

Boston Landmarks Commission
Loring-Greenough House
12 South St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

August 2026

Proposal for Perennial Borders and Lawn Path Renovations

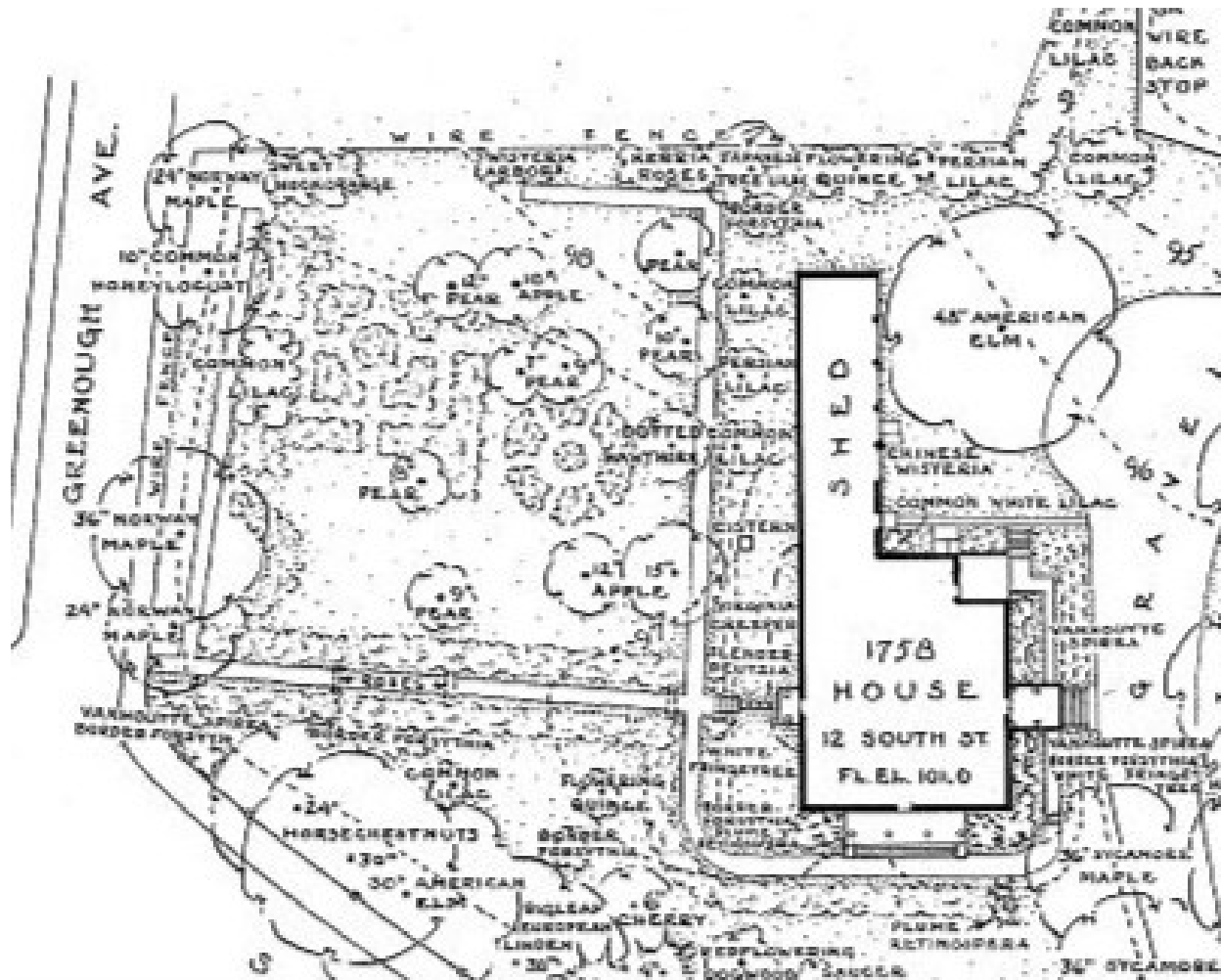
1. Archaeological and Historical Documentation

Archaeological work of the north yard of the Loring Greenough House was carried out under State Archaeologist permit No. 2145 between April 19 and May 3, 2002 by the Center for Cultural and Environmental History (CCEH). The results were then extensively documented in the Fiske Archaeology Report, 'Archaeological Site Examination - North Yard of the Loring-Greenough House, Jamaica Plain MA' in 2004.

Based on the discovery of fragments of pottery in two rectangular excavations in the parallel plant borders, the current pathway is thought to have originated in the early 1800's. The original pathway material was a medium-brown coarse sand and gravel. In the decades to follow, numerous layers of coal ash, coarse sand and gravel were added and compacted. The addition of planted borders alongside the pathway material is thought to have occurred between 1840 and 1860. It appears that soil from the plant beds oftentimes mixed with the path surface to form a sandy loam at the meandering pathway edges. The addition of a final ash layer is thought to have occurred in the late 1800's to early 1900's. The beds at this juncture were cut into the path width in order to properly define the pathway edges. According to the Fiske Report, sometime after 1937 a layer of loam was spread over the path layers at an approximate width of 1 meter.

The original depth of the pathway measured approximately 30 to 40 centimeters (12" to 16"), with the surficial soil layer around 5" in depth. The A horizons occur below the original pathway layers. The alignment of the pathway and plant borders is thought to have originated as a desire line reaching from the north house entrance to a gate in the Greenough Ave. fenceline. Thus, as shown on the HABS plan, the orientation of the pathway and plant borders is not perpendicular to the north wall of the house, but set at a slight angle.

The HABS report, or Historic American Building Survey, no. MA 272, was completed in 1937. The image below is taken from the HABS plan.



HABS plan from 1937

2. Description of the Present Site

Existing Perennial Borders: The perennial borders are located within the lawn area north of the Loring-Greenough House. They are each approximately 70 feet in length and 5 feet in width and oriented slightly askew to a north south axis centered on the north doorway. The borders have been in existence for many years and were documented on the HABS survey done in 1937. The beds were renovated with new perennial plantings approximately 20 years ago by volunteers of the Loring-Greenough House. In the intervening years, the borders have become densely overgrown and infilled with invasive and unsuitable plants. The perennial borders however still attract many visitors, old and young, to the Loring-Greenough House.

Existing Lawn Path: Visitors to the Loring Greenough House total around 25,000 every year with Thursdays on the Lawn events from summer to fall, weddings and casual daily use. With this intense pedestrian use from spring through fall, the lawn path is compacted and often muddy or dusty and not conducive to pedestrian use.



*Existing Perennial Borders with Lawn Path, facing south.
The Loring-Greenough House is in the background.*

To find a solution that will survive year-round, the turf and bare areas of the pathway have been renovated multiple times in the last 10 years. The pathway was initially replaced with new sod. This quickly failed. Subsequent restoration attempts have been done in the early spring every year and involve core aeration, addition of compost and new seed. Despite producing lush grass at the beginning of the summer season, each of these efforts eventually fail due to the very heavy pedestrian use which causes compaction and degradation of the grass plants.



Existing Lawn Path and Perennial Borders, facing north



Graduation Ceremony



Ex. Lawn Path and Borders, facing north. Ex. bluestone terrace and stairs are in foreground.

3. Perennial Borders and Walkway Proposal

The Loring-Greenough House proposes to replace the existing lawn pathway with a bluestone paver walkway which will provide a durable and weatherproof surface. The proposed bluestone pavers will match the color, texture and paver dimensions of the existing adjacent bluestone terrace. The pavers will be set on a 1" depth stonedust setting bed laid over a 9" depth compacted dense graded base layer. The overall excavation depth will be approximately 11.5" to 12" and will not go into the A horizons below.

As mentioned earlier in this proposal, materials such as coal ash, coarse sand and gravels were used as pathway materials in the 19th and early 20th centuries. For a present day walkway used by frequent visitors to the grounds, these granular materials are not recommended because they will migrate into planting soils and are conducive to growth of weeds thus creating maintenance issues.

The new bluestone walkway is designed at a 4 foot width so that two people can walk side by side down the walkway. This proposed width also approximates the original walkway width of 1 meter as determined by archaeologists in their report. The proposed 69 foot long walkway will be set on axis with the existing bluestone staircase and aligned with the existing angled lawn path. The new plant beds are designed at 6 foot widths which is similar to the existing bed widths. The beds are the same length as the proposed walkway. The outside edge of the beds will be edged with flush cobblestones in order to create more maintenance free and distinct perimeters where they abut the lawn.

Perennial Border and Walk Layout: The proposed perennial borders and bluestone walk are proposed to be aligned with the angled orientation of the existing plant beds and lawn path. The Loring-Greenough House proposes to renovate the existing plant beds with new plantings including low maintenance and non-invasive perennials and grasses as well as the incorporation of compost into the existing soil. The inclusion of occasional deciduous and evergreen shrubs will give year-round color and structure to the borders.

Walkway Materials

The inspiration for the use of bluestone for the proposed walkway evolved from the historical use of bluestone in the existing stoop at the north entrance (shown below). This material was also used in the adjoining walk, staircase and lower terrace. The latter installations have proven to be durable, with little or no maintenance required as opposed to the brick units which were installed in a pathway on the south side of the house.



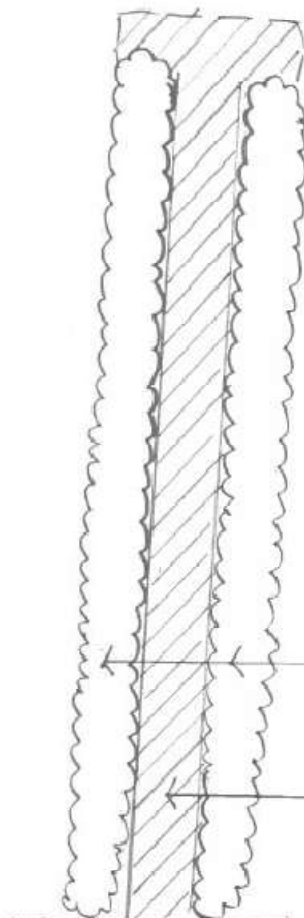
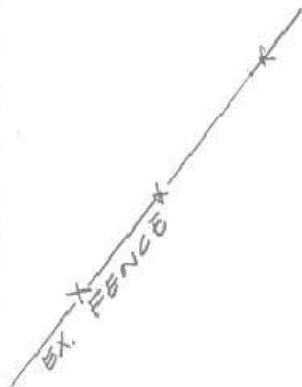


Ex. Bluestone terrace and stairs, in foreground.

4. Site Preparation and Construction Procedure

Throughout the construction process, from site preparation to completion of site work and planting, the contractor (to be determined) will be made cognizant of the fact that they are working in and on a historic, Boston Landmarked site which may contain archaeological items below existing grade. As advised by the City of Boston Archaeology department, compaction from construction equipment, vehicles and storage of heavy materials are potential issues that the contractor will be made aware of, and advised to avoid throughout construction.

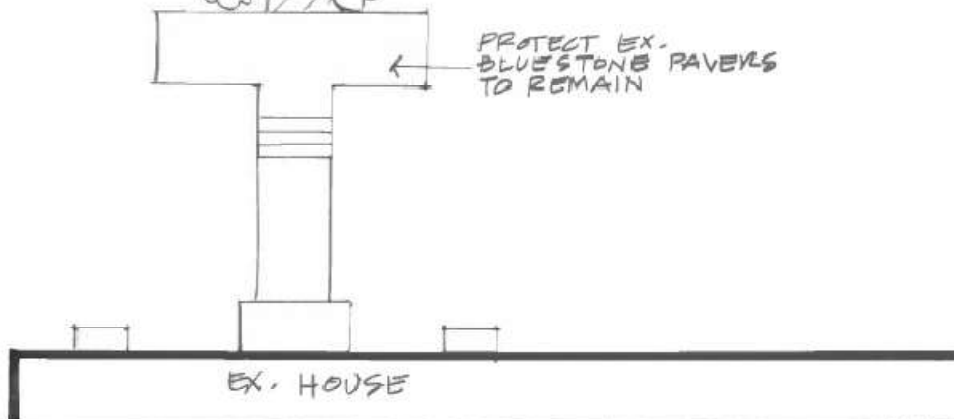
The City's Archaeology Dept. has also advised that excavations into the existing soils be limited to no greater than a 12" depth. This will be adhered to throughout the site preparation and construction phases.



REMOVE EX.
PERENNIALS

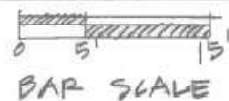
REMOVE EX. LAWN

PROTECT EX.
BLUESTONE PAVERS
TO REMAIN



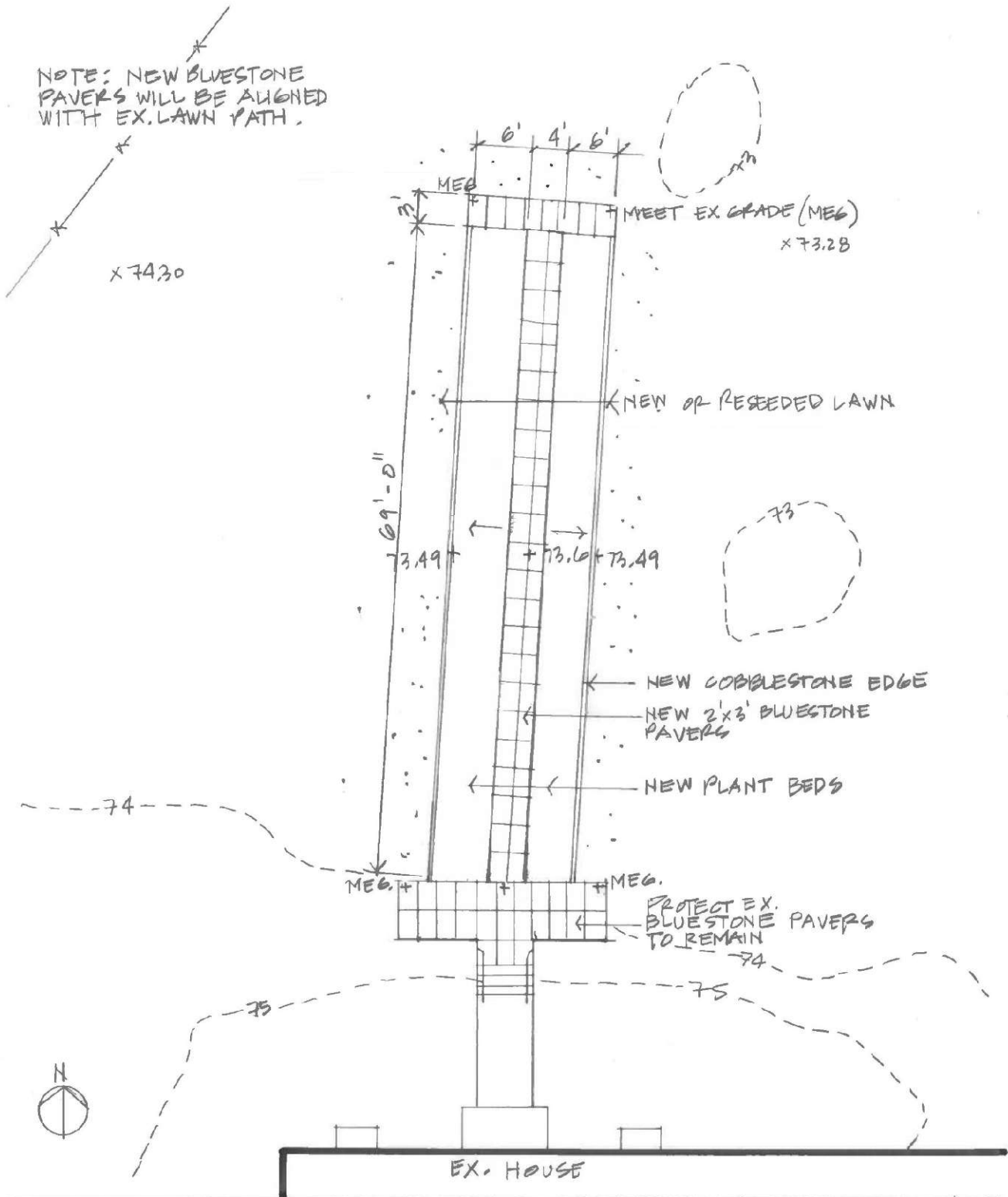
LORING - GREENOUGH
HOUSE
12 SOUTH ST., DP, MA

SITE PREPARATION PLAN



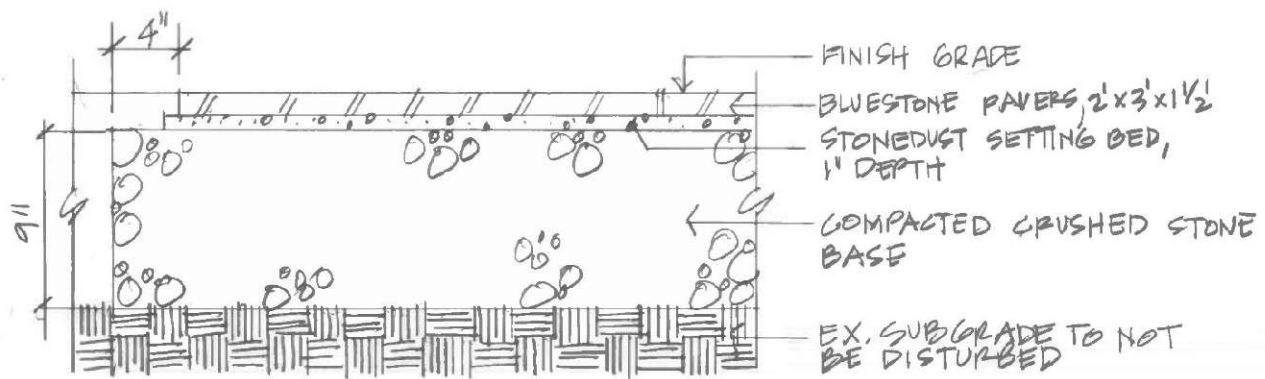
DWG.
L1

NOTE: NEW BLUESTONE
PAVERS WILL BE ALIGNED
WITH EX. LAWN PATH.

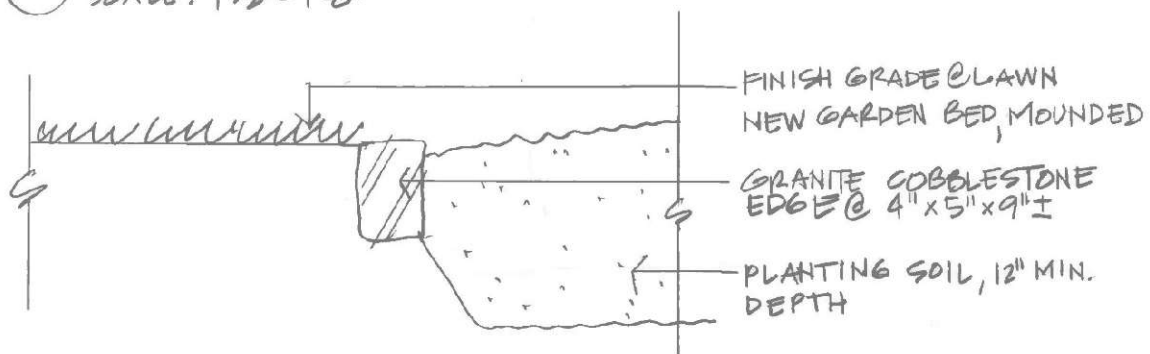


LORING - GREENOUGH
HOUSE
12 SOUTH ST., DP, MA

LANDSCAPE PLAN



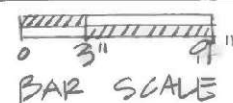
① BLUESTONE PAVERS - SECTION
SCALE: $1\frac{1}{2}'' = 1'-0''$



② COBBLESTONE EDGE - SECTION
SCALE: $1\frac{1}{2}'' = 1'-0''$

LOJING - GREENOUGH
HOUSE
12 SOUTH ST, JP, MA

SITE DETAILS



DWG.
L3

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EXISTING IMAGES- FACING NORTH



Existing Perennial Borders in winter.



Existing Perennial Borders with Lawn Path in late winter.
Ex. bluestone terrace is shown at the south end of the
borders.



Existing Perennial Borders in early spring.



Existing Perennial Borders in mid summer.



Existing Borders and Lawn Path in mid-summer, facing north