

Living Streets Aotearoa



New Zealand Walking Conference 2006 *Getting There on Foot in NZ Cities and Towns – Taking the Next Steps*

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ABSTRACT FORM

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Presentation Remit

The promotion of pedestrian mobility contributes to a modern and sustainable urban development and vice versa. Many cities have introduced pedestrian zones and other forms of traffic-calming to counter inner-city road congestion and to improve quality and attractiveness of central shopping and business districts. However, there are many places where pedestrian zones are not possible because car traffic cannot be cut off, possibly because there is a parking facility, because through-traffic has to be allowed, or because the discussion about the exceptions would be too complicated. Therefore, starting from the traditional homezones in residential areas, the concept of pedestrian priority zones has been developed further. After allowing pedestrian priority zones in commercial zones, it has been discovered that simply slowing down the cars to 20km/h it is possible to keep traffic smooth even when there is a continuous flow of pedestrians. At the same time, urban squares and plazas can be re-designed not for cars, but for people.

Several phases of traffic-calming and pedestrian zones can be distinguished. In Switzerland, so called zones of encounter (Begegnungszonen), represent the newest concept, where cars, bicycles and pedestrians share the same space, with pedestrians enjoying priority rights. This setup may be used to create new urban spaces, so solve complicated traffic problems, and to create a public space open to traffic, and having qualities of an indoor space. The case in point, Bleicheli area in the city of St. Gallen is highlighted because it shows how artist intervention can enhance the meaning of a pedestrian priority zone and create a totally new type of public space using modern material.