

Livable Streets???

What comes to mind when you hear the term “Livable Streets”? You might conjure up images of vibrant community streetscapes with traffic flowing efficiently; people getting around safely on bicycles and by walking; folks of all ages interacting as they stroll or as they relax on a street bench in the shade of an attractive tree; and people of all abilities moving safely along and across the streets.

Since you are a savvy consumer of local news, you might say to yourself, “Haven’t I heard something about a Livable Streets **Resolution** or **Policy** in Lee’s Summit?”

And if you have really been paying attention, you might even think, “I believe I heard something about a **Livable Streets Advisory Board**...I wonder what that’s all about?”

All of these thoughts and images would be relevant to the term “Livable Streets” in Lee’s Summit. (See us on Facebook or at www.livablestreetsls.com)

You see, the Livable Streets concept has been developing in our community since 2008, when the Health Education Advisory Board first recognized the lack of accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians in many parts of the city as a major public health and safety issue. Even as health professionals were advising people to engage in “active living”, people were often resisting due to safety concerns. (I’m sure they weren’t just being lazy!)

Gradually, it became apparent that the city needed a “policy focus” to ensure that our streets would be built to safely accommodate **all** of our citizens, regardless of whether they choose to drive, walk, ride a bike or take transit...and regardless of their age or abilities. In other words we needed a “Complete Streets” or “Livable Streets” approach to street planning, construction, and resurfacing as a standard policy.

In fact, developing a Livable Streets policy became one of the top priorities that came out of the comprehensive Lee’s Summit 360 Citizens’ Strategic Plan. Ultimately, after almost 2 years of development, collaboration, and thoughtful revision, the **Livable Streets Policy** was resoundingly approved by the Lee’s Summit City Council in November of 2010.

The Livable Streets Policy, among other things, expressed the city’s intent to incorporate Livable Streets principles into all of the city’s public strategic plans, standards and regulations. It also expressed the city’s desire to promote public health by encouraging walking and bicycling as a part of active living.

Lee’s Summit’s Livable Streets Policy has received national recognition, being ranked second in the nation compared with Resolutions in other cities of our size in the country. Our policy has served as a model and as a catalyst for passage of similar policies in communities around the KC Metro and the state of Missouri.

The City Council also created a Mayor-appointed **Livable Streets Advisory Board** to assist the city in implementing the Livable Streets Policy, and to educate the public and encourage safe bicycling, walking and use of public transit.

Already the Livable Streets Advisory Board has helped the city receive national recognition as a **“Walk Friendly Community”**...one of only 21 communities in the nation to be so designated! The Board has also developed, along with city staff, a **Bicycle Transportation Plan**, which will be proposed to the City Council and Planning Commission in the near future. We helped orchestrate **“Walk to School Day”** last October and have big plans for **“Bike and Walk Month”** coming up in May. (Look for a proclamation from Mayor Rhoads!)

The Livable Streets Advisory Board is now joining forces with our local newspapers to provide you with a series of timely, educational and encouraging articles. These articles will entertain you with images of safe walking and biking, transit, people interacting with their neighbors on vibrant, attractive streetscapes. In other words...images of Livable Streets!

By Ed Kraemer, M.D.

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