

Liveable and walkable communities



SmartSteps®
FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS



Year 7 Unit 2 Place and Liveability

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People walking in and around their neighbourhoods is one of the best markers of a healthy, vibrant community. Disappointingly, many urban areas are not very walkable and there has been a significant decline in walking over recent decades.

The aim of this unit is for students to gain an understanding of the liveability of places, what liveability means to them and how this term can be applied to their local neighbourhood through walkability. It will allow students to investigate aspects of liveability including community safety, walkability and how young people can enhance the liveability of place and improve their connectedness to and identity with their community.

This unit has been developed by [Victoria Walks](#) in partnership with the [Geography Teachers' Association of Victoria Inc.](#)

Victoria Walks is a walking health promotion charity working to get more Victorians walking every day. Critical to this aim is the creation of vibrant, supportive and strong neighbourhoods and communities where people can and do choose to walk wherever possible. *Smart Steps* is an initiative that aims to increase the number of children, families and young people walking by making streets and neighbourhoods more walkable and increasing opportunities for them to walk.

Curriculum links – Australian Curriculum: Geography

Year 7 Unit 2: Place and liveability Geographical Knowledge and Understanding

The factors that influence the decisions people make about where to live and their perceptions of the liveability of places [\(ACHGK043\)](#)

The influence of accessibility to services and facilities on the liveability of places [\(ACHGK044\)](#)

The influence of social connectedness, community identity and perceptions of crime and safety on the liveability of places [\(ACHGK046\)](#)

The strategies used to enhance the liveability of places, especially for young people [Australian example] [\(ACHGK047\)](#)

Geographical Inquiry and Skills Observing, questioning and planning

Develop geographically significant questions and plan an inquiry, using appropriate geographical methodologies and concepts [\(ACHGS047\)](#)

Collect, select and record relevant geographical data and information, using ethical protocols, from appropriate primary and secondary sources [\(ACHGS048\)](#)

Evaluate sources for their reliability and usefulness and represent data in a range of appropriate forms, for example, climate graphs, compound column graphs, population pyramids, tables, field sketches and annotated diagrams, with and without the use of digital and spatial technologies [\(ACHGS049\)](#)

Represent the spatial distribution of different types of geographical phenomena by constructing appropriate maps at different scales that conform to cartographic conventions, using spatial technologies as appropriate [\(ACHGS050\)](#)

Interpreting, analysing and concluding

Analyse geographical data and other information using qualitative and quantitative methods, and digital and

spatial technologies as appropriate, to identify and propose explanations for spatial distributions, patterns and trends and infer relationships [\(ACHGS051\)](#)

Apply geographical concepts to draw conclusions based on the analysis of the data and information collected [\(ACHGS052\)](#)

Communicating

Present findings, arguments and ideas in a range of communication forms selected to suit a particular audience and purpose; using geographical terminology and digital technologies as appropriate [\(ACHGS053\)](#)

Reflecting and responding

Reflect on their learning to propose individual and collective action in response to a contemporary geographical challenge, taking account of environmental, economic and social considerations, and predict the expected outcomes of their proposal [\(ACHGS054\)](#)

Suggested time: 3–4 weeks of class time

Resources

- Victoria Walks website www.victoriawalks.org.au
- a map of the local area to take on the fieldwork
- camera, clipboard.

The inquiry sequence

What is liveability?

What factors affect liveability?

What does liveability mean to you?

How does walkability affect liveability?

What are the advantages of a walkable neighbourhood?

How walkable is your neighbourhood?

How can walkability of my neighbourhood be improved?

Part A: Introduction (2–3 lessons)

What is liveability?

Students will better understand liveability if they work out the meaning of the word for themselves. By completing Activities 1 and 2, they will first identify the features of a liveable community and then reach a shared understanding of its meaning. They will then apply this definition to walkability.

Australian Curriculum: Geography definition of liveability:

An assessment of what a place is like to live in, using particular criteria, for example, environmental quality, crime and safety, education and health provision, access to shops and services, recreational facilities and cultural activities.

Activity 1: What factors affect liveability?

The aim of this task is for your class to identify the various factors that can affect the liveability of a place.

1. Brainstorm the elements or features of a neighbourhood that make it safe, easy to get around, interesting and make people feel happy to live there.
2. Students create a shared list of the features that they think make a place desirable to live in. This could be completed as a class activity with students adding their ideas interactively to a white board summary or by using a scribe to keep board notes of the discussion points.
3. It will sometimes help students to focus on this task if you ask them to begin by quickly noting 10 ideas on their net book or notebook before you start the collective summary.
4. Prompts/hints from the teacher would be to suggest aspects of, *environmental quality, crime and safety, education and health provision, access to shops and services, recreational facilities and cultural activities* as identified in the definition of liveability above. Specific examples could be safe crossings, trees, skate parks, bike lanes, nice houses, places for adventures, safe roads (e.g. slow traffic speed), good public transport, interesting streets and public spaces etc.
5. Either in small groups or as a class attempt to classify the notes from the brainstorm into similar groupings. Use sub-headings that make the most sense given the nature of the class responses e.g. sporting facilities, safe places, community places or fun places.

Activity 2: What does liveability mean to you?

The aim of this task is for students to identify the aspects of a liveable community that are most important to them personally and then as a class to reach a shared definition for this term.

All students should be able to see the collected discussion notes from the brainstorm activity.

- a. Individually, students select the five most important factors, which they think make a community a safe and happy place in which to live. They might like to rank these using a diamond ranking sheet.
- b. Form groups of 2–3 students. Using their individual list, negotiate with the group to identify the five most important factors, which make a community a safe and happy place in which to live (use a new diamond ranking sheet).
- c. Finally, in a group of six students complete this task again, to identify the five most important factors, which the group believes make a community a safe and happy place in which to live. Discuss any similarities amongst the groups.
- d. In the group of six, create a catchy presentation to promote the group's shared understanding about the most important liveability factors for a community. Possible formats are Prezi, PowerPoint or film/video.
- e. Show each presentation to the class or make them available on a shared network (class Blog, Wiki etc). Use these presentations to create a class understanding or definition of liveability. Compare this to the definition provided.

Definition: *An assessment of what a place is like to live in, using particular criteria, for example, environmental quality, crime and safety, education and health provision, access to shops and services, recreational facilities and cultural activities.*

The class definition may not be exactly the same as this as this brainstorm activity will direct student responses. Discuss the differences between your definition and the one provided.

Before the fieldwork/walk: 2 lessons

A walkable neighbourhood is one in which all of the built environment works together to welcome and support people to walk - it includes good public transport, quality footpaths and places that people want to walk e.g. shops, school, sport grounds. That is, walkable neighbourhoods are useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting.

1. Melbourne has been judged as the world's most liveable city for 2011 and 2012.
 - a. Watch this video (10 minutes) to show [why Melbourne has been rated in this way.](#)
 - b. What has been done to improve walkability in Melbourne?
 - c. How does this contribute to improved liveability?
2. Watch these two short videos on walkability:
[Walkable 101: the basics \(based in Martin Country, USA\) \(4:57mins\)](#)
[Urban planning 101: walkability \(2:30\)](#)
Discuss the following.
 - a. How is walkability defined?
 - b. How does he say that walkability and liveability are linked?
 - c. List the ways that walkability improves communities or neighbourhoods.
 - d. What are the features of a walkable community? Make a list.
 - e. How can walkability and liveability be improved within neighbourhoods?
 - f. Do you like the idea of a walkable community? Discuss

- Identify the similarities and differences between liveability and walkability.

Part C: What are the advantages of a walkable neighbourhood?

Activity: Why walk?

Aim

The aim is for students to research an aspect of walkability and create an engaging presentation of their findings.

1. Divide your class into three groups.
2. Have each group randomly (e.g. draw from a hat) select their topic from the following list:
 - walking for health and happiness
 - walking for community and social connection
 - walking for the planet

Allow each group access to the Victoria Walks website for them to research their topic. For each topic there is an information page and the class could view one or two short films to provide some stimulus. All of the films are collected here:

www.victoriawalks.org.au/Victoria_Walks_films/

[Walking for Health and Happiness](#)

[Walking for Community and Social Connection](#)

[Walking for the Planet](#)

Each group's task is to produce a short summary of their findings in an interesting or fun way so that they can share their knowledge with the class. They could write and perform a rap /poem /short play/ skit or song, produce a TV or radio news segment or make use of a digital media presentation.

Present each group's work to the class.



Part D: How walkable is your neighbourhood?

A fieldwork activity – 3 lessons plus walk

Getting started

1. View [the Walking Map for part of Westgarth](#) and [this one for a walk in Bendigo CBD](#)
 - a. Students should view this on their personal device (laptop/tablet) so they can click through the various stops more quickly.
 - b. Discuss which aspects of this neighbourhood are desirable or liveable?
 - c. Is this place walkable?
 - d. Can you spot any possible walkability issues?
2. Direct your students to think about the local school neighbourhood. Explain that the class will be going on a neighbourhood walk to assess or audit aspects of walkability of some of the streets that are high pedestrian areas such as a route to primary or secondary school, local shops, train station or local sports grounds, services or entertainment areas.
3. Discuss which features of the local neighbourhood the class could assess or audit. Suggest that the aspects of a liveable community as listed in the definition may be a good starting place. The '[Assessing walkability](#)' [page](#) will provide your students with some ideas about the questions they could ask to rate the six aspect of liveability. They could particularly look at the '[Do a Walking Audit](#)' and related links at the bottom of this page, particularly the *Walk San Diego and Victoria Walks Walking Audit Form*.



Aspects of walkability to audit and some suggestions about the things your students could look for:

- **footpath** (width, surface and quality, road crossings, shared bike paths, near traffic [see Information Box below], obstacles, signs)
- **facilities** (seating, shelter, rubbish bins etc and their condition; shade, signage, lighting)
- **road crossings** (how safe?, types of crossings, traffic signals, clear views)
- **traffic** (appropriate speed limits, devices to slow traffic, drivers obeying speed limits and road rules, cyclists using footpaths, appropriate barriers - see Information Box below)
- **safety** (feeling of safety, good lighting, other people around, visibility to others)
- **aesthetics** (attractive area, attractive landscaping, interesting art, accessible shops, presence of litter).

Information Box:

Safe speeds to support walking

Lowering traffic speed creates streets that are more inviting for people to walk or bicycle. Communities with slower traffic speed limits are associated with people enjoying their streets more. By implementing slower speeds, environmental and safety needs of the most vulnerable road users (walkers and cyclists) are met, particularly those with mobility issues, young children and the elderly.

There are movements across Europe supporting lowering speed limits

- [European Citizen's Initiative "30kmh – making streets liveable!"](#)
- [20's Plenty \(UK\)](#)

[This film \(5 minutes\)](#) highlights how the idea of slowing down traffic has spread so fast throughout the UK, following the example of several cities limiting traffic speed. (20mph = 30kmh)

Use these links as stimulus material and conduct a class discussion about the impact of reducing speeds on walkability and liveability.

Connecting places

4. Divide your class into six groups, each of which will be responsible for assessing one of the above aspects of a liveable and walkable community.
5. [Show the 'Leon' clip](#). This is an amusing illustration to get students thinking about how well they will need to be prepared and what they will be doing once they conducting the fieldwork/walk. There may be some overlap between the observations made by each group but that will just add to their final understanding of liveability and walkability.
6. Provide your students with a photocopy map of the area to be walked – from a street directory or from Google Maps. When they are familiar with the route of their walk and are a part of a group with an allocated aspect of liveability to investigate, provide them with the Group Audit Task Worksheet.

Group Audit Task worksheet

This worksheet informs each group how to prepare for their neighbourhood walk and gives them instructions about what information to collect while they are on their fieldwork.

You will need to seek the appropriate permission from the school and/or parents to cover the required safety aspects of taking students out of the school grounds on this local fieldwork.

Creating a walkability map

After the walk your student groups should spend a couple of lessons collating and presenting the data that they collected. They will now have all the information required to create a walking map. The link to create the map is at <http://walkingmaps.com.au/>. Completed maps can also be downloaded if you wish.

There are some terrific [tips and information](#) on the Victoria Walks web site that explain all that you need to know about [Walking Maps](#). There is also a [Secondary Teacher's Guide to Walking Maps](#). You might like to work through these instructions as a whole class exercise. Refer the class once again to the [Westgarth walking map](#) and the [Bendigo CBD](#) as examples.

Each group should complete a Walking Map and choose an appropriate name for it. The name should include the school name e.g. Honeywell High School safety walkability map. All photos and any appropriate web links are uploaded onto the map.



The Walkability Report worksheet

Decide how best to present the information collected by each group. Options could include:

- a poster with a printed copy of the Walking Map in the centre surrounded by photos and annotations for each of the locations, or
- share a link to your completed walking map.

The format must be one that allows all students to see what each group has collected so that they can assess the full range of the aspects of walkability and not just their own findings.

Part E: How can the walkability of my neighborhood be improved?

Time: may be from one to several lessons depending on level of detail required by the teacher.

Aim

To use the data that your students gathered during fieldwork to propose a change that could improve walkability at some place or places along the *Walking Map* route.

Activity

1. As a class brainstorm some possible locations/issues.
2. Propose an action plan to promote your change.

Use the templates available on the Victoria Walks site to assist with various aspects of your action plan. These templates outline how to write letters and what to say, are found at www.victoriawalks.org.au/Resources/

These actions may include:

- letter/s to the editor of the local papers
- letter to local council
- poster campaign
- press release.

Other action strategies could include:

- making a short movie to explain their proposal for change
- gaining the support of the student representative council or the school council to promote their idea for change to improve walkability in the local neighbourhood.
- inviting a local council representative to the class to inform them about the class idea for improved walkability
- engaging the school community, primary or secondary schools, parents or the local community.

If asked, Victoria Walks is happy to provide comment on a Walking Map and the suggestions for improvement by a class.



David Marks 2011

Connecting places



Group Audit Task worksheet

Which aspect of liveability is your group auditing?

As a group, list the neighbourhood features that you will need to identify and assess/rate to complete a liveability study of your topic within your local neighbourhood.

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Next check through the 'Assessing walkability' page www.victoriawalks.org.au/How_to_assess_walkability/ to get some ideas about what questions you could use to assess your aspect of liveability.

Be sure to have a look at the 'Do a Walking Audit' www.victoriawalks.org.au/Walking_audit/ page and look at the related links at the bottom of this web page, particularly the Walk San Diego and Victoria Walks Walking Audit Form.

Your teacher will provide you with a map of your local neighbourhood for you to use as your base map. Prepare a liveability audit form, similar to the Walking Audit Form from the Victoria Walks website, so that you can compare each location along your group map.

Your group task is to complete your audit form using the base map as a guide. Use the 0 to 3 rating scheme for each question at each stop, as has been suggested in the Victoria Walks Walking Audit Form.

Rating scale:

0 = Great! I can't see any problems

1 = May be a problem for some people

2 = Definitely a problem for some people

3 = Definitely a problem for everyone

Your audit form should be a table that has space for you to rate and comment at each point of interest or stop that you make. Have at least 4–6 observations to make at each stop to allow for comparison between the stops.

Connecting places



Group Audit Task worksheet (Cont.)

The following is an example of a partly completed table used to collect observations for the liveability aspect of Personal Freedom.

Personal Freedom

STOP No. 1	Issues School gate	Observations	Rating
1	What activities are people doing here or what can they do? Are they prevented from doing desired activities due to poor design aspects?	Signs show: No riding skateboards. Must walk bikes. Must cross road at the crossing. People are parking close to the gate, which is not allowed and blocks people from walking.	2
2	Are there enough people in the area to make you feel safe to walk here? What would attract more people to the area? Are the people here acting appropriately? ?	Many people with dogs off leads. At school times there are plenty of people here to make it feel safe.	2
3	Is this place suitable for ...		
4	Etc..		
STOP No. 2	Issues Delacombe Park	Observations	Rating
1.	What activities are people doing here or what can they do? Are they prevented from doing desired activities due to poor design aspects?	Signs indicate no walking dogs off leash. School uses the ovals for PE during the school day so it is not available for the community. There are no sports facilities for older people.	1
2	Are there enough people in the area to make you feel safe to walk here? What would attract more people to the area? Are the people here actin appropriately?	More seating would attract older people. A better crosswalk from the main road would make it easier to access. A group of 4 people who look like they should be attending school.	2
3	Etc...		

Once all groups have prepared their Audit Form and organised to get a camera or camera phone to take photos at each stop, you are ready to complete the audit.

At each stop your group must:

- complete the table to provide a rating for each issue
- make some observations about the rating
- take several photos of each stop to illustrate your ratings
- make a quick sketch on which to note or annotate the specific location or aspects of your observations
- identify possible way/s to improve the liveability and walkability of this place. This could include asking local people what they think would improve this place.

Your group you could make individual members responsible for collecting the information for each of the tasks above but it is best to work as a whole group to decide your ratings.

Bring all of your information back to class to prepare a report.

Connecting places



The Walkability report

On your return to class your group must now prepare a walkability report for the aspect that you investigated.

Which places along this walk have the highest and lowest walkability ratings?

Which places along this walk require some changes to improve walkability?

What must be included in your report?

1. A map of the walk.
2. Photos or sketches of each location linked to the map.
3. Explanatory annotations and a walkability rating for each stop.
4. For any locations with poor walkability ratings a suggestion to make this place more walkable.
5. A discussion about how improved walkability can improve liveability.

Your teacher will discuss with you the common format to be used by all groups to present your report and the time that you have to complete it.

After completing your report

1. Identify three locations on your map that best reflected appropriate walkability and liveability.
2. Identify three locations on your map that reflected problems with walkability and liveability.

After looking at the all the other group reports

1. Do most groups agree about which locations were in the most walkable places? Explain
2. Do most groups agree about which locations were in the least walkable places? Explain.
3. Use a copy of your class Walking Map and the information collected on your walk to identify which places along your walk would be rated the most liveable for young people. Annotate the map to explain your selections.
4. How could the liveability for young people be improved at two of the stops along your class Walking Map? Draw and annotate a map or plan which illustrates the strategies that you believe will enhance the liveability of these two places.