



Neighborhood Walkability Assessment Program

Living Streets Alliance (LSA) has developed a *Neighborhood Walkability Assessment Program* for the Tucson region to help area residents prioritize walkability improvements in their neighborhoods. *Neighborhood Walkability Assessments* are a fun and effective way to engage people in recognizing and shaping the potential for walking in their neighborhoods. Through group exercises and hands-on activities, residents connect their walking habits with the current condition of the streets and sidewalks they regularly use. People gain a better understanding of how walkable their neighborhood streets are and become proactive about improving walking conditions in their communities.

What is a Neighborhood Walkability Assessment?

A *Neighborhood Walkability Assessment* is the evaluation of the walking environment in a neighborhood with the purpose of:

- Investigating the current walking conditions
- Understanding the qualities of the neighborhood streets that may encourage or discourage walking
- Identifying improvements that can enhance walkability
- Prioritizing streets and areas for possible future improvements

How does the program work?

The program has two main components:

Walkability Workshop: The first activity is a 1.5-hour workshop hosted by LSA staff with interested residents, area businesses, schools, homeowners associations, neighborhood associations, etc. During the workshop, participants are given a brief introduction on walkability and the benefits of walkable neighborhoods. This presentation is followed by a mapping exercise designed to identify destinations within walking distance of the neighborhood, as well as walkability assets and challenges. For the second part of the workshop, LSA presents some street treatments for walkability improvements and gives residents the opportunity to discuss and identify where in their neighborhood these treatments might be beneficial. Participants are also asked to suggest streets for the second component of the program, the *Neighborhood Walk & Talk*.

Neighborhood Walk & Talk: The purpose of this activity is to observe what is on the ground in the neighborhood that may encourage or discourage walking and discuss improvements that could potentially enhance the walkability of each block. The walk is led by LSA staff along neighborhood streets selected during the workshop. Participants may include neighborhood residents, owners and employees of neighborhood businesses, as well as elected and appointed officials. Following the *Neighborhood Walk & Talk*, interested neighborhood residents are given

surveys to collect detailed information on pedestrian safety and comfort along selected neighborhood streets within a two-week period.

How do neighborhoods benefit?

- *Neighborhood Walkability Assessments* provide residents an overall picture of the walking conditions in their neighborhood, while helping them better understand the elements that contribute to walkability.
- Neighborhoods receive a report that highlights the major findings of the *Neighborhood Walkability Assessment*, which can be useful for future access to grant funding.
- The information collected through this program helps neighborhoods begin to prioritize walkability improvements in their area.
- LSA presents the findings to the neighborhood and provides the residents with additional resources and ideas for how to improve walkability in their area.

How do I get a Walkability Assessment scheduled in my neighborhood?

Interested neighborhoods can contact LSA to set up a *Neighborhood Walkability Assessment*. The only requirement for a neighborhood to participate is to commit to designating two “Neighborhood Ambassadors” to work with LSA staff throughout the *Neighborhood Walkability Assessment*. Neighborhood Ambassadors are expected to assist LSA with the following tasks:

- Meet with LSA staff prior to the *Neighborhood Walkability Assessment* to discuss neighborhood issues and projects relevant to walkability.
- Conduct neighborhood outreach to ensure maximum number and diversity of participants.
- Provide potential dates for the *Walkability Workshop* and the *Neighborhood Walk & Talk*, considering the calendar of events in the neighborhood and the general availability of the neighborhood residents (weekends vs. weekday evenings, etc.).
- Whenever possible, coordinate with the neighborhood association to allocate a 10-minute slot to LSA for a short introductory presentation at a neighborhood association meeting prior to the *Neighborhood Walkability Assessment*.
- Make logistical arrangements for an indoor venue located in the neighborhood for the *Walkability Workshop*.
- Participate in a data analysis session with LSA prior to presenting the assessment findings to the neighborhood

For more information about the *Neighborhood Walkability Assessment Program*, contact Evren Sonmez at evren@livingstreetsalliance.org or 440-9131.