

PLACE

Fall 2013

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the protection and enhancement of open space in Brookline.



Fisher Hill Reservoir Park Moves Ahead

The Town of Brookline acquired the 10 acres of land that is to become Fisher Hill Reservoir Park from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. To ensure that the land would be preserved for conservation and recreation, the Commonwealth required that a third party hold a conservation restriction on the property. In 2011, The Town of Brookline granted a conservation restriction to BGSA for the Fisher Hill Reservoir.



The purpose of the Conservation Restriction is to (1) ensure that the Fisher Hill Reservoir will provide in perpetuity parkland designed and used for open space, active and/or passive recreation purposes or a combination thereof; (2) provide appropriate public access; and/or further park, conservation and open space used consistent with Chapter 20, of the Acts of 2008; (3) preserve the historic gatehouse and the portion of the reservoir berm; (4) preserve the environmental value of the large wooded buffer for wildlife habitat; and (5) prevent any use of the Restricted Area that will significantly impair or materially interfere with conservation, open space, passive and/or active recreation values thereof.

During the 2013 calendar year, the Town of Brookline was fully compliant with the terms of the Conservation Restriction. The site was closed to the public throughout the year awaiting the construction of the park.

The conservation restriction lists 11 prohibited uses concerning such matters as construction of certain types of buildings, removal of certain soil or minerals, and dumping of refuse on the restricted area. None of the 11 forms of acts prohibited by the

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Overall plan for Fisher Hill Park.
Prepared by Klopfer Martin Design Group

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Marian Lazar

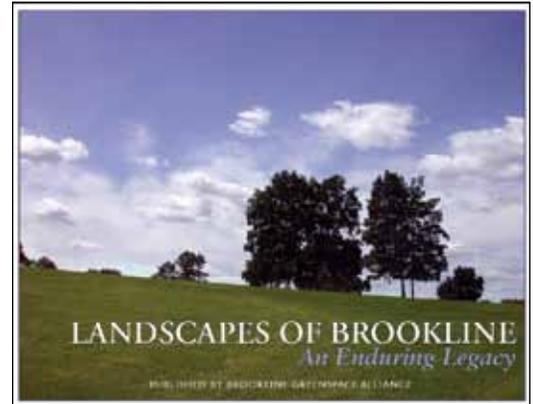
BGSA is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax deductible.

Landscapes of Brookline

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance is pleased to announce that *Landscapes of Brookline: An Enduring Legacy*, a book of color photographs of Brookline's beautiful public and private open spaces is once again available at the Brookline Booksmith.

According to Frances Shedd Fisher, who edited the book for BGSA, "Our intention is to call attention to Brookline's unusual legacy of green and to the culture of stewardship, philanthropy and volunteerism that have helped define our town over so many years. It is unusual for one small, semi-urban New England community to have historic landscapes like Larz Anderson Park, and a portion of the Emerald Necklace, plus a working farm, and nature sanctuaries. That abundance is something to celebrate."

The book, designed by Marian Lazar, contains more than 200 photographs taken by local photographers Shedd Fisher, Lazar, Jean Stringham, Bruce Wolff and Judy Wong. In addition, there is a short history detailing some of the acts of philanthropy and advocacy, past and present, that have contributed to the greening of Brookline.



Brookline citizen signing the bottle bill petition at the BGSA table at Brookline Day, September 22nd. From left to right: Hugh Mattison, Jean Stringham and Anita Johnson. Photo by Jean Stringham



A No Net Loss of Open Space

While organizations such as Trust for Public Lands are working to create urban parks in other cities and towns, a Brookline committee this year presented plans that depended on building on parkland. Does Brookline have too much green space? There are national standards for the amount of open space per thousand residents and Brookline is about average. We do not excel. Brookline has some of the most dense housing in New England; and many areas of dense population are coming to the realization that quality of life improves as trees and green are made available for residents and they are aiming at protecting and increasing green space.

This is not about whether there are other worthy goals in our Town. It is whether we understand the value of the natural environment;

whether we believe healthy people and healthy economies thrive with well-maintained green space; whether we get stay-cationing and the heat island effect; and most importantly, whether we as a community have a conservation ethic. If we see open space as surplus land that can be built on as need be, we are out of step with those communities that are taking every opportunity to add to their recreational outdoor space and seeing their towns thrive because of it. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance believes that as an almost urban community, it is vital that Brookline institutionalize a conservation ethic into our planning and bylaws; that we take the recommendation of the Comp Plan approved by our Selectmen and enforce a No Net Loss of Open Space policy.

Arlene Mattison

Stay Connected

Visit www.brooklinegreenspace.org to learn about open space issues and upcoming events. Sign up for e-mail updates at info@brooklinegreenspace.org

Newly renovated Clark Park.
Photo by Frances Fisher



Fisher Hill (continued from page 1)

terms of the Conservation Restriction have occurred.

The Brookline Park and Recreation Commission formed a Design Review Committee to oversee the design of the park. That committee has been working for more than two years. After viewing ideas presented by several design firms, the Klopfer Martin Design Group was chosen. The park as planned includes all of the features specified in the Conservation Restriction. It will combine natural habitat and open space conducive to active and passive activities, preserve the historic gatehouse and a portion of the reservoir berm, and preserve a large wooded buffer.

At a meeting of the Design Review Committee on September 24th, Klopfer Martin presented final design plans and a construction budget. The park will include an open field, an overlook platform, a seating grove, and episodic play areas for children, as well as a promenade with a water rill and seating, a picnic terrace, and plantings of trees and shrubs. Underlying the park will be a storm water management and drainage system. Currently, not all features are funded. Their implementation will depend on actual construction costs.

Plants for the park are designed to provide color through three seasons. Three levels of plants provide a canopy, a midlevel and ground cover creating a natural wooded habitat. BGSA has been successful in fundraising for the GreenSpace Grove, celebrating our 25th anniversary. Go to www.brooklinegreenspace.org to see the list of donors.

The episodic play areas will be the first of this type of equipment in a Brookline park. Rather than a circumscribed area of traditional play equipment, these areas consist of jumping and balance elements scattered around the open park areas and are designed to encourage children to



Episodic play structures (above and at right) encourage children to explore and improvise.

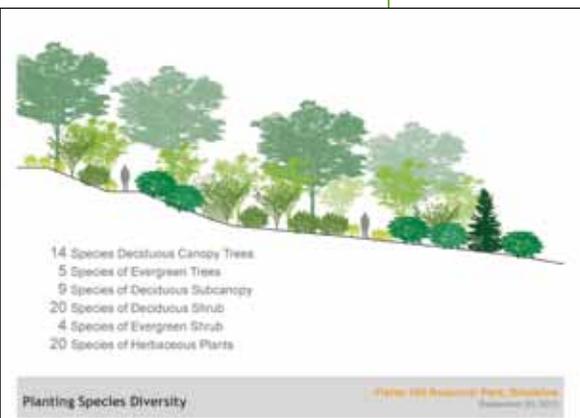


explore and be adventurous.

The historic gatehouse on the site has been protected by a separate historic preservation restriction. On October 10th, students from the Boston Architectural College presented an exploration of possible adaptive reuses for the Fisher Hill Gatehouse. The gatehouse was built in 1887, designed by Arthur Vinal, and is an important visual marker of the historic nature of the site. Its reuse will assure its permanent presence in the life of the community.

Bid documents for park construction are available on the town's web site. Construction is expected to begin as soon as a contractor is chosen.

The illustrations used in this article were prepared by the Klopfer Martin Design Group. Information was taken from the BGSA Annual Report on the Fisher Hill Reservoir Park Conservation Restriction and the Town of Brookline web site.



Membership Drive

Dear Friends and Supporters,

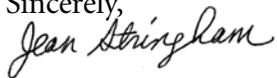
Thanks in advance for continuing your support of Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, now in our 26th year of advocating for green space in Brookline.

Please join or renew now for 2014. Your membership supports our work to protect parks and nature sanctuaries for both wildlife and human visitors. With your membership you receive PLACE, updates of local activities, invitations to join us on walks, and you show support for volunteerism in our parks and open space advocacy.

Help prioritize a green environment for Brookline by being a member of BGSA. Your membership communicates to decision-makers a commitment to a healthy environment.

Please use the enclosed envelope today. Making our annual appeal through PLACE will keep us from having to do a follow-up mailing that uses more paper and energy. We hope we can count on you now.

Sincerely,



Chair, Development Committee

Excerpts from The Return on Investment in Parks and Open Space in Massachusetts - Trust for Public Land, 2013

Return on investment in land conservation

The Trust for Public Land conducted an analysis of the return on the Commonwealth's investment in land conservation by comparing the state's investment with the economic value of the natural goods and services provided by conservation lands. Every \$1 invested by Massachusetts in land conservation returns \$4 in economic value of natural goods and services.

Climate change mitigation (carbon sequestration)

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the primary greenhouse gas emitted into the atmosphere through human activities such as energy production, transportation, and industrial processes. Greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere trap heat and lead to a warming of global temperatures. This results in changing weather patterns with more severe and frequent storm activity and greater weather extremes such as periods of extreme drought. The economic impacts include costly storm and flood damage, loss of agriculture and food production, heat-related illnesses and deaths, damage and disruption from increased wildfires, and loss of tourism and recreation activity among others. Carbon "sinks" are natural areas, such as forests, that collect and store carbon; however, by developing these areas, humans are reducing the environment's ability to remove carbon from the atmosphere.

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Membership Matters

Unprotected Open Space: Hancock Village

Since 2009 Chestnut Hill Realty has presented several proposals for increasing the number of apartments at Hancock Village. All these plans called for using the available green spaces on the property to increase the density of the project.

The development of Hancock Village, between 1946 and 1949, was undertaken by the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company to meet the area's critical need to provide affordable housing for returning war veterans. In consideration for a zoning change from single to multi-family housing granted by the Town, the company proposed a development that would be more affordable than contemporary single-family neighborhoods but would embody the best thinking about large-scale residential development of its time, as indicated in historical documents.

Laid out by Olmsted Associates of Brookline, the result represents the culmination of an evolving strand of American, automobile-age residential development that had its beginning in the mid-1930s as the Garden Village model. Its hallmarks are respect for the natural and topographical character of its site, separation of pedestrians from automobile traffic, and the orientation of the living space away from the street and towards common green space.

Each of Hancock Village's dwelling units

occupies a townhouse of two stories topped by a peaked roof. Each unit has its own separate entrances, the front door of which characteristically opens into a green courtyard providing pedestrian

access to the village streets. At the rear, each has a patio within a sheltered hierarchical system of green spaces consisting of a communal open space overlooked and bounded on three sides by its townhouse rows and, at its open end, connecting to a network of rustic green corridors that filter through the development.

In designing these open space sequences, Olmsted Associates, rather than being daunted by the site's genius loci, its rising and falling terrain and its prominent rock outcroppings, used them to provide the development's visual interest. One such corridor, running north-south through the village, incorporates the area's highest point, crowned with puddingstone outcropping, to form a small urban wild.

In addition to weaving the village together with internal more rustic green corridors, Olmsted Associates laid out a sophisticated greenbelt of linear parkland along its northern edge. This undulating greenward framed by mature trees simultaneously provides the green space into which the communal green spaces and patios of the northernmost townhouses open and a recreation zone for perhaps a quarter of the site's Brookline residents.

In 2005 Brookline commissioned a study of Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) legislation and a by-law creating a Neighborhood Conservation Commission was passed at the Special Town Meeting in November 2011. At the same time a Neighborhood Conservation District comprising Hancock Village was created.

Among the features protected in the District are the existing spatial organization and land patterns of the landscape, including the curvilinear circulation patterns and views from roads, sidewalks, pathways and buildings.

Significant negative impacts shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. Removal or alteration of rock outcroppings greater than 200 square feet in contiguous area;



- b. Alteration of existing grades by more than three feet in vertical height;
- c. Removal of existing pedestrian paths that separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic;
- d. Addition of new impervious surfaces within 100 feet of abutting properties, including the Hoar Sanctuary or single-family homes; and
- e. Loss of open space through building coverage exceeding 20% of the area of the district or through loss of the “greenbelt” now serving as a buffer to the abutting single-family detached homes.

In June 2013, Chestnut Hill Realty presented a new development plan and applied for 40B designation as a project including significant affordable housing units. Under Chapter 40B, in any municipality where less than 10% of its housing qualifies as affordable under the law, a developer can build more densely than the municipal zoning bylaws would permit, allowing more units per acre of land when building a new development, if at least 25% (or 20% in certain cases) of the new units have long-term affordability restrictions. The NCD Commission commented on several aspects of the 40B proposal including important concerns about the loss of the green spaces.

Topography and Environmental Resources

Olmsted Associates’ Hancock Village townhouses, paths and open spaces utilize the site’s distinctive topography and characteristic rock outcroppings to give the village its defining character, that of residences set densely but appropriately within a green natural environment of great visual interest. The proposed project would destroy that character at the sites it proposes to redevelop, first by leveling the rock outcropping and replacing the urban wild within the north-south open space corridor with an apartment block, and second, by replacing its undulating linear park with a development zone that would flatten its contours and destroy its

mature trees to accommodate parking. The Commission also notes that most of the proposed housing closest to Beverly Road is inappropriately sited four feet above the adjoining topography (to the north and south). In addition to the visual impacts of these measures, the Commission is concerned with the impact of such extensive tree removal and of the parking areas’ impervious surfaces on site drainage, particularly on the lower elevation homes on Beverly and Russett Roads.

Existing Development Patterns

The discussion of topography and environmental resources above focuses on the incompatibility of the present proposal with the fully realized integration of housing, open space and circulation within Hancock Village, with special emphasis on the village’s residential scale and its greenbelt open space and puddingstone highlands. The proposed elimination of the greenbelt linear park is also significant because it destroys a feature that, in the terms employed in the 40B handbook, was designed to be a buffer between Hancock Village and the adjoining single-family neighborhood

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The Greenbelt Linear Park between Hancock Village and the houses on Beverly Road. Photo courtesy of Preserve Brookline





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Unprotected Open Space (continued from page 7)

on Beverly and Russett Roads. In its place, the submission proposes new development that is aggressively close to these homes. In fact, it appears to further aggravate the impact of this development by placing paved areas even closer to the rear property line than an earlier 2012 submission, despite concerns about inappropriate setbacks raised by the Town in response to that proposal.

Notwithstanding the comments by the NCD Commission, BGSA, and the Town,

MassDevelopment (the state's finance and development authority) approved the project to move on through the state funding process.

Information for this article was taken from *Report of the The Brookline Conservation District Commission on the Site Eligibility of the Hancock Village c.40B Proposal*, and from the websites of Preserve Brookline and Town of Brookline.

Excerpts from The Return on Investment in Parks and Open Space in Massachusetts

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Quality of life

Conservation has major implications for the health of the state's economy beyond the industries directly impacted. Protecting natural resources improves the quality of life for the residents of Massachusetts by providing places to roam, play, and learn and by maintaining the scenic beauty of the state. Quality of life has a major impact on the ability of the Commonwealth to attract well-educated and talented workers and new businesses. Land conservation helps the state maintain a quality-of-life advantage in an increasingly competitive national and global economic climate.

The most sought-after workers in today's economy look at more than just a paycheck when picking places of employment. One survey of high-tech workers showed that a job's attractiveness increases by 33 percent in a community with a high quality of life. Another survey found that the availability of outdoor activities is the second most important factor after job availability for recent college graduates when deciding whether to stay or leave Massachusetts. A 2003 quality of life survey undertaken for The Massachusetts Institute (MassINC) also found that access to beaches, oceans, and mountains is one of the state's three most desirable features. Over half of respondents also said that the loss of open space, including loss of farmlands and parks, posed a threat to quality of life.

The complete report can be found at www.TPL.org