

JAMES H. ROBERTS PLAYGROUND

COMMUNITY MEETING #1

Meeting Summary Notes

DATE: December 15th, 2025 @ 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

LOCATION: ZOOM

PRESENTERS: Kenya Thompson (KT) | Boston Parks & Recreation Department (BPRD)
Cassie Bethoney (CB) | Weston & Sampson
Gracie Swansburg (GS) | Weston & Sampson

PRESENTATION:

- KT opened the meeting by informing the public that it will be recorded and available on the city website the following week.
- KT introduced My'Kel McMillen (BPRD Outreach Coordinator) and the Weston & Sampson team. She discussed the meeting agenda and clarified the scope of Phase 1 work: updates to the splash pad, improving grading and drainage, and prioritizing the health and care of the existing trees.
- KT introduced CB, who discussed the general project timeline: Kickoff and Site Analysis/Tree Assessment (Fall 2025-Now), Community Meetings and Concept Design (Now- March 2026), Design Development and Construction Documents (Spring 2026), Anticipated Commencement of Construction (Fall 2026).
- CB briefly reviewed the elements that go into park design and the five elements of Play, and how these influence the playground design process. She discussed the site history, and presented information about the late James H. Roberts, for whom the park was recently renamed.
- CB reviewed several maps, including an inventory of parks, their comfort amenities and active recreation opportunities within a 20-minute walking radius of Roberts Playground.
- Next, CB introduced GS, who reviewed slides about park entrances, site elements and circulation, and general observations of the existing conditions.
- GS shared site analysis created by the Weston & Sampson team based on survey data and an arborist's tree assessment of Roberts Playground, before reviewing inspiration imagery indicating what future types of play equipment, park amenities, and gathering spaces could look like.
- KT then closed out the presentation with several questions to begin the listening and discussion portion of the meeting.
- Community members shared their observations and feedback, and the son of James H. Roberts spoke about his experience growing up in the neighborhood and spending time at the park.

COMMENTS:**Park Use and Operations:**

- Dog park: some neighbors bring their dogs to run around in the 2-5 Playground because it's fenced in. There is a desire for a better dog park in the neighborhood.
- The park is often used for gatherings and children's parties, and people bring their own folding tables and chairs.
- More benches and picnic tables are desired.
- The existing open grassy areas are valued for gatherings and unprogrammed play space. These are more used for gathering than the plaza space that also functions as the splash pad.
- There was interest in interpretive signage or community garden elements for children's education.
- There was enthusiasm for nature-inspired seating that blends into the landscape (boulders, canopies).
- Shade structures or canopies would be enjoyed.

Playground & Equipment:

- Attendees were in favor of inclusive play elements, and generally excited about maintaining spaces for children to play – especially given new real estate development in the neighborhood.
- Need was expressed for ADA accessible equipment; and that the current equipment is outdated. A specific example of the slide material and color being too hot in the summer was brought up.
- The splash pad gets frequent use and is considered an important feature of the park. It was noted that when the splash pad didn't work in the summer, the park had significantly fewer kids in attendance than usual.

Trees, Vegetation, and Drainage:

- Residents expressed appreciation for the large shade trees. The park functions as a cooling center for the neighborhood and the shade is highly valued.
- More understory trees and plant variety were suggested.
- Neighbors with abutting properties expressed that drainage issues pool and attract mosquitoes.

Maintenance, Lighting, and Safety:

- There is only one trash barrel currently, and it is uncovered. Trash from this barrel blows into neighbor yards.
- More trash barrels are needed, with closed lids to prevent rats and household dumping.
- Recycling options requested.

- The splash pad has not worked properly for 2 summers; neighbors emphasize the need to prioritize maintenance of current and future park features.
- There is currently no lighting, which was intentional to prevent undesirable gatherings at night. There once was lighting in the park that was removed due to this less desirable activity.
- Some neighbors prefer that there continues to be no light, while others feel that the lack of light is unsafe and unwelcoming.
- Motion-sensing lights and a blue light (emergency call station) was suggested.

Entrances and Access:

- All entrances should have clear signage identifying the park.
- There is general confusion about what is city property versus neighbors' property, especially at the Goddard St. entrance (referred to colloquially as the Seattle St. entrance).
- There is desire for appropriate safety and accessibility features at each entrance, such as traffic controls and sidewalks with curb cuts.
- The W. Sorrento St. entrance (referred to colloquially as the Hopedale St. entrance) is often icy or unplowed in the winter. There is a need for increased maintenance at these entrances in the winter.

General Comments:

- There was a strong emphasis on keeping the park family/kid friendly, and it is expressed that the play features get frequent use.
- General enthusiasm for providing more amenities for multi-generational gathering (i.e. picnic tables).
- It was noted that two phases of construction could be frustrating for the community: continue to be clear about intentions and expectations for the current versus future work of the park.

End of Notes.