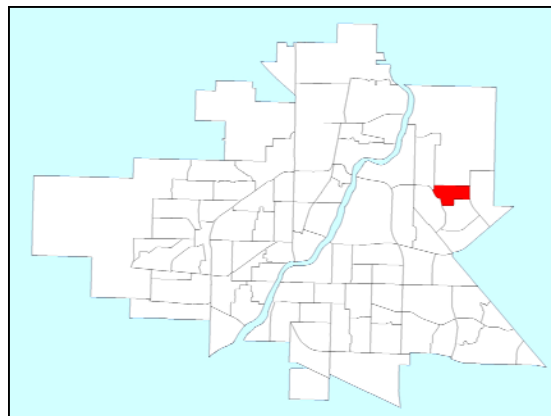


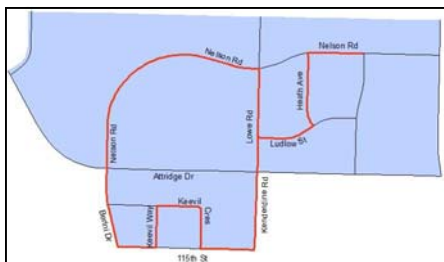
University Heights Suburban Centre



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).



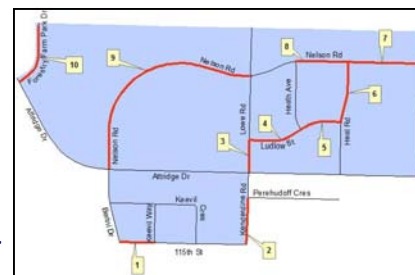
University Heights Suburban Centre in Saskatoon



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 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.



IMI Segments 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 the University Heights Suburban Centre compare to Saskatoon neighbourhoods in general.

Smart Cities Healthy Kids

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University Heights Suburban Centre Overview

The University Heights Suburban Centre is bordered by Attridge Drive, Berini Drive, 115th Street, Kenderdine Road, McOrmond Drive, and the Forestry Farm Park and Drive. The University Heights Suburban Centre was developed under Plan Saskatoon, a development plan adopted in 1998 as a result of community wide consultation on development and growth policies. Plan Saskatoon introduced sustainable development principles, Local Area Plans for existing neighbourhoods, and a Formal Concept Planning process for all new neighbourhoods. New forms of neighbourhood development were encouraged, including a minimum average density of five units per acre, housing variety, neighbourhood commercial sites, infill development, affordable housing, and mixed uses in core neighbourhoods and former industrial areas. The University Heights Suburban Centre tried to incorporate sustainable development principles through high density residential developments.



University Heights Suburban Centre street view



Well marked pedestrian crossing

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.

- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, University Heights Suburban Centre rated **7.12** for Safety from Traffic, above Saskatoon's average rating of **6.06**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, University Heights Suburban Centre rated **8.51** for Safety from Crime, above Saskatoon's average rating of **8.46**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 6, University Heights Suburban Centre rated **4.25** for Safety, above Saskatoon's average rating of **3.81**. (NALP)

The University Heights Suburban Centre's safety ratings suggest that pedestrian and vehicular travel areas are fairly well defined and somewhat safe to navigate and that there are only few elements that reduce feelings of personal security. For example, all streets have the potential for high traffic levels, though not all busy intersections were marked for pedestrian crossing. Crosswalks present were well marked with zebra stripes and signs. In terms of safety from crime, well maintained surroundings and plenty of opportunities for casual surveillance of the street by residents and customers contribute to the perception of personal security. However, some concealed areas could be used for lurking, particularly around undeveloped areas and in construction zones.



Grass buffer separates the sidewalk from traffic

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.



Cluster of retail and professional services



St. Joseph's High School

- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, University Heights Suburban Centre rated **10.00** for Diversity of Destinations, well above Saskatoon's average rating of **6.26**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 6, University Heights Suburban Centre rated **4.38** for Density of Destinations, above Saskatoon's average rating of **3.92**. (NALP)

The University Heights Suburban Centre's destination ratings suggest that there are many destinations of a wide variety. For example, observed destinations in the University Heights Suburban Centre include parks and a playing field, two high schools, a library, an indoor fitness and leisure centre, medical services, banks, gas and service stations, grocery stores, restaurants, and a variety of retail and professional services.

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.



High density residential located near destinations

- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, University Heights Suburban Centre rated **5.93** for Pedestrian Access, above Saskatoon's average rating of **5.08**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 6, University Heights Suburban Centre rated **3.92** for Activity Friendliness, above Saskatoon's average rating of **3.67**. (NALP)



Shared bike and walking path

These activity friendliness ratings suggest that the University Heights Suburban Centre has both supports and obstructions for pedestrians. For example, most streets have a least one sidewalk, and when present, sidewalks are in good condition and are often separated from traffic by a grass buffer strip. Further, wide streets provide adequate room for cyclists, though heavy traffic levels limits the route choice. Additionally, high density residential areas located close to destinations and clearly defined pedestrian areas at destinations enable people to live near and easily access the places they need.

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.

- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, University Heights Suburban Centre rated **3.66** for Attractiveness, below Saskatoon's average rating of **4.80**. (IMI)



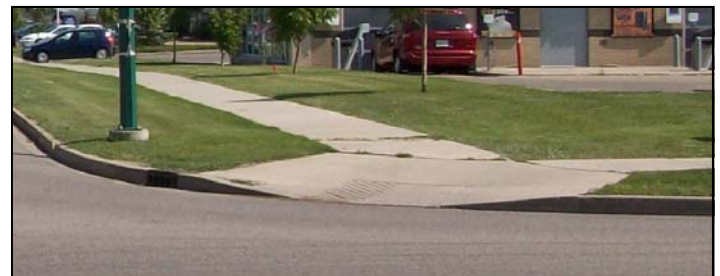
A place to rest when walking

The University Heights Suburban Centre's attractiveness rating suggests that both attractive and unattractive features are present in the neighbourhood. For example, the architectural styles of the high density residential development units can appear repetitive. The surroundings are new, well maintained, and inviting. Further, pleasant landscaping, large parks, and pathways considerably increase the attractiveness of the area.

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, University Heights Suburban Centre rated **4.67** for Universal Accessibility, above Saskatoon's average rating of **2.19**. (NALP)



Graded curb cut

This universal accessibility rating indicates that the University Heights Suburban Centre has some elements that enable safe movement for those with reduced mobility. For example, curb cuts are present at almost all intersections. Further, some of the observed pedestrian crossings are adapted for individuals with visual or hearing impairments. Most destinations provide reserved parking and other services for people with reduced mobility.

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.ca

If you have any further questions about the project, please contact our research co-ordinator tracy.ridalls@usask.ca or call 966-2237.

