



Streets Reconsidered

Inclusive Design for the Public Realm



IDA Downtown Achievement Award 2014

re:Streets is a three-year collaborative research effort funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. It has resulted in a fundamental rethinking of America's streets.

re:Streets explores the future of streets and what America's roadways would be like if they were designed for living, instead of just driving.

Below are key areas in which re:Streets has achieved the goals of the IDA Downtown Achievement Award:

INNOVATION: *Does the project or program offer an innovative or unique approach to downtown management or development challenges?*

As a public resource that covers about 30% of the land area in the average American city, streets are an underutilized resource in every community.

re:Streets broadens the Complete Streets concept to describe how the function of streets can be expanded to create a vibrant downtown and healthy community. By re-imagining our streets, this public space can be used to promote multimodal mobility, social gathering, commerce, events and programs, play and recreation, urban agriculture, wayfinding, green infrastructure, and image and identity.

Through an interactive research process that has already involved hundreds of professionals across the country, re:Streets is educating people,

mobilizing communities, and creating a community of professionals poised to re-imagine our streets.

REPLICATION: *Does the entry present a solution others could modify for their own downtown circumstances?*

The comprehensive design manual – available at www.restreets.org – includes design guidelines as well as case studies that enable practitioners to implement a re:Streets program in their communities. The manual includes low cost ideas that can be immediately implemented by any downtown.

The re:Streets web forum is continuously updated as an ongoing resource for practitioners who want to implement changes in their communities.

REPRESENTATION: *Is the project or program inclusive? Were partnerships employed? Was the community involved? Were downtown organizations involved?*

re:Streets is an incredibly inclusive process with the involvement of many partners, downtown organizations and community members. To create the re:Streets design manual, design charrettes were held in 15 cities across the country and a three-day charrette was attended by over 100 multidisciplinary professionals from throughout the United States, including planners, engineers, advocates, public officials, downtown organization representatives, and many more. A national advisory committee was formed with members representing cities, downtown organizations and professional organizations.

Funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, additional project supporters included MIG, Inc., the National Complete Streets Coalition and the University of California-Berkeley, College of Environmental Design. Over a dozen additional corporate and organizational sponsorships made this project possible.

SUSTAINABILITY: *How is your submission sustainable? How does it increase the sustainability of downtown?*

re:Streets promotes **active transportation**, such as walking and biking; the use of **green infrastructure** to manage water and waste, capture and reuse energy, and reduce heat island effect; and the use of public areas adjacent to streets to increase access to **local food**. These efforts also **actively engage and inform** the public about the environment and sustainability issues.

EXECUTION: *What were the steps leading up to the project outcome?*

1. Best Practices Research: Best practices were researched in each of the nine areas addressed by re:Streets. A draft document was produced and used as a study guide at the re:Streets Charrette.

2. re:Streets Charrette: A three-day charrette attended by over 100 multidisciplinary professionals was held at the University of California – Berkeley from July 21-23, 2011. Professionals reviewed the draft study guide prior to the event and provided comments and suggestions. During small working



group sessions organized by topic area, participants used the best practices for their topic area to develop a set of physical designs to test research ideas. The event allowed ample time to refine best practices during small working group sessions in each of the nine topic areas as well as to share findings with all professionals in attendance.

3. Local Charrettes: Highly collaborative and interactive charrettes were held and continue to be organized to provide input for the re:Streets guidelines. These charrettes provide local officials with an opportunity to explore new approaches to the design and management of city streets using an actual street in their community. In addition, these events have helped shape an ongoing research and communication agenda. To date, local charrettes have been held in Berkeley, Encinitas, Riverside, San Diego and San Francisco, California; Boulder and Denver, Colorado; Chicago, Illinois; Laramie, Wyoming; Minneapolis,

Minnesota; Portland, Oregon; San Antonio, Texas; Seattle, Washington; and St. Louis, Missouri.

4. re:Streets Design Manual: These research findings have created a database of best practices and case studies which will be continuously updated to describe the full spectrum of street forms and functions that promote active living, thriving economies and healthy communities – available to anyone at www.restreets.org.

5. Project Dissemination: Primary ways that have been used to disseminate the re:Streets research findings include:

- *Announcement of Website Launch:* The website launch was announced via an email to the re:Streets email list of over 1000 interested parties, as well as to organizations, professional journals and newsletters serving architects, landscape architects, engineers, and city staff and officials.
- *Conference Presentations and Exhibits:* A number of conference presentations have been made and these will continue to be scheduled. Presentations to date have included the International Downtown Association (Master Talk at 2013 conference), Environmental Design Research Association, Landscape Architects Expo, Institute of Transportation Engineers, Active Living Research, Urban Affairs Association, California Parks and Recreation Society, and the National Endowment for the Arts' Mayors Institute.
- *One-on-one Meetings and Community Presentations:* One-on-one meetings with professionals and local community workshops have taken place and will continue to be used to publicize the re:Streets effort.

- *Social Media:* Social media posts that illustrate re:Streets concepts have been made and will continue, e.g., at Twitter, @restreets.org.
- *re:Streets Website:* The free website, www.restreets.org, is a major vehicle for continued dissemination of the re:Streets research effort. Since August 2012, the website has received 16,000 hits. The activities above continue to be drivers of this website's success.

The publication of the re:Streets design manual in book format is anticipated in 2015.

OUTCOME: *Was the impact of the effort significant? How was it measured? Was it compared to an initial goal? Describe how your project benefits the downtown and your organization.*

re:Streets has exceeded expectations, mobilizing hundreds of professionals across the country to redesign streets as public spaces that can meet human needs, and that contribute to public health and economic revitalization of our downtowns. These projects include **implemented, built streets nationwide** – from busy boulevards in Texas to beautiful roadways in Colorado to green streets and transit malls in California. The attached PowerPoint presentation illustrates how these built projects promote multimodal mobility, social gathering, commerce, events and programs, play and recreation, urban agriculture, wayfinding, green infrastructure, and image and identity. These projects and the research agenda that has emerged from re:Streets are transforming local and national street design standards, construction and operations—building streets that are truly designed for living, not just for driving.