

Section 1. Introduction, Goals, and Objectives

Covered in Section 1...

- Why Create a Pedestrian Plan?
- Contents of the Plan
- Who to Contact for Information
- Plan Vision, Goals and Objectives

1.1 Introduction and Purpose of the *Durham Walks!* Pedestrian Plan

Like many communities across the nation, Durham has recently come face to face with its dependence on petroleum resources. During the time of this work, fuel prices hovered near \$3.00 per gallon of gas, and the City had temporarily curtailed non-essential trips by staff due to the fuel shortage prompted by a pair of hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico that shut off a portion of the supply of gasoline to the eastern United States. News reports indicated that more people were avoiding trips made by private car, riding mass transit at higher rates, and using bicycling and walking at increased rates for transportation purposes. In addition, a continuing concern for the City had been the need to provide adequate facilities for walking as a means of transportation for those Durham residents who could not drive or could not afford to own a car. To bolster this concern, the Brookings Institute had recently released a policy brief stating that lower income households pay more for vehicle ownership and operation, even if they may pay the same percentage as other households on overall transportation costs (about 23 percent of total household income)¹.

Meanwhile, Durham was also enjoying a transformation in the downtown area. Downtown businesses were becoming more frequent, due in part to the additional residential development and redevelopment that was taking place in the former tobacco warehouse district of the city. In a more tragic sense, a number of pedestrian-related crashes involving children and teenagers urged an additional emphasis on pedestrian safety. At the same time, Durham became one of the first major cities in the Triangle region to maintain a bicycle and pedestrian coordinator staff position and standing Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

Durham, like most of its southeastern counterparts, can not be considered a very “walkable” city in many of its neighborhoods –traffic signal designs throughout most of the city are geared towards providing maximum throughput of cars, not people. Land uses are separated by distance and inadequate pedestrian facilities. Nevertheless, the City of Durham is rich in areas that have great potential to create bustling, pedestrian-friendly communities:

- *Downtown*, which is enjoying a resurgence of new and converted commercial and residential developments;

- *College campus settings*, such as Duke University and North Carolina Central University, that have high numbers of walking students and staff; and
- *Many residential communities*, some of which were constructed during periods of Durham’s history when walking was a primary method of transportation, and some communities now characterized by high proportions of low-income households with limited access to automobiles.

The *DurhamWalks!* Pedestrian Plan (“Plan”) represents the first dedicated pedestrian plan created for the City in the modern era. The Plan was completed in April, 2006, by the City of Durham and was partially funded by a grant from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation and Transportation Planning Branch, in addition to significant funding from the City of Durham’s Public Works Department. The study area for the Plan is the City of Durham and selected areas where the City may grow in the next few years. Significant features of the Plan include a complete inventory of all sidewalks and hard-surface public trails; and extensive public outreach conducted through the Partners Against Crime (PAC) District meetings, the Durham Public School System, and other venues including the internet. The complete inventory includes information about the presence of curb ramps, sidewalk condition, width, and material of construction. Thousands of pictures were taken at intersections to provide Durham with a pictorial inventory that could be referenced using geographic information system (GIS) software.

The sections of the Plan are as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction, Goals and Objectives
- Section 2: Evaluating Current Needs
- Section 3: Existing Plans, Programs, and Policies that Support Walking
- Section 4: Pedestrian System Plan
- Section 5: Project Prioritization
- Section 6: Standards and Guidelines
- Section 7: Programs and Policy Recommendations
- Section 8: Implementing the *DurhamWalks!* Plan

A Glossary at the end of the Plan has been created to provide explanations of common transportation- and pedestrian-related terminology. Appendices are also included to provide more detailed information about recommendations made in the main text of the document.

For More Information or Copies

Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
City of Durham
101 City Hall Plaza
Durham, NC 27701
919.560.4366

1.2 Goals and Objectives

As an integral part of the *DurhamWalks!* Pedestrian Plan process, a Stakeholder Committee was formed to help guide the Plan and related public outreach activities. This citizen and staff committee developed vision and mission statements for the Plan. The Vision Statement, as the name implies, suggests a future vision for Durham and its residents, where walking is a much more accessible and integral part of everyday life. The Mission Statement describes the purpose of the planning process, and the charge inherent to the City of Durham to carry out the recommendations in this pedestrian plan. In addition, the Stakeholder Committee also developed specific goals, objectives and success benchmarks, critical to evaluating the status and progress of the Plan's implementation.

Vision Statement

Visitors to and residents of the City of Durham walk to their destinations often because Durham has a safe, accessible, convenient and comfortable network of sidewalks, trails, and other pedestrian facilities.

Mission Statement

The City of Durham is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, accessible network of pedestrian facilities for all residents, and implementing policies and programs to inform our citizens and enforce our laws.

Four goals, and accompanying objectives and benchmarks, further delineate the *DurhamWalks!* Pedestrian Plan to our citizens and business community. Goals, objectives, and success benchmarks should be grounded in realistic expectations of funding levels and other variables that may influence implementation, but also be aggressive enough to inspire confidence that the Vision and Mission of the Pedestrian Plan will be achieved.

Goal 1: Facility Quantity.

To increase the number of pedestrian facilities: sidewalks, trails, crosswalks, pedestrian safety improvements at intersections, and other related amenities in the City of Durham.

Objective #1: According to survey responses, the Durham residents consider new sidewalk construction as a top priority, and it should therefore be a top priority of the Plan. Construction demands are symptoms of a need to increase connectivity in the pedestrian system, and thus additional facilities such as pedestrian crossings, signals, crosswalk treatments, signage, street furniture, and streetscaping elements, should also be a top priority. In addition, barriers to pedestrian travel such as missing sidewalk to trail connections should also be eliminated where existing and avoided in new development.

Objective #2: Funding new pedestrian facilities is a capital intensive task, and needs to be done as a coordinated effort between public and private sector actors, with the local government taking a strong lead role in both aggressively funding, providing matching funding, and undertaking policy initiatives to ensure a reasonable expectation for completing the projects and programs recommended in the *DurhamWalks!* Pedestrian Plan.

Success Benchmarks

- The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) or State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funded projects and programs for the City of Durham will include those recommendations shown within this plan.
- Reduce the sidewalk “gap” indicator variable (increase connectivity) inside the City by 25 percent in ten years (2015) and by 10 percent in five years (2010). See explanation of the sidewalk “gap” indicator at right.
- Establish a consistent prioritization scheme for new sidewalk construction by the end of 2006.
- Reduce the number of residential parcels in the City of Durham that do not have sidewalk on at least one adjacent street face by 25 percent in ten years (2015).
- Construct or implement 75 percent of the project recommendations in the *DurhamWalks!* Pedestrian Plan by 2015 and 30 percent by 2010.
- Increase city and state funding to pedestrian-related facilities.
- Reduce or mitigate existing barriers to pedestrian travel in order to increase connectivity and functionality of the pedestrian system.

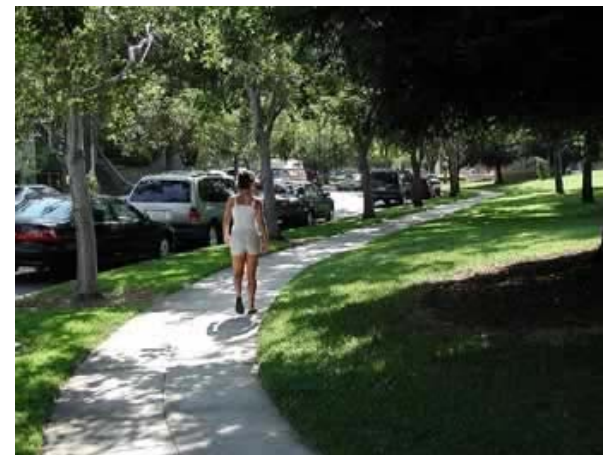


Photo courtesy of Dan Burden. www.pedbikeimages.org

Sidewalk “Gap” Indicator

$$GI = SM / GBS$$

where:

GI=Gap Indicator

SM=Sidewalk (miles)

GBS=Gaps Between Sidewalks



Goal 2: Facility Quality.

To improve the quality of both future and existing pedestrian facilities in Durham, especially in those areas that are suffering the worst from poor conditions.

Objective #1: The City of Durham should adhere to a cohesive set of pedestrian facility design standards that respect levels of pedestrian activity, and enforce these standards in both public and private sector initiatives. These standards should promote connectivity within the pedestrian system and also between the pedestrian system and other forms of transportation, such as transit and cycling.

Objective #2: Maintenance is the second most important priority of our citizens and this plan. Sidewalks, multi-purpose trails, and other pedestrian amenities should be kept in a safe and accessible condition for all of Durham's citizens.

Objective #3: The Plan strongly encourages higher levels of pedestrian activity. Pedestrian activity is, in turn, strongly influenced by the quality of the pedestrian experience communicated through street-level design details and mixes of proximate land uses. The City of Durham, particularly in those areas with high pedestrian demand, should create and adhere to higher standards for streetscaping, pedestrian amenities, and public/private building construction to create pedestrian activity centers and corridors within the City.

Success Benchmarks

- The City of Durham will adopt design standards and guidelines in all plans that respect and enhance pedestrian activity centers, including the downtown core. (See also Goal 4.)
- The City of Durham will reduce the level of sidewalks meeting the “moderate” or “severe” rating in the pedestrian facility inventory by 25 percent in 2015.
- The City of Durham should conduct a survey every two years to determine the satisfaction level of its citizens on pedestrian facilities including sidewalks, greenways, trails, and amenities; this survey should also address issues of personal safety including vehicular traffic conflicts and lighting (see also Goal 3).
- An updated pedestrian facility inventory should be completed in 2015 to ensure that progress has been made towards the objective of higher maintenance standards. Updated inventories should be completed every two years to encompass new construction as a result of private development actions.

Illustration of poor facility quality. Photo courtesy of Dan Burden: www.pedbikeimages.org



Illustration of high quality sidewalk facility. Photo courtesy of Dan Burden: www.pedbikeimages.org

Goal 3: Safety and Security.

To enhance real and perceived pedestrian safety while increasing pedestrian activity.

Objective #1: Improve pedestrian facilities at schools and encourage pedestrian activity in children. Schools are one of the key locations for increasing pedestrian activity and encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle. At the same time, children are some of the most vulnerable populations in terms of pedestrian safety and security. Both physical and policy improvements can be made to encourage more pedestrian activity while at the same time improving pedestrian safety and security.

Objective #2: Develop and support an annual “Leave the Car at Home” week, during which transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel are promoted at schools and workplaces. This is already being done in Durham, but would be more beneficial if additional technical and other support options were put into place to reward participating offices, retail centers, and schools.

Objective #3: Conduct periodic (recommend: six months) enforcement reviews with the Duke University, North Carolina Central University, and Durham police forces to assess bicycle/pedestrian accidents and develop/coordinate enforcement programs and engineering improvements to address problem locations. The City of Durham engineering staff should be present at these meetings to discuss engineering options.

Success Benchmarks

- Develop, in conjunction with the Durham Public School System and NCDOT, a class-based education module for pedestrian and bicycle safety for fourth- and fifth-grade students.
- Improve crossing treatments at schools so as to reduce pedestrian-related crashes at these locations by 50 percent by 2010.
- Pedestrian accidents should be reduced by 25 percent (from year 2000 records) by 2010 while pedestrian activity (measured by journey-to-work data compiled by the decennial census and recorded accident rates) should be increased by 25 percent inside the City of Durham.
- Conduct a bi-annual survey of Durham’s citizens to ascertain their perception of personal safety and security about walking to/from school, home and work (see also Goal 2). This survey should see concerns diminish generally over time as the survey is conducted.
- Create traffic calming and speed reduction programs to reduce dangerous driver behavior.
- Implement pedestrian safety awareness and enforcement programs for both pedestrians and drivers in order to encourage safer travel behavior.

Goal 4: Coordination.

To guarantee that those people and agencies responsible for providing transportation and land use options assume pedestrian considerations in their everyday policies and practices.

Objective #1: The development of capital improvement programs – including the Durham CIP and Metropolitan TIP – should include coordinated pedestrian projects which optimize limited resources to maximize connectivity and safety benefits.

Objective #2: Every new sidewalk and maintenance upgrade of existing pedestrian facilities must include provisions for impaired citizens, including mobility, visual acuity, and aural acuity. An option for audible pedestrian signals should be made available on all new installations, as well as for retrofitting existing signal installations on a priority and citizen-based request system.

Objective #3: Land development and policy exercises should include pedestrian considerations as a core concern in every instance, including during preliminary project scoping and functional designs of roadway projects. Proximity of complimentary land uses should be encouraged by streamlining the development of multi-use properties and providing pedestrian connections between various land use types. New development should be required to provide sidewalk connections to the nearest continuous sidewalk segment, just as would be required for water, sewer, or street connectivity.

Objective #4: Priority should be given to pedestrian improvements within a quarter mile of existing schools, especially for those projects that create connections to the existing pedestrian and greenway system. The City should carefully consider the siting and design of new or expanded school proposals to ensure pedestrian connectivity and the safety of children arriving to school on foot.

Objective #5: Coordination should occur between pedestrian and transit facilities. The most frequent users of the pedestrian system are also transit riders, and therefore it is of utmost importance that the Durham Public Works Department works directly with Durham Area Transit Authority officials to create a smooth and accessible interface between the pedestrian and transit systems in Durham.

Success Benchmark

- The City of Durham should adopt an aesthetic guideline manual to accompany the Design Guidelines Manual that now exists. This manual should apply to areas of high pedestrian activity, as designated by the City, and apply to new construction or major renovations that occur in these

areas. Guidelines should speak to building massing, eliminating blank walls, provision of pedestrian furniture/amenities, and streetscaping to encourage pedestrian activity.

- Create linkages between trails and residential areas, as well as trails to trails to increase pedestrian system connectivity. This will require coordination between the Durham Public Works Department, Planning Department, and Parks and Recreation Department. By 2020, all trails should be connected to nearby neighborhoods, sidewalks, and other trails.

ENDNOTES:

¹ Margy Weller, “High Cost or High Opportunity Cost? Transportation and Family Economic Success.” The Brookings Institution Center on Children and Families, December, 2005.