

AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit

A step-by-step self-service guide
for assessing a community's walkability

aarp.org/walk-audit



THE PROBLEM

Too many communities in the United States are designed exclusively or almost exclusively for automobile travel, with very little consideration given to the needs of pedestrians. A scarcity of sidewalks, multilane roadways that are unsafe to cross, and a lack of street maintenance are all factors that discourage or outright prevent people from walking.

A SOLUTION

You can help make your community more walkable by conducting a walk audit to identify the roads and intersections that are dangerous for pedestrians but can and should be safely walkable and crossable.

THE TIME COMMITMENT

It takes about an hour to complete a targeted walk audit and a bit more time to summarize your observations and offer ideas for needed improvements.

WHO CAN CONDUCT A WALK AUDIT?

Anyone!

AMONG THE REASONS TO CONDUCT A WALK AUDIT

- It can help create a pedestrian-friendly environment
- It increases exercise opportunities for your communities
- It boosts social interaction among neighbors
- It enables people to get around without having to drive
- It can help reduce traffic congestion and pollution
- It can lead to increased property values

▶ Getting **STARTED**

NOTES:

1 RECRUIT PEOPLE TO CONDUCT THE WALK AUDIT

You can do a walk audit on your own, but it's more fun to do with other people. It's helpful to include a person who has a walking or physical challenge (e.g., someone who uses a walker, wheelchair or cane, or even a parent pushing a baby stroller). That will help you get a true sense of an area's walkability.

2 IDENTIFY YOUR ROUTE

Map out a walkable area that can get you to and from where you need to go.

3 GATHER YOUR SUPPLIES, WHICH MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Street maps
- Clipboards
- Notepaper and pens
- A digital or smartphone camera
- Comfortable walking shoes
- A hat and sunscreen
- A bottle of cold water
- The walk audit documents that start on page 4

4 CHOOSE A DATE AND TIME FOR THE WALK AUDIT

5 CONDUCT THE WALK AUDIT

6 "RATE" THE ROUTE

7 TAKE ACTION TO MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY MORE WALKABLE

► The WALK AUDIT

Review the walk audit documents and checklists before you head out, and as you walk note the locations of streets, sidewalks and any problems you would like to see solved. Take photographs of problem areas as well as good features you would like to see more often.

Suggestions for the types of photographs to take include:

- Crossing signals
- Overhead traffic lights
- Turning lanes
- Curb cuts
- Sidewalks
- Crosswalk lines and vehicle stop lines
- Important signage

The tool kit contains the following sections to help guide and record your observations:

- Mapping the Walk Audit
- Crossing Streets and Intersections
- Sidewalks
- Driver Behavior
- Safety
- Comfort and Appeal
- Overall Ratings and Observations

Each section asks you to rate your streets or intersections. Here's what each rating means:

Excellent	The area is very pedestrian-friendly and safe
Good	The area is moderately pedestrian-friendly and safe
Fair	The area is somewhat pedestrian-friendly and safe
Poor	The area is not pedestrian-friendly or safe

TIP: You can bring the pages for Assignments #1 through #6 with you during the actual walk audit and leave the rest of this guide behind.

NOTES:

▶ Mapping the **WALK AUDIT**

Your walkable area can be as small as one intersection or it could include several streets and intersections. Consider starting small, with one or two intersections and a connecting street.

TIP: *The smaller your walk audit area, the easier it is to follow up and get results.*

1. Record the following for your audit area:

County: _____ City/Town: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

2. Next, draw a simple map of your walk audit area in the space below and label the streets. Indicate North, South, East and West to show which direction the streets are oriented.

▶ CROSSING STREETS and INTERSECTIONS

Complete one set of the Assignment #1 sheets for each intersection you observe.

TIP: We suggest allowing 20 to 30 minutes per intersection.

Intersection observed: _____ and _____
Street Name 1 Street Name 2

Day and Date of week: _____

Time observations began: _____ AM | PM Time observations ended: _____ AM | PM

DIRECTIONS: Place a ✓ next to any items that are a problem for pedestrians and note:

- What might be especially problematic for a child, older adult or person with disabilities?
- What is the exact location of each problem? Record a landmark or side of street (North, South, East or West) on the line to the right of each item you check.

PROBLEMS FOR PEDESTRIANS

LOCATION

- The crossing doesn't have a pedestrian signal or audible signal _____
- The pedestrian signal doesn't give people walking at an average speed enough time to cross _____

- Time allowed for crossing: _____ (Minutes) _____ (Seconds)
- The signal doesn't give slow walkers enough time to cross _____
- The traffic signal makes pedestrians wait too long before crossing _____
- The location needs a traffic signal or crosswalk _____
- A Push-to-Walk signal is not available/operating/accessible _____
- The crosswalk is not marked or is poorly marked _____
- People need to walk >300 feet for a safe place to cross the street _____
- The road is too wide to safely cross _____
- There's no median on a street with four or more lanes _____
- Parked cars or utility poles block the pedestrian view of traffic _____
- Other issues and observations: _____

► CROSSING STREETS and INTERSECTIONS

WHO IS USING THE CROSSWALK?	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS OBSERVED (use hash marks <i>///</i> for counting)	TOTAL #
People walking at an average speed		
People walking slowly		
People with children or baby strollers		
People crossing against the signal		
People using assistive devices (wheelchairs, canes, walkers, etc.)		
Bicyclists		
Skateboarders		
Other		

Overall Rating of the Street Crossing(s) in the Survey Area: Excellent Good Fair Poor

Additional observations:

▶ SIDEWALKS

Complete one sheet for each sidewalk-equipped street within your walk area.

Street observed: _____ between _____ and _____
Street Name Cross Street 1 Cross Street 2

Day and Date of week: _____

Time observations began: _____ AM | PM Time observations ended: _____ AM | PM

DIRECTIONS: Place a ✓ next to any items that are a problem for pedestrians and note:

- What might be especially problematic for a child, older adult or person with disabilities?
- What is the exact location of each problem? Record a landmark or side of street (North, South, East or West) on the line to the right of each item you check.

PROBLEMS FOR PEDESTRIANS

LOCATION

- There are no sidewalks, paths or shoulders. _____
- The sidewalks are not continuous (i.e., segments are missing). _____
- The sidewalk isn't wide enough for two people to walk together side-by-side (minimum width needed: 5 feet). _____
- The sidewalk is broken or cracked. _____
- There's no buffer between traffic and the sidewalk. _____
- The sidewalks are interrupted by driveways. _____
- There are no ramps (i.e., curb cuts) or they're misplaced. *(Note: There should be two curb cuts per corner.)* _____
- The curb cuts aren't textured or marked for people with visual impairments. _____
- The sidewalk is blocked or interrupted by poles, signs, shrubs, dumpsters, low-hanging trees, etc. _____
- Cars, trucks, vendors are blocking the sidewalk. _____
- Other issues and observations: _____

Overall Rating of the Street Crossing(s) in the Survey Area: Excellent Good Fair Poor

Additional observations:

▶ DRIVER BEHAVIOR

Complete one sheet for the entire walkable area on your walk audit map.

Day and Date of week: _____

Time observations began: _____ AM | PM Time observations ended: _____ AM | PM

DIRECTIONS: Place a ✓ next to any items that are a problem for pedestrians and note:

- What might be especially problematic for a child, older adult or person with disabilities?
- What is the exact location(s) of each problem? Record a landmark or side of street (North, South, East or West) on the line to the right of each item you check.

PROBLEMS FOR PEDESTRIANS

LOCATION

- Drivers do not stop at stop signs _____
- Drivers do not obey traffic signals _____
- Drivers appear to be speeding _____
- Drivers don't yield to pedestrians, especially at right turns _____
- Drivers do not stop behind the crosswalk _____
- Drivers don't look when leaving or backing out of driveways _____
- Drivers make unexpected turns/maneuvers _____
- Other issues and observations: _____

Overall Rating of the Street Crossing(s) in the Survey Area: Excellent Good Fair Poor

Additional observations:

▶ SAFETY

Complete one sheet for the entire walkable area on your survey map.

Day and Date of week: _____

Time observations began: _____ AM | PM Time observations ended: _____ AM | PM

DIRECTIONS: Place a ✓ next to any items that are a problem for pedestrians and note:

- What might be especially problematic for a child, older adult or person with disabilities?
- What is the exact location(s) of each problem? Record a landmark or side of street (North, South, East or West) on the line to the right of each item you check.

PROBLEMS FOR PEDESTRIANS

LOCATION

People don't feel safe walking here.

- Car speeds are too fast _____
- There's too much traffic _____
- Drivers are distracted (e.g., they're using cellphones) _____
- There's loitering or suspicious/criminal activity _____
- There are unleashed dogs _____
- The signage or directions for drivers/pedestrians are confusing _____
- Other issues and observations: _____

Overall Rating of the Street Crossing(s) in the Survey Area: Excellent Good Fair Poor

Additional observations:

▶ COMFORT and APPEAL

Complete one sheet for the entire walkable area on your survey map.

Day and Date of week: _____

Time observations began: _____ AM | PM Time observations ended: _____ AM | PM

DIRECTIONS: Place a ✓ next to any items that are a problem for pedestrians and note:

- What might be especially problematic for a child, older adult or person with disabilities?
- What is the exact location(s) of each problem? Record a landmark or side of street (North, South, East or West) on the line to the right of each item you check.

PROBLEMS FOR PEDESTRIANS

LOCATION

People don't feel safe walking here.

- The street needs shade trees _____
- The street needs grass, flowers and landscaping _____
- The street needs benches and places to rest _____
- The grass and/or landscaping needs maintenance _____
- There are no water fountains and/or bathrooms _____
- A sidewalk is needed to the bus stop _____
- The bus stop doesn't provide shelter _____
- The bus stop doesn't have adequate lighting _____
- There's graffiti or vacant or rundown buildings _____
- There's too much trash or litter _____
- Other issues and observations: _____

Overall Rating of the Street Crossing(s) in the Survey Area: Excellent Good Fair Poor

Additional observations:

▶ RATINGS and OBSERVATIONS

Now it's time to tally your scores from each observation section.

DIRECTIONS: Place a ✓ next to each rating from the previous sections.
If you observed more than one location, record the average of your observations.

STEP	RATING			
Crossing Streets and Intersections	_____ Excellent	_____ Good	_____ Fair	_____ Poor
Sidewalks	_____ Excellent	_____ Good	_____ Fair	_____ Poor
Driver Behavior	_____ Excellent	_____ Good	_____ Fair	_____ Poor
Safety	_____ Excellent	_____ Good	_____ Fair	_____ Poor
Comfort and Appeal	_____ Excellent	_____ Good	_____ Fair	_____ Poor

TOTALS: _____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor

Your overall rating will be more than just your check mark total. Think about your observations as a whole. Were some areas much better or worse than others? For example, the sidewalks might be good for walking, but intersections might be poor for crossing the street. This might justify reducing the overall rating of your walk audit area. With this in mind:

Overall rating of the entire walk audit area: _____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor

Additional comments about what works well and what needs improvement:

► TAKE ACTION

It can be a challenge to persuade municipalities to make needed transportation and roadway improvements and changes. Obstacles abound, ranging from politics to price tags. But individuals and community groups can get the ball rolling by identifying problems and calling attention to them.

SOME NEXT STEPS

Rally community members to work with local government and transportation officials to add new walkways and sidewalks that can help improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians.

Contact the local public works and transportation departments, or the area's elected community representative, to report unsafe sidewalks. Provide copies of the completed walk audit as well as photographs that show the problems.

Ask local officials to create crosswalks, install traffic signals and use traffic-calming measures (such as a "road diet" that narrows the street) to help control the speed of traffic. If a traffic signal already exists, ask that the light's timing accommodate slower moving pedestrians, such as children, older adults and people with disabilities.

Organize a neighborhood watch group to keep an eye out for speeders, criminal activity or other conditions or activities that would prevent people from being able to safely go for a walk.

Advocate for the kind of walkability features that will make your community walkable and welcoming for people of all ages and abilities. (To learn about those features download the **AARP Livability Fact Sheet** series in English or Spanish by visiting [AARP.org/livability-factsheets](https://www.aarp.org/livability-factsheets).)

A FEW WORDS ABOUT SIDEWALKS

- Sidewalk requests can be complicated because, although a community's public works department often addresses sidewalk maintenance, the maintenance might actually be the responsibility of the adjacent property owner. Adding a new walkway could require negotiating with the respective property owners. Installing a sidewalk where one doesn't already exist is easier if the work involves filling in a gap in an otherwise continuous sidewalk.
- In most areas, a community's department of public works or transportation can address concerns about the placement and width of sidewalks and the maintenance of publicly managed sidewalks.
- Caring for trees and bushes that intrude upon a sidewalk is usually the responsibility of the property's owner, but the local government can send a notice asking the owner to perform the maintenance. If the property owner does not comply, a public works crew might be able to trim the bushes and bill the property owner. In some neighborhoods, a homeowners' association is responsible for sidewalks.
- Some communities or neighborhoods have ordinances restricting the installation of sidewalks or curbs for aesthetic reasons or to make the area appear less urban. Advocating for sidewalks in these types of communities can be challenging. If action on sidewalks is not possible, the local government can still make the streets safer for pedestrians by employing traffic-calming measures.

▶ FINDING SOLUTIONS

▶ PROBLEMS

- There are no sidewalks, paths or shoulders
- Sidewalks start and stop, are broken or blocked
- There is too much traffic

▶ SOLUTIONS

- Identify another (safer) route
- Tell the traffic engineering or public works department about the problems and provide a copy of your walk audit results
- Speak up at board meetings
- Write or petition the city for better walkways
- Work with a local transportation engineer to develop a plan for a safe walking route
- Make the local media aware of the problems

▶ PROBLEMS

- The roads are too wide to cross
- Traffic signals don't allow enough time to cross and/or don't provide regular chances to cross
- There aren't any crosswalks or traffic signals
- Views of traffic are blocked by trees, landscaping and/or parked cars
- Curb cuts are missing or are in need of repair

▶ SOLUTIONS

- Identify another (safer) route
- Tell the traffic engineering or public works department about the problems and provide a copy of your walk audit results
- Ask permission to trim landscaping that blocks the street and/or ask the property owner to trim the landscaping
- Leave polite notes on the problem cars asking owners not to park in those spots
- Attend community meetings to advocate for crosswalks, signals, parking changes and curb cuts
- Report parked cars that cause safety hazards to the police or traffic departments
- Ask the department of public works to trim trees and bushes that block views of the street
- Make the local media aware of the problems

▶ PROBLEMS

- Drivers are backing up without looking
- Drivers aren't yielding to pedestrians
- Drivers are driving too fast and/or speeding up to make the light
- Drivers are running red lights and stop signs

▶ SOLUTIONS

- Identify another (safer) route
- Set an example by being a safe driver
- Report unsafe drivers to the police
- Petition for better law enforcement
- Ask the municipality's transportation planners and engineers for traffic-calming solutions
- Organize a neighborhood speed watch program

▶ PROBLEMS

- The landscaping is in poor condition or nonexistent
- Dogs are off-leash
- The area isn't well-lighted
- There's a lot of litter
- There's no place to sit and rest
- There's criminal activity

▶ SOLUTIONS

- Identify another (safer) route
- Report unleashed dogs to municipal authorities
- Report unlawful activity to police
- Report lighting needs to the police or department of public works
- Collect the trash yourself
- Request increased law enforcement
- Ask the municipality's transportation planners and engineers for traffic-calming solutions
- Organize a community cleanup day
- Start a neighborhood crime watch program
- Sponsor a neighborhood beautification day
- Begin an adopt-a-street program

AARP thanks the **Institute of Transportation Engineers** for its assistance with this guide.

