

How Citizens Can Make a Difference in Defining and Achieving Walkability



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Workshop on how citizens can strategically and tactically leverage scarce resources to most effectively influence the regard given to walkability in the policies, programs, plans and associated legal and administrative documents of local governments and their agencies.

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www.healthycommunities.on.ca

Talking Point 1



Whose Values and Attitudes?

- Citizens must establish themselves as the primary source of values and attitudes on walkability (and everything else in formal municipal documents, including official plans, transportation master plans, pedestrian advisories, traffic enforcement priorities, and budgets).
- Citizens must assert themselves as proponents, advocates, and definers of walkability objectives, standards, and priorities, and must lead in establishing the importance of walkability to the community.
- Times, places, and venues to express values and attitudes about walkability include:
 - Elections
 - Council and committee meetings
 - Advisory boards
 - School and other community organizations
 - Media communications
 - Internet groups

Talking Point 2



Walkability Expertise of Citizens

- Citizens are the experts on the features and characteristics of the preferred walkable future for their neighbourhoods and the larger community.
- Citizens are ill-advised to prescribe solutions to problems.
- Citizens who make errors are stuck with them.
- Professional staff are trained and paid to identify the means to ends, and they are liable for errors, let them do their jobs.

Talking Point 3



Walkability Performance Measures – Long Overdue

- Indexes and other performance measures bring rigor to walkability decisions by elected officials and staff.
- Citizens decide whether the measures serve the public's walkability agenda.
- Citizens decide whether the measures are understandable.

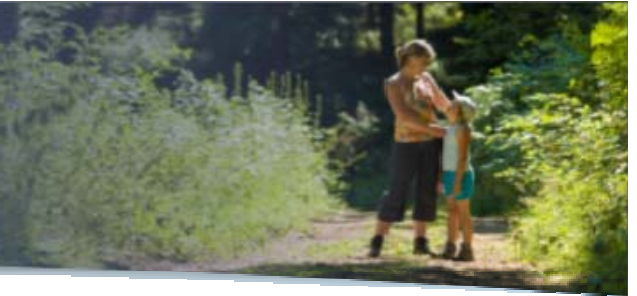
Talking Point 4



Walkability Performance Measures – Inclusivity

- Parties to discussions about walkability performance measures, from variables through to design, testing, and implementation, include representatives from such organizations as:
 - Local government agencies (public health, recreation and leisure, planning, engineering, police, etc.).
 - Elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education academies.
 - Public interest groups and other groups whose mandates to serve and promote the mental, physical, social, emotional, and physiological well-being of seniors, children, intellectually and physically disabled youth and adults, and other pedestrians include a walkability aspect.

Talking Point 5



Technical Support

- Elected officials and professional staff have little hesitation in hiring consultants – engineers, lawyers, planners, accountants, etc., -- to assist in all manner of transportation, planning, engineering, legal, financial, etc., tasks.
- It makes sense for citizens to demand technical assistance to better understand what a municipality is doing or not doing to define, measure, and achieve walkability objectives.

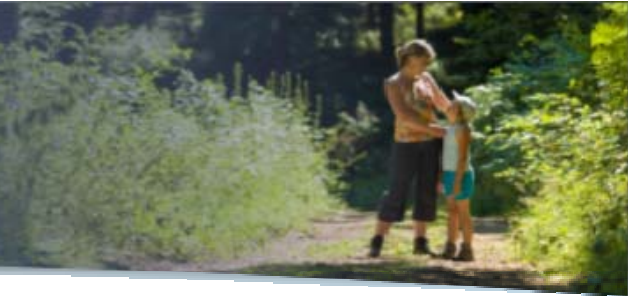
Talking Point 6



Questions, Questions, Questions.

- Good questions are the key to finding out whether walkability promises are being achieved.
- Good questions that require an answer in writing expose the quality of thinking and the quality of doing that underpin a walkability agenda.
- Ask questions, and more questions, about the walkability practices scheduled and achieved in neighbourhoods and the larger community.
- Ask questions that involve the provision of fact-based evidence.

Talking Point 7



Keep Dialogue with Officials Public, And Make it Digital

- Put issues, complaints, and concerns about walkability on the public record to create an undeniable and inescapable record of accountability, responsibility and liability. All else is 'she said-he said', and is largely useless in meetings of any kind, including those at OMB hearings and in court.
- For reasons of speed, ease of use, minimal cost, and widespread accessibility, email and the Internet are effective means of informing and listening to interested parties about what is or is not happening in regard to walkability processes and outcomes in neighbourhoods and municipalities across the province and the country.

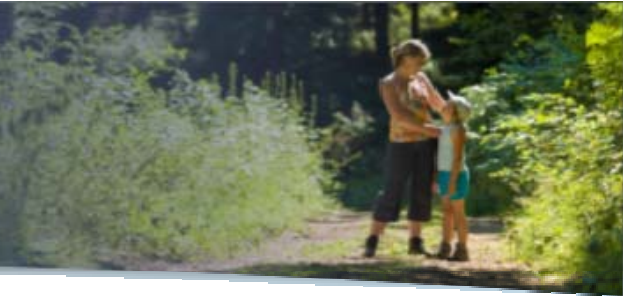
Talking Point 8



Avoid Being Manipulated

- Make your views known at public meetings (council, committee, advisory, etc.) where official records are kept.
- Do not get worn out attending so-called “Open Houses”; many of them are time- and energy-wasters that serve little to no productive purpose.
- There are ‘old boy’ networks in all fields. Instruct your elected officials to obtain second opinions from experts on walkability who are not part of a staff or professional network of insiders.

Talking Point 9



Media – Much to be Gained, Much to be Done

- Newspaper, TV and radio transportation stories in most if not all communities across Canada are still biased towards coverage of incidents and situations involving private motor vehicles.
- In order to promote more media coverage of incidents and situations involving pedestrians – school children, teens, adults, seniors – make visits and calls to media organizations, and write letters to editors about walkability issues and concerns, and especially about needed action by governments, corporations, and citizens.

Talking Point 10



Media – Much to be Gained, Much to be Done, Help is Near

- Enlist university researchers as resource people and work with them to raise the media appeal of walkability issues and processes.
- The Internet has emerged as a very popular communications medium. Use it to inform citizens, and to ‘encourage’ elected and appointed officials to acquire and to demonstrate due regard for walkability issues, processes, and outcomes.



Bio-Note

- Dr. Barry Wellar is Distinguished Research Fellow, Transport 2000 Canada, and President, Wellar Consulting Inc. He is a Registered Professional Planner in Ontario, and a Member of the Canadian Institute of Planners. He is the author of more than 100 papers in the transportation-land use domain, and has received the Anderson Medal and the Ullman Award for his internationally recognized achievements in applied transportation research.
- From 1995-2002 Dr. Wellar directed the Walking Security Index project for the Region of Ottawa-Carleton and the (new) City of Ottawa. His recent public presentations include “*Geographic Factors as a Core Element of Sustainable Transport Best Practices in Metropolitan Regions in Canada*” (April 2007 in San Francisco), “*Sustainable Transport by Design or by Default? Either Way, the Wasteful Ride is Over*” (November 2007 in Belfast), and he recently authored *An Advisory to Council About Solving Ottawa’s Transportation Mess*.
- Dr. Wellar is Professor Emeritus of Geography, University of Ottawa, and is a frequent media commentator on transportation issues. He has been qualified in Saskatchewan and Ontario as an expert witness in the field of urban planning and transportation, and has successfully used the Walking Security Index research in his testimony involving injuries to pedestrians.

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