

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets Wellington on Town Centres document

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About Living Streets

Living Streets Aotearoa (LSA) is a national organisation with a vision of “More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places – young and old, fast and slow, walking, sitting and standing, commuting, shopping, between appointments, for exercise, for leisure and for pleasure.”

The objectives of LSA 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 e.g. 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.

Living Streets Wellington is the local group based in the Wellington region which is working to make city and suburban centres in the region more walking-friendly.

For more information, please see: www.livingstreets.org.nz

I would like to make an oral submission: Yes

What centre/s or areas (town / district / neighbourhood / retail destination / work area / mixed use area) do you have an interest in or use regularly?

Living Streets Wellington is interested in all Wellington centres.

What is your connection there? (Select all that apply.)

- ✓ Live
 - ✓ Work
 - ✓ Own/operate business
 - Develop property
 - ✓ Own property
 - ✓ Shopping or purchasing goods
 - ✓ Other
- If 'other', what is your connection:
Other amenities e.g. visiting hairdresser, libraries, Community Centres, gym

Proposals

Indicate your level of support for the following proposals.

(1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree)

A hierarchy of centres - differentiates between different centres and industrial areas according to size, role and function. 1

Improving urban design quality - by developing a design guide, and considering design when assessing new development resource consents. 1

Achieving a greater mix of uses - includes apartments on upper storeys, and more entertainment and recreational activities. 1

Ensuring most general retail activities locate within centres - includes restricting development of some large-format retail outside of centres. 1

Retaining current industrial land - by restricting other activities that can be located there. 1

Business Improvement Districts (BID) - local partnerships between the Council and businesses to promote economic development and manage local improvements. 1

Would you, your business or organisation be interested in establishing a BID in your local centre? No

Do you have any other comments:

Living Streets particularly supports Objectives 2, 4 and 7 in the Draft Centre plan, and has the following suggestions to support these objectives:

Objective 2 - To maintain and strengthen the Central City

We agree with this objective particularly because the Central City already has an existing public transport hub. However improvements to the public transport system are now needed in terms of frequency of services and linking different types of public transport, i.e. bus and train connections. Improvements to the existing service would therefore encourage greater use of public transport.

Objective 3 – To strengthen the multi-functional nature of centres

We suggest that libraries and community centres be encouraged to remain in all centres since they offer an important set of destinations that should be accessible by foot.

Signage needs to be improved. Many centres have good access to playing fields, playgrounds or attractive reserves but this is not obvious to new residents or casual visitors. A map for each centre showing access to reserves or town belt, nearest schools and any facilities such as swimming pool (not obvious from say, Johnsonville or Kilbirnie) would help. Fingerboard signs may also help.

Objective 4 – To manage the location of retail activities

Restrictions on new out-of-centre retail activity and restrictions to additions on out-of-centre retail activity. Out-of-centre retail activity encourages higher use of motor vehicles, both for private and transport purposes. This type of centre also takes business away from other centres which already have established public transport links.

Objective 5 – To support centres through targeting future residential growth

Overseas experience has shown that development follows good public transport, so it's important to have good public transport in place where you want development to occur.

Objective 7 – To improve the urban design quality of all centres

Of particular importance are the requirements for 'active street frontage' where allowance is made for safe pedestrian access. It is suggested all centres take pedestrian's needs into consideration as part of improving urban design in centres. Some initiatives in this area should include safe routes for pedestrians in and around centres and an active effort from Council to encourage drivers to keep motor vehicles off all footpaths in all centres, not just in the Central City. Further to this, we suggest that each centre has adequate bicycle parking so bikes are not left on the footpaths. For the smaller centres, ensuring there is good public transport and pedestrian access is more important than increasing numbers of car parks given their primary purpose is to serve the local community. For the larger centres, access to public transport should be given some priority, with good signage, shelter and possibly real-time information visible from shopping areas as well as public transport stops, so you know whether the bus is on time or you have time for another coffee!

Also, centres need to have verandahs to give shelter. We welcome outdoor cafe seating and other public seats but recommend that WCC is careful that they don't block pedestrian access. We suggest a rolling programme of community street reviews, centre-by-centre, to pick up obstacles and to seize opportunities to improve amenity. Living Streets is concerned about making centres attractive to linger in, with public art, attractive planting, seats and shelter being important as well as making the journey along footpaths smooth and unobstructed. If a centre can then attract more pedestrians, this has a flow-on effect of more shoppers!

In closing, if centres are to be lively, they should generally support residential activity above the commercial/retail space. This provides surveillance as well as potential customers. However, the boundaries between centres and residential need better consideration from transition so we don't go from 4-storey 100% cover to single-storey character bungalows with no transition in height.