Walk Friendly Communities
walkfriendly.org

COMMUNITY REPORT CARD AND FEEDBACK

Charlottesville, Virginia
April 21, 2014

Introduction

Thank you for submitting an application to maintain Charlottesville's designation as a Walk Friendly Community. The 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 the improvements that Charlottesville since the city's first application, we are designating Charlottesville as a **Gold Walk Friendly Community**! There were several areas that we were particularly impressed with, including:

- Charlottesville's extensive sidewalk system and policies that continue to promote infill.
- An ADA transition plan that is already being applied to all street improvement projects.
- The launch of an Open Streets event that is supported by a dedicated group of volunteers.
- The new count program, which will provide context for crash data and help Charlottesville prioritize pedestrian improvements.

Charlottesville has continuously 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 Charlottesville as a Gold 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 continue to improve its policies, programs, and standards. 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.

www.walkfriendly.org   info@walkfriendly.org

Primary Recommendations

This section identifies and provides suggestions for the most vital areas of improving Charlottesville'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.**

- It is time to consider developing new **safety campaigns** and **education programs** to promote walking in Charlottesville.
- Charlottesville could expand **staff training** opportunities by offering free webinars for city officials, planning and engineering staff, and school staff. It is also important for the city to offer on-going training about pedestrian law for police officers.
- Reexamine some your policies for **signal timing**, and consider enhancing signalization for pedestrians using pedestrian recall and increasing the number of intersections with leading pedestrian intervals.
- **Targeted enforcement** could be a great way for police to focus attention on pedestrian safety and ensure that motorists are aware of pedestrian safety laws.
- There are a number of **comprehensive evaluation tools**, including Health Impact Assessments and Road Safety Audits, which can help planners and residents of Charlottesville to understand how to improve the pedestrian environment.

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
Walk Friendly

- It is great to see dedicated staff time and committee activity dedicated to pedestrian issues. Should funding permit, establishing a full-time pedestrian coordinator would be a very beneficial step.
- 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.

Status of Walking
On the Right Track

- Amazing walking mode share! The mode share suggests that walking is comfortable, easy, and convenient in the city. It was also good to see that Charlottesville have relatively high rates for biking and transit.
- Unfortunately, the city's injury rate is extremely high. You may want to check to see if your police are reporting all crashes, not just those resulting in injuries. It is important to look at even non-injury crashes, because it gives you a sense of where pedestrian/vehicle conflicts are happening.
- It is good to see that the Charlottesville is conducting pedestrian counts because this can help the city understand the relationship between crashes and pedestrian exposure.

Planning
Walk Friendly

- It is great to see that you have a pedestrian plan in the works. A target mode share would provide a specific goal for the city to attain, while a crash reduction goal can provide extra impetus in implementing crash countermeasures.
- One of the main reasons the Pedestrian Master Plan of Seattle, the only Platinum-level Walk Friendly Community, is such a successful document is the clear establishment of goals and measurable performance indicators. With the objective of becoming the country's most walkable city, Seattle established baseline measurements, performance targets, and data collection processes to improve walkability. These indicators fit into the four main goals of the plan: Safety, Equity, Vibrancy, and Health and contain such examples as reaching ten new schools a year with outreach and increasing pedestrian volumes in selected count locations.
- Great job following through on one of the main recommendations from Charlottesville's first application—an ADA transition plan. Hopefully the inventories are not only conducted along routes used by the advisory committee. Their needs should not be considered representative of the entire community's need.
- To take Complete Streets one step further would be develop guidelines and implementation strategies that transform streets into better public spaces. Elements of the guidelines from Charlotte or San Francisco could be helpful.

www.walkfriendly.org   info@walkfriendly.org

- Public input is vital to creating a vision for the community that is lasting and appealing to residents. Public participation is integral to the success of transportation planning and should be considered at every stage of the planning process, from collecting baseline data to conducting post-implementation evaluation. Charlottesville does a reasonable job of soliciting public input from citizens, but it seems like the city relies heavily on advisory boards and commissions. Consider using mobile apps, surveys, and project websites to engage residents, along with low-tech approaches like small group events that target different populations.
- It's good to see that the standard for Planned Unit Development includes language about connectivity, but the requirement is not very specific and likely only applies to a small area of Charlottesville. A standalone connectivity policy is important for encouraging pedestrian access and pedestrian travel, particularly with ensuring that infill development continues to maintain the high level of pedestrian access. 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.
- High quality trail networks form the facility network backbone of many walkable communities and can also encourage recreational walking. These types of trails also stimulate economic development and tourism and can raise property values. Considering formalizing the process for providing incentives to build trails could contribute to a greater network of trails in Charlottesville.
- The transit service in Charlottesville is excellent for a community of its size, but efforts could be made to improve accessibility around bus stops. Accessibility audits could be useful in accommodating disabled populations at stops. Since individuals with disabilities rely on transit service, it is critical to provide accessible facilities in and around transit stops. The Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies can help identify areas where accessibility can be improved. This case study provides more information.
- The parking policies and practices have obviously been a focus in Charlottesville. Keep up the good work!
- Charlottesville has good policies to encourage density. The city 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. More information can be found here.

Education & Encouragement
On the Right Track

- Charlottesville is doing a good job using Safe Routes to School programs to promote active transportation among your youngest pedestrians. Consider collecting some more information about student travel behavior and incorporate this into your school plans. Check out the services offered by the National Center for Safe Routes to School.
- It's great to see that SRTS maps will be included as part of the bicycle and pedestrian master plan update. Check out this example from Bronze-level Fort Collins, Colorado: all of their Safe Routes maps are available online.

- A combination of education and encouragement efforts can have a large effect on pedestrian volumes as well as pedestrian safety in a community. Also, there can be major differences in the walking abilities, behavioral patterns, and learning capacities of different groups of pedestrians and other road users. Because of this, educational programs succeed when tailored to specific audiences and to the behaviors they seek to modify. Charlottesville could consider environmental campaigns, walking training, and walk to work days and should tailor any campaigns to specific populations. Also, diversifying the audience to reach more residents of different types could be very effective in terms of educational initiatives. This PBIC webpage provides more guidance.
- If possible, the city could consider creating some pedestrian safety public service announcements (PSA). The city could partner with local institutions and schools to encourage children to participate, possibly providing a prize to the best PSA.
- 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.
- Charlottesville should consider extending the wayfinding beyond the downtown mall. There are many community groups and businesses that might be interested in helping your city expand the wayfinding system. In Gold-level Washington D.C., the Downtown Business Improvement District led the effort of 30 stakeholder groups to develop a citywide wayfinding signage system that is now slated to expand to neighborhoods beyond downtown.
- It would be great to move the Bike Walk Play JPA event into different neighborhoods. Also, Charlottesville should find ways to also incorporate active living and walking groups into existing events, such as the farmers market.

Engineering
On the Right Track

- Sidewalks are the backbone of a good pedestrian system and encourage walking. Walkways should be part of every new and renovated facility and efforts should be undertaken to retrofit streets without sidewalks. It looks like Charlottesville has done a good job providing sidewalk on at least one side of most roads.
- Very impressive that the city has inventories of sidewalks and curb ramps and dedicated funding to maintain these facilities. Charlottesville could step up its schedule for installing curb ramps.

- Pedestrian signalization is an important component of a walkable environment. Great job providing countdown pedestrian signals at all intersections and Accessible Pedestrian Signals at over 10 percent of intersections.
- Pedestrian recall where pedestrians do not have to use a push button should be provided in all high pedestrian corridors and downtown.
- An advance stop/yield line can be placed 20 to 50 feet ahead of the crosswalk at uncontrolled locations. This treatment can greatly reduce the likelihood of a multiple-threat crash, as this encourages drivers to stop back far enough so a pedestrian can see if a second motor vehicle is not stopping and take evasive action. Charlottesville should consider this treatment.
- It is good to see that you are switching to high-visibility crosswalk markings and using flashing beacons at trail crossings. These devices have been shown to be effective in improving yielding rates to pedestrian.
- One area for improvement would be to create a policy for how crosswalks are placed around bus stops and other transit locations and ensure that pedestrians can safely cross around bus stations. The Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies is an excellent resource.
- Charlottesville should consider moving away from the complaint-based system and begin proactively selecting locations where there is a problem. Ann Arbor, designated as a Gold-level Walk Friendly Community, has strong traffic calming initiatives that can serve as a guide. Using a neighborhood-based program, the city has met with success in reducing speeds along residential streets by employing speed humps, chokers, traffic circles, road diets, and raised intersections among others. Charlottesville could use this resource as a guide.

Enforcement
On the Right Track

- Excellent staff commitment! It's great to see that Charlottesville has a Traffic Unit and over 20 officers certified for bike patrol.
- It looks like your community is using targeted enforcement program, but your application needed more detail in this section. 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. If allowed by law, consider using photo enforcement to reduce red-light violations, which can often also improve pedestrian safety. See Chapter 8 of the Countermeasures That Work for more information.
- The crossing guard program sounds good. If you aren't already, consider evaluating your crossing guard placement regularly, and reallocating these resources as needed. Walking patterns may shift, or the installation of a new crossing treatment may require an additional crossing guard.
- It is great to see that the police department and other city departments collaborate regularly to review site plans and problem areas and identify possible solutions.

Evaluation
On the Right Track

- Great job starting a regional count program! Using volunteers to count multiple locations twice a year is a good way to launch a count program. The next step for Charlottesville is to analyze trends and figure out how these data can be incorporated into the project prioritization process.
- Charlottesville could consider using permanent counters 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.
- We were impressed with your ongoing partnership with the university to utilize PEQI.
- Charlottesville should also 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 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.
- 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