

2023 AARP Walk Audit Report

Purpose of this Report

One of Glen Rock's primary attributes is its walkability with an accessible downtown area. Residents love being able to walk to the schools, shops, and homes throughout town. The Borough Council believes everyone should be able to walk safely for fitness and to get where they want or need to go. The Council conducted this Walk Audit to ensure that Glen Rock really is as walkable as we believe it to be and to identify areas of improvement to make it even more safely and easily walkable. In addition to being important to residents, walkability was specifically identified in our Senior Survey as a priority for seniors living in Glen Rock. It is an important part of our journey to being an AARP Age-Friendly Community, where all residents are comfortable remaining in Glen Rock as they age. Walking is also an important part of healthy and active living, which is the goal of our Mayor's Wellness Campaign. Enhancing walkability is therefore an important part of reaching our goal of receiving a Mayor's Wellness Healthy Town designation. We received a grant from the AARP Livable Communities initiative that made this Walk Audit possible.

How the Walk Audit Was Conducted

In order to conduct the Walk Audit, we divided the Rock Road business district into 49 smaller areas, consisting of 31 intersections, 15 blocks and 3 public transit stations. Over 30 volunteers participated in three separate audit sessions. These sessions were scheduled at different times to provide information about walkability during the week, on the weekend, and at the time school lets out. Each volunteer was assigned a separate area and given worksheets to record a great deal of specific information about the condition of the area and its usage, including such factors as the condition of the sidewalk, curb, signage, crosswalks, lights, landscaping, drainage, etc. Volunteers were asked to time how long it took them to cross the street compared to the amount of time provided and whether drivers appeared to be following speed limits. They were also asked questions about who was using the street and how they were using it. The information they collected was input into a computer program to be reviewed and analyzed. The results of that analysis are set forth in this Report and will be presented to the public at a Community Meeting.

Walk Audit Dates & Times:

Thursday, September 14th, 2023 2:00pm-4:00pm

Wednesday, October 4th, 2023 10:00am-12:00pm

Saturday, October 21st, 2023 9:00am-11:00am

Map (MB)

Goals

Goals of this Walk Audit include:

- Documenting that Glen Rock is a walkable town with an accessible, walkable downtown area
- Identifying areas where improvements can make walking safer and more convenient

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- Prioritizing recommended improvements in order of importance and achievability
- Creating an inventory of recommended improvements for future action

Municipal Improvements

Possible improvements within the Borough's purview include adding or extending sidewalks, curbs, signage, pedestrian safety features, and traffic calming devices. All improvements must be planned with input from all appropriate Borough professionals and experts and need to go through the municipal budgeting process. Rock Road and Maple Avenue are county roads, but the Borough can petition the County for improvements such as raised crosswalks and changes to the "Walk" lights.

Private Improvements

The Department of Public Works will alert residents and businesses of necessary sidewalk repairs, and the Code Enforcement Official will notify residents and businesses of property violations such as overgrown shrubbery that are affecting pedestrian walkability. Upon receiving such notification, homeowners and businesses are responsible for making the necessary repairs.

Glossary of Terms

Raised Crosswalk: Ramped speed tables spanning the entire width of the roadway. The crosswalk is demarcated with paint and/or special paving materials. These crosswalks allow pedestrians to cross at grade with the sidewalk, make pedestrians more visible to oncoming traffic and encourage cars to slow down



Bump Out: A widening or extension of the sidewalk into the road at a specified location. This creates additional space for pedestrians on the sidewalk, increases pedestrian safety, and slows cars.

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Pedestrian Beacon: A traffic control sign designed to help pedestrians safely cross higher-speed roadways at midblock crossings and uncontrolled intersections by highlighting to drivers that this is a pedestrian crossing area.



Pedestrian Island: a small section of pavement or sidewalk in the middle of a road, often covered with grass and landscaping, where pedestrians can stop before finishing crossing the road.

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How Walkable Is Glen Rock?

Walking Assets – Summary

- Many shops, restaurants and amenities are located close together, making it easy to walk to them
- Train stations and a NJ Transit bus stop are also located in close proximity, as are the Glen Rock Library and Municipal Building
- Sidewalks line most streets and intersections
- Benches and parks are available as places to rest
- Homes are well-maintained, creating a pleasant walking environment
- Many street trees provide shade and aesthetic value

Walking Challenges – Summary

- Glen Rock is over 125 years old with aging infrastructure
- Walkability was not necessarily a primary concern when the downtown area was built
- The town is fully developed, with no more room to add improvements that might improve walkability
- Rock Road and Maple Avenue are both county roads over which the Borough has limited control
- All changes and additions to town must be consistent with Glen Rock's small-town charm and appearance

Areas of Study

Area A

This area surrounding the intersection of Doremus Avenue and Rock Road is at the base of the Rock Road Business District and the closest main intersection to Byrd Elementary School. It also includes the entrance to a very busy shopping center and is adjacent to the Main Line train station.

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Walkability of area: Mixed/Acceptable

Issues to be addressed:

Speeding

Lack of pedestrian crossing signage

Crosswalks not clearly visible

Traffic pattern causes encroachment on crosswalk

Congested traffic when trains are stopped at Main Line station puts pedestrians at risk

Some cracked sections of sidewalk.

Suggested solutions:

Better pedestrian signage and lighting

Traffic calming devices to reduce speed

Raised crosswalks and sidewalk repair

Traffic enforcement

Area B

Extending from Veterans Park on Main Street across the intersection with Rock Road, Area B runs parallel to the Main Line train tracks. Drivers coming from Main Street are faced with a dead end entering a busy commercial thorough fair and must traverse either a set of tracks or a pedestrian crosswalk when turning.

Walkability of area: Acceptable

Issues to be addressed:

Drivers not yielding to pedestrians in the crosswalk

Crosswalks not clearly visible due to faded paint

Congested traffic when trains are stopped at Main Line station puts pedestrians at risk

Parked cars decreasing visibility of pedestrians entering crosswalks

No tactile road surface on train side of crossing, some cracked sections of sidewalk and landscape maintenance to improve visibility.

Suggested solutions:

More pedestrian signage and lighting

Traffic calming devices to reduce speed, jaywalking enforcement

Raised crosswalks

Add tactile surface

Refresh crosswalk paint

Sidewalk repair.

Area C

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Area C on Rock Road runs between two sets of train tracks and includes two midblock crosswalks. This area is considered the “main street” of downtown Glen Rock and is heavily trafficked.

Walkability of area: Acceptable

Issues to be addressed:

- Jaywalking
- Drivers not yielding to pedestrians in the crosswalks
- Crosswalks not clearly visible due to faded paint
- Congested traffic at either end when trains are stopped at stations putting pedestrians at risk as drivers ignore stop sign and crosswalk to gain traffic advantage
- Parked cars decreasing visibility of pedestrians entering crosswalks
- Some cracked sections of sidewalk and low-hanging trees

Suggested solutions:

More pedestrian signage and lighting
Positioning pedestrian signage before crosswalks
Traffic calming devices to reduce speed
Jaywalking enforcement, raised crosswalks
Refresh crosswalk paint
Sidewalk repair
Tree maintenance to improve visibility

Area D

Beginning at Demarest Park and extending to Austin Place, Area D on Glen Avenue includes the Rock Road Business District’s central intersection and, therefore, heavily trafficked.

Walkability of area: Mixed/Acceptable

Issues to be addressed:

Pedestrian signal buttons are confusing
Signal crossing at Glen Avenue is not operational
No crosswalk at all between Glen Courts and the secondary Glen Courts parking lot
Curb cuts at the Glen and Rock intersection become flooded during rain.
Jaywalking
Drivers not yielding to pedestrians in the crosswalks
Crosswalks not clearly visible due to faded paint
Cracked sections of sidewalk and rough textured sidewalk making wheeled travel difficult

Suggested solutions:

Address signal issues
Fix curb cut flooding
Install a crosswalk on Glen Avenue near the Glen Courts lot
More pedestrian signage and lighting

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Jaywalking enforcement
Raised crosswalks
Refresh crosswalk paint
Sidewalk repair/replacement.

Area E

Area E continues from the tracks by Bank of America up to the Rock/Maple corner. It includes the crosswalks – but excludes the Rock/Maple intersection.

Walkability of Area: Mixed/Acceptable/Great

Issues to be Addressed:

- Crossing tracks is difficult because of the uneven surface; it is bumpy to cross the tracks.
- Motorists do not appear to be following the speed limit
- No streets signs at Rock and Harding
- There is some damaged signage.
- Sidewalk damage and curb misalignment makes walking difficult in some places
- Placement of certain signs or telephone poles may make it difficult for either motorists or pedestrians to have a clear sight line.
- Driveways at commercial establishments may make it dangerous for pedestrians
- Pedestrian scaled lighting does not exist.
- Jaywalking

Suggested Solutions:

- Sidewalk repairs
- Street sign replacements/installations
- Improved landscape maintenance
- Seating would be useful on the east side
- Review condition of railroad crossing(s) with NJ Transit
- Pedestrian scaled lighting
- Need more bike lanes

Area F Maple Ave, Wilde memorial/GVRAC to Exxon but not including intersection

Walkability of Area:

Acceptable/Great

Issues to be Addressed:

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- Sidewalk slabs are broken in certain areas.
- The "Road May Flood" sign leans toward the street and should be straightened out.
- Motorists do not appear to be following the speed limit
- There is only one streetlight. Maple Ave. is very steep, which may make it unsafe.
- The sidewalk is very close to the parking lot by the Ambulance Corp building.
- Lighting is not pedestrian scaled
- Some signs may be blocked by foliage.

Suggested Solutions:

- Sidewalk Repairs
- Pedestrian-friendly lighting -- More pedestrian-friendly lighting is needed on the park side at Wilde Memorial. Could the streetlight be made LED?
- Raised crosswalks could level the slope on Maple.
- Trash receptacles

Area G

The area is limited to the Rock/Maple intersection.

Walkability of Area: Poor/Mixed

Issues to be Addressed:

- Motorists do not appear to be following the speed limit
- Signal box blocks crosswalk when turning from Maple Ave to Rock Road.
- The sidewalk is separated from the street by a buffer on the south side but not the north side of the street. There is a traffic signal at the southeast corner that obstructs part of the sidewalk. Poles for traffic signals also partially obstruct the drivers' view when turning, which is dangerous to pedestrians.
- The crosswalks are not visible to drivers
- There are obstructions that make right turns hazardous for pedestrians. The crossing distance is too long because the street is too wide. Bump outs for every corner would slow down cars and reduce crossing times.
- Standing to cross -- not enough time
- Foliage blocks the view for drivers in some spots

Suggested Solutions:

- Safety barriers between the sidewalk and street (landscaping, low walls, fencing, etc.)
- Pedestrian bump outs at intersections or crossings

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- Pedestrian island(s)
- Trash receptacles

Area H

We looked at the Hamilton/ Central School crossing, the Library, the Triangle, and the southern Hamilton crossing.

Walkability of Area: Mixed/Acceptable/Great

Issues to be Addressed:

- One stop sign is tilted
- Site line onto Rock Road is not available until cars are in the crosswalk
- Sidewalks not in good condition
- Some trees need to be cut back to make the signage visible.
- Needs a crossing guard for school crossing
- No signage alerting drivers to pedestrians

Suggested Solutions:

- Minor repairs are needed to the sidewalk on the school side of the street
- Site lines should be reviewed
- Crosswalks (because there aren't any at all)
- Trash receptacles
- There should be a sign alerting drivers to the pedestrian crosswalk

Summary/Recommendations

The initial impression of Glen Rock was that of a pedestrian-friendly, walkable town. After reviewing the observations of our diligent volunteers, we still believe that to be true. While we give ourselves a “B+” grade in terms of walkability for pedestrians of all ages and abilities, there is still room for improvement. Throughout the areas studied, several themes emerged.

Pedestrian infrastructure

Throughout our Central Business District there are physical improvements that can be made to increase safety.

Crosswalks

To increase driver compliance and reduce driving speed, ideally, it is suggested raised crosswalks be installed where crosswalks already exist along Rock Road.

Crosswalks along adjacent streets should have their paint refreshed.

Pedestrian Beacons/Flashers

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Based on our data, the timing and functionality of the manual pedestrian beacons and flashers should be examined by the Glen Rock Police Department (GRPD).

Signage

The Borough should consider increasing signage alerting drivers to crosswalks, including signs *before* the crosswalks, as well as at the driveway entrances and exits of businesses along Rock Road.

Lighting

While our studies were conducted during daylight hours, a few observers mentioned lack of lights or dim lighting during other times of day. An after-dark assessment of lighting in the area by the Glen Rock Department of Public Works (GRDPW) is suggested.

Sidewalk Surface Repair/Landscaping

While generally in good condition, it is recommended the Borough and private property owners make the recommended repairs to damaged sidewalk surfaces and intersections lacking tactile ground surface. Encroaching landscaping should also be addressed in the few areas where it exists.

Enforcement

Even the best signage is not effective without enforcement. Based on this study we recommend action in the following areas.

Speeding

While it is acknowledged that cars appear to be traveling more quickly when monitored by a stationary observer, a large portion of our walkers noted cars traveling at inappropriate speeds. It is recommended the GRPD consider an enforcement detail in this area, especially during the busy after school and daytime weekend hours.

Yielding to Pedestrians/Compliance

An enforcement detail is also recommended to increase compliance with existing pedestrian and traffic signage and decrease jaywalking.

Public Transit

Station Maintenance

Noting a fair amount of litter, our observers recommend an increase in cleaning of train and bus stations by the GRDPW as well as frequent sweeps for graffiti.

Station Infrastructure

Observers noted water damage to stations as well as damage to stairs. Bike racks areas were also in need of regular maintenance. It is recommended New Jersey Transit be contacted to review the areas.

Train Track Surface Examination

Neither of our two street-level train track crossings have tactile ground surfaces on both sides and our observers found it difficult to traverse the tracks using wheels. It is recommended New Jersey Transit be contacted to review the areas.