

RESTORATION & PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN FOR GEORGETOWN'S HARRY MURCH PARK JUNE 2008

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**“A PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN
HARRY MURCH PARK
GEORGETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS
GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL COMMISSION
WALKER-KLUESING DESIGN GROUP”**

Introductory Comments On The Preservation Master Plan For Harry Murch Park

By the Georgetown Historical Commission

A copy of the final CPA funded "Preservation Master Plan For Harry Murch Park" (HMMP) follows this introductory information by the Georgetown Historical Commission (GHC).

However, before reviewing that plan, it is important to note several important points about the Plan and how its implementation will proceed when the \$150K of CPA funds granted for the project become available at the start of Fiscal Year 2009 (FY09) on July 1, 2008. This CPA award was granted jointly to the GHC and the Georgetown Highway Department (GHD) at the May 2008 Annual Town Meeting (ATM).

The first important point to note is that the recommended park features, configuration and technical specifications related to how the park should be restored that are given in the following HMMP are those that represent the consensus vote by the Townspeople at the public meeting held for that purpose on Feb 21, 2008.

Therefore, it is the view of the GHC that this Master Plan represents the final or ultimate goal as to how the park is to be restored. Specifically, this means that the ultimate goal of the restoration work to be done there is to realize the features and configuration for the park that are summarized in the Consultants diagram entitled "Preservation Master Plan Executive Summary-6" (hereinafter referred to as PMP-6) following explicitly the specifications set forth for them in the body of the plan.

This goal, of course, has to be tempered by what is affordable by the Town. For this reason, the Consultant has provided a series of cost estimates at the end of the plan. These estimates are presented under the heading "MASTER PLAN COST ESTIMATE". They are sufficiently detailed to help guide the Town in choosing what features of the presented plan it feels it can afford. In order to help prioritize this selection process, the cost estimates are presented under 3 priority levels entitled Priority One thru Priority Three. A Summary Estimate which covers the composite is also provided.

At first glance, the magnitude of these estimates are such that it is likely that only a limited subset of all of the proposed features and changes can be achieved in the near term. This is especially true if CPA funds, which are generally distributed across several projects each year, are the only funds to be made available on an annual basis for this purpose. It is important to note here, however, that the Consultant's estimates in the Plan are based on prevailing wage rates and material costs using outside contractors. As a result they do not allow for the cost savings that can likely be achieved by having the GHD do most of the work, as well as purchase the materials needed.

Of primary concern at this point, of course, is what can be accomplished with the initial \$150K CPA grant received at the 2008 May ATM if the GHD does the work.

Regarding this latter issue, the GHD has estimated that it can do all of the work included under the Plan's Priority One estimate for considerably less than the indicated \$150K amount. In making this assessment, the GHD also feels that, barring any unforeseen complications, the savings it can achieve by doing the Priority One tasks may be sufficient to not only remove the existing large deciduous trees but also to purchase and install a significant number of the Plan's specified peripheral trees for this \$150K amount (this latter tree removal, purchase and installation task is listed as a subpart of Plan's Priority Two estimate).

As was evidenced at the May 2008 Annual Town Meeting (ATM) the possibility of achieving these savings along with the potential for installing even some of the trees for the \$150K CPA grant by having the GHD do most of the work was an important determinant in getting the grant for this project. As a result, the grant was finally awarded on the basis that the GHC and the GHD would do as much as possible to

provide a “useable” and “acceptable” re-landscaped and re-configured Murch Park with hopefully some surrounding trees at least, for this \$150K amount rather than limit the project, as it was originally proposed, to that indicated under Priority One in the plan.

On the basis of the GHD’s assessment of what it will be able to accomplish with this \$150K grant, both the GHC and GHD feel that it is safe to conclude the following about what parts of the HMMP can or can not be achieved for this amount:

1. All of the subparts listed under the plan’s Priority One estimate can be completed to realize the basic re-leveled and irrigated configuration shown in the plan’s PMP-6 diagram at a cost that is significantly lower than \$150K. This includes the removal of all of the existing large deciduous shade trees on the perimeter of the park that is listed as subpart under the plan’s Priority Two estimate¹.
2. With the savings accrued by having the GHD do the work associated with (1) above, it appears that it will be possible to purchase and plant at least some of the specified park-surrounding deciduous shade trees per the plan’s PMP-6 diagram under this grant as well .
3. The \$150K fund is inadequate to support the purchase and installation of the new war monument for the 3-monument arrangement as well as the multi-service flag display, that are shown in the plan’s PMP-6 diagram. Therefore adding those features must be deferred until funds become available.
4. The funds are adequate to pay for relocating the existing two war monuments and the single existing flag pole for the American flag to their respective locations shown in the final PMP-6 layout plan. This will allow for the graceful addition of the additional war monument and the multi-service flag display as funds become available in the future.
5. If additional trees are needed to complete the purchase and installation of trees around the periphery of the park as indicated in PMP-6, as well as the benches shown deployed throughout the park, it will be necessary to find additional funds for those purposes.
6. Other than providing for the electrical service necessary to run the natural well fed irrigation system provided as a subpart under the plan’s Priority One estimate, the cost of providing additional electrical services as listed in a subpart under the plan’s Priority Two estimate must also be deferred until additional funds for that purpose can be found.
7. The new street lights listed as a sub-part under the Consultant’s Priority Three estimate must similarly be deferred until funds are available to cover their purchase and installation.

As can be seen by these conclusions, having the GHD do much of the restoration work recommended in this Preservation Plan for Harry Murch Park, makes it possible to achieve a much more useable and acceptable park that is closer to the ultimate goal of providing the features indicated in the plan’s PMP-6 diagram than would otherwise be possible. Indeed, the real possibility of having at least some of the peripheral shade trees planted in addition to the leveling of the grade, the provision of natural irrigation system and the space opening relocation of the monument cluster for this \$150K grant makes this approach of using the GHD all the more acceptable.

Georgetown Historical Commission

¹ In order to provide an aesthetically uniform and shaded park for future generations like what was once created by long past generations for those who enjoyed the park in the early 1900s, the Consultant recommends that all of the existing trees be removed and replaced by a new disease resistant variety. The existing trees have become deformed by their close proximity to the power lines due to the excessive pruning necessary to coexist. The new trees to line the park will be relocated uniformly around the park as shown in the plan’s PMP-6 diagram at a sufficient and consistent distance from the existing power lines to eliminate the need for excessive and harmful pruning.



A PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN
HARRY MURCH PARK
GEORGETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL COMMISSION
WALKER-KLUESING DESIGN GROUP

A PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN
FOR
HARRY MURCH PARK
GEORGETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

GEORGETOWN HISTORIC COMMISSION

MAY 2008

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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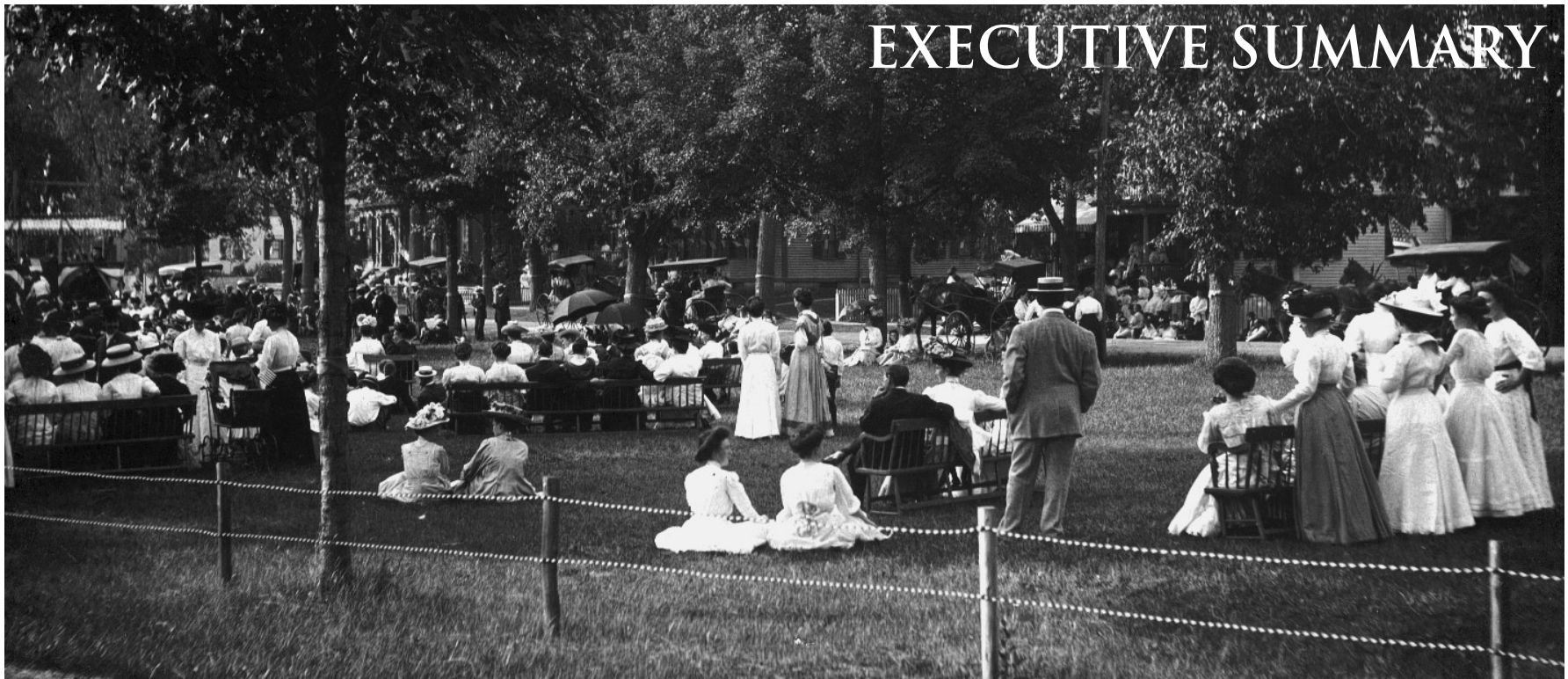
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*Cover image: Harry Murch Park in the early 1900s,
looking west [courtesy of the Georgetown Historical
Commission]*

*All of the contemporary photographs in this publication
were provided by Walker-Kluesing Design Group,
except as otherwise noted.*



Harry Murch Park is a triangular shaped parcel about an acre in size with longest side adjacent to East Main Street, route 133, on the northeast side. Library Street, on the south side, creates a connection to Town Hall. Union Street on the northwest side is a short one way street. The Winter Street intersection with East Main Street occurs at the approximate midpoint of the park and links the park to the High School.

The park is generally open and has served as a focal point for town gatherings for many years. Surroundings are mixed residential [primarily mid to late 19th century] and commercial. The eastern end of park has a primarily commercial character with Georgetown Plaza, Johnnies Place, NAPA Auto Parts and The Pool Guy. At the western end, closer to the town center, commercial facilities have maintained more of a residential character with Century 21 Real estate offices, Bank of America and Smith's Family Treehouse.

Harry Murch Park is a historic park that was inventoried for inclusion on the State Register of Historic Places in 1967. At that time there was concern about the impacts of widening East Main Street. The 2006 upgrade of East Main Street improved traffic conditions, but did impact the park by reducing its size and changing its rural character with concrete perimeter sidewalks, traffic lights, etc.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to develop a preservation master plan and implementation plan for the entire park that can be used as a guide for both long and short term planning and improvements.

General goals include rehabilitation of this historic resource in a contemporary context, reinforcement of an overall image that is compatible with the historic assets of this one acre park, improvement of accessibility, and increasing passive recreation opportunities.

METHODOLOGY

The study began with on site investigations and a review of available historic and current materials generously provided by the Georgetown Historical Commission. More in depth research would be beneficial. Files at other repositories of historic information were not examined. A number of meetings were held with the Georgetown Historical Commission, as well as a well attended public meeting, to develop and refine to concepts presented here.

The Massachusetts Historic Commission has not been contacted in regard to records of any archaeological investigations that may have taken place in the park. It is suggested that this contact be made and that, if deemed appropriate, an archaeologist review the site to make a preliminary determination of any potential archaeological sensitivity prior to any excavation work.

LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION STANDARDS

The 1996 Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes addresses four treatments: preservation; rehabilitation; restoration; and reconstruction. "Of the four, Preservation standards require retention of the greatest amount of historic fabric, including the landscape's historic form, features and details as they evolved over time. Rehabilitation standards acknowledge the need to alter or add to a cultural landscape to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the landscape's historic character. Restoration standards allow for the depiction of a landscape at a particular time in its history by preserving materials from the period of significance and removing materials from other periods. Reconstruction standards establish a framework for recreating a vanished or non-surviving landscape with new materials, primarily for interpretive purposes."

The overall goal for the site is rehabilitation. Current conditions require acceptance of the internal path, additional memorials, flagpoles and benches, and nonconforming signs that are related to the adjacent streets.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Concept

The primary goal is to recreate the image of Harry Murch Park to that of circa 1920 while adapting selected areas to accommodate existing and proposed changed needs and conditions using design principles established for the park at that time. The park was a major contributing factor to the character of the town as well as a central focal point. The intent of the plan is to restore that character by utilizing historic landscape elements.

The plan returns the perimeter of large shade trees which was the significant character defining element of the park. It also gives the memorials an appropriate setting of prominence.

Landscape Character

Vegetation: The historic high canopy of large deciduous shade trees should be restored at the perimeter of the park. In this endeavor, consideration should be given to the reintroduction of improved disease resistant Maples which were the historic predominant tree type. Small deciduous trees like Crabapples and evergreen trees should not be part of the plant palette on the site. The use of shrubs and other floral displays should be limited to areas immediately adjacent to the memorials.

Lawns: All lawn areas should remain mown lawn to retain the historic well kept image.

Soils: Soils should be improved with organic matter, lime and fertilizer to improve water holding capacity and reduce acidity to facilitate their ability to support plant growth. Consideration should be given to adding an irrigation system to the entire site because of the droughty nature of the soils on site.

Circulation and Parking

Pedestrian Circulation: Move the internal walk so that it directly relates to the crosswalks it serves and provides a smooth circulation route. Given that there is no historic precedent for path materials, a concrete walk matching the perimeter walks would be appropriate and easily maintained.

Vehicular Circulation: No changes to recent upgrades are recommended.

Parking: While no designated parking facilities are recommended adjacent to the park, temporary parking along park edges for specific events should be acceptable.

Safety and Accessibility

Making Harry Murch Park accessible is required for compliance with state and federal regulations. This can and should be done without the loss of green open space.

Monuments, Memorials and Markers

While the war memorials are an important part of town history, their current locations in the park do not benefit the park. The memorials should be relocated to a prominent space as shown in the preservation plan. Relocation will also allow the central area of the park to regain the spacious feeling and unobstructed open lawn character that it once had.

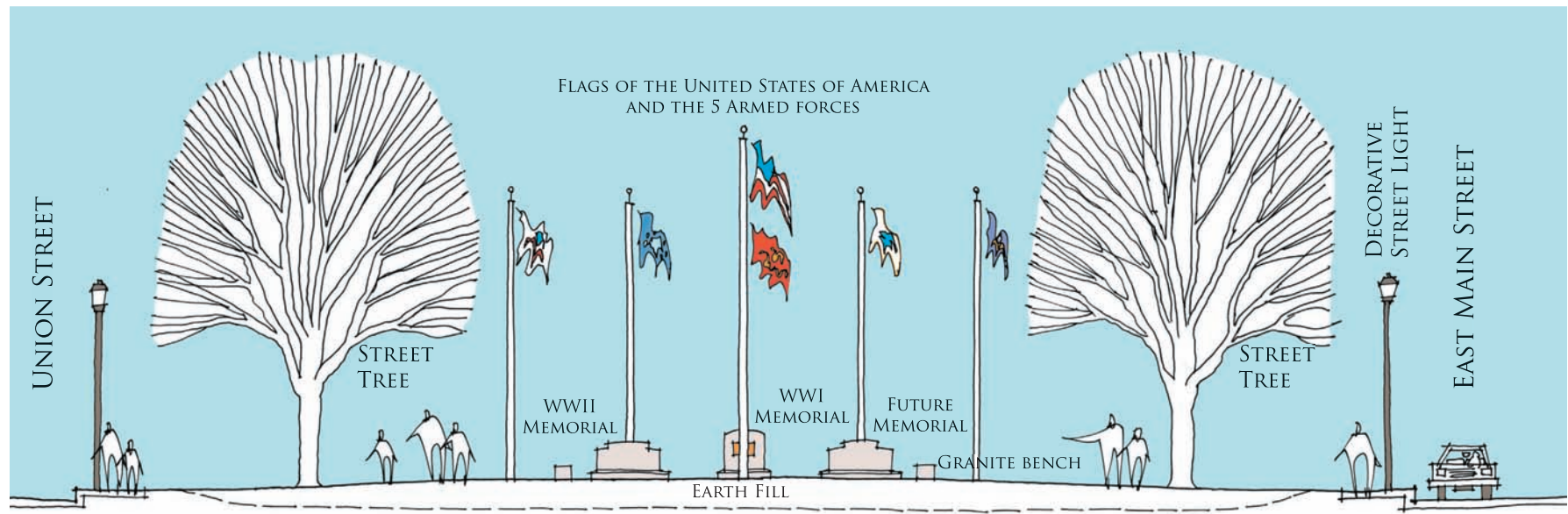
Site Amenities and Furnishings

Benches: Benches serve an important contemporary purpose and should have a place in Harry Murch Park. The existing benches should be replaced with benches that have cast iron supports and wood slats which are more appropriate to the era of significance.

Trash Receptacles: Trash receptacles should be provided even though none have been seen in the historic images. Locations should be limited to the ends of the internal walk through the park. Receptacles should be visually compatible with the character of the historic open space.

Signs: Harry Murch Park should have an identification sign. Interpretive signs would also benefit the park. The signs related to the highways should be reexamined with the goal of reducing the quantity and/or size of as many of them as possible.

Illustrative section through Harry Murch Park



Flagpoles: In addition to the American flag there is a desire for 5 additional flags, representing each of the armed forces.

Fences/Bollards: A general preference was expressed in the public meeting not to edge the park with fencing because it was not considered an inviting image.

Recreation Facilities

The park should maintain is passive recreation quality. No permanent structures should be added to the park.

Surface Drainage

Raise the level of the lawn area such that it is higher than the surrounding streets and has positive surface drainage.

Utilities

It is extremely important to work with utility providers to prevent further deterioration of the park image and to work towards improving that image. Placing overhead utility services underground should be a high priority.

Lighting: The character of the utilitarian light fixtures should be changed to better reflect the historic nature of the park. Even though they are not appropriate for the era of the park, the style of fixture should match those used in the town center for continuity of image and ease of maintenance. Lighting should be provided for the American flag since it is left flying day and night. If lighting of the war memorials is desirable, it should be accomplished with discrete fixtures mounted on the poles used for street lighting.

Electric Service: Service should be provided to facilitate events.

Well: The well should be developed and utilized for an automatic irrigation system inside the park.

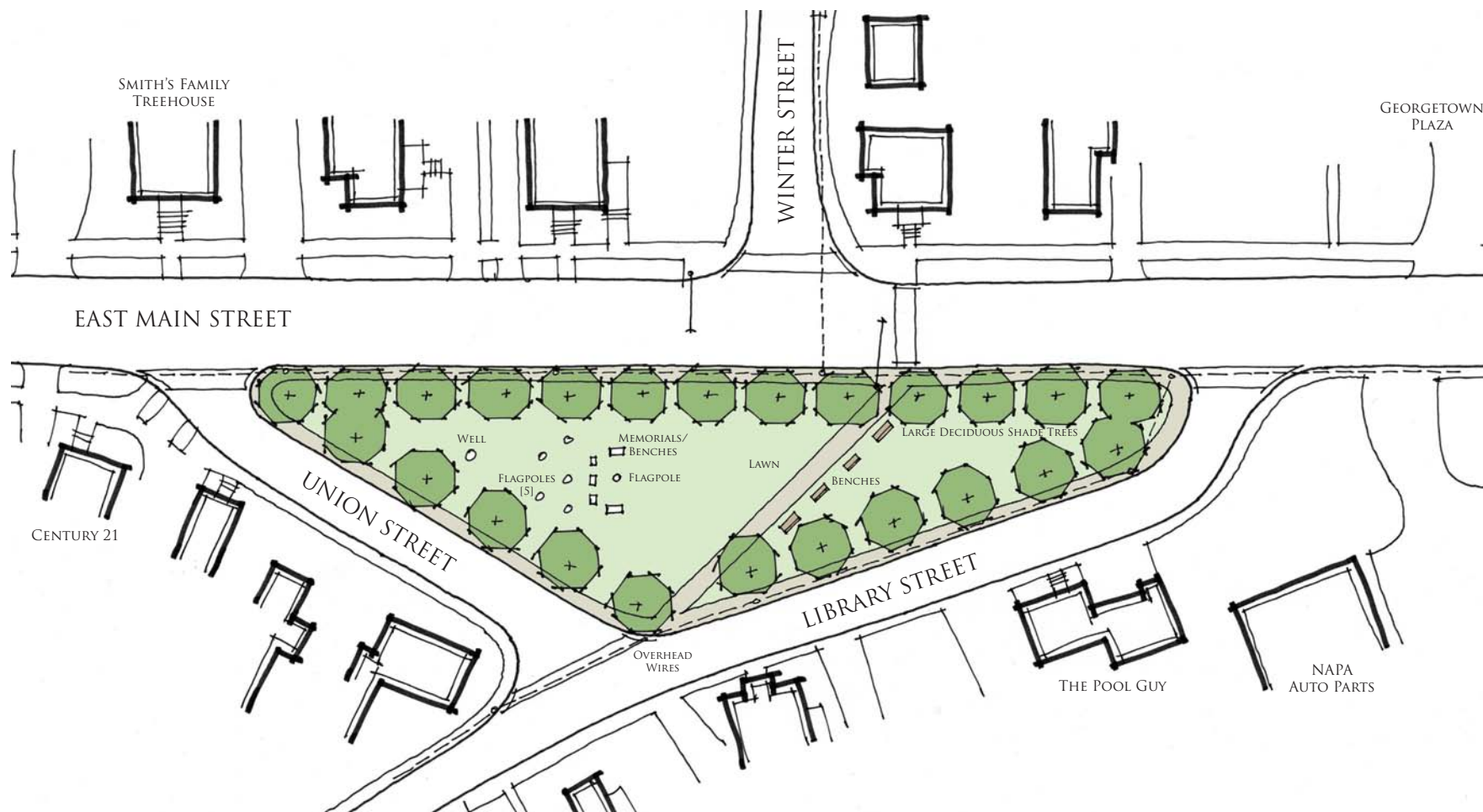


EXISTING CONDITIONS PLAN
HARRY MURCH PARK
 GEORGETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

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SCALE IN FEET
 0 20 40 100



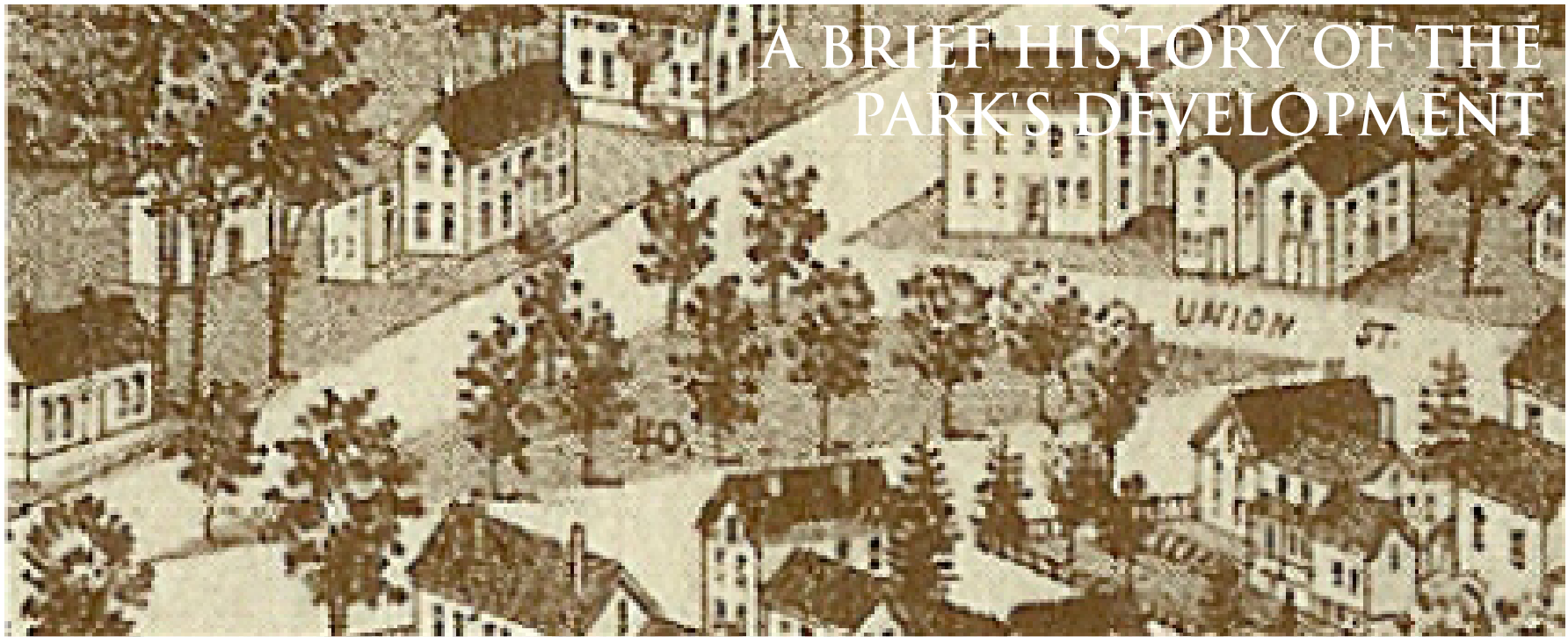


SCALE IN FEET
0 20 40 100

PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN
HARRY MURCH PARK
GEORGETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

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Sketch of Union Park [later to become Harry Murch Park] from the west, 1887 [courtesy of the Georgetown Historical Commission]

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Not far from center of town, Harry Murch Park was created sometime between 1810 and 1830. Called Union Square or Union Park in 1887, it was renamed Harry L. Murch Park in 1928, the same year responsibility for the oversight, improvement and care of the park was transferred from the Georgetown Improvement Association to the town veterans. This act followed the chartering of the Rene J. Gagnon American Legion Post No. 211 on September 22, 1919 who assumed responsibility for the erection of the WWI monument not long afterward.

As a town owned open space, it appears not to have been previously developed for other uses. In many respects the park served as the town common, hosting important town events. It had a classic appropriate character with perimeter trees surrounding a central lawn. There were no perimeter or internal walks. It was a very flexible space with no internal obstructions or furnishings except for special events when temporary facilities were often provided.

Once the WWI memorial was placed in the park, it became a memorial park and has become the destination for the annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day parades and celebrations.

The period of landscape significance and emphasis has been designated to be circa 1920 which is shortly after the WWI monument was placed in the park and relates to a developing moment of landscape maturity for Harry Murch Park.

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF HARRY MURCH PARK

In many respects Harry Murch Park appears to have paralleled the development of Elm Park in Groveland, although in depth research for this park has not been completed to date.

Both parks appear to have been created about the same time with Elm Park being laid out in 1832. Harry Murch Park was created sometime between 1810 and 1830. While the planting of Elm Park occurred between 1837 and 1839, it appears that trees were not placed in Harry Murch Park until the 1870s.

In the early 1900s Elm Park began to suffer the effects of transportation improvements and neglect. Harry Murch Park suffered the same indignities although much later.

Preceded by a flagpole, the granite World War I memorial was erected in the north end of Elm Park in 1923, followed by a World War II memorial and a Vietnam memorial. The World War I memorial in Harry Murch Park preceded that in Elm Park, but no other memorials followed until the World War II memorial was relocated there in 2007.

No evidence has been found to date that the park was ever designed. It seems to have evolved over time.

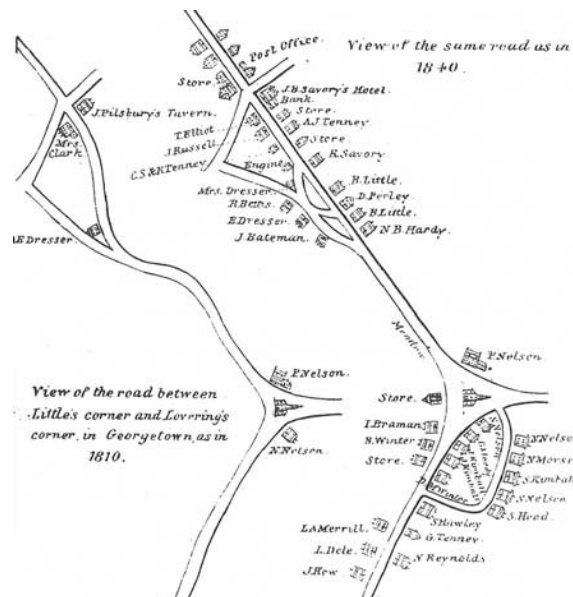
REMAINING HISTORIC FEATURES

The basic structure of the park remains intact. It is still a central green space with roads along the edges.

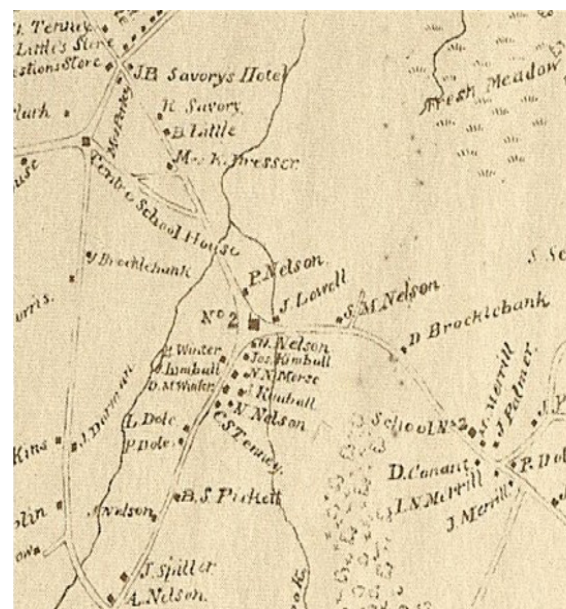
CHANGES TO THE ORIGINAL PLAN

No original trees are left. Transportation improvements over the years have left the park at a lower elevation than surrounding streets. Additions to the park include memorials, flagpole, perimeter and internal paths, benches, trash receptacles and small deciduous trees. The latter bisects the space and makes it appear smaller. The road widening project completed in 2006 cut into park, actually making it smaller.

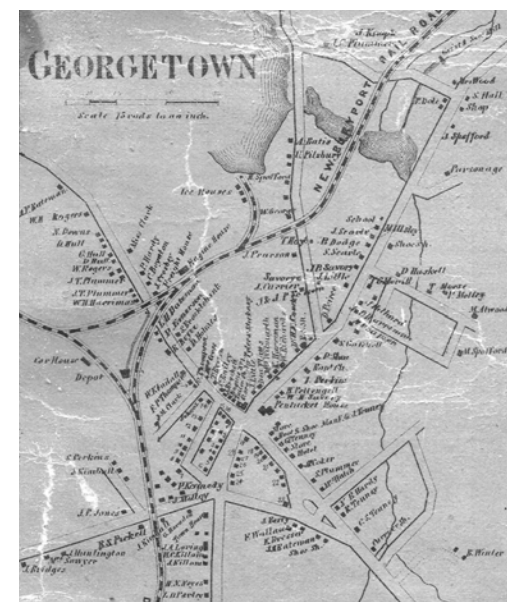
Over time, these changes have changed the expression of the space from that of a town common to that of a memorial park.



Detail of Gage 1810 and 1840 map
[courtesy of the Georgetown Historical Commission]



Detail of 1830 map
[courtesy of the Georgetown Historical Commission]



Detail of 1856 map
[courtesy of the Georgetown Historical Commission]



SCALE IN FEET
0 20 40 100

HISTORIC PERIOD PLAN c.1900
HARRY MURCH PARK
GEORGETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

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c. 1900 plan of Harry Murch Park



OVERALL CONCEPT

The primary goal is to recreate the image of Harry Murch Park in accordance with that established circa 1920 while adapting selected areas to accommodate existing and proposed changed needs and conditions using design principles established in the historic plan.

The goals that follow describe broad aims or ideals for achievement.

Develop a master plan and an implementation plan that can be used as a guide for both short and long term planning and improvements.

Recreate the pastoral qualities of the historic landscape design while solving the contemporary problems of public safety, security, appropriateness of use, maintenance, management and preservation.

Recommend changes to existing facilities, management policies and maintenance practices that are inconsistent with the original landscape design intent and/or contemporary park needs.

Each major component of the master plan is presented and discussed in three parts: the Issue; Objectives to be resolved in achieving established goals for the park; and Recommendations.

View toward east end of Harry Murch Park, 2007



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Issues

Landscape Character

Once shaded by a continuous perimeter of large deciduous shade trees, apparently Maples as determined from historic photographs, Harry Murch Park is considered by many as an important public open space for Georgetown.

The scale of the park and absence of an internal circulation system indicates that it was developed as a civic open space. Used as such, it created a strong sense of civic pride near the center of town. Placement of the war memorial in the center of the park was an appropriate development for such a space even though the location limited alternate uses.

Vegetation

Early plans do not have sufficient detail to illustrate the types and placement of vegetation, only the green area. Historic photographs have been the primary source of reference. Large deciduous shade trees and lawn were the vegetative cover for the park.

View toward west end of Harry Murch Park, 2007

Preservation Master Plan - 11

While shrubs, small deciduous trees and evergreen trees were not part of the initial plant palette, shrubs did appear near the memorial in photographs from 1923 and 1968.

The park perimeter was initially planted with what appears to be Maples. Based upon the size of trees in turn of century photos, the trees were probably planted in the 1870s. They are also illustrated in an 1887 sketch.

Crabapples were added to the interior sometime after 1960. This choice of a much lower scaled tree caused a dramatic change to the image of the park and resulted in the loss of the sense of vista created by the overhead canopy of the shade trees. Much of the foliage of the Crabapples is at eye level, blocking views into and across the park.

There have been many tree losses since the 1960s causing loss of continuity. There were 5 Maples along the west end of East Main, 4 Lindens on eastern end of East Main Street and 5 Crabapples along path connection to Winter Street intersection in the fall of 2007. One of the Maples was removed in the spring of 2008.

In addition to trees, there are no lower level ornamental plantings except seasonal flowers at the war memorials which have come to be largely due to volunteer efforts. The seasonal flowers at the WWI memorial are defined by steel edging.

A recent survey indicates that there were additional trees in the park before the transportation improvement project began, including 1 in the interior of the park, 1 on East Main, 4 on Union and 6 on Library Street. There are none now on the south side, Library and Union Streets, leaving the park essentially without shade, hot and glaring in the summer.

The recent transportation project also added fill at the edges of the park over existing tree roots. This has contributed to the decline and loss of some of those trees.

Conflicts between the trees on East Main Street and overhead wires are discussed under Utilities.

Lawns

Early photographs of the park reveal a generally flush condition with surrounding roads. Road paving, widening and curbing efforts have raised perimeter roads in relation to the park leaving the park as a depression with an inappropriate steep slope along edges of the park.



*Planting at WWI Memorial, 1968
[courtesy of Georgetown Historical Commission]*

*Memorial Day, 2006
[courtesy of Georgetown Historical Commission]*



Lawn areas are in fair to poor condition with some bare spots and herbaceous weeds. Lawns receive no supplemental water, soil treatment or fertilization.

Soils

The existing soil in the park is a Sudbury fine sandy loam. It is a deep, nearly level, moderately well drained soil. Typically, the surface layer is very friable, a very dark brown fine sandy loam about 4" thick. The subsoil is 22" thick and very friable throughout. The substratum is mottled, loose, yellowish brown stratified sand and gravel to a depth of 60" or more.

The permeability of this soil is moderately rapid in the subsoil and rapid in the substratum. Available water capacity is moderate and reaction ranges from extremely acid to moderately acid [3.6 to 6.0]. The rooting zone extends into the substratum, but root growth is restricted by a seasonal high water table which is in the lower part of the subsoil during winter and spring. Wetness is the major limitation. The main management needs include installing field drains where needed, improving tilth and increasing organic matter content. The seasonal high water table is a limitation for playgrounds. The seasonal high water table, seepage and susceptibility to frost action limit the soil for most types of residential development.

Shallow excavations have severe limitations due to wetness, caving of cut banks and small stones. Local roads and streets have moderate limitations due to wetness and frost action. There are severe limitations for absorption fields due to wetness.

Common trees associated with this soil includes Eastern White Pine, Northern Red Oak and Red Spruce.

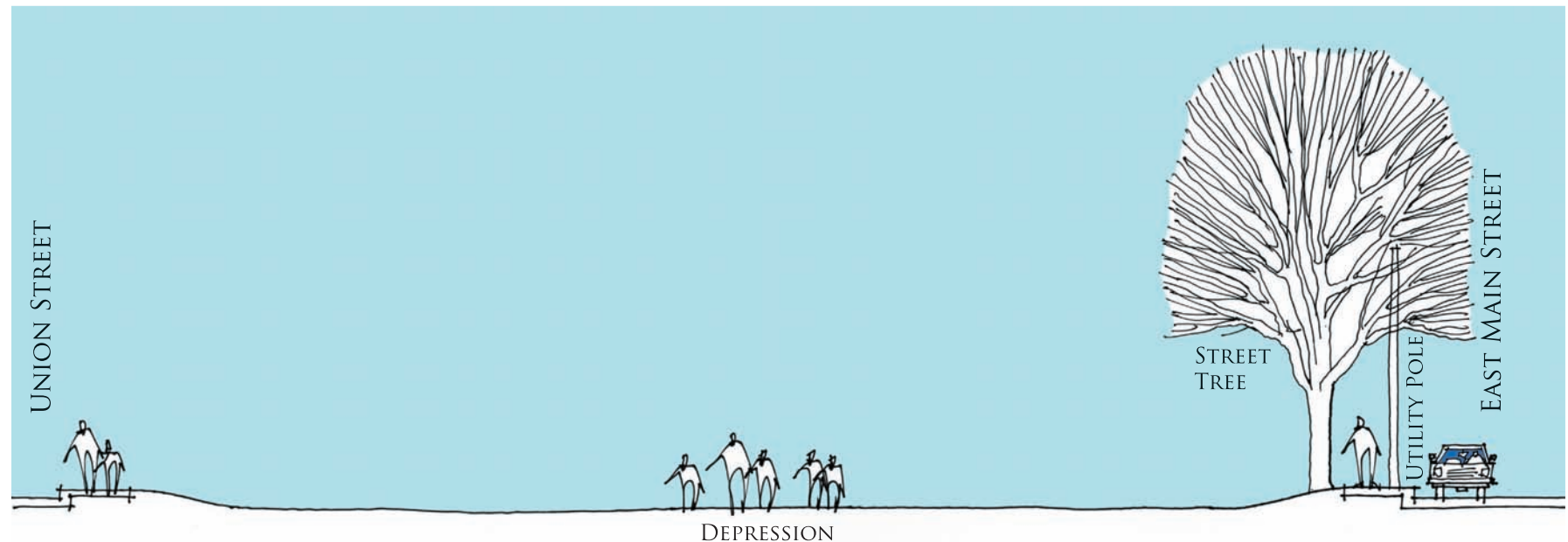
Objectives

To use vegetation to restore the scenery and historic style of the park.

To create healthy plant communities within the park.

To develop an ongoing vegetation management program.

Section through Harry Murch Park, 2007



Recommendations

Landscape Character

The historic high canopy of large deciduous shade trees should be restored along the perimeter edges of the park.

Vegetation

Maples were the historic predominant tree type. Sugar Maples could be used provided they are pruned up as required to establish limb free trunks. Initial tree sizes should be of sufficient size to provide immediate impact, but not so large that the root balls would have to be placed below ground water level.

Small deciduous trees like Crabapples and evergreen trees should not be part of the plant palette on the site. The use of shrubs and other floral displays should be limited to the area immediately adjacent to the war memorials. This is historically appropriate and will complement the civic nature of the space.

This master plan, particularly in regard to vegetation, should be viewed as a long term goal for revegetation. Existing trees that do not conform to the overall plan in terms of type or location should be relocated or removed as needed and as possible.

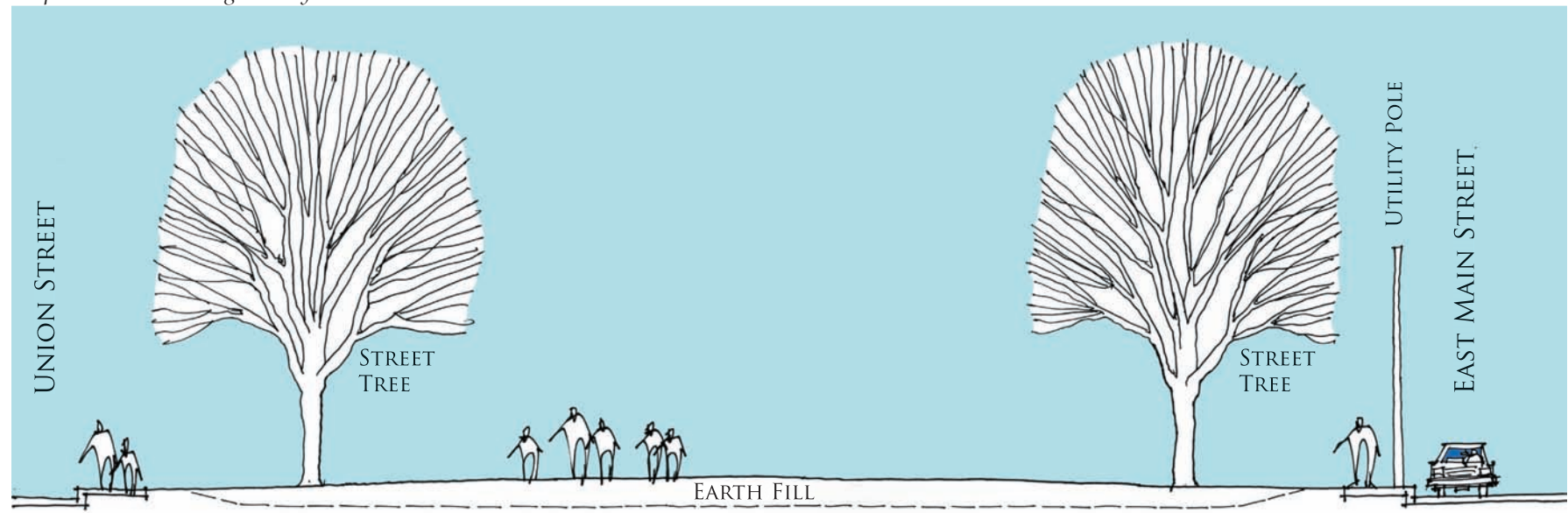
Lawns

All lawn areas should remain mown lawn to retain the historic well kept image. Fill should be provided as necessary to raise the level of the park above the elevation of the adjacent streets. The lawns should be slightly crowned to provide positive surface drainage. Lawns should be restored as the area is regraded.

Soils

Soils should be improved with organic matter, lime and fertilizer to improve water holding capacity and reduce acidity to facilitate their ability to support plant growth. Consideration should be given to adding an irrigation system to the entire site because of the droughty nature of the soils on site. New plantings need moisture for the first two or three years to assist with establishment. Consideration should also be given to adding underdrainage to relieve the impacts of a seasonally high water table.

Proposed section through Harry Murch Park



CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Issues

Pedestrian Circulation

There were no perimeter or internal walks related to the park in the early 1900s and at least through 1960. The 5' wide internal asphalt walk that bisects the park was most likely added after construction of the Georgetown Middle/High School in the early 1960s. It connects the Winter/East Main Street intersection with the Library/Union Street intersection. It is reported to be an important connection for student use although the recent transportation improvement project provided an awkward crosswalk connection to it. The perimeter concrete sidewalk along East Main, Library and Union Streets was added as part of the 2006 upgrade of adjacent streets. The sidewalk was added immediately adjacent to the curb creating an urban image. Without a green verge adjacent to the curb, the former rural character has been lost.

Vehicular Circulation

Harry Murch Park is bounded on the north by the heavily used Route 133, East Main Street. Library Street on the south side links East Main Street to Town Hall. It is one way adjacent to the park. Union Street, a short quiet one way residential street, forms the southwestern edge.

The 2006 roadway upgrade widened East Main Street at the expense of the park which became smaller because of roadway expansion. The close proximity of high speed traffic limits its appropriateness for use in festivals, but it is still used as a meeting place for some.

The sides of the park are edged with vertical granite curb. In the early 1900s a photograph indicates that the park was already lower than adjacent streets. Vertical curb was initially installed between the early 1900s and 1960. This exaggerated the grade difference between the park and the street, i.e., the park appears much lower than surrounding streets. The recent transportation improvement project continued this treatment evidenced by pavement patches at the ends of the internal walk.

Parking

There is no perimeter parking adjacent to the park. Larger facilities are nearby at the High School and at Park and Ride lot. It has been reported that the limited nearby parking limits use of the park. It was also reported that town sanctioned activities require insurance coverage for liability. The town currently applies for coverage for individual events. Georgetown Days were cancelled for this reason.

Objectives

To minimize the existing and potential impact of circulation and parking on the historic open space resource of Harry Murch Park while accommodating basic improvements to other areas.

Recommendations

Pedestrian Circulation

Move the internal walk so that it directly relates to the crosswalks it serves and provides a smooth circulation route. Given that there is no historic precedent for path materials, a concrete walk matching the perimeter walks would be appropriate and easily maintained.

Vehicular Circulation

No changes to recent upgrades are recommended. Providing a green verge at the edge of the park would effectively reduce the functional area of the park even more.

Parking

While no designated parking facilities are recommended adjacent to the park, temporary parking along park edges for specific events should be acceptable.

SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Issues

The location of the park next to the traffic on East Main Street limits potential use without an appropriate safety barrier. The speed of traffic today is much greater than it was when Harry Murch Park was created. The depression of the lawn with steep side slopes in relation to the street makes the park not accessible.

Objectives

To enhance the safety and security of park visitors.

To strengthen the interconnected network of pedestrian circulation systems.

To enhance scenic opportunities in the park as seen from adjacent streets.

Recommendations

Making Harry Murch Park accessible is required for compliance with state and federal regulations. This can and should be done without the loss of green open space. There is apparently no public interest in providing a safety barrier at the edge of the park because of the unappealing image it would create.

MONUMENTS, MEMORIALS AND MARKERS *Issues*

Memorials were not a part of the initial plan or development of the park. The first war memorial in town, the Civil War Memorial, was placed near Town Hall. Today there are two war memorials in the center of the park with a World War One [WWI] memorial and a World War Two [WWII] memorial at the east side with a flagpole between them. Their location makes it difficult to arrange space for events related to them.

The WWI Memorial is gray granite with a bronze plaque. Approximately 4'-4" high, 3'-6" wide and 1'-4" thick, it was placed near the center of the park, facing north toward East Main Street. Settlement of the ground adjacent to the memorial has exposed the concrete foundation.

The bronze plaque has the following inscription:

*IN MEMORIAM
to the boys of this town
who gave their lives
for the cause of freedom
Rene Gagnon
Harry Murch*

*Joseph Tidd
Edward Nolin*

Bryant Brown

*This tablet presented by
Rene J. Gagnon Post No. 211
American Legion*

Of the 95 men from the town that saw service, these are the names of the 5 men who died serving their country. The park was reportedly named after Harry Murch, an only child whose parents lived on Library Street across the street from the park.



*World War I Memorial, front, 1923
[courtesy of Georgetown Historical Commission]*

World War I Memorial, front, 2007



World War I Memorial, rear, 2007



The gray granite WWII Memorial is approximately 3'-6" high, 5'-7" wide and 10" thick. Dedicated in May 1948, it was moved from a site at the front of the Library to the park in 2007. Of the 226 men enlisted from the town, 8 died including S/Sgt John E. Adams, Pvt. Neill C. Aiken, Cadet Edward A. Dunlap, Jr., Capt. Ralph Keeler, Pvt. Arthur E. Parkhurst, 3/c William R. Walker, PFC Orin W. Woodman and Lt. Clarence E. Rice. Their names are inscribed on the back of the memorial.

Objectives

To limit the addition of new monuments, memorials and markers except as appropriate to the overall design intent.

To relocate monuments, memorials and markers as required to be compatible with the overall design concept.

Recommendations

While the war memorials are an important part of town history, their current locations in the park do not benefit the park. The memorials should be relocated to a prominent space as shown in the preservation plan. Relocation will also allow the central area of the park to regain the spacious feeling and unobstructed open lawn character that it once had.

When relocating them, care must be exercised to provide sufficient spatial separation to maintain the sense of respect demanded by these monuments.

It may be appropriate at some future date to add memorials to future wars. The town veterans organizations [VFW and American Legion] desire that the park become a focal point for commemorating veterans of all wars, including wars not yet memorialized. Any new memorials should have an appropriate scale and be placed with respect for the other memorials.

World War II Memorial, front, 2007



World War II Memorial, rear, 2007



SITE AMENITIES AND FURNISHINGS

Issues

Benches

A historic photograph indicates numerous benches set on the lawn apparently only for an event. The benches appear to have been borrowed from Town Hall or the Meeting House.

Today provisions are evident for 5 benches along the central walk although only one existed in the fall of 2007. It was made up of precast concrete supports and wood slats for the seat and back. In the spring of 2008 2 additional benches were placed there, one matching the existing and another composed of an iron frame with wood slat seat and back. The bench pads are edged with pressure treated timbers.

Trash Receptacles

No trash receptacles are evident in historic images. There was 1 contemporary trash receptacle on site in the fall of 2007 composed of vertical metal slats. It was replaced with a plastic residential receptacle in the spring of 2008.

Bench 2008



Signs

No permanent signs are evident in historic photographs. While Harry Murch Park does not have an identification or interpretive signs, it contains a quite number of highway related regulatory signs. In addition, there is a directional sign to the Georgetown Middle / High School and a temporary sandwich board type sign providing direction to a private enterprise.

Flagpoles

It is not known when the first flagpole was installed, but the current one is a replacement, dedicated on 11 November 2001. Associated with the memorials and centered on Winter Street, it is approximately 45 feet high. The brushed aluminum is scratched because of the external halyard. The flag is always flying and it is not lit.

Bench and bench pads 2007



Fences / Bollards

Historic photographs indicate that there was a fence on Library Street between trees and street in the early 1900s. While difficult to tell, it could have been what is called the Georgetown fence. A photograph of the 1909 Homecoming event indicates the presence of a more decorative barrier that appears to have been temporary and composed of vertical posts and rope. Neither fencing nor bollards currently exist.

*Georgetown fence [1938 HABS drawing
courtesy of US Library of Congress]*

Objectives

To reconfirm the historic character of Harry Murch Park through the use of appropriate site amenities.

To enhance the experience of visitors through attractive and functional site amenities.

To limit the addition of new signs.

Recommendations

Benches

Benches serve an important contemporary purpose and should have a place in Harry Murch Park. The style of the existing benches relates to a period later than c1900. They should be replaced with benches that have cast iron supports and wood slats which are more appropriate to the era of significance.

Trash Receptacles

Trash receptacles should be provided even though none have been seen in the historic images. Locations should be limited to the ends of the internal walk through the park. Receptacles should be visually compatible with the character of the historic open space and other amenities.

Signs

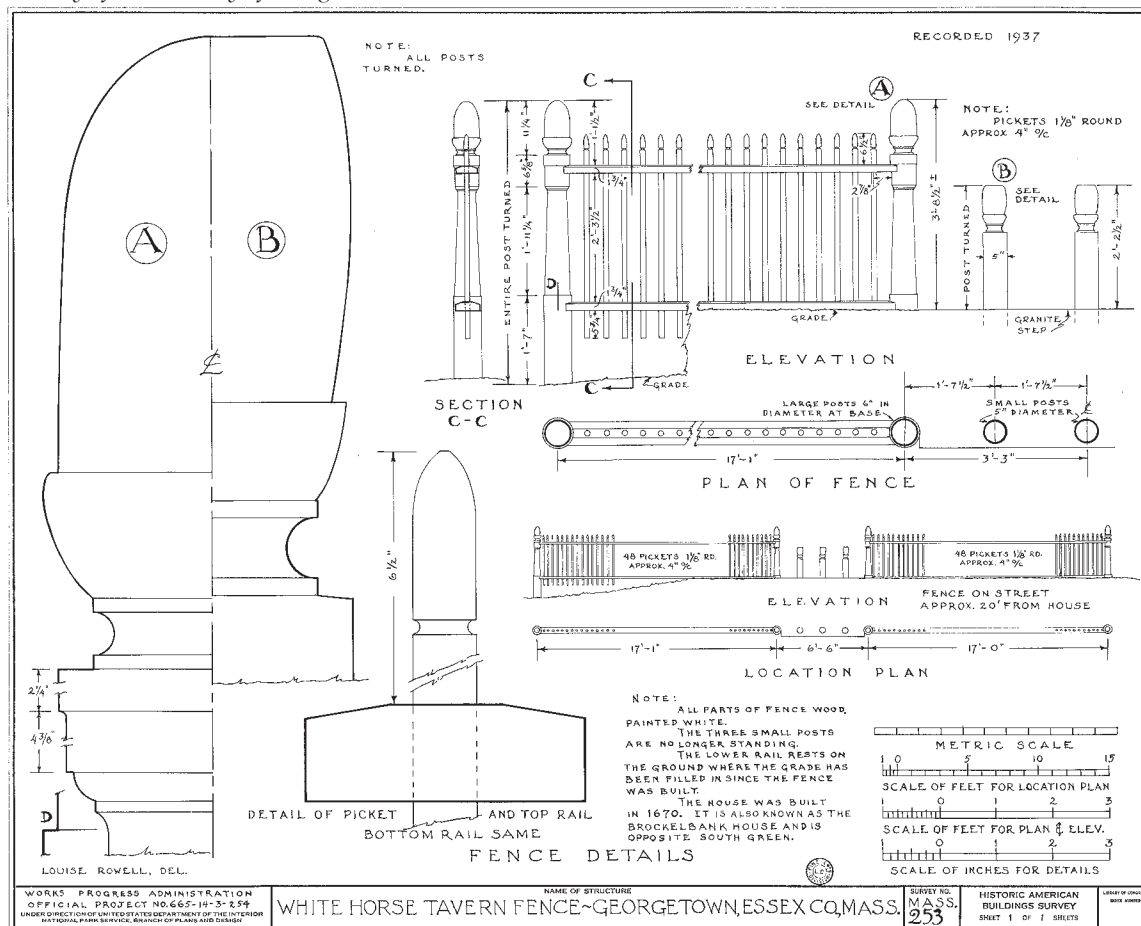
Harry Murch Park should have an identification sign. An interpretive sign[s] would also benefit the park. The signs related to the highways should be reexamined with the goal of reducing the quantity and/or size of as many of them as possible. The larger ones in particular are visually incompatible with the historic character of the site. Signs for private enterprises should not be allowed in the park.

Flagpoles

In addition to the American flag there is a desire for 5 additional flags, representing each of the armed forces. The pole for the American flag should be the tallest and placed in the most prominent position.

Fences / Bollards

A general preference was expressed in the public meeting not to edge the park with fencing because it would not present an inviting image.



RECREATION FACILITIES

Issues

Although generally undeveloped, the majority of Harry Murch Park offers opportunities for passive recreation.

Pavilion/Bandstand

One is evident in a photograph of the 1909 Homecoming event, but it appears to be a temporary structure for that specific event.

Objectives

To enhance passive recreation opportunities.

To recreate the historic landscape as much as possible without compromising today's recreation needs.

Recommendations

The park should maintain its passive recreation quality. No permanent structures should be added to the park.

SURFACE DRAINAGE

Issues

The central lawn area is depressed, lower than surrounding streets. No storm structures are apparent inside the park, apparently relying on infiltration. There have been reports of wetness in the spring which is appropriate given the soil type. The quantity and location of catch basins in the adjacent streets appears sufficient.

Objectives

To provide positive surface drainage.

Recommendations

Raise the level of the lawn area such that it is higher than the surrounding streets and has positive surface drainage, eliminating the need for storm structures inside the park.

UTILITIES

Issues

Overhead Wires

The most significant issue related to utilities is the unsightly character created by overhead wires and appurtenant wood utility poles. The street trees along East Main Street physically compete with the wires for space, exposing the impact of the wires on the area in general. This has been a long term issue given that a utility pole is evident in photo from early 1900s at the corner of East Main and Library Streets. With completion of the 2006 street improvement project, the poles and wires have been placed in closer proximity to the street trees, exaggerating the problem.

Overhead wires currently exist on 2 sides of the park, the East Main Street and Library Street edges. They currently only conflict with the street trees on East Main because there are no trees left on Library Street.

Lighting

The Municipal Light Department began operation in 1906 and electric lights were introduced to the town in 1912.

Utilitarian light fixtures are attached to the wood utility poles along the perimeter of the park. There is no lighting inside the park, including at the flagpole.

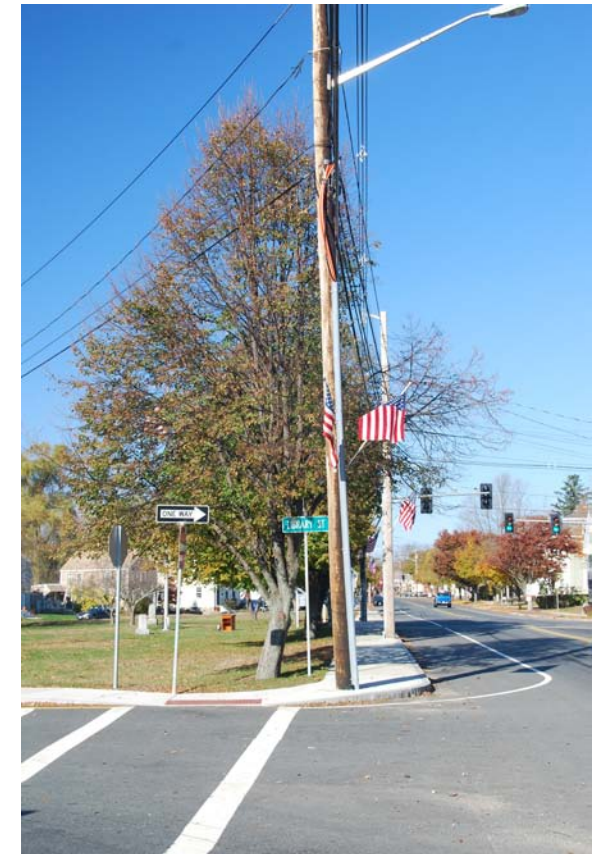
Electric Service

There is no electric service for the park. Events rely on portable batteries, etc.

Well

A cursory inspection by town officials in March 2008 found a water level about 3' below the ground surface with a depth of about 10'. It was recommended that water quality be tested.

A hose bib in a plastic handhole marked "electric" exists near the WWI memorial to assist with watering seasonal flowers. The connection is reputedly in Library Street.



The result of the conflict between overhead wires and trees, 2007

Objectives

To accommodate utility services in a manner that is compatible with the historic image of the site.

To provide utility services that would benefit enjoyment and maintenance of the park.

To provide lighting for the safety and security of park users.

To provide remedial measures for utility services that are detrimental to the site.

Recommendations

General

It is extremely important to work with utility providers to prevent further deterioration of the park image and to work towards improving that image. Placing utility services underground should be a high priority. The park should not serve as a short cut for utility connections because there are restrictive impacts on the future improvement and development of the park associated with each utility line.

Overhead Wires

The use of trees with a high canopy will continue to cause competition for the same space with overhead wires. In this constant conflict between overhead wires and tree branches, the trees always lose. Ideally, the wires should be relocated underground. This recommendation regarding overhead wires will require cooperation and coordination between the town, town owned electric company and the Massachusetts Highway Department.

Lighting

The character of the utilitarian light fixtures should be changed to better reflect the historic nature of the park. Even though they are not appropriate for the era of the park, the style of fixture should match those used in the town center for continuity of image and ease of maintenance.

Because the American flag is left flying day and night, lighting should be provided, preferably with flush in ground fixtures. If lighting of the war memorials is desirable, it should be accomplished with discrete fixtures mounted on the poles used for street lighting.

Electric Service

Service should be provided to facilitate events.

Well

The well should be developed and utilized for an automatic irrigation system inside the park.

Existing street lighting on wood utility poles on East Main Street, 2008



Existing street lighting in the town center on West Main Street, 2008





PRIORITIES AND PHASING

Proposed work is divided into three phases. While the phases have been listed in a prioritized sequence, phases can be combined or further subdivided as funding requires. The actual order of events will depend completely upon sources and availability of funds and the needs and desires of the Town.

Priority One

This phase rehabilitates the park by creating an appropriate civic space. It includes providing fill to raise the level of the park for positive drainage, reestablishing the lawn area with an automatic irrigation system, relocation of the war memorials and flagpole, and providing a more functional internal path.

Priority Two

This phase returns the high canopy shade trees to the perimeter of the park with subsurface drainage, and provides park amenities like benches and additional flagpoles.

Priority Three

This phase includes the introduction of period lighting.

*Improvements to the park, 1960
[courtesy of Georgetown Historical Commission]*

MASTER PLAN COST ESTIMATE

This estimate is presented in the phases described above. It should be considered preliminary in nature and used for discussion purposes only. Many items should be considered flexible because of the scale and level of detail development of this plan.

Estimates reflect a public bidding process and are in 2008 dollars. Because of the probable long range nature of this project, a factor for inflation has been omitted. Inflation could easily double this estimate in a very short period.

Contributions could also facilitate implementation, particularly with priorities 2 and 3. Should this approach be taken, donor recognition is often an important component, and costs for that recognition should be considered.

SUMMARY ESTIMATE

Priority 1:	150,000
Priority 2:	185,000
Priority 3:	<u>230,000</u>
Subtotal	\$565,000

Other Project Costs

[Survey, Design Consultants, Bid Process, Testing, etc.]	<u>110,000</u>
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Grand Total \$675,000

DETAILED COST ESTIMATES

PRIORITY ONE

Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Subtotal	Total
Site Preparation					\$6,000
Removal of diagonal bituminous walk, bench pads, bench and adjacent small trees.					
Salvage of monuments and flagpole.					
Raise concrete cover in lawn.					
Earthwork					53,500
Install sediment barrier.					
Strip topsoil [assumes 6" existing].					
Provide granular fill [assumes 30" average depth].					
Paving and Surfacing					10,000
New internal path					
Site Improvements					5,000
Reset monuments and flagpole.					
Irrigation					30,000
Install irrigation system for lawn areas.					
Lawns					<u>13,000</u>
Spread topsoil, fine grade and seed.					

Subtotal	117,500
General Conditions	17,500
Contingency	<u>14,000</u>
Total	149,000
Say	\$150,000

Note:

The above estimate assumes implementation in 2008.

Add \$10,000 if lawns are sodded or defer new internal path.

PRIORITY TWO

Site Preparation	\$5,000
Removal of remaining large deciduous shade trees.	
Earthwork	5,000
Install sediment barrier.	
Strip topsoil [assumes 6" existing].	
Site Improvements	85,000
New benches [4].	
New flagpoles [5].	
Lawns and Planting	40,000
Spread topsoil, fine grade and seed.	
Large deciduous shade trees	
Underdrainage	
Electrical	<u>10,000</u>
Electric service for events	
Flagpole lighting	
Subtotal	145,000
General Conditions	22,000
Contingency	<u>18,000</u>
Total	\$185,000

Note: Future monuments with adjacent benches are not included, nor are costs for inflation.

PRIORITY THREE

Electrical	\$180,000
New street lights	
Subtotal	180,000
General Conditions	27,000
Contingency	<u>21,000</u>
Total	228,000
Say	\$230,000

Note: Relocation of overhead wires and poles, and new electrical service is not included in this estimate, nor are costs for inflation.