



# Jane's Walk

## The Problem

**Jane's Walk is directly addressing problems associated with the walkability of cities and neighbourhoods. Walkability is a measurement of how inviting or un-inviting an area is to pedestrians. Improving walkability creates better social cohesion and stronger neighborhood relations.**

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

Jane Jacobs

## The Innovation

**Jane's Walks are neighborhood tours coordinated and lead by local people. Jane's Walks value local knowledge and community building. Part of the innovation of Jane's Walk is acknowledging that everyone has a perspective on their neighborhood – no matter how long they have lived there.**

Jane's Walk encountered little opposition from city administration in its early stages.

Nor did it face barriers in relation to funding. People saw the value of Jane's Walk right away and small foundation grants were immediately given.

Underlying Jane's Walk is the premise that people actually know more than they think they do about their city. One need not visit the central library to find out about a neighborhood's history.

Jane's Walks use walking as a way to connect neighbours, local merchants and the broader community.

Chris Winter, Executive Director of the Conservation Council of Ontario came up with the idea with Margie Zeidler, President and creator of 401 Richmond Limited, and Mary Rowe, Director at the Centre for City Ecology. They wanted to mark the birthday of Jane Jacobs a year after her passing. The idea came together in 8 weeks in 2007. There were 27 tours that first year.

Jane Farrow also organized Jane's Walk in Manhattan in 2007 with a small grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Nine walks were held in total with tours in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens.

Jane's Walk is about improving social cohesion, the safety of neighborhoods and directly challenging assumptions about suburban versus urban living. It addresses issues stemming from cultural and economic diversity, empowers people to discuss neighborhood development and establish access to city decision makers to improve their communities.

Jane's Walk also challenges the assumption that walkability can only be established in certain parts of a city – traditionally older neighbourhoods appealing to tourists.

The inner suburbs are where the affordable housing and many immigrant communities are in Toronto. The same is true in lots of North American cities. Jane's Walk draws attention to common treacherous conditions in these suburbs, such as fast moving traffic, wide arterials, short times to cross the street and no buffers between people and big open lanes. The Walks draw attention to poor street design.

**Jane's Walk allows people to begin to think about and become committed to the design of their own neighborhoods.**

“People come away from the walks just floating, happy, feeling very optimistic about their city. It's like walking through a movie set, as it turns the urban landscape from black and white to Technicolor in a few well-told stories and insights.”

Jane Farrow, Founding ED

# Challenges overcome and some still ahead

- **Sustainable Growth:** Jane's Walk has been successful in attracting a range of donors and sponsors in Toronto, but has found it challenging to meet the expectations of its growing global constituency. Jane's Walk would benefit from a multinational sponsor or global foundation support.
- **Attitudes:** While Jane's Walk sought to break down barriers between the suburbs and the inner core of the city from the outset, there was some push back from those that felt suburban walks would not attract participants. However, any question about whether the event was viable in the suburbs was answered quickly by 2008. There were 13 well-attended walks in the suburbs that year – lead by youth, newcomers and women.
- **Technology:** Jane's Walk is developing a licensing agreement for cities that wish to host tours. However, increasing demand for its online resources has strained the website's capacity. Despite significant page loading times in 2011, however, Jane's Walk still grew by 40% demonstrating demand and loyalty.
- **Donor Engagement:** Jane's Walk is researching how to increase the engagement of the natural constituency of Jane's Walk through an individual donor campaign that would logically include text and/or social media components like Facebook or Twitter outreach.
- **Evaluating impact:** Measuring whether a tour lead to new stop signs, timing on traffic lights, new park benches or an engaged community is still a challenge. Anecdotal evidence is being received but it is sporadic.
- **Expertise:** Jane's Walk needs scale up support, network and website expertise.
- **Human Resources:** With a growing demand for Jane's Walk, growth with one full time staff is near impossible.

## Impact

**From 27 tours in Toronto in 2007, Jane's Walk now happens in 75 cities in 15 countries with over 500 walks - a growth rate of 600%**

“The beauty of Jane's Walk and why people want to be part of it is that it builds a great sense of citizen engagement that is bigger than your community or place.”

—Regina organizer

## Structure

The Jane's Walk annual budget has been approximately 160K since 2009. The funding is a mix of foundation grants and corporate donations. Individual donors have also enabled the work to continue. Small grants and in-kind support from the city have been provided on occasion.

There is one staff member, a few short-term contracts and a lot of volunteer labour close to and during Jane's Walk's signature event each May.

Jane's Walk is a program of the Centre for City Ecology, a project of Tide Canada Initiatives. Tides Canada provides the innovative operating infrastructure for the CCE and Jane's Walk, which minimizes its day-to-day financial, legal and administrative details.

Jane's Walk has an Advisory Board of nine people. They have struck up volunteer committees to get new work done. The walks themselves are all volunteer-led.

It is designed to be replicated with the provision of a Jane's Walk operations kit and templates available on its website.

Some outreach has been conducted, but it has grown largely by word of mouth and reputation.

## Canadian innovation

Jane's Walk is an innovation in which Canada can be proud. Canada has a reputation for doing multiculturalism differently.

Jane's Walk creates the space for people to connect, learn, develop ideas and plans about their city. The walks are adaptable and lend themselves well to innovation from all directions – academics, youth, newcomers, urban designers, politicians and business owners can lead tours and walk alongside with others. It is a valuable opportunity to share perspectives on what city is; this approach is consistent with Canada's vision for multiculturalism.

Jane's Walks believes that change happens when people are armed with information and empowered with a voice.

The Jane's Walk Profile was produced by Social Innovation Generation (SiG) which is comprised of:  
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