FACT SHEET

Walkability

Key point

- *By reducing dependency on the car and promoting walkability, the city can become more liveable, with less congestion, air pollution, noise, vibration and severance brought by heavy traffic.*

Walkability explained

Walking is the most important form of human transportation. The way we design cities can greatly influence the way people move for decade to come. Cities should be planned and designed to encourage people to walk more rather than using private vehicles. Planners should focus on the overall pedestrian experience when designing the layout and character of urban street and infrastructure.

How it works

Street design and urban environments can better serve for pedestrian by improving safety, comfort, and attractiveness for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and public transport users of all ages and abilities. Overall walkability of cities can be improved by the following measures:

- **The development of car-free areas:** Car-free areas can take many shapes and forms, depending on the context of the city. Approaches could range from the traffic calming of a single street (via the introduction of speed bumps or chicanes) to a totally car-free city.[1] The development of car-free areas within a city is relatively easier to enforce than, say, parking regulations because entry points into the zone can be secured against violating traffic – as opposed to policing a whole area. The technological requirements are also lower, compared with, say, congestion charging.
- **Walkable street design:** The development of pedestrian-friendly streets requires serious consideration of a number of factors early in the planning process. For instance, cellular development concepts that locate a variety of important destinations within close proximity including schools, grocery and retail stores, office buildings would encourage people to walk more. Key elements include: safety features such as increased lighting, reduced vehicle speeds and effective traffic signals and crosswalks; efficient street networks that allow for greater route choice; convenient access to mass transit options; installing clear and direct signage; widening of streets for people instead of widening for cars; creating space for urban greenery, such as street trees, seating areas and shelter to more effectively accommodate pedestrians.

Strengths in walkability

- **Reduces carbon emissions, air pollution, noise and congestions** via reduced dependency on private cars.
- **Enhances liveability** via increased a sense of community and health benefits.
- **Increases land and property values.** Businesses benefit from a higher level of footfall.

Challenges to expanding walkability

- **Planning culture that prioritizes the movement of cars rather than people.**
- **Attitudes:** Business owners likely will fear a reduced level of commercial activity, and individuals will perceive the car as more convenient than walking

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[1] Lloyd Wright, *Car-Free Development* (Eschborn, GTZ, 2005). Available from www.sutp.org (accessed 27 February 2012).

Implementing strategies

Develop an integrated transport and land use master plan: Incorporate provisions for car-free areas, especially for central shopping and business districts, with walkable streets and restricted parking space in downtown areas.

Ensure appropriate analysis involving many actors and outreach/marketing on the benefits of the scheme: The added business benefits (more footfall) and improved accessibility (shorter journeys) have to be impressed upon communities.

Engage a skilled project team: Proper design includes operational plans, conceptual designs and detailed engineering designs.

Examples

- **Car-free residential area in Vauban-Freiburg, Germany**
- **Traffic-calmed residential blocks in Guangzhou, China**
- **Abu Dhabi urban street manual, United Arab Emirates:**[2] The Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council created the Urban Street Design Manual in 2010 to guide the designers in creating walkable streets and pedestrian-friendly environments. The manual applies to all streets in the emirate, including those parts scheduled for urbanization by 2030 as well as streets to be retrofitted.

Further reading

Our Cities Ourselves: Ten Principles for Transport in Urban Life (New York, Institute for Transportation & Development Policy, 2010). Available from www.itdp.org/documents/2010-OurCitiesOurselves_Booklet.pdf

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[2] Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council, *Abu Dhabi Urban Street Design Manual* (Abu Dhabi, 2010). Available from www.upc.gov.ae/template/upc/pdf/Street%20Design%20Manual%20English%20(small)%20FINAL.pdf (accessed 27 February 2012).