25 ‘Vital and Viable’ Priorities

Place Management
What are the 25 vital and viable priorities?

Research from the Institute of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University has identified the Top 25 priorities that can influence high street vitality and viability.

The framework was created by experts from a range of disciplines and other stakeholders to foster cross-disciplinary knowledge and broadening real-world understanding of the changing nature of the high street.

The 25 priorities are practically orientated and, given their ability to be controlled or influenced at a town level, are fairly internally focussed. For each of the priorities you will find an introduction to evidence that describes the priority, suggests what it covers, discusses how it might be implemented and the level of control associated with it.

Additionally, you will find suggestions of what the priority could mean for implementation during the COVID-19 recovery stage.

**Place Management**

**Factors included in Place Management**

Centre management; Shopping Centre Management; Town Centre Management (TCM); Place Management; Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

**Ranking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place Management</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>10th out of 25</td>
<td>4.06 out of 5</td>
<td>Highly Influential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>6th out of 25</td>
<td>3.58 out of 4</td>
<td>Potentially controllable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Priorities</td>
<td>6th out of 25</td>
<td>14.39</td>
<td>Very high priority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description/Definition**

The Institute of Place Management (IPM) defines place management as “a coordinated, area-based, multi-stakeholder approach to improve locations, harnessing the skills, experiences and resources of those in the private, public and voluntary sectors”.

There are of course numerous definitions of place management, but normally the place management process is concerned by the task at hand (e.g. high street vitality and viability, place development, place promotion) and involves a specific method of governance that includes citizen activation and participation, cooperation among local actors, local partnerships, and integration of fields of action (Kalandides, 2020). It is best to think of place management as an umbrella-term that encompasses a plethora of place-based activities (such as place branding, town centre management, place making, urban planning, place governance, public administration), stakeholders (citizens, investors, businesses), and organisations (town teams, local authorities, BIDs).
Why does it matter? (Influence)

Place management is considered “as a symbiotic element of strategic significance in the long-term impact and sustainability of towns/cities”, which needs to be “at the heart of the planning, design and overall placemaking processes” (Coca-Stefaniak and Bagaeen, 2013: 532). In the context of the high street, town centre management (a predecessor of place management) has paved the way on the importance of co-operation, effective place stakeholder relationships, and the need to develop effective partnerships to tackle different aspects of town and city centre decline (leisure provision, public health, cleanliness, poor image, publicity, etc. (Tomalin and Pal, 1994), and the search for competitive advantage through the maintenance and/or strategic development of both public and private areas and interests within town centres (Warnaby et al., 1998).

With the recent emergence of localism agendas and the shift towards “network local governance” (Peyroux et al., 2012: 112), BIDs and town teams have also become equally important pieces of the place management puzzle. BIDs assume the responsibility to provide a voice for local businesses, to market the defined area, and to create a more appealing environment that can boost direct and indirect investment for the place (Morçöl et al., 2008; Steel and Symes, 2005). In addition, BIDs can have a wider societal and financial impact and act as key channel for organizing wider area-based regeneration and develop a coherent place management strategy, that can add value to both service delivery and destination creation (Hemphill et al., 2014).

Town teams are bottom-up, primarily community-led partnerships, that aim to provide new insights into partnership working, local governance structures, and, most significantly, the role that local communities can take during the place management process (Hurst and Blackwell, 2014). As such, town teams are most likely to promote a slightly different agenda in order to promote community participation and empowerment in place management. Just like other types of community-driven local partnerships (such as neighbourhood partnerships and local environmental partnerships), town teams can help to overcome social exclusion, improve participation in economic and social activity, and offer an insiders’ perspective in decision-making (Bailey, 2010; Bailey and Pill, 2015; Davies, 2002; Hemphill et al., 2006).

The successful blending of such initiatives into a joint partnership-based place management scheme is indeed the most crucial challenge that place managers and place leaders are facing on a constant basis, but is one that opens up possibilities for dialogical understanding and consensus in place management, and fosters conditions for collective and co-creative capacities for place development (Ntounis, 2018).

What can you do about it? (Control)

Place management is a process that seeks ensure the achievement of desired outcomes for a specific geographic place (Stinson and Irvine, 1997). It is important to understand though that there is no ‘one right way’ to manage a place and thus the adoption of best practices from one place to another is not recommended without consideration of the local context and an understanding of your local community and catchment (Kalandides, 2020; Parker, 2009). As Bishop (2016) argues, the challenge of place management is to keep the conversation focussed on the community outcome being sought, rather than what each functional output is occurring. Cross-functional communication requires an understanding of the skills, resources, and experiences of all actors and communities that are participating in the process.

In general, place management schemes are concerned with place interventions that cover an array of services and activities:

- janitorial (“clean and safe”, street and sidewalk cleaning, policing, waste management)
- developmental (business development, business mix improvement, housing)
- social (social services for the community, tackling homelessness, youth services)
- public space/physical infrastructure (capital improvements, economic development, area maintenance)
- promotional (place marketing and branding, decorations, events)
- strategic (advocacy, lobbying) (Kalandides, 2020).

As BIDs have become a popular model of high street vitality and viability, BID managers (in collaboration with local authorities and other stakeholders) need to develop the necessary mechanisms and policy frameworks that synchronize the interests of BID participants (levy payers) and the wider community and help towards forging a consensus regarding the long-term improvement of public realm quality (De Magalhães, 2012). From that perspective, BIDs are integral to the place management process, since they are important pieces of the ‘place puzzle’ that can enhance acceptance of local stakeholders for development and regeneration (Coca-Stefaniak and Bagaeen, 2013).

However, other approaches towards collaboration are needed, such as a focus on knowledge exchange between stakeholders, by taking into account the shifting behaviours and interactions of these in local partnerships (Le Feuvre et al., 2016), and by embracing conflict and ‘social untidiness’, if it is for the greater good (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007).

**Place Management and COVID-19**

It is important to maintain and improve the level of communication and collaboration with place stakeholders (local government to community), as well as building capacity for action through establishment of working groups. The development of effective place management initiatives is essential for working towards recovery.

As your place management strategies are likely to be heavily influenced by the effects of COVID-19 it is important to regularly evaluate place performance through consideration of available data/evidence and inform shifts in strategy.

Ongoing implementation of strategy, regular review through evaluation of data/evidence, co-ordination and ongoing engagement of local capacity and continued collaboration and communication with place stakeholders via partnership-working initiatives are some of the key criteria for a successful place management strategy that will assist to the transformation of the high street.

**See also**

Vision and Strategy; Networks and Partnerships with Council

**References**


