



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Arlington Planning Department, 730 Mass Ave,
Arlington MA, c/o Laura Wiener

To: Board of Selectmen, Arlington, MA
From: Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)
Subject: Downing Square Update
Date: 6 February 2012

Since the Board of Selectmen approved the Downing Square recommendations (detailed in our 2009 report), several items have been addressed to develop a final design. Enough has changed that we felt it was appropriate to prepare this update for your approval before completing the project.

Following the Board of Selectmen's vote in 2009, a consultant was hired to conduct an engineering survey and prepare preliminary engineering drawings according to the recommended plan. Both the recommended plan from our 2009 report and the most recent engineering drawing are attached. It's important to note that the engineering survey revealed a strip of land (approximately 20 feet wide) on the west side of Park Avenue within the Town's right of way.

The TAC working group reviewed the material and an email update was sent to the project contact list of roughly 80 individuals. The email included a request for volunteers to help us review the preliminary engineering plan. Several people came forward to represent the neighborhood and local businesses. The group met with BSC Group Engineer Sam Offei-Addo and came up with a number of specific refinements:

- Add parallel parking on the west side of Park Avenue
- Install a flashing beacon on the Park Avenue approach
- Modify the stone wall at Westminster Avenue / Park Avenue Extension corner
- Install Heights business district street lights on Park Avenue

The Town Engineer and TAC met on-site with Covenant Church Pastor Brian Emmet regarding modifications to the stone retaining wall at the corner of Westminster Avenue and Park Avenue Extension. (Mr. Emmet offered this suggestion at the engineering plan review meeting.) Rounding off the corner of this wall would improve motorist visibility and pedestrian mobility. Pending further review, the Town is moving forward with including the wall modification as a line item cost. Work would proceed based on an agreement with the Church on the private property portion of the project.

The right of way land on the west side of Park Avenue also offered the opportunity to add green space to the Square. We worked with Lisa Decker (Arlington Open Space and Tree

Transportation Advisory Committee Members:

Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Wayne Chouinard, Jean Clark, Paul Kent, Officer Corey Rateau, Jeffrey Maxtutis,
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Committees) and met with the Open Space Committee to develop a landscape plan for Downing Square. The proposed plan (see attached) includes street trees, benches and a bike rack integrated into the design.

As the details of the right turn pocket from Lowell Street to Bow Street were developed, it became apparent that conflicts between pedestrians and turning traffic would be difficult to resolve in the limited space available at the intersection. Several attempts were made to resolve these conflicts. Unfortunately, each had unacceptable safety problems.

The TAC working group met and concluded that eliminating the turn pocket was the simplest and safest solution. The Town Engineer presented the Fire Department with options for the Lowell Street / Bow Street corner. The Deputy Chief responded that he and the Fire Chief preferred the option which removed the turn pocket. Alternative routes for fire equipment would avoid this turn.

Although right turns from Lowell onto Bow would not be prohibited, these turns would be more difficult without the turn pocket, especially for large vehicles. Yet, we believe that the safety implications warrant its removal from the plan. Reasonable alternate routes are available and the volume of turns is not high. (Turning counts indicate that there are 20 right turns during the morning peak hour, 27 during the evening peak hour and 15 during the Saturday peak hour.)

The TAC was notified of the working group's recommendation and unanimously voted the following on January 11, 2012:

- Revise the Downing Square recommendations (of October 2009) to remove the turn pocket from Lowell Street to Bow Street.

The Town would like to proceed with final drawings and construction on the project this year. Timing modifications have already been made to the signal at Massachusetts and Park Avenues (as recommended in our 2009 report).

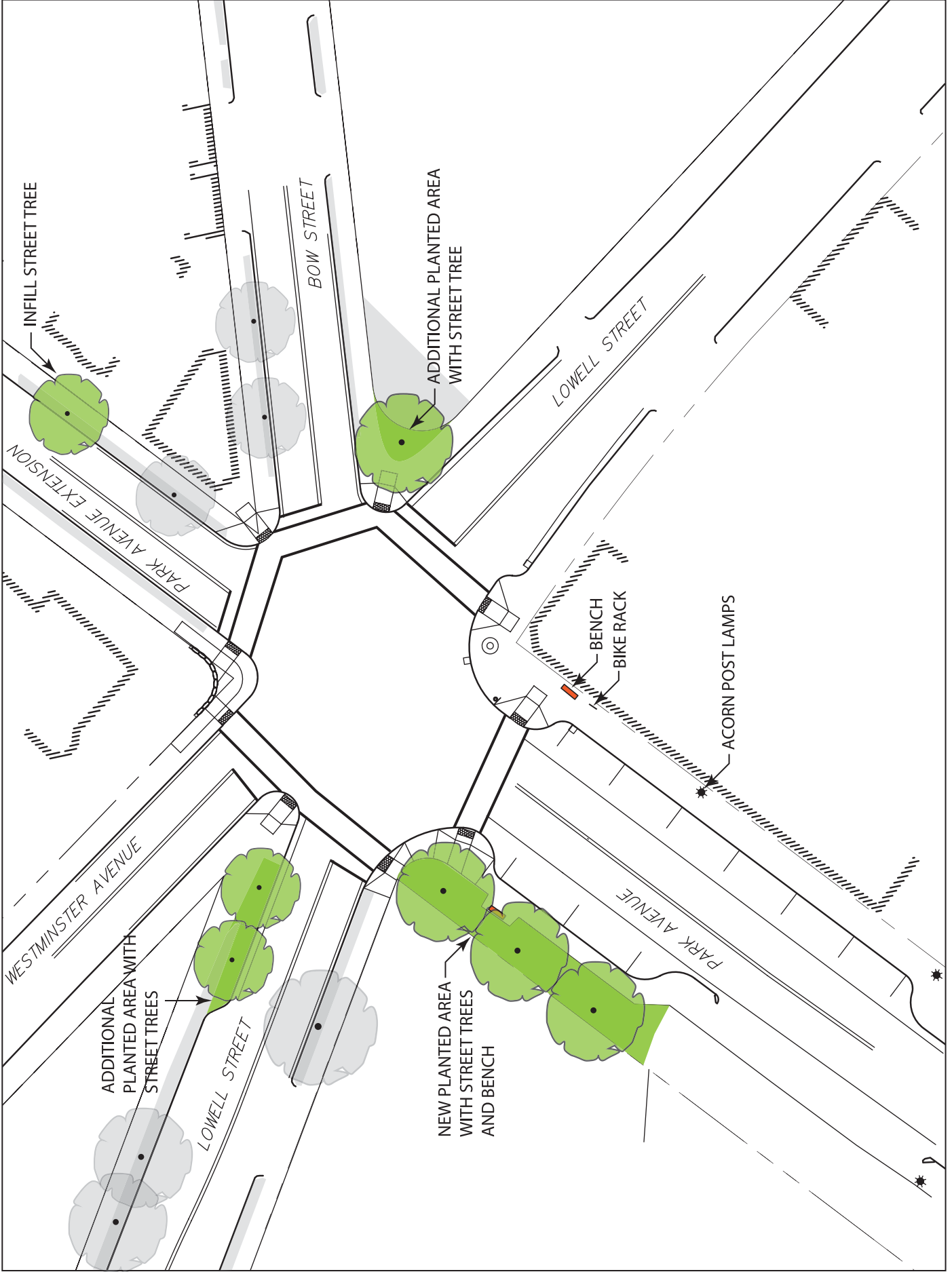
Respectfully submitted:

Elisabeth Carr-Jones, working group lead
Jeffrey Maxtutis, Co-Chair
Transportation Advisory Committee

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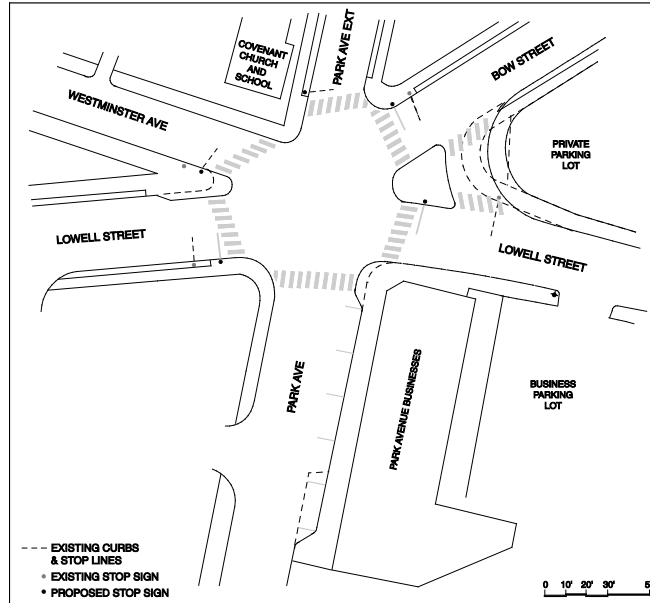
DOWNING SQUARE PROPOSED LANDSCAPE PLAN

Previous TAC Recommendations

Reprinted from October 2009 report

1. Modify signal timing, install vehicle detection loops and designate southbound approach lanes by lane striping at the intersection of Massachusetts and Park Avenues to improve operations and reduce vehicle queues on Park Avenue between Massachusetts Avenue and Downing Square.

2. Implement Option 1 as illustrated



- a) Tighten corners and provide definitive stop lines at stop-controlled streets to improve motorist visibility and safety.
- b) Add bump outs, islands and handicap ramps to improve pedestrian safety.
- c) Institute a parallel parking arrangement on Park Avenue, and consider time limits on adjacent parking places to accommodate businesses.
- d) Provide advance signage, pavement markings and/or flashing red/yellow beacons alerting motorists to intersection.
- e) Improve lighting for the intersection, such as increased street lighting for pedestrians and business patrons.
- f) Repave intersection and adjust drainage as needed.

3. Provide opportunity for enhanced streetscape

- a) Facilitate development of appropriate character for overall project design.
- b) Contact Arlington Garden Club for possible business participation in maintaining plantings.
- c) Suggest that businesses make shared parking arrangements with the two adjacent parking lots, and for employees to park away from site and employ Transportation Demand Management measures.
- d) Consider rededicating Square to Captain Downing and M. Sergeant Downing upon completion with appropriate ceremony.

4. Maintain the ability to consider future improvements such as signalization or further modifications at Bow and Lowell Streets.

5. The DPW will oversee the design process, which will include development of concepts and preliminary and final design plans. Draft plans will be presented for public comment and reviewed by the TAC and other Town committees and departments.