

[NEW] PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Thanks to so many of you for coming to our annual walk and meeting in March. The theme was “Good Walking is Good Business” and we distributed our brochure on this topic [being well-received statewide]. Thanks to the Barr Foundation, we will be taking “Good Walking is Good Business” on the road soon.

We have a busy spring ahead of us with a number of upcoming events for our members in the works. Invitations will be included in upcoming e-blasts. As always, volunteers are needed to help plan and execute our initiatives and I encourage you to contact the office to find out about how you can get involved.

A little about me: By day I'm a VP at Colliers International — responsible for real estate consulting assignments for corporations and institutions in Greater Boston. In addition, I'm on the advisory board of the Urban Land Institute, the board of the domestic violence advocacy organization Casa Myrna Vazquez, and serve as chair of the Champions of the Massachusetts Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I live in Norwood with my husband Tom and am an avid walker!

Jessica Sawyer

Jessica

BY COREY FREEDMAN

Livability to profitability

It's fair to say that since they appeared in the 1950s, scattered site shopping malls have reigned over the American retail landscape. But winds of change may topple the monarchy of the mall, as vibrant downtown retail emerges as an alternative model for prosperity.

In Lodi, California, strategies that made the city more walkable simultaneously made it more prosperous. In 1997 a 30% increase in downtown sales tax revenue resulted from a \$4.5 million public-private investment in such streetscape improvements as wider sidewalks, street trees, lighting and benches. As revenues increased, so did the strength of the business environment: 60 new businesses opened and the downtown vacancy rate dropped from 18% to 6%.

In the late 1980s, Mountain View, California, revitalized its downtown by building a pedestrian-friendly city hall and performing arts center complex with an outdoor plaza, plus adding a flexible use zone [parking at some times, cafes at others] where sidewalk cafe tables replaced parked cars. Hundreds of millions in private investment followed. Today the town is a regional draw.

Slowing traffic had a major impact in West Palm Beach, Florida, where planners narrowed streets, raised intersections, built curb bulb-outs and restored key buildings. In 1993 only 30% of the building space on Clematis Street in West Palm Beach was occupied; by 1998 it was more than 80%. Commercial rents went from \$6/sq. ft. to \$30/sq. ft. in that time.

walk



BY KEN KRAUSE

Walking boosts bottom line

As healthcare costs skyrocketed over the last two decades, US companies discovered the value of workplace health and wellness programs. Not only do companies save money through decreased healthcare expenses, but they see reduced absenteeism and turnover, higher productivity and job satisfaction, and increased morale and loyalty.

But one area sometimes overlooked with regard to workplace wellness is walkability. That is changing.

In Atlanta, Hewlett Packard halted an expansion planned in an area unfriendly to pedestrians, saying it did not want to subject 1,000 new employees to its serious traffic problems. Not surprisingly, a coalition of stakeholders embarked on a plan to transform the area into a more walkable, connected environment in order to attract new businesses.

“Our vision is to provide a high-quality environment for those who want to live where they work and work where they live and meet the needs of young professionals and older populations who either by choice or necessity limit their travel distances between work and home,” said Ann Hanlon of the local community improvement district.

In Detroit, the IT solutions company Compuware moved its headquarters to a walkable downtown area adjacent to a revitalized park. “They didn't want just a building. They wanted a lively district where their workers would have things to do,” said Bob Edwards of the park conservancy.

And the website Open Office Space, which connects entrepreneurs and small businesses seeking office space with lessors, now includes a Walk Score in all property listings, rating their walkability on proximity to amenities. “We believe this is pretty important information, as a walkable office location can save an entrepreneur, start-up, or small business time, money and even help the environment,” Open Office Space said.

What can your business do to improve pedestrian access? Start by opening WalkScore.com for your street address to get a general view of walkability in the neighborhood and the businesses that might be needed to attract walkers. Then conduct a Walkability Audit, available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthier Worksite Initiative [www.cdc.org]. The audit assesses pedestrian facilities, destinations and surroundings and identifies specific improvements to make routes more useful to pedestrians.

In one Orlando neighborhood, after using the Walkability Audit, roads were resurfaced, sidewalks repaired and trees planted. A neglected street was turned into an inviting, walkable place.

And that is what a majority of Americans want. According to a National Association of Realtors study, six in 10 would prefer to live in walkable neighborhoods. A 2010 study by the Creative Class Group found that walkable metro areas had more highly educated and creative people, higher incomes and housing values, more high-tech companies, and greater levels of innovation.

Concluded author and University of Toronto business professor Richard Florida: “Walkability is more than an attractive amenity — it's a magnet for attracting and retaining the highly innovative businesses and highly skilled people that drive economic growth, raising housing values and generating higher incomes.”

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calendar

Wed. May 25 @ 5:30 [1.5 hours]

Advocacy Committee Meeting

Walk/Transit Oriented Dev./Smart Growth — How to make these connections work and improve the quality of design. Meet: WalkBoston office

Wed. June 8 @ 6:00 pm [1 hour]

Pedestrian advocacy 101

A WalkBoston program/discussion
American Meterological Society
45 Beacon Street, Boston
Cost: Free. Accessible
Register: rsvp@walkboston.org

Sat. June 25 @ 10:30 am [2.5 hours]

Brookline's secret stairways & paths

A WalkBoston event in cooperation with Brookline Adult Education
Cost: \$25/WB members \$20, Stairs
Register: aded.brooklinema.gov

tipping point

Increased walkability is expected to be an economic boon on Chicago's North Side. Under its Complete Streets policy, adopted in 2007, the Chicago Department of Transportation plans to slim four-lane Lawrence Avenue on the North Side. "We're not minimizing the role of the car," Adolfo Hernandez, director of advocacy at the Active Transportation Alliance, said of removing lanes. "We're balancing multiple modes of transportation."

According to Hernandez, businesses along walkable streets tend to do better and see higher foot traffic than roads geared solely to the car. "Moves like this can push a place to the tipping point."

cars cost

Parking A study of retail businesses in Toronto, Canada, found that patrons arriving by foot and bicycle visit the most often and spend the most money per month. Also, bicycle parking is space efficient and generates about five times as much spending per square yard as automobile parking.

Budgeting The poorest fifth of Americans spend 42% of their annual household budget on auto ownership — more than twice the national average. Two-car suburban families driving an average of 95 miles a day spend ~\$1,400 a month, akin to a mortgage payment. These factors are undoubtedly contributing to the foreclosure crisis in suburban communities. *Timothy Reardon, MAPC*

one small step

In the top 51 metropolitan areas with a million or more people, if we reduce vehicle miles traveled only 1 mile per day — only 1 — it's worth \$29 billion annually to the country in terms of savings in gas, car purchase and car repair. \$29 billion. And that's not a one-time stimulus — that's a stimulus every single year. *Carol Coletta*

Carol was our annual meeting speaker and is the CEO of CEOs for Cities, a "civic lab of today's urban leaders catalyzing a movement to advance the next generation of great American cities." [www.ceosforcities.org]. She was named one of the world's 50 most important urban experts by a leading European think tank.

5.11 business boost

WalkBoston encourages walking throughout Massachusetts for transportation, health and education and advocacy programs give voice to citizens to make their vibrant communities better. Our mission is to encourage communities to make their neighborhoods walkable.

WalkBoston 45 School Street Boston, MA 02108 T: 617.367.9255 F: 617.367.9285 info@walkboston.org www.walkboston.org

mission

thank you!

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BY BOB SLOANE

21 years of ped advocacy celebrated

This year's annual meeting began with our Good Walking is Good Business walk through downtown, featuring brief talks by Greg Gatlin/Director of Public Affairs of Suffolk University, Rosemarie Sansone/President of the Downtown Boston Business Improvement District [BID] and Judith Frampton/Vice President of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care who all spoke about how walking has improved their bottom line. Excellent food, views and conversation followed, at 60 State Street [courtesy of WilmerHale].

Golden Shoe Awards were presented to Rep. Denise Provost for strong legislative support for walkers, the South End's Doug Johnson for persistent and persuasive advocacy to improve signal timing, Alan French for creating the Bay Circuit Alliance 200-mile walking trail, and Brockton Safe Routes to Schools for its schools, principals, kids and parents community success story.

Our new president, Jessica Sawyer, was elected and steps into the shoes so ably filled by Beverley Johnson. We thank Beverley for years of fantastic service.

Our speaker was Carol Coletta of CEOs for Cities, who captured our attention with her vision of cities as the hubs of innovation and growth for the next generation of Americans.

SEE PHOTOS www.flickr.com/photos/walkboston/sets/72157626276575463/