



STORIES FROM THE STATE WALKING COLLEGE:

AN IDEA BOOK FOR TAKING ACTION TO
CREATE MORE WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

This publication was created by America Walks with support
from AARP

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The Walking College was launched in 2015 by America Walks to build the capacity of local advocates to create and expand livable, walkable communities across the U.S.

During the first eight years of the program, 180 Walking College Fellows have received skills training in community change strategies, acquired a national network of peer experts, and started implementing locally-focused Walking Action Plans. As a result, thousands of positive outcomes have occurred in these communities, including adoption of dozens of new policies and projects designed to slow down traffic and improve the pedestrian experience.

In 2021, AARP Livable Communities engaged America Walks to design a State-level version of the program and deliver it in California, Georgia, and South Dakota – leading to the graduation of 33 Fellows from those states, including many AARP community partners, volunteers, and staff. When the State Walking College program was expanded to nine states (Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Texas) in 2022, another 66 Fellows completed the curriculum and started working on their Walking Action Plans.

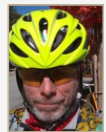
This publication, "Stories From the State Walking College: An Idea Book for Taking Action to Create More Walkable Communities" highlights some stellar examples of how State Walking College Fellows are creating more walkable, equitable communities. It also highlights ideas and solutions that any community can use to take action and effectively advocate for change.

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ABOUT THIS PROGRAM



About the State Walking College program:

The State Walking College program is a partnership of AARP and America Walks, through which dozens of Fellowships are awarded annually to community change agents in selected states. Fellows receive training, support, and resources to help them develop strategic plans to improve walkability and livability in their own communities.

About America Walks:

America Walks is a leading national nonprofit that advances safe, equitable, accessible, and enjoyable places to walk and move by giving people and communities the resources to effectively advocate for change.

About AARP Livable Communities:

AARP is the United States' largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 or older to choose how they live as they age. The AARP Livable Communities initiative's programs include the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and the annual AARP Community Challenge "quick-action" grant program.

GETTING STARTED

The What, Why, Where, When, Who, and How

WHAT is a Walk Audit?

A short (about one hour) walk in your community during which you evaluate pedestrian safety and comfort with a critical eye

WHY do a Walk Audit?

To identify specific design problems which make walking unsafe and uncomfortable, and to develop specific recommendations for correcting them

WHERE to do a Walk Audit?

In a neighborhood, along a road corridor, or at an intersection where people are walking or where they would be walking if the streets and sidewalks were better designed

WHEN to do a Walk Audit?

Now if you're doing it on your own, next week or next month if you're inviting others and need extra time for scheduling and planning your route in advance

HOW to do a Walk Audit?

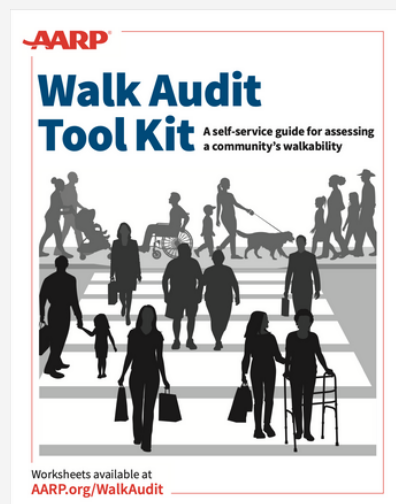
Your friends and neighbors who care about your community, as well as local government planners, engineers, and elected officials

WHO takes part in the Walk Audit?

Review the [AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit](#) and America Walks' [How to Conduct a Walk Audit](#) video and start planning.

The [AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit](#) and Worksheets (available for download in English and Spanish) are “go-to” resources for anyone who wants to make their community more walkable and livable.

Organized in three parts, the Tool Kit starts with a quick “Ready, Set, Go” checklist of things to do to conduct your first Walk Audit. Part 2 provides a thorough but accessible educational overview of the concept of “Complete Streets,” vocabulary that will enable you to describe your Walk Audit experience accurately, and how to use the worksheets. The final part focuses on how to use the results of your Walk Audit to improve walkability and livability in your community.



Each of the State Walking College Fellows featured in this booklet started down the path to their “Quick Wins” by conducting a Walk Audit:

- By using the AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit, Juanita, Vicki, and Sybil were able to identify and quantify differences in walkability between Sausalito and neighboring Marin City.
- Natalie’s Walk Audit brought together children and older adults to evaluate pedestrian safety in the neighborhood surrounding the local school and a senior center in Bemidji.
- Keith discovered that the existing AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit did not capture safety issues related to multi-use paths and natural surface trails in Peachtree City, and his recommendations led to the creation of additional Worksheets.
- Ariel partnered with a college professor and a class of students for her Walk Audit in San Diego, and their data were enriched with surveys of passers-by.

Case Study of a Walk Audit: Natalie Gille (Bemidji, MN)

Involvement:

- 4 adults, 14 youth, and ...
- ... Seniors who were head over heels that the kids came to visit

Preparation:

- Identified walking route and created map
- Selected worksheets and put together packets
- Scheduled Walk Audit based on activities at school and senior center

Observations:

- Absence of public restrooms
- Absence of painted crosswalks
- Absence of sidewalks, sidewalks in disrepair, and overgrown bushes
- Overall, walkability considered “mixed” on a scale with four options: “great”, “acceptable”, “mixed” and “poor”

Recommendations:

- Increase time allowed for crossing Bemidji Avenue
- Add signage to welcome pedestrians, especially children and the aging population
- Create walking camp to educate and gain support from locals in the downtown area
- Advocate for infrastructure changes to improve safety at intersections

Verdict:

• “If someone in a wheelchair cannot get around, it’s time to make improvements.”

“
***If someone in a wheelchair
cannot get around, it’s time
to make improvements.***”

Paths to the Future in Peachtree City:

Walk Audit Wins for the Whole Community



IT STARTS WITH A VISION

Keith Larson's vision for Peachtree City, Georgia is "an active community fully connected by pedestrian networks, allowing all residents to have equitable access to active recreation or an alternative mode of transportation."

He wants to be part of the solution – not just identifying problems – and recognizes the need for pedestrian safety in a community with its own unique set of infrastructure challenges.

WHY THE WALKING COLLEGE?

Keith has been working to advance local community bicycle and pedestrian public policy and outcomes since 2014 when he assisted Peachtree City achieve recognition as a Bicycle Friendly Community.

Despite his years of advocacy experience, he applied to the Walking College because he saw an opportunity to grow his knowledge even further and increase pedestrian safety in his community. He stated, *"I am seeking to learn appropriate planning benchmarks and tools to elevate the status of pedestrians in a community known mostly for the extensive 100+ mile multi-use path system and golf carts. Path safety has become a significant issue with path conflicts."*



Keith Larson

- Community advocate with Bike-Walk Fayette
- Georgia State Walking College Fellow (2022)
- Overcoming pedestrian barriers in a multi-use path network
- Peachtree City, GA



Southside Support Board Members Nick Ferrante and Kay McInroe with Peachtree City Recreation Manager Cathy Wilder (from left to right) and Keith Larson at the starting point of the soon-to-be-marked accessible route on the multi-use path to Spyglass Island Park

“I saw my opportunity as an advocate by drafting a Walking Action Plan to address the gaps in personal mobility and recreation capacity because I knew that we could do better.”

Keith shares that he felt a specific call to action during the Walking College when he read AARP's [Lessons From Livability Leaders](#) because this article includes a focus on improving accessibility and well-being for aging and disabled residents. At the time, Peachtree City was in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan – it was noted that the aging population was increasing in the city's demographics and yet no new projects specifically focused on the needs of senior citizens were identified.

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

Keith has outlined several goals in his Walking Action Plan which will lay a strong foundation for lasting change, and he has already achieved several early successes:

- The Mayor and Council proclaimed October 2022 as Peachtree City Walking Month, in recognition of World Walking Day, International Walk to School Day, and numerous local walking events.
- Keith recommended the City include a \$500,000 Path Transition Project in the next Special-Purpose Local-Option Sales Tax proposal for resident approval in 2023, which will remove accessibility barriers at curbs and install traffic safety signs at neighborhood connections and street crossings on the 100+ mile multi-use path system.
- The City has joined with Fayette County, Georgia to apply for a Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant to create a county-wide Safety Action Plan – this will include a Vision Zero goal and a Safe System approach for prioritizing traffic and pedestrian safety projects.

National recognition of community achievements is one of the performance measures Keith has identified for his Walking Action Plan. The fall of 2023 will mark the renewal of Peachtree City's status as a recognized Bike-Friendly Community, a Runner-Friendly Community, and if successful, the initial approval as a Walk-Friendly Community.

EXPANDING THE AARP WALK AUDIT TOOL KIT

Keith is currently in the process of identifying and marking ADA-accessible routes at six City parks and nature areas with assistance from Southside Support Inc. and numerous volunteers. This project - which is receiving funding from AARP - should be completed by January 2023 and has already been formally approved by the City Council.

As recommended in the Walking College curriculum, he started out using the AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit. However, he quickly encountered a challenge that is unique to communities like Peachtree City, where low-speed vehicles, such as golf carts, are often used for local errands and travel. The fact that these motorized vehicles share multi-use paths with pedestrians and cyclists creates potential conflict issues, which should be taken into consideration during a walk audit.



Somerby Village residents Hal Gabby and Curt Thomas conduct a trail walk audit with Keith

"The AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit is used to help local leaders and residents improve the safety and walkability of a street, neighborhood, or community. I proposed an alternative set of worksheets for a multi-use path or natural-surface trail in a suburban or urban environment, to consider some of the significantly different design and safety considerations."

As a result of Keith's suggestion, the [AARP Walk Audit Worksheets for Multiuse Paths and Trails](#) was created and is now available for download to supplement the AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit.

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AARP Walk Audit Worksheets for Multiuse Paths and Trails

Download our free printable, fillable, shareable forms for taking notes and making observations

AARP Livable Communities

AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit

The walk audit worksheets are a supplement to the AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit. Download or order the free publication by visiting

[AARP.org/WalkAudit](https://www.aarp.org/WalkAudit) »

TIPS FOR MOVING FORWARD

When asked about the keys to his success, Keith recognized the importance of connecting with like-minded groups to advance mutually beneficial community projects, and continuous engagement with the local government at all levels. His Walking Action Plan is an example of building strategic partnerships and taking intentional steps designed to advance pedestrian safety, encourage active recreation and alternative mode transportation capacity in Peachtree City and the Atlanta Region of Georgia.

STORIES FROM THE WALKING COLLEGE

The “Superhero Steppers:” Kids and Seniors Stepping Out Together in Bemidji, Minnesota



Fast facts on Natalie Gille:

- Greater Minnesota Program Manager at BikeMN
- Central Region Walking College Fellow (2022)
- “Pop-up” crosswalk project and Walking School Bus program
- Bemidji, MN

WALKING AND BIKING EVERYWHERE

“If someone in a wheelchair cannot get around, it’s time to make improvements.”

As a child growing up in the St. Paul, Minnesota suburbs, Natalie Gille “walked and biked everywhere” – to church, to school, to sports practice, to the mall.

Later, as a college student in the northern Minnesota community of Bemidji, she loved the compact, walkable downtown area where she could get to the park, coffee shop, and theater in a matter of minutes. But when Natalie’s Mom died of cancer, she had to return home to care for her younger siblings, which meant getting a job she could walk to and encountering “various forms of weather, sidewalk and road conditions.” One day, she helped a lady with crutches, who was trapped on an icy and uneven area of sidewalk, navigate to safety.

All these experiences contributed to Natalie’s understanding of the importance of community accessibility, her vision for towns and cities where kids and senior citizens can get around safely without a car, and her interest in the Walking College.

AN “AWESOME WALK AUDIT” WITH YOUNG AND OLD

For her Module 4 community activity, Natalie arranged an “awesome walk audit with 14 youth and 4 adults,” which ended at the senior center where “a whole bunch of seniors were ‘head over heels’ that the kids came to visit and discuss the walk audit with them.”

She created packets for everyone with selected worksheets from the AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit, and a map of the walk. On moving back to Bemidji, Natalie had realized that pedestrian safety and comfort declined rapidly outside the downtown area and so she designed the 1-mile round-trip between the senior center and the school to illustrate these issues. Most participants rated the walkability of the area “mixed” on the 4-point scale consisting of “great”, “acceptable”, “mixed” and “poor.” Shortcomings noted on the walk audit included missing sidewalks and crosswalks, sidewalks in disrepair, overgrown bushes, and no public restrooms.

During another walk audit in downtown Bemidji, she noticed problems with the curb cuts and ramps - “If someone in a wheelchair cannot get around, it’s time to make improvements.”

QUICK WINS: A “POP-UP” PROJECT AND A TV INTERVIEW

During her Walking College Fellowship, Natalie and her son helped build a “pop up” crosswalk as part of a demonstration project organized through a local coalition of stakeholders in Bemidji and in partnership with Alta Planning.

The process consisted of marking the roadway with chalk and sticky reflective tape, assembling and installing bollards in the pavement, and then painting. The temporary crosswalk and pedestrian bulb-outs in front of Lincoln Elementary School were designed to reduce traffic speeds and ensure drivers are aware of kids walking to school. Although it has now been removed to avoid conflicts with snowplows during the winter, advocates hope it will lead to a permanent installation.

When a reporter arrived to produce a local TV news story, [he interviewed Natalie and her son](#). “As a young child, he was able to give great feedback - honest and open!”



Students participating in Natalie's walkability audit

THE “SUPERHERO STEPPERS”



A Lakeland PBS News reporter interviews Natalie and her son about the pop-up crosswalk

The goal of Natalie's Walking Action Plan is to create a Walking School Bus program called the “Superhero Steppers.”

The plan starts with a vision for “Walking Wednesdays,” which will take place at Lincoln Elementary and Apple Blossom Village. To make this a multi-generational program, Natalie hopes to include members of the Bemidji Senior Center among the adult volunteers who will supervise the groups of kids walking to and from school. She also plans to hold a student design contest and then create branded “Superhero Steppers” t-shirts, funded by AARP.

Having included one group of school kids in her initial walkability audit, Natalie knows how excited they will be about the Walking School Bus program. She also sees it as a pathway towards more infrastructure improvements.

When asked about keys to success, Natalie remarked that she's "not starting from scratch" and "a lot of local partners are on board with the vision," including the City, the Regional Council, the Senior Center, and the schools. She has also observed that kids and senior citizens really enjoy walking together.



Natalie and other members of the pop-up project construction team



**"THERE'S A
SPECIAL INTER-
GENERATIONAL
SYNERGY WHEN
KIDS AND SENIOR
CITIZENS WALK
TOGETHER."**

KEYS TO SUCCESS



“QUICK WINS” IN SAN DIEGO:

Neighborhood Beautification and Walking/Biking Amenities

ARIEL WITH ANCHI MEI, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF THE MAKE CAFE AND FARM

Planning is Critical

Ariel Hamburger works at the intersection of health, justice, and planning. And, she observes, *“planning is critical because it decides how resources are allocated.”*

In 2021, Ariel was considering a Master's in Urban Planning, when she heard about the California State Walking College. It seemed like a perfect “on-the-job” learning opportunity so she applied and was accepted.

Walking College Experience

Khalisa Bolling, a public health researcher was assigned as Ariel's Mentor, and they *“totally hit it off immediately.”*

Because they both lived in San Diego, they were able to get together in person in addition to the online coaching sessions. On one occasion, while biking across town to meet Ariel, Khalisa was interviewed for a local TV story. The reporter was covering a controversial bike lane project and [Khalisa was able to make compelling arguments to a large audience](#). *“We were living it while we were taking part in the program,”* said Ariel later.

She enjoyed the flow of the six modules and appreciated the emphasis on racial justice, such as discussions around decriminalizing jaywalking. She also found it inspiring to hear from the other Fellows, and know that “this work was happening up and down the state.”

Walking Action Plan

Ariel wanted to connect her Walking Action Plan with an existing community development initiative in her own neighborhood of North Park.

The mission of MAKE Projects, led by Anchi Mei, is “to create an inclusive San Diego by empowering refugees and immigrants with the job readiness skills to achieve their dreams.” Using a social enterprise model, the MAKE Cafe and Farm employs local youth and provides training in urban farming, food production, meal preparation, and business management.



Khalisa Bolling, Ariel's Mentor, giving a TV interview

**“PLANNING IS CRITICAL
BECAUSE IT DECIDES HOW
RESOURCES ARE
ALLOCATED.”**

Located on 30th Street, a busy arterial with high traffic volumes and speeds, Anchi and Ariel felt that the pedestrian experience left much to be desired. As Ariel explained, “this part of San Diego is still moving from being super car-centric,” and so her Walking Action Plan focused on beautification and expanding the identity of the neighborhood as a walkable destination.

She started by performing a walkability audit in partnership with Professor Madison Swayne at San Diego State University, who incorporated the project into several classes. On a visit to the site at the corner of Gunn St. and 30th St., the students walked the area, gathered data, and surveyed members of the public.



Ariel Hamburger

- Planner with San Diego County
- California State Walking College Fellow (2021)
- Pollinator gardens, bike racks, and crosswalk
- San Diego's North Park neighborhood

EARLY IMPACTS IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Ariel started implementing her Walking Action Plan immediately and achieved several “quick wins.” Within a year of completing the Walking College, several garden boxes, bike racks, and a new crosswalk were installed.

With funding from AARP, youth participants in the MAKE program built the garden boxes and planted them with pollinators. After a “right of use” permit had been obtained, they were set in place on the sidewalks bordering the urban farm.

Ariel requested the bike racks through a City of San Diego Program and they were installed at no charge.

When she pointed out that there was not much awareness of the program in the community, they took her advice and produced a brochure for more widespread distribution.

Around the same time, the San Diego Association of Governments was planning a new crosswalk system one block south of the MAKE Café and Farm at the intersection of Landis St. and 30th. Ariel and Anchi joined other local residents and business owners in expressing strong support for the project (which has now been completed) and requested another one at their location. While there is still no crosswalk at the corner of Gunn and 30th, advocacy efforts continue to emphasize the importance of a striped crosswalk at every intersection.

KEYS TO SUCCESS AND LESSONS LEARNED

"I ALWAYS ASSUMED YOU HAD TO HAVE A PERTINENT DEGREE BUT THE PLANNING EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE I GAINED THROUGH THE WALKING COLLEGE COUNTED FOR A LOT!"

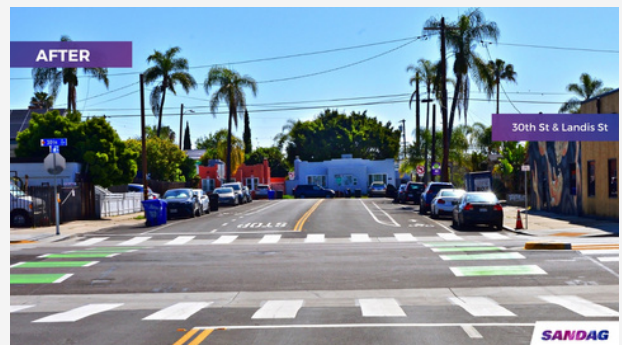
New plantings and pollinators boxes in front of the MAKE Café and Farm on 30th Street

When asked about the keys to her success, Ariel was quick to mention the importance of identifying and reaching out to the right partners. In addition to connecting with Anchi, she met with the Mobility Coordinator for the City and the construction manager for the crosswalk project, and these conversations helped advance positive outcomes.

Ariel also achieved (in her words) “a *huge personal success*” when she secured a new job as a Land Use and Environmental Planner with San Diego County. “*I always assumed you had to have a pertinent degree but the planning expertise and experience I gained through the Walking College counted for a lot!*”



The intersection of Landis St. and 30th, before and after installation of a crosswalk system by the San Diego Association of Governments



MEET THE THREE WOMEN WHO ARE RE-CONNECTING COMMUNITIES IN CALIFORNIA



An Intergenerational Project Focused on Racial Healing

Juanita Edwards, Sybil Boutilier, and Vicki Nichols worked collaboratively through the Walking College to combine their contrasting lived experiences and backgrounds and bring to life a Walking Action Plan focused on racial healing.



Juanita Edwards

- Interim General Manager, Marin City Community Services District
- MLK Jr. Award Winner, Marin Co. Humanitarian Commission
- California State Walking College Fellow (2021)
- Marin City, CA



Sybil Boutilier

- Chair, Age-Friendly Sausalito
- Member, Marin Age-Friendly Network
- Member, Marin County Commission on Aging
- California State Walking College Fellow (2021)
- Sausalito, CA



Vicki Nichols

- Past Chair, Sausalito Planning Commission
- Former Vice-President, Marin Conservation League
- California State Walking College Fellow (2021)
- Sausalito, CA



While all three have extensive resumes in community service and civic appointments, and a special interest in improving quality of life for older adults, they represent two communities divided by historical injustice. Marin City, where Juanita lives and works, is predominantly Black and Hispanic with a median age of 40 and median household income of \$54,000. Sybil and Vicki are long-time residents of neighboring Sausalito, where the population is about 90% white, much older (55 years), and more than twice as well-off (\$121,000).

Just 2 miles apart, Marin City and Sausalito are separated by U.S. Highway 101, the only connection being a dark and forbidding tunnel.

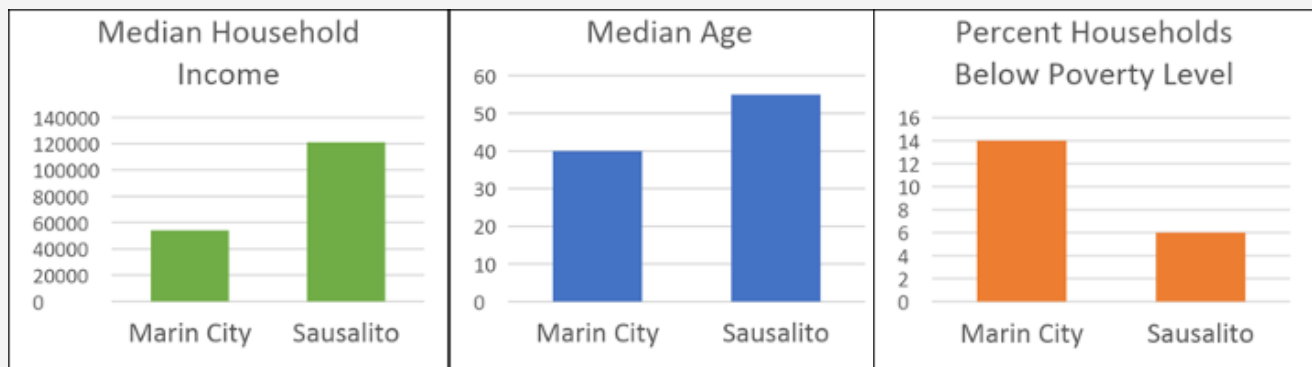
TWO COMMUNITIES DIVIDED BY HISTORICAL INJUSTICE

Sausalito was incorporated in 1893. Built along the shore of Richardson Bay, a shallow, ecologically rich arm of San Francisco Bay, the terrain is hilly and most residences are located on steep, narrow, winding roads. One flat thoroughfare, Bridgeway, connects the city to the Golden Gate Bridge and Marin Headlands open space at its south end. Sausalito is home to a thriving houseboat community.

Marin City, set back from the waterfront in a valley, also has a rich history. Originally developed for housing the thousands of African American shipbuilding workers who came from the South during World War II, this community built and launched 93 Liberty Ships from the harbors of Sausalito. After the war, however, Marin City's fortunes and those of its residents declined with the closure of the shipbuilding industry, racial covenants prohibiting residents from owning property, and the path of Highway 101, which segregated Marin City from Sausalito and the waterfront.



In recent years, government and non-profit groups have collaborated in an intentional effort to acknowledge past injustice and center equity going forward. For example, the separate Marin City and Sausalito K-8 schools have now merged into one school with a campus in each community - students are now assigned to one of the campuses according to grade level rather than their home address, creating a physical and cultural exchange.



U.S. Census (2020) gathered from Data USA: Marin City, CA and Sausalito, CA

WALKING COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

In 2021, Juanita Edwards, Vicki Nichols, and Sybil Boutilier were all involved in this community healing process in various ways.

So, when AARP California invited Sybil, Chair of Age-Friendly Sausalito, to create a team of three advocates to participate in the California State Walking College, she immediately recognized the opportunity to develop and work towards a shared vision of inclusiveness. She reached out to Vicki because of her background with the Sausalito Planning Commission and to Juanita who had just been appointed as the Interim General Manager of the Marin City Community Services District.

Together, they decided to focus their efforts on bringing together the resources and good will of the two neighboring communities to create safer, more appealing walking and biking spaces throughout Sausalito and Marin City.

Their Walking Action Plan focuses on inter-community and inter-generational activities, such as partnering with the newly-merged Sausalito/Marin City School District and the County's Safe Routes to School program.



Their Walking Action Plan focuses on inter-community and inter-generational activities, such as partnering with the newly-merged Sausalito/Marin City School District and the County's Safe Routes to School program. One goal is to establish weekly or monthly Walking School Buses in which elders from both communities will serve as volunteer chaperones for the students on their walk to school. They also plan to form Social Walking Groups of older adults to explore the two communities together, create and coordinate a "Safe Walking and Biking" Education Program, and work together to advocate for street and sidewalk improvements.

To start the evaluation process, they used the AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit to identify routes for improved walking pathways in Marin City.

EARLY IMPACTS IN THE COMMUNITIES

Since completing the Walking College program and writing their joint Walking Action Plan, the Sausalito/Marin City team has:

- Launched a Bike Safety Program with Marin County and promoted messaging across social media
- Set up booths at community events to discuss the importance to pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout the community
- Used funding from AARP to purchase and distribute "Smart Cycling Guide" pamphlets

- Served in an advisory capacity with the Marin County Transit Authority regarding the placement of bike safety banners
- Provided materials for benches to be built by local Scouts troop
- Volunteered at Walk to School events at Nevada Street campus of MLK Jr. Academy, and participated in a community volunteer event to plant trees at newly re-landscaped park
- Led a total of 33 Older Adults on walks in County Parks, bringing together neighbors from Marin City and Sausalito as part of the equity and engagement partnership
- Coordinated with the Marin County Parks District to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the creation of the district with a "Senior Stroll"

Sybil, Vicki, and Juanita also worked with the County of Marin to craft ballot language for a sales tax renewal measure, which included dedicated funds to improve and maintain walking, hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. They distributed information and educated voters at the farmers' market, and the measure passed with more than 75% support.



"Unity Mural" Under Highway 101

The team joined with community groups to advocate for an exciting recent development (at the time of writing in December, 2022) which is central to the goals of re-uniting the communities of Marin City and Sausalito.



Sausalito artist Raylene Gorum brushes dust off the new mural in the tunnel under Highway 101 connecting Sausalito and Marin City on Nov. 10, 2022 (Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal)

A mural, titled "All Our Children United," has been installed along the walkway in the tunnel connecting Sausalito with Marin City. The art, commissioned by both local governments, is intended to emphasize the historical connection of the two communities and reaffirm their bond following the desegregation efforts in the Sausalito Marin City School District.

Designed by local artist Raylene Gorum, it features hundreds of sky-blue handprints embedded onto a backdrop of a sunrise and sunset. The handprints were made from stencils provided by about 80 students from preschool to eighth grade in the combined School District.

KEYS TO SUCCESS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Marin City/Sausalito team has already begun to measure some successes since completing the Walking College program. In particular, they stressed the importance of supporting the community and taking a holistic approach to working with new partners and communities, 'You don't want to be in my view too overbearing or dictate what is the best thing to do,' said Vicki, "A key to success is community engagement, listening to each other, and empathy."

FIRST STEPS FOR WALKABLE COMMUNITY ADVOCATES:

How to Kick-Start Walkable Change in your Community

Advocating for walkable communities is hard. It takes a long time to identify the problems, build a local movement for change, advocate successfully for new policies and road designs, and see infrastructure projects through to completion.

However, each of these major processes consists of hundreds or thousands of smaller steps. With planning, persistence, and passion, these smaller steps – or “Quick Wins” – are achievable and they build on each other to gradually transform a community. Here are a few examples of “Quick Wins” achieved within 6-12 months by the Walking College Fellows featured in this booklet:

- Natalie led a Walk Audit, assisted with a traffic calming pop-up project, and made it onto the local TV news.
- Sybil, Vicki, and Juanita led walks for older adults, volunteered for Walk to School Days, and set up event booths to discuss pedestrian safety – all after conducting Walk Audits which demonstrated disparities between two communities.
- As a result (or partly as a result) of Keith's efforts, the Mayor issued a proclamation for Peachtree City Walking Month, the Council included \$500,000 in an upcoming sales tax proposal to remove accessibility barriers at curbs, and AARP created a new [Worksheets for Multiuse Paths and Trails](#) as a part of its [Walk Audit Tool Kit](#).
- Ariel organized a Walk Audit with a college class and spearheaded the advocacy which led to several garden boxes and bike racks being installed.

If you care about making your community more walkable, lots of “Quick Wins” are available, whether or not you have had the opportunity to participate in the Walking College. Start by conducting a Walk Audit – either on your own or with others. Then select one or two of the ideas in the display boxes which appeal to you!

TOP TEN (FREE!) “QUICK WINS” YOU CAN START WORKING ON TODAY:

1. Write a Letter to the Editor about your Walk Audit
2. Present your Walk Audit findings at a City Council meeting
3. Apply to join the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Commission
4. Contact the Traffic Engineer and ask her/him to install a traffic calming “pop-up”
5. Organize a walking group – start educating participants about walkable design
6. Walk your child to school – invite some of their friends to walk with you
7. Start a social media discussion group focused on pedestrian safety
8. Form a book club and read a book or article about walkable communities
9. Join your local or statewide advocacy organization
10. Research traffic fatalities in your community

TOP TEN “QUICK WINS” THAT REQUIRE SOME FUNDING AND RESOURCES

1. Purchase and distribute pedestrian and bicycle safety guides
2. Collaborate with your local public library to create a Story Walk project
3. Start a Walking School Bus program with t-shirts/prizes/snacks, etc. for the kids
4. Organize an annual Active Commuter Challenge and offer incentives for participating
5. Implement a communications campaign with social media, e-marketing, and a website
6. Host a Walkable Community Workshop with expert facilitators/speakers/panelists, etc.
7. Partner with advocacy groups on a Pedestrian Safety Summit and Vision Zero campaign
8. Engage an artist to design and create a mural that activates an underutilized public space
9. Work with local government to design and install pedestrian wayfinding signage
10. Obtain a permit and install a pop-up project with paint, posts, and planters

FUNDING RESOURCES



About the America Walks Community Change Grants

[America Walks' Community Change Grants](#) program supports the growing network of advocates, organizations, and agencies working to advance walkability. Grants (typically of \$1,500) are awarded to innovative, engaging, and inclusive programs and projects that create change and opportunity for walking and movement at the community level.

About the AARP Community Challenge:

The AARP Community Challenge is an annual grant program that builds momentum for local change. Part of the nationwide AARP Livable Communities initiative, the Challenge enables communities to make immediate improvements and jump-start long-term progress in support of residents of all ages. Local governments and nonprofit organizations nationwide are eligible to apply. Learn more at [AARP.org/CommunityChallenge](https://www.aarp.org/CommunityChallenge).