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## WALKING ASSOCIATION--WHAT IS IT AND WHY?

BY

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### ABSTRACT

An organization of persons interested in walking and its promotion, the WALKING ASSOCIATION, was formed as a non-profit association in 1976. The formation was spearheaded by Robert B. Sleight, Ph.D. who now serves as its volunteer Executive Director.

## WALKING ASSOCIATION--WHAT IS IT AND WHY?

### INTRODUCTION

The Walking Association is not just a convocation of convalescent cardiacs--or resimented ramblers of any kind.

It is for those who already walk as an avocation or occupation or for recreation, recuperation, self-preservation, and transportation. It is even more for those who have yet to learn that feet evolved after millions of years not merely to depress a clutch or step on a gas accelerator.

Ironically, at the very time that walking is becoming more essential it is becoming more difficult and dangerous. Chief villain is the automobile that increasingly kills and maims pedestrians and for which highways, cities, and indeed the whole physical structure of society are designed with little provision for the needs or safety of people who want to walk.

Members can exchange ideas and help educate legislators, city planners, highway builders, designers of suburbs and suburban facilities such as shopping malls, sports arenas and the like.

There is also a social side to the Association. Meetings are held after which members may enjoy refreshments and, if they care to, a stroll. Informality, as befits an association of walkers, is the rule. Members, bound only by a common desire to promote the cause, walk when and with whomever they please, or alone or not at all, if they prefer.

One of the greatest benefits of membership is somewhat intangible. By participating either through exchange of ideas at meetings, newsletter, or otherwise, and by attempting to influence friends and acquaintances as well as lawmakers and responsible officials, one gets the same feelings of satisfaction and even fulfillment that comes from selfless dedication to any truly worthwhile cause. Where will members get the input for such an exchange of ideas? From personal observation and experience, from newspapers, periodicals, and books, and from talking to people in every walk of life.

Why an Association? Simply put, something must be done and now. One of the most effective means is through the Walking Association. An organization with such vital and wide-ranging objectives--objectives that affect the health and happiness of the entire nation--has great potential clout.

#### NEED FOR A WALKING ASSOCIATION

No organization in the United States speaks for the pedestrian. The Association members think it is time to make government and business aware of the needs and desires of people for safe, pleasant places to walk. Too little consideration is given to walkways today. Walking is free, healthful, energy saving, and non-polluting--it needs to be promoted.

#### WALKING ASSOCIATION BENEFITS

Most important -- it encourages people to walk! And it offers many services to its members:

Promotional activities to enhance the quality of walking and its acceptance as a means of transportation, and as a pleasant outdoor experience...A newsletter...A listing of walking tour guides...Exchange of information among concerned persons...Specification of walkway design features... Pedestrian safety information...Library of materials about walking...Walking challenge charts...Awards for efforts to promote walking...Motivational pep talks...Aid in the formation of local chapters...Opportunity to interact socially and professionally with others concerned about walking...Representation on government, civic and business committees where there is a need for recognition of walkers' rights.

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