

Practical Q&A

What is a Playstreet?

Playstreets give residents (from children to seniors) the opportunity to play and move freely in a space that is otherwise normally reserved for motorized traffic. Playstreets are generally organised in residential zones on streets where there is only low traffic volume and which are mainly used by people directly from the neighbourhood. Even if you don't live on a street with vehicular transit, you can still organize the event. Such community-led events often take place in places where there is no traffic, making the whole preparation easier and faster. A great Community Playstreet can also take place in a courtyard or similar pedestrian spaces.

What is a Community Playstreet?

A Community Playstreet is an event that is planned and organized by the community itself. The place where the event takes place is also the place where the community lives or to which it has a connection to. It is not a high production or costly event, but an opportunity for children from the same neighbourhood to meet, get to know each other and use the space for free and safe play.

Aren't existing playgrounds or parks adequate for play?

Parks are great places for families or older children, but younger children usually don't have the opportunity to go to the park on their own without adult supervision. In addition, street play is very different – firstly, it takes place right 'under the windows' so there is still a degree of control, and also it is a way for children to meet and make friends with other children on their street who they don't normally meet (they may be in different schools or at different ages). It also provides more space and freedom to move around. Skipping the rope, skating, cycling and scootering are generally not possible in a playground.

Who can organize Community Playstreets?

Anyone can be an organizer! No need to have special experience, no need to be a parent. All you need is determination and an interest to do something good for your neighbourhood.

What if the neighbours don't show enough interest?

If you don't get enough enthusiasm from those around you, sometimes there's no point in pushing it - after a while you can try again. In the meantime, you can generate interest in this type of event by playing outside (on the sidewalk, on a green space) even with a small number of people, for example as a family with children or as a group of friends.

What if my neighbors don't agree to organize the Community Playstreet?

Ask your neighbours what their concerns are and the reason for their disagreement. There are some people who will always disagree with everything on principle, but in most cases this attitude stems from a lack of information. Discuss with them and try to explain why they have nothing to worry about.

Why aren't Playstreets organized by the city/city district?

Bratislava plans to continue to organize Playstreets, but the scope of these events is larger, with a cultural program and activities that are more demanding to organize. In addition, these events are only held a few times a year and cannot cover all locations within the city. The advantage of Community Playstreets is that you do not have to wait for the municipality, but can create better conditions for outdoor play yourself. You can choose the time, location or programming based on the individual needs of your neighborhood.

What if the weather changes and it starts to rain?

A number of Playstreets have already taken place during rain or snow. From the children's point of view, rain is usually a welcome change that makes the game even more fun.

Aren't streets just for cars?

The idea that streets in the city are just "roads", i.e. spaces for

driving and parking cars, has gradually expanded until it has become a generally accepted fact. Up until the 1970s-1980s, however, street play was seen as a normal part of life in our neighbourhoods. Streets are the main and most common urban public space and are also the place where a sense of community and neighbourhood belonging can be created. Community Playstreets serve in part as a demonstration of the fact that it is a social space that has many uses and is for everyone.

Why do you want to temporarily close our street?

The number of cars in the city has grown rapidly over the decades. The need to close the street is not an ideal situation or a long-term solution. However, the danger from fast-moving cars or from driver inattention is the main reason why it is no longer common to play in the street as it was in the past. Moreover, many times parked cars take up so much street space that play is impossible. In such circumstances, closing the street and supervising its maintenance is an 'insurance policy' - among other things, for parents who would otherwise not dare to let their children play there. The Playstreet can be the first step towards a change of attitude in the perception of the position of cars in residential streets.

Ideally, our streets should be spaces where cars and people of all ages can coexist happily. This is the long-term goal of Playstreets.

I'm afraid I will be disturbed by the noise of children playing outside.

Based on the experience of already organized Playstreets, the event itself generates much less noise than what is present when the street is open to traffic. People with different needs live in the city and it is important that they are able to function alongside each other. So even people who only walk to get around the city are forced to endure the noise caused by traffic. Children cannot live only inside their houses, schools and playgrounds. The city belongs to them too, and it is their right to use public space in accordance with their own needs. Moreover, the Playstreets only last for a few hours and are not a permanent source of noise.

I'm worried about damage to my car parked on the street.

If you're too worried, it's best to temporarily park your car at another location – information about the Community Playstreet event is posted a few days in advance. However, so far we have not seen any incidents of damage to vehicles. Community Playstreets generally involve activities such as cycling, chalk painting on the ground or playing chase, which cannot be considered to be an increased risk compared to a normal day in this respect.

I don't like children playing unsupervised.

During Community Playstreets, children are always the responsibility of their parents, but

if any other adult sees harm being done or witnesses an injury, they should responsibly and reasonably discuss the situation with either the children directly or with their parents. Supervision by other adults in the community is an important learning experience.

Wouldn't that lead children to believe that the road is normally a safe place to play?

Even young children can tell the difference between a street closure event and a normal situation. A report published by the University of Bristol found that when children were questioned on the subject, they could clearly describe the visual and auditory cues indicating different situations (e.g. based on the noise of moving cars or the presence of supervisors wearing reflective vests). Community Playstreets are also a good opportunity for parents to talk to their children about safety on the roads or in public spaces.

I don't have young children and that makes me feel like I can't participate.

Organisers should assure people that everyone is welcome, regardless of age, family situation or place of residence, at all times. Community Playstreets should not just feel like a family event. Adults can play and have fun on the street too – the aim is for everyone to be able to fully enjoy the space their neighbourhood has to offer. However, if someone isn't interested in joining in the activities, it's perfectly fine if they just

watch what's going on in the street from a bench.

Can the Community Playstreet also include activities that are designed more for adult participants?

Of course! The street is for everyone and it is common in this kind of event to create a programme for different age groups. It can be a sports game (e.g. street football) or a neighbourhood yoga or Tai Chi session. If you have music provided, dancing is also a great option. In addition to sports activities, it can also be various board games.

What other benefits do Community Playstreets bring?

In addition to safer streets, another great advantage is the independence and free play of children. Parents, for a variety of reasons, feel apprehensive about allowing their children to play in the street and are often unsure whether this is even acceptable. Community Playstreets are an opportunity for parents to come together and support each other to let their children play outside.