

McKinney Playground Community Meeting #4 (In Person)

Date & Time: June 8, 2024, from 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Location: McKinney Playground

Attendees:

Nelle Ward, Project Manager, Parks and Recreation Department, City of Boston (BPRD)

Lauren Bryant, Project Manager, BPRD

Liz Breadon, City Councilor, City of Boston (COB)

Matt Costas, Chief of Staff, Office of City Councilor Breadon, COB

Moira McCrave, Director of Planning, Office of City Councilor Breadon, COB

Kevin L'Herrou, Allston-Brighton Liaison, Office of Neighborhood Services, COB

Megan Tomkins, Principal, CBA Landscape Architects

Michelle Johnson, Landscape Designer, CBA Landscape Architects

Friends of McKinney Playground members

Community members (including neighbors and permit holders)

Nelle Ward started the Community meeting by introducing the design team; they then introduced the project and provided a summary of the last community meeting, which was held via zoom on Tuesday June 4th, 2024. Nelle asked for questions and comments from the community and facilitated a subsequent discussion. The discussion points are represented in bulleted outlined below. After that, the design team dispersed to stand near several boards showing the existing and proposed plans and materials. The design team met with the meeting attendees informally to discuss the project, answer questions, and to receive feedback about the proposed design.

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

Athletic Fields & Courts:

- A representative from Allston-Brighton Little League expressed support for artificial turf for the sports field, citing the poor conditions and lack of maintenance at the existing sports fields. BPRD responded that the City is in the process of expanding maintenance capacity for ballfields City-wide; the City will be using outside landscape maintenance contractors to perform field maintenance as needed.
- Community members expressed concern about drainage on the fields. BPRD responded that they will work with the Designer's Sports Field Consultant specialist to design the best possible drainage system for the athletic fields given the constraints of the site and desire for natural turf.

- A Community member asked if there would be a new batting cage, noting the poor condition of the existing batting cage. Other community members suggested removing the batting cage and not replacing it. BPRD stated that if the batting cage were to remain and be renovated, it would require that the basketball court remain the shortened, non-standardized size that it currently is, due to the spatial constraints of the site. BPRD will study this further.
- Community members asked if a pickleball court could be added to the design. Community members suggested striping the hockey / multi-sport court for pickleball, so a moveable net could be brought in by community members to play pickleball. BPRD will consider this request.
- Community members suggested replacing the hockey / multi-sport court with a second basketball court. Several noted that they do not see anyone using the hockey / multi-sport court, but they do see a lot of use at the basketball court. BPRD will study this further.
- A park user noted that the mesh on the movable soccer goals is not fully attached / has holes. These goals likely belong to PALS soccer. BPRD will pass along the feedback.
- Community members shared that coyotes have a den by the stairs by Leicester Street and a family of coyotes is living there. BPRD will alert Animal Control.
- Community members expressed concerns regarding the density of planting behind the backstop and that illicit activities happen there. A request was made to prune and thin the vegetation in that area. BPRD will include vegetation management at the requested area in the proposed site improvements.
- Community members expressed concerns about human waste and urination in two specific spots in the park: one behind the backstop and the other behind the shipping container. BPRD will study this further.
- A community member noted that designing for deterring skateboarders from the courts will be important. BPRD will study this further.
- Friends of McKinney Playground (FOMP) noted that there are ongoing discussions about how FOMP can help fundraise to improve ballfield maintenance at McKinney Playground.

Perimeter Path, Adult Exercise Equipment, Fencing:

- A community member asked for distance markers / signs along the perimeter loop path. BPRD will consider this request.
- Community Member discussed adult exercise equipment; some think it will get used and others think that it won't get used. BPRD will study this further.
- A meeting attendee asked if there will be new perimeter fencing and if they will be cutting back the trees along the edge of the park. They noted that perimeter trees hang over their property. BPRD noted that tree pruning will be part of the proposed site improvements.

Lighting:

- A community member asked if there will be new lighting at the park. BPRD noted that there will be new sports lights and path lights.
- A community member asked if the sports lights can turn off earlier in the evening (BPRD typical latest time that sports light will be on is 10:45 PM). BPRD will follow up with Permitting / programming about this request.
- A community member asked about the directionality of the various types of lights. BPRD explained that the sports lights had high lighting cut off, and the pedestrian lights are lower, but have less cut off.

Entrances & Playground:

- One meeting attendee asked if there will be a splash pad, and where it will be in the park. The design team showed the plans and indicated the area of the proposed splash pad.
- During the presentation a meeting attendee asked to see slides for the new playground. BPRD responded that this information is on the printed slide packets made available at the meeting and on the presentation boards on display. BPRD also noted that this information will be made digitally available on the BPRD website within a week or so.
- Community members noted they would like to see a dish swing at the park citing how popular they are at Smith Park. A dish swing is being considered for the design.
- A meeting attendee asked if there would be new drinking fountains at the park. BPRD responded that there will be a minimum of one new drinking fountain / bottle filler near the playground. A community member asked if there will be a dog waterer incorporated in the drinking fountain; BPRD noted that the City typically installs dog waterers when the drinking fountain is not adjacent to a playground. BPRD will consider whether a second drinking fountain with a dog waterer, located away from the playground, can be incorporated into the design.

Dogs:

- A meeting attendee asked for an area designated for dogs at the park. BPRD noted that a designated dog park area is being planned for Hardiman Playground, located at 380 Faneuil Street, half a mile away. BPRD noted that not there is enough room at McKinney without taking substantial space from the playground or from the athletic fields, which the community was not in favor of.

Additional Feedback:

- A community member asked how the McKinney construction will align with the construction at Faneuil Gardens (BHA) across the street. They want to make sure that neighborhood kids, including the kids who live at Faneuil Gardens, have a place to play when the sites are shut down. BPRD will coordinate the construction schedule for McKinney and



for Faneuil Gardens with BHA to the degree possible while still keeping McKinney Playground's renovation on track.

- Community members asked that the existing stairs not be relocated. Some community members would that the stairs in place so as not to disrupt the sledding that currently occurs on the hill where the stairs had previously been proposed to go.

Prepared by Michelle Johnson and Megan Tomkins, CBA Landscape Architects LLC