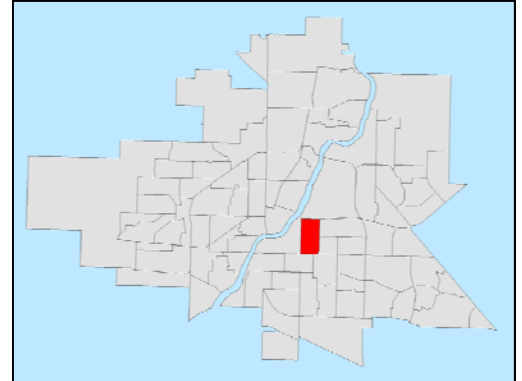


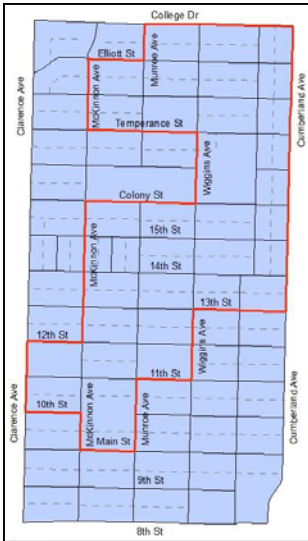
Varsity View



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).



Varsity View in Saskatoon

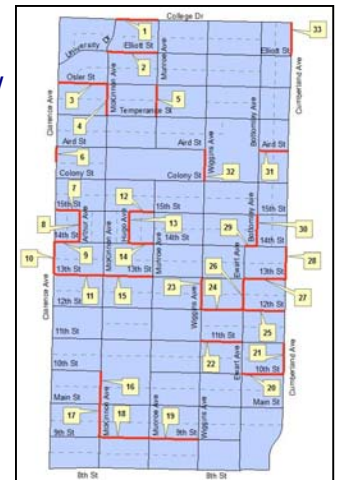


NALP Route Map

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.

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 Varsity View compare to Saskatoon neighbourhoods in general.

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

Smart Cities Healthy Kids

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Varsity View Overview

Varsity View is bordered by College Drive, Cumberland Avenue, 8th Street, and Clarence Avenue.

Varsity View was designed under the First Zoning Bylaw, which was in effect from 1930—1966. This Bylaw marked the beginning of a formal land use classification system that separated land use types into more defined categories for the purposes of controlling land uses and protecting property values. This Bylaw also marked the beginning of a street classification system that separated volumes of traffic into classes (local, collector, and arterial). Neighbourhoods developed under the First Zoning Bylaw often included early forms of curvilinear streets, where grid patterns give way to crescents linked by a collector street. Varsity View, however, is composed entirely of grid patterned streets.



Varsity View 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, Varsity View rated **5.91** for Safety from Traffic, below Saskatoon's average rating of **6.06**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, Varsity View rated **8.56** for Safety from Crime, above Saskatoon's average rating of **8.46**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 6, Varsity View rated **4.13** for Safety, above Saskatoon's average rating of **3.81**. (NALP)

Varsity View's 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, although several observed intersections were uncontrolled and few were marked for pedestrian crossing, traffic levels in some areas were low, so observers felt these streets were safe to cross. Indeed, the intersections with very high traffic did include crosswalks, but Varsity View could benefit from further consideration for the safety of pedestrians. In terms of safety from crime, mostly well maintained homes, some opportunities for casual surveillance of the street by home owners, and minimal graffiti all contributed to the perception of personal security. However, we observed a high number of spaces concealed by bushes or in alleyways that could be used for lurking.



Grffiti

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.



President Murray Park

- Out of a possible highest rating of 10, Varsity View rated **6.00** for Diversity of Destinations, below Saskatoon's average rating of **6.26**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 6, Varsity View rated **4.38** for Density of Destinations, above Saskatoon's average rating of **3.92**. (NALP)



Alexander's Restaurant outdoor patio

Varsity View's destination ratings suggest that there are some destinations of a moderate variety. For example, observed destinations in Varsity View include two schools, three neighbourhood parks, a playground, several churches, professional and medical services, a bank, some retail, restaurants, an outdoor dining area, and the nearby University of Saskatchewan Campus.

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, Varsity View rated **4.68** for Pedestrian Access, below Saskatoon's average rating of **5.08**. (IMI)
- Out of a possible highest rating of 6, Varsity View rated **3.50** for Activity Friendliness, below Saskatoon's average rating of **3.67**. (NALP)



Bush obstructs sidewalk



Wide streets support cyclists

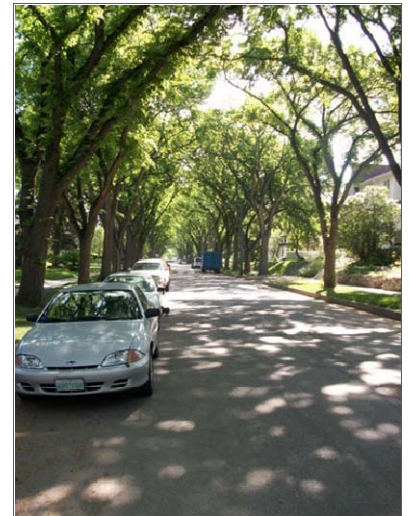
These activity friendliness ratings suggest that Varsity View has both supports and obstructions for pedestrians. For example, sidewalks were often in good condition and present on both sides of many streets. Wide streets provide adequate room for cyclists, and bike parking at some destinations considerably increases bike friendliness. The grid street pattern is easy to navigate and provides a wide range of route choices for pedestrians and cyclists.

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, Varsity View rated **5.07** for Attractiveness, above Saskatoon's average rating of **4.80**. (IMI)

Varsity View's attractiveness rating suggests that both attractive and unattractive features are present in the neighbourhood. For example, large street trees are present on several streets and provide shade for pedestrians on the sidewalk. Sidewalk amenities, such as benches and garbage cans, are present in a couple of areas throughout the neighbourhood. Further, mostly well maintained homes, architectural variety, and pleasant landscaping considerably increase the attractiveness of the neighbourhood.



Attractive streets with developed tree canopy

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, Varsity View rated **2.83** for Universal Accessibility, above Saskatoon's average rating of **2.19**. (NALP)

This universal accessibility rating indicates that Varsity View has some elements that enable safe movement for those with reduced mobility. For example, few sidewalks in Varsity View are mountable, though there are graded curb cuts present at some intersections. Further, only one of the observed pedestrian crossings is adapted for individuals with visual or hearing impairments.



Graded curb cut

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

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