

EPA Technical Assistance for Sustainable Communities: Building Blocks

Technical Assistance Tool: Walkability Workshop

Benson Annexation, Renton, Washington – June 7-8, 2011

To: Erika Conkling, Senior Planner, City of Renton

From: Sarah Bowman and Dan Burden, WALC Institute

Date: July 15, 2011

Re: Suggested Next Steps as Outcome of Technical Assistance

1. Key Issues Addressed during the Site Visit

The following key issues were addressed during the site visit:

The Cascade Shopping Center:

The area around the Cascade Shopping Center is a traditional suburban model of development with single family tract homes from 60s and 70s, a set of baseball diamonds, utility corridor to the north, elementary and high school to the east, middle school to the northwest and some residential multifamily housing to the southeast. This area includes a post office. The area as a whole has a high concentration of people and should be a walkable community. Additionally, there are multiple transit lines with a consistent ridership. During our initial assessments and other area explorations, we found a significant number of children walking many of the principle roadways, often with inadequate sidewalks or crossings.

The Cascade Shopping Center is located at 16900 116th Avenue SE. It is bordered by 116th Avenue SE, the utility corridor, the Post Office, and the Emerald Heights Apartment Complex. The Cascade Shopping Center has double fencing, razor wire, security cameras and signage prohibiting loitering. These residents are close to the shopping and services, but, due to fencing, have no direct walking access. The Shopping Center has experienced break-ins and property damage. The owner feels residents and visitors to Emerald Heights Apartment Complex are responsible for this damage and access between the apartment homes and Shopping Center was severed with double chain link fencing and razor wire. Additionally, the fire access route to the northeast was closed because of excessive speeding.

The Shopping Center lost its grocer four years ago and the pharmacy recently – the Bartell's Drug Store closed a week prior to the walking workshop. The Shopping Center is now home to a few businesses – a barber, gym, childcare facility and a dollar store that sells alcohol. Within the Shopping Center, the owner has invested in landscaping, paint, and has repaired damage to the property. Workshop participants noted that the owner, Bruce Anderson, keeps the property clean and has been seen on the property picking up garbage and otherwise maintaining facilities. For this, the community is appreciative. The developer/owner is also a willing partner in creating a significant remake of the center.

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The walking audit focused on assessing conditions around the Cascade Shopping Center and its connections to the community.

Cascade Shopping Area:

- High Vacancy Rates
- Boarded Windows
- Limited Glazing/Transparency of first floor retail
- Displays of persons of interest and criminal behavior in store front
- Broken Store Windows
- Graffiti
- Limited Pedestrian Connections within complex and between the complex and community
- Terrible layout of buildings, with no logical order, direct views or view sheds or other traditional forms
- No sidewalks into the Shopping Center from 116th Avenue SE; blocked secondary access
- Trail of pavers from the crosswalk on 116th Avenue SE through landscaping bed
- Large, empty parking lots
- Corridors, pedestrian alleys that are stark, scary and vacant and have no one watching over the area, and no windows facing corridors
- Notices of store closings
- Double chain link fencing (1/4 inch and 1 inch) with razor wiring
- No "eyes" on the backsides of the properties
- Excessive signage for prohibited behaviors (no trespassing, soliciting or loitering)
- Security cameras and signage warning about surveillance activities

Emerald Heights Apartment Complex:

This facility is not served internally by transit; residents must walk to transit stops outside of the community for services. Participants observed that transit does enter single family housing areas within the City that are less dense and less reliant on public transit. The verity of this information will need to be confirmed by transit, along with the rationale for current service locations.

Workshop participants noted that the Emerald Heights Apartment Complex has been perceived as a source of crime in the community. We did not have a representative from law enforcement involved in the Walkability Workshop and this statement could not be verified. We did not have a representative from Emerald Heights Apartment Complex as a participant during the Walkability Workshop. This perception may be completely unfounded and without merit but it was raised as a community perception during the walkability workshop and is, therefore, noted here. Workshop participants noted

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their perception that Section 8 housing vouchers are used extensively within the Emerald Heights Apartment Complex but the exact figure was not known. Participants noted a lack of integration of Section 8 housing community-wide and believed a high concentration of affordable housing in this area was contributing to crime in the area. This was not confirmed by City Staff and we did not have a representative from the City's Affordable Housing program at the event. Because these comments were raised more than once, it speaks to the need for outreach efforts with the Emerald Heights Apartment Complex, law enforcement, the affordable housing department, the media and this community. These perceptions may be erroneous but they exist.

116th Avenue SE:

- Modifications to the sidewalks have been made to accommodate the utility pole placement in the sidewalk. The sidewalk extension works fine for a single pedestrian but it forces those walking in groups to walk single-file or to walk in the street. We did not assess how navigable this is for a wheelchair or scooter. The deviation from the expected route would be a challenge for those with visual impairments.
- The crosswalk on 116th Avenue SE lacks curb cuts and the street markings are faded and difficult for motorists to see. Participants noted that a pedestrian was struck and killed here crossing to the transit stop.
- Speeding is an issue on 116th Avenue SE and we witnessed a vehicle traveling at 50mph in a 30mph zone. In general, the street is overly wide and encourages fast – and unsafe – vehicle speeds.
- Sidewalks exist only on one side of the street between 176th Street and the edge of the Cascade Shopping Center.
- North of 168th Street SE, sidewalks are at grade with large drainage ditches.
- The travel lanes are too wide. 1-2 feet could be removed from the center turn lane (currently 11 feet) which would allow the City to add one foot to the bike lanes. A 6-foot bike lane is ideal. 8-10-inch wide bike lane stripe to reduce traffic speeds and further demark the bike lane is missing.
- Seating is needed in this area. Participants noted the concerns about loitering, prostitution and vagrancy exist and are not sure if providing seating would exacerbate problems.
- The current walkscore is 48 – this area is car dependent.
- Ground cover should be held to 18 inches.

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- The exit from Post Office is problematic due to speeds on 116th Avenue SE.

116th Avenue SE at 168th Street SE:

- This is a wide intersection with vehicles speeding on 168th Street SE heading east due to the downhill grade.
- The baseball diamonds sit at this corner and are heavily used. They were not in use while we were there but parking may be an issue. Given the speed of vehicles moving through this intersection and the size of the intersection, pedestrians crossing this intersection will be challenged. We observed two young women who ran through the intersection. The City should determine whether a senior would be able to cross this intersection in the time allotted.
- The utility corridor cuts through this intersection from northwest to southwest. If this corridor becomes home to a recreational/non-motorized trail, the City will want engineering studies to address how the intersection and trail will function together.
- This area was identified by the walking audit group as the “Heart of the Community” and participants noted that it should be considered in this way by the City.

Other Areas of Concern:

These areas were not included in the Walkability Workshop but were issues raised by participants:

- 116th Street at Petrovitsky – Right Turn on Red prohibition is ignored and pedestrians are not in the motorist’s sightline when they round the corner.
- 128th Street at Petrovitsky – Right Turn on Red prohibition is ignored and pedestrians are not in the motorist’s sightline when they round the corner.
- The intersections at 116th Avenue SE and 168th Street SE and 128th Avenue SE and 168th Street SE are problematic for pedestrians and need to be studied. The High School and Elementary school are located on 128th Avenue SE at the intersection of 168th Street SE and this may be addressed in the Safe Routes to School report.
- Petrovitsky is a challenge for the Fire Department – at times, all 5 are lanes blocked; speed humps are an issue for emergency responders and the use should be discontinued.

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Integrating Transit:

- The transit stops on 116th Avenue SE do not have shelters or seating. Lighting around transit stops should be evaluated.
- Transit does not enter the Emerald Heights apartment complex.
- Safety concerns for transit users waiting at the bus stops on 168th Avenue SE and 116th Street SE were raised.
- Within the area, landscaping is not maintained around transit stops and weeds growing alongside open drainage ditches compound this problem.

Crime & Safety / Perception of Crime & Safety:

- Crime and safety were brought up repeatedly during the walking audit. Participants noted drug use, gang activity, prostitution, vandalism, and theft as significant issues in this community. Unfortunately, we did not have a member of law enforcement present for the walking workshop. When we queried as to the perception of crime compared to actual crime, we could not get a clear sense of perceived danger versus actual danger. We pulled the crime statistics for this area for the past six months and crime is actually a concern – as opposed to the perception of crime. The crime statistics from Crimereports.com (per the Renton Police Department website) for the Walking Audit area zip code are:
 - 12/8/10 – 6/8/11: 392 Total Events
 - 12/8/10 – 6/8/11: 98 Violent Crime Events

We compared this to the FBI *Crime in the United States* Statistics for Renton and Washington State in 2009. Those figures were:

| Renton, WA Statistics – 2009 | Washington State Statistics - 2009 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Population of Renton: 63,599 | Rate Per 100,000 inhabitants |
| Violent Crime: 314 | Violent Crime: 331 |
| Murder: 2 | Murder: 2.7 |
| Forcible Rape: 32 | Forcible Rape: 38.1 |
| Robbery: 152 | Robbery: 100.5 |
| Aggravated Assault: 128 | Aggravated Assault: 189.7 |

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| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Property Crime: 4,322 | Property Crime: 3,666.9 |
| Burglary: 800 | Burglary: 792.2 |
| Larceny/ Theft: 3,041 | Larceny/ Theft: 2,519.4 |
| Motor Vehicle Theft: 481 | Motor Vehicle Theft: 355.3 |
| Arson: 7 | Arson: Not Reported |

Renton's 2009 Crime Statistics tracked higher than the statewide rate per 100,000 inhabitants.

Lack of Community Engagement:

- Renton has the greatest diversity of population based on ethnic mix of any city in the State of Washington. The Benson Community is very representative of that. Russians, Somalis, Vietnamese, East Indian, Chinese, Eastern European, Latin American, Asian Pacific Islanders and African Americans comprise this community with the breakdown as: 49 percent white, 10 percent black, 21 percent Asian, and 13 percent Native American. Culturally sensitive messaging is extremely important and outreach efforts were challenging because there has been no sustained history of outreach for this annexed area. While the City utilizes social media, the efforts are in English only. Strategies for effective community engagement are included in Section 2 of this memorandum.

Safe Routes to School:

- Walking and biking access to school for elementary, middle and high school students within the study area was noted.

Community Vision:

- The following were generated by participants when they spoke of their vision for this area:
 - Safer Environment
 - Walkable Community
 - Gathering Places
 - Less Traffic
 - Less Fencing
 - Connected Bike Trails
 - Better Connections – Bikes & Pedestrians
 - To Live in Place – To Grow Old Here
 - Playground & Trails
 - Something To Do
 - A Sense of Place

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- That the City Cares
- No More “Lipstick” (Cosmetic) fixes
- More Recreational Uses – Ball fields, Gym, Park, Pool, Recreational /Senior Center
- More Civic Uses alongside Post Office
- Something for Youth
- Local Farmer’s Market / Local Foods / Crafts
- Playground – Multi Age Facilities
- Trails – Improved Non-Motorized Regional Connections
- Engaged Community – A Sense of Community
- Get grocery store back, even if only a green grocer at first

Those immediate needs identified by the community:

- Places for kids to bike and walk to
- A grocery store and other services
- Parks and open space – a playground
- Safe routes to school
- To integrate transit better
- Improved safety / reduction in criminal activity

2. Targeted Strategies Discussed during the Workshop

Develop a Public-Private Partnership:

Renton is in an extremely fortunate situation: the annexed area needs a town center, parks and open space, and the Cascade Shopping Center provides the ideal location and a willing owner who has a history of making improvements in the area. The owner’s representative took part in the walking workshop and spoke to meeting the needs of the community and was interested in ways to utilize Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design to place eyes on the premises and to reduce vandalism and other criminal activities that are happening on site. The owner's architect was a principle designer of University Village, one of the best remade shopping districts in the Pacific Northwest. Presently, displays in the windows show criminal activity and wanted persons. This, combined with the high vacancy rate and few services that can be met within the shopping center, point to further degradation. Students who use this lot and the utility corridor to get to their homes in the Emerald Heights Apartment Complex and the surrounding area have no one watching over them as they travel to and from school.

As the City undertakes its Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, and addresses the lack of facilities within the annexed area, it may look to purchasing acreage within the Cascade Shopping Center that will allow it to maximize the existing resources on the site – the renovated bowling alley, swimming pool and

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fitness center – and tie this to the Baseball Diamond by creating a trail through the utility corridor. The infrastructure pieces for a community/senior center may already be in place. Working together, the City and Owner could create a Master Plan for the area that aims at improving quality of life for all. High Point in Seattle is a local model that can be used by the City of Renton and Owner for best practices and lessons learned. See: <http://www.thehighpoint.com/>.

As part of the City’s Master Planning effort, the City should consider how affordable housing is integrated within the community of Renton and positioned so that goods and services are within walking distances or along transit routes. As a mixed use town center, the Cascade Shopping Center could assist the City on a number of initiatives including living in place, active transportation, increased transit ridership and reduced vehicle miles traveled. Ideally, the fencing and razor wire between the Emerald Heights Apartment Complex and the Cascade Shopping Center would be removed so that people can move naturally between the areas through safe, comfortable and enjoyable routes for all modes.

For more information on Public-Private Partnerships, please see *Public-Private Partnerships and State and Local Economic Development: Leveraging Private Investment* (2002) which was commissioned by the U.S. Economic Development Administration: <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/17132277/EDA%20Study.pdf>

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Evaluation:

CPTED involves increasing activities such as Natural Surveillance, Natural Access, Control and Ownership/Definition of Space. There are a number of CPTED evaluation and implementation measures that might be useful to Renton:

- Safe Block – Community Block Analysis and Crime Reduction Strategies
- Safe Realm – Public Realm Analysis and Crime Reduction Strategies
- Safe Park – Parking Zone Analysis and Crime Reduction Strategies
- Family Safe – Analysis and crime reduction strategies for multifamily housing
- Ped Safe – Pedestrian Safety Analysis & Pedestrian Safety Strategies
- Active Safe – Active area investigative and data collection program
- Conflict Res – Analysis and reduction of active transportation/vehicle safety issues
- Culture Calm – Community analysis to increase legitimate activity/reduce crime
- Channel Study – Investigation and identification of “Crime Channels” within a city
- Channel Res – Strategies to disrupt unacceptable behavior and activities

Because law enforcement was not involved in the walking workshop, we cannot provide feedback on existing and on-going efforts to address criminal behaviors in this area. We feel this was a missed

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opportunity for the community. Within the Shopping Center, the following immediate fixes may be of assistance:

- Limited Glazing/Transparency – The Dollar Store/Liquor Store has covered all of their windows. 70 to 90 percent of ground floor uses should be transparent windows/doors.
- Displays of Criminal Behavior in store fronts – Consider moving this information to a website. It's hard to know what value it brings or what it aims to accomplish in its present location.
- The area outside the current manager's office could be a wonderful public park, pocket park or food court. Look to alleys in British Columbia for inspiration.
- Could the Shopping Center eventually house public art, murals, a graffiti wall or other opportunities for local artists to contribute? This may dissuade gang tagging.

For more information on CPTED and how practices can be used to reduce crime, specially robberies in an area, visit: <http://www.usak.org.tr/istanbul/files/cr.pr.environmental.design.pdf>

Development of a Civic Engagement Plan:

Effective community engagement is critical when developing policies and projects that impact a community's built form. Regardless of setting – whether urban, rural, large city or small town – the benefits of effective community engagement in projects affecting the built environment are numerous. Effective community engagement improves the success rates of policies and projects affecting the built environment. This is in large part because community engagement helps the agencies and organizations that are leading a project understand and respond to the local conditions that will influence the project's development. For example, agencies that create true community engagement are more successful at adapting to socio-economic changes that may influence the effort than those that do not conduct effective outreach. Additionally, when people affected by the project are involved from the beginning of the development process, it reduces the likelihood of unexpected or significant opposition when it comes time to implement the project. Community members also have unique knowledge of local contexts - including political, cultural and geographic settings. By interacting with the public and gaining important local insight, project leaders can shape and direct the project in keeping with the community vision and needs.

A conventional model of “public involvement” has been built around complying with legal requirements for issuing public notices about projects and related events, holding public hearings to solicit feedback and incorporating feedback into draft recommendations. The community has been invited in when project leaders have decided input is needed - or when it is mandated by law - and the public hearings, citizen advisory councils, and public comment sessions have formalized the effort. At many public meetings or events, a classroom structure communicates to people that they are to listen and not converse. This model fails to truly engage the public or capitalize on all of the benefits of successful civic

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engagement. To engage communities, leaders must move from the conventional model to one that focuses on outreach, capacity-building, inclusiveness and collaboration.

Develop a civic engagement plan - A successful public process starts with developing a community outreach plan that describes the desired outcomes of the project and details the public process, including who the stakeholders and audiences are, how they should be reached, messages, the tools that will be most effective, and how the success of the effort will be measured. In general, community engagement activities need to address issues that the public perceives as important. Thus, while developing the community outreach plan, project developers should seek ways to explain to the public why the project matters. Additionally, efforts should be made to conduct workshops, events or meetings in places that are comfortable and familiar to the audiences, and to use language that is clear. Each communication or event should contribute to the public's understanding of the project and its purpose.

Specific outreach tools may include educational workshops, media outreach, paid advertising, surveys, print materials such as flyers and brochures, PSA's, educational videos, slide presentations, charrettes, newsletters, websites and online communications, direct mail, letters to the editor or guest commentaries, councils, partnerships, coffeehouse chats, meetings, interviews, demonstrations, bulletin boards and more. The main point is that each of these elements has been identified and tied to other initiatives with outcomes and measures of success so that a quality control and effectiveness feedback loop is in place.

The goal is to engage the community. If the community is not engaged, City leaders must take responsibility for developing effective and successful outreach programs that achieves this identified goal. Because a sustained community outreach effort has not happened in this area, we need to look at localized efforts to build capacity within the community, which will include the identification of outreach goals, definitions of success, measures for evaluating effectiveness, and ways to adjust for improvements over time.

Build cultural competence - Ensuring that programs and messages are designed to be relevant, appropriate and effective in different cultures and different languages is important to any successful community outreach. In fact, cultural competence has emerged as a key strategy to improving health and the quality of healthcare and social services for everyone in the U.S. regardless of race, ethnicity, cultural background or language proficiency. Translating important messages requires strong cultural knowledge, because a word for word translation will not be effective. Reaching people of all backgrounds often requires more than simply translating messages. To increase their effectiveness, many organizations working with multi-cultural populations are developing "health promoters" programs that recruit people who live in and work in a community to be community educators and liaisons between the program and the community. An example is the DeSoto County, Florida program Promotores/as de Salud that serves Hispanic farm workers. Other communities are working to culturally

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adapt messages. For example, in California's San Joaquin Valley, campaigns to encourage people to reduce their contribution to summertime smog were developed for English-speaking and Spanish-speaking markets. The campaigns were culturally adapted to focus on types of behavior changes that would be relevant and appropriate in the cultural context of the different audiences. Adaptation of this type requires strong knowledge of the culture and language of the target audience.

Broaden the list of stakeholders - To build effective community engagement, project leaders should broaden the list of stakeholders and partners whose involvement is sought. Stakeholders and partners commonly include city and county staff, advocacy groups, residents, business operators, property owners, elected officials, community leaders, neighborhood safety groups, school representatives, health agencies, "main street" or downtown groups, charitable non-profit organizations and regional employers. To be more effective, project leaders also should seek the early involvement of churches, news outlets, potential opposition groups and children. Now, more than ever, we identify community outside of geographical areas.

- **Churches.** Across the country, churches build and sustain more social capital than any other type of institution. Thus, project leaders should seek innovative ways to work with church leaders to engage their membership in public projects.
- **Media.** Conventional community outreach plans have treated the media as a means of simply disseminating information. A more effective approach is to engage members of traditional news outlets (newspaper, television and radio) and non-traditional outlets, or "new" media (online news services, bloggers), as stakeholders and seek their involvement early in the process. Just as project leaders should build capacity amongst residents and within the community, so too should they seek to build capacity with journalists and news outlets.
- **Potential opposition groups.** Special efforts should be made to identify and reach out to people and organizations that may be expected to oppose the project under development. It is important to build their trust and involvement. Try to identify and address their concerns both as part of the public process and during special stakeholder interviews or meetings.
- **Children.** Children have much to offer in the community planning and design process, yet they remain mostly untapped throughout community transformation processes. A child's imagination is a powerful tool; they can dream up the perfect community in which to live, play and go to school. Beyond the power of their imaginations, they also can bring very practical solutions to the table. For example, children often are aware of shortcuts to the places they go that could be formalized into trails and added to the community's pedestrian network map. They often speak volumes about important values and their honesty helps raise the discussion to the level of guiding principles. Perhaps most importantly, the involvement of children in public processes can change the whole tenor of the events.

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In every community, there are people and groups that serve unique roles or have connections built on local context or events. Project leaders should determine who they are and invite them into the process early.

Start with a base of shared values and build understanding - The conventional model for public involvement in projects that affect the built environment often engages the public too late in the process, and in a manner that pits interests against each other. For example, holding a public hearing on a proposed project sets up stakeholders to take a position either for or against the project, without any discussion about community values and whether the project supports those values. A better model is to start the public process with educational workshops or visioning sessions that build a base of shared values. In some communities, a vision plan already exists and in those cases, the vision plan should help guide the project development. In other communities, a simple visioning exercise during a public workshop can go a long way toward helping stakeholders see that they generally want the same things for their community – safety and security, economic development, recreation and places to play, and so on – and that their goal should be to collaborate on ways to achieve those ideals through the project being developed.

Approach engagement as a two-way conversation - Effective public engagement involves much more than telling people about a project. Rather, effective engagement actually facilitates a dialogue that leads to reciprocal learning, collaboration and – ideally – consensus. By engaging in reciprocal learning through the public process, project leaders will gain insight and perspective that can help them ensure the project is tailored to meet the community's needs. Community members also will learn from each other.

Support a community Steering Committee or Neighborhood Revitalization Group - Organize a community-based group, such as a Revitalization Group, to represent the values and goals of the neighborhood, evaluate the recommendations of this memo, prioritize efforts, and pursue funding for implementation. One of the working group's first tasks could be to reach out to faith-based groups, schools, residents and organizations to build capacity within the community. Because community is defined less by geographical boundaries and more by our habits and routines, this working group may need to reach outside of the annexed area, to organizations and groups that residents belong to, in order to meet neighbors. The Neighborhood Revitalization Group could look to the Port of Bellingham project and the success of its working group as a model:

<http://www.portofbellingham.com/index.aspx?NID=344>

Celebrate Successes - It is important to celebrate early successes to publicize new community assets, bring recognition to the people involved, reaffirm that the process has worked, and build more support for work to be done.

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A Civic Engagement Plan is in line with the City's stated desires for this area. See:

<http://rentonwa.gov/bensoncommunity/>

While the City prides itself on its communications and the delivery of well-designed outreach products, it is worth noting that when one wishes to find contact information on the website for City Staff, one is given titles and departments instead of people. See:

<http://rentonwa.gov/business/default.aspx?id=592>. This is a subtle but important message the City is giving to residents. The City appears less human and more bureaucratic because of this and yet staff cares very much and is part of the community it serves. This should be corrected. It does not foster relationship building. A better example is found here:

<http://rentonwa.gov/news/default.aspx?id=1922&mid=72>

The outreach materials for the event were focused on process outreach. Specifically, the City did a good job of meeting with organizations, sending information, and emailing people, but there is an opportunity for the development of content and key messaging in outreach materials. For example, the headline of the poster is, "Renton Walks" but we heard that safety, criminal behaviors, and illegal activities were the number one concern for the community. Because this information was also received through the Neighborhood Program, it should have been a primary message for the Walkability Workshop. Additionally, the handout refers to all of Renton, when in fact this event was about the Benson/Cascade Area neighborhood. The specific area of the community was not the focus of the outreach materials. Secondly, we repeatedly heard about the ethnic diversity of the neighborhood prior to and during the event, but we did not see a reference to culturally adapted outreach efforts or even translated materials for people whose first language is not English. Thirdly, the City's media relations were successful in gaining advanced coverage, but we did not have event-day or post-event continuing coverage. Articles in the Renton Reporter announced the upcoming audit, but we did not have a reporter during the Walkability Workshop, or release materials for the paper on the day of the event, or follow up with a reporter afterwards. Lastly, given the focus on Safe Routes to School and the outreach efforts focused to the Parent Teacher Association, we could have worked with Emerald Heights Apartment Complex and the School District to engage children, students and residents in the visioning process. A short children's charrette at school, or on the 8th as part of the larger workshop, might have allowed students to stop by after school. Additionally, had we built capacity with the school ahead of time, students might have written essays, developed art work or spoken to how the existing conditions affect them. As was noted during the workshop, community is less about geographical areas and more about the habits and routines one has.

Continue Safe Routes to School Efforts

Safe Routes to School assessments are ongoing by King County Public Health, the Renton School District, the Bicycle Alliance of Washington and Feet First. The report for Tiffany Park Elementary

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School was shared with the WALC Institute as part of the preparation. Upon review, we noted the following of significance:

- Overall, the report is well done and provides specific details about what needs to be fixed and/or upgraded around the school. It showcases reasons to support Safe Routes to School and challenges unique to the community. In it, we learned that approximately 33 percent of Tiffany Park Elementary Students were born outside of the United States; 25 percent of the school's 450 students are English Language Learners; and over 50 percent of all students qualify for free or subsidized school lunches. This further confirms the need for culturally sensitive messaging tailored to a diverse population.
- Within the report, speeding drivers, drop off/pick up behaviors and open ditches and storm drains are noted as problematic around the school. Additionally, sightlines are interrupted due to grassy berms. We noted the same sightline concerns regarding overgrown buffers and storm drains.
- The recommendation for painting a center line on Lake Youngs Way SE and Jefferson may not produce the desired results. It may create a sense of territorialism for drivers that actually encourages bad behaviors or diminishes the expectation of other road users.
- Educational programs are aimed at correcting behaviors that the built environment is presently encouraging. Goat tracks, short cuts and unwillingness to use certain crossings are evidence of this. Engineering and educational programming need to align more closely and improvements need to be made in cooperation with the community so the outreach is a part of all projects from visioning to implementation.
- A circulation plan for pick up and drop off should be created or reviewed if one exists. This, then, needs to be communicated to students, parents, and school staff through culturally-sensitive messaging and translations to meet the needs of families.
- The City may want to consider creating a Street Design Guide for features that improve Safe Routes to School. See an example within the Casper Area Safe Routes To School Report: http://dl.dropbox.com/u/17132277/CasperWY_SafeRoutesToSchool_1_Report_FinalWithAppendix_WALC-Institute_2011-05_SmallFile.pdf

Develop Street Design Guidelines:

Many of the on-site conditions observed during the walking audit can be addressed by creating a Street Design Guide. Street Design Guidelines will allow the cities to bring land use and transportation planning together so that level-of-service for cars is no longer the sole criterion for

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street design. Street Design Guidelines set forth standards and provide guidance as the cities design and improve streets. The guidelines provide new metrics for measuring the success of a street, provide an assessment of local street types and highlight traffic calming features that have a history of success locally. When crafting Street Design Guidelines, communities should look to the following documents to ensure the guidelines fall within the acceptable standard:

- American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets (“The Green Book”)
- Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Traditional Neighborhood Development Street Design Guidelines
- ITE’s Traffic Engineering Handbook.

Additional recommended reading includes Randall Arendt’s *Rural by Design*, Christopher Alexander’s *The Timeless Way of Building* and *A Pattern Language*, and Galina Tachieva’s *Sprawl Repair Manual*. Los Angeles County is scheduled to release the *Model Design Manual for Living Streets* in Fall 2011, which will serve as a good example for communities. An example of Street Design Guidelines is found in the Appendix.

Document Next Steps to Create an Action Plan:

Take your observations from the workshop and turn them into recommendations. Then share your ideas with others. Together, participants can create actionable strategies for improving the built form. An Action Plan provides a strategy to identify:

- What will be done – Specific actions or activities
- By whom – Specific people with clear responsibilities
- When – Specific timeline for completing activities
- How – Specific resources needed to complete activities

Action Plan Template

| Action | Person(s) | Timeline | Resources Needed | Desired Outcomes | Metrics for Success | Next Steps |
|--------|-----------|----------|---|--|---|--|
| What? | Who? | When? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time? • Money? • What Else? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we want to happen? • What is the desired outcome? • Why are we doing this? | How will we know we have been successful? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time Savings? • Lower Costs? • Lower Crime Rates? • Increased Use of Facilities? • Healthier, Happier Residents and Visitors? • Increased Tourism? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we document this project? • How do we communicate successes, failures, and lessons learned? • What naturally follows? What’s the next step? |

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3. Timeframe for Accomplishing Actions:

During the Technical Meeting, Alex Pietsch, Director of the Community and Economic Development, stated that the Benson Area is a third tier priority area within the City's economic development plans. Since annexation in 2007, this area has received very little investment or attention by the City. Unless residents and business owners feel that they are a priority, it will continue to be difficult to engage the community and this also impacts the timeframe for recommendations.

Develop Public-Private Partnership – With both parties motivated, the City and the Owner of Cascade Shopping Center should come together to discuss how both can improve quality of life for residents and offer needed services to the community. The City will need to determine how the Benson Annexation factors into its 2011-2016 Business Plan. While the suggestions contained in this report are in line with the Mission, Vision and Goals stated by the Business Plan (see information below), the Benson Area is not specifically mentioned as an area of focus by the City at this time.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design – The City of Renton should consider including a CPTED specialist within its Master Planning and Parks, Recreation and Open Space Planning efforts to look at how the built environment might support those activities we wish to have within the community. A CPTED specialist can assess the community and provide feedback within six weeks of project initiation. Detailed CPTED work, such as Channel Studies that pinpoint crime, might take longer but this effort would be undertaken alongside local law enforcement. A CPTED specialist will provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the correctional-facility-type fencing that currently exists around the Cascade Shopping Center and some of the unintended consequences it likely has (i.e. exacerbating the situation by creating more isolation, literally an island of crime).

Bicycle/Pedestrian Officers - Immediately, the City should consider whether pedestrian and bicycle police officers would have more visibility in this area. Walking or riding a bicycle might allow officers into the alleyways and corridors of the Cascade Shopping Center. Additionally, an officer on a bicycle or a pedestrian officer should patrol the Cascade Shopping Center area while students leave for and return from school. With the closing of Bartell's Pharmacy, there are no eyes on these children as they walk along the utility corridor to and from school. This is a dangerous situation and on-foot or bike patrols should be an immediate priority for the City of Renton – implemented now.

Civic Engagement Plan - The City of Renton is undergoing a Master Planning effort and a Parks, Recreation and Open Space planning effort. These initiatives will include the Benson Annexation and will be an important first step in identifying existing resources and needs in the area. We encourage the City to build capacity with the community during these efforts by creating and following a public engagement plan. The City should initiate this effort as soon as possible. A public engagement plan can be developed in eight weeks. Implementation and guidelines for assessment will be set over 3,

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6, 9 and 12 month markers with additional milestones that correspond with existing projects and City initiatives.

Safe Routes to School – In addition to current initiatives, the assessment should include Circulation Plans and culturally sensitive messaging that teaches students and parents how to drop off and pick up their children. Additionally, it should include specific programming under the 5 E's identified by the National Center for Safe Routes to School: Evaluation, Education, Enforcement, Engineering and Encouragement that are concurrent.

4. Implementation Coordination:

The City of Renton has motivated, dedicated staff who reside in and care very much for this community. Erika Conkling, Kris Sorenson and Chip Vincent are outstanding individuals who bring much value to the City of Renton. Planning Commissioner Nancy Osborn is a longtime advocate for the Benson Area. The City did an admirable job of bringing departments together for the technical session, including representatives from the following departments:

- Fire Department
- Community & Economic Development Department
- Parks Department
- Neighborhood Program
- Transportation Department
- School District
- Planning Commission

Other agencies/departments that must be involved in future coordination efforts are:

- Police
- Housing Authority
- Public Health
- Senior Services

Within the City's 2011-2016 Business Plan, the City has set the following Vision and Mission.

Vision: Renton - The center of opportunity in the Puget Sound Region where families and businesses thrive.

Mission: The City of Renton, in partnership and communication with residents, businesses, and schools is dedicated to:

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- Providing a healthy, welcoming atmosphere where citizens choose to live, raise families and take pride in their community
- Promoting planned growth and economic vitality
- Valuing our diversity of language, housing, culture, backgrounds and choices
- Capitalize (*sic Capitalizing*) on the diversity of the community to build stronger neighborhoods and ensure the availability of city services to all
- Creating a positive work environment
- Meeting service demands through innovation and commitment to excellence

Those 2011-2016 Business Goal Actions that support the recommendations in this report are:

- Meet the service demands that contribute to the livability of the community
- Respond to growing service demands while meeting the unique requirements of a diverse population through partnerships, innovation, and outcome management
- Manage growth through sound urban planning
- Foster development of vibrant, sustainable, attractive, mixed-use neighborhoods in established urban centers
- Uphold a high standard of design and property maintenance throughout the City
- Provide a balance between housing and high-quality jobs
- Maintain services to current residents while welcoming annexation areas that desire to become part of Renton
- Promote strong neighborhoods
- Support the vitality and positive appearance of neighborhoods through community involvement
- Encourage and partner in the development of quality housing choices for people of all ages and income levels
- Ensure the safety, health, and security of citizens through effective service delivery
- Promote pedestrian and bicycle linkages between neighborhoods and community focal points
- Promote citywide economic development
- Promote Renton as the progressive, opportunity-rich city in the Puget Sound region
- Capitalize on growth opportunities through bold and creative economic development strategies
- Recruit and retain businesses to ensure a dynamic, diversified employment base
- Continue to implement the Community Planning Initiative to better align the city's planning efforts with the services it provides and the desires of the community.
- Create forums and strategies to better engage the city's diverse population.

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- Build a stronger workforce and community as a whole by supporting programs and initiatives that promote active living and healthy eating.
- Promote citywide economic development
- Aggressively pursue the redevelopment of key large and high-profile properties throughout the city.

The Benson Annexation is not specifically mentioned in the 2011-2016 goals or actions and this is probably the most critical point to establishing coordination and a timeline for implementation activities.