

A low-angle photograph of trees with green and reddish-brown leaves against a bright sky. The image is used as a background for the text.

PLACE

Spring/Summer 2023

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance
is a non-profit membership organization
dedicated to the enhancement of open
space in Brookline by supporting citizens
in caring for their green spaces.

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Friends of Billy Ward Playground
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Lawton Park Community Garden
Larz Anderson Auto Museum
Linden Parks Association

Editor Marian Lazar

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

Cover photo: Longwood Mall

Carlton Street Footbridge Update



The Carlton Street Footbridge restoration is entering the final phase. The bridge, built in 1894, connects Brookline's Longwood neighborhood with Riverway Park in the Emerald Necklace. Much of the work to date has involved less visible infrastructure; soil test borings, the pouring of cement footings for stairways, columns and ramps, and protection of the MBTA power lines. Refinishing of the original bridge was carried out in Coventry, Rhode Island by the Aetna Bridge Company. The bridge was returned and put in place in at the end of February. Bridge reopening is planned for June.



President's Message

Much of this issue of PLACE is devoted to preservation—preservation of our mature woodland, environmentally valuable land, preservation of the spirit of stewardship exhibited by founders of Brookline. As we look to the promise of the future, we can learn from our past about the importance of trees to our community (Longwood Mall), the development of the understanding that young children need outdoor play space (Cypress Playground), that without conscientious maintenance our infrastructure crumbles (Carlton Street Footbridge). And that our green spaces need advocates who will speak out in support of the contribution that healthy green space makes to the overall health of a community.

Since 1987 Brookline GreenSpace Alliance has worked to fulfill its mission of education and advocacy to help protect and enhance the green infrastructure of Brookline. For the last 21 years I have served as its president. From the support of individual park friends groups and the significant improvements their contributions have made, to the provision of a “no net loss of open space” in the Town’s planning documents, the Alliance has encouraged volunteerism and stewardship of our parks, urban forest, and nature sanctuaries. Our work has included town-wide acknowledgement of Earth Day, creation of a conservation restriction to ensure open space at the former Fisher Hill Reservoir, support of environmental education in Brookline, and budgets adequate to maintain green spaces with best management practices. Yet the job is far from done.

Pressures to develop land in Brookline are intense. While competing uses may all be important, green space once lost is seldom replaced. BGSA has been a strong advocate of the Public Land Preservation Act, introduced into the State legislature by Brookline State Representative Ruth Balser, which was finally passed this year. This law will give the Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and the Environment stronger tools for protecting public land from development by formalizing the procedure for land replacement that was already part of state policy. While most of the land being built upon in Brookline is private land, PLPA is at least a step in the right direction in the acknowledgment of the importance of the contribution of green infrastructure to quality of life and environmental health. The new Brookline Tree Protection by-law, also advocated for for many years, can also be a new significant tool.

As I step down from the leadership of the GreenSpace Alliance, I am grateful for working with people dedicated to supporting and improving our local environment. I am aware of the need for the beauty, the contribution to mitigating climate change, the need for passive and active recreational space, and the habitat that our green spaces provide; and for the humans who will speak out and work for these benefits. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance will continue its important work with your help.

Arlene Mattison

Arlene Mattison will step down as BGSA president at the annual meeting on May 8. As the longest serving president of the organization she has forged a strong voice for open space preservation in Brookline.

Preserving Longwood Mall: An Urban Oasis in Brookline

Rob Schoen

Here long before any of us were born and hopefully remaining long after we are all gone, Longwood Mall stands as one of Brookline's most treasured landmarks. Located less than half a mile from Coolidge Corner, this 2.5 acre linear park serves as an urban oasis that both beautifies the neighborhood and unifies our community.

In the 1840s, David Sears brought European Beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) back from England and planted them on the land that would eventually become Longwood Mall. This picturesque grove is considered by many to be the oldest collection of European Beech trees in North America. In 1902, the family of David Sears generously deeded Longwood Mall and three other parcels of land to Brookline, ensuring their preservation as public parks.

Eighty years later in 1982, Longwood Mall was not in good condition. Cuts to the forestry budget had resulted in the trees being neglected for over two decades, leaving them in desperate need of pruning and cultivation. Led by Ellen Golde, a group of dedicated Brookline citizens raised \$20,000 (equivalent to \$62,000 in 2023!) to revitalize the trees and establish an annual maintenance program. This initiative marked the birth of the Friends of Longwood Mall, who later received a Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Award in 1984. Since then, Ellen has been working closely with the Brookline Parks Department to ensure that the trees survive and thrive.

Fast forward forty more years, and Longwood Mall is facing a new threat. A new tree disease, Beech Leaf Disease (BLD), has been decimating Beech trees from Ohio to Maine in recent years. Last year, BLD tragically took the life of a historic Beech tree on Freeman St. (by the former St. Aidan's church). Fortunately, none of Longwood

Longwood Mall in summer



Mall's trees have shown symptoms of BLD yet, but community intervention may be the key to preventing an outbreak.

Thankfully, scientists and arborists recently have made significant progress in understanding BLD and have developed a new treatment. Last year, Friends of Longwood Mall raised money from the neighborhood to administer this treatment to the trees. Additionally, we received an \$8500 grant to treat the trees from the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, as part of the Park Initiative Program. Although it is too early to know how effective the treatments

continued on back cover

Tree Protection By-law Passes

The November 2022 Town Meeting passed Article 10, to create a Tree Preservation By-law to encourage the preservation and protection of trees in connection with significant demolition and/or construction activity. Trees are protected by designating areas of a lot where trees must be protected and requiring mitigation for trees that are removed by either the replanting of trees or the payment of fees to support the Town's tree planting and maintenance efforts. The by-law has received approval from the Attorney General's office.

The new by-law was spurred by the findings in the Brookline Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan completed in January 2022. The plan found "The tree canopy analysis conducted as part of this planning process revealed that the Town's coverage decreased from 46.3% in 2014 to 44.7% in 2020, which amounted to a net loss of 71 acres of tree canopy. Most of this loss occurred on one, two and three family residential properties. More protection for existing trees is critical to prevent further private tree loss as a result of development and redevelopment."

The new by-law defines a Protected tree as one with a diameter at breast height (DBH) of 6" or greater, any portion of whose trunk is in a Tree Yard. A Tree Yard is the area of a lot that is located within 20 feet of any property line. The by-law gives the Department of Public Works Commissioner the power to appoint a Reviewing Agent. Prior to demolition or construction on property containing a protected tree, a Tree Protection and Mitigation Plan must be submitted to the Reviewing Agent.

The by-law also establishes the Town of Brookline Tree Fund, an account for deposit of permit application fees and payments due in lieu of replanting after the removal of protected trees. The fund is for purchasing, planting and maintaining trees and to support the work of the Reviewing Agent.

Removal of a protected tree without a Protected Tree Impact and Removal Permit during construction and within 12 months prior to submitting an application for a demolition or building permit is prohibited. The goal of this provision is to prevent the practice of clear cutting before applying for permits.

Protected trees not removed during construction or demolition must be protected by a fenced off Tree Save Area. The property owner must provide mitigation for protected trees that are removed. Mitigation can be replanting, no less than 1/2" caliper for every 1" DBH of tree removed with a 3" minimum DBH, or by payment of \$500 per 1" DBH of removed protected tree.

Unauthorized removal of protected trees incurs the same fee plus a penalty of \$300 per protected tree per day until the \$500 fee and penalty are paid.

All protected trees and replanted trees must be maintained in good health for 24 months from final inspection. If a tree dies or significantly declines, the property owner is required to provide mitigation within 9 months.



An example of the preconstruction clear cutting the by-law will prevent.

Protecting Land with a Conservation Restriction

A Conservation Restriction (CR) is a legally binding agreement between a landowner and a government agency or qualified conservation organization in which the landowner agrees to restrict the use of the land in order to preserve its environmental value. The landowner retains title to the land and the right to use it in ways that are consistent with its protection. The land may be sold, but the restriction runs with the property's deed and will be binding on the new owner.

The purpose of a restriction is to preserve land in its natural, scenic or open condition in the public interest. To this end a property must meet certain criteria. Values that can make land eligible for protection include the presence of native species, protection of water bodies, wetland resource areas or water quality and storm water control. Other values include the protection of scenic views, significant trees and parcels adjacent to land already protected.

In Brookline, most Restrictions are held by the Town. In addition, the Brookline Conservation Land Trust owns three



Goddard Wood

properties and holds the enforcement rights to the Richardson parcel on Route 9. The land that is now Fisher Hill Reservoir Park was sold to Brookline by the Commonwealth with a permanent restriction enforced by the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance. Ownership of the land remains with the Town. Fisher Hill Reservoir Park, at 9.65 acres is the largest restriction in town but restrictions can be any size; one is as small as 0.029 acre.



Each CR should be tailored to address the specific resources the restriction is protecting. All restricted properties must allow reasonable access to officials of the holder of the restriction so that compliance with the conditions of the Conservation Restriction may be monitored.

Conservation Restrictions benefit Brookline, its residents and the residents of the Commonwealth by preserving environmentally valuable land. Where the CR is a gift, the Town gains the ability to preserve in perpetuity land that might not be affordable for purchase by the Town. Public access, which is a feature of some CRs, is also a public benefit. The particular benefits of a restriction are detailed in the CR itself. The land is generally left undisturbed or in its current state, except as specifically provided in the CR.

In addition to benefitting the community, an owner may see the benefit a Conservation Restriction provides to permanently maintain a parcel of land intact, especially where it has family or historical significance. The owner may also realize tax relief as a result of granting a Conservation Restriction on his or her property. Decisions on any local real estate tax relief is made by the Brookline Board of Assessors. Greater relief is afforded properties that allow public access. In contrast to varying levels of access to Restrictions held by the Town, the three properties owned by the Brookline Conservation Land Trust are open dawn to dusk. The Trust maintains signage and trails.

Building Community and Celebrating Nature In Brookline's Parks

Alexandra Vecchio, Director of Parks and Open Space

The Parks and Open Space Division is excited to invite the community to our Spring events, including Spring Fest: Fight for Nature. Act for All, and two neighborhood park clean-ups and celebrations. The goal of these events is to spread awareness about preserving, protecting and caring for nature in our parks as a climate change solution.

Spring Fest will be held at Allerton Overlook in Olmsted Park on May 20, from 11AM to 2PM. The festival, now in its second year, will have an environmental action focus: celebrating the value of nature and our need to protect and care for it. There will be activities for all ages and community groups with an environmental focus will be there to lead educational games and share information on how the community can get involved with their organization and take collective action on behalf of the natural world.

The Department of Public Works Divisions including, Water and Sewer, Highway and Sanitation, Engineering and Transportation, as well as Parks and Open Space, will all lead activities that demonstrate the work of their Division and easy-to-access ways for community members to increase sustainable actions in their homes, schools, and beyond. Our event sponsors will also provide opportunities for community action and engagement.

Our parks and open spaces play a critical role in both mitigating the impacts of climate change and adapting to the changes we are already facing. Nature needs us and we need nature. If we have any hope of protecting our planet and preserving the natural world in Brookline and beyond, we need to educate and empower our community members to be stewards and advocates for these critical spaces.

Spring Fest will include a tree identification walk to learn about the trees in Olmsted Park, planting activities around Allerton Overlook, as well as lawn games, music, food, and more.

The Parks and Open Space Division has made it a goal to sponsor at least two neighborhood events each spring and two each fall in order to connect the neighborhoods to their local park and increase participation in the various Park Friends groups. The first event in 2023 was a joint effort by the Friends of Brookline Reservoir and the Brookline Recreation Department at Brookline Reservoir. Activities included a fishing clinic, planting new perennials and mulching the beds.

On June third the Division will hold a planting event and clean-up at Linden Park in partnership with the Friends of Linden Park. This event is designed to have a block party feel and will include games and music, as well as various maintenance and planting projects around the park.

The Parks and Open Space Division hopes to see you all there. For more information, please visit www.brooklinema.gov/parks

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance is a sponsor of Spring Fest.





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Support for Friends Groups

One of the primary objectives of the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance is to support and foster volunteer groups who help care for our parks. Park Friends groups' contribution to the quality of life in Brookline is invaluable and BGSA acts as their backup system.

The Umbrella functions of the Alliance include acting as fiscal sponsor; promoting activities throughout the year; holding informational meetings with the Director of Parks & Open Space; and hosting gatherings to exchange ideas. The Alliance also offers grants to Friends Groups for projects in their parks.

By supplying a strong network of park volunteers, BGSA enables individual groups to raise funds for special projects, attract more volunteers to their parks, and foster a sense of stewardship throughout Brookline.

**Join the Alliance
Get involved!**

Preserving Longwood Mall: An Urban Oasis in Brookline Continued from page 4

have been, there is reason for optimism. Unfortunately, the Parks Department did need to remove two of the park's trees in February. These trees were not infected by BLD but were suffering from other maladies and had become a safety hazard for visitors and the other trees. These removals are not done lightly and only done after a thorough assessment by the Tree Warden in consultation with other experts. In the spring, Friends of Longwood Mall will raise money to plant new trees. It is sad to see the old trees removed and each tree is a living thing that we will strive to protect, but sometimes it can be helpful to take a longer-term perspective. We can think of Longwood Mall as an interconnected whole, where all the trees will eventually die (European Beeches typically live for around 200 years), but new trees will be planted and cared for. With this approach, we can hope to preserve Longwood Mall indefinitely, so that many future generations of Brookline residents can enjoy the park as we have.



Please visit our website (www.longwoodmall.org) to learn more about the history of Longwood Mall, share your own photos and stories of the park, and stay updated on all the latest news and events.