

GOALS

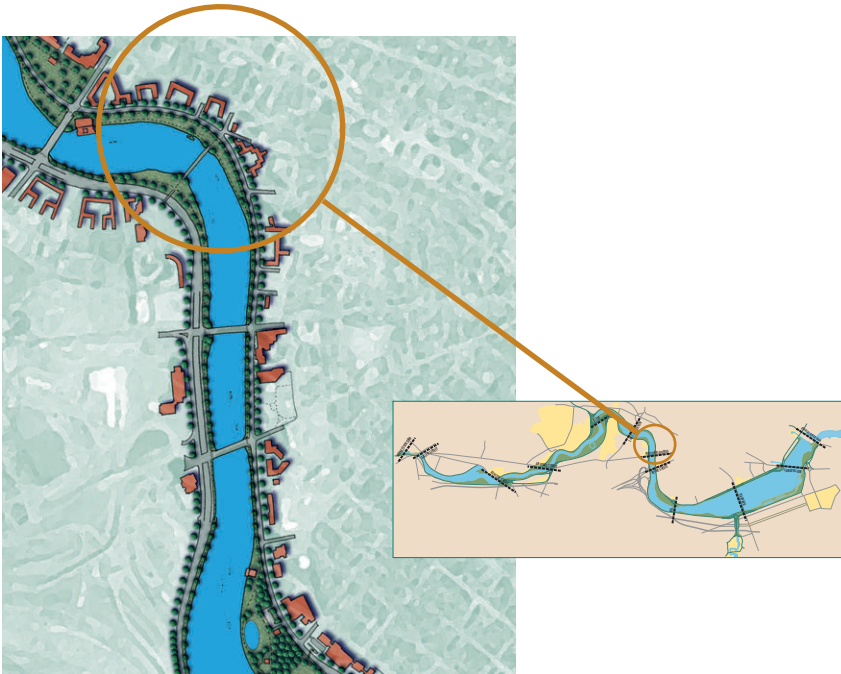
- Preserve the open, grassy character of the banks and the views of the surrounding campus buildings.
- Reinforce the landscape character of the parkway.



THE JOHN W. WEEKS BRIDGE (CENTER) CROSSES THE CHARLES BETWEEN THE HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL (LEFT) AND HARVARD COLLEGE HOUSES (RIGHT).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Coordinate improvements with the campus master plan for the Harvard Business School and identify initiatives that Harvard University can undertake.
- Add curbing and parkway trees to **Soldiers Field Road**. With the London planetrees in decline on the opposite bank, consider establishing a new line of London planetrees in front of the Harvard Business School, while maintaining views to and from the main courtyard.
- Substitute more appropriate, pedestrian-scaled lights for the floodlights at the **John J. Weeks Bridge**. Indeed, all of the bridges across the Charles should have special lights to emphasize these historic and highly visible river crossings. Establish an MDC standard. Restore historic lighting fixtures and provide lighting of the bridge itself to highlight its architectural splendor.
- Repaint and improve plantings at overpass that carries pedestrians to and from the John W. Weeks Bridge above Soldiers Field Road.



# HARVARD COLLEGE HOUSES (6N)

*Memorial Drive between Western Avenue Bridge and the Anderson Bridge*

KEY RESOURCES

- *Weld Boathouse* (1907)
- *Memorial Drive* (1908)
- *London planetrees* (1908)
- *John W. Weeks Bridge* (1927)

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

This segment was among the last open space improvements carried out to fulfill Charles Eliot’s vision for a parkway along the Basin. The London planetrees planted at that time have survived for more than a century.

**EXISTING CONDITION AND ISSUES**

This stretch of riverfront has a very strong character defined by open grassy banks, towering trees, the courtyards and fences of Harvard University, and views of the Weeks Bridge and the Harvard Business School. This segment and the next one upstream (7N) are closed to automobile traffic on Sundays in the spring, summer, and fall, transforming it into Riverbend Park.

Riverbend Park grew out of a citizen initiative led by Isabella Halsted and a dozen other advocates in the early 1970s. Her creative advocacy—including the temporary closure of Memorial Drive for one Sunday in

May 1975 as a demonstration project—led to an effective partnership between the MDC and the Friends of Riverbend Park. With the support of private funding for additional park staffing the MDC agreed to close the parkway on Sundays from 11:00 am to 7:00 pm beginning the last Sunday in April and ending the second Sunday in November. This arrangement was formalized by the state legislature in 1985, and the MDC assumed the costs of the closings. Riverbend Park exemplifies good land management and sets the standard for the flexible use of parkways and other park facilities. Informal surveys show that people come from communities well outside of Boston to enjoy this unique recreational resource.



FROM APRIL TO OCTOBER, THE MDC CLOSES MEMORIAL DRIVE TO VEHICULAR TRAFFIC TO CREATE RIVERBEND PARK. (THE JOHN W. WEEKS BRIDGE CAN BE SEEN ON THE LEFT.)

The parkland between the Weeks Bridge and the Weld Boathouse is wide enough to support large gatherings and celebrations, such as the Cambridge River Festival. Consequently, the turf takes a beating and is bare in places. The soil was disturbed when an interceptor sewer line was laid in the mid-1970s and has never been properly restored.

**GOALS**

- **Restore and protect the open-lawn character of this segment of riverfront for unstructured uses.**
- **Preserve views to the bridges and the Harvard Business School campus across the river.**



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- **Expand the season for Riverbend Park by four weeks.** Begin it two weeks earlier in the spring and end two weeks later in the fall. *Note:* This change would require an act of the legislature to amend the earlier act of 1985.



THIS LONDON PLANETREE SAPLING WAS PLANTED IN APRIL 1998 AS A FIRST STEP IN THE RENEWAL OF THE STAND OF PLANETREES ALONG MEMORIAL DRIVE.

- **Study the feasibility of extending the season for Riverbend Park on Sundays year-round.**
- **Restore the soil and turf of the open area in cooperation with Harvard University.** The quality of the turf and the level of care should be comparable to John Fitzgerald Kennedy Park.
- **Protect and sustain the row of London planetrees** (see segment 7N and pages 182-184).
- **Provide park amenities, including a public drinking fountain, emergency and public telephones, bicycle racks, and a public bathroom.** These amenities should be provided, maintained, and operated in cooperation with the Harvard University boathouses.
- **Consider the construction of a boat landing for short-term use downstream of the Weeks Bridge.** Given the open character of the landscape, extreme care should be taken to locate and develop a low-profile design for such a landing.