

A Summary of

COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

Conducted with WalkABLE Alberta Communities



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INTRODUCTION

THE HEALTH ISSUE

Regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of premature death and chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, colon cancer, breast cancer and type II diabetes. Physically active individuals have a 20–50% reduced relative risk of death. Only 57% of Albertans reported participating in a sufficient amount of physical activity for health benefits (ACAL, 2017). Alberta Health Services (AHS) has chosen to reduce chronic disease by promoting walking as a physical activity. Walking is popular, accessible, low cost, requires a low level of skill (Lee and Buchner, 2008), low level risk of injury (Hootman et al. 2002) and is the most common activity of those who report being physically active (Simpson et al. 2003).

WALKABLE ALBERTA

WalkABLE Alberta is a provincial Alberta Health Services chronic disease prevention program. It is an initiative that aims to improve walkability, create supportive walkable communities and encourage citizens in communities to walk more often. In creating a community that is more walkable people will choose to walk not because they should, but because it is the easy choice. In becoming more physically active through walking, chronic diseases can be reduced. Community walkability improvements can be accomplished through many avenues including interventions in the social and built environment.

WalkABLE Alberta uses various tools and resources to encourage improvements to the pedestrian environment in communities. The program identifies community achievements, opportunities and challenges as the foundation for generating ideas.

WalkABLE Alberta offers initiatives, inspiration and encourages actionable deliverables to build more walkable communities in Alberta.

THE WALKABLE ALBERTA PROCESS

Over the years of 2011 – 2015, WalkABLE Alberta had engaged AHS staff, provincial and community stakeholders to collect and align local strategies, plans and actions to make communities more walkable. The goal of WalkABLE Alberta was to complement the great work already being done in the community, and to help move the undertakings forward.

Key activities included:

- » Walkability presentations
- » Interactive community workshops
- » Community walkabouts
- » Community meetings
- » Feedback sessions
- » Strategic planning sessions
- » Facilitated discussions
- » Presentations to council (and other community decision makers)
- » Advise to local committees/group

Initial contact + link health to municipality



Discuss expectations + community need



Determine appropriate intervention



Intervention



Community Report



Community Action



Evaluation



Continued Support and Engagement

WALKABLE ALBERTA IN COMMUNITIES

Implementation and outcomes are different for every community. Implementation varies depending on community needs and the sector leading the walkability initiatives. In some communities the health sector takes a primary role in leading, in other communities the municipality takes the lead. In either case, the breadth, depth, and scope of community action can be increased by involving more community stakeholders who support and encourage the actions identified by the community.

COMMUNITY INTERVIEW PURPOSE

In January 2018 WalkABLE Alberta re-connected with each community that participated in WalkABLE Alberta through telephone interviews to learn about the progress made since the intervention of the pilot program. The communities that were interviewed include Lethbridge, Strathmore, Camrose, Grande Prairie, Okotoks, Fox Creek, Wetaskiwin, High River, Lacombe, Castor, Morley, Viking. Comments and recommendations collected from the interviews were compiled into broader themes, summarized in this report.

The purpose of this report is to:

- » Understand if the WalkABLE Alberta community visit was helpful
- » Learn how communities have improved community walkability since WalkABLE Alberta
- » Determine how WalkABLE Alberta can continue to help communities improve walkability in the future



Value of WalkABLE Alberta

The involvement of WalkABLE Alberta in each community demonstrated the key strengths of moving towards a walkable environment and the benefits it would bring to the community. The delivery of the program included a combination of tools, processes, knowledge, observation and objectives to focus on meeting a desired result. Communities were inspired by the intended value of walkability. In becoming aware of the barriers to walkability in the community, they developed objectives and created networks amongst stakeholders with complementary objectives. WalkABLE Alberta was successful in leveraging resources to accomplish a common community outcome that improved walkability. The program helped communities identify the value in creating a healthy community while striving towards improving, adapting and aligning strategies to better address walkability.



INSPIRING

The WalkABLE Alberta program was inspiring to many who were able to attend the workshops and events. It was a catalyst for the community to stimulate interest in the topic, act in the community and realize dormant passions.

Encouraging

In attending the WalkABLE Alberta initiatives such as workshops and walking tours, many found the program to be exciting. The issue of walkability was brought to the surface during these consultations that spurred a realization that communities were passionate about the idea of improving walkability where they live. It also encouraged people to think about walkability in a positive light. Individuals around the table were keen and interested in making improvements in their community.

Visionary

Understanding that walkability is not simply about trails and sidewalks, or walking for leisure. Rather it is a mode of transportation and mobility issue. Communities were able to holistically grasp the value and breadth of this concept not being only a recreational component of life, but rather a function that is valued daily. Understanding that walking is for everyone and therefore approaching it to be inclusive was a crucial insight.

EDUCATIONAL

Understanding the benefits of walkability and its best (and promising) practices in designing communities that are healthy, well connected and supports active living opportunities for all people. A primary benefit of the WalkABLE Alberta program is its ability to educate individuals, organizations and communities on the concept of walkability. Education and encouragement are essential in developing a successful, healthy and walkable community.

Background Knowledge

WalkABLE Alberta was successful in conveying the general concept of walkability and its impact on health. Attendees possessed a range of knowledge on the topic. However, all were able to learn new material and broaden their understanding. Most beneficial was the opportunity to learn about best (and promising) practices and the ways in which they can be applied to the community. Additionally, it aided people with a broad vision of walkability that staff members were able to reiterate at a later time through an inclusive view of the issues surrounding walkability is and its benefits to the community.

Understanding Local Issues

While the topic of walkability had been in the radar of many communities, for others, it was a newer and broader concept than they had realized. Having WalkABLE Alberta visit, present and conduct an interactive community workshop on walkability, it encouraged people to think about the concept in a new light. Communities were encouraged to recognize features and concepts that could be improved or barriers inhibiting walkability. It helped frame issues and broadened the vision to give them a holistic view of what walkability is and components that could be improved on in the community.

PERSPECTIVE

The perspective through which one approaches walkability can often influence its impacts. Typically, a walkable community is viewed as one that is a high density residential area with a diversity of destinations, retail and amenities. The minute details in the built, social and cultural environment can often impact the way in which walking is perceived in a community. While there are best practices and elements of the urban landscape and form that enhance walkability, there are also many that create barriers. Often, being immersed in the community can in turn desensitize citizens to the features and functionalities of their community that challenge walkability. WalkABLE Alberta was a catalyst to change perspectives that was required in many communities to recognize the potential and opportunities for improving walkability.

Community Perspective

Attendees learned new things about their community and seeing their built environment in ways that they had not seen before. Through site visits and photos, the outside perspective was helpful and insightful as it showcased things that were not noticed in the past. This offered some clarity on areas that were successful and others that could be improved upon.

Expert Opinion

The external perspectives and expertise were refreshing and valuable for the community. It was beneficial to have an external individual who is well versed in the topic to guide the community through the process and offer suggestions. The insights added validity in the field of those already working in the community.

“WalkABLE Alberta broadened our vision and gave us an inclusive view of what walkability is and other things we could be working on in the community. It helped us create a space to come together and allowed people to be more inclusive.”

- Viking



COLLABORATIVE

The formation of a walkable community is not only the responsibility of a sole department or a sector, but rather the collaboration of a larger network. To ensure the development of a safe, healthy, equitable and sustainable community that embraces walkability, collaborating with others with the same goal is key. Walkability complements objectives and goals of urban planners, health professionals, transportation planners, transit, school systems, economy amongst many more. WalkABLE Alberta encouraged the collaboration of inter-governmental departments and industries to further develop partnerships to achieve similar or complementary objectives in their respective industries. These shared goals of walkability will improve public health, safety and transportation equity that benefits all residents and neighborhoods. Being able to bring members of a community or departments together to collaborate on an initiative is a powerful tool that can bring about positive change in a community.

Conversations

The WalkABLE Alberta program brought together different stakeholders in one room and encouraged them to talk about topics that were not discussed before. While people are working towards goals and objectives in silos, being able to share ideas and reinforce efforts helped validate ongoing work.

Partnerships

Many community established committees and working groups facilitate action on community walkability issues. WalkABLE Alberta helped create new partnerships to work towards a specific goal together. It integrated ongoing strategies within other departments such as active transportation and helped capture and secure walkability within that realm.

INFLUENTIAL

WalkABLE Alberta was able to support community walkability champions to reach their goals by raising the profile of walkability to senior management.

Attention

WalkABLE Alberta was able to concentrate attention and prioritize walkability to community members, officials and senior management in many communities. It helped raise its profile enough to be brought to Council and gain support. It has created more awareness of walking and raised issues on why walkability is important in cities and communities. Walkability is no longer a by-product of other initiatives, but rather, it has gained momentum as an individual priority.

Priority

Many communities had already been doing much work on walkability and enhancing the pedestrian realm. While these communities continued to apply strategies, for other communities walkability had not been a priority. Since the WalkABLE Alberta program began, it has gained momentum by not only as a standalone project, but also by emerging in many other urban development projects. Additionally, communities have also been able to prioritize budgets for walkable initiatives and the application of funding through grants.

Actionable

Such inspiration brought about the motivation to take action on improving walkability in their communities. People began to think about potential areas of improvement, the scales of walkability and how to achieve a more walkable community. Communities have begun projects that are quick-wins such as offering clarity on walking routes and have thought

about long-term achievements such as capital projects. Some have developed a phased approach to progress. The WalkABLE Alberta program was an essential step in making people aware of the issues and ways that principles of walkability can be achieved locally.

EVALUATIVE

A community's ability to track, measure and evaluate the progress made through the impacts of walkability is critical for its continued development. While some communities were on the path to becoming more walkable, WalkABLE Alberta directed the base-line standards for achieving walkability in many other communities.

Accountability

Following the WalkABLE Alberta process specific to the needs of each community, a summary of the work done was provided in a report form. Communities took this report to senior management and the municipal council, which in turn created a baseline status for walkability.

Measurable

Being able to map the community against the International Charter for Walking, was useful as it was a concrete and measurable comparison. The standards of walkability clarified the status of the community in relation.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES AND PROGRESS

A walkable community is one that is well established in its built form, social, and cultural environment as well as the perception of the area. The issue of walkability is involved both in its physical infrastructure as well as the quality of the environment. There is a direct relationship between the built environment and walkability which is rooted in the field of urban planning and transportation. Often, these are the first steps in progressing towards a walkable and healthy community. While the provision of walkways, sidewalks and pedestrian crossings have a direct influence on the quality of walking environments, there are essential non-physical elements such as the local climate and culture of influence that impact walkability.

Since WalkABLE Alberta's involvement, communities have taken significant initiatives in progressing towards a more walkable environment. To achieve the parameters of a walkable community, communities have strategized in all spectrums by ensuring that plans and policies prioritize walkability, funding is in place, partnerships are developed to create a built environment that supports walkability.



STRATEGIZED

Several communities began with developing a set of potential deliverables to address a range of actions to improve walkability. The purpose of prioritizing and strategizing was to provide a summary of the efforts and information to stakeholders that will be involved in the process. For many communities, the project did not start from scratch after WalkABLE Alberta's involvement. However, it helped catalyzed and made much of the progress and plans tangible.

Prioritized

Communities have developed actionable deliverables and priorities for themselves. Examples include:

- » Create safe and healthy environments for all
- » Increased mobility
- » Develop spaces that enhance walkability
- » Create a culture of walking

Some communities were able to implement items that were identified as quick wins. This reinforced actions that had already been taken and maintained excitement on walkability issues. Momentum was created and maintained for walkability to continue improving elements in their urban space.

Influenced Policy and Plans

Plans and policies serve as the framework for creating a successful walkable community. With well established policies, communities can be proactive in serving a walkable community.

As staff members advocated for increased walkability to the municipal council and continue to do so, it has been well received and positive feedback was offered. The Councils have been supportive in this initiative and see a value in it, therefore want to

continue its improvements. Here are some examples communities provided during interviews:

- » City plans have been revised to ensure that there is funding in the budget for implementation.
- » The Community Report that was developed to summarize the work that WalkABLE Alberta had conducted in each community have made it to other related strategies and have been reviewed by the Council. In some communities The International Charter for Walking is going to the Council soon to be reviewed. Some municipal councils have agreed to adopt the concepts recommended in the report and The International Charter for Walking (better connectivity of walking paths).
- » Changes in policy and land use bylaws, walkability will become a focus and those writing the by-laws will be cognizant of it.
- » A long-term goal is to support the designing of the community for people of all ages and physical activity.
- » Support policies that encourage active transportation and community walkability.
- » Released a Community Mobility Plan where a list of soft action items are included to help improve active transportation and transit throughout the community.
- » Changes in maintenance by-laws for snow removal to increase response times to quickly remove snow after a snowfall in all major pathways around the city.
- » Connecting on planning applications for large scale developments to encourage the development of healthy communities.

- » The WalkABLE Alberta Community Report was used when writing the comprehensive community plan.
- » Council has signed The International Charter for Walking.

- » Funding a project that encourages children to walk to school.
- » Fundraising to support trails was initiated.

Funding

The support of the local government and investments in the community to develop walkable environments is crucial to the creation of pedestrian-friendly communities. While sharing a common vision can facilitate the funding of projects, financial barriers can often be the result of shifting priorities. WalkABLE Alberta has influenced communities in creating an environment where walkability became a priority for the local government resulting in increased investments in the efforts to improve the public realm for pedestrians. Examples of funding actions that communities provided include:

- » Resources were allocated in the municipal budget to urban infrastructure such as trails and sidewalks, as well as maintenance and functionality such as snow clearing.
- » The approach to budgeting for walkability for some communities is no longer a question, but rather the conversations surround how much funding and the funding period.
- » Several cities have allocated more funding for urban infrastructural improvements.
- » Increased budget for snow maintenance and clearing.
- » Written grants and received money to put down a base layer of trail.
- » Found surplus money from other years that were dedicated to walking initiatives such as sidewalks and ensure that the money was used to its allocated purposed.

REMOVING BARRIERS

A vital issue in communities is providing easy access to the transportation network for a range of community members including toddlers, seniors, young children and people with disabilities. Due to barriers in access to transportation, people are often not able to experience the benefits that walking offers. Some actions that communities have taken to remove barriers include:

- » The indoor walking tracks were not being used because the location where track passes were being sold were often not open during easily accessible hours. To tackle this barrier, a small change in where passes were sold from and the extension of hours that they were sold resulted in an increase in access to indoor walking tracks for community members.
- » Avoiding the use of interlocking bricks as a sidewalk material unless their movement can be minimized or there is continual maintenance to ensure they do not act as an accessibility barrier.
- » Increased rigor in prioritizing sidewalk repairs and regular monitoring to ensure that sidewalks are safe and barrier free.
- » Focusing on providing opportunities to ensure that active transportation users are prioritized during events.
- » Improved accessibility and barrier free design throughout the community.
- » Trail improvements include better accessibility, shorter names and plain language for wayfinding.

"We have started to avoid the use of bricks in downtown projects since the WalkABLE Roadshow. We learned that this was an accessibility barrier. Bricks and sand heave with the frost and become a tripping hazard."

- Lethbridge

COMMUNICATION

While constructing infrastructure and developing policies and plans is critical in creating a walkable community, the ultimate success lies in the use of the added resources by people. The commitment to inform community members about the progress made is key. A communication strategy and efforts can showcase the pedestrian network by utilizing effective tools and avenues to reach different audiences to encourage more walking.

Marketing

Several communities have prioritized communication efforts through marketing tactics. A priority has been to showcase the benefits of walking and further, that walking 'is' an easy choice. To do this, communities have marketed and promoted walkability in many creative ways.

- » People have a hard time walking in neighbourhoods when residents do not shovel their driveways and pathways. An example of a successful campaign that improved snow clearing included both better enforcement of bylaws, as well as advertisements that were placed around the community. The campaign helped residents to think about snow removal differently.
- » Utilized guerrilla marketing.
- » Graphic designed promotional and branding materials to raise awareness and educate the town about walking.
- » Developed communication materials to be installed in new areas of the community as well as request for donations.
- » Promoted physical activity through social media.



Will you shovel for my family?

Please consider others and remove snow and ice in a timely manner to ensure safe and accessible walkways for all.



Will you shovel for my friend?

Please consider others and remove snow and ice in a timely manner to ensure safe and accessible walkways for all.



City of Camrose Marketing Strategy

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships can often strengthen the vision and goals of the issues that communities are addressing. By collaborating within municipalities, communities are able to streamline their efforts. Linking with other industries that complement walkability, allows communities to leverage the expertise of each stakeholder to maximize the overall objective of improved walkability.

Inter-departmental Collaboration

Where there was opportunity, departments within the municipal governments were able to collaborate on strategies and work together to further the walkability agenda. Actions that were reported include:

- » Integrated and worked with different departments such as Planning to be included in conversations around walkability. Collaborations included engaging the public and improving the trail system by adding benches, so people can take breaks more frequently.
- » Took advantage of utility maintenance schedules to create better sidewalks that are wider and more accessible. For example, a specific community used to have one narrow sidewalk, and after the partnership they now have two accessible wider sidewalks.
- » Created a Wellness Coordinator position to build partnerships and provide opportunities for active living and healthy eating.
- » Gained support from the Transportation Department for biking, and other sustainable transportation options.

Inter-industry Collaboration

Walkability is not an agenda item that can be accounted for by only one industry. The demand

for increased walkability is changing the way communities are designed, developed and constructed. The outcomes and consequences of community walkability have significant impacts on the health industry.

- » The communications campaign was picked up by the health industry for distribution and brought awareness to the benefits of walking.
- » There has been collaboration with the library to engage and educate the public about the benefits of walking.
- » Efforts have been taken with developers and new neighbourhoods to consider the connections of trails and walking infrastructure to the broader road network.
- » In some cases, new developments now require:
 - » Identification of community safe routes for all school sites.
 - » Ensuring effective pedestrian access.
 - » Ensuring pedestrian detours in construction projects.
 - » Re-visiting street standards so they include Complete Street concepts and are accessible.
- » Developers are given the WalkABLE Alberta Community Report to implement possible elements of walkability such as the inclusion of sidewalks on both sides of residential streets and ensuring that recreational paths in residential areas are well connected to surrounding amenities. Although it is not a requirement for developers to implement the recommendations, it is encouraged.
- » Engineering companies that work with the town have been asked to consider the WalkABLE Alberta report. An opening of a multi-use building will include a walking track and programs to

encourage seniors to be more active as a way of maintaining wellness.

- » University professors are working on research with the Transportation Department.
- » During development inspections, inspectors will be aware of elements in the built environment that promote walkability.

Community Collaboration

Members of the community have collaborated to encourage their friends, neighbours and relatives to walk. Community walkability champions reported that they:

- » Engaged with the public to educate them about walking.
- » Created walking and running groups to encourage each other to be more active and utilize the walking infrastructure for recreation.
- » Brought up issues around equity and focused on how to make the community more walkable for vulnerable groups including people with infants in strollers, seniors and lower income populations without access to vehicles.
- » A committee had been formed prior to WalkABLE Alberta which has since then formally turned into a society with a broadened mandate. They are moving forward with building new trails in the community.

"We have more and improved benches along trails. Existing benches were plain and without arms, and the new ones have arms for more comfort."

- Strathmore



URBAN DESIGN AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Walking is the most sustainable form of transportation with several social and individual benefits. It has positive effects in improving one's health, improving social equity as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In North America, over the years there has been a decline in the number of people that walk as a form of transportation. One of the main factors that contribute to the decline of walking is the changes in the built form in cities and communities. Urban sprawl has created auto-orientated cities. Street patterns since the 1980s have more commonly created loops and lollipops, which increases the distance that people must travel and consequently reduced the incentive to walk.

For social equity, it is important to provide a pedestrian-friendly transportation network for a diverse range of individuals. This means ensuring that walking is accessible for people of all ages, abilities and cultures. Accessibility refers to the ease in which pedestrians can reach their destinations in a timely fashion and comfort. There are several factors that determine the level of accessibility including physical, social, cultural and financial. These factors can impact accessibility and create barriers at a macro or micro level. On a macro level, barriers are created through auto-orientated land use planning, or poor connections to other modes of transportation. On a micro level, barriers include walking distances, lack of snow clearing or poor sidewalk designs. Different barriers can make or break the choice an individual makes when deciding upon their mode of transportation, or choice of recreation. While some barriers can be quantified and are tangible, others can be social or cultural that distracts the importance of walking for the population. Since WalkABLE Alberta's involvement, many communities focused on

improving the built environment to improve walkability in their communities.

Human Comfort

The way in which the urban environment is designed often contributes to the comfort of those using it. Human comfort can be influenced by the weather, thermal heat, the presence of elements such as garbage bins, benches and the state of pathways.

- » Communities have added more and improved benches along trails for those who need to take breaks. For example, some previous benches were built without arms, whereas the new benches have arms that individuals can use to easily get on and off the bench.
- » Other communities have added bike racks on busses so people have the choice to use multiple transportation options.

Safety

A walkable community contributes to creating safe environments for residents and visitors. The number of pedestrians in an area increases the perception of safety as there are more eyes on the area. It alerts auto-mobile drivers to reduce their speed as they see more pedestrians on sidewalks and crosswalks. Other methods of increasing safety include the slowing down of traffic near schools by implementing well-designed crosswalks, and teaching children to cross the roads safely. Further, safety can be improved by enhancing the streetscape and physical infrastructure through better lighting, clearer signage and lines of sight. Community champions interviewed provided some examples of safety improvements that were made since their involvement with WalkABLE Alberta:

- » Improved lighting along pathways.
- » Enforced traffic calming measures to slow down automobiles.
- » Extended and repaired sidewalks that ended abruptly.

- » Grinded shifted concrete on sidewalks to make them less of a trip hazard.
- » Purchased a crosswalk lighting system that will be placed two blocks from the school which is heavily used not only by the school children but also by community members as it provides access to community walking trails.

Connectivity

Connectivity refers to the convenience in which residents are able to access nearby destinations and amenities within walking distances. A well-connected pedestrian network provides amenities to residents including shops, services, recreational opportunities, restaurants and transit. Such street systems offer targeted destinations to be continuously connected so that a walker can safely and comfortably walk to their destination without having to share the road with motor vehicles. Often, filling gaps in the street network can be an efficient and/or effective method to ensure better walkable environments. Community champions reported that they addressed connectivity through the following avenues:

- » Ensured that the pedestrian infrastructure is well connected from a recreational and a functional perspective such that people can travel easily between destinations using active transportation.
- » Created local and regional connections.
- » Developed infrastructure guidelines to increase connectivity by focusing on the gaps in the pedestrian network such as bridges, pathways and trails that ended abruptly.
- » Increased the time for pedestrians to cross the street at intersections.

Wayfinding

Providing a sufficient amount of information on places to walk to and directions increases the enjoyment and ease of walking. Signage and maps indicate the support for walking culture and is a good way to facilitate walking for several different purposes include recreational, transportation and fitness. Community interviews reported that wayfinding had been addressed by:

- » Instigating a sign program where boards will be placed in parking lots to clearly indicate to visitors how to get from the parking lot to key locations and major destinations such as museums, hospitals, the arena within a 5 – 10 minute walking distances (400 – 800 meters).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WALKABLE ALBERTA

Built and social environments, policies, plans and strategies have the potential to create promising walkable environments and in turn improve public health. While much of the initiatives to create a walkable environment lie in the efforts of communities, WalkABLE Alberta can play a crucial role in supporting and catalyzing efforts to create pedestrian-friendly and healthy neighbourhoods. Future recommendations for the program as requested by many communities primarily include building capacity in communities, supporting the procurement of funding, connecting people and continuing to educate communities through resource provision and consultations.



Overview of the Meeting

Agenda

- 1. Welcome
- 2. Introduction
- 3. Presentation
- 4. Discussion
- 5. Q&A
- 6. Closing

Photo of a group of people sitting around a table.

The Community Interviewer worked with the Report Author and Editor to theme the results of their conversations that they had with communities. From that information they were able to theme the results and provide their information as recommendations to WalkABLE Alberta. The themes that were identified that could provide community support include: build capacity, funding, connect and liaise, consult and support, educational resources.

BUILD CAPACITY

Ongoing capacity building and education for professional staff creates an environment where walkability is prioritized. By educating public officials, communities can ensure that policies, and initiatives that are implemented are the best (and promising) practices, and appropriate for the community. Almost all communities mentioned the importance of continuing capacity building, which demonstrates that there is an interest to further develop and enhance the work that is already being done. Avenues include workshops, conferences, training and collaborative learning.

Workshops

Develop and host workshops and sessions that offer information on specific topics related to walkability and how to improve the community. Additional topics may be decided upon with the community as required. These workshops may be held in-person at the communities where WalkABLE Alberta facilitates the event. Workshops may also be conducted online where people from several communities can sign on to.

Conferences

Conferences bring people together who share a common goal and promote networking amongst attendees. There could be opportunities for

communities to learn about several different topics from experts in the field to be brought back to the community and applied. It is also an opportunity to share experiences with each other. With WalkABLE Alberta hosting and organizing conferences every few years, communities may have a formal platform to attend that greatly benefits all.

Training

Offer training to community leaders about the concept of walkability and teach them the skills and ability to identify opportunities to improve walkability in their respective communities. Eventually this training may progress to a Train The Trainer session. The trainer may then be able to educate staff as well as community members on the benefits of walking and its impact on health.

WalkABLE Alberta Roadshows and Events

The WalkABLE Alberta Roadshow was well received in all communities therefore conducting several more events similar to this may be beneficial. With more time to plan and promote the event, communities will be able to invite a larger number of community members and ensure a higher attendance.

Collaboration

All communities are interested in learning about the progress made and initiatives taken by other communities. Additionally, they are willing to share their experiences and lessons learnt. An opportunity exists to create a platform, or a committee where communities are able to meet face-to-face from all over Alberta to get together and learn from each other and help raise awareness in unity.

FUNDING

Funding Information

To be able to implement any changes or initiatives for walkability, all communities require funding. WalkABLE

Alberta should explore the opportunity to have a single web page which gathers and posts information on available funding, grants or programs that support walkability.

Grant Programs

WalkABLE Alberta could explore avenues to promote programs and avenues that offer grants, which in turn would make it easier for communities to apply and push forward such projects.

Advocacy

Funding for community groups is limited and the actions around walkability are equally as limited as funding will support. WalkABLE Alberta could investigate and share potential funding sources to support community action and encourage health systems change to support health promotion actions in improving walkability within communities. Additionally, advocating for funding, rooted in evidence and expertise within the health sector has credibility. Expertise can incorporate best (and promising) practices in public health, built and social environment while recognizing the strategic and budgetary synergies of investing in walkability across different departments.

CONNECT + LIAISE

Connect People

Connect comparable communities in order to facilitate discussions with communities so that they can share experiences, knowledge, and best (and promising) practices. Connections can also be made between key experts in the field, and other individuals from which communities can learn from or invite to workshops and consultations. WalkABLE Alberta could investigate and provide recommendations for individuals and experts that would be appropriate

for the respective community. Connections between other organizations or institutions to collaborate on the walkability can help move forward agendas for several organizations. These may include research facilities, school boards, health facilities, and others.

CONSULT + SUPPORT

Consult

The availability of public health champions that advise and advocate for public health to encourage the agenda from a health perspective in order to influence how communities are designed is critical in gaining community stakeholder support.

Support

WalkABLE Alberta should continue to be available to answer any questions that communities might have and provide support through the process. This may be in the form of connecting people, guiding communities on processes or next steps as well as reviewing and evaluating ongoing initiatives and tasks. Having more Community Health Advisors to be able to call for support and consult with is extremely valuable and assuring.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Educate

An opportunity for WalkABLE Alberta is to provide educational support by providing materials that community champions can use. Additionally, encouraging a broader audience reach that communities can engage throughout the process such as children can result in ripple effects on the number of people influenced.

"Moving forward, we would love for WalkABLE Alberta's role to be a resource for communities that are at any stage of the walkability work. Whether they need support while starting out, or evaluating the work done during any stage of the process."

- Camrose

Information Sharing

An opportunity for WalkABLE Alberta would be to share success stories by publishing them on newsletters, or a website. This may also be a space where communities are able to post their own content, collaborate with one another as well as connect. Develop a website platform where information and resources on anything related to walkability can be shared. This might include access to other webpages, people, communities through links. Content can include guidelines, tools, best practices, articles, blogs and videos related to walkability. The platform should be clear, easily accessible and easy to navigate. This would be the central space where each community can access.

Communication Resources

To promote walkability, communities have to create many different types of advertising content such as posters, letters or pamphlets. If WalkABLE Alberta had standardized templates for such items, each community could personalize them and utilize as required.



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