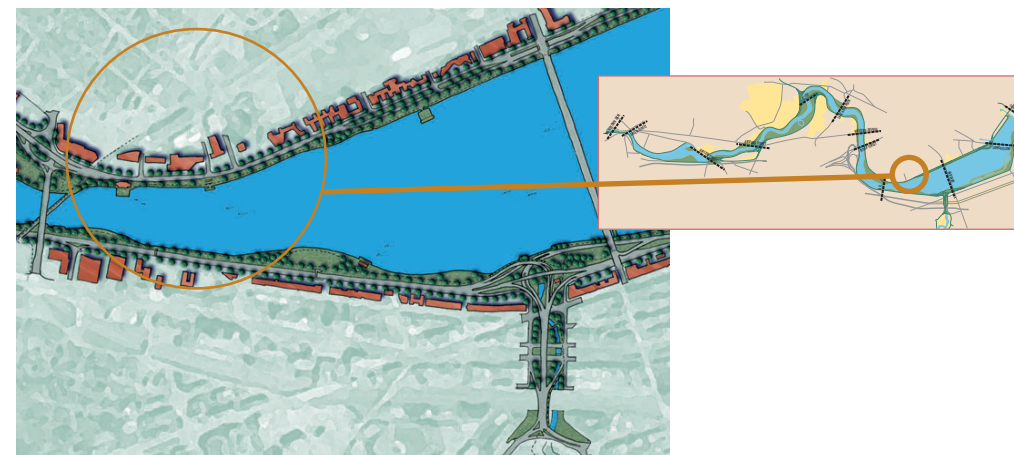


- **Install new pumps to help prevent flooding in the underpass.**
- **Develop a formal landing, similar to those at the Esplanade, on axis with MIT's Killian Court.** The original plan for the MIT campus envisioned such an overlook, and it was recommended in the 1928 *Report on Proposed Improvements of the Charles River Basin* (the "Harriman Report"). The seawall was built years before the dam and creates a significant vertical separation between the pathway and the water level. Grand steps down to a landing at the river would overcome this separation and establish the missing link between Killian Court and the river. This initiative might well attract the support of MIT alumni.
- **Close the entire eastbound parkway during weekends from March/April to October/November in a manner similar to Riverbend Park** further west on Memorial Drive (see Section 6N). The parkway closure period could be coterminous with daylight savings time—the first weekend in April to the last weekend in October—to reinforce public awareness. This lane closure would allow both the median and the parkway to be utilized. The westbound lanes could accommodate two-way traffic by eliminating parking during this period. Consider a cooperative arrangement with MIT for public parking during special events.



## MIT HOUSES (3N)

*Memorial Drive from the end of the seawall to Boston University Bridge*

### KEY RESOURCES

- *Memorial Drive* (1897)
- *West end of the seawall* (circa 1899)
- *Boston University Bridge* (1928)
- *William J. Reid Overpass at Boston University Bridge* (1939)
- *DeWolfe Boathouse, Boston University* (1999)

### HISTORY

The Charles River Embankment Company, incorporated in 1881, began building the Cambridge seawall in 1882 and filling the marshes for a residential neighborhood that would rival the recently completed Back Bay. Unlike the Back Bay, this neighborhood of fine houses was to have had a grand boulevard fronting on the Basin with splendid views of the Boston skyline. Demand for house lots never developed, however, and the Charles River Embankment Company went bankrupt. The abrupt ending of the seawall just west of the MIT rowing pavilion and the transition

to a sloping bank is a testimony to financial woes and the construction of the historic Charles River Dam in 1910. The construction of the dam and establishment of a constant water level made seawalls unnecessary. The cost of the dam, it was argued, would be offset by the savings realized by forgoing seawall construction.

**EXISTING  
CONDITIONS AND  
ISSUES**

This segment of the reservation—with its panoramic views of downtown Boston, sunny southern orientation, and broad expanse of bank—has tremendous potential. Currently its eroded condition and exposure to traffic discourage use.



PARKWAY TREES SUFFER FROM COMPACTED SOIL AND ERODED SLOPES.

This stretch of shore is one of the most degraded planting areas in the reservation. The few remaining parkway trees are dead or dying. Many of the cherry trees in the grove just west of the seawall are dead. Crowds watching the rowing races in the spring when the ground is soft have trampled and severely damaged the turf near the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Storm water running off the parkway has eroded the bank into a concave profile. The beautiful granite blocks that armored the shoreline have collapsed over the years and now tip toward the water at a steep angle.

The broad bank has a dual path system, promoting separation of foot and wheeled traffic, a goal of this master plan. However, the poor condition of the two pathways discourages use. The existing paved path lies too close to the road and is exposed to traffic. Its six-foot width is insufficient to handle daily pedestrian and bicycle traffic and creates multiple conflicts between users. The existing informal dirt path along the water is uneven and unkempt.

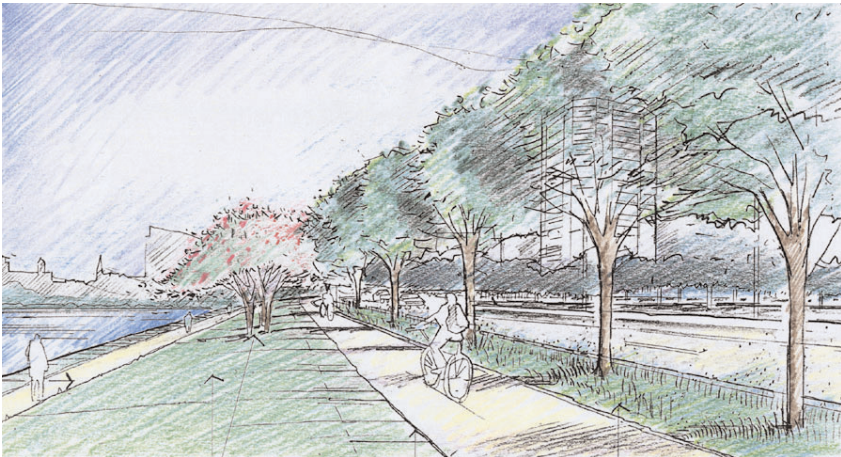
**GOALS**

- **Maintain the view across the Basin to the Boston skyline for pedestrians and drivers.**
- **Provide opportunities to get to the shoreline.**
- **Improve the quality of the active pathways while providing protected passive areas for quiet use.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Regrade the bank and fill the hollow profile. Replant the turf.**
- **Widen the paved path along Memorial Drive to eight feet and the planting strip to a minimum of six feet.**  
Convert the lower pathway along the shoreline into an eight-foot- wide, soft-surfaced dedicated walking/jogging path. The surface of all soft paths should be properly crowned and drained and the material stabilized to avoid erosion.
- **Replant a continuous line of parkway trees next to Memorial Drive and establish informal groupings of trees along the river's edge** to frame views of the river and the Boston skyline while maintaining an open visual character.
- **Reset the granite blocks along the river** to provide users an opportunity to get to the shoreline and to re-establish its historic edge.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES INCLUDE ADDITION OF A SECOND PATH ALONG THE RIVER; REGRADING AND REPLANTING OF THE SLOPE; WIDENING OF THE UPPER PATH; AND ALONG MEMORIAL DRIVE, A PROGRAM TO PLANT NEW TREES SELECTIVELY TO AVOID INTERFERING WITH VIEWS.







TOP: PROPOSED TREATMENT OF THE MIT FRONT (LOWER PHOTO SHOWS EXISTING CONDITIONS). THE POLE MARKS THE FINISH LINE OF THE LOWER BASIN ROWING COURSE.

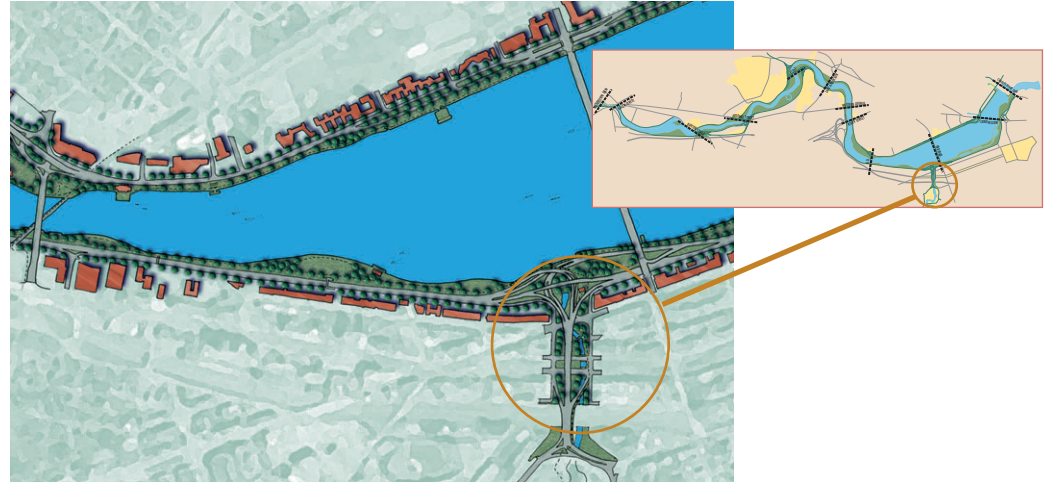
- **Add carefully placed benches set back from the lower pathway.**

Many people will use the sloping ground for sitting and lying down if new turf is provided.

- **Develop a public landing.** A landing will provide a place for boats to tie up and for people to

get onto the water. Care must be taken to avoid conflicts with rowers.

- **Create a terraced viewing area in front of the finish line for rowing sprints** to prevent spectators from damaging turf using some of the granite slabs along the shoreline. Install interpretive signage and information about river sports here.
- **Construct an overlook at the west end of the seawall.** Incorporate seating and lighting into such a structure, along with interpretive information on the history of boating along the Charles.
- **Discourage growth of the flock of feral geese,** which gather between this segment and Magazine Beach,. Provide signage explaining what feral birds are and advising against feeding them.



## CHARLESGATE (3S)

*Bowker Overpass between Charles River and The Back Bay Fens.*

### KEY RESOURCES

- *Storrow Drive (1951, 1955)*
- *Bowker Overpass (1966)*

### INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

Charlesgate follows the course of the Muddy River. It is the link between the two most important open space systems in the Boston area—the Charles River Reservation and the Emerald Necklace. The Fens, designed in the 1878 by Frederick Law Olmsted, had a tremendous influence on Charles Eliot, who apprenticed with the Olmsted firm from 1883 to 1885.

Charlesgate has had to accommodate many roadway and railway crossings throughout its history. Few areas of the Basin have undergone so many changes. Olmsted viewed Charlesgate very much as an extension of the Fens (it was originally known as the area’s “Beacon Entrance” ), but it was transformed a few years later by a more formal treatment of