



Sexsmith

2015 Walkability Workshop

WalkABLE
ALBERTA 

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Introduction

WalkABLE Alberta

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

Communities ChooseWell

Communities ChooseWell is a provincial initiative funded by Alberta Health and managed by Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA). Communities ChooseWell fosters healthy communities through education, community capacity building and partnerships that support healthy eating, active living and social wellbeing. ChooseWell offers seed grants, educational resources, networking opportunities and more to enable and enhance a community's ability to create supportive healthy environments. In 2015 alone, over 230 Alberta communities, including hamlets, villages, towns, municipal districts, cities, urban neighbourhoods, schools, organizations, and First Nations and Métis communities, have registered with Communities ChooseWell.



Benefits of a Walkable Community

WalkABLE Alberta recognizes the great work that is already being done in communities and helps to build on this work. The Walkability Workshops are a great way to spark ideas and initiatives for key actions to help advance this work, ultimately creating walkable communities across Alberta. Increasing physical activity levels through walking improves a community's physical environment and social environment. Walking can also have many health benefits. As part of a physically active and healthy lifestyle, walking plays a role in chronic disease prevention; helping to manage many conditions like:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes (Type 2)
- Metabolic Syndrome
- Obesity
- Dementia
- Mental Health
- Osteoporosis
- Certain Cancers (eg. breast, colon)ⁱ

*“The slower we travel,
the more we spend.”*

Dr. Rodney

In addition to the health of the population, walkability has many economic and social benefits for communities. In fact, walk-in spending for downtowns has a larger influence than we think. Improving walkability increases value through increases in:

- Store rents.
- Property value – each point increase in WalkScore, increase home values by \$700 - \$3,000.ⁱⁱ
- Business and the local economy – the slower we travel the more we spend.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Space for people is valued more than car parking making the street more attractive for people to spend time and therefore money.

Social benefits include:

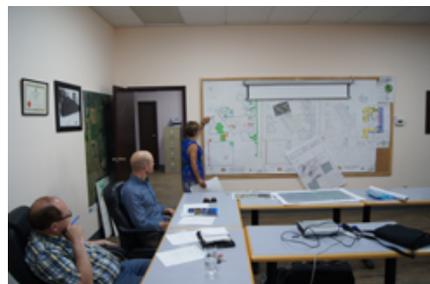
- Community connection – connect people from where they live (their homes) to the places they want to be (their destinations).
- Safety - reduction of traffic related injuries to pedestrians.^{iv}

Walkability in Sexsmith

Alberta Health Services' WalkABLE Alberta and Communities ChooseWell met with stakeholders from Sexsmith for an opportunity to discuss walkability in the community, support future improvements of walkability to the community, and facilitate a walkabout to discuss walkability issues in the community.

Day 1 – Evening meeting

See Appendix A for the agenda of the meeting. The meeting began with an introduction of the Communities ChooseWell program provided by Sarah Wildgen, a Communities ChooseWell Program Officer. This was followed with a presentation by Health Promotion Facilitator, Graham Matsalla, which described the principles of the International Charter for Walking (Appendix B) and how they are applied in Alberta Communities. Sexsmith's future walkability plans were then presented to Alberta Health Services and Communities ChooseWell and then discussed by the attendees.



Attendees: Allan, Clinton, Isak, Holly, Pauline, Jen M, Lucille, John L, Rick, Rachel, Claude, Graham, Garrett, Sarah, Nicole.

Day 2 – Walkabout and discussion

The “neighbourhood active, healthy design checklist”, provided in Shaping Active, Healthy Communities: A Heart and Stroke Foundation Built Environment Toolkit for Change (Appendix C), was used by community stakeholders who wished to use a resource to help them look critically at the walkability of their community. A map of the walking route is included in Appendix D.



The Walkabout started in the Sexsmith Arena parking lot. The Heart and Stroke's “neighbourhood active, healthy design checklist” was distributed amongst the group and was used informally by the during the walkabout.

Attendees were: Allan, Clinton, Holly, Pauline, Jen M, Lucille, Rachel, Graham, Garrett, Sarah, Nicole.

Discussion Points

There were several points of discussion during the walkabout:

1. Start: Sexsmith Arena

The Walkabout group gathered in the Sexsmith arena to start the walkabout.

Concern: A pathway to the arena ends in the parking lot without providing further direction on how to proceed to the entrance.

Suggestion: Paint a walking path from the pathway to the entrance to show pedestrians how to arrive at the entrance safely. One barrier to the painted path is the high volume of snow fall in the winter which would often leave the path invisible.

2. The group traveled from the Arena parking lot to the Junior & Senior High School along the 99th Avenue sidewalk.

Positive Finding: Allan, from Public Works, noted that all new sidewalks that were being installed are equipped for wheelchair and mobility impairments.

Concern: The asphalt sidewalks are cracked from the environmental conditions and salt used during winter, making walking surfaces uneven.

Suggestion: Asphalt sidewalks should be placed onto a priority list for complete replacement as concrete sidewalks. Any additional cracking causes (tree roots) need to be addressed before replacement.

Concern: Gravel from driveways gets pushed onto the sidewalks, demonstrating the priority for cars over pedestrians and creating walking conditions that are problematic.

Suggestion: A Snow Angel program in the winter and a 'clean sweep' program in the spring can engage citizens to contribute to debris removal, keeping neighbourhoods safe and clean for pedestrians.

3. At the Junior and Senior High school

Concern: Similar to the arena, a pathway leads pedestrians, mainly students, into the school parking but there is no guidance for pedestrians on how to navigate safely towards the entrance.

Suggestion: Install a physical structure or barrier to lead pedestrians to the school safely. Painting lines to lead pedestrians safely to the school is a first step that can be taken.

Concern: There are no indicators to tell pedestrians that the walking path continues behind the school.

Suggestion: Install signage that shows that the pathway continues behind the school.

4. The group turned off of 99th Avenue, down a pathway between 95th Street and 96th Street.

Bench Placement Idea: There is a grassy area along the pathway, near 99th Avenue, that belongs to the Town of Sexsmith and could be a potential location for a new bench. It also has potential to become a pocket park.

Suggestion: Bench location could be piloted around town to see what works best.

Discussion Points

5. Continuing down the path and merging with 96th Street, the group eventually reached 100th Avenue.

Bench Placement Idea: Beside the garbage can at the intersection of 96th Street and 100th Avenue. The concern with this location is being able to fit the bench properly, and that snow removal will impact the access and usability of the bench. There were also concerns about the attractiveness of the location, given that the bench would be directly on the side of 100th Avenue.

6. Turning right on 100th Avenue, the group followed the sidewalk to P.O.S. West Ltd.

Bench Placement Idea: It was suggested that the Town of Sexsmith could partner with the private business and install a shared bench in front of the building. This would also present an opportunity to share the cost of the bench and installation with P.O.S. West Ltd.

7. The group continued walking on the 100th Avenue sidewalk, arriving at Isaac's house on the corner of 93rd Street and 100th Avenue.

Bench Placement Idea: The corner of 93rd Street and 100th Avenue is a potential bench location. It is sheltered from the wind and will not be an issue with snow removal; a home owner agreed to watch for vandalism.

8. The group crossed 100th Avenue at the pedestrian lights and walked along the green patch between the two 100 Avenues.

Concern: This is a popular pathway without a sidewalk, everyone walks on the road or on the grass to get to Tag's or the Ice Cream Shack.

Suggestion: Install a walkway from the crosswalk to the end of the cul-de-sac beside Tag's. Allan, from Public Works, agreed that this is a priority project that should be done in 2016.

Suggestion: Planters could be installed and gravel could be removed from the end of the cul-de-sac/at the Ice Cream Shack's eating area. This would beautify the area, avoid cars from parking in certain places, and limit the gravel that gets brought onto the path. Business owner would to be engaged in the process and see the value in change.

9. The group walked back to the Arena along 93 Street

Concern: There are no sidewalks on either side of 99th Avenue due to a decision that was made several years ago by the residents.

Suggestion: This is a potential site for a new sidewalk to be installed.

Concern: The sidewalk on 93rd Street between 99th Avenue and the arena parking lot is very uneven and in need of significant repair.

Suggestion: Ensure this sidewalk get on the sidewalk repair schedule.

10. End: Sexsmith Arena

After a short discussion about next steps and follow-up the stakeholder group agreed to let Communities ChooseWell and Alberta Health Services develop this community report to be shared with the Sexsmith Wellness Coalition and any other community stakeholders upon completion.

Summary of Discussion and Next Steps

Each year, the Town of Sexsmith installs new walkways to add to, or repair existing infrastructure. This adds to the overall community-walking network. Repairs are based on evaluated priorities and installation is based on a similar priority basis and demand.

Bench Location Ideas:

- On the pathway between 95th Street and 96th Street, near 99th Avenue.
- Beside the garbage can at the intersection of 96th Street and 100th Avenue.
- In front of the P.O.S. West Ltd. building as a shared bench.
- On the corner of 93rd Street and 100th Avenue.

2016

A new subdivision and park is being built, and the Town of Sexsmith plans to create a pathway that will connect across the train tracks and run along the tracks to the new train station where the trail starts or install pathway along 100 Avenue to Tag's.

2017

A new park is going into Forest Grove. Walkways will be installed this area and a trail around the man-made lake and treed area will be developed. There is a plan to build a boardwalk here for walking and bird watching.

2018 and onward

The Town of Sexsmith has plans to continue improve their network of pathways throughout the Town to continue to improve the walking network, accessibility, and amenities provided to a sustainable form of transportation for the town, walking.

Recommendations

Recommendations for improving walkability in Sexsmith based on principles listed in the International Charter for Walking (Appendix A):

Increased inclusive mobility

- Determine needs of individuals with mobility aides in Sexsmith.
 - Assessment through interview and/or interactive discussion to identify priority areas of change required for those with mobility aides (Fig. 1).
 - Conduct a walkabout with people with mobility aides to determine if there is a destination that they have difficulty reaching.
- As repairs occur ensure that curb ramps (dropped curbs) are included as part of the repair (Fig 2a, b).
 - Add/include accessibility devices when/where necessary (Fig. 2c).



- Clearly identified crossings in high pedestrian areas are important. Many of these areas across busy streets and near schools have been identified in Sexsmith.
 - Yearly crosswalk paint should continue to occur.



Well designed and managed spaces and places for people

- Facilities for walkers such as benches, trash cans, water, and protection from the elements can improve the walking experience. Those that have the support they need will walk more.
 - Communities
ChooseWell is supporting the addition of a bench to support walkers. Piloting location(s) and/or selection of location should occur as a committee.
- Assess and address the need for walkways/pathways that are clean and free of debris and obstacles
 - Addressing the blocking of walkways/pathways as a way to show support to those with mobility trouble rather than an enforcement campaign.



- Walkway improvements should be prioritized and an action plan for improvements should be made and provided to the public (Fig 3a).
 - Communicate the improvements already made to pedestrians and a plan for further improvement can celebrate the great work already being done in the community and displays a desire and intention for improvement (Fig 3b).



Improved Integration of networks

- Identify locations where network improvements could be made
 - Destinations that cannot be, or are difficult to reach such as schools, churches, and other public buildings.
 - Prioritization plan for improvements to the network which can be identified by destination paths (Fig 4a) or missing connections to destinations (Fig 4b).
- Consistency of network available should be made throughout the community
 - Improvement existing developments and create a standard for future developments. Due to previous changes in zoning and urban planning by-laws certain areas are missing sidewalks and/or pathways. An assessment should occur to address these missing portions of the pedestrian network with the goal to include sidewalks on both sides of the street for all areas (Fig. 5a and b).
- Ensure that there is a link to destinations for pedestrians. The network should be as continuous as possible.
 - Identify potential improvements – there are already many links to destinations as well as opportunities for additional links in the future. By identifying destinations for pedestrians a complete and continuous walking network is a goal to strive for.



Supportive land-use and spatial planning

- Create destinations for pedestrians. Examples include businesses, green spaces, athletic fields, and the skate park (Fig. 6a and b). It should be clear that these destinations support and encourage walking to/ from their locations.
- Way-finding improvements can be made to encourage those that live in the community, as well as, those that visit that walking is valued.
 - Destination to facilities on signs/maps should be based on walking time and not distance to make walking choices easier to make.



Reduced road danger

- Pilot speed control devices that do not require additional enforcement dollars in downtown area as well as near the entry into town that does not inhibit commercial traffic but does identify that pedestrians are a priority within the town. Curb extensions are already used within the community to slow traffic and shorten crossing distance these can be piloted elsewhere in the community using paint and/or planters (Fig. 7a). This can be added in other areas of community where roads are wide (Fig. 7b and c). This can be implemented as pilot projects and the curb extension could be made of paint and/or planters before the expense of curbs is made.



Less crime and fear of crime

- Identify areas and address perceived safety issues such as clear sightlines and allowing lighting through to walkways/pathways (Fig. 8a and b). These issues could be addressed if/when perceived safety issues are identified.



More supportive authorities

- Town council can show support and commitment for walkability by signing the international charter for walking.
 - This can be highlighted through the media.
- Policies/initiatives that support walking/walkability during public events and other opportunities.

A culture of walking

- Challenge another community to a steps challenge.
 - It can be community versus community and/or a Mayoral walking challenge
 - Invite the media to attend/participate to raise the profile of walking issues within the community
 - Conduct a walkabout at various time/seasons with different community members or groups to identify and address walkability issues.

Appendix A

Walkability Discussion Agenda – Town of Sexsmith

Invited: Wellness coalition members, council members, public works, other municipal members, and other community stakeholders

Day 1 – Tuesday, July 21, 2015 (6:30 pm – 8:30 pm)

6:30 – 6:45 Introduction - Sarah Wildgen – Communities ChooseWell

Graham Matsalla – Alberta Health Services

6:45 – 7:15 - International Charter for walking (Graham Matsalla – Alberta Health Services - Health Promotion Facilitator, Provincial)

- Describe principles and how they are being applying in communities.
- AHS – provincial office, zone representation.

7:15 – 7:30 – Break

7:30 – 7:50 - Sexsmith Plan (Sexsmith representative)

- Trail system expansion – informal plan 3 – 4 year plan.
- Needs for current plan; goals moving forward.

7:50 – 8:30 - Discussion on future of walkability in Sexsmith

- Improvement of overall walkability in the town.

Day 2 – Wednesday, July 22nd at 9:30 am – 12 noon

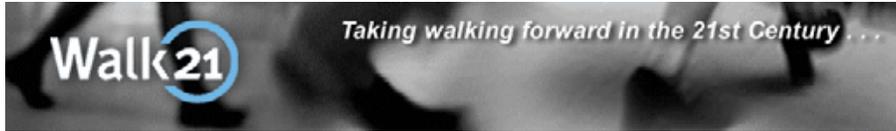
9:30 am – 11:00 am - Walkabout

- Could be a virtual tour - Look at any issues identified in day 1.
- Apply the Principles from the International Charter for Walking to assess potential walkability improvement opportunities.

11:00 am – 12:00 pm - Discussion & Next steps

- Short/medium/long term steps to address issues identified during walkabout and discussed in day 1.
- Actions moving forward.

Appendix B



International Charter for Walking

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

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

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

Signed

Name

Position

Date

www.walk21.com

Appendix C



A Heart and Stroke Foundation
built environment toolkit for change



Appendix D



References

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