



# NEWS

FALL 2023

## In-Person Annual Meeting Returns – Tuesday, January 23, 2024

The Board of Directors of the Arlington Land Trust is pleased to invite you to join the 2023 Annual Meeting in person on Tuesday, January 23, 2024 at 7 pm. We will meet in the Back Room of the Donut Villa Diner, 319 Broadway in Arlington Center. We will elect Board members, hear a brief Treasurer's report, and provide updates on the proposed Thorndike Place development on the Mugar property and other local conservation projects.

Our guest speaker this year is **David Santomenna**, Senior Director of Land Protection at Mass Audubon. He will present the organization's statewide vision for land protection with a focus on the **Nature in the City Program**, the urban component of that vision. Launched in 2022, this program envisions a Massachusetts where all city residents—no matter their race, income, ability, spoken language or lived experience—have access to greenspaces that bring them joy, connect them to the natural world, and address the effects of climate change. The program is being piloted in four cities—Boston, Cambridge, Lowell, and Fall River—with plans to expand over the coming years.



credit – Peter Belknap

## Geocache on Elizabeth Island

Arlington teenager **Lucas Goulart** inquired about setting up a geocache on Elizabeth Island, and with ALT permission he installed it last spring. Geocaching is an outdoor treasure-hunting activity that uses GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (usually a container or marker) that is located nearby. Once they find it, they sign and date the logbook at the site and also log their discovery into the online app. For more information about how to find or create a geocache, go to the [Geocaching website](#). “While geocaching in the area does seem to be quite popular,” Lucas explained, “there aren't many people who find mine since it's only accessible by boat in good weather conditions. But everyone who has found it so far has reported good experiences.”

## Conservation Commission Reviews Mugar Project

The Conservation Commission has begun its public hearing on the proposed Thorndike Place 40B development project on the Mugar property in East Arlington. In September the Conservation Commission received an official Notice of Intent (NOI) under the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act (WPA) from Arlington Land Realty, LLC, the owner/developer of the site. The NOI describes work within the FEMA 100-Year Floodplain / Bordering Land Subject to Flooding (BLSF), as well as within the Buffer Zone to Bordering Vegetated Wetlands (BVW). Mitigation measures are proposed to compensate for the impacts to these resources.

The public hearing on the NOI began on September 21 and was continued into November while the Conservation Commission solicited peer review consultants to supplement their own analysis of two specific portions of the NOI. The first is a review of the Stormwater Report and Management Plan associated with the Thorndike Place development to determine whether it complies with the Massachusetts Stormwater Standards. The second is a review of the Thorndike Place Planting Plan for compliance with the performance standards for restoration work in designated zones and whether the plan will enhance wildlife habitat conditions. At its November 16 meeting, the Conservation Commission voted to hire Hatch to review the stormwater plan and SWCA to review the planting plans. *Continued on back*

The Land Trust continues to support efforts to gather accurate and comprehensive information about the complex environmental challenges on the site. In October ALT retained Scott Horsley, a hydrologist with more than 30 years of experience in evaluating water resources projects, to review the NOI and other documents relating to stormwater management. His report is posted on the Conservation Commission's [Thorndike Place web page](#) along with other related materials, and he is expected to make a presentation at the December 14 hearing, along with the initial peer review presentations.

The Select Board also continues to address its concerns about the Thorndike Place proposal. At its October 11 meeting, the Board members reviewed several past votes and actions on this project dating to 2015, and voted unanimously "to reaffirm their opposition to any development located at the Mugar Wetlands."

## Board News



credit - CoCo Boardman Photography



**Nora Frank** rejoined the Land Trust Board in March to serve as membership and fundraising coordinator. She has over 30 years of non-profit management experience, primarily in fundraising and marketing. She is excited to help upgrade the constituent database and help grow the visibility and support for ALT's important work.

**Ann LeRoyer**, an ALT Board member and Clerk, was recognized in May for more than 22 years of service as Chair of the Arlington Open Space Committee. She received a proclamation from the Select Board during Town Meeting and was thrilled that her colleagues arranged for a bench to be placed at the Arlington Reservoir in her honor.

## Symmes Woods and Parks



Since 2014 the Arlington Land Trust and Conservation Commission have been co-holders of a conservation restriction (CR) on more than eight acres of land surrounding Arlington 360 and BrightView on the former Symmes Hospital site off Summer Street. The CR lands include the

Symmes Woods, two landscaped parks at the top of the hill, and buffer areas around the site.

The terms of the CR require regular monitoring to ensure that the protected land is being maintained and the boundaries are respected. Changes in management at Greystar/Arlington 360 have made consistent oversight difficult at times, but we are pleased to report progress during the past year.

### CR Monitoring Report

Conservation monitor Maggie Werneburg documented conditions during site visits in the spring of 2023 and submitted her report to ALT in April. Supplementing previous reports and existing boundary markers, she noted numerous instances of encroachments from abutting properties, ranging from dumped yard waste and trash to occasional structures and landscaping that extended into the CR land.

Conversations continue among ALT, the Conservation Commission, Greystar/Arlington 360, and the abutting property owners to ensure that all parties are aware of the boundaries and maintain the land appropriately. A new survey of the boundaries was

completed this fall, and additional survey markers and CR sign posts are being installed to more clearly demarcate boundary corners and other landmarks.

### Forest Management Plan

Consulting arborist Daniel E. Cathcart has prepared a Forest Restoration and Invasive Species Mitigation Management Plan for Greystar/Arlington 360, as another part of the CR requirements. The Plan includes a complete plant inventory and map, a summary of invasive species populations, a multi-year policy for reducing the population of invasive species, and a multi-year restoration planting strategy.

The Plan proposes that roughly twenty percent of the trees and invasive shrubs/vines will be removed annually. It also presents a revegetation schedule to restore the site with native species of trees and shrubs that have been marginalized by the expansion of the invasive species populations. Greystar is responsible for implementing the Plan in collaboration with the Conservation Commission and the ALT.

## Support the Land Trust

Arlington Land Trust is a membership organization that depends on your participation. All donors to ALT's special funds also receive full membership benefits. If you have not yet renewed your ALT membership or sent a contribution for 2023, please respond to our annual mailing or go to the website to make your donation online. Thank you again for your continuing support. If you have any questions, and if you are interested in volunteering, please contact ALT via email.