

## Cambridge Named America's REAL Walking City

By Karen Klinger



For years, Boston has boasted of being "America's Walking City," but a recent study confirms what people on the left bank of the Charles River already knew: the title really belongs to Cambridge.

Not ones to gloat, Cantabrigians have been taking in stride news that Prevention magazine, together with the American Podiatric Medical Association, has proclaimed their town the country's top walking metropolis.

"Residents of Cambridge, MA, give yourselves a pat on the back--you live in the No. 1 walking city in the nation, and much of that is due to you!" the health and fitness magazine says in its April edition, noting that more Cambridge residents walk to work than in any other city in the United States, while also ranking seventh in use of mass transit and 12th in lowest ratio of cars to households. The publication also calculates that Cambridge has more parks per square mile than anywhere else in the country and ranks 15th in school density.

Alas for Beantown, it ranks only ninth on Prevention's list of top ten U.S. walking cities, behind such places as New York (No. 2), Chicago (No. 4), Washington, D.C. (No. 5), San Francisco (No. 6) and Trenton, N.J. (No. 8).

Trenton? Take that Boston--You're no Trenton!

In addition to naming the top 10 walking cities in the country, a Prevention panel of experts ranked the top 10 in each of the 50 states. In Massachusetts, Boston came in second, with the panel noting its "foot-friendly, dense core" of shops, cafes, boutiques and restaurants, high numbers of pedestrian commuters and mass transit use.

The experts used dozens of criteria to come up with the rankings, with the most heavily weighted consideration going to the percentage of residents who walk to work, the number of local, state and national parks per square mile and the safety of streets, based on violent crime per capita.

Other criteria included numbers of people who walk for exercise, schools per square mile, per capita pedestrian fatalities, use of mass transit, cars per household, air quality, cleanliness and destinations such as stores, restaurants and libraries within easy walking distance.

Cambridge also received credit for being part of a "Rails to Trails" system, with its stretch of the Minuteman Bikeway, the nation's best known and most utilized former rail track converted to a walking and bicycling trail.

It might come as no surprise that Cambridge is tops in walking (America's most popular form of exercise) considering that the city has a long-standing pedestrian committee and a program called "CambridgeWalks" that promotes the benefits of getting around on your own two feet.

Each May, CambridgeWalks puts on the month-long "Hunt for the Golden Shoes," in which a hundred spray-painted golden shoes are hidden in places people typically walk. Finders can turn them in for a free pair of walking shoes and also are entered into a drawing for a grand prize--a walking shopping spree.

For its part, the Cambridge Office for Tourism has created a sight-and-sound walking tour of the area around Harvard Square that visitors and locals alike can download to a mobile phone, iPod or computer. It features Harvard graduate Meghan Day as guide and narrator, with the voices of numerous luminaries including poet and performer Brother Blue, songwriter Eric Andersen and architectural historian Brian Pfeiffer.

It can be downloaded from the tourism office's website: [www.cambridge-usa.org](http://www.cambridge-usa.org).