

Building a Healthier Community in Every Sense of the Word.



Redding, CA
May 2009



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Five Simple Points:

- Perspective on what ails us.
- What I'd like to see stimulated, (and wish the candidates had said more forcefully).
- The Bad News. 3 numbers that everyone should know.
- The Good News. A viable prescription for *community* health, in every sense.
- The Hard News. Some recommendations for your consideration . . .



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**Perspective:
Recollections of
our youth . . .**



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**Topics for stimulus (and the top
candidates):**

**Health care costs & the so-called
obesity epidemic.**

**Global warming & environmental
degradation.**

Foreign policy, oil dependence.

Aging transport infrastructure.

Growing local issues:

- **Education cost vs. performance.**
- **Traffic congestion.**
- **Local economic development.**
- **Community life.**



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Amazingly, one thing actually does help with all of these issues:

Health care costs & the so-called obesity epidemic.

Global warming & environmental degradation.

Foreign policy, oil dependence.

Aging transport infrastructure.

Growing local issues:

- **Education cost vs. performance.**
- **Traffic congestion.**
- **Local economic development.**
- **Community life.**



**More walkable,
bicycle-, transit-
friendly
communities.**

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The bad news in just three numbers:

30 Minutes of daily physical activity recommended by Surgeon General.

25 % of American adults who meet the S.G. recommendation (thru LTPA).

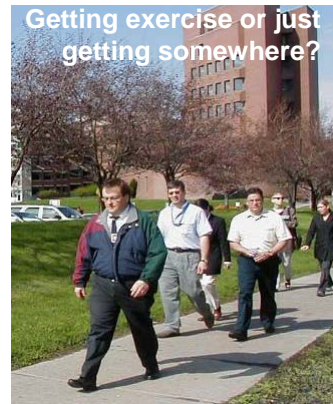
365,000 Estimated annual deaths in America due to physical inactivity & poor nutrition. (2nd only to tobacco.)

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Surgeon General's Report, 1996 US Physical Activity Guidelines, 2008

www.health.gov/paguidelines

- Average 150 mins./week of moderate physical activity (e.g. 5 days x 30 minutes).
- More is even better. Can be broken up.
- Children need 300+ mins./wk.
- Reduced risk for CVD, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, dementia in old age, clinical depression, a growing list of cancers.

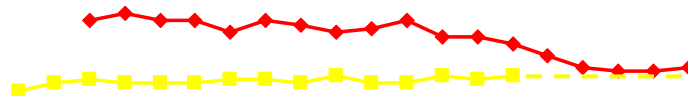


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Leisure Time Physical Activity in the US

(MMWR: 50(09), 166-9; 54(39), 991-4)

◆ Inactive ■ Sufficiently Active



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Necessary and important, but not enough. >



Getting some exercise, or just getting somewhere?



< We must build communities where people are *intrinsically* more active.

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So, what seems to matter for physical activity?

- 1. Destinations within walk, bike, & transit distance?**
- 2. Sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, crossings?**
- 3. Inviting settings for active travelers?**
- 4. Safe & accessible for all ages, abilities?**

www.thecommunityguide.org

CDC Guide to Community Preventive Services



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Or in Planner-Speak:

- Land use mix.
- Network of bike, ped, & transit facilities.
- Functional, appealing site designs.
- Universal access.



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1. Land use.



Compact neighborhoods
& shared open space.



Alta Mesa Park



E.g., Schools,
shopping, transit.



Mixed
use,
multi-
family.

Housing
above
& retail
below.



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In other words, create & sustain city, village, neighborhood centers.

We're more active when where we live, work, learn, play, shop, pray are closer together!



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Often parking is the tail that wags the dog.



Excess, cheap, free parking all invite car traffic, *and* often create challenging settings for pedestrians, bikes, and transit users.

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E.g., Land use & nutrition:

Community gardens (near schools, parks, senior housing); preserving ag-land



Farmer's markets

Regulate fast food, drive-through locations.



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2. Network encourages active travel with:



- Presence of sidewalks, pathways, bike lanes.
- Shorter blocks, cul-de-sac cut-throughs, more intersections.
- Access to trail, park, greenway, *transit*.



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Bicycle network options:

www.pedbikeinfo.org

Sacramento, CA



(Shar-row) v



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Comfortable setting for drivers and pedestrians?



Arlington VA



Lincoln NE

But how far back?

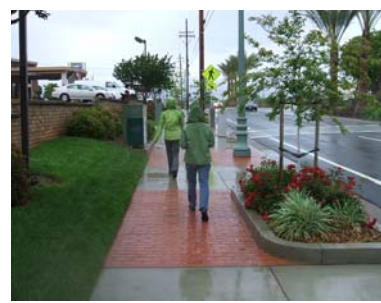


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Preferred sidewalk setback:



1.0 Fenton minimum



Even a bike lane adds buffer



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Lessons from RWJF funded trail study

(Summarized in Mar. 2008 *Planning* magazine)

- Far more users in areas with lots of connections; streets, transit stops, other trails.
- Trail alignment has to go close to destinations (shops, restaurants, libraries, civic institutions).
- Design trail to be an integral part of community life, not an escape from it.

www.activelivingresearch.org



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Users -

Recreation only: 58%

Both rec & transport: 38%

Transport only: 4%

Trails aren't just recreation,
transport corridors; they're
"social venues."



Trailhead from neighborhoods
down to Turtle Bay, bridge, &
Sacramento River Trail

Ratio of men:women

Isolated areas – 6:1

Connected – 2:1

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3. Site design:



Where would the
average person find
it more appealing to
shop on foot and
by bike?

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Site design?

Research &
practice suggest:

- Pedestrian, bicycle access; buildings are near the sidewalk, not set back.
- Trees, benches, water, aesthetics, lighting, scale.
- Details: bike parking, open space, plantings, materials.



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A standard
Walgreens.



No one walks to
these places
anyway . . . ?

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Incentives:

- Decrease, share parking (bike racks).
- Build-to lines.
- Mixed-use, multi-story, w/ residential density bonus.
- Expedite permits.

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Incentives:

- Decrease & share parking.
- Mixed-use.
- Multi-story.
- Bonus density.
- Expedite permits.



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Diagonal parking increases on-street capacity, but . . .



Des Moines, IA



- Reverse angle:**
- Fewer, less severe collisions.
 - Safer for bikes.
 - Slows traffic.

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4. Safety.

- Engineering can dramatically improve safety.
- Increasing pedestrian and bike trips *decreases* overall accident & fatality rates.



Median islands



**Roundabout
Neenah, WI**



Curb extensions

Jacobsen P, *Injury Prevention*, 2003; 9:205-209.

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Neighborhood mini-circles can replace four-way stops. Slow traffic, maintain flow on residential streets.

Mountable (roll-over) curb accommodates fire trucks, school busses.



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Lane re-alignments

- Sometimes called road diets, change four lanes to three.



Champaign-Urbana, IL.



- Reduces number & severity of collisions.
- Dramatically improves bicycle, pedestrian capacity.

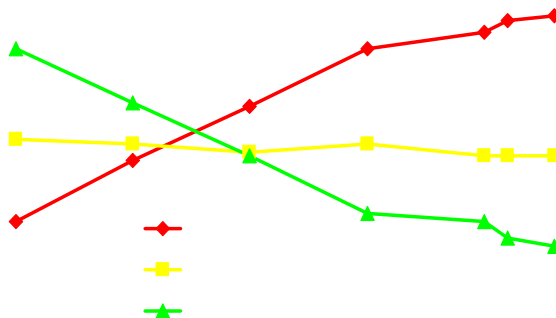
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But what about more rural areas?

Suburbanization of America

US population shift, 1950-1996

(after *Bowling Alone*, R. Putnam, 2000)



1. Suburbia is now steadily consuming the landscape . . .

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2. Rural areas are where you can affect the shape of development *before it's done!*

More of the



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All of the “health” benefits.

Economic:

Environmental:

- Reduced traffic; air, water, & noise pollution.

- Residents shop locally; more stable tax base.
- Healthier employees, low turnover, happy employers.
- Healthy housing values (NAHB & NAR surveys).



Safety:

- Kids, elderly mobility.
- Crime deterrent.

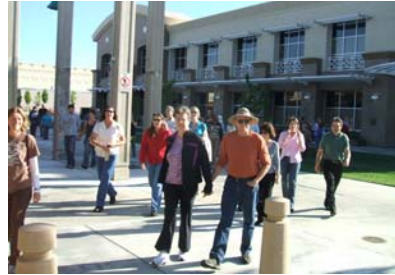


Social:

- Equitable transportation.
- More personal connections.

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Themes from our sessions . . .



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Themes from our sessions and my observations.

- Trail system is enviable, and great for recreation; but incomplete for functional, transportation use.
- Some developers ready for healthier design, but don't feel system is clear & rewards it enough.
- Some in the public frustrated by automobile dominance; ready to support institutional change and looking for leadership.
- Many professionals are ready to learn more about how to implement & what really works.
- Safe Routes to school: where are the schools?!

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Some promising ideas for Healthy Shasta:

- **Work w/ an interdisciplinary “stealth team.”**
- **Connectivity for the trail “network.”**
- **Top level buy-in for Safe Routes to School; start evaluating.**
- **Institutionalize Complete Streets.**
- **Evolve zoning from “allow” to “require;” & walk the tightrope with the development community.**

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Rec. 1. Build a compact, inter-disciplinary implementation team focused on this issue:

- **Education, schools**
- **Planning & Zoning**
- **Engineering, DPW**
- **Parks, Recreation**
- **Public Health & Safety**
- **Historical; Social equity**
- **Chamber of Commerce**
- **Employers, Business Groups**
- **Developers, Lenders, Realtors**
- **Neighborhood Assoc, Church & Service Groups**
- **Environment, Conservation**



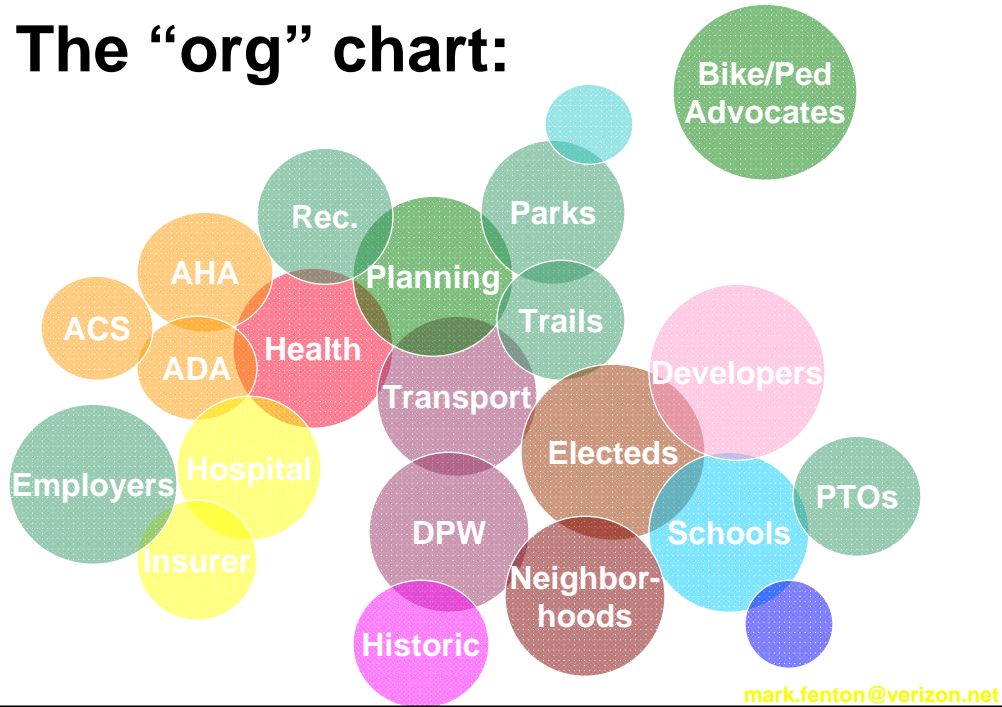
Policy information:

www.lgc.org

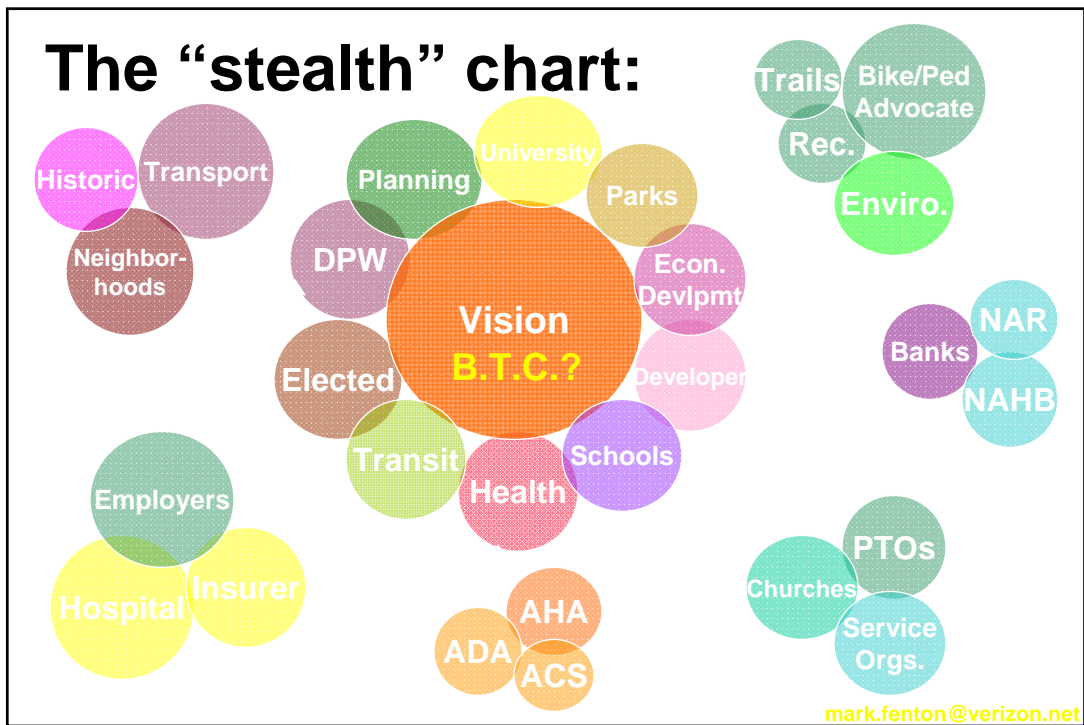
www.vtppi.org

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The "org" chart:

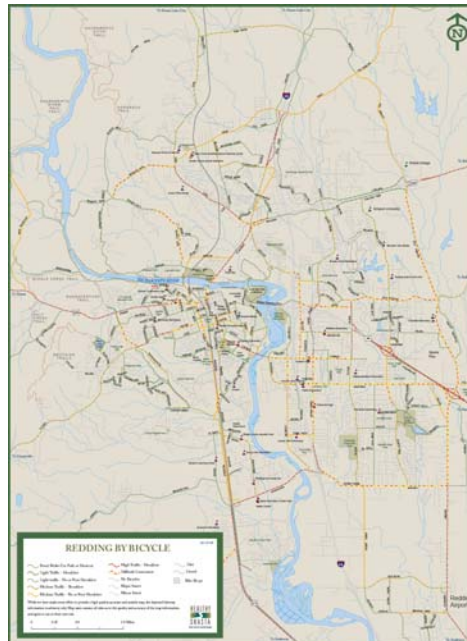


The "stealth" chart:

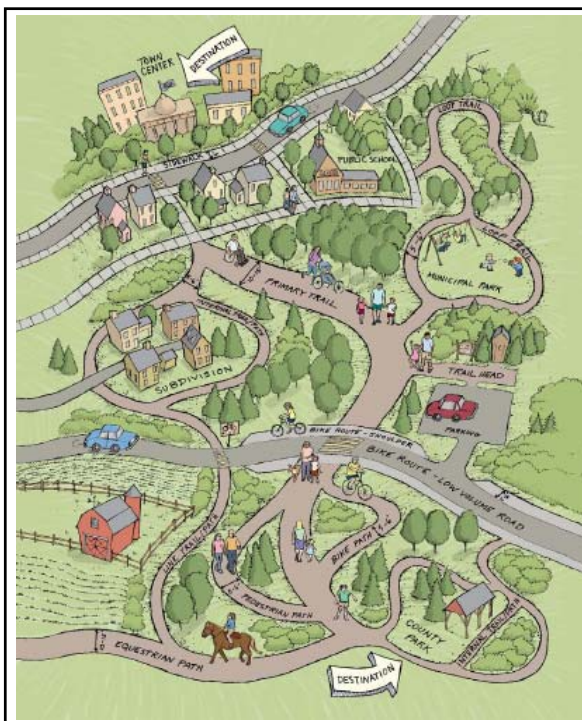


Rec. 2. Advance the trail network, focusing on critical, local links.

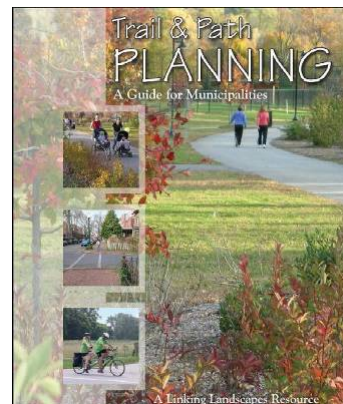
- Tie in to the sidewalk, bike lane, & transit network - connections.
- Focus on *destinations*.
- Make it part of, not an escape from, fabric of the community.
- Look for short links that boost *functionality*.
- Map comprehensively!



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Chester County PA: Trail & Path Planning Guide for Municipalities



<http://dsf.chesco.org/planning>

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Rec. 3. Institutionalize community-wide Safe Routes to School programs.

- Get superintendent, principals, parents on board!
 - Focus on safety, solving traffic issues, transportation costs, academic performance.
 - Of the five Es, start with EVALUATION; convene school working groups.
- www.saferoutesinfo.org



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Safe Routes to School, 5-Es.

- Education. For students (bike/ped skills) & parents.
- Enforce proper & safe behavior, procedures.
- Engineer sidewalks, crossings, traffic calming.
- Encourage walking & cycling (students, staff, faculty, & parents).
- Evaluate: Show of hands, surveys, observation.



*Start w/ principal, parents, & police; add planning & public works.

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Evaluation

Do this *first*: Where kids come from, what mode, & why?

Travel modes

- Show of hands survey

Direct observation

- Counts, speed
- Vehicle movements

Surveys

- Student, parent
- Perceptions, barriers

Municipal data

- Crash Data
- Traffic volumes, speed



Mapping

- Home locations; code by travel mode.

- Green = Walk
- Blue = Bike
- Yellow = Bus
- Red = Car

- Routes (current, barriers, preferred)

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Rec. 4. Fully implement a Complete Streets policy:



- All users (pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, & drivers) of all ages & abilities considered whenever you touch a road.
- Roadway design = posted speed.

www.completestreets.org

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- Update roadway design guidelines . . .
- Don't be bound by the local-collector-arterial hierarchy; What about alleys & lanes? Boulevards & parkways?
- Use full right-of-way width, including sidewalks, side or separate pathways, bike lanes, etc.

Kapolei



Start with paint . . .

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Keys to success:

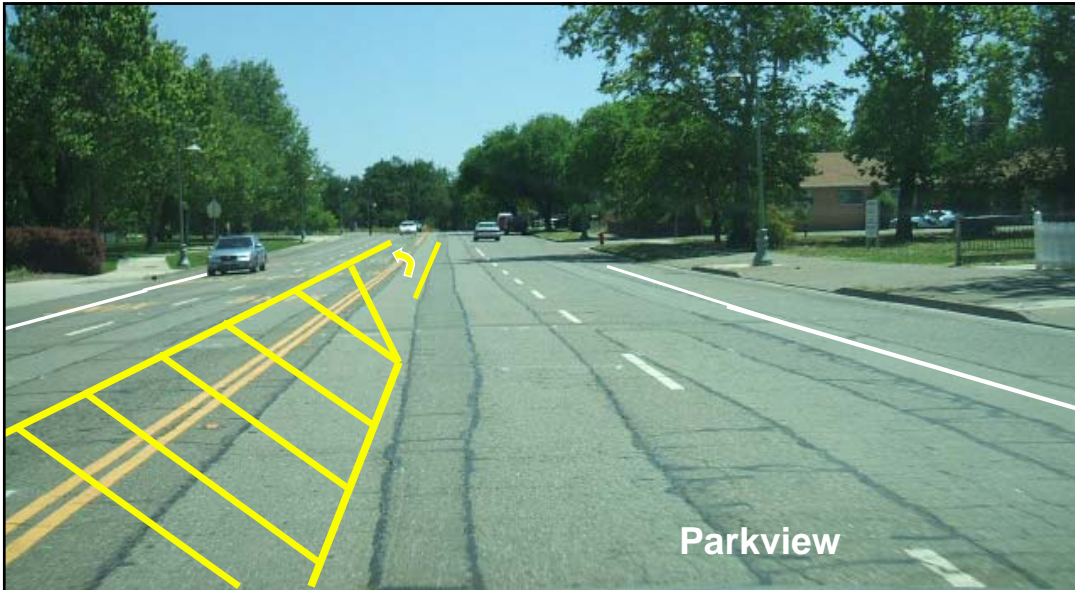
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- Detail when you will allow (rare) exceptions:
 - Controlled access highways.
 - Roads with parallel multi-use paths or other alternative facilities.
 - Severely physically constrained corridors (not simply lack of right-of-way).



- Clarify what remediation is required when an exception is granted.

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Road diets can be one way to make a street more “complete.”

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Why bike lanes?



Improves predictability of behavior of both drivers and bicyclists.



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Rec. 5. Establish new subdivision & commercial “village” site standards.

- Use older neighborhoods (e.g. alleys) as a guide; begin with overlay districts first if necessary.
- Density bonuses for mixed use, affordability, infrastructure improvements.
- Higher residential densities, clusters, grid streets.
- *No more cul-de-sacs!*



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How to really get there?

- Learn more about what’s working across the state, region . . .
 - Team with H.S. to host technical trainings, lunch-and-learns, field trip(s) to other communities.
- Move from allowing, to encouraging, to requiring healthy designs.



- Engage the public constructively:
 - List serves, public forums, walkabouts.

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Require not just *traffic*, but *multi-modal transportation* analysis for all development.



Mitigation = transit, bike, pedestrian facilities.

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A potential opportunity:



Recycling big-box store sites

As Wal-Mart's close, cities can fill voids

By Matt El Neour
USA TODAY

Wisconsin Rapids, one of Wisconsin's old paper-mill towns, had never thought to have Wal-Marts and other big-box retailers out. Quite the opposite. The city was so successful that it got a state grant to meet Wal-Mart's parking needs in the 1990s. By the late 1990s, however, Wal-Mart overtook the space and moved to the outskirts of town. Downtown Wisconsin Rapids now left with a 120,000-square-foot shell and a giant parking lot. A neighboring developer stepped in.

Today, the old Wal-Mart has new life as the Cascade Center for senior citizens. "That was not done 50 years ago. It would still be sitting there. It might be a big box experience is entering a new phase."

Some towns continue to block developers because they object to their requests, require local merchants and the traffic congestion they can create, but successful cities across the USA that reimagine their land a growing challenge. What is to do with the concrete spaces left behind by retailers such as Home Depot, Wal-Mart and



New lease on Miller Hill, Wis., 92, play-pool at the reconverted senior center in Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.



In the book opens this week at the Miller Gallery at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. "Hopefully we can take answers," she says.

Wal-Mart owns more than 3,400 stores among its Supercenter versions. Sarah's Clark and others says Jennifer Evans-Cowley, a city and regional planning professor at Ohio State University who has written about how communities can prepare for the store fit space of non-retail stores.

"Every time Wal-Mart closes stores," she says, "there are 15 major retailers. Making that by 2,000 stores each with a 20- to 25-year life cycle it's not unreasonable to expect that closures would happen during that time."

Cities adopt new standards

More communities are introducing policies that require big-box retailers to help revitalize the spaces they leave behind. Some require them to tear down the store's facade if they're empty more than a year. Others have introduced design standards that require landscaping and more than one main entrance so that the building can accommodate multi-

How to re-use an entire first generation of big boxes?

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Which generates more tax revenue?



Mizner Park, FL

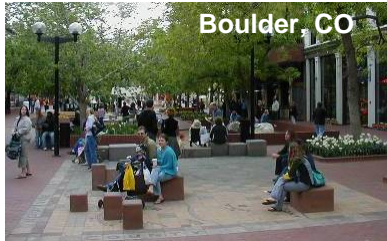
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A Madison, WI merchant knows how his store fits into the community.



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No downtown has been saved by a convention center or more parking. Build a great place to live—it will become a great place to visit, run a business, and thrive.



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Resources:

Pedestrian Facility & Bicycle Lane Design Guides, image library: www.pedbikeinfo.org

National Safe Routes to School programs: saferoutesinfo.org; saferoutespartnership.org

Victoria Transportation Policy Institute: www.vtpi.org

Local Government Commission: www.lgc.org

RWJF Active Living by Design program info: www.activelivingbydesign.org; www.activelivingresearch.org

National Center for Bicycling & Walking: www.bikewalk.org

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