



**WalkBoston**®



## ***City of Chelsea, MA***

June 24, 2013

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Community Health/Community Transformation Grant

Mass in Motion, an initiative of the MA Department of Public Health

### **MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE**

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## Walk Audit

WalkBoston conducted a Walk Audit training and field walk on June 24, 2014 with the \_\_\_\_\_ Walking Group organized through the Chelsea Community Health Center. The group usually walks twice a week, varying the route to sustain interest.

The participants included adult walk group members, several of them with baby strollers, the six-year old son of one of the group members, staff from the Health Center, the City's Planning Director and two WalkBoston staff members.



*Participant identifying a broken sidewalk*

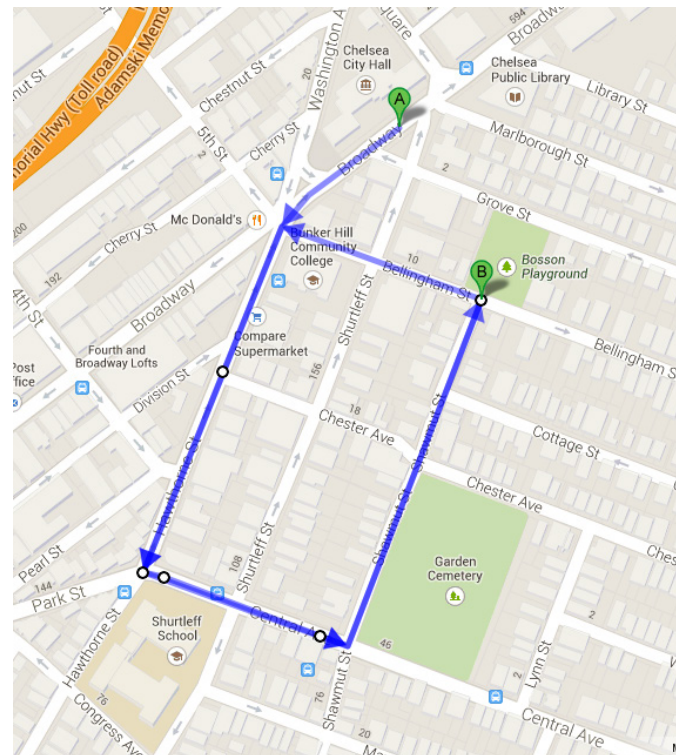
The immediate purpose of the walk audit training was to engage group members in looking at the walking environment of the City, and learning how to provide comments to the City about improvements that are needed for safety or to make walking more attractive. John DePriest told the participants about the smart phone app "See Click Fix," which the City uses for reporting. Several of the participants promptly downloaded the app for future use.

Underlying these immediate purposes for the event were the longer-term goals of getting group members more engaged in the community as one way to make walking their regular and ingrained way of getting around the City. The participants seemed to enjoy the walk, and after the hour spent looking at the walking environment they clearly felt comfortable identifying elements of the built environment that needed repair or improvement.

Chelsea is a very walkable city with narrow streets that force vehicles to move at relatively moderate speeds. With a wide variety of settings, main street activity (Bellingham Square) to lovely homes (Admirals Hill) and walks along the Chelsea River, group members said they easily found interesting walking routes.

## Walk Audit Route

The walking group was very familiar with the compact city (2.2 square miles) and easily shared their observations with the audit team which traversed a one-mile walking route beginning at City Hall, and moving through Bellingham Square and onto residential streets and nearby parks.



*Walk Audit Route near Downtown Chelsea*



*An enthusiastic participant in the audit*

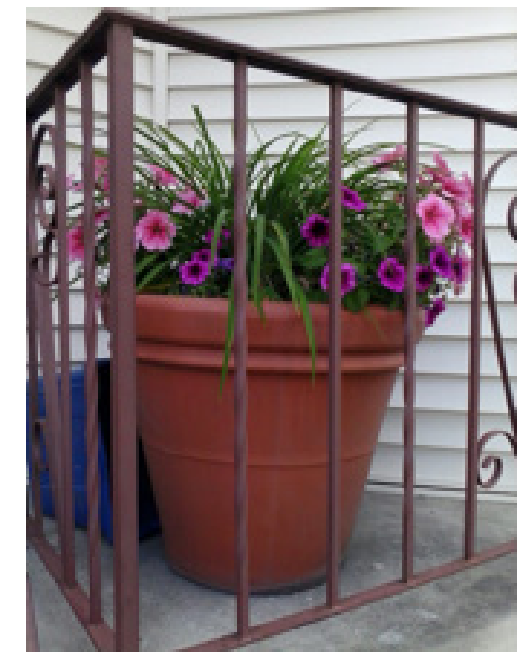
## Overall Observations:

1. Chelsea is a very walkable community. Because of the City's compact development pattern, many destinations are within easy walking distance. Furthermore, the densely developed streets with limited building setbacks create strong visual definition along the narrow streets. This built form combined with the short blocks slows driving speeds along many streets. As the group walked, they encountered polite drivers who yielded to crossing pedestrians.
2. Chelsea has already invested in many pedestrian safety improvements to make it safer for walkers to get around the City. These include well marked crosswalks, narrowed driveways, and provision of curb ramps.
3. Chelsea has great potential to be an especially attractive city for pedestrians. It has an active retail district, a dense development pattern with many closely spaced destinations, many attractive

19th century buildings, and active and committed residents and municipal staff. However, as the walking group toured the neighborhood it found that many of the residential buildings would be substantially enhanced with landscaping, window boxes, planters or other small beautification measures, such as painting. Such additions of color and or plantings would embellish the architecture and make the streets feel more cared for.



*Raised crossing on Grove Street at Bosson Playground*



*One colorful planter already enlivens Shawmut Street*

## Recommendations

1. Community Outreach Group (COG) offers landscape design for community based groups. Through the use of students and volunteers their services are available at minimal cost. WalkBoston highly recommends that Chelsea contact this group to develop a beautification plan for a limited commercial and residential area in Chelsea. Website: [info@cogdesign.org](mailto:info@cogdesign.org)
2. Install a curb extension or bump out on Broadway at the northwest corner of Bellingham Square to shorten the crossing distance and make pedestrians more visible to drivers.
3. Install a crosswalk at the intersection of Shurtleff/Central on the east crossing of Central.
4. Repair sidewalks. On Hawthorne Street between Central and Chester Avenues, the brick sidewalk is broken and is a tripping hazard. Walk participants also noted broken sidewalks on Shawmut Street across from the Garden Cemetery and between Central and Chester Avenues.
5. Repair or remove tree grates along Hawthorne Street that pose tripping hazards and reduce the clear walking zone to less than needed for safe passage of a wheelchair.
6. Narrow curb cut openings when streets and sidewalks are being re-built. On Hawthorne Street between Broadway and Division Street there is a very wide curb cut that exposes walkers to entering/exit vehicles. Future curb cut openings should be narrowed to increase walker safety.
7. Relocate Bellingham Square bus stop which is now on a very narrow sidewalk on Broadway. The City and MBTA are considering moving the outbound bus stop to the other side of the square – on north Broadway.



*Example of a small public space in Chelsea that could be landscaped to make the street more attractive*



*Popped tree grate*

## Participants:

Melissa Dimond, Chelsea Community Health Center  
John DePriest, Director of Planning & Development  
Walking Group members (get official title of walking group)  
Wendy Landman, WalkBoston  
Dorothea Hass, WalkBoston