How to Make a Woonerf, Step by Step

The following steps will guide you through the process of making a Woonerf. Make sure to have this guide at hand as you watch the video "How to Make a Woonerf, Step by Step". This guide is part of the Designing a Livable Neighbourhood: The Woonerf Concept Course on EIT Urban Mobility Courses platform.

Before you begin, make sure to have in front of you (ideally twice on a piece of paper) the neighbourhood, street or area you want to transform into a Woonerf. You can also use a digital base map to create your Woonerf area (with a graphical program such as Illustrator).

Step 1: Define the precise Woonerf area

A. Make sure you identify the Woonerf area by defining the entrances of the Woonerf on your map. Go through all the streets surrounding the Woonerf and mark them; what type of streets are they? What is the limit speed there? Mark those down.
B. Based on the entrances, you may be able to identify where the specific gateways and entrances of the Woonerf should be placed.

Step 2: Mark all the intersections in the area

A. Mark all the intersections you can find, as you might have to edit these later on. It is important to note where people might be moving around, either walking, cycling or by car.
B. Make sure you identify all other aspects such as building facades, front gardens or alleyways in the area.

Step 3: Label all entrances

A. All private residences, garages, and even housing blocks have entrances that you wish to maintain. It is important that people have safe spaces to interact with each other (in the street, in the garden, or in front of their houses).
B. Label these entrances to ensure that you won't remove them.

Step 4: Preserve trees and other greenery

A. Pay attention to existing trees and other greenery in the area; as growing new trees will take a lot of years, it is better to preserve existing ones. At the same time, they strengthen your design and make the area come alive.
B. Traffic safety can be improved by trees, as you have to manoeuvre around them, which will result in a slower speed limit, so preserve as many trees as possible.

Step 5: Remove multiple parking spaces behind each other

A. Eliminate unnecessary traffic elements, such as parking bays and long lines of on-street parking, in order to prevent cars from speeding.
B. As you still need to accommodate parking spots for the neighbourhoods, make sure you reduce long lines of parking spots, instead of removing them all.

Step 6: Take everything out of your Woonerf that you don't need

A. Draw clear lines of the existing elements such as green edges, building lines, solid edges and housing blocks.
B. Edit your drawing by keeping only the buildings, property lines, front gardens and trees. Draw the items you want to keep on the second piece of paper, and delete everything else. If you are working online, remove or hide the extra's in your digital base map.

Step 7: Redesign your area

A. When you remove or outdrew all the unnecessary elements of your Woonerf, you will begin to rebuild your base map, keeping the following things in mind: keep trees, define the main entrance, keep speed limits low, and keep alleyways, driving ways, parking spots, and entrances open.
B. Decide which problematic areas need speed reduction, such as parking sports and problematic intersections (as mentioned in step 2A).

Step 8: Make your problematic areas safer

A. Near intersections, you can add the following elements to make problem areas safer: (small) green spaces, extra trees, parking spots, speed bumps and side walks.
B. Step by step, you should do this at each intersection, (problematic) area, and at the entrance, leaving room for pedestrians who won't have to interact with traffic.

Step 9: Use less paving and more green areas

A. By paving less, you create rainproof areas and at the same time save money on materials. You can control speeding better by adding green areas, trees, and speed bumps close to alleyways in long streets.

Step 10: Optimize your design

A. Play around with roads alignment in order to create a Woonerf with enough space for bike and car parking, traffic-calming, equalized intersections, and a lot of greenery.
B. Optimize your final Woonerf using a digital program. By getting advice from residents and experts, you will definitely improve your Woonerf!