

Age-Friendly Walk Audit Report

Site: The Historic District of the City of Dublin | Date: April 7, 2023

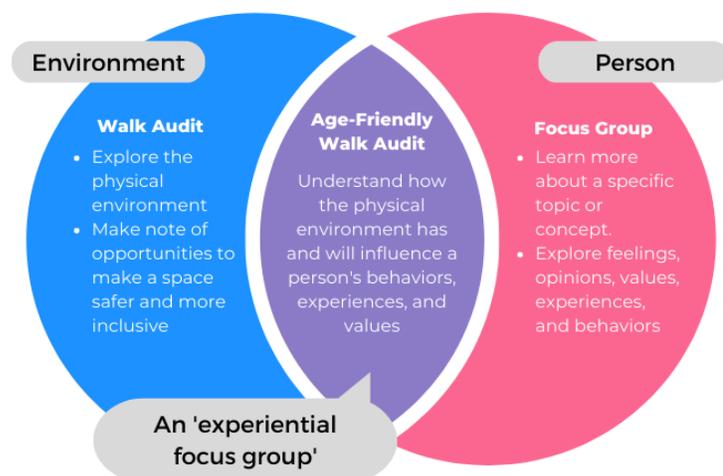
INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Age-Friendly Innovation Center (AFIC) is to innovate with older adults through research, education, and engagement to ensure inclusion and build resiliency to make communities more age-friendly.¹

About Walk Audits

A **walk audit** (also called a walk study or walkability assessment) is a systematic approach to looking at the streets, sidewalks, and physical activity spaces in a neighborhood. Typically, walk audits consider things like where you feel safest walking and where people like walking the most to help plan the route. This information is then used to create a walking map of the area for residents and visitors and used to advocate for infrastructure updates. Walk Audits are conducted with residents of the neighborhood or employees of a local business interested in improving the walkability of their community. Walk Audits are also an important way to share community concerns about neighborhood conditions with local municipalities, area leaders, and other community members.

An **Age-Friendly Walk Audit** acknowledges a community's history, recent and planned infrastructure changes, and past transportation and mobility experiences of the participants. It also considers a concept called Person-Environment Fit, or P-E Fit. It seeks to understand the match between an environment (including the physical and social contexts) and a person (or group of people) and their unique values, needs, and perspectives. Ultimately, an Age-Friendly Walk Audit combines the foundational components of a walk audit and a focus group.²



¹ <https://agefriendlycolumbus.org/>

² Age-Friendly Walk Audit Toolkit: <https://bit.ly/AgeFriendlyWalkAuditToolkit>

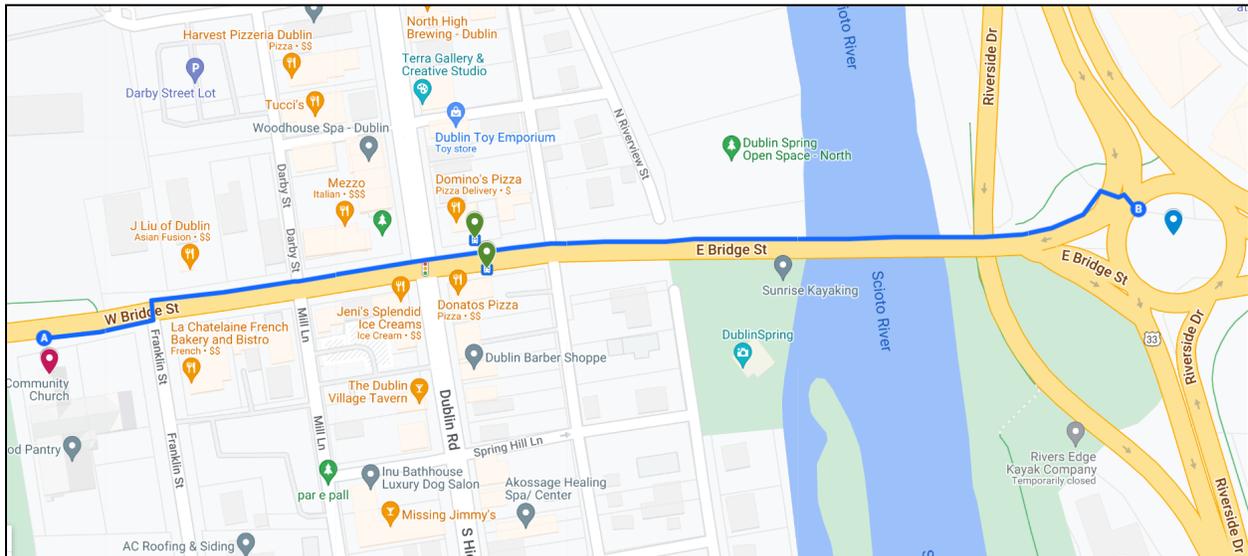
Walk Audit Route

Date: Friday, April 7, 2023, 10am-12pm ET

Number of Participants: 19 people total

- 5 older adults
- 5 members of Age-Friendly Columbus
- 2 representatives from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
- 2 consultants with the City of Dublin
- 5 members of the City of Dublin’s Planning and Development Team

Description: This audit traversed approximately 0.4 miles through the City of Dublin’s Historic District along East Bridge Street (OH-161) and ended at the roundabout where E. Bridge Street intersects Riverside Drive. The audit focused on safety and access to local commercial destinations along E. Bridge Street in the Historic District and across the bridge leading to the more recently developed Bridge Park district, which has more updated infrastructure and a plethora of commercial destinations. This audit also assessed the safety and accessibility of the roundabout.



[Age-Friendly Walk Audit - Dublin, OH, 2023](#)

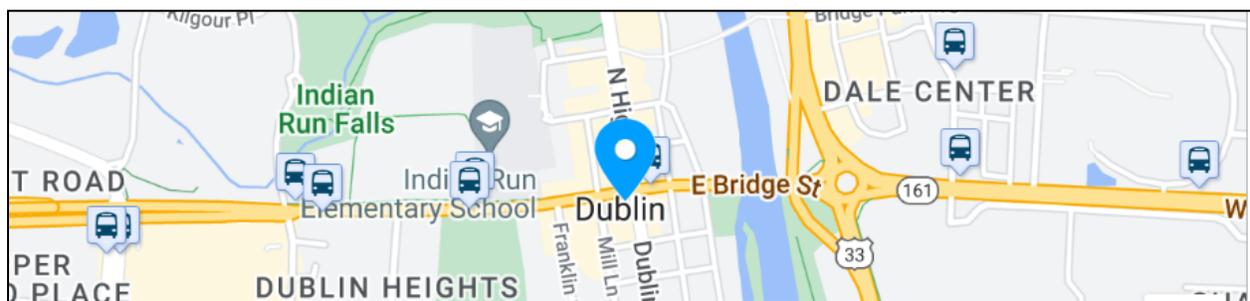
SITE PRE-SCREENING

Walk Score

A Walk Score®³ was obtained at 1 West Bridge Street (**74 out of 100**). The area is deemed “very walkable,” meaning “most errands can be accomplished on foot.” The associated Bike Score (**36 out of 100**) speaks to the lack of versatility this route offers to pedestrians who (whether or not by choice) do not ambulate on foot and/or require the use of a mobility aid (i.e. walker, rollator, wheelchair, scooter). As one planner pointed out, a mother pushing her child in a stroller would have difficulty moving along the eastbound sidewalk. Furthermore, recent construction projects warrant the need for additional signage for detours for drivers. While the signs are placed in ideal locations for a ‘car-centric’ environment, pedestrians must navigate the environment while being mindful of large apparatuses that obstruct sidewalks and make it difficult to ambulate safely.



Nearby Public Transit



While a Transit Score was not generated, participants did note the presence of fixed-route transit lines that run along E. Bridge Street. These allow for safer mobility and access to businesses beyond the audited route.

Two Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) bus stops were encountered during this audit:

- Bus Stop # 7952, Lines 33 and 73
- Bus Stop #7705, Line 33 and 73

³ <https://www.walkscore.com/>

WALK AUDIT FINDINGS

Community Assets - Summary

- The Historic Dublin District is a remarkable architectural and engineering feat that has integrated modern and commercial infrastructure into a space while still paying tribute to the original landscape, design, and presence of the past.
- When funding is allocated to update and modernize a space, planners, architects, and engineers must work together to not only preserve the history and existing infrastructure but also ensure new infrastructure meets the physical, social, and economic demands of modern-day life.
- The Historic Dublin District allows pedestrians to access shops, restaurants, and businesses with good walkability and accessibility.
- The decorative block paving that runs along these buildings is well-maintained in most areas, particularly in more recent installments such as the walkway between the bridge over the Scioto River and the roundabout at the intersection of 161 and Riverside Drive.
- Crosswalks are spaced out appropriately to allow easy access to both sides of the street. They are also clearly marked and have audible and visual cues for pedestrian right-of-way.
- Tactile domes are installed at both ends of blocks before streets.
- There is generally good wayfinding infrastructure and signage throughout the audited route to help individuals navigate the environment and easily find their desired destination.

Community Opportunities- Summary

- Participants identified walkability and safety as major concerns, citing that the narrow width and upkeep of several sections of the sidewalks were not conducive to mobility either on foot or using a mobility aid (walker, wheelchair, rollator, etc.).
- This car-centric environment places undue demand on pedestrians to have heightened attention to drivers and oncoming traffic—especially in areas of high exposure/minimal buffering between pedestrians and motor vehicles.
 - Furthermore, high volume and fast traffic left several residents feeling anxious while walking during this audit.
- People with an unstable walking gait who are prone to a loss of balance or who use a mobility device would have a particularly difficult time walking in this area and would be more at risk for falls and possible injury.

AUDIT PHOTOS



Image 1: Rectangular, cement planters line the walkway along Bridge Street. They are set back from the road by about 2-3 feet, effectively narrowing the pedestrian walkway.



Image 2: Tactile panels are in the direction of travel.



Image 3: Pedestrian crosswalk to cross Bridge Street. Crosswalk is well-marked with tactile panels positioned in the direction of travel.



Image 4: Intersection of High Street and Bridge Street (OH-161)

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Image 5: Sidewalk on the eastbound side of Bridge Street. The path is well-maintained. A bus stop, a single sign in the ground, is placed roughly two feet from the road. It does not have a shelter, bench, or trashcan. There is no curb or buffer between traffic lanes and the edge of the road. Only 2-3 feet of grass separates this walkway and the road's edge.



Image 6: The eastbound sidewalk along Bridge Street abruptly ends just before the bridge.



Image 7: Bus Stop #7705, Lines 33 and 73; the stop lacks a shelter, trashcan, or stop-specific lighting. There is no place for pedestrians to sit at this stop.



Image 8: Construction signage is placed along roadways but obstructs the walkway for pedestrians, becoming a possible trip hazard. Individuals using a mobility device (wheelchair, walker, scooter, stroller, etc.) would have difficulty navigating this walkway.

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Image 9: The intersection at High Street and Bridge Street includes well-marked crosswalks. Tactile panels are not ADA-compliant. A Dublin walk audit participant suggested implementing a scramble light for this intersection.



Image 10: Businesses that line the westbound sidewalk of Bridge Street have shallow driveways that allow traffic to enter and exit. Construction signage obstructs the walkway.



Image 11: The sidewalk along OH-161 is wider and generally well-maintained.



Image 12: The tactile panels are not ADA-compliant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Mid-Block Pedestrian Beacon:** This crossing would benefit from a 20-30 second duration for pedestrians to have ample time to cross safely. One pedestrian described it as “not a safe crossing” as many drivers did not stop despite the visual cue (flashing lights). Residents also suggested repainting the markings. A member of the Columbus Advisory Council on Disability Issues (CACDI) suggested installing a pedestrian hybrid beacon (PHB), which includes a “red phase” to signal motorists to stop when pedestrians wish to cross.
- **Bridge Crossing Scioto River:** Pedestrians felt exposed when walking along this bridge while facing oncoming traffic. Seasonal planters are placed along the edge of the sidewalk. These were not present on the date of this audit. While this bridge allows pedestrians to cross the river to access the updated Bridgeway District, many participants did not feel safe either crossing this bridge or the roundabout. It was suggested signage is installed to guide pedestrians toward the footbridge as a safer alternative path. It is recommended this signage is placed by N. High Street and encourages pedestrians to detour down N. High Street as this has the most inclusive and walkable infrastructure. Residents and Dublin personnel also noticed the staircase to the path underneath the bridge is inaccessible for those using a wheeled-mobility device (or even a mother with a stroller).
- **Sidewalks:** Well-maintained, wider sidewalks make for a safer and more accessible avenue for travel as a pedestrian. There are planters lined along sidewalks that narrow the path and force some pedestrians to detour around the planters and toward the curb and passing traffic—a prime example of how the environment influences people’s actions and behaviors. In-ground planters are placed outside the Starbucks. One participant with a background in planning suggested replacing the in-ground planters with fencing to help create divisions while widening the walkway and removing a potential tripping hazard. The old-style brick pathways are visually appealing and contribute to the overall identity of the space. Participants did note that some tree roots and access tunnels to the sewage system have caused bricks to dislodge, crack, or become raised, which may become a tripping hazard for pedestrians.
- **ADA Detectable Warnings - Truncated Domes:** Participants noted the tactile panels are not ADA-compliant at the intersection of High Street and Bridge Street. More contrast is needed between the panel and the surrounding surface. Furthermore, ADA requires the panels to be placed in the direction of travel; since intersections are marked with crosswalks that are perpendicular to one another, a single panel between the two is insufficient according to ADA standards.

- **COTA Bus Stop:** Stop #7705 does not have a shelter or bench; however, one participant suggested a bench could be placed in the space just behind the stop on the corner of High Street and Bridge Street. Per the Age-Friendly Innovation Center’s 2022 Age-Friendly Transit report, community members identified shelters, lighting, and trashcans as important pieces of infrastructure to include at transit stops. Shelters were recognized as especially important among community members, both in surveys and focus groups. Besides physical comfort and protection from the weather, individuals who are visually impaired have a place to direct service animals or become more spatially aware through the use of auditory cues as sound bounces off the shelter better than a pole.⁴
 - To read the full report, please visit <https://agefriendlycolumbus.org/>.
- **Scramble Light at the Intersection of High and Bridge Streets:** A walk audit participant suggested installing a scramble light at this intersection to allow for enhanced pedestrian mobility. The existing intersection has a four-way traffic light and crosswalks with audible and visual cues to support the pedestrian right of way. Participants noted the time allotted to cross Bridge Street (~20 seconds to cross), which some participants felt was too quick. However, crossing North or South High Street had a much longer crossing time (~50 seconds) even though there were fewer lanes of traffic. Installing a scramble light may be a safer, more convenient alternative to manage pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic while increasing efficiency.
 - <https://www.bsu.edu/map/landmarks/scramble-light>
- **Roundabout at the intersection of Bridge Street and Riverside Drive:** A group of participants chose to audit the Roundabout. Most community residents chose not to as they felt it was too unsafe. While none of the participants were blind or had a visual impairment, roundabouts are not accessible to those who are. Audible cues need to be activated for rectangle rapid flashing beacons or PHBs. To enhance pedestrian safety and offer more time for drivers to exit the roundabout and acknowledge pedestrians who may be crossing, Dublin planners suggested moving the sidewalks away from the epicenter of the roundabout. There are pedestrian crossing beacons located around the roundabout. However, participants noticed a lack of effective visual and audible cues and lights to warn drivers. Some drivers failed to acknowledge and yield to pedestrians. The lighting around the crossing sign is minimal and may not be very visible to oncoming traffic—especially during particularly sunny days.

⁴ Sheldon, M., Murphy, I.E., Hyde, C., White, K., (2022). Age-friendly transit infrastructure: Defining and prioritizing fixed route stop improvements for Franklin County



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This audit would not have been possible without the guidance and oversight of Marisa Sheldon, MSW, LISW-S, Director of the Age-Friendly Innovation Center. I'd especially like to thank J.M. Rayburn, AICP, City of Dublin Planner, and Christine Nardecchia, City of Dublin's Director of Outreach & Engagement, who were incredibly kind and supportive of this endeavor from the very beginning, aiding in the identification, recruitment, and execution of this audit. I'd be remiss not to also thank the older community residents who joined us and were able to offer their own ideas and expertise to help inform our work. And, finally, I'd like to thank members of the Columbus Advisory Council on Disability Issues for informing the language and recommendations in this report.

This walk audit report was created by Nathan Grizenko, OTS, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctorate in occupational therapy at the Ohio State University.

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