

Evaluation of a Pilot Community Walking Map Project in Inner-city Edmonton

BACKGROUND

- 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: Bonnyville, St. Paul, North Central Edmonton, and Medicine Hat/Redcliff.



- 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 PROJECT

- In North Central Edmonton, the representatives 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 and evaluation of the Avenue Communities Walking Map.
- 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 map included:
 - ten walking routes that ranged in length from 1.4 kilometers to 5.0 kilometers.,
 - historical information about the community, and
 - locations of key community amenities (e.g., library, community centre, etc.).

WHAT WE DID

- 10-minute online survey conducted with residents.
- The goal of the evaluation was 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 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 which were mailed to all households in the map area in July, 2010. In addition, two postcards were mailed to all households in the catchment area for the walking maps in late August and late September, 2010 (10,408 and 10,342 households respectively).
- In October of 2010, representatives from the project visited key locations in the community (e.g., library, grocery stores) to inform residents who had not received the map or postcards about the project.

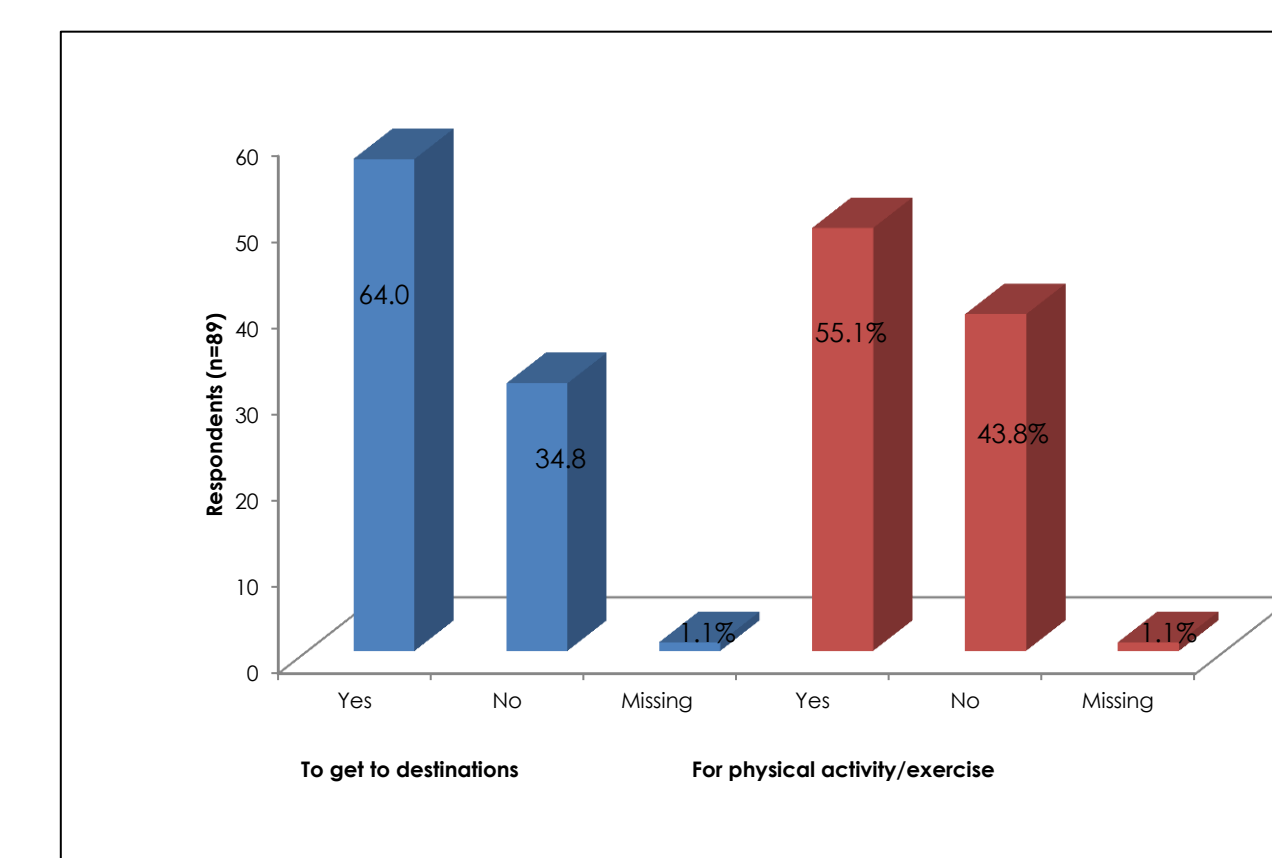
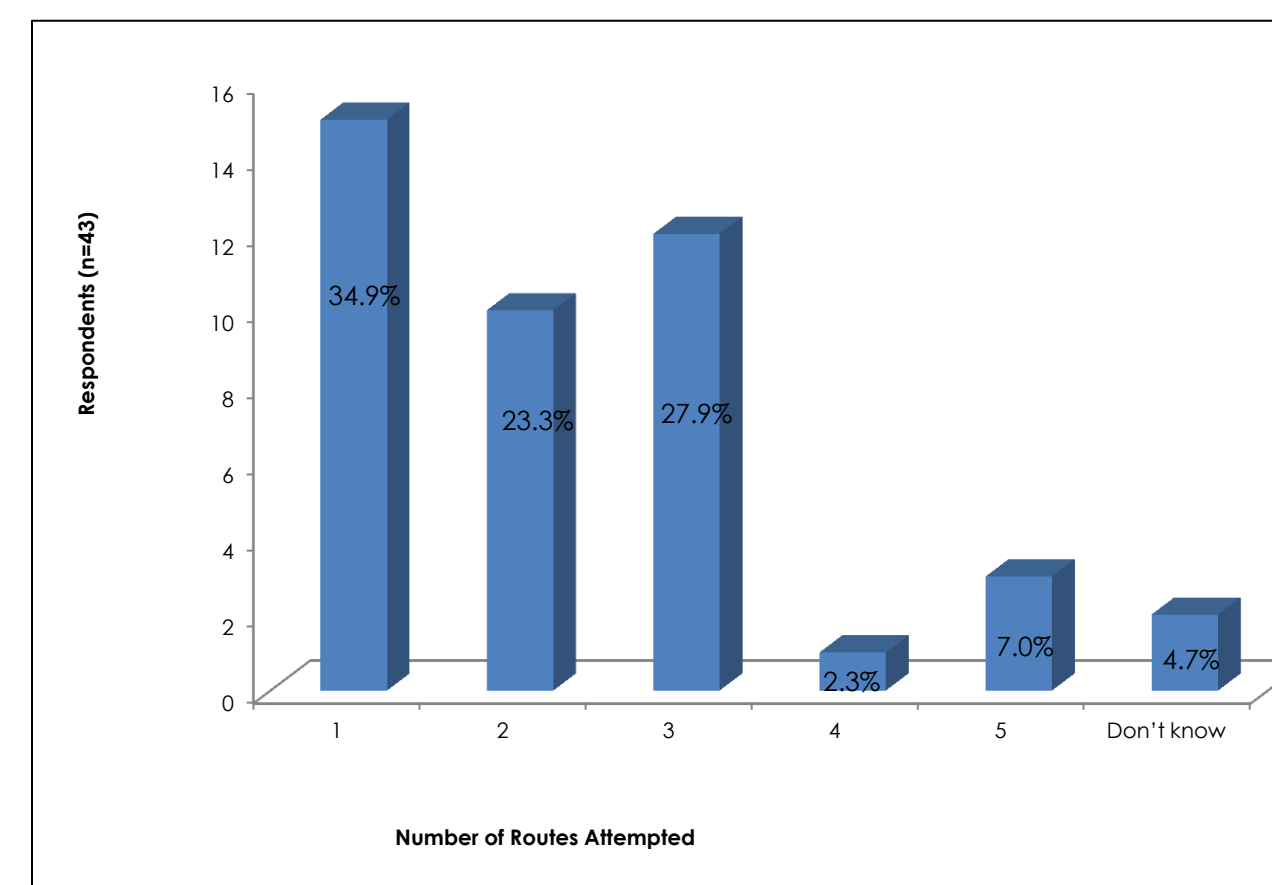
WHAT WE FOUND

- 155 people completed the survey
 - 57.4% (n=89) had a copy of the map
 - 38.7% (n=60) did not have a copy of the map
 - 3.9% (n=6) refused to complete the survey past the first question
- Participant responses will be divided into the following categories: (1) those who had a map, and (2) those who did not have a map.

Respondents Who Had a Map

Short Term Changes in Behaviour

- Almost half of the respondents had tried at least one of the walking routes (48.3%).
- 76.4% of respondents indicated that the routes and destinations on the map encouraged them to walk more in their community. Reasons for walking more included:
 - 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%).
- 64.0% of respondents indicated that they would walk more to get to destinations as a result of having the map.
- 55.1% of respondents indicated that they would walk more for physical activity as a result of having the map.
- 43.8% of respondents 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.



Usefulness of the Map

- 91.0% of respondents indicated that they found the map to be a useful tool as it provided places to go in the community (64%) and local walking routes (67%).

Community Impact

- 93.3% of respondents who had a map indicated that the map was beneficial for the community, indicating that it:
 - 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

- 56.7% of respondents who did not have a map were not aware that a walking map was created for their community.
- 100% of respondents who did not have a map indicated that they would like to have a walking map for their community.
- 95% of these respondents indicated that they would use a walking map if they had one.

Respondent Demographics

- The majority of survey respondents were female (69.1%) and were between the ages of 35 and 54 (50.3%).

EVALUATION STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

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:

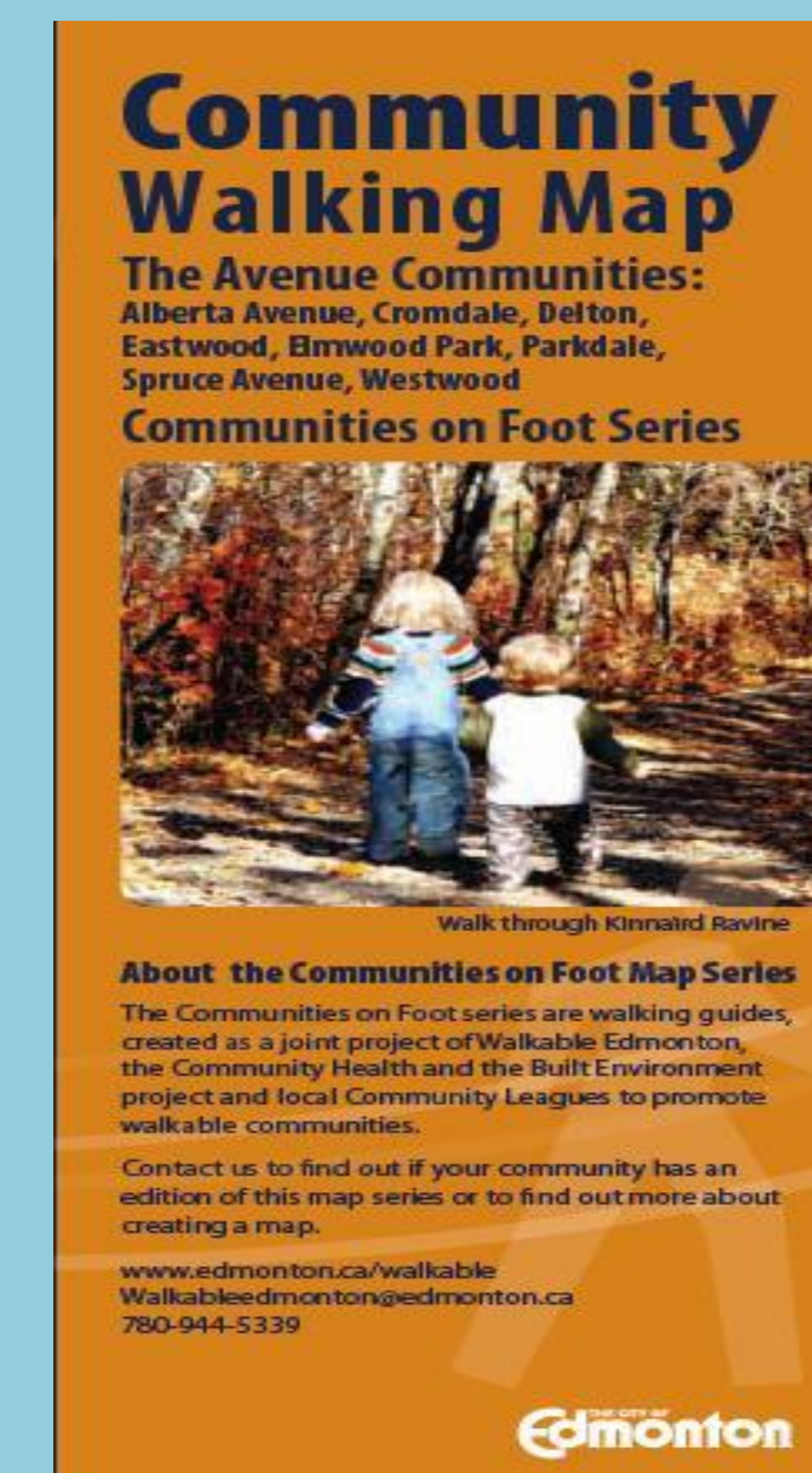
- A community survey was used to collect data which only provided a snapshot of information at a particular time.
- The survey was only available online for a limited time (4 months) immediately after the map was distributed and relied on self-reported data. Thus, residents may not have had enough time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

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.

- The results of this evaluation have been disseminated to community partners and are being used to inform City of Edmonton decision-making concerning future map development for other areas of the city.

- Evaluation results suggest that researchers and policy-makers should utilize strategic, community-based tools as effective population-level interventions.



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