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Hub of the fitness universe?

As the Boston Athletic Association and sneaker giant New Balance assemble teams of elite runners, they're giving Greater Boston an opportunity to flesh out an identity beyond so-called eds and meds. However attractive the area might be to graduate students and medical researchers, it hasn't received much attention lately for drawing hardcore athletes. The \$10,000 mountain bike atop a \$500 used Subaru is a stereotype of Colorado, not Massachusetts. As a recent Globe story noted, elite runners flock to the Rockies, or to the Nike campus in Oregon, but Boston's cachet as a hotbed for would-be Olympic runners seems to have faded since the 1990s. But that trend may be reversing.

Boston regularly ranks among the country's fittest cities. Boston, Cambridge, and surrounding communities have lower obesity rates than nearly every other US metro area. An outdoorsy culture and well-developed fitness infrastructure can be economic assets: Last year, the Globe profiled **Global Rescue**, a firm that extracts travelers from dangerous situations



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Runners warm up the day before the Boston Marathon.

abroad. The company set up shop in Boston because New England's transportation infrastructure complements its varied geography — the mountains of New Hampshire aren't far afield from Logan Airport — giving Global Rescue's strikingly athletic employees both mobility and good opportunities to train. For its part, the BAA's pitch to elite runners focuses on the balance of urban amenities with a variety of workout facilities and running routes.

Boston's traditional selling points can't hurt, either: Type A athletes bent on shaving fractions of seconds off their race times have lots to learn from an ample supply of Type A scientific and medical experts.