

How Students Can Apply “The Ten Steps of Walkability” to Evaluate Any Downtown

Friday, October 24, 2025 10:30 AM (20 minutes)

In his 2012 book, *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time* (2012), Jeff Speck offers ten planning steps for creating American downtowns that are useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting. While the ten steps emphasize walkability, they include improvements to land use, public transit, bicycle use, and traffic flow. In this presentation, I will demonstrate how I used Speck’s “Ten Steps” to design a downtown field assignment for geography students. After reading and discussing the ten steps, students participated in a guided walk of downtown Edwardsville, Illinois, to collect notes and photos of their observations. They were instructed to answer two questions as they wrote up their results: (1) What does the city do well to promote walkability? and (2) How could walkability in downtown be improved? The assignment concluded with an in-class discussion of their results. The outcome of this discussion was students’ desire to learn more about the planning decisions behind what they saw in the field. Applying Speck’s “Ten Steps” gave students the structure to make sense of their field observations and draw meaningful conclusions.

Organized Session Details

Is there a SINGLE day you are unavailable to present?

Is there a time of day you are unavailable to present?

Presenter: HUME, Susan (Southern Illinois University Edwardsville)

Session Classification: Paper Session