



Making Life Better on the Esplanade



REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

FY 2014

Working in Partnership with



THE ESPLANADE ASSOCIATION

Report to the Community

In 2013-2014, the Esplanade Association continued to work in partnership with its members, donors, volunteers, community members, and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation to make life better on the Esplanade.

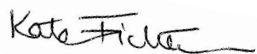
Thanks to the generous support of individuals, organizations, foundations, and corporations, we were able to invest over a million dollars in your Esplanade, making meaningful improvements to the horticulture; physical infrastructure; annual events; free programming; and play spaces of the Esplanade. These investments mean a better, safer, more active, and more beautiful park for everyone to use and enjoy.

To advance our sustainability goals, we are continuing our 'green' initiative in 2014 by working to further green the park landscape in a way that is more in harmony with the human and natural environments. This includes continuing our compost tea program—a program in which organic park debris is composted, brewed, and returned to the park's landscapes in the form of a liquid called 'tea' — planting new gardens, and caring for the existing park trees. All of this work was accomplished by a full-time professional horticulturalist and a seasonal professional horticulturist, aided by the skills and enthusiasm of almost 3,000 volunteers.

The 'Esplanade 2020' vision continued to provide inspiration for improving the facilities of the park. Together with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, we broke ground in September 2013 on reconstruction of the Eliot Memorial, a reclaimed space immediately beside the Community Boating facility for sitting, reading, and enjoying the spectacular view of the Charles River. Also underway is the planning and design of a restored Hatch Shell Oval Lawn, with construction to take place during autumn/winter 2014-2015, thanks to a generous leadership gift from Santander.

The Esplanade Association works with a diverse community of stakeholders from all sectors, representative of the Esplanade's 3 million annual users. We welcome your participation in our efforts and invite you to visit our website (www.esplanadeassociation.org), volunteer during a 'Drop-In Saturday,' or take part in one of the many recreational offerings held throughout the summer. The more people use and enjoy the Esplanade, the stronger the park will be.

Thank you for everything you do for the Esplanade.



Kate Fichter
Executive Director

THE ESPLANADE ASSOCIATION

FY2014 Report to the Community

GREEN IN 14

Horticulture

In 2014, the Esplanade Association continued to employ a full-time and a seasonal horticulturalist to focus on beautifying and improving the health of the park plants and trees. Working with volunteers and with staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the horticulturists focus on tasks such as pruning trees, weeding, planting, managing a composting program, and supervising a volunteer program. In 2013, 3,000 volunteers provided 9,000 hours of meaningful work in the park.

Composting Program

We established the park's first composting program last year. Organic park debris generated by our staff is collected and composted along with vegetable scraps from the Women's Lunch Place, a local sanctuary for women and children living in poverty. The compost is then used in the landscape to amend soil and to mulch beds throughout the park. This effort contributes to a more sustainable land care approach. We have also initiated a compost tea program, in which the compost is brewed into a special tea and sprayed in select areas to further improve the health of the park's trees, turf, plants, and soil.

Landscape Advisory Committee

This initiative is a collaboration between the Esplanade Association, community volunteers, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation to recommend and prioritize restoration projects, maintenance needs, ongoing design improvements, and design guidelines for the future of the Esplanade landscape. We intend to focus renewed energy on these efforts in FY2014.

Eliot Memorial

The Esplanade Association was fortunate to receive matching funds from the Department of Conservation and Recreation to allow for the revitalization of the Eliot Memorial plaza area. \$380,000 in crucial private contributions are leveraging public monies. When complete, the area will be a wonderful gathering spot in a prime location with river views from a re-opened overlook. Groundbreaking occurred in September 2013, with completion this spring and an opening celebration just after July 4th.



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FY2014 Report to the Community

PLAYING IN THE PARK

Free Programs

The summer of 2013 saw the continuation of several popular free programs in the park, all offered with the support of the Department of Conservation and Recreation and generous donations from private individuals, foundations, and corporations.

- **Children in the Park**—For the fourth straight year, the Esplanade Association brought over 1,200 children from summer camps across Metro Boston to the Esplanade for a day of fun, exercise, and exploration. The program, which meets every Wednesday, promotes good health, provides education and recreation, and helps combat childhood inactivity. It also introduces camp participants to the park in hope that they will return with their friends and families.
- **Sunday Fun in the Park**—The Esplanade Association held two summer Fun Days in FY 2013 focused on family-friendly activities. We provided music, games, yoga, Zumba, and fishing activities for kids of all ages.
- **Healthy, Fit & Fun**—Almost 6,000 people participated in Zumba, yoga, Crossfit, boot camp, Run Club, and Community Walk in July and August of 2013. For the first time, the program was extended into September in order to offer a two-week Total Body Toning class.



Healthy, Fit & Fun



Children in the Park

THE ESPLANADE ASSOCIATION

FY2014 Report to the Community

PLAYING IN THE PARK

Art in the Park

In 2014, the Esplanade Association introduced new public art into the park. We unveiled the Stoneman tree sculpture in the Stoneman Playground and introduced new sculptures to the Esplanade Playspace. In addition, we welcomed visiting displays like Cool Globes, Play Me I'm Yours, and the Lucy Light Forest.



Cool Globes



Lucy Light Forest



Play Me I'm Yours

Canine Promenade

In October 2013, the Esplanade Association held the fourth annual Canine Promenade. This Halloween celebration for pets and people alike included a parade, prizes, and treats (both human and canine). This year's event was led by Sarah French from WHDH, and we had over 100 four-legged participants.



Teddy Ebersol's Red Sox Fields

Each year, the Esplanade Association funds a portion of the annual maintenance cost of the popular and heavily used Teddy Ebersol's Red Sox Fields. We work collaboratively with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Hill House, and the Red Sox Foundation to be effective stewards of this important recreational and athletic resource.

THE ESPLANADE ASSOCIATION

FY2014 Report to the Community

GETTING EVERYONE INVOLVED

We are fortunate to have a large and diverse group of Esplanade champions. From April 1, 2013—April 1, 2014 **over 1,100 individuals** made generous gifts to the Esplanade Association to support efforts to maintain and improve the park. **Forty businesses** participate in our Business Perks programs, offering discounts and special offers to our members. **Sixty businesses** provided in-kind services or donated materials during the year. **Over 50 foundations and corporations** provided valuable financial support.

This past year, a record **3,000 volunteers** provided **over 9,000 hours of service** to the Esplanade. Volunteers removed invasive plants along the riverbank, cleaned and painted benches, picked up trash from the water's edge, raked leaves, collected fallen branches, and planted bulbs and perennials.



PARK STEWARDSHIP

The Esplanade Association advocates for the needs of the Esplanade and its users, as well as the needs of parkland and open space generally.

We advocate for additional public and private resources for improved park access and connections to the surrounding neighborhoods, for the restoration of parkland and horticulture, and for improved park amenities. We also monitor projects with potential negative impact on the park.

In 2013-2014, major issues facing the Esplanade included the ongoing reconstruction of the Longfellow Bridge and the associated design and construction of a new pedestrian bridge linking the Longfellow to the Esplanade; a proposal to expand the campus of the Massachusetts Eye & Ear Infirmary and affiliated improvements to the Esplanade; a proposal to expand the Lower Basin Barracks used by the Massachusetts State Police at the northern edge of the Esplanade; and a study of the potential demolition of the Bowker Overpass at Beacon Street and the Charlesgate area. These major issues were coupled with day-to-day efforts to advocate for sufficient public funding for the maintenance and upkeep of the Esplanade.

THE ESPLANADE ASSOCIATION

FY 2014 Project & Program Details

The table below tabulates the investments made by the Esplanade Association in the Esplanade in FY2014 (July 1, 2013-June 30, 2014), in a number of key areas. These costs do not reflect indirect expenses such as the costs of advocacy, marketing, and development.

More detail on all of these activities is found in the following pages.

ACTIVITY	FY2014 INVESTMENT
Major Park Projects	\$149,640
Critical Park Care	\$115,579
Garden Improvement Program	\$117,478
Tree Care	\$26,276
Play Area Care	\$72,124
Park Programs	\$35,702
Volunteer Program	\$66,009
TOTAL	\$582,808

THE ESPLANADE ASSOCIATION

FY2014 Project & Program Details

MAJOR PROJECTS

Investment: \$149,640

Esplanade 2020

- In its improvements to the physical and natural landscapes of the Esplanade, as well as its advocacy work, the Esplanade Association continues to be guided by the long-term, volunteer-created 'Esplanade 2020' vision document for the future of the Esplanade, first released in February of 2012.

Eliot Memorial Restoration

- The restoration of the Eliot Memorial—a collaboration between the Esplanade Association, private donors, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation—is nearing completion, and will be open for full public use during the summer of 2014. The newly landscaped Memorial will provide not only a new space within the Esplanade for sitting, reading, conversation, and contemplation, but will also be a 'laboratory' to try out new techniques of horticultural care.

Hatch Shell Oval Lawn Restoration

- On October 18th, 2013, the Esplanade Association, in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and thanks to a **\$100,000 donation** from Santander, officially launched a campaign to restore the DCR Hatch Shell area. The first major element of this campaign is the repair and rejuvenation of the DCR Hatch Shell Lawn—the 'Oval'—which is currently undergoing design and other preparatory work. The reconstruction of the Oval will occur during the fall/winter of 2014-2015, so that the Oval will be fully restored in time for the 2015 season. This work will make for a healthier, more attractive, and more sustainable lawn.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Investment: \$66,009

Record Participation

- In 2013, we brought almost **3,000** volunteers to the Esplanade to help maintain the park by raking, weeding, picking up trash, planting, painting, and building. That's **over \$135,000** worth of work in the park, as well as the immeasurable benefits that accrue to the individuals who get to experience the satisfaction of bettering the landscape of the Esplanade.

Litter Pick-up

- We brought out **over 500 volunteers** to the 2013 Charles River Cleanup and picked up over **120 cubic yards of trash** (almost 1 ton).

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FY2014 Project & Program Details

TREE CARE

Investment: \$26,276

Tree Pruning

- Our horticulture staff **pruned trees and shrubs** throughout the park. There are 1,864 trees planted on the Esplanade's 64 acres, and they all require attention and care. Our tree care efforts will increase in the coming years, as we plan to develop an in-depth, park-wide tree care plan and strategy for its implementation.

Tree Mapping & Labeling

- We updated our **tree inventory database and added a new mapping system**. This invaluable resource provides the location, name, history, and condition of every tree on the Esplanade. With this database, we can help to manage the care of Esplanade's trees, prioritizing maintenance, removals, and targeting new planting areas.
- We began **retagging all the trees** in the park with species information and unique identification numbers.

GARDEN IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Investment: \$117,478

Perennial Beds

- In addition to the design and installation of the Clarendon Street Garden, improvements were made to **five perennial beds**, including those at the Dartmouth Street Comfort Station, the Lotta Fountain, the Storrow Memorial, and the Oliver Wendell Holmes Memorial. Work will continue in these areas in 2014, with additional landscaping and new garden designs that are sensitive to the particular environments of each park area. Perennial bed improvements will continue this spring in the form of soil amendments and new plant installations.
- Approximately **6,000 bulbs** were planted throughout the park in 2013, and more will be planted in the autumn of 2014. The planting of these bulbs not only provides meaningful work for our volunteers but also brings new color and visual vibrancy to the park.
- During the spring/summer of 2014, we will undertake **new landscaped installations** at two of the footbridges that connect the main Esplanade paths with the park islands. These areas also represent opportunities for the introduction of new color and new landscaping that is sensitive to the climate and history of New England horticulture.

THE ESPLANADE ASSOCIATION

FY 2014 Project & Program Details

GARDEN IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (continued)

Garden Maintenance

- We established a program to maintain the memorial gardens and the prime park areas that have existing flower beds, including the flower beds at Dartmouth Street, the Hatch Shell, and the Lee Pool area.
- We designed and installed a new flower garden at Clarendon Street and implemented a program of garden maintenance there.

CRITICAL PARK CARE

Investment: \$115,579

Bench Painting

- Volunteers painted over **40 historic Shurcliff benches** (named for Arthur Shurcliff, the celebrated landscape designer and Olmsted protégé who laid out the park's original plantings).

Invasive Plant Removal

- With the help of volunteers, we selectively **cut miles of invasive plant material** from along the Esplanade's shoreline to help promote native plants and native wildlife.

Irrigation

- A 300-gallon tank was carried to various locations on a weekly basis to successfully implement a **watering program** for maintaining improved and newly installed perennial plantings thus assuring their survival.

Composting

- In 2013, we continued our **chipping and composting program**. In addition to organic park debris collected on-site, we partnered with the **Women's Lunch Place**, one of our neighbors in the Back Bay, to collect their leftover food scraps to be composted. This compost was then returned to the park's landscapes in the form of mulch, compost, and compost tea. This program helps us to reduce costs for landscape materials, become more self-sufficient and more sustainable, and helps to improve park plants and soil health.

THE ESPLANADE ASSOCIATION

2014 Project & Program Details

CRITICAL PARK CARE (continued)

Compost Tea

- Last spring we used our 300-gallon tank to begin **brewing compost tea** and applying it to the Esplanade's plants and soil. It enhances plant health and appearance by improving soil structure, adding beneficial organisms to the soil, building soil organic matter, and aiding in nutrient uptake. Compost tea protects plants from disease, de-compacts soil, and decreases run-off and leaching. It is a natural solution to enhance soil quality.

General Maintenance

- Our horticultural staff carried out additional maintenance tasks including weeding, raking, fertilizing, edging and garden bed maintenance, all necessary tasks for a healthy and attractive landscape.

PARK PROGRAMS

Investment: \$35,702

Children in the Park

- This popular weekly program in which the Esplanade Association invites Boston-area summer camps to spend Wednesdays on the Esplanade continued to grow in FY2013; 1,200 kids participated during the months of July and August. We will be expanding the offerings in FY2014: in addition to free play in the park, organized games, and fishing, we will also be adding a science component to help kids to learn about the Charles River.

Healthy, Fit & Fun

- 6,000 people joined us on the Esplanade in FY2013 for recreational and exercise programs, all held outside, and all free of charge. The Esplanade Association recruits instructors, sponsors, and donors; works with the Department of Conservation and Recreation to develop the schedule and ensure appropriate use of the park; and performs registration, setup, cleanup, and supervision. This year, we will provide expanded offerings including tai chi, dancing, and a community walk.

Sunday Fun in the Park

- The Esplanade Association hosted two Sunday Fun Days, for which our staff performed community outreach, coordinated volunteers and programming, purchased materials, obtained permits, and provided onsite supervision of the program.

THE ESPLANADE ASSOCIATION

FY2014 Project & Program Details

PLAY AREA CARE

Investment: \$72,124

Teddy Ebersol's Red Sox Fields

- As in past years, the Esplanade Association worked collaboratively with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Hill House, and the Red Sox Foundation to provide financial support and oversight for the annual maintenance of the popular Teddy Ebersol's Red Sox Fields.

Esplanade Playspace

- The Esplanade Association is responsible for the annual maintenance of the equipment at the wildly popular Esplanade Playspace. The Association also funded the design and installation of new playful sculptures in the Playspace and funded the annual maintenance of the play equipment. We will continue to invest in this key amenity for families.

Stoneman Playground

- In FY2013, the new Stoneman Playground Tree Sculpture was treated and maintained in order to ensure its longevity, and improvements were also made to the small garden areas within the playground. The play structures also received routine maintenance.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Daily Monitoring

- We continue to monitor the park daily and report on problems such as graffiti and hazardous trees to the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Improved Visibility

- The Esplanade Association is becoming more visible along the Esplanade, with new posters promoting our volunteer and recreational opportunities. We have also ordered a new canopy and banners to use in the park during volunteer activities and other events. For all of this, we appreciate the support of the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

IT and Communications Improvements

- We are working to improve our use of data about the park and its trees, horticulture, and facilities, and anticipate making this an ongoing initiative. We are also updating our website design and are reviewing ways to improve in-the-park registration for classes and events.

THE ESPLANADE ASSOCIATION

History and Highlights

The Esplanade Association was established in 2001 in response to the ongoing deterioration of the Esplanade and a public outcry for improved park maintenance and facilities.

Since our founding, we have dedicated ourselves to restoring and enhancing the Esplanade as a vital urban park to be enjoyed by all. The Esplanade Association has been the catalyst for the investment of more than \$12 million dollars in the past 12 years.

SELECTED 12-YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

- 2013 Hatch Shell Area Restoration kick-off and launch of Corporate Champions program
- 2013 Family Council created to bring the voices of parents, families, and schools to the planning and maintenance of the Esplanade
- 2013 Friends of the Esplanade Playspace and the Esplanade Association merge
- 2013 Eliot Memorial Revitalization Project begun
- 2012 *Esplanade 2020* unveiled
- 2012 Composting program started in the park
- 2011 Privately-funded Esplanade Playspace opened
- 2011 Community Boating Docks rebuilt
- 2010 Successful advocacy for good pedestrian access directly to the Esplanade from the rebuilt Longfellow Bridge
- 2010 Free summer programs expanded
- 2009 *Esplanade 2020* launched to create a community vision for the Esplanade's future
- 2008 Boat Haven Dock restoration completed
- 2007 First Esplanade user survey completed
- 2006 Teddy Ebersol's Red Sox Fields restored with Hill House and the Red Sox Foundation
- 2005 Park Geese Control Program established, first in Commonwealth
- 2004 Esplanade Association park volunteer program launched
- 2003 Gloucester Street Dock renovated
- 2002 Successful advocacy for the replacement of all of the benches throughout the Charles River Parklands
- 2001 Stoneman Playground rebuilt

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