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What's Out There®

Boston



Photo courtesy Friends of the Public Garden

Welcome to *What's Out There*® Boston, organized by The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) and a committee of local experts.

This guidebook provides photographs and information about 31 examples of the region's rich cultural landscape legacy, many of which were featured in *What's Out There Weekend Boston*, September 12-13, 2020, a weekend of free, expert-led tours.

From the city's founding in 1630 to the City Beautiful movement in the early twentieth century and postwar development, Boston's landscape legacy is rich and nationally significant. During colonial times, Boston grew into an active seaport with a bustling Common (historically, the Public Common). Boston's population increased dramatically during the nineteenth century, as the harbor developed into a leading commercial hub. Between 1878 and 1895, the Boston Park Commission initiated the construction of more than 2,000 acres of publicly accessible parkland. Conceived and implemented by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., the design stretches from the Common at the foot of the State House in downtown Boston all the way to the southern limits of the city, and set a precedent for public park systems and urban greenways in America and beyond.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the physical size of Boston had dramatically expanded from its time as a colonial seaport. Accommodating motor vehicles yielded construction that both connected the city and separated neighborhoods. Urban development and civic projects, growing universities and cultural institutions, and many factors shaped the contours of the city we experience today.

With the advent of the novel coronavirus in 2020, the value and importance of the city's public parks and open space has increased. Sites such as the Boston Common have

been beneficial to public health, now they are important in ameliorating the effects of social isolation and strengthening family, community and neighborhood bonds. Public parks and open space continue to be places for recreation and relaxation as well as sites for this year's protests against racial and social injustice.

This guidebook is a complement to TCLF's digital *What's Out There Cultural Landscapes Guide* to Boston (tclf.org/boston), an interactive online platform produced in partnership with the National Park Service. It includes a history of the city, more than 60 site profiles, as well as overarching narratives, maps, historic photographs, and designers' biographical profiles. This print guidebook and the digital guide dovetail with TCLF's web-based *What's Out There*, the nation's most comprehensive searchable database of cultural landscapes. Profusely illustrated and carefully vetted, the searchable database currently features more than 2,100 sites, 12,000 images, and 1,100 designer profiles. The database has been optimized for mobile devices and includes *What's Nearby*, a GPS-enabled feature that locates all landscapes within a given distance, customizable by mileage or walking time.

A special word of thanks is owed to the many photographers who generously contributed their work to the guidebook and online guide. We are likewise grateful to the site owners, stewards, volunteers, financial supporters, and other friends of TCLF who made the guidebook and tours possible. We also appreciate your interest in *What's Out There Boston* and hope you will enjoy experiencing the region's unique and valuable landscape legacy.

Sincerely,



Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR
President and CEO, The Cultural Landscape Foundation



The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF)

TCLF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit founded in 1998 to connect people to places. TCLF educates and engages the public to make our shared landscape heritage more visible, identify its value, and empower its stewards. Through its website, publishing, lectures and other events, TCLF broadens support and understanding for cultural landscapes. TCLF is also home to the Cornelia Hahn Oberlander International Landscape Architecture Prize.

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Spectacle Island

Photo by Eric Kilby

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Emerald Necklace

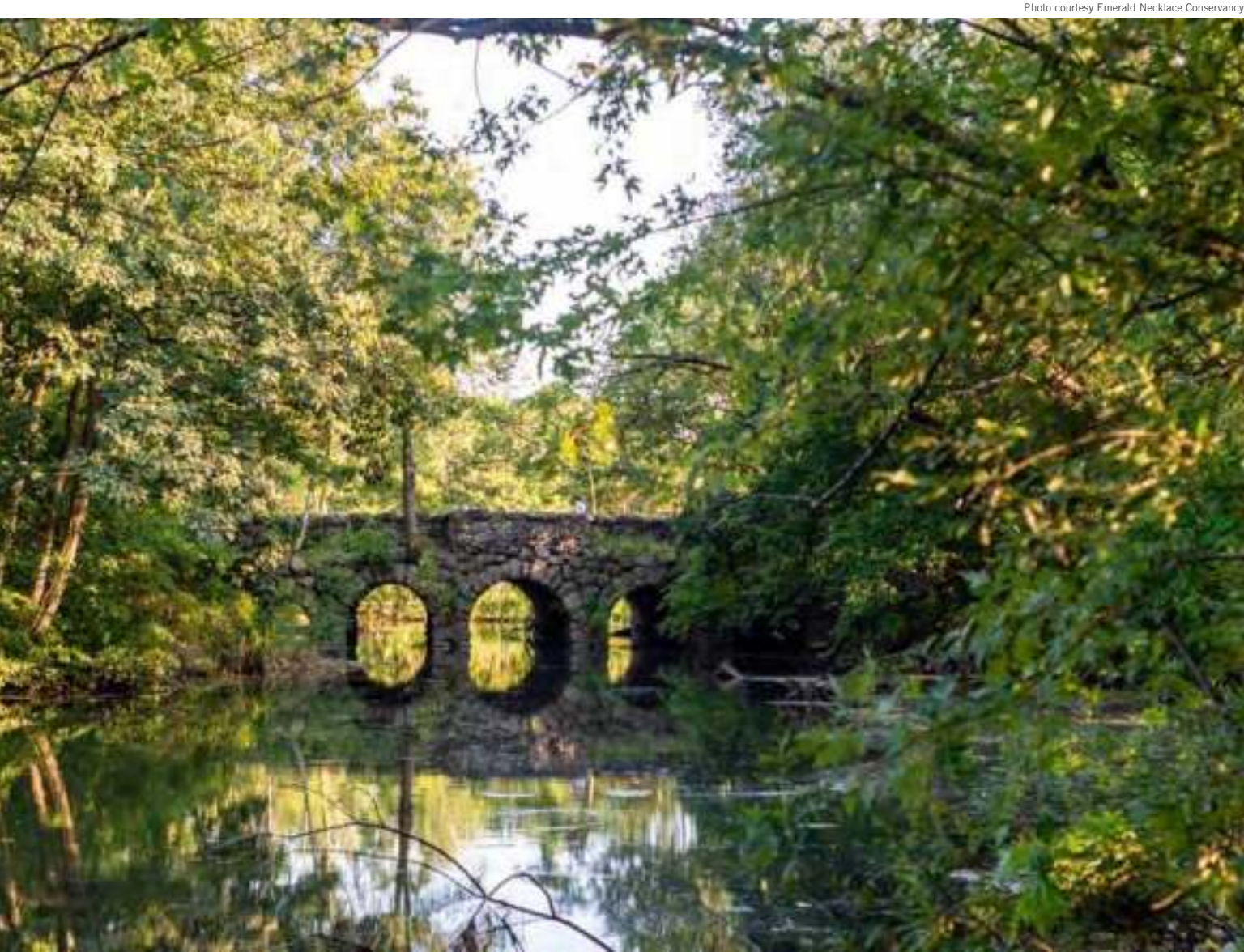


Photo courtesy Emerald Necklace Conservancy

This park system stretches from the Boston Common to Franklin Park. Designed between 1878 and 1895 by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., with Charles Eliot, John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., it is perhaps the first urban greenway in the world.

The core of the 1,100-acre system consists of five parks: the Back Bay Fens, the Muddy River Improvement (later named Olmsted Park and the Riverway), Jamaica Pond, the Arnold Arboretum and West Roxbury Park (now Franklin Park). The parks were linked by parkways resulting in a comprehensive system of water, meadows and woodland measuring five miles in length.

The Olmsted firm consulted on the parks until the 1920s, including collaborations between the Olmsted Brothers and Arthur Shurcliff on the Back Bay Fens. From 1984 to 1991, a joint venture between Walmsley + Company and Pressley Associates (Walmsley/Pressley Joint Venture) produced “The Emerald Parks Master Plan for Back Bay Fens, The Riverway, Olmsted Park and Jamaica Pond.” In 2017, the park section connecting the Riverway and the Fens, which had been made into a parking lot, was returned to parkland as part of a project to restore the Muddy River by Pressley Associates. The park was named for former Parks Commissioner Justine Liff. The Necklace was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Olmsted Park System in 1971, while the Fens and Franklin Park are Boston Landmarks. In 1996 the Emerald Necklace Conservancy was created to protect, restore, maintain and promote the park system.

Landscape Type:

Public Park -
Park System

Landscape Style:

Picturesque

Designed By:

Charles Eliot
Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.
Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
F.L. & J.C. Olmsted
F.L. Olmsted & Co.
Halvorson Design Partnership
John Charles Olmsted
Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot
Olmsted Brothers
Pressley Associates
Walmsley and Company

Related Landscapes:

Arnold Arboretum
Back Bay Fens
Boston Common
Boston Public Garden
Commonwealth Avenue Mall
Franklin Park
Jamaica Pond
Olmsted Park
The Riverway

Photos courtesy Emerald Necklace Conservancy



Franklin Park

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Large Municipal Park

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Arthur Asahel Shurcliff
Child Associates
Donald Ross
Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
F.L. & J.C. Olmsted
F.L. Olmsted & Co.
Halvorson Company
John Charles Olmsted
Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot
Pressley Associates
Reed Hilderbrand
Susan Child
Weinmayr Associates

Related Landscapes:
Emerald Necklace
Franklin Park Zoo

The largest park in the Emerald Necklace, measuring 527 acres, this landscape was meant to serve as Boston's "central" park. Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., with John Charles Olmsted, completed the general plan in 1885. John Charles Olmsted supervised construction through 1896. Subdivided into two sections separated by Glen Lane, the Country Park portion represents 2/3 of the acreage, with the remainder, known as the Ante Park, set aside for active recreation. This latter portion includes the children's play area, termed the Playstead, and a promenade known as the Greeting (now the Franklin Park Zoo). The design used existing topography, ledges, native stone, and vegetation to achieve the intended Picturesque character. Although the woodlands and meadows are often larger than in other Emerald Necklace parks, contributing elements such as drives, bridges, walls, overlooks, and site furniture deploy a similar palette. A golf course replaced the former Country Park Meadow in 1896. Arthur Shurcliff designed the zoo in 1910 and redesigned the Peabody Circle drives in 1925. White Stadium was built in the Playstead in 1948, while a section, known as Heathfield, was deeded to the Commonwealth to build Shattuck Hospital in 1954. In 1976 Weinmayr Associates prepared an Historic Master Plan. In 1991 the Halvorson Company (now Halvorson Tighe & Bond Studio) prepared "The Franklin Park Master Plan." Child Associates undertook historic preservation work at the park from 1995 to 1998, returning stadium parking to recreational lawn, and reinstalling pathways that had been removed or altered over time. Pressley Associates restored the ruin and landscape at Schoolmaster Hill in 1997 and in 2012 restored park paths and trails. In 2019, Reed Hilderbrand in collaboration with Agency Landscape + Planning and MASS Design Group began a master plan for the park.



Photos courtesy Boston Park & Rec



Franklin Park Zoo

Opened in 1912 and situated in the western corner of Franklin Park, the 72-acre zoo is New England's largest. While Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., who designed Franklin Park, felt that zoos were incompatible with pastoral city parks, he did plan for naturalistic areas featuring native animals. Arthur Shurcliff's design for the zoo worked with Olmsted's Picturesque plan but supplemented it with animals from equatorial climates. Some of the earliest elements to be installed were the Asian-inspired bird house designed by William Austen and The Greeting, a half-mile long pedestrian mall lined with fifty elm trees. Built in 1918, the main entrance, called the Zebra Entrance, was marked by eight classical granite columns taken from the Custom House Tower before their removal in 2007. Smaller gates were added in 1934. The entrance connects with the larger park through The Greeting's graceful promenade. The Giraffe Entrance opens to the interior of Franklin Park and is framed by two marble statues designed by Daniel Chester French, which were installed in 1928.

In 1958 management of the zoo was transferred from the City of Boston to the Metropolitan District Commission, which hired the zoo's first professional zoologist and established the Children's Zoo. In 1991 zoo ownership was transferred to the Commonwealth Zoological Corporation (now Zoo New England), which opened several exhibits focused on Africa and Australia and the butterfly habitat. Exhibits are organized according to biome and animal type, with Naturalistic designs that allow animals free movement in spaces that approximate their natural habitat.

Landscape Type:
Zoo -
Victorian Zoological Garden

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Arthur Asahel Shurcliff
Stickney & Austin

Related Landscapes:
Franklin Park Zoo



Photo by Chris Devers



Photo by Ber Syles



Photo by Lorraine DiSabato

Arnold Arboretum

Landscape Type:

Arboretum
Public Park

Landscape Style:

Picturesque

Designed By:

Arthur Asahel Shurcliff
Beatrix Farrand
Brown, Richardson + Rowe
Carol R. Johnson Associates
Charles Eliot
Charles Sprague Sargent
Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
H.H. Richardson
John Charles Olmsted
Julia Moir Messervy Design Studio
Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot
Reed Hilderbrand
Sasaki Associates
Shurcliff, Merrill & Footit

Related Landscapes:

Emerald Necklace

A 120-acre portion of James Arnold's estate was transferred to Harvard College in 1872 to create an arboretum. Charles Sprague Sargent, its first director, together with Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., penned a thousand-year lease agreement in 1882 between Boston and Harvard in which the land became part of the Emerald Necklace while the Arboretum retained control of the living collections. The city was to provide maintenance in exchange for public access. The overall design was intended to be Naturalistic, fitting with existing topography and vegetation. The main road presented the collections sequentially according to genus. Entirely surrounded by a stone wall, the various entry gates were largely designed by the Olmsted firm, though the South Street entrance is attributed to architect H.H. Richardson. Other structures include three simple boulder culverts serving as bridges, all designed by John Charles Olmsted. In 1895, additional lands were purchased and designed by the Olmsted firm. In the 1940s, Beatrix Farrand added the Meadow Road azalea border. In 1974 Shurcliff, Merrill, & Footit redesigned the summit of Bussey Hill, adding seating. Over time the Arboretum grew to 281 acres, and reflects the work of many Boston-area landscape architects. This includes the Blackwell Footpath and two ornamental entrances designed by Brown, Richardson + Rowe, the Hunnewell Visitor Center by Carol R. Johnson Associates (now IBI Placemaking) in the 1990s, and the three-acre Leventritt Garden by Reed Hilderbrand in 2007. In 1965 it was listed as a National Historic Landmark and in the National Register of Historic Places the following year.



Photo by Chris Devers



Photo by Charles A. Birnbaum



Photo by Heather McMahon

Photo by Heather McMahon



Jamaica Pond

Photo courtesy Emerald Necklace Conservancy



Formed by an ancient glacier, this 70-acre pond is the largest freshwater body in Boston. Prior to Olmsted Sr.'s involvement, the pond served as a popular summer resort. In an 1882 report, Olmsted described the feature as "a natural sheet of water, with quiet graceful shores, rear banks of varied elevation and contour, for the most part shaded by a fine natural forest-growth." In contrast with other parks in the Emerald Necklace, little was done on-site; there was no significant regrading or reshaping of the land required; while a simple system of walkways that encircle the pond provide for a 1.5-mile scenic loop. For the additional 60 land acres, Olmsted retained many of the existing trees, in addition to the Pinebank house designed in 1870 (demolished in 2007). The Jamaica Pond Boathouse and Bandstand were built in 1913 from plans by William Austin. A memorial statue to horticulturist and historian Francis Parkman, designed by Daniel Chester French, was erected at the site of his former residence in 1906. Jamaica Pond is served by two parkways, both intended to be integral to the parks: the Jamaica way, at its southern end; and, the Arborway, which connects the park to the Arnold Arboretum. Jamaica Pond was included in the Emerald Necklace Park master plan undertaken by the Walmsley/Pressley Joint Venture. From 1989 to 2001 Pressley Associates completed bikeway, shore and path restoration, restored views and made vegetation improvements. Jamaica Pond was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 as part of the Olmsted System nomination.

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Neighborhood Park

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Charles Eliot
Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.
Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect
John Charles Olmsted
Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture
Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot
Pressley Associates
Stickney & Austin
Walmsley and Company

Related Landscapes:
Emerald Necklace

Photos courtesy Emerald Necklace Conservancy



Muddy River: Olmsted Park

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Neighborhood Park

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Charles Eliot
Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
John Charles Olmsted
Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot
Pressley Associates
Walmsley and Company

Related Landscapes:
Emerald Necklace

This park, contiguous with the Riverway, forms part of what was originally called the Muddy River Improvement, on the boundary of the City of Boston and the Town of Brookline. It was described by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., in 1881 as “a chain of . . . fresh water ponds, alternating with attractive natural groups and meads.” This linear park was added because of concerns regarding the pollution of the Muddy River. Connected by a common waterway, the 12.8-acre Leverett Pond, (the original name for the park) was renamed Olmsted Park in 1900. Other significant water features in the park include Ward’s Pond and Willow Pond. Richly planted along its banks with a diverse palette, today this seventeen-acre swath is the most forested section of the Emerald Necklace. As with the Riverway, the design incorporates a diverse collection of stairs and bridges, including the puddingstone footbridge at Ward’s Pond and granite bridges at Cumberland Avenue, the Cove Entrance, and Ward’s and Willow Ponds, with the design of the bridges benefitting from preliminary studies by John Charles Olmsted. Jamaicaway parkway runs along the southern edge of the park connecting the Riverway and Jamaica Pond. Olmsted Park was included in the Emerald Necklace Park master plan by the Walmsley/Pressley Joint Venture. Following the plan’s adoption, the 1965 skating rink was removed, and Pressley Associates improved the park’s shoreline, woodlands and circulation system, adding a bikeway and restoring the Riverdale parkway. Olmsted Park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 as part of the Olmsted System nomination.



Photos courtesy Emerald Necklace Conservancy

Muddy River: The Riverway

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Neighborhood Park

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Hideo Sasaki
Charles Eliot
Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.
Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
John Charles Olmsted
Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot
Pressley Associates
Walmsley and Company

Related Landscapes:
Emerald Necklace

The linear parkland along the Riverway, connecting to Olmsted Park, forms what was originally called the Muddy River Improvement, located on the boundary of the City of Boston and the Town of Brookline. It was described by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., in 1881 as “passages of rushy meadow and varied slopes from the upland; trees in groups, diversified by thickets and open glades.” This park was added because of concerns regarding the pollution of the Muddy River. Connected by a common waterway, and falling into two distinct topographical sections, the park was graded and planted along its banks. The design includes a diverse collection of bridges, stairs, and a park shelter. Along with an integrated bridle path, the bridges supported a separation of “ways” (e.g. pedestrian, equestrian); they include the Longwood Bridge (Shepley, Ruten, & Coolidge, architects), the Chapel Street Bridge, two small footbridges leading to the island near Netherlands Road, and the iron Carlton Street Bridge. The Huntington Avenue overpass was a 1936 addition. Along the park’s southeastern edge, the Jamaicaway parkway becomes the Riverway parkway. Between 1988 and 1998, Pressley Associates restored park paths, bridges, and plantings. In 1998, Sears Company returned their parking lot to the city, thus, strengthening the Riverway’s connection to the Back Bay Fens. The restored “Missing Link”, completed by Pressley Associates, was named for former parks commissioner Justine Liff. The Riverway was included in the Emerald Necklace Park master plan by the Walmsley/Pressley Joint Venture. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 as part of the Olmsted System nomination.



Photos courtesy Emerald Necklace Conservancy

Back Bay Fens



Photo courtesy Emerald Necklace Conservancy

Initially called Back Bay Park, the park was renamed to reflect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.'s vision for a restored saltwater marsh. Through his 1879 plan, Olmsted called for passages of Picturesque scenery through an ecologically healthy wetland able to absorb flood waters. Realized with assistance from John Charles Olmsted, the plan provided a solution for the ever-increasing sewage outfalls from the burgeoning city population, while also creating a retention area during periods of flood. In addition to the innovative use of native plants, the Fens included several bridges and a gatehouse. Architect H.H. Richardson designed the Boylston Street Bridge and the Stony Brook Gate House while the Agassiz and the Fen Bridges were designed by John Charles Olmsted. After the Charles River was dammed in 1910, the ecology of the Fens shifted from salt to freshwater; redesign solutions were undertaken with Arthur Shurcliff, including the southern basin near the Museum of Fine Arts and the Kelleher Rose Garden. In 1941 a victory garden was planted during wartime. A number of war memorials have also been added over time as has a playground known as Mother's Rest designed by Walker-Kluesing Design Group. Between 1989 and 1993 Pressley Associates restored the Agassiz Bridge and the Fenway Victory Gardens. Back Bay Fens is connected to the Emerald Necklace by the Fenway and Park Drive parkways. The Fens was included in the Emerald Necklace Park master plan by the Walmsley/Pressley Joint Venture in 1989. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 as part of the Olmsted System nomination.

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Neighborhood Park

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Arthur Asahel Shurcliff
Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect
H.H. Richardson
John Charles Olmsted
Olmsted Brothers
Pressley Associates
Walker-Kluesing Design Group
Walmsley and Company

Related Landscapes:
Emerald Necklace



Photos courtesy Emerald Necklace Conservancy



Boston Public Library

Landscape Type:
Courtyard
Streetscape

Landscape Style:
Italianate

Designed By:
Charles McKim
McKim, Mead & White
Philip Johnson
Reed Hilderbrand
Walker-Kluesing Design Group

This library, designed by McKim, Mead & White, is aligned with the southern edge of Copley Square. Opened in 1895, the Renaissance Revival building is ornamented with many lavish embellishments including monumental inscriptions, sculpture, murals, and light fixtures. Nestled into the building's core is an open-air courtyard closely based on that of the sixteenth-century Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome.

Designed in the manner of a Renaissance cloister, the courtyard is surrounded by an arcaded gallery. In the middle is a small plaza centered around a square basin with a classically-inspired sculpture and fountain by Frederick William MacMonnies. On opposite sides of the fountain plaza are two large lawn panels, each with a compact evergreen perimeter hedge and ornamented by annual plantings. The view from inside the courtyard provides a glimpse of the campanile of the Old South Church.

A 1972 addition by Philip Johnson was notable for having no windows on the streetscape. In 2016, landscape architects Reed Hilderbrand, in concert with William Rawn Architects, redesigned the building's first floor to serve as "a grand civic living room." They opened up the structure to the street by removing the 2,000 pound tablets that the architects had used in place of windows and repurposed them as pavers. The interior space now seamlessly flows outside to an inviting streetscape along Boylston Street. The library was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986.



Photo by Maveric Studios



Photo by Koshka



Photo courtesy Reed Hilderbrand

Christian Science Center

Within the tight urban grid of Boston's Back Bay neighborhood, the world headquarters of the First Church of Christ, Scientist was completed in 1971, featuring an enormous central open space not unlike the massive plazas and piazzas adjacent to Europe's cathedrals. To contextualize the many existing and proposed buildings that would comprise the 25-acre Christian Science Center campus, architect Arnaldo Cossutta of I.M. Pei & Associates, in close collaboration with the Boston Redevelopment Authority, created a master plan. Cossutta's report included the development of neighboring properties to encourage private investment and improve access between the campus and the surrounding community.

In the mid-1960s Cossutta engaged the landscape architecture firm Sasaki, Dawson & DeMay to provide a classical setting for the Christian Science Center, including a great plaza with circular spray fountain 80 feet in diameter, an arching grove of nearly 200 linden trees, and a 700-foot long rectangular reflecting pool. Visitors appear to walk on water as they move along the tree-lined pool while motorists proceed unseen through the parking garage below. Landscape architect Peter Rolland of Sasaki, Dawson & DeMay carefully compiled the rotating plant palette, using raised planters to feature seasonal displays of color. Prescient then, innovative now, the continuous soil trenches beneath the linden bosque has supported the healthy maturation of large shade trees. In more recent years Reed Hilderbrand and IBI Placemaking have led projects to improve and restore the plaza. In 2011 Christian Science Plaza became the first Modernist landscape in Boston to be locally designated as a landmark.

Landscape Type:
Institutional Grounds -
Religious Institution
Plaza

Landscape Style:
Modernist

Designed By:
Hideo Sasaki
IBI Placemaking
I.M. Pei
I.M. Pei & Associates
Peter G. Rolland
Reed Hilderbrand
Sasaki, Dawson & DeMay
Stuart O. Dawson



Photos by Charles A. Birnbaum



Charles River Esplanade

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Neighborhood Park

Landscape Style:
Beaux-Arts / Neoclassical
Picturesque

Designed By:
Arthur Asahel Shurcliff
Charles Eliot
Clara Batchelor
Halvorson Design Partnership

Related Landscapes:
Charles River Reservation

This linear waterfront park stretches from the Longfellow Bridge at its northeast end to the Harvard Bridge at its southwest end via the Back Bay and Beacon Hill neighborhoods. Originally known as the Boston Embankment, the park was created as part of the Charles River Dam project in 1910, which had been previously championed by landscape architect Charles Eliot. Eliot's efforts were initially opposed by residents of the Back Bay neighborhood who feared a loss of views and property values. However, the proposal gained momentum in 1901 when lawyer and banker James Storrow organized a letter-writing campaign, and in 1903 the state legislature approved the project. In the 1920s and 1930s landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff designed expansions to the promenade, adding a lagoon, plazas, boat landings, and playgrounds. In 1941 the Hatch Memorial Shell, an outdoor concert venue, was constructed. Initially connected to the Emerald Necklace, the expansion of Storrow Drive and the creation of the Charlesgate Overpass in 1954 and 1966, respectively, limited connectivity. A pedestrian path extends the length of the park, tracing the Charles River shoreline, while a bicycle path traces the interior of the park, adjacent to Storrow Drive.

In 2001 community members formed the Esplanade Association to restore and enhance the declining esplanade. The Association has overseen various improvements including the installation of an ornamental garden, and ongoing efforts to restore Shurcliff's original tree plantings. As part of the Association's 2009 Esplanade 2020 vision, Halvorson Design Partnership, completed design work at the Charles Eliot Memorial, the Esplanade Playspace, and restored the Hatch Shell Oval Lawn.



Photo by Tom Klein



Commonwealth Avenue Mall



Photo by Charles A. Birnbaum

Initially laid out in the 1850s as part of Arthur Gilman’s plan for the Back Bay, this 32-acre axial boulevard that connects the Public Garden to Massachusetts Avenue and the Fens is a precursor to what would become the Boston Park System (designed between 1878 and 1895). Nestled into Boston’s Back Bay, the green space is visible from every intersection along its length. Unlike many sections of Boston that have consistent architectural styles, the boulevard’s setting is diverse, with many corners anchored by a distinctive church or private residence. In 1885 Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., extended the Mall westward from Massachusetts Avenue to Charlesgate, however much of this section was later redesigned.

For the first eight blocks, the design palette is simple: lawn panels separated by a central pedestrian path; a cathedral-like canopy of trees; benches along the path; and, wrought iron fences at the entrance to each block. Nine sculptures have been added to the park since William Rimmer’s Alexander Hamilton in 1865. In 1970 local community members established the Friends of the Public Garden in an effort to improve Boston’s declining parks, including the Mall. The portions of the Mall that are bounded by Commonwealth Avenue, Kenmore and Arlington Streets were designated as a Boston Landmark in 1978.

Landscape Type:
Boulevard

Landscape Style:
Beaux-Arts/Neoclassical

Designed By:
Arthur D. Gilman
F.L. & J.C. Olmsted

Related Landscapes:
Emerald Necklace



Photo courtesy Friends of the Public Garden



Photos by Charles A. Birnbaum



Boston Public Garden

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Greens / Commons / Squares

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
George F. Meacham
James Slade
John Cadness

Related Landscapes:
Emerald Necklace

Originally established on the former mudflats of Boston's Back Bay by horticulturalist Horace Gray in 1837, the first public botanical garden in America was not fully realized until the late nineteenth century. Although many proposals were generated during its initial decades, only simple modifications were made until 1859 when the land was secured for park purposes, in response to the proposals for a 'Central Park' in New York. That same year, a design by architect George Meacham was selected. Employing formal and Picturesque elements, Meacham's plan included geometrical flower beds, a central building on axis with an ornate bridge, a playground, fountains, and pedestrian paths. The plan was adapted by city engineer James Slade who replaced the building with an equestrian statue of George Washington (1864) by Thomas Ball. Construction was completed by the 1860s. The park's iconic swan boats were added in 1877. Improvements over time included the conversion of a peninsula, situated along the north side of the pond, into an island and the regrading of the eastern border along Charles Street in 1895. The Public Garden, and the adjacent Boston Common, serves as the northern terminus of the Emerald Necklace park system, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. Various sculptures have been added over time. In 1970 community members established the Friends of the Public Garden to improve Boston's declining parks, including the garden. In 1972, the garden was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987.

Photo courtesy Friends of the Public Garden



Photos courtesy Friends of the Public Garden



Photo by Wally Gobetz

Boston Common



Photo by Barrett Doherty

The Boston Common, along with the Public Garden and Commonwealth Avenue, served as a precursor to the Boston Park System, designed between 1878 and 1895. As in many early New England towns, Boston's treeless common land, used for pasturing cows, also accommodated pedestrian foot traffic. One of the city's oldest cemeteries, The Central Burying Ground, was established here in 1756. In 1836 an ornamental fence was constructed around its perimeter and the park's circulation network was articulated to include pedestrian malls and promenades. The transformation to a wooded park, lined with double and single rows of canopy trees, happened in the late nineteenth century. The nation's first subway system opened here in 1897.

The 50-acre park, located at the foot of the State House, has many designers. The Olmsted Brothers firm oversaw considerable renovation between 1910 and 1913 while Arthur Shurcliff prepared a general plan in the 1920s. Significant landscape features include the Brewster Fountain by Paul Lienard; the Soldiers and Sailors Monument by Martin Milmore; and the Parkman Bandstand, and Parkman Plaza by Schurcliff & Merrill. In 1970 local community members established the Friends of the Public Garden, in an effort to revitalize Boston's parks, including the Common. In 1990 the Boston Common Management Plan by Walker-Kluesing Design Group was completed, and updated in 1996. Pressley Associates rehabilitated the Common's Brewer Fountain Plaza, Lafayette Mall, Parkman Plaza and Tremont Street Mall between 2012 and 2018. The Common was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and was listed as a National Historic Landmark in 1987. In 2019, the city launched a master plan for the Boston Common in collaboration with the Friends of the Public Garden; Weston & Sampson design studio is leading the master planning efforts.

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Greens / Commons / Squares

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Arthur Asahel Shurcliff
Olmsted Brothers
Pressley Associates
Shurcliff & Merrill
Walker-Kluesing Design Group

Related Landscapes:
Emerald Necklace



Photos by Charles A. Birnbaum



Photo by Barrett Doherty

Granary Burying Ground

Landscape Type:
Cemetery

Related Landscapes:
Freedom Trail

Established in 1660, this approximately two-acre cemetery is located on the edge of Boston's Beacon Hill neighborhood, just to the east of Boston Common. It contains more than 2,300 grave markers, including those for Benjamin Franklin's parents, Paul Revere, John Hancock, James Otis, and Samuel Adams. During the early Victorian era, headstones in the graveyard were reorganized into street-facing rows to accommodate the advent of the lawn mower. An Egyptian Revival gate and fence, designed by architect Isaiah Rogers, was installed in 1840. Interments ceased in 1880, after concerns about overcrowding and public health were raised by local physicians.

The trapezoid-shaped cemetery is surrounded by commercial and institutional development on three sides, and opens onto Tremont Street on the remaining side. It is dotted with mature trees and plaques, which highlight historically significant persons interred in the cemetery. There are stone paths along the perimeter of the cemetery, and a path runs from the main entrance through the center of the burying ground. Secondary paths branch off from the central spine to connect with the perimeter path. Wrought iron bollards connected by a single chain line both sides of the central path in an effort to keep people from veering off the established pathways. The Granary Burying Ground is one of sixteen stops along the Freedom Trail.



Photos by Barrett Doherty



City Hall Plaza

Landscape Type:
Plaza

Landscape Style:
Modernist

Designed By:
Halvorson Design Partnership
Hargreaves Associates
I.M. Pei & Associates
Kallman McKinnell & Knowles
Klopfer Martin Design Group
Reed Hilderbrand
Sasaki
Utile

In 1961 I.M. Pei & Associates devised the Government Center Urban Renewal Plan, which sought to reconfigure the city's West End neighborhood and Scollay Square, an area near the harbor known for its cabarets and burlesque shows. Pei's 60-acre Government Center, completed in 1968, featured 30 buildings for federal, state, and municipal offices alongside commercial space, and introduced Modernist design into the core of historic Boston.

City Hall's open, eight-acre plaza is Government Center's central focus. Designed by Pei and based upon the Piazza del Campo in Siena, Italy, the plaza is integrated with the Brutalist-style, pre-cast concrete structure designed by architects Kallmann McKinnell & Knowles. Pei's master plan stipulated the building's height, location, and architectural program as well as the irregular shape and form of the surrounding plaza. The plaza, operating as a multi-level forecourt, is paved in brick, recalling Beacon Hill's historic streetscapes. While the plaza's central expanse appears flat, it gently slopes down from east to west, with the northern half terraced and stepped to negotiate the grade change from Cambridge to Congress Streets. The plaza's northern border is lined with a gridded bosque of maple trees which shade angular, concrete benches. An original feature, a pie-shaped, sunken seating area with a fountain in the northwest corner, was paved over in 2006. More recently, a transit station with associated outdoor spaces was completed in 2016 by Halvorson Design Partnership with HDR, Inc. The following year, Reed Hilderbrand and Utile created a new master plan and in 2020 Sasaki began renovating the plaza to improve accessibility and sustainability.



Photo by Ed Woresek



Photos by Sam Sweezy



Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Neighborhood Park

Winding through downtown Boston, this 1.5-mile linear series of parks and open spaces measures seventeen acres along the path of a former elevated highway. Officially opened in 2008, the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy assumed stewardship and management responsibilities the following year through a lease agreement with the State.

Landscape Style:
Modernist

The Greenway is the result of the decades-long Central Artery Project (commonly known as the Big Dig), which buried Interstate 93. The project and its distinct parks restored visual and physical connectivity between downtown Boston and several historic neighborhoods, including the North End, Long Wharf, South Station, and Chinatown. The distinct parks that make up the greenway are each unique in character and spatial composition. Moving from south to north, the parks include: Chinatown Park (which marks the arrival at the Chinatown neighborhood by Carol R. Johnson Associates with Chinese landscape architect Yu Kongjian), Dewey Square (a plaza that foregrounds Boston's South Station by Machado and Silvetti Associates, Utile, and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society), Fort Point Channel Parks (a horticulturally rich and exuberant site by Halvorson Design Partnership and Massachusetts Horticultural Society, with subsequent plantings by Copley Wolff Design Group, Inc.), Wharf District Parks (which reconnects Boston with its harbor by EDAW and Copley Wolff), Armenian Heritage Park (Stantec), and North End Parks (which serves as a "front porch" for the North End by Crosby, Schlessinger, Smallridge, LLC and Gustafson Guthrie Nichol).

Designed By:
Carol R. Johnson Associates
Copley Wolff Design Group, Inc.
Crosby, Schlessinger, Smallridge, LLC
EDAW
Gustafson Guthrie Nichol
Halvorson Design Partnership
Machado and Silvetti Associates
Stantec
Utile
Yu Kongjian

Photo courtesy Copley Wolff Design Group



Photo courtesy Greenway Conservancy



Photos by Tom Klein



Norman B. Leventhal Park at Post Office Square

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Greens / Commons / Squares
Roof Garden

Located in Boston's Financial District, this triangular plot of land fronting Boston's main post office was created in 1872. Post Office Square, as it became known, was occupied by the Mutual Life Insurance Company, which was demolished in 1945 and replaced by a three-story parking garage.

Landscape Style:
Postmodernist

The Friends of Post Office Square, representing local civic leaders, successfully advocated for the garage's removal in 1988 and the construction of a seven-story underground parking facility. After Skidmore, Owing & Merrill's Boston office developed a programming and planning document, the Friends held a national competition won by the Halvorson Company, which implemented its design for the 1.7-acre park. Iterations of the Halvorson firm have been involved in ongoing improvements since 1991.

Designed By:
Halvorson Company

Curvilinear pathways, shaded by evergreens, maples, oaks, honey locusts, and other species, edge a large central lawn before encompassing a plaza featuring a glass-and-bronze sculptural fountain by Howard Ben Tré. A 143-foot-long vine-covered pergola supported by granite columns borders one edge of the lawn. Granite walls, lawn areas, and seasonal garden beds edge the park's east and west perimeters. Toward the southern entrance, the lawn gives way to a second plaza containing two copper-and-glass pavilions designed by Ellenzweig, which house a café and utilites surrounded by outdoor seating. Plantings consist of more than 125 species of shrubs, perennials, and deciduous trees, including several specimens on permanent loan from the Arnold Arboretum. The plantings frame views of the surrounding cityscape while screening the garage ramps. Leventhal Park earned the American Society of Landscape Architects' (ASLA) Landmark Award in 2014.



Photos by Ed Wonssek

Photo by Charles A. Birnbaum

Christopher Columbus Waterfront Park

Located between Boston's Commercial and Long Wharves, this site was once populated by industrial buildings that served the city's shipping industry. In the 1960s the Boston Redevelopment Authority funded the construction of public spaces, including a "Walk to the Sea" from Quincy Market to the waterfront. In 1974 the landscape architecture firm Sasaki, Dawson & DeMay created a waterfront park on filled land that became the harbor's public access point. The design drew on the site's history, using cobblestones and brick paving, wooden structures, and a bollard-and-chain system along the water to mimic the old bulkhead. On the nation's bicentennial, thousands watched from the newly dedicated park as the "Tall Ships" paraded into Boston Harbor. In 1999 a new design by the landscape architecture firm Halvorson Company saw the installation of a new performance area and additional lawn space that opened up views of the harbor.

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Neighborhood Park
Waterfront Development

Landscape Style:
Modernist

Designed By:
Halvorson Company
Sasaki, Dawson & DeMay
Stuart O. Dawson

Framed by Atlantic Avenue, the park is screened from traffic by groves of sycamores. A central lawn is bordered by a paved walkway that connects the park's central features, including the Rose Kennedy Garden and an open promenade framed by Sasaki's Lamella truss shade structure, which is draped in wisteria vines. A circular fountain demarcates the park's southwest entrance. To the north, a linear brick path leading from the street to the harbor separates the playground and the Massachusetts Beirut Memorial (1992) from the lawn. In 2020, during a period of social unrest, the park's namesake statue was beheaded and subsequently put in storage.



Photos by Charles A. Birnbaum

Long Wharf



Photo by Tom Klein

Originally built in the 1710s, this pier once extended from State Street in downtown Boston a half-mile into Boston Harbor. Before being shortened by infill, Long Wharf helped solidify the city as an important shipping destination. The wharf became further disconnected from downtown by an elevated highway constructed during the 1950s. This spurred concerns over the future of Boston's waterfront and resulted in its redesign by Sasaki, Dawson & DeMay. The firm was commissioned by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 1974 and prepared and oversaw the implementation of a master plan in 1979. The project involved the installation of a promenade along the remaining length of the pier, terminating in an open plaza that features decorative granite and bronze paving at its center in the form of a compass. To the north of this focal point is an open-air structure surrounded by planters and benches. The project also included the restoration of granite bulkheads and the introduction of furnishings, including granite slabs for seating and nautical-themed bollards and chains. A towering mast and flagpole acts as a beacon, visually connecting the pier with the city. The Harborwalk runs along the southern edge of Long Wharf, transitioning from a boardwalk to stone paving at the open plaza.

The project is visually and physically linked with Christopher Columbus Waterfront Park, designed by the same team in 1976. Long Wharf was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966.

Landscape Type:
Public Park
Waterfront Development

Landscape Style:
Postmodernist

Designed By:
Sasaki Associates
Sasaki, Dawson & DeMay
Stuart O. Dawson

Related Landscapes:
Boston Harbor Islands National
Recreation Area



Photo courtesy SASAKI



Photos by Charles A. Birnbaum



Marine Park

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
State Park

Designed By:
Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot
Stickney & Austin

Located in the City Point area of South Boston, along Pleasure Bay, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. intended this park to be the final jewel in the city's Emerald Necklace park system. In 1897 he laid out a plan for a grand boulevard leading from Franklin Park to Marine Park to connect Roxbury to the ocean in South Boston. However, his plans for the grand boulevard were never realized due to the difficulty of building over rail lines and acquiring land from encroaching structures, so Marine Park was never fully integrated into the network of parks. From 1894 to 1895, E.M. Wheelwright, the City of Boston's official architect, built a resort named Head House (demolished in 1942) in the southeastern section of the park. The park saw multiple alterations during the 1950s, including the construction of a permanent causeway at its north end that connected Marine Park to Castle Island, effectively enclosing Pleasure Bay.

The 255-acre park is bisected by Broadway, the eastern end of which contains a traffic circle featuring a bronze statue of Admiral David Farragut (1893) by Henry Hudson Kitson. The northern half of the park contains Murphy Memorial Skating Rink and athletic fields, and the southern half features a bandstand, open green space, and a playground. A beach runs along the park's eastern edge. The park is owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.



Photos by Tom Klein

Castle Island/ Fort Independence

Located in South Boston, the 22-acre former island and military fortification site juts into Boston Harbor. The site has been the location of a fort since the 1600s. During the Revolutionary War, it was occupied by British officials until the Siege of Boston in 1775. The dominating feature of the island is the extant granite fort, which was constructed from 1834 to 1851 and is the eighth iteration of forts on the island. The fort served as an armory during the Civil War, and was also utilized during the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II. In 1962 ownership of the fort shifted to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and it is now operated as a state park by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

The island became connected to the mainland as a result of land reclamation for port facility expansion. It is now accessible via both pedestrian and vehicular pathways with a pedestrian route encircling the fort and the island. A small marina is located on the western shore of the property. An obelisk dedicated to Donald McKay, the builder of the famous clipper ships Flying Cloud and Sovereign of the Seas, and a fishing pier are located just east of the fort. To the south is a playground area modeled after the fort's five-point star-shaped plan. The fort was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

Landscape Type:
Institutional Grounds -
Military Institution
Public Park -
State Park

Designed By:
Jean Foncin
Sylvanus Thayer

Related Landscapes:
Metropolitan Park System of
Greater Boston



Photos by Tom Klein

Joe Moakley Park

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
Neighborhood Park

Designed By:
Arthur Asahel Shurcliff
Stoss Landscape Urbanism

This 60-acre park along South Boston's coastline grew out of a plan by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., to connect his Emerald Necklace to South Boston's Marine Park via a system of parkways. The creation of the Dorchesterway and the Strandway spurred the development of waterfront recreation along Dorchester Bay, including Columbus Park. Designed by landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff in 1916 and built on infilled mudflats, the park included a below-grade, sunken open air track and football field, a series of baseball diamonds, and a playground. Ten acres were reserved as a wooded grove with walking paths lined with benches. In 2001 the park was renamed Joe Moakley Park in remembrance of the U.S. Congressman. In 2019 Stoss Landscape Urbanism began work on a Vision Plan to adapt the park to rising water levels of the Boston Harbor, diversify park activities, and improve waterfront accessibility.

Overlooking the crescent-shaped Carson Beach and providing views of Old Harbor, the park remains largely recreational including soccer fields, tennis courts, three baseball diamonds and a track and field stadium. Additional playfields and a playground are arranged along the park's western border. Linden and oak trees line the park's perimeter and shade interconnecting pedestrian pathways. The proposed redesign by Stoss elevates portions of the park and integrates stormwater management to protect the playfields and adjacent neighborhoods from flooding. The new topography allows for enhanced play features, improved views and community spaces including a waterfront amphitheater.

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Spectacle Island

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
National Park
State Park

Designed By:
Brown, Richardson + Rowe

Related Landscapes:
Boston Harbor Islands National
Recreation Area

Located four miles east of Boston in Boston Harbor, this 114-acre island features recreational amenities including five miles of hiking trails, beaches, a marina, and a visitor center. Composed of two drumlins connected by a narrow point of land, Spectacle Island was given its name by colonial settlers who looked out across the harbor and saw what looked like a pair of eyeglasses. The island has served as the location for a variety of uses over time, including agriculture, a quarantine hospital, a glue factory, recreational resorts (until 1857), and a municipal landfill from 1935 until 1992. Starting in 1992 excavated dirt from Boston’s “Big Dig” (see Rose Kennedy Greenway, page 29) infrastructure project was relocated to Spectacle Island and was utilized to cap the landfill with two feet of clay and up to five feet of topsoil. The Boston-based landscape architecture firm Brown, Richardson + Rowe designed and re-graded the island, maintaining the original formation of two connected hills and incorporating a spiral circulation pattern leading up to each peak.

Spectacle Island is accessible by public ferry, private or charter boats. The marina and visitor center are located on the island’s western shore. Hiking trails offer views of neighboring Harbor Islands and Boston’s skyline. Spectacle Island is owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the City of Boston. The island is part of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, which became a National Park unit in 1996.



Photo by Eric Kilby



Photos by Bogdan Tapu



Paul Revere Mall

Landscape Type:
Pedestrian Mall

Designed By:
Arthur Asahel Shurcliff
Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture, Inc.
Sidney Nichols Shurcliff

Inspired by the Paseo del Prado in Havana, Cuba, this walkway was designed by landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff with the assistance of his son Sidney Shurcliff in 1933. Originally called Webster Avenue, the narrow passageway was cleared of tenement housing and substantially widened to create a direct sightline between two historic landmarks: The Old North Church and St. Stephen’s Church. The new pedestrian thoroughfare was resurfaced with red brick and bluestone arranged in repeating geometric patterns and lined by rows of shade trees. In 2019 the City of Boston, in consultation with the firm Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture, Inc., installed new lighting and paving, improved accessibility, and restored the mall’s central fountain.

Situated along Boston’s Freedom Trail, the 480-foot-long cruciform passageway, also known as the Prado, is bounded by nine-foot-high coped-brick walls that separate the space from nearby residences. An avenue of linden and poplar trees, interspersed by granite benches, runs the length of the mall, creating a rare shaded respite in Boston’s North End neighborhood. An equestrian statue of Paul Revere (1940) by Cyrus Edwin Dallin marks the mall’s primary entrance at Hanover Street. Closer to the Old North Church, where two lanterns were hung to signal the departure of British troops, a prominent Italianate circular granite fountain is set within a square demarcated in the pavement and further defined by four raised corner curbs, containing plantings within cast-iron fences. The square is edged by commemorative bas-relief plaques embedded in the surrounding brick walls.



Photo by Zack Lee



Photo by Wally Gobetz



Photo by Marc Buehler

Boston National Historical Park



Bunker Hill Monument - Photo by John Benson

Established in 1974, this 43-acre national park consists of eight historically significant sites that illustrate the events that led to the American Revolution in 1776 and the founding and growth of the United States. The historic properties include the Old South Meeting House, the Old State House, Faneuil Hall, the Paul Revere House, and the Old North Church in Downtown Boston; the Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown; a portion of the Boston (Charlestown) Navy Yard including the USS Constitution; and, Dorchester Heights in South Boston. The National Park Service (NPS) works with many different partner organizations at this park, and with the exception of Dorchester Heights, all of these historic resources are also included in Boston's 2.5-mile Freedom Trail. However, unlike the Freedom Trail, Boston National Historical Park is composed exclusively of National Historic Landmarks.

Boston National Historical Park features two visitor centers -- one located downtown in Faneuil Hall, and the other at the Boston Navy Yard. Most of the sites are privately owned and operated, with the exception of the Bunker Hill Monument, the Charlestown Navy Yard, and Dorchester Heights, which are owned by the NPS. The USS Constitution, still a commissioned naval vessel, is operated by the U.S. Navy in cooperation with the NPS. Each site is walkable, open to the public, and accessible by public transportation. The park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places upon its establishment in 1974.

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
National Park

Related Landscapes:
Boston Navy Yard
Bunker Hill Monument
Dorchester Heights
Faneuil Hall
Freedom Trail
Old North Church
Old South Meeting House
Old State House / Boston Massacre Site
Paul Revere House



Faneuil Hall - Photo by Tom Klein



Paul Revere House - Photo by Giles Parker



Boston Navy Yard - Photo by Tom Klein

Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



Photo courtesy National Park Service

After obtaining the commission to design the Emerald Necklace, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. moved his home and office to Brookline in 1883; he named the property Fairsted. Transforming the 1.75-acre agrarian property into a Picturesque landscape was a collaboration between Olmsted, Sr., and John Charles Olmsted, who oversaw most of the construction. Hans J. Koehler, an employee of the firm, also played an integral role in the development of the grounds between 1910 and 1930.

Working within a residential neighborhood of rolling hills and country roads, the Naturalistic design blended Olmsted's smaller property into the surroundings while also ensuring privacy. Screening two nearby streets, Olmsted planted masses of vegetation and installed a rustic spruce-pole fence covered in fast-growing vines. On the south side of the property Olmsted kept the remains of a gravel pit as a geological remnant, and created a path there using local sedimentary rock (Roxbury puddingstone) interspersed with native trees and shrubs. Near the house is an irregular lawn flanked by a mixed composition of trees, shrubs, ferns, and groundcover. The house is subordinated into the landscape, with climbing vines growing on the walls.

Fairsted was named a National Historic Site and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1963, and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1966. In 1980 the National Park Service acquired the property, including the house and its contents. During the 1990s, hundreds of invasives were removed, replaced with herbaceous plants, shrubs, and trees in accordance with plans and photographs dating to the 1930s.

Landscape Type:
Institutional Grounds -
Cultural Institution
National Park
Garden and Estate
Picturesque Garden

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
Hans J. Koehler
John Charles Olmsted
Joseph George Hudak



Photos courtesy National Park Service



Photo courtesy National Parks - Pennsylvania

Harvard University

Landscape Type:

Campus -
Colonial College
Quadrangle Plan

Designed By:

Charles Bulfinch
H.H. Richardson
I.M. Pei
Michael Van Valkenburg Associates
Peter Walker
Pressley Associates
Robert G. Neiley
Stoss Landscape Urbanism
SWA Group
William R. Ware

Related Landscapes:

Harvard Stadium
Harvard Yard
Tanner Fountain

Originally established in 1636 as New College, the school was named for benefactor John Harvard three years later. The 210-acre main campus includes the 25-acre Harvard Yard, the oldest section of the campus and its symbolic heart. Initially a cow pasture, the Yard was developed throughout the nineteenth century into a quintessential college quad with crisscrossing walkways, defined by academic structures and shaded by American elms and pine groves. Beginning in the 1980s Pressley Associates created a master campus plan for Harvard Yard and North Yard that created the gatehouse, rehabilitated lawns and improved the pedestrian circulation and the tree canopy. The Tanner Fountain, designed in 1984 by Peter Walker and the SWA Group, is located between Harvard Yard and Memorial Hall. In the early 1990s, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates developed a master plan for Harvard Yard that restored and diversified the space's historic tree canopy, and improved the circulation system. To the north, the Harvard Plaza, designed by Stoss Landscape Urbanism in 2013, sits atop the Cambridge Street Underpass connecting the Yard to the Science Center.

The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, with Radcliffe Yard at its center, is located west of Harvard Yard. This area once housed the women's college the Harvard Annex (later Radcliffe College), which opened in 1879 and merged with Harvard in 1999. The Cambridge-based campus is comprised of 209 acres that does not include the University's Allston campus situated across the Charles River, or the Harvard Business School, the athletic facilities, or the graduate student residences.



Photo by Barrett Doherty



Photo by Mike Albert



Photo ©Charles Mayer - @Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Photo by Tom Klein



Tanner Fountain

Landscape Type:
Plaza

Landscape Style:
Modernist

Designed By:
Peter Walker
The Office of Peter Walker and
Martha Schwartz
SWA Group

Related Landscapes:
Harvard University

Situated between Harvard Yard, the Science Center and Memorial Hall on the Harvard University campus, this busy pedestrian crossroads was transformed in 1984 by Peter Walker and the SWA Group into a minimalist fountain intended to be inhabited, explored and traversed. Comprising stone and water, this geometric space recalls the rocky, rural landscape of New England and was designed to be a symbolic bridge between the region's past and the university's intellectual aspirations. The 60-foot diameter fountain, designed in collaboration with sculptor Joan Brigham, utilizes 159 granite boulders randomly set in concentric circles which overlay the existing asphalt pathways and lawn and incorporate nearby trees. Water emanates from the circle's center - during spring, summer and fall in the form of mist and in winter as steam from the university's heating plant - obscuring the center stones and creating a seasonal contemplative landscape. The fountain was the first institutional project in the "Landscape as Art" movement, an outgrowth of Harvard's Graduate School of Design Landscape Architecture Expression Studio. In 2008 the Tanner Fountain received the American Society of Landscape Architects' (ASLA) Landmark Award.



Photos courtesy PWP Landscape Architecture

Charles River Reservation

Beginning at Boston Harbor and running along the Charles River for twenty miles, this reservation was one of the metropolitan sites proposed by Charles Eliot and Sylvester Baxter in an 1893 report published by the Metropolitan Park Commission. When Eliot became a partner in the firm Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot that year, he remained the designer of this project.

This 863-acre linear reservation consists of two sections. The lower half of the reservation, from the Charles River Dam to the Watertown Dam, is the Charles River Basin, which includes the Charles River Esplanade on the Boston side. The original dam, built in 1910 to prevent flooding, was replaced in 1978. The basin abuts Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Boston University. The Upper Charles River section of the reservation begins at Watertown Square and extends to Riverdale Park in West Roxbury.

The reservation contains numerous parks and cultural resources located along both sides of the Charles River, including esplanades, parkways, beaches, and parks. Two granite pillars in Watertown Square mark the entrance to the Upper Charles River Reservation. A continuous pathway runs along the river to the Moody Street Bridge in Waltham. The Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path loops around the basin from the Charles River Dam to Watertown Square. The 820-acre Charles River Basin Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, and the Charles River Reservation parkways were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2006 as a district.

Landscape Type:
Public Park -
State Park

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Charles Eliot
Sylvester Baxter
Stickney & Austin

Related Landscapes:
Brook Farm Historic Site
Charles River Esplanade
John F. Kennedy Park - Cambridge
Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston



Photo by Daderot

Photo by Tom Klein

Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons

John F. Kennedy Memorial Park

Landscape Type:
Commemorative Landscape
Public Park

Designed By:
Carol R. Johnson
Carol R. Johnson Associates
Jennifer Jones
John Gustafson

Related Landscapes:
Charles River Reservation

In 1976 this five-acre site, located on Memorial Drive along the Charles River and formerly populated by car barns, was chosen as the location for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' monument honoring President John F. Kennedy. Boston's Metropolitan District Commission selected the landscape architecture firm Carol R. Johnson Associates to realize the park's design. A citizen's advisory committee, which included Caroline Kennedy, supervised the project. The firm, directed by project manager Jennifer Jones, used infill to tilt the park's lawn south to integrate it with the Charles River Reservation. Polluted soil was buried underground and capped. The landscape's focal point is a raised, terraced platform that fronts a sunken square bordered by low stone retaining walls with built in benches. At its center is a granite memorial fountain, designed by John Gustafson, where a laminar flow of water runs over engraved quotations by Kennedy (selected by the Kennedy family). The memorial is placed on axis with an allée of honey locusts that connects to Harvard Square. The park's major east-west walkway is aligned with Harvard's Gore Hall, the residence hall in which Kennedy lived as a student. The sidewalk was also diverted towards the memorial to preserve the park's sycamore trees that also visually connected the space with those along the Charles River Reservation. The park entrances are marked by stone pillars that, like the fountain, are engraved with quotes by Kennedy.

Photo courtesy CRJA



Photos courtesy IBI

Mount Auburn Cemetery



Photo by Wangkun Jia

Founded in 1831, this cemetery located outside of Boston was the nation’s first designed rural cemetery. It quickly became a model for the cemetery design movement that served as a precursor to the American park movement. The primary force in its creation was physician and horticulturist Jacob Bigelow, who persuaded Boston’s city leaders to address problems of overcrowding and sanitation in the city’s cemeteries. In the process of providing then-modern solutions for burial practices, the cemetery transformed interactions between people and graveyards. Mount Auburn served as a new paradigm for commemoration of the dead, inviting visitors to explore its park-like setting. The 175-acre site was laid out according to the plan of Henry Dearborn and Alexander Wadsworth as an “embellished landscape” of rolling terrain with ornamental plantings, ponds, sylvan glades, monuments, fountains, and chapels. Numerous architectural styles are represented; similarly, the landscape’s intimate spaces and grand sweeping vistas reflect a wide range of styles, from Victorian to contemporary. With more than 5,000 trees representing 630 taxa, the landscape is horticulturally diverse.

In 1993 the Halvorson Company completed a master plan to guide future planning and design while preserving and strengthening significant landscape features. The plan reaffirmed the cemetery’s original values as a rural and contemplative refuge. Subsequent projects, such as Reed Hilderbrand’s 1998 rehabilitation plan for the area surrounding the Mary Baker Eddy Memorial and Julia Moir Messervy Design Studio’s improvement of the Spruce and Willow Knoll, continued that tradition. Mount Auburn Cemetery was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2003.

Landscape Type:
Cemetery -
Rural Cemetery

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Alexander Wadsworth
Ernest W. Bowditch
Gridley J. F. Bryant
Halvorson Company
Henry A.S. Dearborn
Jacob Bigelow
James Scorgie
James W. Lovering
Julia Moir Messervy Design Studio
Laurence Caldwell
Reed Hilderbrand
Shedd & Sawyer



Photos courtesy Mount Auburn Cemetery



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Photos [Left] Courtesy Friends of the Public Garden and [Cover] by Barrett Doherty.