



# From Cars to Community An Urban Green Space Walk



Co-funded by  
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# From cars to Community An Urban Green Space Walk



## General Information

In this tour we explore **green places** in Berlin-Kreuzberg that used to be car-dominated, neglected, or underused and how they have been reclaimed, reshaped, and renegotiated. We ask how cities can create the conditions for **local community**, shared life, and everyday democracy.

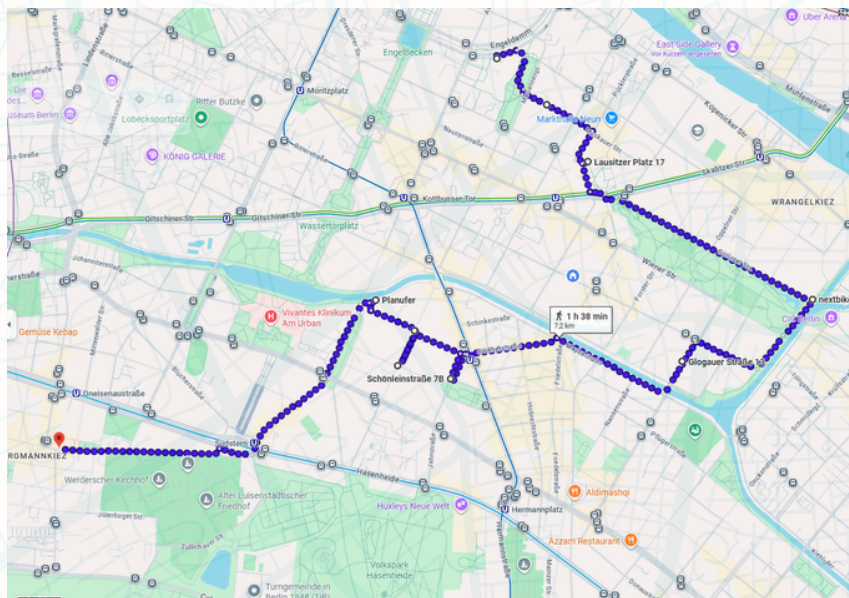
- Primary Themes:** Public space and community, citizen participation, urban greening, civic agency, sustainability
- Group Size:** 1-8 participants
- Starting location:** Community Garden Ton, Steine Gärten at Bethanien  
(52°30'18.2"N 13°25'26.1"E)
- Distance:** 7,2 km
- Estimated Duration:** 2,5h by foot; 1,5h by bike
- Material needed:** Tour-Booklet, charged phone, usual city tourist gear, map application like googlemaps, bike optional.
- Accessibility Level:** Easy to medium with flat terrain and public sidewalks, sometimes uneven terrain in public gardens or narrower access points.

**The city street is the river of life...where we come together**

--William H. Whyte

# From cars to Community An Urban Green Space Walk

## General Information



## Itinerary

- Ton Steine Gärten
- Lausitzer Platz
- Görlitzer Ufer
- Community Garden Glogauer Str.
- Zickenplatz
- Graefestraße & Böckhstraße
- Dieffenbachstraße & Graefestraße
- Planufer
- Bergmannstraße

SCAN ME



# Accessibility

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## **Sidewalks and curb cuts**

The route is mostly accessible, with flat terrain and public sidewalks, but some limitations may arise from uneven surfaces, crowded areas, or narrower access points. Also, when visiting gardens we can expect uneven terrain, that may be difficult for elder people or walking impaired. The gardens are also not accessible by wheelchair.

## **Bikes**

The tour can also be done by bike. Most streets are relatively calm, but bike lanes are not available everywhere. Watch out for cars, delivery vehicles, and pedestrians, and dismount at crowded stops.

## **Stairs, ramps and elevators**

Everything can be explored by foot or bike. There may be some smaller stairs within community gardens. No elevators.

## **Rest areas and seating**

There are several possibilities to rest along the route: benches and seating areas are practically at every stop. There may be limited seating possibilities in between the stops.

## **Accessible restrooms**

Semi-public toilets are available at Lausitzer Platz, where participants may use the restrooms of several cafés and restaurants. There is also a public toilet at Planufer. Additional public toilets exist along the route, but they are relatively rare, so cafés and restaurants may offer the most practical option in between stops.

## **Safety**

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Standard urban safety rules apply:

- stay with the group
- be aware of traffic and bicycles
- keep valuables secure

# From Cars to Community

## Stop 1: Ton Steine Gärten at Bethanien

### From Protest Space to Shared Garden

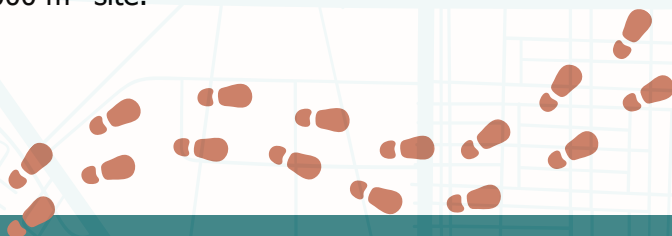


Gather at the entrance sign of Ton, Steine, Gärten. This places shows, that community does not happen by itself. It needs structure, places, time to stay and reasons to gather.

That is how people can become a community, and sometimes even a public with shared political agency. Ton, Steine, Gärten is a strong example of that.

This garden grew out of a political history. Located openly accessible at Bethaniendamm, next to the Georg-von-Rauch-Haus and around the corner from Mariannenplatz, it is closely tied to the **activist and squatter scene** around Bethanien.

In fact, the site itself was briefly occupied before formal negotiations began in 2008. And in 2009 a group of local residents, organized as Ton, Steine Gärten e.V., succeeded in securing a use agreement for the roughly 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> site.



# From Cars to Community

Today, the garden is an intercultural **neighborhood** garden whose aim is to be shaped and cared for collectively by local residents.

And the garden is not only ecological, but also social and political. The concept includes learning, exchange, and organizing **collective action** around ecological and social topics.

Part of the area is designed for meeting and relaxation, with lawn and seating. Other parts include beds, paths, hedges for birds, compost areas, and a water point. Around 40 to 60 gardeners are active here.

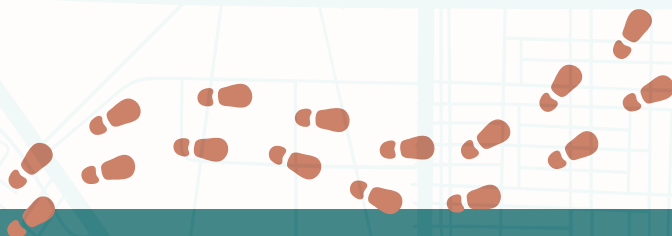
## Activity

**SCAN ME**



## Next Stop:

Cross the grounds to Waldemarstraße and turn left. Follow the street until you reach Lausitzer Platz.



# From Cars to Community

## Stop 2: Lausitzer Platz

### A neighborhood renegotiates public space

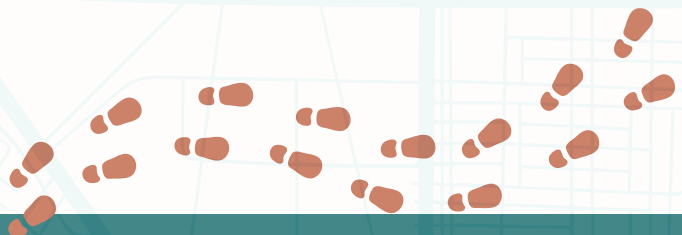


Welcome to Lausitzer Platz, or “Lausi,” a place that matters for the local community, especially those with kids, as an important local meeting point.

From where we stand, we can see de-sealed, greened areas, planters, and play streets in both directions. What we do not see are cars.

But that was not always the case. Before the current transformation began, much more of the space around the square was organized around traffic. Now the place is in the hand of the local community and its visitors.

And the local businesses do more than benefit from the change but actively shape its social life. One example is the “Open Table” concept by the pizzeria Rocco und seine Brüder to our left, where anyone is welcome to sit, even without ordering anything.

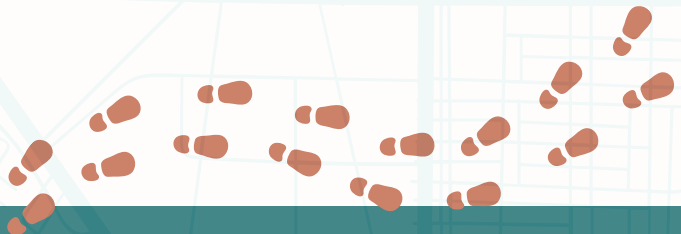


# From Cars to Community

But this is not a simple story of “problem solved.” Lausitzer Platz has the usual conflicts about public space: some appreciate the new freedom and quieter atmosphere, while others criticize the loss of parking or the way decisions were made.

However, the ongoing transformation of the place is being rethought on an even bigger scale: even better quality of stay, better traffic safety, and a more climate-friendly public space.

If you are standing on the marked spot, you can see Lausitzer Platz across three moments in time: in the **first picture**, you see this exact spot in the past, when the square was shaped much more by cars and parking; in front of you, you see the present; and in this **second image**, you see a possible future, a vision of what this place may yet become.



# From Cars to Community



## Activity

**SCAN ME**



## Next Stop:

Leave Lausitzer Platz, keep the church on your right and head down Görlitzer Straße until you reach the river side.



# From Cars to Community

## Stop 3: Görlitzer Ufer

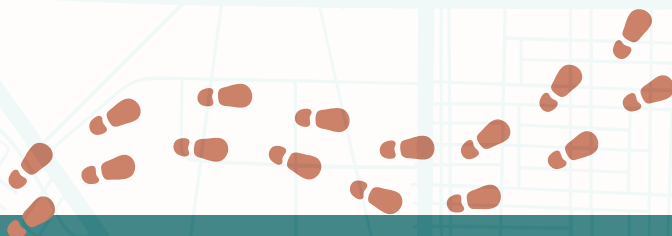
**Hard surfaces are opened up, green space returns**



At Görlitzer Ufer, we see that sometimes, community begins with the ground beneath our feet. This street used to be shaped by cars and parking until the district decided that this stretch should no longer be used by private cars, and in 2023–24 it was redesigned for walking and cycling instead.

Around 1,000 square meters of asphalt were removed. In their place came greenery, a biodiverse flowering meadow, and space that can absorb rainwater more naturally. The district explicitly presents this as part of a more climate-resilient city.

That may sound technical, but the effect is deeply human. When a place becomes cooler, greener, quieter, it also becomes easier to stay. And when people can stay, they can notice one another, share space, and return.



# From Cars to Community

So this stop shows us something important: public life does not only depend on people, but also on surfaces, shade, water, and room.

What used to be a harder edge of the neighborhood became a calmer path between park and canal. In that sense, this is not just a traffic project. It is a small example of how a city can become more livable and more shareable.

Before people can gather differently, the city often has to be built differently.

## Activity

## Before and after pictures

**SCAN ME**



**SCAN ME**



## Next Stop:

Walk south-west along the riverbank, follow Wiener Straße to the right and turn left into Glogauer Straße, then walk to no. 13.



# From Cars to Community

## Stop 4: Community Garden Glogauer Straße 13

### From former sports-field wasteland to garden

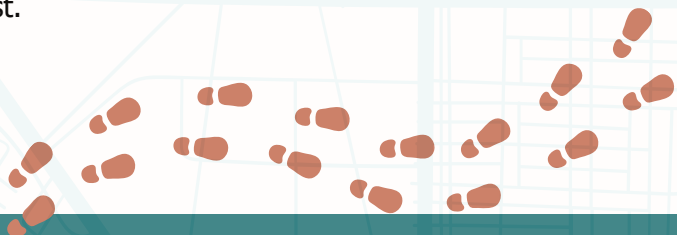


**This garden began in 2012 on a former sports-field wasteland. It covers about 2,000 square meters and was created as a community garden for and with the neighborhood.**

**Its aim is not just to grow plants, but to support a more socially just, ecological, and participatory way of living together.**

As at Ton, Steine Gärten this is not only a green space. It is a place of joining in, working together, learning, and spending time with others. The garden describes itself as a **place for shared work, shared enjoyment, and shared learning**. New members are explicitly welcome, and decisions are made in open meetings and plenums.

Here we can see that community does not emerge from design alone. It needs repetition, cooperation, and shared responsibility. People come back, see each other again, solve problems together, and create trust.



# From Cars to Community

In that sense, this garden is not only a green refuge. It is a small infrastructure of public life.

And there is another important detail: the garden actively invites participation from the surrounding neighborhood in multiple languages and seeks to include neighbors as well as social and cultural institutions from the area.

That means it is not only a place to grow food or flowers it is a place built to lower the threshold for people to take part.

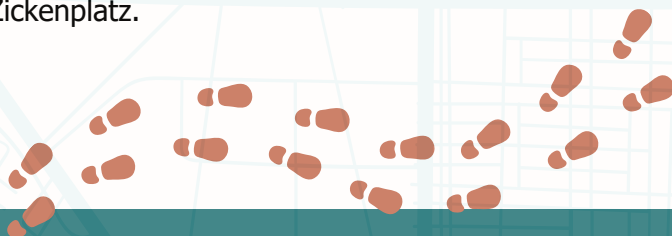
## Activity

**SCAN ME**



## Next Stop:

Continue down Glogauer Straße, cross the river and turn right. Walk along the river side until you reach Bürkner Straße, then follow it. Cross Kottbusser Damm and turn left into Schönleinstraße. Follow it until you reach Zickenplatz.



# From Cars to Community

## Stop 5: Zickenplatz

### The Gateway to Graefekiez

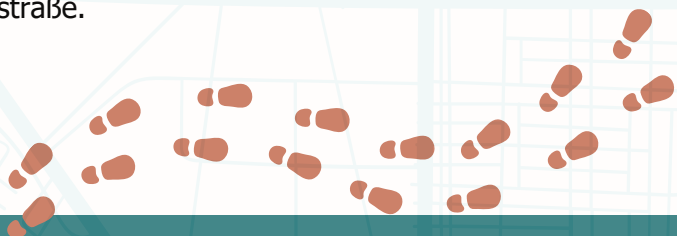


**Welcomem to Hohenstaufenplatz, better known in the neighborhood as "Zickenplatz."**

**This square is the gateway into the so called Graefekiez, a neighborhood where streets are being redesigned step by step to create more space for walking, cycling, greenery, and everyday public life.**

What is happening here is part of a bigger shift: the Graefekiez is moving toward the logic of a **Kiezblock**—a residential area with less through-traffic, where cars can still access buildings, but the neighborhood is no longer meant to function as a shortcut for drivers or a parking space.

And right here where we stand at Zickenplatz, that change becomes visible. In 2025, the district began work on a car-free section of Schönleinstraße at Hohenstaufenplatz, between Dieffenbachstraße and Lachmannstraße.



# From Cars to Community

The plan includes de-sealing, new seating, bike racks, and more room for people to stay, while also improving safety and reducing noise and air pollution.

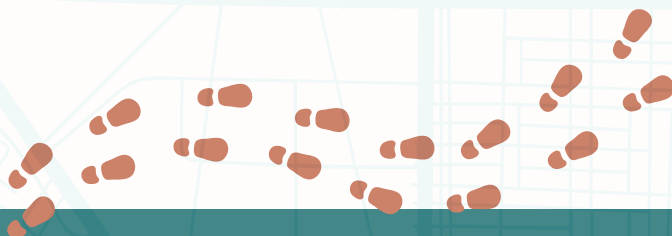
So this stop is a threshold. From here on, we are entering a kiez that is being reshaped street by street.

And our guiding question becomes more visible with every step:

**What happens when a neighborhood stops being a route through and becomes a place to be?**

## Next Stop:

Walk back along Schönleinstraße the way you came and turn left into Böckstraße until you reach no. 40.



# From Cars to Community

## Stop 6: Böckhstraße

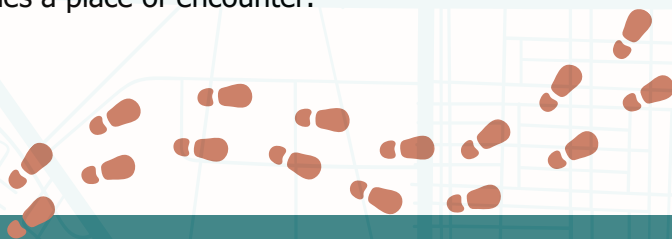
### From Playstreet to Kiez Project



Right in front of us, we can see something small but meaningful: in front of this building, local residents have created a permanent small play area with a beautiful garden, toys, and ride-on vehicles for children. Anyone can come, and every child can play here.

It is a great example that community needs people who want to contribute to their local community. But luckily this idea grows larger. Since August 2019, Berlin's first official temporary play street has been located here.

The section between Graefe- and Grimmstraße is closed to moving and parked car traffic during the warmer months, from April to September, every Wednesday from 2 to 6 pm. For a few hours, the street belongs to **children, families, and the neighborhood**. What is usually a traffic space becomes a play space; what is usually a route through becomes a place of encounter.



# From Cars to Community

But the transformation goes even further. As part of the **district project Graefekiez – Step by Step More Space**, the area around Böckhstraße and Graefestraße has been undergoing major redesign. In the eastern part of Böckhstraße, most parking spaces have gradually been repurposed. Some areas were de-sealed, others redesigned, and new features such as parklets were added.

Here, we can clearly see what happens when a street no longer serves only traffic, but begins to support neighborhood life. While we walk to our next two stops within Gräfekiez, you will see that whole streets have basically transformed almost into gardens.

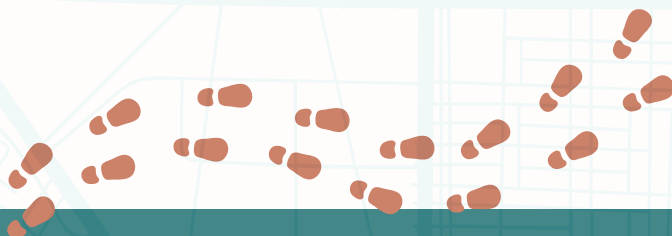
## Activity

**SCAN ME**



## Next Stop:

Follow down Böckhstraße to the corner of Gräfestraße.



# From Cars to Community

## Stop 7: Gräfestraße I

**Before a street changes, people have to be heard**



**The changes in the Graefekiez did not begin with plants, benches, or construction. They began with a conflict: who gets to decide what this street is for?**

**The start was difficult. There were protests, heated debates, and even a petition against the project.**

It was a bumpy start, but what followed is what makes this stop very important for our theme. The project had to be rebuilt as a process of communication and participation.

Simon Wöhr from the organisation paper planes e. V. said there had been a “communication vacuum.” The organization joined the project in 2023 and helped create ways for residents to understand, question, and actively shape what was happening. The project became more open. Residents were invited to share what they knew about their own streets, not in theory, but from everyday life.



# From Cars to Community

One of the most important tools was the “Map of Local Knowledge.” In fact, there were seven maps, built from more than 500 suggestions by residents. These maps collected where benches and tables were missing, where entrances were blocked by parked cars, where more bins were needed, and where the street did not work well for everyday life.

There were on-site office hours, newsletters, flyers, information in German, English, and Turkish, and meetings for residents who wanted to get involved. The process made it possible not only to voice concerns, but to help shape what came next. That mattered because the street was no longer seen only as traffic infrastructure, but as a lived space shaped by daily routines, needs, frustrations, and shared experience.

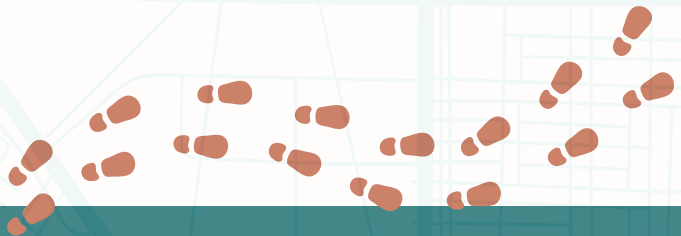
## Activity

SCAN ME



## Next Stop:

Turn left into Gräfestraße until you reach the corner of Dieffenbach Straße.



# From Cars to Community

## Stop 8: Gräfestraße II

### What shared public space can look like

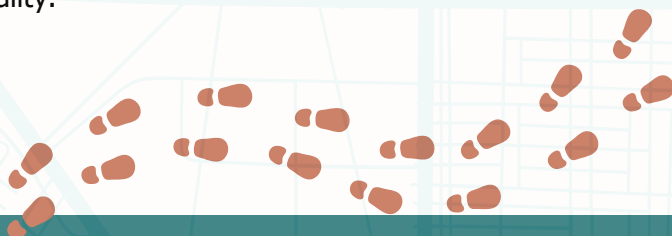


At the last stop, we looked at the process: local knowledge, conflict, and participation. Here, we can see what that process has already changed.

In the Graefekiez, former parking spaces have been turned into planted green areas, new places to sit, bike parking, and shared street uses.

In many places, tree pits were enlarged where roots had already pushed up the pavement, and since 2024, local hobby gardeners have been caring for perennials and flower meadows along the street. That means this redesign is not only visible, but is also being maintained through ongoing **neighborhood involvement**.

Rainwater can now soak into the ground more easily, helping protect streets and sidewalks from flooding during heavy rain. Trees, shrubs, and planted areas also help cool the neighborhood during heat and improve air quality.



# From Cars to Community

There is also a **climate dimension**. Rainwater can now soak into the ground more easily, helping protect streets and sidewalks from flooding during heavy rain. Trees, shrubs, and planted areas also help cool the neighborhood during heat and improve air quality.

The new planted areas also create habitat for insects and support greater biodiversity in the neighborhood. Flower meadows, perennials, shrubs, and small green islands make the street more attractive to pollinators and other small urban species. In that sense, the street is being reshaped not only as social infrastructure, but also as a more living ecological space.

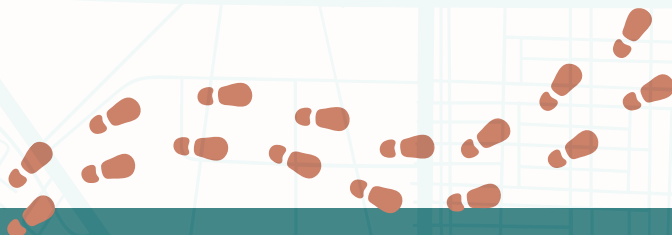
## Activity

**SCAN ME**



## Next Stop:

Turn right onto Dieffenbachstraße, then turn right again onto Grimmstraße. Continue straight until you reach the riverside.



# From Cars to Community

## Stop 9: Planufer

### Quiet Waterfront - noisy Evenings

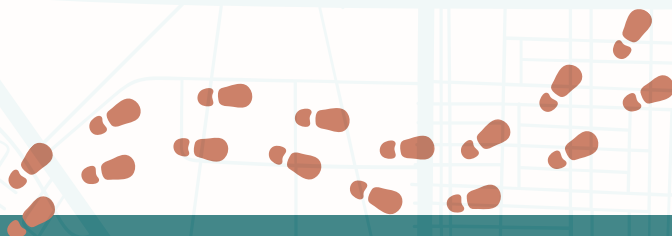


Here at Planufer and the Admiralbrücke, is one of Kreuzberg's best-known meeting points. The bridge is a popular gathering place for both Berliners and visitors, especially in the warmer months.

People come here to sit, talk, watch the canal, share food, listen to music, and simply spend time together.

Because traffic here is limited and calm, the bridge and the canal edge is not only infrastructure but a setting for repeated encounter.

Even the bridge itself works as a kind of urban living room. The area is often described as a place where spontaneous conversations, music, and social life emerge almost naturally. Furthermore, next to the Pizza place Il Casolare, there is also a garden. It softens the edge between restaurant, street, and canal, and turns this stretch even more into a shared social space.



# From Cars to Community

Just nearby, there is also the **wildflower meadow** at Admiralbrücke, created through neighborhood initiative. Local residents watched overused former lawn areas turn into bare, eroded ground. In 2020, after a construction site was cleared, people from the neighborhood decided not to wait for change from above. They came together, planted an insect-friendly wildflower mix, added shrubs and perennials, organized watering, and created a small green space through collective care.

Of course, this also brings tension. On warm evenings, the bridge can become lively and sometimes noisy. That, too, is part of the story of public life: places that invite people in are not always quiet, tidy, or easy to manage.

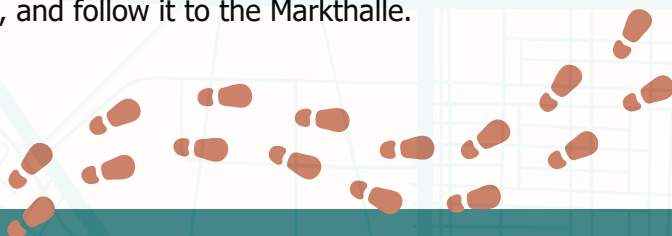
## Activity

**SCAN ME**



## Next Stop:

Walk south and follow Grimmstraße again. Cross Urbanstraße and continue along Körtestraße. Cross Hasenheide, turn right onto Bergmannstraße, and follow it to the Markthalle.



# From Cars to Community

## Stop 10: Bergmannstraße

### When conflict leads to a fairer street

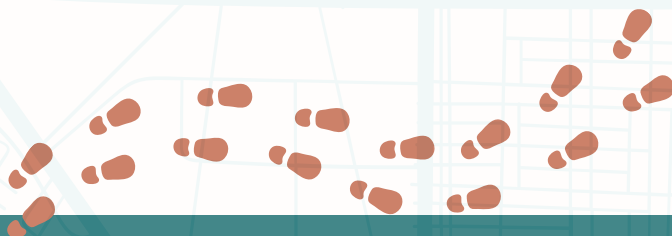


Our final stop tells a story very similar to the one in Graefekiez:

The “Begegnungszone Bergmannstraße” began in 2011 as part of Berlin’s pedestrian strategy, followed by years of public participation, planning studies, and a test phase.

For a long time, this street forced different road users into constant friction: people walking, cycling, driving, unloading, or simply trying to cross all had to compete for the same limited space. That is exactly why Bergmannstraße became a **major pilot project** for traffic calming.

From 2018 to 2019, Bergmannstraße became a testing ground. Temporary seating, safer crossings, bike parking, loading zones, traffic calming, and more greenery all asked the same question: what if this street worked better for people?



# From Cars to Community

The changes were controversial, but one idea became stronger over time: **less car traffic could mean more space for safety, greenery, and everyday public life.**

Today, parts of the street have far less car traffic, safer crossings, a two-way bike lane, new planting, and slower speeds while the surrounding streets help keep through-traffic away.

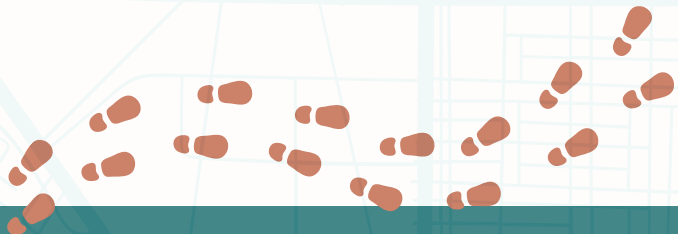
And the transformation is still continuing. The long-term goal is an even greener, safer, and more climate-resilient Bergmannstraße, with more space for walking, cycling, and staying.

## Activity

**SCAN ME**



Now it's your turn: notice one place in your neighborhood that could bring people together and imagine how it could change.



# From Cars to Community

## References

Ton Steine Gärten

byTimor Kodal from Berlin, Germany - Ton Steine Gärten, CC BY-SA 2.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=92196663>

Lausitzer Platz

by Holger Haberstock

Lausitzer Platz

by De-okin (talk) 21:01, 30 October 2011 (UTC) - own work, CC BY 3.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17184146>

Lausitzer Platz Vision

by acalitzvisual

Bahnbrücke at Görlitzer Ufer

by Roehrensee - own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22536804>

Glogauer Straß 13

by Bodo Kubrak - own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=38880533>

Hohenstaufenplatz

by Gunnar Klack - own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57285001>

Spielstraße Böckhstraße

by Bündnis Temporäre Spielstraßen

Gräfestraße

by #Kiezblocks – eine Kampagne von Changing Cities

Adsmiralsbrücke

by Lienhard Schulz – own work, CC BY-SA 3.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=513977>

Parklets in Bergmannstraße 2019

by Fridolin freudenfett – own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=78292589>



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