

EXERCISE BOOK

Each of the primers of this series contain a series of exercises designed to help you think more carefully about the concepts and examples that we have discussed – and to integrate these ideas into your walk. We've compiled all of the exercises here in one place so you can more easily choose which of them might be best suited to your walk.

EXERCISES FOR THINGS TO DO IN PUBLIC SPACES

Public spaces including sidewalks, parks and other open spaces continue to be crucial to our daily lives. Public spaces are places where a sense of trust, safety and mutual support must be felt among strangers if we are to go about our lives together. This brings us to the question: *how do public spaces work today?*

As a walk leader, it will be your challenge to bring different aspects of public spaces to the attention of your walkers. What's exciting is that in many cases sidewalks will be right under your feet or at your fingertips at least part of the time so you have a great opportunity to weave the ideas we've outlined into the theme of your own walk.

For these exercises we will focus on sidewalks but keep in mind that you can easily substitute parks, plazas or other open spaces for any of the exercises.

Here are three exercises that you can consider:

- **EXERCISE 1: WHAT'S ON YOUR SIDEWALK?**
- **EXERCISE 2: WHO'S ON YOUR SIDEWALK AND HOW ARE THEY USING IT?**
- **EXERCISE 3: HOW DOES YOUR SIDEWALK FEEL?**

Keep in mind that a great way to get people thinking is to ask good questions without necessarily providing the answers! Your job is to help people "see" and experience their city differently. A good way to do this is to engage your walkers directly in the exercises by asking them to share their own perspectives on public spaces, healthy sidewalks and walkable neighbourhoods.

EXERCISE 1: WHAT'S ON YOUR SIDEWALK?

For this exercise you can pause on a particular part of a city block, laneway or busy thoroughfare. Ask your walkers what they observe. What is present on the sidewalks (if there are any)? What is missing? In some cases this might be the sidewalks themselves! Some of the things you might find on a sidewalk include:

- Bus stops
- Signs
- Benches, shelters
- Newspaper boxes, mail boxes
- Garbage bins
- Trees and other greenery
- Public art
- Food carts
- Animals
- Pedestrian crossings (marked or unmarked)

- Curb ramps, stairs, overpasses or underpasses
- Places to stop and rest
- Places to get out of the rain
- Construction barriers and broken sidewalks

Attached to sidewalks can be:

- Shops and other local businesses
- Schools
- Food markets
- Parks and other green spaces
- Homes
- Playgrounds
- Public squares
- Laneways and alleys
- Paths (marked and unmarked)

1. Ask your walkers how they think the “things” and places that they observe add to a vibrant sidewalk life (however they define it).
2. Ask how the things they observe (or the things that aren’t there) take away from a vibrant sidewalk life.
3. Depending on who is on your walk and what the theme is, you can ask your walkers if their observations touch on any of the same themes that Jane Jacobs identified as important uses of sidewalks: safety; social contact; places for children; play and learning; criss-crossing paths.
4. Walkable neighbourhoods with good sidewalk life depend in many ways on maintaining small distances and good connections between buildings, schools, workplaces and social spaces. This gives people reasons to crisscross paths! Identify two or more important parts of sidewalk life on your chosen block or blocks. This might be a school, grocery store and park, for example. Walk from place to place then ask your walkers what they observed. Were there good connections between the places? Were the distances walkable for most people? What issues might pose barriers? What could improve walkability between your chosen sites?

EXERCISE 2: WHO’S ON YOUR SIDEWALK AND HOW ARE THEY USING IT?

A natural extension of observing **what** is on a sidewalk is to ask **who** is using the sidewalk and **how** it is being used. Be sure to remind your walkers that it’s not just a matter of observing who is using a sidewalk, but just as importantly, who is **not**. Absences can tell us just as much about the vitality of sidewalk life.

Sidewalk users can include:

- Children
- Youth

- Adults
- Seniors
- People with mobility, hearing or vision impairments
- Homeless people

Sidewalk uses can include:

- Walking
- Jogging
- Cycling
- Skateboarding
- Parades and protests
- Sitting
- Resting
- Playing
- Dog walking
- Selling food or crafts
- Panhandling

Once again you should pause on a particular part of a city block, laneway or busy thoroughfare that is part of your walk. Ask your walkers what they observe. Who is present on the sidewalks (if there are any)? Who is missing?

1. Ask your walkers to reflect on how they think the people and activities that they observe add to a vibrant sidewalk life (however they define it).
2. If your walkers are able to identify people who aren't present on your sidewalk, ask them why they think this is the case? Is it a matter of accessibility (e.g. no sidewalk ramps or marked crosswalks), ambiance (too close to a busy road or no places to stop for a chat), time of day (night time versus day time) or safety (perceived danger because of poor lighting, few people around, certain types of people seen to be 'undesirable').
3. Ask your walkers to observe the mix of people on the sidewalk. Are there different types and ages of people? Do certain people seem more welcome than others? How are people interacting (or not) when they pass each other on the street? Do they greet each other? Stare straight ahead? Walk purposefully or linger to window shop and chat?

EXERCISE 3: HOW DOES YOUR SIDEWALK FEEL? A MINI AUDIT OF THE SENSES

Public spaces have an important role to play in fostering feelings of belonging, safety and integration to produce vibrant sidewalk life. This includes not only the physical dimensions of sidewalk life but also our sensory experiences. This last exercise picks up on these themes. You can incorporate this quick exercise into your walk by pausing at a few different planned spots on your walk and asking your walkers for their individual feedback on some of the following.

1. Ask your walkers to close their eyes and focus on what they hear at different points of the walk. Does traffic noise dominate? Can you hear birds and other animals? What about children playing? People socializing with each other? The sound of dishes clanking from a sidewalk café? All of these sounds tell us different things about the kind of sidewalk

life that exists on the walk.

2. Try the same exercise with the sense of smell.
3. Try it yet again by paying attention to the feeling of weather. Are there places to get out of the rain or bright sunshine? Is there shelter from the wind?

EXERCISES FOR MOVING AROUND *YOUR* CITY

The choices we make about how we move around our cities have important social, environmental and health implications. This brings us to the question: **how do you move around *your* city?**

As a walk leader, it will be your challenge to bring different dimensions of mobility to the attention of your walkers. The ways that you move around *your* city, whether you must drive from place to place, whether you can safely – and enjoyably – walk or ride your bike, whether public transit is accessible and affordable, will provide you with lots of opportunities to connect the ideas we’ve talked about in this primer with the theme of your own walk. Here are two exercises that you can consider:

- **EXERCISE 1: RE-THINKING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE**
- **EXERCISE 2: PONDERING MODES OF TRANSPORTATION**

Keep in mind that a great way to get people thinking is to ask good questions without necessarily providing the answers! Your job is to help people “see” and experience their city differently. A good way to do this is to engage your walkers directly in the exercises by asking them to share their own perspectives on mobility.

EXERCISE 1: RE-THINKING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

In the first section of this primer we learned that transportation infrastructure refers to the roads, rail lines, canals and fixed terminals (airports, train stations, etc.) that allow different forms of transportation to take place. For this exercise, pre-select a pit-stop on particular part of a city block, laneway or busy thoroughfare, preferably at a site where there are at least two different types of transportation infrastructure within reasonable proximity. Transportation infrastructure might include:

- Roads
 - Sidewalks
 - Bike lanes
 - Dedicated bus lanes or carpool lanes
 - Subway lines or streetcar rails
1. Conduct an on-the-spot survey of your walkers as to the type of transportation infrastructure they used to get to your walk. Ask your walkers to reflect on what they think was the best part of the infrastructure they used (was it easy? pleasant? good exercise? convenient? accessible? affordable?). What about the worst part (was it crowded? polluted? expensive? slow? inefficient?).
 2. Ask your walkers what they would change about the transportation infrastructure in and around your pit-stop if they could. Who do they think would benefit from the changes? How would it change the city? Why do they think the changes haven’t happened?

3. Ask your walkers what they observe as the general characteristics of transportation infrastructure around the pit-stop. For instance, how much space is set aside for pedestrians? How much for cars? How much for bicycles and other uses? Ask them what difference they think this makes the general ambiance of the area.
4. If there are people on your walk from cities in other parts of the world, invite them (if they are willing) to share their perspectives from their home city. Ask them how the transportation infrastructure you are examining compares to their home city. What kind of infrastructure would that person see in a similar type of “pit-stop” in their city? What are the differences? The similarities?

EXERCISE 2: PONDERING MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

As you will recall, modes of transportation are the basic means through which transportation takes place – car, bus, boat, bike, skateboard, foot and so on. For this exercise, pre-select a pit-stop on particular part of a city block, laneway or busy thoroughfare, preferably at a site where there are a number of types of modes of transportation within reasonable proximity. Some modes might include:

- Cars
 - Freight trucks
 - Public transit (buses, streetcars or light-rail transit)
 - School buses
 - Scooters
 - Bicycles
 - Skateboards
 - Pedestrians
1. Take a few moment at your pit-stop and ask your walkers how many different modes of transportation they can identify in the immediate vicinity. Ask them what difference they think this makes the general ambiance of the area.
 2. Ask your walkers what they think works best about the mix (or lack thereof) of modes of transportation. Ask what they think are the biggest challenges?
 3. Ask what your walkers to reflect on who is using the different modes of transportation. Who might have trouble accessing different modes of transportation and why?

EXERCISES FOR THE SHAPE OF *YOUR* CITY

The shape of a city, including mixed uses, higher densities and shorter blocks are important parts of our urban landscapes. This brings us to the question: **what is the shape of *your* city?**

As a walk leader, it will be your challenge to bring different dimensions of the shape of your city to the attention of your walkers. The shape of *your* city, whether it is high density or low, mixed use or single use, will provide you with lots of opportunity connect the ideas we’ve talked about in this primer to the theme of your own walk. Here are two exercises that you can consider:

- **EXERCISE 1: HUMAN SCALE – WHERE DO YOU FIT?**
- **EXERCISE 2: WHAT ARE THE “USES” IN YOUR COMMUNITY, AND *WHO* GETS TO USE THEM?**

Keep in mind that a great way to get people thinking is to ask good questions without necessarily providing the answers! Your job is to help people “see” and experience their city differently. A good way to do this is to engage your walkers directly in the exercises by asking them to share their own perspectives on mixed uses, densities, short blocks and old buildings.

EXERCISE 1: HUMAN SCALE – WHERE DO YOU FIT?

This exercise focuses on the idea of “**human scale.**” Basically, this refers to how we “fit” into our urban landscape. Do we feel awed and overpowered by soaring office towers, or right at home sitting at a sidewalk café on our favourite shopping street? Remember that these experiences are often closely linked to the type and extent of mixed uses and densities. The exercise will require you to pre-select two specific “pit-stops” along your walk route. One pit-stop will be a long block with few “uses.” The second will be a shorter block with a higher number of “uses.”

1. Take a few moments at each of your pit-stops and ask your walkers how they feel in each place. Does either pit-stop evoke feelings of belonging and connection? Or do the pit-stops make people feel alienated and overshadowed? Try to ask people to expand on the reasons for their answers.
2. Ask your walkers to put themselves in other people’s shoes. Ask them to reflect on how a person who is homeless, or who has mobility challenges, or mental illness might answer the same questions.
3. Ask your walkers what they observe as the general characteristics of the spaces around each pit-stop. For instance, how much space is set aside for pedestrians? How much for cars? How much for other uses? How much “density” is there? Ask them what difference they think this makes.
4. Ask your walkers what they would change about the two pit-stops if they could. Who do they think would benefit from the changes?

EXERCISE 2: WHAT ARE THE “USES” IN YOUR COMMUNITY, AND WHO GETS TO USE THEM?

For this exercise you can pause on a particular part of a city block, laneway or busy thoroughfare. Ask your walkers what “uses” they observe at this pit-stop. Some uses might include:

- Shops and other businesses
 - Schools
 - Food markets
 - Parks and other green spaces
 - Homes
 - Playgrounds
 - Public squares
 - Laneways and alleys
 - Paths (marked and unmarked)
1. Ask your walkers what they think works best about the mix of uses and densities. Ask what they think are the biggest challenges?

2. Ask what your walkers to reflect on who the “users” are in place in question. Ask whether they think that the place you are reflecting on is open and accessible to everyone? Who might have trouble accessing the “uses”?
3. If there are people on your walk from cities in other parts of the world, invite them (if they are willing) to share their perspectives from their home city. Ask them how the place you are examining compares to their home city. What kind of uses would that person see in a similar type of place? What are the differences? The similarities?

EXERCISES FOR THE SOCIAL LIFE OF YOUR CITY

As we have seen, the social life of a city involves diversity in built form and uses, but also attention to the diversity of people in a city and how they participate in civic life. This brings us to the question: **what is the social life of your city?** As a walk leader, it will be your challenge to bring different dimensions of the social life of your city to the attention of your walkers. The social life of *your* city will provide you with lots of opportunity connect the ideas we’ve talked about in this primer to the theme of your own walk.

Keep in mind that a great way to get people thinking is to ask good questions without necessarily providing the answers! Your job is to help people “see” and experience their city differently. A good way to do this is to engage your walkers directly in the exercises by asking them to share their own perspectives.

Here are two exercises that you can consider:

- **EXERCISE 1: EXPERIMENTING WITH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**
- **EXERCISE 2: MAKING YOUR OWN PARTICIPATORY BUDGET**

If you choose to use either of these exercises keep in mind that both require your walkers to do a bit of “homework” in advance of the walk, so you will need to make sure to include instructions in your “write up” to advertise the walk.

EXERCISE 1: EXPERIMENTING WITH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

What is civic engagement? It’s simple: It means participating in public life and encouraging other people to participate in public life. The result is a more vibrant social life of a city! Examples include:

- Belonging to a voluntary organization
- Attending a community consultation meeting
- Starting a community garden
- Starting a recycling program at work
- Voting
- Working for a candidate in a local election
- Serving dinner at a homeless shelter
- Giving blood
- Coaching a local sports team
- Organizing a neighbourhood “clean-up”
- Participating in activities that build relationships between people in the community

For this exercise, you will ask your walkers to **engage in one act of civic engagement prior to your walk**. There are two important conditions: First, it must be legal! (No climbing fences to

spray paint protest messages!). Second, it must be something the person does not already do (if they already coach their local hockey team, it doesn't count!). Make it clear that it is not mandatory! People can still come to the walk if they choose not to try the experiment.

At some point as you plan your walk, build in some time to pause to reflect on the experiences of those who participated. Make sure you choose a place to stop that will be conducive to a group chat. Ask your walkers how their act of civic engagement made them feel? Ask whether they thought it made a difference, and to whom? Will they do it again? What could they do to inspire civic engagement on a bigger scale?

EXERCISE 2: MAKING YOUR OWN PARTICIPATORY BUDGET

This exercise also requires some preparation before the walk. In your walk write-up you will explain that you will be engaging in a mock participatory budgeting exercise (you can briefly explain what a participatory budget means using the definition in this primer).

Suggest that there is an imaginary \$100,000 available from the City budget for local decision-making in the area where your walk will take place (make sure it is clear in your write up that this is only an exercise!!).

Ask your walkers to come prepared to propose (1) how they think the funds should be spent and why; and (2) how they would design a participatory process to make sure that all members of a community – even the marginalized – had the opportunity to contribute their views. Ask what your walkers think the pros and cons would be of devolving budgeting responsibility to local communities.