
Rural Active Living Assessment (RALA) Tools

Codebook & Scoring

*For assessing physical features,
community programs and
policies that promote physical
activity in rural communities.*

Rural Active Living Assessment (RALA) Codebook & Scoring

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Rural Active Living Assessment (RALA) Tools have been designed to help you collect data on physical environment features and amenities, community characteristics, community programs, and policies that could potentially influence levels of physical activity among residents in your community. This Tool will allow you to assess the “friendliness” of your community for using modes of active transportation. It provides a structure for looking at the community as a whole, how it is laid out, where people live, work and go to school, and how they are likely to get from one place to another. It also includes a detailed tool to look at specific “segments” of your community and assess key characteristics of those segments. Finally, it also provides a structure for assessing the programs and policies that might help to overcome an “unfriendly” environment, or that might actually make that environment less activity friendly. The RALA tools were originally designed by researchers at the Maine Rural Health Research Center, University of Southern Maine, and were tested and refined by researchers at the University of Southern Maine, Tufts University, University of Alabama, and University of Mississippi.

The RALA Tools have been adapted by professionals involved in the **Healthy Canada By Design CLASP Initiative** to fit within a Canadian and more local context. For more information with respect to the RALA Tools use in your own community, please use the following contact information for any questions, comments or feedback you may have:

RALA Tools Facilitator Name: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____
Address: _____

The RALA Tools consist of three separate assessments, including:

- 1) Community-wide Assessment
- 2) Program & Policy Assessment
- 3) Segment Assessment

These three assessment instruments are designed to be used together and provide a tool to conduct a comprehensive active living audit of your rural community. Please keep in mind that some rural communities have found it necessary to adapt and modify the RALA Tools to better suit their needs or unique characteristics. (For example, users may want to extend the number of kilometers for inclusion of physical activity amenities because they feel that residents regularly expect to travel further for services.) Since conducting these assessments is for your community’s benefit, we encourage you to adapt as required.

At the end of this Codebook, you will find scoring tools for the Community-wide and Program & Policy Assessments. These scoring tools are meant to further help users

identify areas for improvement or change in their community, and are hoped to create a dialogue among community members, leaders and researchers as they strive to make their community activity friendly. Currently there is no scoring for the Segment Assessment.

**** Please note that in many rural communities, the Segment Assessment may not be applicable due to: dispersed layout, lack of concentrated "centre", and perhaps the small size of the community. If your community does not lend itself to conducting the Segment Assessment, the Community-wide and Program & Policy Assessments will still capture the elements that determine activity friendliness.*

1.1 Getting Started

This tool is primarily intended for use in rural communities. Larger centres may be assessed more effectively using urban typologies and audit tools (many of these urban tools can be found at: <http://activelivingresearch.org/resource/research/toolsandmeasures>).

In the physical domain, a rural community may be described in terms of factors within its boundaries, such as road density, types and density of intersections, presence or absence of a community centre(s) as well as natural features such as hills and bodies of water. In addition, the community's geographic typology to geographic or physical factors requires us to consider at least three dimensions for rural communities:

- 1) Location – this will require a map showing at least a 10 kilometre radius about the community centre. A "Google Maps", "Google Earth" or "Mapquest" map showing location of residences, services and businesses will be helpful. The Community-wide Assessment includes questions about specific characteristics and number of recreational amenities that may not be within the community boundaries but are still accessible to local residents. In this audit tool, such amenities are not considered readily accessible if they are beyond a distance of 10 kilometres from the community centre (as mentioned previously, this distance may be adapted if appropriate). In some parts, communities are close to one another and share amenities. Rural communities typically fall into one of the following categories, with shared amenities more common in the first two types:
 - a. Integrated – one community seems contiguous with the next
 - b. Intermediate – some development between communities, typically less than 10 km between community centres
 - c. Remote – largely undeveloped areas separate one community from the next

Understanding your communities location pattern may be useful when trying to understand what resources (physical amenities, programs, and commerce) residents have access to within and beyond the community boundaries.

- 2) Settlement Pattern – walkability and connectivity will be determined to a great extent not only by the density of population and intersections, but by the overall pattern in which streets were laid out as the community was originally settled. Most rural communities fall into one of the following patterns:

- a. Dispersed – there may be a community centre, but most of the population is spread out and may live several kilometres from the centre. Such communities can be identified by low population density and will usually have a few roads and intersections.
- b. Elongated – this pattern is best exemplified by very small communities with only one major road passing through and most non-residential development along that road. Intersecting roads may lead to residential areas or schools, but are often not connected to one another, except by returning to the main thoroughfare.
- c. Clustered – this pattern often results from subdivisions. A grid pattern or cul-de-sac pattern residential neighbourhood may be quite distant from the centre, with only one thoroughfare connecting the neighbourhood to the community centre. Occasionally, a cluster will be commercial, rather than residential, as when a large box store locates on the edge of the community and other retail businesses locate nearby.
- d. Compact – in areas where sprawl has been restricted, either by natural features or by land-use restrictions, both residential and commercial development is likely to have greater density. Grid patterns are more common in such communities. Connectivity is likely to be good, due to greater intersection density. Such communities are inherently more walkable.

These settlement types may be clarified or refined by considering the pattern of highway, thoroughfare and residential roads in a community beginning with radial vs. grid pattern, with possible combinations such as a radial pattern with neighbourhoods clustered along arteries having limited local grid patterns.

Understanding your community's settlement pattern/type may help you determine whether you should conduct the Segment Assessment and/or define the segments that you may choose to audit when assessing the activity-friendliness of the community.

- 3) Physical Features – there are several natural and man-made physical features that may create unique barriers in rural communities when trying to choose segments to audit. You may find these same features to be supports or barriers to physical activity among residents in your communities. Physical features can include:
 - a. Topography
 - b. Rivers
 - c. Lakes
 - d. Limited access highways and/or active railroad tracks

Having a general understanding of the location patterns, settlement patterns and physical features of your community before you begin your audit will aid in the selection of your segments and identification of important factors that may aid or thwart physical activity in your community.

1.2 Selecting the Centre Point

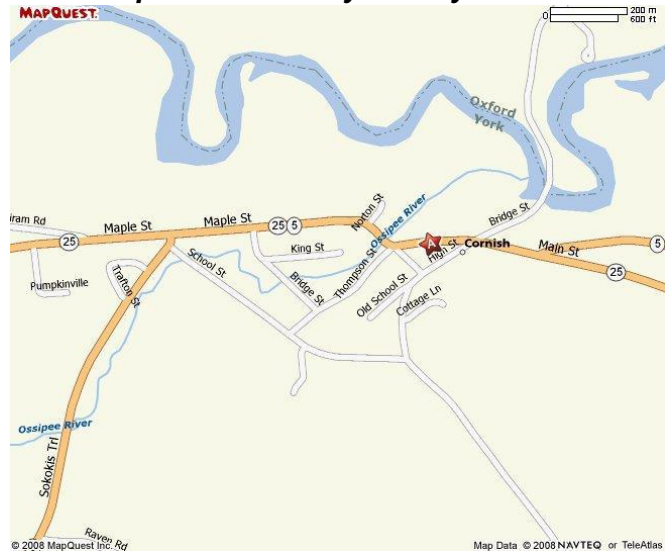
Many of the questions in the assessment tools make reference to the “Community Centre” or “Centre Point”. This is a reference point that should be determined by you at the outset of conducting the assessments. A good way to determine the central point for the community is locating the central businesses and/or services that residents access on a regular basis. You will eventually construct a circle (with a 2 kilometre radius) around that central point to help you select your segments when you reach the Segment Assessment.

Examples:

Community Library



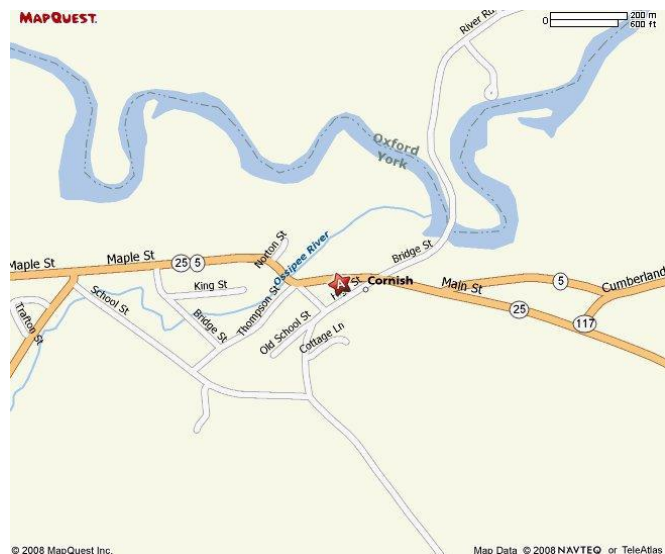
Map of Community Library Location



Community Green



Map of Community Green



2.0 USING THE RALA TOOLS

You will be observing your community on both a broad-scale (macro) and detailed (micro) level. The broad-scale, Community-wide Assessment will look at characteristic s of your community as a whole. The Program & Policy Assessment will help you take an inventory of your community's programs and policies that are related to physical activity. The more detailed the Segment Assessment will involve identifying specific physical attributes of each segment of the community that you choose to audit, in order to further assess the activity-friendliness of your community.

1) Community-Wide Assessment

Before conducting the Community-wide Assessment, be sure to read the introductory section above regarding the location, settlement pattern and physical features, and think about where you community falls in those typologies. To complete this section, it may be helpful to refer to your community map and/or contact your local administration/elected officials to answer some of the questions.

**** Please note that in areas where there are no specific boundaries, it may be appropriate to use an "area" when conducting the community assessment. If you choose to do this, outline on a map, the boundaries you have used to identify your "community".*

Questions in this section include information with regard to:

- Population
- Demographics
- Density
- Topography
- Community Centre
- School location(s)
- Recreational Amenities and location

If needed, you can find question-by-question details for the Community Wide Assessment here:

Question by Question Details for Completing the Community-wide Assessment:

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS & CHARACTERISTICS:

Community Name – fill in the name of the community that is being assessed.

Auditor's Name – who is auditing the Community

Community Population – enter the total number of residents residing in the community being assessed. This can be collected from the local community office or Statistics Canada - <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html>.

Area Population – what is the potential ‘market area’ for services, facilities, etc... from the surrounding communities?

Area Measurement – enter the total area, in square kilometers, of the community that is being assessed. This can be collected from the local community office or Statistics Canada – <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html>.

Population Density – enter the community population density. This can be calculated by dividing the total community population by the total community area to get the number of persons per square kilometer. Population density can also be collected from the local community office or Statistics Canada – <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html>.

Topography – check the option that best describes the natural topography of the community as a whole. Choose from the following options:

- *Flat* – the community is generally flat with very few hills and no mountains.
- *Hilly* – the community has rolling hills throughout.
- *Valley* – the community has a valley located within its boundaries.
- *River/Creek/Ocean* – the community has a river/creek/ocean located within its boundaries.
- *Forest/Agricultural/Undeveloped* – the community has an area or areas within its boundaries that are designated “forest/agricultural/undeveloped”.
- *Other* – the community has some other form of distinct topography.

Presence of “Community Center” – check the option that best describes whether there is one or several “community centers” located in your community. Choose from the following options:

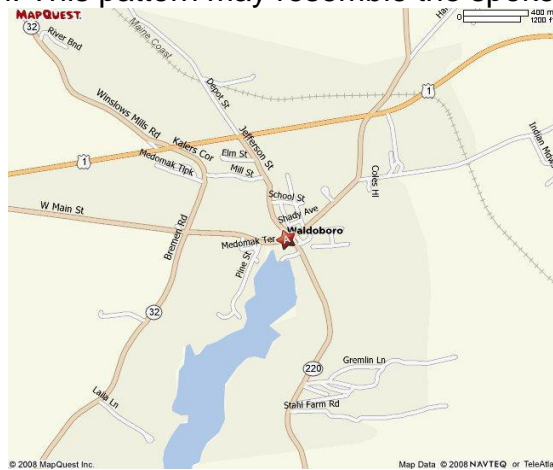
- *Yes – one distinct center* – The community has one established community center where all or most of the civic facilities are located, such as the offices, library, police/fire departments, post office, and other commercial services.
- *Yes – multiple centers* – The community has more than one area that is considered to be the community center. Municipal and commercial services can be found in both/all of these “centers.”
- *No center* – There isn't an established/distinguishable community center where municipal/commercial services are clustered. These services are either spread out across the community or are not available.
- *Other* – the community has some other arrangement of municipal and commercial services (please specify).

General Street Pattern – check the option that best describes the overall street pattern when looking at the community as a whole. It may help to look at a community map to determine the street pattern. Choose from the following options:

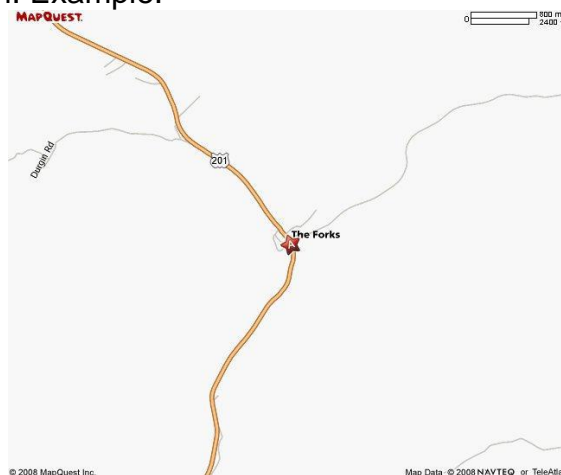
- *Grid* – The roads have an obvious and distinguishable grid pattern in one or several sections of the community. Grid patterns are similar to those found in urban areas with distinct city blocks. Example:



- **Radial** – The roads follow a pattern where the primary roads generally intersect and come together at a central point, but do not follow a distinguishable grid pattern. This pattern may resemble the spokes of a tire. Example:



- **No distinguishable pattern** – The roads do not follow a grid, radial, or other pattern. Example:



- **Other** – The roads follow a distinguishable pattern other than grid or radial (please specify pattern): _____.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES:

This section is designed to provide the assessor an indication of the type and location of the educational facilities in the community. Please keep in mind that adult and distance learning centres also apply.

Is there a school located in your community? Is there any type of school structure or program within the boundaries of your community?

If yes, what type of school(s) is/are there in the community? What types of school(s) are located in the boundaries of your community?

If no, what is the proximity of the closest school(s)? If the educational facilities and programs are not offered within the boundaries of the community, how far away are they?

RECREATIONAL AMENITIES:

This section is designed to collect information about recreational amenities available in your community. For each amenity, please check off its distance from your central community point, the condition of the amenity, and whether it has the specific access features listed. If there are any comments related to a specific amenity, please write it in the space provided.

Each amenity is listed in the **first column**. In the **second column**, check off the *distance* of that amenity from the designated community central-point. If the amenity is located outside of the community's boundaries, but is still considered to be accessible to community residents, please note it in the "Comments" box for that particular amenity. Choose from the following options:

Yes – within 2 kilometers of community center – The amenity is located within two kilometers of the community's designated central point.

Yes – 2 to 8 kilometers from community center – The amenity is located between two and eight kilometers from the community's designated central point.

Yes – 8 to 25 kilometers away from community center – The amenity is located between eight and twenty-five kilometers away from the community's central point.

Yes – beyond 25 kilometers away from community center – The amenity is located farther than 25 kilometers from the designated community central-point.

No – community does not have this amenity – The amenity is not available for residents of this community.

In the **third column**, check off the most appropriate choice regarding the *condition* of each amenity. Choose from the following options:

Very Poor & Poor – The amenity is not well maintained and is in fair or poor condition. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration.

Average – The amenity could use many upgrades but is still in appropriate condition for use.

Good & Very Good – The amenity is well maintained and is in good or excellent condition. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration.

In the **fourth column**, check off the most appropriate choice regarding access to each amenity. Check of whether the amenity includes any of the following elements:

Clearly marked signs for amenity – There is clear and legible signage posted specifically to direct visitors to the amenity.

Sidewalks, trails, etc... leading to amenity – There are sidewalks, trails, etc... that lead to the amenity and connect visitors to comfortable walking routes to and from the amenity. Comfortable walking routes are those that are safe, in good repair throughout, provide appropriate weather protection, and include appropriate lighting.

Public Transit leading to the amenity – There are transit stops located adjacent to the amenity that makes the amenity is easily accessed by all community members – i.e. the young, elderly and disabled.

Designated parking for amenity – There are parking spaces (paved, dirt, gravel or other) designated for the amenity.

Complete the above steps for each amenity listed. Please note that there are additional spaces at the end of this section for “Other Amenities” in your community that have not been listed on this assessment tool.

This completes the instructions for the Community-Wide Assessment portion of the RALA Tools.

2) Program & Policy Assessment

Participants from previous studies about physical activity have suggested that following community programs may help support physical activity among residents. In order to answer the questions on this Tool, you may have to contact specific individuals in your community who are knowledgeable about available programs in your area. These individuals may include:

- Recreation professionals
- School faculty / Administration
- Parks professionals
- Church / Service Club Leaders

These key individuals can help you answer the following questions in the Program & Policy Assessment. Once you have checked off the appropriate circles for each question, please feel free to use the “Comments” space provided to record additional information about each particular question if necessary.

Question by Question Details for Completing the Program & Policy Assessment:

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS & POLICIES

Does the community have a policy that requires bikeways or pedestrian walkways in new public infrastructure projects?

- Yes – As the community considers and builds new infrastructure projects, there is a community requirement or guideline for incorporating lanes and/or walkways for bikes and pedestrians.
- No – As the community considers and builds new infrastructure projects, there is no community requirement or guideline for incorporating lanes and/or walkways for bikes and pedestrians.
- *Don't know*
- *N/A – not applicable*

Does the community have a program/policy in place to ensure regular clearing of snow and ice from sidewalks?

- Yes – When there is snowfall or ice in your community, sidewalks promptly cleared; creating safe, passable sidewalks for residents to walk to school or work following the storm.
- No – When there is snowfall or ice in your community, ‘some’ or ‘all’ sidewalks do not promptly get cleared and remain impassable.
- *Don't know*
- *N/A – not applicable*

Does the community have a public recreation department that offers physical activity programming?

- Yes – The community has a municipally funded recreation department offering physical activity programming for community members.
- No – The community does not have a municipally funded recreation department offering physical activity programming for community members.
- *Don't know*

If “Yes”...

Do they offer physical activity programming for local youth? Please indicate whether the public recreation department offers programming specifically geared toward youth (ages 0-18). Please check one:

- Yes
- No
- *Don't know*
 - Also indicate the ages served by this programming.

Do they offer physical activity programming for adults? Please indicate whether the public recreation department offers programming specifically geared toward adults (ages 18-65). Please check one:

- Yes
- No
- *Don't know*
 - Also indicate the ages served by this programming.

Do they offer physical activity programming for seniors? Please indicate whether the public recreation department offers programming specifically geared toward adults (ages 65+). Please check one:

- Yes
- No
- *Don't know*
 - Also indicate the ages served by this programming.

Are physical activity resources/facilities available for local resident use outside of formal programming? Are the resources and facilities of the community recreation available to all residents even if they do not participate in organized programs? Please choose one:

- Yes
- No
- *Don't know*

Is there funding or a 'sliding fee scale' available for lower income residents to access recreation programs and services in the community? Please choose one:

- Yes
- No
- *Don't know*

Does the community have a private organization (e.g. YMCA or a religious organization) that offers physical activity programming?

- Yes – The community has a private organization offering physical activity programming.
- No – The does not have a private organization offering physical activity programming.
- *Don't know*

If "Yes" ...

Do they offer physical activity programming for local youth? Please indicate whether the private organization offers programming specifically geared toward youth (ages 0-18). Please check one:

- Yes
- No
- *Don't know*

- Also indicate the ages served by this programming.

Do they offer physical activity programming for local adults (18+ years)? Please indicate whether the private organization offers programming specifically geared toward youth (ages 0-18). Please check one:

- Yes
- No
- *Don't know*

- Also indicate the ages served by this programming.

Are there membership requirements to participate in these programs? Do residents have to pay a fee to participate in youth physical activity programming offered by the private organization(s)?

- Yes
- No
- *Don't know*

Are physical activity resources/facilities available for local resident use outside of programming? Are the resources and facilities of the private organization available to residents even if they do not participate in organized programs sponsored by the organization? Please choose one:

- Yes
- No
- *Don't know*

Does the organization provide scholarships or offer a sliding fee scale for lower income residents? Please choose one:

- Yes
- No
- *Don't know*

Does the community offer any local public transportation options, such as public busses or vans?

- Yes – The community has either free or fee-based public transportation regularly available.
- No – The community does not have any public transportation available to residents.
- *Don't know*

If “Yes”... Please specify what kinds of transportation options are available to residents (e.g. bus, shuttle, cab services, etc...)

Are there any long-distance public transportation options available in your community, such as a train or Bus?

- Yes – There are long-distance public transportation options available in the community.
- No – The community does not have any long-distance public transportation

options available to residents.

- *Don't know*

If “Yes”... Please specify what kinds of transportation options are available to residents (e.g. bus, shuttle, cab services, etc...)

SCHOOL PROGRAMS & POLICIES

Does the community have any “Walk to School” programs or other programs that encourage children to walk or bike to school?

- *Yes* – The community/school has organized “walk to school” or other programs that encourage children/students to walk and/or bike to school.
- *No* – The community/school does not have any organized “walk to school” or other program to encourage children/students to walk and/or bike to school.
- *Don't know*

Does the community participate in the National “Active & Safe Routes to School” program?

- *Yes* – The community/school takes part in this program.
- *No* – The community/school does not take part in this program
- *Don't know*

Do the schools in the community offer other sponsored physical activity initiatives for students?

- *Yes* – The schools offer other organized/sponsored physical activity initiatives for students.
- *No* – The schools do not offer any other organized/sponsored physical activity initiatives for students.
- *Don't know*

Do the schools in the community allow public access to their recreation facilities after hours?

- *Yes* – One of more of the schools in the community allow community residents to use their recreation facilities, such as the school gym, playing fields or courts, and/or pool after school hours or on weekends.
- *No* – None of the schools in the community allow community residents to use their recreation facilities.
- *Don't know*

Do the schools in the community have a ‘late bus’ option for children that stay after school for sponsored activities?

- *Yes* – The public schools offer late buses for children who stay after school for team sports or other activities.
- *No* – The public schools do not offer late buses.
- *Don't know*

What percent (%) of school children live within 2km of their school? Talk to your local school administrators to determine what percent of students live within 2 kilometers of their school to determine what percent of children could potentially walk to school.

This concludes the Program and Policy Assessment section of the RALA Tools

3) Segment Assessment

Not all communities will find it necessary to conduct the 'Segment Assessment'. This portion of the RALA Tools is to be conducted in larger rural communities or in a segment of the community that represents the typical layout of the community. It is intended to inform the Assessment at a more detailed level.

General Guidelines:

- Ideally, two people should conduct the audit together – this will help test reliability. Preferably, at least one person should be an active and informed local community member (planner, recreation professional or other community official). This will help ensure that one of the auditors knows the community well, and can aid in selecting meaningful segments in the community.
- It is recommended that you obtain a map of the community you are auditing. This can be obtained from your local community office or online (For example, Google Maps and Mapquest). These websites allow you to zoom into specific areas and observe street-level and satellite/aerial maps. Starting with a physical map can be useful in planning out your audit route, defining segments, and documenting certain physical features such as lakes, rivers, parks, typology, and other features.
- Be sure to bring a watch (to note the time), clipboard, pencils, digital camera (documentation purposes at a later date). Also, you may want to use a GPS device.
- Portions of the audit may be done by foot, while others will need to be conducted by vehicle.

Selecting Segments:

Defining the segments you would like to study in your community will be one of the most challenging steps during the physical audit process. Because most rural communities are not made up of neat, city-blocks, choosing the boundaries for each segment can be tricky. It may be helpful to identify/separate zones in the following four categories and then choose segments from within these zones:

- 1) Community Centre Zone
- 2) Thoroughfare Zone
- 3) Neighbourhood Cluster Zone (minimal traffic and primarily residential)
- 4) Isolated School Zone (school that does not fall into any other segment)

It is up to you how many total zones and segments you would like to audit. For example, a community may have one centre zone, several thoroughfare zones, several neighbourhood clusters and an isolated school zone.

**** We do not recommend auditing the entire community! Start by identifying segments that fall within the Community Centre zone (2 km radius from the central point of the community). The segments you audit should fall within that circle. In cases where the school(s) in the community do/does not fall within the central circle, a separate zone should be constructed around the school(s) so the area can be properly audited. If you need to draw multiple circles (e.g. one around the community centre and one around the school), you may find it necessary to audit any thoroughfare that connects the two circles. If your community is laid out in a clustered settlement pattern (as defined above), you may use this same approach for any additional clusters that are not within a mile of the community centre.*

Each zone you identify will fall into the following shape categories: radius, line or polygon. For example,

- Community centre zone – radius – drawing a circle around what you have determined to be the central point of the community. Within a 1 km radius that defines the community centre zone, you should identify preliminary segments using a street map. You will most likely find that some of the preliminary segments you chose will need to be modified based on certain characteristics you see in the field. In densely settled zones, a segment is identified as both sides of a street from one street intersection to the next (e.g. a city block). However, in rural communities, this approach must be modified to make use of endpoints other than cross streets, drawing on observed natural boundaries that out may see out in the field, such as large unsettled areas, bridges or significant changes in land use. For example, if an area or a road within a zone makes an obvious change from commercial to residential, that may be an appropriate segment boundary. Your 2 km radius zone may have many such segments. The number of segments you choose is up to you. It is most likely sufficient to identify 12 segments or less within the Community Centre zone radius from which to choose your final set of segments. Although segment lengths may vary based on obvious boundaries, a distance of approximately 0.5 of a km may be used as a general guide for segment length.
- Thoroughfare zone – may be a thoroughfare connecting the community centre to a school or residential cluster, or it may be a Main Street or major highway passing through or near the community centre. A thoroughfare zone may be separated into segments along the thoroughfare using the same approach as the community centre zone – that is, using cross streets and other natural or built endpoints. Choose at least two segments from any thoroughfare zone that is 1 km or more in length. For shorter thoroughfare zones, or a thoroughfare zone with no variability in land use, one segment is sufficient.
- Neighbourhood zone or Cluster zone – radius or polygon since there may or may not be natural or built boundaries that define it. The area of each cluster zone (neighbourhood or school) should be no greater than 1 km². As with the community centre and thoroughfare zones, identify segments on your map. Since cluster zones are smaller, you only need to find a maximum of six segments in a cluster zone. In some cases, only one segment may be sufficient.

*** In each zone, you will choose a sample of segments from among those you have identified. There is no absolute minimum number of segments. It is recommended that you start with a segment near the centre of your zone, and audit as many segments as you feel necessary to capture the essential characteristics of the zone. When moving on to your next segment, you should continue to an adjacent segment or the next closest segment that you have chosen to audit. Continue this process until all selected segments have been audited. A community centre zone in a community of 5,000 is likely to need at least 4 segments. If the community is compact, the centre zone may be the only zone, and you may need at least 6 segments to capture the variety of physical environments in that zone.

Once you have determined how many and which segments you will be auditing, you should make a separate copy of the Segment Assessment tool for each segment to assess the physical and natural features in each section.

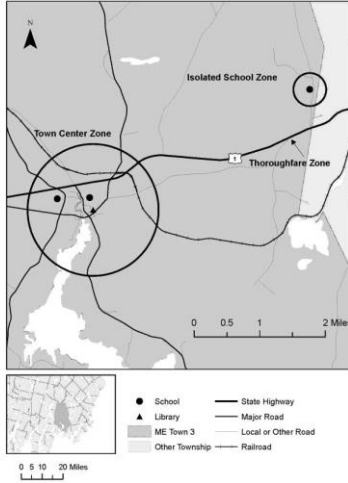
The figure on the next page illustrates these zones using a map from a community in Maine. The triangle represents the library, which was the community central point. The black dots illustrate where the schools are located.

The large circle encompasses the community-center zone, from which several segments were selected to audit. It is recommended to draw a circle with a two-kilometer radius around the central point, and then choose segments within that circle for the community center zone.

Up in the right-hand corner of the figure is where the high-school is located, over 3 ¼ kilometers from the community central point. To audit segments around this school an approximate half-kilometer radius was drawn around the school creating an Isolated School Zone.

A Thoroughfare Zone was also identified to audit segments that connect the Community Center Zone with the Isolated School Zone. Here the thoroughfare was broken into half-kilometer parts and selected segments based on land use type. If there was no change in land use type on this road, you could audit just one representative segment.

There was no Neighborhood Cluster Zone in the community, but it would look similar to the School Zone shown here, but it would be primarily a residential area.



Example of rural community with multiple zones identified for Street Segment Assessment. Notice the Community Center Zone, Thoroughfare Zone and Isolated School Zone.

Completing the Detailed Segments:

Make sure you number each segment on your map as well as on the corresponding Audit Assessment Tools. A separate audit sheet should be completed for each segment that you choose to assess in your rural community. Please be sure that you only choose one answer (unless instructed otherwise) for each question on the audit. You may choose at which point you would like to begin auditing in each segment, but be sure to audit the entire segment (by foot or vehicle). You can ensure this by referring to a map of the area/segment and making sure you audit the characteristics, amenities, and features found on every street you see on the map in that segment. Be sure to observe characteristics, amenities, and features found on both sides of the street.

Question by Question Details for Completing the Street Segment Assessment

The following information is provided to help you complete the assessment for each segment:

Street Segment Assessment

*** Start by filling out the Segment ID Number (to be selected by you) on each page of the assessment tool. This will eliminate any confusion should pages get separated. This number should correspond with the number you assigned each segment on your community map.

*** Next fill out the Auditor ID (to be selected by you – you may choose a distinct number or a name) on each page of the assessment tool to keep track of who is filling out the tool.

*** Now fill in the Community Name, Auditor's Name, Date, and Start and End Time.

SEGMENT DESCRIPTION

Boundaries – Enter the features (north, south, east, and west) that identify the boundaries of the Segment.

Primary streets – Enter the most significant streets in the Segment.

Land use – Select the primary land use in the segment: residential, commercial, industrial, public/civic, community park/open space, mixed-use (all or more than 1 of the above) or other.

Terrain – Select any significant terrain features present: flat, hills, valley, forest/agricultural/undeveloped, river/creek/ocean, winding roads, water body or other feature. You may check more than one box if appropriate.


Segment Zone Type – Select the option that best describes the type of Zone in which the segment is located (please check only one):



1. Community Center/Main Street
2. Thoroughfare
3. Industrial
4. School
5. Neighborhood
6. Commercial
7. Community Park / Open Space
8. Other

WALKABILITY





Sidewalks, crosswalks and other pedestrian and bike-friendly features have an impact on a community's walkability. This section will help to determine whether your segment includes any of these features.



Sidewalks – Choose one option that best describes the sidewalks in the segment: sidewalks are found on both sides of the street, one side of the street, intermittent (sidewalks exist along only parts of the roads), footpath only or none. Rate the overall condition of sidewalks using the following definitions:

| Rating | Description | Example |
|--------|---|---|
| Poor | The sidewalks are generally not well maintained in this segment. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration and pose a safety risk for users. |  |



| Rating | Description | Example |
|---------|--|---|
| Average | The sidewalks could use upgrades but is still in appropriate condition for use. Sidewalks do not pose a significant safety risk for users with little/no mobility limitations. |  |
| Good | The sidewalks are generally well maintained in this segment and are in good or excellent condition. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration. |  |





Buffers and Shoulders – Check the appropriate boxes if most sidewalks in the segment have a sidewalk buffer strip separating them from the road and if the roads have a defined shoulder separating the traffic lanes from the edge of the road. If neither of these features exists, check “none.” Rate the overall condition of buffers and shoulders using the following definitions:

| Rating | Description | Examples | |
|---------|--|--|---|
| | | Shoulder | Buffer |
| Poor | The buffers and shoulders are generally not well maintained in this segment. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration and pose a safety risk for users. |  |  |
| Average | The buffers and shoulders could use upgrades but are still in appropriate condition for use. They do not pose a significant safety risk for users with little/no mobility limitations. |  |  |

| Rating | Description | Examples | |
|--------|--|--|---|
| | | Shoulder | Buffer |
| Good | The buffers and shoulders are generally well maintained in this segment and are in good or excellent condition. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration. |  |  |

Cross-walks, Pedestrian & Cycling Signage – Check the appropriate boxes regarding whether the segment includes crosswalks, crossing signals (“walk” and “don’t walk” lights), pedestrian signs, cycling demarcations, and children at play signs. If none of these features exist check “none.” Rate the overall condition of these features using the following definitions:

| Rating | Description | Examples | |
|--------|--|---|--|
| | | Crosswalk | Signage |
| Poor | The crosswalks, signals and pedestrian signs are generally not well maintained in this segment, are hidden, and/or are in fair or poor condition. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration (e.g., are the crosswalk lines brightly painted or otherwise made visible to drivers and pedestrians? Are crossing signals in working order? If you answer no to these questions, then the signs/signals are considered to be in poor or fair condition.) |  |  |

| Rating | Description | Examples | |
|---------|---|---|--|
| | | Crosswalk | Signage |
| Average | The crosswalks and signage could use upgrades but are still in appropriate condition for use. They do not pose a significant safety risk for users with little/no mobility limitations. |  |  |
| Good | The crosswalks, signals and pedestrian signs are generally well maintained in this segment and are in good or excellent condition. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration. |  |  |

Other Safety Features

Check off any other pedestrian friendly features available in the segment including traffic lights, stop signs, yellow school flashing lights, speed bumps and public lighting. If none of these features exist check "none." Use the comment box to note other features or places where you might recommend improving safety features.

Road/Traffic Characteristics

Indicate all road types found in the segment including paved multi-lane roads (three or more lanes), paved single lane roads (one or two lanes) and unpaved roads.

Next indicate the road condition, either Poor/fair (roads are generally not well maintained in this segment. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration) or Good/excellent (roads are generally well maintained in this segment. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration).

Note the posted maximum speed limits found in the segment. Indicate whether there is no speed limit posted.

Indicate what level of traffic volume you witness in the segment:

- *High traffic volume:* There is a steady stream of significant traffic traveling

through the segment

- *Medium traffic volume* There is noticeable, but not constant traffic traveling through the segment
- *Low traffic volume:* There is little or no traffic traveling through the segment

Barriers

Indicate any significant barriers to pedestrian and bike traffic in the segment, including a highway, train tracks, posted private property, industrial zone, natural features (e.g., a river, thick woods, steep terrain) or other obstacle. If no barrier or obstacle exists, check "none."


Connectivity



Indicate whether non-vehicular routes such as sidewalks, bike paths or trails connect this segment with other parts of community/attractions, including attractions such as schools, commercial districts and parks or with other segments or roads. If they are available in this segment, rate the overall condition of these connectors using the following definitions:

- *Poor* – The connectors are generally not well maintained in this segment and are in fair or poor condition. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration.
- *Average* - The connectors would benefit from improvements but are still in appropriate condition for use. They do not pose a significant safety risk for users with little/no mobility limitations.
- *Good* – The connectors are generally well maintained in this segment and are in good or excellent condition. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration.



LAND USE


Residential – In the first column of question 14, please indicate how densely settled the segment is by checking one of the following options:

| Density: | Description | Example |
|----------|--|--|
| Densely | Residences are located close to one another with little or no open space between each structure. It is possible to see several other structures from each residence. |  |

| Density: | Description | Example |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Moderately Dense | Residences are spaced out with moderate open space between each structure. It may be possible to see some other structures from each residence. |  |
| Dispersed | Residences are located very far distances from one another with vast space between each structure. It is not possible to see other structures from each residence. |  |
| None | N/A | N/A |

In the second column, please note the housing types present (single family detached, multi-family/apartments, mobile homes, other types, none) and in the third column select the overall condition of the homes in the segment using the following definitions:

| Rating | Description | Example |
|----------------|---|--|
| Poor | The houses are generally not well maintained in this segment. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration and pose a health & safety risk for occupants. |  |
| Average | The houses could use upgrades but are still in appropriate condition for use. They do not pose a significant safety risk for occupants. |  |

| Rating | Description | Example |
|--------|---|--|
| Good | The houses are generally well maintained in this segment and are in good or excellent condition. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration. |  |

Use the comment box to note other observations on residential patterns that may be relevant to activity-friendliness.

Public/Civic – Please check off all of the public or civic buildings/offices/facilities located in the segment including:

- Library
- Museum
- Community center
- Post office
- Community offices
- Courthouse
- Police station
- Fire station
- Church/religious building
- Hospital/health center
- Athletic fields/courts
- Playground
- Other (please specify) _____
- None

In the third column, please select the overall condition of each civic building/office/facility that is present in the segment using the following definitions:

- *Poor* – The civic building/office/facility is generally not well maintained and is in fair or poor condition. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration.
- *Average* – The civic building/office/facility could use upgrades but are still in appropriate condition for use. They do not pose a significant safety risk for users and/or occupants.
- *Good* – The civic building/office/facility is generally well maintained and is in good or excellent condition. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration.

Commercial – Please check off all of the commercial buildings located in the segment including:

- Restaurant/café
- Bar

- Food market
- Theater
- Gas station
- Convenience store
- Small retail store
- Big box retail store
- Fitness center
- Private medical office
- Private other office
- Office building
- Other (please specify) _____
- None

In the third column, please select the overall condition of each commercial building that is present in the segment using the following definitions:

- *Poor* – The commercial building is generally not well maintained and is in fair or poor condition. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration.
- *Average* – The commercial building could use upgrades but are still in appropriate condition for use. They do not pose a significant safety risk for users and/or occupants.
- *Good* – The commercial building is generally well maintained and is in good or excellent condition. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration.

Schools – Please indicate whether there are any schools located in the segment:




- Elementary school (public)
- Middle school (public)
- High school (public)
- Private school
- University or campus
- Other (please specify) _____
- None

In the third column, please select the overall condition of each school that is present in the segment using the following definitions:

- *Poor* – The school is generally not well maintained and is in fair or poor condition. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration.
- *Average* – The school could use upgrades but are still in appropriate condition for use. They do not pose a significant safety risk for users and/or occupants.
- *Good* – The school is generally well maintained and is in good or excellent condition. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration.

Industrial / Agricultural

Please check off if any significant industrial or agricultural areas are present in the segment including:

| Land Use | Description | Example |
|------------------|---|--|
| Light Industrial | Small industrial buildings/facilities that cover a limited land area that do not include significant smokestacks or other industrial features (e.g. small salt/granite/sand pits, small trucking/construction business, small electrical power substation, etc.). |  Sand Pit |
| Heavy Industrial | Large industrial buildings/facilities or complex that cover a large area of land and include smokestacks or other industrial features (e.g. large chemical or manufacturing plant, large trucking facility, large power plant, etc.). |  |
| Agricultural | Any agricultural, livestock, or other farmland area. |  |

In the third column, please select the overall condition of each industrial/agricultural area that is present in the segment using the following definitions:

- *Poor* – The area is generally not well maintained and is in fair or poor condition. There is apparent neglect and/or deterioration.
- *Average* – The area could use upgrades but are still in appropriate condition for use. They do not pose a significant safety risk for users and/or occupants.
- *Good* – The area is generally well maintained and is in good or excellent condition. There is little or no apparent neglect and/or deterioration.

Stop Time – Please indicate at what time you completed the Segment Assessment

SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT

Questions 21 and 22 are to gather your overall subjective opinion regarding the

walkability and aesthetic quality of the segment. These questions should be answered **last**, that is, after the rest of the Segment Assessment tool has been completed in its entirety for the segment. Please check off how strongly you agree with each of the following statements (choose only one answer for each question – Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree):

How strongly do you agree with the following statement(s)?

“This segment is walkable.”

“This segment is aesthetically pleasing.”

For both subjective assessment questions, it may be of use to note any comments about the segment that you feel would be useful in the overall assessment of the segment.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

Questions 23-25 are meant to capture current environmental conditions when you completed the Street Segment Assessment. These conditions may impact some of the objective and subjective observations on this assessment.

Current weather conditions – please indicate the temperature, whether it was sunny/clear, partly cloudy, overcast, raining, snowing or some other weather condition when you conducted the segment assessment.

Season – please check off whether it is currently: Winter, Spring, Summer, or Fall

Day of week – please indicate whether today is a weekday, weekend, or holiday.

This completes the Street Segment Assessment portion of the RALA Tools.

SCORING THE RALA TOOLS

It is up to each community whether they would like to use the following scoring tools for the Community-wide and Program & Policy Assessments. Feedback from those who have used the RALA tools indicated that users prefer a scoring tool to help highlight or rank areas for discussion and improvement.

These scoring tools were developed with the close help of an Expert Advisory Committee (in Maine), made up of leaders in the physical activity, childhood obesity community planning, and built environment fields. The items on the RALA tools were weighted and scored and subsequently assigned points/scores for the scoring tools. These scores can be used to compare your community with other communities that have also used and scored using RALA. Additionally, scores can be used to assess

your community before an intervention or change in the community and then again afterward for comparison purposes.

Some of the most valuable outcome from RALA are the conversations and observations that come from completing the Assessments and Scoring – it helped them highlight areas where their community may be weaker in physical activity opportunities and allowed them to start the discussions on how to improve these opportunities. Other users of RALA indicated that the more people and viewpoints that were involved in the discussion, allowed for more variety in ideas and possible solutions.

Please note that there is not a scoring tool for the Segment Assessment as is would be extremely cumbersome to conduct scoring at this level of detail.

To complete the Community-wide and Program & Policy Assessment scoring tools, please proceed to the Appendices.