



BASIC INFORMATION

Name: Andy Thornley

Candidate for: Board of Supervisors, District 1

PERSONAL WALKING EXPERIENCE

1. Please describe what role walking plays in your life.

I'm a proud longtime member of Walk SF and an active citizen advocate for great walkable human-scale neighborhoods and communities. I grew up in a Minneapolis suburb where kids could walk to school and play safely in the street, and ever since I've always prioritized making my home in communities where getting around on foot is not only possible but pleasant and preferable (though there's always more to do to make the environment better). Like many San Franciscans, I get around by bike and transit, and sometimes find myself in a car, but all of those trips begin and end with a walk and there's a lot of walking laced throughout my day, whether wandering to lunch in Little Saigon or hoofing it from my Richmond District house over the Golden Gate Bridge to Stinson Beach and back for a weekend getaway (quite wonderful and quite doable, one foot after the other). I'm an old-school flaneur and practice every chance I get.

BIG PICTURE

2. Describe your vision of a healthy, safe, equitable, and sustainable transportation system for the city and the role that walking plays in that vision.

I've been very fortunate to live and make extended stays in great old cities like New York, Boston, Amsterdam, Paris, and Copenhagen, cities with human-scaled streets and human-centered land-use traditions and outstanding transport systems (streetcars, subways, bikeways, interurban rail, etc). San Francisco is in many regards one of these great human-scale cities, but we're still trapped under decades of car-centered policy and programming that privileges convenient private automobility over the safety and comfort and dignity of people on foot (and on transit and bikes).

I want a San Francisco where we have a transit system that's so attractive and convenient that people don't just tolerate it, don't just endure it, they go out of their way to use it. I want a San Francisco where making a trip by bicycle, whatever the purpose or destination, is more convenient and comfortable than making that trip by car. I want a San Francisco where we abolish the term "jaywalker" and shape our streets and policies to support and celebrate the human experience of strolling and wandering and ambling, even just stopping and watching others wander and amble. Sidewalks are for walking, sidewalks are for shopping, sidewalks are for kissing.

VISION ZERO

3. If elected, what steps would you take to ensure the implementation of Vision Zero projects? In your answer, please explain whether you pledge to prioritize safety improvements that narrow crossing distances and slow traffic (bulbouts, “road diets,” etc.) over other competing demands for street space, including parking or automobile lanes.

I've been promoting Vision Zero since it was a provocative idea promoted in European cities, and I'm entirely signed on with San Francisco's commitment to Vision Zero. I've already spent years promoting policy and funding and action to create bulbouts, curb extensions, car-free streets, road diets, traffic calming, woonerfs and raised roadways and crosswalks, and other fixes to the built environment. I've boldly confronted out-of-balance automobility and worked to reclaim right-of-way for a better safer pedestrian realm, and I would continue to push back on “automobile essentialism” everywhere it confounds civilized human streets and work to convert parking and travel lanes to wider sidewalks and narrower streets (at intersections and mid-block as well as whole blocks). I've made a career out of working with neighbors, agencies, businesses, and advocates to reclaim our streets for people and I look forward to being even more effective and productive in helping SF realize Vision Zero, whether or not I'm elected to the Board of Supervisors.

4. What would you do to ensure there is enough funding for pedestrian safety improvements and Vision Zero projects?

I'll continue to support and campaign for ballot measures to increase and program funding to streetscape improvements and the pedestrian realm, as I will continue to support and adopt local, regional, state and federal funding programs and complete streets policies for an ever-better pedestrian realm. I'll continue to work with the SFPD and SFMTA to prioritize safe streets through effective targeted enforcement and education, and advocate for SFPD's Traffic Company realignment to a “Safe Streets” unit (including a move away from the “windshield perspective” to cops on foot and on bikes). In District 1, I'll continue to advocate and organize for thoroughgoing and significant streetscape changes to Geary Boulevard as part of the Geary BRT project – even without the proposed transit enhancements (essential), the Geary BRT project will bring crucial safety upgrades to dozens of intersections along Geary Boulevard and I'll fight to make those happen.

POLICY/LEGISLATION

5. The most dangerous transportation behavior in the city is speed, as it exponentially increases a victim's risk of injury or death. Two key strategies that have effectively reduced speeds in other states and countries are automated speed cameras and decreased speed limits. Unfortunately, the State of California doesn't permit automated speed enforcement and only allows speeds lower than 25 mph in school zones. Do you support these strategies? If so, how will you work with your community and State legislators to change these (and similar) laws so the City can use these strategies to save lives?

Yes, I enthusiastically support automated speed enforcement and 15 MPH speed limits for most San Francisco streets (arterials can have 20-25 MPH limits, so long as we engineer pedestrian & bicycle safety to the maximum and direct enforcement resources [human and automated] to the most hazardous locations). I will continue to work with state and local legislators, advocates, agencies, and community members to energetically prioritize and realize these tools and goals.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

6. Approximately 41% of San Francisco elementary school students live within walking distance of school. Unfortunately, only 25% take the short journey by foot. Studies have shown that children who walk to school enjoy key health benefits and academic advantages, as well as getting more quality bonding time with parents. What would you do to increase the number and safety of children walking and biking to school?

I'm proud of my contributions to establishing San Francisco's Safe Routes to School program, and am fully committed to expanding that program to every school in the city, public and private. I'll redouble my advocacy for safe routes to libraries and safe routes to parks, and continue to support and organize for family bicycling and walking in our neighborhoods, in DI and across the city, through funding and policy and projects.

WALKABILITY/WALKING MODE INCREASE

7. The City has established a goal to steadily increase the percentage of all walking trips and walking trips for commuting in the next 5 years. Do you support this goal? If yes, what would you do to help the City realize it?

Yes, of course. I'll continue to support and promote Walk to Work day, and continue to advocate for the city (via the SFMTA and other agencies and partners) to develop and implement real transportation demand management programs that help employers and their employees understand and find and use better ways to get to work. And of course I'll continue to fight to rebalance our streets away from default automobility to human streets, for walking and transit and bicycling, to make walking to work (or anywhere) safer and more attractive and convenient.

8. Walk San Francisco believes that everyone deserves equal access to enjoyable places to walk, and that our street space can be better used by shifting excess street right-of-way from private automobiles to places for people to walk and gather. How do you feel about projects like these that improve our public realm, and how will you support them?

I'm entirely supportive of reclaiming our public right-of-way for humans. I'm proud of my contributions to establishing Sunday Streets, and I'll work to grow Sunday Streets to an every-Sunday every-district thing. I'm proud of my work to establish 4th Street in Mission Bay as a car-free street, and my contributions to reclaiming other streets from car-dominance to peaceful car-free spaces. I'm committed to continuing my work to diminish the impact of cars in Golden Gate Park, expanding our nearly-50-year tradition of car-free JFK Drive Sundays to more car-free space on more days (if NYC can do it in Central Park then there's no excuse for smart green SF).

OTHER EXPERIENCE

9. Have you championed or strongly supported any other initiatives that are in line with Walk San Francisco's mission of making walking in San Francisco safe, so that our community is healthier and livable?

I've advocated and organized for Complete Streets policy and practice at the local, regional, state and national level for many years, and have been instrumental in realizing success in "operationalizing" complete streets practice in San Francisco and the Bay Area (there's a lot more we still need to do). I've worked with state and local legislators to improve the law for more effective enforcement (enforcement cameras for Market-Octavia, vulnerable roadway user laws, etc).

10. Is there anything else you'd like to share with the people of San Francisco, all of whom walk or travel with an assistive device at some point?

As you note, we all wake up "pedestrians" and we all go to sleep "pedestrians", it's the fundamental state of human being. We must protect and nurture a public realm that's not only safe for walking (for whatever purpose, on foot or with a wheelchair or other assistance) but dignified and delightful. We've already got so many neighborhoods and streets that are fine, even enchanting, for strolling and wandering, we know how to do it, we're smart and we're compassionate and it's not a mystery to understand. We just need to decide, and I've decided – I want to live in a great city for walking, for everyone.