

BMTS Article Digest August – September 2021

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed from the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page at <http://bmtsonline.com/about/committees>.



Pedestrian & Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) Messenger e-Newsletter

Go to <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/newsroom/newsletters.cfm>.

[Subscribe](#) to the new monthly PBIC Messenger. Send news for future issues to editorial team member [Linda Tracy](#).

Come out and play in Broome County

Go All Out Broome County is your simple guide to hundreds of places and thousands of acres in your own backyard or just down the road. Easily locate hidden gems and local favorites then map your next outdoor adventure in Broome County. Go to www.GoAllOutBroome.com.

Explore more than a dozen state forests, 78 parks or 77 miles of paddle friendly waters. Give our antique carousels a go-round or enjoy a round of golf on courses worthy of professional competition. From challenging trails to hike or bike to riverside strolls or picnics, you can go all out in any way, in every season, in Broome County.

Now you're just a few clicks away from an awesome day.



See the **Two Rivers Greenway Pedestrian & Bicycle Monthly Counting Reports** at <http://bmtsonline.com/data/bikeped-counts>.



Chenango Street Bridge in Binghamton will close for 3 months to address 'settling' issue

Jeff Murray

Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin / September 9, 2021

The Chenango Street Bridge in Binghamton will close to traffic temporarily starting Saturday.

The bridge will be closed in both directions for about three months, according to the state Department of Transportation.

DOT announced in June engineers had detected an "uncharacteristic settlement" in the roadway above the arch of the Chenango Street Bridge.

While the bridge remains safe for travel, out of an abundance of caution and to preserve the structure's 75-year design life, DOT engineers developed a plan to remedy the issue, the agency said.

With the planned closure to implement those measures, motorists should plan accordingly and follow posted detours, DOT officials added.

Through traffic heading north on Chenango Street will be diverted at Frederick Street. Southbound traffic will be diverted at Bevier Street.

Local traffic will retain access to homes, businesses, places of worship, and side streets located between the detour points and the overpass, according to DOT. Bicycle and pedestrian access will be maintained through the work zone on Chenango Street.

Wednesday, 8 September 2021

Streets Alive! and Ithaca Apple Harvest festivals return

Matt Steecker Ithaca Journal USA TODAY NETWORK

The Streets Alive! and Ithaca Apple Harvest festivals are scheduled to return to Ithaca in the next few weeks.

The **16th annual Streets Alive!** festival will take place from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday Sept. 19. Cayuga Street from Ithaca High School will be closed to motorized vehicles and open to pedestrians and bicyclists who will see several activities along the route.

Entertainment along the path will include a bike rodeo, Circus Culture acrobatics and strolling musicians. Organizers say a food truck or two will be present during the festival as well.

"After the experience of the past year-and-a-half and three lost festivals, we're triply excited to bring back Streets Alive! — an afternoon of open-air, carefree time to enjoy being together in the street," Bike Walk Tompkins Director Margaret Johnson said.

Bike Walk Tompkins needs 40-60 volunteers for the festival and is inviting people 16 and up to sign up to be shift Intersection "Superheroes" at bikewalktompkins.org/streetsalive.

The 39th annual Apple Harvest Festival will return to downtown Ithaca from Oct. 1 to Oct. 3.

Attendees will be able to find farm stand fresh apples and produce, seasonal baked goods, food trucks, live music and entertainment and craft fair made by artisans from around the region. There will be a cider trail, apples and apple-inspired products for sale at shops in and around downtown.

Festival hours are from noon to 6 p.m. on Oct. 1 and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Oct. 2 and 3.



The annual Apple Harvest Festival brought thousands to downtown Ithaca to enjoy fall foods, ciders, entertainment and vendors in 2019.

KATE COLLINS/ITHACA JOURNAL

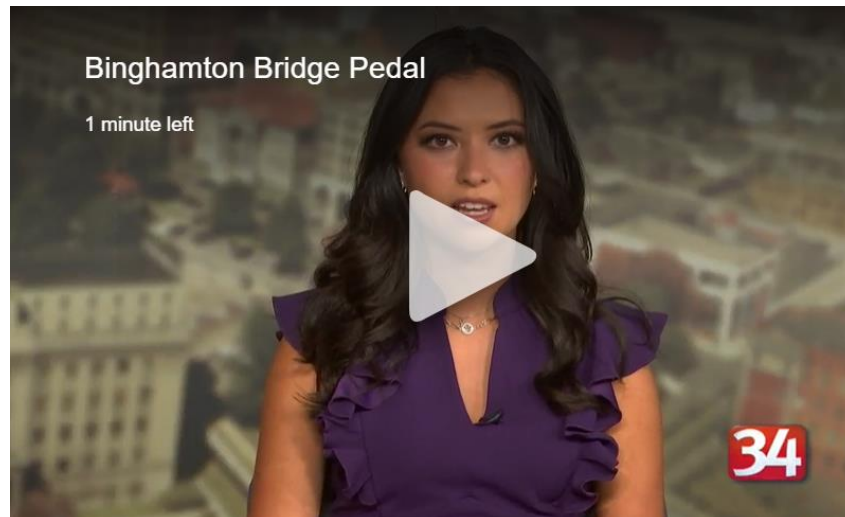
Bridge Pedal guides cyclists through the area

WIV-TV NEWS

<https://www.binghamtonhomepage.com/news/bridge-pedal-guides-cyclists-through-the-area/>

by: Jay Bradley

Posted: Aug 8, 2021 / 06:11 PM EDT / Updated: Aug 8, 2021 / 06:12 PM EDT



BINGHAMTON, NY — Dozens of people came out today for a family-friendly tour of Binghamton on their bikes.

The Binghamton Bridge Pedal took place for its 14th year, bringing together cyclists all throughout the area of different skill levels.

The event guided around 80 cyclists of all ages from Techworks on Water Street to

visit different places in the area like Otsiningo Park, and the carousel at Rec Park.

Scott Reigle, the Senior Transportation Planner at Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study, was an organizer for the event and he says he hopes this trip can show people more about the hobby and the area.

“I’m hoping they will see how fun biking can be and that we do have good facilities, both on road as well as the trails, there’s different pieces of the tour, there was greenway that goes through Binghamton,” said Reigle. “And then also looking at different facilities, destinations that they might want to go to.”

Last year the event was put on hold due to COVID restrictions and Reigle and the other cyclists were excited for its return.

The 9-mile trek ended at Techworks, after which the cyclists were able to sample local food and hear about the different showcases at Techworks.



A neglected, dismal-looking pedestrian area in downtown Binghamton is being transformed in an ongoing \$636,000 project.

Crews at the Washington Street construction site have been working for the past two months. They're expecting the renovations will be completed in a couple more months.

Mayor Richard David said the project between Court Street and the MetroCenter entrance will transform "a concrete jungle with new green space and amenities."



Excavation work in progress near the south entrance to the MetroCenter on August 10, 2021. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

Utility work at the project site was completed in June. Electrical and water lines were upgraded. New fire hydrants also were installed.

The project will include landscaping, lighting and decorative pavers.

The construction work is being done by Procon Contracting of Vestal.

FLASHBACK: The Washington Street pedestrian mall on November 4, 2014.
(Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)



Japanese knotweed's spread is a problem: A Cornell professor is working on a solution

Dr. Bernd Blossey's Cornell University team is exploring a biocontrol for Japanese knotweed, which damages ecosystems and economies

Chris Potter

Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin

Published 6:01 a.m. ET Aug. 11, 2021 / Updated 8:42 a.m. ET Aug. 11, 2021

[It spreads like wildfire](#), blanketing entire landscapes in a sea of green that chokes out all other competitors.

It is incredibly difficult to kill, constantly springing back to life like the villain in a horror movie.

It has no native predators, but Dr. Bernd Blossey is trying to change that.

Blossey, [a professor in Cornell University's Department of Natural Resources](#), is working toward a solution to curb the spread of [Japanese knotweed](#), an invasive species wreaking havoc on ecosystems and infrastructure across the United States and much of the world.

Blossey's Cornell team is exploring a biological control for Japanese knotweed that has the potential to slow its steady spread across the American landscape. Researchers are hoping to introduce an insect native to knotweed's home range in Asia, essentially creating a natural enemy where none has existed since knotweed was introduced in the U.S. in the late 1800s.

This new "biocontrol" approach may be the last, best hope to prevent knotweed from taking over still more vulnerable acreage.

"There's no other hope for anything else," said Blossey. "I don't think you can be successful."

The stakes are high. Outreach by [Cornell's New York Invasive Species Research Institute](#) regularly finds knotweed among the top concerns for land managers in the state.

"Japanese knotweed is probably No. 1," said Blossey. "Everybody is concerned about it, with the exception of the beekeepers who like the abundant flowerings in August and September. Everybody else wants to get rid of it as quick as possible."



Current control efforts 'incredibly labor intensive'

With its hollow stems and large leaves, Japanese knotweed resembles bamboo. It forms dense colonies, often around waterways, and once established it will quickly dominate native vegetation. Knotweed can shoot up higher than 10 feet in a single growing season before dying back in the fall, leaving the ground vulnerable to erosion as it eliminates most other understory growth.

Cornell researchers have found knotweed has a severe impact on amphibian populations due to disruptions to the natural food web around rivers and streams. Knotweed's effect on fisheries and aquatic systems is not as well understood, but there is concern it could hurt the spawning habitats of valued fish species like trout and salmon.

The problem is economic as well as ecological. Knotweed's aggressive nature can damage the foundations of homes, underground drainage and septic systems, and other infrastructure. The problem isn't limited to North America. A study released in July estimated that invasive species have [cost the United Kingdom's economy nearly \\$7 billion over the last 40-50 years](#). Japanese knotweed was identified among the prime culprits, [costing the UK about \\$57 million per year](#).

Knotweed hits close to home for Blossey. It is prevalent in meadows around his home in the town of Richford in Tioga County. Blossey also watched with interest as a new shopping center was constructed on a patch of Japanese knotweed in Richford. Within a year, he was noticing knotweed pushing its way through the small cracks just outside the building.



"The only way we know how to get into something that even remotely gets to eradication is deep excavation, six feet down, to get all the little rhizome pieces, and then put it in the landfill. That's not feasible to do at any landscape scale," said Blossey. "Maybe you could excavate that much for the foundation of a house, but it's not possible elsewhere. You rely on other methods."

Regular mowing can slow the spread of knotweed and may even kill isolated pockets, but most large thickets will return in a matter of weeks if the root system isn't removed. Mowing also risks inadvertently spreading the plant, which is already ubiquitous in many areas.

"When you drive along through the Catskills to New York City or in the Binghamton area where you have it flowering and you can identify it, it's everywhere," said Blossey. "You could mow it, it's a good job creation program for everybody all the time, but as soon as you stop, it's back with a vengeance. Mowing suppresses native species as well. They can't tolerate the mowing all the time."



"While you can kill some stems and individuals with mowing or herbicide, it's not allowing native species to return the way we would be able to do so if biocontrol were successful. Mowing and herbicide are also incredibly labor intensive."

Southern Tier researchers hope to solve a global problem

Biocontrol offers an alternative to costly containment efforts. Knotweed is kept in check by insects and fungus in its native range across eastern Asia, but it essentially has free rein in Europe and North America. Researchers have been attempting to introduce a sap-sucking insect native to Asia, the knotweed psyllid (*Aphalara itadori*), in the hope it could curb knotweed's prolific spread across the land.

The psyllid, the country's first-ever biocontrol agent for knotweed, was approved for release in the U.S. in March 2020. Blossey and the Cornell team released more than 2,000 psyllids in June, dispersing one group near the Susquehanna River in the Binghamton area and another along a creek in Tioga County, both areas thick with knotweed.

Early signs were encouraging. Blossey's team returned to the protective cages the following week to find the insects had laid thousands of eggs, but the small creatures vanished when they were released to the wider environment.

"They were really successful in reproducing in these leaf cages, but then they disappear outside," said Blossey. "We think a lot of it is predation, but we don't have full confirmation. There may be a combination of factors. No sign of them has been detected since."

Blossey's findings mirror those of counterparts in the UK and Canada, where the release of the psyllid was approved ahead of the U.S. rollout. Similar releases were conducted last year across the U.S. in conjunction with the Cornell University effort.



Aside from a single specimen observed here and there, all of the attempts at creating psyllid colonies appear to have failed.

"There's always the hope that maybe they did establish, they just didn't like the site where we put them, or we can't find them and in some years we will see them, but that has never happened in the UK or Canada where they have multiple years of observations already," said Blossey. "It seems to be a dead-end for this particular insect."

Blossey remains undeterred, though. He already had doubts about *A. itadori*'s ability to impact knotweed populations, given previous research, and the Cornell University team is intent on visiting China and Japan to look for other organisms to enlist in the fight against knotweed. That research trip was supposed to take place this year, but the COVID-19 pandemic interfered.

"We are not at the end of a potential biocontrol for the species, but this particular psyllid doesn't seem to be a candidate we should bank on anymore," said Blossey. "We're doing more work. We have some candidate species we want to look at that do more damage to Japanese knotweed and then we will test the safety."

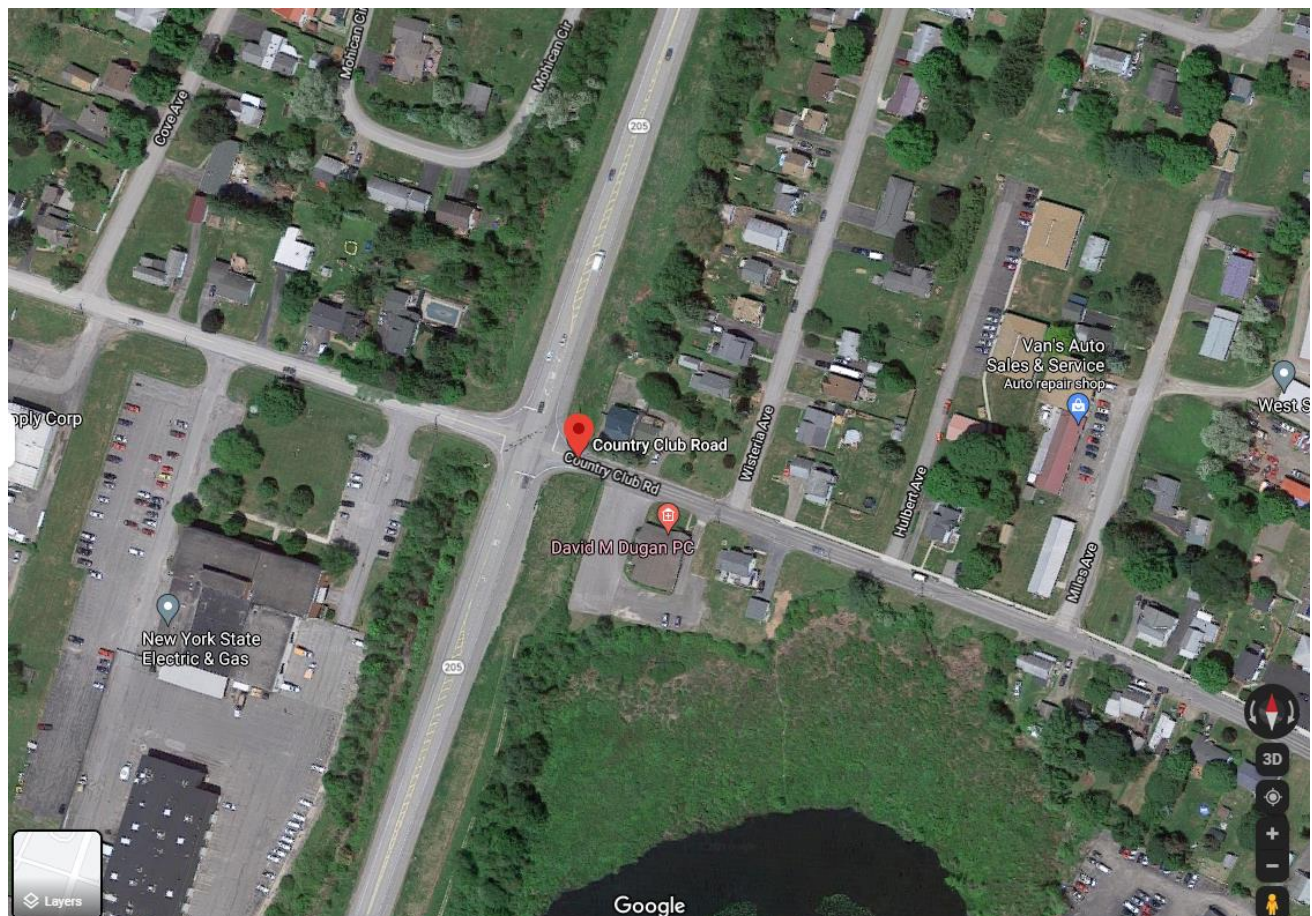
Cornell is equipped with a USDA-approved quarantine facility to ensure no insects are accidentally introduced into the environment. They must first prove compatible with native flora and fauna to avoid the devastation wrought by other invasive insects, such as the Asian longhorned beetle, emerald ash borer, gypsy moth and hemlock woolly adelgid.

Introducing a biocontrol species to prey on another invasive species has worked in the past. Beetles that solely feed on purple loosestrife have helped reduce that fast-spreading plant in a process Blossey hopes to duplicate in knotweed.

"My personal and scientific drive is trying to make sure we don't lose the species that are conservation-reliant," said Blossey. "Conservation is the big thing for me. That means we need to reduce the big populations of knotweed that we have. Biocontrol is never eradication. We don't need that, but we need to lessen the impact Japanese knotweed has. That's what I'm trying to do. There's no other hope that I have, other than biocontrol."



State police are working to locate the person who was driving a vehicle in a deadly hit-and-run incident in Otsego County.



Investigators say a pedestrian was struck and killed late Sunday night or early Monday morning on Route 205 in the town of Oneonta.

According to a news release, the incident occurred near Country Club Road. The driver did not stop at the scene or contact police.

People with information about the incident may contact state police at (607) 561-7400.

The name of the person who died was not released. Police also provided no details about the type of vehicle that hit the pedestrian.



What you should know about the most underrated form of exercise

By **Melanie Radzicki McManus, CNN**

Updated 9:15 AM ET, Fri August 6, 2021

(CNN) For many of us, walking doesn't seem like anything special. It's just something we do every day. But walking is actually one of the best forms of exercise out there.

[Scores of studies](#) show that this simple form of movement has a wealth of wide-ranging benefits, including better physical and mental health, increased mindfulness and enhanced communication skills.

"Walking is the most underrated, corrective, mind-body, fat-burning exercise available to humans," said Dana Santas, a CNN fitness contributor, certified strength and conditioning specialist, and mind-body coach in professional sports. "I walk every single day."

Here are several things everyone should know about this simple, yet beneficial, form of exercise. *(Important note: Before beginning any new exercise program, consult your doctor. Stop immediately if you feel pain.)*

Walking improves your health

A walking regimen can help you lose weight; lower your blood pressure and cholesterol; and reduce your risk for heart disease, diabetes and cancer; among other benefits.

"Walking for Health," a special report issued by [Harvard Medical School](#), says that walking can do more to combat disease and other health conditions than pretty much anything else. One example: Walking just two-and-a-half hours a week, or just under 22 minutes a day, might reduce your risk of heart disease by an impressive 30%.

It improves memory and cognitive capability

Numerous studies show that walking is a brain booster.

A [study published in a 2010 issue](#) of the journal Neurology found a link between walking and a greater amount of gray matter in the brain. For example, [research from the University of Virginia](#) in Charlottesville indicated walking lessened the risk for dementia and Alzheimer's disease in elderly men.

It boosts your mood and lowers stress

Walking even a few minutes a day calms anxiety and enhances your mood. This is especially true if you're walking outside in nature, a setting that [numerous studies show](#) is beneficial in myriad ways.

You can strengthen your muscles, bones and joints. Your leg and abdominal muscles get a workout when you walk, as do your arms if you're pumping them or using trekking poles.

Your bones benefit, too, as walking is a weight-bearing exercise, which is great for building bone strength. And as you walk, your motion helps bring oxygen and nutrients into your joint cartilage, which has no direct blood supply.

Walking is energizing, yet also helps you sleep

A walking regimen helps boost your energy levels, but don't worry if you suffer from insomnia. Women ages 50 to 75 who walked for an hour every morning were less likely to have insomnia than those who did not, [according to the Arthritis Foundation](#).

It's a safe, easy exercise for newbies

Some 17% to 50% of Americans are inactive, according to the US [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), with percentages varying by state and territory. For these people, walking is arguably the cardiorespiratory exercise best suited to them, said Evan Matthews, associate professor of exercise science and physical education at New Jersey's Montclair State University.

"This is because it is likely a familiar movement, removing the learning curve that occurs with a new form of physical activity and the intimidation factor many feel when starting out," he said. Walking is also safe with one of the lowest exercise injury rates, according to a [report by the US Department of Health and Human Services](#).

Matthews noted those without the stamina to finish a 30-minute walk can break it up into small chunks, something not easily doable if you need to exercise at a gym. "This could be a 10-minute walk to work, a 10-minute walk on your lunch break and a 10-minute walk home from work."

Walking can be a vigorous workout



Another great thing about walking -- you can easily control the intensity level.

If you want to [ramp up the intensity](#), try intervals, where you alternate a few minutes of easy strolling with intense bursts. You can also walk with hand or ankle weights, assuming they are not so heavy that they throw off your form, Santas said. Or strap on a loaded backpack. Another option: hill repeats, where

you walk briskly up a hill, then easily back down, several times in a row.

You don't need to take 10,000 steps a day

While many groups tout walking 10,000 steps a day, [research supported by the National Institutes of Health](#) and published in 2019 found that while older women who took 4,400 steps a day had a lower death rate than those taking just 2,700, the benefit of more daily steps leveling off around 7,500.

Build family bonds

Heading out for a stroll with your children could enhance your communication, reduce behavioral issues and even boost academic success. And don't forget your spouse.

"One man told me walking saved his marriage," Santas said.



The couple was on the brink of divorce when his wife began accompanying him on his daily walks.

"They started communicating in ways they hadn't before, and it brought them back together."

Develop community bonds

[Studies show that when people frequently walk](#) around their neighborhood, crime drops. Regular walks are also a great way to get to know your neighbors, and social bonds are important at any age.

Walking is free and can be done anywhere

There's no need for a pricey gym membership. Just put on your shoes and head out the door. If the weather's bad, look for a place such as a mall or school that offers community walking time. You can even walk around your house.

One final thought: While walking is a great form of exercise, new research shows we should [move regularly throughout the day](#) for optimal health. "Walking for five minutes every hour goes a long way," Matthews said. "It doesn't need to even be moderate intensity. Just move."

[Melanie Radzicki McManus](#) is a freelance writer who specializes in hiking, travel and fitness.



Ten social benefits of walkable places

We shape our cities and then they shape us.

[ROBERT STEUTEVILLE](#) AUG. 12, 2021

Winston Churchill insightfully said of architecture, "we shape our buildings and thereafter they shape us." That statement is even more true of communities and urban planning. Cities and towns are architecture writ large. Their assembly, often involving thousands of buildings, thoroughfares, and public spaces, impacts nearly every aspect of our lives.

A research report called *Cities Alive* by Arup, a multinational engineering and design firm, enumerated two score and ten benefits of walkable places, in four categories: Social, economic,

environmental, and political. This article focuses on social benefits, those that directly impact the well-being of people, along with their neighbors and community members. Here's a list of 10 social benefits of designing and building human-scale cities and towns.

1. **Promotes active living, for longer and better lives**

Living in a walkable place that allows for activity built into each day benefits every age group, and helps people to live longer. Walking to school promotes independence among children. Unfortunately, the number of children who walk to school [has declined](#) from about 50 percent, 50 years ago, to less than 15 percent today, partly due to changes in the built environment. Regular walking cuts early mortality risk by 22 percent, according to a study cited by Arup. Walk every day, keep the Reaper at bay.

2. **Improves happiness and mental health**

"Great public space is like magic, it's almost happiness itself," said Enrique Peñalosa, former mayor of Bogota, Columbia. Not only is that a great quote, research seems to back it up. Walking raises endorphin levels, lowers stress-related cortisol, and helps people sleep better.

The longer we drive to and from work, the less happy we are. One study found that a person with a one-hour commute has to earn 40 percent more to be as happy as someone who walks to work. Maybe money *can* buy happiness, but so can living and working in a walkable town.

3. **Reduces obesity and chronic disease**

Walking burns four calories a minute, and regular strolls reduce the risk of diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and colon cancer. A [study of California cities](#) showed that walkable street networks correlate with lower obesity, diabetes, asthma, and heart disease. Investing in walkable places can drastically improve a fit lifestyle, which increases resilience to health risks and reduces the number of people affected by chronic disease.

4. **Fosters social interaction**

Ever have a nice conversation on the street with another driver or passenger in a car next to yours? That never seems to happen. No one ever stops at a traffic light and asks to borrow a jar of [Grey Poupon](#).

There's a reason why New Urbanism is known as the architecture of community. In a

walkable environment, an intensified use of public spaces raises the frequency of information interactions between citizens, building ties among neighbors, Arup notes. The physical characteristics of streets can impact your social life. In a classic study, Donald Appleyard found that residents of streets with light and slow traffic had three times as many friends among neighbors as those living on busy roads.

5. Saves lives on the street

Putting walking first helps slow down traffic speeds without necessarily lowering its flow, dramatically reducing the risk of road accidents, Arup explains.

A street network that connects walkable neighborhoods reduces fatal automobile accidents [by a factor of three](#) by slowing traffic and giving people transportation options like walking and biking. Even simple changes can make a difference: Shortening crosswalk distances by three feet can reduce pedestrian crashes by six percent.

6. Tends to reduce crime

Safety in numbers and “eyes on the street,” a term coined by Jane Jacobs, help to discourage crime and keep people safe. Redesigning the urban environment to encourage walkability brings people in the streets and increases activities in public space, dramatically improving the perception of safety and individual confidence, according to Arup.

In Rotterdam, Holland, community members identified traffic speed and street appearance as crime issues. Working with police to improve the public realm dramatically cut crime over a period of two years: drug crime dropped by 30 percent, burglary by 22 percent, and vandalism by 31 percent.

7. Enhances “sense of place” and community identity

Designing human-scale streets helps to boost “genius loci,” the unique character of a place. Sense of place is promoted by the feeling of an “outdoor room” created by the dimensions of a main street. That feeling is rarely, if ever, achieved in modern, single-use, commercial districts. Urbanists joke that two big box stores, placed across from one another, are so far apart that one can see the curvature of the Earth.

“Conceiving streets as places for people—rather than functional links for cars—allows them to sense and shape those characteristics that make every place unique,” Arup explains.

Enhancing the sense of place can raise awareness around the local history, helping

communities to build a collective memory and a cultural identity. An Irish study found that walkable neighborhoods have 80 percent more “social capital.”

8. Broadens universal accessibility and encourages inclusiveness

Walking is the most democratic, accessible, and oldest mode of transport, Arup notes. Everyone, at some point, is a pedestrian. Successful public transportation generally begins and ends with a walking trip. Even those who generally drive will find themselves on a crosswalk from time to time. Especially people without a car may be able to easily access their daily needs in a walkable community. Boosting walking helps to unlock the city for many of those who are most in need.

9. Supports cultural initiatives

Walkability is a driver for creativity. A pedestrian-friendly environment tends to support art and culture in the public realm. A good example is [Porchfest](#), a free festival of music that has been initiated in cities and towns across the US and Canada. Porchfest [began in my neighborhood](#), Fall Creek, in Ithaca, New York, in 2007. Two women were inspired by neighbors playing music on their porch and decided to invite musicians throughout the neighborhood to play on a single Sunday afternoon. A cultural phenomenon was born.

10. Promotes a vibrant urban experience

Human-scale streets tend to make street life thrive. “Street life is enabled through urban design: typical qualities of a pedestrian environment, such as density of functions, active frontages and complexity of use, deal with the creation of a vibrant experience where people have opportunities to socialize, enjoying sidewalk cafes or shopping,” Arup explains. In short, a walkable environment can radically improve the urban experience.

Designing communities for more walking, and enabling less driving, does not determine anyone’s health or well-being, or ensure that a community is equitable and strong in community identity. But it is a factor with beneficial consequences in these areas, during normal or pandemic times. To find out more, follow the links in the article or read the report, [Cities Alive: Towards a Walking World](#). There are references to studies not linked above.
