



Walkability Event
September 26, 2009; El Cajon, CA
Summary Report

In recognition of Fall Prevention Awareness Week (September 20th – 26th 2009), the County of San Diego’s Aging & Independence Services (AIS) conducted a Walkability Event, in partnership with the San Diego Fall Prevention Task Force and the County of San Diego’s Health & Human Services East Region. This event was funded primarily by a grant from Archstone Foundation, with the addition of several large sponsorships from Task Force member organizations. The event ties into the County of San Diego’s “Chronic Disease Agenda,” which has a focus on changing the built environment to promote healthier behaviors. Improved walkability may prevent falls by reducing physical hazards and also by promoting physical activity. The purpose of this event was to increase awareness of the concepts of “walkability,” including safety hazards and also features that promote walking. Another goal was to stimulate community members to conduct advocacy to improve the walkability of their neighborhoods. The particular neighborhood for the event was selected based on several factors: 1 - it is in an area that has the highest incidence of pedestrian involved crashes in El Cajon (we were not able to identify the precise location of outdoor falls, but we were able to identify locations of pedestrian-involved crashes); 2 – the neighborhood is designated as part of a “Safe Routes to School” zone, so there would be a possibility of identifying funds to address the problems identified, and 3 – the area includes many older adult residents. We also aimed to conduct this event with an intergenerational approach, since safe, walkable neighborhoods impact residents of all ages, and both youth and older adults benefit from working on projects with each other.

Funds provided through the Archstone grant allowed AIS to contract with Walk San Diego to conduct the walkability training, walk audit, mapping session, report and advocacy training. Walk San Diego is a grassroots organization whose mission is to make neighborhoods more walkable. They accomplish their mission through educational events, training and advocacy. Archstone funds also purchased incentive items including water bottles and pedometers. AIS also identified other sponsors who contributed to the event by donating food, water and raffle prizes. These sponsors included AARP, At Your Home Familycare, Elderhelp, Scripps Mercy Trauma, Sharp Memorial Trauma, UCSD Trauma, and Visiting Angels. The total cost of the event was \$5,067.28 of which \$3717 came from the Archstone grant and \$1350.00 was donated by the sponsors above.

The event was attended by 54 people on Saturday, September 26th from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at Wells Park Recreation Center in El Cajon, CA. The event started with training on “what are walkable neighborhoods?” After the training, participants divided into two groups, each led by a Walk San Diego member, and took to the streets to conduct a walk audit. Walk San Diego had identified two different routes in the vicinity. On the walk audit, the groups learned to identify hazards and helpful features on their route. They took pictures of specific problems and

used an extensive checklist to record their findings. Then, after returning to the center, the last half of the event included a mapping session where each group identified the hazards on large scale maps of the neighborhood. Then, representatives from group presented their findings to the entire audience. After that, each participant voted on which of the identified hazards was a top priority to address. Walk San Diego used the information to create their report, included as an appendix here.

Overall, the walkability event was very successful. The participants in the event were very diverse, including youth, older adults and disabled adults. AIS is happy to report that during the event participants were engaged in each component of the event from participating in the walk audit to actively discussing the problem areas during the mapping session.

Our evaluation results indicate participants learned valuable information about walkability and enjoyed the event. Specifically, all 35 participants who filled out the evaluation indicated either 'strongly agree,' or 'agree' that they would recommend this type of event to others. Similarly, when asked if participants felt 'more likely to report safety problems after attending this event,' most participants responded 'strongly agree' or 'agree.' When asked what aspect of the event they enjoyed the most, participants said they enjoyed learning about walkability the most, followed by enjoying the walk portion of the event. The raw evaluation data report is attached here as an appendix. Moreover, we are especially pleased that 20 of the participants also signed up to indicate their interest in a future event to learn how to advocate for changes.

Our next steps will be to coordinate advocacy work with AARP and Walk San Diego to continue to engage the 20 local residents who signed up for a follow-up meeting to learn how advocacy can address the identified hazards. AIS also plans to look for partnerships to secure funds for future walkability events in different parts of the County. By engaging former participants in advocacy and holding additional walkability events around the County, we hope to increase concern and interest in how walkability relates to fall prevention. Community involvement is imperative to improve neighborhood safety and prevent outdoor falls.