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Efforts in making Port a walkable city

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What makes Port Colborne a walkable community?

According to Paul Young, a representative from WalkON, a community partnership of Heart Health projects from Central West Ontario that engages the creation of environments that support walk, the canal city would have to have plenty of amenities within walking distance, an adequate balance between roadways and sidewalks/trails, and esthetically pleasing neighbourhoods that draw people to support the "pedestrian experience."

Those are some examples Young gave as about 30 members of the community gathered at Wilson Archives Oct. 6 for a public workshop on how to make Port Colborne a walkable community.

The workshop was hosted by Safe Communities Port Colborne, a non-profit organization aimed at mounting coordinated, collaborative programmes designed to reduce pain and cost of injury and promote a culture of safety for residents.

Young said today's society has evolved from an era of 80 years where the focus has been on motorized transportation.

"As the distances get longer, fewer people want to walk," Young said. "This leads to health problems like obesity. If you ask people what they want to do in the community, they often list walking as one of their top interests. Most municipalities don't often make enough investments in such things as walking trails."

Young said statistics show that 75 per cent of children want to walk or cycle to schools, but as urban sprawl increases, the distance between homes and schools grows.

Young also said the ways lands are zoned in municipalities are often in clusters that are spread out, and do not mix residential area with commercial zones.

"Large scale zoning means communities are no longer together and in walking distance," Young said.

"There needs to be places where people can meet. These are the sidewalks, the front porches and cafes."

The workshop included a walking tour of Port Colborne's downtown area to gain feedback from those in attendance on what improvements can be made. It also included guest speakers such as Lindsay Richardson, community policy planner for the City of Port Colborne, who discussed how ongoing work is underway to improve active transportation in the community.



Efforts in making Port a walkable city. Lori Kleinsmith, right, program coordinator for Safe Communities Port Colborne, leads a walking tour of about 30 people down King Street to seek input on how to make the city a more walkable community Oct. 6. *EDDIE CHAU/STAFF PHOTO*

“The region has policies in place that deal specifically with cycling. They’re very proactive to cycling and active communities,” Richardson said. “Port Colborne is currently has provisions in its Official Plan for walking and cycling policies in place. It’s definitely a positive thing for the city.”

Lori Kleinsmith, program coordinator for Safe Communities Port Colborne, said the group has worked on ways of addressing issues of accessible communities. Kleinsmith said the organization has groups looking at issues to make the community a safe one for residents to commute and enjoy.

All feedback from the workshop will be used to hold further workshops on making Port Colborne a safer accessible community.

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