

## Community Meeting Notes

Meeting: Robert G. Lawson Park, Community Meeting #1  
Date: November 19, 2024  
Attending: Priyanka Vankina (BPRD Project Manager)  
My'Kel McMillen (BPRD Community Outreach Coordinator)  
Caroline Peters (ONS Jamaica Plain Liaison)  
William Moose (Boston Transportation Department (BTD))  
Kyle Zick (KZLA)  
Tracy Hudak (KZLA)  
Community Members, including  
Melissa Beltran from Councilor Weber's office

**Below is a summary of comments and questions received during the meeting, organized by theme:**

### A. Traffic

Comment in support of raising Atherton Street to be flush with park and Atherton Plaza. Can Atherton Street be closed to traffic?

*Response:* BTD investigated this option, but residents of Atherton Street did not want to lose direct access. What is being proposed is a hybrid approach where the street will be raised to be flush with the sidewalk between Robert Lawson Park and Atherton Plaza. Left turns from Washington Street onto Atherton Street will be prohibited and a raised median on Washington Street will reinforce that.

Can there be more separation from the impacts of the traffic on Washington and Columbus?

*Response:* The design will need to balance separation with the need for visibility and safety. BTD will be widening the sidewalk alongside Robert Lawson Park by a few feet, and potentially adding landscaping, which will provide a bit more distance between park users and the street. They will do this by right-sizing the existing travel lanes.

### B. Trees

Cherry trees are a feature many people love.

How will the design approach the existing trees? Will trees be removed?

*Response:* City's goal is to increase tree canopy, so design will start with the aim of saving all the healthy trees and proceed with that goal in mind.

### C. Circulation

A commentor noted that one of the trees in poor condition is located near the crosswalk across Columbus, and may be impacted by people crossing through the park at that location. Another commentor noted that many people pass through the park, and the design should consider that.

*Response:* The design team will look at current circulation, where people go, and how that might change with a new design.

#### **D. Lighting**

Can the lighting in the park be re-examined to better balance the very bright and very dark areas? Can the location and intensity of the lighting be changed?

A local resident worked with the Public Works Department to install the floodlights in Atherton Plaza due to safety concerns.

*Response:* Design team will be looking at lighting holistically. Depending on where the light is located and what type of fixture it is, it may fall under the ownership of Boston Street Lighting or another city division. That complicates the coordination, but the design team will be working to make the lighting uniform, safe and appropriate for the space.

#### **E. Granite Pieces**

What will happen to the granite blocks?

*Response:* The blocks were originally put in place over 20 years ago to prevent gathering, but it is clear that people want something different for this space now. There are no restrictions in place. The blocks can be repurposed as-is, cut into other shapes or forms, or they can be removed.

#### **F. Streetscape and Edges**

The big blank wall was noted as an interesting observation.

The short retaining wall at Atherton Plaza, while used as seating, also means that cars parking in the municipal parking lot intrude into the plaza space visually, and sometimes physically. Can their impact be softened?

*Response:* Much like with the impact from traffic, the design team will look at how to balance separation with safety and visibility.

#### **G. Art**

The community has expressed a desire for artwork to honor Mr. Lawson. What are the options?

*Response:* The park redesign project is funded by Community Preservation Act funds, which cannot be used for funding art. Priyanka can help point people to other potential sources for those types of projects.

#### **H. Blue Bikes**

Blue Bikes shape the way people use the plaza. Can the docks be broken up? Is there data on usage?

*Response:* The docks can now be broken up to some extent, though there is still a minimum length that can function on its own. The design team has requested data on Blue Bikes usage,

but did not receive it in time for this meeting. They will present the data at the next meeting in January.

**I. Timing**

Will it really take until Spring 2026 for construction to start?

*Response:* Design will go through spring of 2025, and then the design team will develop construction documents and work through permitting. Bidding is expected in the fall of 2026. The project will start earlier if it can, but right now, the expectation is that construction will start Spring of 2026.