

# Open and shut: the case for **Open Streets** in St. Louis

**OPEN STREETS INITIATIVES** open spaces normally reserved for cars to people, providing a safe environment to walk, bike, dance, play, and socialize, promoting healthy and active living and building community. Researchers in the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis have received funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to evaluate St. Louis' 2011 Open Streets events, and to build a campaign encouraging participation by urban youth and families in 2012. With over 1,800 participants in 2011 alone, leadership from the Mayor's office, and generous sponsorships, St. Louis has the potential to be a national leader in Open Streets. In fact, our evaluation survey is featured as a model resource by the Open Streets Project, a national coordinating collaborative. Working together, we can grow St. Louis Open Streets in 2012 and beyond.



## Open Streets 2011 by the numbers

**108**  
MINUTES  
*Average time spent at Open Streets*

**58%**  
Participants who were attending their **first** Open Streets

**73%**  
Participants who spent money at a restaurant or store on the Open Streets route

**68%**  
Participants who became aware of a store or restaurant that was new to them

## What do people think about Open Streets?

We surveyed **119** Open Streets participants at the two 2011 events. We asked them to answer some questions about Open Streets, and its effect on St. Louis:

"Open Streets is a free event that welcomes everyone."  **99%** Agree or strongly agree

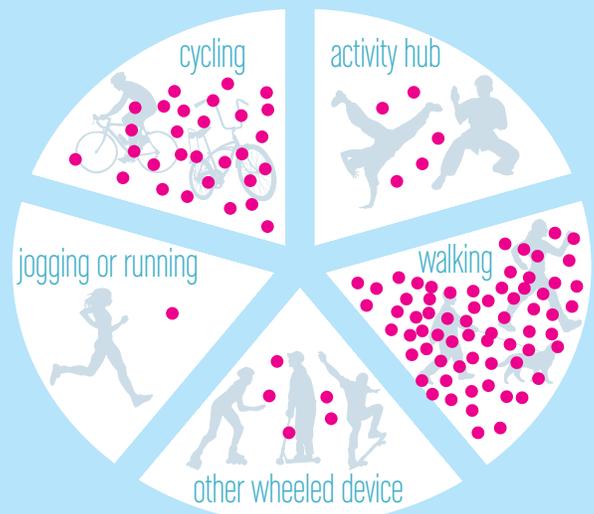
"Open Streets strengthens our community"  **100%** Agree or strongly agree

"How safe do you feel at Open Streets?"  **97%** said "very safe"

"Does Open Streets change your feelings about the city?"  **94%** said "yes - positively"

## What do people do at Open Streets?

Open Streets participants could place a sticker on a poster we made to tell us what their main activity was:



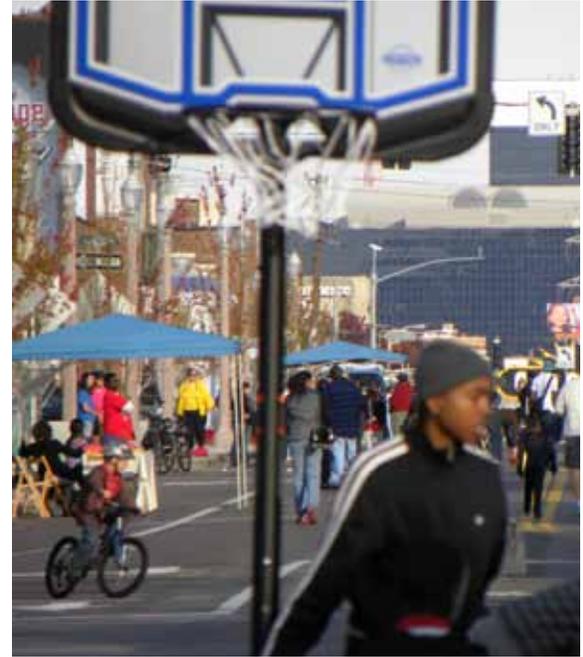
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**OPEN STREETS 2011**



When we asked Open Streets participants the main reason they came, they named many reasons, while some themes also became apparent.



Open Streets participants at the October 29<sup>th</sup> event in the Grove neighborhood.

## Challenges for Open Streets and the City of St. Louis

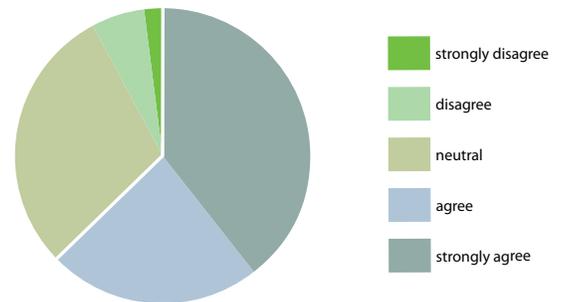
People who participate like Open Streets, but the demographics of Open Streets participants does not match those of the City overall.

City of St. Louis	Open Streets participants	
49%	23%	Black
44%	66%	White
0.3%	0%	American Indian/Alaska Native
3%	2%	Asian
4%	0%	Hispanic/Latino

Source: Washington University, U.S. Census Bureau State & County QuickFacts

**Policy action:** Continue Open Streets, and promote the event to segments of the community that were underrepresented in 2011. Marketing and outreach through trusted community partners, such as schools, neighborhood organizations, and advocacy groups.

Outside of Open Streets, the city of St. Louis can improve in offering friendly environments for physical activity such as walking.



One-third of participants did not agree with the statement "Outside of Open Streets, St. Louis provides friendly environments to walk".

Source: Washington University

**Policy action:** Support collaboration among groups in St. Louis whose missions include promoting physical activity, improving the built environment, sustainable development, and livability. Activate communities to pursue low-cost, improvements in the environment.

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<http://stlouis-mo.gov/openstreets>  
[www.facebook.com/OpenStreetsSTL](http://www.facebook.com/OpenStreetsSTL)  
<http://openstreetsproject.org>

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[activelivingresearch.org](http://activelivingresearch.org)

