



43 THORNDIKE STREET, S3-3
CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS
0 2 1 4 1

617 608 1410 t

crc@thecharles.org
www.thecharles.org

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Commissioner Arrigo
State Transportation Building
10 Park Plaza, Suite 6620
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Artesani Parking Lot Project

November 15, 2024

Dear Commissioner Arrigo,

On behalf of the Charles River Conservancy (CRC), I am writing to provide comments on the most recent updates from the October 30, 2024, public meeting on the Artesani Parking Lot project. We appreciate DCR's ongoing efforts in addressing the diverse needs of Herter Park users and are pleased to see promising designs for stormwater management and green infrastructure. The implementation of 3-hour parking signs has also noticeably improved park access for the community.

As we continue our partnership in enhancing Herter Park, we would like to reiterate our key priorities, which we believe are not adequately addressed in the current design proposal:

Safety for Non-Vehicular Traffic at Herter Park Entrance

We are deeply concerned that the proposed park entrance design (Soldiers Field Road at Everett Street) falls significantly short of our primary objective: ensuring the utmost safety for all park users, especially those not in vehicles. The current design remains excessively car-centric, posing unacceptable risks to pedestrians and cyclists, and fails to provide the comprehensive safety measures necessary for a park entrance in an urban setting.

We strongly urge DCR to prioritize safety by implementing comprehensive traffic calming measures at the gateway to Herter Park. This should include design considerations to effectively slow down vehicles and create a safer environment for all visitors. Specifically, we recommend the following design elements:

- A landmark or gateway feature at a human scale to clearly demarcate the park entrance
- Clear and visible signage to guide all users
- Visual cues that signal entry into a pedestrian-priority zone
- A multi-use path that meets or exceeds recommended width standards
- Raised crossings to slow vehicle traffic and increase pedestrian visibility
- Traffic signals timed to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists

These measures should be designed to emphasize safe and efficient entry points for all users, especially non-motorists. Moreover, the success of this entrance will depend on transforming Soldiers Field Road from a high-speed, four-lane highway into a true parkway, as outlined in the Herter Park Master Plan. We look forward to seeing a revised design that truly puts the safety of pedestrians and cyclists at the forefront.

5-Year Vegetation Management Plan

The long-term health and success of the plantings around the Artesani Parking Lot and Herter Park are crucial for the park's overall appeal and ecological value. We recommend DCR's development of a 5-year Vegetation Management Plan to ensure the sustainability of the landscaping efforts in conjunction with the parking lot design and construction. This plan should include plans to water the trees and plantings for up to five years as well as invasive plant management. The CRC would be glad to collaborate with DCR in planning and implementing tree and vegetation care to support the growth and maturity of new plantings.

Neighborhood and Community Inter-Project Coordination

We respectfully call on DCR to improve coordination between various community projects in the area. For instance, the Everett Street crossing has been a concern for the Allston/Brighton community for years. It's essential that the Artesani Parking Lot project takes into account these long-standing community needs and other related initiatives. We strongly encourage DCR to enhance communication and design considerations across projects to create a cohesive and community-responsive approach.

In conclusion, while we appreciate the challenging task DCR faces in meeting diverse user needs, we believe these points are crucial for the park's long-term success and safety. The CRC remains committed to supporting the care and improvement of Herter Park. We look forward to continuing our collaborative relationship with DCR and contributing to these important enhancements.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to provide input on this project that significantly impacts the health, wellness, and wellbeing of our communities along the Charles River.

Sincerely,



Laura Jasinski
Executive Director, Charles River Conservancy
ljasinski@thecharles.org