

## Chapter 3 ~ Current Policies, Plans and Practices

This chapter summarizes the processes involved in creating, maintaining, and expanding the pedestrian environment. The next chapter- The Walkability Action Plan- describes goals, objectives and specific actions that will improve walkability in Louisville. This chapter describes how current policies, plans and practices affect walkability and recommends areas for improvement (also reflected in the Action Plan).

### Overview of What Exists Today

Louisville understands that a walkable community is more than one with sidewalks on every street. Sidewalks allow people to walk safely, but measures of walkability are built on a pattern of pedestrian-friendly developments and redevelopments. The City has a rich toolbox of policies, practices and standards for creating a walkable community.

Key policy and planning documents are:

- Complete Streets Policy
- Cornerstone 2020 Plan
- Land Development Code

The toughest choice of the commuters should be what color shoes to wear on the walk to work, not which highway do I get on.

*On-line survey respondent*

The newly adopted *Complete Streets Policy* sets the tone by stating that “Louisville’s transportation system shall accommodate and balance a broad range of factors within all transportation and development projects, both new and retrofit, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right of way. The goal of this policy is to develop a multi-modal network that manages the demand for travel and improves the efficiency of the community’s transportation system as envisioned in Cornerstone 2020.”<sup>1</sup>

The *Land Development Code* governs design standards, i.e., regulatory requirements, and supersedes the Complete Streets guidelines. Its Form Districts offer a vision of many types of neighborhoods, all of which accommodate pedestrians. Pedestrian facilities are required in nearly all developments; design standards are also included. Sections of the Land Development Code most relevant to walkability are:

- Chapter 3, Appendix 3B: Downtown Overlay District, which includes items related to pedestrian facilities;
- Chapter 5 (all): Form Districts, including particular attention needed to address issues within the Suburban Form Districts;
- Chapter 10: Tree Canopy, Landscaping, and Open Space Standards; and
- Chapter 11: Part 6 contains the description of the Category Review processes, but the thresholds and standards are located within Chapter 5, depending on the size and form district for the proposed development site.

<sup>1</sup> The Complete Streets Manual is related to Cornerstone 2020. Crossed referenced sections are various Community Form Objectives, Mobility Objectives and Plan Element Policies.

The region's *Cornerstone 2020 Plan* "...represents the vision of Louisville and Jefferson County, [with] a focus on the creation of community – how to plan to bring people together in livable communities, each with a distinct sense of place. This abiding concern with community and a sense of place gave rise to the recognition of community forms and to the form district concept as a new paradigm for planning. (Plan background, page 1)

Key design and assessment documents are:

- *Complete Streets Manual*: The Complete Streets Manual guides the development of “a thoroughfare system that provides safe and effective access to all users in a context-appropriate manner.” Its guidelines apply to developments adjacent to all roads, whether they are public roads, proposed public roads or private roads. Chapter 6 of the Manual serves as the Streetscape Design Manual referenced in Chapter 10, Part 6 of the Louisville Land Development Code (LDC).
- *The Louisville Neighborhood Walking Survey program*: Neighborhood walking surveys are used to analyze neighborhood streets and sidewalks for walking. Residents conduct the survey, determine needs, and prioritize the greatest walking needs. Louisville Metro Council and Louisville Department of Public Works use the list of prioritized issues to improve walking conditions in the neighborhood.
- *Suitability of Louisville Metro Roads for Bicycling and Walking*: Bicycle and Pedestrian Level-of-Service Analysis, August 2004: See the Existing Conditions section of this Plan for information about this analysis.
- *Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Design Manual*: The manual provides uniform design standards for bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the City of Louisville and Jefferson County.
- *Speed Hump Installation Policy, July 2007*: Louisville uses speed humps to slow traffic speed in neighborhoods, based upon the procedure and guidelines outline in this policy.
- *TARC Bus Stop Inventory and Plan, 2007*: The inventory provides accurate and current information about the location and condition of on-street facilities, as the basis for developing an improvement plan.
- *Louisville Retail Market Study, April 2008*: The study identifies several strategies for building economically vital retail areas in Louisville, including creating pedestrian-friendly retail centers.

## Specific Walkability Issues

Creating a pedestrian-friendly community requires addressing many issues. The various policies, plans and practices used by Louisville contribute to walkability. What follows is a more detailed discussion of 3 issues – Connectivity and pedestrian accommodation, the pedestrian context, and stakeholder input and coordination – with respect to how they are currently represented in documents and recommended changes that will enhance walkability. The recommended changes described here are reflected in the Walkability Action Plan in Chapter 4.

**CONNECTIVITY AND PEDESTRIAN ACCOMMODATION.** Louisville policy documents include goals for pedestrian accommodation and connectivity. For example, the *Cornerstone 2020 Comprehensive Plan* includes a goal to “integrate bicycle and pedestrian facility planning into regional and local transportation planning” that results in a “comprehensive, convenient and direct bicycle and pedestrian network that serves the needs of Jefferson County.” (Goals H1 and H2). This policy is

described more fully in the Land Development Code Form Districts details, which all include pedestrian accommodation and connections. Louisville’s Complete Streets Policy begins to narrow a design focus for these policies and standards:

Sidewalks, shared-use paths, street crossings (including over- and under-crossings), pedestrian signals, signs, street furniture, transit stops and facilities, and all connecting pathways shall be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so that all pedestrians, including people with disabilities, can travel safely and independently. (Chapter 1, Page1)

Connections within and between neighborhoods are a desired goal in the Cornerstone 2020 plan. Goal 1 supports “...easy access between various uses and [facilities that] separate pedestrians from motors vehicle traffic within a unified development site.” The 2020 plan continues by envisioning “...a cohesive network of streets, walkways and bicycle paths to promote efficient circulation patterns between new development, on a selective basis, with its surroundings.

The Land Development Code addresses neighborhood connections more specifically. For example, Subdivision Regulations, Standards for Design, Blocks (7.3.20A) says “...sidewalks bisecting non-residential blocks may be required within non-residential blocks where necessary to improve pedestrian circulation by providing more convenient access to schools, parks, shopping, etc., than is possible with sidewalks within the street right-of-way. Such walkways shall have an easement width of at least ten feet.”

Standards for pedestrian connections in non-residential developments are included in the Land Development Code, and include a requirement for delimited walking across parking lot drive aisles (5.9.2A1bv). This requirement is replicated in Objective 12.1 of Cornerstone 2020, and includes the desire for “special sign features when crossing driving lanes or passing through a parking lot.”

Developers may be assessed a fee in lieu payment for specific circumstances. Payments are used to construct sidewalks in the Council District in which it was collected, however, a process to determine where and when to use these funds does not exist.

Finally, the Land Development Code includes standards for ADA requirements with a focus on safe accommodation, such as in section 5.8.1B2 and 5.8.1C1f.

## Recommended Improvements

1. Give the Complete Streets Policy the regulatory force of the Land Development Code. Cornerstone 2020, Objective I3.1: Provide sidewalks along streets within development sites to accommodate pedestrians. But, this is negated by the waiver/fee-in-lieu system included in the Land Development Code. Suggested improvements are:

- Cross-reference relevant portions of the Complete Streets Manual and the Land Development Code.
- Give the Complete Streets Manual regulatory force of the Land Development Code by incorporating relevant portions of it in the Land Development Code.
- Decrease the number of cases in which pedestrian facilities may be eliminated. Proposed changes are:

Current exceptions	Proposed change:
Bicyclists and pedestrians are not permitted by law to use the roadway. In this instance, a greater effort may be necessary to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians elsewhere within the right of way or within the same transportation corridor.	When pedestrians and bicyclists are not permitted by law to use the roadway, they will be accommodated elsewhere within the right of way or within the same transportation corridor.
The cost of pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure is excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use, i.e., 20% of the larger transportation project.	<i>Eliminate this exception. Land uses and preferences change over time. Louisville should take advantage of expanding the pedestrian network when opportunities exist.</i>
The street has severe topographical or natural resource constraints exist.	Pedestrians and bicyclists will be accommodated elsewhere within the same transportation corridor when the street has severe topographical or natural resource constraints.

2. Reflect pedestrians in transportation planning earlier in the process. Transportation elements in the *Land Development Code* are based upon vehicular traffic needs, including public transit. Pedestrian traffic is not considered to be a driver for design standards.

Pedestrian facilities are amenities to a development that can be waived. An example of this philosophy is in Chapters 6, Mobility Access, which is intended "...to manage vehicular access to land development, while preserving traffic flow in terms of safety, capacity, and speed." Pedestrian volumes are assumed to be derived from expected vehicular traffic. Thus sidewalk locations and widths are based upon the number of travel lanes and total street width.

"Our focus and expectations will shift from thinking about automobile access (during building, design & construction) to thinking about pedestrian access & pedestrian 'systems.'"

*Built Environment Workshop Participant.*

Sidewalks live in a "catch 22" world. They are not required in single family home developments of 5 acres or more when they cannot connect with sidewalks on both sides of the property; or if sidewalks were previous waived "as part of the subdivision approval for the applicable street frontage." Requiring sidewalks for clearly defined circumstances will mitigate the affect these exceptions have on completing sidewalk network. Two such circumstances include:

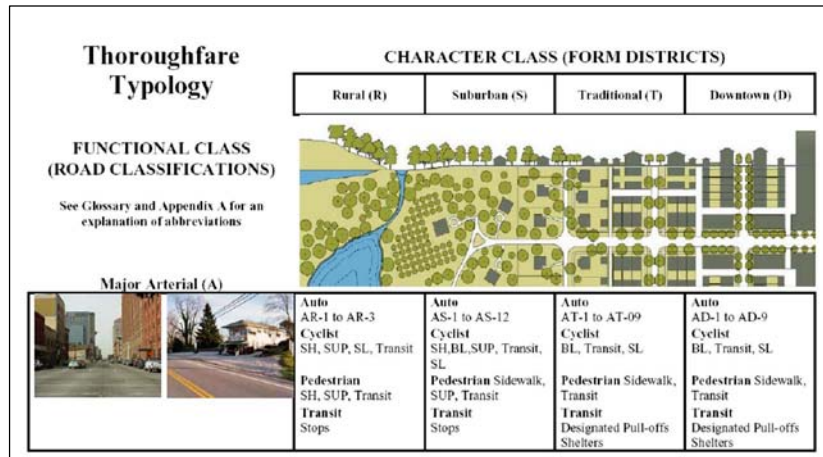
- where an existing sidewalk network can be completed or extended; and
- when the required sidewalk would provide a direct means of access to a pedestrian generator such as a school, church, library, community center or park

3. Include school site design to the regular review process instead of the Community Facilities Review Process. This will ensure site design and changes to current schools reflect the broader community walkability and safety vision. The review process is governed by State law. Revisions to State law would be pursued cooperatively with the Kentucky Department of Education.

4. Expand and codify roadway category definitions in the Land Development Code to include pedestrian traffic. Roadway categories are based upon vehicular traffic and are not related at all to pedestrian needs. Adding non-motorized transportation will create a comprehensive picture. The Thoroughfare Typology included in the Complete Streets Manual can provide a basis to update the definitions, as it identifies all users and infrastructure for each user. Current definitions for Arterial, Collector and Local roads can be expanded, and the thoroughfare typology referenced (additional language in blue), such as:

**Arterial**

Provides the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest uninterrupted distance, with some degree of access control for motor vehicles, transit buses and bicycles. Pedestrians accommodated on separate facilities. See Thoroughfare Typology for standards.



**THE PEDESTRIAN CONTEXT.** Walkability is most directly affected by the built environment. Elected and appointed officials, and by city government executives now understand that pedestrian facilities are on the critical path to walkability. They are sensitive to the benefits of pedestrian-friendly development patterns. The LDC, Complete Streets Policy and other planning documents give decision-maker the tools to affect a different built environment. Additional education and encouragement is needed.

“My vision for a walkable, active community would be one where people could walk to area parks, to stores, to friends and to work.”  
*Workshop participant*



Figure 1.3 – St. Matthews

Standards in many of the form districts described in the Land Development Code address the pedestrian context, both from the site plan and amenities perspectives. The development code is an essential and effective way to assure pedestrian friendly design, and also the definite killer of community form if the design standards are not pedestrian-friendly. For example, the Land Development Code requires that “whenever nearby buildings are primarily built to the sidewalk, the shapes and forms of new construction or improvements should create a strong, well-defined

base at pedestrian level that fits well into its context. (Appendix 3B, B2). Further, in the Downtown Overlay District, lighting is required to help “create a greater sense of activity, security and interest to the pedestrian.” (Appendix 3B, B8b). Pedestrian and streetscape zones are required in streets and road-side designs (5.8.1C1).

### Recommended Improvements

Standards that specifically address the pedestrian context should be in all form districts and should have a strong role in site plan approval. Some form districts allow changes to features such as set-back requirements or pathways between the street and a building entrance that are not pedestrian-welcoming. Specific recommended improvements are:

1. Continue updates to the Land Development Code to require a pedestrian context in all form districts. Form district language speaks to being “pedestrian oriented”, but no specifics are provided.
  - a. Revise the maximum setback alternatives that promote pedestrian-oriented design while allowing design flexibility. These alternatives should be used instead of variances and waivers that are commonly approved currently, especially in non-residential uses in the suburban form districts ((Neighborhood, Suburban Marketplace Corridor, Regional Center, and Suburban Workplace).
  - b. Revise mixed-use design standards to promote wider use of residential use in development plan.
2. Work with corporate retailers to gain agreement once on pedestrian-welcoming access design instead of needing agreement at each location.
3. A Reward good design and contest bad design. Use incentives available during the design review process to encourage design that results in the desired pedestrian context.
4. Analyze proposed development for internal walkability and connectivity. Consider using the bicycling and pedestrian LOS standards, combined with a simple checklist that staff and the public understands.



Figure 2.3 – Norton Commons

**STAKEHOLDER INPUT AND COORDINATION.** Stakeholders in Louisville include its citizens, developers, business community, elected and appointment officials, and staff. Each opportunity to improve walkability also has an opportunity to gain input from a subset of these stakeholders.

Stakeholder involvement is reflected in existing processes and practices. One of the Objectives of the Cornerstone 2020 Plan is to “establish a network of all major user groups to assess needs and ... improve ...pedestrian access to key destinations.” The Louisville Neighborhood Walking Survey is an example of how this approach is applied, with neighborhood residents included in long-range planning:

If your neighborhood is currently working with Louisville Planning and Design Services to create a Neighborhood Plan, the results of the survey will be integral to the mobility chapter which becomes a part of Louisville’s long-range plan: Cornerstone 2020. Together, members of

your community will create a neighborhood walkability map and list of priorities to guide future streetscape, sidewalk, and intersection improvements. In other words: a complete survey will lead to real, concrete (literally!) change in your neighborhood.

The Planning Commission's role is critical in making progress towards a walkable Louisville. Its decisions on requests for sidewalk waivers and setbacks should face a strong set of criteria to receive approval.

Public involvement can be an asset to creating a walkable community. Based upon the positive experience with developments such as the Riverfields Land Trust, citizens should be involved in some way at each stage of project development.

Attention to stakeholder input and coordination should be reflected broadly in Louisville practices. Opportunities exist to do this. For example, offices and agencies have established patterns of working together. This can be strengthened through institutionalizing the connections. Education, a shared vision of the future, and newly defined roles will make the connections stronger.

### Recommended improvements

1. Educate all stakeholders, such as Planning Commission members, Louisville staff, developers and citizens (to participate in the plan development and approval process).
2. Continue the Walkability Leadership Task Force as an active stakeholder, with an appropriate role.
3. Create a process for stakeholders to state why pedestrian facilities improvements are needed.
4. Work with developers to understand how to develop in support of the city's walkability goals. Use developers who "get it" to help educate others who are slower to reflect market demands in their plans.
5. Energize citizens and neighborhoods groups to become players in the development and redevelopment process. Create an "organizers' guide" that is modeled after the Riverfields Land Trust.

