

Strøget; Copenhagen, Denmark

CASE STUDY



Location: Central Copenhagen, Denmark

Population: 0.5 million

Metro: 1.9 million

Length: 1.15 km (0.7 mi)

Right-of-Way: 10–12 m

Context: Mixed-use (Residential/
Commercial)

Maintenance: Several repavings since
1963

Funding: Public

Overview

Until 1962, all the streets and squares of central Copenhagen were used intensively for vehicle traffic and parking, and were under pressure from the rapidly growing fleet of private vehicles.

The pedestrianization of Copenhagen began with the city's main street, Strøget, which was converted in 1962 as an experiment. The conversion of the 1.15 km-long main street into a pedestrian street was seen as a pioneering effort, which gave rise to much public debate before the street was converted. "Pedestrian streets will never work in Scandinavia" was one theory. "No cars means no customers and no customers means no business," said local business owners.

Soon, Strøget proved to be a huge success, with businesses realizing that traffic-free environments provide increased financial revenue. Magasin Torv, the square by Nikolaj Church, and Gråbrødre Torv were the first squares to be renovated.



Before



After

Photos: Gehl Architects

The pedestrianization of Strøget highlighted the potential for outdoor public life in Denmark.

Key Elements

Removal of all traffic from the street.

Removal of curbs and sidewalks, addition of new paving.

Consolidation of street furniture to facilitate pedestrian movement.

Goals

- Improve connectivity in the city center.
- Provide a high-quality and attractive environment.
- Create a space that supports businesses.
- Encourage a diverse range of people to live and spend time in the city center.
- Revitalize the city's forgotten alleyways by turning them into vibrant laneways.

Involvement

City of Copenhagen, Stadsarkitektens Direktorat, Stadsingeniørens Direktorat, Bjørn Nørgård.

Keys to Success

The successful pedestrianization of streets in Copenhagen can be attributed, in part, to the incremental nature of change, giving people the time to change their patterns of driving and parking into patterns of cycling and using collective transport to access key destinations in the city—in addition to providing time to develop ways of using this newly available public space.

Lessons Learned

The pedestrianization of Strøget highlighted the potential for outdoor public life in Denmark, as Danes never before had the room and the opportunity to develop a public life in public spaces. This pedestrianization created peaceful, yet lively, public spaces. Strøget also proved that pedestrian streets can increase revenue for local retailers.

Evaluation

 **+35%**

Increase in pedestrian volumes in the first year after the conversion.

 **+600%**

Increase in pedestrian space, from 15,800 m² in 1962 to 99,700 m² in 2005.

 **+81%**

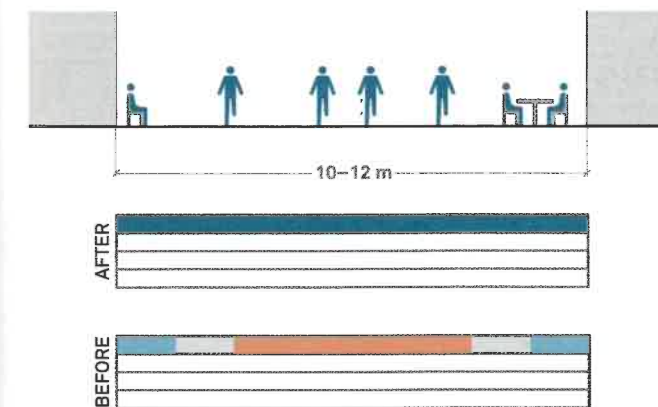
Increase in outdoor café seating, from 2,970 seats in 1986 to 7,020 in 2006.

 **+400%**

Increase in stopping and staying activities from 1968 to 1996.

 **+20%**

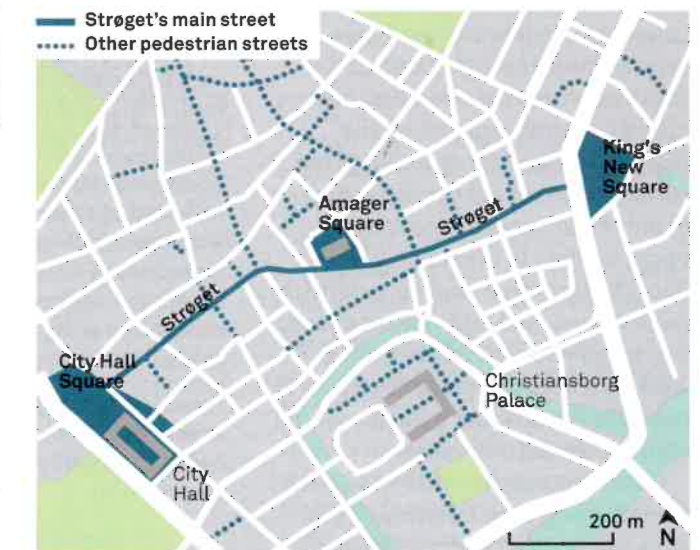
Increase in citywide pedestrian volumes to 15 min/day on average.



User legend:
 Pedestrian space
 Parking
 Mixed traffic

Project Timeline

1962–Today



Strøget has been renewed and upgraded several times during its 53 years as a pedestrian street, by using progressively better-quality materials, repurposing public spaces and plazas to increase pedestrian comfort, and adding outdoor uses.

Amager Square was renovated in 1993 by local artist Bjørn Nørgård. Today, it is the second most popular urban space in the city because of the diverse range of activities offered there.

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