Can the efforts at Magazine Beach be seen as a model for other sorts of projects around the river? Where else can we apply these lessons?

Cathie Zusy presents on Magazine Beach:

Magazine Beach is a fifteen-acre park on the banks of the Charles River. The focal point for park is the 1818 powder magazine, which was initially erected to store gun powder for ships in Boston Harbor.

The Neighborhood Association became involved with the park in November 2010, working with the Department of Conservation and Recreation to make improvements. A survey of park users revealed their top priorities for restoration include a new play structure and new wading pool or water feature.

Restoration progress as of 2013 includes fixed benches, pruned vegetation, and graffiti removal. The Magazine was emptied and given a temporary rubber roof and a historic structure report is almost completed.

In 2014 DCR will match Cambridge Neighborhood Association funds to fix the Magazine roof and add new doors, windows and security lighting.

Why do we need to involve artists at Magazine Beach? Artists can help enhance the aesthetic of Magazine Beach including the view, which is more industrial than scenic and art will help reactivate the space. Over the past two years there have been events and celebrations to bring people to the park to help make them more aware of the potential of the area, as well as to celebrate the idea of moving forward with the park. In 2014 another celebration is planned, tentatively in the fall, to celebrate the new doors and windows. ArtForming has offered to do an art installation, but that has not yet been approved.

Evan Hines presents on the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR):

The DCR is one of approximately seven agencies that report to the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The DCR is responsible for approximately 450 acres across the commonwealth, covering parks, park facilities, watershed, trails, drinking water, beaches, playgrounds, sports facilities, bike trails, islands, golf courses and infrastructure such as street lights, roads, damns and piers. Because of the breadth of the department, allocating resources for maintaining properties can be challenging for the agency.
The second phase of the Magazine Beach restoration will include restoring the riverbank, paving pathways, installing site furnishings, installing a water play area and playground, removing excess pavement, fixing traffic flow issues, improving parking and drop off areas near the swimming pool, and fencing concerns as well as some vegetation concerns.

The Magazine Beach Restoration project has consisted of about 20 public meetings regarding restoration of property and the total project cost has been approximately $4,500,000. An estimated $2,000,000 is needed to complete the work.

In Boston there are agreements with several companies/organizations to help sponsor the maintenance of certain aspects of city (Children’s Hospital sponsors the playground in Jackson Square). The DCR believes that sponsors may be willing to work with the Magazine Beach area, and anticipates sending out a press release asking for sponsors to partner with the DCR. There would be outlined parameters for the sponsorship, and the hope is that sending out a solicitation may attract corporations or non-profits that would be willing to work with the agency.

**Rob Trumbour presents on past installation at Magazine Beach:**

N-Gon an architecture and sound installation was installed in the Powder House at Magazine Beach in June of 2013. The installation was designed by ArtForming in collaboration with composer and musician Jon Sakata.

Two points to make:
- Art connects people to place
- Collective ownership should overcome authorship in a collaborative process.

Also important to note that working in a public place is different than in a gallery, and there needs to be an advocate for the artist’s perspective. We need to make public art for the meaningful connections.

**Renata von Tscharner presents on the Charles River Conservancy and the possibility of a Bike Power Project:**

The Charles River is 80 miles, with 20 miles of shoreline or urban parkland in proximity to 300,000 residents and 400,000 workers. The mission of the Conservancy is to make these urban parklands more active, attractive and accessible. There are many places along the Charles where art could happen and where activities already do happen. Examples include:

- The BU boathouse
- MIT sailing pavilion
- Longfellow Bridge
There is a bike path connecting all of these places where art can happen and there are already twenty Hubway stations near the Charles River. The Charles is about longitudinal movement and enjoyment.

A human powered bike art project could bring people to the river and engage and educate people. This would be a project about creating power, movement, play, exercise and the environment. There are already many examples of projects like this.

Could we do something like this? How could a bike art project work? Are the bikes themselves art or just what the bike generates?

Next Steps: Project Name, ideas for locations, ideas for artistic elements, ideas for partners.

Contact: crc@thecharles.org

Discussion:

Based on Evans Hines laying DCR’s responsibilities, how do we begin?

- One possibility: we start piloting project ideas on Magazine Beach. What if the resources at DCR and community-based resources were applied to the area: what could happen? The riverfront could become the highlight of the river. How can we be creative in overcoming obstacles?
- Focus on the piloting and a few key areas on the Charles River corridor, where art can begin to ripple just beyond that one point. Identify those potential sites besides Magazine Beach. Get people engaged in the idea of playing with art. The bike art project is great as a way of engaging the public; without the public it will be difficult to accomplish anything.

Trying to engage in partnerships with corporations and universities, there are always issues, until there is agreement that this restoration and inclusion of art is important there will always be obstacles.

Concerns about the idea of piloting:

- Magazine Beach is a fraction of what the DCR is responsible for. If we talk about piloting how much time can DCR really spend on meeting about this one small place?
- Rather than having DCR approve every one-time installation, we could find an umbrella organization/individual to take on the Powder House and let them run the many pilots under their umbrella, within parameters of DNC. They can see what works and we can learn from that.
Legislation has been introduced enabling the Department of Conservation Management to lease real Property.

- This would allow the 1818 Powder Magazine to go under DCR’s Historic Curatorship Program, giving DCR the option of leasing out the structure to a “curator”/3rd party, in exchange for their converting it to its next use.
- If the Powder Magazine does not end up on the list, there may be other ways the Historic Curatorship program could help. Possibly lease the Magazine out for a shorter amount of time (5 years).
- People may be interested in the five year but also wary of what they are taking on in financial duties and structure versus just filling the space.

It is important to note that at the end of this year the Powder House will be stabilized, but it will be seasonal. There is no insulation which means it could probably only be open May – October. Someone needs to come in and work with the interior (no heating, no electricity, no water, no bathrooms) and this is one of the challenges of the space.

Instead of asking a group or person to make a long-term commitment to the space, another idea is that of Popups: e.g., musical performances.

- The space is locked and protected from weather and could have small events. Popups could even become a concept for something more long term.
- Small events like this could help prove the viability and develop a community around it, bringing in funding later.

Some inquiry was posed about whether or not the Charles River Conservancy, or the DCR has a master plan for the Charles River.

- The DCR has a master plan but it involves landscaping not public art.
- Someone could do a public art inventory and master plan for the Charles River. There might already be many arts initiatives happening that someone could document.

Public art requires so many interests to align. Bringing together public, government, private sector and artists.

Attempting to tap into federal or state budget there is going to be pushback because organizations would be going toe to toe with other priorities such as heating, food stamps etc. Also, with the private sector, there is going to be reluctance to be involved unless there is a direct benefit. Sometimes it helps to have a concrete example of something we can do.

There are some examples of funding without obvious advantages for specific groups:

- San Francisco Bay Bridge lit up with LEDs and computer generated images: it’s a two-year installation that costs eight million dollars - privately funded, and absent any corporate logos on the bridge! The benefit to San Francisco has already been enormous (tourisms, restaurants). We need to prove to people that this investment in public art is worth it. How do we prove that to them?
Let’s focus on the power of the people, bring together these disparate factions on one large project to set the tone. That should be the beacon to draw other projects in. This needs to happen on a grassroots level. Referencing back to the bike project idea, there are very active bike people in the Magazine Beach area. They need to be involved.

Another aspect of the Magazine Beach restoration and any projects done along the Charles is the connection back into the neighborhoods.

- Things happen when those neighborhoods take on their piece of the river. The perpendicular connections need to be as strong as the lateral connections. Actual implementation has to come from neighborhoods and communities.
- Events happen, but they are staggered throughout the year. We can’t forget that there needs to be a focus on the area all year to make it viable, and that will come from the neighborhoods.
- We must also understand who is there: who passes through/lives/works in the area. Must make sure that at the end, for each group, there is ownership. Find out what is important to each group, and compile that information to get a sense of the focus/needs/desires.

Cathie Zusy previously pulled together a group of about thirty people, representing various interests, in the fall of 2012 to talk about Cambridge interests along the Cambridge side of Charles and where energy should be focused. It was this group that wanted to make Magazine the priority spot, because DCR had already expressed an interest in it. This is a good model that can be recreated. Forging a partnership with city will be part of that. If an understanding can be negotiated with the DCR and the city about the mission and goals, then private funding may be possible.

In planning the next event with DCR, we need to consider a plan for a new approval system for public art (getting approval and facilitating local artists placing pieces). Considering all the property DNC has, streamlining that process could be a great pilot. Maybe this fall is too soon, but we could use a project as an opportunity to develop a process for public art.

It is also important to think about who the next governor is going to be and how that will affect this project and many processes in the city.