WALKABILITY DAY
Tampa Bay

Florida Department of Health – Hillsborough County

Community Opinions and Perceptions Report

Florida HEALTH
Hillsborough County

www.hillscountyhealth.org

Walkability Day Tampa Bay
Community Opinions and Perceptions Report

Background
According to Florida Charts two-thirds of adults in Hillsborough County weigh more than they should. Hillsborough County also has high rates of physical inactivity. With only 28.6% of the population participating in vigorous activity and 25.3% reporting that they are sedentary. [1] These stats make it clear that county residents need to be more physically active.

With multiple demands competing for individual or family's time, physical activity needs to be easy, affordable and accessible to assure the greatest participation. Walking and biking are activities almost everyone can use to increase their physical activity. Yet for many, these are not ideal options due to lack of access, dilapidated or unkempt facilities and traffic or safety issues. In fact, according to one survey parts of our county were described as car-dependent with a walk score of 28 out of 100. [2] While many of these problems have simple solutions, others require more resources. The good news is that the return on investment is significant even with improvements related to the more complicated concerns. There is scientific evidence that providing access to places for physical activity like walking and biking, increases the level of physical activity in a community, ultimately reducing chronic diseases and their related healthcare costs. [3] The economic and social benefits of walkable communities have also been well established. [4,5,6,7]

The Florida Department of Health - Hillsborough County is a leading member of Partners in Obesity Prevention, a community coalition focused on reducing the prevalence of obesity in Hillsborough County. One of the coalition's main objectives is to increase community physical activity levels. To meet this objective the Physical Activity subgroup initiated Walkability Day Tampa Bay in 2014. Walkability is defined as a measure of how friendly an area is for walking. The main goal of Walkability Day was to promote physical activity and emphasize its benefits. The event encouraged citizens throughout the county to utilize a consumer-friendly walk-audit checklist to assess the walkability of their neighborhoods. It was anticipated that this event would heighten their awareness of the resources and local assets available to be physically active. For neighborhoods that were not as "activity friendly" information on available options was provided. Further, all participants would be better informed on the need to be physically active and how it relates to overall health and well-being. Secondarily, the responses provided aspects of the walk's safety and desirability from a resident's perspective; which could be used to help direct an action plan to increase walkability and physical activity levels throughout our county.

Methods

On May 3, 2014, residents of Hillsborough County were encouraged to join our efforts by taking a walk and completing a short seven-question checklist (Appendix A), adapted from the checklist developed by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC), [8] on the walkability of their route. Along with the primary intent of encouraging individuals to be more active where they live, work, learn and play, we also wanted a resident's perspective. This perspective could then drive the secondary part of the effort – catalyze and enhance community-based efforts to increase walkability in Hillsborough County by connecting local leaders and planners with the perspective of community members. It was hoped that the completed checklists would highlight walkability issues and successes within Hillsborough to help develop an action plan for projects and initiatives that would improve walkability within our county.

To encourage participation, local newspapers, news broadcasts and radio spots served as key marketing venues. Outreach efforts were made to the county's neighborhood association group to encourage neighborhood buy-in and participation. Outreach included participation in the 2014 Annual Neighborhoods Conference, email blasts and networking with various neighborhood associations. In addition, email blasts and announcements were made to other community partners through the Partners in Obesity Prevention.

To assist with data collection, the checklist was made available online in a digital format. For those unable to access the online version, the checklist was distributed in paper format through the local newspapers and to individual neighborhood associations.

Once submitted and received, the results were processed to show participants' responses to the checklist and where they were conducted. Participants provided a zip code and route of walk to indicate location. Questions 1 through 5 were "yes/no" answers; with 4 of the 5 asking for more details if "no" was selected. Each of these 5 questions then asked participants to rate their route in regards to the question on a scale of 1 to 6; with 1 being awful and 6 being excellent. To indicate problems, participants could select from a list of general issues or write in their own. In addition, the location of each indicated problem was requested.

Results

A total of 112 checklists were submitted via the online form, the US postal service and fax. Of these, 108 were completed within Hillsborough County. Checklist locations represented 33 of Hillsborough's 56 zip codes (see Figure 1).

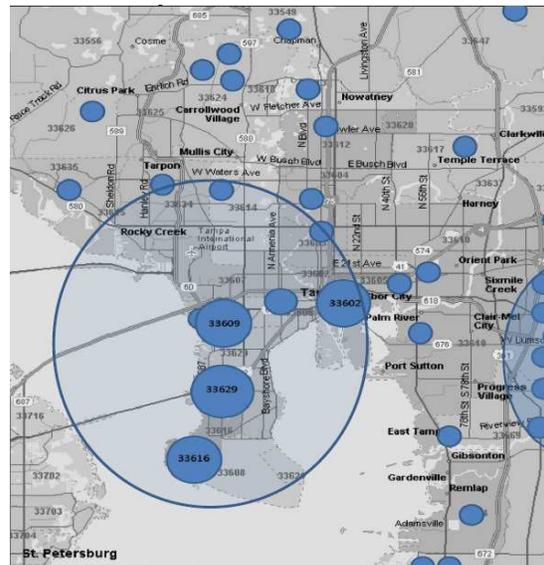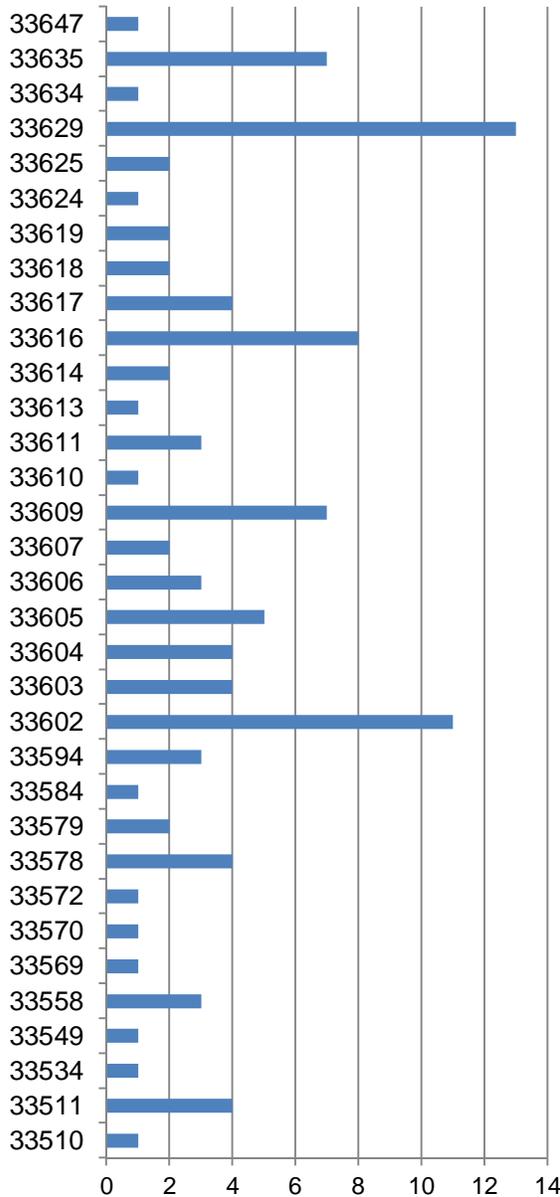**Figure 1: Submitted Checklists by Zip Code**

Figure 2: Proportional Dot Map of Submitted Checklists

Larger bubbles represent a larger participation count; this map shows more participation in urban areas with dense population.

The following pages summarize the results for each of the 7 questions on the walkability audit checklist.

1. Did you have room to walk?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No, there are some problems**
- ☐ Sidewalks or paths started and stopped
- ☐ Sidewalks were broken or cracked
- ☐ Sidewalks were blocked with poles, signs, shrubbery, dumpsters, etc.
- ☐ No sidewalks, paths, or shoulders
- ☐ Too much traffic
- ☐ Something else _____

A total of 31 (27.7%) submitted checklists indicated "yes" they had room to walk. The majority, 81 (72.3%) reported "no, there were some problems." Figure 3 provides details on the proportion of respondents that experienced the listed problems. Responses to something else mostly related to sidewalks and traffic, but 3 stood out. The first highlighted drug dealers and prostitution (109th Avenue, 33612). The second was bus stops that were not connected to sidewalks (Hackney Drive & Providence Road, 33578). The third was an issue with the width of sidewalks not being friendly for wheelchairs or walkers (Covington Park Street, 33584).

The overall rating for having room to walk averaged to 3.2; where 1 represented awful there was no room for walking and 6 represented excellent there were no issues with room for walking (see Figure 4 for details).

Figure 3: Problems Preventing Room For Walking

	sidewalks start & stop	sidewalks broken	sidewalks blocked	no sidewalks	too much traffic	other
	46	30	13	42	30	17
	64.8%	42.3%	18.3%	59.2%	42.3%	23.9%
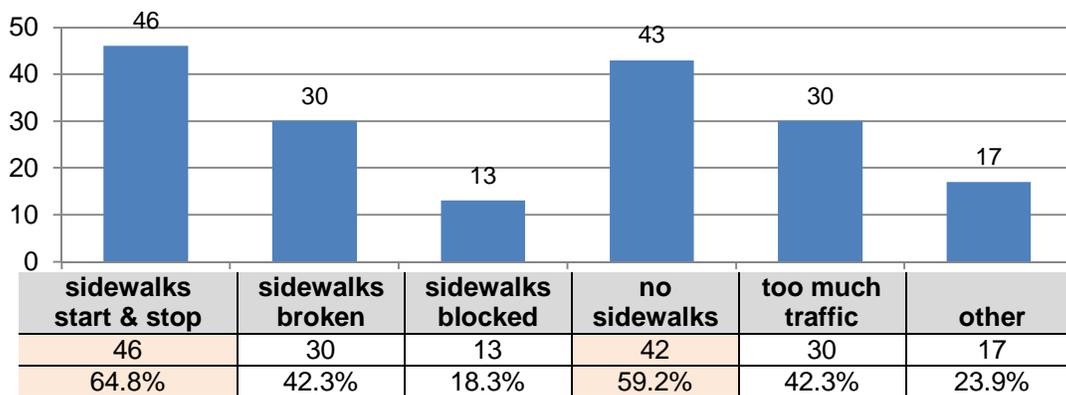
Figure 4: Ratings by Percent for Room to Walk
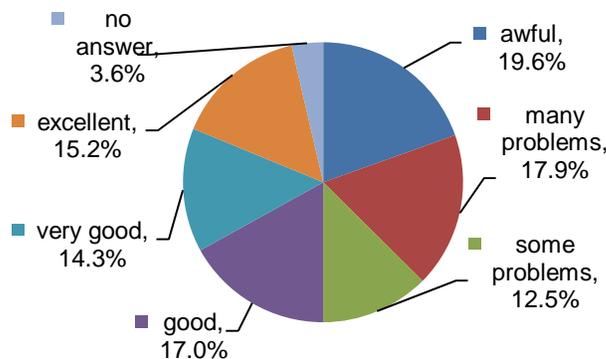
Total: 112   Average: 3.2

	#	%
1 - awful	22	19.6%
2 - many problems	20	17.9%
3 - some problems	14	12.5%
4 - good	19	17.0%
5 - very good	16	14.3%
6 - excellent	17	15.2%
no answer	4	3.6%

2. Was it easy to cross streets?

□ **Yes** □ **No, there are some problems**
    □ Road was too wide
    □ Traffic signals made us wait too long or did
       not give us enough time to cross
    □ Needed striped crosswalks or traffic signals
    □ Parked cars or trees blocked our view of
       traffic
    □ Needed curb ramps or ramps needed repair
    □ Something else _____

The majority of submitted checklists 69 (61.6%) indicated "yes" it was easy to cross streets. A total of 7 surveys did not answer the question.The remaining 36 (32.1%) reported "no, there are some problems." Figure 5 provides details on the proportion of respondents that experienced the listed problems. Responses to something else mostly related to traffic moving too fast and the need for cross walks or signals, but a few did stand out. The first highlighted a neighborhood being used as a cut through (Hilltop Drive, Woodview Drive, and Stanberry Drive to Sunset Drive, 33511). The second was vehicles refusing to yield to pedestrians (US 92 to MLK on Parsons, 33584). The third was reported blind spots caused by landscaping at subdivision entrances (Lakeshore, 33558).

The overall rating for ease of crossing the street averaged to 3.9; where 1 represented awful it was not easy crossing the street and 6 represented excellent there were no issues with crossing the street (see Figure 6 for details).

Figure 5: Problems with Crossing Streets

	road too wide	traffic signals	crosswalks or signals	blocked view	ramps or repair	other
	5	3	17	13	8	20
	13.9%	8.3%	47.2%	36.1%	22.2%	55.6%
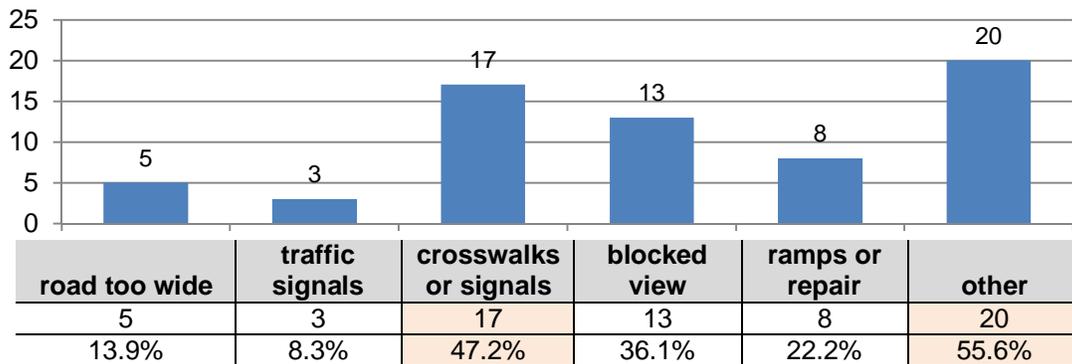
Figure 6: Ratings by Percent for Ease of Crossing Streets
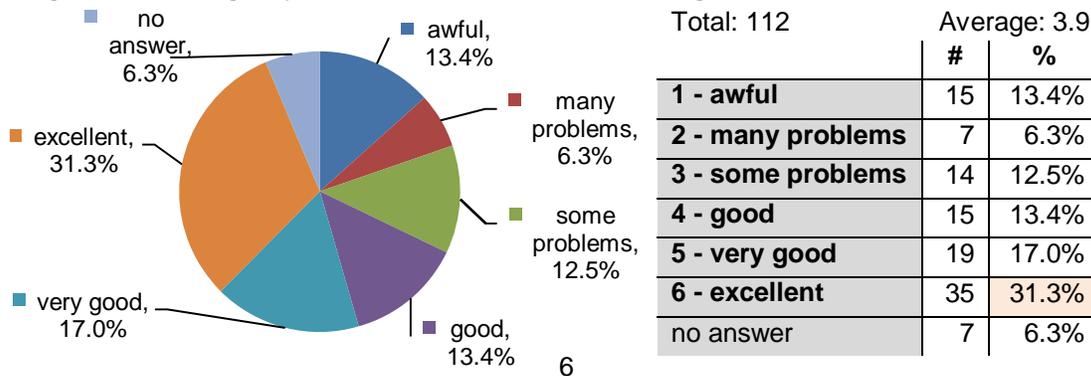
Total: 112		Average: 3.9
	#	**%**
1 - awful	15	13.4%
2 - many problems	7	6.3%
3 - some problems	14	12.5%
4 - good	15	13.4%
5 - very good	19	17.0%
6 - excellent	35	31.3%
no answer	7	6.3%

6

3. Did drivers behave well?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No, there are some problems: Drivers**
   ☐ Backed out of driveways without looking
   ☐ Did not yield to people crossing the street
   ☐ Turned into people crossing the street
   ☐ Drove too fast
   ☐ Sped up to make it through traffic lights or
      drove through traffic lights?
   ☐ Something else _____

A total of 51 (45.5%) submitted checklists indicated "yes" drivers behaved well. The remaining 61 (53.6%), the majority, reported "no, there are some problems: Drivers …" Figure 7 provides details on the proportion of respondents that experienced the listed problems. Many responses to something else were similar; with multiple reports of drivers speeding, rolling through stop signs, and not sharing the road with pedestrians or bikers. Manhattan Avenue and Grady Avenue both had multiple complaints on drivers.

The overall rating for ease of crossing the street averaged to 3.4; where 1 represented awful, drivers did not behave well and 6 represented excellent, there were no issues with driver behavior (see Figure 8 for details).
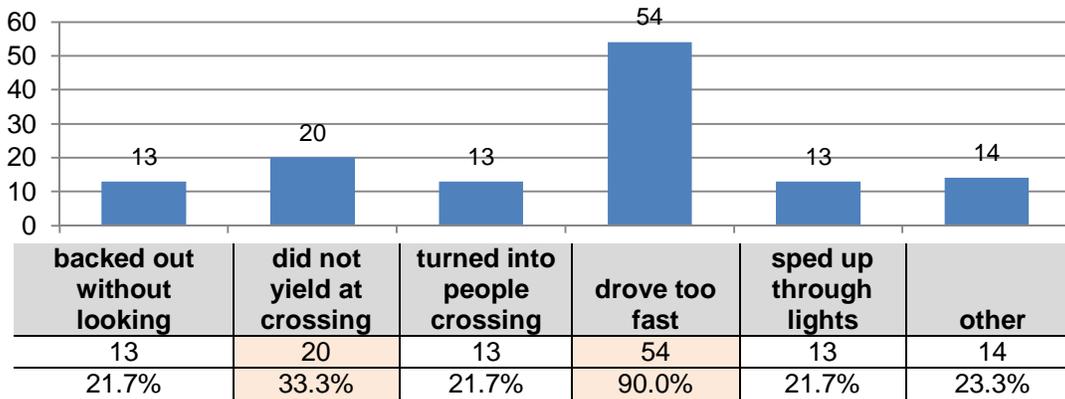
Figure 7: Problems with Drivers

backed out without looking	did not yield at crossing	turned into people crossing	drove too fast	sped up through lights	other
13	20	13	54	13	14
21.7%	33.3%	21.7%	90.0%	21.7%	23.3%

Figure 8: Ratings by Percent for Driver's Behavior
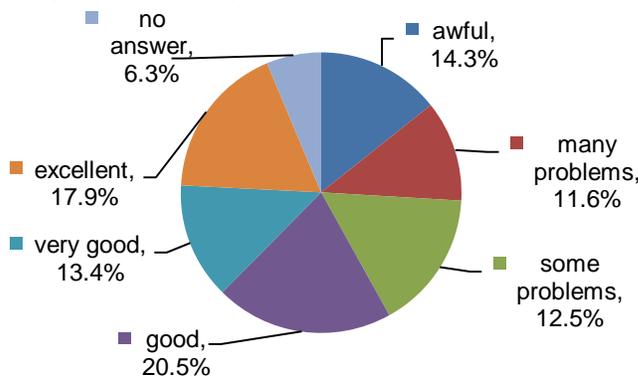
Total: 112   Average: 3.4

	#	%
1 - awful	16	14.3%
2 - many problems	13	11.6%
3 - some problems	18	16.1%
4 - good	23	20.5%
5 - very good	15	13.4%
6 - excellent	20	17.9%
no answer	7	6.3%

7

4. Was it easy to follow safety rules?

Could you and your child…	
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**	Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen by drivers?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**	Stop and look left, right and then left again before crossing streets?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**	Walk on sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic where there were no sidewalks?
☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**	Cross with the light?

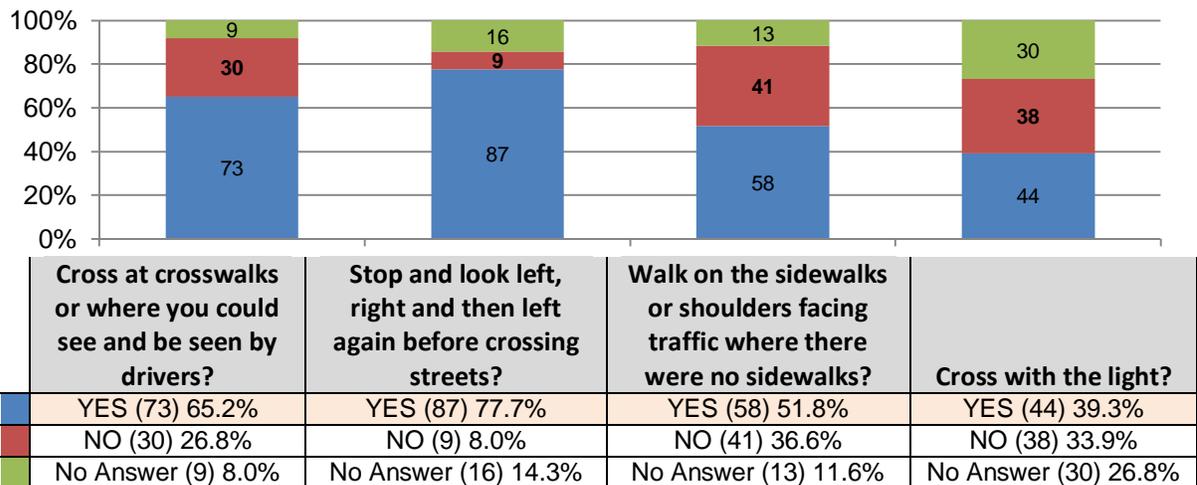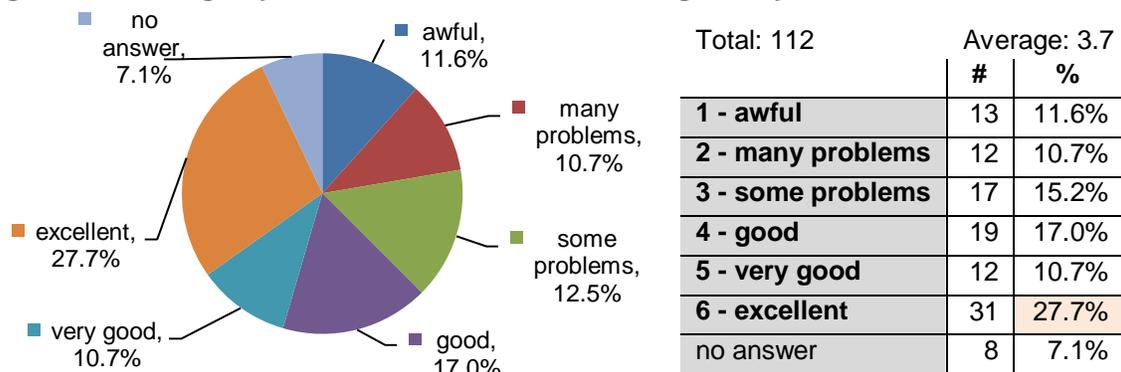Question 4 was a series of yes/no comments regarding the respondent's ability to follow safety rules. Figure 9 provides details on the proportion of respondents that answered "yes" or "no" and those that did not answer for each question.

The overall rating for ease of following safety rules averaged to 3.7; where 1 represented awful, I could not follow safety rules and 6 represented excellent, there were no issues with following safety rules (see Figure 10 for details).

Figure 9: Ability to Follow Safety Rules

	Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen by drivers?	Stop and look left, right and then left again before crossing streets?	Walk on the sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic where there were no sidewalks?	Cross with the light?
YES	YES (73) 65.2%	YES (87) 77.7%	YES (58) 51.8%	YES (44) 39.3%
NO	NO (30) 26.8%	NO (9) 8.0%	NO (41) 36.6%	NO (38) 33.9%
No Answer	No Answer (9) 8.0%	No Answer (16) 14.3%	No Answer (13) 11.6%	No Answer (30) 26.8%

Figure 10: Ratings by Percent for Ease of Following Safety Rules

Total: 112 — Average: 3.7

	#	%
1 - awful	13	11.6%
2 - many problems	12	10.7%
3 - some problems	17	15.2%
4 - good	19	17.0%
5 - very good	12	10.7%
6 - excellent	31	27.7%
no answer	8	7.1%

5. Was your walk pleasant?

☐ **Yes**   ☐ **No, there are some problems**
  ☐ Needed more grass, flowers, or trees
  ☐ Scary dogs
  ☐ Scary people
  ☐ Not well lighted
  ☐ Dirty, lots of litter or trash
  ☐ Dirty air due to automobile exhaust
  ☐ Something else _____

More than half of the submitted checklists 59 (52.7%) indicated "yes" their walk was pleasant. A total of 9 surveys did not answer this question. The remaining 44 (39.3%) reported "no, there are some problems." Figure 11 provides details on the proportion of respondents that experienced each of the listed problems. Many responses to something else related to missing or unfinished sidewalks and poor lighting. However, there were other safety issues reported. On the 3100 block of W. Horatio Street (33609) bar patrons using the neighborhood as a parking solution return to their vehicles intoxicated. The North Center Drive (33604) neighborhood reports high levels of crime being an issue. Finally, on Parsons, between MLK and US 92 (33584), there was a report of panhandlers being a constant issue.

The overall rating for ease of following safety rules averaged to 3.6; where 1 represented awful, the walk was not pleasant and 6 represented excellent, the walk was very enjoyable (see Figure 12 for details).
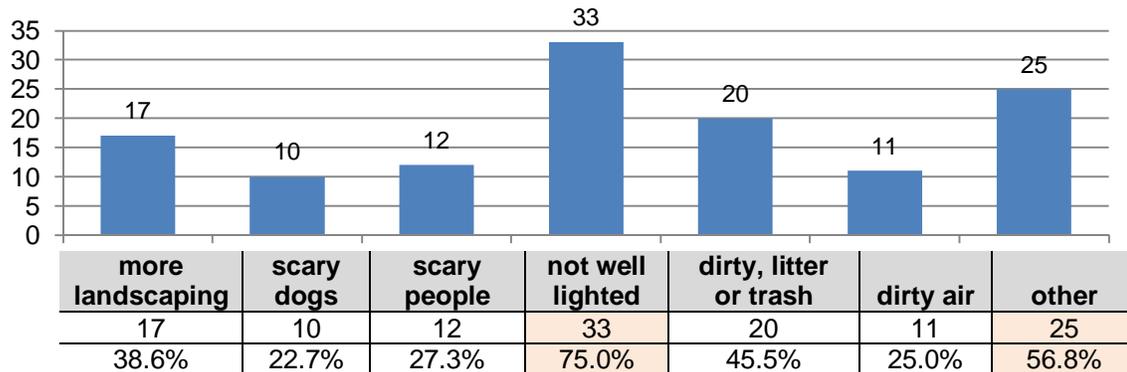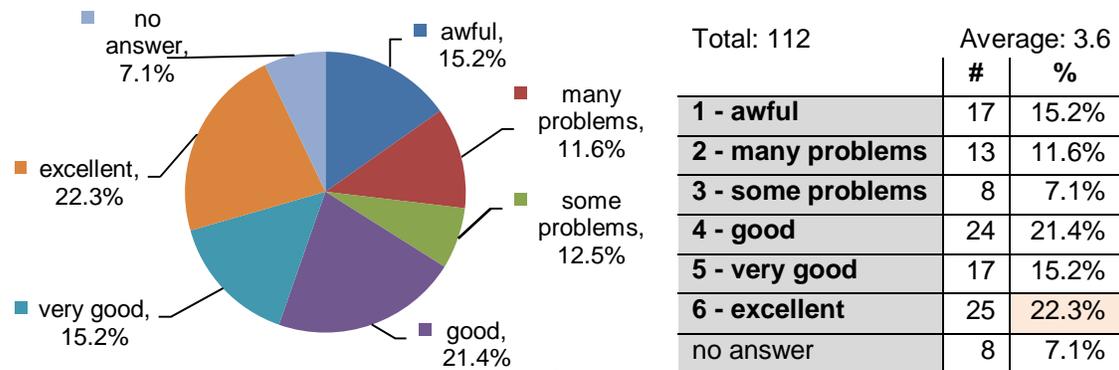
Figure 11: Problems with Pleasantness of Walk

	more landscaping	scary dogs	scary people	not well lighted	dirty, litter or trash	dirty air	other
	17	10	12	33	20	11	25
	38.6%	22.7%	27.3%	75.0%	45.5%	25.0%	56.8%

Figure 12: Ratings by Percent for Pleasantness of Walk

no answer, 7.1%
awful, 15.2%
many problems, 11.6%
excellent, 22.3%
some problems, 12.5%
very good, 15.2%
good, 21.4%

Total: 112   Average: 3.6

	#	%
1 - awful	17	15.2%
2 - many problems	13	11.6%
3 - some problems	8	7.1%
4 - good	24	21.4%
5 - very good	17	15.2%
6 - excellent	25	22.3%
no answer	8	7.1%

9

6. How does your neighborhood stack up?

Add up your ratings and decide.
- ☐ **26–30** Celebrate! You have a great neighborhood for walking.
- ☐ **21–25** Celebrate a little. Your neighborhood is pretty good.
- ☐ **16–20** Okay, but it needs work.
- ☐ **11–15** It needs lots of work. You deserve better than that.
- ☐ **5–10** It's a disaster for walking!

A total of 107 respondents rated their neighborhood. Of these responses, almost 25% rated their neighborhood as great for walking. However, an overall average rating of 19 was reported; which falls into the "Okay, but needs work" category (see Figure 13 for details).

In addition, question 6 asked, "**What does 'Walkability' mean to you?**" Responses were categorized by major themes and could contain multiple themes depending on the response. A total of 84 responses were given. The most common theme was related to the ability to walk safely (81%), followed by the ability to enjoy the neighborhood (34.5%). Figure 14 provides details on the themes and proportion of respondents that reported them.

Figure 13: Ratings by Percent for How Your Neighborhood Stacks Up

Total: 112   Average Rating: 19

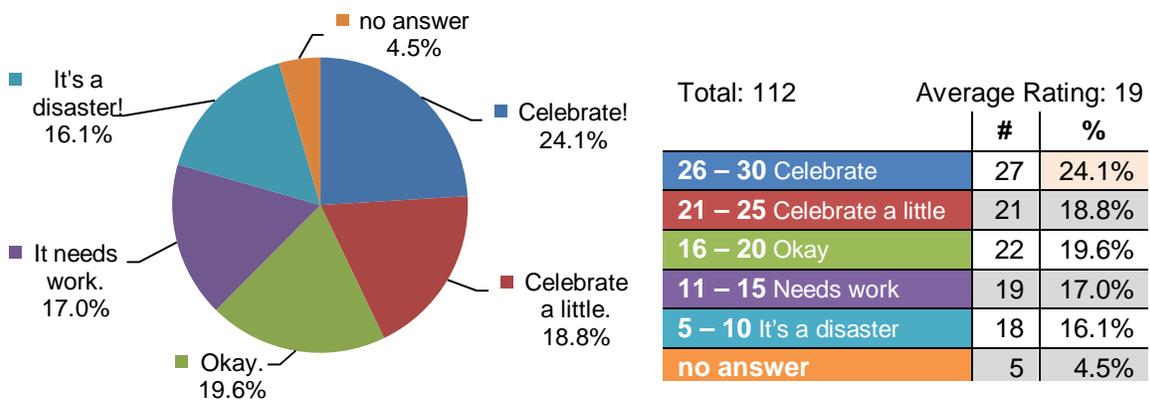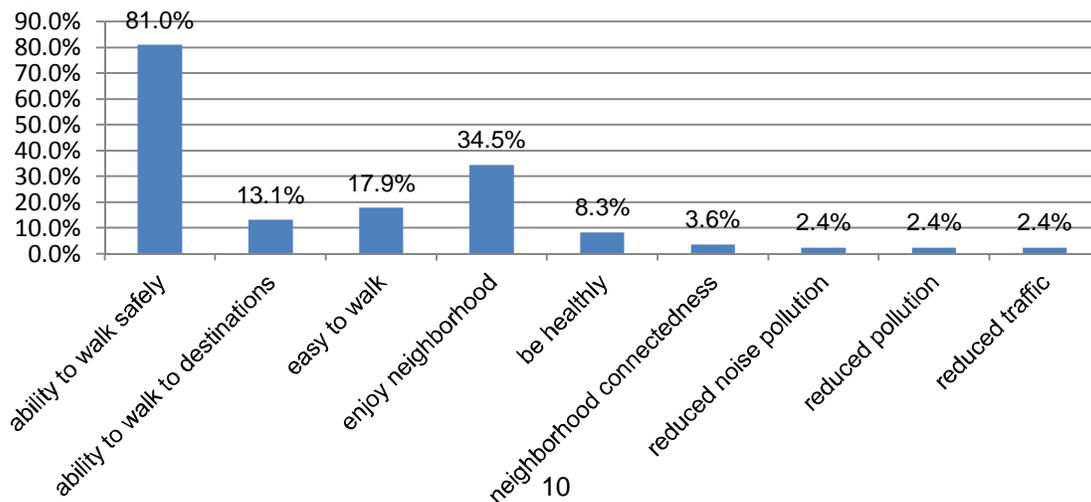|	#	%
26 – 30 Celebrate	27	24.1%
21 – 25 Celebrate a little	21	18.8%
16 – 20 Okay	22	19.6%
11 – 15 Needs work	19	17.0%
5 – 10 It's a disaster	18	16.1%
no answer	5	4.5%

Figure 14: Themes from What Walkability Means by Percent

7. What do you think would improve your neighborhood's walkability?

A total of 99 responses were given for this question with 167 specific requests. Of these requests, the majority of all comments were related to sidewalks (49.7%). Respondents requested adding sidewalks (23.4%), repairing them (8.9%) or connecting them (9.0%). Specific requests for new sidewalks were made for Cain Road, Grady Avenue, Bay Avenue, Old Memorial Highway, Sydney Road and Valrico Road. Requests for connecting sidewalks were made for Bay Avenue to Dale Mabry, Forest Lakes Boulevard to Westchase, Eisenhower Middle School to East Bay High School and connecting the Upper Tampa Bay Trail to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Additional sidewalk improvements were highlighted by other respondents, including more shade, benches, lights and drinking fountains. Safety measures also made it to the list (8.9%). Requests for additional crosswalks or walking bridges to cross major traffic roads were made for bikes and pedestrians. Signs to alert drivers, as well as bikes and pedestrians, were other suggestions. To accommodate individuals using wheelchairs, walkers or strollers, requests for wider sidewalks were made.

To address drivers and traffic, many requests were made for ways to reduce drivers using neighborhoods as a cut through and to reduce/enforce neighborhood traffic speeds. Traffic and safety on major roads were issues. Managing traffic flow on Manhattan Avenue was requested by respondents in multiple zip code areas. Other areas suggested for managing traffic flow were Westshore Boulevard, Bay to Bay Boulevard and El Prado Boulevard.

Discussion

Almost 25% of respondents rated their walk in the "Celebrate" category (26-30) and the average reported rating was 19, falling in the "Okay, but needs work" category.

According to responses for "what walkability means to you," it is clear that respondents understood the concept of walkability and its many dimensions. While there were many positives identified, the overall consensus was that some improvements are needed.

Based on participant feedback, improvements are needed to the infrastructure in some neighborhoods that will require the resources and involvement of county and city government, as well as time to be addressed. These include sidewalk additions and repairs, improved lighting and changes in crosswalks and signals. Illegal activity, trash, landscaping issues and speeding concerns also were expressed by residents and can be more easily and directly addressed.

Despite the question, we found many responses focused on sidewalk issues. According to the Florida Department of Transportation, "by providing facilities that are more comfortable, we can increase the number of trips made by walking." [9] As walking is one of the easiest ways for people to get physical activity every day, finding a way to make walking areas safe, comfortable and accessible for all is a vital aspect to increasing the county's health.

Limitations of this intervention include the participation of a small percent of the county's population, all zip codes were not represented and some not adequately so. Additionally, participation was highest and most representative of Hillsborough's urban areas.

Future efforts will be given to increasing participation in walkability audit events to ensure that findings more fully represent the opinions of all our county residents.

Conclusion

Walkability is "a measure of how friendly an area is to walking" and other community activities. Research indicates that health, social and economic benefits are associated with more walkable communities. Walkability indices correlate with body weight and the physical activity of local populations, as well as a reduction in carbon emissions from reduced use of automobiles. Increased walkability improves social and community interaction, reduces crime rates, and increases community pride. Increased efficiency of land use, livability, economic development and improved land use, are evident in communities that are walkable. According to the Public Health Institute and the American Public Health Association, in one U.S. city $10 million spent in improving walkability led to a $125 million in economic investments to the city, 40 new businesses, and 800 new jobs. [10] Based on these benefits, the health department and its partners intend to remain fully invested in building a healthier community which improves overall productivity, makes businesses stronger, saves money and saves lives.

Resources

1. Florida Department of Health. (2007). *The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.* Available at: www.floridacharts.com/charts/Brfss.aspx

2. *Hillsborough, Florida.* Available at: www.walkscore.com

3. The Task Force on Community Preventive Services. (2013). *Creating or Improving Access to Places for Physical Activity is Strongly Recommended to Increase Physical Activity.* Available at: www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/default.htm

4. Joe Cortright, Impresa, Inc. for CEOs for Cities. (2009). *Walking the Walk: How walkability raises home values in U.S. cities.* Available at: blog.walkscore.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/WalkingTheWalk_CEOsforCities.pdf

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011). *Strategies to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases: The CDC Guide to Strategies to Increase Physical Activity in the Community.* Available at: www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/pa_2011_web.pdf

6. Local Government Commission Center for Livable Communities. (n.d.). *The Economic Benefits of Walkable Communities.* Available at: www.lgc.org/wordpress/docs/freepub/community_design/focus/walk_to_money.pdf

7. Xuemei Zhu, Zhipeng Lu, Chia-Yuan Yu, Chanam Lee, George Mann. (July 2013). Walkable communities: Impacts on residents' physical and social health. *World Health Design.* Available at: www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/aia/documents/pdf/aiab099630.pdf

8. Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. (n.d.). *Walkability Checklist.* Available at: www.pedbikeinfo.org/community/walkability.cfm

9. Florida Department of Transportation. Conserve by Bicycle and Pedestrian Study Phase II. FDOT, Tallahassee, FL, 2009.

10. Public Health Institute. (n.d.). *Prevention Means Business.* Available at: www.phi.org/uploads/files/PHI%20PMB%20brief.pdf

WALKABILITY DAY
Tampa Bay PARTNERS

Take a walk and use this checklist to rate your neighborhood's walkability.

How walkable is your community?

Location: Zip code of walk: _____

Rating Scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
awful	many problems	some problems	good	very good	excellent

Start street: _____ to _____
to _____ to _____ end street.

1. Did you have room to walk?

☐ Yes ☐ No, there are some problems

- ☐ Sidewalks or paths started and stopped
- ☐ Sidewalks were broken or cracked
- ☐ Sidewalks were blocked with poles, signs, shrubbery, dumpsters, etc.
- ☐ No sidewalks, paths, or shoulders
- ☐ Too much traffic
- ☐ Something else _____

Rating: (circle one)   **Locations of problems:**
1 2 3 4 5 6   _____

2. Was it easy to cross streets?

☐ Yes ☐ No, there are some problems

- ☐ Road was too wide
- ☐ Traffic signals made us wait too long or did not give us enough time to cross
- ☐ Needed striped crosswalks or traffic signals
- ☐ Parked cars blocked our view of traffic
- ☐ Trees or plants blocked our view of traffic
- ☐ Needed curb ramps or ramps needed repair
- ☐ Something else _____

Rating: (circle one)   **Locations of problems:**
1 2 3 4 5 6   _____

3. Did drivers behave well?

☐ Yes ☐ No, there are some problems: Drivers ...

- ☐ Backed out of driveways without looking
- ☐ Did not yield to people crossing the street
- ☐ Turned into people crossing the street
- ☐ Drove too fast
- ☐ Sped up to make it through traffic lights or drove through traffic lights?
- ☐ Something else _____

Rating: (circle one)   **Locations of problems:**
1 2 3 4 5 6   _____

4. Was it easy to follow safety rules?
Could you and your child...

☐ Yes ☐ No Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen by drivers?

☐ Yes ☐ No Stop and look left, right and then left again before crossing streets?

☐ Yes ☐ No Walk on sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic where there were no sidewalks?

☐ Yes ☐ No Cross with the light?

Rating: (circle one)   **Locations of problems:**
1 2 3 4 5 6   _____

5. Was your walk pleasant?

☐ Yes ☐ No, there are some problems

- ☐ Needed more grass, flowers, or trees
- ☐ Scary dogs
- ☐ Scary people
- ☐ Not well lighted
- ☐ Dirty, lots of litter or trash
- ☐ Dirty air due to automobile exhaust
- ☐ Something else _____

Rating: (circle one)   **Locations of problems:**
1 2 3 4 5 6   _____

6. How does your neighborhood stack up?
Add up your ratings and decide.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
Total: _____

26–30 Celebrate! You have a great neighborhood for walking.
21–25 Celebrate a little. Your neighborhood is pretty good.
16–20 Okay, but it needs work.
11–15 It needs lots of work. You deserve better than that.
5–10 It's a disaster for walking!

What does "Walkability" mean to you?
_____

7. What do you think would improve your neighborhood's walkability? _____
_____

Online, visit: www.PartnersInObesityPrevention.com/Walkability-Day to enter your checklist results
If you don't have access to a computer or mobile device, you may fax (813-307-8094) or mail your checklist to us:
Community Health, Florida Department of Health—Hillsborough, P.O. Box 5135, Tampa, Florida 33675