

# Meeting Notes



## Project

Byrne Playground

## Client

Boston Parks and Recreation

## Meeting Date

November 28, 2023

## Issue Date

December 1, 2023

## Attendees (Virtual)

Crowley Cottrell

Boston Parks and Recreation Department

Community Members (roughly 25 people)

## + Synopsis of the Presentation

On November 28th Boston Parks and Recreation (BPRD) and Crowley Cottrell held a virtual community meeting to solicit feedback from residents in the vicinity of Byrne Park. BPRD started the meeting with an introductory presentation of the team, the project schedule, and an explanation of the priorities for the city of Boston and BPRD.

Afterwards, Crowley Cottrell presented their site analysis. The analysis focused on the various opportunities and challenges of the different spaces (*playground, street hockey/pickleball, splash pad, walking loop, tennis court, site amenities, walls/fences, access & circulation, impervious surfaces, and vegetation*). See attached slides for bullet points of site analysis. Post-site analysis, the floor opened up for community members to share their thoughts and pose questions. The session concluded with an invitation for neighbors to participate further by completing an online opinion survey.

## + Comments from Community Members

**Several neighbors spoke. Their names, relationship to the park and thoughts are as follows:**

**Paul Doherty:** He has lived in the neighborhood for 40 years and is the primary caretaker of the flower planter. He also installed the pickleball nets and seating in the street hockey court. The tennis court is frequently used for ongoing lessons. The park is well used and loved - it especially gets a lot of use after the pickleball court installation. Prior to that, the most popular parts of the park were the playground and the walking loop for dog walkers. People gather for community events, but add picnic tables or seating. The shrubs in the playground area should be removed as they are a nuisance. Lastly, more greenery and vegetation in the park (suggested that the pickleball courts become formalized and the leftover space is turned into greenery).

**Chelsea Shaw:** A neighbor who uses the playground with her children often. Keep the playground fenced in with benches so parents can spend time with family and friends without being nervous about her kids. The shrubbery should be removed as people sleep under it and it generally doesn't get maintained. The swing set is the most popular play equipment piece. People come to the park for the playground since it is so shady, but a light pruning is acceptable. Not concerned about the slickness of the play surfacing. The water play area could be more dynamic, but fencing is not necessary. There is a significant amount of dog usage. Tennis or pickleball could be a more flexible spaces despite their high usage. Opposed an entrance on Mill St. as people drive fast there.



**Brian Leadbetter:** There is a strong community around the park. There could be a third pickleball court due to popularity. Lots of tennis court use and dog walkers as well. More vegetation should be added and paving/ internal curbs should be removed. The park is great as it is and the existing amenities should be enhanced. The loss of the park for two years during construction would be devastating. Can construction be phased?

**David Lewis:** A neighbor for 10 years who abuts the park. There should be less asphalt and more greenery. Add a gathering space. Thin the trees, remove the shrubs, and modernize the play structures. Remove internal fencing and add back basketball (a half court or undersized is fine).

**Matt Martel:** Lives on Elm street and abuts park. Keep the swings. The pickleball courts are the reason for park's resurgence in popularity. Dog walking is one of the park's big uses. Add more greenery. Tennis doesn't get enough use to warrant that much space. Keep the limited entrances. Lighting is of some interest.

**Jeffery Gibbons:** Basketball was removed because teens from outside the neighborhood were not respecting the space and using all the street parking. Keep the monkeybars and add more swings. Have limited entrances and don't open up Mill St. Don't light the park. Enhance the splash pad - no fencing is fine. Add more greenery and remove curbs. Interested in bike path. Pickleball is the most popular element of park.

**Kevin Mcdermott:** Lives across the street. Don't add lights. The park is very popular especially among dog walkers and pickleball players. There are community events. Is there a way to muffle the pickleball sounds?

**During these comments other neighbors were making comments in the chat. Here are the comments:**

- I use the walking loop to walk my dog and visit the playground with my toddlers. Would love to see a part of the park dedicated to a dog park given the number of dogs in the community. I think that would help foster community as well. My toddlers love the swing set in the playground
- The shrubs are also filled with mosquitos in the summer from all the water that gets stuck
- We are having issues with rats coming from the bushes in the playground area.
- Improved water drainage would be great. And I have seen rats in the shrubs near the playground
- There are some Teens but not the majority, its mostly kids under 10
- I have seen teenagers playing pickle ball and tennis but few and far between
- Teens play tennis & pickle ball, sometimes hang out on the benches after school in the summer.
- The splash pad is a bit dangerous with all of the bricks and unused planters near by but would love to see an expanded splash pad with more water features, I think the kids would use it more.
- 100% on pickleball bringing people together
- No one spoke on this yet, but I think a walking path/bike area like Garvey Playground would be great. Kids love to bike and scooter in the park / playground area, plus a lot of folks walk the park and agree less curbs more plants & flowers!
- High use of the courts and playgrounds, which is great. Improvement in safety with lighting especially with walking dogs at night
- Totally agree on losing the park [to construction] being devastating, we use it daily
- If possible to do "sections" at a time vs. a full closure would be great [in response to construction timeline]



- I agree with Brian. No need to shut down the whole park during construction.
- Regarding limited use of the park by families: many families rather drive to nearby modern parks like Garvey, etc.
- Worth the extra drive to have splashpad, better amenities.
- Speeding and lack of stopping at the Mill/Everett intersection is bad.
- I could see a basketball hoop easily added to the labeled pickleball court to make it even more of a flex space.
- I would love a basketball hoop.
- Teens love pickleball.
- Lights is a topic on the survey. It has not been discussed, but lights would be a bad idea for a residential neighborhood. The park is best left dark after sunset.
- If there is a decision to add lights, I would recommend an automatic "shut off" time of no later than maybe 8pm.
- Lighting is two fold- agree on timing somewhat..but dark park is a place for other potentially illegal activities. Hard to walk a dog at this time of the year. Maybe minimal lighting but enough to see where you are going.
- The basketball court was problematic.
- Basketball = no parking.
- How is basketball problematic? I don't believe that a half court would produce the issues that are being described (parking, rowdy teens).
- Basketball itself isn't problematic. My daughter is 29 and still plays. LOL. Unfortunately, there were behavior issues with the bball court.
- Maybe there could be a rule that pickleball cannot be played before 9:00am :)
- I saw lighting in the survey, glad I brought it up. Definitely not pushing for lighting in anyway, more so just wanted to pose the question.

## Next Steps

The community members were informed that the opinion survey would be up for roughly two weeks. Following the closure of the survey Crowley Cottrell will develop three design schemes to show the community for their feedback. This meeting will take place in January 2024.