

Murphy Playground Community Meeting

Location: Virtual Meeting

Date: Monday, January 22, 2024

Attendees:

Design Team:

Nelle Ward, Project Manager, Boston Parks & Recreation Department

D.J. Chagnon, Principal, CBA Landscape Architects

Preston Holleman, Senior Landscape Architect, CBA Landscape Architects

Elected Officials:

(should we list these out? Nellie, did you catch everyone's name? I know Ben Webber (City Council District 6) attended)

Sports Organization Representatives

Other Community Members (Neighbors & other attendees)

Presenters:

Nelle Ward, D.J. Chagnon & Preston Holleman

- Provided an overview of the project goals, schedule, & progress to date.
- Presented an analysis of the existing site.
- Presented proposed improvements based on analysis and prior feedback from stake holders, community members and Margarita Muniz Academy students.
- Discussed specifics of improvements and additional items to be considered.

Community Feedback:

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

Construction Logistics:

- What are the hours of construction and where will the workers park? During school drop off/pickup, buses often block the road restricting the residents' driving routes. There was concern that construction traffic will exacerbate the situation.
 - The team noted that most of the construction is planned to take place

- over the summer, minimizing conflict with the buses.
- The team said the construction activity could be timed to avoid conflict with the buses; the intent is to include a coordination section in the specifications to ensure the Contractor has a plan in place.

Field Improvements:

- Asked if the field will be natural or synthetic
 - Team said the field will be natural
- Improvement priority should be making the field safe and playable. Coaches have often had to fill in holes/depressed areas for safety reasons.
 - The Team plans to address the planarity of the field as part of construction.
- Suggested that poor gravelly soil is the reason grass is not growing in some locations.
 - The Team said the soil structure seems to be good (well draining; not overly compacted) and it is a matter of aerating, adding additional topsoil and soil amendments, and overseeding/slit seeding with appropriate turf species to establish a more consistent lawn.
- Ask if the field will be irrigated.
 - Team noted that the parcel of land is on Boston Public School's (BPS) property. BPS does not handle external plumbing, and there is not a viable point of connection for an irrigation system.
- Asked if removing and replacing the existing grass with sod would be more successful than reseeding.
 - Team said if sod was to be used, there would need to be irrigation and that overseeding allows for the selection of species that will succeed.
- Said City should keep up with the field maintenance. Acknowledged that the parks department representative is not responsible for park maintenance.
 - Team noted the Parks Department is working to improve their maintenance regimen.
 - Team said the contractor owns maintenance until the grass is determined to be established.
- Said the proposed U6 field is not needed. That age group does not use the park.
 - Team will see if a U10 field will fit.
- Asked if the sports fields will be striped.
 - Team said it was unlikely. The park's versatility should be preserved.
- Issues with dogs using the field. It should be made clear that Murphy is a sports field and dog use is prohibited.
 - Team is determining the best way to address the issue.
- Asked if permanent soccer goals be installed.
 - Team said portable goals will still have to be used because the soccer fields are within the ballfield's outfield, and other field uses such as Ultimate Frisbee also overlap the goal areas.
- It was suggested that the portable goals could be chained to the fence in deep center field.

- The team will explore storage locations for portable goals, including this suggested location.
- The infield drains well and players like the all dirt infield.
 - The Team's intent is to keep the skinned infield (all dirt) as the field is also used for softball.
- An onsite users meeting was suggested.
 - BPRD has (since the online meeting) scheduled an onsite meeting with representatives from permit holder organizations.

Existing Trees:

- Asked if any trees being removed and if so how many.
 - Team said an arborist has assessed the trees and their preliminary report suggested the possible removal of 3 major trees that are in decline. A decision on their removal has not yet been made. (The final arborist's report is pending.)
- There was concern about emerald ash borer and despite the trees being treated, would the impact of construction jeopardize their health?
 - Team said that the existing hardscape around the trees will be carefully removed, the grade will be slightly raised and a permeable flexible pavement will be installed. The flexible pavement is a low impact way of providing an accessible walking surface while minimizing damage to the tree's roots.

Field Lights:

- Field lights sometimes remain on as late as 11 pm.
 - The new lighting controls will enable more careful scheduling on the lighting, and they should only be on in the evenings while the park is permitted in the future.
- Importance of maintaining existing trees to block excess light from field lights
 - Team noted the intent is to preserve all trees not identified as a hazard. See "Existing Trees" section of additional information.
- Site photometrics were reviewed to show residents the improved light directionality which will minimize excess light from shining on the park abutters.

General Questions:

- It was asked how the park's budget had been decided.
 - Team said the field improvements the first priority.
- Asked what will happen with the park's murals.
 - The team said the park murals will be preserved. The walls are being assessed by a Structural Engineer, but the preliminary assessment is that only minor repairs are needed at this time, so the murals will stay in place.
- It was suggested that the play area be replaced with a dog park in an effort to relieve dog pressure on the field.

- The Team noted that the playground is heavily used by neighborhood residents.

END OF NOTES

Prepared by Preston Holleman for CBA Landscape Architects LLC, 01/29/2024.