

Executive Summary: Barriers to Walking for Public Housing Highrise Residents



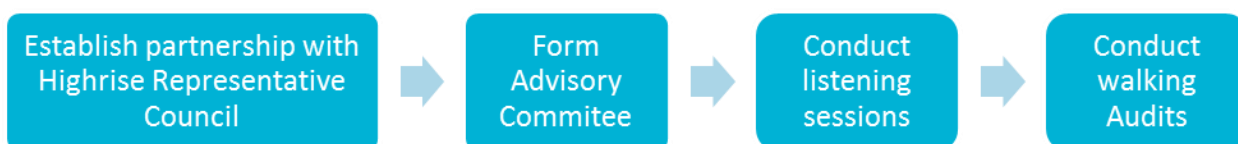
As part of its Healthy Living initiative, the Minneapolis Health Department has been working with residents of Minneapolis Public Housing Authority highrise buildings to improve physical activity opportunities in and near the highrises. The Health Department is working on this project in partnership with the Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council (MHRC), the MPHA highrise tenant organization. Together, MHRC and the Health Department have led a process to gather resident input on exercise equipment in their buildings, falls prevention programming, and the walking environment around their buildings. MHRC and the Health Department worked with the Active Living Advisory Committee to develop a process to assess the walking environment around buildings. Advisory committee members included eight highrise residents, a representative from Allina Health, representatives from Volunteers of America (an organization that provides social workers in highrise buildings), Minneapolis Public Works staff, Health Department staff, and MHRC staff.



Members of the Active Living Advisory Committee

Walking Environment Assessment Process

The walking audit assessment included two phases: 1) listening sessions with residents at 10 buildings to gather initial input on residents' concerns about walking in their neighborhoods, and 2) walking audits at each of the 10 buildings, where residents walked a short route near their buildings and documented specific concerns and challenges to walking.



The following 10 buildings, with a total of 2727 units, were included in the assessment process:

- Lyndale Manor, 600 18th Ave N
- Hamilton Manor, 1314 44th Ave N
- Cedar High Apartments, 1627 S 6th St
- Hiawatha Towers, 2121 16th Ave S
- Spring Manor, 828 Spring St NE
- Park Center, 1515 Park Ave S
- Parker Skyview, 1815 Central Ave NE
- Heritage Commons, 350 Van White Memorial Blvd
- Charles Horn Towers, 3110 Blaisdell Ave
- The Riverside, 2728 E Franklin Ave

Walking Environment Assessment Results

The common walking barriers identified during the walking audits include:

- Sidewalk and pavement conditions, including uneven sidewalks and pavement, poor snow clearance (see top image to the right), obstructed and/or narrow sidewalks (see middle image to the right), and sidewalk steepness
- Crossing streets, including long wait times for walk signals, short crossing times at signalized intersections, curb cut problems and lack of mid-block crossings (see bottom image to the right)
- Personal comfort, including personal safety concerns, insufficient lighting, and lack of bus shelters
- Sharing the route, including speeding/fast traffic, high-density traffic, traffic not yielding to pedestrians, and lack of separation of bikers/walkers

Priorities & Next Steps

Residents would like to see improvements on many of the concerns they have identified; however, they have also identified three priority areas. These priorities include:

- Improvements to winter snow clearance, including on sidewalks, at corners, and at bus stops
- Improvements at and near the intersection of Dupont Ave N and Glenwood Ave N, including sidewalk issues, increasing the comfort of the bus stops, and making it easier and more comfortable for residents to cross Glenwood Ave N.
- Improvements to the mid-block crossing on S. 6th St. between the Cedar High Apartments (1627 6th Ave S) and the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Civic Center (504 Cedar Ave S)
- Improvements to the long crossings at Franklin Ave E and Riverside Ave. Residents of the Riverside (2728 Franklin Ave) find this intersection to be confusing and difficult to cross.

Health Department staff, MHRC staff and residents plan to share the findings with the appropriate agencies and policymakers in order to see how these concerns can be addressed, either in the near term or through future infrastructure projects or planning efforts. After participating in walking audits, residents at many of the buildings began to walk more often, and residents at several buildings started walking clubs. These walking audits have become part of a larger movement among residents to lead active, healthy lifestyle.



A resident using a walker walks in the street to avoid an unshoveled sidewalk on Dupont Ave N near Heritage Commons at Pond's Edge



E Franklin Ave & Riverside Ave: Traffic signal with green arrow for right turns is confusing for crossing pedestrians; the wide intersection is also intimidating.



Dupont Ave N and Glenwood Ave N: Traffic traveling on Glenwood Ave N does not have a stop sign, and residents find it difficult to cross the street to get to the bus stop.