

Overarching Programming Principles

Park Programming

Programming includes any and all activities that occur on the Esplanade, whether organized or spontaneous, active or passive. That is, programming is what *happens* on the Esplanade. The Esplanade should host a variety of programs to accommodate individual and group uses, and should capitalize on the park's location between city and water.

1) The Esplanade parkland should:

- a. Be safe, attractive, and enjoyed and used year-round;
- b. Be a regional, even a national or international resource;
- c. Be an attraction easily accessible to the broad public for their leisure and enjoyment
- d. Support universal access;
- e. Host a diverse mix of activities – passive and active, planned and spontaneous – which attract both adjacent and regional residents, as well as visitors to Boston. Programs and events fall into several categories, including*:
 - i. Water-based;
 - ii. Health and fitness;
 - iii. Culture;
 - iv. Family and community;
 - v. Entertainment.

*Specific programming examples and ideas identified to date are listed in Attachment I.

2) Its programs and activities should:

- a. Increase citizen's and visitor's sense of connection and commitment to the park and enhance the visitor experience along the following dimensions:
 - i. Appreciation of nature (greenspace, water, landscape, vistas, animal-life);
 - ii. Social interaction;
 - iii. Quiet reflection;
 - iv. Cultural appreciation;
 - v. Relaxation;
 - vi. Education;
 - vii. Fitness/exercise;
 - viii. Sense of community/connection;
 - ix. Expansion of experiences for urban dwellers;
- b. Make the utmost and best use of its waterside location and resources, with water-related activities given both implementation and siting priority;
- c. Locate activities that are not dependent on the waterside or vistas closer to the Storrow Drive edge of the park.

3) New programs should not:

- a. Duplicate activities already available in the parkland;
- b. Generically replicate activities available in the surrounding areas;

- c. Individually or collectively, put undue or unreasonable stress on neighborhood residents or the natural resources of the park.

4) Large events should:

- a. Be limited to appropriate areas of the park;
- b. Be managed through a permit process, whereby appropriate usage and oversight is consistently regulated;
- c. Require event sponsors and/or production companies to provide funds or in-kind donations to repair any damage to the park that occurs as a result of the event;
- d. Minimize the need for additional permanent structures or the loss of greenspace; any new structures must be appropriate and thematically connected to the Park, its history and setting.

Overarching Programming and Design Principles

Site Planning and Landscape Design

The Esplanade is a park with tremendous historical significance, providing an urban, water-side respite for residents and visitors for a century. Its particular location should be celebrated and emphasized, and landscape alterations should improve both the ecological health of the park and the experience of its users.

1) Intent

- a. Create a world-class, 21st Century water front park along the Boston edge of the Charles River Basin;
- b. Provide a therapeutic, universally accessible environment for all;
- c. Respect the good work of the past:
 - i. Restore and update the major historic features (granite landings, architectural features, etc.);
 - ii. Renovate plantings to reflect and complement Arthur Shurcliff's planting concepts and material selection, but update to meet contemporary environmental needs and park usage demands;
 - iii. Insure ongoing maintenance;
- d. Restore the ecological balance of the city, the Charles River, the Muddy River tributary, and the parkland;
- e. Develop an ongoing turf, shrub, and tree management and maintenance program;
- f. Respect needs and desires of abutters, balanced with meeting larger regional needs:
 - i. Provide easy access into the park;
 - ii. Provide shade and screening in the park as appropriate, but balance with the maintenance of pleasant views from the parkway and abutting buildings.

2) Site organization

- a. Recognize that the parkland extends to the original seawall – and thus includes Storrow Drive;
- b. Recognize that key adjacent gateway points and public nodes are integral components of the Esplanade;
- c. Orient gateways and public nodes to the water and connect them by pleasant public pathways;
- d. Site the most actively programmed spaces so that they are readily accessible via public transit and safe, efficient pedestrian links to the rest of Boston;
- e. Promote easy access to the water and to water-based activities;
- f. Separate thru-traffic (vehicles, bicycles, joggers) from park users and orient this traffic toward the Storrow Drive side of the Esplanade;
- g. Separate service vehicle and activity areas from public areas and public pathways, and guide vehicles directly from Storrow Drive into flexible and secure, designated service areas.

3) Site Improvements

- a. Ground plane materials and design should be improved for both active surfaces (turf, play surfaces, walking/jogging paths, thruways for bikes, service areas) and edges;
- b. Site lighting and installation features so that they do not to disrupt important views;
- c. Preserve and ensure proper placement of the historic Shurcliff pavilions and benches.

Overarching Programming and Design Principles

Architecture

There are several, specific-use buildings on the Esplanade today, yet many are underutilized. Still more are unused or are in need of substantial structural and aesthetic improvements. Architectural features should enhance the park visitor experience, and should complement the Esplanade's location and landscape.

1) Intent

- a. Buildings on the Esplanade support the needs of the parkland; activities and programs and the comfort and service needs of the park visitor.

2) Priorities

- a. Restore, reuse, and/or enhance historic elements first (i.e. Hatch Shell, Community Boating Center, Locks and Dam Buildings);
- b. Bring historic architectural features up to date to meet present and future needs and uses;
- c. New facilities should be kept to a minimum and consume as little land as possible, and should :
 - i. Have a strong *raison d'être* with an exciting and justifiable program;
 - ii. Be designed to reflect the park's context and history as well as the contemporary world;
 - iii. Strive to be a green/sustainable structure;
 - iv. Embody "High Design:" rather than overshadowing the surrounding parkland, it aims to complement it;
 - v. Generally be sited away from the water and towards Storrow Drive so as to, when possible, provide a buffer to traffic impacts;
 - vi. Be flexibly designed to accommodate a variety of uses and changes over time;
 - vii. Integrate public support services (restrooms, drinking fountains, information, etc);
- d. Buildings should be sited and programmed to encourage movement through the length of the park;
- e. Facilities should be open, maintained, and staffed year round;
- f. Provide sufficient lighting to assure safety and increase visual appreciation of structures, landscape, and art.

Overarching Programming and Design Principles

Circulation, Access, and Wayfinding

The Esplanade is a place for people, overwhelmingly on foot and needing safe access to various activities within the parkland, into the city, to public transit, and to other parks. It is also a thru-corridor for vehicles, bikes, runners moving through the park to off-Esplanade destinations. The park must accommodate these varied users who travel to, in, along, and through the park at different speeds.

1) Intent

- a. Provide universal access, eliminate barriers to foot, bike and wheelchair traffic to and within the Esplanade, and provide organized pathways for all users;
- b. Vehicular use in and adjoining the parkland should be restricted and prevented from adversely impacting the Esplanade;
- c. Restore the parkland and expand its boundaries to recapture real estate eroded by the road.

2) Laws and protections

- a. The park is protected by section 4(f) of the National Environmental Policy Act;
- b. The park is a National Historic Landmark;
- c. The park was granted City of Boston Landmark status in 2009.

3) Storrow Drive Parkway

- a. Storrow Drive is a Parkway that lies within a park, and is subject to the needs of the Esplanade and its users;
- b. No ground or trees should be lost to vehicles or roadway development.

4) Neighborhood connections

- a. Provide robust, direct access to neighborhood streets and shopping districts;
- b. Better incorporate Boston-side access points and footbridges (Science Park, Arlington St, et al) and Storrow Drive traffic islands into the Esplanade parklands;
- c. Protect neighborhood assets and direct traffic to major thoroughfares and away from local streets; be mindful of unintended traffic consequences;
- d. Encourage the use of the Mass turnpike for high demand vehicular accessibility;
- e. Link the Esplanade to other parks and greenways (e.g., the Fens and the Public Garden) seamlessly and in a park-like manner;
- f. Improve connections from the Esplanade along the river in both directions.

5) Parkway configuration today

- a. Storrow Drive today consists of 4 lanes, 2 in each direction, with elongated entrance and exit ramps;
- b. Strongly emphasize that the roadway design and posted speed is 30 or 40 mph;
- c. Capacity is less important than a disciplined design speed;
- d. Safety requires that the posted speed be strictly enforced;
- e. Design standards are those of a Parkway (e.g., 10' wide vehicle lane widths);

- f. Improve parkway safety by managing vehicular speed and by eliminating pavement conditions that encourage speeds above the posted limit;
- g. Parkway prohibits use by trucks and busses.

6) Priorities for parkway modifications

- a. Parkway capacity, whether for thru-traffic or entry/exit situations, should not be increased;
- b. Do not make roadway enhancements that will encourage greater vehicular speed;
- c. Enforce posted speeds so as to reduce vehicular noise;
- d. Grade separations for vehicles are to be discouraged as they speed up the road, increase traffic capacity, and require more real estate;
- e. Design the parkway for average traffic conditions, and avoid peak-hour design methodology;
- f. Reduce the amount of pavement devoted to entrances and exits and restore the land to park use at key location;
- g. Eliminate redundant exit and entrance ramps;
- h. Consolidate traffic lanes to reduce roadway width, restore lost parkland, and relocate traffic lanes away from the river's edge;
- i. Allow pedestrian and bicycle use of the roadway on holidays.

7) Areas of opportunity for parkway reclamation

- a. Eye and Ear Parking lots near Teddy Ebersol's Red Sox Fields;
- b. Access ramps at Charles Circle;
- c. Bowker Overpass;
- d. Berkeley and Arlington Street on/off-ramps.

8) Parking

- a. Discourage and diminish parking on the Esplanade;
- b. Reclaim parking areas from lands that were formerly part of the Esplanade;
- c. Restrict access to events by private cars and service vehicles;
- d. Protect trees and root mass;
- e. Allow parking on the Storrow Drive during events.

9) Pedestrian and bicycle access

- a. Access at several key locations is to be strengthened by increasing pathways and by reducing pedestrian conflicts with vehicles; key locations include:
 - i. BU Bridge;
 - ii. Charles Gate (Muddy River/Bowker Overpass);
 - iii. Massachusetts Ave;
 - iv. Dartmouth St;
 - v. Arlington St;
 - vi. Charles Circle;
 - vii. Blossom Street;
 - viii. Leverett Circle;
- b. Widen the Esplanade at its pinch points (e.g. near BU, at the Lagoon, under the Longfellow Bridge, etc);

- c. Provide separate paths for ambling walkers and faster moving joggers and bicyclists, but do not do so at the expense of grassed areas;
- d. Determine appropriate use by motorized bicycles and Segways;
- e. Provide routes on Charles River-spanning bridges that make loops around the lower basin possible.

I0) Water access

- a. Restore existing docks and make them ADA accessible;
- b. Provide clear pathways to docks.

I1) Wayfinding

- a. Create an attractive, integrated system of directional identification and regulatory signs:
 - i. On the Esplanade to key destinations, identification and regulatory signs;
 - ii. To the Esplanade from other Boston sites and destinations (e.g. MOS/ MGH/ Hotels/ Public Garden/ Charles Street/ Cambridge/ MBTA/ Copley Square, etc.).
- b. Integrate technological wayfinding:
 - i. Develop a comprehensive, online mapping service for the park;
 - ii. Create smart-phone appropriate maps of the Esplanade.

**Attachment I
Program Ideas**

1) Water-based activities

Existing

- a) Community Boating—sailing, kayaking, windsurfing, rowing
- b) Gondola Rides- Expand
- c) Model Sailboat Club- Expand
- d) Fishing Program- Expand

Possible New Programs

- a) Swimming at Lee Pool or off Charlesbank area
- b) Docking privileges for excursion boats
- c) Additional fishing spots
- d) Fly-fishing classes
- e) Art barge (seasonal art displays)

2) Health & fitness activities:

Existing

- a) TERSF programmed and informal programs
- b) Community Boating
- c) Jogging/walking/skating/biking paths
- d) Tennis
- e) Fitness Par course
- f) Dancing at the Hatch Shell

Possible New Programs

- a) Walking & running clubs
- b) Ice skating classes or clubs
- c) Bike rental
- d) Participatory classes in yoga, tai chi, exercise and dance
- e) Therapeutic/healing garden or walk connected to healthcare facilities

3) Cultural activities:

Existing

- a) Concerts
- b) Landmark Orchestra Movies

Possible New Programs

- a) Permanent exhibit explaining the history of the park and the park system
- b) Science, nature, and history Learning programs, lectures or walks

4) Family and community-based activities

Existing

- a) Community Boating
- b) TERSF sports programs
- c) Play areas
- d) Friday Flicks Movies
- e) Plays
- f) Picnicking

Family and community-based activities (*cont.*)

Possible New Programs

- a) Team games (e.g. board game tournament, bocce, wireless scavenger hunt)
- b) Area for chess and game tables
- c) New play spaces as needed (minimize number, carefully oversee design)
- d) Ice sculpture contest
- e) Learn-to-swim programs

5) Other ideas

- a) Support passive recreation
- b) Create reflective landscaped areas for reading, sitting, through landscaping, re-siting benches, etc.
- c) Create sitting areas other than benches
- d) Create indoor/sheltered sitting areas that can be used in inclement weather
- e) Running/walking/skating/biking paths need to be improved, delineated and well-signed
- f) Create small venue areas (e.g. 50-100 people for a poetry reading) through landscape manipulation
- g) Improve the Storrow Drive edge of the Park so it is more acceptable as a location for activities
- h) Need storage space for equipment that supports ongoing activities (e.g. model boats, chess pieces, bocce balls, chairs, bikes)
- i) Possible development of Charlesbank area for fishing, docking, river swimming
- j) Lee Pool development for swimming, possible multi-purpose space for exhibits, games, lectures
- k) Charlesbank area development for multipurpose space, exhibits, visitor center
- l) Create picnic space
- m) Create concessions and bathrooms to support all activities
- n) Create central reception point or points with posted information about events and activities

*Programming includes all events and activities occurring in the Park

Note: This is an preliminary draft document meant for workshopping purposes.