



30 June 2014

Tucson City Council
255 W Alameda
Tucson AZ 85701

RE: Impact Fee Update

Honorable City Council Members,

On behalf of Living Streets Alliance, I am writing in support of the Sidewalk Expansion Program in the Streets Infrastructure Improvements Plan. As a non-profit organization that has spent a great deal of time and energy around issues of walkability and pedestrian safety in our region, we can attest to the great need for sidewalk improvements.

A walkable community is a desirable community. Numerous national surveys and reports (see attached) indicate that Americans want to live in walkable environments where daily destinations can be reached by foot or by a combination of modes of transportation including walking for increased mobility options. In that way, sidewalks are an economic development tool with tremendous return on investment. A walkable streetscape can spur development by providing a safe, attractive, and desirable atmosphere for local businesses, developers, and customers alike. Additionally, an accessible sidewalk network is essential to an efficient, high-functioning regional transportation system. The key is that it must be a complete sidewalk network. We support Development Impact Fee dollars going towards making this a reality in our city.

Current estimates of sidewalks alone in the City of Tucson indicate that over 2,600 miles are missing; a cost estimate of roughly \$483 million. When combined with the estimated \$12 million expense of bringing partial sidewalks up to ADA compliance (adding ADA curb ramps where needed), the City faces nearly \$500 million in sidewalk improvement funding needs. Additionally, it is safe to assume that this number will increase once the ADA Transition Plan has been completed and additional gaps and deficiencies have been identified.

We are encouraged by the forward-thinking refinements being made to the City's Street Infrastructure Improvements Plan and **encourage that the maximum amount possible be allocated to making life-saving, life-changing improvements to the sidewalk network in our city.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Yetman", written over a horizontal line.

Emily Yetman
Executive Director

The New York Times

May 25, 2012

Now Coveted: A Walkable, Convenient Place

By **CHRISTOPHER B. LEINBERGER**

WALKING isn't just good for you. It has become an indicator of your socioeconomic status.

Until the 1990s, exclusive suburban homes that were accessible only by car cost more, per square foot, than other kinds of American housing. Now, however, these suburbs have become overbuilt, and housing values have fallen. Today, the most valuable real estate lies in walkable urban locations. Many of these now pricey places were slums just 30 years ago.

Mariela Alfonzo and I just released a [Brookings Institution study](#) that measures values of commercial and residential real estate in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, which includes the surrounding suburbs in Virginia and Maryland. Our research shows that real estate values increase as neighborhoods became more walkable, where everyday needs, including working, can be met by walking, transit or biking. There is a five-step "ladder" of walkability, from least to most walkable. On average, each step up the walkability ladder adds \$9 per square foot to annual office rents, \$7 per square foot to retail rents, more than \$300 per month to apartment rents and nearly \$82 per square foot to home values.

As a neighborhood moves up each step of the five-step walkability ladder, the average household income of those who live there increases some \$10,000. People who live in more walkable places tend to earn more, but they also tend to pay a higher percentage of their income for housing.

Although we have not studied all urban areas to the same degree, these findings appear to apply to much of the rest of the country. In metropolitan Seattle in 1996, the suburban Redmond area, home to Microsoft, had the same price per square foot as Capitol Hill, a walkable area adjacent to downtown, based on data from [Zillow](#). Today, Capitol Hill is valued nearly 50 percent above Redmond.

In Columbus, Ohio, the highest housing values recorded by Zillow in 1996 were in the suburb of Worthington, where prices were 135 percent higher than in the struggling neighborhood of Short North, adjacent to the city's center. Today, Short North housing

values are 30 percent higher than those of Worthington, and downtown Columbus has the highest housing values in that metropolitan area.

In the Denver area, Highlands Ranch, an upscale, master-planned community 20 miles south of downtown, had housing in 1996 that cost on average 21 percent more than housing in Highlands, a troubled neighborhood adjacent to downtown Denver. Today, Highlands has a 67 percent price premium over Highlands Ranch.

People are clearly willing to pay more for homes that allow them to walk rather than drive. Biking is part of the picture, too. Biking and walking are part of a “complete streets” strategy that public rights of way should be for all of society — not just cars.

The rise in bike-sharing systems in Minneapolis, metropolitan Washington, and soon New York City makes it possible to imagine a future in which a third of a city’s population gets around primarily by bicycle. The popular Web site [Walk Score](#) has just added [Bike Score](#) to let people know which neighborhoods are most bikable.

Demand for walkable urban space extends beyond city centers to suburbs; in metropolitan Washington, more than half of the walkable places are in the suburbs, like Reston Town Center, 22 miles from downtown Washington; Ballston, in Arlington County; and Silver Spring, in suburban Maryland. Residents can easily get to grocery stores, cafes, libraries and work by rail transit, biking and walking.

Why is there an urbanization of the suburbs? Some baby boomers want to sell their large suburban houses and move to a walkable urban place but stay close to friends and family. Young families want the advantages of walkable urban life but also high-quality suburban schools. This trend is about both the revitalization of center cities and the urbanization of the suburbs.

To address the affordability challenge, a sensible strategy would include changes like zoning that allows homes with units in the back or over the garage. But the long-term solution is encouraging the building of more walkable places, which will reduce the price premiums by creating more supply.

(Disclosure: I am the president of Locus, a coalition of real estate developers and investors, and a project of Smart Growth America, which supports walkable neighborhoods and transit-oriented development.)

Different infrastructure needs to be built, including rail transit and paths for walking and

biking. Some research has shown that walkable urban infrastructure is substantially cheaper on a usable square foot basis than spread-out drivable suburban infrastructure; the infrastructure is used much more extensively in a small area, resulting in much lower costs per usable square foot.

It's important that developers and their investors learn how to build places that integrate many different uses within walking distance. Building walkable urban places is more complex and riskier than following decades-long patterns of suburban construction. But the market gets what it wants, and the market signals are flashing pretty brightly: build more walkable, and bikable, places.

A professor at the George Washington University School of Business and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.



URBAN WONK

What Millennials Want—And Why Cities Are Right to Pay Them So Much Attention

ANTHONY FLINT MAY 05, 2014 COMMENTS



As a baby boomer myself, I'll confess to feeling a bit like, enough with all this talk about the Millennials already. But the reality is, those born roughly between 1982 and 2001 form a demographic cohort of some 80 million Americans. So it's not surprising that U.S. cities are paying a lot of attention to what they want—now and in the future—in terms of the places they live.

For cities, the resurgent interest in downtown living has long been attributed to aging boomers—those born roughly between 1945 and 1964, an estimated 80 million as well, many of whom have already become empty-nesters and sold the house in the suburbs and “right-sized” to a condo near the symphony and fabulous bistros. Another significant segment of growing urban populations, of course, are the young professionals and what Richard Florida calls the “creative class.”

Nearly half of those who owned a car said they would consider giving it up.

Millennials are something else again. Characterized, fairly or not, as competitive and driven, entitled and narcissistic, thoroughly technology-savvy, and more practical than ideological, they are finding their way in the world, and making the time-honored calibration of professional career and preferred place of residence.

Two public opinion polls came out in the last month suggesting the kinds of places Millennials like. Spoiler alert: it's Boston, New York, San Francisco, and Chicago, as well as communities such as—I'm inclined to say once again, of course—Boulder and Austin. The key characteristics seem to be walkability, good schools and parks, and the availability of multiple transportation options.

The first survey was released by [The Rockefeller Foundation](#) and [Transportation for America](#), the arm of [Smart Growth America](#) that focuses on transportation as the key element of land use.

They found that 54 percent of Millennials surveyed would consider moving to another city if it had more or better options for getting around, and 66 percent said access to high quality transportation is one of the top three criteria they would weigh when deciding where to live. Nearly half of those who

owned a car said they would consider giving it up if they could count on public transportation options. Up to 86 percent said it was important for their city to offer opportunities to live and work without relying on a car.

The poll, conducted by Global Strategy Group, was done in 10 major U.S. cities across three 'tiers' of transportation systems – "mature" (Chicago, New York City, San Francisco), "growing" (Charlotte, North Carolina; Denver; Los Angeles; Minneapolis-St. Paul) and "aspiring" (Indianapolis; Nashville; Tampa-St. Petersburg).

"This survey reinforces that cities that don't invest in effective transportation options stand to lose out in the long-run," says Michael Myers, a managing director at The Rockefeller Foundation. "As we move from a car-centric model of mobility to a nation that embraces more equitable and sustainable transportation options, Millennials are leading the way."

The second survey was released last week by the American Planning Association, on the last day of the organization's [National Planning Conference](#) in Atlanta, a gathering of some five thousand planners, elected officials and others. The report on the national poll, titled [Investing in Place](#), compiled results of surveys of 1,040 Americans, roughly half Millennials, the other half baby boomers. Part of the message was that the two groups want many of the same things: better transportation options, walkable communities, technology-enabled cities, and housing that would allow "aging in place."

That poll, conducted by Harris, found that 68 percent of respondents believe the U.S. economy is fundamentally flawed, and that the path to prosperity lies in building up local communities—not through recruiting companies but by concentrating on these same basic elements of desirable places to live.

Whether the community is a small town, suburban or urban location, 49 percent of respondents said they someday want to live in a walkable community, while only seven percent want to live where they have to drive to most places. Over three-quarters noted the importance of affordable and convenient transportation options other than cars in deciding where to live and work; nearly two-thirds said the so-called "shared" economy, meaning companies like Car2Go or Airbnb, was at least somewhat important to them.

Forty-four percent of respondents said they were somewhat or extremely likely to move in the next five years. Fifteen of more than 300 U.S. metro areas named as top potential destinations were: San Diego, New York, Boston, Denver / Boulder, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, Los Angeles, Portland Ore., Washington, D.C., Austin, Phoenix, Charlotte, Atlanta, and Miami.

Skeptics might wonder about the framing of questions in polls like this. The APA survey points out the low percentage of respondents who said they would prefer "living in a suburb requiring driving to most places," rather than a place with "walkable amenities." What if they substituted "the freedom to drive to most places?" Nonetheless, there do seem to be some genuine common themes here. And certainly the scale of the demographics warrants this kind of market research: combining Millennials and boomers translates to roughly 160 million Americans, who are essentially the present and future customers of metropolitan regions. "As planners, it's vital that we look ahead 15 or 20 years," to guide growth, says APA President William Anderson.

The APA says its national poll was commissioned to "objectively analyze community preferences related to key demographic groups for economic development purposes." In the end, though, it's all about me. I'm what the APA would consider an "active boomer," and I do like being in an urban environment. My oldest son, born in 1996, is a Millennial; he's graduating from high school next month and off to college—Washington University in St. Louis—in August. He might surprise me, when he starts his life as an adult, but I can't picture him in a suburb, either. It all feels sensible and frankly a little bit obvious. City leaders and transportation policymakers are right to take note.

Keywords: Walkability, Millennials, Surveys



Anthony Flint is a fellow at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, a think tank in Cambridge, Mass., and author of *Wrestling With Moses: How Jane Jacobs Took On New York's Master Builder and Transformed the American City* and *This Land: The Battle Over Sprawl and the Future of America*. His next book, *Modern Man: The Life of Le Corbusier, Architect of Tomorrow* will be published in the fall of 2014 by Amazon Publishing.

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Study: Shift to walkable urban places is good news for economy

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Better! Cities & Towns



In the first regional, comprehensive [study](#) of mixed-use urban centers, Christopher Leinberger coins a clever term, WalkUPs (walkable, urban places). Leinberger examines 43 WalkUPs in the Washington, DC, region, most of which have been created in the last two decades.

Although they only occupy 1-2 percent of the DC land area, they account for 29 percent of the income-producing property and they generate tax revenues far out of proportion to the land they consume. Since 1990, WalkUPs have steadily gained a larger share of commercial development in the region, and Leinberger, research professor of urban real estate at the George Washington University School of Business, argues DC is a model for how the nation will develop in the coming decades.

"This shift is extremely good news for the beleaguered real estate industry and the economy as a whole," he says. "It will put a foundation under the economy as well as government tax revenues, much like

drivable sub-urban development benefited the economy and selected jurisdictions in the second half of the 20th century." *Better! Cities & Towns* will feature a more extensive report on *The WalkUP Wake-Up Call* in the coming October-November issue. Here are some highlights from the report:

- There's a pent-up demand for WalkUPs. "Up until the 1980s, drivable suburban office space commanded a premium rent over WalkUPs, but this position has reversed. There is currently a 75 percent premium for WalkUP office rent, giving such places a market advantage."
- The shift toward WalkUPs has refocused development toward the center. The vast majority are in the city core and first-ring suburbs.
- Walkable urban development used to be a niche market, Leinberger says. "Today and in the future, it will be considered *the* market." One reason is overbuilding of sprawl in the last five or six decades. Another is the highly educated, creative workforce that is increasingly made up of 1- and 2-person households. DC is ahead of the nation in education level, but other metro areas are heading in the same direction. This workforce prefers WalkUPs, he says, and metro areas without them will be left behind.
- The new real estate paradigm is no longer city versus suburbia, it is walkable versus drivable (drivable only — walkable places are *also* drivable, but not the reverse). Many of the new WalkUPs are in the suburbs, including suburban town centers like Rockville and Silver Spring that have been revitalized, and commercial strip corridors that are being redeveloped.
- Three factors explain the increased economic performance of WalkUPs: greater walkability, job density, and higher workforce education.
- Land values are much higher in WalkUPs, which impacts housing costs. Residents compensate by renting and occupying smaller spaces.
- Transportation costs are low in WalkUPs. Looking at housing and transportation costs combined, WalkUPs are relatively affordable, even in DC. About 78 percent of WalkUPs have housing and transportation costs below 45 percent of the area median income, and below the regional average.
- Racial diversity is much higher in WalkUPs, with more than three-quarters having a diversity index higher than the region as a whole.

For more in-depth coverage on this topic:

- [Subscribe](#) to *Better! Cities & Towns* to read all of the articles (print+online) on implementation of greener, stronger, cities and towns.
- See the [September 2012](#) issue of *Better! Cities & Towns*. Topics: Artists energize places, Parking and transit-oriented development, the sprawl culture war, Complete Streets, Pocket neighborhood in Illinois, European-style street, Treating people and nature better, Highway teardown and New Haven, Sustainable Urbanism and Beyond, Too Much Magic, Advice from a pioneering source
- Get [New Urbanism: Best Practices Guide](#), packed with more than 800 informative photos, plans, tables, and other illustrations, this book is the best single guide to implementing better cities and towns.

Posted by Robert Steuteville on 10 Sep 2012

Comments



URBAN WONK

The Case for Walkability as an Economic Development Tool

KAID BENFIELD JAN 04, 2013 COMMENTS



A terrific street redesign is assisting economic development in a southern California community that has suffered from changing economic conditions but is nevertheless seeing significant population growth. This is a story of municipal foresight, excellent recent planning, and green ambition.

Lancaster is a fast-growing city of a little over 150,000 in far northern Los Angeles County, about 70 miles from downtown Los Angeles. Its population has more than tripled since 1980; it increased by nearly a third from 2000 to 2010. It is racially mixed (38 percent Latino, 34 percent white, 20 percent African-American) and, like so many fast-growing western cities, decidedly sprawling. The satellite view on Google Earth reveals a patchwork pattern of leapfrog development, carved out of the desert. It is a city with a very suburban character.



Lancaster's economic condition isn't among the country's very worst, but it certainly has been better. According to City-Data.com, the median price of home sales in the city plummeted by almost two thirds from 2007 to 2009, from \$350,000 to about \$125,000, more or less where it still stands. As of August 2012, unemployment stood at 15.7 percent, way above the state average of 10.4 percent. Not far from Edwards Air Force Base and related industry, the city's fortunes have long been associated with aerospace engineering and defense contractors, but some major employers, including Lockheed-Martin, have been moving their investments elsewhere in recent years.

Sprawl and disinvestment have also left scars. [Greg Konar writes](#) in the *San Diego Planning Journal*:

By the late 1980s the City's historic downtown was in serious decline. Most retailers and commercial services had long since migrated to commercial centers and strip malls in other parts of the city. For years big box retailers and regional malls had captured nearly all new commercial growth. Much of it was concentrated along the Antelope Valley Freeway (I-14). Meanwhile the historic downtown deteriorated rapidly. Crime became an increasing problem and the surrounding older neighborhoods were suffering.



Before and after shots of Lancaster Boulevard. Images courtesy of the City of Lancaster

That's a pattern [all too typical of America in the late 20th century](#), but Lancaster moved to do something about it, including in 2008 the adoption of a form-based zoning code for the downtown Lancaster Boulevard corridor. ([Form-based codes](#) encourage walkability by encouraging mixed uses and a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.) The city also hired the well-known architecture and planning firm [Moule & Polyzoïdes](#) to capitalize on the opportunities created by the code by redesigning the boulevard to attract businesses and people.



The ramblas on the remade Lancaster boulevard. Image courtesy of [Moule and Polyzoïdes](#)

The results – a rejuvenated section of downtown now named [THE BLVD](#) – have been spectacular, as the photos accompanying this article show. The project has won multiple awards, including [EPA's top national award for smart growth achievement](#). [Moule & Polyzoïdes describe the design features](#):

Among the Plan's key elements are wide, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, awnings and arcades, outdoor dining, single travel lanes, enhanced crosswalks, abundant street trees and shading, and added lighting, gateways and public art. Lancaster Boulevard has been transformed into an attractive shopping destination, a magnet for pedestrian activity and a venue for civic gatherings.

[Greg Konar's article](#), which I cited above, provides an excellent review of what makes the design features of the project work so well.



The remade Lancaster boulevard. Image courtesy of [Moule and Polyzoides](#)

Justly proud of their work, the architects recount some of what's happened in the area since the project was completed:

- 49 new businesses along the boulevard and an almost doubling of revenue generated compared to just before the work began.
- An almost 10 percent rise in downtown property values.
- 800 new permanent jobs, 1,100 temporary construction jobs, and an estimated \$273 million in economic output
- 800 new and rehabbed homes.
- Dramatically increased roadway safety, with traffic collisions cut in half and collisions with personal injury cut by 85 percent.



Rendering of the BLVD. Image courtesy of [Moule and Polyzoides](#)

This is a great example of how the right legal framework and the right design at the right time can help make a difference. It is also a great example of [how our suburban communities can be improved](#). Is Lancaster Boulevard the best or most walkable district in America? Not by a long shot. But the change is tangible, giving the city something to build upon and setting an example for similarly situated communities. All while re-using infrastructure and reducing emissions from car travel by taking advantage of a [central location that shortens driving distances and encourages walking](#).

Moreover, THE BLVD is not the city's only green ambition. One thing that Lancaster's southern California desert location provides is a lot of sunshine, and the city is taking advantage by [going solar in a big way](#). In August 2009, the city worked with the company eSolar to bring a 20-acre solar-power generating facility, the first of its kind in the country, to Lancaster. In 2010, it partnered with production homebuilder KB Home to build "a never-before-attempted affordable solar energy housing community" in the city; two similar developments followed.



And there's more. From [the city's website](#):

In July 2010, the solar journey continued when the City of Lancaster, in partnership with SolarCity, launched the Solar Lancaster program—an affordable solar financing program for homeowners, business owners and nonprofit organizations. The Solar Lancaster program was designed to simplify the process of going solar—by reducing energy bills, offering several financing options and discounting solar pricing, while providing custom solar system designs and monitoring ...

In addition, five City facilities—the Lancaster Municipal Stadium, City Hall and the Lancaster Performing Arts Center among other sites—are now powered with clean, non-polluting solar energy in a 1.45 megawatt project, which is projected to save the city an estimated \$6 million over 15 years. Clear Channel Stadium, home of the Lancaster JetHawks, is the first Minor League Baseball Stadium in the country to go green. Its new solar system offsets close to 100 percent of its energy use and will save its owners nearly \$50,000 in the first year of operation alone.

The city hopes to keep moving in this direction, eventually becoming one of the world's first cities to produce more energy from renewable sources than it consumes (not counting transportation energy). The story of Lancaster Boulevard and the downtown revitalization is presented in this video produced by EPA (watch it in HD if you can; man, that piano at the end needs to be tuned!):

This post originally appeared on the NRDC's [Switchboard](#) blog.

Keywords: Walkability, Redvelopment, Green Energy, Sustainability



Kaid Benfield is the director of the Sustainable Communities program at the Natural Resources Defense Council, an adjunct professor at the George Washington University School of Law, co-founder of the LEED for Neighborhood Development rating system, and co-founder of Smart Growth America coalition, and author of several books on cities, smart growth and sprawl. Watch for Kaid's forthcoming book, . [All](#)

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