


# Slow Streets



As at June 1, 2020 | Version 1.0

Rethink  
Mobility 





As we learn to live in the current reality, more residents will go out onto the streets and day-to-day mobility flows will gradually be **Re**stored in our localities.

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An action plan to make  
sure mobility is safe,  
sustainable, healthy  
and efficient.



# Introduction

We are adapting the concept of public space and mobility to this new reality in order to bring back daily life to our localities. We are doing so with an action plan that will enable us to move around more easily and more safely, with sustainable, healthy means of transport that benefit everyone. We are calling this - **SLOW STREETS**.

As we learn to live in the current reality, more residents will go out onto the streets and day-to-day mobility flows will gradually be restored in our localities.

The Local Council Association together with the Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government and in coordination with Transport Malta and the Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Project will be working together with a number of Local Councils on **an action plan to make sure this mobility is safe, sustainable, healthy and efficient**.

The aim is to promote walking, cycling and public transport, in parallel with other educational campaigns to avoid unnecessary travel. To achieve this, a series of temporary interventions are required to ensure that our localities are as safe as possible, now and in the coming weeks, in order to minimise new cases of Covid-19 and to protect people's health through non-polluting means of transport.

Thirty five Local Council expressed their interest in being part of this effort. More will join as the scheme will be rolled out and the public will react positively to this initiative.

Within this context, **travel on foot and by bicycle for short and medium distances will continue to be the main recommended ways of getting round**.

They are individual and sustainable modes of transport and allow for the physical distancing from other people required as a preventive measure to continue tackling the spread of the virus.

**Travel by public transport is also recommended**. Our buses have continued to operate throughout the emergency situation all over the island. Great efforts have been made to comply with the maximum occupancy level and ensure the necessary hygiene measures to protect users. 

# Context

It is astounding how, in a span of a couple of months, the current pandemic changed our habits, questioned our lifestyles, distorted our day-to-day priorities and limited our freedom that seemed unquestionable.

Newly imposed limits restrict the way we socialise, interact, work and communicate. But a restriction on a basic human need, emerges as the most distressing – **Movement**

As the country is gradually reopening, we need to move back to our previous lives, in different ways, and integrate physical activity into our new routine. More than ever, finding sustainable solutions to adapt our localities to these new realities is becoming more urgent. Changes in our infrastructure and public spaces are necessary to achieve the new spacing measures necessary to live with the virus.

Malta is one of Europe's most densely populated countries. No simple solutions exist, especially in managing movement around densely populated areas. We need to find a new balance between managing the movements of people who will start resuming with their lives again and ensure their protection from the risk of contagion.

In this new reality, it is fair to assume that using a private car could be considered as a safer alternative than making use of public transport for shopping, travelling to schools and the workplace, places of leisure and entertainment. This will undoubtedly lead to an unprecedented increase of congestion, especially at peak times, in CO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> pollution levels, fine dust and climate-changing emissions, and the impact in terms of space, linked for example to the limited parking offer.

Hence the urgent need to reflect, plan and act, on the reduction in demand for mobility and on the offer of alternatives, seeking a new balance that allows residents to adopt functional behaviours for effective, safe and sustainable mobility, in response to both the new emergency and the 'previous' problems of our localities.

While some vehicle movement within our localities is inevitable, such as movement of goods and regional transfers, a lot of vehicle-generated traffic can be avoided.

There are a number of 'creative' solutions that do not require major infrastructural interventions. Promoting and providing incentives for remote working schemes, intervening on locality schedules, and encouraging shortening journeys by promoting the 'local' shopping and leisure experience will be essential measures to compensate for the

reduction in public transportation capacity and the motor vehicle dependency.

In order to diversify the mobility offer, it is necessary to identify 'healthy' alternatives to support collective transport. The best way to move and integrate physical activity in a locality is also the simplest: **walking and using a bicycle**. Walking is an essential need, as well as the more natural and straightforward way to move, especially within and around neighbourhoods. 🌻



Image: Mariona Gil | [www.barcelona.cat](http://www.barcelona.cat)

A photograph of a man in a striped polo shirt and light-colored trousers walking away from the camera on a city street. He is holding a black leash for a small, fluffy, light-brown dog. To his left, a young girl in a blue striped shirt and jeans is walking. In the background, a person in an orange shirt and blue face mask is walking, and another person in a blue shirt and blue face mask is also visible. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The text "The time is right to give more space to people and improve environmental quality around us." is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

The time is right  
to give more space  
to people and improve  
environmental quality  
around us.



# Safe Routes in the Neighbourhood

## - an unprecedented opportunity

We missed physical activity. The season is perfect. And the air is cleaner.

With fewer cars on the road, and record drop of pollution levels, walking and cycling is much safer.

Despite being in times of difficulty, everyone seems to be appreciating the new scenes of our localities with limited car movements that have restored the charm of a slow-paced, human-scale locality. The daily impact that traffic generates on the well-being of people and the environment, in terms of air pollution and noise has become more apparent.

The time is right to give more space to people and improve environmental quality around us. It is time to increase the non-polluting surface movements and redefine the use of roads and public spaces for commercial, recreational, cultural, sporting uses, respecting the expected physical distances.

The substantial reduction in urban traffic allows us to experiment and intervene effectively on our roads before they return to full speed, minimizing discomfort on the circulation.

The temporary nature of this situation forces us to identify soft and inexpensive solutions, fast and reversible adaptation, which if effective could consolidate over time, accelerating the transition period to already defined and more permanent long-term solutions in support of sustainable means of transport.

The progressive stages for the recovery of our lifestyles require the reinforcement of every neighbourhood's safe route network where people can walk and exercise individually, always respecting the minimum distance of two metres from other people as recommended by the Maltese health authorities.

The routes, which must have a width of at least four metres, include streets with pavements of more than four metres in width, streets of more than four metres in width with priority for pedestrians, squares and promenades.

In order to expand the safe route network, Local Councils in coordination with Transport Malta will be temporarily closing a number of streets to through traffic, which will result in more available space for pedestrians. The closures will take place on specific schedules and specific days and will be marked with signposted boundaries located at the start and end of each street and at each crossing. Emergency vehicles, loading and unloading services and residents will be allowed access.

**Slow Streets** are intended to provide additional free and unencumbered open public space and priority to pedestrians and bicycles for essential travel. While outdoor exercise, recreational activities and play are encouraged, these spaces should not become locations for public gatherings.

When choosing the streets, priority will be given to those neighbourhoods which have the fewest spaces for walking safely in the current circumstances: those without direct access to large open spaces and those with a very dense population and a lack of open spaces.

The streets that have been chosen are not part of the main arterial and distributor traffic network, and no bus routes use them. Furthermore, priority will be given to roads that complement routes to facilities such as markets, shopping hubs, the locality's main piazza, primary healthcare centres, playing grounds and gardens, among others. Whether the streets intersect perpendicularly in a specific or central part of the neighbourhood will also be taken into account.

Some of the gardens and play areas have been closed since the pandemic started. Where possible we are suggesting that these would be reopened and added to the safe route network and pedestrian areas. 🌻



# Who will Gain

## - Our Residents

Our Residents and their well being are at the centre of this project.

The mental and physical health of the most vulnerable is at the top of our priorities as we reopen our localities. Our elderly and disabled will be able to enjoy a short stroll through our beautiful and historic village urban cores and our town centres without putting their lives in danger. A number of safe walking corridors will connect shops, churches and piazzas, schools, primary health centres, gardens and play areas.

Our children can play safely and let out steam in temporarily designated creative play areas, in areas formerly occupied by cars, enjoying a bicycle or scooter ride along with their parents within their neighbourhoods.

Physical exercise, such as walking, jogging and cycling in our locality,

becomes possible thanks to a safe loop within the locality connecting gardens, green areas, rural neighbourhoods and open spaces.

A cycling priority route that links neighbouring localities, shopping hubs, bus networks and places of entertainment will trigger a shift to cleaner and sustainable ways of transport. We are hopeful that our youths and the younger generation will lead this transformational change.



Image: Monica Moreno | [www.barcelona.cat](http://www.barcelona.cat)



## - Local Businesses

Walkability provides more business opportunities as more people enjoy easy access to commercial uses. Our local businesses are an integral part of our communities and need to be supported in this delicate situation. Residents will be encouraged to shop from local businesses by extending the open safe pedestrian space of our local shopping hubs.



Image: Monica Moreno | www.barcelona.cat

## - Our Society

Walkability increases social interaction (even at a distance), diversity of public life, increases wellbeing and enhances collective security and safety.



Image: Monica Moreno | www.barcelona.cat

## - Government

Walkability improves public health and creates more connected, and therefore stronger, communities. Physical exercise has been widely recommended to improve the resistance against the pandemic.



# Where to Start

As we enter the new normal, we have to embrace what we can do outdoors - and expand the idea of what is considered as outdoor space.

We need access to our streets, not just piazzas and town centers. Streets allow more space for movement. Slow Streets give residents an opportunity to **experience their neighbourhoods in a new way**, connecting homes and

gardens, homes and shops, homes with their neighbours. With less cars, streets are wide expanses available for cycling, roller blading and playing. Children can learn to bike without worrying about traffic.

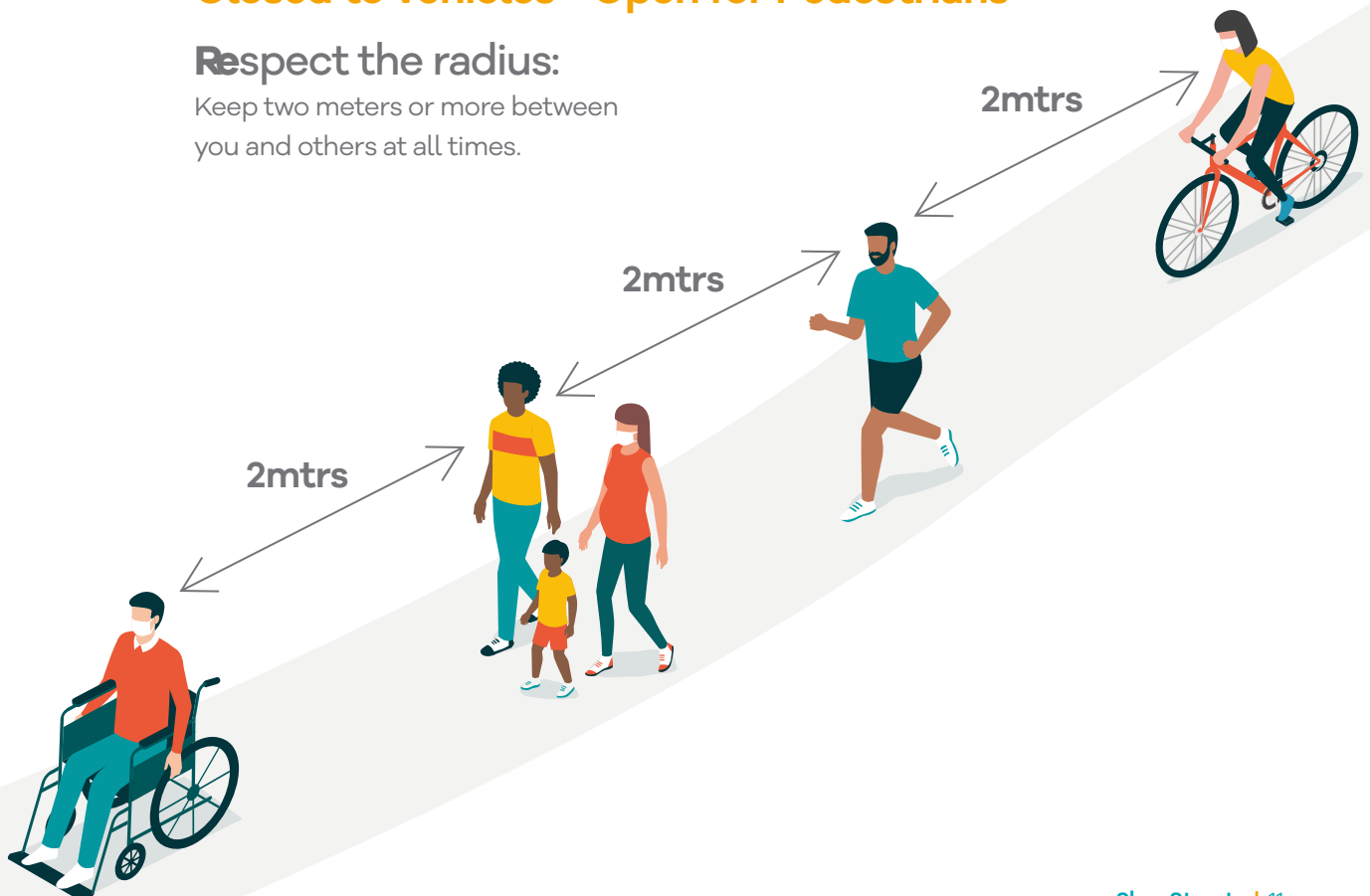
While every neighbourhood has different concerns and considerations, **Slow Streets is a concept that can potentially extend to a permanent network of safe walkways and low-stress biking so as to slow traffic and create safer streets.**

Slow Streets should be done in high density neighbourhoods, especially in communities that lack open space.

## Closed to vehicles > Open for Pedestrians

### Respect the radius:

Keep two meters or more between you and others at all times.



Slow Streets is a concept that can potentially extend to a permanent network of safe walkways and low-stress biking.



## Making it Appealing

We have to work on making **streets attractive for people**. Vehicle traffic is now starting to creep up and there is a concern that, as commuters return to work, private vehicle use could increase further from pre-pandemic levels.

It is important to give people an easily-accessible way to provide feedback and monitor how people are using the open streets and whether they relieve pressure on crowded areas.



Image: [www.comune.milano.it](http://www.comune.milano.it)

## Keep 'Slow Streets' Local

**The challenge is to keep the streets open for local residents. The best way to do that is to make many more slow streets available, to create enough space for safe local recreation.**

Slow Streets are for local residents, and are not intended as gathering areas for the general public. Users must keep 2m distance from each other, which is important in the recovery from this pandemic by making sure that there is more space for people in every area.

## We already have the Resources

Within this period of the pandemic, we need to rethink and adjust our surroundings to meet the new needs and requirements of more space for residents, and more quality spaces. These spaces should address the need to move freely, and interconnect the community.

We have to think of innovative ways to reuse and reshape available resources to the needs of all users and new spacing measures, from playing grounds for children to walking lanes for adults. It is necessary to improve conditions for walking and cycling if we are to achieve

safe and accessible mobility for everyone in our localities. We do not need new infrastructure – we just need new rules and guidelines.

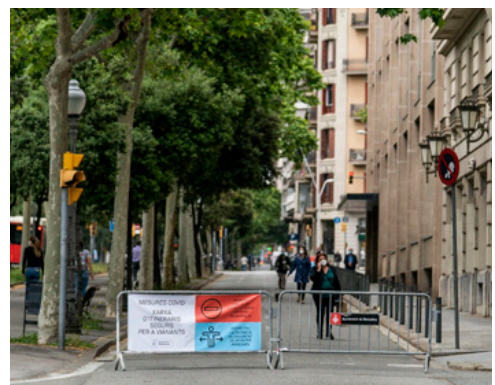


Image: Monica Moreno | [www.barcelona.cat](http://www.barcelona.cat)

## Important target Goals

We need to realise that residents are at the core of the problem **and the solution**. We need to think of links that will allow people to move safely and remain protected.

**Protecting public health can be done by providing temporary walking and cycling routes which enable safe physical distancing for essential journeys and exercise for everyone,**

in particular within localities where there are limited public spaces.

There are different types of routes to consider, a few can be combined:

- Hospital/clinic and pharmacy route;
- Shopping/commercial routes;
- Exercise routes (for everyday);
- Scenic/hiking routes (for weekends);
- Social routes, such as picnics and playing; and
- Future school and office routes.

The better the conditions, the more activity occurs. Activities are essential for vitality, safety, and healthy communities.

## Traditional Routes > Different Routes

### Refocus the journey:

Projects should firstly focus on essential journeys, and should be delivered quickly and provide a visible improvement that has an immediate benefit.





# The immediate Solution

## - Temporary Pedestrianisation

As we plan for Malta's future, we are expecting to see a change in the way people move around our localities. Streets are a place for movement as well as public space, where social interaction occurs.

Implementing a pedestrianization scheme will reduce the use of cars, increase walkers' safety and comfort, and improve the economic activity.

Temporary closure of some roads to vehicle traffic will make creation of new rules and regulations for pedestrian areas easier.

It will require:

- Collecting data on number of pedestrians and timings;
- Consulting local authorities, local community groups and other stakeholders through meetings and workshops – this would include conducting surveys to find out residents' opinions on closing selected streets and providing opportunities for the local community to contribute to the process
- Setting up test closures on selected streets and temporary traffic reorganisation

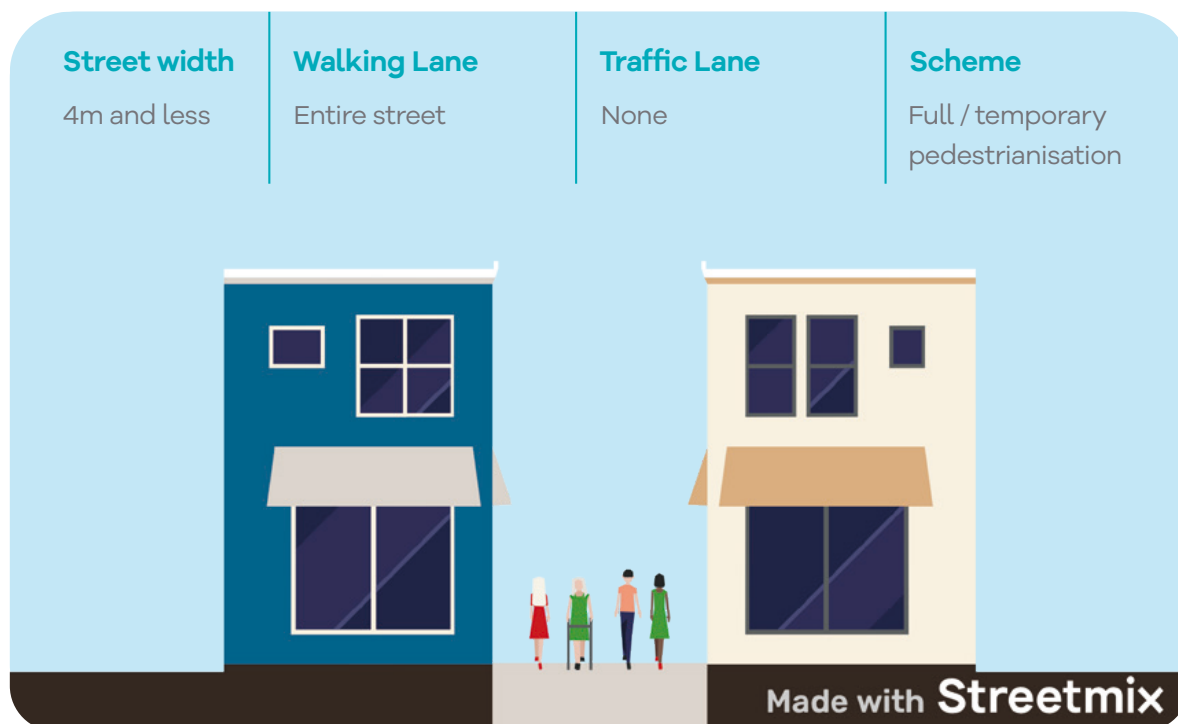
The use of streets and public space by people can provide insights into informal use of space as well as showing the need for, and the great potential of, quality public spaces.

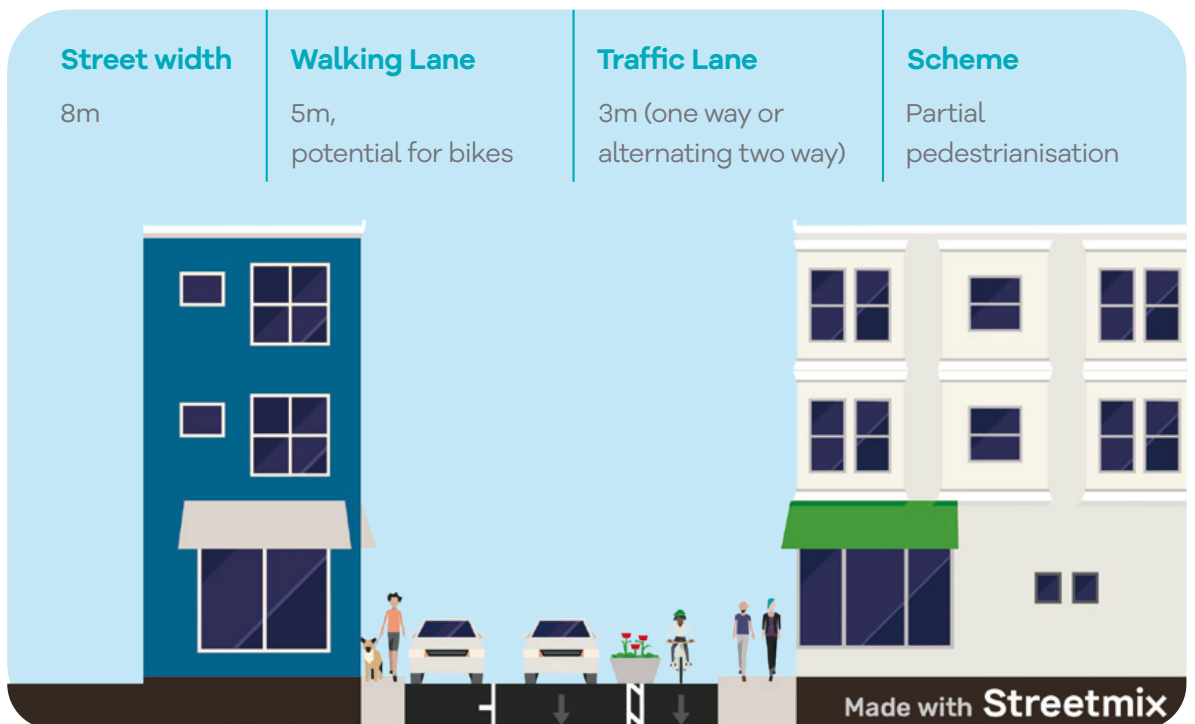
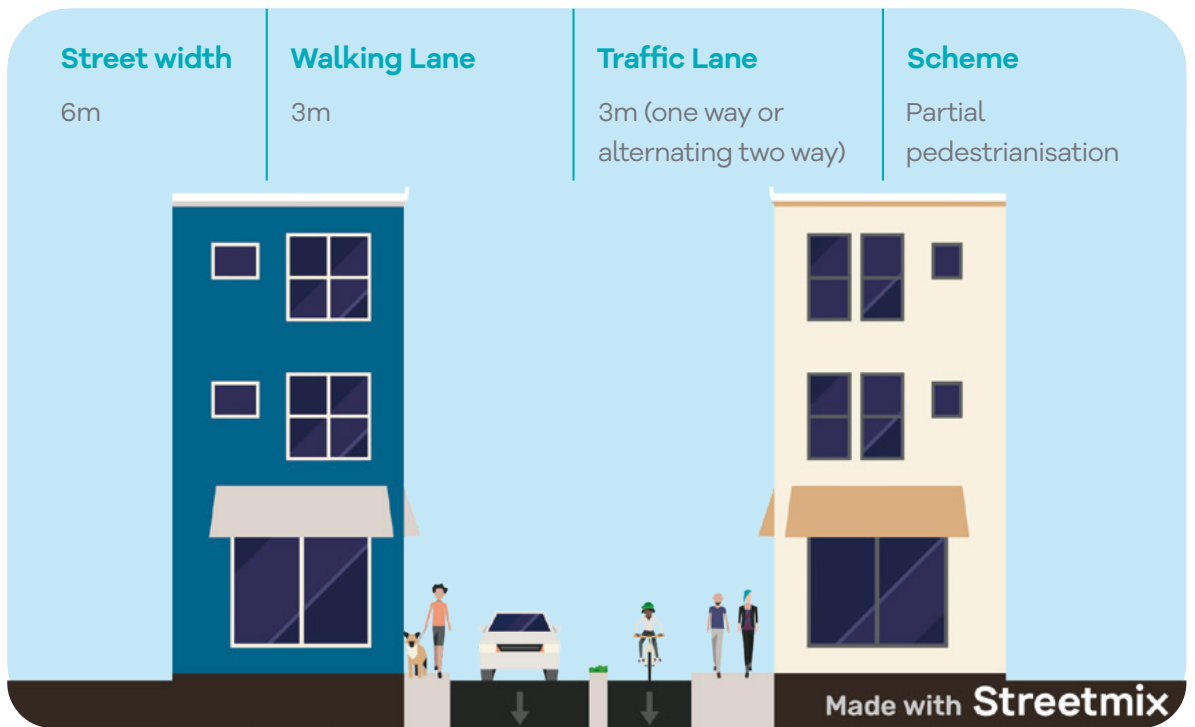
## - Pedestrianisation Schemes

The degree of pedestrianisation can vary according to the locality, street and the needs of the residents.

There are several schemes to be considered:

- **Temporary schemes:** where at day time it is open to vehicles and at night it is only for pedestrians, and potentially food/commercial stalls, or vice-versa.
- **Partial pedestrianisation:** closing off a section of the street but not the entire road to allow for one-way traffic.
- **Full pedestrianisation:** closing off the entire street.





Street width	Walking Lane	Traffic Lane	Scheme
10m	7m, potential for bikes	3m (one way or alternating two way)	Partial pedestrianisation



Street width	Walking Lane	Traffic Lane	Scheme
10m	3m	6m (two way)	Partial pedestrianisation



## - Creating pop up Pedestrian Lanes

The creation and delineation of immediate pedestrian streets or lanes can be done using several methods, such as:

- Traffic cones or protective metal barriers (for greater safety)
- Paint markings on the ground
- Planters, which can also serve further as small 'community gardens' to engage the community in planting.



Image: [www.comune.milano.it](http://www.comune.milano.it)

Redesign  
Spaces



Image: [www.comune.milano.it](http://www.comune.milano.it)

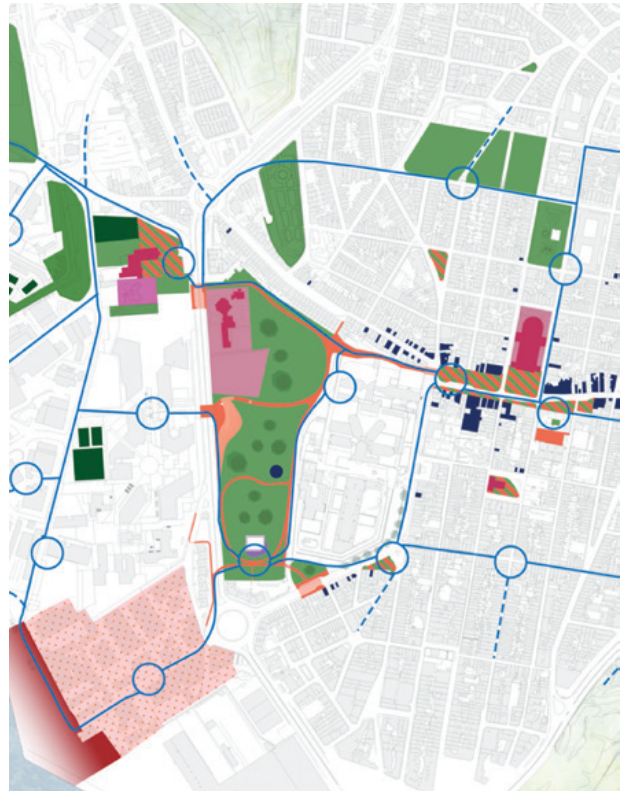
# Planning Considerations

When creating lanes, consider:

- Localized loops wherein 1 loop is a 30-minute walk and 4 loops comprise a 30-minute bike ride @ 12mph;
- Potentially reducing a lane in the current pandemic;
- Where retail is closed, repurposing parking lanes; and
- Providing active transportation routes that can provide space for people to disperse in parks, open spaces and waterfront promenades.

When deciding on a temporary or even permanent pedestrian scheme for any locality, consider:

- All residents should have equal opportunities to participate and engage in creating a walkable community.
- Access requirements by service vehicles.
- The possible introduction of temporary walking routes to schools and universities.
- The current speed limits, as roads with high designated vehicular speeds require more protection for pedestrians.



## - Other European examples

[France announces €20 million to get people cycling](#)

[Bologna speeds up bike network roll-out](#)

[London to fast-track mass walking and cycling network](#)

[Scotland commits £10 million for pop-up cycleways and footpaths](#)

[Brussels announces 20km/h limits and expanded bike network](#)

[Budapest launches temporary bike lanes to get city moving](#)

[Dublin cuts parking space to prioritise pedestrians](#)

[New South Wales announces funding for pop-up street improvements](#)

[Milan reallocates street space from cars to walking and cycling](#)

# An Evolutionary Process

## - Temporary Pedestrianisation

It has never been more important to look after our health and the health of our fellow residents, particularly those who have limited access to open spaces.

In this respect, short-term actions comprise a tool to test an idea before implementing large-scale, costly projects that may not meet the desired outcomes.

Often short-term interventions become permanent or cyclical, where they become approved and accepted due to their outstanding results.

The achievement of walkable neighbourhoods is a result of an ongoing process. We can begin with small changes as from tomorrow, and eventually reach our long-term target goals within a few years. In this respect, even the smallest effort in this direction may contribute to such important goals.

### Life



### Space



# Acknowledgment

Slow Streets is a project forming part of the Sustainable Mobility pillar within the ResidentFirst vision 2024.

This document was developed by The Local Councils' Association ResidentFirst Team in collaboration with Dr Antoine Zammit BE&A (Hons)(Melit) MSc (Lond) PhD (Lond), perit, Founding Architect and Urban Designer at Studjurban and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Faculty for the Built Environment, University of Malta.

## **Special appreciation to:**


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# Participating Councils

- 1 Attard Local Council
- 2 Balzan Local Council
- 3 Birgu Local Council
- 4 Birkirkara Local Council
- 5 Bormla Local Council
- 6 Dingli Local Council
- 7 Fgura Local Council
- 8 Floriana Local Council
- 9 Fontana Local Council
- 10 Ghajnsielem Local Council
- 11 Għarb Local Council
- 12 Għargħur Local Council
- 13 Gudja Local Council
- 14 Gzira Local Council
- 15 Hamrun Local Council
- 16 Haż-Żebbuġ Local Council
- 17 Iklin Local Council
- 18 Isla Local Council
- 19 Kalkara Local Council
- 20 Lija Local Council
- 21 Marsaxlokk Local Council
- 22 Mdina Local Council
- 23 Mellieha Local Council
- 24 Mosta Local Council
- 25 Mqabba Local Council
- 26 Msida Local Council
- 27 Mtarfa Local Council
- 28 Munxar Local Council
- 29 Naxxar Local Council
- 30 Pieta Local Council
- 31 Qrendi Local Council
- 32 Safi Local Council
- 33 San Lawrenz Local Council
- 34 Santa Lucija Local Council
- 35 Santa Venera Local Council
- 36 Siggiewi Local Council
- 37 Sliema Local Council
- 38 St. Julian's Local Council
- 39 Swieqi Local Council
- 40 Ta' Xbiex Local Council
- 41 Tarxien Local Council
- 42 Valletta Local Council
- 43 Victoria - Gozo Local Council
- 44 Xagħra Local Council
- 45 Zabbar Local Council
- 46 Zurrieq Local Council





Now is the time to act.  
Now is the time to  
embark on real and  
effective change.

**Resident First** 

