

Walnut Park Play Area and Crawford Street Playground Community Meeting #3 Meeting Held Over Zoom on September 28, 2021 at 6:00 pm

Attendees:

Lauren Bryant, Project Manager, Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BRPD);
Megan Tomkins, Principal, CBA Landscape Architects (CBA);
Jocelyn Wolff, Landscape Designer, CBA Landscape Architects (CBA);
Jessica Choi, Landscape Designer, CBA Landscape Architects (CBA);
Various Community Members.

Presenters:

Lauren Bryant:

- Introduced the meeting and provided a brief overview of the project goals, schedule, and funding allocated for the Walnut Park and Crawford Street Playground renovations.

Megan Tomkins:

- Presented a summary of the first two community meeting including: site context, site analysis, schematic plan options, and community feedback from the first two meetings and the on site pop up, held in July.

Jocelyn Wolff:

- Presented the schematic plan for Walnut Park with accompanying precedent images.

Jessica Choi:

- Presented the schematic plan for Crawford Street Playground with accompanying site section graphic and precedent images.

Community Feedback:

Below is a summary of the questions and comments brought up for discussion during the meeting, organized by park and topic:

Walnut Park:

Features:

- Benches with an intermediate arm rest were requested to discourage people from sleeping in the park. BPRD stated that Age Strong Boston has formally petitioned for benches with intermediate armrests to be incorporated throughout Boston parks.

- Community members were supportive of making hand prints the theme of the park. This theme is based on the existing decorative fence panels with handprints. At the first community meeting, an attendee noted that the handprints were created by students at the David A. Ellis School and that the fence dated back a couple of decades. The fence and its decorative handprint panels are to be refurbished during the park renovation. There was interest in incorporating current Ellis School student in the process of developing the the new design theme.

Play Features:

- A community member brought up that some of the proposed play features exist in the nearby Marcella Playground in Roxbury. CBA stated that they would review Marcella and make sure that Walnut Play Area is not duplicating play structures.
- There was an interest in having play features for kids with varying levels of mobility along with features that encouraged collaborative play.

Safety Concerns:

- A community member expressed safety concerns, stating that the park has had illicit activities conducted within in it. They wished to see the final design maintain clear site lines into the park.
- The existing cross walk across Walnut Avenue does not line up with the existing park entrance. Community members were interested in the cross walk being realigned for clearer access and safety. BRPD does not have jurisdiction over crosswalks but BPRD has reached out to the Boston Transportation Department to start a conversation about potentially realigning that crosswalk with the park entry.
- Community members requested that gates and lighting are incorporated into the park for safety.
- Concerns were raised over water runoff from the splash pad. Lauren at BPRD noted that splash pad at Walnut should not have runoff issues, due to the level topography of the playground.
- Water cabinets have in the past been vandalized in the neighborhood. BPRD is currently installing sturdy, lockable, large water cabinets to minimize this issue.

Crawford Street Playground:

Circulation:

- At the request of community members, a trike or walking loop has been integrated into the schematic plan. A community member suggested adding graphics to measure the distance traveled along the loop into the final design.
- Community members expressed an interest in repaving the bituminous driveway and parking area that abuts the park between the Museum of NCAAA and the Ellis School. The parking lot and driveway are not within the Crawford Playground property lines; they appear to be with the NCAAA property. However, BPRD maintenance does use the

driveway to access the park.

New Programs and Features:

- At the first community meeting, a neighbor expressed interest in integrating educational signage into the park design, specifically around the historic Abbotsford Estate, which is now the Museum of NCAAA. At this meeting community members expressed interest in educational signage again.
- Accessible picnic tables were requested.
- Plants with vibrant colors and multi-seasonal interest was requested. CBA stated that for park renovations, they specify vegetation that can be maintained by the BPRD, which often restricts plantings to trees and lawn. CBA will explore tree varieties that will have seasonal interest and bright colors for both Crawford Playground and Walnut Park. BPRD suggested that if community members were interested in adding some additional plantings, they can apply for the City Bulb Planting Program, which donates bulbs to community groups to be planted in community green spaces.
- A representative from a youth baseball league that uses the Crawford field stated that some dog owners do not pick up after their dogs and inquired if they could have a designated area for dogs in the park. A dog park area had been discussed at previous meetings but there is not enough space or community support at Crawford. BPRD noted that the renovated park will have more signage stating park rules for dog owners. BPRD is also able to install a dog waste bag dispenser in the park; however, BPRD is unable to refill it with bags so the community would need to refill it. If a community member or group expresses interest in restocking the feature, the BPRD will drop off necessary refill materials. Another community member noted that dog waste is an issue in the parts of the park with low visibility from the street.

Little League/Softball Field:

- A representative from a youth baseball league, the Roberto Clemente League, that uses the field stated that they sometimes rent portapotties for events and would like to see an area dedicated for portapotties integrated into the design. Currently, the portapotties are brought into the site via the bituminous concrete driveway between the park and school.
- The current fencing along the field (at the back of the residential properties) is an adequate height for the current sports uses.
- A coach for a local little league team expressed that Crawford is not often a viable sports field for them to use because of the lack of lighting in the field.

END OF NOTES

Prepared by Jocelyn Wolff, CBA Landscape Architects LLC, 09/29/2021.