

Toronto Walking Strategy: Putting Pedestrians First

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Abstract

The Toronto Walking Strategy is an example of an innovative action plan, which promotes the inclusion of pedestrian needs in all city building and supports a sustainable future in Toronto. This paper will describe the development of the Walking Strategy, an action plan for building the policy, infrastructure and program elements needed to create a culture of walking in the City of Toronto. It will also discuss the importance of building on a solid policy framework and inclusive consultation process in the development of the Strategy.

The Toronto Walking Strategy builds on a strong foundation. The City's Official Plan provides an excellent policy framework for achieving a more intense, mixed-use development pattern to support increased travel by foot, bicycle and public transit. The City has many existing pedestrian-related policies, guidelines, programs and services. The City's recently adopted Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan sets out emission reduction targets and calls for a new way of thinking about transportation and community planning and design.

The Walking Strategy Team reviewed existing policies and programs, identified areas for improvement and gaps where new initiatives were needed, in order to integrate all walking-related initiatives into a single strategy.

An extensive consultation process ensured that the Strategy was built on the knowledge and coordination of several City divisions, public advisory committees, external stakeholders, international experts and Toronto residents. This input was collected in a variety of forms including: a community walkability roadshow, public and staff workshops and working groups.

An important element of the consultation process was the International Walk21 Conference – *Putting Pedestrians First*, hosted by Toronto in October 2007. Walk21 provided a unique opportunity for Toronto to learn about global best practice and to have international experts review and comment on Toronto's Walking Strategy framework report.

The Toronto Walking Strategy, to be presented to Toronto Council in September 2008, establishes clear implementation targets for each of the Strategy's actions. The City's new "Public Realm Office", within the Transportation Services Division, will be responsible for implementing the Walking Strategy, coordinating work across all City Divisions, and monitoring and reporting on progress in achieving the Strategy's actions. This paper will also explain how implementation of the Walking Strategy has been integrated into the regular business of all relevant City Divisions.

Toronto Walking Strategy: Putting Pedestrians First

1.0 Introduction

The Toronto Walking Strategy is an action plan for making Toronto a great walking city – creating a physical and cultural environment that supports and encourages walking. The Strategy presents an integrated approach to walkability with actions that reflect the health, social, economic and environmental benefits of walking.

This paper discusses:

- the need for a Walking Strategy to support a sustainable City of Toronto;
- building on a solid policy framework and inclusive consultation process throughout the Walking Strategy development;
- a Strategy framework that reflects the multifaceted nature of making Toronto a more walkable city; and
- implementation of an integrated action plan through the regular business of all relevant City Divisions.

2.0 Why Toronto Needs a Walking Strategy

2.1 *Community Challenges and Opportunities*

Toronto’s city structure consists of two distinct patterns of development. The City’s most walkable neighbourhoods are located in the older parts of the City, which is characterized by a compact, mixed land-use, and a fine grain of streets and transit – streetcar neighbourhoods. However, even in Toronto’s most walkable neighbourhoods, there is much more that can be done to give pedestrians a higher priority and to raise the quality of urban design in the public realm.

Toronto’s “post-war suburbs” pose the biggest challenge to improving the City’s walkability. These suburban neighbourhoods were built on a segregated land-use pattern and, not surprisingly, are typically the least walkable neighbourhoods in the City. Within these suburban neighbourhoods there are generally two subsequent development patterns: single family homes on residential streets and high-rise apartment towers on arterial roads. The concentrations of apartment towers have relatively high residential densities. However, they generally have poor access to social and 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 account for the largest increases in population, recent newcomers, and poverty over the past 30 years. The majority of the City’s Priority Neighbourhoods are located in these post-war suburbs.

In addition to the challenge in responding to different types of neighbourhoods, Toronto faces many of the same challenges as other cities around the world. Urban sprawl has led to increased distances between home and work, school, shopping, recreation and other services and has contributed to automobile dependence. One measure of this change is that only 36% of children and youth walk to school today, a figure which has declined steadily from 80% thirty years ago. (Source: Green Communities Canada, 2007)

The decrease in walk-to-school trips is part of a much larger societal trend towards decreasing levels of physical activity across all age groups. Lack of physical activity is a contributing factor to higher levels of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and other chronic health problems. Increasing motor vehicle traffic and higher amounts of ground level pollution and noise in all parts of the city have also contributed to a deterioration of the walking environment. Toronto Public Health estimates that 1,700 people die prematurely each year due to smog-related causes.

There is a growing body of research that indicates that people who live in the most walkable neighbourhoods walk more and are less likely to suffer obesity and other chronic health problems. Neighbourhood characteristics such as road traffic, sidewalk safety, proximity to parks and other services can either support or create barriers to walking and other physical activity. In addition, more people on the street also can lead to an increased sense of neighbourhood safety.

Walkable communities also support public transit because most transit trips begin and end in a walking trip. The most vibrant, economically successful commercial streets depend on high levels of foot traffic. Currently, twenty percent of Torontonians choose to regularly walk to their shopping destinations. Supporting and building a pedestrian friendly environment will encourage more customers to choose walking as a regular mode of travel. Toronto's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) have long recognized the benefit of providing a high quality walking environment to attract customers and the City will continue to work with BIAs to create attractive and lively streets and explore potential partnerships to promote walking in the City. Cities which have dynamic, interesting walking environments attract millions of visitors every year. To compete globally, Toronto needs to invest in becoming a great walking city.

2.2 Institutional Framework

Toronto has many policies, programs and projects to focus growth to transit served-areas, support healthy neighbourhoods, and build vibrant pedestrian environments. The Vibrant Streets Guidelines; Coordinated Street Furniture Program; Essential Sidewalk Links Program; Accessible Pedestrian Signals; Urban Design - Streetscape Design Guidelines; Discovery Walks; and Active and Safe Routes to School are some examples of ways in which the City has recognized the importance of designing and supporting walkable communities.

3.0 Development of the Toronto Walking Strategy

3.1 Introduction

The City's many pedestrian-related policies, programs and projects evolved over time, generally in response to very specific objectives and often singular divisional needs. The initial phase of work was to inventory all existing policies, programs and projects to better integrate them and to identify gaps to be addressed by new initiatives. In addition, an extensive consultation process sought input from a variety of stakeholders, in many diverse forums, on the specific Walking Strategy actions to make Toronto a great walking city.

3.2 Toronto's Strong Foundation for Walking

Toronto has a strong foundation on which to create a comprehensive Walking Strategy. The City's Official Plan provides an excellent policy framework for achieving a more intense, mixed use pattern of development which will increase opportunities for better pedestrian, transit and cycling conditions.

Throughout many sections of the Official Plan, from built form and public realm to neighbourhood planning and parks and open space, specific policies detail ways to improve the pedestrian environment and reinforce the notion that building a walkable city means building a sustainable city.

This Toronto Pedestrian Charter and the International Charter for Walking served as foundation documents for the Toronto Walking Strategy. Adopted by Toronto City Council in 2002, Toronto Pedestrian Charter reflects the principle that walkability is one of the key indicators of the City's health and vitality. The first of its kind in North America, the Charter serves as a reminder to decision-makers within the City and community at large, that walking is a valuable form of urban sustainable transportation. The Charter details six key principles including: accessibility, equity, health and well-being, environmental sustainability, personal and community safety and community cohesion and vitality.

The International Charter for Walking was built on extensive discussions with experts throughout the world and provides a common framework to help authorities focus existing pedestrian policies, programs and actions to create an environment where people choose to walk. The International Charter is centred on eight key principles which identify with the needs of pedestrians and include: increased inclusive mobility, well designed and managed spaces and places for people, improved integration of networks, supportive land-use and spatial planning, reduced road danger, less crime and fear of crime, more supportive authorities and a culture of walking. Under each of these principles, a listing of actions is provided as examples of potential improvements which could be applied in most communities.

In addition, the Walking Strategy responds to Toronto Public Health's "Call to Action" for healthier, active living and the City recently adopted Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan. The "Climate Change" plan calls for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of 6% by 2012 and 80% by 2050.

To translate the Official Plan policies into action the City has adopted action plans for transit and cycling such as the Toronto Transit Commission Ridership Growth Strategy, Transit City Plan and the Toronto Bike Plan. The Toronto Walking Strategy will provide the long term, comprehensive walking action plan to assist in achieving the City's planning, transportation, health and environmental objectives.

3.3 *Inclusive Consultation Process*

3.3.1 *Introduction:*

Public consultation on the Toronto Walking Strategy began in April 2007. The Public Consultation Unit of Policy, Planning, Finance, and Administration supported Transportation Services in consulting with the public, stakeholder groups, pedestrian experts, and staff across several City divisions and agencies.

The input received from the consultations ranged from detailed comments about specific intersections in Toronto, to broad, visionary statements about improving the experience of walking in the city. The consultations demonstrated that pedestrian issues are of great interest to Torontonians and that there is strong public interest in making Toronto more walkable.

This input was collected in a variety of forms including: public meetings and open houses, a community walkability roadshow, the International Walk21 Conference, a resident survey, and staff workshops and working groups.

3.3.2 *Walk21 Conference*

A pivotal element of the consultation process was the International Walk21 Conference – *Putting Pedestrians First*, hosted by Toronto in October 2007. Four hundred delegates from 19 countries took part in Walk21 Toronto 2007, including leaders from government, academia, the private sector, non-profit, community, and advocacy groups. They all had a mutual interest – to discuss research and action to make a more walkable world.

Walk21 provided a unique opportunity for Toronto to learn about global best practise and to have international experts review and comment on Toronto's Walking Strategy framework report. The conference also drew great media interest and brought walkability issues to the forefront within Toronto.

3.3.3 *Walkability Roadshow*

In advance of the Walk 21 Conference, several Canadian communities worked with the Walk21 International Team and Green Communities Canada to develop an international framework for creating and implementing local pedestrian strategies and plans. In April 2007, the City of Toronto participated in a Walkability Roadshow in which participants audited their communities against the International Charter on Walking principles and actions. In addition to Toronto, the following communities participated in the roadshow: Haliburton, Minden, Peterborough, Sudbury, Brantford, Minto Township, Region of Waterloo and Halifax.

The objective of the Roadshow was to assess what was 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.

A workshop of City of Toronto staff was organized as part of the Roadshow. This session provided a starting point in the Walking Strategy development. It included a presentation on worldwide walking initiatives and offered a group facilitated discussion on the issues, actions and major hurdles for walkability in Toronto. An interdivisional staff working team to lead the development of the Toronto Walking Strategy was developed as a product of this session.

3.3.4 Toronto Walking Survey

In November 2007, the City of Toronto conducted a random sample telephone survey of 1,000 households to learn more about the walking culture in Toronto.

The objectives of this study were to:

- Provide an understanding of the walking behaviour of Toronto residents and their underlying reasons for walking;
- Determine where there is potential to increase walking opportunities;
- Determine if there is any recognition for current City walking programs and material; and
- Develop a profile of walkers in the City.

The Survey provided a snapshot of walking activity in Toronto; the attitudes and concerns of Torontonians and their priorities for action. The results from this survey helped shape the Toronto Walking Strategy in the development of an action plan to increase and improve walking opportunities in the City.

3.3.4 Stakeholder/Public Meetings

During the course of the Strategy development the project team had a number of meetings with interested stakeholder groups and the public to gauge the actions and priorities for the Toronto Walking Strategy. A total of eight public consultation events took place in all parts of the City. The workshops focussed on: what makes Toronto

walkable, urban design and walkability and feedback response to the Walking Strategy framework document “Steps Towards a Walkable Toronto.”

A significant part of the Toronto Walking Strategy consultation included the contribution of the Toronto Pedestrian Committee. This citizen advisory committee reports to Toronto City Council and gives ongoing guidance with regard to pedestrian initiatives in the City and the continued promotion of a walkable Toronto.

4.0 Toronto Walking Strategy Framework

4.1 Introduction

The framework for the Toronto Walking Strategy builds on the existing pedestrian programming within the City of Toronto and reflects on the principles of the Toronto Pedestrian Charter and the International Charter on Walking. The framework is divided into six key action areas. The actions are strategically grouped within these action areas and reflect the complex nature of a walkable Toronto and identify with the health, social, economic and environmental attributes of a walkable city.

The action areas include:

- 1 Promoting a Culture of Walking
- 2 Leadership and Support for Walking
- 3 Integrating Networks for Walking
- 4 Making Toronto Streets for Pedestrians
- 5 Creating Spaces and Places for People
- 6 Special Focus Areas

4.2 Promoting a Culture of Walking

As one of its eight strategic principles, the International Charter for Walking calls for “promoting a culture of walking” by providing up-to-date, good quality, accessible information on walking, and opportunities to celebrate and enjoy walking as part of every day life.

The Toronto Pedestrian Charter describes walking as "the most ancient and universal form of travel" and "an important form of exercise and recreation." One of the key themes of this Strategy is that “everyone is a pedestrian”. As the Toronto Charter states, "every personal trip involves walking, alone or in combination with taking public transit, driving or cycling." Yet, walking is all too often taken for granted and many people don't identify themselves as pedestrians.

Urban sprawl has led to increasing dependence on automobiles for everyday travel, even for short trips. Walking can be a practical and healthy way to access community services and amenities, especially for distances up to 2 kilometres. However, almost one-third of

automobile trips in Toronto are 2 kilometres or shorter. Making walking an attractive choice means that many of these short trips can be made on foot.

Nevertheless, walking is about so much more than simply getting from one place to another. It promotes the goals of civic life by providing opportunities for face-to-face contact, casual interaction and public participation. People on streets and in public places are an essential ingredient for vibrant, economically vital and safe communities. The positive benefits of walking should be promoted to foster a culture of walking within the city.

Actions Include:

- Encourage walking to school
- Initiate an annual celebration of walking
- Provide access to walking information (website/promotion)
- Encourage communities to take action on local walkability issues
- Promote walking to work and at work programs
- Raise the profile of walking and reward design excellence and sustainable innovation

4.3 Leadership and Support for Walking

Implementing the Walking Strategy will require leadership from City Council and Senior Management to support and encourage this “culture of walking” among the Divisions and Agencies that deliver City programs and services. It will require extensive collaboration amongst City Divisions, a commitment by City staff at all levels, and cooperation by other agencies and stakeholders.

Cooperation across Divisions and Agencies will also be necessary to develop new tools and processes for evaluating pedestrian impacts and opportunities. A continuous training approach will be required to keep staff abreast of international best practices regarding pedestrian planning, design and engineering and to foster a culture based on innovation and sound design principles.

Actions Include:

- Establish an accountable City staff team to lead the Walking Strategy
- Create an interdivisional coordinating body
- Establish tools for guiding decisions including: comprehensive data collection, staff training and audit tools.
- Develop a transparent process for monitoring progress
- Lead by example and promote a culture of walking among City staff

4.4 Integrating Networks for Walking

A well-connected network, composed of direct, convenient, safe and accessible walking routes, is one of the key ingredients of a walkable community. Toronto's street network forms the backbone of the walking network. However, there are many other networks used by pedestrians, including hundreds of kilometres of walkways and trails in and along parks, ravines, the waterfront and natural areas; linkages to public transit; the downtown PATH network of underground walkways connecting major office buildings and subway stations; laneways; public mid-block walkways; and publicly accessible walkways through private development sites.

Toronto also has several networks, including ravines, highways, rail and hydro corridors, which often create barriers between communities, but also present opportunities for new walking routes. North-south "green corridors" to provide walking and cycling access to the waterfront are being developed incrementally by the City and Waterfront Toronto. New walking routes and improvements to existing routes can be secured and developed through the development review process and links with existing programs, such as the annual road reconstruction program.

Several City divisions and agencies, and private landowners, often with very different objectives, manage the different networks that support walking. However, from a pedestrian perspective, it is important that walking routes function as a fully integrated, accessible network linked to community services. Walking routes need to be maintained to enhance safety and encourage year round use.

Actions Include:

- Provide sidewalks on all streets
- Expand the PATH network
- Create walking maps and an inventory of pedestrian services city-wide.
- Develop designated walking routes
- Develop a wayfinding system throughout the City of Toronto
- Initiate a program to improve trail linkages and access across corridors.
- Improve linkages to transit by auditing pedestrian accessibility at stations/stops

4.5 Making Streets for Pedestrians

The City's streets and sidewalks are the most important component of Toronto's public realm. Public streets comprise almost 25% of the City's land mass and they connect virtually every destination. For this reason special emphasis must be focussed on making Toronto streets great places for walking, shopping, socializing and exploring the city's many great places, whether as a resident or a visitor.

There is increasing recognition that the design of Toronto's streets needs to focus more on sustainable transportation, with a higher priority placed on walking, cycling and transit. Encouragement and support of walking requires better designed and managed walking environments and safer, more convenient crossings. Streetscape enhancements, including street trees, landscaping and decorative paving materials are acquired through

the development review process and the annual road reconstruction program. The Vibrant Streets Guidelines prescribe new rules for placing street furniture and other elements on sidewalks to reduce clutter and ensure clear, accessible pedestrian walkways. Pedestrian countdown signals, accessible pedestrian signals, zebra crosswalks and the Pedestrian Crossover Enhancement Program are aimed at improving the safety and comfort for pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

The design of buildings and facilities and their connection to the street must provide for a pedestrian scaled environment. The Urban Design Guidelines and the Green Development Standards set out the principles for pedestrian oriented development. Encouraging a mix of uses on the street, creates a street that is lively, entertaining and safe and at the heart of it, a destination. To make Toronto walkable is contingent on creating destinations within neighbourhoods that are easy to get to on foot. The Official Plan policies clearly articulate a direction towards mixed-used development which is reaffirmed in current work along the Avenues.

The many City divisions and agencies that have a hand in creating Toronto's streets need to continue to work together and in cooperation with the development community to make streets that support walking, transit and cycling.

Actions Include:

- Implementation of the Coordinated Street Furniture Program
- Complete a program review of pedestrian winter maintenance services
- Develop a pedestrian design manual
- Best practice review of accessible intersection design (geometric/traffic signals)
- Implement the Vibrant Streets Guideline objectives across the City
- Develop a strategy for installation of better pedestrian friendly street lighting
- Develop methods to assess and identify pedestrian needs as high priority in existing studies and processes (ex. Transportation Impact Studies, Environmental Assessments, etc.)

4.6 Creating Spaces and Places for People

To be a great walking city Toronto's streets and public places need to spark the imagination and make walking a pleasure. The first priority is building beautiful and functional streetscapes. This is generally achieved through the development review process, transit facility and road reconstruction projects and partnerships with business improvement areas.

Going a step further, making great spaces and places could involve something as simple as converting a boulevard parking space into a beautifully landscaped green space or having artists paint traffic control signal cabinets. It could also involve a much larger project such as acquiring land and building spaces like Dundas Square.

There are many examples of pedestrianization projects in cities around the world that we could learn from. For example, many of the world's great cities have dynamic and prosperous pedestrian streets. These are the areas that are consistently sought out by tourists and visitors. Establishing a successful, permanent pedestrian street is complex and requires a supportive community and an extensive consultation and design process to address parking, transit and traffic diversion issues.

Pedestrian streets can also be established on a temporary/periodic basis such as the Kensington Market Pedestrian Sundays. These temporary street closures are intended to operate like traditional market streets where merchants spill out onto the sidewalk and pedestrians have full access to stroll on the roadway.

Moreover, pedestrianizing a street does not necessarily require the removal of cars. The "shared street" concept has successfully transformed streets and squares in European cities where safety has been improved by mixing vehicles and pedestrians rather than separating them. Toronto should investigate similar innovative measures that could potentially be applied on Toronto streets and public spaces.

Actions Include:

- Provide improved support for recurring pedestrian street events
- Accelerate development process for implementing beautification projects within neighbourhoods to improve community walkability
- Identify pedestrian priority areas for civic improvement
- Develop design standards for transit stops/waiting areas (Transit City).

4.7 *Special Focus Areas*

One of the greatest challenges is making Toronto's suburban neighbourhoods better for walking. Historically built around car travel, these communities generally have wider roadways and more dispersed land-use patterns - with this comes a lack of pedestrian infrastructure, linkages and public spaces. In addition, the development of large tracts of high-rise apartment buildings and retail complexes has led to much larger city blocks and fewer pedestrian connections through privately-owned lands.

Yet, the City is simply too large to implement the actions of this Walking Strategy in every suburban community at the same time. Where do we start?

In 2005, Toronto City Council identified 13 high priority neighbourhoods within the City. These neighbourhoods were defined by high levels of low-income households, a high number of new immigrants, a high population density, inadequate infrastructure, and a serious inability of community organizations to meet the growing needs and concerns of the people in these neighbourhoods.

The fundamental change in the nature of these suburban neighbourhoods has triggered the need for the social infrastructure to change along with it. In parallel, the way people

move around these neighbourhood needs to be examined along with new and greater pressures for public transit and pedestrian services.

Linking with the Priority Neighbourhood Program is an effective way to advance the state of walking in parts of the City where the need for improvement is the most critical. The 13 neighbourhoods are typically suburban and one of the main criteria used to measure priority was based on “poor walkability” to local services. The City’s Neighbourhood Action Teams are already situated to provide for more local community services to these neighbourhoods. Ensuring that these services and others are easily accessible by foot needs to be done in parallel.

Neighbourhood walkability projects will not be limited to these communities - as priorities change over time so too will the direction of City resources – but this is an ideal starting point for improving walkability in the suburbs.

Actions Include:

- Expand local health programs and encourage local participation in community-led walking groups and programs
- Demonstrate unique small-scale walkability projects within the priority neighbourhoods.
- Undertake a pilot project in one priority neighbourhood to improve local walkability
- Develop a framework and funding approach for community focussed pedestrian improvements

5.0 Implementation of the Toronto Walking Strategy

5.1 Introduction

Implementing the Toronto Walking Strategy will require continued coordination between several City Divisions and Agencies. The intent is to implement the Walking Strategy actions, for the most part, through existing City processes and programs including the development review process, annual capital work programs and various community-focussed programs.

A critical piece in the management and coordination of the Walking Strategy is the creation of a new Public Realm unit within the Transportation Services Division.

5.2 Existing City Processes

Securing walkability improvements through the development review process is critically important and is an integral part of the Walking Strategy implementation. This is especially true in areas designated for growth by the Official Plan including Downtown, the Centres, the Avenues and Employment Districts.

Improvements considered during review of development focus on:

- Enhanced Streetscaping
- Pedestrian linkages within a site and connections to surrounding area, including direct connections to transit facilities, community services and the PATH system.
- Consolidation and location of building entrances and access points
- Public easements, allowing access to private property i.e. pedestrian linkages to cross private property.
- Building scale and design.

The implementation of these pedestrian improvements begins with the general policies identified in the City's Official Plan, with a primary focus on the built form and the public realm policies.

Secondary Plans offer the next level of policy building and outline implementation strategies for specific areas. These Plans identify key pedestrian routes and links to community services throughout a neighbourhood as well as deal with pedestrian comfort, safety and amenity. Ensuring that these pedestrian systems are implemented through development or re-development of the area is fundamental in the ongoing promotion of an integrated walking network for Torontonians.

The form of cities affects the way people use cities and move through them and urban design characteristics are strongly associated with walkability. Ensuring building entrances provide access to the street, providing continuous weather protection (i.e. awnings, canopies, etc.) implementing pedestrian scale design and lighting as well as other pedestrian amenities are critical to create spaces and places for people. Current City of Toronto Design guidelines including the Infill Townhouse Design Guidelines, Design Criterion for Review of Tall Buildings Proposals and Urban Design Guidelines (Area-Specific), ensure the highest standards of design for the pedestrian environment as a part of new development or re-development.

Building on this existing planning framework, several Walking Strategy actions are focussed on achieving further improvements to the pedestrian environment through the development review process. These actions include: developing tools for measuring the impact of new developments on pedestrians; consolidating pedestrian design standards and guidelines; and ongoing training for City staff involved in development review to ensure a consistent city-wide approach to achieving pedestrian and public realm benefits.

The City's annual capital budget programs provide opportunities to achieve significant improvements to the public realm. These programs fund infrastructure and therefore 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 where they are missing, to providing more beautiful streetscapes. Several Walking Strategy actions are focussed on achieving improvements to the pedestrian environment through the annual capital works programs. These actions include developing new accessible intersection standards, improving pedestrian links between

major public transit nodes and adjacent neighbourhoods, removing barriers which restrict pedestrian access across major corridors.

There are also a number of opportunities to link future Walking Strategy projects with some of the City's community-focussed programs. The Clean and Beautiful City Program, the Walk Into Health Program, the Live-Green Toronto Program, the Priority Neighbourhoods, the Tower Renewal project, and local Toronto Community Housing Corporation projects represent some of the programs through which improvements to neighbourhood walkability can be advanced. Toronto neighbourhoods are rich with diversity and walkability issues vary by neighbourhood. Linking with community driven initiatives supports the identification of local walking priorities, promotes resident participation and is critical to cultivating a walking culture within Toronto neighbourhoods.

5.3 Public Realm Management

A new Public Realm Unit will be established within the Transportation Services Division to elevate the quality of design and maintenance of Toronto streets. In addition to managing the City's Street Furniture Program and the "Clean and Beautiful" neighbourhood beautification projects, this group will also perform a vital project management and coordination function for capital works projects that have a significant impact on the pedestrian environment. The Public Realm Unit will be strategically positioned to manage the implementation of the Walking Strategy and to coordinate projects involving two or more City Divisions. The new office will be responsible for directing the required resources and staffing to carry out a number of the actions within the Walking Strategy, as well as monitor, evaluate and report on the progress and success of the Strategy. Consistent public feedback called for an accountable team to lead the Strategy.

6.0 Concluding Comments – Vision for a Walkable Toronto

The aim of the Walking Strategy is to create an environment where walking is an appealing, convenient, safe, and stimulating experience for all people, in every part of the City.

Walking is the most ancient and universal form of travel. It is the first kind of travel we learn and the one that is most accessible to all. Every journey begins and ends on foot. To create a sustainable Toronto we must build on a foundation of walking.

The Walking Strategy envisions a Toronto where citizens and visitors enjoy and contribute to a culture of walking. It proposes to create a city where streets, parks, spaces and neighbourhoods are secure and vibrant, so that people choose to walk on more and more of their journeys. It envisions a place where walking is complemented by public transit, cycling and other sustainable modes of travel. It supports infrastructure and cultural programming that encourages Torontonians to walk for both practical and recreational purposes.

Toronto has a long pedestrian tradition. Many roads in the City follow historical Aboriginal trails. Spadina Road was originally carved over thousands of years by traders travelling between Lake Ontario and areas to the north. Davenport Road is part of the path traders and fishers followed between the Don and the Humber rivers.

The Walking Strategy builds on that tradition. It sets out a plan through which residents and visitors will share the environmental, health and social benefits of a strong walking culture. It imagines a Toronto where everyone lives and works within walking distance of key shops and services and feels a closer connection to their neighbourhoods because they experience them at a walking pace.

This strategy strives to create a diverse, economically vital city where walking is a natural transportation choice for the millions of people who move through the streets every day from home to work, to school, to shop, and for social and recreational activities. Cities throughout the world are realizing that walking is essential to any sustainable community.

Resources / Weblinks:

Toronto Walking Strategy – Framework Document “Steps Towards a Walkable Toronto”
(<http://www.toronto.ca/walking>)

Toronto Pedestrian Charter
(<http://www.toronto.ca/pedestrian>)

International Charter for Walking
(<http://www.walk21.com/charter>)

Change is in the Air: Climate Change and Clean Air Action Plan
(<http://www.toronto.ca/changeisintheair/>)

Active and Safe Routes to School (Toronto Public Health)
(http://www.toronto.ca/health/walking_to_school/index.htm)

Coordinated Street Furniture
(<http://www.toronto.ca/involved/projects/streetfurniture/>)

Toronto Walking Survey
(<http://www.toronto.ca/walking>)

Walk21 Toronto 2007 International Conference
Conference proceedings, research reports, etc
(<http://www.toronto.ca/walk21> and www.walk21.com)

Centre for Urban & Community Studies (Research Bulletin 41, December 2007)
(<http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca>)