



**NEWTON
CONSERVATORS**

SUMMER ISSUE

NEWSLETTER

Newton's land trust working to preserve open space since 1961

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The Riverside Greenway Moves Forward

By Ted Chapman, Riverside Working Group, Project Manager

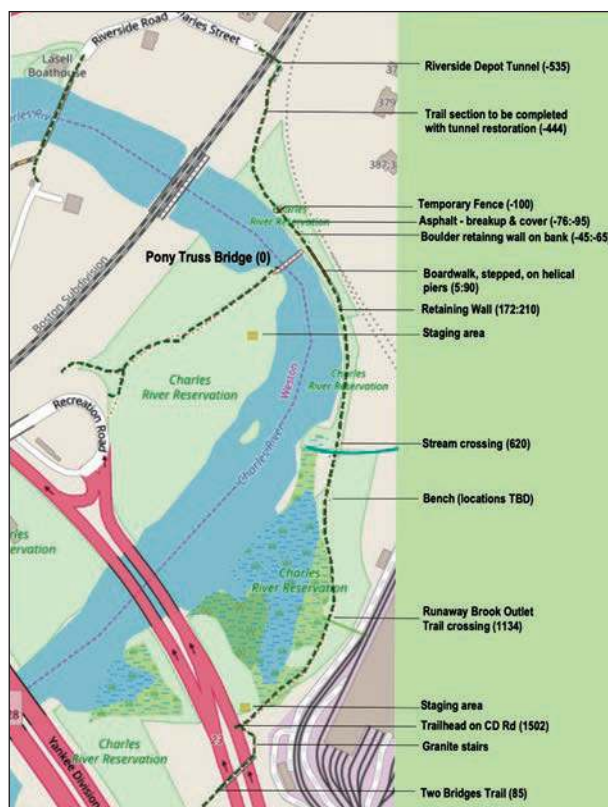


Figure 1. Restoration plan for the Pony Truss

the Riverside MBTA station, the RGWG has defined over 20 unique projects, which when linked together will create a network of trails along three miles of Charles River shoreline. This article will describe several of these projects that are actively moving forward.

The Pony Truss Trail. This historic 2000-foot-long trail that runs along the Newton bank of the Charles River, from the Riverside Depot Tunnel to the CD Road and Two Bridges Trail, is getting a face lift as this report is being written. The CD road is a service road (the old 128) that runs from Grove Street to Riverside Park.

In the 1800s this trail was the route from the Riverside Depot across the Pony Truss Bridge, then across the river to the boat houses, athletic facilities, and pool in what is now the Riverside Park in Weston. Sections of the trail are being washed into the river by sediment coming from the steep bank of the Green Line Spur above it. The restoration of the trail bed will result in a non-ADA-compliant three-foot-wide footpath and will include two stacked-

The Riverside Greenway Working Group (RGWG) is a coalition of local trail advocates, including Newton Conservators, Bike Newton, the Solomon Foundation, and residents of Lower Falls and Auburndale. Newton Conservators functions as the fiscal agent for RGWG grants from the Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation (MassDCR) Recreational Trails Program and MassTrails. The Solomon Foundation has provided financial and invaluable technical support with the long-term goal to close a gap in the Blue Heron Trail between Lyons Field and the Trestle Bridge in Newton Lower Falls. This Greenway will help connect transportation resources and to restore recreational opportunities that this part of the Charles River once offered.

Beginning in 2017 with a design study of the Two Bridges Trail between Newton Lower Falls and

granite staircases, using recycled curbing from the Newton DPW, and an 85-foot-long boardwalk. Restoration work began in mid-May and will be completed by July, depending on current COVID guidelines.

Riverside Station Development. Riverside Station is a vital transportation link, and the development now being approved for the site will become home to more than 1000 new Newton residents, a 150-key hotel, and 250,000 square feet of office. The RGWG introduced the principals of Mark Development to the Charles River that abuts Riverside. Realizing the potential of the Greenway and adjacent park system along the Charles, Mark Development committed \$3M to cover four key elements of the Greenway. This agreement will be a condition of the special permit, now in process, to be approved by the Newton City Council.

- 1. Riverside Depot Tunnel:** The design and construction of a trail under the Framingham-Worcester Commuter Rail line will connect the Pony Truss Trail to the Auburndale Riverside Park. The tunnel is one of the “Auburndale Links” that form a nexus to the park. The other three are the Lasell/Recreation Road Bridge, the Charles Street I-90 underpass, and the Pigeon Hill Trail.
- 2. Riverside Connector:** Full design and construction of a trail connection between the Riverside Station Development, the Two Bridges Trail, and the new shared-use trail on the CD road, connecting to Riverside Park in Weston.
- 3. MWRA Link:** Full design and construction of a trail shared-use link between the new shared-use trail on the CD road from Riverside, under Recreation Road and the Commuter Rail line to the shared use path around the MWRA site.
- 4. Two Bridges Trail:** Full design of the Two Bridges Trail from Riverside Station to Deforest Street in Lower Falls and a ramp to the Leo J. Martin Golf Course.
- 5. A \$50,000 donation to the Newton Conservators:** To support the monitoring of the design, construction, and to supplement the DCR’s ongoing maintenance of these trails.

As negotiated, the agreement will require the fulfillment of these conditions as part of the construction of the Riverside Station Development to be granted an occupancy permit under the Special Permit for the site. If these conditions are not met, Mark Development will pay the balance of

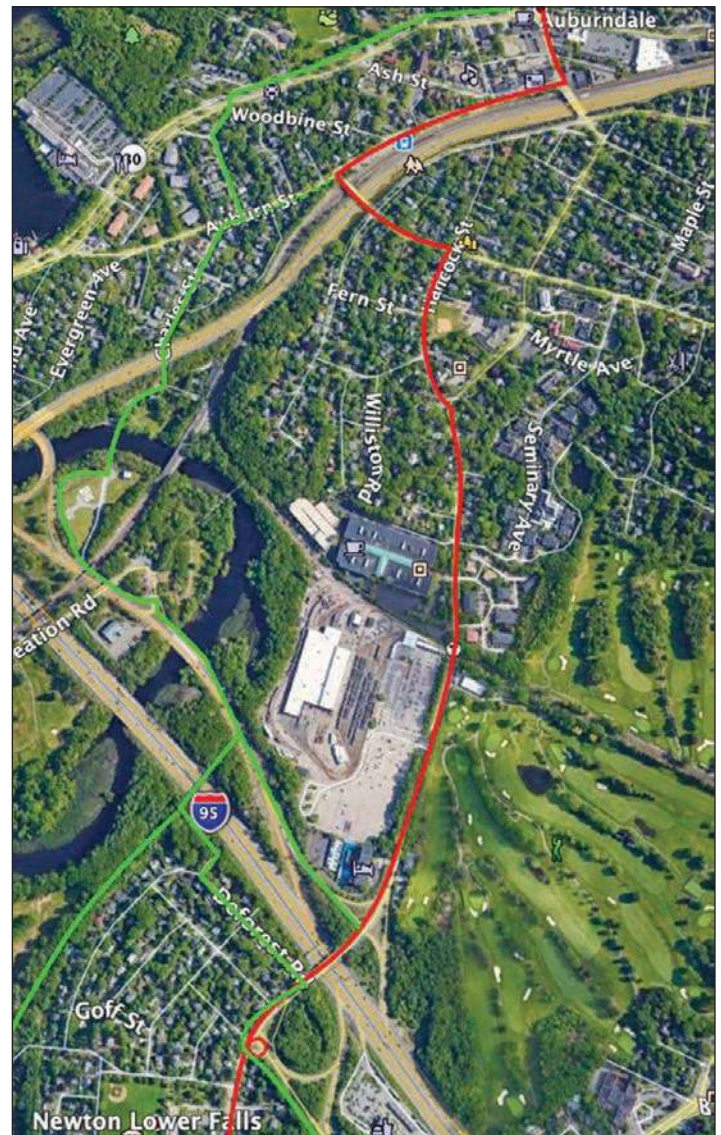


Figure 2. Proposed shared use bike/pedestrian improvements. Grove St. (red), Riverside Greenway (green)

any work not done to a fund, held by the city, earmarked for these projects. There are obvious benefits of this work being done by a private entity because of efficiency and cost related to a publicly funded process.

Equally important, Mark Development will be building a separated, protected 2-way cycle track and pedestrian walkway on Grove Street across the I-95 overpass and the entire length of the new Riverside Station Development. The Lower Falls Improvement Association suggestion to the Land Use Committee that this infrastructure be extended south to the Hamilton Community Center in Lower Falls and north to Williams School and Auburndale has received some traction. Simultaneously, the DCR has funded two studies that are in progress: 1) the 100% design of a shared-use path along Quinobequin Road; and 2) a conceptual

study of how to connect the Two Bridges Trail to the Quinobequin Trail.



Auburndale Links. Four important components of the Greenway converge at the small DCR-owned Auburndale Riverside Park.

- 1. The Riverside Depot Tunnel:** The Depot was the end of the train line for folks coming from Boston in the late 1800s to rent canoes and to access the recreational opportunities via the Pony Truss Trail, but also to the boathouses in the park.
- 2. Lasell/Recreation Road Bridge:** This bridge was scheduled to be replaced along with the Pony Truss and Lower Falls Trestle Bridges in 2011. That restoration is now scheduled for 2023 by Mass DOT as a vital ADA-accessible river crossing on the Greenway.
- 3. The Charles Street I-90 underpass:** Will be a primary bike commuter transportation corridor reaching Commonwealth Avenue and the Auburndale Commuter Rail Station.
- 4. The Pigeon Hill Trail:** The RGWG has grants totaling \$212,000 from the DCR-RTP, MassTrails, the Newton Community Preservation Act, and the Solomon Foundation to produce a 100% design for this recreational trail. This will restore access between the Auburndale Riverside Park, the Pigeon Hill neighborhood, and through to Commonwealth Ave and the boathouse.

Pigeon Hill Trail. The Pigeon Hill Trail and Charles Street Underpass will connect to Commonwealth Ave via the neighborhood streets Charles, Evergreen, Auburn, and Bourne (see graphics above right). The RGWG has

met with the communities and the City of Newton to brainstorm solutions that maintain the residential character of those streets. The goal is safety and shared use using the concept of ‘Neighborhood Ways’ or the Dutch ‘Woonerf Way.’ The guidelines being discussed include:

- Keep a neighborhood feel
- Don’t separate people, cars, and bikes
- Define entrances
- Define behavior expectations by design
- Use frequent reminders (twists and turns in the roadway called chicanes)
- Signs to make behavior clear
- Make it pretty – landscaped chicanes where appropriate



An example of chicanes, twists and turns in the roadway

Continued on page 4



Designer's sketch of the plan for Commonwealth Avenue at Lyons Park in Auburndale

Commonwealth Avenue. In much of Newton, the Commonwealth Avenue carriageway is a shared use/ neighborhood way. When the RGWG became aware that MassDOT will be replacing the Route 30 Charles River Bridge in 2022 and that Weston was planning to install a shared-use trail along the length of Route 30, we approached MassDOT to include a shared-use trail over the bridge with access to Norumbega Road. We then suggested the city of Newton convert the north side of Commonwealth Avenue from Lyons Field to the Bridge to a separated, shared use path. Both these are now being designed. The city has completed the 25% design and

received a strong score on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which provides Federal highway funds for transportation projects. The city will proceed to 100% design. The plan is to separate auto, bicycle, and pedestrian tracks in this section of Commonwealth.

Auburndale Park. In anticipation that the goal to connect Lower Falls to Auburndale via an ADA accessible shared-use trail is viable, the RGWG met with Newton Parks and Recreation to upgrade the Marty Sender Trail to meet ADA standards and deal with flooding issues on the Blue Heron Trail in Lyons Field. Part of this work was approved for 2020 using Community Development

Block Grant funding for accessibility. The balance will be applied for through a MassTrails grant.

The Riverside Greenway Working Group with support of Newton Conservators, Mark Development, MassTrails, the City of Newton, the Massachusetts DCR, DOT, and MBTA, and the Solomon Foundation is well on the way to making the vision a reality. Opportunities for volunteering and financial support are welcome. See the website <https://riversidegreenwayma.wildapricot.org/> for more information.



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YES, count me in! I want to be a nature steward and help Newton Conservators protect and preserve the natural areas in our community.

Please renew/accept my tax-deductible membership at the level checked below:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Directors' Circle | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Family Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Patron | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Individual Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Donor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Sustaining Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution \$_____ |

Want to make an even bigger impact?

Help us support these conservation areas:

Woodcock Meadow \$_____ Trail Fund \$_____

Ordway Endowment Fund \$_____

Land Stewardship Areas (Dexter Rd., Bracebridge Rd.) \$_____

New members receive Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Conservation Lands.

NAME _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____ ZIP _____

☐ I would like to volunteer!
Please email me.

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