



Safe Routes
to School
**National
Partnership**

Get to Know Your Neighborhood With a Walk Audit

Walk audits are a great tool to gather information about street conditions, engage community members, and inform planning and traffic safety projects. Through walk audits, you can help improve walking, health, and quality of life in your community! In a walk audit, community members go for a walk together, noting what makes their streets feel comfortable for walking and what is missing. Walk audits can be informal and casual events with just a few friends, or can include city councilmembers, traffic engineers, and detailed forms.

What Is a Walk Audit?

A walk audit can be as simple as taking a walk during which you assess how supportive the street is for walking. Walk audits can be done solo, but are often conducted by a group of people using a checklist to assess street infrastructure and conditions, documenting barriers, positive features, activities, and perceptions of the walking environment. Walk audits let you survey a planned route, evaluating and documenting the street on a scale that helps assess the current walkability and identify how to make it better for people of all ages and abilities. A walk audit can occur as part of a bigger plan to assess overall walkability, or can be a one-time event to understand or express concerns about a specific area.



Photo Credit: City of Cleveland Planning Commission



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Safe Routes to School and Walk Audits

Safe Routes to School helps improve safety for students walking to and from school. Holding a walk audit around a school is one way to start thinking about Safe Routes to School. Walk audits can also help assess areas for improvements once your program is underway. Conducting walk audits on streets near the school and students' routes can help:

- Improve safety to and from school on streets and in neighborhoods
- Select recommended safer routes for students who walk or bike to school
- Prioritize which schools have the highest need for investment in safer streets and school zones
- Identify school entrance/exit and facility needs
- Engage students in understanding and improving their neighborhoods
- Lead to reductions in traffic around school at peak hours
- Encourage healthy behaviors and physical activity which can improve student performance
- Assist with attendance and tardiness issues
- Improve air quality around schools by lessening traffic and managing vehicular traffic patterns near schools

Why Do a Walk Audit?

Conducting a walk audit can be the start to making positive change in your community, leading to a safer, more accessible, more comfortable walking environment for everyone. A walk audit can occur for different reasons. They can be used to:

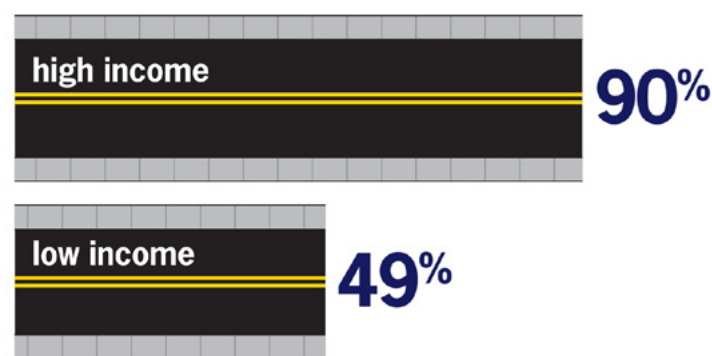
- Create a starting point for a Safe Routes to School program
- Document how walkable a route is
- Identify walking barriers and benefits in a community
- Bring community members together to discuss problems and brainstorm solutions
- Quantify disparities, assessing whether different neighborhoods have walking environments that differ in quality
- Determine problems that can be easily fixed
- Identify needed improvements to be included in funding asks, plans, and projects
- Engage elected and appointed officials around a problem and request change
- Capture conditions before and after a street renovation to assess the effects of improvements

Conducting a Walk Audit

[*Let's Go For A Walk: A Toolkit for Planning and Conducting a Walk Audit*](#) provides detailed information and resources for conducting a walk audit. The toolkit will assist you in planning your walk audit and achieving your community's goals through four simple steps:

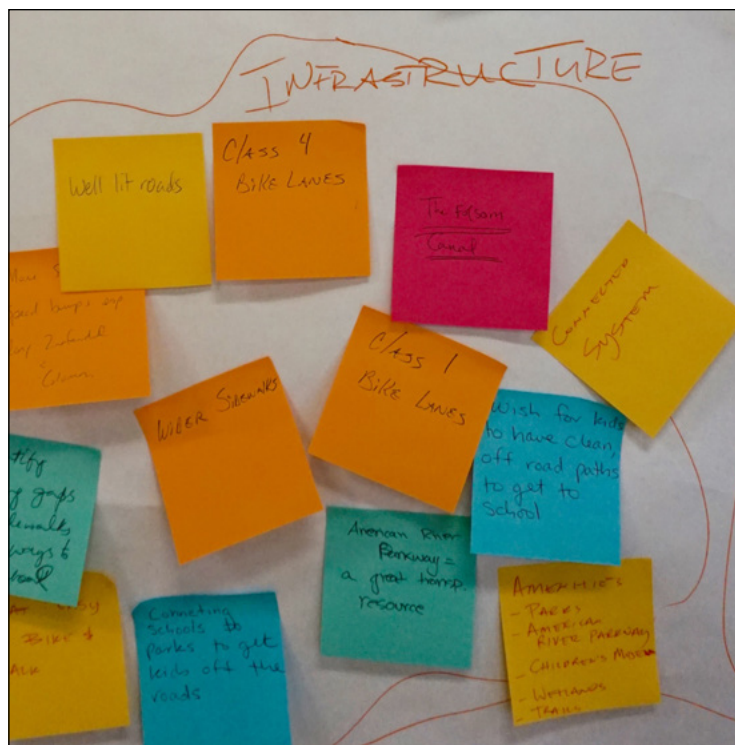
1. Get Ready: Where's the Route and How to Rate it
Make initial decisions about your walk audit: your goals, what tool to use, what route to assess, and scheduling your walk audit.
2. Get Set: Who Will Help and What You Need
Figure out who to invite to the walk audit and what supplies you will need.
3. Get Walking: What to Do and What to Look for
Conduct your walk audit and document infrastructure, behaviors, and factors that support or deter walking and bicycling.
4. Get Active: Share Observations and Make Change
After your walk audit, compile your observations, share results with elected officials, transportation departments, and other decision makers, and make change on your streets.

Communities with Sidewalks



Bridging the Gap, Income Disparities in Street Features that Encourage Walking, 2012

Walk audits can identify street inequities and lead to safer and fairer street environments.



Walk Audit Resources

[Let's Go For A Walk: A Toolkit for Planning and Conducting a Walk Audit](#) includes a sample one-page school neighborhood walk audit form, a sample general walk audit checklist, and a chart of other walk audit tools. The tools vary based on length, questions asked, complexity, and audience, among other things. The following are some walk audit tools designed for community members.

- [AARP Walk Audit Toolkit](#)

This toolkit focuses on crossings, sidewalks, safety, and comfort and appeal, and provides an overall rating system. The toolkit also includes proposed solutions and a separate leaders' guide.

- [Healthy and Complete Communities in Delaware: The Walkability Assessment Tool](#)

The tool includes a Walkability Assessment Checklist within a much longer guide to organizing and conducting a walk audit.

- [Microscale Audit of Pedestrian Streetscapes \(MAPS\) Mini Version](#)

The Microscale Audit of Pedestrian Streetscapes (MAPS) Mini has only 15 questions and is intended to be used by community members.

- [Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index](#)

This assessment contains separate questionnaires for street segments and intersections, and includes a number of tools and resources to assist in training and implementing, such as a quiz and a cheat sheet. There is a Spanish version as well.

