



## KENNEDY PARK/ LONGFELLOW PARK (7N)

*Memorial Drive between Anderson Bridge and Eliot Bridge*

### Key Resources

- *Memorial Drive to Ash Street (1897)*
- *London planetrees (1897)*
- *Memorial Drive from Ash Street to Fresh Pond Parkway (1949)*
- *Eliot Bridge (1951)*
- *John Fitzgerald Kennedy Park (1987)*

### Existing Condition and Issues

Longfellow Park extends along one side of the river, the Harvard athletic fields along the other. The park was established to protect the sight lines from the Longfellow House to and across the river. The towering embrace of the London planetrees, the sweeping curve of the embankment, and the broad expanse of green lawn down to the water's edge are character-defining features of this segment. In the spring, the riverbank is

covered with hundreds of blossoming bulbs planted by volunteers. As they die back, however, weedy growth springs up at the edge of the water. The banks along this segment are cut back in the fall, but are soon choked again by false indigo, jewelweed, and other invasive species.

The trees along Memorial Drive are in decline due to soil compaction, automobile damage, a 1978 sewer project that severed tree roots, pavement that limits the passage of water to roots, soil with high salt content, and a high water table that may be drowning the roots of some trees.

The playground between Mt. Auburn Street and Memorial Drive, one of the few in the Middle Basin, is well maintained by volunteers. It is located next to a residential neighborhood and has ample parking on Mt. Auburn Street. Volleyball is popular in Longfellow Park, but because courts are not moved around, bare spots have appeared in the turf.

The signals at the intersection of John F. Kennedy Street and Memorial Drive are among the few along the river to have an automatic dedicated pedestrian phase. Vehicles queuing in the intersection to make left turns conflict with pedestrian movements. Pedestrians find it difficult to cross Memorial Drive to get to the river between the Anderson Bridge and the Eliot Bridge because of traffic speed, limited driver sight lines, and the lack of pedestrian crossings. Many elderly people living in the



vicinity no longer attempt to cross the parkway, nor do they walk the narrow, six-foot path because of potential conflicts with bicyclists and skaters.

Joggers wishing to avoid the paved pathways have seriously eroded the bank and compacted soil around tree roots. In other places, tree roots have heaved the path pavement, creating a dangerous surface.

## Goals

- **Preserve the open character of the banks and the landscape character of the parkway.**
- **Create a comfortable and safe pathway along the river.**
- **Provide safe pedestrian access to the reservation.**

## Recommendations

- **Where insufficient space makes it impossible to separate paths, widen the existing multiuse path to a minimum of eight feet.** In some places, this may require filling the shore slope in order to build



COURTESY CAMBRIDGE BIKE COALITION



THE PHOTO SHOWS THE EXISTING CONDITION OPPOSITE KENNEDY PARK;  
THE SKETCH SHOWS A SECTION WITH THE PROPOSED CHANGES.

up enough level ground. Do not place fill over the root zone of healthy London planetrees. Where space is sufficient, consider a secondary path at the water's edge for pedestrian use. This would require rebuilding the shore armoring, but once done this action would provide a clean, mowable edge and preserve the expanse of grassy bank. With

- **Create opportunities to sit by the water,** including an overlook for watching boats as Eliot recommended for a site near the Anderson Bridge.

- **Remove one westbound lane of traffic on Memorial Drive.** Given the low peak-traffic volumes, removal of a lane west of Sparks Street would have minimal impact on traffic. The resulting area would widen the parkland and allow better pathways.

- **Locate a new pedestrian crosswalk and yield sign at Sparks Street** to make it possible to cross Memorial Drive safely.

- **Improve the pedestrian crossings where Fresh Pond Parkway meets Memorial Drive** by adding clearer markings.

- **Improve the pathway between the Eliot Bridge and the Cambridge Boat Club.** The existing pathway is undefined as it passes through the parking lot for the boat-houses of Buckingham, Brown & Nichols and Cambridge Boat Club.

- **Realign the handicapped ramps at the intersection of Memorial Drive and John F. Kennedy Street** to meet the crosswalks.

- **Implement a London planetree replacement and management program** to fill gaps and extend the rows of trees (see page 182).

- **Reduce the visual intrusion of apartment buildings by extending lilac plantings and by adding new trees between Memorial Drive and Mt. Auburn Street.**

- **Maintain the view corridor from the Longfellow House to the river basin through selective tree removal.**

- **Plant the islands at the intersection of Memorial Drive and Fresh Pond Parkway with special ornamental species** to mark this gateway to the Upper Basin.



SKETCH, TOP, SHOWS PROPOSED CHANGES;  
PHOTO, BELOW, SHOWS THE EXISTING  
CONDITION WEST OF LONGFELLOW PARK.