

How CNY Moves on Two Feet

Tuesday, Nov. 3, 4:30-6 p.m. at the Housing Visions/Visions for Change conference room

Co-chairs: Heidi Holtz and Mary Kate Intaglietta

OCL: Sandra Barrett, Eileen Jevis, Renée K. Gadoua

Panelists:

Taywana “Mother Earth” Jones, Near Westside resident and community activist who does not have a car

Allison Mitura, Events Coordinator, American Heart Assoc.; “Wednesday Walk” participant

Aaron McKeon, Senior Transportation Planner, on SMTC's Sustainable Streets project, which produced a walkability map for the county.

Mike Alexander, Senior Transportation Planner, on SMTC's Wayfinding Study, including what's been done to plan for wayfinding for people in cars and what could be done for pedestrians.

1. **McKeon** provided an overview of SMTC Sustainable Streets project/sidewalks ([2014 project summary is online.](#))
 - Report requested by Syracuse Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA).
 - The project’s long-term goal is to encourage the development of streets that both accommodate all users – cyclists, pedestrians, transit users and motorists – and enhance the environment.
 - First part of project: collected data on all aspects of providing sidewalks.
 - SOCPA sought help identifying where sidewalks are suitable and should be required as part of a project.
 - What roads in the region need sidewalks?
 - What are the rules for sidewalk maintenance? (Sidewalks are usually on the right of way, but the property owner responsible for maintenance. Rules vary town to town.)
 - What are the costs and benefits of sidewalks? Health and safety benefits are massive. “There’s not a better thing you can do to prevent certain kinds of accidents than put in a sidewalk.”
 - Reference manual includes details of every municipality in the county.
 - Created first-ever inventory of city sidewalks, using aerial photos and a rating system.
 - Outside of city we see some robust sidewalk networks as well as some state sidewalks that go nowhere.
 - In older neighborhoods built post-WWII, sidewalk network dissolves.
 - Followed Pedestrian Demand Model, which lists features, such as: Destinations (schools, grocery stores, pharmacies, “Community Core,” post offices, libraries, community centers, convenience stores, transit stops); Neighborhood Characteristics (population density, employee density, households w/o vehicles; percentage walking to work; population over 65; population under 18, refugee resettlement areas); Pedestrian Detractors (pedestrian/vehicle collision density)

- Created list of Pedestrian Priority Zones, areas identified as having a high potential for pedestrian activity. They are a starting point for sidewalk planning.
2. **Heidi Holtz** led an exercise that invited attendees to list elements of a street. She drew road and asked: What's missing?

Crosswalk, lights, trees, signs, bus shelter, benches, trash cans, curb cuts, people, strollers, families, dogs, poop, pet cleanup station, people walking, public art, bike racks, bicyclists, restaurant, outdoor seating, delivery trucks, parking, bike lanes, flowers, awnings, signs, billboards, garbage, snowbanks, skateboarders, stop light, pedestrians, street/sidewalk surfaces, grass, cops, good guys and bad guys, fragile people, food carts, closed/boarded up buildings, empty buildings, apartments

The point: A lot of elements make up a street. What can make bad guys not bad? Eyes on the street. Lots of people. Familiarity. Sometimes bad is simply the unknown.

3. **Allison Mitura**

- Works for the American Heart Association, which moved to downtown Atrium Building from office on Fly Road in East Syracuse. Half of colleagues excited by opportunity to be in booming downtown; others were scared.
- Participated in downtown Wednesday Walks to learn more about the city.
- She previously knew disconnected locations downtown, Walks helped connect the dots.
- Pushing a stroller or pushing/operating a wheelchair on many downtown streets difficult.
- Walks provided opportunity to tell colleagues, "It's not a scary place" and to act as a goodwill ambassador.
- Increased familiarity with services and events downtown. Family now goes to more events downtown.
- Heart Association recommends 30 minutes of activity five days a week. "I was telling people that but not living it." Wednesday Walk a good way to get exercise. "It's nice to do it with other people."
- People resist walking more downtown out of uncertainty, fear of homeless hassling them.
- She learned distances often shorter than they seem.
- "Like a traveler, once you experience it, it becomes more familiar."

Kim Armani: Wednesday Walk runs biweekly June to October 6, with 50 participants. Themes: history, public art, parking spaces, architecture, Syracuse Crunch. The idea is to get people to know "a lot of places we drive to are walkable."

4. **Mother Earth**

She was mother to 7 by age 21 and is the subject of a documentary about her life. She does not have a car.

"Walking for me is part of nature. We're in these containers. We don't use these containers enough. For health reasons, I like to walk. There was a time I would be happy to catch

a ride. Then I got cancer and decided I'd walk. I challenged myself to walk two hours. I did it and I kept doing it. Now I look for reasons to walk.

“There are two different worlds. When you're driving, you're going fast. When you're walking, you time things better. I can take my time and talk to people. On the West Side, everything I need is within walking distance. It's so magical to me to use my legs and not worry about gas prices. Walking is a blessing. People who have a car find any reason to get in their car. They look at me and think, 'Oh, you're poor. You don't have a car.' No. I don't have a headache. I walk.

“(Re sidewalks in winter) On the West Side, walkers clear the sidewalks. We encourage everyone in the neighborhood to keep their sidewalks clean, so let's get it done.

“Walkers have shortcuts. We leap over stuff and make our own way.”

“There are some sidewalks missing. I wish we wouldn't be so political about this. Even a little kid would say, 'Just fix it.' We shouldn't have a long discussion about it. We should fix them.”

5. **Mike Alexander** discussed [SMTC's Wayfinding Study](#)
 - At some point, everyone is a pedestrian.
 - “Wayfinding” refers to sign systems for vehicles, walking, bike riders. Systems should complement each other.
 - Wayfinding is the use of guide signs to direct people to destinations.
 - Vehicle and bike systems require specific designs and have lots of rules; pedestrian signs are more flexible. But they are interconnected and complementary.
 - Rules outlined in [Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices \(MUTCD\)](#)
 - Case study: Rochester
 - Vehicle sign system color-coded by quadrant. City divided by river and Main Street.
 - Evolved over 30 years
 - 200+ signs to two dozen sites
 - In 2008, cost \$817K
 - 2012 SMTC study estimated \$350-450K to implement
 - Considerations: Direct vehicles to designated parking; MUTCD, [AASHTO guidelines for interstates](#)
 - Pedestrian system: small font, sign orientation, direct walkers to destinations
 - Other considerations: Public funds signs for permanent, public uses (not businesses); open year-round
 - Gateway and welcome signs not wayfaring signs
 - Signs on interstates must point to places with 250,000 visitors a year.
 - Signs typically have 15-year lifespan.
 - Q: Efforts to coordinate signs with GPS? A: State roads typically developed to higher standards; despite Google maps and GPS, state roads are the default.

Ron Boxx, Program Manager, Visions for Change

Agency's workforce empowerment program works with people living below the poverty level, many of whom don't have cars.

Safety a significant concern: Erie Boulevard and Carrier Circle not pedestrian-friendly. There are opportunities for employment, but they are dangerous to walk to. "You have folks doing everything they can to get to work, but they're risking their lives. We take that for granted."

Next meeting:

Wednesday, November 18, 12-2 p.m., SUNY Oswego Metro Center. Lunch is available. [RSVP required](#)

--Submitted by Renée K. Gadoua, study writer