

Sidewalk Snow Clearance Policies

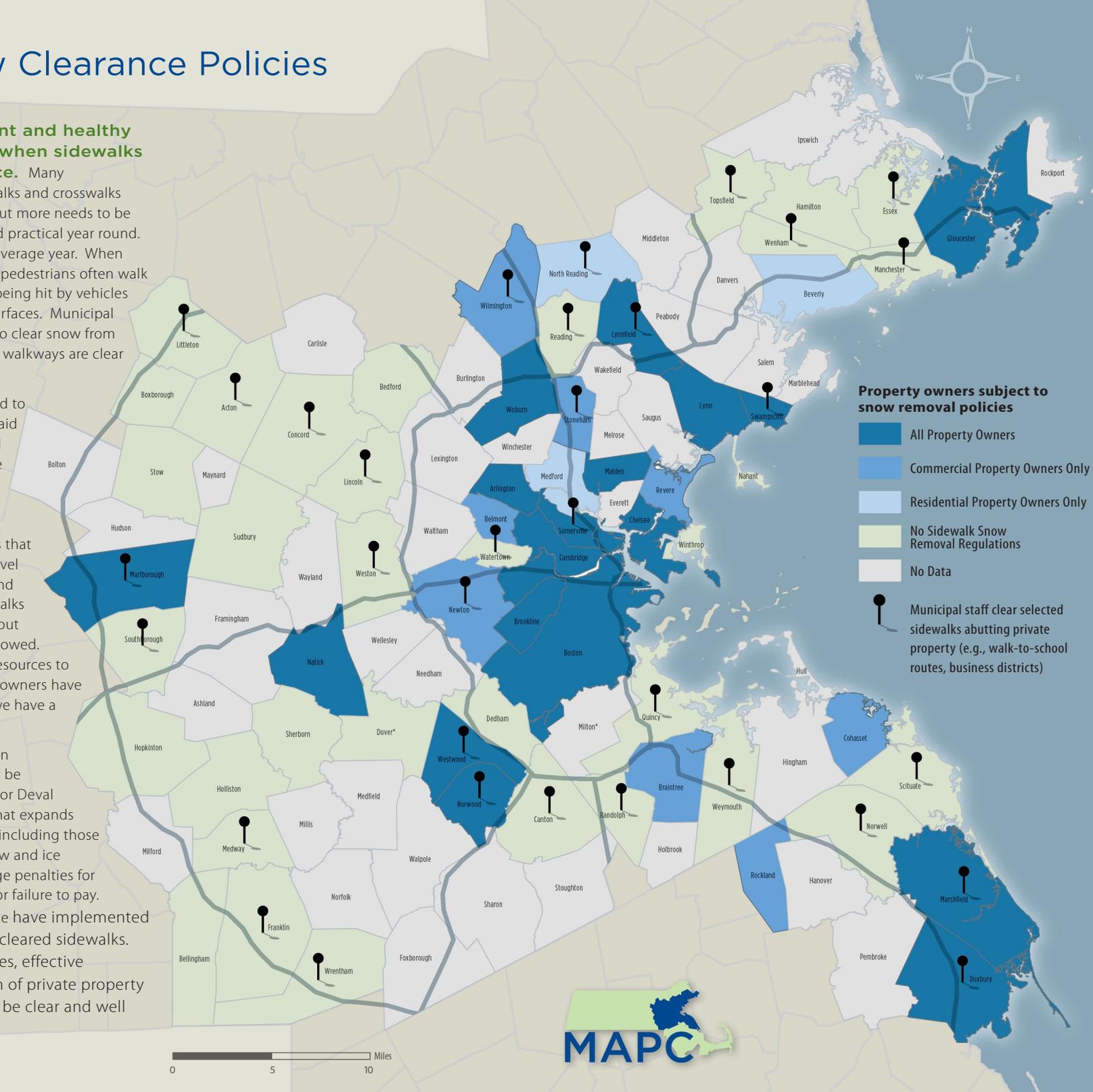
Walking can be a convenient and healthy way to get around, except when sidewalks are blocked by snow and ice. Many municipalities are building new sidewalks and crosswalks to create a safer pedestrian network, but more needs to be done to ensure that walking is safe and practical year round.

The region receives 42" of snow in an average year. When sidewalks are not shoveled or plowed, pedestrians often walk in the street, where they are at risk of being hit by vehicles driving in narrower lanes and on icy surfaces. Municipal policies that require property owners to clear snow from abutting sidewalks help to ensure that walkways are clear for pedestrians.

Of the 68 municipalities that responded to a recent MAPC survey, only a quarter said they require all sidewalks to be cleared of snow. Several municipalities require only commercial property owners to clear sidewalks, while others require it only of residential property owners. Nearly half reported having no policies that require private property owners to shovel snow from sidewalks. In many cities and towns, municipal staff may clear sidewalks near schools and in business districts, but usually after all roadways have been plowed. No municipality reported having the resources to clear all sidewalks, so private property owners have a critical role to play in ensuring that we have a year-round pedestrian network.

Even when snow removal policies are in place, enforcing these regulations may be challenging. In February 2010, Governor Deval Patrick signed the "Green Tickets Bill" that expands local authority to collect unpaid fines, including those related to sanitation, housing, and snow and ice removal. Municipalities can now charge penalties for late payments and impose sanctions for failure to pay. Some municipalities such as Cambridge have implemented websites for residents to report uncleared sidewalks. With stronger snow removal policies, effective enforcement, and the participation of private property owners, the region's sidewalks can be clear and well used throughout the year.

Data Source: MAPC Survey, 2010



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