Walkability and Pedestrian Safety in Nampa, Idaho

Laura J. Q. Shoemaker

Boise State University

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Boise State University

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Author Note:

Bachelor of Applied Science

Communication Management Certificate

Mentor: Dr. Margaret Sass

Contact Information: laurashoemaker@u.boisestate.edu
Abstract

This service-learning capstone project explores the pressing concern of walkability in Nampa, Idaho, driven by a rise in pedestrian fatalities. The project is designed to foster citizen advocacy for a more walkable town by creating a booklet. After research and collaboration, I created a concise booklet that shares the benefits of walkability, pedestrian safety tips, local laws, and organizations citizens can contact or be involved in.

Results include city support for distribution, media coverage, and engagement through social media and community events. While successful, the project could benefit from increased opportunities for community engagement and broader dissemination to promote pedestrian safety and the benefits of a walkable community.

*Keywords:* walkability, pedestrian safety, pedestrian advocacy
Section 1: Introduction to your Capstone Project

Walkability in Nampa, Idaho, is a pressing concern due to the rise in pedestrian fatalities. There is an urgent need for safer infrastructure and overall awareness of pedestrians' vulnerability. I asked, “How might I encourage citizens to advocate for a more walkable town, promoting a healthier community through physical activity and enhancing the overall quality of life?” Ultimately, I wrote a booklet on walkability in Nampa, Idaho, for the capstone project. This project includes safety tips and current pedestrian laws. It also explains the importance of walkability in a community and how to advocate for it. I hope to continue using this project to promote awareness and advocacy and make Nampa safer for its stakeholders.

Section 2: Elements Coming Together

Innovative Approach

Pedestrians and drivers often view situations differently when assuming each role. Promoting awareness by sharing safety tips and pedestrian laws with both groups has been crucial in my project. I have gathered input from the city of Nampa and the Nampa Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, on which I serve, to ensure a comprehensive approach. I utilized integrative thinking by synthesizing various perspectives and collaborating with different entities to create a more well-rounded and effective solution.

I researched local and nationwide walkability statistics and issues. Many of my sources are current and provide contemporary ideas about walkability and promoting stakeholder advocacy and safety. A decisive reference that motivated me to further advocate for walkability in my hometown was an article about the high cost of bad sidewalks and its effect on accessibility (Zipper, 2020). I found a source in Idaho explaining the regrettable 70% increase in
pedestrian deaths over a 10-year period (Idaho State Journal, 2021). I also found that Nampa heavily relies on vehicles, having a walk score of only 29 out of 100 (walkscore.com, 2024).

I spoke with Breanna Son, a city planner from Nampa, who offered several ideas and support. Her list of ideas for the booklet helped shape the final product, and she pointed me toward several resources, including Nampa’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. This document highlights arguments for improving pedestrian and bicyclist conditions, including community health, environmental quality, equity, economic growth, and quality of life (2020).

The matriarch of the Nampa Bicycle Project, LaRita Shandorff, served as an influential expert on pedestrian and bicyclist advocacy in Nampa. Shandorff became an early advocate when moving to Nampa in 1992. She quickly observed a need for sidewalks and pathways. In 2013, she pioneered Nampa’s first Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (L. Shandorff, personal communication, March 25, 2024). As I pulled resources together for my booklet, Shandorff provided several resources and ideas on how to appeal to Nampa citizens.

**Emotional Intelligence**

I refined my approach to the capstone project by developing an initial outline for a Nampa walkability booklet that highlights the benefits of walkability to all citizens. I have considered the agenda I want to push versus one that supports the city’s efforts. As I distribute the final booklet, I hope to share a positive message to increase citizen awareness and encourage involvement and advocacy. I started from a place of frustration but quickly realized that a more productive and positive approach would be partnering with the city. I firmly believe that communities thrive when they receive ongoing support and advocacy.
Creative Thinking

I recognized the importance of understanding diverse perspectives, and I tried to garner those to make something that would suggest positive benefits for everyone if their community was more walkable. As stated, several stakeholders offered support and feedback on what to include in the booklet. Shandorff encouraged me to consider what would entice people to pick the booklet up if they saw it. I had to think outside of the box to answer that question. I approached the content of the booklet with thoughtfulness, organizing the information into clear and reader-friendly sections. I utilized bullet points, concise language, and visually appealing design elements to enhance readability and comprehension. I hope that this booklet highlights an important message and becomes a catalyst for citizens to look further into advocating for a healthier, more vibrant, and inclusive community.

Your Innovative Solution

My motivation for this project stemmed from wanting to be more involved with my community and contribute to the Nampa Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. I was inspired to join the committee a couple of years ago, but my contribution was minimal beyond attending the once-a-month meetings. This project has allowed me to collaborate and build new connections with other community stakeholders.

Beyond my personal growth, the project's outcomes include increasing awareness and understanding of walkability in my community. It has created a conversation starter, leading to advocacy for pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. Rather than simply disseminating information, the booklet is a call to action. Through this approach, I hope to ignite a sense of ownership and responsibility among residents, prompting them to take meaningful steps toward improving walkability in our area.
Section 3: Results

The city of Nampa played a significant role in supporting my project. I am genuinely grateful for the support the Nampa Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and key city employees extended. My booklet is now accessible on the city’s website, and they generously offered to print 20 copies and make them available upon request at the city hall. Additionally, they were willing to share it on their social media platforms. While I had hoped to gain access to their website analytics and further promotion through their social media channels, city employees are currently occupied with other responsibilities and have not been able to provide this assistance yet.

I was fortunate to have a reporter from the Idaho Press take notice of my project. She interviewed me for an article about pedestrian deaths. The article highlighted my booklet on the front page of the Easter Sunday paper. According to a “Note from the Publisher” in 2022, the Idaho Press has 300,000 individual readers. While I am optimistic that the newspaper helped my booklet reach a broader audience, I am unable to confirm any specific data.

Because I could not get analytics through the city, I pushed out my booklet on my social media and requested feedback. I was pleased with the project's exposure. I estimate at least 100 views, 45 likes, three shares, and nine comments. Several comments were encouragement from friends, but three people took the time to read the booklet and give specific feedback. The following is what they shared. "Easy to follow with lots of great tidbits and tips." “Very thorough yet concise and easy to read.” “We are walking more now than ever…and the safety piece is real! We appreciate the very important work you are doing…”

Nampa recently hosted a "Destination Wellness" event at the public library on April 13th.
I teamed up with the Nampa Bicycle Project, which allowed me to share a flyer containing a QR code linking to my booklet on the City of Nampa Website. Since I have limited copies of the booklet, I provided one sample during the event.

While there, I connected with a dedicated volunteer from the Boise Bicycle Project and the volunteer coordinator for the Goathead Fest, an event held in Boise at the end of the summer. They invited me to share my booklet at the festival and even offered a potential resource for printing more copies. Shandorff has also provided me with two potential grant resources.

Looking ahead, the Nampa Bicycle Pedestrian Committee will be participating in a Nampa Third Thursday downtown event on May 16th, presenting another opportunity to distribute the booklet. We also plan to have a booth at the Nampa Farmer’s Market, but a date has yet to be determined. The feedback I have received so far has been encouraging, suggesting possibilities for further distribution in the future. It is gratifying to witness my community embracing this project.

This project has benefited various stakeholders, including myself, Nampa residents, Nampa Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee members, and city of Nampa personnel involved in city planning and infrastructure development. Through this project, I gained knowledge of pedestrian laws and community engagement, giving me the confidence to participate actively in my community. Nampa residents have also benefited from the project, increasing awareness of pedestrian safety and tips for navigating walkable environments, improving the overall quality of life. The Nampa Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee and city personnel now have another tool for promoting walkability.
Section 4: Conclusion

Completing this capstone project has been an enriching experience. It has deepened my understanding of pedestrian laws and boosted my confidence in advocating for pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. I did not anticipate the support and resources I have been extended. They have been invaluable. Engaging with my community has been the most rewarding aspect of this experience. Stakeholders provided valuable insights into local perspectives and needs. I am pleased that I have been able to use the city’s website as a platform and hope that this project will gain further exposure.

While the project was fulfilling, I recognized the potential for increased community engagement, which could be achieved through surveys or focus groups to gather more extensive feedback and ensure diverse voices are heard. Understanding conflicting perspectives could have helped me empathize with their views and understand how to inspire them to read the booklet.

Walkability is integral to a vibrant community. I have learned that through actively participating in community well-being, I can contribute to making my community a better place. I hope the booklet will continue to benefit the community and reach a broader audience, educating citizens on pedestrian safety and the advantages of a walkable community.
Section 5: References


Section 6: Appendix

Nampa Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee page on the City of Nampa website

Step by Step: A Guide to Walkability and Pedestrian Advocacy