

Advancing Age-Friendly Walking in Massachusetts

Walkability and Age-Friendly Communities

Senior populations are growing across Massachusetts. In response, cities and towns are increasingly adopting Age-Friendly Community designations and other measures to improve quality of life for their older residents. As part of this movement, WalkBoston is working with cities and towns to help them create safe and comfortable walking conditions for older adults and by extension, for all community members.

Walkability is a key to ensuring that seniors can age in community, maintain good physical, cognitive and mental health, access important goods and services, remain socially and civically active, and maintain physical and economic mobility. Seniors are also making it clear that they want to live in walkable communities and that this is an issue that they will help to put on the agenda for municipal action.



Across Massachusetts, the senior-relevant walking conditions that need improvement include: smoother sidewalks, safe street crossings (longer WALK times on traffic signals, or “bump outs” to shorten the crossing distance), slower traffic speeds in certain areas of town, safer access to bus stops, widespread access to shady places to walk, benches on sidewalks, and public restrooms. These are the determining factors for making streets and sidewalks more welcoming and accessible places for people of all ages.

Technical Assistance for Age-Friendly Walking

WalkBoston provides three types of training and technical assistance for seniors, municipal officials and other community stakeholders to advance Age-Friendly Walking:

- **Pedestrian Advocacy 101 (“Ped101”) community discussions**
Ped101 discussions educate participants about low-cost and easy-to-implement walkability improvements, including well-marked crosswalks, properly timed traffic signals, and benches to provide resting points. The intended audience includes community residents, municipal staff, elected officials and staff of local non-profits or senior service agencies – truly anyone interested in learning about improving walking.
- **Local walking workshops**
Walking workshops are more intensive, combining the Ped101 information with on-the-street walks where participants look at local walking conditions, then meet to discuss specific ideas for enhancing the built environment and how to get those ideas implemented. Follow up from workshops includes a memo describing these recommendations that is designed for participants to use with municipal decision makers. Both community discussions and workshops can serve as powerful tools for advancing local walkability.

- **On-call strategic assistance and planning/design advice**

When a community wishes to pursue a variety of efforts to improve walkability, WalkBoston is available to provide on-call strategic assistance and planning/design advice such as attending local meetings, making site visits with local residents or officials, and helping community members prepare for meetings.

The cost for a 90-minute Ped101 training and guided discussion (including community-specific preparation) is \$750.

The more intensive half-day walking workshop with a walk audit is \$3,500. These costs cover WalkBoston staff time, as well as travel, refreshments, materials, and the production of recommendation memos after walk audits.

On-call technical assistance consulting costs \$100/hour. If more in-depth consulting is requested, WalkBoston can provide a simple contract that describes the services and their costs.



Experience

WalkBoston has an extensive track record of providing technical assistance to municipalities across the state – both identifying ways to improve local walking conditions and helping to build informed constituents for walkability. We have worked with state agencies including the Department of Public Health, Department of Transportation, and Executive Office of Public Safety and Security as well as municipal officials, community organizations, and residents.

WalkBoston has worked with 115+ municipalities across Massachusetts, ranging from cities to suburbs to small towns to rural villages. Based on this deep and diverse experience, we will design and implement discussions and workshops to fit the particular needs of your community. **For more details, please contact Adi Nochur, Project Manager at 617-367-9255 or anochur@walkboston.org.**

About WalkBoston

WalkBoston's mission is to make walking safer and easier in Massachusetts to encourage better health, a cleaner environment and more vibrant communities. We were founded in 1990 as the first pedestrian advocacy organization in the US and we are now one of the nation's recognized leaders in providing a voice for walkers.

In recent years, WalkBoston has significantly deepened our focus on aging issues. We are working intensively with the City of Boston on an Age-Friendly Walking project and we have been named as a key implementation partner in the 2017 Age-Friendly Boston Action Plan. Over the years we have worked on projects specifically targeted to the needs of seniors with Brookline, Fall River, Weymouth, Belchertown, Williamsburg and Gloucester. We serve on the Executive Committee of the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative (MHAC), which is a network of leaders in community, health and wellness, government, advocacy, research, business, education, and philanthropy who have come together to advance healthy aging across the state.