

WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

Plan for pedestrians as a top priority in all cities, villages, and town centers, creating a safe and attractive network of side-walks and crossings within a 5 to 10 minute walk of the center.

One of the fundamental requirements of a successful center is making people feel comfortable walking around. Virtually everyone is a walker, if you include wheelchair users who also need good sidewalks. And walkers are shoppers. Except for banks and burger joints, people still have to get out of their cars to become customers. Attractive sidewalks are the economic lifeblood of centers, good for bottom-line business by enticing people to browse from store to store, rather than making only one quick stop.

A convenient sidewalk system insures a proper balance between walking and vehicles, helping to restore the street as a social space. Too often walkers are only considered obstructions to the flow of faster traffic, even though slower speeds are essential in centers. Over 80% of pedestrians are killed in 40 mph accidents, while only 15% die at 20 mph. One out every seven traffic fatalities are pedestrians (1 of 4 in New York State), so we need to put a much higher priority on safe sidewalks and crosswalks.

The First Steps to Walkability

Step 1 - Take photos or videotape your streets

If the main sidewalks are not fairly full in the afternoons and friends are not stopping for long conversations on the corners, go to Step 2.

Step 2 - Observe and talk to seniors and kids

Over 30% of people cannot drive because of age, income, or disability. If a 12-year-old and her grandpa cannot easily walk from their homes to the center, find a nice place to sit, and some interesting things to do, go to Step 3.

Step 3 - Map all pedestrian features

Do an inventory of sidewalks, crosswalks, benches, bus stops, bike racks, and high pedestrian generators (post offices, schools, public parking, etc.). Also note obstacles to walking, such as 30+ mph or overly wide roads, lack of sidewalks and crosswalks, no buffer from traffic, gaps between storefronts, or stores behind parking lots.

Step 4 - Agree on a list of priority projects

Work with public officials, business owners, and other key groups to fill in the gaps to a continuous walking network, beginning with easier tasks like striping new crosswalks, mapping sidewalk extensions, and getting local boards to include pedestrian enhancements in every site plan.



A compact mix of community uses and a continuous pedestrian network within a 1/4 mile to 2,000 foot radius of the neighborhood center encourages walking for short trips, to nearby schools, and between stores in the business area.

Pedestrian-Friendly Guidelines

Sidewalk Design:

- 5-foot minimum width (6-foot wide better); 8 to 15 feet in main street commercial areas.
- 7-foot minimum height clearance.
- Durable materials (concrete or brick pavers best).
- At least 5 feet (preferably 6 feet) back from curb to separate walkers from traffic and road spray, allow room for street trees and snow storage, and prevent side slopes at each driveway.
- Meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

Sidewalk Locations:

- Both sides along central circulation streets, in commercial districts, near schools, and in residential areas with more than 4 units per acre.
- At least on one side in residential areas with 1 to 4 units per acre.
- Optional one side or wide shoulder in areas with less than 1 unit per acre.

Crosswalks:

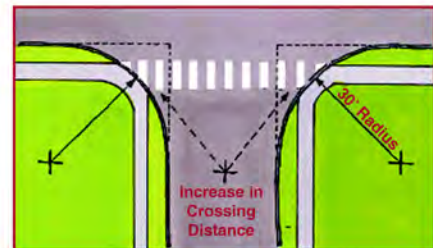
- As short as possible with small corner radii.
- About 10 feet wide, well lit, boldly marked with bar stripes or textured surface, and at every major intersection and selected higher volume mid-block crossings.
- Extend curbs/sidewalks into parking lanes to shorten crosswalks and increase visibility.

Traffic:

- Slow speeds to under 30 mph in centers, preferably under 20 mph in higher pedestrian areas.
- Provide pedestrian signals and eliminate right turn on red at major crossing locations.



New York drivers need to be reminded that walkers have rights too. Additional crosswalks with bold markings will help announce equal access for walkers and cars in centers.



Corner radii in centers should be as small as possible to shorten crosswalks and slow down turning vehicles. Where a traditional 5 to 10-foot radius produces a 36-foot crossing distance, a new 30-foot radius can create a 60-foot crosswalk.



A redesign for the "four corners" intersection in Tivoli calls for textured brick crosswalks, street trees, and flared sidewalks out into the parking lanes to slow traffic, increase pedestrian visibility, and prevent illegal parking too close to the intersection.



Pedestrians are the lost measure of a community... To plan as if there were pedestrians may be a self-fulfilling act.

Peter Calthorpe

Sources:

Anton Nelessen, *Visions for a New American Dream*, 1993

Peter Calthorpe, *The Next American Metropolis, Ecology, Community, and the American Dream*, 1993

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