

## Overview: Complete Streets is a Growing Movement

More than 700 U.S. towns, cities, counties, regions, and states have made official commitments to Complete Streets policies including 5 communities in New Hampshire: Concord, Dover, Keene, Portsmouth, and Swanzey.

By adopting Complete Streets practices, a community establishes a process for selecting, funding, planning, designing, and building transportation projects that allow safe access to destinations for everyone, regardless of age, ability, income, or ethnicity—matter how they wish to travel.

Whether it's planting trees or adding crosswalks, making travel lanes narrower or creating space for people on bikes, hundreds of communities are creating great public places for everyone to get out and enjoy.

Several communities report<sup>1</sup> that these public investments are getting a great return. Immediate benefits include increased safety and foot and bike traffic at area businesses. Several report averting expensive retrofits that would have been necessary if they had not adopted Complete Streets guidelines in the planning stages. Studies also indicate increased real estate values for communities that added bicycle lanes, walking paths, or planted trees.



Complete Streets look different for every neighborhood depending on what the community needs and wants. Here's an example from the New York City Department of Transportation showing how streets can be designed for everyone to get around safely.

### CASE STUDY: Driggs City, Idaho

#### Increase in retail sales after widening sidewalks on Main Street

Population 1,700 with approximately 10,000 in surrounding area

Data based on interview of Doug Self, Community Development Director

- Driggs City had a 3 block Main Street downtown proposed for redevelopment (total of 99 feet wide)
- Project was scaled down to 2 of the 3 blocks completed as conceived and designed
- The 2 blocks were changed to parallel parking and the sidewalks were increased by 10 feet, giving 18-foot sidewalks with trees and benches
- The 3rd block retained the existing sidewalk of 5 feet with 2-foot buffer
- The work was completed in summer 2013, and the area with the 18-foot sidewalk saw a 15-20% increase in retail sales – with an average of only a 6.4% increase retail sales outside that area
- Parking: Town has also been expanding its off-street municipal lots, generally located in the center of each block, and went from a 2-hour parking limit to a 4-hour parking limit to encourage longer visitor stays

## What are Complete Streets?

Complete Streets are for everyone. They are safer for people walking and bicycling, create great neighborhood spaces, reflect resident cultures, and support economic growth by making local businesses more accessible and attractive to residents and visitors alike.

## Why adopt Complete Streets?

More than half of Americans recently surveyed say they would like to walk more and drive less.<sup>1</sup> Complete Streets meet the demand for transportation choices while promoting other community goals, such as health, safety, and economic development.

## What do Complete Streets policies do?

Complete Streets policies change the way communities think about transportation. A community with a Complete Streets policy values the health, safety, and comfort of its residents and visitors. These policies provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to contribute to, and benefit from, a livable community.

## Benefits of Complete Streets<sup>2</sup>

- Encourage healthy and active lifestyles among residents of all ages
- Boost the economy by attracting more area businesses, residents, and real estate development
- Provide children with opportunities to walk and bike to school and other nearby places in a safe and supportive environment
- Encourage people – particularly those with disabilities and older adults – to get out and stay connected to the community
- Promote safety – sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placement, traffic-calming measures, and treatments for travelers with disabilities may reduce pedestrian risk by as much as 28 percent<sup>2</sup>
- Ensure that all people – including those without a car or other transportation options – have equitable access to education, employment, religious and cultural institutions, physical activity, and friends and family
- Support a better quality of community – studies show that people are more likely to be socially engaged and trusting than residents of less walkable neighborhoods and they reported being in better health
- Preserve resources for the next generation – Complete Streets help save money when switching from driving to biking/walking and can reduce carbon emissions

### CASE STUDY: Dubuque, Iowa

#### Increase in private investment, as well as bicycling

When Dubuque, IA, was planning the redevelopment of its historic Millwork District in 2009, local leaders understood that the project's success hinged on whether people would want to walk or bike there.

City examined the District's four main avenues— Jackson, Washington, 9th and 10th streets—and figured out how to make them work better for people walking and biking:

- Replaced sidewalks
- Made it easier to cross the street
- Added new street lights
- Painted “sharrows”
- Created a multi-use trail

Results:

- Within a year, bicycling use increased by 273%
- The neighborhood has experienced more than \$34 million in new private investment within the first year, with another \$150 million in the pipeline
- The first warehouse to be redeveloped is leasing 72 residential units, 39,000 square feet of retail and commercial space, and 20,000 square feet for an incubator for arts and nonprofit organizations

# MAKING THE CASE FOR COMPLETE STREETS IN YOUR NEW HAMPSHIRE COMMUNITY

## How much do Complete Streets cost?

When discussing Complete Streets, questions are often raised about the additional costs to accommodate for all ways of getting around. However, communities implementing a Complete Streets policy within a balanced and fiscally-sound budget often find that it adds little to no expense to their transportation budgets.

By contrast, it can cost more to build streets without Complete Streets guidelines in place. For instance, bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation accommodations are often debated too late in the design process and are considered a disruption rather than necessary and beneficial project features. This creates expensive design revisions, time delays, and erodes public support. Furthermore, the failure to accommodate these user groups can trigger an expensive retrofit project at a later date.

## What about maintenance costs?

Any additional costs for maintaining should be offset by increased economic activity and a rise in property values. According to a study by CEO for Cities, houses with above-average levels of walkability command a premium of about \$4,000 to \$34,000 over houses with just average levels of walkability in the typical metropolitan areas they studied<sup>3</sup>. (See also Driggs City, Idaho case study on page 1 for an example of how wider sidewalks helped boost retail sales in their downtown.)

## Why invest in Complete Streets?

Complete Streets are a sound financial investment that will provide long-term savings and a healthier, more economically vibrant community. An existing transportation budget can often incorporate Complete Streets projects without requiring additional funding by re-prioritizing projects and allocating funds to projects that improve overall community mobility.

By considering Complete Streets in the planning process, your community will allow for efficient and optimal use of limited resources while providing a number of potential benefits to the community including improved health and safety, increased property values, economic growth, and better mobility for all.

### **CASE STUDY: Concord, NH** **Complete Streets Policy a catalyst for new funding and partnerships**

Concord adopted a Complete Streets policy in 2009 called the Comprehensive Transportation Policy. Spurred by this policy and national Bicycling Friendly Communities designation by the League of American Bicyclists, significant planning and design began to support streets and sidewalks that were not only safer for bicyclists and pedestrians, but also more attractive to visitors to downtown businesses.

Adoption of the Complete Streets policy along with the incremental improvements they have made, has served as a catalyst for funding and partnerships:

- Concord received a \$4.71 million federal TIGER grant for the revitalization of its Main Street
- Central NH Bicycling Coalition elected to donate \$10,000 from the HEAL Active Transportation grant along with \$7,000 of their own monies to mark the bike lane through the Route 3 North corridor in conjunction with a roadway improvement project and to install 12 “Wrong Way Ride With Traffic” signs throughout the city
- A \$2.7 million Phase 6 Corridor Improvement Project will also improve bicycling and walking experience from Concord and Penacook with marked bike lanes, signs, sidewalks, bicycle, and pedestrian friendly signals

# Making the case for Complete Streets in your New Hampshire community

## Specific examples of the economic benefits of Complete Streets

Listed below are examples of economic benefits many communities have seen when adopting Complete Streets as part of the planning process:<sup>4</sup>

- Prevent costly delays and retrofits
- Integrate the needs of all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation riders, motorists, older people, children, and people with disabilities – early in the life of a project minimizes costs associated with including facilities for these travelers
- Ensure early multi-modal scoping, saving money by avoiding costly project delays
- Discover effective measures at little or no extra cost
- Some standard infrastructure projects, such as conversion from open to closed drainage, can be enhanced with Complete Streets facilities (i.e., sidewalks) for negligible additional cost
- Change pedestrian signal timing at intersections to a 3.5 feet per second walking speed adds nothing to the cost of a signal, and adding countdown clocks can be done for as little as \$2,000 per intersection
- Save money through better design
- Reduce infrastructure costs by requiring less pavement per user saving money at the onset and reducing maintenance costs over the long-term – including less salt during the winter
- Compared to increasing road capacity for vehicles alone, investing in pedestrian and bicycle facilities cost far less – over the width of one traffic lane, walking and cycling can move five to ten times more people than driving
- Neighborhood streets built in a grid to serve all users reduce the need for wide automobile lanes and complex intersections, and can lower infrastructure costs 35-40% compared to conventional suburban development
- Support long-term savings for public transportation
- Investing in one-time basic improvements (when compared to the cost of curb-to-curb service for just one person) can enable more commuters to access an existing fixed-route public transportation route
- More extensive improvements, such as adding a lighted shelter and bench and replacing the sidewalk leading to the stop, have a one-time cost just 33% more than a year of curb-to-curb service for a single commuter

Many NH communities have made improvements to street designs to make them safer and more attractive for walkers and bicyclists.



Main Street, Nashua has several Complete Streets features, including plantings and benches.



The bicycle lane on Washington Street in Keene shows how Complete Streets look different depending on the surrounding land use and context.



Swanzey did a Complete Streets demonstration with a temporary installation prior to adopting a formal policy for the town.

### SOURCES:

<sup>1</sup> An Introduction to Complete Streets, Smart Growth America ([www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/resources/cs-intro.pptx](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/resources/cs-intro.pptx))

<sup>2</sup> Safer Streets, Stronger Economies, Smart Growth America's National Complete Streets Coalition, March 2015 ([www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/safer-streets-stronger-economies.pdf](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/safer-streets-stronger-economies.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> Walking the Walk, CEOs for Cities, August 2009 ([www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/2009WalkingTheWalkCEOsforCities.pdf](http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/2009WalkingTheWalkCEOsforCities.pdf))

<sup>4</sup> Smart Growth America ([www.smartgrowthamerica.org](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org))