

SUMMARY OF PROJECT FINDINGS

Project title: Walking and cycling in Māngere: Community experiences of Te Ara Mua – Future Streets

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Te Ara Mua – Future Streets (Future Streets) was a transport project in Māngere Central where streets, footpaths, and recreational areas were changed to make it safer and easier for people to get around the neighbourhood, especially by walking or cycling, and to reflect cultural identity. The aim of this study was to understand how people from the Māngere community experienced the Future Streets changes, particularly for walking and cycling.

I interviewed eight community stakeholders for this study, whom I selected based on their ability to represent a range of community perspectives. I also used written transcripts from three focus group discussions with 21 Māngere residents. I analysed these together and identified five major themes, which I have summarised below.

1) Road safety

Participants generally felt the Future Streets changes had improved road safety for people walking and using mobility devices but made driving harder and less safe. Cycling was still seen as quite unsafe, and while some thought the new bike lanes made cycling safer, others felt it was better to bike on the footpath or road.

“down [at] the town centre now it is definitely safer crossing the roads” (female, interview)

“it is safer, especially for the older citizens for them to walk” (male, focus group)

“I get it [...] they use the island to make it easier for the kids to cross [...] but it's a pain in the arse for our cars to get through” (male, focus group)

“on the quiet days you [go for a] bike, but you never ride a bike when it is busy” (female, focus group)

2) Personal safety (safety from crime and attack)

Personal safety in Māngere Central remained a major concern, with participants describing the streets and reserves as looking nicer, but not feeling any safer than before, especially at night.

“[the park] looks friendly but basically when you look closer [...] drinking still happens everywhere” (female, focus group)

“would I be feeling safer about sending my teenage girl up to the shop, you know at night time in Māngere, no” (male, focus group)

3) Social and cultural norms

Residents were also said to experience social barriers to walking and cycling. For example, walking and cycling was considered a symbol of not being able to afford to drive or take the bus. Cycling was described as normal for children only, while adult cycling was seen as sporty and culturally foreign to local residents.

“you rarely see people walking to the town centre, unless [...] you're broke” (male, interview)

“from a cultural perspective, island-based [...] bikes are for kids, and that's how they should always be” (male, interview)

“this is Māngere no one ever wears helmets, they all still bike on the footpath” (male, focus group)

4) Practicality

Participants said practical barriers to walking and cycling prevented many residents from taking advantage of the new infrastructure, such as responsibility for transporting children, lack of time, and the cost of bikes.

“people struggle to make ends meet, they gotta be places, feed kids, lay them down, off to your next shift” (male, interview)

“[it’s] a large family-oriented community, so if you’re going somewhere, you may be taking six or seven other people [...] so it’s easier to throw everybody in a single people mover” (female, interview)

5) Community involvement

Finally, participants tended to see Future Streets as either an under-researched experiment or as much-needed investment in a neglected area. Community engagement on the project, especially on the bike lanes, was felt to have been insufficient.

“it’s just nice that there has been some investment into recreational stuff that looks quite good” (female, interview)

“I know you guys did all the stuff in the markets but [...] there’s still a lot of people that don’t feel like they were part of it” (male, focus group)

“I think the frustration occurred when they started doing too many bike lanes [...] I was going what the hell no one’s going to be in this, there’s no bikes, especially in Māngere” (female, focus group)

Community experiences of walking, cycling, and Te Ara Mua – Future Streets	
How comfortable and safe people feel getting around the neighbourhood	How easily available walking and biking are to locals
<p>Road safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking is safer and easier, especially for children, older people and mobility device users • Biking is still unsafe, including in the bike lanes • Driving is harder and some drivers have crashed on the bike lane separators <p>Personal safety (safety from crime and attack)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parks and alleyways around Windrush Close are nicer but not much safer than before • Reckless youth, gangs, and aggressive dogs make walking and cycling unsafe • Children and women are most vulnerable • Bike theft puts people off biking 	<p>Social and cultural norms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking and cycling for transport is associated with poverty • Driving is the normal way to get around • Cycling is childish, or sporty and culturally unfamiliar • Bike lanes are for sports and commuter cycling <p>Practicality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large family sizes make walking and cycling difficult • Overcrowded housing worsens loss of parking • Biking is cheap, but locals can’t afford bikes • Residents are short on time • Health issues make walking and cycling harder • Many common destinations are far away
<p>How well the project involved the community and understood their needs</p>	<p>Community involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local transport habits were under-researched or misunderstood, <i>or</i> the project was a big change and the community will take time to adjust • Community engagement insufficient; some residents left out

Figure 1: Summary of study themes

In conclusion, Māngere community experiences of Future Streets changes are influenced by a wide range of social, practical, and environmental factors. While street design was considered important, especially for road safety, participants in this study saw embedded social and practical factors as having more influence on local walking and cycling. As such, despite greater community engagement than most transport projects, participants lacked a strong sense of ownership over the changes. The findings suggest that personal safety concerns, local transport norms, and practical circumstances require further attention if the Māngere community is to widely realise the health benefits of increased walking and cycling. Potential future initiatives could include increasing supervision of parks and alleyways, providing free bikes (or e-bikes) and locks, or working with key local institutions such as churches to promote walking to their services.

If you would like to discuss this research, please contact Rebekah Thorne at rtho170@aucklanduni.ac.nz