



City of Flagstaff – Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization La Plaza Vieja Walkability Audit

3 October 2008

Introduction

A walkability audit is a community-based exercise intended to highlight opportunities, identify obstacles, and evaluate how easy it is to get around a neighborhood on foot. On October 3, 2008, a walkability audit was conducted in La Plaza Vieja neighborhood, an historic Flagstaff neighborhood that is bounded by Milton Road on the east, Route 66 on the south, and the BNSF railroad tracks on the north and west (refer to attached map).

The walkability audit was part of Flagstaff's fourth annual Pedestrian Awareness Week, a series of events held each October that celebrate Flagstaff's walkable character and raise awareness of pedestrian issues. The audit was also done in conjunction with the City of Flagstaff's on-going neighborhood planning process for La Plaza Vieja neighborhood. The event was organized by the City of Flagstaff, the Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization, Coconino County Injury Prevention and Safe Kids Program, and the Arizona Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School Program.

More than 30 people participated in the audit, including interested citizens, representatives of the neighborhood, and a number of individuals from communities across Arizona who had attended a Safe Routes to School workshop the previous day.



The event began with a short workshop on how to conduct a walkability audit presented by Brian Fellows, Arizona Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School coordinator; Martin Ince, multi-modal transportation planner for the Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization and the City of Flagstaff; and Tracy McMillan of PPH Partners, a consulting firm that specializes in transportation, community planning, and public health. Kimberly Sharp, neighborhood planner for the City of Flagstaff, provided information about the neighborhood and outlined the planning process.

Following the workshop, participants were divided into four groups and sent on a “walkabout” tour through the neighborhood. During the walkabout, each participant was asked to score the neighborhood using the Walkability Checklist (attached), a rating form developed by the National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. At the conclusion of the tour, participants re-assembled as a group to compare scores, share comments and observations, and discuss the neighborhood’s walkability issues.



A total of 13 completed Walkability Checklists were returned and are tabulated and summarized in the next section. The percentage shown in front of each issue under “some problems” indicates the number of times it was checked on the returned forms.

The last section includes a general summary of comments and observations made either on completed Walkability Checklists or during the wrap-up discussion following the walkabout tour.

Checklist results

1. Did you have room to walk?

Average score: **2.4** out of 6

7% Yes

Some problems:

- 93% Sidewalks were broken or cracked
- 86% Sidewalks were blocked with poles, signs, shrubbery, dumpsters, etc.
- 79% Sidewalks or paths started and stopped
- 57% Too much traffic
- 43% No sidewalks, paths, or shoulders

Other problems:

- Trip wire in sidewalk near Greyhound
- Grass chemically treated made one leery of getting too close
- 4 foot sidewalks
- Too close to traffic
- Sidewalks are narrow throughout
- Barbed wire at eye level next to sidewalk along Tucson near Milton
- Too much traffic on Milton and Route 66
- Missing segments of sidewalks along Blackbird

2. Was it easy to cross streets?

Average score: **3.0** out of 6

14% Yes

Some problems:

- 64% Needed striped crosswalks or traffic signals
- 64% Needed curb ramps or ramps needed repair
- 57% Trees or plants blocked our view of traffic
- 43% Road was too wide
- 29% Parked cars blocked our view of traffic
- 0% Traffic signals made us wait too long or did not give us enough time to cross

Other problems:

- Private owner parked across sidewalk
- Visibility
- Blind access/alleys
- Crossing 66 very difficult
- Very dangerous to get to Safeway
- Cars corner too close
- Except on Route 66
- Crossing to NAU too far
- Wide streets on 66 extremely dangerous
- Curb radii are too large
- No traffic signals or other designated places to cross along Milton and Route 66
- Inconsistent use of crosswalks
- Non-ADA curb ramps
- Milton and Route 66 are too wide

3. Did drivers behave well?

Average score: **3.9** out of 6

36% Yes

Some problems:

- 43% Drivers drove too fast
- 21% Drivers did not yield to people crossing the street
- 21% Drivers sped up to make it through traffic lights or drove through traffic lights?
- 7% Drivers turned into people crossing the street
- 0% Drivers backed out of driveways without looking

Other problems:

- Rude gestures on Route 66
- Parked car on sidewalk
- Driving too fast on Clay
- Some drivers not behaving well
- Parked car on sidewalk

-
- Bicyclist behavior
 - Drivers drive too fast on Route 66 and Milton
 - Drivers rolled-through or ran stop signs

4. Was it easy to follow safety rules? Could you and your child...

Average score: **3.0** out of 6

-
- 50% Stop and look left, right and then left again before crossing streets?
 - 43% Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen by drivers?
 - 29% Cross with the light?
 - 21% Walk on sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic where there were no sidewalks?

Other problems:

- Not enough traffic signals
- Need more crosswalks
- Hard to see pedestrians until they are in street at Clay and Blackbird due to location of stop signs

5. Was your walk pleasant?

Average score: **3.5** out of 6

-
- 14% Yes

Some problems:

- 71% Dirty, lots of litter or trash
- 50% Needed more grass, flowers, or trees
- 29% Not well lighted
- 7% Scary people
- 7% Dirty air due to automobile exhaust
- 0% Scary dogs

Other problems:

- Weeds growing over sidewalk
 - Hate to cross Route 66 in wheelchair or with groceries
 - Weeds on sidewalk
 - Poorly maintained properties
 - Glass on sidewalks
 - Cars and dumpsters on sidewalk
 - Unfamiliar neighborhood
 - Loud truck traffic along Route 66
 - Housing, yards not maintained
 - Property maintenance ordinance would help with property maintenance
 - Overgrown weeds along sidewalks and yards
 - Train noise
 - Scary people at bus station
-

Total score

15.7 out of 30

26-30 Celebrate! You have a great neighborhood for walking

21-25 Celebrate a little. Your neighborhood is pretty good

16-20 Okay, but it needs work

11-15 It needs lots of work. You deserve better than that.

5-10 It's a disaster for walking!

Comments and observations

The following comments and observations are taken from the completed Walkability Checklists and/or were brought up during the wrap-up discussion following the walkabout tour.

- The average walkability score for La Plaza Vieja is 15.7 out of a possible 30 points. This score places it between "Okay, but it needs work" and "It needs lots of work. You deserve better than that" on the rating system.



- There a significant difference in walkability depending if one is walking through the neighborhood or walking along Milton Avenue or Route 66, the two major arterial roads that border the neighborhood on the south and east.
- Participants observed a number of issues that negatively affect walkability on Milton and Route 66: there is a lot of traffic, traffic tends to move fast, and the absence of parkways places pedestrians uncomfortably close to traffic.
- There are also problems with crossing Milton and Route 66 on foot: the streets are very wide, large curb radii adds to the crossing distance, there are only two intersections with crosswalks and pedestrian signals (Clay/Butler/Milton and Milton/Route 66), at those intersections pedestrians are prohibited from crossing on one of the legs, and distances between designated crossings are long. This creates a barrier for pedestrians on two sides of the neighborhood.

- The crossing for pedestrians at Route 66 and Blackbird Roost/Metz Walk is especially troublesome and difficult for pedestrians as a result of the speed and volume of traffic, a high number of turning vehicles, the width of the road, and the lack of crossing facilities for pedestrians. The problem is complicated because there is a large retail area south of Route 66 that is a draw for neighborhood residents and would otherwise be within easy walking distance.



- The BNSF railroad tracks, which form the northern and a portion of the western boundary of the neighborhood, also create a barrier for pedestrians. There is a well-used, but unofficial and illegal, pedestrian pathway that connects the neighborhood to Old Town Springs Park and other destinations to the north.

- Walkability on streets within the neighborhood is generally good. Most streets have sidewalks, although most sidewalks are only four feet in width and there is no parkway.
- Sidewalks are missing along most of Blackbird Roost, and there are short missing sections in a number of other locations.



- Trash, weeds, and overgrown vegetation on sidewalks are a significant problem at numerous locations in the neighborhood. In a number of locations sidewalks are also blocked by other obstacles, including sign posts, light posts, and fire hydrants. In a few places vehicles were parked to block the sidewalk.

For further information

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Attachments

- Map of La Plaza Vieja neighborhood
- Walkability Checklist

Walkability Checklist

How walkable is your community?

Take a walk with a child and decide for yourselves.

Everyone benefits from walking. These benefits include: improved fitness, cleaner air, reduced risks of certain health problems, and a greater sense of community. But walking needs to be safe and easy. Take a walk with your child and use this checklist to decide if your neighborhood is a friendly place to walk. Take heart if you find problems, there are ways you can make things better.

Getting started:

First, you'll need to pick a place to walk, like the route to school, a friend's house or just somewhere fun to go.

The second step involves the checklist. Read over the checklist before you go, and as you walk, note the locations of things you would like to change. At the end of your walk, give each question a rating. Then add up the numbers to see how you rated your walk overall.

After you've rated your walk and identified any problem areas, the next step is to figure out what you can do to improve your community's score. You'll find both immediate answers and long-term solutions under "Improving Your Community's Score..." on the third page.



Partnership for a Walkable America



Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center



U.S. Department of Transportation



Take a walk and use this checklist to rate your neighborhood's walkability.

How walkable is your community?

Location of walk _____



1. Did you have room to walk?

- Yes Some problems:
- Sidewalks or paths started and stopped
 - Sidewalks were broken or cracked
 - Sidewalks were blocked with poles, signs, shrubbery, dumpsters, etc.
 - No sidewalks, paths, or shoulders
 - Too much traffic
 - Something else _____
- Locations of problems: _____

Rating: (circle one) _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 _____

4. Was it easy to follow safety rules?

Could you and your child...

- Yes No Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen by drivers?
- Yes No Stop and look left, right and then left again before crossing streets?
- Yes No Walk on sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic where there were no sidewalks?
- Yes No Cross with the light?
- Locations of problems: _____

Rating: (circle one) _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 _____

2. Was it easy to cross streets?

- Yes Some problems:
- Road was too wide
 - Traffic signals made us wait too long or did not give us enough time to cross
 - Needed striped crosswalks or traffic signals
 - Parked cars blocked our view of traffic
 - Trees or plants blocked our view of traffic
 - Needed curb ramps or ramps needed repair
 - Something else _____
- Locations of problems: _____

Rating: (circle one) _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 _____

5. Was your walk pleasant?

- Yes Some unpleasant things:
- Needed more grass, flowers, or trees
 - Scary dogs
 - Scary people
 - Not well lighted
 - Dirty, lots of litter or trash
 - Dirty air due to automobile exhaust
 - Something else _____
- Locations of problems: _____

Rating: (circle one) _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 _____

3. Did drivers behave well?

- Yes Some problems: Drivers...
- Backed out of driveways without looking
 - Did not yield to people crossing the street
 - Turned into people crossing the street
 - Drove too fast
 - Sped up to make it through traffic lights or drove through traffic lights?
 - Something else _____
- Locations of problems: _____

Rating: (circle one) _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 _____

How does your neighborhood stack up? Add up your ratings and decide.

- | | | |
|----------|--------------|---|
| 1. _____ | 26-30 | Celebrate! You have a great neighborhood for walking. |
| 2. _____ | 21-25 | Celebrate a little. Your neighborhood is pretty good. |
| 3. _____ | 16-20 | Okay, but it needs work. |
| 4. _____ | 11-15 | It needs lots of work. You deserve better than that. |
| 5. _____ | 5-10 | It's a disaster for walking! |

Total _____

Now that you've identified the problems,
go to the next page to find out how to fix them.

Now that you know the problems,
you can find the answers.

Improving your community's score...



1. Did you have room to walk?

Sidewalks or paths started and stopped
Sidewalks broken or cracked
Sidewalks blocked
No sidewalks, paths or shoulders
Too much traffic

What you and your child can do immediately

- pick another route for now
- tell local traffic engineering or public works department about specific problems and provide a copy of the checklist

What you and your community can do with more time

- speak up at board meetings
- write or petition city for walkways and gather neighborhood signatures
- make media aware of problem
- work with a local transportation engineer to develop a plan for a safe walking route

2. Was it easy to cross streets?

Road too wide
Traffic signals made us wait too long or did not give us enough time to cross
Crosswalks/traffic signals needed
View of traffic blocked by parked cars, trees, or plants
Needed curb ramps or ramps needed repair

- pick another route for now
- share problems and checklist with local traffic engineering or public works department
- trim your trees or bushes that block the street and ask your neighbors to do the same
- leave nice notes on problem cars asking owners not to park there

- push for crosswalks/signals/ parking changes/curb ramps at city meetings
- report to traffic engineer where parked cars are safety hazards
- report illegally parked cars to the police
- request that the public works department trim trees or plants
- make media aware of problem

3. Did drivers behave well?

Backed without looking
Did not yield
Turned into walkers
Drove too fast
Sped up to make traffic lights or drove through red lights

- pick another route for now
- set an example: slow down and be considerate of others
- encourage your neighbors to do the same
- report unsafe driving to the police

- petition for more enforcement
- request protected turns
- ask city planners and traffic engineers for traffic calming ideas
- ask schools about getting crossing guards at key locations
- organize a neighborhood speed watch program

4. Could you follow safety rules?

Cross at crosswalks or where you could see and be seen
Stop and look left, right, left before crossing
Walk on sidewalks or shoulders facing traffic
Cross with the light

- educate yourself and your child about safe walking
- organize parents in your neighborhood to walk children to school

- encourage schools to teach walking safely
- help schools start safe walking programs
- encourage corporate support for flex schedules so parents can walk children to school

5. Was your walk pleasant?

Needs grass, flowers, trees
Scary dogs
Scary people
Not well lit
Dirty, litter
Lots of traffic



- point out areas to avoid to your child; agree on safe routes
- ask neighbors to keep dogs leashed or fenced
- report scary dogs to the animal control department
- report scary people to the police
- report lighting needs to the police or appropriate public works department
- take a walk with a trash bag
- plant trees, flowers in your yard
- select alternative route with less traffic

- request increased police enforcement
- start a crime watch program in your neighborhood
- organize a community clean-up day
- sponsor a neighborhood beautification or tree-planting day
- begin an adopt-a-street program
- initiate support to provide routes with less traffic to schools in your community (reduced traffic during am and pm school commute times)

A Quick Health Check

Could not go as far or as fast as we wanted
Were tired, short of breath or had sore feet or muscles
Was the sun really hot?
Was it hot and hazy?

- start with short walks and work up to 30 minutes of walking most days
- invite a friend or child along
- walk along shaded routes where possible
- use sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher, wear a hat and sunglasses
- try not to walk during the hottest time of day

- get media to do a story about the health benefits of walking
- call parks and recreation department about community walks
- encourage corporate support for employee walking programs
- plant shade trees along routes
- have a sun safety seminar for kids
- have kids learn about unhealthy ozone days and the Air Quality Index (AQI)

Need some guidance?
These resources might help...

Great Resources

WALKING INFORMATION

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC)
UNC Highway Safety Research Center
730 Airport Road, Suite 300
Campus Box 3430
Chapel Hill, NC
27599-3430
Phone: (919) 962-2202
www.pedbikeinfo.org
www.walkinginfo.org

National Center for
Bicycling and Walking
Campaign to Make
America Walkable
1506 21st Street, NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (800) 760-NBPC
www.bikefed.org



WALK TO SCHOOL DAY WEB SITES

USA event: www.walktoschool-usa.org
International: www.iwalktoschool.org

STREET DESIGN AND TRAFFIC CALMING

Federal Highway Administration
Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Research Program
HSR - 20
6300 Georgetown Pike
McLean, VA 22101
www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/index.htm

Institute of Transportation Engineers
www.ite.org

Surface Transportation Policy Project
www.transact.org

Transportation for Livable Communities
www.tlcnetwork.org

WALKING COALITIONS

America Walks
P.O. Box 29103
Portland, Oregon 97210
Phone: (503) 222-1077
www.americawalks.org

Partnership for a Walkable America
National Safety Council
1121 Spring Lake Drive
Itasca, IL 60143-3201
Phone: (603) 285-1121
www.nsc.org/walkable.htm



PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Traffic Safety Programs
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590
Phone: (202) 662-0600
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/ped

National SAFE KIDS Campaign
1301 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20004
Phone: (202) 662-0600
Fax: (202) 393-2072
www.safekids.org

WALKING AND HEALTH

US Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Children's Health Protection (MC 1107A)
Washington, DC 20460
Phone: 202-564-2188
Fax: 202-564-2733
www.epa.gov/children/
www.epa.gov/airnow/
www.epa.gov/air/urbanair/ozone/what.html
www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html
www.epa.gov/otaq/transp/comchoic/ccweb.htm

President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and
Safety Risks to Children
www.childrenshealth.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity
Phone: (888) 232-4674
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/readysset
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/index.htm

Prevention Magazine
33 East Minor Street
Emmaus, PA 18098
www.itsallaboutprevention.com

Shape Up America!
6707 Democracy Boulevard
Suite 306
Bethesda, MD 20817
www.shapeup.org



ACCESSIBLE SIDEWALKS

US Access Board
1331 F Street, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20004-1111
Phone: (800) 872-2253;
(800) 993-2822 (TTY)
www.access-board.gov