

South Whidbey Island Walking Audits

Langley, Clinton, Freeland and Bayview



Socialability



Healthy Buildings and Streets



Child Friendly



Enclosure



Green, Memorable Streets



Healthy Main Street



Intact Town Centers



Trails and Walkways



Complete Streets

Walkability, Livability, Bicycling Audit

Cities are an invention to maximize exchange (goods, culture, friendship, knowledge) and to minimize travel.

The role of transport is to maximize exchange.

....David Engwicht



Clinton, Washington was evaluated in April 2007 for its status and potential for walkability, livability, “active living” and “active transportation.” Dan Burden, *Director of Walkable Communities, Inc. and a Senior Urban Designer with Glatting Jackson* conducted half-day walking audit and workshop events. The series of events on South Whidbey Island involved four communities (Langley, Clinton, Freeland and Bayview) and attracted more than 100 staff, political leaders and residents. These activities were sponsored by the Island County Public Health organization, Island County Planning and local community sponsors.

A walking workshop was held near the ferry terminal and in other central and outlying portions of Clinton. This document summarizes changes underway or needed to make Clinton more walkable, bicycle friendly and a destination in its own right as opposed to a pass-through location.

In his books “*Rise of the Creative Class*” and “*Flight of the Creative Class*” Richard Florida documents how towns that become the most livable; which devote the most capital to es-

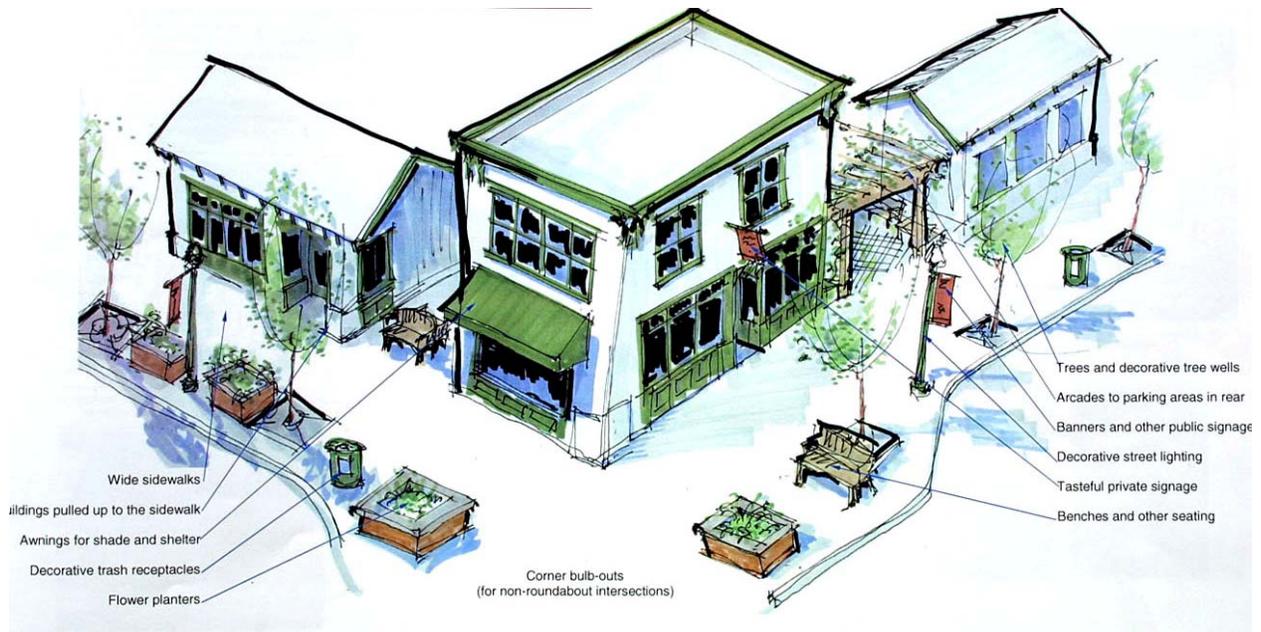
tablishing and maintaining “place” are those that will be the most competitive in future years. The end of both the agricultural and industrial eras, along with a growing desire by many in the Pacific Northwest to end suburban sprawl, means that towns, cities and regions must do much more than generate pipelines to move traffic at high speed. All urban streets must become places maximizing association, where exchange comes easy.

Participants in the walking workshop shared a longing to help their community to become a place. Today Clinton is hard to distinguish as a place by the 4.2 million who pass through it each year. Many people waiting to load onto a ferry, or exiting a ferry to get to other locations have little awareness that they are in a community.

Participants understood the importance of town making and historical preservation. Clinton should continue its work to further develop a strong, unique visual image ... a true portal or gateway sense of arrival and a formal welcome to an established rural community. Significant work is needed in traffic calming, sidewalk development, streetscaping, crossings and conversion from shopping plazas to easy to access mixed use buildings. This calls for added public/private partnerships and a new emphasis on planning and modern streetmaking.



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Focus on SR 525

SR 525 is Clinton's public face. This tired "placeless" roadway environment lacks distinguishable features or character. This is especially true in the most public locations. The combination of poorly located, featureless buildings, unkempt frontages and an aged, high speed, people unfriendly roadway is worthy of cartoons, not Sunset Magazine.

Despite recent efforts to create an attractive gateway park in Clinton — the feature and expenditure goes largely unnoticed in the more dominant grey roadway context. There is special opportunity to make aesthetics and a "complete streets" approach to SR 525 through a major new streetscaping, scaling and intersection compaction. SR 525 needs to be green and welcoming.



Ugly signs do more to repel visitors than to welcome them. A quality face created by distinguishable buildings, combined with tasteful, low speed signs will do more to bring needed commercial trade.



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Walkability Assessment

Clinton

1	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	HUMAN SCALE (BUILDINGS, STREETS, WALKWAYS IN HARMONY)
2	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	DEFINED TOWN CENTER AND TOWN/STREET CHARACTER
3	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	ENCLOSURE / STREETScape, LANDSCAPING, BUFFER FROM TRAFFIC
4	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	TRAILS, SIDEWALKS AND CROSSINGS
5	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	IMAGEABILITY AND COMPLEXITY, SENSE OF ARRIVAL (MEMORABLE)
6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	SECURITY AND TRANSPARENCY
7	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	STREET CONNECTIVITY, WALKABLE SCALE AND DENSITY
8	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	STREET DESIGN -- APPROPRIATE SCALE AND SPEED
9	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	INTERSECTION DESIGN -- APPROPRIATE SCALE AND SPEED
10	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	COMPLETE STREET SCORE (BICYCLE, PEDESTRIAN, TRANSIT FRIENDLY)
11	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	OPEN SPACE/PARKS/PLAZAS -- QUALITY, SCALE, ACCESS, SECURITY, USE
12	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	SOCIABILITY AND EXCHANGE -- NUMBER/DIVERSITY, INTERACTIONS

COMPOSITE SCORES ABOVE 5.0 ARE CONSIDERED WALKABLE. HIGHLY WALKABLE COMMUNITIES HAVE SCORES ABOVE 7.0 (TOTAL AVERAGE)

The Walkability Assessment scoring sheet to the left is the result of the consultant's first impression of Clinton. This score is based on the short time he was in the community.

It may be useful for a small group of citizens and other stakeholders to conduct their own self assessment to determine those scores they feel most accurately represent portions of their community, or the community as a whole.

In conducting a walking audit it is important to understand why these 12 qualities are being measured. People driving through a town rarely see interior neighborhoods, and often their desire to stop, visit or invest in a town are based on "first impressions," which often become lasting impressions.

People who get out of their cars to walk often realize that the scale of blocks, intersections or streets either work or fail the community.

imageability

Imageability is the quality of a place that makes it distinct, recognizable, and memorable. A place has high imageability when specific physical elements and their arrangement capture attention, evoke feelings, and create a lasting impression.

What do the experts say?

- "generic places with no character have no imageability"
- "really imageable places are recognizable and memorable"
- "distinct views can make an otherwise ordinary place very imageable"
- "architecture that suggests importance, presence of historical buildings, and landmarks" are imageable
- ask yourself "is the place unique?"

Streets filled with people, many signs, and strong landmarks make Times Square in New York City a very imageable place.

HIGH IMAGEABILITY

Few pedestrians, no street activity like outdoor dining, and no features that serve as landmarks make this street hardly distinguishable from others and thus not imageable.

LOW IMAGEABILITY



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complexity

Complexity refers to the visual richness of a place. The complexity of a place depends on the variety of the physical environment, specifically the numbers and kinds of buildings, architectural diversity and ornamentation, landscape elements, street furniture, signage, and human activity.

What do the experts say?

"many people add to complexity"

"overly controlled design makes a place less complex; you lose complexity with predictability"

"a block with one building is less complex than a block made of several buildings"

"also need complex activity - social complexity"

This street is visually complex with many different building and accent colors, places to dine on the street, and many pedestrians.

Few colors, few buildings, and a lack of pedestrians make this street scene very low in complexity

HIGH COMPLEXITY

LOW COMPLEXITY



enclosure

Enclosure refers to the degree to which streets and other public spaces are visually defined by buildings, walls, trees, and other elements. Spaces where the height of vertical elements is proportionally related to the width of the space between them have a room-like quality.

What do the experts say?

"Different building heights and levels don't provide the same enclosure as continuous edges"

"old trees with large canopies can make otherwise low enclosed places more enclosed"

"is the space well defined?"

A continuous street wall on both sides of the street gives this scene high enclosure. The buildings and uniform street trees create a room-like effect by limiting long sight lines and views of open sky.

This scene has low enclosure because the arrangement of buildings does not provide a well-defined street wall. The scene feels open, with the ability to see far into the distance with large amounts of open sky.

HIGH ENCLOSURE

LOW ENCLOSURE



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Human Scale and Imageability. SR 525 is low on both the Human and Imageability (memorable) scales. In the photos below note the change in the intersection from one where people seek to get out of town as fast as they can to where there is a desire to linger. A streetscape comes first, but a partnership where buildings come into compliance with an urban form is essential to Clinton becoming a place.

human scale

Human scale refers to the size, texture, and articulation of physical elements that match the size and proportions of humans and, equally important, correspond to the speed at which humans walk. Building details, pavement texture, street trees, and street furniture are all physical elements contributing to human scale.

What do the experts say?

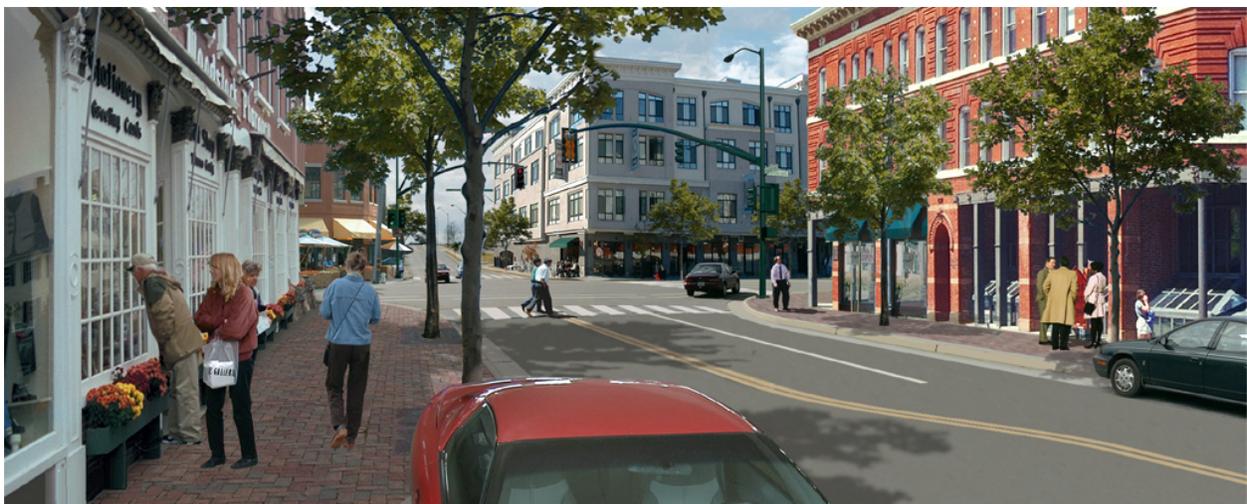
- "presence of street furniture, protection from traffic; focus on street level;"
- "sidewalk cafes on both sides of sidewalk increase human scale"
- "presence of stores and activity that invite you in"
- "presence of people plays a big role"

Continuous active uses at street level, restricted sight lines that create a room-like feeling, small buildings, a narrow street, and ample street furniture give this street human scale.

This street has no active uses or street furniture that would engage pedestrians. Long sight lines into the distance also contribute to this street having low human scale.

HIGH HUMAN SCALE

LOW HUMAN SCALE



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Street design

To what extent do streets create comfort for walking with leisure and safety? A good street is one where motorists are behaving themselves, not shoving one another around, and giving full consideration to the pedestrian. High volumes may be fine, but high speeds are inappropriate to urban settings.

What do the experts say?

“streets are places of social and commercial encounter and exchange”

“Streets moderate the form and structure and comfort of urban communities”

“Great streets have 9-to-10 foot lanes and 7-8 foot parking maximum”
.....Alan Jacobs

Great streets often vary in their typical sections as they travel through a neighborhood, or community, sometimes with parking, sometimes without, sometimes with sidewalks attached, some not.

In all cases the design is in context with the places that it helps establish and celebrate.

Well designed streets do not so much follow minimum designs so much as they set upper thresholds for things that often destroy a place, such as oversized turn or travel lanes, medians, sidewalks or planters when not needed.

Good urban streets are most often compact and details are well thought through.

HIGH DESIGN SCALE

LOW DESIGN SCALE



Intersection design

To what extent do intersections create comfort for walking with leisure and safety? A good intersection is one where motorists are behaving themselves, not accelerating into the space, giving full consideration to the pedestrian. Good intersections are compact, taking up no more space than needed for through and turning movements. Turns are made at proper speeds.

What do the experts say?

“When great intersections work it is because of the creation of a pedestrian realm where the cars know this”

“When streets become unsafe, it is almost always when the pedestrian realm does not exist”
.....Alan Jacobs

“Great intersections attract pedestrians, poorly designed ones repel them”
..... Dan Burden

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HIGH DESIGN SCALE

LOW DESIGN SCALE



“For more than sixty years city designers have made changes that are anti-urban, anti-pedestrian and anti-mixed use. As a philosophy, they moved to segregate uses and then they moved to segregate people and cars under the guise of safety, with an emphasis on size — wider, larger — and this is anti-pedestrian. Existing standards are not based on research, they’re mostly based on queuing problems”.

...Alan Jacobs

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Walking and Bicycling Environment

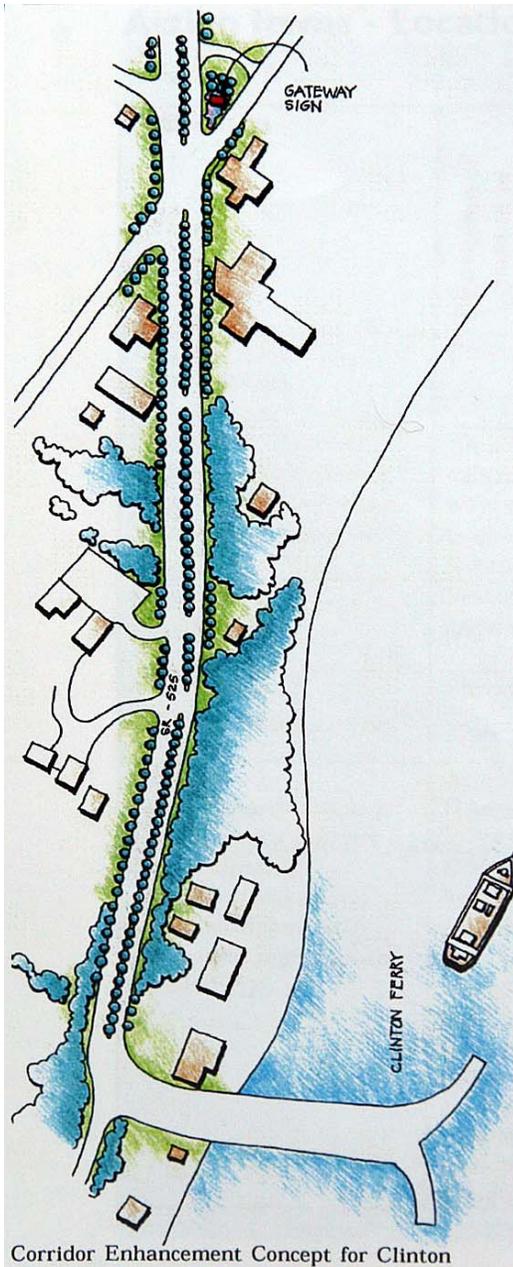
Site development standards contribute greatly to the quality of the pedestrian environment by “framing” a street and providing interest and activity. Similarly the character of a street, including the design of its sidewalks, travel lanes, parking and bicycling facilities impacts the pedestrian realm, and potentially in a more direct way. The pedestrian realm requires attention to pedestrian safety, as well as comfort and ease of access. Pedestrian safety and comfort are directly related to the width of sidewalk, the amount of buffering from traffic, shade, lighting and availability of other pedestrian amenities. In order to assure that a pedestrian-friendly environment is created, clear pedestrian design guidelines should be adopted.

At a minimum, include the following guidelines:

- Commercial sidewalks should be provided with a minimum width of 8 feet for pedestrian movement, with the minimum front setback of 4-6 feet. Where appropriate additional street furniture/commercial use zone should be provided.
 - Neighborhood sidewalks should be a minimum of 5 feet, with 4-6 foot planter strips.
 - Street trees provide scale to the street, shade, and separation from traffic for the pedestrian. Ideally, they should be planted every 20 to 30 feet and placed between 3 to 4 feet from back of curb.
 - Pedestrian street lighting is a typically overlooked element when designing streets. Nighttime activities are a critical part of achieving an active district and pedestrian-scaled lighting should be provided along sidewalks with fixtures limited in height ranging between 10 to 15 feet.
- All developed sites should provide at least one continuous intra-parcel walkway of at least 5 feet in width to connect sidewalks adjoining to the main entrance of the building.
 - Wherever feasible, provide one-way, marked bicycle lanes in the same direction of travel as motorized vehicles. Exceptions are one way streets with an opposite direction bicycle lane separated from travel lanes (contra-fl w lane). The preferred minimum width of a bicycle lane is 5 feet.
 - Provide consistent signing and pavement markings along the entire length of bicycle lanes, routes and trails. Provide additional wayfinding, as needed.
 - Use appropriate markings and signs to end bicycle lanes prior to intersections. The use of colored lanes or “skip” marking through the intersection is recommended.
 - At intersections with exclusive right-turn lanes, transition the bicycle lane to the left of the right-turn lane. If right-of-way is a constraint, use appropriate markings and signs to end bicycle lane prior to the intersection.
 - In some cases adding paved shoulders of 5-6 feet, rather than marked bike lanes, will prove to be a “best choice.” This is often done when a roadway change is not long enough to warrant markings, or where an official group has not yet designated a full system.



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Crossings and Intersections

Clinton's streets and intersections should be designed to allow a smooth, even, efficient movement of traffic at low rates of speed. Use of curb extensions, an entry roundabout, crossings islands every 500-800 feet will be needed in time to achieve a pedestrian supportive environment. Highly skewed intersections can be prime candidates for roundabouts to bring speeds under control and to allow more safe crossings and a gateway feel.



