

What Makes Cities Livable?

LEARNING FROM SEATTLE

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Environmental Action



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10 Good Reasons For Seattle's Livability



Pike Place Market

Threatened with destruction by an urban renewal project, the Pike Place farmers' market was saved for its original use by a 1971 referendum. Recognizing that the Market served as a vital social and economic function, the city established a 7-acre Market Historical District as part of a broader 22-acre urban renewal project, specifically designed to preserve the Market and its environs.

Since 1971, several of the Market buildings have undergone extensive restoration and rehabilitation under the guidelines of the 1966 Historic Preservation Act, and the safeguards established by the City Market Ordinance. A Special Design Review Board supervises the design process while citizens' participation is handled through an Historical Commission.

An attractive farmers' market today, Pike Place builds upon old traditions in contemporary form. The intelligent planning and implementation which have gone into this project have made it a national model, particularly for its creative financing mechanisms, its mix of consumer uses and its sensitivity to problems of dislocation and relocation associated with the rehabilitation process.

Central Waterfront

When the shipping facilities of the Port of Seattle were moved away from the central waterfront area, the old waterfront entered a period of decline. During the last decade, however, the downtown waterfront has made a spectacular comeback, with redevelopment proceeding incrementally and tourist facilities filling the vacuum left by shipping.

Most of the old piers have been renovated through private initiative to include restaurants and shops. A waterfront park, a pedestrian promenade and a spectacular aquarium have also been developed with Forward Thrust park funds, combining recreational and educational facilities with shopping, dining, boat cruising and fishing.

The ferry system, renovated and expanded by the State, has become a major focus for tourists and residents, and provides both an element of vitality on the water scene as well as a way to enjoy a view of the city.

As the waterfront develops for pedestrians, the city is moving to establish better links on the steep hill between the waterfront and downtown, exemplified by the Hill Climb Corridor, connecting the Pike Place Market to the Aquarium.

Magic Carpet

Magic Carpet, a free downtown bus service introduced in 1974, has dramatically affected the patterns of downtown mobility, while stimulating retail trade as well as tourism.

It was former Mayor Wes Uhlman's idea to invest \$70,000 in a practical test rather than in a feasibility study of innovative public transit. The benefits have far outweighed the expenditures and the project has been an instant success ever since its inception. Moreover, Magic Carpet did not require any major changes in the city's overall bus system. Passengers going outside of the Magic Carpet area pay upon exiting from the bus, while riders who board outside the downtown pay upon entering. Within the central city limits, free circulation is unlimited.

Implementation of Magic Carpet did not require any major change in the city's overall bus system. Passengers going outside of the Magic Carpet area pay upon exiting from the bus, while riders who board outside the downtown area pay upon entering.



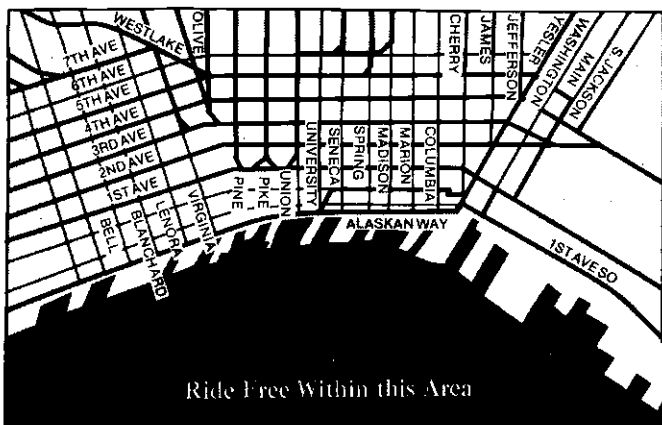
Magic Carpet

But the most original idea which emerged from this period of small solutions to seemingly monumental problems was the creation of "Magic Carpet," Seattle's highly touted free downtown bus service, which enables passengers to get on and off anywhere in the downtown area without having to pay a fare. A year before the initiation of Magic Carpet, Seattle had a "Shoppers Shuttle" which operated on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., charging a reduced fare of ten cents. Although it was an improvement over the previous system, it still attracted only 2,300 passengers daily. Magic Carpet, on the other hand, attracted 12,258 passengers only one year after its introduction, and a survey conducted in 1974 showed that 8% of the downtown employees had shifted to the bus from cars for work trips. The aim of Magic Carpet was to reduce traffic and parking lot congestion, encourage the overall use of transit, and stimulate tourism and retail trade. It succeeded in all of its objectives, and during its first year captured more than \$5 million in retail sales for the central business district, about a 1% increase in total downtown sales of goods and services. Operating costs in 1974 were a mere \$138,000, making Magic Carpet one of the simplest and most economic solutions to the problem of downtown congestion, while satisfying the needs of both merchants and users.²

Bike Facilities

This trend gained increased impetus in 1972, when Washington became the second state in the nation to enact legislation providing funds for bike facilities. The bill required that one half of a percent of any community's gas tax be spent for construction of pedestrian, equestrian and bicycle needs which serve a "transportation purpose." The people of Seattle liked the idea, and within the last five years, the city has constructed 38 miles of scenic bike-routes, 5 miles of bikeways in the parks, and bicycle safety programs which included the construction of bike ramps and installations of special direction signs, and bike racks on buses to cross the bridges. 12.5 miles of Seattle's bike-routes resulted from the conversion of the Burke-Gilman Trail, an unused railroad track to a scenic hiking and biking route extending from Gasworks Park to Kennon Logboon Park.

Seattle's Magic Carpet



Ride Free Within this Area