



MEDIA RELEASE

WALK Friendly Communities Fundamental to Smart Growth Principles

(TORONTO, MARCH 24, 2015) – Two Ontario municipalities are starting the year on the right foot with recognition by [Canada Walks](#) for their progress toward walkability.

WALK Friendly Community designations have been awarded to the City of Kitchener (Silver) and the Town of Smiths Falls (Bronze). Honourable mention was also given to the Town of Saugeen Shores.

The designations were presented at Smart Growth 2015, a forum held in Toronto and hosted by the Ontario Smart Growth Network. The forum brought together people from various sectors to share information about approaches and terms used to describe “smart growth” including building walkable communities, urban villages, complete streets, new urbanism, LEED-ND and other approaches to healthy community design.

“The WALK Friendly Communities designations encourage municipalities to take practical steps to make walking safe, convenient and enjoyable,” said program manager Kate Hall.

“We are so pleased to receive a silver WALK Friendly Community designation,” said Mayor of Kitchener, Berry Urbanovic. “These types of active transportation initiatives are key to promoting neighbourhood connections and supporting a healthy lifestyle.”

Communities applying for designation report their progress on more than 200 key walkability indicators, including sidewalk policies, connectivity, progressive design standards, campaigns and promotions, training, and citizen engagement. Applications are scored by a panel of experts.

“Smiths Falls understands the benefit walking brings to people of all ages” said Mayor, Shawn Pankow. “We are excited and proud to be the recipient of a Bronze level award, recognition that further confirms Smiths Falls is committed to creating an ever-improving quality of life for its people.”

Walk friendly environments are linked to higher rates of everyday walking, helping to create vibrant neighbourhoods, and increased retail sales and transit ridership. Walking is also being recognized as a “wonder drug” that boosts health and fitness, and combats chronic diseases like diabetes.

“We’re proud to support our partner [Green Communities Canada](#) and the WALK Friendly initiative,” said Michael Coteau, Ontario’s Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Applications will be accepted again in the Fall of 2015 – watch the website for details www.walkfriendly.ca.

WALK Friendly Communities is a program of Canada Walks, a division of Green Communities Canada. The Government of Ontario and the Metcalf Foundation currently support this initiative.

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