



The Virginia Active Living Project

September 2018

Background

During the summer of 2018, the City of Virginia, Minnesota, developed a steering committee of staff and community members to develop walking and bicycling routes throughout the Virginia community. These routes were to be designed on existing trails, sidewalks, and streets to connect residents with popular destinations in town. The end goal was to create maps and guidance for installation of community signage to identify where the walking and biking routes are located. Although installation of signage was recommended in the process, encouragement of physical activity was the aim of the project. An additional component of this project was meant to identify routes throughout the community for recreational 5K race events.

The City of Virginia applied and was awarded assistance to pursue this project from the Healthy Northland Active Communities Assistance Program, which is made possible by Healthy Northland and provides planning assistance from the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission. The project is funded in part by the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Walking

Research & Input

In April 2018, the City of Virginia worked with the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) to administer public engagement activities throughout the city of Virginia. This public engagement included the deployment of interactive boards hosted at six locations around town: Virginia Public Library, The Shop Coffeehouse, Mesabi Recreation, Mesabi Range College, Natural Harvest Food Co-op, and Mesabi Family YMCA. A special focus group session was held for residents of Alice Nettell Tower, and community members also had the opportunity to submit input online.

This engagement specifically asked for where it is important for people to access via human-powered transportation with an open-ended question for any additional input about walking and bicycling. The results of this input were compiled in a summary document (see: Appendix A) and then used by a local steering committee to guide the development of project deliverables.

Project Deliverables

The ARDC and the City of Virginia used public input to identify priority walking routes through the city. These routes will help advise the City of Virginia when pursuing infrastructure projects, such as seasonal maintenance (sweeping and snow-clearing) and reconstruction projects.

The ARDC worked with members of the steering committee to create maps featuring walking loops in popular walking destinations throughout the city, including Olcott Park, Silver Lake, Bailey's Lake, and the Mesabi Trail to the Highway 53 bridge scenic mine overlook. These maps are designed as pocket-sized cards that can be shared via card racks, kiosks, and retail counters throughout the city. The ARDC also reached out to the Virginia Historical Society to identify points of interest visible from the walking loops. A "Walk Virginia" branding was also created as a part of the map designs.

Future Activities

The steering committee wishes to make the mapping of walking loops more widely known and accessible by installing signage at the identified walking loops in town. These signs would feature a map of the walking route and may take the form of larger kiosks or smaller signs along the loop.





SILVER LAKE

Connect with nature, recreation, art, history, and business on this quintessential tour in the heart of the city of Virginia.



WALK VIRGINIA

DISTANCE 1.24 MI TIME 25 MIN DIFFICULTY ●●●

POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1 Swimming Beach
- 2 Cuppoletti Building
- 3 Children's Memorial Park
- 4 Roosevelt School
- 5 Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific Train Depot
- 6 Rotary Park

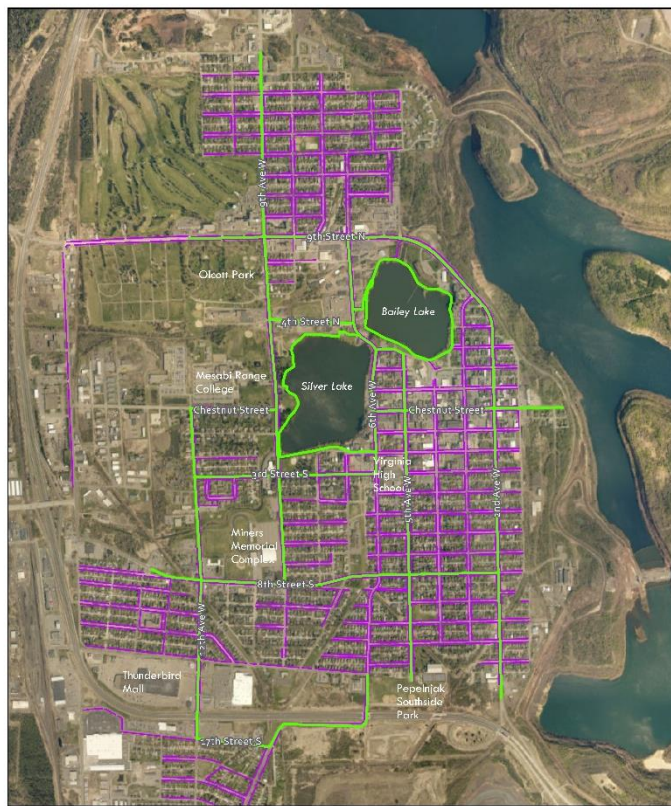
DID YOU KNOW?

Silver Lake was home to numerous sawmills from 1893 to 1929, and the result of industry can still be seen in Virginia today. After sawmill operations sparked a fire that reduced Virginia to rubble in 1900, structures on Chestnut Street were required to be made of brick, stone, or concrete.

NOTICE TO PET OWNERS

According to City Code, pets must be leashed at all times within city limits, and owners must pick up pet waste and have dog bags on hand.

THIS PROJECT FUNDED IN PART BY THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION



Walking Routes Sidewalks

0 0.13 0.25 0.5 Miles



Bicycling

Research & Input

In April 2018, the City of Virginia worked with the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) to administer public engagement activities throughout the city of Virginia. This public engagement included the deployment of interactive boards hosted at six locations around town: Virginia Public Library, The Shop Coffeehouse, Mesabi Recreation, Mesabi Range College, Natural Harvest Food Co-op, and Mesabi Family YMCA. A special focus group session was held for residents of Alice Nettell Tower, and community members also had the opportunity to submit input online.

This engagement specifically asked for where it is important for people to access via human-powered transportation with an open-ended question for any additional input about walking and bicycling. The results of this input were compiled in a summary document (see: Appendix A) and then used by a local steering committee to guide the development of project deliverables.

Project Deliverables

The ARDC and the City of Virginia used public input to identify priority bicycling routes through the city. These routes identify suggested connections for bicyclists to use in consideration of safety, destination connectivity, directness of routes, and the frequency of stop sign or light-controlled intersections (to limit the number of times a bicyclist must stop).

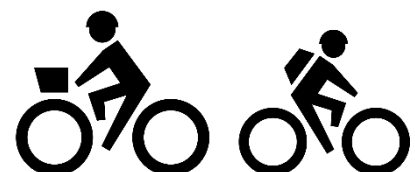
The ARDC worked with City administration and engineering staff to plan appropriate signage and wayfinding systems to accompany the planned bicycle routes. The wayfinding system was developed with a priority of guiding bicyclists to economic districts of the city; the following destinations were included in the wayfinding system: Downtown District, Thunderbird Mall, Mesabi Range College, Virginia Secondary School, Miners Memorial Complex, Mesabi Trail, Olcott Park, Highway 53 Bridge, Midway, Mountain Iron, and Gilbert/Eveleth. See: Appendix B.

Future Activities

The City of Virginia wishes to install bike route signage and bike wayfinding signage along the designated routes throughout the city. In special circumstances, “sharrows” will also be installed on road pavement to communicate recommended lane placement where hazards (such as an adjacent parking lane where a motorist may open their door on an approaching bicyclist) are present. Implementation of bike route signage will include cooperation with the City of Mountain Iron to identify extension of the system into Mountain Iron; the Mesabi Family YMCA will be a destination in the system as a part of this extension.

The City of Virginia wishes to monitor bicycle route usage and install bicycle facilities (i.e. bike lanes) where a need has been identified and where grant funding or a road reconstruction project can offset expenses for facility enhancements.

The steering committee wishes to see formal bicycle safety education reintroduced in the community.





5K Events

Research & Input

The steering committee identified the desire to plan 5K event routes early in the project. The steering committee identified preliminary routes where nature, scenery, and participant accommodations (i.e. parking) offered themselves to 5K courses and event-scaled spaces.

The St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority and the City of Virginia Police Department offered guidance about facility use and staff capacity that helped refine options for 5K courses the City can recommend for prospective race organizers.

The City's "Park & Recreation Rental Policy" and the City clerk helped define guidance for race organizers, addressed by project deliverables below.

Project Deliverables

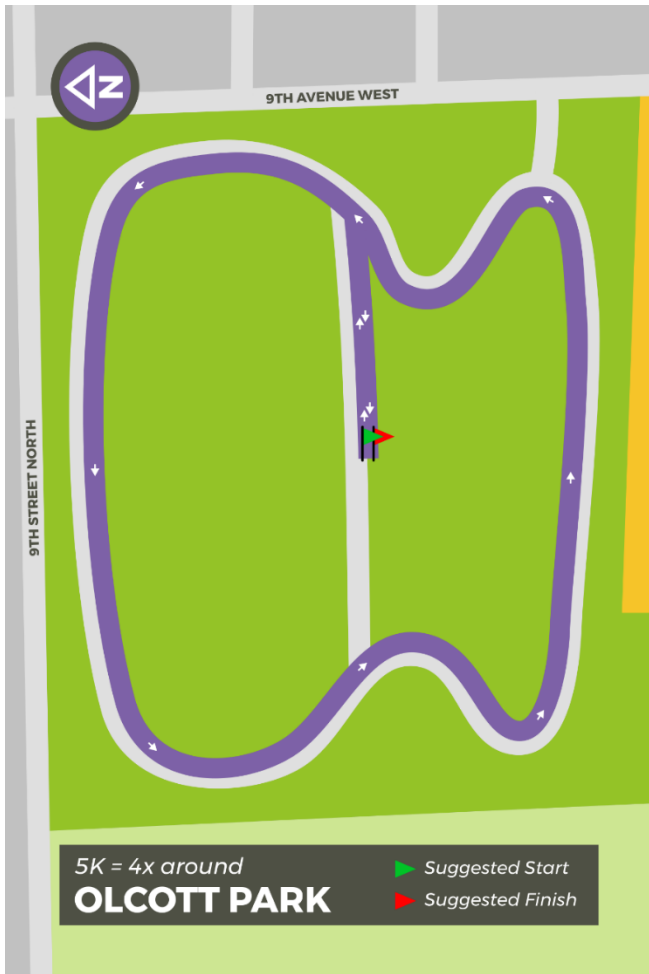
The City of Virginia and the ARDC developed a "Checklist for 5K Race Event Organizers" (see: Appendix C) to help prospective race organizers understand the process of working with the City to utilize public property for a 5K event.

The ARDC used guidance by the steering committee and City staff to design and map suggested 5K routes for those considering hosting a 5K event. These suggested routes are designed to limit involvement of the Police Department for 5K events.

Future Activities

The City of Virginia wishes to create a webpage on its website dedicated to 5K races. The information presented in the "Checklist for 5K Race Event Organizers" will appear on the page, and a staff member of the City will be listed as a point of contact for parties interested in organizing a 5K race.

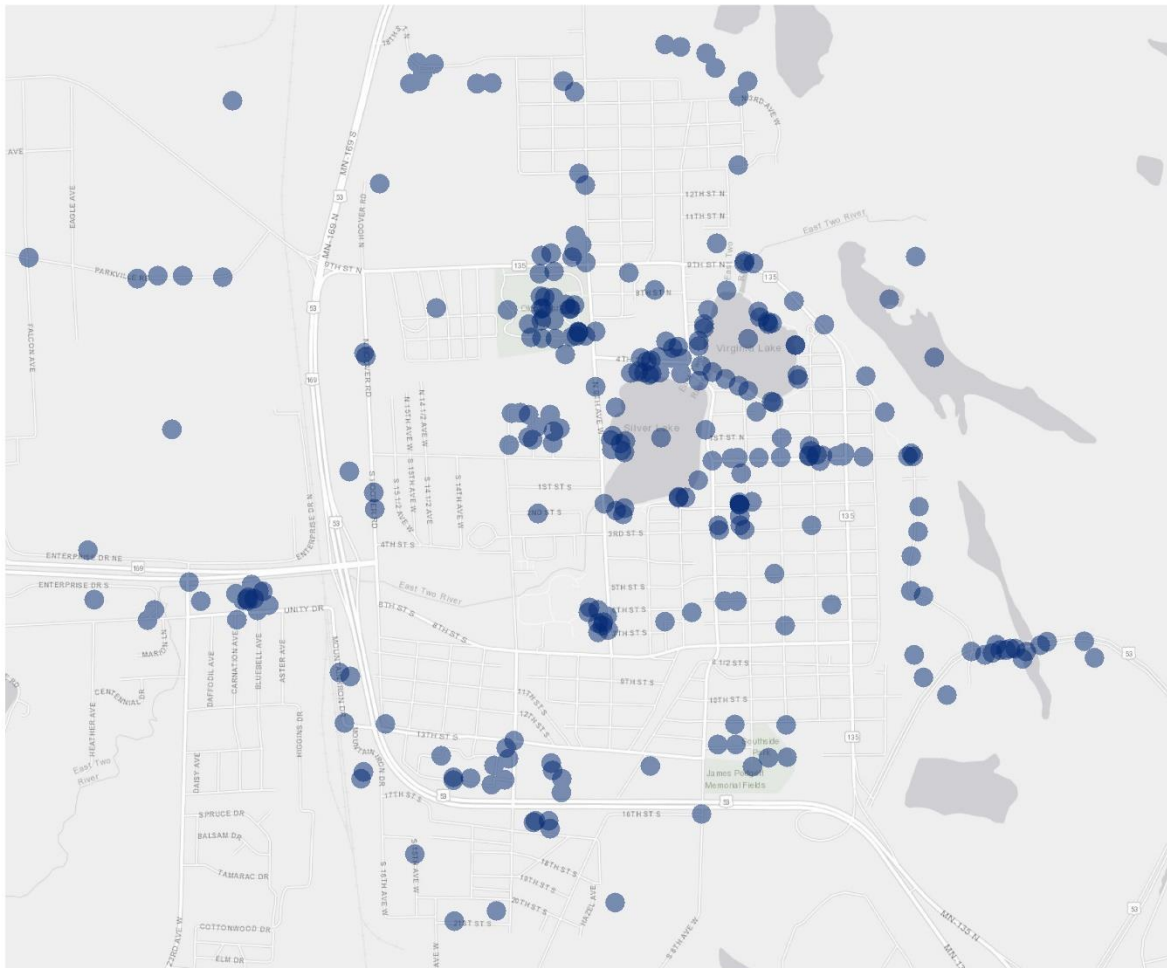




Appendix A

COMMUNITY INPUT REPORT

Where is the most important place for you to walk or bicycle to in Virginia?



Collection Spots

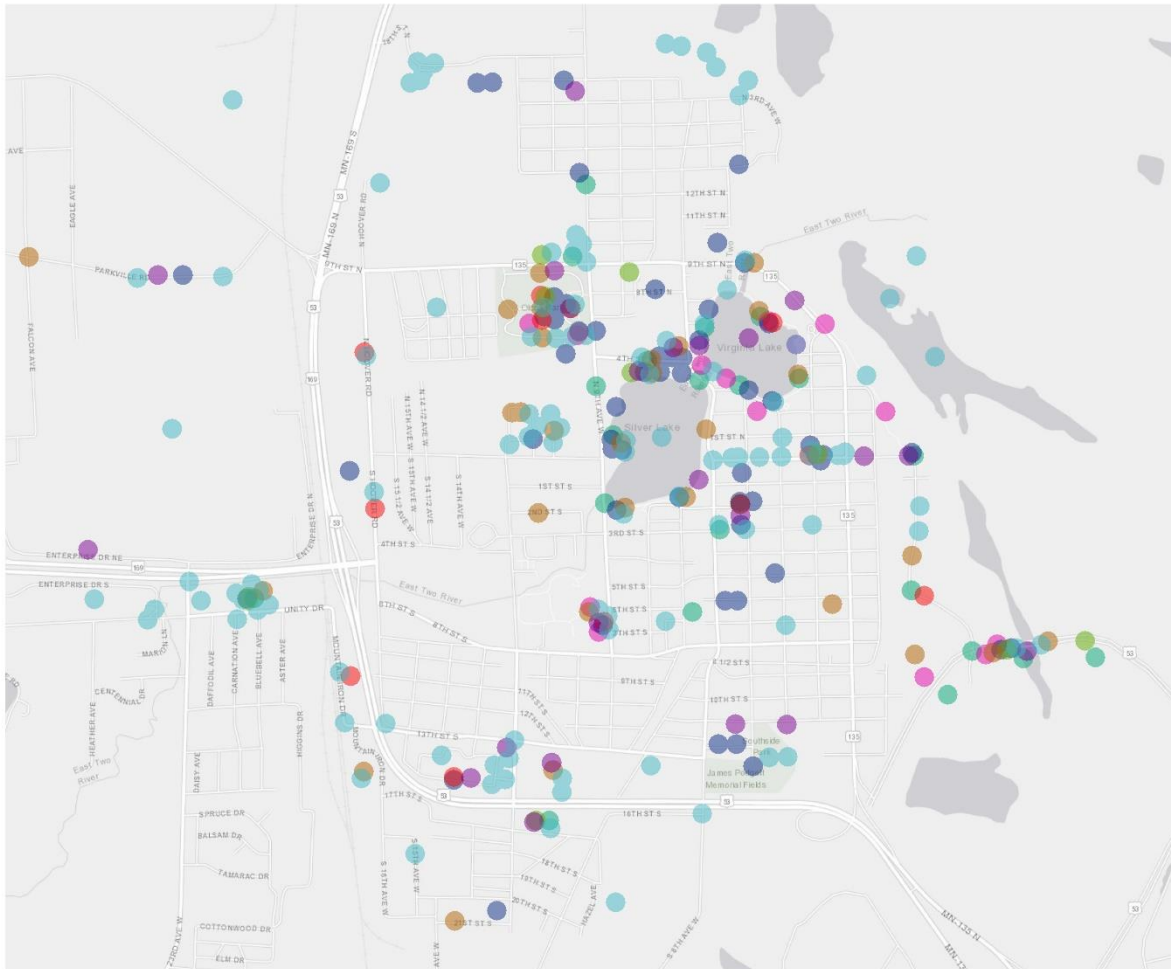
- (1) Mesabi Family YMCA
- (2) Virginia Public Library
- (3) Mesabi Range College
- (4) Mesabi Recreation
- (5) The Shop Coffeehouse
- (6) Natural Harvest Food Co-op
- (7) Alice Nettell Tower
- (8) Online

279 data points collected
60 comments collected

Data collected by the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC)
in cooperation with the City of Virginia, April 2018

COMMUNITY INPUT REPORT

Where is the most important place for you to walk or bicycle to in Virginia?



Collection Spots

- (1) Mesabi Family YMCA
- (2) Virginia Public Library
- (3) Mesabi Range College
- (4) Mesabi Recreation
- (5) The Shop Coffeehouse
- (6) Natural Harvest Food Co-op
- (7) Alice Nettell Tower
- (8) Online

279 data points collected
60 comments collected

Data collected by the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC)
in cooperation with the City of Virginia, April 2018

COMMUNITY INPUT REPORT

Have other ideas about walking and bicycling in Virginia?

Mesabi Family YMCA

- Getting across Highway 169!! Yikes (+1)
- Street lights are important for walking @ nite – to see and be seen!
- Yes – be able to see the sidewalks in the evening/night
- Is Midway a part of the plan? Is it in Virginia?
- A new mineview, preferably with bike access
- Air pollution
- Keep the streets well-kept and get rid of all the cracks in the sidewalks as well as make them friendly for 3-wheel adult bikes (adult tricycles).
- Garbage
- Need sidewalks on Unity Dr behind movie theater in Mt Iron

Virginia Public Library

- Traffic violation tickets should be issued by the police for failure to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalks. Isn't this the law? Maybe we would cause behavior change and watch out for pedestrians.
- Trail – all the way around Silver Lake :) :)

Mesabi Range College

- Clear sidewalks in winter :((+2)
- Have proper walking places like Grand Rapids!
- Easier access to new bridge from 2nd Ave for bikers and walkers
- Knowing there are places to pump up my tires would be awesome
- If more knew bikes are vehicles on the road too, that would be great.
- Having community biking events that also cater to beginners
- It's easy to walk when distracted. Playing music downtown, having street vendors and fairs, etc, would be awesome!

The Shop Coffeehouse

- I'd feel safer walking if there weren't so many sex offenders living all over the place!
- By Mt Iron school Diamond Lane

Natural Harvest Food Co-op

- Create more bike-friendly lanes for getting around town too! (+1)
- And drivers need to respect bikers. Also – bikers need to follow rules to gain respect of drivers!
- Have more bike racks
- Street lights are important for walking at dark – to see and be seen!
- Clear snow from paths + sidewalks

- Consequences for violation at crosswalk laws for all motorists – especially police officers!!
- How about including Midway??

Alice Nettell Tower

- Chestnut needs help. There's a huge sideways slant on some of the sidewalks, and people in wheelchairs can't get around
- There's potholes, cracks, sloping all around Alice Nettell Tower and neighboring apartment buildings.
- Maintenance issues on trail around Bailey Lake
- Grandparents want a place nearby to bring their grandkids, and the playground at Veteran's Memorial Park needs to be upgraded. Isn't there a civic-minded organization like the Jaycee's that could help raise money for something like that?
- The lake areas need to be better kept. Garbage cans should be placed around the lake, and clean-ups need to take place. In the summer, the whole area smells because of the lake. Did development on the northeast side affect the water quality?
- Sidewalks need to be wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass each other.
- Virginia should have benches throughout town for the elderly to use when walking. St. Petersburg, Florida, made a big push for benches to accommodate active seniors and got a lot of positive press for it. A lot of seniors want to walk, but they can't without any place to rest. Seniors can't get down and sit on the curb like younger people.
- Don't install picnic tables
- There needs to be more lighting along paths and sidewalks, especially in Olcott Park and around the lakes.
- The old entrance to Olcott Park at the corner of 9th St and 9th Ave needs to be kept open. Why is the only way to get in through the double gate entrance by Parkview?
- Walking at night is dangerous – too many drugs, too many gangs
- I think it would make a big difference if there was one or two police officers who got out of their cars and patrolled on foot. For example, the K-9 unit could pick a different area and walk each day. Having someone outside of a car would make a big difference for public safety

Online

- Good travel to grocery store. Wayfinding from the bike trails to downtown, from the east end of Chestnut, the 4th St. area and from the Finn Flyway at 3rd Ave.
- So glad to see VA went for this grant! SHIP started this process years ago. What Virginia needs is education to drivers about crosswalk safety. Drivers often ignore this. Also would like to see advocacy to let dogs walk in park. Dogs get people out walking! A fact... so why not provide cheap bags and container at the park. Again education Peer monitored. My daughter lives in EP where you would never leave feces cuz someone walking a block away would shame you and insist on going back to get it. This works!
- I don't think people who aren't from here can find shops and eating places. There aren't any signs around town pointing the way. Also, it's dangerous to walk on the sidewalks sometime with the bikers using it, but there aren't bike lanes for bikers either.

- I'd love more friendlier crosswalks for pedestrians. Like ones that can talk to you and tell you how much time you have left to cross. It would be great if there were more stop signs at places like 5th ave and 8th st. Sometimes I feel really unsafe crossing in those areas. Having painted bike lines would be super useful. That way cars don't park over those lines and cars won't cross into them when driving.
- Bike safety classes put on by the city would be helpful. I think promoting helmets at those events would be great. So many people I talk to say bike helmets look stupid so it's hard to convince them it's worth wearing. "
- A dog park would be a great addition to the community!!
- I live in Midway and like to bike to work in Virginia. I haven't tried yet this year with the new bridge but am looking forward to getting onto the Mesabi Trail from Midway. I think I can still go across HWY 135 and access the trail near the landfill road.
- Fix the potholes
- Ride and or Walk to work day City or Range Wide.
- We need painted lanes with directional arrows or sharrows to inform motorists of likely bicycle traffic and to inform bicyclists of the necessity of riding on the right side of the road. We also need our police to be informed of the bicycle laws including 169.22, 169.18 Subd. 3 (3) the 3' rule, and 169.06 Subd. 9. The Police should have this for distribution: Pocket Guide to MN Bicycle Laws
www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/education/pdfs/bike%20law%20summary.pdf
- challenging when bicycles and pedestrians share the same path
- There needs to be a path connecting Eveleth and Virginia directly - not through Gilbert. As it is, I can't bike to home/work and those who walk do so on the highway.
- We need sidewalks where there aren't any, we need holes fixed so we aren't falling off of our bikes when on the road sharing with vehicles. That is so dangerous trying to pay attention to all the pot holes and traffic at same time. Especially riding as a family with small kids.
- I would like drivers to be more considerate when it comes to walkers. Maybe some posted reminders about pedestrian right-of-way and crosswalk rules should be published in the paper AND posted along common routes.
- I would love to see a couple of different length "loop" paths: 1 mile, 2 mile, 3 mile, etc or maybe 5K, 10K, type routes so people can start training for runs/marathons. Start and end at the Miner's or the YMCA (somewhere with good parking so those out in the country can use as well...).
- Driver - and bicyclist/pedestrian education about proper rules of the road is needed. I drive, walk and bike in town and feel there is a high percentage of people that don't know or refuse to follow proper traffic laws when it comes to bikes and pedestrians - which leads to negativity towards them - which leads to unsafe conditions. Even at properly marked crossings or 4-way stops (with or without lights), I rarely feel secure if biking with my child as I have had multiple close calls by myself. Pedestrians and bikers are just as guilty of not following the rules of the road. The walking trails around both lakes are great - with the exception of the crosswalk by SuperOne.

The City of Virginia is developing walking and bicycling routes to encourage physical activity, and we need your help to identify where the routes should go. So...

What is the most important place for you to walk or bicycle to in Virginia?

Grab a pin, and mark your place on the map below!



VIRGINIA MINNESOTA healthy northland ARROWHEAD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

This project is funded in part by the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Learn more about the Virginia Active Living Project at:

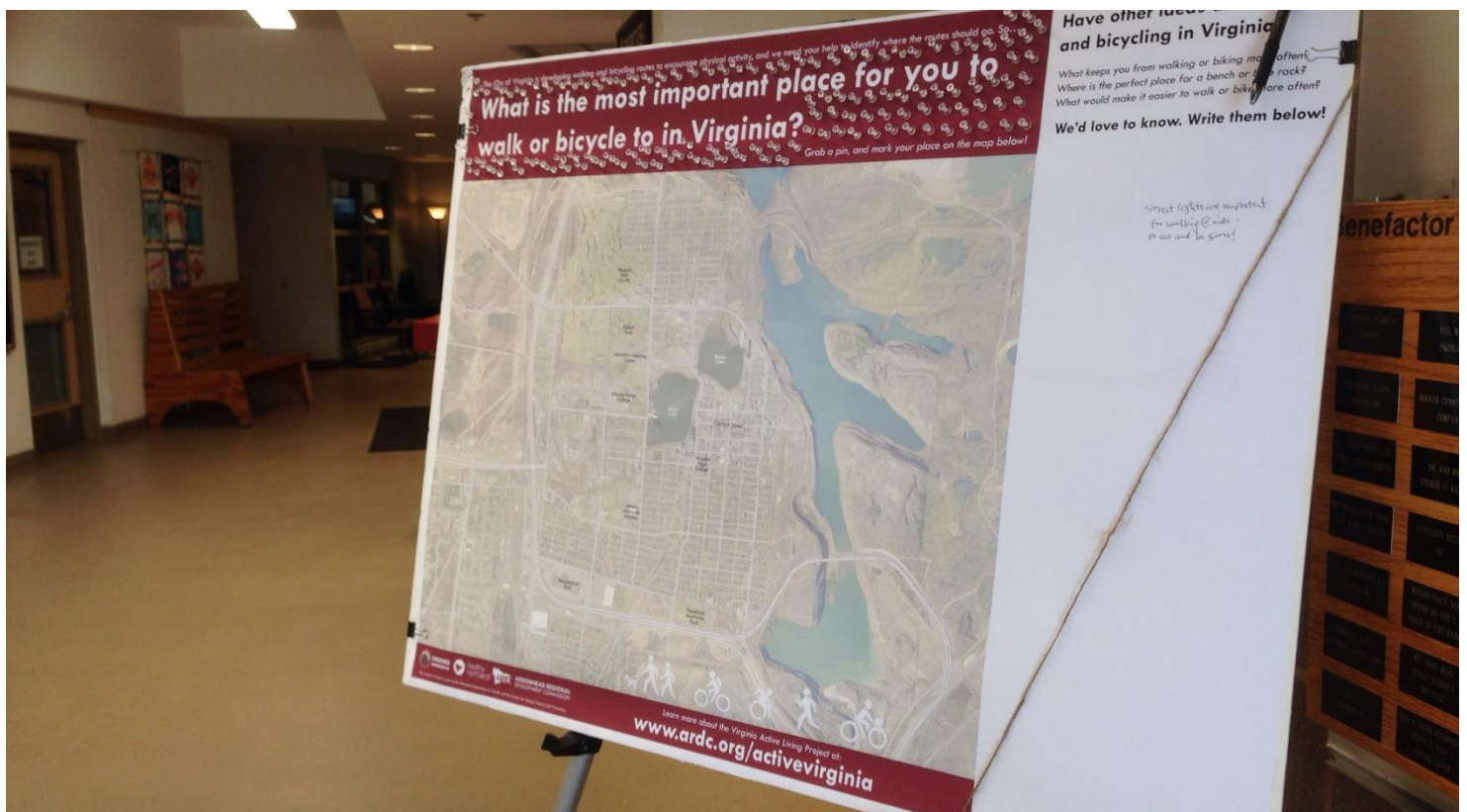
www.ardc.org/activevirginia

Have other ideas about walking and bicycling in Virginia?

What keeps you from walking or biking more often?
Where is the perfect place for a bench or bike rack?
What would make it easier to walk or bike more often?

We'd love to know. Write them below!

THANK YOU!



Appendix B

See the bike route and bike wayfinding sign network detailed on the additional handout provided.

This page intentionally left blank.

Appendix C



Checklist for 5K Race Event Organizers

- ☐ Identify desired date(s), time, and race course for your event. The courses on the bottom of this checklist are suggested, but you may create a course on existing city sidewalks/trails. A map of existing sidewalks in the City of Virginia is available online at <http://arcg.is/1zz8zi>.
- ☐ Determine whether you will rent a park building or pavilion for the event. Rental of at least one facility is suggested. For more about rentals, read the City's "Park & Recreation Rental Policy."
- ☐ Determine whether you will use tents (must be free-standing) on public property for the event.
- ☐ Determine whether you will have a first-aid station for participant use on race day.
- ☐ Determine whether you or vendors will sell liquor on-site as a part of your event.
 - *Please note: If liquor is sold, liquor licensing and insurance regulations must be met.*
- ☐ Determine if you wish the race course to be closed to the public during the event.
 - *Please note: The city council must approve if a park, trail, or sidewalk is closed for an exclusive use for which an admission is required.*
- ☐ Prepare a letter, map of race course, and a copy of the "Application for Use of City of Virginia Park Facility." Submit these materials to Pamela LaBine at plabine@virginiamn.us or at the address below.

Pamela LaBine, City Clerk
City of Virginia
327 South 1st Street
Virginia, MN 55792

- ☐ The City of Virginia will review your application.
 - The Parks & Recreation Department will review facility availability on requested date(s).
 - The Parks & Recreation Department will identify whether desired activities take place fully on public property; if not, the applicant will be directed to obtain written permission from the owner(s) of any private property used.
 - The Parks & Recreation Department will review the location and size of any event tents to be placed on public property.
 - The Parks & Recreation Department director will review if the event includes consumption or sale of alcohol on public property.
 - If the event is proposed to make exclusive use of any trails or streets, the Parks & Recreation Department director will make recommendations for signage and capacity of staff/volunteers the applicant must organize for the event.

- The Police Department will determine proper accommodations that must be made for the event (i.e. additional parking, transportation to the site, additional toilets, additional police officers or security measures).
- Work with the City of Virginia to revise event plans, as needed.
- Enter into a contract for facility use and/or rental.
 - *Please note: A waiver of liability must be included on the contract form. After contract completion, City administration will present the contract to the city council for consideration; requests for exclusive use of facilities or waiving fees will be presented to the council at this time.*
- Submit rental fee, damage deposit, special use fees, and fundraising fees as identified by City staff for your use.
 - *Please note: A fundraising fee may be waived by majority vote of the city council.*
- Supply a certificate of insurance to cover use of specialized equipment and facilities.
- Provide copies of any advertising or promotion of the event to the City prior to production and distribution of materials for review by the Parks & Recreation Department.
- Provide copies of the language supplied to and agreed to by participants of the event.
 - *Please note: The City of Virginia must be included in the indemnification clause signed by participants of the event.*

Please note: Event applicants must be 21 years of age or older, and the application must be submitted at least three days prior to rental of a facility. Facilities may be booked up to one year in advance.

