



Global Observatory of  
**Healthy and  
Sustainable Cities**

# Changsha China 2023

**Policy and spatial indicators for healthy and sustainable cities**  
1000 Cities Challenge report

Qican Weng, 2023



Full details of the data and methods are available at:

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

Policy review conducted by: Ke Peng, Xiaoyu Cheng and Yaning Yang (2023-10-25)

Population data: Schiavina, M; Freire, S; Carioli, A., MacManus, K (2023): GHS-POP R2023A - GHS population grid multitemporal (1975-2030). European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC) [Dataset] doi: 10.2905/D6D86A90-4351-4508-99C1-CB074B022C4A

Urban boundaries: Florczyk, A. et al. (2019): GHS Urban Centre Database 2015, multitemporal and multidimensional attributes, R2019A. European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC). <https://data.jrc.ec.europa.eu/dataset/53473144-b88c-44bc-b4a3-4583ed1f547e>

Urban features: OpenStreetMap Contributors. OpenStreetMap.fr (2023).  
<http://download.openstreetmap.fr/extracts/asia/china//hunan.osm.pbf>

Colour scale: Crameri, F. (2018). Scientific colour-maps (3.0.4). Zenodo.  
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Global Healthy & Sustainable City Indicators Collaboration

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## Policy and spatial indicators for healthy and sustainable cities

### 1000 Cities Challenge report

This report outlines how Changsha performs on a selection of spatial and policy indicators of healthy and sustainable cities. As part of the 1000 Cities Challenge, we examined the spatial distribution of urban design and transport features and the presence and quality of city planning policies that promote health and sustainability.

The findings could inform changes needed to local city policies. The maps show the distribution of urban design and transport features across Changsha and identify areas that could benefit the most from interventions to create healthy and sustainable environments.

### Changsha context

Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province, is located in the northeastern part of the Province. It is a major central city in the middle reach of the Yangtze River and the core city of the Chang-Zhu-Tan urban agglomeration. The city features diverse terrain, numerous rivers and lakes, and a mild climate with abundant rainfall.

### Levels of government

The policy checklist of Changsha encompasses policies from both national and local government levels. At the local level, primary urban planning policy documents address various aspects such as master planning and specialized planning.

### Demographics and health equity

By the end of 2022, Changsha's GDP reached 1.3 trillion yuan, with a permanent population of 10.421 million. The city faces various health challenges, including rising chronic diseases and critical concerns in managing infectious diseases like hepatitis, tuberculosis, and AIDS.

### Environmental disaster context

Changsha faces various environmental challenges, such as heavy rainstorms, hailstorms, floods, mudslides, landslides, cold waves, and urban heat.

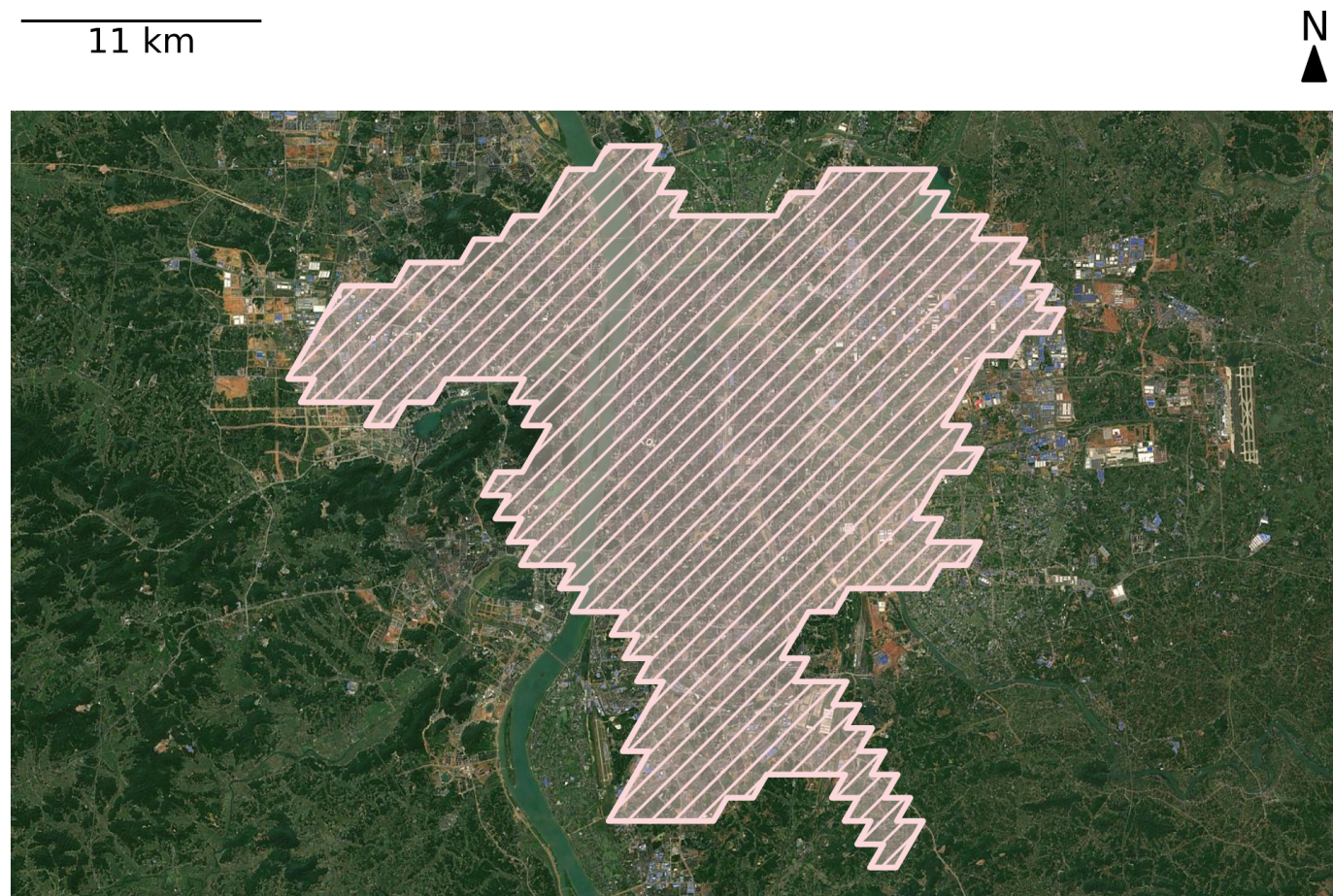
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## Study region

The study region used to calculate spatial indicators for the population of Changsha presented in this report has been highlighted in the map below using parallel line shading.



Study region boundary (shaded region): Global Human Settlements urban centres: 2015 (EU JRC, 2020; Changsha Center only) under CC BY 4.0; GHSL - Global Human Settlement Layer under CC-BY-4.0 | Basemap: Sentinel-2 cloudless - <https://s2maps.eu> by EOX IT Services GmbH (Contains modified Copernicus Sentinel data 2021) released under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

### Map legend



Administrative boundary  
(GHSL - Global Human Settlement  
Layer.<https://ghsl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/download.php?ds=pop.>)



Urban boundary  
(Global Human Settlements  
urban centres: 2015 (EU JRC,  
2020; Changsha Center only)  
(GHS:UC\_NM\_MN=='Changsha'  
and CTR\_MN\_NM=='China'))



Study region boundary  
(intersection of administrative  
boundary and urban boundary)



## 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*

**23/32 (71.9%)**

### Policy quality score

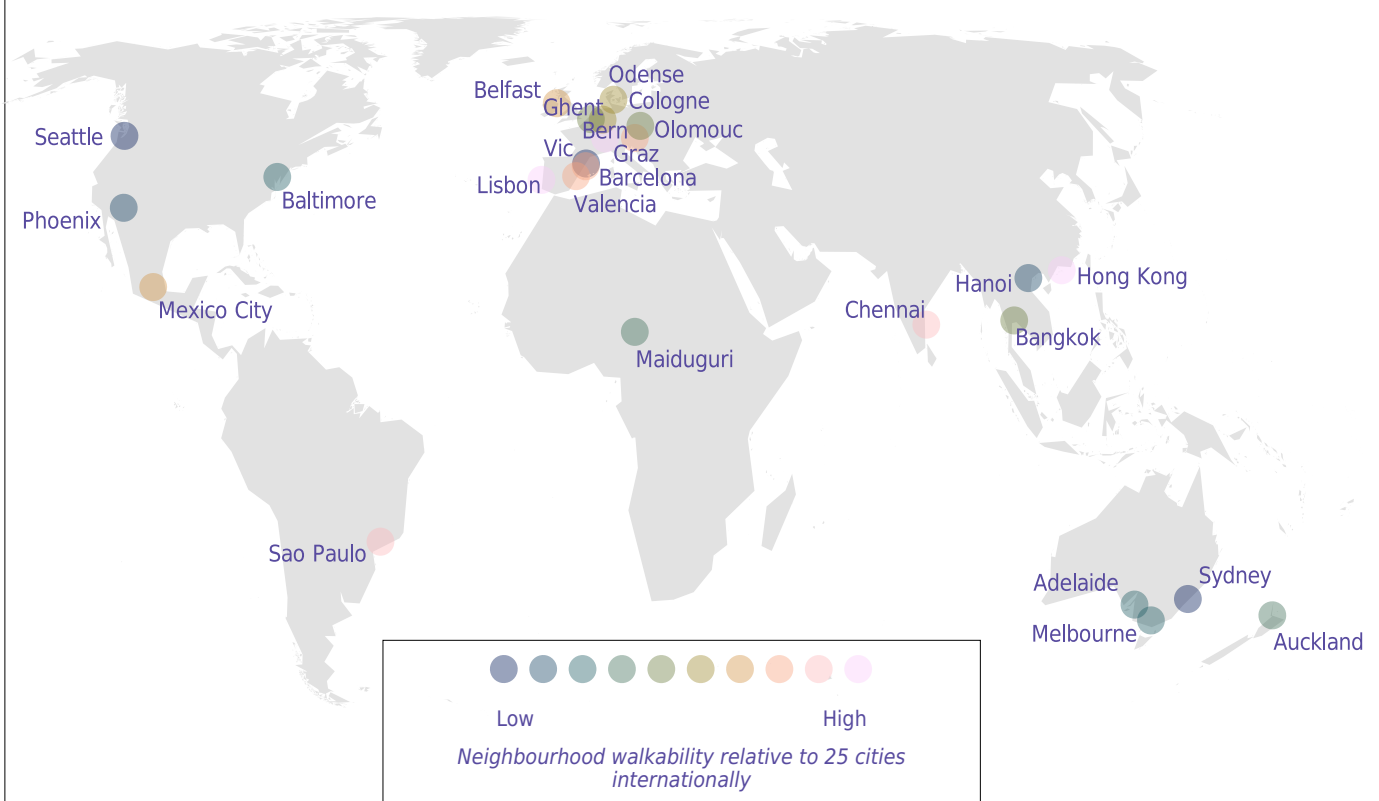
*Policy quality score for measurable policies aligned with evidence on healthy cities*

**34.0/62 (54.8%)**

### 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.

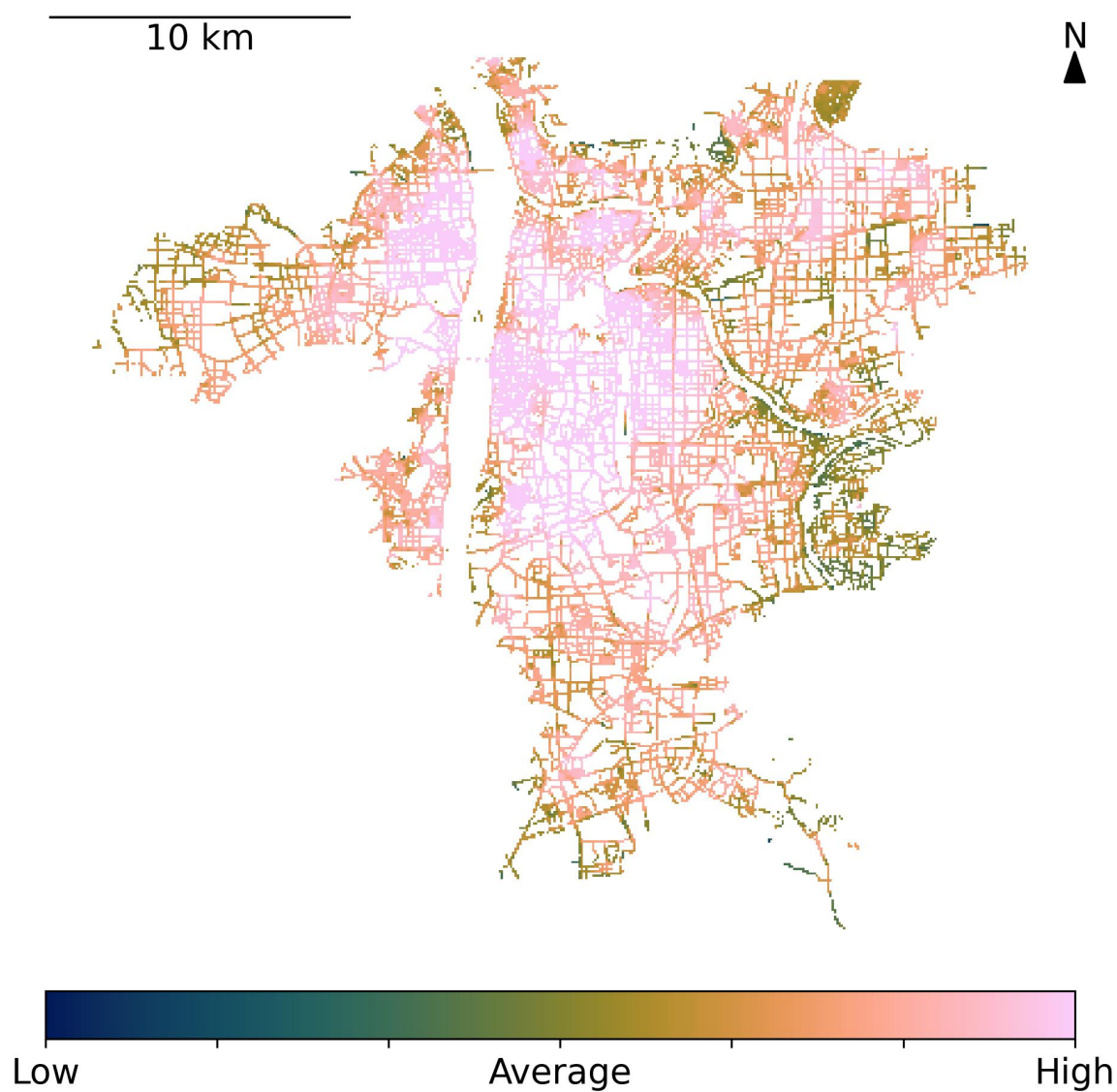
## Walkability and destination access policies

	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 -

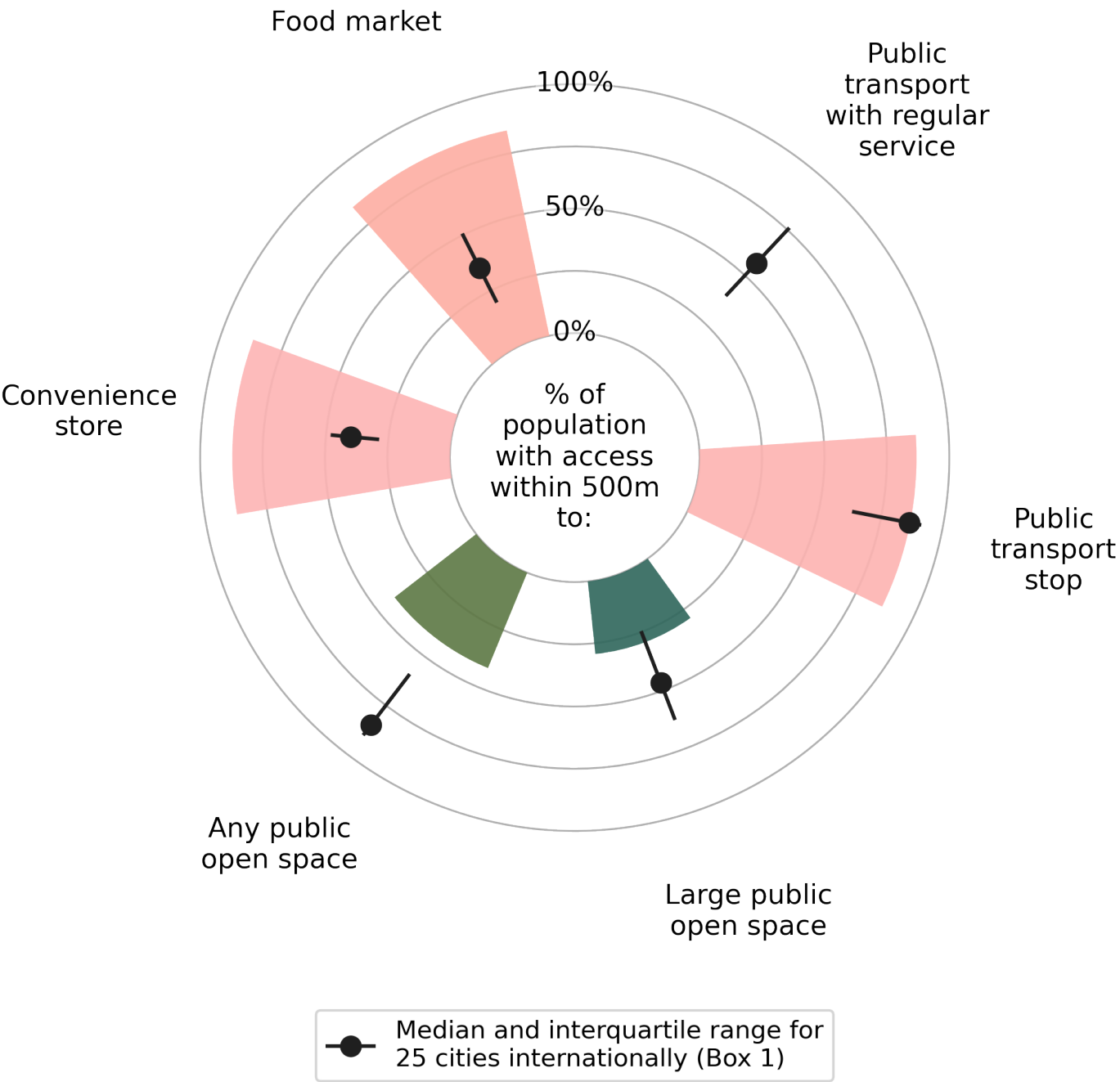


## Neighbourhood walkability relative to 25 cities internationally



99.7% of the population in Changsha live in neighbourhoods with walkability scoring above the median of 25 cities internationally (Box 1)

Percentage of population with access to amenities within 500 metres (m)





## Urban design thresholds to promote walking

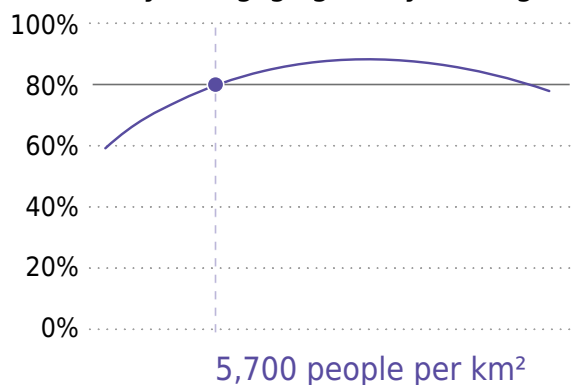
The 2022 Lancet Global Health Series found that to achieve at least 80% probability of engaging in any walking for transport, an average urban neighbourhood would need a population density of at least 5700 people km<sup>2</sup> and street connectivity of at least 100 intersections per km<sup>2</sup>, approximately and depending on context. Preliminary evidence showed that street intersection density above 250 per km<sup>2</sup> and ultra-dense neighbourhoods (> 15,000 persons per km<sup>2</sup>) may have decreasing benefits for physical activity. This is an important topic for future research.



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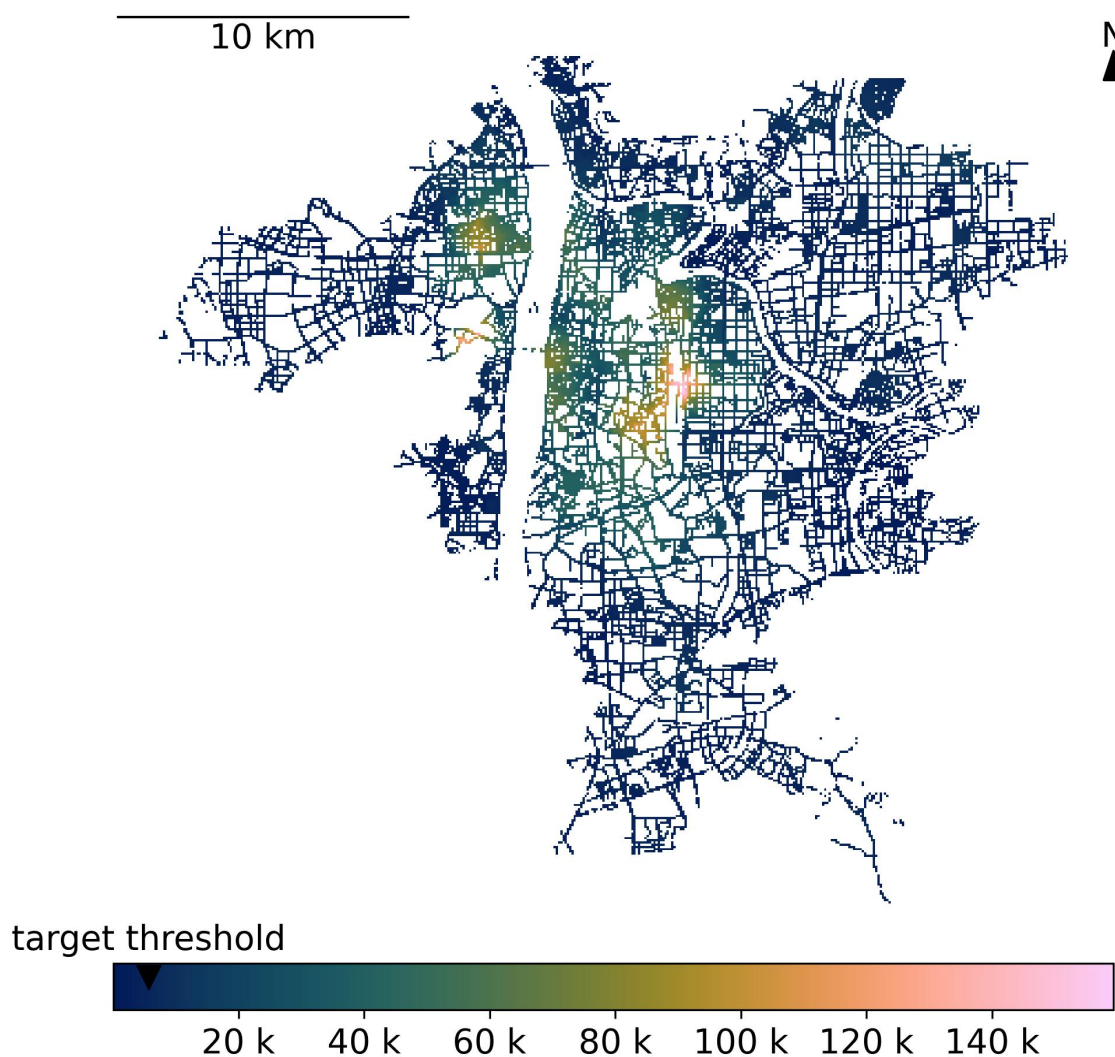
## Neighbourhood population density (per km<sup>2</sup>)

### Probability of engaging in any walking for transport



Adapted from The Lancet Global Health (2022):  
<https://www.thelancet.com/infographics-do/urban-design-2022>

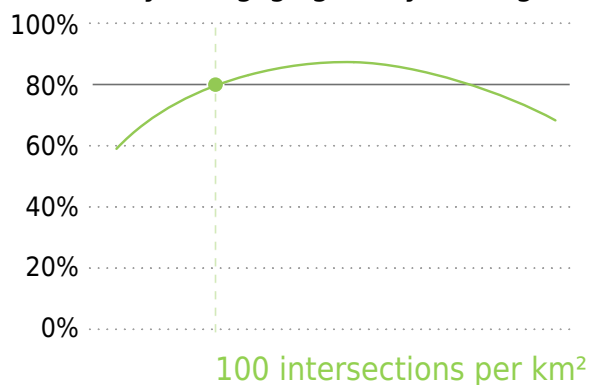
91.3% of the population in Changsha live in neighbourhoods meeting the population density threshold for 80% probability of engaging in any walking for transport (5,700 people per km<sup>2</sup>)





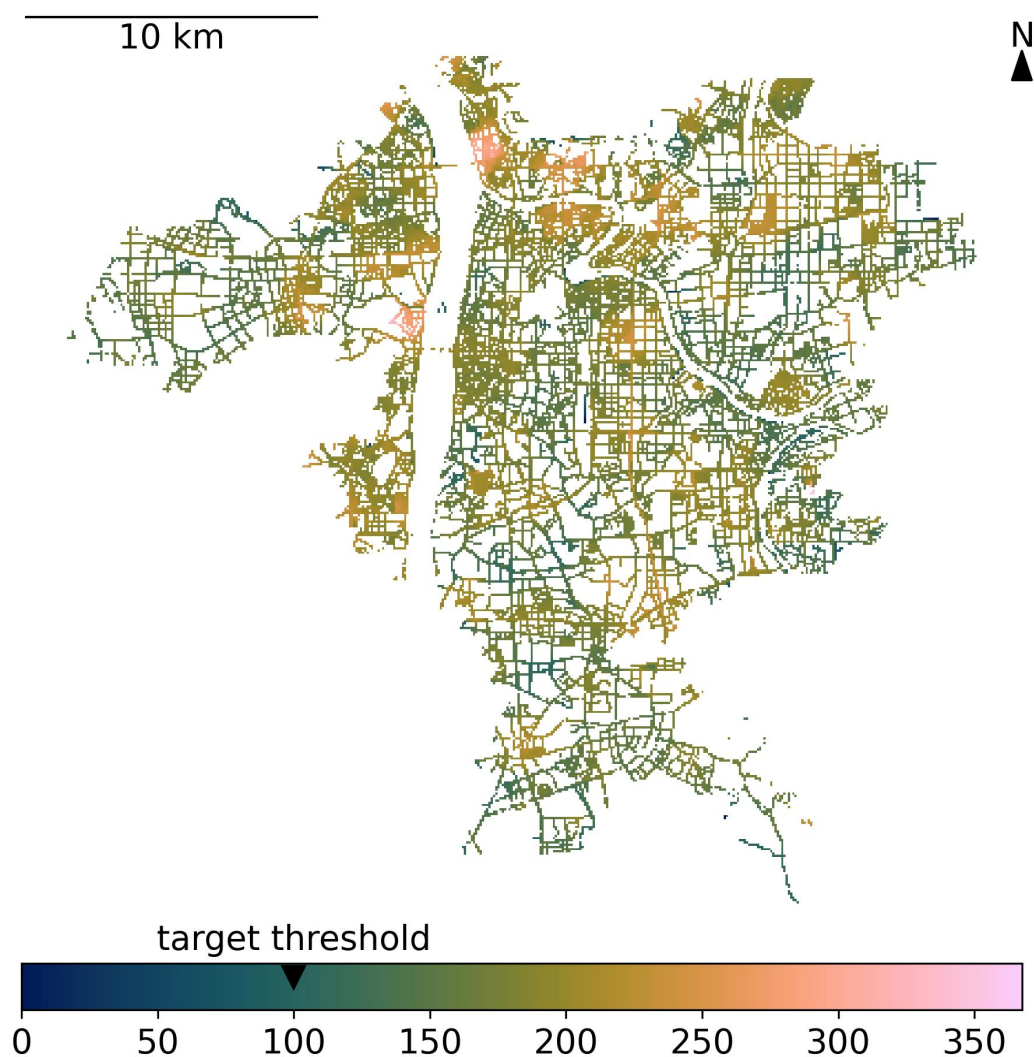
## Neighbourhood intersection density (per km<sup>2</sup>)

### Probability of engaging in any walking for transport



Adapted from The Lancet Global Health (2022):  
<https://www.thelancet.com/infographics-do/urban-design-2022>

99.8% of the population in Changsha live in neighbourhoods meeting the street intersection density threshold for 80% probability of engaging in any walking for transport (100 intersections per km<sup>2</sup>)

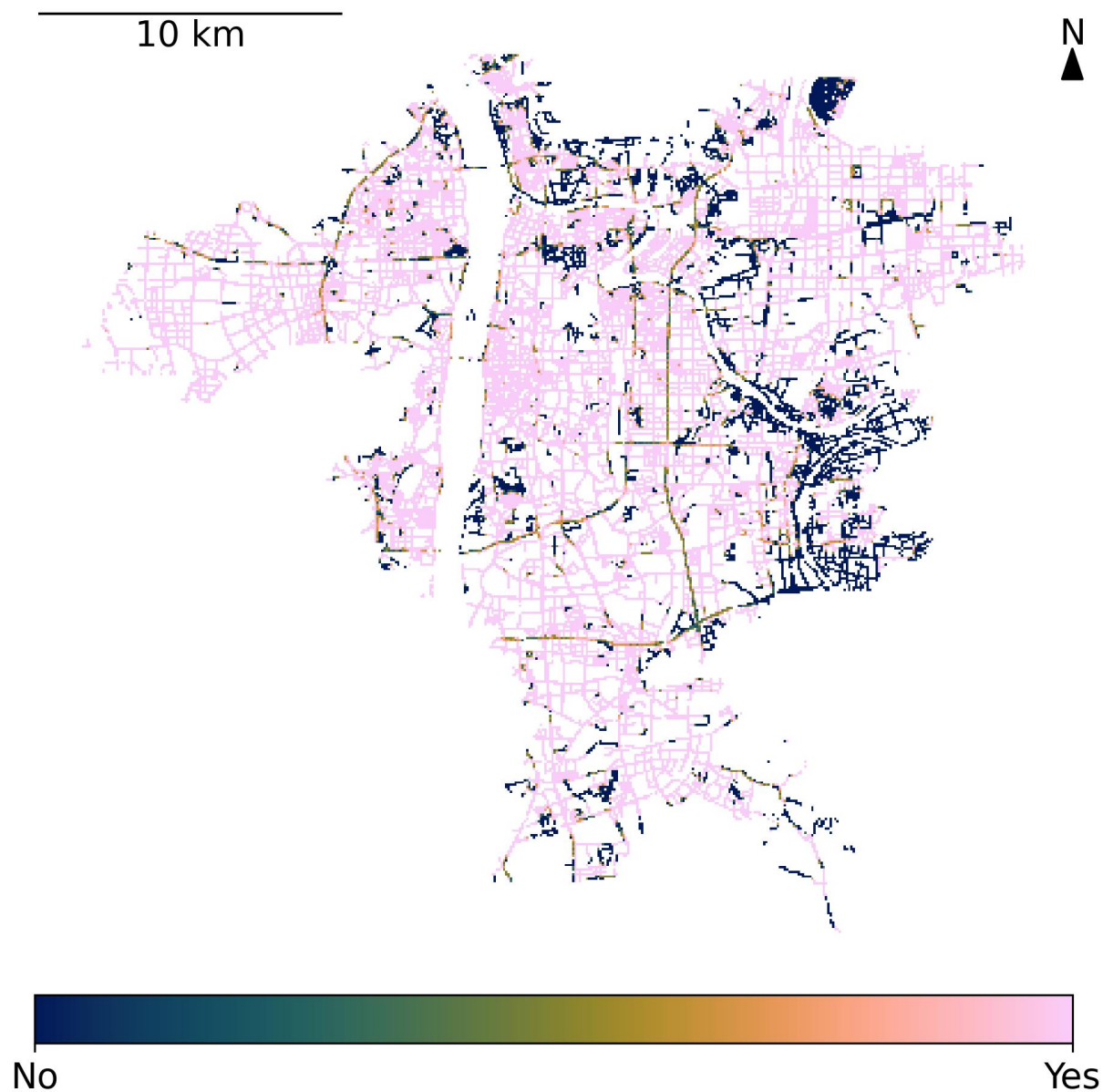


# Public transport access

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 -



86.9% of the population in Changsha live within 500m of public transport

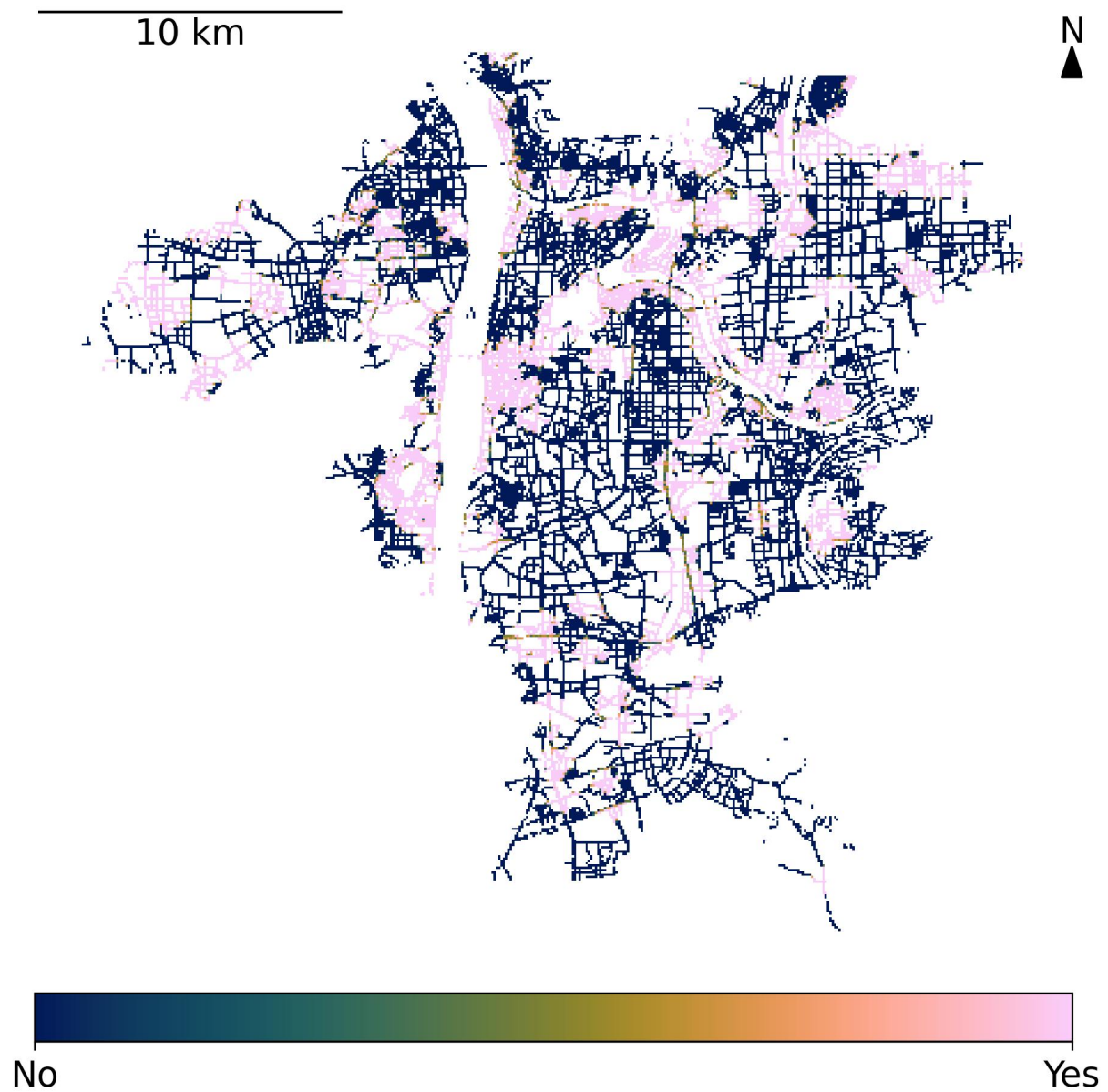


# Public open space access

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 -



29.4% of the population in Changsha live within 500m of public open space of at least 1.5 hectares in size

# 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 -



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## Summary

The assessment of healthy city policies in Changsha indicates that the city has a comprehensive policy framework for urban planning. While there is a lack of relevant policies in areas such as destination accessibility and transportation infrastructure investment by mode, there are policies related to land use and transportation, air pollution, urban design, development density and etc. In terms of the quality of spatial policies, the healthy city policies lack specific and measurable goals and standards in Changsha. Some policies are ineffective in promoting the development of healthy city, resulting in lower policy quality ratings.

In terms of the quality of built environment, the accessibility of public transport stations and convenience stores in Changsha is on par with the average level of 25 benchmark cities, with an approximately 90.6 percent of the population residing within a 500-meter radius of public transport. However, Changsha performs poorly in accessibility to public open spaces, as only 29.4 percent of the population residing within a 500-meter radius of public open space covering an area of at least 1.5 hectares. The city demonstrates a high level of walkability at the neighborhood level, with only 0.3 percent of the population residing in neighborhoods with a pedestrian accessibility score below the average level of other benchmark cities. 89.3 percent of the population residing in neighborhoods meeting the threshold of population density for an 80 percent of likelihood of travelling by walk. 99.8 percent of the population resides in neighborhoods meeting the threshold of street intersection density for an 80 percent of likelihood of travelling by walk.

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## Citation

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