



The City of Portland hosted a walkability workshop in June 2010 to explore how context sensitive transportation practices could help enhance the downtown area for a wide array of transportation modes. Through a partnership with Metro, national transportation experts from AECOM and the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute visited the city and conducted a multi-day, interactive and community-driven process.

Walkability workshops can be a powerful tool for people to discuss common issues of interest or concern related to the design, maintenance, and operation of streets, parks, and open spaces. The goal of the East Portland workshop was to identify and prioritize solutions to current issues to help enhance livability and redevelopment potential downtown. Thoughtful input was provided during interviews with residents, elected officials, planning staff, and representatives from various agencies. This summary highlights the set of ideas and priorities that emerged from the walkability workshop, and outlines a new approach that the City of Portland is poised to help advance and implement with the support of Metro.

Sustainable transportation systems meet the present transportation needs of pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The current practice of sustainable transportation planning was developed in reaction to the limitations of conventional, auto-centric transportation policy, practice, and performance throughout the USA during the past half-century. Urban transportation systems based only on the car (speed and accommodation for the motorist) have proved unsustainable, consuming excessive energy, affecting the health of populations and delivering a declining level of service despite massive capital and environmental costs. Many of these negative impacts fall disproportionately on people who are least likely to own and drive cars.

Today, sustainable transportation advocates call for improved transportation equity, shifting the emphasis in public spending and actions away from conventional, auto-oriented practices, and to instead address the needs of a broader array of citizens and transportation modes. Building streets that accommodate pedestrians safely and comfortably is especially critical given prior decades of emphasis on designing streets primarily for motor vehicles. By designing for pedestrians first, communities establish a better balance between different transportation modes and add value to homes and businesses. Walkable communities lead to more social interaction, physical fitness, and diminished crime and other social problems.



East Portland

What We Heard

The following is a summary of the planning process, as facilitated by AECOM. The following were the major issues, opportunities, and desires voiced during the walkability workshops and discussions with different stakeholders:

ISSUES

- Bad bones - Lack of street connectivity
- Poor driver behavior / speeding
- Auto-focus design of streets (Division, Powell, 122nd)
- Hostile environment for pedestrians
- Noisy
- Ugly
- Excessive size
- Inadequate pedestrian facilities
- Lack of pedestrian crossings
- Barrier effect
- Suburban building pattern and transportation practices

ASSETS

- Served by transit
- Established neighborhoods
- Multicultural community
- Market for local / neighborhood services
- Workforce housing

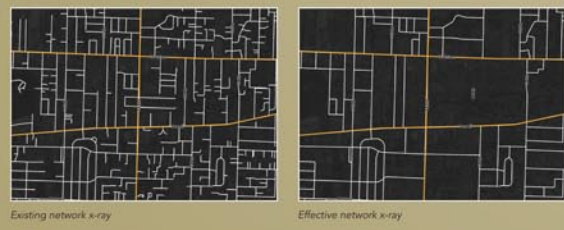
OPPORTUNITIES

- Increased Walkability
- Nodes for services (village center style)
- Higher modal choices
- Preservation of neighborhoods
- Increased safety - traffic calming
- Increased aesthetics along arterials
- Opportunities for investment / new jobs
- Infill redevelopment
- Additional parks / pedestrian connections



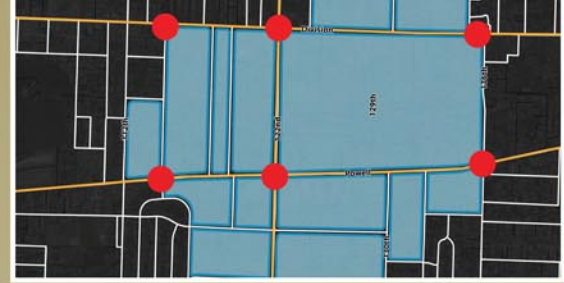
Study Area - Walkability Workshop Route

EXISTING CONDITIONS



The number of street connections determines how well a community's residents can move around on foot or even by vehicle. The diagrams above show connectivity (or the lack of thereof) within the study area. The upper left diagram shows all existing streets (the orange streets reflect the major roads carrying regional traffic). The upper right diagram shows only the effective street network, which reflects a sparse and hierarchical system, which puts all traffic pressure on a few streets, creating a need for wide, fast roads that end up being barriers to communities. The dependence on major roads for local trips results in a street system that is stretched to its capacity and have reduced accessibility for local trips.

Sustainable Transportation - Sustainable transportation is about meeting present transportation needs (i.e. pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists) without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The practice of sustainable transportation was developed in reaction to the mistakes of conventional transportation policy, practice, and performance throughout the USA during the past half-century. Urban transportation systems based only on the car (speed and accommodation for the motorist) have proved unsustainable, consuming excessive energy, affecting the health of populations and delivering a declining level of service despite massive capital and environmental costs. Many of these negative impacts fall disproportionately on people who are least likely to own and drive cars. The sustainable transportation movement is gaining force and advocating for transportation equity as a way to help shift the emphasis in public spending and actions away from conventional practices.



Lack of contributing network creates SUPER BLOCKS, which forces all automobile traffic onto a few roads, creating an unwalkable environment and over burdened intersections.

The existing network of arterials and collectors is strained by regional and local traffic volume. Better use of existing resources and creation of new street connections would distribute traffic more evenly. Isolated neighborhoods should be connected, especially for people walking and bicycling. Linking neighborhoods together strengthen the sense of community and makes walking and bicycling more convenient.

Top Priorities

SHORT TERM

IMPLEMENT ARTERIAL TRAFFIC CALMING ALONG POWELL, DIVISION, AND 122ND STREETS



Powell is candidate for a road diet (road narrowing) given its current low traffic volumes (20,000 AADT)

During the last century roads have been widened and straightened to accommodate more and faster vehicle traffic. These changes facilitate driving but often degrade conditions for walking, cycling, and for nearby residents. Conventional practices such as removing roadside obstacles, providing wider lanes, and managing access, have consistently reduced accidents and increased capacity, mostly on our freeways. Over time, the same approach have been applied to arterial and local streets, at times with mixed results. Street capacity may be increased, but often at a loss of access, neighborhood livability, and pedestrian and bicycle mobility. In many cases, the application of freeway-type design principles on arterial and local streets has actually increased speeding and accidents. Due to the evolving needs and function of an area over time, a corridor and its adjacent land uses may change and become incompatible. Arterial traffic calming efforts aim to minimize the divergence between adjacent land uses and driving behavior (speed). All to often this relationship is not considered or if so, is not integrated. City leaders and transportation professionals should strive to match the role of a corridor to its context, to determine appropriate operating, design and posted speeds. Potential benefits include road safety, increased comfort and mobility for non-motorized travel, reduced environmental impacts, increased neighborhood interaction, and increased property values.

Traffic Calming - Traffic Calming is the combination of mainly physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alter driver behavior and improve conditions for non motorized street users. Drivers tend to travel at speeds that are comfortable based on the street design, not necessarily at posted speed limits. Thus, the design speed of a street is critically important to its safety for all users, as well as the comfort of pedestrians and cyclists.

Through changes to the physical design of the street, traffic calming measures encourage improved driving behavior at desired speeds, which increases safety, reduces the number and severity of collisions, enhances community character, and increases walkability. On the other hand, traffic-control devices such as signs, signals, and pavement markings, as well as route-modification measures such as street closures, partial street closures, and turn prohibitions, do not necessarily calm the traffic and, in fact, can make traffic worse.



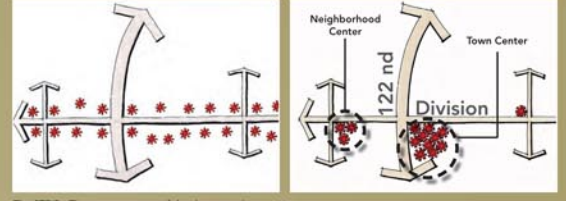
Before

Arterial Traffic Calming Visualization of 122nd approaching Division (before and after)

LONG TERM

ESTABLISH COMMUNITY NODES

We consider land uses as they pertain to the street. The idea is to balance traffic performance with the desired qualities of the street, such as its value as an "address", its retail friendliness, and its role as a public space for the community. The design of streets should respond to the vision and qualities of place that the community desires.



The STRIP - The current pattern of development along Division, Powell, and 122nd (suburban arterial roads)

Plan for community nodes along arterial corridors in the form of mixed use villages and neighborhood centers

Placemaking - Placemaking is the transformation of a street, sidewalk, plaza, square, paseo, open lot, waterfront or other space to be attractive, rewarding, and a community source of distinction and pride. Good places make good experiences and everlasting memories possible in our lives. Being in places involves social encounters and immersion into the sights, sounds, sun, wind and atmosphere of the locale. It encourages curiosity about the thought, imagination, and investment that guided the place's construction and use over time. Why is place-making important now? It is largely due to economics, ecological sustainability, and a desire by people to be more socially connected and engaged.



Typical suburban shopping center on an arterial road

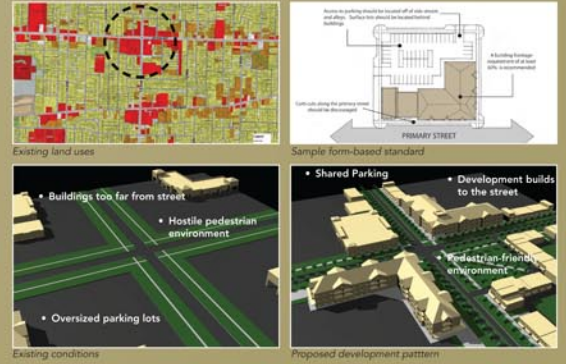
Sample redevelopment concept of a suburban shopping center into a mixed use village

IMPLEMENT FORM-BASED REGULATIONS



Urban to rural transect - A framework used in form-based regulations to define contexts

Form-based code is an evolved approach to land-development regulation that goes beyond addressing the uses of single parcels of land, or the form of individual buildings, to ensure that a community's vision is achieved. By linking the forms and functions of a town's buildings, parks and open spaces, and streets, form-based code helps municipalities build vibrant communities with a strong sense of place. The regulations in form-based codes, presented in both, diagrams and words, are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development rather than only distinctions in land-use types. Form-based codes typically address: 1) Building Form, determining the best building envelope for the context, how to address the street and the variety of buildings which integrate seamlessly with the surrounding context; 2) Circulation, evaluating existing streets and providing parameters for designing future streets by relying on the context of the area; 3) Parks and Public Spaces, identifying the types of parks and public spaces currently in the community and providing new parks and public spaces that are appropriate for the vision of the community. This is in contrast to conventional zoning's focus on the segregation of land-use types, permissible property uses, and the control of development intensity through simple numerical parameters (e.g., floor area ratio, dwellings per acre, height limits, setbacks, parking ratios, etc.)



Existing conditions

Proposed development pattern