

WalkBoston and the Public Realm

As Massachusetts' leading advocate for safe and enjoyable walking environments, WalkBoston works with local and state agencies to accommodate walkers in all parts of the public realm: sidewalks, streets, bridges, shopping areas, plazas, trails and parks. By working to make an increasingly safe and more attractive pedestrian network, WalkBoston creates more transportation choices and healthier, greener, more vibrant communities. **Please volunteer and/or join online at www.walkboston.org.**

The center of Boston's public realm is Boston Common and the Public Garden, where the pedestrian network is easily accessible on foot for more than 300,000 Downtown, Beacon Hill and Back Bay workers, shoppers, visitors and residents. These walkways are used by commuters, tourists, readers, thinkers, talkers, strollers and others during lunch, commutes, and on weekends. They are wonderful places to walk — you can find a new route every day. Sample walks:

Boston Common Loops

- Perimeter/25 minute walk – Park St., Beacon St., MacArthur, Boylston St. and Lafayette Malls.
- Central/15 minute walk – Lafayette, Railroad, MacArthur Malls and Mayor's Walk.
- Bandstand/15 minute walk – Parade Ground Path, Beacon St. Mall and Long Path.

Public Garden Loops

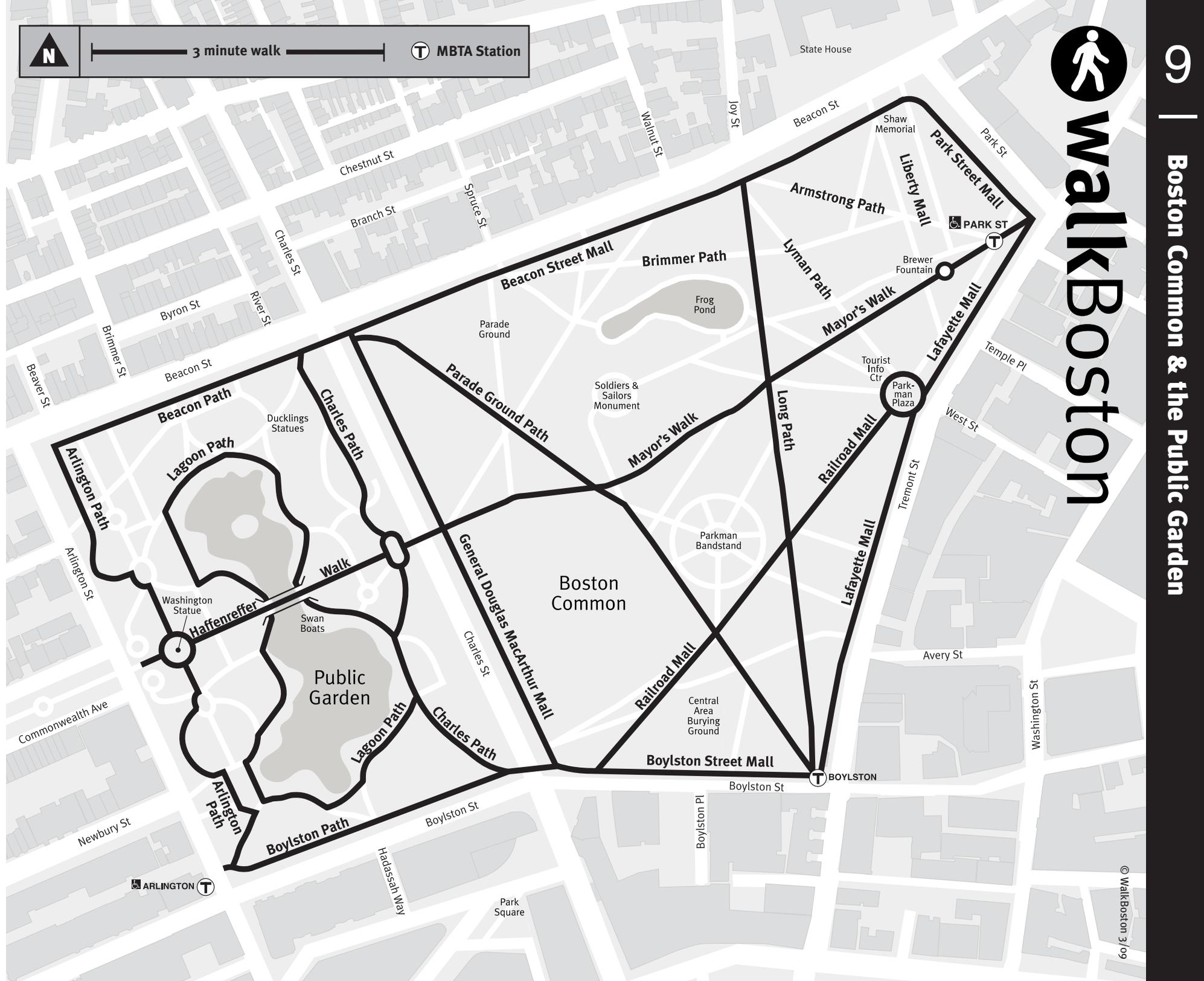
- Perimeter/15 minute walk – Boylston, Charles, Beacon and Arlington Paths.
- Swans and Ducklings/8 minute walk – Lagoon Paths.

Public Garden & Boston Common

- Mid-park/10 minute walk – Mayor's, Haffenreffer Walks.
- Perimeter Common & Garden Loop/40 minute walk – Beacon, Arlington, Boylston Paths; Boylston St., Lafayette, Park St. and Beacon St. Malls.



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Boston Common

Boston Common [1634] is America's first public park — 50 acres purchased at the edge of the colonial town for the common use as a place to train soldiers and graze cattle. For 200 years residents walked through the Common's treeless meadows on informal paths. Colonial and British soldiers camped and marched here. The grazing cows were evicted from the Common in 1830, when the city's growth surrounded the park. Starting with George Washington, all US presidents have walked its paths.

The first path to be named, Lafayette Mall, honors the 1825 visit of the legendary Frenchman who had trained colonial troops in our Revolution. This mall was a popular promenade adjacent to fashionable residences on Tremont Street. At the time a "mall" was a walkway in a park, set off by trees, shrubs, or flowers—perhaps derived from London's celebrated Pall Mall—a street along a field where pall mall [a precursor of croquet] was played.

A 1911 plan formalized the location of the Common's malls and paths, lined by trees. Prepared by landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff, the plan realigned existing paths, created new routes between focal points, and made additions to the park, such as the Parkman Bandstand and the baseball fields.

Most of the cast iron fences surrounding the Common were torn down for their metal during WWII. A parking garage was added under the Parade Ground in 1960. The Common's open space hosts the enormous crowds associated with speakers such as Pope John Paul II, displays such as First Night ice sculptures, fireworks and some 300 events annually including sports team parades, outdoor theater and festivals.

Malls/paths/landmarks

Beacon Street Mall

- Founders' Memorial honors Boston's Puritan settlers who arrived in 1630.
- Guild Steps at Joy St., an ornate entrance, honors Curtis Guild, MA governor/ambassador to Russia.
- Oneida Tablet commemorates the first US football game [1862] played by an organized team.

General Douglas MacArthur [Charles Street] Mall

- At Beacon and Charles Streets is the only remaining original gate from the 1836 fence around the Common.
- MacArthur Mall follows the original Back Bay shoreline where British Redcoats left Boston for Lexington and Concord by rowboats in shallow waters.

Mayor's Walk

- Brewer Fountain was donated by Gardner Brewer who purchased it at the Paris Exhibition of 1867.
- Soldiers and Sailors Monument is a lavish Civil War memorial with peaceful maidens [including Liberty] and military men leaving for war and [luckily] returning.
- A WWI defused mine and a memorial to military nurses are near Soldiers and Sailors Monument.

Lafayette Mall

- America's first subway is located underneath this mall, with grand entrances and vintage streetcars on display in Boylston Station.
- Raised beds above the subway are filled with flowers in spring, summer and fall.
- Monuments commemorate the Boston Massacre, the Declaration of Independence, Commodore John Barry [founder of the American Navy], Marquis de Lafayette and the establishment of the Common in 1634.
- Parkman Plaza holds Art Deco statues of Industry, Learning and Religion around a central flowerbed.
- Visitor Information Center is the start of the Freedom Trail and provides restrooms year-round.

Park Street Mall

- Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment Memorial is a celebrated sculpture by Augustus Saint-Gaudens of free Black soldiers leading an 1863 Union attack [featured in the movie *Glory*].
- WWI monument, the stairway beside the 54th Regiment Memorial, is dedicated to the "Great War."

Long Path [Oliver Wendell Holmes Walk]

- Holmes, an author whose poem "Old Ironsides" helped save the *USS Constitution*, wrote of this path.
- Frog Pond is a winter skating rink [with restrooms] and a summer wading pool. In 1848 a fountain spouted water from Boston's first reservoir, 90 feet; 100,000 celebrated.
- Site of the Great Elm where, it is said, Boston hanged pirates, witches and religious dissenters.
- Snack bars are at the Frog Pond in winter and at Boylston Station subway entrance in summer.

Railroad Mall

- Route used by Abraham Lincoln and others to walk to the former Providence train station in Park Square.
- Parkman Bandstand [1912] has concentric sidewalks surrounding a music and theater performance pavilion.
- Central Burying Ground [1754] is an early graveyard for inhabitants and, during the Revolution, British soldiers.

Parade Ground Path

- The Parade Ground is where colonial militia trained, British Redcoats camped, and Pope John Paul II spoke to 400,000 people.
- Flagstaff Hill is marked by an 1837 flagpole, moved here in 1866; in the 19th century it was the only area where smoking was allowed within the Common.

The Public Garden

Boston's Public Garden is the nation's first public botanical garden. Until 1814, its 25 acres were submerged under the waters of Back Bay. When Beacon Street was extended along the Charles River atop a tidal-power dam, the stagnant pond it created produced odors and filth upsetting to residents. In 1837 landfill began at the Public Garden. A combined conservatory and aviary was built privately and later burned, leaving the Garden in controversy. Following an overwhelming public vote in 1856 to retain the Garden as a public amenity, architect George Meacham won the design competition for the Public Garden — a \$100 award.

In contrast with Boston Common, the Public Garden has changed little since it was built. It includes fountains, memorials, statues of ducklings, and rare and beautiful trees have been planted and labeled. The heart of the Public Garden is the irregularly-shaped Lagoon with the famous swan boats and a small suspension bridge, all part of the original design. It is truly a "period piece" from the 19th century.

Paths/landmarks

Boylston Path statues

- Rev. William Ellery Channing — of Arlington St. Church
- Charles Sumner — antislavery Massachusetts Senator
- Tadeus Kosciuszko — Polish patriot aided our Revolution
- Thomas Cass — Civil War Colonel
- Wendell Phillips — abolitionist/antislavery activist

Beacon and Arlington Paths

- Ether Monument — memorializes the first successful use of anesthetic during surgery [1846] in the US.
- G. R. White statue — philanthropist.
- Two fountains — on either side of the Washington equestrian statue: a small child, a boy with a bird.
- 9/11 Garden of Remembrance — for the 200 victims of 9/11 with connections to Massachusetts.

Charles Path

- Statue of Edward Everett Hale [1913], U.S. Senate chaplain, author of *Man Without a Country*.
- Bagheera fountain [1986], representing the black panther in Kipling's *The Jungle Book*.

Lagoon Path

- *Make Way for Ducklings* statues [1987] by Nancy Schön — Fictional Jack, Kack, Lack, Mack, Nack, Ouack, Pack and Quack imagined in a real setting.
- Swan Boats and Dock — signature watercraft begun in 1877 and still operated by the Paget family.

Haffenreffer Walk

- George Washington — equestrian statue [1869].
- Foot Bridge [1867] — once the world's shortest suspension bridge.
- Seasonal flowers — annual show along this path.

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