Why are we driving everywhere instead of walking?

Our communities are designed so that we have no other choice!

The following pairs of photographs illustrate barriers in current land use patterns that keep us from walking alongside solutions that demonstrate more pedestrian-friendly alternatives. Which land use patterns would you like to see in your community?

BARRIERS

- **No through streets or walkways**
  Walking is made difficult when streets look like spaghetti and there are no paths that take you directly to your destination.

- **Large-lot or strip development**
  It is unlikely that anyone would walk from McDonald’s to the bank. Buildings are too spread out.

SOLUTIONS

- **Through streets**
  Streets or paths which connect to multiple destinations encourage walking. In these neighborhoods, people walk up to 3 times as often.

- **Compact development**
  Compact development makes walking possible because destinations are closer to one another and the walk is more interesting.

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Walking is key to staying healthy.

- Regular physical exercise is a vital part of maintaining our health and well being. Yet we are walking an average of eight miles less per day than our forebears. Instead, our time is spent behind the wheel. On average, U.S. households make 12 auto trips a day.

- One-fourth of all trips are less than one mile, yet three-fourths of these trips are made by car.

- Car dependence is damaging our health. Poor diet and lack of exercise is now second only to cigarette smoking as a leading cause of death in the United States.
Changes in the community environment to promote physical activity may offer the most practical approach to prevent obesity or reduce its co-morbidities. Restoration of physical activity as part of the daily routine represents a critical goal.

– Dr. Jeffrey Koplan and Dr. William Dietz, Centers for Disease Control

**BARRIERS**

- **Dead wall space**
  In many areas, it doesn’t feel safe to walk. People feel vulnerable when there is no one around.

- **No crosswalks**
  It’s often too hard to walk across the street to get where you want to go. It’s much easier to drive.

- **Long blocks**
  Long blocks are inconvenient for pedestrians who want to travel efficiently between destinations.

- **Unappealing walks**
  A path like this one is infrequently used except by those without options.

**SOLUTIONS**

- **Windows on the street**
  Windows and people along the street create a safe and pleasant place to walk.

- **Crosswalks**
  Well-marked crosswalks help the pedestrian feel safer when crossing a wide street.

- **Short blocks or mid-block alleys and paths**
  Mid-block crossings make walking more convenient.

- **Interesting or beautiful walks**
  Amenities such as landscaping encourage pedestrian use.
**BARRIERS**

- **Wide, unshaded streets**
  Wide, unshaded streets look unappealing to the pedestrian and encourage cars to speed. In the summer, these streets are hot.

- **Wide streets with no medians**
  Walking across a wide street is unappealing and extends pedestrians’ exposure to traffic hazards.

- **Large shopping malls**
  A California Air Resources Board study shows that 99% of the shoppers drive to malls like this.

**SOLUTIONS**

- **Narrow, shaded streets**
  Narrow, shaded streets can slow down the cars and be up to 10 degrees cooler, making walking far more pleasant.

- **Streets with medians**
  Adding a street median will make it more pleasant and safe to cross the street.

- **Downtown shopping**
  60% of the people who shop in this mall located in downtown San Diego either walk or take transit.

**Resources**

The resources listed below will be helpful to you and your city planners. Call the Local Government Commission for additional help, (916) 448-1198.

- **Ordinances.** The LGC maintains a collection of the nation’s best mixed-use ordinances and traditional neighborhood development ordinances.


- **Downtowns.** The National Main Street Center can assist communities interested in downtown revitalization. Contact: (202) 588-6219; www.mainst.org. In California: California Main Street, (916) 322-5003.

- **Urban Design.** The Congress for the New Urbanism has resources and referrals to architects, planners, and urban designers who design walkable environments. (415) 495-2255; www.cnu.org

**LGC Guidebooks:**

This project is funded by the Physical Activity and Health Initiative, California Department of Health Services under a Preventive Health Services Block Grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Work performed as part of a UC San Francisco contract.

Planning for Walking

Focus on Livable Communities

Create a walkable environment and the community will reap the benefits:

- Walkers bring business to shop owners.
- Walkers interact with neighbors, building a sense of community.
- Walkers teach children traffic safety skills.
- Walkers don't pollute the air.
- Walkers don't clog the roads.
- Walkers get energized and improve their fitness.
- Walkers who are seniors live longer than those who are sedentary.
- Walkers make our communities more livable.

Most planning decisions are made at the local level by your city or county. Form coalitions to work with your county supervisor, mayor, or city council members, planning commission members, and planning or public works staff.

BARRIERS

- Isolated schools
  Increasingly, schools are being put on the edge of existing development, making driving unavoidable.

- Isolated recreational areas
  It is likely that children will need to be driven to this recreational area.

- Isolated grocery stores
  People must drive to stores like this, even if they simply need a carton of milk!

- Isolated office buildings
  No pedestrian access here! In 1990, only 4% of Americans walked to work.

SOLUTIONS

- Neighborhood schools
  When schools are integrated into the neighborhood, children can walk or ride a bike.

- Neighborhood parks
  Neighborhood parks allow kids to be more active when they are in their own neighborhood.

- Neighborhood grocery stores
  A neighborhood store allows family members to pick up daily needs by walking.

- Downtown or neighborhood
  This office location allows people to walk to work and go to lunch without climbing in a car.

Walkers bring business to shop owners.
Walkers interact with neighbors, building a sense of community.
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