

9

Cultural Resources



Cultural Resources

Introduction

246

Interpretive Opportunities

249

Public Art

250



Park and Recreational Facilities

Introduction

Urban park cultural resources encompass a wide range of assets that hold historical, educational, and cultural significance. These resources are vital for preserving heritage and enhancing the cultural richness of the community. The main types of cultural resources found in the Southwest Corridor Park include:

1. **Cultural Landscapes:** These are areas within parks shaped by human activity and hold cultural significance, such as designed landscapes and areas with historical land use patterns.
2. **Public Art:** The SWCP features sculptures, murals, and other forms of public art that contribute to the cultural and aesthetic value of the space.
3. **Recreational Facilities:** Facilities like amphitheaters and sports complexes that have been used for cultural and recreational activities over the years hold cultural significance since they often host community events, performances, and festivals.
4. **Memorials and Monuments:** Individuals like Coretta Scott King and Martin Luther King are honored along the corridor, reflecting their significant impact on the community and nation. They serve as places of reflection and remembrance.
5. **Interpretive Signage:** At the Roxbury Crossing MBTA plaza, an interpretive panel provides educational content about the park's cultural and historical significance.
6. **Archaeological Sites:** Archaeological investigations part of

the Southwest Corridor construction project provide valuable insights into the history and culture of the area.

7. **Historical Landmarks:** The SWCP has historical landmarks adjacent to the corridor and has the potential to interpret the community activism, former land uses, historical figures, etc. within the corridor.

The Southwest Corridor Park is an immensely important piece of Boston's social history. While each park component may appear individually insignificant, as a whole, the park represents a turning point in Boston's urban planning when a disruptive highway project was converted into a community-led multi-modal greenspace project. It was groundbreaking as a model for public participation and involvement in large-scale, transportation-related urban planning projects. Described as a "visionary transportation planning effort based on outstanding design criteria and supported by a sustained community participation program," it paved the path for other multi-modal, community-focused greenspaces in cities across the country.

Introduction(continued)

More work is needed to preserve and enhance these cultural resources in the Southwest Corridor Park. Recommendations for the cultural resources include:

Recommendations

- **Preserve the character-defining features of the original park design:** such as the dual path system surrounded by parkland with linear tree planting, granite block walls lining the park perimeter, and recreational facilities punctuating the linear park.
- **Pursue National Register eligibility for the Southwest Corridor Park.**
- **Pursue National Register eligibility for some archaeological resources.**
- **Protect undisturbed sites** and undertake reconnaissance archaeological surveys to refine the horizontal and vertical sensitivity of unsurveyed areas.

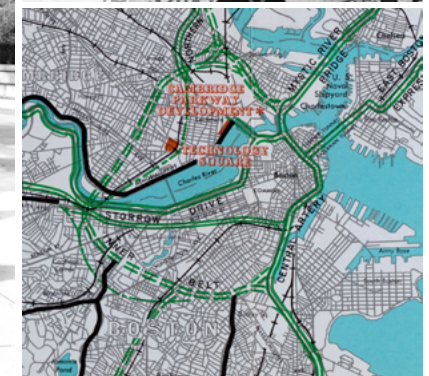
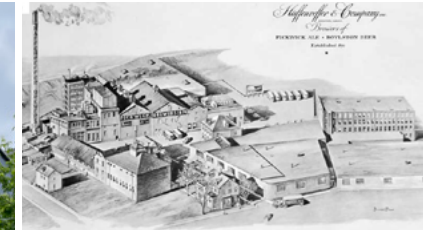
Public Art

- **Regularly maintain public art.**
- **Promote public programming** that highlights the public art to make it relevant again. For example, the “Boston Contemporary Writers” project from 1986–1987 includes nine monuments in the SWCP engraved with poetry and prose. The content and context are largely lost on park users, presenting an opportunity to reinterpret the messages and reflect on their meaning today.

Interpretation

- **DCR to hire an interpretive planner to develop an interpretive plan for the Southwest Corridor Park.** An interpretive plan is a strategic document intended to guide how to tell the story of a place. It is the initial step in the planning and design process where interpretation is used to communicate messages, stories, information, and experiences. The interpretive plan would offer guidance on programming, educational opportunities, and informal ways to engage visitors with a deeper interpretation of the space. The plan would include personal (e.g., staff or community member programming) and non-personal (e.g., signage, art, web-based information, and interactive site features) methods.
- **An interpretive goal would be to convey the richness of the neighborhood that was destroyed.** Likely interpretive themes would address displacement, community activism and the anti-highway movement, resilience, and environmental injustice.
- **Following the interpretive plan, design and implement site-specific interpretive features and signage.**
- **Develop interpretive programs that engage the community** and pursue partnerships with local historical societies, cultural organizations, and government agencies.

By recognizing and preserving the cultural resources within the Southwest Corridor Park, the surrounding communities can maintain a tangible connection to their history and heritage while providing educational and recreational opportunities for park visitors.

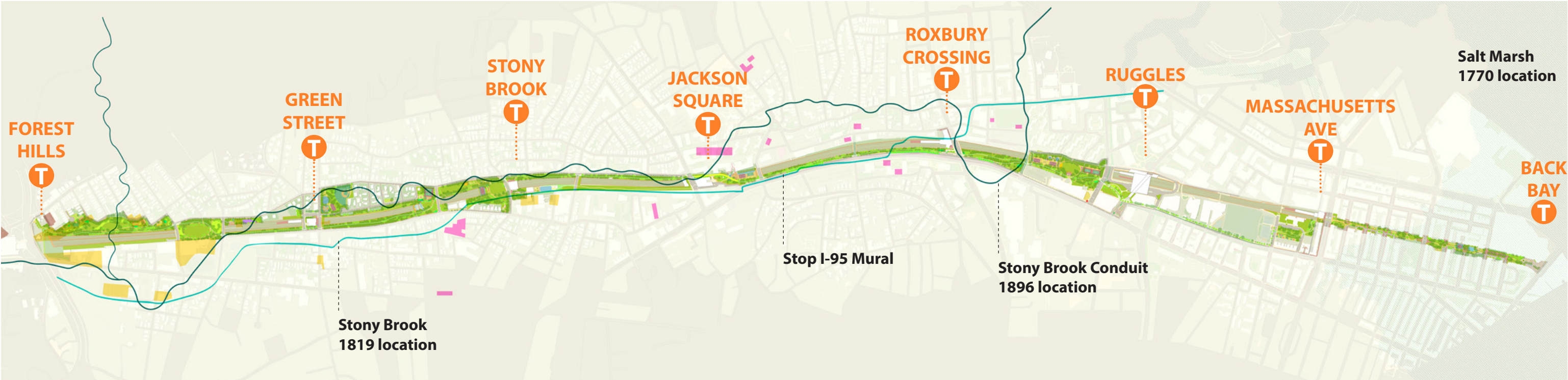


Interpretive Opportunities

While an interpretive plan will be developed with a consulting interpretive planner following the completion of the Action Plan, there are significant interpretive opportunities worth noting to be explored further in the interpretive plan. These include:

- Ghost Rivers: The Stony Brook originally ran its natural course through the Jamaica Plain and Roxbury parts of the corridor and was eventually reconfigured to support industry and prevent flooding. The brook still exists within a conduit running directly underneath the park near Stony Brook. Additionally, near Boynton Street, Goldsmith Brook has also been relocated into a conduit that crosses the park.
- People Before Highways Movement: If it wasn't for community activism, the Southwest Corridor Park (SWCP) would be a highway. A twelve-lane highway was proposed by the government, but efforts of thousands of citizens banding together to save homes, neighborhoods, and open spaces created the submerged Orange Orange Line rapid transit, the railroad, and the SWCP.
- Displacement: Colonial settlers displaced native people, industry displaced residents, and the proposed highway removed large sections of communities.
- Environmental Injustice: The railroad followed the Stony Brook alignment, and historical redlining influenced the proposed highway design.

These interpretive opportunities will help to highlight the rich and complex history of the Southwest Corridor Park, ensuring that visitors understand the multifaceted stories and struggles that shaped the space.



Public Art

Enhancing Public Art and Cultural Engagement in Southwest Corridor Park

The Southwest Corridor Park is home to nine monuments engraved with poetry and prose from the “Boston Contemporary Writers” project (1986–1987). However, these literary treasures are often overlooked by the public. More should be done to increase awareness of these monuments and relate their content to contemporary issues, making them more relevant and engaging for today’s park users.

Large-Scale Murals

Large-scale murals in key areas like Jackson Square or on the storage building south of English High School on McBride Street activate and enliven the park. These murals can serve as dynamic visual landmarks that draw attention and encourage visitors to explore the park further.

Smaller Scale Murals

In addition to large-scale murals, smaller scale murals on traffic signal boxes and park furnishings can bring a personal and intimate feeling to the park. These smaller works of art can highlight local culture and creativity, making the park feel more welcoming and community-oriented.

Temporary and Short-Term Art

Short-term and temporary art installations, such as the painted panels on the Saranac community garden fence, help keep the park environment fresh and engaging. These installations can be rotated regularly, providing new and exciting visuals for frequent park visitors.

Public Art in the South End

The South End area of the park is particularly suited for public art installations. The raised beds and garden square quality of this section provide an excellent setting for three-dimensional art pieces, which could be either installed or commissioned. Such installations would enhance the aesthetic appeal and cultural significance of the area.

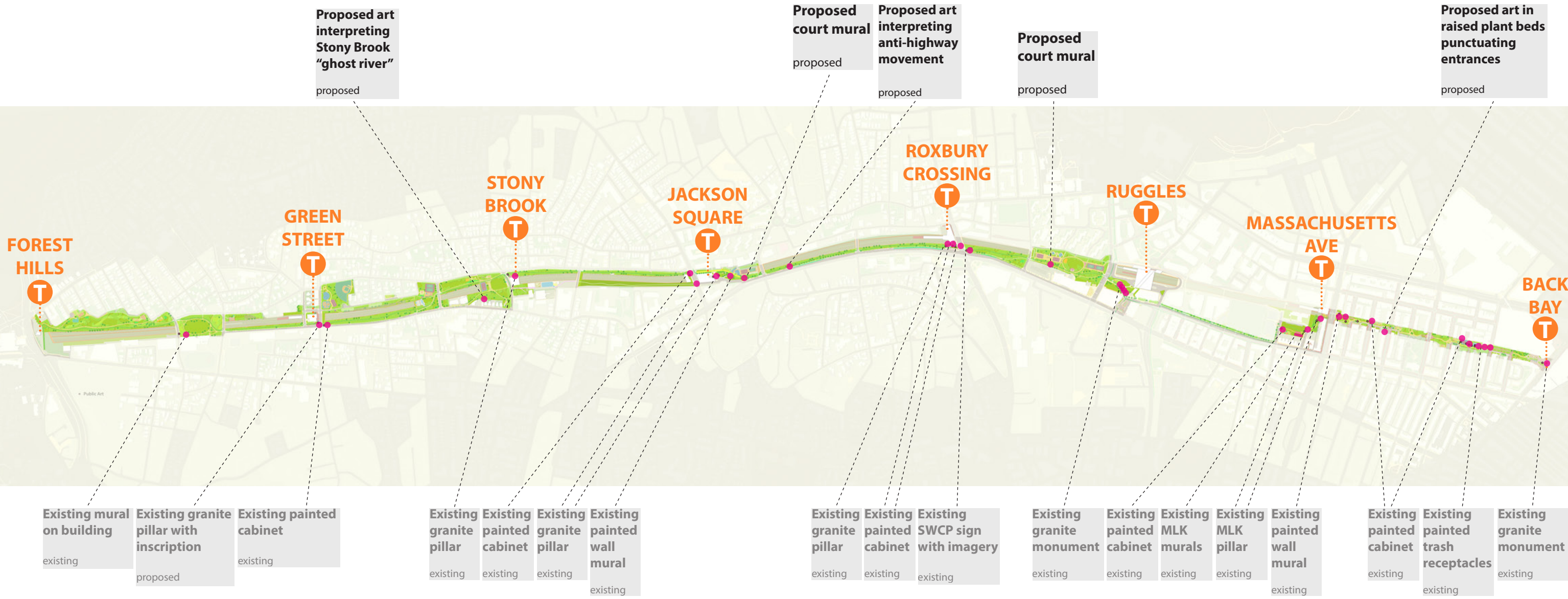
Court Murals

Court murals are an excellent way to enhance the visual appeal of basketball courts and other hard surface areas in the park. By showcasing local culture, history, and artistic talent, these murals can transform plain surfaces into vibrant community spaces. They provide unique and colorful designs that inspire and uplift park users, encouraging physical activity and social interaction.

Integrating Art with the Interpretive Plan

As the interpretive plan for the park is developed, there will be numerous opportunities to incorporate public art that interprets the primary themes of the park. This art could take various forms, including sculpture, painted graphics or murals, furnishings, performance-based works, or multimedia installations. Integrating art with interpretive themes will enhance the educational and cultural value of the park, making it a richer experience for visitors.

Public Art (continued)



Public Art (continued)

