Benson Block Talks
Virtual Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA)
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What is a Block Talk?

- MAPA’s name for a walk audit
- Based on methodology developed by Mark Fenton
  - Programs
  - Projects
  - Policies
- Developed in partnership with ONE Omaha and other community organizations
Power the movement toward vibrant communities.

No matter how you choose to move around the city, Complete Streets can make it safer for everyone—whether it's walking, riding a bike, driving your car, or taking the bus.

Omaha, Let's Complete Our Streets!

GET INVOLVED
Block Talk Tool-Box

Facilitation

Input Gathering

Recording
Virtual Block Talk Tool-Box

Facilitation

Input Gathering

Recording
Serious and fatal pedestrian crashes

Coordinated with BID, Neighborhood Association, and City of Omaha

Public Surveys and Public Virtual Meeting

Benson Alleyway Block Talk
Metropolitan Area Planning Agency and the City of Omaha
Video Recordings of Routes

Simulates the walks between the stations

People able to review the videos and identify key issues or assets

Segment Video
This video shows this segment of the route from street view. Participants will take notice of the opportunities for investment and safety, as well as the beautiful murals painted on the rear walls of businesses.
Pre-determined locations to guide discussion

Surveys allowed input to be tied to a specific location

DIY StreetView
Survey Embedded in StoryMap

Survey123 allowed mapped comments

Way to participate without joining the Zoom meeting

Survey responses guided facilitators in public meeting
Virtual Block Talk by the Numbers

30 participants (85 registered)

Facilitators led conversations in 6 groups

75-minute Zoom Meeting
  10 minutes – Introductions
  15 minutes – Location 1 (Breakout)
  15 minutes – Location 2 (Breakout)
  20 minutes – Action Plan (Breakout)
  15 minutes – Debrief
Virtual Block Talk Facilitation Tools

Group facilitators led discussion of two locations

Used photospheres guide discussion

Captured input in Jamboard, entered it into a Survey123 form
Table 7: Proposed Action Planning Program Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Assign To</th>
<th>Support By</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td>Benson Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>Benson BID</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Community action to pick up litter along NW Radial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benson BID</td>
<td>City of Omaha</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Limit access in alleyways to bike/ped in alleys as a pilot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term</td>
<td>NDOT</td>
<td>City of Omaha</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Implement Complete Streets Guidance and include wider 8’ sidewalks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lessons Learned

▪ Lots of interesting options for online engagement, including many free tools
▪ Consistent reporting format is helpful for MAPA and stakeholders
▪ Simplify multimedia for mobile users, streamline the overall process for all users
▪ Different format, similar problems as in-person meetings