

Pedestrian Streets

Back in the old days when I was mayor I visited Santa Monica and Boulder. After seeing their successful pedestrian streets, I proposed closing just two blocks of State Street on weekends only as an experiment. Hugh Petersen, owner of La Arcada, was a dear man, but he totally freaked out at the idea. He'd seen other cities where pedestrian malls had failed because they were badly done.

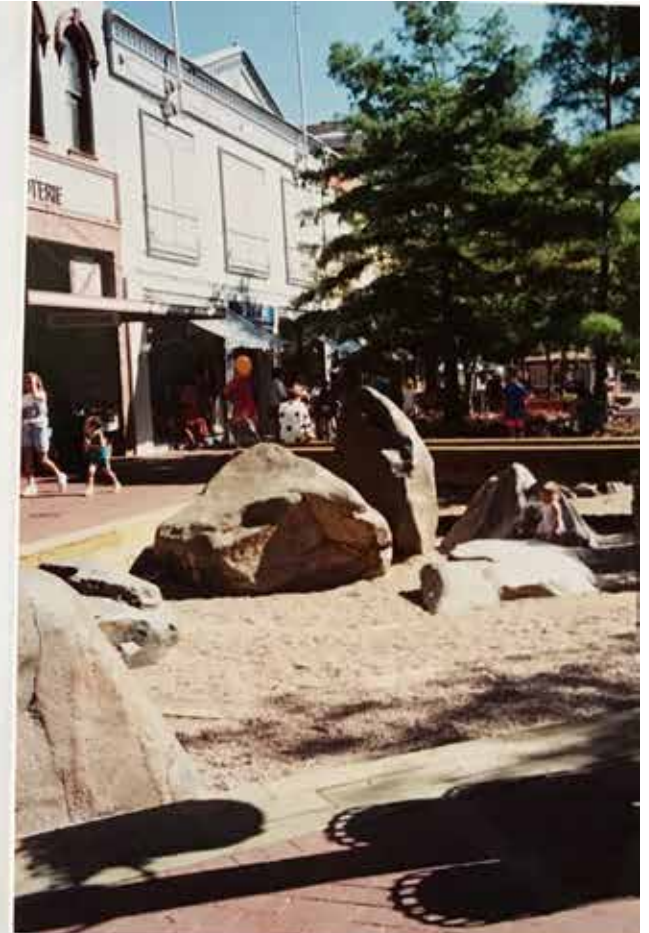
Petersen hired some planning consultants to look at State Street and come up with suggestions. They made a well-attended presentation one evening in the art museum's theater. Their recommendation was to bring the parking back to State Street. (Yes, really!) I nearly got hung from one of La Arcada's lamp posts that night. I still think that creating a permanent pedestrian mall on some of State Street is a very good idea.

What follows are photos of the pedestrian streets in eleven cities. I hope they are helpful in providing ideas for what Santa Barbara might do.

Sheila Lodge
July, 2020

Boulder, Colorado - the Pearl Street mall (June, 1990)

The first photo below was taken looking west towards the Rockies. The middle photo shows some of the entertainment that was available. The third photo shows a very small child in a very large sand box.



PEARL STREET MALL

Boulder created this mall on four blocks of what was its original downtown. The cross streets remain open.

I spent two days in Boulder. Both evenings were spent on the mall it was so pleasant and inviting. Three generation families, students, people of all ages walked up and down. There was a very congenial atmosphere.

I asked about wintertime use and was told that when the sun was out it was quite comfortable to be outside. There were numerous eateries with outside seating as in the first photo.



PEARL STREET MALL

Boulder • Colorado



PEARL
STREET
MALL



PEARL STREET MALL

↓ PUBLIC REST ROOMS

COUNTY COURT HOUSE

↓ MRS. FIELDS COOKIES



There was only one very small chain store on the mall. The other shops were unique locally owned stores. (That may have changed.) A mini-food truck offered fresh crepes (below).



Boulder • Colorado

MASKED STORYTELLER



The east end of the mall is below. 1.5 miles away down Pearl Street was a traditional enclosed mall with the usual chain stores. Both malls were doing well.



Copenhagen • Denmark (1991)



Stroget - the longest pedestrian street in Europe - 1.25 miles



Oslo • Norway (1991)

A brochure about this neighborhood described it as Oslo's most exciting area, and it may well be. It has a harbor and marine facilities, residential flats, a rich cultural life with theater and cinemas and 1600 underground parking spaces.



Looking down Oslo Fjord from the pedestrian plaza. A Dixieland jazz band played nearby.



Edinburgh • Scotland (1991)

Rose Street - the main shopping street in downtown Edinburgh.





Brisbane • Australia (1992)

Queen Street Mall

One of my hopes for Santa Barbara was to close at least two blocks of State Street downtown to traffic. Traffic engineers generally do not like to do such things because it interferes with the free flow of traffic. I was delighted to see Brisbane's Queen Street Mall.

Queen Street is *the* street that leads directly onto one of the three bridges that cross the river into downtown. A river curves around it on three sides. (See the map and satellite view on the next page.)



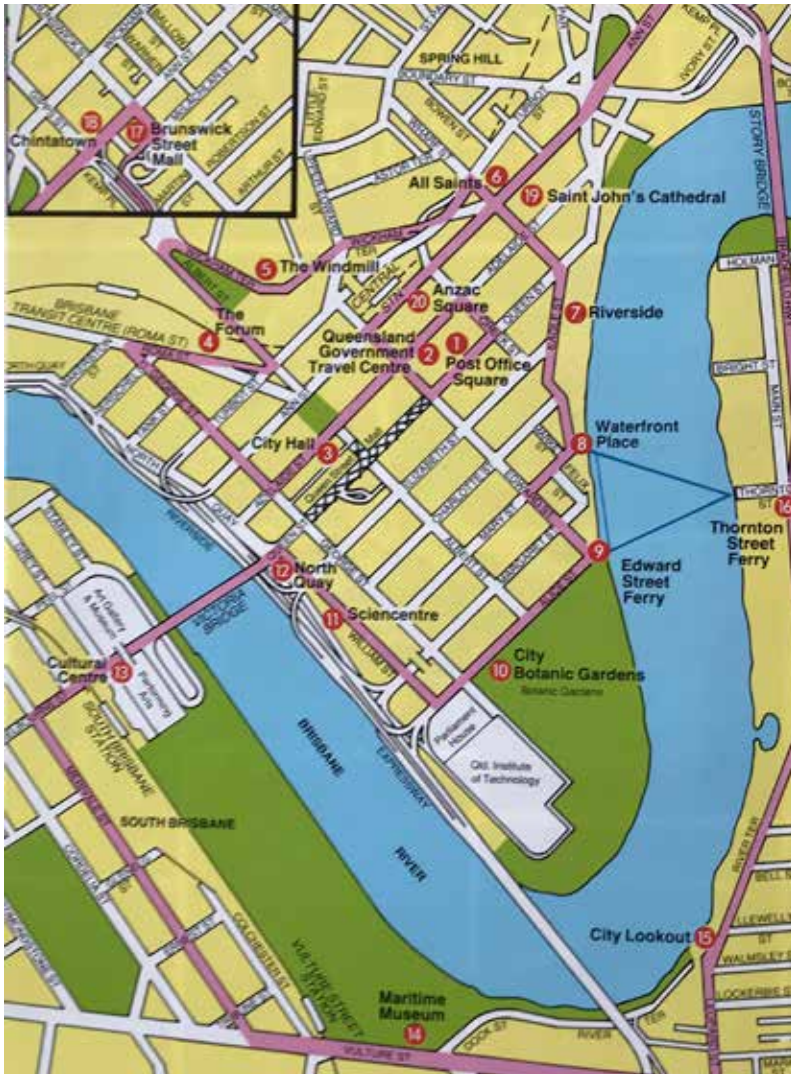
The stores didn't open until 10:30 am, and we were on the mall before then. There still were quite a few people strolling.



Brisbane • Australia

Despite the fact that cars have to go around the mall coming to and from the bridge, the city still seems to function well. If Brisbane can do it with its much greater population (2.5 million as of 2019), much greater density of development in its downtown and much more restricted access, so can Santa Barbara!

The cross-hatched street below is the Queen Street Mall.



Brisbane • Australia

Queen Street Mall



The photo above is one of several arcades that go through a block and are filled with elegant shops.



The one cross street goes under the mall. It is to the right of the low wall.

(The mall is behind me.)

Brisbane • Australia

Queen Street Mall

I managed to cut off the bottom line in the photo below. It said, "Your City Council -- working for you", and was the reason I took the picture. (Well, why not try to make the council look good?)



Sydney • Australia (1992)

A major retail and office tower block was turned into a pedestrian mall. Three side streets were also permanently closed to traffic. Lots of public art enlivened the area.



Christchurch • New Zealand (1992)



City Mall

The three main retail blocks in downtown plus a cross street which led to a large plaza were closed to vehicles.

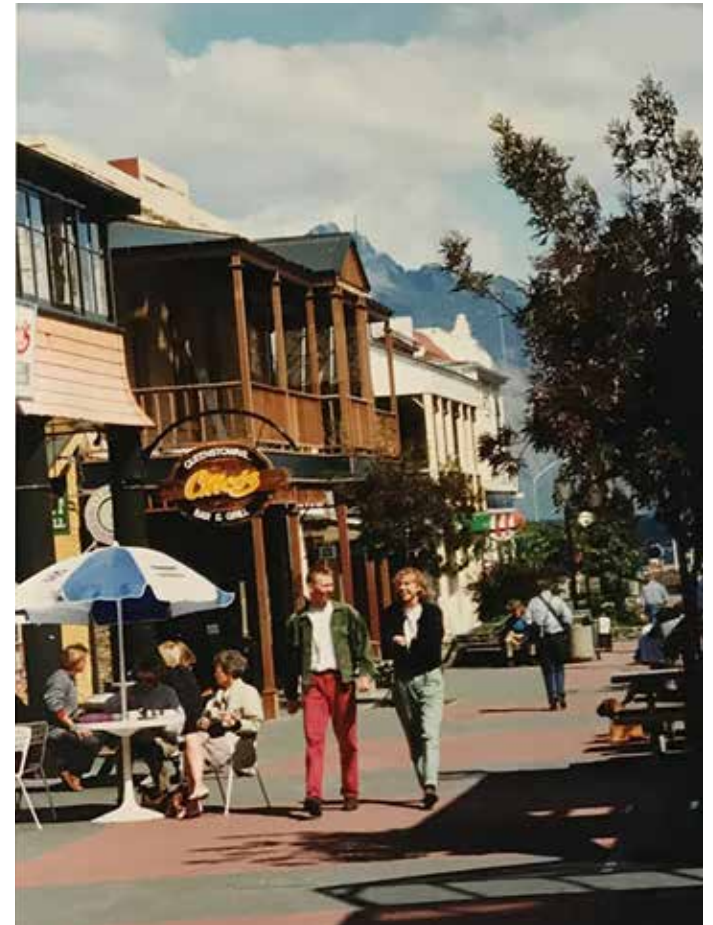
The structure in the photo below is a pedestrian bridge leading from the second story of a department store to another store across the street.

(In February 2011 a severe earthquake destroyed many of the buildings along this mall. It is still a pedestrian street, but it doesn't look the same.)



Queenstown • New Zealand (1992)

The two main retail streets of Queenstown have been turned into pedestrian streets. Although it was March and not a prime holiday time when we were there, these pedestrian streets were lively places, especially at night.



Amsterdam • The Netherlands (1993)

The street in the first photo allowed no vehicles at all. The wider pedestrian street in the middle photo allowed public transportation, and there were lots of street cars. Many of them were very colorfully painted.



Charlottesville Virginia



When typical suburban malls were built on the edge of Charlottesville draining business from the original main street, it was turned into this pedestrian promenade. It is a popular place. Once I was walking across the mall on a cross street. As I got to the middle of the mall I heard an odd buzz in the air. I stopped and listened. It was the sound of the conversation of the many people on the mall.





Santa Monica • California



Third Street Promenade



What Makes a Successful Pedestrian Mall?

The most successful of these eleven pedestrian malls were Boulder, CO, and Charlottesville, VA. They were also the most inviting. They had generous plantings of canopy trees and street furniture including public places to sit. Boulder's Pearl Street Mall was a community living room.

The shopping streets shown which were simply closed to vehicles were full of people such as Edinburgh and Amsterdam. Once shopping was done, however, there was nothing to make people linger.

Santa Monica's 3rd Street Promenade has been commercially successful. Its wide street and lack of canopy trees make it less inviting than Boulder and Charlottesville.

Sydney and Charlottesville have public art enlivening their pedestrian streets. It should be added to State Street.



Some State Street blocks are amply landscaped including canopy trees. Those that have a scanty supply could have tree wells placed in the street as was done on Wentworth Avenue while leaving enough width in the middle for Santa Barbara's numerous parades to pass through.

Wentworth Avenue tree wells