



Summit Lake Pedestrian Safety Master Plan

2024 Connecting
Communities
Planning Grant

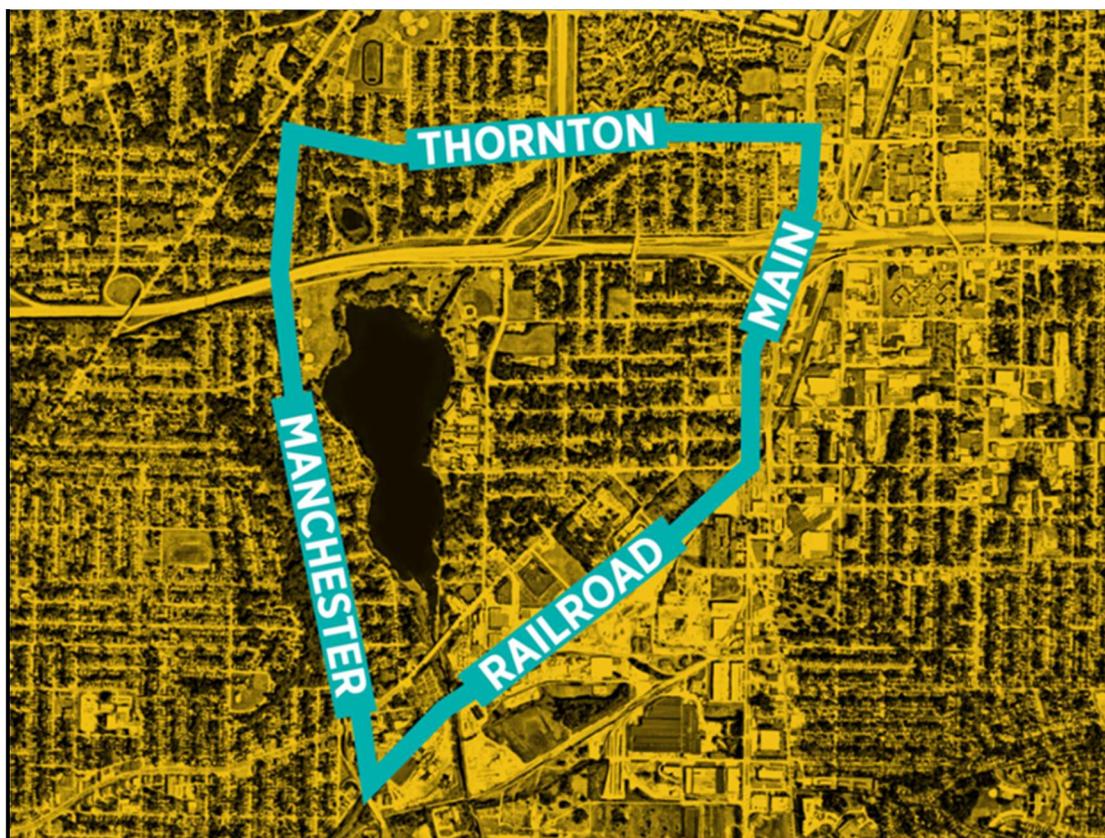
CITY OF AKRON, OHIO | DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & URBAN
DEVELOPMENT | 166 SOUTH HIGH STREET, ROOM 401 | AKRON, OHIO 44308 |
PLANNING@AKRONOHIO.GOV | 330.375.2090

Planning Study Summary

The Summit Lake Pedestrian Master Plan will focus on the incorporation of complete streets principles which will improve neighborhood safety, especially for non-motorized users. This plan will build upon the themes identified in the Our Summit Lake Land Use Plan of which pedestrian safety was a top corner by implementing traffic calming devices to improve safety. A primary focus of the plan will be reduction of traffic speed through the neighborhood while enhancing walkability.

Study Area & Map

The study area will match the boundary used for the Summit Lake Neighborhood during the 2021 “Our Summit Lake” land use planning process. This area includes the City’s officially designated Summit Lake neighborhood as well as additional land near Manning Pond. The study’s area is bounded by Thornton Street (to the north), South Main Street (to the east), the CSX-owned railroad corridor (to the south), and Manchester Road (to the west).



PURPOSE & NEED

Following the Our Summit Lake land use planning process (2021), several community feedback themes were identified. Of twelve primary themes, seven of these can be addressed with a “complete streets” focus. An overarching theme identified in this process was the need for safety improvements for all modes of transportation.



Given recent investments along the shores of Summit Lake, there is increased demand for waterfront and other recreational activities along the Towpath Trail. New amenities will attract users from within the neighborhood and across the region. Addressing pedestrian safety within the neighborhood itself is crucial to providing a safe place to walk for persons of all ages & abilities. Existing bike and pedestrian infrastructure in the neighborhood is aging, lacks accessibility, and is discontinuous within the neighborhood.

The development of a Summit Lake Neighborhood Pedestrian Master Plan will build upon community feedback that has already been identified. With these feedback themes, a strategic plan for the development of complete streets infrastructure in the neighborhood can be developed. The recommendations identified in the plan will be implemented as the neighborhood grows in the future.

Upon the culmination of the Our Summit Lake Land Use planning process, investment has continued to take place in the neighborhood. This is also being done in concert with AMHA's Choice Neighborhoods Planning Process which proposes to rebuild and expand the Summit Lake Apartments. The City of Akron has also studied the shortcomings of the existing zoning code. The City is in the process of updating the zoning in the neighborhood to form-based zoning that will better support walkability and equity for residents.

Outcomes

The Summit Lake Pedestrian Master Plan will generate a cohesive neighborhood map of proposed safety improvements that are ready for implementation. The 2021 land use planning process developed a 'refrigerator map' that both residents and city staff can hang up their refrigerator or their wall for quick and easy reference; the pedestrian master planning process should have a similar outcome. An implementation 'roadmap' of realistic timeframes can also add transparency and accountability upon the conclusion of the plan. Solutions that are both low-cost and easily implemented should be prioritized.

The master plan document should address existing barriers to safe pedestrian activity within the neighborhood. One example is Crosier Street, which is the neighborhoods' direct link to the Summit Lake Community Center. There is no sidewalk along the final block (at Lakeshore Blvd.) for access to the community center. This leaves a nearly 1000-foot gap from the end of the sidewalk to the front door. The lack of a crosswalk at Crosier and Lakeshore is another example of the deficient pedestrian infrastructure in the neighborhood. Additionally, evaluation of Lakeshore Blvd. for a road diet should be considered. Residents are concerned with the overall safety of Lakeshore Boulevard and have made it known that they do not feel safe letting their children walk alone to the community center (as well as other lakefront amenities, such as the new Summit Lake Loop Trail, Metro Parks' Summit Lake Nature Center, and the North Shore Park currently under constructions) because it is unsafe to cross the street.

The plan should also address driver behavior, which can be attributed to the lack of safety for non-motorized transportation options. The neighborhood's location between the South Main Street and Kenmore Boulevard corridors means that speeding traffic passes through the neighborhood daily with little regard for residents, children, and pets. A successful plan will evaluate intersections, signalization, lighting, and traffic calming devices (i.e. speed tables) as additional ways to reduce speeding to improve neighborhood safety.

The connection between Kenmore Boulevard/Ira Avenue to Old Main Street is also an area for safety improvement. This section serves as the primary corridor between the Old Main Street Business District and the Kenmore Business District. The existing condition includes a pair of one-way streets to facilitate the flow of traffic from the intersection of Miller Avenue and Old Main. This pair of one-way streets along Ira and Edison is a safety concern, given that it brings thru-traffic into the core of the neighborhood.

Connecting Communities Principles

Creating a neighborhood-level pedestrian master plan will involve the incorporation of Complete Streets principles to the public right-of-way which will enhance walkability, safety, and accessibility within the Summit Lake Neighborhood. This is one of the principles highlighted in AMATS' *Connecting Communities* guide and will "improve linkages between neighborhood and the transit and park systems (Strategy 1.C – Create a regional pedestrian plan). Redesigning Lakeshore Boulevard would complement the planned redevelopment of Summit Lake Apartments and transform this nondescript road into an attractive north-south spine.

A major component of the master plan should focus on the evaluation of each neighborhood street to determine appropriate treatments. Treatments could include (but are not limited to) vehicular operation modifications, adding on-street parking, bike lanes/boulevards, mini roundabouts, curb bump outs, improved crosswalks, chicanes, and speed tables. The goal of each treatment should be centered around the Connecting Communities principle of increasing pedestrian safety which will give residents (and visitors) a viable choice how they choose to get around Summit Lake.

Also mentioned in *Connecting Communities* is the importance of bike lanes. The inclusion of a neighborhood bike network will better connect Summit Lake to existing bike infrastructure which already ties into the neighborhood. Bike lanes in the neighborhood will help build out the vision of the Akron Bicycle Network Plan (2019). Connecting to the Towpath Trail and Kenmore Boulevard bike lanes, which are part of the planned bike network, will provide even more options for residents to connect to business districts, jobs, recreation amenities, and opportunities throughout the Greater Akron Metropolitan area.

Any future pedestrian safety improvements that are implemented following the development of this plan will help to cocreate a safer, more accessible, and livable environment that promotes active transportation, enhances quality of life, and fosters vibrant, sustainable neighborhoods for residents of all ages and abilities.

Level of Use

As of 2023, there are 3819 residents of the Summit Lake Neighborhood (as defined by the study area). Of this population, 68% is non-white and 37% of households are below the poverty level (both higher than Akron's citywide average). Additionally, 1135 (or 30%) of all neighborhood residents are under the age of 18.

Traffic calming implementation will be a major component to the success of this master plan. The neighborhood's busiest traffic corridors are along Kenmore Boulevard, Manchester Road, and Thornton Street, all of which have recent ADT counts in the range of 3000-6000, per AMATS' recent figures. The posted speed limits along some segments of Kenmore, Manchester, and Thornton is 35mph, however, residents have vocalized that there is a good amount of traffic that moves well above this limit – which is particularly concerning as some sections of these roadways have 25mph limits. All efforts to bring traffic speeds down will be a critical element to increasing safety for neighborhood residents.

The Our Summit Lake Land Use Plan was a community-led process in which residents expressed many concerns about safety within the neighborhood. During the planning process, residents said that they want improved access to the lake, better access to transit, more street trees, safer crosswalks and intersections, fewer speeding cars, and better sidewalks. All of the aforementioned community feedback themes can be directly addressed with a Complete Streets approach. The Summit Lake Pedestrian Master Plan is the next logical step to creating a better Summit Lake Neighborhood.