



5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

(2022-2027)





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I. WHO WE ARE

A. Our Mission (why we exist)

America Walks equips people and communities with the resources to advance safe, equitable, accessible, and enjoyable places to walk and move; and serves as a national voice for walkability.

B. Our Vision (what we want to achieve)

Streets and neighborhoods in all American communities are safe, attractive public places and people of all ages, abilities, ethnicities, and incomes will be able to move and walk in ways that make the most sense for them.

C. Our Values and Decision-Making Principles (what guides how we operate)

AW is a values-driven organization. Our culture as an organization, our role and approach to advancing the walkability justice movement, and the strategic programs, initiatives, and campaigns we lead are expressions of our values. And our values guide not just what we work on, but how we do our work.

Equity

We seek to understand, shine a light on, and correct walkability inequities. We recognize people's walking experiences and ideas for walkability solutions are shaped by identities, lived experiences, and societal circumstances.

Principle: We prioritize people and places experiencing the deepest inequities.

Grassroots Community

We believe that positive change (walkability— a human right) comes from empowered local leaders.

Principle: We connect grassroots leaders to each other and build power to advance their priorities at the local and national levels.

Mobility Justice

We believe the freedom of all people to move around, safely, freely, and engage with community is a basic human right.

Principle: We advocate for the resources, policy, and public will to protect and invest in this right for all people and places.

Respect & Human Dignity

We believe that every person has an inherent right to move about their community with dignity and without restriction to connect with social, civic, and economic life.

Principle: Our work goes beyond infrastructure and community design to include addressing laws, policies and behaviors that fail to honor the respect and dignity due to all.

Connection

We believe that mobility justice is deeply interconnected with quality of life. Creating communities that respect all backgrounds, ages, abilities, and economic circumstances builds healthy social connections and community resilience.

Principle: We advance the movement for mobility justice for communities today and for generations to come



D. Lay of the Land (the context in which we operate)

America Walks is uniquely situated as the sole national organization with a singular focus on walkability. However, it exists in an ecosystem of national organizations whose advocacy work on transportation, safety, public health, climate and racial justice significantly intersects and overlaps with our work. To succeed, America Walks must partner strategically and maximize its strengths to contribute to those partnerships. In the transportation advocacy arena, America Walks distinguishing strengths include

- the broad public appeal of walkability
- a focus on grassroots advocacy
- a foundation in public health
- a diverse board and staff
- a willingness to engage mobility justice
- and intersectionality with movements for health, climate, housing and racial justice

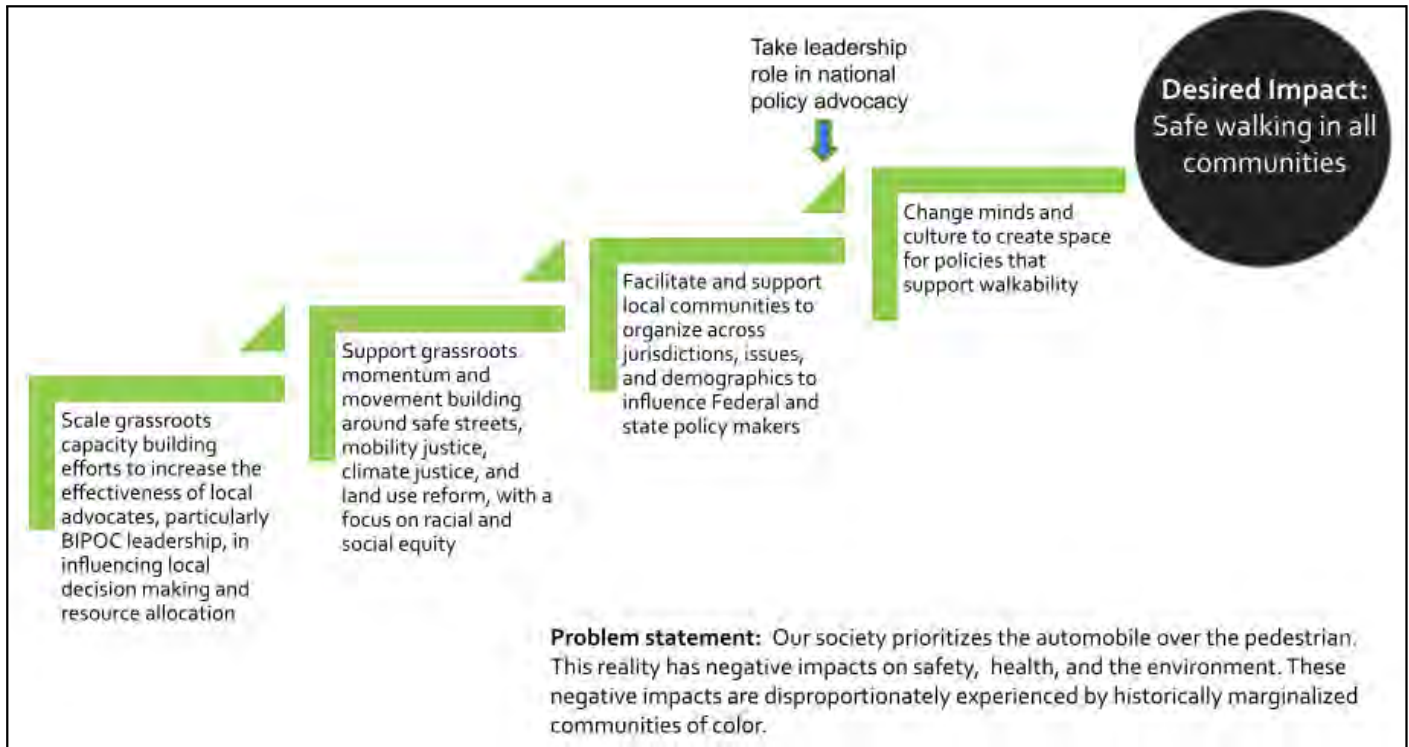
America Walks has much to do to reach its organizational potential. This strategic plan identifies priorities and strategies to focus our efforts, to address organizational

needs, and to build and popularize a broadly appealing, sustainable, and transformative national narrative around walkability and walkability justice.

A key to our goals is to equip and mobilize more people to take action at the state and local levels, and aggregate that grassroots strength to national goals where appropriate. This means building internal capacity to authentically engage community advocates of all backgrounds. It also means being relevant and visible on high profile national issues to drive change, to draw people to the movement and inspire them to action on the local level.

We believe that walkable and accessible communities are a critical path towards achieving goals of health, safety, climate, housing and economic justice. We are committed to elevating those connections, and working in partnership with others to bring more people into the work of improving communities, whether through us or other organizations.

E. Our Theory of Change (How we create impact)



II. WHERE WE'RE GOING: 2022 - 2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

America Walk's mission, values and theory of change give it flexibility to pursue a wide range of policy objectives, using a potentially wide range of topics. We believe our effectiveness will derive from pursuing focused policy outcomes, with tactics that work to our strengths, and with an understanding of the areas we need to improve.

We also believe that we must continually measure our efforts, evaluate our impact, and understand the broader context in which we operate. This section will address our primary policy goal, complementary policy goals, strategic imperatives to reach our goals, our signature tactics, and a process for ensuring that we measure and track internal and external progress.

A. Primary Policy Goal (the big policy change we aim to make over the next 5 years that will focus efforts and bring us closer to realizing our vision)

Our big goal for the next 5 years is to increase the walkability infrastructure and mobility justice resources invested in under-resourced communities.

This is not our only policy priority, but a focus on this goal supports our broad policy and organizational goals. The big goal has multiple internal and external outcomes that we can potentially measure. These outcomes are:

External: Win multi-year campaigns influencing transportation funding and policies

- Change public opinion/perspective to make equitable distribution of funds a priority and desired outcome

- Increase funds budgeted and distributed for walkability and safety
- Increase funds allocated to, received by, and invested in under-resourced communities
- Help win approval of policies that improve mobility justice

Internal: Stronger position than we started in

- More relationships with local advocates and grassroots community and having more regular communication with them
- Increased visibility and requests for capacity building/technical assistance
- Experience and infrastructure to organize and run campaigns

B. Complementary Policy Goals (focus areas that express our values and where we can make a significant impact by playing our role in the ecosystem)

In addition to the primary goal described above, America Walks will also support education on national, state and local adoption of regulations, funding and policies in the following topical areas. Specific objectives and priorities will be set forth in annual work and campaign plans.

- *Safe Streets Design and Policy* - support safe, healthy and accessible street design. Help communities to develop and implement plans that drive down pedestrian fatalities and injuries and lead to increases in walking.
- *Mobility Funding* - Support local streets and walkability, and connect underserved communities to funding with the goals described in the section above.

- *Mobility Justice* - Protect access for all to public spaces (e.g. decriminalize jaywalking and equitable alternatives to enforcement); Address inequitable health and safety impacts (eg.exposure to pollution, noise, traffic deaths and injuries)

- *Vehicle Safety* - Support vehicle design that protects pedestrians, with a goal of improved safety regulations at the federal level.
- *Community Design* - Educate the public and decision makers about the connection between land use and walkability (eg. public education on the issues, break up exclusionary zoning, eliminate parking minimums, promote mixed use and mixed income communities, the role and importance of transit.)

C. Strategic Imperatives (the internal work we must do to meet our goals)

In assessing America Walks mission, goals and capabilities, as well as the lay of the land, the America Walks board identified the following five topics as key areas for focus over the next five years.

- **Prioritize advancing racial justice through all strategies**

America is becoming more racially diverse. The history of transportation, land use and housing policy reflects America's history of racial injustice. Building an effective coalition for change that lifts us all means incorporating that understanding into all aspects of how we do our work internally and externally.

- ▷ *Key goals and milestones* include ensuring diversity of board and staff, building competence in working with BIPOC communities, and incorporating anti-racism into our policy campaigns and objectives, consistent with the racial equity strategic imperatives adopted by the board at our 2020 retreat.

- **Reach more people with a compelling message**

In addition to building a compelling narrative for change, America Walk must work to deliver its message to more people in a way that inspires them to act.

- ▷ *Key goals and milestones* include increasing the size of our mailing list, expanding the reach of social media, earning media, and increasing the number of speaking engagements.

- **Scale grassroots engagement and base**

A key part of our theory of change is an active and engaged network of state and local advocates.

- ▷ *Key goals and milestones* include more local advocates connected with us, more local advocates receiving training and support, more local advocacy organizations, and sustained engagement with Walking College Fellows

- **Expand proactive policy agenda**

Campaigns are a series of linked tactics to achieve an objective. In addition to winning meaningful changes that improve people's lives, campaigns are a platform to demonstrate thought leadership, earn media, engage and train grassroots leaders, build strategic partnerships and solicit donors. Promising recent campaigns include work to reform the federal manual governing local street design, and advocacy for safer vehicle designs. Currently initiated campaigns include work to reconnect communities divided by unsafe roads, and support for decriminalizing jaywalking nationwide.

- ▷ *Key goals and milestones* include maintaining momentum on multiple campaigns over an extended timeframe, identifying new campaign opportunities, and analyzing the impact of campaigns on external and internal goals

- **Diversify and grow America Walks funding**

America Walks has historically been reliant on restricted grant and contract funding for most of its annual funding, and anticipates continued success. It has also successfully raised unrestricted funds through its National Walking Summits. With the lapse in hosting summits, America Walks is committed to a long term effort to grow its individual and corporate donor base. In addition to providing greater flexibility than restricted funds, a larger base of small to moderate donors can provide greater financial resilience.

- ▷ *Key goals and milestones* include significantly increasing the number of individual and corporate donors, increasing the total amount raised in unrestricted funds, and maintaining growth in grants and contracts central to the America Walks mission.



D. Key Tactics (our public-facing signature programs and initiatives)

These are the most impactful ways we will bring our values to life in pursuit of our priorities. Individually and collectively, these are programmatic tactics we will adopt each year to make progress on our strategic plan

- **Intensive training for local advocates on policy, process, and organizing**

America Walks has successfully run CDC-funded National Walking Colleges since 2014. This model has been extended to state walking colleges funded by national partners and state agencies. Through its webinars, website and social media, America Walks also provides educational resources. America Walks will continue its current educational offerings, but work to supplement them with additional educational offerings between the intensity of a one hour webinar and the 18-week Walking College. We envision moderate duration interactive workshops aimed towards advocates and local elected officials to increase their proficiency on policy, and the processes of making change, as well as more hands-on assistance to local campaigns.

- **Thought leadership and public education on walkability-related issues nation-wide.**

America Walks webinars address current and relevant ideas in the walkability movement, and

we will continue this work. America Walks will strive to expand the reach of its communications through a more focused effort to use social media platforms and earned media to reach a broader audience.

- **Sustained campaigns on current and relevant issues**

Campaigns will support the policy priorities described above in this strategic plan. Campaigns are likely to be multi-year efforts, and America Walks will periodically review and revise its campaigns in light of opportunities to win changes.

- **Convening advocates, supporters, professionals, and decision-makers**

America Walks hosted successful National Walking Summits in 2013, 2015, and 2017, and two regional summits in 2019 and 2020. America Walks has also convened communities of practice around specific themes. With the return to in-person public gatherings post-Covid, America Walks will pursue opportunities to fundraise for in-person meetings around specific topics (e.g, Reconnecting Communities, or decriminalizing jaywalking) whether for their own benefits, or as the potential cornerstone of a renewed National Walking Summit.

E. Measuring Success (how we know whether our plan is working)

America Walks recognizes that it can be difficult to measure the precise effect of our work on the societal outcomes we seek, given the many broader forces at play. Nevertheless we believe measurement is critical to understand broad trends in community outcomes, how well we are adhering to our theory of change, and the direct impacts we can attribute to our activities.

America Walks staff will identify readily available baseline measures that can be tracked over time. To the extent such measures don't exist, this may provide an opportunity for additional strategic efforts, in partnership with others, to improve measurement of key indicators of walkability and mobility justice. Progress toward measurable goals will be assessed by the board and staff at the organization's annual retreat, as well as the indicators to be used in the coming year.

Indicators will be chosen to understand:

- What is happening in the broader walkability ecosystem, including:
 - ♦ Walkability infrastructure resources available and allocated to communities
 - ♦ Trends with regards to strategic imperatives and priority areas
- How well America Walks is executing the strategic plan, specifically:
 - ♦ What America Walks is doing (tactics and activities) and difference made (process and outcomes)
 - ♦ How those tactics are moving America Walks closer to its goals
- How well is the theory of change working, most importantly:
 - ♦ How well America Walks is sticking to the theory of change
 - ♦ How well is America Walks makes decisions according to its values
 - ♦ Taken together, the difference working in this way makes

3-part measurement strategy for Strategic Plan

