



## COMMUNITY REPORT CARD AND FEEDBACK

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Oxford, Mississippi  
April 4, 2012

### Introduction

Thank you for submitting an application to the Walk Friendly Communities program on behalf of Oxford, Mississippi! A Walk Friendly Community is a city or town that has shown a commitment to improving walkability and pedestrian safety through comprehensive programs, plans and policies.

Each application was evaluated by at least three reviewers to provide a fair assessment of your community and provide technical feedback on how to improve the walkability of your community.

After thorough consideration of your application, we are unable to designate Oxford, as a Walk Friendly Community. However, there were several areas that we were particularly impressed with, and we would like to recognize Oxford as an Honorable Mention community based on some of your impressive programs, including:

- Oxford has clearly embraced the challenge of encouraging walking through numerous **policies and plans** including the Pedestrian Plan, Transition Plan, and forthcoming Complete Streets policy.
- There is clear support for walking from the City leadership as exhibited by the signing of the **International Charter for Walking**.
- The Pathways, Disability, and Transportation **Commissions** all provide support for walking and avenues for public input and engagement.
- The regular bicycle-pedestrian **counts** performed in Oxford allow the City to track changes over time and evaluate the best uses for limited resources.
- The **Safe Routes to School** program in Oxford is comprehensive in scope and demonstrates the commitment to walking in the community.

Oxford has exhibited a desire to become a community that supports active transportation. The application to the Walk Friendly Communities program is an endorsement of that desire and it is our hope that the feedback and information we provide can help your community improve in this regard.

We have noted several areas in which your community can improve its policies, programs, and standards. Please continue to build upon this foundation to work to become a Walk Friendly

Community. This report card provides detailed feedback on how your community can take its programs and initiatives to the next level; take the time to review the feedback and contact us with any questions.

## Primary Recommendations

This section identifies and provides suggestions for the most vital areas of improving Oxford's overall walkability. Additional details are provided in the following sections. **We recommend that you read these areas thoroughly and develop clear goals, benchmarks, funding sources, and an implementation schedule for reaching these goals.**

- Expanding your **education and encouragement programs** could go a long way toward changing the behaviors in Oxford to increase walking.
- Much more can be done to systematically **evaluate your community's walkability** – this can be accomplished through analysis of crash data, before/after evaluations of specific transportation projects, and using available evaluation tools. There are dozens of tools available to assist planners and engineers in system-wide, corridor, or intersection evaluations.
- Ensure that all plans have **measurable performance objects** that can be tracked over time.
- Pedestrian safety and behaviors at **street crossings** could be improved through the installation of countdown signals, accessible pedestrian signals, leading pedestrian intervals, and timing for an appropriate walking speed.
- **Adult school crossing guards** play an important role in the lives of children who walk or bicycle to school by helping children cross safely at key locations. Oxford should consider creating a crossing guard training program, which would work in conjunction with the Safe Routes to School program.
- The crash rate in Oxford is certainly high, despite the fact that no fatal crashes occurred. Hiring a **traffic safety officer** to lead a strategic enforcement program could help to mitigate this.

## Feedback by Section

This remainder of this report card will provide detailed feedback and suggestions for each section in the community assessment tool. Feedback will include research to support the importance of this question as well as tools, guides, and case studies of successful implementations in other communities.

Each section received an overall score as defined below:

- **Walk Friendly:** The responses in this section indicate that your community is particularly strong in this area with great efforts being made towards improving walkability. Even so, there are always areas within this section where improvements and growth could be made.
- **On the Right Track:** This score indicates that your community does not exhibit the characteristics to be truly walk friendly in this section, but that there are still good existing programs or new programs that could be expanded. Please review our suggestions on how you could improve the walkability in this area.

- **Needs Attention:** This score indicates that your community does not yet demonstrate strong programs, policies, and results, characteristic of a Walk Friendly Community based on the responses in this section. Please review our suggestions carefully on how you can create positive change in your community with both short- and long-term objectives.

## Community Profile

### On the Right Track

- It is great to see that so many members of the city government are involved in pedestrian issues, even though it is clear that staff time is at a premium. Creating funding and time for staff to work on pedestrian issues is particularly important in terms of advocating for street design improvements, education and encouragement measures, and for increased enforcement of pedestrian-supportive laws. Check out the report [Why Communities & States Need Bicycle and Pedestrian Staff](#).

## Status of Walking

### On the Right Track

- It is great to see that you have begun to use the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation project guidelines for your counts.
- Oxford looks to be moving in the right direction for increasing the walk share in the city through a combination of political will, staff expertise, strong planning, and funding.
- The low pedestrian crash rate in the city is great. Continue to monitor this as the number of people walking increases.

## Planning

### On the Right Track

- Oxford stands out among communities of a similar size in that it has a comprehensive pedestrian plan. The plan could be enhanced by including performance measures, including a target mode share and reduction in pedestrian crashes, to track the progress towards your goals and communicate effectively with the public. Two excellent sources for performance measures in pedestrian plans include San Francisco's [Healthy Development Measurement Tool's Safe and Sustainable Transportation Element](#) and Seattle's [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) which places measureable performance indicators into the four main goals of the plan: Safety, Equity, Vibrancy, and Health.
- The recent adoption of your ADA Transition Plan is excellent and will be a helpful resource towards making the city more accessible for everyone.
- The adoption of the Complete Streets policy will be another valuable tool for improving street design and retrofits in Oxford. It's great news that this policy is in process!
- It's great that sidewalks are required throughout Oxford and not just in certain zoning districts.
- The block length standards are still quite long and reducing them is important in terms of encouraging pedestrian access and pedestrian travel. In addition, street connectivity, grid networks, and short block lengths are helpful in creating direct routes to

destinations. More information about connectivity can be found [here](#). The Victoria Transport Policy Institute also provides [guidelines](#) on connectivity policies.

- High quality trail networks form the facility network backbone of many walkable communities and can also encourage recreational walking that can improve health and interaction. These types of trails also stimulate economic development and tourism and can raise property values. Oxford should consider expanding the number of the trails in the city and connecting them to key destinations.
- Overall, Oxford seems to provide a good public transit system with many people living close enough to transit to walk. If funding allows, extending the evening and weekend service would be helpful. Additionally, the system could be improved by improving the percentage of accessible bus stops and it's good to see the Citi's efforts in this area. Since individuals with disabilities rely on transit service, it is critical to provide accessible facilities in and around transit stops. The [Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies](#) can help identify areas where accessibility can be improved, while this [case study](#) provides more information.
- While Oxford has indicated that they do use parking location requirements, surface lot size and design requirements, and park and rides, all of these policies could be strengthened greatly. Parking should be located at the side or behind buildings to allow pedestrian access from the street without requiring a person to walk through a parking lot. Moving your parking spaces (with the exception of on-street parking) can make buildings and storefronts much more inviting. This [paper](#) on Parking Management can be a helpful guide. By increasing density and discouraging automobile use, downtown areas will become more pedestrian friendly, have more character, and can even experience increased economic vitality. For more information, the San Francisco Metropolitan Transportation Commission has produced a Best Practices [resource](#) that can provide further guidance about this.

## Education & Encouragement

### On the Right Track

- While some types of training can be very expensive, Oxford could stand to benefit from free training Webinars provided by various organizations. More information about PBIC Webinars can be found here: <http://www.walkinginfo.org/training/pbic/webinars.cfm>. This [case study](#) also highlights how the police can benefit from extra training.
- Oxford should consider a large-scale pedestrian encouragement campaign, perhaps even partnering with the University. Arlington, Virginia conducts an impressive amount of outreach and education about walking in the community through WalkArlington. WalkArlington is involved in everything from Safe Routes to School to walking clubs for seniors to programs for employers. One of the most significant resources are the Walkabouts available on this [website](#). These well-designed maps have detailed information and diagrams for 18 different walking routes in Arlington, ranging from rolling parkland to historic neighborhoods.
- [Flagstaff Walks!](#) is a weeklong event organized by the Pedestrian Advisory Committee and dedicated to celebrating the walkable nature of Flagstaff, designated as a Bronze-level Walk Friendly Community, and raising awareness of walkability issues. Activities

- include Safe Routes to School Workshops and Walkability Audits, guided walks, and promotional events, all culminating in International Walk to School Day.
- Franklin, Tennessee has embraced its history and tourism draw and is actively using it to improve the walkability of the City. This is significant, as it can serve as an example to many communities on the fringes of major metropolitan areas. The City offers [walking tours](#) for children and adults that explore the history of Franklin's Main Street, graveyards, historic battlefields, and other features and are frequently wheelchair accessible. To complement the tourism aspect and make walking more amenable, the City has also engaged in an excellent [wayfinding campaign](#).
  - Consider a Car Free Event, or Ciclovía, during which a selected route will be closed to vehicle traffic and opened up for jogging, walking, and cycling. The event focuses community attention on alternative modes, and can provide numerous other benefits. More information available at this [link](#) or the Open Streets Project [website](#). The case studies from [Chicago](#), Illinois and [Clearwater](#), Florida can also provide more guidance.

## Engineering Needs Attention

- It's great that all streets must have sidewalks on both sides. Within the sidewalk design standards provided, it would be helpful if there were graphics included to clearly communicate expectations to the engineers and architects that are viewing the ordinance. The width of sidewalks section was particularly difficult to understand it wasn't clear from that document whether there were buffers or what the width was. Additionally, the sidewalk standards should address that sidewalks should be level and continuous at intersections.
- The efforts described show promise for increasing the number of sidewalks throughout the community. Sidewalks are the backbone of a good pedestrian system and encourage walking. Walkways should be part of every new and renovated facility and efforts should be undertaken to retrofit streets without sidewalks. Continue the efforts to ensure that Oxford has a complete sidewalk network including sidewalks on both sides of arterials.
- The inventory in the recent transition plan will be a big help for planning and prioritizing improvements. The sidewalk inventory should be expanded beyond the Central Business District to include the entire city. Establishing a process for updating the inventory of sidewalk and curb ramp conditions could streamline the process for replacing these facilities. Clearly, with the limited sidewalk network the improvements that are being made on an annual basis there is a need to be strategic with the improvements that are constructed. The City of Seattle has an excellent [website](#) that covers its system of prioritizing sidewalk improvements.
- It's great to see that street lighting is clearly important for Oxford and is obviously good for a pedestrian environment as well.
- It is telling that Oxford's past three bridges were constructed with sidewalks on both sides. The caution is that the bridges are on each side of a Walmart. Walmart shopping centers are not often pedestrian friendly and this raises issues of concern, especially in a

community that is this small. It may be worth reviewing pedestrian access and safety in this area.

- Requiring new road or sidewalk construction and any sidewalk maintenance to include pedestrian signals (audible and vibrotactile warnings as well) will be particularly important for creating a pedestrian-friendly street network and encouraging people to walk. In addition, implementing right-turn-on-red restrictions and using pedestrian recall can also yield positive safety benefits and encourage less mobile pedestrians to walk more. The Accessible Pedestrian Signals [guide](#) and the PEDSAFE [guidelines](#) are also helpful in relation to pedestrian signals. The "How to Develop a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan" [document](#) could also be useful.
- Oxford needs to begin a process of installing countdown signals, which is now required by the MUTCD.
- A simple, useful change at signalized intersections is the leading pedestrian interval (LPI). The LPI gives pedestrians an advance walk signal before the motorists get a green light, giving the pedestrian several seconds to start in the crosswalk where there is a concurrent signal. Pedestrians are more visible to motorists and motorists are more likely to yield to them.
- It would be a major step in a positive direction to reduce the walk speed used to 3.5 feet per second to meet MUTCD requirements and better accommodate children and seniors. Check out our page on [pedestrian signal timing](#) to learn more.
- An advance stop/yield lines placed 20 to 50 ft. ahead of the crosswalk at uncontrolled locations can greatly reduce the likelihood of a multiple-threat crash, as this encourages drivers to stop back far enough so a pedestrian can see if a second motor vehicle is not stopping and take evasive action.
- While Oxford has made a good start by implementing in-road stop/yield signs, the pedestrian environment could still be greatly enhanced. Crosswalks, in particular, are extremely important for pedestrian safety. Marked crosswalks serve to highlight the right-of-way where motorists can expect pedestrians to cross. Oxford should begin moving away from parallel lines in favor of more effective crosswalk patterns. Parallel lines are the least visible and require more maintenance than other patterns. The [policy](#) for Columbia, MO could provide some guidance. Further guidance on crosswalks is available at this [link](#).
- Also consider installing rapid flash beacons or [pedestrian hybrid beacons](#) (HAWKs) at unsignalized crossings, particularly around schools and trails, to improve pedestrian safety.
- Amenities around transit stops and tighter curb radii would improve the pedestrian environment substantially. Crashes often occur when cars strike pedestrians at intersections, particularly right turning movements. Tighter curb radii, around 15 feet for residential streets and 25 feet for arterials, can improve the sight distance for pedestrians and motorists as well as shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians. This FHWA [memo](#) could be helpful.
- Oxford should begin installing curb extensions to improve pedestrian visibility, shorten the crossing distance, and reduce the curb radius. Hoboken, New Jersey, has improved pedestrian intersection design at low cost by "[daylighting](#)" intersections. With the use of vertical delineators, they are able to incorporate bulb-outs at key intersections to improve sight distance for all road users. This flexible solution is significant, as it allows for pedestrian improvements in a climate of limited funding availability. As funding becomes available, these treatments can be made permanent.

- Road diets, typically a 4-lane to 3-lane conversion, are an inexpensive and effective way to reduce crossing distance, speed, and crashes for all road users. In 2012, the Federal Highway Administration included road diets as one of their top nine proven safety countermeasures and provides further information on this treatment [here](#).

## Enforcement

### On the Right Track

- While Oxford does have a number of police officers in enforcement, including a dedicated traffic safety officer in the police force could have a large effect on enforcement and safety. By prioritizing traffic safety, your City can reduce the rate of pedestrian crashes and enhance officers' understanding of pedestrian laws. South Carolina provides an [example](#) of pedestrian safety training for officers.
- Enforcement efforts can have a large effect on motorist yielding behavior. Oxford seems to be on the right track by using media campaigns regarding enforcement as well as speed feedback signs. By informing the public about where and when enforcement activities will be, the police can create public support and offset the complaints of those breaking the law. One particularly effective method, particularly at locations with a documented crash problem, is the crosswalk sting or pedestrian decoy technique. By using this enforcement type, drivers are made aware of what types of behaviors are not allowed. Using this in conjunction with progressive ticketing [scheme](#) allows officers to educate drivers more than penalize them.
- Excellent citation levels for speeding, failure to yield, and parking on sidewalks! It is clear that Oxford is serious about enforcing pedestrian safety laws.
- Adult school crossing guards play an important role in the lives of children who walk or bicycle to school. While the primary role of an adult school crossing guard is to guide children safely across the street, children also remain responsible for their own safety. There are many model crossing guard programs in existence. At minimum, crossing guards should be vetted by the community, trained by certified training programs, provided with class 2 reflective vests and hand held stop paddles. The [Adult School Crossing Guard Guidelines](#) might be a helpful resource for Oxford in terms of starting their own program. Crossing guards are particularly important when used in conjunction with a Safe Routes to School program and could have a substantial impact on walking to school in Oxford.
- In addition to crash data and pedestrian volume data, there are other methods of selecting strategic locations for enforcement. Consider the [Data Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety](#) (DDACTS) system in your community. This system allows law enforcement to focus on areas seeing both high crime and high concentration of traffic crashes, to more efficiently deploy its resources.
- Focusing discussions on pedestrian safety can target helpful countermeasures and create a cooperative dialogue between engineering, planning, transit, and enforcement departments. Creating a special focus group in these divisions can help focus on where the problems are and how to deal with them appropriately.

## Evaluation Needs Attention

- By using the methodology of the National Pedestrian & Bicycle Documentation Project, Oxford is far ahead of most communities in terms of understanding where pedestrian volumes are highest and where to direct infrastructure investment.
- While Walkability Checklists are a really helpful tool, there are also other tools that can enhance the understanding of the built environment from the perspective of pedestrians. [Pedestrian Intersection Safety Indices](#), [Pedestrian Road Safety Audit Guidelines and Prompt Lists](#), and [Health Impact Assessments](#) are important new tools and can provide helpful guidance.
- The 2010 Highway Capacity Manual has new multimodal level of service models that Oxford should consider as an additional evaluation tool.
- Conducting pre- and post-evaluations for your developments and other projects is the only way to know how your efforts have improved pedestrian safety. By evaluating each project, Oxford will develop a better understanding of how it has impacted pedestrian safety and walkability you can use positive findings to justify more investment in pedestrian projects.
- While the urban areas in Oxford are quite walkable, it is clear that other areas lack amenities for pedestrians or pedestrian destinations. By increasing infill development and creating nodes around Downtown and the University, Oxford can increase density and create more walkable communities.

## More Information

If you have questions or comments regarding this feedback, your community's initiatives and programs, or the application process in general, we'd like to hear from you. Please contact:

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