Planning a Pedestrian-Friendly Community

Link Between Community Design and Walkability

Traditional communities, primarily those built before World War II, have a strong sense of place that resulted from careful planning and community design. Because these traditional communities have a more compact, human-scale design, they are inherently more walkable. Traditional communities have a distinct town center with a mix of businesses and attractive buildings. They are also characterized as having well-built homes, interconnected streets, mature trees, public squares, a variety of retail shops, and transit and offer close proximity to schools, parks, and neighborhoods. In contrast, post-World War II communities have separated land uses and are oriented toward automobile travel, which has contributed to sprawling development.

In recent years, communities are rethinking their development strategies and growing smarter. Design professionals, public health experts, government officials, park and recreation professionals, land use and transportation planners, environmentalists, and community residents are recognizing that there is an essential link between the design and health of a community. Neo-traditional neighborhood design and smart growth strategies are being implemented to mitigate the effects of sprawl, promote a sense of community, and encourage pedestrian-friendly design. In Delaware, smart growth principles are supported by the state’s Livable Delaware initiative and a statewide focus on implementing mobility-friendly design standards. The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), the Transportation Management Association (TMA) of Delaware, Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC), and the University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration (IPA) have collaborated to build a foundation for development design standards for statewide transportation infrastructure, based on the ten common “mobility-friendly” elements. This checklist can be used to ensure that key mobility-friendly components are present in all developments (Athey, O’Donnell, and DeCoursey):

- **Mix of land uses and housing types** – To foster civic, social, and physical activity.
- **Interconnectivity** – To provide an accessible, grid-like street pattern that facilitates a range of transportation modes.
- **Public spaces as a focus of development** – To highlight the importance of a sense of place and orientation towards pedestrians.
- **Managed density** – To support viable public transit systems.
- **Universal accessibility** – To ensure that all public transportation facilities, including pedestrian and transit facilities, are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act.
- **Pedestrian-friendly infrastructure** – To ensure that pedestrian-circulation systems are designed in a manner that is safe, interconnected, and multi-modal.
• **Multi-modal infrastructure and design** – To provide infrastructure that is both pedestrian- and transit-supportive and allows fast transitions between modes.
• **Transit-oriented design** – To locate and design public facilities to minimize automobile dependency and maximize multi-modal transit opportunities.
• **Off-road facilities** – To provide recreational opportunities such as trails and shared-use paths, circulation system connections, and infrastructure that promotes a healthy, walkable community.
• **Managed parking** – To locate and design land-efficient parking that also encourages transit use.

**How Do Successful Communities Become More Walkable?**

Communities with the key mobility-friendly components do not just happen by accident. While motivations vary, communities that are more walkable have made clear, conscious decisions about the kind of future they desire for their residents, develop a common vision, and plan for action. In *Better Models for Development in Delaware*, Ed McMahon cites the following secrets of communities that have design features associated with a good quality of life and an enhanced pedestrian orientation. These communities (McMahon, 5 - 8):

- Have a shared vision for the future.
- Identify key assets.
- Build local plans based on preservation and enhancement of local assets.
- Pick and choose among development proposals.
- Assess the impacts of land-use policies.
- Use education, incentives, and voluntary initiatives—not just regulations.
- Meet the needs of both landowners and community members.
- Pay attention to community appearance, economics, and ecology.
- Recognize the link between land use and transportation.

So how do successful communities become more walkable? Policymakers and community leaders need to assess opportunities for improvements and share a powerful and positive image of a healthy community legacy for future generations. Developing, communicating, and promoting a vision for the community’s future is an essential step. In addition to serving as visionaries, policymakers and community leaders need to build support for this vision and empower others to adopt policies, plans, and programs for a more walkable and healthy community. Once broad-based support for a pedestrian improvement project is established, the planning process may begin. Throughout a planning process, the importance of working with and through stakeholders and strategic partners cannot be underscored enough. The process of planning for infrastructure improvements to create pedestrian-friendly community is illustrated below.
Collect Data

The way a community is designed, built, and maintained determines its walkability. Planning for infrastructure improvements needs to start with an overview of the study area and inventory of existing mobility-friendly design features. Both primary and secondary research may be used to collect data to plan for a walkability improvement project. Primary research may include the use of surveys, interactive keypad polls, focus groups, and key person interviews to gauge public opinion and gain a clear understanding of the preferences of local residents. Input from prospective users will help shape decisions that reflect their mobility and accessibility needs. Input from professionals such as engineers, landscape architects, planners, archeologists, historians, environmentalists, and public health officials is needed to help ensure that a concept or idea is feasible. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is an interactive mapping tool used to display and analyze spatial data which are tied to databases. This technology organizes information in layers and can map an existing pedestrian network and where future infrastructure improvements, connections, or new facilities such as trails, sidewalks, or shared-use paths may occur. Not only does GIS provide municipalities with an expandable management tool to track and monitor development of the pedestrian network, it also helps the community visualize possible development scenarios.

Secondary research refers to data that already exists. Demographic information and trends that may influence planning outcomes should be reviewed and analyzed. An inventory of existing
pedestrian-oriented infrastructure, facilities, and linkages to other pedestrian networks or trail systems should be conducted. Existing plans, ordinances, and policies at the federal, state, regional, and local levels should also be reviewed to obtain data that supports the need for a project and to ensure consistency and compatibility in planning.

Walkability Audits

Stakeholders and advisory committee members can help to assess the need for potential public policy changes and infrastructure improvements. One approach to identifying whether a community’s walking environment is safe, accessible, convenient, and attractive to pedestrians is by conducting a walkability audit. A walkability audit is “an unbiased examination/evaluation of the walking environment” (“Assessing Walking Conditions with Audits”). Informal audits that involve an interactive field visit to an area of concern and observation of conditions can be conducted by a group of community members and local government or agency representatives. Results of the informal audit should be documented and reviewed by the local government department or state agency that is responsible for the design, development, and maintenance of the pedestrian walkway, facility, or road.

More formal audits can also be conducted. The University of Maryland’s National Center for Smart Growth has developed a Pedestrian Environmental Data Scan (PEDS) survey instrument that includes an audit sheet and standardized procedures for the audit activity. PEDS requires a team of surveyors to go out into the community with maps to assess a segment of the pedestrian network. Conditions and aspects of the pedestrian network such as the environment, pedestrian facilities, road attributes, walking/cycling environment, and a subjective assessment are rated according to criteria established in the protocol. While PEDS is more formal, labor intensive, and time consuming, the audit sheet can be easily adapted for a more informal audit in a small community (See Appendix A).

NED Assessment Tool

For the University of Delaware’s Healthy-Walkable Communities Initiative, IPA uses a three-pronged approach to assess a community’s walkability. Called NED, this approach examines the study area’s:

- **Network** – referring to the presence and completeness of the pedestrian network including sidewalks, paths, trails, crosswalk connections, and directness between destinations and origins
- **Environment** – dealing with the extent to which the pedestrian environment is pleasing and aesthetically appealing; is safe, secure, and barrier free; and adequately orients buildings and walking spaces.
- **Destination** – describing the utility of the pedestrian network including convenience and access to places of work, play, business, and education.
A town’s self-selected study committee or working group is involved in the NED walkability assessment of the study area. Together with IPA’s assessment of the town’s infrastructure, codes, and recreational opportunities, the study committee helps to make recommendations that may lead to a larger scale walkability improvement project.

**Identify Opportunities and Constraints**

Once data has been collected, an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) can be conducted collectively by stakeholders, advisory committee members, and professionals responsible for plan development. A SWOT analysis is a tool that can be used to analyze data and is a key step in crafting a strategic plan for the development of a more walkable community. It provides a framework for developing a vision statement, establishing goals, and setting objectives based on community assets rather than present needs. Finally, a SWOT serves as the basis for assessing pedestrian planning options and prioritizing phases of development and implementation.

**Determine Community Vision**

According to the International City/County Manager’s Association (ICMA), Active Living Communities, or those that integrate physical activity into daily routines, are in high demand. An active living community provides opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to achieve at least 30 minutes of moderate activity each day. Members of active living communities experience benefits of improved health, economic vitality, and quality of life. Local government policymakers and community leaders can serve as visionaries and champions to promote a pedestrian-friendly community that supports an active living way of life. Planners, transportation, public health, recreation, economic development officials, and other professionals can influence policies, programs, and strategies that impact active living opportunities. Visionary leadership can help to shape positive policy decisions that affect the built environment such as the design and layout of streets, zoning ordinances and amendments, facility design and master plans, and the implementation of such plans (ICMA, 1).

To develop a strategy for an active living community, strong leadership and an ongoing participatory planning process are needed. Many communities will hire a consulting firm to oversee the planning process with input from the public, advisory committees, and Parks and Recreation Department. A successful strategy or plan (Saratoga Associates, 1-2):

- **Incorporates an inclusive planning process** – A sustainable, comprehensive plan is community driven and community focused. The community needs to be involved from the onset in the planning process to develop policies or design, construct, and implement projects related to a pedestrian-oriented project. Citizens and stakeholders, who represent
diverse community interests, need to be identified and proactively involved in an ongoing planning process. Citizen involvement should serve to educate citizens and stakeholders on issues and options; provide meaningful opportunities to shape a community’s vision, goals, and strategies; and provide ways to engage stakeholders in implementation activities. Public participation should be designed to involve stakeholders with meaningful access to key decisions.

- **Communicates a compelling vision** – Ultimately, it is the vision of people, not the process that makes a successful master plan. Stakeholders involved in the master planning process must develop a shared vision of community needs that can be translated into a strategic action plan. A visioning process translates the mission of an organization, strategic plan goals, and stakeholder interests into a collective aspiration for the community.

- **Provides a dynamic, ongoing planning process** – A strategic plan should anticipate, embrace, and respond to future changes in social, environmental, economic, political, or other conditions. An ongoing plan should articulate community vision, develop strategies or plans to accomplish goals and objectives, and provide a flexible implementation plan or action strategies that can be accomplished in phases or adjusted as circumstances change.

**Visioning Process**

Visioning is “a process that helps a community identify the future it desires by defining its core values and goals as well as strategies to achieve that future. The vision created through this process—what a community should be like in 10 to 20 years—becomes the foundation on which land-use laws, fiscal budgeting, and detailed strategic policies can be based. For policy-makers and community leaders...having a long-term vision of their community’s future is critical, as the decisions of today shape a community’s future health, vitality, and well-being” (Baldwin, 28).

The Oregon Model was conceived as a primer for local elected officials, planners, and citizens interested in the process of community visioning. The model is designed to actively engage participants in an easily understood process to plan for the future of a community. The simple, four-step process leads participants from understanding the current state of the community and its values to an action plan for carrying out a future vision for the community (Ames).
**Prepare a Vision Statement**

A vision statement is a vivid, idealized description of a desired outcome that inspires, energizes, and helps create a mental picture of desirable future condition. According to Fieldstone Alliance, an organization that builds nonprofit capacity, a vision statement should (Fieldstone Alliance):

- **Excite and inspire followers** – To feel good about moving towards a shared vision for the future, the vision must convey a positive image and address critical issues. “Vision-storming” is a recommended approach that allows stakeholder participants to draft, refine, and agree to a vision statement.
- **Be attainable and realistic** – To be effective, stakeholder participants must believe that they can attain the vision within a reasonable time period.
- **Be supported by sufficient resources** – To fuel the work to achieve the vision, there must be adequate funding, willpower, and organizational capacity to succeed.
- **Be concise and memorable** – To enable leaders and stakeholders to respond to an expressed need for a positive vision of the future.

The following two examples of vision statements pertain first, broadly, to a vision for a “livable community” and second, specifically, to development of a comprehensive trail system:

The [town] will be characterized by [neighborhoods] with diverse populations, accessible jobs, pedestrian-friendly residential and commercial areas, and economically diverse housing stock. All the [town’s] residents will have access to high-quality, open space and recreation opportunities; convenient public transportation; and excellent, equitable schools, health care, social services and cultural amenities (Realizing the Vision, 3).

[The City’s] trail system will be a vibrant network of interconnected trails, greenways, blueways, and cycling routes that will support the City’s commitment to creating a livable, attractive, and healthy community. It will provide a variety of exciting opportunities for walking and cycling that will link people to each other, to their community, and to [the City’s] unique natural and cultural heritage (2010 Richmond Trails Strategy).

**Establish Goals and Objectives**

Goal and objective setting are integral to the visioning process. A goal is a statement of broad direction, purpose, or intent based on the needs of the community. Goals should consider outcomes of the SWOT analysis and reflect the vision of a livable, attractive, and healthy community. Objectives, or precise statements of how the goal will be accomplished, should be established for each goal. SMART objectives are specific, measurable, attainable and agreed
upon, result oriented, and time bound (Miami-Dade County, 11).

Obtaining consensus on goals and objectives in a group setting is challenging. Organizational psychologists recognize that group dynamics can influence goal and objective setting within a visioning process. Their research indicates that goal follow-through and achievement is more successful when a person publicly states a goal in front of someone they value (Baldwin, 31). Trained meeting facilitators use this theory of goal setting to develop strategies to make stakeholder agreement possible. To ensure active living aspects are considered, the following themes of a pedestrian-friendly community should be considered by participants in a participatory engagement process for goal and objective setting:

- **Circulation system** – Including linkages and connections for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Conservation and natural resources** – Including opportunities for environmental stewardship.
- **Cultural and historic resources** – Including opportunities to showcase a community’s cultural landscapes, unique heritage, and historic sites.
- **Aesthetics and design** – Including safety improvements, scenic views, streetscape amenities, and traffic-calming measures.
- **Economic development** – Including initiatives such as trail-, heritage-, and eco-tourism.
- **Recreation** – Including programs and special events to promote use of walkable facilities.
- **Mobility and access** – Including diverse intermodal options and connectivity.

The following is an example of goals for a trail network, which reflects a community’s active living values:

The proposed trail network is based on a “hub & spokes” model, where parks and other popular destinations serve as “hubs” and the trails that connect them serve as “spokes…” Goals of the trail network [are to] (Trails & Greenways Master Plan, 1-9):

- Offer area residents a viable choice to walk or bike for their local trips.
- Provide opportunities for improving the personal health and fitness of individuals.
- Stimulate economic growth through increase in real property value and tourism.
- Enhance and protect the environmental quality of open spaces and creek and river corridors.
- Conserve and tell the story of local culture, history, and heritage through interpretive trails and signage.

**Build Consensus**

Communities are recognizing that it is essential to build a collaborative environment and actively involve citizens in the decision-making process in order to resolve a public policy issue
or plan for a project that will benefit the community. Studies have shown that the benefits of citizen participation include an enhanced understanding of community need, greater input in the problem-solving and decision-making process, shared ownership or “buy-in” of solutions or plans, and reduced likelihood of opposition to a project and public investment to fund the project (ICMA and National League of Cities, 1997). To develop a truly community-driven initiative, genuine community involvement is required at every stage of the process in planning and developing a walkable community. This process requires mutual understanding and collaboration between the local government or entity planning the project and the community itself.

**Advantages of Consensus Building**

In recent years, the public has challenged and resisted traditional top-down government decision-making, where public officials make and rigorously defend policy decisions. The Policy Consensus Initiative and the National Policy Consensus Center have worked to support initiatives and develop collaborative governance systems to achieve better state and local government solutions through consensus-building tools (Policy Consensus Initiative, n.d.). The director of the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium indicates that the advantages to collaborative approaches to decision-making and problem-solving at the state and local levels, include (Jones, n.d.):

- **Making better decisions** – Which reflect the concerns of stakeholders and result from developing a common ground for action.
- **Achieving faster implementation** – As a result of a plan or policy being crafted that considers the basic needs and incorporates input from all stakeholders.
- **Arriving at mutually beneficial solutions** – To bridge community differences.
- **Educating constituencies** – On the concerns of other stakeholders and the complex nature of problem solving.
- **Dealing productively with the distribution of power** – To recognize that the power of decision-making is not vested in one group or political leader.
- **Creating new resources** – To leverage support from public, private, and community organizations.
- **Managing diversity and building common ground** – To improve relationships among diverse groups, build trust, and identify common ground.
- **Collaborating** – To develop action plans that cross interjurisdictional boundaries.

**Strategies to Build Consensus**

Consensus building is defined as a “decision-making process that is vital to any community planning effort or other process requiring public participation” (National Park Service, n.d.). Consensus building involves bringing people together to express their ideas, clarify areas of agreement and disagreement, and develop shared resolutions (National Park Service, n.d.).
While there is no right or wrong way to build community support for a walkability project, there are several processes or strategies to actively engage stakeholders and elicit public involvement.

**Best Practices - Tools to Build Public Involvement and Consensus**

A strategy needs to be developed to solicit public input and provide broad opportunities for community involvement. There are different options to inform, engage, involve, or outreach to stakeholders and potential project partners. The idea is to engage people to discuss their ideas and concerns and offer suggestions for planning a more walkable and healthy community. This builds trust, enables people to feel empowered to take ownership of the project, and builds community involvement and pride. Community members need to know how they may actively participate in planning a walkability project and be recognized for their efforts. Tools and techniques to promote community involvement are highlighted below.

**Forums**

While local governments and public bodies hold regular meetings to conduct business, public forums can supplement the regular meeting process to effectively inform the community about a proposed plan and obtain citizen feedback to guide decision-making. In order to decide what type of public forum should be held, several things should be considered. First, the meeting should be planned with the purpose in mind. The type of public forum depends on whether the intent of the meeting is to passively inform the public, problem solve to better frame the issue and define the problem, brainstorm on various planning scenarios, or actively obtain feedback from stakeholders.

Second, regardless of the type of public forum that will be held, it is essential to prepare an agenda with guidelines for citizen participation and ground rules for public comments and input. Third, all meetings of a public body should be advertised and open to the public in conformance to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). While not an inclusive list, below are public forum options to gather and engage the public:

- **Formal meeting** – Schedule a formal meeting that is targeted to include all stakeholders and provides an agenda that addresses the goals and purposes of the session. While the time length of a formal meeting varies, it is essential to provide scheduled breaks every 90 minutes. If the purpose of the meeting is to share ideas and information, then each participant should be sent the supporting materials and documents prior to the confirmed date. To streamline and enhance the effectiveness of a meeting, organizers should assign roles of a facilitator to guide the discussion, a presenter to share facts and information, a recorder to document the proceedings, and a timekeeper to enforce meeting time limits (Community Toolbox, 2003).

- **Charrettes** – As intensive brainstorming sessions, charrettes bring key informants and community leaders together to develop ideas and build partnerships among organizations,
agencies, and special interest groups. According to the National Charrette Institute (NCI), a charrette is a “collaborative planning process that harnesses the talents and energies of all interested parties to create and support a feasible plan that represents transformative community change. The public design charrette is as an alternative to the “design and present” convention, which provides a framework for creating a shared vision with community involvement, directed by consultants representing all key disciplines” (“What is a Charrette?).

• Public workshops – Public workshops bring together diverse people with various ideas to work towards a consensus on an issue or topic. Workshops may include large-group presentations and small-group interactive sessions that often allow for greater participation and encourage open dialogue among participants. The key to public workshops is to have strong facilitators to ensure that there is good communication and active listening among participants to build consensus (Community Toolbox, 2003).

• Open house – An open house is an informal public meeting, possibly legally required, with the primary object to disseminate project information to the public and accept public comment. Components of an open house may include a formal presentation by the project sponsor, display of project exhibits and alternative design scenarios, and opportunity for informal conversation between the sponsor and the public. Written comments are usually accepted, but unrecorded verbal conversation is the primary form of communication. (Washington State Department of Transportation, 2007).

• Focus groups and forums – Focus group meetings and community forums seek to inform future neighbors or adjacent property owners about a project early in its planning stages to obtain input, solicit volunteers, develop a vision, and build consensus. On-site visits or walkability audits may be conducted with focus group participants to help identify key needs, concerns, issues, and challenges (City of Shoreline, 2006).

Public Involvement Tools and Techniques
Tools and techniques to involve the public, document public input, or provide outreach to better inform the community about plans for a walkability project, and a list to carry out these techniques are described below.

• Interviews – Interviews are most effective to conduct public outreach individually, when there is not a large population of community members. To be effective:

  • Conduct key person interviews or prospective users of the facility, non-users, and adjacent property owners. Group interviews may be conducted at civic- or social-organization functions.
  • Conduct key person and group interviews in diverse public places, various times, and different days to ensure that there is sufficient public involvement outreach and inclusion.
• Train interviewers (possibly advisory committee members) on proper interview protocol before speaking with any community member.
• Gain permission for an interview first and respect the rights of the people who decline an interview.
• Prepare a script for each interview, including a statement about the purpose and goal of the interview.
• Allow the interviewee to remain anonymous, and remind the person that answers will remain confidential.
• Refrain from leading or steering the interviewee toward a response. The point of the interview is to gain the ideas and concerns of the community surrounding this project.
• Thank respondent(s) for their time, and inform them how results will be communicated upon completion of the interview.

• **Questionnaires/surveys** – Survey instruments may be developed to gather input from a large population that would be difficult to reach individually and/or unlikely to attend public meetings. While the design of questionnaires and surveys vary, they should be professionally developed, administered, and analyzed to avoid bias and ensure statistical significance. Questionnaires may be mailed randomly to a sample population and administered via an online survey, telephone, or conducted in person. The drawbacks to surveys include cost and low response rates.

Once the surveys have been collected and analyzed, the task force and key partners should have an idea of what the community members are interested in pursuing. The task force or advisory board members should use survey feedback as part of the data collection and SWOT analysis phases of project planning. This information may be reported back at a public meeting to build awareness and create excitement for the new project. Below are guidelines to developing a survey/questionnaire instrument:

• Include a statement on the cover page of each questionnaire to provide information about the purpose of the survey, need for voluntary participation, and use of survey information.
• Phrase questions so that they are easy to understand and can be answered honestly.
• Keep the questionnaire length to no more than two pages, preferably one.
• Ask demographic questions to get a snapshot of the community’s ideas based on geographic location.
• Leave enough room under each open-ended question to allow the respondent to answer honestly. If there is not enough room provided, the answers might be limited.
• Inform respondents that names and addresses on the questionnaire are optional; anonymity and confidentiality should be ensured.
• Confirm that all answers will be kept confidential whether or not their name and address are listed on the sheet.
• Provide a deadline for returning mailed questionnaires and a pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope for their convenience.
• Bring an extra box or folder in which to place completed forms if the questionnaire is handed out at a meeting or a function.

• **Straw/informal polls** – These public involvement tools are unofficial public opinion surveys. They are based on a random sample of the community and are used to identify the public’s opinion regarding the proposed event, infrastructure project, or program planned for the community.

**Outreach Strategies**
Other important aspects of building consensus are outreach strategies using written, oral, and visual communications.

**WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**
Written communication provides a concrete, permanent method of getting a message to a target audience. No matter how advanced technology gets, written forms of communication will always play a role in building consensus. A large group of people still rely on newspapers, brochures, and other forms of written communication to obtain information. Listed in detail below are examples of useful forms of communication that aid in building consensus.

• **Newsletters** – A well-formatted newsletter with feature stories and information can reach a large target audience. A drawback of this form of written communication is its overuse. To help decide whether or not to start a newsletter, ask yourself the following questions. What is the purpose of creating a newsletter? Would it be more effective and economical to advertise in other newsletters and submit editorials to local papers? Would it be more effective to create a website and make the information available online to your target audience? If after addressing these questions it is still favorable to develop a newsletter, then follow these steps on its creation (Community Tool Box, 2002):

  • Decide on the content of the newsletter. Stories should be targeted to the intended audience and be interesting, short, and written in the active voice (“we are” versus “we have been”). Include pictures of people in action, quotations to enhance images or messages and theme issues that include interviews with experts on the subject. Mail the newsletter periodically to include project updates.
  • Design the newsletter for readability. Use consistent font size and plenty of white space.
  • Select images carefully. Use graphics to enhance understanding of a message and attract people to the information presented in the newsletter. Avoid using a poor-quality visual image or one that does not strengthen a story.
  • Give the newsletter a signature style that is recognizable to the target audience. The newsletter masthead, sections, and consistent content placement are important.
  • Proofread the newsletter to edit the text and content.
Print and mail it. If you have a large mailing, contact your post office on ways to lower mailing costs.

**Websites** – As a written and visual form of electronic communication, websites are popular with computer-savvy individuals. Websites are effective if they are easy to navigate, provide timely information, and serve as vehicles for public input. Begin the website-design process by assessing other forms of communication being used to inform people. Consider what aspects of a website are needed to bridge a gap in public outreach (e.g., to secure fundraising, administer online surveys, or establish blogs and/or live chat sessions). Review websites of similar groups and those that are viewed as “cutting edge.” Below are guidelines to plan a website (Community Tool Box, 2002):

- Keep the design simple and consistent. Document how each page of the website is connected and give viewers a table of contents so they may navigate to what information is most pertinent to them.
- Keep website material basic. Creating a website is not the same as taking articles and brochures and simply posting them online. There are two types of basic web pages: splash and scripted. Splash is brief and concise. It offers readers choices to more in-depth material, but still communicates a particular message. Scripted gets readers to interact with text and images like in a game. There are frequently not as many words on scripted pages.
- Keep the layout between pages of the site consistent (e.g., background color and navigation links located in the same place).
- Don’t assume icons will be understood intuitively. Photographs and images need captions. Make sure that all images strengthen content.
- Consider website protection and submitting the website to search engines. Advertising the website through other forms of communication is also suggested.
- Regularly test listed website linkages to make sure that they are still active.

**Press releases** – These are publicized announcements, issued to media representatives, to inform the community about a new project, program, or recent development related to the walkability initiative. Press releases are effective because they can generate wide media coverage at little expense. Each press release should contain a release date, title of announcement, name of organization, and contact information. To help ensure that an announcement gets the recognition it deserves (Community Tool Box, 2002):

- Create a strong media contact list. Research news organizations that will most likely want to be involved and write the release so it addresses their audiences and interests.
- Place the publicized announcement within the context of trends or developments that affect the target audience.
- Include a few approved quotes from the organization’s leaders or a well-known personality associated with the project.
• Issue press releases for Monday mornings.
• Summarize the most important and essential information in the first paragraph. Then answer the “who, what, where, when, why, and how” of the news.
• Issue the press release three- to five-days before a story should be published in a daily newspaper and two weeks before a weekly newspaper.
• Follow up with a telephone call to find out whether the release was received.

• **Brochures/flyers** – Brochures are a versatile communications tool that can be used to promote membership, highlight a project, or provide a trail map. They can be handed out, mailed, posted on bulletin boards, or placed in libraries or other public places. They are typically used to announce meetings, special events, recruit volunteers, or educate the community about a resource. Steps to creating an effective brochure or flyer include (Community Tool Box, 2002):

  • Define the objective. What is its purpose? What audience are you trying to reach? Be as specific, narrowly define the message, and keep it concise.
  • Choose a format. Collect samples to see which is most effective for your particular goal. Different folding patterns will also affect production costs.
  • Write to a target audience. Convey feelings by including a story or something readers can relate to about your organization. Use an active, not passive voice, and be concise. Include a contact name, phone number, mailing address, names of other people involved in the project, and logos of involved sponsors.
  • Design it. Consider how font size, bold text, and high-quality images can enhance readability and the appearance of the document.
  • Proof it. Enlist someone who is not involved in the design or publication of the print to proofread the draft and edit for clarity of message.
  • Produce and distribute it. If funding is limited, seek support from sponsors. Project partners may be willing to help pay for production if they are recognized on the final product.

**ORAL/VISUAL COMMUNICATION**

Oral communication can provide a clear insight into the meaning of a message because feedback and transmission are immediate. There are several advantages to oral communications. First, the people involved do not have to end a discussion until a mutual understanding is reached. Second, the give and take of an oral exchange can help the parties reach consensus much faster than the written exchange of information. Finally, the process enables participants to clarify the intent of individual interactions with the message more fully than in writing (Oral Communication, 2002).

Visual communication enhances any written form of communication and reinforces oral methods as well. Some people learn and absorb by listening, and others by seeing. Decide what form of communication will be most useful in terms of building consensus.
• **Speaker’s bureaus** – This tool allows speakers to bring information directly to a local civic association, religious group, neighborhood organization, service club, or other types of gatherings. The purpose of the speaking engagement is to spread accurate information and strengthen trust and credibility within the community. Follow these steps to organize a speaker’s bureau (Community Tool Box, 2002):

  • Find volunteers with experience in public speaking, or provide training for persons with limited speaking experience, but who are passionate about the project.
  • Decide message and key points in consensus with all committee members. Different presentations must be formatted for different meeting settings.
  • Include props such as slides, maps, computerized projections, and other forms of displays.
  • Practice the scripts with props. There should be “dress rehearsals” where the speaker is recorded and then the group reviews the tape. It may also be useful to stage a question and answer session.
  • Brainstorm to find groups that are interested in hearing the proposed project. Create a flyer that lists the topics of presentation and contact information, mail them to every community organization, and initiate follow-up contacts.
  • Inform the speaker about the logistics of the presentation: an agenda; anticipated audience size; format of the presentation such as lecture, workshop, or panel discussion; length of presentation time; and availability of aids like a microphone, projector, or lectern.
  • Keep a master calendar to document all available speakers in case of last minute cancellations or emergencies. One person should coordinate schedules, solicit new appointments, and respond to particular requests for information following a presentation.

• **Displays** – Well-designed displays can increase the visibility of a project and be used to attract the public to a walkability event or location. When designing a display (Community Tool Box, 2002):

  • Create a flyer to use as a “take away” informational piece in conjunction with the display.
  • Attract children to obtain a following of adults.
  • Determine depth of display to decide if it is self-explanatory or needs to have someone there to explain, address questions, or conduct demonstrations.
  • Choose one message or theme to emphasize the most important point and message to an audience. Make the project logo prominent to give identity to the effort.
  • Seek professional help to add visual appeal and polish the design of the display.
  • Research similar events to determine the possible audience.

• **Telephone/e-mail** – Both are cheap, easy, and fast methods of communication. The key is
to figure out how to use them each appropriately—intentionally, moderately, and professionally. These tools can increase credibility, awareness, sense of involvement, and strength of relationships in a community.

One primary purpose of making telephone calls or sending e-mails is to give information such as meeting reminders, invitations to events, or need to respond to a survey. E-mails can also be used to send an attached document such as a newsletter or flyer. Telephone calls and e-mails may also be used to gather preliminary information or request volunteer help. When contacting persons (Community Tool Box, 2002):

- Request permission to call people. Remove people from a call list, if requested.
- Collect information. Find out if they prefer to be called at their home, work, or on cell phone.
- Cover all methods of communication. Some people may not have access to e-mail so be sure that all information sent electronically is also sent out via regular mail.

Draft Master Plan

Once a vision for a more walkable community has been established and strategies to build consensus and public involvement are underway, the master planning process may begin. The master planning process is only one part of total community planning. Master plans should complement and conform to other state, regional, and municipal policies and standards regarding transportation, land use, zoning, subdivision and land development, recreation, public safety, building, and design. Public participation is a cornerstone of the master planning process. In order for the planning effort to be successful, stakeholders need to agree on the scope of the planning effort, how the activity addresses the needs of the community, and what types of problems may be anticipated or need to be addressed (ICMA and NLC, p. 51).

Master plans are similar to road maps that chart out a journey between a starting point and future destination. A master plan results from a comprehensive, participatory process that guides decision-making about the future development and programming of a trail system, pedestrian facility, or infrastructure project that enhances walkability. Benefits include the community’s ability to envision and shape the future, prioritize actions or develop phased plans, manage resources, improve communication, collaborate, generate support, and evaluate success of a project. Master plans are not static, but serve as dynamic, flexible planning tools that provide a framework for future, long-range planning and evolve to adapt to future needs, goals, or priorities of a community (Coe, 1). Successful master plans are:

- **Financially feasible** – The phasing of the plan’s capital projects should be aligned with identified need and the ability to secure available funding.
- **Environmentally compatible** – The plan should minimize potential environmental impacts.
• Balanced – The plan should maintain a balance between community needs and community impacts.
• Technically sound – The plan should comply with federal, state, and local requirements and it should be able to be constructed efficiently and cost effectively.
• Responsive – The plan should address the needs and interests of stakeholders.
• Flexible – The plan should be dynamic and able to respond to future changing conditions.

Master Plan Components

A master plan for a new public park, trail, shared-use path, streetscape project, or infrastructure project that supports walkability integrates both strategic and physical development planning. A consulting firm may be hired by a municipality to guide the master planning process with oversight from an advisory committee and considerable public input. While there is no prescribed format, the document may consist of sections that describe the background of the project, existing site conditions, the community’s vision, design considerations and requirements, funding needs, and maintenance requirements. At this stage, the master plan is conceptual in nature and is subject to public review and refinement based on input. The draft is not intended to address detailed issues related to engineered site design or operational aspects. These issues are deferred to the project development process. The following checklist describes elements of a master plan:

• Background and existing conditions – This section reflects outcomes of the data collection phase, which may include:

  • Base mapping using geographic information systems (GIS).
  • Site description and analysis.
  • Survey data.
  • Needs assessment for the facility or project.
  • Analysis of consistency with existing plans, policies, and statutes.
  • Description of the community’s demographics, physical characteristics, pedestrian circulation system and/or trail network.
  • Inventory of existing facilities.
  • Results of walkability audits.

• Community vision – This section of the master plan should express the community’s vision, goals and objectives for achieving the vision, and a prioritized action plan to guide attainment of the vision. Also described in this section is the public outreach process, list of stakeholders, types of public outreach efforts and meetings, and attendees at each venue. Outcomes of the visioning process should identify community issues, opportunities and constraints, and other considerations that may impact the planning process.
• **Draft master plan** – The draft master plan should have both a written narrative component, which describes a general management plan, and a conceptual development plan, which illustrates schematic design options for the proposed project or facility.

• **General management plan** – The written narrative component describes:
  • Purpose of facility.
  • Types of facilities and uses.
  • Integration with existing pedestrian circulation systems and park facilities.
  • Integration with land use, water, natural resource, environmental protection, and stewardship plans.
  • Funding options.
  • Maintenance and stewardship.
  • Volunteer and partnership opportunities.

• **Conceptual development plan** – Mapping scenarios should be included to provide conceptual design options that detail:
  • Existing and proposed phases.
  • Future pedestrian network connections and trail linkages.
  • Facility design considerations and development standards governing universal design, accessibility, maintenance and sustainability, security, and management.
  • Points of interest.

### Develop Implementation Plan

Following community input, extensive fieldwork, research into related planning endeavors, and a site analysis, the draft master plan will undergo an extensive public review process. Ideally, the draft master plan will have several opportunities for public review, in accordance with FOIA, prior to adoption. A public meeting or series of neighborhood forums may occur at the onset of the planning process to introduce the project, explain the purpose of the project, review site conditions, identify community issues, clarify the planning process, and highlight opportunities for public review. After a conceptual development plan with various design options is prepared, a public workshop or informal open house may be held to enable the public to evaluate alternatives and provide feedback. After each public meeting, the draft master plan may be further refined. The final master plan will be presented at a final public hearing and be subject to a public comment period prior to the final approval and adoption of the plan.

An implementation plan should be developed based on funding, priorities, and planned phases of development. Many small municipalities, which do not have an engineer on staff, must hire an engineering firm to develop and prepare an implementation plan. This plan will consist of preliminary engineering plans, design guidelines, and cost estimates for the project. Financial resources necessary for implementation will be identified. Finally, a management plan may be prepared internally by the responsible departments (e.g., Parks and Recreation, Public Works,
and Police) to detail operations and maintenance requirements once the project is constructed, describe operational policies and standards, identify safety and security issues, plan education and stewardship activities, and organize future recreation programming activities.

**Adopt Plan**

After the master plan is adopted, the development process begins. Development or construction of a project to enhance the walkability of a community may not immediately follow adoption of the master plan. Funding sources must be identified, which often requires the lengthy process of applying for grants, securing voter-approved bonds, obtaining private contributions, and/or budgeting for municipal capital improvement funds. Once funding is secured, the budget will determine if phased construction is required and the scope of work for the first phase of the project.

Following plan adoption and budget approval, the contracted engineering firm may be authorized to prepare detailed engineered site designs, bid documents (drawings and specifications), and a request for proposals (RFP) to bid the construction project. The RFP will be advertised for a competitive bidding process and the contract will be awarded if all bid specifications are met. The construction process begins once all applicable permits have been secured and project documentation requirements have been met.