

What Makes a Walkable City?

To encourage people to walk, Austin and other cities use urban design, planning and zoning tools to encourage attractive walking environments. People walk more in areas of the city that are more lively, pleasant and interesting to walk through, on a human scale – with many destinations within a 5-10 minute walk. To create a walkable city, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan encourages “compact and connected” development patterns, with neighborhoods and districts that have a street grid of small blocks, enlivened by street-level retail and landscaping, with sidewalks shaded by trees and awnings.

Studies have documented that development patterns strongly impact how much, and how safely, people walk. According to [research](#) cited by the [National Safety Council](#), walkable urban communities (with sidewalks and short blocks) were found to have three times as many pedestrian trips as communities characterized by suburban sprawl (few sidewalks and large blocks).