

WALKING THE WALK  
IN **SmallerCities**



**“Walking the Walk in Smaller Cities” — listening to  
our community for better public spaces in Brandon**

*A federally funded knowledge partnership that brings together  
the City of Brandon, Prairie Mountain Health, and Brandon University*

We acknowledge that the city of Brandon is located in Treaty 2 lands. This continues to be a gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Dakota, Anishanabek, Oji-Cree, Cree, Dene and Red River Métis peoples. Any discussion of land and space in Brandon is possible because of the treaties and the continued contributions of Indigenous people to care for this place. By starting with an acknowledgement of Indigenous people's relationship with the place we call Brandon, we want to encourage meaningful reflection about understandings of land, its value and its use. We also want to honour Indigenous knowledge and what we can learn from Indigenous teachings



## Bringing the best to Brandon

“Walking the Walk in Smaller Cities” intends to make public spaces in Brandon better, and to make Brandon a model for other smaller urban centres, especially cities like ours that are on the Canadian prairies.

This project will explore how people in Brandon use public spaces for meeting and moving, especially active transportation like walking and biking, and open public spaces like parks and plazas. This summer we will listen and learn, and over the winter we will explore possible changes to make Brandon better. Next summer we plan to install a pop-up demonstration project that will put into practice some of what was learned.

## Why this project?

A shift to better supporting public spaces and active transportation, which includes walking and biking, is one of the major themes proposed in Brandon’s forthcoming City Plan 2050 and is a highlight of council’s recently approved strategic plan as well as the city’s new Climate Change Action Plan.

Walking, biking, parks and plazas are proven economic boosters that are among the most affordable investments a community can make. These public facilities also foster a healthier and happier population.

Brandon has a wonderfully diverse population, allowing this project to conduct wide-ranging consultations that will be applicable in many places. At the same time, Brandon is small enough to be agile in implementing solutions. Combined with strong support at City Hall, in Public Health, and in the academic sector, this makes Brandon ideally suited for this project.

## A team built for success

This project brings together three major community partners — The City of Brandon, Prairie Mountain Health, and Brandon University. Our team members are:

- Lead researcher **Dr. Rachel Herron** (Brandon University)
- Mayor **Jeff Fawcett** (City of Brandon)
- Director of Planning **Ryan Nickel** (City of Brandon)
- Medical Officer of Health **Dr. Amy Frykoda**, (Prairie Mountain Health)
- Director of Marketing and Communications **Grant Hamilton** (Brandon University)
- Research Assistant **Jared Friesen** (Brandon University)



The composition of the team was mandated by the federal funding call and we are fortunate in Brandon to so quickly be able to bring senior City leaders, public health, and researchers together to take advantage of this opportunity.

## **Partnering with local experts**

Our team cannot do this alone. We know that different groups experience spaces in very different ways, and we want to ensure we are proposing solutions that meet the entire community's needs and promote the health of those facing health disadvantages.

We are assembling a Knowledge User Advisory Council to help guide our consultations. This council will ensure that we connect with and consider as many different perspectives as possible, including people of all ages and abilities, gender and sexual identities, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Our members so far include:

- Brandon Neighborhood Renewal Corporation
- Brandon Urban Aboriginal Peoples' Council
- Manitoba Harm Reduction Services
- Seniors for seniors
- Sexual Education Resource Centre
- Westman Immigration Services

We are actively seeking more members to represent the diverse socio-economic, cultural, and demographic groups that make up our community. We are currently seeking youth-serving partners and we have been in conversation with Brandon Bike Patrol.

## **Reaching out across the country and overseas**

This project has received \$68,065 from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research through the Healthy Cities Research Initiative and is also supported by the Canada Research Chairs program, by Brandon University, by Prairie Mountain Health, and by the City of Brandon.

The "Smaller Cities" project in Brandon is one of four similar projects that have been funded across the country, and the Brandon team is liaising with teams in **Guelph**, **Oshawa**, and **Saskatoon** to share strategies and solutions.



## **Making Brandon a livability leader**

Our goal is to situate Brandon as a model city for active transportation and public space initiatives, especially compared to other smaller cities. We believe Brandon can be a livability leader on the Canadian prairies, and that we can demonstrate “built in Brandon” solutions here that will be copied by other places.

In doing this, we also want to develop collaborative approaches that can also be shared with other groups. These approaches should deliver meaningful health and social impacts through an equity lens.

### **Summer 2023 — Consultations**

Our first step is to detail how people in Brandon are currently using active transportation (like walking and biking) and public spaces, as well as how people would like to use them, and the reasons they don't.

We will conduct a wide-ranging campaign online to listen for what's most needed here in Brandon. Working with our Knowledge User Advisory Council and the connections they help us foster, we will also do select in-person consultations to focus on specific groups.

As time allows, we are also planning pop-up consultations that will connect us with people in parks or paths as they are actively using these public spaces.

Anyone interested can also send us their thoughts online at [SmallerCities.ca](https://smallercities.ca).

All planned research activities have been reviewed and approved by the BU Research Ethics Committee.

### **Fall/Winter 2023–24 — Learning and exploring**

Once we know what gaps need to be filled in Brandon, we will work to find potential solutions.

This September, the Brandon team will join the other three Canadian teams in attending a global workshop in Copenhagen, a community renowned as a world leader for integrating safe and convenient active transportation, extensive and welcoming public spaces and greenspaces, and robust public transit options into their city.

Then, over the in winter, we will reconvene the focus groups to explore different Copenhagen-inspired solutions that might fit in Brandon, and how to adapt or translate those possibilities to the Canadian prairie context.



## Summer 2024 — Building and sharing

Next spring, the team will select and implement a chosen project that is the best fit for Brandon.

Using a rapid implementation approach, this pop-up project will implement a needed and desired active transportation or public space enhancement in the City of Brandon, bringing together world-class best practices and local stakeholder feedback. This project will be refined and iterated based on user experience over the summer, with an eye towards permanent installation that can be replicated and transplanted elsewhere.

Finally, in late summer or early fall of 2024, representatives from other smaller cities in Canada will be invited to Brandon to experience this success and help us share this solution as widely as possible.

### Learn more

Direct feedback can be offered online at [SmallerCities.ca](https://smallercities.ca), by email to [SmallerCities@BrandonU.ca](mailto:SmallerCities@BrandonU.ca), or by connecting with any of the Smaller Cities Project social media accounts on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#).