

















Taking Steps . . .

towards a more



Number 10 December 2005

Take a hike, hoser! 
[One] Edmonton Walking 
Group 
Keeping the walkways 
clear 
Higher gas prices 
And, in the same vein 
And if that isn't enough 
So, to repeat a theme 
Alberta Centre 
for Active Living 
Noteworthy resources 
Downtown planning 
charrette 
Paying employees 
to walk to work 


Our **New Year's Resolution** Issue

Take a hike, hoser!

While the images projected by those Canadian icons the McKenzie brothers might not usually convey the best of healthy, active living messages, one of their slogans does contain a gem of wisdom for the holidays . . . get out and enjoy some brisk Alberta sunshine.

It is all too easy and tempting to park yourself in an easy chair close to the TV and the candy dish at this time of year. Why else is there such a huge rush at all the fitness centres in early January? Give your family — and yourself — the gift of fresh air and exercise this holiday season!


Some suggestions:


 Many families sit around all of Christmas Day, playing with their new gadgets and waiting for the opportunity to eat too much festive food. Why not make an outside activity part of your family Christmas Day tradition? You could get together with neighbours for a hike around the neighbourhood or a walking Christmas lights tour, go tobogganing, or go for a cross-country ski.

 If you like having a real tree for




Christmas, why not take your toboggan and walk down to the tree lot, or if you are more adventurous you can go out and cut your own. Contact Alberta Sustainable Resource Development Information Centre at 780-422-2079 or toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-

0000. Their website also has useful information, have Ed whisk you there .

 Explore the trails in our wonderful river valley and ravine system on foot or on skis. Our natural areas are never better than after a nice fresh fall of snow. Everything is so quiet and clean.

Get away from the hustle-bustle of the season by going for a walk outside for a while.

One important note: dressing for the weather can make a huge difference. Leaping Lizards Adventures has some great tips on dressing for outdoor exercise on their website . They also offer a range of hiking and snowshoeing activities you might find interesting.



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](#)

[One] Edmonton Walking Group

Sheila Parr of the Alberta St. George of England Society would like to invite any interested readers to participate in their walking group.

Sheila leads a walking group on Wednesday mornings. They walk for an hour and a half and then have coffee. You do not necessarily have to be members of the Society and there is no fee to walk.

You can call Sheila at 780-454-7581.

Keeping the walkways clear

It is that time of year again when we have to make a little extra effort to ensure our neighbourhoods stay walkable and safe for ourselves and our neighbours. Please remember that many Edmontonians, particularly seniors and those with disabilities, have greater difficulty getting around during the winter. By keeping your walks ice-free and clear of snow, you make it much easier for them to walk to neighbourhood stores or get out for fresh air and exercise on the warmer days.



Something to think about

Many municipalities and agencies are coming to realize the value in making it possible for older people to remain in their own homes as long as they can comfortably do so. The term applied is *aging in place*.

Aside from the obvious savings to the health care system from having healthy and independent seniors, there are also savings in terms of the need for fewer elder care institutions, etc. One can also make the argument that it benefits a residential community to have their seniors stay in the neighbourhood as long as possible. A diverse social structure is more interesting and stimulating, it provides the opportunity for residents of all ages to mingle and share ideas. Seniors are often a wealth of knowledge about the area and its history. Because seniors are generally home during the day -- a rarity in many suburban neighbourhoods -- they also help make the community safe by keeping an eye on the comings and goings on the street while the rest of us are at work.

So, as you are out shovelling, perhaps keep going and do the walks of the older couple next door. You may be serving your community in many ways by doing so.




Will higher gas prices help encourage smarter development?

A study done across the United States this October revealed that higher gasoline prices are encouraging Americans to alter their driving habits and to consider using public transit. Respondents cited high fuel prices as one of the three top issues that concerned them, behind education and crime. Interestingly, traffic congestion ranked lowest among the concerns; about two-thirds of respondents said that the amount of time they spent commuting had stayed the same over the past two years.

The primary objective of the survey was to measure consumer attitudes toward transportation issues, including:

- 🚗 the modes people use for both commuting and non-commuting trips;
- 🚗 why consumers choose or reject alternatives to driving;
- 🚗 the extent to which people would use or consider using an alternate mode of transportation; and
- 🚗 the likelihood of using commuter rail transit or bus service.

According to the Urban Land Institute, sponsors of the survey, the results reinforce the need to build and rebuild urban regions in ways that offer alternatives to car-dependent development. 


And, in the same vein . . .

On December 10, 2005 the *Edmonton Journal* printed a piece by Bob Ransford of Vancouver, a former real estate developer and current director of the Pacific Region of the Urban Development Institute (the association of developers who create our neighbourhoods). In his article he paints a picture of what more walkable communities would be like -- wider sidewalks, pedestrian-level lighting, single car garages, fewer driveways but more pathways, higher housing density and perhaps even corner stores. He also has the temerity to suggest that the automobile be demoted to a "second-place position on our list of the most important things in life".

Mr Ransford does not object to urban development. He comes from, and is still part of the urban development industry. However, he is pragmatist enough to realize that these changes won't come all at once. All of us -- consumers, developers, and municipal authorities -- will have to "take small steps and build better places to live".

[Return to Contents](#)

And if that isn't enough . . .

A recent study  which examined long-term health records of more than 5,000 Americans found that people over the age of 50 years who took part in moderate to high levels of physical activity lived from 1.3 to 3.7 years longer, largely because they had a reduced risk of heart disease. The results clearly show “that physical activity really does make a difference -- not only for how long you live but for how long you live a healthy life”. Additionally, the study also demonstrated that it is never too late to start exercising.

The average lifespan of Canadians *has* been on the increase in recent years, but we now have the situation where many of our seniors, particularly women, are living longer but are experiencing chronic and debilitating health problems in their later years. This study shows us that by avoiding a sedentary lifestyle we can improve our quality of life as we get older.

In the study, moderate activity was defined as the equivalent of walking for 30 minutes a day five days a week; intense activity was the equivalent of running for half an hour a day five days a week. Those who engaged in more intense activity showed slightly more than twice the improvement in lifespan than those who exercised moderately.

So, to repeat a theme from an earlier issue . . .

Many of you who read this newsletter already know all this stuff. You're the converted. What we all need to do is pass the messages on -- to our elderly parents, our sedentary friends and neighbours, and to our co-workers. We need to encourage change through our work and through our relationships.


We each need to help encourage our society to start taking those “small steps” to help build a better life for Canadians.


Hey! Another great idea for a New Year's resolution!



Alberta Centre for Active Living

December 2005 research update


Highlights of the 2005 Physical Activity Survey: Understanding the Role of Determinants in Physical Activity Behaviour by Tanya R. Berry, PhD, Alberta Centre for Active Living. 

Communicating Health Messages by the ALPINE project authorship team. (Results of an evaluation of health-promotion information sent out through all Alberta newspapers.) 


Noteworthy resources on walking, walkability and related topics

We have recently received information about a number of useful resources:


Community Cycling Manual: Planning and Design Guide

Developed in partnership with the Canadian Institute of Planners, this is a comprehensive planning guide for community bicycling facilities, emphasizing the integration of planning, engineering, education and enforcement. 


Community Fitness Toolkit: Stick to It

This tool lets you create custom self-stick activity reminders to post on calendars or in agendas. Hand them out to your members, clients and participants and tell them to make a date -- with themselves -- for better health. 

Community Fitness Toolkit: Making Your Community More Walkable

This tool and checklist lets you assess how walkable your community is. It will help you identify barriers that keep people from walking. 

Walk This Way: At the Intersection of Information and Promotion

WellSpring June 2005 


Stepping Out: Tips for Walkers

WellSpring Spring 2003 

Stepping Up Your Physical Activity: Walking to Improve your Health

Canadian Health Network 

The Art and Science of Pedometer Programming

WellSpring Spring 2003 

I've been inactive. Why should I start now that I'm older?

Canadian Health Network



Why am I inactive and why would I want to be more active?

Canadian Health Network



Downtown planning charrette

As part of a review of the Edmonton Downtown Plan, the Planning and Development Department recently partnered with a group called MADE to hold a series of charrette workshops focused on the future of the Downtown core.

MADE in Edmonton is a volunteer, not-for-profit organization whose members come from the fields of architecture, graphic design, industrial design, landscape architecture, interior design art, film and others interested in the design environment.

Forty people from a broad range of backgrounds and interests took part in the event on two Saturdays in October and November. These workshops produced a more detailed development of ideas generated through public consultation on the vision for Downtown that occurred this past summer. The key concepts explored were sense of place, pedestrian friendly environment, connectivity and movement, and mixed use and activity. This input will be considered as the Planning and Development Department begins drafting the policies and action plan as part of the

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

Downtown Plan Update. Once the policies and action plan are developed, there will be further opportunities for public input, tentatively scheduled for March, 2006.

For further information on the Downtown Plan Update . . .

Paying employees to walk to work

Auto manufacturer Mazda has announced a plan to pay up to \$14.50 per month to employees at their Japanese plants who walk to work. The objective is to improve employee health and improve the environment. To be eligible, an employee must live more than two kilometres from the workplace, and must walk four or more kilometres round-trip on fifteen or more workdays per month.



Wishing you a safe and happy holiday season, and continued success with those New Year's resolutions.

[Return to Contents](#)