



COMMUNITY REPORT CARD AND FEEDBACK

Bellevue, Washington
September 29, 2014

Introduction

Thank you for submitting an application to the Walk Friendly Communities program on behalf of Bellevue, Washington! A Walk Friendly Community is a city or town that has shown a commitment to improving walkability and pedestrian safety through comprehensive programs, plans and policies.

Each application was evaluated by at least three reviewers to provide a fair assessment of your community and provide technical feedback on how to improve the walkability of your community.

After thorough consideration of your application, we are designating Bellevue as a **Silver Walk Friendly Community**. In reviewing your application, there were several areas that we were particularly impressed with, including:

- Bellevue's Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan, which receives regular updates, and the city's annual progress report on pedestrian-related infrastructure and programs.
- Excellent parking and land use policies that support a walkable urban environment.
- Detailed inventories for sidewalks and curb ramps, crosswalks, medians, and curb extensions, in addition to the city's progress installing and repairing these elements.
- The steadily increasing mode share for walking and transit.

Bellevue has exhibited a desire to become a community that supports active transportation. The application to the Walk Friendly Communities program is an endorsement of that desire and it is our hope that the feedback and information we provide can help your community improve in this regard. We also hope that, by identifying Sisters as a Bronze Walk Friendly Community and highlighting some of these impressive programs on our website, other communities can follow your example and build their own successful programs.

We have noted several areas in which your community can improve its policies, programs, and standards. Please continue to build upon this foundation to work to become a Walk Friendly Community. This report card provides detailed feedback on how your community can take its programs and initiatives to the next level; take the time to review the feedback and contact us with any questions.

Primary Recommendations

This section identifies and provides suggestions for the most vital areas of improving Bellevue's overall walkability. Additional details are provided in the following sections. **We recommend that you read these areas thoroughly and develop clear goals, benchmarks, funding sources, and an implementation schedule for reaching these goals.**

- While Bellevue has demonstrated strong planning and engineering efforts related to development and pedestrian infrastructure, it is time to consider developing new **safety campaigns** and **education programs**.
- An **Open Streets event** during which a selected route will be closed to vehicle traffic and opened up for jogging, walking, and cycling would be a great way to promote active living and encourage more walking.
- **Targeted enforcement** could be a good way for police in Bellevue to focus attention on pedestrian safety and ensure that motorists are aware of pedestrian safety laws.
- Bellevue should develop an **ongoing count program** to regularly determine the levels of walking in the city. This process will help you determine where people are walking, where you can focus your improvements, and can help "make the case" for more investment in walking programs and facilities.

Feedback by Section

This remainder of this report card will provide detailed feedback and suggestions for each section in the community assessment tool. Feedback will include research to support the importance of this question as well as tools, guides, and case studies of successful implementations in other communities.

Each section received an overall score as defined below:

- **Walk Friendly:** The responses in this section indicate that your community is particularly strong in this area with great efforts being made towards improving walkability. Even so, there are always areas within this section where improvements and growth could be made.
- **On the Right Track:** This score indicates that your community does not exhibit the characteristics to be truly walk friendly in this section, but that there are still good existing programs or new programs that could be expanded. Please review our suggestions on how you could improve the walkability in this area.
- **Needs Attention:** This score indicates that your community does not yet demonstrate strong programs, policies, and results, characteristic of a Walk Friendly Community based on the responses in this section. Please review our suggestions carefully on how you can create positive change in your community with both short- and long-term objectives.

Community Profile

On the Right Track

- While we recognize that the Transportation Commission addresses bike/ped planning and programs, but it is common for other modes to dominate the conversation. It is very important to have a dedicated group that can address local pedestrian issues. Consider starting a separate Pedestrian Advisory Council, and be sure to include diverse members of the community, including individuals with disabilities.
- Signing the [International Charter for Walking](#) would be a great way for city leadership to demonstrate its commitment to enhancing walkability and pedestrian safety. In Gold-level San Francisco, the Mayor signed a [Pedestrian Safety Executive Directive](#) to express support for pedestrian safety—that directive laid out short- and long-term goals for pedestrian safety, and launched a comprehensive effort to improve conditions for pedestrians throughout the city.
- Overall, 200 hours per year is not a substantial amount of time for a coordinator to spend on pedestrian and bicycle issues, particularly for a city the size of Bellevue. It would be great to see more staff time devoted to pedestrian issues.

Status of Walking

On the Right Track

- It is heartening to see that Bellevue has seen an increase in the percentage of commuters walking and using transit.
- Bellevue does not have a high crash rate and it is good to see very few fatal crashes, but the injury rate is quite high. Work with the police department and the state to make sure that all crashes are reported, even if there isn't a severe injury. Compiling complete pedestrian crash information is fundamental to addressing pedestrian safety, particularly for identifying trends and determining where problem areas are located.

Planning

On the Right Track

- It is great to see that Bellevue's Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan was first adopted more than 20 years ago and has consistently been updated! For the next update, consider adding performance indicators that go beyond infrastructure (e.g., mode share, equity, program participation, enforcement efforts, etc.).
- While Complete Streets have been integrated into the Transportation Element, it would be even better if Bellevue created a stand-alone Complete Streets policy.
- Gold-level Washington DC's [complete streets policy](#), signed in 2010, applies to all transportation planning, design, review, operations, major maintenance projects (such as milling and overlay), new construction and reconstruction projects, except where prohibited by law. This ensures that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for all users.
- Consider creating design guidelines to complement an adopted Complete Streets policy. Bronze-level Louisville, Kentucky, created a [Metro Complete Streets Manual](#), which is a comprehensive collection of documents to promote all modes of transportation on their streets. It combines elements of the zoning code, city ordinances, and design guidelines

into one informative document and serves as the guidelines for both new road construction and road retrofits in the city. This could be a model for Bellevue.

- Bellevue should suggest policies to ensure that sidewalks are standard on both sides of arterial and collector streets, and define what constitutes “no need” for sidewalk.
- Examine systems for sharing this cost to ensure that sidewalks form a connected network. In Cary, North Carolina, a Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community, residents can sign a petition to be placed on the city’s sidewalk priority list, which helps the transportation agency make difficult decisions about where to install and improve sidewalks. See the policy [here](#).
- Connectivity is vital to encouraging people to walk. Bellevue could use a stand-alone connectivity policy that applies beyond just the downtown. More information about connectivity can be found [here](#). The Victoria Transport Policy Institute also provides [guidelines](#) on connectivity policies.
- Silver-level Bend, Oregon, has a Development Code that establishes pedestrian friendly block lengths in different zones of the city (e.g., 400 feet block length and 1,500 feet block perimeter in the Central Business District). See page 234 of this [PDF](#).
- The number of trails cited is impressive, though Bellevue could consider creating further impetus to add trails through incentives and zoning. This would certify that trails continue to be an important component of the walkable network in Bellevue. Flagstaff, a Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community, is home to a popular and extensive trail system called the [Flagstaff Urban Trail System](#). It connects many areas of the city and currently has over 50 miles of trails. Another 80 miles are planned! Bellevue could consider some of the tools on Flagstaff’s website to enhance people’s understanding of the trails system in the city.
- Bellevue has a strong public transit system and high ridership. Safety around bus stops is a key issue for all transit agencies and stop placement should be periodically evaluated. The [Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies](#) can help identify areas where accessibility can be improved. This [case study](#) provides more information.
- Bellevue has done a great job providing assistance through the Transportation Demand Management program and unbundling parking costs for downtown buildings. If there is interest, Bellevue could consider developing a city-wide framework that clarifies the city’s vision for parking management. Check out this [Strategic Parking Plan](#) from Gold-level, Denver, Colorado.
- According to research, dense development leads to higher levels of walking and transit use and less driving. Some measures to increase density, such as form-based codes and density bonuses, can be very positive for the vitality of a community or city center. Bellevue’s density bonuses require the provision of pedestrian amenities. Bellevue could consider also using form-based codes to ensure that a comfortable walking environment is created in the city. Arlington County, Virginia, designated as a Gold-level Walk Friendly Community, has a great example of a form-based code. One of Arlington’s main corridors, Columbia Pike, a 3.5-mile streetscape connecting the Pentagon to the Fairfax County line, has a form-based code that is designed to foster pedestrian-oriented development on this stretch of South Arlington’s historic main street. Compared to traditional zoning, which separates uses, form-based codes focus on the community’s design vision while allowing a range of uses within acceptable building types. More information can be found [here](#).
- Silver-level Redwood City, California, has a [form-based code](#) and a requirement for mixed-use that could also useful as a resource in Bellevue.

- Neighborhood school siting policies could also be helpful in terms of encouraging young people to walk (or bike) to school.
- If there is interest in creating a unified document for streetscape design, Gold-level Chicago provides some extra information for Bellevue. Chicago's [Streetscape Design Guidelines](#) were created to assist community leaders, design consultants, and public officials in making informed decisions on the design of city streets. They provide a framework to increase the vitality of commercial streets and include community involvement, streetscape elements, and functional requirements.

Education & Encouragement

On the Right Track

- It sounds like Bellevue has a great history of promoting safe walking for school trips. Hopefully the city and the school district can work together to increase the number of schools with Safe Routes to School events, like International Walk to School Day, and help some schools start an ongoing SRTS program.
- Austin, Texas, a Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community, has a SRTS program that benefits from, and works in tandem with, the Public Works department's Child Safety Program. These programs not only provide pedestrian safety education to children, but also to adults. The Child Safety Program employs four safety trainers and targets drivers, parents, teachers, and students in a comprehensive pedestrian safety education program.
- Broadening the scope of training and education to include many types of professionals (public health, law enforcement, schools, etc.) can advance pedestrian safety substantially.
- If possible, the city could consider creating some pedestrian safety public service announcements. The city could partner with local institutions and schools to encourage children to participate, possibly providing a prize to the best PSA.
- Bellevue should provide more education and encouragement programs. Gold-level Arlington County, Virginia, has education and encouragement programs that are incredibly important in fostering community support for walkability:
 - [Street Smart](#) is a public awareness and enforcement campaign in its tenth year that uses print, outdoor, online, and broadcast media channels throughout the metropolitan Washington area to reach a diverse audience.
 - The [Car Free Diet](#) program is an innovative development aimed at raising awareness of the health, environmental, financial, and commuting benefits of going car-free or car-lite through web, video, blogs, social media, transit advertising, a Car-Free Diet Calculator, and media outreach.
 - The [Neighborhood 25](#) program is a campaign that began in 2010 as a response to the difference in fatal crashes that occur at 20 mph and 30 mph with "Keep Kids Alive – Drive 25" signs placed throughout the neighborhoods in conjunction with police placement of speed feedback signs.
- In Flagstaff, a Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community, the city hosted a series of 16 themed walks along city trails. The walks were organized by a variety of local community partners with themes including geology, history, flora, or astronomy. By organizing walking tours, people can experience the history and natural beauty of a place, while

getting some exercise. This could be an easy step for Bellevue in terms of encouraging people to walk.

- Consider an Open Streets event, or Ciclovía, during which a selected route will be closed to vehicle traffic and opened up for jogging, walking, and cycling. The event focuses community attention on alternative modes, and can provide numerous other benefits. More information available [from the PBIC](#) or the [Open Streets Project](#). Case studies from [Chicago](#) and [Clearwater, Florida](#), can also provide more guidance.
- Shortly after receiving its Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community designation, [Wilsonville, Oregon](#), launched its first-ever open streets event and had over 4,000 attendees. Another great example from a Bronze-level WFC is [Atlanta Streets Alive](#), which closes a street segment to motorized traffic and opens it up for people to play, walk, and bike. At least two miles of street are closed for four hours and the route rarely stays the same. The event is organized by the Atlanta Bicycle Coalition and it is held multiple times a year. At the October 2013 event, 83,000 attendees enjoyed nearly five miles of open streets and more than 40 activities along the route.

Engineering Walk Friendly

- The sidewalk standards are positive, but the city should consider adding buffer zones to sidewalks. Buffers can improve the aesthetic appearance and safety of sidewalks, as well as improving stormwater management. This [AASHTO Guide](#) can provide more information.
- Bellevue has done a great job keeping an inventory of sidewalks and curb ramps, in addition to consistently repairing or replacing these facilities.
- Consider using a web service like [SeeClickFix](#) to allow citizens to report problem areas.
- Good job providing pedestrian provisions on your bridges. These facilities can often represent barriers to pedestrian travel, but you have ensured that they do not impede walking trips.
- Pedestrian [signalization](#) is an important component of a walkable environment. Bellevue has done a great job providing accessible pedestrian signals, but the city should consider increasing the number of intersections with Leading Pedestrian Intervals and reducing cycle lengths.
- Through engineering policies and geometric design, Bellevue has done a good job providing for the safety and comfort of pedestrians crossing its roadways. We were especially impressed to see the city's recent, and planned, construction of refuge islands, medians, and curb extensions.

Enforcement Needs Attention

- Good staff commitment. Having a dedicated traffic safety officer shows a commitment to enforcing laws to protect pedestrians. It is also great to see that bicycle police are active in Bellevue.
- It is worrying that no police officers concentrate specifically on pedestrian safety. The community might consider having one or two officers dedicated to enforcing pedestrian safety laws.

- It was good to read about the use of speed feedback signs in Bellevue, but we would have liked to have seen more information about other targeted enforcement operations like pedestrian crossing operations or DUI check-points.
- One effective method, particularly at locations with a documented crash problem, is the crosswalk sting or pedestrian decoy technique. This involves plainclothes police officers crossing in the crosswalk and observing if cars are yielding. If cars do not yield, the plainclothes officer will radio to another officer to pull over the offending vehicle. By using this enforcement type, drivers are made aware of what types of behaviors are not allowed. Using this in conjunction with [progressive ticketing scheme](#) allows officers to educate drivers more than penalize them. Check out this [program](#) in New Jersey.
- By informing the public about where and when enforcement activities will be, the police can create public support and offset the complaints of those breaking the law.
- It is great to see that police cite drivers for failing to yield to pedestrians. Also, keeping parked cars away from crosswalks and off of sidewalks is critical, so it's good to see you're doing that as well.
- Bellevue has done a good job tracking the positive effect of photo enforcement technology. Keep it up!
- Adult school crossing guards play an important role in the lives of children who walk or bicycle to school. They help children safely cross the street at key locations. They also remind drivers of the presence of pedestrians. The presence of adult crossing guards can lead to more parents feeling comfortable about their children walking or bicycling to school. While the primary role of an adult school crossing guard is to guide children safely across the street, children also remain responsible for their own safety. There are many model crossing guard programs in existence. At minimum, crossing guards should be vetted by the community, trained by certified training programs, provided with class 2 reflective vests and hand held stop paddles. The [Adult School Crossing Guard Guidelines](#) might be a helpful resource.
- Gainesville, Florida, a Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community, has a model crossing guard program. To determine the placement of school crossing guards, the city's traffic engineering department considers gap studies, sight distance, vehicle and pedestrian traffic volumes, ages and grades of students, vehicular speeds, width of street and number of lanes of traffic, existing traffic controls, and traffic crash history. [School crossing guards](#) are required to take an initial eight-hour certification course and an annual two-hour refresher course.
- It seems like the police department and other city departments collaborate regularly to review problem areas and identify possible solutions. Consider formalizing this dialogue into a focus group that includes representatives from at least the engineering, planning, transit, and enforcement departments.

Evaluation

On the Right Track

- A count program is particularly important to understand where people are walking and serves other important purposes as well. Ideally, this program should perform counts several times a year and at locations throughout the city. Permanent count stations should be considered to provide annual data. Gold-level Arlington County provides a good model where they perform seasonal manual counts in addition to 18 automated counters. They are also developing an integrated database to store, analyze and share results of the two sets of data.
- The 2013 edition of FHWA's [Traffic Monitoring Guide](#) (TMG) includes a review of existing techniques and guidance for implementing traffic monitoring programs for nonmotorized transportation. See Chapter 4 of the document.
- Bellevue should look into conducting road safety audits, especially in high-crash areas. The [Pedestrian Road Safety Audit Guidelines and Prompt Lists](#) can be very valuable for diverse groups of city staff (engineers, planners, law enforcement) in reviewing the pedestrian environment and developing recommendations, while other tools such as [walkability checklists](#), pedestrian level of service, [Pedestrian Intersection Safety Index](#), and [Health Impact Assessments](#) can provide targeted information about pedestrian safety on roadways and in the community overall.
- While Walkability Checklists are a really helpful tool, there are also other tools that can enhance the understanding of the built environment from the perspective of pedestrians. [Pedestrian Intersection Safety Indices](#) and [Health Impact Assessments](#) are important new tools and can provide helpful guidance.
- The [Pedestrian Road Safety Audit Guidelines and Prompt Lists](#) can also be very valuable for diverse groups of city staff (engineers, planners, law enforcement) in reviewing the pedestrian environment and developing recommendations.
- In Silver-level Tallahassee, Florida, the [Comprehensive Plan Mobility Element](#) created multimodal level of service (LOS) standards and performance targets for the Mobility District (18-square-mile section of the city), whereby pedestrian, bicycle, and transit LOS take priority over vehicle LOS in the evaluation of roadway improvements, capital improvement planning, and funding allocation.

More Information

If you have questions or comments regarding this feedback, your community's initiatives and programs, or the application process in general, we'd like to hear from you. Please contact:

Carl Sundstrom, 919-843-4963, sundstrom@hsrc.unc.edu

Dan Gelinne, 919-962-8703, gelinne@hsrc.unc.edu

You can also send general inquiries to info@walkfriendly.org