

## Handout 16

# Walkability checklist

## Introduction

Walking is a great way to get the exercise you need for healthy aging. Walking is easy to do. It can fit into even the busiest of schedules. Best of all it's free. But not all neighbourhoods are created equally when it comes to walking. We invite you to use the following checklist to explore the walkability of your neighbourhood. Your organization may want to organize a group walkability check for the neighbourhood around their facility.

## How to use the checklist

- ◆ Pick a place to walk to, like a route to a friend's house, to a store or for some exercise.
- ◆ Your walk can be as long or as short as you wish.
- ◆ Read the checklist over before you go.
- ◆ As you walk, watch for items from your checklist.
- ◆ Take note of good things and problems along your walking route.
- ◆ Also, check off the items that might be a problem for someone less able-bodied
- ◆ Pay attention to where you are going. Stop first, then check off items on your list.
- ◆ Write down the location of problems you find.
- ◆ If the item does not apply to your route, go on to the next section.

## After your walk

- ◆ Fill in the rating for each section.
- ◆ Total up the ratings to see how your neighbourhood scores overall for walkability.

## You can use the results to:

- ◆ Choose walking routes in your neighbourhood that are safe and pleasant. Let your friends and neighbours know about good places to walk.
- ◆ Use the checklist results to improve the walkability of your neighbourhood. Contact your city hall and let them know about problems that you have found. Call or send a letter. Provide details about the problem and its location to help city staff respond to your request.
- ◆ You may want to collect walkability checklist results from other people to bring problems to the attention of city hall. If more people report a hazard, there is a better chance of getting changes made.

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## 1. Sidewalks, stairs and ramps, and winter safety

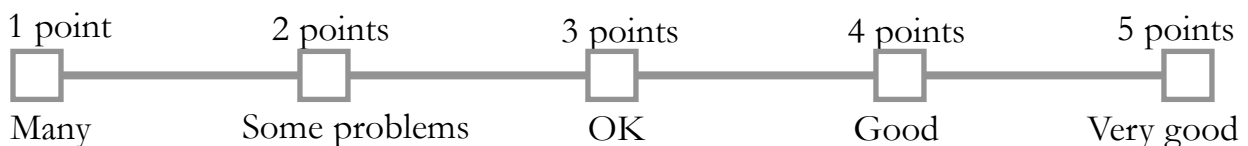
**Yes No**

- There are sidewalks all along my route.
- Sidewalks are wide and even, with no cracks or holes.
- Sidewalks are level.
- Sidewalks are clear of poles, signs, bushes, trash, parked bicycles etc.
- Edges of stairs and ramps are marked with a contrasting colour.
- Stairs and ramps feel safe to use—not too steep, no cracks or breaks.
- Stairs and ramps have railings on both sides.
- Stairs are safe to use in wet weather—not slippery.
- Sidewalks are safe to use in winter—clear, and well salted or sanded.
- There are grit boxes in the neighbourhood.

Other:

Location of problems:

### Rating:



## 2. Crosswalks

**Yes No**

Curbs have ramps at crosswalks.

I can clearly see traffic before I cross the street—nothing blocks my view.

On wide roads, there is an island in the middle of the road to wait for the next light.

I can use an under or over pass to cross streets.

There is a crosswalk where I need one. I don't have to walk all the way to a corner to get across the street.

Drivers give pedestrians the right of way at crosswalks and at stop signs and stop lights.

I can get across the street before the light changes.

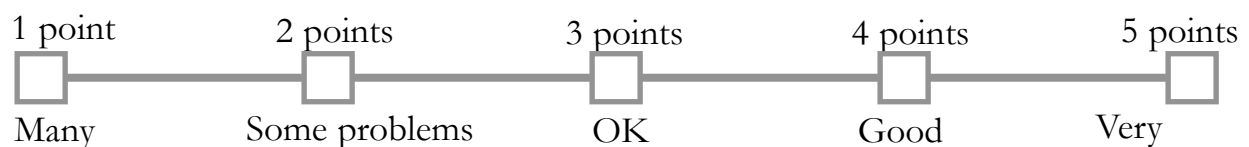
The traffic light changes soon after I push the crosswalk button.

I can cross the street in time and within the crosswalk lines even if there are many people crossing at the same time.

Other:

Location of problems:

### Rating:



### 3. Traffic

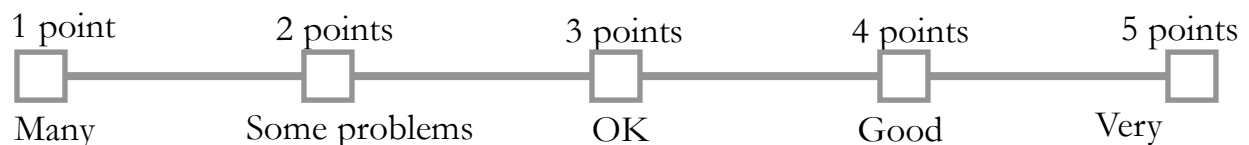
**Yes No**

- There is space between the sidewalk and the street so I don't worry about the traffic.
- The traffic is light enough to make walking pleasant – not too many large trucks, exhaust fumes or noise.
- Drivers obey the speed limit.
- The speed limit is suitable for this neighbourhood.
- Speed bumps and extended curbs at corners help slow down the traffic.
- Drivers are careful—they watch out for pedestrians at driveways, crosswalks and parking lots.
- Drivers are careful not to splash walkers when there are puddles on the streets.
- Cyclists are careful around pedestrians. They dismount when approaching pedestrians or they drive slowly, use their bells and leave plenty of room between their bike and the walkers.
- The parking lots I walk through have sidewalks and crosswalks.

Other:

Location of problems:

**Rating:**



## 4. Personal safety

**Yes No**

At night, the street is well lit.

I feel safe because there are lots of other people around.

There are houses and stores where I could go in case of trouble.

There are phones I could use to call for help.

My route is free of suspicious people, vandalism, crime and disturbing graffiti.

There are police, security guards or a pathway patrol on my walking route.

Dogs are properly controlled by their owners.

Other:

Location of problems:

**Rating:**

1 point                      2 points                      3 points                      4 points                      5 points

—————  —————  —————  —————

Many                      Some problems                      OK                      Good                      Very

## 5. Pleasant and supportive routes for walkers

**Yes No**

The route is natural with rivers, lakes, gardens, grassy areas, birds, flowers trees or wildlife to look at.

It is clean—no litter, trash, including houses and businesses.

There are interesting things to see such as statues, fountains, interesting old buildings or beautiful architecture.

Shady places with benches can give me a comfortable place to sit and take a rest.

There are public washrooms that I can use easily and safely.

Trees, building awnings, and bus shelters give protection from sun, rain and wind.

I can take a bus home if I get tired.

I can get a drink at water fountains.

Other:

Location of problems:

### Rating:

1 point 2 points 3 points 4 points 5 points

—————  —————  —————  —————

Many Some problems OK Good Very

## Summary

Date of walk: \_\_\_\_\_

Route: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Add up your ratings</b>	<b>Score</b>
1. Sidewalks, stairs and ramps, and winter safety	
2. Crosswalks	
3. Traffic	
4. Personal safety	
5. Pleasant and supportive routes for walkers	
<b>Total:</b>	

### How did your neighbourhood score?

<b>20-25</b>	Congratulations, you have a great neighbourhood for walking.
<b>15-19</b>	Not bad, a couple of things to fix up.
<b>10-14</b>	Your neighbourhood needs some work to make it pedestrian friendly.
<b>5-9</b>	You deserve better than this, get some help from your local government, a lot of work needs to be done.



## What to do if you found problems

Pick another route for now.

Report problems to City Hall or to the proper authority.

### 1. Sidewalks, stairs and ramps, and winter safety

*What you can do now*

- ◆ Make sure all bushes on your property are trimmed so they don't get in the way of walkers.
- ◆ When snow is removed from your driveway, make sure that it is not piled on the sidewalk.
- ◆ Carry a small bag of sand with you in the winter time to spread on slippery spots.
- ◆ Wear good shoes when you are out walking.
- ◆ In winter, take a bus to a shopping mall and join a walking group.

*What you can do with more time*

- ◆ Ask business owners to make sure their stairs and ramps are safe for seniors.
- ◆ Have a local radio station give an update on walking conditions along with their regular weather and traffic reports.
- ◆ Get together with your neighbours to clean up problem areas.
- ◆ Work with City Hall to set up a hotline for people to report hazards on sidewalks.
- ◆ If you have no sidewalk in your area, contact your councillor and other people in your area that might be concerned, start a petition.

### 2. Crosswalks

*What you can do now*

- ◆ Be a courteous driver yourself.
- ◆ Trim any trees or bushes that block the street or drivers' views.

*What you and your community can do with more time*

- ◆ Ask that the police department do more to enforce traffic laws.

- ◆ Ask City Hall for more crosswalks, greater visibility for pedestrian crosswalks, traffic light timing that puts pedestrian safety first, pedestrian overpasses or underpasses and raised medians.

### **3. Traffic**

#### *What you can do now*

- ◆ Pick a time for your walk when there is less traffic.
- ◆ Set an example: when you are driving slow down and be considerate of others.
- ◆ Report unsafe driving to the police.

#### *What you and your community can do with more time*

- ◆ Organise a neighbourhood Speed Watch program.
- ◆ Ask the police department to enforce traffic laws.
- ◆ Work with City Hall to introduce traffic calming in your neighbourhood.
- ◆ Ask City Hall to fix roads where large puddles of water accumulate.
- ◆ Ask City Hall to make walking routes a priority in all new developments.

### **4. Personal safety**

#### *What you can do now*

- ◆ Ask a friend to go with you on your walk.
- ◆ Walk in the daytime.
- ◆ Report scary people to the police.
- ◆ Ask neighbours to keep dogs leashed or fenced.

#### *What you and your community can do with more time*

- ◆ Start a Neighbourhood Watch or Crime Watch program.
- ◆ Start a walking club so you always have someone to go with.
- ◆ Request more police in your neighbourhood.
- ◆ Ask business owners to put lights in sunken doorways, alleyways and other areas where someone might lurk.
- ◆ Ask City Hall and private property owners to fix up vandalism.

- ◆ Organise a walking potluck in your neighbourhood where people have to walk to a new house for each course of the meal.

## 5. Pleasant and supportive routes

### *What you can do now*

- ◆ Smile and say hello to the people you pass.
- ◆ Plant trees and flowers in your own yard.
- ◆ Take a trash bag with you on your walk.
- ◆ Take a folding chair or stool with you so you can sit down and have a rest.
- ◆ Take a drink with you.
- ◆ Walk on the shady side of the street.

### *What you and your community can do with more time*

- ◆ Plant trees and flowers on abandoned properties.
- ◆ Organise a community clean-up day.
- ◆ Sponsor a neighbourhood beautification or tree-planting day.
- ◆ Begin an adopt-a-street program.
- ◆ Make a map of your neighbourhood that shows public washrooms, water fountains and telephones.
- ◆ Work with businesses and City Hall to install benches along popular walking routes.
- ◆ Work with city planners to build parks with shade, benches, public telephones and water fountains.
- ◆ Ask City Hall to improve bus routes in your neighbourhood.
- ◆ Ask local farmers if they would set up a fruit or vegetable stand once a week in a church or community centre parking lot.

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