



**INSPIRED LEADERS  
SHAPING CITIES**

# Prioritizing Pedestrian Improvements

A 2016 TOP ISSUES COUNCIL **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 2016 IDA Top Issues Council on Pedestrian Improvements surveyed IDA members on four key areas relating to the pedestrian experience: education; engineering and planning; enforcement; and technology. Respondents were from the United States, Canada, Japan and New Zealand, and represented cities of various populations ranging from under 100,000 to more than 500,000 residents. The complete research report analyzes these survey results, explores the barriers to success, provides relevant case studies, and offers potential paths to follow in creating successful pedestrian facilities.

In many ways, urban place management organizations, such as business improvement districts (BIDs), continue to lay the foundation for pedestrian improvements by creating a clean, enjoyable environment for users. However, more effort is needed to develop the infrastructure necessary to further capitalize on the trend of living, working, and playing in downtown areas. As global populations shift toward urban centers, the opportunity is ripe for downtown areas to improve walkability. This executive summary highlights key takeaways from the report.

## **TAKEAWAY 1**

**A pedestrian-friendly environment significantly improves all aspects of a downtown area.**

Walkability fulfills a number of downtown and city center needs, including transportation, connectivity, aesthetics, access and experience.

Walkable communities require well-connected streets, places to visit, and good infrastructure—all of which improve other aspects of a downtown core. Furthermore, walkability bolsters the economy, as walkable urban areas can lead to sizable increases in property values for homeowners and businesses.

## **TAKEAWAY 2**

**Placemaking efforts of urban place management organizations can improve the pedestrian experience, attracting more visitors.**

The top three engineering solutions cited by survey respondents align neatly with an improvement district's traditional role: amenities, beautification, cleaning and maintenance.

Urban place management organizations often focus on enhancing the built environment through placemaking strategies, public space activation, events, marketing, brochures/maps, sidewalk amenities, and wayfinding.

## **TAKEAWAY 3**

**Roadblocks to walkable downtowns include familiar problems, such as finances.**

Aging and inadequate infrastructure can create a perception that walking is not safe or attractive, leading to future disinvestment. A lack of funding, disinterest in prioritizing pedestrian infrastructure, or an emphasis on improvements solely for vehicle traffic can prevent simple enhancements.

Pedestrian improvements require investment focused on improving connectivity and access to multi-modal transportation infrastructure. Improvement districts have the relationships in place with key community leaders and should champion projects that require municipal commitments.

#### TAKEAWAY 4

### Benchmarking and technology are key in advocating for pedestrian investment.

Not updating technology, whether due to lack of funding or staffing resources, is a missed opportunity. In addition, a significant number of respondents say they do not know what is available in the marketplace.

Due to a lack of benchmarking, place management organizations often do not have data regarding pedestrian traffic, an essential component to advocating on behalf of pedestrian infrastructure projects. Tracking metrics also allows benchmarking for larger, future investments.

#### TAKEAWAY 5

### Urban place management organizations should consider expanding their traditional roles, including advocating for pedestrian improvements. This can be done by partnerships with the public sector or pedestrian advocacy groups to encourage better walkability in urban areas.

Improvement districts can tackle low-cost pilot projects to reshape streets and sidewalks. Districts can also partner with the public sector or pedestrian advocacy groups to push for better walkability in urban areas, incorporating data on pedestrian use and the power of tax dollars that districts deliver.

#### THREE STEPS TO MOVE PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS FORWARD

As communities work to improve the pedestrian experience, business districts and other place management organizations have opportunities to take key leadership roles by:

- 1 Partnering with public sector and advocacy groups in **funding and promoting** pedestrian initiatives.
- 2 Using limited resources to **launch small pilot projects** that could serve as test cases for larger investments.
- 3 **Tracking metrics** of existing programs to create a benchmark for larger investments.