



Walkable Communities

< 20%
of adults in
Indiana meet
physical activity
guidelines



2.6%
of Hoosier
commuters walk
or bike to work



Walkable
neighborhood
residents weigh
**6–10
lbs less**
than residents
of areas with
low walkability

Walking is the oldest and simplest form of human transportation. Walkability is a relatively new term to describe how friendly a city or neighborhood is to pedestrian activity.

According to the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute: "Walkable communities have a person, not their automobile, at the center of the design scale. When we design communities around the human foot, we create places that are socially, environmentally and economically vibrant."

There is a strong relationship between an area's walkability and its property values—people want to live in walkable neighborhoods, and it's easy to understand why. In addition to promoting physical and mental health, **walkability supports independence for people of all ages and abilities** and contributes to a greater quality of life for everyone.

Unfortunately, most of our communities were designed for automobiles and actually discourage people from walking. A built environment meant for cars may prevent residents from aging in place (as they are no longer able to drive).

There are numerous ways for communities to improve walkability. This brief will provide Indiana funders with some basic information about walkability and suggestions on how to support safe, walkable communities for all ages and abilities.

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Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Hunter College, City University of New York

Understanding Walkability

KEY CONCEPTS

Walking Behavior refers to the reasons why people walk. Walking behavior includes instrumental walking (walking to get to specific destinations like stores, jobs, schools or transit stops) and health walking (walking for relaxation, exercise or fun).

Complete Streets is a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities, regardless of their mode of transportation. Complete Streets allow for safe travel by those walking, bicycling, driving automobiles, riding public transportation or delivering goods.

Walk Score is a walkability index based on distance to amenities such as grocery stores, schools, parks, libraries, restaurants and coffee shops. The creators of Walk Score have also developed Transit Score and Bike Score metrics. Walk Score does not account for the presence of infrastructure between destinations and therefore is a helpful, but sometimes misleading, indication of walkability. Visit walkscore.com.

There's no single metric of walkability. The following factors all influence how pedestrian-friendly a community is.

Presence and quality of footpaths and sidewalks

Variety of destinations (shops, services, jobs and schools) within walking distance of homes

Safety (speed limits, lighting)

Beauty (landscaping, public art)

BENEFITS OF WALKING

Residents of walkable neighborhoods walk more often than residents of less walkable neighborhoods. (This is true for individuals who walk for instrumental reasons and individuals who walk for health or relaxation.¹) When more people walk more often, communities benefit in multiple ways.

Public Health and Quality of Life

- People who are physically active live longer and have a lower risk for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression, and some cancers.²
- The average resident of a walkable neighborhood weighs 6–10 pounds less than someone who lives in a sprawling neighborhood.³
- More people walking leads to friendlier, livelier streets and a more socially connected neighborhood.

Environment

- More walking means less driving. Cars and light trucks produce nearly one-fifth of our nation's greenhouse gas emissions.⁴

Economy

- In metro areas, houses in neighborhoods with above-average Walk Scores sell for \$4,000–\$34,000 more than homes with just average walkability.⁵
- Walking (and biking) projects create 11-14 jobs per \$1 million spent, compared to just 7 jobs created per \$1 million spent on highway projects.⁶

¹ "The Impact of Neighborhood Walkability on Walking Behavior" (CUNY)

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

³ University of Utah

⁴ Environmental Protection Agency

⁵ "Walking the Walk" (CEOs for Cities)

⁶ Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

Getting Involved

HOW TO HELP

Convene a meeting of community stakeholders to learn more about Complete Streets.

Catalyze action toward creating a trail or linking existing trails by funding a feasibility study.

Communicate the health benefits of walking by funding a public education campaign through a local nonprofit.

Contribute to beautification and safety, which influence walking behavior, in a downtown area or along Main Street.

Consider walkability when creating long-range community plans.

Community walkability studies and audits should consciously seek out the perspectives of older people and people with disabilities.



Any discussion about making a street, neighborhood, or community more walkable is incomplete if it does not engage people with disabilities.

ANALYZING PROPOSALS

Will young people be able to walk to the proposed summer youth program?

Does the YMCA offer a walking club or other opportunities for group walking?

Is there an opportunity for the animal shelter to incorporate volunteer or paid dog-walkers into their program?

Are the sidewalks around the food pantry accessible to individuals in wheelchairs?

Is the new healthcare clinic accessible by foot?

Learning More

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

AARP Livability Fact Sheets

These easy-to-read resources explain important concepts and tools for creating walkable communities (such as sidewalks, modern roundabouts, street trees and traffic calming)

Alliance for Biking and Walking

Publishes a biennial **Benchmarking Report** analyzing data on bicycling and walking in all 50 states—an essential resource for advocates and decision makers

America Walks

A source of data and resources, case studies, webinars and more

Health by Design

Coalition working to ensure that Indiana communities have neighborhoods, public spaces and transportation infrastructure that promote physical activity and healthy living

National Complete Streets Coalition

Works for the adoption of Complete Streets policies at the local, state and federal levels

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

Provides examples—with cost estimates—of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements, case studies, fact sheets and more

TEDx Presentation on Aging in Place Through Walkability

WALC Institute Executive Director Dan Burden describes how walkability affects our ability to stay in our homes as we age

Walkable and Livable Communities Institute (WALC)

Another source of information and resources, including a **Walkability Workbook**, designed to guide participants through the delivery of a Walkability Workshop

Walk Friendly Communities

National recognition program to encourage towns and cities to commit to improving walkability (currently, Bloomington is Indiana's only designated Walk Friendly Community)

Walksteps.org

An online resource for developing strategies toward walkable communities, based on **Steps to a Walkable Community** guidebook (which can also be downloaded for free)



Thank you to our content partner, Health by Design.

Community AGEnda

This brief was made possible through Grantmakers in Aging's Community AGEnda Initiative, funded by the Pfizer Foundation.