

Community Meeting Notes



Project
Dudley Town Common

Client
Boston Park and Recreation

Meeting Date
July 16, 2025

Issue Date
July 18, 2025

Attendees (In-Person)

Priyanka Vankina (BPRD)
My'kel Mcmillan (BPRD)
Leah Broder (CCLA)
Echo Chen (CCLA)
Neighbors

Boston Parks introduced the project, its general timeline with Community Engagement during the summer 2025 concluding with a final design to be shared with the Community in September. Crowley Cottrell presented site analysis for both the North and South sites of Dudley Town Common. Primary issues discussed were accessibility and safety concerns due to differential settlement of paving and structures, pavements in poor repair, barriers to access with steps, curbs, and ramps. Also discussed were the existing site elements of art and history such as interpretive plaques, mosaics, and the large sculptural gateway, shade, and stage features.

A neighbor is a long-term resident in Roxbury for about fifty years. They commented that Hampden Street sets the tone for the whole neighborhood because it is the busiest street and a primary entry to Roxbury for those arriving by car. North site is located in a focal area where the neighborhood transitions from commercial to residential, so it's important to provide a visual beacon to mark the entry to the neighborhood. The neighbor suggested doing so using a water feature and/or night lighting. They also suggested removing the steps and ramp at the corner because they are not usable. As children, they had an uncle who worked at the police station next to the north site. They used to accompany their aunt to drop off and pick up their uncle there every day.

The neighbor also noted that the Dudley and Blue Hill Ave. intersection used to be a gas station, then a parking lot, then a nursing facility, and most recently became a community college. They shared that the metal figures in the sculptures at Dudley Town Common used to rotate, but later someone added speakers, which stopped the figures from turning.

The neighbor commented that the parks are not visible at night, which raises safety concerns and discourages people from walking in the area after dark. They also said that the vacant lot adjacent to the north site diminishes the experience of seeing the park.

Another neighbor suggested adding more shade and natural elements, such as stone benches rather than concrete, adding grass, and using natural slopes instead of steps. They also recommended better lighting for nighttime use. The neighbor mentioned that they mostly uses the park as a pass-through because it doesn't feel very inviting. They commented that the park is culturally significant and offers an interesting vantage point for viewing the surrounding streets and buildings. They appreciated the mosaics, engraved bricks, and interpretive panels. They suggested that the redesign should interplay with the surrounding streetscape—balancing natural and architectural elements and offering respite from the motion and heat of the commercial area.

A neighbor suggested adding more greenery and shade trees. They suggested incorporating interactive musical elements referencing the music festival held in a park in Brookline. Music events could attract younger visitors. They also proposed adding a splash pad or interactive water feature.

In the Zoom chat, a comment expressed support for the idea of a splash pad.



Leah Broder (CCLA) responded that water features require high maintenance. From her experience in public park design, especially when considering the potential for shifts in management teams, it's more sustainable to propose low-maintenance elements.

A neighbor said that as new residents of Roxbury, they would love to see more of the area's history reflected in the redesign—perhaps through an interpretive element or historical references in the park.

A neighbor asked if it would be possible to install a fountain similar to those in South End Park. They noted that when approaching from Hampden Street, people often miss the park and focus only on the traffic light. The corner where Dudley Town Common now stands used to be an apartment building, which is why the grading is different. If the concrete steps are eliminated, the corner could be redesigned with a fountain, which they believe would help draw people in. The sound of water would also be an attraction. They also suggested that the back of the globe chairs might originally be proposed as vine trellises.

Priyanka Vankina (BPRD) responded that water fountains are difficult to maintain, but the Parks Department will explore splash pad options and see how they might inform the design. She will speak with the maintenance team, but noted that water features are not typically included in BPRD-managed public parks.

Leah Broder (CCLA) added that it's inspiring to have a design element that builds a visual beacon even if people don't physically pass through the space. If not a water feature, it could be a sculpture or lighting.

A neighbor noted that they have lived in the neighborhood for 4- years. They commented that the neighborhood has gone through many transitions due to gentrification. They mentioned an agricultural group on the south side of the park (possibly the Dudley Greenhouse?) and suggested the design be tied to that project. The design team could reach out to them to connect with local youth. The youth group could also help maintain the park on a seasonal basis. Expanding the agricultural group into the park could help teach youth about healthy diets and land stewardship. They suggested building partnerships with nearby active youth and/or senior groups who might get involved in planting ornamental plants (bulbs, perennials) and plant maintenance. They suggested adding more shade, and that comment was supported by two others in the Zoom chat.

A neighbor suggested adding a lamp clock at the steep corner of the north site. They felt it would bring a sense of old-town Roxbury and serve as a focal point at the intersection.

A neighbor grew up in the neighborhood and suggested installing display panels that tell the history of the people who used to live in the area, with photos and stories about Roxbury. They mentioned that three strong neighborhood associations have offered to help care for parks in the Dudley area, and they might be good partners for rotating maintenance responsibilities at Dudley Town Common. The neighbor is a member of a group who actively maintains Gertrude Howes Park which is a couple of blocks from Dudley Town Common. They suggested the City organize an Adopt-A-Park system - a rotating schedule of Community Groups to watch over the park and help with keeping it clean and well cared for.