

Livable Streets essential to a welcoming community

By Dan Wiltshire

The Livable Streets Advisory Board is a way for me to take participation in the LS360 Visioning Process to the next logical step – implementation. I grew up in a small town in Northeast Missouri – Canton (population 2,400) – where it was common for senior citizens to ride big tricycles to and from the grocery store, and for college students to make the half-mile walk downtown. With low speed limits, low traffic, and wide road shoulders, I comfortably rode my bike or walked everywhere in town for the 18 years I lived there, and some summers beyond.

I also recently lived in one of the largest cities on the planet – Shanghai, China (pop. 26 million). I rode a bicycle or walked five miles each way to work the year I lived there, and it was the best part of my day.

The ability to safely walk or ride a bike to work, sports practice, grocery store, friends' houses, school and to shops is a basic expression of freedom I cherish and want to promote in Lee's Summit. Livable Streets to me are safe, affordable, and connected travel systems – and this kind of common sense utility is what we pictured during LS360. Promoting safe street systems with sidewalks and pathways is a challenge I think is worth pursuing for the benefit of all Lee's Summit, and helps transform the infrastructure into a welcoming community.

One of the ballot issues on April 2 asks voters in Lee's Summit to consider this type of investment in our community – street systems that include sidewalks and drainage along Orchard Street, and paved shoulders on Pryor Road between Hook and Longview. Walking on a sidewalk instead of through deep puddles in the street is an essential part of a welcoming community. A welcoming community doesn't force people into the mud when they have a flat tire or when they're approached by a car as they walk. A paved shoulder is a gesture of a progressive culture that says "we thought of that, planned for it, and built it for you."

Lee's Summit earned the Walk-Friendly designation in 2011, and Bicycle-Friendly designation in 2012 due in large part to our commitment to improvement as a community. Please join me in civic engagement, take interest in our award-winning City, learn more about this upcoming ballot issue on April 2 and vote.

Dan Wiltshire is a member of the Livable Streets Advisory Board and LS360 Transportation Committee member. The LSAB is a Mayor-appointed, volunteer board whose goals include working to make our community and our streets more "livable," safe and accessible for all citizens.