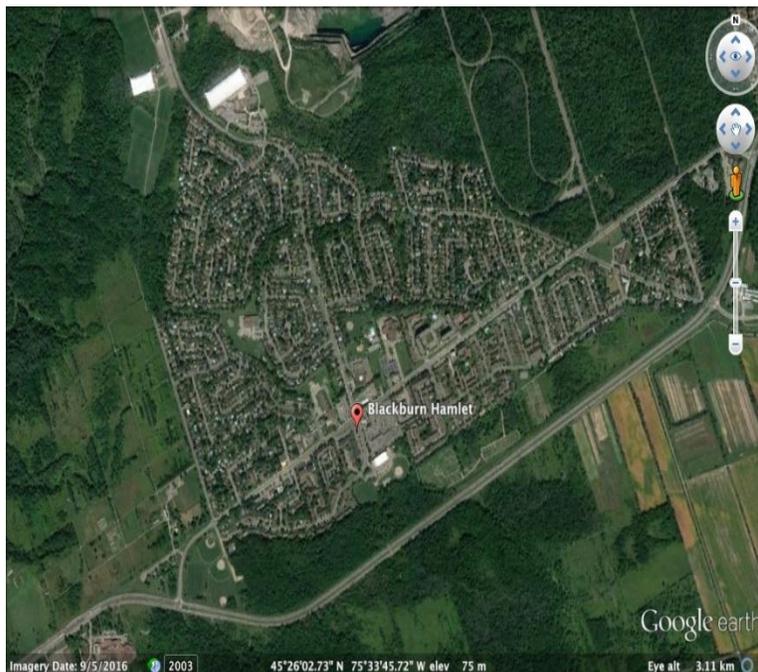




Blackburn Hamlet

The earliest settlers arrived around 1800; by 1876 a post office was opened and the area became known as "Blackburn".



In 1958 the federal government created a greenbelt around Canada's national capital. This led to the development of Blackburn Hamlet in the early 60s.

Today, Blackburn Hamlet is a suburban community 10 kilometers east of Parliament Hill. The community is surrounded by the Greenbelt, served by a network of green spaces and pathways and home to almost 10,000 people.

The major east-west road, Innes Road, intersects with a north-south road, Bearbrook Road. This is where 3 commercial malls and a seniors' retirement residence occupy the 4 corners. There are 6 schools in Blackburn Hamlet, including one high school. The community has 3 churches (2 located in schools), an outdoor public swimming pool, tennis courts, numerous soccer fields, baseball diamonds, skate boarding park, 2 outdoor hockey rinks, an indoor hockey arena and two domed soccer fields, one of which includes North America's only indoor 400-metre track.

There is a highway bypass, The Blackburn Bypass to the south. Innes Road, and Bearbrook Road are the 3 routes in and out of Blackburn Hamlet. In recent years, the growth of Orléans to the east (the population is expected to reach 135,000 by 2021) has resulted in a significant increase in traffic using these main arteries for commuting to and from Ottawa.

For example, over 357,000 vehicles used Bearbrook Road in the last 2 ½ months of 2016, an average of almost 4,700 vehicles each day. Approximately 1/3 travelled Bearbrook Road within its 40 Kph speed limit; 85% were within 50 Kph. There are two stop lights on Bearbrook and two pedestrian cross walks (one with an activated stop light) serving the many pedestrians crossing Bearbrook Road each day. Efforts to install “traffic calming” on Bearbrook Road and introduce crossing guards for school children has become a priority in the community.

Innes Road, which has a 50 Kph speed limit, pedestrian crossings and traffic stop lights is lined for the most part by small retail malls, auto repair shops, medical centers and high density housing. Most residents still use their car for short trips within the community.

The city of Ottawa, like most major cities these days, is increasing its budget support for the development of active transportation infrastructure and accessibility to its expanding LRT and Bus Rapid Transportation systems.

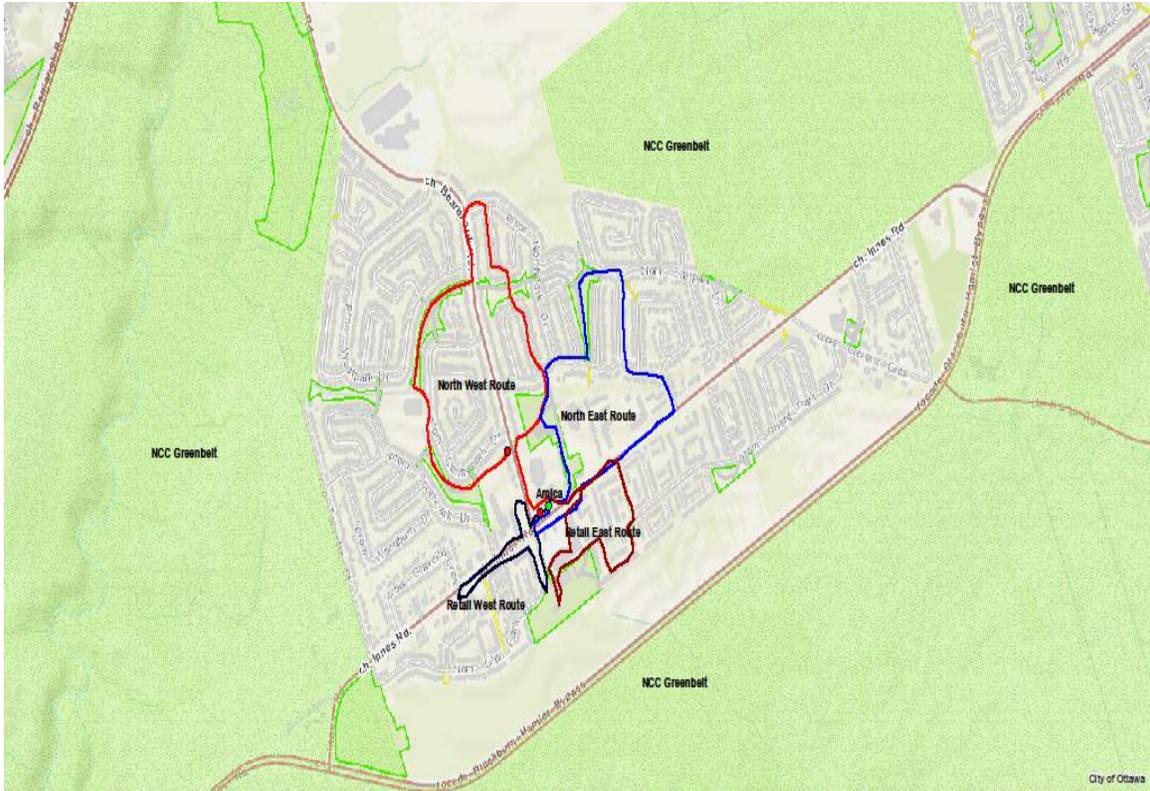
Walkers, runners and cyclists in Blackburn Hamlet include seniors living in the seniors’ residence and at home seniors, school children attending schools, dog walkers, parents with young children and babies in strollers and those confined to wheelchairs. The residents of the community use its extensive pathway system and sidewalks year round to access schools, stores, medical centers, churches, play structures and the many sports facilities in Blackburn Hamlet.

Blackburn Hamlet Walk Audit

On Saturday, January 21, 2017 the Blackburn Community Association (BCA) brought together 15 people, ranging in age from 6 to 96, to examine the walkability of residential and retail areas of the hamlet. Participants used the All-Season Age-Friendly Pedestrian Safety and Walkability Checklist, developed by the Council on Aging of Ottawa, to assess the safety, accessibility, convenience and comfort of using sidewalks and paths in their community.

This Audit Report is one tool the community will use to engage City staff, the Councilor, businesses and institutions in identifying short- and long-term improvements to pedestrian year-round safety and walkability in Blackburn Hamlet.

Four routes were walked covering the retail areas east and west of Bearbrook Road as well as two residential and school areas to the northwest and northeast of Innes Road. All walks originated from the Amica seniors’ residence. Amica provided a meeting area and refreshments for the four teams.



Checklist Summary



The audit took place after a period of high snowfall and some freezing rain; temperatures were 1-3 degrees above Zero C during the walk.

Therefore, on January 21, 2017 Blackburn Hamlet's sidewalks and paths had many icy and slushy sections and puddles of water, nonetheless it was unanimous that the

walks were enjoyable. Everyone recognized the difficulty a northern climate community faces each winter to keep its sidewalks and pathways safe and walkable during the winter months.

1. Safety

Lighting around schools and retail areas is good but lighting in residential areas was rated from adequate to poor, particularly Diceman Park.

Sidewalks are not available in the Orient Park development and some of the residential streets. Residents use the centre of the roadways for safe passage with attendant danger from vehicles.

Plowing on most residential routes was marginal for safe walking and concern was expressed about the practicality of pushing strollers or using a wheelchair.



Most transit stops were well maintained, two exceptions were noted below under Walk Audit Findings NE Section.

Walk Audit teams noted that often pedestrians chose to walk on roads or mall parking lots to avoid snow covered sidewalks.

Two of the Walk Audit teams recommended that pedestrian X-walks be installed on Innes Rd, one at Gravelle Cr and one in front of the Amica seniors' residence. Also a cross walk was recommended for Glen Park Drive from the Library to the Arena and Community Center area.

The three teams whose routes crossed Innes Road felt that the north/south crossing times (13 seconds) at Bearbrook and in front of the Life Centre are too short for elderly pedestrians, particularly those using walkers.

Traffic calming measures should be reviewed and appropriate measures adopted to slow traffic near schools and school crossings on Bearbrook Road and Innes Road. More signage alerting traffic to the Amica residence should be considered.



The continued use of temporary “Flex signs” on Bearbrook Road in summer as well as the effectiveness of the narrowing of Bearbrook Road at the cross walk near Westpark Drive.



This cross walk on Bearbrook Road near Westpark Drive is also in need of repairs for better wheel chair accessibility. Snow clearing at cross walks could be improved.

2. Accessibility

The ability to walk/wheel side by side is hampered or not possible in the Orient Park development and on the pathways. Sidewalks along main streets and in the retail areas are adequate with some exceptions noted below in Findings.

Snow piles and ice are hazards in some places noted below in Findings.

Protruding drainpipes on sidewalks are also a hazard as are sandwich boards for wheelchair users.

Toilets are accessible only in the retail areas.

There are curb ramps at crossings but these are subject to water pooling (and subsequent freezing) at most intersections.

None of the local walkers was aware of the audible signal devices protocol at crosswalks, however the cross walk on Bearbrook Road near Westpark Drive was not working. Those devices require that the walker press on them for a few seconds.

3. Convenience and Connectedness

Pedestrian signage is limited but this may be acceptable given the size of Blackburn Hamlet. Services are centralized but not all roads lead directly to Tim Horton's as seniors from the residence and children have been known to jaywalk.

Sidewalks and pathways are linked in warmer weather, one of the remarkable features of Blackburn Hamlet. Some paths are not maintained in winter, a problem noted on the path above Glen Ogilvie School entering Centrepark Dr.



One diagonal paved “short cut” at the 4 main corners in summer is covered by a snow dump in the parking lot of one of the shopping malls. This forces seniors from the residence and other walkers to take longer routes to the bank and barber shop.

There are no dog off-leash areas. Some residents would like these to be part of the greenways.

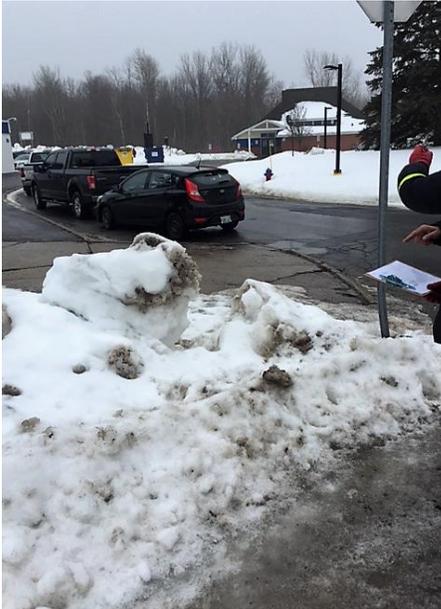
4. Comfort and Attractiveness

There are no places to shelter from the elements in residential areas other than bus shelters.

There are some benches but more are required according to the City's Older Adults Plan. Suggested locations are the Bearbrook and Innes intersection, every

bus stop, the top of the hill near Glen Ogilvie School and along the pathway in Bush Park.

Points of interest for both residents and visitors include the Library, Community Hall, Arena and lighted ball diamond all located near the main intersection in Blackburn Hamlet.



The community's nearby soccer fields, cross country trails and indoor track host events that attract many visitors as does the annual Fun Fair.

Unfortunately, snow plowing of sidewalks near the Arena has resulted in the sidewalk being blocked on the day of the Walk Audit.

Parking at most of the points of interest for residents and visitors is adequate with the exception of the soccer fields on Bearbrook Road during major tournaments in the summer. Vehicles often park along Bearbrook Road near the soccer fields where there are no sidewalks. Spectators and players must walk on Bearbrook Road to reach these soccer fields.

Street frontages could be improved with trees, planters and meeting areas (e.g. benches).

Recommendations

The Blackburn Community Association will make the following recommendations to the Councillor and City staff about ways to improve walkability and accessibility in our community, based on the findings of the walk audit:

1. Short-term

- Follow up on specific sidewalk and path maintenance problems identified in the audit, particularly ponding and icy conditions.
- Address issues of accessibility near City facilities, such as the steep bump at the entrance of the community hall, located at 19 Glen Park Drive.
- Review and adjust north/south crossing times for Innes Rd intersections.
- Request winter sidewalk/path maintenance schedules from City staff, focusing on what paths are to be maintained and what maintenance standards apply within 500 metres of schools.
- Encourage residents to report hazards by calling 311.

- Meet with Mall and Orient Park condo management to determine a solution to the blocked pathway leading from the residential area to the rear of the Mall.
- Meet with management of the Blackburn Mews plaza to deal with the blocked access via the paved short cut to the bank and other retail outlets.

2. Long-term

The Blackburn Community Association will with City staff and the Councillor to:

- Install additional benches at the Bearbrook/Innes intersection, every bus stop, the top of the hill at Glen Ogilvie and at the paths crossing in Westpark Park.
- Work with local schools to secure funding for crossing guards.
- Find permanent solutions to speeding and unsafe driving issues in the area of the schools and seniors residences.
- Review the effectiveness of “Flex signs” and other traffic calming measures on Bearbrook Road.
- Review the need for additional pedestrian X-walks across Innes Rd and a new X-walk across Glen Park Drive by the Library.



Thank you to the volunteers who participated in the Walk Audit and to the organizers, Les Whitney from the Council on Aging in Ottawa and Laura Dudas, President of the Blackburn Community Association, and to the staff at the Amica Seniors Residence in Blackburn Hamlet