

Walking in The Hague; a gradual change towards pedestrian priority

Peter Smit
Alderman Traffic and Transport of The Hague
jacqueline.pieters@denhaag.nl

Abstract

The city of the Hague has, from the 1970's on, followed a consequent policy to create more attractive and safer spaces for pedestrians. This presentation will put pedestrian-policy in The Hague in a historic perspective. Showing a shift in the paradigm; from a policy oriented towards making space for car mobility, towards a policy aiming at a healthy mobility mix with a strong position for pedestrians. By showing "good examples" within the Hague, the presentation will show that small steps have transformed the city into a pedestrian friendly place.

The presentation starts with plans for a new motorway-breakthrough in the mid 70's, which were stopped by civilian protests. From then on the attitude towards pedestrians started to change. In the early 80's policy makers became aware of pedestrians; the first streets in the city centre were closed of for cars and "home-zones" (woonerfs) were created. From the mid 90's large parts of the inner city were redesigned, to create a more attractive environment. It became clear that attractive public spaces for pedestrians are an important economic factor. Meanwhile living areas were transformed into 30 km/h zones, in which cars adjust speed towards pedestrians and bicycles. In the beginning of 2010 the city centre was closed for through traffic, the prestigious "traffic circulation plan" has created the largest pedestrian area within the Netherlands. Nowadays pedestrians are the dominant factor for designing public spaces in the inner city.

The presentation will also highlight the relations with the spatial- and mobility policy as important factors for creating the right conditions for "getting people back on their feet". Spatial policy in The Hague is aimed towards a more compact city, in which new homes and offices are integrated within the existing city fabric. Traffic policy is aimed at a modal shift from car traffic towards bicycle-use, public transport and pedestrians.

The presentation will give a general overview of the position of pedestrians within The Hague by using "good examples" of pedestrian spaces within the inner city area, residential neighbourhoods and green areas. For those visitors who are interested to learn more on "good examples" in The Hague, three more detailed presentations of the municipality The Hague will focus on these areas (see other papers of the municipality). These presentations will be combined with "walkshops" in these areas. (see the other papers from The Hague)

- The transformation of the inner city into a pedestrian zone; creating an attractive urban space which has also revitalised the economic position of the inner city.
- Walking within residential areas; designing a safe and accessible public space. This is about safety and comfortable routes to shops, park and schools. Traffic calming and continued development of 30 km/h zones are examples of this strategy.
- Attractive and accessible green areas and park.