

Taking Steps . . .

towards a more



Number 8

July 2005

Get thee into
the streets



Most significant invention



Using cell phones while
driving



Canada's Commuter
Challenge



Walkable Edmonton is a
winner



Walk it first on the Web



The 2005 Ultimate SUV



My favourite walk



Place names - Garneau



Obesity on the rise among
Canadians



The Alberta Smart Growth
Report



Highlands neighbourhood
design charrette



Peak oil



Get thee into the streets

We've all heard the expressions "preaching to the converted" . . .

While it is comfortable and easy to communicate and share ideas with folks who have the same beliefs and goals as we do, that does little to change the views or actions of the rest of the world.

We here at *Taking Steps* expect that most of our readers nod in quiet agreement as they read this newsletter, perhaps even holler out the odd "Right On!" as they come across something particularly impactful. They might even

share their copy with their hiking buddies or cycling club. With all due respect, gentle reader, you will do us all a bigger favour by forwarding this newsletter to a few of your friends and colleagues who might NOT share your views about walkability, wellness and the environment:

- Distribute copies to the parents of your childrens' classmates and their teachers, soccer team parents or others you feel might take the time to give it a read;
- Post or drop a few copies off at your local gym, sporting goods outlet or coffee bar;
- Give them to your neighbours and business associates; or
- Send them on to your political representatives.

If we are to truly Take Steps to Creating a Walkable Edmonton, we all need to get out and take the message to the streets!

Most significant invention

The BBC conducted a poll to determine the world's greatest invention. The **bicycle** won more than half of the vote. The transistor came second with 8% of the vote, and the electromagnetic induction ring — the means to harness electricity — came third.



Using cell phones while driving

It was estimated in 2004 that at any given daylight moment, an estimated 8 percent of all motorists in the U.S., or about 1.2 million drivers, were talking on cell phones while operating their vehicles. This is up from 6 percent in 2002 and 4 percent in 2000.

Walk safely, the drivers you see may not be paying attention.



Meet Ed . . .
Click on him and he'll
walk you to the
particular article or
website.

Please pass this newsletter on to a friend or colleague

[Return to Contents](#)


Canada's Commuter Challenge

[Go for Green](#) has announced the six winning cities in the June 5-11, 2005 Commuter Challenge. Participants in 105 communities and municipalities across Canada walked, cycled, skated, carpoled, took the bus or teleworked from home to show the rest of Canada what we **could** do to improve air quality and reduce the risk of climate change.

The winning communities each had the highest percentage of participation in their population category:

<u>Community</u>	<u>Population Category</u>
National Capital Region	1 million+
Winnipeg	500,000-999,999
Central Okanagan	100,000-499,999
Lethbridge	50,000-99,999
Whitehorse	10,000-49,999
Whistler	Under 10,000

Edmonton, whither thou ??

The Commuter Challenge is an annual competition to encourage as many people as possible to use sustainable and active modes of transportation during Environment Week. 

Walkable Edmonton, however, is a winner

Walkable Edmonton was recently honoured in the 'urban planning' category by Active Edmonton, in recognition of the group's activities in promoting walkability and wellness.




From left:
Kate Gunn, Rod Keith, David Price, Councillor Bryan Anderson

Walk it first on the Web

A new website uses Google's mapping capabilities to allow you to measure the distance for a proposed walking tour. You can do it using either Google maps or satellite imagery, and can readily jump back and forth between display modes.


Check it out -- use it to calculate your noon-hour walking route, the distance to your favourite coffee bar, or the window-shopping tour of Whyte Avenue you've got planned for this weekend.

And yes, you can see your own house on the satellite photos! 

The 2005 Ultimate SUV

Funny about some of the really luxurious and/or oversized SUVs.

Ever notice how you never see one with mud on it? Apparently, you can now buy spray-on mud to improve the *macho index* of your SUV, particularly if it never goes off the pavement.

Here's one that will go places other SUVs wouldn't dare... Have you got yours yet? 

Dave Cruden My favourite walk

My favourite walk starts at my front door in North Garneau but if you are visiting you might start the circuit at the University LRT station. From there, head north to the Old Arts Building and then continue to Rutherford House on Saskatchewan Drive. Pause for tea before turning east through Garneau to appreciate the High Level Bridge and follow the old tramway up to the Garneau Monument. Westwards then is Emily Murphy House and Old St. Stephens College beside the LRT. The route takes you back along elm-shaded streets to the days when Edmonton was first building landmarks -- a short walk through history in our Centennial Year.

There is a more detailed guide at www.preservegarneau.org.

Place names Garneau

According to our trusty Ada to Zoie reference guide (*Naming Edmonton*, that is), the Garneau community was named for Laurent Garneau (1840-1921), a Metis who immigrated from Michigan by way of Manitoba. En route he played a part in the 1869 Riel Rebellion in the Red River Colony.

[Return to Contents](#)

As a settler, he was granted River Lot 7 in the Edmonton Settlement, and was active in local politics.


Although he moved on to the St. Paul area in 1901, his homestead eventually became part of the Town of Strathcona.

Obesity on the rise among Canadians

A Statistics Canada report released in early July revealed an alarming trend to unhealthy levels of overweight and obesity among Canadians.

The study compared rates of overweight and obesity from 1978/79 to 2004. The most alarming increases were among the following age groups:


- Adolescents aged 12 to 17 - the proportion who were obese went from 3% in 1978/79 to 8% in 2004;
- Young adults 25 to 34 - increased from 9% to 21%; and
- Persons over 75 - rose from 11% to 24%.

There was an increase in overweight/obesity among all age groups of adults except those 65 to 74. 

The Alberta Smart Growth Report

Former Edmonton City Councillor Allan Bolstad recently completed a report for the Sierra Club, in which he examines the issue of urban sprawl in Alberta.

And the bad news is . . . sprawl is alive and thriving in Alberta and in Edmonton. As Bolstad pointed out in an *Edmonton Journal* article, there is something wrong if we get into a car 95% of the time when we leave our homes. This, of course, is not news to *Taking Steps* readers.

You can find a copy of the report by clicking on Ed: 

Highlands neighbourhood design charrette

Dan Burden was back in town April 7-10, to lead a neighbourhood design charrette in the Highlands/Bellevue communities. Walkable Edmonton sponsored the event, with major funding from [Go for Green](#) and additional funding and tremendous staff support from Councillor Janice Melnychuk's Community Revitalization Project and the Edmonton Planning & Development, Transportation & Streets and Community Services Departments.

As many as 200 persons participated over the course of the four-day event. Activities included:

- A training session for neighbourhood volunteers and


city staff;

- Group walks around the neighbourhood to identify issues and opportunities;
- A presentation by Dan on some of the key concepts of community walkability and what has been accomplished in other communities;
- A neighbourhood "design table session", where community residents had the chance to sketch out solutions to some of the problems identified earlier in the charrette; and
- A wind-up presentation, where residents were able to prioritize the various initiatives that had been designed and talked about how to make them a reality.

Some of the key changes the neighbourhood wanted to see were:

- A road diet for 112th Avenue (a background information sheet on road diets will be posted on the Walkable Edmonton website soon, watch for it);
- Development of a "village centre" on 118th Avenue, centred on the old Safeway store;
- A road diet for 118th Avenue;
- Another village centre development on 112th Avenue and 65th Street; and
- Various other initiatives to slow traffic, increase neighbourhood diversity and make the neighbourhood more attractive.

The Transportation & Streets Department is presently looking at ways to pilot test some of the suggestions brought forward during the charrette.

Click on Ed, he'll take you to the complete report on the Highlands/Bellevue Neighbourhood Design Charrette. 

Peak oil

Something to think about while motoring along on holidays, skimming across the lake in your boat, or as you reach for the air conditioner switch . . .



There have been several articles recently, in a wide diversity of publications and on the Internet, discussing a possible significant 'adjustment' in the world oil supply. The higher gas prices we are seeing right now may represent the tip of a very large iceberg.


In a book, and an [article](#) published in Rolling Stone magazine earlier this year, James Howard Kunstler discusses an impending and fundamental change in the world economy brought on by what he refers to as "peak oil".

Simply put, the world will very soon pass the point of maximum global oil production, and annual production will start decreasing year after year. Kunstler says that while half the oil will be left, he goes on to make it quite clear that the first half was very much the easy half. The remaining oil reserves are going to be much more difficult and costly to extract, will be of relatively poorer quality, and are located mostly in politically and geographically inhospitable places. Kunstler thinks we may hit this oil extraction peak as soon as this year, or as late as 2010.

Making things worse, the demand for oil from China and India have risen dramatically, putting that much more pressure on the remaining oil reserves.

In Kunstler's analysis we face the end of the cheap-fossil-fuel era. A huge proportion of our economic engine runs on oil and everything depending on oil is going to increase sharply in cost. The current spike in oil prices is just a beginning, he says. A recent business article in the *Edmonton Journal* (June 23, 2005) cited multi-millionaire oil tycoon Boone Pickens' belief that oil supplies are going to be very tight in coming years. Pickens said he made more money on oil in the last five years due to rising prices than he did in the preceding fifty years, and obviously thinks prices are going to rise further as a result of increasing demand and decreasing production.

This news is a mixed blessing for us here in Alberta. Our province will undoubtedly see even stronger economic conditions over the short term if Kunstler and others are right. We may find, however, that over the slightly longer term walking becomes much less of a choice than it is now.

Here are a few other articles and websites dealing with the issue. 

If you would like to have your name added to our electronic mailing list, please click on the following icon:



If you do not have an email connection we can send you copies by mail. Please drop us a line at:

Walkable Edmonton, c/o Kate Gunn
Edmonton Community Services
P.O. Box 2359
Edmonton, AB
T5J 2R7

Vehicular traffic is slowed by the 'street friction' created by street trees, light posts, on-street parking and crosswalks well defined by material and color. Safety and comfort are achieved by having a road network that has many intersections, and that doesn't give drivers a free and clear sightline for miles."

—Jeff Raser



[Return to Contents](#)