



Prospect Hill Park

Corner of Munroe Street & Prospect Hill Parkway – Somerville, MA

Community Meeting No. 1 - Notes

Thursday, July 6, 2017

Location: Prospect Hill Park. 6:00 – 8:00 PM

A tent, seating, and a display table were set up on the lawn near the base of the tower. The doors to the tower were opened so that visitors could access the tower and the views from the top. Approximately 25+ residents attended the meeting and several others came to visit the tower.

Meeting announcements were issued on the City's webpage, cable channel, Facebook page, and the Portuguese, Spanish, and Haitian Creole Community Facebook pages. Multilingual flyers were posted around the neighborhood.

Community response was good and attendees represented a cross-section of age groups, ethnicities, physical abilities, and income levels.

Meeting Agenda:

Parks and Open Space Director Arn Franzen, and Project Manager Luisa Oliveira introduced the project, explaining the site's historical significance and need for ADA improvements, as well as the design and renovation schedule. The [Historic Preservation Commission](#) must review and approve all landscape plans. The park must be made compliant with the American with Disabilities Act.

The Ward 3 Alderman Robert J. McWatters thanked residents for attending and encouraged them to stay involved in the design process. Residents then discussed their ideas and concerns. Most attendees then toured the park, walking the trails and reviewing the features, and then regrouped to continue the discussion.

Community ideas, concerns, and comments:

Common themes were better ADA access, quality lighting, improving the quality of the tree canopy, the consideration of native plant material, historic signage, views from the park to the surrounding area, stormwater management, crosswalks and safe neighborhood connections.

Trees:

- Attendees appreciated the park for its canopy trees and the forested slopes that occupy the parks lower elevations.
- Many of the park's trees are broken, or misshapen, in poor health and needed proper pruning and several were dead. Trim the trees
- A very large tree recently fell knocking out a section of fence and landing on a neighbor's garage.
- Many of the larger trees are invasive species of Norway maple and Black Locust
- People asked that special attention be given to the woodland to improve the health of the canopy. Suggestions included some thinning to open up the canopy for new tree species, better understory growth, and ground layer plantings.
- Inventory the trees and develop a forest management plan
- Remove trees from the lower level around the base of the tower

Lighting:

- Provide new lighting. Eliminate tall utility pole lighting. Provide fixtures that are more traditional and appropriate for a historic park.
- Provide lighting to feature the tower, and light the flag.
- Do not allow new lighting to shine in the windows of neighboring homes.
- Light the pathways through the woods.
- Residents suggested that new lights be solar powered and LED.
- Provide period lighting
- Put lights on timer
- Use lighting for plaques

Artwork:

- Provide spaces for chalk art on the main wall around the tower base
- Provide a historic mural
- Consider a plaque, monument or signage that points out the views from the park
- Consider wayfinding signage

Tower Design:

- Provide access to the middle balcony level where the raised lawn circles the tower. That space is currently off limits to the public. Consider a path and railings for that level.
- Install a new ADA path around the base of the tower

Recreation:

- Provide footings for a volley ball net that could be installed during the summer months
- Provide a bocce Court
- Incorporate natural play features focused on learning activities. Consider including logs and stumps and natural items to climb over.

Stormwater:

- Capture stormwater and use it for irrigation
- Capture water runoff that runs down the sidewalks and paths on the hillsides
- Repair blocked or broken drains

Landscaping:

- Use a landscape architecture firm that has an environmental background
- Consider having a community representative on the panel that reviews the proposals submitted in response to the RFP
- Install native pollinator plants
- Plant a “meadow” on the hill
- Design sidewalks and paths to improve circulation and flow
- Include natural perma-culture, incorporate a composting system
- Provide “picture window views of Boston through the trees. Consider conical shaped tree that will open up more of the skyline
- Provide attractive flowering shrubs along the Prospect Hill parkway as it climbs the hill to the park
- Include flower beds around the stone walls in the middle of the park
- Use boulders as benches
- Provide views to Fenway park
- Incorporate edible plantings like blueberries, for wildlife and people
- Manage the lawns, use aeration, improve the quality of the soils for grass and plantings
- Preserve the homemade woodland path
- Plant woodland bulbs and flowers in the shady woodland areas to provide more natural color.
- Provide natural trails for kids and others. Have “fantasy” pathways.
- Save and integrate large groups of shrubs for children to use as forts and play areas.
- Retain undesignated play areas
- Do not include artificial turf
- Use trees for windbreaks
- Provide views to union square that will not be blocked by tall buildings
- Consider a designated space for events and park gatherings
- Use natural elements like boulders to provide small gathering notes and seating areas

Neighborhood connections/ Traffic Calming/Crosswalks:

- Improve ADA accessibility. The sidewalks are uneven and most of the park does not have any access.
- Provide traffic calming and safer crosswalks to Corbett McKenna Playground
- Provide crosswalks at all corners to provide safer access to the park
- Consider connections to Union Square
- Provide traffic calming elements

Site amenities/features:

- Install a new drinking fountain. Install bottle filler.
- Provide new benches like the City uses in other parks. Install granite benches. Install wrought iron benches.
- Provide tables for picnics and small gatherings
- Install a composting toilet
- Provide more trash and recycling containers

Stone House:

- Protect the stone house. Remove graffiti. Repair the house so that it can be used by the public.
- Reuse the building for DPW storage or Recreation Department use

Signage:

- Provide Historic signage
- Downloadable electronic tours and key to important views
- Provide signage that shows the parks historical importance and which embraces the parks history
- Signage that helps to educate community and tourists
- Use lighting for plaques

Railings, Stairs, and Walkways:

- Repair all stairs and railings on the hillsides
- Use better quality fencing everywhere use picket fence
- Replace broken curbs
- Install new retaining walls as necessary
- Improve all sidewalks at the street.
- Remove cobblestones that restrict ADA access.

Miscellaneous:

- Consider a windmill as a power source