

Minute

Meeting Date/Time

May 25, 2017

Today's Date

May 30, 2017

Location

Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester
35 Deer St
Boston, MA 02125

Written By

Yao Xiao

Project

Downer Park:

Purpose

Community Meeting Minutes

Pages

4

Copies to

MF, MJY, record

Present

Michele Folts
Marchelle Jacques-Yarde
Shauna Gillies-Smith
Yao Xiao
Community members

Organization

Boston Parks and Recreation
Boston Parks and Recreation
Ground Landscape
Ground Landscape

Initials

MF
MJY
SGS
YX

Item Description

1. A police officer gave a brief talk about safety issues around Downer Ave Park area. He appealed to neighbors to collaborate reporting suspicious activities to improve safety conditions nearby.
2. **Introduction by Michele Folts from Boston Parks and Recreation:** MF talked about the Downer Park project. She explained the project process and introduced the project team and partners. Michele presented the budget, schedule, goals, and survey results.
3. **Presentation by Shauna Gillies Smith from Ground Inc.** SGS reviewed the earlier site analysis and community engagement process, and then presented three conceptual schemes. The designs included the improvement enhanced safety, decorative lighting, improved visibility, green spaces, added seating, play spaces, social and fitness spaces, a basketball court, and a dog run area. The scheme
4. **Public discussion.** All the attendants gathered by the 1”=10’ scale physical models to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of each of the schemes.

Public comments (Notes only):

1. Basketball Court and Safety:
 - i. Several community members expressed very strong concerns about having a full-size or half-size basketball court. They believed that the basket-ball court would attract unwanted and dangerous activities. Although some neighbors liked the full-size basketball-court, most at the meeting did not want a full size court. MF explained that the result of the online survey and the Boston Park’s department’s goals supported basketball courts in this location. A proposed compromise solution was suggested of a multi-purpose court that included a basketball hoop that seemed to be well received.
 - ii. Some individuals liked the location of a basketball hoop in scheme C. They liked the proximity to the main entrance of the park and the overall exposure--allowing the basketball area space to be overseen by more users of the park. The suggestion for diversified uses on the basketball court was well received among neighbors. Some of the suggested uses were: Tennis, Volleyball, Yoga, Taiichi, and movie night. Tennis courts were discussed as being too
2. Connection to Hancock Stair:
 - i. Concern was expressed that parts of the Hancock Stair are currently dangerous due to the lack of visibility from the street and park. There was a suggestion to make the Hancock Stair Access more open to the street or park by grading or replacing the wall with a fence so the stair become more visible from the street and park.
 - ii. Two of the schemes showed a potential access to the Hancock Stair landing directly from the park. Some members thought this would be positive in that it would bring more

pedestrian traffic through the park thus reducing unwanted activities. Others thought that the connection could become an escape route from police or other authorities.

3. Street Openness and Safety:

- i. In general the sentiment was expressed to open-up the park to Downer Avenue as much as possible with multiple access points. The seat-walls along the street in scheme C were very well received. In general the stair access in the lower part of the park was also well received with the caution that it not provide further hiding places.

4. General Programing and Uses:

- i. Several people spoke about the necessity to have a park that serves everyone and not only specific groups. They talked about having a park that attracts more users all year around. Winter programs and activities should be taken into consideration. The community also would like the park to be durable and lasting.
- ii. Forming a 'Friends Group' was discussed. MJY described many benefits to the park and the neighborhood of Friends Groups.

5. Dog Play Area:

- i. There was a lot of interest expressed in having a dog play area - either fenced or not with some preference for a fenced area. SGS suggested locating the park next to the Hancock stair. Several people agreed with the location since the frequent use would deter unwanted activities.

6. Fitness Path and Activities:

- i. A lot of support was shown for having a fitness path and fitness stations as in Scheme A.

7. Playground:

- i. The big built in slides and climbing areas in both scheme A and C were well received. Some individuals expressed concerns about the proximity to the dog play area.

8. Lighting:

- i. Many members of the community spoke about the need for lighting in the park, especially for safety reasons, however quite a few also mentioned that they liked the idea of lighting the trees.

9. Public Art:

- i. Some individuals suggested the inclusion of public art – primarily murals.

10. Trees and Green Space:

- i. Some neighbors talked about the trees at the main entrance of scheme B. They believed that the tress could reduce the openness and safety of the park. Others

disagreed and talked about the advantages of having the trees for shade and comfort.

11. Privacy of Abutters:

- i. One abutter conveyed the desire to have more buffer between the park and residences such as the seat-wall and slope in Scheme B.

The above minutes constitute our understanding of events that transpired at this meeting. Please notify this office in writing of corrections or additions within ten working days of receipt of these minutes.