

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**New walkability toolkit to help cities engage young talent in shaping their communities with \$182,000 from Knight Foundation**

*Walk [Your City] startup will work with community leaders in Lexington, Ky., and San Jose, Calif., to create more vibrant urban centers and propel civic engagement*

Raleigh, N.C. – Feb. 26, 2015 – Walk [Your City], a civic startup focused on building more livable cities, will develop an online walkability toolkit that will allow people to get involved in making their communities more vibrant and walkable. Supported by \$182,000 from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the toolkit will be piloted in Lexington, Ky., and San Jose, Calif., with the aim of helping cities across the country increase civic participation, and encourage residents to help create the cities they want to live in.

City leaders are increasingly recognizing that a thriving, walkable urban core is essential to keeping and attracting the young talent that contributes to healthy economies. In 2010, young adults were 51 percent more likely than other Americans to live in neighborhoods close to the central business district, up from 10 percent in 1980. Yet, proximity does not necessarily translate into civic participation: For example, mayoral election turnout in large U.S. cities rests at 25.8 percent.

Walk [Your City] will help local residents and city partners step toward greater civic engagement. The startup has developed online tools that people can use to create street signs, highlighting how easy it is to walk in their city. Signs may say: “It’s a 7-minute walk to downtown” or “It’s a 10-minute walk to Central Park.” The software also allows people to manage campaigns and collect data around use of the signs.

Using the online platform, Walk [Your City] will partner with government representatives and civic organizations in Lexington and San Jose, two [cities where Knight invests](#), to develop do-it-yourself toolkits that cities can put in place to encourage residents to make their neighborhoods more walkable. Partners on the initiative include NoLi Community Development Corp. in Lexington, and SPUR in San Jose, among others.



To develop the toolkit, they will launch educational “wayfinding” campaigns that engage residents in creating street signs and other tools to help people more easily maneuver throughout the city. The campaigns will be used to experiment and iterate toward the creation of a toolkit for cities everywhere.

“Young, college-educated adults are attracted to walkable, urban cores, but too many of our cities are not built to deliver that kind of lifestyle,” said Carol Coletta, Knight Foundation vice president for community and national initiatives. “This toolkit has the potential to help people bridge that gap by inviting them to make their own walkable neighborhoods, with appealing signage that nudges new behavior.”

“We see a Walk [Your City] campaign as a hands-on opportunity to engage San Jose citizens in a conversation about walkability, the concept of San Jose as an urban place and a vision of this city as a less car-dependent environment in the future,” shared Kristy Wang, community planning policy director for SPUR San Jose.

Over the next year, project partners will use the walkability toolkit to create informational signage in neighborhoods. Feedback from community partners and assessment data will help improve the toolkit software. By the end of 2015, Walk [Your City] will release a full do-it-yourself solution for communities looking to increase civic engagement through walkability.

Support for Walk [Your City] forms one part of Knight Foundation’s efforts to invest in civic innovators who help cities attract and keep talented people, expand economic opportunity and create a culture of engagement. The foundation believes that designing places to achieve these goals is crucial to city success.

### **About Walk [Your City]**

Walk [Your City] offers an online suite of tools that individuals and communities can use to prototype street signs for people. These informational signs show the distance in minutes to community amenities, on foot or by bike; campaign management features online allow users to organize their signs and analyze use data. WYC provides the tools for citizens to pilot new types of projects in the built environment, and to increase engagement around walkability. For more, visit [walkyourcity.org](http://walkyourcity.org).

### **About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

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