WORKSHOP #34
FOR CHARLES GATE PARK AND BEYOND... ART+DESIGN FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN PUBLIC SPACES

• What role(s) can art – however defined and in whatever medium! – play as an element of inclusive design in public spaces?
• We’ve included the responses by a number of participants to a set of questions posed at the end of the Workshop.
• Check these out – and the notes themselves – for the range of ideas and recommendations generated...and send along your own ideas and responses to info@bostonapp.org!

FROM THE WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

Significant planning is underway to restore Charlesgate Park as the critical link in Frederick Law Olmsted’s single park system -- which includes the Esplanade, the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, and the Emerald Necklace.

There’s a special opportunity here: to incorporate, via art and design, new ideas and identify new opportunities for increasing accessibility and inclusivity in public spaces -- to expand a real-time, working definition of "the public" for the Park, for the neighborhood, for the system itself, and for the city as a whole.

We invite you and all Workshop participants to come up with new responses to the challenges of -- and questions about -- accessibility and inclusivity:
• What kinds of initiatives could/will contribute to accessibility at Charlesgate -- from park bench to pathway? In what ways?
• What role(s) can art -- however defined and in whatever medium! -- play as an element of inclusive design in public spaces?
• What part can you play in meeting those challenges?

Helping to shape the discussion will be Charles Baldwin, of Mass Cultural Council’s Universal Participation Initiative; Dan Adams and Marie Law Adams, of Landing Studio; Parker James, of the Charlesgate Alliance. They’ll provide a set of frames -- historic, art, design, and community engagement -- within which to consider issues of accessibility. Participants will then break into small groups to brainstorm how these frames can be filled in!

NOTES

Community + Wellbeing
1. Public means...
   a. Open to everyone
      i. Define “everyone”
   b. Navigation is important
c. Orientation
  d. What makes people want to engage w/ the space
  e. What’s the experience of entering the space?
  f. Clarifying the space and access
  g. Engage w greater audience
    i. Write down the needs of everyone
  h. Provide opportunities to “get lost” w/ well defined navigation
  i. Provide entrances to all areas
  j. Space for programming
  k. Quiet space
  l. Connection to water
  m. Access with texture: stone dust for paths, rock walls

2. Accessibility
   a. Solar chargers on bencher

3. The role of art
   a. Relaxing structures for seating
   b. Bridge intergenerational gaps
   c. Space for children – Magical
   d. Structures w/ twigs and branches
   e. Call to artists
   f. Change play space yearly?
   g. Food trucks/coffee carts
   h. Engage w/ sound/light
     i. Light-up swings
   i. Fountains/water features/fog art

Nature
1. Get up high
   a. see the whole site
   b. Understand the larger system
   c. Walls obstruct view
2. Map/visual depiction of whole thing
3. It seems “off limits”
   a. Why and how does it communicate “No Entry”/”Forbidden Zone”? 
4. Not all of it is under the Bowker
5. You can’t invite people to touch dirty water – So how should people access the site?
6. Visual access
   a. Son et Lumiere
   b. Chairs gave access
   c. Lighting to highlight
7. Paint overpass to show drivers above what’s happening below!
8. Vegetation hides the site
9. How can art/design support + enhance accessibility?
   a. Lights! It’s under a roof
   b. Design inspired by the shadows of birds
   c. Reflected water: visual

10. Tactile mapping
    a. Feeling where/what you are: sensual

11. Audio: you drive it
    a. When I do X, this lights up, or this sound makes X happen
    b. Sound of highway translated below
    c. Sound of water translated somehow

12. Intentional anticipation of human variety

13. Besides water...
    a. Plantings – New landscapes
    b. Highlight nature – how to make it communicate more
    c. Natural fauna representing a particular area- so a particular natural sign to locate each linear site
       i. Ex. Wetland, marsh, swamp
       ii. These are currently not behaving the way a river should
       iii. Perhaps it is behaving more like a long skinny lake
    d. Pontoon platform
       i. Be near the water without touching it
    e. Telling the story makes it much more...interesting!
       i. Linear....wetland!
    f. Softer!
       i. Softer plants! Just because it’s under an overpass doesn’t mean stuff couldn’t grow...this is not a light issue...

A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS

➢ What were your biggest takeaways from this evening regarding “art+design for accessibility in public spaces?”

1. To think about all levels of accessibility in art from sound, visual, materials, color, texture, space, functional sculpture, intergenerational play areas, etc.
2. Amazed at this history of Charlesgate, and inspired by the energy tonight
3. Need to find ways to activate the space during the years before final completion. Art of many kinds would do this. How to make the mast of the river. I was surprised how little newcomers knew of the history. How to change that.
4. Thinking about the Muddy River [? Illegible] as a lake, non-moving
5. A lot of work
6. I love to think about making ACCESS to all – such a creative thing?
7. The history of Charlesgate and its potentials; participatory process; UP initiative w/Mass Cultural Council – never heard of it before
For a possible follow-up workshop, which topics would you most like to dig into?
1. Continued digging into innovative ways to engage all people through art + creating accessibility. Maybe look at actual case studies of other people/parks how to activate space before the park will be built.
2. Sound, and creating quiet spaces.
3. The river. Which plants for texture. What the “diverse” people really want from them as the source.
4. How to make “a lake” attractive.
5. What art, & how to get it done? Connecting ‘artists’ (writ large) with the space.
6. Performance art; bench-design charrette called “Plan Against Loneliness”; ecological potentials – learning from Alewife.

Any additional thoughts?
1. Thanks!
2. Love the conversation – can we see how these conversations will be incorporated into the final design?
3. Dedicated Earl of Sandwich in Boston Common, formerly an unused structure. Call for food outlet could be realized by converting building already there into a ‘Starbucks’
4. Loved this evening!