

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Improvements to Kenmore Block – Community Briefing
Summary Meeting Notes

DATE: July 10, 2025

LOCATION: Zoom Virtual Meeting

PRESENTERS: Amy Linné, Project Manager, Boston Parks and Recreation Department (AL, BPRD)
Cassie Bethoney, Team Leader, Weston & Sampson (CB, W&S)

Presentation Overview

AL began the meeting with meeting and Zoom housekeeping items, the meeting's agenda, and project team introductions. Staff from Counselor Sharon Durkan's office spoke about her excitement and support of the project. Rebecca McKeitz, Director of Capital Projects and Parks Care from the Friends of the Public Garden, introduced herself and the role of the Friends as stewards of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall and invested partners on the project.

CB then discussed the project's schedule and discussed the permitting timelines that led us to today's Community Briefing. She discussed next steps on the project – award to the low bid Contractor and construction beginning. She then walked through the final proposal site plan, a potential pedestrian detour plan while construction is underway, and shared information on the two tree removals planned as part of the project. She noted that 11 new trees will be planted as part of the improvements.

The project team opened the floor to public comments.

Discussion Items

1. Plantings

- a. There was discussion of the Yews flanking the western and eastern ends of the park, and how they provide a buffer against traffic for those using the park.
- b. Status of protecting the legacy 1880s-era Elm in the southeast corner of the block was raised. An application had been submitted and folks were curious of its status. **AL to check in on its status.**
- c. The planting beds surrounding the gathering plaza were received positively. The Friends will be caring for these plantings in the future.
- d. There was discussion and approval of the tree selections and review process by the Friends and their arborist Norm Helie.

- e. The project team discussed the protection measures that will be in place during construction and the provisions in the project to ensure care will be taken when carrying out work within the drip lines.

2. Circulation

- a. Discussion of the midblock crossing took place. There was concern that its closure will be less convenient to park users and limit access.
- b. Walkway materials were clarified, and endorsed.

3. Art and Site Furnishings

- a. There was a request to replace the lighting in the Lombard Lamp with LEDs while maintaining its character.
- b. There were requests for additional bench seating along the pathways, and especially under shade.

4. Utilities

- a. Irrigation was discussed and the team noted irrigation is included in the lawns, and drip irrigation is included in the planting beds to support their care. Water service other than the irrigation is not included (i.e. a hose bib).
- b. Several folks raised the request to add an electrical hookup near the gathering plaza for event use.
- c. The team confirmed that power is being brought to each tree so that Christmas tree lighting can be added to each tree in the future.

5. Next Steps / Construction Logistics

- a. The construction period is anticipated to start in early fall and run through summer 2026. The team's hope is to work through winter should the conditions be favorable, and wrap up construction as quickly as possible.
- b. Discussion of the Bowker Overpass project took place during the meeting and well-informed attendees offered to walk the area with others who might be interested in learning more about the planned improvements there.
- c. Attendees asked if they could facilitate media coverage of the project via The Guardian and other outlets. **AL to follow up on media inquiries.**
- d. AL noted that the project website will be updated with this meeting's presentation, a link to the video, and these summary meeting notes. **AL to connect with Counselor Durkan's office on a contact at Kenmore Abbey, to share this meeting's information with them.**
- e. **AL to coordinate with utility work on Comm Ave to ensure sidewalks are passable.**

End of notes.