

CITY OF TORONTO



TORONTO WALKING STRATEGY

EVERYONE IS A PEDESTRIAN



TORONTO MAYOR DAVID MILLER

Toronto's Walking Strategy is a vision for a more liveable, prosperous and sustainable city. It is a plan to create high quality pedestrian environments and foster a culture of walking in all of Toronto's neighbourhoods. By bringing together the City's existing pedestrian policies and programs with exciting new initiatives, the Walking Strategy provides a framework for renewing and revitalizing our pedestrian realm. As more people leave their cars at home, our city becomes a greener and healthier place to live, work and play. The Walking Strategy will help us to build our streets and public spaces so that they meet the full potential of our great city.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Miller".



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WALKING IS ESSENTIAL TO BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE TORONTO



The Toronto Walking Strategy outlines what it takes to make Toronto a great walking city — a city where people love to walk. It strives to create an environment where walking is an appealing, convenient, safe and stimulating experience for everyone in every Toronto neighbourhood.

Walking is a basic form of mobility and it is a component of almost every journey. Walking doesn't cost any money, require any special equipment or create harmful emissions. The Walking Strategy recognizes that building a sustainable city means building a city where people choose to walk, along with cycling and public transit trips, as a preferred way to move from place to place. In recognition of the broad, far-reaching advantages of a pedestrian-friendly city, the Strategy's actions give a high priority to the health, social, economic and environmental benefits of walking. Toronto will benefit from more people walking in neighbourhoods all across the city and the Walking Strategy provides the tools to make that happen.

The Walking Strategy is an integrated approach that brings together several City divisions and agencies to create physical and cultural environments that encourage walking. It is the product of many discussions with the public, external organizations and relevant City divisions and agencies. Input from Toronto residents includes information gathered through public consultation sessions and the Toronto Walking Survey¹. In addition, the Strategy has been developed with the advice of international experts in pedestrian policy and programming who were delegates of Walk 21 Toronto — a high-profile international conference hosted by the City of Toronto in October 2007.

1. A random telephone survey of 1,000 Toronto residents conducted in 2007

BIG STEPS TO A PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY CITY



- A culture of walking will be supported and nurtured throughout the city.
- All City sidewalks and walkways will be clear, accessible and easy to navigate.
- City building projects, both public and private, provide opportunities to create a high-quality walking environment.
- Tools for navigating the city on foot, such as signage and maps, will make walking easy and enjoyable.
- Pedestrian-focused projects and initiatives will be coordinated across City divisions and agencies.
- Areas that are not well designed for walking will be transformed, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, into places where people want to walk.

VISION: BRINGING TORONTONIANS TO THEIR FEET

A pedestrian is a person moving from place to place, either by foot or by using an assistive mobility device. Pedestrians include residents and visitors to the city of all ages and abilities.

— TORONTO PEDESTRIAN CHARTER, 2002

The Walking Strategy envisions a Toronto where citizens and visitors participate in a culture of walking. This is a Toronto where streets, parks, public spaces and neighbourhoods are accessible, secure, vibrant and enjoyable so that people choose to walk more often and where walking is complemented by public transit, cycling and other sustainable modes of travel.

Toronto has a rich pedestrian tradition. The route that is now Spadina Road was travelled over thousands of years by people moving between Lake Ontario and the areas to the north. Similarly, Davenport Road follows a path that was used by traders and fishers travelling between the Don and Humber rivers. The Walking Strategy builds upon this tradition of walking by setting out a plan that will encourage residents and visitors to share in the environmental, health and social benefits of a strong walking culture. It imagines a Toronto where everyone lives and works within walking distance of the shops and services they want to frequent and where they feel a closer connection to their neighbourhoods because they experience them at a walking pace.

GLOSSARY Terms often referred to in The Walking Strategy

WALKABILITY — is a measure of how easy and enjoyable it is to walk in your neighbourhood. For example, a very walkable neighbourhood is a neighbourhood where walking is convenient, safe and enjoyable.

AVENUES — The City of Toronto Official Plan identifies key Avenues as important corridors along major streets where reurbanization is anticipated and encouraged to create new housing and job opportunities while improving the pedestrian environment, the look of the street, shopping opportunities and transit service for community residents. (Official Plan, Section 2.2.3)

PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY PHASE — is a feature that allows pedestrians to cross the road safely in any direction while traffic is stopped for all vehicles. In these selected intersections, a red light is shown to vehicles in all directions while the pedestrian “walk” sign is provided to pedestrians to travel in any direction they wish, including diagonally across the intersection.

WALK 21 — is an annual international pedestrian planning conference. Toronto hosted the 2007 conference.

TORONTO: A STRONG FOUNDATION OF WALKING

An urban environment and infrastructure will be created that encourages and supports walking throughout the City through policies and practices that ensure safe, direct, comfortable, attractive, and convenient pedestrian conditions, including safe walking routes to schools, recreation areas, and transit.







— CITY OF TORONTO OFFICIAL PLAN, 2002

Toronto’s existing policies and programs provide a strong foundation to support a comprehensive Walking Strategy. The City’s Official Plan provides the policy framework for achieving a more intense, mixed-use pattern of development that will increase opportunities for better pedestrian, transit and bicycling conditions. Several sections of the Official Plan provide specific policies that support a high-quality pedestrian environment. These policies reinforce the notion that by building a “walkable” city we are creating a sustainable city. (Please see City of Toronto website at www.toronto.ca/walking for a summary of relevant Official Plan policies.)

In 2002, City Council adopted the Toronto Pedestrian Charter, which reflects the principle that the quality of our walking environment is a key indicator of the City’s health and vitality. The International Charter for Walking, adopted by the Walk21 Conference in Melbourne, Australia in 2006 has also served as guidance for the development of the Toronto Walking Strategy.

A Walking Survey of 1,000 Toronto residents was conducted in 2007. The survey results show that walking is an integral part of daily travel patterns for most Torontonians. Eighty-one percent of respondents reported walking for recreation or fitness. Though fewer people said they walk to their daily destinations, results show that approximately 31% of Torontonians choose to walk to work, school, shopping, or leisure and entertainment activities.

2008 TORONTO WALKING SURVEY How Torontonians travel

	 walk	 bike	 transit	 carpool	 drive	 taxi
work / volunteer	9%	3%	36%	2%	49%	1%
school / take to school	25%	1%	23%	2%	47%	1%
shopping	18%	1%	15%	2%	63%	1%
leisure / entertainment	12%	2%	23%	3%	59%	1%

WHY TORONTO NEEDS A WALKING STRATEGY

Toronto Public Health estimates that 1,700 people die prematurely each year in Toronto due to smog-related causes.

50 per cent of adults living in Toronto are not physically active enough to maintain or improve their health.

— DR. DAVID MCKEOWN, TORONTO
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

Toronto has many existing guidelines, programs and projects that focus on improving the pedestrian environment. These initiatives are the responsibility of many different City divisions, agencies, boards and commissions. The Walking Strategy links all of these into one integrated plan and recommends several new actions for providing and maintaining a high-quality walking environment and fostering a culture of walking. Toronto needs a walking strategy in order to evaluate and coordinate existing initiatives while creating new programs that put walking at the forefront of city-building initiatives. The Walking Strategy contributes to building a sustainable living environment that prioritizes the health and safety of Torontonians.

EXISTING GUIDELINES AND PROGRAMS

Walking related City guidelines and programs include the Vibrant Streets Guidelines and the Coordinated Street Furniture Program; the Essential Sidewalk Links Program; Accessible Pedestrian Signals; Streetscape Design Guidelines; Discovery Walks program; and the Active and Safe Routes to School program. (A complete list can be found at www.toronto.ca/walking). These initiatives evolved over time, often in response to specific objectives.

In translating Toronto's Official Plan policies into action, the City has adopted specific action plans for both public transit and bicycling, such as the TTC Ridership Growth Strategy, the Transit City Plan and the Toronto Bike Plan. The Walking Strategy is a corresponding action plan for pedestrians and provides a long-term, comprehensive set of actions for achieving the Official Plan's objectives for walking and the public realm.

HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Walking Strategy supports Toronto Public Health's "Call to Action" for healthier, active living. Walking is a proven method of promoting personal health and is consistently ranked very highly as a preferred physical activity for youth and adults. Furthermore, City Council has called for new ways to think about transportation, community planning and design to help meet the Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan emission reduction targets. This plan aims for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of 6% by 2012 and 80% by 2050. Building a more walkable Toronto will contribute significantly towards achieving these goals by encouraging walking, along with cycling and public transit trips, in place of motor vehicle use.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

In the past, two distinct patterns of development have shaped the City of Toronto. The first type, located in the older parts of the city, is characterized by neighbourhoods that are generally conducive to walking as they are compact and have mixed land uses. With their fine grain of streets and transit, these areas are sometimes called “streetcar neighbourhoods” and were built before the post-war era of the automobile. Yet even in these walking-friendly neighbourhoods much can be done to give pedestrians a higher priority and raise the quality of urban design in the public realm.

The second pattern of development is found in Toronto’s “post-war suburbs” and poses a considerable challenge to improving the city’s walkability. Built on segregated land-use patterns, these suburban neighbourhoods are typically composed of single family homes in residential subdivisions and high-rise apartment towers on arterial roads. Concentrations of apartment towers create areas with relatively high population densities, but these areas generally have poor access to community services and public transit. According to a recent report by the Centre for Urban and Community Studies at the University of Toronto, over the past 30 years these suburban neighbourhoods have seen the largest increases in population density, new immigrant residents and poverty levels compared with other areas of the city. The majority of the City’s Priority Neighbourhoods are located in these post-war suburbs.

Urban sprawl has led to increased distances between home,

work, school, shopping, recreation and other services which has greatly contributed to automobile dependence. Increasing motor vehicle traffic and the resulting increase in ground-level pollution and noise have contributed to a deterioration of the walking environment in communities all across Toronto. Neighbourhood characteristics like speed and volume of motor vehicle traffic, sidewalk safety and proximity to parks and other services can either support walking or create barriers. Having more people out walking on the street leads to an increased sense of neighbourhood safety, a term coined by urban planning activist and writer Jane Jacobs as “eyes on the street.”

DECREASES IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Only 36% of children and youth walk to school today, a figure that has declined steadily from 80% just 30 years ago. Fewer walking trips to school are only one example of a societal trend in decreasing levels of physical activity across all age groups. Lower levels of physical activity are a contributing factor to increased levels of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and other chronic health problems. Research indicates that people who live in the most walkable neighbourhoods walk more often, and people who walk more often are less likely to suffer obesity and other chronic health problems.

WALKABLE COMMUNITIES ARE VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Toronto’s most vibrant, economically successful commercial streets depend on high levels of foot traffic. Currently, 20% of Torontonians choose to walk regularly to their shopping destinations. Walkable communities also support public transit because most transit trips begin and end with walking. The Walking Survey indicates that 41% of Torontonians take public transit and 92% of those transit users walk to their transit stop, which is on average a five-minute walk away. Supporting and building pedestrian-friendly environments will encourage even more customers to choose walking as a regular mode of travel.

2. Hulchanski, David J. “The Three Cities within Toronto: Income polarization among Toronto’s neighbourhoods, 1970–2000”. University of Toronto Centre for Urban and Community Studies Research Bulletin #41, December 2007.

IMPLEMENTING THE WALKING STRATEGY

Putting Toronto's Walking Strategy to work will require continued coordination between several City divisions and agencies. The Strategy's actions will be implemented largely through existing processes and programs including the City's development review process, the annual capital work programs, various community-focused programs and the work of BIAs.

SECONDARY PLANS

Toronto's Secondary Plans offer a more detailed level of planning policy, including implementation strategies for specific areas of the city. These plans identify key pedestrian routes and links to community services throughout a neighbourhood while addressing issues such as pedestrian comfort, safety and amenities. Ensuring that pedestrian-focused policies are implemented through the development or redevelopment of a neighbourhood is a fundamental component of building an integrated walking network for Torontonians.

CAPITAL BUDGET PROGRAMS

The City's annual capital budget programs provide opportunities to achieve significant improvements to the public realm. These programs fund infrastructure that can encourage and support walking, improve safety and foster a sense of community. Capital improvements range from very basic services, such as constructing sidewalks and walkways, to more ambitious projects such as creating more beautiful streetscapes. Several Walking Strategy actions are focused on improving the pedestrian environment through the annual capital works programs and include developing new and accessible intersection standards; improving pedestrian links between major public transit nodes and adjacent neighbourhoods; and removing barriers which restrict pedestrian access across major corridors.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

Securing improvements to the pedestrian realm through the development review process is critically important and is an integral part of implementing the Walking Strategy. This is especially true in areas designated for growth by the Official Plan including the Downtown, Centres, Avenues and Employment Districts. By designing Toronto's buildings with walking in mind, we can create an environment that encourages people to walk. For example, locating entrances where they provide easy access to the street; placing awnings, canopies, or other building elements so that they provide pedestrians with weather protection; and providing pedestrian-scale lighting and other amenities create high-quality spaces and places for people.



WALKABILITY IN ACTION

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS

Toronto's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) have long recognized that providing a high-quality walking environment will attract customers. The City works with BIAs to create attractive and lively streets through programs that are run by the BIA office in Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Division. The projects are intended to improve the quality of spaces on many of Toronto's main streets. Several of these programs provide matching funds and other financial incentives to improve the pedestrian environment and encourage walking including: The Streetscape Improvement Program, Commercial Façade Improvement Program for BIAs and the Community Festivals and Special Events Program.

Improvements that may be achieved through the development review process include:

- Enhanced streetscaping including trees and landscaping;
- Pedestrian links on-site and from the site to the surrounding area including direct connections to transit facilities, community services and the downtown underground PATH system;
- Consolidation and/or relocation of building entrances and other access points to give priority to pedestrian access;
- Public easements that allow for public pedestrian walkways to cross private property;
- Design features that ensure the scale and configuration of a building contributes positively to the walking environment.

Achieving pedestrian enhancements through the Development Review Process is a long-term and incremental process. The Walking Strategy recommends several actions to achieve the best possible results for pedestrians through this continuous, ongoing city-building process. These actions include: creating new tools for measuring the impact of new developments on pedes-

trians; consolidating pedestrian design standards and guidelines; and providing ongoing support for City staff involved in development review to ensure a consistent, city-wide approach to achieving pedestrian and public realm benefits. Current City design guidelines that promote the integration of high quality pedestrian facilities into new developments and redevelopments include the Infill Townhouse Design Guidelines, the Design Criterion for Review of Tall Buildings Proposals and the District and Area-based Urban Design Guidelines.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FOCUSED PROGRAMMING

There are a number of neighbourhood-focused City programs working to promote walking and walking friendly environments in Toronto including the Clean and Beautiful Program; the Walk Into Health Program; and the Live Green Toronto Program. In addition, the Priority Neighbourhood Programs; the Tower Renewal Project; and local Toronto Community Housing Corporation projects focus pedestrian-related initiatives in areas of the city where the need is most critical. Linking with community driven projects helps to identify local walking priorities and promotes the participation of local residents. Neighbourhood scale initiatives are essential to cultivating a culture of walking throughout Toronto that is tailored to local needs and conditions.

TORONTO'S OFFICIAL PLAN: BUILT FORM POLICIES

New development will provide amenity for adjacent streets and open spaces to make these areas attractive, interesting, comfortable and functional for pedestrians by providing

- a) Improvements to adjacent boulevards and sidewalks including street trees, lighting and other street furniture;
- b) Coordinated landscape improvements in setbacks to create attractive transitions from the private to public realms;
- c) Weather protection, such as canopies and awnings;
- d) Landscaped open space within the development site;
- e) Landscaped edges of surface parking lots along streets, parks and open spaces to define the street edge and visually screen the parked autos;
- f) Safe pedestrian routes and tree plantings within surface parking lots;
- g) Public art, where the developer agrees to provide this, to make the building and its open spaces more attractive and interesting.



WALKING STRATEGY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

With a view toward both long and short-term initiatives, the Walking Strategy actions have been built upon the following principles:



→ **UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY**

All public and private places and spaces should be barrier-free



→ **SAFETY**

The safety of pedestrians takes precedence over all other modes of transportation



→ **DESIGN EXCELLENCE**

High-quality design creates a positive experience for everyone

The Walking Strategy has attempted to reflect these guiding principles within each of the actions identified.

These actions are strategically grouped in six “action areas” that include:

Leadership and Support for Walking
Promoting a Culture of Walking
Integrating Networks for Walking
Designing Streets for Pedestrians
Creating Spaces and Places for People
Focus on Priority and Tower Renewal Neighbourhoods



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WALKING STRATEGY ACTIONS



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PHOTO BY MACKENZIE BLAKE

LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR WALKING

A CITY-WIDE EFFORT

Implementing the Walking Strategy is a city-wide effort. Leadership starts with City Council and Senior Management and is the responsibility of all City staff. The Toronto Pedestrian Committee and community groups provide valuable guidance on residents' priorities for pedestrian-related improvements and promotion. Collaboration among City divisions and agencies, a commitment from City staff at all levels and the cooperation of other stakeholders will ensure the successful implementation of the Strategy. New tools and methods for evaluating pedestrian impacts and opportunities will be developed and accompanied by continuous training so that staff are equipped to implement innovative and sound best practices from around the world in pedestrian planning, design and engineering principles.

The Public Realm Section in the Transportation Services Division will serve as the nerve centre for the Walking Strategy. The Public Realm Section will oversee improvements in the design and maintenance of Toronto's streets and ensure that all City Divisions support a culture of walking. This group will manage Toronto's Coordinated Street Furniture Program as well as the Beautiful Streets projects. The Public Realm Section will act as both project manager and coordinator for capital works projects that have a significant impact on the pedestrian environment, making certain that the Walking Strategy will always be part of the process. Pedestrian focused projects that involve two or more City divisions will be coordinated through the Public Realm Section. In addition, Public Realm will direct the required resources and staffing in order to carry out the Walking Strategy actions. With a view to keeping the Strategy on track, the Public Realm Section will monitor, evaluate, provide progress reports and if necessary adapt the Strategy to keep it relevant and up-to-date.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- *City Council and Senior Management champion the Walking Strategy*
- *The Walking Strategy elevates the importance of walking in all city processes and initiatives*
- *Citizen input and involvement is critical to the success of the Walking Strategy*