

## *Instructions:*

Part 2 of this module's PowerPoint presentation features a placeholder for one optional activity. This menu contains four possible activities. Before the workshop begins, select one activity from the four options provided. The activities help reinforce concepts introduced in all of the tools, however, some activities align more closely with specific tools. See the table in the Instructor's Guide for a list of which activities closely align with which tools.

You should select the activity you are most comfortable with, as well as an activity that reinforces the concepts introduced by the tools. Additionally, you should select an activity that meets the needs and/or experience level of the regional team. For example, the virtual walking audit activity may not be challenging for participants who come from communities that have completed streetscape improvements.

Replace the activity placeholder slide with the slides associated with the activity you select by moving or copy/pasting the slides from this menu into the placeholder space, then deleting the placeholder slide. In addition, you also need to prepare the associated materials (instructor's notes and worksheets) that correspond with the selected activity.



## Instructions:

This Virtual Walking Audit activity is particularly relevant to regions/communities that are currently very automobile-oriented and interested in making their areas more inviting to other types of transportation (e.g., walking, biking, transit). It may also be useful for regions/communities looking to revitalize their core/downtown areas. This activity may be located at the beginning of Part 2 of the module or midway between the discussion of the 4 selected tools. It would be interesting to do this activity after introducing Tool #5: Street and Streetscape Improvements.

This activity will help participants understand the role of streets and community design in enhancing rural character and economic development. Participants will identify the various components that make a community walkable and vibrant and will learn how to conduct a walking audit in their community.

This activity requires:

- PowerPoint slides (see slides #121-136)
- Virtual Walking Audit Participant Worksheet (one per participant)
- Virtual Walking Audit Instructor Notes (one copy for instructor only)
- Flip chart or white board and marker for instructor to take notes on group discussion

Before the workshop begins, if you select the Virtual Walking Audit as the desired activity, insert the slides into the activity placeholder section of the main presentation and delete the placeholder slides.

Exercise steps:

1. Discuss the idea of walkability and the parts of a street.
2. Distribute the Virtual Walking Audit activity worksheets to the regional team.
3. Explain the exercise and allow for clarifying questions.
4. Show photos of five types of streets often found in rural communities. Participants have one minute to examine and rate each photo, using a scale of “needs improvement” to “high quality” for four categories: accessible, welcoming, convenient, and safe. Allow a three-minute group discussion about each photo. Discuss whether or not the road is accessible to all users, welcoming, convenient, or safe. The Virtual Walking Audit Instructor’s Notes provide some ideas to supplement the discussion about each photo.
5. Use the remaining time to discuss as a group if the photos make participants

### ACTIVITY: VIRTUAL WALKING AUDIT



**Slide: 1**

**Time: 1 Minute (30 minutes total for activity)**

think differently about any of the streets in their communities. Do they think street design can influence the character and economic development potential of their community/region? Remind participants that this type of assessment could easily be replicated on streets in their own community.

## *Script:*

“This activity aims to illustrate the role of streets, streetscapes, and community design in enhancing rural character and economic development potential. You will learn the different components of the street and how to audit and evaluate a street for elements such as pedestrian accessibility, design, safety, and attractiveness. You’ll be able to take this audit tool home and apply it in your own community.”



**Slide:** 1 continued

**Time:** 1 Minute (30 minutes total for activity)

## Instructions:

Using the bulleted list on the slide, provide a brief overview of why walkability matters to rural communities.

## Script:

“This activity is centered around the principle of walkability. Simply put, walkability is how comfortable an area is for walking. Many of our historic communities were designed to be very walkable, but over the years some have abandoned this notion and have grown increasingly reliant upon automobiles to get around throughout the community.

The walkability of an area provides more benefits beyond just the opportunity to walk. Walkable communities feature thoughtful street design, which often reflects the community’s historic and small-town roots. For instance, traditional main streets were designed for people to stroll around and check out various shops and services by foot.

Walkability also adds value to businesses by increasing the potential for people to slowly pass by storefronts rather than breeze by in a car, which means they are more likely to stop and shop. A walkable area looks attractive and invites people to stroll and linger. Businesses want to locate in walkable areas so that their customers have easy access, and so their employees can go out for breaks and have access to nearby restaurants and services.

Walkability also adds value to neighborhoods by providing opportunities for interaction with neighbors, a safe environment for children, and convenient access to nearby businesses and amenities. Walkable neighborhoods are often desirable areas, where people want to live and invest in their homes.

In terms of health and safety, walkable communities provide opportunities for residents to get out of their cars and get around by foot. Designing a community for walkability makes it safer for pedestrians, as well as for others including bicyclists, those with disabilities and in wheelchairs, visitors, motorists, and transit users. Finally, providing a walkable community means that residents of all ages have options to move throughout the community without needing to access a vehicle.”

### Why does walkability matter?

- Supports small town character
- Adds value to businesses & homes
- Benefits health & safety
- Provides mobility options for all ages



**Slide:** 2

**Time:** 5 Minutes

## Instructions:

Explain what walkability is and why it matters to rural character and economic development.

## Script:

“Four criteria factor into an area’s walkability:

1. How Accessible-Focuses on the degree to which the environment allows and encourages all users
2. How Welcoming-Focuses on user comfort and attractiveness
3. How Convenient-Focuses on how conducive an area is to walking by means of connections to other modes of transportations and the surrounding land uses
4. How Safe-Focuses on how secure and protected the users feel

We’ll discuss each of these criteria briefly in the slides that follow.”



**Slide:** 3

**Time:** 1 Minute

**Additional Comments:**  
The Walkable and Livable Communities Institute developed this list of criteria. For more information visit: [www.walklive.org](http://www.walklive.org).

## Instructions:

Explain why accessibility is an important element of walkability.

## Script:

“Accessibility is the degree to which the built environment accommodates users to move around, including the elderly, children, and the disabled. This includes the design of different components of the street such as the widths and locations of sidewalks, bike lanes, vehicle travel lanes, driveways, and parking areas. It also includes the elements of intersections including the crossings, signals, and intersection configuration and location. It also includes compliance with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements that address the placement and slope of handicap ramps, potential obstructions, driveways and other entry drives for vehicles.

Notice that in the left photo, accessibility is limited and pedestrians and wheelchair users opt to use the street instead of the sidewalk, probably due to the fact that the sidewalk lacks ramps, is disjointed, or uneven. In the photo on the right, ramps are highly visible to users, and crosswalks are clearly marked and designed to make pedestrian users visible.”

## Accessibility

- Streets
- Intersections
- ADA Compliance



**Slide:** 4

**Time:** 1 Minute

**Additional Comments:**

To learn more about accessibility, go to:  
<http://www.access-board.gov/provac/draft.htm>

## Instructions:

Explain why being welcoming is an important element of walkability.

## Script:

“When it comes to determining how welcoming an area is, it is useful to ask, ‘would it be pleasant to walk here?’ Providing outdoor seating and places to linger is important, as are considering factors such as shade from the sun, other people around, and area’s appeal or attractiveness. Additionally, the placement of buildings and parking areas also play a critical role in the look and feel of an area. As shown in the image above, the lack of sidewalks or a clear area for pedestrians makes this area seem unwelcoming, whereas the tables and chairs, landscaping, and design of the public space in the bottom photo make that area seem very welcoming and inviting for pedestrians.”

### Welcoming

User Comfort and Attractiveness

- Lighting
- Street furniture (benches, tables, trash cans, planters)
- Signage/ Wayfinding



Slide: 5

Time: 1 Minute

## Instructions:

Explain why convenience is an important element of walkability.

## Script:

“Convenience is a key principle of walkability. By that, we mean the area is easy to use, and walking is a natural choice. Factors that contribute to convenience include the following:

- Connecting the sidewalk system so that there are not any unanticipated gaps or barriers
- Linking the pedestrian system to other modes of transportation by carefully locating bus stops, bicycle racks, and parking areas
- Designing things such as signs, lighting, and other streetscape elements at a pedestrian (not automobile) scale
- Paying attention to the orientation and design of buildings so that they are easily accessed and attractive to pedestrians
- Locating pedestrian-friendly land uses such as cafes and shops in close proximity to pedestrian areas.”

## Convenience

- Connected system
- Links to other transportation modes
- Human scale design
- Building orientation
- Synergy with land uses



Slide: 6

Time: 2 Minutes



## Instructions:

Explain why safety is an important element of walkability.

## Script:

“Safety, or the feeling of being protected and out of harm’s way, is another important principle of walkability. Our perception of safety as pedestrians is influenced by physical factors such as how close we are to the street, what barriers exist between us and moving vehicles, and visibility as we enter crosswalks. Our perception of safety is also influenced by factors such as transparency, or the ability to see and be seen.

For example, notice how in the photo on the top of this slide has sidewalks to accommodate pedestrians, but as a user, this sidewalk might feel unsafe due to the fact that there is no barrier or protection from moving vehicles. Also, visibility at crossings is limited due to the tall wall, lighting is limited, and users might feel isolated due to the fact that the nearby houses seem to have their backs turned on the sidewalk. On the other hand, the photo below shows an area that seems very safe for pedestrians due to the pedestrian-scale lighting, generous crosswalk, landscape barrier between the sidewalk and street, and the sense of enclosure and visibility offered by the homes and businesses on the street.”

## Safety

- Street & sidewalk design
- Visibility
- Transparency



Slide: 7

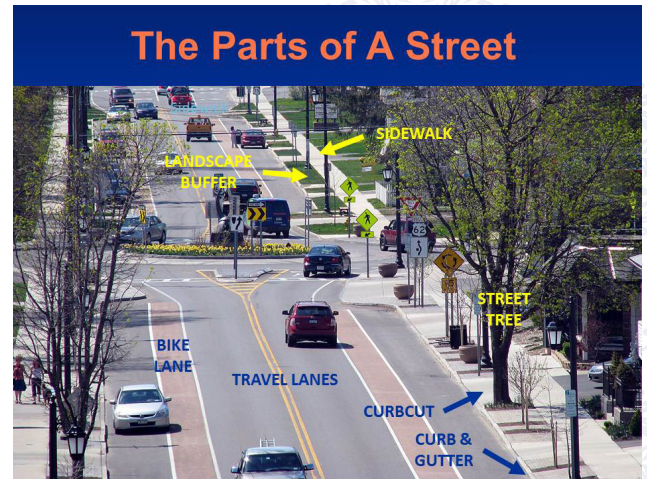
Time: 2 Minutes

## Instructions:

Using the labels on this slide, explain the various components of a street.

## Script:

“A street can contain many different parts, including the travel lane (where the vehicles drive), bike lane, parking area, sidewalk, curb, gutter, and landscape buffer, which may or may not include street trees. A curbcut is the area where a driveway or entrance for vehicles crosses the sidewalk and intersects with the travel lanes. Some streets also have medians (not shown in this photo), which can either be a concrete or landscape divider between the travel lanes. The presence or absence of these components shape walkability and overall feel of the street.”



Slide: 8

Time: 1 Minute

## Instructions:

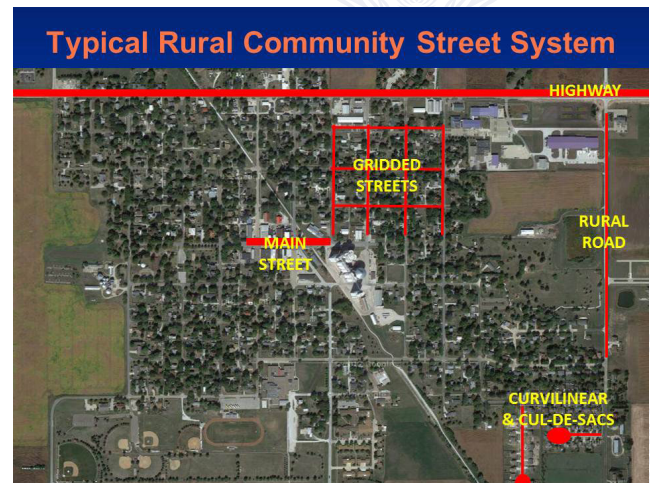
Introduce the different types of typical street types present in rural communities.

## Script:

“Most rural communities share these street types:

1. A ‘main street’, which is often the principal shopping street in the downtown
2. Gridded streets, which usually run parallel or perpendicular to the main street area and surround the downtown or core community area
3. Curved or cul-de-sac streets, which are usually located farther away from the downtown core, usually in newer parts of the community. These often present challenges for walkability because they are disconnected and do not provide direct routes to destinations.
4. Highways, which are meant for high speeds and can be designated as state or interstate highways
5. Rural roads, which serve to connect places or communities (sometimes these are called county roads) and may be paved or unpaved. Some rural roads may also be designated as highways.

In this activity, we’ll look at each of these street types in detail and will conduct a brief virtual walking audit for each one.”



Slide: 9

Time: 2 Minutes

## Instructions:

Distribute the Virtual Walking Audit activity worksheets to the regional team. Read the Virtual Walking Audit activity instructions, and allow time for questions before the activity begins. The total length of the activity should be 30 minutes, so the instructor will need to monitor the time as the activity progresses.

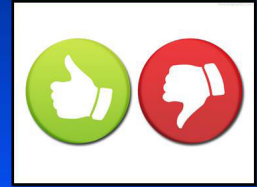
## Script:

“I will show you a series of five types of streets often found in rural communities. When you look at each photo, rate the perceived walkability, based on the four walkability criteria that we discussed a few minutes ago (how accessible, how welcoming, how convenient, how safe). The rating scale includes needs improvement, adequate, and high quality. Please record your ratings next to the photos on your individual Development Preference Survey worksheet.

While you review the photo, record your notes and observations about why you chose this rating. Also, please consider whether this street design in your community would support or detract from its rural character and ability to achieve its economic development goals. You’ll have a about two minutes to review and rate each photo individually, then we’ll spend a few minutes discussing our ideas as a group.”

## Instructions

- Rate each street photo using criteria
  - How Accessible
  - How Welcoming?
  - How Convenient?
  - How Safe?
- Ratings
  - Needs Improvement
  - Adequate
  - High Quality



**Slide:** 10

**Time:** 30 Seconds

**Handout:**  
Virtual Walking Audit Worksheet

**Additional Comments:**  
Plan on spending four minutes on each photo. Two minutes should be allocated for individual rating of the photo, followed by two minutes discussing each photo.

## *Instructions:*

Spend about four minutes on this photo. One or two minutes should be allocated for individual rating of the photo, followed by one to two minutes discussing the photo. The Virtual Walking Audit Instructor's Guide contains notes which may be helpful to use to supplement the group discussion.



### 1. Main Street

## *Script:*

“This photo is of a typical main street in the downtown area of a rural community. Please spend a minute and rate the photo based on your perceptions about its walkability.

Now that you've had a chance to review and rate this photo, let's discuss what you think.

- Do you think this main street is accessible to all users? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this main street is welcoming? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this main street looks convenient? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this main street looks safe? What would you add or change?”

**Slide:** 11

**Time:** 4 Minutes

## Instructions:

Spend about four minutes on this photo. One or two minutes should be allocated for individual rating of the photo, followed by one to two minutes discussing the photo. The Virtual Walking Audit Instructor's Guide contains notes which may be helpful to use to supplement the group discussion.

## Script:

“This photo is of a typical gridded neighborhood street in a rural community. Please spend a minute and rate the photo based on your perceptions about its walkability.

Now that you've had a chance to review and rate this photo, let's discuss what you think.

- Do you think this gridded neighborhood street is accessible to all users? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this gridded neighborhood street is welcoming? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this gridded neighborhood street looks convenient? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this gridded neighborhood street looks safe? What would you add or change?”

## 2. Gridded Street



Slide: 12

Time: 4 Minutes

## *Instructions:*

Spend about four minutes on this photo. One or two minutes should be allocated for individual rating of the photo, followed by one to two minutes discussing the photo. The Virtual Walking Audit Instructor's Guide contains notes which may be helpful to use to supplement the group discussion.

## *Script:*

“This photo is of a typical curvilinear neighborhood street in a rural community. Please spend a minute and rate the photo based on your perceptions about its walkability.

Now that you've had a chance to review and rate this photo, let's discuss what you think.

- Do you think this street is accessible to all users? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this street is welcoming? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this street looks convenient? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this street looks safe? What would you add or change?”

### 3. Curvilinear Streets



**Slide:** 13

**Time:** 4 Minutes

## Instructions:

Spend about four minutes on this photo. One or two minutes should be allocated for individual rating of the photo, followed by one to two minutes discussing the photo. The Virtual Walking Audit Instructor's Guide contains notes which may be helpful to use to supplement the group discussion.



## Script:

“This photo is of a typical state highway passing through a rural community. Please spend a minute and rate the photo based on your perceptions about its walkability.

Now that you've had a chance to review and rate this photo, let's discuss what you think.

- Do you think this street is accessible? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this street is welcoming? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this street looks convenient? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this street looks safe? What would you add or change?”
- 

Slide: 14

Time: 4 Minutes



## Instructions:

Spend about four minutes on this photo. One or two minutes should be allocated for individual rating of the photo, followed by one to two minutes discussing the photo. The Virtual Walking Audit Instructor's Guide contains notes which may be helpful to use to supplement the group discussion.

## Script:

“This photo is of a typical rural county road on the periphery of a community. In some communities, a rural road can be a highway, but this one is just a rural county road that connects communities. Please spend a minute and rate the photo based on your perceptions about its walkability.

Now that you've had a chance to review and rate this photo, let's discuss what you think.

- Do you think this rural road is accessible to all users? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this rural road is welcoming? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this rural road looks convenient? What would you add or change?
- Do you think this rural road looks safe? What would you add or change?”

## 5. Rural Road



Slide: 15

Time: 4 Minutes

## Instructions:

After discussing each of the photos, use the remaining time to discuss what these observations about different street types mean for the sense of character and economic development in participants' communities using the questions below. Encourage participants to conduct this audit in their own communities.

## Script:

“Now that we have conducted a walking audit for these different types of streets, are you thinking differently about the streets in your community? How do you think street design can influence the character and economic development potential of your community or region?”

## Observations

- Do any of the photos make you think differently about the streets in your community?
- How do you think street design can influence the character and economic development potential of your community or region?



**Slide:** 16

**Time:** 3 Minutes

**Additional Information:**

*EPA Office of Sustainable Communities, Smart Growth and Transportation webpage:*  
<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/topics/transportation.htm>

*Walkable and Livable Communities Institute:*  
<http://www.walklive.org/>

*National Complete Streets Coalition:*  
<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>

*AARP, Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide:*  
[http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/il/d18311\\_communities.pdf](http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/il/d18311_communities.pdf)