HIGH STREETS TASK FORCE

25 'Vital and Viable' Priorities

Non-Retail Offer

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.

Non-retail offer

Factors included in Non-retail offer

Attractions; entertainment; non-retail offer; leisure offer

Ranking

Non-retail offer	Rank	Score	Descriptor
Influence	15th out of 25	3.99 out of 5	Influential
Control	8th out of 25	3.54 out of 4	Potentially controllable
25 Priorities	9th out of 25	14.05	Very high priority

Description/Definition

Non-retail offer refers to the opportunities in a centre beyond retail. It includes bars and restaurants; leisure, entertainment, arts, and culture; business and employment; education; health services; and housing. Centres that have an attractive non-retail offer, become places that are interesting to spend time and live in and can result in economic prosperity.

Why does it matter? (Influence)

Both a centre's shopping provision and non-retail offer are key in attracting people into the centre (Wrigley and Lambiri, 2015). A diverse mix of shops and non-retail opportunities in a centre is thus integral to ensuring its vitality and viability (Teller and Schnedlitz, 2012), and a lack of it can lead to customer dissatisfaction (Wrigley and Lambiri, 2015).

In the UK, 75.8% of the population uses online shopping (Centre for Retail Research, 2019), and although independent retail remains active in many centres, the overall number of stores has been falling consistently for many years. Therefore, it is important to understand what else a centre can offer apart from retail. A diverse mixture of retail and non-retail offerings in a centre can result in economic benefits due to, for example, encouraging linked shopping trips and greater 'dwell time'. Furthermore, it can extend the offer of the centre to a larger section of the community and can extend the economic base by offering employment and business opportunities.

What can you do about it? (Control)

Town and city centre strategies should look at the main attractions a centre has to offer, and the strength of each of these should be assessed as part of the repositioning and reinventing processes.

Looking at what is on offer in neighbouring towns, and in similar towns and cities elsewhere, will help identify whether the balance is right or what developments are required. As change happens, space that has previously been dedicated to retail, may no longer be required. These places can be transformed for alternative uses (e.g. space for workshops, community exhibitions, etc.) so that a healthy and vibrant centre can be created. Planning policy needs to reflect the pace of change; and care must be taken that property values do not erode diversity to too great an extent (such as conversion of offices or workspace to residential).

Attracting new users and occupiers requires a collaborative approach, working with the property industry, the local authority, potential end users, potentially transport providers, civic groups, and others. Although, short-term opportunities may present themselves, increasing the non-retail offer should be encouraged through a strategy for the centre as a whole.

Non-retail offer and COVID-19

During lockdown, people have turned to online shopping and it is uncertain how many will return to town and city centres for shopping. This in turn is linked to the potential struggle of increasing footfall post-lockdown. It is therefore key that centres are able to attract visitors for non-retail purposes.

Information about the open and available retail and non-retail offer could be crucial as lockdown is being eased and people are encouraged to return to town centres and high streets. Therefore, it is important to encourage all non-retail businesses to publish whether they are temporarily closed or, if not, their up to date shopping hours on google maps. Aiming to establish networks of evening economy businesses where these do not already exist to ensure the offer is joined up and consistent, and coordinate businesses that can cross promote (e.g. hotel and attractions, theatres and restaurants) can be beneficial.

Additionally, supporting the leisure offer - or gaps in provision - with complementary events in the public realm could aid return of footfall. It can also be important to stay up to date with government and sector-based advice to businesses and disseminate it regularly. Declining retail uses can be replaced with more experiential non-retail uses where relevant and attractive to the catchment. This repurposing of town centres is an established trend – try to consider reviewing planning policy to assess whether this is permitted and desirable in your place.

See also

Retail offer; Experience; Diversity; Recreational space; Functionality; Barriers to new entrants

References

Teller, C., & Schnedlitz, P. (2012). Drivers of agglomeration effects in retailing: The shopping mall tenant's perspective. Journal of Marketing Management, 28(9-10), 1043-1061. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2011.617708

Wrigley, N. & Lambiri, D. (2015). British High Streets: from Crisis to Recovery? A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence. Southampton; 2015. Available from: https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/30341672.pdf