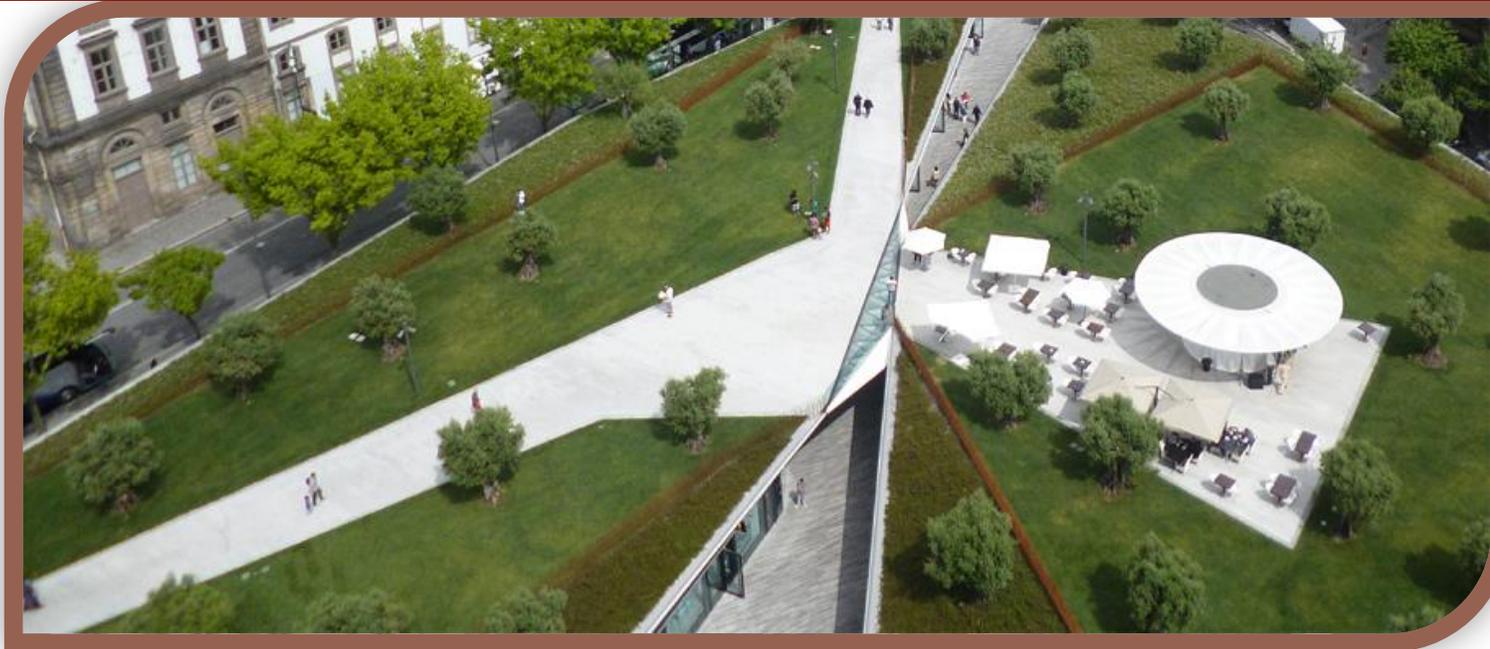


# Designing “Walkable Cities”

## Sustainable Approaches to Wayfinding



TravelWayfinding.com  
symonds@travelwayfinding.com

**Published by:**

TravelWayfinding.com, Cardiff, Wales, UK

email: [Symonds@travelwayfinding.com](mailto:Symonds@travelwayfinding.com)

[www.travelwayfinding.com](http://www.travelwayfinding.com)

Contact: Paul Symonds

Written by Paul Symonds

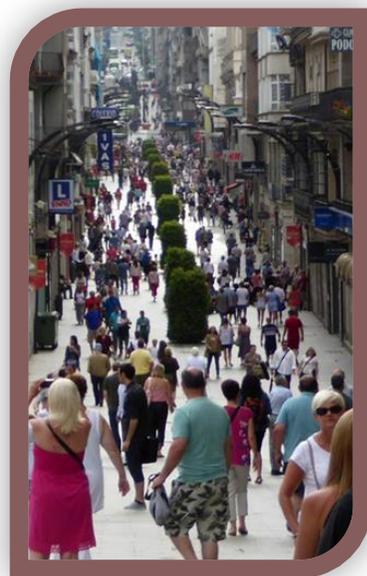
# Wayfinding Specialists



## 1. Accessible Modalities of Movement for All

*“If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places.” — Fred Kent, Project for Public Spaces*

In talking about “Walkable Cities”, it should be noted that having walkable areas lends itself not only to those able to physically walk, but also tends to mean much better spaces for those with accessibility needs, such as those in wheelchairs or who rely on motor scooters. Furthermore, in terms of modalities by user group, walkable cities benefit the significant percentage of people who do not drive! Those not of driving age, those who do not like or are able to drive, all can benefit from increased options for walkability. The population of non-drivers can often be as high as **25%**!



Additionally, walking (or cycling) is very often part of a **Connected Route**, meaning that even where a car or other form of transport is used, walking is an important part of the start or end of the journey. A person may, for example, walk to a train station and use the train and then walk again to their final destination. Connectivity is an important consideration in the design and implementation of “Walkable Cities”. In addition to making our cities better for all users, there are a number of other benefits to the “Walkable Cities” concept, the first of which are the economic benefits.

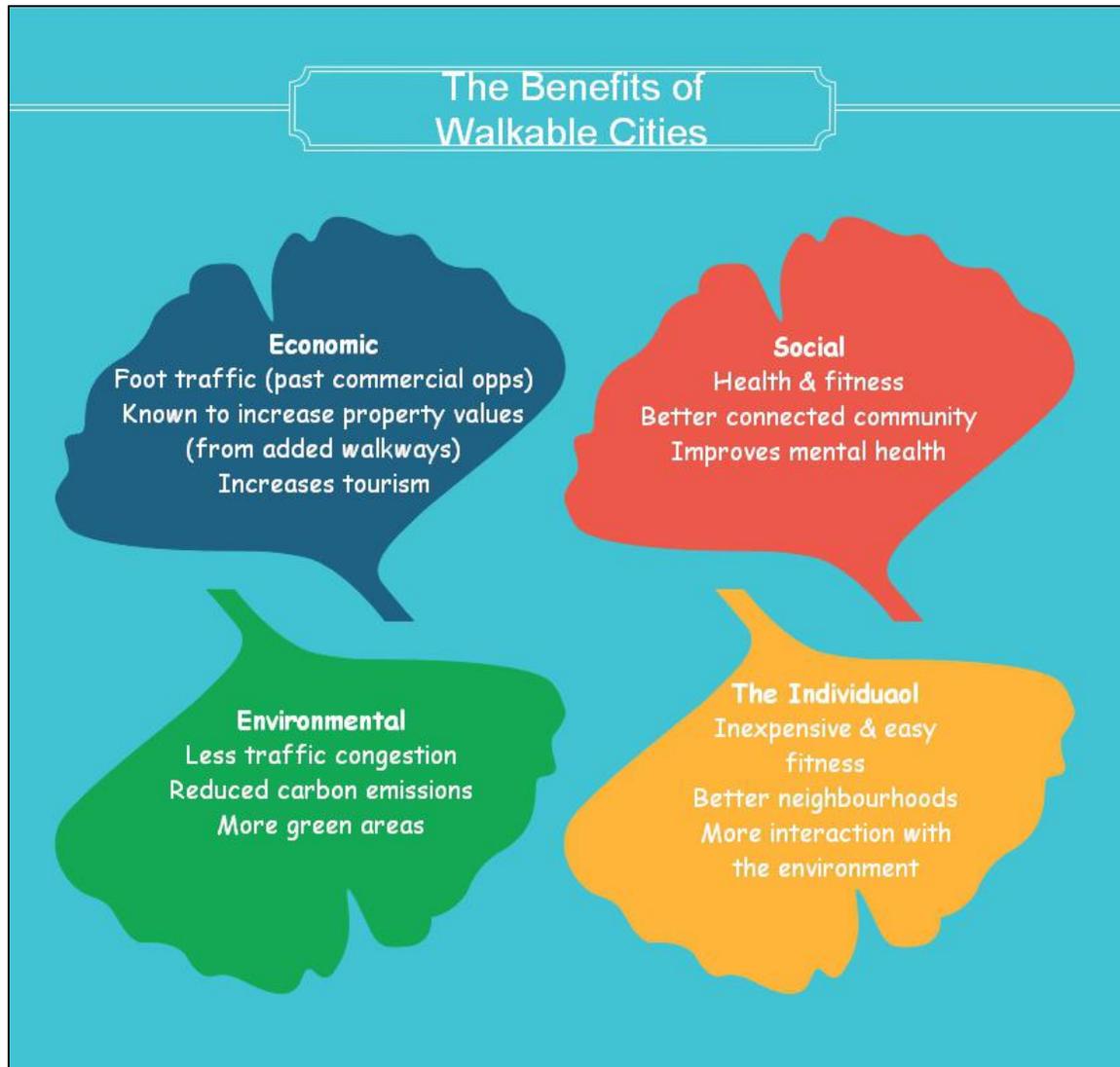


FIGURE 1 - THE BENEFITS OF WALKABLE CITIES - BY PAUL SYMONDS (TRAVELWAYFINDING.COM)

### **Economic Benefits of Walkable Cities**

There are a number of long-term economic benefits to be gained from a move towards creating walkable areas, one of which is the commercial benefits.

Increased numbers of foot passengers passing store fronts and services that you might wish to provide, are particularly useful ways of increasing tourism income and to, not only gain commercially, but also create a better user experience (UX) for visitors and users of the location/s in question.

**Increases in foot traffic** can create great opportunities for a wide range of service providers including shops, restaurants, stall holders, kiosks, to name but a few. Creating walkable cities tends to also mean the need for additional pavements and walkable areas close to properties and this is known to help raise local **property prices**. Walkable Cities also mean a great opportunity for tourism income and opportunities. In addition to the rise in foot passengers, walkable areas in certain locations, such as in urban centers, often become hubs for tourist activity, benefiting the local economy.

One particularly good idea that some cities, such as Cardiff, Wales in the UK choose to do in these areas, is to allocate a certain number of performers' licenses, so that musicians, singers, magicians and the such like, from the local area, have the opportunity to showcase their skills in these walkable areas. This creates a great community based atmosphere, provides a stage as it were, for local talent, and make the walkable areas generally more pleasant to experience.



## Social Benefits of Walkable Cities

Making locations connected via walkable paths and areas in essence creates **better connected communities** benefiting local people and neighbourhoods that locals can be proud of and which they take pride in helping to maintain, such as through volunteer programmes. Providing the opportunity also to improve communities through walkable areas can aid **mental health through a greater connection to nature**. The drive for walking cities includes the development of areas such as bay, lake and reservoir trails, and the chance to experience nature and the beauty of the local environment. Projects such as the “[Giraffe Path](#)” in NYC, where users can explore 6 miles of trail and are connected between 7 different parks, are good examples of walkable cities initiatives. This is a trail that enables walkers to explore and experience the green areas of NYC, great both for visitors and local users. Likewise, the development of the Wetlands along the Cardiff Bay Trail and their [Wilderness Trail](#) provides school groups the chance to experience pond wildlife on educational trips.



## Environmental Benefits

Getting people to walk more and cycle more has undoubted benefits. In addition to being safer for people (statistics show that walking reduces accident rates as opposed to driving), there are definite benefits in relation to the environment. Pedestrianizing parts of cities such as in city centres is often unwelcomed at first by local traders but, time and time again, pedestrianizing has proven to be a popular move, by users. Reducing the use of cars and creating walkable areas such as trails and pedestrian and cycle only zones, also means **cleaner air** through **less pollution and reduced emissions**. Pedestrianized zones also means the chance to plant trees, add ponds, and other green and environmentally friendly locations, locations which, as mentioned previously, aid mental health through improved neighbourhoods.



## Real World Considerations

### Stakeholders

The push for “Walkable Cities” is, on paper, actually quite simple.

- Pedestrianize more city centre areas, for example.
- Add wider walkways and separate cycle paths.
- Develop green areas on these new non-vehicle areas (planting trees, shrubbery and develop an art plan).
- Ensure that these new paths are usable for all user types i.e. to be wheelchair friendly.
- Work to connect these paths with parks, shopping and other areas. Work to create connected areas that can be navigated by foot, cycle and other non-road transport (i.e. Wheelchairs).
- Promote the paths and build a narrative around these areas.

The problem, of course, often is in the politics and getting the necessary stakeholders to agree. Furthermore, the income from road taxes, speeding fines and [wrong lane](#) usage can be extremely high for local councils. In reality, what should actually be a fairly straight-forward process, will not be and working with stakeholders is a necessary part of the planning and implementation process for “Walkable Cities”. In order to try and overcome stakeholder issues, creating a committee who oversee the process and unite these different groups tends to become a necessity.

### User Experience (UX) and Human Needs

What if it rains? Do users still want to cycle or walk along these paths and trails that have been designed as part of a “Walkable Cities” programme? [Human factors](#) are a key element and aspect of developing trails and routes for walking and cycle routes and these are a number of considerations and also solutions! Ensuring there are enough toilets (restroom facilities en-route), information points, transportation pick-up points (so that the elderly can choose to do parts of a route) and so on, are essential considerations in creating walking paths in urban areas that can be several miles long (such as along bay or lake trails) on the edge of cities. You can learn more about human factors by following [Travelwayfinding.com](http://Travelwayfinding.com).

**Wayfinding Audits**  
([click to learn more](#))

