

Bostonians Will Be Able To Charge Their Gadgets With Solar Powered Smart Benches

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Would you rather sit on a dumb bench, which just holds your butt off the ground, or a smart Soofa, which can both hold your butt off the ground and charge your phone with solar power?

We've got smartphones, smart watches, and smart homes, and soon, at least if you live in Boston, smart benches.

A new initiative in Boston is bringing Soofas, solar powered benches that can not only charge your gadgets, but also monitor air quality and sound levels, to several city parks in a pilot program funded by Cisco.

The Soofas, called "smart urban furniture, were developed by [Changing Environments](#), a spinoff of MIT Media Lab, and are capable of charging mobile gadgets via two USB ports, thanks to a solar panels and the free energy of the sun. And while they're charging phones and powering Facebook updates, they're also gathering environmental data about air quality and noise levels nearby, and uploading them to a public map online.

Click here to watch "MAKER CHATS: solar benches in Boston Parks":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KxIz-0XMx4>

"Your cellphone doesn't just make phone calls, why should our benches just be seats?" - Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh

Beyond just serving as a charging point for the public, and gathering what could be important environmental data, these solar powered benches may also serve to boost awareness of the viability of renewable energy and other environmental initiatives to people who might not otherwise be exposed to them. The Soofas are also part of a bigger mission, which aims to change urban environments into "social, sustainable and smart" spaces.

The City of Boston wants to know where they should install the rest of the Soofas, and is asking the crowd to [pin a location on their map](#) to help them decide on locations. And because each Soofa gets a name, the team behind the benches is [asking for your input on bench names](#) as well.

If you think that having these solar powered smart benches installed at a location near you would be an asset to your community, the [Soofa team says](#) they are "happy to consider installing Soofas in your city, at your campus, boardwalk or playground," and there's a contact form on the bottom of the website to put in a request for one.
