

**To: Falls Church City Council**

**From: Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation**

**Subject: Results of City of Falls Church 2016 Walkability Survey**

### **Summary of walkability survey results**

In the fall of 2016, the Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT) conducted a public survey to enlist the help of residents in assessing the walkability of the City of Falls Church's two main commercial corridors, Broad Street and Washington Street, on a block-by-block basis. The survey was distributed in paper form and also available online at <http://bit.ly/walkfallschurch>.

Participants were asked to rate each block's sidewalks, the ease of crossing streets, and the comfort and appeal of the walking experience on a scale of 1 (Awful); 2 (Many Problems); 3 (Some Problems); 4 (Good); 5 (Very Good); and 6 (Excellent). Residents were encouraged to survey as many blocks as they liked. In total, 62 people submitted 224 responses.

Overall, residents offer a lukewarm assessment of the walkability of the City's two main commercial corridors. Respondents were particularly likely to mention broken/cracked sidewalks and pedestrian/vehicular conflicts in their criticisms.

#### **Sidewalks**

Overall, participants gave surveyed sidewalks an average grade of 3.4, falling into the "some problems" category. The top three problems reported include:

1. Broken/cracked segments (mentioned in 76 responses, or 34% of all responses);
2. Signs, poles and overhanging foliage blocking the right-of-way (30 responses or 13%); and
3. Bicyclists riding on the sidewalk (29 responses or 13%).

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#### **Street crossings**

Overall, participants gave the street crossings of surveyed blocks an average rating of 3.7. Despite this middling rating, respondents didn't have specific problems to point to – nearly half said they had no problems crossing the street. Of the problems that were reported, the two most mentioned were:

1. Experienced a near miss with a motorist or cyclist (mentioned in 45 responses)
2. Striped crosswalk or traffic signal needed (mentioned in 26 responses)

#### **Pleasant walk/Comfort rating**

The survey asked respondents what would make their walks on Broad and Washington more pleasant, and offered a list of possible remedies. Respondents were allowed to select as many, or as few as they liked. The top three choices were:

1. Increased buffering between the street and sidewalks (102 votes, or 54%);
2. More grass, flowers and trees (35 votes) (35 votes or 18%); and
3. The addition of public art (9 votes or 5%).

The survey also asked respondents what makes walking on Broad and Washington *unpleasant*. Respondents named:

1. Rundown or vacant buildings (17 votes, or 21%)
2. Poor lighting (17 votes, or 21%)
3. Loiterers or suspicious activity (14 votes or 17%)

The average “comfort rating” for surveyed blocks was 3.44 (Some Problems). No City blocks scored ratings of 1 (Awful) or 6 (Excellent). The worst-rated blocks which earned average scores in the 2 (Many Problems) range were:

- 900 S. Washington
- 800 S. Washington
- 600 – 200 S. Washington
- 500 N. Washington
- 700 W. Broad

The most comfortable blocks, which earned average scores in the 4 (Good) range were:

- 100 – 300 W. Broad
- 1200 W. Broad
- 100 N. Washington
- 300 N. Washington

### **Summary of open-ended comments from Falls Church City 2016 walkability survey**

#### **1. Comments/trends**

- a. 100 E. Broad
  - i. Sidewalks too narrow
  - ii. Signs obstruct walking ahead
- b. 100 W. Broad
  - i. Dogwood tavern sidewalk is obstructed and too narrow
  - ii. Uneven brick walkways by GM Square
  - iii. Signal at Broad & Washington not effective
- c. 200 W. Broad
  - i. Signs obstruct sidewalk, reduce right of way
- d. 300 W. Broad
  - i. Harris Teeter parking garage entrance creates pedestrian hazard; poorly signed
  - ii. Broken/uneven sidewalks around Virginia Ave. entrance to Broaddale
- e. 400 W. Broad

- i. Telephone pole at Bedos/Gun Dude make it impossible for strollers to pass
  - ii. Park Ave: unconnected sidewalks; missing sidewalks on both sides of street
  - iii. Unmaintained planting areas, particularly Exxon and Gun Dude
  - iv. Signs obstruct walking ROW
- f. 500 W. Broad
  - i. Traffic calming
- g. 600 W. Broad
  - i. Complete sidewalk on Park between PA and VA ave's
  - ii. Poles obstruct pedestrian ROW
- h. 700 W. Broad
  - i. Utility and telephone poles obstruct sidewalk and view
  - ii. Asphalt has replaced sidewalk
  - iii. Traffic congestion makes street undesirable/unable to ride bike
- i. 800 W. Broad
  - i. Sidewalks too narrow
  - ii. Telephone poles obstruct pedestrian ROW
  - iii. Reoccurring puddle at Spring & Broad by St. James
- j. 900 W. Broad
  - i. Telephone pole near Broad & Spring intersection narrow pedestrian ROW
  - ii. Sidewalks on parallel side streets (Fulton and Park for example) missing sidewalks completely
  - iii. Pedestrians feel "exposed" on this block; too close to the street and block features run down buildings
- k. 1000 W. Broad
  - i. American car wash water and wax creates slippery hazard on sidewalk
  - ii. American car wash customers obtrude pedestrian ROW
- l. 1100 W. Broad
  - i. Day laborers congregating (although what, specifically, the issue is isn't clear)
- m. 1200 W. Broad
  - i. Wait to cross the street is too long; automatic walk signals
- n. 500 N. Wash
  - i. Crossing at W&OD & Washington unsafe
  - ii. Cracked/obstructed sidewalks make it difficult for biker and pedestrian use
- o. 400 N. Wash
  - i. Cracked/uneven sidewalks
  - ii. Northgate sidewalk too narrow
  - iii. Northgate planter boxes hazardous
- p. 400 S. Wash
  - i. Cracked/broken sidewalks, particularly around Fox's Music/ LaMiguelena
  - ii. Unmaintained sidewalks/gardens; trash
  - iii. More bike infrastructure
- q. 500 S. Wash

- i. Broken/uneven sidewalks
  - ii. Sidewalk contains many obstacles for handicapped
- r. 600 S. Wash
  - i. Uneven/cracked sidewalks
  - ii. Maple & Lee Hwy intersection perceived unsafe
- s. 700 S. Wash
  - i. Cracked/uneven sidewalks
  - ii. Trash/unkept lawns
  - iii. More buffer from street
- t. 800 S. Wash
  - i. Trash on ground
  - ii. Increase buffering from street
    - 1. Trees
- u. 900 S. Wash
  - i. Seen as not pedestrian-friendly; narrow and incomplete sidewalks
  - ii. Light at Marshall & Lee Hwy needs a signal
  - iii. 900 S. Washington building is run down and unsightly
  - iv. Protestors outside of 900 S. Washington are disruptive and prohibit peaceful walks

**Across nearly every Broad Street block there were complaints of signs and/or poles obstructing residents' walk. The pole and brick wall by The Gun Dude (400 block W. Broad) was specifically mentioned by numerous residents. Many participants also stated that the sidewalks were not wide enough to walk side-by-side with their partner or to roll a stroller and reported cracks or uneven sidewalks throughout that similarly made walking with small children difficult.**

**Another common complaint was streets not mentioned on the survey where the sidewalk ends abruptly, forcing pedestrians to cross the street to continue their walk (Park Ave. and Fulton Ave. were commonly named). It seems that sidewalk maintenance and consistency are viewed as Broad Street's, and the City's in general, biggest flaws.**

#### Washington Street

- 1. 100 N. Washington
- 2. 200 N. Washington
  - a. Cracked/uneven sidewalks
- 3. 300 N. Washington
  - a. Uneven sidewalks
- 4. 400 N. Washington
  - a. Uneven Sidewalks
  - b. Northgate stretch
    - i. Open top plant boxes hazardous
    - ii. Narrow sidewalks

5. 500 N. Washington
  - a. Difficult to cross the street
  - b. Concerns of fast and dense traffic
6. 100 S. Washington
  - a. Broad & Washington intersection dangerous for pedestrians
7. 200 S. Washington
  - a. Annandale & Wash intersection need updated signals and crosswalks
  - b. Park near Annandale & Wash intersection needs maintenance; broken benches and overflowing trash
8. 300 S. Washington
  - a. Broken parts of sidewalk
  - b. Trash in the street and in green areas
  - c. Unkept plant boxes/gardens
9. 400 S. Washington
  - a. Unkept plant boxes/gardens
  - b. Trash in the street
  - c. Broken sidewalks
  - d. Missing curb ramps/not wheelchair accessible
10. 500 S. Washington
  - a. Trash in the street
  - b. Building facades look run down
11. 600 S. Washington
  - a. Many cracked and broken sidewalk segments
    - i. Sidewalk mostly sloped driveway aprons from car dealership and other businesses
  - b. Crossing at Maple & Washington dangerous for pedestrians; needs light
12. 700 S. Washington
  - a. Trash along street
  - b. Broken sidewalk segments
  - c. More buffer between street and sidewalk
  - d. Weeds growing between sidewalks
13. 800 S. Washington
  - a. Broken sidewalks
  - b. Heavy traffic and no bike lanes leads to bikers on the sidewalks
  - c. More buffer between street and sidewalk; many sidewalks are driveways/parking lot entrances
    - i. More trees
14. 900 S. Washington
  - a. Narrow and broken sidewalks
  - b. Incomplete sidewalk near Marshall
  - c. Need crossing signal at Marshall & Washington
  - d. 900 S. Washington building is ugly and offputting

i. Protesters outside disrupt community peace

Washington Street, as a whole, has many cracked, broken or incomplete sidewalks along the north and south side of the street. The sidewalks are also seen as being too narrow and close to the street, with a few obstructing poles in the pedestrian ROW, but not as many as Broad Street.

North Washington's most common complaint were the sidewalk conditions as already mentioned; other than that, residents didn't seem to have a problem with the buildings or other surrounding infrastructure.

South Washington Street has many problems, being the worst-surveyed block in the City by far. Nearly all of S. Washington, from the 900 block to 100 received an average rating of 2 (Many Problems). In addition to the sidewalks being broken and too close to the street, residents also complained about this stretch being a generally unappealing part of the City. Citizens reported trash on the ground, unkempt gardens and plant boxes outside of deteriorating buildings, and dangerous crossing conditions at the Marshall and Maple intersections.

**Attachments:**

Suggestions for improving walkability

Block rating map

Sidewalk rating map

Bad block pictures

Picture maps

Walkability survey (PDF)