

Living Streets Aotearoa



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28th January 2010

Re Open Space Strategy.

Living Streets Canterbury is regional subgroup of Living Streets Aotearoa (a national group that aims to improve conditions for pedestrians and to get more people walking more often for both transport and recreation). As such we have considerable interest in the open space strategy. We would like to talk in person to the main points of this submission.

In essence, we support this strategy and the ideas and objectives in it. It is excellent to see reference to the need to manage open space for a range of values including transport, biodiversity, recreation and storm water management. While this does increase the complexity of planning it can also provide for better outcomes across a wider range of outcome areas than would be the case if these were not kept in mind. Well done! It would be also be good to see community development as something to be kept in mind in the process of planning (as outlined below).

We believe that it is important to provide better access to new and existing open space and at least the same level of open space per person in urban Christchurch over the next thirty years as currently exists now, both for local people but also for people visiting the area. Tourism is currently an important economic activity in the area and open spaces make our City more attractive and interesting both for residents and tourists and promote the city's natural and cultural heritage. If petrol/ oil prices increase as projected over the next thirty years, open space within and close to the City will become

increasingly important for recreation for both visitors and local people alike. In addition, encouraging active forms of transport and recreation is important from both a physical and mental health perspective. In-fill housing makes green space more important for those who do not have significant garden area. With this in mind, it may be that some mention of community gardens and other similar community projects including stream care groups etc is relevant to this strategy, particularly given the focus on partnerships in the guiding principles.

We endorse the issues identified in this strategy and suggest that many of them are likely to intensify over the next decade. We particularly applaud the note that " Christchurch streets are dominated by motorised transport. Relatively few inner city streets are 'pedestrian friendly'. This is of particular concern because community becomes increasingly fragmented where streets are not used by pedestrians. People do not get to know each other from inside their cars but they often do when they walk.

We place a high value on green spaces as they can provide connectivity and pleasant environments (away from from the noise, fumes and danger posed by motorised transport) for active transport such as cycling and walking both for commuting and recreation purposes. Therefore we strongly support the high priority on the development of small, local green spaces as part of an overall network of green, blue and grey space within the City.

Currently many of our central city and suburban parks are very English in design. It would be great to see some parks with art work and native plantings reflective of the values of Ngai Tahu. At present many of our central city parks have no shelter for days where the weather is poor. Gazebos or summer house type structures could be used to make these parks more useful on these days. Not all offices have a staff room and sometimes older people or those with health issues need to stop. If they had a dry place to rest it would make the space more usable to them. It is great to see in this strategy the acknowledgement by the council of the limited open space opportunities available in our industrial areas for the workers in those areas.

We also strongly support making central City Streets more pedestrian friendly and greener through tree planting. In the Open Space Strategy it states "Tree plantings that are part of the Garden City Christchurch character are slowly being eroded by infill residential development". It is concerning that so much of the physical structure of our communities is determined by developers. Judging by some recent developments there appears to be no requirement that developers compensate communities for what they take away. We would like to see the council require developers to pay greater attention to the effects of their developments on community connectivity and green spaces.

We strongly support the guiding principle of designing open space as a connected system and suggest the development of cycling and walking maps that are developed by and for local communities. Maps would show people what open space facilities exist in their area and help them to navigate more effectively through the streets and roads in their community. Research shows people are more likely to walk if it is made easy for them and maps are one way of doing this. Improved signage of open space areas would also enable people to better identify and access these areas. Improved linkages with public transport would also help people to better access open space areas. Currently at the exchange you can take away small cards (the same size as a business card) which tell you what buses you can catch to get to for example a particular mall. Similar cards could be used to promote open spaces and help people to access them easily.

This strategy appears to meet three of its four goals adequately however Goal 3: *Encouraging community involvement in open space* could be improved by linking this document more specifically to community development in the same way that community development is linked with the work the Council is doing to protect and enhance biodiversity and the storm water network. Public open space is critical for the development of community. The development of communities is important for fostering resilience and for managing change. Arguably the development of strong communities will also assist in developing and protecting public open spaces, biodiversity and cultural heritage.

We strongly support the development of a rail trail along the line between the Central City and Lyttelton. The rail trail on the other side of town works well and is well used. We are also keen to see improved linkages between the Little River Rail Trail and the Central City as is suggested in this strategy.

This rail trail concept would also provide facilities for suburbs which currently lack use-able green, blue and grey space – a concept that we endorse. We have little to say about new sports parks except that provision should ideally be monitored as the strategy suggests.

While we accept that the planned northern and southern motorway developments do provide the opportunity to develop walkway and cycleway infrastructure, we have concerns. Motorways are built for the needs of cars, and they tend to carve up the land and break the linkages and accessibility that are so essential to making a community pedestrian friendly. To mitigate these effects we would want to see a major effort put into ensuring the needs of pedestrians would not be forgotten.

We agree with the notion of protecting important natural landscapes, waterways and coast line as outlined in the City Identity Concept Plan.

We think this could be improved by including the Perimeter Walkway concept in the City Identity Concept Plan rather than in the Metropolitan Concept Plan. The idea of the Perimeter Walkway is to draw attention to the natural and cultural heritage found around Christchurch. It would be good to see it used as a framework for developing interpretive material and raising public awareness both of open space and of some of our local heritage sites.

We are enthusiastic about the idea of enhancing opportunities off major roads for recreation routes, it would be ideal if these opportunities were able to provide short cut, direct routes for those using slower forms of transport. Cycling and walking routes that require cyclists and walkers to continually stop and give way to motorised road users will not be used as well as routes where right of way is maintained.

Yours faithfully

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