

Santa Ana High School Article of the Week #3

Youth movement nets \$2 million for bike lanes in Santa Ana (1520L)

Instructions: READ and ANNOTATE using CLOSE reading strategies.

Step 1: Skim the article using these symbols as you read:

(+) agree, (-) disagree, (*) important, (!) surprising, (?) wondering

Step 2: Number the paragraphs. **Read** the article **carefully** and **make notes in the margin**.

Notes should include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the article. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important sections may serve this purpose.)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
- Notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
- Observations about how the **writer's strategies** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and choices affect the article.

Step 3: A final quick read noting anything you may have missed during the first read.

Your **margin notes** are part of your score for this activity. Answer the questions carefully in **complete sentences** unless otherwise instructed.

Student _____ Class Period _____

SANTA ANA – No one knows Santa Ana’s streets like the people who live there, and a group of local youth has used that knowledge in an **unprecedented** effort to get the city a \$2.37 million grant for bike lanes on the roads they ride every day.

The small group of middle and high school students, working with nonprofit KidWorks, spearheaded a “bikability” assessment in central Santa Ana two years ago and realized that the thoroughfare they rode on to get to school – Edinger Avenue – was in great need of bike lanes.

With some guidance from KidWorks staff and Santa Ana planners, the youth wrote a grant for active transportation funding from the state, and late last month they learned the project submitted through the city had been awarded the money. “It’s the largest funding that is coming to either KidWorks or the city by way of our youth leadership and involvement,” said Councilman David Benavides, who has been KidWorks’ executive director since March.

It didn’t happen overnight. When members of KidWorks’ Youth **Empowerment** Network program five years ago attended city meetings on transportation, they felt neglected because their input wasn’t really considered, said Maribel Mateo, a member of the youth group. “The adults and other people that were part of the meeting didn’t pay much attention to us since they thought that we’re just kids and we had no idea what they were talking about,” said Mateo, 18, now a student at Cal State Fullerton.

The youth wrote a letter to the city and received a response inviting them to be trained by the staff’s private consultants on how to conduct walkability assessments in their neighborhoods. Soon after, the youth started meeting with city planners to advocate for protected bike lanes, and city planners asked the youth to identify three target projects.

After surveying nearly 200 bicyclists in Santa Ana, using geographic information

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systems to map Santa Ana's bikeways and demographics, and video recording the strengths and weaknesses of biking there, the youth came up with their three projects. They were portions of Santa Ana Boulevard, and Bishop Street and Willits Street, and Edinger Avenue from the Santa Ana River trail to Bristol Street, the path to eight public schools including Godinez Fundamental High School, which Mateo attended. Santa Ana planners took the lead on the first two and secured funding, but challenged the students to take the reins on solidifying and writing the grant application for Edinger Avenue.

"It was just a struggle getting the full support of the city staff – every time we proposed something, they would bring up a problem," said Mateo's brother, Tony Gatica, 15, a sophomore at Godinez.

Those roadblocks didn't **deter** the youth. Mateo and Gatica were motivated by a biking accident close to their hearts. Shortly after they joined the Youth **Empowerment** Network-initiated "Bike it! Santa Ana" campaign, their father was hit while riding on Harvard Street and thrown off his bike onto the street, fortunately not in the way of traffic. Bicycles are the only means of transportation for their family. "Santa Ana is full of Latino people that are low-income, and not everyone has access to cars," Mateo said. "So that's one of the major reasons a lot of people are biking, and that's why we started getting involved in biking and the campaign."

In their five-minute bike ride from home through busy Edinger Avenue to Godinez High, Mateo and Gatica navigated a section with no sidewalk along 14 homes and a bus stop. "It was dangerous," said Mateo, who plans to major in civil engineering.

Between January 2011 and May this year, 12 bicycle collisions and eight pedestrian collisions occurred on the 1.7-mile stretch of KidWorks' bike lane project, they stated in their grant application. In July, a 13-year-old girl riding her bicycle was struck and killed by a Santa Ana Unified School District employee driving a work truck.

KidWorks' Edinger Avenue project, expected to go under construction in a year, includes improved sidewalks and a protected bike lane with a raised physical barrier separating the bike and car lanes. The physical barrier will also incorporate parked cars and street parking as an added barrier providing more visible protection for bicyclists.

"I thought, 'That's a good idea.' The kids' efforts made the city take a real close look at that particular street," said the city's active transportation coordinator Cory Wilkerson. "They deserve the credit." KidWorks' community engagement coordinator Lynnete Guzman said she helped with the technical part of the grant writing but that the youth "were the experts because they know their neighborhood well."

Benavides, who has spent two decades working with KidWorks serving youth in challenged neighborhoods, said the group's application was an accomplishment in and of itself and that their funding reward was "a brilliant experience" for the nonprofit. "This team of students definitely now serves as role models to their peers, to the younger children and to the broader community," Benavides said. "And to anybody who has ever doubted the talent of young people facing adversity and what they can accomplish."

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Important terms:

Unprecedented- adjective un·prec·e·dent·ed \,ən-'pre-sə-,den-təd\ : not done or experienced before

Empowerment- verb em·pow·er \im-'paü(-ə)r\ : to give power to (someone) : to give official authority or legal power to (someone)

Deter- verb de·ter \di-'tər, dē-\ : to cause (someone) to decide not to do something: to prevent (something) from happening

Possible response questions:

1. *What motivated these students to make a change in the city? cite text*

2. *What change did they make? How was it “unprecedented”?*

3. *Discuss what this article has to do with the word **empowerment**.*

4. *Discuss what this article has to do with the word **adversity**.*

Standards 9/10.RI.2,3,4