The Oil Drum: Campfire
Discussions about Energy and Our Future

Walkscore: Now With Added Features & Analysis

Posted by Glenn on June 4, 2009 - 10:25am in The Oil Drum: Campfire
Topic: Environment/Sustainability
Tags: cities, community, mixed use zoning, new urbanism, small towns, walking, walkscore [list all tags]

A couple of years ago, I wrote about Walkscore as a handy tool to estimate the walkability of a specific address anywhere in the US. There are a few limitations to the tool, but by and large it hits the mark in determining which areas have the potential to be great walkable communities where you don't need to own a car versus totally auto-dependent areas.

Now they have added a whole lot of new features, analysis and commentary to the site and it's worth a look.

You might want to start by running your address and a few prior addresses or addresses of friends and relatives to get a taste of what makes a community walkable. The basic idea from Walkscore is that you are within a mile or less of basic necessities like grocery store, schools, hospitals, employment, post office, etc. While it helps, population density is not necessarily the best predictor of walkability, but rather the mixing of uses (residential, commercial, retail, public spaces, etc). For instance a suburban single use residential area by actually have quite a few people per square mile if they are filled with 4-5 people per house, but they are still completely dependent on automobiles to get around because of the single use zoning. However, just because you live in a single detached house with a yard in a low density area doesn't mean that you can't live without a car if you have a retail street around the corner.

For more on what factors contribute to a walkable community, take a look at Walkscore's handy checklist.

Here's some of the new features:

1. Place Finder: Find all the walkable places around the country with the new Census Viewer. All the little dots are places that are walkable. Notice all the interesting patterns, especially how towns and villages seem evenly spaced out and form lines along rivers, old rail lines or roads. Note the ring around Yellowstone. Note the east to west lines in Nebraska & Kansas.

2. Community/Neighborhood rankings: Find the top walkable neighborhoods around the country. While standout cities like New York, San Fran and Boston have a lot of representation, I had no idea Kansas City's Old Westport would clock in at #10.

3. Walkscore Blog: They had a lot of good recent post including the video up at the beginning of this post and links to other cool features like heat maps of walk scores in different areas.

4. Real Estate Services: If you are looking for real estate or trying to sell real estate, Walkscore has different web features to add the Walkscore API to any listing automatically, which Zillow and

other real estate websites now use.

Enjoy Walkscore - maybe you can use it to find a cool neighborhood to live, work or play.