

Rincon Heights Neighborhood Walkability Assessment Report

(May 2014)



living streets alliance

PROMOTING "STREETS FOR PEOPLE"
IN THE GREATER TUCSON REGION

www.livingstreetsalliance.org

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THIS PROGRAM WAS MADE POSSIBLE
IN PART BY THE CITY OF TUCSON

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT LIVING STREETS ALLIANCE (LSA)

Founded in 2011, *Living Streets Alliance (LSA)* is a Tucson-based non-profit organization dedicated to encouraging and advocating for sustainable alternative transportation options in the greater Tucson region. The mission of *Living Streets Alliance* is to promote healthy communities by empowering people to transform our streets into vibrant places for walking, bicycling, socializing, and play.

In 2012, LSA launched a *Pedestrian Safety & Comfort Campaign* with the goal of “making the simple act of walking safe, comfortable, and convenient in the greater Tucson region.” The campaign encompassed a variety of initiatives geared toward improving walkability for people of all ages and abilities in the region. Implementation of the *Neighborhood Walkability Assessment Program* was one of many concrete objectives achieved through the campaign.

and initiated a conversation about neighborhood priorities regarding possible future improvements to the walking environment. The Neighborhood Walkability Assessment had two components, a *Walkability Workshop* and a *Walkability Audit*.

Program goals

- Pilot and evaluate methods for neighborhood residents to conduct street inventories and collect data about sidewalk network and accessibility.
- Pilot and evaluate methods for collecting and assessing qualitative information from neighborhoods regarding walkability, walking experience, barriers to walking, etc. Help inform the upcoming Pima Associations of Government’s (PAG) Pedestrian Plan update.
- Begin to develop a regional walkability database.



Discussion of assets and challenges during the Rincon Heights *Walkability Audit*

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

From February through April 2013, *Living Streets Alliance* conducted a pilot *Neighborhood Walkability Assessment Program* in three Tucson neighborhoods. Through the Neighborhood Walkability Assessments, LSA engaged residents in thinking and learning about walkability, while helping them identify the challenges that discourage walking and the assets that encourage walking in their neighborhoods. The program gave residents the opportunity to share their personal experiences of their neighborhood streets from a pedestrian perspective

INTRODUCTION

THE WALKABILITY WORKSHOP

The *Walkability Workshop* was the first engagement in the neighborhood, designed to introduce participants to major concepts about walkability and identify key aspects of walking in the neighborhood. During the workshop, participants were invited to share their thoughts about walking, including why they walk in their neighborhood. An interactive mapping exercise asked participants to work in small groups with large aerial maps of the neighborhood and mark:

- Walking destinations in or around the neighborhood
- Neighborhood walking assets
- Neighborhood walking challenges
- Major walking routes (currently used routes and/or desired routes)

THE WALKABILITY AUDIT

Following the initial *Walkability Workshop*, LSA hosted a *Walkability Audit* to engage residents in completing a block-by-block assessment of their neighborhood walking environment. During the audit, using an audit survey form, participants collected data on different aspects of walkability, including pedestrian accessibility, safety, and comfort issues. The data collection was focused on specific blocks that had previously been identified as “priority streets” during the *Walkability Workshop* mapping exercise.

OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT

WALKABILITY WORKSHOP:

Date: 4/3/2013

Location: Ha:San School

Number of Participants: 15

WALKABILITY AUDIT:

Date: 4/13/2013 & 4/17/2013

Number of Participants: 16

Details: The audit included a short “walk & talk” led by LSA staff. Interested participants completed additional surveys following the audit. A total of 42 blocks were surveyed.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS - WALKABILITY WORKSHOP

1. WHY DO YOU WALK?

During the workshop, participants shared the reasons they walk. (Note: Each pedestrian icon indicates a response).

- For exercise 
- To get around 
- It is leisurely, pleasant and relaxing 
- To walk the dog 
- Don't like the car 
- To avoid parking 
- It is cheap 
- To check on things – Neighborhood Watch 

2. WALKING ASSETS, CHALLENGES, AND DESTINATIONS – SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

Workshop participants worked together in small groups to identify key walking assets, challenges, and destinations in the neighborhood. Visit the neighborhood Google map to see everything that was shared.

<http://goo.gl/maps/S79GR>

Walking Assets - Summary

- Destinations – having nearby destinations including the community garden
- Pedestrian Infrastructure – HAWK and crosswalks
- Nature – bump-outs and water harvesting, high school wash
- Comfort and Attractiveness – shade, art, narrow streets (such as Martin Ave), lots of other people (especially on Highland)

Walking Challenges - Summary

- Traffic – speeding
- Crossings – cars ignore crosswalks, difficulty getting across Broadway, pedestrian signal timing issues
- Safety – some areas feel uncomfortable; scary dogs can also be an issue
- Sidewalks – lack of sidewalks and discontinuous sidewalks in places, cars parked on sidewalks, maintenance issues, low hanging branches in pedestrian area
- Shade – need more shade and street trees
- Connectivity – blocked routes due to construction in some places
- Attractiveness – smelly dumpsters, unsightly properties

Walking Destinations - Summary

FOOD/DRINK AND SHOPPING	BUS STOPS
FELD DAVIS PARK	COMMUNITY GARDEN
SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA	

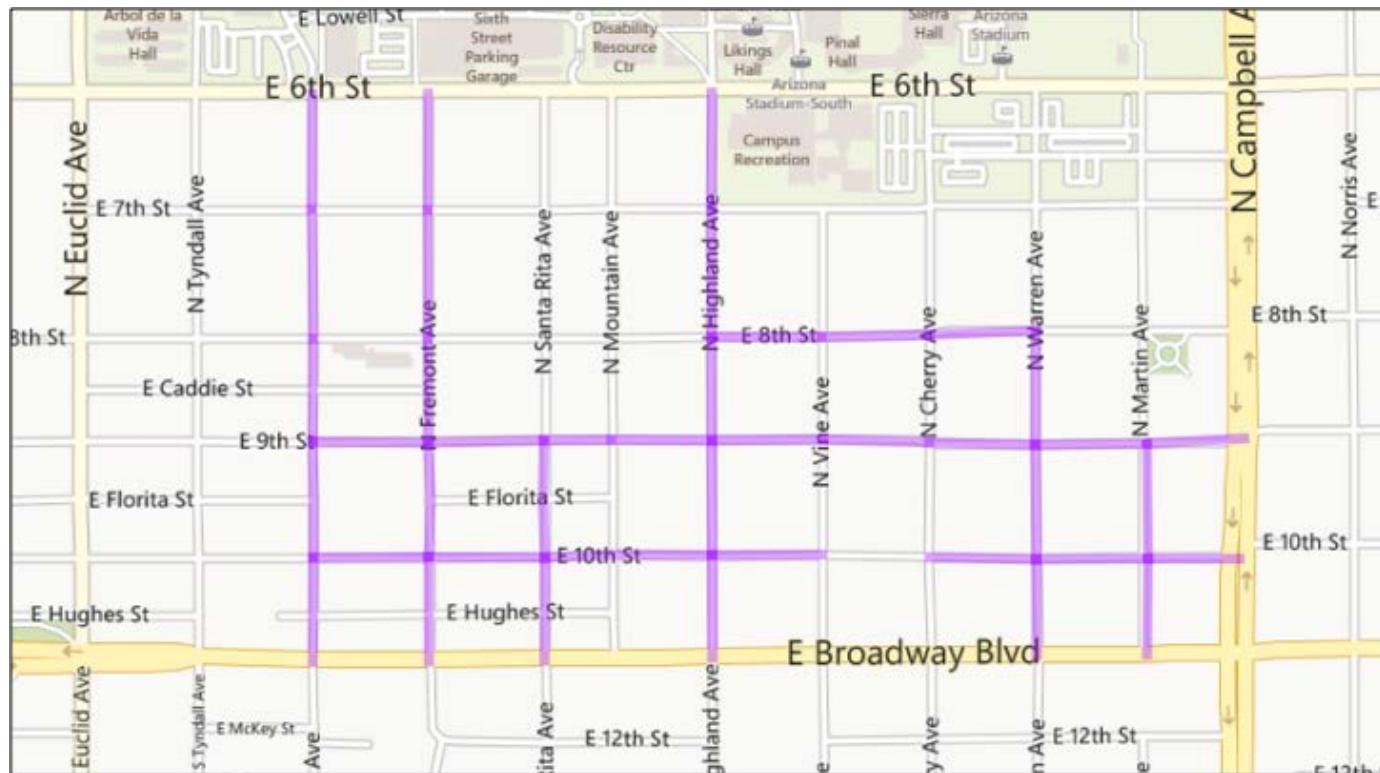


Rincon Heights community garden

SUMMARY OF RESULTS - WALKABILITY AUDIT

SURVEYED BLOCKS

Residents surveyed 42 blocks in the Rincon Heights Neighborhood (surveyed blocks are shown in purple below). Both sides of each block were assessed individually, for a total of 84 block assessments. This represents roughly 75% of the neighborhood.



SUMMARY OF RESULTS - WALKABILITY AUDIT

SIDEWALK INVENTORY

Slightly less than half of the surveyed blocks had full and continuous sidewalks. However, a complete sidewalk network is clearly an issue, as over a third of the surveyed blocks had sidewalks on less than half of the block or no sidewalks at all.

Block rating	Percentage of total blocks (Total blocks assessed: 84)
Full and continuous sidewalks	43% (36 blocks)
Partial or discontinuous (>50% of block)	21% (18 blocks)
Partial or discontinuous (<50% of block)	26% (22 blocks)
No sidewalks	10% (8 blocks)

SAFETY

On the surveyed blocks safety does not appear to be a major issue. Only 2% of surveyed blocks were reported as feeling unsafe or very unsafe. Almost a third of blocks were recorded as “very safe.”

Block rating	Percentage of total blocks (Total blocks assessed: 42)
Very safe	29% (12 blocks)
Safe or Somewhat safe	69% (29 blocks)
Unsafe or very unsafe	2% (1 block)

NIGHT SAFETY

Night safety is more of an issue than general daytime safety. Respondents felt that over half of the surveyed blocks would be either definitely unsafe or somewhat unsafe at night. The primary reasons for this were reported as poor lighting, overgrowing vegetation, obstacles in the pedestrian area, empty buildings, and empty parking lots.

Block rating	Percentage of total blocks (Total blocks assessed: 39)
Would not feel safe walking here at night	7% (3 blocks)
Would feel somewhat safe walking here at night,	46% (18 blocks)
Would feel safe walking here at night	41% (16 blocks)
Unsure how safe it would feel	5% (2 blocks)

SUMMARY OF RESULTS - WALKABILITY AUDIT

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Traffic safety was not reported as a major issue. On over three-quarters of the surveyed streets respondents said the traffic did not make them feel unsafe. The primary reasons for this were well lit streets and well buffered sidewalks. When traffic did make respondents feel unsafe, the reasons were traffic turning into the neighborhood from Broadway, traffic in and out of the large Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) parking lot, and busy traffic going toward the University of Arizona (U of A).

Block rating	Percentage of total blocks (Total blocks assessed: 42)
Traffic makes me feel unsafe or somewhat unsafe	24% (10 blocks)
Traffic does not make me feel unsafe	76% (32 blocks)

ATTRACTIVENESS

Almost half of the surveyed blocks were assessed as either attractive or very attractive, and no blocks were reported as very unattractive. Things that participants found attractive: front porches, interesting architecture, historic buildings, nice landscaping, trees, and water harvesting. Things that made blocks feel unattractive: parking lots, vacant lots, fences and walls, weeds, trash, lack of landscaping, unkempt properties, bump-outs, and cars in front yards.

Block rating	Percentage of total blocks (Total blocks assessed: 42)
Very attractive or attractive	48% (20 blocks)
Unattractive	12% (5)
Very unattractive	0
Neutral (neither attractive or unattractive)	40% (17 blocks)

SHADE

Almost all blocks were recorded as providing only minimal or moderate shade. Full shade was reported on only one block.

Block rating	Percentage of total blocks (Total blocks assessed: 42)
No shade	0
Minimal shade	62% (26 blocks)
Moderate shade	36% (15 blocks)
Full shade	2% (1 blocks)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are generated based on the findings of the Rincon Heights Neighborhood Walkability Assessment and presented in a three-tier categorization: *DIY* for actions that residents can take themselves at low or no cost; *Local Partnerships* for improvements that may be implemented in collaboration with non-profit organizations or City agencies within existing funding opportunities and constraints; *Long Term/Major Investment* for improvements that necessitate significant public dollars and can be implemented by the City as funding becomes available.



DIY

- Complete the audit on un-surveyed blocks. Use the collected information to prioritize shade corridors, traffic calming, and DIY maintenance needs.
- Organize periodic neighborhood pruning “parties” to manage overgrown vegetation encroaching on sidewalks. Assistance may be available through the Tucson Botanical Gardens’ Urban Forestry Program. The program was recently developed to train community members in caring for Tucson’s urban forests.

More information: <http://www.tucsonbotanical.org/education/shady-deals-get-certified-in-urban-forestry/>

Contact information:
education1@tucsonbotanical.org
or (520) 326-9686 ext. 39

- Launch a neighborhood “Adopt-a-Bump-Out” program to address landscape maintenance issues with the bump-outs. Cleanup tools and debris pick-up assistance is available through Tucson Clean and Beautiful’s Adopt-a-Park and Public Areas Program

More information: <http://tucsoncleanandbeautiful.org/adopt-a-park-public-areas/adopting-a-site/>

RECOMMENDATIONS KEY



DIY: Solutions neighborhoods can implement on their own



Local Partnership: Solutions possible through partnering with local organizations



Long Term / Major Investment: Solutions that require larger grants or funding



A shaded portion of the sidewalk, during the Rincon Heights *Walkability Audit*

RECOMMENDATIONS



LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Work with Trees for Tucson to plant additional shade trees in the neighborhood. Low-cost street trees are available through the Community Shade Trees Program. Utilize the shade information collected during the Walkability Audit to prioritize shading of walking corridors. PAG's tree canopy can also be utilized as a digital tool for supplemental information: <http://bit.ly/GBp2iX>

More information: <https://tucsoncleanandbeautiful.org/trees-for-tucson/>
low-cost-shade-trees/community-shade-trees/

Contact information: tft@treesfortucson.org
or (520) 791-3109

- Follow funding announcements through Watershed Management Group and the City of Tucson Bicycle and Pedestrian Program to implement additional traffic calming solutions, especially in areas where fast traffic turning into the neighborhood from Broadway Blvd. poses a safety concern.

More information: <http://watershedmg.org/>

Contact information: 520-396-3266
or <http://watershedmg.org/contact>

- Contact the City of Tucson Bicycle and Pedestrian Program regarding the following possibilities:
 1. Adjusting the pedestrian signal timing on Broadway and Highland so that the light responds faster to pedestrians requesting it
 2. Adding a pedestrian countdown at Broadway and Campbell intersection
 3. Reconfiguring the pedestrian crossing on Park and 6th to make it more convenient for pedestrians

- 4. Enhancing the existing crosswalk on Martin and 6th with a pedestrian island (This location might be a good candidate for a pedestrian island if the neighborhood is supportive of restricting right turns on Martin for eastbound vehicles on 6th Street, since the U of A side does not have a through street that would be impacted.)

Contact information: ann.chanecka@tucsonaz.gov or 520-837-6691 (Program Coordinator Ann Chanecka)

- Approach apartment complex owners/managers to initiate a dialogue about installing better landscaping, water harvesting features, and screening of dumpsters and parking lots. Make it a collaborative neighborhood project, first gauging neighborhood resident volunteer interest. Follow up by planning an event to implement these landscape features.

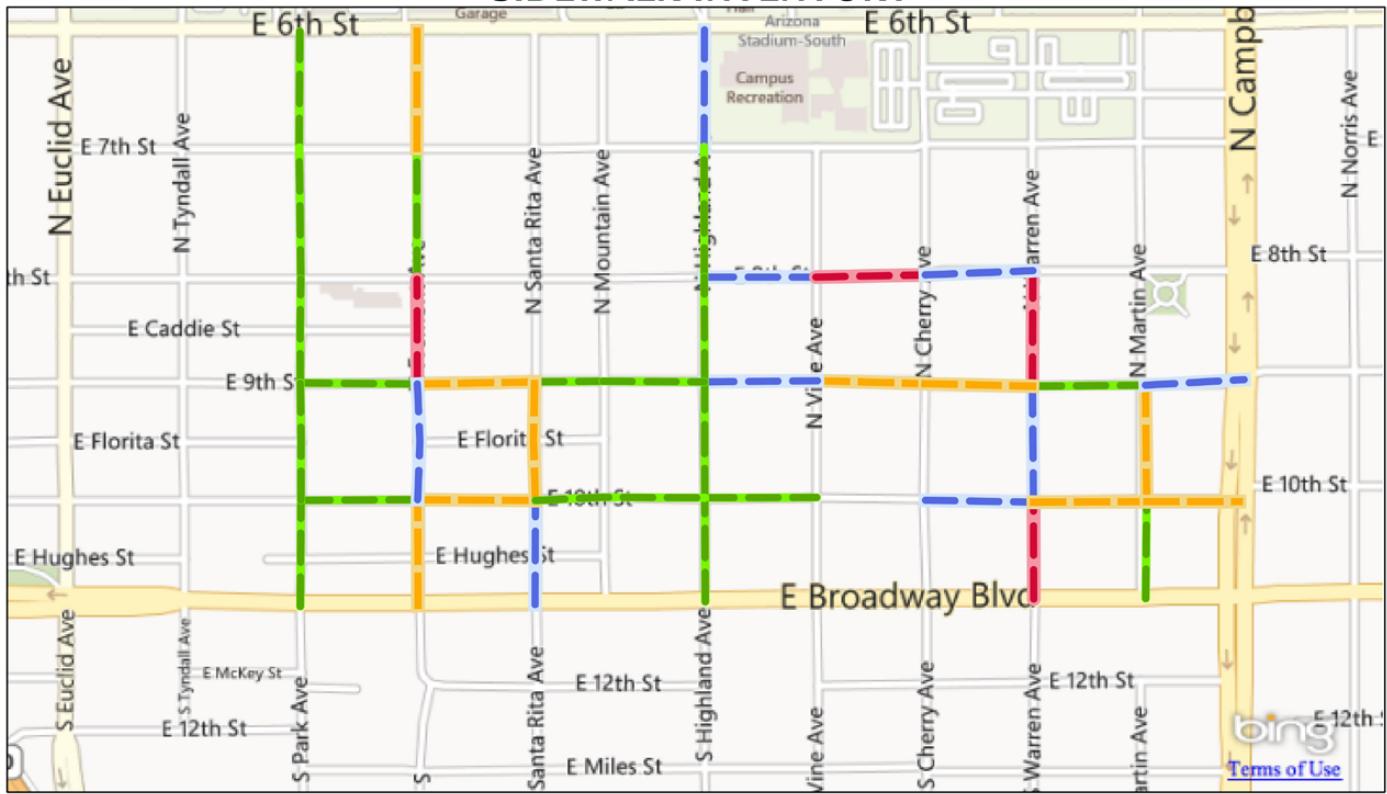


LONG TERM/ MAJOR INVESTMENT

- Complete the sidewalk network by filling the sidewalk gaps identified through the Walkability Assessment.
- Build ramps at all intersections where they are not currently present, including alleys and streets.
- Fix heaving, buckling, and areas of tilted and severely cracked sidewalks.
- Install streetlights.

APPENDIX A

Rincon Heights: Walkability Assessment SIDEWALK INVENTORY



Map shows results of the Walkability Assessment completed in 2013 in the Rincon Heights neighborhood.
SIDEWALK INVENTORY: Participants were asked to rate each block on the presence of continuous sidewalks

Rating Scale:
 - No sidewalks
 - Partial (<50% of block)
 - Partial (>50% of block)
 - Full sidewalks

Note: Block ratings are determined by the lowest score given to one side of the street

0 200 400 Meters
 Walkability Assessment Map
 Produced by the
 Living Streets Alliance - 2013

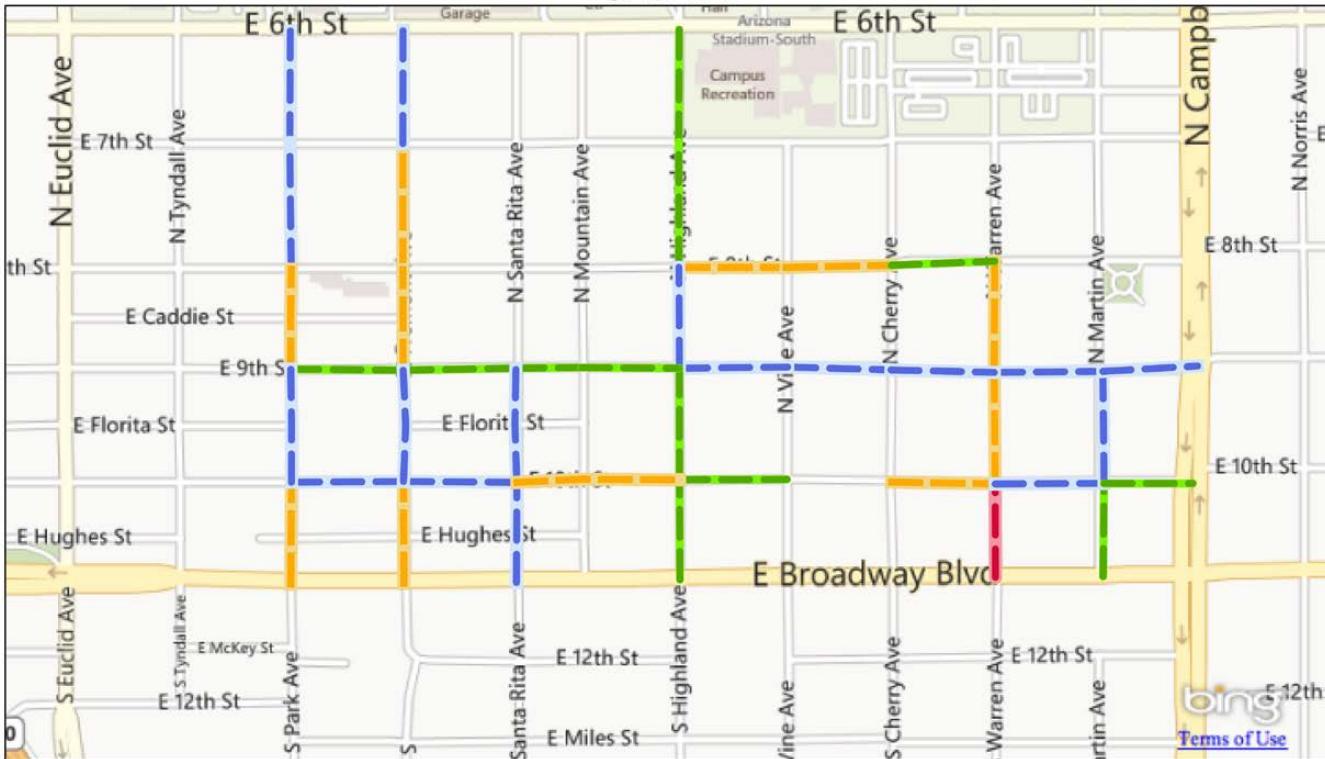
Map Key

Sidewalk inventory

- No sidewalks
- Partial sidewalks (<50% of block)
- Partial sidewalks (>50% of block)
- Full sidewalks (both sides)

APPENDIX B

Rincon Heights: Walkability Assessment SAFETY



Map shows results of the Walkability Assessment completed in 2013 in the Rincon Heights neighborhood.
SAFETY: Participants were asked to rate each block by how safe they felt when walking there

Rating Scale:
- Very safe
- Safe
- Somewhat safe
- Unsafe

0 200 400 Meters



Walkability Assessment Map
Produced by the
Living Streets Alliance - 2013

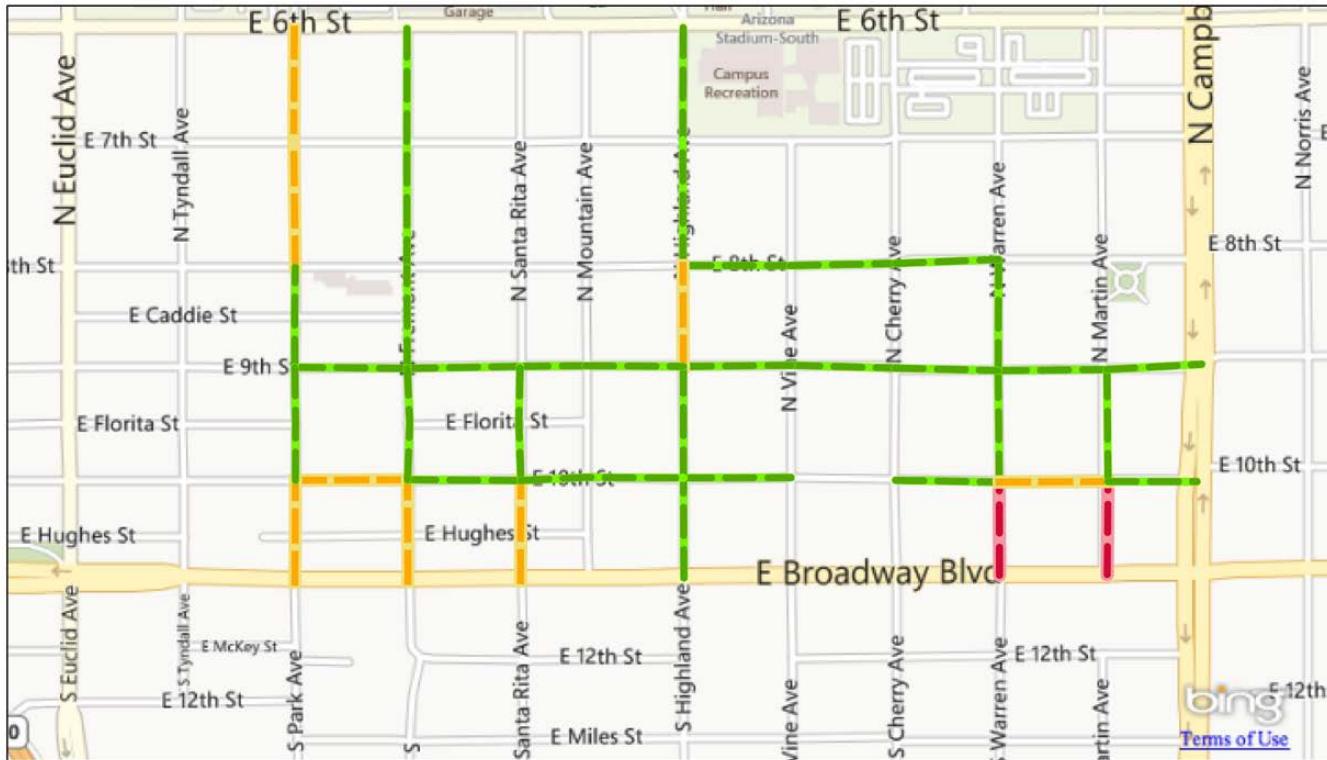
Map Key

How safe do you feel walking here?

- Very Safe
- Safe
- Somewhat Safe
- Unsafe

APPENDIX C

Rincon Heights: Walkability Assessment TRAFFIC SAFETY



Map shows results of the Walkability Assessment completed in 2013 in the Rincon Heights neighborhood.

TRAFFIC SAFETY: Participants were asked to rate each block by whether the traffic made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe

Rating Scale:
 - No
 - Somewhat
 - Yes

0 200 400 Meters



Walkability Assessment Map
Produced by the
Living Streets Alliance - 2013

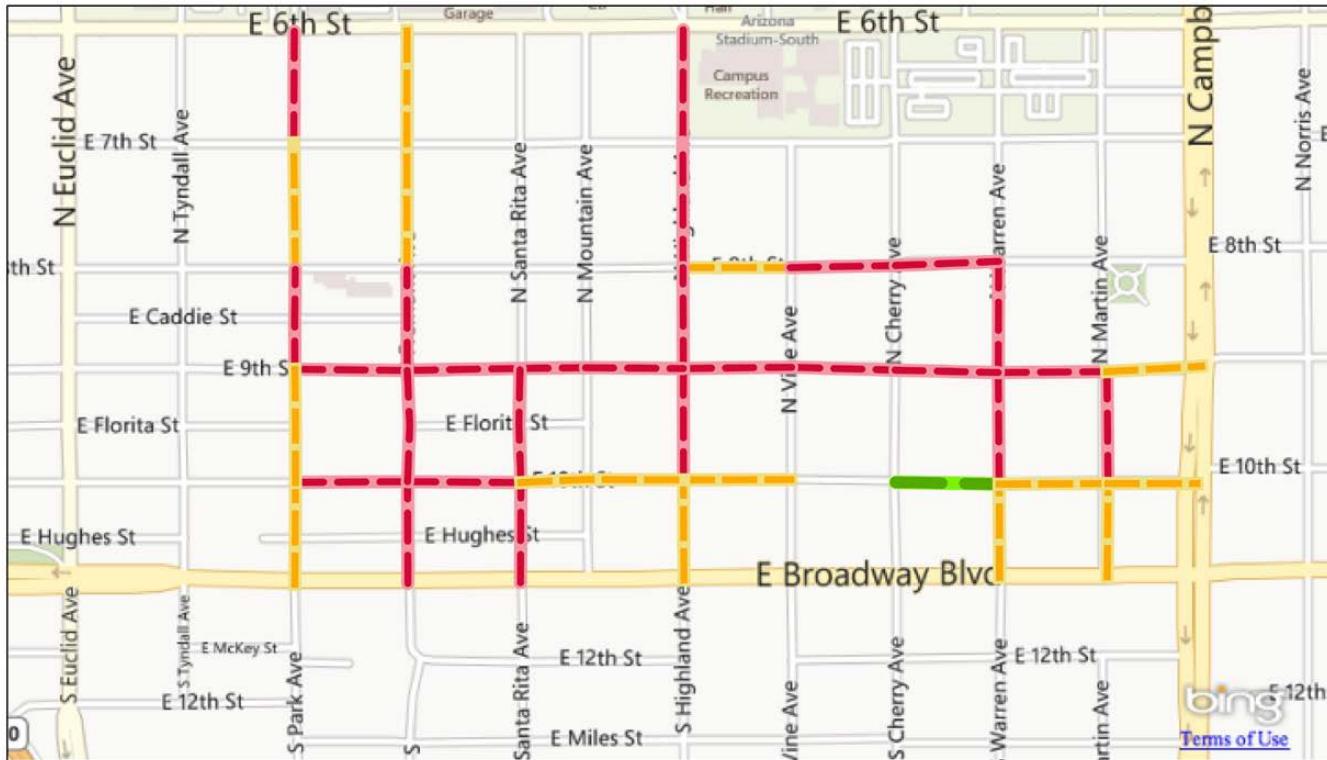
Map Key

Does the traffic make you feel unsafe?

- No
- Somewhat
- Yes

APPENDIX D

Rincon Heights: Walkability Assessment SHADE



APPENDIX E

Rincon Heights: Walkability Assessment ATTRACTIVENESS

