Template letter

This template is a guide to writing to your local council. You can change it in any way you feel necessary. Don't forget to attach the checklist and any photographs, maps or sketches you have made about the conditions/route.

The General Manager
City/Town/Shire Council
Address
Suburb/Town/Postcode/State

Dear Sir/Madam

I/we live in …………………….. (*insert precinct or suburb name*) and enjoy walking regularly in ………… area. I/we appreciate the efforts of council to maintain the environment so that it is pleasant to walk.

Recently, ……………………… (*insert I or name of walking group*) conducted a survey to gauge how walkable my/our neighbourhood is and would like to provide my feedback to improve the amenity in my/our neighbourhood.

It would be appreciated if you could advise of any action relating to the issues or suggestions raised in the attached Neighbourhood Walkability Checklist. I have kept a copy of the checklist and will follow up in four weeks time.

Name of individual/walking group:

Date: …………………….…………………………….……………………

Telephone contact: …………………….…………………………..………

Email: …………………….……………………………………....................

Heart
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For heart health information
1300 36 27 87
www.heartfoundation.org.au

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Neighbourhood Walkability Checklist
How walkable is your community?

The Heart Foundation is committed to improving the health of all Australians. Being regularly active throughout life is one of the most effective ways to improve and protect your heart health and walking is the preferred choice of physical activity for many Australians.

The Neighbourhood Walkability Checklist is designed to help individuals and groups to survey their local walking environment. It will help you to identify the aspects of your local environment that help or hinder you when you walk.

Your completed checklist will provide structured feedback to your local council. It will outline issues with facilities and infrastructure in your local area and identify improvements to the quality of the environment.

A safe and supportive environment for walking is essential. Neighbourhoods need to be walkable for all members of the community and for all ages and abilities. The Heart Foundation believes that local residents know and understand their neighbourhood better than anyone else.

Heart Foundation Walking is a network of free community based walking groups with volunteer Walk Organisers who lead groups in your local area.

For more information about the Heart Foundation Walking, visit www.heartfoundation.org.au/walking or call 1300 36 27 87.

How to use the checklist

- Use the Neighbourhood Walkability Checklist to assess your usual walking route. If you do not have an established route, choose a place to walk to such as a local shop or park. (Please note: this tool is not intended for use in areas of natural bush land).

- To assist your council, provide a map of your walking route. A local street directory or a web based map such as http://maps.google.com.au may be helpful.

- Read over the checklist before you start. As you walk, complete the checklist by placing a tick in the appropriate boxes. It will be useful if you can identify street names or places when making specific comments.

- Consider taking photographs or sketching conditions along your route.

How walkable is your route?

The checklist is divided into sections:

1. Walker friendliness;

2. Comfort;

3. Safety; and

4. Convenience and connectedness.

At the end of each section, total the number of yes and no answers. If you are unsure or a question is not relevant, leave it blank.

When you have completed the checklist, add up the subtotals to provide an overall walkability score for your route. The total walkability score is based on the total number of "yes" answers. The "no" responses will guide your local council to any issues you identified on the route.

Let's get started!

Neighbourhood Walkability Checklist

About your walk

Location of walk:
Please include a map if possible, highlighting any identified issues.

Suburb: _____

Name of street at start of walk:

_____

Average distance of walk: _____ km

Time of day: _____ am/pm

I/we walk without a walking stick or aid:

☐ Yes   ☐ No

I am walking for (please tick):

☐ Transport - to reach a specific location e.g. shops, bus stop, school.

☐ Recreation - walking for enjoyment or physical activity.

☐ Transport and recreation.

Where does this walk take place?

☐ Local suburb

☐ Local park

☐ Beach

☐ City

☐ Rural or remote area

☐ National Park

1 Walker friendliness
An attractive neighbourhood promotes walking.

	Yes	No
1. Are the footpaths free from obstructions such as overgrown vegetation, sign poles, advertising boards or café dining?		
2. Are there trees along the route to provide shade and a pleasant environment?		
3. Are there any points of interest (e.g. historical markers, public art, parks, community gardens)?		
4. Are the street frontages interesting and attractive (e.g. landscaping, fences, shop fronts)?		
5. Is the neighbourhood free from litter and broken glass?		
6. Are dog litter bags and bins available in parks and open spaces?		
7. Is the neighbourhood free from graffiti or vandalism?		
8. Is playground equipment and park areas maintained to a sufficient standard?		
Sub total	/8	/8

Comments or suggestions:

Location of identified issues:

2 Comfort
The design of streets and pedestrian places and the ability to access facilities along a route promote walking.

	Yes	No
1. Can people walk side by side on the footpaths, particularly people with prams and people in wheelchairs?		
2. Do the footpaths all link up with no missing segments?		
3. Are there adequate seats to stop and rest, particularly for older people and young children?		
4. Are there drinking fountains in parks or open spaces?		
5. Can you access toilets along the route?		
6. Are there places to shelter from rain and hot sun?		
7. Are the paths easy to walk on, with consistent and even surfaces for prams, wheelchairs and learner cyclists?		
Sub total	/7	/7

Comments or suggestions:

Location of identified issues:

3 Safety
Street lighting, safety measures and well maintained paths promote walking.

	Yes	No
1. Generally, do you feel safe on this walk?		
2. Can you see other people around as you walk?		
3. If you were to walk this route at night, would it be well lit?		
4. Are pedestrian lights or zebra crossings conveniently located with schools, parks, retirement homes, shops etc.?		
5. Is the wait at pedestrian lights reasonably short?		
6. Does the timing at pedestrian lights allow for older people and young children to cross safely?		
7. Do you feel safely separated from the road traffic?		
8. Are there roundabouts, humps or other measures to slow vehicles?		
9. Are crossing points free of obstructions such as vegetation and parked cars that limit your view of the traffic?		
Sub total	**/9**	**/9**
Comments or suggestions:		
Location of identified issues:		

4 Convenience and connectedness
Having direct routes between homes, shops, workplaces and other destinations is important. Compact and connected neighbourhoods create shorter distances between destinations and promote walking.

	Yes	No
1. Is there pedestrian signage on the route such as maps identifying play areas and dog off leash parks and distances to shops?		
2. Does this route link with public transport services?		
3. If yes, please circle: Bus/Train/Tram/Other		
4. Does this route lead to a destination such as a school, café, library, workplace or sporting facility?		
5. Is there a dog off-leash park separated from children's play areas along your route?		
6. If you walked to a cul-de-sac or dead end, was there a safe route linking you through to another street?		
Sub total	**/6**	**/6**
Comments or suggestions:		
Location of identified issues:		

How did your walking route score?

Total your 'yes' responses:

Walker friendliness _____

Comfort _____

Safety _____

Convenience and connectedness _____

Total _____ **/30**

Walkability score	
22 – 30	Good news! Your route is extremely walkable
15 – 21	Your route is walkable but there is room for improvement
8 – 14	Your route needs some work to make it more walk friendly
0 – 7	Your route is not very walkable. Your local council will appreciate hearing about the identified hazards/issues

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Once you have completed the checklist

Councils value constructive feedback that helps improve their services. It is important to provide your council with positive feedback on your route or suggestions for improvements. You are encouraged to draw sketches or provide photographs of route conditions that may supplement the checklist.

Send your checklist and route map with the cover letter provided to your local Council. If you choose to email your checklist you can download the checklist and template cover letter at **www.heartfoundation.org.au/walking**.

Councils prioritise works in response to community needs and available funding. Making the best use of available funds is vital for Council. They will consider all feedback and suggestions and add them to the works list as appropriate. Council will endeavour to respond to you in a timely manner; however the issues may need to be addressed as funding becomes available. If an issue identified falls outside the scope of Council, Council should direct requests to relevant bodies.

Disclaimer: The individual considerations featured in this checklist are not equally weighted in determining how walkable an area may be. Councils will consider the identified issues within the structure for prioritising and scheduling works for improvements to the municipality as well as plans for neighbourhood renewal and maintenance schedules.