



Safe Routes  
to School  
**National  
Partnership**

# Keep Up the Pace: Next Steps After Conducting a Walk Audit



Photo: CMSD/City of Cleveland Safe Routes to Schools Initiative

Walk audits are a great tool to engage community members and gather information for community planning and traffic safety projects. But a walk audit is just the first step! This factsheet helps you figure out how to use the results of your walk audit to make your streets safer and more comfortable for people getting around on foot.

## Revisit Your Walk Audit Goals

Start by remembering why you decided to conduct a walk audit in the first place. Is your goal to capture and share information? If so, see the section below about ways to share your walk audit findings with staff and officials. Is your goal to highlight a specific need and advocate for changes to the streets to address that need? If so, share your walk audit findings with staff and officials, but be prepared to continue building community support and following up to see the changes implemented. Was the walk audit conducted as part of a process to make broader changes to improve walkability or bikeability near your school, in your neighborhood, or community-wide? If so, it is important that walk audit findings inform and are included in a pedestrian, bicycle, Safe Routes to School, or other planning document, or that a policy such as a Complete Streets policy is put in place. This way your city or county will continue to implement changes that support walking and biking over a longer period.

## Why Conduct a Walk Audit?

Walk audits are used to identify and record street conditions, barriers to walking, behaviors, and perceptions of people walking. In order to improve conditions for walking, a walk audit needs to translate into changes to the streets and neighborhoods or programs that change behaviors. Our [Let's Go For A Walk: A Toolkit for Planning and Conducting a Walk Audit](#) provides guidance on and tools for conducting a walk audit. This fact sheet picks up where that toolkit leaves off and covers ideas for sharing your walk audit results, what changes you might see your city or county make and how long it might take, and things that community members can do to support improved walkability more immediately.

## Sharing Your Walk Audit Findings

Once you have compiled your walk audit notes, pictures, and findings in a report or on a map, you are ready to make sure the right people get the information.

Here are some strategies for sharing walk audit findings with key stakeholders and decision makers.

- **Share your report and conclusions with agency staff.** City or county transportation, planning, public works, or other staff may have participated in the walk audit. If so, great! They likely already heard many of the findings firsthand. Ask the staff what would be most helpful for them. Would a report or testimony directly from community members help them in their planning process? Grant applications often ask for documentation of community engagement or community support for the proposed project. A summary of your walk audit process and conclusions could help elevate the need for funding improvements. If city or county staff have not been involved with your walk audit yet, now is the time to connect with them. These staff can help you understand the process to making change. Some concerns, like maintenance issues, might be easily addressed once the appropriate staff is informed and engaged.

Note: If your walk audit included a school area, share the findings with the school district as well. Concerns on school property will need to be addressed by the district. The district can also be an effective advocate with the city or county for changes surrounding the schools.



Photo: Orange County Health Care Agency

- **Present your findings at a city council, county board, or planning or transportation commission meeting.** Approach the staff for these decision making bodies to see about getting a dedicated time on a meeting agenda to present on your walk audit process and findings. If you are not able to secure a dedicated spot on the agenda, you can also provide information during the public comment portion of the agenda, but keep in mind there will likely be time limits and your comments will need to be brief. Involve the walk audit participants in the presentation to elevate their voices. If students participated in the walk audit, include them in the presentation as well. The perspectives of youth who walk or bike can be very compelling.

Some key items to include in your presentation include the impetus for the walk audit (why did you decide to conduct one and why in that particular area), a description of who participated in the walk audit, key barriers or challenges observed, and a specific ask for improvements. Include a map to give context, as well as pictures, which can sometimes tell the story all on their own. Keep your presentation brief so the audience can focus in on your key points.

- **Write up and share findings with the broader community.** This could include writing an article or op-ed for the local newspaper, posting findings from the report on social media, or publishing a blog post. Traditional and online media are great outlets to make sure residents and other community members know about the walk audit and conclusions. This can generate support from more community members who can reinforce needs for changes with the city or county decision makers. It may also generate support from businesses, foundations, or other organizations that may provide resources to help solve some of the concerns.

### Share Your Findings on Paper or Online

Walk audit findings can be compiled and shared in a number of different ways. Paper maps with consolidated notes and corresponding pictures can be useful for public presentations. You can also use free online tools such as Google Maps to create virtual, interactive maps with icons representing different concerns. See the [Vermont Safe Routes to School Walk Audit Mini Guide](#) for instructions on using Google Maps to compile findings.

## Strategies to Improve Walkability

Sharing your findings with staff and officials is important, but of course your real goal is to see change. This section describes the typical types of programs and infrastructure changes a city or county can implement to improve walkability. The information is organized into short, medium, and long term approaches to give a sense of what timeline should be anticipated. More detailed information on each infrastructure strategy can be found on the [Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center website](#).

Strategy	Description
<i>Short Term (0-6 months)</i>	
Beautification	Cleaning up the area by removing graffiti, picking up litter, and replacing or installing landscaping.
Traffic education and enforcement	Programs to raise awareness, educate people walking, bicycling, and driving about safety, and reinforcing safe behaviors while deterring unsafe behaviors.
Removing sidewalk obstructions	Trimming overgrown trees and shrubs; moving or removing signage and other obstacles identified during the walk audit. Note: moving utilities obstructing the sidewalk may be a medium-term improvement.
Repainting crosswalks and replacing signage	Repainting faded crosswalk markings and other striping with high visibility materials and replacing signs that are illegible or outdated.
Adjusting signal timing	Changing signal timing to allow enough time for people to walk across the street.
<i>Medium Term (6 months-2 years)</i>	
Upgrading street crossings	This can include adding signage and adding flexible posts or other temporary curb extensions.
Upgrading pedestrian signals	Adding countdown signals; ensuring push buttons comply with ADA requirements; adding pedestrian signals when they are missing.
Reconstructing sidewalks	Repairing deteriorated walking surfaces; ensuring curb ramps meet ADA requirements; moving utilities that are obstructing the path.
Installing street trees and street furniture	Adding or replacing street trees that provide shade; installing benches and trash receptacles.
New wayfinding and signage	Adding new signage including warning signs and wayfinding signs.
Improving street lighting	Replacing street lighting with pedestrian-oriented lighting and/or upgrading to more energy efficient features.
Traffic calming using paint	Using paint to stripe curb extensions, buffers, and other features to slow drivers down.
Addressing vacant or abandoned properties	This may include working with property owners to landscape vacant lots or turn them into temporary community spaces or rehabilitating or tearing down abandoned and deteriorating buildings.
<i>Long Term (2+ years)</i>	
Building new sidewalks and paths	Creating places for people to walk where there was not a pathway before. This can involve acquiring the needed property (right-of-way or an easement), grading the land, and laying down a walking surface.
Redesigning streets	This could include realigning intersections, narrowing the roadway (a road diet), adding bike lanes, or changing on-street parking.
Large-scale traffic calming	This could include permanent curb extensions, roundabouts or traffic circles, or redesigning curbs to have a smaller radius.

Adapted from Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha and Get Healthy Philly's Introduction to Walkability.

## Things You Can Do to Support Walkability Now

While infrastructure changes and the strategies described above are likely going to need to be implemented by the city or county that is responsible for the streets and sidewalks, there are some things that community members can start addressing right away. Here are some ideas for how you can take your walk audit findings and create more immediate change.

- **Organize a community clean up.** Work with residents and local businesses to address some of the maintenance problems seen on the walk audit. This can include picking up litter, trimming overgrown landscaping, and planting new trees and plants on private property. Reach out to elderly homeowners or others with property in need of some TLC to help them out or connect them with resources for maintenance assistance.
- **Organize a community event to promote walking and physical activity.** This might be a Walk to School Day event or a family bike night, or organizing a reoccurring activity like a walking group. Encouraging more people to try out walking can build awareness and enthusiasm.
- **Fundraise.** Check with your local planning or public works staff about policies around community fundraising and donations. Some cities and counties allow neighborhood residents or business owners to fundraise and donate things like street trees and furniture that can improve the walking environment.
- **Teach others to conduct walk audits and keep up the momentum.** Share the tools and resources you used with other community members and encourage them to organize walk audits around their schools and on their neighborhood streets.



## Why is it Taking So Long?

Street infrastructure changes may take months or even years, which can be frustrating. As a general guideline, infrastructure changes that are more complex take longer to implement. Some factors that influence a project timeline include:

- Who owns or controls the land? Does the right-of-way need to be acquired or does an easement need to be established? Both of these add time because they require coordination between the local jurisdiction and separate landowners.
- Are there different parties or jurisdictions that need to coordinate? For example, changes to a state highway running through a town might need approval and coordination by local and state authorities.
- Is there complex engineering involved? This could include leveling slopes or addressing drainage issues.
- Is a traffic study or other study needed? Some infrastructure changes require additional studies to make sure the changes are going to be safe for all users and actually improve conditions.
- How expensive is the improvement? Is there funding? Projects that require larger dollars may need to be planned and budgeted for the future as resources are available in the city/county's capital improvements program or through grant funding.

