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The pandemic challenges us to re-evaluate urban life.

"Managing streets and public spaces, though, requires little more than tape, traffic cones, spray paint, and a sense of urgency. In a matter of weeks, officials and private citizens all over the world have jury-rigged enormous metropolitan areas."

Justin Davidson, The New Yorker April 27, 2020



Will restaurants survive and jobs come back? Will people still travel in crowded subways? Do we even need office towers when everyone is on Zoom?

Foreign Policy May 1, 2020

Some cities – particularly those in dire financial straits – may neglect public space in favor of other priorities. But I would argue (and others support this theory) that we will eventually devote more resources to help us congregate and to strengthen our frayed community bonds, be it through parks, plazas, promenades, community centers or streets turned over to pedestrians.

Sam Lubell, Los Angeles Times April 22, 2020

COVID-19 has magnified the deficiencies of how we manage our cities but has also given us a unique chance to rethink, replan, and redesign. However, the question remains: will we heed these lessons? When the alternative is empty streets, quarantined urban dwellers, locked-down cities, a stalled economy, and most devastatingly of all, the loss of life, I argue we can no longer afford not to.

Michele Acuto, One Earth April 15, 2020

Why conduct this survey?

Cities gain their competitive edge from density and diversity. For millennia, urban centers have been catalysts for innovation and progress of all kinds, allowing for the spread of ideas through physical proximity. The built environment of cities allows for serendipitous meetings and chance encounters that suburban and rural life cannot match. But with the novel coronavirus working its way across the globe, the very nature of urban life has emerged as a topic of discussion.

The Neighborhood Design Center (NDC) is a nonprofit committed to empowering communities in Central Ohio through affordable design-related services. Since 1982, we have worked directly with neighbors and stakeholders to imagine unique projects and see them through to reality. Our philosophydesign is a right, not a privilege—reminds us that safe urban design is a right, as well. Given the concerns caused by COVID-19, the NDC designed a survey to assess the impacts of the virus on people's behaviors and perceptions in outdoor public spaces.

This report shares the results of that survey, which reached 355 individuals. The results illustrate a high level of concern regarding COVID-19 when using outdoor public spaces. We are proud to share the experiences of hundreds of Central Ohio residents in this report, and hope that the data will inform future decisions impacting public space.

"Parks are overcrowded, so I won't go"

-Survey respondent

"The multi-use trail is overcrowded even in normal times. We won't go now."

-Survey respondent

"Most people do a good job with it. We definitely need parks to remain open."

-Survey respondent



Photo: Columbus Dispatch, Adam Cairns

Media Spotlight: Columbus area parks officials monitoring use

"I think it is definitely going to be hard to keep at least 6-feet distance with the warm weather and everyone getting outside," said Dr. Erika Kube, an emergency physician at several OhioHealth hospitals. "I worry about the close contact people will have while out walking, exercising and biking."

Metro Parks Executive Director Tim Moloney said, "The trail use we have seen so far allows our visitors to get outside and stay active while keeping a safe distance from others. Our staff is out in the parks and on the trails to observe and keep our visitors aware of the guidelines."

Jeff Henderson, general manager of Fleet Feet-FrontRunner and an organizer of races, has urged people through his Facebook page, "Running Isn't Cancelled," to avoid the trails and exercise alone or with family. A lifelong runner, he has stopped using trails.

"That 6-foot radius is not enough," he said. "Whether I'm coughing or just exhaling, you're blowing out saliva or whatever that may be carrying the virus. It's a moving bubble of respiration."

Dean Narciso and Mark Ferenchik, The Columbus Dispatch, 4 April 2020



Many people are spending more time outside, but in less popular spaces.

Many respondents indicated they are seeking less popular locations for outdoor recreation, or changing their schedules in order to go to outdoor public spaces at less popular times of day. For example, a few respondents mentioned visiting cemeteries to escape the crowds. Overall, 42% of respondents reported spending more time in outdoor public space now than before the stay-athome order; 41% reported spending less time in outdoor public space.



Proper distancing on existing infrastructure presents difficulty for many people.

> Most respondents indicated that they have experienced difficulty maintaining proper distance from others when in outdoor public space, and 77% of respondents indicated they have had to go into the roadway when using sidewalks to maintain distance. The pedestrian infrastructure is not conducive to official social distancing guidelines for COVID-19, especially in popular destinations.



Going outdoors causes anxiety for most people, even significant and severe levels.

> Despite many people spending more time outside, results also indicate that spending time outside causes anxiety for many people. This illustrates that many people certainly want to be outdoors, but that concern over COVID-19 is making them reconsider. Or, if they still go outdoors, their anxiety may turn what is supposed to be a relaxing walk into a stressful and unappealing experience.



While more people are exercising outdoors, people also reported less safe driving behavior.

A quarter of respondents reported seeing less safe driving behavior, while the vast majority of respondents reported less vehicular traffic in their neighborhoods. These results could go hand-in-hand, with some drivers potentially taking risks they may not take with larger traffic volumes on roadways.

At a glance

10

DAY ONLINE SURVEY

355

RESPONSES

91%

WHITE

71%

FEMALE

29%

FROM 43214 OR 43201 ZIP CODES

72%

BETWEEN AGE 30 AND 60



Background & Methods

Why conduct this survey?

COVID-19 has impacted our daily lives in ways we never expected. On March 22, 2020, the State of Ohio issued a stay-at-home order requiring non-essential business and operations to cease, limiting/banning public and private gatherings, and taking other steps to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

This action had an immediate impact on our relationship to other people in outdoor public space as well. The Neighborhood Design Center, as a nonprofit focused on improving the quality of life for residents of Central Ohio and empowering communities, undertook this survey to gain a deeper understanding of the impacts of the stay-at-home order and the COVID-19 pandemic on people's relationship to and perceptions of the built and natural environment in the context of human interaction.

The goal of the survey was to assess the impact of the stay-at-home order on a variety of outdoor activities, including using sidewalks, multi-use paths, and visiting public space like parks and regional trails.

Survey questions asked about changes in how respondents navigate public space and about their stress levels when encountering others in public places. Questions were typically multiple choice, with some variety including Yes/No and long answer responses. Refer to Appendix A for a full copy of the survey.

Survey results are intended to help inform policymakers, practitioners, and interested stakeholders about the impact of COVID-19 on the behavior of Central Ohio residents in outdoor public spaces. Ultimately, the way public space is designed will likely need to adapt based on the realities of public health. We are hopeful these survey results can help leaders make more informed decisions moving forward.

Survey distribution and limitations

The COVID-19 Outdoor Public Space survey was designed to gauge how residents of Central Ohio have changed their behaviors to adapt to the risks presented by the global pandemic on outdoor activity. The target audience for the survey was adults living in Central Ohio.

The survey was distributed passively, meaning individuals were not specifically contacted. The primary distribution methods of the online survey link were through the Neighborhood Design Center's email list and social media–Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The survey was designed using Google Forms, and was only available online between May 1 and May 10. No paper, phone, or in-person surveys were conducted. Google Forms is a free survey administration application that is included in the Google Drive office suite.

The survey was answered by 355 individuals. Demographic results show that survey respondents were more likely to be white and live in higher-income zip codes, which illustrates that survey responses are not from an equitably distributed demographic pool. As with all passive surveys, people who have an interest in the topic area may be more likely to engage. This could indicate that the individuals attracted to taking this survey harbored strong feelings about COVID-19's impact on outdoor public space.

The dynamic nature of the COVID-19 situation prevented the use of alternative survey methods, such as advertising via postcard mailing. The survey was intended to be relatively informal and focused on the urgency of capturing respondents' feelings at this particular point in the pandemic.

Results Summary

The survey results are presented question-by-question in the following pages. Major takeaways from the questions are also shown in the panel to the right. Additional highlights are shown under the icons below.



15% of categorized comments mentioned increasing enforcement of social distancing



Running errands was the most stressful reported activity



Neighborhood streets were the most reported location where distancing was difficult



30% of categorized comments recommended increasing signage and education for social distancing



7% of respondents reported leaving the house only for essential errands or commuting to an essential job



83% of respondents reported leaving the house to get exercise for themselves or their pets

Most survey respondents...

...are visiting outdoor public spaces close to home.

....spend time outdoors in public a few times each week.

...leave home mostly to run errands or get some exercise.

...experience some stress due to COVID-19 when leaving the house.

...reported that running errands was the most stressful activity asked about.

... are walking more and driving less.

...are only socializing with people with whom they are self-isolating.

...reported having difficulty maintaining safe distances while in outdoor public space.

...have gone into the roadway to maintain safe distance when using sidewalks.

...reported an increase in the number of people using sidewalks.

...reported observing a decrease in vehicular traffic.

...reported feeling anxiety when in outdoor public space.

...reported that COVID-19 anxiety has prevented them from going to outdoor public space on at least one occasion.





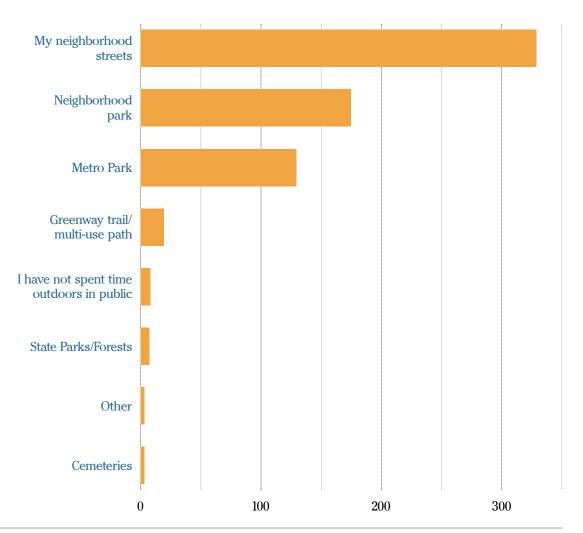






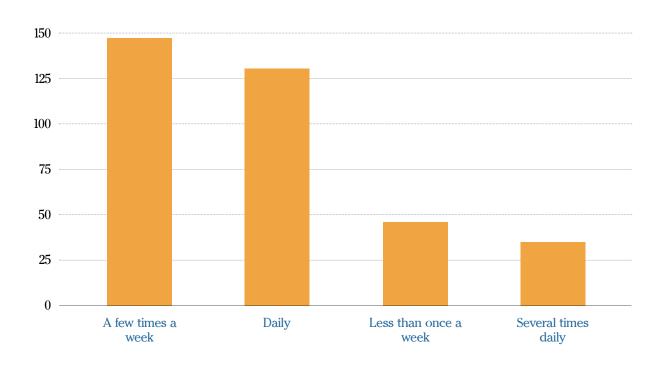
Question 1 Where have you spent time outdoors in public during the pandemic? (Check all that apply)

My neighborhood streets (including sidewalks)	331
Neighborhood park, dog park, or playground area	169
Metro Park (i.e. Highbanks, Three Creeks, Blendon Woods, Scioto Audubon)	133
Greenway trail/multi-use path	19
I have not spent any time outdoors in public at all	12
State Parks/Forests	9
Other	4
Cemeteries	2



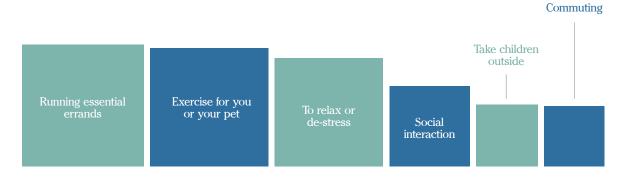
Question 2 How often do you spend time in outdoor public spaces during the pandemic? This does not include your own yard, porch, or balcony.

Public Outdoor Frequency	Number	Percent
A few times a week	148	41.7%
Daily	129	36.3%
Less than once a week	47	13.2%
Several times daily	31	8.7%



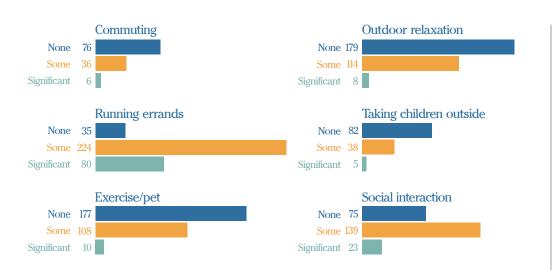
Question 3 Why have you left your residence during the pandemic? (Check all that apply)

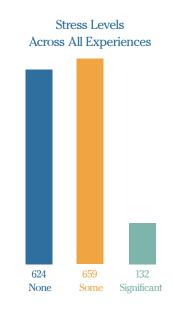
Reason for Leaving Residence	Count
Running essential errands	314
Exercise for you or your pet	295
To relax or de-stress	248
Social interaction (at a distance of 6 feet or more)	136
Take children outside	81
Commuting to essential / frontline job	77
Other	5
I have not left my residence during the pandemic	2



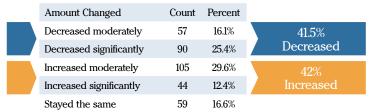
Area of boxes represents frequency of responses in relation to one another.

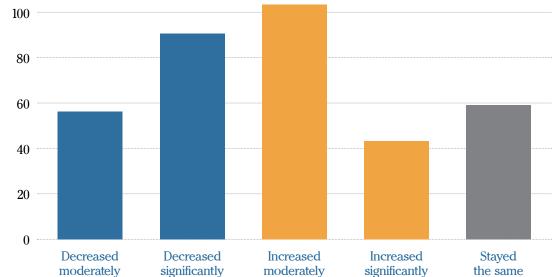
Question 4
If you have had
the following
experiences
during the stayat-home order,
please rate your
level of stress
during them.



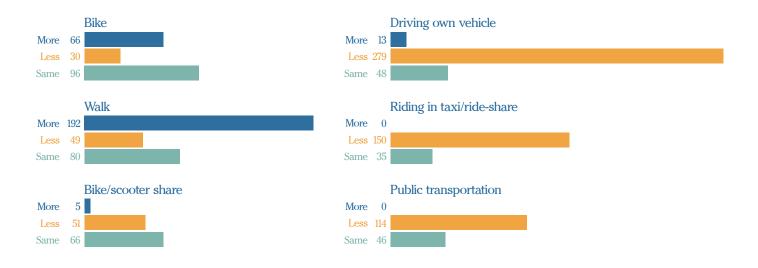


Question 5 How has the time you spend in outdoor public space changed since the stay-at-home order for the pandemic was announced?



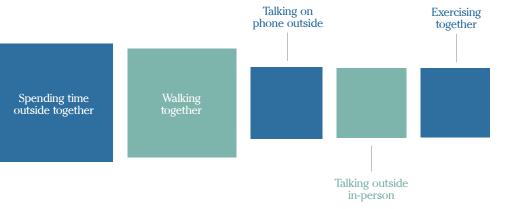


Question 6 During the pandemic stay-at-home order, how has the way you get around changed?



Question 7
How have you been socializing outdoors with people OTHER than those with whom you are self-isolating? (Check all that apply)

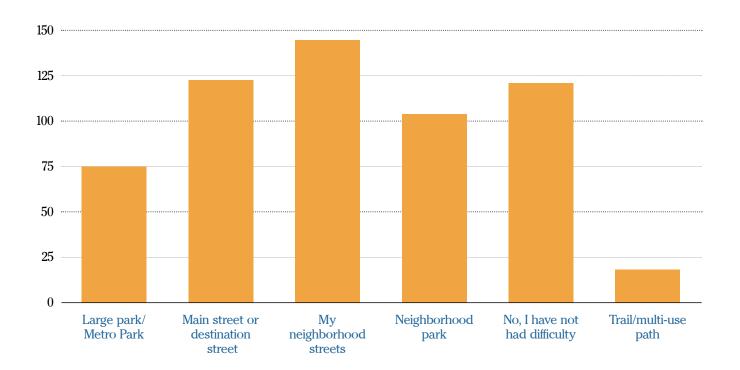




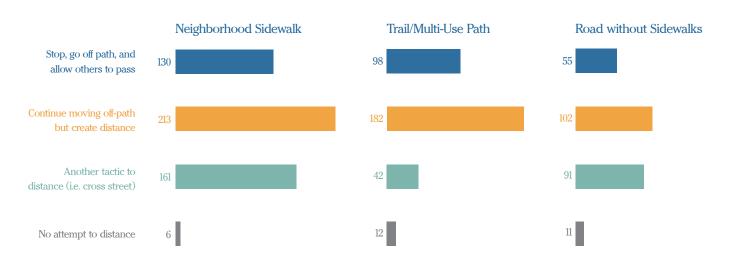
Method of Socialization	Count
No, I only spend time outdoors with people with whom I am self-isolating	170
Spending time in one place together	103
Walking together	87
Talking on the phone in public	38
Talking outside in-person, at least 6 feet apart	36
Exercising together (biking, running, small group fitness)	35

Area of boxes represents frequency of responses in relation to one another.

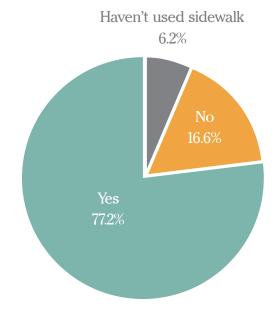
Question 8
Have you had
experiences when
it was difficult to
practice physical
distancing in the
following outdoor
locations? (Check all
that apply)



Question 9
When you are in the following outdoor public spaces, what do you do when encountering others?



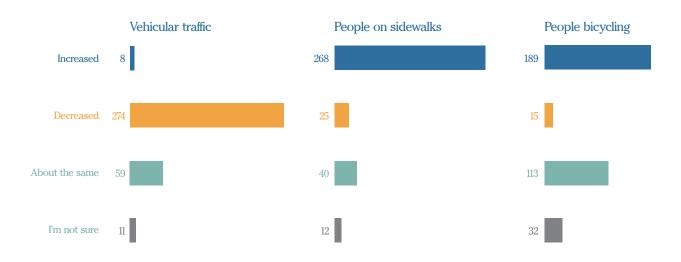
Question 10
At any point, have you had to go into the street in order to maintain safe social distance when using sidewalks?



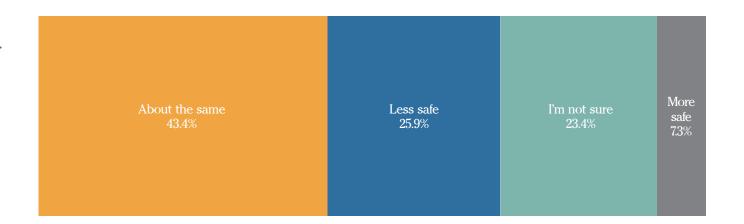


Two runners in the street on Reinhard Avenue in German Village.

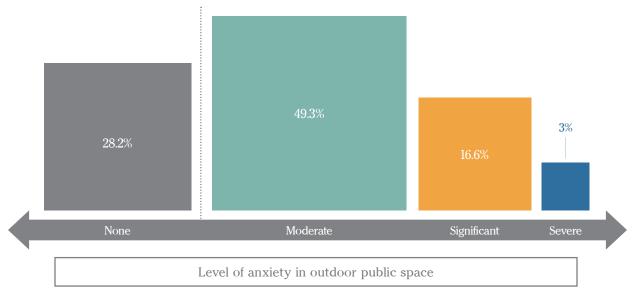
Question 11
How have the following aspects of streets in your immediate neighborhood changed since the onset of the COVID-19 stay-at-home order?



Question 12 How has the behavior of drivers in your neighborhood changed since the onset of the stayat-home order for COVID-19?

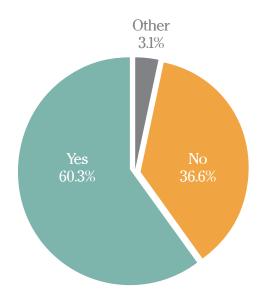


Question 13
On any occasion,
have you experienced
anxiety when
encountering others in
outdoor public space
due to COVID-19?
Consider places like
parks, sidewalks, and
trails.



Area of boxes represents frequency of responses in relation to one another.

Question 14
On any occasion, has concern or anxiety about COVID-19 prevented you from going to outdoor public



"Recently I was publicly shamed for not having a mask on outside. This caused me a lot of stress and made me feel unsafe."

"I give greater consideration to where I go, and I avoid places I think will be the busiest, i.e., the Olentangy Trail."

"I go out later in the evening after everyone goes home."

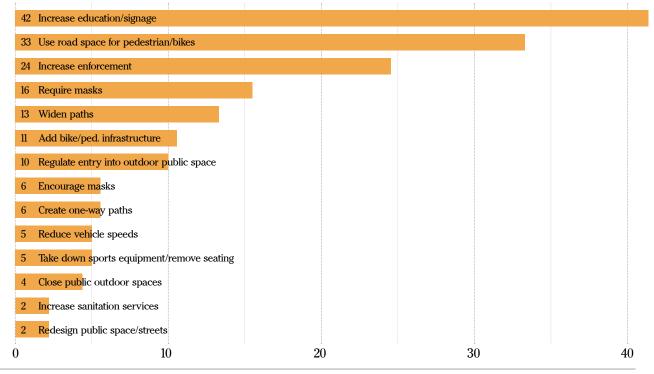
"It hasn't kept me from going out, but it has made me change where I go..."

Question 15
Do you have thoughts about how local governments can address social distancing in outdoor public places like sidewalks, parks, and trails?

Mentioned once

- Automate pedestrian crossings
- Create safe passing plan for paths
- Discourage through traffic
- Increase green space
- Open golf courses as parks
- Open playgrounds

Number of Comments by Category





"Enforcement will disproportionately impact people of color and low-income individuals." "Make face masks mandatory in public."

"Governments should consider the widths of pedestrian pathways to include more than just one or two individuals. It does not leave much room to pass without getting into a 6' distance scenario."

How can local governments address social distancing in outdoor public places?

"Cars are excessively speeding because there are fewer cars on the streets. Runners are jogging in the road routinely to avoid clogged sidewalks. I've seen and encountered far too many close calls."

"Messaging to people (social media campaign, signage, etc.) to tell people 6 foot distance is still necessary outdoors. I think many people think that the distancing doesn't matter when you're outside."

"I have not seen a single instance where any government official has called out a citizen for not maintaining social distance. Essentially this policy has been announced but not enforced. This needs to be addressed."

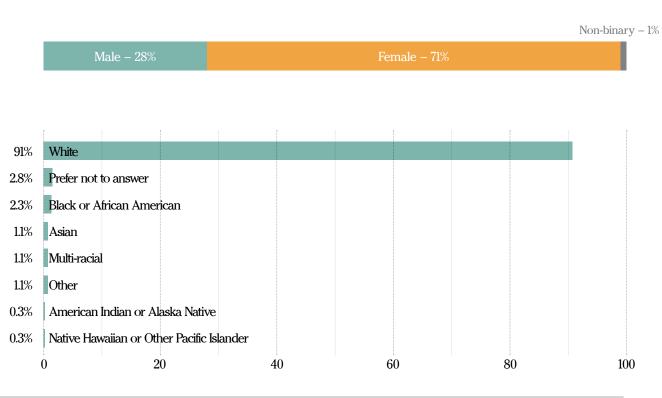
"I think there are too many people in some of the Metro Parks (I'm looking at you, Highbanks). Suggest that there be more limitations on number allowed in to parking areas. Masks could be required for the busiest parks." "I would love to see one way side walks. Sidewalks could follow the same direction as traffic and people would have less need to cross the street to avoid people. More observation from others would be nice too!" "Shut down more streets by prohibiting cars, so that bikers, skateboarders, and runners have more space to continue their outdoor exercise and recreation while maintaining proper social distancing."

Who took the survey?

Gender

A typical survey respondent was a white female between age 30 and 60 living in Clintonville or the Short North area.

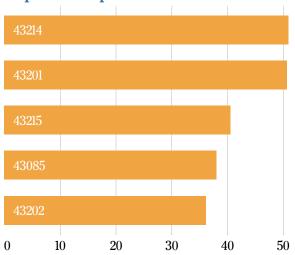


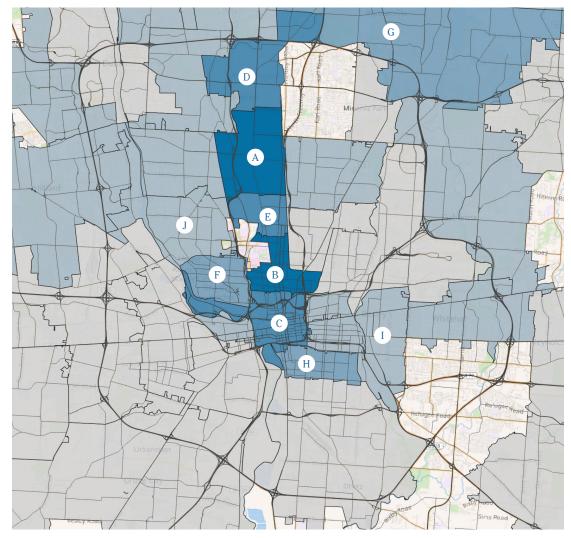


Respondents by Zip Code

The majority of respondents claimed the 43214 and 43201 zip codes as home. The 43214 zip code primarily encompasses Central Clintonville, but includes portions north of Morse Road and also west of the Olentangy River. The 43201 zip code contains much of the Short North, including the University District and a portion west of the Olentangy River as well.

Top Five Zip Codes





Zip Code	Map Label	Area	Count
43214	A	Central/North Clintonville	52
43201	В	Near North Side	51
43215	C	Downtown Area/Goodale Park Area	41
43085	D	Worthington Area	38
43202	E	Old North/South Clintonville	36

Zip Code	Map Label	Area	Count
43212	F	Grandview/5xNW	21
43081	G	Westerville Area	14
43206	Н	German Village/Near Southside	10
43209	Ī	Bexley Area	6
43221	J	Upper Arlington Area	5

Opportunities

Among the situations we asked about, **running errands caused the most stress for respondents**. How can getting groceries and making other essential trips be made less stressful? Stores should consider additional measures to help put customers at ease.

Sixty-five percent of respondents indicated that practicing safe distancing was challenging when in outdoor public spaces. Neighborhood sidewalks, which are typically narrower than multi-use trails, were the most reported area where distancing was difficult. Another common response was multi-use greenway trails—specifically the Olentangy Trail. This indicates that existing infrastructure is incompatible with official public health guidance.

This leaves many residents wondering whether leaving the house is safe at all. Consideration should be given to increasing infrastructure investment for non-motorized recreation and transportation opportunities in light of the pandemic. While travel in private vehicles is a safer way to avoid the respiratory droplets of others, an effort should be made to make walking and biking more compatible with official public health guidance by allowing users to remain at least 6 feet apart. This could be achieved by adding infrastructure and by opening existing non-pedestrian spaces to pedestrians and bikes.

Similarly, 77% of respondents reported going into the roadway to maintain safe social distance when using sidewalks. Interestingly, this means 77% of respondents

admitted to violating Columbus City Code 2171.05, a misdemeanor offense. The code states that it is "unlawful for any pedestrian to walk along and upon an adjacent roadway" when a sidewalk is provided. The idea that pedestrians must be confined to narrow sidewalks, even in large numbers, has become more challenging during a global pandemic. While drivers are safe from respiratory droplets in their vehicles, people are risking transmission when forced together on narrower pathways. In this case, staying safe by creating distance often means breaking the law.

Furthermore, respondents reported a decrease in vehicular traffic, but many also reported an increase in unsafe driving behavior. This is consistent with other research demonstrating an uptick in illegal driving. For example, a May 2020 study from the Center for Urban and Regional Analysis at The Ohio State University found an increase in speeding on roads in Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati compared to the same time period last year, with Columbus seeing some of the largest increases. Across the country, reports of extreme speeding and unsafe driving since the onset of the pandemic are up.

One in five respondents reported having felt significant or severe anxiety when in outdoor public space. Moreover, 3 in 5 reported that their anxiety about COVID-19 has prevented them from going to outdoor public space. Overall, survey responses illustrate that many respondents are looking to government for increased safety and protection when using outdoor public spaces.

Columbus City Code 2171.05 - Walking on path or street, jaywalking.

(a) Where a sidewalk is provided and its use is practicable, it shall be unlawful for any pedestrian to walk along and upon an adjacent roadway.

(ORC 4511.50; Ord. 1170-75; Ord. 2120-03 § 1 (part); Ord. No. 0411-2009, § 4, 4-19-2010)



Many respondents reported an increase in the number of people biking in their neighborhoods.



A few respondents mentioned the potential risk of contamination when requesting to cross streets by pressing buttons.

How wide are Short North sidewalks?

Sidewalk widths vary widely throughout cities and throughout Columbus. A survey of the Short North area reveals a range of widths, but for the most part N. High Street has wider sidewalks than other streets. Most residential side streets have sidewalks of 4 feet, but a slightly larger sidewalk of 5 feet exists on W. Third Avenue at Oregon Avenue, while Neil Avenue generally has a sidewalk width of 6 feet. However, widths can vary from block to block.

Minimum sidewalk widths

Title 9 - STREETS, PARKS AND PUBLIC PROPERTIES CODE

Chapter 905 - SIDEWALK AND DRIVEWAY CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR

905.07 - Sidewalk specifications-Grade.

In no case shall these sidewalks be less than a minimum width of four (4) feet for all streets having a right-of-way width of twenty (20) or more feet, and shall be so located that the nearest edge of sidewalk to the back of the curb or edge of pavement along the street shall not be less than three (3) feet, unless otherwise approved by the director. When a sidewalk is specified, or permitted, to be placed next to a curb in no case shall it be less than a minimum width of six (6) feet.

 $(Ord.\,588\text{-}06\ \S\ 2\ (part);Ord.\,1987\text{-}2008\ Attach.\,1\ (part);Ord.\,No.\,0128\text{-}2009,\,\S\ 1,\,2\text{-}9\text{-}2009)$



N. High Street at W. 1st Avenue



N. High Street at Russell Street 50" is 4.17 feet.



Goodale Park Archway Dennison Avenue at Buttles Avenue



Summit Street at E. 2nd Avenue



West First Avenue at Delaware Avenue Left: looking west; Right: looking east



Olentangy Trail at Third Avenue Bridge

The Neighborhood Design Center

p. 19

Appendix A: Full Survey

Effects of COVID-19 on Your Experience in Outdoor Public Space in Central Ohio. If you live in Central Ohio, help us understand how the pandemic has affected your behaviors and perceptions of the world around you. This survey will close on Sunday, May 10, 2020. Survey created by: Neighborhood Design Center (columbusndc.org)

Question 1 Where have you spent time of (Check all that apply)* My neighborhood sark Neighborhood park Metro Park (i.e. High Backyard/Deck/From Other:	streets (including k, dog park, or pl ghbanks, Three (sidewalks)		Question 5 How has the time you spend in outdoo order for the pandemic was announced Increased significantly Increased moderately Stayed the same Decreased moderately Decreased significantly		changed since the si	tay-at-home
Question 2 How often do you spend time This does not include your ov Less than once a v A few times a week	wn yard, porch, c week		indemic?	Question 6 During the pandemic stay-at-home ord If you don't use a mode, don't check as		e way you get around Less	d changed? Same
Daily Several times daily				Bike			
·	'			Walk			
Question 3 Why have you left your residence in the control of the			hat apply)*	Bike/Scooter Share (i.e. Cogo, Bird)			
Commuting to esseRunning essential		b		Driving own vehicle			
Exercise for you orTo relax or de-stres	•			Riding in taxi/ride-share (i.e. Uber, Lyft)			
Social interaction (Public transportation			
Question 4 If you have had the following of level of stress during them. If				Question 7 How have you been socializing outdoo you are self-isolating? (Check all that a Walking together Exercising together (biking, a Spending time in one place)	apply)* running, small together		with whom
Commuting to essential/ frontline job				☐ Talking on the phone in publ☐ No, I only spend time outdoo☐ Other:		with whom I am self	-isolating
Running essential errands				Question 8			
Exercise for you or your pet				Have you had experiences when it was following outdoor locations? (Check all	that apply)*		cing in the
Outdoor relaxation				My neighborhood streets (in Main street or destination str	eet (including		
Taking children outside				Large park/Metro Park (i.e. S No, I have not experienced of	haron Woods,		
Social interaction (at a distance of 6+ feet or more)				Other:	·		quired question

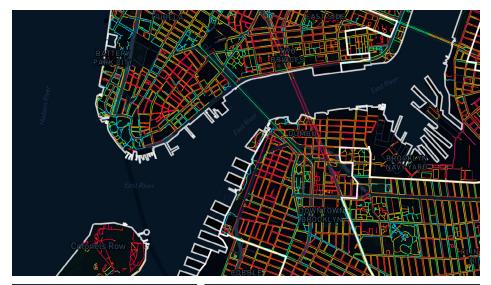
_	ow off-path but ss create distance			Yes, I have had moderate anxiety Yes, I have had significant anxiety Yes, I have had severe anxiety I have not encountered others in public space since the Question 14 On any occasion, has concern or anxiety about COVID-19 produtdoor public spaces?* Yes No Other Question 15 Do you have thoughts about how local governments can additionated outdoor public places like sidewalks, parks, and trails? [Long Demographic Questions Please help us understand the nuances of survey responses	revented you from going to dress social distancing in answer]
neighborhood sidewalk Trail/multi-use path (wider than sidewalks) Road without sidewalks Question 10 At any point, have you had to distance when using sidewall Yes No I have not used a sidewal-at-home of the stay-at-home of	go into the street in orders?*	□ □ er to maintain safe s	Gocial	Question 14 On any occasion, has concern or anxiety about COVID-19 production public spaces?* Yes No Other Question 15 Do you have thoughts about how local governments can additioutdoor public places like sidewalks, parks, and trails? [Long	revented you from going to dress social distancing in answer]
path (wider than sidewalks) Road without sidewalks Question 10 At any point, have you had to distance when using sidewall Yes No I have not used a side to the stay-at-home of the stay-at-home of the stay-at-home of the stay of the	go into the street in orders?*	□ er to maintain safe s	□ Social	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other Question 15 Do you have thoughts about how local governments can add outdoor public places like sidewalks, parks, and trails? [Long ☐ Demographic Questions	answer]
Sidewalks Question 10 At any point, have you had to distance when using sidewall Yes No I have not used a so the stay-at-home of the stay-at-home of the following aspects.	go into the street in orders?*	er to maintain safe s	 social	Do you have thoughts about how local governments can addition outdoor public places like sidewalks, parks, and trails? [Long Demographic Questions	answer]
At any point, have you had to distance when using sidewall Yes No I have not used a stressay-at-home of Question 11 How have the following aspectors.	ks?* idewalk or encountered				by completing this section.
	•	•	od changed	What is your age range?* Under 18 years 18 to 29 years 30 to 45 years 46 to 60 years Above 60 years	
Increased		same	I'm not sure	What is your gender?* ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Non-binar	n.
Vehicular traffic					y .
Number of people using sidewalks				How would you describe yourself?* American Indian or Alaska Native Black or African American	Asian Hispanic
Number of people bicycling				☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander☐ Multi-racial	☐ White ☐ Prefer not to answer
Question 12 How has the behavior of drive the stay-at-home order for Community More safe driving but Less safe driving but About the same as	OVID-19?* ehavior ehavior	d changed since the	onset of	What is your zip code?* [number-only short answer] While this survey is anonymous, if you'd like to receive a provide your email address. Otherwise, follow ColumbusNI for results in the next couple of weeks. Thank you! [short answer must contain "@"]	

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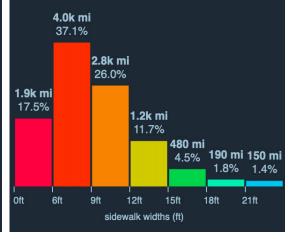
*Required question

Appendix B: New York City Sidewalk Width Map

The Sidewalk Widths NYC map illustrates the width and corresponding safety level of every sidewalk in the city. Available at sidewalkwidths.nyc, the map determines the ease of social distancing on sidewalks and offers a level of safety corresponding to the width. For example, sidewalks 21 feet and wider are classified as "very easy" to maintain social distancing. The map is intended to give an impression of how sidewalk widths impact the ability of pedestrians to practice social distancing. Widths were determined from New York City's Sidewalk dataset which was not verified for accuracy or completeness.







Appendix C: NACTO's Emerging Practices for Cities

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) recently released the Rapid Response: Emerging Practices for Cities, a guide for how to handle the dynamic pressures placed on urban transportation infrastructure by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cities and transit agencies are taking action now to address the most critical impacts of the coronavirus and ensure that essential services operate in their communities. To help city and agency staff plan responses to the pandemic, NACTO is regularly updating a summary of rapidly-deployed responses.

1. Maintain transportation systems to safely move essential workers and goods

- Establish protocols for frequent, comprehensive cleaning of transit vehicles and facilities
- Establish back door boarding and waive fares to alleviate crowing and for operator safety
- Strategically adjust service to balance public need for essential trips with reduced staffing and operational capacity
- Build pop-up bike lanes
- Classify bike shops as essential services
- Offer free or reduced price bike share access
- Convert actuated to fixed signals where possible
- As traffic volumes drop, adjust signal timing to slow vehicle speeds and ensure safety

2. Keep front-line workers safe, and actively manage and support both operational and remote office workforces

- Stagger start times, enhance cleaning, and employ dispatch procedures for operations teams
- Clearly communicate safe work practices to essential employees working in the field
- Provide guidance for managers supporting remote teams
- Ensure adequate hardware, software, and program licensing for remote staff

3. Address immediate delivery & pick-up needs

- Develop protocols for on-sidewalk queuing at grocery stores
- Establish dedicated delivery/loading zones for restaurants, commercial businesses, and school lunch pick-up

4. Relieve crowded areas (i.e. parks and narrow sidewalks) to support health department guidance for physical distancing

- Close or limit through traffic on select streets for social distancing
- Close or limit through traffic on streets adjacent to or within parks for social distancing
- Temporarily expand pedestrian facilities in high-volume or congested locations using interim materials
- Restrict access routes to areas and attractions where it is impractical to promote social distancing

5. Create clear messaging of city policies and guidelines

- · Give simple instructions in plain language
- · Place signage in obvious places

6. Support unsheltered and vulnerable populations

- Use city/government property to open testing locations accessible to people outside cars
- Provide transportation to testing
- Repurpose taxi fleets to deliver groceries/ medicines to vulnerable populations.

Learn more at https://nacto.org/covid19-rapid-response-tools-for-cities

Appendix D: Historic Sidewalk Width Visual Comparison





N. High Street at Fifth Avenue





Oak Street at Miller Avenue





N. 4th Street at E. 11th Avenue





Mt. Vernon Avenue at N. Monroe Avenue

Historic photos are from the Blanchard Collection, taken in 1922 by Forest Ira Blanchard. Learn more at www.cura.osu.edu/blanchard. Current photos from Google Maps.

