



Chesterfield Main Road Walk Audit Report

November 23, 2021

About this Project

The Hilltowns CDC, together with Healthy Hampshire and WalkBoston, are leading a 5-year grant project to promote Age-Friendly Walkability in the Hilltowns Town Centers. Together with community residents and leaders, the team will be conducting a series of walk audits in partnering Hilltowns. The goal of these walk audits is to identify infrastructure improvements and policy changes to make town-center walking safer and more enjoyable for people of all ages in the Hilltowns. The Town of Chesterfield is one of the partnering communities in this grant project.

Background

The Town of Chesterfield has a dedicated group of community members interested in creating more opportunities for residents of every age to meet, gather, and develop strong social networks in the Town center. Many residents describe walking the common route loop (Main Road to South Street and onto Bryant Road to Bagg Road and back to Main Road) and their desire for more safety features, especially when crossing Main Road. Similarly, Chesterfield hosts the Hilltowns CDC offices and Davenport Childcare Center just east of the Town center on Route 143/Main Road at the bottom of a hill. There is no sidewalk along this section of Main Road making it difficult for both child care staff and families, as well as CDC employees, to get to the building without a car.

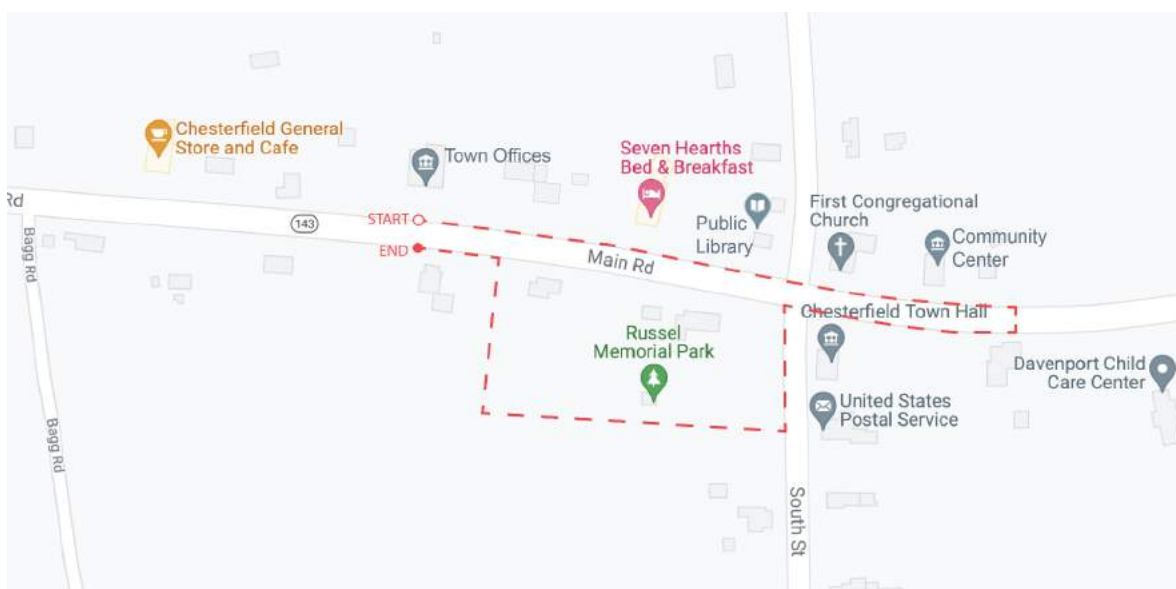
Residents who participated in the walk audit process shared their interest in investing in more opportunities for social cohesion in the Town Center. Suggestions included offering more recreational opportunities for older adults in Russell Memorial Park through the addition of benches and other infrastructure. Many describe the addition of the skate park as a great example of park design that has inspired multi-generational use of the park. The Chesterfield General Store & Cafe also presents a great opportunity for more community gathering — many were excited about its opening just before the COVID-19 pandemic in March 202. However, the latest sidewalk installation and repair project did not extend to the store, leaving those who try to walk to the store from the center on the shoulder of Route 143.



Audit participants observing walking conditions along Main Road.

Walk Audit Process

WalkBoston led an in-person walk audit on Thursday, September 23, 2021 from 2 pm to 3:00 pm under gray skies - though the sun broke through during the audit - with temperatures in the high 50s. Seven participants gathered at the Town Office Building and walked the route, though more participated in the Ped 101 Zoom session held earlier in the week. A list of participants for both activities can be found in Appendix A.



Walk Audit Route

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walkboston.org | 617.367.9255 | info@walkboston.org | facebook.com/walkboston | twitter.com/walkboston

Prior to the in-person portion of the walk audit, WalkBoston led participants through a presentation of walkability concepts and the walk audit process via Zoom on Tuesday, September 21 at 6 pm. Participants in both the Zoom session and in-person walk included residents, Select Board members, and other town and state agency staff with a range of knowledge on traffic calming techniques and experience with traffic and pedestrian issues in Chesterfield.

Key Concerns and Recommendations

Reduce traffic speeds on Main Road through the Town Center

Main Road and the Town Center are important assets to Chesterfield — but many residents cite concerns of speeding when they walk through the area and either find themselves on high alert for oncoming traffic or opt to drive.

- Consider low cost, short-term engineering measures to reduce speeds such as reducing lane widths and/or other treatments at the South Street/N Road/Main Road intersection. (See FHWA guide in appendix)
- Consider installing a 4-way stop at the South Street/N Road/Main Road intersection to slow traffic down before proceeding into the center. Install warning signs to make drivers aware of the 4-way stop as they approach the intersection. This would require an engineering study.
- Continue the use of speed feedback signs on Route 143 at the town limits to reduce driving speeds.



Speed feedback sign heading Westbound towards the Town Center

Improve safety and visibility of the pedestrian crossing in front of the Library

The pedestrian crossing in front of the Library poses some visibility concerns as vehicles traveling on 143 are often traveling quickly and, depending on direction, at an incline with limited visibility of the crosswalk.

- Ensure adequate visibility at the crosswalk by installing a pedestrian-activated Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) at the crosswalk or consider a raised crossing to reduce speed at this location.
- Repaint crosswalks with a continental stripe pattern to enhance visibility.



Walk audit participants waiting to cross near the Library

Add more benches and update other amenities to Russell Memorial Park to promote community gathering for people of all ages and abilities

Many participants shared hopes of utilizing Russell Memorial Park more often, but felt that there are not many places to stop and rest or places to gather to build community. Participants spoke highly of the addition of the skateboard area to the park, citing that children of all ages and from many other surrounding communities visit the park to use it.

- Install more benches and tables, including those that accommodate people with disabilities or mobility challenges.
- Update other park elements, such as the swing set and play structures, and include a fall safe surface to mitigate the impact of any falls. An adaptive swing set and other play structures would also increase the accessibility of the park.
- Consider planting more trees to increase shade.
- Consider installation of more trash receptacles alongside these improvements so that the park can be well maintained by community members.

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Russell Memorial Park skateboard area and swing set

Improve walking connection from the Town Center to the Chesterfield General Store and Bagg Road intersection

The Chesterfield General Store is a great addition to the town since its opening in 2020, and despite COVID-19, has drawn much support from many in the community. However, the sidewalk on Main Road only extends to the Town Offices building. Furthermore, there is a defined walking route included on the Chesterfield Walking Maps, which loops down South Street to Bryant Street, up Bagg Road to Main Road. However, when coming from Bagg Road to Main Road, there is no crosswalk.

- Extend the sidewalk along the north side of Main Road to the Bagg Road intersection. This would provide a safer walking connection for those walking to the General Store and those using the walking loop at Bagg Road.
- Install a marked crossing with a continental stripe pattern to enhance visibility at the Bagg Road intersection. Consider installing a pedestrian-activated Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB).



Left: Chesterfield General Store; Right: Walk Audit participants walk to General Store along the side of Route 143

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Study different options for improving pedestrian access to the Hilltown CDC and Child Care Center

The Hilltown CDC and Child Care Center are important destinations for many residents, but navigating a walking route is difficult and inaccessible for many. Currently, there is an unmarked, informal walkway that leads from the Chesterfield Town Hall along a wooded slope, behind CDC-owned housing, to the parking lot at the CDC offices/day care center. There is no sidewalk along Main Road which would provide direct access to the CDC offices/day care center.



Access to Hilltowns CDC and Child Care center currently requires visitors to drive, walk along Route 143 (right), or walk behind the wooded area nearby (left) which is inaccessible for some.

- Study the feasibility of building a sidewalk along the southern side of Main Road between the CDC offices/day care center. There appears to be enough space within the right-of-way to build a sidewalk, but there are side slope issues that may require retaining walls or other structural supports.
- Seek funding for a more permanent off-road connection between the Town Hall and office building. Some funding opportunities are summarized in Appendix B.

Policy Considerations

In addition to the infrastructure improvements listed above, the Town of Chesterfield can enact and review town policies to promote walkability. We recommend the following policy considerations.

- Enact a Complete Street Policy to become eligible for MassDOT state funding to implement walking and biking improvements on locally-owned roads. <https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program>
- Consider an application to the Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program for improvements at Russell Memorial Park and or the purchase of more pedestrian-activated Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB).

Appendix A. Ped 101 and Walk Audit Participants

Jennifer	Peotter	Resident; Library Trustee
Nancy	Rich	Resident
Anthony	Vona	MassDOT District 1 Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
Carol	Jolly	Resident
Trish	Colson-Montgomery	Select Board
Don	Willard	Select Board; Recreation Committee
Carole	Bergeron	Resident; COA; School Committee
Therese	Brigley	Director of Child Care Center
Eileen	McGowan	Resident
Roger	Fuller	Select Board
Matt	Smith	Highway Department
Janice	Gibeau	Chesterfield COA Director
Kate	Bavelock	Hilltown CDC
Joan	Griswold	Hilltown CDC
Stacey	Beuttell	WalkBoston
Miranda	Briseño	WalkBoston

Appendix B. Resources

WalkBoston Rural Walking Guide:

<https://walkboston.org/sites/default/files/WalkBoston%20Rural%20Walking.%20Tool%20Kit%202013.pdf>

Urban, Rural and Suburban Complete Streets Design Manual:

https://www.northamptonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6668/Hampshire-County-Complete-Streets-Design-Manual_1-4-2017-FINAL?bidId=

Speed Management: A Manual for Local Rural Road Owners p. 15-22

https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/training/fhwasa010413spmgmt/speedmanagementguide.pdf

Appendix C. Funding Opportunities

Walkable Hilltowns: Funding Opportunities

This document provides a brief overview of funding opportunities for walking improvement infrastructure projects in Massachusetts.

MassDOT Funding Opportunities

Complete Streets Funding Program

- **About:** The MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program provides technical assistance and construction funding to eligible municipalities. Eligible municipalities must pass a Complete Streets Policy and develop a Prioritization Plan.
- **Amount:** Up to \$400,000 in construction funding to implement Complete Streets elements in municipal projects and up to \$50,000 in technical assistance funding in order to develop a Prioritization Plan.
- **Limitations:** only locally owned roads can be included in the Prioritization Plan. This is a 3 step process that requires adoption of a town-wide policy and creation of a detailed prioritization plan, though funds for consultant support are available.
- **Link:** <https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program>

State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

- **About:** The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a list of projects prepared yearly by The Office of Transportation Planning. This is a 5-year rolling capital plan. The list includes projects such as: sidewalks, bicycle paths, bridges, roadways, transit investments.
- **Amount:** wide variability
- **Limitations:** Long project wait times & limited awards given due to typical project scale
- **Partners:** Regional Planning Agencies, MassDOT District Office
- **Link:** <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/state-transportation-improvement-program-stip>

Capital Investment Plan (CIP)

- **About:** Programs state and federal funds to pay for long-term improvements to the transportation system. The CIP is usually a five-year plan that is updated annually. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's CIP is a one-year plan for 2021. The 2021 CIP will focus on maintaining the safety and reliability of our transportation network and investments that are currently underway or are planned to start in 2021.
- **Amount:** wide variability
- **Limitations:** long project wait times & limited awards given due to typical project scale
- **Partners:** Regional Planning Agencies, MassDOT District Office
- **Link:** <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/capital-investment-plan-cip>

Chapter 90

- **About:** reimburses cities and towns for expenditures on road-related construction projects and pedestrian facilities. Localities have the flexibility to use Chapter 90 funds for the construction and maintenance of sidewalks, curb ramps, shared use paths, street lighting, right-of-way acquisition, landscaping, and design work.
- **Amount:** wide variability
- **Limitations:** This is a reimbursement program
- **Link:** <https://www.mass.gov/chapter-90-program>

Community Compact

- **About:** The Community Compact is a voluntary, mutual agreement entered into between the Baker-Polito Administration and individual cities and towns of the Commonwealth. In a Community Compact, a community will agree to implement at least one best practice that they select from across a variety of areas. The community's chosen best practice(s) will be reviewed between the Commonwealth and the municipality to ensure that the best practice(s) chosen are unique to the municipality and reflect needed areas of improvement.
- **Amount:** ?
- **Limitations:** Must select from a list of Best Practices. Age-Friendly Communities is a listed strategy, and working on walking is an eligible project goal.
- **Link:** <https://www.mass.gov/best-practices-program>

Community Preservation Act Funding

- **About:** The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. Communities have used these funds to develop better walking conditions near senior housing, or to make recreational spaces more age-inclusive.
- **Amount:** ?
- **Limitations:** Must be able to tie walking improvement projects to the goals of the CPA.
- **Link:** <https://www.communitypreservation.org/about>

Safe Routes to School: Infrastructure Funding Program

- **About:** This component of the SRTS Program facilitates bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements to benefit students who walk, bicycle, or use a wheeled mobility device to get to school. Infrastructure projects seek to improve safety, access, and mobility for students in kindergarten through eighth grade, while also encouraging more students to walk and bicycle to school. The SRTS Program facilitates such improvements by providing funding for infrastructure projects.
- **Amount:** \$100,000-1,000,000
- **Limitations:** To be eligible for SRTS Program's infrastructure funding, schools must build a partnership with the SRTS Program's non-infrastructure program that involves education,

encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation activities. Applicants must be a partner for at least six months prior to applying.

- Link:
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/infrastructure-application-guidance-document/download>

Safe Routes to School: Signs and Lines Grant Program

- About: The SRTS Signs and Lines Program will provide design services and construction funding to a selected municipality for a low-cost infrastructure project around a public elementary or middle school. The goal of these projects is to eliminate small barriers that students encounter when walking, bicycling, or using a wheeled mobility device to get to school. Examples of a Signs and Lines Project could include the purchase and installation of new signage or pavement markings.
- Amount: Up to \$6000
- Limitations: Must be a SRTS partner school. This is a reimbursement-based funding program; MassDOT reimburses the municipality for eligible spending after the project is complete.
- Link:
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/safe-routes-to-school-engineering#srts-infrastructure-project-funding-program->

MassDOT Shared Streets & Spaces Program Funding

- About: The Shared Streets and Spaces Program was established in June 2020. The program provided grants for quick-build improvements to sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces, and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce. This program is pending renewal, but the success of the program makes this a likely prospect.
- Amount: from \$5,000 to \$300,000
- Limitations: Unsure if this funding program will continue
- Link:
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/program-overview-shared-winter-streets-and-spaces-grant-program>

Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

MassTrails Grants

- About: MassTrails provides matching grants to communities, public entities and non-profit organizations to design, create, and maintain the diverse network of trails, trail systems, and trails experiences used and enjoyed by Massachusetts residents and visitors. Applications are accepted annually for a variety of well-planned trail projects benefiting communities across the state.
- Amount: Grant amounts are dependent on the project and its needs, but generally range from \$5,000 to \$100,000 with grants of up to \$300,000 awarded to projects demonstrating critical network connections of regional significance.

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- **Limitations:** Eligible grant activities include project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails, shared use pathways, and the amenities that support trails. MassTrails grants are REIMBURSABLE, meaning grantees must first pay for expenditures themselves and then submit for reimbursement using the required documentation. MassTrails grants are MATCHING grants and require that proponents provide a minimum of 20% of the total project cost. Projects with higher match commitments will be given greater consideration.
- **Link:**
<https://www.mass.gov/guides/masstrails-grants#-masstrails-grant-program-overview->

MassDevelopment Commonwealth Places

- **About:** MassDevelopment’s “Commonwealth Places” is a competitive opportunity to advance locally driven placemaking in downtown and neighborhood commercial districts in eligible communities throughout Massachusetts. Placemaking is a collaborative process through which people in communities work together to improve public spaces and maximize their shared value. The process facilitates creative patterns of use, and leverages the local physical, cultural, and social assets that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.
- **Amount:** \$250-\$50,000, depending on grant category
- **Limitation:** Local match requirements for some grant categories. Rural projects must show direct connection to economic development.
- **Link:**
<https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/commonwealth-places/>

Executive Office of Housing and Community Development

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI)

DHCD's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) offers a range of services and assistance to communities seeking help on how to revitalize their downtowns. Planning and design funding, technical assistance. Capital funding is not provided.

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi>

Local Funding Opportunities

Municipal budgeting strategies:

- Include new sidewalk construction in municipal budget (can come from Chapter 90 funding)
- Include sidewalk repair and replacement in municipal budget (can come from Chapter 90 funding)
- Include snow and ice removal in municipal budget
- Include crosswalk re-striping in municipal budget

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- Funds received from fines for handicap parking violations can be spent on accessibility improvements (eg curb ramps, sidewalk repair, etc.):
<https://malegislature.gov/laws/generallaws/parti/titlevii/chapter40/section22g>

Other local funding sources:

- Regional Transit Authority discretionary funds - can be used for purchasing benches, shelters, and making improvements around bus stops (crosswalks, sidewalks, curb ramps)

Private Funding Opportunities

- AARP Community Challenge Grant
Link: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/>
- Local sponsorship programs to purchase benches