



# NEWTON CITY HALL AND WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING GROUNDS

## Historic Landscape Preservation Master Plan

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>
<del>1</del>
<del>1</del>
2
3
4
7
7
7
<del>27</del>
<del>27</del>
<del>27</del>
<del>29</del>
<del>32</del>
<del>33</del>
<del>34</del>
<del>36</del>

Millennium Park	<del>37</del>
<del>Views and Vistas</del>	<del>37</del>
Small-Scale Features	<del>38</del>
Plans Accompanying Chapter Two	
Plan L1: Tree Inventory	
Plan L2: Existing Features Plan	
Chapter Three: Analysis of Integrity	41
Introduction	<del>41</del>
Summary of Landscape Integrity	<del>42</del>
<del>Vegetation</del>	<del>43</del>
<del>Topography</del>	<del>43</del>
Buildings and Structures	<del>43</del>
Circulation Routes	<del>43</del>
Constructed Water Features	44
Millennium Park	44
<del>Views and Vistas</del>	44
Small-Scale Features	<del>45</del>
Plan Accompanying Chapter Three	
Plan L3: Annotated Extant Historic Features Plan	
Chapter Four: Treatment Alternatives	<del>47</del>
Introduction	<del>47</del>
The Secretary of the Interior's Standards	<del>47</del>
Comparison of the Treatment Alternatives	<del>49</del>
Preservation	<del>49</del>
Rehabilitation	<del>50</del>
Restoration	<del>52</del>
Comparison of Treatment Alternatives for Newton City Hall	<del>53</del>
Plans Accompanying Chapter Four	
Plan L4: Conceptual Preservation Plan	
<del>Plan L5: Conceptual Rehabilitation Plan</del>	
Plan L6: Conceptual Restoration Plan	

Chapter Five: Recommendations	59
Introduction	59
Philosophical Approach	59
Summary of Specific Recommendations	61
Specific Recommendations	62
Vegetation	62
Topography	64
Buildings, Structures	64
Circulation	65
Constructed Water Features	67
Millennium Park	67
Views and Vistas	67
Small-Scale Features	68
Plan Accompanying Chapter Five	
Plan L7: Recommended Treatment Plan	
Chapter Six: Maintenance Plan	<del>71</del>
<del>Introduction</del>	<del>71</del>
Specific Maintenance Categories	<del>73</del>
Landscape Features	<del>73</del>
Tree Maintenance	<del>74</del>
Shrub and Ground Cover Planting Area Maintenance	<del>75</del>
Mown Lawn Maintenance	<del>76</del>
Embankment Planting Maintenance at Ponds	<del>79</del>
Weed and Pest Control	<del>80</del>
Bedding-out or Floral Displays	<del>80</del>
Water Body Features	<del>80</del>
Site Amenities Features	<del>82</del>
Pavements, Paths, Curbs, and Accessibility Ramps Maintenance	<del>82</del>
<del>Structures</del>	<del>83</del>
<del>Furnishings</del>	<del>83</del>
General Trash Removal	84
General Graffiti Removal	<del>85</del>
Conclusion	<del>85</del>
Event Maintenance and Event Damage Costs	<del>86</del>
Current Events Held on City Hall and War Memorial Grounds	<del>87</del>

Chapter Seven: Bibliography	<del>89</del>
Published Sources	<del>89</del>
Repositories	<del>90</del>
<b>Appendices</b>	<del>93</del>
A. Olmsted Brothers Plant List	
B. Summary of Relevant Plans	
C. Existing Tree Inventory List	
D. Draft Event Guidelines	
E. Draft Policy Statement on Memorials	

## **Newton City Hall and War Memorial Grounds**

## **CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### Introduction

The previous chapter set out the three main treatment alternatives for the Newton City Hall and War Memorial Grounds. After discussion of the implications and impacts of each alternative with the City of Newton Parks & Recreation Department and its Commissioners, *Rehabilitation* is the treatment recommended in this Master Plan. As explained in Chapter Four, this is an inclusive treatment that provides for a broad range of interventions to both meet contemporary uses and retain historic character. This includes the retention and maintenance of existing historic features, as well as selective changes to the property provided the overall historic character is not compromised.

This treatment is also recommended because it does not require the reconstruction of missing features or the full restoration of the landscape to a specific period of time, investments, which would be unsustainable given existing resources and management capacity. Rehabilitation is thus a treatment that fits well with the diverse management objectives of the City of Newton and the current use.

#### Philosophic Approach

In order for the Newton City Hall and War Memorial Grounds to be a successful historic public landscape a philosophy that recognizes the importance of the site as a National Register property has to be embraced. In the course of this endeavor, this philosophy should consider the need to:

- Foster greater appreciation of Newton City Hall and War Memorial Grounds as a historic site: Venerable and venerated public landscapes demand higher levels of understanding, public awareness, and sympathetic treatment than other public grounds. It is necessary to educate the public and the city officials in order to develop a high regard for the property as a very special place in the City of Newton.
- Understand the primary role of the landscape architect: The grounds at the City Hall were designed and installed in 1931/32 by the Olmsted Brothers firm of landscape architects. The firm was founded by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. regarded as the forefather of the landscape architecture profession in the United States. Public buildings were a fairly unusual commission for the firm, but did include the grounds of the US Capitol and the National Museum in Washington, DC. The landscape design for

Newton City Hall was directed by Henry Vincent Hubbard, one of the partners in the firm.

- Memorial Grounds: Every effort should be made to enhance the environmental aspects of the property through a good maintenance program and programming for the open space that respects the environment. Special attention should also be paid to the recommendations for the protection and enhancement of the vegetation during the rehabilitation process and the continual maintenance of the series of designed ponds.
- Foster a new generation of park managers: Historic landscapes require structured management and maintenance staffs with greater skills and knowledge of historic landscapes and vegetation. The appointment of Park Administrators and "Hort" crews in New York City's Central Park, Prospect Park and Riverside Drive Park, as well as, in the Emerald Necklace Park System and the Public Garden and Common in Boston, and the National Park Service promotion of preservation maintenance, are all evidence of this emerging trend. More demands are imposed on the park administrators to address contemporary needs in historically sensitive ways, for example, to evaluate original planting plans and plant lists in the light of authenticity, public safety, invasive plant species, maintenance, and cost.
- Be aware of outside impacts on the site: Public sites are subject to external events and are inseparable from the city or its neighborhoods of which they are a part. The Newton City Hall and War Memorial Grounds are no exception, having been continuously affected by events and development outside, as well as inside, their boundaries. These changes, which can threaten the future of the landscape, must be recognized and strenuous efforts made to control their effect on the condition and integrity of the historic landscape.



**Figure 5.1.** One of the rides installed on the City Hall and War Memorial Grounds for the annual Kids Fun Fest, 2002 (City of Newton).

Respond to contemporary uses: One of the most difficult tasks facing the preservation
of historic landscapes is to serve present and future generations of users, while
maintaining the integrity of the historic design. New uses should be considered in light
of landscape's historic integrity and should be accommodated in ways that do not
compromise original design intent. The siting of new facilities, their space-taking and

visual impacts, their form and materials all need to be considered with a sensitivity to the original design intent and landscape character of Newton City Hall and War Memorial Grounds.

- Develop guidelines for event programming: Several events are held within the Newton City Hall and War Memorial Grounds from Kids Fun Fest and Plant Sales to the Marathon and the Veterans observations. These events bring small to large numbers of people to the site but, if not controlled, can damage the physical landscape, compromise the integrity of the historic features, and increase maintenance costs. The setting of clear and concise guidelines for use is important. Management, maintenance, and the enforcement of rules and regulations are important to make these successful events for both the public and the landscape.
- **Develop access for all:** Special efforts must provide for the young, disabled and elderly. It is crucial that the landscape be safe and accessible to all those individuals who wish to visit and engage in appropriate activity.
- Establish guidelines for memorialization: We are in a major period of memorialization across the country and public landscapes and, in particular, city hall grounds, are prime sites for this influx with many sites being overwhelmed by the demands. The relatively new addition of Balsamo Millennium Park into the historic landscape bears witness to these pressures. The War Memorial Grounds in particular may be the site for possible future memorials. We need to think carefully, however, before filling the landscape with memorials and monuments and consider whether any additional memorials should be placed. However, if additional memorials and monuments are going to be added we need to think about their placement in relation to the integrity of the historic landscape. Their inclusion and placement should be directed by established guidelines.

Just as the original design and construction of Newton City Hall and War Memorial Grounds was an important public project undertaken by City of Newton, its preservation and rehabilitation today can be considered no less of a commitment. It will require the cooperative dedication of all involved municipal agencies, elected officials, citizen groups, and individuals to resolve these issues as they arise. Recommendations for funding for the rehabilitation projects within the scope of the Master Plan should be diligently pursued as should the funding for management and maintenance now and into the future.

## **Summary of Specific Recommendations**

Rehabilitation of the Newton City Hall Grounds will focus on retaining the historic character around the three ponds and the lawns to the north and west of the building, while retaining contemporary additions such as Balsamo Millennium Park and allowing for monitored public events. Selected removal of non-historic trees and shrubs are recommended in order to re-open lost views and vistas from the surrounding roadways. It is recommended that the original character of the vegetation around the ponds be re-established to allow for reflections of the building in the water and that the north pond be

re-configured to re-establish its original size and shape. Rehabilitation also allows for the replacement of the missing historic trees within the site and along the sidewalks and some shrub borders throughout the site, and for the replacement of the non-historic fountain in front of City Hall with the original Olmsted design, which is in keeping with the Period of Significance of the site and the style of the architecture.

It is recommended that rehabilitation at the War Memorial Grounds focus on retaining the historic character of the open lawn so trees are to be removed to re-open the lost long view to the War Memorial building facade. Trees along the sidewalk that frame this view will be retained and some are to be replanted where they are missing. It is also recommended that some of the existing monuments be relocated to more appropriate locations and, where appropriate, surrounding plantings are to be modified to provide a better presence and to make the monuments more compatible with the historic character of the grounds. The improvement of the ability of the lawn to withstand large public events is recommended and designated vehicular entry points should be created.

### **Specific Recommendations**

The following specific recommendations have been developed collaboratively with the City of Newton Parks & Recreation Department with input from the Parks Commission and the public during public meetings. They develop and enhance the examples of rehabilitation interventions listed in the previous chapter. The recommendations are also designed to address the analysis of existing conditions described in Chapter Two and to meet the project objectives. They include a broad range of recommended actions to enhance resource stewardship, public use, and grounds management and maintenance.

The accompanying Recommended Treatment Plan sets out these proposals graphically. The recommendations are generally organized into the same categories as the existing conditions and analysis sections in Chapters Two and Three.

#### Vegetation

The Olmsted firm made a very careful and deliberate choice of trees and shrubs for this landscape, to frame the important views and vistas and to ensure ease of future maintenance. Without seeking completely to restore the original planting plan, these recommendations aim to recreate the historic character of the landscape, as well as addressing the maintenance issues identified by the Tree Inventory conducted in late 2005. The accompanying Recommended Treatment Plan identifies individual trees to be retained and pruned; non-historic, hazardous or poor trees to be removed; poor historic trees to be replaced in kind; and new trees to be added following the original Olmsted planting plan. In addition, to allow the north and west lawn to withstand events such as the Kids Fun Fest and the Plant Sale, the turf needs to be stabilized, a crushed stone sub-base installed and consideration given to adding an irrigation system. There will also be a new policy on events to minimize their future impact on the lawn; draft Event Guidelines are attached as Appendix D to this Master Plan.

- General recommendations: Prune existing trees as necessary, remove hazardous trees and trees in poor condition; as appropriate, replace removed trees with historicallyappropriate trees; remove non-historic planting around City Hall fountain; remove nonhistoric planting around memorials and monuments and replace with historically appropriate planting. All new trees placed in the site should be a minimum of four (4") inches in caliper, but preferably six (6") inches in caliper for major shade trees. Root balls should be 25% larger than the American Association of Nurserymen standard and should not be guyed or staked in place since vandalism of lower branches usually results as well as being a tripping hazard. The tree should be mulched no more than twelve inches off the trunk to protect from the lawn mower, but this should be phased out in two to three years as the tree becomes established. There should be no 'volcanoes' of mulch around the tree since that will kill it. After planting it is critical that the trees be placed on a regular fertilizing and watering program for the first two years after planting. The two-year maintenance requirement should be part of any new capital projects or general tree planting programs. The larger size root ball and the 2-year maintenance will insure the success of the planting.
- **Pond area:** Remove non-historic trees and shrubs; re-establish historic lawn to the water's edge and vegetation along pond edge; re-establish historic shrub beds; re-plant missing historic trees.
- North and West Memorial Lawn areas: Reconstruct north and west memorial lawn
  areas as described below and protect against further intrusions that block historic views;
  remove selected non-historic trees and shrubs; remove trees and shrubs in the viewshed;
  replace missing historic shrub beds to frame the War Memorial entrance and along
  Homer Street; improve the lawn's ability to withstand large public events as described
  below.
- Street trees: All street tree planting on the perimeter streets should have the trees that have been removed or died replaced to reinforce the original edges and the containment they provided. Street trees are usually composed of a single species along any given edge and the use of the same single species shall continue to maintain continuity and historic integrity. All new street trees planted should be a minimum of four (4") inches in caliper. Root balls should be 25% larger than the American Association of Nurserymen standard and should not be guyed or staked in place since vandalism of lower branches usually results as well as being a tripping hazard. The tree should be mulched. After planting it is critical that the trees be placed on a regular fertilizing and watering program for the first two years after planting. The two-year maintenance requirement should be part of any new capital projects or general tree planting programs. The larger size root ball and the 2-year maintenance will insure the success of the planting.
- Lawns: Lawns in general should be rehabilitated to restore worn, disturbed and eroded
  areas. Lawns should be seeded not sodded. Seed mixes should be appropriate to the
  sun/shade conditions of the specific areas being rehabilitated and should be protected

with temporary fencing until established. Seed species selected should be hardy species that can tolerate heavy use and periodic dry conditions. After rehabilitation it is critical that the lawns be placed on a regular maintenance program to maintain as uniform and finished an appearance as is possible for a public open space. An irrigation system is not recommended for general lawn areas.

- Lawns for Event Areas: Lawns for the event areas should reconstructed with a layer of structural crushed stone with soil separator under six inches of loam to improve its structural capabilities and to improve drainage. Lawns should be seeded not sodded. Seed mixes should be appropriate to the sun/shade conditions of the specific areas and should be protected with temporary fencing until established. Seed species selected should be hardy species that can tolerate heavy use. After rehabilitation it is critical that the lawns be placed on a regular maintenance program to maintain as uniform and finished an appearance as is possible for a public open space. An irrigation system is recommended for event lawn areas.
- **Protection of Vegetation during Construction**: All existing vegetation to remain should be protected during construction operations during capital improvement projects.



**Figure 5.2.** The non-historic vegetated pond shoreline (left) and the stone dust and bituminous path in need of repair (right), 2004 (City of Newton).

#### **Topography**

- **Stabilize banks and other eroded areas:** The areas either side of the rustic bridges in the pond area, in particular, show signs of erosion that needs to be stabilized and repaired.
- **Re-grading:** Re-grade slopes on pathways if needed to create smooth transitions to meet ADA accessible walkways that maintain a maximum slope of 5%.

#### **Buildings**, Structures

• **Retaining Walls:** Repair stone retaining wall along pond path parallel to Walnut Street. The wall appears to be in generally good condition, but any loose stones need to be

- replaced and the mortar raked back and repointed as necessary. Mortar samples for color and mix should be submitted for approval.
- Stone Steps: Repair stone steps on Homer Street and add code-compliant handrails. The steps are part of the original Olmsted design, but are in a poor condition and need substantial repair or total reconstruction. The current handrails do not comply with current building codes and need to be replaced.

#### Circulation

- Accessibility Ramps: Add new accessible ramps as appropriate and remove ramps in inappropriate locations; create 'no parking' zone at ramps. Accessible ramps that provide access to and from the sidewalks for wheelchair users at various points in the grounds should be located as shown on the Recommended Treatment Plan.
- Accessibility on Sidewalks and Pathways: Check slope of existing pathways and sidewalks in general and re-grade as necessary to ensure compliance with current accessibility codes. The two curving paths that lead from City Hall Drive towards the bridges appear for part of their length to exceed the maximum five (5%) percent slope required by the ADA for accessibility. Both need to be re-graded as necessary.





**Figure 5.3.** The traffic island in City Hall Drive, where the original fountain will be reconstructed (left); one of the historic trees to be retained (right), 2005 (Pressley Associates).

- Concrete Sidewalks and Pathways: Repair sidewalk and pathway pavements with either existing in-kind or compatible new materials. The sidewalks and concrete pathways should be repaired as necessary with white concrete (with no lamp black in it), to match the original sidewalks and pathways of the Period of Significance.
- Stonedust Pathways: The stonedust pathways in the pond area are in a poor condition and are to be repaired with stonedust that matches the existing stonedust or could be replaced with a compatible rolled stone on bituminous concrete base, for ease of maintenance. If pathways are to be stonedust an edging needs to be installed to restore the crisp, defined edge of the original design.

- Pathways over Bridges: The paths over the bridges need repairing with existing bituminous concrete or compatible new materials such as rolled stone on bituminous concrete base course.
- **Desire Lines:** There are two 'desire line' paths near the south and center ponds that need to be removed and new turf installed.
- **Balsamo Millennium Park:** The new brick pathway system that is part of Millennium Park needs to be retained and maintained.
- Roads and Drives: Repair roads with existing bituminous concrete materials. The granite curbs along City Hall Drive and Memorial Drive are generally in poor condition and need to be reset or replaced. The concrete curbs along the walks and elsewhere on the site are generally only fair or poor and need to be repaired or replaced in kind as necessary. The concrete curbing should match historic curbing installed at the Period of Significance in color and design.
- Parking: The Master Plan acknowledges the need for adequate parking within close proximity to the building, but recommends that it is necessary to hold the line on the automobile taking more landscape to accommodate parking. Both the historic importance and the integrity of the site should take precedence over individual needs to park within a few feet of an entry into the building, except for universally accessible spaces. Parking along adjacent streets is available.
- No-Parking Zones at the Islands at City Hall Drive and War Memorial Drive: For safety reasons (to allow for police and fire access and to protect pedestrians), it is recommended that parking be prohibited around the center traffic islands at both City Hall Drive and Memorial Drive. The fire department's new tower ladder truck requires eighteen feet clearance. All other areas, except for areas designated for universal accessible ramps, would retain parking on the drives.
- Entry Points during Events: There need to be designated entry points for vehicles to deliver and collect equipment for events such as the Kids Fun Fest. This will require widening one or two of the concrete pathways in the north lawn and providing additional ramps, to prevent vehicular damage to the lawn and curbs. See the draft Event Guidelines at Appendix D for more information.





Figure 5.4. Granite and concrete curbs in need of repair or replacement, 2006 (Pressley Associates).

#### **Constructed Water Features**

- Siltation of Ponds: The sand and silt that have accumulated in the three ponds needs to be removed. Continued maintenance of the three ponds, including periodic silt removal is essential to the health and appearance, as well as, the historic integrity of the three ponds. An appropriate storm water interceptor system should be installed for the watercourse; the pond edges repaired; city street catch basin sumps cleaned, and access points created for periodic silt removal at all three ponds. Remove silt build-up periodically and improve future storm water management.
- Restore the Original Configuration of North Pond: The original configuration of the north pond has been lost over time and needs to be restored, both to increase waterholding capacity and to restore the original edge and scale of the pond.
- Restore Original Appearance of Pond Edges: As stated under vegetation the non-historic plant materials need to be removed and replaced with the edge as designed and constructed during the Period of Significance, which was a combination of plantings and open lawn at the edges, but now with a low fence to control geese. The obtrusive scale of the current geese-deterrent fence, which is in a poor condition, needs to be replaced with a less visible fence.
- Island Fountain: Remove non-historic fountain and replace with historic basin pool and fountain jet as originally designed and constructed in the Period of Significance. The current small fountain and accompanying planting are "Victoriana" in style, and thus inappropriate in the context of the Georgian Revival City Hall and War Memorial Grounds. The simple basin and jet of the original fountain are more in keeping with the age and distinctive architectural style of the building and site integrity.

#### Balsamo Millennium Park

• Retain and Maintain Millennium Park and Parking. Millennium Park is a new, privately-funded area and this Master Plan makes no recommendations for change in this area. It is recommended, however, that this area not be expanded, but be retained within its current boundaries.

#### Views and Vistas

Restoration of Views and Vistas: Remove selected non-historic vegetation and site features to restore historic views and vistas. It is this one recommendation more than any other, which would serve to restore much of the historic character of the site. The Olmsted firm created a series of carefully managed views and vistas, which defined the nature of the landscape for many years. These included reflections of the City Hall façade in the water, a view of the ponds from the City Hall steps, a framed view of the building from the intersections at both ends of Walnut Street; and a view of the War Memorial from Commonwealth Avenue. The accompanying Recommended Treatment

Plan shows the trees, shrubs, memorials and small-scale features to be removed or relocated to re-open these historic, character-defining views and vistas.

#### **Small-Scale Features**

• Benches: Remove incompatible benches and replace them with one consistent style that is compatible with the character of the site, but does not present a false historic appearance. Presently, there are seven different styles of bench placed at various locations around the site, which detract from the original unity of the design. While the Olmsted firm did not propose any public seating areas, current uses dictate that benches are an appropriate feature, and that one consistent style be chosen and placed at appropriate locations. It is not recommended to increase the number of benches. The accompanying Recommended Treatment Plan shows the proposed locations for benches.

This may present an opportunity for a bench donation program, provided 1.) a specific compatible bench is selected 2.) a plan is prepared to determine the number of benches and their specific locations and 3) the historic integrity of the site is respected.

Memorials: Relocate four of the existing memorials to more appropriate and protected positions and introduce policy guidelines for inclusion and placement of future memorials on the site. Relocating the four existing memorials and monuments on the west War Memorial lawn and turnaround to new sites on either side of the War Memorial entrance will make them more prominent for visitors and protect them from damage during City-wide events held on City Hall grounds (especially the annual Kids Fun Fest and the Plant Sale). This will also enhance the character and appearance of the memorials and the landscape. The accompanying Recommended Treatment Plan shows the proposed new locations of the four memorials.

The Armed Forces memorial, flag and bench at the Commonwealth Avenue / Walnut Street intersection will be retained in their current location, but the plant material that blocks the view to City Hall will be removed. This will allow historic vistas of the building to be re-opened. A draft Policy Statement on future memorials is attached as Appendix E to this Master Plan.



**Figure 5.5.** The blocked views from the intersections at both ends of Walnut Street, 2004 (City of Newton).

• **Signs:** Review existing signs for appropriateness and compatibility with the landscape; introduce consistent style of signage as needed. The five large City signs located at various prominent places detract to a greater or lesser extent from the historic character of the site. Consider redesign of signage to be more compatible with the historic integrity of the site. Signs with no particular link to the site itself (such as the one headed "Do you like to run?" on the west lawn) should be removed.

