

Richard Florida and the Creative Class Exchange

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The University of Michigan's Chris Leinberger has a new study out from Brookings on Walkable Cities. The full report, [here](#), is well worth reading. The top 10 after the jump.

Lucky fellow that I am, virtually every US city I've lived in made the top 10 - DC, Boston, New York, and the 'burgh. Someday, I hope to get a place in Miami - maybe when the bottom drops out. And I know the others well. I have no disagreements with the rankings.

But having lived now in Toronto for the past several months, with the exception of New York (and by that I mean mid-town to lower Manhattan), these cities pale in comparison to Toronto's walkability. In DC, we lived in Cleveland Park/ Forest Hills. We were tied to our cars (note the plural) - for everything. The bagel shop was a mile away, as was the coffee shop. The grocery stores were a couple of miles. My dentist and doctor 3 or 4. Shopping for goods 5 or 6 or more. To get your car service was a good 10-12 mile drive. Good luck if you have kids, as most people choose to move out of the city and live in Maryland or northern Virginia. Then you are in car-land. My wife commuted to a job in Tyson's Corner for a while: It was her worst nightmare.

In Toronto, we can walk to everything. The grocery store is two blocks away. Coffee shops and restaurants and more specialty groceries maybe a ten minute walk. The university maybe a 10 minute bike ride. Everyone walks, rides their bikes (yes in the cold) or takes public transit. My wife wants to sell her car, she says we can get along easily with one. My colleague Kevin Stolarick got rid of his. If you need to take a "car", cabs come in a matter of minutes and are super-efficient. And our neighborhood is filled with families with kids. The same can be said of many, many European cities. More on this in *Who's Your City*.

Some American cities are more walkable than others, but US cities pale in comparison to their foreign competitors on this score. Why might this matter?

Well, if Jane Jacobs and Robert Lucas are right, the creative-knowledge-driven economy gets its greatest productivity boost from clustering and agglomeration. The more clustered, the more dense, the more face-to-face interactions and random collisions the greater the rate of innovation, the greater productivity growth.

I have said many times that America's stretched-out spatial structure, which was such a boon to Fordism, is a dead-weight competitive disadvantage in the creative economy.

Top Ten Walkable Cities

1. Washington
2. Boston
3. San Francisco
4. Denver
5. Portland, Ore.
6. Seattle
7. Chicago
8. Miami
9. Pittsburgh
10. New York