Speak Up, Act Up, & Step Up.

3 Lessons for Healthy Community Design.

Boise, ID
June 2013


www.markfenton.com
My lessons:

• The real risk our children face.
• It’s not about me/you.
• It’s the environment! (Overcoming the stickiness problem).
• A call to action: speak up, act up, step up!

Spring run-off in Zion.
Youthful recollections?
Not just my idea . . .

Kids held back with ‘over-organised’ play, says Shane Gould

The Australian, 14-Oct-2009
Changes in Walking & Cycling to School, 1969 to 2001
Ham et.al., Jour. of Physical Activity & Health, 2008, 5, 205-215

![Bar chart showing changes in transportation modes to school from 1969 to 2001.](chart.png)
Trends in Childhood Obesity & Overweight


The real risk the next generation faces . . .

US “Obesity Epidemic”

Ogden et. al. (JAMA 288, 14; Oct. 2002)

% Obese (BMI > 30)


www.markfenton.com
My rant:
Change the discussion. It’s not just an obesity epidemic. It’s twin epidemics of physical inactivity and poor nutrition.*

* Two of the three biggest drivers of skyrocketing healthcare costs.
Three numbers describe the epidemic of physical inactivity:

30 Minutes of daily physical activity recommended (60 min. for youth).

20 % of Americans who meet the recommendation (thru LTPA).

365,000 Estimated annual deaths in America due to physical inactivity & poor nutrition. (2nd only to tobacco.)
Surgeon General’s Report 1996
Physical Activity Guidelines 2008
www.health.gov/paguidelines

- 150 mins/week of moderate physical activity; more is better.
- Any activity is better than none.
- Can be broken up.
- 300 min/week for children.
- Reduced risk for CVD, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, dementia in old age, clinical depression, a growing list of cancers . . .

This counts!

www.markfenton.com
Leisure Time Physical Activity in the US

*(MMWR: 50(09), 166-9; 54(39), 991-4)*

![Graph showing leisure time physical activity in the US from 1985 to 2005. The graph compares the percentage of the US population that is inactive versus sufficiently active.](www.markfenton.com)
Why?

At least in part the stickiness problem.
Exercise Participation
Effect of Short Bouts, Home Treadmills
(Jakicic et.al., JAMA 282, 16)
Self-help vs. Commercial Weight Loss Programs
(Heshka et.al., JAMA 289, 14; April 9, 2003)
Social Ecology

Determinants of behavior change

Individual
motivation, skills

Interpersonal
- family, friends, colleagues

Institutional
- school, work, health care & service providers

Community
- networks, facilities

Public Policy
- laws, ordinances, permitting practices & procedures

Sallis & Owen, Physical Activity & Behavioral Medicine.
Easier to Implement

Individual motivation, skills

Interpersonal - family, friends, colleagues

Institutional - school, work, health care & service providers

Community - networks, facilities

Public Policy - laws, ordinances, permitting practices & procedures

Greater Impact

www.markfenton.com
Socio-ecological successes?

- Tobacco use
- Seatbelts, child safety restraints
- Recycling
- Water-borne disease in Haiti

www.markfenton.com
FIGURE 1. Annual adult per capita cigarette consumption and major smoking and health events — United States, 1900–1998


Thanks to Prof. Ross Brownson, Wash. Univ., St. Louis
Necessary and important, but not enough.

We must build communities where people are intrinsically more active.
Quiz II:
Find 10 signs of activity supporting environments & policies.

Swift Current, Saskatchewan

www.markfenton.com
10 Signs of a truly Active Environment in Swift Current, SK.

1. Sidewalk exists and . . .
2. It has been cleared, and . . .
3. Ice rink is located in neighborhood.
4. Two sheets; boards for older kids; lights.
5. Back alley garages, utility poles = better sidewalks.
6. Informal game, kids developing “life” skills.
7. He kept a wary eye on us while there . . .
8. Corner store where he can stop for a snack, drop off mail, pick up something for mom.
9. It’s a really cold day (~ -20C) and he’s still walking.
10. Parents believe it’s safe enough for walking.
If we build it, will they come?
YES! Four elements:

1. Variety of uses within walk, bike, & transit distance.
2. Connecting facilities: trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, transit.
3. Destinations are functional & inviting for pedestrians, bicyclists, & transit users.
4. Safe & accessible for all ages, incomes, abilities

www.thecommunityguide.org

CDC Guide to Community Preventive Services
In planner language:

- Mix of land uses; varied clusters.
- Comprehensive network, all 4 modes.
- Functional & inviting site designs.
- Universal safety & access for all.
1. Land use.

Varied destinations in proximity.

Compact neighborhoods & shared open space.

Mixed use, multi-family.

E.g. post office, grocery, schools

Housing above, retail below.

www.markfenton.com
2. Network encourages active travel with:

- Presence of sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, sharrows.
- Shorter blocks, cul-de-sac cut-throughs, more intersections.
- Access to quality, reliable, affordable *transit*. 
Which setting seems more appealing for travel on foot and by bike?
• Buildings near the sidewalk, not set back; parking on street or behind.
• Trees, benches, lighting, awnings, “human” scale.
• Details: bike parking, open space, plants, art, materials.
Possible incentives:
• Decrease, share parking (bike parking req., bonus).
• Build-to, not set-back requirements.
• Residential bonus.
• Expedite permits.

Elected & appointed officials must be supported if you expect them to act courageously!
4. Safety.

• Engineering can dramatically improve safety.
• Increasing pedestrian and bike trips decreases overall accident & fatality rates.

Diagonal parking increases on-street capacity, but...

Des Moines, IA

Reverse angle:
- Fewer, less severe collisions.
- Safer for bikes.
- Slows traffic.

Meridian

www.markfenton.com
“But what about rural areas . . . ?”

Suburbanization of America
US population shift, 1950-1996
(after Bowling Alone, R. Putnam, 2000)

1. Suburbia is steadily consuming the landscape . . .
2. Rural areas are where you can affect the shape of development *before it’s done!*

“Rural” housing?

Or just more suburbia . . . ?

e.g. Fairview Ave.

www.markfenton.com
Five Elements of Healthy Community Design:

- Ped, bike, & transit network
- Mix of destinations
- Site design
- Safety & access
- Healthy affordable food

www.activelivingresearch.org
www.markfenton.com
How do you help?

- **Speak up:** To family & friends, students, colleagues, the media, especially community leaders.
- **Act up:** Help improve the built & policy environments for P.A.
- **Step up:** Be a role model—build lifestyle activity into your day!

www.markfenton.com
Speak up:

• Not just an obesity epidemic; twin epidemics of physical inactivity & poor nutrition!

• Suggest, prescribe physical activity to students, administrators, patients, family, friends, colleagues, everyone.

• Help build active lifestyle skills for everyday activity, not just structured exercise.

• Be a vocal advocate for more walkable, bicycle-, & transit-friendly communities.

www.markfenton.com
Act up: Support five national movements changing the physical activity landscape.

(Fenton, Community Design & Policies for Free Range Children, *Childhood Obesity* 8(1), Feb 2012)

1. Healthy planning & zoning.
2. Complete Streets.
3. Transportation trail networks.
5. Comprehensive Safe Routes to School.

www.markfenton.com
1. Show up at a planning or school board meeting. Testify in behalf of:

- Keeping schools close to where kids live!
- Neighborhood corner stores, pocket parks, services . . .
- No more big box & strip malls—build villages!

www.activelivingbydesign.org
Communities in Motion 2040:

- Transit, Trails, & Transit Oriented Development (TOD) option most in-line with healthy design.
- Steer, don’t just respond, to land use.

- E.g. Health Impact Assessments.
- Count costs of physical inactivity!

www.markfenton.com
2. For ACHD, COMPASS actively support:

- Complete Streets. All users (pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, & drivers) of all ages & abilities considered in every road project (new, repair, maintenance).

www.completestreets.org
Some challenging CS work:

- Complete Streets: during paving, painting, maintenance.
- Multi-lane one-way roads w/ one purpose.
Lane re-alignments

- Often called road diets, being seen more often.

- Can reduce collisions & severity.
- Dramatically improves performance for pedestrians & cyclists.

Urbana, IL; before & after.
3. Support a comprehensive network of transportation trails.

- **Connect** to other parts of network (sidewalks, bike lanes, transit).
- **Focus on destinations** (schools, shopping, parks, senior housing)
- **Balance the cries of the NIMBY, BANANA, & CAVE people.**

![Boise Greenbelt](image1)
![Boone, NC](image2)

[www.markfenton.com](http://www.markfenton.com)
E.g. Columbus, IN Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan

Voted into community Comprehensive Plan.

- Bike Friendly Campus or Bike Friendly Community rating (bronze to platinum).
- Student, staff ID’s as transit passes. Use them!
- Community “buy a bike rack” program.
- Teach bicycle skills, safety, repair in your school. >

www.bikeleague.org
The High Cost of Free Parking
D. Shoupe

Boise Bicycle Project – skills, maintenance, . . .
5. Safe Routes to School – more than just an encouragement program!

• All 5 E’s: Engineer bike lanes, racks, sidewalks; educate & encourage walk/bike groups; enforce proper speeds.

• Measure BMI? Must evaluate how kids get to school (walk, bike, bus, car) and why . . . !

www.saferoutesinfo.org
What did the kids think?

The ENVIRONMENT

• “I had to walk with my little brother to keep him out of trouble . . .” (Ciairah)

• “We saw a dog across the creek, in the trees . . .” (Jarrette)

www.markfenton.com
What did the kids think? FUN.

• “This is Tyshion falling in the water off of the bridge . . .” (Khalil)

• “This is the pipe the water comes out of, and this is Khalil falling in the water . . .” (Tyshion)

(Note the perspective.)
Recommendations:

• Do this all the time, not just as an “event.”
• Improve the trail through the park.
• Plant a garden, trees along the way.
• 5 minute safety delay on cars at dismissal.

www.saferoutespartnership.org
www.saferoutesinfo.org
Step up:
Be an active role model.

Leave the car behind at least one trip per week; walk, bike, or take transit instead. And take a friend along.
Why care about stickier communities for active living?

- The inactivity epidemic; our kids may pay!
- ~4,000 pedestrian, ~40,000 motor vehicle, ~400,000 sedentary-related deaths/year.
- Carbon footprint, air & water pollution.
- Failing transport infrastructure; hour+ commute time/day, traffic congestion & costs.
- Dependence on foreign oil; wars in Mid-east.
- More eyes on the street, less crime.
- Livable communities, where employers want to locate.

www.markfenton.com