

# TORONTO

## SHINAN GOVANI

Gives Fashion's  
30th birthday  
bash his blessing.  
*Page 8*

## GINA MALLET

Can barely hear  
herself eat at the  
city's noisy restos.  
*Page 18*



BY DAVE MCGINN

On a scale of walkability, City Hall rates a 95 out of 100.

That's 10 points higher than the CN Tower and 50 points higher than Exhibition Place. Nathan Phillips Square, however, is two points below the Eaton Centre when it comes to walkability.

These numbers are thanks to Walkscore.com, a new Web site that its creators hope will fire up a bit of friendly competition among different neighbourhood residents and help make the issue of walking a little less, well, pedestrian.

And with the city of Toronto currently working on a pedestrian plan to put more feet on the street, the site could be a welcome first step in getting residents to think about the most basic form of transportation.

"We built the site to get people thinking about walkable neighbourhoods and to promote walking for its good health and environmental benefits," says Matt Lerner. "Hopefully, we can get people comparing their walk scores."

Lerner, from Seattle, Wash., and fellow Web designers Jesse Kocher and Mike Mathieu were inspired to create the site after coming across walking maps distributed last year by the Sightline Institute, a Seattle-based think-tank dedicated to encouraging sustainable living.

"We thought we could make them more interactive," says Lerner.

The site calculates the walkability of any address in the U.S. or Canada by measuring the distance from nearby bars, restaurants, stores, schools, parks, movie theatres and other destinations.

Lerner is the first to admit that the site leaves out many important factors that go in to the walkability of a place.

"What it's really good at is showing you what's near an address," he says. "But what it's not good at is at things like how wide the sidewalks are, how safe it is, how nice it is to walk, whether there is lighting or not. There are a lot of ways that it doesn't measure walkability."

Yet it is exactly those sorts of things that the Toronto Walking Strategy — a plan to turn the city into a pedestrian's paradise and get more Torontonians taking walks instead of car rides — is looking at in order to reshape what it means to go for a stroll in the city.

"Accessibility in distance is only one of the issues. The quality of the

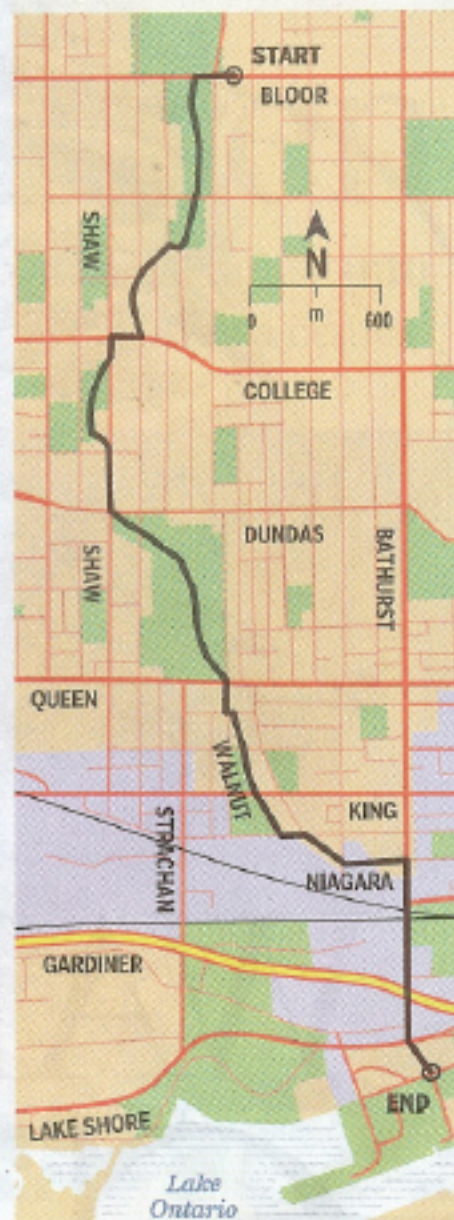


#### Waterfront (Moderate)

Start at the LRT station at Bay and Queens Quay, then head south past the ferry docks to the waterfront path. Moving west, you're on a shoreline pathway with lots of spots to view the lake. At Harbourfront, there may be an open-air concert or skating on the pond. Next comes the Music Garden, lovely in all seasons. Coronation Park is too secluded to enjoy alone at night, but lovely in daytime. Finish by passing through the triumphal Princes' Gates.

#### The Power Walker

Sprinting to Saturday yoga class or on a soccer-mom school run, the Allrounder by Mephisto for women in Niro is a Prince of Wales-check with suede-trim maryjane sneaker (\$215 exclusively at Ron White, ronwhite.ca).



#### Garrison Creek (Moderate)

Trace a buried stream: From Christie subway, cross to Christie Pits Park, and south across Bloor through Bickford Park (spot balustrade: relic of buried Harbord Bridge). Cross Harbord; continue south through Harbord Park, and south on Crawford (it curves to follow buried stream route). Cross College, head south through Fred Hamilton Park, Roxton Road Parkette. Cross Dundas at Shaw, walk southeast through Trinity-Bellwoods Park. Walk south on Stanley Terrace, east on Richmond, south on Walnut. Head west on Wellington, and southeast on Niagara. Turn south on Bathurst to charming Little Norway Park.

#### The Modern Lumberjack

For the woody city-dweller who has Algonquin Park dreams in High Park, Timberland's Radula boot, with Smart Comfort topography for cushioning and support, moisture-wicking lining that inhibits odour, genuine crepe-rubber outsole and wrap for foot flexibility and waterproof sealed seams (\$180, see 866-943-7335, timberland.com).



environment in getting there is also critically important," says Daniel Egan, Toronto's manager of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.

In determining how walkable a place is, you have to take in to account things like whether or not there trees and streetlights, whether the area is mixed use or if there are long stretches of road and nothing else, whether there are benches to sit on and access to transits, says Egan.

"It's not just about walking," says Egan. "It's about creating a city where you want to be out on foot."

By encouraging more people to walk, the plan will not only make Torontonians healthy thanks to increased physical activity, it will also boost the city's bottom line.

"Cities that are really walkable are the most economically vibrant places," says Egan.

Since hosting a first public meeting to discuss the walking strategy in April, Egan and his team held a second public meeting in July, where concerned Torontonians shared their opinions as to how to make the city a better place for walking.

"There's no shortage of great ideas out there," says Egan.

While the walking plan is still in development, Egan says a draft was to be shown to delegates attending Walk21, a conference featuring pedestrian experts from around the world, that Toronto hosted earlier this month.

Egan says he expects the plan will go to council sometime in 2008. It is still too soon, however, to discuss particular details or, perhaps more important, the cost of the plan.

"There are still a lot of question marks," he says.

Pedestrian advocacy groups are optimistic about the walking plan, though skeptical.

The city's bike plan, a similarly ambitious strategy to make Toronto more bicycle-friendly, has been moving at a pace that critics say is nothing of a ride on flat tires.

And this is not the first time that Toronto has championed pedestrianism.

In 2002, the city unveiled the Toronto Pedestrian Charter, a document that set out six principles to ensure that walking is safe and convenient.

"It's worthless if it's just another Pedestrian Charter," Chris Oullette, a steering committee member of the Toronto Coalition for Active Transportation, says of the walking plan. "There's no point having a plan if