

Every Body WALK!

everybodywalk.org

Getting Started Getting The Community on Board

Some members of your community will immediately embrace the idea of creating a more walkable environment. But others may have never given it a thought, and won't even know what it really means, let alone why it's a good thing or how to get there. Here are four things a community can do to build understanding, interest, and support for walkability initiatives.

Host Some Walk Audits

A walk audit is simply a facilitated walk of an area designed to get folks thinking about and experiencing how the environment works for all users, not just cars, and discussing how to make it better.

One goal of a walk audit can be to identify locations for some of the pilot improvements described in this brief.

For more, go to:
www.markfenton.com/resources/TipsLeadingWalkAuditFenton.pdf

For a video on leading walk audits:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-XnWtqz9Oc



Elements of Successful Walk Audits

- Walk a route where there is or could be pedestrian demand – say, from a neighborhood to a school or park; in a retail district; near senior housing.
- Recruit facilitators with expertise in planning and design, transportation, or public health; it's best to have a team with different backgrounds leading the walk jointly.
- Invite public officials, city staff, local residents, people of all ages and physical abilities to take part.
- During the walk, have people score the "walkability" on a 1 to 10 scale in their minds, and stop occasionally to discuss their scores and what would make it better. No blaming, just open, honest discussion.
- Follow the walk with a planning session over maps of the area so people can note their recommended improvements ("repair sidewalk," "paint crosswalk") while fresh in their minds.

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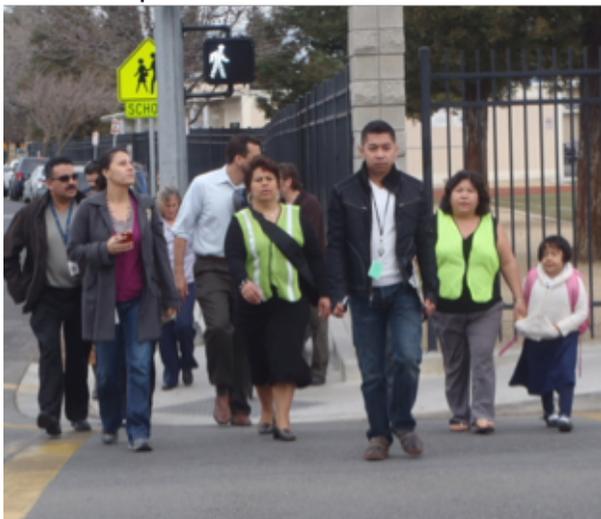
Perform a Walkability Inventory

An inventory could be technically detailed and completed by city staff, measuring land uses, sidewalk widths, and traffic volumes. But a better choice might be simple non-technical questions to start, so that neighborhood groups, service organizations, or students could collect the initial data.

Design the 'inventory' questions so that they reflect the concerns and aspirations of the residents (e.g. don't ask about transit if your community has none). If you have plenty of sidewalks but tree roots are damaging them, then identifying priority repair locations might be a focus. If street crossings are lacking, determining critical crossings for painting might be the goal.

To the right are examples of questions you might ask during a neighborhood walkability inventory.

For more, go to www.markfenton.com/resources/AFQ-MYChklst.pdf



Question	Answer
Is there a sidewalk network?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No, none. Yes, on one side of street. Yes, on both sides.
What is the sidewalk quality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sidewalks exist but are too narrow or damaged. Sidewalks exist and are in goodshape.
Are there street crossings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are few or no marked crosswalks. There are some crosswalks, but not enough or not highly visible. There are frequent and visible crosswalks.
Are there bike facilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No bike facilities exist. Modest bike facilities including sharrow, modest shoulder of 4' or less Sufficient striped bike lane of 5' or more Yes, protected bike lane.
Are there varied destinations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only one type of 'land use' (residential, retail, businesses, or park) Several types of land use Many different destinations and land uses
What transit options are available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No service is available Occasional or poor service exists Community enjoys quality, high frequency service
What is the state of traffic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not an issue Traffic is heavy and fast Traffic is too close to pedestrian areas

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Try Out a Better Street Design

Many communities are testing out street improvements as part of special, short-term events. Open streets, play streets, or better block events allow residents to try out anything from temporary curb extensions or parklets, to narrower lanes and high visibility crossings. These can be tried for just a day or weekend, or an entire summer, but they allow residents and public officials to experience the benefits of a more walkable street and fine tune designs, before investing in permanent infrastructure.

For more, go to: www.betterblock.org; www.openstreetsproject.org



Pass or Sign a Complete Streets Resolution

The idea of Complete Streets is simple: A roadway is not “complete” unless it takes into account all four user groups—pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motor vehicles—of all ages, incomes, and abilities. Cities and towns across the country have passed everything from simple resolutions of intent to detailed roadway design standards. An ideal first step is to have an elected executive, such as a mayor or county supervisor, and/or boards (e.g. city council and planning commission) pass a resolution stating the community’s intent to implement Complete Streets in all roadway projects. This “whereas . . . be it resolved . . .” statement should briefly outline the community’s vision for a safe, appealing, walkable landscape, the anticipated benefits (public health and safety, cleaner air, less congestion, thriving businesses), and the intent that all projects, including routine road painting and maintenance, shall use Complete Streets principles.

For more, go to: www.completestreets.org.

By Mark Fenton; compiled from key informant interviews with twelve long-term practitioners in the field of walkability, building on the practice wisdom of these “elders” with expertise such as traffic engineering, public health, urban planning, elected officials, and law enforcement.