

NATIONAL CITY IS THE WALKING WINNER

South Bay town rated No. 1 in county for pedestrians

ROGER SHOWLEY • U-T

National City ranks first in walkability, according to Walk San Diego.

The organization, which promotes pedestrian safety and less dependence on the car, issued its report on Halloween, the holiday most noted for walking.

Based on cities' planning policies and field reports from volunteers, the Regional Walk Scorecard listed National City with 63 out of a possible 100 points, followed by La Mesa with 59.9 and Solana Beach with 59.8

Santee ranked 18th with 37.2 points and San Diego, the region's largest city, ranked sixth with 55.3 points.

"National City has been working hard to make walking and biking safer and more convenient," said the

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city's mayor, Ron Morrison. "It looks like our efforts are paying off."

Walk San Diego's executive director, Jim Stone, said in an accompanying report that National City scored relatively high because it was laid out in the pre-auto age that offers a "dense network" of low-car-volume streets.

The survey was sponsored by Sharp Health Plan and included a cellphone application, BestWalk, that more than 1,500 volunteers used to judge the first of 30,000 intersections and street segments for safety, proximity to stores and other factors.

Walk San Diego plans to issue a score card each year and market the app nationally.

The components of the score card revealed different rankings for different cities.

Coronado ranked first in the walking index, which combines car-pedestrian collision data and proportion of walking and transit commuters to auto commuters.

It had only 37 pedestrian-vehicle collisions between 2005 and 2009, giving it a collision rate of 0.37 per thousand population. (Solana Beach had the lowest rate at 0.06.)

Coronado also had the county's highest walking/transit share of transportation modes, 13 percent. (Santee had the lowest at 2 percent.)

Planning and implementation policies included 12 factors, and National City and La Mesa tied at 37 points, while Poway was last with just 19.

Highlights included the best sidewalk network in Imperial Beach; best pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, Carlsbad; and best tree canopy (to shade pedestrians), Del Mar.

The BestWalk app results rated Escondido first with an average score of 9, San Diego at 8.5 and Del Mar at 7.6. El Cajon had the lowest score of 4.6.

But since so few streets and intersections were assessed by volunteers, the overall score card results for each city contributed only 10 points out of a possible 100.

Walk San Diego's app may still be downloaded at no

charge to any smartphone, and users can pick the intersections and streets they want to assess. Search for "BestWalk" in apps stores.

Score card

Walk San Diego compiled scores, on a 100-point scale, for all 18 incorporated cities in the county. Factors included the cities' planning policies, crash data between pedestrians and vehicles, and on-the-ground assessments of selected streets and intersections.

National City: 63

La Mesa: 59.9

Solana Beach: 59.8

Imperial Beach: 56.3

Carlsbad: 55.7

San Diego: 55.3

Coronado: 53.8

San Marcos: 51.5

Oceanside: 51

Del Mar: 50.9

Vista: 49.9

Encinitas: 49.4

Chula Vista: 49.3

Escondido: 49.1

Poway: 48.3

Lemon Grove: 41.2

El Cajon: 40.4

Santee: 37.2

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