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Christian A. Herter Park Master Plan

Boston, MA



Prepared for



Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Prepared by HALVORSON Tighe&Bond STUDIO

Christian A. Herter Park Master Plan





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dcr Massachusetts Department of Massachusetts Conservation and Recreation

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Christian A. Herter Park Master Plan

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Part One Executive Summary



Photo credit: DCR

1.1 | Purpose and Goals

Background

Located in the Brighton neighborhood of Boston, Christian A. Herter Park is at once a riverfront respite from urban life, critical habitat, and an important green transportation link. Moreover, the park is heavily programmed—in addition to informal art classes, drum circles and family reunions, Herter Park is DCR's most permitted site, with numerous charity events each year.

Given the park's importance to the neighborhood and the region, DCR undertook a master planning process to analyze and make recommendations for improved circulation and accessibility, stormwater management and green infrastructure, utility infrastructure, and programming, particularly for the Herter Center and the Amphitheater. DCR wants an integrated layout for parking, recreation programs and special events to enhance visitor experience, reduce routine maintenance and improve ecosystem function.

Herter Park at a Glance

- Approx. 56-acre open space, one of the region's most heavily used and programmed parks.
- First developed as The Charles River Speedway in 1899 - one of the earliest parks of the Boston's Metropolitan Park System.
- 1960s site redevelopment formed the basis for today's park.
- Designated in 1974 as Christian A. Herter Park.



Figure 1-1. Herter Park location within the urban context. Map source: DCR Stewardship Map application.

The park's origins as the Charles River Speedway (1899) are associated with the visionary creation of the Boston Metropolitan Parks System - the vast network of protected open spaces and parkways that extends throughout Boston and the surrounding communities. The Speedway was part of the Charles River Reservation, which transformed the former industrial waterfront and filled the tidelands with a continuous string of parks along the dam-controlled Charles River Basin. After the original use of the Speedway, horse cart racing, fell out of fashion, the park was redeveloped in 1959 - 1960, and has not seen substantial changes since then. The park was designated as Christian A. Herter Park in 1974, in honor of the former Massachusetts governor, United States secretary of state, and champion of the environment.

Technically, Herter Park extends from Eliot Bridge in the east to Richard T. Artesani Memorial Playground, which was designated in 1962. For the purposes of the Master Plan, Herter Park is the 60-acre project area extending from Arsenal Street Bridge to the parkland downstream of Eliot Bridge.

Purpose and Goals of the Master Plan

Today, our parks—and the Herter Park landscape in particular—are faced with new demands and challenges. The DCR is committed to meeting diverse needs as we improve landscape management and ecosystem function. The re-imagining of Herter Park is an exciting opportunity to continue to build on DCR's tradition of stewardship of great public open spaces for the present and future generations.

DCR's Vision for Herter Park

diverse riverine habitat.

Goals for Herter Park

The Master Plan Goals set the stage for a vibrant, sustainable, accessible, and wellcrafted public park that unites multiple opportunities: recreation, cultural activities for all ages, connectivity, infrastructure, and ecological restoration.

- recreation along and adjacent to the riverbank.
- of the Charles River Reservation.
- programs for the Herter Park facilities.

Dynamic, accessible and sustainable public recreation open space set in a rich and

• Enhance public access to outstanding opportunities for passive and active

• Restore a healthy riverbank and parkland ecology that provides for stable shorelines, enhanced wildlife habitat, improved stormwater management and water quality, beautiful vistas, climate resiliency, and a safe, stable tree canopy.

• Steward parklands that reflect the cultural values and the over 100-year history

• Provide a framework to guide future capital restoration projects and vital

• Improve the visitor experience, wayfinding, and visitor comfort amenities.

• Engage a cooperative network of stakeholders who both enjoy the recreational opportunities and provide volunteer assistance in managing the park's assets.

1.2 | Master Planning Process

The Herter Park Master Plan was a collaborative effort, born of community, stakeholder, and agency input through a well organized and meaningful public engagement process. Finding consensus among groups and individuals with diverse priorities and points of view helped develop a plan with widespread support.

Collaboration Between the DCR and the Consultant Team

The process was driven by a close collaboration between the DCR and the consultant team that included:

- Site walks (6) with DCR team members and community representatives
- Weekly coordination meetings with the DCR and consultant's project managers
- Coordination meeting with DCR specialists on • specific issues
- Preparation of public presentations •
- Agency-wide internal review of consultant's work • to provide feedback and direction

Public Engagement Process



Figure 1-2. Socially-distanced site walk with the consultant staff and DCR representatives.

The public engagement process in the early stages of planning provided insights into the user's experience, cherished aspects of the park, as well as areas that could use improvement. Later in the process, the public provided feedback on the proposed recommendations, which helped shape the final Master Plan. Because of the ongoing pandemic, the majority of public meetings were done remotely, using the Zoom platform; the participants had the opportunity to comment live during these meetings and send written comments to the DCR afterwards.

- Working Group Meeting # 1- on 03/31/2021- created with the assistance from the Massachusetts State • Representative Michael J. Moran, the Working Group included neighborhood residents.
- Stakeholder's Meeting #1 on 05/18/2021 included an invited group of organizations such as the current permit holders (Paddle Boston, Head of the Charles Regatta), and partner organizations (Charles River Watershed Association, Charles River Conservancy, Friends of Herter Park); and others.
- Public Meeting #1 on 06/10/2021- open to the general public.
- Working Group Meeting # 2 on 09/15/2021.
- Stakeholders Meeting #2 09/23/2021. •
- Public Meeting #2 on 09/29/2021. •
- On-site meeting with the Friends of Herter Park and DCR to discuss the Amphitheater on 10/15/2021.
- DCR engagement with the Charles River Community Garden, Herter Community Garden, and Pollinator • Network representatives on 11/1/2021, 12/1/2021, 12/2/2021, and 03/24/2022.

Public comments and notes from the meetings can be found in the Appendices of this report.

1.3 | Summary Recommendations

The following is a summary of the principal recommendations for Herter Park. The recommendations complement the goals that guided the plan development, which were affirmed throughout the Master Planning process. Their implementation will contribute to fulfilling the vision of Herter Park as a dynamic, accessible, and sustainable public open space set in a rich and diverse riverine habitat.

The summary of recommendations below is organized by the goals / guiding principles that they help support. More specific explanation of recommendations is provided in later sections of this report.

Enhance Access to Herter Park

Proposed public access improvements are among the most transformative aspects of the master plan, and include the Soldiers Field Road road diet, new access points across the road, multi-modal improvements along the park frontage, circulation improvements within the park, and various accessibility improvements.

- Soldiers Field Road 'Road Diet' follows the recommendations of the 2020 'DCR Parkways Master Plan':
 - Eliminate the westbound lanes, replacing them with extended parkland and improved shared use path.
- Reconfigure the eastbound lanes for two-way traffic, keeping the eastbound lane largely within its present width (33'-wide) and striping to accommodate two-way traffic with 10'-wide vehicular lanes as well as 5'wide bicycle lanes.



Figure 1-3. Soldiers Field Road proposed road diet concept

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- Reconfigure the former 6'- wide Soldiers Field Road sidewalk / Dr. Paul Dudley White (PDW) Greenway along the Herter Park frontage into a 12'-wide shared use path, separated from the vehicular traffic with the former tree-lined median. At the intersections of the PDW Greenway and parking lot driveways, utilize recessed crossing design, per the 'MassDOT Separated Bike Lane Planning & Design Guide.'
- Merge the eastbound service lane from Western Avenue with the new layout of Soldiers Field Road by removing the guardrail and median where feasible.
- Create new crosswalks at Everett Street, Telford Street, and from Smith Playground to Herter Center.
- Consolidate the Soldiers Field Road network of slip lanes at the approach to Eliot Bridge into a signalized intersection. Maintain the existing eastbound slip lane along the Harvard University fields, as pedestrian use of that corner is not anticipated.
- Reconfigure the Main Entry
 - Create a tree-lined new main entry drive across from Everett Street, with a signalized intersection.
 - Reconstruct Artesani Parking Lot to be parallel to Soldiers Field Road, and in doing so reclaim valuable open space between the parking lot and the river. Maintain the present number of parking spaces (230).
 - Eliminate the "jug handle" former driveway entrance. Retain a paved path for pedestrian access that can be used for alternative boat trailer egress during Head of the Charles Regatta.



Figure 1-4. Proposed plan of the Central Area, featuring the new main arrival, pedestrian corridor from Telford Street to the river, and realigned paths around the event / picnic lawn and Herter Community Garden.

Circulation Improvements within the Park

- Create a pedestrian corridor from Telford Street along Artesani Playground to Charles River, to increase connectivity to the residential neighborhoods.
- In the West Area, after the removal of the existing garage, realign the path in front of Henderson Boathouse to relieve the current sharp curve for improved visibility.
- In the West Woodland, improve the informal footpaths network with stable and accessible stabilized stonedust surfacing, or boardwalks in wet areas.
- Between Artesani parking lot and the existing boardwalk, realign the paths to define a large high-use lawn, and a smaller river-view lawn between the path and the Herter Community Garden.
- Between Herter Center and Canoe & Kayak rental facility, realign the paths to define a large high-use lawn and create a more graceful experience through the park.
- Near Eliot Bridge, create a more generous turnaround loop for bicyclists of all abilities. Past the bridge, regrade the path for an accessible slope up to the Eliot Bridge approach sidewalk.
- Key Accessibility Improvements
 - Provide multiple accessible curb ramps from the Artesani parking to the surrounding paths.
 - Regrade the overly steep approach to Herter Amphitheater to achieve accessible slope.
 - At Herter Amphitheater, provide an accessible permanent stage, accessible spaces at the top and bottom of the audience area, and accessible portable toilets near Herter Center. Reconfigure the steep slope of the audience area with a series of stepped terraces.
 - Regrade and realign the overly steep path east of Herter Community Garden to achieve accessible slope.
 - At both community gardens, widen the main circulation, provide stable accessible surfacing, raised beds, and other improvements to accommodate users of all abilities.
 - Provide an elevator within Herter Center.

Provide Outstanding Opportunities for Passive and Active Recreation Along and Adjacent to the Riverbank

Passive and Active Recreation Recommendations include: high use / event lawns; relocation of the High School rowing into the Herter Center and adjacent proposed boat storage halls; proposed new fishing dock, defined access points to the water, and improvements to the West End informal path network.

- **Define and Improve High-Use Event Lawns** •
 - Improve designated lawns with grading, soil and drainage enhancements, so that they can provide a more convenient and resilient area for high-use activities and events. One lawn is proposed in the Central Area, and two in the East Area. The generous size of these lawns will allow flexibility for large-scale events, in particular the Head of the Charles Regatta.
- Relocate High School Rowing into Herter Center and New Adjacent Facilities •
 - Create a "touch-down" space for the High School rowing program on the ground floor of Herter Center • with storage, unisex bathrooms, and offices.
 - On the upper floor, the multi-purpose room is to be shared between the rowing program during the • program season, and by the Amphitheater center and other organizations off season.
 - Create new boat storage facility which could consist of one or two storage halls for seasonal storing of rowing shells, as well as limited and orderly site storage.
 - Create a new 200'-long dock for the rowing program, and for public use at other times.
 - Complement the new rowing center with dedicated bus dropoff and boat trailer parking.
- Create a New Fishing Dock at the West End, adjacent • to the BWSC outfall. Collaborate with the BWSC on the reconstruction of the deteriorated outfall.
- Create View Terraces defined access points to the water for viewing, fishing, or dock access for water race events.
- Improve the Dirt Paths in the Woodland area to • create accessible trails for passive recreation.



Figure 1-5. High School rowing center - preferred site layout alternative.



Center.

Figure 1-6. East Area plan featuring improved passive recreation lawns and the proposed high school rowing facilities at Herter

Restore a Healthy Riverbank and Parkland Ecology that Provides for Stable Shorelines, Enhanced Wildlife Habitat, Improved Stormwater Management and Water Quality, Beautiful Vistas, Climate Resiliency, and a Safe, Stable Tree Canopy.

- Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan:
 - Reduce the volume of runoff that reaches the sewer system or the Charles River, through the reduction of impervious surfaces and the use of bioretention and vegetated swales. The Soldiers Field Road diet alone could contribute 4.6 acres of new porous green space.
 - Reduce peak flow through the use of subsurface detention for water quality rain events.
 - Improve quality of stormwater discharge into the river: Reduce total suspended solids (TSS), total Phosphorus (TP) reduction, and discharge temperature to meet state-required targets.

Underground Corrugated Metal Pipe Detention Basins for Off-site Stormwater						
Parking Lot	Pipe	Pipe	Total	Total Storage	Watershed for 1"	
Description	Diameter	Length	System Area	Volume	Water Quality Depth	
	(IN)	(FT)	(SF)	(CF)	(AC)	
Artesani	30	23,580	87,012	164,046	46.19	
Lot 3	30	4,680	18,046	35,457	9.76	
Lot 2	30	3,200	12,403	24,306	6.69	
Lot 1	30	3,520	13,628	26,702	7.35	

Location:	Parking Lots - Bioretention for On Site Stormwater Treatment					
ВМР	Total Phosphorus (TP) Removal Rate	Starting TP Load	Amount Removed	Remaining Load		
Weekly Regenerative Air/Vacuum Street						
Sweeping	0.08	1.00	0.08	0.92		
Semi-annual Catch Basin Cleanouts ¹	0.02	0.92	0.02	0.90		
Bioretention (Rain						
Garden) ²	0.60	0.90	0.54	0.36		
P	roposed Total Phosph	64%				
	³ Target Phosph	60%				

³Target Phosphorus Removal

Location:	Parking Lots - Underground Detention for Off Site Stormwater Treatment					
	Total Phosphorus (TP)					
BMP	Removal Rate	Starting TP Load	Amount Removed	Remaining Load		
Hydrodynamic Separator ⁴	0.05	1.00	0.05	0.95		
Jellyfish Filter ⁵	0.59	0.95	0.56	0.39		
I	Proposed Total Phosph	61%				
	³ Target Phosp	60%				

Target Phosphous Removal

1. TP Removal Rates from Appendix F, Massachusetts MS4 General Permit - Requirements of Approved Total Maximum Daily Loads

2 Rain Gardens Range From 30% to 90% TP removal per MassDEP Stormwater Handbook

3. Target Phosphorus Rates Per MassDEP, Total Daily Load for Nutrients in the Upper/Middle Charles River, Massachusetts

4. TP removal rates from Appendix B NHDES Stormwater Manual Volume 2

5. Jellyfish Filter TP Removal Rate per NJCAT Technology Verification of the Jellyfish Filter

Figure 1-7. Estimates of detention capacity for underground corrugated metal pipe system, and total phosphorus removal for the proposed BMPs.

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- meadows and more varied vegetation over lawns.
- other BMPs, this system can meet the TSS and TP reduction targets.

Invasive Species Management

- Vegetation Management Plan (CRVMP).
- stabilizing the banks.

Introduce Native Pollinator Meadows

- Create a new Pollinator Network garden along the moat at the Herter Center memorial garden.
- interpretive or Pollinator Network signage.



the reclaimed land into pollinator meadows.

• For the treatment of surface stormwater, prioritize green infrastructure and nature-based solutions such as grading and soil improvements, vegetated swales, bioretention areas, and increasing the proportion of

For treatment of off-site stormwater, subsurface storage and treatment structures under Artesani and the other parking lots could provide a total storage volume of over 250,000 cubic feet. In combination with

• Perform larger-scale ecological restoration in areas with established invasive species, in particular the West Area around the wetland and in the woodland. Use methods recommended by the Charles River

Along the banks, control invasive species and the aggressive non-indigenous False Indigo. Replacement plants should be low-growing species as recommended by the CRVMP, to preserve river views while

 In the West Area after the invasive buckthorn, phragmites, and garlic mustard have been removed, establish a new native pollinator meadow, using seed mixes as recommended by the CRVMP.

• In the East Area, downstream of the Eliot Bridge, create a new pollinator meadow, complemented with

Figure 1-8. The East / Eliot Bridge Area proposed transformation includes consolidation of the roadway network and converting

Maintain the Tree Canopy for Climate Resiliency and User Comfort •

- Maintain existing trees with periodic pruning and other tree care as necessary. Pruning may be required • where trees pose hazard to park users and facilities, to maintain tree health, or to maintain views and vistas.
- Minimize impact to existing trees from new construction and events. If trees have to be removed due to new construction, replace them with new trees. Events should be required to provide tree protection such as fencing and ground protection mats if event activities could not be kept away from tree root zones.
- Plan for tree succession. Replace trees that needed to be removed due to damage or decline. Use native species as recommended by the CRVMP.

Steward Parklands that Reflect the Cultural Values and the over 100-year History of the Charles River Reservation.

Key recommendations are the rehabilitation of the mid-century architectural gem Herter Center as an active yearround use, and highlighting the historic and cultural dimension with proposed Speedway and Metropolitan Boston Arts Center (MEBAC) interpretive content.

Rehabilitate Herter Center for Active Year-Round Use

- Touch-down area for High School rowing on the ground floor, including storage, unisex accessible restrooms and lockers.
- Upper floor to provide support for the Amphitheater, along with a multi-purpose space used by the rowing program during the rowing season, and by the Amphitheater operator and others at other times.
- Implement high energy efficiency BMPs; include photovoltaic arrays on the roof for on-site energy generation, while ensuring that visually they do not diminish the cultural integrity of the building.
- Provide year-round use public restrooms on the ground floor.



Figure 1-9. Herter Center plan diagram of proposed program uses.

Create a Historic Interpretation Areas for the Speedway and MEBAC

- with any found artifacts from that era.
- vision and former theater structure.

Maintain a Unified Image with the Other Charles River Reservation Parklands

- Continue to use the historic Shurcliff bench as a recognizable feature of the Charles River Reservation. Design modification of the bench to add armrests is recommended for inclusive design.
- Use a standard DCR palette of ornamental street lights along the reconfigured Soldiers Field Road.
- Use a unified system of standard DCR signage and wayfinding elements.
- Restore the Moat
 - reduce the mosquito nuisance to the Amphitheater and other park users.



invasive species infestation with new meadows and improved woodland

• Create the Speedway interpretive area in the West End. Realign the paths in the West End to trace the original configuration of the Speedway loop in this area. Feature interpretive signage along the path, along

Create the MEBAC Interpretive Area near Herter Center. Feature interpretive signage for the original 1950s

• The moat and the island are unique character-defining features of Herter Park. Dredging the moat to its original depth and circulating and aerating the water will allow a healthier aquatic environment and

Figure 1-10. West Area realigned paths trace the former Speedway loop. The ecological restoration will replace the present

Provide a Framework to Guide Future Capital Restoration Projects and Vital Programs for the Herter Park Facilities.

- Update Herter Amphitheater and Island to meet the needs of visitors and performers, and to better integrate the island with the rest of the park.
 - Provide a welcoming and accessible route to the Amphitheater: locate accessible parking, provide a welcome sign / kiosk to announce programming, and regrade the path from the bridge to the upper plaza. Provide adequate lighting.
 - Construct a new pedestrian bridge as a second means of access and egress from the island.
 - Reconfigure the steep amphitheater slope into lawn terraces, with accessible seating on the top and bottom levels.
 - Construct a new accessible stage with protective canopy and truss-mounted stage lighting.
 - Provide designated areas for concessions, and screened portable toilets for visitors.
 - Install a performer's 'green room' with restroom near the stage.
 - Locate additional amphitheater support functions on the directly accessible upper floor of Herter Center.



Figure 1-11. Herter Amphitheater and island improvements plan.



- Add a new shade structure at the entry into the Wading Pool area to provide much needed protection from the sun for lifeguard staff and pool patrons waiting to enter.
- **Rehabilitate Herter Center and create new High School Rowing Center** storage halls see summary recommendations on previous pages.
- Improve the Park Electrical and Lighting infrastructure
 - infrastructure ownership and control to DCR.
 - solar powered ornamental roadway lights.
 - Extend the site light infrastructure west of Artesani Playground towards the West End.
 - Utilize solar fixtures where feasible and not shaded by the trees.
 - Provide EV charging stations at Artesani parking lot.
 - Provide photovoltaic array for on-site energy generation on the roof of rehabilitated Herter Center.
 - In compliance with *Executive Order 594*, all Herter facilities should be Net Zero. https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-594-leading-by-example-decarbonizing-and-minimizingenvironmental-impacts-of-state-government.



Position the new Aquatics facility near the existing comfort station (public restrooms), to provide some needed separation away from the Wading Pool and Spray Deck areas, and to provide easy staff access to existing pool pump and equipment located within the comfort station; incorporate solar array.

Replace the Eversource-controlled and outdated park lights with DCR standard park fixtures; transfer the

• Along the reconfigured Soldiers Field Road segments, remove existing 'Cobra-head' lights; replace with

Improve the Visitor Experience, Wayfinding, and Visitor Comfort Amenities

A range of improvements, some already mentioned, will enhance the visitor experience and comfort. The key recommendations follow:

Improve the Visitor Arrival Experience

- The reconfigured tree-lined main driveway will create a clear and stately arrival for those arriving on foot, bike, or car. The subdivision of the Artesani parking lot into two areas will bring its scale down while still providing the same number of parking spaces.
- Provide Signage and Wayfinding
 - Use the signage to announce the park entrances and facilities, orient and direct visitors within the park, and inspire and educate about the park's history, ecology, and other notable gualities
 - The Signage and Wayfinding Plan included in this report proposes a complete system and hierarchy of signage types, based on the existing DCR Style Guide Manual. The system includes: Main Identification Sign for the overall park, Site / Facility Cantilevered Signs for identifying particular features or facilities; Parking Lot Entry Signs, Welcome / Orientation Waysides that include with maps, regulations, and general info; Interpretive Signs, Directional Signs, and updated rules and regulations signage.
 - The plan proposes replacing individual rules signs with new iconography consolidated on Welcome wayside / orientation panels and used at key locations.





Figure 1-14. Proposed view terrace at the West End offers attractive river views. The meadow in background will be created as part of the ecological restoration of the area, which is presently colonized by invasive species.

Improve visual and physical access to the river

- to the river and to Arsenal Bridge.
- water's edge will direct visitors, consolidate foot traffic, and prevent shoreline erosion.
- as well as serve as formal dock access during water race events.
- and filtered river views.
- Provide consistent placement of site furnishings for visitor comfort

 - Arrange picnic tables on pads providing accessible clearance and accessible routes.
 - Provide drinking fountains equipped with bottle refill stations and pet fountains.

• In the West Area create an overlook with benches and picnic tables, to take advantage of attractive views

• Construct a fishing dock in the West End, in a spot that is already informally used for such purpose.

Create a series of view terraces along the shoreline, which can be defined with granite remnants, paved with stabilized stonedust surfacing, and provided with benches or other seat elements. Overlooks at the

• In the central area near the event lawn, create a stepped feature to the water that can be used informally

At key areas where bank vegetation consists of dense trees, provide vista pruning for increased porosity

Install benches on extended pads that provide companion seating areas for persons using wheelchairs.

Engage a Cooperative Network of Stakeholders who Both Enjoy the Recreational Opportunities and Provide Volunteer Assistance in Managing the Vegetation.

- Long-term permit holders such as Paddle Boston (Canoe & Kayak rental), Night Shift Brewery (Owl's Nest beer garden operator), and the Friends of Herter Park (Amphitheater program operator) are considered as partners that not only provide valuable programming and recreational opportunities but also share in the park upkeep within their areas.
- Reinforce the objectives of the CRVMP and the Herter Park Landscape Management Plan (LMP) in the Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with permit holders.
- Create MOUs with the Charles River Community Garden, the Herter Community Garden, and the Pollinator Networks, to detail the privileges and responsibilities of these organizations.
- Continue established partnerships and pursue new partnerships with organizations that provide volunteer assistance in the implementation of the (LMP).
- Provide a dedicated parking space for the Charles River Conservancy's maintenance Conex box and truck at the West End parking lot.