

Walk21 IV: Health, Equity & Environment

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Walking in the 21st Century
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Conference Conclusions

Rodney Tolley, Director, Walk21
Jim Walker, Chair, Walk21
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Health

H1. People who live in walkable neighbourhoods walk one hour per week more than those who live in less walkable neighbourhoods. By doing so they meet forty per cent of their physical activity target and halve their risk of being overweight. Developing neighbourhoods where people can walk must be a key component of public policy.

H2. Inactivity is the biggest killer in western societies. Everyone who promotes walking is thus a health professional with a vital message.

Equity

E1. Walkable communities are designed inclusively for the needs of all levels of mobility and ability and at an appropriate scale for the speed at which the environment is used and enjoyed.

E2. People who use the city are almost invisible in the planning process. We need to acknowledge walking as a human right, as an activity which has dignity and respect.

Environment

ENV1. Walkers are the indicator species of healthy, equitable and quality environments.

ENV2. The Segway is the latest “cuckoo’s egg” that is threatening to hatch in the space allocated for pedestrians. Pedestrians frequently have insufficient space as it is and should not be expected to share it with powered vehicles, unless these have a clear benefit for the mobility-impaired and are not intimidating to those on foot.

Refining the tools

R1. It is time for an International Accessibility Manifesto to codify good practice for walkable communities.

R2. There is an urgent need for an international online platform to enable professionals to share research and best practice. Country-specific issues should form identifiable and focused sub-sets.

Achieving the vision

A1. Experience suggests that by far the majority of communities have a longing for more walkable and liveable neighbourhoods. Advocates need to awaken and respond to that longing, by engaging, motivating, inspiring and supporting the community.

A2. Each profession has become its own audience. Working together, across traditional disciplines and boundaries, will improve the speed and effectiveness of achieving a joint vision.

A3. Creative ideas about walking, good practice and talented practitioners should be praised and rewarded.

A4. We spend three weeks of our lives waiting as pedestrians at traffic lights. Engineering environments that allow some travellers to save time, force others, especially pedestrians, to lose it. Educating and training engineers and planners to place walkers at the pinnacle of the transport hierarchy is a key goal.

A5. It is hard to imagine an agenda that would be easier to implement than the walking one, or one that would have more cost-effectiveness. We have to show our politicians that this is a great and realistically attainable prize.