



Magazine Beach Partners

2021 Annual Report

December 2021

MagazineBeach.org

Making
Magazine
Beach
a more
welcoming
and vibrant
park,
connecting its
community
and
stewarding
its natural
grounds.



Dear Friends of Magazine Beach,

Magazine Beach Partners (MBP) is pleased to present the 2021 annual report of our work at Magazine Beach Park, Cambridge.

It was just over 11 years ago that the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association (CNA) hosted its first cleanup at the Magazine Beach, discovering a very broken park. The historic 1818 Powder Magazine's roof was filled with holes, graffiti tagged the granite structure, and trees sprouted from the foundation. The 17-acre riverside landscape was marred by unusable picnic tables and benches. Behind a locked six-foot chain-link fence lay a derelict play structure and trash-filled wading pool. Over the years, the park had been a construction staging area for multiple projects. It was covered with overgrown vegetation and neglected trees shedding dead limbs.

Neighbors made it clear at that 2010 cleanup that they wanted to reclaim the space; working with the City and State, we have. A decade plus, many partnerships and millions of dollars later, the park looks spectacular.

The big achievement of 2021 was finding the perfect occupant for the Powder Magazine we helped restore. What a delight it is to welcome Mass Audubon as the new tenant of the Powder Magazine!

As the new guardian, Mass Audubon brings its 125 years of environmental service to Cambridge with a 21st-century purpose. The Powder Magazine will serve as an urban nature center, with the added benefits of arts and community engagement. See Mass Audubon's three-minute video about this [here](#).

For those of you who missed the November ribbon cutting, a very feel-good event, check out Cambridgeport neighbor Werner Grundl's [short video](#).

[WGBH](#) covered the story as well!



Newly renovated, the Powder Magazine welcomes its first tenant: Mass Audubon.



We celebrated with a ribbon cutting November 23rd. Photo courtesy of Tyler Motes.

We thank you for supporting this important historic preservation, environmental justice and community revitalization project. Led by Magazine Beach Partners, the City of Cambridge, the State, and neighbors, it is a fine example of what can happen when people work together.

But we're not done yet. The Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) will renovate the brick bathhouse this winter and the Olympic-size pool next winter. At the same time, we hope to move forward with Phase II-2 of the park renovation project, turning the sunken parking lot between the pool and the river into a grassy beach and adding a dock and outlook to increase engagement with the water. And we intend to continue to plant and maintain trees. The park is a living tapestry that demands ongoing care.

We are thankful for DCR's, the City's, and the community's decade of commitment to Magazine Beach!

Cathie Zusy

for Magazine Beach Partners

Board of Magazine Beach Partners

Board Members:

Cathie Zusy - President

Ken Carson - Secretary

Decia Goodwin - Treasurer

Brian Conway

Richard Garver

Fred Yalouris



The Perez and Garcia families hosted their reunion again at the park in August. Family gathered from Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Virginia.



Always busy, the exercise area beside the soccer fields.

2021 Accomplishments

Park Improvements

2021 physical changes include DCR's adding a shade structure at the new kids' spraydeck and the City's planting 10 new trees at the park: 4 red oaks and 6 elms.

Behind the scenes, however, important groundwork was laid for the park's future. After years of MBP advocacy, DCR granted Mass Audubon a five-year lease to the Powder Magazine.

Starting this April, Mass Audubon will bring a variety of environmental educational programs to the park, including drop-in nature activities, guided bird and nature walks, kayak eco-river tours, and live animal presentations. They will also engage local partners to bring arts, cultural, and food events on evenings and weekends. We are very excited about the new infusion of fresh ideas and energy. Do you have programming ideas? Contact Mass Audubon's Paul Kelley at pkelley@massaudubon.org.

DCR also completed plans for the renovation of the pool bathhouse, which will modernize its internal traffic pattern, improve accessibility inside and out, add shade and provide exterior access to public bathrooms from the park. This work will begin any day and is to be completed by June 2022.

And progress was made on Phase II-2 of our park renovation plan, which will turn its last derelict area—between the swimming pool and the river—into a grassy beach leading down to a dock similar to those at the Esplanade. DCR worked with landscape architects Crosby Schlessinger Smallridge to complete the park's Phase II-2 design. We now have shovel-ready plans and an estimate for this work, and we hope to advance it soon. (See rendering of design on page 11.)



Ten new trees at the park!



We put out 25 Adirondack chairs in the spring.

Stewardship

As always, Magazine Beach Partners serves as the park “guardian” and as the central clearinghouse for park inquiries. This year we organized four cleanups of the park, working with Scout Troop 56, City Sprouts, Meadowsclaping for Biodiversity and the Charles River Conservancy. We also reported maintenance issues to DCR and the City: trash, broken tree limbs and graffiti. And we sought agency resources to address overnight tenting and homeless encampments.

We also:

- purchased more red Adirondack chairs for the park
- planted petunias in the large planters at the kids’ spraydeck again
- planted native plants, courtesy of the Cambridge Plant & Garden Club (CP&GC), beside the park’s eastern swale
- dug up bulbs from in front of the bathhouse, since it is soon to be a construction site, and donated them to the CP&GC for gardens at the Cambridge Community Center.

And we:

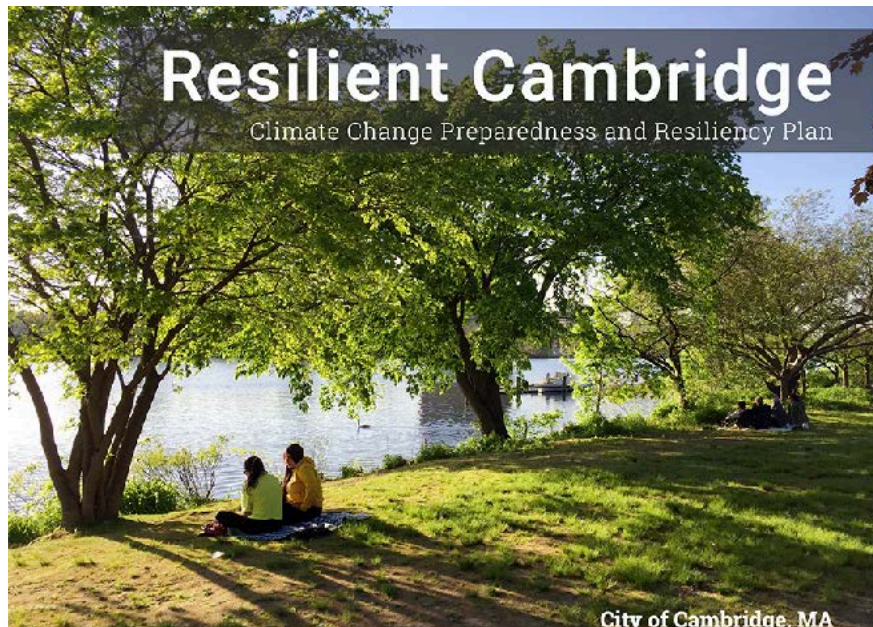
- encouraged DCR to publish the Powder Magazine RFI and RFP and to select a tenant
- encouraged DCR to relocate the big dumpster set in the middle of the picnic area.



A fall cleanup with representative Mike Connolly



Cambridge Rindge & Latin School teens plant petunias at spraydeck.



The City featured Magazine Beach on the cover of its 2021 publication on climate change preparedness. The stronger the community, the better we can adapt and support one another.

Advocacy

Advocacy, stewardship and fundraising are Magazine Beach Partners' main contributions to the park. DCR is responsible for almost half a million acres in Massachusetts. They invest at Magazine Beach Park because there is broad community support, as our State Rep. Jay Livingstone, Senator Joe Boncore, and the City of Cambridge made clear this year. The importance of the City's regular matches of DCR investment cannot be overstated; their support has inspired the park's transformation.

We thank Rep. Livingstone (no longer representing Cambridgeport come November 2022 due to redistricting) for his tireless advocacy for the park. He has been in our corner since taking office and, thanks in large part to his attention and the City of Cambridge's financial support, Magazine Beach Park has made tremendous strides.

MBP also signed two joint letters drafted by the Charles River Conservancy regarding DCR's Special Commission, encouraging greater opportunities for feedback from park friends groups and the general public, more funding for DCR, and better strategic planning, and sent our own addendum.

We also signed onto a joint letter drafted by the Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation against permitting electric bikes on trails and dirt roads in parks.



Partnerships

Our name, Magazine Beach Partners, reflects our *modus operandi*: partnering is how we get things done. As always, we have partnered with the City and DCR to:

- complete the landscape plans for Phase II-2—we now have “shovel-ready” designs
- reactivate the park with Mass Audubon as the tenant at the Powder Magazine
- plant 10 new trees
- maintain the park.

We have been collaborating with Mass Audubon since the summer, connecting them with the community and helping to promote and document their programs. Their success will ensure the park’s success.

The Charles River Conservancy (CRC) also continues to be a strong partner. In 2021, it organized 6 cleanups at Magazine Beach (including with Amgen, Infinity Pharma, the Green Engineer, HMFH Architects, Daisy Troop, Y.E.S. and the Riverside Boat Club), watered our new trees, and brought Math Trail to the pedestrian footbridge.

As one of two partner groups included on DCR’s Special Commission, the CRC has represented the “friends group” voice. We appreciate their advocacy for larger river parkland issues, among them: plans for I-90, improving DCR operations, and lobbying for more DCR funding. (According to the Special Comm. Report, DCR is one of the most poorly funded State park systems in the country.)

Thank you, partners all!



The Charles River Conservancy waters our new trees.



Mass Audubon organized youth kayaking programs.

Programs

Because of the pandemic, summer programming was kept simple. We hosted free yoga classes in July and August and Stories & Song, led again by amazing local children's librarians. In November, for the second year in a row, we also raked leaves with the pre-schoolers at the nearby Morse School—a very joyful activity.

We also offered park history programs for students at City Sprouts and Northeastern University and for families at *Eitz Chayim*. In September, MBP board member Ken Carson presented a short history of Magazine Beach Partners at the Cambridge Residents Alliance's forum, *Improving Park, Playing Fields & Green Spaces*.

The free swimming pool was open from June 26-August 21, with the kids' spraydeck available for a splash for an even longer period of the season. It was a cool, rainy summer, so pool attendance was lower than in the past: 8,259. DCR continued to host its Learn to Swim program, reaching 30 people.



Yogis stretched under the old shade trees.



During the pandemic, the park became a safe outdoor refuge for picnics and spontaneous events, including musicians, dancers, boxers and gymnasts.





Partner Programs

Thankfully, during Covid, our partners have stepped up with programming. Mass Audubon offered Summer Nights five Mondays in July and August and five drop-in programs in October and November. All featured Mass Audubon naturalists, live animals (owls, hawks, snakes and more) and science and art making activities.

In July, on the pedestrian footbridge, the Charles River Conservancy debuted their [Math Trail](#), developed in coordination with Math Talk.

Waypoint Adventure also continued to offer small group kayaking experiences for adults and youth with special needs, and collaborated with Mass Audubon to provide general youth kayaking programs.



Focusing on measurement, the CRC's Math Trail has children cross over Memorial Drive safely by elephant, giraffe and bunny steps.

Magic

Many of the best things that happen at the park aren't planned. They just happen, whether it's a snow fort, flower fairy bed, or a tire swing. Who knows how these things come to be?



What's Next?

This year, at long last, 5 interpretative signs we've developed with DCR will be installed. They share the history of the Powder Magazine, river swimming at Magazine Beach, the Riverside Boat Club, the Charles River cleanup, and how an island surrounded by marshes became an urban park.

Look for construction around the pool bathhouse to begin this winter.

Next winter DCR will replace the leaking pool, improve access to the pool and redo the deck. As long as everything is dug up, MBP believes it makes sense that DCR improve the area between the pool and the river. Because the area will be disrupted, this is their opportunity to regrade the area to make the pool better integrated with the site and to increase engagement with the river by adding a dock and outlook.

Big Infrastructure Projects Impacting Magazine Beach

Change is all around us.

I-90. In late September, Gov. Charlie Baker committed to spend \$1.7B to rebuild I-90 at grade across the river from Magazine Beach. Construction is expected to begin in 2024. While it will likely be a 7-year noisy inconvenience, it will yield great long-term benefits, including less noise pollution for Magazine Beach, a new West Station (a train and bus hub in Allston/Brighton), and parks on the Boston side of the Charles.

Eversource hosted several public meetings this fall about their [Greater Cambridge Energy Project](#). As electric demand grows, Eversource must ensure that it is reliable and that there are redundant systems, so between 2024 and 2028, they will connect substations. One of the possible routes between Kendall Square and the Allston/Brighton substations is 30' below the playing fields at Magazine Beach.



I-90's noisy raised viaduct directly across the river is now slated for removal. The at-grade highway that will replace it promises to make Magazine Beach a quieter park.

Eversource is proposing to tunnel under the soccer fields, where there are no trees, during a single winter.

We have been assured by Eversource and Cambridgeport neighbors with appropriate expertise that this can be done safely, without negative impact to the riverside ecology. If the Massachusetts Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB) permits the project, cyclists will be rerouted through a new path in the park during construction. Eversource will also provide mitigation.

Memorial Drive Redesign. DCR has engaged Stantec and Brown, Richardson & Rowe landscape architects to rethink Memorial Drive from the Eliot Bridge to Hawthorn Street. In time DCR will redesign the parkway adjacent to the park, at that point adding, we hope, the park entrances and pathways envisioned in our 2017 park plans.

Fundraising

In September, the City of Cambridge committed a second \$150K of Community Preservation Act Open Space funds for Phase II-2's parking-lot-to-grassy-beach project, pending a DCR match. Thank you, Cambridge! And Representative Jay Livingstone and Senator Joe Boncore secured a \$50K earmark for this, too. Now to shake a bit more from the trees. DCR estimates that Phase II-2 will cost \$2.2M. Please help us to get there by making a donation today.

Please Contribute!

Your tax deductible contribution will help us move closer to Phase II-2 improvements. Remember, we are all volunteers. We have no staff costs. **100% of your gift will be applied to tangible improvements in the park.**

- Send checks made out to "Magazine Beach Partners" to MBP President, Cathie Zusy, 202 Hamilton St, Cambridge, MA 02139.
- Donate on Paypal at magazinebeach.org.
- Volunteer your time or talent! We're looking for help with photography, publicity, editing, assisting with our events, and more.



MBP 2021 Financial Statement

Prior Years Retained Revenue as of 1 January 2020	102,791
Expenditures	
Program Costs & Spraydeck Plantings	1,245
Fundraising	120
Administrative Expenses	<u>300</u>
Total	1,665
Income	
Individual Donations	3,086
Groups & Foundations	1,545
Massachusetts Earmark for Phase II-2	<u>50,000</u>
Total	57,543
Net Available for Future Park Investments:	158,669



Phase II-2 will turn this sunken parking lot into a grassy beach.



In 2021 landscape architects Crosby Schlessinger Smallridge completed the Phase II-2 plans, rendered above. They are "shovel ready."

