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Safe Streets, Healthy Families was created for residents who want to see safer streets and who support the pedestrian experience. The streets of Los Angeles have been designed to give priority to vehicular traffic, not to the diverse users of the street like people who walk. For example, the children who walk to school, the mothers who cross wide avenues to connect to public transit, or the grandparents who walk with their grandchildren to the park all use the streets of Los Angeles daily. We deserve our streets to be safe so that families who use them daily can walk safely and live healthy lives.

This guide describes the experiences of Best Start groups and Los Angeles Walks, and their efforts to create safer streets. Additionally, we share what we learned throughout the course of the journey.
Friends:

Thriving communities are places where families have the resources and opportunities for learning, health, child care, and active play. They are places where families have what they need to help their children learn to engage with the world around them. An important part of a thriving community is a walkable neighborhood that promotes physical activity and a safe environment where children can get to school, medical services, and outdoor recreation.

The Safe Streets, Healthy Families Advocacy Guide is an important tool for parents, community members, and leaders within communities across Los Angeles County to understand how to advocate for policies, services, and investments that improve the built environment and places where children live, play, learn, and grow up.

I invite government and business leaders, and community members to read this important guide and partner with others to take action to support safe streets and healthy families. Together, we can drive these changes that parents and residents wish to see in their communities and make things work better for children and their families in Los Angeles County.

Sincerely,

Kim Belshé
Executive Director | First 5 LA
Dear Reader,

Within the City of Los Angeles, there are more than 6,500 miles of streets and 11,000 miles of sidewalks. Called the built environment, these streets and sidewalks are lifelines for every Angelenos: a place where life, work, and play for entire communities come together. And so, as we work towards creating healthier and greener communities, creating safe and accessible streets are essential components in that effort.

For too long, residents have been fighting for a seat at the table when it comes to determining these built environments, especially fellow Angelenos from neglected and marginalized communities. The sad reality for many is that their streets and sidewalks are crumbling, fast and unmediated traffic continue to kill, and residents feel little to no ownership of their own neighborhoods. We can change all of this by changing our streets.

At Los Angeles Walks, we believe everyone has the right to a safe, comfortable built environment. We also believe that neighbors know best what their neighborhoods need to be healthy, thriving places.

That’s why LA Walks provides trainings to and mobilizes residents to advocate for the changes they want to see in their neighborhood, like more open space, more sidewalks, more beautification, increased awareness of pedestrian rights, and more.

We are proud to share with you the case studies in the following pages of LA Walks’ first Safe Streets, Healthy Families Advocacy Guide. The collective creative actions described in the guide come in different forms: a block party, a People Street application, a pedestrian safety workshop.

Be sure, though: each of these resident-led efforts is a step towards building community power, and fighting for the kind of neighborhoods we know we need —and deserve. The win these communities have today only build on future positive changes to come.

On behalf of the Los Angeles Walks, we hope the examples provided in this advocacy guide inspire you to take collective action and build the world you want for yourself, your family, your community, and our City.

In solidarity,

John Yi
Executive Director | Los Angeles Walks
What do members of Best Start have to say?

When I imagine a safe street I see and feel...

“Tranquility and peace.”
- Olvia Garcia

“I will be calm at any time, if I am waiting for a bus to go to my job.”
- Araceli Celestino

“When people are walking in the streets. That would be fabulous.”
- Jose Camacho

“That there aren’t many cars.”
- Rosa Martinez

“Happiness to see safe streets, see street lighting at night, a happy world.”
- Ana Nieves

“That everyone should be safe so that everyone can walk with confidence in the streets.”
- Carlos Sarabia
“Peace, tranquility, because if it is a pedestrian school zone, the children, their families, and young babies will be safe.”
- Severiana Pablo

“Having clean streets and safe sidewalks, one can walk more comfortably.”
- Maria Soberanis

“I see the streets clean.”
- Rosalinda Hernandez

“Freedom to go for a walk with my family, I feel less stress and I am in an environment that generates well-being and motivation.”
- Irais Colin

“I see more traffic signals in the streets near schools and more slow school zone signs.”
- Maria Palacios

“Lights for the crosswalk, continental crosswalk.”
- Nancy Cid Gomez
Glossary

In this section, we will explain the significance of different words and terminology that we use in this guide.

**Advocacy:** To defend in favor of a cause, or the act of fighting for the rights of an individual or group

**Neighborhood Council:** A group of elected people whose purpose is to promote community participation in local government. The group functions as an intermediary between the local government and the residents of the community.

**Improvements for safe streets:** Physical changes in the construction of the street to reduce speed and/or implement amenities that help increase the safety of pedestrians and drivers.

**Pedestrian:** A person who walks or rolls (like in a wheelchair)

**High Injury Network:** Identified by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation, the High Injury Network are streets that have high numbers of severe and fatal pedestrian and cyclist related crashes.

**Vision Zero:** An initiative from the City of Los Angeles that focuses on eliminating all traffic fatalities and severe injuries.

**Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT):** A city agency that oversees transportation planning, design, construction, maintenance and operations.
Why advocate for safe streets?
Traffic crashes are the **#1** cause of death in children **2-14** years old.

In 2017, the City of Los Angeles lost **247** lives due to traffic collisions.

Driving at a high speed can be fatal. The probability of surviving a traffic crash is much less when a driver is going at high speeds.

- **20 MPH**: When a car crashes into a pedestrian at 20 miles per hour, the pedestrian has a 90% survival rate.
- **30 MPH**: When a car crashes into a pedestrian at 30 miles per hour, the pedestrian has a 50% survival rate.
- **40 MPH**: When a car runs over a pedestrian at 40 miles per hour, the pedestrian has a 10% survival rate.
High Injury Network

In 2015, the Mayor of the City of Los Angeles established an initiative to eliminate all traffic deaths by the year 2025. That initiative is called Vision Zero to describe the ultimate goal of having zero traffic fatalities. The Los Angeles Department of Transportation has a program completely dedicated to this initiative, and has identified a High Injury Network throughout the City of Los Angeles. This initiative recognizes the importance of safe streets.
What does safe streets advocacy look like?

Safe streets advocacy can be fun through creative actions. What do we mean by “creative actions”?

A creative action is a collaborative project that is self-determined by the community, brings the community together, increases community power, and builds residents’ civic capacity to create change.
Example 1:
Block Party
Best Start Metro Los Angeles

Best Start Member Perspective:
What was the creative action, and what was the purpose?

“It is to advocate for a curb ramp so that people with disabilities can cross or take the bus without any problem.”
- Rosalinda Hernandez

“We are going to have a block party with the purpose of getting a curb ramp.”
- Rosa Guevara

“Where there is access for people with disabilities and pedestrians on the street who use the crosswalk and can cross the street without needing to walk or roll to get to the other block.”
- María Soberanis

“Block party with the purpose to obtain safe streets in the community.”
- Carmen Zarate
Example 2:
Educational workshop on pedestrian safety in schools
Best Start Panorama City

Best Start Member Perspective:
What was the creative action, and what is the purpose?

“To lead educational forums to create awareness of our responsibilities as pedestrians and drivers. Respect the signals that correspond to each individual person.”
- Olvia Garcia

“For community awareness; if there are no schools zones or pedestrian crossings or traffic signals, then we should come together with our government representatives and ask for signs for the good of our children and their families.”
- Severiana Pablo
Example 3:
People Street application to obtain a decorative crosswalk
Best Start Wilmington

Best Start Member Perspective:
What was the creative action, and what is the purpose?

“An application to People Street for a decorative crosswalk and an intersection mural. Impact the community to make a positive change in it.”
- Irais Colin

“A decorative crosswalk and an intersection mural.”
- Nancy Cid Gómez
Safe streets are important to me because...

“It’s good for health.”
-Alejandra Delfin

“That there will be no loved ones lost for being a pedestrian or driver.”
-Severiana Pablo

“Accidents are avoided, and these places turn into calm and relaxed zones.”
-Olvia Garcia

“Where there is safety all day and night, more safety for the community and children, schools, sports for the community.”
-Nalda Ucles

“Because the community has to be and feel safe to cross securely, have proper lighting, and feel safe in many ways.”
-Nancy Cid Gómez
“Our people deserve to be calm in its community.”
- Jose Camacho

“For the safety of our generations.”
- Araceli Celestino

“It is very important for me and my family to be living in a healthy environment.”
- Irais Colin

“People move easily. The risk of accidents is reduced; less violence; more pedestrian domination, and we are free to use the streets without fear and with more connection with the community.”
- Irma Fabián

“We live in the community and we hope to live in a safe place for our children.”
- Rosalinda Hernandez
How to start on safe streets advocacy in your community

Los Angeles Walks had the honor of working with Best Start Metro LA, Best Start Panorama City and Neighbors, and Best Start Wilmington in advocacy to obtain safe streets in their community. Advocacy can also be fun, and that’s why we suggest that you start by means completing a creative action. Thus, we include diverse perspectives of people who use the street on a daily basis and we learn together what improvements can really foster an inclusive environment for all.

Below you will find a step-by-step guide to start the fight for safe streets.
Safety improvements

Crosswalk

Traffic light

Pedestrian beacon

ADA ramp

Pedestrian lighting

Stop sign
A step-by-step guide to start the fight for safe streets

Establish the need
When do you know that it’s the right time to advocate?

If you do not feel safe crossing the street, walking on the sidewalks, waiting for the bus at night, it is likely that you are not the only person who feels that way.

It’s never too early to fight for safe streets in your community. Streets should be places where you as a pedestrian feel comfortable and safe.
2 Identify people who have had similar incidents or experiences

Start measuring interest in community groups that you already participate in: Best Start Communities, religious groups, parent-teacher organization (PTO), neighborhood council, social or community groups, etc.

Another option is to form a group of individuals that join together to improve street safety. For example: a group of neighbors who wish to advocate for a stop sign at the end of their block because the speed of passing cars is too high and creates a danger for people walking and other drivers.
What do members of Best Start say?

What is our right as a pedestrian and a resident of the City of Los Angeles?

“Be more free and walk on safe streets without having problems on the sidewalks and for cars to respect the individuals walking whether they are children, adults, or people with disabilities.”
- Ana Nieves

“To use the streets the same as cars use streets.”
- Nancy Gómez

“Have safe streets for the elderly.”
- Laura Ruano

“The right to cross the street safely and respect all those that use the street.”
- Carlos Sarabia
“Advocate to exhaustion for streets where there are no street lights or traffic signals. Talk and seek help, even if they say not to continue, until we achieve it.”
- Severiana Pablo

“Require safety for the public.”
- Karina Noriega

“That the streets be recognized as if we the pedestrians are also their owners.”
- Irais Colin

“I want to know what my pedestrian rights are when I’m walking on the street.”
- Estela Romo

“Our right to advocate for places and support people with special needs.”
- Rosalinda Hernández
Create an event or meeting to gather participants interested in advocating for safe streets

Organize a meeting with strong and credible goals:

- What do you want people to learn in this meeting?

Share guiding questions: These questions are open and help participants to define and interpret topics on their own terms. This is an excellent way to initiate conversations and involve all participants.

- Do you walk? Where? If you do not walk, why?
- How is the pedestrian experience in your community?
4 Invite a small group of dedicated individuals

It is likely that safe streets are not always a priority for everyone, but there will be people who really want to spend additional time learning more about the subject.

Establish agreements in the space: People have different working styles and experiences that shape group work. Establish agreements / values for meetings that help the group focus.

Organize logistics: Identify the common date and time of the meeting. To create a welcoming environment for all participants, consider how you can support people who need childcare, interpretation, assistance for disability or age, etc.

Get the best contact information from all participants: This will be very useful when you need details about future meetings or when you have to do work in preparation for a meeting.

Tip: Use communication tools like WhatsApp, GroupMe, a Facebook group, or conference calls that help create transparent and accessible communication to all participants.
Identify the change you would like to see in your community

The group decides by majority on an improvement they want to see at a chosen location.

Tip: When there is a large group, it is common to see diverse opinions about what and where the change should happen. To achieve a change it is important to work collaboratively and cohesively. Community power is impactful and transformative.

Explore what kind of improvements can be made: Research examples of safe streets in other places. From what you saw, what could you adapt in your neighborhood?

Evaluate your group’s capacity: Change takes time and many dedicated people. Consider what is feasible for your group.

Tip: An event such as a block party requires a group of several people (about 10 to 15) to organize all the logistics and fulfill the responsibilities. If you have a small group, it is advisable to consider a creative action that fits the capacity of your group.
6)

**Build capacity of the small group to reach the ultimate goal**

The group understands and decides to advocate for an improvement they want to see in their streets through a creative action.

Identify what steps are necessary to reach the final goal:

- How much time is taken to carry out the improvement?
- What community groups or community leaders should be invited to future meetings?
- What is the budget for the creative action?
- How can you finance the creative action?

**Different creative actions have different costs:** Time, money, focus, capacity; all are investments that depend on the creative action. For example, planning a block party may require more time, money, and people compared to the development of an educational workshop.

**Tip:** Ask the group, “What is it that makes your community unique?” Use creativity and ingenuity to inspire appropriate, representative, and accessible creative actions for your community.
Act!

The group decides to carry out the creative action in order to raise awareness and get more support for safe streets.

To serve as inspiration, these are examples of the creative actions that we have seen with Best Start groups and other community organizations.

1. Block party
2. Educational workshop development on pedestrian safety + educational campaigns
3. Walk audit
4. “Slow Jams,” a sidewalk choreography with signs encouraging drivers to slow down
Follow-up + next steps

The group feels safe and able to participate in the next step.

Know and participate in your neighborhood council: The neighborhood council is a good space to generate more support, learn about alternative solutions, and connect with resources that could facilitate the change you want to see in your community. If you want to know which neighborhood council represents your neighborhood, visit the website: neighborhoodinfo.lacity.org

Get involved with the City of Los Angeles' Pedestrian Advisory Committee: This committee evaluates and advises the Department of Transportation, Bureau of Engineering, Bureau of Street Services, etc. on pedestrian issues. Contact your council district field representative to be nominated for the committee.

Get informed: Find out about projects that promote safe streets. The Department of Transportation and the Mayor’s Office have official websites and social media accounts to keep residents informed of changes and opportunities related to street design.

Familiarize yourself with your city council district field representative: There are a total of 15 councilmembers from the City of Los Angeles. Know which district you live in and ask what plans for safe street improvements exist in your council district. If you want to know how to contact your councilmember’s office, visit the website: neighborhoodinfo.lacity.org

Tip: Invite the field representative from your council district to your next meeting. Use these opportunities to increase your training and knowledge of how the council district can support your group in its creative action. For example, Best Start Metro LA invited the district field representative to learn more about the street closure permit process for their block party.

Celebration: Celebrate the experience and learning. Recognize what was built in the process: friendships, alliances, opportunities, documentation of your achievements and challenges.
3

Resources page
Los Angeles Walks: Non-profit organization that focuses on training and mobilizing Los Angeles residents to advocate for safer streets in their communities.

SoCal Families for Safe Streets: A Los Angeles Walks project, SoCal FSS is a group of families who have lost a loved one in a traffic crash or individuals that have been personally injured due to a traffic crash. The group offers support and a safe place to transform that pain into political action.

Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition: Non-profit organization that works to make all communities in Los Angeles County healthy, safe and fun places to ride bicycles.

People for Mobility Justice: Non-profit organization and a Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) collective that focuses on sowing critical consciousness about mobility justice across all communities.

Investing in Place: Non-profit organization that helps explain and advocate for policies related to the development and access to public transportation and safe walking environments in Los Angeles.

Public Matters: Non-profit organization that uses art to engage the community and increase community awareness on safe streets advocacy.

Vision Zero Los Angeles: A program in the Los Angeles Department of Transportation with the goal to eliminate all traffic deaths. The program is responsible for the identification of streets that need safe street design improvements to protect people that walk, roll or bike.

Safe Routes to School: A program in the Los Angeles Department of Transportation to improve traffic safety for school-aged children. The program works with the LAUSD to create safe routes to and from schools.
Resources of the City of Los Angeles

**My LA311:** A resource in the City of Los Angeles that facilitates requests for clean sidewalks, maintenance of ramps and sidewalks, repairing of a street light, and more.

- **Tip:** My LA311 is also available as an application for your phone. Through the application you can send photos of an intersection or part of the street that needs improvement.

- **Tip:** Encourage other people to use this resource and invite your field representative to your next meeting to learn more about how to make a stronger request.

**LADOT Service Request:** A resource in the City of Los Angeles that facilitates requests for traffic signage, stop signs, bus benches, and more.

**City of LA Neighborhood Info:**
A web page with information about your neighborhood council, councilmember based on council district, police department and more.

**Safe Sidewalks LA:** A program in the City of Los Angeles, funded through the Willits settlement, to repair sidewalks and other improvements for people who walk or roll.

- **Tip:** People with mobility disabilities can apply for sidewalk repairs through this program. At the moment, these type of requests take priority.

Additional tools

**DIY Great Streets:** A how-to manual with different resources from the City of Los Angeles to turn streets into lively, vibrant, and safe public space.

**Street Story:** An interactive map where you can document intersections or streets where you do not feel safe when traveling by foot, bike, car, scooter, etc.

**Map of LADOT Vision Zero:**
An extensive map of Los Angeles’ traffic crashes and streets that form the High Injury Network.

**TIMS Berkeley:** A system of traffic crash maps in California. You can use these maps to document traffic injuries or deaths in your community.

**Streetmix:** An interactive platform where you can design streets that you would like to live on, and use the mock-up designs to present to city planners and designers.