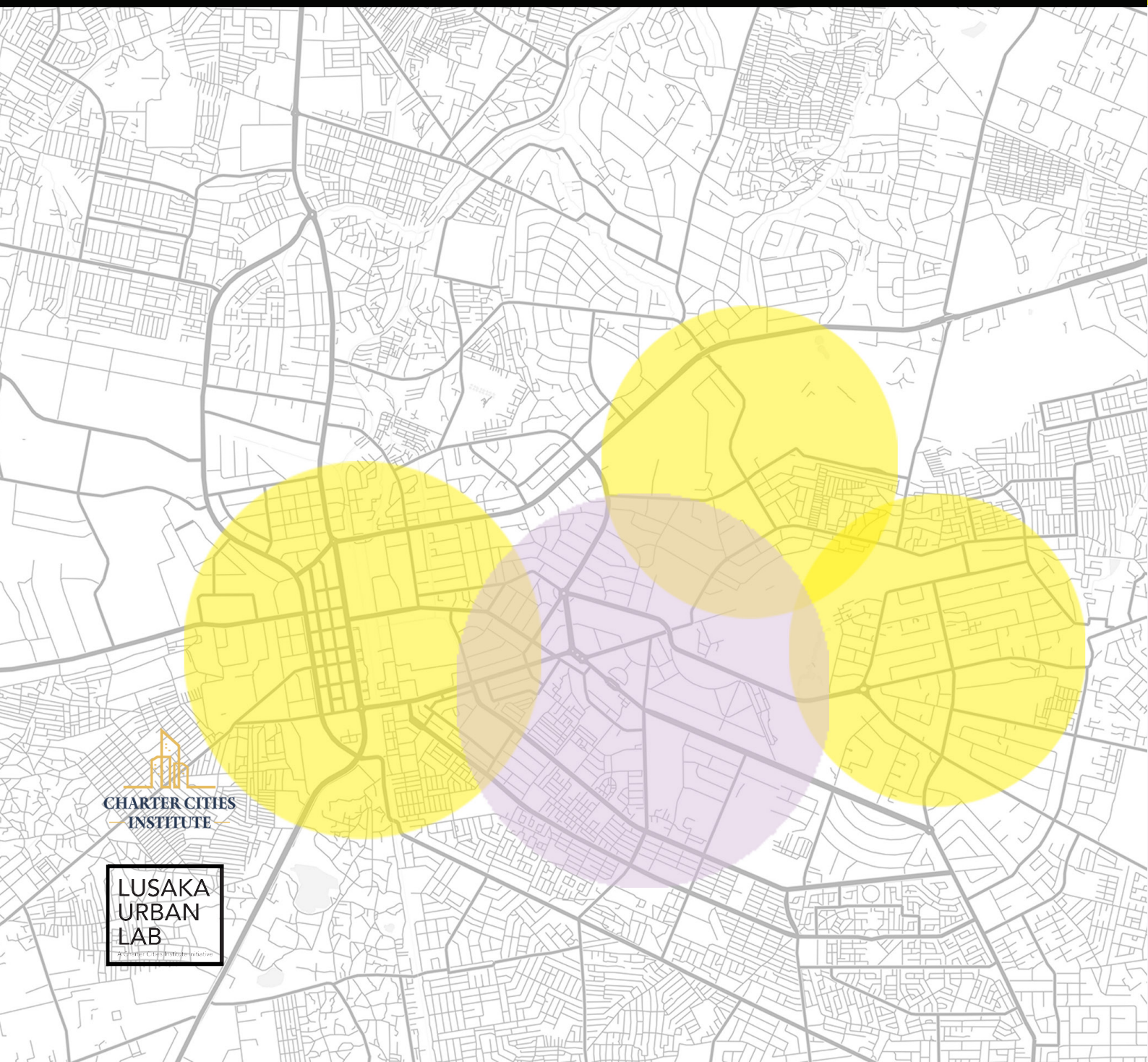
Walking the Un-Walkable

Findings Report
October 2023



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The Charter Cities Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to building the ecosystem for charter cities by:

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- Influencing the global agenda through research, engagement, and partnerships.

LUSAKA URBAN LAB

A Charter Cities Institute Initiative

The Lusaka Urban Lab (LUL) is an initiative of the Charter Cities Institute Zambia office to generate new research and facilitate knowledge sharing on urban issues in Lusaka.

The Lusaka Urban Lab is a multidisciplinary research hub that bridges the gaps between urban scholars, communities, and policymakers by engaging these stakeholders in research projects about the many urban issues facing Lusaka and its residents.

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The Project

In Africa, an estimated 78% of people rely on walking for their daily travel. Across Zambia, citizens spend approximately 55 minutes daily walking or cycling, and in Lusaka alone, 65% of daily personal trips are on foot. However, urban infrastructure in Zambia's major cities is significantly inadequate to support pedestrian mobility. Sidewalks are often inaccessible or nonexistent, urban expansion is sprawling thus lengthening travel time, and lacks proper planning and design that prioritizes pedestrians. As cities like Lusaka continue to grow rapidly, it becomes crucial to understand how infrastructure and urban form can more effectively meet the needs of urban residents.

Walking the Un-walkable—a participatory research project aimed at understanding, mapping and addressing walkability in Lusaka. This project draws on the French tradition of Flâneur, which loosely translates to 'stroller' and refers to the tradition of walking and learning from cities. In collaboration with key stakeholders, CCI conducted four walks along selected major routes in Lusaka, to simulate the experience of walking along selected major routes in Lusaka.

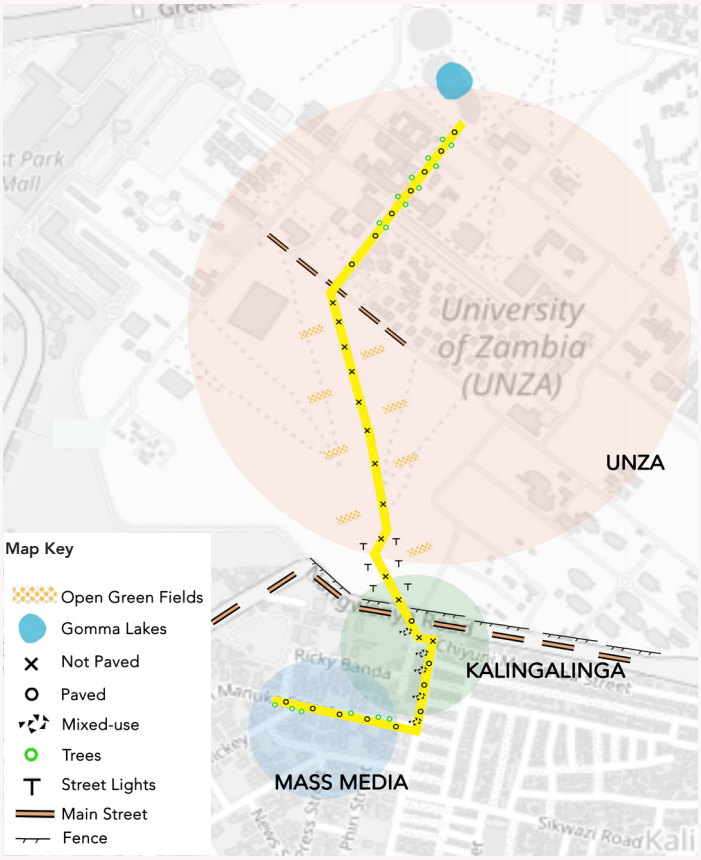
Through these walks, challenges pedestrians face while walking were mapped and the opportunities for improvement were identified. The project utilized participatory policy-making, transect walking/ mapping, and co-design and validation workshops to map the findings and the recommendations. This report will outline the findings identified in the walks and the following verification workshop done with key stakeholders.

First Walk

Date: 21st April 2023

Theme: UNZA Walks

Focus: Understanding and mapping local student and worker routes.



Built Environment

Kalingalinga (High-density area): Mixed use; few cars; high pedestrian density; poor waste management; blocked drainage systems

Mass Media (Low-density area): Mostly residential; more cars; lower pedestrian density

Pedestrian Infrastructure

No sidewalks, trash bins, traffic lights, or traffic signs; Very limited shade and street-lights

Walking Experience

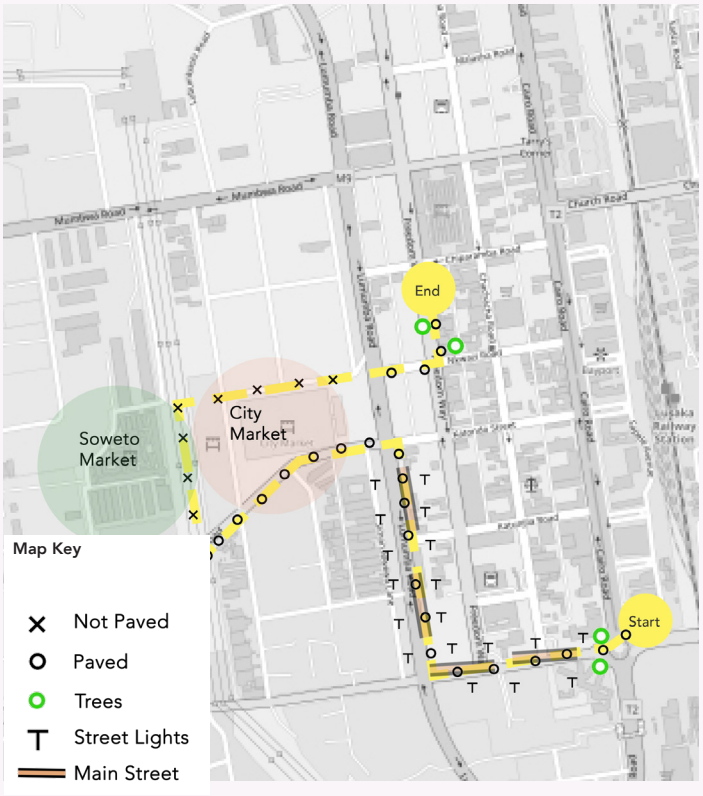
—Low car frequency in both Kalingalinga and Mass Media makes the walk somewhat safer for pedestrians.
— High speed and heavy traffic on the Great East Crossing make the walk dangerous, with a higher chance of car accidents.
—While the streets are safe in these areas in the morning, its less safe at night, where many students living in Kalingalinga can be robbed on their way from UNZA.
—Drainage blockages in the rainy season leaves Kalingalinga unwalkable and the route to UNZA becomes inaccessible.

Second Walk

Date: 21st of April 2023

Theme: Markets in Town

Focus: Understanding and mapping access to markets from both the sellers' and shoppers' perspectives.



Built Environment

Mostly commercial and governmental use; high frequency of both cars and pedestrians; poor waste management systems; proliferation of street vendors

Pedestrian Infrastructure

Paved sidewalks, drainage systems, streetlights, and traffic lights exist on Ben Bella Road, Lumumba Road, and parts of Los Angeles Road. The rest of the market spaces featured no trash bins, traffic lights or signage, and sidewalks with little shading or streetlights.

Walking Experience

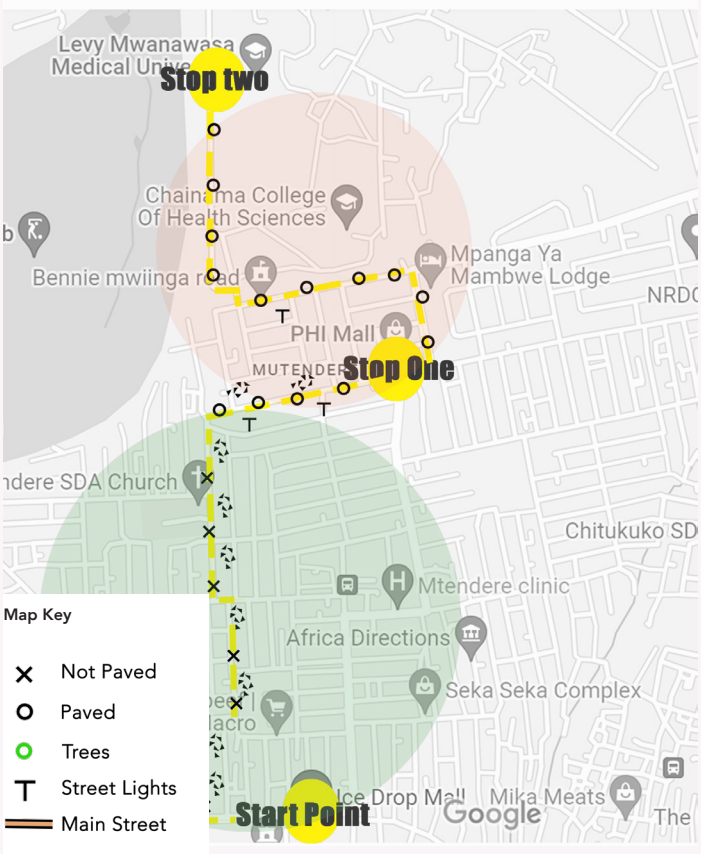
—Zam-cabs, bus stops, and street vendors made the walk unsafe as pedestrians are easily hit.
—Low-quality or nonexistent sidewalks increased the likelihood of falling or injury.
—Walk participants often felt unsafe as the markets are crowded and known for pickpocketing.

Third Walk

Date: 25 August 2023

Theme: An Eye on Townships

Focus: Understanding and mapping the paths taken by township residents to access job opportunities and transport.



Built Environment

Mixed-use, with access to services, markets, and transportation often within a 15-minute walk; lacking waste management and drainage systems.

Pedestrian Infrastructure

No sidewalks, trash bins, traffic lights, or traffic signage; poor shading; few street-lights.

Walking Experience

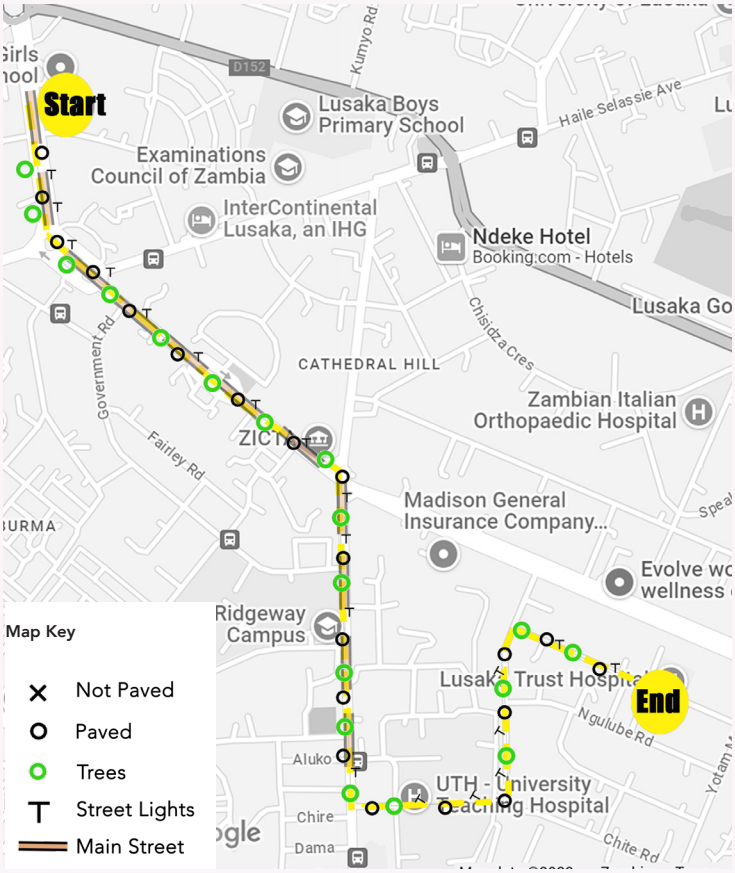
—Small, unpaved streets limit traffic flow, which is safer for pedestrians.
—Significant, visible street life, with kids playing and lots of commercial activity.
—The mixed-use nature of the compound makes access to services easy and creates a unique and lively walking experience.

Fourth Walk

Date: 01 September 2023

Theme: Into the Garden City

Focus: Understanding and mapping the paths taken to access government services and local amenities.



Built Environment

Most of the area is comprised of government buildings; very little commercial activity; some residential buildings; many cars and pedestrians; functional drainage systems

Pedestrian Infrastructure

Sidewalks were present and in good conditions; insufficient streetlights, traffic lights, trash bins, and street signs.

Walking Experience

—Good-quality sidewalks made the walk feel safe for most people.
—The wide streets and the high frequency of cars made it clear that the streets are made for cars.
—Crossing streets remains a challenge as most cars don't respect pedestrians.

The Outcomes

1. The walking experience in low-density neighborhoods and high-density neighborhoods have many commonalities and some distinct differences.

Low-density and high-density neighborhoods both suffer from a lack of pedestrian infrastructure.

In general, pedestrian infrastructure provision is much lower in high-density neighborhoods. However, lack of streetlights, traffic signals, traffic signs, proper sidewalks, and other pedestrian amenities is common in both areas. In low-density neighborhoods, the dominance of private car use creates a need for the separation of pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist pathways. However, the small-scale nature of high-density neighborhoods createsanatural shared street experience.

Pedestrian Infrastructure is more essential along main streets than in neighborhoods with low car usage and smaller streets.

Traffic accidents involving pedestrians tend to happen along main roads in Lusaka, both in high-density neighborhoods and low-density neighborhoods. In low-density neighborhoods, private vehicles are often slower along neighborhood level streets, reducing the chances of car accidents. In high-density neighborhoods, neighborhood-level streets remain for the most part car-free. Proper sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure maintain pedestrian safety along main routes with high vehicle volume.

Flooding remains the high-density area's main walkability challenge.

Flooding during the rainy season poses significant challenges for pedestrians in some neighborhoods, even blocking off some routes completely.

The distinct difference in the built environment in high-density neighborhoods and low-density neighborhoods changes the nature of their pedestrian priorities. The lack of proper drainage systems in high-density neighborhoods results in extreme flooding during the rainy season, destroying infrastructure and preventing walking and access to different services and amenities. Low-density formal neighborhoods are characterized by the separation of residential and commercial functions, making travel distances to access services longer (within the same neighborhood) and requiring more vehicle usage.

2. There is a gap between citizens' pedestrian infrastructure priorities and government infrastructure priorities.

Prioritization of motorized transport is evident in infrastructure provision.

The development of the Great East and many other roads is evidence of the lack of prioritization of pedestrian infrastructure. Often, new streets are paved for cars, while investment in pedestrian infrastructure is lacking. This results in paved streets for cars with no sidewalks, street lights or street signals. These design choices increase the likelihood of car accidents, and creates an uncomfortable and unsafe walking experience.

A common vision for pedestrian infrastructure is lacking.

The Town Markets area often changes land uses. While known for street vendors, consecutive governments often have moved the street vendors or removed them all together from the area. Street vendors often come back and occupy the streets. This shift of uses of mostly pedestrian walkways shows a lack of a common agreement of between residents and the government about how these pedestrian spaces should be utilized.

The underuse of green public spaces in low-density areas highlights a gap between design and practice.

Designed as a garden city, the center of Lusaka features a lot of greenery, with the trees often providing shaded pathways. However, the green spaces are not used by local residents for entertainment or as public spaces. Man-made footpaths have been cut across green spaces because this is seen as their best possible use.

3. Mixed-use built environments are vital to the development of pedestrian infrastructure.

High-density areas foster a more inviting walk through a mix of commercial activities and residential units.

The mix of residential, services, and commercial activities cuts down on travel time, makes the walks more enjoyable and accessible. Commercial activities activate street life, helping keep the area safe with "more eyes on the street" throughout the day and into the night.

The lack of cars in high-density neighborhoods reduces exposure to car accidents.

The gravel and unpaved streets of the high-density neighborhoods often present a challenge for private car usage. The residents of the high-density compounds own few cars. Public transportation inside the compounds often goes along one or two streets and connects the high-density neighborhoods to main transportation routes.

Higher densities improve access to jobs and services by shortening travel distance.

Accessing services, transportation or amenities inside a high dense neighborhood often is less than a 15-minute walk. In low-density neighborhoods, however, walks are long and sprawled to access any services. High-density neighborhoods often contain public transportation stops that connect the neighborhoods to main roads all over Lusaka.

The Way Forward

1. Develop area-specific walkability policies.

The four transect mapping walks carried out by Walking the Un-Walkable have highlighted the specific requirements needed to improve walkability in many different Lusaka neighborhoods. Developing area-specific solutions will ensure the sustainability of future interventions. Through co-designing solutions and interventions with the local communities, the project will ensure the solutions match the need of the communities affected.

Identify pedestrian priorities

—Run a city-wide questionnaire to better understand pedestrians' needs in their neighborhoods.

—Host neighborhood workshops to identify specific improvements desired by residents.

—Decide on intervention priorities together with the communities.

Co-Identify affordable pedestrian interventions

—Identify affordable and sustainable pedestrian infrastructure interventions feasible for implementation in Lusaka.

—Experiment with what works before scaling-up interventions across Lusaka.

—Start with proven interventions that have worked elsewhere in similar settings.

Iterate on local opportunities

—Utilize Lusaka's garden city legacy to center public spaces around trees and greenery.

—Densify neighborhoods by introducing more mixed-use communities in informal areas.

2. Support a denser built environment.

Creating a denser built environment will help support walkability in Lusaka. Densely built environments cut down on travel time and increase access to services and jobs, especially for those dependent on being able to walk to their destinations. The sprawling nature of Lusaka and the lack of a comprehensive and accessible public transportation system make walking the only choice for many Lusaka residents.

Research the practical and technical limitations to creating denser environments in Lusaka.

Work with the private sector to stimulate more mixed-use dense built environments.

Support high-density neighborhoods with basic infrastructure and better connections to services and markets.

3. Identify alternative funding solutions.

The project has identified funding as a key constraint to pedestrian infrastructure provision. Most new street construction often ignores pedestrian infrastructure to cut costs, resulting in more car-centric development. Identifying and securing funding for future pedestrian infrastructure is key to improving walkability in the future. Thinking of innovative funding resources and not relying solely on limited government funding can open the doors to turning Lusaka into a walkable city.

Research the practical and technical limitations to creating denser environments in Lusaka.

Work with the private sector to stimulate more mixed-use dense built environments.

Support high-density neighborhoods with basic infrastructure and better connections to services and markets.

To learn more about the Charter Cities Institute, visit:

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