

18. TRANSFORMATION TO “LIVING STREETS”

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The purpose of this report is to consider progress made with the review of traffic calming in the city. It introduces the concept of a living streets philosophy, seeks endorsement of the Living Streets Charter and informs and seeks endorsement from the Committee with respect to the next steps necessary to progress through a phased transformation. The transformation refers to the stepwise implementation of a 5 year strategy.

BACKGROUND

In February 1999 the Council considered a report on the existing philosophy and policy on traffic calming in Christchurch. A copy of the February 1999 report is available from the Unit and gives brief insight into the philosophy behind current practices. At that time there was growing recognition and concern that whilst these practices were based on accepted philosophy, policy and best engineering practice, in reality, the demand for traffic calming by residential communities supported by Community Boards, often exceeded the funding available. Scheme plans implemented under pressure for delivering ‘quick-fix’ solutions often resulted in low cost physical works on street, like speed humps without the necessary environmental enhancements that could have been implemented had suitable funding been available. Generally this resulted in compromised solutions. These compromises often did not fulfil everyone’s needs and in some instances served only to frustrate or antagonise road users. The City Services Committee therefore requested that a review of current practices be undertaken and that alternative means to achieve similar objectives be explored. Examples of techniques that were evolving through pilot implementation in Australia such as “street reclaiming” and “travel blending” were cited as possible avenues for exploration. The Committee also expressed a desire to engage “independent” expertise that could objectively review current practice in Christchurch and introduce “fresh ideas”.

STUDY APPROACH

At its first meeting the City Services Subcommittee working on a proposed study brief, expressed its expectations and requirements by developing the following objectives for the study:

1. To mitigate the adverse traffic effects on residential neighbourhoods and high intensity pedestrian environments;
2. To explore means of addressing the growing negative reaction to the use of “severe” speed humps for slowing speeding vehicles;
3. To introduce approaches that will bring about a general change in driver “culture” that encourages safe behaviour;
4. To reinforce the complementary role that arterials and other higher order roads play along with local road traffic calming in managing a successful transport system;
5. To mitigate the traffic effects of these higher order roads so that they fulfil their role whilst minimising impact on the surrounding community;
6. To develop a framework or guideline that assists the decision-making processes with respect to appropriate traffic calming measures;
7. To build sufficient flexibility into the framework so that traffic calming measures appropriate to the specific characteristics of local environments can be implemented;
8. To highlight key success factors/requirements for traffic calming measures (such as lighting, signage and planting) where appropriate.

Following this input, the study brief was finalised for the purpose of calling for registration of interest and drew significant response from a variety of local, national and international consultants. What followed was a clarification stage in discussion with several of the consultant partnerships that had been shortlisted by the Subcommittee to establish a focus for the purpose of preparing and presenting their proposals. This further clarification resulted in a supplementary directive to the consultants. It included: (i) the need to create an understanding about the role of traffic calming; (ii) the development of critical success factors for achieving a quality living environment; (iii) the identification of a sensible classification system for dealing with the variety of streets within the roading hierarchy; and then (iv) exploring appropriate approaches for achieving the objectives of the study within this directive.

On 1 March 2000, the Subcommittee heard presentations by and received proposals from each of the shortlisted consultant teams. After further evaluation, Dick van den Dool of Jamieson Foley & Associates working in association with Penelope Coombes of The People for Places and Spaces were selected and appointed to assist the Subcommittee to achieve its objectives.

Two parallel streams of work emerged for the study. The one characterised largely by research into previous work on similar topics and included several literature searches, discussions with experts and collation of relevant engineering best practice guidelines. The second focused heavily on engaging a cross-section of stakeholders for the purpose of building a mutual understanding of perceptions, issues, problems and opportunities in the urban environment where traffic calming projects have and could be implemented.

This engagement was achieved through a structured programme of interviews, workshops and observation. It began with an “All Ears Listening” phase where the study team captured input from a broad range of people, followed leads and identified exciting opportunities for collaboration. The phase which followed, “Did We Hear You Right?” aimed to feedback the wealth of information, knowledge, opportunities and views in a structured way to firstly, test the study team’s interpretation and understanding and secondly, to develop and confirm emerging direction, including a ‘Living Streets Charter’.

Although there were two streams of work, they were strongly integrated and the emerging results from the research were continuously woven into the discussions and deliberations of the many working sessions with stakeholders. Several working documents were produced through this participative process and are available from the Unit on request. These include “Community Boards and Elected Persons’ Workshop 1 June 2000”, in which the findings from a questionnaire and the outcomes of the workshop are documented and “Summary Document – Internal and External Stakeholder Views.” Other documentation is separately circulated and discussed briefly in the ensuing sections.

The third phase of the engagement proposed a series of themes or goals called Key Results Areas (KRAs) and the work in this phase concentrated on developing actions and activities that would drive towards their achievement. The development of the KRAs began during the previous “Did We Hear You Right?” sessions as did a number of potential ideas and activities. Stakeholder groups from a cross-section of Council units were requested to indicate what they were currently doing that aligned with each of the KRAs as well as what they would or could do in the future. The detailed outputs from this phase are documented in the “Draft Living Streets Charter, September 2000”.

QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS

The report that captures the essence of the research into quality of life factors and discusses critical success factors is entitled “Quality of Life and Living Streets in Christchurch – Critical Success Factors, August 2000” (separately circulated).

It highlights that while there are many factors that influence the importance individuals and the community place on the different aspects of their quality of life, there are a number of key factors that emerge around which there seems to be growing global consensus. These are reflected in the table, which also shows the relationship between robust quality of life indicators and Living Streets:

Figure 1: The relationship between the Quality of Life factors and Living Streets

Quality of Life factors	‘Living streets’ – relationships to Quality of Life factors
1. Safety and security.	Safety and security real and perceived for all users of the street and road with a particular regard to traffic safety drivers and for pedestrians of all ages and abilities and slow modes
2. Economic vitality – a precondition to generate the wealth to create other services.	Economic activity is a vital human activity that must be a recognisable use for streets. Streets play a vital role in facilitating economic activities by all user groups, not just for motorists.
3. Access to a good quality of stock of housing.	Housing that has a direct relationship to, and interaction with, the street and other houses and increases neighbourhood sociability and neighbourhood aesthetics.
4. The importance of the community’s networks and organisational capacity in creating a livable and safe place and a sense of community.	Creating Social interaction and recreational activities that are available in streets (and in adjacent public spaces) for all groups of people in all life stages.

Quality of Life factors	'Living streets' – relationships to Quality of Life factors
5. A sense of place and identity and strong public realm.	This factor relates directly to the street and public spaces.
6. Cultural activities that allow places to be celebrated and enjoyed.	Streets and adjacent spaces play an important role in enabling communities to stage activities and celebrations and are the most public of all stages.
7. The need to establish a sustainable environment, particularly user-friendly transport systems, a high quality of air, water cleanliness, waste disposal, and noise reduction.	The relationship between a sustainable environment and streets is well established. Those environments that have reduced motor vehicle kms travelled and which support walking, bikes and public transport usages being the most sustainable.
8. Ease of access to amenities and facilities including health, education, shopping, sporting, and community organisations.	Here streets play an important role in providing access to the essential amenities.

IS CHRISTCHURCH READY?

In simple terms "... the most salient feature that distinguishes 'living streets' from others is that 'living streets' change the priority between people and cars, by giving people who live, work and visit in the streets greater measure of priority along with cars." Quoting further from the above-mentioned report, "it appears they ('living streets') don't 'just happen'! They are created by **clear and consistent political will and capacity** of national, regional and local governments, which are often **actively supported by a coalition of local residents and businesses.**"

It is appropriate to pause here for a moment to consider whether Christchurch is ready for this.

Firstly, Christchurch already has several superb examples of living streets. This demonstrates that the willingness, tools and some of the mechanisms for delivering living streets existed at certain moments in time (at least in part). It is important to build on and draw out these strengths within the Council. Setting up mechanisms that deliberately focus in this area is therefore a crucial element of the strategy and the topic of further discussion later in this report.

Secondly, through the interaction at the work sessions of this study that have taken place to date, there appears to be the political will to give further impetus to creating more and better living streets. Clearly more formal support will be sought through this report and other processes.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, one could conclude from the results of the annual Citizens' Survey, that the community is ready. There is a significant proportion of residents who are either Very Satisfied or Satisfied with Living in Christchurch from a quality of life perspective but are very concerned about factors such as Air Quality and Increasing Traffic, which might have an adverse impact in some way on their general quality of life. The above-mentioned statement needs to be qualified however and this area is key to the successful application of the living streets approach. For example, the traditional delivery of asset renewal street projects over many years has strongly influenced the expectations of most residential communities. People see and experience residential streets where the carriageway is typically narrowed from 14 metres to 9 metres and the wider berms are landscaped (usually in a manner that complements the planting on surrounding properties.) The 9 metre carriageway is generous enough to still allow on-street parking on both sides while permitting two vehicles travelling in opposite directions to pass comfortably. For most residents facing proposed work in their street, departing from this standard represents a significant 'loss' or 'threat' and influences their openness to explore any other alternative. Having a portfolio of good alternatives that they can be shown and where they can speak to the local residents therefore becomes crucial to introducing new possibilities. The establishment of a portfolio is therefore proposed as one of the essential steps in moving forward through the transition to the Living Streets Charter.

Fourthly, many projects throughout the city have or are demonstrating that when given the opportunity through fully understanding common purpose, citizens do care, become committed and collectively enter into governance partnerships to achieve common goals. The approach being developed as an integral part of living streets planning aims to nurture community involvement and commitment to maximise the mutual benefits from governance partnerships.

Fifthly, the initial direction being favoured through the metropolitan transport strategy planning process is one that promotes walking, cycling and public transport and improving access to and availability of alternative modes. This is encouraging because it strongly complements the concept of living streets. Other current strategies like the Cycle Strategy for Christchurch City, Pedestrian and Public Transport Strategies, are also evidence of the state of readiness in the city at the policy level.

All in all it may be concluded that, with careful planning and staged implementation, Christchurch is poised to embrace a fresh approach.

LIVING STREETS CHARTER

The document circulated “Draft Living Streets Charter, November 2000” covers the detailed results of the stakeholder engagement sessions. It proposes the following Living Streets Charter:

Vision

Enhancing the well being of the people of Christchurch and their city through effective local governance and the delivery of high quality services.

Mission

Create living streets and a living city where a variety of road environments support and encourage a greater range of community and street activity.

Key Results Areas (KRAs)

- KRA 1 In our dealing and work with people, we will improve communication, working relationships and seek their input in every phase of creating living and vibrant streets.
- KRA 2 Promote positive change in driver behaviour, route, mode and location choices.
- KRA 3 Strengthen and increase the use of all modes of public transport.
- KRA 4 Ensure all funding for road and transport infrastructure benefits pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.
- KRA 5 Ensure crossability and accessibility for cyclists, pedestrians and vulnerable road users.
- KRA 6 Create main roads that are for living while recognising their function as transport corridors.
- KRA 7 Extend the range of effective tools for local streets to meet community needs.
- KRA 8 Generate collective ownership and stewardship of local streets by their residents.
- KRA 9 Strengthen interdisciplinary and interdivisional collaboration.
- KRA 10 Minimise the negative impacts of car traffic in terms of health, safety and pollution.

Numerous exciting responses of officers and other roleplayers have been collated from the sessions to determine current alignment with the KRAs and possible future initiatives and ideas. It is relatively clear to the study team that a number of these initiatives would be a high priority should the overall concept of pursuing the Living Streets Charter carry the support of Council. It is however equally clear that a good measure of teamwork and ‘buy-in’ is necessary to develop practical and effective action plans within each of the KRAs. Their development is seen as an important part of the next steps in the process.

TOOLS MANUAL

The Tools Manual proposes a number of alternative technical solutions to compliment those already used in Christchurch. Most of these alternatives have been discussed, at least in concept, with the broad range of stakeholders that were consulted to date. They are not intended to be comprehensive but rather to be read in conjunction with existing guidelines and standards used here in practice. Copies of the Manual will be tabled at the City Services Committee meeting.

One of the more profound suggestions in this Manual relates to the introduction, for the purposes of understanding where the “Living Streets” philosophy could be applied, of a two-tier road classification system. This stems from the Charter’s requirement that all urban streets are for living. It demands a road classification regime that recognises and supports the access function of all urban road environments and differs significantly from the four-tier road hierarchy that currently restricts most calming treatments to “local roads”.

A number of interesting treatments like Safety Zones, Diverse Speed Environments, Main Road Diets and a host of other traffic management measures are dealt with under the broad topics of Crossability and Accessibility, Main Roads Are For Living, Effective Local Street Tools and Creating a Sense of Place.

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

There are a number of immediate steps that can now be identified and followed after the Council has indicated its support of the Living Streets Charter. However it is anticipated that the full programme of action plans will only emerge once the teams develop and co-ordinate their plans in pursuit of the KRAs. The first of these immediate steps therefore relates to the development of the action plans aligned with each KRA and resourcing implications. The second involves the identification of projects within existing programmes that clearly offer potential for applying the living streets philosophy as well as identifying the resourcing implications necessary to ensure successful implementation. The third step would be to implement several living streets projects across the city as demonstration projects. This would then be followed by intensified publicity to further promote practical concepts.

Developing Action Plans for KRAs

It is proposed to identify people interested to lead or ‘champion’ each KRA and to charge them with the task of developing these plans together with their teams. The nature of activities within some of the KRAs is such that action plans could be developed relatively quickly and there is urgency for this in order to identify resource requirements for inclusion in the proposed Draft Annual Plan for the 2001/02 year.

For example, one of the KRAs is to “Strengthen interdisciplinary and interdivisional collaboration”. In this regard, it is clear that multi-disciplined teams should be set up to deliberately follow the living streets approach when planning to deliver asset renewal and capital works streets projects. Such teams would typically involve key members from units like City Streets, Parks, Waterways & Wetlands, Leisure, Environmental Planning and City Design and are likely to require at least the City Streets members, to shift the emphasis of their current roles. These shifts in emphasis could necessitate adjustment to other roles, certain processes and the possibly the structure of the Unit.

Identifying Living Streets Projects

There are a few projects that are currently being explored by enthusiastic planning leaders as potential candidates to apply the living streets philosophy. In some instances the limited level of resourcing currently provided for the projects could compromise the application of the full living streets approach. It is therefore prudent to proceed with a measure of caution here and to provide additional funding or time to support their efforts.

Looking further ahead, resources should be dedicated to work in collaboration with Community Boards to identify where adjustment to the scheduling of projects in years 2, 3 and 4 (of the proposed 2001/02 Draft Annual Plan), would create opportunities to apply the living streets philosophy. The City Streets Unit has already begun this process and is working in collaboration with the Waterways & Wetlands team and other units. However, recommendations in this regard will be subject to the full support of the Community Boards and Council Standing Committees.

Demonstration Projects

It is essential to build up a portfolio of “show piece” Living Streets projects to demonstrate potential options. The reason for this is more fully discussed in the third point under the Section “IS CHRISTCHURCH READY?” It is proposed that once living streets teams are set up, their primary focus will be to work towards this goal.

Publicity

As with all initiatives that aim to bring about a shift in thinking and change in behaviour, there is a need to develop and implement a promotion strategy. This will clearly need to include effective exposure to the benefits of demonstration projects and people’s experiences.

There are already aspects of this publicity that are receiving some attention through the programmes managed by the Christchurch Co-ordinating Committee for Traffic Safety and the cycling promotion initiatives. The teams developing action plans aligned with KRAs 1, 2, and 3 have promotion as a common thread and will require resources to bring their messages strongly across throughout the transition.

TIMEFRAME

Transforming from the existing very well established process that delivers a fairly consistent standard, to new innovation and alternatives that reflect the nuances and characteristics of local communities, does not happen over night. There are expectations that have been created through the consultation process and publication of the City Council's Annual Plan, which reflect indicative projects over a period of four years. While there are opportunities within this that will be explored and implemented, it is sensible to phase in living streets projects over a period of years so that, so called "full implementation," becomes a reality in the new fifth year of the 2001/02 Annual Plan.

TRANSITIONAL ISSUE

Many projects already reflected in the current Annual Plan (particularly in the Neighbourhood Improvement Works output category) have been structured and estimated through the traditional approach and on the expectation that low cost physical solutions, like speed humps, would suffice to address issues that have been raised by stakeholders. There is currently a moratorium on the use of speed humps in isolation and it is likely that a large proportion of these projects may not proceed as initially intended. It is proposed that these projects are identified and alternatives, with their funding implications, reported through the Draft Annual Plan development process. Given that in many instances, the alternative will require increased resources, particularly in their planning, it is likely that they will need to be deferred to later years in the programme.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City Streets Unit would like to thank the Subcommittee (Councillors Sally Buck, Sally Thomson, Denis O'Rourke and Ron Wright) lead by Denis O'Rourke, for the inspirational leadership, direction and encouragement it enjoyed through this work as well as its foresight in recognising opportunities that arose throughout the process.

The study team remains indebted to the many people involved in stimulating the debate and generating ideas and enthusiasm.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Living Streets Charter, including the ten Key Result Areas mentioned in the body of this report, be endorsed and accepted as the guiding policy framework for new street asset and street asset renewal planning, design and implementation.
 2. That the City Streets Manager be requested to proceed with the development of action plans for the fulfilment of each Key Result Area and to report any resource implications required to achieve this to the six month Annual Plan review process.
 3. That proposals and draft budgets be developed for "show piece" projects to demonstrate the potential of the living streets philosophy to create a quality environment.
 4. That the resourcing and rescheduling implications of existing projects identified within the first four years of the Draft 2001/02 Annual Plan, that offer potential for applying the living streets philosophy, be explicitly reported as part of the annual plan process.
 5. That projects with high potential for applying the living streets philosophy be entered into the new fifth year in the Draft 2001/02 Annual Plan.
 6. That the cost implications of developing a publicity plan as well as the resource implications of implementing the plan be reported to the six month Annual Plan review.

7. That projects currently within the Annual Plan, which can not be implemented without compromising the Living Streets Charter, be identified and alternatives, with their funding implications, reported through the Draft Annual Plan development process.
8. That the City Services Subcommittee work with staff on the implementation of recommendations 2, 3, 5 and 7.

**Chairman's
Recommendation:**

1. That the above recommendation be adopted.
2. That the subcommittee consist of the Chairman and Councillors Sally Thompson, Ron Wright and Barry Corbett.