



Bessemer City Pedestrian Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Current Pedestrian CONCERNS

Sidewalks and Connectivity

The City's relatively few existing sidewalks are clustered downtown. Many of them need repair. Where sidewalks are unavailable, roads are often too narrow and/or too busy to be safe for pedestrian use.

Safety

Insufficient street lighting in many areas, speeding vehicles, busy intersections with low visibility, and unleashed dogs present danger to walkers.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics can have a great affect on an individual's willingness to walk about their community. The City is in need of a number of beautification features, such as street trees, signature street lighting, and cleaned up private properties.

Destinations

More downtown businesses and other desirable destinations would mean a more walkable community.

Plans and Policies

Implementation of already adopted plans and enforcement of laws already on the books could make an immediate difference. Insufficient funding to implement plans is part of the problem, along with the City's sole reliance on County police to enforce its laws.

Pedestrian Plan GOALS

Walkability/Connectivity

- Increase connectivity and accessibility for all citizens through improvement of pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and key destinations.
- Improve safety conditions for pedestrians particularly at busy street crossings. Address inadequate sight distance, poor lighting, and unleashed dogs.

Vitality

- Create and support a strong Central Business District.
- Encourage owner-occupied properties and foster quality, pedestrian-friendly redevelopment in currently vacant properties and underutilized buildings.

Aesthetics/Identity:

- Establish attractive entrance features and beautification throughout key portions of the City that portray a clear and positive identity for the community.
- Ensure residences present a decent appearance to the street.

Regional destination (visitors and businesses):

- Accentuate the unique aspects of the City, drawing upon historical roots, geographic assets, and cultural potential.
- Create viable pedestrian links from downtown to industrial sites, business parks, open space and recreational areas, and regional pedestrian networks.

Specific Pedestrian Barriers and Constraints

- **The Norfolk Southern Railroad** bisects the City into north and south.
- **Whetstone Mountain** separates the Vantine community from downtown.
- **NC 161** bends sharply around Whetstone Mountain's southern end and is streaming with a massive volume of cars particularly at peak commuting times when many Middle School students are walking across or adjacent to the road.
- **Virginia Avenue**, as the City's Main Street, sees its share of speeding vehicular traffic inhibiting pedestrian activity in the City's primary downtown corridor.

Policy recommendations

- **Enhance the Existing Sidewalk System.** Review the current sidewalk maintenance schedule and its funding sources. Develop a reporting system that helps users to record and report maintenance and accessibility problem spots.
- **Implement existing development policy.** Review adopted policies, particularly those cited in the Pedestrian Plan. Establish partnerships with local corporate entities, citizen action groups, and regional public organizations and identify the complementary goals, any common funding strategies, and potential private partners.
- **Engage in community planning for infill** of derelict or under-developed parcels. Zoning restrictions for such properties should be evaluated in terms of pedestrian-friendliness.
- **Work with neighboring jurisdictions** to coordinate on areas outside the City's incorporated limits. Sprawling growth patterns inevitably lead to strip-type development that would not support a pedestrian vision.
- **Create a complete pedestrian system** throughout the City and its surroundings. Creek lands, utility corridors, preserved street right-of-ways and existing parks can be most readily utilized for greenways. Ensure that all new development respect these designated corridors.
- **Designate Development Nodes** of concentrated mixed-use development. Map existing and potential nodes with the boundaries of each clearly defined and develop Node Overlay Standards.
- **Accentuate City Identity.** Identify signature landmark elements that express the City's unique heritage and special qualities. Designate selected gateway locations as a special landscape zone.
- **Enact UDO and Land Use Plan changes** recommended in the Pedestrian Plan.



Development Nodes

Bessemer City Pedestrian Plan

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ORDINANCE MODIFICATIONS

Issues	Recommended Ordinance Revisions and Actions
1. Mixed Land Uses	1.) Allow mixed residential-commercial developments as a conditional use where residential zones are located within proposed pedestrian nodes. 2.) Increase the maximum number of dwelling units permissible within a mix-use building when space and infrastructure are sufficient. 3.) Review areas within newly designated nodes and rezone appropriate areas to pedestrian oriented zoning.
2. Street Connectivity	1.) Per development, lower the minimum number of lots requiring multiple entrances. 2.) Mandate that new subdivisions have at least one stub to adjoining properties greater than 10 acres having a minimum contiguous adjacent frontage of 100 feet. 3.) Limit the use of cul-de-sacs to promote internal connectivity within the subdivision. 4.) Require pedestrian trails where street connections are considered impractical.
3. Cul-de-sac length	Reduce the maximum allowable length of cul-de-sacs to 400 feet.
4. Block length	Limit block lengths in new development to no greater than 600' and no less than 200 feet. Include objective guidelines for determining "unusual topography" such as maximum slopes, stream valley widths, and floodway and endangered stream classifications.
5. Crosswalks	1.) Require that all uses that generate substantial amount of pedestrian traffic be subject to a conditional use. A condition that could be placed on such uses is the installation of crosswalks on major streets that abut such facilities. 2.) Require midblock crosswalks along principal streets within subdivisions for block lengths of greater than 500 feet. 3.) Reference the City Pedestrian Plan and other future related planning documents for implementation of proposed crosswalks and improvements to existing crosswalks. 4.) Require that the location of proposed crosswalks be indicated on the sketch plan and on the preliminary and final plat.
6. Sidewalks: location, condition, connections	1.) Require that all sidewalk construction meet all applicable ADA standards . Reference the City Specifications and Standards . 2.) Reference the City Pedestrian Plan for location of all required sidewalks within the City limits and the ETJ. 3.) Require developers to install sidewalks along residential streets for the length of their development of more than four dwelling units per acre. 4.) Provide clear regulations as to what party will pay for the sidewalks if they are not installed at the time of development. Developer contributions to sidewalks must be set aside in an account at the time of development.
7. Greenways, Trails & Open Space	1.) Adopt an Open Space Protection Plan and/or a Comprehensive Park System Plan. 2.) Reference the above plan and the Pedestrian Plan for the location of greenways & trails and require the dedication of open space to secure land for greenway (and other open space) development or usage. 3.) Provide or reference design standards for greenways. 4.) Include a stipulation of providing internal pedestrian paths to adjacent open space for off-site open space credit.
8. Street Trees	1.) Revise UDO Section 11.4 to include all areas within the City's ETJ. 2.) Consider Corridor Highway Overlay Districts for roads into Bessemer City. 3.) Develop and adopt more complete landscaping requirements.
9. Setbacks	Establish "build-to" lines or maximum front yard setbacks for each zone, or establish guidelines for required off-street parking allowed in the front yard.
10. Off-street Parking Requirements	1.) Limit the maximum number on off-street spaces for each zoning category. 2.) Lower the minimum requirements for off-street parking for the Downtown Overlay and designated Node areas. Require a certain amount of off-street parking only for residential uses located in these zones. 3.) Reduce the required number of off-street parking spaces in all districts. 4.) Grant Zoning Administrator greater discretion to allow exemptions from additional parking requirements.

Recommended Programs

The Heart Walk

Bessemer City can show that it truly is the City with a Heart with an annual American Heart Association **Start! Heart Walk** for Heart Disease. Many events may be featured, including an 10K and 8K runs, a 5K walk, a Tot Trot, a 1 mile “Fun Run” or even a half or full marathon.



Walk a Kid to School event

On special days each year, non-profit organizations, teaming up with area restaurants, could provide school children breakfast before leading them on a community group walk to school.

Walking School Bus

The walking school bus idea encourages students to walk together with supervision of adults taking turns walking with students by having assigned days of duty.

Crossing Guards

Volunteers from the community can work with the local school system to provide safe crossings for school children at key crossing areas.



Pedestrian Safety Roadshow

NCDOT hosts this special program to train facilitators who could help communities identify and solve problems that affect pedestrian safety and walkability.

Adopt a Sidewalk/Trail Program

The Adopt-a-Road program is very successful in gathering volunteer groups to regularly clean a particular stretch of road. Adopting a trail or sidewalk section can be just as effective.

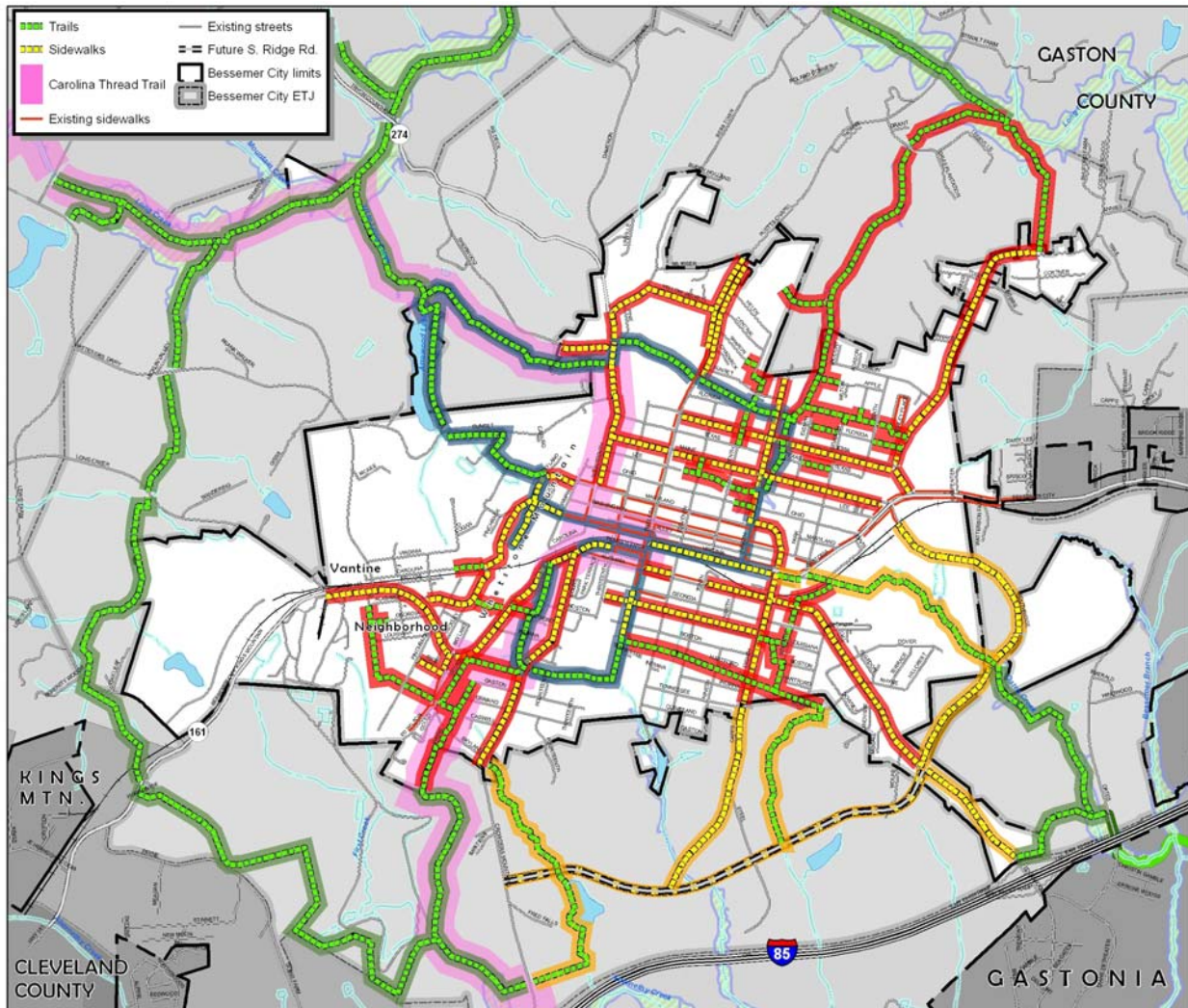
Wireless Internet (Wifi) and trail webcam coverage.

Wifi allows people to enjoy a mobile workplace. Anyone working on a laptop computer can choose to work inside or outside, wirelessly, anywhere within the Wifi range.



The Bessemer Trekkers

Trails provide opportunities for the community to meet, socialize and exercise. As part of initial promotions for particular trails, the “Bessemer Trekkers” would provide an organized opportunity to gather for a trek along the trails.



Project Groups

Whetstone Mountain Scenic Trail

- Accentuate the unique aspects of the City, drawing upon historical roots, geographic assets, and cultural potential.
- Provide additional aesthetic improvements throughout key portions of the City to reinforce City identity. These features may include signature paving and street lighting, street trees, sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities.

Commercial Connectors

- Provide viable pedestrian connections from the City's industrial sites and business parks to downtown.

Community Network

- Increase connectivity by improving pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and key destinations, particularly the Central Business District. Make important destinations, attractions and pedestrian facilities more accessible to all members of the community.
- Create and support a strong Central Business District.

Regional Green Links

- Create pedestrian links to nearby open space, adjacent cities, and larger county and regional pedestrian networks.

