

Austin Walkability Summit

Summary Report

August 1, 2013
Austin, Texas

Acknowledgements

The Austin Leadership Team recognizes all of the participants of the walkability summit and the generous contributions of the following individuals responsible for making the Walking Action Network Community Workshop* a success:

Facilitator and Keynote Speakers:

Jeremy Grandstaff, S & G Endeavors

Scott Bricker, America Walks

Thomas Schmid, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

In Kind Contributors:

Ballet Austin

Dave Floyd, W. David Floyd, PLLC

Downtown Austin Alliance

Sara Foskitt, Foskitt Realty Group

Panelists:

Kevin Callahan, Map My Fitness

John Eastman, City of Austin

Christine Freundl, City of Austin

Wendy Landman, Walk Boston

Eileen Nehme, Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Chris Riley, Austin City Council Member

Gary Schatz, City of Austin

May Schmidt, Austinite by birth, now retired

Imagine Austin Building Compact & Connected Speaker Series Sponsors:

Austin Board of Realtors, Congress for the New Urbanism, Real Estate Council of Austin, Urban Land Institute

Austin Leadership Team: Robert Anderson (City of Austin), Doug Ballew (City of Austin), Lauren Bennett (Movability Austin), Thomas Butler (Downtown Austin Alliance), Gonzalo Camacho (Camacho and Associates), Chelsea Donahue (City of Austin), John Eastman (City of Austin), Taylor Horton (City of Austin), Gwen Jewiss (SocialGoodSummit Austin, formerly of Beyond2ndNature), Allison Kaplan (Bicycle Advisory Council), Pamela Larson (City of Austin), Chris Moore (City of Austin), Eileen Schaubert (Urban Transportation Commission), Jessica Tunon (community organizer, formerly of Beyond2ndNature).

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Background

Residents of Austin interested in walkability convened May 2-3, 2013 for a 1.5-day-long summit on walkability issues led by America Walks which included an evening lecture followed the next day by a full-day workshop. The primary intent of the full-day workshop was to catalyze and enhance individual and community-based efforts to increase walkability in Austin by connecting local leaders and community members with the expertise of America Walks. Throughout the summit it was hoped to: Highlight walkability as an issue within Austin; Identify and involve stakeholders and share our varied experiences and expertise; and, Develop a set of projects and initiatives with associated action plans that can serve to guide initial efforts toward improving walkability.

In fall 2012, Jessica Tunon and Beyond2ndNature, a community advocacy organization in Austin, Texas, received a technical assistance award for a Walking Action Network Community Workshop to be conducted by America Walks. By offering to partner with the City of Austin to organize an Imagine Austin Building Compact and Connected Speaker Series event, the Austin Leadership Team was formed. The Team consisted of Jessica Tunon, Beyond2ndNature, City of Austin staff, Downtown Austin Alliance, S&G, and America Walks. America Walks' Walking Action Network Community Workshops, produced through a funding partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Public Health Association, enabled the design and organization of a customized 1.5-day-long summit for Austin.



Thomas Schmid Speaking at the evening presentation



Attendees at the full-day workshop

Background, Cont'd



Tom Wald presenting recommendations

On May 2, 2013, more than one hundred people came together for a two-hour presentation on walking intended to be a primer on important issues in walking and an overview of efforts underway at the City of Austin. Scott Bricker (America Walks), Thomas Schmid (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), Christine Freundl (Urban Design Division of the City of Austin Planning and Development Review Department), John Eastman (Neighborhood Connectivity Division of the City of Austin Public Works Department), and Gary Schatz (City of Austin Transportation Department) provided excellent information to the attendees; a question and answer session was also conducted. The video recording of this event is available [here](#).



Eileen Nehme presenting on children's health

On May 3, over sixty people gathered for a full day to hear from five additional panelists (including Wendy Landman, Executive Director of Walk Boston who was able to join via Skype) who helped participants develop walking priorities and create draft action plans to advance newly identified initiatives.

The Vision, Mission, Projects and Initiatives, and proposed Action Plans included in this report are the product of the full-day workshop. Participants vocalized the need for an Austin-based pedestrian organization to emerge. The Austin Leadership Team has been working to establish such a group - a walkability coalition through which future efforts will be conducted. The Austin Leadership Team has also initiated work to create a Pedestrian Advisory Council.

Vision, Mission, Projects and Initiatives

Vision

WalkAustin transforms Austin into a nationally recognized leader as a pedestrian friendly city - a city with a safe and pleasant walking environment that encourages all people to walk as an integral part of their daily lives.

Mission

Through community engagement and education, we work to mainstream walking as a transportation mode throughout the city. Collaborating with the community and city leaders, we aim to improve the enjoyment of walking, as well as the health and safety of walkers, with policy and infrastructure improvements.

Projects and Initiatives (not listed in order of priority)

- Legal rights and enforcement – increase safety of people who walk in Austin;
- Start a pedestrian advocacy coalition;
- Advocate for walkability in all applicable city codes and standards, including promoting the Great Streets Program of the City of Austin;
- Utilize technology and mapping for education and policy change;
- Promote and educate on the Safe Routes to School program;
- Promote health and other benefits of walking (including economic) and develop an outreach campaign;
- Pursue and support projects that are inclusive of all socio-economic groups; and,
- Create a pedestrian advisory council and/or strengthen the existing Urban Transportation Commission's Bike and Pedestrian Subcommittee.

The Way Forward

How the Action Plans will be used

The following Action Plans were developed throughout the walkability summit by the assembled stakeholder group to provide direction to each Project and Initiative. The Action Plans are reported essentially unmodified from the summit, unless the voting at the summit resulted in a negative value. Because the Action Plans are intended to align with Projects and Initiatives, some liberties were taken by the Leadership Team with the Action Plans to reflect modifications made to the Projects and Initiatives.

The Action Plans are intended to be works in progress and are presented “incomplete”. The Leadership Team encourages individuals to become coalition members in order to refine and implement the Action Plans and to ensure their continued evolution with the coalition’s priorities. Current gaps within the Action Plans include identifying entities responsible for implementation and their partner organizations, additional Key Actions to satisfy the idealized scenario described by the Future Statement, and Performance Measures to evaluate progress.

The walkability coalition (currently in development) will treat the identified Projects and Initiatives and Action Plans as recommendations to begin Year 1 work. The coalition reserves the right to expand, contract, or modify the Projects/Initiatives and accompanying Action Plans according to coalition needs and interests.

Modifications to the coalition’s scope of work can occur throughout the year, though efforts will be made to develop annual work plans with wide coalition input. Individuals wishing to become more involved in walkability issues are urged to do so at regular coalition and steering committee meetings as well as the community events.

Action Plans

Legal Rights and Enforcement - Increase Safety of People Who Walk in Austin

FUTURE STATEMENT

All users of public spaces will obey laws and operate their chosen mode in a respectful manner.

Key Actions

- Identify key locations with high rates of pedestrian-vehicle collisions and analyze cause and effect
- Inventory current laws and identify legal gaps to protect pedestrians
- Education and awareness campaign: Clear signage on streets; public relations materials; education provided to Austin Police Department; increased enforcement by Austin Police Department

Performance Measure

- Is the data timely and available?
- Report or website created
- Reduced injuries and fatalities. Increased citation of violations

Action Plans, Cont'd

Start a Pedestrian Advocacy Coalition

FUTURE STATEMENT

The pedestrian advocacy coalition is comprised of individuals and organizations (to be determined) invested in creating a more walkable Austin. The coalition works with the community to improve the built environment, address policy, and increase awareness of walkability issues as well as enforcement of pedestrian safety laws.

Key Actions

- Identify stakeholders
- Engage stakeholders through community events, social media, newsletters, etc.

Performance Measure

- Diversity of coalition. Establish a coalition within six months
- To be determined

Action Plans, Cont'd

Advocate for Walkability in All Applicable City Codes and Standards, Including Promoting the Great Streets Program of the City Of Austin

FUTURE STATEMENT

The coalition is involved in all aspects of the Land Development Code re-write; educating the public on content being proposed, and working with staff, officials, and consultants for walkability concepts. The number of pedestrian improvement projects doubles in 2013-14 over 2012-13.

Key Actions

- Coalition advocates for walkability throughout Code re-write process
- Double pedestrian projects in City: 2013 versus 2012
- Citizens receive updates on walkable code/standards proposals

Performance Measure

- 90% of meetings attended by coalition members
- Number of projects completed and map of locations
- Periodic emails, bulletins, tweets, and other forms of communication

Action Plans, Cont'd

Utilize Technology and Mapping for Education and Policy Change

FUTURE STATEMENT

Use technology to create maps accessible to everyone that will exist as digital and paper versions.

Key Actions

- Identify destinations (food markets, arts organizations, architecturally significant buildings, parks, etc.)
- Identify technical design staff
- Identify potential funding sources

Performance Measure

- To be determined
- To be determined
- To be determined

Action Plans, Cont'd

Promote and Educate on the Safe Routes to School Program

FUTURE STATEMENT

Increase the number of students walking to schools, bus stops throughout the city with the support of schools and community.

Key Actions

- Identify partners capable of obtaining funding. Apply for funding
- Prioritize pedestrian infrastructure to schools
- Increase awareness regarding health and learning benefits of walking/bicycling to school
- Start a walking school bus and/or participate in National Walk to School Day
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle safety classes to students and parents

Performance Measure

- Increased number of students walking to school. Number of entities and amount of secured grants/funding
- Increased number of students walking to school. Percentage of built infrastructure
- Increased number of students walking to school. Surveys and events held
- Number of participants and/or events held
- Number of participants and/or events held

Action Plans, Cont'd

Promote Health and Other Benefits of Walking (Including Economic) and Develop an Outreach Campaign

FUTURE STATEMENT

Walking is recognized as a practical, accessible, and cost-efficient solution to sustain personal health and community well-being

Key Actions

- Define target audience

- Establish baseline walking frequency

- Define health benefits directly related to walking

- Educate by contrasting walking with other forms of exercise

- Period survey of target audience

- Establish an economic baseline

- Identify existing and work to create economic incentives (such as Go Local)

- Study impact of Viva Streets!

- Survey local business for economic benefits

Performance Measure

- List of entities, events, and geographic areas of town to target

- Survey of target groups to ascertain current frequency of walking

- List of benefits created and spectrum of benefits

- Create educational materials and document distribution

- Contrast data to baseline walking frequency data

- Sales tax and property values, apartment/office vacancies

- Number of businesses involved, number of participants, earned media

- To be determined

- To be determined

Action Plans, Cont'd

Pursue and Support Projects that are Inclusive of All Socio-Economic Groups

FUTURE STATEMENT

The coalition, recognizing the varied reasons people opt to use walking as a mode of transportation, will work to address the needs of all walkers.

Key Actions

- Engage all citizens and all regions of the City of Austin

Performance Measure

- Track location of events, project focus, and marketing efforts

Action Plans, Cont'd

Create a Pedestrian Advisory Council and/or Strengthen the Existing Urban Transportation Commission's Bike and Pedestrian Subcommittee

FUTURE STATEMENT

Create an entity similar to the Bicycle Advisory Council to consider the design, infrastructure, and policy implications for pedestrians. Recommendations will be made to boards and commissions and City Council.

Key Actions

- Establish entity to advise boards and commissions and City Council

Performance Measure

- Resolution offered by City Council to create group to advise on walkability issues

Contact Information

The Austin Leadership Team encourages everyone to remain involved in walkability issues. As the coalition is being formed, please contact the following individuals for more information:

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Appendix 1

Participants of Full-Day Summit Workshop

Robert Anderson	Kevin Callahan	Christian Malanaka	Preston Tyree
Doug Ballew	Ruben Cantu	Clint McManus	Derek Villemez
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Leah Bojo	Lyn Estabrook	Eileen Nehme	Heyden Walker
Scott Bricker	Becca Freer	Melissa Neslund	
Thomas Butler	Glenn Gadbois	Greg O.	
Kevin Callahan	Justin Golbabai	Kevin Paris	
John Eastman	Jose Guerrero	Stephen Ratke	
Christine Freundl	Jeremy Grandstaff	Lori Renteria	
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Tom Bauer	Caitlin Leach	Donna Tiemann	
Eric Bollich	Jessica Lemann	Laura Troups	
Rob Borowski	Jess Lowry	Jessica Tunon	
