



The Research Bureau

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Date:

January 7, 2019

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Worcester Regional Research Bureau releases its newest brief to encourage resident involvement in walkability issues

The Worcester Regional Research Bureau (WRRB), an independent Worcester headquartered nonprofit organization focused on regional public policy research, released a new [Brief](#) today on walkability in the Worcester area, accompanied by a scorecard intended to allow residents to measure the pedestrian-friendliness of their neighborhood. The WRRB hopes these tools will encourage residents to get more involved with helping the City accomplish its goal of becoming a more walkable community.

This project was initiated after the launch of a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) effort to develop and pilot a walkability scorecard. While the report was developed with input from public and private sector experts, and focuses on improvements in the jurisdiction of local governments or property developers, any Worcester resident can use the scorecard to evaluate their own neighborhood, hopefully expanding their knowledge of the factors involved in making an area pedestrian-friendly.

“The Worcester Regional Research Bureau has been a valuable partner to the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester,” Coalition Director Casey Burns said. “Their expertise and support has improved our ability to track and understand data. We look forward to continuing to develop our relationship and aligning activities.”

While the origin of the idea was rooted in the CHIP, walkability is a timely issue for a number of reasons, including recent pedestrian fatalities that have highlighted safety issues on city streets, the influence of walkability on successful economic development, and the City of Worcester’s Complete Streets policy, of which the next step would be a Prioritization Plan that would make the city eligible for technical assistance and funding from the state. The report contains a map showing the status of Complete Streets policy initiatives in various Central Massachusetts municipalities.

“People generally have good intuitions about how walkable a neighborhood is, but providing objective measures will allow these intuitions to better inform public policy decisions, and could encourage residents to take a more active role in ongoing efforts to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment,” WRRB Executive Director and CEO Paul Matthews said. “The City of Worcester and a wide range of community organizations are making walkability a priority, so the Bureau is proud to provide this regional resource to further advances with Complete Streets and other municipal initiatives.”

The scorecard is available in printable PDF format as part of the walkability report, and in an interactive online version. As highlighted in the report, the WRRB follows a long line of community groups and activists who have been working for years on walkability issues, including in-depth walkability assessments like the recent Lincoln Street “walk audit” organized by the Green Hill Neighborhood Association and supported by WalkBike

Worcester, WalkBoston, the Worcester Division of Public Health, and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission.

To download the WRRB Walkability Brief, go to: <http://www.wrrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/WRRB-BureauBrief-Walkability.pdf>

About the WRRB:

The Worcester Regional Research Bureau serves the public interest of Greater Worcester by conducting independent, non-partisan research and analysis of public policy issues to promote informed public debate and decision-making. For thirty years, The Research Bureau has worked to protect the public interest in Greater Worcester by identifying issues, investigating impacts, and educating the public and government officials of opportunities and best practices.