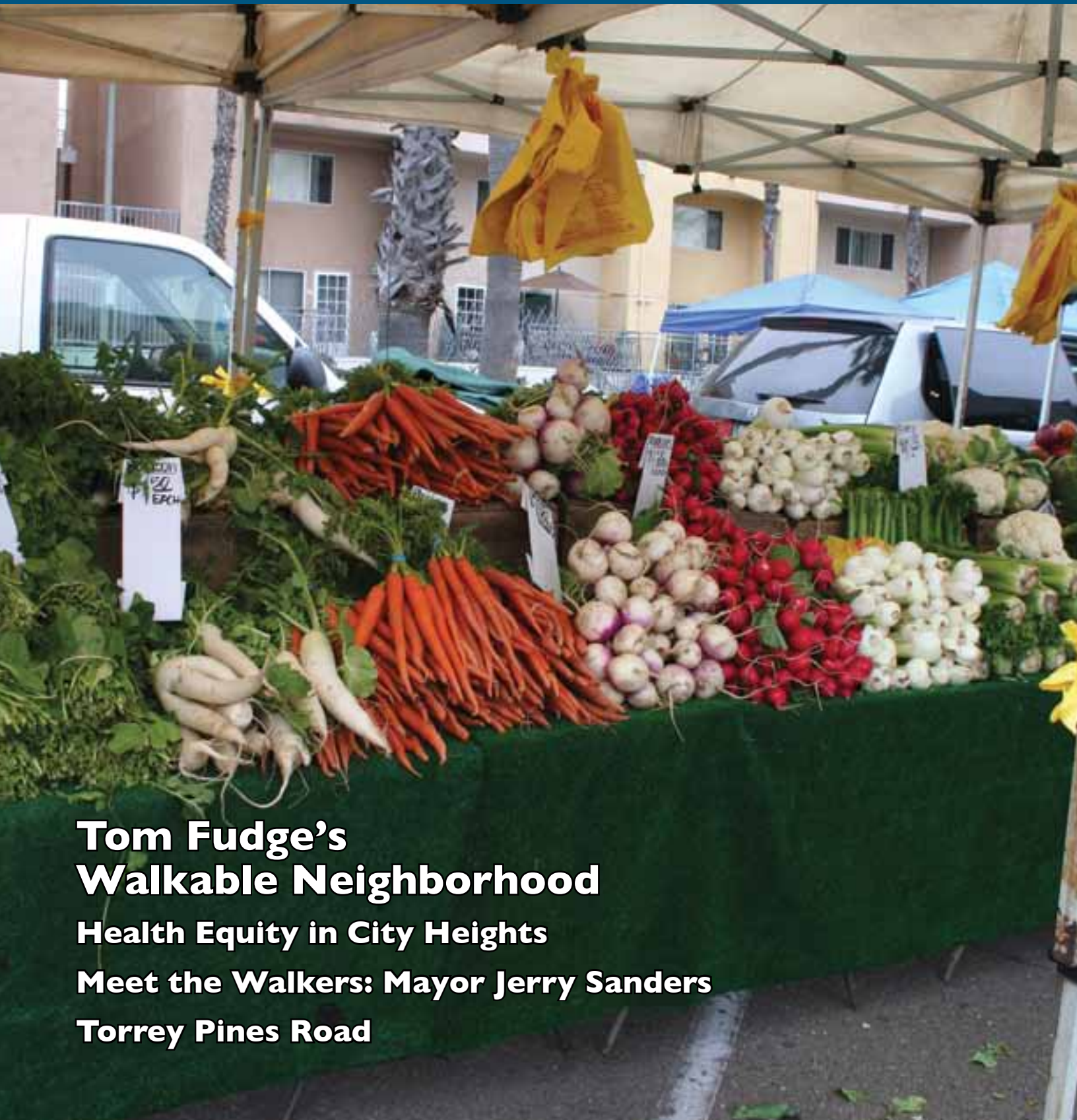


Spring 2011

# FootNotes

The Quarterly Magazine of WalkSanDiego Promoting Walkable Communities



## **Tom Fudge's Walkable Neighborhood**

**Health Equity in City Heights**

**Meet the Walkers: Mayor Jerry Sanders**

**Torrey Pines Road**



## *The World at 3 mph.*

*When you walk, everything changes. Scenery and senses sharpen. Body, mind and breath find their natural rhythm. Space stretches out and time settles down. We're determined to be a new model for pedestrian-friendly communities here in Mission Valley, and Sudberry Development applauds Walk San Diego for their mission and the important work they do.*



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# Making A Connection



**T**his is my first communication with the readers of *FootNotes*, so I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and share a few thoughts. I'm WalkSanDiego's new executive director. I've been on the job since January 18, and it feels like the steep learning curve is starting to level off—just a bit anyway.

My background includes thirty-something years as an environmental educator and advocate. Before starting my position here, I most recently served as the vice president of programs at the San Diego Natural History Museum, an organization with deep roots in the community and a long record of working on behalf of the wildlife and habitats of this region.

At first blush, some people might not think of WalkSanDiego as an environmental organization. But I would beg to differ with them. My previous work focused on improving conditions for animals, plants and the places they live. Whenever I

hear people talk about “saving the planet” or “protecting the environment,” I imagine they are conjuring up images of rainforests, migrating gray whales, or perhaps a solitary mountain lion in the nearby Cuyamaca Mountains. It's as if people and the places we live are somehow not part of the “environment.” However, I learned a long time ago in my very first ecology class that everything is connected.

The miles we drive put CO2 in the air, warming the planet, disrupting weather patterns, impacting human populations, and changing habitats so rapidly that many species can't adapt and will soon be lost forever. The miles we don't drive don't put CO2 into the air, and they have the added benefit of improving our health.

So I like to think that every walking improvement we help to foster gets a few more people out of their cars and on their feet. And even if they don't realize the connectedness of their lives to every other living thing on the planet—human and otherwise—they are helping to make a difference, one step at a time.

**Jim Stone, Executive Director**



## Statement of Purpose

WalkSanDiego is a locally based membership organization working to improve the built environment and make walking a safe and viable option for all people who live, work and play in the San Diego region.

Aiming to enhance the livability of communities, through education, engagement, engineering and enforcement, a professional staff team provides technical expertise, specialized advice and practical support to a range of partners in the public, private and nonprofit sectors.

Working in collaboration with neighborhood groups, local jurisdictions and planning organizations, WalkSanDiego develops and delivers programs to improve pedestrian safety and advocates for changes in public policy to support walkable communities and advance the equitable use of transportation funds.

Joining WalkSanDiego as a member helps WalkSanDiego keep you connected to the exciting work we are doing and helps us to demonstrate the power in numbers behind our cause. As a membership based non-profit we also rely on paid memberships to help fund the work we do. Please consider joining us at any level you can.

Supporter	FREE
Tread Lightly	\$25
Pace Setter	\$50
High Stepper	\$100
Donor	\$250+
Sponsor	\$500+

Members joining at the *Tread Lightly* level or above will receive a license plate frame, *Pace Setters* and above will receive a pedometer, *High Steppers* and above will receive a pair of Sock Guy socks and *Donors* and above will receive a Klean Kanteen bottle.



**Join online at [www.WalkSanDiego.org](http://www.WalkSanDiego.org)**

WalkSanDiego is a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization; your contribution is deductible as a charitable contribution to the extent permitted by law.



# Safe for All: WalkSanDiego's 2011 Benchmark Street Design Study

by Kathleen Ferrier, AICP



**T**hroughout its 12-year history, WalkSanDiego has made pedestrian safety its number one priority and has focused on programs such as Safe Routes to School to create safer walking conditions. Last year, the organization received a grant from The San Diego Foundation to explore street design practices—around the U.S. and the San Diego region—to get at the heart of both pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

WalkSanDiego has drafted initial findings of stellar street design best practices and is currently interviewing staff from the region's 18 jurisdictions to see how well we're doing at the local level. Our final report will include recommendations for SANDAG (which provides much of the local street funding) and individual cities on how to better integrate bicycle and pedestrian safety into road construction projects.

While WalkSanDiego is still completing interviews, two important recommendations from the draft report are highlighted here: (1) Establishing decision-making processes that effectively balance the needs of all street users, and (2) Being strategic about implementation.

(1) By updating street design regulations and updates to city-wide plans, cities such as Charlotte, NC and Sacramento have examined how well local streets serve each community, rather than looking only at how many vehicles each road can accommodate.

- In Charlotte, this exercise resulted in the creation of a new six-step decision process to ensure surrounding land uses are considered. For example, a quaint local main street should look and operate very differently than the street serving a large mall, even if the two handle the same amount of car traffic.

- In both Charlotte and Sacramento, street 'typologies' were developed to describe the street's function (main street vs. residential vs. big box center), and help guide subsequent design decisions.

- Similarly, Seattle adopted a Complete Streets Ordinance to integrate this idea into all decision making, from laying sewer pipes to scheduling traffic enforcement. For example, Seattle developed a Complete Streets Checklist which is passed around to all departments for review and approval with all projects.

(2) Each of the cities mentioned above also produces a comprehensive transportation strategy every five years. This allows them to prioritize improvements for traffic, bicyclists, and pedestrians based on Complete Streets principles as well as budget constraints.

It is encouraging that a city here in California—Sacramento—is among the jurisdictions employing best practices. Passage of Assembly Bill 1358 (calling for Complete Streets with all city plan updates) and Senate Bill 97 (implementing Complete Streets when private or public projects are reviewed for their environmental impacts) offers a telling sign that change is afoot in California. Now it's up to each local jurisdiction to think about how pedestrian and bicycle friendliness can be woven into every transportation and land use decision, starting with a strategic vision for the function of streets. In the San Diego region, WalkSanDiego's benchmark study is intended to help guide the way.

# A Surprisingly Walkable Neighborhood

by Tom Fudge



I'm a pretty fair and objective journalist but WalkSanDiego has always been a group to which I've shown some favor. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, I'm an environmental puritan who thinks we need to get out of our cars to save the planet. Second, I just think it's cool to be able to get around town on my own power.

This ethos has made me pay a price that's gone beyond the sweat I've had to burn and the few extra minutes it's taken me to get places. I rode my bike to work for a couple of years until I got hammered by a car and suffered traumatic brain injury. That was the end of my biking days.

Since then, I have spent more time traveling afoot. Until recently, I lived in Normal Heights. It's a neighborhood full of small lots and single-family bungalows. Normal Heights is bisected by Adams Avenue, where you can find a library, a post office, a full-service grocery store, and many other shops and services that are all within an easy walk.

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***"I could either drive to the gym, run on the treadmill and then drive back home. Or I could walk to the gym, stand in the doorway for a minute, then turn around and walk home. Both things took about the same amount of time and gave me about the same amount of exercise. I cancelled my gym membership."***

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But six months ago I left walkable Normal Heights and moved to El Cerrito. It's about half a mile south of San Diego State and sidles up along El Cajon Boulevard.

Though it's only a couple miles from Normal Heights, El Cerrito is much more suburban. There's less traffic and the houses and lots are bigger. The main commercial street, El Cajon Boulevard, is at least a five-block walk and the part of the boulevard I'm closest to has a motley collection of low-rent establishments I'm unlikely to use. There's a Von's grocery store on El Cajon. But it's a mile away and that's not walking distance.

Or is it? The answer to that question has surprised me and it has changed my whole view of what "walkable neighborhood" means.

When you get in a car and drive a mile it seems like more than a mile. Driving confounds the senses. In fact, walking a mile takes between 15 and 20 minutes if you set a brisk but unhurried pace. From my home, it's a mile to Von's and a mile to KPBS, where I work.

Doing these mile hikes has taught me the extra time it takes to walk is just not that great. Plus, it's good exercise. I used to belong to a gym on the SDSU campus that was, again, about a mile away. I soon realized that I could either drive to the gym, run on the treadmill and then drive back home. Or I could walk to the gym, stand in the doorway for a minute, then turn around and walk home.

Both things took about the same amount of time and gave me about the same amount of exercise. I cancelled my gym membership.



About seven years ago I spent two weeks in central London and I was struck by how fit people were. Was it the diet? Was it because they had less poverty and better health care? I think it was because they walked so much.

The great majority of working people in that city get around on public transit. But that doesn't mean you catch a bus right outside your flat and it takes you to the doorstep of your workplace. In London it means walking to the subway stop, changing trains at a transfer station where the next platform is at the end of a very long tunnel, then walking another quarter mile to your final destination.

The walking Londoners do is tremendous and it keeps them fit. My point is that walking is a twofer. It keeps you healthy and it saves the planet by reducing your use of carbon fuels. Okay, I'm talking like a puritan again! But if you don't think you live in a walkable neighborhood, give it a second look.

Like me, you may discover that there are quite a few things within a mile radius of where you live. Leave a few more footprints and you'll reduce your carbon footprint, and you may be able to cancel a gym membership.

Tom is author of the blog *On-Ramp* at [kpbs.org/onramp](http://kpbs.org/onramp).

# Health Equity by Design: Reducing Health Disparities in City Heights

by Kathleen Ferrier, AICP

**D**id you know that one number may impact how long you live and how well you feel? It's not your weight or your age—it's your address. The way your community has developed over time and the places where you live, learn, work and play affect your health more than having health insurance or seeing a doctor regularly.

Health Equity by Design (HED), a 20-month project recently completed in San Diego's City Heights community through a partnership between WalkSanDiego and San Diego County's Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), was initiated to find projects and policies that can be implemented to reduce health disparities and promote better health in the city's most diverse community.

Parks, trails, sidewalks, bikeable streets, and healthy foods are not equally available in all communities. These differences can create health disparities. After all, if your doctor tells you to eat better and exercise more, but your neighborhood discourages these behaviors, studies show your health will suffer. Working towards better health through community design is known as place-based health and is motivating health professionals to get involved in community design to ensure that residents have plenty of opportunities to play, walk, bike, and eat healthy foods.

Collaborating with three City Heights organizations—the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Proyecto de Casas Saludables and the City Heights Community Development Corporation (CDC)—the HED project engaged residents to talk about health disparities in their community and to find solutions. Several tools were created and residents helped identify solutions which were detailed in *A Resident's Guide to a Healthy City Heights*, available on WalkSanDiego's website, [www.walksandiego.org](http://www.walksandiego.org).

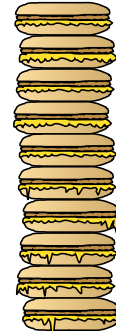
## Tools for Advocacy

### Health indicators

percentage of City Heights population within ¼ mile of a park, transit stop, grocery store, fast food restaurant

NUMBER OF FAST FOOD FRANCHISES  
WITHIN 1/4 MILE OF A GRADE SCHOOL

CITY HEIGHTS  
**4.4**



### Community-based maps

illustrating the findings from the indicators

SAN DIEGO  
**1.3**



### Cartoon graphics

illustrating the disparity between City Heights and the City of San Diego's general average



## Solutions for Change

In many cases, the solutions desired were reflected by policies already in place, e.g. safe street design policies to encourage walking and require appropriate street lighting, development impact fees to build additional parks and green space, and programs to help families treat lead-ridden homes. In fact, these policies were in place because they reflected priorities communicated for decades. The challenge lay in creating a sense of urgency at the City and other implementing agencies.





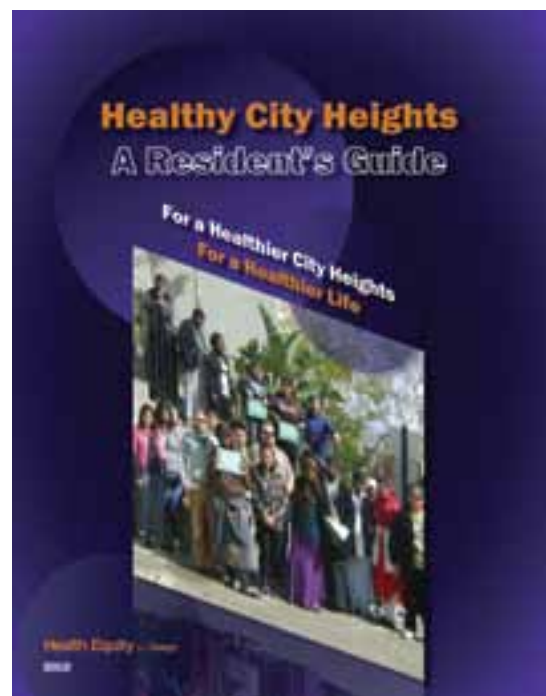


As a result of the project, HED galvanized residents to advocate for specific improvements:

- With the Redevelopment Project Area Committee, they successfully requested improved sidewalks and more street lighting so they could feel safer walking, especially at night.
- They asked the Parks and Recreation Board for improvements to Colina del Sol Park to bring out more residents and to create more watchful eyes within the park.

Another proposed solution is a Health Overlay Zone. Targeting the University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard corridors, the zone would limit additional fast food restaurants, encourage produce carts and outdoor seating, and emphasize the need for traffic calming to slow traffic and protect pedestrians and bicyclists. WalkSanDiego will continue to work with neighborhood groups, local nonprofit agencies and elected officials to encourage changes like these to help reduce the health disparities found in City Heights.

More of the solutions can be found in the Resident's Guide to a Healthy City Heights.



# The Footbridges of San Diego County

*Andy Hamilton looks at the Lake Hodges Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge*

If you've driven past Rancho Bernardo on I-15 recently, you may have noticed the striking David Kreitzer Lake Hodges Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge, which opened in May 2009. The bridge is a key link in the ambitious plan of the San Diegito River Park ([www.sdrp.org](http://www.sdrp.org)) to link ancient Volcan Mountain forests to the Pacific Ocean 55 miles away. The span is named for a 21-year County Planning Commissioner and park advocate. It was designed by T.Y. Lin International, and at 990 feet, is the longest of only four stressed ribbon style bridges in the western hemisphere. The bridge's narrow profile and small footprint is aesthetically appropriate for its scenic location in a sensitive habitat. Construction of the 12-foot wide, \$9.5 million bridge took two years, with summer construction breaks to avoid disturbing nesting birds. You can reach the bridge via a 1.7-mile hike from a parking lot just east of I-15 at Via Rancho Parkway.



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# Meet the Walkers: Mayor Jerry Sanders



If you have seen Mayor Jerry Sanders recently, you probably noticed that he's looking pretty fit. We heard rumors that a regular walking regime played a significant role in his fitness program. So we decided to go straight to the source and ask him ourselves.

**WalkSanDiego: We understand you have lost some weight recently. How has your walking program played a role in that?**

Jerry Sanders: Well, I walk about 50 miles a week, sometimes more, and I think just getting out and exercising, number one you burn a lot of calories and number two you're not sitting around thinking about what you want to eat. So, I think it feels good to get out, to put some mileage on. And I think that's been a major role in my weight loss, because once you start walking and getting into that routine you pay more attention to your diet.

**WSD: What personal benefits have you found from walking regularly?**

JS: Well, I've lost 70 pounds. It also allows me to clear my mind frequently. With the job that I have, it's nice to be able to get out and get clear of all the thoughts I've had and think through other issues.

**WSD: What have you learned about walkability during your walks?**

JS: You know, I think San Diego is a pretty easy community to walk in. You've got your choice. I have several different places that I go to walk. Mainly, I just walk straight from my house down one of the major boulevards in San Diego. I have a bunch of different paths I like to take and also enjoy walking around my own neighborhood.

**WSD: How would you rate the city's walking environment and are there particular neighborhoods where we should focus on improving walkability?**

JS: You know, I think probably any neighborhood in San Diego is a good neighborhood to walk in. The only time I have problem is when it rains. Some of our storm drains and storm drain systems pool up water around intersections and makes it tough to get through them. But that's in the oldest parts of San Diego. Other than that, I think San Diego's got a great neighborhood walkability factor no matter where you are.

**WSD: What do you think we should do to get more people out walking?**

JS: Well, I think people kinda have to come up with that themselves. Some people think you have to run or jog to lose weight and you know, I've found if you're putting on mileage just walking it does pretty much the same thing with the same benefits.

**WSD: The city has some great ideas in the Pedestrian Master Plan. When do you think we will start seeing the envisioned improvements?**

JS: We are already seeing some improvements with adding curb cuts to comply with ADA regulations. As funding for more projects becomes available, we will begin to move forward with other aspects of the plan.

*We salute Mayor Sanders for personally demonstrating the significant health benefits of walking. And while we agree that San Diego is a fine place to walk, we know that there are some places in the region where we need better sidewalks and improved street design to make neighborhoods truly walkable. We look forward to working with the City and other jurisdictions to make walking a safe and viable choice no matter where you live. - Editor*

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# Torrey Pines Road: A Resident's Perspective

by Dr. Sherry Nooravi, Community Activist & Safety Advocate

***"Determine that the thing can and shall be done,  
and then we shall find the way." - Abraham Lincoln***

**W**hen I first moved to San Diego, I never thought it would become my mission to fight for pedestrian and bicyclist safety, but that became the case after I realized Torrey Pines Road (between La Jolla Shores Drive and Prospect) lacked complete sidewalks and safe places to cross. In order to get across the street, a person has to cross two lanes of speeding traffic, wait anxiously in the middle with no median, and then cross two more lanes. Bicyclists are also forced to ride extremely close to the cars that drive between 40-60 MPH in this 35 MPH zone.

I was faced with a challenge and had to make a decision... complain for the next 20 years, or do something. As an Organization Effectiveness Consultant who helps companies grow through their people, I asked myself, "Why can't I help my community grow through the efforts of its people?" I decided to utilize the principles of my field to make a difference in these dangerous conditions that affect residents and visitors of San Diego.

Using a change management model I employ in my work with organizations (John Kotter's 7-step change model) I decided to dive in for my quest for safety.

• **Establish a sense of urgency** – I urged residents to attend community meetings to share our views and revive the Torrey Pines Corridor project, a plan for beautification and safety that was developed by residents and community groups (with the help of WalkSanDiego in 2005) and approved as a whole by the groups and the San Diego City Council in 2008.

• **Form a powerful coalition** – I invited anyone who was interested to begin meeting and sharing ideas. Our group slowly grew in size and we kept in touch through group emails.

• **Create a vision** – We created a vision for a safe, green and clean La Jolla to address the importance of safety, walking instead of driving and beautification as part of traffic calming (speed reduction).



• **Communicate the vision** – We did this at community and SANDAG meetings, writing opinions in the La Jolla Light newspaper and the website we created ([www.torreypinessafety.org](http://www.torreypinessafety.org)). We hosted Andy Hamilton, President of WalkSanDiego, to conduct a Talk and Walk Tour and we were able to communicate our vision throughout San Diego through TV news coverage on the Channel 10 news (found on In the Press on our website).

• **Empower others to act on the vision** – To this day, we communicate the message that pedestrian and bicyclist safety is a right, not a nice-to-have. We continue to alert members for all opportunities to speak about the vision for safety including email drives to our elected officials, opinions in our local papers and before city officials.

• **Plan for short-term wins** – Our Council Member Sherri Lightner promoted this project as her top priority for federal stimulus funds and we received \$500K to get started. We continue to update our community on every meeting and change that happens.

• **Build on changes through systems, structures, development** As Residents for Torrey Pines Safety, we would like to help other areas in San Diego develop safer living conditions. We are hopeful that we will be successful and that our model for success can be replicated. Many of our members foresee helping WalkSanDiego with this mission.

Currently, some of our members are researching the specific voting items that were made in the community groups from 2005-2008 in the hopes of clarifying past decisions so we don't have to start from scratch that which has already been approved. It certainly feels like we have a long battle before us and we are doing our best to ensure that justice and safety prevail.

WalkSanDiego has been a fantastic ally in several ways. First, they've spoken at community events I've hosted and second, the staff has attended the community meetings for this project and shared their expertise about what is needed to create safer road conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers. Without the contributions of WalkSanDiego, we would just be a group of residents without the specific technical facts or statistics to make our case for traffic calming, narrower roads, crosswalks and wider sidewalks.

I urge those of you who are living in unsafe conditions to take the time to take a stand. Yes, it will take a lot of time and effort, but what great things don't require great investments? As Lincoln said, make your decision and you will find the way.

[www.torreypinessafety.org](http://www.torreypinessafety.org)





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