



Walkable Communities: What REALTORS® Should Know

Walkable communities are becoming the latest trend in real estate and REALTORS® need to be aware of how the demand for walkable communities impacts real estate and their business.

Walkable Communities in a Nutshell

A walkable community is where residents can walk, bike or take public transit (light rail, trolleys and/or buses) to grocery stores, shops, schools, work, cafes, markets, playgrounds and parks. Walkable communities have a mix of housing types as well as mixed-use buildings that combine residential, office and retail. They can be high-rise urban neighborhoods, traditional downtowns and main streets, or suburban town centers.

“Consumers’ preference for walkability isn’t just a trend but a structural change in the way many Americans see the American Dream.”

*Jeff Speck, City Planner,
Urban Designer & Author*

Demand for Walkable Communities

Demand for walkable communities is on the upswing and by all accounts will continue. Millennials, families, the elderly and many others are recognizing the benefits and enhanced quality of life of being within walking distance to destinations of choice.

Recent Findings:

- According to [NAR’s 2020 Community Preference Survey](#), 76% say that living in a walkable community would be very or somewhat important if they were deciding where to live today and nearly 80 percent see walkable communities as an important attribute.
- Fifty-six percent of millennials and 46% of baby boomers prefer to live in more walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. ([Regional Plan Association](#))
- Half of survey respondents said that walkability is either the top or a high priority in where they would choose to live. ([Urban Land Institute Survey](#))

“The most requested neighborhood characteristic of all buyers is walkability.”

Andrea Evers, Real Estate Broker

Real estate professionals are noticing an increase in home buyers who are adding walkability to their list of priorities when looking for homes to purchase.

How walkable is your community? Are you ready to make it more walkable? For more information on walkable communities, visit www.realtorparty.com/walkability.



Impact on Real Estate

There is a game-changing shift underway in real estate, according to Christopher Leinberger, Research Professor of Urban Real Estate at the George Washington University. Walkable urban places or “WalkUPs” will drive tomorrow’s real estate industry and the economy.

“A city’s ‘walkability’ drives real estate values.”

*Diana Olick,
CNBC Real Estate Reporter*

Properties located in convenient, amenity-rich communities are commanding increases in the per-foot price of both commercial and residential spaces compared to those in neighborhoods where residents do not have amenities close to where they live.

Recent Findings:

- For-sale housing is \$157.68 per square foot, about 70%, more than in car-dependent areas. ([DC: The WalkUP Wake-Up Call](#))
- For apartments, there is a 70% rental premium on walkability. ([Foot Traffic Ahead](#))
- Commercial office space in walkable areas has an average 74% price per square foot premium over suburban business parks. ([Foot Traffic Ahead](#))

Benefits Communities

Cities that focus on walkability are experiencing new growth, development and revitalization. They are seeing an increase in retail, restaurant and office investment. Retailers are drawn to these communities because of the potential to develop a new customer base. Companies are moving to or expanding in downtowns and walkable neighborhoods because of employees’ desire to be near amenities.

“Creating walkability with restaurants and stores can help transition an edgy part of town into one that is hip and hopping with pedestrians. This type of real estate development transforms the community for the better.”

Lawrence Yun, Chief Economist, National Association of REALTORS®

Walkable communities attract tourists, reduce commuting costs and emissions, facilitate good health and [generate four times the tax revenue compared to regional and business malls](#), bringing more value to a neighborhood.

Creating a Walkable Community

Creating a more walkable community involves engaging key stakeholders at both the grassroots and policymaking levels, namely elected officials, businesses, cultural organizations, developers, residents and REALTORS®. A shared vision and civic participation are the keys to success.

“Cities that want to thrive in our new economic and demographic realities will need to find ways to create and support more of these dynamic, productive walkable districts that are in high demand.”

Geoff Anderson, CEO, Smart Growth America

One successful way to engage a community is to conduct a walkable community workshop. Workshops can include a presentation that outlines best practices; a walking audit to assess specific sites and identify conditions to enhance; break-out sessions to set priorities and action steps; photo-visualizations; and follow-up observations and recommendations.

Does your MLS include Walk Scores?

Walk Score is a walkability index based on distance to amenities and neighborhood destinations.

A one-point increase in a home’s Walk Score is associated with a \$700 to \$3000 increase in its value compared to less walkable homes of comparable size.