

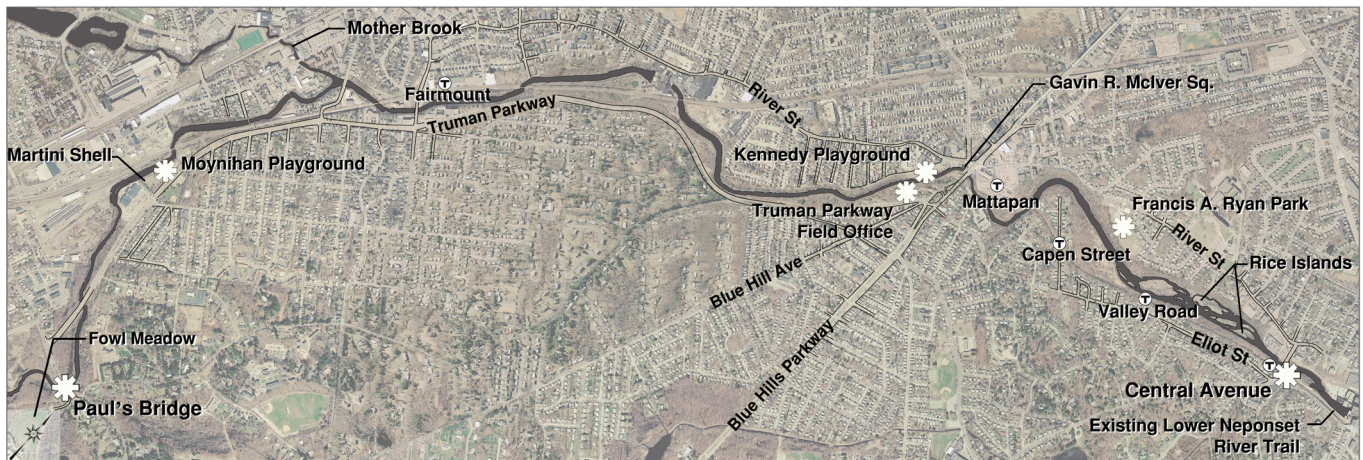


## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In the late 1880s two of the founders of the Metropolitan Park system, Charles Eliot and Sylvester Baxter, alarmed by the hasty pace of Boston’s expansion, laid out an idea for a vast, interconnected system of parks, nature reserves, and scenic roadways in and around the city to ensure that a wide range of natural and recreation lands would be preserved and enhanced for the future. “This plan builds upon the course set by Eliot and Baxter. The course stresses the principles of wise land stewardship, of preserving sensitive wildlife habitats, of restoring damaged natural areas, and of opening portions of the outdoors for public use and enjoyment. It is a course that has stood the test of time, and one we can count on to guide us in the future.” In 1893, Eliot wrote: “Nature appears to have placed these streams just where they can best serve the needs of the crowded population gathering fast upon them.”

*from A Master Plan for the Lower Neponset River Reservation, Metropolitan District Commission, 1996, page 1*

In 1998, the master plan for the Lower Estuary of the Neponset River Reservation (Phase I) was completed, and much of that plan, up to Central Avenue, has been implemented. The Lower Neponset Trail runs from Central Avenue in Milton to the Port Norfolk Neighborhood in Dorchester where connecting roads and trails lead to the mouth of the River at Dorchester Bay.



Project Area

Pope John Paul II Park and the recently completed Neponset Park are beautiful and popular additions to the regional open space network.

Building on the success of the earlier Phase I Plan, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) embarked upon a master plan for a major section of the Neponset River Reservation extending from Central Avenue on the Boston/ Milton line to Paul's Bridge in Hyde Park. This plan provides access to the River, a continuous trail connecting to the Phase I trail, five MBTA stations and several private developments along the River, as well as a wide range of recreation opportunities for the adjacent neighborhoods and region.

The plan is a long-term plan that will be implemented over a ten to fifteen year period. However, implementation of some elements will begin immediately. Equally important, the plan will enable the DCR to more effectively "weigh in" on current development decisions - to work closely with developers and regulatory agencies to identify opportunities for public/private partnerships as well as potential impacts to the Reservation.

## Project Goals

This Master Plan was developed to respond to the following goals:

- Continue development of a greenway corridor and a continuous multi-use pathway system throughout the Reservation that links this section of the Neponset River Reservation and its surrounding communities (e.g. Boston and Milton) with the Lower Neponset River Trail.
- Restore River banks, edges and channels to promote both increased recreational use and the river's ecological health.
- Protect and enhance the wildlife habitat by improving natural areas.



- Strengthen the open space network along the River by identifying key parcels required for acquisition or easement, and key connections to other public open space systems.
- Determine areas most suitable/desirable by location and type for recreation, education and preservation.
- Identify partnership opportunities with businesses, community groups and owners along the River to obtain funding for capital improvements, maintenance and operations.
- Develop a public participation and volunteer framework to help care for the Reservation.
- Develop guidelines and techniques for management and operation of the parkland.
- Develop early action park improvement projects and maintenance and operation priorities.

## Public Process

The Plan is the result of a public process which began with the Phase I Master Plan in the 1990s. The public process for this Phase II Plan has been carried out over the course of five months. Three public meetings were held:

- March 8, 2006: Public Meeting to discuss Existing Conditions Inventory & Analysis
- April 26, 2006: Public Meeting to discuss Master Plan Alternatives
- June 14, 2006: Public Meeting to discuss Recommended Master Plan

A newsletter summarizing the project progress was widely distributed prior to each meeting.



Large display boards at the public meetings provided attendees with detailed information about the plan.



Attendees at a public meeting discussing the plan.

At each meeting, display boards, arrayed around the room, provided information on the project analysis and recommendations to date. Following a brief presentation, attendees broke up into smaller groups. Each group responded to a series of questions and annotated maps to illustrate their ideas and comments. Following the smaller group discussions, each group presented a summary of the discussion to the entire audience. These responses provided valuable guidance for the project team. A summary of the comments is included in **Appendix A**.