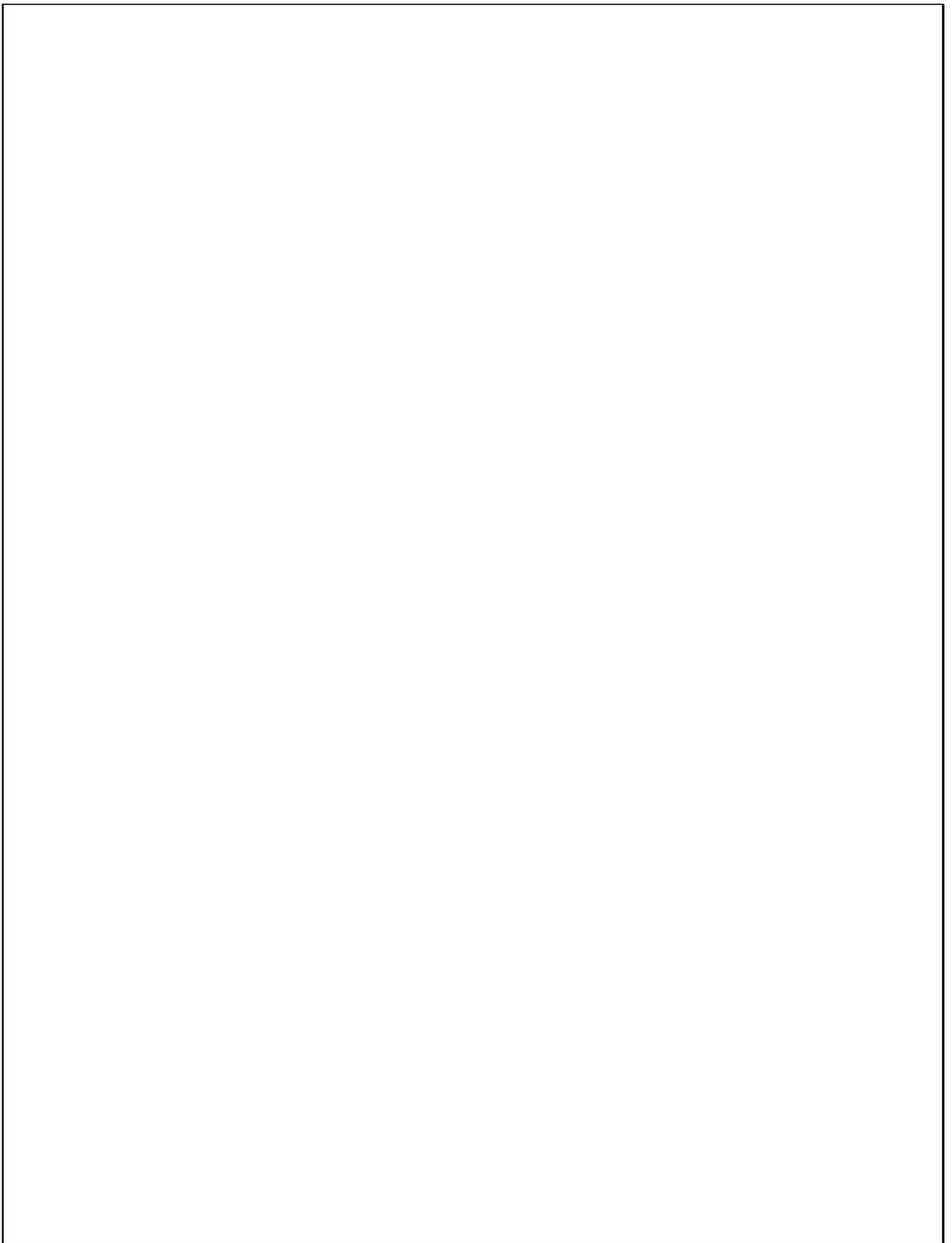




BELLINGHAM PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN

JULY 2012



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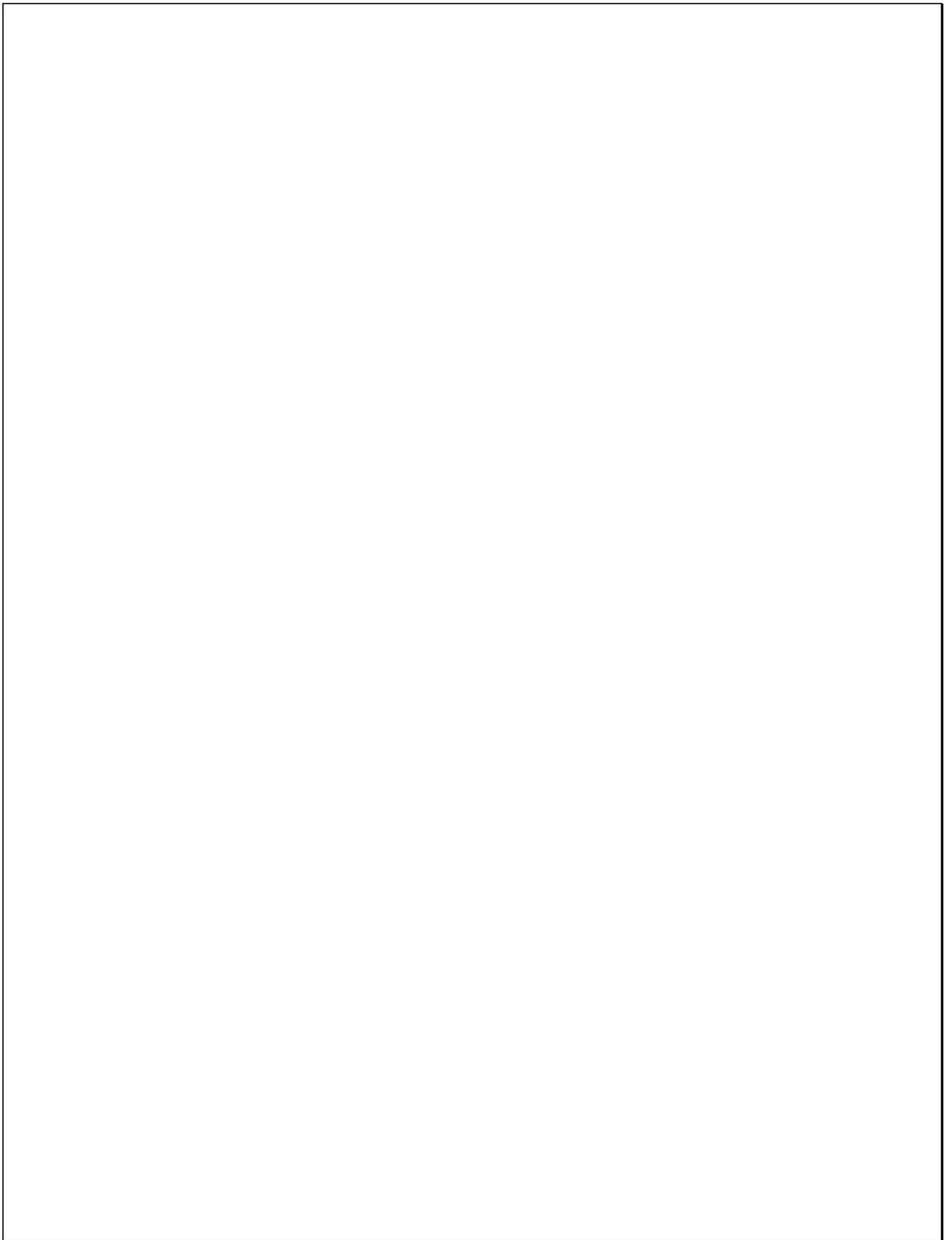


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Executive Summary

Walking is the oldest form of human transportation. Almost everyone walks at some point during their day. Walking is so common and simple that we tend to forget that after years of planning around auto mobility, walking needs to be nurtured, protected, and encouraged.

“The Pedestrian Master Plan is Bellingham's action agenda to create a safer, more walkable and healthy city. Implementing this plan is key to enhancing our quality of life, fostering economic vitality, and protecting our environment. Most importantly, this plan builds a sense of community. When we walk, we connect more with others and with our environment. Let's work together to make the vision in this plan a reality!”

- Kelli Linville, Mayor of the City of Bellingham

The Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan is ambitious in its recommendations for infrastructure and programs to achieve the vision for walking in the City of Bellingham. The Plan calls for development of nearly 77 miles of sidewalks, 58 improved crossings, and a robust set of studies and programs to support and encourage walking over the next 20 years.

The Pedestrian Master Plan Vision:

The residents of Bellingham envision a community that invites people of all ages and abilities to walk for enjoyment, exercise, and daily transportation by providing a safe, convenient, and attractive pedestrian environment.



Plan Goals

- **Safety:** Improve pedestrian safety through well-designed facilities along and across roadways, and by promoting safe driving, walking, and bicycling behaviors.
- **Equity:** Provide accessible pedestrian facilities for all through equity in public engagement, service delivery, and capital investment.
- **Health:** Develop a pedestrian network that promotes active, healthy lifestyles and sustains a healthy environment.
- **Economic Sustainability:** Enhance economic vibrancy by creating a safe and aesthetically pleasing walking environment with easy connections to commercial centers and inviting public places for people to socialize.
- **Connectivity:** Provide a citywide network of accessible, efficient, and convenient pedestrian infrastructure that connects homes, jobs, shopping, schools, services, and recreation areas using sidewalks, crosswalks, shared-use paths, bridges, tunnels, and signage.
- **Multi-Modal Transportation:** Develop high-quality pedestrian facilities that provide access to all other modes of transportation.
- **Land Use and Site Design:** Employ land use planning and site design requirements that are conducive to pedestrian travel and result in a mode shift away from automobile trips to walking trips.



The Planning Process

The project management team consisted of representatives from the City of Bellingham's Public Works and Planning and Community Development Departments, as well as the consulting team. The project management team worked together throughout the 14-month project to guide the technical work and review project deliverables. The process was driven by the desire to build the framework for a truly connected pedestrian network that serves all residents of Bellingham.

Residents and key stakeholders were engaged throughout the process and provided invaluable information about both challenges and opportunities for pedestrians in the city. The Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan Steering Committee was comprised of stakeholder representatives and key staff, who will implement the Plan. This group formally advised the project team. In addition, residents throughout the city gave input and received information through two public workshops, an online survey, and information posted to the City website.

Policy Recommendations

Existing federal, state, regional, and city policy, the vision and goals for the Plan, and best practices were all considered in developing policy to guide pedestrian facility and program implementation in Bellingham. The goals help to articulate broad concepts that the City and residents hope to achieve for pedestrians, while the policies are statements that translate the intention of the goals into the language of local government. The recommended policies are intended to guide the way the public improvements are made, where resources are allocated, how programs are operated, how City priorities are determined, and how private development is designed. The policies recommended in the Plan are tied directly to the goals and are intended to guide implementation of the Plan.

Network Development

The Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan recommends a robust network of on-street routes to connect people with the places they live, work, play, and learn within the city. In order to understand which routes would provide the greatest connectivity, safety, and pedestrian comfort, a GIS-based approach was undertaken to evaluate current and future potential for walking.

The analysis performed the following tasks:

- Quantified factors that impact pedestrian activity
- Located pedestrian network gaps as potential projects
- Identified key pedestrian corridors

The key pedestrian corridors and access points to destinations in the city were compiled into a Primary Pedestrian Network. This network provides pedestrian connectivity to recreation and services throughout the community and to every neighborhood. The connected Primary Pedestrian Network is shown on the following page.



Project Recommendations

The recommended network builds upon previous and on-going local and regional planning efforts and reflects input offered by City staff, the project steering committee, the transportation commission, and Bellingham residents. Goals that framed the development of the Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan project list include the following:

- Provide a consistent and connected network for walking for transportation and recreation in the City of Bellingham.
- Provide a list of projects that will result in contiguous routes with dedicated pedestrian facilities.
- Identify opportunities to overcome barriers to walking.
- Identify needs for future study needed to improve safety and design.

The recommended projects include the following:

- Sidewalk infill (approximately 77 linear miles – 343 projects)
- New off-street connections (.2 linear miles – 3 projects)
- Intersections and crossings (50 arterial roadway, 1 local roadway, 3 trail/shared use path, and 3 grade-separated crossings)
- Intersection and feasibility studies (4 total)
- Citywide projects (4 total)



Design Guidance

The City has design standards for pedestrian facilities in various documents. Minimum standards meet or exceed federal and state requirements. However, there is a desire to elevate the quality and consistency of pedestrian facilities throughout the city. The Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan design guidance provides a summary of best practices in pedestrian facility design. The practices will help coordinate with existing standards to support consistent development of projects over time. The graphic below depicts a sample of the best practices guidance.

Description

Sidewalks are the most fundamental element of the walking network, as they provide an area for pedestrian travel separated from vehicle traffic. A variety of considerations are important in sidewalk design. Providing adequate and accessible facilities can lead to increased numbers of people walking, improved safety, and the creation of social space.



The parking lane can act as a flexible space to further buffer the sidewalk from moving traffic. Curb extensions, and bike corrals may occupy this space where appropriate.

In the **edge zone** there should be a 6 inch wide curb.



The furnishing zone buffers pedestrians from the adjacent roadway, and is also the area where elements such as street trees, signal poles, signs, and other street furniture are properly located.

The through zone is the area intended for pedestrian travel. This zone should be entirely free of permanent and temporary objects. The City's Code also refers to this area as the 'movement zone'.

Wide through zones are needed in downtown areas or where pedestrian flows are high.

The Frontage Zone allows pedestrians a comfortable "shy" distance from the building fronts. It provides opportunities for window shopping, sign placement, planters, or chairs.

Also referred to as the 'storefront activity zone'.

Recommended Programs

While improving infrastructure is critical, the importance of encouragement, education, enforcement, and evaluation programmatic improvements should not be underestimated. These efforts can ensure that more local residents know about new and improved facilities, learn the skills they need to integrate walking into their activities, and receive positive reinforcement about integrating walking into their daily lives. In essence, the new and enhanced programs market the idea of walking to local residents and encourage a shift to walking as a transportation option.

Ten recommended programs for the city and partners are as follows:

- Safe Routes to School
- Neighborhood Walking Maps
- Traffic Safety Campaign
- Themed Walks
- Open Streets Event
- Professional Development Courses
- Marketing Campaigns
- Speed Reader Board Loaner Program
- Pedestrian Crossing Enforcement Actions
- Walk Friendly Community Designation



Implementation

The final chapter of the Plan provides a framework for implementation that includes identification of priority projects, potential funding sources, and measures to track performance over time. Priority projects were identified through a set of criteria developed with the project team and steering committee. All projects were evaluated and the resulting priorities were identified in two tiers. The Tier 1 projects are the highest priority and the City will actively seek funding and opportunities to complete those projects in the short term. The table below summarizes extent of priority and total plan projects.

	Sidewalk/Corridor Improvements	Length of Sidewalk Projects	Crossing Improvements
Tier 1	41	8.4 miles	17 crossings
Tier 2	33	5.6 miles	15 crossings
Long Term	273	63.4	26 crossings
Total	347	77.4	58 crossings

Implementation Actions

The Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan provides the long-term vision for the development of a community-wide pedestrian network. Implementation of the Plan will take place over many years. The Plan identifies strategies that can be acted on in the short term through specific actions to develop the network and strive towards the vision of a walkable Bellingham. The five key strategies are as follows:

- Strategically pursue infrastructure projects
- Support network improvements through education, encouragement, and enforcement programs
- Establish and encourage multi-modal corridor design
- Integrate pedestrian needs into all Bellingham planning and design processes
- Integrate equity concerns into ongoing facility and program development

Performance Measures

Evaluation is a critical part of planning for pedestrians and for all planning processes. The recommended performance measures are a means of gauging both progress on implementation of the Plan and the effectiveness of the facilities and programs on behavior change and mode shift. The performance measures are based on the following principles:

- The measure is policy driven and can be supported by data.
- Data can be collected with available resources.
- Data are consistently available over time.
- Data allow year to year comparisons.
- The results are understandable to the general public.