

BOSTON GRANTS INITIATIVE COVER SHEET

DATE: January 15, 2011

NAME OF APPLICANT ORGANIZATION: Allston Brighton North Neighbors Forum (ABNNF)

CONTACT PERSON: Harry Mattison

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WEBSITE: n/a

AMOUNT OF THIS REQUEST: \$8,000

TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET: \$9,698

TOTAL CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET (If different from Project Budget): n/a

TOTAL AMOUNT YOUR ORGANIZATION SPENT LAST YEAR: \$500

NUMBER OF STAFF, FULL AND/OR PART-TIME (if any): 0

NUMBER OF KEY VOLUNTEERS: 20

HOW LONG HAS YOUR GROUP BEEN ACTIVE? November 2007

PROJECT PROPOSAL SUMMARY (No more than 2 sentences):

Renovate James Collins Square, a highly visible and heavily-used pocket park in the Allston neighborhood of Boston. Engage our neighbors of all ages and improve the park by adding plantings and seating and enhance the local environment by creating a safe and inviting bird habitat.

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS GRANT PROGRAM?

ABNNF received a BGI grant in 2009

CHECK ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY TO YOUR ORGANIZATION:

☒ Neighborhood/Community group (not a 501(c)(3) or incorporated group)

☒ Checking or Savings account in group's name

Fiscal Agent Organization _____ Federal EIN # _____

☐ Incorporated as a nonprofit in Massachusetts

☐ 501(c)(3) status with the IRS Federal EIN # _____

If you are an informal neighborhood or community group and do not have a checking account or fiscal agent, you will need to set up an account or agent upon receipt of a grant. You do NOT need to have an account or agent when you apply.

BOSTON GRANTS INITIATIVE APPLICATION FORM

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In the heart of the North Allston residential neighborhood, a small and heavily-used pocket park has great potential to be improved in several important ways, increasing community engagement and the local environment.

For some neighborhoods, a 0.04 acre park might hardly merit notice. But in this City of Boston park, known as James Collins Square, can have an impact on the community that is much bigger than its size. Collins Square is in close proximity to two elementary schools (the public Gardner Pilot Academy and the private German International School of Boston), Saint Anthony's Church, and urban amenities including a convenience store, mailbox, and laundromat. The park is also bordered by well-traveled secondary streets – Holton Street and Franklin Street which are used by hundreds of neighbors each day on their way to school or work. Expanding upon our existing relationships with the nearby schools we look forward to involving the students as appropriate in the hands-on implementation of this project.

Collins Square is dominated by two mature trees (pine and honeylocust), three yews, and a few other shrubs and perennials. Particularly because several large trees on private property have been cut down in recent years, Collins Square should have a valuable role as a place of natural shade, beauty, and refuge for birds.

In our densely-settled neighborhood, little Collins Square is the only park that can be accessed without crossing a major road. Neighbors visit the park for a place to sit and read, to enjoy a bit of nature, or to give their dogs a place to go to the bathroom. Unfortunately, this latter use often becomes a mis-use of the park when people do not pick up after their dogs. An unglamorous but key part of our project will be the installation of dispenser for dog waste bags, signage, and replacing the rusting 60-gallon drum that currently serves as a trash can. We will also increase personal outreach to dog owners at the park, thanking them when they properly dispose of the dog waste.

The heavy foot traffic through the park and extensive root systems of the trees has left too little top-soil for other plants. We therefore have designed a raised planting bed that will be built from granite curbing. The raised bed will discourage dogs from entering this planting area and hold new top soil needed for successful planting of new shrubs.

In the past, Collins Square has been home to birds that have built nests in the trees and shrubs. We would like to enhance this aspect of the park by installing bird houses on metal posts attached to the existing chain link fence. With the large population of outdoor cats in our neighborhood, the birds need all the help they can get. By providing water, native berry-producing shrubs (serviceberry, viburnum, etc) , and safe shelter we can maximize the park's potential as a natural bird habitat.

Finally, by adding new sculptural benches under the shade of the pine tree and a Bill Wainwright sculpture (whose studio is across the street from Collins Square) we will complement the park's natural beauty with man-made art and the opportunity for more neighbors to enjoy the space.

This project is being done in partnership with the Friends of Fern Square (Collins Square is also known as Fern Square, as one of the abutting roads is Fern Street).

Describe the neighborhood or community need(s) and/or challenges that this effort will address.

North Allston is a highly-urbanized and industrial area with few greenspaces in the residential neighborhood. Most residents live in multi-unit housing with, at best, minimal private green space which makes public parks all the more important. This project will build upon previous successful projects by ABNNF to improve our local environment and create green and physically inviting places. This project will also continue ABNNF's tradition of building a more connected, empowered, and proactive neighborhood.

What is the level and nature of involvement of the community-at-large?

Hundreds of members of the North Allston and North Brighton community have become more engaged in civic issues in the past few years, with the support of ABNNF and in response to expansion proposals by Harvard University which owns hundreds of acres of land in Allston and Brighton. These urban design and planning meetings primarily attract homeowners interested in the long-term future of the community.

However, there remains a much larger group of several thousand residents who might become more actively involved in our community. Reasons for this include a lack of interest in long-term planning, as few units are owner-occupied and many residents move elsewhere after living here for a few years. Also, the limited English-language skills of many

neighbors make it difficult for them to participate in meetings that emphasize speaking in public forums in front of large groups.

Therefore, ABNNF's projects are an important opportunity for neighbors to make tangible and positive changes for our community through hands-on involvement in neighbor-driven projects. The visible and results-focused nature of our projects, along with our door-to-door outreach makes our projects accessible and inviting for all to participate, regardless of demographic and socio-economic status.

Specific to this project, we will promote the project by posting and distributing fliers to nearby residents, requesting coverage by the weekly neighborhood newspaper, and sharing information through community email lists. We will have at least two community work days on weekends, one to install the bird houses and one to spread the new soil and plant new shrubs. Teachers and students from the Gardner Pilot Academy have enthusiastically participated in our past projects and we will attempt to coordinate at least one work day with them during the school day. At the conclusion of the project we will invite neighbors and local musicians to celebrate our accomplishments.

If your project is successful, what changes will occur in your community and its environment?

Through this project we will create areas of natural beauty and continue to show our neighbors and others that it is possible to take initiative, organize, encourage widespread involvement, and develop the capacity to make positive changes in our community. The local environment will be improved for birds that will be able to nest and find food in the park. These positive changes will be done in a visible and educational way that will help more neighbors learn what they can do as urban residents to improve the environment.

BOSTON GRANTS INITIATIVE APPLICATION FORM (CONTINUED)

PROJECT BUDGET

1) Itemize anticipated expenses and income for this Project Proposal. Also note in-kind services (donated materials and/or labor) you may receive for this proposal.

Expenses

- Raised Bed constructed from granite curbing: \$2,500 for granite and installation (based on past projects by Ross Miller with the Boston Schoolyard Initiative)
- Topsoil / compost blend – 12 cubic yards: \$800
- Dog waste
 - Bag Dispenser: \$140 <http://www.buygreen.com/biobagdogvaluedispenser.aspx>
 - Biodegradable bags: \$50 <http://www.buygreen.com/biobagdogwastebags.aspx>
- Combination Waste & Recycling receptacle \$1,128
<http://www.themunicipalcatalog.com/Customkititems.asp?kc=DJ184-1017>
- Bench: \$1,200
- Bill Wainwright sculpture: \$1,000
- Shrubs: \$1,500
- Bird houses:
 - \$30/each <http://www.urbannaturestore.ca/shop/pc/viewPrd.asp?idproduct=1126&idcategory=4>
 - Squirrel baffle: \$30/each http://audubonworkshop.com/product.asp_Q_pn_E_2134
 - Mounting bracket: \$10/each http://audubonworkshop.com/product.asp_Q_pn_E_4107
 - Mounting poles & hardware: \$10/each
 - Total: \$80/each, \$480 for 6
- Bird bath/water station: \$100
- Pruning of existing mature trees: \$800 (DeMore tree service, Allston)

Total: \$9,698

In-Kind Services

We will seek donations and in-kind contributions from local businesses such as the 50% discount that Mahoney's Garden Center provides to ABNNF projects. Our track record has been that we are able to leverage significant donations and discounts to let us get the maximum "mileage" from the funds that we raise.

The sculpture by Bill Wainwright would be provided to the park at a considerable discount to its retail value. A similar donation is being discussed with a local artist for the new benches.

We will attempt to obtain free or discounted soil and mulch from the City of Boston as part of its Boston Shines spring clean-up event. Based on a suggestion by Vidya Tikku at the Boston Natural Areas Network, we are attempting to get the granite curbing donated by the City of Boston Public Works Department

120 hours of volunteer time is expected to be contributed by community members.

20 hours each from the 3 project leaders = 60 hours

4 hours each from 15 neighborhood volunteers = 60 hours

Photocopying of flyers for outreach will be donated by Houghton Chemical, a local business

Water for new plants will be donated by neighbors abutting the park, as there is no source of water at the park itself.

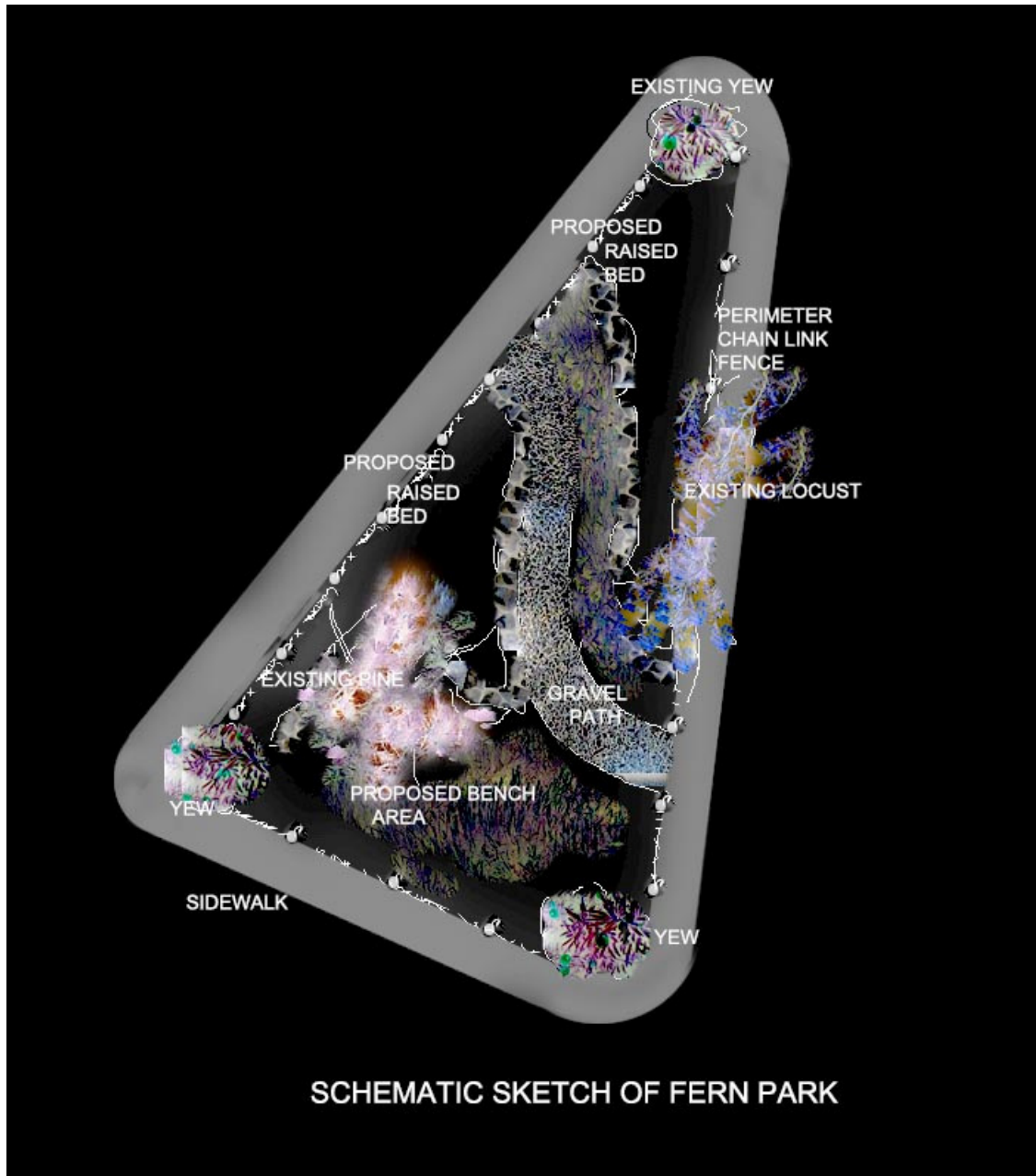
Principal sources of support (such as membership dues, individual donations, grants, special events etc)

- Individual donations to ABNNF
- Grants – ABNNF will seek assistance as needed from through the Harvard Allston Partnership Fund and Urban Ecology Institute City Roots program. Applications for these grants occur after NEGEF awards the BGI grants, so the amount sought from these other sources will be based on any NEGEF grant that we receive. (ABNNF received City Roots grants in 2008 & 2009)

Existing Condition Photographs



Proposed Improvements



ABNNF Steering Committee Members & Key Volunteers

- 1) Harry Mattison, 28 Mansfield St, Allston - harry.mattison@autodesk.com
- 2) John Powell, 101 Franklin Street, Allston - lighttimeinspace@verizon.net
- 3) Ross Miller, 107 Franklin Street, Allston - rossmiller@earthlink.net
- 4) Brent Whelan, 332 North Harvard St, Allston - jgbwhelan@gmail.com
- 5) Tim McHale, 102 Litchfield St, Brighton - bostonminstrel@aol.com
- 6) Karen Smith, 70 Athol St, Allston, KMSLINKON@aol.com
- 7) Jeff Bryan, 58 Riverdale St, Allston - bryan58_99@yahoo.com
- 8) David McNair, 12 Bagnal St, Allston - DavidMcNair@hotmail.com
- 9) Tom Lally, 10 Alcott St, Allston - oldtomlally@yahoo.com

Allston/Brighton neighbors transform asphalt into green playground

Allston/Brighton TAB - <http://www.wickedlocal.com/allston/news/education/x135754586/Allston-Brighton-neighbors-transform-asphalt-into-green-playground>

By Natalia Knochowski

Wed July 15, 2009

Allston, Mass. - Allston residents, and their kids, can prepare for a greener, more peaceful and educational playground. Neighbors gathered on the sunny Saturday morning at the [Gardner Pilot Academy](#) to plant another ginkgo tree and finalize some details of the ongoing playground renovation.

"The playground is almost done," said Harry Mattison, one of the neighbors and founders of the [Allston/Brighton North Neighbors Forum](#), a community group in the area that has taken on this project.

The ABNNF is trying to convert the playground "from what it has been - an expanse of asphalt - to something more green and natural and educational - something that's more enjoyable for everyone," said Mattison.

After a morning full of planting and weeding, those who helped Saturday morning also discussed and decided what other features they would like to add to the space. As a result, soon residents can expect seating areas for teachers, parents, and students, the planting of another large tree, boulders, a meadow area, and shrubs to enliven the space around the new playground.

Mattison said that the school is a great resource for those who live in the neighborhood and even those who don't because children especially use the playground during the summers and after school.

"We want to get most of it finished before school starts," he said.

"We'll be working a lot through July and August; we'll probably then shift back to our Everett Street site with CityRoots and do some more work there," said Mattison. "Next week, we'll start doing some of the larger physical things - the stones, and tree stumps, wood chips."

Also involved in restoring the playground is the Greater Boston organization [CityRoots](#), which according to Sustainable Cities Program Manager Rachael Dobson, is a non-profit program of the Urban Ecology Center that works with volunteer groups, such as neighborhood associations, and helps the groups design and plant community landscaping projects.

CityRoots provides a stronger community that is equal to a stronger sense of place, of trust, of well being, that betters the environment, said Dobson.

The neighborhood organizations apply to the CityRoots program and if the groups are accepted, they are funded by CityRoots and are assigned two project consultants, who are experts in landscaping and planting, and help facilitate the planning and completion of the project.

"This year we were fortunate to have CityRoots fund us again," said Mattison, who also explained that last year, the CityRoots helped the ABNNF complete phase one improvements on Everett Street. "This year and we want to continue moving through the neighborhood, finding other areas that could benefit from greening and landscaping."

Rita Vaidya, one of the members of the ABNNF and also the Friends of the Gardner, a group of school parents and neighbors, referred to the school's playground as like a yard for her family.

"We want to be nice and make it more welcoming for other families," she said of the group and their current task.

Another meeting of the ABNNF and the playground project is in the process of being scheduled for an upcoming date. The CityRoots project consultant on Saturday was Karen Chaffee.

Neighbors spruce up Everett Street with greenery

By Ken Howard, Correspondent

Allston/Brighton TAB - <http://www.wickedlocal.com/allston/archive/x1727388116/Neighbors-spruce-up-Everett-Street-with-greenery>

Wed Aug 06, 2008

Allston-Brighton - When Allston residents ran out of water this weekend, 5-year-old Levi Mattison came to the rescue, ready to navigate his red wagon to the nearest faucet and fill several 5-gallon buckets.

“[For] filling up the water, you have to be strong,” said Mattison, adjusting his Red Sox cap backwards.

Mattison was one of the volunteers who met with the Allston-Brighton North Neighbors’ Forum on Aug. 2 and 3 to plant trees and bushes along Everett Street between Lincoln and Adamson streets.

While bringing the wagon back to the site, Mattison said, “I pull [the wagon] and then we get to [a neighbor’s] house, we fill it up, and then a grownup pulls it back while me or a kid pushes.”

Among his duties at the tree-planting event, one of his major contributions was “helping get rid of the lemonade,” he said.

It’s great that roughly a dozen people can come out on a Saturday to make this site more beautiful and create a safer place for people to walk past and enjoy, said Levi’s father, Harry Mattison, an active member of the neighborhood group. “Trees are of community good for everyone.”

“This is a site that’s been pretty neglected,” said Mattison. “There are these sort of bands, these slivers and patches, of the neighborhood that have gone neglected for too long, and [it’s] too easy to forget they are there.”

The neighborhood group was awarded a \$2,500 CityRoots grant by the Urban Ecology Institute to cover the costs of supplies. The group also provided a community forester and a consulting landscape architect to help plan the event.

“The program is designed to help out with a lot of areas,” said Tim Porter, the community forester hired for the task. “The planting helps improve air quality; also there’s an aspect of the process to build neighborhood unity and to introduce as many stakeholders and all the diverse groups of people in the neighborhood to one another.”

Decked out in dirt clot-hiking boots and a moist polo, Porter planted a red maple tree weighing roughly 300 pounds, with the help of three volunteers. The group also planted red buds, cherry, service berry and maple trees, along with a pine tree.

Porter said Mahoney’s Garden Center on 449 Western Ave. gave the group a 50 percent discount on supplies, Shaw’s Supermarket provided refreshments and Harvard University contributed to the project by clearing the tree stumps and weeds that plagued the area.

“I think this is an example of how Harvard and the community have worked well together over the years, and we think it’s terrific the space will be cleaned up and made more attractive,” said Kevin McCluskey, senior director of community relations at Harvard University, in a phone interview.

But for Chris Wagner, a volunteer from Allston who works as an environmental consultant, improving the environment is an everyday commitment.

“This is right up my alley,” he said, after opening a bag of compost barehanded.

It was impressive to see the community relying heavily on plants native to the New England area, he said.

“You don’t need to get something from a far-away land; you can find stuff that grows locally that’s going to be well suited to the conditions that you’re planting,” said Wagner.



From left, Levi Mattison, Chris Wagner and Ryan Bunck help plant trees along Everett Street. The Allston Brighton North Neighbors Forum received a grant from the Urban Ecology Institute for the project.