

## Part Two: The Strategy and the Network





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## 6.0 The Strategic Concept

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### 6.1 The Tree as a Metaphor for the Pedestrian Plan

The vision of the Ottawa Pedestrian Plan is to facilitate year-round walking in the city and make it a comfortable, realistic, viable well integrated and a well used component of the transportation system. To realize the vision, a key goal of the Plan is to increase the walking modal share. The Plan is about improving all aspects of the pedestrian environment so that Ottawa's citizens incorporate pedestrian travel as the mode of choice into their daily routines. In effect, the plan is about "nurturing and cultivating" walking to make it "grow".

Pedestrian travel is the simplest and most fundamental form of transportation. It has taken our society many years to move away from walking as a primary mode of travel and move towards more sophisticated mechanized forms of travel. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that it will take some time for us to move back to pedestrian travel as a mode of choice.

Pedestrian travel is organic. Although routes and pathways can be designed, pedestrians do not always follow prescribed routes and often do not walk in a straight line to get from their origin to their destination, often they will choose a route that is the most convenient and comfortable. In this way, pedestrian travel is different from other modes that rely almost entirely on a network of constructed facilities. A large part of making pedestrian travel a mode of choice is related to convenience, comfort and real or perceived safety.

In many ways, "nurturing and cultivating" pedestrian travel can be compared to cultivating a tree, and thus, a healthy tree is the metaphor for a successful Pedestrian Plan. A healthy tree is also a symbol of a healthier, greener Ottawa. The tree is made up of several components and its overall health is dependant on a number of inputs. Without the inputs, the tree may survive but its health and vigor will be compromised.

The following section describes the essential inputs that a healthy tree depends on and the components of the tree as a living organism as it relates to, and represents the elements of pedestrianism.

#### 6.1.1 The Roots

Roots support the tree, they keep it anchored in the earth and are the conduit for uptake of the critical nutrients that a tree needs to thrive and grow. Several main roots radiate from the trunk and provide balance, stability and firm anchorage into the earth.

Like the roots of a tree, the Pedestrian Plan has a number of main roots. These include:

- **Pedestrian Network**, which includes the missing links in the sidewalk and pathway system, establishing a method to identify and evaluate their priority for implementation, determining what elements make up an effective pedestrian system and organizing those elements in a manner that will enable pedestrians to move about the city in a convenient and comfortable way.

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- **Planning and Design**, which includes how the physical aspects of the pedestrian environment can be improved in Ottawa at the higher level through initiatives such as Community Planning, Transit Oriented Design, and Transportation Demand Management, and at the same time includes the improvements that can be made to the very details that make up the elements of the pedestrian environment.
- **Safety and Accessibility**, which includes understanding the key safety issues and measures to improve conditions for the pedestrian in response to those issues, and includes the development of more accessible pedestrian environment.
- **Maintenance and Rehabilitation**, which is how the physical aspects of the pedestrian environment are managed so that the investment can be maintained in a most effective way, and so that the full lifespan of those elements can be realized.
- **Education and Promotion**, which includes a range of promotion and programs that are effectively designed and delivered to the public, so that over time walking is seen as a viable means of travel for getting around the city, and so that Ottawa's citizens can build it into their everyday travel routines. These include programs and initiatives that the City can undertake on their own, as well as those that can be cooperatively developed and implemented through partnerships with other organizations.

All of the main roots are necessary for the tree to be healthy and thrive, and like the tree, all of the key elements of the Ottawa Pedestrian Plan must be balanced for it to be successful.

### 6.1.2 Water, Soil and Nutrients

These are the essential inputs that a tree needs to become established, thrive and bear fruit. Without these inputs, the anchor roots become weak, the leaves drop, the tree becomes weak and may become dormant or not survive.

Water, soil and nutrients represent commitment, support and dedication. In other words:

- Council must be committed to improving all aspects of the pedestrian environment in the city. This must be demonstrated by supporting pedestrian policy and allocating appropriate resources to infrastructure and programs.
- Staff must be committed to enact the pedestrian agenda and demonstrate their commitment through willingness to enact the recommendations of the Plan and work across interdepartmental mandates.
- Staff who are involved with the pedestrian agenda in their daily assignments must be empowered and given the necessary tools so they can confidently "enforce" the vision, goals and objectives of the Plan.

### 6.1.3 Crown, Flowers and Fruit

As the roots are nourished, the tree becomes stronger. Its trunk becomes sturdier, the canopy develops and grows. Each year the tree grows taller and produces more leaves, equivalent to more and more of Ottawa's citizens making the choice to include meaningful pedestrian travel in their day to day travel routines. As walking becomes more popular, more pedestrians will result in more

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public demand for a quality pedestrian environment which, will in turn result in more priority given to the pedestrian mode of travel.

Over time the tree matures, produces flowers and fruit. Fruit is the equivalent to the many tangible and intangible benefits of pedestrian travel such as a reduction in pollution and improved air quality, improved physical and mental health, reduced wear and tear on road infrastructure, and reduced demand/need for a roadway network to move more cars. As the fruit falls from, or is carried from the tree, the seeds germinate and produce a forest of trees, a symbol for an improved pedestrian environment having a positive effect on other aspects of living, working and playing in Ottawa, and the positive influence that this change will have on the communities that surround the City of Ottawa. Cultivating a tree takes care and time. It will take care and time to make changes to the pedestrian environment and to realize the effect of those changes.

The following chapters of the Ottawa Pedestrian Plan describe the issues, recommendations and strategies associated with the key anchors (roots) and inputs (water, soil and nutrients) to the plan.

**Figure 6.1**

The Ottawa Pedestrian Plan strategic concept

