

Tips on Leading a Walk Audit

Walk audits are facilitated walks for an interdisciplinary group of community stakeholders, often led by design experts, with the following potential outcomes:

- **Education.** Guides people to *experience* and assess the “friendliness” of an area to active transportation (walking, biking, transit), not just look at it theoretically.
- **Inspiration.** Helps leaders and policy makers and residents to explore and imagine what could be possible in their community.
- **Practical planning.** Outstanding way to get everyone--professionals and not--actively involved in project or policy development, valuing each person’s input.

Participants. Anyone who can influence or is affected by the built environment: Planners, public works, engineers, architects, landscape architects; public health and safety, housing, transit, school officials; elected and appointed officials (city/county council, planning commission, school board); business and development leaders; and those who often lack a voice in planning: children, elderly, people of color, of low income, or with disabilities.

Distance. Often 0.5 to 2.0 miles; for a 30 to 90-minute walk, allowing time to stop for observations and discussion. A one-hour, roughly 1.5-mile walk can work very well.

Route. Should be determined and pre-scouted by the facilitator(s) ahead of time, and include a mix of supportive and challenging (good & bad, below) settings for active transportation, with safe (out of traffic) places for the group to stop and talk.

- Good e.g.: Park, trail, walk- & bike-friendly facilities & downtown, traffic calming (curb extensions, islands, raised crossings), community garden, farmer’s market, etc.
- Bad e.g.: Wide roads, no crosswalks, speeding traffic; malls & sprawling low-density subdivisions, giant parking lots, no bike racks, “big box” retail & strip development.
- Surprises: Informal trails, bikes parked at trees or parking meters (or other evidence of user demand), overlooked gems (e.g. small neighborhood park or green-SummitGroup1grocer).

Four major elements of the walk.

- **Introductions**, brief, to connect the group and understand the mix of perspectives.
- **Education/set-up.** This could be an hour-long PowerPoint presentation, or a 10-minute discussion of elements that support community health. Either way, start the walk by first thinking about what supports active transportation (walk, bike, transit):
 - o A varied mix of land uses (live, work, shop, play, learn, pray) in close proximity.
 - o Good network for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit use (sidewalks, trails, etc.)
 - o Functional, inviting site designs (buildings at the sidewalk, trees, benches, etc.)
 - o Safety and access for users of all ages, abilities, incomes (ramps, traffic calming)
- **The Walk.** Have participants use a 0 to 10 scoring system for considering the environment, 10 being the most supportive of active transportation, 0 the least. At occasional stops, have participants state their scores, and give examples of why it is what it is (“too much traffic, only a 4;” or “8: great trees & benches & lots of people”). No right or wrong answers, just a device to help all to observe and share.