

Description The creation of trails and paths within a neighborhood and connecting adjacent neighborhoods and to commercial centers in order to reduce reliance on automobiles and their associated environmental impacts.

General Information The walkability of a neighborhood is a major component of the new urbanism. This practice involves using existing and new routes for non-motorized human movement within a development and within a community. On-street trails consist of sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks. Off-street trails consist of the more typical type of trail: wooded paths, hiking trails, equestrian trails, and bike trails.

Trails and paths, like those for any transportation mode, are most effective when they are part of a system that assures connections, continuity, access, and safety. A community-wide system of facilities that is well designed and maintained is essential. Where appropriate these routes should link with other existing long distance routes. Greenways, river corridors, canal right of ways, and abandoned railroad lines present opportunities for the creation of paths and trails serving larger areas.

It is important to consider the needs of pedestrians during transportation and development projects. In an interconnected pedestrian system, sidewalks are continuous; crossing streets safely is made possible; and, where appropriate, measures are taken to slow automobile traffic. Wherever possible access to a network from public transport networks should be encouraged and developed. Unlike bicyclists who sometimes want to traverse an entire city or region, pedestrians tend to do most of their walking close to home, work, school and commercial activity areas, like central business districts and shopping centers.

Some of the areas where pedestrian considerations should and often do occur, include:

- Central business districts
- School routes
- Residential areas
- University/college areas

Additional areas of attention where pedestrian considerations should, but often do not, occur include:

- Access to downtown from surrounding neighborhoods
- Arterial and collector roadways that serve commercial and residential areas
- Neighborhood commercial areas
- Access to parks and community centers
- Hospitals and elderly housing facilities

Because sidewalks and trails provide such fundamental services to the public,

they should be designed to meet the needs of the widest possible range of users. Trail and path networks should also be developed in an environmentally sensitive way, reconciling the needs of path users with those of nature conservation.

Both the basic development pattern and the design of individual sites can encourage or discourage bicycling and walking. For example, large parking lots in the front of buildings, berms that discourage easy access, and blank walls are intimidating. However, interesting facades and buildings that face the street and are closer to sidewalks create a more pedestrian "friendly" environment. Parking for cars should either be provided on the street or behind the development. Parking for bikes should also be provided in a protected location and close to the building to encourage non-motorized access.

Additional Resources

Little, C.E., 1995. *Greenways for America*, Johns Hopkins University Press.

Smith, D.S. and P.C. Helmund, eds., 1993. *Ecology of Greenways*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, NM.

Federal Highway Administration, no date. *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access*. Available on website.

Iowa Department of Transportation, no date. *Connecting People and Trails: Local Community Planning for Bicyclists and Pedestrians*. Available on website.

Walkable Communities, Inc. Information available on website.

Florida Department of Transportation, no date. *Twelve Steps Toward Walkable Communities*. Available on website.

Figure 12-1. Trail and path network

