



Willard Safe Streets

Organization:

Santa Ana Active Streets

Project Name:

Willard Safe Streets

Reach:

3600

Award Amount:

\$15,000



● Santa Ana,
Orange County



The following report was written by Santa Ana Active Streets about Willard Safe Streets.

Overview

Willard is one of the densest neighborhoods in the City, with a median renter rate of 80% where residents spend more than 30% of their income paying rent. Participants were majority families with children and elderly folks. The families that came by were those who were cost-burdened and expressed their appreciation for the free incentives such as monetary gift cards donated from the City's Revive Santa Ana program, helmets, refillable water bottles, and resources from the organizations that were tabling.

In general, an event that offers a variety of activities for kids and resources for families is always appreciated in low income communities. During the event we heard from participants that they enjoyed learning about resources they didn't already know about such as the nearby library, bike classes, The Bicycle Tree bicycle cooperative and appreciated the idea of safe streets because some of them were mothers or caregivers. The artistic crosswalk made participants feel seen and reminded them to be alert when walking or biking. The bike course we implemented taught children and youth how to scan and signal when riding a bike. Participants also received a free helmet and learned the proper fitting steps.

The impact of having a playful "Place It" activity was that participants were encouraged to imagine what their neighborhood could look like if there were safer streets and open space. Some ideas included having a skatepark, a zoo, and parks for recreational activities such as soccer and riding bikes. A mom who grew up in Willard actually couldn't recall spending much time in any parks as a youth, but remembered the first time she brought her son to the park and watched him play. This showed us the high need of bringing more open spaces to communities such as this one. The area's high number of renters, pollution burdens, and its place as a cut-through neighborhood for traffic going into the region's Civic Center and downtown has made it difficult for neighborhood residents to advocate for a better quality of life.



Lessons Learned

We dreamed big on this project. Lots of effort and collaboration was made prior to the event date. We are thankful for the support we received from Toole Design, SCAG staff, volunteers, Willard Neighborhood Association, and City of Santa Ana Public Works, Traffic Engineering, and Police Department in all their efforts to help our vision become a reality. One big lesson from this event was learning the process of obtaining permits. There are many requirements and deadlines that created a few barriers for us. We were grateful that our partner from the Willard Neighborhood Association was familiar with these documents because of her involvement in community events. Another thing we learned was to begin our communication with City staff early so that they can understand and support our visions for community events. As a CBO, our visions of community engagement can often look different than an entity such as Public Works and Traffic Engineering. The event showed us the continuous need for safe streets, open space, and resources for low income communities. We saw families, children, and elderly folks share their desires for recreational spaces and visibility of pedestrians and cyclists. Additionally, if we host a similar event we need more volunteers or fewer activities.

