

New Bedford to join national ‘Safe Routes to Parks’ pilot program

The New Bedford Department of Parks, Recreation & Beaches and Mass in Motion New Bedford have joined the national Safe Routes to Parks pilot program to review the Ashley Park area in the City’s South End.

Local park and recreation agencies across the country are using the Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework to increase safe access to parks and improve health outcomes. Developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in collaboration with the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, the framework provides evidence- and practice-based guidance to help local park and recreation agencies implement policies and practices that create safe and equitable access to parks for all.

The pilot project developed by Parks, Recreation & Beaches and Mass in Motion New Bedford will be used to review the neighborhood infrastructure in the Ashley Park area. Being chosen for the pilot project affords the City the technical advice of NRPA in ensuring safe and walkable connections to the park from the neighborhood. New Bedford will engage the surrounding neighborhood for participation and input.

Nine other cities nationwide are participating in the Safe Routes to Parks pilot program.

“Ashley Park offers a complex network of streets, businesses, schools and homes which will produce a template that we can use to evaluate other city parks in the future” said Mary Rapoza, Director of Parks, Recreation & Beaches for the City.

“We look forward to working with the surrounding neighborhood

of Ashley Park to identify barriers to park access and how we can identify tangible solutions to increase activity, play and usage”, said Kim Ferreira, program director of Mass in Motion New Bedford.

Safe Routes to Parks was developed to help park and recreation agencies break down the physical and social barriers that limit people’s access to parks. A variety of tools, including the Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework, are available to help agencies address these issues. The framework encourages the use of community engagement and partnerships when building safe routes to parks. Potential partners, in addition to park and recreation municipal leaders, include active transportation advocates; neighborhood groups; municipal planners; economic developers; municipal management and elected officials; schools; health departments; and law enforcement.

To access the Safe Routes to Parks Guide and Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework, visit www.nrpa.org/Safe-Routes-To-Parks/.