



Belmont Carbon Emissions Down 14%

Belmont Energy Committee Sees More to Do

By Roger Wrubel, Brian Kopperl, and James Booth

According to the Belmont Energy Committee’s most recent inventory, the town’s carbon emissions dropped from 177,000 tons to 150,000 tons per year between 2014 and 2021.

The drop, which measures emissions from gasoline, natural gas, fuel oil, and electricity, results from residents shifting away from home heating oil to other energy sources, driving more fuel-efficient vehicles, and drawing their electricity from a cleaner New England grid.

Except for the shift away from fuel oil, none of these reductions are happening at a pace sufficient to reach zero emissions by 2050.

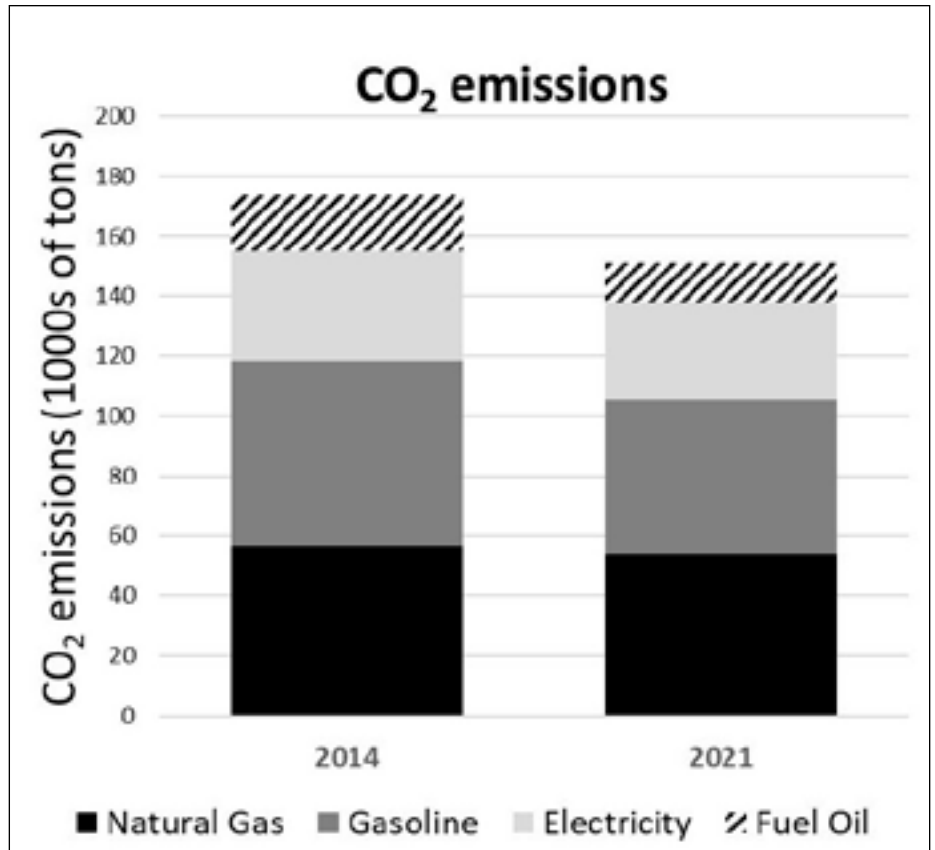
The committee expects larger reductions in vehicle emissions to come with increased market penetration of electric vehicles (EVs).

It also expects the carbon intensity of the New England electricity grid to continue to improve due to the growth in renewables and adherence to statutory requirements.

This leaves natural gas use as the most challenging component of Belmont’s emissions to reduce and one that requires local action. Specifically, the town needs to accelerate the use of heat pumps for home heating.

Incentives for converting to heat pumps

Heat pumps are significantly less expensive for home heating than oil furnaces and are cost-competitive with gas furnaces (see:www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-household-heating-costs). Air-source heat pumps also enjoy the added benefit of replacing fossil fuel emissions in our



housing stock with electric heat (and cooling) powered by increasingly clean energy sources.

Heat pumps provide air conditioning in summer (at no extra installation cost) and achieve up to 230% heating efficiency by drawing ambient heat from the outdoor air. By comparison, new oil furnaces max out at 90% efficiency, while new condensing gas boilers top out at 92% to 95%.

The challenge of converting oil furnaces to heat pumps is primarily a matter of incentives. Unlike gas-heated homes that can tap into zero-interest loans and MassSave incentives of up to \$10,000 for heat pump installation, existing oil heat customers can’t access these incentives.

To address this deficit, the Energy Committee proposed to the Belmont Light Board last winter to create a pilot incentive system to help oil-heated

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Belmont Citizens Forum Inc. is a not-for-profit organization that strives to maintain the small-town atmosphere of Belmont, Massachusetts, by preserving its natural and historical resources, limiting traffic growth, and enhancing pedestrian safety. We do this by keeping residents informed about planning and zoning issues, by participating actively in public hearings, and by organizing forums.

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homes make the change. Other municipal light towns in Massachusetts have similar programs.

New building code will encourage all-electric homes

Another decarbonization tactic is encouraging all new construction to use electricity for all power. At the Energy Committee's urging, the 2023 fall Town Meeting did just that by adopting the Massachusetts Specialized Energy Code for new residential and commercial construction. Effective in Belmont beginning January 1, 2025, this code was drafted by the state's Department of Energy Resources (DOER) to disincentivize fossil fuels in all new construction.

The specialized code strongly favors all-electric homes and electric commercial buildings by exempting them from certain building requirements. For example, if a newly constructed residence is more than 4,000 square feet and uses fossil fuels (for appliances and heating), the code requires the house to generate as much energy as it consumes.

Practically, this means that new large houses must have a large rooftop solar array. Smaller residences and commercial buildings that use fossil fuels must offset that with a solar array unless the roof is largely shaded. In addition, any new residential or commercial building with fossil fuel appliances must be pre-wired for their eventual conversion to electric, encouraging builders to go electric. None of these actions are required for all-electric buildings.

The new code also regulates the subset of new multifamily homes that are four stories or greater, which, as of 2025, will be required to meet passive house standards set by national and international passive house organizations (www.phius.org and passivehouse.com). Passive house construction reduces heating and cooling loads through significant insulation, air sealing, and high-quality windows and doors.

Making Belmont a climate leader community

To make the town eligible to receive state-funded grants for decarbonization improvements, the Energy Committee will recommend to the Select Board that Belmont pursue designation as a "Climate Leader Community."

This new DOER program, which has an application deadline of December 31, 2024, is an expansion of DOER's long-running Green Communities Program. Belmont became a Green Community in 2014, which made it eligible for grants to improve the energy efficiency of municipal buildings. In the early years, the town received \$401,850 in sustainability grants, but Belmont has not applied for any grants since 2017. According to the town administrator, Belmont lacks the staff to manage these and other energy grants, which may explain the town's failure to pursue decarbonization grants in recent years.

Climate Leader status could bring seed funds to pay the salary of a municipal clean energy/climate coordinator, which would allow the Select Board to "try out" the position before making a permanent financial commitment. Climate Leader communities can also access monies for municipal and school building electrification, on-site solar photovoltaic (PV) and energy storage at existing and newly constructed town-owned buildings, geothermal heating and cooling systems for municipal buildings, and other innovative projects. There are six criteria to become a Climate Leader, three of which Belmont has already fulfilled:

1. Being a Green Community in good standing;
2. Having an energy/sustainability committee;
3. Adopting the DOER Specialized Energy Code, approved by Town Meeting last fall.

The remaining three need further action by the December 2024 deadline. Still, they can be achieved if the Select Board, town administration, and fall Town Meeting are receptive

4. Adopting a Zero-Emission-First Vehicle Policy

This would apply to all future town vehicle purchases. The Energy Committee has submitted a draft fleet procurement policy to the town administrator and the Select Board (tinyurl.com/Belmont-Fleet-Electrification). Recent procurements have informally followed such a policy by inquiring whether a zero-emission vehicle is available, with fallbacks to hybrid vehicles when not. The committee's draft policy provides the town with lots of purchasing flexibility, such that if a heavy-duty



COURTESY OF ROGER WRUBEL

Electric school buses and chargers.

truck is available only with diesel or gas engines, the town could, of course, buy it.

Adopting an updated vehicle procurement policy is expected to lower operating, maintenance, and fuel costs in the future as technology improves.

5. Committing to eliminate on-site fossil fuel use by the municipality (all buildings and vehicles) by 2050.

Belmont's Climate Action Plan and Climate Roadmap point toward fulfilling this criterion, but a new, more strongly worded statement by Town Meeting is required than that set out in the 2019 Roadmap, which suggested on page 13 that as "Belmont moves forward with new public building construction, the strategic electrification of those buildings and facilities should be a primary consideration."

6. Developing a municipal decarbonization roadmap

Related to criterion 5, the final criterion is for the town to develop a decarbonization roadmap for municipal operations, focusing on eliminating the use of onsite fossil fuels by municipal buildings and vehicles. The Climate Leader program provides opportunities for funding for consultants to create such a roadmap, which would entail a more comprehensive approach to electrifying all municipal buildings and vehicles.

The committee notes that the forward-looking elements of the decarbonization roadmap (such as planning for heating system replacements and major building renovations) dovetail with the ongoing work of the Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee in doing longer-term planning for the capital needs of the town.

Old incinerator site is proposed new energy park

Belmont Light is forming plans to repurpose the old municipal incinerator site on Concord Avenue into a proposed new energy park combining a solar energy generation and energy storage facility. Members of the Energy Committee have encouraged Belmont Light to explore the trade-offs associated with contracting with a commercial private developer to finance and install solar and battery storage systems. This proposal would require permission from the state legislature to modify the site's reuse authorization.

Transition to electric school buses

A new energy park on the incinerator site could provide parking and dedicated charging equipment for a fleet of leased all-electric school buses (E-buses). Our current school bus vendor, Eastern Bus Company, has temporary authorization from the town to park its diesel school buses at the site, which reduces the contract cost for Belmont schools. The Energy Committee has recommended that this authorization be made permanent and available to any bus vendor to allow schools to switch bus vendors and include E-buses in the future fleet.

E-buses provide pollution-free transportation and can act as additional electric storage for Belmont Light when electric demand is peaking and the buses are idly parked. In 2023, Town Meeting overwhelmingly adopted a proposal from members of the Energy Committee that allows the schools and other town departments to enter into long-term procurement contracts to secure in-town E-buses

and EVs so that their upfront costs and their charging infrastructure can be amortized efficiently over the term of the contracts.

The Energy Committee has had discussions over the last two years with the town administrator's office and the Belmont School Committee to include E-buses in bus procurement and to work with vendors to secure grants from the US EPA's electric bus program. Belmont could follow the lead of many other school districts that have gotten these grants, including just recently, the town of Andover, which received \$5 million in EPA grants to grow their fleet from 5 to 30 E-buses.

Solar energy at the Belmont Middle and High School

After several years of committee and community advocacy, a one-megawatt rooftop solar system is now installed and operating on top of the new Middle and High school. Activated in March 2024, it is expected to produce approximately 40% of the school's annual electricity needs.

To raise awareness, the Belmont High Climate Action Club has been working with the town and school departments to link this solar system to public display monitors in the school lobby so that real-time and historic solar electricity production can be displayed to students, staff, and visitors alike. As demonstrated at the Chenery School, solar production monitors provide data teachers can use for mathematics, physics, engineering, and environmental science instruction.

Solar and fiscal challenges at the skating rink

Consistent with the town's adopting a 2050 municipal decarbonization goal, the Energy Committee believes that solar generation should be part of all municipal building projects. The town has taken this to heart at the Belmont Middle and High School and the original plans for the new library and skating rink.

However, rooftop solar is often vulnerable to fiscal challenges as building committees look for ways to control capital costs. For example, the building committee for the Middle and High School at various points considered removing or downsizing the solar array to control costs. The Skating Rink Building Committee now recommends that the rink be built "solar ready" without

Carbon Emission Takeaways

- ◆ Emissions from home heating oil dropped an estimated 30% as households continued to shift away from oil.
- ◆ Emissions from natural gas use (mainly for home heating) stayed essentially flat, with 2021 being just 5% lower than 2014.
- ◆ Emissions from gasoline dropped by roughly 16% due to a slight pandemic-year reduction in miles driven and a small improvement in the fuel efficiency of gasoline-powered vehicles. Larger reductions are expected as gasoline-powered vehicles continue to be replaced by EVs. For example, EVs represented only 2.4% of all vehicles in Belmont in 2021 but grew to 4.4% in 2023.
- ◆ Emissions from electricity use dropped by 12%. While town-wide kilowatt usage remained constant, the carbon emissions of the New England grid (CO₂ emitted per megawatt of electricity) declined.

panels. While this will save capital costs, it will also increase the building's operating costs for decades, making it harder for the town to reach its stated climate goals.

The committee supports finding creative ways to make solar part of the final skating rink, whether through a partnership with Belmont Light as the owner of a rooftop array or through a community solar initiative funded by interested residents.

Join the Energy Committee

Residents with interest or experience in energy matters, building operations, and related business impacts are invited to join the Energy Committee to facilitate all of the above programs. This dynamic group meets monthly to help the town do its part to address the pressing issue of our time—climate change—and explore what more all of us can do about it as a community.

Roger Wrubel, Brian Kopperl, and James Booth are members of the Belmont Energy Committee.



Rooftop solar array at Belmont Middle and High School.

COURTESY OF ROGER WRUBEL

Vision for a Better Belmont: Jeff Birenbaum

The stated goal of the Planning Board is to protect and preserve the character and the quality of life that defines Belmont (www.belmont-ma.gov/planning-board). Jeff Birenbaum is chair of the Belmont Planning Board.

BCF

How would you define Belmont's character and quality of life, in a few sentences?

Birenbaum

Belmont, Massachusetts, is known for its great neighborhoods, excellent schools, vibrant community life, and keen sense of history. Its character and quality of life are shaped by its close-knit community feel. Residents value Belmont's suburban charm, cultural diversity, recreational amenities access, and commitment to environmental sustainability. Preserving these aspects while responsibly managing growth and development, especially creating a commercial tax base, is essential to maintaining Belmont's unique character and high quality of life.

BCF

Can you describe the most important workings of the Planning Board and how the board engages with other town departments and committees?

Birenbaum

The Planning Board plays a critical role in shaping the future development of Belmont by reviewing and approving proposed projects, zoning ordinances, and land use policies. Its key functions include:

1. **Zoning and land use regulation:** The board recommends zoning regulations to provide development guidelines in close coordination with the town planner.
2. **Site plan review:** It evaluates site plans for new construction or renovations to ensure compliance with zoning bylaws, architectural standards, and environmental regulations.
3. **Comprehensive planning:** Planning Board members actively participate in long-term strategic planning efforts to address future growth.



To engage with town departments and committees, the Planning Board:

1. **Collaborates with planning staff:** Board members work closely with planning department staff to analyze proposals, receive technical expertise, and ensure consistency with town regulations and policies.
2. **Consults with other departments:** The board regularly communicates with other town departments, such as building committees and conservation, to coordinate review processes, address concerns, and incorporate feedback into project approvals.
3. **Holds public meetings with other town boards, committees, and elected officials** to provide opportunities for collaboration, information sharing, and coordination on issues of mutual interest, such as economic development.
4. **Public engagement and feedback:** The Planning Board conducts public hearings to solicit input from residents, stakeholders, and community organizations, ensuring their perspectives and concerns are considered in decision-making.
5. **By actively engaging with town departments and committees, the Planning Board fosters a collaborative approach to planning and development that promotes sustainable growth, protects community character, and enhances Belmont's overall quality of life.**

BCF

Can you share an instance where the Planning Board's advice or recommendations significantly influenced town policy or an important decision? How did this advice align and support the broader goals of Belmont's development?

Birenbaum

The Planning Board recommended bylaw amendments that were overwhelmingly passed at the fall 2023 and spring 2024 Town Meetings. This fall, the Planning Board expects to make recommendations to Town Meeting for the MBTA Communities Act (also known as 3A). The bylaw amendments are meant to achieve a more transparent and predictable development process for Belmont to promote commercial opportunities to expand our commercial tax base while also preserving our character.

The MBTA Communities Act is an opportunity to provide more housing for families, taking advantage of our two great commuter rail stops. However, collectively, we need to understand the fiscal impact of future developments so the town can plan accordingly, which is why the town has engaged a firm for a fiscal impact study and market analysis.

BCF

What changes do you see ahead that will support or amend Belmont's character and quality of life?

Birenbaum

The MBTA Communities Act is at the forefront, and while achieving compliance with the law, we need to understand the impacts on the town and mitigate and plan meaningfully.

For the future, responsible commercial development to broaden our commercial tax base will have a direct positive impact on the budget. It may mitigate future tax increases or provide for more town services or improvements without having the burden fall on the property owners. Encouraging responsible economic development that supports local businesses, creates job opportunities, and generates revenue while preserving the town's character and quality of life is essential for long-term prosperity.

Infrastructure investment is paramount to the quality of life, and it includes road repairs, water



Jeff Birenbaum

and electrical system upgrades, and park enhancements to ensure the continued functionality and attractiveness of Belmont's built environment.

Addressing these challenges will require initiative-taking planning, collaboration among stakeholders, and a commitment to preserving Belmont's unique character and high quality of life for current and future generations.

BCF

What steps do you believe we need to make in the short-, medium-, and long-term to enhance Belmont's quality of life and achieve a sound fiscal future that includes vibrant neighborhoods, excellent municipal services, and world-class schools?



TOWN OF BELMONT

Birenbaum

To enhance the quality of life in Belmont while ensuring fiscal stability and responsibility, I see the following steps:

Short-term (1-2 years)

1. Community visioning workshops: Organize workshops to engage residents, businesses, and stakeholders in identifying priorities and aspirations for the community, ensuring that future planning efforts align with the community’s values and goals.
2. Zoning regulations: Review, update, and rewrite zoning regulations to encourage mixed-use development, affordable housing options, and sustainable design practices that enhance neighborhood vibrancy and livability while promoting fiscal sustainability.
3. Permitting processes: Streamline and expedite the permitting process for small businesses, homeowners, and developers to encourage investment, job creation, and economic growth while maintaining high-quality development standards.

Medium-term (3-5 years)

1. Strategic growth management: Develop a comprehensive growth management strategy that balances residential, commercial, and recreational development to maximize economic opportunities, preserve open space, and maintain neighborhood character.
2. Infrastructure investments: Prioritize investments in utilities and public facilities to improve connectivity, enhance services, and support sustainable growth while minimizing long-term maintenance costs.

3. Public-private partnerships: Explore these partnerships to leverage resources, expertise, and funding for infrastructure projects, community services, and economic development initiatives that benefit residents and businesses.

Long-term (5+ years)

1. Fiscal planning and sustainability: Develop long-term fiscal plans and reserve policies to ensure financial stability, resilience, and flexibility in responding to future challenges, such as economic downturns, demographic changes, and infrastructure needs.
2. Education and workforce development: Invest in education and workforce development programs that prepare residents for 21st-century jobs, support innovation and entrepreneurship, and attract employers seeking a skilled labor force, thereby strengthening Belmont’s economic competitiveness and tax base.
3. Sustainable development practices: Adopt and implement green building standards, renewable energy initiatives, and climate resilience measures, to minimize environmental impacts, reduce operating costs, and enhance the quality of life for residents.

By adopting a proactive and strategic approach to planning and development, the Planning Board can help ensure that Belmont remains a vibrant, inclusive, and financially resilient community with world-class schools, excellent municipal services, and vibrant neighborhoods that enhance residents’ overall quality of life.

Jeff Birenbaum chairs the Belmont Planning Board.

Concord Bike Lane May be Increasing Cycling

By Dan Eldridge

This August will mark two years since the restriping of Concord Avenue, a project that repainted the lines on the road to switch the positions of the biking and parking lanes.

Separated (sometimes called protected) bike lanes are against the curb and are usually separated from traffic by bollards, islands, or raised platforms: there are no plans to install bollards on Concord Avenue. In each case, a barrier is created so cyclists will encounter fewer vehicles and feel more secure. In the case of Concord Avenue, separation is indicated by painted lines and parked cars only.

Separated bike lanes increase safety for cyclists and decrease risk for drivers by moving the bike lane away from the travel lane. Two of the most common crash types experienced with the previous bike lane configuration were sideswiping from cars to the left in the travel lane and “dooring,” crashing into a door thrown open from a parked vehicle on the right.

By separating the bike lane from the travel lane, these types of crashes are avoided, giving the bike lane user a greater sense of safety and security. This feeling of safety and security is vital to the change in thinking for pedestrian and bicycle lane design. The logic for this is well laid out in chapters 1,2, and 4 of the city of Cambridge’s 2020 Bicycle Plan.

Past research and surveys identified a large group of riders in town referred to as “interested but concerned”; that is, they would like to cycle more but feel too vulnerable biking in the older lane configuration between traffic and parked cars. When

asked what would make them feel safer, the number one response was separation.

You don’t have to look far to see other towns and cities implementing protected bike lanes at every opportunity. While Boston and Cambridge lead the way, neighboring communities follow suit. A study of a similar project on Cambridge Street in Cambridge found that bicycle traffic increased between 21% and 59% depending on the time of day after adding a protected lane.

A more secure cyclist rides more and helps alleviate traffic congestion by leaving their car in the driveway. The 2020 Cambridge Bicycle Plan states that increasing the construction of safer bike facilities goes hand in hand with increased ridership. Ridership in Cambridge is up four times what it was in 2002. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation guidance on separated bike lanes



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Bike lane with bollards in Cambridge, MA.

also documents the standardization of separated bike lanes.

How Concord Avenue got bike lanes

The Concord Avenue project began when the Traffic Working Group identified the need for an enhanced Middle and High School bicycle lane while planning for the new campus. In 2021, the town engineer asked the consulting/design firm Nelson/Nygaard to plan a separated lane based on using parked cars as the separating buffer, and the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was asked to hold a public forum. Following two sessions, the TAC voted to recommend favorable action on the plan and sent it to the Select Board.

The Select Board delayed acting on the recommendation and asked the TAC to hold more public comment sessions to make alterations and include additional public feedback. The TAC held several design reviews at its monthly meetings through the fall of 2021 and another public forum in February 2022. The TAC again voted to recommend favorable action and sent the plan back to the Select Board. This time, the Select Board voted favorably, and the Department of Public Works repainted the roadway the following summer.

Reception to the new lanes has been generally positive. While the town does not track usage, the general consensus has been that the number of people using the new lanes and bicycle parking available at the new Middle and High School has significantly increased. Residents have expressed a much greater feeling of safety with the new configuration, with many now feeling comfortable riding with their young children on Concord Avenue. There has also been a noticeable traffic calming effect, with abutters commenting on the reduced traffic speed and noise that has resulted from narrowing the travel lane.

TAC plays a big role in project planning

A big part of this project was the TAC working with Town Engineer Glenn Clancy to gather public feedback and make recommendations to help address concerns. When the town seeks public input about its roadways and transportation infrastructure, those issues often end up before the TAC, where they can be discussed publicly and with input from those interested. All TAC meetings are open to the public and are posted in advance on the [TAC's](#)

[page on the town of Belmont website](#). Minutes of previous meetings can also be found there.

In addition to attending TAC meetings, residents can raise issues regarding traffic, transportation, and safety with Clancy. The process for raising issues is laid out in the town's [traffic calming](#) and [crosswalk](#) policies.

The town continues to explore ways to improve pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure. While the Belmont Community Path is the most ambitious project, Phase 1 is still years away from construction start, anticipated for 2026. Other projects in the works are designating specific bike routes through town, reworking Grove Street with an eye on traffic calming and better bike lanes, and adding traffic-calming features to White Street.

Belmont also continuously evaluates its crosswalks, recently adopting the aforementioned [crosswalk policy](#). Currently, Clancy is exploring options to improve the crosswalks on Concord Avenue, specifically near the Middle and High School.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact any current TAC member or the town engineer with anything specific you would like addressed. While we are pleased with what we have accomplished so far, we are all well aware of how much work remains to make Belmont a safer, easier, and more inclusive place to get around.

Dan Eldridge is vice-chair of the Belmont Transportation Advisory Committee.



THE MARMOT FROM USA - COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Profiles in Belmont: Robert McLaughlin, Sr.

By Elissa Ely

There is a temperament best suited for success in law, especially in the area of litigation. There is a temperament best suited for success in life, especially in the areas of personability and contentment. It seems unlikely that the two temperaments could coexist serenely in one character.

Please meet Bob McLaughlin: indispensable town exemplar, and proof of the possible. He is chair, co-chair, or member of vital Belmont committees almost too numerous to count; senior and managing Boston law firm partner; white-haired scuba diver, water-and-downhill skier; sailor and seven-continent traveler (with no wish to see a penguin again); pleased and proud husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

"I was born on third base, but I know I didn't hit the triple," he says. In fact, Bob was born 87 years ago in Mount Auburn Hospital and raised on School Street. The family lived a few blocks in one direction from what is now the Grove Street Playground, and a few blocks in the other from what has become the Payson Park Reservoir.

When he was growing up in Belmont, milk arrived by horse-drawn wagon. The gas stove in the kitchen took quarters to cook a meal. Bob's father, one of nine, never went to college, but he did go to law school at night while working days in a bakery. Eventually, he cofounded a family law firm, rose to become a Superior Court judge, and afterward joined the alternative family firm Bob had formed. Not all of us might welcome our parent as our colleague, but his son did. "You pick your friends, but God picks your relatives," Bob says.

Law was destiny. Three out of four of Bob's children are lawyers now. "I'm a competitive person," he explains, "so trial law was a natural profession. When I started, it was also a noble



Robert McLaughlin Sr.

LINDSEY BOYLE

profession. You extended courtesy to brother counselors. The goal was to make a trial system as accurate and fair as possible. It was fun."

Times change: lawyer jokes are a staple of modern culture, punchlines are bad, paperwork is endless, relationships and trust are frayed. Still, he continues to practice. "My wife married me for better or worse," he says, "but not for lunch." (As well as a great facility with the law, he has a great facility with chestnuts that are old but still true.)

As fate happens, he married his wife—before lunch—on the day the Berlin Wall was erected, and they moved promptly to France when his position

as a personnel officer in the National Guard was activated. The apartment had no central heat, and a coal stove in constant need of restocking. This might have caused discomfort for some. “It was marvelous,” he remembers, “a year-long honeymoon.”

Back in the states, the McLaughlins couldn’t afford to live in Belmont—and, let the record show, this was the Belmont of 63 years ago!—so they moved to Arlington while Bob finished law school. In 1976, drawn back, they bought their house on Belmont Hill, and his decades of town involvement began.

Here follows an imperfect attempt, after a deep breath, to list the Belmont committees Bob has served on. Membership on the Permanent Building Committee seeded many, though not all, of them: the Library Building Committee, High School Building Committee, Capital Projects Oversight Committee, Electrical Substation Site Committee, Energy Committee, Warrant Committee, Town Finance Committee. “As the lawyer, I’m kind of the point person,” he explains.

It requires persuasiveness, problem-solving, and, when called for, litigation. Bob litigated to get lights and artificial turf while he was on the Harris Field Renovation Committee; he litigated against a contractor’s shoddiness while he was on the Fire Stations Building Committee. “I know the process of bidding and when extras are out of line,” he says. It would be unwise to meet this man for the first time when he’s holding a deposition in his hand.

And yet, somehow there has still been enough time for a long and fervid affair with the ocean. The sea caught him and taught him, beginning in childhood. Bob was about seven when his parents bought an 8-foot rowboat. As a teenager, he was driving a 16-foot outboard powerboat. In his early 30s, he bought his first sailboat: a used 28-footer he named Seaquester, in punning tribute to both his profession and his passion. Before electronic guidance became common, he navigated celestially. Horses were no longer leading milk wagons, but stars were still leading sailors.

Summer trips in Seaquester were long; past Bar Harbor to the north, below New York to the south. In 1986, when President Reagan rededicated the Statue of Liberty, Bob anchored in New York Harbor for the event (his wife drove down instead).

He has raced to Bermuda four times, most recently with family members crewing. They finished middle of the pack, but took home the “Family Trophy.”

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There was also the annual Memorial Day Figawi event between Hyannis and Nantucket, “a three-hour race and a three-day party.” Proceeds still go to a variety of causes, including veterans, first responders, and youth organizations.

The current Seaquester, a third-generation iteration, is “full of comfort things”: a microwave, a stereo system. Household goods one never thinks of as heavy—what is a microwave compared to a hot water heater?—weigh down a boat. Lightness is required for speed, speed is required for racing, and as a result, comfort has scaled back competition. “99% of the time now,” Bob says, “I sail to the nearby harbor, have lunch, and sail back.” The multiday trips of summer are gone, though he still takes grandchildren out overnight. Boating, like law, runs in the McLaughlin blood.

How does one person create such prosperity in his professional and personal lives, and still manage to donate such quantities of time to the civic welfare and life of his town? Bob will tell you his wife has been pondering the same question for years. “You know the old saying,” he says cheerfully (and we do): “If you want to get something done, give it to someone who’s overworked.”

Elissa Ely is a community psychiatrist.

Belmont Mosquito Control Services Explained

The Role of the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project

By Jeffrey North

Mosquitoes can be more than just a summer nuisance; they can carry diseases like West Nile virus (WNV) and Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE). The East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project (EMMCP) works to protect Belmont residents from these diseases.

Established in 1945, the EMMCP is a regional public health agency dedicated to controlling mosquito populations and minimizing the risk of mosquito-borne diseases. Serving 27 cities and towns across the greater Boston area, the EMMCP

employs a team of entomologists, biologists, and environmental specialists to keep mosquito activity in check.

Surveillance is key

The EMMCP doesn’t just wait for mosquitos to become a problem. They use a network of traps to monitor mosquito populations throughout the season. These traps capture different mosquito species, allowing the EMMCP to identify areas with high activity and test captured mosquitos for WNV and EEE. The EMMCP is keeping a watchful eye on local mosquito populations.

Ecologically Based Mosquito Management at the Statehouse

“An Act establishing an ecologically-based mosquito management program in the Commonwealth to protect public health” (S.445/H.845) has made it to the Ways and Means Committees. These committees will determine the fate of these bills.

Filed by state Senator Jo Comerford and state Representative Kathleen LaNatra, this bill is intended to replace what the filers believe are outdated and expensive mosquito management practices with “ecologically based mosquito management” or EBMM, which supporters claim is more effective, affordable, transparent, ecologically responsible (including reduced use of pesticides and other chemicals), and scientifically based. As defined in Bill S.445,

“Ecologically-based mosquito management” or EBMM, [is] an ecologically sustainable approach to the management of mosquito populations combining cultural, physical, biological, and, when strictly necessary to protect public health, least-toxic chemical control strategies. EBMM prioritizes preventative measures, including surveillance, monitoring, and public education on eliminating breeding sites and taking personal protective action. EBMM involves the selection, integration, and implementation of mosquito control strategies

based on predicted ecological, epidemiological, and economic consequences. EBMM seeks maximum use of naturally occurring mosquito controls, including weather, disease agents, predators, and parasitoids. In addition, EBMM utilizes various biological and physical controls and habitat modification techniques. Under EBMM, chemical controls are imposed as a last resort and only as required to keep a pest from surpassing tolerable population levels predetermined from accurate assessments of the ecological, public health, and economic costs of the control measures.

This legislation builds on the recommendations of the Mosquito Control for the 21st Century Task Force, which called for modernization of mosquito control for improved human health protection, especially in the face of climate change.

Citizens can request that Ways and Means support these bills for the health of our lands, waters, wildlife, and communities at actionnetwork.org/letters/call-for-ecological-mosquito-control-end-aerial-spraying/

For more information, visit the MASSquito Coalition at www.nofamass.org/home/policy/massquito.

Targeted interventions are standard

When mosquito populations rise or EEE/WNV is detected, the EMMCP takes action. In areas with extensive wetlands, the project uses larvicides applied by helicopter to target mosquito larvae in their early stages. In Belmont, with relatively small areas of wetland habitat, the project focuses on catch basins alongside roads. Instead of helicopters, mobile seasonal employees (young workers on bicycles) apply larvicides to these basins, targeting the mosquito species that carry WNV.

Community engagement is vital

The EMMCP recognizes that residents play a crucial role in mosquito control. The project provides educational resources on its website (<https://sudbury.ma.us/emmcp/>) and offers presentations to schools and community groups. Residents

can do their part by eliminating mosquito breeding grounds around their homes. These efforts include emptying containers that hold standing water, such as tires, buckets, and flower.pot saucers.

Working together makes Belmont healthy

The EMMCP's dedication to mosquito control and informed residents taking preventative measures create a strong defense against mosquito-borne diseases in Belmont. By working together, we can ensure a safe and enjoyable summer for everyone.

Jeffrey North is the managing editor of the Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter. Special thanks to Brian Farless, superintendent of the East Middlesex Mosquito Control and Suffolk County Mosquito Control, for providing information and answering questions to make this article possible.

Porchfest Returns This September



STEVE DRUSKIN

Belmont Porchfest, the annual celebration of Belmont's diverse arts and musical talents, will return on the Saturday after Labor Day. Hosts and performers can register July 1 - July 30 on www.BelmontPorchfest.org. Porchfest organizers will match performers who don't have a porch with

willing hosts. The schedule will be published on the website in early September. Despite a torrential downpour last year, more than 2300 people participated in the fun at the 58 porches hosting 80 performances.

Rodenticides Are Killing Massachusetts Wildlife

Will Authorities Step Up?

Courtesy of the Harvard Animal Law & Policy Clinic

A coalition of Massachusetts residents petitioned the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) in May to suspend the registrations of anticoagulant rodenticide products that are killing eagles, owls, and other wild animals throughout the Commonwealth. The petition—prepared by the Harvard Law School Animal Law & Policy Clinic—was submitted on behalf of bird rehabilitators Erin Hutchings, Jodi Swenson, and Linda Amato of Cape Ann Wildlife in Essex; mammal rehabilitator Jane Newhouse of Newhouse Wildlife Rescue in Chelmsford; Marci Cemenska of Save Lexington Wildlife; James Joyce II and Patricia Sears-Joyce of Friends of Horn Pond in Woburn; and Laura Kiesel of Save Arlington Wildlife.

through a round-the-clock regimen of vitamin K injections.

“Day after day, wildlife rehabilitators face the heartbreaking task of caring for birds choking on their own blood and sick foxes whose bodies seem too weak to recover,” adds clinic student Allyson Gambardella. “Rat poisons are wrecking the food web.”

In 2022 alone, Massachusetts commercial applicators used more than half a million pounds of anticoagulant rodenticides, yet MDAR does not appear to monitor rodenticide-related wildlife deaths. The voracious use of these poisons has grave consequences: tests commissioned by Cape Ann Wildlife have found rat poisons in the livers of dozens of patients in recent years, including hawks, owls, crows, a raven, a coyote pup, and red foxes. A recent study by the Tufts Wildlife Clinic reported that 100% of the 43 Red-tailed Hawks admitted over a two-year period tested positive for anticoagulant rodenticides.

The clinic's petition argues that anticoagulant rodenticides fail to meet the Massachusetts Pesticide Control Act's registration standards because they cause “unreasonable adverse effects to the environment.”

In a separate request, the coalition is also calling for the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to investigate the impacts of rodenticides on species protected by the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) and ensure that MDAR is using all practicable means to avoid damaging protected species.

“Anticoagulant rodenticides are threatening to undo decades-long efforts to protect species like the bald eagle,” says Lila Anderson, of Harvard's Animal Law & Policy Clinic. “We have no choice but to remove these poisons from the environment, which means that we have got to stop feeding them to rodents.”

After pesticides decimated the Commonwealth's bald eagle population in the mid-20th century, policy changes and reintroduction efforts have allowed this MESA-protected species to slowly recover. A few breeding pairs of eagles have even returned to the Boston area in recent years.

“Rodents are a key food source for birds of prey, so poisoning rats is a surefire way to kill owls and hawks too.”

“Rodents are a key food source for birds of prey, so poisoning rats is a surefire way to kill owls and hawks too,” says Lexi Neilan, a student in Harvard's Animal Law & Policy Clinic. “We're urging MDAR to step in to protect Massachusetts' wildlife before it's too late.”

Anticoagulant rodenticides are dangerous toxicants that prevent blood from clotting, causing victims to die of massive hemorrhaging. By design, these poisons kill animals slowly, with their effects setting in days after they're consumed. Poisoned rodents return to the environment, where they may be eaten by predators who then also become sick. If found alive, these animals end up in the care of wildlife rehabilitators who try to save the animals

However, since 2021 alone, four local bald eagles have died of anticoagulant rodenticide poisoning, including MK—a beloved Bald Eagle who nested in Arlington—and her daughter 25C.

“The federal government has found that rat poisons could push sensitive species to the brink of extinction,” adds clinic student Kira Horowitz. “We’re asking Massachusetts authorities to act now to ensure our native predators and scavengers have a chance at survival.”

As a result of litigation and legislation related to the impacts of rat poisons on native wildlife, the state of California has placed a moratorium on the use of certain anticoagulant rodenticides in the state.

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DAVID MORRIS

MK the eagle.



SHAWN P. CAREY, MIGRATION PRODUCTIONS

Yellow Warbler.



SHAWN P. CAREY, MIGRATION PRODUCTIONS

Baltimore Oriole.

Belmont Boasts Bounteous Birds

By Fred Bouchard

Most of us try to cozy up to Mother Nature now that we’re increasingly climate-conscious, especially during longer days and presumably carefree hours of summer. Whether you’re in the garden, open spaces, or on woody walks, our home town offers a variety of eco-friendly locales to commune with Ma Nature’s little winged ambassadors.

I offer four likely places, each hosting two not-obvious, strictly seasonal denizens that you might readily identify with your attentive ear and sharpened eye. We go from high altitude to low, and throw in an easily overlooked hotspot in nearby Cambridge.

A good guide book (Sibley, Peterson, or National Geographic) or your favorite app and binoculars will prove reliable back-up or stand-ins for seasoned bird-watching friends. Early morning beats late afternoon for bird-spotting; midday, when birds tend to nap, lags far behind. Wear brimmed caps, apply sunscreen, skip the shades. The Merlin app works, but fallibly: trust, but verify. Check out Cornell University’s brilliant website eBird for matters of avian location, recording, and identification.

Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary: Warblers

The Habitat Massachusetts Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary is a 88-acre haven knifed between Concord Avenue and Prospect Street. It hosts woodland wanderers year round, and spring migrant birds and kids’ events in warmer months. Two warblers that eschew heading much farther north, unlike most of their 25 New England pass-through brethren, are the shy, pine-topping Pine Warbler and the gregarious, deciduous-favoring Yellow Warbler.

Pine Warblers, despite lemony breasts, chartreuse backs, and pairs of white wing bars, seldom give you eye-level looks. You can hear them softly trilling in the upper canopy of Habitat’s many white pines and may, with diligence, earn a peek.

Yellow Warblers approach closer, sing louder (“sweet, sweet, I’m so sweet!”), sport custard- yellow plumage, the males adding jazzy orange pinstripes. They may nest near eye-level in orchards, gardens, or damp locales, and are on the go early and late.

Both species tend to fade, in song and plumage, as the summer wears on. Pine Warblers mostly winter in the Caribbean with a few lingering as far north as Cape Cod. Yellow Warblers winter between Mexico and Peru.

Rock Meadow: Blackbirds and Orioles

Off Mill Street, near its junction with Concord Avenue and opposite Lone Tree Hill, Rock Meadow welcomes summer avian residents to varied habitats within its 70-acre parcel of the Western Greenway. In its vaunted Victory Gardens you may spy a whizzing Ruby-throated Hummingbird, in its open fields crepuscular American Woodcocks in diving flight songs at deep dusk, and along its forested edges, flashy Northern Flickers.

Red-winged Blackbird males “check!” frequently and sing gurgly “conk-a-lee!”; they’re quick to chase intruders from their marshy cattail lairs, jet-black bullets flexing their expandable vermilion epaulets. Blackbirds are emblematic of sexual dimorphism, i.e., you’d think the females another species: they are smaller and sepia-streaked with a dusting of facial beige. They are nearly equally aggressive in chasing threatening crows, grackles, and hawks.

Up in the trees live their glamorous Icterid (New World blackbird) cousins: the beautiful and tuneful Baltimore Orioles. Males are strikingly orange-bodied with black heads and cowls; yellowish females lack black on top, but both have black wings with two white wing-bars. Males’ elegant spring songs vary individually and carry afar (one sang his signature bluesy song three years running at Brookline’s Hall’s Pond); females contribute complementary vocalizations. Lure them to platform feeders with cut-up fruit. While orioles fade away quietly in September, blackbirds may convene in large wandering flocks mixed with cowbirds and grackles (fellow Icterids) and persist through early winter.

Clay Pit Pond: Swifts and Vireos

Fast-flying swifts, affectionately known as “cigars with wings”—blunt Dutch cigars, not lengthy coronas—lack legs but use tiny claws to nest and roost along the inner walls of chimneys and steeples. The lone members of the Apodidae (“footless”) family found east of the Mississippi, these



Solitary Sandpiper (left) and Spotted Sandpiper (right).

aerial specialists' wings are long, stiff, tapered, a bit decurved: built for speed.

Swifts' rapid fluttering and high-pitched chittering are unmistakable as they course individually or in small flocks over open water and town centers, decimating local airborne insect populations. Along the pond's edge below them you may catch the amiable, aimless noodling of Warbling Vireos. These plainest of plain-jane vireos (gray over white, small white eye-line, bare eye, dark bill) hide out in deciduous trees and shrubs as they feast on bug and bud, and sing decreasingly as summer progresses. Both birds fly south by mid-September to winter in South America.

Blair Pond: Sandpipers

A stone's throw behind Comella's off Brighton Street, Blair Pond hugs the commuter rail tracks and bike path, straddles flows into Alewife Brook, and links via a modest woods to an industrial park. Its shallow depth and mudflats attract herons, nesting waterfowl, shorebirds, and kids fishing for carp. In spring and fall, several species may stop by: Green Herons, Killdeer, Soras, Least Sandpipers, even a Glossy Ibis or American Bittern.

Two related sandpiper species among regular visitors are the Spotted and Solitary. They're just passing through; if you're lucky enough to spy them

side by side at 15 yards from either green bench, the lanky Solitary has longer olive legs, dark bill, and eye-ring; Spotty is squattier, with shorter tawny legs, orange base of the bill, more spots, an eye-line, and the clincher—it regularly bobs its tail. Larger females foist incubation and chick care onto males; both sexes lose their spots after breeding season.

Shortlisted autumn poster-chicks

Everyman's Backyard

Northern Cardinal, White-throated Sparrow

Rock Meadow (gardens)

American Goldfinch, White-breasted Nuthatch

Beaver Brook (Middle, waterfall area)

Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-tailed Hawk

Little Pond

Belted Kingfisher, Hooded Merganser

Claypit Pond

Common Merganser, Great Blue Heron

Habitat MAWS

Eastern Bluebird, Wood Duck

Fred Bouchard is a member of the Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter Committee.

New Connections Coming to Mystic Greenways

By Isaiah Johnson

It's a great time to enjoy Greater Boston's parks and paths as we head into the middle of summer. Whether you walk, bike, or run, the Mystic Greenways are great places to get outside and enjoy fresh air. At the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA), we are excited to see the path network along the Mystic River grow more connected every year, linking parks and greenways from the Mystic Lakes to Boston Harbor.

The vision behind the Mystic Greenways is to connect 25 miles of paths, improve hundreds of acres of parklands, and engage thousands of community members. A high-quality network of greenways for active transportation and recreation will enhance climate resiliency, provide sustainable mobility, and improve physical and mental health outcomes for the more than 600,000 residents of the watershed, which connects 21 cities and towns, including Belmont. The Mystic River Watershed

Association (MyRWA) is leading this vision and creating a roadmap to transform these waterfront parklands with full participation from area residents.

"High-quality parks and connected paths are not luxuries but essential infrastructure for 21st-century cities. They improve community health and well-being, mitigate climate impacts, and encourage active mobility," says Karl Alexander, Greenways program manager for the Mystic River Watershed Association. "With every improvement, we are helping create this critical infrastructure in partnership with area residents."

What's new along the greenways?

Construction of the Clippership Connector is underway in Medford. The Clippership Connector will be a half-mile waterfront path linking Medford Square with the Andrews/McGlynn Schools and Riverbend Park. The path will connect 10 miles of contiguous trails and will allow people to walk, run, bike, and push strollers along a section of the river that, to date, has been blocked from public access.

In Charlestown, much-needed improvements will begin soon at the Little Mystic Channel. The Little Mystic Channel is a long-forgotten corner of Boston's waterfront on the Lower Mystic River. In partnership with the Charlestown community, the city of Boston, and Massport, MyRWA is working on a vision for how a high-quality park along the Little Mystic Channel can provide better opportunities for recreation, access to nature, social gatherings, and climate resiliency in an area that has been characterized by years of deferred mainte-



The Clippership Connector breaks ground in Medford, MA, November 2023.



DARIA CLARK

MyRWA staff explores the Little Mystic Channel Park, September 2023.

nance and a lack of open space amenities. A new heat-resilient plaza and a pollinator garden are expected to break ground within the next year, and a new connection from Barry Field to Chelsea Street is open and now connects the channel to the Charlestown Navy Yard.

In Winchester and Medford, preliminary designs have just been completed for the Mystic Lakes Path. The Mystic Lakes Path is a three-mile path that runs along the eastern shoreline of the Mystic Lakes. The path is managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and throughout the fall and spring, MyRWA worked with community members to produce conceptual designs for improvements to the path, aiming to make it more accessible and to enhance the ecological health of the lakes and their shoreline.

All of these projects are important steps along the way toward a more beautiful and connected Mystic River, adding to the existing network of parks and paths from the Alewife Reservation to Horn Pond to Belle Isle Marsh.

Everyone deserves access to safe, fun, and green outdoor spaces when the weather is warm and the sun is shining. With continued progress to the parks and paths along the Mystic River, there are many ways to have fun in the sun! You can learn more about all of the ways you can explore the Mystic River at mysticriver.org/explore.

Isaiah Johnson is the outreach and media manager for the Mystic River Watershed Association

Group Plants Cambridge Front-Yard Forest

By Susan Filene, Tori Antonino, Judy Perlman, and Ali Kruger

A longer version of this article with more illustrations is available on the Belmont Citizens Forum website.

The first Miyawaki forest in the northeast was planted on public land in Cambridge in September 2021. ([Miyawaki Forest Boosts Biodiversity, Resilience](#), BCF Newsletter, May 2022). Similar little forests have been planted or are planned for nearby communities, including Somerville, Brookline, Watertown, Natick, and Worcester.

It occurred to me that people could do something similar, on a smaller scale, in their urban/suburban yards. We could replace lawns with native species of trees, shrubs, and groundcovers which would have the same positive effects as a larger Miyawaki forest—carbon sequestration, soil improvement, pollinator food, storm-water management, and local cooling. My husband and I had a lawn in front of a two-family house we owned on Alpine Street in Cambridge, and we decided to see what could be done to replace it.

Not knowing where to begin, I searched on NextDoor for someone who did. Tori Antonino, owner of Victorious Gardens, responded, “That is what I do, turn lawns into meadows or, even better, Miyawaki forests.”

Tori came to see the site. Her advice was to let all of the leaves from an existing large oak and from neighbors’ Norway maples lie where they would fall come autumn. Tori returned to the site in the spring to examine light, slope, and water runoff so that she could plan which native plants would do well. Tori and I brought in Judy Perlman and Ali Kruger, who lived in apartments overlooking the lawn. They would see the forest every day and needed to be part of the project.

There was a lot of work to do at the site: testing soil, contacting DigSafe, sourcing mulch, bringing in hundreds more plants, and arranging for a site visit by Walter Kittredge, to get his opinion about what more was needed. Kittredge

spent his career as a taxonomist at Harvard University’s Gray Herbarium, and now runs a native plant nursery called [Oakhaven Sanctuary](#). We learned much more was needed because, when Walter stuck his shovel into the ground to examine the soil, the shovel went in about one inch and no further.

We had hardened clay for soil. A rototiller would break before loosening the soil, and the site did not lend itself to using a backhoe. The entire yard had to be turned by hand using pickaxes, garden spades, and shovels. We put out a call for volunteers through local listservs. People responded and joined community planting days. The next step, according to Miyawaki guidelines, was to incorporate quality



Planting day at the Alpine Street Forest.

COURTESY OF SUSAN FILENE

mulch into the loosened soil. Volunteers returned to fork in the mulch.

There are differences between this little forest and the Miyawaki forests which have been planted in this area so far. Alpine Street Forest is on residential property. We couldn't dig deeply where there were underground utility lines. The area was shaded by an existing tree and by neighbors' trees and, for part of the day, by the house on the property and neighboring houses. An oak with massive roots limited digging in one area. Downspout runoff and discharge from a sump pump created a permanent boggy area.

Tori turned these limitations into features. An area where they couldn't dig deeply became a little meadow with sedges, wild strawberries, and a seating area. Tufted hair grass and path rushes and spring ephemeral flowers including Jacob's ladder and Virginia bluebells went in over the utility lines. Tori made a little dip in the boggy area to form a vernal pool and planted pussy willow, marsh marigold, and other plants which like their feet to be wet.

Another difference between the Alpine Street Forest and the formal Miyawaki forests is that the soil at Alpine was loosened to one foot rather than the two feet advised by Miyawaki. Roots should be able to penetrate where pickaxes and garden forks could not.

The Alpine Street Forest also contains herbaceous perennials which a "true" Miyawaki forest lacks. These plants provide essential habitat for pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Why change a lawn into a mini-forest?

Little forests and dense native plantings improve soil and air quality, provide food and homes for pollinators and small animals, help to ameliorate climate change impacts, and make life better for humans.

Every part of the forest improves the soil biome.

The biome of healthy soil is a neighborhood of dead and dying carbonaceous material and living bustling bacteria, fungi, tiny bugs, earthworms, and the roots of a variety of plants. Native plants foster the biome which supports their particular needs. When plants are not native, the inputs needed to keep them thriving harms the creatures living below the soil as well as those living above.

One of the worst things people do to soil biome is to install lawns. Lawns have no means of adding deep healthy roots below and, therefore, no means above the soil of turning carbon into sugars to feed creatures below the surface.

The mini-forest sequesters carbon.

Trees and plants pull carbon from the air. When a plants or a soil organisms die, the roots of the plant and the bodies of the organisms remain in the soil, keeping the carbon sequestered in those roots and in the decomposing body.

The mini-forest manages stormwater.

The forest manages water in several ways. As the rain falls, it will be intercepted by the canopy and break into smaller and smaller droplets as it falls down through layers of vegetation. Some will remain on leaves or needles to evaporate. Because the soil in the forest is permeable, water can be absorbed. Some absorbed water is taken up by roots into plants.

The mini-forest cools its area.

Heat waves exacerbate health issues, especially cardiovascular and respiratory disease. They're associated with increased hospital admissions, psychological stress, aggressive behavior, and excess mortality. Most heat- related deaths occur in urban areas. A study from Adelaide, Australia, found that trees could lower local surface temperatures up to nearly 11°F.

The mini-forest provides food and habitat for pollinators, birds, and small animals.

Pollinator populations have decreased to the point that the human food supply is endangered. Application of insecticides and loss of species-specific food sources are reasons. If we encourage the planting of many small safe islands of native plants, we may be able to reverse the destruction of tiny life-giving creatures and provide for other species which are disappearing.

The mini-forest fosters community.

This happens through vents involve many people such as the festivals of Planting Day and Winter Solstice Celebration at the forest, or one-on-one interactions with neighbors who stop to admire, ask a question, or just breathe in what the plants have to offer.

Mission of the Alpine Street Forest Group

We formed the Alpine Street Forest Group to encourage, advise, and assist others, whether individuals, faith communities, or municipalities. We see the city departments and organizations propagating opportunities for public participation in supporting green space, including Green and Open Somerville, the Massachusetts Pollinators Network, and SUGi, among too many to name!

If you would like to explore ideas for how to get started, we welcome your questions at alpinestreet-forest@gmail.com.

Susan Filene is a Cambridge resident and cofounder of the Chilton Street Urban Farm. Tori Antonino a Somerville resident and a local activist, ecological landscaper, and guerrilla gardener. Judy Perlman is a Cambridge resident who works with government and nonprofit teams to advance housing stability. Ali Kruger is a Cambridge resident who fosters collaboration to bring new ideas into being.

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