

Livable ● Streets

HEALTH BENEFITS

LIVABLE STREETS — sometimes referred to as complete streets — are roadways designed to allow for safe and convenient travel by all users, including motor vehicles, pedestrians (including those with disabilities), transit vehicles, and bicyclists both along and across the corridor.



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● ENCOURAGE ACTIVE LIVING

Livable streets encourage walking, running and biking. We already know that modest increases in physical activity can extend our lives and make us healthier. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend livable streets design as a means of reducing obesity rates by increasing active living alternatives.

● INCREASE DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Walkability has a direct and specific relation to the health of residents. A comprehensive study of walkability has found that people in walkable neighborhoods did about 35–45 more minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week, and were substantially less likely to be overweight or obese than similar people living in low-walkable neighborhoods.¹

● MAKE HEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOODS

Public health researchers recommend building more sidewalks, improving transit service, and shifting highway funds to create bike lanes to encourage more physical activity.² One study found that 43 percent of people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of home met recommended activity levels. Among those without safe places to walk, just 27 percent met the recommendation.³ Residents are 65 percent more likely to walk in a neighborhood with sidewalks.⁴

● PROVIDE SAFER STREETS

Livable streets enhance the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, by providing safe crossings and bicycle lanes. This helps prevent conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists. Conventional streets are also less safe for pedestrians, bicyclists and auto owners because they make it harder to cross streets and safely move along the street.



● OFFER TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Livable streets promote health by encouraging more walking, bicycling, and other outdoor activities. Several studies have shown that people are less likely to be overweight if they live in more walkable areas. By making walking and bicycling easier, livable streets encourage people to use these types of activities to meet more of their transportation needs.

● ARE INVITING

Complete streets provide people with a range of safe choices for moving around their communities, including walking and biking. Complete streets are people-friendly and support good health.⁵

● INCREASE VISIBILITY

Livable streets provide improved visibility, signals, and signage so that everyone using the street is aware of other users. This reduces safety hazards and protects public health by reducing accidents, making streets safer for all.

● CONTRIBUTE TO A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT

Livable streets are promote cleaner air by reducing vehicle idling and trips. Cleaner air helps to reduce asthma and other respiratory diseases. Livable streets also are designed to improve water quality by reducing runoff into streams and rivers, contributing to healthier water sources for all of us.

● PROMOTE SAFE TRANSIT

Livable streets encourages transit use by accommodating transit vehicles. The use of transit has been shown to encourage health by walking or biking to transit stops. Nearly one-third of transit users meet the U.S. surgeon general's recommendations for minimum daily exercise through their daily travels.

- 1 www.completestreets.org: Sallis, James F, et al .2009. "Neighborhood built environment and income: Examining multiple health outcomes"
- 2 www.completestreets.org: Brennan-Ramirez, L. et al .2006. "Indicators of Activity-Friendly Communities: An Evidence-Based Consensus Process"
- 3 www.completestreets.org: Powell, K.E., Martin, L., & Chowdhury, P.P. (2003). "Places to walk: convenience and regular physical activity"
- 4 www.completestreets.org: Giles-Corti, B., & Donovan, R.J. (2002). "The relative influence of individual, social, and physical environment determinants of physical activity"
- 5 Public Health Law & Policy: Planning for Healthy Places, *Complete Streets Talking Points*

