



WALKABILITY ASSESSMENT

OREGON, IL
SPRING 2021

Completed by:



This assessment was made possible by funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration granted to Blackhawk Hills Regional Council for assistance with response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Executive Summary

The Oregon walkability assessment was completed by Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC) staff and was made possible through U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding for COVID-19 response and recovery. The goal of this assessment is to identify opportunities to improve active transportation within the City of Oregon. The three priority focus areas identified for assessment were “Routes to Schools and Parks”, represented by routes between Park West, Mix Park, and the Oregon schools, “Critical Connections”, which included the downtown along IL 64/Washington St and IL 2/4th St, and “Intersections of Concern”, which was comprised of the entrance to Park West off Jefferson St/Hawk Dr, IL 2/4th St and Webster St at the northwest entrance of Mix Park, and the intersection at IL 64/Washington St and 5th St.

The assessment was completed by surveying the identified priority routes and intersections in each focus area. The survey looked at a variety of factors that contribute to walkability, including contiguity of the sidewalk network, compliance with accessibility standards, and streetscape elements that make a place more or less appealing to walk. Crash data for sections of IL 64 and IL 2 that run through the City was obtained from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). This data provided a measure of existing safety conditions for these routes of concern. City ordinances and planning documents were also reviewed for broader opportunities to improve active transportation.

Survey findings were presented to the steering committee along with initial recommendations for improvements. The steering committee discussed prioritization of improvements and worked with BHRC to organize a walk audit from the Park West entrance to Mix Park. The walk audit, held on July 20, 2021, looked at some of the higher-prioritized areas of concern including intersection conditions at the Park West entrance off Jefferson St and the Mix Park entrance at IL 2/4th St and Webster. The audit also included a review of sidewalk conditions along Adams St and safety conditions at the student pick-up/drop-off location along Koontz Pl.

From the survey findings and walk audit, the higher-prioritized recommendations are:

- Improvement of intersection safety at the Park West and Mix Park entrances
- Sidewalk construction along the west end of Jefferson St from the elementary school to Park West
- Installation of crosswalks and signage along Koontz Pl (elementary school pick-up/drop-off location)

Project Overview

BHRC was awarded \$400,000 from the U.S. Economic Development Administration in 2020 to support the region's response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing an assessment of communities' walkability was identified as a comprehensive way to look at factors that contribute to safety, inclusivity, sense of place, and human health and well-being. These factors are major drivers of a community's resilience during the pandemic, the recovery period, and beyond.¹ Working on improvements for walkability has numerous positive implications for communities, including:

Safety: Over the past decade, the United States has seen a 45 percent increase in people struck and killed while walking. The past four years were the most deadly in the past three decades.² Despite fewer vehicles on the road during the height of the pandemic in 2020, pedestrians faced greater risks due to the absence of typical traffic congestion to slow speeds and the presence of other factors that contributed to dangerous driving behavior. When accounting for the 13.2 percent decrease in vehicle miles traveled in 2020, the pedestrian fatality rate saw an unprecedented 21 percent increase from 2019.³ Improving safety for pedestrians helps make roads safer for all users. Traffic calming and other engineering techniques designed to create safer environments for pedestrians also have the impact of reducing fatalities from automobile crashes.⁴

Health: Nearly 80 percent of American adults do not get enough physical activity. About half of all American adults have one or more chronic diseases, and seven of the most common chronic diseases can be improved by regular physical activity.⁵ Walking offers a no-cost, low-skill opportunity for people to be active across a lifetime.

Social Equity: Non-motorized transportation is essential for accessibility. One-third of Americans do not drive due to age, disability, choice, or lack of financial means to own

¹ Love, Hanna and Mike Powe. "The Necessary Foundations for Rural Resilience: A Flexible, Accessible, and Healthy Built Environment." Brookings. 1 Dec. 2020 <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-necessary-foundations-for-rural-resilience-a-flexible-accessible-and-healthy-built-environment>. "Cities that Heal: How the Coronavirus Pandemic Could Change Urban Design." On Point. WBUR. 3 Aug. 2020. <https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/08/03/healthy-cities-urban-design-pandemic>, Sisson, Patrick. "How the '15-Minute City' Could Help Post-Pandemic Recovery." Bloomberg CityLab. 15 July 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-15/mayors-tout-the-15-minute-city-as-covid-recovery>

² Dangerous by Design 2021. National Complete Streets Coalition and Smart Growth America. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design>

³ Snider, Adam. "Pedestrian Deaths Soar in 2020 Despite Precipitous Drop in Driving During Pandemic." Governors Highway Safety Association. 20 May, 2021. [Pedestrian Deaths Soar in 2020 Despite Precipitous Drop in Driving During Pandemic | GHSA](https://www.ghsa.org/news/2021/05/20/pedestrian-deaths-soar-in-2020-despite-precipitous-drop-in-driving-during-pandemic)

⁴ "What is Vision Zero", Vision Zero Network, <https://visionzeronetwork.org/about/what-is-vision-zero>

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. 2nd Edition. 2018.

and maintain a vehicle.⁶ Consequences for poor walking and wheelchair rolling conditions are disproportionately affecting older adults, people of color, and people walking in low-income communities. These groups are overrepresented in fatal pedestrian crashes – even when accounting for differences in population size and walking rates.²

Environment: The transportation sector is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.⁷ Passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks are the largest contributing category, emitting 59 percent of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.⁸ In addition to reducing transportation’s large carbon footprint, trading more short drives for active transportation (walking, biking, or rolling) can also positively affect air quality. Ground level ozone, created by vehicle emissions, can create health problems, especially for children, older adults, and individuals with chronic conditions like asthma and emphysema.⁹

Transportation: Active transportation is a viable alternative to driving for many trips from a distance perspective. About 40 percent of all trips are less than 3 miles.¹⁰ Improvements to pedestrian infrastructure benefit everyone, as even motorized trips involve an active transportation link such as from a parked car to a destination.

Economy: Automobile-dependent communities offer residents less opportunity for economic resiliency. During times of unexpected financial distress, such as job loss or fuel price spikes, households are left with few options to reduce their transportation costs, which is the second largest household expense in the United States.¹¹ In addition to helping families find ways to reduce their transportation costs, improving walkability can help communities recruit talent and attract business. Between 2010 and 2015, nearly 500 companies relocated to more walkable downtowns.¹² This trend was seen across the country in both small and large cities.

6 Thomas Gotschi and Kevin Mills. Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increased Federal Investment in Bicycling and Walking. Rails to Trails Conservancy. 2008.

7 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2021). Carbon Pollution from Transportation. <https://www.epa.gov/transportation-air-pollution-and-climate-change/carbon-pollution-transportation>

8 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2020). Fast Facts on Transportation Greenhouse Gas Emissions. <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

9 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2021). How Mobile Source Pollution Affects Your Health. <https://www.epa.gov/mobile-source-pollution/how-mobile-source-pollution-affects-your-health>

10 Litman, T. Short and Sweet: Analysis of Shorter Trips Using National Personal Travel Survey Data. Victoria Transportation Policy Institute. 2010. www.vtpi.org/short_sweet.pdf

11 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Consumer Expenditures-2019. Economic News Release (2020). <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nro.htm>

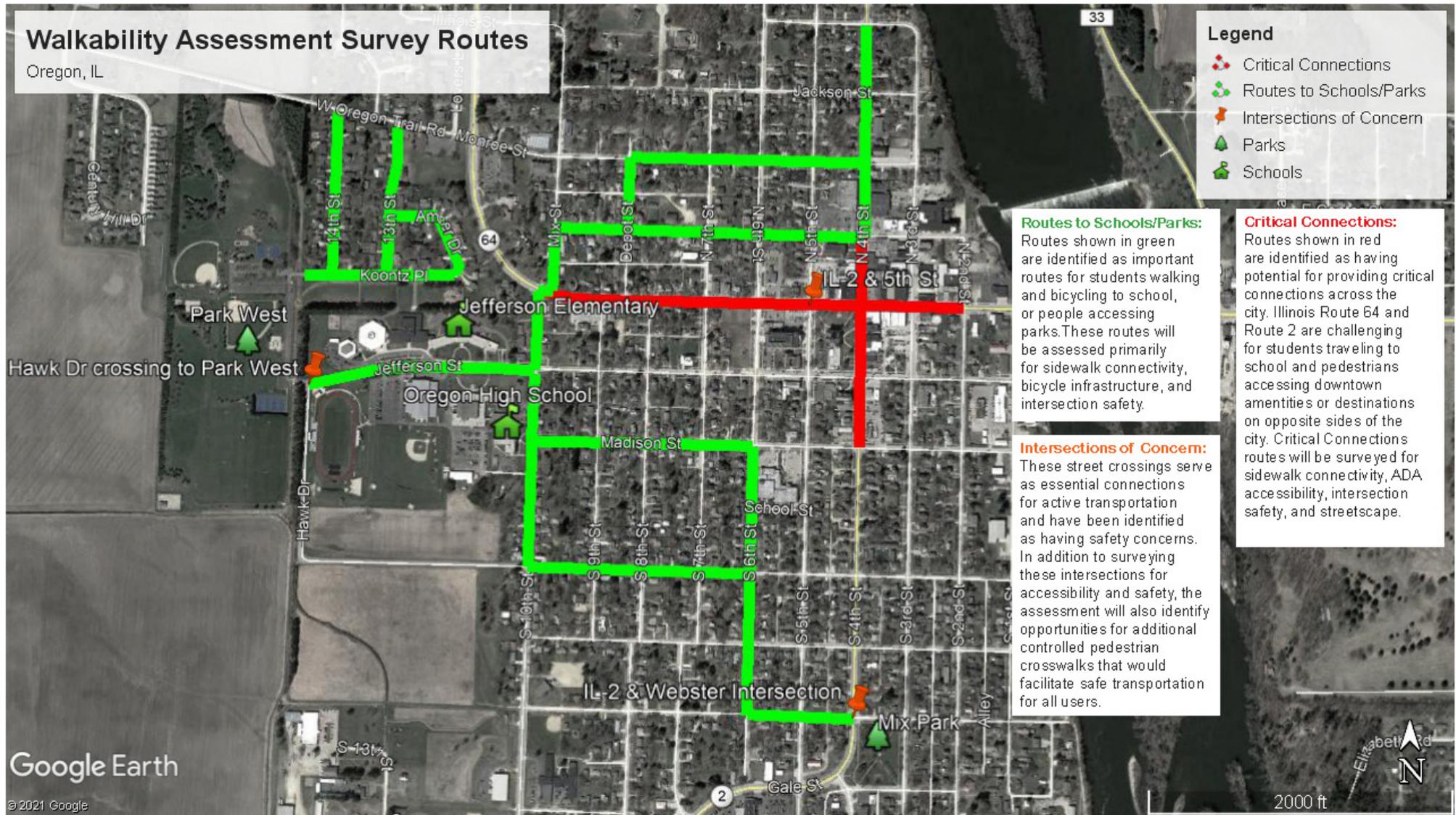
12 Smart Growth America. Core Values: Why American Companies are Moving Downtown (2015). <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/core-values-why-american-companies-are-moving-downtown>

Goals & Objectives

Oregon was included in the first round of walkability assessments conducted in spring of 2021. Kick-off calls were held on March 22nd and 23rd with the steering committee to introduce the assessment process and begin identifying local goals. Members of the steering committee provided representation from the Oregon Park District, City Planning Commission, Long Range Planning Committee, Economic and Community Development Commission (ECDC), and, very importantly, parents of school-aged children.

The steering committee and BHRC staff discussed and identified priority issues and routes to be surveyed. Three major themes emerged from these discussions: safe routes to schools and parks, critical connections (across IL 64 and IL 2), and intersections of concern. With the help of the steering committee, BHRC staff tailored the assessment to identify opportunities for improving active transportation options to the schools and parks and for improving walkability and safety at several intersections of concern including crossings of IL 64 and IL 2. Specific objectives to meet the goals included:

- Survey three route and intersection categories in the city (*see map below for locations*):
 - **Routes to Schools & Parks:** Routes to Jefferson Elementary and Oregon High School were selected from neighborhoods to the north, northeast, and southeast of the schools. Several of these routes also serve as access to Park West and Mix Park.
 - **Critical Connections:** These routes include sections of IL 2 (4th St) and IL 64 (Washington St) where they bisect the downtown.
 - **Intersections of Concern:** Intersections of concern were identified at the Jefferson St/Hawk Dr entrance to Park West, IL 64 and 5th St downtown, and IL 2 and Webster St near the northwest entrance to Mix Park.
- Conduct a group walk audit with members of the steering committee to look at priority areas assessed by the survey
- Review crash data available from IDOT for IL 64 and IL 2
- Examine city ordinances and planning documents for opportunities to further encourage active transportation and associated infrastructure
- Create a table of recommendations for improving active transportation in Oregon
- Identify grant opportunities and funding strategies to implement selected recommendations



Map 1. Selected survey routes, intersections, and focus area descriptions

Methods

Routes and intersections within the three focus categories (Routes to Schools & Parks, Critical Connections, and Intersections of Concern) were assessed using a set of surveys designed to evaluate sidewalk conditions, intersections, ADA compliance, and streetscape. Streetscape elements make a space more or less appealing for walking and include measures such as proximity to high speed traffic, protection from the elements, trees and landscaping, and other characteristics that contribute to a positive sense of place. Surveys were completed on April 21st and 30th, 2021, through ArcGIS Survey123 app data collection, photography, qualitative notes, and walking methods.

Locations Surveyed and Data Reviewed

Routes to Schools & Parks:

- **Neighborhood north of schools** including Koontz Pl, 14th St, 13th St, and Amber Dr
- **Mix Park to schools** including Jefferson St to 10th St, 10th St from Jefferson St to Adams St, Madison St from 10th St to 6th St, Adams St from 10th St to 6th St, and Webster St from 6th St to IL 64/ 4th St.
- **Northeast neighborhoods to schools** including 10th St from Jefferson St to IL 2/Washington St, Mix St from IL 2/Washington St to Franklin St, Franklin St from Mix St to IL 64/4th St, Depot St from Franklin St to Monroe St, Monroe St from Depot St to IL 64/4th St, and IL 64/4th St from Franklin St to Illinois St

Critical Connections:

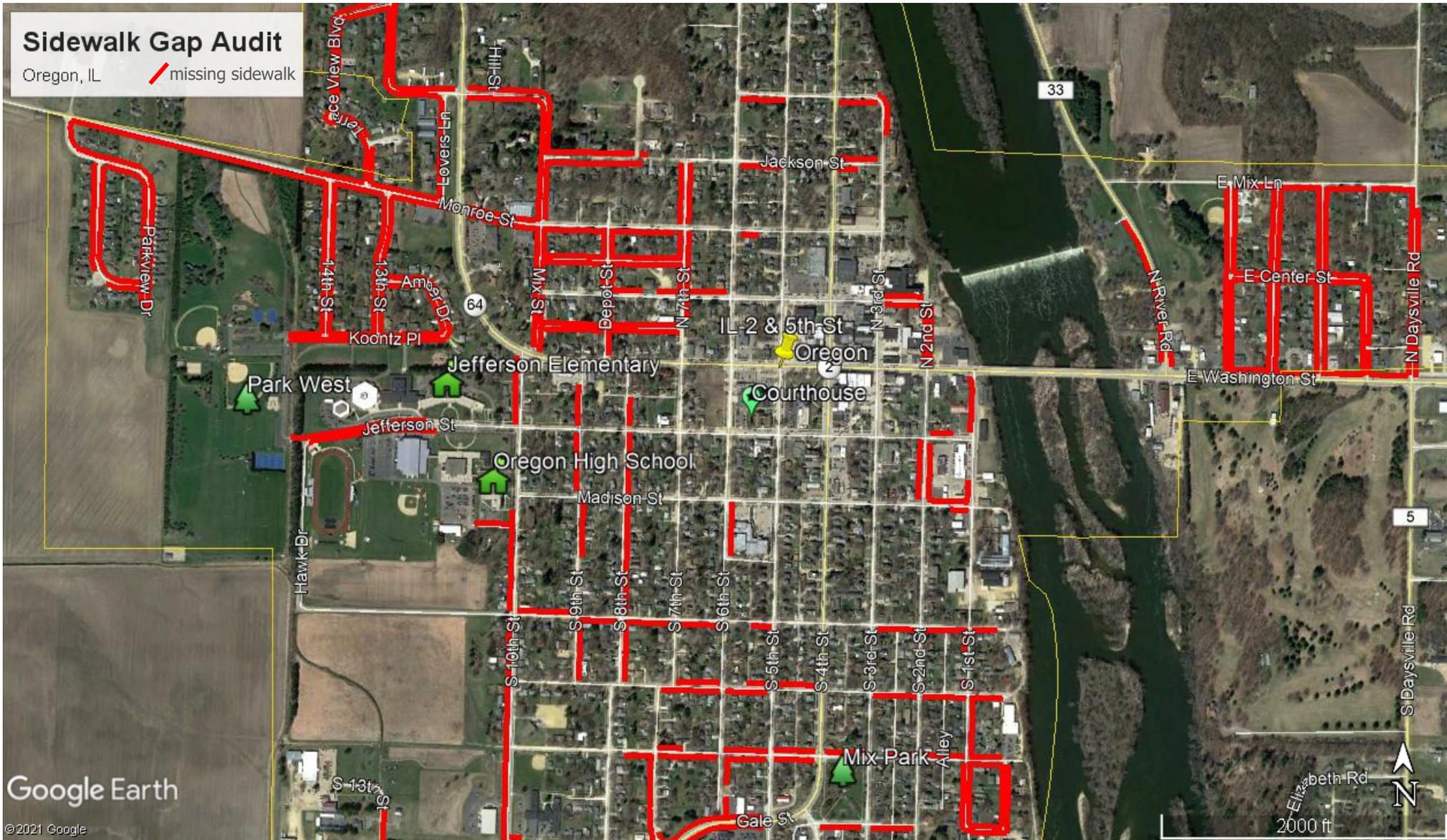
- IL 2/4th St from Franklin St to Madison St
- IL 64/Washington St from 10th St to 2nd St

Intersections of Concern:

- Jefferson St/Hawk Dr entrance to Park West
- IL 64/4th St and 5th St downtown
- IL 2/Washington St and Webster St near the northwest entrance to Mix Park

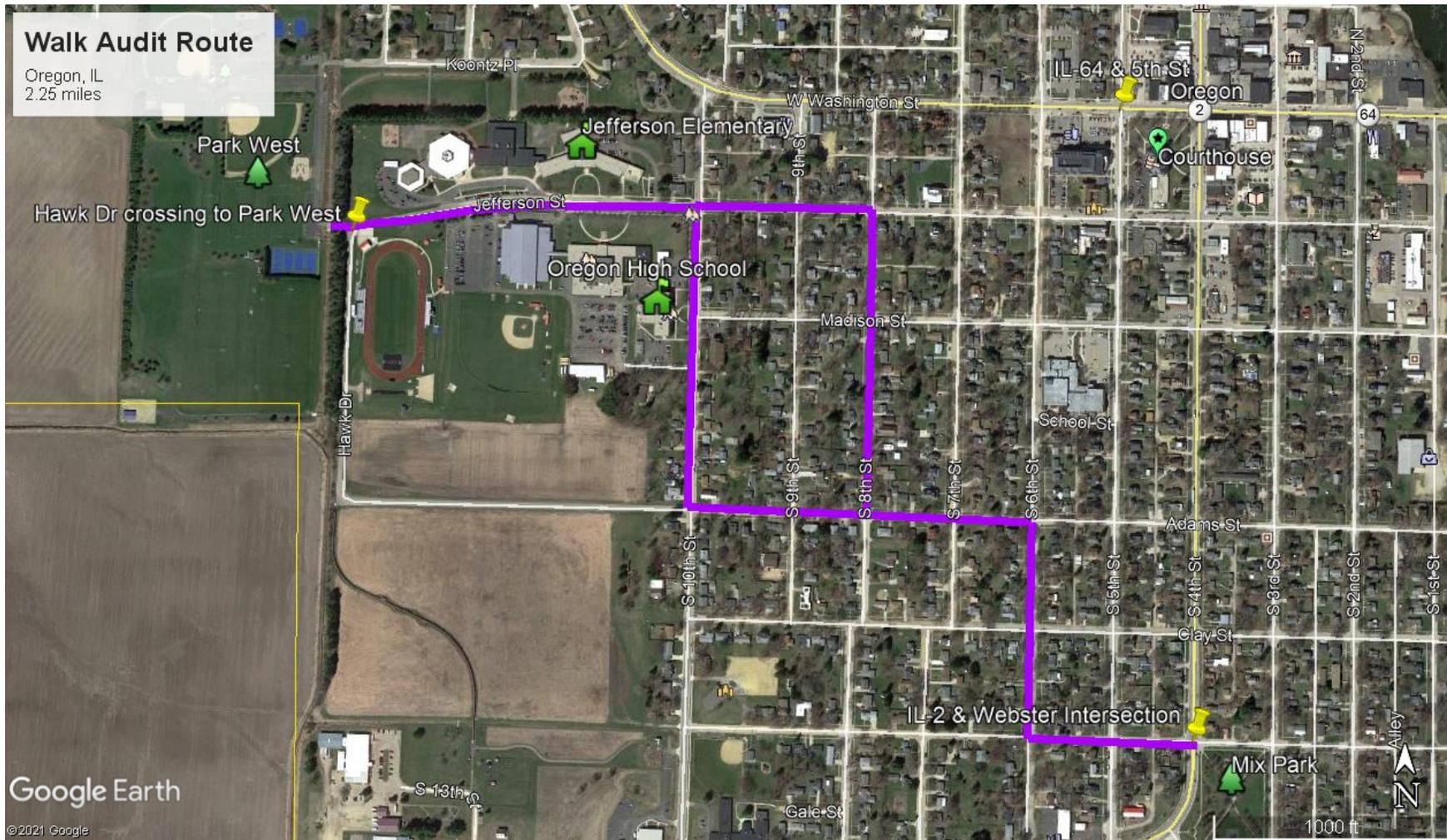
A mapping exercise using Google Earth aerial imagery was also conducted to develop a sidewalk gap audit. The resulting map allows for identification of patterns in missing sidewalks throughout the city (see map below).

As safety along and crossing IL 64 and IL 2 was identified as a concern, traffic crash data was reviewed from IDOT for insight on the corridors' recent safety history. City ordinance and planning documents were also reviewed for opportunities for improvement via planning and policy changes.



Map 2. Red sections indicate missing sidewalks

Following the completion of survey work and a follow up call with the steering committee to review findings, a walk audit was organized to provide an opportunity for steering committee members to review priority areas with BHRC staff. The route shown on the map below was used as a starting point for the walk audit.



Map 3. Walk audit route shown in purple

US Access Board’s Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)

Originally established in 1973 to ensure access to federally funded facilities, the US Access Board is now the nation’s lead agency on accessible design. In 1990 when the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law, the board was tasked with developing accessibility guidelines for facilities and transportation systems.¹³ Since the board published the original ADA Accessibility Guidelines in 1991, several updates have been published to incorporate additional aspects of public life and changes in technology.

In 2011, the board issued proposed Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) for public comment.¹⁴ These guidelines would set standards for sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, and other public right-of-ways. The PROWAG have not yet been finalized for a variety of reasons including the board’s decision to supplement the guidelines to address shared use paths. Although not yet enforceable at the federal level,¹⁵ the PROWAG offer the most up-to-date and recommended design practices for supporting accessible active transportation. It is anticipated that the board will release the finalized version of the guidelines shortly, and for that reason, the proposed guidelines were used as a benchmark for assessing accessibility in this study.

ADA Self Evaluations and Transition Plan Requirements

Two critical requirements of the ADA, which are frequently left uncompleted, are a self-evaluation and transition plan.

The 1991 ADA regulation required all public entities, regardless of size, to evaluate all of their services, policies, and practices and to modify any that did not meet ADA requirements. In addition, public entities with 50 or more employees were required to develop a transition plan detailing any structural changes that would be undertaken to achieve program access and specifying a time frame for their completion. Public entities were also required to provide an opportunity for interested individuals to participate in the self-evaluation and transition planning processes by submitting comments.¹⁶

Completing or updating a self-evaluation and transition plan would give the City a broader perspective of where improvements in accessibility are needed, an action plan to implement needed changes, and would ensure that legal obligations are being upheld should a complaint be filed.

13 U.S. Access Board (2021). About the U.S. Access Board. <https://www.access-board.gov/about/>

14 U.S. Access Board (2021). (Proposed) Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines. <https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/>

15 The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design are the current enforceable standards to date, but lack nuanced guidance for outdoor access routes.

16 U.S. Department of Justice (2015) ADA Update: A Primer for State and Local Governments. https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/titleI_2010/title_ii_primer.html#coordinator

Findings

SURVEY

Routes to Schools & Parks

Neighborhood north of schools

The neighborhood just north of Jefferson Elementary, which is comprised of Koontz Pl, 14th St, 13th St, and Amber Dr, lacks sidewalks or bike lanes. Although these streets are designed as low volume, residential roads, the lack of infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists is problematic because Koontz Pl serves as a drop-off/pick-up location for students. Children who live in the neighborhood and travel to and from school by bike or foot must navigate through parked cars and vehicles coming and going on the streets.



Absence of sidewalks, bike lanes, or crosswalks on Koontz Pl

Two paved walkways connect students from the school to Koontz Pl, and a third connects from a playground to the corner of Koontz Pl and Amber Dr. Although the walkways provide distinct points where students could cross the street, the lack of crosswalk signage or paint decreases the chance that these points will be left free of parked cars or used for crossing. The walkway to street transitions are not flush and lack ADA-compliant truncated dome warning strips.



School walkways and Koontz Pl intersections lacking flush transitions and ADA detectable warning strips

Mix Park to schools

The Mix Park to schools routes are primarily southeast of the schools and include Jefferson St, 10th St, Adams St, Madison St, 6th St, and Webster St. Gaps in the sidewalk network along these routes include the west end of Jefferson St (both north and south sides), the west side of S 10th St, alternating north and south segments of Adams St, and both north and south sides of the surveyed section of Webster St.

The sidewalk gap along Jefferson St between the schools and Park West was noted as the most problematic because students coming from the schools are contending with vehicular traffic entering Park West. This traffic can be heavy before and after sporting events, and drivers frequently pick up speed heading west on Jefferson St. The lack of sidewalks along this section of Jefferson also fuels the safety concerns at the Park West entrance addressed further in the 'Intersections of Concern' section.



Absence of sidewalks on Jefferson St between schools and Park West, looking east (left) and west (right)

Sidewalk conditions along these routes are generally good, apart from Adams St, which had more significant issues with deterioration and vertical faults greater than 1/2". Most sidewalks are 4' wide with wider, ADA-compliant sections around the schools. The intersections have a mix of ADA-compliant and non-compliant curb ramps. Missing curb ramps are isolated to instances on Adams St and S 6th St. Throughout all surveyed routes it was evident that the City is working on improving ADA compliance at curb ramps.



Sidewalk condition issue on Adams St



ADA compliant curb ramp on Adams St

Northeast neighborhoods to schools

Routes surveyed from the northeast neighborhoods to schools include sections of 10th St, Mix St, Franklin St, Monroe St, Depot St, and 4th St. Notable gaps in the sidewalk network are found on the west side of 10th St, Mix St (east and west sides), Depot St (sections of both east and west sides), south sections of Monroe, and north sections of Franklin. Monroe St is signed as a bicycle route, but no other signage or bike lanes were observed during the survey.



Looking north from the dead-end on Mix St; Oregon Music Garage on the left

Although none of these streets serve as major thoroughfares, Mix St may offer students heading north or northeast a lower traffic alternative to heading further east on IL 64/Washington. Mix St is sheltered from traffic coming off IL 64/Washington St because it dead-ends for vehicles at this point. With the upcoming opening of the Oregon Music Garage next to Ukulele Station America on Mix St, it may be worth considering what additional activity and traffic this might bring and how incorporating sidewalks could support the space.

Sidewalk conditions along the northwest neighborhood routes are generally fair with more issues on Monroe St with cracking, heaving and associated vertical faults greater than 1/2". Sidewalks are mostly 4' wide with some narrower sections.

Monroe St and Franklin St have missing and non-ADA compliant curb ramps (missing detectable warning strips). The lack of controlled or signed crosswalks along IL 2/N 4th St is a safety issue for students. The closest controlled crossing is at IL 64/Washington, which puts students on a higher traffic route heading west to the schools.



Vertical faults and vegetation overgrowth along Monroe St

Critical Connections

IL 64/W Washington St & IL 2/4th St

The sidewalks surveyed for the routes in the “Critical Connections” category are contiguous, 5’ or wider, and generally in very good condition. The few exceptions (a hole, which was repaired by the time of the walk audit, and vertical faults greater than 1/2”) were found on IL 2/4th St between Madison St and Jefferson St. The more challenging element of connection that exists on these routes is intersection crossings. There are only three controlled pedestrian crossings located at 10th St, 4th St, and 3rd St. There are painted crosswalks at 5th, 6th, and 8th streets, but driver compliance and pedestrian comfort level may not be at ideal levels.



The “Critical Connections” routes exhibit a strong sense of place. The historical information kiosks on the courthouse lawn, sculptures, memorials, and distinct architecture provide unique character and encourage pedestrians and bicyclists to spend more time in the space. The downtown area around the IL 2/IL 64 intersection is also outfitted with benches, planters, waste bins, and an artistic bike stand and repair kit, all of which encourage people to experience the space on foot or wheel.

It was also apparent that the downtown area relies heavily on the mature trees on the courthouse lawn for its canopy cover. With little space for street trees, the open space around the courthouse is critical for providing this important, beneficial element of nature in the downtown setting.

Crosswalk at IL 64/Washington St and 6th St



Bike repair stand at Courthouse Lawn



Lincoln Highway interpretive signage

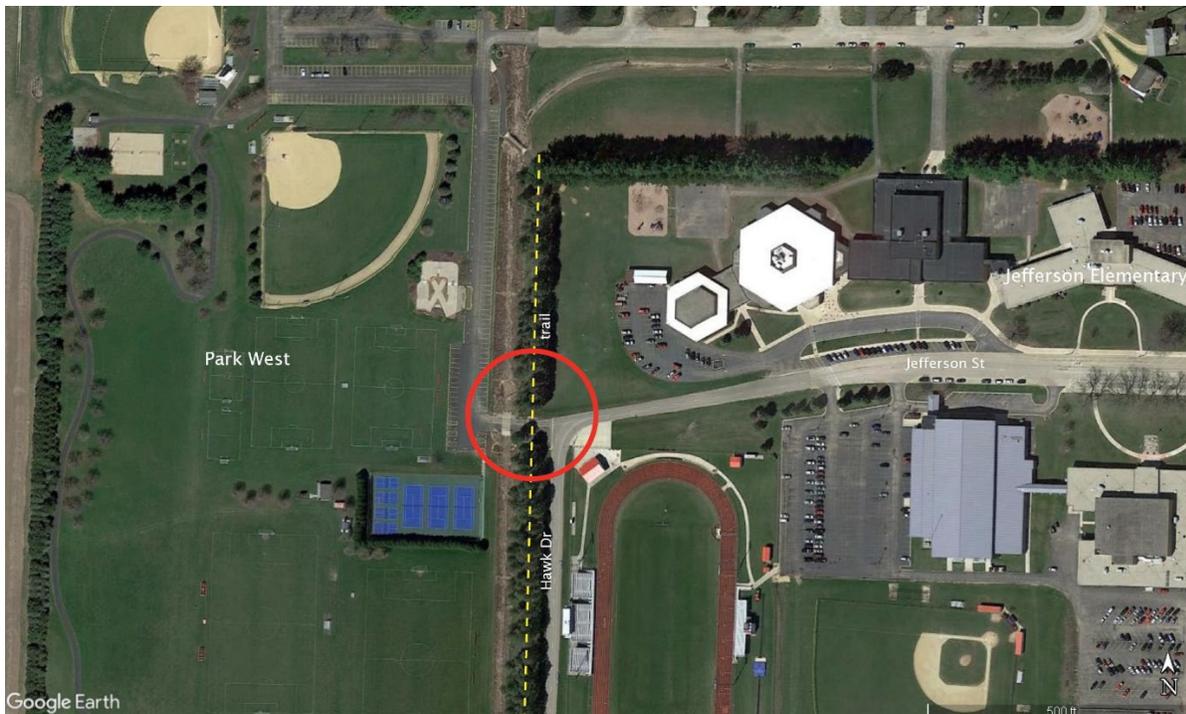


Bench and waste bin along IL 2

Intersections of Concern

Jefferson St/Hawk Dr entrance to Park West

The southern entrance to Park West is located at a curve at the end of Jefferson St where it transitions to Hawk Dr. Vehicular traffic can pick up speed along the long straight route on Jefferson St. Traffic entering the park does not have a stop sign at the intersection with a trail running north/south within the tree line on the east edge of the park. A stop sign would likely cause problematic traffic backups along Jefferson St and is not likely to be a viable solution. The intersection with the trail does have signage warning drivers about pedestrians, bicyclists and children on the trail, and the trail has pedestrian/bicycle yield signs with indication that vehicular traffic does not stop. Despite the signage, the intersection and speeds at which vehicles enter the park are a concern. The lack of sidewalks between the school and the park entrance adds to the problem as students are walking alongside the road to enter the park.



Map 4. Intersection at Jefferson St/Hawk Dr and entrance to Park West



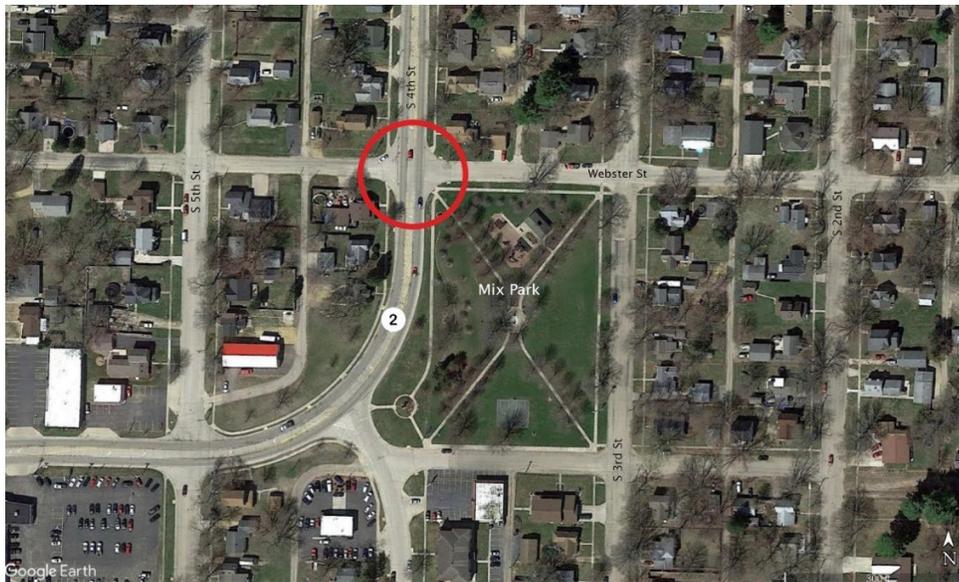
Signage cautioning drivers of trail crossing



Yield sign along trail at intersection

IL 2/4th St & Webster St to Mix Park

The intersection at IL 2/4th St and Webster St is located at the northwest entrance to Mix Park and also serves as a crossing for students traveling to school from the south and east. Although all curb ramps are ADA compliant, the intersection lacks crosswalk signage and paint. The crossing sightline is not ideal as there is a curve along IL 2/4th St to the south which prevents pedestrians from seeing all oncoming traffic. Crossing the road at this point can be intimidating, even for adults, as it sees heavy semi-truck traffic and is three lanes wide.



Map 5. Intersection at IL 2/4th St and Webster St at Mix Park entrance



Northwest entrance to Mix Park across IL 2/4th St

IL 64/Washington St & 5th St

The intersection at IL 64/Washington St and 5th St is an important node in the downtown area. The courthouse lawn, located on the southeast corner, hosts farmers markets and other events, while the post office, banks, and other businesses are on the north side of IL 64/Washington. Although the crosswalk does have striping, clear sightlines, and is outfitted with ADA-compliant curb ramps, the lack of signage, signalization, and level of traffic can make this crossing uncomfortable.



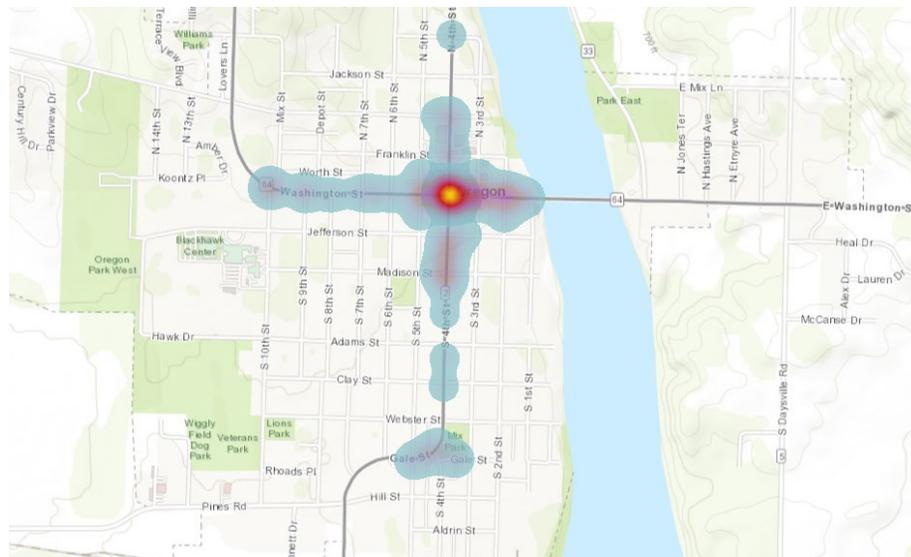
Map 6. Intersection at IL 64/Washington and 5th St at northwest corner of courthouse lawn



Intersection at IL 64/Washington and 5th St

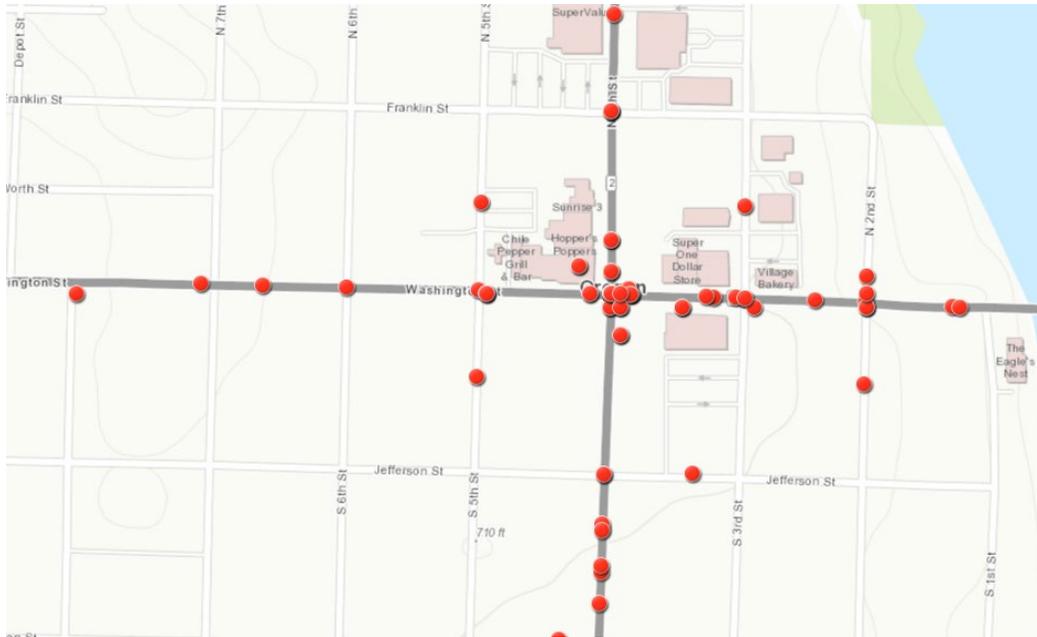
TRAFFIC CRASH DATA

Traffic crash data for IL 64/Washington St from S 10th St to 2nd St and for IL 2/4th St from Illinois St to Hill St was requested from the Illinois Department of Transportation. Data was provided for the years 2015 to 2019.



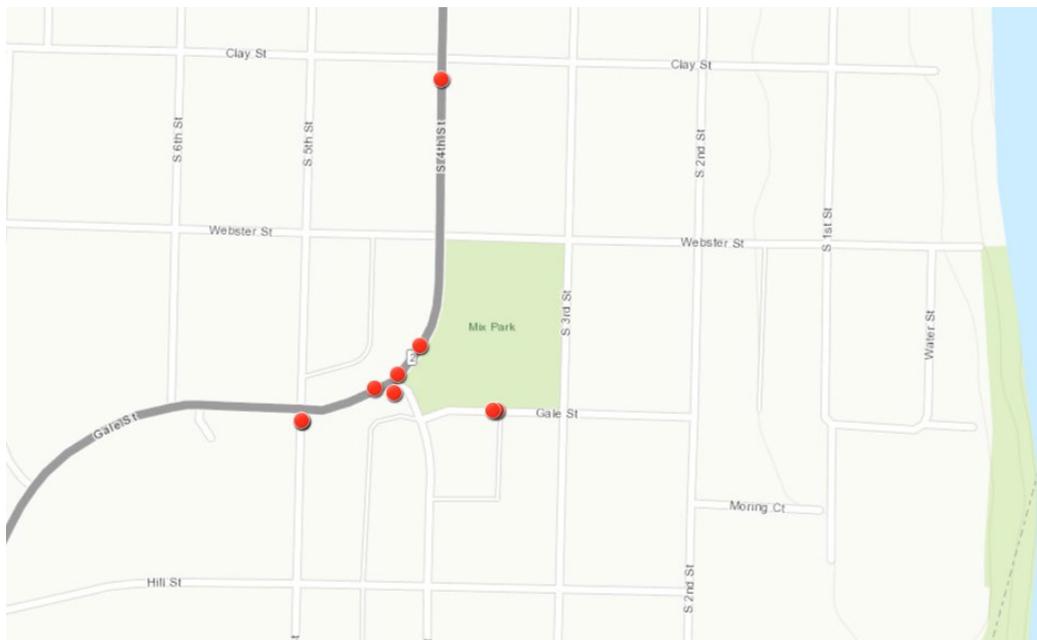
Map 7. Heat map indicating prevalence of crashes along IL 64 and IL 2 in Oregon, hottest point indicating 12 crashes (2015-2019)

Crash points along downtown intersections were reviewed for pedestrian and cyclist involvement. Two crashes, one at IL 2 and IL 64 in 2019 and one at IL 64 and 3rd St in 2018 involved pedestrians. Both incidents resulted in pedestrians with class B (non-incapacitating) injuries.



Map 8. Crash points along IL 64 and IL 2 in downtown Oregon (2015-2019)

The intersection at IL 2 and Webster was also reviewed for crashes. Although there weren't any reported crashes at the intersection for the years reviewed, there were a number of crashes along the curve in the highway that inhibits clear sightlines at the intersection.



Map 9. Crash points along IL 2 near Mix Park (2015-2019)

CITY ORDINANCES & PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The Oregon **Comprehensive Plan**, updated in 2016, provides numerous recommendations and references to the importance of improving conditions for walking and bicycling and enhancing streetscapes. Prioritizing active transportation safety and creating linkages between parks via sidewalks and bicycle routes are highlighted throughout the plan. Key goals and objectives include:

Community Character

Goal 2, Objective 1: Encourage well-designed, walkable residential developments which are accessible to open space and recreation facilities, commercial and employment centers and basic community services.

Residential Neighborhoods

Goal 2, Objective 1: Design neighborhoods to encourage bicycle and pedestrian movement both within the community and to adjacent communities.

Transportation

Goal 1: A balanced, efficient, safe, and attractive transportation system that allows for the movement of motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists through, around, and into the City of Oregon.

Objective 1: Develop a sidewalk improvement plan to ensure that all major public institutions, parks, open spaces and business districts are connected and provide safe routes. Require sidewalks in new subdivisions.

Objective 3: Provide a system of pedestrian trails, walkways, and bikeways that encourage safe and easy circulation throughout existing and future developments within and beyond the City.

Public Facilities and Services

Goal 2, Objective 2: Link park, recreation, and open space with residential neighborhoods via safe pedestrian and bicycle routes.

The comprehensive plan also includes a chapter for design guidelines. These standards provide an excellent foundation for ensuring that the City develops and maintains quality streetscapes that encourage active transportation. Elements including building setbacks, parking locations, signage, lighting, and architectural style are addressed in detail.

Although specific sidewalk additions are not addressed directly, the Transportation Plan chapter of the comprehensive plan notes the issues associated with lack of sidewalks in newer subdivisions and termination of trails at park boundaries (lack of linkages). The plan encourages continuing to work on development and implementation of the Ogle County greenways and trails plan and the Downtown and Riverfront Concept Plan.

A review of the 2020-2024 **Capital Improvements Plan** shows that the City is clearly committed to investing in sidewalks and street trees. Specific sidewalk improvements are called out and funded in addition to a general fund for sidewalk removal and replacement. The City generally pays for 100 percent of sidewalk replacement costs, but residents have the option of speeding up replacement by splitting the cost with the City if the annual budget is already spent. Adjacent curb ramps and intersections are also checked for ADA compliance as sidewalks are replaced. This is a strong policy as these important sidewalk features are often forgotten in repair and replacement

programs. The city specifications for sidewalks are referenced noting that they call for sidewalks to be 4' wide. The specifications should be reviewed regularly to make sure they are current with the PROWAG once they are adopted as the enforceable standards.

In addition to funds for sidewalk repairs, the Capital Improvements Plan includes annual funding for the tree maintenance program. The City website also offers more information for residents through a Tree Planting Guide and Emerald Ash Boer (EAB) Tree Replacement Program and through Tree Planting Permitting for parkways. Although the City is not a part of the Tree City USA program, the Capital Improvements Plan notes that there is interest in tree maintenance assistance.

The City of Oregon's **Code of Ordinances** was reviewed for this assessment and was found to provide a solid framework for sidewalk maintenance and construction. Some of the pertinent ordinances include:

18. Streets, Sidewalks and Other Public Places:

18.04.020 Sidewalks; Construction: Sidewalks shall be built in conformity with the grade plans and specifications on file in the office of the city engineer.

18.08.070 Removal of Snow from Sidewalks in Commercial District [summary] Commercial property owners are required to remove snow and/or ice accumulation from sidewalks by 9am and again at 5pm on or following the day of the storm. Sand or grit application is required if snow or ice accumulation has hardened to a state where it cannot be removed without risk of damage to the sidewalk. Enforcement of this ordinance includes a notice of violation, removal of snow and charge by the City, and a fine increasing to \$100 for each offense following the first (\$50).

18.20.010 Sidewalk Cafes: [summary] Sidewalk cafes are encouraged and allowed under a permitting process which is reviewed annually. The location rules note that cafes shall be located five feet from driveways and alleys, and ten feet from intersections. The ordinance also notes that 5' of clear, unobstructed passageway must be maintained.

30. Subdivisions:

30.16.130 Sidewalks a) Sidewalks may be required by the plan commission if in their opinion sidewalks are essential or advisable by reason of existing sidewalks on adjoining streets.

The zoning ordinances chapter (32) does an excellent job of incorporating important streetscape elements into requirements with particular attention paid to historic character.

To support a complete sidewalk network, the City should consider requiring new subdivisions to construct sidewalks in all circumstances with few exceptions. This reduces the burden on future homeowners and puts the sidewalk construction upfront, when it is less likely to encounter issues with existing utilities or landscaping. An option to encourage lot owners to fill gaps in the sidewalk network would be to split the cost of new sidewalk construction 25 (municipal)/75 (homeowner), or incorporate it into the sidewalk maintenance budget.

By taking on the responsibility for sidewalk maintenance, the City is acknowledging the importance of keeping up conditions for the safety of all users. Maintenance can help prevent and protect against liability claims in situations where sidewalk conditions are in question following an incident. Even when a community has ordinances that require adjacent property owners to maintain

sidewalks (through snow removal, vegetation trimming, etc.), the municipality may still be found ultimately responsible for sidewalk conditions. It is clear that Oregon has a strong maintenance strategy, and recording the plan in writing, if not already done so, can help limit exposure to liability. In times when a municipality's budget is minimal, having a policy in place that effectively uses resources that are available can still help mitigate risk of liability.¹⁷

The benefits of having a written sidewalk maintenance plan are manifold. Advantages of a maintenance plan include:

- Improved sidewalk conditions and safety
- Protection of infrastructure investment
- Conveyance of information to residents
- Provision of guidelines for city employees in public works departments
- Mitigation of exposure to lawsuits
- Compliance with the ADA and improved accessibility of the sidewalk network for all users

Sidewalk maintenance policies should contain some level of detail to be effective. Strong policies address the following elements:¹⁸

1. Identification of defective conditions

The policy should establish criteria that defines when a sidewalk is defective and requires repair or replacement.

2. Development of an inspection procedure and schedule

The plan should include conducting an initial survey (or continuation of the survey provided in this assessment). A frequency for subsequent surveys should be set, and it should be determined whether surveys cover the entire city or are done by sections.

3. Prioritization of repair and replacement needs

An effective policy should establish prioritization criteria: location of sidewalk, pedestrian traffic, cost vs effect, resident complaints, etc. The development of a repair and replacement schedule should also be incorporated and designed in a way that can address unexpected changes in budget, resources for conducting work, and condition of sidewalks.

4. Development of cost-recovery mechanisms

If property owners are expected to share the cost of sidewalk repair, clear policies and procedures for assessing costs to property owners should be established.

5. Response to resident complaints and concerns

It is best to consult with an attorney to develop an appropriate plan for addressing sidewalk incidents and complaints.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *A Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities for Enhanced Safety*. Washington D.C. (2013) https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/fhwasa13037/chap2.cfm#ftn3

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *A Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities for Enhanced Safety*. Appendix D: Risk Management Information (2010). https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/fhwasa13037/appxd.cfm

More information about developing a sidewalk maintenance plan, including examples, can be found in the [US DOT Federal Highway Administration \(FHWA\)'s Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities for Enhanced Safety](#).

The City takes a good first step in requiring lot owners in the commercial district to take responsibility for winter sidewalk maintenance. These sidewalks are likely to have the most use, so the impact of the maintenance requirement (and enforcement plan) should be significant. The next important step to take is to expand the maintenance requirement to all sidewalks and communicate this (and options for assistance) to residents.

Winter precipitation has a profound effect on all modes of transportation, but sidewalks can be particularly vulnerable as they are often last to be cleared or end up being used for snow storage after roads are cleared. A new, ADA-compliant sidewalk can be rendered useless after just a few inches of snow if a winter maintenance plan isn't in place. This can be particularly frustrating for those who have disabilities and rely on active transportation. The ADA requires any "accessible route" to be maintained "in working order." This means that sidewalks left covered in ice or snow are in violation of the ADA.

Expanding the ordinance along with an enforcement plan to include all sidewalks can also play an important role in mitigating risks for the City in the case of a lawsuit. The ordinance should address requirements for businesses, single-family residents, and property owners of multi-family housing with sidewalk frontage. Details about enforcement should also be explained so businesses and residents can know when to expect a warning or a fine.

It should be recognized that some residents may struggle to meet snow removal requirements due to age or disability. Coupling a snow removal ordinance with a volunteer program or student on-call job service can be a good way to address this need.

Informing and reminding residents and businesses about snow removal requirements should be the first step in gaining compliance. An annual brochure mailer is one method for ensuring that information is circulated. The brochure can also be used to share information about winter parking, snow emergencies, appropriate de-icing mechanisms (rock salt can be damaging to concrete sidewalks), and keeping catch basins and fire hydrants cleared. Massachusetts's Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has collected examples of snow removal procedure brochures which can be found in their [Snow Removal Policy Toolkit](#). The University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration also offers a [Winter Maintenance of Pedestrian Facilities Guide for Local Governments](#), as does the FHWA in its [Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities](#) and [US DOJ in its ADA Guide for Small Towns](#).

WALK AUDIT

The walk audit was held late morning on July 20, 2021. BHRC regional planners Emily Lauderdale and Tara Walters were joined by steering committee members Karly Spell and Erin Folk. The group reviewed the priority areas and route from the parking lot at Park West. Due to a variety of circumstances, the group review was short, but BHRC staff continued on to review the priority areas including the intersection at Jefferson St/Hawk Dr and park trail at the Park West entrance, student drop-off/pick-up along Koontz Pl, sidewalks along the schools on Jefferson, Adams St, and the intersection at IL-2 and Webster at the Mix Park entrance.

Sidewalk improvements were on-going in front of the schools, and a hole in the sidewalk on IL 2/4th St that was noted in the initial survey had already been repaired.



Before and after repair work of sidewalk hole associated with drain along IL 2/4th St

BHRC staff spent the most time considering potential solutions for improving intersection safety at IL 2/4th St and Webster St as it was clear that higher traffic speeds, presence of semi-trucks, and poor sightlines make this crossing uncomfortable even for adults.



IL 2/4th St and Webster St intersection looking northwest from Mix Park entrance

Recommendations

The following priority improvement options were identified based on survey findings, review of city ordinances and planning documents, the walk audit, and discussions with the walkability assessment steering committee. Please see Appendix A for additional improvement options.

Improvement	Route Category	Benefit/Cost*	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Demonstration Project						
Temporary traffic calming technique at the Park West entrance off Jefferson St	Intersections of Concern	Low Cost/Moderate Benefit		✓ Park District		This trial project can be implemented with low cost materials such as paint, planters, straw wattles, or plastic barriers. The demonstration project would test out the effectiveness of a pinch point at reducing traffic speeds and improving safety.



Graphic depicting a temporary pinch point at Park West entrance and trail intersection

Improvement	Route Category	Benefit/Cost*	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Infrastructure Improvements						
Implement permanent tactics to improve safety at Park West entrance: speedbump prior to the crosswalk, reduced speed limit at the crosswalk (10 mph), permanent curbed median pinch point at turn off Jefferson, "crosswalk ahead" signage on Jefferson	Intersections of Concern	Low-Moderate cost/ Low-Moderate benefit		✓ Park District		
Add sidewalks along west end of Jefferson from Elementary school to Park West	Routes to Schools & Parks	Moderate-High cost/High benefit Estimate: \$90,025		✓ School District		Priority would be a sidewalk on the north side of the street. Estimate for north side: \$32,175
Conduct sidewalk maintenance and curb ramp repair/construction along routes with a focus on Adams St	Routes to Schools & Parks	Moderate cost/Moderate-High benefit				Important for ADA compliance.
Paint crosswalks and install crosswalk signs at the ends of both paths from the school to the north side of Koontz Pl	Routes to Schools & Parks	Low cost/ Moderate benefit		✓ School District		Would improve street crossing safety for students, but wouldn't connect to a sidewalk network.
Conduct maintenance on path to street transitions along Koontz Pl, and add truncated dome warning strips for ADA compliance	Routes to Schools & Parks	Low cost/Moderate-Low benefit		✓ School District		
Construct sidewalks along 14 th St, 13 th St, and north side of Koontz Pl (Amber Dr lower priority)	Routes to Schools & Parks	High cost/ High benefit Estimate: \$315,250				Priority would be a sidewalk on the north side of Koontz Pl Estimate for this section: \$57,785
Construct sidewalks on Mix St (to Franklin or Monroe)	Routes to Schools & Parks	High cost/ Moderate benefit Estimate: \$51,740 to Franklin St, \$104,975 to Monroe St				Addition of sidewalks could be particularly helpful if the new Oregon Music Garage increases traffic on this street.

Improvement	Route Category	Benefit/Cost*	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Consider alternative land use when jail is demolished.	Critical Connections	Moderate-High cost/ High benefit				Area could be used to enhance tree canopy, host events or additional permanent or temporary art exhibits
Work with IDOT to plan safety improvements at IL 2/4 th St and Webster St (see diagram of potential options below)	Intersections of Concern	Moderate cost/High benefit	✓			Options could include crosswalk striping and signs, including a warning sign before curve in IL-2, and/or a crosswalk beacon



Diagram showing potential improvement options at IL 2/4th St and Webster St

*Note that cost estimates are very broad and actual costs may vary significantly

Policy, Plan, and Ordinance Changes

Improvement	Notes
Update City sidewalk design specifications to meet current ADA guidelines	Consider updating sidewalk design specification to meet the PROWAG or prepare to do so when the PROWAG is adopted at the federal level.
Complete or update an ADA self-evaluation and transition plan	To be compliant with the ADA, the City should ensure that a self-evaluation has been completed and is on file. Although not required for municipalities with fewer than 50 employees, a transition plan would be helpful in planning out improvements to meet compliance. The New England ADA Center offers an Action Guide for State and Local Governments on how to conduct a self-evaluation and develop a transition plan. The website also offers sample documents and self-evaluation forms.
Develop a written sidewalk maintenance plan	A sidewalk maintenance plan that addresses short and longer-term needs would help the city plan for improvements by identifying both budget and coordination needs with IDOT, businesses, and/or residents. A maintenance plan could work particularly well in combination with a city tree plan or forestry program to address necessary tree removals and replacements.
Extend the sidewalk snow removal ordinance to include all sidewalks	The ordinance update should be done in tandem with a plan for residents who require assistance with snow removal and a plan to inform residents about the requirement and options for assistance.
Require new subdivision developers to construct sidewalks and, in certain cases, bike lanes along any new roadways	Requiring new subdivisions to include sidewalks as the norm with few exceptions will help to ensure that new parts of the city are connected to the sidewalk network and will reduce future gaps. Criteria for when bike lanes would be required should also be incorporated.
Incorporate division of gap-filling sidewalk construction costs into city ordinances and streets budget	Encourage lot owners to fill gaps in the sidewalk network by splitting the cost of new sidewalk construction 25 (municipal)/75 (homeowner)
Develop a community forestry program to address tree health, hazard mitigation, and tree planting needs	Working through the Tree City USA program would provide a strong framework for the city to address concerns and needs regarding trees. The process of becoming a designated Tree City requires municipalities to develop a tree board, establish a tree care ordinance, institute a community forestry program, and host an Arbor Day observance and proclamation. Tree City USA offers helpful resources and templates for developing these programs and ordinances. Trees Forever , a non-profit based in Marion, IA, assists communities in Iowa and Illinois in community forestry efforts and would be a helpful partner for the City in establishing a forestry program.
Review and revise the City's lighting plan to meet safety and International Dark-Sky Association recommendations	Street lighting is critical for safety and can also be an important factor for security. An often forgotten impact of poorly planned lighting is effects on the quality of the night sky, which is important for both animal and human health. The International Dark-Sky Association provides resources for finding Dark-Sky Friendly Lighting and offers accreditation programs for International Dark Sky Communities . Two recently designated communities in Illinois are Hawthorn Woods and Homer Glen in Lake and Will counties.

Funding Strategies

The following grant opportunities and programs are a snapshot of what is currently available or may be available in the future. Additional guidance and future opportunities are likely to be offered as the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic progresses.

Grant/Strategy	Adminstrating org.	Funding available & match requirements	Applicable projects
<p><u>Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)</u> Next funding cycle will be announced in the fall of 2022</p>	<p>Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)</p>	<p>Up to \$2,000,000, Illinois House Bill 270, which was passed by the State House and Senate in May 2021, removes the 20% local match requirement for biking and walking infrastructure on IDOT-maintained roads. The bill was signed and will be effective as of 1/1/2022. Preliminary engineering costs is eligible for reimbursement, but invoices must be submitted after Federal Authorization of the funding.</p>	<p>All improvements along and within the IL 64 and IL 2 corridors.</p>
<p><u>Local Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)</u></p>	<p>IDOT</p>	<p>State DOTs receive federal funding for projects on their State Transportation Improvement Program lists.</p>	<p>Work with IDOT staff to determine if IL 64 or IL 2 projects would qualify.</p>
<p><u>Safe Routes to School (SRTS)</u></p>	<p>IDOT</p>	<p>Up to \$250,000 with a 20% local match requirement.</p>	<p>All improvements within a 2 mile radius of the schools.</p>
<p><u>AARP Community Challenge Grant</u></p>	<p>AARP</p>	<p>Grants can range from several hundred dollars to several thousand or tens of thousands of dollars. Applications are typically due in April and projects must be complete by November of the same year.</p>	<p>Most improvements along local roads would qualify under the Transportation category. The City may be interested in submitting other projects under the Public Places or Diversity and Inclusion categories.</p>

<p><u>Urban and Community Forestry Grants</u></p>	<p>Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)</p>	<p>The program is 50/50 cost share reimbursement. The applicant must have an approved tree care ordinance or equivalent or must use an application to ask for funding to create a tree care ordinance.</p>	<p>Creation of a tree care ordinance and city forestry plan.</p>
<p><u>Rapid Flashing Beacons Give Away</u></p>	<p>America Walks</p>	<p>In Spring of 2021, America Walks partnered with Carmanah Technologies to give away rapid flashing beacons to communities who applied and showed need. Although it is uncertain whether this will be an annual opportunity, it is worth checking for subsequent years.</p>	<p>Crosswalk improvements at IL 64/Washington St and 5th St or IL 2/4th St and Webster St at northwest Mix Park entrance. Beacons could also be helpful along IL 2/4th St.</p>

Appendix A. Additional Improvement Options

Improvement	Route Category	Cost/Benefit	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Construct sidewalks to address gaps with a focus on East/West streets: Webster and Adams	Routes to Schools & Parks	High cost/Moderate-High benefit				East/West streets are missing more sidewalk sections in this part of the city.
Fill sidewalk gaps along Monroe and Franklin	Routes to Schools & Parks	Moderate-High cost/ Moderate Benefit				
Conduct sidewalk and curb ramp maintenance/ replacement (and curb ramp construction where missing) along Monroe and Franklin	Routes to Schools & Parks	Moderate cost/ Moderate benefit				
Work with IDOT to install an additional crosswalk along 4 th St/ IL 2- possibly using beacons	Routes to Schools & Parks	Moderate cost/ Moderate benefit	✓			This option may not be as strong/effective as working on other highway crossings due to number of residents affected and existing crosswalk at IL 2 & IL 64.
Work with IDOT to implement additional pedestrian crossings along IL 64	Critical Connections	Moderate-High cost/ High benefit	✓			Intersections of 5 th or 6 th and IL 64 would be a good focus
Make use of downtown planters year-round.	Critical Connections	Low cost/Moderate benefit		✓ Could rely on volunteers or businesses		Consider seasonal decorations or an adopt-a-planter program for businesses and organizations
Work with IDOT to plan safety improvements at IL 64/Washington St and 5 th St	Intersections of Concern IL 64/Washington St and 5 th St	Moderate cost/High benefit	✓			Options could include installing a traffic light, pedestrian crosswalk sign, and/or a crosswalk beacon