

Walkable tops the most wanted list

My husband and I are entering the real estate market and we have several must-haves on our shopping list. At the very top is walkability which includes walking distance to a grocery store, elementary school, and playground; a safe neighborhood which includes accessible sidewalks, street lighting, and cross walks; and close proximity to public transit. Some of our friends have questioned why walkability is so important and this is what I tell them: Living in a walkable neighbourhood is good for your physical, social and mental health.

Walkability encourages people of all ages to get outside and be more physically active. Currently, one in three British Columbians are living with preventable chronic illnesses like heart disease. Walking keeps us healthier and helps reduce our risk of chronic disease and obesity.

Secondly, getting out of our houses and our cars allows us to socialize with our neighbours. Having a playground down the street will make it easy for my children to be active and for our family to get to know other families in the neighbourhood. Social connections help build a safe and supportive community where neighbours shovel walks for each other and parents look after neighbourhood children when a little help is needed.

Spending time in nature can also boost our mental well-being. Fresh air is calming whether it's under the stars or the sun, in the wilderness or in our town centres. Not everyone is able to hike up a mountain but smooth, paved sidewalks, benches and neighbourhood green spaces help make nature accessible to all and that can mean the difference between isolation and happiness.

Walkability is at the top of our new home must-have list because we want to raise a family in a neighbourhood that promotes healthy living and a sense of community. Health is something that can happen every day... where we live, learn, work, and play.

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