

Be Active! Be Green! Recycling Bench Initiative Planning Guide

This guide includes **Criteria** and **Site Recommendations** for planning your Be Active! Be Green! Recycling Bench Initiative. If you have questions or need clarification, contact:

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Project Criteria

1. Routes should be considered corridors that are designed to connect destinations.
2. Destinations include community-gathering places, public or private.
3. Whenever possible, benches ought to be placed in a visibly continuous corridor so that people can see the next bench.
4. Benches should have a distance apart ranging from 50 ft. – ¼ mile apart.
5. Benches will be the design and materials specified by Active Living Ramsey Communities.
6. Applicants need to provide GIS coordinate of bench placement (Camera with GIS coordinates is available for use.)
7. Benches shall be accessible and without barriers, and be placed in a manner to assure use (refer to **Bench Site Recommendations**, page 3).
8. Each bench shall be installed in the design outlined by the contract.
9. If pavers option is selected, quotes to be used for the pavers must come from the list of quotes supplied by Active Living Ramsey Communities. At least half the quotes must be from the **Nature and Environment** quotes listed in the **Be Active! Be Green! Recycling Bench Paver Guide**.
10. Grantees will be responsible for:
 - a. Concrete slab, installation, and pavers if selected.
 - b. Funding for the local match, which can be public, private, or a combination of sources. For example, a city may decide to fund the local share in its entirety or solicit donations from individuals or organizations to sponsor benches.
 - c. Constructing the concrete slabs and installing the benches and optional pavers according to grant specifications.
 - d. Ongoing maintenance of each bench site.
 - e. All approvals, permits, access permissions and other necessary actions to allow construction of the bench area.

Bench Site Recommendations

The **Be Active! Be Green! Recycling Bench Initiative** is intended to support physical activity and movement, and to give people a chance to rest on the way to destinations in their community.

1) PLANNING A PATH

When planning a “path to health,” consider where people live, and where they might be going (destinations). Think about where they may want to walk for physical activity and recreation. You may want create bench routes along a path in a park or lake or to connect:

- ❑ apartments
- ❑ bus stops
- ❑ churches
- ❑ coffee shops, restaurants
- ❑ community centers
- ❑ health care facilities
- ❑ libraries
- ❑ neighborhoods
- ❑ parks
- ❑ retail stores
- ❑ schools
- ❑ senior housing

Use the list above to help plan your route, but keep in mind that your destinations will be site specific. Your goal is to connect people with common destinations or create others opportunities for physical activity. Your route can support walking as a form of transportation or physical activity as a form of recreation. The elderly and people with young children or a disability should be taken into consideration.

2) PLACING THE BENCHES

- Once you have a route, you’ll also want to consider how to position the benches. Comfort and safety are the biggest factors in how much people will use the benches.
- The space behind a sidewalk (and further from the street) is often in city right-of-way and so the city can site a bench there.

PLACING THE BENCHES (CONTINUED)

- People feel safer and more relaxed the further away they are from traffic. Between the sidewalk and street can be too close for comfort.
- Face the bench in the direction of what's interesting to look at, like other people, scenery, architecture, anything that moves or changes, including traffic. A bench placed behind the sidewalk next to buildings facing the street gives seated people the ability to see pedestrians and buildings on both sides of the street.
- Keep the bench away from things that are unpleasant to be near (like fast traffic).
- If an ideal spot for a bench is not within city right-of-way, a property owner can agree to allow a bench to be sited there. Agreements must be in writing and accompany the application.
- Keep travel zones for pedestrians or vehicles clear.

3) OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Someone sitting on a bench can feel nervous if people are walking directly behind them. It is better to avoid having a bench backing up to a sidewalk unless you can leave a bit of a buffer.
- In an area with a crime problem, consider placing benches near lighting. You can also try to place benches within sight of an occupied building with ground floor windows and doors.
- If a community group or the city is willing to landscape, consider deciduous shade trees, or planted flowers around the bench site.
- Buffers between benches and traffic increase comfort and safety. A row of parked cars, bushes, a grassy boulevard, flowers, raised planters, etc. can all form a buffer.

Thank you to the following individuals for providing general recommendations on bench sites:

Don Burrell, OKI Regional Council of Governments

Bob Chauncey, National Center for Bicycling and Walking

Brian Fellows, Arizona Department of Transportation

Michael Holm, City of Denver Public Works

John Z. Wetmore, Perils for Pedestrians