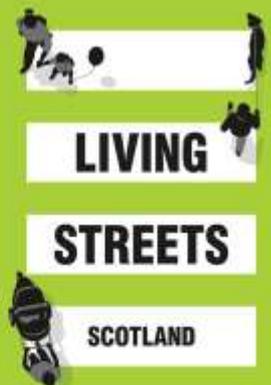


High Street and Saltmarket Street Review.

February 2018



We are Living Streets Scotland, part of the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a walking nation where people of all generations enjoy the benefits that this simple act brings, on streets fit for walking.



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Rational

The High Street is the oldest street in Glasgow and has great historical significance. It was the original main street in medieval times along with the Saltmarket, and links the Cathedral precinct in the North to Glasgow Green and the River Clyde in the South. There are many areas of historical interest along the route including St Mungo's Cathedral, the Necropolis, Tolbooth and Market Cross. There are also a number of key destinations for people making journeys on foot including Glasgow Royal Infirmary, the High Court, Glasgow College and Strathclyde University. Despite the many reasons for people to visit and walk the street, footfall to and through the area is low, and the space feels neglected.

The High Street has been seen by Glasgow City Council as a key priority for regeneration in the city centre, with agreement that more could be done to improve and enhance an area that comprises the city's historic heart. Glasgow City Council's City Centre Strategy Board tasked officers from across the council, arm's length organisations including Glasgow Housing Association and City Property, and local partners to form a working group to oversee the development of a five-year action plan for the area. (High Street Action Plan 2018 – 2022

<https://www.glasgowconsult.co.uk/KMS/dmart.aspx?strTab=PublicDMartCurrent&%3bNoIP=1>)

The action plan aims to improve the look and feel of the High Street: tackle heritage related challenges such as a failure to capitalise and celebrate the heritage of the area: improve on the current state of repair of some of the residential and commercial properties; and improve the visitor experience to assets including the Glasgow Cathedral, St Mungo's Museum and Tolbooth Steeple, Improvements delivered under the action plan should deliver a more functional space for the people that live and access it every day.

The current Glasgow City Centre Strategy and Action Plan is driving improvements in the city centre, with a focus on delivering people friendly spaces and inclusive economic growth. Within this process the city centre has been divided into 9 Districts, with each at various stages of producing a framework for improvement in collaboration with local people and organisations.

The High Street falls into two Districts in the Glasgow City Centre Strategy, The Learning Quarter and the Merchant City. These recognise that the public realm has no uniform look and feel, with historic buildings sitting beside new developments, different footway surfaces within short distances and neglected buildings beside redeveloped ones.

There are opportunities to deliver a more attractive, cohesive, and functional public realm, which better serves the needs of local residents and businesses while encouraging increased footfall from visitors. Impetus provided by the City Centre Strategy, as well as significant developments currently being undertaken by Glasgow College and Strathclyde University offer a chance to revive an important and neglected historical street in the heart of the city.

What the space should be

A successful, walkable street is accessible to all users including those with mobility and sensory disabilities. It should have high quality pavement surfaces, designed to allow as much freedom as possible from traffic noise and pollution. It will have routes that connect popular destinations both locally and with wider districts, and these are well signposted and direct with crossing points related to desire lines. Walking along the street should be pleasant, and feel inviting and safe. There should be space for social interaction and it should have a diversity of shops, businesses and refreshment options.

In thinking about the High Street and Saltmarket space and what will make it successful we need to consider who uses the space and what priority is given to them currently. There are commuters passing through on foot, on public transport and in vehicles. There are residents that live in the space, looking for a sense of belonging and community. There are business owners wishing to attract passing trade, and also tourists passing through, visiting places of interest.

For the High Street to be a successful space it needs to be functional for all the people that use it.

Home to a community

The High Street is a home to the community that lives in the area both directly on the High Street and adjacent to it. They need streets that are easy to walk around, with convenient crossings; good links to public transport; access to local services and amenities on foot; streets that are well maintained, without clutter; and that feel safe. A community needs social space, places for informal chats, benches to linger and planting and landscaping to make lingering appealing. There also needs to be civic space, with places for art, community noticeboards for information and space to come together and celebrate.

Through route for commuters, tourists, and hospital visitors

People walking to study, work, explore local heritage, or visit Glasgow Royal Infirmary are looking for easy access to and from the High Street, and wide, clear, accessible and well maintained streets to walk along. They are looking for crossings at convenient points that follow desire lines. As many people may be accessing the Glasgow Royal Infirmary at the top of the High Street there is extra stress on accessibility to ensure that less able pedestrians can access services at the hospital easily, with some pedestrians requiring well positioned seating between the rail station and the hospital. In order to easily find routes clear wayfinding is important.

A destination for visitors

In addition to the requirements above, many visitors are also looking for good information signage about places of interest and links to other nearby destinations. They are looking for places of beauty and interest, and access to shops, cafes, restaurants and transport links. The look and feel of the High Street needs to be inviting with a variety of shop fronts and options for food and entertainment. Encouraging those passing through to linger, and providing space and reason to do so, will bring money into the local economy by increased footfall.

Home for businesses

Businesses are looking for footfall past their door. By enabling more people to walk, cycle and use public transport along the length of the High Street, and improving the look and functionality of the business units, there should be an increase in footfall. The improved appeal of the High Street as a route should also draw footfall from the Merchant city and city centre northwards up the High Street to the Hospital, University and Cathedral and southwards to Glasgow Green and the Courts, increasing incidental passing trade to the local businesses.

Living Streets Scotland

Living Streets Scotland is part of the UK charity for everyday walking.

We want to create a walking nation, free from congested roads and pollution, reducing the risk of preventable illness and social isolation and making walking the natural choice. We believe that getting Scotland walking means progress for everyone.

We work with professionals and politicians to make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces. Our Walk to School campaigns reach every area of Scotland. Through our Walkable Communities project, we empower community groups to deliver improvements to their walking environment.

Street Audit

Living Streets Scotland was commissioned to conduct a street audit as part of the Public Realm theme of the High Street Action Plan 2018-2022. This is the report of the findings from the workshop and audit held on the 14th February 2018.

We led a workshop with participants made up of council officers, Councillors, representatives from Wave Particle and one local business owner. During the workshop we looked at the health, social, economic and environmental benefits of walking. We then looked at the assets and barriers to walking before heading out to walk down the High Street and note issues.

A Community Street Audit allows local residents, business owners, and other street users to have their say about the streets and spaces they walk in very day. As part of a Community Street Audit, we would usually ask members of the local community to participate and feedback about what they felt were the main issues and priorities for change. In this instance there was limited opportunity to engage directly with these groups, and so the findings and recommendations in this report may not be those of the local community. Additional activity to bring members of the local community, and other key street user groups, into the conversation about the space would be beneficial in developing an action plan. The recommendations included in this report reflect our appraisal of the key issues, and reflect the views of the officers, councillors, and other key stakeholders involved.

Summary of audit findings – Home to a community

There are several issues that stop the High Street functioning well for the local community, including the dominance of traffic; poor footway maintenance; accessibility; and in some places issues with anti-social behaviour.

The High Street and Saltmarket is dominated by 4 lanes of traffic comprising the A8. These traffic lanes were not fully utilised over the period of the audit, conducted mid-morning. This suggests that there is scope to reduce the carriageway size for traffic, and reprioritise some of the space for pedestrians and bikes.

From the River Clyde to the top of High Street there is a 20mph speed limit. As the High Street turns into Castle Street before joining the M8 it changes to 30mph speed limit. The auditors commented on the noise levels of the traffic and the speed which was perceived to be going faster than 20mph. The noise, speed and pollution from the traffic will have a greater effect on the local population as they will live with it daily.



High Street looking towards Cathedral Precinct

At several points along the audit route there were piles of litter and bin bags that had been left on the footway. These were particularly noticeable near the junction with Duke Street and in the vicinity of the High Street Station. For local residents these are not just unsightly but can also attract vermin and cause issues for local residents in particular.



High Street near junction with Duke Street, rubbish left on the footway.

The poor footway surface in places along the High Street and the lack of dropped kerbs can make access locally difficult for older and more infirm residents. Whilst auditing we met a gentleman in a mobility scooter and his wife trying to navigate up the High Street. As there wasn't a route with dropped kerbs he had brought his own mini ramp to enable him to travel up the street.

There is a lack of uniformity and repair of the footway surface along the length of the High Street. Parts need maintained and other sections are in such poor repair that they need resurfaced to make them fit for walking.



Lack of dropped kerbs





Area in need of repair.



Area needs resurfacing.

There is a history of anti-social behaviour under the rail bridge south of Trongate. The space under the bridge is quite dark; there is a CCTV camera in the area. The space feels neglected and uninviting. The area around the Old College Bar is also run down and could attract anti-social behaviour, and is uninviting to walk past.



Area under the rail bridge, Saltmarket.



Area at Old College Bar.

Recommendations

Area/Issue	Recommended Action	Level of Action Quick Win/ long Term
Road Layout and space allocation	1 – Reduce the width of the carriageway to allow more space for pedestrians and cyclists. This should also help reduce speed and volume of traffic travelling through the High Street.	1 – Long term
Footway Surfaces and Obstructions	1 - Ensure the crossings on the route from the High Street Station to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary have dropped kerbs. These include; Entrance to old High Street car park beside the station and Burrell’s Lane on the East side of the High Street and Rottenrow and Nicholas Street on the West side of the High Street. 2 – Resurfacing of the footway between George Street to College Street.	1 – Medium term 2 – Long term
Maintenance and enforcement	1 – Ensure that refuse is collected regularly and that both domestic and trade waste are only put out on the designated collection dates.	1 – Short term

Summary of audit findings – Route for pedestrians

The High Street does not work as a route for pedestrians. The adjacent Merchant City and Learning Quarter are busy with high levels of footfall, yet many of these pedestrians do not flow into and across the High Street area, even though it would seem a natural route to the Infirmary, Courts, University and College. One reason is the route feels more of a vehicle corridor rather than a pedestrian route. This perception is hard to evidence as we didn't have local community members at the Street Audit. However, it is clear that traffic has priority in terms of space allocated and the layout disadvantages pedestrians trying to navigate the area.

There are long waits and several crossings to navigate around the Trongate and Gallowgate section. Crossing times and priorities at these junctions prioritise vehicle flows and act to sever pedestrian routes. This effectively cuts off the Merchant City and City Centre from the High Street. The change in the quality of the public realm may also impact on the impression for people walking that they are welcome to continue north. There is a lack of crossing points that would be a natural desire line, for example at the High Street Station.

A lack of regular buses to and from the area may also lead to reduced footfall.

The poor repair of the footways may act as a barrier to less able pedestrians from using the High Street as a commuter route.

There are no cycle lanes along the High Street so cyclists may be put off using it to commute especially with the high volume of traffic. There is a nextbike station under the railway bridge on the Saltmarket and it would benefit cyclists to have some designated cycle lanes along the High Street and Saltmarket.

There are also quite a few unnecessary obstructions on the footways. These range from obsolete poles to large advertising structures. Street clutter narrows space available to pedestrians, and this is particularly an issue for those using mobility aids such as wheelchairs or rollators. Redundant signage poles or other unnecessary pavement clutter add to a perception that the area is uncared for, detracting from visual amenity and discouraging people from walking there. Advertising and traffic signage designed to inform drivers approaching the motorway is out of scale with the space, and contributes to a feel of a street for vehicles rather than people on foot.



Advertising boards on the High Street

The junctions around the Tolbooth and Glasgow Cross are dominated by traffic, with vehicle flow at the junction taking priority from pedestrian links. Pedestrians have several crossing points to navigate to traverse the street, and crossing phases are timed such that pedestrians can be waiting some minutes to continue their journey. The balance of space for drivers and pedestrians signals visually the dominance of vehicle movement, contributing to a sense of severance between The Merchant City and the streets to the north.



Crossings at the Tolbooth and Glasgow Cross.

It can be seen from the map below that there are several crossings for pedestrians to navigate to walk up the High Street. This can take time to wait at each crossing and many pedestrians would therefore either cross without the crossing signal or take a different more convenient route.



© OpenStreetMap contributors, accessed March 2018.

The pedestrian crossing on the High Street at George Street is not immediately visible if you are walking down the hill, with pedestrians seen to cross at the corner several feet away from the actual crossing point. This may be because it is partially obscured by a large grey electrical junction box.



Approach to the junction with Duke Street and George Street

There is no pedestrian crossing for people coming out of or going to the High Street Train station. This may mean pedestrians attempting to cross the traffic or take a longer detour or ultimately using a different more user friendly route.



Road from Station to bus stop.

There are obstacles on the High Street that may make it difficult to walk on the street, this is especially true for less able pedestrians.



Obsolete poles and litter on the footway.



Large advertising monolith

Visitors to the High Street are likely to want to find somewhere to sit and relax and to find refreshments. There are few spaces to linger and take in the general atmosphere of the area. There is an opportunity to develop the green space at the top of the High Street adjacent to the St Mungo Mural. By adding some benches and some landscaping this could become an attractive and useful social space.

Adding further benches along the High Street would also be helpful for visitors that are older or have poor health. This is of more importance at the top end of the High Street where there is a steep slope. Currently the only choice for a seat is at the bus stops, one near the top of High Street and the others near to the High Street Station.

There are some inspiring murals that can be seen from the High Street, and there are also areas that have been recently upgraded such as College Street. There is a small temporary community garden which can be accessed via a path from the High Street; this could have a higher profile so that pedestrians know it is there as this is an inviting space to look at and could be enhanced with adjacent seating.



St Mungo Mural

There are a few areas that detract from the overall look and feel of the High Street and may be a deterrent to visitors.

- Empty shop fronts
Many of the shop units on the High Street lie empty and leave the area feeling neglected and abandoned.
- Some dilapidated buildings
The small block between George Street and the Old College Bar look particularly neglected.
- There is an old style junction box on the corner with George Street that has been damaged and painted over several times, obscuring the art work on it. This could be repaired and restored as a street feature.



Junction box on



Old College Bar

- Empty land beside the High Street Station
This area looks derelict, there is a lot of litter and weeds, there are future plans to develop this area along with the upgrade to the station. Could there be opportunities to use this space like the temporary community garden across the road?



Derelict area beside High Street Station

Recommendations

Area/Issue	Recommended Action	Level of Action Quick Win/ long Term
Road Layout and space allocation	1 – Install cycle lanes along the High Street. 2 – Increase the island size that the Tolbooth Steeple sits on.	1 – Long term 2 – Long term
Crossing Points and desire lines	1 - At the Trongate/Gallowgate/Tolbooth areas the crossings do not work for pedestrians, long waits, several crossing points to get from a to b. There needs to be more thought as to who has priority in this area and how the space works. 2 – Install crossing point at the High Street Station.	1 – Medium term 2 – Long term
Footway Surfaces and Obstructions	1 - Remove obsolete poles on High Street opposite number 283. 2 – Remove large advertising monoliths, one near the top of the High Street on the East side, one near Aldi and one near McChuills.	1 – Quick win 2 – Quick win
Facilities and Signage	1 – Add benches on the steep section of the High Street	1 – Quick win
Aesthetics	1 – Develop the greenspace at the top of the High Street adjacent to the St. Mungo mural, adding in seating. 2 – Repair and restore the old junction box near the junction with George Street. 3 – Investigate opportunities to make temporary use of the derelict land near the High Street station for community projects.	1 – Long term 2 – Medium term 3 – Medium term

Summary of audit findings – A place for visitors

For the space to function well for visitors, places of interest need to be easily found. This means routes to the High Street need to be as well signposted as well as places along the High Street. There are two types of signage needed along the High Street: wayfinding and information.

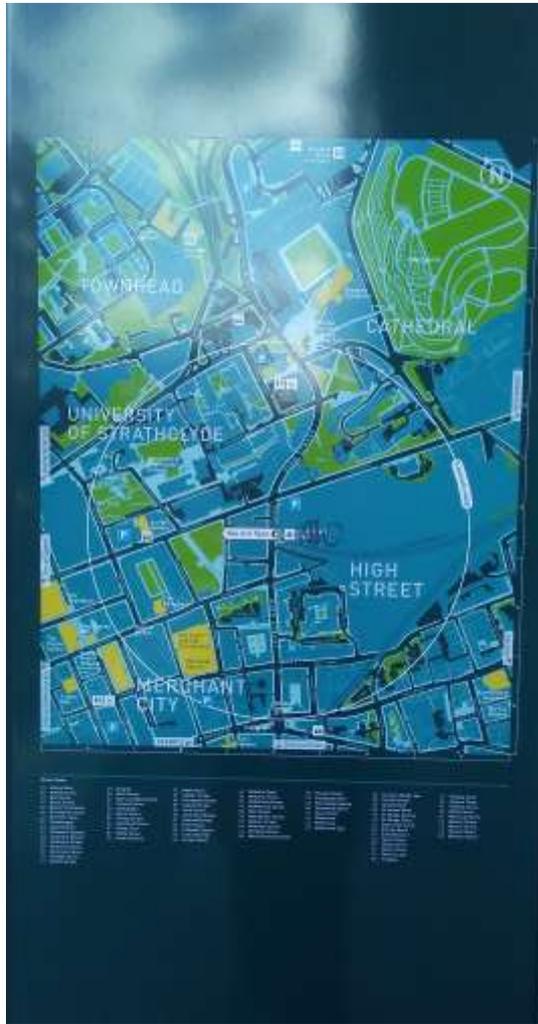
Information

There is a general lack of local information on the historical buildings and areas of interest. The auditors felt that the length of the High Street could be a destination if a coherent promotion strategy was developed, including producing a map of interesting features. One such feature is a Gargoyle that has been retained and placed on the student accommodation building on Blackfriars Road, which unfortunately has been placed so high up that it is often missed by pedestrians.

Wayfinding

There are several large wayfinding blocks along the High Street which are useful for visitors. These are very large, over 6 feet tall and can obstruct the footway. The information is shown in the form of a map with an index or information below. The information sign at the High Street Station shows a limited area whilst the one at the Cathedral Precinct shows a broad area of Glasgow city Centre. There is a map on each side. Auditors thought these maps were a bit confusing as they were not displayed with north at the top. This means that the map on one side is the opposite way up to the map on the other side.

It would be beneficial to have fingerpoint signs to key trip generators, allowing visitors to easily find their way to both amenities and places of historic interest. People making journeys to visitor attractions on foot typically prefer signage that gives an idea of the time it will take to walk to the site. Any new signage should seamlessly link with signage already provided, possibly expanding city centre wayfinding into the High Street and Saltmarket.



Wayfinding sign outside High Street Station



Wayfinding sign at the Cathedral Precinct

Recommendations

Area/Issue	Recommended Action	Level of Action Quick Win/ long Term
Signage	1 – Repair the large traffic sign near Tesco. The middle section appears to be loose and the whole sign sits very low on the poles. 2 – Design and install heritage signage to areas of historical interest along the length of the street. 3 – Extend the wayfaring signage in the city centre to the High Street.	1 – Quick win 2 – Long term 3 – Medium term

If work was done on the High Street prioritising pedestrians, making it more accessible, reducing the impact of traffic and improving the signage and therefore the functionality of the space, this should encourage more pedestrians.

The increased footfall would make the street a more economically viable space to run a business.

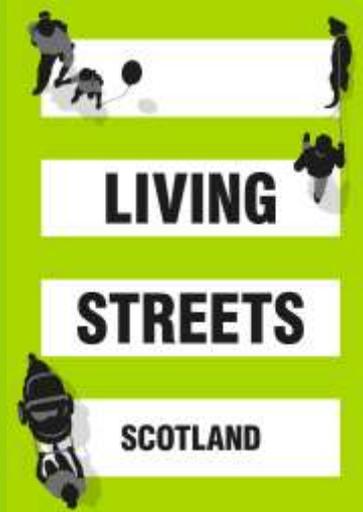
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