

25 'Vital and Viable' Priorities

# Walking



## 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.

# Walking

## Factors included in Walking

Walkability; pedestrianisation/flow; cross-shopping; linked trips; connectivity

## Ranking

Walking	Rank	Score	Descriptor
Influence	7 <sup>th</sup> out of 25	4.16 out of 5	Highly Influential
Control	16 <sup>th</sup> out of 25	3.31 out of 4	Potentially controllable
25 Priorities	11 <sup>th*</sup> out of 25	13.63	Very high priority

\*Although the priority 'walking' is on the 11<sup>th</sup> position after 'merchandise' we have decided to prioritise 'walking' over 'merchandise' as it has become of prime importance during COVID-19.

## Description/Definition

This refers to how walking-friendly an area is, the quality of walking conditions, including safety, comfort, and convenience. Walkability in town and city centres has health (i.e. improved fitness and public health), environmental (i.e. emission reduction), and economic impacts (i.e. consumer cost savings and expenditure) (Litman, 2003). It encompasses the quality of the space, the presence and suitability of footpaths and crossing points, and the absence of temporary or permanent barriers (such as stairs or roadworks) that might prevent some (i.e. people with disabilities) or all groups in society to walk. It also includes other aspects that can improve the walking experience: car free zones, appropriate lighting, signing, etc.

## Why does it matter? (Influence)

As identified by the Project for Public Spaces (2017), 'successful' public spaces are accessible and perceived by visitors to be comfortable, of which the walkability of the place is a key component. Due to growing suburbanisation, centres have become less accessible for the private car, with their vitality and viability becoming increasingly dependent on the accessibility provided by public transportation and pedestrian activity (Rotem-Mindali, 2012).

Centres with unobstructed, logical, and safe pedestrian walkways can generate positive economic benefits due to encouraging increased footfall and linked shopping trips (Hass-Klau, 1993). Pedestrian-friendly centres encourage cross-shopping trips, and hence have economic benefits (Wrigley and Lambiri, 2015). Once walking, people are far more likely to engage with the centre, to make purchases, interact with other community members, and build place attachment. Walking can also promote community health and well-being (Ross and Mirowsky, 2001), reduce carbon emissions, and make centres more livable. However, issues arise when there are barriers to walking within a centre, such as extensive walking between shops, traffic congestion, and poor lighting (Lee & Moudon, 2008).

## What can you do about it? (Control)

A 'positive' walking experience stems from pedestrian routes being comfortable, interesting, safe, and unobstructed (Talen and Koschinsky, 2013). Walking routes from surrounding areas need to be clearly signed, well maintained, well lit, avoid grade changes where possible, avoid narrow pavements, and be prioritised at traffic junctions. Once in the centre, signposting can encourage exploration, as can visual displays, banners, lights, flags, and town centre wifi/apps that lets people find out more the centre.

Walking can also be encouraged for some people by the provision of well-maintained benches at regular intervals, at least some of which are under cover. Home delivery, collect later, or storage lockers can all encourage shoppers to both shop and walk. Pedestrianisation of busy streets can encourage their walkability; but in some places these can become off-putting at night or require service vehicles to access at times. Designing streets as shared spaces, or allowing vehicular access at times, may be the solution.

## Walking and COVID-19

Space for walking safely has become of maximum importance for social distancing. Going forward, town and city centres may establish the capacity of various areas and monitor how social distancing is working in practice by using, for example, footfall counting technology or undertaking manual counts if necessary. Furthermore, tactical urbanism (employing low-cost and temporary solutions) can help to make more space for people to social distance. Walking can become (along with other foot powered transport modes including bikes, e-bikes and scooters) the main method of travel around centres. The streetscape can be designed to enable this, with wayfinding, rest points, green infrastructure and restricted vehicular access. To facilitate this, taking sustainability and air quality into consideration also becomes important.

## See also

Experience; Attractiveness; Safety; Accessible; Recreational space; Necessities

## References

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