

January 28, 2026

Penniman Community Meeting #2

PRESENT: My'Kel McMillen and Max Sell from Boston Parks Department; Kaki Martin, Jennifer Ng, Melita Schmeckpeper, and Hannah Hardenbergh from KMDG; and Members from the Allston Community

MEETING ATTENDEES: 6 in-person; 10 via zoom

Overview

- This meeting was held in a hybrid format for both an in-person audience and online via Zoom.
 - At the beginning of the meeting, Max introduced the project, the team, and the agenda.
 - Jen shared what the design team learned from Community Meeting 1, an additional meeting with the community garden group, and the online survey.
 - Kaki then presented 3 possible designs for Penniman. She shared that all three concepts are presented to prompt discussion, and that the team can “mix & match” elements from all three concepts based on community feedback.
- The presentation was followed by a discussion open to both in-person and virtual attendees.
- The presentation and hybrid discussion were recorded.
- The design team shared the link to the online survey.
- Following the hybrid discussion, the in-person attendees had the opportunity to view and comment on posters presenting the design, and discuss the design further with each other & the design team.

Hybrid & In-Person Discussion Summary:

General Comments

1. Which concept will cost the most?
 - a. *All three concepts have the same budget. However, they each allocate that budget differently.*
2. More shade is needed, especially in the lawn area!
 - a. *All concepts will add new trees to shade the lawn, gathering, and play areas.*
3. Will the big tree by the community garden be protected?
 - a. *Yes, the big tree will be protected in all 3 concepts. The design team is planning to protect all healthy existing trees. Unhealthy trees will be replaced with new trees.*
4. Where will there be fences? How tall will they be?
 - a. *The existing park has a lot of unnecessary duplicate layers of fence. The park redesign will reduce the amount of fencing, while still including fences where needed to separate the playground from the street, and to enclose the community garden and basketball courts. The design team will share a fence plan in Meeting 3.*
5. Will relocating the basketball court further north make it louder for neighbors to the north?
 - a. *Because Penniman Park is relatively small, sound will travel from the basketball court regardless of where it is located within the park. The design team expects that noise levels will remain similar to what they are currently. Sound travels unless stopped by a solid object with significant mass (e.g. a building, solid wall, or hill), so planting trees will not significantly reduce sound levels.*

6. Could all three concepts have a trike loop added?
 - a. *Yes, the design team can add a trike loop to any of the concepts.*
7. Several community members emphasized the importance of durable play equipment that is easy to maintain and repair. They also were interested in equipment that felt unique to Penniman. Several expressed a preference for tall, exciting climbing structures for the 5-12 age group.

Concept 1: Refresh

1. In Concept 1, will the basketball court and play area be demolished and rebuilt, or left as is?
 - a. *The existing play area and basketball court need repairs and upgrades, and so will be demolished and rebuilt in all three concepts. The existing play structures are old and would be difficult to salvage. They will be replaced with new structures based on community input. In Concept 1, the locations of the play area and basketball court remain the same, but they will get new paving, new furnishings, new play structures, etc.*
2. What is the path through the lawn in Concept 1?
 - a. *This path maintains the current route through the site, with access to sidewalk and alley.*
3. Several community members said they preferred Concept 1 because it improves what is already good about Penniman. They feel the existing park layout works well already.

Concept 2: Trade

1. Is a larger play area needed?
 - a. *Some community members shared that while they feel the neighborhood has fewer children than in the past, a larger and more exciting play area might attract families with children to move to the area or visit to play.*
 - b. *The design team noted that several daycares use the Penniman Park playground on a regular basis. The design team looks forward to getting more feedback about how big the playground should be via the survey and future community meetings.*
2. Several community members noted that they like Concept 2 because of the gathering area near the playground, which would be good for adults to gather while their children play. They felt that Concept 2 would bring people of all ages together and felt like the “most multi-generational” concept. They would like amenities for all ages to be included in the final design.
3. Community members suggested alternate programs to the mini-court that might be more multi-generational, including outdoor ping pong.

Concept 3: Shuffle

1. Did the design team consider an alternative that keeps play and the basketball court in their current locations, while switching the locations of the community garden and lawn?
 - a. *Yes, the design team considered this option, but concluded it was not as beneficial the Concept 3 presented.*
 - i. *We heard in Community Meeting 1 that the existing lawn is too sunny, feels isolated, and lacks a clear purpose. Putting the lawn next to the playground, as shown in Concepts 2 and 3, addresses this issue because it turns the lawn into a flexible*

- extension of the playground, where kids can run & play. It also becomes a potential gathering space where families can spend time in the shade while their kids play in the adjacent playground.*
- ii. *The basketball court, in contrast, is very popular and will draw people in even if it is further from the primary park entrance.*
 - iii. *Placing the lawn at the intersection of Penniman Rd and Hano St also improves the park entry area by making it greener and more multi-purpose.*
2. If a new building is built on the parcel north of Penniman Park, how will this affect light levels in the relocated community garden?
 - a. *Because any new building would be north of the garden, it would cast shadow away from the garden rather than towards it.*
 3. What are the costs associated with relocating the community garden? What are the tradeoffs in terms of budget?
 - a. *Expenses associated with relocating the community garden include: relocating garden beds, installing contaminant-free high-quality planting soil, installing new fencing, relocating utilities such as the garden water spigots, and accessibility upgrades.*
 - b. *Concept 3 has the same budget as the other two concepts. Improvements to the community garden were not part of the original project scope or budget, and relocating the garden will shift significant budget away from other park programs (e.g. play, basketball, gathering spaces). Practically, this means that Concept 3 would include fewer or less expensive play equipment pieces, less play surfacing, no outdoor fitness equipment, more lawn, less unique site furnishings, and no shade structure or dedicated gathering space. The play area would match the existing play area; but it would not expand.*
 4. For various reasons, several community members shared that they preferred Concept 3 despite the costs of relocating the garden:
 - a. *They appreciated how the relocation made it possible for lawn, playground, and basketball courts to be connected. Several liked the idea of having the lawn next to the play area, and having adjacent spectator seating for the basketball court.*
 - b. *They viewed the relocation as setting Penniman up for the future by improving the organization of the space. In comparison, amenities such as more unique site furnishings and shade structures were a lower priority for them.*
 - c. *They wanted a sunnier location for the community garden.*
 5. Several community members shared that they did not want the garden relocated as it would be disruptive to the gardening community and their existing gardens.