

McKinney Playground Community Meeting #3

Date & Time: January 29, 2024, from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Location: Josephine A. Fiorentino Community Center, 123 Antwerp Street Extension
Brighton, MA

Attendees:

Nelle Ward, Project Manager, Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BRPD)

Cathy, Baker-Eclipse, Director of the Capital Plan, Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BRPD)

Thammy Pierre-Louis, Community Outreach Coordinator, Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BRPD)

Kwanna Wise, Director of Community Engagement, Environment, Energy, and Open Space Cabinet at the City of Boston

Megan Tomkins, Principal, CBA Landscape Architects

Liz Thompson, Landscape Architect, CBA Landscape Architects

Luke McCoy, Principal, Kaestle Boos Associates, Sports Field Consultant

Brian Sun, Spanish Language Interpreter

Community Members, Neighbors

Nelle Ward, Boston Parks and Recreation Project Manager, introduced the meeting and provided a brief overview of the design process to date. Nelle then introduced CBA Landscape Architects LLC, the designers for the renovations of McKinney Playground. Megan Tomkins of CBA presented a summary of CBA's site analysis; a review of the 2016-2017 Master Plan and the 2019-2020 design process; an overview of three schematic design plans focusing on park entries and the playground along Faneuil Street; and two field material options (artificial and natural turf). Nelle spoke about the City's stance on artificial turf fields during the field discussion portion of the presentation. BPRD and CBA both noted that an online survey has been created to solicit additional feedback on the proposed park design, particularly for the playground and area along Faneuil Street; the QR code for the survey was included in the presentation.

The following is a summary of the questions and comments that were discussed during the meeting, organized by topic:

Entrances & Playground:

- An abutter questioned the centrally located entrance on Faneuil Street as a main entrance since no crosswalk directly leads to it and they see it being seldom used.

- A meeting attendee noted that the Faneuil Gardens housing complex will be renovated soon and suggested that the projects should be coordinated.
- A park user noted cars drive too fast on Faneuil Street and that raised crossings could make the street safer for pedestrians.
- Community members would like to preserve the secret sledding hill within the park (the hill near Leicester Street).
- Concern was raised about the walkability of Market Street and asked if the City could put in more crosswalks and street lighting. This is outside the scope of this project (outside of BPRD's control) but BPRD will pass this comment along to the appropriate City departments.
- Adding community art within the park was suggested, specifically murals.
- CBA confirmed that the proposed playground layout options as shown would not remove any of the existing trees. If any trees are proposed for removal, public hearings will be held according to the City's tree ordinance.
- CBA noted that a lockable vehicular gate will be included in the site improvements to limit vehicular access to the park.
- Abutters expressed support for the addition of a splash pad.

Trees:

- CBA confirmed that the proposed playground layout options as shown would not remove any of the existing trees. If any trees are proposed for removal, the removal review process would adhere to the City's tree ordinance.
- An abutter is excited about the additional trees being proposed throughout the property.
- A meeting attendee noted that many of the trees around the edge of the field have grown on their own/were not planted by the City.

Park Maintenance:

- A resident asked about maintenance for the renovated park and pointed out that an existing water fountain has been broken at the park for many years. BPRD noted that that particular broken water fountain may have a larger issue, and that it will be addressed as part of the renovation to McKinney Playground. BPRD shared that a maintenance crew regularly picks up trash at parks across the City.
- Maintenance for fields: Per BPRD, the City will mow a natural turf field 5 to 6 times per year. For an artificial turf field, The City has a specialized contractor on-call to perform any needed field repairs.
- Residents noted that currently there is a lack of regular maintenance occurring at the park, and concern was raised about the longevity of the proposed improvements if the level of maintenance is not increased.

Dogs:

- It was suggested that dog waste baggie stations be installed at the park.
- Dog waste has been encountered across the park.

- Youth sports representatives noted that there have been instances of sports games being cancelled due to dogs interfering with players or the game.
- BPRD noted that a new dog park is being designed at Hardiman Park in Brighton, approximately 0.7 miles from McKinney. A community member commented that the walking route to Hardiman is a challenging one from the McKinney area.
- Several people noted that changing the dog use culture at McKinney will be difficult.
- Meeting attendees noted that dogwalkers bring groups of dogs to the park and let them off leash.

Lighting:

- An abutter commented that the park is a great amenity to live next to and lighting is needed to safely use the park in the evenings.
- Allston-Brighton Little League pointed out that the light is currently very limited; they cannot use the fields in the evenings because there is no sports lighting.
- A neighbor of the park voiced appreciation for the proposed lights not to be intrusive into abutting properties.
- Community members did not want lights to be installed and would like to limit evening access to the park.
- Motion detecting pedestrian lights were suggested for inside the park to limit unnecessary light pollution.
- Abutters expressed concern about sports fields shedding lighting on to private residential property.

Athletic Fields:

- A meeting attendee asked what the expected life span of an artificial turf field is. BPRD noted that artificial turf fields will be under warranty from 8 to 10 years, and that BPRD is experiencing a 12 to 15 years life span from currently installed artificial turf fields across the City.
- A parent of a young athlete who uses the field voiced their disappointment at many of the cancelled games due to the poor condition of the existing natural turf field.
- A PALS Soccer coach commented that the artificial turf field is desirable for their program. Practices and games are sometimes cancelled due to rain and poor field conditions.
- The PALS soccer coach also noted that over 300 hundred kids live across the street from the park at the Faneuil Gardens housing development, and that this is a main open space for them.
- A community member noted that the artificial turf field will cut down the “natural area” of the park significantly.
- A suggestion was made to limit the design to one ball field and one soccer field.
- A representative from Allston-Brighton Little League pointed out that the designs as proposed have already reduced the ball fields from three to two. Their program serves youths from ages 4 to 18 years old. The league offers little league, baseball, and soft-ball, and they most recently had 180 kids signed up. They have often encountered rain issues with the field. The existing field is often wet, and he noted that due



to Allston-Brighton Little League's programming needs it would be difficult to reduce their use of the fields to let the field recover.

- The representative from Allston-Brighton Little League noted that they would like to be able to hold tournaments at the park and asked for confirmation that mobile fencing is included within the proposed designs.
- One abutter voiced their appreciation for the work being done to improve the park and observed that the park has had decreased usage due to the poor condition of the fields.
- An abutter asked about the type and height of replacement fencing proposed for the perimeter of the property. The design team noted that standard black chain link fencing would be used, and it would match the existing fence height.
- An abutter to the park voiced support for the installation of the artificial turf.
- Another community member voiced support for the artificial field being installed but advised that as little as possible of the park be used for the artificial field.
- Residents voiced their desire for the park to remain a "natural" green space. They currently enjoy the park for its natural lawn and grass areas and would like to see this aspect remain.
- A resident expressed concern that artificial turf would harm the current park's ecology.
- Concern was voiced for the increased injuries and heat island affect attributed to artificial turf fields.
- A community member pointed out that the survey doesn't include a question about the material selection of the fields. CBA responded that the survey's objective was to solicit feedback on the playground and non-field park elements, as the previous meetings (2019 and 2020) were heavily focused on the field design and materials. CBA stated that comments and questions about the fields can be discussed at this meeting.
- A local resident indicated that the permit usage data is only based on permitted activities and the park is used for other (informal) non-permitted activities, and that all uses, permitted and informal, should be considered by the City and the design team. BPRD agreed that not all park uses are included in the permit data; therefore, the overall field use is higher than what is shown on the permitted use slide in the presentation.
- An abutter to the park grew up playing many sports at McKinney and understands the importance of the fields for the neighborhood. This abutter is worried about the potential volume of users increasing beyond the existing (assumed to be) neighborhood users if an artificial field is installed. He is also concerned that parking on Faneuil Street will be negatively impacted due to the park's increased use.
- A community member argued that kids from across the street use the park to play soccer informally, and that additional permitting (anticipated from installing an artificial turf field) would limit their informal access to the field.
- A neighbor brought up concerns about the end-of-life treatment of artificial turf and noted that should be taken into consideration when selecting materials for the field. BPRD pointed out that Brookline has recently recycled artificial turf material from one of their athletic fields.
- BPRD confirmed with residents that drainage problems will also be addressed on natural turf fields; further study of subsurface conditions and potential design solutions is required.
- A meeting attendee noted that the long-term impact of artificial turf needs to be closely looked at; she does not believe the scientific data is fully developed.

- Concerns were raised about the location of the walking path in relation to the baseball field third base line, as pedestrians may get hit by balls.
- One community member asked if a compromise could be reached between using artificial vs natural turf field. BPRD replied that a mixed design option could be explored.
- Clarification was provided by the City that permits are unlimited as long as the dedicated time is available for use. The City prioritizes permitting for youth athletics.
- BPRD noted that a very nominal fee is charged for use permits and that permits do not make a profit for the City.
- A park abutter with small children noted that that current grass field is in rough shape; when it is wet it is puddly, and when it is dry it is dusty, and it lacks shade. She noted that she does not want to bring her children to the field.
- A park abutter noted that one of her park side window was broken by a baseball last year, so fencing improvements are important.

Additional Feedback:

- A meeting attendee requested that an on-site community design event be held so that the community can provide additional feedback.
- A meeting attendee asked if the grant money received from the Boston College (BC) Neighborhood Improvements Fund included any stipulations. BPRD noted that the scope of the original proposal included sports lighting and artificial turf, and currently BPRD's understanding is that these features are to be included in the design if that funding is to be used. Both BPRD and the BC representative who was at the meeting noted that they would discuss the scope in relation to the funding and the community's feedback.
- City Councilor Breadon acknowledged that there is a lack of public parking near McKinney, she will look into whether there are any solutions.
- City Councilor Breadon also noted that City residents should be treating stormwater on their own property, via stormwater best management practices like planting rain gardens and not over-paving whenever possible.

Prepared by Liz Thompson and Megan Tomkins, CBA Landscape Architects LLC

