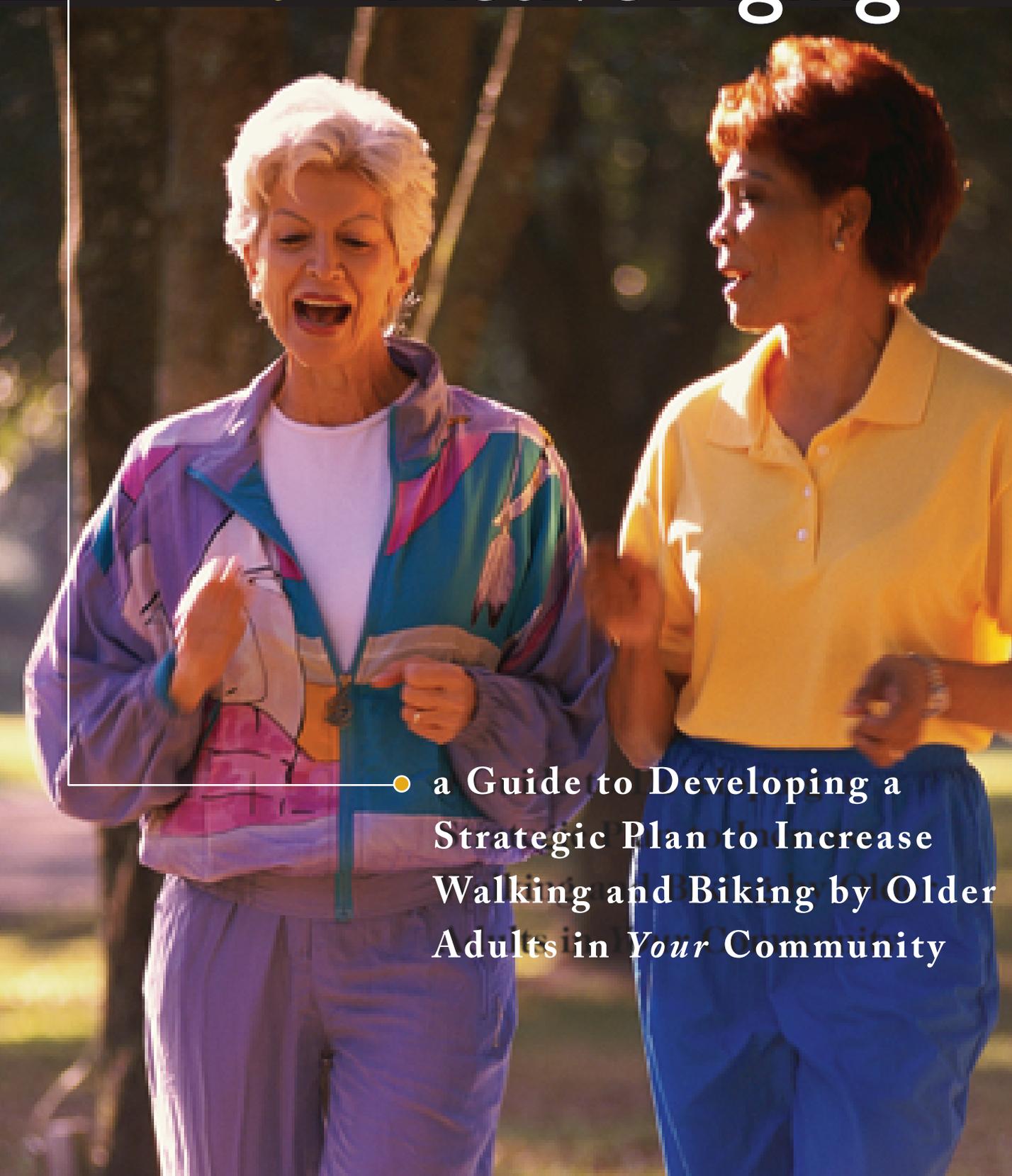


# Creating Communities *for* Active Aging

- 
- A photograph of two women walking outdoors. The woman on the left has short white hair and is wearing a colorful, multi-colored jacket (purple, teal, pink) over a white shirt and purple pants. She is looking down and smiling. The woman on the right has short reddish-brown hair and is wearing a yellow polo shirt and blue pants. She is looking towards the first woman. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a fence.
- a Guide to Developing a Strategic Plan to Increase Walking and Biking by Older Adults in *Your* Community



# PREFACE

Most people are familiar with the saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. But not everyone knows that prevention is just as important for older adults as it is for the young. Prevention means investing now to protect health in the future; and one of the most effective ‘investment strategies’ is regular exercise. Americans, as a whole, do not get enough physical activity to protect their health. Of all age groups, older Americans are the least likely to participate in regular exercise.

People of all ages can benefit from regular, moderate physical activity. A couple in their 60s who take a brisk 30-minute walk most days, and do stretching and strengthening exercises one or two days a week, will not only increase the chances of living a longer life, they will also be less likely to develop chronic diseases—from diabetes to depression—that can occur in later life.

Yet many Americans live in places where it’s not easy to get those recommended 30 minutes of brisk walking or riding a bike every day. The technological progress of the 20th century has had a significant side effect: sedentary lifestyles. This is reflected in the communities where we live. Many suburbs were built without sidewalks; and with houses and services spaced far apart, even the most trivial errand requires the use of a car. Cars, computers, and televisions have made it easy to forego regular physical activity.

As our population is increasingly comprised of older adults, there is a growing imperative to make communities more activity-friendly. Adding sidewalks to suburban neighborhoods may be a big project, but often there are simpler changes communities can make so it is easier to walk and bike.

Of course, many forms of physical activity, such as swimming or fitness classes, are beneficial. This guide focuses on walking and biking because they are simple and easy to do for most older adults. While the ideas presented here have older adults in mind, most of them can benefit all ages.

By:

- defining some goals,
- bringing a variety of people to the table,
- performing an evaluation of your community, and
- developing a plan for how to make changes,

you may find that there are many ways your community can become more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly. That process is, in a nutshell, a simple version of strategic planning.

**This guide will help you create a strategic plan to engage the older adults in your community in more physical activity.** Whether you live in a big city or a small town, a suburban neighborhood or a farm, there are ways to make it easier for older adults in your community to walk and bike and be active and independent.

First, the guide contains some goals and terms for your group to discuss so you can tailor your strategic plan to meet the needs of your community.

This guide also includes suggestions on involving key stakeholders from your community in the process. **One of the keys to a successful plan is making sure you have input from a wide range of people in your community.**

Using the process and resources outlined in this guide, your community can assess the opportunities for and barriers to increased walking and biking by older adults. Perhaps your community already has a walking trail, but you’ve noticed that mostly young people use it. Would providing a few benches along the way make it more appealing for older adults?

## What are the barriers to walking in our neighborhood?

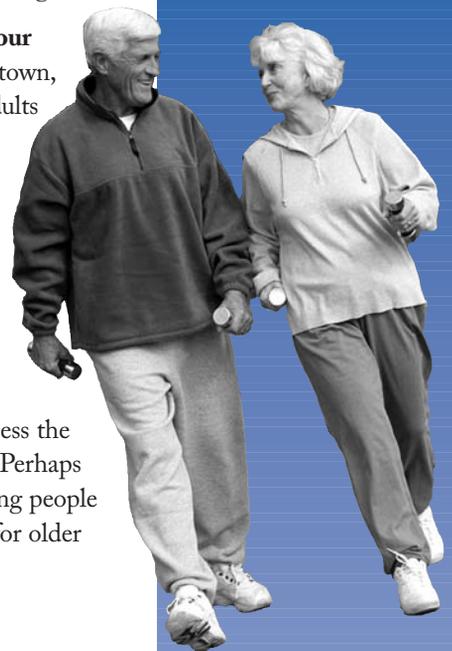
- > No sidewalk on Glenn Drive
- > Trail beside Kearney Lake is often muddy
- > Crossing Robie Street is terrifying!

## One third of older adults don’t engage in regular physical activity.

Percentage of Persons Age 65 or Older Who Reported No Leisure-Time Physical Activity

	1985	1990	1995
Total:	40.0%	39.4%	34.4%
Men:	33.9%	31.5%	27.8%
Women:	44.3%	45.0%	39.2%

Source: National Health Interview Survey.



In order to plan, you will need to find out how easy or difficult it is right now for the older members of the community to walk and bike. This guide lists some common obstacles faced by older adults who want to be active. It also provides suggestions for further reading and a list of resources to get you started. **The guide also contains a catalog of ideas and strategies for helping older adults be more active and mobile.**

Once you've identified what prevents people from getting out, and what helps them, you'll want to decide what changes you can make right away, and which ones will take time. For instance, those low-hanging tree branches that make it hard to use the sidewalk can be trimmed next month, but it may take longer to make sure that the new development being built in your town has sidewalks! Either way, it's all work toward the same goal: maintaining—and increasing—physical activity among older adults.

## Who can use this guide?

This plan is designed to be useful to a wide range of people and communities. Whether you are:

- a citizen—young or old—or a community planner;
- an advocate for senior citizens, or a developer;
- a local administrator, a recreation director, or a civic or non-profit group;

this guide can help direct your efforts. The only thing you need to start using this plan is a desire to create a community that enables your older residents to be more physically active, mobile, and independent for as long as possible.

## The goal of this guide is to help communities:

- increase the proportion of older adults participating in safe physical activity, especially walking and bicycling; and
- preserve, and even enhance, older adults' independence, mobility, and health.

## Some terms used in this guide

Before getting started, let's define a few key terms that have broad meaning and can lead to confusion. We'll be talking about different types of barriers to being physically active. One way to think about these barriers is to divide them into **personal** and **environmental**. By personal we mean *internal*, something about you. For example, a personal barrier might be feeling self-conscious about being out of shape. An environmental barrier is something *external*: you're ready to go out walking, but there aren't any sidewalks in your neighborhood.

Another term to clarify is **mobility**. To some people, mobility refers primarily to driving a car; thus, maintaining mobility means making sure people can drive for as long as possible.

To others, mobility can mean the ability to move around safely on your own, whether in your kitchen or just going to the grocery store. For the purposes of this guide, mobility means *getting around*, and is part of active aging. It means being able to walk down to the corner store to buy a newspaper, and it means being able to drive to the next town to visit a friend. Mobility can even mean being able to play a game of catch with your grandchildren. At any age, all of these types of activities contribute to quality of life.

## Why should older adults be more active?

Regular, moderate exercise by older adults can help delay or prevent the onset of disabilities and many chronic diseases, reduce the risk of falls and fractures, improve mood and relieve depression, increase mental acuity, and perhaps increase life expectancy. Many older Americans, however, are not engaging in sufficient physical activity to reap these benefits.

### What kinds of exercises should we do?

Four types of exercises are important for older adults.

1. Endurance activities are those that increase our heart rate and breathing for an extended period of time. Ideally, we should do 30 minutes of endurance activities at least five days a week.
2. Strength exercises help build muscles and are particularly important for preventing fractures among older adults. We should do some simple strength-building exercises at least twice a week.
3. Balance exercises, which can be incorporated into strength exercises, help prevent falls.
4. Stretching helps keep us flexible with more freedom of movement. We should do stretching exercises most days before/after exercise.

More information: Exercise: A Guide from the National Institute on Aging. Available from (800) 222-2225 or [www.nih.gov/nia](http://www.nih.gov/nia).



Research shows that regular physical activity greatly reduces the risk of death from America's leading cause of death, coronary heart disease. Physical activity also reduces the risk of developing diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure.\* Even people who have already developed some of these diseases can benefit from physical activity. For example, regular activity decreases the need for insulin among diabetics, and many scientists believe that heart disease can be reversed through exercise and a healthy diet. Exercise can also be beneficial for people with arthritis.

In addition, several studies show that regular, moderate-intensity exercise can improve mood and alleviate depression. For older adults, adopting an active lifestyle may help with feeling isolated. There's nothing like a walk around the neighborhood to help you meet your neighbors!

Increased activity can even benefit lifelong 'couch potatoes.' Common gains include improvements in muscle and bone strength, balance, and energy level. Moderate physical activity can help prevent falls, a common problem for older adults. In fact, just getting started—taking a short walk, for example—can help you get in shape to be more active.

Moving around in our communities—to run errands such as buying groceries, visiting the bank or the post office, or meeting a friend for lunch—is something most of us do by car. But as we age and our priorities shift, we may want, or need, to do some of these things without getting behind the wheel or making a long trip. Studies show that over 80 percent of Americans want to remain in their homes for as long as possible as they grow older. By being physically active on a regular basis, and having services within walking distance, older adults can help maintain this independence and rely less on others to help them with their daily activities.

### **Why should communities provide opportunities for physical activity?**

Researchers in a number of fields—such as urban planning, transportation, and public health—are learning that the physical environment (the neighborhood) has a strong effect on whether people in a community walk or bike. For a long time, many of us assumed that physical activity depended on someone's willpower or interest. And while interest certainly plays a part, we're learning that places where it's easier and safer to walk and bike tend to have much higher incidences of these activities. Increased physical activity may also add to the pocketbooks of older adults by providing an alternative to more expensive modes of travel.

Many communities are beginning to realize that sidewalks, bike paths, and crosswalks are not just 'extras,' but essential investments in the health and safety of their residents. Making sure our neighborhoods provide opportunities for everyone to be safely active not only enriches quality of life but also improves health and increases longevity. In addition, steps taken to improve the environment for older adults are beneficial to others as well.

For example, making sidewalks safe and accessible helps people in wheelchairs, parents pushing strollers, and young children walking to school, as well as older adults. Increased foot traffic can boost sales at local retail businesses, and there is evidence that property values increase in communities where residents are able to walk and bike easily.

## **DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Define goals: what do you and your community want to achieve or change?**

As you begin your planning process, take time to articulate your community's goals. From these broad goals, more specific 'action items' will evolve. In addition, defining goals in a clear and straightforward manner often helps clarify what steps you plan to take to achieve these goals.

### **Who are 'older adults?'**

Many people define 'older' differently. One thing we have in common is that our perspective on aging changes over time. As you go about creating a more



\* U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; 1996.

activity-friendly environment for the adults where you live, spend some time with them thinking about who they are in your community, and what their particular needs might be.

Do you just want to increase the number of older adults in your community who participate in regular exercise? Or do you have a more specific target in mind: providing more places to walk, for example, or protecting elderly pedestrians by installing traffic islands on a street where many older adults cross? Or do you have a certain group in mind, such as increasing daily walking among Medicare beneficiaries who have diabetes? In any case, agreeing on your goal or goals helps focus your efforts and bonds everyone working on the project. As you establish these general goals, talk with other residents and community organizations so they also can become involved.

### What are our goals?

- > Increase walking and biking in Alberto's neighborhood
- > Slow down traffic on Oxford Street—a lot of pedestrian injuries have happened there
- > Establish an early morning mall-walking program for seniors
- > Make sure the new development builds bike paths

### Who can help?

*"All communities have older residents. And those who are not older, if lucky, will be older one day... the features of a community that make it a livable place for older people benefit all."*\*

Often the most successful efforts to foster change involve a wide array of participants or stakeholders. The more people from different walks of life you can involve in creating and carrying out your strategic plan, the more confident you'll be that your project reflects your community. Some committee members may be obvious choices, such as members of community groups that promote walking, or representatives from interested local government agencies. Others could be selected from groups you may not have considered, such as a member of the local chamber of commerce or a law enforcement officer.

### Timeline for our goals

This month: trim branches on South Street

By next spring: install benches along Inglis Street

Within the next 2 years: include bike paths when they widen Barrington Street

The people you'll want to include in the planning process are, first and foremost, older people themselves. In addition, representatives from minority groups and from different neighborhoods may want to participate. Local business owners, representatives from the real estate industry, and officials from your community's transit agency, if there is one, can offer input and resources.

### Getting started: assess the situation

To begin, it helps to have as much information as you can about your community. This is often referred to as a 'community assessment.' It can be very general, asking such questions as:

### Work Group—Kearney Lake Trail

Bill – talk to friend at Parks Department

Karen – ask son-in-law about building raised trail at muddy sections

Jonathan – see if lumber yard would donate materials

Fernando – research safety of raised trail – do we need handrails?

### The goal of this guide is to help communities:

- > Increase the proportion of older adults participating in safe physical activity, especially walking and bicycling
- > Preserve, and even enhance, older adults' independence, mobility, and health.

### Strategic Planning: Key Steps

1. Define goals or mission
2. Analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
3. Establish specific goals
4. Select strategies to reach goals
5. Assign responsibility and time lines for strategies
6. Write down plan, and distribute to everyone involved
7. Implement plan's strategies
8. Celebrate your success!



\* Patricia Baron Pollak. Liveable Communities: An Evaluation Guide. Washington, DC: AARP, Public Policy Institute, 1999. p. 7.

- Approximately how many older adults live in our community?
- How many engage in regular physical activity?
- What types of physical activities do they participate in?
- Is it easy for them to do so?
- Where do the greatest number of pedestrian injuries occur, especially among older adults?
- What groups are not physically active?
- What are some of the reasons why they aren't active?
- What resources already exist for older adults to be physically active? Are these opportunities used? Are there additional resources that could be made available?

### Who can help us?

- > Who has time? Betty, Hugh, Tom
- > Who has expertise? Jerry, Marge, Lois
- > Who has money? Ed, Karen
- > Who has influence? Jose, Molly, John
- > Whom must we include? Maris, Garry, Henry

Granted, you won't know the answers to these questions right away, and it may take some time to find out. This is simply the first task in your strategic planning: develop a list of questions and collect the information you need.

Many resources are there to help you at this stage. Two such examples are the *Walkability Checklist* and *Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide*, by Patricia Baron Pollak, published by AARP. (See the resources section at the end of this guide for more information.) Documents such as these are designed to help you assess your own community and create an inventory of its assets and shortcomings in what opportunities are available to be active.

### Typical findings from community assessments

We've compiled a list of common opportunities and barriers to walking and biking for older adults. Some of these barriers may exist in your community; reading through them may also help you recognize some of your community's assets. These barriers are grouped into four categories: personal barriers, personal opportunities, community barriers, and community opportunities. This list is designed to stimulate your thinking about the barriers and opportunities in the places we live.

## PERSONAL FACTORS

### Barriers: What factors prevent us from being active?

- Disabilities
- Perceived lack of time
- Isolation
- Depression
- Dislike of physical activity
- Poor vision
- Side effects of medications: energy level, balance, alertness
- Fears: falling, crime, health event (such as a heart attack, being hit by a motor vehicle, stray dogs)
- Lack of information: Where do I go? What should I bring?
- Perceived lack of social support for

### Benefits of Regular Physical Activity\*

- > Lowers the risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes
- > Cuts risk of falling and bone fractures
- > Helps manage discomfort of arthritis
- > Helps develop and maintain strong bones, muscles, and joints
- > Improves mood and sense of well-being
- > Helps control weight

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**Researchers in a number of fields—such as urban planning, transportation, and public health—are finding that the physical environment (the neighborhood) has a strong effect on whether or not members of a community walk or bike.**



\* U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; 1996.

biking and walking

- Frailty, muscle weakness
- Care-taking duties
- Lack of ‘equipment’—e.g., footwear, bicycle
- Perceived lack of energy

### Opportunities: What factors contribute to being active?

- History of active lifestyle
- Desire for social contact
- Involvement in faith-based organizations, clubs, community centers, etc., can offer access to programs
  - Concern about weight /chronic disease management
  - Errands
  - Participation in travel, hobbies, interests
  - Desire for independence
  - Wish to ‘keep up’ with grandchildren, peers, etc.
  - Vanity
  - Desire to enjoy life
  - Availability of time



### Two Myths About Physical Activity

1. It has to be jogging/swimming laps/working out at a gym.
2. I have to do it all at once.

Doctors recommend that adults engage in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least five days a week, and both strength training and flexibility training one or two days a week. But some people think physical activity only means vigorous exercise: jogging, participating in an aerobics class, or playing tennis. They're surprised to learn that just about anything that gets you moving counts! Brisk walking, working in the garden, or actively playing with your grandchildren, are all 'acceptable' forms of moderate physical activity. And furthermore, you can break it up into pieces. For example, a 20-minute walk in the morning followed by some simple strength-building exercises, and another brisk 10-minute walk to the grocery store before dinner gets you to the recommended level!



### What personal factors prevent us from being more active?

Lorraine: not enough time  
Bob: feels silly  
Cecilia: hates exercise!  
Duane: joints are too stiff

### What personal factors contribute to our being more active?

Ken: wants to keep up with the grandchildren  
Bea: always feels good...once you get started  
Susan: helps keep the weight off

### What environmental factors prevent us from being active?

Marian: people drive too fast near our house, and there aren't sidewalks  
Sam: my kids will think I'm crazy  
Nelson: my doctor never said anything about exercising

### What environmental factors contribute to being active?

Ned: loves walking along the river  
Luella: has made a lot of new friends at the stretch-and-strength classes  
Jack: pharmacy, coffee shop, and hardware store are in walking distance

# ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

## Barriers: What factors prevent us from being active?

- Hills, stairs
- Bad weather
- Lack of benches to sit on
- Lack of sidewalks and bicycle trails
- Broken sidewalks/uneven pavement
- Inadequate lighting
- Social environment that doesn't embrace physical activity
- Inadequate public transportation to neighborhood services, recreation centers
- Hazardous traffic crossings and pedestrian signals
- Aggressive drivers
- Lack of safe places to ride a bicycle and multi-use paths
- Shortage of community facilities, such as school gyms, nature trails, and bike shops
- Lack of guidance from untrained/uninterested health care providers
- Lack of reimbursement to health care providers for exercise 'prescription'
- Lack of agency coordination and planning (between public health department, aging services, parks department, etc.) for active communities to prosper
- Inaccessible staircases in buildings with older residents
- Feeling isolated in your neighborhood

## Opportunities: What factors contribute to being active?

- Ready availability of places to walk, bike, etc.
- Easy, pleasant environment for walking or biking
- Adequate number of pedestrian crosswalks
- Stores and services within walking distance (for easy errand-running)
- Trees for shade
- Pleasant climate
- Benches
- Simple equipment: good shoes, comfortable clothing
- Access to information on both how and why to exercise
- Bicycle safety training classes
- Money saving: running errands by foot saves on gas
- Social clubs, including bike clubs and walking groups
- Affordable (no or low cost) and accessible classes
- Intergenerational programming
- Neighbors who can help if needed
- Walking/biking paths, etc., in retirement communities
- Disposable income
- Well-marked bike lanes on side streets
- Availability of shopping mall-walking programs

Using your own findings, revisit your goals. How can you make the most out of your community's assets?

### Who are 'Older Adults?'

Different people define 'older' differently. One thing we have in common is that our perspectives on aging change over time. As you go about creating a more activity-friendly environment for the adults where you live, spend some time thinking about who they are in your community, and what their particular needs might be.

### Key Questions

- How many older adults are there in your community? Who are they?
- What types of physical activity do they participate in?
- Is it reasonably easy for them to do so?
- Who are the people who aren't physically active? Why?
- What resources already exist for older adults to be more active? Are these opportunities used? Are there resources that could be made available?



## Prioritize results by categories

Once you have conducted a community assessment, you may find you have a lot of ‘pieces’ of information, but you’re not sure how to use your findings to plan activities to help you attain your goals. You know that on a certain busy street the sidewalk ends halfway down the block. You also know that older adults who use a local walking trail have said they would use it more frequently if there were places to sit and rest along the way. But how do you use this information? How do you decide which barriers to address first, and which opportunities show the most promise?

One strategy is to group the information you have into categories, such as cost, feasibility, or time frame. This can often help clarify what to do next. Examples of these groups are listed below. You may wish to sit down with your team and fit the information you’ve gathered about your community into such groupings as:

- **Feasibility:** easy to address, can be addressed, will take major effort to address
- **Cost:** no-cost, inexpensive, medium-cost, costly
- **Reach/Impact:** would affect a lot of people, a moderate number of people, few people
- **Time frame:** immediate, within six months, within a year, within/over several years
- **Leadership:** neighborhood residents, town/city planning department, town/city parks department, transportation authority, social service agencies, private sector (note: many initiatives may involve shared responsibilities)

## Develop strategies to achieve your goals

Your community assessment and the list of strategies in the next section can help you identify approaches to build on community assets and reverse shortcomings. Be sure to keep your list manageable and include a mixture of short- and longer-term (or more complex) projects. Build as much agreement as possible among the members of your group about which strategies are most important. Having ‘buy-in’ from a diverse array of people and organizations is essential to achieving success with projects of this type.

As you develop a clear idea of what you want to achieve, work with your group to break each project into clear, feasible steps. Then assign responsibility for these steps to a specific person or organization. Agree on a realistic timeline for accomplishing each step, and get ready to launch your effort!

## Measure progress and celebrate your success

An important, and often overlooked, component of any strategic plan is evaluation. It doesn’t need to be complicated. But it’s important to include a way to measure progress towards your goals and get feedback from the people you’re trying to help. By including evaluation in your efforts, you’ll also have information and advice to share with other communities that want to duplicate your success. Whether you ask your local public health department to conduct a formal evaluation, or whether you take a survey of all the older adults out walking in the park one summer evening, you should include a way to measure your progress as part of your plan.

### How can we get feedback?

- > Distribute a questionnaire at a retirement community
- > See if someone at your community college can help

### Low tree branches make it hard to walk on Jones Street next to Bob’s Diner

Project: Trim trees

Feasibility: Easy

Cost: Low-cost

Reach: A lot of people (everyone goes to Bob’s!)

Time: Immediate

Leadership: Town; Bob’s

### Uneven sidewalk on Main Street in front of public library

Project: Fix the sidewalk

Feasibility: Can be addressed

Cost: Medium

Reach: Moderate

Time: Within six months

Responsibility: Town planning department; can Friends of the Library help too?

One last tip: make time to celebrate your success. Your team will work hard. Plan a ribbon-cutting ceremony or a team party to enjoy the results of your work and spread the word. You may find yourself with some new volunteers to help achieve your goals.

# STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE ACTIVE AGING

Across the nation, many communities are undergoing a renaissance. Together, citizens, businesses, and governments are making their communities more walking- and biking-friendly. In this section, you'll find a list of strategies to make this happen in your community. Some strategies may not apply to all communities; others you can adapt to your circumstances and goals; and some can be used just as they are.

Creating communities for active aging is not complex, but it will take time. Communities built after World War II were designed for cars. In the last 40 years, many suburbs were built without sidewalks or bike paths. Fortunately, small changes can result in more residents biking and walking, which can help build support for large-scale projects.

## Principles behind the strategies

The strategies listed here are not random ideas. Many are grounded in research findings from diverse fields. Others are just common sense. As you develop strategies, keep in mind some basic principles.

First, people tend to walk and bike where they have pleasant and safe places to do so. Trees, adequate street lighting, and trash removal do make a difference. As more people are drawn outdoors, crime is less of a threat. For older adults, the adage 'safety in numbers' can also mean there's someone to get help if someone falls or is injured.

At any age, the sense of social support for active lifestyles is important. Mall-walking programs are a success because friends can gather at a convenient location, get some exercise, and even scratch an errand off their list. Malls also offer a comfortable walking environment in all seasons.

Similarly, although many people are busy, they will bike and walk to do errands if paths connect homes and offices with shopping, restaurants, and services. Active communities not only provide places for walking and biking, they connect destinations and make it easier to fit walking and biking into hectic schedules.

Keep in mind that older pedestrians have specific needs. Physical disabilities (arthritis, visual and hearing impairments, aging joints, etc.) can slow the walking pace and reflexes. Agility may be reduced. As a result, some older pedestrians are more vulnerable to injuries, and might need such things as benches, shaded paths, and traffic islands.

Improved crosswalks and sidewalks for older pedestrians tend to benefit other groups as well. Parents with strollers and persons in wheelchairs are two such groups. In fact, many of the strategies listed here are likely to boost safe biking and walking among all generations.

Finally, both structural changes to neighborhoods and other activities to promote active aging are important. Older adults may need advice and encouragement from physicians and physical activity experts to begin a safe walking or biking program. Public education campaigns can remind drivers of ways to ensure the safety of older pedestrians.

## The Catalog

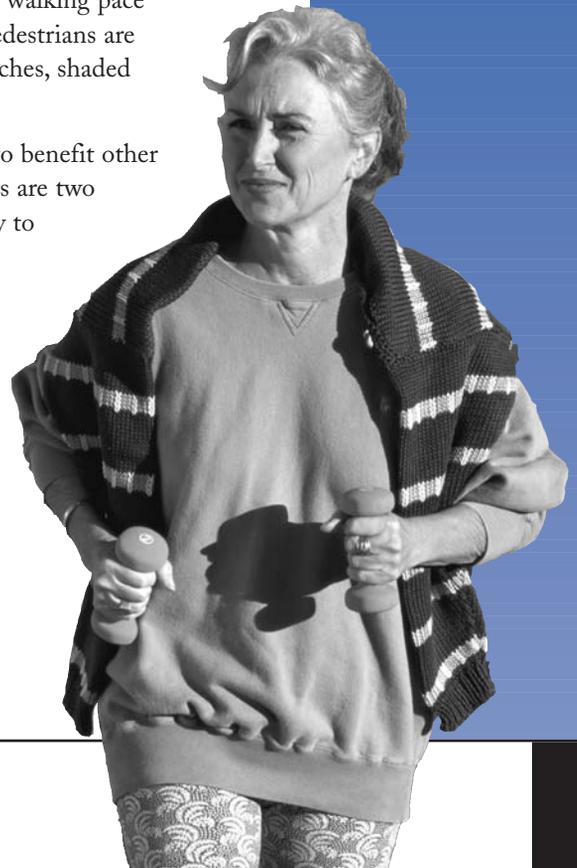
The strategies listed below are grouped into seven categories: community design, civic engagement, education, government

**Active communities not only provide places for walking and biking, they connect destinations and make it easier to fit walking and biking into busy lives.**

### Types of Strategies

- > Community Design Strategies
- > Civic Engagement Strategies
- > Education Strategies
- > Government Policy Changes
- > Information Strategies
- > Pedestrian and Bike Facilities Strategies
- > Traffic and Transit Strategies

**Across the nation, many communities are undergoing a renaissance. Together, citizens, businesses, and governments are making their communities more walkable and bikeable.**



policy, information, pedestrian and bicycling facilities, and traffic and transit. They can be undertaken by businesses, civic groups, and non-profit social service agencies—and governments. Strategies that involve changes to public laws or policies will need support from residents and businesses.

The catalog uses ‘pedestrian facilities’ as a catch-all term denoting physical structures for walking and biking. Sidewalks, trails, bike racks, bike lanes, crosswalks, benches, and safety measures are some of the most common pedestrian facilities. Parks and recreation centers also can be included in this group.

## Community Design Strategies

### We need a place to go on hot summer days or after winter storms. To Do:

- > Call management company at the mall—would they sponsor an early morning walking program?
- > Maybe Mel’s Sports Store would give a discount on walking shoes to people who participate?
- > Could Cecilia’s daughter’s company donate t-shirts?

### Update Land Use/Community Design Policies

- > Ensure residential areas can have service and commercial areas in walking distance
- > Ensure all new residential areas are built with sidewalks and bike paths
- > Insist on attractive building designs that place windows and porches (or ‘eyes’) on the street
- > Allow/encourage sidewalk cafes (may require widening sidewalks)
- > Protect public access for biking and walking along community ‘treasures’ like rivers, lakes
- > Add traffic-calming/slowing measures to streets with a lot of pedestrians

#### 1. Boost Visual Appeal

- Plant and nurture trees
- Remove graffiti and trash
- Encourage businesses and residents to plant and maintain flowers and trees
- Brighten dim areas by trimming vegetation or installing lights
- Install street furniture: benches, awnings for shade
- Create community gardens

#### 2. Connect People and Destinations

- Connect homes with jobs, shopping, services, community centers, public transportation, recreation facilities, and schools
- Build more paths
- Remove fences or create gates through them
- Pave paths where pedestrians have made their own
- Install pedestrian short-cuts through cul-de-sacs to tempt people to walk instead of drive
- Offer frequent crosswalks on busy streets and to locations visited by older adults, such as doctors’ offices, libraries, or grocery stores
- Develop park corridors and transit routes that connect neighborhoods and destinations
- Place pathways to cut across city parks in addition to those on the perimeter

#### 3. Offer Incentives for Senior Housing Developments to Promote Biking and Walking

- On-site gyms
- Accessible and inviting stairways
- Transit services to malls and parks
- Walking groups

## Civic Engagement Strategies

#### 1. Organize Community Groups to

- ‘Patrol’ parks in the early evening
- Pair elders with companion walkers (of any age) for social support and safety
- Lead walking groups or tours of points of historic interest
- Shovel snow and de-ice slippery sidewalks for residents unable to do this
- Sponsor mall-walking programs
- Convince the community’s leading employers to build or underwrite recreational facilities
- Offer golf, tennis, tai chi, stretch-and-strength classes

#### 2. Involve the Health Care Community to

- Assess older adults’ health and need for physical activity
- Write prescriptions for older patients to walk and bike
- Refer patients to walking groups and other community resources
- Review medications for impact on balance, cognitive clarity
- Counsel patients on how to prevent falls

#### 3. Engage Local Businesses to

- Sponsor incentive programs for seniors to start and sustain biking and walking activities
  - Free t-shirts or walking vests with reflective tape



- Coupons to reduce the cost of new walking shoes
- Two-for-one dinner coupons for people leading walking groups
- Sponsor creation of paths and facilities

## Education Strategies

### 1. Inform the Public About the Benefits of Walking and Biking Investments

Healthier residents/increased quality of life and healthy years  
 Community 'livability' improves – attracting new residents and visitors  
 Active seniors have more energy for volunteering and community involvement  
 Fewer pedestrian injuries

### 2. Educate Older Adults About the Personal Benefits of Active Aging

Use media, public relations, and public health communications to develop campaigns to

- Provide information about starting to walk and bike
- Teach them how to incorporate physical activity into daily lives
- Engage them in civic groups working to create an active community

### 3. Inform Older Adults on How to Be Safe Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Use bicycle helmets and other protective gear  
 Stretch and warm up  
 Wear good shoes  
 Start slowly and gradually increase time  
 Wear light- or bright-colored clothing, reflective strips  
 Use flashlights and bike lights at dusk and night  
 Keep music off or at a low volume  
 Obey traffic laws  
 Invite a companion to walk or bike with you

### 4. Teach the Public to Support Safe Walking for Older Pedestrians

Encourage – or even join – older family members and neighbors on walks and bike rides  
 Yield the right of way to pedestrians  
 Keep dogs behind a fence they cannot jump or on a secure leash  
 Back out cars slowly and with care  
 Look for bicycles before opening car doors when parked on the street  
 Drive 'friendly,' not aggressively  
 Slow speed in areas with pedestrians

## Government Policy Changes

### 1. Enforce Traffic Laws and Regulations, such as:

Traffic patterns  
 Pedestrian right-of-way  
 Red lights  
 Speed limits

### 2. Adequately Invest in Pedestrian Projects, Including Safety Campaigns and Facilities

- Set funding targets based on community need: pedestrian injuries and deaths, also ill health associated with inactivity
- Use federal transportation enhancement funds to develop a network of safe pedestrian facilities
- Set performance standards for transportation agencies regarding bicycle and pedestrian facilities and safety
- Ensure agency staff, especially at regional or field offices, have the knowledge and skills to foster community improvements
- Streamline funding requirements so pedestrian/recreation programs are easier to administer
- Support education strategies such as those listed above

### 3. Update Land Use and Community Design Policies

Ensure residential areas can have service and commercial areas in walking distance

## Three Scenic Walks in Elm City

1. From the beginning of Glenn Drive, south to Kearney Lake Road; left on Kearney Lake Road to Elm Street, along Elm Street back to Glenn Drive. This walk takes about 25 minutes.
2. Starting at South Street, walk along the Riverside Trail to Barrington Street. Note: City bus stops one block north on Barrington Street and takes you back to South Street. The walk takes about 30 minutes. Great on a hot day!
3. From Point Pleasant Park, walk along Inglis Street to South Park Street; cross Inglis and go back along the other side. The loop takes about 25 minutes. Lots of beautiful historic houses!



Ensure all new residential areas are built with sidewalks and bike paths  
Insist on attractive building designs that place windows and porches (or 'eyes') on the street  
Allow/encourage sidewalk cafes (may require widening sidewalks)  
Protect public access for biking and walking along community 'treasures' like rivers, lakes  
Add traffic-calming/slowing measures to streets with a lot of pedestrians

#### **4. Reduce Crime in Risky Neighborhoods**

Community policing and neighborhood watch programs  
Incentives for job creation and business development  
Seed funding for businesses and homeowners to fix up properties  
Adequate street lighting

### **Information Strategies**

#### **1. Develop a Map or Handbook of Walking and Biking Pathways**

Recreational (e.g., scenic routes and parks)  
Historic sites and neighborhoods  
Special-interest commercial areas (e.g., antiques district)  
Nature trails

#### **2. Increase Signage on Main Roads to**

Help residents and visitors find parks and trails  
Mark bike lanes  
Identify upcoming pedestrian crossings

#### **3. Create Guides to Local Walking and Biking Resources**

Groups that organize/sponsor walks and bike rides  
Stores selling discounted walking and biking equipment  
Health professionals who advise individuals and groups  
Directory of indoor walking facilities (schools, malls) with hours and addresses



## **Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Strategies**

### **1. Remove Walking and Biking Hazards**

- Fix broken and uneven sidewalks
- Trim tree branches that are low enough for head injuries
- Brighten poorly lit paths
- Widen pedestrian paths so walkers and bikers can safely share the space

### **2. Increase Access to Existing Community Facilities**

- Open school gyms and tracks to the public on evenings and weekends
- Reclaim parks: add lighting, repair sidewalks, clean benches, remove trash and graffiti
- Extend hours at recreational centers, including pools, golf courses, and tennis courts
- Install bike racks at destinations
- Ensure parks and trails have adequate parking spaces
- Convert abandoned railways to trails
- Offer 'comfort stations'—benches, water fountains—in parks and along trails

### **3. Eliminate or Reduce Recreational Fees**

- Offer group or senior discounts
- Give yearlong passes to state parks, community pools, etc., to seniors on fixed incomes

### **4. Improve Pedestrian Crossings...to Encourage Walking**

- Install pedestrian signals that indicate seconds remaining for safe crossings
- Extend signal times so senior pedestrians have enough time to cross
- Decrease waits for pedestrian signals
- Add more on-demand pedestrian signals
- Install curb ramps (or sloping curbs) for pedestrians and bicycles
- Add more crosswalks on major roads, especially when homes are stranded from services

### **5. Improve Pedestrian Crossings...for Safety**

- Create buffers between people and traffic such as parked cars, trees, bike racks
- Designate bicycle lanes
- Build pedestrian bridges when crossing by foot or bicycle is too dangerous
- Add traffic islands or raised medians for pedestrians who are crossing multiple traffic lanes or where slower pedestrians can take refuge until the light changes
- Reduce traffic speed to give drivers and pedestrians more time to see each other
- Make pedestrian signals brighter and/or larger for older eyes
- Add sound to pedestrian signals
- Improve crosswalks to create obvious pedestrian zones
  - Add lines designating crosswalks and where cars should stop
  - Mark the crosswalk with contrasting materials such as bricks or colored cement, but avoid adding tripping hazards
  - Use reflecting materials
  - Install signs to warn drivers of pedestrian crossings (consider using a fluorescent yellow color)

## **Traffic and Transit Strategies**

### **1. Slow Traffic in Areas with Many Pedestrians (or areas where you want to encourage more walking)**

- Reduce speed limits and enforce them
- Narrow street width
- Design street intersections at sharper (e.g., 90°) angles
- Give straight streets some curves with
  - traffic islands and circles
  - sidewalk extensions that bump into the street
  - alternating on-street parking patterns
  - large concrete planters
- Note that if streets are *too* curvy, pedestrians cannot see oncoming traffic

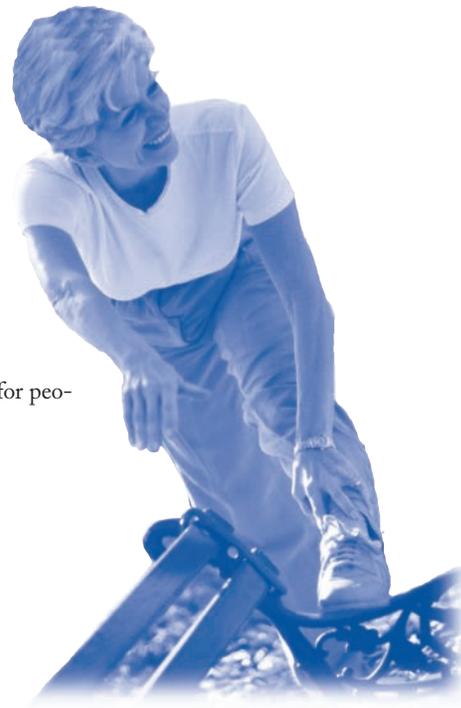


## 2. Design Transit Routes to Link Seniors with Walking Areas

- At convenient times for seniors
- To places they want or need to go
- With minimal transfers
- With bus stops close to where they live

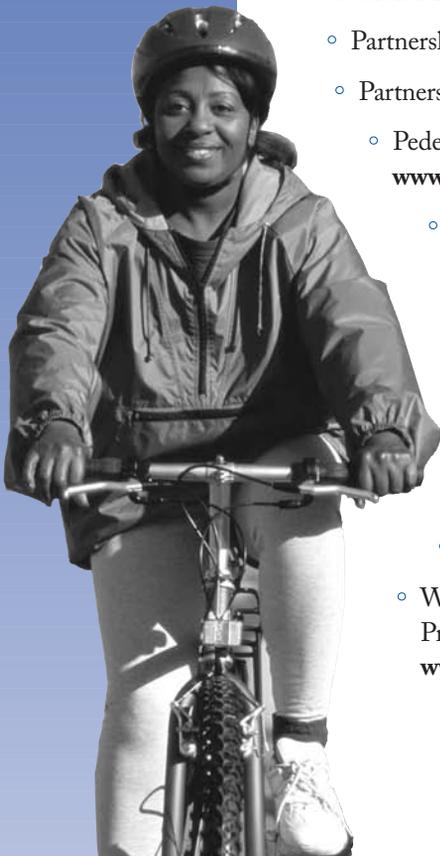
## 3. Accommodate Seniors and People with Physical Disabilities

- Purchase or retrofit transit vehicles for people unable to use the steps
- Encourage healthy riders to leave open seats designated for people with special needs



## RESOURCES

- AARP: [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)
- America Walks: [www.americawalks.org](http://www.americawalks.org)
- Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging: [www.uwo.ca/actage](http://www.uwo.ca/actage)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Nutrition and Physical Activity, Active Community Environments: [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm)
- Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, The Brookings Institution: [www.brookings.edu/es/urban/urban.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/es/urban/urban.htm)
- Local Government Commission: [www.lgc.org](http://www.lgc.org)
- National Center for Bicycling and Walking: [www.bikewalk.org](http://www.bikewalk.org)
- National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Aging: [www.nih.gov/nia](http://www.nih.gov/nia)
  - National Recreation and Park Association: [www.nrpa.org](http://www.nrpa.org)
  - Partnership for a Walkable America: [www.nsc.org/walkable.htm](http://www.nsc.org/walkable.htm)
  - Partnership for Prevention: [www.prevent.org](http://www.prevent.org)
  - Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center: [www.bicyclinginfo.org](http://www.bicyclinginfo.org) or [www.walkinginfo.org](http://www.walkinginfo.org)
  - Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: [www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org)
  - SPRY Foundation: [www.spry.org](http://www.spry.org)
  - Strategic Planning, online guide by Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD [http://www.mapnp.org/library/plan\\_dec/str\\_plan/str\\_plan.htm](http://www.mapnp.org/library/plan_dec/str_plan/str_plan.htm)
    - Surface Transportation Policy Project: [www.transact.org](http://www.transact.org)
    - U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)
  - Walkable Communities: [www.walkable.org](http://www.walkable.org)
- World Health Organization, Department of Noncommunicable Disease Prevention and Health Promotion: [www.who.int/hpr/ageing/index.htm](http://www.who.int/hpr/ageing/index.htm)



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