

# Living Streets Aotearoa



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## Submission from Wellington Living Streets to Wellington City Council on the draft Spatial Plan 2020

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### General

Living Streets notes this is a blueprint for current and future land use that needs to provide an overall framework for both the District Plan and other policies. This is the first Spatial Plan that Wellington will have and is built on the work from many other consultations and plans, such as Wellington 2040 and Urban Growth Strategy 2016. The NPS on Urban Development is required to be implemented in Resource Management Act plans within 2 years, and earlier for some parts.

The draft Spatial Plan has a real focus on 'walkability': Wellington is well known for its high rates of walking, and the emphasis on retaining a compact walkable form continues in this Plan. There is a need to provide more direction to ensure walkability in the plan, such as on the important connections with transport infrastructure, and key principles included on what walkability requires.

The walk catchment for public transport is optimally 400m, as after this distance mode change to public transport falls off. Greater Wellington Regional Council, like many other public transport service providers, uses this metric in their public transport planning for all services, and a wider catchment of 800m for high frequency services. Time to walk the 400m is also a required indicator of the public transport catchment. Many Wellington stops would take longer than 5 minutes to walk 400m due to topography in some directions, and also the gross inequities in traffic-light timing for pedestrians. Either walk catchments need to be based on real walk times, or the Spatial Plan needs to include measures on how and when this will be improved.

'Transit-oriented design' requires a focus on pedestrians so that access to public transport is improved and development is centred around the public transport route. This will require a shift in planning emphasis in Wellington from car-centred design that needs to be reflected in the Spatial Plan – it's all about how land is used and allocated.

## Walkability

Walkability requires land use planning to include provision for:

### Connected walking

- Cul de sacs must be walk permeable, eg snickets and shortcuts are included, and block sizes are small.
- Street frontages need to have 'activated edges'. Planning addresses the issues with buildings, public spaces, the public transport interfaces and street space. This means that the ground floor of all multilevel buildings needs to be 'active', parking should be hidden, streets will be multi-modal, and there are public parks and plazas.

### Convenient walking

- It is easy to get there on foot, pushchair or wheelchair
- Services are nearby
- For example, Wellington waterfront is very popular but is disconnected from the city centre by a wide, high-volume vehicle road. The Spatial Plan should include improving the convenience of this key location.

### Coherent walking

- Where it is easy to find your way, with footpaths that are easy to follow with defined edges, and markings to aid crossing the road
- Lighting is on the footpath to aid walking
- Wayfinding through use of materials as well as sign posting to make destinations obvious. For instance, on vehicular cul-de-sacs with footpaths or flights of steps leading from them to nearby streets are marked "No through route except for pedestrians". Street names could be included in the fabric of the footpath to make them more legible for pedestrians.

### Destinations to walk to

- All suburbs should include the basic requirements of daily living that allow people to have a 20 minute walk to services like fresh food shops, medical services, parks, schools, and nearby jobs or improved access to bus stops and train stations
- Green field developments must include the services required for daily living. It is not clear that the proposed developments will do this. For instance, footpaths are provided on both sides of the road.
- Adequate public space is required for meeting and being, and may be part of shopping areas or in parks. About 80% of public space is roadways, and a significant step up on the amenity of footpaths is required to cater for increases in population and thus walking and active social spaces. Many footpaths in Wellington (including some high-use new ones) do not meet minimum requirements currently.

### Accessible spaces for all

- Accessibility requirements for land use planning should include measures for buildings with at least 25% of residential building being accessible to a wide range of

people. All publicly accessible buildings should be accessible and meet the standards in NZS4121

- Accessibility is also required for public and blue/green spaces
- The World Health Organisation recommends that a minimum of 9 square metres per person of green space is provided. In Wellington Central the amount of green space falls as low as 7 m<sup>2</sup> in the most dense inner city residential areas. The Spatial Plan must include a measure for green space and all new green space should be accessible.
- Regular seating for the 25% of people over 65 who will call Wellington home in the next 10 years so they can more easily walk to their daily service needs and be part of their communities
- Infrastructure is improved so that footpaths are accessible (not currently) using the best practise guidance below
- Shelter and shade in public spaces

### **Particular considerations**

#### Driveway and garages on the street frontages of properties

- This is a key issue with rules in the current District Plan to limit and contain vehicle use across footpaths being poorly implemented leading to a profusion of vehicle accessways. The more vehicle accessways the less safe and pleasant the footpaths are.
- Active street frontages should be encouraged where the life both on and off the footpath is part of the cityscape. Measures that are required include:
  - o Hide vehicle parking from street view
  - o Limit garages per property and location of them
  - o Limit vehicle accessways/driveways to each property
  - o Fence heights must remain low so that vehicle users can see and be seen by pedestrians

#### Cuba Mall

- Cuba Mall is our one pedestrian-only space in Wellington. This was an innovative and very successful approach to provide for pedestrians. This space should be recognised as a special amenity area in the Spatial Plan.

#### Wellington waterfront

- Since Wellington waterfront was opened up for public use it has been a very popular place to be. This needs to be retained and supported by making it a special amenity area.
- The impact of climate change must be recognised in any future uses (residential use and high 24-hour occupancy buildings should not be permitted). It is surprising that Te Papa is included as a resilience point, as for example access to this area across unconsolidated ground post-earthquake should not be encouraged!

### Basin Reserve to Waitangi Park

- This area should be recognised as a special character area
- It is the largest green space in the central area, and the Canal Reserve has the most potential to be an improved green space
- It has a lot of interest as a walk destination being an inner city open space, with many historic buildings and points of interest, such as old tram paraphernalia. Connection along this important reserve needs to be improved and should be signaled in the Spatial Plan.

### Wellington Railway Station

- The Railway Station area requires special recognition as a key centre of intense pedestrian activity associated with public transport. Land use in this area for the future should include a vehicle free forecourt and Bunny Street retaining its open space and greenery. Better at-grade connections to the waterfront and west towards Parliament are needed.

### Best practice design

- Include in the Spatial Plan a requirement to meet best practice design for pedestrian infrastructure and services to support the walkable city that is envisaged. The New Zealand Pedestrian Planning and Design Guidelines and RTS14 for blind accessible footpaths (soon to be renamed the Pedestrian Network Guide) with NZS4121 are the most appropriate.

### **About Living Streets**

Living Streets Aotearoa is New Zealand's national walking and pedestrian organisation, providing a positive voice for people on foot and working to promote walking friendly planning and development around the country. Our vision is "More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places".

The objectives of Living Streets Aotearoa are:

- to promote walking as a healthy, environmentally-friendly and universal means of transport and recreation
- to promote the social and economic benefits of pedestrian-friendly communities
- to work for improved access and conditions for walkers, pedestrians and runners including walking surfaces, traffic flows, speed and safety
- to advocate for greater representation of pedestrian concerns in national, regional and urban land use and transport planning.

For more information, please see: [www.livingstreets.org.nz](http://www.livingstreets.org.nz)