

Under • the • Overpass: The Charlesgate Interchange Park Charrette

Co-sponsors:
Metropolitan District Commission, Boston Society of Landscape Architects/Radcliffe Chapter

Grants:
LEF Foundation, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management and the USDA Forest Service, BSLA/Radcliffe Chapter

Location: Boston, MA

Coordinators:
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On a beautiful fall day in October 1998, a group of neighborhood residents, students, design professionals, community activists, and members of government agencies gathered at Kenmore Abbey for a community design event. The goal of the day was to bring a diverse group of interested people together to find a common path towards revitalizing an urban open space, to create a vision for the future, and to provide a rich and rewarding design experience for the participants.

Participants were asked to explore ways of restoring beauty and dignity to the Charlesgate Interchange Park. Originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted as part of the Emerald Necklace park system, the park is now a forlorn and degraded open

space that lies in the shadow of the Bowker overpass. It is a critical link between the Emerald Necklace and the Charles River Basin park system and is enormously important as an environmental resource. It has great potential to be enhanced and reconnected both to the community and to the abutting park systems.

By the end of the day the participants had developed a deeper understanding of both the rewards and the problems involved in reshaping our environment to fit the needs of today. They had met with others who cared passionately about the quality of their surroundings. Most of all, they had begun the long process of improving and revitalizing an aging and overlooked urban resource.



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