



Global Observatory of
**Healthy and
Sustainable Cities**

Barka Oman 2025

Policy indicators for healthy and sustainable cities
1000 Cities Challenge report

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Full details of the data and methods are available at:

Global Observatory of Healthy & Sustainable Cities
<https://www.healthysustainablecities.org>

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Policy indicators for healthy and sustainable cities

1000 Cities Challenge report

This report outlines how Barka performs on a selection of indicators of healthy and sustainable cities. As part of the 1000 Cities Challenge, we examined the presence and quality of city planning policies that promote health and sustainability. The findings could inform changes needed to local city policies.

Barka context

Barka is a coastal city in Oman and the administrative capital for Al Batinah South Governorate. The city is known for its historic forts, beautiful beaches, vibrant souks and traditional Omani Culture. As a regional economic hub, the city provides a variety of employment opportunities with an efficient infrastructure.

Levels of government

The policy checklist for Barka encompasses government actions at the national level with limited actions at the governorate level as the strong centralised government gradually decentralizes local development processes as envisioned in the country's Vision 2040.

Demographics and health equity

The population of Barka is approximately 36,427 people, according to 2020 estimates. This figure represents a significant increase from previous years, reflecting the city's growth and development. An integrated system of social protection provides support to eligible households and individuals among vulnerable sub-populations.

Environmental disaster context

Environmental hazards that may impact the urban area over the coming decade include: severe storms, floods, heatwaves, cyclones, earthquakes.



Policy indicators for healthy and sustainable cities

Public policies are essential for supporting the design and creation of healthy and sustainable cities and neighbourhoods. The 1000 Cities Challenge Policy Checklist was used to assess the presence and quality of policies aligned with evidence and principles for healthy and sustainable cities.

Policy presence score

Presence of urban and transport policies supporting health and sustainability

24/32 (75.0%)

Policy quality score

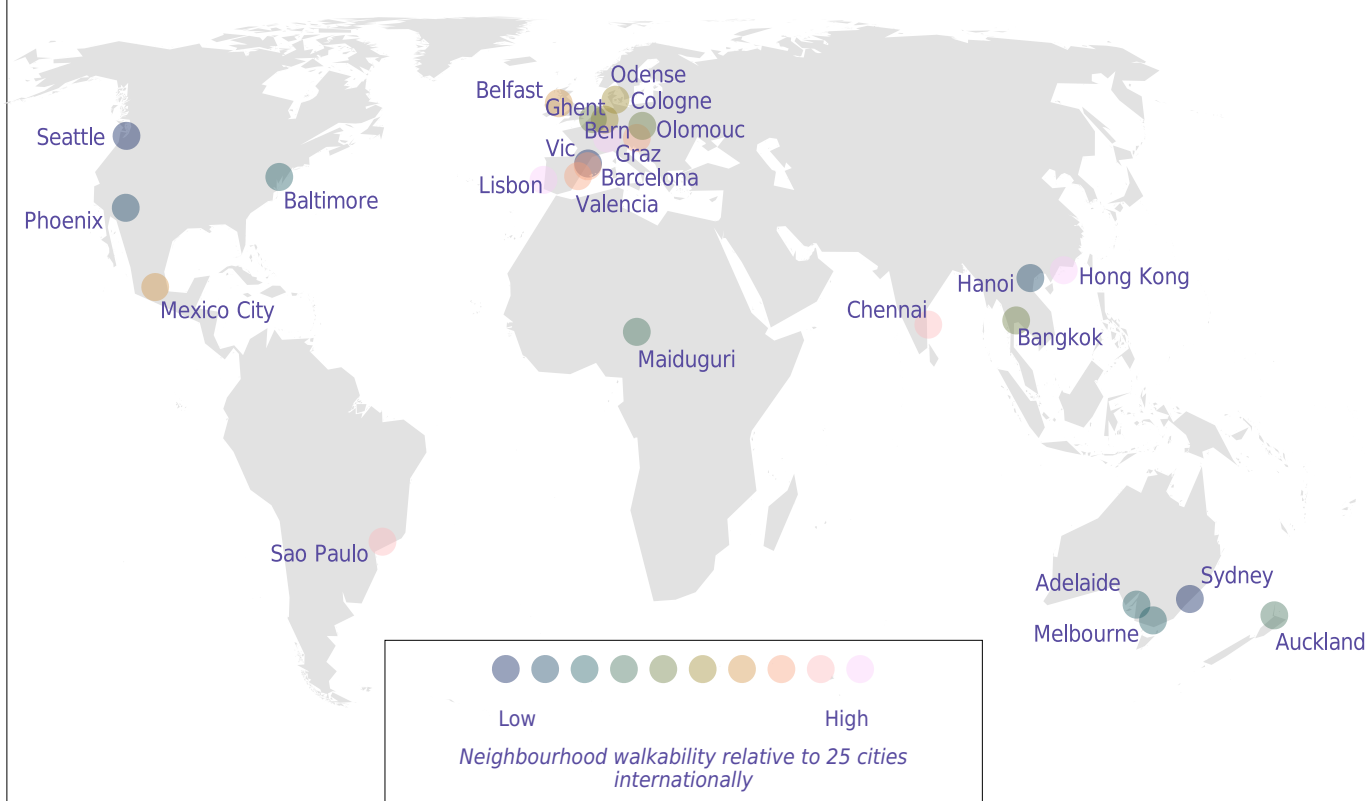
Policy quality score for measurable policies aligned with evidence on healthy cities

28.5/62 (46.0%)

Box 1: The Lancet Global Health Series study of 25 cities internationally

The 1000 Cities Challenge extends methods for assessing the health and sustainability of cities outlined in the 2022 Lancet Global Health Series on urban design, transport, and health. Policy and spatial indicators were calculated, analysed and reported in multiple languages for 25 diverse cities across 19 countries and 6 continents. These cities provide a useful reference for comparisons, but are not a representative sample of all cities internationally.

For more details, please see the 2022 The Lancet Global Health Series on Urban design, transport, and health (<https://www.thelancet.com/series/urban-design-2022>).



Integrated city planning policies for health and sustainability

Many sectors are involved in creating healthy and sustainable cities, including land use, transport, housing, parks, economic development, and infrastructure. Integrated planning is required to ensure policy alignment across sectors. Health considerations need to be embedded in transport and urban policies, and investment in active and public transport should be prioritised.

	Policy identified	Aligns with healthy cities evidence	Measurable target
Transport policy with health-focused actions	✓	✓	✗
Urban policy with health-focused actions	✓	✓	✗
Health Impact Assessment requirements in urban/transport policy	✗	-	-
Urban/transport policy explicitly aims for integrated city planning	✓	✓	✗
Publicly available information on government expenditure for different transport modes	✗	-	-

Key: Yes ✓ No ✗ Mixed ✓/✗ Not applicable -

Walkability and destination access

Walkable neighbourhoods provide opportunities for active, healthy, and sustainable lifestyles through having sufficient but not excessive population density to support adequate provision of local amenities, including public transport services. They also have mixed land uses and well-connected streets, to ensure proximate and convenient access to destinations. High-quality pedestrian infrastructure and reducing traffic through managing demand for car use can also encourage walking for transport.

Walkability and destination access policies

	Policy identified	Aligns with healthy cities evidence	Measurable target
Street connectivity requirements	✓	✓	✗
Parking restrictions to discourage car use	✗	-	-
Traffic safety requirements	✓	✓	✓
Pedestrian infrastructure provision	✓	✓	✗
Cycling infrastructure provision	✓	✓	✗
Walking participation targets	✓	✗	✓
Cycling participation targets	✓	✗	✓
Housing density requirements	✓	✓	✓
Residential building height restrictions	✓	✓	✓
Limits on greenfield housing development	✓	✓	✓
Mixture of housing types/sizes	✓	✓	✗
Mixture of local destinations for daily living	✓	✓	✓
Close distance to daily living destinations	✓	✓	✓
Employment distribution requirements	✓	✓/✗	✗
Ratio of jobs to housing	✗	-	-
Healthy food environments	✗	-	-
Crime prevention through environmental design	✗	-	-

Key: Yes ✓ No ✗ Mixed ✓/✗ Not applicable -

Public transport access

Easy access to frequent public transport is a key determinant of healthy and sustainable transport systems. Public transport near housing and employment increases the mode share of public transport trips, thus encouraging transport-related walking; offering access to regional jobs and services; improving health, economic development, and social inclusiveness; and reducing pollution and carbon emissions. The frequency of services also encourages public transport use, in addition to the proximity of stations or stops.

	Policy identified	Aligns with healthy cities evidence	Measurable target
Requirements for public transport access to employment and services	✓	✓	✗
Minimum requirements for public transport access	✓	✓	✓
Targets for public transport use	✓	✓	✓

Key: Yes ✓ No ✗ Mixed ✓/✗ Not applicable -

Public open space access

Local access to high-quality public open space promotes recreational physical activity and mental health. Nearby public open space creates convivial, attractive environments, helps cool the city and protects biodiversity. As cities densify and private open space declines, providing more public open space is critical for population health. Having public open space within 400 m of homes can encourage walking. Access to larger parks may also be important.

	Policy identified	Aligns with healthy cities evidence	Measurable target
Minimum requirements for public open space access	✓	✓	✓

Key: Yes ✓ No ✗ Mixed ✓/✗ Not applicable -

Urban air quality, and nature-based solutions

Land use and transport policies play a key role in limiting air pollution, with multiple benefits for health and sustainability. Nature-based solutions, including urban greening and urban biodiversity protection, have mental health benefits by increasing contact with nature. Green spaces and vegetation cover can cool cities and help build resilience to extreme heat.

	Policy identified	Aligns with healthy cities evidence	Measurable target
Transport policies to limit air pollution	✓	✓	✓
Land use policies to reduce air pollution exposure	✓	✓	✓
Tree canopy and urban greening requirements	✓	✓	✗
Urban biodiversity protection & promotion	✗	-	-

Key: Yes ✓ No ✗ Mixed ✓/✗ Not applicable -

Climate disaster risk reduction

In the face of climate change, built environments need to be designed to reduce the health impacts of increasingly frequent and severe extreme weather events, such as heat waves, flooding, bushfires/wildfires and extreme storms.

	Policy identified	Aligns with healthy cities evidence	Measurable target
Adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies	✓	✓	✓

Key: Yes ✓ No ✗ Mixed ✓/✗ Not applicable -



Summary

In Barka, the policy review indicates a fairly comprehensive policy framework; the policy presence score could be improved by aligning walkability and destination access policies with global evidence. Identifying measurable policy targets and improving others to better align with healthy city principles could increase the policy quality score.

Citation

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