

Neighborhood Walkability Checklist

(Adapted from the checklist of the Partnership for a Walkable America; www.walkinginfo.org)

Take this checklist on a typical walk (to a friend's house, work, the corner store) and share copies with friends. Note things that might discourage people from walking regularly and their locations. Score each with a 1 to 6; compare notes to identify the biggest problems. Then talk to public officials and set priorities for making improvements.

1. Did you have room to walk? (6-room for 2 or 3 people; 1-barely enough for 1) Score: _____

Common problems: No sidewalks or broken ones; sidewalks blocked with poles, signs, dumpsters; no paths or trails; no shoulders.

Comments, locations: _____

2. Was it easy to cross streets? (6-no problem; 1-it took forever and was scary) Score: _____

Common problems: Roads too wide to get across; signals made us wait too long, or didn't give enough crossing time; needed striped crosswalks or traffic signals; parked cars, trees or other things blocked our view of traffic; needed curb ramps.

Comments, locations: _____

3. Was traffic a problem? (6-didn't notice it; 1-lots of cars, too fast, too close) Score: _____

Common problems: There were too many cars, or traffic was too fast. Drivers backed out of driveways without looking; did not yield to pedestrians, turned toward people crossing side streets; drove too fast, sped up to get through traffic lights; stopped in or blocked crosswalks.

Comments, locations: _____

4. Did you feel safe? (6-I'd walk alone, anytime; 1-scary, even with others, daylight) Score: _____

Common problems: Saw suspicious activity or people; no apparent houses, stores or other places to go in case of trouble; no public telephones; too dark; too few other pedestrians; too little activity on the street.

Comments, locations: _____

5. Was it a pleasant place to walk? (6-I'd love to go back; 1-no reason to be there) Score: _____

Common problems: Needs more grass, flowers, or trees, water fountains, shade, benches; too dark, dirty; no art, natural, architectural, or historic features. Few desirable destinations (stores, restaurants, a library, post office, schools, bus or subway stops).

Comments, locations: _____

Check your score:

26 - 30: Terrific. You live in a great walking community!

21 - 25: Good. But focus on trouble spots.

16 - 20: Fair. Get your neighbors and elected officials involved.

15 or less: Call out the National Guard—it's no fun walking there, and it needs work.

Making the World More Walkable

If your walking route scored poorly then take action. Share your findings with elected officials (for example, the mayor's office or city council) and public services. Start with the department of public works, transportation, and police departments. Let them—and the media—know about specific trouble spots. Also, get out and fix what you can. Here are some simple things you can do; urge family and friends to join your efforts:

Do it yourself

- **Select better, safer routes** to walk if necessary. But that's not enough!
- **Trim hedges or trees** that block sidewalks or the view at a crosswalk.
- **Plant beautifying trees and flowers** if you have property abutting sidewalks or trails.
- **Organize a neighborhood clean-up day**, or just take a bag and pick up trash on your normal walking routes. Always clear your sidewalk of snow or debris.
- **Be a considerate driver.** Set an example: drive at safe speeds in neighborhoods, let pedestrians cross at intersections, don't stop in crosswalks.
- **Notify the animal control officer of problem animals**, and the police of suspicious activity. Report street or signal lights that are out to the department of public works.

Change your community

- **Speak up at governance and planning meetings.** Demand bicycle and pedestrian friendly planning, engineering, and policies. For detailed information:
 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, 877-WALKBIKE; www.pedbikeinfo.org.
 - National Center for Bicycling and Walking, 202-463-6622; www.bikewalk.org.
 - The RWJF Active Living by Design Program: www.activelivingbydesign.org.

Build a trail

- Learn how trails improve health: www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/trails.htm
- Get a railroad right-of-way turned into a trail; contact the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy for assistance at 800-888-7747; 202-331-9696; www.railtrails.org.

Get Kids Walking to School

- Hold a Walk to School Day event; see www.walktoschool.org
- Set up a walking school bus, where adults walk with children daily. Request the CDC's "KidsWalk-to-School" booklet at 888-CDC-4NRG, or ccdinfo@cdc.gov.

Be a role model: walk somewhere every day

Encourage others by your actions. For a detailed resource list, and comprehensive information on starting or maintaining a walking program, take a look at "*The Complete Guide to Walking for Health, Weight Loss, and Fitness*" by Mark Fenton (Lyons Press, 2001)