



important to be able to reach by foot.

The City Council has also adopted the Walkability Plan's recommendation that pedestrian impacts be considered during project review whenever a traffic study is required. The walkability study is to focus on basic pedestrian "level-of-service" measurements (for example, can the pedestrian safely cross streets). Staff can waive the walkability study requirement for specific projects if it is deemed unnecessary.

As Williams explains, doing a walkability (or "pedestrian impact") study has led to some modest adjustments to site plans. For example, some building footprints have been shifted slightly to provide better pedestrian/sidewalk connections. Williams adds that city planners are cognizant of the City Council's concern that walkability studies not slow down the review process or be burdensome. As he notes, "you shouldn't need an engineer to complete it." ♦

For more information, contact Gerald Williams at: Gerald_Williams@kcmo.org. The Kansas City Walkability Plan, along with the Neighborhood Walking Survey, is available online at: www.kcmo.org/planning.nsf/plnpres/walkability.

7 Walkable Neighborhoods

How do you get from one part of your neighborhood to another? Can you do it on foot, or are there too many barriers in your way? Which route is most direct? Which is safest? Which most attractive?

These are basic questions facing planners as they try to make cities and neighborhoods more "walkable."

Why the interest in making our cities easier on pedestrians? As Kansas City, Missouri's planners report: "The number one method of human transport is walking. This may seem obvious, but this fact has often been overlooked in the planning and development of our communities. ... One major reason why individuals choose to walk is for psychological and physical health. Individuals and families can also save financial resources through reduction in motor vehicle use. ... [Another] reason to plan for better pedestrian mobility is by reducing the number of traffic accidents involving pedestrians, people will feel safer walking about their communities."¹

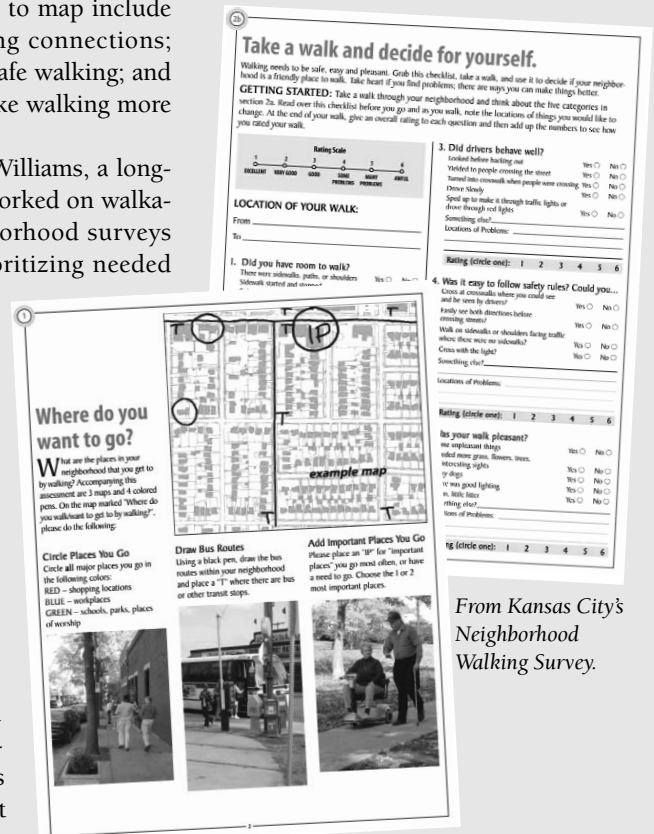
Kansas City's Walkability Plan, adopted by the City Council in 2003, reflects a thoughtful – and comprehensive – approach to improving the environment for walkers throughout the city. It also starts with an acknowledgement that Kansas City ranks third from the bottom of major metropolitan areas in terms of number of commuters who walk to work.

1 From "Kansas City Walkability Plan," pp. 2-5.

Two key components of the walkability plan are its neighborhood focus and its incorporation into the development review process of walking needs.

The City Planning and Development Department has prepared a survey form that allows residents to evaluate the walkability of their own neighborhood. It includes mapping instructions for identifying the neighborhood's strengths and weaknesses for walking. For example, residents are asked to evaluate sidewalks in terms of their completeness and condition, while street crossings are to be considered in terms of ease to cross. Other items residents are asked to map include barriers to direct walking connections; areas where they feel unsafe walking; and physical features that make walking more (or less) pleasant.

According to Gerald Williams, a long-range planner who has worked on walkability issues, the neighborhood surveys have been useful in prioritizing needed sidewalk and other pedestrian-related improvements. Neighborhoods which have completed the survey are also at an advantage in competing for public improvement funds (generated in Kansas City by a 1/4 percent sales tax). The neighborhood surveys, in conjunction with a citywide analysis, have also helped city planners in identifying which destinations people feel are most



From Kansas City's Neighborhood Walking Survey.