

Livable Places Update

Emerging Trends in Community Planning and Design

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Walk, Don't Drive, to the Economic Recovery: Now that gas prices have risen to over \$4.00 a gallon, we have seen the media giving increased attention to the importance of walking, biking, and transit. Eight California cities have recently been pointed out as being among the very best at providing their residents with these options!

San Francisco and Davis included on CNN's list of "15 of the World's Most Friendly Bike Cities"— Not a bad record when you are competing against cities like Amsterdam and Copenhagen!

The City of Davis was chosen for having a larger population of bikes than people. Since the early seventies, city elected officials have been requiring developers to add to the existing off-street bike network by including it in new development plans. As the City has grown, the miles of off-street bike paths have grown. Today, the community has almost the same number of miles of paths for bikes as they do for cars. Seventeen percent of all trips are taken on a bike.

San Francisco was noted for having doubled the number of bike commuters over the past decade while the number of bike collisions declined. Among the City's bike-friendly initiatives are removing car parking to make room for bike parking, distributing "Watch for Bikes" stickers (to be placed on driver's side rearview mirrors), and a fledgling bike share program. This program initially will offer 1,000 bicycles at up to 100 kiosk stations around the Bay Area. The system allows people to access bikes at secure docking stations either by becoming online subscribers or paying on-site.

Santa Barbara is included in The Atlantic's list of the "Eleven Most Walk-Friendly Cities in the U.S." — Communities were in rank order and Santa Barbara was fifth!

Santa Barbara received its top-level ranking due, in part, to its Pedestrian Master Plan that emphasizes connectivity policies. Included in the plan is the development of paseos or pedestrian-oriented shopping streets that were created after the removal of parking lanes behind businesses in 1969.

The Circulation Element of Santa Barbara's General Plan is a complete streets document. Goals include: Strive to Achieve Equality of Choice Among Modes; Increase the Availability and Use of Transit; and Increase Bicycling as a Transportation Mode.

Santa Barbara has a model Safe Routes to

School Program already implemented with increasing participation from schools. The Master Plan has maps of safe routes for all 16 schools in the city limits. They host a Walk to School Day in October, encourage regular walking to school through a friendly competition called the Walk & Roll to School Challenge, produce and disseminate Safe Routes To School maps to parents at the beginning of each school year, partner with others in teaching how to drive a walking school bus, track walking and biking to school during homeroom time, and perform School Hazard Assessments every three years.



Pedestrians on State Street in Santa Barbara, CA, one of the most walk-friendly cities in the U.S.!

The Santa Barbara Car Free program encourages car-free travel through discounts and by providing information on walkable destinations like the Farmers Markets, parks, trails, and bus and shuttle services.

Finally, as part of standard operating procedure, curb radii are designed on a case-by-case basis with a focus on increasing the pedestrian staging area, shortening the pedestrian crossing length, and slowing the speeds of turning vehicles.

Modesto, Fresno, and Silicon Valley cities included in TIME Magazine's Ten Best U.S. Cities for Public Transit — TIME's ranking of the best U.S. transit cities was based on a survey by the Brookings Institute of the routes and schedules of 371 transit systems in the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas. Three of the top ten regions were in California.

In Fresno, 72% of working-age residents live near a transit stop. The median wait for a rush hour transit vehicle is 10.7 minutes. And 57% of jobs in the city are reachable via transit in 90 minutes.

Ninety percent of residents of working-age in Modesto live near a transit stop. The median wait during rush hour is 18 minutes. And 38% of jobs in the city are reachable via transit in 90 minutes.

Ninety six percent of the working-age residents of San Jose, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara live within easy walking distance of a transit stop: 96%! During rush hour, the median wait for transit was a mere 6.9 minutes. The percent of jobs reachable via transit in 90 minutes is 58%.

The Brookings report, *Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan Areas*, found that although nearly seven out of ten residents of large metropolitan areas live in neighborhoods served by some form of transit, most jobs are unreachable, even if residents are willing to devote an hour and a half just to get to work! Brookings says a large part of the problem is that when jobs are scattered through the suburbs, as has been the trend for many years, they're difficult to reach by transit, much of which still operates on a hub-and-spoke layout focused on central business districts.

There is some good news. Los Angeles, the home of the freeway, seems to be getting back on the tracks! Transit watchers across the country say that the LA region has become the prime example of how to raise money for rail and is an innovator in pursuing loans to speed up construction.

While many agencies are cutting back, Los Angeles' aggressive rail expansion is picking up steam. The county's Metropolitan Transportation Authority unveiled this month a record \$4.15-billion budget that includes money for about a dozen rail lines that are either under construction or being planned. The lynch pin of this continued work is a .5-cent sales tax increase dedicated to transportation projects that voters approved in 2008.

Walk, Don't Drive – Key to Health As Well As Economic Recovery: New data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicates that not only is the number of people with obesity, diabetes and heart disease growing, the trends appear to be accelerating! In light of this, more communities are taking action. Michael Osur, Deputy Director of the Riverside County Department of Public Health says, "You can totally change the health of a county if you change how the communities are built."

Concerned about very high rates of obesity, the Riverside County Health Department was one of the first in California to partner with the planning department to assure walkability in new development. Recently this partnership has resulted in a framework for "healthy communities" as an amendment to the General Plan. The new policies now set the stage for communities that will be walkable and bikeable with convenient access to nutritious food.

It is particularly significant that the county has taken action because much of the county's development has been occurring in fast-growing, unincorporated areas. While a number of older cities in the Inland Empire could serve as models for walkability — Redlands, downtown Riverside, downtown Palm Springs and the historic section of downtown Coachella — the county is primarily built with the suburban cul-de-sac street form with separated land uses.

Today, Riverside County officials say they want to see developments with more recreational opportunities; cul-de-sacs that are connected by walking trails; multimode transportation networks; safer streets for pedestrians and bicyclists; and housing developments that are close to employers, schools, health care facilities and markets that sell fresh food. From now on, developers will need to take into account the guidelines for "healthy communities" that are outlined in the General Plan. "It's prevention on the grandest scale," says Osur.

A New York Department of Health Survey has found that New Yorkers who walk or take transit to work get most of their physical activity as they go about their daily routines, walking a total of 57 minutes a day. Those who drive by car get half as much exercise. The Health Department concludes that the city's compact development and strong transit system is the key to incorporating activities that lower New Yorkers' risk of diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. The city's top doctors are now joining the public health department in making the case for more traffic calming on city streets.

Call for Session Proposals for New Partners for Smart Growth 2012: Next year's New Partners Conference will be held February 2 to 4 at the San Diego Sheraton Hotel and Marina in San Diego, California.

The Call for Session Proposals (CFSP) for the 11th Annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference has officially opened! This process will be open from May 16 to June 30. There is no limit to the number of proposals a person or entity can submit. There is also very little limit on the types of proposals - including workshops, trainings, panels, tours, lightning rounds, networking, or individual presentations.

The submittal review process will take place from early-July through late-August 2011. By mid-September, the LGC will notify those who have submitted sessions as to whether their proposal was accepted for inclusion in the conference program. To receive instructions and an online submittal form, go to the conference web site at <http://www.newpartners.org/cfsp/>