GUIDELINES ON SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

WALKABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

ResidentFirst

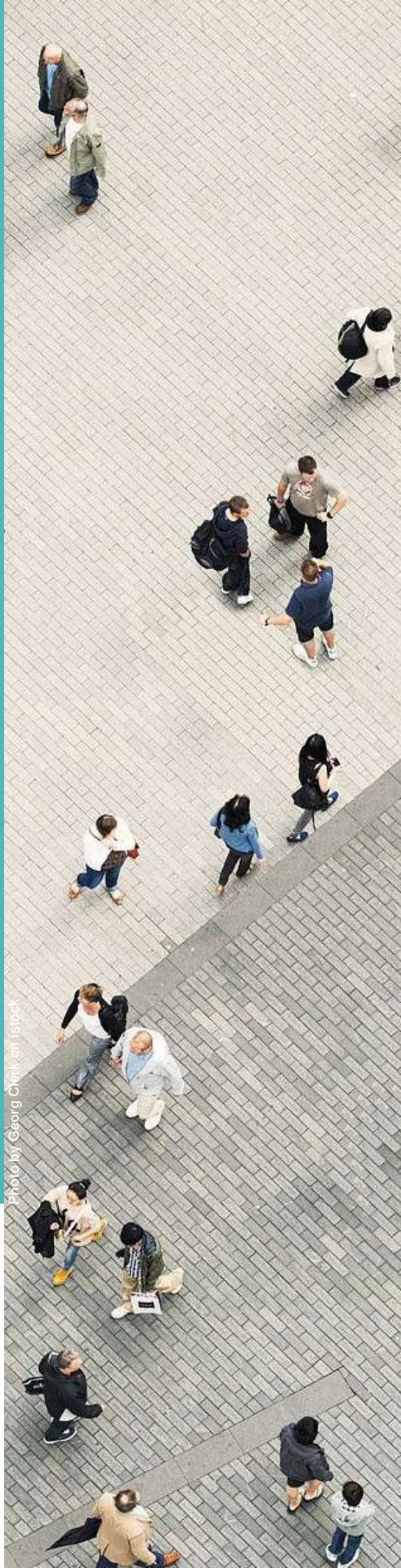

Photo by Georg Clerk on Istock

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This publication is dated August 2023 and is one of 24 documents being produced as part of the Local Councils' Association's ResidentFirst vision 2024, under the pillar of Sustainable Mobility.

This is the third published guideline document, in a series of documents which are being published under the Resident First project headed by the Local Councils' Association and endorsed by all Local Councils in Malta and Gozo. The document is aimed at raising awareness of the importance of walking to deliver better urban environmental quality and liveability in our towns and villages. The guide seeks to establish why and when walking should take priority and how walkability is part of a broader accessibility and connectivity strategy. It frames this discussion within well-established urban design parameters such as the walking distance model to guide future decision-making.

The document gives an equal focus on the qualitative aspects that enhance the walking experience. It provides an on-the-ground understanding of the various types of pedestrian infrastructure, from fully pedestrianised routes to segregated pavements, and the design principles for each. This publication is intended to guide Local Councils in planning, designing and promoting safe walking environments, and identifies tools for improving the walking environment.

As first steps in increasing walkability in our localities, the Local Council Association together with the Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government and in coordination with Transport Malta and the Ministry for Transport, infrastructure and Capital Projects are working together with a number of Local Councils on temporary measures to make sure this mobility is safe, sustainable, healthy and efficient. The project is referred to as Slow Streets. The aim is to promote walking, cycling and public transport, in parallel with other educational campaigns to avoid unnecessary vehicle travel. To achieve this, some safe walking corridors within every locality have been identified that will connect shops, churches and piazzas, schools, primary health centres, gardens and play areas. Albeit its temporary nature, Slow Streets is the largest and most comprehensive pedestrian study in the form of 250km interconnected routes that can potentially extend to a permanent masterplan network of safe walkways and low-stress biking to slow traffic and create safer streets.

This document focuses on permanent transformations even though some temporary solutions are presented as a way of reaching the goal of having permanently walkable and accessible societies. Together with four other published guideline documents, within the same series of documents, this publication aims to establish and maintain sustainable mobility on Malta and Gozo.

Contents

1. Walkable Localities in a Car-Dependent Society

1.1 Introduction

Walking is the most fundamental mode of human transportation. Walking and cycling provide an alternative and sustainable method for short-distance travel beyond driving. It is free, good for our health and for some of us, especially for youngsters and the elderly, a necessity.

Today, the overbearing and increasing presence of vehicles has replaced the much-needed space for pavements, trees and leisure spaces, leaving an urban environment that is fragmented, visually unpleasant and unsafe for those other than the drivers. Walking through a few blocks or crossing a street in our localities has become inconvenient and unsafe. It is not that we don't have the desire to walk, but our built environment does not allow us to do so.

Streets are more than movement corridors for vehicles and parking spaces. They are first and foremost part of the public space network, a social space where people gather, interact, move, play and socialise.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed our habits, questioned our lifestyles, distorted our day-to-day priorities and limited our freedom that seemed unquestionable. Now, people want a fundamental change in the way streets and public spaces are designed and constructed in order to promote walking and reclaim space for people, especially for those of us living in confined spaces, including the elderly, children and people with reduced mobility.

Even though the pandemic fueled people's desire to have walkable societies, designing for walkability is neither rare nor new. In fact, there are multiple examples of cities that work towards the goal of increasing walkability. Additionally, there are several well-established concepts concerning walkability, for example the concept of a 15-minute city.

Local Council members, who are democratically elected by their residents, are expected to safeguard and improve the quality of life of every resident in their respective locality. It is every Mayor's and Council member's duty, and responsibility, to protect their residents' right of walking safely in all localities. Practical enough, this document provides Local Councils with information and tools to ensure walkability and accessibility for all residents.

All this to give back our localities to their residents.

1.2 The Advantages of Walking

The creation of more walkable localities has significant positive impacts on the overall wellbeing of the community:

For individuals, walkability:

- contributes to a better quality of life;
- results in less spending costs for transportation; and
- provides a cleaner environment which may be enjoyed by all.

For society at large, walkability:

- serves as an equitable and inclusive form of transport at no cost;
- increases social interaction and diversity of public life;
- enhances collective security and safety with more active streets;
- encourages local businesses; and
- results in less congested streets.

For private businesses, walkability:

- creates less demand for parking spaces;
- generates an active workforce; and
- provides more business opportunities as more people enjoy easy access to commercial uses.

For governments, walkability:

- improves public health, which implies less strain on the health sector;
- reduces air pollution and carbon emissions; and
- creates more connected, and therefore stronger communities.

Photo by Kevin Schmid on Unsplash

1.3 This is a Walkable Locality

A walkable society has a lot of advantages. Generally, these include:

- A connected walking and cycling infrastructure;
- A defined centre, whether it is a main street or a public space;
- Mixed income and mixed use, such as affordable housing located near businesses;
- Public places for people to socialise and do outdoor activities;
- Attractive active frontages;
- Streets designed to cater for pedestrian and cycling safety, and public transport; Schools and workplaces located close to residences; and
- Activity and people for businesses to flourish and for public transit to run frequently.

Well-designed streets and public spaces give priority to pedestrians instead of private vehicles, and encourage walking and cycling and use of public transport services. Before redesigning our streets, we need to first know if our localities are walkable, and to what degree. This assessment would clarify what needs to be improved. Therefore, we need to be asking the following questions in every locality:

Connectivity

- Does the pavement provide a continuous network for pedestrians?
- Are crossings always available at intersections?
- Are pavements connected well to public transport stations?
- Are there any obstacles on the pavement that disturbs the flow of people?

Accessibility

- Are entrances to stores wide and clear of barriers?
- Are public transport stations clearly seen and easy to get to?
- Are stairs and gentle gradients available where they are needed?
- Can people with visual and physical disabilities get around easily?

Comfort

- Are paths wide enough for all pedestrians?
- Are pavement surfaces even and non-slippery?
- Is there shade and shelter at frequent distances?
- Are there enough seating benches?
- Are there areas subject to excessive noise and pollution?
- Are pedestrian spaces enjoyable and clean?

Convenience

- Are there enough litter bins on every street?
- Is signage clear enough for both residents and visitors?
- Are there enough public facilities, such as drinking fountains and public bathrooms?
- Are services and facilities located within easy walking distance?

Safety

- Is there signage for road speed limitation?
- Are there clear markings for pedestrian crossings?
- Does the walking environment discourage antisocial and criminal behaviour?
- Is there sufficient lighting at night?

Photo by Jan Antonin Kolar on Unsplash

2. Steps Towards Walkable Localities

This section introduces and discusses eight steps which Local Councils can adopt to enhance and promote walkability within their localities. It is important to note that planning for walkability is part of a larger vision, which also plans for sustainable alternative modes of transport, shared transport, parking management and open space networks. They are all interlinked and should be studied together for better and more sustainable city planning. Therefore, to have walkable neighbourhoods, issues like on-street parking, provision of public transportation and alternative modes of transport have to be tackled simultaneously.

It is also important to note that all the tools presented in this document are general, however, design must always be specific.

After answering the questions on pages 7 and 8 to see if their locality is walkable, each Local Council would be able to address specific issues related to walkability and accessibility that are present within their locality. Understanding the context is the main key to implementing the most effective measures.

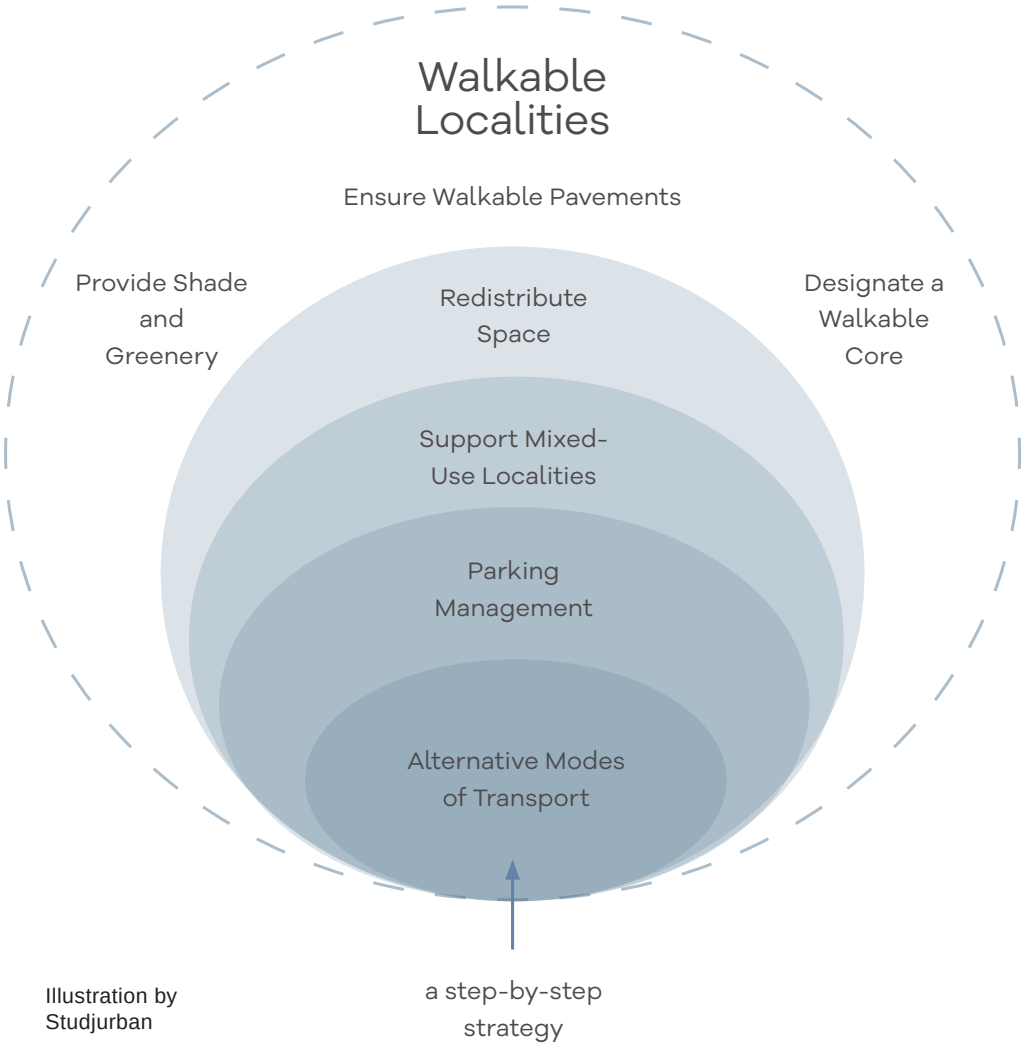

Illustration by Studjurban

Step 1

Ensure Walkable Pavements

Photo by Gordon Chaffin on Unsplash

Guidelines on how pavements can be made to encourage people to use them, be comfortable to walk on, promote the walking experience, ensure safety, be comfortable, convenient, well-connected and accessible for all

Protecting pedestrians is perhaps the most seemingly obvious thing to do. Most often than not, pedestrians do not feel safe walking in most areas. Pavements should be redesigned to promote the walking experience and ensure pedestrian safety. These should not only be safe to encourage people to walk, but also comfortable, convenient, well-connected and accessible for all.

Despite its apparent simplicity, achieving a sense of safety amongst pedestrians requires considerable planning. Most local streets in Malta are not designed to withstand the volume of cars that use them. Pedestrians' perceived safety is affected by the size of buildings, speed limit, carriage and footpath widths, the direction of flow and turning motions, traffic and wayfinding signage and several other factors. Pavements are dedicated spaces to pedestrians, so they should promote safety and encourage them to walk.

There are a few design elements that should rightfully be discussed regarding pedestrian pavements. On larger streets, pavements should be distinctly separated from other vehicular traffic to ensure safety, while on narrower streets the safety of pedestrians can instead be ensured by slower traffic or no vehicular traffic. STEP 1 concentrates on pavement-design, where the distinction between vehicular traffic and pedestrians is expected to be clear. Under this heading, the following pavement features will be discussed: zones and width, accessibility, waste management, furniture, other vehicles, construction sites, surfaces, shade, lighting, bus stations and crossings.

Zones and Width

Pavements have three basic 'zones', of which the width should differ depending on the use of the street. For example, pavements in commercial areas will normally need more space than the ones in residential areas. The three zones are as follows:

- The Frontage Zone: It consists of the facade of the building facing the street and the immediate adjacent space, which functions as an extension of the building as entryways or sidewalk cafes, and generally varies from 0.5 to 1.5 metres in busy commercial areas.

- The Walking Zone (also referred to as the Pedestrian Zone, or the Pedestrian Clear Zone): the area dedicated to walking that should have the minimum unobstructed width for two people to walk next to each other (approximately 1.8 to 2 metres). Wider pedestrian zones are required in areas with busy pedestrian traffic, where the width should be at least 4 metres.

- The Furniture/Landscaping Zone: accommodates street furniture and facilities such as benches, bins and waste containment, lighting, bicycle racks, landscaping and charging stations. It also provides a barrier between the pedestrians and the road. This zone should have a minimum width of 0.5 to 1.5 metres.

In Malta, the often narrow pavements constitute all of these zones, making it difficult for pedestrians to have a clear path to walk to their destination. Generally speaking, pavements are simply not wide enough. Where possible, street sections should be rethought and reconfigured in order to enable pavements to be enlarged, such that the walking path may be clear of any obstacles, and thus increasing pedestrian safety.

A number of these situations have been studied within the Slow Streets strategies prepared for a number of localities in Malta and Gozo, with proposals that seek to redistribute space in order to prioritise it for pedestrians and cyclists, as opposed to vehicular traffic.

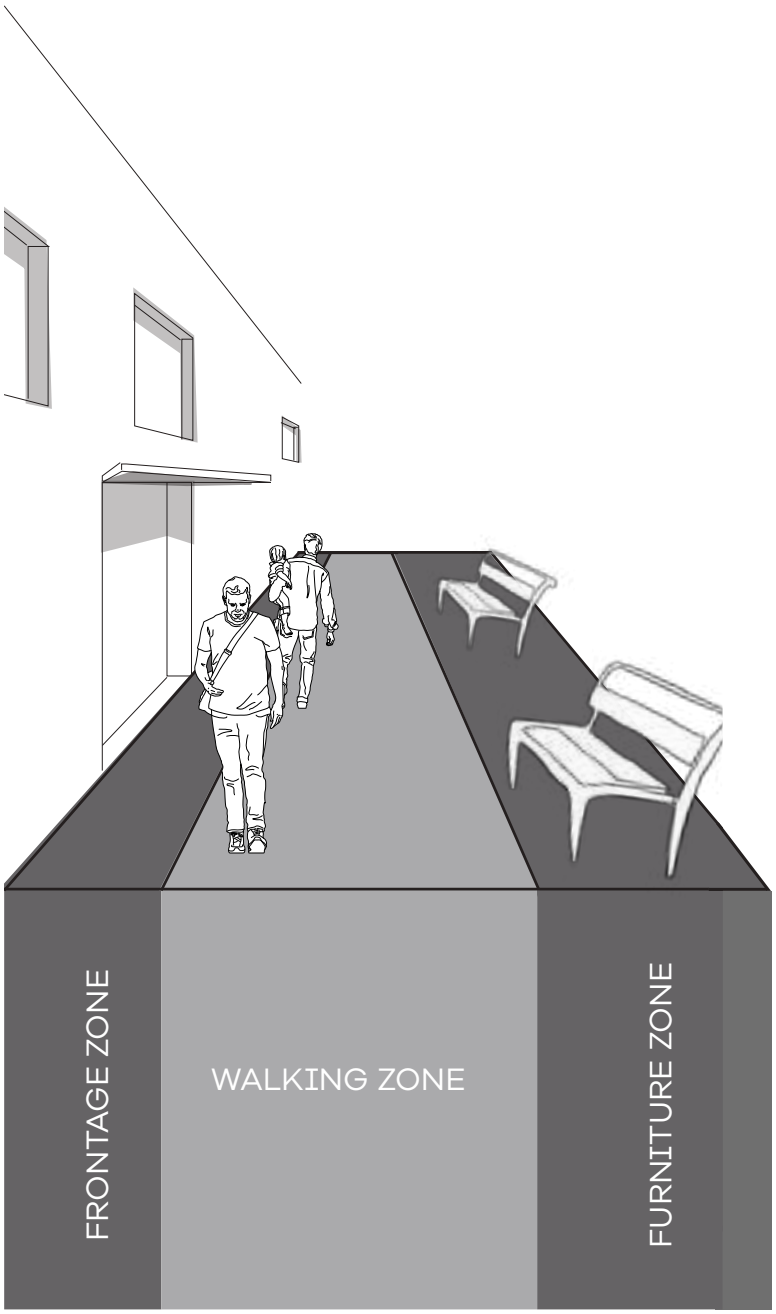

Illustration by Studjurban

Accessibility

Streets are for people, and therefore our streets should be for everyone. Streets should allow for accessibility for all of the public and safety for all users. A few design elements and strategies can be followed to guarantee access for all. These include:

- wide walkways that guarantee space and access for all users;
- an even walking surface;
- non-slip finishes for pavements;
- low-grade ramps and low kerbs at intersections;
- auditory systems and Braille directions to help the visually impaired, and/or textured finishes on pavements to alert a change in level or an upcoming crossing;
- mobile applications that allow pedestrians with limited mobility to plan accessible routes (for more information: Read access for all design guidelines issued by the CRPD); and
- wide entrances to shops, restaurants and public transport stops.

Surface

As mentioned, accessible pavements have a level walking surface. Concerning entrances to buildings and garages, a ramp should be added within the furniture zone for the walking zone to be uninterrupted and accessible for all. Often In Malta, pavements have uneven surfaces causing inconvenience for pedestrians. Not only are they locally damaged at certain places, they are also intentionally uneven by garage entrances where the lowered surface interferes with the walking zone. This issue needs to be addressed in order for us to have walkable localities.

Furniture, lighting and shade

Furniture elements should also be studied, in terms of how they might coincide with important pedestrian paths, such that they may not interrupt the Walking Zone. This includes seating and lighting elements, wherein creative solutions should be sought for placing them in specific areas. It also includes bus stations/shelters, which would otherwise hinder the walking routes because of the large number of passengers waiting to board. Since pavements are usually quite narrow, street furniture design should be rethought to combine more than one function. Multifunctional street furniture would therefore provide more space for pedestrians and improve walkability within localities. Such examples include integrated CCTV; charging infrastructure and lighting poles; seating areas integrated within planters; and bus signs integrated with bus shelters.

Lighting provision is critical – well-lit streets increase visibility at night, enhancing their security, and contribute significantly to individuals' perception of safety within the street environment. Street lighting is furthermore an important crime deterrent. Pavements that are properly illuminated therefore encourage more residents to walk instead of using other means of transportation.

Furthermore, providing shade along walking paths on the islands of Malta and Gozo is a necessity, especially during the summer time. When shade is guaranteed by adding street trees, it will additionally upgrade the scenery. Read more about street trees in a forthcoming chapter of this document, STEP 3 (Provide Shade and Greenery).

Bus Stations

Bus stations should be designed in a way that allows pedestrians to walk uninterrupted behind it. In cases where that is currently not the case, consider broadening the pavement locally, or even better, along the full street. The bus station could also be located closer to the kerb. Making sure buses are always able to park close to the kerb (avoiding situations such as the one illustrated below), additionally makes public transport more accessible.

Photo by Miguela Xuereb on Newsbook

Crossings

Further, pavements must be well connected with safe pedestrian crossings to ensure safety during the full journey as well as a flow of movement for the pedestrian. The frequency and position of pedestrian crossings should be considered, which will differ depending on the street and local need. The design of specific crossings should be context based, meaning that not all crossings should look and function the same way.

Other Vehicles

To ensure safety, comfort and connectivity for pedestrians while they are in any of the pavement zones, it is crucial that vehicles do not drive where they are restricted to do so. This is a topic that has become urgent after the entry of shared e-kick scooters since the scooter-drivers often tend to drive on the pavement, despite the regulation against it. Regulations on micro-mobility will be further discussed in a forthcoming document entitled Last Mile Transportation.

Waste Management and Other Appropriations of Pavements

Locally, the current waste management is a big issue concerning walkability. Placing waste bags out on the pavements highly deprives the walking experience and the overall street environmental quality. It not only smells bad, causing uncomfortable walking, it also risks interfering with the walking zone. This issue will be addressed in a future publication as part of Pillar 2 (Green Environment, Cleanliness).

Another pressing issue is the appropriation of outdoor catering areas, particularly where they occupy significant pavement space and at times further impede pedestrian flows along the pavements.

The administration of pavement appropriation (refer to image on the right), including outdoor catering areas together with other related issues such as the integration of street furniture elements and amenities, such as public convenience facilities and open spaces, will be discussed in more depth in forthcoming publications. These will include Historical Heritage, Urban Cores (Hubs) and Piazzas, Outdoor Sports and Open Markets.

Construction Sites

In cases where the existing pavement is temporarily inaccessible, a provisional replacement should be considered. Normally, this would be needed when the pavement is occupied or unsafe due to construction on site. Note that regulations concerning construction must still be followed and, in some cases, enforced. For example, whenever there is a front garden, the boundary walls should be placed along this edge and not out on the pavement. Naturally, there should always be clear signage. The temporary pavement is only meant as an option when the occupation of the existing pavement is inevitable, and it must always be considered based on the context.

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Step 2

Redistribute Space

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Redistrubution of Street Space Via the Reconfiguration of Vehicular Space

When talking about space within our urban areas, the equation is simple. Space is limited, while all transportation modes are in need of space. Today, too much space is taken up by vehicles and at the same time pedestrian-oriented design suffers from a lack of space. This must be changed in order for us to have walkable localities.

Malta has no trams and trains. Apart from the public bus service, private vehicles are considered the most convenient transportation form for many residents. But our complete reliance on cars has become problematic. We need to put the private vehicle back to its intended function.

It is clear that a redistribution of street space is necessary, not least to support the first step presented in this document (STEP 1 Ensure Walkable Pavements). When designing and redesigning our streets, pedestrians should be prioritised as well as cyclists and public-transport riders. Private vehicles convey a great sense of freedom and movement, especially on an island like ours where the choice of mobility is limited, not to mention style and status. But due to their ever-increasing demands for space, speed, and time, private vehicles have reshaped our localities and lifestyles around their own needs and distorted how decisions are made. Placing the car back to its intended function is essential to reclaiming our open public spaces for our communities.

A concrete example of how car-space is being prioritised over pedestrianised space and how it has influenced the design of our localities, is how the pavements are, in several places, uneven to support private car-owners to access their garage easily. This causes inconvenience for people on foot, while it creates comfort for the drivers. Another example would be the lack of pedestrian crossings which disrupts the pedestrian flow while it supports cars to move continuously. The last example concerns on-street parking. All vehicles require somewhere to be parked, and parking spaces for cars are space-consuming. Naturally, the more vehicles on the road, the more parking spaces will be needed. When discussing redistribution of space in favour of pedestrians, on-street-parking is a significant issue that needs to be addressed.

Redistribute Space with the Street Width in Mind

In order to offer alternative modes of transport as well as ensure walkability, we need to assess how space in our streets is being used, and how it can be redesigned to cater for these modes. The pavement width is related to the road width and, most importantly, the street use. Each driving lane generally requires a minimum of 3 metres (with the passage of a fire tender generally requiring a minimum clear width of 3.7 metres), and a pavement is always necessary on both sides of the road. The following are examples of different potential street designs according to some commonly occurring street widths:

Available width (Building-to-Building, or front garden/s as applicable)	Recommended strategic decisions to favour walkability	Provision of other elements
Up to and including c. 6m	No on-street parking Recommended shared space Potentially one-way routing of vehicular activity	None
c. 6.1 - 8m	No on-street parking to enable designated pavements of (min.) 1.2m on either side and the passage of emergency vehicles Potentially shared space if on-street parking retention is neccessary Potentially one-way routing of vehicular activity to liberate road space for sidewalks and retain on-street parking	Potential for low-lying landscaping Potential for seating within wider streets Public transport transit shelter within wider streets
c. 8.1 - 10m	Formal walking zone Intermittent on-street parking Potential bicycle lane Potentially one-way routing of vehicular activity Public transport transit shelter	Potential for landscaping scheme including trees Potential for on-street benches Potential for lighting posts
c. 10.1 - 13m	Wide formal walking zone On-street parking possible (one side) Bicycle lane possible Public transport transit shelter Bike or scooter stations possible Landscaping scheme including trees On street benches and lighting posts	Potential for parklets* (as illustrated below) Potential for frontage zone *A parklet is defined as being ''a small seating area or green space created as a public amenity on or alongside a pavement, especially in a former roadside parking space.''

Source: Studjurban

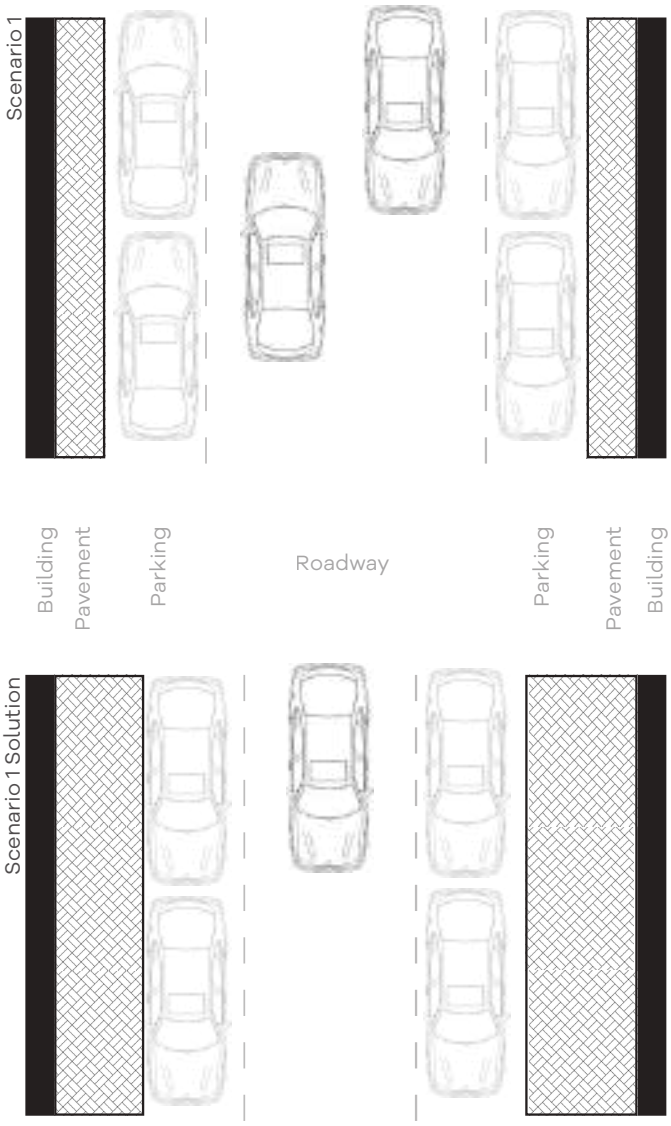
Parklet.Photo by Tim Barnes on shiftspacedesign

Available width (Building-to-Building, or front garden/s as applicable)	Recommended strategic decisions to favour walkability	Provision of other elements
c. 13.1 - 16m	Wide formal walking zone Potential dedicated bus lane On-street parking possible Bicycle lane possible Public transport transit shelter Bike or scooter stations possible Landscaping scheme including trees On street benches and lighting posts	Potential for wider frontage zone Potential for other street furniture elements to be included Potential for parklets

Since a number of local roads in Malta and Gozo fall under the narrower roads category (with available widths of 8 metres or under), consider the following transition solutions until more permanent parking solutions may be planned at a strategic level. A number of these proposed measures may be found within the Slow Streets strategies prepared for different localities throughout Malta and Gozo, as Level 2 (rerouting) and Level 4 (reconfiguration) interventions.

Scenario 1: Two-way local residential road with on-street parking
Solution: Limiting traffic to one direction

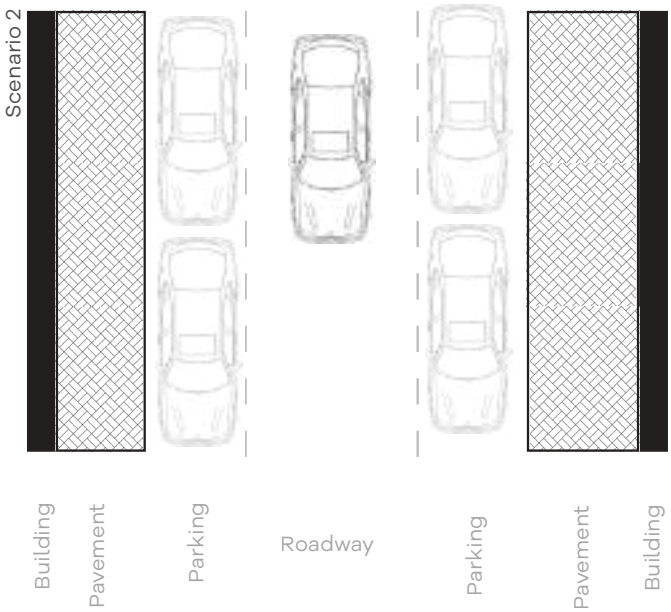
In streets with two-way routes and on-street parking on both sides, consider making the road a one-way only (if the nature of the street and the surrounding street network permits). The gained space could be used to expand the pavements and narrow the roadway.

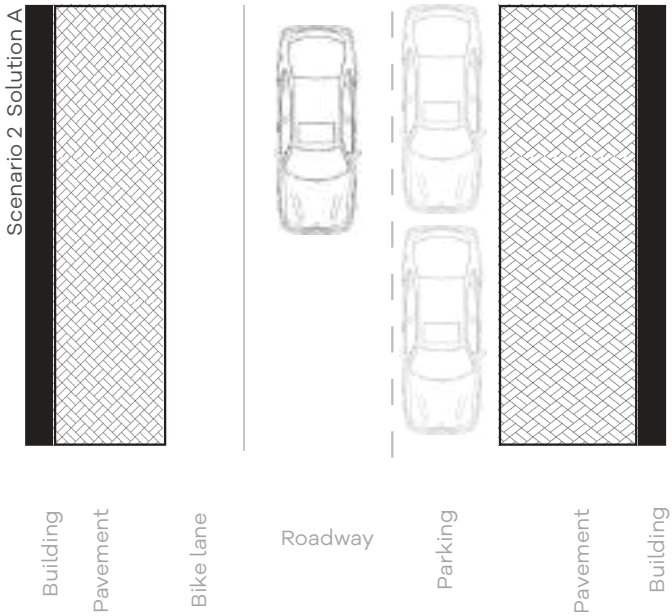


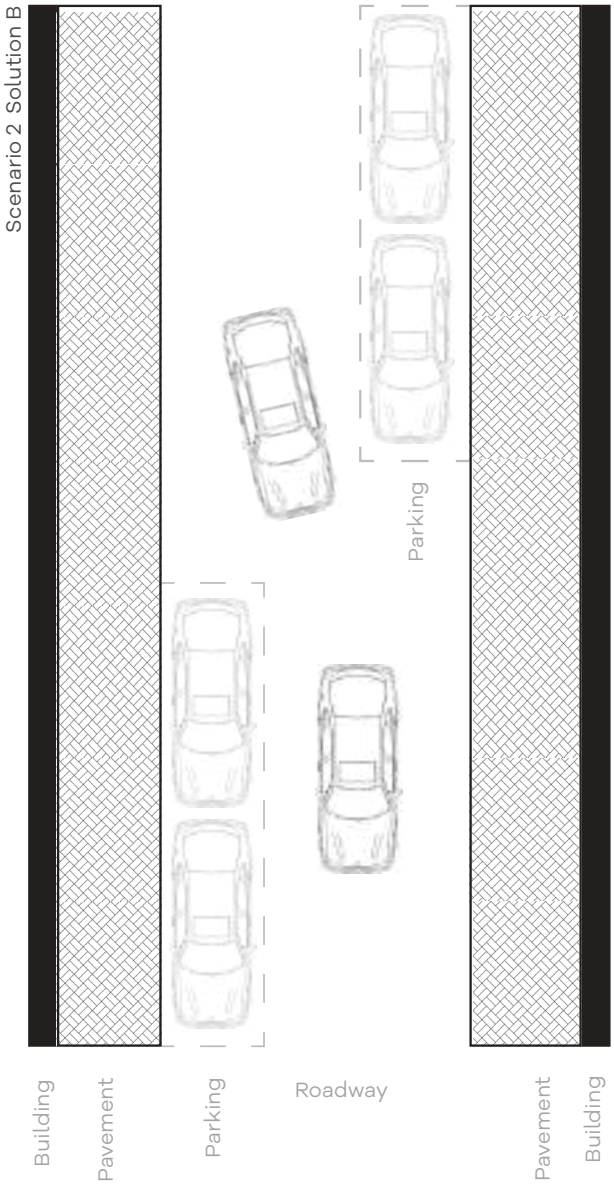
Illustrations by Studjurban

Scenario 2: One-way local residential road with on-street parking
Solution: Reducing on-street parking

In streets with only one-way traffic direction and on-street parking on both sides, consider removing one side of the on-street parking and instead widen the pavement. In longer streets, this parking scheme could alternate on either side of the street so as to slow down speeding cars and provide a safer environment for pedestrians.





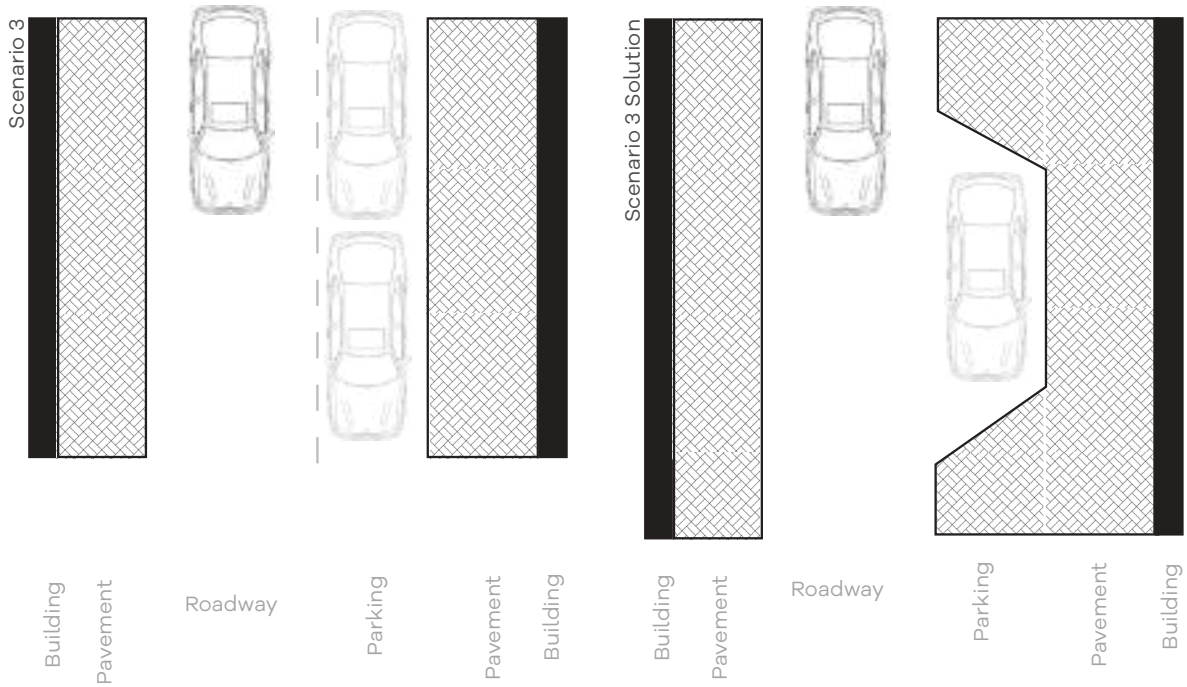


Illustrations by Studjurban

Scenario 3: One-way local residential road with on-street parking (one side only)
Solution: Implementation of parking pockets

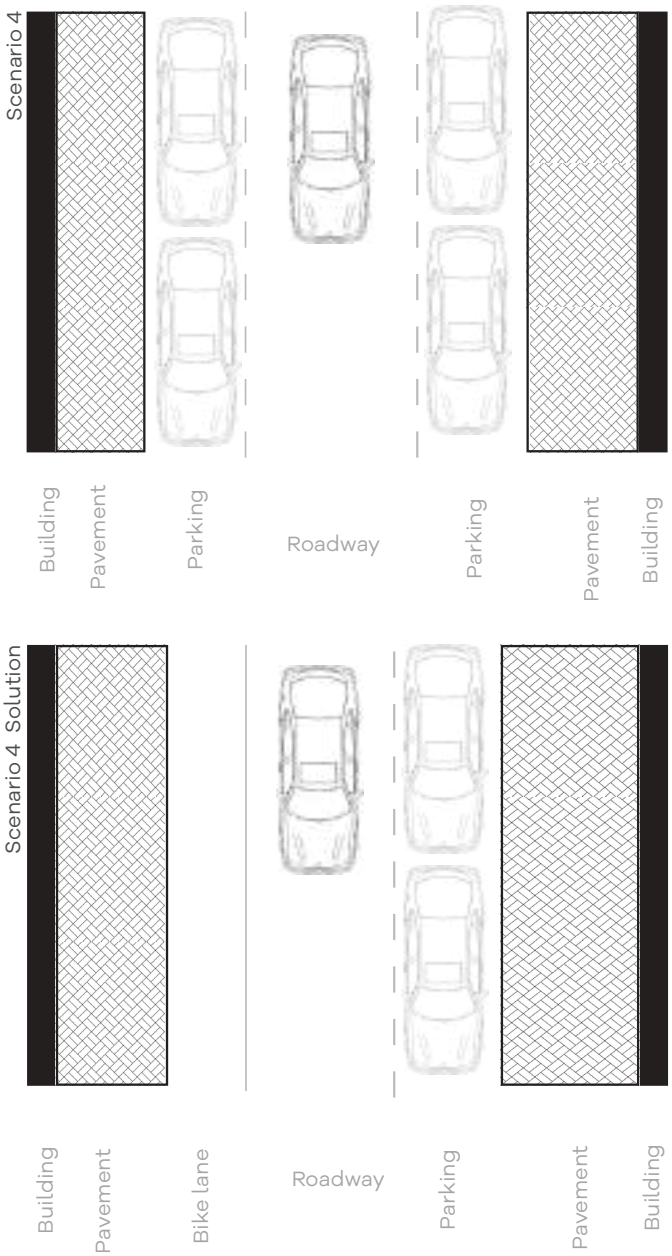
In streets with only one-way traffic direction and on-street parking on one side, consider widening the pavement and providing some parking pockets such that the majority of the space may be released for pedestrians rather than for on-street parking.

Illustrations by Studjurban



Scenario 4: One- or two-way local residential road with undesignated on-street parking
Solution: Clear, designated spaces for parking

In streets where on-street parking is not formally designated within the road, but occurs nonetheless, consider designating on-street parking on one side only in order to be able to release space for widening the pavement and, if possible, the introduction of a dedicated cycle lane, to be studied within a broader cycling strategy for the locality in question.



Illustrations by Studjurban

The previous potential scenarios need to be studied in tandem with the considerations made for parking management, discussed briefly in Step 6, and more comprehensively in the LCA's previously published doucment (Guidelines on Parking Management), so as to simultaneously ensure adequate parking provision, especially for local residents.

Photo by Linus Ekenstam on Unsplash

Step 3

Provide Shade and Greenery

Photo by Quan Le on Unsplash

Lining our walkable paths with trees providing shade is probably the best investment in a city's infrastructure

We all know the positive contribution trees give to the urban landscape. They provide shade, clean the air, and give an enhanced aesthetic quality to their surroundings. Surprisingly, few are willing to commit to a long term investment for proper infrastructure and suitable indigenous trees as our localities deserve.

One of the most basic benefits that trees bring is shade and lowering temperatures for their surrounding environment. Shade, and its resultant cooling benefit, are an important element of a good walking environment, particularly in hot climates. In countries where walking is not seen as desirable because of the sun and heat, tree lined walkways are essential for encouraging people to walk.

Landscaping not only improves a street's aesthetic, but cools down the immediate environment, especially when using wide canopy trees. Landscaping also serves as a protective buffer from the road, and cleans the environment from pollution caused by vehicles. Planting native trees and vegetation furthermore ensures minimal maintenance and water consumption.

If we really wish to enhance the walking experience, it is crucial that we dedicate appropriate space within our pavements.

Step 4

Designate a Walkable Core

Moulding walkable routes to fit the narrative of the locality

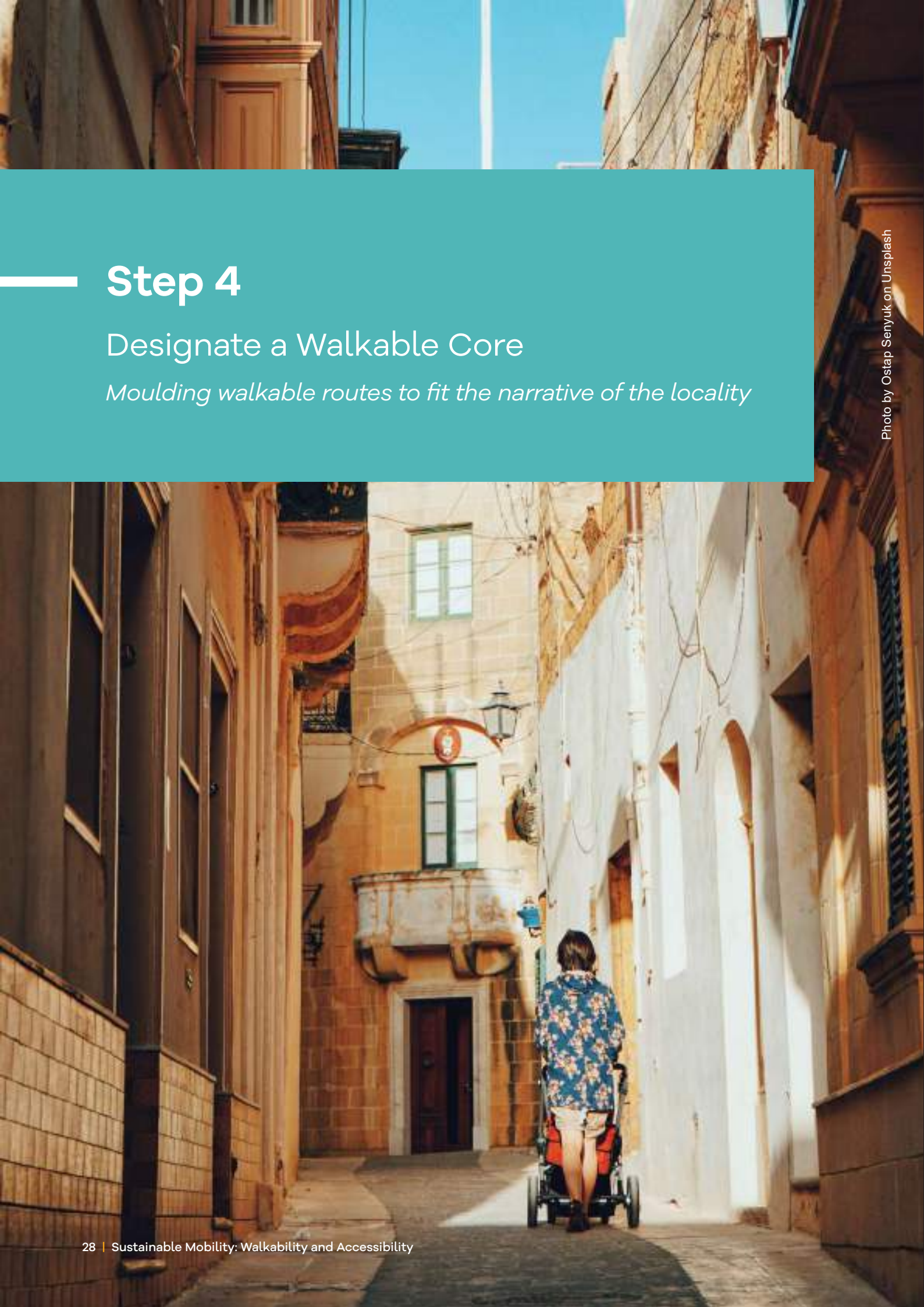
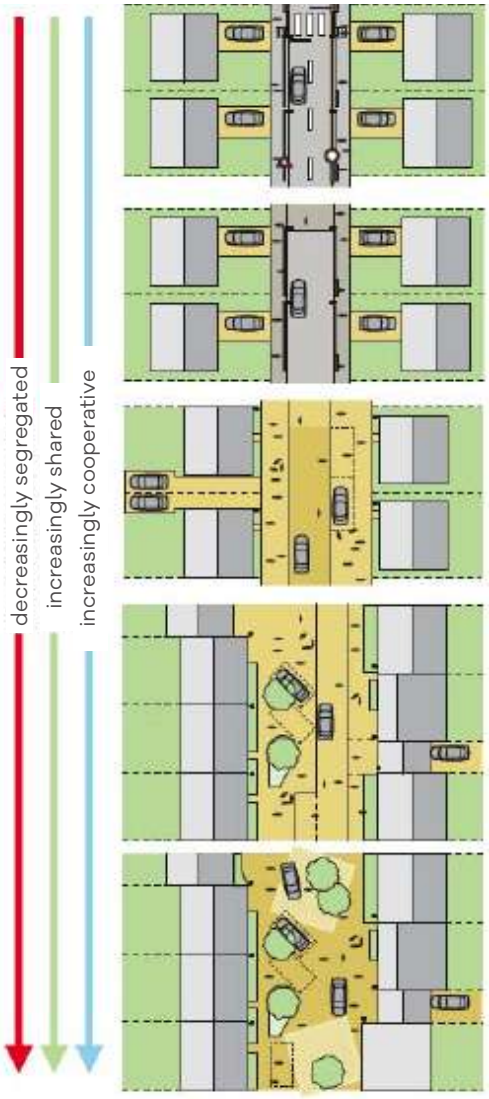


Photo by Ostap Senyuk on Unsplash

This step is about choosing and designating streets for walking within localities, while giving due regard to local identity and authenticity. By following what is suggested here, the Local Councils will have the opportunity to make the heart of their localities an even more attractive place for everyone

After identifying the scenario that best resonates with the locality in question, is is then important to understand the different degrees of pedestrianisation that may be possible. What has been mainly tackled so far in this document is the typical street which is semi-pedestrian, as both cars and people have access to their own space. However, pedestrianisation can happen to varying extents, where wider pavements allow more social life and active frontages. A shared space is a semi-pedestrian concept where all traffic control barriers and kerbs are removed to blur the line between pavement and roadway. Therefore, space is shared between all users. Taking this typology of space further, and prioritising the pedestrian, a fully pedestrianised street would in turn prohibit car accessibility or permit it at specific times, therefore completely dedicating the street to people.



Guard railing
Excessive road markings and signs
Conventional kerbs
Intrusive lighting columns
Vehicle movement and parking dominant

No roadmarkings or signage
Informal crossing

More dominant pedestrian area
Low kerbs
Common material for footway area carriageway
Reduction in vehicle parking impact

Reduced carriageway width
More informal street compositioning
Sensitive soft landscaping

Level surface - no deliniation between street user zones
User hierarchy favours pedestrians

Image by gov.scot

On the ground solutions should be sought based on the character of a place, town, neighbourhood or street. There are many factors that determine different character areas, such as density, users, land use diversity, and connectivity. Therefore, no single design guideline or feature can ensure the resolution of traffic issues and the attraction of pedestrians. Every case must be seen within its specific context.

Designate a walkable core

Select your best streets to be semi- or fully pedestrianised, and accept that some roads will need to serve as vehicular corridors.

No walkable town or city can become totally and exclusively pedestrianised. Most streets will remain principally reserved for vehicular traffic, and therefore, every locality must make a conscious choice of its walkable core. These must have the potential of becoming spaces that pedestrians love to walk through. Naturally, this core could start off from a street or a place that people already tend to visit, for example the church and its surroundings, a popular square or other urban pocket. From there, walkable routes should spread out creating a walkable core.

The best places for walking combine many design elements to create streets that feel comfortable to pedestrians and create a sense of place rather than just for movement. A successful inclusive design places all people at the core of the design process, and includes them in the decision-making process. Inclusive design will be discussed further in a later step.

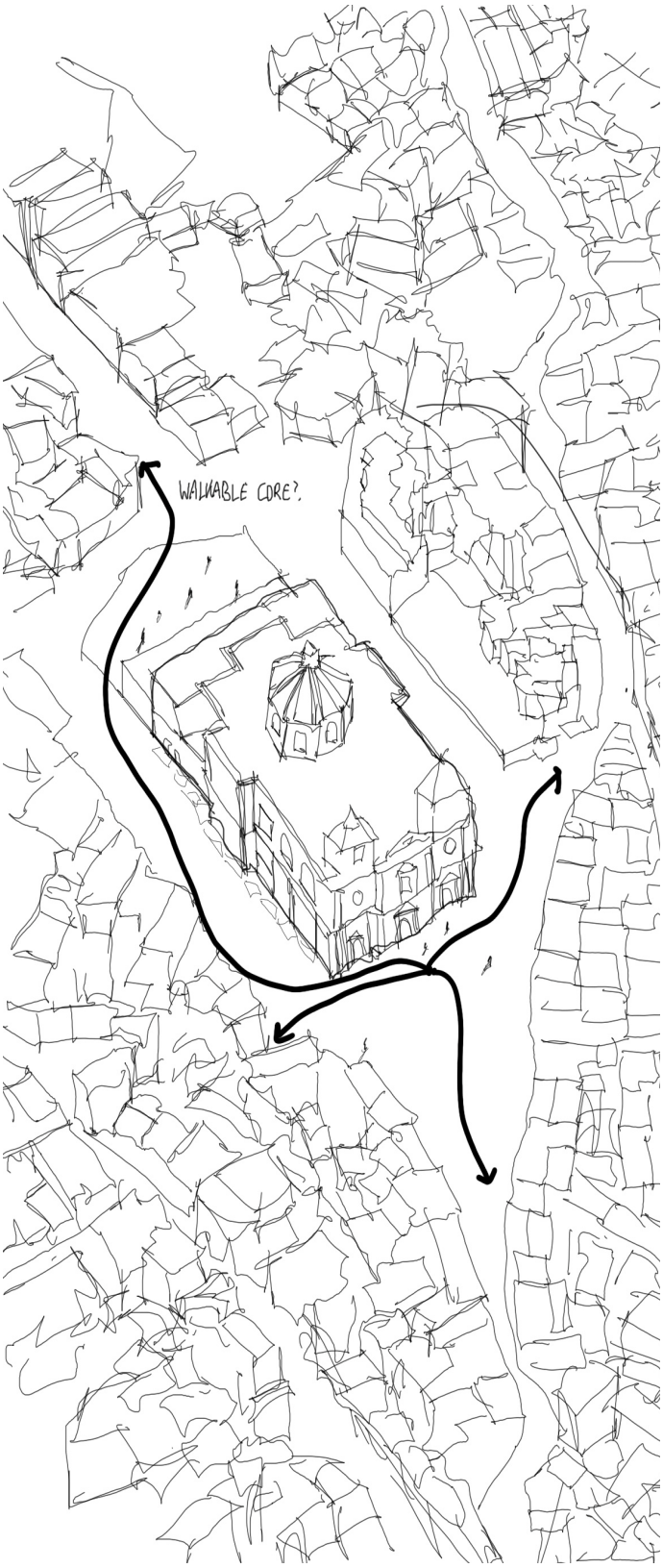


Illustration by Studjurban

Tell a story through walkable routes: The Narrative

Create a walking experience that tells the story of your locality, including historical landmarks and places of interest.

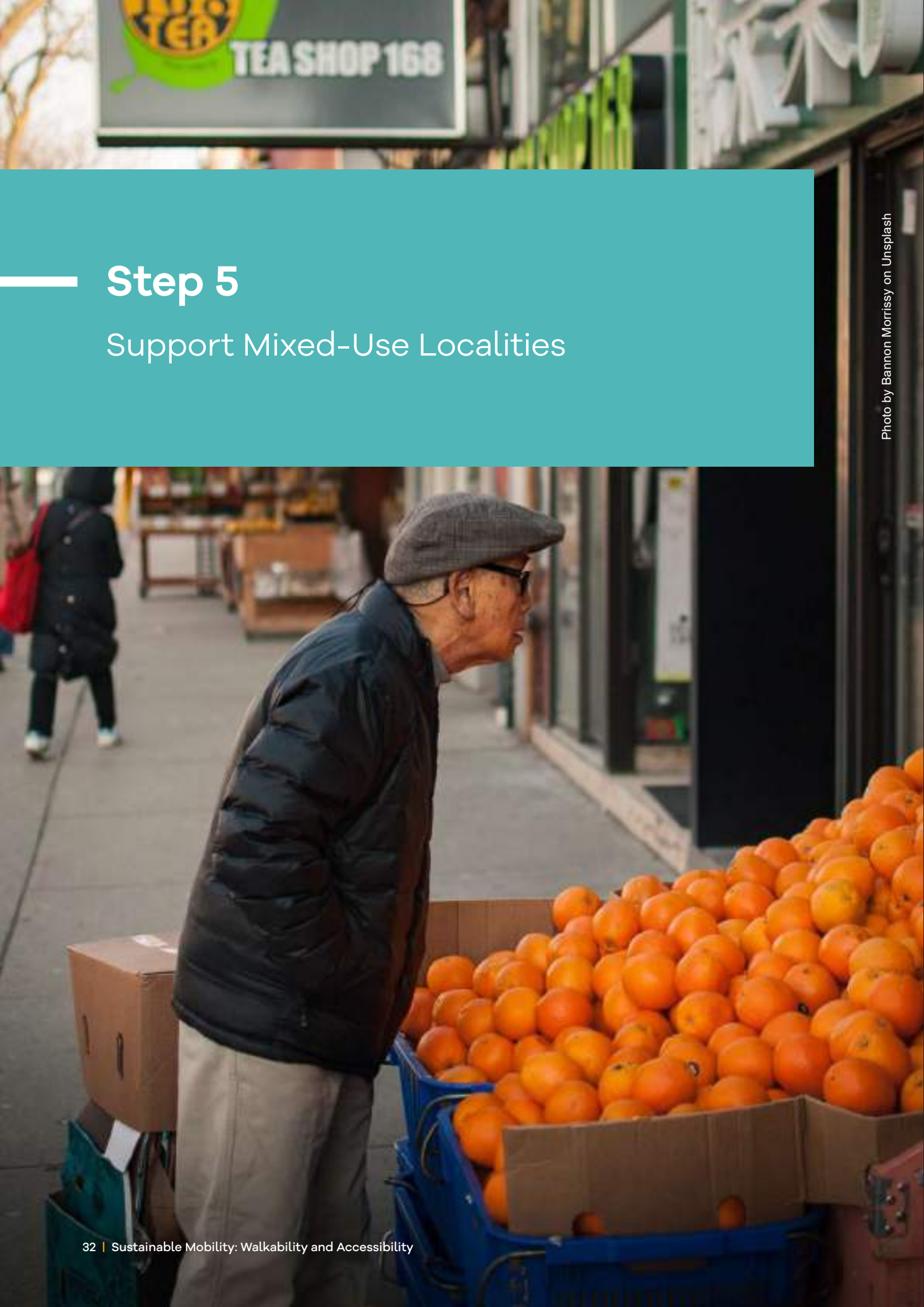
Perhaps not all is lost in most of our town and village cores. Pedestrians need to be entertained, and there is nothing worse than garage doors, blank walls and characterless apartment blocks. Besides designing a route that passes characteristic places, it is of importance to add vibrant elements that enhance the walking experience. It will all be a part of the story about the locality. Therefore, planning policies and architectural design guidelines need to promote facades that invite walking.

Each locality should define its own public realm framework — an integrated package of public realm improvements, including parks, plazas, heritage trails, and streetscape improvements. The public realm framework should:

- emphasise complete communities, providing a mix of walkable streets, gathering spaces, natural areas and open spaces; and
- establish safe, comfortable and continuous pedestrian access connecting transit facilities, major uses, activities and amenities.

People experience the built environment at human scale. Local streets should meet and engage people at that scale, with interesting facade elements, lighting, signage and other features along pavements. These elements contribute to a total 'sense of place'. Sense of place is about residents' relationship with their neighbourhood as well as each other.

Walkable environments are a key way of enhancing a sense of place as they help increase social encounters, which can be encouraged and facilitated through walkable distances. This provides opportunities for residents to meet at shops, parks, or bus stops, and strengthen the social ties of the local community.



Step 5

Support Mixed-Use Localities

Photo by Bannon Morrissy on Unsplash

A minimum parking provision requirement to address the lack of parking space for our ever-increasing number of registered private vehicles has rendered our towns uninteresting and pushed our small community businesses and services out of our urban cores. We need a better mix of uses

People choose to walk when convenient. Convenience is achieved through proper planning and balancing of activities within walking distance to each other. Most of our localities are built around a dense urban core and are less than 2 square kilometres. While there are exceptions, most village and town cores have an imbalance of uses that can be overcome only by revising planning policies.

Compact cities consist of short distances with high density of residences and mixed services. It is based on an efficient public transport system and a layout which encourages walking and cycling. Therefore, a compact city is denser and brings together all the residents' needs, from housing, work, and services, within a short walking distance. By offering healthier mobility opportunities, making land use more diverse and shortening trips, the city becomes more compact, increasing the quality of life.

Compact cities re-balance the use of streets in favour of pedestrians and the local community. Roads of compact cities are built to discourage fast vehicular traffic, wherein parking is not the dominant element.

Considering the reality imposed by the pandemic in 2019, walkable cities have become an urgent goal. To provide a safe environment, cities have to provide residents' needs within walkable distance through good infrastructure to guarantee safe access for all. It is critical to eliminate long distance commutes and travels, while creating space and conditions for active transport modes, especially walking.

Image from SPUR.org

Step 6

Manage Parking

Photo by Eduardo Soares on Unsplash

Parking management and national parking policies will relieve the pressure on parking requirements. We need to use parking provisions to benefit our towns and villages rather than a driver's right to open public space. Walking will bring our localities back to life

Many of our local roads are typically narrow, either with on street parking on one or both sides of the roads. Achieving walkability will inevitably put more pressure on the current on-street parking demand. So how would we manage to liberate space for wider pavements or cycling lanes? We need efficient parking management schemes that would use existing resources to better organise car parking in a way that vehicles would stop dominating our streets.

As amply discussed in the LCA's previously published document 'Guidelines on Parking Management', in order to better understand the parking reality in their respective localities, Local Councils should undertake surveys that take stock of parking opportunities (on- and off-street), possibly contributing to a broader upgrade of current GIS data in this regard. It is crucial to note that without better management of on-street parking, transforming existing roads to more walkable streets will not be a realistic goal.

With the right policies and incentives, targeting parking projects, and good parking management strategies, the use of private vehicles as the primary mode of transportation is discouraged. Hereunder are some key targets that Local Councils may aim towards achieving:

- Provide strategic car parking on the outskirts of towns, or where the town intersects with the arterial road network.
- Restrict parking in the core and town centres, with priority for resident parking and managed (timed) parking in the more active commercial centres. In tandem, encourage the use of public transport and alternative modes of transport.
- Provide incentives for parking reduction programmes, such as shared parking, and introduce technology such as VMS (Variable Message Signs) systems within localities, possibly in partnership with the private sector, to better manage parking opportunities.
- Organise PARK(ing) Day, which is an international annual event in which citizens transform parking spaces into temporary public parks and other social spaces.

Step 7

Promote Alternative Ways of Transport

Photo by Gabriella Clare Marino on Unsplash

Walkable cities rely on a well designed, efficient and cheap transit system that moves people and goods fast and on time. A well-designed system improves the urban quality and increases real estate value. Well designed networks implemented through proper public consultation processes often result in surprising public support

It is expected that alternative ways of transport will support walking for several reasons. Primarily, it would reduce car use which as we know is a necessary basis for increased walkability. Walking cannot replace the use of cars by itself, especially for longer journeys, meaning it would need to be supplemented with other alternative modes of transport. This step discusses public transport and cycling, however there are several other modes of alternative transport. More options are discussed in the LCA's forthcoming publications, Shared Transport and Last Mile Transportation.

Improve public transport

In order to reduce the frequency of cars on our streets, having a developed public transport system is a necessity. Public transport is much more efficient than private cars in terms of transporting people per amount of space.

When travelling longer distances, walking will normally not be the only transportation mode. Instead, it is likely that walking is the first or last mile option, combined with other transportation options to complete the journey. In this case, the question of walkability must be viewed in a wider perspective. A developed public transport system is of utmost importance for the full chain of urban transport to be effective. It is proven that, for people to choose a sustainable mode of transport, the option must be close to being equally convenient and effective compared to car-driving.

Needless to say, if people choose to travel door to door by car instead of travelling by public transport, no first or last mile transport will be needed, meaning that walking will be erased from the chain of transport. This puts high pressure on the development of our public transport system in order for it to support walking as a first or last mile option. Last mile transport will be discussed further in a forthcoming publication.

Cars are popular because they are the most reliable and convenient transportation. Public transport services need to be improved in order for residents to prefer taking the bus over driving their own private vehicle. When talking about public transport in Malta, buses will be the main focus. However, it should not be forgotten that ferries are an important part of the public transport system in localities where they can be used. Strategies for improved public transport include:

- increasing the frequency of buses and ferries;
- adding more bus and ferry stops where needed;
- making sure technology is up-to-date;
- having separate bus lanes when possible;
- introducing controlled and/or restrictive parking on the roads.

Having less vehicles on the road would greatly enhance the walking experience on the island.

Actively promote, welcome and invest in cycling infrastructure in the localities

Walkable cities are also cities where cycling becomes second nature. Bikeability promotes walkability because it makes driving less necessary. If walking and cycling were made more accessible, localities could reuse some car parking spaces for bicycle parking and even micro-gardens or terraces for people to enjoy the outdoors. Cities designed for cyclists and pedestrians are cities designed for people.

Street space in most cities disproportionately favours vehicles. This imbalance would be resolved when streets in localities are redesigned to also cater for cyclists and pedestrians, and to discourage car use. Compared to the car, pedestrian and cycling spatial demands are minimal. The most important factor to consider for increasing walking and cycling uptake is safety. Localities should consider introducing a combination of the following:

- Pedestrianised streets and widened pavements.
- To make walking an attractive option, pavements need to be in good condition and well lit at night. Streets should promote traffic calming measures.
- Designated cycling lanes. Protected cycling lanes are proven to be far more effective at encouraging cycling and improving safety than cycle lanes painted on the street.
- Bike share infrastructure. This includes bikes, docking stations and vehicles to transport them.
- Secure bike parking infrastructure.
- Traffic light signalling that prioritises pedestrians and cyclists. This allows shorter waiting time for pedestrians to cross the road.
- Intersections redesigned to maximise safety for pedestrians rather than traffic speed.

These suggestions are simple, fast and cheaper solutions to implement than alternative transportation investments, and should be complemented with schemes to incentivise walking and cycling. Designing localities that promote walking and cycling need to have a comprehensive transportation strategy.

Cycling as an alternative mode of transport is discussed in depth in the LCA's forthcoming publication, Last Mile Transportation.

Photo by Danique Vedhuis on Unsplash

Step 8

Let People make a Difference!

Testing Pedestrianisation through Tactical Urbanism

Photo by Jamshed Khedri on Unsplash

In the long run, the goal is to transform our urban centres to partially car-free, walkable and liveable places where people can meet and thrive. However, this needs to be established gradually and over time. Testing pedestrianisation in a small scale, and redesigning streets temporarily, can be implemented directly as a way of prioritising pedestrians, not tomorrow, but today

Test pedestrianisation

As residents become increasingly aware of the harmful effects cars have on our health and overall quality of life, cities are shifting away from the dominance of cars, and towards pedestrianisation and more human scaled city development. Therefore, streets are being reclaimed for residents by gradually removing private cars from the roads. This can occur by closing the central roads for certain periods. This is already done during the religious festivities and can be implemented more frequently on weekends to promote more activities such as local markets, sports and music events. In the long-term, locality centres could be restricted to buses, taxis, pedestrians and cyclists, with restricted access for service traffic and people with disabilities. Reconfiguration of car circulation within the centre should be complemented by upgrading street furniture and material.

Other streets can also be temporarily pedestrianised at certain times of the day. For example, prohibiting car access for two hours in the afternoon might encourage residents to walk and do their local errands during that period.

The transition to pedestrianisation is achieved by shifting perceptions about the benefits and necessity of private car use. Most local governments face stiff opposition when introducing pedestrianised projects, but the successful examples of car-free policies in several European cities have changed public opinion in favour of such initiatives.

Slow Streets - Tactical Urbanism in Zejtun
Source: studjurban

Tactical Urbanism

If a pedestrian area is thriving, it will succeed due to its location, demographics, surroundings and infrastructure. Tactical urbanism can help test pedestrian spaces, allowing residents to experience what the change could be like. The idea is to shape spaces temporarily and then invest in the permanent infrastructure at a later stage.

Tactical urbanism involves using temporary materials in order to repurpose places and transform them into more dynamic public spaces, with pedestrian safety as a primary concern. The strategy adopts a phased approach, with short-term commitment that eventually leads to more permanent solutions. Such experiments are carried out inexpensively, and with flexibility, in order to assess the potential success of an idea and to enable making adjustments before committing significant capital expenditure.

Tactical urbanism can push existing ideas to move closer to implementation in the quickest manner. Some examples of tactical urbanism strategies are:

- temporary signage and bollards to close off some streets for different uses, such as play streets or the setting up of markets;
- use of planters to define a boundary, especially at important pedestrian entrances;
- use of temporary movable furniture to turn a parking space into public space;
- use of painted markings on pavements to highlight priority for pedestrians; and
- added signage to help minimise vehicular traffic and prioritise walking and/or cycling.

Selected materials will likely involve some level of trial and error before reaching the optimal design for the particular context. The flexibility of tactical urbanism initiatives provides an opportunity for creative thinking, and is the starting point for real change.

Tactical urbanism has become a global movement. It can involve anyone, and is intended to improve the lives of all residents. Tactical urbanism provides a community-focused platform and is geared towards the development of sustainable practices.

Slow Streets - Tactical Urbanism in Zejtun
Source: studjurban

Photo by Victor Macedo on NACTO

3. Concluding Thoughts

We have seen how, during the COVID-19 pandemic, streets also served as extensions to people's homes. Local streets are the connectors between residences and commercial and business areas. By providing more walkable local streets, residents would be encouraged to walk more frequently, and might also choose to walk to work or school. More residents on the street will enhance the liveability of the entire locality.

Once local streets are addressed, they can serve as catalysts for wider roads and intersections with other localities, which may be easier to manage given the available physical space on such roads.

In Malta, streets are the primary public spaces, used daily by everyone. In order to improve the liveability of our localities, therefore, we need to start from our streets. Having pedestrian-friendly streets implies more equitable access to the outdoors, active transportation, opportunities to exercise, and the support of both physical and mental health.

Resource Section

Potential Funding Opportunities & Kickstarting

The main and biggest funding instruments can be found below for EU Member States:

Connecting Europe Facility Funds (CEF):
https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/connecting-europe-facility/transport-infrastructure_en

Horizon Europe:
https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon-europe/transport-research-horizon-europe_en

Interreg Europe:
http://www.interregeurope.eu/

Funding Opportunities

Initiatives	Project Themes	Participants
Urban Innovative Actions	Supports pilot projects that test innovative solutions to modern urban challenges. It targets the following topics: • air quality; • circular economy; • culture and cultural heritage, and; • demographic change	• Any local authority comprising at least 50,000 inhabitants • Any association of urban authorities; this can include cross-border associations or groupings
URBACT:	The programme supports actions in these areas: • environment and biodiversity; • integrated urban development; • governance; • economy; and • inclusion	• Local/city authorities: Cities, municipalities, towns

An interesting URBACT programme that is worth looking into is the Walk'n'Roll:
https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/mobility

Some other helpful links that can provide important advice and technical assistance on funding and investment opportunities are:

European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH):
http://www.eib.org/eiah

Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (JASPERS):
http://jaspers.eib.org/

Guide to EU Funding - 2023 Edition:
https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9e6c7c9b-1a11-11ee-806b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search

Awards

Local Councils should not miss out on the opportunity to participate in the following European awards:

CityStar (RegioStars):
https://regiostarsawards.eu

European Mobility Week Award:
https://mobilityweek.eu/emw-awards/

Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan Award:
http://www.mobilityweek.eu/sump-award/

Local and European Legislative and Policy Context

The EU supports cities in developing a sustainable urban mobility policy, including efficient public transport systems. The EU also promotes active mobility solutions and ensuring good accessibility for all users, thereby improving the quality of life in cities.

The following initiatives propose actions and provide information to encourage and help local, regional and national authorities in achieving their goals for sustainable urban mobility:

- Urban Vehicle Access Regulations (UVAR) (see Portal of all Urban Access Regulations in Europe/: http://urbanaccessregulations.eu/

- Keep Europe Moving – 'sustainable mobility for our continent': https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/strategies/2006_keep_europe_moving_en

- White paper 2011 - 'Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area': https://transport.ec.europa.eu/white-paper-2011_en

European actions for active mobility namely include:

Partnership on Urban Mobility (PUM) (FUTURIUM):
https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/en

The main objective is to seek solutions to improve the framework conditions for urban mobility across cities in the EU. The final action plan began the implementation phase after the approval of the directors in November 2018. Several actions target increasing active modes of transport and the development of European guidelines and encourage Member States to develop their own guidelines on this basis. It also aims at supporting more European investments in walking and cycling infrastructure.

Graz Declaration:
https://www.eu2018.at/latest-news/news/10-30-Graz-Declaration.html

Under the theme: "Starting a new era: clean, safe and affordable mobility for Europe", the Graz Declaration (October 2018) details how active mobility should support Europe achieve its climate goals for 2030, set out in the Paris Agreement of 2016. It specifically discusses integrating active mobility in the current and future European funding plans to:

- extend and improve infrastructure
- develop a Trans-European Cycling Network (TEC)
- support Member States' programmes

Other Charters:

Other significant charters that identify the needs of pedestrians and provide a common framework to help authorities centre their existing strategies and policies on creating a walking culture include:

The European Charter of Pedestrians' Rights (adopted in 1988 by The European Parliament);
International Charter for Walking Creating healthy, efficient and sustainable communities where people choose to walk; and
International Walking Data Standard

Road Safety:

Road safety is mainly detailed within the General Safety Regulation (EC) No 661/2009 and Pedestrian Safety Regulation (EC) No 78/2009. The following manuals highlight how to develop and implement comprehensive measures to improve pedestrian safety:

EU Road Surfaces: Economic and Safety Impact of the Lack of Regular Road Maintenance

Pedestrian Safety: A Road Safety Manual for Decision-Makers and Practitioners - World Health Organization

EU Road Safety Policy:
https://road-safety.transport.ec.europa.eu/eu-road-safety-policy/priorities/safe-road-use/pedestrians_en

Mobility & Transport - Road Safety:
https://road-safety.transport.ec.europa.eu/eu-road-safety-policy/priorities/safe-road-use/cyclists/walking-and-cycling-transport-modes_en

More information with regard to EU legislation, policies, strategies, studies, funding, project examples on the topic of Urban Mobility can be found at the One-Stop-Shop.

Legislation:

In 2016, the European Commission approved the Malta National Transport Strategy 2050 and the Malta National Transport Master Plan 2025, which encompasses a National Cycling Action Plan. The National Cycling Strategy also falls within the current Government's policy to promote healthier lifestyles and become a walking and cycling nation by 2025.

The following articles and documents further examine road infrastructure and mobility initiatives in Malta:

Directives for the Standardisation of Pavements for Traffic Areas:
https://www.transport.gov.mt/Volume-7-Directives-for-the-Standardisation-of-Pavements-for-Traffic-Areas.pdf-f3955

General Document References

Pedestrian Planning and Design Guide:
https://nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/pedestrian-planning-guide/docs/pedestrian-planning-guide.pdf

Principles for public space design, planning to do better:
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41289-018-0070-3

World Class Streets: Remaking New York City's Public Realm:
http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/World_Class_Streets_Gehl_08.pdf

Global Public Space Toolkit:
https://unhabitat.org/global-public-space-toolkit-from-global-principles-to-local-policies-and-practice

Planning and Designing for Pedestrians:
https://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid_713_3269.pdf

UN HAbitat - Streets for walking and cycling:
https://www.itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Streets-for-walking-and-cycling.pdf

Urban Street Design Guide:
https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/

Manual for Streets - UK Department for Transport:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/341513/pdfmanforstreets.pdf

Energy Cities - Superblocks in Barcelona:
https://energy-cities.eu/best-practice/superblocks-free-up-to-92-of-public-space-in-barcelona/

Steps to a Walkable Community A Guide for Citizens, Planners, and Engineers:
http://cfgis.org/hostedcfgis/srtsweb/Documents/ResourceDocuments/StepstoaWalkableCommunity.pdf

The first and last mile – the key to sustainable urban transport (2019, EEA):
https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/the-first-and-last-mile

Oxford Languages:
https://languages.oup.com/

Shiftspace Design:
https://www.shiftspacedesign.com/

Scottish Government:
https://www.gov.scot/

SPUR:
https://www.spur.org/

ARA:
https://en.ara.cat/

Unsplash:
https://unsplash.com/

NACTO
https://nacto.org/

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Local Councils' Association Malta