

Santa Barbara Walks

Annual Report 2010



A Project of COAST



Submitted by:

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Santa Barbara Walks (SBW) was established in January 2008 to improve walking infrastructure, safety and culture throughout the South Coast. SBW intends to become an expert in pedestrian issues that planners turn to for sound advice regarding infrastructure and development.

At the beginning of the project in 2008, Santa Barbara Walks identified four overarching goals to achieve its stated mission. Each goal is listed below along with the identified strategies as a measure of the year's achievements.

Goal 1: Raise awareness and build public support for walking infrastructure and culture

Efforts to Achieve Goal 1

In 2009, SBW launched Walking Wednesdays as an opportunity to celebrate walking and expose more people to our project and the needs of pedestrians. We continued again in 2010 and have had even greater success in attracting new supporters. A brief report with photos was posted on Edhat after each event, generating discussion and interest as several hundred people viewed the posting each time. Many readers became regular attendees, inviting their friends and family to future events. Additionally, other groups in town asked SBW to share our contacts with host walk leaders, proving that we had created an enviable program. We were able to activate Walking Wednesday supporters around important issues such as curb extensions. Furthermore, we have acquired our first Walking Wednesday sponsor, Allen Associates, who will help us kick off 2011.



Figure 1 Walking Wednesdays group at Fielding University

Santa Barbara Walks was interviewed for a piece on City TV called, "Sharing the Road", which aired in February (http://www.citytv18.com/Videos_ISB.htm). We were a bit disappointed for as much as we discussed curb extensions in particular, it only translated in part to the final piece. Regardless, having been sought out as the pedestrian voice in the community was a sign that Santa Barbara Walks is becoming the trusted expert.

Goal 2: Guide and participate in major local planning efforts as well as State and Federal legislation to ensure they include the best possible pedestrian practices

Efforts to achieve Goal 2

In an effort to remain engaged on a statewide level, SBW was active in opposing Assembly Bill 909, which would reduce the fine for right turn on red violations to less than a parking meter or littering fine. The original committee did not consider risks to pedestrians when introducing this bill and failed to conduct proper outreach regarding the potential risks. Unfortunately this bill passed but due to the efforts of California Walks (state-wide pedestrian advocacy) and the work of SBW, the bill was vetoed by the Governor barely a month later.

SBW continued working with community and civic groups concerned with the UCSB Long Range Development Plan (LRDP): the Sustainable University Now coalition (SUN) Coalition. As a result of our 2009 efforts in submitting detailed comments for the LRDP, Ms. Dietz was selected one of four members of the negotiation committee to work with University officials on creating a suitable agreement.

Also, the City of Santa Barbara was selected to test the Walk Friendly Communities (WFC) assessment tool designed by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) of the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center funded by the Federal Highway Administration. City of SB Public Works staff asked for SBW to help with the assessment so were able to share our recent efforts as well as other local projects targeted to walkers, which the City was often not aware of.

Goal 3: Identify target locations where specific pedestrian improvements can be made.

Efforts to Achieve Goal 3

The San Ysidro Road path required continued effort to maintain momentum in 2010. From County hosted public meetings, to meetings of the Montecito Association and the Land Use Committee, supporters were required at every juncture. Those opposing the path were vigilant and vocal and SBW worked hard to connect supporters with the cause and enable them. SBW took more of a secondary role at this point in the project, as it was more important to have Montecito residents as the face of the project. It was encouraging to help mobilize families and support them as they battled hard for something they so strongly believed in. Ultimately, the Montecito Association voted to approve the design and the project continues to move forward even though there are a few steps more in the process before we can expect construction.



Figure 2 No room to walk safely along San Ysidro

A development project at 803 N Milpas (in an area with high pedestrian traffic and near two major schools – SBJHS and SBHS) was appealed strictly because of the proposed curb extensions. SBW took on this project the high volume of underrepresented pedestrians (students and Spanish speaking families) in the area needed a voice. This project required significant effort from attending meetings, providing presentations, talking in person to local businesses (many of them Spanish speaking only), writing letters, distributing handouts, holding a press conference, meeting with the applicant, etc. Ultimately our efforts were effective and the City Council voted to deny the appeal (4-3 with Bendy White being the anticipated swing vote). We worked hard to have varying members of the community represented to include business owners, employees in the area, families with children, bicyclists, pedestrians, motorists, and school officials (Principals, PTA Safety Committee, and SB School Board).

Almost a year later, pedestrians were challenged again as Council was set to vote on whether to change the existing, long vetted Chapala Street Guidelines, which included plans for adding curb extensions, landscaping and brick crosswalks at the three remaining Chapala Street intersections: Cañon Perdido, Cota and Haley. Once again curb extensions were the point of contention. Ms. Dietz went and talked to business owners and employees along the corridor and determined that the vast majority was in support of the existing and planned changes. When presented to Council, along with support from MTD, cyclists, drivers, walkers, designers, landscape architects and more, the Council voted 4-3 to remove any mention of curb extensions from the Chapala Street Guidelines. This was incredibly disappointing and short sighted, as now there will be no room for increased landscaping in this area.

Santa Barbara Walks also partnered with Safe Routes to School, focusing on a low-income school, Cleveland Elementary School, to implement a comprehensive and community-wide Safe Routes to School program. Using what we learned at the previously hosted Community Pedestrian Safety Training workshop regarding walkability as well as community organizing (as demonstrated by the Greenfield Walking Group) SBW launched a regular Walk to School Day at Cleveland. While we have struggled to gain access to the teachers, we have successfully partnered with the English Learner's Class where many of the mothers attend class daily. Through the recurring Walk to School Day we have seen an increase from just below 20% to a steady 45%



Figure 3 Principal Vail leading a walking school bus

school-wide participation.

Additional efforts:

- Community map at Earth Day where residents pinpointed over 100 problem areas. Santa Barbara Walks focused on curb extension education as we reached out to potential supporters to grow our database. This led to the creation of our online mapping tool, SBWalkSafe.
- Provided constructive criticism on the Hollister Avenue redesign, which was originally limited to exploring two 4-lane options. With pressure from SBW and COAST, and a meeting with City of Goleta Councilmember Ed Easton, they initiated a review and traffic study to determine if a 2-lane option was feasible.

Goal 4: Provide resources for pedestrian advocates.

Efforts to Achieve Goal 4

Santa Barbara Walks launched, SBWalkSafe, an online reporting tool for pedestrian hazards and close calls where members of the community can log in and report areas that are difficult for walkers. We have done the paper version of this at Earth Day for 3 years now and found it quite helpful and well received by the public. We anticipate being able to turn to this information to help guide our efforts and those of government in deciding where pedestrian improvements are most needed.



In 2010 we had our second long-term intern, Rachel Alonso, who was able to complete the assessment of major County intersections, documenting existing conditions and safety perceptions for pedestrians at several major County intersections. Rachel was also tasked to write a white paper on curb extensions, which helped to gather more data.

Fundraising and Opportunities for Upcoming Years

The Orfalea Family Foundation provided the funding for the first part of the Cleveland project and has recently contributed an additional \$5,000 towards our efforts there. With this funding, Safe Routes to School will work to ensure that the Cleveland project is sustainable in our absence and will take the concept to another low-income school. Since both \$5,000 grants have been unsolicited we hope that our proven track record will aid us in securing greater grants in the future.

And the most exciting news is that Santa Barbara Walks secured \$20,000 from the McCune Foundation for an Eastside pedestrian project based on the previous years proven success. This funding has enabled us to expand the Cleveland project to the greater community and include the lower Eastside of Santa Barbara. We have hired a part-time community organizer, a bilingual mother dedicated to improving her community and making it safer for walkers. The goal of this project is to organize the neighborhood around pedestrian issues and prioritize, based on community need, infrastructure improvements. We hope to train underrepresented residents on how to leverage government and advocate for themselves. Our community organizer, Ana Rico, has proven to be a real champion in the neighborhood. She has already been interviewed on Radio Bronco and will likely have an entry to the Green Shorts Film Festival (Earth Day competition) about her work.

The grassroots effort of the Eastside Walks project has the potential to have an incredible impact. There are so many underserved areas in our region that just need to be given a voice. And when we combine pedestrian safety with the impacts on crime, lighting, access to services, it becomes an issue that simply can't be ignored. We hope that Santa Barbara Walks' Eastside Walks model will be able to be implemented in other areas: Mesa Walks, Westside Walks, Goleta Walks, etc.