

A “Walk-About” Technique

Members of the Management Committee are divided into groups of two to three individuals. Each group is given a clipboard, pen and paper, and a set of prompt questions. Ideally, participants would also be given a small map of the downtown study area. Digital cameras can be used to record images of the things the groups observe — images that the Coordinator can later use to illustrate possible project areas. All groups are asked to walk the study area and record their personal observations of the following:

- **Business mix** — Are there any clusters of similar businesses or complementary businesses?
- **High traffic locations** — Where are the high traffic areas? Are there high traffic areas near public services or businesses?
- **Building condition** — What is the condition of buildings and the state of maintenance (alley/rear and street façades)?
- **Building appearance** — What is the quality of window displays, signs, awnings, color schemes, etc.?
- **Architecture** — Are different types of architecture present on the street? Identify buildings with siding that masks their historic character. Identify upper storeys and window styles, parapets and cornices that show workmanship and style.
- **The continuity of the ground floor to the upper storey**— Are there holes/gaps in the building fabric?
- **Pedestrian comfort and security of the street** — Are there potential conflicts between pedestrians entering businesses and traffic circulation?
- **Landscaping of the streets** — What is the availability of benches, lighting, public washrooms and drinking fountains? Are there uncomfortable sections of the street?

The groups reconvene and collectively record their observations on a large-scale map on a wall. This exercise can bring forward physical improvements priorities for further design and also immediate action ideas – e.g., removing garbage from a specific vacant property. This exercise acts as another way for the group to look at the downtown, with a primary focus on the physical landscape.