



**Walking Strategy Consultation Series
Visions for a Walkable Toronto
Meeting Notes**

Wednesday April 25, 2007

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Harbourfront Community Centre, Dance Studio

This meeting was the first in a series of monthly Walk21 workshops on creating Toronto's Walking Strategy. This workshop was sponsored by the City of Toronto in partnership with Spacing Magazine.

City of Toronto Staff

Matthew Cowley – Public Consultation
Bob Davis – Public Consultation
Daniel Egan – Transportation Services
Jennifer Hyland – Transportation Services

Presenters

Matt Blackett – Spacing Magazine
Jacky Kennedy – Green Communities
Gil Penalosa – Walk and Bike for Life
Jim Walker – Walk21

Workshop Objectives

1. Introduce the public to the Toronto Walking Strategy - goals, timelines, how to get involved over the next several months
2. Begin public dialogue about making Toronto a great walking city
3. Raise local awareness about Walk21 Toronto 2007

1.0 Welcome (Matthew Cowley)

Matthew Cowley opened the meeting and introduced the meeting agenda.

2.0 Introduction to Walk21 and the Toronto Walking Strategy (Daniel Egan)

Daniel Egan introduced staff and presenters in attendance. He introduced **Jacky Kennedy**, from Green Communities Canada.

Jacky Kennedy as part of the Walk21 conference team has organized a “Walkability Roadshow” This session has been organized in advance of the Walk21 conference and is intended to highlight work on walkability being done in a number of urban, suburban and rural communities.

A key focus of Walk21 Toronto 2007 is the development of an international framework for creating and implementing local pedestrian strategies and plans. The “Walkability Roadshow” involves several Canadian communities working with the Walk21 International Team, Green

Communities Canada and the City of Toronto to build this model framework. Communities participating in the Roadshow are audited against the “International Charter for Walking” to assess what is currently being done locally to help achieve more walking, to recognize what the priorities and barriers are for future policy and investment, and to identify what external supports would assist communities to develop and implement effective local pedestrian strategies.

Jacky Kennedy said she has been involved with the pedestrian issues for 11 years. She noted the lack of Canadian presence at previous Walk21 conferences. Walkability is not high enough on the Canadian political agenda. The Walk21 conference is coming to Canada on October 1-4, 2007. The conference theme is “Putting Pedestrians First” and will focus on how to make communities (urban, suburban and rural) more walkable.

3.0 Presentation - What is walkability, why is it important and how do we achieve it?

Matt Blackett, from Spacing Magazine, introduced the two speakers, **Gil Penalosa** and **Jim Walker**. **Matt Blackett** commented on the fact that postering and pedestrianism were the two first issues for Spacing Magazine. He described his recent experience using a car to drive around the City and particularly focusing on his drive to North York from his home in Parkdale. Through this experience, he has realized that many areas of the City, particularly those furthest from downtown, are not used or usable by pedestrians.

PRESENTATION: Gil Penalosa (Executive Director, Walk and Bike for Life)

Gil Penalosa provided a presentation on the importance of walkability and on initiatives to encourage pedestrianism. He described how pedestrian/cyclist fatalities and injuries far exceed firearm fatalities and injuries. Cycling infrastructure increases commuting with bicycles and showed slides of separated bike paths in Berlin

Gil Penalosa described how vision with work creates results. For example, adults in Denmark have a high level of participation in sporting activities, particularly because of their cycling and walking activities. City staff needs more resources to realize this vision of a walkable Toronto. Cycling and pedestrian transportation does not receive as much funding as vehicular transportation. People are talking the talk but are not yet walking the walk.

Gil Penalosa described Bogotá’s Cyclovía. Every Sunday, the City of Bogotá closes some of its major roads so that the City’s population can walk and cycle throughout the City. Many thousands of citizens participate every week. One of the advantages of such a project is the fact that the infrastructure is already there. Bogotá is creating a cycling transportation route throughout the City. **Gil Penalosa** described Bogotá’s greenway, which crosses through residential and commercial areas.

Many arguments and different arguments are needed to support having a walkable city. The walkability of a city generates tourism and economic activity. For example, the paths in Minneapolis attract tourism to the City, despite the City’s cold weather. Tourism is a pedestrian activity. Pedestrian areas create communities and benefit our children. 1/3 of citizens do not drive, even in the most sprawled car-friendly communities. Walking is also the best link to all transit systems. One automobile parking spot on each street can be converted to create parking for many bicycles. The walkability of a city is a health issue.

The cover of Vancouver’s Transportation Master Plan indicates the City’s priorities with the motto “Pedestrians First”. Toronto should aspire to be a great city. To be a great City, pedestrians have to be a priority. This goal involves fantastic challenges and opportunities.

PRESENTATION: Jim Walker

Jim Walker said that he wants to hear what the public wants. He displayed the International Charter for Walking:

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

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

Jim Walker described how a lack of pedestrian areas can harm communities. He described his recent visit to London Ontario in which he observed that small businesses were suffering because the public no longer had good pedestrian routes in the community.

Questions and Comments

The following is a summary of the public’s comments and questions that were provided after the presentation.

<u>Question/Comment</u>	<u>Response</u>
Is anybody from the Transportation Department attending this meeting? There are no transportation engineers here. The City’s transportation staff has nothing in common with the people who come to these meetings. Go to St. Clair West where the new light rail section was put in and you will see the City’s absolute contempt for pedestrians.	(Daniel Egan) I am part of the City’s Transportation Services Division. (Jim Walker) City officials will be meeting with us all day tomorrow and we will tell them about the public input that was received tonight.
We recently did a charrette on the Church Street Donlands development. The engineers started to bend their thinking when they heard what people wanted.	(Jim Walker) City engineers are public servants and they do what politicians tell them to do. In theory, politicians will instruct them to do what the public wants.
What the public says it wants is different from what is said at City Hall. City Councillors have their own agenda. Why is nobody here from City Hall?	(Daniel Egan) I represent City Hall and Transportation Services at this meeting. The City called this meeting. We just started this consultation

	process. I hear the public's frustration.
I was speaking to a former member of the Toronto Pedestrian Committee who seemed frustrated. She said the Pedestrian Strategy was once a Pedestrian Plan. Does the name change signal less of a commitment?	<p>(Daniel Egan) There is no significance in calling this a Pedestrian Strategy rather than a Pedestrian Plan.</p> <p>(Gil Penalosa) The City of Toronto is a major source of funding for Walk21. A lot of City staff will be at the Walk21 conference.</p>

4.0 Brainstorming Session

Two brainstorming groups were formed and members of the public provided their ideas on a walkable Toronto. (These comments are listed below)

Question: How do we make our communities more walkable?

1. Plant more trees to soften the landscape and provide a shady buffer between traffic and pedestrians
2. Reallocate road space by dieting the provincial standard given to cars and widening the sidewalks
3. Add benches and create seating areas which attract people to stay and pause.
4. Enforce the law that stops parking on sidewalks and stop fining people for jay walking.
5. Provide separate cycling and walking paths and crossings in downtown Toronto as well as the suburbs like they do in Tokyo etc
6. Give us naked streets based on the Hans Monderman models
7. Close streets every Sunday including Yonge, Spadina, Queen, and etc all on the subway loop.
8. Measure current behaviour and the indicators of successes such as the number of cafes with on street seating.
9. Create and sign shortcuts to get people off the grid
10. Clear the snow as a priority on the pedestrian network - in parks and on bridges etc
11. Coordinate and integrate the transport network so that people on foot are provided for getting to public transit
12. Prioritize station access improvement for pedestrians and other key walkable places
13. Pedestrianise Yorkville, Esplanade, Kensington, Ryerson and St George
14. Encourage police to patrol on foot across Toronto on MVS
15. Give more time to pedestrians to cross at traffic signals
16. Provide scramble crossings to allow people to cross on the diagonal or in any direction.
17. Provide exclusive phases for pedestrians
18. Simplify the different crossing types
19. Provide faster button responses for pedestrians
20. Install more planters to slow traffic and provide additional seating
21. Remove physical and visual clutter/street furniture
22. Eliminate barriers to crossing major roads, railway tracks and elevated highways
23. Create positive spaces under the Gardiner Expressway.
24. Provide stronger links between Downtown and the Lake

25. Develop planning guidance which understands the needs and impact of development on pedestrians and influence the design review panel
26. Promote small scale retail and work with retailers to make the economic case for pedestrian planning
27. Double the number of outdoor cafes in Toronto
28. Plan out wind tunnel effects of tall buildings
29. Waymark key destinations within 10 minutes walk
30. Encourage mixed-use neighbourhoods
31. Develop walkways connecting our parks and urban environments
32. Develop wider standards for sidewalks
33. Re-write the Highway Traffic Act to improve priorities for pedestrians

5.0 Feedback from Brainstorming Session

Jim Walker said he would communicate the public's ideas to Mayor Miller when he meets with him. He asked the meeting participants to identify their top three ideas to communicate to Mayor Miller. The following three priorities were provided:

1. Involve people at every stage of the Walking Strategy.
2. Reallocate road space in Toronto by narrowing roads and widening sidewalks
3. Place pedestrians at the top of the transport hierarchy in Toronto

6.0 Priorities and Next Steps

Daniel Egan will be available to answer questions. **Daniel Egan** can be reached at pedplan@toronto.ca. **Jim Walker** said he would like to create a Master Document containing the public's input.

3.0 Meeting End

The meeting finished at 9:15 p.m.