

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets Wellington

on Draft Waterfront Development Plan 2009/10

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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.

Living Streets Wellington is the local walking action 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

Introduction

This submission focuses on those aspects of the waterfront that are most important for walkers. It identifies a number of additional work areas that need to be included in the plan.

Waterfront as a whole

Living Streets Wellington supports the aim of making/retaining the waterfront as a major pedestrian area for through-walking and recreation walking, as well as for access to the sea. The overall design of the area, plus the detailed features within the overall design, will

determine the extent to which people are attracted to the area as a recreational destination, the way people interact with the area, the degree of conflict between different users (e.g. between walkers and service vehicles), and the usefulness of the waterfront as a transport route for walkers (e.g. between the Railway Station and Te Papa).

To achieve a walk friendly environment pedestrians require:

- access along the waterfront that is safe and comfortable e.g. well designed footpaths, safety from wheel transport, safe surfaces for walking;
- access to the waterfront through ways that are safe/quick/easy e.g. pedestrian priority at crossings, visible and enticing entry points. There has been some excellent work done on this;
- access to the water, e.g. through steps, floating jetties, beaches.
- signage and other information, particularly for people unfamiliar with the area;
- facilities for users (see below);
- amenities to make the experience more enjoyable, such as the poetry and sculptures already provided.

Shared space

Living Streets supports in principle the concept of shared spaces (between walkers and cyclists, and between active modes and motor vehicles), but these must be well designed and have sufficient width to accommodate the allowed modes, and space design to ensure appropriate behaviour by vehicles and fast cyclists. There should be no further development that leaves only narrow paths that have to handle purposeful fast walkers and runners, cyclists, and perambulating tourists and children. The width of Taranaki wharf and the waterfront promenade of Frank Kitts area should be the standard minimum. There should be no further development of 'narrow necks' such as the bridges at either end of the Taranaki Wharf, or in front of Shed 5.

Vehicle access to the waterfront should be limited to essential service vehicles, and entry to the parking buildings. Taxis and buses should be required to drop passengers at the edge of the area, and be provided with clear and suitable areas for doing this (as is the case next to the Museum of City and Sea).

Any further developments should be of a type that do not require large numbers of service vehicles, unless these can be routed under the pedestrian/shared spaces (e.g. through existing underground carparking spaces).

Personal safety

It is vital that the waterfront is attractive and safe at night. Lighting, the encouragement of activities that increase pedestrian numbers, and detailed design features will all increase the perception of safety. There should be restrictions on the consumption of alcohol in the public spaces.

Urban design

The design of the area should be focused on creating attractive, comfortable public open spaces. Carparking (other than underground carparks) should be removed, with the spaces re-designed as public open space. Any new buildings should be the same scale as the existing sheds, and designed to ensure that adjacent public spaces are enhanced rather than adversely affected (e.g. the edges should be designed to provide attractive sheltered areas for pedestrians rather than create shaded, windy tunnels.)

The sense of the waterfront as a single area, with coherent connections between the different parts, must not be lost. Buildings should also not reduce the connection between the waterfront and the rest of the city – something that needs to be enhanced.

It is also important that the area retain its open space character. For example if areas are to be covered over to increase shelter (e.g. for the Chaffers market), this should be designed to retain the open space feel of the area (as was done with the sails at Queen's wharf).

Comfort

The overall plan needs to provide not just walking routes, but also the basic facilities to make the use of the area for pedestrians comfortable -

- sufficient seating to allow people with poor mobility to rest frequently, and to encourage people to stop and enjoy the area
- drinking water
- shelter. Ideally there would be one sheltered direct route along the waterfront for commuters to use, and some sheltered seating closer to the water for people wishing to enjoy the views.
- lighting to ensure that the area feels safe
- toilets – we particularly welcome the proposal for toilets at the north end

Navigation-signage

There is a need for better signage and other measures (e.g. maps, stencilled routes on the pavement) to help people find their way around the area.

Correcting past errors

There are a number of features of the area that are generally agreed to be undesirable, and opportunities should be taken to correct these past errors. One example is the narrow route near Shed 5.

Access onto waterfront

A number of access routes from the city to the waterfront are not well designed for pedestrians. The major roads that border the waterfront area create a significant barrier to pedestrian movement. The Bridge to the Sea shows that this problem can be solved by imaginative investment. In the short term, increasing the frequency of pedestrian phases on major crossing points, and ensuring that pedestrians crossing at those points can enter a safe pedestrian space, are vital. We would note in particular the unsatisfactory and unsafe conditions faced by pedestrians crossing from the Railway Station to the Blue Bridge Ferry.

Any new developments in the waterfront area itself and the areas adjacent should increase rather than inhibit the movement of people into and across the area. We are concerned, for example, that the development of Chinese gardens in Frank Kitts Park could restrict the free movement of people across that area.

The North End

There should be a plan to extend an attractive and safe walking route all the way along the sea side of the roads to the Picton ferry terminal, and immediate actions to create a clear pedestrian route from the Railway Station to the area south of the Police wharf.

Great Harbour Way

The waterfront will be a core part of the Great Harbour Way. The Plan should identify this as a key project.