

Project Description

For generations the Malden River was an industrial waterway walled-off to public use. The Malden River Greenway Plan lays out a vision that will transform the river, creating a world-class park system running through the cities of Everett, Malden, and Medford, Massachusetts.

The Greenway intends to provide safe, connected, and accessible paths for residents and visitors along the river. It will establish an urban greenscape with thriving biodiversity and promote a healthy lifestyle through active design and open space programming.

The development of the Malden River Greenway will become integral to an open space network that is a key link in the larger regional greenway system along the Mystic River. The Greenway will also provide a direct connection to the Northern Strand Trail, which connects the cities of Lynn, Saugus, Revere, and Everett. This is a rare opportunity to stitch together a two-mile green link along the Malden River into a system that could span fifteen miles all the way from Lynn to the Mystic Lakes.

In addition to a path system, the greenway will be punctuated by new parks and open spaces. While there are scattered paths along the river, they often don't connect to each other. This causes a disruption in continuity. Creating links that are currently missing is an essential ingredient to creating a seamless system.

Construction is underway in Everett to provide paths from the Northern Strand Trail to the river. Subsequent to this, a trail will be completed at the Wellington MBTA station, connecting the Wellington Greenway with the Malden River Greenway. Design is also

underway for a new pedestrian bridge from the Everett casino to Assembly Square in Somerville.

The physical, social and ecological contexts of the Malden River Greenway are all intimately tied together. The cities of Malden, Medford, and Everett have largely been cut off from river access for decades. The physical constraints of the study area and its legacy of industrial uses have an impact on social equity and public health of the surrounding community. The MBTA Orange Line tracks, large landholders and utility companies have prevented access. Part of the design and planning exercise is to remedy that problem.

The Malden River is a regional open space opportunity and an amenity of significant scale for the public health of local residents, providing the potential for active and passive open space. The objective is to design a safe, convenient and accessible path system for local residents and visitors and encourage active recreation.

From an ecological perspective, the creation of an open space system along the Malden River offers opportunities for ecological restoration by building a greenspace with thriving biodiversity, such as wetland creation and restoration along the National Grid site on the eastern edge of the river. Running a path adjacent to the site can create new wetlands and provide eco-education opportunities. The river is still subject to stormwater runoff due to slopes that have been either mowed or are abutted by parking lots. The planting of the river banks can reduce stormwater runoff and pollutants from entering the river.

The organization that initiated the project saw the potential of the Malden River to provide connections between disparate paths and to improve those that exist. The design concepts created for the greenway take measures to treat access to the river as equally as significant as greenways along it. The project is a significant social and environmental justice solution for cities that have limited open spaces. The tri-city involvement speaks to a level of cooperation that focuses on both the local and regional benefits of the plan. The primary challenge is ensuring that the property owners along the waterway abide by state legislation and take measures to provide access to the river and along it, in addition to ensuring that the river paths and parks are deserving of the people that will use them.