

Creating Communities *for* Active Aging



- a Guide to Developing a Strategic Plan to Increase Walking and Biking by Older Adults in *Your* Community



PREFACE

Most people are familiar with the saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. But not everyone knows that prevention is just as important for older adults as it is for the young. Prevention means investing now to protect health in the future; and one of the most effective 'investment strategies' is regular exercise. Americans, as a whole, do not get enough physical activity to protect their health. Of all age groups, older Americans are the least likely to participate in regular exercise.

People of all ages can benefit from regular, moderate physical activity. A 67-year old who takes a brisk 30-minute walk most days, and does stretching and strengthening exercises one or two days a week, will not only increase her chances of living a longer life, she will also be less likely to develop the chronic diseases—from diabetes to depression—that can occur in later life.

Yet many Americans live in places where it's not easy to get those recommended 30 minutes of brisk walking or riding a bike every day. The technological progress of the 20th century has had a significant side effect: sedentary lifestyles. This is reflected in the communities where we live. Many suburbs were built without sidewalks; and with houses and services spaced far apart, even the most trivial errand requires the use of a car. Cars, computers, and televisions have made it easy to forego regular physical activity.

As our population is increasingly comprised of older adults, there is a growing imperative to make communities more activity-friendly. Adding sidewalks to suburban neighborhoods may be a big project, but often there are simpler changes communities can make so it is easier to walk and bike.

Of course, many forms of physical activity, such as swimming or fitness classes, are beneficial. This document focuses on walking and biking because they are simple and easy to do for most older adults. While the ideas presented here have older adults in mind, most of them can benefit all ages.

By:

- defining some goals,
- bringing a variety of people to the table,
- performing an evaluation of your community, and
- developing a plan for how to make changes,

you may find that there are many ways your community can become more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly. That process is, in a nutshell, a simple version of strategic planning.

This document is a guide for you to use to create a strategic plan to engage the older adults in your community in more physical activity. Whether you live in a big city or a small town, a suburban neighborhood or on a farm, there are ways to make it easier for older adults in your community to walk and bike and be active and independent.

First, the guide contains some goals and terms for your group to discuss and adapt as you develop your own community's plan. You can tailor your own strategic plan to meet the needs of the place where you live and the people who live there.

You will find suggestions on involving key stakeholders from your community in the process of finding the obstacles and prospects. **One of the keys to a successful plan is making sure you have input from a wide range of interested people.**

What are the barriers to walking in our neighborhood?

- > No sidewalk on Glenn Drive
- > Trail beside Kearney Lake is often muddy
- > Crossing Robie Street is terrifying!

One third of older adults don't engage in regular physical activity.

Percentage of Persons Age 65 or Older Who Reported No Leisure-Time Physical Activity

	1985	1990	1995
Total:	40.0%	39.4%	34.4%
Men:	33.9%	31.5%	27.8%
Women:	44.3%	45.0%	39.2%

Source: National Health Interview Survey.



Using the process and resources outlined in this document, your community can assess the opportunities for and barriers to increased walking and biking by older adults. Perhaps your community already has a walking trail, but you've noticed that mostly young people use it. Would providing a few benches along the way make it more appealing for older adults?

In order to plan, you will need to find out how easy or difficult it is right now for the older members of the community to walk and bike. This document lists some common obstacles faced by older adults who want to be active. To give you a head start, it also provides you with suggestions for further reading and contacts you might use. **The guide also contains a catalog of ideas and strategies for helping older adults be more active and mobile.**

Once you've identified what prevents people from getting out, and what helps them, you'll want to decide what changes you can make right away, and which ones will take time. For instance, those low-hanging tree branches that make it hard to use the sidewalk can be trimmed next month, but it may take longer to make sure that the new development being built in your town has sidewalks! Either way, it's all work towards the same goal: maintaining—and increasing—physical activity among older adults.

What kinds of exercises should we do?

Four types of exercises are important for older adults.

1. Endurance activities are those that increase our heart rate and breathing for an extended period of time. Ideally, we should do 30 minutes of endurance activities at least five days a week.
2. Strength exercises help build muscles and are particularly important for preventing fractures among older adults. We should do some simple strength-building exercises at least twice a week.
3. Balance exercises, which can be incorporated into strength exercises, help prevent falls.
4. Stretching helps keep us flexible with more freedom of movement. We should do stretching exercises most days before/after exercise.

More information: *Exercise: A Guide from the National Institute on Aging*. Available from (800) 222-2225 or www.nia.gov/nia.

Who can use this document?

This plan is designed to be useful to a wide variety of people and communities. Whether you are:

- a citizen—young or old—or a community planner;
- an advocate for the aging, or a developer;
- a local administrator, a recreation director, or a civic or non-profit group;

this document can help guide your efforts. The only thing you need to use this plan is a desire to create a community that enables your older residents to be physically active, mobile, and independent for as long as possible.

The goal of this document is to help communities:

- increase the proportion of older adults participating in safe physical activity, especially walking and bicycling; and
- preserve, and even enhance, older adults' independence, mobility, and health.

Some terms used in this document

Before getting started, there are a few key terms to define that have very broad uses and can lead to confusion. We'll be talking about different types of barriers to being physically active. One way to think about these barriers is to divide them into **personal** and **environmental**. By personal we mean *internal*, something about you. For example, a personal barrier might be feeling self-conscious about being out of shape. An environmental barrier is something *external*: you're ready to go out walking, but there aren't any sidewalks near where you live.

Another term to clarify is **mobility**, an aspect of 'active aging.' To some people, mobility refers primarily to driving a car; thus, maintaining mobility means making sure people can drive for as long as possible. To others, mobility can mean the ability to move around safely on your own, whether in your kitchen or to the grocery store. These two definitions may seem at odds with each other. But for the purposes of this document, mobility means *getting around*, and is part of active aging. It means being able to walk down to the corner and buy a newspaper, and it means being able to drive to the next town to visit a friend. Mobility can even mean being able to play a game of catch with your grandchildren. At any age, all of these types of activities contribute to quality of life.

Why should older adults be more active?

Regular, moderate exercise by older adults can help delay or prevent the onset of disabilities and many chronic diseases, reduce the risk of falls and fractures, improve mood and relieve depression, increase mental acuity, and perhaps increase life expectancy. However, many older Americans are not engaging in sufficient physical activity to reap these benefits.

Research shows that regular physical activity greatly reduces the risk of death from America's leading cause of death, coronary heart disease. Physical activity also reduces the risk of developing diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure.* Even people who have already developed some of these diseases can benefit from physical activity. For example, regular activity decreases the need for insulin among diabetics, and many scientists believe that heart disease can be reversed through exercise and a healthy diet. Exercise can also be beneficial for people with arthritis.

In addition, several studies show that regular, moderate-intensity exercise can improve mood and alleviate depression. For older adults, adopting an active lifestyle may help with feeling isolated. There's nothing like a walk around the neighborhood to help you meet your neighbors!

Increased activity can even benefit lifelong 'couch potatoes.' Common gains include improvements in muscle and bone strength, balance, and energy level. Moderate physical activity can help prevent falls, a common problem for older adults. In fact, just getting started—taking a short walk, for example—can help you get in shape to be more active.

Moving around in our communities—to run errands such as buying groceries, visiting the bank or the post office, or meeting a friend for lunch—is something most of us do by car. But as we age and our priorities shift, we may want, or need, to do some of these things without getting behind the wheel or making a long trip. Studies show that over 80% of Americans want to remain in their own homes for as long as possible as they age. By being physically active on a regular basis, and having services within walking distance, older adults can help maintain this independence and rely less on others to help them with their daily activities.

Why should communities provide opportunities for physical activity?

Researchers in a number of fields—such as urban planning, transportation, and public health—are beginning to find that the physical environment (the neighborhood) has a strong effect on whether or not members of a community walk or bike. For a long time, many of us assumed that whether or not a person was physically active depended on that individual's willpower or interest. And while interest certainly plays a part, we are now learning that places where it's easier and safer to walk and bike tend to have much higher rates of these activities than places where it's difficult. Increased physical activity may also improve the pocketbooks of older adults by providing an alternative to more expensive modes of travel.

Many communities are beginning to realize that sidewalks, bike paths, and crosswalks are not just 'extras,' but essential investments in the health and safety of their residents. Making sure our neighborhoods provide opportunities for everyone to be safely active not only enriches quality of life but also improves health and increases longevity. In addition, steps taken to improve the environment for older adults are beneficial to many others. For example, making sidewalks safe and accessible helps people in wheelchairs, parents pushing strollers, and young children walking to school, as well as older adults. Increased foot traffic can boost sales at local retail businesses, and there is evidence that property values increase in communities where residents are able to walk and bike easily.



* U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, *Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; 1996.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN

Define goals: what do you and your community want to achieve or change?

As you begin your planning process, it will help to articulate your community's goals. From these broad goals, more specific 'action items' will evolve. In addition, defining goals in a clear and straightforward manner often helps clarify what exactly you plan to do.

Who are 'older adults'?

Different people define 'older' differently. One thing we have in common is that our perspectives on aging change over time.

As you go about creating a more activity-friendly environment for the adults where you live, spend some time with them thinking about who they are in your community, and what their particular needs might be.

What are our goals?

- > Increase walking and biking in Alberto's neighborhood
- > Slow down traffic on Oxford Street—a lot of pedestrian injuries have happened there
- > Establish an early morning mall-walking program for seniors
- > Make sure the new development builds bike paths

The goal of this document is to help communities:

- > Increase the proportion of older adults participating in safe physical activity, especially walking and bicycling
- > Preserve, and even enhance, older adults' independence, mobility, and health.

Strategic Planning: Key Steps

1. Define goals or mission
2. Analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
3. Establish specific goals
4. Select strategies to reach goals
5. Assign responsibility and time lines for strategies
6. Write down plan, and distribute to everyone involved
7. Implement plan's strategies
8. Celebrate your success!

Do you want simply to increase the number of older adults in your community who participate in regular exercise? Or perhaps you have a more specific target in mind: providing more places to walk, for example, or protecting elderly pedestrians by installing traffic islands on a street where many older adults cross? Or do you have a certain group in mind, such as increasing daily walking among Medicare beneficiaries who have diabetes? In any case, agreeing on your goal or goals helps focus your efforts and bring cohesion among those working on the project. As you establish these general goals, talk with other residents and community organizations so they can become involved.

Timeline for our goals

This month: trim branches on South Street

By next spring: install benches along Inglis Street

Within the next 2 years: include bike paths when they widen Barrington Street

Who can help?

*"All communities have older residents. And those who are not older, if lucky, will be older one day...the features of a community that make it a livable place for older people benefit all."**

It is often said, and is worth repeating, that the most successful efforts to make change involve a wide array of participants or stakeholders.

The more people from different walks of life you can involve in creating and carrying out your strategic plan, the more confident you can be that you will benefit a broad array of people in your community. Some committee members may be obvious choices, such as members of community groups that promote walking, or representatives from interested local government agencies. Some are from groups you may not have considered, such as a member of the local chamber of commerce or a law enforcement officer.

Work Group—Kearney Lake Trail

Bill – talk to friend at Parks Department

Karen – ask son-in-law about building raised trail at muddy sections

Jonathan – see if lumber yard would donate materials

Fernando – research safety of raised trail – do we need handrails?



* Patricia Baron Pollak, Liveable Communities: An Evaluation Guide, Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute, 1999, p.7.

The people you want to be sure to include in planning are, first and foremost, older people themselves. In addition, representatives from minority groups and different neighborhoods may want to participate. Local business owners, representatives from the real estate industry, and officials from your community's transit agency, if there is one, can offer input and resources.

Who can help us?

- > Who has time? Betty, Hugh, Tom
- > Who has expertise? Jerry, Marge, Lois
- > Who has money? Ed, Karen
- > Who has influence? Jose, Molly, John
- > Whom must we include? Maris, Garry, Henry

Getting started: assess the situation

To begin, it helps to have as much information as you can about your community. This is often referred to as an 'community assessment.' It can be very general, asking such questions as:

- Approximately how many older adults live in our community?
- How many engage in regular physical activity?
- In what types of physical activity do they participate?
- Is it easy for them to do so?
- Where are the locations of the greatest number of pedestrian injuries, especially among older adults?
- Who are the people who aren't physically active?
- What are some of the reasons why those people aren't active?
- What resources already exist for older adults to be physically active? Are these opportunities used? Are there resources that could be made available?

Of course, you won't know the answers to these questions right away, and it may take some time to find out. This is the first task in your strategic planning: develop a list of questions and collect the information you need.

Many resources exist to help you at this stage of the process. Two examples are the *Walkability Checklist* and *Liveable Communities: An Evaluation Guide*, by Patricia Baron Pollak, published by AARP. (See the resources section at the end of this document for more information.) Documents such as these are designed to help you assess your own community and create an inventory of its assets and shortcomings in terms of opportunities to be active.

Typical findings from community assessments

Following is a list of common opportunities and barriers for walking and biking for older adults. Some of these findings may apply to your community, and reading through them may help you recognize some of your community's assets. They are grouped into four different categories: personal barriers, personal opportunities, community barriers, and community opportunities. This list is provided to stimulate your thinking about the barriers and opportunities in the place where you live.



Benefits of Regular Physical Activity*

- > Lowers the risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes
- > Cuts risk of falling and bone fractures
- > Helps manage discomfort of arthritis
- > Helps develop and maintain strong bones, muscles, and joints
- > Improves mood and sense of well-being
- > Helps control weight

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Researchers in a number of fields—such as urban planning, transportation, and public health—are finding that the physical environment (the neighborhood) has a strong effect on whether or not members of a community walk or bike.

* U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, Atlanta, GA: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; 1996.

PERSONAL FACTORS

Barriers: What factors prevent us from being active?

- Disabilities
- Perceived lack of time
- Isolation
- Depression
- Dislike of physical activity
- Poor vision
- Side effects of medications: energy level, balance, alertness
- Fears: falling, crime, health event (such as a heart attack, being hit by a motor vehicle, stray dogs)



- Lack of information: Where do I go? What should I bring?
- Perceived lack of social support for biking and walking
- Frailty, muscle weakness
- Care-taking duties
- Lack of 'equipment'—e.g., footwear, bicycle
- Perceived lack of energy

Opportunities: What factors contribute to being active?

- History of active lifestyle
- Desire for social contact
- Involvement in faith-based organizations, clubs, community centers, etc., can offer access to programs
- Concern about weight /chronic disease management
 - Errands
 - Participation in travel, hobbies, interests
 - Desire for independence
 - Wish to 'keep up' with grandchildren, peers, etc.
 - Vanity
 - Desire to enjoy life
 - Availability of time

What personal factors prevent us from being more active?

Lorraine: not enough time

Bob: feels silly

Cecilia: hates exercise!

Duane: joints are too stiff

What personal factors contribute to our being more active?

Ken: wants to keep up with the grandchildren

Bea: always feels good...once you get started

Susan: helps keep the weight off

What environmental factors prevent us from being active?

Marian: people drive too fast near our house, and there aren't sidewalks

Sam: my kids will think I'm crazy

Nelson: my doctor never said anything about exercising

What environmental factors contribute to being active?

Ned: loves walking along the river

Luella: has made a lot of new friends at the stretch-and-strength classes

Jack: pharmacy, coffee shop, and hardware store are in walking distance

Two Myths About Physical Activity

1. It has to be jogging/swimming laps/working out at a gym.

2. I have to do it all at once.

Doctors recommend that adults engage in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least five days a week, and both strength training and flexibility training one or two days a week. But some people think physical activity only means vigorous exercise: jogging, participating in an aerobics class, or playing tennis. They're surprised to learn that just about anything that gets you moving counts! Brisk walking, working in the garden, or actively playing with your grandchildren, are all 'acceptable' forms of moderate physical activity. And furthermore, you can break it up into pieces. For example, a 20-minute walk in the morning followed by some simple strength-building exercises, and another brisk 10-minute walk to the grocery store before dinner gets you to the recommended level!



ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Barriers: What factors prevent us from being active?

- Hills, stairs
- Bad weather
- Lack of benches to rest on
- Lack of sidewalks and bicycle trails
- Broken sidewalks/uneven pavement
- Inadequate lighting
- Social environment that doesn't embrace physical activity
- Inadequate public transportation to neighborhood services, recreation centers
- Hazardous traffic crossings and pedestrian signals
- Aggressive drivers
- Lack of safe bicycling facilities and multi-use paths
- Shortage of community facilities, such as school gyms, nature trails, and bike shops
- Lack of guidance from untrained/uninterested health care providers
- Lack of reimbursement to health care providers for exercise 'prescription'
- Lack of agency coordination and planning (between public health department, aging services, parks department, etc.) for active environments
- Inaccessible staircases in buildings with older residents
- Feeling isolated in neighborhood

Opportunities: What factors contribute to being active?

- Ready availability of places to walk, bike, etc.
- Easy, pleasant environment in which to walk or bike
- Presence of pedestrian crosswalks
- Stores and services in walking distance (for easy errand-running)
- Trees for shade
- Pleasant climate
- Benches
- Simple equipment: good shoes, comfortable clothing
- Access to information on both how and why to exercise
- Bicycle safety training classes
- Money saving: running errands by foot saves on gas
- Social clubs, including bike clubs and walking groups
- Affordable (no or low cost) and accessible classes
- Intergenerational programming
- Neighbors who can help if needed
- Walking/biking paths, etc., in retirement communities
- Disposable income
- Well-marked bike lanes on side streets
- Availability of shopping mall-walking programs

Using your own findings, revisit your goals. How can you make the most out of your community's assets?

Who are 'Older Adults?'

Different people define 'older' differently. One thing we have in common is that our perspectives on aging change over time. As you go about creating a more activity-friendly environment for the adults where you live, spend some time thinking about who they are in your community, and what their particular needs might be.

Key Questions

- > How many older adults are there in your community? Who are they?
- > What types of physical activity do they participate in?
- > Is it reasonably easy for them to do so?
- > Who are the people who aren't physically active? Why?
- > What resources already exist for older adults to be more active? Are these opportunities used? Are there resources that could be made available?



Prioritize results by categories

Once you have conducted a community assessment, you may find you have a lot of ‘pieces’ of information, but you’re not sure how to use your findings to plan activities to help you attain your goal. You know that on a certain busy street the sidewalk ends halfway down the block. You also know that older adults who use a local walking trail have said they would use it more if there were a few places to sit down and rest along the way. But how do you work with this information? How do you decide what barriers to address first, and which opportunities show the most promise?

One strategy is to group the information you have into categories, such as cost, feasibility, or time frame. This can often help clarify what to do next. Examples of these groups are listed below. You may wish to sit down with your team and fit the information you’ve gathered about your community into such groupings as:

- **Feasibility:** easy to address, can be addressed, will take major effort to address
- **Cost:** no-cost, inexpensive, medium-cost, costly
- **Reach/Impact:** would affect a lot of people, a moderate number of people, few people
- **Time frame:** immediate, within six months, within a year, within/over several years
- **Leadership:** neighborhood residents, town/city planning department, town/city parks department, transportation authority, social service agencies, private sector (note: many initiatives may involve shared responsibilities)

Develop strategies to achieve your goals

Your community assessment and the list of strategies in the next section can help you identify approaches to build on community assets and reverse shortcomings. Be sure to keep your list manageable and include a mixture of short- and longer-term (or more complex) projects. Build as much agreement as possible among the members of your group about which strategies are most important. Having ‘buy-in’ from a diverse array of people and organizations is essential to achieving success with projects of this type.

As you develop a clear idea of what you want to achieve, work with your group to break each project into clear, feasible steps. Then assign responsibility for these steps to a specific person or organization. Agree on a realistic timeline for accomplishing each step, and get ready to launch your effort!

Measure progress and celebrate your success

An important, and often overlooked, component to any strategic plan is evaluation. It doesn’t need to be complicated. But it’s important to include a way to measure progress towards your goals and get feedback from the people you’re working to help. By including evaluation in your efforts, you’ll also have information and advice to share with other communities who want to duplicate your successes. Whether you ask your local public health department to conduct a formal evaluation, or whether you take a survey of all the older adults out walking in the park one summer evening, you should include a way to measure your progress as part of your plan.

How can we get feedback?

- > Distribute a questionnaire at the retirement community
- > See if someone at the community college can help

One last tip: make time to celebrate your successes. Your team will work hard. Plan a ribbon-cutting ceremony or a team party to enjoy the results of your work and spread the word. You may find yourself with some new volunteers to help achieve your goals.

Low tree branches make it hard to walk on Jones Street next to Bob’s Diner

Project: Trim trees

Feasibility: Easy

Cost: Low-cost

Reach: A lot of people (everyone goes to Bob’s!)

Time: Immediate

Leadership: Town; Bob’s

Uneven sidewalk on Main Street in front of public library

Project: Fix the sidewalk

Feasibility: Can be addressed

Cost: Medium

Reach: Moderate

Time: Within six months

Responsibility: Town planning department; can Friends of the Library help too?

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE ACTIVE AGING

Across the nation, many communities are undergoing a renaissance. Together, citizens, businesses, and governments are making their communities more walking- and biking-friendly. In this section, you'll find a list of strategies that communities have used. Some strategies may not apply to your community; others you can adapt to your circumstances and goals; and some can be used just as they are.

Creating communities for active aging is not complex, but it will take time. Places that were built after World War II were designed for cars. In the last 40 years, many suburbs were built without sidewalks or bike paths. Fortunately, small changes can result in more residents biking and walking. These small achievements can help build support for large-scale projects.

Principles behind the strategies

The strategies below are not random ideas. Many are grounded in research findings from diverse fields. Others are just common sense. As you develop strategies, keep in mind some basic principles.

First, people tend to walk and bike where they have pleasant and safe places to do so. Trees, adequate street lighting, and trash removal can make a difference. As more people are drawn outdoors, crime is less of a threat. For older adults, the adage 'safety in numbers' can also mean there's someone to get help if one of us falls or is injured.

At any age, the sense of social support for active lifestyles is important. Mall-walking programs are a success because friends can gather at a convenient location, get some exercise, and even knock an errand off their list. Malls also offer a comfortable environment in all seasons.

Similarly, although many people are busy, they will bike and walk to do errands if paths connect homes and offices with shopping, restaurants, and services. Active communities not only provide places for walking and biking, they connect destinations and make it easier to fit walking and biking into busy lives.

Keep in mind the special needs of older pedestrians. Physical disabilities (arthritis, visual and hearing impairments, aging joints, etc.) can slow the walking pace and reflexes. Agility may be reduced. As a result, some older pedestrians are more vulnerable, and might need such things as benches, shaded paths, and traffic islands.

Improved crosswalks and sidewalks for older pedestrians tend to benefit other groups. Parents with strollers and persons in wheelchairs are two such groups. In fact, many of the strategies listed are likely to boost safe biking and walking among all generations.

Finally, both structural changes to neighborhoods and other activities to promote active aging are important. Older adults may need advice and encouragement from physicians and physical activity experts to begin a safe walking or biking program. Public education campaigns can remind drivers of ways to ensure the safety of older pedestrians.

Active communities not only provide places for walking and biking, they connect destinations and make it easier to fit walking and biking into busy lives.

Types of Strategies

- Community Design Strategies
- Civic Engagement Strategies
- Education Strategies
- Government Policy Changes
- Information Strategies
- Pedestrian and Bike Facilities Strategies
- Traffic and Transit Strategies

Across the nation, many communities are undergoing a renaissance. Together, citizens, businesses, and governments are making their communities more walkable and bikeable.



The Catalog

The strategies below are grouped into seven categories: community design, civic engagement, education, government policy, information, pedestrian and bicycling facilities, and traffic and transit. They can be undertaken by businesses, civic groups, and non-profit social service agencies—and governments. Strategies that involve changes to public laws or policies will need support from residents and businesses.

The catalog uses ‘pedestrian facilities’ as a catch-all term for physical structures for walking and biking. Sidewalks, trails, bike racks, bike lanes, crosswalks, benches, and safety measures are some of the most common pedestrian facilities. Parks and recreation centers can also be included in this group.

We need a place to go on hot summer days or after winter storms. To Do:

- > Call management company at the mall—would they sponsor an early morning walking program?
- > Maybe Mel’s Sports Store would give a discount on walking shoes to people who participate?
- > Could Cecilia’s daughter’s company donate t-shirts?

Update Land Use/Community Design Policies

- > Ensure residential areas can have service and commercial areas in walking distance
- > Ensure all new residential areas are built with sidewalks and bike paths
- > Insist on attractive building designs that place windows and porches (or ‘eyes’) on the street
- > Allow/encourage sidewalk cafes (may require widening sidewalks)
- > Protect public access for biking and walking along community ‘treasures’ like rivers, lakes
- > Add traffic-calming/slowing measures to streets with a lot of pedestrians



Community Design Strategies

1. Boost Visual Appeal

- Plant and nurture trees
- Remove graffiti and trash
- Encourage businesses and residents to plant and maintain flowers and trees
- Brighten dim areas by trimming vegetation or installing lights
- Install street furniture: benches, awnings for shade
- Create community gardens

2. Connect People and Destinations

- Connect homes with jobs, shopping, services, community centers, public transportation, recreation facilities, and schools
- Build more paths
- Remove fences or create gates though them
- Pave paths where pedestrians have made their own
- Install pedestrian short-cuts through cul-de-sacs to tempt people to walk instead of drive
- Offer frequent crosswalks on busy streets and to locations visited by older adults, such as doctors’ offices, libraries, or grocery stores
- Develop park corridors and transit routes that connect neighborhoods and destinations
- Place pathways to cut across city parks in addition to those on the perimeter

3. Offer Incentives for Senior Housing Developments to Promote Biking and Walking

- On-site gyms
- Accessible and inviting stairways
- Transit services to malls and parks
- Walking groups

Civic Engagement Strategies

1. Organize Community Groups to

- ‘Patrol’ parks in the early evening
- Pair elders with companion walkers (of any age) for social support and safety
- Lead walking groups or tours of points of historic interest
- Shovel snow and de-ice slippery sidewalks for residents unable to do this
- Sponsor mall-walking programs
- Convince the community’s leading employers to build or underwrite recreational facilities
- Offer golf, tennis, tai chi, stretch-and-strength classes

2. Involve the Health Care Community to

- Assess older adults’ health and need for physical activity
- Write prescriptions for older patients to walk and bike
- Refer patients to walking groups and other community resources
- Review medications for impact on balance, cognitive clarity
- Counsel patients on how to prevent falls

3. Engage Local Businesses to

Sponsor incentive programs for seniors to start and sustain biking and walking activities

- Free t-shirts or walking vests with reflective tape
- Coupons to reduce the cost of new walking shoes
- Two-for-one dinner coupons for people leading walking groups
- Sponsor creation of paths and facilities

Education Strategies

1. Inform the Public About the Benefits of Walking and Biking Investments

Healthier residents/increased quality of life and healthy years
Community 'livability' improves – attracting new residents and visitors
Active seniors have more energy for volunteering and community involvement
Fewer pedestrian injuries

2. Educate Older Adults About the Personal Benefits of Active Aging

Use media, public relations, and public health communications to develop campaigns to

- Provide information about starting to walk and bike
- Teach them how to incorporate physical activity into daily lives
- Engage them in civic groups working to create an active community

3. Inform Older Adults on How to Be Safe Pedestrians

Use bicycle helmets and other protective gear

Stretch and warm up

Wear good shoes

Start slowly and gradually increase time

Wear light- or bright-colored clothing, reflective strips

Use flashlights and bike lights at dusk and night

Keep music off or at a low volume

Obey traffic laws

Invite a companion to walk or bike with you

4. Teach the Public to Support Safe Walking for Older Pedestrians

Encourage – or even join – older family members and neighbors on walks and bike rides

Yield the right of way to pedestrians

Keep dogs behind a fence they cannot jump or on a secure leash

Back out cars slowly and with care

Look for bicycles before opening car doors when parked on the street

Drive 'friendly,' not aggressively

Slow speed in areas with pedestrians

Government Policy Changes

1. Enforce Traffic Laws and Regulations, such as:

Traffic patterns

Pedestrian right-of-way

Red lights

Speed limits

2. Adequately Invest in Pedestrian Projects, Including Safety Campaigns and Facilities

- Set funding targets based on community need: pedestrian injuries and deaths, also ill health associated with inactivity
- Use federal transportation enhancement funds to develop a network of safe pedestrian facilities
- Set performance standards for transportation agencies regarding bicycle and pedestrian facilities and safety
- Ensure agency staff, especially at regional or field offices, have the knowledge and skills to foster community improvements
- Streamline funding requirements so pedestrian/recreation programs are easier to administer
- Support education strategies such as those listed above

Three Scenic Walks in Elm City

1. From the beginning of Glenn Drive, south to Kearney Lake Road; left on Kearney Lake Road to Elm Street, along Elm Street back to Glenn Drive. This walk takes about 25 minutes.
2. Starting at South Street, walk along the Riverside Trail to Barrington Street. Note: City bus stops one block north on Barrington Street and takes you back to South Street. The walk takes about 30 minutes. Great on a hot day!
3. From Point Pleasant Park, walk along Inglis Street to South Park Street; cross Inglis and go back along the other side. The loop takes about 25 minutes. Lots of beautiful historic houses!



3. Update Land Use and Community Design Policies

- Ensure residential areas can have service and commercial areas in walking distance
- Ensure all new residential areas are built with sidewalks and bike paths
- Insist on attractive building designs that place windows and porches (or 'eyes') on the street
- Allow/encourage sidewalk cafes (may require widening sidewalks)
- Protect public access for biking and walking along community 'treasures' like rivers, lakes
- Add traffic-calming/slowing measures to streets with a lot of pedestrians

4. Reduce Crime in Risky Neighborhoods

- Community policing and neighborhood watch programs
- Incentives for job creation and business development
- Seed funding for businesses and homeowners to fix up properties
- Adequate street lighting

Information Strategies

1. Develop a Map or Handbook of Walking and Biking Pathways

- Recreational (e.g., scenic routes and parks)
- Historic sites and neighborhoods
- Special-interest commercial areas (e.g., antiques district)
- Nature trails

2. Increase Signage on Main Roads to

- Help residents and visitors find parks and trails
- Mark bike lanes
- Identify upcoming pedestrian crossings

3. Create Guides to Local Walking and Biking Resources

- Groups that organize/sponsor walks and bike rides
- Stores selling discounted walking and biking equipment
- Health professionals who advise individuals and groups
- Directory of indoor walking facilities (schools, malls) with hours and addresses



Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Strategies

1. Remove Walking and Biking Hazards

Fix broken and uneven sidewalks

Trim tree branches that are low enough for head injuries

Brighten poorly lit paths

Widen pedestrian paths so walkers and bikers can safely share the space

2. Increase Access to Existing Community Facilities

Open school gyms and tracks to the public on evenings and weekends

Reclaim parks: add lighting, repair sidewalks, clean benches, remove trash and graffiti

Extend hours at recreational centers, including pools, golf courses, and tennis courts

Install bike racks at destinations

Ensure parks and trails have adequate parking spaces

Convert abandoned railways to trails

Offer 'comfort stations'—benches, water fountains—in parks and along trails

3. Eliminate or Reduce Recreational Fees

Offer group or senior discounts

Give yearlong passes to state parks, community pools, etc., to seniors on fixed incomes

4. Improve Pedestrian Crossings...to *Encourage Walking*

Install pedestrian signals that indicate seconds remaining for safe crossings

Extend signal times so senior pedestrians have enough time to cross

Decrease waits for pedestrian signals

Add more on-demand pedestrian signals

Install curb ramps (or sloping curbs) for pedestrians and bicycles

Add more crosswalks on major roads, especially when homes are stranded from services

5. Improve Pedestrian Crossings...for *Safety*

Create buffers between people and traffic such as parked cars, trees, bike racks

Designate bicycle lanes

Build pedestrian bridges when crossing by foot or bicycle is too dangerous

Add traffic islands or raised medians for pedestrians who are crossing multiple traffic lanes or where slower pedestrians can take refuge until the light changes

Reduce traffic speed to give drivers and pedestrians more time to see each other

Make pedestrian signals brighter and/or larger for older eyes

Add sound to pedestrian signals

Improve crosswalks to create obvious pedestrian zones

- Add lines designating crosswalks and where cars should stop
- Mark the crosswalk with contrasting materials such as bricks or colored cement, but avoid adding tripping hazards
- Use reflecting materials
- Install signs to warn drivers of pedestrian crossings (consider using a fluorescent yellow color)

Traffic and Transit Strategies

1. Slow Traffic in Areas with Many Pedestrians (or areas where you want to encourage more walking)

Reduce speed limits and enforce them

Narrow street width

Design street intersections at sharper (e.g., 90°) angles

Give straight streets some curves with

- traffic islands and circles
- sidewalk extensions that bump into the street
- alternating on-street parking patterns
- large concrete planters

Note that if streets are *too* curvy, pedestrians cannot see oncoming traffic



2. Design Transit Routes to Link Seniors with Walking Areas

- At convenient times for seniors
- To places they want or need to go
- With minimal transfers
- With bus stops close to where they live

3. Accommodate Seniors and People with Physical Disabilities

- Purchase or retrofit transit vehicles for people unable to use the steps
- Encourage healthy riders to leave open seats designated for people with special needs



RESOURCES

- AARP: www.aarp.org
- America Walks: www.americawalks.org
- Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging: www.uwo.ca/actage
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Nutrition and Physical Activity, Active Community Environments: www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm
- Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, The Brookings Institution: www.brookings.edu/es/urban/urban.htm
- Local Government Commission: www.lgc.org
- National Center for Bicycling and Walking: www.bikewalk.org
- National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Aging: www.nih.gov/nia
 - National Recreation and Park Association: www.nrpa.org
 - Partnership for a Walkable America: www.nsc.org/walkable.htm
 - Partnership for Prevention: www.prevent.org
 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center: www.bicyclinginfo.org or www.walkinginfo.org
 - Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: www.railstotrails.org
 - SPRY Foundation: www.spry.org
 - Strategic Planning, online guide by Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD http://www.mapnp.org/library/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm
 - Surface Transportation Policy Project: www.transact.org
 - U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: www.nhtsa.dot.gov
 - Walkable Communities: www.walkable.org
 - World Health Organization, Department of Noncommunicable Disease Prevention and Health Promotion: www.who.int/hpr/ageing/index.htm



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people contributed their time to this project, lending expertise, a critical eye, information resources, and helpful suggestions. Foremost among these were members of the project advisory committee, to whom we say “thank you.”

David Buchner, MD, MPH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dan Burden, Walkable Communities, Inc.

Karen Scott Collins, MD, The Commonwealth Fund

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Michael Whelan, City of Largo Recreation and Parks Department

Bill Wilkinson, National Center for Bicycling and Walking

Partnership especially appreciates the invaluable guidance of the advisory committee chair, **Lois Michaels, MSHy**, who also serves on Partnership’s Board of Directors.

Jeff Finn, PhD, School of Communications, The American University, and **Laurie Flaherty, RN, MS**, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration also provided assistance.

Partnership staff who worked on this report were **Jennifer Bell**, project manager, and **Molly E. French, MSCRP**, director of policy research.

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This research was supported by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) under Co-operative Agreement No. DTNH22-00-H-05210. The opinions, findings, and recommendations contained herein are those of Partnership for Prevention and do not necessarily represent those of NHTSA.

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