

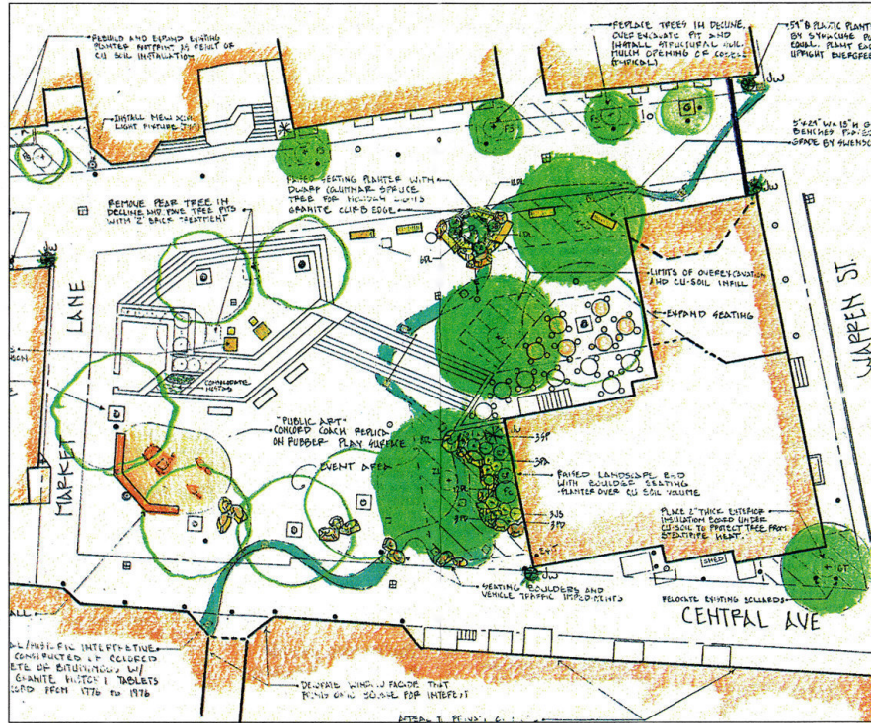


A history runs through the river: Local historian Judy Dickinson worked with the city, Groundwork Concord and third-graders to come up with 15 important facts and fixtures, including White Park, Eastman Park and the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium . . .



City of Concord

The before shot: Enticing, isn't it? And is that a bus stop over there? Hmm . . . don't see any buses. Whatever it was, it's gone now, and to its right will be a rocky retreat - a place for people to contemplate, rest or play.

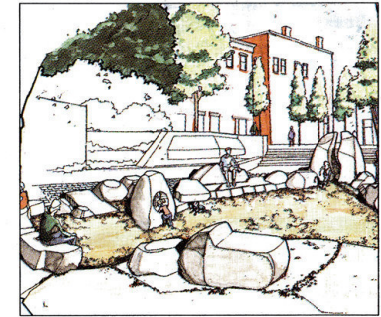


Drawing from Groundwork Concord

This 2003 plan for the square, designed by landscape architect John Sullivan, is still mostly on track: a blue brick river meanders through the space, and a tan circle to the lower left marks the "glacial retreat," an interactive boulder garden designed by local artist Chance Anderson. The green circles, filled in and outlined, mark spots where trees have been planted.



. . . not to mention Main Street, the quarries and, of course, the State House. This spring, the drawings and their accompanying text will be etched into 15 slabs of white stone and placed in the brick river at intervals.



Chance Anderson

The "glacial retreat" was designed by Canterbury artist Chance Anderson. If the square is meant to be a miniature version of Concord, why the boulders? "I just went back about 10,000 years," he said.

THE MAKING OF A HIPPER SQUARE

Bicentennial gets a river, a turtle and some funkified boulders

We were about to tell you about all the hubbub going on at Bicentennial Square, but we realized we might get a few blank looks from readers. Bicentennial what? Where? (The space behind Margaritas. Ring a bell now?) And even if you know where it is, you don't go there. For years, it has seen only the occasional passer-by or teen killing time. Even tumbleweeds avoid it.

Enter the hubbub: The city and a local nonprofit, among others, want to un-cool it, if you will. And things have definitely changed. That old, '70s canopy is gone, for one thing, and the space now has a mascot: a large stone turtle who watches over the men tearing up bricks to put in the river.

That's right, a river. It starts at Granite State Candy and runs southeast, down the steps and across Central Avenue toward Main Street. It's made of blue brick, so don't worry about flooding. There are other cool features, like the history tiles and the glacial retreat, but before we tell you about them you should probably know how this all came about.

Back in 2002, the city began thinking seriously about revitalizing the square. It got together with Groundwork Concord, a nonprofit focused on improving the city's physical environment (they're the ones who plant all those trees), and a vision emerged. The goal was a sort of mini-Concord - hence the mini-Merrimack - with a more natural,

open feel. Years passed. Federal money rolled in. Committees were formed, an artist chosen. A lot of meetings happened. Hardhats were donned.

And this fall, things really got moving. If you visit the square, you'll see some things already in place, such as the river (minus the history tiles and a power-washing that will bring out the blue). Big rocks are strewn about: some of them where they're supposed to be, others in transit. The turtle was originally destined for the boulder area, but things changed. Where he'll end up is anybody's guess.

By May 1 or so, the square will be reborn, says Nancy Berliner, Groundwork Concord's executive director. But stop by before then. Say hi to the

guys with the trowels, and see if you can't give the mascot a name. Not "Tommy," okay? You can do better.

The money

\$100,000 in federal funding, passed along by Concord 20/20, another local nonprofit.

ANOTHER \$100,000 in federal dollars, thanks to U.S. Rep. Charlie Bass.

\$23,300 out of the city's pocket (On Jan. 8, the city council will officially talk about whether to put that amount toward the project.)

MONEY'S STILL NEEDED, and donors may receive bronze thank-you cards affixed to various boulders. (Call Groundwork Concord for details.)

The players

CONCORD GROUNDWORK CONCORD
JOHN SULLIVAN, landscape architect
CHANCE ANDERSON, stony artist
DZIOBA CONSTRUCTION CO. of Derry
JUDY DICKINSON, history guru

and last but not least, 15 CONCORD STUDENTS. (Psst . . . young artists, step up, please. We'd like to give credit where credit's due. E-mail us at news@theconcordinsider.com and tell us what inspired you!)

DANIELLE KRONK