

# Public Space and Climate Resilience *at* Malden River Works

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The [Malden River Works project](#) sought to develop a climate resilient public park by looking at how cities can prepare for climate change with input and leadership from a diverse cross-section of the community. The project proposes several green infrastructure and nature-based solutions behind the City's existing Department of Public Works Building. This includes an elevated, climate and flood resilient greenway, restored riparian ecosystem, permeable paving in the parking lot, and planting about 80 native trees and plants. This project involved numerous partnerships among local organizations and city governments, and created a model for supporting a paid Steering Committee.

*Along with ecological and climate benefits, this project will provide an important community connection along the waterfront.*



**LOCATION**  
Malden, MA

**CLIMATE HAZARD ADDRESSED**

- Increased precipitation
- Rising temperatures
- Extreme weather

**ACTIONS/TECHNIQUES**

- Green stormwater management
- Community engagement

**CO BENEFITS**

- Building social resilience
- Health & quality of life
- Habitat creation

**PROJECT STATUS**

*(as of July, 2022)*  
Design and permitting 50% complete

**SCALE/SIZE**

Site: 5 acres

**COSTS**

\$300,000 (design); \$7.5M (construction est.)

**FUNDING**

\$150,015 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program, grant with \$50,000 in matching funds  
\$100,000 MIT Leventhal Prize with additional in-kind support .

**PROJECT PARTNERS**

City of Malden,  
Malden Redevelopment Authority,  
Friends of the Malden River,  
Mystic River Watershed Association,  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology,  
Landing Studio,  
Horsley Witten Group

## Nature-Based Solutions Spectrum

Nature-based solutions can be used at any scale, and include conservation of existing natural areas such as forests or wetlands of forests; restoration of destroyed or degraded ecosystems; and incorporating nature into the built environment.

CONSERVE EXISTING  
NATURAL AREAS

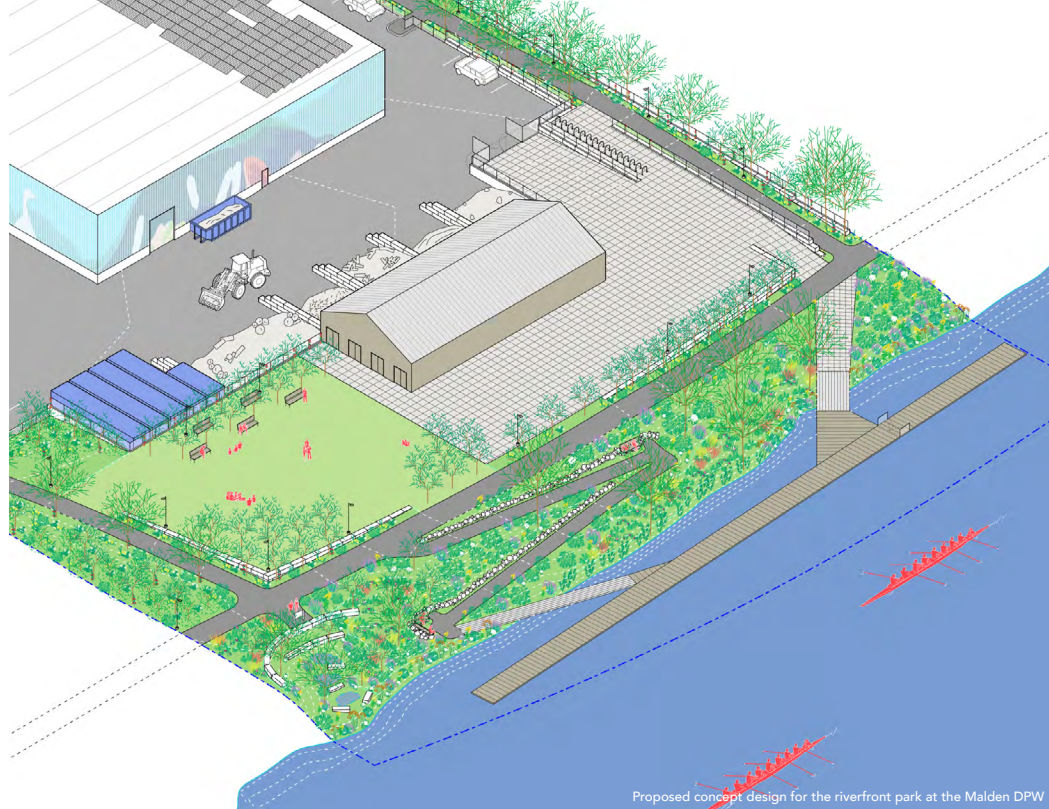
RESTORE OR ENHANCE  
ECOSYSTEMS

INCREASE NATURAL  
ELEMENTS IN THE BUILT  
ENVIRONMENT



Historically, people of color and non-native English speakers have not been included in planning processes within their own neighborhoods. Prior to submitting a grant application, members of the Friends of the Malden River (FoMR) and the City tapped Marcia Manong, the now Steering Committee Chair and Project Team member, to organize a meeting of Malden residents to hear about their opinions and thoughts on the project. This initial buy-in of community leaders then led to the application to the Leventhal City Prize at MIT.

The project had a Steering Committee, composed of 14 community leaders who oversaw the development of the design and led the outreach and engagement portion of the public design process. The Steering Committee provided guidance and direction to the Project Team, set and maintained the team's core values, led the strategic decision-making processes, and managed how the grant funds would be used. Most of the Steering Committee was composed of ten community members, with three City officials and a community environmental advocate. All community representatives received a stipend for sitting on the Steering Committee, not including the City staff members who are serving in this position as part of their job.



In addition to increasing local access to green space, the park design aims to reduce surface flood risk, respond to rising sea levels, and mitigate the urban heat island effect.

There was also a Project Team, which oversaw the gathering and synthesizing of the notes from community meetings, writing and reporting grant applications, analyzing survey results, and designing the technical aspects of the conceptual design. The Project Team received support and direction from the Steering Committee, to ensure that community voices were continuing to lead the process.\*

“Young and old and black and white.  
Now is the time to stand and fight.  
To make these Malden waters stream,  
Let’s build a dynamic neighborhood team.”

Excerpt from “Malden River Works” by Terry Carter | Contained in the published volume, “Brown Skin and the Brave New World: A Poet’s Anthem” (Xulon Press, 2020)

This resource was developed in collaboration with the Mass ECAN-affiliated Nature-Based Solutions work group, written by P. Sheinbaum and edited by E. Gildesgame, H. King, M. Ocana, and G. Rabinkin. ©February 2023.

#### REFERENCES

Catalyzing transformative urban design and planning solutions. (n.d.). Norman B. Leventhal City Prize. from <http://leventhalcityprize.mit.edu/>

Manong, M., Aragon, C., Cline, L., Marsh, E., Norales, R., Akib, S., Le, L., Buck, K., Spetrini, E., Murphy, B., Knox, B., Kaba, K., Christoffersen, A., Garate, M., Law Adams, M., Vandiver, K., Alvarez, X., Sharma, T., Christenson, G., ... Wood, E. (2020). *Malden River Works for Waterfront Equity and Resilience: Concept Design Report*.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [See our other Nature-Based Solutions case studies](#)
- [Mass ECAN Nature Based Solutions Resource](#)
- [Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Case Study](#)