Walkable communities are places where all members are engaged in the process of creating safe, accessible, equitable, and enjoyable spaces to walk and move. America Walks is committed to building a network of walking advocates of all ages, abilities, ethnicities, and backgrounds. These best practices can help you consider how to be more inclusive in your efforts to improve walkability by starting with a walk audit.

1) Step up, and be the leader even when no one else is doing so. Establish yourself as the point of contact for this unique audit.

2) Customize your walk audit to the goal you want to achieve in your community and ground it in your own place and space.

Communities and neighborhoods vary, so must walking audits. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the purpose the audit is serving and are informed about any unique mobility considerations. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Examples of goal-oriented audits include:

- Engaging design engineers
- Focusing on Vision Zero and pedestrians with disabilities
- Informing city planning and planners
- Increasing overall sensitivity and awareness
- Solving a specific, unacceptable issue, like a dangerous intersection for people with disabilities to cross

3) Look through the eyes of all users, and learn all you can about accessibility in your community. Admit you need help to understand different users’ experiences.

4) Partner with the disability community to identify and cultivate cross-disability community voices to participate in your audit.

Seek to meet people with disabilities where they are at in your community, whether that be representing national disability organizations, state and local chapters of those organizations, at events, fairs and expos dedicated to the subject matter or simply in your neighborhood.

Photo Credit: National Center on Health, Physical Activity, and Disability
5) Ask questions and approach with curiosity.
This is an opportunity to assess and learn about the built environment and how it does or doesn’t support mobility. Ask how would this make me feel if I used a wheelchair, walker or cane? If I had hearing or visual impairments? If I had a sensory or intellectual disability, etc.

6) Observe, listen and think critically about the experiences of all users’ all the time. The audit should include the voice and considerations of all users.

7) Document the experience with pictures and words to build a case for action. Record ideas, thoughts, shared insight and suggestions. The documentation will be critical to presenting, evaluating and implementing the results.

8) Identify steps toward implementing change and commit to making the first step as soon as possible. Turn the momentum into action.

About America Walks
America Walks, a national non-profit organization is leading the way in advancing safe, equitable, accessible, and enjoyable places to walk and move by giving people and communities the resources to effectively advocate for change. We provide a voice for walking and walkable communities with federal agencies, provide strategy support, training and technical assistance to statewide, regional, and local organizations, and serve as the convener of the national Every Body Walk! Collaborative. Together, America Walks and the Every Body Walk! Collaborative boast 700 allied organizations who across the nation are working to increase walking and make America a better place to walk.

About Juliette Rizzo
Juliette Rizzo is the former Ms. Wheelchair America, one of Maryland’s Top 100 Women and a national pedestrian and safe streets advocate, as well as a long-time national advocate for inclusive health and wellness. Juliette is a nationally recognized and sought after public speaker and has over two decades of award-winning experience designing and producing large scale, highly visible and accessible public events across the nation and for the U.S. federal government.