



CASTOR COMMUNITY REPORT

2017



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INTRODUCTION

WalkABLE Alberta

WalkABLE Alberta, provided by Alberta Health Services (AHS), is a chronic disease prevention program that aims to improve walkability by creating supportive walkable environments which encourage all citizens to walk more often. The principles of the International Charter for Walking (Appendix A) are used as a guide to promote key actions that would improve walkability in communities. This charter helps identify things that are already being done to support walkable communities, as well as determine current challenges and future opportunities for promoting walkability.

Communities ChooseWell

Communities ChooseWell is a provincial program of the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) funded by Alberta Health. The program promotes and supports community-level actions, such as developing programs, policies places and partnerships, to foster healthy eating and active living among Albertans. Communities ChooseWell offers funding, recognition, learning and networking opportunities, and other resources to support local efforts to create healthier communities. In 2017, over 200 Alberta communities, including hamlets, villages, towns, municipal districts, cities, urban neighbourhoods, schools, organizations, and First Nations and Metis communities, were involved with Communities ChooseWell.



THE CASTOR WALKABILITY STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

Molly Hanson-Nagel, Community Health Promotion Facilitator, Alberta Health Services - Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Fund, discussed having WalkABLE Alberta visit the community with the Castor Community Network. The Castor Community Network met with Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator, Alberta Health Services - Chronic Disease Prevention, regarding the steps that would be taken for a WalkABLE Alberta community visit. Additional discussions occurred to decide how WalkABLE Alberta could help the group accomplish their community walkability improvement goals.

On November 7, 2017 WalkABLE Alberta met with the Castor Community Network to discuss what they are currently doing to improve community walkability and discuss future opportunities. The goal of the community visit was to develop future actions for a strategic walkability plan based on the Castor Community Network's work plan. This single day meeting was hosted by the Town of Castor in Council Chambers located in the Town Office. An agenda was developed prior to the workshop and is available in Appendix B.

The meeting attendees included:

Castor Community Network:

- Town of Castor
- Town of Castor Recreation
- Castor & District Family and Community Support Services (FCSS)
- Castor & District Housing
- Castor Food Bank
- Alberta Health Services - Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Fund

Alberta Health Services - Chronic Disease Prevention - WalkABLE Alberta

- Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator, Population, Public, & Indigenous Health - Healthy Living - Chronic Disease Prevention - WalkABLE Alberta
- Claire Bower and Erin Gorman from the provincial Healthy Living - Chronic Disease Prevention team

To start the discussion a presentation was provided by facilitator, Graham Matsalla, to introduce Communities ChooseWell and WalkABLE Alberta, the importance of walkability for health and recreation, and the International Charter for Walking principles (Appendix A). The group then shared what they have done in each charter principle area and what they felt that they could do to improve in each area. This was recorded using flip chart paper. The transcribed notes can be found in Appendix C. A walkabout was then done to experience community trails and other aspects of the community's walkability. This was followed by a facilitated discussion on actions that could be taken and the group also shared some 'big picture' ideas that the community could work toward. Finally, Graham shared some of what he saw in visiting the community through a photograph presentation and the group also discussed these images in relation to the actions previously highlighted.

ACTIONS IDENTIFIED USING THE INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR WALKING

Once the brainstorm session using the International Charter for Walking was completed (Appendix C) the group discussed some actions that stood out to them. These ideas are summarized below:

Engagement

Conduct future walkabouts with people of varying ages, abilities, and times of day to give a complete picture of what might help improve walkability in Castor.

Link with businesses to encourage visitors to the community to experience other aspects of the community while they are in town (e.g. as parents are in town for a hockey game they might explore/experience other parts of the community).

Community Programs, Initiatives, and Events

At future community events promote the walkability of the community and the use of walking facilities throughout the community.

- Provide a grand opening/celebration of trails
- Create walking challenges that could be used as part of the promotion

Relate walkability to existing community campaigns/events. Create a walking challenge that could be included within existing programming:

- Fall Supper
- Seniors Tea
- Museum/historical society trail

Challenge other communities and involve the Mayor and/or other town leaders.

The existing Summer Student program can be used as a opportunity to leverage resources and design/create walkability improvements.

Active Transportation Promotion

Promote and encourage walking to school.

Address issues that prevent children from walking to school.

Determine a safe and appropriate drop-off and/or pick-up spot for children who are driven to school.

Engage Additional Stakeholders

Work with Alberta Transportation to determine how to navigate Alberta highway regulations to address highway crossing.

ACTIONS IDENTIFIED USING THE INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR WALKING

Built Environment Change

Trail connection to destinations - link to wayfinding

- Indicate trail continuation at intersections and points where it is confusing to allow for continuity of trail design

Pilot projects using visual cues to encourage walkability such as identification of paths, painted crosswalks, and painted games onto walkways to make the walking journey more fun.

Although vehicle speeds were not identified as a large problem with Castor. There could be some areas that could be addressed. Traffic calming ideas were discussed in areas with higher traffic speeds like the intersection of 45 street (highway 861) and 50 avenue (highway 599).

Look to create other pedestrian support structures that contribute to the benches throughout the community

- Pedestrian shelters and other support structures could contribute to existing infrastructure
- Projects could be identified for the student design program
 - Additional supports could be engaged for this (University of Calgary - Faculty of Environmental Design)

Wayfinding

Link trails to destinations within the community.

Expand existing map plans to include purposeful walking routes (e.g. Lodge to Post Office) and promote community destinations.

Consider simplifying future map development - consider use of walking time signage instead of distance.

Community area naming - that can be celebrated in a community event such as a block party.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Community Walkability Network

Although it was identified that walkers in Castor do not mind walking on the road they would certainly choose to walk on a sidewalk that meets their needs. Castor has a sidewalk repair and/or replacement prioritization which is very important and this needs to continue. As sidewalks are replaced they should continue to be replaced with accessible curb ramps and wider sidewalks as part of the existing sidewalk repair/replace plan. Long-term replacement can work in conjunction with short-term repair of sections of sidewalks with the broader goal of complete sidewalk replacement that are wider and include curb ramps to ensure an accessible and inclusive community. While this occurs, gaps in Castor's walking network should be addressed. Even if there is not a complete sidewalk network currently, dedicated walking areas should be created on the roadway. Dedicated walking space increases perceived safety and identifies the importance of the pedestrian on roadways.

Recreational trails should link to walkways so that people can get from where they are to where they want to be. This is accomplished by creating identified walking routes to destinations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Wayfinding

Wayfinding is more than just signage and there are wayfinding opportunities for Castor. There are currently some great initiatives being implemented in Castor regarding signage. These initiatives could continue to grow and improve using best practices. Strategic wayfinding design should be incorporated into the current system (designworkplan, n.d.). Future adaptations could include signage that represents the larger community visual identity and expanding on the trail identities currently developed. An example is provided by the City of Edmonton Pedestrian Focused Wayfinding Project: Detailed Strategy (City of Edmonton, 2014).

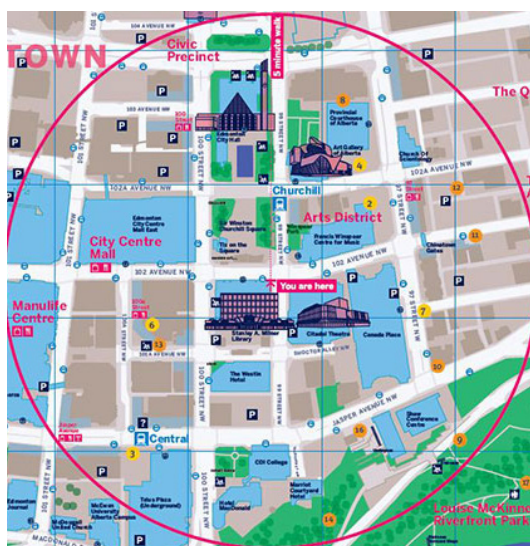
Simplified large scale map that is printed directly onto aluminum. This could include adaptations to GIS mapping (Image 1) and/or adaptations done by a graphic designer (Image 2).

- Simplified map
- Larger streets
- Identified destinations
- Highlighted routes
- Naming community areas to assist in wayfinding efforts
- Walking distance identified in terms of time rather than distance using an average time based on community demographics.

Temporary corrugated plastic signs could be used as temporary pilot project (Images 3 & 4).

Direction and orientation should be indicated on signs (Vanderberg et al., 2016). This includes navigating the physical reference to a specific area using directional signs to guide people along their way towards their destination. (<http://designworkplan.com/wayfinding/introduction.htm>).

Image 1



City of Edmonton (<https://transformingedmonton.ca/walk-edmonton-lays-out-new-direction-in-urban-wayfinding/>)

Image 2



The Edmonton Wayfinding Society (<http://www.edmontonwayfindingsociety.com/winter-cities-2017>)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Image 3



Image 4



City Lab (<https://www.citylab.com/design/2015/02/diy-wayfinding-signs-are-about-to-go-mainstream/386081/>)

Additional student projects for wayfinding might be to include some Tactical Urbanism ideas from CityLab (<https://www.citylab.com/design/2012/03/guide-tactical-urbanism/1387/>) that could be implemented as part of other summer events and/or as projects on their own. There are many ideas of projects (large and small) that can transform a public space into new use. Some examples can be found through the Tactical Urbanism 2: Short-Term Action = Long-Term Change resource (http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol_2_final?mode=window&backgroundColor=%23222222). Greater Places (<http://greaterplaces.com/project-topic/>) provides some ideas that can be used demonstrating best practices in community design: place making, planning, policies and public participation.

Effective wayfinding is different between individuals but there are a few evidence based directions that a community can take in wayfinding:

- Using destinations as landmarks can promote community destinations and help people to orient themselves to a map being used (Vandenberg, et. al., 2016). Directions to destinations should be supported by the time required to reach the destination as a pedestrian (Canada Walks, 2015).
- Digital wayfinding can expand on the wayfinding initiatives that have already been started by the Castor Community Network. The City of Vancouver (2014) provides some examples that could help develop a digital wayfinding strategy that can be included as part of a student project.

Most people overestimate the time it takes to walk and are at times intimidated by signs that signify distance (Horning, et. al., 2008). A person is more likely to choose to walk if the time seems reasonable even if the distance might not appear reasonable. This indicates that the choice to walk would be increased if signage includes the time it takes for the averaged aged individual in Castor walking at a moderate pace. A slight overestimation of the time that a person takes to walk has a secondary benefit of individuals trying to 'beat the time'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Broaden Stakeholders

Castor Community Network should engage a broader depth and scope of stakeholders within the community. As broader capital projects are being addressed, walkability infrastructure should be included. There is an opportunity to promote walkability by working closely with, and providing support to, actions identified in local Municipal Development Plan strategies. By signing the International Charter for Walking the mayor would demonstrated ongoing municipal support and increase the profile of walkability in Castor. Additional stakeholder engagement should occur with the local business community. To promote community walkability a link should be established with businesses to encourage visitors to the community to experience other aspects of community while they are in town (e.g. as parents are in town for a hockey game they might explore/experience other parts of the community).

Businesses have the opportunity to improve the health of their employees and their bottom line (CDC, 2015).

External community stakeholders should be engaged. Provincial support from Alberta Transportation can assist in informing and advising walkability improvements through the department responsible for Active Transportation and Transit Systems Planning. Engaging the University of Calgary - Faculty of Environmental Design can add to student projects in developing other pedestrian infrastructure supports such as shelters that can add to memorial benches that are located throughout the community. As additional pedestrian facilities are added garbage cans and dog bag dispensers could be included in the plan. A policy should be created in the future and 'memorial' should include broader pedestrian infrastructure such as garbage cans.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Community Programs, Initiatives, and Events

Walkability should be included as part of existing community events or events should be created to promote the walkability of the community and the use of walking facilities available. There is an opportunity to provide a grand opening/celebration of trails. Another opportunity exists to relate walkability to existing community campaigns/events. For example, create a walking challenge that could be included within existing programming:

- Fall Supper
- Seniors Tea
- Community 'street event' – closing the street, adding chairs/tables, and include music to turn the street into a public shared space

Walking challenges could be included as a way to promote the walkability of the communities and a way to engage other stakeholders. Active Transportation challenges amongst businesses and/or scavenger hunts could be used to encourage exploration of the town and engagement of the business community.

Active Transportation Promotion

Encouraging school travel by implementing a school travel plan that includes active transportation promotion and support. SHAPE Alberta should be engaged to provide recommended actions to promote and encourage walking to school. The barriers and issues that prevent children from walking to school should be addressed. A safe and appropriate drop-off and/or pick-up spot for children who are driven to school should be determined. Initiatives like this can be combined with others such as environmental programs, anti-idling campaigns, and active transportation challenges. A walking school bus could be included as part of the school travel plan to include supervision for children walking to school. This could be an opportunity to identify challenging school routes and determine ways to address concerns.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Intersections and pedestrian crossings

Some intersections and pedestrian crossings could be improved to shorten the distance to cross and slowing vehicle traffic without impeding traffic flow. The intersection crossing 45 Street along 50 Avenue is a key intersection connecting the east side of the community to the west. It is a key corridor for children getting to school and other pedestrians linking where they live to the businesses in the community. This is also an intersection of two highways (highway 861 and 599), which would require the municipal administration to work with external stakeholders like Alberta Transportation.



There are a variety of potential ways to address a challenging crossing. Shortening the distance of the crossing and creating visual cues to slow traffic can create a safer environment for pedestrians. [Crosswalksafety.ca](http://www.crosswalksafety.ca/opportunity-awareness/) provides some crosswalk safety ideas (<http://www.crosswalksafety.ca/opportunity-awareness/>). Although there is a crosswalk many parents will not feel safe allowing children to cross the highway on their own. The use of crossing guards at peak times can increase the comfort to parents that their children will have a safe walk to, or from, school.

Built Environment Change

Many businesses have accessible buildings. Ensuring that walking infrastructure supports all ages and physical abilities creates a community of inclusiveness and accessibility. Increasing accessibility also assists accessibility of strollers as well. Ensuring benches are accessible from walkways can improve pedestrian facility accessibility.



RECOMMENDATIONS

An opportunity exists to create community area naming. This can be linked to wayfinding systems and create local community identity. Events such as block parties can celebrate community area naming releases. Opportunities to celebrate accessible and inclusive infrastructure should be taken as often as possible.

Pilot projects using visual cues to encourage walkability such as identification of paths, painted crosswalks, and painted games onto walkways can make the walking journey more fun!. A simple line to indicate a dedicated area for pedestrians to walk will increase the feeling of safety for pedestrians and demonstrate the walkability of the community.




Although traffic speed is not a significant issue in Castor there is an opportunity to piloting traffic calming ideas to determine their effectiveness where required. Some examples are provided by a group from Hamilton, Ontario called Raise the Hammer (<https://raisethehammer.org/article/2674/traffic-calming-a-welcome-addition-but-needs-to-accommodate-cycling>).

A big picture (long-term) project is to expand the trail (near the truss bridge). Expansion of the trail to include the bridge could include existing infrastructure such as using the wood bottom of the bridge and the addition of new features such as benches and flowers to improve the walking experience.

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A



Walk21 Taking walking forward in the 21st Century ...

International Charter for Walking

Creating healthy, efficient and sustainable communities where people choose to walk

I/We, the undersigned recognise the benefits of walking as a key indicator of healthy, efficient, socially inclusive and sustainable communities and acknowledge the universal rights of people to be able to walk safely and to enjoy high quality public spaces anywhere and at anytime. We are committed to reducing the physical, social and institutional barriers that limit walking activity. We will work with others to help create a culture where people choose to walk through our commitment to this charter and its strategic principles:

1. *Increased inclusive mobility*
2. *Well designed and managed spaces and places for people*
3. *Improved integration of networks*
4. *Supportive land-use and spatial planning*
5. *Reduced road danger*
6. *Less crime and fear of crime*
7. *More supportive authorities*
8. *A culture of walking*

Signed _____
Name _____
Position _____
Date _____

www.walk21.com

APPENDIX B



Walkability in Castor

November 7, 2017

Town Office

4901 50 Avenue, Castor, AB T0C 0X0. Phone: 403-882-3215

10:00 – 10:30 am – Introduction from Alberta Health Services & Communities ~~ChooseWell~~

10:30 – 11:15 am – Introduction to the International Charter for Walking (international, national, and provincial)

11:15 – noon – Discussion: What is going on now in Castor? What could be done?

Noon – 1:00 pm – Lunch provided

1:00 – 3:00 pm – Guided walkabout

3:00 – 5:00 pm – Potential Identified actions

APPENDIX C

Below are the notes recorded on flip chart paper during group discussions about what Castor is doing well regarding walkability and whater could be done better to improve community walkability.

1. Increased Inclusive Mobility

- Improve sidewalks
 - New ones in with ramps
- Wheelchair ramps to building
 - Chiropractor doesn't have one - said no
- Federal grant - 1 Main St. sidewalk/year
- Infrastructure project starting
- Main Street = highway
 - Can't put in center boulevard
- Local business supported projects for students
- Designated walking path paved
 - Snow removed eventually

2. Spaces and Places Designed for People

- Consider connectivity to benches/sidewalk
- Design lacks arm rests/no shelter/not comfortable in winter
- Garbage cans located at path entries helps with incentivizing cleaning up after your dog
- Promotional item i.e. dog poo bags with community network branding
- Heaving pavements. Creating more stable base
- Outside of post office = picnic table and mural
- Amenities for employees working on Main street
- Designing pathways around creek. Tributaries. Pathways link to hospital. Link with historical society potential
- Historical walk exists
- Castor is very pretty, increase green spaces and planting/landscaping
- More ability to walk around the creek near "the donut". Bridges needed
- Repurpose trestle. Painters Regional Waste own railway property along waterline
- Cross-country skiing trail around creek. People sometimes ski on frozen lake. Potential to use golf course in winter

3. Improved Integration of Networks

- People with scooters
- Community van and lodge
- Plans for routes (destinations)
- Pool laneway (idea to clean up)
- Alberta Transportation rules
- Highway crossing (kids walking to school)
 - Could pilot (walking school bus, crossing guard)
- Not all streets have sidewalks
- Sidewalks can be narrow and not all cleared
 - Could do visual line
- Downtown well lit and have night watch
- Maintaining infrastructure

APPENDIX C

4. Supportive Land Use Planning

- Snow removal policy for residents to clear their section of sidewalk (sidewalks not so prominent)
- FCSS Snow Angels
- Stencils/prints on sidewalks
- Some sort of stenciling/lineage to help delineate pathways without laying down pavement
- Working with students to map
- Priorities routes to clear first = Doctor's Surgery, Hospital, Schools, Lodge and Main Street.
- Currently only one person trained to use sidewalk snow clearing equipment.

5. Road Danger

- Crossing highway
- Flashing crosswalk sign
- Different color paths

6. Crime

- Farmers market held in community hall
- Break in's in shops/businesses/vehicles in Main Street/not crimes against people
- Community Night Watch run by community members who volunteer between 12-5 am has made a big difference
- Cameras exist in Main Street at Municipal Offices and Post Office
- Pull down shutters
- Increased perceived safety
- Increased high community cohesion in small rural communities helps with individual feelings of safety

7. Supportive Authorities

- Lots of support
- Can have charter signed

8. Culture of Walking

- Castor has a strong culture of walking
- The goal of the community is to maintain its appeal to those who choose to live in the community while providing an accessible and inclusive community.

CONTACT

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