

Vision for American Legion Parkway: Protect, Reclaim, Enhance

The Overview

The American Legion Parkway (Hwy) Corridor, with 300 acres of urban green offers our city the opportunity to extend the Emerald Necklace from Franklin Park to Hyde Park continuing through Stony Brook Reservation to the Neponset River Trail finally ending in South Boston. By including Franklin Park, Forest Hills Cemetery, and Stony Brook Reservation, this new section of the green necklace will total 1,500 acres. This project will include the opportunity for parks, off-street bike and pedestrian paths along the open 4,500 foot Canterbury Brook, a 5,000 feet section of Stony Brook's conduit easement, a panoramic vista along a 60 foot high bluff, as well as pathways through urban wilds, parks, and cemeteries.

The Problem

This will be a long-term project, but it has the short-term urgency of securing these open spaces before they disappear, particularly on the eastern side of Roslindale. The American Legion Parkway is on the outer edge of four of Boston's outlying neighborhoods, Mattapan, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and Hyde Park, and has not been noticed, embraced, or cared for by any of them. The American Legion Parkway Corridor is functionally invisible. Worse, it has been seen as a location to dump city, state, and utility facilities that other neighborhoods do not want.

The eastern Roslindale section is home to a working class, multiracial population of 3,000 – 4,000 people, yet has 37 acres of these types of unwanted facilities. Twenty one acres of open space were taken within the last year by Eversource and the PWD, with no community engagement. In contrast, Jamaica Plain with a population of about ten times this area only has one 9-acre unwanted facility, the MBTA bus yard at Forest Hills. The American Legion Corridor now has three Eversource sites, a US Army reserve base, two correctional facilities, and the recently moved PWD street light pole yard, which currently is planned to clear-cut 3 acres of a wooded wildlife corridor. All these facilities are important to the proper functioning of our city and state, but this area has more than its fair share.

The first step to turn this around is to start securing the remaining undeveloped land for parks, play spaces, urban wilds, and bike and pedestrian pathways. This will not only make the Emerald Necklace extension possible but also will provide to eastern Roslindale and our corridor neighbors something we are completely lacking - play spaces, parks, and off road bike and pedestrian paths. A trip to the park means a trip in the car. Again, for contrast, Jamaica Plain is surrounded by three park systems with a fourth running down its center and another 16 smaller ones scattered throughout. In JP, it is hard not to bump into one of them when you leave your house.

The American Legion Parkway Corridor extension of the Emerald Necklace has the growing potential to become an innovative go-to Urban Agriculture/Eco-Education center for the City of Boston. The Boston Nature Center, CitySoil Composting and Ecovation demonstration Greenhouse, along with adjoining garden-style cemeteries, L, Franklin Park, etc. provide a unique rural-feeling environment for those who live, work, and commute along it. Unfortunately, at this point, most of the protected land is comprised of cemeteries, and as previously stated, none of it yet has accessible recreational play space or safe bike/pedestrian paths.

The Fix

Cooperation between City, State, nonprofits, private owners, and residents is essential to enable any of these plans to work.

The Details

Following is a list of such opportunities along the American Legion Corridor. See attached maps and details for each:

- 1. Overview maps of the American Legion Corridor and Emerald Necklace Extension.**
- 2. Seven parcels for play spaces or pocket parks between American Legion Parkway, Hyde Park Ave, and Cummins Hwy. – 3,200 to 27,000 sq. ft.** The two parcels on Hyde Park Ave. could also be developed into enhanced off sidewalk bus stop waiting areas with park benches, trees, rain canopy and no advertising. They would use only a small portion of these two lots.
- 3. Eight parcels for play space, small park, urban wild, bike and pedestrian paths, and vista adjacent to the Roslindale Stop and Shop on American Legion Parkway in Hyde Park - Crane Ledge 23 acres.**

This is a wooded sloping hill leading to a 60 foot bluff with a dramatic vista overlooking Roslindale and Hyde Park to the west. Nearby are a couple of large apartment house complexes and a neighborhood of single-family houses. The parcels along American Legion Parkway could be developed into A) a play space with bike and pedestrian pathways leading up the hill through B. an urban wild to the bluff continuing through to a neighborhood in Hyde Park. The parcel adjacent to the Walgreens at the Stop and Shop Plaza could be a unique playground for not only surrounding residents, but also for the many families shopping there.

- 4. Five partial parcels along Canterbury Brook for a play space and small park at Walk Hill and American Legion Parkway.**
- 5. 14 parcels between American Legion Parkway and Navarre St. – Play Space, Urban Wild, Bike and Pedestrian Pathways.**

Thank you for your consideration. For more information, contact:

Rick Yoder 617 953 8633 yoderelectric@yahoo.com

Lisa Beatman 617 306 1283 lisabeatman@yahoo.com

Mt. Hope – Canterbury Neighborhood Association, Roslindale, MA