

# ACADIA

A community portrait prepared by  
Active Neighbourhoods Canada.



## Active Neighbourhoods Canada

How can the design of our communities contribute to public health, well-being and safety? Respond to traffic congestion? Stimulate the economy? Work towards the overall sustainability of our city?

These are questions that inspired the development of Active Neighbourhoods Canada, a collaboration between Sustainable Calgary, the Montreal Urban Ecology Centre and the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation. Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada's "Healthy Weights" program, Active Neighbourhoods supports walking, cycling and vibrant streets. Our philosophy is that people will walk more if they have destinations nearby to go to,

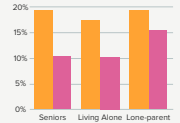
and great pathways – safe, accessible, beautiful – to get there with. Sustainable Calgary is working alongside 4 communities in Calgary and Alberta over 4 years, with Acadia as our second community. We help neighbourhoods identify strengths and weaknesses in their neighbourhoods, explore design solutions with professionals, and work towards the implementation of at least one design change within 2 years. These experiences are shared with professionals, decision-makers and community organizations over the course of the project to contribute to best practices in participatory planning and sustainable urban design.

## Population and Dwellings

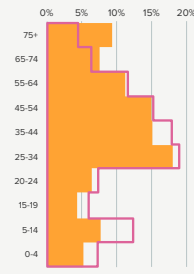
### Population

Population  
Acadia 1,195,194  
Calgary

Median Age  
Acadia 42  
Calgary 36



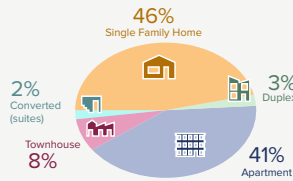
### Age Distribution



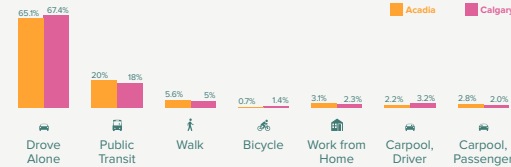
### Dwelling Units

Total dwellings:  
4,884

55% of dwelling units in Bridgeland are owner-occupied, compared to 69% for Calgary as a whole.



### Mode of Transport



## Active Neighbourhoods in Acadia

Active Neighbourhoods has been partnering with the Acadia Community Association (ACA) since July 2015 to find out the good, the bad, and the "meh" of Acadia's public spaces. Engaged in this project are local residents, University of Calgary students, students from NHTV (Breda, Netherlands), Safer Calgary, the Spinal Cord Injury Alberta, various departments at the City of Calgary, Ward 9, the MLAs office for Calgary-Acadia, and more.

This Community Portrait distills the information we collected, and provides a snapshot of Acadia – what does it look like, physically and socially? How do residents feel about walking, biking and hanging out in their community? What changes would they like to see?

This information will feed into the 2016 Urban Design Invitational, where designers and decision-makers develop 3-5 "design schemes" for Acadia, and evaluate their feasibility. The Acadia Design Selection Kiosk then provides a forum for resident feedback and voting on these schemes.

We've been collecting information in a number of ways. Our travelling map of Acadia invited residents to reflect, provide feedback and chat. Door-to-door surveys provided rich feedback, and put Acadia in the running for most hospitable Albertans. In April 2016, the Spinal Cord Injury Association teamed up with us for an accessibility walk audit, providing feedback from the perspective of sight, hearing and mobility impairments. We led a resident walk audit, performed short interviews, went on exploratory bike rides, gathered resident photos and stories, reviewed online conversations, met with

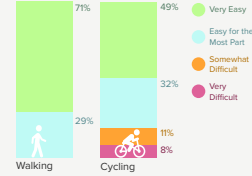
## Activity Surveys

### Activity Profile

Acadia residents were surveyed by Active Neighbourhoods. Here's what they had to say!

- Exercise is the #1 reason residents choose to walk or bike.
- Why they might choose not to walk:
  - Weather: **45%**
  - Distance: **31%**
  - Too much to carry: **29%**
- Why they might choose not to bike:
  - Weather: **33%**
  - Traffic Safety: **24%**
  - Too much to carry: **19%**

### How easy is it to get around your community?



### Promoting Active Transportation

**55%** of residents surveyed think it is important or very important to promote walking and biking in their neighbourhood.

"Without activity, there is no community"

### Social Connectivity

**60%** of residents think the sense of community Acadia is strong or very strong.

### Street Design

According to residents, **better physical design of streets** would encourage residents to walk or bike more.

### Walkscore

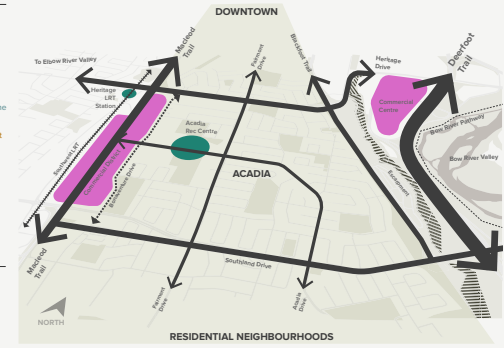
According to walkscore.com, Acadia has the following scores:

**Location A**  
Walkability **74** Transit **60**

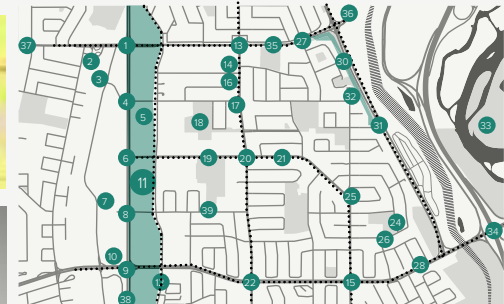
**Location B**  
Walkability **35** Transit **32**



## Acadia Urban Structure



## Hotspots



- 1 Improve cycling/pedestrian safety.
- 2 Difficult to access by foot, bike and bus: LRT track is primary barrier.
- 3 Improves access to LRT Station; walkway is steep, particularly for people on wheels, particularly in winter.
- 4 Major pedestrian crossing; provides LRT access; safety concerns for pedestrians/cyclists.
- 5 Great place for random conversations.
- 6 Improve cycling/ped safety.
- 7 Great place to waste an entire day.
- 8 Improve cycling/pedestrian safety.
- 9 Improve cycling/pedestrian safety.
- 10 Great place to walk to.
- 11 Improve walkability; control height of new developments; improve access from Acadia to shops.
- 12 Sidewalks narrow; high speed traffic; noisy; businesses have their backs to street - opportunity for better pedestrian access; lots of room for wider sidewalks/bike lanes.
- 13 Improve cycling/pedestrian safety.
- 14 Convenient and walkable.
- 15 Uncomfortable crossing by bike/foot; Southland very busy; main access to Willow Park.
- 16 Improve aesthetic of traffic calming measures (eg. cement barriers).
- 17 High speed traffic & related safety concerns; curbside passing due to wide road; lack of dedicated cycling infrastructure; lots of schools and seniors.
- 18 Personal safety concerns.
- 19 Pedestrian safety, as this is a popular place to cross the street.
- 20 Improve cycling/pedestrian safety; high traffic speed; history of collisions.
- 21 Nice, wide road to cycle on, but vehicle speed and safety concerns, especially for children, no dedicated cycling infrastructure.
- 22 Improve cycling/pedestrian safety.
- 23 Drivers dropping off children create safety concerns.
- 24 High vehicle speeds in school zone.
- 25 Walkable amenities; great potential for further development.
- 26 Improve sidewalks.
- 27 Generous curb radii encourage high-speed turning; safety concerns.
- 28 Busy street; uncomfortable to travel or cross by bike; improve comfort of access to Bow River.
- 29 High-speed cut-through traffic.
- 30 Great place to walk a dog and run into neighbours.
- 31 No pedestrian access between Southland and Heritage.
- 32 No pedestrian access across Blackfoot at this intersection, due to soundwall.
- 33 Great local amenity; create more pedestrian and cycling access.
- 34 Uncomfortable to cross by bike/foot; high-speed traffic at major interchange; main access to Bow River.
- 35 Bike paths are convenient; improve aesthetic and heat island effect.
- 36 Great local amenity; improve bike access.
- 37 Great local amenity; improve bike access.
- 38 Great local amenity; improve bike access.
- 39 Great place for random conversations.

## Cool Ideas

What do Acadia residents have to say? We rounded up their 'Hot Spots' and 'Cool Ideas' to make their neighbourhoods more active. Feedback was gathered through door-to-door and online surveys, at community events, and in resident interviews. What did people say?

"My vision for Acadia: safe, continuous, straight routes making recreational riding, access to C-Train, and light shopping trips easy."

"We need a coffee shop. We would love to fill all that empty space at Heritage and Macleod with businesses."

"People come to the community garden because it is a destination. We need more benches, picnic tables, gathering places, BBQs, bike racks, and bike fixing stations in Acadia."

The list to the right captures a diverse collection of inspiring ideas Acadia residents have for their community's future.



1. Dedicated bike lanes: Acadia Drive, Fairmount Drive and Bonaventure Drive.
2. Bike Route: Create a safe, continuous bike route that connects parks, Bow River Pathway, and C-Train.
3. De-fencing: Remove chain link fences in Acadia.
4. Fences and Street Calming: Instead of concrete barriers, hedges or cement flower boxes.
5. Dog Obstacle Course (in dog park)
6. Snow plowing: Stop plowing residential streets; the snow just gets plowed into the curb cuts.
7. Transform some schools into retirement homes: help seniors stay in their neighbourhood.
8. Schools as community hubs: to make amenities beneficial to all residents.
9. Micro-grocery: install satellite grocery stores that are walkable for residents, particularly seniors and children. You could text in your order.
10. Micro-convenience: install small convenience stores that are walkable; could be stocked with everything you need to fix a bike.
11. Shared Space: create a plaza area for shopping, eating and hanging out that's open to vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles.
12. Portable Coffee: Install temporary cafes residents can walk to (portables or food trucks). Include an area where people can tie up their dogs - lots of dogs here!
13. Community gardens: more of them!
14. Acadia Village Mall: create a shared space; experiment with a portable cafe, outdoor furniture and a community garden.
15. IKEA Access: ramp or stairs down the hill.
16. Blackfoot Crossing: Punch a hole through the sound wall at the intersection; will provide access to shopping and walk-to-work opportunities.
17. Trees for Traffic-Calming: for example on 88th, line the sides of the streets with trees to encourage slower driving speeds.
18. Public Washrooms: Install them along routes to major destinations, like parks and shopping.
19. Arlington Park: great place for a community garden and skating rink
20. Wayfinding: Create a system of signs designed to be seen by pedestrians and cyclists.
21. Pave gravel service road along LRT for cycling





### Resident Priorities:

- Vehicle speed
- Aesthetics + Effectiveness of current traffic calming devices
- Sidewalk width + proximity to streets
- Lack of Cycling Infrastructure / Separated Paths
- Cultural attitudes towards cyclists
- Seniors' resources and amenities
- Safety: children and seniors; pedestrians and cyclists
- Barriers to pedestrian travel (eg. fences, loading zones, etc.)
- Access to LRT
- Access to parks (Sue Higgins, Fish Creek, Glenmore)
- Access to river
- Access to shopping districts
- Scale/height of new housing development

### Neighbourhood Overview

Sports hub, shopping destination, educational nexus; home to two LRT stations and several major arteries; and nestled between the Bow River and Glenmore Reservoir. Acadia is a community of large trees, of long-term residents and of new families – described as “Norman Rockwell-esque” by one resident. It is a community of volunteers, whether driving seniors, working charity casinos or spearheading the Acadia Community Garden and Art Society – currently going into its 4th year! Their collection of raised beds and little library have quickly become a community hub.

Acadia has been advocating since at least 2006 to bring traffic calming measures to the community. In 2013, Safer Calgary was invited to become involved, and Active Neighbourhoods followed suit in 2015. In the meantime, the Acadia Community Association has led creative initiatives to calm traffic and create vibrant community spaces. In 2016, for example, they held their Neighbour Day Fair on Acadia Drive, without closing the road – eliciting conversation between pedestrians and drivers curious about the event. Acadia is an active community anticipating development pressure, facing traffic speed issues, experiencing limited access to amenities, and armed with an appetite for experimentation.

Typical of its era, the neighbourhood is residential on the inside with large centralized green spaces. It is bordered by wide thoroughfares that house most of their shopping and amenities. Fairmount Drive and Acadia Drive – home to seniors' housing, schools and daycare – bisect the neighbourhood and also see heavy traffic and high speeds. Residents have expressed concerns about pedestrian safety along these busier streets.

Residents have also expressed a lack of safe pedestrian and bicycle access to the Bow River, Glenmore Reservoir and surrounding parks, despite their proximity. The two water bodies create a bottleneck effect on traffic, with north-south traffic being funneled through McLeod and percolating through the surrounding neighbourhoods. Acadians have reported high rates of cut-through traffic, high speeds, and associated collisions and fatalities – thus experiencing the disadvantages of being hugged by water, without reaping the benefits.

Acadia has the highest number of schools of any community in Calgary (9), and seniors nearly double the Calgary average. The schools add to high traffic in a neighbourhood with more vulnerable street users. Both children and seniors are less likely to be drivers, which builds the case for creating high-quality pedestrian infrastructure.

