



Photo Credit: Curious by Nature-WorldPress.com

AGE-FRIENDLY TRAILS

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1.0 Background

Walking serves as one of the most viable options for accessing social and economic opportunities in all parts of the world. Providing transportation infrastructure that encourages individuals to move from place to place is very rewarding especially in terms of health, environmental protection, and social interactions. Making this infrastructure available and accessible can help especially, older adults and persons with physical disabilities live more independent lives (Bhattacharya et al., 2019). Walking is one of the most active modes of transportation capable of supporting active ageing.

For this assignment, I considered four case studies. Three of them are from towns in Kentucky in the US. They are Berea, Livingston, and Morehead. The fourth case study is from Portage La Prairie in Manitoba, Canada. These four towns have unique walking trail systems which are very accessible with age-friendly features which can be adopted in the town of Neepawa.

This is a walking trail in Berea, one of the trail towns in Kentucky.



Photo Credit: S. Rogers 2019

Figure 1: A walking trail through Berea

2.0 Case Studies

2.1.1 Berea

The many economic and social activities along the trail in Berea draw people from all walks of life to use it. For instance, they have set up an art gallery along the trail which attracts people to experience the art and culture of the town (Rogers et al, 2019). The trail is used for walking and cycling since it is located along the TransAmerica bicycle trail. In addition to promoting health, the Trail Town program aims to encourage residents to become more active through trail visits (Best Walking Trails in Berea, n.d.). Figure 1 shows the walking trail through Berea.

2.1.2 Livingston

As a trail town, Livingston provides a very warm and receptive environment for both residents and visitors. This trail is also multi-purpose in nature with 2.2 miles of asphalt and 6.5 miles of gravel for strolls, riding, or hiking. The trail system in Livingston incorporates an accessible washrooms and service area. Livingston views the Trail Town project as a tool in revitalizing their downtown area (Rogers et al, 2019). Figure 2 shows the trail path in Livingston.



Figure 2: A walking trail in Livingston



Photo Credit:

Figure 5: Accessible trail sign



Photo Credit: via PQQ / Shutterstock.com

Figure 6: A walking path with an outdoor bench

2.1.3 Morehead

Morehead showcases the re-routed Sheltopee Trace National Recreation Trail, the trail contributes significantly to the tourism efforts of Morehead. This has resulted in a collaboration between the tourism board and other volunteer groups to manage and maintain the trail (Best Walking Trails in Morehead, n.d.). It is designed for runners, cyclists and for people who enjoy walking. The local hospital's presence on the team is particularly interesting, demonstrating the role of active transportation (trails) in promoting health and wellbeing. Figure 3 shows the trail path of Morehead.



Photo Credit: S. Rogers 2019

Figure 3: Trail sign at Morehead

2.1.4 Portage La Prairie Crescent Lake Walking & Biking Path

The Trail in Portage la Prairie provides an incredible avenue for walking, jogging, and biking. The surface is well paved, making it convenient and accessible for older adults. People who like walking with their pets are welcome, however, the pets must be on leashes. The trail is age-friendly allowing people in different age categories to use it conveniently and safely. It is also very accessible in all seasons of the year. Portage Service for Seniors Outdoor Gym Stations are located along the crescent (Portage Walking Paths – Stride Place, n.d.). Figure 4 shows the multi-purpose trail in Portage la Prairie with a bench.



Figure 4: Walking trail with a bench along the Crescent Lake

3.0 Lessons Learned From The Case Studies

1. All the towns considered in this study have a multi-purpose trail system which underscores the varying needs of different population groups.
2. The case study towns showcase diverse experiences, including commercial enterprises, arts, culture, and recreation. Trail Towns cater to various users, benefiting from regional trails and hill or riverfront communities.
3. The walking path in Portage offers physical activities such as gyms for seniors which can enhance their health and wellbeing.

4.0 Need for an Age-Friendly Walking Trails for the People of Neepawa

During our first meeting with some of the older adults in Neepawa, some of them said they were actively involved in morning and evening strolls. Providing an Age-friendly walking trail in Neepawa will help make strolls very easy for older adults

Figure 7: Portage la Prairie walking path.



Photo Credit: Portage walking path-stride place

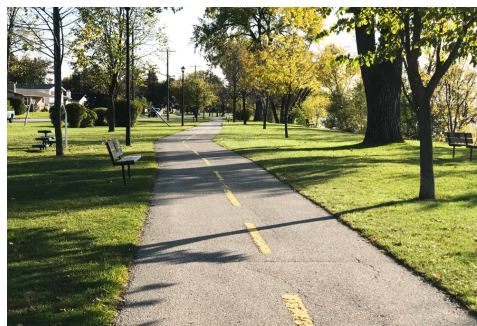


Photo Credit: Portage walking path-stride place

Figure 8: A walking trail with a bench in Portage la Prairie

and encourage social activities among them. This can be very instrumental in ensuring intergenerational and intercultural cohesion as people from different age groups and cultures will be allowed to use this trail system. Stated below are some of the short-term impacts of providing an accessible walking trail in the town of Neepawa.

1. Improved health: a reduction in health-related issues
2. An avenue for social and communal interactions
3. An opportunity to enjoy nature/natural environment.
4. Provide safe routes to various amenities in the town.

5.0 Final Thoughts

1. The Kentucky trail offer useful insights on the benefits of trails. From the three study towns in Kentucky, there are various sights to be hold while using the trail including historic buildings, restaurants and parks.
2. The Portage La Prairie crescent walking path is an example of an age-friendly walking trail which can be replicated in Neepawa with its smooth surfce and multi-purpose nature.
3. Providing an age-friendly walking trail within and around Neepawa can help residents and visitors to see and appreciate the beauty of the town.
4. For older adults especially, age-friendly trails will offer an opportunity for exercise and physical activity which is necessary in reducing undesirable health conditions.

6.0 Conclusion

Walking predates dates human civilizations and other contemporary modes of mobility. Providing trail systems and networks in towns and communities can play a very significant role in contributing to health, social participation, and ecological protection. Providing an accessible and age-friendly trail system in Neepawa can help older adults to age in place while staying healthy.

Providing an age-friendly trail in Neepawa will also boost tourism in the town of Neepawa since it will enable visitors to appreciate the natural and tourist attractions in the town such us the bird sanctuary.

Sources:

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