

# Going Kerbside – Why it's the Next Frontier for Making Great Places

**Intro:** Welcome to a special edition of the People and Place podcast exploring the Future Ready Kerbside and its role in creating Future Ready places for people to live, work and play. Here is your host Graham Pointer.

**Graham:** Welcome to our special edition of the People and Place podcast, where we're exploring local places and how to achieve Future Ready Kerbsides. My name is Graham Pointer, a geographer and planner at WSP Australia. I'm joined today by Ashleigh Cormack, Future Cities Lead Australia and New Zealand for Uber, a cities policy expert who cut her teeth in roles with state and federal governments in Australia. Welcome Ashleigh.

**Ashleigh:** Thanks Graham.

**Graham:** Mary Haverland, Technical Executive Planning and Mobility for WSP, and one of Australia's leading thinkers on mobility and place. Welcome Mary.

**Mary:** Hi Graham. Thanks for having me.

**Graham:** And Ethan Kent, Executive Director Placemaking X, a global network he co-founded in 2019 to accelerate placemaking leadership and impact globally. Over the years, Ethan has been welcomed into more than a thousand cities in 60 countries to advance the cause. Thanks for joining us, Ethan.

**Ethan:** Hey, Graham. Great to be here with you.

**Graham:** So welcome to all of you. I'm really looking forward to this discussion. The prompt for the podcast is some thinking that WSP has been collaborating on with Uber, looking at the future of the kerbsides. And this thinking recently culminated in the release of a white paper called Future Ready Kerbside. But as we get started, let's bring everybody into the conversation by considering, what is your favourite street and why? Ethan?

**Ethan:** So Graham, that's a tough one. But yeah, I love thinking about wonderful streets. And if you haven't been able to spend as much time around the world in the last year, so this is a, it's a good one. But as I think about my favourite streets in the world, I think about streets where the kerb actually disappears.

There's a town in Sweden I went to called Borås where there were many different paving patterns that slowly, as you got closer and closer to the centre of the city, they slowed you down almost subconsciously and the kerb ultimately disappeared.

But how do we start to think, in a much more iterative and sensitive way about the design of streets. And then realizing that the best designed streets, actually, the design doesn't even matter anymore. It's about the life. But I think the life of all cities really starts with, the crux of it is on the sidewalk and the most informal life of a sidewalk is right at the edge of it.

And so how are we not just thinking about the transportation angle of this, but how do we manage it, so we maximize the social life of the edge of our sidewalks, of our kerbs.

**Graham:** So we'll book a trip to Borås. Mary, what's your take on your favourite street?

**Mary:** My absolute favourite is in my little town of 1600 people in the Huon Valley down here in Tasmania. It's a little high street that is named after me Mary street, so that wins. And it's book-ended by the top pub and the bottom pub. And it's got church, school, shops, cafes, art galleries in between.

But it's not just the places in between. It's the way in which the streets support those places. So, it's got the wide footpath, it's got street trees. It's got the bench where my mum can sit down so she can shop between the butcher and the chemist. It's got little features that my kids find interesting. It's got a community bookstand. It's got the apple stand where the local farmers bring their apples and you can still buy apples. And it's just a wonderful, vibrant little street and the only thing I would change on it is that in the middle of this street, it had, does have a car park and the car parks used as a market on the weekend.

But what I'd love to see flipped around is for that to become a public square, which is used for parking during the week. But other than that, fabulous little street.

**Graham:** Excellent. Thanks, Mary. And I leave it to you, Ashleigh.

**Ashleigh:** Mine is hard as well. An area of Sydney that I like going to, and I don't go to enough because it's really touristy, is the Rocks, which for those of you who don't know Sydney, it's a historic area on the South side of the Harbour bridge and it was the first sort of area that was settled when the English arrived in 1788.

And I love the sort of the rambling streets and laneways through the rocks and the unpredictable layout. It's not very intuitive in that way and like that. I will say, being an infrastructure nerd, I love being under the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Tourists always go to the Opera House to take a photo of the Sydney Harbour Bridge when really the best angle is under it looking up at it. Just how magnificent it is as a piece of infrastructure. So, I think that would be my, one of my favourite places to visit. I think one of the reasons, I was trying to analyse, why do I like it? It was built at a time and designed at a time when the private car wasn't around, and it was built for pedestrians.

And I think, there are private cause around there now, but it is just a much more pedestrian friendly sort of area to walk around because of its history. And so that's why I like it.

**Graham:** Ah, excellent. Ashleigh. And I think I heard a fairly common theme there, pushed on by Ethan with that comment about where the kerb dissolves away and you have that muddling of uses and functions that this public realm enables and that movement. And also, those place ambitions being realized.

I might take the opportunity now just to come back a little bit in our consideration of the kerbside and how it matches into place and let's really bed down what we mean by place. There might be people listening that haven't heard that term used too often.

So, Ethan, I might throw to you to give us the rundown. What do we mean by place?

**Ethan:** First of all, I think the kerb is a really exciting new focus and way to get people into the place conversation. And place is sort of an amorphous idea, but it's really how people give purpose and meaning to space. On a simple level, it's places that we love, places that we do things in. It's of limitless potential what place can be and it means many things to many people. One place can have many different purposes and meanings to many different people. And in many ways, the best places are competing to support and serve many different uses and populations. One way we think of what makes a good place is, sort of, a criterion we talk about is called the power of 10. Where a good place has at least 10 reasons to be in it. It just helps people think about what you do in there. And, what are the different user groups that feel welcome to do different things there.

But we see place as also, it's a new movement. We see it as the next environmental movement, or the environmental movement was how do we save the planet from people. How do we impact it less? And we think there needs to be a place movement to challenge people, to create a world that works to create a world where people work well together to build a civilization that's sustainable, but also thriving and just being sustainable isn't enough and it's frankly not achieving sustainability enough.

We need to aspire to great places that we want to live in and be part of and help co-create to achieve many of the goals that we have to sustain human life on earth.

**Graham:** Thanks for that, Ethan. Picking up on one of the points you made, there is that cross-cutting, cross-disciplinary piece to places. If you want to create places, it requires a whole bunch of different disciplines to achieve great outcomes for people.

And that's where I think this discussion is really helpful in terms of reaching lots of different types of professionals to shine a light and to reflect on their roles in creating great places. And it's certainly something that I've found joining WSP and engineering consultancy which builds big things, but then bringing it back to users and people and what the outcomes of those projects enable for places really resonates. And you can see that being really powerful in terms of a sense of achievement, accomplishment in those projects.

**Ethan:** We think, the goal of creating places, really, it turns upside down the shaping of cities and ideally it draws more demand for, and more creativity from the various disciplines, especially engineers. We actually find that the engineering professions particularly transportation engineering in the US has caused the most damage to place because they weren't asked to create places. They were asked to move traffic. But at the same time when you ask an engineer to create great places, it's a challenging, wonderful question that we just haven't been trained to do, we haven't been asked to do enough. And so, it's not meant to be a critique of them.

And we find that focus on places is the best way to really make the competition comfortable, creative, accessible to many, to de-professionalise it a little bit sometimes too to get, allow communities to be part of it. But also make it not antagonistic. It's not about being against the car about one set of solutions it's being for something.

**Mary:** I think what was really important with introducing the movement and place framework into policy was that so many of our, as you pointed out, Ethan, so many transportation engineers just aren't asked to consider place. We had defined our roads and streets in the 20th century by movement and access.

We'd completely taken place out of the equation and we asked them to design a primary arterial road, a collector road, a local street, based on how many vehicles they moved through it, how fast they went and how many people would access the properties next to it. And we completely stripped out this idea of roads and streets being public spaces and places in their own.

And so, what's been really exciting is introducing that definition back into how we define roads and streets and say, and actually they're a balance of movement and place and that it's this design and the design objectives for those can be quite competing. For the movement we want to move people quickly and reliably through our spaces, but for place, for people in space, we want them to be sticky.

We want people to stop and dwell and it's quite a different competing design objective but bringing everyone into the same tent at the beginning, by defining your objectives for a road and street has been really powerful.

**Ashleigh:** If I could just add to that, Uber we're in the business of moving people, but so people sort of wonder why is place really important to you. It was important to us because it's important to cities and we want to be a good partner. So that's number one. But the pandemic has really shown us what happens when people don't go out into places.

The big use case for Uber is what we call social hours. People going out Friday and Saturday nights to restaurant and entertainment precincts. If cities don't have lively sort of precincts and places where people want to go and attend and, that's a large part of our business not happening.

So, I think places are, interestingly, really important to us as well.

**Mary:** That's a really interesting point about how it's changed during the pandemic, isn't it? And how we've used our roads and streets. I think, also coming back to Graham's point where he was saying about working for an engineering consultancy often we're designing big things. But what we're finding is the common unit of all those big things is the people.

And, the people who are using that infrastructure or the people who are going to live within the buildings we create. But it becomes a challenge as well, because for engineers, it's much easier to design for vehicles. They go forwards and backwards and they're pretty predictable. Designing for people, really challenges a lot of us. Understanding the psychology of people, understanding why they're going forwards backwards, and then they turn around and then they stop and scratch. And people are very hard to design for. So, it really, it challenges people.

**Ethan:** I always think of the point of transportation systems isn't to move people around more and more, as you say, it's not movement and it's not even access. Access is still a new

idea, an important idea for many people to think about but it's actually to get people to places they want to be.

And a lot of our transportation engineering of the past it was actually degrading the very destination we're meant to bring people to. It was undercutting and as Ashleigh said, it's preventing, cities from thriving, there's fewer reasons to go out, to be around each other and to make our cities thrive economically, but socially, culturally, and so forth. But more than that, I think, the focus on place it's not just about planning for place or sensitively to place, but it's actually, to really have an efficient transportation system we need to turn it upside down to think about how do we reinvent our regions, our districts, our streets around destinations that have lots going on. And that's an efficient transportation system when you accomplish many planned and unplanned things in one place. When you smile at people, connect, get serendipity and you get ideas and get the things you need functionally in one place or our longest street that really changes the efficiency of a community.

And in turn, it actually makes your transport system more compatible with biking, walking, and transit with more environmental modes. But I actually think that it is car sharing and how we manage the kerbs that is really our biggest opportunity, maybe our only opportunity, to really shift the transportation system to be place led.

I think that right now it can go into two different directions coming out of this pandemic. And because of the way that some of the advertising for the car industry and in car sharing is it promotes a frictionless environment sometimes.

And there's exceptions to this certainly, but it promotes this idea that the future city is this, sort of, elevated highways moving through high rises. And it sounds fantastical, but it's been drilled into our minds is this is what a futuristic city is like. And realistically the parts of the world that are allowed to copy that in Asia, hiring American architects or elsewhere, are building that pretty quickly. And even in New York, the newer buildings actually reflect that sort of more frictionless experience.

We have a rare opportunity because of the pandemic and honestly, because of companies like Uber in discussions like this on the reinventing of the kerb, to really think about how our system can be reinvented around maximizing destinations. And that ultimately is about having really active kerbs that support those destinations, where drop-off can occur, where car sharing eventually autonomous vehicles will out-compete privately owned vehicles because parking should not be viable or affordable in those destinations. And you want the high turnover of the drop-offs to add to the social life of that kerb of that public space. So, we need to envision a world and we need to get people talking about these issues to think about it's the destination that's really active that is the exciting, sexy thing about cities. And that new technology is going to support that. The city is not going to be defined my new technology or buy the car anymore it's going to be defined by people. And we actually need new technology to support that.

**Mary:** And that's really interesting with future mobilities that often when we talk about it, the images we show and the footage we show are of autonomous vehicles zipping around and we always show the movement of these future vehicles. But actually, when we step

back and look at it as a designer, if we consider those future vehicles purpose of that journey as a passenger is still the same to get somewhere as quickly and reliably as possible.

So, whether I'm in an autonomous, connected, electric or a shared vehicle, my journey purpose is the same when I'm moving. What's really going to change with future mobility is what happens at the beginning and the end of that journey. What happens in the places where I start that journey? And this is where we'll see massive change at the kerbside, because what will change is if I'm in a shared vehicle, as opposed to a private vehicle, I'm going to want to know, where do I get that shared trip from, where do I start? As opposed to wanting the car parking space at the end of it. Or if I've got an electric vehicle I'm going to want to know, can I charge my vehicle at the end whilst I'm doing something? So, what's going to really change with future mobility is at the kerbside and at the places as opposed to on the road networks themselves.

And that's something I find really interesting with future mobility that we don't focus, or we haven't focused to date, on those changes. I get really excited by micro mobility and how that talking before about how we've got quite binary in how we design a road space, the footpath at walking speed and the roads carriage way at the speed of a vehicle. But micro mobility just shakes that all up. These electric bikes and electric scooters, they go at a pace that's not quite as fast as a vehicle at full speed, but certainly much faster than walking. They enable you to go much further and it changes how we design road spaces. Are we still going to design them in this binary way or is there a third speed that we need to be designing for? And how does that impact the kerbside with our traditional cycle lanes or cycle paths?

**Graham:** Yeah and it wraps up our key theme that we've tried to push through our white paper around having that vision, that appreciation for what we want from our places. So, we've talked about automated vehicles, micro mobility, and we're seeing some of those inaction at the moment. They bring implications for how we manage that kerbside to best achieve our vision for those places. And I guess I'd be really interested in your reflections on what's the barrier been so far to really making the most of our kerbside to achieve the best for our places.

**Mary:** We don't often set objectives for the kerbside. We know what we want from a foot path. We often know what we want from the carriage way, in terms of what sort of modes and what sort of speeds. But for the kerb to date, it's been quite an undefined area. And that's where the productivity studies coming out of San Francisco and Cincinnati were really exciting is that for the first time it was applying this systematic method of looking at, do we want them to be productive and how do we make them the most productive? And hopefully in this study, we've added to that with the place context and the future mobility context at those kerbsides. But certainly, I think agreeing those objectives and also certainly in Australia, at least, that's quite challenging because we have different governance arrangements for the footpath and the carriage way. So, we will have state government being responsible for the state road. We will have local government responsible for the pavement, and often we'll even have a transit authority or a bus group responsible for the bus stop itself.

So, we have all these different players who have different objectives. The local government will be responding to its local residents and businesses and community. Whereas the state government will be responding to its transport network and a much broader, city-wide group of people and society.

**Graham:** Yeah. And then what I'd add to that as well, I think is the voice of businesses in the community are often quite muted within that process as well. So particularly if you see changing land use within places like shifting from potentially light industrial area to a lively restaurant scene, how quickly does the kerbside use that provision for e-bikes to come and pick up orders coming in people to come in and drop off. The loading zones, you need to facilitate deliveries, to restaurants, quite different, to light industrial. How quickly does the kerb shift to enable that I think is a real challenge in our cities?

**Ethan:** You know, obviously one of the big obstacles is just the expectation for free parking and we've been told it's a right to be able to have free parking. I often say that you can't have easy parking and be a good place. The best places in the world have no parking or very little, it's impossible to park there.

And a good indicator that a community doesn't have a broader vision for itself is that it's still focused on parking and that's true for everywhere. But again, this pandemic and these new types of mobility are enabling a rethinking for how we use the kerb for parking. And in New York, just in the last year, even right before the pandemic, but there's been a whole bunch of legislation and initiatives and research being done on the kerb.

From parking management studies to how do we support vendors after the pandemic? And obviously guys have heard about how over 10,000 restaurants have been able to use their parking areas in front of their restaurants in New York for seating and that's been made permanent.

So that's really just, you know, blowing people's minds.

**Mary:** And that was worldwide as well. Wasn't it? We saw it in London, Melbourne, New York.

**Ethan:** Yeah. It's happening everywhere. Yeah. It's just, you know, reinvented how people think of street space and no longer here in New York at least do they see parking as the highest and best use for that space, been the most underperforming possible use we could have had especially in high cost cities like New York. But obviously now there's efforts to put, especially with the amount of waste that's going into sidewalks right now, using parking spots for trash containers and Barcelona has been doing that for a long time. It's unleashing a whole creative era for this. And then actually just recently, they've done drop off zones here in Brooklyn. Especially for packages, because there's so much more of that going on right now.

But for any resident that wants to have a loading and unloading zone to get dropped off by an Uber it's a really exciting, flexible time that we won't get again. So, this is the time to rethink it and have these conversations.

**Mary:** And it is flexible at the moment. I think we've seen the real emergence of tactical urbanism particularly gaining prominence during the pandemic and the idea that we can change. We can try things out. And for the kerbside in particular, it's been a very static space. It's still cluttered with a thousand signs that will tell you, you can park here Monday to Friday, you can load on a Saturday and it's a free for all on a Sunday. But you have to read five or six different signs to work out what you can or can't do at the kerbside. And those are very static. And one of the things that I think came out in this report was the need for the kerbside to be a lot more dynamic, a lot more flexible so that it can respond to the changes when it's more about moving people through it and sometimes when it's more about placemaking.

And to be able to shift that balance by time of day, weeks, seasons. But also, in events that have happened, I think one of the things we saw with the pandemic as well, was the idea of there being different scenarios. That there will be times where we have to socially distance more where businesses have changed that it's cafes are going to be more takeaways as opposed to dining in, and that the streets need to be flexible to support those different scenarios and the kerbside's really the flashpoint where you can do that.

**Ashleigh:** Can I just add, I agree with what Ethan and Mary have said about parking. And I think one of the challenges is that the community understands the concept of parking. They don't understand the concept of kerbside management and allocation. That's a bit more wonky and something all of us enjoy speaking about. But we really need, that co-design process with communities where we set the vision for a place and have that conversation with them about what they want their place to be and how they want it to function.

Because then down the track, when you say, oh, we're removing parking spaces. And they complain, you can go we're doing it because you said you wanted this, and you wanted that. And that this is the vision we're trying to achieve. And so, I really think it's important that we broaden that conversation beyond parking to make it a bit more holistic and incorporate the vision. Because I think that's the only way we're going to really get changed through.

**Graham:** But you match that up as well. With the discussion that we've just had in Nathan's examples from New York on trialling things. If you have that vision, you can do some quick trials that's right up against it. Before making things permanent.

I might put you on the spot here, Ethan. When we talk about that co-designing piece, that it's really about making sure that community businesses, governments have a seat at the table and having a genuine partnership approach to considering what the vision for places are, what are the outcomes we want to see there. And how do you find some people in those places? Like you've talked about achieving change in New York and under challenging conditions with COVID. I don't know if there's any lessons there in terms of the approach to governance on that, or whether you've seen other examples worldwide, where that co-design approach has borne fruit.

**Ethan:** Okay. Yeah. So, the process is key as I think it's exciting to hear Ashleigh talk about that as well. Like how people come to these conclusions is the challenge and how they feel ownership over the process and the place is key.



Obviously, taking away something is very threatening to people. Yeah. There's been huge pushback. All the things that people hear about New York that looked good they were all very fragile and where they went wrong was often in the process. From Time Square for some of the bike lanes that were famous here to the streateries and the temporary plazas and so forth.

But if it wasn't for the right process, in many cases led by advocates in these communities for a long time, you hear about what Janette Sadik-Khan did. She did an amazing job implementing it, but she got major pushback at many points and only got these projects to be kept in.

And a lot of them would've been torn out if the advocates there hadn't been engaged beforehand, there's something called the bike lash. But then there was the backlash to the bike lash that advocates supported. So, it's looking holistically at the ecosystem of changemakers that's needed, ideally at a small community level.

Cause I do think that's the future of place governance and of change. I do think it's finding the neighbourhoods that are ready for this, that are right for it. You can't just impose this on a place that's not ready for it. But what we're seeing right now, again that the pandemics enabling is that this is a race for the survival of many communities of commercial districts. And the districts that are becoming destinations, becoming places here in New York, the ones that are doing the most streateries that are doing open streets, that are limiting cars on their streets the most and adding social life, those are the ones that are thriving.

And frankly, if you go right outside those areas it's dying off. So, it's reinventing where the destinations and districts are. And those are going to be destinations that are very compatible with flexible forms of mobility with the drop-offs and very active kerbs. And they're going to end with switching to micro mobility and getting on transit and these destinations and having all those options and a lot more efficiently. But there'll be places formed by people, defined by people through a place led, community led process.

And that's, where really where placemaking comes in. But it's also about getting it to go viral. You go to Ludlow street here in the lower East side. That's the part of the city that best got this. And it is so much more fun than it's ever been.

Much more outdoor dining and music in the streets. If people see that they're going to want that everywhere else. To contribute to the place rather than a race to take the place. Leading with parking, leading with movement alone has degraded the places. Now's the time to lead with great places formed by people. To turn our transportation systems upside down.

**Mary:** Can I challenge the co-design approach? Obviously, I see all the great benefits of co-design and that of ownership and particularly of local ownership. I think one of the challenges though, is recognizing that our streets and roads are public as well. And it's not just the people who live and work there and not all roads and streets are places necessarily either. We've got a lot of roads and streets in Sydney. 80% of our road network is what we would call movement corridors, where it's purely about movement as opposed to places.

And so, one of the challenges of co-design is on those roads and streets, which aren't high places, how can we ensure that the wider community is not just benefited by the local community. So, the local community creating a fabulous place in a street pushing all the hard work, such as moving long distance traffic or moving freight into other parts of the city. How do you ensure that equity?

**Ethan:** Yeah, no, totally. Good question. I think, we need to have a stronger hierarchy of streets and roads in cities. Often, especially in the last weeks, have applied highway standards to all of our roads. But also, I think we can have people in a participatory way define what the outcomes of their streets can be.

And, yes, you have to look at network connectivity and, yes, you have to get some throughput. But even larger streets can be places on the edges. You can create boulevards. And we say, start with the sidewalks, because that's what makes the street, I think it might be better to start with the kerbs than the sidewalks. But there's the social life project, which is our sister program to Placemaking X that my father runs actually. They have a whole series of articles on how we can save the planet by starting with the sidewalks. But I want to challenge him to, I think the next article should be starting with the kerbs. I agree. We need new participatory ways to get people to look at whole networks.

I think this power of 10 tool can be a way to think of the destinations. But I do think it's not just about optimizing networks or mobility it has to be also about optimizing places. And I know the movement to place framework is a good framework that so most people don't know about or haven't learned enough about. But I think it's not just about being sensitive to it, but really, we want to get communities to compete to create the best destinations and the ones that do the best become harder places to move through.

You'll get some good tensions about who gets to move through there, but you'll get more wins in that kind of competition.

**Graham:** Yeah. And I think just to follow on from that, it's about making sure that we have those conversations and that's really clear. So, one of the recommendations from the paper, number four is about road and street network plans reflecting place functions. So, making sure that hierarchy of movement that we need to make sure that people can get to jobs, study, play to these destinations considered along with what is that hierarchy of place functions in our network of streets and roads as wellbeing quite crucial.

And when we consider our places, we also cover in the report that consideration of access for people of all ages and abilities. And there's so many different touch points when we consider accessing our destinations, our critical places. And dwelling and enjoying that touches on this. I know that's something you're really passionate about Ashleigh.

**Ashleigh:** Yeah. It's recommendation 10 is probably my favourite recommendation, although it does change on some days. But when designing cities, we should be designing for our most vulnerable users and improves accessibility for all if we can do that. And so, recommendation 10 in the report really speaks to that need to audit and upgrade our street

kerbside and public transport infrastructure to make sure particularly disability advocates are included in that co-design process that we spoke about earlier.

I think the other big thing, when Uber thinks about vulnerable users, is some of our most vulnerable users are our pedestrians and cyclists. And so how do we make sure the kerbside prioritizes their safety. And I've heard it mentioned before that, does safety and place, do they compete with each other. But I actually think to create great places you need to create safe places, places where people want to stay and linger and sit down by the side of the road and have a cup of coffee. And they're not going to do that if there's a clear way with 60 kilometres per hour traffic. An example, I think about in Sydney is King Street in Newtown is a very different experience walking down it when the clearways are on it to when they're off.

I think that creating accessible, unsafe places is really important to bringing people into them. So that's something we need to get much better at thinking about when designing for kerbside. When we don't have accessible places, people sometimes have to default driving. And so, if we really do want to see that shift in replacing private car use with mobility-as-a-service, micro mobility and walking and cycling, then we need to really get better at that and address that issue head on.

**Mary:** Some of my favourite design solutions is where you see the kerb continued all the way across an intersection, where you have a raised platform at an intersection. Because you're totally flipping that around and saying, instead of the pedestrian is subservient to the car using that space, that it's a pedestrian space that cars are allowed to use. And you can continue walking or continue cycling regardless of the intersection and that the cars need to stop at that intersection and look for you. And that seems to be one of the better solutions in those shared spaces is to continue the kerb and to continue the pedestrian foot path over those intersections.

**Graham:** 100 percent. And that, Mary, was what I was going to mention around continuing that consideration of access to the local catchment is so important and the infrastructure that entails. So that solution there, Mary, like, how do you make sure that someone's going to walk to the local high street from three blocks away rather than jumping in the car?

**Mary:** Cause when you've got a fully loaded pram with kids clinging to it, you know? There may as well be a ravine when you've got a big kerb that you're trying to get the pram up and down

**Graham:** Hmm. So that consideration of that catchment and what those locally infrastructure needs are, whether it's wider pavements, shade seats, along the way so that somebody can pause and reflect before they carry on, becomes really important.

**Mary:** Or wait for their shared journey.

**Graham:** Yeah, Yeah, no, indeed. In terms of a final point for discussion, I just wanted to come back to something that Ethan mentioned earlier, which really resonated with me.

We have a rare opportunity now. Either due to the pandemic or emerging from the pandemic. And that, that idea, that sentiment around maximizing destination. So, if you had a crystal ball can you name a place near you and what you'd do to it, to maximize its attractiveness as a destination, for now, but for the longer term for 10 years.

**Ethan:** I think, we should imagine a future that is defined around maximizing the social life at the edge of the kerb. And you think about, our work grew out of the work of a man by the name of William White who does something called the social life of small urban spaces.

And one of the videos was how a good street corner, how the social life on the street corner and the goodbyes, like what are the spaces that create these places of purpose and meaning and of serendipity. But really that's the building block of a healthy city, of a civilization.

Thinking about how do you maximize that social life at the corners, but elsewhere, this is really opening up all of the kerbs to think about maximizing that. And then the parts of streets that ultimately are pedestrianized, some streets in the drop-off area, the kerbs become the ends of those pedestrianized areas and those become the really active areas. And then going further out, you start to have your cities and your regions defined by these destinations that have led with place first become this constellation of places that become much more compatible with transit and car sharing and autonomous vehicles eventually. Because they need destinations to go through that are defined, not just everywhere, not just having to spread out to the regions and this can even apply to rural areas.

And how do you get main streets that are like your Tasmania example. I got to go there last year. It was amazing. How can Tasmania be defined by destinations, so those pubs become the drop-off points at the end of your town. And they become the activators of the spaces. Only then are we really going to be able to address climate change in a quality economic access because its place led development. It's wanting to add to place and how transportation is ultimately the game board on which this is all played. And the parking spaces in the kerbside is the most flexible part of that. It's the part where the catalyst for the conversation for reinventing our streets and ultimately our land use and our communities.

And it will have implications for, better co-design processes. It will necessitate a better process to get to that conclusion, but it'll enable it. You'll necessitate and enable better governance place led governance around districts that again, facilitate businesses and buildings to add to their shared environment, to co-manage and co-create their public realm around again, around these destinations.

We've done a lot of work on innovation districts that, it's at the district scale that. economies agglomeration is going to occur in new ideas, new companies emerge. But it's also the scale at which new democracy, new participation emerges, and people fall in love with their places again. How we have a future that's more about communities, defined by lovability, not just livability and not just consuming our communities, but by adding to and giving love to our streets, to our interactions, to our neighbours in, in those spaces.

The kerb can be the catalyst for changing the way we connect with each other at the human scale, but ultimately changing the course of civilization as well.

**Mary:** Wow. That's a big outcome. A humble kerb changes civilization.

**Ethan:** Let's do it.

**Graham:** I don't know. It resonates with me. It will change civilization. It is at the nexus of, I think, as we discussed, and it's a great way to book end the conversation as well, as we talked about the complexity of the governance ambition what we need to get out of our kerbs for our places to work for people.

It does bring in so many different actors and parties to the conversation that need to work together to realize those outcomes.

**Mary:** And Ethan, I would challenge you to take it one step further from transit orientated development. You mentioned to place led development. I'd take it one step further to people orientated development. Let's go from Todd's to pods and into the pubs and then be happy.

**Ethan:** Sure. No, it's true. Its people create a place, create a community, but yeah, I certainly, I agree. You're right.

**Ashleigh:** It's something that I've been so interested in having all these different conversations, where discussions about the kerb has led. And you spoke about a lot of things just then Ethan, but one of our New Zealand industry colleagues spoke about the kerb as a feminism issue because females are much more likely to walk and take public transport and that's not, what's being prioritized at the kerb. And so, it is so interesting how the kerb can take you on all these different journeys and different topics. But for me, I think it's really important when I'm thinking about this topic, to keep bringing it back to the kerb because you can get lost, I think.

And so, I'm continually reminding myself to, as I think of different things, okay, what does that mean for the kerb? And what does that mean for the kerbside and the allocation and just always bringing it back to that to steer us

**Mary:** I see it as the great meeting point of all of these topics and all of these stakeholders and

**Graham:** We covered many things. We talked COVID. We talked kerb as catalyst. We talked about maximizing destinations. We talked about feminism. We talked about future technologies that may evolve, certainly a wide-ranging conversation. So, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you all Ethan, Ashleigh, and Mary for having an engaging and such a, such a great conversation about kerbside. Really appreciate your time. Thank you.

**Ethan:** Thanks so much.

**Mary:** Thank you.

**Outro:** We hope you enjoyed this episode of People and Place. To hear more, find us on Spotify, Apple podcasts, and Google podcasts. You can also find us on LinkedIn and Facebook at WSP in Australia and on Instagram and Twitter at WSP\_Australia.