

Addressing the Built Environment to Encourage Physical Activity for Women 55-70

The built environment, either outdoor or indoor can have a positive or negative impact on physical activity opportunities within a community. A supportive built environment encourages regular physical activity by making it easy, safe and fun. This benefits all community members including women 55–70.

Safety

- Lighting is important. Work with city planners and facility managers to ensure proper lighting is installed around walkways, parks, trails, paths, sidewalks, parking lots, bus stops, hallways, stairwells, change rooms and any other places people frequent.
- Encourage city managers, homeowners and businesses to keep trails, paths, stairs and sidewalks well salted/sanded and cleared of snow to ensure they are safe and used all year long. Advise women to wear ice grippers on their shoes to reduce their risk of falling.
- Build and maintain sidewalks on streets/roadways and within shopping areas so people have a safe place to walk.
- Build more trails and paths close to residential areas where they are easy to access and regularly used. Many trails are built in lovely isolated areas but women 55–70 do not use them because they do not feel safe.
- Where possible avoid creating multi-use trails as motorized and human-powered activities do not mix.
- Allow more time at stop lights so that slower people can make it across. Intersections should be designed with pedestrians in mind, not cars.
- Place mirrors in strategic places or design rooms with a more open concept to avoid blind or hidden corners.

Accessibility

- Incorporate a universal design approach: doors, entrance ways, trails, paths and sidewalks are designed to handle strollers, walkers or wheelchairs; easy to use handles; accessible bathrooms with grab bars; change rooms with hooks and lockers at low heights; non-slip floors; and, showers with seats and shower chairs.
- Examine the way communities are growing. Community sprawl is not conducive to physical activity. People need to have easy access to services in their own area to encourage regular daily activity and on-going independence.

Functionality

- Create inviting spaces. Walking paths with lots of benches, shade, water fountains, garbage cans and gardens and indoor spaces with plants and lots of natural light.
- Build cycling paths that actually go somewhere and don't just end at busy roads with no bike lanes. These can become transportation corridors.
- Identify where bathrooms are on the trails. Add additional bathrooms in facilities where possible.

Do Your Research

Conduct an audit of the built environment and upcoming urban plans in your community (trails, parks, community centres, housing developments) to identify modifications to make these areas safer, more accessible and more functional for the entire population, including women 55–70.

Helpful Tools

World Health Organization Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities

http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Age_friendly_cities_checklist.pdf

Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/pubs/age_friendly_rural/pdf/AFRRRC_en.pdf

Why People Don't Walk and What City Planners Can do About it

http://www.lgc.org/freepub/PDF/Land_Use/focus/plan_to_walk.pdf

The Health Impacts of Urban Sprawl

<http://www.ocfp.on.ca/local/files/Urban%20sprawl/UrbanSprawl-Obesity.pdf>

Active Living By Design Community Action Model

<http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/index.php?id=293>

Women's Community Safety Audit Guide

http://www.femmesetvilles.org/pdf-general/WISE_new%20safety%20audit%20guide.pdf



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For more information on the CAAWS Women 55–70 and Physical Activity project please contact caaws@caaws.ca or visit the website at: www.caaws.ca/women55plus/index.cfm

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