



OPERATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT UPGRADES

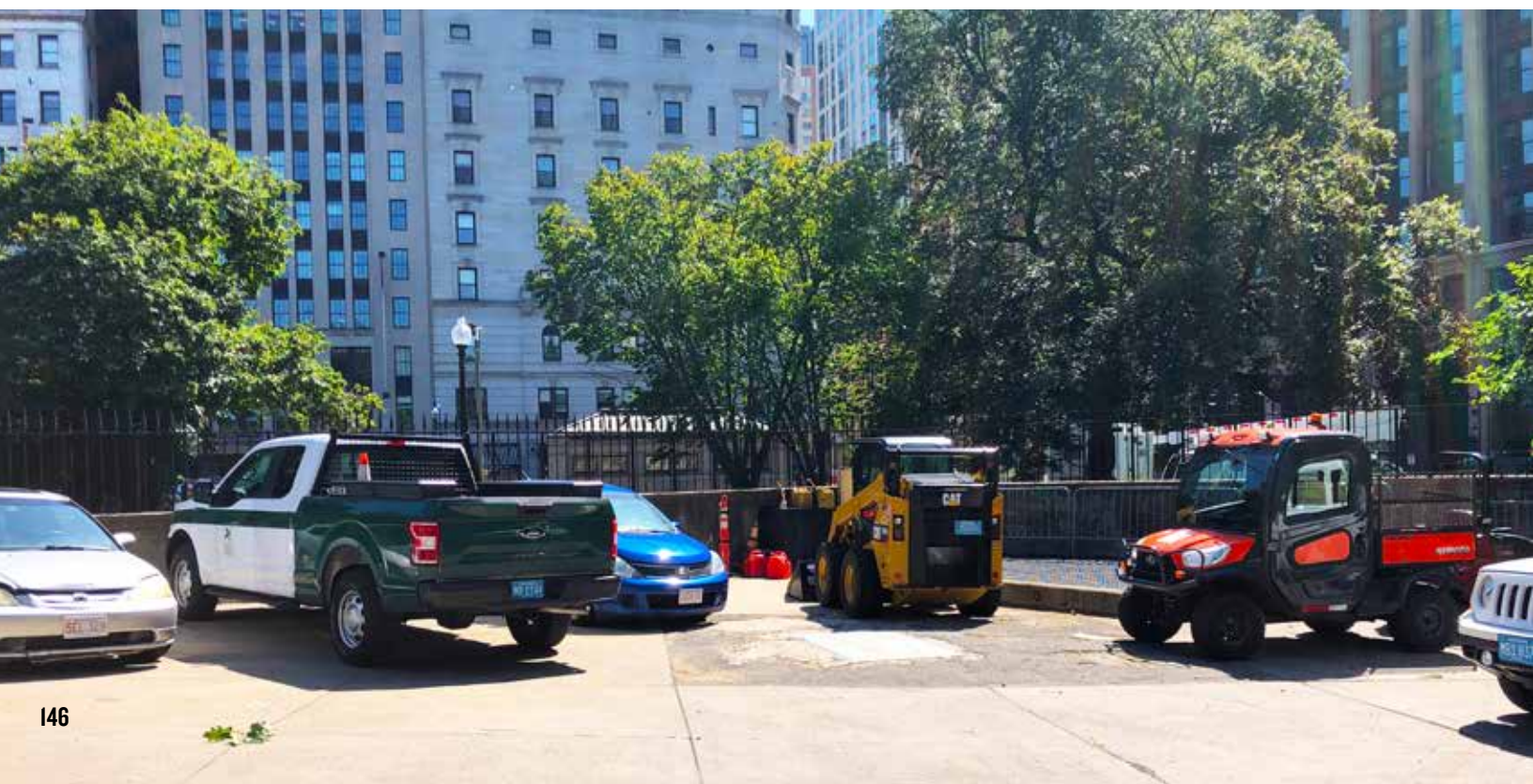
Establish Park Management Protocols	148
Improve Facilities for Operations	160
Strengthen Daily and Special Event Management	170

For the Common to better serve recreational, cultural, and civic needs for the city, its level of use must be matched by an equally high level of care. Carefully calibrating this balance will be central to any future development of Boston Common, as the enjoyment of the space is contingent on how well the physical landscape is managed and maintained. Today, some areas of the park either meet or exceed their carrying capacity, while others are underutilized.

A clear park management program will provide a framework for operational and management policies and practices that can support the complex needs of this heavily used and dynamic park. While many items build upon the good work of the 1996 Management Plan, it is important to recognize that needs change over time. Management protocols must have the flexibility to respond to new issues and conditions in the future. Upgraded operations protocols will ensure that the efforts of all park personnel are working in concert with one another.

Thinking about these management recommendations as interconnected is essential to shaping a maintenance program tailored to the Common that guarantees the continued use and enjoyment of the park by all its visitors.

Opposite: Recommendations with the respective project ideas and goals each satisfy below; **Below:** View of existing personal vehicle and equipment parking at Deer Park Maintenance Yard



PROJECT IDEAS

ACTIONS & GOALS SATISFIED

ESTABLISH PARK MANAGEMENT PROTOCOLS

To sustain a public park as historically significant and intensively used as the Boston Common, effective management protocols tailored to the park must be set in place. The intricacies inherent to the park will be matched by an equally nuanced management plan—one that is not only guided by this Master Plan’s overall vision, goals, and objectives, but also tackles specific challenges the Common faces, such as vending, vehicular access, event use, and visitor safety. Though varied in scope, each of these recommendations will contribute to a more enjoyable park experience while remaining flexible and responsive to an ever-evolving future.

Regional Park Administrator



Vending Management Upgrades



Vehicular Access and Control



Visitor Safety and Support Services



IMPROVE SUPPORT FACILITIES

Maintenance operations facilitate activity in the park at nearly every level, from programming to athletics to passive enjoyment. These maintenance operations must be adequately supported by facilities and systems within the park to ensure that the public face of the Common functions seamlessly. Physical improvements will aid daily efforts and include expansion and general upgrades of Deer Park Maintenance Yard, procurement of better equipment and storage areas, and increases in the maintenance team’s capacity by introducing trainings that build upon existing areas of strength and on-boarding additional staff. A park’s physical character and functioning must be cultivated and continually cared for by equipping the Common’s maintenance team with the tools they need to improve the overall park experience for visitors.

Deer Park Maintenance Yard Expansion and Upgrades



Better Equipment and Storage Facilities



Expanded Maintenance Capacity



STRENGTHEN DAILY AND SPECIAL EVENT MANAGEMENT

As the heart of downtown Boston, the Common must support a wide variety of programs and events. New daily and special event management strategies will equip the park with tools to host these events without overburdening the landscape. An improved event management system, comprehensive permitting application and event planning process will ensure better event execution and post-event recovery. Capacity restrictions for certain venues, temporary landscape protections, and mitigation strategies will ensure that the park’s long-term health is sustained. These strategies will establish a process that better serves the needs of both the people and the landscape.

Improvements to the Existing Permitting System



Capacity Restrictions



Landscape Recovery Methods



Temporary Protections



Event Mitigation Fees





ESTABLISH PARK MANAGEMENT PROTOCOLS

Regional Park Administrator	152
Vending Management Upgrades	153
Vehicular Access and Control	156
Visitor Safety and Support Services	158



PARK MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS TODAY

A Governance and Case Studies Report conducted by HR&A Advisors analyzed the wide range of operations and maintenance models for urban open spaces around the country. These management approaches vary from sole public ownership and management to the fully private model, with some striking a balance between the two with a public-private partnership agreement. More on these different models is discussed in Appendix A.

Boston Common functions under a hybrid public-private governance model developed through a 50-year partnership between the BPRD and FOPG. Even though this relationship wasn't formalized until 2020 when a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed, it codified the connection that grew during the 50-year partnership. The MOA establishes ongoing responsibilities for both parties and a framework for how to approach new projects in the Common, Public Garden, and Commonwealth Avenue Mall. Each organization's responsibilities are outlined below:

Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD):

- Provides a "core level of service, maintenance, and security" (Maintenance Division, Park Rangers)
- Maintains ownership and has final decision-making power
- Provides annual operational funding and funding for capital improvements
- Permits and manages events (BPRD Permit-

ting Division, Special Events Team)

- Manages the vending program (Business Operations)
- Manages sports programming (Recreation Department)
- Provides police services
- Provides built improvements (Design & Construction Division)
- Oversees tree maintenance (Forestry Division)

Friends of the Public Garden:

- Acts as an independent contractor
- Actively pursues fundraising programs to encourage donations for the care, maintenance, operation, and programming of the Parks; oversees the use of these funds and future projects
- Provides supplemental maintenance to protect areas of investment
- Serves as primary catalyst to encourage people to get involved with the Parks (advocacy, volunteer opportunities, fundraising activities, etc.)

Beyond BPRD and FOPG contributions, the Boston Police Department provides daily monitoring and details for events and the Park Rangers act as a resource for park education and security. Additionally, the GBCVC manages the VIC and the Freedom Trail Foundation operates tours from the center.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating a clear park management program for Boston Common requires recommendations that are vast, covering overall park administration and daily oversight, vending, vehicular access and control, and safety and support services for park visitors. Recognizing that needs change over time and that management protocols must have the flexibility to respond to new issues and conditions in the future, these proposals build upon past efforts to meet current conditions, needs, and best practices.

Upgraded operations protocols will ensure that the efforts of all park personnel work in tandem on any given day, from the everyday needs of visitors, maintenance crews, Park Rangers, and BPD, to managing and limiting vehicular access, to on-site management for singular or recurring small and large-scale events (discussed in a later section). Thinking about these management recommendations as interconnected is essential in shaping an appropriate operational protocol that guarantees the continued use and enjoyment of the Common by people from around the world.

Opposite: In progress set-up for an event in 2019;

Below: Food vending along Mayor's Walk



REGIONAL PARK ADMINISTRATOR

Creating a new role based in the Common will centralize the management of the park's operations and programming, resulting in a focused and consistent implementation of park protocols and practices.

VENDING MANAGEMENT UPGRADES

Making strategic upgrades to the current vending program, such as tweaking vendor locations, adding metrics to track vendor performance, and improving the aesthetics of vendor stations will allow the program to work more efficiently, generate more revenue, and contribute to a strengthened sense of place. Expanding food and beverage options will attract more visitors to the Common and at varied times throughout the day.

BETTER VEHICULAR ACCESS AND CONTROL

Defining how and where vehicles can be used within the park will streamline maintenance operations and improve pedestrian safety and enjoyment. Vehicle entrances, parking locations, and designated pathways are identified.

VISITOR SAFETY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Better coordination is needed between agencies and stakeholders to ensure that the Common remains a safe and welcoming public space for all. Creating a Task Force to discuss issues and manage objectives and deliverables with law enforcement, the BID, and advocates could be coordinated through the regional park administrator.

REGIONAL PARK ADMINISTRATOR

BPRD and FOPG investments in the Common are significant and deeply rooted. Yet, meeting even the basic needs of the Common is a constant and ever-present challenge. Introducing a park administrator who would manage several downtown Boston parks transfers the day-to-day management of the park to a dedicated person with boots on the ground in the Common. This role would effectively strengthen the existing partnership between BPRD and FOPG and allow both organizations to revisit relative roles and responsibilities where a shift could improve the park's operations and care. With an office located on the Common, the regional park administrator's job responsibilities would be varied and could fall under the categories of:

- Coordination and oversight of capital improvements
- Daily operations (e.g. vehicle management, park visitor safety, vendor management)
- Inter-agency coordination (i.e., coordination with maintenance crews, Park Rangers, BPD and social service organizations, GBCVB, etc.)
- Regular and special event management
- Contribute to the annual work plan for the Boston Common Maintenance Endowment Fund
- Build upon the successful management practices set forth in the revised 1996 Management Plan; those recommendations that are still relevant will be referenced, while others will be replaced by recommendations of this report. These broadly include:
 - Measures that preserve the existing significant and historic features, furnishings and architecture of the Common

- Administrative protocols around the permitting process and events, licensing of vendors, and vehicular access
- Ensuring that future additions conform to the historic character of the park
- Updates to the Management Plan

Finally, a regional park administrator would benefit greatly from a dedicated asset and work management software that plugs into BPRD's existing system. This database would collect all park operations into a web-based format that streamlines day-to-day maintenance, tracks park infrastructure, manages employees and volunteers, monitors spending, and runs projections.

Early Action Projects:

- BPRD, in partnership with FOPG and other key stakeholders, will first define the job description and seek funding to establish an administrator.
- Once an administrator is established, develop an update to the 1996 Management Plan to reflect current thinking on park resiliency infrastructure, vegetation, and event management.
- Once an administrator is established, they would study and recommend an asset and work management software that manages park inventory and anticipates the future needs of the park.

Below : Cartegraph Park Management software
Opposite: Proposed vending location plan

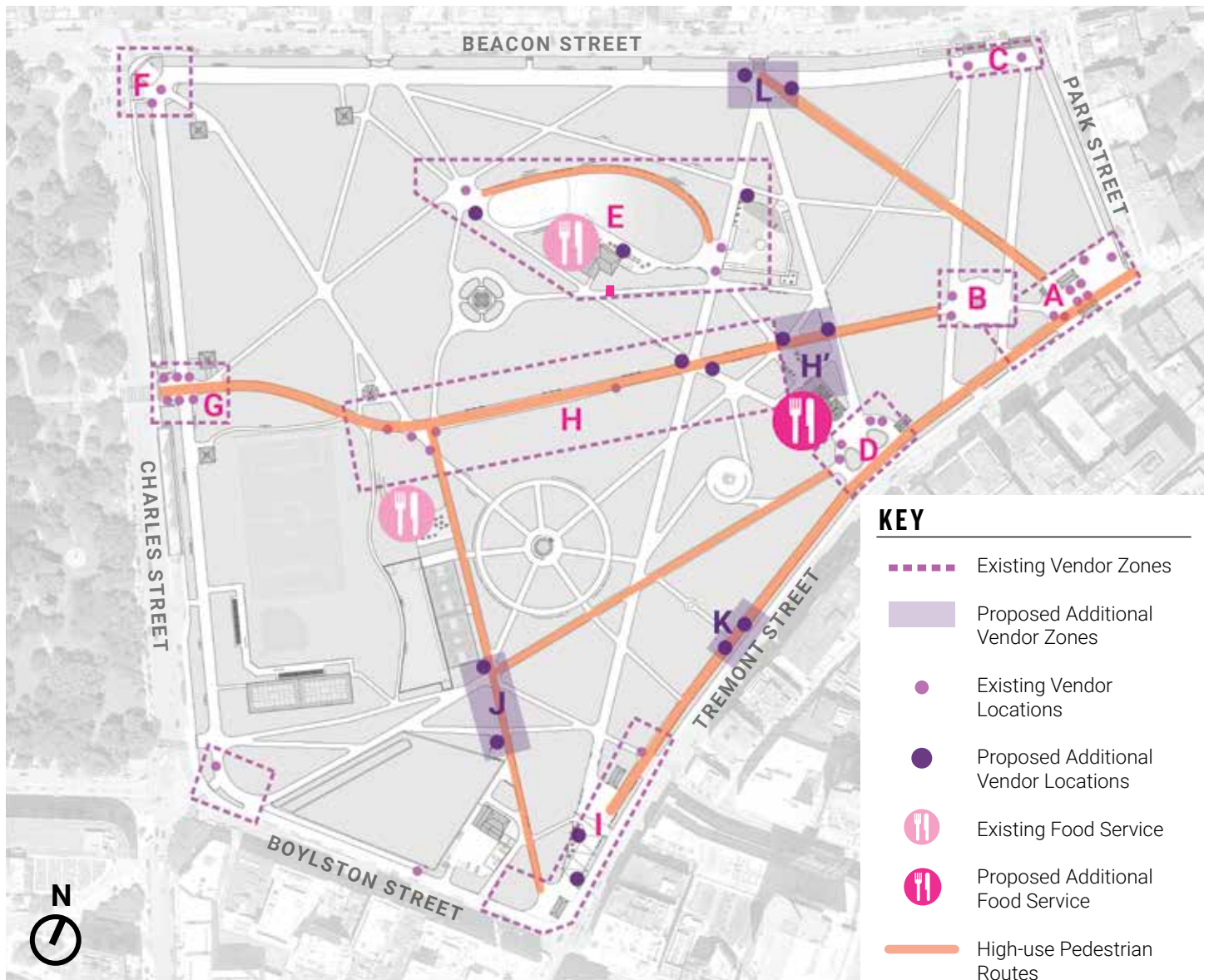


VENDING MANAGEMENT UPGRADES

Mobile concessions on Boston Common are currently managed through BPRD’s Vending Program, which oversees vending in several other parks across the city in addition to the Common (although the Common holds the most licenses). Revenue generated from the vending program is the sole source of funding for BPRD’s recreational programs for youth across the city. From 1986 to 2016, the vending program was run by the Boys & Girls Club of Boston, but it has been solely city-run since 2016. On the Common, there are currently 42 available vending locations. As a well-established and long-standing program on the Common, the vending program must serve its visitors at a high level while reflecting the Common’s unique character.

Recommendations include the following:

- **Adjust vendors locations slightly to correlate with highest-use zones and paths of travel.** At present, vending locations are determined by BPRD and offered to potential vendors through a public procurement process. Park Street Plaza is one of the busiest vendor locations, with 10 permits. At Frog Pond, another high frequency concessions area, BPRD oversees all vendor locations; however, the Skating Club manages concessions inside the building only. Even with these efforts, BPRD managed vending areas tend to drift outside of their specified areas. Tweaks to the vending layout plan will work more precisely to ensure that vending stations are deployed at dedicated locations across the Common, as vendor profitability generally corresponds with distribution patterns. This layout will be based on the on-the-ground study performed as part of this master plan.



- **Designate areas for vendor use with a special, yet consistent, paving type.** This delineation of space will provide spatial clarity and allow for easier maintenance of grease stains and general upkeep.
- **Review vendor licenses annually to ensure vendor performance, accountability, and adherence to regulations.** The number of licenses given out should be evaluated on a yearly basis to prevent over-saturation and repetition of vending types. This kind of tool should monitor successes and challenges and run projections on how to improve aspects of the program year to year. End-of-year interviews with vendors would help assess any potential gaps within the system.
- **Create a cohesive visual aesthetic between the different vending stations and, in turn, build a stronger sense of place.** There is an opportunity to develop branded movable vending stations. These stations could bear a Boston Common logo and all share similar colors and features to ensure that they feel like a cohesive element within the park, even if they support different offerings. The development of a consistent cart aesthetic could be handled through a third-party consultant or manufacturer, or even in a design competition. Such an activity could generate renewed excitement and build camaraderie around vending offerings on the Common.

Improving upon the existing vendor program through these recommendations will better serve all those who visit the Common as well as those who vend there. Refreshing the permitting process will set

Below, left to right: Existing concessions at Frog Pond; Existing mobile concessions on Mayor’s Walk; **Opposite, top to bottom:** “Emerson Cafe,” which was once located at the Boylston Station Plaza; Aesthetic of the vending stations at Bryant Park, as precedent for a unifying theme on the Common



vendor expectations and defining a recognizable vending aesthetic will clarify the visitor experience. By giving structure to the daily experience of eating or purchasing items on the Common, services will be more streamlined, visually distinct, and enjoyable for all parties.

Diverse Food and Beverage Options

More than just recreational spaces or active sites of history, parks are also places where people gather for picnics, a quick lunch on a bench, or breakfast on the morning commute. As such, food and vending are of central importance when it comes to outlining the variety of visitor services at the Common. Currently, there are mobile carts selling lemonade, hot dogs, and roasted nuts and fixed structures in the Frog Pond Pavilion and at the Earl of Sandwich located in the Parkman Concessions Plaza. Yet, there may be an opportunity to diversify concessions in a way that also strengthens the Common’s sense of place.

Refinement to the current procurement model should be made to support short-term vending opportunities, local small businesses, and alcohol sales. The new amenities proposed for the Common bring with them a wider range of food and beverage opportunities, such as a pop-up “beer n’ dogs” station in the plaza space adjacent to the proposed dog recreation area. New and diverse food and beverage offerings have the potential to morph into their own programmable amenities on the Common, not unlike the vending program at City Hall, which highlights local small businesses and offers short-term and pop-up opportunities.

Widening the vending possibilities within the Common could lead to increased revenues and also help build support for a new experiences that promote lingering and fun in the park. For example, an expanded food



and beverage establishment overlooking the ice-skating rink at Frog Pond could act as a seasonal attraction in the winter months that transforms into an ice cream shop in the summer. Ultimately, more varied food concepts address a broader spectrum of park goers, from a family looking to spend a few hours to commuters passing through looking for a coffee and snack. As a first step, an online survey could solicit community input for incorporation into future Vending Requests for Proposals. A website dedicated to the goings-on on the Common could include food offerings and retail across the park as a resource for visitors.

Finally, vendor safety is of critical importance, given the amount of time they spend in the Common. Dedicated vending infrastructure could help with this initiative by providing pagers tied to the Park Rangers or Boston Police Department, or by enacting other tangible safeguards. Further thinking about safety is included in the visitor safety and support services section discussed later in this chapter.

Early Action Projects:

- Design options for what a vending cart could look like for the Common, with the goal of creating a consistent, brand-able aesthetic to the vending program on the Common across all vending types.
- Issue an online survey that requests public input on food and beverage preferences to be incorporated into future Requests for Proposals within the current vending program procurement process.
- Build a web presence locating concessions on the Common with a description of their offerings. This effort could be coupled with online mapping and information described in the Access and Wayfinding section of the report.



BETTER VEHICULAR ACCESS AND CONTROL

Though Boston Common is most heavily used by pedestrians, management and operations protocols cannot ignore the reality that regular vehicular access happens today and is necessary. Today, only permitted vehicles are allowed on the Common, and over the course of developing this master plan, we observed a wide range of vehicles accessing the Common on a regular basis that fall under these categories, below:

- Police vehicles
- Event-related trucks, trailers, and cars
- Civilian cars
- Vendors – Food trucks temporarily stationed at the park and box trucks that set up, supply, and break down the mobile push carts.
- Maintenance – Smaller golf carts are used when possible. Larger subcontractor vehicles that drop off maintenance equipment (for tree and lawn care) are typically parked on the Common. Deer Park Maintenance Yard's on-site garbage bin is serviced two times weekly.

The official access point for all non-maintenance vehicles is the Charles and Beacon Street intersection. Maintenance vehicles make use of the entrance into Deer Park Maintenance Yard. Even with these entrances in place, unapproved vehicle entry happens regularly and was observed at Parkman Plaza, Boylston Station Plaza, and the corner of Boylston Street and Charles Street, as shown on the plan on the opposite page, presumably to access the park closer to a desired destination. In short, navigating safely around pedestrians at 5 miles per hour makes for a long trip if your destination is across the Common at the Park Street Plaza, Brewer Fountain, or the Boylston Station Plaza corners. Adding a second discrete vehicle access point on the opposite side of the Common would bring vehicles closer to their destinations, which will allow vehicles to move in and out of the Common more efficiently. Specific recommendations include:

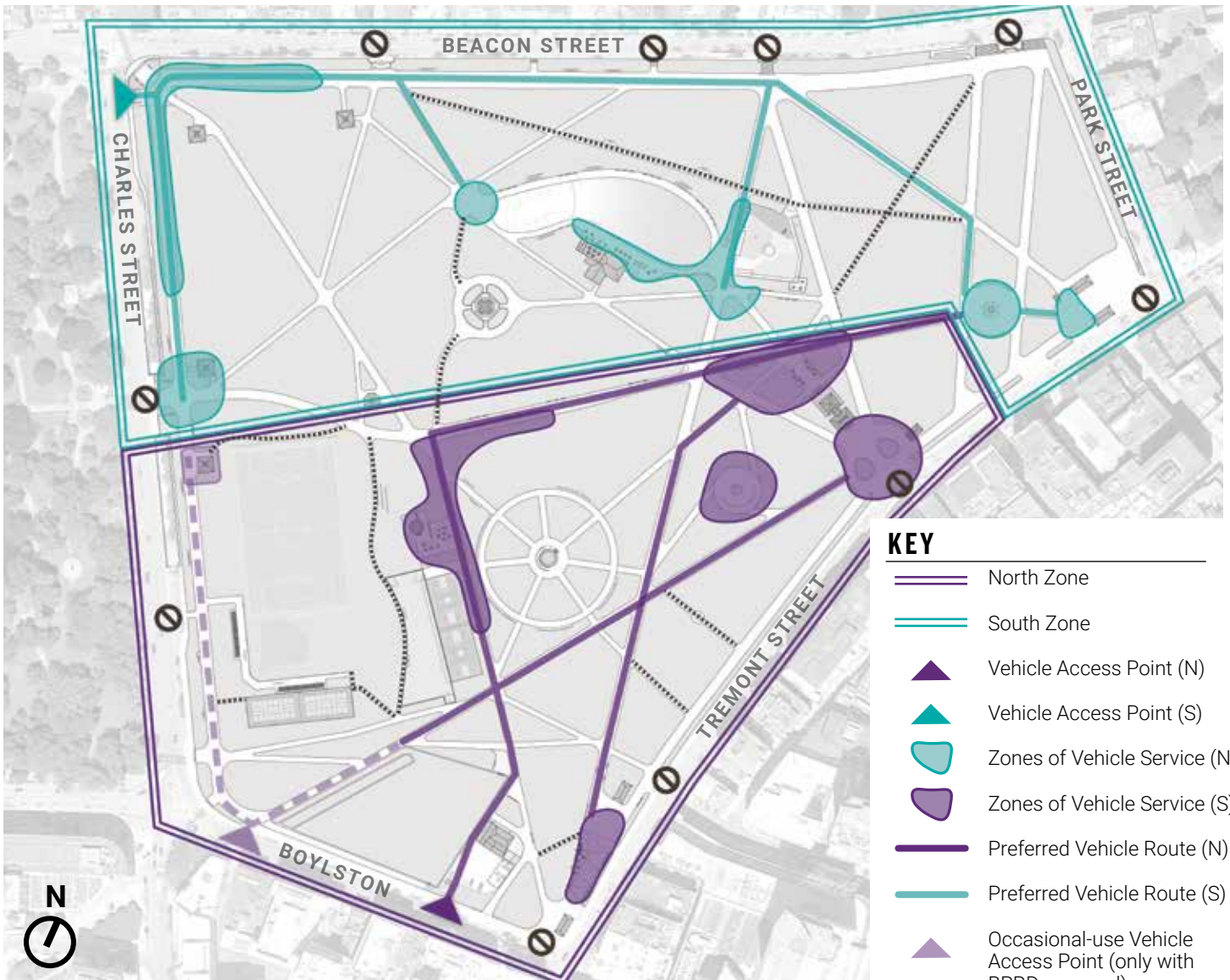
- Maintain and improve the Charles and Beacon Street intersection entrance with gateway enhancements, as detailed in the previous chapter.
- Allow service vehicles to exit the park through a vehicular gate at Deer Park Maintenance Yard. Add informational signage to limit conflict with pedestrians.

- Provide closer access to the athletics area by way of a mountable curb at Charles and Boylston Street corner. This access point should only be used under special circumstances with approval by BPRD, by way of the regional park administrator.
- Limit vehicles to the pathways of travel associated specifically with each entrance.
- Manage access into the Common through the administrator and require all permits to be displayed on the windshield, as was previously required. In keeping with the 1996 Management Plan, permits will continue to differentiate between delivery, event, etc., and include special requirements for construction vehicles. Authorization for event and press vehicles will be through the park administrator.
- Improvements to the Common's entrances will serve to further clarify vehicular access and control on the Common.

Forging and strengthening relationships with the park administrator, vendors, park security, and maintenance will be key to successfully limiting vehicle access on the Common moving forward.

Early Action Projects:

- Install temporary wayfinding signage at Deer Park Maintenance Yard to ease the conflict between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Finalize and enact designated pathways of travel per entrance. Enforce and limit use of vehicles only to the pathways of travel designated per entrance, as shown in the plan included on the opposite page.



Above: Vehicular access and circulation plan;
Below, left to right: Existing vehicle entrance to Deer Park Maintenance Yard at Boylston Street; Landscape and tree maintenance vehicles near the Parade Ground



VISITOR SAFETY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The Boston Common is not immune to the challenges around crime and negative activity found in many urban parks. The COVID-19 pandemic has also introduced new challenges and stresses. The park today has several safety and security protocols already in place, including:

- BPD officers stationed at the park
- Security cameras and video surveillance
- Emergency call buttons (Blue Lights) with a direct line to the Boston Police Department (BPD).
- Activation of spaces brings in positive activity and drives out negative use (e.g., year-round recreation activities at Frog Pond).

Agencies and stakeholders must better coordinate to ensure that the Common remains a safe and welcoming public space for all. As such, this master plan recommends the formation of a Visitor Safety and Support Services Task Force which could meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues, identify goals and objectives, and create action-oriented deliverables

Below: Police vehicles on Flagstaff Hill; **Opposite, top to bottom:** Existing Emergency Blue Light system and typical pedestrian lighting; Mounted Park Ranger unit mingling with park visitors on the Common

that coordinate between law enforcement, the Downtown Boston Business Improvement District (BID), park advocates, and social services, including but not limited to representatives from Department of Neighborhood Development and Boston’s Way Home Action Plan partners, Pine Street Inn, Bridge Over Troubled Waters, St. Francis House, St. Anthony Shrine, and the Boston Health Care for the Homeless. This coordination could be under the purview of the regional park administrator once the role is in place. This task force would focus on operational changes, policies, and procedures around the follow topics:

- Assessment of the existing conditions and safety needs of park visitors
- Capital improvements (in coordination with master plan recommendations) that promote design features to meet the safety needs of those who enjoy the Common (ie: restroom facilities)
- De-escalation guidelines for staff
- Guidance to the public on the best way to assist safety personnel through reporting
- Loose needle collection
- Security cameras and Emergency Blue Lights
- Pedestrian lighting
- Improved enforcement of existing regulations



Deploying a variety of safety practices will keep park management flexible and responsive to change. Central to effectively addressing these complex issues will be the collaboration among all stakeholders and those charged with addressing public safety as well as those working to provide social services to people in need on the Common.

Early Action Project:

- Formation of the Visitor Safety and Support Services Task Force.





IMPROVE SUPPORT FACILITIES

Deer Park Maintenance Yard Expansion and Upgrades	164
Better Equipment and Storage Facilities	166
Expanded Maintenance Capacity	168



MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS TODAY

As the city grew and Boston Common continued to serve as the major park for a wide variety of uses, the demands and needs on the Common's support facilities multiplied. To make capital investments in the built environment and public programming function, the scope of maintenance operations needed to expand just to keep pace. At present, operations are housed at Deer Park Maintenance Yard, which is sandwiched between the Central Burying Ground and Boylston Station. Given the footprint of the historic building and surrounding pavement, space is limited and challenges to the current facilities include the following:

- The various maintenance vehicles in the current fleet are large and bulky. Lack of covered space requires vehicles and equipment to be left outside and exposed to the elements, resulting in more frequent upkeep and replacement.
- Some vehicles and equipment in use do not match current maintenance needs. For example, snow removal operations around tight turning radii on pathways would be more efficient with smaller plows.
- Maintenance vehicles and the personal vehicles of park staff compete for limited space in the parking lot.
- The garage, where smaller equipment is stored, is undersized for the amount of use. It requires

reconfiguration to serve current needs. Seasonal equipment is rotated out to clear space.

- The manually operated gate at Boylston Street is generally left open for ease of access. However, this lack of clear boundaries, combined with the area's proximity to the Central Burying Ground, causes confusion for pedestrians who are looking to access the cemetery from inside the park.
- Certain maintenance operations are done by hand (e.g., trash and recycling pickup) and are less efficient as a result.
- Many trips back and forth from Frontage Road or Franklin Yard are required for refueling vehicles. Energy efficient or electric vehicles/equipment would reduce trips and not require that gasoline be stored at the park.

Even with the resources dedicated to the Common by the City of Boston and the FOPG, it is challenging for the existing support facilities to keep pace with the growth of the park. A fresh look at the proposed improvements for Boston Common will inform how to organized a streamlined maintenance system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What makes a park “great” can be difficult to pin down, but what is certain is that it is nearly impossible to make a great park without a robust maintenance program. The familiar scenes that come to mind when thinking of a park—friends strolling down a path, people eating lunch in the grass, kids playing a pick-up game of soccer—all have maintenance corollaries that enable these activities. Paths need to be swept and plowed, the grass cut, and the fields maintained to support all different kinds of activities, especially given the high-intensity use of Boston Common. Thus, to care for the Common at the highest level, maintenance operations at the park need an upgrade—one that meets the challenges of the modern era and plans for challenging needs in the years to come.

For many, the sign of a thriving maintenance program is when it is least apparent. Updating new maintenance protocols will account for this by consolidating and upgrading the park’s physical maintenance infrastructure and implementing new training programs. This approach will create new opportunities by re-tooling the park’s relationship to its infrastructure, such as purchasing more efficient and eco-conscious equipment and defining new storage opportunities. All master plan recommendations will contribute to a smoother workflow and a seamless visitor experience.

A direct line can be drawn from the support given to park staff and the relative success of a park. Better park maintenance protocols benefit everyone, from the person driving the snowplow to the kid building their first snow fort of the season. Investing in park maintenance operations is not simply complementary to some larger goal—it is integral to the process of improving and sustaining Boston Common to guarantee that it can serve as a resource for everyone.

DEER PARK MAINTENANCE YARD EXPANSION AND UPGRADES

Expanding Deer Park Maintenance Yard will help modernize the maintenance program by providing park personnel with much-needed amenities, office space, and defined storage areas. This enlarged footprint will also provide an outdoor venue for a new visitor information station and horse stable.

BETTER EQUIPMENT AND STORAGE FACILITIES

Investing in newer, better equipment and providing adequate storage space will allow maintenance personnel to work more efficiently, discreetly, and effectively to sustain the Common. Equipment selections will align with the park’s efforts to increase sustainability practices and to prioritize the pedestrian experience. Introducing a covered open-air storage space at Deer Park Maintenance Yard will create a protected spot to store larger equipment so the garage can be organized effectively as a workshop and house smaller equipment.

EXPAND MAINTENANCE CAPACITY

Providing additional resources to maintenance staff will benefit the operational capacity of the Common. Resources would include workforce development training on proper park care, including new and sustainable practices, and bringing in additional staff.

Opposite: View of Deer Park Maintenance Yard (within the Common) today

SURFACE STRUCTURE

POTENTIAL LOCATION FOR DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

SECURE MAINTENANCE YARD ACCESS GATE

EXISTING DEER PARK MAINTENANCE BUILDING

DEER PARK MAINTENANCE BUILDING EXPANSION

MAINTENANCE GARAGE EXPANSION

MAINTENANCE VEHICLE PARKING

PLAZA WITH EDUCATIONAL SIGNAGE AND INFORMATIONAL KIOSK

PARK RANGER HORSE HITCH

OVERHEAD CANOPY, 1235 SQUARE FEET

MBTA ACCESS HATCH TO REMAIN

IMPROVED PARK GATEWAY ENTRANCE

IMPROVED ENTRY TO BURYING GROUND

EXISTING VEHICLE ENTRY FROM BOYLSTON STREET TO REMAIN

BOYLSTON STREET

DEER PARK MAINTENANCE YARD EXPANSION AND UPGRADES

Updating and physically expanding Deer Park Maintenance Yard is critical to the successful maintenance and management of Boston Common. Among these improvements include increasing the building footprint to expand equipment storage capacity and improve back-of-house services for staff.

A two-story expansion to the Deer Park Maintenance Building would serve many functions and would need to be sized accordingly, with space that includes:

- Administrative space (including offices and a conference room, men's and women's locker rooms, kitchen with eating area, emergency sleeping area, and storage) for park staff and relocated operations headquarters for the Park Rangers. A Park Ranger outpost will still be maintained at their present location within the VIC.
- Reorganization of the garage into a workshop for repairs and ongoing projects.

Interior upgrades will be supplemented by improvements to the outdoor area that clarify and organize the space. These include:

- The park-side entrance of Deer Park Maintenance Yard would be supported by a plaza space and horse stable where visitors "meet and greet" the horses and learn more about the Park Rangers' Mounted Unit and get information on park goings-on, rules, and regulations.
- Access into Deer Park Maintenance Yard's back-of-house maintenance facility would be fully separated from public park areas with a gate to reduce confusion and improve pedestrian safety. Directional signage clearly identifying park destinations, including the Central Burying Ground next door, would be incorporated into these improvements.

- The parking lot would be re-striped to accommodate an open-air shelter for covered parking of maintenance vehicles. Parking of staff personal vehicles will no longer be accommodated at or around the Deer Park Maintenance Yard due to limited capacity and park use conflicts.
- Continued service access to the MBTA hatches will be accommodated in any proposed improvements.

Early Action Projects:

- BPRD to commission an architect to study the interior square footage requirements and reconfiguration of space within the existing Deer Park Maintenance Yard facility to accommodate the adjustment in uses.
- Reorganize the garage to transform it into a workshop.
- Design and install an all-weather shelter

Opposite: Proposed plan of upgrades planned for Deer Park Maintenance Yard; **Below, left to right:** Precedent example of a small informational kiosk at the Boston Harbor Islands Welcome Center, staffed by National Park Service Rangers; Park Rangers Mounted Unit in the Common garnering interest



BETTER EQUIPMENT AND STORAGE FACILITIES

While Deer Park Maintenance Yard is much too small to adequately serve the Common, adjustments to both its interior and exterior spaces will help the space be used more efficiently. The garage has become a catch-all for storage of small tools and equipment, a de-facto workspace, and bicycle parking for staff. Outside of these organizational needs, the existing fleet equipment is heavily utilized to the point where many pieces require regular maintenance or replacement. There is no garaged parking or even covered space under which these vehicles can park, so they are exposed to the elements and wear out much faster than their typical life expectancy. The pieces that are currently in circulation and their conditions are noted in Appendix B.

Rather than supplementing the current fleet with a few new items, the existing equipment should be redistributed to other parks. A new line of smaller, multi-use equipment should be purchased for dedicated use within the Common. Smaller specialized equipment would allow the maintenance crew to work more efficiently, save on storage space, and have a smaller footprint on the Common when the equipment is in use. As electric options become available and cost effective, they should be vetted and considered as viable alternatives to the gas-powered equipment noted here. Ultimately, reducing how many gas cans are stored on site will be safer and eliminate the

extra trips to Frontage Road or Franklin Park for can refilling.

All equipment should be parked underneath an open-air shelter to protect the equipment from rain and snow, with more sporadically used equipment stored in the garage or off-site. Covered storage is essential for extending the use of these expensive pieces of equipment, reducing the number of repairs needed, and making the Common's maintenance practices more sustainable. For maximum access and efficiency, no personal vehicles should be parked on the Common, including Deer Park Maintenance Yard.

Additionally, an inventory of smaller, handheld equipment should be taken to ensure that maintenance work can continue uninterrupted. Providing the maintenance team with access to a variety of well-kept tools in the appropriate quantities will ensure that the level of care at the Common remains high, meeting the park's ever-growing needs.

The trash compactors currently within Deer Park Maintenance Yard should be reconsidered. An alternative to keeping a compactor on site would be to purchase smaller packers that remove and transfer trash away from the Common. Removing the compactor would free up space for storage within



the confines of Deer Park Maintenance Yard and offer a better, covered, and lockable space for small equipment storage. These smaller packers could also help gather recyclables across the park, once a recycling program is put into place.

Improved storage facilities at Deer Park Maintenance Yard will create room for new maintenance equipment that can better serve the needs of the park. Smaller maintenance vehicles will take up less space in Deer Park Maintenance Yard's paved outdoor space, cut down on energy resources, and help staff keep up with the growing needs of the Common.

Early Action Projects:

- Develop a recycling program.
- Standardize the process for rotating in and out of season equipment between the Common and Franklin Park Yard.



Right, top to bottom: Covered outdoor storage area; Kubota with snow attachments in Copley Square; Wide-Area Zero-Turn Commercial Mower; **Opposite:** Existing Deer Park Maintenance Yard



EXPANDED MAINTENANCE CAPACITY

While the right equipment and facilities play a key role in achieving a high maintenance standard, ultimately, having a highly skilled staff ensures a successful park maintenance program. It is no doubt that the Boston Common's current maintenance crew are passionate and dedicated to the park's success. The master plan is an opportunity to improve upon what works within BPRD's Maintenance Division, to examine elements that are challenges for the crew, and to identify areas where improvements can be made.

The MOA between FOPG and BPRD includes an accompanying maintenance plan that identifies monthly maintenance tasks, such as monitoring the holiday lights in December or activating the Brewer Fountain by May. Currently, FOPG and BPRD share duties within this list and the Friends hires subcontractors to perform tree pruning and lawn care services on the Common.

On a routine basis, BPRD's maintenance crew for the Common currently operates out of Deer Park Maintenance Yard and has three shifts:

- Shift 1: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (7 employees)
- Shift 2: Wednesday through Sunday, 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (4 employees)
- Shift 3: Wednesday through Sunday, 1:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. (4 employees)

In the future, the park administrator will collaborate with and support ongoing maintenance operations on the Common. This person will be tasked with coordinating new equipment, new maintenance requirements surrounding capital improvements, strategic planning of staff resources, etc. and will further clarify how best to achieve maintenance goals.

Specific recommendations around expanding maintenance capacity include:

- **Expand the maintenance staff, including positions with specialized skill sets** – As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the more ambitious projects recommended in capital improvements will be supported by the expanded facilities at Deer Park Maintenance Yard,

Opposite, top to bottom: Precedent of a training course on small engine repair, Turfgrass management from Rutgers Professional Landscape Programs; Horticulture technology training at Bidwell Training Center; **Left:** Maintenance equipment in Deer Park Maintenance Yard

upgraded equipment, and increased storage space. While these infrastructural upgrades will make a huge impact, ultimately, adding more staff to the maintenance team who have skillsets that compliment the current staff's expertise will be key in carrying out the operational goals and higher level of care set forth by this report.

- **Developing and investing in the talents of maintenance staff** – Specific maintenance tasks could be assigned to individuals to help staff members develop niche skills and expand career pathways.
- **Implement inside and outside training** – For this expanded team to work as a cohesive unit and to meet the needs set forth in this section, training of current and new maintenance staff will be critical. These trainings will make maintenance knowledge that is passed down from person to person more accessible to newer staff as part of on-boarding. Training programs and workforce development programs (either by staff within the Common's own maintenance crew or through external groups, such as the National Recreation and Park Association's Playground Maintenance Course) will grow and develop their skills. Providing maintenance staff with training will ensure park longevity, foster a high level of care, and allow staff to new skill sets. These recommendations will be further studied and detailed in the update to the Management Plan.

Early Action Projects:

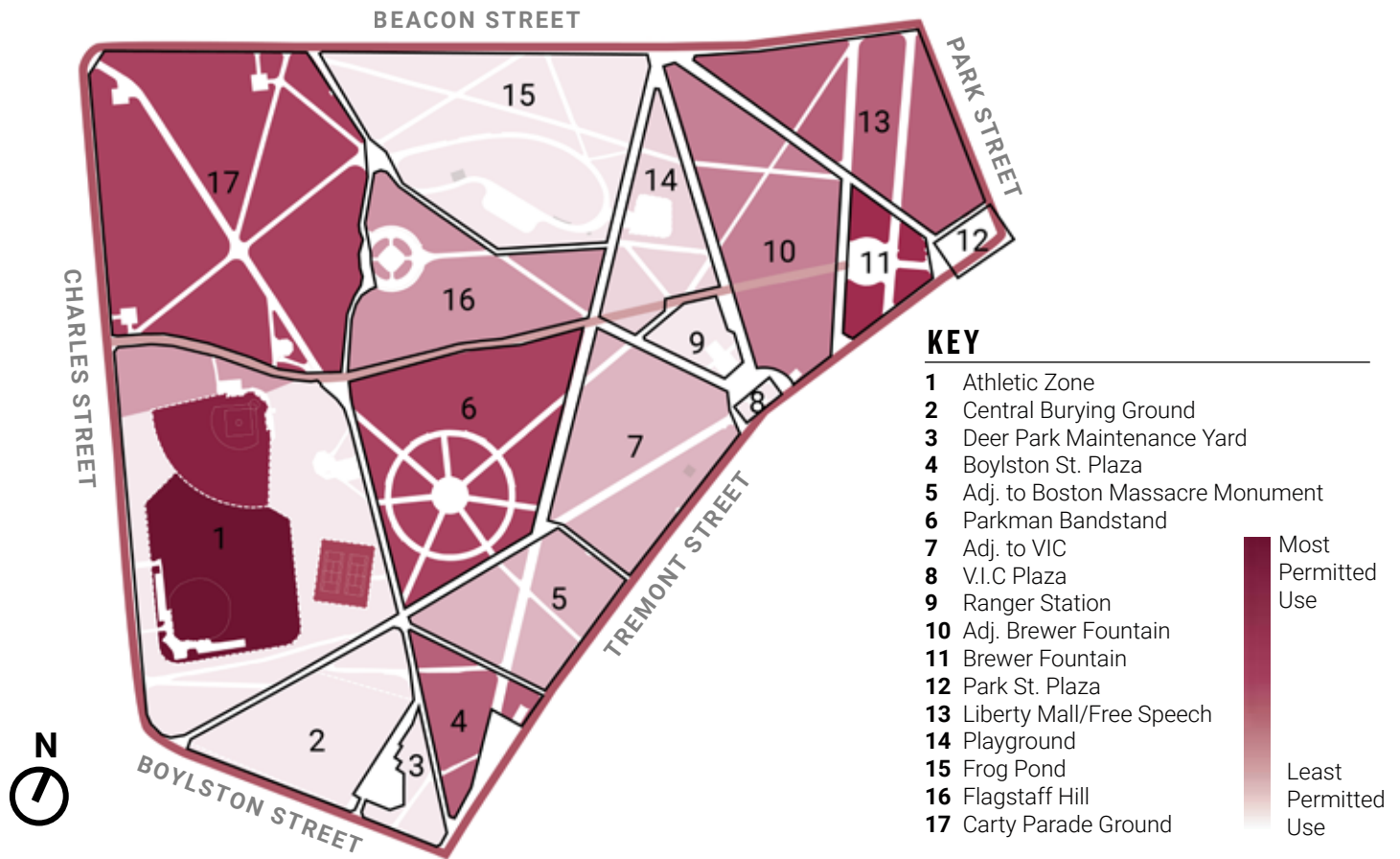
- Hire additional employees as needed.
- Develop specific trainings for the maintenance crew that are relevant to the current workload and schedule to put into action.





STRENGTHEN DAILY AND SPECIAL EVENT MANAGEMENT

Improvements to the Existing Permitting System	174
Capacity Restrictions	177
Landscape Recovery Methods	178
Temporary Protections	180
Event Mitigation Fees	181



DAILY AND SPECIAL EVENT MANAGEMENT TODAY

The Common's status as a treasured national landmark in Boston's urban core makes it the obvious choice to host major events rallies and protests. The park serves the recreational needs of the neighborhood, and Little League and tennis courts bookings are extremely popular.

Permits are currently requested through the Active Network recreation management platform on the BPRD website. Bookings can be made for any time of the day between 6:30 a.m. and 11:30 p.m., seven days per week, and all online reservations, resident or not, must be made seven days in advance. BPRD's Permitting Division then reviews the booking details. The Common is currently divided into 17 permitting zones; event attendee capacity is generally uncapped. In 2007, 1,000 permits were pulled (Special Events on the Boston Common: Best Management Practices, 2008). In 2019, that number increased to roughly 1,800 permits; in the span of 12 years, event use has increased by 80% and will likely continue to climb. The general categories of events are included below:

- Major public celebration (e.g., Boston Common Tree Lighting)
- Major sporting event (e.g., Boston Marathon)
- Local community event (e.g., Coat Giveaway)

- Park interpretation (e.g., Freedom Trail Tours)
- Park-based entertainment (e.g., Shakespeare on the Common)
- Major commercial events (e.g., Corporate Challenge Race)
- Political demonstration (e.g., Black Lives Matter protests)
- Cultural events (e.g., Making History on the Common)

In addition to special events, many public and private tour companies and other businesses are managed out of the Common (permitted or not). Since the Freedom Trail starts at Parkman Plaza, many of the visitors at the VIC are often those looking for tours. Though a high number of tours run through the Common each day, proper infrastructure for tour facilitation is lacking. On any given tour, the guide stands on the lawn, and over time, certain lawn panels become brown, bald, and difficult to maintain. The landscape's resilience is no match for the other unknown number of events, activities, and general visitorship at the Common and will require a tailor made management approach to ensure its longevity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The sights and sounds that enliven a park—concert music filling the air, people engaging in political dialogues, groups gathering to share in cultural experiences—will be made more accessible and enjoyable through an upgraded event management system. Instituting operational upgrades, like park-specific permitting, reservation systems, and lawn management techniques, will provide important guidelines that balance the needs of temporary events with the long-term health of the park. These new protocols will ensure the sustainable improvement of the park.

Boston Common is one of the most desirable event spaces in the city. The growing population of Boston and the proposed improvements to the park are likely to increase the number of programs and gatherings at the Common. With a consistent event schedule nearly guaranteed, park operations tailored to the specific needs of Boston Common are justified and will provide an opportunity to strengthen the events framework and reduce the physical impacts of events on the landscape. As such, the guiding principles as set forth in the vision plan for the report should be referenced by event coordinators to ensure that their programs are aligned with the overall ethos of the Common.

Event infrastructure at the Common was previously outlined by the 1996 Common Management Plan, with topics including event permitting, time limits, sound ordinances, fees, performance types, liability insurance, vehicular access, and vendor licensing. Certain protocols within that plan should be maintained, including enforcement, but others will be adapted to contemporary needs. The intention of this section is to outline recommendations that elevate the Common's function as a premiere space for special events and for regular everyday use.

Improvements to the Existing Permitting System

Adjusting the existing permitting system for Boston Common will help the park run more smoothly. Improvements will standardize the event planning process, further clarify permit fees and overall park management protocols, and build upon the capacity of BPRD's Permitting Division. Ultimately, the management of events at the park will be simplified and more predictable for park staff.

Capacity Restrictions

Enforcing capacity restrictions in event spaces will help better distribute events across the park to appropriately-designated spaces, relieving areas subject to overuse. By prescribing where events can take place by relative size, more of the park can be utilized, and potential damages can be minimized.

Landscape Recovery Methods

Defining times when the use of certain lawn areas is restricted will prevent overused turf panels from being in a constant state of deterioration. Limiting or rotating patterns of usage will help minimize future damage while only minimally interrupting daily park activities.

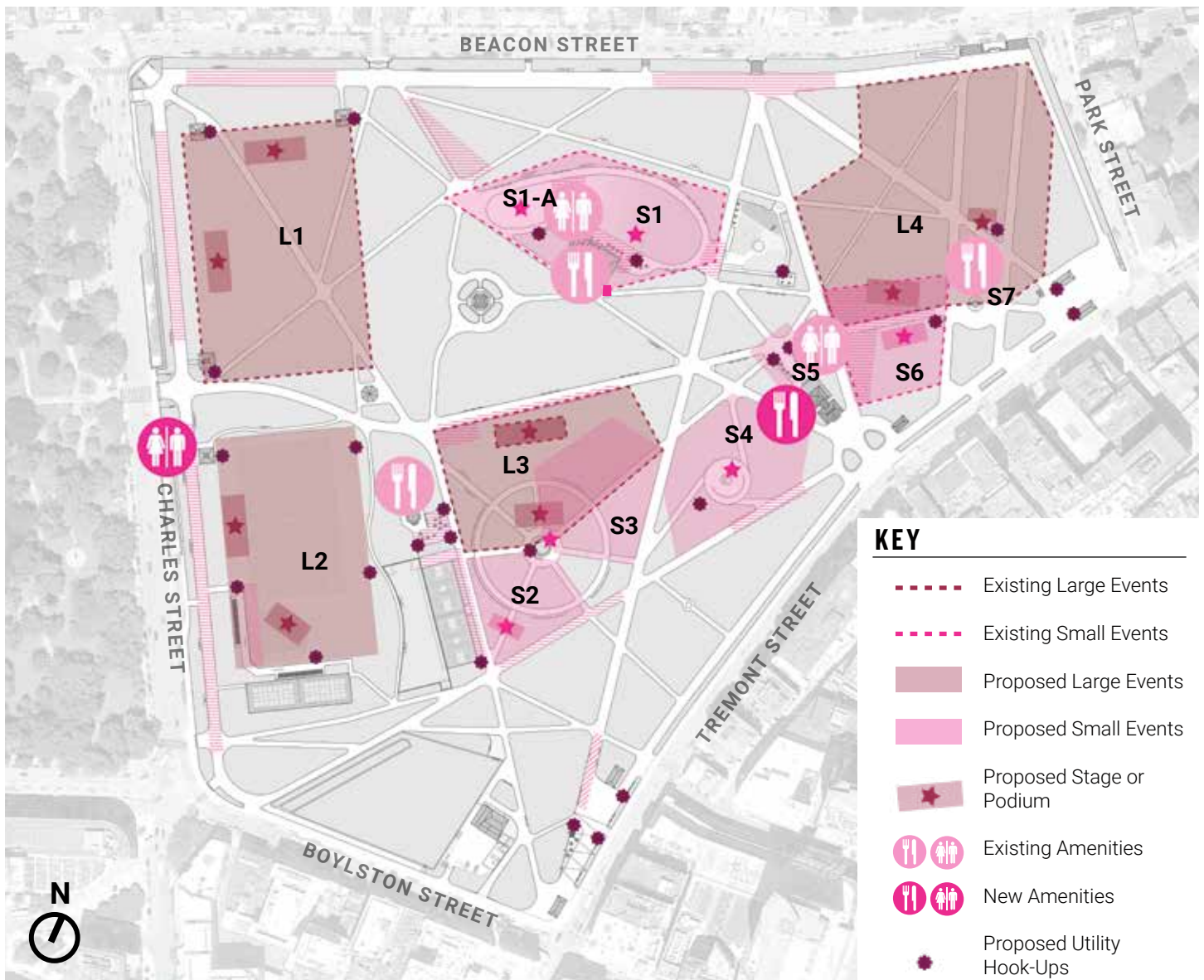
Temporary Protections

Installing temporary protections during events will keep park areas safe from potential damage from event and program use. These protective measures could include turf covers, tree fencing, and other barriers to preserve important park features.

Event Mitigation Fees

Enacting event mitigation fees will ensure that event organizers treat the venue with respect. The enforcement and collection of these fees will hold negligent event organizers accountable as well.

Opposite: Existing permitting zones and level of use



IMPROVEMENTS TO THE EXISTING PERMITTING SYSTEM

BPRD's dedicated Permitting Division manages the permitting for 738 facilities at 262 different properties managed by BPRD for the city. Each of these properties has different constituents, needs, facilities, and offerings, and the recreation management software currently in place keeps bookings for all these options organized. The permitting demand for events and recreation at Boston Common is so high that a dedicated system for this one property is warranted, though it should remain linked within the broader recreation management platform.

A specialized system would benefit the park in many ways. These include developing the comprehensive permitting application, which is discussed below.

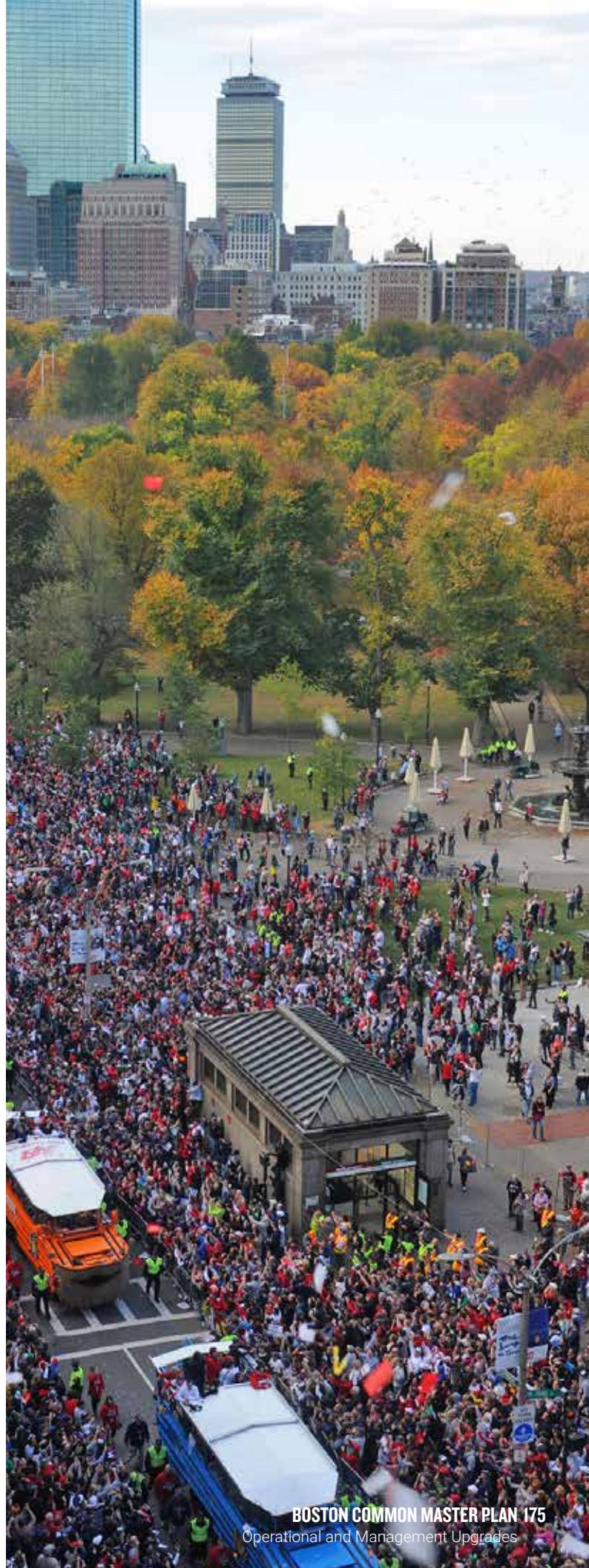
- **List potential additional permits (e.g., sound, lights, etc.) that an event will need to file for on the permitting application.** Right now, the Permitting Division evaluates each individual permit request for possible additional permits and relays the needs to the event coordinator. This measure will take the burden off the staff and put more responsibility onto the event organizer.
- **Develop and refine a standardized process for event planning, day-of execution, and post event evaluation.** Specialized permitting support would create a process to guide event sponsors through the planning process, troubleshoot all questions, share the rules and regulations specific to each permitted area on the Common, and provide day-of support for events. Once a park administrator is in place, they will quickly become an expert on the nuances of each space available for booking and be able to steer event sponsors toward the most appropriate location for each event based on details, including the number of

expected attendees and utility and infrastructure needs. The relationship built through the planning process will clarify expectations for both parties and will likely result in a better use of the spaces across the Common. Use of the permitting process specifically for the Common will help identify additional operational changes and, ultimately, more effectively balance the care of the Common's landscape with its use and event needs.

- **Approve the number of hours allowed for an event on a case-by-case basis.** Currently, all spaces are available from dawn to until around 11 p.m., seven days a week. This responsive system will allow more time for the landscape to bounce back, particularly after physically impactful events on lawn panels. Permitting should limit events with amplified sound and additional lighting from the morning and evening hours.
- **Link the management of events to maintenance and overall park management protocols.** All park operations will be able to work in lock step if handled by the same park administrator.

A refined logistical focus will simplify event permitting on the Common by keeping the process local and park specific. These adjustments will ensure that park impacts, use, and care are more closely knitted into the park's overall management system. Any permitting software upgrades would need to be coordinated with the recommended asset management software to ensure that event management is closely linked with park improvements and maintenance strategies moving forward. Communication between operations across the park is essential to the Common's long-term well-being.

Opposite: Events and Programming Map; **Right, top to bottom:** Red Sox Duck Boat Parade, 2018; Boston PRIDE Parade, 2019





A Common-specific permitting application supplemental to the existing BPRD application could be modeled after the “Special Event Permit Application” administered by Chicago Park District. This application outlines the comprehensive requirements and detailed guidelines to event organizers from the earliest stages of planning an event. Items to be covered in the application include:

- Application fees, deadline, and planning timelines, including event type categorization and respective due dates. Regular and recurring programming (like Hill House Athletics use of the fields) will have slightly different application requirements than one-off events (like the African Festival) that have more extensive infrastructure needs. This will build upon the existing different reservation procedures for sports field reservations and special events/weddings.
- Event features, description, and site map that includes, but is not limited to:
 - Amplified sound and direction of sound
 - Stages, tents, and canopies and any other structures with sizes and locations
 - Proposed driving paths and vehicle parking locations
 - Locations for concession service/sale
 - Locations for port-a-potties
- Event maintenance and waste management/trash/recycling removal plan
- Security plan and medical services
- Event rules and regulations
- Fees schedule and security deposit
- Performance bond information
- Insurance requirements
- Penalties for permit violations and appeal procedures

Having dedicated permitting support could allocate time and resources to retool the existing event application into a document that is Common specific. This application could be reviewed annually to ensure that

the requirements and guidelines included within the document are reasonable and that the mitigation and recovery procedures are effective.

Early Action Projects:

- Access the current event application and begin to incorporate the recommended changes.

CAPACITY RESTRICTIONS

There must be a balance between the demand for events and the protection of the Common’s natural and historic landscape. To achieve this balance, limitations should be placed on the number of attendees allowed per event and the appropriate uses per large and small event sites, including the number of permits granted and time restrictions. In addition to the table to the right that lists suggested capacity by location, a few generalized protocols are recommended:

- Events taking place on lawn panels shall be restricted to three consecutive days, which is consistent with the 1996 Management Plan recommendations. Specific events with differing needs or extenuating circumstances would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- The park administrator (via the city) reserves the right to cancel any events if wet conditions would result in significant damage to the park landscape.
- Tents and other structure locations should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis through the site map approval process within the comprehensive permitting application.
- General amplification guidelines from the 1996 Management Plan (i.e., decibel/hertz maximums, hours, etc.) should be assessed and updated as needed, with clarifications provided in the chart to the right as to the sound limitations at the various event spaces. Stage locations that better direct sound and technological upgrades were articulated in the previous chapter.

#	Event Location	Size (sf)	Max. Attendees	Annual Permits	Amplified Sound
L1	Carty Parade Ground	Large, 136,440 sf	10,000	10	Allowed
L2	Athletics	Large, 129,080 sf	10,000	10	Allowed
L3	Parkman Bandstand Main	Large, 77,940 sf	6,500	10	Allowed
L4	Liberty Lawn	Large, 175,730 sf	10,000	10	Limited
S1	Frog Pond	Small, 49,120 sf	4,000	300	Allowed
S1-A	Frog Pond Splash Pad (off-season use)	Small, 36,570 sf	3000	500	Allowed
S2	Parkman Bandstand South	Small, 27,080 sf	2,000	100	Limited
S3	Parkman Bandstand East	Small, 44,460 sf	3,500	100	Limited
S4	King Memorial	Small, 47,350 sf	3,500	300	Limited
S5	VIC Plaza	Small, 43,570 sf	3,500	300	Limited
S6	VIC/ Brewer Sandwich	Small, 35,370 sf	3,000	100	Limited
S7	Brewer Fountain	Small, 6,700 sf	500	25	Limited

Opposite, top to bottom: Event areas and capacity details; Shakespeare on the Common, 2016; **Above, left to right:** Bernie Sanders rally, February 2020; J.P. Morgan’s annual Corporate Challenge 3.5 mile road race, 2019

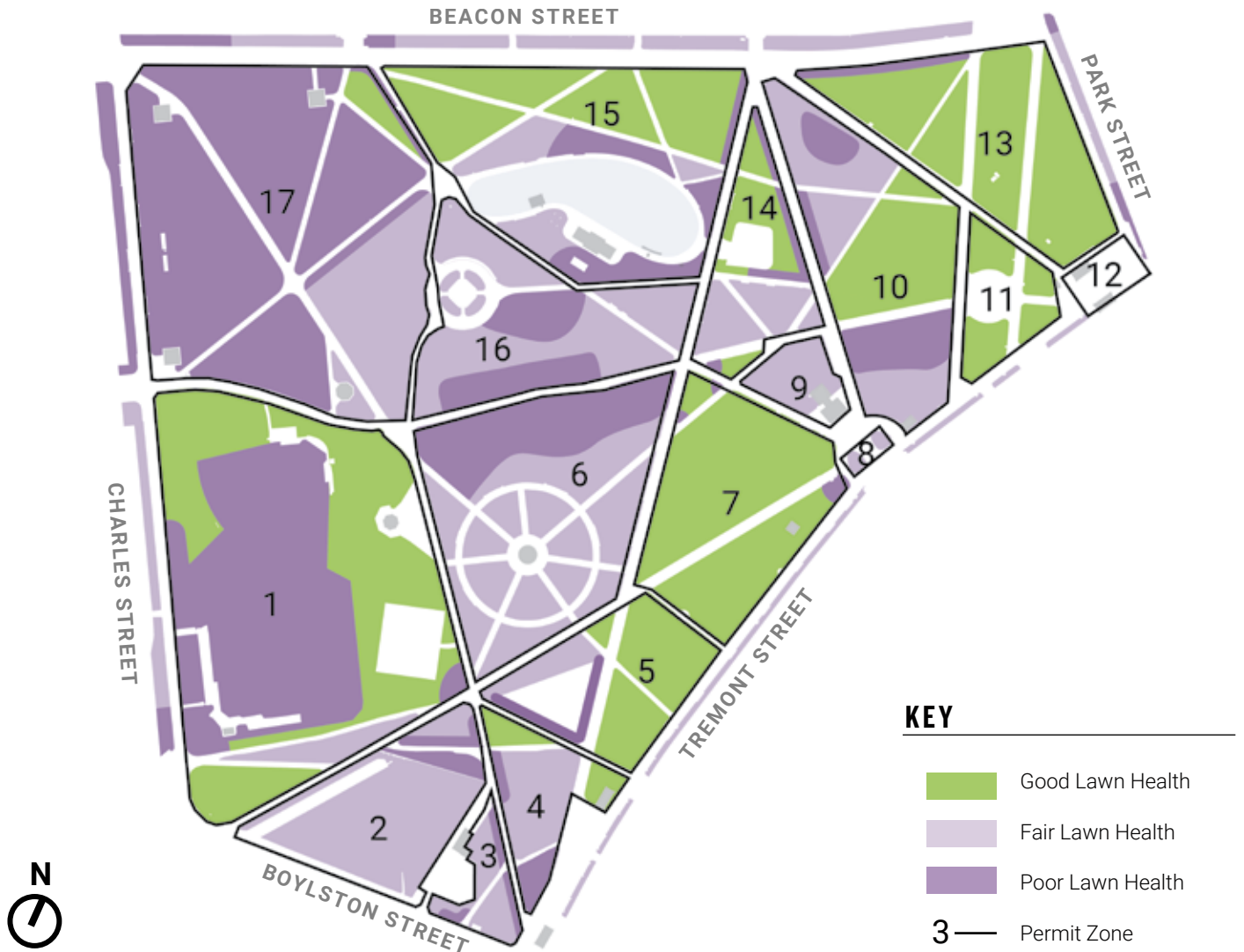


LANDSCAPE RECOVERY METHODS

Implementing processes that help curb the cumulative effect that crowds have on turf and tree health is a priority for the Common. Soil compaction is the primary issue resulting from excessive levels of foot traffic in concentrated areas. Pore space in the soil is reduced, which eliminates the ability for water to drain, oxygen to be exchanged, and roots to grow in a healthy manner. As is seen today, turf and trees in areas of heavy event usage are in the poorest condition because of soil compaction. To address these issues, some parks, like Grant Park in Chicago and Battery Park in New York City, have taken to closing lawns entirely for rest periods. While total closure is likely not a viable option for all lawn spaces that support large events in the Common, recommendations in this section include landscape recovery methods that will protect the park's greenspace from the overuse and damage that the turf sees today.

The following recovery procedures are recommended to allow lawn panels time to recover from events:

- Events within the small event locations should be limited to three days per week
- Two weeks rest between events for large event locations during early spring (first week in April to second week in May, which allows for three events per event space, or 12 events total) and mid to late summer (first week in July through the second week in September, which allows for five events per event space, or 35 events total) to mitigate the combined impacts of weather and foot traffic on lawn panels, when turf is more susceptible to damage
- One permit allowed every two weeks per large event location
- When damage to the turf cover is less than 50% of the event space, turf recovery actions within three days of the event should include: core aeration, overseeding, and fertilization
- When damage to the turf cover exceeds 50% of the event space, turf renovation actions shall be required within three days of the event; herbicide application, core aeration, seeding, and fertilization is needed



Working with a combination of temporary protections and proactive infrastructure discussed in the previous chapter (see the Common-wide Event Infrastructure Strategy), these recovery methods will better balance the toll that events take on the Common's landscape.

Early Action Projects:

- Develop a specification for grounds and turf maintenance specific to the Common.
- Develop a mitigation checklist that directly links the event activities with the resulting damage. The checklist would be included as part of the comprehensive permitting application and reviewed with the permitting coordinator and event organizer during the event's planning process.
- Investigate a method to suggest alternative venues for events, especially during designated rest periods for lawn panels.



Opposite: Existing lawn conditions plan with a permit zone overlay; **Right, top to bottom:** Battery Park's Oval Lawn during a rest period; Aeration and overseeding of a lawn panel at the Common; Hemp Fest 1996





TEMPORARY PROTECTIONS

While digital management platforms, event management protocols, and fixed event infrastructure will undoubtedly bring the Common to a greater level of care, these proactive support measures must be supplemented by efforts connected to the events themselves. An array of strategies can meet this challenge. Items that address ground protection, perimeter enforcement, and vegetation boundaries will clarify event limits and protect the turf and trees. These temporary protections should become standard expectations and required for event organizers as part of their agreement to host an event:

- Install temporary fencing around the critical root zones of particularly sensitive trees as identified in the permitting application.
- Provide a perimeter of security and volunteer/staff support around an event to keep the event's footprint contained.
- Lay a permeable turf protector in critical areas to protect natural turf grass from excess abrasion and wear due to high traffic. Turf protectors would be in place before, during, and after an event. The protector would be provided by the event organizer. Locations would be marked on the site plan as part of the comprehensive permit application and subject to review. Because prohibiting all vehicles from driving on or across lawn panels is difficult and impractical for some events, a turf cover is a helpful mitigation measure to keep the lawns at the Common healthy and ready to use.



The initial effort required to implement these new standards will reap important benefits for the park and all of its visitors. Ultimately, these simple yet effective protection measures will operate in conjunction with the work done by park staff and ensure a long and healthy life for the Common.



Early Action Projects:

- Require use of temporary protections as part of the permitting process. See “Improvements to the Existing Permitting System” for more information.

Opposite: Aftermath of Lollapalooza at Grant Park, Chicago in 2019; **Left, top to bottom:** Lawn restoration in the spring at Hyde Park, London; Lawn condition of Hyde Park's Parade Ground in August 2019; Turf protectors in place at Hyde Park's Winter Wonderland



EVENT MITIGATION FEES

In a public landscape like the Common, maintenance efforts and landscape protection are not always sufficient in addressing event impacts. Monetary deposits for damage mitigation is a critical component of event management - both to incentivize careful park use and to provide access immediately to funds for repairs when needed. The following recommendations should be required from event organizers in their agreement with the Common's park administrator to put on an event:

- Performance bonds. As outlined in the report 1996 Management Plan, the factors below should be considered in determining bond amount:
 - Length of event
 - Time of year
 - Nature of event
 - Number of people attending
 - Experience regarding any prior events of the same or similar nature
 - Level of property damage risk
 - Security deposit. Fee structure around the security deposit will be clearly articulated in the Common-specific section of the permitting application but will generally be based on event type, size, and duration.

In combination with performance bonds, the park administrator will prepare pre- and post-event reports with photos, descriptions, and remediation measures. Event organizers should sign off on the pre-event report before the event takes place. Similarly, following the event, the park administrator should walk through the event location and develop a report that details any

damage incurred to the landscape and what recovery methods may be needed. The bond and/or security deposit should be used to cover the expense of those repairs with the remaining balance being recovered by event organizers. Percentage reduction of fees should be considered for non-profits and waivers for economic hardship on a case-by-case basis.

Early Action Projects:

- Build a fee for event mitigation fees into the permitting fee. See "Improvements to the Existing Permitting System" for more information.