

Summary Report of Walk Audits in Phoenix Neighborhood



November 6, 2018

Dates of Walk Audits: February 15, July 31, and August 7 in 2018

Walk Audit Team: Lurise Bannister, Cario Dickerson, John Kolczynski, Amy Ingles, Chris LeDew, Colin Moore, Soliman Salem, Laurie Santana, Devin Scott, and Stephanie Zarkis

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Study Area..... | 1 |
| Walk Audit Process | 4 |
| 1. Crossing Streets & Intersections | 4 |
| 2. Sidewalks..... | 4 |
| 3. Driver Behavior | 4 |
| 4. Safety | 5 |
| 5. Comfort & Appeal | 5 |
| Study Area Walk Audit Results..... | 5 |
| Crossing Streets & Intersections..... | 5 |
| Sidewalks..... | 7 |
| Driver Behavior | 11 |
| Safety | 12 |
| Comfort & Appeal | 13 |
| Recommendations | 15 |
| Next Steps | 16 |
| Appendix A..... | 17 |

Introduction

This report summarizes three Walk Audits conducted within the Phoenix neighborhood in Jacksonville, Florida. The Walk Audits, which followed guidance provided by AARP, were conducted on February 15, July 31, and August 7, 2018—all three in the middle of a weekday during work hours – by City of Jacksonville employees of the Planning & Development and Public Works Departments. This neighborhood was selected for undergoing Walk Audits for several reasons. First, it is a disadvantaged community in that it skews towards greater minority population, higher proportion of single mothers, lower household income, lower levels of employment, and lower educational attainment compared to Jacksonville as a whole¹. In addition, the Planning and Development Department has spoken with community members who have asked for sidewalk infill and other pedestrian improvements.

The following report includes a brief description of the neighborhood and the Study Area, and a summary of the Walk Audit results including recommended improvements and next steps for the Planning & Development and Public Works Departments.

Study Area

Phoenix is a mostly-residential neighborhood with some commercial and light industrial land uses. It is located in the Urban Priority Area just northeast of Downtown between Jax Port and the Springfield neighborhood. Figure 1 is a map of the area. The roughly 3-square mile neighborhood is bordered, and largely closed off, by many active freight rail lines and Martin Luther King Jr Pkwy (US 1 Alt). Phoenix has a main street of the same name where its central business district lies. The building stock is mostly from the early- to mid-twentieth century, and the roads are narrow, some with sidewalks and some without.

The Walk Audit Team selected subsets of the neighborhood for each Walk Audit until they covered the entire neighborhood. The Team took routes that enabled them to look at both sides of each street so that they could get a full picture of the quality of the pedestrian environment. During each Walk Audit, there were a number of intersections where the team stopped to observe the operation of intersections and any notable behavior of the various road users, such as drivers not yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks or pedestrians crossing against the traffic signal. Figure 2 shows all of the intersections that were observed in this way.

The team also assessed the condition and use of three pedestrian overpasses that connect the Phoenix neighborhood to the area beyond its northeastern, eastern, and southern boundaries. These are indicated in Figure 2 as well. The only roads within the Study Area that outlet into adjacent neighborhoods are Carmen Street, crossing over the railroad tracks to the west, and Phoenix Avenue to the north and 11th Street, crossing under MLK Jr Pkwy to the east.

¹ <https://statisticalatlas.com/neighborhood/Florida/Jacksonville/Phoenix/Overview>

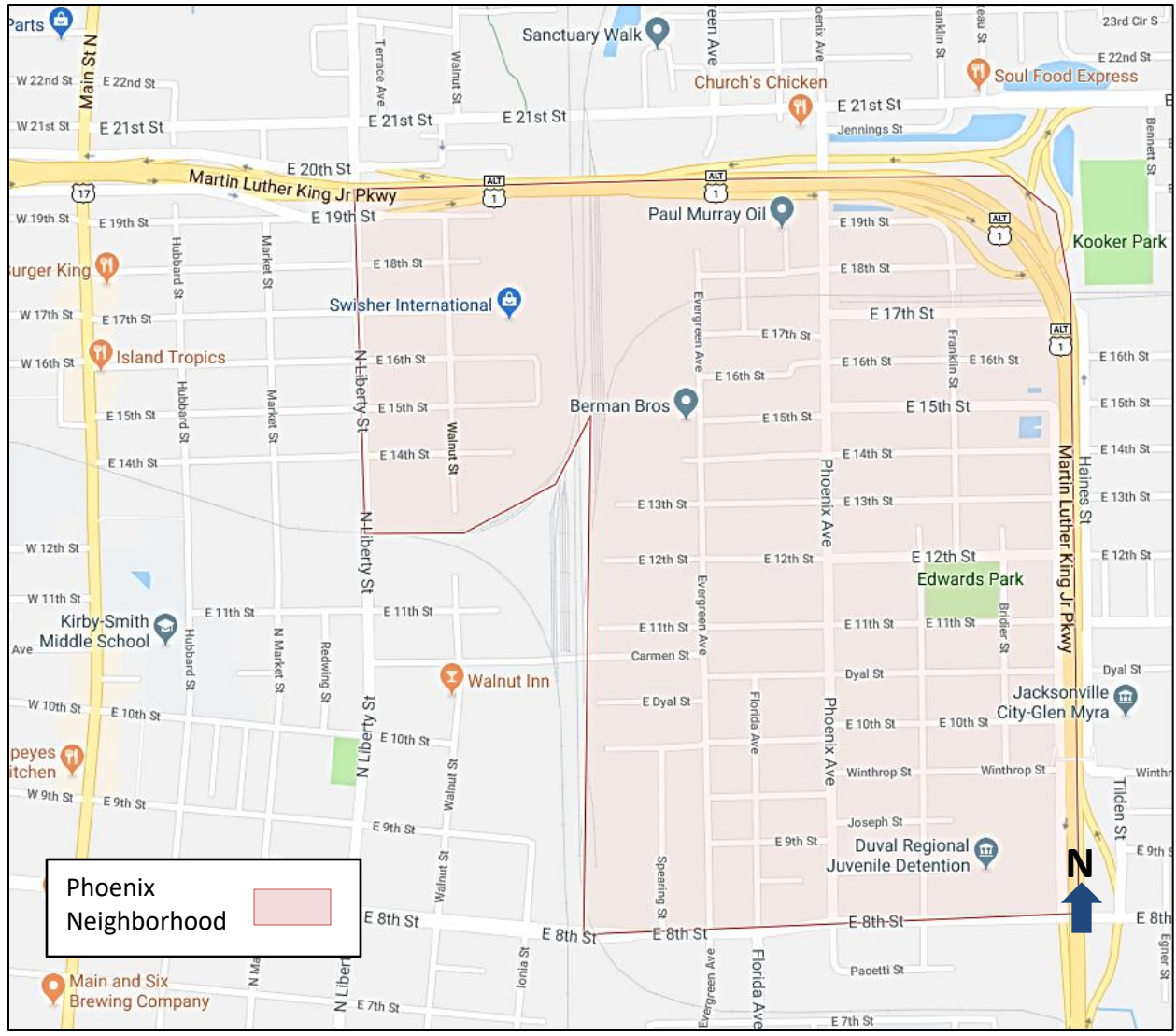


Figure 1: Phoenix Neighborhood Boundary Map

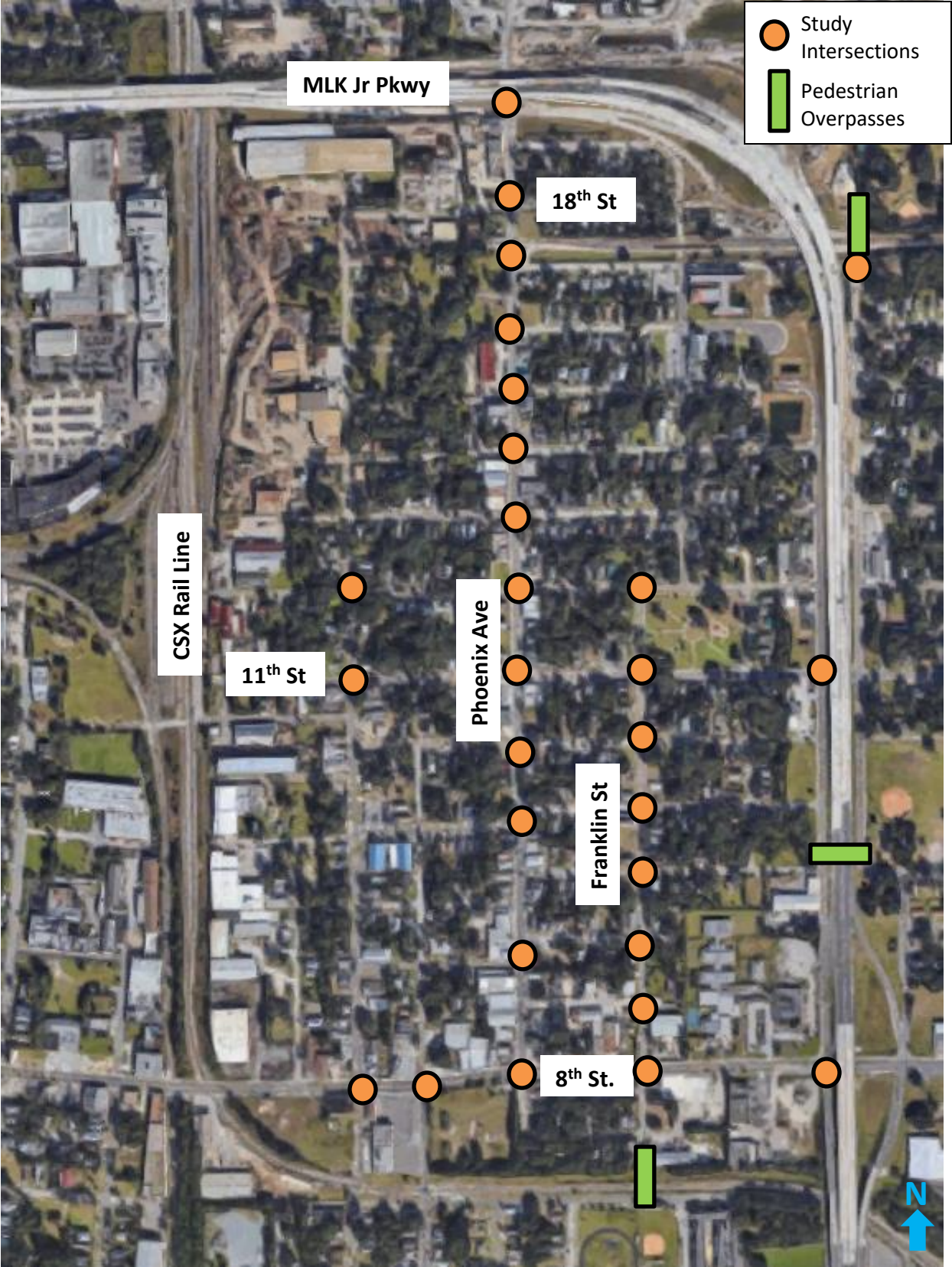


Figure 2: Study Intersections

Walk Audit Process

There are five different Assignments that make up the Walk Audit process, each covering a set of characteristics to be assessed. There should be at least one auditor for each assignment—ideally there would be a team of auditors for each Assignment. Each Assignment has a specific worksheet on which teams can record their observations and answer prompts tailored to that Assignment. Teams are asked to ultimately provide an overall rating of each location considering the characteristics of their given Assignment. The five Assignments are as follows:

1. Crossing Streets & Intersections
2. Sidewalks
3. Driver Behavior
4. Safety
5. Comfort and Appeal

Assignments 1 and 2 require that a team to fill out multiple worksheets, one for each location (intersection or street segment) that they observe in the Study Area. Assignments 3, 4 and 5 only require the completion of one worksheet for the whole Study Area. All Assignments encourage teams to consider issues that might be especially problematic for children, older adults, or persons with disabilities.

1. Crossing Streets & Intersections

The Street Crossing Team is assigned to observe several intersections for 5 to 30 minutes each, depending on the complexity of the intersection. The team considers things like signal timing, wait time, crossing time and sight lines, as well as the presence and condition of crosswalks, pedestrian signal heads, pedestrian crossing buttons, and refuge islands. The team also counts pedestrians and other vulnerable road users (bicyclists, skateboarders, etc.) during this time, being sure to note behaviors such as crossing against the signal. All of these things inform the overall rating the team assigns to the intersection. A separate worksheet is completed for each assigned intersection.

2. Sidewalks

The Sidewalk Team is responsible for assessing the quality and condition of the sidewalks, or lack thereof. This team looks at each street segment (or block) and assesses sidewalk width, connectivity, and surface condition, as well as the presence and condition of a grassed buffer and curb ramps. There may be numerous driveways interrupting the sidewalk with cars parked on the sidewalk or utility poles, signs, and landscaping blocking the path. All of these things should inform the overall rating the team assigns to the segment. A separate worksheet is completed for each assigned street segment.

3. Driver Behavior

The Driver Behavior Team observes driver behavior throughout the entire Study Area, noting whether drivers stop at stop signs, drive over the speed limit, yield to pedestrians, stop behind the crosswalk, obey traffic signals, or generally drive in a safe and lawful manner. All of these things inform the overall rating the team assigns to the Study Area. Only one worksheet is required for this Assignment, which covers the entire Study Area.

4. Safety

The Safety Team looks for all issues related to safety within the Study Area, including speeding vehicles, heavy traffic, distracted drivers, loitering or suspicious/criminal activity, unleashed dogs, etc. All of these characteristics inform the overall rating the team assigns to the Study Area. Only one worksheet is required for this Assignment, which covers the entire Study Area.

5. Comfort & Appeal

The Comfort and Appeal Team considers a variety of factors that contribute to the level of comfort experienced as a pedestrian in the Study Area. A number of things can affect a pedestrian's comfort including perceived safety, pedestrian amenities, and physical attractiveness of the area. This team looks for things like shade trees, landscaping, benches, water fountains, lighting, cleanliness and bus stop shelters. They also consider whether the Study Area is well maintained with respect to its sidewalks, landscaping, signage, and other infrastructure. The presence of graffiti and litter can contribute to a pedestrian's discomfort. All of these things inform the overall rating the team assigns to the Study Area. Only one worksheet is required for this Assignment, which covers the entire Study Area.

Study Area Walk Audit Results

This section compiles the results of the five Assignments for all three of the Walk Audits, and introduces an overall rating for each. Table 1 below, shows the overall rating given for each Assignment. The next few pages provide summaries of the findings of each Assignment.

Table 1: Overall ratings for each Assignment

| Assignment | Rating | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------|------|------|
| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
| Crossing Streets & Intersections | | | X | |
| Sidewalks | | | | X |
| Driver Behavior | | | X | |
| Safety | | | X | |
| Comfort & Appeal | | | | X |

Crossing Streets & Intersections

A total of 28 intersections were selected for observation within the Study Area. Selection was based on crash history, connectivity, and likelihood of pedestrian activity. Each intersection was observed for five minutes. Most of the observed intersections are two-way stop intersections, but two are signalized. All of the audited roads are two-lane roads. A couple of the side streets that intersect with Phoenix Avenue are offset on either side of Phoenix Avenue by about 100 feet.

Generally, the intersections are not very accommodating to pedestrians. Almost none of the stop controlled intersections have marked crosswalks or stopbars. There are uncontrolled crossings on Phoenix Avenue at both 11th Street and 12th Street that are striped as standard crosswalks rather than

special emphasis. None of the intersections with 8th Street have marked crosswalks or pedestrian signage to aid in crossing 8th Street, except for the signalized intersection with Haines Street, which is on the southeast edge of the neighborhood.

Figure 3 shows Florida Avenue & 8th Street, which is one of two streets that cross over the railroad tracks to the south, leading to the adjacent neighborhood. Without signage or marked crossings, drivers are not likely expecting pedestrians to cross at Phoenix Avenue, Florida Avenue, or Franklin Street, however several people were observed crossing at all three locations. Pedestrians and/or bicyclists were recorded at nearly half of the intersections that were observed, for a total of 42 pedestrians. For the level of pedestrian activity observed, especially in the middle of the day on a weekday, there could be better and a lot more marked crossings. However, based on the low traffic volume, relatively short crossing distances, and fairly consistent presence of curb ramps.

The team rated the Study Area as **FAIR** for the Crossing Streets & Intersections Assignment.



Figure 3: Long crossing with no marked crosswalk at Florida Avenue & 8th Street

Sidewalks

The Study Area was broken up into 46 segments for this Assignment. In most of the Study Area, sidewalks were blocked by poles and overgrown grass and vegetation. There are many cracked and severely broken sidewalks all throughout the neighborhood. Several segments have no sidewalks at all. In a number of locations it is difficult to tell if the sidewalk is missing or simply covered by overgrown grass and weeds. There are some locations where trash has been dumped, blocking the sidewalk. Several vehicles parked on the sidewalk, particularly in the west side of the neighborhood where there are industrial buildings. Rarely is there a grassed buffer between the sidewalk and the street. Where curb ramps are present, they are often not ADA compliant. Figures 4 – 11 illustrate these issues.

Considering the level of pedestrian activity, which was never heavy but nearly constant, particularly on Phoenix Avenue, the sidewalks should be in a lot better condition.

This is especially true because many families live here, which suggests that children are walking in the neighborhood.

The team rated the Study Area as **POOR** for the Sidewalks Assignment.



Figure 4: Utility poles and signs block the sidewalk



Figure 5: Broken sidewalk with no curb ramp



Figure 6: Severely broken sidewalk with no grassed buffer



Figure 7: Sidewalk with overgrown vegetation, with potential sidewalk gap



Figure 8: Overgrown landscaping blocking the sidewalk



Figure 9: Vehicles parked on the sidewalk from a commercial property



Figure 10: Trash blocking sidewalk



Figure 11: No sidewalks leading to church

Driver Behavior

The team observed several problems with driver behavior:

- Drivers fail to come to a complete stop at stop signs, and those that do, often stop in the crosswalk instead of behind the stop bar.
- Drivers are often not using their turn signals.
- Some segments of the Study Area allow on-street parking and other segments prohibit it yet drivers seem to disregard the no parking zone signs and park where they desire.
- Some drivers performed unsafe or illegal movements. The team observed a U-turning movement made at 12th Street and Phoenix Street even though there is no median.
- The team observed a school bus come to a stop in the middle of an intersection to let students off right into the middle of the street (Figure 12).
- Drivers were observed speeding on 8th Street and 11th Street
- There is a considerable amount of large truck traffic on the west side of the neighborhood near the industrial properties; however, the trucks seem to keep off the narrow, residential roads. This is true of all traffic in general, as many of the streets in the neighborhood dead end.
- People are parking vehicles on the sidewalks rather than in the street, especially on the southwest side of the neighborhood.



Figure 12: School bus dropping students off in the middle of an intersection.



Figure 13: Commercial vehicles parked on the sidewalk.

While there were several instances of careless driving, the neighborhood as a whole had very little vehicle traffic, and speeding was moderate and limited to two streets.

The team gave the Study Area a **FAIR** rating for the Driver Behavior Assignment

Safety

There were a few different issues observed regarding the overall safety and perception of safety of the Study Area.

- As mentioned in the previous section, many drivers were exceeding the speed limit on Phoenix Avenue.
- The team also observed people loitering, which could make pedestrians feel uncomfortable.
- There were several locations where trash was dumped on the sidewalk, forcing pedestrians to walk in the street and/or be wary of where they step to avoid glass or other sharp objects.
- There were some vehicles parked in driveways so that they blocked the sidewalk.
- The team noted that palm trees on northeast corner of Phoenix Avenue and 8th Street block view of oncoming westbound traffic for pedestrians attempting to cross 8th Street.

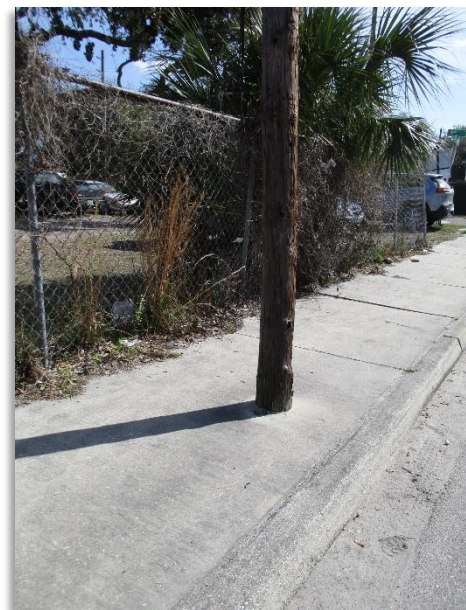


Figure 14: Unused driveway and pole blocking sidewalk

- There are several locations on Phoenix Avenue where the buildings block drivers' view of the sidewalks on the side streets. This is because the buildings are right on the property line and the sidewalks are very narrow.
- There are also many driveways interrupting the sidewalk along Phoenix Avenue, many of them unused.



Figure 14: Trash with potentially sharp objects dumped on a sidewalk

The team gave the Study Area a **FAIR** rating for the Safety Assignment.

Comfort & Appeal

The team found many aspects of the Study Area to be problematic.

- Landscaping in the public right-of-way over the entire Study Area is either lacking or overgrown and littered with trash.
- None of the bus stops have shelters, and most do not have benches or lighting.
- The pedestrian overpass at Haines Street & Winthrop Street has some broken sidewalks and is need of trash pickup.
- The entire Study Area needs trash removal and landscape maintenance.



Figure 15: Bus stop with no, bench, shelter or lighting



Figure 16: Broken sidewalk on pedestrian overpass at Haines Street and Winthrop Street



Figure 17: Trash blocking sidewalks is pervasive in the area.

The team gave the Study Area a **POOR** rating for the Comfort & Appeal Assignment.

Recommendations

This section contains a list of recommendations that the Planning and Development Department has distilled from the data collected during the Phoenix Area Walk Audits. From basic maintenance and pavement markings to sidewalk construction and ADA compliance, all of these recommendations will be brought to the responsible division within the Public Works Department for implementation. A detailed list of recommendations with specific locations can be found in Appendix A.

Recommendations applicable to the entire Study Area:

- Stripe stop bars and crosswalks at all stop-controlled intersections
- Bring all existing curb ramps to ADA compliance, and add new ramps where there are none
- Fix all broken and cracked sidewalks
- Construct new sidewalks on at least one side of the street on those blocks where there are none, and fill small gaps that currently exist between sidewalk segments
- Trim all vegetation/remove downed trees in the public right-of-way so that the sidewalks are clear and sight distance at intersections is not obstructed
- Edge all sidewalks where grass is encroaching
- Fix potholes in the streets
- Remove abandoned wooden poles in the sidewalk
- Fix hanging wires from utility poles
- Remove debris from blocked storm drains
- Update standard crosswalks at uncontrolled locations or at traffic signals to special emphasis crosswalks
- Fix any drainage/flooding issues
- Relocate AT&T poles throughout neighborhood where possible
- Conduct regular litter pick-up
- Ensure that bulk garbage pick-ups are being made
- Increase in law enforcement presence and issuance of warnings and citations to careless drivers
- Increase code compliance enforcement

Design improvements and safety countermeasures for specific locations or street segments in the Phoenix neighborhood:

- Plant shade trees in utility strip on both sides of Franklin Street between 12th Street & 8th Street
- Close extra/unused driveways on Phoenix Avenue where possible
- Work with the Jacksonville Transportation Authority to get shelters, benches, and lighting at all bus stops along Phoenix Avenue
- Widen the following bus stop pads along Phoenix Avenue into the street by 3 feet:
 - Southbound at 18th Street
 - Northbound at 17th Street
 - Northbound at 16th Street
 - Northbound at 13th Street

- Southbound at 12th Street
 - Northbound at 11th Street
- Add a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon or other enhanced crossing across 8th Street at Florida Avenue
- Add bulb-outs and/or raised crosswalks across 11th Street at the Bridier Street and Franklin Street intersections
- Add a new crosswalk with pedestrian lighting across Franklin Street on the east leg of the 11th Street intersection and on the east leg of the 12th Street intersection (west side of skew)
- Add a W11-2 pedestrian sign at the intersection of Haines Street & 17th Street ahead of the 90 degree curve for both directions of travel
- Rebuild sidewalk on Haines Street from 14th Street to 10th Street to fix steep cross-slope
- Add lighting to pedestrian overpass at Kooker Park
- Pressure wash sidewalk on pedestrian overpass at Haines Street & Winthrop Street
- Implement one of these design improvements for Phoenix Avenue between 21st Street & Dyal Street:
 - Add 5-foot bike lanes with a 3-foot buffer (replaces underutilized on-street parking)
 - Stripe/formalize existing on-street parking and construct bulb-outs with marked crosswalks at all intersections. Intermittently add small islands between parking spaces and plant a shade tree there
- Implement all design improvements for Phoenix Avenue between Dyal Street & 9th Street:
 - Construct bulb-outs at intersections and bus stops, and stripe crosswalks across Phoenix Avenue at those locations
 - Intermittently add small islands between parking spaces and plant a shade tree there

Next Steps

The Planning and Development Department will send all maintenance issues and minor improvements to the relevant divisions in the Public Works Department to be addressed. Then the Planning and Development Department will work with the Public Works Department to develop a cost estimate for issues that are more complex and/or not related to maintenance (e.g. filling sidewalk gaps), and develop conceptual drawings as necessary. The Departments will conduct public outreach to share some of the more complex improvements with residents and receive their feedback. The Departments will move towards implementation of the necessary improvements.

Appendix A