

Community Meeting Notes

Project: BBF Pathways: Victory Garden
Date: March 24, 2023
Attending: Lauren Bryant (BPRD)
Steve Kruszkowski (BPRD)
Rob Barella (KZLA)
Kyle Zick (KZLA),
20 public community members

1. Representative Livingstone: Excited about regrading and repaving path. Look forward to hearing from community. Has there been coordination with the state on the Charlesgate bridge replacement?
2. Super exciting concepts. Entranceway used by park maintenance vehicles for trash and maintenance and by gardener vehicles-concern with entry options B, D and others that restrict vehicular circulation.
3. Adding accessible paths to plots is a concern because we don't have long term use of the public gardens-not codified in MOU with garden society and BPRD. Agreement should be updated to formalize.
4. Like entry option A-minimal and exciting
5. Delighted to see creativity. All garden deliveries go to the Grove. Love option D with sidewalk entrance; add text in pavement Fenway Victory Gardens established 1942. Vehicle traffic is a real issue. New garden spaces are a concern-who maintains them? Need to identify responsibility. Electrical box: near entrance-add to plans. Show location of blue phone. Seating and benches: when they had seating it was horrendous with bad activity. Add bulletin board to existing conditions plan. Signage for garden: wayfinding signs and bulletin board to put up notices are different types of signs.
6. New shade trees proposed-what are the species and purpose?
At this conceptual stage of design we have not selected species yet.
7. High priority is drinking fountain. Usually bike to garden-bike rack would be great. Do drive in to drop off things-don't want concept F to turn into a parking area.
8. Path/road along the river will make a huge difference. This is a living, functioning space for gardening; while highlighting history don't stray too far from purpose-it is not a museum. Would any options with large gathering potential we would need more police and ranger presence? Security and safety is a daily issue.
9. Kennedy from Councilor Bok's office: With better engagement would it dissuade bad activity?
10. How important is gathering space?
11. Gathering spaces might not help gardeners-would help pre and post red sox, concerts, etc.
12. Flexible open lawn has been helpful.
13. My favorite gathering place is the compost heap-work together there. Gardening is active and don't need seating. Most used paths are the 2 along the northern edge. This entrance is visible and could have seating that is safe.

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14. Meadow functions well. Gardens are best enjoyed by touring (viewing gardens, wildlife)...don't think to site and gather.
15. Bench next to a garden is a step ladder. Chain link fence along the river will be up 2 years, so limits bench options-may block vehicles.
16. Difficult to maintain vegetation along fencelines-adding benches will make harder. Bench bad behavior next to gardens-a problem. Could benches be near center south compost? Accessible path to wheelbarrow yard: understand the utility, but concerned about lessening lawn panel. Area is boggy-can the grade be raised? Tree health issues in that area due to dampness. Switchback path near Boylston Street: really great way to improve accessibility-wonder if vista from Boylston St. bridge will be impacted.
17. Accessible paths needed are to the pollinator garden and accessible garden, don't worry about community nursery and wheelbarrow yard. Switchback path: will it work? Add curb cuts for vehicle use: dumpster delivery- one way circulation? Would like to pave paths to accessible garden and pollinator garden.
18. How wide will the river side path be?
19. Lighting was added as temporary in Flynn administration-out of character for this park.
20. Make sure paths are accessible for maintenance crews.
21. Consider irrigation options: want to care for new trees.
22. Cofferdam-will it be removed? Could impact the water levels in this area.
23. Hope for beautiful entry and perimeter and a touch here and there-not major.
24. Cofferdam removal: water is flowing at a higher level, could impact things.
25. Could meadow be raised? Ducks swim in puddles...raise 3-6"?
Because the site is within a floodplain, if we raise the grade we need to compensate for the lost flood storage somewhere else in the park.
26. Thank you for notes for February meeting.
27. Was there a reason at tonight's meeting participants not allowed to show videos?
We apologize, it was not purposeful and will make sure in future meetings the video is turned on.

Chat

18:15:41 Lauren.Bryant@boston.gov

Project website <https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/improvements-back-bay-fens-pathways>

18:23:16 Replace the lights with acorn lamps like the rest of the park?

18:24:18 Lauren Bryant, BPRD: Thank you, I like that suggestion. We will be looking at the fixtures with Boston Street lighting as the pedestrian lights are owned by them. We will keep you posted on those conversations.

18:25:17 Thank you. I thought I heard at the last meeting that the acorn lamps were the only approved style.

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18:26:15 From Lauren Bryant_Boston Parks (she/her) to Everyone:

That is the plan, but we will have to have that switch out approved by Boston Street Lighting.

18:26:24 Of course. Thanks again.

18:38:10 Everyone's a critic

18:42:16 do you want our comments now?

18:45:28 My eye and heart gravitate to Concept C. I especially like the large, circular seating area with grass in the center.

18:45:50 Concept A.

18:47:07 +1

18:48:33 Marie, you make a good point. Could a vehicle accessible entrance be established elsewhere and allow the entrance designs to have more flexibility and utility for those on foot?

18:49:18 Especially if the back path by the river can handle more traffic

18:49:30 And- police and emergency vehicles use them to circulate as well.

18:49:34 Threshold: make it "grand," use teak benches, perhaps the curved types found at Harvard near the Science center. Use teak, cedar, stone, plus low height Info booth small size there. Fyi, Gardeners did minimal row of rocks near this threshold because objects , plants .stolen. Good; move the Memorial stone, was not impressive. I like C and D. Keep in mind Herb garden needs full sun. E, no. F, no. Large shade trees—there are Gardeners there./People picnic in front of herb Garden when Fenway has music concerts

18:50:58 Thanks, I forgot to mention that long term maintenance of new plantings is a concern for me, too.

18:51:41 From Lauren Bryant_Boston Parks (she/her) to Everyone:

Thank you everyone for these great comments!

18:51:56 Perhaps keep seating at entrance where police can see.

18:54:53 A "you are here" map.

18:55:02 I gravitate away from the hard surfaces in the rectangular and oval areas of Concepts E and F respectively..

18:55:12 From Lauren Bryant_Boston Parks (she/her) to Everyone:

Thanks, directional signage is a great thought.

18:55:20 Were there going to be irrigation lines put into the entry area for the future restoration of those planted areas- the plans that have been approved by Landmarks that COG design helped create?

18:56:21 From Lauren Bryant_Boston Parks (she/her) to Everyone:

Thank you , we are looking at putting sleeves in for irrigation to those areas.

18:59:36 More police phones.

18:59:55 ...good point about seating requiring more police and/or ranger presence.

19:01:18 It would be good to meet a point person police person

19:02:21 Good lighting for each of the concepts is really required for safety

19:02:51 Lots of visitors come after the Red Sox game.

19:03:11 Hi, and thanks so much for your work! For the newly-created meeting areas, I expect they might become a gathering place for large groups of Fenway Park visitors. Perhaps overwhelming?

19:03:22 Bike tours come through also.

19:03:46 Many of invite others into our own gardens for socializing.

19:03:51 From a gardener's perspective, people tend to gather in their own gardens, and the gathering space for larger events is still needed.

19:04:20 And concerts at Fenway Park draws a very large crowd

19:04:27 Fixed seating is a real concern- people will come and do drugs. They already do without any seating. I have used the open spaces for Pilates and picnicking.

19:04:28 Some of us are both gardeners and neighbors. I like casual urban gathering spaces. I also believe that well-used local spaces create a zone of safety on their own.

19:05:04 Food trucks sometimes too

19:06:00 I see regulars (who are not part of the undesirable population) doing Tai Chi and other forms of exercise in the gardens on a daily basis. It is a group of 1-2-3 people.

19:06:10 Keep the grassy areas grassy!

19:06:23 Visitors from hotels also visit.

19:06:39 People also seem to like spreading out a blanket under the trees in the meadow area and picnicking or playing music or reading.

19:06:50 I feel it is important that the Victory Gardens and the public park within which they reside need to co-exist.

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19:07:11 Dog walkers also visit.

19:07:57 ...I love the idea of socializing over compost!

19:08:13 Bird watchers come here.

19:08:42 It is a birding hot spot ... 114 different species of birds have been spotted in the area !!

19:09:53 Lighting lighting everywhere!

19:09:53 Benches along the river will encourage bad behavior

19:10:55 I like the idea of short benches facing the wonderful vista that stretches out. Right dont put bench near garden fence.

19:11:07 I want to echo Tim Horn's recommendation from the last meeting to keep any seating short enough in length to discourage lying down/sleeping.

19:11:27 Small groups (2-3 people) are usually less likely to disturb the wild life, plants, etc. It's a wonderful place to relax, be contemplative, etc. Nice to get away from the hustle bustle of traffic and crowds of people.

19:11:54 From Lauren Bryant_Boston Parks (she/her) to Everyone:

Great comments everyone!

19:11:57 Seating would be best in the area currently between the river and the fence

19:12:37 Are there any plans for new lighting on the paves that will be repaved?

19:14:57 I agree with Stephen re: optimal location of the seating, if feasible.

19:15:21 That is the best view of the park

19:16:02 The wheelbarrow yard next to the community nursery is not an accessible plot. I think this is the path sketch that I have a concern with.

19:16:47 Poetry and Patriotism sculpture gorgeous, unfortunately faces the steep hill. Sculpture should face out to see for traffic.

19:17:20 Will the river side pathway be widened from what it is now ? I think its 10 feet ?

19:17:49 From Lauren Bryant_Boston Parks (she/her) to Everyone:

Thank you, I have passed along your thought on this to the Boston Arts Commission. I haven't heard back yet, but will reach back out to you once I hear back.

19:19:47 I am concerned with any seating area without new lights. Thank you for the answer

19:20:21 From Lauren Bryant_Boston Parks (she/her) to Everyone:

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Thank you, I appreciate that clarification on the concern.

19:21:04 I want to highlight in your puddle analysis that the current temporary crushed stone berm put in place to allow the construction vehicles access to the river covers an area that was chronically flooded, due to being at the low point of the main path. It may not be apparent due to the berm.

19:21:20 Those light fixtures are also extremely bright ... you can garden at midnight with them

19:21:41 Right re that lighting

19:22:09 Glad to hear you share our feelings about them.

19:22:33 The Boylston compost area is the goal for the dumpster, but the map shows it on the center south. Is there a decision there?

19:23:52 It sure looks to me that they are removing the cofferdam ... I see them working on it everyday

19:25:28 If you walk the back road, you see areas where there are nature-made drainage waterways crossing the back road

19:25:56 This was great, thanks so much for all the work!

19:27:37 There was a row boat on the muddy river in front of REI today. I think it was an MRRP row boar

19:29:07 Thanks to all, Pam, Marie, Kevin, and all Luren, Kyle and all the names I dont know. No one mentioned picnic tables, unresolved.

19:29:21 I feel that the area has been sinking over time. So maybe something to look at!

19:29:57 From Lauren Bryant_Boston Parks (she/her) to Everyone:

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19:30:47 From Lauren Bryant_Boston Parks (she/her) to Everyone:

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19:31:02 Thank you for the great ideas and work!

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