

Newsletter

Seward Redesign / Seward Neighborhood Group / SCCA
2323 E Franklin Ave, Mpls, MN 55406 * Telephone: 612.338.8729 * Fax: 612.399.0739

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Visual Identity – Landscaping

Mondays at 6:30 PM

Movement

Tuesdays at noon

Community Involvement

Crime and Safety

Wednesdays at 6:30 PM

Local Business

Vitality/Gateways

Fridays at 8:30 AM

Franklin Avenue Blog www.FranklinAvenue.us

Seward Redesign
<http://www.sewardredesign.org>

Seward Civic & Commerce Association (SCCA)
<http://www.sewardredesign.org/SCCA-about.html>

Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG)
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Interacting with Franklin

By Emily Wergin

When we armed groups of people with digital cameras and sent them out to record their thoughts about Franklin Avenue, I'm not sure what I expected . . . Images of businesses and buildings that people like (or don't) – of course. Nice examples of landscaping – yes. Ugly parking lots – uh huh. Traffic issues – you bet . . .

I didn't anticipate, however, how many pictures we would get of people interacting with the environment and each other. As I organized photos on the flickr site, these images jumped out . . . A group of women and children stopping traffic to cross Franklin where they want a crosswalk. A man throwing away litter after a group asked him not to drop it. Participants enjoying outdoor seating and benches (see photo)

These photos took the concept of interaction even further than we had hoped. People who attended the walks didn't just take photos and talk (and eat), they met their neighbors and experienced both the good and bad along Franklin first-hand. They interacted.

This interaction is exactly what we're aiming for in this planning process, that hasn't always been central in the past. We have a surplus of stagnant past planning documents



Group 6 enjoys the bench outside of Second Moon.

around our office. They spend their days tucked away in filing cabinets, on CD's hidden in the back of bookshelves, and lost in some digital folder that no one remembers. In short, they don't tend to make much of an impact.

With every step we take in this process, we want to be interacting with both each other and the environment. We are all building relationships with one another that will help get things done and figuring out what things we can do now. When we (volunteers, staff, board members, etc.) do produce a document in the fall, we hope it will be a living document that will continuously guide our community.

To view photos from the walk, see <http://www.flickr.com/photos/franklinavenue>

TASK FORCE AGENDAS

- Meeting #1: Review input to date and set the stage for vision and values
- Meeting #2: Set Vision and Values
- Meeting #3: Define Strategies
- Meeting #4: Detail out test projects
- Meeting #5: Finalize and refine, and Celebrate!



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What The Experts Are Saying ...

Each week, we will bring in information from outside our neighborhood on topics relevant to the discussion. As you read what the experts have to say, think about how it relates to your own experience. Embrace it. Question it. Reject it. Talk about it... you decide.

To kick things off, we've included an article by local expert Jay Walljasper. Jay is a resident of the Kingfield neighborhood and a former editor of the Utne Reader. Since the 1980's, he has been writing about urban planning and public spaces while actively working to shape his own community. For those of you who did not hear him speak at our Community Workshop, this article introduces his perspective on community involvement.

If you want to read more things like this, the Project for Public Spaces has an impressive website: www.pps.org

Jay also has a book: "The Great Neighborhood Book; A Do-it-Yourself Guide to Placemaking"

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Takin' it to the streets: Sometimes Placemaking means challenging the rules.

Once in a while you come across a juicy tidbit of information that gloriously confirms something you always suspected was true. That happened to me last week when reading William Murray's book *A Walk in Rome*--a collection of musings, memories and historical research from the New Yorker's longtime Italy correspondent.

Murray (whose obituary I discovered in the New York Times only an hour-and-a-half after finishing the book) notes that Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was so deeply troubled by the chaos of people walking around central Rome that he enacted strict rules governing pedestrians. Everyone on the busy

thoroughfare Via del Corso was commanded to walk in one direction on the east side of the street, and the opposite direction on the west side. This crude attempt at social engineering was, of course, a spectacular failure, and it provides an uplifting example of the creative human spirit triumphing over those who want to control us like so many sheep.

A wide smile crossed my face as I read this little story, since it substantiates my longstanding claim that authorities who want to corral and order pedestrians for the convenience of motorists really do exhibit fascist tendencies.

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*Reprinted from Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and sustaining public places that build communities. Read the electronic version of "Takin' it the streets: Sometimes Placemaking means challenging the rules" at;
http://www.pps.org/info/newsletter/march2005/march2005_town_square*

FRANKLIN AVENUE
DOWNTOWN SEWARD

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I have occasionally used that F-word to describe politicians and traffic engineers who impose impediments to the free flow of foot traffic. Now I have the historical record to back me up.

But I am slightly embarrassed at how most modern-day North Americans willingly submit to this sort of auto-cratic injustice. Romans living under the bootheel of Mussolini's fascist regime refused to accept this infringement of their right to walk the way they want to walk (as another grandson of Italy, Bruce Springsteen, put it). So why has no one in Winnipeg, a city famous for its radical history, torn out the sidewalk blockades at Portage and Main, one of the most celebrated intersections in Canadian history? Why don't folks in Seattle, a hotbed of enlightened civic activism as seen by the recent [Placemaking conference](#), revolt against the police department's longstanding policy of issuing jaywalking tickets to innocent souls simply crossing the street? And why for crying out loud

haven't more New Yorkers, America's closest counterpart to the colorfully anarchic Romans, resisted former Mayor Rudy Giuliani's campaign to confine pedestrian movement in order to promote more cars in an already traffic-choked city?

It's high time that we stand up to planners and politicians who don't yet understand that it's pedestrians that bring life to a community, and it's cars who suck all the life out. While it's important to lobby public officials for traffic calming and other public safety improvements, it's also important to assert the fact that our streets don't exist merely for the ease of motorists. Traffic calming, after all, was invented by frustrated citizens in the law-abiding Netherlands, who illegally moved old sofas and planters into the street to slow rushing traffic when the local police weren't enforcing speed limits. Improving the life of your community sometimes means takin' it to the streets.

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Your Opinions Wanted!

We're looking for your opinions, thoughts and ideas about the Franklin/Downtown Seward redesign and development. This is your page and your chance to have your say on the changes in your community!

Send your letters to emily@sewardredesign.org.

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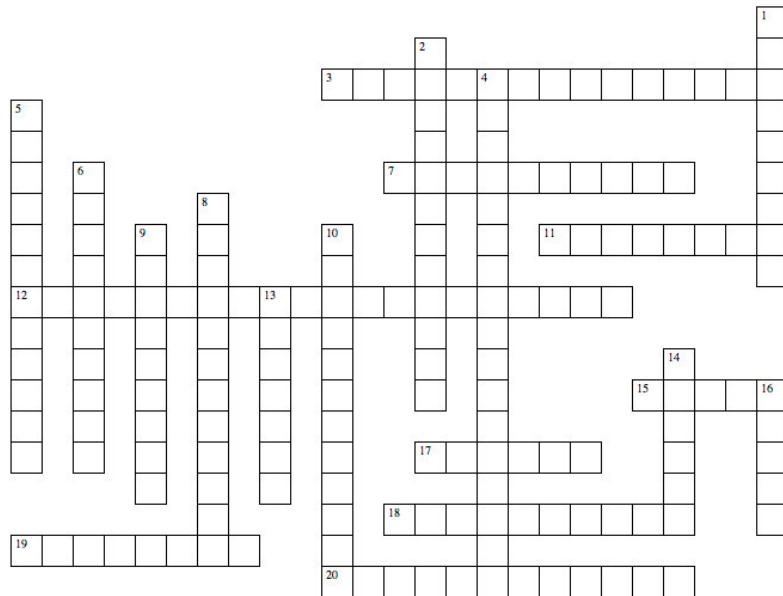
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Franklin Avenue Walks



ACROSS

- 3 Place to sit at Pizza Luce and Tracy's
- 7 More of these would help connect North and South side of Franklin
- 11 Busy neighborhood eatery with nice flowerboxes
- 12 "The Bridge" publisher
- 15 Corner store with merchandise on sidewalk
- 17 Refuse on sidewalk
- 18 Popular hang-out with nice benches
- 19 Unwanted tags
- 20 Fueling place with landscaped parking lot

DOWN

- 1 LRT for short
- 2 Corner grocery
- 4 Northern Clay, Playwright's Center, Movement Arts, Joan of Art
- 5 Pair of tall apartments complexes
- 6 Seward Co-op, Blue Nile and Assembly of God share this
- 8 Well-landscaped apartments
- 9 Difficult intersection: Franklin, Cedar and _____
- 10 These luminaries are not pedestrian scaled
- 13 Eatery whose backside and parking lot face Franklin
- 14 Triangle Park Sculpture
- 16 Property used to access LRT stop