

Walk 21:

How to Make Israel More Pedestrian-Friendly

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Introduction

Walk 21 is an international organization that seeks to promote walking as a way of life and an integral part of a city's culture. It seeks to change the image of public transportation, so that it is no longer being seen as an inconvenient way to get from one place to another. In many places around the world, walking has been forgotten as part of a daily routine and transportation is dominated by driving private vehicles. This is not only true for commuting to work, but also for shopping, taking children to school, and visiting friends. The loss of walking as a daily activity has contributed to the decline of the quality of life, particularly within cities. This is an issue which should be alarming, not only to those who are interested in creating attractive cities, but also because it is having negative effects on health and the environment.

To remedy the present situation, Walk 21 has created an international charter and holds annual conferences during which people from all over the world can come together and exchange ideas on how to make cities more pedestrian-friendly. The charter serves as a guideline for cities and countries to use after they sign on, so that people can have an idea of the steps that should be taken to improve the situation in their area. Topics can include creating pedestrian-only areas, accessibility for vulnerable groups, and reducing road danger, among others.

As Walk 21 grows and reaches more and more people, some of the driving ideas behind it are being implemented in cities all over the world. While there is still a long way to go before walking is a dominant mode of transportation, Walk 21 is making a serious effort to move in that direction. In order to create a more sustainable future, it is important that

Israel take part in this international effort to increase walking and make it a more enjoyable experience. Israel would benefit greatly from joining this endeavor and it should not wait any longer to do so.

The Charter

Walk 21 has created an International Charter for Walking that countries can sign in order to participate in the organization. The charter outlines the goals of Walk 21, which aim to create inclusive and sustainable communities throughout the world by eliminating any barriers to walking and working to create a culture where people choose to walk. The charter discusses the overall decline in health that people have been experiencing, as well as the pressure on the environment that we have been creating by using vehicles. Walking is a basic part of life, but somehow it has managed to become something that is seen as a chore; a last resort for getting around when there are no other possibilities. The charter was created after consulting with experts throughout the world in order to create a society where walking is a part of life's daily routine.

The first principle that the charter discusses is increased inclusive mobility to provide access to walking, public squares, and other areas regardless of age, income, or other factors. For a society to be pedestrian-friendly, it must be accessible to everyone who lives there. Next, there should be well designed and managed places for people to enjoy. By having well maintained public facilities, people will be more likely to spend time outside, using their feet as a mode of transportation. There should also be an improved integration

of networks that connect walking areas with public transportation so that people will have an easier time getting around.

While walking is the primary goal of this project, it is not always possible, and other forms of transit should be built into a city's network. The use of land and spatial planning is another important factor in creating pedestrian-friendly cities. Homes should be easily linked with jobs, businesses, and recreational areas. It should not be difficult to walk between places that people go to daily; otherwise people will be discouraged from walking.

Reducing road danger is another crucial aspect in Walk 21's charter. Roads need to be designed in such a way that makes it safe for pedestrians to cross the street and there should be strict enforcement of traffic laws, combined with greater education of the public on walking and driving safely.

Another part of the charter is to reduce crime and the fear of crime so that people will feel comfortable walking around their cities, ideally in any area and any time of day. Without feeling physically safe, any other part of the charter is pointless. It is also important to have support from authorities to make these changes and improve infrastructure in their cities. Ordinary citizens can do a lot on their own, but eventually they will need some official support.

Lastly, it is important to create a culture of walking, where walking is seen as something fun to do. This can be encouraged by having festivals and other outdoor celebrations that attract people to spend time outside. There are many cities around the world that are enacting at least some of these policies so that they can participate in Walk 21 and improve their level of walkability.

Portland, Oregon, USA

Portland has made important steps toward becoming a more walkable city by tearing out a freeway and parking lot in the middle of the city and replacing them with public plazas, parks, and high-density housing. The city also built curbless streets in Chinatown, making the area friendlier to pedestrians and street festivals. These changes were made due to efforts by supportive elected officials and community advocates who pushed for making the city more accessible for pedestrians. The Oregon Bike and Pedestrian Bill, passed in 1971 by the Oregon Legislature, require the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities wherever a road, street, or highway is built.

The project impacted the culture of the city; it didn't just make technical differences. There are festivals in the pedestrian areas of Chinatown and streets are closed on Sundays to motor vehicles so that cyclists and pedestrians can use them. The changes came from a combined result: elected officials created policies; community organizations created advocacy groups and worked within their neighborhoods to get people interested in the subject; urban designers, planners, and engineers all became involved and used their professional expertise to help change the city. Businesses clamored for more pedestrian-friendly areas because they knew being in these locations would increase the number of customers who would stop at their stores.

http://www.walk21.com/papers/Walk21_NYC_2009_AprilBertelsen_small.pdf



Miami, Florida, USA

In 2001, Miami-Dade County developed the Walk Safe program in response to a very high rate of cars hitting children. The program teaches elementary school children how to walk safely around their schools and encourages them to walk whenever possible. Walk Safe's research has shown that yearly education programs are an effective way to improve pedestrian safety. In addition, there has been an increase in traffic surveillance and ticketing, as well as an increase in collaboration on pedestrian safety issues throughout the county. Since the program's implementation there has been a 40% decrease in the number of traffic accidents involving children in the Miami area.

The project was put into action by parents, teachers, and others involved with the school communities who were concerned about the safety of children. Although the project does not impact everyone in the area, it does change the way of life and mentality of people going to and from school, particularly students. This is an important step because children learn from an early age about the importance of walking, not only for personal health, but also for the well-being of a community. The result of this project is that there are significantly fewer traffic accidents involving children in the Miami area. Therefore, there is a positive impact on everyone in the community. Children are no longer likely to get hit by cars and parents and teachers do not need to constantly worry about this happening. The project received support from mayors and other local politicians. As a result of this program, more people are able to walk in a safe environment.

<http://www.walk21.com/papers/SafeRoutesToSchoolHotz2009small.pdf>



Salisbury, England, UK

In 1996, Salisbury's Walking Forum and Walking for Health projects began, and have since become some of the longest running and most successful walking for health initiatives

in the United Kingdom. These projects promote various programs that are designed to get people to walk more in the city. For example, one early program called “Doorstop Health Walks” used volunteers to survey and map out ten self-guided circular routes between ¼ and two miles through local neighborhoods. The walks are publicized through local newspapers and tourist information centers. Since the beginning of this project, more than 1,000 led health walks have been completed in and around Salisbury, led by volunteers and supported by local authorities.

The project in Salisbury began as part of the area’s response to the UK government’s “Active for Life” campaign with participants from health agencies and the local authority leisure department. This program also has cultural relevance because it is designed to get people into their communities to experience them on foot, thereby seeing the area in a more personal way than in a vehicle. As a result of the health walks, more people are out walking around in Salisbury and there is general satisfaction with the project.

<http://www.walk21.com/papers/M%2006%20Stuck%20and%20Rouquette%2099%20percent%20perspiration%20%20breeding%20a%20successful%20community%20walking%20for%20health%20initiative.pdf>



Switzerland-various cities

In 1999, a program called Being Mobile, Staying Mobile began in the city of Thun, Switzerland. This project is aimed toward people who are 60 years or older with the goals of improving levels of mobility, promoting daily physical activity as a way of preventing illness among older people, and to help people understand the connection between mobility, safety, health, and environmental protection. The courses given by the project attempt to increase participant's independence and help people feel comfortable using various modes of transportation to get around. Since the project's inception, it has spread to Basel, Bern, Chur, Geneva, and Zurich. Several hundred people have participated in courses given by this program, which has led to greater levels of walking and mobility.

Although the program has been successful in getting elderly people out in public and walking around more, it has only reached a few hundred people, which is not enough to have a truly transformative effect on a society. The program is mainly utilitarian; it is a way for seniors to exercise and spend more time outside of the house, but there is no significant cultural impact on the cities that participate in the program, nor is there any economic changes, for better or worse. Overall, the program is a good idea, and has had some positive effects, but it needs to be more far-reaching in its goals if it wants to have a sweeping change.

<http://www.walk21.com/papers/Zurich%2005%20Cebulla%20Being%20mobile%20staying%20mobile%20the%20use%20of%20mod.pdf>

Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

Cambridge has a well-earned reputation of being one of the most, if not the most, walkable city in the United States, with 24% of its citizens getting to work on foot. There has been a concentrated effort by citizens, elected officials, developers, and others to make Cambridge a place where walking can be used as a primary mode of travel. In 1992, the city council passed the Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance which provided a work plan for multiple city departments and called for coordination between them. One of the most visible results of this ordinance are the raised intersections first installed in 1997 as a traffic calming device. There have been many other more subtle elements of traffic calming installed since then. As a result of these efforts, people in Cambridge walk more often than almost any other population in North America.

Cambridge's walkability designs have not come from any one person or institution; they have come from a combined effort of city officials, businesses, residents, and developers who have made a sustained, conscious effort to make their city a walker's paradise. While Cambridge does seem to have had more practical purposes in mind when becoming a walking town, there are still some cultural effects. Just having so many people walking around a city makes a place seem more alive and people-oriented rather than being a place where people don't really see each other or their city while getting around. There appears to have been some positive economic changes too since business owners are continuing to encourage pedestrian-friendly development.

<http://www.walk21.com/papers/Parenti,%20Jeff-%20Cambridge%20Shapes%20a%20Livable%20Community.pdf>



Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

In Milwaukee, residents have come together through a common interest in making their city more walkable. The result of this collaboration is a program called Walking Workshop, in which people get together and come up with pedestrian plans to improve the infrastructure and create policies and neighborhood programs that are relevant for their desires. This program is funded by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. These Walking Workshops focus on the neighborhood as a geographical unit. This translates into group walking audits of a neighborhood to find out what a particular area needs to become more pedestrian-friendly rather than just relying on data. Once these audits are completed, there are meetings during which plans can be discussed in detail. During the meetings, short, medium, and long term goals are identified and then acted upon. This program shows that planning can be done according to what people want, not just what statistics dictate.

This ensures that cities will truly meet the needs of their residents and not continue to be places that are difficult to navigate and get around in.

http://www.walk21.com/papers/Guequierre_Nathan-

[Collaborative%20Pedestrian%20Planning%20in%20Commu.pdf](http://www.walk21.com/papers/Guequierre_Nathan-Collaborative%20Pedestrian%20Planning%20in%20Commu.pdf)

Toronto, Canada

Despite its location near downtown Toronto, the area's main street, College Street, has deteriorated over the years. Businesses struggle to remain open and the street conditions with six traffic lanes and two bike lanes on a narrow sidewalk make it unappealing for pedestrians. To remedy this situation the College Street Revitalization Committee was created with the purpose of changing the conditions of the street to make it more walkable. The group is guided by urban designers and took advantage of upcoming sidewalk reconstruction to make it more pedestrian friendly. As a result of this effort, much of the area received two to three meters of additional sidewalk and 90 new trees to bring shade to people walking on the newly widened sidewalks. This project shows that something that is seemingly simple, such as the width of a sidewalk, can make a major difference in the attractiveness of an area for pedestrians.

This effort has been spurred by a citizen initiative, through a group called the College Street Revitalization Committee. Therefore, the effort for change in this case is almost solely a grassroots endeavor to make Toronto a more pedestrian-friendly city. This project does have a cultural impact because it makes the sidewalks of Toronto more attractive, not just more functional, and this encourages people to spend more time

outside, creating a greater sense of community among the city's residents. Two urban designers from Brown Storey and Architecture became involved with the project and used their expertise to help the area's residents develop a list of goals to get the project moving.

<http://www.walk21.com/papers/Brown,%20Gord-A-%20College%20Street%20Pedestrian%20Clearway.pdf>



Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

In 2005, Charlotte began to review its sidewalk construction program as a response to resident's concerns that their needs were not being met and to further the goal of Charlotte becoming a city in which walking is a more dominant mode of transportation. From the 1950's to the 1990's, sidewalks were not required for new development in Charlotte, which resulted in the city having 1,800 miles of streets with no sidewalks. To deal with this issue, the city came up with the Sidewalk Program Review, and hired a consultant to help evaluate and redesign sidewalks to meet public needs. The project takes requests from residents of the city and it prioritizes areas, beginning with major thoroughfares and moving on to smaller side streets.

The program in Charlotte was initiated by its own city government when it began to review the conditions of the city's streets and sidewalks. However, this review began as a result of residents voicing their concerns on this issue. Also, the city wanted to remake itself as a more walker-friendly place. In this sense, the project came about as a result of concern on the part of citizens and government. In general, response to the program has been positive from both elected officials and residents. Many people are happy with the idea of Charlotte becoming a less car-dependent city and think that this project will help in that realm.

<http://www.walk21.com/papers/Coleman,%20Vivian%20-Development%20and%20Implementation%20of%20the%20City%20.pdf>

Possibilities for Israel

These examples provide useful information and potential guidance for Israel to be able to become a more pedestrian-friendly country. Perhaps the most obvious challenge for Israel is the culture of reckless driving that exists and which poses a threat to other drivers as well as pedestrians. One of the points made in Walk 21's charter is that road danger must be reduced for people to feel safe walking around. To improve this situation in Israel, there must be strict law enforcement for people who break road laws. However, this is not enough; from an early age, there needs to be a restructuring in the way people are taught to think about driving. This is a complicated process that will take a long time, but it is something that needs to happen if Israel is going to become a safer place to walk in.

In the meantime, there is more action that could be taken by citizens to minimize the risk of walking. Israeli schools could adopt a program similar to Miami's Walk Safe project that teaches children how to walk safely around schools. This program has significantly reduced the amount of traffic accidents involving children in Miami, and if it was executed properly in Israel, it would presumably have the same results. As in Miami, there would probably have to be a concentrated effort by parents, teachers, and other community members to get the program going. Hopefully, people who are taught about this subject from a young age would carry their knowledge into adulthood and continue to use it as pedestrians and drivers.

Another issue that Israel faces is unobstructed sidewalks. While Tel Aviv and other Israeli cities do have many areas where it is easy to walk, there are some areas where sidewalks are narrow or uneven, which makes it difficult to walk on, sometimes even forcing

pedestrians to walk in the street briefly. Perhaps Israel could learn something about this from the effort made in Toronto to make the downtown area easier to walk in. Through a citizen's initiative, sidewalks were widened and trees were added, which would be especially nice in Israel to provide shade from the sun. All over Tel Aviv there are new skyscrapers and other buildings being constructed. While this is a necessity for the city's future, it might make more sense to first improve already existing structures, including sidewalks.

There are also existing places in Israel that have implemented successful pedestrian-friendly infrastructure that can be used as models for further improvement. One prominent example is the pedestrianized area of Nahalat Binyamin Street in Tel Aviv, which includes a twice-weekly arts and crafts fair. Such a street could be created in other busy parts of Tel Aviv as well as other cities in Israel. This model is also used on Jerusalem's Ben-Yehuda Street. However, this street caters to tourists, which means that locals are not being integrated into its use. Nonetheless, it still provides a good example of what a pedestrian-only street can be like. If Israel had streets like these in more places and utilized them for street festivals and other public affairs, it would greatly improve the country's walkability and overall quality of life.

It seems that the greatest challenge for Israel will be getting the public interested and active on this issue, so that people will come together to form committees and begin applying pressure to their local or even national government. This is always the hardest step in any process of change, but once it is done, development tends to pick up speed. There is already a small group of dedicated organizations and professionals in Israel who are

committed to enacting policies in line with Walk 21's agenda. If this group can continue to grow in influence and size, Israel can soon be on its way becoming a productive member of Walk 21.

International Charter for Walking

Creating healthy, efficient and sustainable communities

where people choose to walk

I/We, the undersigned recognise the benefits of walking as a key indicator of healthy, efficient, socially inclusive and sustainable communities and acknowledge the universal rights of people to be able to walk safely and to enjoy high quality public spaces anywhere and at anytime. We are committed to reducing the physical, social and institutional barriers that limit walking activity. We will work with others to help create a culture where people choose to walk through our commitment to this charter and its strategic principles:

- 1. Increased inclusive mobility***
- 2. Well designed and managed spaces and places for people***
- 3. Improved integration of networks***
- 4. Supportive land-use and spatial planning***
- 5. Reduced road danger***
- 6. Less crime and fear of crime***
- 7. More supportive authorities***
- 8. A culture of walking***

Signed

Name

Position

Date