



Walkability Audit
Cities of Olympia, Tumwater and
Lacey, Washington

Next Steps Memorandum
September 2012 - **FINAL**



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Walkability Audit for the Cities of Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater, Washington

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1. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) selected the Thurston Regional Planning Commission (TRPC) for Sustainable Communities Building Blocks technical assistance associated with improving safety, public health, and economic development in three communities by increasing walking and connecting destinations. A centerpiece of this technical assistance involved conducting a walkability audit in the cities of Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater. The walkability audit focused on the theme of access to transit in three key locations along the Capitol Boulevard-Martin Way Corridor, the former US Highway 99 which served as the major route serving Olympia before the construction of I-5. The corridor is the subject of a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Challenge Grant awarded to the TRPC for a Corridor and Neighborhood District Plan to promote sustainable economic development and community livability in those cities. The day's activities entailed training in the walkability audit survey tool for the community's use in other areas to identify improvements in the walking environment that will increase safety, accessibility and comfort for people of all ages and abilities.

This memorandum describes the Walkability Audit held on Saturday, August 11, 2012, and focuses on the outcomes of the audit and next steps that the communities may undertake as a result of this technical assistance. EPA Contractor Whit Blanton, FAICP, of Renaissance Planning Group led the Walkability Audit in partnership with the TRPC; the cities of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater; and Intercity Transit. Participants included agency staff, planning commission members and elected officials. Representatives of EPA Region 10 participated in the planning for the audit. The outcomes of the workshop include a commitment to continuing inter-agency partnerships, identification of potential walkability issues to address, and next step actions to improve walkability in each district that were identified by the group.



Figure 1 - Walkability Audit Team

2. WORKSHOP EVENTS

The technical assistance centered around a day-long workshop on August 11th that included a walkability audit of three selected areas in cities of Lacey (Woodland District), Olympia (Martin Way District) and Tumwater (Brewery District). Prior to the walkability audit, the contractor presented an overview of basic principles and treatments that can improve walking conditions in a community. The contractor also provided training on using the walkability audit survey tool. This tool assists the participants in documenting the existing conditions along the audit route and recording their impressions about aspects of the built environment that are important for walkability. Intercity Transit provided a full-sized bus for the group to use traveling between the walkability audit locations in Lacey, Tumwater and Olympia, and then back to Lacey City Hall for the concluding work session. Throughout the day, there were about 35 local community participants engaged in the activities, many of who participated all day.

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After the audit, participants reconvened in a working group to review their notes and observations captured through the survey tool and to discuss next steps options for improvements that will make the area more walkable. The walkability workshop served as an important foundation for the planning activities associated with the HUD Challenge Grant for the Capitol/Martin Corridor.

3. KEY ISSUES + STRATEGIES

Based on the field observations and post-walking audit work session, participants identified several strategies to improve pedestrian accessibility to transit service and the overall walking environment for each of the three districts. Figures 2-4 show the walking routes selected by TRPC and local agency staff based on guidance from the contractor. Given the context of the overall corridor planning activities, the audit focused on strategies to improve pedestrian accessibility as part of economic development and redevelopment activities in each district. Further evaluation by city staff will be needed to confirm the specific options, develop cost estimates and move projects forward with funding.

Lacey – Woodland District

The Woodland District in Lacey, WA is a mixed-use employment center located south of Interstate 5 and immediately west of College Street from St. Martin's University. An Intercity Transit bus transfer facility is located near the center of the district, near Huntamer Park, a focal point for community events. The city has developed a master plan for the district, which entails street connections, infill development and other public realm improvements that include sidewalks and open space. Both College Street and Sleater Kinney Road are high speed, heavy volume roads that form barriers for pedestrians to access the Woodland District. The following strategy options were developed by participants during the audit for consideration as ways to overcome these barrier roadways and help make the district more walkable and inviting:

- Create a signalized pedestrian crossing at the existing T-intersection of Woodland Square Loop SE at College Street SE to connect the Woodland District with the pedestrian path on the east side of College Street that connects to residential areas on the St. Martin's University campus. One option would be to install a pedestrian hybrid beacon, which is also known as a HAWK beacon (High-Intensity Activated crossWalk). This is a traffic signal used to stop vehicular traffic and allow pedestrians to cross safely. It would be a more cost effective option than a grade separated pedestrian overpass, which the city may consider as a longer-term option. Another design and signage treatment option would entail modification of the College Street dimensions within the right-of-way to create a refuge median along with a rapid flashing beacon. A refuge median would introduce a modest horizontal deflection in the roadway, helping to slow down traffic as it approaches the intersection and make the intersection safer to traverse.
- Fill in existing gaps in the sidewalk network on the north side of 3rd Avenue SE in the district, perhaps as part of redevelopment of an older office building or as part of a road diet to reduce the number of lanes or width of the lanes to help slow down traffic exiting I-5. There are newly built hotels on the north side of 3rd Avenue, and the planned connection of Golf Club Road SE with 3rd Avenue will enable a crosswalk at that intersection to assist pedestrians from the hotels reaching destinations elsewhere within the district. Other design treatments are needed in coordination with the Washington State Department of Transportation to slow the I-5 off-ramp traffic making right turns onto Golf Club Road.
- Improve the visibility and utility of the existing I-5 Trail (a separated shared use path) at 3rd Avenue, with potential realignment of the trail south to the planned future completion of a new east-west road,

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4th Avenue SE. Signage and wayfinding would help to better connect the I-5 Trail with the Intercity Transit facility located immediately south along Golf Club Road, and would help to provide more direct access to the St. Martin's University trail.

- Add a crosswalk with a potential pedestrian hybrid beacon at Golf Club Road SE and 6th Avenue SE, where both pedestrian movement and traffic volumes are expected to increase as development occurs and with new road connections. Design options to consider as right-of-way and space permits include a refuge median with rapid flashing beacon and a raised crosswalk with curb extensions (bulb-outs). A traffic calming strategy for 6th Avenue between Sleater Kinney Road and College Street may also be worth considering.
- Consistent with the city's master plan, consider design and signage treatments for 6th Avenue SE that would reinforce its function and utility as a true main street for the residents of Lacey. Creating "gateway" intersections with Sleater Kinney Road and College Street through pavement treatments and other elements, along with appropriately scaled signage and wayfinding components, would help attract and guide people on foot and in vehicles to destinations within the Woodland District.
- Improve the access from the Intercity Transit bus transfer facility to the Fred Meyer retail center by enhancing the crossing of 7th Avenue SE with crosswalks and wayfinding.
- Consider adding a trailhead in the Woodland District for the three shared use paths that connect into Lacey. This would serve as a valuable community focal point and could be tied to public transportation and/or redevelopment activities in the district.
- Assess the feasibility of adding a park-and-ride component to the Intercity Transit transfer facility to better capture potential transit riders in the Woodland District and encourage some pedestrian activity to adjacent retail and commercial uses. This may work with an agreement from property owners to dedicate a certain number of parking spaces for park-and-ride use.

Tumwater – Brewery District

The City of Tumwater is engaged in a community visioning and planning effort to address redevelopment of the former Olympia Beer brewery facility and its nearby commercial areas. The walkability audit focused on a retail and office development located immediately northeast of the former brewery at the intersection of Capitol Boulevard and Custer Way. This area features an Intercity Transit transfer point and neighborhood-serving retail and office uses adjacent to various neighborhoods in both the City of Tumwater and Olympia. The district generally suffers from a lack of well-defined pedestrian connections both within the commercial area and to the nearby residential areas. The following strategy options were developed by participants during the audit for consideration as part of the district's redevelopment planning efforts:

- Revisit the district's traffic circulation plan, including the connectivity and design of interior streets, location and amount of parking, clarity and functionality of signage and pavement markings, etc., as well as the design of the exterior roadways serving the district to balance mobility and accessibility for all users. This would include integrating better visibility and pedestrian connectivity to the former brewery, the Schmidt House and Tumwater Falls Park as local attractions. Those elements will serve as a necessary long-term foundation for a truly walkable destination that adds economic and social value to the community.
- Identify specific streets, such as Cleveland Avenue SE, where sidewalks can be expanded to a minimum 6' width and up to 15' for areas with outdoor dining/seating. Providing a well-defined "furniture zone," where public art or landscaping may be displayed, would serve as a buffer between higher volume and

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faster roads, and pedestrians seeking to reach destinations or public gathering places. Street trees would help to soften and better define the pedestrian realm of this roadway, while potentially providing a buffer from passing traffic and shelter from weather.

- Along those lines, an effort should be made to more distinctly define the walking area along Cleveland Avenue. This road is an important boarding/transfer and turnaround point for Intercity Transit, yet lacks adequate sidewalk widths and crossing zones. The travel lane widths and bus waiting area should be evaluated to determine if they can be narrowed or removed to increase the amount of protected pedestrian space. Redevelopment plans will also need to be reviewed for possible relocation of parking to expand sidewalks.
- Treat Cleveland Avenue as a main street to support pedestrian-scaled redevelopment of the existing commercial area with “complete streets” elements that serve all users. Use design features like textured pavement, signage and landscaping to distinguish the street as a livable roadway that supports multimodal access and mobility.
- Evaluate the feasibility of a left turn signal at Cleveland Avenue and Custer Way to assist in more efficient transit operations and access to the commercial district.
- Consider a possible re-routing and widening of the sidewalk along Cleveland Avenue at Capitol Boulevard adjacent to the Safeway grocery store. The sidewalk is narrow and overgrown at the intersection, yet serves as an important means of access for pedestrians from neighborhoods along Capitol Boulevard to access the Safeway. The re-routing and possible widening could move the sidewalk closer to the Safeway building.
- Similarly, improve pedestrian connectivity from Capitol Boulevard to Cleveland Avenue and into the commercial core by better defining pedestrian travel ways with markings and signage, and reorientation of internal streets for all users. Similarly, provide pavement marking, lighting and other appropriate design treatments to improve the comfort and safety of the pedestrian connection at Blass Avenue SE to the neighborhood east of the Safeway grocery store.
- Given the dimensions of the intersection, surrounding development and relatively balanced traffic flows, there is a potential for a roundabout at Capitol Boulevard and Custer Way to serve as a gateway for the district that will help create a walkable sense of place. A first step for the city and its partners would be to evaluate the feasibility of a roundabout at this location.

Olympia – Martin Way District

This portion of the walkability audit in Olympia centered on an area along Martin Way, a four-lane section of the former US Route 99 where Indian and Woodard Creeks form a series of wetlands and where Intercity Transit is planning an expansion of its existing administrative and maintenance facility on a vacant parcel. The area includes a combination of strip commercial buildings, aging hotels, transitional housing and institutional uses like nearby Providence St. Peter Hospital, and there are residential areas on the north and south side of the roadway, located behind the commercial fronting property. Intercity Transit provides high frequency bus service along the corridor as a major commuting route between Lacey and Olympia, and other points in the region. The district is lacking in pedestrian facilities and experiences high speed, heavy volume traffic along Martin Way. The following strategy options were developed by participants during the audit for consideration as part of the district’s redevelopment planning efforts:

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- The city of Olympia and Intercity Transit can work in partnership to use the new facility expansion fronting Martin Way to help set a new pattern for development oriented to the street with a comfortable and well-defined walking area along the roadway with adequate buffer from traffic.
- Select other catalyst sites along the corridor that are likely to redevelop and work with property owners to define a clear pedestrian space for better access, comfort and safety. An expected standard discussed during the audit is having an 8' sidewalk, decorative lighting and 10' planting strips.
- Make Indian and Woodard Creeks an amenity and focal point for people during the daytime. A stormwater or wetlands park could have the dual function of making the corridor a more appealing destination while helping protect water quality.
- Prepare an access management plan in cooperation with property owners that works in tandem with pedestrian facility improvements to create a better functioning and more orderly corridor for all users. The access management plan needs to incorporate appropriate crossing strategies or treatments of Martin Way roughly every 300' to 500' to support safe access to public transportation and destinations. The stretch of Martin Way between Devoe Street and Pattison Street is especially critical as a crossing for safe access to transit.

4. ACTIONS/ TIMEFRAMES/ RESPONSIBILITIES

The key to an effective walkability audit and EPA's Building Blocks program is to cultivate champions who will carry the knowledge gained from the technical assistance forward to address the community's health and accessibility needs on a comprehensive and consistent basis. Toward that end, the Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater Walkability Audit involved key community representatives who pledged to follow through from the workshop, during the HUD Challenge Grant process and other ongoing activities, to carry out the ideas in collaboration with residents and stakeholders within each district and the region. This may also entail applying the audit tools in other areas of the tri-cities and TRPC region. During the audit wrap-up discussion, participants defined the next step action items listed in the table below. These actions reflect ideas generated from the workshop process. The pursuit of these actions is fully at the discretion of the local participants and the communities they represent and serve.

Action	Purpose	Lead Entities	Timeframe
A. Plans and Policies			
Integrate walkability audit findings into the inventory, analysis and recommendations components of the HUD Challenge Grant for the Capitol/Martin Corridor.	Ensure that the scope of work and work products of the Challenge Grant reflect the focus on pedestrian accessibility, safety and comfort, and spirit of collaboration illustrated in the audit.	Thurston Regional Planning Commission and cities of Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater	100 days

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Action		Purpose	Lead Entities	Timeframe
Prepare Brewery District traffic circulation plan.	Address the internal circulation and parking needs relative to planned redevelopment to make a more walkable neighborhood.	Tumwater Community Development Department	One year	
Develop or strengthen the pedestrian wayfinding program.	Pedestrian-scale wayfinding & signage connects people from neighborhoods and parking areas to destinations.	Community development departments of each city	Mid-term (generally longer than two years but fewer than 10 years)	
Develop access management and crossing plan for Martin Way in Olympia.	Improve pedestrian crossing safety, help manage traffic and coordinate access with redevelopment opportunities.	Olympia Community Planning & Development and Public Works depts.	Two years	
B. Physical Infrastructure				
Evaluate and develop strategy for safe pedestrian crossing of College Street at Woodland Square Loop in Lacey.	Facilitate safe crossing from St. Martin's University to the Woodland Square District.	City of Lacey engineering department	100 days	
Evaluate and then undertake "main street" design treatments for Cleveland Avenue in Tumwater and 6 th Avenue SE in Lacey.	Create a stronger pedestrian-oriented community focal point and multimodal center.	City community development and public works/engineering departments	Mid-term	
Re-route and possibly widen the sidewalk adjacent to the Safeway at Cleveland Avenue and Capitol Boulevard in Tumwater	Provide better buffering, visibility and comfort for pedestrians from neighborhoods along Capitol Blvd to access the Safeway	Tumwater Community Development & Public Works Departments	Mid-term	
Evaluate the feasibility of a roundabout at Custer Way and Capitol Boulevard in Tumwater	Create gateway and help slow traffic for increased pedestrian and bicycling.	Tumwater Community Development & Public Works Departments	Mid-term	

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Action	Purpose	Lead Entities	Timeframe
Modify 3 rd Avenue SE to manage traffic speed and improve sidewalk and I-5 Trail connectivity.	Improve pedestrian safety, comfort and accessibility.	Lacey Community Development and Public Works Departments	Mid-term
Construct crosswalk and appropriate signage at 7 th Avenue SE and the Intercity Transit facility in Lacey.	Improve pedestrian access to the Fred Meyer store and other retail opportunities in the Woodland District.	Lacey Community Development and Public Works Departments	Two years
Add a crosswalk with a potential pedestrian hybrid beacon at Golf Club Road SE and 6 th Avenue SE; evaluate other design options to provide better pedestrian safety and visibility.	Improve pedestrian access and safety as redevelopment/infill occurs along this roadway and the Club Road connection is made at 3 rd Avenue SE.	Lacey Community Development and Public Works Departments	Two years
C. Interagency Coordination and Stakeholder Partnerships			
Participate in the Capitol/Martin Corridor Integrated Land Use and Transportation Planning Study and develop recommendations.	Facilitate the execution and development of specific recommendations to strengthen the multimodal character of the corridor and enhance its economic vitality.	TRPC, Intercity Transit and cities of Lacey, Tumwater and Olympia	Two years
Expand training & application of walkability tools region-wide.	Use as part of neighborhood or district outreach and partnership programs to improve safety, sense of place and brand identity.	Thurston Regional Planning Commission and cities	One year

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Action	Purpose	Lead Entities	Timeframe
Prepare PowerPoint presentation of case studies (both local and regional) featuring transformations of streets for better pedestrian accessibility, safety for all users and economic development.	Build support among boards, elected officials and the public for candidate improvements.	Thurston Regional Planning Commission	100 days

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5. APPENDIX

- Walkable and Livable Communities Institute: <http://www.walklive.org/>
- U.S. EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities: <http://www.epa.gov/dced/buildingblocks.htm>
- Figures 2, 3 and 4: Walking routes for the cities of Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater
- Photos from Walkability Audit

Figure 2 – Woodland District, Lacey

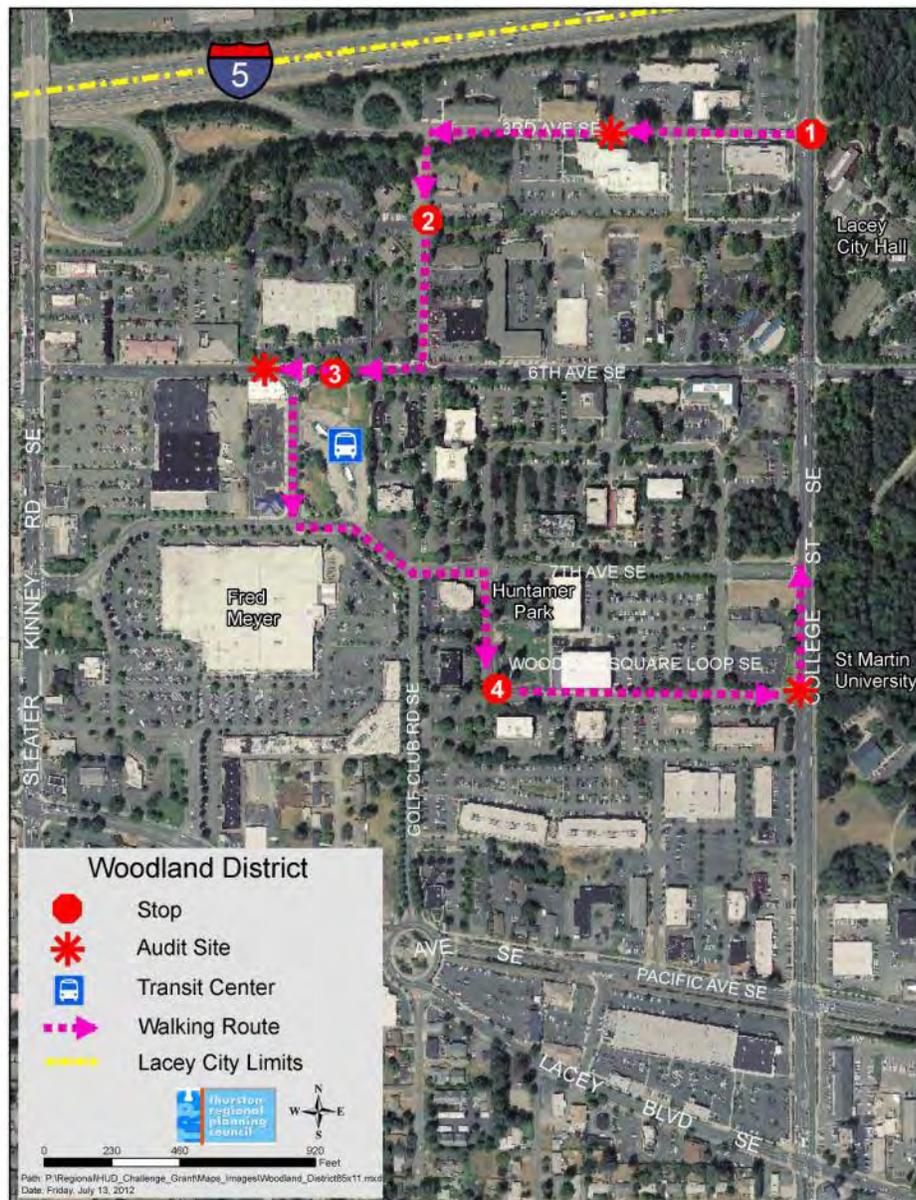
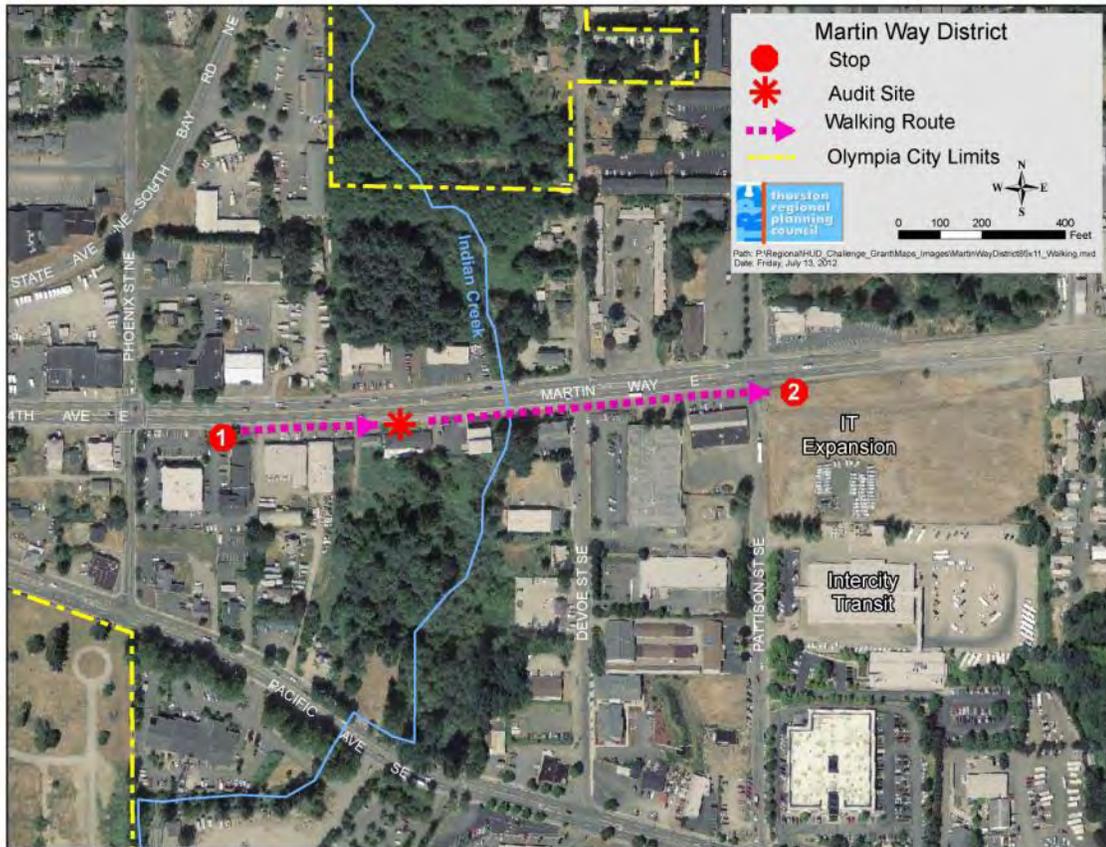


Figure 3 – Brewery District, Tumwater



Figure 4 – Martin Way District, Olympia



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