

Winter Park Walkability Workshop with Mark Fenton
Joint Pedestrian & Bicycle Board and City Commission
November 17, 2014 - 2–3:30 pm

The Joint Pedestrian & Bicycle Board and City Commission meeting was called to order by Mayor Kenneth Bradley at 2 p.m. in the Commission Chambers, 401 Park Avenue South, Winter Park, Florida.

City Commission Members present: Mayor Kenneth Bradley, Vice Mayor Steven Leary, Commissioner Sarah Sprinkel, and Commissioner Carolyn Cooper.

City of Winter Park Staff present: Randy Knight, City Manager; Michelle del Valle, Asst. City Manager; Troy Attaway, Public Works Director; Dori Stone, Planning Director & Community Development Director; Jeffrey Briggs, Planning Manager; Lindsey Hayes, Sr. Planner; Abby Gulden, Sustainability/Permitting Coordinator; Butch Margraf, Traffic Manager, Keith Moore, Engineering Technician, and Debra Moore, Recording Secretary.

Pedestrian Bike Board Members present: David Erne, Scott Redmon, Jill Hamilton Buss, Jean Siegfried, and Tom Hiles.

Mayor Bradley opened the meeting. He thanked the Pedestrian Bicycle Board for their work and the Winter Park Health Foundation for sponsoring Mark Fenton, our guest speaker. On behalf of the City, he thanked Ms. Hamilton Buss, Mr. Fenton, and Ms. Portelli for making our City a better place.

Mr. Mark Fenton, Consultant, was introduced by Ms. Hamilton Buss, Director at Healthy Central Florida. Mr. Fenton is a national public health, planning, and transportation consultant.

The intent of Mr. Fenton's presentation is to help develop a deepened understanding and appreciation for walking and cycling and talk about how to move forward. Also, he will assist in guiding leaders in a discussion about how to design our community for health and safety. We want to create a system for all users (pedestrians, bikes, cars, and transit). We can design communities, streets and sidewalks to encourage safe walking and biking. We also need to focus on effective education, engineering and enforcement strategies.

Mr. Fenton has visited Winter Park three times during which he was able to watch the City's evolution. He praised Winter Park for a wonderful job. He shows the City's pictures all over the country.

Many changes are occurring such as: growth is continuing, traffic is rising, density is increasing, the weather may be changing, and there is more concern about water and stormwater. Mr. Fenton believes Winter Park is at one of those decision moments about what the plan is for the 21st Century.

Mr. Fenton's presentation is entitled "Designing for the Triple Bottom Line: healthy economy, healthy environment and healthy people. He stated we want to build a system for all users (pedestrians, bikes, cars, and transit). The key points of his presentation are listed below.

1. Everybody should be more physically active. We live longer, and have healthier lives.

2. We are not as physically active as we should be and it leads to chronic diseases. We are in a chronic disease epidemic because there is less physical activity and we have more poor nutrition.
3. Telling people to exercise more does not work. Education campaigns, outreach, encouragement does not work.
4. Active environments and policies do work. Designing our communities for physical activities works and there is good evidence to support this.
5. When we do it right, it yields what Mr. Fenton refers to as the triple bottom line which includes: public health, economic health and environmental health. The principles we put in place to improve public health are the same ones that are proving to be very beneficial to local economies and to improve the environment. The evidence is telling us that we can design communities to get this triple win.

Mr. Fenton asked the attendees “What is your earliest fond recollection of having been physically active as a youngster?” They spoke of activities that did not have adult involvement (riding bikes with friends, building a fort, playing outside). Mr. Fenton has a term for this: free-range kids. When Mr. Fenton asks parents why they can’t let their kids be free range their response is “it is not safe.”

Mr. Fenton stated the two underlying behaviors that are driving the bus on chronic disease and the costs of health care are physical inactivity and poor nutrition. Sedentary living causes higher rates of cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, cancer, etc. We want the next generations of kids to be healthy. Even as our medical care gets unbelievably better and we can prolong life through medical treatment, life expectancy will go down.

He reviewed a timespan over a 30 year period (1970 to 2000) in which the percentage of kids walking and biking to school dropped from 40% to 15% and the percentage of kids being driven to school by car went from 15% to 50%. Over three decades we totally reversed how kids got to school. The research showed no dramatic increase in child abductions or similar activities. Over that exact timespan we saw childhood obesity rates triple over the exact three decade period in which we totally changed the way kids moved around. In the last 30 year timespan we are seeing diabetes in 9 year olds.

Unless we change the environment, behavior change programs give short term outcomes, not long term gains. We have to build a world where being physically active is a part of daily life. We need institutions that influence exercise and nutritional habits. We need to create the design of the community, the actual physical layout, and even public policies to encourage healthy behavior. All of these are systematic or sociological changes where the public health will benefit from changing our practices and procedures. We can construct places where we can get more than the 20% to be physically active by the design of the community.

Research shows that mixed land uses create settings where routine physical activity is an outcome of the design. You live, work, shop, pray, play, and learn in a closer environment which includes libraries, post offices, corner stores, and schools. Retail can be on the first floor and housing above.

Mr. Fenton reported across the country, communities are reevaluating whether they want to permit the strip mall. Village Centers can be created to have a network of facilities, sidewalks on both sides of the street in residential areas, multi-use pathways and trails, on-street bicycle facilities, transit, etc. In the Winter Park Village redevelopment, they created parking boulevards facing sets of buildings more like the streets in downtown, with second stories for housing and businesses intermingled. There is higher pedestrian and bicycle transit activity when we design buildings up at the street, multi-story, with street trees, awnings, benches, and bike racks. These are not amenities, but functional attributes for users. We also need to provide the support to staff and elected officials to get things done.

If you want a world for free-range kids again you have to populate the sidewalks and you do that by creating multi-use destinations. According to research, that is what makes sidewalks feel safe again. Getting other pedestrians on the street makes it feel safe. We have a lot of tools to build places where pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and motor vehicles can coexist safely. You can use curb extensions, sidewalk bump outs, roundabouts, and mid-block crossing islands.

Mr. Fenton stated he looked at the Trader Joe's development at the end of Morse Blvd. You need to hold yourself and your developers to the standards you set. Build what you want into the ordinances.

Mr. Fenton outlined four key elements for routine activity:

1. Destinations within walk, bike, and transit distance.
2. Sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, transit network.
3. Inviting & functional sites for bikes, pedestrians, and transit.
4. Safe and accessible for all ages, incomes, and abilities.

In the past it was thought that more street lanes move more cars. This is now being reconsidered and we have evidence to prove that it is not always the case, particularly for four lane alignments. Research showed they would actually be better off turning some roads into a 5 lane road: three car lanes, two bicycle lanes, center turn lane, with 1 travel lane in each direction and a bicycle lane in each direction. It eliminates two kinds of collisions: no left turn crossing collision, and no rear end collision. You can install median pedestrian crossing islands with offsets where there is no left turning movement. Those islands tend to slow the traffic and give pedestrians crossing refuges. Businesses along the corridors thrive, collisions can be reduced, and it works better. It is safer because there are law abiding citizens walking that area and they have cell phones and can report any unwanted activity. Furthermore, homes closest to the trail go up in value. Our job is to change it from an emotional based response to an evidence based response.

Possible Design Projects in the City of Winter Park.

Mr. Fenton suggested some streets that may benefit from a redesign.

1. Denning Drive can be redesigned to change the character of the roadway to be more efficient for the motor vehicle traffic going to the increased density that has come along. The cost is fairly modest if you do it as part of the repaving program. The decisions you make invite a type of traffic behavior.

2. The school at Lakemont Avenue has the 4 lane alignment. As you go further south on Lakemont Ave. you get to the Glenridge Way intersection. You can explore a round-about there. A round-about can work at odd offsets and sometimes a lower volume street or a lower volume intersection is the place to put your first round-about.
3. Brewer's curve (on Aloma Avenue). This would be a good area for a design project.
4. The street Cady Way. It has bike lanes and a school, pool, lots of residential density and the trail as an important destination. You might try a protected bike lane at that spot. Protected lanes are pretty reversible, largely paint and bollards.

Zoning Ordinance. When we discuss zoning ordinances, design guidelines, and permitting procedures, it opens the door to physical activity and the nutrition side of the equation. Even simple things in the ordinance such as: do we allow urban farming, backyard chicken keeping and compost. Do we try to create green growth in neighborhoods? Do neighborhoods have access to a grocery or minimart that has an actual produce section? Some communities are discussing where they will limit their zoning where fast food is allowed; they start by looking at their schools. Mr. Fenton stated when we talk about healthy design, we need to put nutrition in the mix.

“Walkability premium.” Developers like this more productive style of development which is more compact, needs less infrastructure in the ground, smaller parking footprints, trails are less costly, compact neighborhoods, and develop less land. Once built these settings are very successful and a number of studies show higher retail sales and/or tax revenue on streets that have this design style. Improved streets show higher retail and tax revenue.

The National Association of Realtors Publication asked the question “What is the next generation of home buyers looking for?” They heard this: I want to live in town, access a trail or park, and be able to ride my bike to a coffee shop. In March of 2014 the National Association of Home Builders (Builder Magazine) had a cover story entitled “Walkability, why we care and you should to.”

Successful communities first did gateway or demonstration projects to prove it works in their community. The idea of complete streets--you say how do we get there? Choose 5 minor projects and try your first round-about and your first protected bike lane. Use best practices then there is no reason it can't be beneficial to all users.

After you do the demonstration projects and prove they work, you institutionalize. A simple tool is to change the traffic analysis checklist to include the expectation of a multi-modal transportation analysis. The New Institute of Transportation Engineers trip estimation manual (ITE) has estimating tools particularly for settings around transit oriented development and areas that look like the City of Winter Park's downtown. You have to estimate the pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and motor vehicle trips.

Mr. Fenton stated the whole 17/92 area and the collective communities along it may benefit from a corridor design. Mr. Attaway stated there was a study group on the 17/92 corridor in 2002/2003 timeframe. Those lanes are extra wide. It involved narrowing the lanes and widening the pedestrian way.

Safe Routes to School. One school decided to utilize the parking lots nearby at churches or parks adjacent to the schools. They got all the pedestrians across the intersections to these parking lots before moving the cars. At dismissal time they froze any cars that pull up in front of the school for 5 minutes so all the pedestrians and bicyclists could leave. The other kids sit in the gym for five minutes. If you let the bike kids go earlier then they all want to ride their bike. Several schools have done this and it is very successful. Ms. Jill Hamilton Buss said the Principal at Dommerich Elementary School releases the pedestrians and bicyclists five minutes early. This creates incentive, makes it safe and reduces traffic conflict.

Commissioner Leary asked for a general description/profile of an individual from a healthy walking/biking community. Mr. Fenton stated our stereotype tends to be more male, more in the 35-40-55 age range for the cycling community. The walking community is more female and older. Both tend to be higher income and more educated than the population at large. The national data shows they are doing it for fitness reasons, other reasons than just utilitarian. When you start to put in utilitarian travelers they get younger, and there is more gender balance on transportation oriented trails and on the better used sections of trails. We like to build long trails to go for a 40 mile bike ride but those are not the highest use sections of trails. The highest use sections are not near trail heads but proximity of destinations, connections to the sidewalk and transit network.

With pedestrian facilities you tend to see greater diversity of ethnicity and greater diversity of income. There is usually a shift in the demographics in the user group when a good transit system is available.

Commissioner Leary asked if you see more participation in the arts. Mr. Fenton stated many communities have made that part of their economic development model and tie it directly to the arts. Some include pop-up music events, pop-up art festivals, and they combine other activities such as a farmer's market.

Commissioner Leary asked about pedestrian mall concepts. Mr. Fenton stated those seem to be going away. Some are still successful (Boulder's Pearl Street, Portland, OR). If you have a lot of motor vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic and people can't get across, it may be better to have a Mall. We have to think of a balance using commercial traffic/retail traffic, pedestrians, bicycles, and transit.

Pedestrian Mall (closing down streets intermittently). Mr. Fenton suggested a street can be closed and organized activities such as farmer's market, or a music festival can be offered. Possibly a jazz brunch on Sunday morning or Wednesday afternoon. Be flexible in design. Or maybe narrow it down with some traffic calming, or protected bike lanes using intermediate resolutions. Mr. Fenton stated there are many options for the pedestrian mall. Mr. Attaway stated that Winter Park has events such as these on occasion.

Commissioner Cooper asked what Mr. Fenton saw when he drives through the City. Are there obvious areas where we could provide connectivity? She would like for the Pedestrian Bicycle Board to be able to be on the review team for any major development that comes through. She would like to focus on connecting the big activity areas and then connecting them with Sun Rail. It could be user friendly and include tree canopies.

Mr. Fenton stated it is very important that every development or redevelopment gets put through a performance procedure. There should be a plan that is already identified for corridors to make sure they are linked together. It should be inviting and desirable. Consideration can be made for tree canopy, water stops, etc.

Mr. Fenton stated he looked at two east/west corridor opportunities today. *Morse Blvd.*--maybe this could be an old style boulevard. *Palmer Avenue* is another corridor that can be redeveloped over time.

Ms. Hamilton Buss stated the only options east west from City center to the hospital and beyond is Palmer Avenue on the north or Aloma Avenue. Mr. Fenton mentioned Aloma Avenue can be redesigned. Involve students, engineers, planners, and architects. Include: functionality, desirability, safety, etc. You need the vision before you can start making the incremental steps toward it.

Commissioner Sprinkel stated she wants a concrete mechanism. She would like a concrete way that the City Commission can address resident questions such as: Why can't something be done about the traffic in my neighborhood? Commissioner Sprinkel stated you can design it and if you build it they will come.

Commissioner Leary stated it is all in how you market it. It is a massive undertaking. Commissioner Cooper said it is the flexibility of implementation. Commissioner Sprinkel mentioned it is not the same all over town, however there are certain basics.

Mr. Fenton spoke on a complete street policy. He said the Multi Modal Transportation Analysis (MMTA) is the first big step. Ask this question: Have I accommodated as best as possible for the appropriate surrounding land uses (pedestrians, bicycles, transit and motor vehicles) in this project every time we touch a road. Across the country, people are coming up with hybrids. The real step forward in complete streets is level of service, but there will be other measures added to come up with more of a mixed score. You can ask the question what will our measures be? Formalize it, structure it, and get it to developers so they know what they are going to be measured by. Winter Park could be one of the leaders in evolving performance measures.

Commissioner Sprinkel stated our Comprehensive Plan says we can have the multi-modal but we have not calculated how that should be based on the user. The important thing is not to use current travel. You have to do trip estimation. You can't use what is there now as an indicator for pedestrian or bicycle travel because those numbers will be low.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

The minutes for the City Commission Work Session on November 17, 2014 were approved on January 13, 2015.

Debra Moore, Staff Assistant