but by how effectively that growth supports the health of people and planet. In that sense, it provides an ideal setting for exploring the Congress theme: *Breakdown or breakthrough?*

# Congress themes

We are delighted to invite you to submit abstracts on the following themes. All abstracts must be submitted using the online form by 1 April.

 Partnership opportunities available for these themes

## > Healthy homes and neighbourhoods **AECOM**

How housing and neighbourhood design can support health, equity, and everyday wellbeing, exploring evidence-based approaches to delivering healthy, affordable, and adaptable homes within inclusive, walkable neighbourhoods, addressing issues such as housing quality, density, access to services and green space, and social connection. The stream will showcase policy, design, and community-led initiatives that create safe, resilient places where people can thrive across all stages of life.



## > Smart cities and digital health

Exploring how digital innovation and smart technologies can improve health, wellbeing, and quality of life in cities. It will examine the role of data, digital tools, and emerging technologies in shaping healthier urban environments – supporting active travel, access to services, environmental monitoring, and more responsive public spaces. It will also address governance, equity, and ethics, highlighting how smart city approaches can be people-centred and inclusive.



 **Urban Initiatives**  
Sidara Company

## > Keynote theme: Healthy city design & planning

How urban planning and design can create healthier, more resilient, and inclusive cities, highlighting global, evidence-based strategies for compact, vibrant, and people-centred urban development that prioritise wellbeing, active living, and community-led regeneration. Including a focused examination of how local planning, design, culture are shaping healthier futures in Salford and Greater Manchester.



## > Sustainable infrastructure and green mobility

How sustainable urban, economic, and social infrastructure, together with green mobility, can support human and planetary health. Grounded in the principles of sustainable development, it will examine how low-carbon, resource-efficient and integrated urban systems enable inclusive economic growth and strengthen social cohesion and community resilience. Topics include active travel, clean energy, nature-based solutions and social infrastructure that help cities thrive within ecological limits.



## > Population and neighbourhood health

How cities can improve health outcomes through place-based approaches, exploring the integration of healthcare provision into communities – at home, in neighbourhood settings, and on the high street – alongside planning and design strategies that support prevention, early intervention, and health equity. Sessions will highlight models that connect health services, housing, and local infrastructure to create accessible, resilient, and people-centred systems of care.



## > Community impact and social value

Examines how urban planning and development can deliver meaningful social value and positive community impact, exploring methods for embedding equity, inclusion, and health outcomes into decision-making, measuring social value, and empowering communities through co-design and local leadership. Case studies will highlight how place-based approaches can strengthen social connection, support regeneration, and ensure that urban change benefits people and communities.



## > Healthy working environments

How a wide range of workplaces can be designed, delivered, and managed to support health, wellbeing, and productivity. It will cover commercial real estate and offices, public-sector buildings such as healthcare and education, construction sites, and other non-office workplaces. Sessions will highlight evidence-based design and policy approaches that improve physical and mental health, safety, inclusion, and sustainability across diverse working environments.



# Programme Committee



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## Organising committee



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**Jim Chapman**

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## Advisory group

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For further enquiries on the event programme,  
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Community partners

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