

Albert Diaz

Walkability is a vital part of how livable and sustainable a city is. The documentary *Urbanized*, showcased many different problems and concerns that have been raised in many communities throughout time. Problems that have surfaced throughout the lives of many people I know, and in some instances, mine too. The film showcased the city of Brasilia, the capital of Brazil. A city designed from the start to be a beacon of modern Architecture and Urban Planning. It's modernistic approach creates stunning views when seen from the sky. But it's downfall comes when taking into account that the planners and designers solely focused on the city's look and aesthetics, and forgot to integrate it's livability and its citizens. It's landscaping and ample build forced citizens to walk and drive long straight distances to reach their destinations. That gave a beautiful city with so much potential a feeling of disconnection with its people. Places need to be accessible, specially when residential areas are separate from people's workplaces. [Image 1] Lack of walkability in neighborhoods is more prominent within suburb areas. When communities start developing sprawl however, walkability is lost in nearly every aspect. I went to High School partly in New York, then I moved to St. Cloud, Fl (a small town which in my opinion is the definition of sprawl) and finished school there. The change was almost unbelievable, coming from a community where walking was encouraged and safe I would walk to school practically every day. After I moved down here walking was not an option. My new school was miles away from home and the walk was not safe. I felt disconnected specially since I wasn't old enough to have a car. I didn't really explore or enjoy Orlando/ St. Cloud because I just simply couldn't. When I did get a car and moved on to college I noticed that this trend was not specific to me, but a majority of Orlando's citizens. Living a less than two miles from UCF's main campus I still don't feel safe walking to school. A majority of UCF's students feel the same way; there is an obvious disconnection between places and people in Central Florida. Many people argue that they enjoy the suburb lifestyle and they have no problem with driving wherever they go, but that doesn't change the fact that neighborhoods and cities that are not walkable tend to not be safe for citizens. The option for walkability should be there regardless of the type of community or transportation preference. Kevin M. Leyden writes in 'Social Capital and the Built Environment: The Importance of Walkable Neighborhoods' that, "A growing number of researchers agree that social networks and community involvement have positive health consequences. Persons who are socially engaged with others and actively involved in their communities tend to live longer and be healthier physically and mentally." This goes to show that not only is it more safe to have walkable neighborhoods but it is also beneficial to citizen's health. Planning for walkability increases the overall sense of community and integrity within a city, and in some instances might even help the local economy.

Works Cited

Kevin M. Leyden. Social Capital and the Built Environment: The Importance of Walkable Neighborhoods. *American Journal of Public Health*: September 2003, Vol. 93, No. 9, pp. 1546-1551.

Hustwit, G., Swiss Dots (Firm), Plexifilm (Firm), & New Video Group. (2011). *Urbanized: A documentary film*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Plexifilm.



IMAGE 1 (BRASILIA)