Recommendations

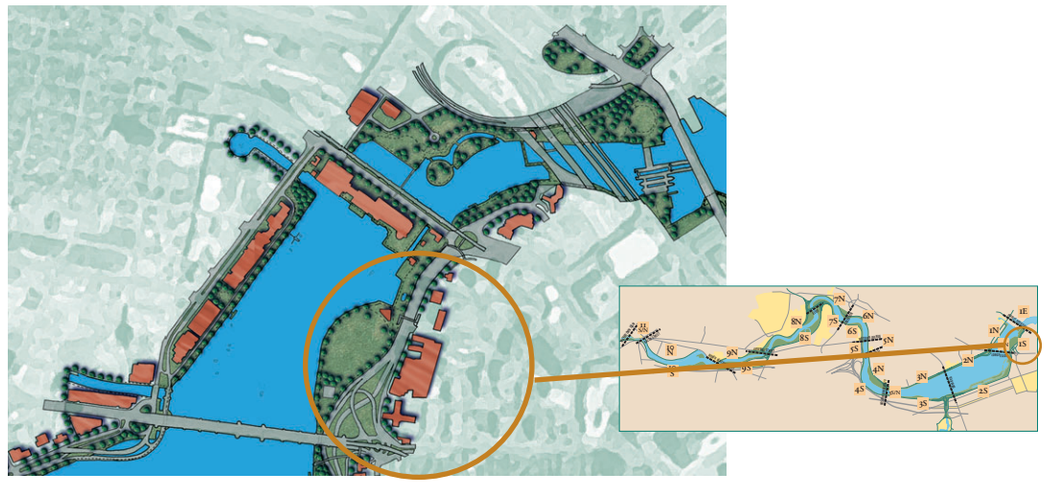
- **Construct a ramp and dock at the head of the canal in coordination with any new development.** A ramp and dock along the water's edge would allow launching of small powerboats, canoes, and kayaks. A water-taxi service might also be accommodated. On weekends boaters could use parking lots of the office complex, mostly empty at those times.

- **Rebuild the drawbridges and refine the structural supports in order to maximize clearance.** At least eight feet is needed to get small powerboats out of the canal. This design objective should be achieved when each bridge come up for replacement at the end of its life cycle.

- **Establish a continuous path along the seawall on the east side of the canal** similar in width to the path on its west. A land-preserving alternative would be a boardwalk along the base of the seawall, connected to the head of the canal by the boat ramp. Such a boardwalk could slope up to ground level before the first drawbridge; the existing traffic lights would then be reactivated to allow foot and wheeled traffic to cross First Street and Land Boulevard. Alternatively, if the drawbridges are rebuilt to allow greater clearance, the boardwalk could run under them and downriver along the seawall, connecting to the proposed public landing at Front Park. A boardwalk would need to be handicapped-accessible, would have to be built to withstand ice, and would require significant maintenance. The participation of private developers would be essential.

- **Work with MIT and other abutters to continue the path from the head of Broad Canal to Broadway and down Wadsworth Street.** This will provide an alternative to the Longfellow Bridge viaduct for pedestrians, joggers, cyclists, and inline skaters travelling from the Front to the Cambridge Esplanade.

- **Interpret the industrial history of the canal,** through signage, ranger tours, or the preservation and interpretation of such artifacts as the old bridge building.



CHARLESBANK PARK (1S)

David M. Mugar Way (formerly Embankment Road) between the Charles River Dam and Longfellow Bridge

Key Resources

- *Charlesbank Park (1892)*
- *Seawall (1910)*
- *Embankment Road*
- *Lederman Athletic Field and pool (constructed 1951, named 1974)*

History

Frederick Law Olmsted was commissioned to design a park on newly filled land along the edge of Boston's West End. Patterned after similar playgrounds in Germany, Charlesbank Park was one of the first of its kind in this country. Specialized recreation facilities, enclosed by fences, were provided for men, women, and children. A promenade and open lawn were provided along the bank for passive enjoyment of the river scenery. The widening of Embankment Road (now Mugar Way) and the construc-

tion of Storrow Drive in 1950-51 obliterated the original Charlesbank. The athletic complex—including a swimming pool, wading pool, softball fields, and tennis courts—was developed after the new road was completed.

CHARLESBANK PARK EXTENDS FROM LEVERETT CIRCLE (UPPER RIGHT) TO THE LONGFELLOW BRIDGE.

Existing Conditions and Issues

Charlesbank is dominated by active recreation facilities, including two softball fields, two tennis courts, a spray fountain and playground, and Lee Pool, the largest swimming pool in the MDC system. Many of these facilities were developed in 1951, and the spray pool, playground, and tennis courts were rebuilt in the 1990s. The Lee Pool is currently closed.

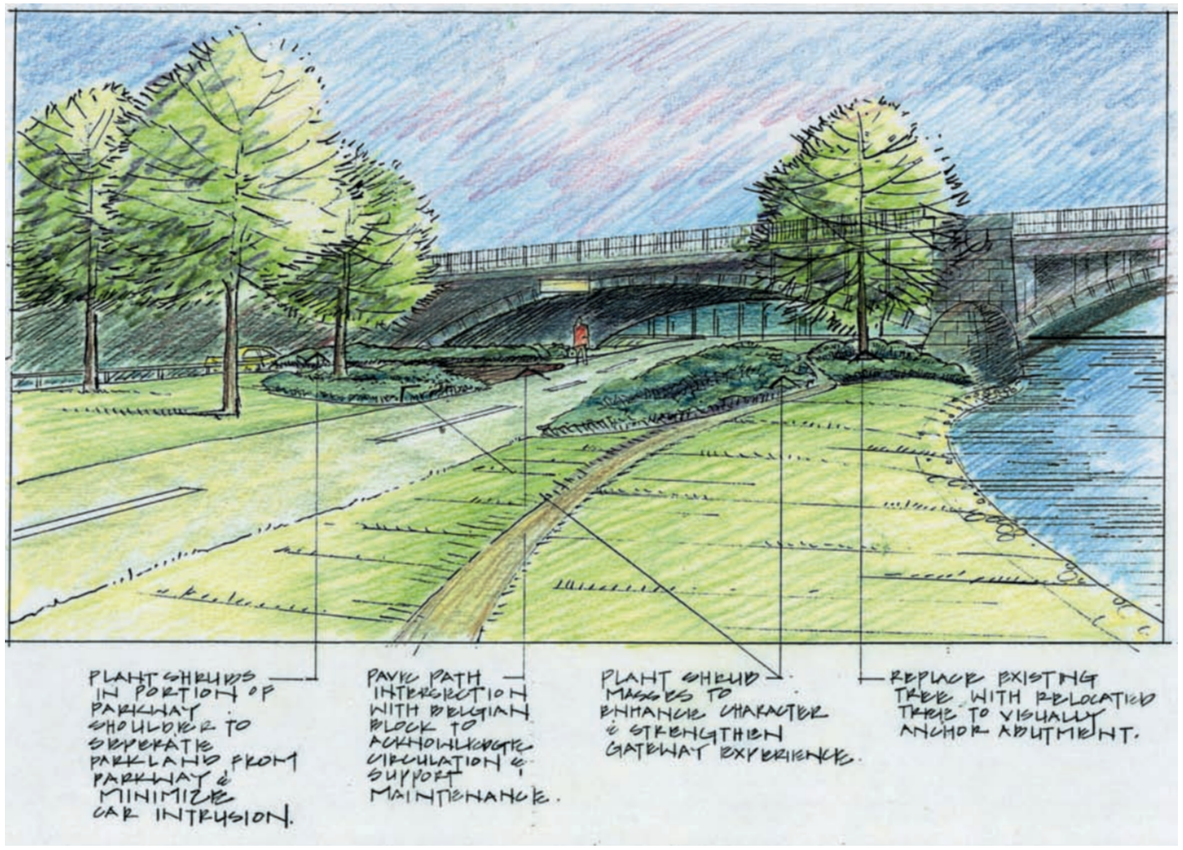
This area is increasingly used for staging large events, removing some of the impact of special events on the Esplanade. That it is relatively unencumbered with fences, trees, and site furnishings makes it especially suited to this use. Passive use of the Charlesbank area is low. The open space along the river lacks benches or a sense of enclosure. It is not conducive to activities such as picnicking or sunbathing.

Charlesbank feels cut off from the rest of the Basin, in part because its pathways bottleneck at either end. The river path exposes pedestrians to traffic on both sides because it passes through one parking lot next to the Lee Pool and along a second parking area under the Longfellow Bridge. One pedestrian bridge connects residential neighborhoods directly to The Charlesbank over Mugar Way

The Lederman Athletic Field has minimal fencing, no bleachers, no scoreboards, and no night lighting, yet they are heavily used. A tree-lined path separates them from shore. In contrast to Daly Field (10S), Lederman Field is a model for how athletic fields can blend with the river landscape. The tennis courts, with their high fencing and asphalt surface, however, intrude upon the reservation.

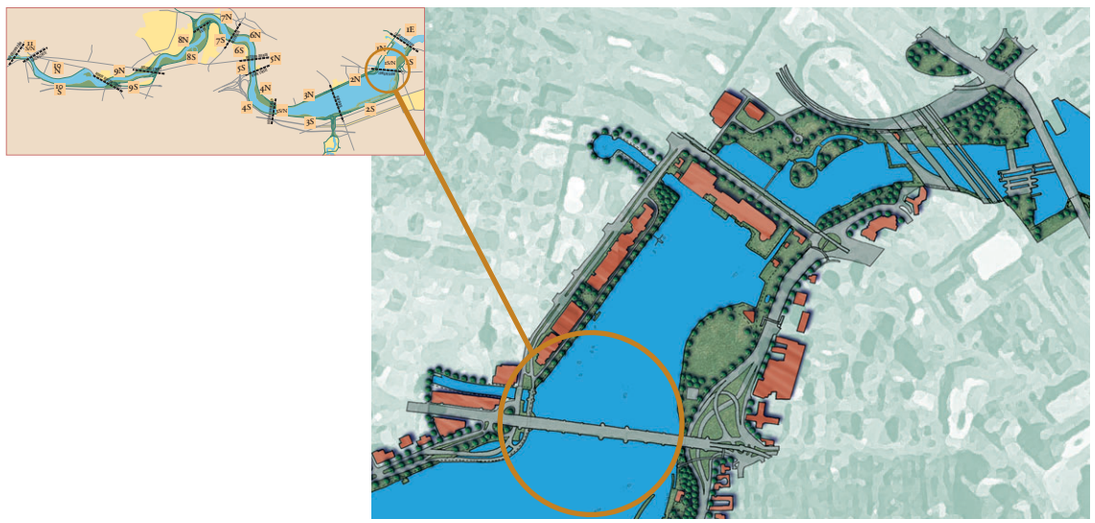
Recommendations

- **Design and program Charlesbank as a flexible, multi-use area.**
- **Reinforce the landscape setting for passive as well as active uses.**
- **Remove entirely, or reconfigure, both parking areas** to minimize conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.
- **Keep Lederman Field a simple, flexible athletic field.** Add plantings at the edges of the field to help reinforce a picturesque landscape character.
- **Landscape the tennis courts to screen them and to blend with the river setting.** Tennis courts and other intrusive and non-water-dependent sport facilities should be accommodated off the river banks elsewhere in the Metropolitan Park System wherever possible.



LANDSCAPING RECOMMENDATIONS AT LONGFELLOW BRIDGE.

- **Redesign the Lee Pool as a place for large gatherings** and as a multi-use (rather than single-use) facility. A raised landscape platform facing south, for example, could provide an alternative stage area for large events. Public bathrooms, phones, and water fountains in this area are essential.



LONGFELLOW BRIDGE (1N&S)

Key Resource

- *Longfellow Bridge (1906)*

History

Located at the site of the 1793 West Boston Bridge, the Cambridge Bridge was designed by Edmund Wheelwright and engineered by William Jackson and completed in 1906 (it was renamed for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1927). Viking ships depicted on four of the bridge's stone piers recall the now-discredited legend that Leif Ericson sailed up the Charles River. The Longfellow (or "Salt-and-Pepper") Bridge is the most architecturally distinguished bridge on the Charles River.

Existing Conditions and Issues

The structural condition of the bridge is beyond the scope of this Master Plan but has been documented in other reports. Though structurally sound, considerable effort and money will be needed to restore this landmark.

The connections from the Longfellow Bridge to the river paths on both banks have been broken, making the bridge one of the weakest links in the reservation. Storrow Drive and the Cambridge Viaduct, designed to pass under the bridge, create difficult pedestrian connections along the river.

On the north side of the bridge, the viaduct has isolated a piece of the Cambridge Esplanade, including the access stairs to the bridge. These stairs are now stranded on an island between lanes of high-speed traffic. There is no safe or obvious connection between the river path and the bridge walkway. The pathway along the viaduct is less than four feet wide, has poor drainage, and collects sand and other debris. Some users consider it the worst path segment in the Basin.

On the Boston side, flights of stairs connect the Longfellow Bridge to the pedestrian bridge, but bicyclists and skaters find them difficult to negotiate. People with physical disabilities find them impossible. The alternative of continuing into the Charles Circle intersection is not much better. Here the pedestrian path and roadway shoulder end entirely, with no crosswalk. Cyclists crossing to Boston currently use the shoulder, which vanishes at the end of the bridge as the roadway expands from two lanes to three. Some of the worst conflicts in the reservation between bicyclists, pedestrians, and cars occur here.

NARROW WALKWAY ON THE UPSTREAM SIDE OF THE LONGFELLOW BRIDGE