



# Avenue Communities Walking Map Evaluation: Summary Report



COMMUNITY HEALTH &  
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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## Introduction

The current evaluation project is part of a larger project based out of the University of Alberta: Community Health and the Built Environment (CHBE). CHBE is a community-based participatory research project. The goal of this project is to understand how community environments influence individuals' levels of physical activity and healthy eating in four communities in Alberta, Canada:

- Eleven neighbourhoods comprising North Central Edmonton (Alberta Avenue, Boyle Street, Central McDougall, Cromdale, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, McCauley, Parkdale, Spruce Avenue, and Westwood),
- The Town of Bonnyville,
- The City of Medicine Hat and the Town of Redcliff, and
- The Town of St. Paul.

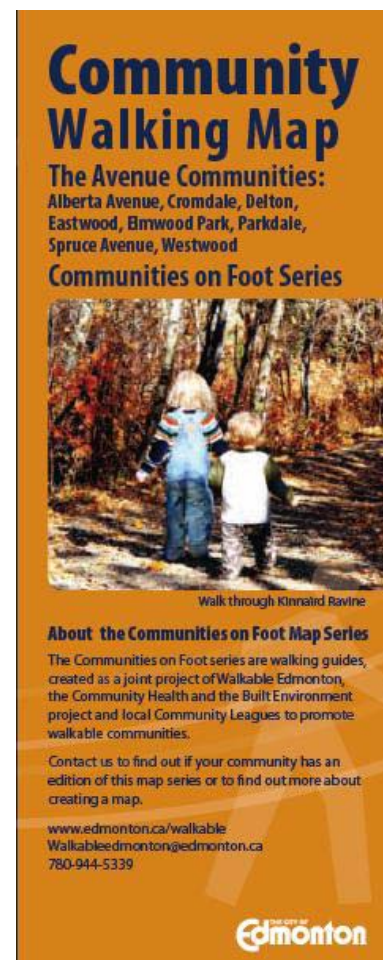
As part of this project, researchers have been working with a group of representatives from each of these communities to develop community-level projects. The goal of these projects is to help residents be more physically active and eat healthy. The representatives from North Central Edmonton identified a need to encourage physical activity and exploration of neighbourhood attractions among residents in the community. To do this, researchers partnered with Walkable Edmonton, an initiative administered by the City of Edmonton, to assist in the development of the Avenue Communities Walking Map.

## Background

The Avenue Communities Walking Map (pictured on the right) was created by local community members to be used by other residents. The map included the following local neighbourhoods: Alberta Avenue, Cromdale, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Parkdale, Spruce Avenue and Westwood.

The purpose of the map was to:

- provide walking routes to allow residents to explore their community,
- promote physical activity and active transportation, and
- to guide residents to specific destinations or points of interest within the community.



The Avenue Communities Walking Map included ten walking routes that range in length from 1.4 kilometers to 5.0 kilometers. Historical information is also provided on the map to inform residents about the development of the different neighbourhoods. Additional information illustrates the locations of key community amenities such as:

- community centres,
- schools,
- emergency services,
- health centres,
- libraries,
- bus and transit stations and stops,
- grocery stores,
- bakeries,
- hotels, and
- recreation facilities.

The Avenue Communities Walking Map was distributed in July of 2010 to all households (including both houses and apartments) in the catchment neighbourhoods for the walking map (i.e., eight neighbourhoods). In total, 11,994 maps were distributed to households in North Central Edmonton.

## What We Did

A survey was conducted with residents to understand the impact that the Avenue Communities Walking Map had on encouraging people to walk in the community and visit local community destinations. The survey was available online and took respondents approximately ten minutes to complete. Two sets of questions were developed: one for respondents who had a copy of the map and another for respondents who did not have copy of the map. The results are subdivided based on these two categories.

The survey was comprised of open-ended and multiple choice questions that were designed to collect the following information:

- awareness of the map,
- participation in the development of the map,
- method of receiving a copy of the map,
- whether any of the walking routes were attempted by the respondent,
- if any community destinations were visited by the respondent,
- suggestions for map improvements,
- if the map was considered a useful resource, and
- demographic information.

Information about the survey was put on the walking map. In addition, two postcards were mailed to all households in the catchment area for the walking maps in late August and late September, 2010. The postcards included information about the maps and the survey, and locations where free internet could be accessed to complete the survey. The postcards were mailed to 10,408 and 10,342 households in the area for the first and second rounds of distribution, respectively.

In October of 2010, representatives from the project visited key locations in the community (e.g., Sprucewood Library, Safeway, Italian Centre) to inform residents who had not received the map or postcards about the project. The representatives handed



out copies of the map and postcards to provide information to residents about the map and the survey.

In addition, a toll-free number was provided to residents who did not have access to the internet. Residents could call this toll-free number to complete the survey over the phone with a member of the research team.

As an incentive for residents to complete the survey, an early bird prize (a \$100 gift certificate to a local grocery store) and a grand prize (a mountain bike and helmet) were offered to survey participants.

### What We Found

The following section provides an overview of some of the key findings from the survey. In total, 155 people completed the survey. Of those respondents, 57.4% (n=89) had a copy of the map, while 38.7% (n=60) did not have a map. It should be noted that 3.9% (n=6) of respondents opted not to complete the survey past this point and were excluded from further analysis. To illustrate the differences in responses between those that did and did not have a map, the following section is divided into a number of subsections:

- (1) respondents who had a map,
- (2) respondents who did not have a map, and,
- (3) respondent demographics.

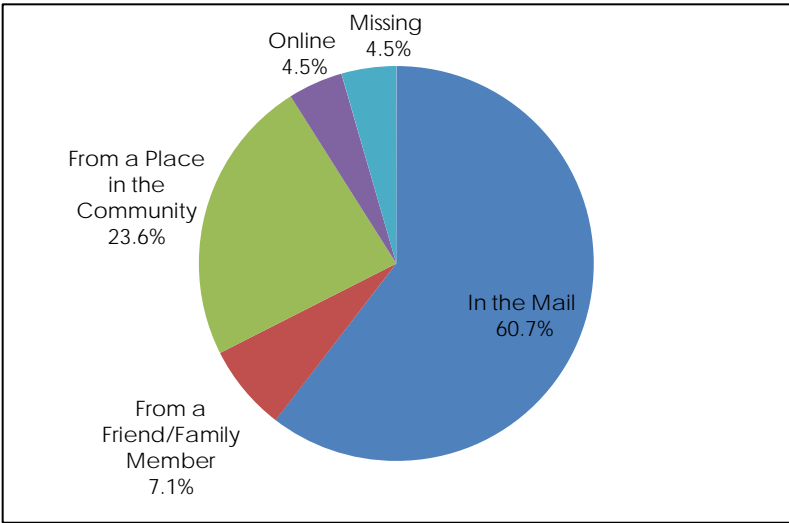
### Respondents Who Had a Map

The following section summarizes the results for those respondents who indicated that they did have the Avenue Communities Walking Map (57.4% of survey respondents).

#### Receiving the Map

Of the 89 (57.4%) of respondents who had a map, 60.7% indicated that they received the Avenue Communities Walking map through the mail. Another 23.6% received the map from a place in the community (e.g., Sprucewood Library, coffee shop, grocery store, etc.). *Figure 1* provides an overview of where in the community participants received the walking map.

Figure 1: How Respondents Received the Avenue Communities Walking Map



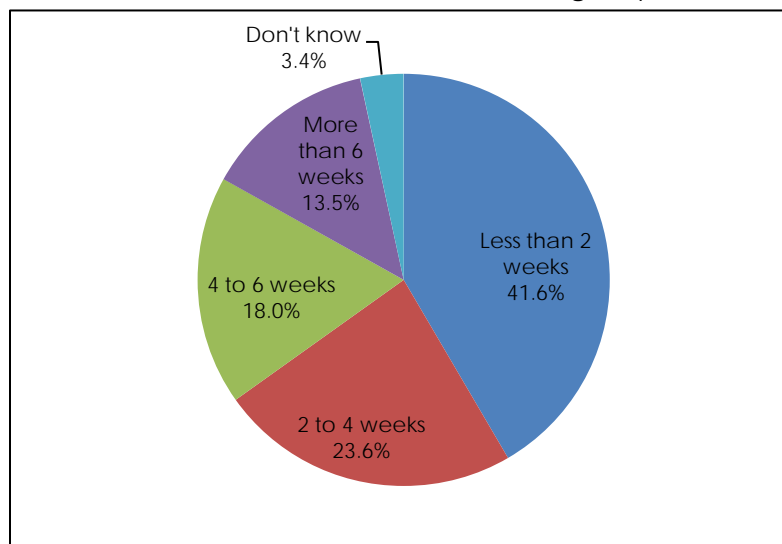
Respondents indicated that if the walking maps were to be distributed again, they would prefer to receive them:

- through the mail (77.5%),
- at a community location (i.e., the local library) (65.2%),
- online (36.0%), or
- through e-mail (20.2%).

It is important to note that for this question respondents were asked to check all appropriate responses.

The majority of respondents had a copy of the map for less than two weeks (41.6), with only 13.5% of respondents indicating that they had a copy of the map for more than 6 weeks. *Figure 2* provides a summary of the length of time that respondents indicated they had a copy of the Avenue Communities Walking Map.

*Figure 2: Length of Time Respondents had a copy of the Avenue Communities Walking Map*



#### *Short Term Changes in Walking Behaviour*

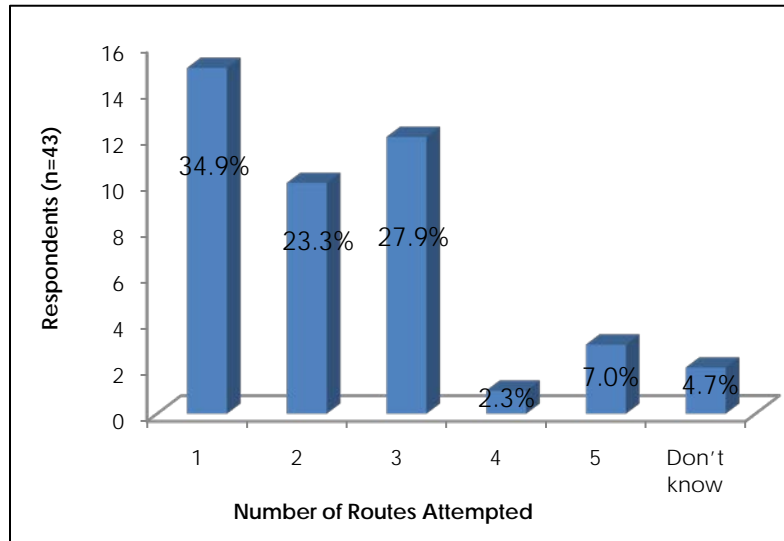
To understand changes in their short term walking behaviour as a result of having the map, respondents were asked a series of questions:

- Have you tried any of the walking routes identified?
- How many times have you used the walking routes identified?
- How many of the routes have you used in the maps?
- Have the routes and destinations on the map encouraged you to walk more in your community?
- How have the walking maps encouraged you to walk more?
- Do you think that you will walk more often to get to destinations because of the map?
- Do you think you will walk more often for physical activity or exercise because you have the map?



Almost half of the respondents had tried at least one of the walking routes (48.3%). If respondents had tried one or more of the walking routes they were asked to indicate how many of the routes they had used. Overall, 34.9% had tried one of the routes, 23.3% had tried two of the routes and 27.9% of respondents had tried three or more of the routes. *Figure 3* provides an overview of the number of routes attempted by respondents.

*Figure 3: Number of Routes Attempted by Respondents*



Of the respondents who had tried at least one of the walking routes, 44.2% of respondents indicated that they had used the routes 1 to 2 times, while 39.5% of respondents had used the routes 3 to 4 times.

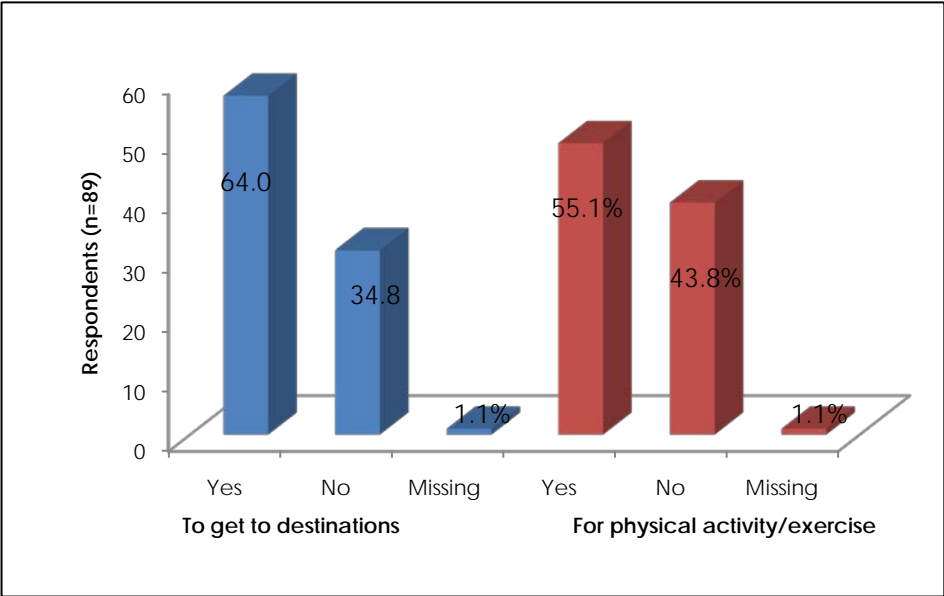
Overall, 76.4% of respondents indicated that the routes and destinations on the map encouraged them to walk more in their community. The respondents that walked more because of the map were then asked to indicate the reasons why the maps encouraged them to walk. A list of potential responses was supplied to the respondents and they were encouraged to select all responses that applied to them. Respondents indicated that the maps encouraged them to walk more by encouraging them to:

- become familiarized with their community (66.2%),
- get more exercise (66.2%),
- get out and enjoy their community (58.8%),
- visit places in their community (50.0%),
- learn about the history of their community (32.4%), and
- get to know other members in their community (13.2%).

When respondents were asked specifically about whether they would walk more often to get to local community destinations because of the map, 64.0% indicated that they would. Similarly, 55.1% of respondents indicated that they would walk more for physical activity or exercise because of having the map. These results are summarized in *Figure 5*.



Figure 5: Percentage of Respondents who Walk More to Get to Destination and for Physical Activity/Exercise



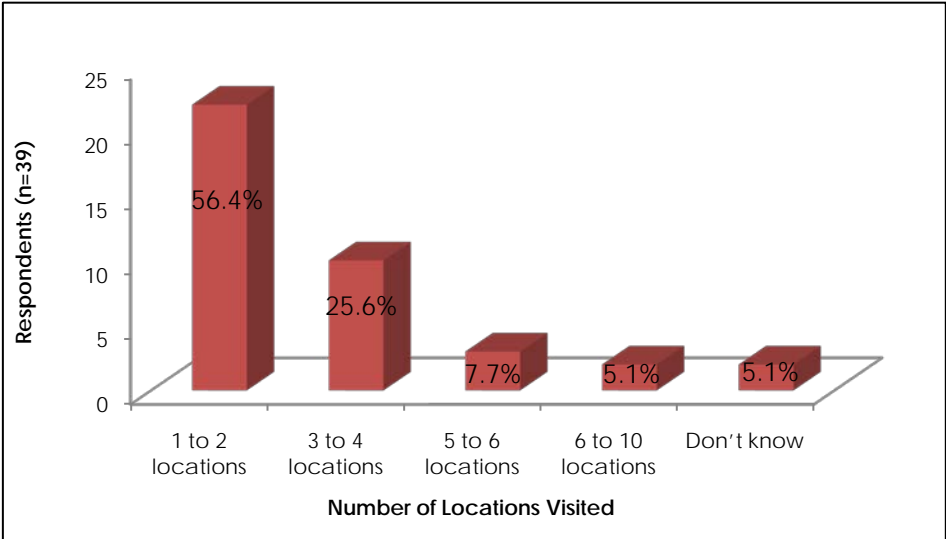
Short Term Changes in Visiting Community Destinations

To understand whether respondents visited local community destinations more often as a result of having a copy of the walking map they were asked a series of questions:

- Have you used the map to discover new places to visit in the community (e.g., local library, coffee shop, or parks)?
- How many of the community destinations have you visited since having the map?
- Do you visit local destinations in your community more now because of the map?

Overall, 43.8% of respondents had indicated that the map helped them discover new places in their community. Of these respondents, 56.4% had visited one or two community locations since having the map. Figure 6 provides an overview of the number of community locations respondents had visited since having the map.

Figure 6: Number of Community Locations Visited by Respondent





When respondents were asked to indicate if they visited local destinations in their community more as a result of having the map, 44.9% indicated that they did.

#### *Usefulness of Maps*

When respondents were asked whether they found the map useful, 91.0% indicated that they did. The respondents provided a number of reasons why the map was considered a useful resource:

- it provided places to go in the community (64%; note: selection provided),
- it provided walking routes (67%; note: selection provided),
- it provided the length of the routes (5%),
- it was good for visitors/new community members (3%), and
- it was good for exploring the community (3%).

It is important to note that respondents were encouraged to select all appropriate answers.

As follow-up to this question, respondents were asked to indicate whether they found the information written on the map to be useful; 86.5% of respondents who had a map indicated that they did. The respondents provided a number of reasons why the written information in the map was useful, including that it:

- provided historical information (49.4%),
- provided interesting information about different places to visit in my community (48.3%),
- provided good walking resources (44.9%),
- the information was easy to read (44.9%),
- provided contact information for places in my community (42.7%), and
- provided important information about the benefits of walking (15.7%).

It is important to note that respondents were encouraged to select all appropriate answers.

Overall, respondents had very few comments on why the map itself and the written information in the map were not useful. The most prevalent response for this question was that respondents were already aware of the benefits of walking (7.9%).

#### *Suggestions for Map Improvement*

When respondents were asked to indicate what type of other information they would like to see on the map, they indicated that the maps could have provided:

- information about how to stay safe while walking in the community (46.1%),
- information about local community events (44.9%),
- information about the community destinations (38.2%),
- descriptions of the walking routes (33.7%),
- more information about the community (31.5%)
- information specific to their needs (e.g., as a senior citizen or a parent with young children) (19.1%) ,
- information about how to deal with the outdoor elements (e.g., sun protection, or winter weather) (7.9%), and
- information about how the map was created (5.6%).

It is important to note that respondents were encouraged to select all appropriate answers.



### *Community Impact*

An overwhelming number of respondents (93.3%) who had a map indicated that the map was beneficial for the community. When asked to select why it was beneficial, respondents indicated that the maps:

- may have helped to get people more active (74.2%),
- provided local routes for people to walk (66.3%),
- got people out into the community (66.3%),
- provided locations for people to visit in the community (65.2%),
- supported local business (60.7%),
- got people out onto the street in the community (56.2%), and
- provided opportunities for people to interact in the community (43.8%).

### **Respondents Who Did Not Have a Map**

The following section summarizes the results for those respondents who indicated that they did not have a copy of the Avenue Communities Walking Map; i.e., (38.7%) of survey respondents.

#### *Awareness of the Walking Map*

For those respondents who did not have a map (38.7%), 56.7% were not aware that a walking map was created for their community, but they all (100%) indicated that they would like to have a walking map for their community. In addition, 95% of these respondents indicated that they would use a walking map if they had one.

#### *Receiving the Map*

The survey respondents who did not have a map were asked to indicate the best way to distribute the walking maps in the future. Respondents indicated that they would prefer to receive the maps:

- at community locations (73.5%; e.g., library or coffee shop),
- through the mail (70.6%),
- online (52.9%),
- through e-mail (32.4%), or
- other (20.6%).

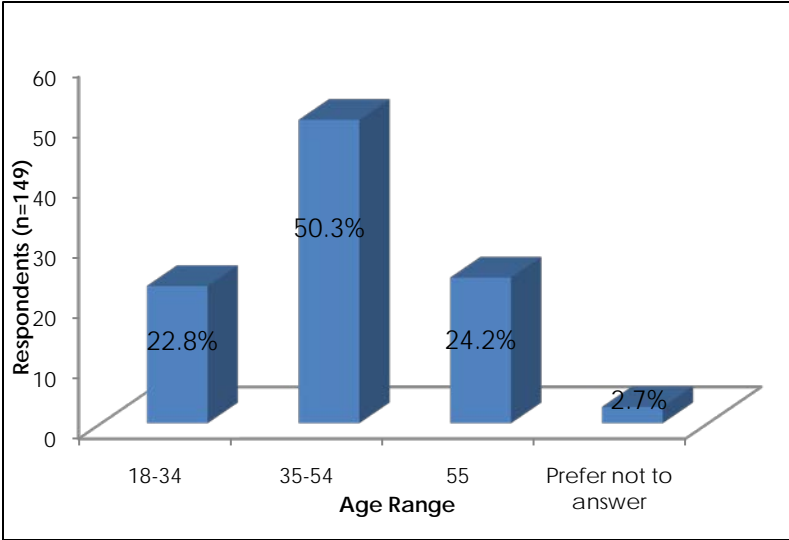
It is important to note that respondents were to select all appropriate answers for this question. Other responses included: delivery by community members, billboard advertising, having the maps available at workplaces or daycares, and advertisements in the local newspaper.



### Respondent Demographics

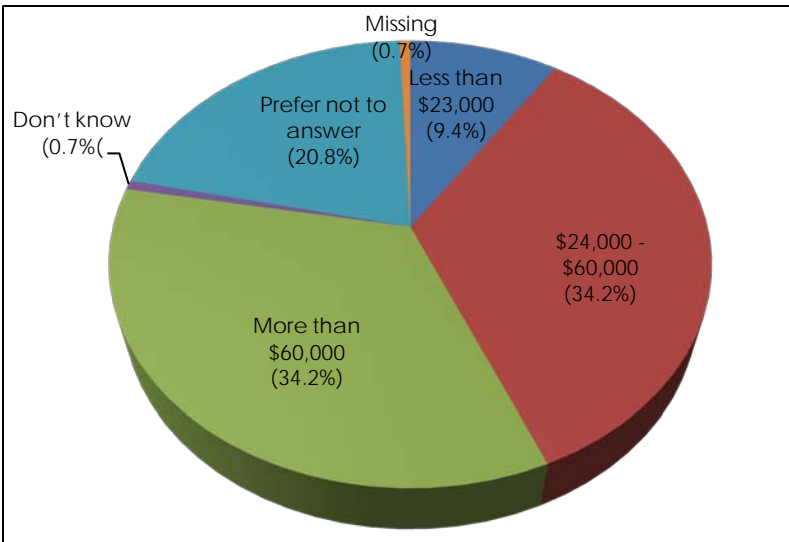
This section summarizes respondent demographics for the respondents that did and did not have a map. The majority of survey respondents were female (69.1%) and were between the ages of 35 and 54 (50.3%). *Figure 7* provides an overview of the age groups represented by the survey respondents. It is important to note that the survey was only open to individuals over the age of 18.

Figure 7: Overview of Respondent Age Groups



The household income level of respondents was collected to understand the general socio-economic status of the individuals that completed the survey. Most respondents indicated that their household income was either between '\$24,000-\$60,000' or 'more than \$60,000'. *Figure 8* provides a summary of respondent income levels.

Figure 8: Household Income Level of Respondents



Respondents were also asked to indicate the neighbourhood they lived in. A large portion of the respondents were from Alberta Avenue (22.1%) neighbourhood. In addition, it is interesting to note that 15.4% of survey respondents lived outside of the map target area. *Table 1* provides a summary of which neighbourhoods survey respondents represented.

*Table 1: Survey Respondents' Home Neighbourhood*

Neighbourhood	n (%)
Alberta Avenue	33 (22.1%)
Boyle Street	1 (0.7%)
Central McDougall	2 (1.3%)
Cromdale	4 (2.7%)
Delton	13 (8.7%)
Eastwood	12 (8.1%)
Elmwood Park	5 (3.4%)
McCauley	13 (8.7%)
Parkdale	18 (12.1%)
Spruce Avenue	6 (4.0%)
Westwood	6 (4.0%)
Other	23 (15.4%)
Don't know	4 (2.7%)
Missing	9 (6.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>149 (100.0%)</b>

## Evaluation Strengths and Limitations

It is important to note that there are a number of strengths and limitations of this evaluation project that should be considered while interpreting the results.

### Strengths

- Community stakeholders (e.g., residents and City of Edmonton partners) provided input into the development of the survey questions and the evaluation design (e.g., incentives that should accompany the survey).
- This study gathered information from respondents that had a copy of the map as well as those who did not. This was advantageous as it enabled us to understand the value placed on the maps.

### Limitations

- A community survey was used to collect data which only provided a snapshot of information at a particular time.
- The survey was only available online for a limited time (4 months) immediately after the map was distributed and relied on self-reported data. Thus, residents may not have had enough time to review the map or try the routes identified prior to completing the survey.



- Although the community walking map was available to residents of all ages, only those residents over the age of 18 could participate in completing the survey.
- Despite the fact that the map and postcard reminding people to complete the survey were mailed to nearly 12,000 households in the map area, only a small number of residents completed the survey. Therefore, the sample may not be an accurate representation of the community.

## Conclusions

The current evaluation was only conducted on the Avenue Communities Walking Map project. In the future it would be valuable to conduct a larger scale evaluation with the series of walking maps created through Walkable Edmonton. In addition, a longer evaluation project would be valuable in order to understand long-term behaviour change as a result of using the map.

