

# Rocking the walking: Millennials drive new urban spaces

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People walk along Washington's Barracks Row on May 14, 2014. Neighborhoods that have a mix of businesses, homes, shops and restaurants are increasingly popular as people seek places to which they can walk rather than drive.(Photo: Manuel Balce Ceneta, AP)

Urban hipsters, you may not know it yet, but you're living in a WalkUP.

Your apartment building may have an elevator, but chances are good that if you're a Millennial in a major U.S. city, you live in a "regionally significant Walkable Urban Place," a neighborhood where the premium is on walking rather than driving.

Researchers at George Washington University in a report issued Tuesday found 558 WalkUPs in the USA's 30 largest metro areas. In a few cities, such as Washington, D.C., New York and Boston, such places account for more than one-third of office and retail space. On the other end, WalkUPs make up just 5% to 6% of office and retail space in Sun Belt cities such as Tampa, Phoenix and Orlando, all built around automobiles.

But that's rapidly changing, the findings suggest. A few major cities such as Miami, Atlanta, Los Angeles and Denver "are making some surprising and unexpected shifts toward walkable urban development," the researchers concluded. Walkable neighborhoods are defined as those where everyday destinations such as home, work, school, stores and restaurants are concentrated and within walking distance.

In future decades, the researchers said, new urban dwellers likely will push for "tens of millions" of square feet of walkable space and "hundreds of new WalkUPs."

"We know whom to blame, basically," George Washington University researcher Christopher Leinberger said.

"It's the kids. It's the Millennials ... that are driving this."

Leinberger, who heads the Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis at the George Washington University School of Business, noted that as Baby Boomers were coming of age, their taste in television made suburban-themed sitcoms popular. Shows such as *The Brady Bunch* and *The Dick Van Dyke Show* defined their notion of an ideal lifestyle. For younger generations, Hollywood is shifting gears: Shows such as *Sex in the City* and *Two Broke Girls* all take place in "safe, walkable, urban places," he said. "This is a reflection of the aspirations of the Millennials."

In many cities, Leinberger said, planners and residents who once opposed dense urban spaces are shifting gears.

In places such as White Flint, Md., near Washington, D.C., neighborhood groups mobilized around a major new development and demanded higher density "because they wanted great urbanism that their kids could walk to."

"We've basically seen some NIMBYs ("Not In My Backyard") become YIMBYs — 'Yes In My Backyard,' " Leinberger said. "That's because of the different principle, that more is better with walkable urban."

The report can be found at <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/locus/foot-traffic-ahead/>

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