

Walkable Communities Workshop

NATIONAL CENTER
BICYCLING & WALKING

Anderson, IN Final Report



June 14, 2005



Citizens, Professionals, and Government Officials Gather to Learn and Brainstorm Ideas

Workshop Purpose: To brainstorm ideas on how the concept of a walkable community can be incorporated into the existing town as well as any new developments.

On June 14, 2005, a group of citizens, government officials, professionals, and other interested people gathered in the Delaware Room of the Anderson Public Library to discuss how walkability can and should be incorporated into the overall downtown revitalization efforts.

Two national walkability experts, Mark Fenton and Megan Hoyt, led the workshop. It was organized by the National Center for Bicycling and Walking and sponsored by the Madison County Council of Governments (MCCOG).

What is a Walkable Community?

A walkable community is, as the name implies, a community where people can comfortably and safely walk or ride a bicycle as a means of daily transportation. Making Anderson truly walkable, however, implies more than just sidewalks and crosswalks. It also means:

- attending to detail, which ultimately determines a town's walkability.
- considering children, the elderly, and the handicapped (e.g., repairing sidewalks that might be more dangerous for the elderly and handicapped).
- creating a comfortable and inviting environment allowing people to be out on the street all day and on weekends, thereby producing a safe environment through informal surveillance.
- ensuring that adjacent neighborhoods are connected to town and other parts of the city so that pedestrians can walk from place to place easily and safely.
- planting trees between the sidewalk and the street (where possible) to buffer pedestrians from cars as well as to provide shelter from rain and shade from the sun.
- establishing a mix of business, industry, residences and



For a list of useful links, go to
<http://www.lawalks.org/links.htm>

For a copy of the PowerPoint presentation,
contact Madison County Council of Governments at
mccog@mccog.net

other uses, ensuring that the streets are not vacant after 5 p.m. on weekdays.

Why is a walkable community a worthy goal for Anderson? There are many reasons; it would:

- make the town a more enjoyable place to be.
- ensure that all members of the community can lead an independent lifestyle. A full 30% of the American public do not drive automobiles - whether because they are too young, are physically unable, cannot afford a vehicle, or simply choose not to drive - and therefore must rely on walking, bicycling, or transit to get around.
- positively influence residents' health. The current generation of Americans is the first expected to have a shorter lifespan than their parents. This is due in large part to an American obesity epidemic, which is related to a sedentary auto-related lifestyle. The sedentary lifestyle is difficult to avoid if neighborhoods do not enable people to walk or ride bicycles.

The Workshop Agenda

Hoyt led Anderson's workshop, which focused on determining what role walkability can play in the ongoing revitalization efforts downtown and the issues related to it, including community and neighborhood connections, aesthetics, economic development, etc.

The workshop followed the following format:

- *Visions:* Each participant was asked to share their vision for Anderson in the next 10 years.
- *Presentation:* Hoyt gave an extensive presentation covering a number of rationales for improving walkability as well as tools to enact change. (for a copy of the presentation, contact MCCOG)
- *Walking tour:* Fenton and Hoyt split the group into two smaller groups and went on walking routes around the town. Along the way, participants were asked to rate their experience at a number of points, as well as to compare their perceptions of different areas, explain why they felt the way they did, and to generate ideas for how the spaces could be altered.

The Workshop Leaders



Mark Fenton is an established walking and walkability expert - he earned a B.A. and an M.S. in biomechanics from M.I.T. prior to participating in the U.S. Olympic speedwalking team, later becoming a coach for other prominent speedwalkers. He has also worked in research engineering for Reebok, edited and contributed columns to several walking magazines, and more recently become a prominent public health spokesperson and hosted the PBS series 'America Walks.'

Megan Hoyt, the City of Seattle's Department of Transportation Coordinator for Pedestrian and School Safety received her M.A. in civil engineering and has since been involved in a number of innovative transportation projects. She has also been actively involved in walkability advocacy and the national Safe Routes to School Program.

- *Group brainstorming:* Once the participants returned to the library, they split into four groups. Each group was given aerial photos of the walking routes along with markers and was asked to brainstorm ideas about what they would like to see downtown.

Participants were asked to think in terms of three P's: projects, programs, and policies. For example, if the goal is to landscape local parking lots, a project might be planting trees in a particular parking lot. A program might be getting a group of town business owners together to encourage and assist people to install landscaping town. A policy might be to have a municipal landscape requirement for any new development town.

Results

The results from the workshop have been compiled and listed below. Concepts have been combined where two or more people or groups have expressed the same idea. The results have been separated by the four sections of the workshop: Visions, Presentation, Walking Tour and Group Brainstorming. A map with the information gathered from the group brainstorming session is located at the end of the document.

Visions

At the outset, each participant stated his or her 10-year vision for town Anderson. Visions included:

- An extensive bicycle path network, including designated bike lanes and trails on both sides of the river.
- Increased landscaping - green streets and parking lots.
- An attractive, active downtown.
- Bicycle and pedestrian connections at multiple levels: space, neighborhood, city, inter-city.
- All new development to include walking and landscaping provisions.
- Higher density and mixed use.
- Increased commercial and industrial activity.
- Safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- An improved sign system.

Presentation

Hoyt went through an extensive list of walkability elements, rationales and details. She suggested a series of elements that might be useful in Anderson's town revitalization:

- Consider back-in angled parking.
- Use natural drainage.
- Install two ramps per corner at intersections.
- Install short pedestrian crossings and marked crosswalks.
- Create gateways to the town.
- Increase the number of sitting places along the sidewalks.

The Walking Tours

Participants split into two groups and went on a walking tour around the town, with one group led by Hoyt and the other by Fenton. At key points, the groups stopped and participants were asked to rate their surroundings, explain their ratings, and generate ideas for how the spaces could be improved. Comments and ideas from each group are listed below, organized by location.

Route 1

Hoyt led the first walking route. Participants walked from the library west to Meridian Street, north to 8th St., east to Main St., south to 11th St. and then back to the library.

12th St. and Main.

- Some of the buildings lack entrances and windows facing the street. Not having street entrances discourages pedestrian access and lessens the life of the street. There is a need to find ways to open them and ensure future businesses are open to the street.
- Sidewalks are uneven.
- Some blocks have trees buffering pedestrians from the street; others do not. More continuity would be an improvement.

Meridian St. - Town Center Park and Paramount area

- Town Center Park has potential for many activities (e.g., farmer's market, plays, etc.).
 - Good job in creating a visual for drivers to know they are in a unique place.
 - The park is heavily used by families with children, but it does not attract many town employees; this might be an opportunity for research.
- The entire area, including the street itself, could be blocked off for a festival.
- Meridian St. needs more places to sit.
- Meridian St. is generally excellent for pedestrians, but more businesses are necessary to pull people downtown.
- The painted alley next to Camerata, a now-closed business, is a good planned space but is not being used
- Meridian St. could use more planters and banners along street.
- South of 11th St., Meridian lacks the town feel and has a lot of surface parking- these spaces could have better uses.

Intersection of Meridian and 9th St.

- Connection to neighborhoods two to three blocks west needs improvement – barriers should be removed.
- The County parking lot is very harsh - could use some plant buffers to screen parking and provide shade. Iron fending should be removed.

8th St. bridge

- Sidewalks are too narrow for more than one person at a time.
- Could reduce lanes to two along 8th St. - a one-day test can be performed using pylons.

11th St. and Main

- Senior housing could be better-connected to downtown.
- Find ways for people to get from senior housing to grocery stores, entertainment.

Route 2

Fenton led the second walking route. Participants walked from the library east to Pearl St., south to 14th St., west to Meridian St. (observing south to 15th St.), north to 12th St. and back to the library.

12th St. from Central Ave. to Pearl St.

- Sidewalks are generally narrow and in disrepair – should be widened and repaired.
- Tree branches on sidewalk create barrier – should be trimmed to enable access for all users.

- Senior housing could use:
 - o Bus shelter – there is only a stop now.
 - o A pharmacy/market.
- Trees along sidewalks would decrease heat, improve aesthetics

Pearl St from 12th St. to 14th St.

- A traffic circle could be installed at intersection of Pearl St./13th St./Ohio Ave. to improve function.
- Bump-outs could be installed at intersections (for example at 13th St. and Pearl St.) to improve safety conditions for pedestrians.
- Ramps at sidewalk intersections missing in many locations – should be installed.

14th St. from Pearl St. to Main St.

- Too many curb cuts, especially at old gas station on 14th St.
- Sidewalks on 14th St. in serious disrepair.
- 14th St. has a potential for bike lanes– there is plenty of space. Bike lanes would be the cheapest and simplest way to slow traffic.
- Utility poles in the middle of the sidewalk are serious barrier for pedestrians, especially handicapped – they should be removed.
- Too much surface parking, should be developed into other uses.

Meridian St. from 15th St. to 12th St.

- Meridian Street is very different from areas to east and west – could be tied in better.
- Existing angle parking could be converted to backwards angle parking.
- More landscaping would improve aesthetics and microclimate, especially around bare areas (e.g., parking lots).

Brainstorming Session

The brainstorming session provided participants with an opportunity to put their ideas for Anderson's downtown on paper. Once the participants returned to the library, they split into four groups. Each group was given aerial photos of the walking routes along with markers and was asked to brainstorm ideas for improving town. The results below have been combined from all groups and divided into projects, programs, and policies. Please note that, since this is a compilation, some concepts may overlap. For example two different projects may be suggested for the same site.

Projects – The projects listed below have been divided into general and specific. General projects are those that could be installed in multiple locations; specific projects are site-specific.

General projects

- Build mixed use parking garage(s) – participants frequently mentioned the desire to consolidate parking while maintaining commercial and residential access to the street. A mixed use parking garage is a good way to achieve these goals.
- Improve sidewalks - repair sidewalks, increase width, install two ramps per corner separate from road where possible.
- Trim tree branches.
- Install bump-outs at intersections (e.g., 13th and Pearl St.); any bump-outs should have smooth curves for snow clearing.

- Decrease number of curb-cuts.
- Remove utility poles from center of sidewalks (e.g. 14th St.).
- Decrease amount of surface parking – redevelop into other uses.
- Tie Meridian St. in with areas to east and west.
- Install backwards angle parking.
- Convert one-way streets to two-way.
- Increase trees and landscaping, especially around large paved areas (e.g. parking lots) to decrease heat and beautify the area.
- Install bus shelters near senior housing.

Specific projects

- Install traffic circle at Pearl/13th St./Ohio Ave.
- Add bike lanes to 14th St.
- Establish a grocery store downtown, possibly near senior housing.
- Install lights along the River Walk to improve safety.
- Create a boulevard on Main St. with bike lanes both ways to slow traffic and allow safe bike travel and create a main 2-way corridor.
- Connect 9th St. bike route to the River Walk to connect bicyclists and pedestrians to other recreational opportunities.
- Convert Workforce One site into:
 - a government complex with the main post office to bring the functions of a town back to town
 - a park or miniature golf on open area, or
 - a high rise residential building.
- Landscape the 8th St. bridge to create a gateway, as a wayfinding tool and sign that you are entering the downtown.
- Convert the Madison County Government Center parking lot across from the courthouse as well as the building directly to the south to residential/retail center.
- Convert the block with the US Post Office to residential/commercial mixed with parking because of its prime location on Meridian St.
- Separate the 11th St. sidewalk from the road with tree buffer to make the east-west walk more enjoyable.
- Continue decorative lighting along 12th St. corridor.
- Relocate bus depot to a main transit station. Note: transit gets more passengers when connected to a pedestrian/bicycle system.
- Convert the parking lot across from the library to a grocery store and buffer sidewalk with trees because the area is close to assisted living and there are no facilities like it nearby.
- Convert parking on Central Ave. and 12th St. to mixed use with parking above- this is a large parking lot with few cars and close to the activity of the library.
- Improve sidewalks and crossings along 11th St. and 12th St. for safer corridors for the senior residents (including lane separators for resting spots).
- Improve the crossing at the intersection of Jackson St. and 12th St. creating a transition into town.
- Install bike lanes on Main St. and 14th St.; it is a cheap way of slowing traffic and improving bike access.
- Develop the land along the river into condos, townhouses, and/or zoo.
- Widen and fix sidewalks directly southeast of town (Fletcher St., Pearl St., etc.) and 14th St. - sidewalks are narrow and in poor condition.
- Install signs to show River Walk access - good for people unfamiliar with area.
- Landscape the vacant lot towards the end of 9th St. near the river parking lot.

- Build a parking garage with retail on first floor at Jackson St. and 12th St - parking needed for events at Paramount of State Theaters, replace the current surface parking.

Programs

- Adopt a planter – a program could be created where businesses or community groups furnish and/or care for a planter.
- Shared parking – encouraging shared parking would cut down on the amount of land taken up by surface parking, freeing the space for other activities, redevelopment, or amenities such as pocket parks.
- Buy a bench – town has an overall lack of outdoor sitting space. Having businesses, community organizations, or individuals purchase a bench would be a simple remedy.
- Cultural/historic walking route – researching, creating and promoting a cultural/historic walking route could increase awareness of the town's history as well as increasing activity.
- Bike/walk to work day expansion – expanding to a monthly or weekly event makes sense since it has already been successful.

Policies

- Establish a landscaping ordinance/all parking lots should be landscaped – a landscape ordinance could remedy some of the negative effects of development, especially for surface parking lots. Trees reduce surface runoff, cool the environment by providing shade, and improve aesthetics and property values.
- Require businesses to have bike racks – requiring businesses to provide bike racks improves the bikeability of the town.
- Prohibit suburban development town – keeping buildings fronted to the street and parking either on the street or behind the building maintains the feel and function of a town.
- Review parking times – time limits for on-street parking should fit the needs of adjacent buildings.

Conclusions

The workshop provided an important forum for information sharing and brainstorming. Some important points to consider in walkability include:

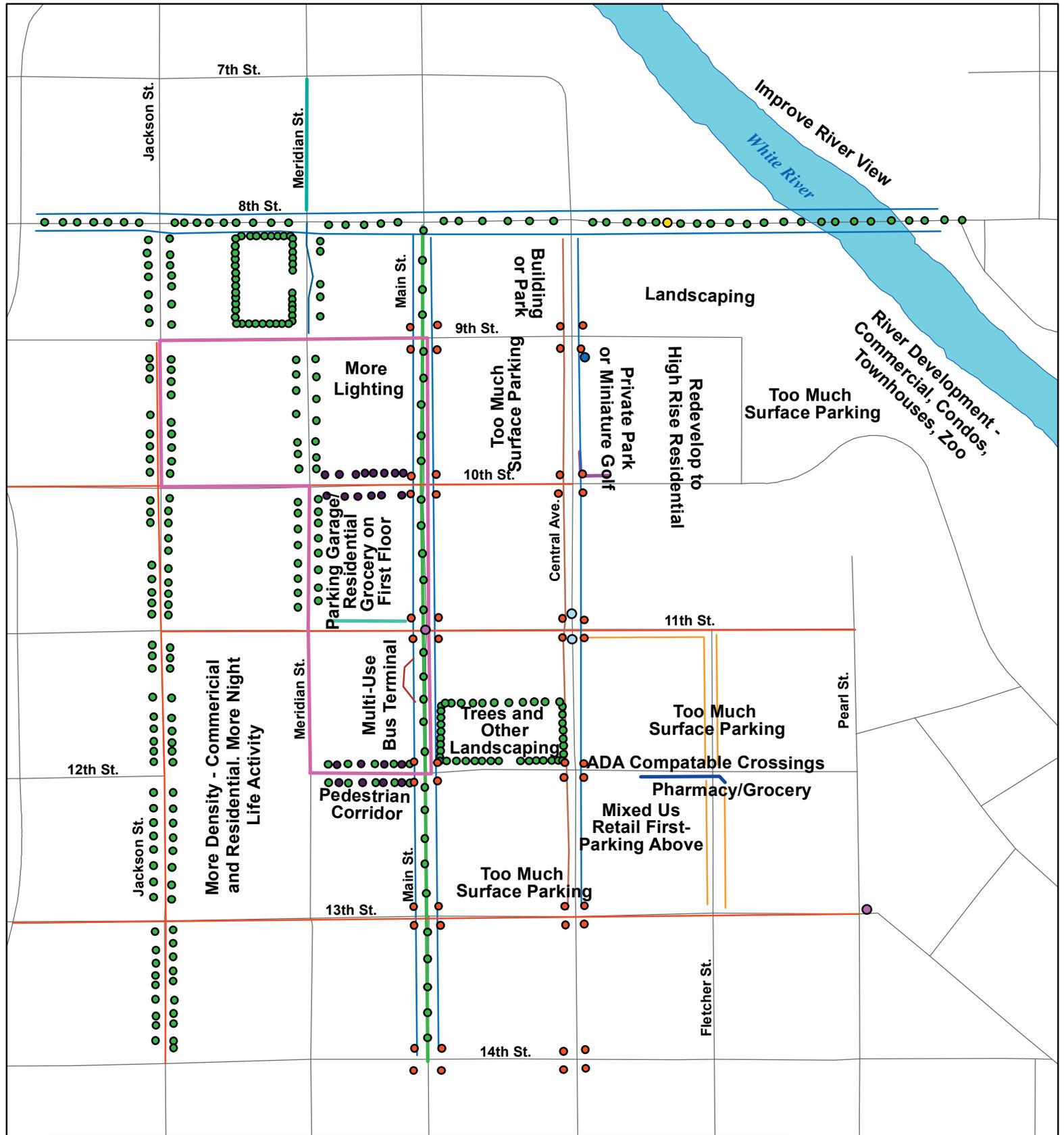
- *Users.* When planning for walkability, it is important to keep in mind all potential users. That includes everyone in the community – not just able-bodied adults but also young children to the elderly and people using wheelchairs. In fact, it is especially important to consider the youth and the elderly because they often are unable to drive, so walking is their primary means of transportation.
- *Land use.* Land use is the activity that occurs in a given place. In terms of walkability, you have to make sure that there is a place to begin and a place to end – for example, for people to walk to work, there must be residences and jobs connected by a path that is short enough to walk.
- *Continuity.* It's important to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian paths are continuous. One small barrier – a rough patch, the lack of a ramp, an ill-placed utility pole – can make the entire path unusable for its intended users.

There are many possible routes to implementing walkability into town. As Hoyt and Fenton

emphasized, getting local people involved in small inexpensive projects they are personally interested in is just as important as having large-scale, expensive projects. Additionally, improvements can come piece by piece – by maintaining interest and a watchful eye as the town develops over time, walkability can be used as an effective support tool in the ongoing town revitalization.

Attendees

Charlie Bridenthal	Storrow and Kinsella
Tonia Carriger	
Cory Daly	Anderson Parks and Recreation
Tamera Doty	Anderson Parks and Recreation
Jessica Foerster	HNTB
Michael Hershman	Madison County Planning Director
Audrey Mattingly	Anderson Herald-Bulletin
Joe Newman	
April Phillips	Anderson City Planning
Stephen Rybolt	Spoke and Wheel Club
Nishit Somaiya	Kato Smith Design Studio
Rob Sparks	Anderson Board of Public Works
Lori Sylvester	Anderson City Planning, Main Street
Winifrid Williams	KR Montgomery



	White River		Bike Lane		Safe Corridor
	Gateway to Downtown		Boulevard with Trees in Median		Separate Sidewalk from Road
	Historic Street Lights		Bus Drive up		Sidewalk Improvements
	Lane Separator		Chicane		Square The Corner
	Pedestrian Bump		Connection to Riverwalk		Two Way
	Signs for Riverwalk		Historic Walking Route		Local Streets
	Traffic Circle				
	Trees				

