



Boston Parks & Recreation Department

Improvements to Clifford Playground Community Meeting #2: What We Heard

In-Person: December 2, 2023

Zoom: December 6, 2023

Summary

Community Meeting #2 reviewed what we heard at the Listening Session (August) and Community Meeting #1 (October) and how that input was translated into a vision and set of goals for the park renovation design. We then presented three (3) park renovation design concepts and asked for community feedback on those designs. The feedback will be incorporated into a final preferred design to be discussed at Community Meeting #3 (January 2024).

Confirming Input from Prior Meeting

- In addition to summary notes in the presentation, in-person meeting participants requested that we add to the slide: police call boxes, flashing beacons at crosswalks, and lighting as important to the park renovation. (These were added to the Zoom meeting presentation.) A full set of notes from Community Meeting #1 can be found at: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/improvements-clifford-playground>.
- Community participants reiterated a desire to:
 - Add more recreation/amenities to fill the park with positive activity.
 - Provide programming for all ages and abilities.
 - Design and build a park that meets the long-term needs of the community; not focused on the current, temporary situation at Mass & Cass.

Concept 1 Feedback

- Team/spectator seating is in the safest location – can see flyballs, etc.

Concept 2 Feedback

- There was lots of interest, at the in-person meeting especially, for this concept. Consensus was that it prioritized the needs of neighborhood youth and the schools better than the other concepts.
- Playground – largest square footage of three concepts; best for school
- Courts

- Participants liked that this concept increases number of courts and that they are on school/residential side of park; closer to residents.
- Recommended switching location of tennis and basketball courts so basketball courts are closer to playground for use at recess.
- Prefer 2 tennis courts and 2 full size basketball courts.
- Consider multiple lines in courts (e.g., badminton, volleyball).
- Fields
 - Recommendation to overlay soccer field on football field; leaves infields available when soccer/football are happening.
 - Football storage pad recommended in corner near the Red Cross building.
 - Field surfacing: This is the only concept that requires artificial turf.
 - Many meeting participants noted the advantages of artificial turf allowing for more athletic fields in a smaller space, improved stormwater storage/drainage options, don't need to mow/fields always ready for play.
 - One participant urged avoidance of artificial turf for environmental reasons and concern for exacerbation of urban heat island and injuries. There was a discussion of whether Mayor Wu has banned artificial turf. BPRD staff clarified that Mayor Wu prefers natural turf but listens to park users and prioritizes some use of artificial turf where need is greatest for the functionality it offers.

Concept 3 Feedback

- Some participants noted that this concept was most aesthetically pleasing.
- Representatives from The Base appreciated the separation of baseball and football/soccer in this concept as it could streamline permitting/scheduling. Baseball could operate independently of football/soccer schedule.
- Participants recommended natural turf on the multi-use field and artificial turf on the baseball field to accommodate different infields.
- Less desirable because courts are far away from Mason School and it does not increase number of courts.

General Discussion

- Football - Anticipate having permanent goal posts. If moveable goal posts were used, they would go up at beginning of season and down at end of season so would impact other spring/fall sports.
 - Assuming permanent goal posts, community participants recommended integrated football goal posts/soccer goals.
- Baseball/Softball - Participants clarified that intermediate baseball and softball infields are similar. Intermediate baseball fields' infield extends ~10ft beyond edge of softball field.
- Participants asked about maintenance plan for renovated playground. Boston Parks & Recreation Department does not anticipate major additional maintenance costs associated with the renovated park. Continue to work with the maintenance crew and

other City departments on frequent trash pickups, sweeps for needle clean ups, police call boxes, etc.

- Seating
 - Like having seating in multiple sections of park. Participants noted a desire for tables near playground, near courts, and near The Base.
 - Recommended prioritizing shaded seating.
 - Include game tables; creates an all-ages activity.
 - Consider small plaza by playground for birthday/small parties.
- Fencing
 - Some participants were interested in plan for fences. BPRD noted that once we get input from Community Meeting #2 and have a sense of where different park activities are located, we will consider appropriate fencing for the design. This will be discussed in greater detail at Community Meeting #3.

Playground Feedback

- Types of Play and Structures
 - Mason School staff suggested that an integrated structure would work well for 2-5 year olds and multiple separate structures are better for 5-12 year olds.
 - Youth meeting participants were split on their preference for integrated or separate structures; they liked the ocean and beehive playground themes.
 - Additional suggestions from a youth participant in the meeting included:
 - Animal rescue tent
 - Round-a-bout
 - Toddlers' area with a sandbox
 - Crafting area
 - Bird feeder/bird bath
 - Plant boxes with native, pollinator-friendly, and kid-friendly plants

Follow-Up Items

- Ensure Vine Street Community Center is a part of the engagement and has input
- Continue to partner with City departments on cross-departmental topics (e.g., Public Works and crosswalks, Boston Police and call boxes/lighting)
- Community & Youth surveys are posted online and open until December 15th. In-person community engagement events with the Mason School are also being planned.