



**Concord River Greenway**  
EPA Healthy Community Grant Region I  
Final Report December 2006  
Presented by: Jane Calvin, Executive Director  
**Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust**  
Lowell, Massachusetts

# Creating the Concord River Greenway

## **THE PROJECT – CONCORD RIVER GREENWAY PARK**

The goal of the Concord River Greenway Park is to restore, maintain, and enhance the ecological integrity and social viability of the reach of the Concord River through the City of Lowell. Through neighborhood-based planning for the design of this multi-use pedestrian/bikepath, we have worked to transform the Concord River from what has historically been a boundary between neighborhoods into a shared natural resource that unites these neighborhoods and connects them to broader regional resources that they can access nearby.

### **Project History and Background**

Since the early 1980's community leaders affiliated with the Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust (LPCT) organization have envisioned a green ribbon of parkland along the banks of the scenic and historic reach of the Concord River in Lowell, Massachusetts. In the late 1980's the Conway School of Design worked with the community to develop an early concept plan for the Greenway. At the time, LPCT was just beginning to use the Concord River for professional whitewater kayaking and rafting along its three stretches of Class III and Class IV rapids. Boston's application for the 2008 Olympics even included Lowell as the venue for whitewater kayaking races. Throughout the economic decline of the Lowell area in the late 1980's and into the 1990's, LPCT kept its sights on a vision for expanded access to what we call our "Hidden Jewel", the Concord River. The Concord River is a tributary to the larger Merrimack River, which often overshadows the Concord, even though they have their confluence in downtown Lowell. Both rivers, which attracted Native Americans seasonally for their fishing grounds, have contributed to why Lowell was eventually developed into the first planned industrial city in the country. Today Lowell is an ethnically diverse community of 104,000, including the largest Southeast Asian community outside Long Beach, CA, and growing Brazilian and African communities.

In the late 1990's the Trust found itself with more consistent staffing and stronger community support for its vision. The Hidden Jewel that could barely be seen except when crossing its few bridges was gaining visibility as the public became aware of the beauty of the corridor and the potential for broader appreciation. Thus, since LPCT is the only local organization which focuses its efforts on the Concord River, we are seen in the community as the project's driving force. The project has gained significant momentum since initially receiving funding from the EPA's Livable Communities Program in 2000. Soon after, city planning staff engineered a land transfer which has since leveraged significant construction funding and much needed land protection. Since then, LPCT has worked with several city administrations and with numerous neighborhood groups to coordinate complex land protection and funding strategies to ensure project success.

Outside of LPCT's local vision for increased access to the Concord River, a significant driving force for the project is its connection to other larger regional trail projects. The Concord River Greenway will close a missing 5-mile link in the regional 200-mile Bay Circuit Trail, providing an alternative transportation mode connecting 50 communities around Boston. The Lowell section of the Greenway will include 4.8 miles of pedestrian/bikeways and will connect with Chelmsford's soon to be constructed ten-mile Bruce Freeman Trail (spring 2007 start) at what is known as Crosspoint (near Rt. 495 and Rt. 3 juncture) and Lowell's network of downtown trails.

Through support from the EPA's Healthy Communities Program, amongst other matching funding sources and community partnerships, LP&CT has been able to complete 25% design for the

Greenway and address complex land protection and stewardship needs to ensure the success of the Greenway in perpetuity.

## HEALTHY COMMUNITY GOALS

**The Concord River Greenway Park will create a more “healthy community” in Lowell by facilitating meaningful improvements in the following measurable ways:**

### **Preserving and Restoring Urban Natural Resources and Open/Green Space**

The Trail will become integral to connecting several of Lowell’s largest open spaces, including the Lowell Cemetery, Shedd Park, Rogers Fort Hill Park, the Edson Cemetery, and pathways and walkways, such as the Mile of Mills Riverwalk, developed in downtown Lowell by the Lowell National Historical Park. Land acquisition and easements for the Trail will target abandoned railroad right-of-ways, riparian tax title properties, and land threatened by industrial development. Areas that were considered a blight will be revitalized and have a new purpose, providing recreational opportunities and some much needed green space in this dense city. The Concord River Greenway Park will open up the river for protected access, eliminate threats of future industrial development along its banks, and heighten awareness in a city that often seems to think only one river runs through it.

*Since inception of the 25% design phase of this project, design for extension of the Riverwalk along the Merrimack River has begun. This extension will wrap around a dilapidated mill building at the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord Rivers. This final segment of the extension will include a bridge across the Concord River to connect to the Concord River Greenway, closing an important gap in the existing and planned network of trails in downtown Lowell. The inclusion of the bridge in the extension of the Riverwalk would not have happened had the Concord River Greenway not been so far along in its design phase.*

- Upon completion of the Greenway, the project will directly contribute to the conversion of 4 acres of tax title properties into permanently protected conservation land, 2 acres of Brownfields development, 9 acres of easements, and the acquisition of 8 acres for permanent protection for the Greenway. This will help reduce further development and degradation of the riparian ecosystem.
  - *Through the project’s 25% design phase, the Greenway has contributed to the conversion of 6.83 acres of tax title properties; 2 acres of Brownfield remediation; and 3.17 acres of land acquired for conservation in perpetuity along the Lowell reach of the Concord River.*
- The Concord River will be opened up for public access. Current public access is limited to the 8,000 sq. ft. Jollene Dubner Park on the opposite side of the river and a small unimproved upstream canoe/kayak launch.
  - *Since the inception of the 25% design phase, 3.17 acres have been acquired for public access and the canoe launch has been improved into a significant city neighborhood asset.*
- Water quality will increase due to the elimination of current dumping sites on the river that annually contribute an estimated 40 tons of pollution into the river.
  - *Multiple annual clean-ups by numerous partners have visibly improved the aesthetic quality of the river experience, eliminating unsightly tires, bikes, shopping carts, and couches within the river’s area of flow. This also has removed potential sources of pollution*

## Smart Growth & Children's Health

The Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust's mission was founded in a strong belief that enhancing the quality of life in our urban areas is an important means of contributing to the protection of more rural or suburban areas. One of the most essential smart growth strategies is to curb urban sprawl by making urban core areas more livable and attractive. The trail will also contribute positively to the revitalization of low and moderate income neighborhoods through which it passes. As of 2004, 27% of all school age children in Lowell live in poverty, limiting opportunities for accessing recreational areas, other than what open space is within their neighborhood. Interestingly, children from families with low-moderate incomes are more likely to use public parks than families with higher incomes (*The City of Lowell: Open Space Initiative Survey*, Nov. 2002). In addition, according to this same study, non-Caucasian residents (more representative of the Greenway's abutting neighborhoods) were more supportive of developing larger, city-wide parks. By increasing the livability of the neighborhoods abutting the trail, owner occupied residences will increase providing further stability to the area and provide direct reduction in development pressures on Lowell suburbs. Furthermore, children will have healthier places to play nearby.

- Children's respiratory health will be improved by providing a safe, environmentally healthy route to schools and play areas via the Greenway.
- Lowell's children will have more healthy places to recreate by preserving open space in neighborhoods with minimal park areas and by redeveloping Brownfields and abandoned railroad rights-of-way.
- **Researching "need for open space"**

Eastern Massachusetts has historically been classified as serious non-attainment for ozone. In addition, the City of Lowell is classified as non-attainment for carbon monoxide. With this non-attainment classification, the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments require that the Commonwealth reduce its emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOx), the two precursors to ozone formation. The City of Lowell must also reduce its emissions of carbon monoxide. The Concord River Greenway Park will contribute to the reduction of emissions by reducing daily vehicle miles of travel (VMT) during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. As this facility will ultimately link with the Bruce Freeman Bike Path (a ten mile regional facility connecting three communities [under construction spring 2007]) and will also provide access to the Lowell central business district, it is very conservatively estimated that 100 individuals will utilize this trail for work or other utilitarian purposes (avg, trip length of 3 miles each way over seasonal 120 work days \* 100 people = 72,000 VMT). Using Mobile 5 emission factors the air quality benefits are calculated as follows: 0.64 kg VOC per summer day; 0.849 kg NOx per summer day. Improving outdoor air quality will contribute to the reduction of asthma in children.

- Daily vehicle miles of travel (VMT) will be reduced by 72,000 miles, providing air quality benefits of 0.64 kg VOCs/summer day and 0.849 kg NOx/summer day (Lowell is currently in non-attainment status).

## **Urban Transportation and Redevelopment**

Lowell is in the process of developing an intermodal transportation system to improve transportation in the city and the region. Pedestrian and bicycle systems are a major component of those efforts and will help relieve congestion and reduce air and water pollution. As an important component of this system, the Greenway will provide commuters, visitors and residents with transportation alternatives as well as open space and recreational opportunities. Once complete, the Greenway will act as a regional, non-motorized hub that will bring people into and through the city from the surrounding region, and provide links from key attractions in the city, such as the Lowell National and State Parks, out to other attractions in the surrounding area. The Trail will connect a major employment center (Crosspoint), a large shopping plaza, several residential neighborhoods, and downtown parks, hotels, and restaurants, contributing significantly to the local economy.

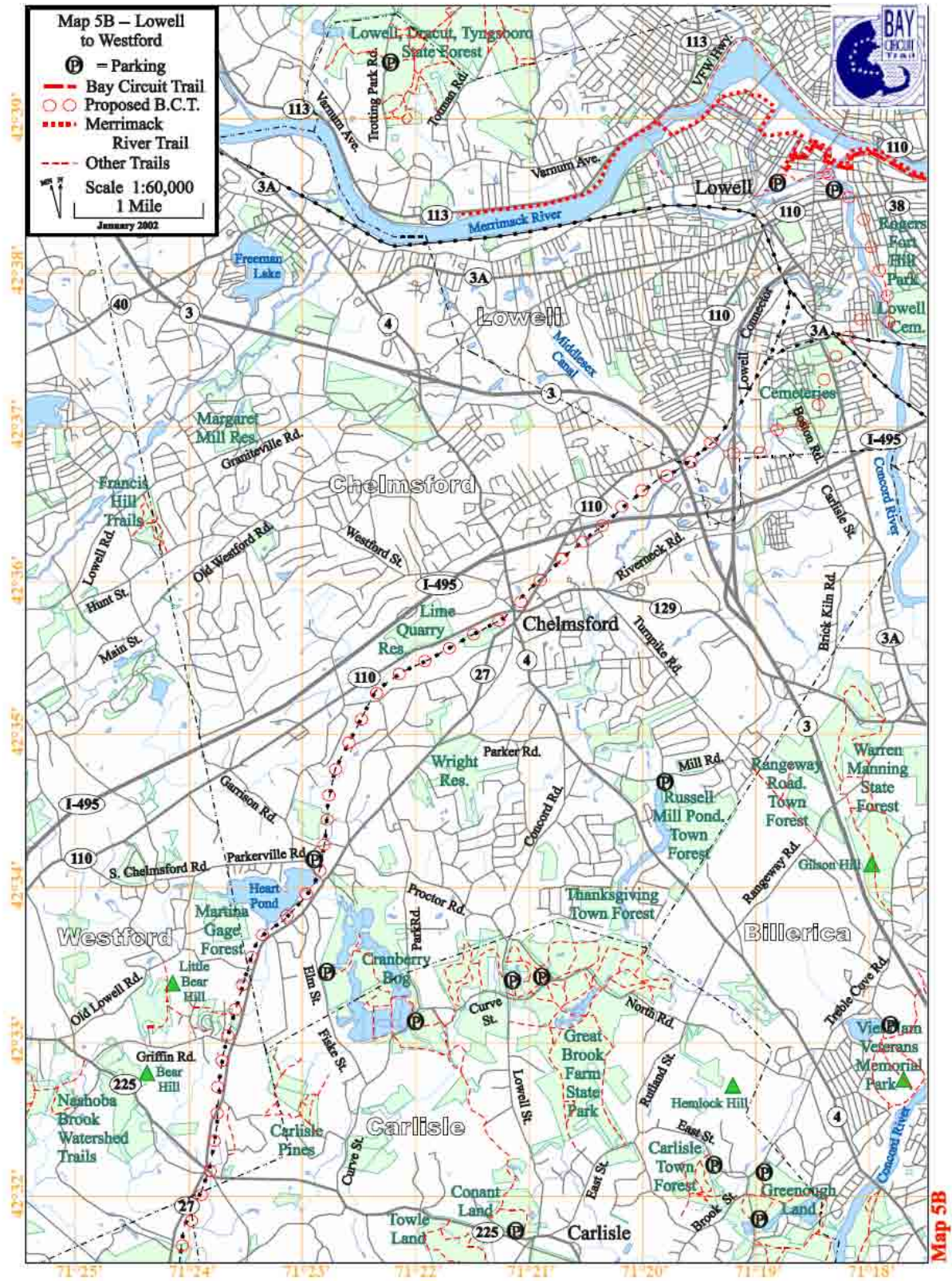
Prior to completion of 25% design, the Greenway had already been included (conceptually) in several regional transportation and recreation plans, including the Northern Middlesex Council of Government's (NMCOG) Regional Transportation Plan for the Northern Middlesex Area. As we approach final design, we hope that the Greenway will receive elevated prominence (moving it from concept to reality) as plans are revised and updated, including NMCOG's "Greater Lowell Regional Open Space Strategy" and regional growth plan, entitled "2020 Vision: Planning for Growth in the Northern Middlesex Region". As per the Commonwealth Connection (Northeastern Massachusetts section), the Concord River Greenway would complete one of the remaining gaps in the Bay Circuit Trail (**see Map I**) which has "been targeted for protection in order to complete the trail, protect its continuity and make it fully accessible to the public." The City of Lowell Open Space Plan, and the recently-completed Master Plan both include this project as one of the few recreational opportunities still available for development in the City. Within the last few months the project has gained recognition within the MA Greenways Plan and the Massachusetts Bicycle Plan, neither of which had included the Greenway until now.



### ***Urban Transportation and Redevelopment***

- Land acquisition and easements for the Greenway will target abandoned railroad right-of-ways, riparian tax title properties and land threatened by industrial development, securing vital open space and reducing impervious surfaces.
  - *While the design phase has determined that the Greenway will be a low maintenance bituminous concrete surface (adding impervious surface), the intense community outreach for the Greenway has resulted in the elimination of a parking lot expansion along the Greenway route, as well as the planned creation of more park land within the Davidson Street lot, currently a vast parking lot at the northerly end of the route.*
- Providing quality recreational experiences close to home eliminates the need for people to drive long distances to enjoy recreational activities.
- By increasing the livability of the three neighborhoods abutting the trail, owner occupied residences will increase providing further stability to the area and the direct reduction in development pressures on Lowell's suburbs.
  - *The Greenway concept has already attracted the planned development of 3 significant condominium developments in converted mills along the route. Planners and designers of these projects are actively using our 25% design plans to recruit investment in their properties.*
- Increased commuter use of the bikepath will contribute to the reduction in VMT (see above).
- The Greenway meets goals in several regional transportation plans (see below).

Map I: Bay Circuit Trail And Connection To Concord River Greenway.



Source: Bay Circuit Alliance ([www.baycircuit.org](http://www.baycircuit.org)). Top right corner (east bank of Concord River) indicates route of Concord River Greenway.

## **CREATIVE FUNDING MECHANISMS**

### **Sale of Other Developable Conservation Land Creates Funding Base for Greenway**

The Trust's approach to funding the Concord River Greenway has been somewhat serendipitous and somewhat strategic. In early 2001, the Trust was approached by staff from the City of Lowell's Planning & Development office regarding the sale of some developable land on the other side of the city that was currently conservation land (1095 Westford Street). City staff suggested that the proceeds from the sale of the land would be dedicated to the Concord River Greenway, still more of a concept to us than an accomplishable goal. Within Massachusetts the transfer of such properties would fall under Article 97 under the MA General Laws. Transfer of conservation land requires votes from the local Conservation Commission, the City Council and then a two-thirds vote of the state legislature. At the time that the City staff approached us there was heavy lobbying in MA by the environmental community to make "Article 97" transfers much more difficult, as they tended to pass easily in the legislature.

In the end this "Article 97" transfer of one acre from conservation land to a commercial development helped protect an additional 10.83 acres immediately abutting the acre sold for development and another critical 3.17 acre parcel for the Greenway (formerly known as 'Guilford RR', see Land Protection Issues map below). This was an interesting transaction considering that the Westford Street parcel and the Greenway parcel are essentially at opposite ends of the city. 1095 Westford Street had been part of a larger parcel of land that was set aside for well head protection, prior to the City's current source of water, the Merrimack River. This land owned by the Water Department did not have any level of protection, other than being largely wet. At the time 1095 Westford Street fronted on a major thoroughfare, abutting existing businesses. The City chose to subdivide the parcel, selling the front acre, leaving 5.27 acres in the rear of the property, which were transferred to city conservation land designation. To "sweeten" the deal when presenting the transfer and sale of the property to the Conservation Commission, the City set aside an additional 5.55 acres of Water Department land as conservation land.

Initially, the Conservation Commission voted down the transfer, but asked the Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust to speak on behalf of the project at a later meeting. As a result of our advocating for the transfer the Conservation Commission did vote in favor of the transfer, followed by support from the City Council (unanimous) and the state legislature (8/21/2001). When the first responses to the request for proposals were received the highest bid was for \$392,000. After several years and several failed bidding processes, the final bid came in at \$875,500, thanks to a surge in the real estate market. This sale was finalized March 2006 providing a base of funding much needed for the estimated \$3.4 million completion of the Concord River Greenway project.

### **Highway Expansion Grant Allows Purchase of Gateway Greenway Parcel**

As part of MassHighway's mitigation package for the widening of nearby Route 3, state environmental officials established a grant program intended to compensate for the loss of wetlands that would occur within the highway's seven abutting communities, including Lowell. In partnership with the City of Lowell Planning & Development office, the Trust worked to document the environmental assets of a critical 3.17 acre parcel of tax title land. The parcel had originally been purchased as water rights access along the Concord River by a former mill owner. Due to this individual's not paying taxes on the property, the city decided on the approach of taking the parcel by eminent domain to protect this key section of the Greenway. Our first obstacle was proving that Guilford Railway which had once owned this spur line did not have claim on the property, which they adamantly insisted upon (this claim was settled by the city by sending Guilford a check for \$1, acknowledging their perceived 'stake' in the land, but that our research had indicated otherwise). Through researching title to the property, we later found out that the former mill owner had died within the last few years, no one had settled his probate, nor his

funeral costs. Further research found that the abutting cemetery owned a sliver of the land to be taken. Another interesting outcome of the title research was that we found that there was no easement for the power lines that traversed the entire length of the narrow parcel. A grant for \$137,600 provided the bulk of the \$160,000 appraisal price, with the remaining funds coming from the sale of 1095 Westford Street (noted above).

**Map II: Land Protection Along Concord River Greenway Route**



Source: Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, Inc.



## **LAND PROTECTION & ACCESS FOR THE GREENWAY**

Land protection (see Map II above) and access for the Concord River Greenway is an ongoing process, but nonetheless we have made significant progress, thanks to support from the city's Planning and Development office. Land protection in urban communities is particularly challenging because of the complexity of the land transactions, the complex chain and layers of ownership, and the high cost of relatively small parcels.

### **Brownfield Remediation**

Concurrent with our beginning the design phase of the Greenway, the City of Lowell began remediation of the city owned Davidson Street parking lot, which overlooks the Concord River. Contamination on the site included a "purple ooze" of unknown chemicals. This is the only known Brownfield along the immediate route of the Greenway. In the midst of our public outreach walks, large storage containers were on site removing the contaminants in the two acre site. Remediation of the site has leveraged interest by the state in developing a courthouse facility on the site which would also enhance usage of the Greenway.

On the opposite side of the river, near the southern end of the Greenway route, lies Centennial Island (noted below). The northern end of this island has a hydroelectric facility on it. The southern end has a potentially contaminated area that might be considered a Brownfield site. We anticipate that the combination of the development of the Greenway and plans for condominium units within the island's mill structure would help leverage resources to research and mitigate this potential Brownfield site.

### **National Grid Easement Swap**

Throughout the design of the Greenway, National Grid has been involved in reviewing plans and providing access to their property. Within the National Grid property, the Greenway will run along the upper bank of the Concord and include several scenic overlooks. This is geologically the most interesting section of the river with steep banks overshadowing where the river flows at its narrowest point. At lower water levels, it's possible to walk the banks of the river and see a very unique river birch natural community, highlighted in our Audubon Eco-inventory (see stewardship section).

National Grid owns power lines throughout the length of the eastern bank of the River, along the entire stretch of the Greenway. Liability is of course a significant concern of all parties since this property is considered a substation through which high voltage passes. This property will be one of our most significant obstacles in terms of providing safe access without obtrusive fencing.

Along the length of the property noted as "Guilford RR" in Map II above lie National Grid power lines for which we have discovered they do not hold an easement. In negotiations for access through the National Grid property, we hope to 'swap' access rights for their much needed easement through the former Guilford property

### **Tax Title parcels – transferred for further protection**

Creative land protection in cities entails keeping an eye on tax title properties. These are properties that are held for payments due on back taxes. Often these properties can be stuck in legal proceedings for years while probate cases are settled. Once settled, these properties become municipal property. Along the Concord River a former mill owner acquired much land for water rights access. In October 2001, the City laid the groundwork for the protection of 12 such parcels of land along the Concord River. Two of these parcels abut the Concord River Greenway, others protect parcels on the opposite side of the river. Additional acreage further upstream was set aside to create a much needed canoe launch along a more quiet stretch of the Concord. The City Council voted unanimously to protect the 12 parcels, totaling 6.83 acres, abutting the Concord River. Another 6 parcels are currently awaiting closure of tax title proceedings before further protection.

### Centennial Island

During design, we were faced with significant challenges of access to the Bradford Industries property. Their business configuration would require our addressing liability concerns regarding large 18-wheel trucks that make continual deliveries to the narrow site. The Greenway would be required to remain behind their parking lot guardrail as a boardwalk over the river bank, causing considerable ecological impact to the riparian corridor. Without being able to impact their operations, we would also face considerable construction costs. As an alternative, late in the process, we have begun to investigate an alternative plan of crossing over the river onto Centennial Island and back again to a wider portion of the Bradford Industries property. While we have been able to include this alternative in the 25% design, we have not been able to initiate access agreements, especially with the Centennial Island Hydroelectric plant owner. Given that we have already drafted easements with him regarding our rafting program, we're confident that such discussions will be well received. Furthermore, the developers of a mill on the island are anxious to have the Greenway cross over. Beyond getting access agreements, we have received approval from the City to use the bridge alternative when seeking responses to an RFP for final design, even though the bridges will add \$800,000 to the final construction costs. The best outcome of using this alternative is opening up the Greenway for access on the western bank of the river, expanding usage in the Back Central and South Lowell neighborhoods, strong partners throughout this project.

### Davidson Street Lot Flooding

May 2006 saw record flooding on the Concord River exceeding the 100 year flood plain. The Davidson Street lot was flooded in its entirety with several feet of water. While the flooding brought to life design concerns about building in the floodplain, the river exhibited its natural behavior reawakening appreciation for this typically hidden natural resource. Knowing that the site lies within the 100 year flood plain, design for the Greenway has always integrated materials that can withstand flooding in this area.

### **STEWARDSHIP - Multiple layers of information engage the community**

A river corridor engages many people for different reasons, especially one that runs through a city. Historically, Henry David Thoreau is famously quoted as saying that he did not "care to loiter" in this area of the city:

"But now at length we heard this staid and primitive river rushing to her fall, like any rill. We here left its channel, just above the Billerica Falls, and entered the canal, which runs, or rather is conducted, six miles through the woods, to the Merrimack, at Middlesex, and as **we did not care to loiter in this part of our voyage**, while one ran along the tow-path drawing the boat by a cord, the other kept it off the shore with a pole, so that we accomplished the whole distance in little more than an hour." Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849).

While Thoreau may have portaged around the City of Lowell to avoid the industrialized Concord River, it helped launch an LP&CT white water kayak program, which we named "Thoreau's Portage". While some are interested in the geology that creates a 50 foot drop and 3 sets of Class III and Class IV rapids in Lowell (which contrasts with the remainder of the river, coming from historic Concord, Massachusetts where the American Revolution was fought on the Old North Bridge, which barely drops a foot), others are interested in industrial history of the corridor, the Native American activity at the confluence with the Merrimack, or the ecology of the corridor.

Thus, the route for the Concord River Greenway is attractive to many for diverse reasons. LP&CT has tried to capitalize on these interests by researching multiple layers of information:

- In December 2002, LP&CT completed an **eco-inventory** of the Lowell reach of the Concord River in cooperation with Mass Audubon's Ecological Extension Service. Information about interesting migratory ducks, damselflies, and invasive species helps us interpret the corridor for visitors. [http://www.lowelllandtrust.org/LPCT\\_Concord\\_River\\_Species\\_Inventory.pdf](http://www.lowelllandtrust.org/LPCT_Concord_River_Species_Inventory.pdf)
- In fall 2004, LP&CT updated our **parcel inventory** of Concord River abutters to provide detailed information for our land protection efforts. In December 2005, LP&CT published a brochure about the **land use history** of the corridor [http://www.lowelllandtrust.org/crg\\_history\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.lowelllandtrust.org/crg_history_brochure.pdf) . We are now in the early phases of creating a book, website, and curriculum to expand the research conducted by UMass Lowell professor, Dr. Chad Montrie, who was honored to receive a 'Scholar in the City' award for his work with us on this project.
- During the spring of 2006, LP&CT began work with an artist team, Mags Harries & Lajos Heder (<http://www.harriesheder.com/>) to develop a **public art plan** for the Greenway (draft available December 2006).



Viewing platform over Massic Falls, looking over the Centennial Island along property formerly known as Guilford RR land, now a key gateway to the Greenway. Public art plan image: Harries/Heder Collaborative.

The intent of the public art plan is to integrate the multiple layers of information about the Greenway into a document that provides a unique aesthetic flair to the Greenway project. Broad community input was gathered through both indoor and outdoor 'open houses'. Neighborhood residents, city planners, representatives from the local Native American organization, and LP&CT members attended sessions to flag important scenic vistas along the Greenway route and note areas of important ecology or land use history. During final design of the Greenway we hope to integrate many of the artist team's design elements.



Conceptual drawing of bicyclist riding the Greenway along the edge of what currently known as the Davidson Street lot (Concord River to right). Public art plan image: Harries/Heder Collaborative.

- Signage: In effort to pull together the multiple layers of information about the Concord River Greenway route, LP&CT has received its second grant from the MA Foundation for the Humanities to work with a local committee to create and install signage along the route. Ideally, the timing of this group's work will coincide with final design, and possibly construction. At minimum, the signage will create early interest in the Greenway as we work toward actual construction.

In addition to these 'layers' of information, the Trust has continued to offer programming on the Concord River which enables us to expand our outreach and engage new partners. Our whitewater rafting program is held each spring (April and May weekends), which fosters a continued relationship with abutting businesses, such as Bradford Industries. While our 2006 season was all but entirely cancelled by severe local flooding, we hope that 2007 enables a return to bringing several hundred people to see Lowell from the banks of the Concord River while enjoying a rafting trip through our unique and scenic Class III and IV rapids. The Alewife Restoration Program has continued with transfers in both 2005 and 2006 of 2,000-2,500 spawning alewife to the upper reaches of the watershed. We continue monitoring alewife returns from the fish ladder at the southern end of Centennial Island.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Lowell is a city of great partnerships – and a true culture of partnering on complex projects, such as the Concord River Greenway. While we have certainly engaged the traditional neighborhood groups and abutters, we have also found unexpected partners. During the second year of our grant the Greenway was chosen for assistance from the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. We are now entering our third year of working RTCA staff, whom have been most helpful in helping coordinate the artists’ work on the public art plan. Other unexpected partners have included a condominium development uphill from the Greenway, condo developers along the Greenway route, a restaurant owner, private elderly housing, and a hydroelectric plant owner (on Centennial Island opposite the Greenway). As the project moves forward toward final design we would like to expand outreach to MAPS (MA Association of Portuguese Speakers), which has an office in the Back Central neighborhood, the Lowell Cemetery, newly emerging neighborhood leadership (due to recent neighborhood leadership turnover), and new city leadership. We are now working with our third city administration, but find that this partnership with the city will probably be our strongest. We’re fortunate that the new City Manager helped initiate the Bruce Freeman Trail 23 years ago, a trail which will be one of our strongest regional connections with the Greenway.

### **Cooperating partners in the effort to create the Concord River Greenway Park include (not including funders):**

Back Central Neighborhood Association  
Bay Circuit Alliance  
Belvidere Neighborhood Association  
Bradford Industries  
Centennial Island Hydroelectric  
City of Lowell  
Friends of Rogers Fort Hill Park  
LDFC/Lowell Plan  
Lowell Cemetery  
Lowell Heritage Partnership  
Lowell Heritage State Park  
Lowell National Historical Park  
Lowell: The Flowering City  
MA DCR Recreational Trails Program  
Massachusetts Riverways Program  
Northern Middlesex Council of Governments  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance/NPS  
Riverside Community Council  
Sacred Heart Neighborhood Improvement Group  
Trust for Public Land  
U.S. EPA New England

## **FUNDING SUPPORT**

Throughout our work on the Concord River Greenway, the Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust has seen itself as a catalyst in leveraging resources and community support for the project. To that end we have sought grants to support our work facilitating the project and for actual design. Over the past two years, major support for the Concord River Greenway has come from the EPA's Healthy Communities Grant Program. The support of LP&CT's 900+ membership from throughout the region solidifies support for the project. Ongoing support for Trust's work to integrate broad community support for the project, negotiate land protection and property access agreements, provide design oversight/input, and long-term stewardship is still a vital need. It is our hope that perpetual care for the Greenway will be provided through income from an endowment, easing the burden of the City's already overstretched Parks and Recreation Department. All of this still begs the question of funding the actual construction of the Greenway, even having secured \$875,500 early on in the process.

### **Other grant support has been provided by:**

3M

Cabot Family Charitable Trust

The Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust

EnTrust

EPA Livable Communities Grant Program

Greater Lowell Community Foundation

The Greeley Foundation for Peace and Justice

Wharton

Green Leaf Foundation

Massachusetts Cultural Council

Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities

Massachusetts DCR Recreational Trails Program

New England Foundation for the Arts

The Theodore Edson Parker Foundation

Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center

## LESSONS LEARNED

In seeking to complete 25% design of the Concord River Greenway, LP&CT and our many community partners, especially the City of Lowell, had to address complex community needs, multi-layered land protection issues, and long term stewardship, while at the same time offering outreach programs to leverage broad public input. Just as students learn through a variety of mechanisms (some by reading charts, some by reading text), we have found that outreach in a diverse community like Lowell requires constant **visibility** and offering a variety of means for the public to learn about and approach the project. Through public art, indoor design open houses, outdoor Greenway walks, river clean-ups, celebrations, and numerous newsletter articles and newspaper articles we have attracted broad public support for this important project.

Constant visibility in the community won't 'buy' public support without the **credibility** of leadership, follow-through, and commitment to a project of this scope. Our community partners have seen us succeed at programs as diverse as white water rafting, alewife restoration, complex land protection transactions, and park creation.

Furthermore, we discovered that what we perceived of as our **toughest obstacles** often turn out to surprisingly easy to tackle or overcome. A local restaurant on the route happened to be undergoing remodeling, which caused some hiccups in our schedule because we couldn't access the owners, but in the end resulted in a simple solution to addressing handicap access issues at this property.

Creating the conceptual design for a project as complex as the Concord River Greenway, has required multiple meetings with neighborhood leaders, business owners, city boards, and even the homeless that live along the route. Getting input, strategizing on approach, addressing engineering obstacles, and then going back to the drawing board to negotiate creates a complex process requiring vigilance, compassion, and facilitation skills. Getting to know how a business operates so your project doesn't impact daily operations may mean rerouting your project, but it may also mean an opportunity to create an alternative route (e.g. bridges to Centennial Island) that's more appealing to artists and opens up access to the project to a different neighborhood.