



Winner!
Brownsville, Texas

In August 2015, Brownsville accepted the Mayors' Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets, seeking to further its commitment to improve walking and biking throughout the community. Brownsville is focusing on reducing health disparities among members of the Latino community by providing residents with a safe, walkable and bicycle-friendly environment and has made strides in implementing policies and creating an interconnected network for safe pedestrian and bicycle travel throughout the city.

Demonstrated Successes

Brownsville Assembles Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee to Kick Off Challenge Activities

The implementation of the Mayors' Challenge began when the City passed an ordinance supporting the establishment of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC). The purpose of BPAC is to review and make recommendations on issues related to bicycle and pedestrian safety, education, signage, and plans. Appointed community members, including a representative from the most underserved district in the city, represent diverse interests from walking and running groups, bicycling organizations,

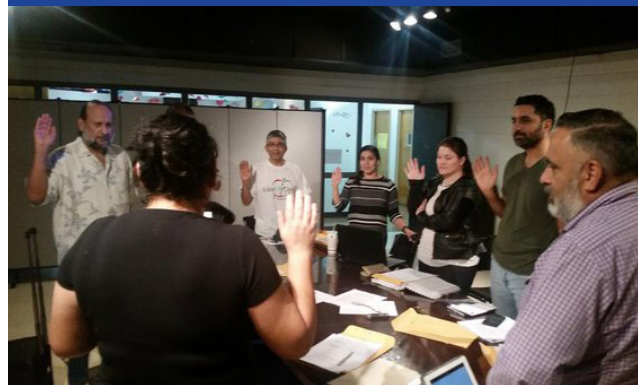
beautification committees, and city staff from the Parks & Recreation, Public Health & Wellness, and Planning & Zoning departments. The BPAC meets monthly and is actively developing a Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Action Plan that identifies and prioritizes actions the city can take to improve conditions for walking and bicycling.

Increased Community Engagement and Communication Earns Local Support for New Policies and Projects

Since joining the Mayors' Challenge and implementing the city's initiatives, Brownsville's BPAC has inspired an increase in public involvement and cross-sector collaboration, two key factors that can help improve conditions for walking and biking. The city-wide collaboration

Over 80% of Brownsville's population is identified as overweight or obese, and one-third are diagnosed as diabetic.

Brownsville is located in one of the poorest metro areas in the country, with 34% of residents living below the poverty level.



Community members serving on the BPAC help identify opportunities to improve walking and bicycling conditions.

and support on policy changes and network expansion projects helps Brownsville identify priority needs and projects.

The city held multiple well-attended public meetings to solicit community input on the Ringgold Street Improvements Project to improve safety, drainage, traffic flow, and accessibility, and the potential use of Brownsville's 9-mile, abandoned West Rail Corridor for a bicycle and pedestrian trail. The Friends of the West Rail Trail group prepared materials on the benefits a rail trail along the corridor could have for low income residents by connecting them with schools, businesses, and parks.

The City is changing business as usual by ensuring routine maintenance projects now consider ways to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety. This effort may involve engaging BPAC representatives and soliciting public feedback on upcoming projects through meetings and other public outreach activities. Recent examples include:

- The city instituted a road diet, which is a FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasure, by reducing automobile lanes on East 6th Street from three lanes to two lanes in order to provide for a sidewalk expansion and new bike lanes.
- Allocation of a portion of Old Alice Road to link Belden trail to the new bike lane on East 6th Street. This extension will allow trail users direct access to the Historic Battlefield Trail and the Fort Brown Connection.

Next Steps

Moving forward, the BPAC plans to finalize the Safety Action Plan to implement new policies and programs to create safer streets and keep people safe. Some of the key action items identified by the BPAC include passing a Vision Zero resolution,

improving data collection efforts, inventorying existing walking and bicycling conditions, and developing additional recommendations for connections and improvements.

"The Mayors' Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets aligns with our efforts to promote safe, accessible and alternative transportation options for all of our residents," said Brownsville Mayor Tony Martinez. "The activities presented in the challenge have helped us raise the bar for bicyclist and pedestrian safety, while promoting a healthy and active lifestyle. We look forward to furthering the mission of the Mayors' Challenge by working together, taking action, and making a positive impact for present and future generations."

Mayor Tony Martinez
