



City of Lethbridge Community Report

WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



For more information:

Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator
Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention
Alberta Health Services
10101 Southport Road SW
Calgary, AB T2W 3N2

Phone: (403)943-6781 Fax: (403)943-2211

Email: graham.matsalla@albertahealthservices.ca

Web: www.albertahealthservices.ca

INTRODUCTION



Acknowledgements

Alberta Health Services would like to thank the following people and organizations for their contributions in preparation to the Alberta Walkability Roadshow in Lethbridge:

- Stephanie Wierl; Lethbridge College Be Fit for Life Projects Coordinator
- Robert McKay; City of Lethbridge Senior Community Planner
- Carol Thibert; Community Services Program Coordinator
- David Ellis; Parks Manager
- Heather Mathur; Dietitian AHS
- Shawn Pinder; Runner's Soul
- George Kuhl; Downtown Revitalization Manager

Alberta Health Services would like to thank the following groups and organizations for providing representatives to participate in the Alberta Walkability Roadshow in Lethbridge:

- City of Lethbridge Parks and Recreation
- City of Lethbridge Planning & Development Services
- Southern Alberta Community Living Association
- Accessibility Consultant
- Fritz Sick Seniors Centre
- Evangelical Free Church of Lethbridge Hiking Club
- University of Lethbridge Professor
- University of Lethbridge Students
- Lethbridge College Be Fit for Life
- Helen Schuler Center Staff
- Business Community
- Cyclists
- Community members
- Alberta Health Services-Health Professionals

The expert team facilitating walkability workshops for the Alberta Walkability Roadshow (biographies can be found in the appendix):

- Bronwen Thornton, Walk21, UK
- Rodney Tolley, Walk21, Honorary Research Fellow, Staffordshire University
- Jacky Kennedy, Canada Walks, Green Communities Canada
- Andrea Baker, Project Coordinator, Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services
- Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator, Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services

Alberta Health Services would like to thank the Health Promotion Disease & Injury Prevention team for their support of this initiative. Specifically:

Bretta Maloff, Executive Director, Health Promotion Disease & Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services. Dr. Sandra Delon, Director, Chronic Disease Prevention and Oral Health, Alberta Health Services. Monique Assi, Manager, Chronic Disease Prevention, Alberta Health Services. Andrea Baker, Project Coordinator, Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services. Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator, Alberta Health Services

Alberta Health Services would like to thank its funding partner:

This one-year grant funded initiative is supported by a grant from Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW), through the The Alberta Cancer Legacy Fund (ACPLF). AHS would like to acknowledge ACPLF for their support and pursuit in the prevention of cancer and chronic conditions. Their belief in health promotion activities supporting the communities was instrumental.

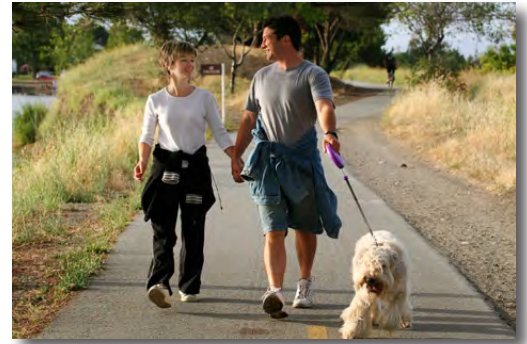


INTRODUCTION

Walking is critical for Health

The Alberta Walkability Roadshow was undertaken to support change that improves walkability and encourages citizens to choose to walk. Walking has long been the most inclusive and popular form of physical activity. Not only is walking associated with improved health but the more opportunities you have for quality walking experiences the more likely you are to choose to walk.

The Alberta Health Services Strategic Direction 2009 – 2012 states that Alberta Health Services is “dedicated to improve the health of communities through strengthening prevention, preparation and response to public health risks”. Alberta Health Services is committed to promoting social and physical environments that enhance wellness and promote healthier behaviours as well as better access to programs that prevent disease and injury. The Walkability Roadshow was a perfect fit with Alberta Health Services strategic direction.



Physical activity has declined between 2009 (58.5%)¹ and 2011 (54.3%)². Encouraging more Albertans to walk for short, local trips and to walk more often has the potential to reverse this downward trend. Being more physically active also helps the provincial economy as obesity is currently costing Alberta \$1.4 billion annually³.

Research has shown that 61% of Canadian adults and 26% of children are overweight or obese. In Alberta, it is estimated that 218,500 children and 1,732,000 adults are overweight or obese. No other chronic disease can begin to match obesity's prevalence or far-reaching health consequences to society. From 2000 – 2007 only 62.4% of Albertans were sufficiently physically active⁴.

¹Alberta Centre for Active Living. 2011 Alberta Survey on Physical Activity: A Concise Report.

²Alberta Centre for Active Living. 2009 Alberta Survey on Physical Activity: A Concise Report.

³Alberta Health Services: Provincial Obesity Business Plan 2011 - 2016. Reducing the Burden of Chronic Disease in Alberta: Prevention and Management of Overweight and Obesity

⁴Alberta Health Services: Provincial Obesity Business Plan 2011 - 2016. Reducing the Burden of Chronic Disease in Alberta: Prevention and Management of Overweight and Obesity

OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



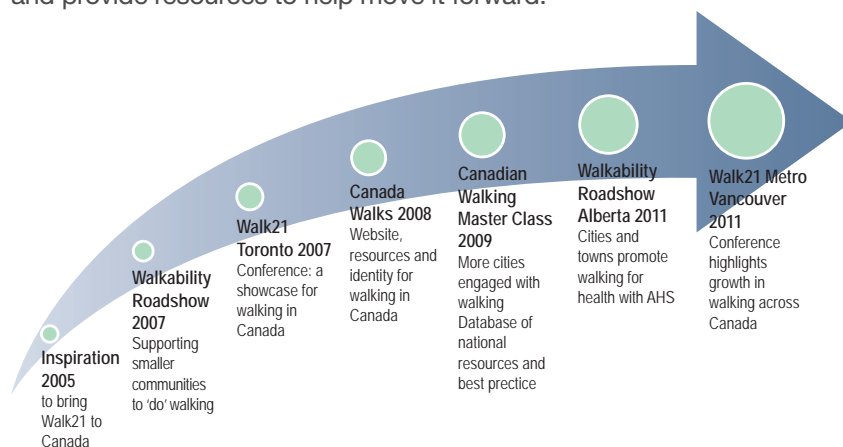
It is becoming well-accepted that walkable communities are both desirable and necessary. Residents focused on enhancing the walkability of their community may have participated in Sustainable Transportation workshops or maybe created municipal Active Transportation plans but there appears to be a gap between creating the plan and implementing the plan. The Walkability Roadshow aims to help fill this gap.

The Alberta Walkability Roadshow

The Alberta Walkability Roadshow builds on the groundswell of interest in walking in Canada and follows in the footsteps of the successful Canadian Walking Master Class 2009 and the Walkability Roadshow 2007. These two initiatives, from Green Communities Canada and Walk21, have proven that a concise and concentrated process can enable municipalities to deliver communities where people choose to walk. These specific activities are supported by the development of Canada Walks and the Walk21 International Conference series and the growth in expertise and best practice examples across Canada which are resources this project continues to draw on.

The International Charter for Walking provides both the strategic direction and detailed descriptive actions for creating walkable communities around the world. The Roadshow uses the Charter to benchmark walking within the communities, to identify achievements, opportunities and challenges as the foundation for generating ideas, initiatives, inspiration and action for building more walkable communities in Alberta.

The Walkability Roadshow brings together a team of local and international experts to build a model framework of local strategies, plans, and actions to help create walkable communities. The Roadshow aims to complement the great work already being done in the community and provide resources to help move it forward.



What is Walk21?

Walk21 exists to champion the development of healthy sustainable and efficient communities where people choose to walk. This goal is accomplished through the Walk21 Conference series, consultancy services and the International Charter for Walking. Walk21 have a vision to create a world where people choose and are able to walk as a way to travel, to be healthy and to relax. Find out more about Walk21 at www.walk21.com

What is Green Communities Canada?

Green Communities Canada is an organization that is dedicated to:

- Support sharing of program information and resources through: the weekly Green Communities News, conferences, meetings, the Green Room (a private online forum for members)
- Facilitate delivery of joint programs common to a number of our members (e.g., Active and Safe Routes to School, Home Energy Efficiency).
- Build capacity through the development of skills and the organizational capacity of Green Communities Canada members (governance, financial management, human resources, policies)
- Build the visibility of the organization through building of the reputation of our members, Green Communities Canada, and programs.

OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW

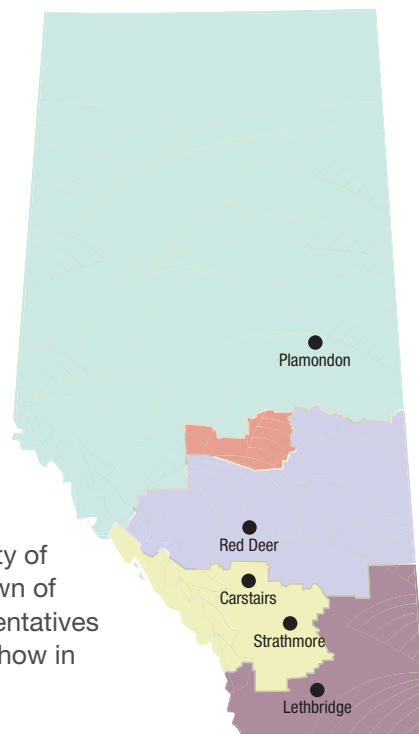


The Process

The project consisted of the following steps:



Alberta Health Services identified 17 communities as potential candidates for the Walkability Roadshow. Nine of these communities indicated interest in participating and completed an Application form. From this process, six were short listed to do the benchmarking questionnaire. Due to the high quality of responses and the variety of communities, the project team revised the Roadshow schedule to include 4 Roadshow visits and accommodate five communities. These were: City of Lethbridge, City of Red Deer, Town of Strathmore, Town of Carstairs and Plamondon. Representatives from Plamondon joined the Roadshow in Carstairs.



What is Canada Walks?

Canada Walks is an initiative of Green Communities Canada. The mission of Canada Walks is to change the current social paradigm so that walkable communities are the cultural and social norm in Canada and to increase the number of Canadians walking, both for pleasure and for transportation. To achieve this goal, Canada Walks focuses on:

1. Supporting the creation of more walkable communities, i.e. changing the built environment to make walking a safe and inviting choice
2. Changing Canadians' walking attitudes and habits so that they choose to walk.

What is the International Charter of Walking?

The International Charter for Waling was developed by a team of international experts as part of the Walk21 conference series and was formally launched at the 2006 Walk21 conference in Melbourne. Since that time it has been translated into several languages, and communities and individuals around the have signed the Charter including many from Canada. To view and sign the Charter visit www.walk21.com.

OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



Application Form

Lethbridge was asked to identify how this project would enhance or improve what they were already doing to promote Walkability.

The Alberta Walkability Roadshow enhances Lethbridge's plans to promote healthy living for all residents by encouraging residents to use existing pathways, sidewalks, city attractions, parks and services via active transportation modes.

Developing strategies to overcome barriers for using active transportation by city residents would be a beneficial outcome from the Roadshow, for example, focusing on university, college and school students, as well as seniors/older adults. An example is pedestrian safety in higher vehicle traffic areas, which deters people from using active forms of transportation. In particular, areas west of Scenic Drive, this houses many older adult condominiums but has a high motor vehicle concentration, making it more dangerous for walkers or cyclists. By addressing these barriers it is hoped that residents of Lethbridge would be more apt to choose active transportation over driving their car to travel to local destinations.

Benchmarking Questionnaire

The Benchmarking Questionnaire, subsequent Webinar discussion and document review provided the background information needed to start preparing for the visit to Lethbridge.

Highlights from the Benchmarking Questionnaire:

What are you most proud of having achieved for people walking in your community?

1. The city has been developing a comprehensive set of plans that give priority to walking and cycling, green spaces, parks and access to public transportation. These plans include the 2007 Master Plan for Parks and Bikeways & Pathways, the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan – Municipal Development Plan, and the Heart of the City Master Plan.
2. The Transportation Master Plan is currently being updated with the number one priority being pedestrians and people with disabilities and number two priority being cyclists. There is a real change in philosophy towards civic investment as the former Transportation Plan just focused on motor vehicle transportation.

About: AHS - Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention (HPDIP)

The mission of AHS is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans. AHS has a vision to become the Best Performing Publicly Funded Health System in Canada. Through the values of: respect, accountability, transparency, engagement, safety, learning and performance AHS formed a strategic direction that provides the foundation for all activity within AHS. The Strategic Direction is organization-wide and is a critical foundation for our planning, operations and accountability. The plan includes 3 goals, 8 areas of focus, 20 strategic priorities and 4 values. It defines the focus of all the departments with AHS including the Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention (HPDIP) department.

The Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention (HPDIP) department's intent is to enhance the health of the population and support Albertans to increase control over their health. HPDIP's focus on health promotion includes: fostering social, economic and material conditions (determinants of health) that promote health and reduce health disparities. HPDIP strategies both reduce and delay entry into the healthcare system and improve quality of life and societal productivity. This is accomplished through three broad objectives: increase protective factors within the population; reduce risk factors within the population; increase early detection and minimize downstream intervention in populations. HPDIP has five priority areas of action: social and physical environments, healthy development, cancer and chronic disease prevention, injury prevention, and addiction and mental health. Each area has a direct correlation to the strategic focus areas of Alberta Health Services (AHS), specifically the goals of quality, access and sustainability.

OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



The top 3 priorities for increasing walking in Lethbridge, identified in the Questionnaire, are:

1. **The Parks and Pathway Plan** – priorities include creating logical connections and filling gaps in the existing system to develop longer connected portions of the bikeway and pathway routes and to provide a balance of new trail development in all areas of the city.
2. **Downtown Lethbridge** – includes a high priority on walking and cycling. The plan involves widening the sidewalks and a designated part of the road for cycling. This is all part of the enhanced pedestrian and cycling connections to improve access and connectivity to the wider city. This will be done by bridging barriers such as highways and connecting to Lethbridge’s excellent trail system along the river valley. Streets will also be designed to enhance the walking experience and appeal to pedestrians, e.g. street trees, high quality street furniture, and crosswalks to ensure amenity, safety and convenience.
3. **Integrated Community Sustainability Plan** – Sustainable development to use less motor vehicle transportation. The priorities include a well designed city that incorporates transportation and movement with the needs of pedestrians, mobility challenged persons and the elderly to be incorporated into the built environment. A priority for a more compact city to bring different activities closer together allowing more people to use transit, bicycles and their feet to reach their destination.

These documents can be found by searching the City of Lethbridge website at www.lethbridge.ca.

The top 3 barriers to more walking in Lethbridge, identified in the Questionnaire, are:

1. Dependence on motor vehicles for transportation (cultural and physical).
2. Barriers to get to the Southside and downtown areas from the Westside and Northside. The river valley is a barrier for Westside residents and Highway 3 and the railroad is a barrier for Northside residents to get to the Southside and downtown parts of the city.
3. The chinook winds and winter weather.

OVERVIEW OF WALKABILITY ROADSHOW



Webinar and Preparation Work

AHS facilitated and attended the community webinars that were hosted by Green Communities Canada – Canada Walks and lead by Walk21. The goal of the webinar was for the team to:

Provide a summary of the results from the benchmark questionnaire with the community with regards to:

- Any documentation that the community provided that supported walkability in their community.
- Any data that the community provided that supported walkability in their community.
- Any community engagement on walkability programs/initiatives that are occurring or have occurred in the past.
- The level of promotion of walking or support for walking culture and/or facilities.

Review ideas and recommendations for the roadshow activities that were inspired by the response to the benchmark questionnaire.

- Review any planning/policies around walkability and discuss if they are being implemented. Try to highlight walking from any planning/policies provided to ensure that the Alberta Walkability Roadshow takes cohesive approach in their community.
- Identify opportunities quick wins that can bring momentum to implementation.
- Determine if there is communication of a vision for walkability from the Mayor.
- Discuss the potential for promoting walking and supporting walking culture.

Discuss the content and the structure of the Alberta Walkability Roadshow in their community.

- Discuss a draft of the roadshow activities.

During the webinar the preparation work that the community needed to complete before the Alberta Walkability Roadshow activities began was discussed:

Discuss the Invitations and preparation:

- Who should be invited to the roadshow activities and how individuals should be invited (sample invite was provided).
- Media and community engagement (template of media release was provided).
- Suggest that the Mayor be invited to sign Charter as part of Roadshow .
- Provide key documents to the team (e.g. strategic plans, current project/proposals, weblinks or pdf's).
- Prepare a walking route for walkabout . Determine if maps and/or transportation to locations would be required.
- Determine a venue and catering for Feedback Lunch.
- Determine a time for a pre-event phone conference to finalize any details and answer any questions that have come up before the team arrives to the community for the Alberta Walkability Roadshow.



Roadshow Activities

In September 2011, the Walkability Roadshow team visited each community. Each visit was unique, with activities and expectations being responsive to the size and needs of that community. For the cities of Lethbridge and Red Deer, the Roadshow was three days, for the town of Strathmore, it was two days and for Carstairs (including Plamondon) it was one intensive day.

Every visit was an opportunity for the Municipality to inspire their politicians and senior decision makers, to train and develop professional staff and consultants and to engage members of the public. There was a variety of roadshow activities including:

- **Keynote presentations** about the importance of walking and walking initiatives from around the world and across Canada
- **Facilitated workshop** discussions and groupwork to brainstorm ideas and issues for walkability in the local community
- **Community meetings** to gather input from local walkers
- **Walkabouts** of selected streets and neighbourhoods to experience firsthand walking conditions and to provide on-street learning for both the visiting and local experts
- **Feedback and wrap up sessions** to review the experience and identify concrete steps to take ideas forwards.

CITY OF LETHBRIDGE BACKGROUND



History

The region in which the City of Lethbridge is located forms part of the Blackfoot Confederacy. The City's first inhabitants were nomadic and walked everywhere prior to the introduction of horses by the Spanish to North America. The Village of Stafford in current North Lethbridge was home to the early miners who walked to coal mines in and across the River Valley. These miners came from Britain, Scotland and Europe bringing a diversity of culture with them. Southern Alberta was the location of Prisoner/Internment War Camps that were the origins of many settlers of Germanic, Ukrainian, and Japanese heritage once the Great Wars were ended. Many started their new lives in Southern Alberta by walking to farms as labourers. In particular after WWII many people settled in the Lethbridge area weary from the effect of war on Europe, and in some cases being introduced to the Southern Alberta through military training and/or the Commonwealth Air Force Training programs.

Community Profile

The City of Lethbridge currently has a population of approximately 87,882 (based on the City of Lethbridge 2011 Census), making it the second largest city in southern Alberta. Lethbridge is located approximately 200 km southeast of Calgary and is located close enough to the Canadian Rockies that they contribute to the city's milder winters, and sometimes windy climate.

Swift physical expansion of the City did not take place until after World War II. Rapid population and economic growth, along with growing car use, resulted in suburbanization and expansion of the city, east, north, and south. In the mid 1960's the City decided to make the land west of the Oldman River the next area for major residential development. This dramatically changed the city's urban form. This rapid residential development of West Lethbridge was due in large part to the opening of the University of Lethbridge.



Lethbridge has a fairly balanced proportion of males and females, with a noticeably large 20-29 year old population (approx. 30% of the 2006 population). This is the largest population age group which is largely due to the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge College and Red Crow College.

Lethbridge is the commercial, financial, transportation and industrial centre of southern Alberta. Half of the workforce, and eight of ten of Lethbridge's major employers are in health, education, retail and hospitality sectors.

Lethbridge's social and cultural landscape is varied, with a burgeoning arts scene and a variety of recreational opportunities. Cultural venues in the city include performing art theatres, museums and sports centers.





Planning for the future in Lethbridge

In 2009, the City of Lethbridge undertook a consultation with residents, organizations and interest groups to create what eventually resulted in the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan – **Municipal Development Plan (ICSP/MDP)** approved in July 2010.

Background documents used to develop the ICSP/MDP were:

- In 2009, the City Circle Ideas Book was created which involved a direct dialogue with city residents and community groups. **The Ideas Book** includes recommendations to encourage bicycle use in Lethbridge and increasing safety for walkers and cyclists.
- In May 2009, **Metro Quest** was developed to create a vision for the city to the year 2050. The Vision is to create a safe, clean, green and liveable city with a vibrant and diverse community. Transportation plans include creating synergies between transportation and land use and promoting convenient alternatives to automobiles. Lethbridge has already identified that pedestrians are at the top of their transportation hierarchy.

In July 2010 the **Integrated Community Sustainability Plan/ Municipal Development Plan (ICSP/MDP)** was approved by City Council and was based on the City Circle Ideas consultation. This document includes policies that coincide with the purpose of the Walkability Roadshow:

1. **Support Active Living** and a policy to provide opportunities for passive recreation such as walking, biking, hiking and gardening (p 43).
2. **Efficient and Effective Integrated Transportation Network** with policies to include community priority planning for pedestrians, cyclists, and personal/recreational mobility devices (p 48).
3. **Lethbridge is a Walkable, Bicycle Friendly City** with policies to improve active modes of transportation e.g. develop commuter oriented, city-wide, integrated pedestrian and bicycle network (p 49).
4. **Lethbridge has a Diverse Parks and Open Space System** with policies that include connectivity, accessibility, functionality, diversity and adaptability, identity and character and sustainability. This will include developing parks to encourage community gathering (p 57).
5. **Lethbridge has a Strong and Vibrant Downtown** with policies to revitalize and redevelop the downtown as the cultural, economic and civic heart of the city (p 51).

CITY OF LETHBRIDGE ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



Day 1

- **Decision Makers Breakfast** – A keynote overview of the importance of walking and new initiatives from around the world. Opened by the Mayor and attended by City Manager, health professionals, Chinook Primary Care Network, City staff, representatives from schools, business community, and an accessibility consultant, being 21 attendees in all.
- **Professional Workshop** – to develop ideas and action plans for walking, with 17 professional staff and interested community members.



Day 2

- **Walkabout** – to visit key locations around town, with a large group of 15-20 walking enthusiasts, city staff, health professionals and an accessibility consultant.
- **Community Meeting** – to gather input and ideas from the community.



Day 3

- **Feedback Presentation and Wrap-up** – to provide ideas from the visiting team to the city and to focus on how to take them forward. This presentation was attended by city staff, health professionals and walking enthusiasts.

Participants

- City of Lethbridge Parks and Recreation
- City of Lethbridge Planning & Development Services
- Southern Alberta Community Living Association
- Accessibility Consultant
- Fritz Sick Seniors Centre
- Evangelical Free Church of Lethbridge Hiking Club
- University of Lethbridge Professor
- University of Lethbridge Students
- Lethbridge College Be Fit for Life
- Helen Schuler Center Staff
- Business Community
- Cyclists
- Community members
- Alberta Health Services-Health Professionals



CITY OF LETHBRIDGE

ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



Day One

Professional Workshop

During the professional workshop, participants worked in small groups to brainstorm ideas and opportunities for supporting walking in Lethbridge, comparing them to the International Charter for Walking. Small groups worked on each of the eight principles of the Charter. They then regrouped to review a different principle, consider the ideas proposed, expand on these ideas and contribute new ones. Finally, participants selected the best three ideas to report to the larger group.

Key ideas generated

Reduce Road Danger

- Increase the length of time to cross at pedestrian crossings, as well as installing more pedestrian points/lights
- Modify pedestrian traffic lights to be automatic – no push button
- Reduce the speed of vehicles
- Shared spaces

Create Spaces and Places for People

- Put bicycle lanes and sidewalks on busy roads
- Close a major downtown street permanently and create a public plaza or square (6th or 5th St.)
- Remove and/or address barriers along streets: lack of curb cuts, snow banks, physical concrete barriers
- Address impacts of climate through facilities and design – trees, shelter from wind
- Increase accessibility and pathway systems to residential, shopping, school areas—connections (south to north side)
- Lack of destinations to walk to; services (shops) in communities

Supportive Local Authority

- Implement pilot projects to advance best practice
- Attract development investment for downtown residential
- Involvement from all sectors around table
- Invite the Mayor and Council to walk and take the bus – provides a great media opportunity as well as connecting with transit users
- The parkade has low usage – encourage drivers to use it for parking and walk from there

A Culture of Walking

- Active transportation supporting information – signage, maps
- Education to understand why we are making improvements for walkability



CITY OF LETHBRIDGE

ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



- Increasing usage of outdoor spaces to improve perception of safety; familiarize people with recreational paths, neighbourhood walking routes, and the river valley
- Increased programming in outdoor spaces – markets, entertainment, Walking School Buses
- Utility boxes decorated

Key ideas refined

Group action planning resulted in a variety of great ideas to move the city towards a more walkable community. In summary, community members would like to see:

- The creation of more accessible, complete neighbourhoods; with destinations to walk to within the community.
- Use of the many trails for everyday walking, rather than just recreational. Hence, improved connections to everyday walking places.
- Creation of online resources, trail signage, and maps with time and distance.
- Widening of the existing walking paths.
- Increasing the lighting on the paths/trails.
- Creation of a more safe and pleasing walking space for both recreation and commuting.
- Educating the community on why walking is important and provide promotional campaigns to create a strong culture of walking in Lethbridge.



Day Two

Walkabouts

The group undertook a detailed and diverse walkabout of many areas of Lethbridge, including a tour of new and old subdivisions, the downtown core, big box developments and some local schools.

The following notes and images capture the issues and ideas discussed during the day, some of the location specific opportunities and challenges around Lethbridge, as well as issues for walking in general.

Downtown

The grid layout and local shopping and services in the downtown make the area a walker's paradise according to the online tool: walkscore.com. Improvements already undertaken have provided some comfortable streetscapes, with clear walking zones, furniture, art and facilities carefully located in zones along the street edge, street trees and good quality paving to enjoy.

CITY OF LETHBRIDGE

ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



However, the allocation of space to motor vehicles both moving and parked and too many blank frontages detract from the walking experience. Downtown as a walking experience would benefit from reallocating space on streets with low traffic volumes, consolidating parking into selected locations and enlarging pedestrian space (and bicycle lanes). This will enable shops to spill onto the pavement, for people to linger and window shop and for the atmosphere and experience of downtown to shift to a more inviting, inclusive experience.



Dr. Rodney Tolley demonstrates the disproportionate allocation of space in the downtown. While the sidewalk here is nice, it is very narrow and the street has substantial excess capacity. Reducing vehicle movement to one lane and pushing out parking would provide ample space for a safe bicycle lane and more pedestrian space on 7th Street South.

Connections and Networks

It is critical to identify the key connections that people use to access their local neighbourhoods and make them safe and comfortable.

This direct line into the City Hall and downtown from a nearby neighbourhood fails when it meets steps (without an appropriate alternative) and crosses a busy road.



CITY OF LETHBRIDGE ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



These key networks must be well provisioned, especially at crunch points such as those illustrated.



Where these networks cross the street are key opportunities for signage and raising awareness of the walker's shortcut.



In some areas, the pedestrian network in Lethbridge is well serviced - such as this trail.



Others not so much, where the lack of sidewalks makes it uncomfortable and unsafe for people to walk down this street (this street is a direct line of access from a neighbourhood to the nearest shops).



People walk on the road or make their own paths where facilities don't exist or are not in the right place.



Extending the walking journey by connecting to public transit is facilitated by on-site information, but this needs to be of high quality.

Crossing the Road

In a city with wide roads where vehicle movement is the dominant mode of travel, it is critical to provide people with very safe crossing points, that don't compromise pedestrian movement.

CITY OF LETHBRIDGE ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



Key factors include: giving motorists clear, advance warning of a crossing, reducing the time people spend in the road space with build outs and central refuge islands and ensuring light controls are in place where required for people and vehicles.



An example of a location where this could be done would be on slip lanes.



Older Residential Areas

Older residential neighbourhoods in Lethbridge provide very attractive and pleasant tree-lined streets with footpaths setback from the curb.



These are comfortable walking environments and safe for children. The grid layout provides good connections to local shops, services, bus stops and downtown.



Retro-fitting curb-cuts in line with the sidewalks will enhance the accessibility for everyone on foot, but especially those in wheelchairs or pushing strollers.

CITY OF LETHBRIDGE

ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



Bus Stops

To encourage more walking it is important to ensure people have access to public transit for longer journeys. Providing a high quality bus service includes providing high quality bus stops and access to those stops. Lethbridge has a combination of bus stops: some are very nice bus stops (right image), others are just a post with a small sign (left image), and others may be lost somewhere in the middle.

Newer Residential Areas

Newer residential neighbourhoods in Lethbridge provide good trails (for recreational walking) and nice park facilities amongst the housing. Participants reported very few places to actually walk to within these neighbourhoods, thus there is no everyday walking, except to walk the dog. Generous road space and street layout create longer than necessary distances for people to travel.

The River Valley

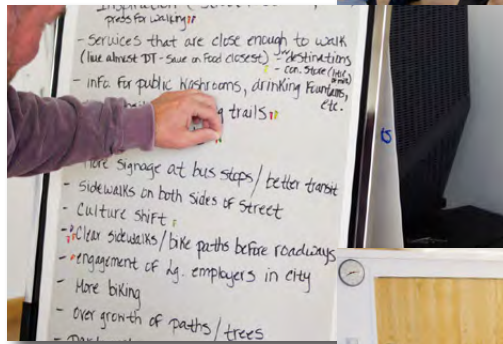
The river valley is a barrier to walking that is both physical and psychological within the Lethbridge community. It is a genuinely long, up and down journey to cross - challenging for the most committed walkers! It also prevents people from imagining they can walk anywhere. It is enjoyed for recreational walking both at the bottom and down from the top. While addressing this barrier is important, it could also absorb a lot of time and energy that is better spent elsewhere initially, i.e. enhancing walkability in downtown and local neighbourhood centres.

Community Meeting

The public meeting was held to engage local people in making Lethbridge a more walkable community.

Following the presentations about the Roadshow, the International Charter for Walking and success stories from other Canadian communities, the group brainstormed against the following questions:

- How often do you walk?
- What motivates you to walk? (What do you like about walking?)
- What barriers do you experience that prevent you from walking more? (single largest barrier)
- What would you like to see happen to improve walking in Lethbridge?



CITY OF LETHBRIDGE

ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



Key themes

Motivation to walk

- Relaxation/stress relief
- Sense of community/social aspect
- Health
- Enjoyment
- Walking Dogs
- Being outdoors; fresh air/sunshine
- Exploring/discovering new things
- Freedom/getting places on your own

Barriers to walking

- Lack of time/distance to destinations/access barriers (river valley in particular)
- Weather
- Lack of motivation

Ideas for more walking

Crossing the River Valley

- Build an active transportation bridge across the river valley from top to top, i.e. don't go down and up.
- CP Rail owns the trestle bridge- add a pedestrian/cycle path.
- Create a park and walk area where people can drive to and walk from there; as well as a bus stop.
- Cable car across river valley.
- Have shuttle running through river valley from one side to the other.

Activities

- Inspiration through media and through people leading by example; festivals; downtown farmers market as a destination that creates contagious behavior.
- Culture shift of people thinking of active living; work culture that include walking.
- More engagement of larger corporations to support active transportation; corporate challenges.
- Make small parks more inviting for users.
- Looking at partnerships (i.e. downtown revitalization); activities that celebrate walking; ensure that a joint community voices are heard – Antique car festival could be held on the street instead of in the park.
- Social marketing campaign to show that walking is the norm that is, to form a culture paradigm shift.



Facilities

- Need destinations to walk; services and facilities; design issue, re-look at city planning.
- Require facilities during walks e.g. –water fountain, public washrooms and benches.
- Increase boulevard trees and safe sidewalks; middle development does not have sidewalks; look at urban design.
- Address overgrowth on sidewalks and pathways.
- Improve lighting on walkways and sidewalks.
- Widen sidewalks – have to step off the sidewalk to move out of the way of a motorized wheel chair.

Information

- Shared information with the public; route maps; route maps with distance in kilometers and to show connectivity (on-site information).
- Improve public transit system – web based and paper based maps; people find it difficult to read chart/map to determine when/where the bus stops.

Day Three

Feedback Presentation and Wrap Up

The expert team provided an overview of the activities undertaken in Lethbridge and outlined what they consider the critical challenges and great ideas for the city to encourage more walking.

To take these ideas forward, City staff, health professionals, accessibility consultants and community members focussed on turning ‘Ideas into Action’ through a facilitated discussion. This concept requires commitment, data, partnerships, quick wins and remembering to celebrate success. Below is a summary of the ideas generated under these topics through a rich and inspiring discussion.

Commitment

- Top level support is needed - from the Mayor, Aldermen and municipal staff.
- Review all plans that exist and pull out the ideas that already support walking (i.e. London Road plan) and consolidate into a Walking Action Plan.
- Create an implementation committee (make sure all important disciplines are present at the planning table - e.g. health, transportation, and infrastructure).
- Create a working group that will follow through with the recommendations.
- Open streets to pedestrians, i.e. close the road to vehicle traffic, on a regular basis, especially in downtown.

Data

- There needs to be a commitment to collating existing data from the community and identify the needs for more.
- Benchmark what already exists so you can come back and measure your success.

CITY OF LETHBRIDGE

ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



Partnerships

Lethbridge has many potential organizations/associations/societies that would be beneficial to partner with to make the community more walkable. The group provided a comprehensive list:

- Creation of a Walking working group; community champion to run group
- Political representation
- City friendly to citizens' associations; can advocate to council (Lethbridge Association of Walkers (LAW))
- Alberta Health Services
- Healthy Communities Association of Lethbridge and Area (HCALA)
- Lethbridge College Be Fit for Life Centre
- University of Lethbridge & College (student unions)
- Research Centre
- Seniors Groups
- Lethbridge Walking Groups
- Urban Development Institute
- School Districts/students
- Parent Advisory Group
- School District Council
- Local attractions (Galt Museum, Fort Whoop Up, Helen Schuler Nature Centre)
- Lethbridge Youth Council
- Lethbridge Skateboarding Association
- Paraplegic Association
- MS Society
- Friendship Center-Opakaasin
- New moms groups
- YWCA/YMCA
- Mall walkers
- Canadian Home Builders Association
- Business Associations
- Chamber of Commerce
- Lethbridge Regional Police Services
- Chinook Country Tourism



Quick Wins

The “quick wins” listed below are ideas that can be implemented within the next six months to one year.

Walking Groups

- Encourage and promote walking groups in the city to give greater profile and perhaps a shared identity.
- Social networking to address walking; Facebook, list serve, social network, people can blog on these sites.
- Online resource to consolidate all walking activities in Lethbridge.
 - Create a walking calendar that encompasses everything - a community calendar does exist which anyone in Lethbridge can use.
 - Invite those organizations who host walking events to use the calendar.
 - Promote the calendar and it's use, especially for walking groups.

Mapping

- Work with and continue Active Community Strategy
- Available on web site – improve neighbourhood maps using Google to make them useful and informative for planning walking trips.
 - Involve elementary students in mapping and discussion of their neighbourhoods.

Safer Crossings

- White zebra stripes for pedestrian crossings to highlight them to both motorists and pedestrians.
- Provide recommendations to transportation for implementation of safe crossings.
 - Create design guidelines for safer crossings from the pedestrian perspective, not just the motorised perspective.
 - Create safe pedestrian crossings using the design guidelines created above.
- Adjust pedestrian crossing times (increase amount of time to cross)
- White paint projects – pull out meridian by using white paint and temporary planters to test changes (quick win but does not need to be permanent)

Bus stops

- Bus stop information signs with timetables, local area maps.
- Art projects at intersections or bus stops; the miners' association has utilized city infrastructure funds for historical stories and information; need sponsor for art projects – perhaps local businesses.

CITY OF LETHBRIDGE

ROADSHOW ACTIVITIES



Activities

- Reward people for walking- opportunities for local businesses.
- Hold a window display competition to bring people downtown and encourages people to walk (Christmas).
- Continue the Arts walk– local artists display their art in local shop windows and cafes, etc.
- Encourage and promote outside activities, i.e. Kite flying festival, and fruit and veggie bus
- Undertake Pilot Projects such as:
 - Barnes dance, diagonal (scrambled) crossing at City Hall
 - 6th Avenue Crosswalk upgrades
 - Inventory on sidewalks and curb cuts improvements



Participants indicated communication with city leaders to ensure change and influencing other agencies to think about the possibilities of a more walkable community as important lessons learned from the Roadshow. A full list of participant comments is available in the appendices of this report.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Drawing on all of the above activities, ideas and discussions and the observations of the visiting expert team, the following findings and recommendations are provided to help focus efforts to improve walkability in the City of Lethbridge and ensure the viability and liveability of the City for generations to come.

In summary

- Extend the current policy commitment in the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan – Municipal Development Plan by articulating it through other plans and programs and walking specific actions.
- Commit to walking by increasing resources for providing walking facilities, promoting walking and ensuring a people-centred approach to new works, i.e. some compromise to vehicle movement, parking facilities and funding.
- Enhance the walking experience and build a culture of walking within the existing urban context. Walking networks are not just pathways, but all the sidewalks, alleyways, and shortcuts throughout the city.
- Ensure local destinations, so people can walk from their front door! A constant issue throughout the roadshow for residents particularly on the westside is the lack of local destinations. While this can be addressed in new developments, creative opportunities within existing sprawl to provide local shopping and services need to be investigated.
- Engage the breadth of expertise and willing partners as walking will deliver results for many different government objectives. In particular, engage health professionals in the planning approval process to ensure built environments enable physical activity.
- Work with the willing and those with greater need of walking opportunities. Focus on children and seniors; get people walking as groups (nordic walking, walking tours) or on medical advice through active scripts, (the local BETTER project).
- Reward walkers with improved facilities, good information and activities such as breakfasts, transit passes or local shopping loyalty cards.
- Remember to have fun while making real change!

In particular, make the most of what already exists

Extract walking from existing policies and plans and combine with new ideas from the Roadshow, to create a Walking Action Plan that consolidates all the good work underway, builds partnerships, focusses resources and provides a clear vision for the future.

Identify a Walking Network within the existing infrastructure of streets and pathways that links to local destinations and downtown and:

- Prioritise works and maintenance for pedestrians on the network to maximize comfort and safety.
- Promote the network through signage and maps.
- Consolidate existing walking activities into an online resource to generate a strong image for walking and give it more profile within the community.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendations mapped against the International Charter for Walking

The International Charter for Walking provides a strategic framework and illustrative actions for cities and towns to become more walkable communities. The recommendations set out below, against the eight principles of the Charter, identify a comprehensive set of ideas and opportunities for the City to undertake to deliver more walking for Lethbridge. Politicians, professionals and the public will be able to see how walking can deliver the outcomes they seek and how they can be actively involved in achieving them.

Principle one: Increased inclusive mobility

People in communities have the right to accessible streets, squares, buildings and public transport systems regardless of their age, ability, gender, income level, language, ethnic, cultural or religious background, strengthening the freedom and autonomy of all people, and contributing to social inclusion, solidarity and democracy.



Key Findings

The City of Lethbridge is committed to providing an environment accessible to everyone. Through accessible buses and bus stops, urban design standards and other activities, it continues to improve its city for those with a disability.

Inclusive mobility is also about younger and older people and those without access to a motor vehicle. Creating good public space and walking environments enables everyone to access their community.

Recommendations

- 1.1** Identify priority areas for improving walking facilities, which meet the needs of those requiring them most; for the young (outside schools and youth centres) and where older people and people with a disability live. Include key routes to shopping centres and downtown to provide an accessible neighbourhood.



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



1.2 Continue current initiatives for people with a disability, especially high quality curb cuts, but also identify areas where people with vision impairment might need support, such as tactile paving and audible signals.

1.3 Provide benches on-street and along trails, good lighting and snow clearing so that everyone can access walkable environments throughout the year.

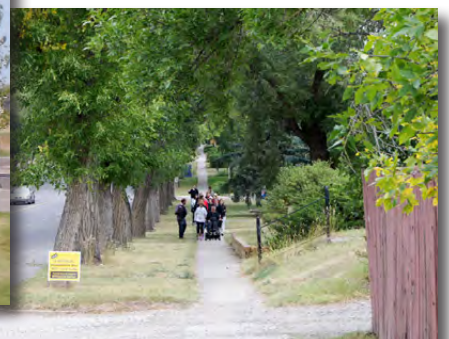
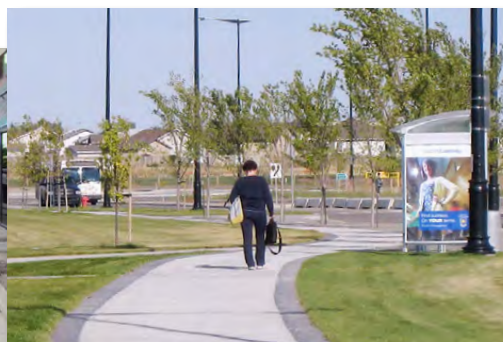


Principle two: Well designed and managed spaces and places for people

Communities have the right to live in a healthy, convenient and attractive environment tailored to their needs, and to freely enjoy the amenities of public areas in comfort and safety away from intrusive noise and pollution.

Key Findings

Lethbridge has pockets of lovely public space, such as Galt Gardens and the Art Gallery, 6 Street South, 3 Avenue South and the sidewalks along 7 Street South in downtown, the streets of older neighbourhoods, pocket parks in suburban areas and new developments such as the Westside Library. Street trees in downtown and older neighbourhoods create pleasant micro-climates and amendable sidewalks.



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Sustaining these pockets and extending them to areas that are less pleasant, particularly around commercial areas and connecting them together with good walking facilities will enhance the overall experience for walking and public space in Lethbridge.

Recommendations

2.1 Identify local shopping centres for improvements such as trees, seating and play equipment, with good access into local streets and neighbourhoods.

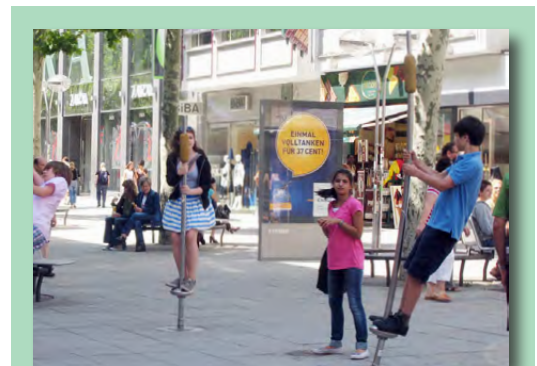


2.2 Maintain existing facilities to ensure accessibility and comfort for walkers, especially pruning vegetation, clearing surfaces and repairing street furniture.



2.3 Provide informal play opportunities for children, particularly in local shopping areas and downtown to invite them and their parents to spend time in public space.

2.4 Create momentum for change with some quick wins, undertaking works temporarily to enable people to experience change before full investment. Use planter boxes, white paint and street furniture to occupy street space or plazas for a whole summer before measuring impact.



Best Practice example from Stuttgart Germany, illustrates how play equipment for children does not have to be large or complicated

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Principle three: Improved integration of networks

Communities have the right to a network of connected, direct and easy to follow walking routes which are safe, comfortable, attractive and well maintained that link their homes, shops, schools, parks, public transport interchanges, green spaces and other important destinations.

Key Findings

The City of Lethbridge already has a comprehensive walking network, consisting of both recreational trails and sidewalks.



The appeal of this network and its ability to encourage walking is reduced by two key factors - the trails generally don't link to everyday destinations and the sidewalks run beside heavy traffic roadways without enough safe crossing points.

The importance of linking the walking network with the public transit network is well illustrated in the example to the right - where paving to the doors of the bus have been provided across the grass. This is a commendable attention to detail that makes a big difference for walkers.



Recommendations

- 3.1** Integrate pathway planning into transportation planning and prioritize spend on linking pathways to destinations.
- 3.2** Identify and map key walking routes (a Walking Network Plan) through the streets, shortcuts and neighbourhoods of Lethbridge, ensuring links to public transit and key destinations such as downtown, schools, shops and local services.
- 3.3** Use this network to determine funding priorities, works and maintenance schedules and promotional opportunities to make the network safe, accessible and attractive.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



3.4 Enhance the walking environment on this network to give pedestrians priority by reducing traffic volumes and speeds, reallocating road space for segregated bicycle lanes and prioritizing pedestrian crossings.



Best practice examples from Kelowna, BC (left) and New York, USA (right), illustrate a more equitable and appropriate allocation of available space for a priority network to support active transportation on both local streets and busier downtown areas.

Principle four: Supportive land-use and spatial planning

Communities have the right to expect land-use and spatial planning policies which allow them to walk to the majority of everyday services and facilities, maximizing the opportunities for walking, reducing car-dependency and contributing to community life.

Key Findings

Lethbridge is a city of two urban forms - the historical grid pattern in older parts of town and the arterial/cul-de-sac developments of the newer parts of town. The grid pattern provides a strong foundation for walkable communities, as long as shops, schools and services stay local.

The distances to travel in newer developments present a challenge to walking, especially as destinations are located on a presumption that people will arrive by car.



The recent strategic planning for the city has identified the need to present the city in a more compact, accessible way.



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



It is essential to reign in any more plans to sprawl the city in unsustainable neighbourhoods and to require new developments to design and deliver communities centred on local neighbourhood shops and services, access to transit and everyday walking facilities.

Recommendations

- 4.1 Establish guidelines for all developments (residential and commercial), both new and retrofitted, to provide clear, direct and comfortable walking routes both within the development and out of it to other locations. Make the walking (and cycling) route the shortest way to arrive and leave a destination, such as the new Crossings High School and Westside Library, by bringing it directly in, rather than automatically following the road.
- 4.2 Retrofit existing shopping centres to ensure priority pedestrian access from the surrounding streets.
- 4.3 Mitigate the impact of existing sprawl with pedestrian shortcuts and multiple safe crossing points at intersections and mid-block.
- 4.4 Create economic incentives for businesses to invest in smaller local stores (in addition to big box), especially to provide a grocery store in downtown for the predominantly older residents.



Principle five: Reduce road danger

Communities have the right to well designed streets that prevent accidents and are enjoyable, safe and convenient for walking – especially for children, the elderly and people with limited abilities.

Key Findings

With the scale of roadscape, the size and speed of the vehicles using it and the low expectation of people walking in Lethbridge, it is critical to address the danger vehicles present to people walking and the impact this has on choosing to walk in the first place. Fear of traffic is one of the top reasons parents don't let their children walk to school and why many older people and people with disabilities (physical and mental) choose not to leave their homes.

The City of Lethbridge provides a range and variety of pedestrian crossings including: light-controlled crossings, pedestrian countdown signals, plain marked crossing points with advance warning and overhead warning lights, crossing points with minimal signage and white paint on the carriageway.



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Preventing people from crossing the road is rarely a better road safety strategy than putting in a proper crossing point as people will continue to cross but potentially in more danger than before.



Recommendations

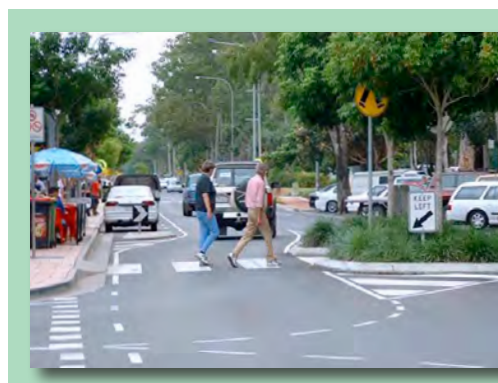
5.1 Reduce traffic volumes and speeds on streets that are part of the walking network.

5.2 Consider seniors and disabled individuals as the design standard for determining short wait times and sufficient crossing times for light-controlled crossing points.



5.3 Provide high quality crossing points for pedestrians that have clear warnings for drivers, especially on the walking network and at critical intersections, such as outside homes for seniors, schools and local centres.

5.4 Reduce road widths at crossing points to minimize the time spent in the roadway - with build outs to at least the line of parked cars to improve sightlines for both pedestrians and drivers and central pedestrian refuge islands.



Best practice road crossing from Rockhampton, Australia that shortens time spent in the roadway, provides a central refuge and slows vehicle traffic

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



5.5 Provide a buffer zone between pedestrians and vehicles with green space and/or bicycle facilities and continue the pedestrian facility across driveways and smaller access roads.



Principle six: Less crime and fear of crime

Communities have the right to expect an urban environment designed, maintained and policed to reduce crime and the fear of crime.

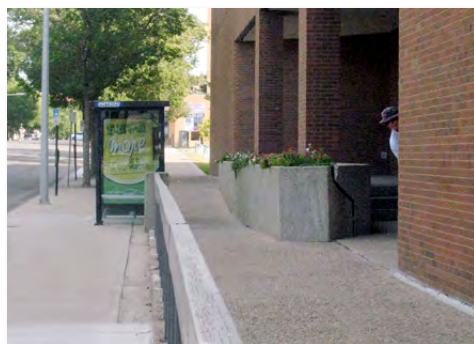
Key Findings

Crime and fear of crime were not raised as particular concerns in Lethbridge, except in the downtown area. The downtown was largely seen as somewhere to avoid, with anti-social behaviour and other activities making it uncomfortable for many, particularly after dark.

Recommendations

6.1 Create opportunities for people to spend time in downtown for positive, rewarding reasons. Host events and activities with local businesses to invite people to explore downtown and feel more confident and comfortable being there. But do it more than once!

6.2 Ensure all future developments comply with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and retrofit existing areas with particular challenges, especially blank frontages that need to be opened on to the streets.



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Principle seven: More supportive authorities

Communities have the right to expect authorities will provide for, support and safeguard their ability and choice to walk.

Key Findings

The City of Lethbridge has a comprehensive set of strategic plans and continues to develop new plans under their agreed Integrated Community Sustainability Plan – Municipal Development Plan. Walking can help meet many of the objectives outlined in the plan and will benefit from the range of policies and actions listed, such as improved lighting and more street trees. It is specifically presented at 6.4.3: Lethbridge is a Walkable and Bicycle Friendly City.



It is critical that the policies and aspirations of these plans inform all aspects of decision making in the city including funding allocations, private development approvals and especially transport provision.

Recommendations

- 7.1** Sign the International Charter for Walking - the Mayor and Aldermen to sign at an applicable public event or during a City Council meeting.
- 7.2** Consolidate ideas and actions from other strategic documents into a Walking Action Plan. To build a sense of momentum, identify opportunities and potential synergies, ensure clarity of meaning, consistency of commitment, community understanding and articulate a clear vision.
- 7.3** Support the Walking Action Plan with a Walking Network Plan for Lethbridge, which includes key walking routes on existing sidewalks and infrastructure that link people to everyday activities, shops and services, as well as parks and pathways. While it is recommended to draft a new comprehensive plan, this could be a review and expansion of the current Pathways Plan, but must be more than just recreational pathways.
- 7.4** Prioritize works on the walking network to ensure existing facilities are safe, comfortable and accessible for people on foot, including curb cuts, crossing points, lighting, good maintenance and signage.
- 7.5** Define what having pedestrians at the top of the transportation hierarchy means in practice - set guiding principles and criteria for decision making across all portfolios that put people on foot first.
- 7.6** Support professional development of all staff to understand how to ensure pedestrians remain a positive priority and to deliver best practice for walking.
- 7.7** Collect and collate data about perceptions of walking and people's walking habits and aspirations to inform new initiatives and investment decisions.
- 7.8** Prioritize spending on walking before expanding or investing in any more road space for motor vehicles.



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Principle seven: A culture of walking

Communities have a right to up-to-date, good quality, accessible information on where they can walk and the quality of the experience. People should be given opportunities to celebrate and enjoy walking as part of their everyday social, cultural and political life.



Key Findings

Recreational walking on the trails and pathways network of Lethbridge is well established and enjoyed by many. Lethbridge downtown rewards people who choose to walk with some lovely art installations, historical plaques and green spaces.

However, the dominant mode of transport is car travel and the physical space and cultural dynamic of the town marginalizes walkers for everyday walking. Yet the opportunities are there to invite people to experience their town and daily living on foot.

Recommendations

- 8.1** Run a series of open streets events throughout the summer to invite people to develop ‘a habit’ of spending time in downtown or at local centres and enabling them to enjoy walking the streets. As a starting point, host the Vintage Car Show on the streets of Lethbridge.
- 8.2** Develop a distinctive and effective signage and way finding system for the walking network of Lethbridge. Place area maps at bus stops and key locations, markers at road crossings and route markers or finger posts along the routes. Ensure the detail design meets current best practice providing time and distance, ensuring legibility and clarity of information.
- 8.3** Enhance current mapping resources to be more effective and meaningful for walking around Lethbridge, e.g. centre neighbourhood maps on local facilities and mark up the walking network.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Best practice examples supporting a culture of walking: opening the streets to people! in Hamilton Ontario and with the vintage car show in Moncton, New Brunswick.

- 8.4** Use online resources, both social networks and the City website to highlight and consolidate walking activities and events, regularly led walks and unique opportunities such as the Art Walk.
- 8.5** Invite the Mayor and Councillors to host regular Community Walks and Transit Rides to demonstrate commitment and engagement with walking as a priority for Lethbridge and provide opportunities to interact with their constituents.
- 8.6** Continue the excellent public art installations and historic plaques around town to provide interest points for walkers and quality public space.



Media reports



Herald photo by David Rossiter

Jacky Kennedy, left, director of Canada Walks, Bronwen Thornton and Rodney Tolley, directors of Walk21, stroll down a pathway in the Oldman River Valley Monday.

WALKABILITY EXPERTS SURVEYING OUR CITY

Walking the walk

Gerald Gauthier

LETHBRIDGE HERALD

ggauthier@lethbridgeherald.com

City planners and local health officials are picking the brains of international experts this week to assess how well Lethbridge is doing at fostering foot traffic.

Lethbridge is the first of six Alberta communities to host the Walkability Roadshow, which identifies best practices in so-called walkability from cities around the world and shares them with other communities.

"Lethbridge is one of the communities that put its hand up and has done its homework and has shown itself to be very keen on developing walkability into the future," said Rodney Tolley, a United Kingdom-based director of Walk 21, an international organization dedicated to promoting healthy, sustainable and efficient communities where people choose to walk.

"In any country, the most popular recreational activity is walking," he said. "But the problem with that is very often people will go somewhere specifically to walk, and they'll often drive there. So in terms of sustainability and environmental issues, it's not particularly helpful.

"We're much more interested in the day-to-day walking: walking to the shops, walking to school, walking to work, walking to the clinic, walking to friends and neighbours and so on. That's the thing that fills streets with life," he said.

Lethbridge's downtown is ideal for walking, he added, but one thing that appears to be lacking is pedestrian-friendly connections with

residential areas around it.

The three-day roadshow got underway Monday with an all-day workshop at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre. Participants will spend much of today doing walkabouts in various areas of the city. In addition, city residents are invited to hear about the roadshow and offer their ideas at a public session tonight from 7-9 p.m. in the County Hall Room at Chinook Regional Hospital.

Improving the walkability of a community ultimately improves its economy, said Jacky Kennedy, director of Canada Walks, an initiative of Green Communities Canada.

"We need to find ways to get back to local economies and to create extra opportunities for businesses. Quite frankly, walking and walkable communities is really the best way to do it because people are out in the streets," she said. "They're going to shop, they're going to want to buy a cup of coffee, they're going to want to sit. It just creates very interesting public space, it's just a lot more vibrant — and people spend money."

The roadshow is being hosted jointly by the City of Lethbridge, Alberta Health Services and the Be Fit for Life Centre at Lethbridge College. It wraps up Wednesday when the three-member expert panel is to present its recommendations to local officials.

City council will likely receive a report on the panel's recommendations in the next couple of months, said Robert McKay, the city's senior community planner.

McKay said he's keen to see an assessment of the walkability of older city neighbourhoods in comparison to newer subdivisions in the city. "This will both identify the strengths in our community but also some areas where perhaps changes of direction would be warranted," he said.

WALKABILITY
ROADSHOW



Media coverage

- Lethbridge Global TV, aired September. 12, 2011 on the 6pm news
- Article in Lethbridge Herald, September. 13, 2011
- CTV Lethbridge, aired September 13, 2011 on local news

Roadshow Evaluations

Participants in the Roadshow completed evaluation sheets to provide feedback about the process.

Participants were looking for a wide range of outcomes from the Roadshow, some being: learning about strategies to increase active transportation and walking for the community, ways to encourage walking and creating behaviour change in Lethbridge and a better understanding of the barriers the community faces in terms of walking. Also, many attendees indicated that they wanted to learn about successful approaches to walkability from global examples and get a new perspective on walking.

One of the evaluation questions was “What will you do differently as a result of attending the Roadshow?” Responses are shown below:

- Influence other agencies when possible, to think about the possibilities of a more walkable community.
- Try to walk more rather than drive in the city. Think of ways to incorporate more walking, even though it seems too far to walk, it’s probably not.
- Stay in communication with city leaders to see changes happen.
- Promote the pathways we currently have in order to begin to start a walking culture in Lethbridge.



Biographies

Bronwen Thornton:

As Development Director for Walk21, Bronwen is working with communities and professionals around the world to promote walking, develop and deliver innovative projects and provide resources, tools and services to support more walking. Her current projects include advising the European Active Access project, leading the Walkability Roadshow in Alberta, Canada and delivering Making Walking Count and the International Charter for Walking to support local action, to underpin strategic directions and gain political support for walking.

Past projects such as the Walkability Roadshow Ontario, Canada in 2007 and the Canadian Walking Master Class 2009 proved a project model of policy analysis and community engagement that can genuinely support local governments to deliver real results for walking.

Prior to joining Walk21 she was the Consultancy Services Manager for Living Streets in the UK where she was responsible for developing and delivering Community Street Audits, bespoke training for local authorities and practical workshops on active transportation issues. This gives her a very hands-on understanding of walking environments and local challenges.

She is a strategic thinker and writer, expert facilitator and trainer with on-street experience of walking audits, transport design and urban planning. Originally from Australia, Bronwen now lives in the United Kingdom and loves nothing better than a muddy walk in the rain!

Dr. Rodney Tolley:

Dr. Tolley has taught and researched in the sustainable transport field at Staffordshire University for over 30 years. He has authored and edited a number of books, most notably “The Greening of Urban Transport: Planning for Walking and Cycling in Western Cities” and has published many papers over the years. He is Conference Director of Walk21, a global partnership of walking experts, and was a founder member of the Steering Group for Walk21. He provides a consultancy service to many clients in the UK and overseas including Australia and New Zealand. Through these activities he has a unique oversight of best practice in planning for walking in the UK, Europe and across the world.

Jacky Kennedy, Director, Canada Walks, Green Communities Canada (www.canadawalks.ca):

Since 1993 Jacky has worked in the non-profit sector to promote and encourage people to walk and she has worked extensively with municipalities to encourage them to create great walking environments. Jacky developed and implemented Ontario’s Active & Safe Routes to School program (in its 15th year) and is the lead on the national dissemination of School Travel Planning. Jacky has been involved in many successful, sustainable community projects: co-hosting Walk21 Toronto 2007 with the City of Toronto, the Canadian Walkability Roadshow, the Walk21 YWALK Global Youth Forum, the 2007 World Record Walk and the 2009 Walking Master Class. Jacky’s background is in project management but her children motivated her to join the environmental movement.

Andrea Baker, Project Coordinator, Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services:

Andrea led the Alberta Walkability Roadshow project on behalf of Alberta Health Services. She acted as liaison between the team and the communities to facilitate the implementation of the Roadshow in each community. Andrea worked closely with communities to provide them with any support required in preparation for the Roadshow in their community. During the Roadshow Andrea represented AHS within communities and provided

APPENDICES



support to the Roadshow process. She assisted in the development of the comprehensive reports provided to each participating community. Andrea's passion for population health promotion continues in the workplace setting where she continues to positively influence modifiable risk factors for cancer and chronic disease prevention; specifically physical activity, healthy eating and healthy body weights.

Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Alberta Health Services:

Graham has been working in health care for over nine years he has worked in the setting of communities and neighbourhoods which includes the promotion of active transportation and the adaptation to the built environment in an inclusive and accessible manor to support active living. Graham participated in the preparation of the team and the communities in the days leading up to the Roadshow. During the Roadshow Graham provided support to the team and to communities during the Roadshow process. He assisted in the development of the comprehensive reports provided to each participating community. Graham continues to support Alberta communities that wish to make their communities more walkable.

For more information:

Graham Matsalla, Health Promotion Facilitator
Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention
Alberta Health Services
10101 Southport Road SW
Calgary, AB T2W 3N2

Phone: (403)943-6781 Fax: (403)943-2211

Email: graham.matsalla@albertahealthservices.ca

Web: www.albertahealthservices.ca

