

On June 6, 2023, Bike Walk Knoxville was thrilled to be joined by Mayor Indya Kincannon, Vice Mayor and District 2 City Council Member Andrew Roberto, District 4 City Council Member Lauren Rider, At Large City Council Member Janet Testerman, and At Large City Council Member Amelia Parker for a walking tour of the area connecting Pond Gap, Forest Heights, and Bearden . We were also joined by representatives from City of Knoxville Engineering, the Knoxville Regional TPO, the Knoxville Community Development Corporation (KDCD), and East Tennessee Design Center as well as community members and representatives from several nearby neighborhood organizations.

The walk began at Everly Brothers Park, a pocket park at the corner of Kingston Pike and Forest Park Boulevard that connects to the Bearden Village Greenway. As the group walked up Forest Park Boulevard towards Sutherland Avenue, advocates highlighted the changes that had been made to the intersection of Newcomb Avenue and Forest Park Boulevard to replace sweeping turns with tight corners. The more compact intersection makes pedestrian crossings much safer by encouraging drivers to slow down and pay attention, thus making crashes less likely and less serious.

As the route continued along Sutherland Avenue towards Renford Road, the group discussed a Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) [Pedestrian Road Safety Initiative Project](#) (PRSI) that will be implemented in the area. The project will include installing a protected midblock crossing between KDCD's Cagle Terrace and the nearby BreadBox Food Store. This is an important safety improvement due to the high volumes of pedestrian crossings made in that area, especially by the elderly and disabled residents at Cagle Terrace. The group also examined the signalized crosswalk at the intersection of Sutherland Avenue and Renford Road, highlighting visibility issues with the flashing lights, the extended flashing pattern that can counterintuitively lead to the signal being ignored, and ways the TDOT PRSI project is hoping to address these.

The group crossed Sutherland Avenue at Hollywood Road, and stopped to discuss some of the other walkability challenges that exist further down Sutherland Avenue. For example, there are very few intersections with marked crosswalks, and sidewalks only exist along the north side past Tobler Lane. This means that for students to or from West High School, or community members trying to access the popular Third Creek Greenway, the choice is between crossing at an intersection with a marked crosswalk and then walking along the sloped southern side of the road with no sidewalk, or making an often unsafe midblock crossing to reach desired destinations. While there are valid challenges to installing marked crosswalks at certain intersections, such as at Cox Street, and sidewalk installation is expensive, the tour highlighted the safety benefits and value of facilities for all the folks who walk in this area.

Turning back along Sutherland Avenue, the walk continued towards Mohican Street. Along the way, the group discussed speeds along Sutherland Avenue - the speed limit is set at 35 mph, but a speed gun clocked drivers traveling at speeds closer to 40 and even 45 mph.

While this increase might not feel significant to drivers, it can severely increase the severity of a crash involving a pedestrian or a cyclist. The tour also discussed the lack of sidewalks on the south side of Sutherland Avenue and a lack of marked crosswalks at intersections.

The tour crossed Sutherland Avenue at the marked crosswalk at Mohican Street and walked along the sidewalk before turning onto Kingston Pike. Speeds on Kingston Pike are also a major issue, because while that segment is marked for a 45 mph speed limit, a speed gun recorded speeds of up to 55 mph. Signalized crosswalks are spaced much too far apart to be convenient for pedestrians, and the high speeds make midblock crossings excessively dangerous. Additionally, crossing times at several intersections that do feature signalized crosswalks are short enough that folks might face challenges making it across in time. This is particularly important at the intersection of Kingston Pike and Newcomb Avenue, where many riders of Knoxville Area Transportation board and deboard.

The walk concluded back at Everly Brothers Park, and participants were invited to head to Albright Grove Brewing Co. for drinks, food, and conversation. Bike Walk Knoxville would like to thank Albright Grove Brewing Co. for hosting a pint night fundraiser to benefit the organization, and thank everyone who participated in the walk for joining us to discuss the importance of walkability in this area!