

## Transportation

### Walkability

#### What makes a neighborhood walkable?

**A center:** A walkable neighborhood has a discernable center, whether it's a shopping district, a main street or a public space.

**Density:** The neighborhood is compact enough for local businesses to flourish and for public transportation to run frequently.

**Mixed income, mixed use:** Housing is available for everyone who lives in the neighborhood: young and old, singles and families, established or just starting out. Businesses and residences are located near each other.

**Open space/Green space:** Public places to gather and play should be plentiful.

**Pedestrian-centric design:** Buildings are placed close to the street to cater to foot traffic, with parking lots relegated to the rear.

**Nearby schools and workplaces:** Schools and workplaces should be within walking distance from homes.

Alamo Heights is a city that loves to walk, stroll, jog, run and bike. Creating an environment that encourages and promotes this healthy life style is an essential part of a vibrant community. Providing safe, accessible walking routes will encourage citizens to utilize them. Sidewalks linking residential to commercial corridors on Broadway will promote walking to shops and restaurants, ultimately helping with parking congestion. A well-designed network of sidewalks around the high school and linking to Cambridge Elementary would make it possible for students to safely walk to school alone.

### Link to Destinations

Sidewalks, bike routes and walking routes should be used to connect neighborhoods to destination areas, as well. Routes and sidewalks that link people to schools, playgrounds, the pool and recreational athletic fields were referenced as important to Alamo Heights residents. Sidewalks and bike routes that would connect to Sunset Ridge shopping center, the Quarry, Lincoln Heights and the McNay Art Museum would be useful. Sidewalks could also be developed to connect the High School to the Junior School, while mid-block paseos or passage ways would facilitate easier access to the high school for walkers and cyclists.

Enhancing the existing network of sidewalks was suggested by Alamo Heights residents as a top priority. There was a strong desire articulated at the neighborhood meetings to be able to walk from shop to shop in the retail areas. The ability to stroll through downtown Alamo Heights was important to a significant number of meeting participants. Creating linkages to the commercial areas should, therefore, also be given priority to encourage pedestrian flow into the retail area.

### Action Steps

- Create neighborhood links to destinations that would encourage walking.
- Prioritize sidewalks that connect neighborhoods to the commercial corridor.

## Construct Neighborhood Sidewalks

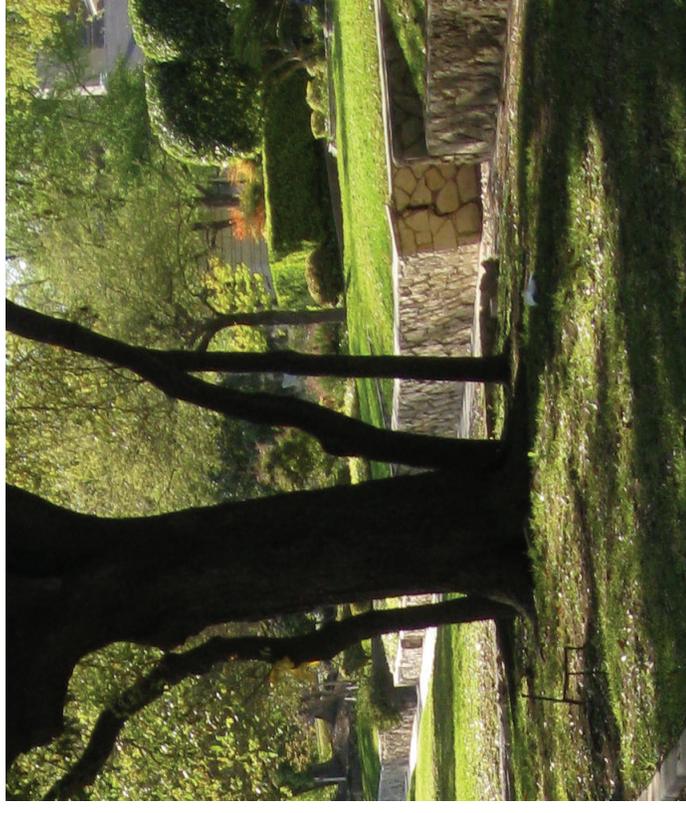
While sidewalks are desirable for a number of reasons, it is not necessary that sidewalks are constructed on all streets. Some neighborhoods are more conducive to adding sidewalks or, in some cases, completing existing sidewalk patterns. For example, in Bluebonnet Hills, the Cottage District, and Madeliene Terrace the sidewalk pattern should be completed and linked to Broadway. The Sylvan Hills and Mont Clair neighborhoods would also be good candidates for a new sidewalk program. Neighborhoods with more irregular patterned streets, such as Cambridge Oval and La Jara, make it more difficult to retrofit the existing infrastructure fabric with sidewalks. In these neighborhoods, more creative ways to integrate pedestrians and vehicles into the shared space should be explored. Sidewalks could be included within wide rights-of-way or integrated with other street improvements, such as bio-swales.

## Design of Sidewalks

The design of sidewalks is important to the character of a community. In general, sidewalks should be designed to a minimum of five feet and should include a planting strip between the edge of the curb and the sidewalk. Pedestrian scale lights can be added to facilitate pedestrian movement along major connector streets and to help define space and scale in the commercial area.

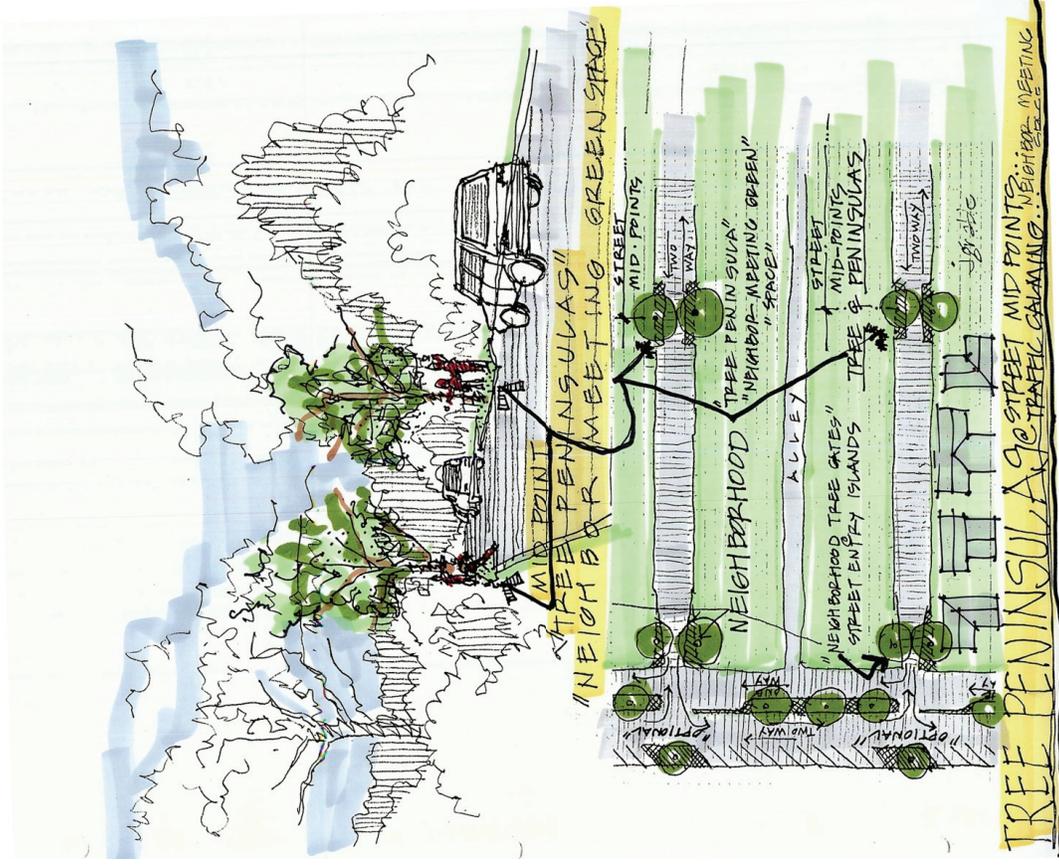
### Action Steps

- Develop a long term strategy for constructing new sidewalks and completing established patterns.
- Incentivize neighborhoods and property owners to build sidewalks or complete patterns.



## Traffic Calming

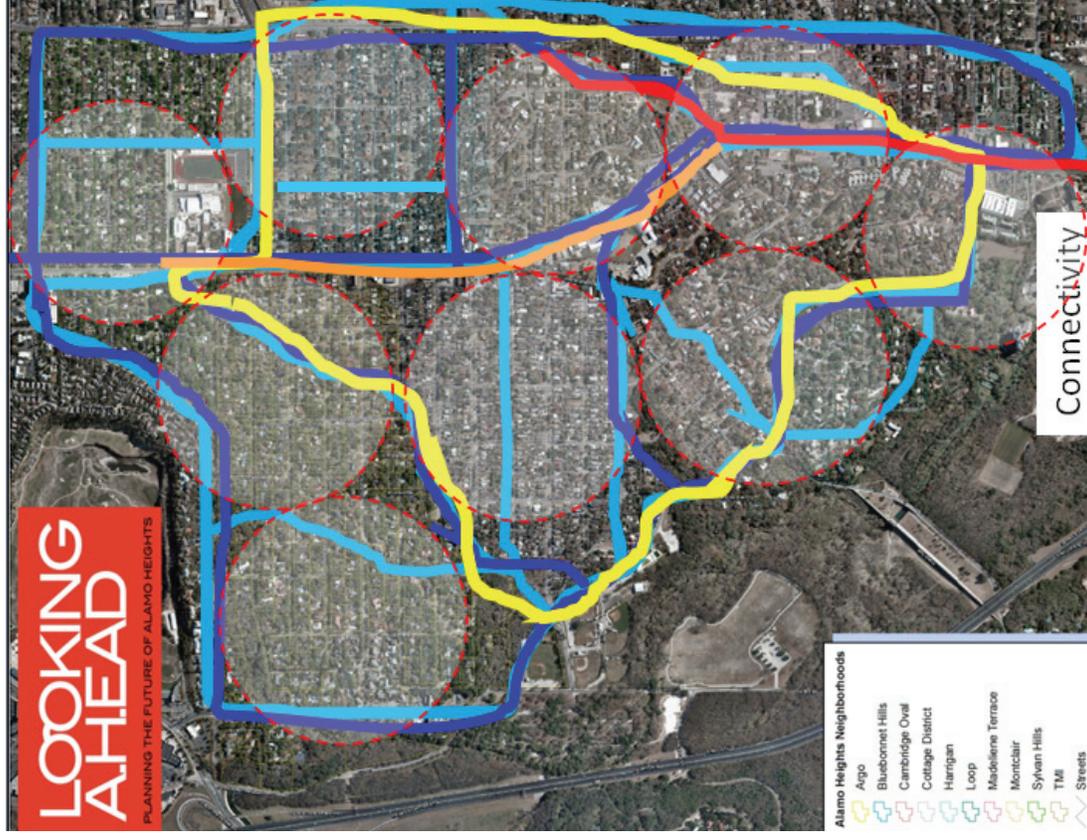
Traffic calming devices, such as corner bulbouts, also serve to enhance the pedestrian experience by decreasing the distance that the pedestrian has to travel while crossing a street. Other traffic-calming devices, such as chicanes can slow traffic, making intersections safer for pedestrians. Pedestrian signals with countdown timers should be installed on Broadway, Austin Highway and New Braunfels to facilitate pedestrian crossing.



# Transportation

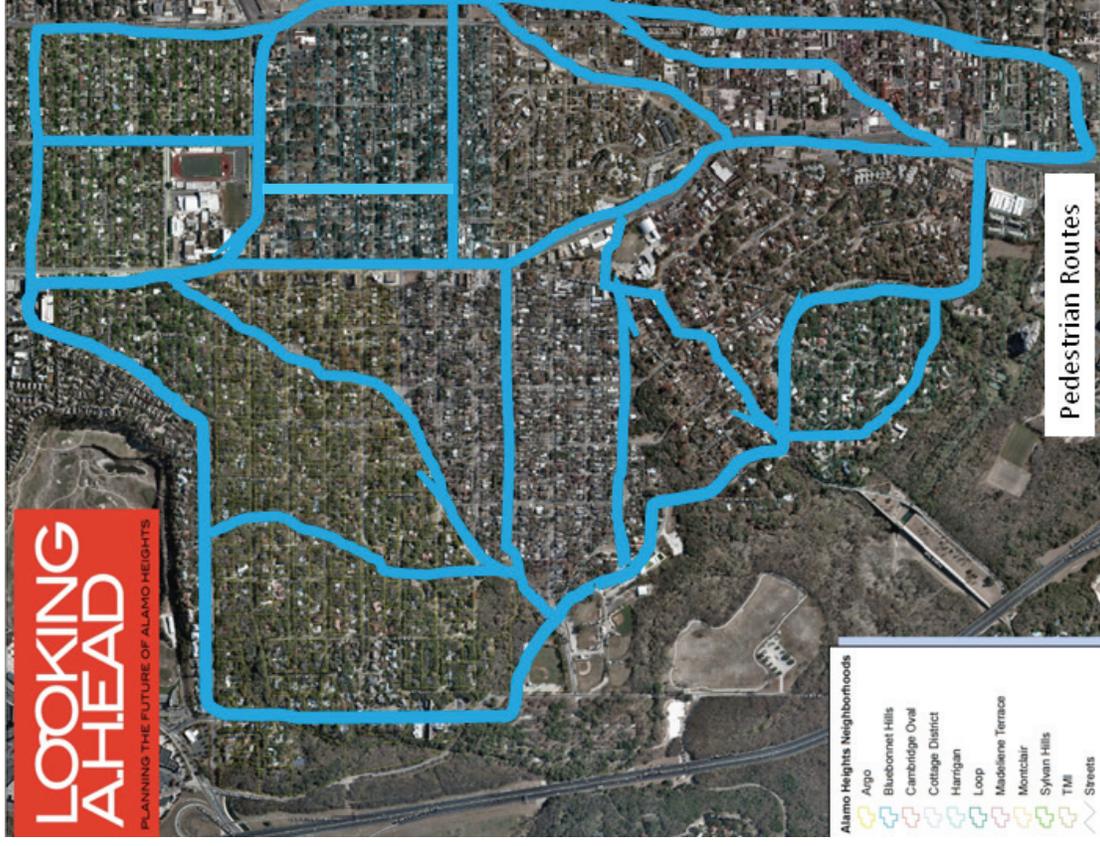
## Connectivity

Connectivity is both a local and a regional issue, which is characterized by an accessible and easily traversed community for citizens of all ages. Elevating the status of pedestrians and cyclists within the public realm will greatly enhance the connectivity of Alamo Heights. Providing safe and dependable public transportation will provide citizens with additional access to shopping, recreation areas and schools.



## Pedestrian Routes

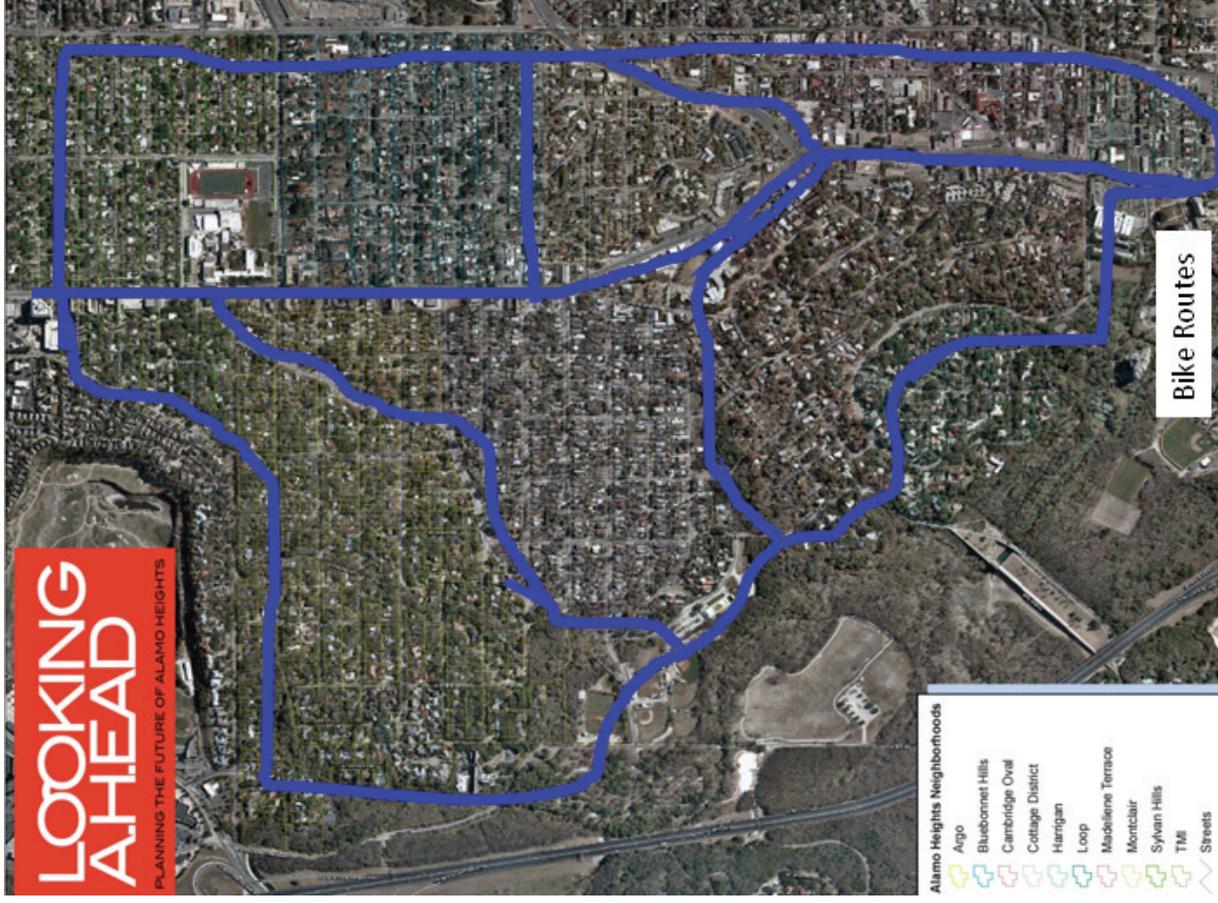
Many citizens expressed the desire to have well-marked, safe walking routes. This may require the construction of additional sidewalks or clearly delineated “people spaces” on wide streets. Additional opportunities for creating paths in conjunction with bioswales, rain gardens and new green space will also provide safe walking conditions. Alamo Heights has a number of unofficial walking/running routes that could be clearly identified, named and marked with identification signage and mile markers. Promotion of these routes with strategic placement of pedestrian amenities, such as water, lighting and call stations would greatly enhance the walkability within Alamo Heights. A police presence from the Bike Patrol would also reinforce the safety of the paths.



## Bicycle Routes

Designating bicycle routes can promote an increase in bicycle activity for work and play. Well-marked bicycle routes can be incorporated into roadways leading to areas of high commercial intensity. A path for bicycles adjacent to but separated from the pedestrian sidewalk can be provided to separate cyclists from traffic. This model is common in Europe and alleviates the conflicts between bikes and pedestrians. A series of bike paths of varying classes that would link with the greater regional system would provide another layer of connectivity, as well as provide more leisurely routes for local residents.

The installation of amenities for pedestrians and cyclists are another way to encourage connectivity. Benches, trash receptacles, water fountains, shade and bike racks should be strategically spaced along major routes.



## Hard Rail Streetcar

As part of the larger regional transportation plan, streets at Broadway and Austin Highway should be designed to accommodate a regional streetcar system that would link downtown San Antonio to the McNay Art Museum. Eventually, the line could continue up Broadway to the high school and eventually connect to the airport. Streetcars are not as much a “travel mode” as they are a “pedestrian assist.” If streetcars were to pass frequently (10 minutes or less, ideally) riders would use them routinely and without planning a “trip.” When they are tired of walking, they can catch a ride, and when they see something interesting, they get off and look around. Streetcars would encourage visitors and residents to get out of their cars, which is a vital key to a true urban neighborhood lifestyle and could benefit the Alamo Heights retail economy. Once pedestrians get back in their cars, they can just as well go shopping in the suburbs, but as long as they are happy on foot or on a streetcar, a much higher amount of their time and discretionary spending would stay in Alamo Heights. Streetcars run in mixed traffic and follow the “rules of the road” moving at the same speed as traffic. They are also smaller, weigh less and can fit into the built environment, compared to buses and light rail. Boarding areas should be placed 1500 feet apart. The first step in implementing the streetcars would be the preparation of a feasibility study and a cost estimate for the system. Routing alternatives, ridership projections, general engineering feasibility and cost and revenue estimates would be included. The City would partner with VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority, the Downtown Alliance and other governmental and private entities to initiate and finance that study, which would, in turn, be used to support the process of securing the funding and financing necessary to build the system. The next steps would include identifying an operating entity for the system, preparing more detailed engineering feasibility studies and design documents, followed by construction of the system.

## Action Step

- Participate with public and private partners in the development of a street car system.



## Rubber Tire Circulator

The plan also proposes a rubber tire circulator trolley that loops through Alamo Heights, providing a safe local route that links the recreational athletic fields, the pool, the shopping district and the schools. The Circulator Trolley is proposed to be a closed loop within Alamo Heights that would provide a secure, safe and dependable way for area children to access ball fields for practice, for the elderly to get to the grocery store and for commuters to connect with the regional streetcar system to access downtown. However, this is not a new idea. In fact, it emulates an old mule drawn trolley system from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Action Step

- Participate with public and private partners in the development of a street car system.

