



**BICYCLE  
COALITION**  
OF GREATER  
PHILADELPHIA



**AARP**<sup>®</sup>  
Philadelphia

2021

# VISION ZERO CITIZENS ACTION GUIDE







# INTRO

**In any public project, there are certain commonalities that come up again and again: Communication, collaboration, participation and safety. As with all issues of public policy, communication between residents and their neighbors, representatives, and their administrative governing body is of the utmost importance. But for too many people in Philadelphia, confusion often sets in before a project can begin. Can one community, or even one person make a difference? The answer is yes.**

That's why AARP-PA and the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia put together the 2021 Vision Zero Citizens Action Guide. The City of Philadelphia is dedicated to eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030, and in order to get there, individuals have an opportunity to step up and do their part. What that looks like in action depends on the circumstances.

The 2021 Vision Zero Action Guide is meant to be a toolkit for taking action in your community to make streets safe for people. The action guide is based on the following principles:

1. Traffic violence is preventable
2. A single traffic death is one too many
3. Bringing down motor vehicle speeds saves lives
4. Human lives are always more important than convenient roads for driving
5. Better planning and engineering are the answers to this -- not police enforcement

With that in mind, we've created this Action Guide by telling the stories of community members who've taken action for a better city and sharing tips on how you can do so, as well.

In addition to the technical details and knowledge required for coordinating with the City of Philadelphia, this guide will tell the stories of people who worked within their communities to make a difference and help advocate for safer infrastructure. We will explain how to get involved in community organizations, work with government officials, and what kinds of traffic calming techniques are available to people in Philadelphia.

This guide will help its readers understand where to begin and how to continue making streets safer in your neighborhood and community. It will also point you toward the right people in elected government and community organizations to help you in your efforts.

AARP-PA and the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia have continued to partner in efforts to make streets and communities safe for all residents, no matter their age or transportation mode. Our organizations believe in working with communities everywhere to make streets safer, better, and more convenient for all. We do this by advocating within government and within communities often working together where our goals overlap. We hope this Action Guide will lead more folks in our communities to work together in improving their streets.



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## PART 1:

**Traffic calming on the high injury network:** the city of philadelphia has identified the 12 percent of streets where 80 percent of all traffic crashes take place. This is referred to as the “high injury network,” and it is of the utmost importance that those streets receive interventions to slow down drivers. Suzanne hagner, of northwest philadelphia, worked along with the city of philadelphia to implement changes on a section of the high injury network where she lives, and has seen countless crashes.



## PART 2:

**Organizing with Families:** From neighborhood groups like registered community organizations, to groups with a common bond, such as Families for Safe Streets Greater Philadelphia, people in and around the region have joined forces to work together and make changes happen around the region.



## PART 3:

**Better, Safer Neighborhood Spaces:** Sometimes, communities want to see big changes that not only make the streets calmer, but also create a new community space. In the case of Lauren Vidas and the South of South Neighborhood Association, they wanted a pedestrian plaza at a three-way intersection in their neighborhood and used the power of community and politics to get it done.



## PART 4:

**Education with Safe Routes Philly:** The City of Philadelphia’s Safe Routes Philly program is dedicated to introducing Vision Zero to Philadelphia public schools. Tara Woody, who leads the program, discusses walkability audits, which involve community engagement, hearing from community members and parents about where they perceive issues around schools, conceptualizing safety plans that pose solutions for neighborhood challenges and addressing traffic safety risk.



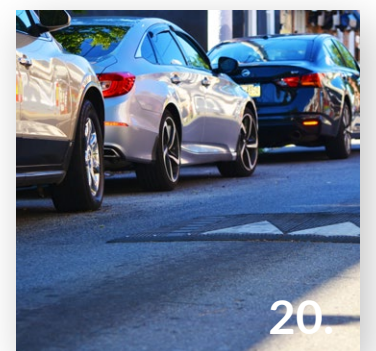
## PART 5:

**Working with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs):** University City District (UCD) is responsible for advocating for several area projects aimed at making streets safer for pedestrians by reducing crossing distances. Director of Planning and Design Nate Hommell at UCD discusses how BIDs can work with communities to create both permanent and temporary infrastructure improvements.



## PART 6:

**Physical speed interventions:** Corey Bell, now-former Constituent Services Representative at Council President Darrell Clarke’s office, was often the first point of contact for constituents who need help calming their streets. Mr. Bell offers an example of neighbors working with him to get a project completed in the 5th District of Philadelphia, and how councilmembers can help make sure projects take off.



# PART 1: TRAFFIC CALMING ON THE HIGH-INJURY NETWORK

Henry Avenue, a 4-lane road through Northwest Philadelphia, is well-known as posing a danger to local residents. Stretching six miles from Hunting Park to Andorra, at least five people died in traffic violence between 2015 and 2020, and countless people have been involved in traffic crashes. According to Wissahickon neighborhood resident Suzanne Hagner, crashes are a regular occurrence along the corridor.

In her small neighborhood near Henry Avenue, Suzanne noted four fatalities along the street, especially a curve near Barnes Street where drivers were prone to gaining speed on the 35-mile-per-hour road and cutting across traffic to enter Fairmount Park.

“Drivers would be so impatient that they would drive into a park road where people are walking. The area had four signs that said ‘do not enter/one way,’” she said. “But if one driver entered the wrong way, other drivers would follow, all going the wrong way on the park road.”

It was a problem she felt wasn’t being addressed -- and wasn’t going to be, even though Henry Avenue was set to be updated within the next few years. So, she got in touch with the PennDOT or Streets Department project manager for the Henry Avenue Remodeling project and asked him to visit the site during one late afternoon.

He immediately realized the danger of the site, even expressing concern for Suzanne’s safety during the site visit. After being

asked to get a petition signed and taken to the Streets department, Suzanne and two other neighbors were able to get over a 100 signatures to support a traffic light at Henry and Barnes St., where the turn is located. The Streets Department then initiated an intervention by placing 20 flex post delineators and high visibility lighting at Henry and Hermit Lane, in an attempt to stop drivers from driving the wrong way down the park road.

Suzanne also talks about the importance of community engaged planning activities. She personally sent many emails to department representatives and attended community meetings to support efforts for traffic safety interventions. After many emails, photo sharing, and three community meetings for resident input on the Wissahickon Transit Center renewal plan, the Office of Transportation, Infrastructure and Sustainability (oTIS) managed to get a two-way bike lane put into the design of the project.

### Advice/ Strategy Points

- Suzanne Hagner used respectful dialogue and ongoing communication as a key strategy to engage oTIS, leaders and engineers involved in local street design and improvement projects. After reaching out to the Streets department, Suzanne met with engineers, walked them through the area, and in the process learned a lot about the things they had to take into consideration to make changes to traffic calming measures. She led petitions, did walkthroughs, attended meetings, and sent weekly emails to department representatives as advised.

“WHEN YOU ASK FOR HELP,  
YOU ALSO ASK FOR WHAT  
CAN BE DONE.”  
- Suzanne Hagner



- Each outreach case for street calming interventions may look a bit different, but building healthy communication between planners, agency engineers, and citizens is key to moving safety projects forward.
- Suzanne worked with neighbors she knew could support advocacy efforts in an effective way, taking the time to communicate with the City and following their guidance for next steps.

Suzanne talks about her advocacy work and the relationships she began to establish with oTIS and City engineers. She notes that we have some of the best engineers in the City. A lot is about relationship building and working within the City guidelines. Engineers are working for us and are trying to help us. Being angry with them does not help.

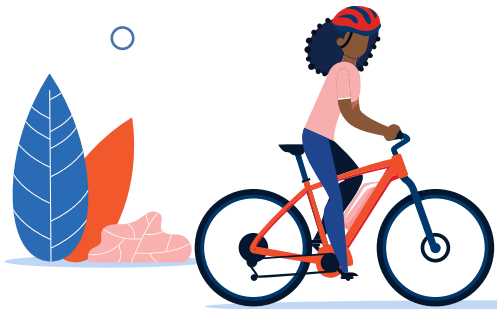
### Overall Reflections

After being moved by speakers from the Families for Safe Streets advocacy group at the Bicycle Coalition’s Vision Zero Conferences, Suzanne decided to join and began by simply attending a meeting. Although Suzanne did not identify as one who personally lost a loved one to a traffic death, she was touched by these stories of loss and felt a connection to the group’s purpose as families turned their grief into the fuel to advocate for safer streets and traffic calming. It is never too late to get involved and all are welcome to this field of advocacy!

Suzanne notes that change for safe streets and fruitful advocacy for interventions do not happen fast. That is the reality, but it does happen. There have been several more crashes in the area in recent months post the pandemic, but the Streets Department installed a very long tight row of delineators to replace all the broken ones.

### A Note to 50+ community members

Suzanne is a testament to the changes that can be made when an individual decides to commit to ongoing, respectful, and relentless communication with City entities. Understanding the responsibilities they have to our city and following the guidance provided created an opportunity for Suzanne to work hand in hand with those in charge of managing the work to secure safe streets. As a retiree, Suzanne has used her time to advocate for change and to be a voice of concern in her neighborhood.







**LATANYA BYRD AND  
FRANCINE LAWSON,  
FAMILIES FOR SAFE  
STREETS GREATER  
PHILADELPHIA (FSSGP)**

## PART 2: ORGANIZING WITH FAMILIES

Laura Fredricks is the co-founder of the Families for Safe Streets Greater Philadelphia chapter. She became an advocate for safe streets alongside her husband Richard Fredricks and family after her daughter Emily Fredricks was killed while cycling in Philadelphia in November of 2017, after having lived in Philadelphia for only six months.

Laura is involved with the Institute for Safer Trucking and the Truck Safety Coalition in Washington, D. C. and has travelled to D.C. to talk with Senators and Representatives about safe trucking regulations. She has spoken at numerous conferences and advocacy events and is part of several groups, including the New Jersey Vision Zero Alliance and the Vision Zero Philadelphia education committee that is part of Philadelphia's Vision Zero Task Force.

Latanya Byrd's niece Samara Banks,

and three of Banks' children, Saamir, Saasean, and Saadeem, were killed by speeding drivers while crossing the street on Roosevelt Boulevard in 2013. Since that time, Byrd has worked to make Roosevelt Boulevard safer via the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's first speed camera Pilot, which, after two years, has already begun to bring down deadly crashes and high speeds on that corridor, according to PennDOT and Philadelphia Parking Authority data.

Byrd helped create Families for Safe Streets Greater Philadelphia (FSSGP) in 2018, has been advocating for safety fixes to Roosevelt Boulevard for the last several years. She worked in Harrisburg and Philadelphia to help pass legislation that will put automated speed enforcement cameras on the Boulevard, making the street safer for years to come.

### Story Overview:

These families have used tragedy as an opportunity to heighten advocacy for street and roadway safety. For the Fredricks, settling out of court allowed for the Fredricks family to advocate for extensive safety changes with the company that include driver safety training and re-training, including instruction on urban driving and interactions with cyclists, a safety audit, a written policy that trucks will not park or idle in bike lanes, and more.

The Families for Safe Streets Greater Philadelphia (FSSGP) community around the nation is composed of individuals who advocate for pedestrian and cyclist safety and confront traffic violence through advocacy and support. Most members have lost loved ones or have been injured in a crash themselves. FSSGP provides a support community for participants as monthly meetings are an opportunity for individuals to connect in a structured supportive environment.



### Advice/ Strategy Points:

- FSS chapters usually receive help from an established advocacy group such as Transportation Alternatives to help support new chapters. Being involved in organizations such as the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia (BCGP) has been instrumental for Laura because they serve as "eyes and ears on the ground." Laura does not live in Philadelphia, but she is still able to learn about the issues, learn about what needs to be done and where the state needs to be pushed for policy changes. She has gone to Harrisburg with the BCGP team and has even spoken with legislators to support safe streets for all.

- Consider your wording when advocating for safety. Advocates use the word "Crash" and not "Accident" when describing incidents because many fatalities are preventable happenings. For streetscape issues, there are often proven solutions that have yet to be implemented in a particular location. Advocates in these cases are key to bringing concerns and solutions to the attention of City officials.

- Partnership and collaboration are beneficial in framing the narratives around crash fatalities. Having organizations work together is useful in relaying a unified message. Through workshops, the FSSGP group has worked with the Police Department and the Philadelphia Inquirer to improve the ways that the media expresses crashes. For example, Laura notes that in car crashes, it was not the car that hit the pedestrian, it was the driver of the car. Language is important.

- It is important to build good relationships with city offices that advocates would otherwise be on opposing terms with. FSS has met with the District Attorney and Police Department to ensure proper procedures in crash investigations are taken. There is a need to push for accountability for drivers. Reckless or distracted driving should be dissuaded as higher measures of accountability are taken through prosecution charges that hold drivers responsible in crashes.



Laura Fredricks holding a photo of her daughter, Emily.

**FAMILIES FOR SAFE STREETS  
GREATER PHILADELPHIA  
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**“In order to try to make the changes that are necessary and are really commonplace you need the personal story of those who have lost loved ones.”**

**Memorable Quotes & Insight**

Advocacy work is frustrating as it is ongoing, and older regulations may stand in the way of new or present solutions to traffic safety. Laura shares frustration with the way changes happen so slowly when safety interventions can seem to be “common sense” at times. At other times it feels like “we’re preaching to the choir,” yet safety improvements are slow because of the current laws and regulation changes that take so long to be passed by ordinance. Even when accomplishing one thing there is always something else to work on.

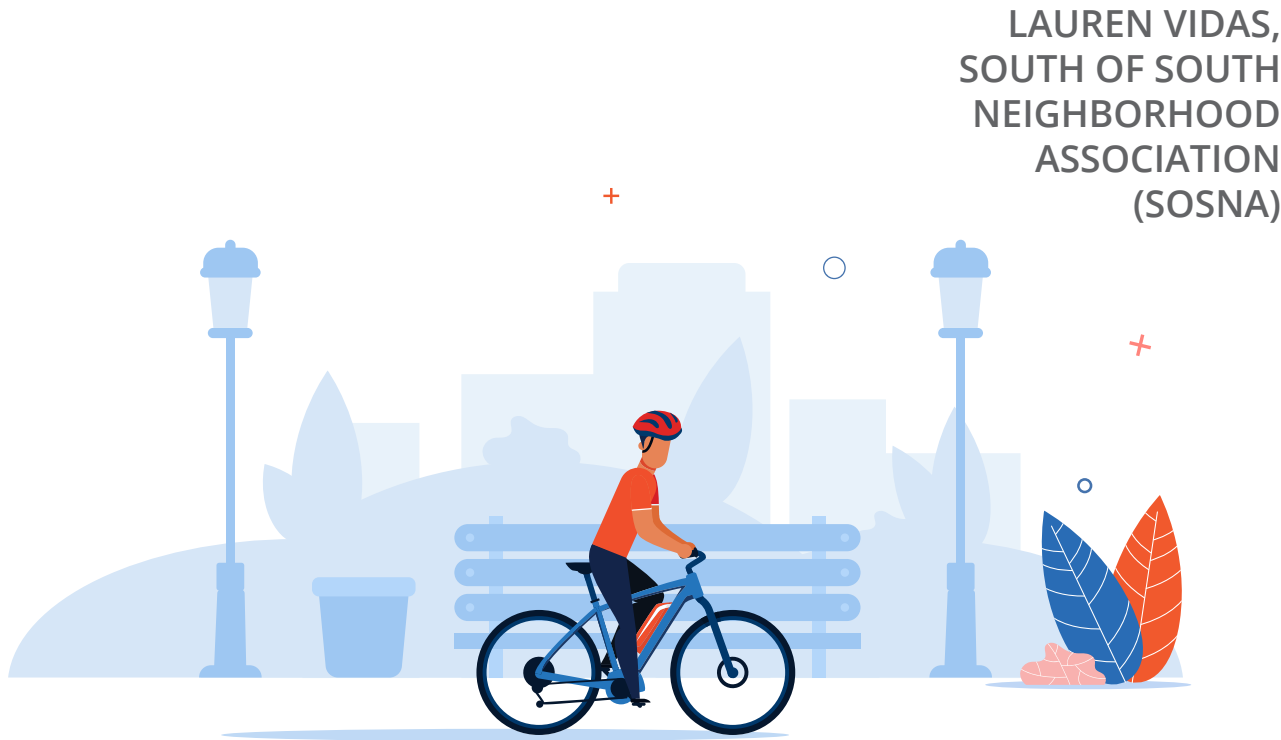
Advocates are sometimes trying to “fix” bad decisions made 40-50 years ago. Previous planning decisions may no longer be conducive to safety due to changing neighborhood patterns, increased traffic, or traffic speeds that have since become dangerous if there has been an increase in pedestrian activity.

Sharing personal stories makes a difference with legislators, senators, and representatives. Laura states, “In order to try to make the changes that are necessary and are really commonplace you need the personal story of those who have lost loved ones.” Personal stories also tell of the lived experiences and daily pathways that people take. Laura still reflects on the pathways her daughter Emily would be cycling along if she were still here.

**Overall Reflections**

For those who have lost loved ones, getting involved in advocacy work is part of an individual process that is uniquely different for each advocate. For some, getting involved happens right away while for others it may happen much later from the initial point of grief. Laura shared the experience of a woman who reached out to her and said, “That’s it, that’s enough.” She expressed that her son was killed about 2 years ago and after hearing the stories of all those who were killed in the month of July in 2020, she was ready to get involved. As a grieving mother herself, Laura was able to empathize.

“You need community support. You can’t do this alone.” The more people that know about the issues, the more we can collectively push for change.



**LAUREN VIDAS,  
SOUTH OF SOUTH  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
ASSOCIATION  
(SOSNA)**



**PART 3:  
BETTER, SAFER  
NEIGHBORHOOD SPACES**



Lauren Vidas was a board member and former chair of the South of South Neighborhood Association, joining the group in 2008, and working to move forward a vision for a pedestrian plaza that neighbors had worked for since 2007. By initiating a pilot project that would allow residents to get a sense of potential changes to the neighborhood’s physical space, the group slowly garnered support for a permanent pedestrian plaza that would benefit both residents and concerned business owners.

**Story Overview:**

SOSNA led efforts to form the Triangles

Gateway Project to create a pedestrian plaza at 23rd and South by hosting listening sessions and events to garner feedback about what area neighbors thought about changes to the area. Although meetings were held once a month, many neighbors were not attending. Through the hosting of events in the targeted space, SOSNA was able to increase resident engagement in the process. SOSNA hosted an event called the “Plaza Palooza” intended to draw families into the plaza space as a fun community event. During this time, they received feedback from residents who could freely share what they thought about the space while they were actively present in it.



During the outreach period, three parking spots were moved temporarily, allowing for businesses to assess how the changes would affect them during the duration of the pilot project.

Eventually the pilot was a huge success, solidifying the viability of the location as a pedestrian plaza and gaining permanence with the support of the City. The parking spots were permanently removed and a new Indego bike sharing station was placed at the site. As for the business owners, they experienced a greater benefit from increased foot traffic while still having access to preserved loading zones in front of their businesses.

The pedestrian plaza has a mix of generations using the space because it was planned with all ages in mind. Considering walkability in the neighborhood was an important piece of the project as the focus was not just on commercial priorities. As more families have moved into the area and the number of children in the neighborhood has grown, walkability and safety have become issues of priority.

This is the story of a cross generational pilot project that has become a permanent plaza where all are welcome -- grandparents with children and a diversity of people! The 23rd and South plaza is now home to the annual Odunde Festival and many more community events.

### Advice/ Strategy Points:

- Community stakeholders important for garnering project support include neighbors, businesses, and the City.

- The language surrounding community engagement for a project is essential. Any community that is looking to tackle a project should also make sure to engage stakeholders by presenting the issues or problems one aims to solve prior to advocating for a particular solution. By initially presenting the issue, such as amenities you would like to create, or safety measures needed, one can invite others into open dialogue about the best ways to find solutions.

- By building a community around the

idea of space, engagement efforts should aim to bring together the community that is already present in and around the locality.

- Look at every interaction in the space you are working in as an opportunity to get feedback. Hosting events and activating the space as a center for gathering can help get neighbors out to learn about your projects. People are often “over” meetings, and more authentic feedback can be gained when one is proactive about meeting people where they are. These sorts of activities can also draw neighbors that would otherwise not attend meetings.

### Memorable Quotes & Insight

Sometimes people need to see the vision in front of them to understand the vision, and that is where a pilot project can be helpful.

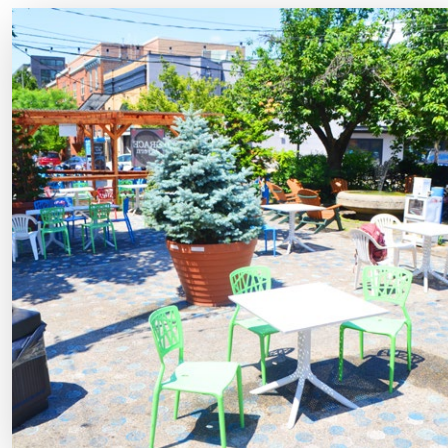
When pushing for an intervention that is specific to space or location, Lauren advises to try to get people into that space. She notes that people need to be in the space to understand it and get excited about it. People could really think through the possibilities being present in the space as “it’s a less academic experience for them.” Sometimes as you make changes to the physical space in the neighborhood, it is easier to get those changes if it’s presented as a pilot and not the final option.

Project facilitators such as those in SOSNA’s community engagement role should be open to changes as time progresses and there is a better understanding of how the space can be used. This allows for people that are reluctant to a permanent change to be less reluctant to a temporary change.

### Overall Reflections

There is so much work that needs to be done. You are going to win and lose some, but there are a lot of opportunities to move on and get the next winnable effort. Don’t focus and continue to spend time losing battles when there are so many doable and winnable projects that can be implemented. You must respect neighbors’ decisions on things, so do not take disagreements personally because you

“  
THE PEOPLE MAKE  
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PLACE DOESN’T MAKE  
THE PEOPLE  
”



do not want to make a permanent enemy. The naysayers on one project can be your biggest supporters on another project. That is why listening is so important, as well as not cutting people off when they don’t agree with you.

Planning has to do with asking, “who is going to be using the space or who is the community that you are going to be serving?” The answer to this question derived by neighborhood feedback will fuel the long-term vision. Lauren states, “the people make the place, the place doesn’t make the people.” She suggests considering the variety of users on the street when pushing for vehicular traffic changes as it is necessary to think of what those changes mean for other users of different abilities.

In sum, effective community engagement consists of activating spaces, piloting things out, creating community space informed by the voices of stakeholders, and listening to people to determine what works and what doesn’t. “The community needs to come before the space,” says Vidas.

### A Note to 50+ community members

Although the population in the community was increasing in the number of children in the neighborhood, Lauren Vidas notes that what is good for children concerning traffic safety planning and increased walkability is also good for seniors. “Projects that consider neighborhood walkability and changes in resident travel patterns are essential for securing the safety of the most at-risk pedestrians, including children and seniors,” she adds. Who is doing the walking is an important question as “hostile” street designs such as the lack of benches for seniors and crossing lights can influence whether certain residents will participate in neighborhood functions or feel comfortable tackling daily tasks. For families and neighbors that regularly engage with a range of ages, feedback about the strengths and neighborhood challenges is especially important!





## PART 4: EDUCATION WITH SAFE ROUTES PHILLY

**Tara Woody has worked to provide training, resources, and technical support to schools across the City and to direct others to opportunities focused on community safety and walkability. She has been fundamental to the Philadelphia initiative in her project planning and program redevelopment role.**

### Story Overview:

The Safe Routes to School campaign works to advance safe walking and rolling to and from schools and in everyday life. This work aims to improve health and the well-being of people of all races, income levels, and abilities and works to build healthy thriving communities for everyone through school-based partnerships. The Safe Routes Philly program partners with schools and provides resources, training for teachers, and technical support for schools across the city within the high injury network.

The High Injury Network (HIN) spotlights streets with a high concentration of severe injuries and deaths, with an emphasis on those involving people walking and bicycling. Therefore, the Philly based Safe Routes to School initiative predominantly focuses on promoting Vision Zero goals, as well as bike and pedestrian safety. Lessons provided range from covering topics of pedestrian walking safety, basic skills for riding bikes, traffic related walking safety instruction, such as crossing streets and large intersections, as well as providing educational guides for pre-k focused on car seat use and protections for preschoolers.

Programs also advocate for walking groups, also known as the “walking school bus,” to promote walking safety and encourage school attendance. Safe Routes to School’s educational resources and lesson plans are available to all schools.

Several public trainings are provided throughout the year and limited technical assistance has been provided through work with community organizations.

### Advice/ Strategy Points:

A walk audit tool is designed to assess street and neighborhood conditions, pedestrian facilities, and destinations along and near a walking route in order to identify specific improvements that would make the route more useful, safe, and attractive to pedestrians.

Community led walkability audits are possible! Several organizations such as AARP have been involved in community focused walkability audits. The process also includes organizing meetings, gathering residents interested in getting involved, and using community feedback on neighborhood concerns and conditions to develop a community-based analysis of key safety issues. A prevalent example of a neighborhood safety issue is speeding. By using walkability audits to examine high traffic times, speeding patterns at certain intersections and blocks, pedestrian hotspots, and the need for signage, a community can develop a community assessment that determines the need for stop signs and speed cushions in a particular area. Essentially serving as a basis for further advocacy, calling on district leaders and city entities to address the concern.



- Walkability audits are a great way of learning about the safety concerns and issues facing local communities. The Safe Routes to School initiative has used walk audits as a tool to inform future safety project plans and to provide schools with a better understanding of the needs surrounding them.

- Walkability audits involve much community engagement, hearing from community members and parents about where they perceive issues around schools, conceptualizing safety plans that pose solutions for neighborhood challenges and addressing traffic safety risk. Through this process, community partners engage in reassessing the goals of project initiatives and plans alongside community members as feedback is provided to develop and plan for interventions.

- Although walkability audits do not often immediately lead to implementation or new infrastructure, they become an effective tool for advocacy, building awareness and serving as a basis for engineers that work on street safety design plans. They can also serve to drive consensus on the safest routes to popular neighborhood destinations, such as schools and grocery stores.

### Memorable Quotes/Insight

- Schools are such a great venue for advocating traffic safety because there are so many people going to and from the school location from various neighborhood sections and directions.

- Traffic safety goes above and beyond wearing a helmet and crossing the street. Children are watching their surroundings, and adults are role models that influence adolescents daily. Because of this, adults need to teach and model safe behaviors.

- Promoting safe routes to school is a good way to think about community connections and better school attendance (through walking groups). The “Walking school bus” concept is a way for community members to feel safer walking as a group and taking children to school. There are also physical and mental health benefits of walking and feeling an enhanced sense of safety.

- Partnerships between school, community, and other organizational partners can enhance student motivation, build student egos, and provide added educational benefits. Partners can provide incentives, serve as student mentors, or support the development of children through other programs. One example described by Ms. Woody showed how school partners of Gideon elementary provided smoothies in the morning for students who came to school. Such partnership provided incentives for students and served as an added benefit for the school. Programs that support safe routes to school can also be tied into other programs like health and wellness programs.

- Traffic safety is heightened when there are more people walking and less people driving. Town watch groups and initiatives promoting “eyes on the street” reflect the power in numbers to increase community safety by increasing the number of individuals looking out for child, adolescent, and senior’s safety.

### Overall Reflections

Ms. Woody notes that schools are a community staple, and as hubs in the community, they play a vital role in multigenerational engagement. Through school partnerships one can reach a wide audience and community members of varying demographics. Importantly, one can gain a range of perspectives by engaging children, students, parents, grandparents, caregivers, school partners, teachers, and principals. Schools may provide an opportunity to enhance collaborative work and community engagement, widening opportunities beyond that which can be accomplished by solely working with community organizations.

### A Note to 50+ community members

Many of our community advocates, leaders, and major stakeholders are seniors. They have proven that their support and leadership in projects promoting safety have been instrumental to neighborhood change. Many of our seniors are also avid walkers, caretakers of neighborhood children and grandchildren, and have become the “eyes on the street”.

## THE “WALKING SCHOOL BUS” CONCEPT IS A WAY FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO FEEL SAFER WALKING AS A GROUP AND TAKING CHILDREN TO SCHOOL.



We acknowledge the indispensable value of our seniors in our local neighborhoods and support the advocacy work of our many seniors who have anchored themselves as beacons of safety in the community and voices of awareness that relentlessly call out for change!

We encourage all of our City’s seniors to get involved in the advocacy movement for safe streets.

### Resources:

#### AARP: Walk Audit Tool Kit and Leader Guide

<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/info-2014/aarp-walk-audit-tool-kit.html>

#### America Walks: How to Conduct a Walk Audit in Your Community - Quick Video Guide

<https://americawalks.org/how-to-conduct-a-walk-audit-in-your-community-quick-guide-for-assessing-your-neighborhood-walkability/>

**Feet First Philly:** <https://feetfirstphilly.org/>

#### Safe Routes to Parks: A Toolkit for Planning and Conducting a Safe Routes to Parks Walk Audit

[https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource\\_files/safe\\_routes\\_to\\_parks\\_walk\\_audit\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/safe_routes_to_parks_walk_audit_toolkit.pdf)

**Safe Routes Philly:** <http://www.phillyotis.com/portfolio-item/safe-routes-philly/>

### Sample Petition Examples:

#### Bicycle Coalition Traffic Calming Petition

[https://bicyclecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Neighborhood-Petition-for-Traffic-Calming-Form\\_Philadelphia.pdf](https://bicyclecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Neighborhood-Petition-for-Traffic-Calming-Form_Philadelphia.pdf)

#### Stop Sign Petition Form

<https://www.pdfFiller.com/jsfiller-desk13/?requestHash=61ec927ebf8c619c35a53e9ba1262a7de8a605330a06321802eb803524fe59a9&projectId=690331755#34fe8b24fb483a0b9ae739db718cab47>





INTERVIEWEE, NATE  
HOMMEL, UNIVERSITY  
CITY DISTRICT



## PART 5: WORKING WITH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

Nate Hommel has been a member of the University City District (UCD) organization since 2012 and has served as the Director of Planning and Design since Summer 2015. Nate was instrumental in launching Green City Works, UCD's new landscaping social venture, and serves as a quality and design consultant for all landscaping projects that the venture executes.

### Story Overview:

The UCD is responsible for advocating for several area projects aimed at making streets safer for pedestrians by reducing crossing distances. At the five-point intersection of 48th & Baltimore, the UCD along with financial support from a City

grant, greened and converted the area into a pedestrian plaza, which the organization has called "Baltimore Crossing." Nate notes that at one point, there was no crosswalk going across Baltimore at this multipoint intersection. By installing bump-outs on each of the corners, painted on the pavement and bordered by large rocks and heavy planters, traffic turning on these streets has slowed. The turning space for vehicles has narrowed and crossing distances for pedestrians have shortened, making it a more pedestrian friendly space as there is a reduction in the amount of time that crosswalk users are exposed to vehicles. This project along with several other UCD lead initiatives show how simple changes to the streetscape can be less

costly, semi-permanent if needed, and can make an extraordinary difference for the safety and beautification of a neighborhood.

Other notable improvements done by the city include "Woodland Green" a traditional plaza done at 42nd and Woodland. Near Cedar Park at 49th and Baltimore, a triangular multi-street intersection with a slip lane was improved using planters, trees, and other internal resources totaling less than \$15,000 for basic project cost. The slip lane was closed off, which improved safety for pedestrians and added to the parking spaces in the area, garnering a lot of immediate support.

Nate recommends pushing for safety projects involving paint upgrades (or creative street murals), flex posts, and movable planters that are also self-watering. Although large stones were used at the time for the Baltimore Ave. project, Nate suggests that it may not be as feasible for present day projects. The City is worried that if they need access to certain areas during an emergency the groups doing similar projects do not have the capacity to lift 1000-pound stones. The City would prefer street safety projects that use planters and flex points, noting that the one type of planter accepted by PennDOT is made from rotomolded plastic.

### Advice/ Strategy Points:

- Be clear about what your project is and aims to do! All of the street improvement projects at major intersections are not pedestrian plazas. They could simply be sidewalk extensions. This is important to keep in mind because projects that are similar to simple sidewalk extensions (not considered plazas) would not require the

same type of insurance and regulations. Clarity in project goals can also help with gathering support and addressing any petition issues that arise. Notably, the 48th and Baltimore project is considered a sidewalk extension to shorten crossing distances and would not be considered a traditional plaza.

- Experiment with projects as pilots and then work to move changes into policy. Always consider maintenance when considering temporary and permanent street changes.

- A targeted advocacy campaign creating a narrative around safety can get people engaged in the advocacy work. By discussing possibilities with residents (i.e., printing out program applications and showing them what changes can be made, etc.), residents can also join in and become advocates! Talk to people in the vicinity, "start from the row house" and go from there.

- If car parking is an issue in certain

communities, be sure to do your research with the City and neighbors. Some "illegal" parking spaces are culturally accepted.

- For safety projects involving flex posts, you must work with the Streets department. Only they can install "flexible delineator posts" and other objects such as planters. Permits are needed from the City when one works with city property and the right of way in public spaces.

- Part of project implementation involves addressing regulators concerns. Regulators may express concerns as to how projects may pose future issues as a result of permanent changes or interventions that cannot easily be moved in case of emergencies. Nate provides the example of using lighter weight planters that can easily be pushed off to the side for street work and are flexible plastic so they will not easily break when hit because they bounce. In sum, if you can solve for some of their problems and concerns by doing your research, regulators are more likely to say "yes" and approve your project!





### Memorable Quotes & Insight

Safety measures should be put in place “by right” in a perfect world. For the sake of project implementation, “don’t wait for perfect, shoot for safety.” Sidewalk extensions, closing of slip lanes and other simple interventions that do not require lofty insurance should be safety priorities as the pedestrian is the most vulnerable in the community.

“Perfect is the enemy of done work” for some city instances. Nate advises to give things a try, especially when street alterations are not permanent. If it doesn’t work well or ruins a different area of street safety in some way, you can just take it out. For example, planters used as a street safety intervention could be moved if necessary as they are not set as permanent fixtures.

Less costly alternatives to streetscape improvements can be significantly more attainable in a shorter amount of time. Pilot interventions slated as a potentially “temporary” change can be regarded as cheap but can often produce great results concerning safety.

“The problem with lofty goals is that they won’t be implemented as quickly.” Consider cheaper alternatives that have proven effectiveness. As for 48th and Baltimore, the planters have been there for over a decade. Nate considers it “money well spent” as it has absolutely made the areas safer.

### Overall Reflections

Nate acknowledges the privilege with which his organization operates as UCD has had the opportunity to experiment with projects in more affluent areas of the city. Many of the organizations working to establish changes in communities can

make it possible for others in the City to apply for the same changes as well. Nate notes that the infrastructure for the projects that have been implemented was not even present a decade ago. He states that the more people understand what the problem is, the more they can advocate for the necessary changes. The goal is safety by reducing crossing distances for people.

Nate emphasizes the power in numbers and suggests that it would be much more effective if small groups like community development corporations and neighborhood or civic groups connect and band together to advocate for changes in the city. It could consist of advocacy for the City to change the budget. Ultimately, when it comes to citizens, everyone would listen. If you come in with 10 community groups reflective of the citizen voice, there is so much power, more than people realize they have.

Group advocacy could also look like a collective group of neighborhood stakeholders using their buying power to purchase materials needed for a street safety intervention project, be it pilot or newly implemented. Aggregation in smaller groups can make it easier to fund and maintain projects as there is more accountability to ensure the sustainability of developments. Collaboration may be used to address issues of insurance needed for certain projects.

Even when organizations can cover the material cost of projects with minimal budgets, groups may run into issues of insurance to cover the project if there is no type of “umbrella insurance” that can meet the requirements to move forward with implementation.

If you want to make it nicer “down the road” you can develop those ideas or use money to go to other locations to begin

implementing projects. He emphasizes that interventions can be non-permanent, and if there are no major factors, such as having a bus route or a street being a part of the highway system, there should be little to no issues when advocating for a safer street.

### A Note to 50+ community members

The project for extended sidewalks and shortening walking distances proved how important it is to advocate for safety

improvements that consider all street users. Often, multipoint intersections are the most frequently used and pose the highest risk for pedestrians as they connect residents to places such as schools, hospitals, daycares, retirement, and senior facilities. As an essential part of the community fabric, seniors play an important role in voicing their concerns and sharing their feedback about the ways that streetscapes hinder or improve their ability to get around! Street safety advocacy must consider different abilities and perspectives!

### Resources:

**Tactical Urbanists Guide to Materials and Design: Version 1.0**

[https://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tu-guide\\_to\\_materials\\_and\\_design\\_v1](https://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tu-guide_to_materials_and_design_v1)

**City of Philadelphia Green Streets Design Manual**

[http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/GSDM\\_FINAL\\_20140211.pdf](http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/GSDM_FINAL_20140211.pdf)

**WHYY’s article:University City District creates new Baltimore Crossing pedestrian plaza**

<https://whyy.org/articles/university-city-district-creates-new-baltimore-crossing-pedestrian-plaza/>

**Penndot Roadside Beautification Overview and Application**

<https://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/PubsForms/Publications/PUB%20461A.pdf>

**Bike Corral & Rack, Pedestrian Plaza and Parklet Programs**

<http://www.phillyotis.com/portfolio-item/bike-corral-rack-pedestrian-plaza-parklet-programs/>



# PART 6: SPEED CUSHIONS AT 25TH & GORDON STREETS



## INTERVIEWEE, COREY BELL, CITY OF PHILADELPHIA CONSTITUENT SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE

**Corey Bell is a representative of the City of Philadelphia Constituent services. In his role, he is a mediator for all conflicts related to urban design, transportation, and economic development.**



### Story Overview:

In the 5th council district, speeding cars is a big issue. Corey Bell was involved in a project to place speed cushions along 25th street after multiple cars crashed into the home of a local constituent living on Gordon Street. Multiple cars crashed into the women's house because they were speeding along Gordon Street, and there was only one stop sign in that intersection. Cars would either bypass the stop and get hit by another vehicle or end up going straight towards her house. After months of advocacy work, the Streets department put in speed cushions on 5th Street and reversed the direction of traffic on one side of Gordon Street so that no cars could turn into 25th Street.

Corey Bell notes that street calming requests are to be sent to the Philadelphia Streets Department, but it is also important to carbon copy, "CC", the Office of Transportation, Infrastructure and Sustainability (oTIS). If the community needs support with reviewing street conditions and assessing possibilities for interventions, they can reach out to oTIS.

Before any request is submitted, Corey advises to circulate a petition among neighbors signed by 75% or more of the properties whose address falls on the block, to show neighborhood support and push for prioritization of the issue. Once a request for street calming is submitted to the Streets Department, it is reviewed by city engineers to determine whether changes are deemed

warranted "by the book." Engineers will go out and measure speed, review reported crashes, and take other measures to determine what and if a street or intersection warrants an intervention like a Stop sign, speed bumps, or other traffic calming measures. They could also consider larger interventions such as changing the direction of a street.

An important note: The City's traffic engineers are guided by State laws also known as PennDOT regulations. In turn, those laws are guided and governed by federal law. Any seemingly "robotic" response from city engineers may be a result of those restrictions as they may find themselves with "their hands tied." Changing state and federal regulations is important to keep in mind for those who wish to change widespread neighborhood safety issues -- a lobbying task for organizational advocates and leaders that desire to push for greater changes at a city and state scale.

In short, the Street Department provides the engineers that will strictly identify whether the law allows for certain changes. oTIS works with both planners and engineers to support the work and manage Vision Zero as they are focused on mobility, safety, and improving quality of life in all Philadelphia communities through safe and sustainable infrastructure. For groups that do not have professional designers and engineers, oTIS may also be able to provide feedback about the options that the City can provide for interventions.

### Advice/ Strategy Points

- First and foremost, it is important to listen and begin engagement with the understanding that the community should be upheld as the "experts." Because they experience the daily happenings of the neighborhood, they are most informed about neighborhood conditions and traffic patterns that affect safety the most.

- Your advocacy stance and language are key. Initial questions and discussions should be broad and open-ended to keep the focus on the importance of needed safety measures. For example, you may not want to start a conversation about safety with, "we need a bike lane." Such a suggestion may be polarizing because people may have certain views against others that don't drive and perceptions about who the bike lane is for. The priority should be, "let's make it safe for pedestrians" and start from there.

- When dealing with planners, engineers, and political officials, documentation is key. Take pictures and videos of the traffic concern or neighborhood issues that need to be addressed (i.e., speeding, pedestrian, and vehicle traffic patterns). Because traffic engineers only initially review reportable crashes, neighbors can serve to witness, document, take pictures, and provide information to engineers to use as supplemental information. The "evidence" provides more validity to the cause, showcases the importance of an issue, and avoids having an issue simply being dismissed as

"hearsay." Corey notes the usefulness of social media for collecting information, noting that a community group started a Facebook page to start documenting and tracking.

- Consider your Strategy for Organizing! Learn more about the history of your neighborhood, the land use (i.e., industrial vs. residential), and what streets are adjacent to major corridors or the street of concern. This is important to note as it is part of the process of figuring out which additional entities such as oTIS could be involved in a neighborhood project or whether a process will need to happen through PennDOT more directly. For example, a street could be classified as an arterial, and the neighborhood could have changed to a residential neighborhood. This issue will need to be addressed if the City still classifies that street as for industrial use.

- Neighborhood Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) as well as Community Development Corporations (CDCs) can provide useful engagement in informing administrative leadership, elected officials, and city council about transportation needs, safety priorities, and suggested policy changes. A united front will help draw support from elected officials who would otherwise not address issues due to neighborhood level contention.

- Suggesting a community pilot project can be the start of a successful strategy. Projects that implement minor changes, such as adding temporary paint to an intersection or jersey barriers to demonstrate the potential for traffic calming, can also provide real



time results of the possibilities. With the resulting feedback, a long-term project idea can be tweaked based on the outcomes or more readily approved while also helping people to feel like they have ownership of the process.

### Memorable Quotes & Insight

Corey notes that organizations for traffic safety interventions at the block level is key. It is important to document conditions, especially when politicians may be hesitant to accept a new proposed street design. Without a critical mass of support and people asking for change, they are not as likely to prioritize an issue. He goes on to explain that politicians often have pressing issues they have to deal with, and it helps when people organize their block and take the initiative to assert the changes they think can make conditions safer. Safety as the main message is a priority that everyone can rally behind.

Corey also notes that traffic crashes are so prevalent that when they happen it's just another happening of the day. There is not so much heightened consideration when it comes to safety as compared to other things like air traffic control. If there is a plane crash everything shuts down, policies and processes must be undertaken to ensure any issues are fixed. With airplanes, there is zero tolerance for safety issues. With driving, we take our lives into our own hands daily.

### Overall Reflections

Corey Bell emphasized the importance of prioritizing the pedestrian and not preventing cities from putting in mechanisms to calm traffic. Given that the history of transportation planning since the 1940s has used a top-down approach to prioritize cars instead of people, advocacy work centered in pedestrian safety is really

dealing with the history of planning as the key root cause of our neighborhood safety concerns. Engineers have had to make sure that traffic works as efficiently as possible. Considering that pedestrians and residents would like to safely walk in in their neighborhood, traffic calming is a safety intervention. While planners and engineers have been historically tasked with improving traffic, fast driving and free flowing traffic speed inherently puts people's lives in danger.

Corey encourages us to think about the “why behind the why” and the intersectionality between factors as people express their needs. He gives the examples of residents saying they may need a car to

**“WHEN ADVOCATING FOR POLICY CHANGE, START WITH SAFETY AND THEN MAKE THE ARGUMENT FOR SPEED.”**

get to goods and services. Such a concern is not simply a car issue; for advocates and residents it may also be a zoning and land use issue as they explore how goods and services can be placed closer to people so that they do not feel like they need to have a car for access. Additionally, you address traffic and safety issues by considering pedestrian concerns and speed in the process.

Organizers should be neutral arbiters and not dismissive to people that do not have a professional background. Let people tell their stories so that everyone has more voice. At times what residents

like, want, or currently desire may not be specific to traffic safety, but all the feedback is important as the little details add up, providing a more expanded narrative of neighborhood priorities. Making sure the community leads the conversation from the start will help ensure that any initial concerns are addressed as part of other potential intersectional projects. The compilation of ideas focused on calming traffic will also inform and further the Vision Zero mission of the City.

### A Note to 50+ community members

Advocacy for safe streets and traffic calming is also an issue of place making. Families and individuals do not only seek goods and services in their neighborhoods. Residential streets are places where people also convene and contribute to the nature of the environment. If residents of any age feel as though they cannot be present in their community in the simplest ways, as we've gathered by the example of the resident whose life would be in danger by simply stepping outside of her home, that can very well be the basis for a needed intervention. Fear of traffic and endangerment are real concerns that must be considered when designing for traffic patterns and making changes to roadways. Our older adult community members have frequently and continue to be the voice for change!



### Resources:

**City of Philadelphia office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability (oTIS)**  
<http://www.phillyotis.com/>

**City of Philadelphia Streets Department Traffic Calming Policy Information**  
<https://www.philadelphiastreet.com/traffic-and-lighting/traffic-calming-policy-information>

**Sample Traffic Calming Petition**  
[https://bicyclecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Neighborhood-Petition-for-Traffic-Calming-Form\\_Phila.pdf](https://bicyclecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Neighborhood-Petition-for-Traffic-Calming-Form_Phila.pdf)

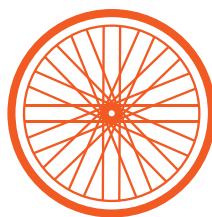
**Feet First Philly Pedestrian Advocacy Guide**  
(arccgis.com)

**Project for Public Spaces**  
<https://www.pps.org/people/fkent>

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[bicyclecoalition.org](http://bicyclecoalition.org)



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