

# FootNotes

Promoting Walkable Communities



**KEN GRIMES**  
WSD's Executive Director

## WSD welcomes new executive director

After a lengthy search, we are excited to introduce Ken Grimes as WalkSanDiego's first full-time Executive Director.

Ken has a planning background and recently left a similar position with a community assistance nonprofit in his native England. He previously worked for the City of San Diego Housing Commission and brings a wealth of experience, a consensus-building approach, and a passion for improving communities.

He and his wife have two grown children and reside in the very walkable San Diego neighborhood of University Heights. Welcome aboard, Ken!

## WSD solicits annual award nominations

Know of an outstanding pedestrian improvement or a passionate champion of walking?

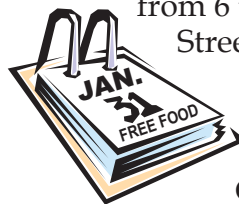
WalkSanDiego is soliciting nominations for our annual Golden Footprints Awards. Winners are recognized in four categories: individual, project or program, public agency, and private or non-profit organization.

Nomination forms are available on our website at [www.WalkSanDiego.org](http://www.WalkSanDiego.org).

## WalkSanDiego schedules open house at new office

Thanks to a grant from The California Endowment, WalkSanDiego is pleased to announce the opening of our new office in the East Village, a baseball's throw from Petco Park and adjacent to the San Diego Trolley. The San Diego Bicycle Coalition is housed with us, which should enhance future collaborations. Our new phone number is 619-544-WALK.

WalkSanDiego will hold an open house at our new offices from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, January 31, at 740 13th Street, Suite 220, in downtown San Diego.



Enjoy heavy hors d'oeuvres, mingle with your fellow walking enthusiasts, celebrate our victories, and recognize this year's Golden Footprints Award winners.

Our guest speaker will be Peter Katz, legendary New Urbanist and a founding member of the Congress for New Urbanism.

For more information, contact WSD Board Member Danielle Putnam at 858-614-5054. Did we mention free food?





*Harborside Elementary parents participate in a walk audit to critique the walking environment (left) and then (above) map known walking hazards throughout the neighborhood.*

## 'Next Steps' Project gains footing in Chula Vista

**WalkSanDiego example leads to \$1.5 million in state grants**

WalkSanDiego's most successful effort to address walking hazards in underserved neighborhoods ("Next Steps" Project) has been our Kaiser Permanente-funded project in west Chula Vista.

The project has expanded to include several aspects:

- **Harborside Elementary School** – Project Coordinator Kristin Mueller has spearheaded work with parents at a third elementary school, Harborside Elementary, following a 2006 project at two previous schools.

Kristin organized and presided over three parent workshops that produced recommendations for pedestrian improvements, in conjunction with City staff and the Healthy Eating Active Communities (HEAC) coalition (see Spring 2007 FootNotes). The city is working to build some of these improvements and fund others.

- **Youth Empowerment** – A project to train local high school students in walkability, access to healthy tools, and advocacy– "Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity

Prevention (CX3)" – is being conducted jointly by the County's Childhood Obesity Initiative, HEAC, WalkSanDiego, and local partners.

Our role has been to train youth from Chula Vista and La Mesa to recognize good and poor pedestrian features, and to help them advocate for needed changes (*see box*).



*CX3 participants (left to right) Nayelly Vicencio, promotora, and students Gerard Garcia and Daniel Rios record pedestrian hazards in their neighborhood.*

The Chula Vista youth selected Lauderbach Park and the surrounding neighborhood to focus on, while the La Mesa youth are pushing the concept of “Complete Streets” – designing streets for the safety of all users.

The Chula Vista youth have already met with staff from the City’s Parks and Recreation and Traffic Engineering Departments. After the new year, they plan to make their case for needed improvements at the City Council and the School Board.

■ **Caminando con Fe** – We collaborated with a San Diego State University (SDSU) research project called “Caminando con Fe” (Walking with Faith) focused on improving the walkability around Most Precious Blood Church in west Chula Vista and the promotion of walking clubs at the church.

WalkSanDiego trained a few of the local church members to become walkability leaders (‘promotoras’) to advocate for improvements in the neighborhood around the church, which happens to be right around the corner from Lauderbach Park.

■ **State Grants** – Finally, the City and the Chula Vista Elementary School District utilized our model of working with residents in winning over \$1.5 million in state grants for three projects:

(1) to implement many of the improvements we recommended at two schools, Rice and Otay Elementary Schools.

(2) to assess the walkability of all of the city’s elementary schools, and

(3) to create a walking education/promotion program piloted at Rice and Otay Elementary Schools. The promotion program will then be scaled up to 15 schools. WalkSanDiego will be intimately involved in all three projects.

Reflecting on these successes, Kaiser Permanente grant officer Diane Strum dubbed our Chula Vista project a “homerun.” While we would humbly agree, we have to credit the progressive attitudes of Chula Vista staff, elected officials, and numerous enthusiastic and effective community partners we’ve worked alongside.



*Chula Vista students experience the walking environment first-hand.*

## CV students embrace pedestrian design issues

As participants in the CX3 project, a group of Chula Vista high school students pursuing community service projects found themselves learning to critique the relative pedestrian friendliness of their own neighborhood. WSD Project Coordinator Kristin Mueller reports the students were enthusiastic learners and are eager to apply their knowledge to work for improvements.

Jerry, a 15 year-old student planning to become an architect, said, “I learned more about what changes I can do in my own community, try to change the community by building safer sidewalks and connect everything with restaurants, stores, parks, and make it easier for people to be physically active and healthier.”

Xinia, a “promotora” (community leader) who participated in the CX3 project said of her experience, “As promotoras, our priority is to help others. I also think it is important for the youth here because sometimes their opinion matters more for the future and they are a good example for other youth...to share and exchange all of our ideas as a team and doing it with much love for your community.”

We could not have said it better.

# SANDAG adopts highway-heavy Regional Transportation Plan

As it does every three-to-four years, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) recently adopted a new Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that outlines its 30-year vision for the region's air, vehicle, transit, bicycling, and walking transportation. As usual, highway expansions were the predominant expenditure in the \$57 billion plan.

This predominance of highway expansions was despite warnings on poor long-term performance from transit experts hired by SANDAG, the Independent Transit Review Panel (ITPR), as well as comments from California Attorney General Jerry Brown concerning global warming.

The plan allocates about 1% for walking, bicycling, and smart growth incentives.

The Transit Panel's 2007 report stated that highway improvements only delay inevitable congestion and may actually encourage it. Meanwhile, the ITPR said, while other region's have shown how to deploy public transit to get around growing congestion, San Diego's system continues to suffer from neglect. This trend was repeated this fall when a \$1.2 billion state budget cut on transit forced the Metropolitan Transit System to raise fares and cut services, disproportionately impacting transit-dependent riders.



*SANDAG's transportation plan favors highways; many believe funding mass transit such as the trolley is a better long-term strategy.*

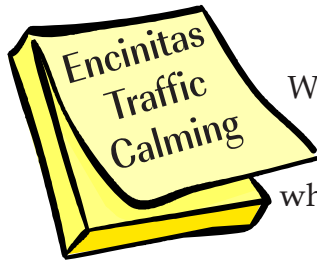
As for the Attorney General, his office has become the one state agency aggressively pursuing land use and transportation planning as a global warming strategy. Brown has sued the County of San Bernardino for its failure to consider global warming in its general plan update. He took a similar, but non-litigious stance with SANDAG's latest RTP.

In November, Deputy Attorney General Sandra Goldberg submitted a letter to SANDAG stating that "the RTP will significantly increase GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions at the same time that the state has mandated reducing those emissions significantly." SANDAG's environmental document on the RTP says the chosen projects will cause GHG emissions exceeding existing levels by 19% by 2020 and 31% by 2030. The letter requests that SANDAG do more to mitigate this impact, and specifically suggested SANDAG reassess its designated "smart growth areas", some of which are too distant from existing development to be considered smart.

WalkSanDiego believes it is only a matter of time that significant investments in transit, supported by compact communities geared toward walking, becomes a more prominent transportation investment strategy than the currently unsustainable, endless highway building that we see now. And how Governor Schwarzenegger can square his concern over global warming with deep cuts in transit is certainly not obvious to us.

Fortunately, the RTP news isn't all bad. For the first time, it discussed the public health implications of our transportation funding choices. A growing body of evidence shows compact communities designed for walking, bicycling, and transit use, as well as reasonable vehicle accommodations, allow more active travel choices and a healthier lifestyle. Our task now is to get SANDAG to more closely align its transportation investments with its words.

# NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES



WSD actively supported City Council adoption of a new neighborhood traffic calming program, and selection of the first neighborhood, a residential area of Cardiff. We provided regular advice to residents who convinced the city to pursue a California Safe Routes to School grant.



WalkSanDiego will help with bilingual outreach to residents in a project to calm traffic and improve pedestrian safety on Palm Avenue, a Caltrans-owned 6-lane arterial that divides the city in two.



WSD conducted two walk audits and produced a recommendations report for improving pedestrian safety adjacent to the City College campus. As part of the City College safety project, WSD conducted a hazard mapping session and walk audit in the East Village neighborhood south of City College. Current redevelopment projects are providing opportunities to increase walkability.



Walk audits conducted on the City College campus (above) and in the East Village neighborhood (left) led to recommendations for safety improvements.



WalkSanDiego has provided regular input and support to developers of this planned pedestrian-friendly, 4000-home mixed-use development in Mission Valley. The project is now undergoing environmental review.

# Designing for walking leads to...

## MORE WALKING

A new comprehensive study by Saint Louis University researchers reveals the top 10 features of activity-friendly communities.

Appearing in the December issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, the study culled 230 indicators of activity-friendly environments and then convened two expert panels to boil these down to 10 essential factors.

Leading the pack, of course, is a compact land use pattern that makes walking convenient for transportation to meet many needs.

Also indicated were a transportation system that includes good transit service, sidewalks, a pleasant environment, and work and school policies that encourage non-automobile travel.



*Mission Valley's River Walk provides an opportunity for recreational walkers, commuters, and shoppers to engage in "active transportation".*

Programs to promote active travel, and the presence of others walking or bicycling are also major factors.

"We wrote the book on identifying the range of

different influences that gets people engaging in physical activity not just for recreation but as part of their everyday life activities," said Laura Brennan Ramirez, Ph.D., adjunct assistant professor of community health at Saint Louis University School of Public Health.

It may seem unnecessary to spend millions of research dollars confirming common sense in this way.

But we at WalkSanDiego find it helpful to be able to cite such studies when we write letters, speak at hearings, and work with planners and engineers.

Some people need the research statistics before they'll believe their own eyes.

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## Americans prefer walkable communities

A recent survey sponsored by the national Association of Realtors and Smart Growth America showed 75% of Americans believe that building compact communities and better public transportation is a more effective solution to traffic congestion than is building new roads.

Nearly 90% said new communities should be designed

so we can walk more and drive less. More than 70% of respondents are concerned about how growth and development affects global warming, and 80% prefer redeveloping existing urban and suburban areas, rather than building at the edges of our existing suburbs.

For more information, visit [www.smartgrowthamerica.org](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org).

# Obesity levels off, but still high

A November 2007 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Obesity Among Adults in the United States – No Change Since 2003-2004", found no change in obesity rates between 2003-2004 and 2005-2006. However, levels are still high – at 34% of U.S. adults aged 20 and over. Obesity is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or greater.

Age and ethnicity groups were found to be disproportionately affected. Adults aged 40-59 had the highest obesity prevalence compared with other age groups: 40% of men and 41% of women in this age group were obese. Among ethnic groups, women were most affected. For example, among women 60 and older, 61% of non-Hispanic black women were obese compared with 37% of Mexican-American women and 32% of non-Hispanic white women.

"In view of these alarmingly high rates of obesity in all population groups, CDC has

made the prevention of obesity one of its top public health priorities," said Janet Collins, director of CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

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## San Diegans active but overweight

A new study by Forbes.com finds San Diego ranks 13th on the list of most sedentary U.S. cities.

While only 25% of San Diegans are completely inactive (compared to 34% nationally), and we spend the fewest hours watching TV (26 hours per week), 64% of us are overweight or obese.

San Francisco, with its compact form and excellent public transit, ranked as the least sedentary city in the U.S. Find details at [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com).

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## Become a Member of WalkSanDiego

To join, fill out and mail this form with your check.

Or join on our secure website, [www.walksandiego.org](http://www.walksandiego.org).

Membership in **WalkSanDiego**:

- Entitles you to free admission to walks, talks, and training events.
- Strengthens the pedestrian voice of the region.
- Gives you a "seat at the table" of agencies allocating the region's transportation funds.
- Provides you the know-how to make changes in your community.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Walking interests \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 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: WalkSanDiego  
740 13th Street, Suite 220  
San Diego, CA 92101

# Californians understand global warming threat

A very recent poll of 1,000 California residents showed

- 80% believe global warming poses a serious or very serious threat. By comparison, a national poll in April found that 52% of U.S. adults described the issue as important to them.

- On the bright side, 85% of Californians believe that greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced while creating jobs and expanding the economy.

- 80% support tax incentives to industry and individuals to reduce their emissions.

- Imposing a carbon tax on individuals is narrowly favored 52% to 43%. However, support grows to 65% if the money from the tax was spent solely on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- Importantly, political party affiliation did not affect respondents' views. However, those who were better informed about the issue were more likely (by 20 percentage points) to favor corrective action.



During odd-numbered months, WalkSanDiego holds a Brown Bag lunchtime forum featuring guest speakers.

At November's Brown Bag, veteran planner Mike Stepner discussed "Canyonlands", a region-wide initiative to protect and improve access to urban canyons.

On January 23, our speaker will be Samir Hajjiri from the City of San Diego discussing the planned transformation of University Avenue.

For more information, visit [www.WalkSanDiego.org](http://www.WalkSanDiego.org).



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