

Client: Boston Parks and Recreation Department

Project Name: Improvements to Mary Ellen Welch Greenway

Date: October 8, 2024

Time: 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Location: Zoom Call

Panelists:

- *Amy Linné, Boston Parks & Recreation Department*
- *Lin Ye, Weston & Sampson*
- *Farah Dakkak, Weston & Sampson*

Meeting Goals:

This meeting was organized by BPRD and the design team to:

- *Present the final design for the greenway path, entry spaces, and amenities including drainage improvements.*
- *Respond to questions and comments from the community.*

Attendance:

26 total attendees.

Presentation:

- Amy began the meeting and welcomed all for attending. Interpreters made introductions in different languages informing all about the zoom interpretation services. The meeting is recorded and will be shared with the public on the project website - www.boston.gov/welch-greenway. Amy shared her email for the public to reach out after the meeting. amy.linne@boston.gov
- Amy introduced the team and welcomed elected officials or staff to say a few words. Marcela Lopez-Romero from Rep. Madaro’s office and Ellie Sanchez from Councilor Coletta’s office were in attendance.
- Lin gave a recap on the project background and site conditions.
- Farah gave design updates:
 - Overall plan update:
 - Access and circulation:

- Shared path, bike path and pedestrian path circulation hierarchy being introduced.
- New shared path width was updated to 14' to accommodate shared use. 6' wide pedestrian path and 10' bike path when separated.
- Paving improvement:
 - Accent pavers introduced at entrances
 - Reshaping the concrete paving to work better where the entrance meets the adjacent property and sidewalk at Marginal Street entrance.
 - The pathways will be asphalt, as they are now.
 - Pavement markings are introduced for bike and pedestrian use separation, yield spots.
 - Entry spaces of the greenway will be accented with concrete paving bands.
- Site furnishings:
 - Trash receptacles and bike racks will be introduced at main entrances at Gove Street and Marginal Street
 - Different seating options including park backed benches and granite block seatings are placed along the greenway
 - Café tables and seating will concentrate in the Caboose area.
- Planting:
 - City is doing tree assessment and will look at dead trees to remove
 - Stormwater Management and Bioretention being introduced to alleviate stormwater runoff and treatment
- Signage:
 - Presented types of signage to be included in the project including: city park name sign, park regulation signage, Marginal Street sign, and no motor vehicle signs.
- Zoom-in Area Updates:
 - Blue Caboose Area updates
 - Farah described the proposed improvement at this entrance
 - Sumner Street to Maverick Street
 - City did a deployable day a week ago
 - Gove Street:
 - Raising the path by 1 foot in this stretch but limited by connecting to existing adjacent pedestrian ramps.

Feedback and Discussions:

Site Amenities

- Comment: Will the bike racks have an air pump to fill your tires?
 - Response: Team to consider adding this feature.
- Comment: Big Belly Trash/Recycling would be great.

- Response: The City has a new standard trash receptacle that has been vetted by the maintenance department.
- Comment: Will surveillance cameras be installed at the gathering areas like the Caboose and Gove St? Power and vantage points are available on the light poles.
 - Response: Feedback was received that indicated surveillance cameras are not desirable and may not ward off unwanted behavior.
- Comment: Additional trash cans.
 - Response: Team can look at adding a few more along the way throughout.
- Comment: Water filling station. Would it be possible to locate one at one of the main entrances?
 - Response: Agreed, design to include water filling stations.

Site Design

- Comment: What are elevation changes to the path?
 - Response: the path will be elevated 1-2 feet where appropriate and when elevation changes won't affect the existing tree canopy.
- Comment: What are the plans for the existing Mary Ellen Welch Memorial Garden?
 - Response: Existing memorial garden is to remain in place during construction, and the design team will plan to add plants and restore it as needed.
- Comment: Capacity of the single path use when the other one is flooded due to the heavy uses.
 - Response: Other approaches are proposed to alleviate the flooding besides elevating the path through grading, those will include the reduction in pavement, the addition of bioretention swales, and gravel trenches along steep slopes.
- Comment: Existing Memorial Garden will this be relocated?
 - Response: Preserving current garden area, and the team can use this improvement project as an opportunity to add planting if desired.
- Comment: Proposed elevation - How much is raised for the paths? What's the transition looking like between the blue caboose and the next stretch that's not raised?
 - Response: 1-2 ft across, further explanation of the transition grading in relation to the memorial garden to remain. Clarification provided for the use of granite block to raise the path south of the caboose area. Grading will be studied in this area to ensure water to pitch into the bioretention zone.
- Comment: Would you be open to expanding the space at Marginal St allocated to "farmers market tents" with permeable pavers from the path to the fence? It doesn't look like enough space to me as currently designed.
 - Response: The space indicated on the plan is just a suggestion for most convenient location to set up tents/food trucks. If the community was to apply for a future event permit, the space allowed for such an event can be explored at that time.
- Comment: Is the flood plain showing a 10-year flood plain? We seem to get a 10-year flood several times each year.

- Response: The plan shows 100-year flood condition. Team agrees that flooding has become more frequent. Due to the nature of the site being the lowest area within the neighborhood, the project currently will not be able to plan so far out.
- Comment: Thank you for this presentation and the thoughtfulness that has gone into this redesign process. I'd like to advocate for:
 1. bird-friendly lighting that directs light down towards the path rather than out sideways or up to the sky
 2. clarification of e-bike and scooter policy. I would say don't put up a "no motor vehicle" sign if that's not actually the rule or what will be enforced
 3. increased tree canopy and biodiversity of all new plantings (thrilled to hear about invasive species treatment, though I do wonder whether those species are playing a significant role in holding the slope in place)
 4. porous pavers anywhere it's possible.

Signage and Regulations

- Comment: Speed Limit sign would be good for e-bikes and scooter people.
 - Response: Acknowledged.
- Comment: "no motor vehicles" does that apply to Massport staff?
 - Response: Only Boston City maintenance staff should be driving on the greenway.
- Comment: As a daily user of the greenway, I'm really excited about these improvements! Thank you for your work.
- Zoom chat discussion around signage for "no motorized vehicle":
 - Comment: MassPort does not want to ban ebikes & scooters.
 - Comment: Was almost hit by a speeding scooter last week. There is vandalism and drug use in those spots.
 - Scooters are dangerous despite not being motorized. Parks to further define the "motorized vehicle" and what to limit on the bike path.
 - Surveillance cameras are needed in certain areas.
 - Comment: Mass Port has one under each bridge and one at Gove St Plaza.
 - Comment: E-bikes and scooters are an important part of mobility in Eastie. Many parents bring children home from school on scooters and older residents can do the length of the greenway with an e-bike.
 - Response: Parks is still working on defining the speed appropriate for the bike path and will investigate regulating e-bikes and other vehicles that might be too dangerous to have on-site.

Maintenance

- Comment: In the future will parks have adequate park staff to take care of the Greenway.
 - Response: Parks will work with the office of green infrastructure to better understand the maintenance of the rain garden.
- Comment: Granite Block Seating currently on site can be relocated. They are not historic or of sentimental value.

- Response: Granite Block Seating currently on site to be re-used in future design.

Construction duration:

- Comment: Will it be closed during the remodeling process?
- Comment: The alternative route is key for such a long closure. How about 12 months?
 - Response: Yes, the greenway will be closed during construction however the city will work with the contractor to ensure closure is kept to a minimum.
- Comment: During construction, can the city create a temporary protected bike lane on either Orleans or Bremen for the length of the greenway? We have 100-200 children come to Piers Park via foot, bike, and scooter in the summer months. I am worried about them being diverted out onto the street.
 - Response: The PLAN East Boston recommendations are for a bike lane on Bremen between Marginal and Sumner, and along Sumner. Amy can pass along the comments to BTD and ask about the effort.
- Comment: Do we know how long the construction will shut down bike usage, and starting when? Also, any update on the possibility of extensions to Revere and Winthrop?
 - Response: 18 months for construction currently expected.

Tree Planting and Green Infrastructure:

- Comment: Will there be new trees added to the greenway?
 - Response: Yes, proposed new trees are shown on the tree planting diagram.
 - Comment: Happy with having new trees proposed.

Art Commission

- Art commission:
 - Matthew Barison: Would be great to include an art commission for a sculpture, something with a wow factor.
 - Current mural artwork is a highlight and can be expanded into other effort if there's capacity.
 - Mark Warren: The Friends can continue to search for grants for additional artwork, including sculptures.

Lighting and Electrical:

- Comment: Convenience outlet along the greenway for placemaking and potential artwork. Has the plan considered that?
 - Response: Notes to study the technical aspect of it with W&S electrical team. Pedestrian poles currently have separate power source from the special or accent lighting power. Team to explore possibilities for the secondary lighting types.

Other Comments:

- Comment: If the runoff issues from parking lots is still unknown, who what's the level of confidence about the budget being adequate given such unknowns?

- Rough cost estimate has been done for the project. As we develop the design we will put updating the cost estimate for greater accuracy.
- Amy noted that this is a 3.5-acre site, 1 million per acre is the ballpark of normal cost for construction.
- Adjacent property run-off issue remains unresolved.
 - Karen Maddalena: When Karen was the president of the Friends' group, the group tried to work with the adjacent health center parking lot to limit their run-off but was not successful. Karen is still working with Mass Port about limiting their users contributing to the run-off.
 - Dennis Sullivan: If the runoff issues from parking lots is still unknown, who what's the level of confidence about the budget being adequate given such unknowns?
 - Amy had direct conversations with the neighborhood health property group. The conversation wasn't productive and might need another effort.
 - Keeley Fanuele: Karen and I walked the space this morning. In addition to the health center parking lot, there was another building with a drainage pipe onto the greenway. Any way to hold them accountable as well?
 - Amy to connect offline on this.
- Noemy from Green Roots (translated by Claudio): We have a group of 42 people for the walking families. The group consists of nature lovers. There were many challenges during the walks. For instance, there were big puddles after big rains. There are also rats and mice issues in certain areas during nighttime. It is really great to see the proposal, but we'd like to make sure the green area is preserved. Illumination should be improved along the path and have water filling stations added.