

## "Good for You and the City, Too"

I like downtown Lee's Summit. I was there last Saturday morning. Lots of people were out—shopping in the stores, stopping for a drink, or just walking about. It's the same sort of feel you get from the Plaza, but on a much smaller scale. People are walking around, lending downtown a feeling of liveliness and accessibility. You might run into someone you know, or meet someone new. I came across a group that had met on one of the quieter streets to work out. Later, I chatted with one of them in a coffee shop.

The same thing happens in my neighborhood. Especially in the mornings and evenings, my neighbors are frequently out walking, running and biking. There are good sidewalks, which make it safe and easy to walk. Many sidewalks in the city have been modified to accommodate scooters and walkers.

This is not by accident. As if guided by the incantation from the movie *Field of Dreams* ("If you build it, they will come.") Lee's Summit has taken a number of actions to promote and make it safer to walk in the city, and in doing so earned the designation as a Walk Friendly Community—one of only 21 communities in the U.S that had this distinction in 2011 and the only such city in Missouri. (There are now 24 Bronze level and higher walk-friendly cities.)

Making our community "walk friendly" is just one aspect of the city's Livable Streets initiative. Similarly, shared-use paths and in-street bike lanes ve been added in several areas of town to make it easier for citizens to get from place to place by bicycle, and the OATS bus—funded in large part by the city--provides a transportation alternative for those who can't or choose not to drive.

"Livable Streets" are designed to serve everyone – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists, including persons of all ages and abilities. The point of the initiative is to make the city both more enjoyable and accessible to its citizens. A side benefit is that livable streets encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Although these city improvements are done simply for the benefit of the citizens, I think they also give the city a competitive advantage. The Walk Friendly Community designation is listed on the city's website ([www.cityofls.org](http://www.cityofls.org)). Imagine you are someone

moving to this region from another part of the country and that you are doing some internet research before coming here. You see the Walk Friendly Community designation on the city's website. Wouldn't it make you more likely to investigate Lee's Summit as a place to live.

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