



## Meeting Notes

### Webster Avenue Playground Improvements Meeting #1

April 8, 2026

#### Attendees:

+/-24 public attendees, including project stakeholders and representatives from the City of Boston, Old North Church, and the design team  
Kenya Thompson, BPRD  
Shanna Dixon, BPRD  
Maria Perez, Office of Neighborhood Services  
Kyle Zick, KZLA  
Yongjae Lee, KZLA

#### Community Meeting #1 Summary

##### Overview:

The meeting provided an overview of the Webster Avenue Playground improvements project, including the site context, project goals, historical background, existing conditions, and community priorities. The project team shared that the primary goal of the project is to improve accessibility, safety, and circulation while respecting the historic character of the plaza and its relationship to Old North Church, Clough House, Unity Street, Salem Street, and Paul Revere Mall. The presentation also reviewed the existing site elements, including the memorial, paving, trees, fencing, gate, seating, planting area, and Freedom Trail alignment.

The team noted that the project is now moving into the **design development phase**, during which ideas and community feedback will be refined into a more detailed design, including materials, layout, accessibility features, and how the space will function overall. The project team stated that the preferred concept plan will be presented at the next public meeting in June.

##### Project Design and Timeline:

A project schedule was presented showing that the project kicked off in February 2026, followed by Community Meeting #1 on April 8, 2026. Design development is scheduled for March through May 2026, with Community Meeting #2 anticipated in June 2026, when the preferred concept plan will be shared. The project will then move through Boston Landmarks submission, Boston Water and Sewer submission, construction documents, and bidding, with construction anticipated to begin in 2027. During the meeting, the City also noted that construction would not begin before 2027 due in part to planning around the nation's 250th anniversary celebrations and the expected increase in visitors to Boston.

The project team explained that the design will seek to make the plaza fully accessible while preserving its historic character. Planned improvements may include replacement of older paving with brick and bluestone that better match Paul Revere Mall, improved circulation, coordination with the accessible route from Salem Street, protection of existing trees, and opportunities to improve stormwater infiltration.

##### Existing Conditions Review:

KZLA presented the site history and current conditions of the plaza. The team reviewed major existing features, including eight honey locust trees, all reported to be in good condition, uneven brick pavement and tripping hazards, the memorial area with limited accessibility, existing benches, gas



lamp, wall, fence, and gate, the ivy planting bed, and the need for masonry repair, fence repair, repainting, and signage updates. Tree protection was identified as a major priority throughout the project.

The presentation also identified uneven brick paving, tree root heaving, inaccessible paths near the memorial, repairs needed to the gate and fence, repointing of the brick walls, and furnishings that are inconsistent with surrounding park materials as key issues to be addressed in the next phase of design.

### Summary of Feedback:

- Strong support was expressed for preserving and improving the memorial area. Several speakers noted that it is a meaningful place for reflection for parishioners, veterans, visitors, and tourists.
- Community members emphasized that the memorial should remain accessible, dignified, and contemplative, and that improvements around it should be handled with care and respect.
- Several attendees noted that the plaza is used for gatherings, ceremonies, wreath-laying, blessings, and other events, and should retain enough open space to support these functions.
- Flexibility of use was seen as important, since the site serves both as a pass-through space and as a place where people pause, gather, or reflect.
- Existing trees were identified as one of the most important site assets. The project team noted that all eight trees are in good condition and community members strongly supported protecting them during construction.
- Residents emphasized the importance of preserving the site's trees and protecting the surrounding urban tree canopy. Concerns were raised about tree maintenance practices and the need for proper coordination with the City's urban forestry staff.
- The current ivy planting bed was widely seen as underperforming. Community members supported improving the planting area, but cautioned against introducing landscaping that would be difficult to maintain.
- Some attendees supported retaining a garden-like character within the space, provided that the planting design is simple, appropriate, and realistic for long-term maintenance.
- Comments were made in support of more thoughtful seating, including seating that supports quiet reflection near the memorial as well as broader use of the plaza.
- Community members noted that some visitors pass through the site quickly, while others stop to sit, reflect, and experience the memorial and surrounding historic setting.
- Accessibility improvements were widely supported, especially in response to uneven paving, tripping hazards, narrow paths, and limited access near the memorial.
- Community members supported using design cues and materials from Paul Revere Mall to create a more cohesive relationship between the two spaces.
- Questions were raised about maintenance responsibilities and the relationship between the City of Boston, Old North Church, and Old North Illuminated. City staff confirmed that an agreement exists regarding management of the site, though documentation was not presented during the meeting. Old North representatives clarified the distinction between the two organizations and their respective roles.
- Residents emphasized the importance of long-term stewardship, especially regarding tree care, planting maintenance, and overall upkeep of the plaza.
- The public discussion reinforced the need to balance accessibility, circulation, memorial use, planting improvements, gathering space, and historic character in the preferred concept design.



**Questions for the Community Raised During the Meeting:**

- How long do visitors typically stay in the plaza, and would more seating encourage longer visits?
- What improvements would make the plaza feel safer and more accessible for users?

**Next Steps:**

The project team will use the site analysis and community feedback to advance the project into design development and prepare a preferred concept plan for presentation at Community Meeting #2 in June 2026. The City also stated that the meeting recording, presentation materials, and project updates will be posted on the project webpage. For questions, maintenance requests, or concerns regarding parks, community members were directed to 311.

**Chat / Contact Information:**

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Project webpage [boston.gov/webster-ave-playground](https://boston.gov/webster-ave-playground)