

The walkability factor: Are you living car-free?

Condo trends. Car share programs, rapid transit, and all the amenities give condo dwellers reason to ditch the car

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While walking around downtown Toronto, you can't help but experience a strong sense of urban social interaction. It's up close and personal. There's a street-level, curb-side appeal that's lacking in the suburbs. Suburban life has its own allure, albeit an entirely different experience where the car is king, and even to grab a quick coffee and newspaper requires a drive to the mall.

Savvy condo seekers now take into consideration the "walkability factor" in choosing a condo. Think of walkability as a measurement of how inviting an area is to pedestrians. It can affect the value of your investment depending on where it's located and how convenient it is.

There's even a rating system for walkability. The website walkscore.com can help you find a walkable place to live. Walk Score uses a rating between 0 and 100 that measures the walkability of any address. There's also a transit score and a bike score.

Prominent Toronto realtor, analyst and condo author Brian Persaud explains that "Revitalization of the downtown or 'walkability' is vitally important. Watch for average condo prices going down as more condos are being built in poorly-planned 905 neighbourhoods that push down the weight of downtown Toronto."

For some time, city council has been trying to wean itself off car dependency.

Popular initiatives like car sharing and BIXI bikes provide year-round alternatives for



Condos like 18 Yorkville in downtown Toronto have a high walkability factor.. Located at the bustling intersection of Yonge and Bloor, surrounded by amenities with close proximity to rapid transit, this residence rates high in street appeal. DUNCAN MCALLISTER/FOR METRO

travellers who opt out of owning a car. City councillor Adam Vaughan told Metro last March about the high level of pedestrian identification in his downtown ward.

"More people walk to work in this area than any other part of the city, so we're actually building a lot of condos now with almost no parking in them because people actually don't need their cars to exist in this part of the city."

The folks at Jane's Walk maintain that walkable communities "are better places to live, have higher real estate values, promote healthier lifestyles and have healthier levels

of social cohesion." They conducted a walkability workshop and polled residents on the factors that affect the pedestrian quality of their neighbourhoods.

The discussions revealed concerns over snow removal, transit, street furniture, bike lanes and accessibility.

One workshop participant said that "There's a big post in the sidewalk right there and I can't get the stroller by. And my father, he's in a wheelchair. That sidewalk is not accessible."

You can access a walkability checklist on their website at Janeswalk.net and test your own neighbourhood.



Zip Cars and Car2Go are just two of the ubiquitous car share programs popping up at parking lots across the city. The popular rental cars are a no-fuss alternative to owning and parking a vehicle downtown. DUNCAN MCALLISTER/FOR METRO