



MAYORS INSTITUTE ON PEDESTRIAN SAFETY



Smart Growth America
Improving lives by improving communities



mayors
innovation
project

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AARP LIVABLE COMMUNITIES
AND SMART GROWTH AMERICA, THE MAYORS
INNOVATION PROJECT LAUNCHED THE MAYORS
INSTITUTE ON PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN 2023 TO HELP
MAYORS DEVELOP THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO
CHAMPION SAFER STREETS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.**



WHY DOES THIS WORK MATTER?

In 2021, the United States reached an unenviable record for the most pedestrian deaths in 40 years. In 2022, that streak reached 41 years with over 7,500 pedestrians killed, up 19% since 2019. Like other policy failures, these deaths and serious injuries disproportionately impact black and brown communities and lower-income neighborhoods. Older adults are also at greater risk, as adults age 65 and over are 50% more likely than younger people to be struck and killed while walking and represent a disproportionate share of pedestrian fatalities in 35 states.

These trends are concerning for mayors; in the [2019 Boston University Menino Survey of Mayors](#) nearly 40 percent of mayors stated that they believe travel for pedestrians in their cities is unsafe, and nearly half are concerned about cyclists' safety.

After decades of disinvestment in infrastructure for pedestrians, cities and their mayors are ready to make changes to improve the safety and quality of life for residents of all incomes, races, ages, or abilities. Importantly, the federal government is also ready to support safer streets, with more funding available than ever before for cities to remake their roads.

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"When the opportunity came here to be involved in the Mayors Innovation Project, specifically on pedestrian safety, I wanted to jump right at it because pedestrian safety is something that's very, very important to me and to the city of Milwaukee generally...having the opportunity to glean information off of mayors from across the country, I think is something that will serve not just me and my administration, but our entire city."

— Mayor Cavalier Johnson of Milwaukee, Wisconsin

WHO PARTICIPATED?

After a competitive application process, nine mayors from around the United States were chosen to participate in the inaugural Mayors Institute on Pedestrian Safety. The selection process focused on finding mayors from a variety of geographies dedicated to reducing pedestrian injuries and deaths on their streets, committed to taking the necessary tangible steps, and who were prepared to lead on this issue in their community. The final cohort included:



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- Mayor John Bauters
Emeryville, CA
 - Mayor Indya Kincannon
Knoxville, TN
 - Mayor Danene Sorace
Lancaster, PA
 - Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway
Madison, WI
 - Mayor Cavalier Johnson
Milwaukee, WI
 - Mayor Mark Freda
Princeton, NJ
 - Mayor Malik Evans
Rochester, NY
 - Mayor Tishaura Jones
St. Louis, MO
 - Mayor Caroline Simmons
Stamford, CT
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WHAT IS THE MAYORS INSTITUTE ON PEDESTRIAN SAFETY?

The Mayors Institute on Pedestrian Safety (MIPS) is a partnership between the Mayors Innovation Project, AARP Livable Communities and Smart Growth America to help mayors create communities that are safe, vibrant, and equitable for people of all ages. MIPS provides mayors the opportunity to learn from both topic experts and their peers about how to create safer streets and better protect their most vulnerable neighbors.

Over six months in 2023, cohort members met virtually with national experts and each other to share experiences and identify solutions to their pedestrian safety challenges. Each session was centered around a key area of opportunity for mayors and their communities.

“The Institute provided ideas... and empowerment. Feeling more energized to tackle these issues.”

— Mayor Indya Kincannon of
Knoxville, Tennessee

COHORT TOPICS

1. **Understanding the Pedestrian Safety Crisis** offered a deep dive into what is causing the rise in pedestrian deaths in the United States and what cities need to do to help stem the tide.
2. **Working with Governmental Partners** focused on building successful partnerships with regional and state governments in order to create a comprehensive strategy for protecting pedestrians.
3. **Funding** highlighted financial resources available to cities to improve conditions for pedestrians, from state and federal funding to best practices for local resource allocation.
4. **The Role of Land Use in Pedestrian Safety** focused on the importance of land use planning and zoning in creating walkable cities.
5. **Community Engagement and Communications** shared strategies for making the case for walkability and engaging the community in an equitable and representative way.

The cohort wrapped up with an in-person meeting in Boston, MA, an opportunity for cohort members to connect, tour innovative infrastructure designed to protect pedestrians and bicyclists, and brag a bit about their cities in the first ever pedestrian safety-focused Innovation Showcase. Throughout the event, the cohort was joined by special guests who brought a wide range of expertise and experience, including Mayor Katjana Ballantyne (Somerville, MA) and Chief of Streets Jascha Franklin-Hodge (Boston, MA).



Mayor Johnson of Milwaukee, WI presents at the Innovation Showcase.

"We share best practices on everything from better connecting zoning to street safety to ways to enhance community engagement around safety, to specific pedestrian safety projects like reducing speeding and crosswalk safety and sidewalk quality."

— Mayor Caroline Simmons of Stamford, Connecticut

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

As part of participation in the cohort, each mayor had the opportunity to receive individualized technical assistance from the experts at Smart Growth America. This allowed each city to take a deeper look at a unique challenge facing them as they work to ensure safe streets. Topics included:

- Near term solutions for when a pedestrian fatality occurs.
- Rapid intervention strategies.
- Safety evaluations to measure effectiveness of infrastructure changes.
- The economic and safety benefits of removing on-street parking and replacing it with active mobility infrastructure.
- Improving relationships with state departments of transportation.
- Pedestrian-only zones.
- Communications strategies for moving controversial projects forward.

"I appreciate the diversity of staff/ mayors at the table. Very rarely do I have the opportunity to be in such a small group exploring one topic in depth."

— **Mayor Danene Sorace of Lancaster, Pennsylvania**

"Planning for older adults in the way you design your cities creates accessibility for everybody. And it should be the way all cities are designed. When we design communities for the most vulnerable users of the systems and infrastructure we build, we're building it for everybody."

— **Mayor John Batters of Emeryville, California**



*Emeryville Greenway
Image courtesy of the City of Emeryville, Ca.*

INNOVATIONS FROM MIPS CITIES

As a peer learning network, we aim to share best practices to help communities around the country learn from one another. Our MIPS participants offered no shortage of great ideas for fostering safer streets. Examples included:

- **Emeryville** - The city will soon complete the Emeryville Greenway, a pedestrian and bicycle path that connects the north and south portions of the city. The Greenway connects residents to employment, shopping, regional transit, and other intersecting trails.
- **Knoxville** - The 400 block of Gay Street, a popular nightlife area in Knoxville, will be turned into a pedestrian only plaza at night on certain days during a trial period. City officials will use this demonstration project to test the feasibility and gauge interest in similar closures in other parts of the city.

- **Lancaster** - The City of Lancaster received \$12.7M through the federal Safe Streets for All Grant that will support the city's Vision Zero initiative. The money will help spur needed change including crosswalk upgrades, lighting, and traffic calming. Multiple complete streets projects are in the works and scheduled to be completed in the near future.
- **Madison** - The City of Madison has adopted a Complete Green Streets guide that provides city leaders and staff a framework for implementing Complete Streets while also incorporating green infrastructure considerations. This guide includes six key elements that incorporate context and the needs of various modes, identify what should be prioritized in different situations, and guide how to make tradeoffs when the project is faced with physical or financial constraints.
- **Milwaukee** - Eight blocks of Walnut St. on Milwaukee's Northwest side received a dramatic redesign to calm traffic and provide safer infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists. The project reduced the stretch of road from four lanes to two, shortened crossing distances for pedestrians, and installed protected bike lanes at the same height as the parallel sidewalk.
- **Princeton** - Mayor Mark Freda helped to establish Princeton's first Vision Zero Task Force to support the city's efforts to improve roadway design and help prevent traffic violence.
- **Rochester** - The City of Rochester was a pioneer in reclaiming space for human scale transportation. The Inner Loop East highway removal project transformed a section of sunken expressway into a complete street with bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The City is now embarking on a plan to reclaim another portion of the underutilized highway to create more developable land and reconnect neighborhoods.

"Mayors should be thinking about their cities in terms of pedestrian safety. And so I hope that more mayors get the opportunity to have this kind of experience and to really think about how to make their cities a better place for everybody."

— Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway of Madison, Wisconsin

- **Stamford** - Under the leadership of Mayor Simmons, Stamford has invested in both demonstration projects and permanent complete streets solutions, including improving pedestrian safety near Stamford High School and creating a pedestrian promenade on Lower Summer Street that will include widened sidewalks, improved streetscapes, a raised intersection, and a dedicated bike lane.
- **St. Louis** - In March, 2023, Mayor Tishaura Jones signed a Safer Streets bill for the City of St. Louis. The bill dedicates at least \$40mm in American Rescue Plan Act funds to calm and redesign dangerous streets in the coming years.

"We applied and got very lucky to get accepted to this excellent, excellent program and initiative and to get to learn from other mayors and experts on best practices for pedestrian safety in our city."

*— Mayor Caroline Simmons of
Stamford, Connecticut*



*Milwaukee's Walnut St. Project
Image courtesy of Isaac Rowlett.*

MOVING FORWARD

The Mayors Innovation Project, AARP Livable Communities, and Smart Growth America are excited to host year two of the Mayors Institute on Pedestrian Safety with a new cohort of mayors in 2024. Safer streets are possible and we look forward to working with more dedicated mayors to create thriving and active communities for everyone.

**THE APPLICATION PERIOD OPENS
ON JANUARY 19, 2024 AND CLOSSES
ON MARCH 1, 2024.**



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ABOUT US

The Mayors Innovation Project is a national learning network for mayors committed to shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and efficient democratic government. We offer high-quality content that emphasizes innovative, actionable solutions and prioritizes peer exchange.

Learn more at mayorsinnovation.org



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