

Community Observation Results

Medicine Hat, Alberta



COMMUNITY HEALTH &
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



Centre for
Health Promotion
S T U D I E S



SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Presentation Outline

- What is the Built Environment
- What we did
- Why we did what we did
- What we found
- How this information can help your community



The Built Environment Includes...

Community Design Factors



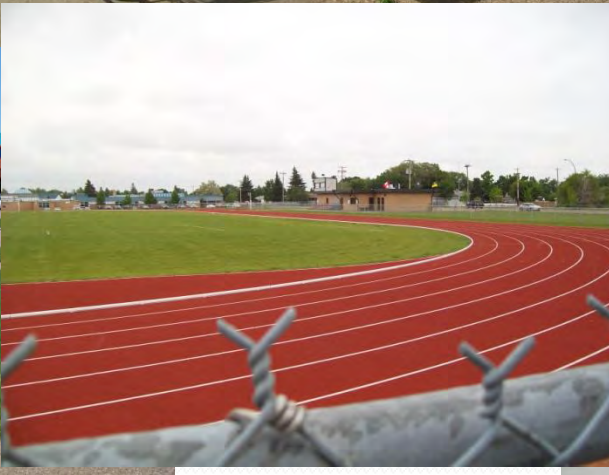
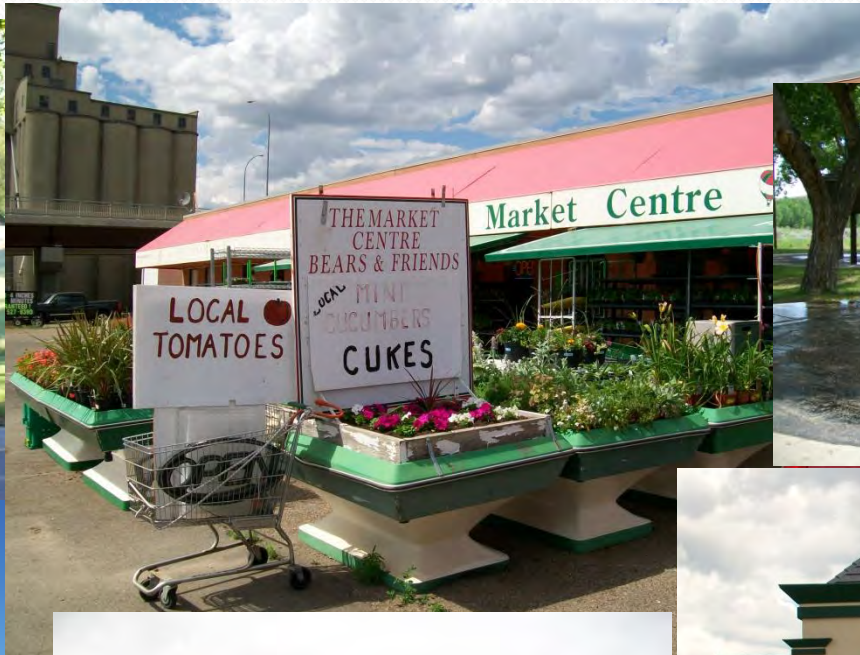
Land Uses



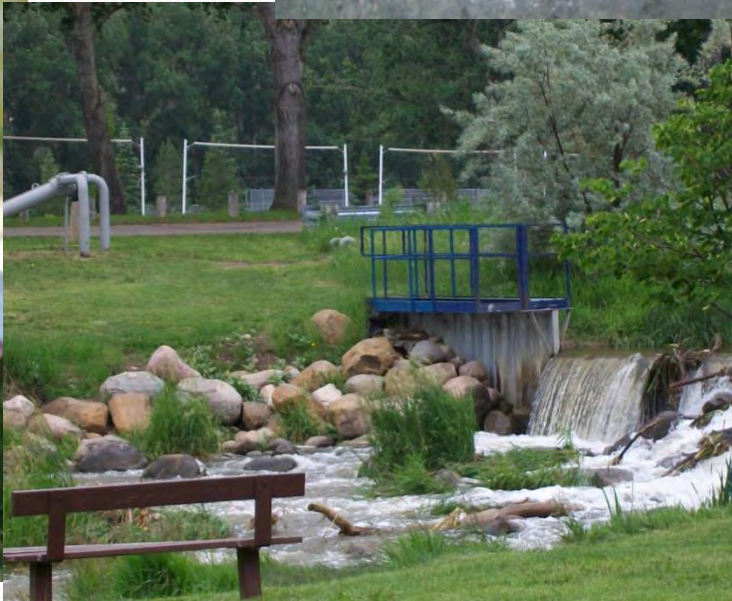
Transportation Options



Activity and Eating Options

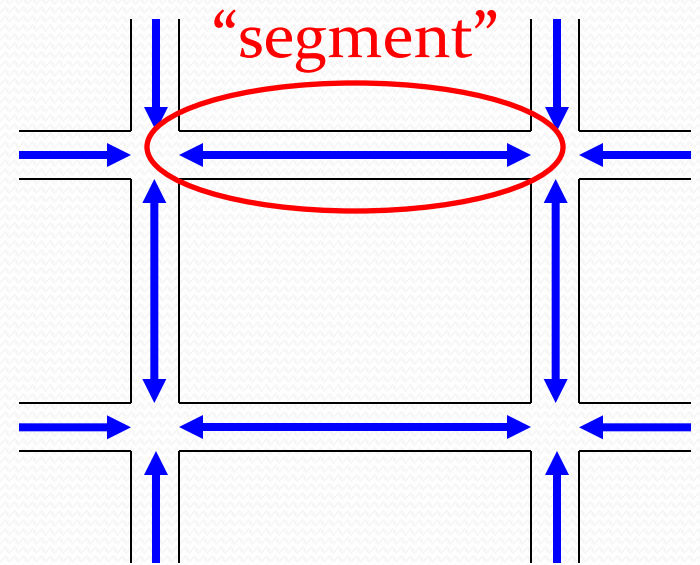


Aesthetics



What We Did (July to September, 2008)

- An observer walked every street in Medicine Hat.
- The observer stopped at 2,064 locations.
- These locations represent every “segment” of street between two intersections.
- Each segment was rated on 230 characteristics of the built environment.



CHBE Team's Core Belief

- The community built environment (BE):
 - influences our health-related decisions, and
 - presents both opportunities and barriers.
- Changes in the BE can have a positive effect on individual and community health.
- The observation data contributes to understanding the BE so that potential changes can be made.

What We Found

- Results from the Medicine Hat observation are presented here.
- The 230 characteristics have been organized into 6 themes.
- Within each of the themes, sub-themes have been created of features that are normally found together on the same segment.
 - 21 sub-themes in total

Themes and their Sub-Themes

Attractiveness

- Attractiveness - Retail
- Attractiveness - Park
- Attractiveness - Street
- Attractiveness - Older Area

Safety from Crime

- Crime Safety - Indicator Aesthetics
- Crime Safety - Indicator Services
- Crime Safety - Indicator Destinations

Traffic Safety

- Traffic Safety - Crossing
- Traffic Safety - Walking
- Traffic Safety - Traffic Calming
- Traffic Safety - Mid-Block Crosswalk

Diversity of Destinations

- Diversity of Destinations - Retail
- Diversity of Destinations - Civic
- Diversity of Destinations - Fitness
- Diversity of Destinations - Schools
- Diversity of Destinations - Industrial

Density

- Residential Density
- Building Stories

Pedestrian Accessibility

- Pedestrian Access - Sidewalks
- Pedestrian Access - Freeways
- Pedestrian Access - Barriers

Results Interpretation

- A street or area is more walkable when it has more features supportive of walking or other forms of physical activity.
- On the maps, segments are coloured to reflect the quality of the theme or feature relative to the rest of the segments in the community.
- More than one segment can be in close proximity to a given physical feature (e.g., a school). Thus, interpretation of the results relates to understanding the proximity of segments to features, and not to the total number of the features in the community.

Results Interpretation

- It is important to note that the comparisons presented here are based only on the differences between segments in Medicine Hat.
 - For example: If a segment has a low rating for crime safety, this does not necessarily mean the segment is not safe. This simply means that in comparison to the other segments in Medicine Hat, the segment was observed as being less safe.

Results

- The following slides provide 20 maps representing each of the sub-themes.
- An additional 26 maps are provided for a selection of the individual features that make up each of the sub-themes.

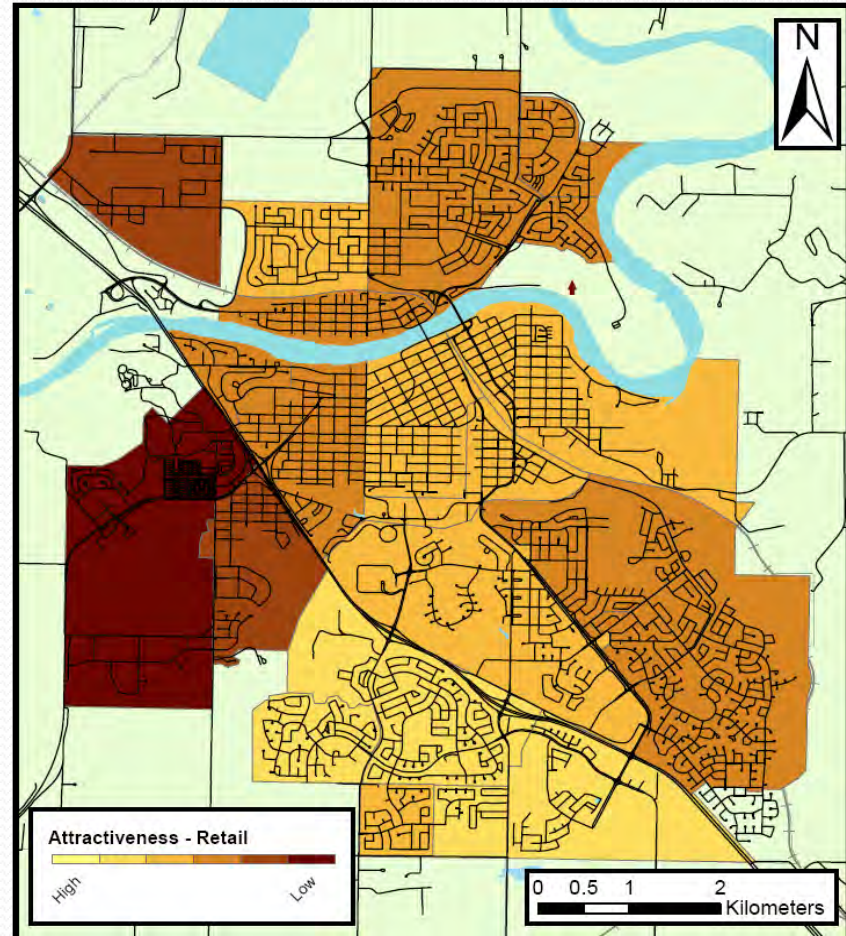


Attractiveness

Features that enhance the pleasure of walking.

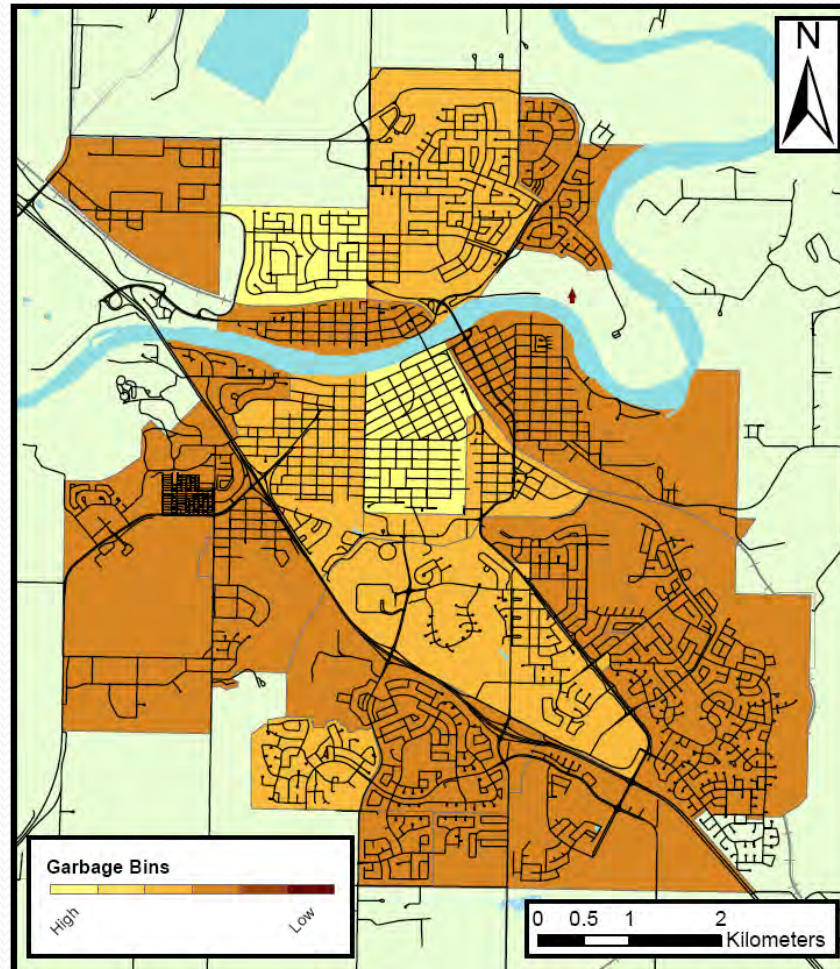
Attractiveness - Retail

- Garbage Bins
- Newspaper Boxes
- Bus Stops
- Increased Sidewalk Width
- Public Art
- Sidewalk Coverings



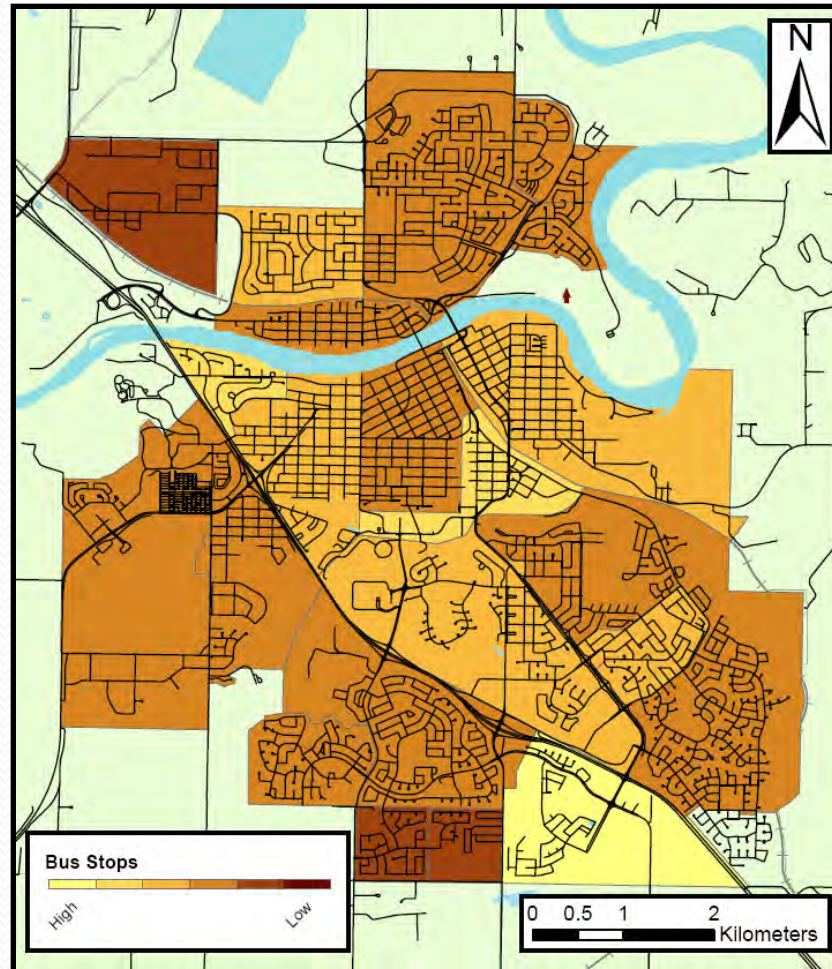
Some features associated with retail locations increase the level of attractiveness.

Garbage Bins



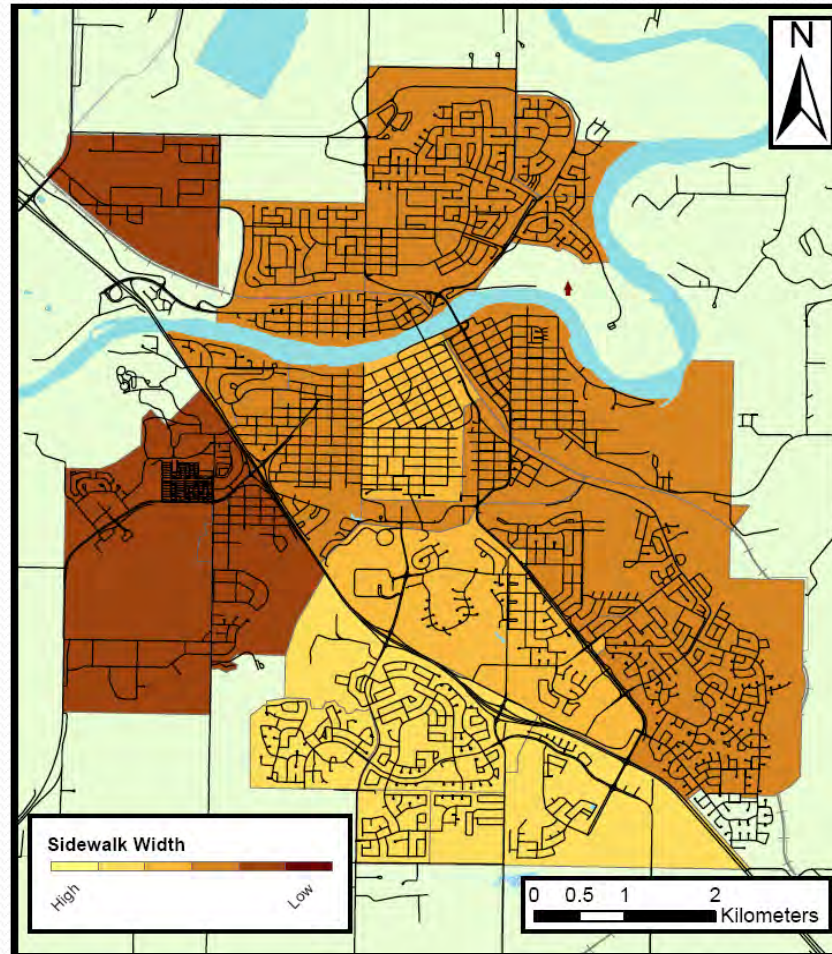
Presence of garbage bins indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

Bus Stops



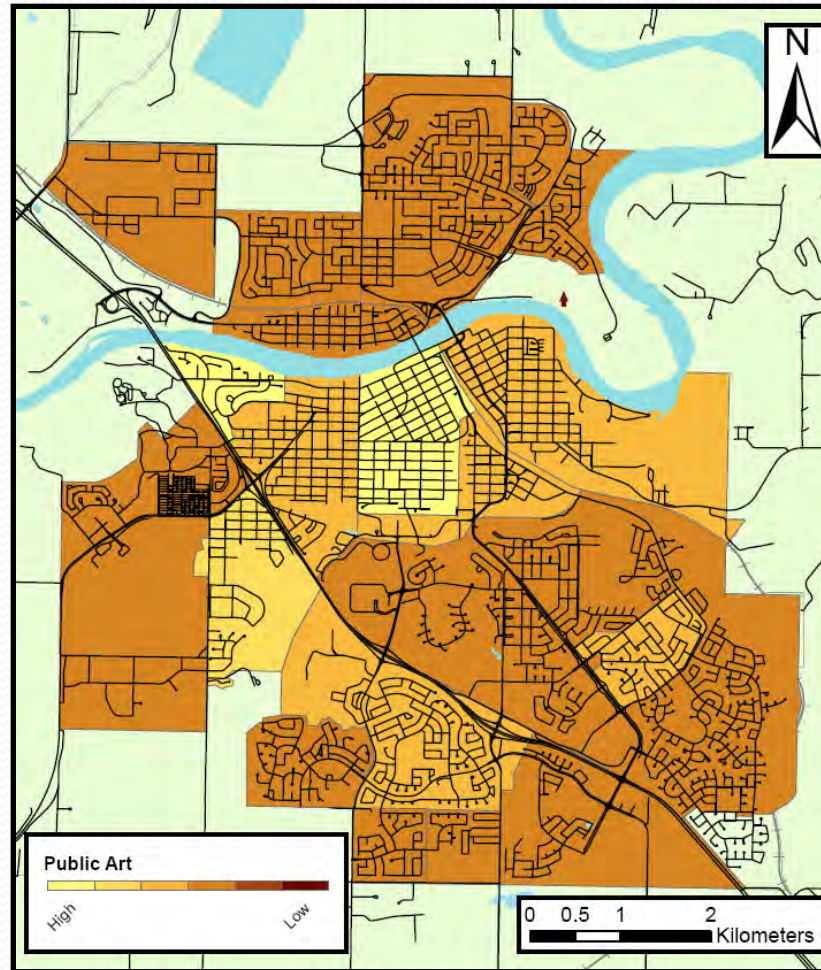
Presence of bus stops indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

Sidewalk Width



Presence of wider sidewalks indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

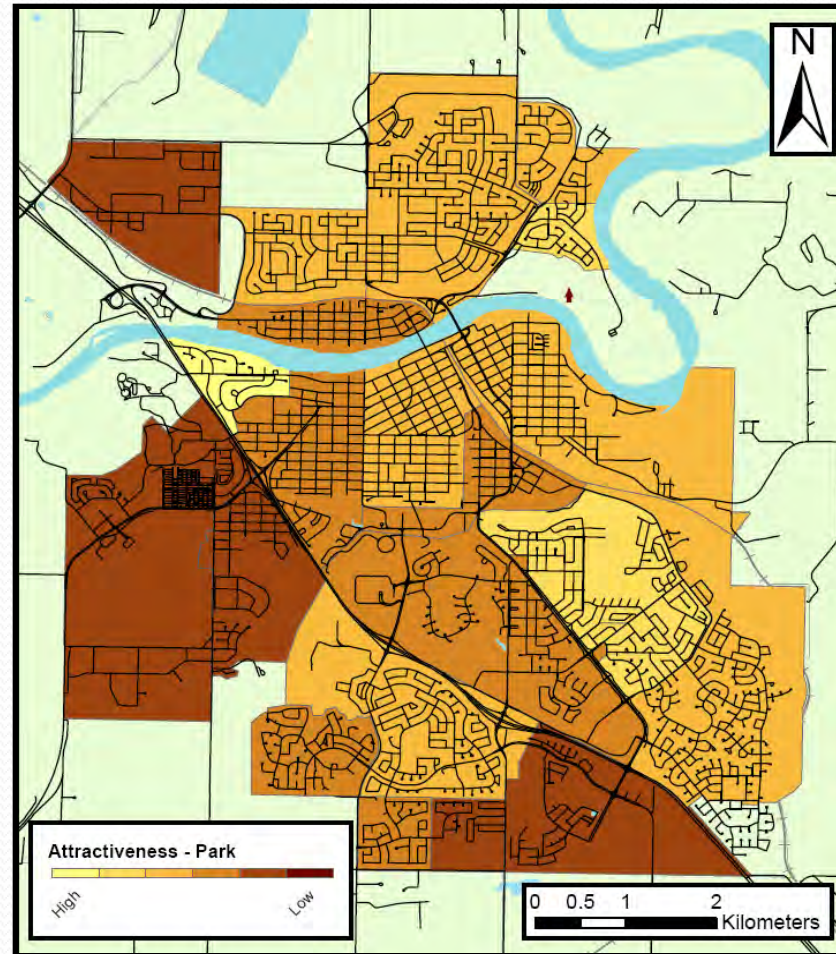
Public Art



Presence of public art indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

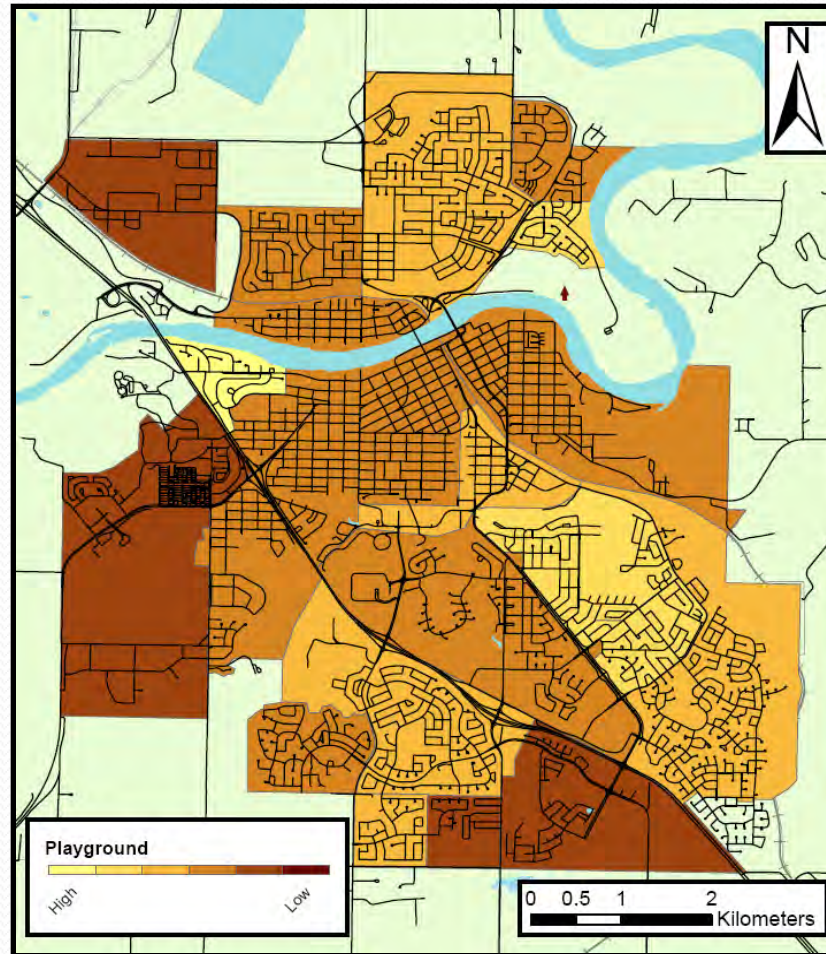
Attractiveness - Park

- Playground
- Playing Field
- Open Spaces
- Basketball Nets
- Seating Options



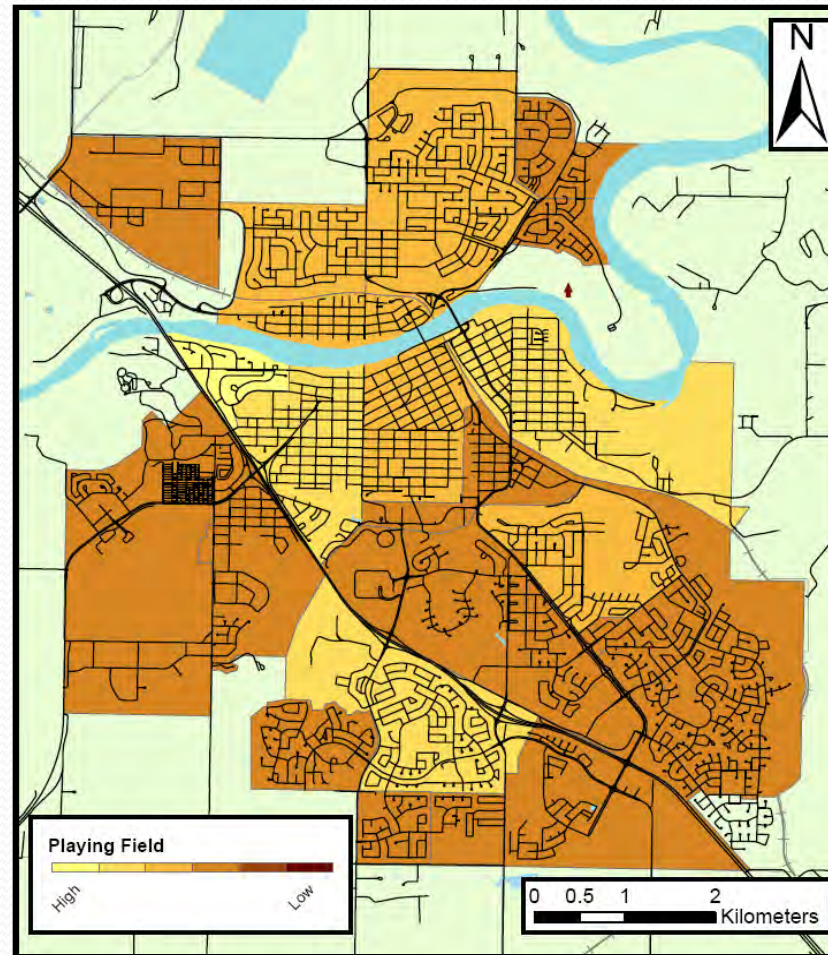
Some features associated with park space increase the level of attractiveness.

Playgrounds



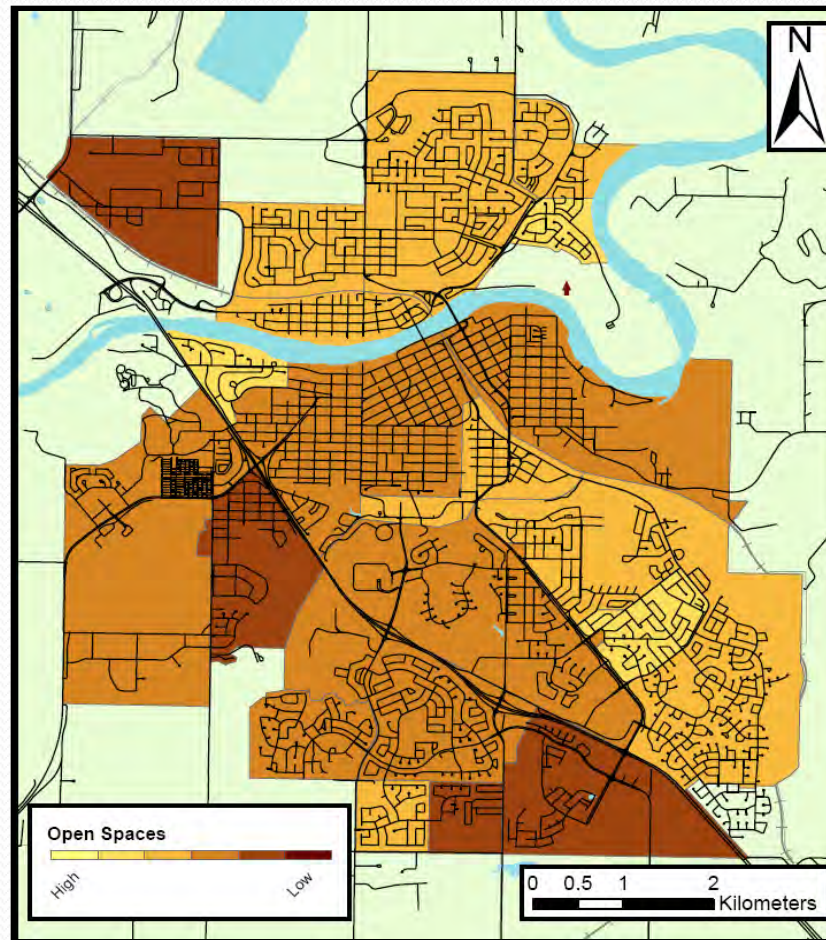
Presence of playgrounds indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

Playing Field



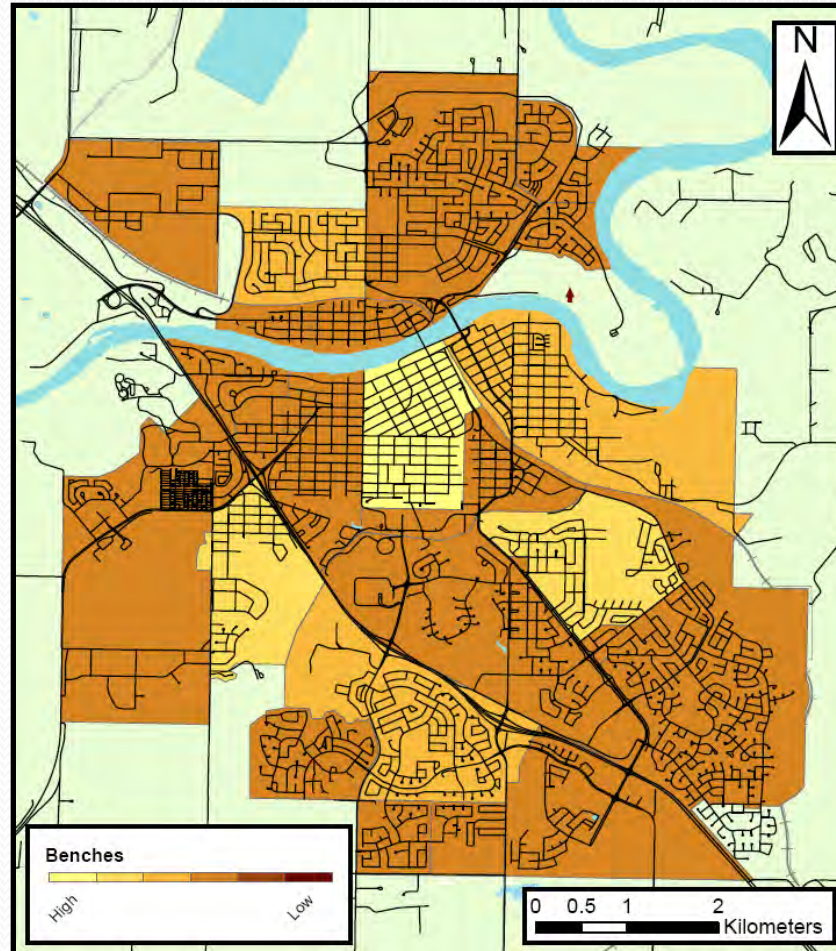
Presence of playing fields indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

Open Spaces



Presence of open spaces indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

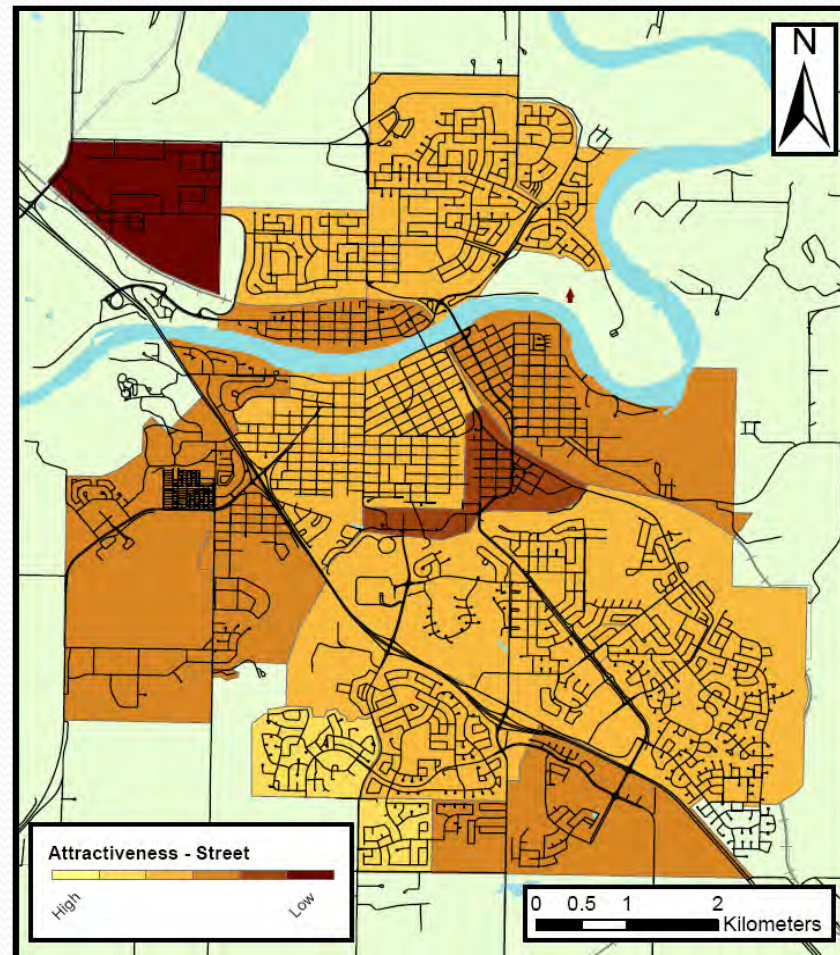
Seating Options



Presence of seating options indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

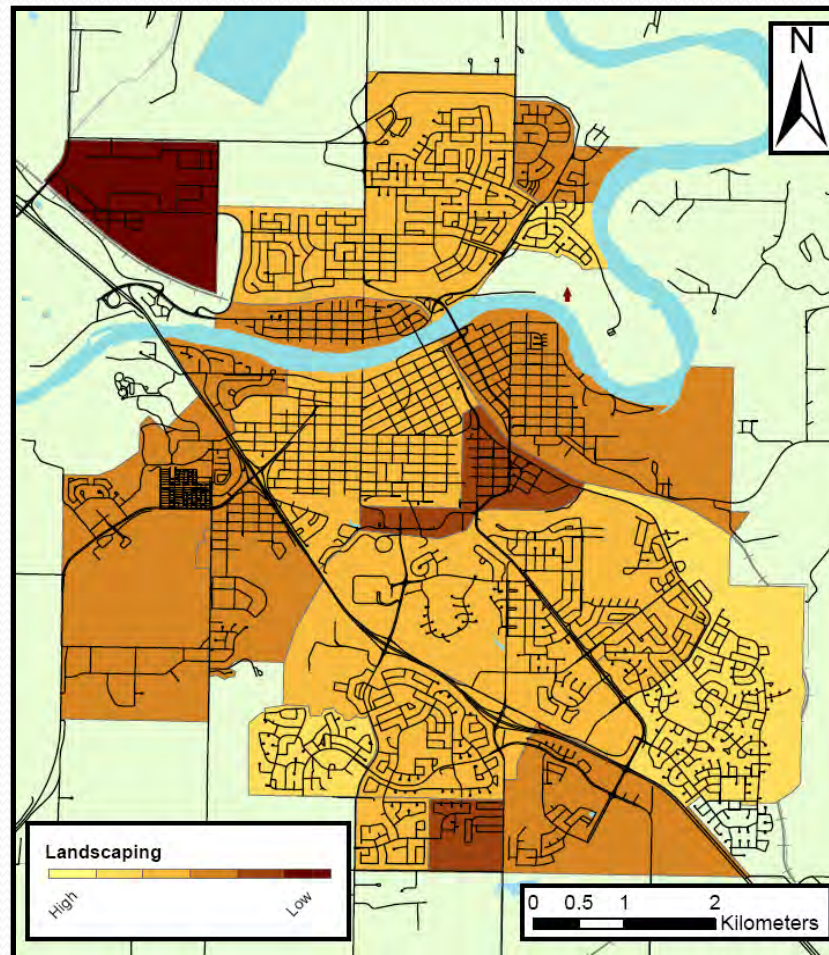
Attractiveness - Street

- Landscaping
- Street Flowers
- Absence of Overhead Wires
- Absence of Blank Walls



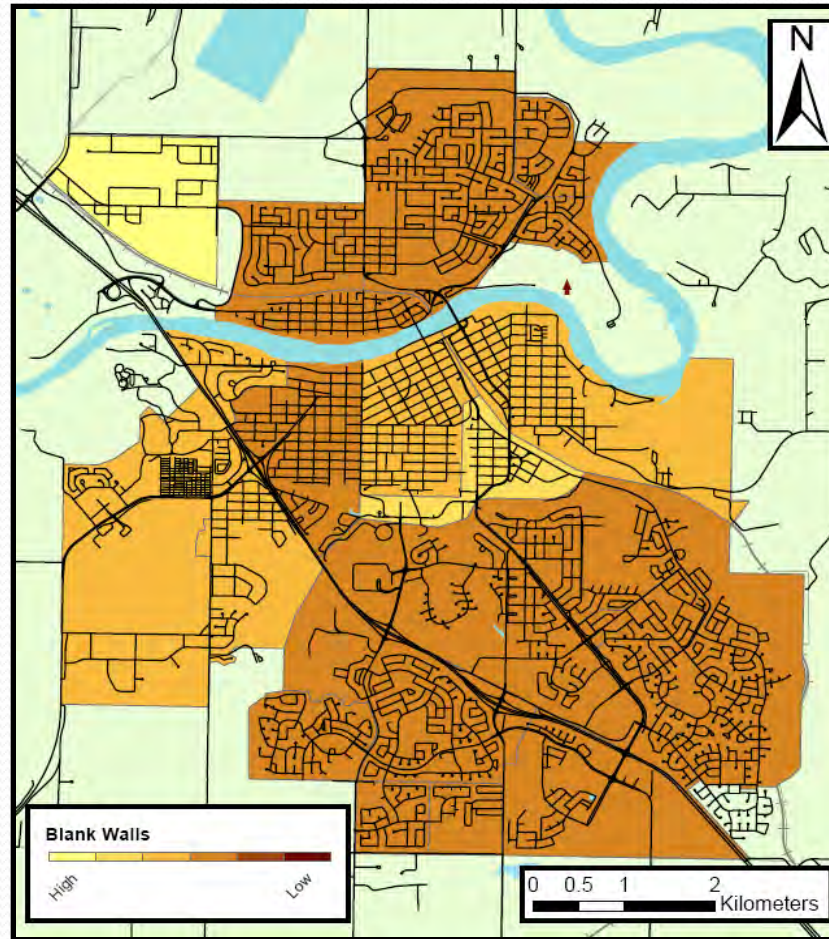
Some features associated with streetscapes increase the level of attractiveness.

Landscaping



Presence of nicer landscaping indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

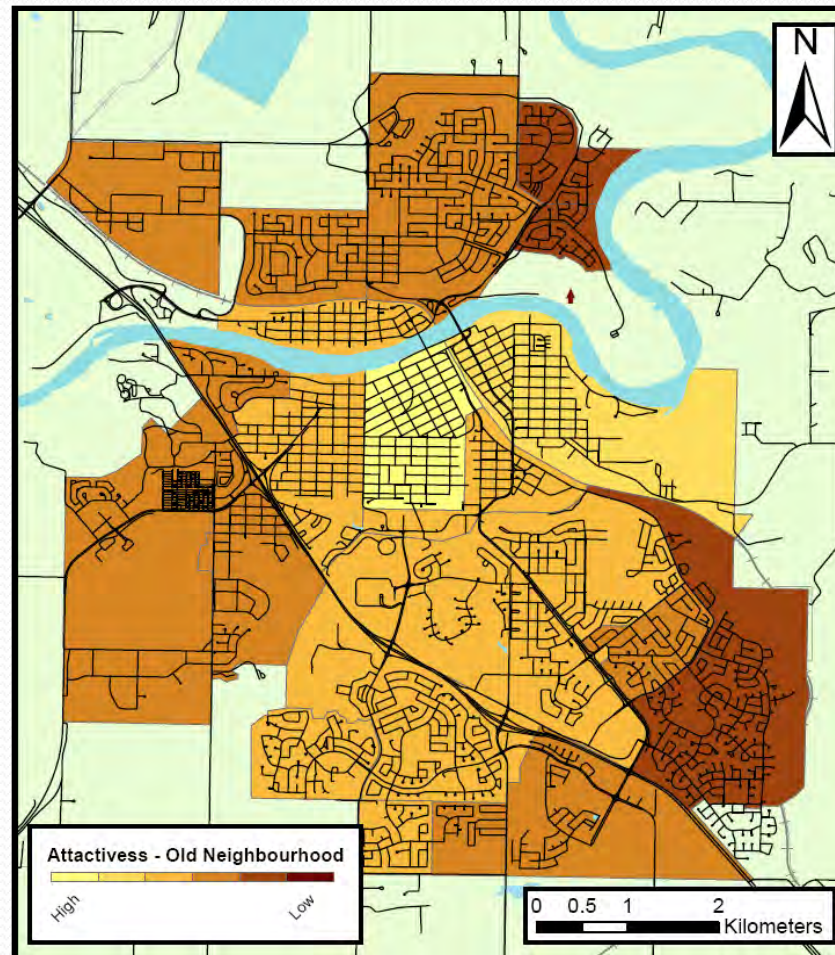
Blank Walls



Absence of blank walls indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

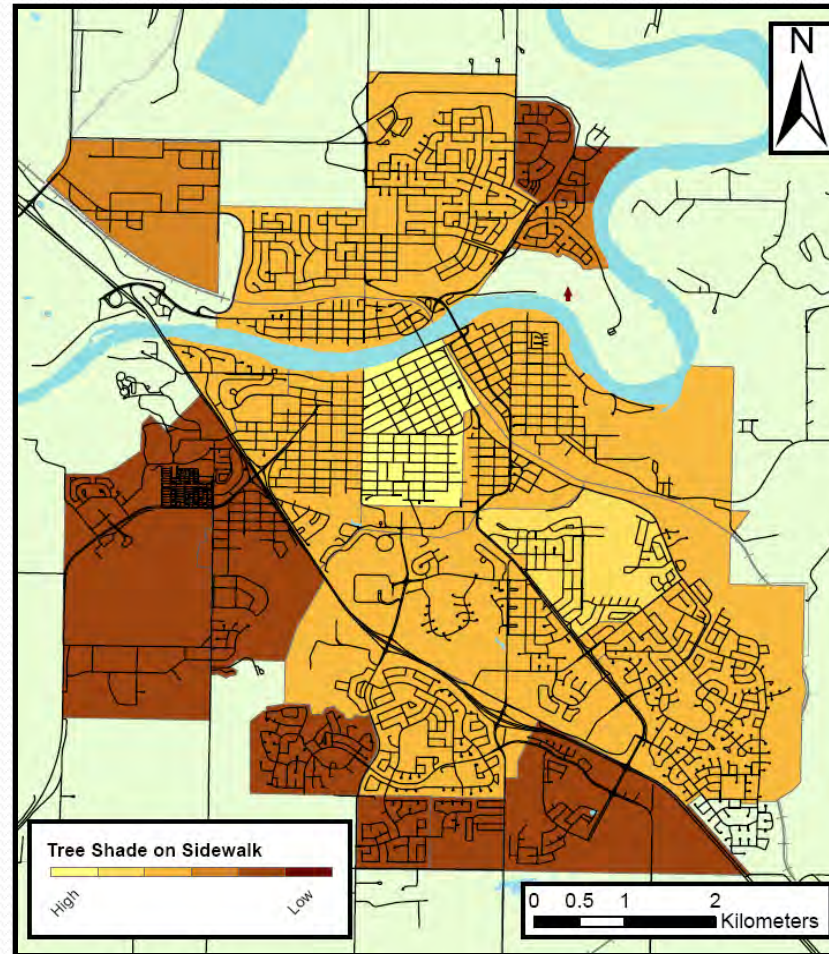
Attractiveness – Older Area

- Garage Visibility
- Verge Quality
- Tree Shade on Sidewalk
- Front Porches
- Off-Street Parking
- Interesting Architecture



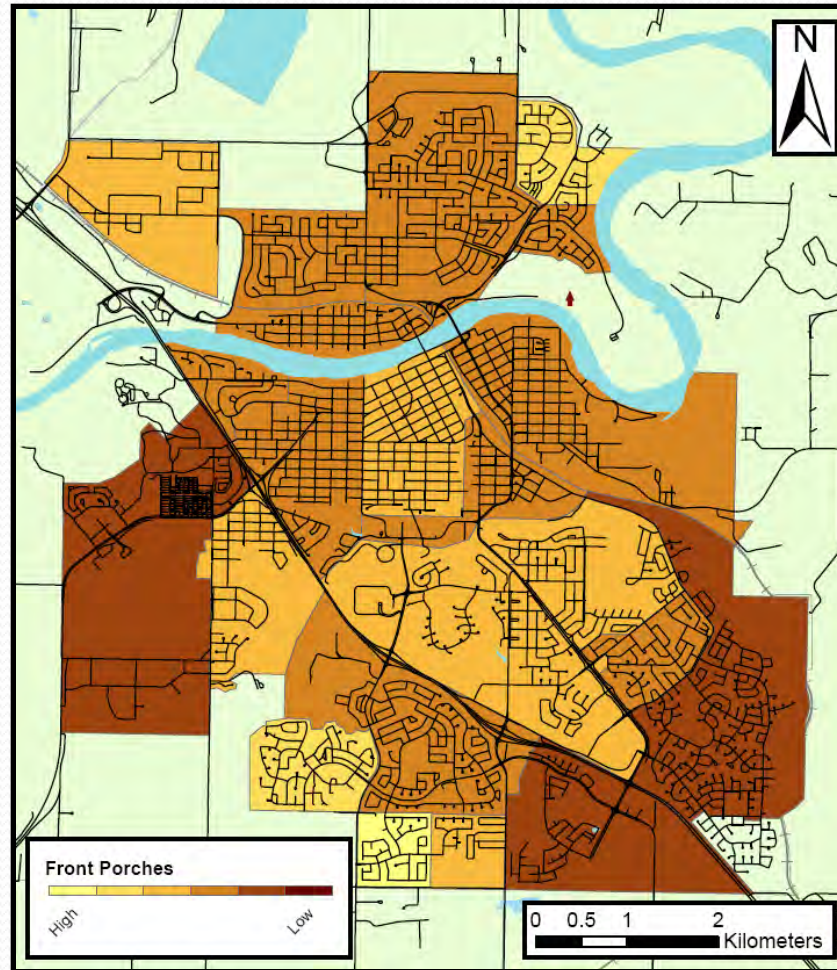
Features associated with old neighbourhoods increase the level of attractiveness.

Tree Shade on Sidewalk



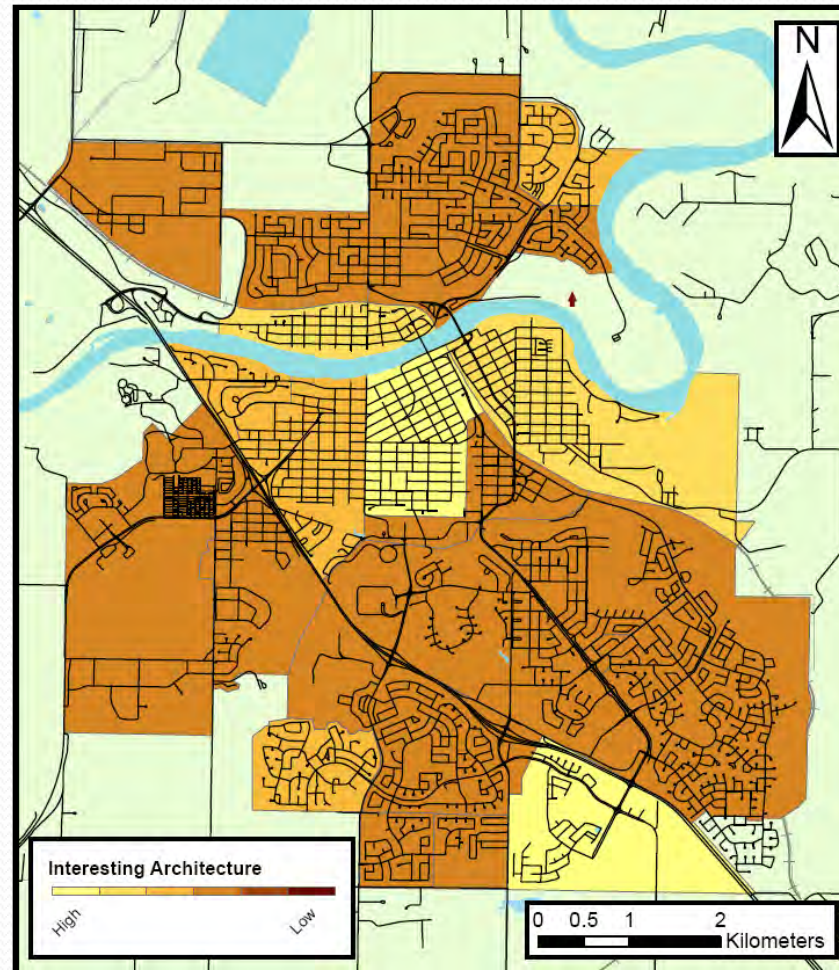
Presence of tree shade indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

Front Porches



Presence of front porches indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

Interesting Architecture



Presence of interesting architecture indicates a higher level of attractiveness.

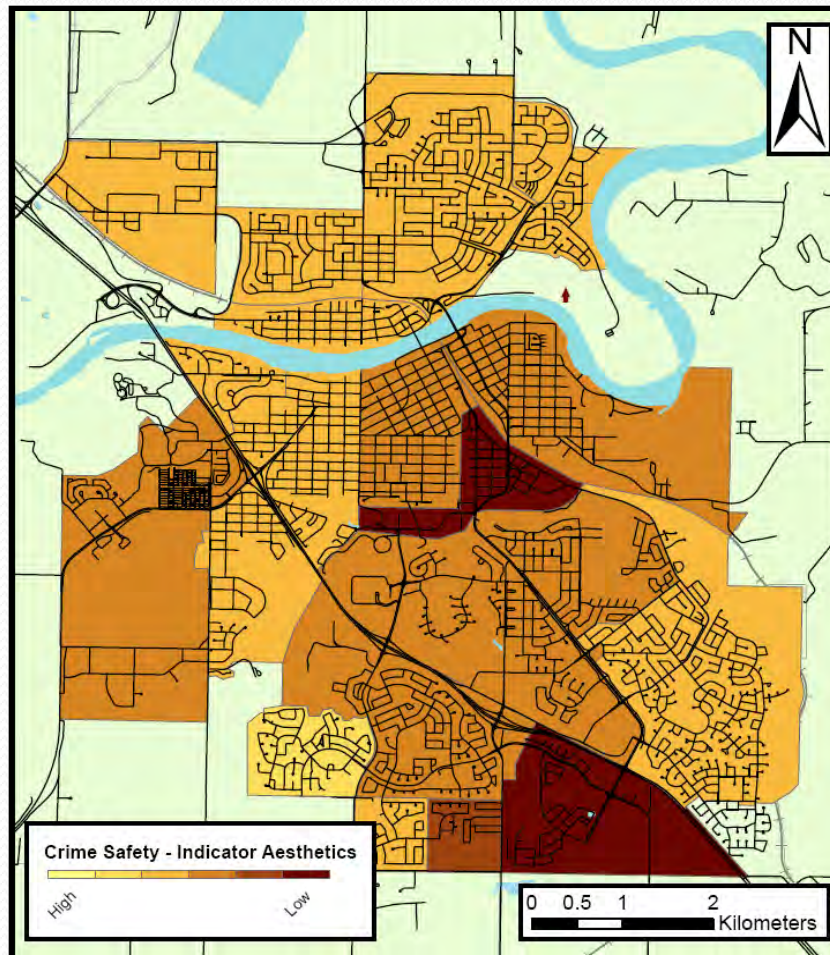


Crime Safety

Features that suggest an area is more safe in relation to crime.

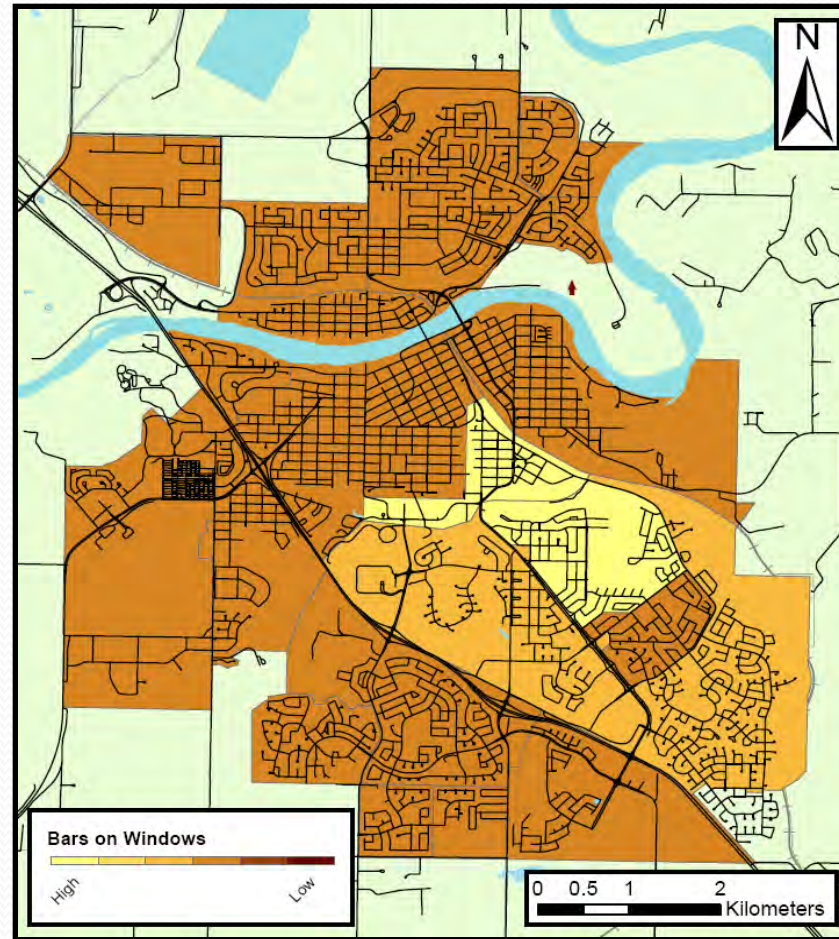
Crime Safety - Aesthetics

- Abandoned Buildings
- Bars on Windows
- Building Maintenance
- Graffiti
- Litter



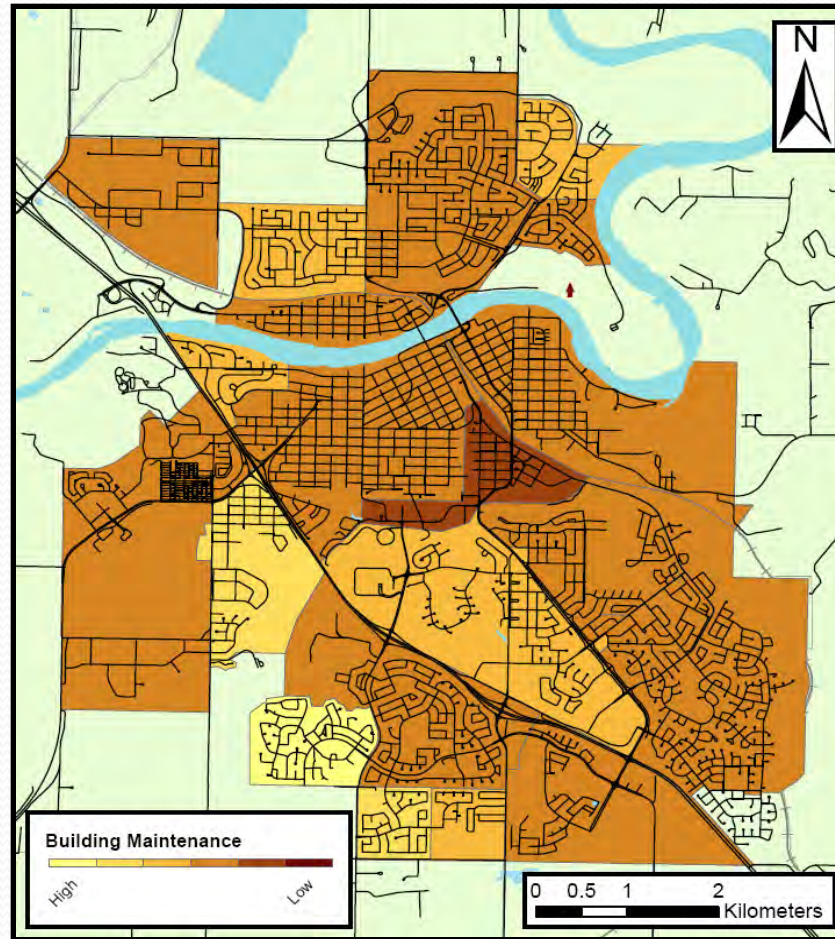
Absence of some street characteristics indicates a higher level of crime safety.

Bars on Windows



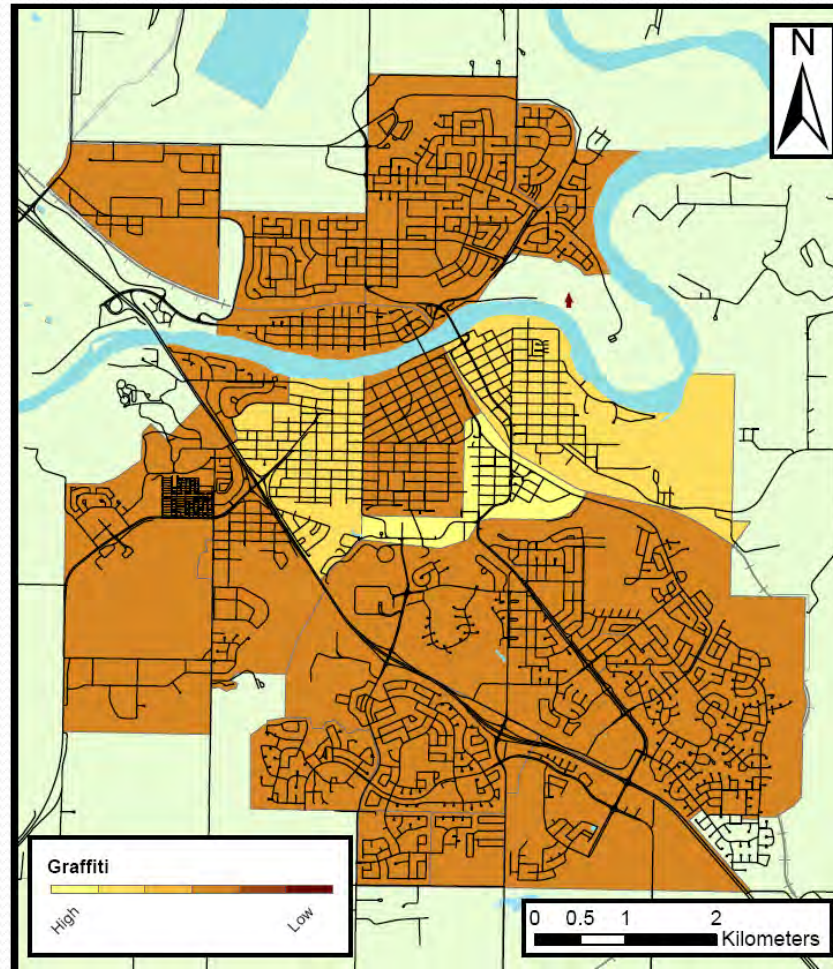
Absence of bars on windows indicates a higher level of crime safety.

Building Maintenance



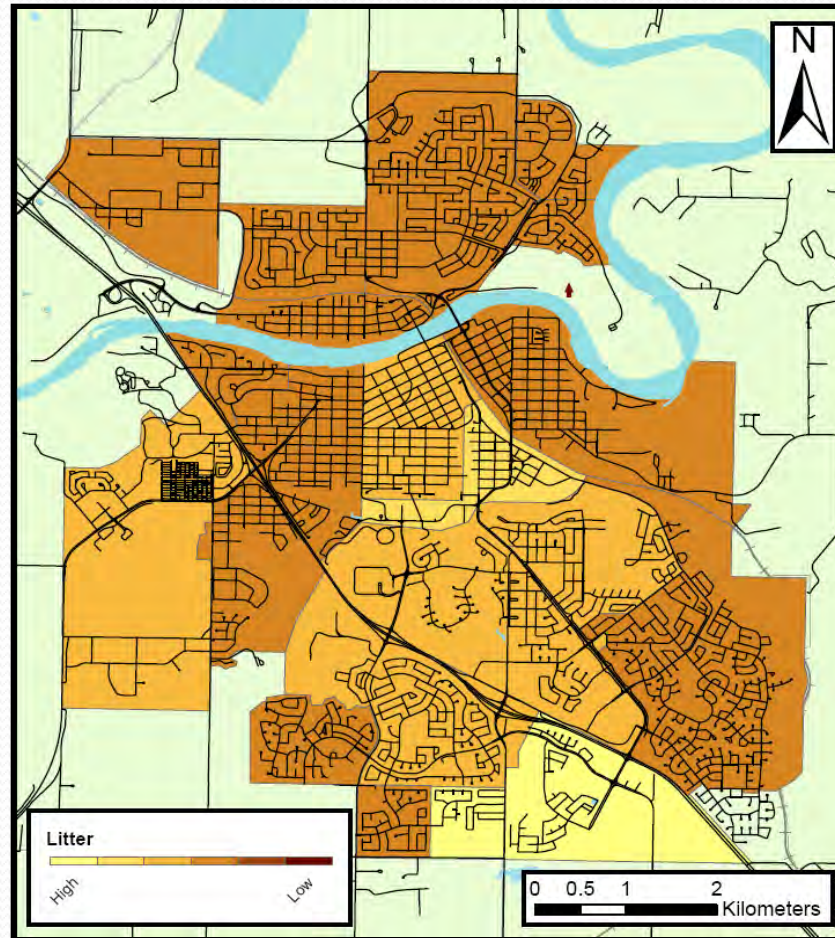
Higher maintenance of buildings indicates a higher level of crime safety.

Graffiti



Absence of graffiti indicates a higher level of crime safety.

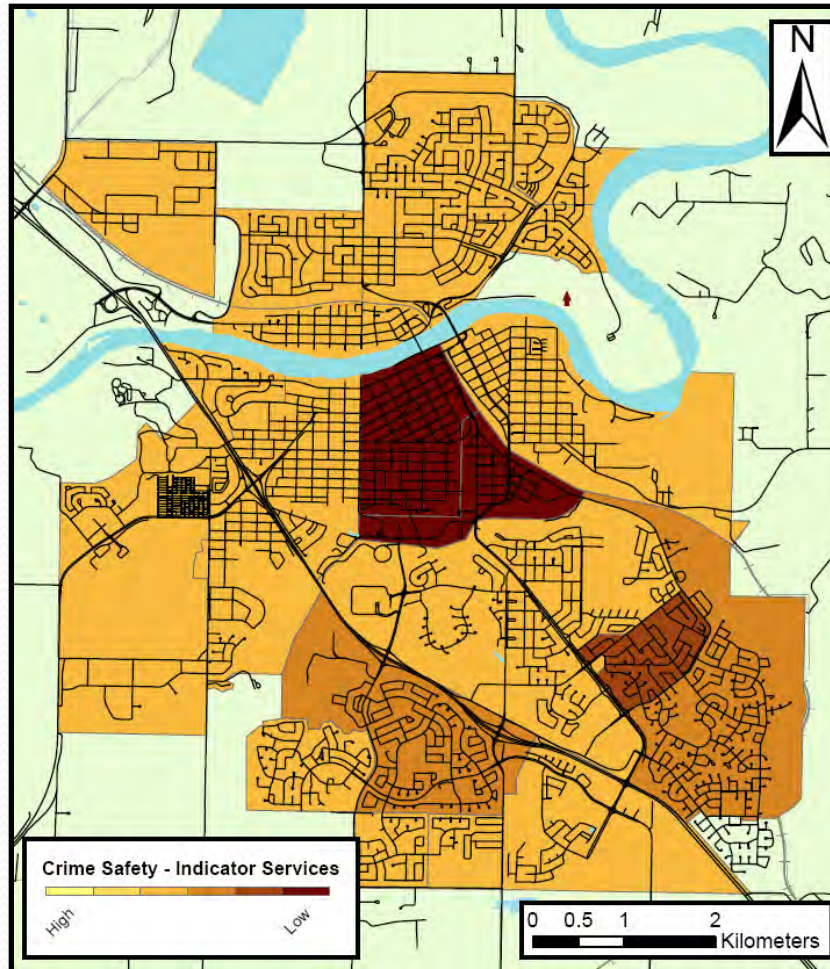
Litter



Absence of litter indicates a higher level of crime safety.

Crime Safety – Indicator Services

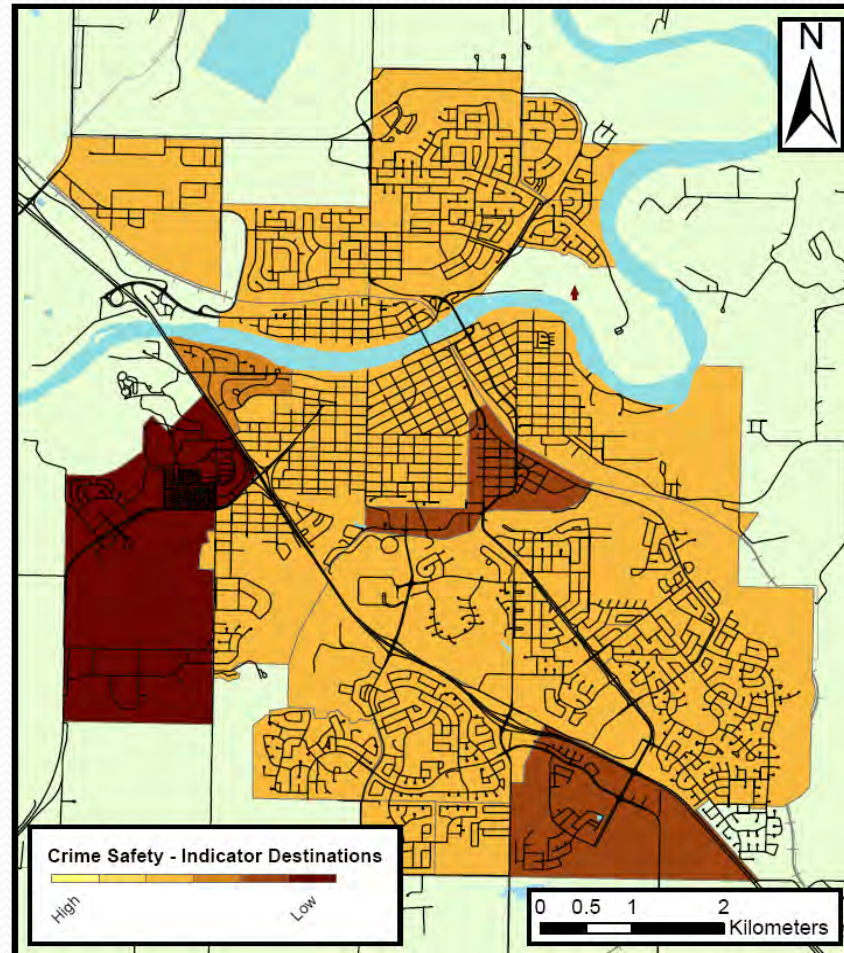
- Check Cashing Stores
- Pawn Shops



Absence of some destinations indicates a higher level of crime safety.

Crime Safety - Destinations

- Liquor Stores
- Bars or Nightclubs



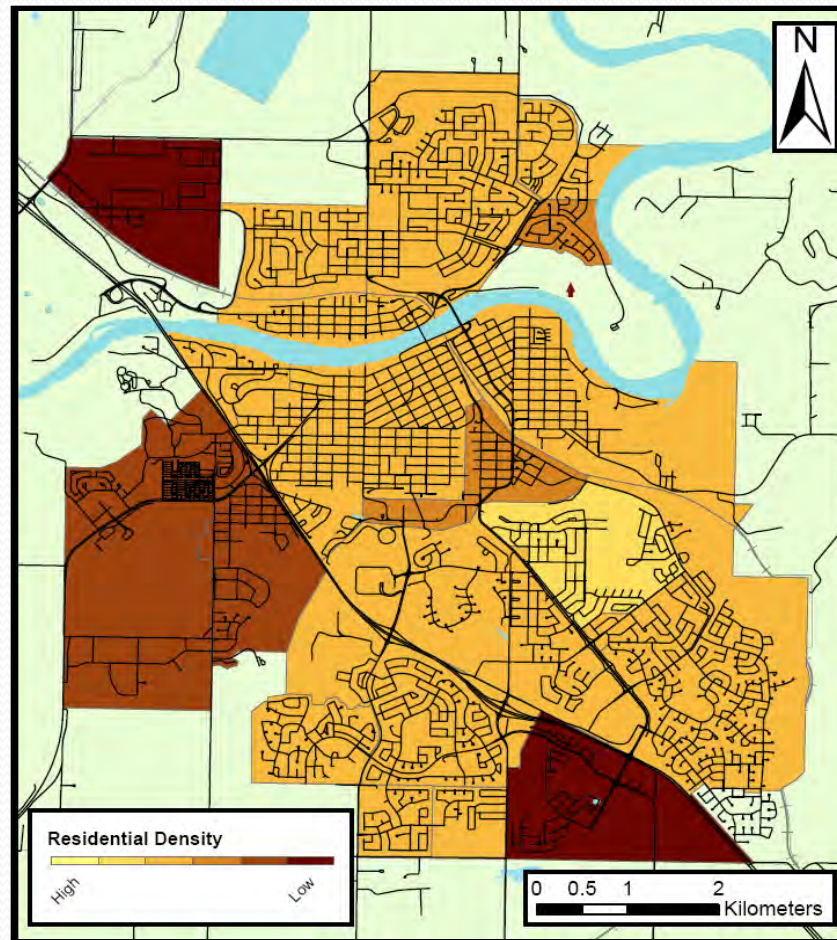
Absence of some destinations indicates a higher level of crime safety.



Density

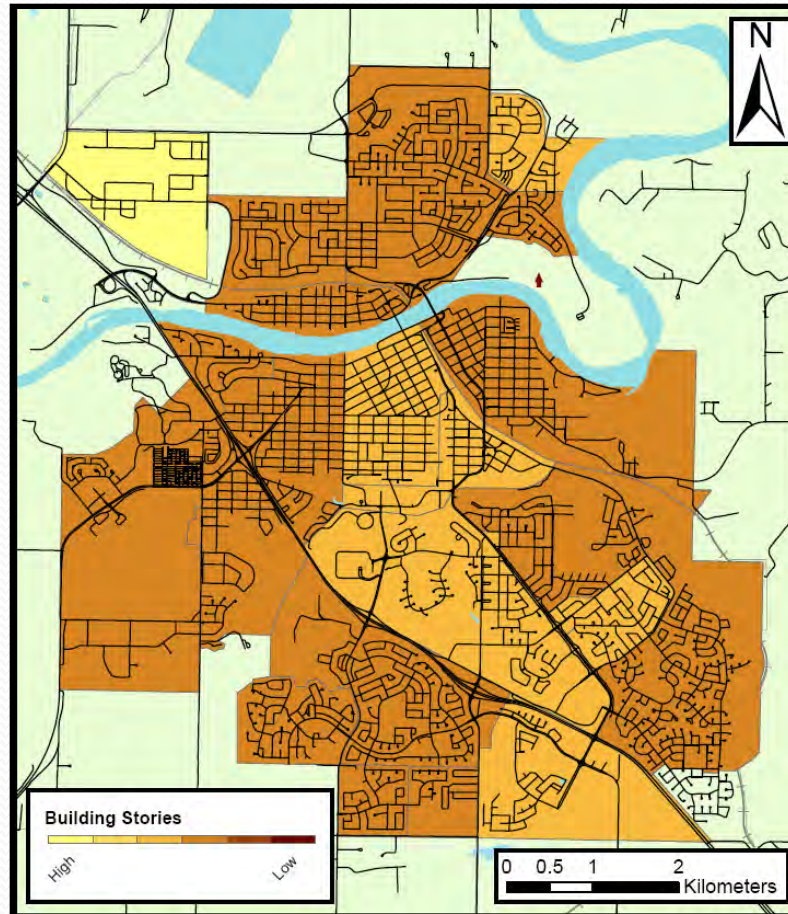
Features that describe the number of people that could live in an area.

Residential Density



Higher residential density indicates higher potential for pedestrian traffic.

Building Stories



Increased number of building stories indicates higher potential for pedestrian traffic.

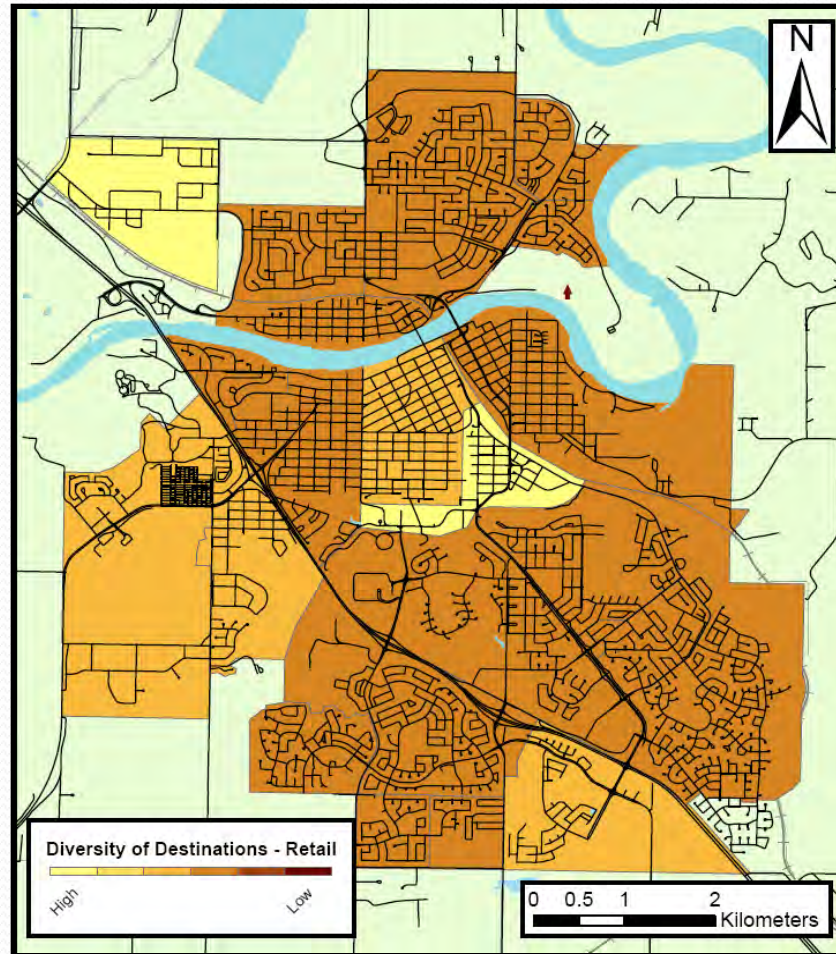


Diversity of Destinations

Features that are destinations community residents would be interested in accessing.

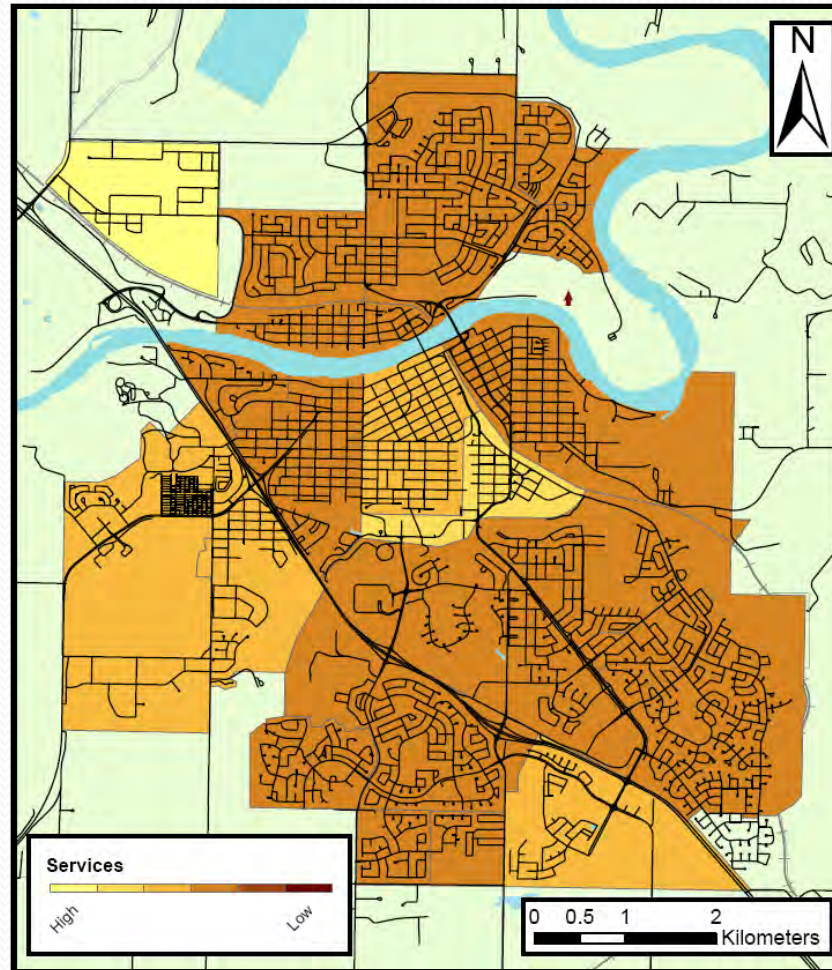
Diverse Destinations - Retail

- Services
- Row of Shops
- Retail Stores
- Offices
- Restaurants
- Banks
- Specialty Food Shops
- Grocery Stores



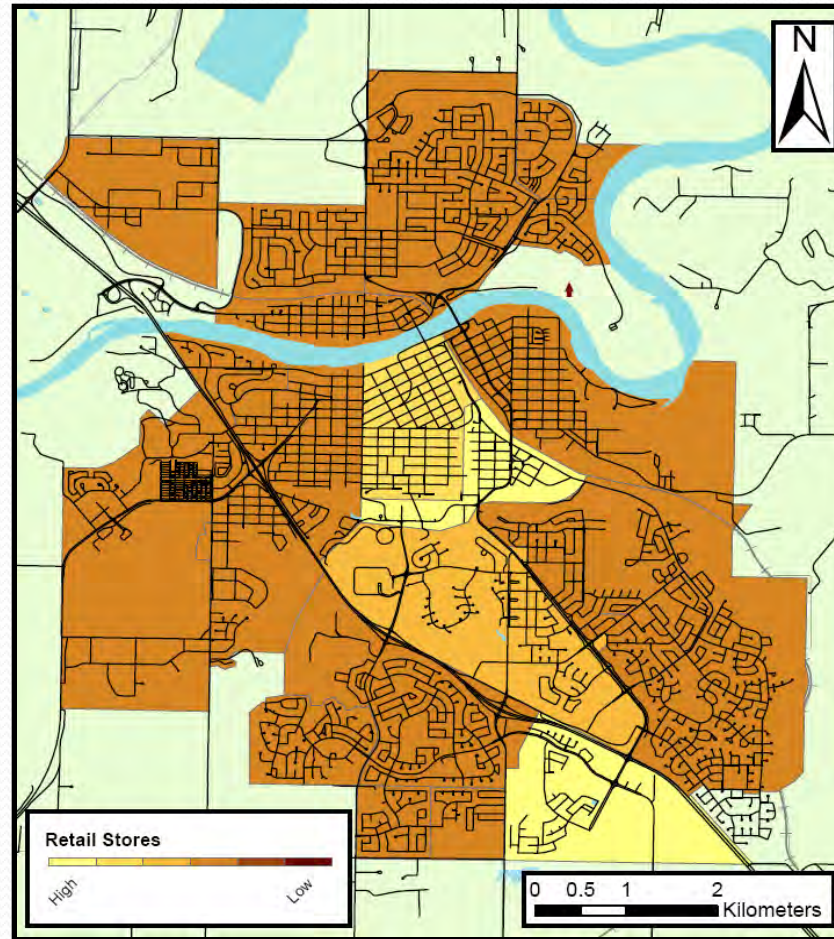
Areas with a diversity of destinations encourage pedestrian traffic.

Services



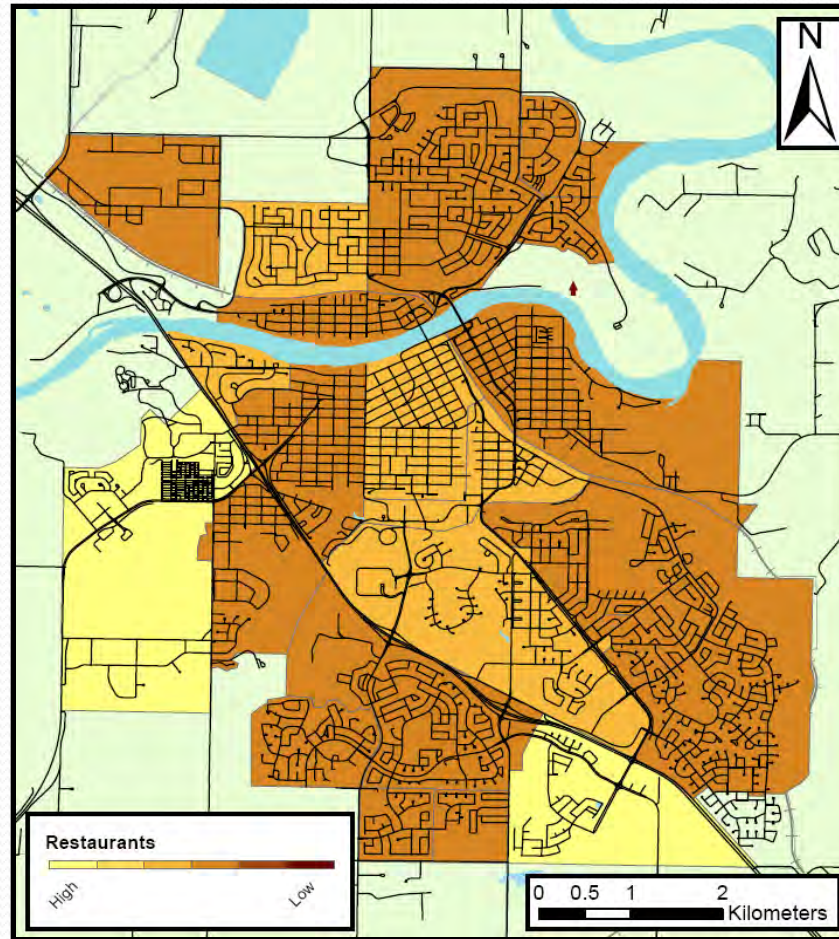
Presence of services increases the chance a resident will access the segment.

Retail Stores



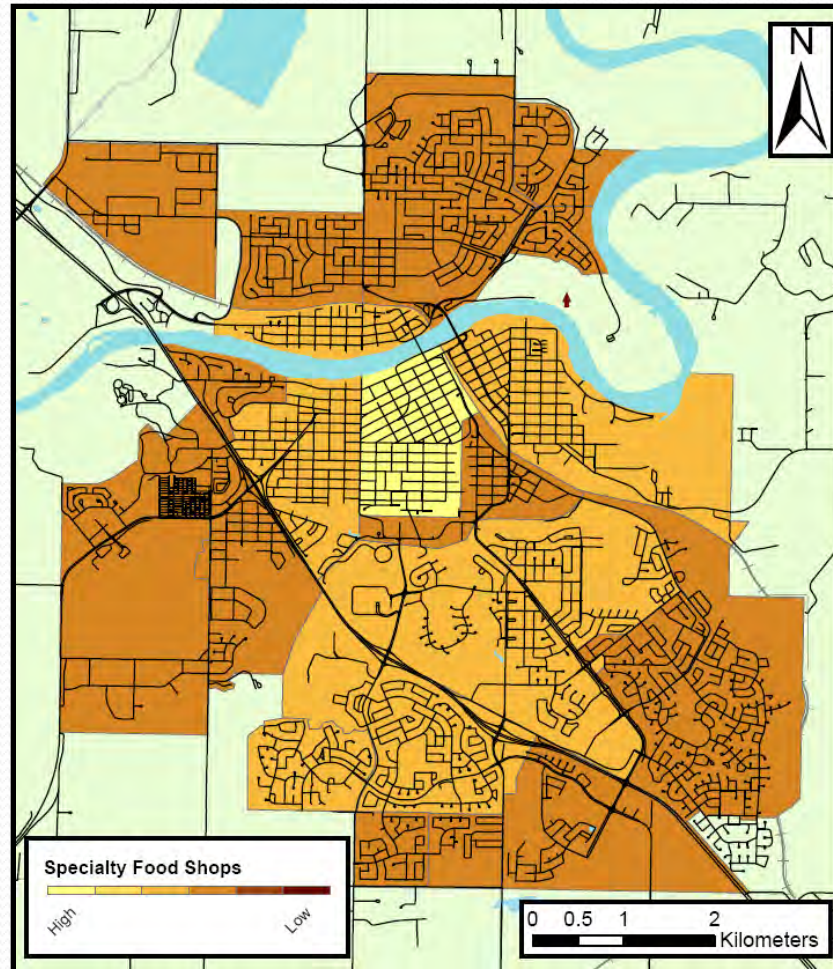
Presence of retail stores increases the chance a resident will access the segment.

Restaurants



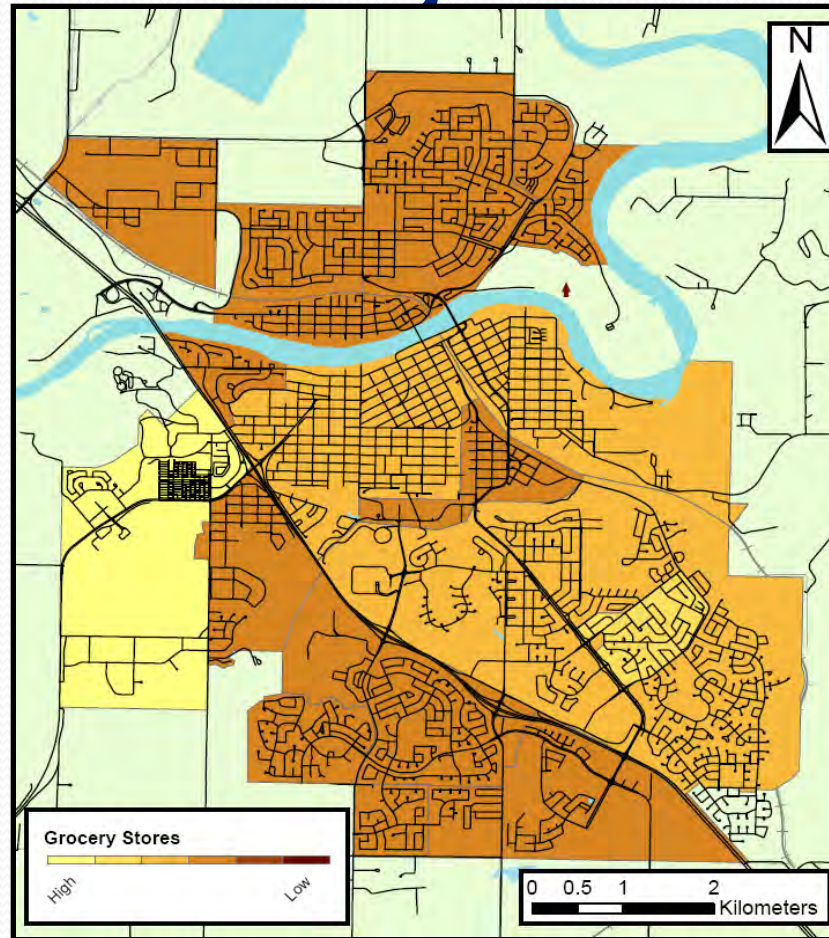
Presence of restaurants increases the chance a resident will access the segment.

Speciality Food Shops



Presence of specialty shops increases the chance a resident will access the segment.

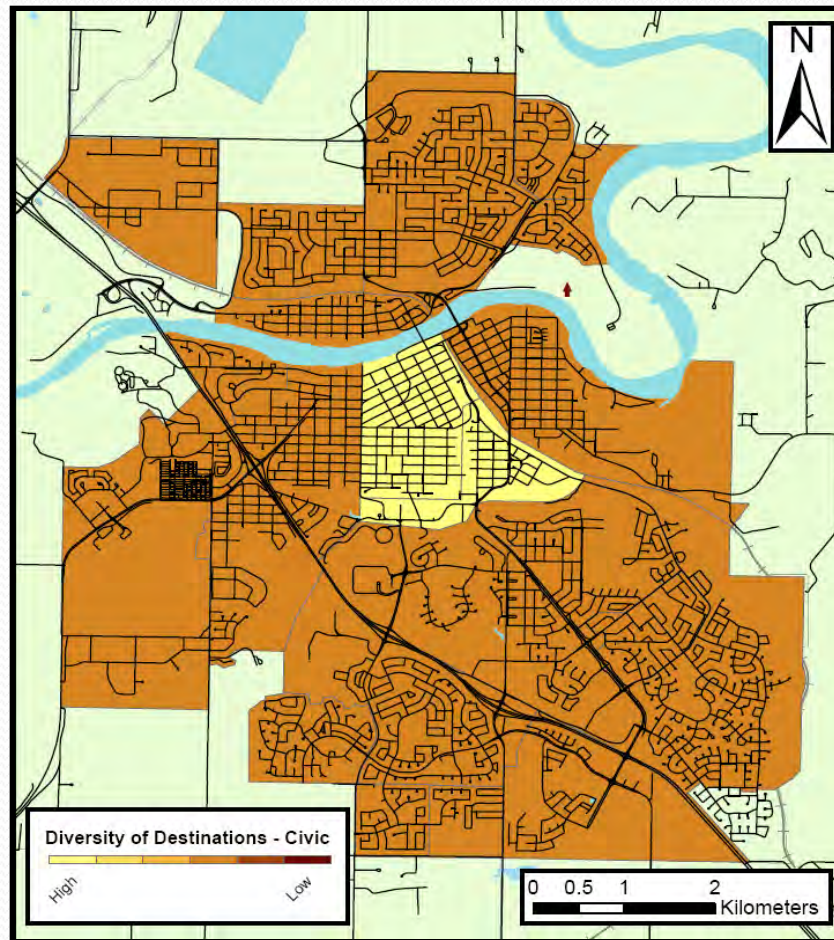
Grocery Stores



Presence of grocery stores increases the chance a resident will access the segment.

Diverse Destinations - Civic

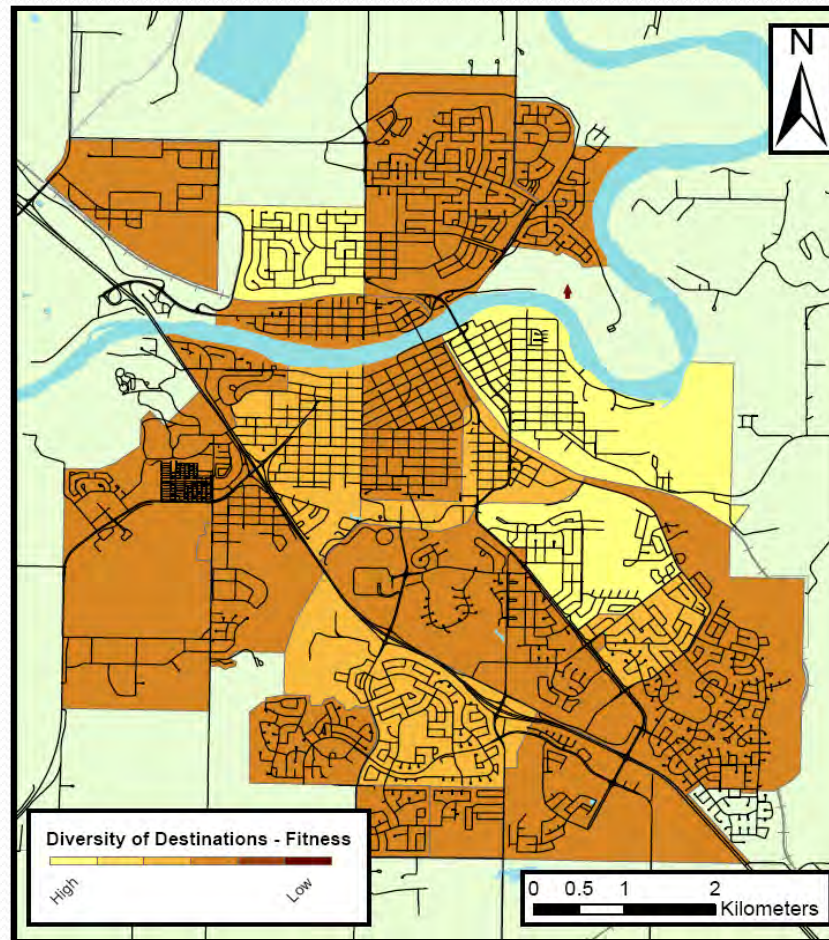
- Auditorium or Concert Hall
- Museum
- Courthouse
- Theatre
- Post Office
- Library



Areas with a diversity of destinations encourage pedestrian traffic.

Diverse Destinations - Fitness

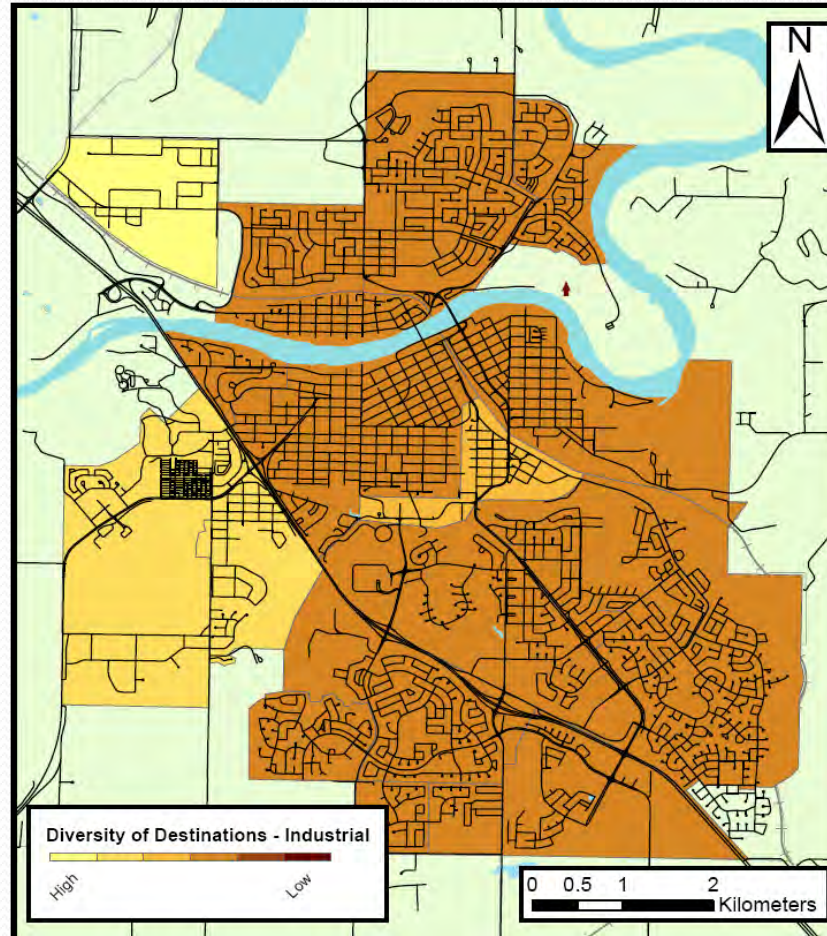
- Hockey Arena
- Indoor Pool
- Fitness Centre
- Other Recreation



Areas with a diversity of destinations encourage pedestrian traffic.

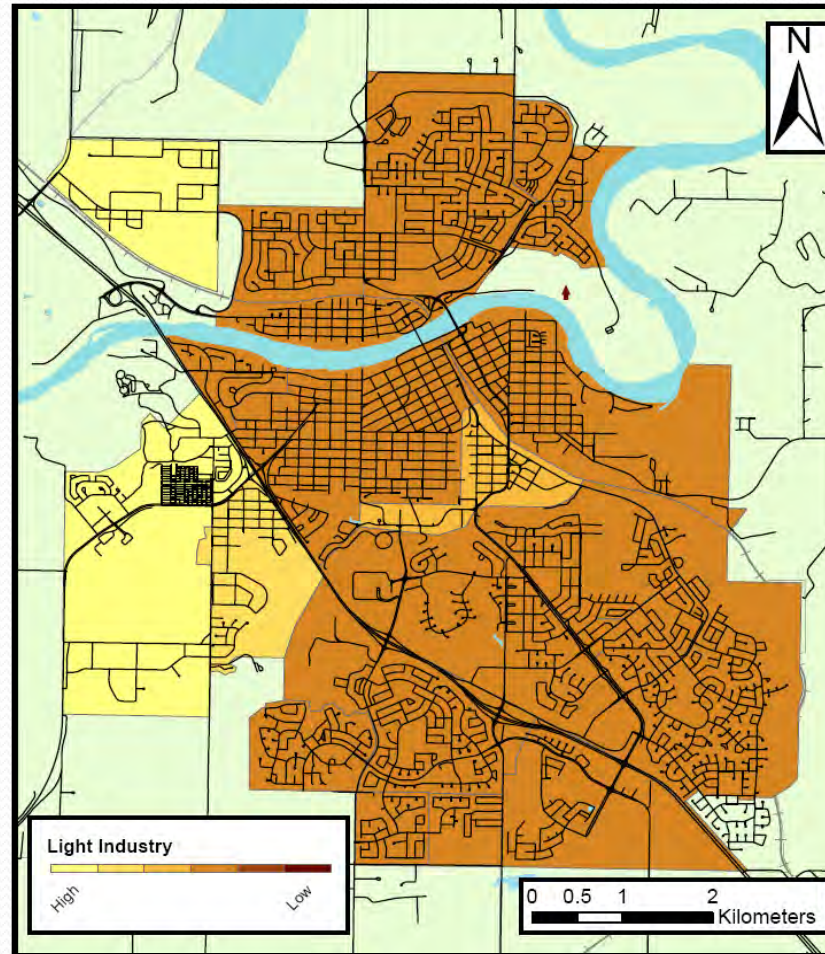
Diverse Destinations - Industrial

- Light Industry
- Medium or Heavy Industry



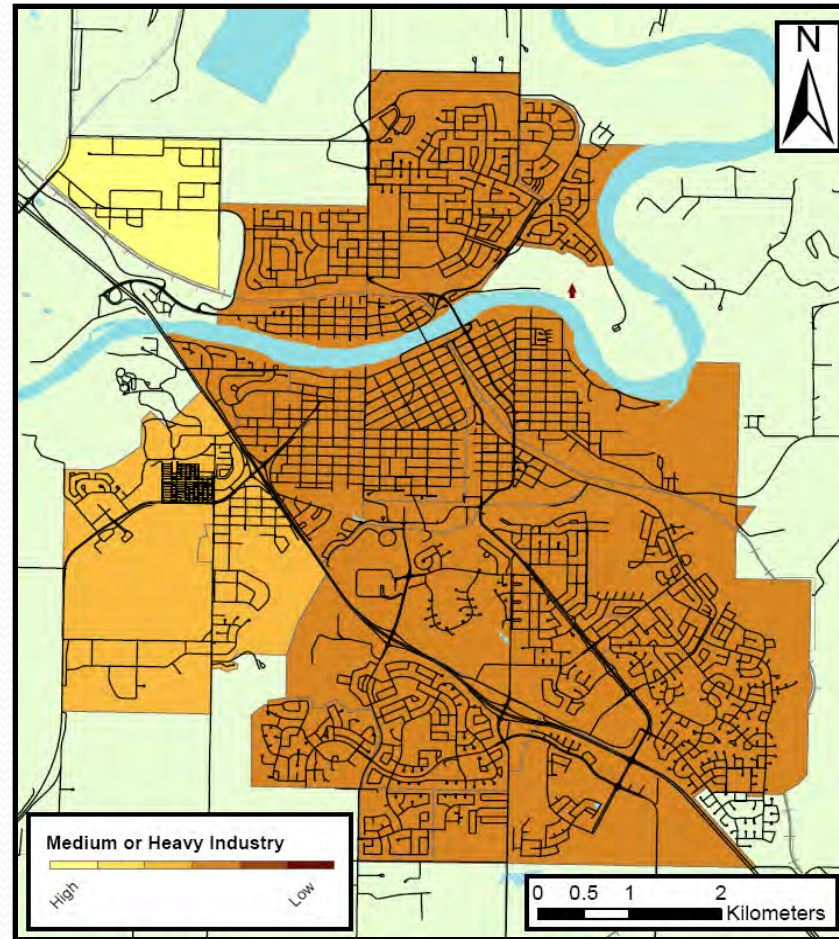
Areas with a diversity of destinations encourage pedestrian traffic.

Light Industry



Light industry increases the chance a resident will access the segment.

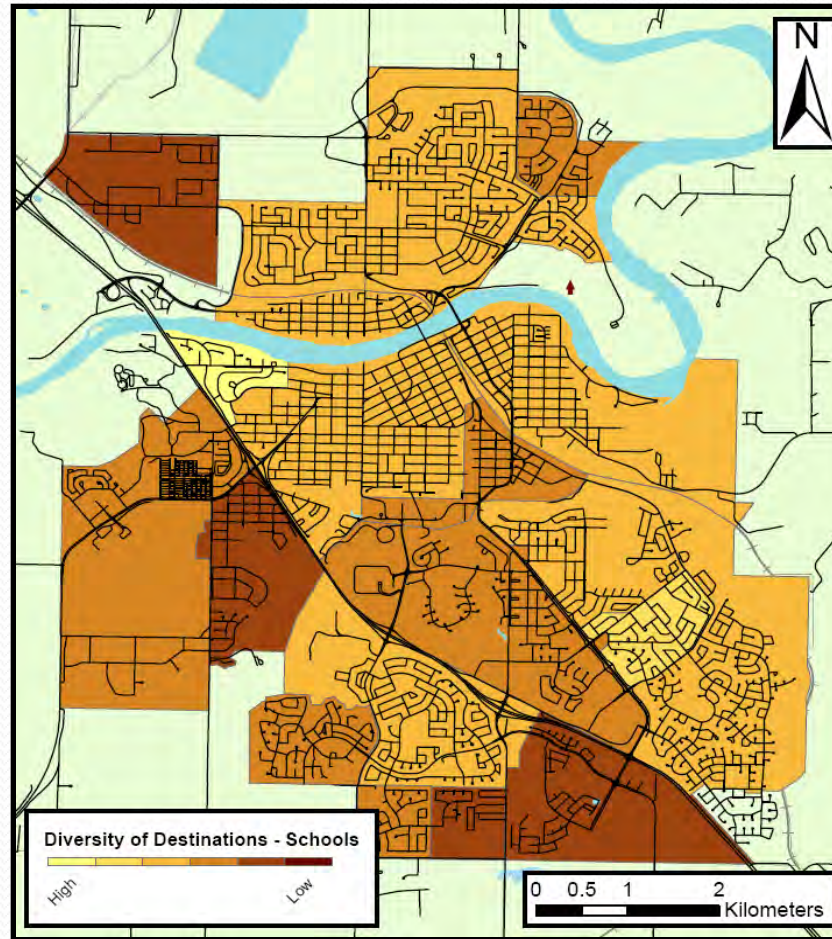
Medium or Heavy Industry



Presence of medium or heavy industry increases the chance a resident will access the segment.

Diverse Destinations - Schools

- Schools
- Public Space



Areas with a diversity of destinations encourage pedestrian traffic.

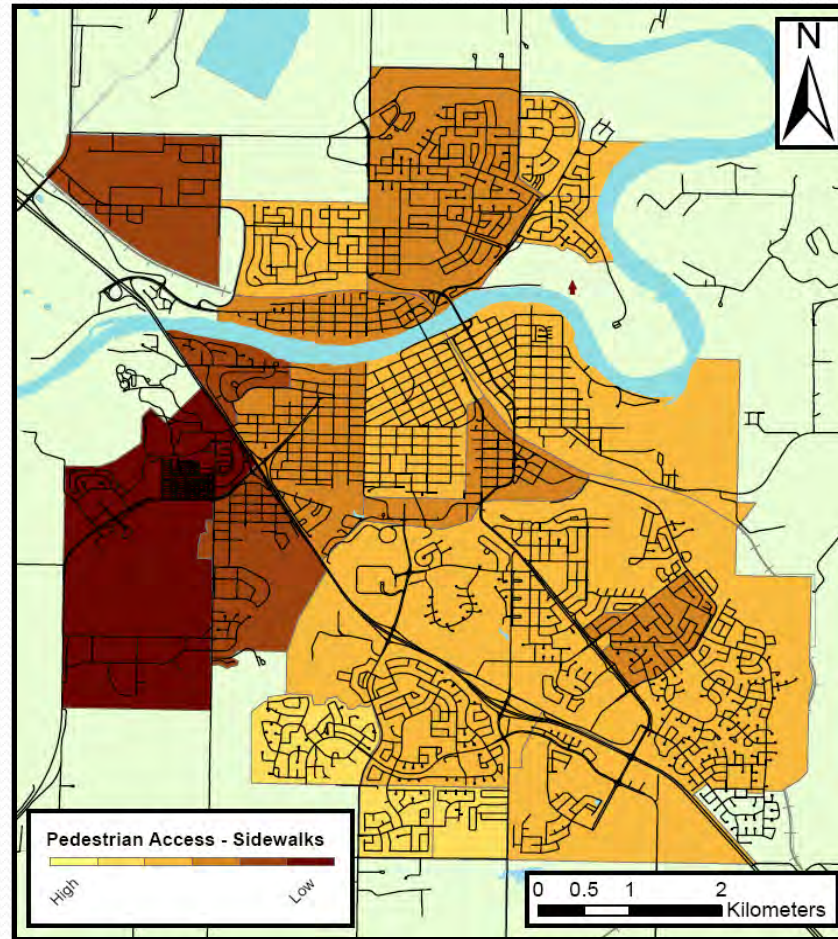


Pedestrian Access

Features that make walking to a destination easier.

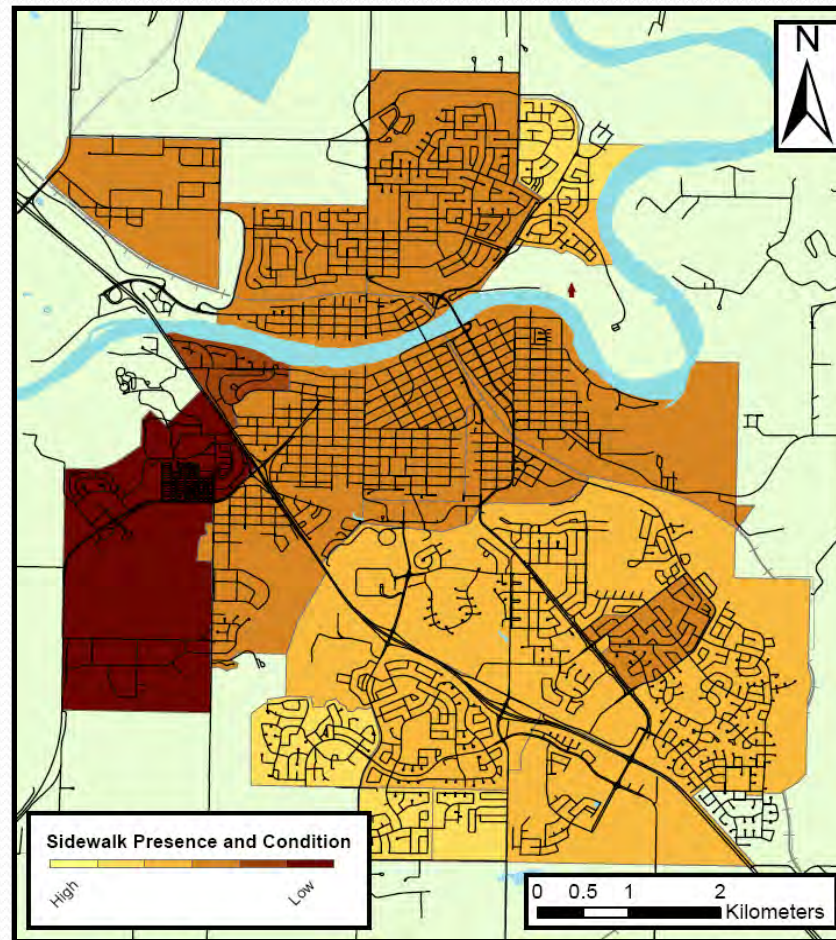
Pedestrian Access - Sidewalks

- Sidewalk Presence and Condition
- Sidewalk Connections



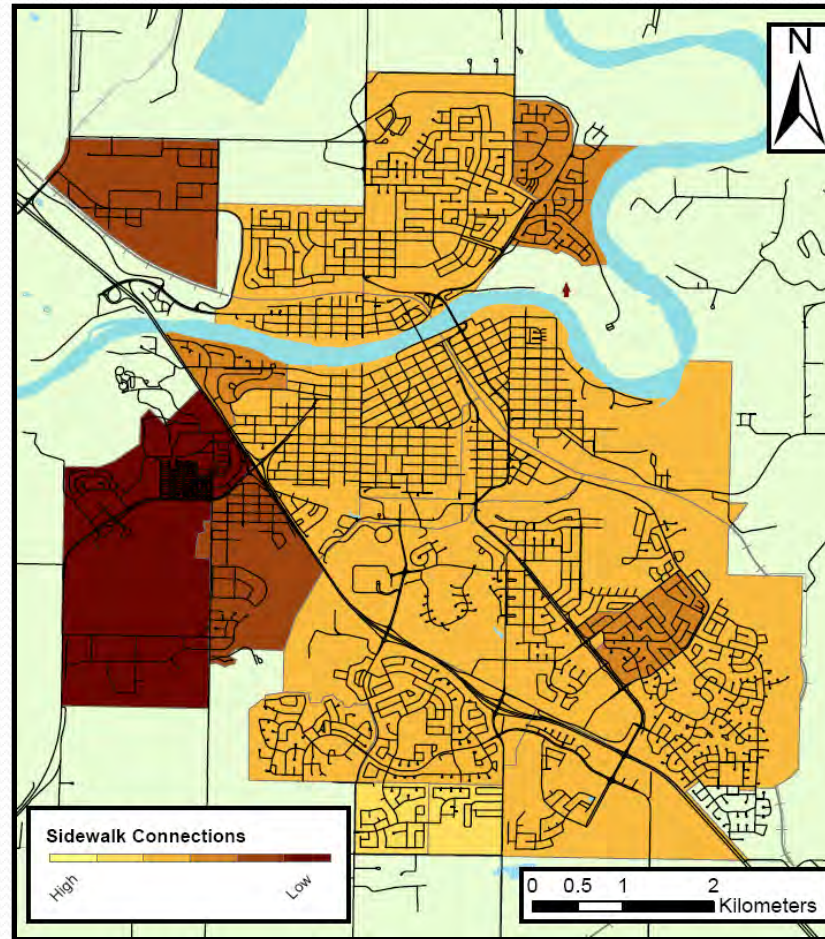
Higher quality sidewalks result in a higher level of pedestrian access.

Sidewalk Presence/Condition



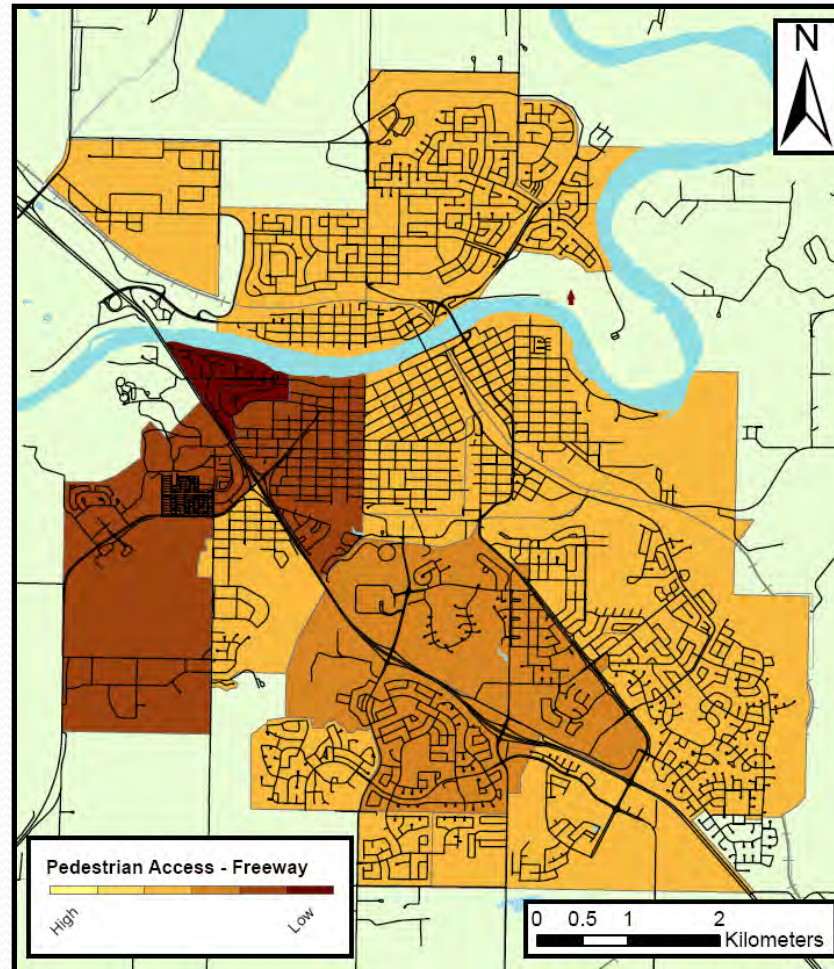
Presence and condition of sidewalks indicate a higher level of pedestrian access.

Sidewalk Connections



Well-connected sidewalks indicate a higher level of pedestrian access.

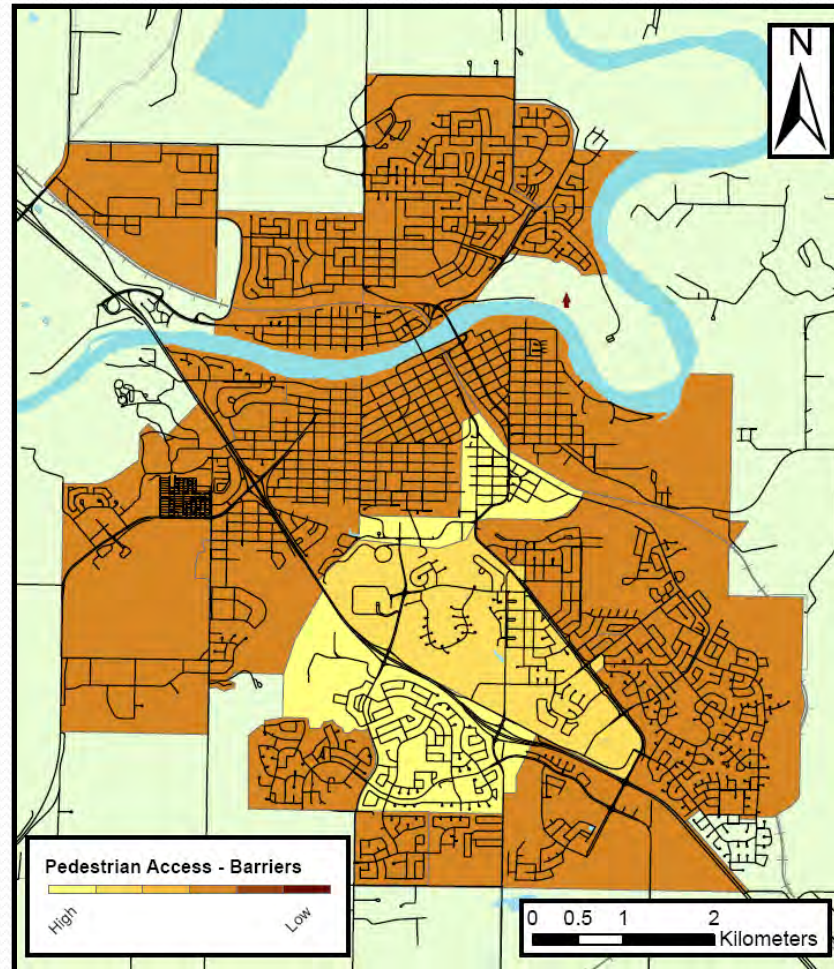
Pedestrian Access - Freeway



Absence of freeways indicates a higher level of pedestrian access.

Pedestrian Access - Barriers

- Highway Barrier
- Railway Barrier
- Impassable Land Use
- Roads with 6+ Lanes
- Temporary Construction
- Other Barrier



Absence of barriers indicates a higher level of pedestrian access.

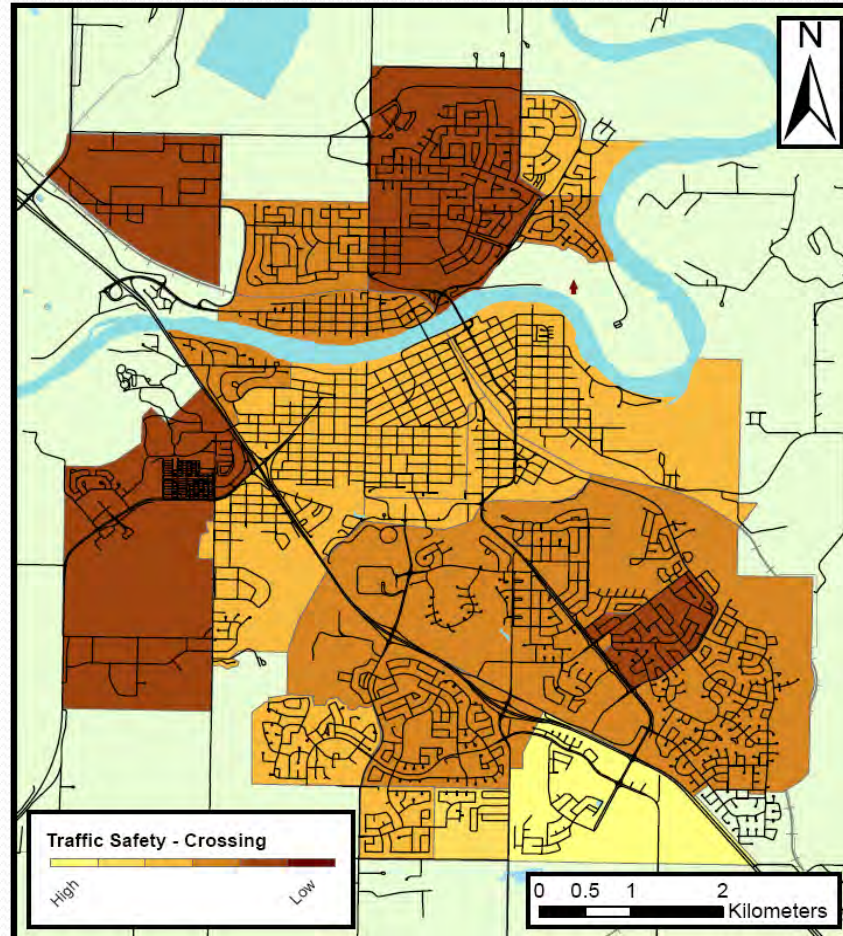


Traffic Safety

Features that suggest an area is more safe for pedestrians in relation to traffic.

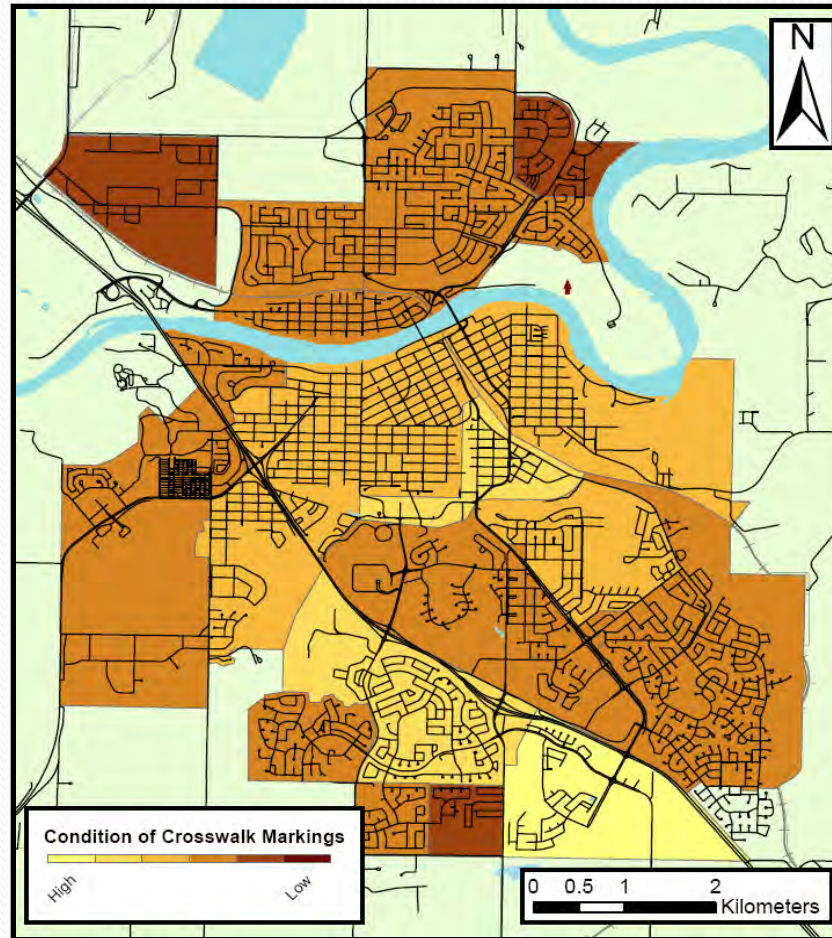
Traffic Safety – Crossing

- Condition of Crosswalk Markings
- Sum of Curb Cuts
- Signs and Signal Systems



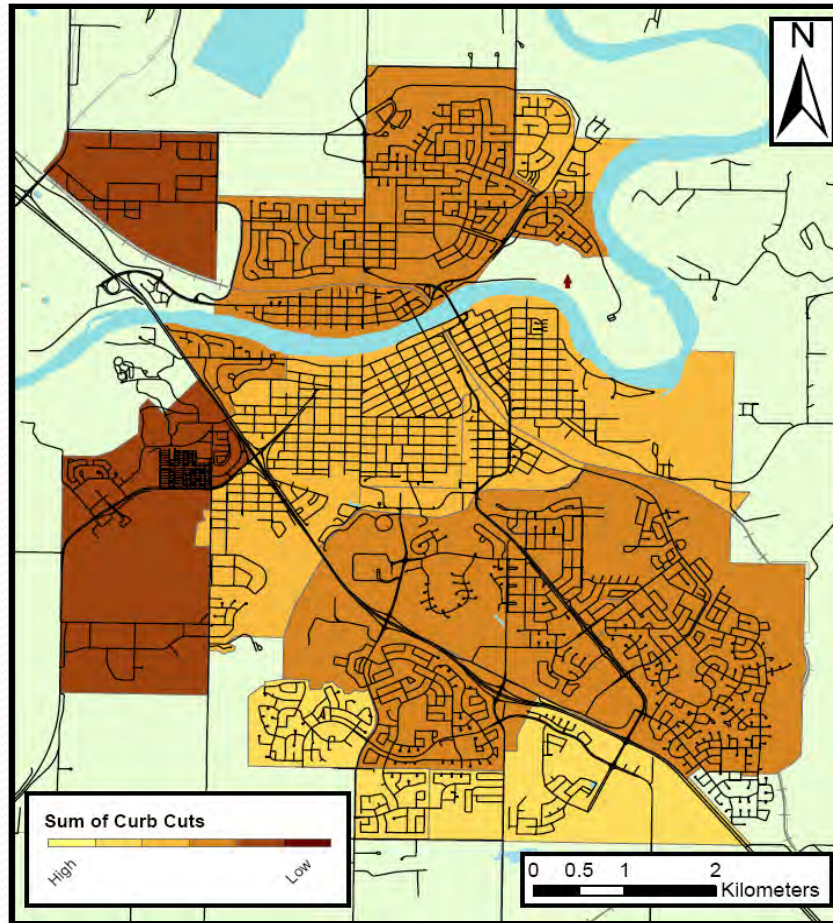
Areas with safer road crossings encourage pedestrian traffic.

Condition of Crosswalks



Presence and condition of crosswalks indicate a higher level of traffic safety.

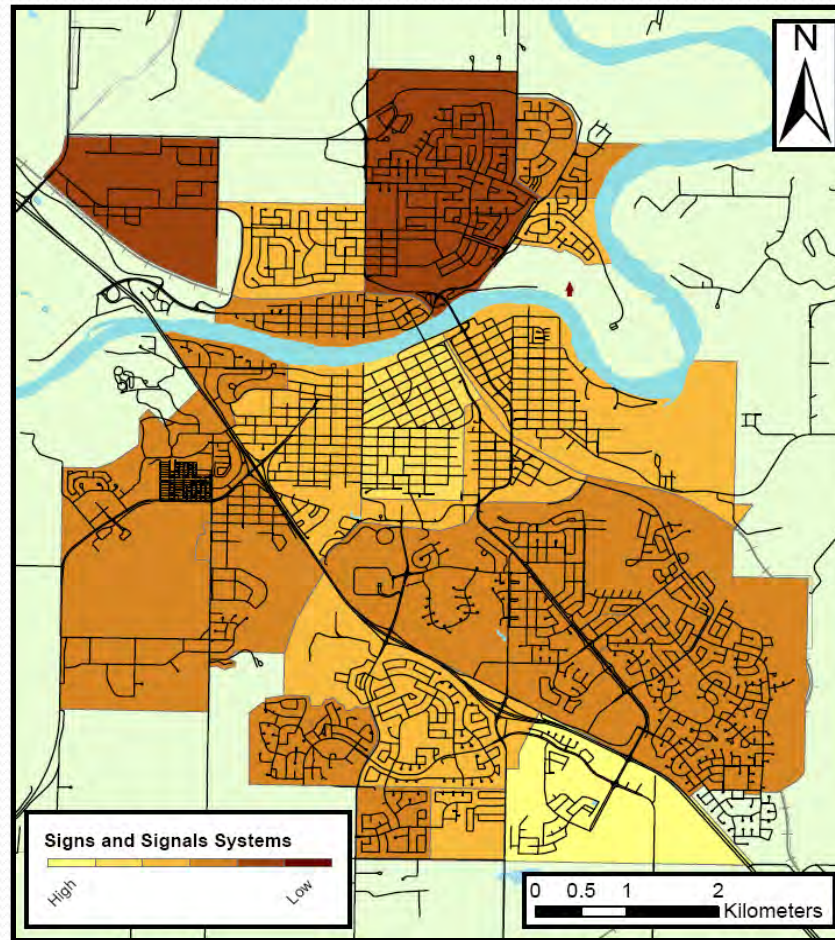
Sum of Curb Cuts



A curb cut is a ramp that takes a sidewalk down to street level. Normally found at street corners, they make it easier for pedestrians to cross a street.

Presence of curb cuts at road crossings indicates a higher level of traffic safety.

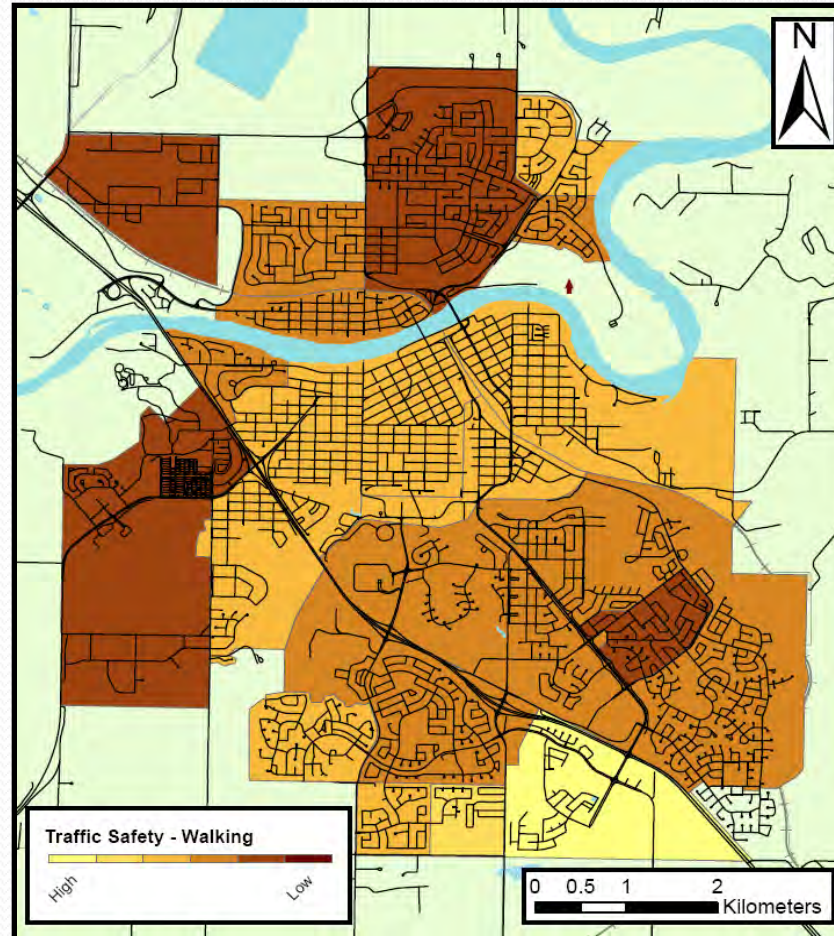
Signs and Signals Systems



Presence of traffic signs and signals indicates a higher level of traffic safety.

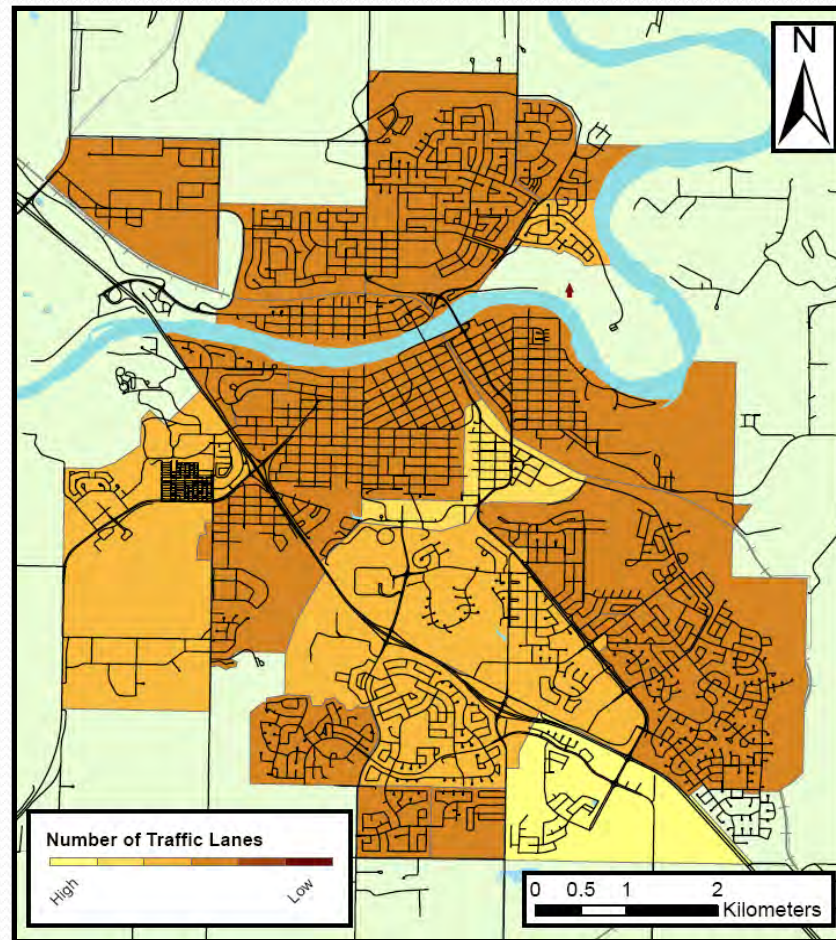
Traffic Safety – Walking

- Number of Traffic Lanes
- Sidewalk Buffer
- On-Street Parking



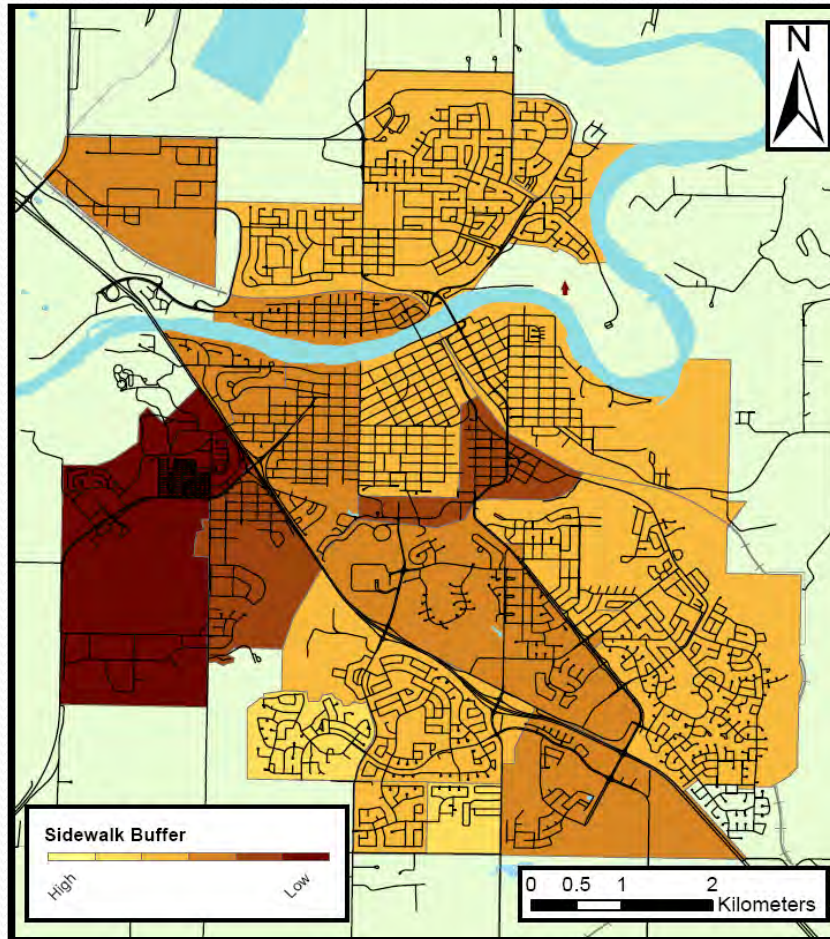
Areas with safer road crossings encourage pedestrian traffic.

Number of Traffic Lanes



Fewer traffic lanes indicate a higher level of traffic safety.

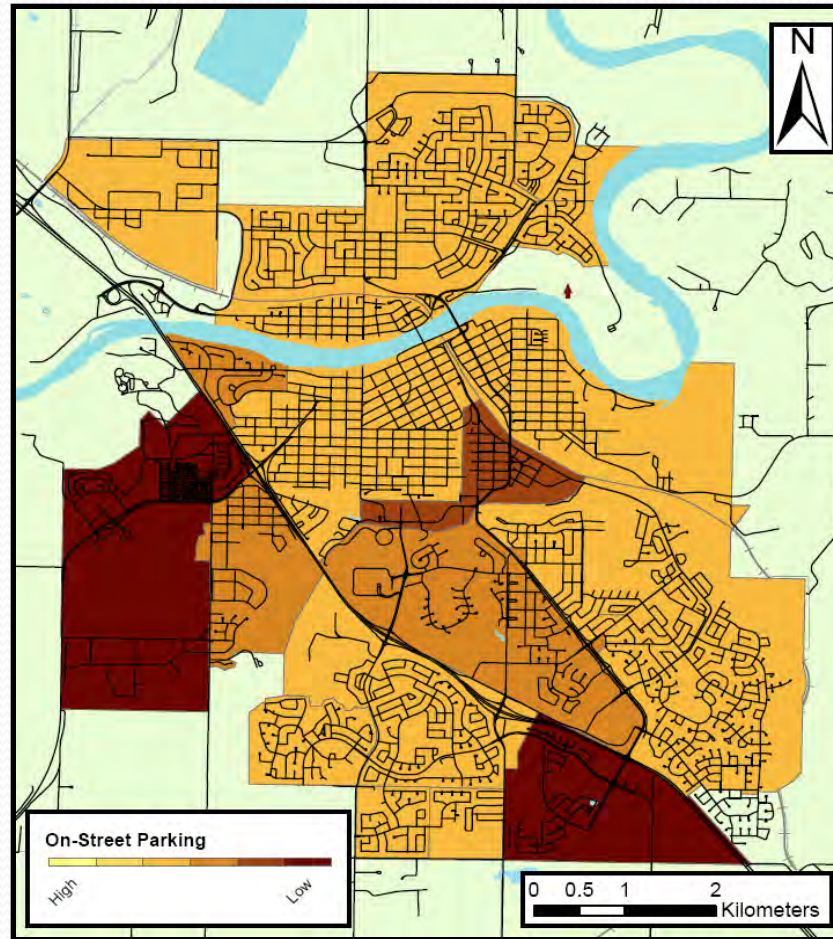
Sidewalk Buffer



A sidewalk buffer is anything that creates a physical barrier between the sidewalk and the road, for example: a guard rail, or a landscaped strip.

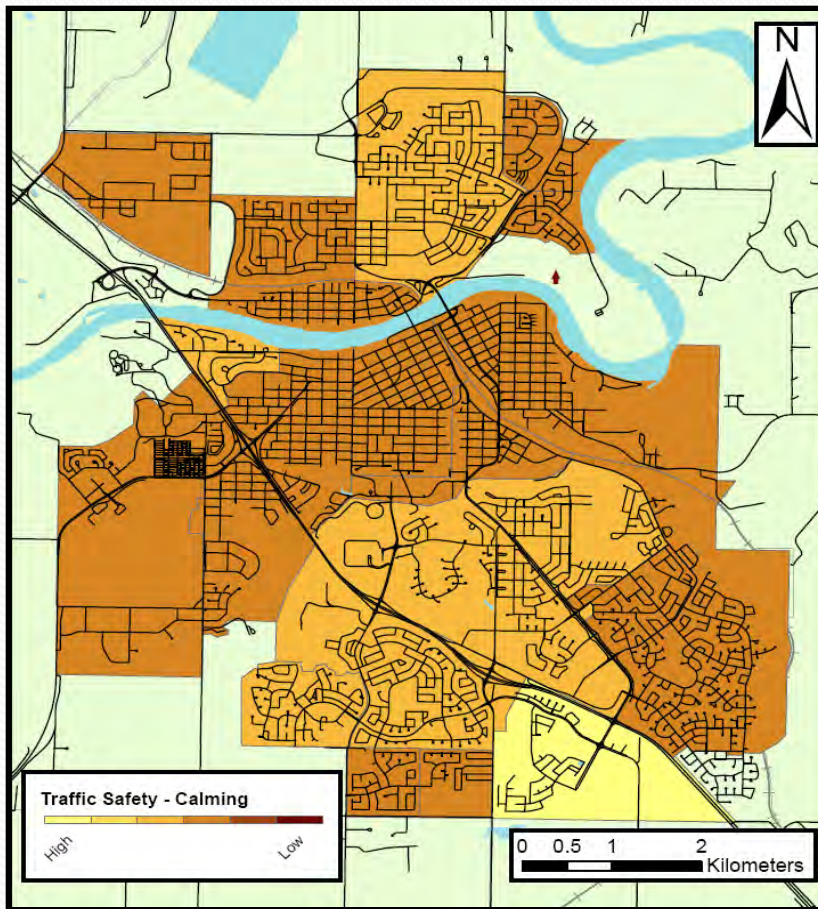
A barrier between the sidewalk and road indicates a higher level of traffic safety.

On-Street Parking



On-street parking indicates a higher level of traffic safety.

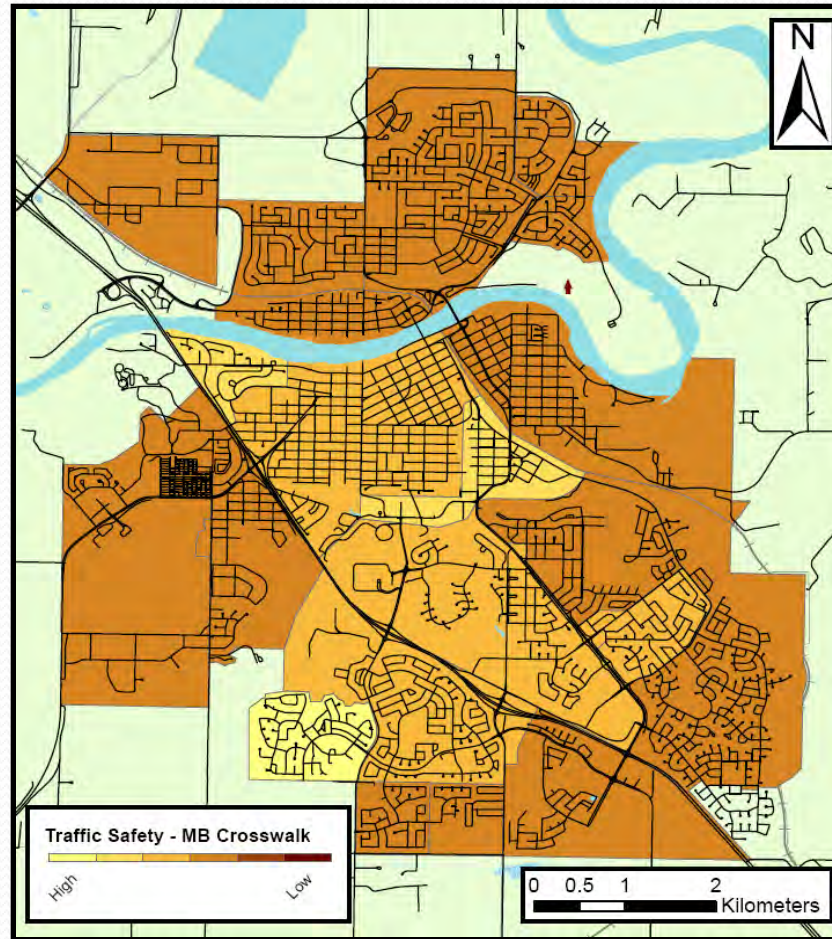
Traffic Safety – Calming



Traffic calming features can include: speed bumps, rumble strips, curb extensions, medians and school zone signs.

Presence of traffic calming features indicates a higher level of traffic safety.

Traffic Safety – Mid-block Crosswalk



Presence of a mid-block crosswalk indicates higher traffic safety.

How this Information can Help

- This analysis identifies **opportunities** and **barriers** for community residents choosing to be physically active.
 - **Opportunities** can be promoted.
 - For example: The creation of walking and cycling routes where segments are identified as being safe and accessible.
 - **Barriers** can be broken down.
 - For example: The installation of benches where there are curb cuts and crosswalks to make areas more accessible for seniors.

Key Lessons Learned to Support the Creation of Healthy Community Environments

- Need to look at **built** and **social environments** in **combination** to better understand how to support community health.
- **Engage community** in all aspects of initiatives to foster local action.
- **Small, incremental changes** can have a large impact.
- **Share information** and **create connections** with multiple levels of stakeholders.
- **Collaborate around shared goals** to increase success.

Thank you for your interest!

For more information, please contact:

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*Finding answers. For life.
À la conquête de solutions.*



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Suggested Citation

- If referencing this document, please cite as follows:

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