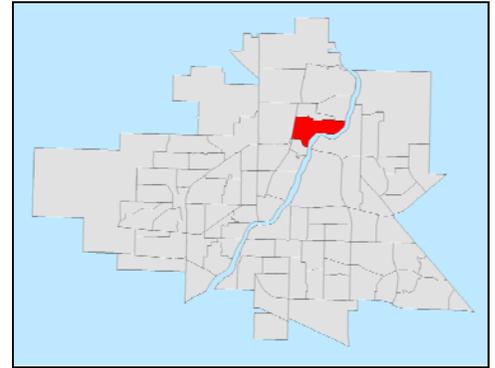


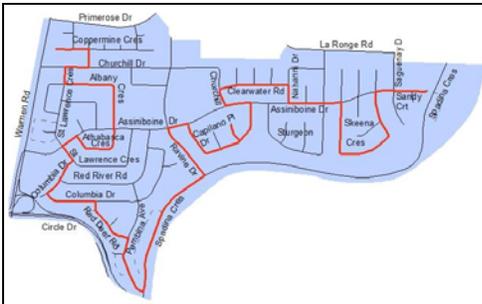
# River Heights



The **Smart Cities, Healthy Kids** research project looks for solutions to childhood obesity by investigating how neighbourhood design affects children's ability to be physically active. Research suggests that safety from traffic and crime, the presence of destinations and built features supporting an active lifestyle (eg. parks, playgrounds, and bike lanes), a neighbourhood's attractiveness, and its accessibility are all very important in determining whether people will be active there. To determine which Saskatoon neighbourhood designs are the most supportive of active living, researchers walked each neighbourhood in Saskatoon in the summer months of 2009/2010, collecting data on these areas using two research surveys: the Neighbourhood Active Living Potential (NALP) and the Irvine-Minnesota Inventory (IMI).

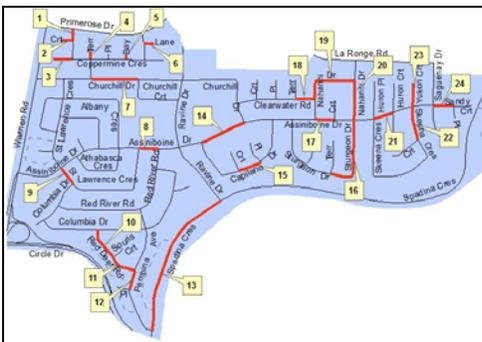


*River Heights in Saskatoon*



*NALP Route Map*

**NALP** consists of 22 items within four areas: Activity Friendliness, Safety, Density of Destinations, and Universal Accessibility. Using this method, observers rated each item on a 6-point scale after walking a pre-defined route in each neighbourhood that connected 10 randomly-selected street segments. The route, typically 4 to 5 kilometres in length, is shown in red on the map.



*IMI Segments Map*

**IMI** consists of a 229-item inventory of neighbourhood features within five areas: Attractiveness, Diversity of Destinations, Pedestrian Access, Safety from Traffic, and Safety from Crime. Twenty percent of street segments in each neighbourhood were randomly selected and observed. Each segment is the two facing sides of a street block and is indicated by a numbered flag on the map.

The NALP tool is more subjective in nature and takes into account the impression of the entire neighbourhood based on the systematic observations of the researchers. In contrast, the IMI is more objective in nature and is based on observations of each individual segment. The following report will discuss how the characteristics of River Heights compare to Saskatoon neighbourhoods in general.

Smart Cities Healthy Kids

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# River Heights Overview

River Heights is bordered by Primrose Drive, La Ronge Road, Spadina Crescent, Circle Drive, and Warman Road.

River Heights was designed under the First Community Planning Scheme, which was in effect between 1966-1982. This was Saskatoon's first comprehensive neighbourhood plan that sought to design neighbourhoods as independent communities. As such, each neighbourhood was required to develop around a school site and neighbourhood park, and park space became standardized at 10 acres per 1000 people.

Commercial types became distributed into neighbourhood and suburban centre uses. Core neighbourhoods became the focus for high density and mixed-use while suburban neighbourhoods became primarily single-family residential. As a suburban neighbourhood, River Heights is primarily residential, with most commercial needs designed to be served by the nearby Lawson Heights Suburban Centre.



*River Heights street view*

## Safety

We rated each neighbourhood according to the presence or absence of certain neighbourhood elements that increase or detract from a feeling of personal security. Observing both the physical and social characteristics of the neighbourhood, security was measured both in terms of traffic and crime. These ratings suggest whether safety concerns affect an individual's related active living decisions in their neighbourhood.



*Well Marked Pedestrian Crossing*

- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, River Heights rated **5.43** for Safety from Traffic, below Saskatoon's average rating of **6.06**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, River Heights rated **8.84** for Safety from Crime, above Saskatoon's average rating of **8.46**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 6, River Heights rated **3.75** for Safety, below Saskatoon's average rating of **3.81**. (NALP)

River Heights' safety ratings suggest that pedestrian and vehicular travel areas are fairly well defined and safe to navigate and that there are few elements that reduce feelings of personal security. For example, most streets we observed had low traffic levels. The intersections with the most traffic included measures of safety for pedestrians. In terms of safety from crime, well maintained homes, an absence of graffiti, and plenty of opportunities for casual surveillance of the street by home owners all contribute to the perception of personal security; however, we observed a high number of spaces concealed by bushes or in pedestrian access ways that could be used for lurking.



*Low traffic enables kids to play in the street*

# Destinations

We rated each neighbourhood according to the number, diversity, and density of its destinations. These ratings suggest whether destinations in a neighbourhood can motivate deliberate, localized active living choices by providing a place to go and a means to interact with others.

- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, River Heights rated **1.00** for Diversity of Destinations, below Saskatoon's average rating of **6.26**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 6, River Heights rated **3.62** for Density of Destinations, below Saskatoon's average rating of **3.92**. (NALP)



*Meewasin Valley Trail*

River Heights' destination ratings suggest that there are some destinations of a minimal variety. For example, observed destinations in River Heights include a school, a park with playing fields and playground, and the Meewasin Valley Trails. However, we are also aware that the Canarama shopping centre on Warman Road is on the edge of the neighbourhood and include a variety of retail, entertainment, and professional services, (though the segment was not selected or observed during either the NALP or IMI data collection).

# Activity Friendliness

We rated the activity friendliness of each neighbourhood based on specific features that encourage or present barriers to an active lifestyle. These ratings suggest whether a neighbourhood assists or limits the opportunities for physical activities such as walking, cycling, or skateboarding.

- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, River Heights rated **4.90** for Pedestrian Access, below Saskatoon's average rating of **5.08**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 6, River Heights rated **3.67** for Activity Friendliness, in line with Saskatoon's average rating of **3.67**. (NALP)



*Pedestrian bridge*



*Pedestrian access ways*

These activity friendliness ratings suggest that River Heights has both supports and obstructions for pedestrians. For example, most streets have well-maintained sidewalks on both sides of the street. Further, wide streets provide adequate room for cyclists. The street design with several crescents and culs-de-sac limits the route choices and access for pedestrians and cyclists, though pedestrian access ways located throughout the neighbourhood increase connectivity.

## Attractiveness

We rated each neighbourhood based on specific features that could potentially increase or decrease the attractiveness of the neighbourhood. This rating suggests whether the level of attractiveness for each neighbourhood itself can encourage or discourage individuals to participate in an active lifestyle.



*Attractive river view*

- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, River Heights rated **5.23** for Attractiveness, above Saskatoon's average rating of **4.80**. (IMI)

River Heights' attractiveness rating suggests that both attractive and unattractive features are present in the neighbourhood. For example, the street trees observed on several streets provide shade for many of the sidewalks. Architectural variety, well maintained homes, and pleasant landscaping considerably increase the attractiveness of the neighbourhood. Further, the Meewasin Valley Trail and river views attract Saskatoon residents beyond River Heights to the area.



*Graded curb cut*

## Universal Access

We rated the universal accessibility of each neighbourhood according to the presence or absence of specific features that help or prevent safe movement for those with mobility, visual, or hearing impairments. These ratings suggest whether people with reduced mobility are able to travel in the neighbourhood safely without assistance.

- Out of a possible highest rating of 6, River Heights rated **1.50** for Universal Accessibility, below Saskatoon's average rating of **2.19**. (NALP)

This universal accessibility rating indicates that River Heights has few elements that enable safe movement for those with reduced mobility. For example, few sidewalks in River Heights are mountable, and curb cuts were absent from most observed intersections. Further, none of the observed pedestrian crossings are adapted for individuals with visual or hearing impairments.

**The principal investigator for this project is Nazeem Muhajarine, PhD. For a complete list of contributing researchers, partner organizations, project staff, and more information, please visit our website: [www.smartcitieshealthykids.com](http://www.smartcitieshealthykids.com)**

**If you have any further questions about the project, please contact our research co-ordinator [tracy.ridalls@usask.ca](mailto:tracy.ridalls@usask.ca) or call 966-2237.**