

Walsh Playground

967 Washington Street, Mattapan, MA 02126

Community Meeting #2

Meeting Held Over Zoom on October 3, 2023, from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Attendees:

Amy Linné, Project Manager, Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BRPD);

Shanna Dixon, Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD);

Megan Tomkins, Principal, CBA Landscape Architects;

Amy Foster, Landscape Architect, CBA Landscape Architects;

Interpreters for Spanish, Vietnamese, and Haitian Creole

Community Members, Neighbors (See Sign-up Sheet)

Presenters:

Amy Linné:

- Introduced the meeting and provided a brief overview of the project goals, schedule, and current design funding.

Amy Foster:

- Presented project outreach context including feedback from meeting 1 and the park popup, and online survey results.
- Presented site context and existing conditions overview.

Megan Tomkins:

- Presented proposed renovations and design concepts.

Community Feedback:

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

General Comments:

- The Park does not need to be “everything to everyone” but should focus on key renovations that serve the most users and keeps the park peaceful and open.
- Flexible space for various activities is highly valued over too much extra programming and hardscape.
- Kids and adults should be prioritized over dogs.

Softball Fields / Multi-Purpose Fields:

- Users commented that girls' softball league currently typically only schedules one softball field at a time, so one field would allow them to continue their current scheduling, but two would help them schedule more games at this location.
- T-ball programs do use two fields at once.
- One full-size softball field and one "challenger" size field (example at McConnell Park) could serve the needs of the softball and T-ball users.
- Overlapping flag football and softball infields is not desirable for either softball players or flag football players. Perhaps we can only fit two flag football fields.

Basketball Court:

- The basketball court is one of the most consistently used amenities in the park and a second full basketball court, or at minimum a half court, would allow more people to play at once and allow different age groups to play at one time.
- The basketball court was one of the highest priorities for the meeting participants.

Tennis Court:

- The tennis court did not come up as a priority during Meeting 2. Some attendees commented that a second basketball court should be added in place of the renovated tennis court.
- A meeting attendee noted that Dorchester Park, which is nearby in the neighborhood, has two tennis courts and it may make sense for tennis players to go there instead of to one court at Walsh.

Playground

- Community members do not support inclusion of an additional playground fence, since the current lack of fence is not perceived as a safety risk, and it is a part of the play experience to run between the playground, the field, the woods, etc., The lack of fence allows a more creative play experience and encourages exploration in a positive way.
- Some new playgrounds are "cookie cutter" and alienate older kids because they are not challenging, and playgrounds are only oriented towards little kids. Older kids should be included in the playground and park design considerations.
- One commenter adds that simple play features are the best because they allow for imagination.

Natural Site Features – Vegetation & Topography:

- People would like to see the natural areas cleaned up of trash and weedy understory and would also like them to be preserved and highlighted as an

exploration experience. Meeting attendees would like to see the rock outcroppings preserved on the plan; some folks felt that an opportunity had been missed to highlight the natural features of the site.

- The sledding hill is one of the most beloved assets of the park and meeting attendees expressed concern about any proposed program that would present a barrier at the bottom of the hill.
- Neighbors would like to see more vegetative screening between their houses on the south edge of the park (St. Gregory Street abutters).
- People oppose synthetic turf for the fields (BPRD noted that only natural turf is being considered for this field).
- The open space south of the courts is used for some school activities, and programming the space too much would reduce its flexibility.

New Program Ideas

- The splash pad is well supported but several participants would like to see it located in a sunnier area, since the south side of the park is so shady.
- People would like to see a porta-potty included in the park. Currently porta-potties are run by sports programs and are not available to all users (they are locked when not in use by sports leagues). BPRD will explore the possibility of including a porta-potty that is managed by the City.
- Adult fitness equipment may be extra program that is not necessary, as the community does not feel the need for extra program.
- **Dog Park**
 - Some neighbors noted that they previously thought that adding a dog park would keep the park more peaceful for non-dog owners, but now they feel that adding a dog park is the wrong priority if it cuts into other park use areas and reduces open space.
 - Dogs off leash in the park are a nuisance, but a dog park getting priority over other programs or open space is not the desired solution.
 - Better signage about leashing dogs should be added.
 - The park should be family friendly, and a dog park does not support that
 - If a dog park is to be added, it should not be right next to the playground
 - Dorchester Park could be a better location for a dog park

Project Next Steps:

- Design team to create an additional survey for community feedback.
- Design team to prepare one design plan to present for final feedback.

END OF NOTES

Prepared by Amy Foster for CBA Landscape Architects LLC, 10/04/2023.

