Public Comments and Idea Gathering for the North Common

Town of Amherst
April 1, 2014
Purpose of public meeting and process moving forward

- Review current conditions of the Common
  - Historic site, including WCTU Fountain
  - Areas of poor drainage and no turf
  - Lack of accessibility
  - Limited pedestrian paths, seating, lighting and gathering spaces
  - Important space for Town Center
  - Public shade trees
- Comments on Concepts to develop themes for future design
  - Two concept plans
- Town may apply for funding for design and construction
  - PARC Grant Program
History of the Town Common

• Town Common is as old as Amherst
• Town Common is part of the road right of way and is not a piece of property
• Amherst Select Board has jurisdiction over the Town Common
• Many boards and committees are involved with maintenance and planning of the Common
• It is an original historic common, not a park, used for civic events and communal uses and gatherings
• The Town Common has been continually redesigned over the years to accommodate changing public needs
Ca. 1740 Map-Original Layout of Common From Bay Road to Mill River in North Amherst
1874 Frederick Law Olmsted Design of Town Common
The Common, Amherst, Mass.
Existing Conditions

- Important space for Town Center
  - Used for weekly and monthly events and for special occasions
  - Surrounded by local businesses
- Public shade trees

- Exposed tree roots and compacted soil
- Significant areas lacking turf and grass
- Poor drainage
• Approximately 16 feet of grade change
• Uniform slope (~6%) to the southeast
• 15 public shade trees
Existing Conditions

- Limited pedestrian paths, seating, lighting and gathering spaces
- Lack of accessibility
Existing Conditions

- High pedestrian use, both on paths and on informal paths
- Significant areas lacking turf and grass
- Poor drainage
Existing Conditions

- Deteriorating tree boxes
- Poor drainage
Concept Considerations

- Based on site assessment and past comments
- A key downtown space
- Used year-round
- An urban setting
- Preserve its historic character
- Pedestrians
- Accessibility and safety
- Amenities such as seating and lighting
- Drainage
- Gathering spaces
PARC Grant Program

• State-sponsored grant program through the Division of Conservation Services in the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
• Helps assist communities with acquiring, developing and rehabilitating land for parks and other outdoor recreation purposes, as well as historic preservation
• Reimbursement grant—Town pays for total project cost and is reimbursed 70%