

25 priorities for high street change

Activity



What are the 25 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.

Activity

Factors included in Activity

Opening hours; footfall; shopping hours; evening economy

Ranking

Activity	Rank	Score	Descriptor
Influence	3 rd out of 25	4.40 out of 5	Highly Influential
Control	9 th out of 25	3.52 out of 4	Potentially controllable
25 Priorities	1 st out of 25	15.43	Very high priority

Description/Definition

Activity (or town centre activity) is understood as a multi-dimensional process including economic, social and cultural adaptive processes (Astbury and Thurstain-Goodwin, 2014) that ensures that a high street or town centre is open for people for a variety of uses (retail, leisure, social exchange, entertainment, work, etc).

The vast array of activities and uses on the High Street also suggest that is important to measure such activity and understand the main uses and characteristics of our High Street. As such, footfall can be understood as a universal measure of activity, that provides a means of classifying place based on the patterns and volumes of usage (Mumford et al., 2020).

Why does it matter? (Influence)

Being open and available for potential customers is fundamental to a centre's performance, and activity hours have a significant impact upon patronage (Yavas, 2003).

Consumer habits have changed over recent decades, and we now have a much greater expectation of being able to purchase things instantaneously. We have also seen the growth of evening and night time economies in many centres, as disposable incomes have risen and lifestyles have changed. The growth in flexible working hours sees activity in centres much earlier and later in the day, and Sunday trading has also presented new opportunities for many centres.

As places are inherently dynamic in nature (Dolega et al., 2019), footfall provides a means to analyse dynamic patterns of behaviour and levels of activity within the urban grid, which will eventually lead to better and more accurate place-based decision-making.

What can you do about it? (Control)

The centre should be open when the target catchment requires it to be. If your centre's activity hours do not meet the needs of the population it should be serving, they will go elsewhere.

Experts undertaking the [High Street 2020](#) project said that retail opening hours were locally controllable; but the experience of place management practitioners is that this is not easy. It can be difficult to co-ordinate a change in opening hours, as national retailers may have set policies and independents may not have the staff or desire to open for longer. You can do that though with temporary and pop-up events, as well as by attracting food and beverage and leisure businesses into the town centre that will extend activities.

Using footfall data to show pedestrian flows at different times of the day can assist in identifying distinct footfall patterns that are reflective of a place's dynamism and characteristics. It will also help you make a case for the support of events that can have a positive impact on pedestrian and economic activity, and subsequently cultivate the social and cultural identity of your High Street.

Activity and COVID-19

During lockdown and social distancing protocols, economic activity in commercial centres has decreased exponentially. Lockdown measures will be lifted by phase –consider what this will do to the activity patterns in your town. For example, you may want to identify and map 'hotspots' by phase (e.g. clusters of non-essential retail stores that may open together).

Deliver your plan to encourage footfall, shopping and support evening economy, in line with newly developed principles, rather than a return to pre-Covid-19 conventions and ensuring adherence to government guidance on [safer public places](#). The overarching goal of tailoring these activities and uses is to have a healthy, safe, and sustainable high street that meets the catchments needs and is active when is more relevant for them.

See also

Retail Offer; Non-Retail Offer; Anchors

References

Astbury G and Thurstain-Goodwin M (2014) Measuring the Impact of Out-of-town Retail Development on Town Centre Retail Property in England and Wales. *Applied Spatial Analysis and Policy*, 7(4): 301–316.

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