

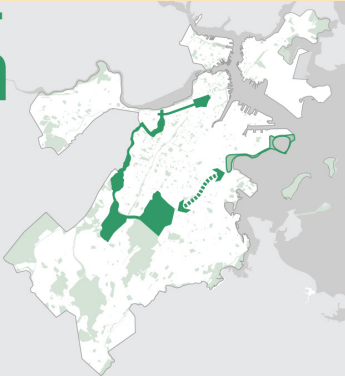


# Open Space

Boston is home to some of the country’s most iconic parkland. Today, nearly every Bostonian lives within a five-minute walk of a park or open space. From tot lots to the fields of Moakley Park in South Boston, to the natural shoreline of the Condor Street Urban Wild in East Boston, these varied resources improve quality of life citywide.

With careful investment from a variety of sources, a distinct and activated network of new and existing open spaces can knit together neighborhoods, strengthen connections to the waterfront, make our city more climate resilient, and promote healthy, active communities. As Boston grows, the following initiatives will enable us to create a parks network for Boston’s fifth century.

Green City



Boston residents shared many open space suggestions in workshops and online in Summer 2016, including ideas for new open space in their neighborhoods, for enhancing existing open space at Franklin Park and elsewhere, and for creating better walking and biking connections to all kinds of open space. One Roxbury resident suggested that the city "focus on greenways connecting neighborhoods and investing in the local parks that people use on a daily basis in their neighborhood."

← Franklin Park



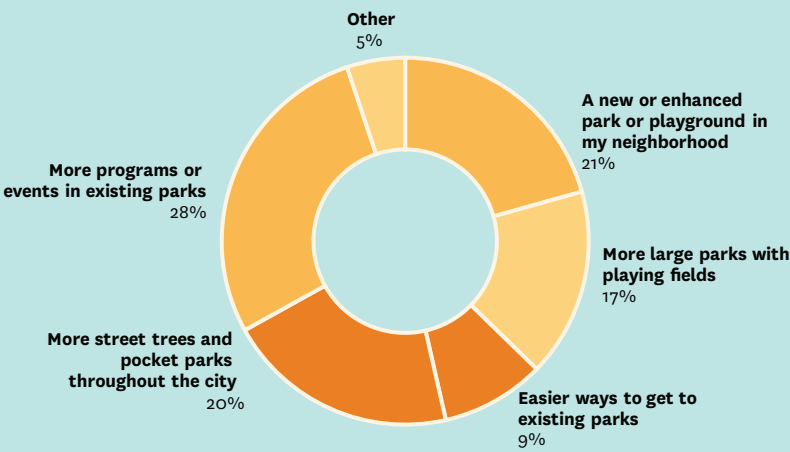
# This is what inspires us to act.

A Boston resident and pet at the South Boston Farmers Market ↓



When asked, "What kinds of open space improvements would make the most impact in your daily life?"

Boston residents replied:



Source: 7,421 surveys; 7,070 comment cards through street teams; 153 website responses, 198 Imagine Boston Forum responses (respondents asked to rank choices; answers to the left were ranked #1)

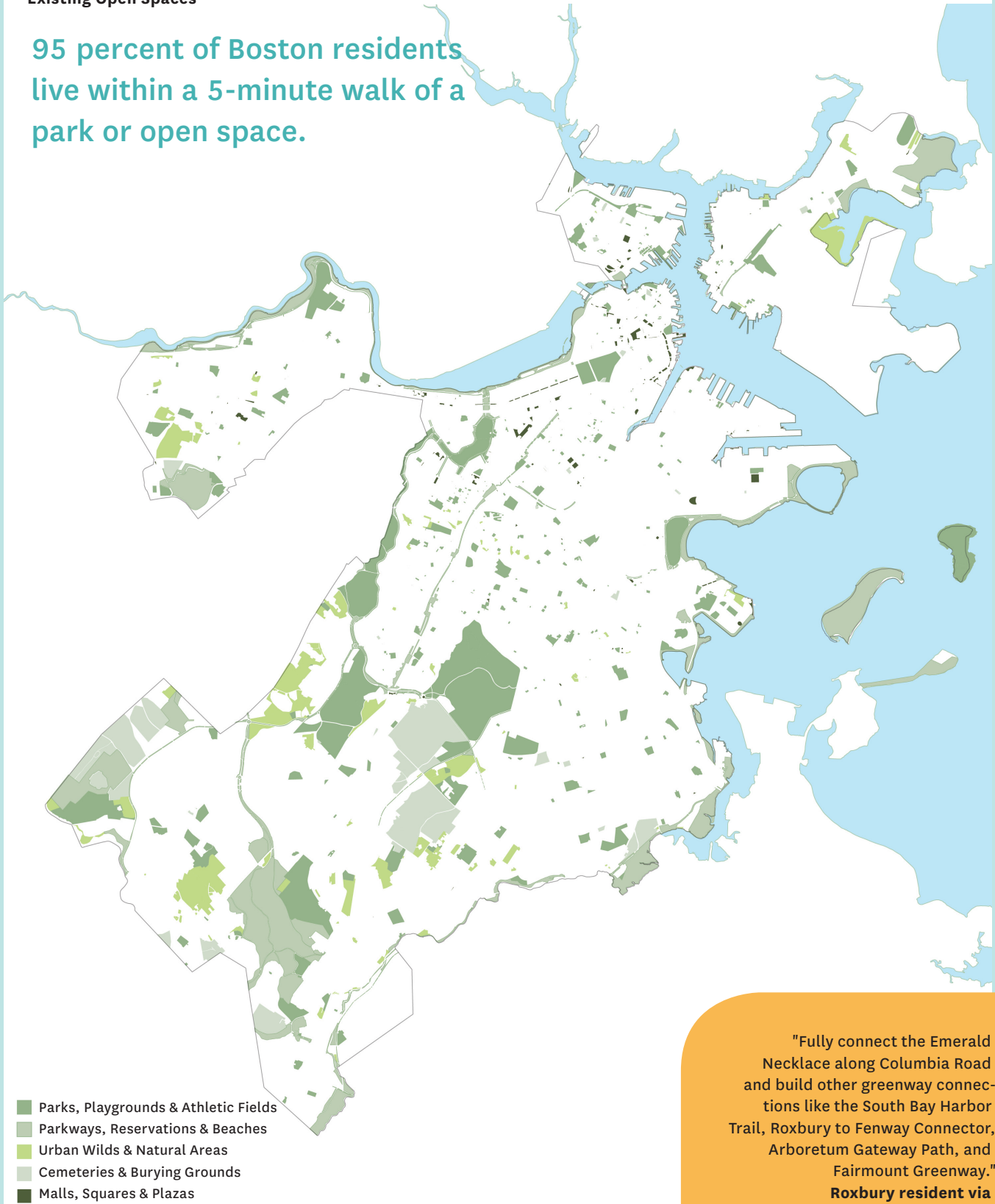
"American Legion Hwy./ Parkway corridor...provides the most natural extension of the Emerald Necklace, all the way down to Stony Brook Reservation and the Neponset Greenway"  
Resident via draft plan feedback

of connected open space continue to inspire Boston.

Open-space access is widespread, but quality and diversity of these open spaces vary. Ninety-five percent of residents live within a five-minute walk of a park or open space. But parks vary in quality and diversity of the landscape and activities available to residents. Some residents have to travel a long distance to reach a park for recreational activities such as baseball or swimming.

## Existing Open Spaces

95 percent of Boston residents live within a 5-minute walk of a park or open space.



Source: City of Boston Open Data, MassGIS

"Fully connect the Emerald Necklace along Columbia Road and build other greenway connections like the South Bay Harbor Trail, Roxbury to Fenway Connector, Arboretum Gateway Path, and Fairmount Greenway."  
Roxbury resident via community workshop

# We will:

**A**  
**Connect the final section of the Emerald Necklace to Boston’s waterfront**

This new corridor will accommodate transportation and recreation that improves access to some of our largest parks, increases connections in underserved areas of our city, and makes our city more climate resilient by absorbing stormwater and expanding our tree canopy.

**B**  
**Undertake a longer-term effort to work with key partners to create a network of green spaces.**

The Emerald Necklace will be an anchor to a wider network of open spaces that will connect parks citywide. Streets will be designed as green links, connecting Moakley Park, the Emerald Necklace to Pope John Paul Park, the Neponset, American Legion, the Arboretum, Roslindale Square, and Stony Brook Reservation. We will prioritize improvements that upgrade public health, safety, and accessibility for residents in underserved neighborhoods.

**C**  
**Invest in Boston’s largest park, Franklin Park**

We will enhance Franklin Park as a keystone park in the geographical heart of the city. Sitting at the nexus of Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan,

Roslindale, and Jamaica Plain, Franklin Park will grow in its role as a destination for visitors citywide and asset for surrounding communities. As part of the City's largest parks investment in close to a century, we will boost programming, create more clear entrances, and build on current efforts to activate the park to strengthen connections to local communities. Investment in Franklin Park will be guided by resident priorities and coupled with implementation of the recent master plan for Harambee Park.

**D**  
**Create a new generation of parks along Boston’s waterfront**

We will partner with the state and local organizations to provide signature connected open spaces that reduce climate risk, enhance culture, and connect existing and new jobs and housing along the waterfront.

**E**  
**Invest in new open spaces in areas of new housing and job growth**

These spaces will respond to the needs of new residents and workers, be designed to reduce climate risks, and accommodate a variety of uses and programming.

**Continue to improve neighborhoods’ access to well-maintained parks**

We will continue to improve parks

with playgrounds, athletic facilities, and other quality features and programming that meet the needs of Boston’s diverse residents, visitors, workers, and pets. We will also invest in green links between key transit, job hubs, and open space.

**F**  
**Invest in diverse public spaces in the commercial core**

We will direct open-space improvements to serve a growing residential community, support workers, and attract tourists, including bolstering connections to Boston's historic waterfront.

**G**  
**Restore Boston Common to its full vibrancy**

We will strengthen Boston Common so that it can serve its fourth century of visitors as the shared, iconic public gathering space its founders intended it to be.

**Develop family- and kid-friendly environments that promote opportunities to play everywhere.**

We will provide easy to access play amenities that will help develop meaningful community gathering spaces and enhance the quality of public life for residents of all ages.

"Lots of tree-lined parks with activities all spring, summer and fall for children, adults, and seniors."  
**East Boston resident via text message**

Existing Open Space







Franklin Park  
Kite Festival

Franklin Park

**Franklin Park is the crown jewel of Boston's Emerald Necklace and one of Fredrick Law Olmsted's greatest masterpieces. Investments in Franklin Park can make it a more vital citywide destination and central park for surrounding neighborhoods.**

Franklin Park was established in 1885 and was originally envisioned as a "Country Park" for the enjoyment of Boston's rural landscape. Franklin Park's 485 acres are surrounded by diverse neighborhoods in the geographic center of the city—Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, and Roslindale. The park's natural resources, historic design, cultural heritage, and recreational opportunities create a vibrant central park. Its landscape reveals Boston's original rolling hills, long views, and green landscapes. The continued enjoyment of the park by future generations of Bostonians and visitors from around the world requires a major restoration effort, informed by a comprehensive plan for Franklin Park.

Franklin Park will be a gathering space where all Bostonians and visitors can enjoy a peaceful, natural landscape and diverse activities and culture. Visitors will be able to immerse themselves in nature within the city, enjoy memorable events and traditions, or spend a day with family. As a citywide destination, Franklin Park will welcome neighbors from the surrounding blocks, residents from neighborhoods across the city, and visitors from further afield.

Franklin Park is located at Boston's geographic center and is the city's largest park. At 485 acres, Franklin Park is about three times larger than the Historic Downtown.



"Franklin Park [is] a place you can still discover "ruins," historic features, great views, unique landscapes"  
**Participant in Franklin Park Open House**

"I envision Franklin Park as a thriving park that is the envy of the city"  
**Participant in Franklin Park Open House**

"Celebrate the crossroads of cultures and races that share the park"  
**Participant in Franklin Park Open House**



Franklin Park Today

Franklin Park is Boston’s largest park and is among the city’s most iconic open-space destinations. The jewel of the Emerald Necklace, Franklin Park was designed in the late nineteenth century by Fredrick Law Olmsted, the visionary behind some of the country’s most recognized open spaces including New York City’s Central Park and Prospect Park. Olmsted’s original design for Franklin Park balanced open space with woodlands, creating a place where Bostonians could, in Olmsted’s words, “find the city put far away from them.”<sup>39</sup>

Franklin Park has been a formative place for arts and culture in Boston.

↓ Yoga at Schoolmaster Hill



↓ Event at The Playstead

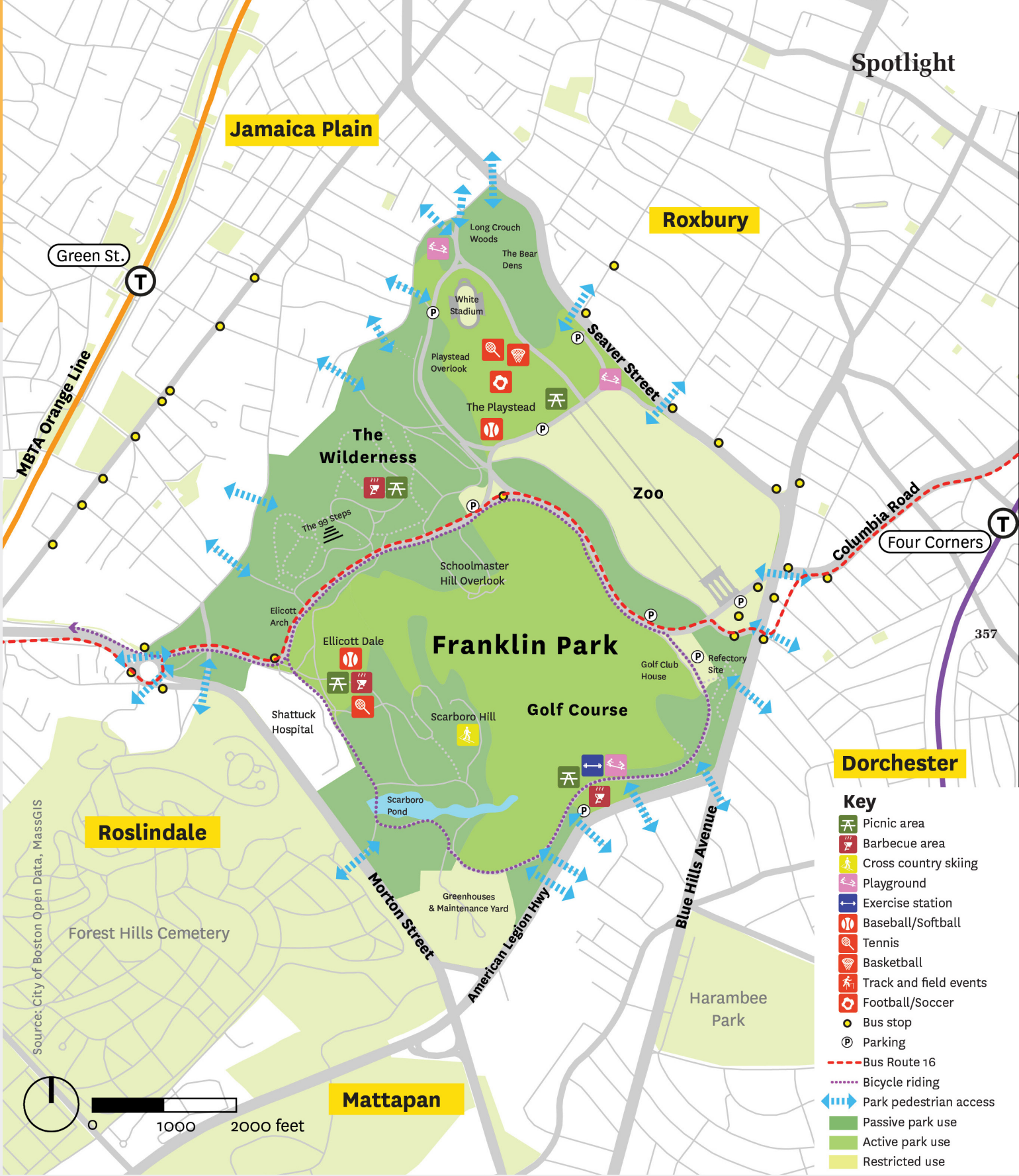


"Revitalize Franklin Park. It is arguably the best park Olmsted ever made...If Boston wants to be the #1 park city and provide resources to communities of color, fixing Franklin Park is a solid investment. The city and state should invest in better transit to the park, not just for the park but for neighboring residents who need mass transit."  
**Dorchester resident via online survey**

"I loved finding the Bear Dens for the first time"  
**Participant in Franklin Park Open House**

Franklin Park presents an opportunity to restore this feeling of escape while connecting neighborhoods, promoting healthy and active communities, enhancing local economic mobility, and celebrating nature's beauty and tranquility at the heart of the city.

Franklin Park joins five diverse and distinct neighborhoods, many of which are home to the city’s largest communities of color. Within a ten-minute walk of the park, 39 percent of residents are black, 26 percent are Hispanic or Latino, and 16 percent are white.<sup>41</sup> →





This Is What We Heard:  
Opportunities and Challenges



Franklin Park Open House



Event at The Playstead



Park Tour



The 99 Steps



Schoolmaster Hill Overlook



Sledding at Golf Course

1,600  
comments from  
230 participants

An open house held at the Franklin Park Golf Course in February 2017 sparked a conversation with neighbors and community leaders about their priorities for Franklin Park and set the stage for a more robust community engagement and planning process.

Community members highlighted wide-ranging opportunities and challenges at the event and through the online survey.

“The best parts of the park are the ones close to the nearby neighborhoods, and that foster a gathering area.”  
**Participant via Franklin Park online survey**

“The Park should draw people in and businesses should be thriving from weekend visitors; instead the park always seems physically isolated from many neighborhoods.”  
**Participant via Franklin Park online survey**

**Community Connections & Neighborhood Economic Development**

Community members envisioned a park that responds to the social and cultural identity of the neighborhoods surrounding Franklin Park. Active events and gatherings, based around family and community, and a celebration of the culture and history of Franklin Park were regarded as key to the park's future. Diverse programming, such as movie nights, food trucks, concerts, and public-art installations were identified as strategies for creating an active park while connections to local businesses were seen as important for bringing in economic benefits to community main streets. A revitalized and well-programmed Franklin Park can also be an economic driver that supports small businesses, attracts investment, and contributes to local economic mobility.

**Access, Wayfinding, Connectivity, & Safety**

A primary concern of community members was providing more welcoming connections and wayfinding within the park, as well as improved transit and pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods—particularly linkages to local businesses and cultural uses. Community members emphasized the importance of clear signs and markers to help park goers navigate within the park and locate entrances, exits and specific activities. To boost safety, many suggested lighting, direction signs, emergency phones, and other improvements in areas such as the Bear Cages, Wilderness, Franklin Park Zoo, and Shattuck Hospital. Many voiced concern with traffic speed along Circuit Drive and the lack of separation between cars, bicycles, and pedestrians.

“Make it accessible from Forest Hills Station, improve walking conditions.”  
**Participant via Franklin Park online survey**

**Landscape Character & Development**

Participants celebrated the unique natural character of Franklin Park, particularly the tranquility of the wilderness and the openness of long views and emphasized the need for habitat preservation. Community members suggested improved features such as tot lots and places to sit and relax. Park maintenance and landscape condition, notably in the Wilderness and Scarboro Pond, were frequently mentioned as areas needing improvement.

“Restore playstead to its original intended 30 acres, Olmsted said it was good for urban dwellers and mental health.”  
**Participant in Franklin Park Open House**

“It actually feels like there aren’t a lot of places that invite people to come and sit or relax. I feel like I’m supposed to keep moving all the time.”  
**Participant via Franklin Park online survey**

“Overall the park needs maintenance. There are a lot of invasive species and dead trees. Getting it in shape and plan for the future of the plantings is key!”  
**Participant via Franklin Park online survey**

**Park Amenities & Structure**

The park's historic structures, overlooks, and puddingstone elements are highly valued, with a strong desire to improve Scarboro Hill, Playstead Overlook Ruins, and the Bear Dens, as well as basic amenities such as restrooms, water fountains, and picnic areas.

“Keep the bear cages! Protect those!! They have been disappearing little by little and they are SUCH a cool, historical part of the park that I enjoy running by each day.”  
**Participant via Franklin Park online survey**

“I like the ruins at the top of Schoolmaster Hill. My son thinks it’s a castle.”  
**Participant in Franklin Park Open House**

“Traffic calming on circuit drive, and dedicated cycle tracks. Also better directional signage outside.”  
**Participant via Franklin Park online survey**

“It would be great to be able to spend a day tooling around the park on separated bike paths.”  
**Participant via Franklin Park online survey**

**Recreation & Sports**

Community members called for improvements to existing ball fields, ball courts, playgrounds, and marked running, hiking, and biking trails. There was also interest in new facilities for recreation, equipment rental opportunities, and a strong emphasis placed on winter recreation activities, such as ice skating, sledding, and cross-country skiing.

“I can go for a long walk or ski and feel immersed in nature.”  
**Participant via Franklin Park online survey**

“It can give the feeling of hiking but within city limits—which is amazing.”  
**Participant via Franklin Park online survey**



This is what we aspire to achieve.

Invest in World Class Programming

Invest in signature arts and cultural activities, events, and traditions to enhance and activate one of Boston's most iconic parks.

Showcase Beauty and Tranquility

Visitors will be able to find beauty and tranquility through diverse landscapes in Franklin Park.

Improve Access to the Park

Entry points will be clear and transportation connections will be strengthened to improve access to Franklin Park from surrounding neighborhoods and the region.

Prioritize Safety

Visitors will enjoy convenient and safe access to the park; intrusions by traffic and parked cars will be minimized.

Provide Best-in-Class Operations and Management

Management and maintenance of Franklin Park will be appropriate for a landscape of its historic significance, scale, and complexity.



Respect the Historic and Ecological Environment

Active uses that respect the capacity of the park and its natural resources will be encouraged. The demands of park users and the diversity of park uses will be managed in a way that is compatible with the landscape's history and ecology.

Improve Signs in the Park

Visitors will be comfortable and confident moving throughout the park. People will be encouraged to use all areas of the park and will be provided with sufficient information to find the park's features, destinations, and entrances and exits.

Foster Healthy Communities

The park will fulfill its historic role of supporting public health and as a "respite" from urban life through a range of actions from improving air quality to promoting fitness.

Create An Inclusive Gathering Place

Franklin Park will continue to be a magnet for diverse groups, a meeting ground for neighbors and a unifying destination for area residents and visitors.

"Kiosks around the park telling people where they are and the history of that area would be great. It would be so cool if they also included cross-training."

Participant in Franklin Park Open House

"Water fountains for drinking and water-oriented play areas for kids and families to cool off"

Participant in Franklin Park Open House



Precedents

A vision for the 485-acre Franklin Park can draw on best practicies from large park transformations nationally

362



Prospect Park, Brooklyn, NY

Prospect Park is an iconic 500+ acre open space in the heart of Brooklyn designed by Fredrick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux as a refuge from the industrial city of the nineteenth century. Prospect Park’s Long Meadow, a mile-long stretch of grass, is one of the longest span of unbroken meadow in any U.S. urban park and the park’s famed Ravine, 150 acres of woodlands and scenic waterways, is Brooklyn’s only forest. The park serves as a destination for picnicking and barbecues and a place for active and organized recreation with fields and courts for nearly every sport. Water features keep visitors cool on hot summer days and natural playspaces encourage children to engage with nature. Prospect Park is also home to regional farmers and food markets and live outdoor entertainment, attracting visitors from all over the city.

Since its conception, projects adding to Prospect Park's original design have reflected architectural and recreational trends of the era. The City Beautiful movement of the early 1900s formalized the Park’s major entrances with marble columns and statues and an era of reinvestment and activation following the Great Depression introduced the park’s zoo, new playgrounds near adjacent residential areas, and the Bandshell. Following a decline in visitorship in the mid-twentieth century, significant recent investment, including in woodland restoration efforts, new amenities, and improved access to adjacent neighborhoods, has built a groundswell of support. Lakeside, a new year-round outdoor recreation center, responds to the historic design of Olmsted and Vaux, and provides skating rinks and indoor and outdoor gathering places for the area's diverse community.



Hermann Park, Houston, TX

Established in 1914, the 450-acre Hermann Park in Houston is similar to Franklin Park in its history and role as an evolving open space and pastoral escape from the city bustle. The park’s main attractions are the Houston Zoo, an 18-hole public golf course, and the Miller Outdoor Theater. Key investments, kicked off by a 1995 Master Plan, focused on restoring the park's historical elements and creating new gathering spaces though the establishment of a central reflecting pool to serve as the "Heart of the Park". These improvements were followed by strengthened pedestrian and bicycle connections, including a new pedestrian bridge across Brays Bayou, forming links to nearby neighborhoods and to a 35-mile trail system. Today, the City of Houston has partnered with the non-profit citizens' organization, Hermann Park Conservancy, to develop a master plan that looks forward to the next 20 years and proposes reducing the impact of parking and adding a world-class play landscape to further the park's mission as “a park for all Houstonians.”

363



Piedmont Park, Atlanta, GA

Known as Atlanta’s “Common Ground”, Piedmont Park is a 200-acre park established in the late 1800s and located approximately two miles northeast of Downtown Atlanta. Although not an original Fredrick Law Olmsted design, Piedmont Park was reimagined in the 1900s by the sons of Olmsted, whose plan—albeit never fully realized—introduced features such as Park Drive Bridge that provided greater access to neighborhoods east of the park.

Today, the park’s prominent features include its Active Oval—consisting of a running track, sports fields and courts—Mayor’s Grove Playground and Noguchi Playscape, and aquatic center. In the last decade, a public private partnership between the City of Atlanta and Piedmont Park Conservancy has led the implementation of a master plan and effort to expand the Park, unlocking over 50 acres of new open space. Recent investments have renovated the visitor center, planted new trees and restored wildlife, enhanced pedestrian access to underground springs, and developed green road medians.





Cass Family Day,  
Roxbury, August 20,  
2016