

FootNotes

Promoting Walkable Communities



North Park's walking champion, Jay Turner, was honored when he retired in September as North Park Main Street's executive director by Acting San Diego Mayor Toni Atkins.

Fall 2005 Footprints – Annual Report Issue

WalkSanDiego continues to punch out one success after another. The pace is, frankly, furious. That's why we skipped right over the summer newsletter and offer a shortened version of this, our Annual Report Issue.

In addition to last year's highlights, it focuses on WSD's recent workshops around the region and the milestone passage of the long-awaited federal transportation bill.

After reading this issue, please pass it along to someone who hasn't been bitten by the walking bug yet.

Next Steps Project Gains Footing

Much of WalkSanDiego's assistance to dozens of neighborhoods over the years has been to upscale or gentrified areas with residents well able to advocate for their needs, and needing only technical help on what pedestrian improvements to ask for. Conspicuously absent from our portfolio were the more modest income neighborhoods where many more people walk and also are more frequently injured or killed.

In late 2004, WalkSanDiego launched the Next Steps Project to help these neighborhoods.

The Next Steps Project has been an unqualified success. We've had an enthusiastic response from funders (see box on page 3) and, more importantly, from the neighborhood residents themselves. And it's no wonder. We have seen first hand the tremendous need for better walking conditions in the region's lower income neighborhoods.

See page 2 of this newsletter to learn about how we were able to help these neighborhoods.



WalkSanDiego hopes to build upon the amenities of historic 3rd Avenue, the most walkable commercial district in western Chula Vista.

Next Steps Project Neighborhoods

Here are some of the highlights of the Next Steps Project:

National City

We conducted a Spanish language training for mothers participating in the San Diego Nutrition Network's nutrition education project. Mayor Nick Inzunza made an appearance, and city staff were in attendance. Once the participants learned how walkability can be improved, they demanded to know how they could push the city to provide better sidewalks, maintenance, trash removal, better crosswalks, etc.

There was no lack of enthusiasm in the room, which city staffers could not help but notice. This success led to a second workshop in the city.

Old Town National City

At a Walkability Workshop, local residents identified nine areas or intersections in need of improvement. The area is greatly impacted by traffic traveling to and from I-5 and other high-speed roads, and lacks adequate traffic calming, lighting, and crosswalks in many places. Following the workshop, we presented to the city and residents a detailed report highlighting major issues, locations, and potential solutions.

Sherman Heights (City of San Diego)

This neighborhood, just east of Downtown San Diego, is undergoing gentrification and significant change. What

hasn't changed is the difficulty of crossing major streets such as Market Street and 25th Street, especially for school-bound children and transit riders. Our detailed report to the community and the city will help the residents advocate for specific changes. The workshop received an excellent write-up in the Union-Tribune, as well as coverage from the local Spanish-language TV station, Univision.

San Ysidro (San Diego)

We partnered with Casa Familiar, an independent health clinic and housing agency, to conduct a Walkability Workshop. Because of its population and proximity to the border, San Ysidro residents and visitors walk a great deal. At one elementary school, 90% of students were found to walk or bike to school. Again, our report will be used to highlight needed changes in particular "hotspots."

North Park (San Diego)

In July 2004, WalkSanDiego and the North Park Community Association hosted national expert Dan Burden, who led a workshop and training on pedestrian oriented street design. We completed the process this summer by holding another

Next Steps Supporters

WalkSanDiego gratefully acknowledges our Next Steps supporters:

- Kaiser Permanente
- Otay Ranch Company
- Quarry Falls by Sudberry Properties
- Nutrition Network
- Latino 5 a Day Campaign
- RBF Consulting
- California Kids' Plates Program
- San Diego County Air Pollution Control District
- Union Bank of California
- San Diego National Bank
- City of San Diego
- City of National City
- Special contributions from WalkSanDiego members

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Next Steps Project Neighborhoods

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workshop in which residents identified problem corridors and intersections. Among these were 30th Street, El Cajon Boulevard, and North Park Way. A report will be delivered to the Association next month.

Imperial Beach

Since last fall, WalkSanDiego has been helping to conduct pedestrian and bike safety presentations and public awareness to students, seniors, and the general public. The reason

is the city's high rate of pedestrian and bicycling injuries.

A Walkability Workshop in Imperial Beach identified a number of locations that are particularly hazardous. City staff participated, and is committed to pursuing improvements.

Chula Vista

WalkSanDiego has a grant from Kaiser Permanente to participate in the Healthy Eating, Active Communities (HEAC) Coalition, an obesity prevention project comprised

of health providers and the school system, among others.

We will be working with two of the most underserved neighborhoods to bring about pedestrian improvements and with the City of Chula Vista to identify and adopt policies that promote pedestrian-oriented design.

We've already conducted a workshop with the HEAC Coalition and several presentations with local residents and "promotoras" — Latina women recognized as informal but trusted neighborhood leaders.

Consulting Projects

In addition to the above grant-funded projects, WalkSanDiego's current contract work includes the following:

- **Imperial Beach Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Campaign** – See Annual Report, page 7; we're also pursuing an opportunity to work with local residents and merchants to add pedestrian safety features to Seacoast Drive, Imperial Beach's beachfront "Main Street."
- **Pedestrian Master Plan, City of San Diego** – WalkSanDiego is teamed with KTU+A and three other firms to create a plan for making pedestrian improvements citywide, as well as examining policies and practices for possible deficiencies. This will be the first of several such plans in the region, funded by SANDAG.
- **Downtown Oceanside Redevelopment** – We're assisting the city as it plans, gains public support for, and implements a traffic calming and circulation improvement plan for its historic downtown area.

- **Safe Routes to School** – We're conducting a walk audit around the area of Rosa Parks Elementary School in City Heights, for which the City of San Diego received a state Safe Routes to School grant. (The state program is the model for a new national program...read on.)



Theresa Quiroz, a citizen member of the Pedestrian Master Plan Working Group looks over a map of pedestrian obstacles during a recent meeting.

Federal "Safe Routes to School" Program Launched

On August 10, the President signed into law a bill designed to meet this nation's transportation needs for the next six years: the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The title is admittedly goofy, but the bill includes a Safe Routes to School (SR2S) program that will make \$612 million available to help more kids walk and bike to school and thus realize benefits in public health, neighborhood cohesion, and other important areas.

While much of this money will no doubt be used for projects such as building sidewalks and improving crosswalks near schools, a percentage of the funds has been set aside for programs intended to actively encourage walking and bicycling to school; conduct public awareness campaigns to change the behaviors of students, parents, and drivers; and for planning and training, among other activities. The funds will be distributed by each state's department of transportation to local agencies and nonprofit organizations.

The bill authorizes the use of 100% federal funds for projects and activities, but with last November's passage of the local TransNet tax, San Diego communities will eventually have a pot of money for matching the

federal portion, and thus be more competitive.

The current generation of children is perhaps the first that doesn't know what it is like to walk or ride a bicycle to school — although notable exceptions exist. The health effects of this inactivity are devastating: childhood obesity has nearly tripled and diabetes is now epidemic among children.

Many advocates believe this federal commitment to increase children's physical activity will trigger a nationwide movement for communities built for healthy children. Indeed, *WalkSanDiego* and our parent organization, *America Walks* (www.americawalks.org) have joined the nascent "National Safe Routes to School Partnership" whose

goal is to watchdog the federal program and promote best practices.

Other parts of the SAFETEA-LU bill were less innovative. Battles were fought primarily to keep alive existing programs adopted in 1998. Fortunately, pedestrians made out okay, although we would have preferred to strengthen the federal funding and policy commitment to walkable communities. For example, a near-miss provision that lost by a Senate vote of 44-53 would have required routine accommodation of bicycling and walking in all federally funded projects. That the proposed provision reached this far is a good sign for incorporation next time. As with the Padres, there's always next time.

Become a Member of *WalkSanDiego*

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- Individual - \$25 Family - \$40
- Benefactor - \$50+ Sponsor - \$100
- Student, senior or treading lightly - \$10
- Small business member - \$100
- Corporate member - \$500-\$2,000

Send to:

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WalkSanDiego in Top Tier of US Ped Groups

With the launch of WalkBoston in 1990, the national pedestrian movement was born. Today, there are around 50 active groups.

How does WalkSanDiego measure up to its counterparts? A recent survey of groups by America Walks revealed that, in financial strength, WalkSanDiego ranks fourth among independent non-profit groups (those not affiliated with a bicycling group or a government agency).

With respect to other measures, WalkSanDiego is light on the number of paid members (WalkBoston and PEDS in Atlanta both claim over 500, compared to our 150), but high on major accomplishments.

Not that we're competitive, but if you aren't already a member, please go to www.walksandiego.org/join, and add your voice to our growing chorus!



WalkSanDiego's Executive Committee members (from left to right) Kevin Reese, Jamie Moody, Andy Pendoley, and Tina Zenzola (Andy Hamilton behind the camera) ponder the challenges of managing the organization's rapid growth.



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