Case Study

Walkable Washington

The Walkable Washington program grew out of the Feet First Cities Program. It showcases exceptional pedestrian-oriented improvements, community groups, and outreach programs; maintains a statewide network for key contacts, and stakeholders including an annual symposium; and provides assistance with Safe Routes to School, walking audits, and other educational activities, and programs.

Mission

who we are - what we do
Feet First promotes walkable communities and envisions people walking every day for their health, transportation, environment, community, and pleasure.

Richland Urban Greenbelt Trail
Richland, WA

Description and purpose
Richland’s Parks and Recreation Commission set a goal in 2012 to increase walkability in the city. One of the factors to address was to improve infrastructure for walking. Back in 2003, an urban planning firm looked at an aerial view of Richland and noticed that there were the makings of a loop around the city that connected the park system and the central business district. From this vantage point, they saw the possibilities for connecting pieces of the loop that weren’t apparent when viewed from the ground.

The goal was to take advantage of what was already in place to create an environment for experiencing urban walking as well as natural areas. Over the next decade, various parts of the loop were completed using existing trails along the river.
Richland aims to appeal to a wide variety of audiences by connecting diverse areas of the city such as the waterfront section, urban areas/employment centers, and medical facilities with adjacent workout areas. They also provide a transportation corridor for bicycles. Maps are available at City Hall.

Currently, most of the city does not know that the whole trail exists. The Riverfront Trail section of the trail is popular and heavily used by residents but the section from Goethals Drive to George Washington Way is used less frequently. The city is trying to increase the awareness of the trail through tour-led walks once a month, led by the Recreation Division of the City of Richland. When the Parks & Recreation Commission set a “walkability” goal in 2013, the “Richland Walks” series became a major focus. A diversity of choices was developed with all abilities in mind; from exploration of the Urban Greenbelt Trail, a Columbia Point South GeoNature Hike, to Stroller Walks for parents and grandparents. A few other examples include Tree Identification Hikes, Sweater Weather Walks (viewing fiber art installations on trees), Bateman Island Hikes, the Chamna Preserve, and Park Birding Hikes. Many more imaginative selections are planned for 2015, including Sunrise Hikes. Some of the highlights of the Richland Urban Greenbelt Trail include:

- A greenway north of the hospital with resident ducks (in the Columbia Playfield section)
- A sunken fountain by a bank only noticeable to pedestrians but not to cars driving past.
- An underground walkway that crosses a creek

Costs and funding

Funding for the Richland Urban Greenbelt Trail came from private institutions, government, and local contributions. The development of the Richland Urban Greenbelt Trail spanned nine years, with original trail plans that started in 2003, and was still being improved in 2014. Different parts of the trail had different funding. In 2007, $50,000 of Community Development Block Grant funds were used to build the section through Gillespie Parkway, in 2011, $54,000 of Community Development Block Grant funds were used to build the section through Columbia Playfield, in 2014 Kadlec Regional Hospital privately funded the reconstruction of the trail from Stevens Dr. to Goethals Drive, through Sutch Park, in 2013 $2,000 of City monies were used for signage for the trail and the City partnered with the Jerry D. Abrams Company in reconstruction a section of the trail from Jadwin Ave. to within 200 feet of George Washington Way.

Community involvement

The Urban Greenbelt Trail was originally proposed as a component of the Barney and Worth, Richland Central Business District (CBD) Urban Design Plan, prepared in 2005. A recommendation of the study was to “Develop a bicycle/pedestrian trail system or Greenbelt around the CBD perimeter” and “acquire strategic parcels and rights-of-way as needed to complete the loop trail.” Numerous public meetings were held to gather public input into the Central Business District planning efforts.
Benefits and results
The usage of the trail is still a work in progress, but it fits with the City’s goals to give its citizens a variety of places to walk for different interests. The trail itself is relatively flat and easy to walk on.
One development is the tour-lead walks which highlights Richland’s history from World War II along 16 stops. Historical pictures are also shown along the walk to compare the present with what the sites used to look like. Through these walks, local residents are becoming more aware and appreciative of the city’s history. Some other walks are in the development phase, such as a public art walk, and one on mid-century modern homes.

Project Contacts
Laurel Strand, Parks & Recreation Manager
City of Richland, Parks & Public Facilities
509-942-7501
lstrand@ci.richland.wa.us

Resources
Richland Urban Greenbelt Trail
http://richlandwa.swagit.com/play/01022013-571