

Q News for March 4

Here's what's happening in your community



Big People in a Little Elevator

In short: The planter box project gets underway March 18 at Building 1. It's an extensive (and expensive) undertaking.

Look carefully at the picture above. That's the west planter box in front of Building 5. The conifer measures well over fifty feet. There are some interesting things to know about planter boxes:

- They're not planter boxes in the traditional, charming-little-wooden-box-with-peonies sort of way. They're almost three feet deep and they hold an estimated *thirteen truckloads* of material, including irrigation, wiring, and—of course—living botanical material. *Lots* of living botanical material.
- That living material includes, as pictured, occasional trees, many of which exceed forty feet in height. These trees' roots are confined to the three-foot depth of the planter box. A week or so ago, [eight members of the Portland Trailblazers were trapped in a Boston elevator](#) for half an hour. Big people in a little box. The crowding in our planter boxes is a bit like that.
- Although it doesn't look like it, the planter boxes are built over our parking garages. Like Trailblazers in an elevator, the roots are restless. They have begun to tear away at the

membrane that keeps water from seeping out of the box. The membranes are disintegrating and water is seeping into the garages below.

- The floor of the planter boxes (the ceiling over the garages) is built of concrete with steel (rebar) reinforcement. Concrete is porous. As water soaks into the concrete, there's concern that the entire structure is being compromised by rust.

Thus, the planter boxes in front of Building 1 will be emptied—of *everything*—things will be left to dry, new membranes will be installed, and a whole new landscape design will be put in place, containing—presumably—no trees (and, we're assured, no grass). Plantings will be in large containers. Irrigation will be of the drip variety.

Funds have been accumulating in reserves for four years for the project, estimated at about \$200,000 per building. Building 1's boxes will be a test case. If all goes well, the project will be repeated four more times in front of four more buildings, staggered over a period of eight or more years. The final design isn't yet determined.

Incredibly, at the managerial level this is a volunteer effort. Dwight Lockwood and Kurt Welty—along with members of the Reserves Committee—are the general contractors. The Landscape Committee will spearhead the replacement design, working with contractors and within a budget, the extent of which will be determined by the actual cost of demolition and what we find once everything is out of the way.

Bartlett Tree Experts will begin removing trees and grinding stumps on March 18. Portland Mechanical Contractors will remove water lines; Jarmer Electric will remove everything electrical. DeSantis Landscapes will excavate the material; Beltz Restoration & Waterproofing will install the new membrane. Bids are being solicited for the new landscape design and its installation. The Building 1 project is projected to conclude in the fall of this year.

That's it for today. The Q News is published by the Quintet Communications Committee. The most recent issues are available on [the Quintet website](#). If you would like to contribute (Have something to sell? Help wanted? An announcement? Praise?), please address an email to commcomm@thequintet.org. Photos are accepted where appropriate. We will probably edit for length and content.