

DRIVING BUSINESS ~

Walk this Way...The Economic Promise of Walkable Places

Walking is by far the most popular physical activity in the United States. The data suggests however that 41% of all trips in the US are one mile or less, yet fewer than 10% of them are taken by walking or biking.

But, mind sets are changing.

A survey by the National Association of Realtors found 60% of Americans prefer to live in a neighborhood with stores and services located in easy walking distance. Walking has moved front and center as a signature Quality of Life measure in this country.

Last year, the first ever Walking Summit was held in Washington, D.C. drawing representatives from over 230 organizations. The summit was convened by Every Body Walk!, a collaborative effort of organizations across various fields to promote walking as a support solution to decrease disease and health care costs, to lessen the impact on climate change, and to bolster the community.

On the personal side, walking will:

- Aid weight loss
- Improve health and reduce risk of chronic disease
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Help relaxation
- Reduce feelings of depression
- Stimulate creative thinking
- Provide social interaction

Walking and walkability is also linked to economic promises for communities. Communities benefit from walkability by:

- Performing better economically
- Enjoying a location in close proximity to other walkable places
- Offering lower transportation costs to residents
- Being more attractive to developers, investors, businesses and residents, thus increasing property values

The Roanoke Valley's governments have been making significant investments in their regional greenway system which is already paying direct economic development benefits. Public infrastructure improvement decisions now factor in a whole new set of criteria as to how limited dollars are spent in this arena.

If this information has piqued your interest, below you will find resources to new strategies and tools that are emerging to promote walking:

- Vision Zero Initiative and Safe Streets ~ www.visionzeroinitiative.com
- Alliance for Biking & Walking ~ www.bikewalkalliance.org
- America Walks ~ www.americawalks.org
- Walkable and Livable Communities Institute ~ www.walklive.org
- Health Economic Analysis Tool ~ www.cdc.gov
- Walk with a Doc ~ www.walkwithadoc.org
- Every Body Walk! Collaborative ~ www.everybodywalk.org

PARK Roanoke supports healthy lifestyles, walking, and bicycling along with all forms of mobility. Parking is not always about cars. It is about people. Parking, walking, bicycling, ridesharing, and trolleys are all important factors for a healthy, walkable, and economically viable community. For more information, visit www.PARKRoanoke.com and access Community & The Environment.

