Phillips Lane

A Walkability Assessment for the Phillips Lane corridor
INTRODUCTION

The Phillips Ln walkability assessment was conceived and quickly implemented by Betsy Ruhe, as a Neighborhood Institute Project, and took place with funding from Councilman Dan Johnson. Betsy, a long-time resident of the Beechmont neighborhood, is a recent graduate of The Center for Neighborhoods’ Neighborhood Institute and Green Institute. She has commuted up and down Phillips Ln for the past 20 years on her bicycle or scooter. As a citizen who utilizes Phillips Ln daily, Betsy and area business leaders are concerned about the vacant lots, deteriorating sidewalks, and overall safety of the Phillips Lane through fare. Phillips Lane is fronted by the KY State Fair & Exposition Center property, as well as several large convention hotels, and is often used by pedestrian convention goers who are visiting the area from elsewhere, stops and are seeking fresh air, dinner at a nearby restaurant, or just a nice walk. Phillips Ln is also used frequently by local residents utilizing TARC or walking to area stores from the adjacent neighborhoods.

In April, 2014, the Phillips Ln walkability assessment was held to give business members of the Phillips Ln area an opportunity to actively participate in analyzing Phillips Lane for safe healthy walking conditions. With guidance from The Center for Neighborhoods, Betsy solicited participation from hotels and businesses along Phillips Ln and formed a team to assess the area for walkability. A short training was provided to participants, and with clip boards, assessment sheets, and maps in hand, the group broke into 4 teams and set out on their walks to assess the pedestrian environment for walkability.

WHY WALKABILITY?

Walking is one of the most accessible and healthiest forms of physical activity. In addition to its environmental and energy advantage as an alternative to the car at shorter distance, it provides health, quality of life, and social benefits. Neighborhoods and areas of commerce that provide the choice to walk tend to be very livable and increase the quality of life for all residents and visitors. Under the project, the goal of the walkability assessment is to identify the barriers that prevent this. The evidence produced will begin to set forth a possible new environment for hotel visitors, individuals and families in the Phillips Ln area, one that increases accessible and safe opportunities for physical activity, and provides a safe and pleasing walking environment for hotel visitors who simply want to go for a walk to an area restaurant.

LOCATION

The Phillips Ln area lies southwest of the Central Business District and borders I-264, providing access to the KY State Fairgrounds, KY Kingdom, and several hotels and is in close proximity to Louisville International Airport property. It is a major through fare to Preston Hwy. The adjacent neighborhoods consists of a variety of housing styles, unfortunately, factors such as abandoned and vacant properties, high traffic volume, a lack of landscape buffers, drainage issues, street litter, poor property maintenance, and crumbling and non-existent sidewalks have made walking in some areas of Phillips Ln difficult. However, with the help of dedicated residents and neighborhood and area business leaders, overcoming these barriers to walkability is possible.

Stakeholders from area businesses examine sidewalk conditions on Phillips Lane.
WALKABILITY ISSUES
Phillips Ln has numerous barriers to being a completely walkable street. The key findings from the walkability assessment were areas that completely lack sidewalks and curb ramps, little or no landscaping or traffic buffers, deteriorating curbs, overgrown sidewalks, other barriers such as drainage ditches and utility poles, and non-existent or un-safe crosswalks and traffic islands.

WALKING TEAM’S WISHES AND PRIORITIES
Using the assessment sheet, the Phillips Ln team split into 4 groups, Blue, Green, Yellow and Red.

RESULT MAPS
In addition to the identification of issues and wishes, the results of the Stroll are presented through the use of maps. While issues such as abandoned properties, litter, crime, and other conditions that contribute to the walkability of an area are important, this assessment process does not emphasize these elements. Instead, the main focus is on identifying infrastructure issues such as sidewalks, curb ramps, signage, and other infrastructure facilities that are essential to a good and accessible walking environment. Specific inspection by Metro officials will be needed to recommend appropriate solutions.

The following series of maps present the result of data collected using the Louisville Neighborhood Walking Assessment tool. The tool evaluates factors such as traffic volumes, speed limits, sidewalk connectivity, materials, conditions, widths, general attractiveness, and whether there are safe and accessible ramps and crossings. These are essential elements of a walkable street and neighborhood.

The maps summarize the findings of the walk, including:

- Total Score
- Sidewalk Connectivity
- Curb Ramps at Crossings and Intersections
- Attractiveness of Blocks
- Sidewalk Surface Conditions
- Lighting
- Total score

The Total Score map provides a cumulative score for the routes walked and assessed. The high traffic volume and lack of marked crosswalks, signals, traffic barriers, lighting and landscaping is of primary concern. The Phillips Ln overall assessment was fair.
**Issues**
- No noise barriers
- No pedestrian walk signal crossing south to north by 700 Phillips Lane

**Wishes**
- Pedestrian walk signal needed to cross south to north
- Pedestrian walk signal needed to cross south
- Pedestrian crosswalk needed at 646 Phillips Ln
- Fence dumpster at 646 Phillips Ln
- Add lighting and landscape buffers
- Repair and add sidewalks
- Repair broken curbs
- Add trash receptacle at bus stop
Issues
- Many vacant lots
- Permanent sidewalk obstructions in front of Highway building
- Unmarked crosswalk at Phillips Lane and Freedom Way, crosswalk markings have faded away.

Wishes
- Utilize and or improve of vacant properties
- Enhancing Interest and Amenities
- Timed crosswalks/pedestrian refuge-island needed at Phillips Lane and Preston Highway.
- Completing Sidewalks
- Add marked crosswalks, improve overall safety
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- Repair and add sidewalks
- Repair broken burbs
- Add trash receptacle at bus stop
Issues
- Trash/graffiti on South side of street along expressway; trash at Seneca Ave.
- Marked crosswalks needed at all intersections.
- Pedestrian signals needed at busy intersections.
- Completing sidewalks
- Improving street crossings
- Enhancing interest and amenities

Wishes
- Mark existing pedestrian crossings and add ped-crossing at or around Comfort Inn.
- Complete sidewalks on half of South side and all of North side; add buffer with landscaping.
- Add sound barrier on South side between Watterson and (add) ‘Mayor’s Mile’.

Phillips Lane Blue Route Walkability Score = Fair
The following list summarizes the overall issues and wishes determined during the walk:

1. At least one side of Phillips Lane should have a consistent walking surface with easy access to that path.
2. Clean up public green spaces and vacant lots.
3. Improve overall curb appeal so visitors utilizing area hotels feel safe walking to area businesses.
4. Add benches and colorful landscaping. More trash cans.
5. Add a “Mayor's Mile” and recreation opportunities to encourage hotel visitors to get out and exercise.
6. Clear up safety concerns, drainage, ramps, cross walks. Repair and widen existing sidewalks and walking paths
7. Mark streets and crosswalks, add more crosswalks
8. Add lighting
9. Add noise buffers
10. Add traffic refuge islands
Total Assessment Score
The Assessment Score map provides a cumulative score for the routes walked and assessed. Approximately 75% of the street’s assessed score was “Fair.” This is due to the fact that traffic volumes and speeds, sidewalk widths, available curb ramps, and surface conditions on Phillips Ln are not favorable to the pedestrian. As indicated on the map, Phillips Ln between Crittenden Dr and James Rd has been scored “Poor.” This is due to disconnected or non-existent sidewalks, a lack of curbs and curb ramps, as well as poor sidewalk conditions where they do exist. These problems are compounded by a lack of pedestrian crosswalks and pedestrian walk lights, missing curb ramps, and no landscaping or noise barriers. This is a highly visible area to local citizens as well as tourists who are visiting the hotels, fair grounds, or the amusement park on Phillips Ln, and may be the only area in Louisville they will see. Enhancing the amenities, overall safety, sidewalk connectivity and landscaping to create a pleasant walking environment would be a great benefit to our community overall.

Sidewalk Connectivity
Overall, Phillips Ln is not very well connected by sidewalks. Sidewalk connectivity from Crittenden Dr to Preston Hwy is an important factor for creating a walk friendly city and neighborhood. Unfortunately there are numerous and serious barriers along existing sidewalks making it difficult for pedestrians to reach area businesses on Preston Hwy.

Curb Ramps
If there is one issue that stands out on Phillips Ln, it would have to be the lack of curb ramps. Without a connection of these ramps, it will leave little option to people in wheelchairs to ride in the street. A systematic review and addition of ramps on Phillips Ln is needed in order to connect the sidewalk network for those less mobile.

Block Attractiveness
Block attractiveness is a subjective measure, left to the discretion of the surveying team. The assessment tool provides flexibility in order to assure some consistency. The Phillips Ln assessment demonstrated that much of the area is poorly maintained, and there are many vacant or abandoned lots, an abundance of litter, and little or no landscaping or noise barriers.

Sidewalk Surface Condition
The surface conditions vary where sidewalks exist, but overall are very poor. The majority of sidewalks are concrete and are in fair to poor condition, and many have obstacles like ditches or utility poles that force the pedestrian off of the sidewalk. The majority of sidewalks are incomplete and need to be connected and many are deteriorated and in need of replacement.

Lighting
The assessment of lighting was determined by the placement of street lights only. There are some street lights but they are not consistently placed. In order to provide safer conditions at night, consistent placement at intersections and mid-block without tree canopy interference will help create more visibility during non-daylight hours.

NEXT STEPS
• Share assessment report with neighborhood leaders
• Build support and communicate priorities with Public Works and Metro Council representative
• Determine specific solutions to neighborhood improvement priorities
• Determine funding sources and take action!
• Build support with Kentucky State Fair Board
• Prioritize areas of concern