

Walkability With Mark Fenton

Walkable settings can positively impact physical activity levels, housing values, health, air quality and sense of community, while serving as an affordable and socially equitable mode of transportation. During a series of local workshops in May 2009, Mark Fenton (a national expert in walkability and Safe Routes to School) posed the question – do we have free-range kids? Can they bike to school or walk to a friend’s house? Or must they be buckled up and driven around?



According to Fenton, things that matter for walkability include:

- **Destinations within walking, biking and public transit distance** (ex: land use mix, compact neighborhoods, mixed-use, neighborhood/village centers, avoid excess free parking)
- **Networked sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, and crossings** (ex: short blocks, cul-de-sac cut-throughs, trail access points, sidewalk setbacks)
- **Inviting settings for active travelers** (ex: site design, buildings near sidewalk rather than pedestrians crossing parking lots, decrease/share parking, mixed-use with residential, expedite permits, density bonus, multi-story, reverse angle diagonal parking)
- **Safe and accessible for all ages and abilities** (ex: neighborhood mini traffic-circles in place of four-way stops, mountable curbs to accommodate emergency vehicles, lane re-alignments)

Fenton made recommendations at a session for local community leaders, including:

- Build an interdisciplinary team focused on this issue (contact Healthy Shasta to get involved!)
- Advance the trail network, focusing on critical local links (ex: tie into sidewalks and bike lanes, create short links, focus on destinations)
- Implement community-wide Safe Routes to School programs to support more children safely walking and bicycling to and from school (ex: start with evaluation of current situation, focus on the 5 E’s, get schools on board)
- Fully implement a Complete Streets policy, taking all modes of transportation into consideration – autos, bicycles, pedestrians and public transit (ex: roadway designed for posted speed, update roadway design standards, detail when you allow rare exceptions and required remediation, use full right-of-way)
- Establish new subdivision and commercial ‘village’ site standards (use older neighborhoods as a guide, density bonuses for mixed use, affordability and infrastructure improvements, clusters, grid streets, include bike/pedestrian cut-throughs if cul-de-sacs)

For more Information: View Fenton’s Powerpoint slides or the complete summary of his visit for more details at www.healthyshasta.org or call Healthy Shasta at 229-8243 to get involved.

- Bicycling and Pedestrian Information Center (resources and design guides): www.pedbikeinfo.org
- Local Government Commission (info on livable communities): www.lgc.org
- Safe Routes to School: www.saferoutesinfo.org or www.saferoutespartnership.org
- Complete Streets: www.completestreets.org
- National Center for Bicycling and Walking and Centerlines newsletter: www.bikewalk.org
- Active Living by Design: www.activelivingbydesign.org or www.activelivingresearch.org



Fenton’s visit was hosted by Healthy Shasta, a local partnership to increase physical activity and healthy eating by making healthier choices – such as walking – easier, convenient and enticing. If you would like to get involved with walkability, bikability or Safe Routes to School, contact Healthy Shasta at 229-8243.