



Walkable ALBERTA



Okotoks Community Report



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Introduction



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- Susan Laurin, Community Services Manager, Town of Okotoks
- Wayne Meikle, Chair, Active Transportation Ad-hoc Committee
- Okotoks Active Transportation Committee

Alberta Health Services would like to thank the following groups and organizations for participating in Walkable Alberta in Okotoks:

- The Mayor
- Council members
- Senior management from the Town of Okotoks
- Town administrators
- Active Transportation Committee
- Okotoks Culture, Parks and Recreation Committee (CPR)
- Healthy Okotoks Committee (HOC)
- Okotoks River Valley Committee (RVC)
- Ever Active Schools/Healthy Hearts/SHAPE
- Alberta Parks and Recreation (Active Community Strategy)
- Private businesses
- Health care professionals

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Introduction



Walking is critical for health

It has been well established that regular physical activity, including walking, is important to health and well-being (Warburton et al., 2006; Blair and Morris, 2009).

Despite the numerous benefits of physical activity, however, we have not seen an improvement in physical activity participation in Alberta. In fact, physical activity levels have decreased among Albertans in recent years, from 58.5% in 2009 to 54.3% in 2011 (Loitz et al., 2011). In Canada, it has been estimated that the total (direct and indirect) health care costs due to physical inactivity in 2009 were \$6.8 billion, or approximately 3.7% of the country's total health care costs (Janssen, 2012).

Unfortunately, physical activity is often viewed as an individual's choice and responsibility and, as such, should be addressed through education and lifestyle management. This is a short-sighted view of how physical activity promotion needs to be addressed.

Similar to many other health issues, physical activity has several big-picture factors that need to be considered. In fact, there is growing evidence that addressing walking through active transportation and the built environment may be the best method of increasing physical activity participation (Nagel et al., 2008; King, 2008; Frank et al., 2005; Aytur et al., 2007).

Walkable neighbourhoods are healthy neighbourhoods. There is a strong link between cardiovascular fitness and body mass index, and how walkable a neighbourhood is (Mobley et al., 2006; Hoehner et al., 2011).

Walkable neighbourhoods and access to green space, trails and parks have many economic benefits to neighbourhoods and communities (Shoup et al., 2010). This is an important message for decision makers and policy makers, as well as residents who wish to make changes in their community.

Alberta Health Services is committed to promoting social and physical environments that enhance wellness and promote healthier behaviours. Walkable Alberta wants to support change in your community by improving walkability and encouraging citizens to walk more often.



Overview of Walkable Alberta



Walkable Alberta improves walkability and encourages citizens to walk more often by working with Alberta Health Services zone representatives, who are working hard to prevent chronic disease, including obesity, by promoting healthy active lifestyles in their communities. These representatives helped make contact with the community representatives who applied to participate in Walkable Alberta.

Walkable Alberta continues the success of the Alberta Walkability Roadshow, which was the first step of the pilot carried out in the fall of 2011, with support from Green Communities Canada and Walk21. These organizations demonstrated a concise process that enables municipalities to create communities where people choose to walk. Alberta Health Services uses a similar process, wherein an interactive community workshop creates an action plan to improve walkability within communities by working through the International Charter for Walking.

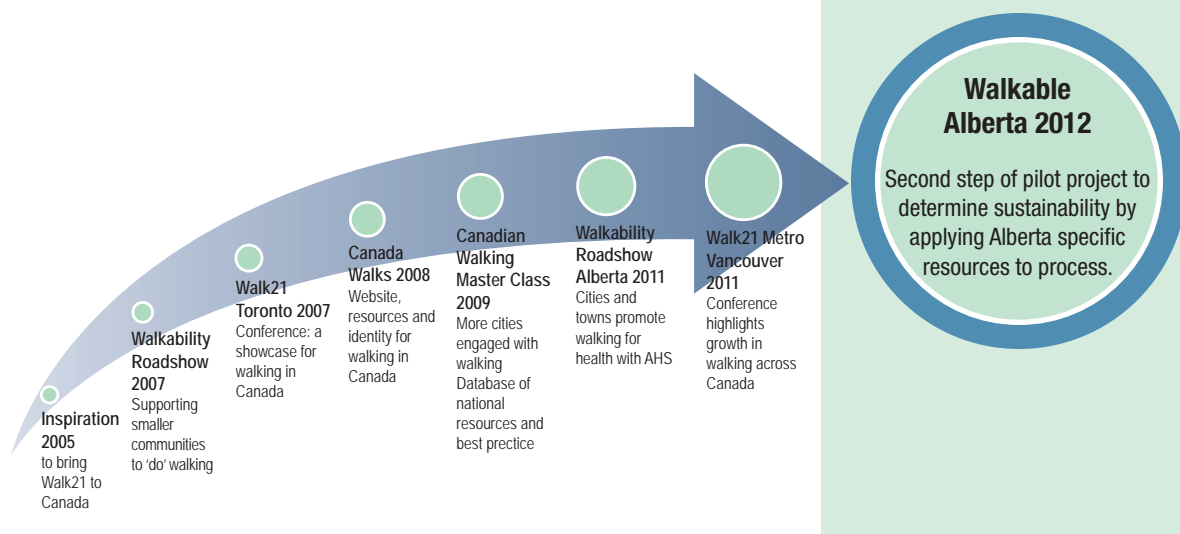
The International Charter for Walking provides both the strategic direction and detailed descriptive actions for creating walkable communities around the world. Walkable Alberta uses this charter to create walking benchmarks within communities and identify achievements, opportunities and challenges as the foundation for generating ideas, initiatives, inspiration and action for building more walkable communities in Alberta.

Walkable Alberta brings a team of AHS staff and provincial and community stakeholders together to build a framework of local strategies, plans and actions to help create walkable communities. The goal of Walkable Alberta is to complement the great work already being done in the community, and to help move that work forward.

Why has Alberta Health Services decided on this process?

Walk21 uses a facilitated process based on their International Charter for Walking. In Canada, Walk21 works with Green Communities Canada—Canada Walks to use their process across the country. This facilitated process was then adapted to form the pilot project Walkable Alberta, which uses Alberta-specific resources to create an interactive, facilitated community workshop that develops an action plan created by communities, for communities, that will improve walkability.

AHS felt it was important to support communities in being part of a national and international initiative that promotes active living by improving the walkability of local communities. This initiative is a way for communities to improve the health of their community members by reducing chronic disease, creating opportunities for active living and making physical activity the easy choice.





The Walkable Alberta Process

The process followed for this pilot project consisted of the following steps:

Engage Alberta Health Services zone directors who were engaged to inform as well as refer to a local zone contact.



Contact Alberta Health Services zone representatives who were directly involved in preparation of the Walkable Alberta event and/or referred the Walkable Alberta team to a community contact.



Create a benchmark questionnaire to identify the current activities and plans for walking, and map opportunities and challenges within each community.



Preparation work to develop the agenda for each community and prepare material for the roadshow visits.

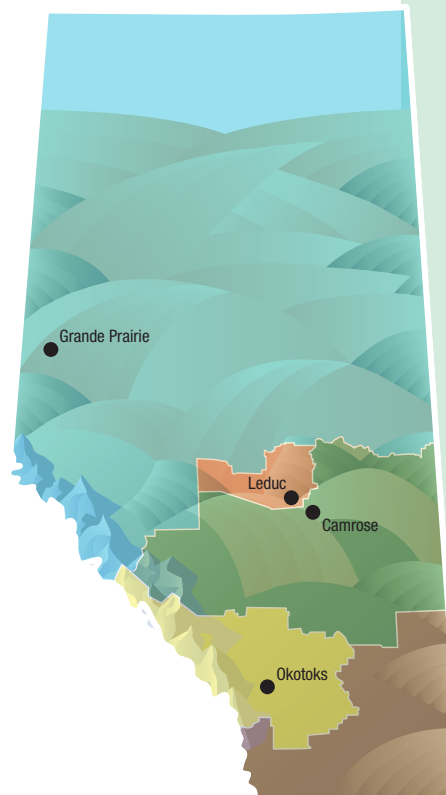


Create Walkable activities in each community, including keynote presentations, professional workshops, walkabouts, community meetings and feedback sessions.



Prepare community reports for each community available on the Alberta Health Services website.

The Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Chronic Disease Prevention and Oral Health, Walkable Alberta team worked with zone directors, zone contacts and community contacts to have communities fill out an application form, followed by the benchmark questionnaire. There were four community visits: to the City of Grande Prairie, the City of Leduc, the City of Camrose and the Town of Okotoks.



What is the International Charter for Walking?

The International Charter for Walking was developed by a team of international experts as part of the Walk21 conference series and was formally launched at the 2006 Walk21 conference in Melbourne. Since that time it has been translated into several languages, and communities and individuals around the world have signed the charter, including many from Canada. To view and sign the charter, visit www.walk21.com.



Background information provided by the Town of Okotoks

Participating in the Walkable Alberta project will complement the great work already started by providing resources to help move Okotoks Active Transportation forward, and bring together local and provincial experts to build a model framework of local strategies, plans and actions to help create active communities.

The Town of Okotoks has recently established an Active Transportation Ad-hoc Committee of the Culture Parks and Recreation Committee for a two-year period, led by the Community Services and Planning Departments, to develop an Active Transportation Management Plan.

Initial stages of creating the plan include

- developing an active transportation vision for the Okotoks community
- developing opportunities and partnerships to enhance active transportation infrastructure and facilities
- advising on the design, development, delivery and maintenance of active transportation policies, programs and facilities
- promoting active transportation as a feasible mode of transportation in Okotoks and encourage citizens to use forms of active transportation through public outreach, education programs and events
- educating the public on the benefits, necessities and safety aspects of active transportation
- promote and enhance a continuous and integrated pedestrian and bicycle network (e.g., trails, sidewalks, bicycle lanes) within Okotoks, including future network connections from outside the town limits
- encouraging legislation and policy changes that support and strengthen active transportation for consideration, once the Municipal Development Plan requires updating

Included in the planning will be:

- Background analysis—review current information related to active transportation, consultation and communication strategies best practices in pedestrian and cycling facility design and municipal planning bylaws and policies
- Inventory analysis and network development—inventory of current and potential trails, bike lanes and routes
- Resident and stakeholder consultation—engage stakeholders and members of the public
- Implementation phase—active transportation across municipal activities, including health promotion, budgeting and staff training, land use planning, transportation and park planning, public health, road design and construction, road and trail maintenance, traffic safety and enforcement, and signal operations

About AHS and HPDIP

The mission of AHS is to provide a quality, patient-focused health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans. AHS has a vision to become the best performing publicly funded health system in Canada. Using the values of respect, accountability, transparency, engagement, safety, learning and performance, AHS formed a strategic direction that provides the foundation for all activity within the organization. The strategic direction is organization-wide and is a critical foundation for our planning, operations and accountability. It includes 3 goals, 8 areas of focus, 20 strategic priorities and 4 values. It defines the focus of all departments within AHS, including Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention (HPDIP).

HPDIP's mandate is to enhance the health of the population and support Albertans in taking control of their health. HPDIP's focus on health promotion includes fostering social, economic and material conditions (determinants of health) that promote health and reduce health disparities. HPDIP strategies both reduce and delay entry into the healthcare system and improve quality of life and societal productivity. This is accomplished through three broad objectives: increasing protective factors within the population, reducing risk factors within the population, and increasing early detection and minimizing downstream intervention. HPDIP has five priority areas of action: social and physical environments, healthy development, cancer and chronic disease prevention, injury prevention, and addiction and mental health. Each area has a direct correlation to AHS's strategic focus areas—specifically, the goals of quality, access and sustainability.



Benchmark questionnaire

The benchmark questionnaire provided the background information needed to start preparing for the visit to Okotoks. Responses to the questionnaire were collected by Susan Laurin, Community Services Manager, Town of Okotoks.

What are you most proud of having achieved for people walking in your community and why?

We are most proud of our pathway system that exceeds 45 km of paved pathways, of which 31 km are snow cleared.

Three priorities for encouraging walking in Okotoks

1. Constructing wide, accessible pathways in new development (subdivisions) that are well connected to existing pathways.
2. Creating a walking brochure and pathway signage to inform/attract pathway users.
3. Ensuring new commercial areas are well connected by the pathway system to residential areas to encourage leaving the car behind and walking to destinations.

Three barriers to encouraging walking in Okotoks

1. Most of the workforce commutes to Calgary, and so must drive or seek alternate private transport (e.g., commuter bus).
2. Lack of existing brochures/signage to promote walking.
3. Cultural habits.





Preparation work

There were several tasks that needed to be accomplished before the Walkable Alberta team visited the community.

Alberta Health Services

AHS facilitated the preparation work by providing suggestions and/or templates for

- defining roles and responsibilities
- discussing the content and the structure of Walkable Alberta in their community
- the invitation information (content and participant recommendations)
- the draft agenda outline
- media releases
- listed invitation recommendations
- the mayor signing the International Charter for Walking as a show of support
- invitations to provincial organizations that promote walking/walkability
- keynote invitations
- interactive community workshops, community meetings, walkabouts
- collecting information, and writing and publishing community reports

The community

Prior to the Walkable team's visit, the Town of Okotoks completed a significant amount of preparation work, including

- the application and benchmark questionnaire (see above)
- documentation in support of walkability, including
 - Go For Green: Active Transportation Workshop—Okotoks, Alberta (November 30, 2007)
 - Go For Green: Community Active Transportation Workshop—Okotoks, Alberta (September 27, 2008)
- booking facilities to host the interactive community workshop and community meeting
- hiring caterers
- preparing the walkabout route
- invitation distribution and the collection of any responses
- agendas
- media releases
- providing community support at the interactive community workshop and community meeting in order to highlight some of the work being done within the community and future work surrounding walkability





Walkable Alberta activities

Starting in October 2012, the Walkable Alberta team visited five Alberta communities. Each visit included activities and expectations based on the size and needs of that community. For the cities of Grande Prairie and Medicine Hat, Walkable Alberta visited for three days; for the cities of Leduc and Camrose and the town of Okotoks it was a two-day visit.

Each visit gave the municipality an opportunity to inspire its politicians and senior decision makers, to train and develop professional staff and consultants and to engage the public. There was a variety of roadshow activities, including

- **a keynote presentation** about the importance of a walkable community
- **facilitated workshop** discussions and group work to brainstorm ideas and issues for walkability
- **community meetings** to gather input from local walkers
- **walkabouts** of selected streets and neighbourhoods to experience walking conditions firsthand and provide on-street learning for visiting and local experts
- **feedback and wrap-up sessions** to review the experience and identify concrete steps to turn ideas into a community plan.





Community profile

According to the Town of Okotoks's 2012 census, the municipality has a population of 24,962. This is an increase from Census Canada's count of 24,511 in 2011. The town recorded a 42.9% increase in population between 2006 and 2011. As one of the largest towns in Alberta, Okotoks is eligible for city status. Okotoks's population and geographic area is ideal for walking and biking, yet it fails to distinguish itself in this area. This is demonstrated to some extent by Statistics Canada's figure from 2006 that only 5.2% of Okotoks residents regularly walked or biked to work. This is much lower than the national average of 7.7% and almost 50% lower than the Alberta average of 7.1%.

Trails are considered Okotoks's most important walking resource. However, even those most pleased with the trail system agree that it does not connect every neighbourhood, and that it often does not integrate well with other active transportation or car transportation infrastructure. Lack of signage is frequently noted as a limiting element of the trail system. One of the principal difficulties with promoting walking is the incompleteness and inconsistency of the infrastructure. Creating a "deficiency list" would be very helpful.

Often very good resources, such as well-constructed trails, are less used because they are un-signed and link poorly with roads and sidewalks. Unfortunately, people will judge their use of a system upon its weakest section. If they feel unsafe in one portion of their trip, it is unlikely that they will choose to continue walking or bicycling.

There is a need to involve schools and youth in more active methods of travel, and the necessity of educating more councillors and parents of the importance of active transportation for individual and community health.



The impact of, and benefits from, improvements in walkability include

- enjoying nature
- being healthier and more active
- making the town more liveable
- reducing air and noise pollution
- active destination-oriented trips (e.g., commuting to work or school) and active workplace travel (e.g., attending meetings)
- using cars less for short trips to and from work, school, shopping or around the neighbourhood
- recreational pursuits and fitness



Walkable Alberta activities

Day one

Decision makers breakfast

AHS Facilitator Graham Matsalla set the stage, followed by a welcome to the 18 attendees of the workshop by Mayor Bill Robertson. Ryan Martinson, P.Eng., Transportation Engineer, Stantec, presented a keynote address on the importance of walking and walkability. The attendees for the day were Town of Okotoks Council representatives Mayor Bill Robertson and Ray Watrin; Town of Okotoks administrative representatives Christa Michailuck, Shane Olson, Susan Laurin, Colin Gainer and Kyla Mak; Active Transportation committee members Wayne Meikle, Brian Fea and Mal Blasetti; Healthy Okotoks Committee (HOC) members Audrey Rezanoff and Al Hagan; Okotoks Culture Parks and Recreation Committee (CPR) member Dale Fea; Active Community Strategy Mark Rowed; Okotoks River Valley Committee (RVC) member Don Cottrell; interested community stakeholders Linda Blasetti, Marla Brown and John Carmichael; and Alberta Health Services representative Sajid Ali.

Thrive on Wellness (Thrive) uses a community development approach. It supports communities in building upon their existing strengths, identifying needs and priorities, enhancing partnerships, leveraging resources and developing local initiatives to promote health and sustainability. Thrive coordinators work to increase the community's capacity to promote health, the number and type of initiatives, healthy eating and active living, awareness and collaboration with other organizations and groups, and a sense of belonging.

Professional workshop

The professional workshop was hosted at the Municipal Centre in Council Chambers and promoted as a way of developing ideas and action plans for walking, with 18 participants, including professional staff and interested community members, staying from the breakfast to brainstorm the future of walkability in Okotoks.



Community meeting

The Community meeting was organized at the Municipal Centre in Council Chambers so that community members who could not attend the workshop had an opportunity to express their views. Very few participants ended up attending, so a brief description of Walkable Alberta was given and an opportunity to answer questions was provided. Contact information was also given so that additional questions or comments could be provided for future consideration.



Day two

Walkabouts and debrief

The walkabout moved through the community, discussing how the concepts from the previous day's professional workshop could be applied. There were 13 attendees, including town council members, town administrators (Open Spaces, Economic Development, Community Services, Planning), Alberta Health Services staff, Thrive members, Ad Hoc Active Transportation Committee members, Okotoks Culture Parks and Recreation Committee members, Okotoks River Valley Committee members, Healthy Okotoks Committee members and Alberta Recreation and Parks Association—Active Community Strategy members.



Feedback presentation and wrap-up

This session was to provide ideas from the visiting team to the town and to focus on how to take them forwards. This session was attended by 15 participants, including town administration staff and Thrive members.



Summary of participants for the entire Walkable Alberta event

- Mayor
- Town of Okotoks administrators (6)
- Town council members (2)
- Ad Hoc Active Transportation Committee members (5)
- Local school board representation—Foothill School Division (1)
- Alberta Recreation and Parks Association—Active Community Strategy (1)
- Active, Creative, Engaged (ACE) Okotoks (1)
- Alberta Health Services health professionals (3)



Media coverage

- Town of Okotoks promotion on town website and throughout town facilities

The screenshot shows the Okotoks town website. The header includes the Okotoks logo and a navigation menu with links for Residents, Municipal Services, Council, Business, Sustainable Okotoks, Visitors, and eServices. A search bar is located in the top right. The main content area features a large image of three children walking outdoors. Below the image, the article title 'Walkable Okotoks' is displayed, followed by a sub-headline 'Walkable Alberta Community Meeting:'. The article text includes the date (December 6, 2012), time (8:30 PM - 8:00 PM), and cost (Free). It also lists the location as Council Chambers, Municipal Centre, 5 Elizabeth Street, Okotoks, Alberta. A 'We want to hear from you!' section asks for input on what motivates people to walk and how to improve walking in Okotoks. The article is attributed to Don Patterson, a Staff Reporter.

- Article in the Okotoks Western Wheel (January 11, 2013)

Okotoks to be 'walkable'
Health: New group wants people to be active

By Don Patterson
Staff Reporter

Provincial health officials are teaming up with the Town of Okotoks and other local groups in hopes of convincing residents to leave their cars at home and go for a walk.

Okotoks is one of five communities across the province selected to participate in the Alberta Health Services (AHS) Walkable Alberta program.

Graham Matsalla, AHS health promotion facilitator, said the program is intended to help municipalities find ways to make their communities more walkable in hopes of encouraging people to get active and embrace healthier lifestyles.

"AHS wants people to include active living in their daily lives, to make active living the easy choice," he said. "It's not so much something that we need to do or have to do, it becomes something that we want to do daily."

He said 61 per cent of Albertans are considered obese. Meanwhile, the number of people involved with regular physical activity dropped from 59 per cent in 2009 to 54 per cent in 2011.

Matsalla said it's hoped they can reduce chronic diseases, obesity in particular, by encouraging physical activity.

"By trying to increase physical activity participation, with the most popular physical activity being walking, we're hoping to address obesity and reduce chronic disease," he said.

According to Matsalla, health officials are targeting walking because it's easy for people to do and it can reduce obesity levels and improve health.

"Research has shown with many different health issues that walking can address it," he said.

While there are no specific recommendations to encourage walking yet, he said a variety of steps could be taken to make communities more walkable, such as increasing access to parks from sidewalks or pathways and improving signs for pedestrians.

The initiative is not about trying to replace cars and Matsalla said AHS is realistic cars will continue to be a dominant way for people to get around, but they want to create more opportunities for them to leave their cars at home.

Matsalla hosted a two-day workshop in Okotoks earlier this month to discuss the initiative and ways to get more people walking. As part of the workshop, participants walked around the community to find examples of things done right and areas that could be improved.

Matsalla said Okotoks has a walkable downtown, but there are improvements which could be made such as building more pedestrian bridges across the Sheep River and upgrading accessibility to bridges and pathways. In addition, Okotoks has good directional signs for motorists, but he said there is room to improve signage for pedestrians.

Matsalla will develop a report from the feedback he received at the workshop to present to the Town in the new year.

Okotoks resident Wayne Meikle contacted AHS to hold the workshop in the community.

Meikle is the chairman of the new Okotoks Active Transportation Committee, formed earlier this fall to provide advice and strategies to the Town to make it easier for people to walk, run, bike or rollerblade around town.

Meikle said the AHS initiative is a good way to kick-start the committee's work.

The committee will look at improvements to infrastructure, pathways, sidewalks, signage or anything else to make it easier for people to walk, bike or use human powered transportation. They will also work to promote active lifestyles to get people out of their cars, he added.



Day one

Professional workshop

The day started with presentations about international, national and provincial walking initiatives, as well as the International Charter for Walking. Participants were then split up into smaller groups to generate ideas using the eight principles of the charter. For each principle, participants were asked to identify what the community has now, what could be done better with what the community has now, and what are some new ideas to improve walkability. The groups reviewed one another's ideas, adding new ones and ranking the existing ones according to their priority.

Key ideas generated

Increased inclusive mobility

- Walkable Alberta professional workshop participants felt that many physical improvements could be made to walkways to ensure they support pedestrians that are mobility impaired:
 - Street crossings: expand on pinch points (bump outs/curb extensions), pattern crossings, drop curb (aprons, ramps, curb cut outs) in new areas
 - Maintenance: increase snow clearing on walkways, including regional pathway
 - Wider walkways (3 m) as an urban design standard
 - Pathway connections (cleared snow where pathway exists) to schools and into school yards—specifically, improved destination pathway leading into downtown from Okotoks Junior High School
- Participants felt that improvements of the walkability of large parking lots will improve the inclusiveness of the community for persons who are mobility impaired.

Well-designed and -managed spaces and places for people

- Walkable Alberta professional workshop participants felt that well-designed and -managed spaces and places for people can be addressed by improving connectivity through
 - complete connection of walkways (pathways and sidewalks)
 - creating safe pedestrian walkways within parking lots, including a pedestrian connection through the centre of parking lots to align with the front doors
 - creating walkable connections to retail areas and ensuring walkable connections between stores
- Participants also felt that well-designed and -managed spaces and places for people can be addressed by improving walkway infrastructure through
 - improving walkway lighting
 - the addition of painted lines on pathways to create separate routes for pedestrians and cyclists
 - improving community signage and clarity of messaging
 - clearly identifying crosswalks to drivers and walkers
- Participants felt that well-designed and -managed spaces and places for people can be improved through the increase of public art. This can be done through gateway entrance art and community artwork (e.g., murals, organized/legal graffiti space).

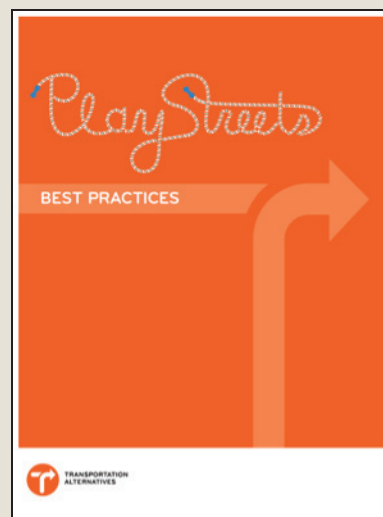
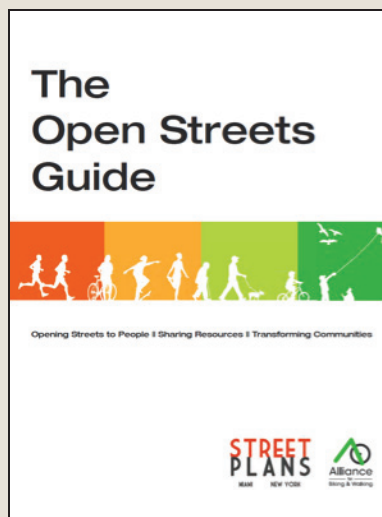


- Participants felt that there should be more temporary street closures for public events. These events show citizens that the streets are shared between vehicles and pedestrians, and could be held in the downtown core or in residential areas. Community residents should be supported in closing residential roads and having neighbourhood events (e.g., block BBQs). Participants felt that street closures could be piloted. Small park areas that include facilities like tables/chairs inside and outside of the downtown core could put people onto these streets, instead of cars.

Improved integration of networks

- Walkable Alberta professional workshop participants felt that the integration of networks could be improved through addressing the connectivity of walkways throughout the community. Some connections need to be added, such as
 - connecting the pathway that runs from Thorson Crescent to Hodson Crescent to the major pathway that runs from Bans Drive to Milligan Drive
 - connecting the pathway that runs behind Crystalridge Terrace to the pathway along the lake behind Crystalridge Rise
 - the pathway along the west side of Southridge Drive between Westridge Drive and Westland Street
 - pathways linking the north residential areas to downtown, commercial areas, the river valley and the south part of the community

Street closures are popular in many municipalities to allow citizens to use the reclaimed area for walking, bicycling, dancing, playing and socializing. These events vary in duration (e.g., one to three days) and frequency (e.g., weekly, seasonally, annually) and can be organized by a variety of groups (e.g., municipality, community associations, community groups, individuals). Inspiration for a variety of events can be found in documents by groups such as Open Streets Project and Transportation Alternatives.





- Participants felt that Okotoks's urban development standards should be changed so that pathways are in place before streets are designed and created. Destinations for walkers, such as stores, should be included in new urban development plans.
- Participants also felt there should be an integration of the bicycling and walking networks.

Supportive land use and spatial planning

- Walkable Alberta professional workshop participants felt that there should be an individual representing walking/walkability within community committees.
- Participants felt that pedestrians should be prioritized first in all stages of planning/development.
 - Provide the Municipal Planning Commission and council with policy and procedures to ensure developers make the pedestrian the priority in the development of pedestrian-friendly infrastructure/design.
 - Update/revise the land-use bylaw to incorporate pedestrian-friendly design.
 - Meet with community stakeholders prior to design investment.
 - Create walkable, pedestrian-friendly guidelines.
 - Provide benefits to developers to demonstrate positive results, including walking routes and neighbourhood appeal in their designs.
- Participants felt that there should be design guidelines for big box stores' parking areas that ensure there are pedestrian facilities (e.g., walkways, crosswalks). These pedestrian facilities should connect pedestrians from the store to their vehicles and should also connect stores within shopping areas.
- Participants also felt that temporary and permanent destinations throughout the community could be created through mixed-use zoning (e.g., a skating rink near a plaza).

Reduce road danger

- Walkable Alberta professional workshop participants provided various examples of traffic-calming devices: variety of speed zones, the use of passive devices (e.g., pinch points), street design to fit the area (eliminating the need for signs) and expanding medians, with more planters.
- Participants felt that the road danger for pedestrians could be reduced at crosswalks through new and/or improved crosswalk lights (including countdown lights), designated signage and painted strips, patterned crosswalks, and better signed and more pedestrian crosswalks.
- Participants felt that the road danger for pedestrians could be further reduced by improving roadways/walkways through paving all roads in Okotoks, prompt and effective street cleaning, appropriate street lighting, and improvements to the quality and quantity of sidewalks (some sidewalks are too narrow—e.g., Centre Avenue Hill).
- Participants felt that the road danger for pedestrians could be improved through a CPTED analysis plan in new urban development plans.
- Participants also felt that the creation of dedicated bike lanes would improve pedestrian safety by moving bicycles off the walkways.



More supportive authorities

- Walkable Alberta professional workshop participants felt that there should be more support from authorities (town council and administration) to
 - expand the pathway network with appropriate resources and to maintain new and existing pathways
 - promote participation and provide encouragement to community sports and recreation opportunities
 - create a communication strategy to dog owners, informing them that the dog park is the only public area their dogs are allowed off leash
 - work with police and peace officers to increase their patrols of the river valley
 - advocate for and provide additional facilities to support walking (e.g., outdoor gyms, walking tracks)
 - advocate for additional support from school boards/parent councils for walking promotion within schools (e.g., adopting practical endorsement of programs/initiatives such as “walking school bus” and “SHAPE”)
 - coordinate existing groups/stakeholders to address common ideas
- Participants felt that there should be more support from authorities for promotion, including
 - social media
 - increased/improved signage and maps, including distances and walking times
 - improved information and interactive tools offered on the town’s website
- Participants felt that there should be more support from authorities for the continuation and expansion of walking promoting during community events, including Winter Walk Day, Walk with the Mayor, Light Up Okotoks, parades, the Car Show and Shine event, quilt shows, and 1st Saturdays coupons. The 1st Saturdays coupon program should be expanded to include not only those walkers who could take their passport from store to store, but also a new stamp for those using the river valley.
- Participants also felt that there should be more support from authorities to facilitate the creation of social walking groups.

When working towards a walkable environment, it is important to understand the barriers that are often cited for not using active transportation. The graph below shows some of the most common ones.

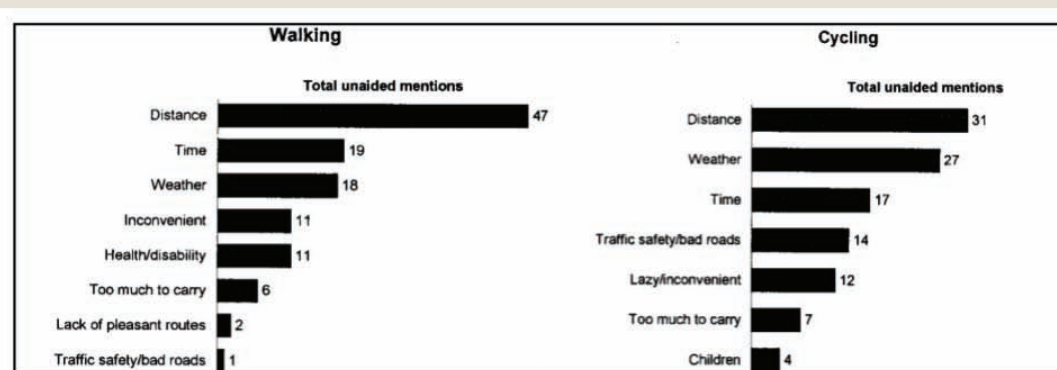


Figure 2-2: Main barriers to walking and cycling as a mode of transportation (%).

Source: 1998 National Survey on Active Transportation Summary Report, Environics International on behalf of Go for Green in Ottawa, 1998 www.goforgreen.ca/active_transportation/



Translating ideas into actions

Workshop participants identified ideas that were of the most importance to them. Their top two ideas were recorded. Individuals then voted on what they thought were good ideas, but could not vote for their own ideas. The ideas that received the most votes were as follows:

- amending the land-use bylaw and policies to reflect people first and prioritize pedestrians over vehicle movement (11 votes)
- working with SHAPE to establish a “walking school bus” program (11 votes)
- requiring commercial developers (new and redeveloped) to create walkable access/ frontage/parking lots (8 votes)
- improving crosswalks (lighting/countdown lights) (7 votes)
- connecting pathways to downtown and river valley (7 votes)
- creating a culture of walking (maps and signs) (7 votes)
- improving the way we promote and educate (7 votes)
- provide adequate support to Council so that a priority to future development is that it is pedestrian friendly (6 votes)
- closing Elizabeth Street on 1st Saturdays and special events (5 votes)
- creating smart communities: “live/shop where you work” (4 votes)
- making large parking lots more pedestrian friendly (4 votes)
- designing for beauty and safety incentives (2 votes)
- creating initiatives for businesses to encourage walking (2 votes)

These ideas, as well as those generated in the community meeting and walkabout, created the themes used on the last day of the community workshop.



Day two

Walkabout

The walkabout started at the Municipal Centre. We walked south over the pedestrian bridge to Woodhaven Pathway, back to the Municipal Centre and then drove to two more locations. We then drove to the Cornerstone shopping area. We walked along Cimarron Parkway to Cimarron Grove Crescent, then drove to Okotoks Recreation Centre and walked along Okotoks Drive past Percy Pegler Elementary School, past Ecole Okotoks Junior High School, along Pacific Avenue, west down Crescent Road, south on the pedestrian walkway, west along Elma Street and south on Centre Avenue back to the Municipal Centre.

Public access

Although new development in the community follows current building codes, not every building in Okotoks is completely accessible. Neither is the environment around the buildings. Full public access would mean comfortable access for all pedestrians.



Fig. 1a



Fig. 1b

- The pedestrian access to Westmount Centre access at Cimarron Boulevard and Westland Street has concrete steps and a hand rail, but is not accessible by all levels of mobility (see Fig. 1a). As you enter the centre, the walking path leads past the dumpster (see Fig. 1b). Once you enter the shopping centre, there is limited support for pedestrian movement throughout the parking area.
- A great example of public access can be seen at the Okotoks Public Library on the corner of Riverside Drive West, South Railway Street and Centre Avenue. Concrete steps, hand rails and ramps ensure that pedestrians of any level of physical ability can access the facility (see Fig. 2).



Fig. 2



The purpose of this guide is to provide an explanation of the intents and objectives of each building code, as well as to make recommendations that are viewed as best practices where accessibility and safety are concerns to persons with disabilities and to seniors.



- Linking the neighbourhood around Crescent Road to downtown through Elma Street East and Clark Avenue should be a priority. The concrete stairway with hand rails is a good link from the north part of the community to the downtown area, but accessibility options for this link are limited for individuals with low mobility (see Figs. 3a and 3b). The stairway leading from Sheep River Park to Woodhaven Parkway (multi-use walking trail) on the south side of the river valley is a good link from downtown to the south side of town. Mixed reviews of the stairway were provided during the walkabout. The steel grate steps remain clear of snow but the steel itself can be slippery in the winter. The fact that you can see through the steps makes some users uncomfortable. This link is also limited for those with low mobility (see Fig. 3c). Analyzing feedback from users of variable mobility levels would give a clearer picture of the effectiveness of these links.



Fig. 3a



Fig. 3b



Fig. 3c



Street crossings

In a community designed primarily for motor vehicles, with many wide, high-speed roads, it is imperative that people are provided with safe crossing points. Minimal provisions for pedestrians, while at the same time maximizing vehicle movement, cannot be the design principle for a town seeking to encourage more walking.



Fig. 4a



Fig. 4b

- The southeast entrance to Christine's No Frills (Real Canadian Superstore) grocery store at Hemus Parkway, along Northridge Drive and just south of Sandstone Gate, demonstrates a clearly painted crosswalk to maintain the Menus Parkway for pedestrians (see Fig. 4a). Clearly painted crosswalks should be on all sides of an intersection. The corner of Big Rock Trail and Village Avenue (see Fig. 4b) demonstrates a clearly painted crosswalk on only one side of the intersection.



Fig. 5a



Fig. 5b



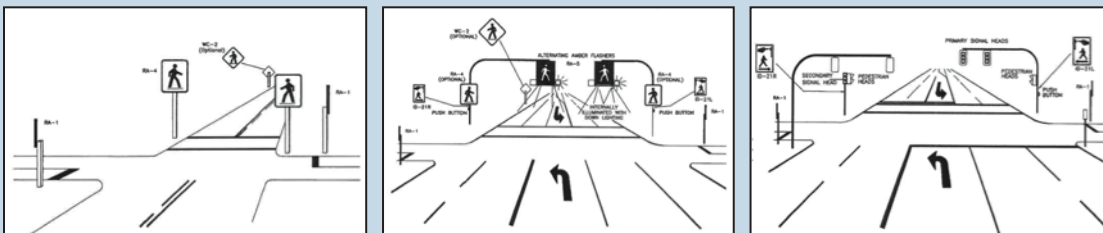
Fig. 5c

- Two examples of a recreation pathway linking to a community walkway network were seen. The first, at the crossing at Woodhaven Drive (see Fig. 5a), connects the neighbourhood around Woodhaven Pathway to Woodbend Way, which leads to an entrance to the pathway accessing Centennial Arena. If a pedestrian continues along the sidewalk on Woodbend Way, the walkway connects to Woodhaven Drive, which leads to Foothills Composite High School. The second



example is at the Milligan Drive crossing to Centre Avenue (see Fig. 5b). Both crossings are clearly marked, have pedestrian ramps to provide accessibility to any pedestrian that has mobility challenges, are well signed, and even have manually activated pedestrian lights. The crossing of busy Northridge Drive along Elma Street (see Fig. 5c) has the same facilities, including a pedestrian ramp so that pedestrians can easily cross the median.

The Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) has developed a manual for pedestrian crossing controls. In this manual, a hierarchical system of signing, marking and signal control is suggested. The hierarchical system includes signed and marked crossings, special crosswalks, pedestrian-activated signals and grade separation.



A number of factors need to be considered when determining the most appropriate crossing type, including accident history, pedestrian volume, pedestrian age and ability, roadway width, vehicle volume, vehicle speed, visibility conditions and proximity of adjacent pavement markings and signs or signals. A detailed engineering study, taking these and other local context details into consideration, should be completed to determine if a crossing treatment is warranted and what the most appropriate crossing treatment would be.



Fig. 6a



Fig. 6b



Fig. 6c



- The crossing at the corner of Tucker Parkway, Westland Street and Westmount Road, which runs near Westmount School (see Figs. 6a and 6b), has good markings for pedestrians, including signage, tactile (stamped concrete), curb cuts (pedestrian ramps) and curb extensions (see Fig. 6a) that facilitates slower vehicle speed. There is a walkway on both sides of the street, which creates a pedestrian network throughout the entire community. In Cimarron Common (see Fig. 6c), along the road leading into a shopping area is a great example of a bump out (squeeze point/curb extension) walkway and lowered curb (curb cut/pedestrian ramp) that is clearly signed. This provides a connection to the walkway on both sides of the street and slows vehicle traffic by narrowing the roadway.

Street art

Street art can improve the experience of walking in a community. It can also be an opportunity to reduce graffiti, engage local artists, increase visual appeal and add character to the community.

- There are already many great examples of street art within Okotoks. Some examples are Elizabeth Street (see Fig. 7a) and the intersection of Clark Avenue, McRae Street and North Railway Street (see Fig. 7b).
- There are some opportunities for additional street art. Utility boxes can be seen as more visually appealing and vandalism could be reduced if they are turned into pieces of art. Examples of opportunities can be seen on Northridge Drive and Riverside Way (see Fig. 7c), as well as along Hunters Gate near Sheep River Drive (see Fig. 7d).



Fig. 7a



Fig. 7b



Fig. 7c



Fig. 7d



Downtown

Businesses typically want people in and around them. By creating an environment that is comfortable for potential customers, they also create a welcoming environment for pedestrians. These areas demonstrate what a successful pedestrian environment looks and feels like.



Fig. 8a



Fig. 8b



Fig. 8c



Fig. 8d

- Many positive pedestrian facilities can be seen along McRae Street, such as stamped concrete, wide sidewalks, bump outs (curb extensions) and pedestrian ramps. It is important to ensure that pedestrians have priority over advertising signs and planters. These can impede accessibility for mobility-impaired individuals (see Figs. 8a and 8b). An example of a downtown street crossing that has many pedestrian facilities can be seen on Elizabeth Street from the Royal Duke Hotel to the Municipal Centre. The crossing for all streets that meet at the intersection is painted, there is a wide sidewalk with a curb extension (bump out) and a pedestrian ramp is included. The push-button activation light and audio alert systems assist any ability-impaired pedestrians (see Fig. 8c). Additional intersections like Elizabeth Street and Elk Street continue the positive pedestrian facilities through painted crosswalks, signs, benches with arms, garbage cans, curb extensions (bump outs), pedestrian ramps and interlocking brick (see Fig. 8d). These are great examples of visually appealing and positive pedestrian facilities that encourage walking for people of all physical abilities. These examples should be followed throughout the community.



Fig. 9

- Providing facilities for pedestrians turns an area into a welcoming space. Areas such as the small area with a picnic table and interlocking brick pathway on McRae Street can improve walkability (see Fig. 9). This area creates a positive link between buildings to access the downtown area and a visually appealing area to walk through or spend time in.



Temporary treatments are gaining more popularity as a measure of changing the streetscape character, with the flexibility of being able to modify the design after observations have been made about operations and usage over a period of time.

Treatments of this type are most notably found in New York City (the last three pictures), but examples can also be found in Canada (the first picture is from Calgary, and the second is from Charlottetown). These treatments often use paint and movable street furniture to create public space or new pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure. To help build community support for this type of project, it is important to pay special attention to the quality of the temporary measures used.



Fig. 10a



Fig. 10b

- Centre Avenue demonstrates how the positive pedestrian facilities in the downtown area can disappear. The sidewalk on the west side of the street abruptly ends (see Fig. 10a), and the one on the east side of the street narrows significantly (see Fig. 10b). Pedestrian walkways leading to/from the downtown can be opportunities to expand the positive pedestrian network.

Links

Neighbourhoods need to be connected to their surroundings. Linking neighbourhoods to commercial areas provides opportunities for residents to walk to local businesses, services and schools.



Fig. 11a



Fig. 11b



Fig. 11c



Fig. 11d

- To maintain walkway links and reduce vehicle traffic, roads can be closed to vehicle traffic but remain open to pedestrians, such as Lauden Avenue off of Elizabeth Street (see Fig. 11a). Another link to/from a neighbourhood can be seen crossing Sheep River Drive along Hunters Gate (see Fig. 11b). These links between neighbourhoods facilitate walking and help pedestrians reach their destinations. Another example can be seen at Hemus Parkway crossing Centre Avenue (see Figs. 11c and 11d).
- Linking pedestrians to their destinations is essential. Several examples in Okotoks demonstrate walkways that are not linked to a pedestrian's destination. For example, on the west side of Northridge Drive (Elizabeth and Northridge), there is no pedestrian entrance to enter the parking lot to reach the front door of the business (see Fig. 12a). Another example can be seen on Big Rock Trail and Southridge Drive, where the walkway running along the building does not connect to the street walkway that runs along the west side of Southridge Drive (see Figs. 12b and 12c).



Fig. 12a



Fig. 12b



Fig. 12c



Fig. 12d



Fig. 12e



Fig. 12f



Fig. 12g



Fig. 12h

- There are several examples in Okotoks where the pedestrian walkway ends without a continuous link. This can be seen on Westland Gate and Westland Road (see Fig. 12d). On occasion, the existing link forces pedestrians to alter their route. For example, the walkway along Crescent Road ends, but the crosswalk takes you to the other side of the road and/or up Pacific Avenue (see Fig. 12e).
- Cimarron Parkway connects the community to Cimarron Common, leading pedestrians past the dumpster along the way (see Fig. 12f). Once they reach the shopping area, there is no clear direction or support for pedestrian traffic. Pedestrians trying to reach Foothills Composite High School/Alberta High School of Fine Arts use the grassed area to reach the school (see Fig. 12g). The walkway around the school is not attached to the neighbourhood walkway. In the past, students needed to create an entry point through the fence. To get to nearby stores along Southridge Drive, students have created a desire path (see Fig. 12h).



Fig. 13a



Fig. 13b



Fig. 13c



Fig. 13d

- By creating desire paths (pathways along which people walk, even though no infrastructure exists), pedestrians demonstrate where they would like to have walking infrastructure. Below are a few examples where desire paths lead toward common pedestrian destination points. A back lane behind Okotoks Drive is being used by pedestrians leading into the schoolyard between Percy Pegler Elementary School, Ecole Beausoleil and Ecole Okotoks Jr. High School (see Fig. 13a). A paved pedestrian walkway leads directly into Wilson Street from the schoolyard between Percy Pegler Elementary School, Ecole Beausoleil and Ecole Okotoks Jr. High School (see Fig. 13b). A desire path through a yard between Percy Pegler Elementary School, Ecole Beausoleil and Ecole Okotoks Jr. High School (see Fig. 13c). Sometimes pedestrians will go to great lengths to create the access they desire. An opening has been created in a hedge into Ecole Okotoks Jr. High School from the laneway (see Fig. 13d).

Sketch planning of the origins and destinations within a walkable distance in key areas of the community would be useful in determining the locations of missing links. These missing links can then be prioritized to match capital availability and the necessity of the link through a sidewalk strategy.



Fig. 14a



Fig. 14b



Fig. 14c



Fig. 14d



Fig. 14e



Fig. 14f

- Pedestrians are demonstrating their desire to reach the downtown area from the Okotoks Recreation Centre area (see Fig. 14a) through a desire pathway (see Fig. 14b). This desire pathway leads to the built pedestrian pathway that leads from Crescent Road to Elma Street and Clark Avenue. Creating a more permanent pathway here is a challenge, as this property is not owned by the Town of Okotoks.
- A desire pathway shows that pedestrians are trying to connect from the Okotoks Lions Campground within the river valley to Woodhaven Pathway. There is no walkway down to the campground from Woodhaven Drive (see Fig. 14c). Linking these visitors to the Okotoks business community could be an opportunity for the stores located nearby. Another desire path can be seen from Crescent Road West and Elk Street. This pathway links the downtown area to Mountain Street (see Fig. 14d).
- A pedestrian desire path can be seen from St. Mary's School to the walkway along Cimarron Park Place (see Fig. 14e). Challenges for walkway maintenance need to be addressed through discussions between other organizations and private property owners. Another example where organizations need to discuss walkway maintenance can be seen in a small link where a town pathway links to a pathway on school property along Cimarron Trail (see Fig. 14f).



Walkway maintenance

Consistent and timely maintenance of walkways is necessary to provide walkers with a safe and accessible walking environment. Maintenance can include the physical structure of the walkway and the environment that affects its usage (e.g., snow, dirt, grass growth, bushes and tree branches).



Fig. 15a

It's important to make sure that removed snow is not deposited in areas that will affect other users. The use of the furniture zone, when provided, in the sidewalk area is one possible area for storage within the street. Where physical storage is difficult to accommodate, hauling snow away could also be considered.



Fig. 15b



Fig. 15c



Fig. 15d



Fig. 15e

- Sometimes lane access appears to take priority over pedestrians on the west side of Northridge Drive near Elizabeth Street (see Fig. 15a). Lane access areas can create a gap in snow removal policies.
- Walkway maintenance equipment can be modified for winter or summer use. An example can be seen at the clearing crossing Westmount Road, where the pathway connects Westmount School to the Tucker Parkway (see Figs. 15b, and 15c). The pedestrian infrastructure is well designed to adapt to snow removal.
- Involving pedestrians in the maintenance of their own walkways is a way to share the responsibility and decrease maintenance resources required for the Town of Okotoks. An example can be seen at the self-maintaining gravel application for the pedestrian bridge (see Fig. 15d) or at the base of the pedestrian walkway linking Crescent Road and Elma Street East and Clark Avenue (see Fig. 15e).



Fig. 16

Residents and business owners play an important role in ensuring that the sidewalks in front of their properties are kept clear. The Snow Angels program, where volunteers agree to clear walkways for neighbours who require assistance, is one example of a program that helps keep neighbourhoods walkable year-round.

- When walkways require repair, there is an opportunity to improve pedestrian infrastructure. A walkway repair along Okotoks Drive in front of Percy Pegler Elementary School is an example of a missed opportunity to improve drainage (see Fig. 16). As snow melts, water accumulates along the sidewalk, where it freezes and creates a slip hazard for pedestrians. When this sidewalk was replaced, water drainage could have been improved by allowing water to drain under the walkway or changing landscaping to drain water at another location.

Residential neighbourhoods

The design of walkways and roadways has a direct influence on the walkers and the walking culture of the community—specifically, where a neighbourhood design can prevent fast-moving vehicle traffic through wide streets and create a safe and convenient walking environment.



Fig. 17

A pedestrian connection (see green line below) between houses in a residential area is a way to ensure that there is continuity to the pedestrian walkway network.

- Keeping walkways clear can be a challenge. The responsibility of one neighbourhood resident may not be shared by another resident. An example can be seen on Woodhaven Drive across from Foothills Composite High School/Alberta High School of Fine Arts where there are walkways on both sides of the street (see Fig. 17). The snow is cleared in front of one house, but not another. The town should explore creative enforcement of its snow-clearing policies and bylaws.

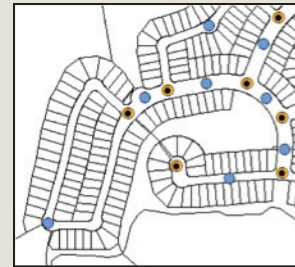




Fig. 18a

An area where residential roadways meet collector roads can be an area of congestion. This can create an unsafe environment for pedestrians. The area around Crystalridge Drive and Milligan Drive has the added challenge of a school nearby (see Figs. 18a and 18b). Changing policies (e.g., vehicle anti-idling initiatives, pick-up points for students further from the front door) and creating programs/initiatives (e.g., school travel plans, a “walking school bus”) can create a safer walking environment.



Fig. 18b

Promoting an Active and Safe Routes to School program at schools in the area is one community tool that has been used internationally since the 1970s to promote and aid children in walking and bicycling to school safely. In addition to the safety benefits of these programs, health and community benefits have also been realized. For more information, visit www.saferoutesinfo.org.

Signage and way-finding

Signage is a highly cost-effective way to encourage and support people to walk more. It is also a great way to promote walking, enable people to understand that they can walk to their destinations (it will be typically closer than they think) and give them the confidence to continue their journey on foot. A signage system for pedestrians needs to be carefully designed, delivered and supported with online information and maps. It must be user-centred and comprehensive.



Fig. 19a



Fig. 19b

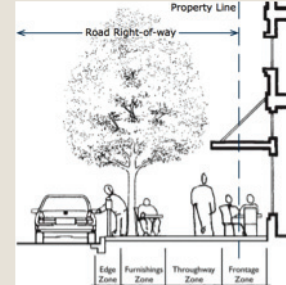
- Signs that point out walking locations for pedestrians, like the ones on Woodhaven Parkway (see Fig. 19a), are helpful and make the community more walkable. Additional signs like these, with way-finding information, could be useful to guide pedestrians to walkable destinations. These pedestrian signs also identify nearby recreational pathways. An example of these signs can be seen on Northridge Drive along Elma Street, where a sign guides pedestrians to Hemus Parkway pedestrian pathway (see Fig. 19b).



Fig. 20

- Signs identifying historical places within the community can make a neighbourhood more walkable. An example can be seen along Elma Street East and near Centre Street (see Fig. 20). The signs identifying historical locations along this route make for an interesting walk.

Thinking about the sidewalk area as four distinct zones helps municipalities and designers ensure space for people walking is given proper consideration.



Adopting space requirements for several different pedestrian uses is a practice common in many municipalities and in Complete Streets guidelines.

Spaces for people

The majority of people will not choose to walk unless it is seen as an attractive, safe and viable option—a space that includes some or all of the following elements: people moving throughout the space; a clearly dedicated pedestrian space to move through; space for resting, relaxing and recreation; seating; water fountains; washrooms; destinations (e.g., places that provide food and drink) and good lighting.



Fig. 21a



Fig. 21b

- Recreational trails within Okotoks provide spaces with many aspects of infrastructure for people using them. They are not just walking loops. They provide links to utilitarian walkways that lead pedestrians to their destinations. Cimarron Parkway (see Fig. 21a) is an example of one of these walking trails. Assessing these trails can determine whether they have adequate shelters, seating and water fountains, and whether they support pedestrians in walking to their chosen destinations. The bench along Riverside Drive demonstrates infrastructure that could be used for future public transportation (see Fig. 21b). Infrastructure like this can be an opportunity to partner with local businesses, which can sponsor it in exchange for advertising. The Town of Okotoks should ensure that the infrastructure installed meets accessibility guidelines. Although the bench (see Fig. 21b) is a nice addition, it lacks armrests, which can be a challenge for mobility-impaired individuals.



Fig. 22

- A positive example of a space for people can be seen at Okotoks Olde Towne Plaza, which is on North Railway Street between McRae Street and Clark Avenue (see Fig. 22). This area provides a great space for main street events. It includes pedestrian-friendly infrastructure such as lighting, a sitting area, a community stage, garbage cans and nearby stores.

It is important to have a data collection program that is aligned with the municipality's policy and vision for the transportation network. Common practice is to have the transportation data collection effort focused on intersection turning movements, but this does not help inform the municipality about how pedestrians are using the area.

Walk21 could be referenced when developing a more comprehensive data collection program for pedestrians. Measuring Walking is a project of the European COST Action 358 "Pedestrian Quality Needs" and the Walk21 international conference series. The goal is to "establish a set of international guidelines for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative techniques for measuring walking."

Pedestrian design and vehicle parking areas

A parking minimum is a standard that many Alberta communities practice for new and existing developments. Downtown Okotoks has ample parking areas, including parking lots and on the street. Mid-block crossings allow pedestrians to navigate the downtown area easily.



Fig. 23

- Parking areas are not always connected to walking infrastructure (sidewalk or pathways), nor are they always linked to the buildings they serve. After individuals park their vehicles, they will most likely have to use a walkway to reach the building. These links are noticeably absent in the parking area at Northridge Drive near Riverside Way (see Fig. 23).



Fig. 24a



Fig. 24b



Fig. 24c

- All of the stores facing the parking area near Big Rock Trail and Southridge Drive had cleared walkways in front of them (see Fig. 24a). Most pedestrians need to reach the front of the store from a parking spot farther away than the front door (see Fig. 24b). There is limited infrastructure for pedestrians to reach the cleared walkways in front of the stores. If a pedestrian walks into the parking area through a link from the street to reach the front doors, they come to an area where snow had been pushed into the pedestrian walkway (see Fig. 24c).

The Institute of Transportation Engineers has a recommended practice, entitled *Promoting Sustainable Transportation Through Site Design*, which provides guidance on how to accommodate walking, cycling, transit and carpooling in the design of a site. A range of supporting policies and actions are also provided.

The document presents four primary categories of design elements: site organization, site layout, site infrastructure and site amenity. Of particular relevance to the Walkable workshop are the elements focusing on pedestrian and cyclist routes, vehicle parking layout, internal roads, pedestrian facilities, and street furniture and landscaping.

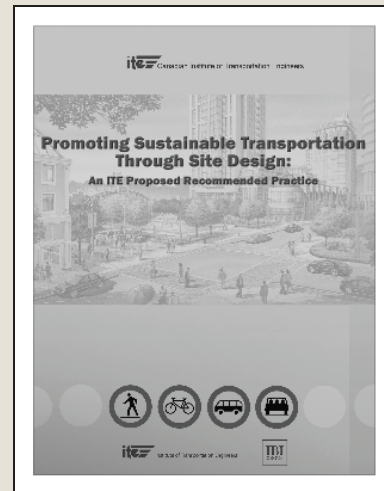




Fig. 25a



Fig. 25b



Fig. 25c

- Pedestrian facilities within shopping areas need to be addressed. Areas like Cimarron Common provide infrastructure for vehicles, but once potential customers park their vehicles, they become pedestrians. There is no infrastructure to support them walking to or between stores (see Figs. 25a and 25b). There is a walkway, including a pedestrian ramp, that leads from Cimarron Parkway into the Cimarron Common parking lot, but no continuation of pedestrian facilities (see Fig. 25c).



Fig. 26a



Fig. 26b

- The Okotoks Recreational Centre has limited connections for pedestrians to reach its front doors as they come from the parking area or the surrounding neighbourhood (see Figs. 26a and 26b).



Recreation and destination walking

Recreation walking paths are something to be celebrated in Okotoks. They are well-designed and well-used. These pathways are a way to provide major links for pedestrians throughout the community. It is important to ensure that these recreation pathways link to utilitarian walkways to ensure that pedestrians have network connections to destinations they would like to reach.



Fig. 27a



Fig. 27b



Fig. 27c



Fig. 27d

- The pedestrian bridge is a key link from the south part of town into downtown. Unfortunately, the pedestrian bridge is not wide enough to provide complete/ inclusive accessibility. The narrow bridge also causes challenges for snow removal equipment (see Fig. 27a). The lighting along recreational pathways can be seen along the river (see Fig. 27b). Additional lighting along walkways in Okotoks is recommended to make the community more walkable.
- Pedestrians can use the recreational pathway (Hemus Parkway) along Northridge Drive just south of Sandstone Gate from their neighbourhood to reach the southeast entrance to Christine's No Frills (Real Canadian Superstore) grocery store (see Fig. 27c). This dog walker is being responsible by using a leash while walking her dog along Woodhaven Parkway (see Fig. 27d). Ensuring dogs are on leash in public pedestrian areas is a challenge to enforce, but dogs that are not on leash can intimidate pedestrians. A multi-modal pathway or a shared pathway can be intimidating for some pedestrians. A cost-effective way of separating traffic could be through a painted line along the pathway.



Fig. 28a

- Along Westland Road, near Westland Gate, there are sidewalks on both sides, but the stores are facing away from the neighbourhood (see Fig. 28a). This lack of a link from the neighbourhood to nearby stores is a missed opportunity for pedestrians and store owners.



Fig. 28b



Fig. 28c

- Pedestrian facilities are noticeably absent in the area around Stockton Avenue and Stockton Point (see Figs. 28b and 28c). Although this area may be considered industrial, there are many locations that could be accessed by pedestrians if the infrastructure to support them was present.

Complete Streets is a design approach that requires streets to be designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

Adopting a Complete Streets policy and implementing street designs that incorporate the spirit of Complete Streets is now becoming common practice in North America. Both the City of Edmonton and City of Calgary have developed design guidelines that are available online.



National Complete Streets Coalition



CompleteStreetsForCanada.ca



Day three

Feedback and recommendations

Themes were identified by the Walkable team based on the first two days of activities. The group was split into three smaller groups. Each of these worked on four themes and identified who, when and how the themes could possibly be addressed in the community. The groups, themes and appropriate examples led to short- (quick wins), medium- and long-term suggestions for solutions.

GROUP 1

1. Work with external organizations on walking initiatives

Examples:

- » Work with SHAPE to establish walking school bus program—walking buddies
- » Determine starting point (pilot, which school(s), support required)
- » Determine requirements for creation and sustainability

Brainstorm

- Central website/info place to inform existing walking groups
 - » raise profile of the website
 - » info places include town website residents' association (e.g., Suntree, Crystal Ridge), sports groups/clubs
- Advertising/actively promote
 - » running ad every week in town's newspaper and/or through social media showing pathways to run/walk
 - » improves resident awareness of where walking paths are
- Pathway maps that show destinations/distances
 - » maps on pathway
 - » town with input—River Valley Committee
- Expand school crosswalk program to more intersections: discussion with AMA/schools
- SHAPE: get information and research program
- Make residents aware of where walking paths are
 - » developers and real estate workshop

Short-term goals (quick wins)

- Survey to determine which groups to engage as stakeholders
 - » existing groups
 - » other stakeholders (solicit related groups (e.g., weight control programs and concerned residents)
 - » interest levels
 - » find out what they do and their mandates
- Develop a joint workshop/meeting with cross-section of representatives to develop promotion plan/strategy and how to advertise/promote existing program
- Research existing grants for advertising/promotion (active communities, team to lead)—active community strategy
- Try to identify potential new groups (e.g., weight programs, daycares)
- Walking buddy program (new program)
- Parks watch program to help educate on dog etiquette (contact dog training programs, etc., and relay information)
- Walking groups become “pathway ambassadors”
 - » research how to implement pathway ambassador program
- Make school divisions aware of SHAPE programs
- Work with Parent–Link and others (e.g., daycares)

2. Improve promotion and education

Examples:

- » What promotional/educational materials might be required
- » Who collects/creates it
- » Distribution and ongoing maintenance of materials



Short-term goals (quick wins): January–April 2013

- Pathway brochures showing routes/distances
- Establish a standard format for information, content, local, size, design for signs
- Develop promotion/plan for eyes of community
- Types of promotional social media/Twitter
 - » creation of walking web page connected to town
 - » talk to town council
- International Walking Charter presented at council
 - » news story, press release, mayor (Eagle/Wheel)
 - » Graham to council (in January 2013)

Medium-term goals

- Research and develop an adopt-a-pathway program
 - » as a pathway improvement initiative, not as a fund raising initiative
 - » maybe as a reporting system
 - » to develop community pride in pathways
- Thank-you program for reporting pathway issues
- Council to enforce pedestrian-friendly initiatives
 - » include tie ins to recreational paths
 - » enforce developer requirements
- Work with developers (have regular/annual workshop with developers and key stakeholders to discuss desires; benefits of connected pathways; pedestrian-assessable buildings/parking lots and neighbourhood designs)—pathways not just recreational, but also destinations
- Develop branding promoting Okotoks as a walkable community
- Work with physicians' network, family physicians, home nursing/home care and nurses (workshop) and provide researchers/brochures (e.g., of the pathway system)
 - » tie into “sustainable Okotoks”

- Work with real estate agents to promote Okotoks as a walkable community—provide brochures to assist knowledge of pathway system and which walking groups exist/contact

Long-term goals

- Signs that promote health and walking along trail system
- Develop “tour guide” and present to some groups (e.g., Newcomers, Clubs, schools, seniors club, Go2) annually
- Develop a volunteer program that will lead people on walks to show pathway system
- Work with ACT team to develop some initial messaging
- Develop branding for brochures, signage as active community
 - » ACS

3. Connect pathways to downtown and river valley

Examples:

- » Determine priority areas

Short-term goals (quick wins): January–April 2013

- Survey and grading plan (design by engineering firm) completed in Coulee behind rec centre, water park, OJ, Poplar Avenue (e.g., OJ Hill)
- Design separate and wider sidewalks on Centre—research if temporary with barricades could be implemented this summer
- New event for Halloween—pumpkin rolling and compost after Halloween

Medium-term goals

- Ensure when Centre Street utility corridor is re-developed improvements in walkability are included.
- when there is a main replacement, ensure that the pathway is oversized (widen) and that there includes a separation for a bike lane.



- Develop long-term strategy/principles/plan for all pathway connectivity
 - » new and old development flexible—apply principles of plan
- Widen Laurie Boyd Bridge Crossing (2–3 years)
- West end feasibility study
 - » pedestrian bridge Sheep River Cove to Mountain View
- Pedestrian connection to review plans from South Bank
- Future pathway connection from downtown to view Field House (discussion with municipal development)

GROUP 2

1. Amend land-use bylaws and policies to reflect people first and pedestrian initiatives

Example: Require developers (new and re-developed) to create walkable access/frontage/parking lots

Short-term goals (quick wins)

- Add a requirement that all commercial areas connect walkways to fronts of buildings
 - » through land-use bylaw
 - » current pathway rule to carry forward

Medium-term goals

- Create municipal strategy for pedestrian amenities (e.g., benches, lighting, washrooms, shelters)
- Permit service kiosks along select pathways and streets

Long-term goals

- Establish municipal funding program for pedestrian retrofit
- Reduce parking requirements to encourage active transportation
 - » therefore can allow for pedestrian amenities
- Continue to promote healthy lifestyle through education

- Introduce incentives to developers to enhance pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods
 - » walkability scorecard
 - » example: bonus to increase density for water conservation
 - » (map included to represent parking lot with curvature parking area with walking path through the middle)

2. Maps and signs

Examples:

- » Type—paper, electronic, size, information on it (distance/time)
- » Location
- » Distribution

Short-term goals (quick wins)

- Okotoks Walking App for smart phones
 - » GPS
 - » interpretive—link to history or amenities
 - » themed walking paths—nature, historic, shopping business, cultural, eating and drinking (like Cowboy Trail)

Medium-term goals

- Wayfinding signage with maps and distances and obstacles (e.g., stairs)

Long-term goals

- Map at municipal centre, future transportation hubs
- Shelter sponsored by businesses

3. More events to encourage people to walk

- » Example: Close Elizabeth street on 1st friendly Saturdays and special events

Short-term goals (quick wins)

- More events at the plaza
- Scavenger hunt to different locations in town
- Encourage block parties/community-wide day
- Pedometer challenge



- Encourage Christmas decorations in backyards along pathways
- Geocaching/orienteering

Medium-term goals

- Walking passport contest
 - » adult focused
 - » child focused
 - » business passport downtown

Long-term goals

- Building community to sustain the culture of walking
- Solar-powered heated sidewalks

GROUP 3

1. Improved crosswalks, lighting and countdown lights

Examples:

- » Paint, tactile changes
- » Physical lights—walk lights
- » Countdown lights

Short-term goals (quick wins)

- Investigate/develop business case for more durable paint for crosswalks (next painting)
- Better maintenance (where roads intersect with crossings)
 - » create a business case
 - » snow clearing
 - » build up at crosswalks
- Milligan Drive and Centre Avenue lighting (at pedestrian crossing)
- Better/more consistent pedestrian signage
 - » assessment
- No parking signs 1 ft² from either side of crosswalks

Medium-term goals

- Guidelines (design) minimum standards; do we need all the parking—beyond the minimum required (i.e., instead in some situations only)?

- Enforcement—minimum standards (change bylaw)
 - » parking minimum amounts currently—should there be a maximum amount rather than a minimum?
- Parkades as alternatives to parking lots
- Better/more consistent pedestrian signage
 - » update plan

Long-term goals

- Textured crossings—increase amount
- Countdowns—audio, visual on sign
- Better/more consistent pedestrian signage
 - » implementation/maintenance

2. Council enforced development guidelines making pedestrian facilities a priority to developers

- » Example: As a supportive authority, determine what the council needs for enforcement

Short-term goals (quick wins)

- Requires a change in planning concepts/requirements by town politicians (react less to small “closets” of electors who ask, “Why is there not enough parking?”)
- Politicians/staff have to stay the course and take the heat (MDP sidewalk examples)
- Education—“new” council member requires an orientation, which could include an info session on walkability
 - » define “walkable” for Okotoks
 - » create measurables

Medium-term goals

- Already in the works, but council needs to set a timeframe or this will drift off into long term or limbo
 - » set timelines and goals

Long-term goals

- Council/developers: pedestrians priority
- Parking needs to be more pedestrian friendly



3. Make parking lots more pedestrian friendly

Examples:

- » Assess—determine what “pedestrian friendly” means (consistency)
- » Guidelines—minimum standards
- » Enforcement—changes to existing parking lots? Just limit to new parking lots?
- » Recommendations—lighting, paint, sidewalks, etc.

Short-term goals (quick wins)

- Painting
- Cornerstone—sidewalks
 - » using parking for other uses: outdoor sitting spaces, trees
- Walking spaces by the George restaurant/ Co-op, Safeway

Medium-term goals

- Limit amount of land that can be used for parking
- Require sidewalks in all new parking lot developments
- Require parking in rear for all new downtown development

Long-term goals

- Parking structures (parkades)
 - » centralized parking

Key findings and recommendations

Drawing on all of the above activities, ideas, documents, discussions and the observations of the visiting Walkable team, the following findings and recommendations are provided to help focus efforts to improve walkability in the Town of Okotoks and to ensure the viability and liveability of the town for generations to come.

In summary

- The town has much to be proud of, with good public spaces for people to walk demonstrating a great foundation that can be built upon.

- The Active Transportation committee has a tremendous show of commitment by the town council, which enables town administrators to discuss and bring about the changes that citizens in Okotoks would like to see.
- Recreational walking/trails networks provide great opportunities for recreational walking and connections to destinations for everyday walking.
- Maintain a clear focus on walking as a priority through attention to the details that have a significant impact on the pedestrian experience. Future projects and proposals should be reviewed for not only their impact on walking, but also their potential to support and promote more walking.
- It will also be necessary to push a few boundaries (e.g., restricting vehicle movement) and to recruit community members to foster support for the changes. Build upon the current community willingness to engage over walkability issues.

In particular

- Put pedestrians at the top of the road-user hierarchy and give them priority in policy, resource allocation, project implementation and promotion.
- Ensure all new developments, neighbourhoods and centres have consistent implementation standards, with clear approval criteria and guidelines to deliver walkable communities.
- Continued incorporation and enforcement of pedestrian facilities within new projects is required. This would include appropriate standards for changes when an area is being repaired and/or changed for other reasons. Priorities should include investigating the possibility of linking residential neighbourhoods and local centres, continuing improvements from downtown and installing key walking infrastructure.
- Celebrate success and maintain a long-range vision of what the community should be to represent all citizens of Okotoks: building a new cultural and physical environment, step by step, and having fun while doing it.



Recommendations mapped against the International Charter for Walking

The basis for the key findings and recommendations come from the themes that the group worked through on the last day of the workshop. Their recommendations, as well as those of Alberta Health Services's Walkable team, were reoriented based on the International Charter for Walking.

Principle 1: Increased inclusive mobility

“People in communities have the right to accessible streets, squares, buildings and public transport systems regardless of their age, ability, gender, income level, language, ethnic, cultural or religious background, strengthening the freedom and autonomy of all people, and contributing to social inclusion, solidarity and democracy.”

Key findings

The mobility-impaired community in Okotoks should be engaged to ensure that their needs are met. Intersections should be assessed to ensure that they are accessible not only for persons with disabilities but also for young children (including those in strollers) and older adults who do not have access to a motor vehicle. Improving walkway accessibility can start with the development of a priority list of walkways that require adaptation and/or repair. Public spaces should be assessed so that adaptations can be made, where required, to enable full access for everyone in the community.

Recommendations for increased inclusive mobility

- 1.1 Engage individuals of various mobility levels to assist in a community assessment of walkway accessibility and public building access. This dialogue can also be reached through a community engagement strategy that includes discussions with neighbourhood associations and other community stakeholders. Identify specific areas that are less accessible. Map a route to begin piloting specific facilities that will improve walkability for all levels of mobility, with the goal of creating an accessible community for pedestrians of levels of mobility.
- 1.2 Improve areas where mobility-impaired citizens identify the need for additional facilities, such as shortening crossings by the addition of pinch points (bump outs/curb extensions), ensuring painted crosswalks are present, increasing signal duration, and areas that should be prioritized for drop curbs (e.g., aprons, ramps, curb cut outs).
- 1.3 Identify where walkway maintenance inhibits pedestrian travel for the mobility impaired. Identify the resource requirements to maintain adequate maintenance.
- 1.4 Create a priority list of areas/routes that should/will be expanded, with the goal of Okotoks having fully accessible walkways.
- 1.5 Identify possible pedestrian facilities that could be piloted to improve the walkability of large parking lots that support all levels of mobility.



Principle 2: Well-designed and -managed spaces and places for people

“Communities have the right to live in a healthy, convenient and attractive environment tailored to their needs, and to freely enjoy the amenities of public areas in comfort and safety away from intrusive noise and pollution.”

Key findings

There is an economic benefit for businesses to support the creation of pedestrian-friendly connections to and within retail areas. Improving walkway infrastructure is required to support walking throughout the community. Pedestrians should feel safe on any portion of the community’s walkways. Crosswalks need to be well-designed to ensure inclusiveness and safety. Displaying that the streets are shared by all community members and not just a place for vehicles can support walking in the community. Street closures, public events, facilities (e.g., tables, chairs) and converting space from vehicle use to pedestrian use display the community’s commitment to pedestrian movement. A well-designed and -implemented marketing and communications plan can share the walking opportunities with everyone in Okotoks.

Recommendations for well-designed and -managed spaces and places for people

2.1 Assess current pedestrian connections to and within retail areas. Determine what is available and what could be improved. Engage building owners in discussions for improvements.

2.2 Assess current walkway infrastructure with a list of ideal infrastructure (e.g., shelter, water fountains, washrooms, walkway lighting) to create a priority list of areas requiring improvements. Determine a plan to implement changes/additions that includes a budget. This plan would include pilot projects to begin trials of new infrastructure that could be assessed for effectiveness. This plan should lead to advocating to council for resources that could lead to more permanent infrastructure changes.

2.3 Assess perceived pedestrian-shared pathway safety. Determine ways to address any identified issues (e.g., adding a painted line to create a separation between pedestrians and cyclists).

2.4 Assess crosswalks and create a priority list of intersections requiring new and/or improved crosswalks. Pilot ways to clearly identify crosswalks to drivers and walkers (e.g., lights, tactile changes, raised crosswalks). Create a plan to have all crosswalks in the community meet the standards set through pilot improvements.

2.5 Identify potential community groups/ organizations that may be interested in temporary street closures for public events. These events could be downtown or residential (e.g., block BBQs). Smaller, temporary closures could be piloted in small areas that include facilities like tables/chairs inside and outside of the downtown core.

2.6 Engage local artists in plan/proposal to increase public art (e.g., gateway entrance art and community artwork through murals and organized/legal graffiti).

2.7 Assess the possibility and effectiveness of a marketing and communications plan to educate the public on walkway etiquette, the health benefits of walking/running/physical activities and sustainability messaging. This could include education and enforcement of walkway rules/regulations through signage (e.g., explain why dogs should stay on leash). Engage community group(s) to assist in plan implementation.



Principle 3: Improved integration of networks

“Communities have the right to a network of connected, direct and easy to follow walking routes which are safe, comfortable, attractive and well maintained that link their homes, shops, schools, parks, public transport interchanges, green spaces and other important destinations.”

Key findings

By improving walkway connectivity, a complete network to support pedestrians can be created throughout the community. Policy development can encourage pedestrian travel by providing accessible destinations for pedestrians to walk to. An integrated and safe network should be provided for all users of Okotoks’s pathways.

Recommendations for improved integration of networks

3.1 Assess connectivity of walkways throughout the community. Set priorities and create budget to address gaps in the walkways. Create an implementation plan to be approved by council.

3.2 Determine where there are missing links in walkways (pathways and sidewalks). Create a priority list to address these links based on community feedback. Determine resources required to complete the walking network.

3.3 Assess Okotoks’s urban development policies and standards to increase the priority of pedestrians within new and existing developments. Destinations for walkers (e.g., stores) should be included in new urban development plans.

3.4 Assess the requirements to ensure safe integration of bicycling and walking networks.

Principle 4: Supportive land-use and spatial planning

“Communities have the right to expect land-use and spatial planning policies which allow them to walk to the majority of everyday services and facilities, maximizing the opportunities for walking, reducing car-dependency and contributing to community life.”

Key findings

An independent committee representing walkability, containing key stakeholders, can ensure that walking is represented at all stages of community development in Okotoks. The town should continue raising the profile of pedestrians. This can be done by adapting current vehicle-dominated environments to support pedestrian use.

Recommendations for supportive land-use and spatial planning

4.1 Increase the mandate of existing town committees (e.g., the Municipal Planning Commission) to include a representative who makes walking a focus.

4.2 Ensure that pedestrians are prioritized first in all stages of planning/development.

This can be accomplished through providing the Municipal Planning Commission and council with updated policy and procedures to ensure developers make the pedestrian the priority through the development of pedestrian-friendly infrastructure/design. Update/revise the land-use bylaw to incorporate pedestrian-friendly design. Engage community stakeholders prior to design investment. Collect and draft walkable pedestrian-friendly guidelines. Developers should be engaged for their feedback on including walking routes and neighbourhood appeal in their designs.

4.3 Update and revise land-use bylaws to incorporate pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and develop new bylaws that would engage building owners to pilot improvements for pedestrians to reach their store. Create design guidelines for pedestrian movement within parking areas. Use these pedestrian facilities to connect stores within shopping areas. Ensure pedestrian networks with parking areas are connected to each other and to the community walkway network.



4.4 Assess the possibility of converting space from vehicle use to pedestrian use through piloted conversions (e.g., convert parking lots to areas that contain pedestrian facilities and/or a public park area). Update/revise land-use bylaws to ensure that when modifications occur, they meet the new guidelines.

Principle 5: Reduce road danger

“Communities have the right to well-designed streets that prevent accidents and are enjoyable, safe and convenient for walking—especially for children, the elderly and people with limited abilities.”

Key findings

Vehicle speed can add to roadway danger. Identifying appropriate traffic-calming devices can reduce vehicle speed without inhibiting the flow of traffic. Improving pedestrian crosswalks can reduce road danger and provide an environment where all pedestrians would feel confidence and safe. Appropriate walkway maintenance should be shared by everyone in Okotoks. The Town of Okotoks shares the responsibility with the entire community to ensure that walkways are accessible to everyone. Take space that was previously dedicated to vehicles and adapt it to pedestrian use.

Recommendations for reducing road danger

5.1 Assess perceptions of vehicle speed. Publish and promote results. If required, pilot and assess traffic-calming devices (e.g., a variety of speed zones, passive devices such as temporary or permanent curb extensions, street design to fit area (eliminating the need for signs), expand medians, additional planters to narrow the roadway and reduce vehicle speed).

5.2 Review current walkway design standards and adapt standards to meet walkability requirements (e.g., width, shared/non-shared, separation between walkers and other modes of traffic). Assess sidewalks and pathways to determine if they meet current design standards or if they need to be updated.

5.3 Assess requirements for new and/or improved crosswalks. Create priority list for crosswalk improvement. Determine ideal facilities for crosswalks (e.g., walk lights that include countdown lights, designated signage, well-painted strips, patterned crosswalks). Pilot ideal crosswalk facilities. Create an implementation plan for crosswalk improvements and continuing standards.

5.4 Assess where appropriate walkway maintenance can improve (e.g., walkways not clear of snow/dirt, lack of appropriate street lighting, quality and quantity of sidewalks can be improved). Create a plan to pilot and then implement walkway maintenance improvements.

5.5 Identify where pilot projects could include a temporary conversion of vehicle areas to an area that contains pedestrian facilities and/or a park area.

Principle 6: Less crime and fear of crime

“Communities have the right to expect an urban environment designed, maintained and policed to reduce crime and the fear of crime.”

Key findings

Crime was not identified as a critical issue for walking in Okotoks, but there were some concerns about perceived safety. Crime, or even the perceived possibility of crime, can prevent people from walking.

Recommendations for less crime and fear of crime

6.1 Conduct vehicle speed studies and promote the results, which could be accessed through public media (e.g., available online).

6.2 Pilot ways of reducing the fear of crime (e.g., adapting space to encourage pedestrians, increasing/changing lighting, adding music).

6.3 Apply crime prevention through environmental design analysis plan in new urban development plans.



Principle 7: More supportive authorities

“Communities have the right to expect authorities will provide for, support and safeguard their ability and choice to walk.”

Key findings

Transferring town administration’s commitment to improve walkability to other authorities can be challenging. There are many areas that can continue to be built upon and help give momentum to other walking initiatives. Commitment to the international charter can help the town commit to having a department and individuals responsible for improving walkability and addressing walkability issues. Ensuring that walkability issues are highlighted within planning documents can ensure that these issues are addressed without the requirement of additional planning documents.

Recommendations for more supportive authorities

7.1 Create proposals to receive support from Town Council and administration for

- pathway network expansion, with appropriate resources to maintain new and existing pathways
- promotion of and support for community sports and recreation opportunities
- enforcement of rules/regulations around walkway maintenance and safety by passive (e.g., promoting rules/regulations, providing pedestrians with ways to regulate, reporting structures) and active (e.g., law enforcement, fines) means
- advocacy for facilities and programs to support walking (e.g., outdoor gym, walking track, social walking groups)
- engaging school boards/parent councils to participate in walking promotion programs/initiatives within schools (e.g., school travel planning, “walking school buses,” Safe Healthy, Active, People, Everywhere).
- coordinating existing groups/stakeholders to address common ideas

7.2 Provide support for the creation of a marketing and communications plan (e.g., social media, increase/improve signage and maps (including distance and walking time), improved information and interactive tools on the town’s website).

7.3 Advocate for and encourage the continuation and expansion of promoting walking during existing community events (e.g., Winter Walk Day, Walk with the Mayor, Light up Okotoks, parades).

Principle 8: A culture of walking

“Communities have a right to up-to-date, good quality, accessible information on where they can walk and the quality of the experience. People should be given opportunities to celebrate and enjoy walking as part of their everyday social, cultural and political life.”

Key findings

Walking culture is a challenge within most Alberta communities. The goal of improving the culture of walking is to see walking/walkability as a desirable activity, rather than just something that you do when you do not have your vehicle. Many improvements to the walkability of Okotoks has already occurred: a downtown area that is very supportive to pedestrians, the start to a strong recreational walking culture within the trail system and green spaces, and the support of council through an Active Transportation committee. It is important to continue building on the momentum of these improvements.





Day 1 – Workshop notes from flip chart paper

Increased mobility

What do we have now?

- “some” pinch points (2 checkmarks), pattern crossing (2 checkmarks), drop curb/aprons in new areas (2 checkmarks)
- Snow cleaning on weekdays (only?) on regional pathway (~ 68% cleaned) (2 checkmarks)
- New pathways designed to be 3m (2 checkmarks)
- New area have separated sidewalks on higher traffic road ways

What can we do better with what we have?

- Integration of bikes & walking (2 checkmarks)
- Pathway connections (cleared snow where pathway exist) to schools (3 check marks)
- Pathway connections into school yards (2 checkmarks)
- Walkability of “large” parking lots (i.e., Costco, corner store, rec centre) (2 checkmarks)
- No walkability from car dealers on North Ridge (1 checkmark)
 - Improve destination pathway (goat path)
- No mobility on bikes on N/S ridge & centre, How? (1 checkmark)
 - Bike path/lanes on roadways to connect pathway systems
- Laurie Boyd bridge too narrow – visibility (1 checkmark)
- Improve “cow path” from OJ to downtown (2 checkmarks)
- Centre & Milligan – “better lighting (council support) (1 checkmark) & larger sign”; more visible crossing
 - Ice clearing along Cimarron Boulevard

- Enforce bylaw for snow clearing on “non-town” owned pathways/sidewalks
 - Enforce/patrol
- Snow clearing from pathway/sidewalk – crossing roads (1 checkmark)
 - e.g., pathway is cleared – the street & street creates wind rows across where pathway connections is
 - Coordination of town clearing snow (so no “piles” left obstructing pedestrian traffic)

What can we add (“big ideas”)?

- Better walking to DAWGS (1 checkmark)
- Centre Ave sidewalk (too narrow, guardrail, separation from traffic) (1 checkmark)
- More crossing across river (west, between Laurie Boyd & 32nd) (1 checkmark)
- Martin Avenue hill improvements (1 checkmark)
- More separated sidewalks & safety on crossings by schools (1 checkmark)
- Identifiable bike lanes & separated from traffic
- Wide pathways (1 checkmark)
- Pathway maps (1 checkmark)
- Painted “pathway” through parking lots (with no slip paint & potted planters) (1 checkmark)
- Wider regional pathway to accommodate walking & bikes (1 checkmark)
- On going pathway maintenance (annual budget for repairs & maintenance) (1 checkmark)
- Improved integration (1 checkmark)
- CHANGE PRIORITY SCALE PLAN PEDESTRIANS FIRST then vehicles
- More downtown events (1 checkmark)
- Another downtown plaza
- Work with Town Okotoks



Well-designed and -managed spaces and places for people

What do we have now?

- River valley
- Extensive pathways – that are connected (for most people)
- Town plaza
- Speed reductions in areas
- Ped. Lights
- Welcoming “Ped. Friendly” downtown
- Water/spray park
- Playgrounds
- Sports fields
- Off-leash dog park
- Community garden
- Dawgs – Seaman Stadium
- Wetlands areas
- Gold courses – cross country ski
- Lake community

What can we do better with what we have?

- Connectivity
 - Pathways
 - Retail areas “to” and within
 - Lighting
 - Painted lines in pathways
 - Separate cyclists from pedestrian
 - Improve signage “clarity”, clear messaging
- Educating citizens
 - Etiquette
 - Health benefits of walking/running/phys. Activities
 - Sustainability messaging
- More street closures for public events
- “close it and they will come”

- Dogs
 - Education & enforcement – signage why explaining why dogs should stay on leash
- Lower car speeds

What can we add (‘big ideas’)?

- More public art
- Gateway entrance art
- Community art work
 - Murals
 - Organized/legal graffiti space
- Patio areas
- Obvious crosswalks
- Natural playgrounds/pathways
- Encourage residents to shut down residential road and have “block” BBQ
- Encourage “Parklets” – i.e., tables/chairs, etc., outside in downtown

Improved integration of networks

What do we have now; What can we do better with what we have; What can we add (‘big ideas’)?

- Connectivity of pathways – Connects that are missing that need to be added: (2 checkmarks)
 - Connect pathway that runs from from Thorson Crescent to Hodson Crescent to the major pathway that runs from Bans Drive to Milligan Drive
 - South part of Crystalridge: Missing connection from pathway that runs behind Crystalridge Terrace to pathway long lake behind Crystalridge rise
 - The pathway along Southridge drive between Westridge Drive and Westland Street needs to be completed

APPENDICES



- Walk North to: (2 checkmarks)
 - South
 - river valley
 - downtown
 - commercial areas
- More benches along existing paths
- Crossing 32nd street from the Drake Landing area to Milligan Drive to reach the school in the area of the Milligan Drive and Crystalridge Drive intersection (1 checkmark)
- Facilities and furniture (benches) – Transit stops
 - Sitting areas in pinch points downtown
- Connecting to downtown/rec. centre/ sports field (connection between Okotok's Recreation Centre, Percy Pegler Elementary School, Okotoks High School between their athletic fields and Wylie Athletic Park (1 checkmark)
- Rebuild the pedestrian bridge to ensure that it is wide enough to support accessibility (connects Heritage Parkway and Sheep River Pathway)
- Railroad crossings – river pathway (1 checkmark)
- Inclusive mobility ramp along the stairs that connect Crescent Road and Elma Street East.
 - Cost
 - Liability issues
- Paved pathway connecting Crescent Road East to the Recreation Centre to link the North to the South
- Trail to DAWGS stadium - pathway linking Mcrae Street, crossing Crystalridge Drive and the Fisher Street/Crescent area (creates and east/west connection)
- Pathway on West side 32 street – all the way downhill – not a priority
- Pathway along bottoms of pathways need to be paved – east west connection – trail to DAWGS stadium
- Westmount storm pond to Sobeys's connection
 - Use the lights there now
- Stockton Point to off leash dog park
 - Expensive
- Future transit hubs – need to be planned to have direct connections to pathways (1 checkmark)
- Integrated approach to destination (i.e., pathway /bikes to front doors of business)
- Integrated pathway connecting stores in strip malls industrial parks, large commercial developments)
- Put pathways in first before streets, have stores, etc., instead of putting in last (even if planned) (2 checkmarks)

Supportive land-use and spatial planning

What do we have now; What can we do better; What can we add ('big ideas')?

- Individual committee of council have opportunity to comment on plan
 - Individual committees can meet more regularly as a group, with inclusion of developers
- People first in all stages of planning/ development
 - MPC's, council have backbone to ensure developers make the investment in pedestrian-friendly infrastructure
 - Update/revise the land-use bylaw to incorporate pedestrian-friendly design
- Need to develop a process to involve developers with recent changes/updates in current philosophy related to pedestrian-friendly designing
 - Meet with stakeholders prior to design investment
- More walkable 'Pedestrian Friendly' guidelines
- Mixed use communities

APPENDICES



- Developers incentives for walking routes & beauty
- Skating rink near plaza
- More architectural guidelines for big box stores
- Planning parks and pathways within big box developments
- Create destinations! (1 checkmark)

Reduced road danger

What do we have now?

- Variety of speed zones
- Traffic claming
 - pinch points
- Cross walk lights
 - new & better, please!
 - countdown lights
- Designated (signage & painted strips)
- Paved roads
 - patterned cross walks
- Street cleaning
- Good street lighting
- Good quality & quantity of sidewalks
- CPTED analysis plan in new development

What can be done better?

- Some sidewalks too narrow
 - Centre Avenue Hill
- Better signed and more pedestrian crosswalks (1 checkmark)
- Speed limits depending on area
 - Speed signs
- Street design to fit area
 - To eliminate need to sign

What can we add ('big ideas')?

- Beautify big parking lots
 - Sears parking lot or across converted to park & Skating rink (or across)
- Expand medians with more planters
- More traffic calming
- Sidewalk 'connectivity'
- Wider walking path connecting large stores
- Connect health centre walking pathway
- Pathways tied to shopping

Less crime and fear of crime

Due to time constraints and group numbers the group felt that this principle would be addressed through addressing the other principles of the International Charter for Walking.

More supportive authorities

What do we have now?

- Pathways – town council & admin
- Sports & Rec – participation & encouragement
- Dog park – participation & encouragement
- River valley – police (pathway patrol)
- Outdoor gym
- Rather than wait for an accident/crisis to motivate adoption of practical endorsement of “Walking school bus” & “SHAPE”; let us coordinate the existing groups/stakeholders to the same end = common good!
- Support from school boards/parent councils
- Walking track
- Winter walk day
- Walk with the Mayor
- Light up Okotoks
- Parade
- Car show & shine
- Quilt show
- River Valley



What can be done better?

- Promotion
- Social media
- Signage & maps
- Improved web-site
- 1st Saturdays coupons for walking to store (stamp passport)
 - Expand to include pathway in River Valley
 - Close main street
- Show distance (educate) – It's really not that far
- Work with schools to create a walking school bus
- Create social walking groups (1 checkmark)

A culture of walking

Due to time constraints and group numbers the group felt that this principle would be addressed through addressing the other principles of the International Charter for Walking.

Day 1 – Translating ideas into actions

Individuals collected their top 4 priorities from group brainstorming or on their own.

Individuals 1st choice:

- Have developers consult and work with stakeholder BEFORE they invest in the planning stages
- Walking school bus – SHAPE
- Integrated approach to destinations (i.e., pathway/bike to front doors of business)
- Beautify big parking lots
- Centre Avenue sidewalk
- Better walking to DAWGS
- Pathway Maps
- Painted walkway in parking lots
- Better & more crosswalks
- Spaces & places for People
- Improved cross walks, reduce road danger, lighting, countdown lights
- Promote Walking School Bus, existing groups (GO2, active transportation), existing groups partner with SHAPE to implement
- Count down cross walks, lighted (reduce danger)
- Tie the different pathway systems to the centre of town (destination)
- Connectivity
- More supportive authorities on every level on community involvement
- Walking school bus



Individuals 2nd choice:

- Update land-use bylaw, polices & processes so that people are thought of first – (later vehicles, business). Ensure MPC & council doesn't waiver on enforcement
- Partnership between town developer & stakeholders walkers first
- Encourage "Parklets"
- More decorative Medians
- More public art
- Block parties
- Patio areas
- Connecting into downtown and river valley
- Culture of walking
- Supportive authorities, education, coordinate existing groups to same end
- Make parking lots more pedestrian friendly and aesthetically pleasing
- Get council to tell developers to do their job – make pedestrians a priority
- Events/programs with local businesses to encourage walking (i.e. build on downtown "passport" incentive)
- Design for beauty & safety
- Increased inclusive mobility
- Parklets & patios

Individuals 3rd choice:

- Work with school divisions to encourage walking programs
- Safety with more lights along some pathways (older part of Okotoks)
- Change priority scale – plan pedestrian first then vehicle
- Close Main Street for 1st Saturdays
- Benches on pathways
- More connecting in Ai Au A5

- Trail to DAWGS stadium
- Mobility ramp along the stairs down from OJ
- Widening of sidewalks
- Improved integration of network
- Culture of walking, create social walking groups, education, and signage, and create destinations
- Improve connectivity of all pathways and roadways
- Wider pathways (3 m) to allow for dual usage
- Improve signage (Maps)
- Destinations
- Improved integration of networks
- Close Elizabeth Street on 1st Saturdays, parade days, light up

Individuals 4th choice:

- Regular/annual investment into pathway development and maintenance
- Educating people about walking culture
- Mote walkable pedestrian friendly design guidelines
- Educating citizens to promote healthier more active life styles
- Skating rink near plaza
- Make all crosswalks pinch points
- Developer's incentives to renovate and beautify
- Architecture guidelines for big box stores
- Schools – less vehicles
- Reduced road danger
- Supportive land use & planning, people first in all planning
- Develop more parklets
- Develop/improve access from North side to downtown & river valley



- Parklets along pathways
- Improve the way we promote & educate
- Supportive land use & planning
- Land use bylaw – look at parking requirements. Less supply = less accessibility and hopefully more people will walk

Each person shared their 2 with their group. Then each person had 3 votes to vote with (could not vote on their own priority).

Group 1

- Count down crosswalks
- Improved integration of networks – stakeholders
- People first in all planning
- Require developers (new & redeveloped) to create “walkable” access/frontage/parking lots (8 Votes)
- SHAPE & Walking School Bus
- Have developers consult with stakeholder before initiate planning process
- Council backbone to tell developers to make pedestrians a priority (6 Votes)
- Increased inclusive mobility
- Improved crosswalks, (lighting countdown lights (7 Votes)
- Create smart communities ‘live/shop where you work’ (4 Votes)
- Partnership between town, developer & stakeholders walkers first
- Amend land-use bylaw & policies to reflect people first and pedestrian initiatives (11 Votes)

Group 2

- Better & more crosswalks
- More walkable pedestrian friendly guidelines
- Work with SHAPE to establish Walking School Bus program (11 Votes)
- Lessen land use bylaws, parking requirements
- Educate & enforce dog owner bylaws (2 Votes)
- Educate citizens in promoting healthier more active lifestyles
- Connecting pathways to downtown & River valley (7 Votes)
- Make larger parking lots more pedestrian friendly (4 Votes)
- Plan for pedestrians before vehicles
- Close Elizabeth Street on 1st Saturdays and special events (5 Votes)
- More events to encourage people to walk (2 Votes)
- More decorative medians

Group 3

- Culture of walking (maps & signs) (7 Votes)
- Improve the way we promote & educate (7 Votes)
- Tie in pathways to central hub
- Walking School Bus
- Connectivity pathways lighting
- Design for beauty & safety incentives (2 Votes)
- Social walking groups
- Initiatives with businesses to encourage walking (2 Votes)

APPENDICES



Evaluations

Respondent characteristics

Seventeen individuals attended the Okotoks workshop and completed the evaluation form. The self-described role of workshop attendees is summarized in Table 1. The majority of attendees identified as community members or employees.

Table 1. Okotoks workshop attendee roles

Role description	n
Community member	6
Municipal employee (Development Officer, Community Services, Town Planning, Pathway Maintenance)	4
Active transportation	3
Healthy Okotoks Coalition	3
Culture, Parks and Recreation	1
School Division representative	1
Total	17

Quality and Effectiveness of Workshops

Organization and Productivity of the Workshop

Workshop attendees were asked a series of questions pertaining to the organization and productivity of the workshop. These findings are summarized in Table 2. Findings indicate attendees were pleased with these elements of the workshop.

Table 2. Organization and productivity of Okotoks workshop

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	Low rating/disagreement				High rating/agreement			
Clarity of goals	0	1	0	1	1	11	3	
Organization	0	0	0	1	2	9	5	
Effective use of time	0	0	1	0	1	9	6	
Productive discussions	0	0	1	0	0	8	8	
Focused discussions	0	0	0	0	0	11	6	
Overall productivity	0	0	0	0	3	8	6	

Answers closer to 7 indicate the desired response (e.g., reflects a positive opinion toward this element of the workshop).

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Comments from participants regarding the organization and productivity of the discussions were very positive, with many expressing gratitude for the workshop. Comments included:

- Excellent, thought-provoking discussions, participants were very enthusiastic
- Helped to establish priorities
- Great idea sharing opportunity
- A great group of people at the table
- Need more time for discussions
- PowerPoint Presentations were not as engaging

Attendees were also asked about their intentions following the workshop and their overall satisfaction with the workshop. These findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Perception of the impact of the Okotoks workshop

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Low rating/disagreement			High rating/agreement			
Practical ideas	0	0	0	1	4	8	7
Plan to act	0	0	0	0	2	6	9
Confidence the workshop will produce a benefit in community	0	0	0	0	3	9	5
Interest in connecting with other communities	0	0	0	2	3	5	7
Overall satisfaction	0	0	0	0	0	11	6

Answers closer to 7 indicate the desired response (e.g., reflects a positive opinion toward this element of the workshop).

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The following were listed as things participants will do differently following their attendance at the workshop:

- Continue to work with other stakeholders to identify strategies to promote walkability
- Ensure Community Walkability is considered in Municipal matters such as Land Use By-law amendments and town Planning
- Be more aware of town infrastructure and walkability

Participants listed the following as being useful or informative aspects of the workshop:

- Great group work/ idea sharing
- The examples from Okotoks and other communities
- The presentations
- Learning about SHAPE
- The emphasis on getting support from commercial developers
- The Charter
- Learning of how the various initiatives can work together

Suggestions from participants regarding how to improve the workshops include:

- Provide handouts for attendees
- Provide more review of the pathways
- Stick to the agenda
- Improve PowerPoint Presentations
- Provide a list of resources and links to websites and more information
- Provide additional information on poorly versus well planned communities



Biographies

Ryan Martinson, P.Eng., Transportation Engineer, Stantec

Ryan is a professional engineer in the transportation planning field who has been involved with various transportation planning and engineering projects in his career. Ryan has extensive experience and excellent understanding of the relationship between land use, urban design and transportation. Ryan's specialty is in sustainable transportation and he takes a multi-modal and human scale approach to the solutions he proposes. Most recently, Ryan has been the transportation planning engineer for the City of Edmonton's Complete Streets Design Guidelines, which require him to develop content, present information to internal and external stakeholders and aid in the facilitation of engagement workshops, all working towards the completion of the guidelines by early 2013. In addition to his analytical and planning capabilities, public engagement is one of Ryan's key skills. It is because of his approach to transportation planning and ability to communicate and apply concepts to real projects that he has been invited to attend numerous public and internal project workshops. Ryan has also been asked to represent his clients at open houses and public hearings.

Ryan's area of interest and passion is in active transportation and it is evident in his involvement with several volunteer associations. Groups he is currently involved with include

the Institute of Transportation Engineer's Sustainability Task Force and Federation of Calgary Communities, but particularly relevant to this event is his involvement with Walk21 and Sustainable Calgary. Measuring Walking is a group within the umbrella of Walk21 that is involved in a worldwide research endeavour looking at the methodologies used by various organizations, researchers and municipalities to measure walking activity and place. For the past six months, Ryan has been providing content to the group based in Zurich, Switzerland on the current state of practice in North America with respect to measuring walking activity. Locally, Ryan continues his passion for sustainable transportation through his volunteer involvement on the Board of Sustainable Calgary. Along with his research focused at determining the City's sustainability indicator ratings for transportation and resource use, his involvement there has led to the development of a Walkability Workshop and Walkability Audit program that was rooted on Placemaking and Tactical Urbanism.

Concurrent to his professional and volunteer activities, Ryan is completing a master's degree in civil engineering that is focused on transitioning inner city communities to more sustainable modes of transportation through urban design, density and mixed-use developments.

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Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator, Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services

Graham has been working in health care for over nine years. He has worked in the setting of communities and neighbourhoods, which includes the promotion of active transportation and the adaptation to the built environment in an inclusive and accessible manner to support active living. Graham participated in the preparation of the team and the communities in the days leading up to the community visits for Walkable Alberta. Graham facilitated the interactive community workshop and led the development of the comprehensive community report. Graham continues to support Alberta communities that wish to make their communities more walkable.

Sajid Ali, Project Coordinator, Health Promotion Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services

Sajid has an extensive background in health promotion/public health, both by academic training and through work experience. He has worked many years for universities and non-governmental organizations before joining Alberta Health Services. He has extensive experience working with communities, especially in capacity building through community development models. He is also skilful in research methodology, both in the qualitative and quantitative domain. At present he is working in engaging ethnic communities in Calgary, to promote walking as a mode of physical activity. Apart from that, he is an invited member of many community associations as a health promotion facilitator in their chronic disease prevention initiatives.



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