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.

“PedFlag” Pedestrian Safety Program
Kirkland, WA

Description and purpose
PedFlag is a pedestrian safety program that places orange or yellow flags at uncontrolled crosswalks (intersections and pedestrian crossings with no traffic signals), to help pedestrians gain the attention of drivers, improving their visibility and safety while crossing the streets. Since 1995 the program has grown to approximately 77 PedFlag locations, both in the Central Business District and distributed along arterial streets running through the city’s neighborhoods. The community is able to request PedFlags at crosswalks they are interested in when budget allows, and both the city and the community work together to maintain the existing PedFlag sites.
Costs and funding
The annual budget for pedestrian flag equipment is $10,000, which will cover the replacement of 8-12 flags per site per year. The PedFlag program requires an on-going expense to replace aged, damaged or lost flags. In 2013, a total of 1,200 flags were used throughout the city’s 77 PedFlag sites. Of those, 800 flags were used to replace old flags and 400 were used to replace damaged or missing flags.

Implementation time-frame
The PedFlag program expanded from four locations in Kirkland central business district in 1995 to 48 locations throughout business and residential neighborhoods in 2006. In 2007 a marketing study recommending increased use of PedFlags and the program initiated a second phase of expansion with a new yellow “PedMan holding a PedFlag” design replacing old orange flags in the central business district and larger flag holders to accommodate more flags per location. In 2013, a further expansion resulted in 77 PedFlag sites throughout the city.

Community involvement
The general public in Kirkland plays a crucial role in maintaining PedFlag sites through an “Adopt A PedFlag Crossing” volunteer program. While city staff maintains locations in the Central Business District and makes sure that adequate flags are in place, volunteers make sure the holders are stocked with flags in all other locations in Kirkland’s neighborhoods. The City provides ten flags at no charge to the volunteer who agrees to participate in the Adopt A PedFlag Crossing program. Volunteers are responsible for checking, reporting, replacing, and maintaining those flags at their adopted crosswalks.

Benefits and results
Since 1995, the PedFlag program has not only been continuously expanding its locations, but has also become an accepted standard in the city of Kirkland. Volunteers and frequent users of flags agree that the PedFlag program does attract the attention of the driver sooner, compared to an unaided pedestrian. Many new locations have been established along walk-routes to school and other popular walking routes. The success of the Kirkland’s PedFlag program has led many public agencies and private citizens, within the state of Washington, and across the country, to start a program in their own town, using Kirkland’s experience as a resource.

Project Contacts
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Resources
Pedestrian Flags-FAQs
http://www.kirklandwa.gov/depart/Public_Works/Transportation_and_Traffic/Pedestrian_Flags_-_FAQs.htm
Social Marketing Plan for Increasing Use of PedFlags
http://www.kirklandwa.gov/Assets/Public+Works/Public+Works+PDFs/Transportation/PedFlag+Marketing+Plan.pdf
Adopt A PedFlag Crosswalk Program™ Volunteer Guideline
http://www.kirklandwa.gov/Assets/Public+Works/Public+Works+PDFs/Transportation/PedFlag+Guidelines.pdf

Photos courtesy of City of Kirkland.