



Photo courtesy of the Newton History Museum

## **Proposal for An Accessibility Plan for Newton Centre Playground**

2004 OCT 15 AM 11:00

to the Community Preservation Committee

by the City of Newton  
Parks and Recreation Department

October 15, 2004

# NEWTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT



DAVID B. COHEN  
MAYOR

70 Crescent Street, Newton, MA 02466  
Office: 617 796-1500  
Fax: 617 796-1512



FRAN L. TOWLE  
COMMISSIONER

## ENCLOSURE

To: Jennifer Goldson  
Community Preservation Planner  
Planning and Development Department  
Newton City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

From: Carol Schein/Mark Kelly  
City of Newton  
Parks and Recreation Department  
70 Crescent Street  
Newton, MA 02466

Re: CPA Application for an Accessibility Plan for Newton Centre Playground

Date: October 15, 2004

PROPERTY OF:  
DEPARTMENT OF  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
CITY HALL  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02459  
\* DO NOT TAKE \*  
\* FOR REVIEW ONLY \*

Enclosed are twelve (12) copies (1 unbound, 11 bound) of the Parks and Recreation Department's application/proposal to the Community Preservation Committee for an Accessibility Plan for Newton Centre Playground.

Please don't hesitate to call if there are any questions.

COMMISSION  
MEMBERS

WARD 1 - JENNIE DEVITO  
WARD 2 - ALAN HUR MAGNI  
WARD 3 - PETER JOHNSON, CHAIRMAN

WARD 4 - FRANCIS J. RICE  
WARD 5 - WALTER S. BERNHEIMER II  
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WARD 7 - GWEN FINEBERG  
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FAYE HAYS - COMM. SECRETARY

ALTERNATES: MICHAEL CLARKE, PETER KASTNER, JACK NEVILLE

[www.ci.newton.ma.us/parks](http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/parks)

2004 OCT 15 AM 10:59

# APPLICATION FOR COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUNDING



David B. Cohen  
Mayor

Submit to Jennifer Goldson, Community Preservation Planner  
Newton Planning and Development Department  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459  
jgoldson@ci.newton.ma.us  
617-796-1120 ext. 1131

Name of Applicant Parks and Recreation Department

Name of Co-Applicant, if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name Carol Schein/Mark Kelly, Parks and Rec. Dept.

Mailing Address 70 Crescent St. City Newton State MA Zip 02466

Daytime Phone 617-796-1500 Email cschein@rcn.com/mkelly@ci.newton.ma.us

Name of Proposal Accessibility Plan for Newton Centre Playground

Address of Proposal (or assessor's parcel id) Centre Street, Newton Centre

CPA Category (circle all that apply): Open space  Historic preservation  Recreation  Community housing

CPA Funding Requested \$65,000 ~~\$65,000~~ 56,500 Total Cost of Proposed Project Phase I: \$65,000  
Phase II: unknown

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Attach answers to the following questions. Applications will be returned as incomplete if all requested information is not provided. Include supporting materials as necessary.

1. **Goals:** What are the goals of the proposed project?
2. **Community Need:** Why is this project needed? Does it address needs identified in existing City plans?
3. **Community Support:** What is the nature and level of support for this project? Include letters of support and any petitions.
4. **Timeline:** What is the schedule for project implementation, including a timeline for all critical milestones?
5. **Credentials:** How will the experience of the applicant contribute to the success of this project?
6. **Success Factors:** How will the success of this project will be measured? Be as specific as possible.
7. **Budget:** What is the total budget for the project and how will CPA funds be spent? All items of expenditure must be clearly identified. Distinguish between hard and soft costs and contingencies. (NOTE: CPA funds may NOT be used for maintenance.)
8. **Other Funding:** What additional funding sources are available, committed, or under consideration? Include commitment letters, if available, and describe any other attempts to secure funding for this project.
9. **Maintenance:** If ongoing maintenance is required for your project, how will it be funded?

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Provide the following additional information, as applicable.

10. Documentation that you have control over the site, such as Purchase and Sale Agreement, option, or deed.

<sup>1</sup> If the proposal is on City-owned land, either the applicant or the co-applicant must be the City Board, Commission, or Department in control of the land.

11. For projects that include construction or rehabilitation, include the existing and proposed site plan, floor plans, elevations, and any other drawings as necessary to visually describe the proposal.
12. Evidence that the project is in compliance with the zoning ordinance, Architectural Access Board Regulations, or any other laws or regulations. Or, if zoning relief is required, specify what relief is needed and when an application will be made to the City for zoning review.
13. Evidence that the appropriate City Boards and Commissions have approved the project (for example, proposed new uses on Parks & Recreation land requires approval from the Parks and Recreation Commission)
14. Evidence that the proposed site is free of hazardous materials or that there is a plan for remediation in place.
15. Evidence that appropriate professional standards will be followed if construction, restoration or rehabilitation is proposed.
16. Information indicating how this project can be used to achieve additional community benefits.

NOTE: If the requested funds are for a real estate acquisition, an independent appraisal will be required which the applicant will be required to fund. No funding decisions will be made without an independent appraisal. Contact Jennifer Goldson, Community Preservation Planner, at 617-796-1131 or [jgoldson@ci.newton.ma.us](mailto:jgoldson@ci.newton.ma.us) to arrange for an independent appraisal.

Refer to the City web site ([ci.newton.ma.us/Planning/CPA](http://ci.newton.ma.us/Planning/CPA)) for further information.  
Form CPA-1 (Revised 9/11/03)

## CPA Proposal for an Accessibility Plan for Newton Centre Playground

### Introduction

Newton Centre Playground, an 18-acre valley in the middle of the village, was designed in 1891 as a picturesque, multi-use playground by the founder of American landscape architecture, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. The historic design plans are archived at the Frederick Law Olmsted Historic Site in Brookline and photos and other documents can be found at the Newton History Museum. As was Olmsted's style, the park was created in keeping with the site's natural scenery and topography with respect for and full use of the "genius of the place." Not simply an arrangement of surface features, the design provided for adequate drainage and other engineering considerations and was intended to promote both the physical and mental health of users. Unfortunately, access and egress are difficult; the topographical constraints of the site, its bowl-like shape, its inadequate pathway system and its lack of handicap parking, all keep the park from being available to everyone in the City equally.

In order to remove some barriers and plan for accessibility, a comprehensive study of the entire park is needed that will document and provide an assessment of the historic character-defining features as well as the existing conditions and uses. A pathway system that meets the current needs and standards for accessibility yet flows with the 19<sup>th</sup> century design can then be implemented. In keeping with our mission, as well as the goals of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to provide access whenever possible to the greatest number of residents possible, the Newton Parks and Recreation Department is requesting CPA funding for an Accessibility Plan for the playground.

### Background

Earlier this year, the Department assessed its parks' access issues, resulting in a prioritized list of recommendations for further study and presentation to the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities. The ranking criteria used, ultimately placing Newton Centre at the top, were centrality of location, level of use, and proximity to a school and/or other facility used for recreation. Currently in their planning phases, are two separately proposed privately-funded accessible play areas for the park: a small one at the old fire engine play structure site behind the Mason-Rice School and a much larger one for the center of the park intended to consolidate and replace all existing non-accessible equipment.

Anticipating the need for access to the central play area, the City has allocated \$17,500 for the construction of a +300 linear foot pathway to angle down the Bowen Street slope from two new proposed hc parking spaces. This being the shortest route in makes that area accessible from one direction yet highlights what is inherently wrong with the park: it lacks a pedestrian circulation system.

1. Goal

The goal is to enable as many City residents as possible to partake in the passive and active recreational opportunities at the Newton Centre Playground by providing an inclusive pathway system that serves to connect as well as to organize the park elements. This ADA-compliant route will remain sensitive to the park's historic aspects, its location within the riverfront resource area, and its natural beauty.

2. Community Need

The Newton Centre Playground, located on Centre Street, is a heavily programmed park and home to a number of City-sponsored events. In addition to the adjoining Mason-Rice School population, the Mason-Rice Afterschool Program is also based at the school, while the older grades share "the Hut" on Tyler Terrace with the Bowen Afterschool Program. The Parks and Recreation Department runs three summer camps out of the school building, and two have a total of 75 children with special needs. Other major stakeholders include the park's abutters, the neighborhood, Little League Baseball, Senior League Baseball, Newton Youth Soccer League and two nearby nursery schools. The park is bordered on one side by the Cochituate Aqueduct and sits in close proximity to the Sudbury Aqueduct and the Newton Center business district.

3. Community Support

The Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities, the Mason-Rice School, and the Mason-Rice and Bowen Afterschool Programs all provided letters of support.

4. Timeline

It is expected that the project will take three months from start-up to a schematic plan with an accompanying cost estimate for pathway construction.

5. Credentials

The Parks and Recreation Department has similar-related experience coordinating the design and construction of major site improvements projects.

6. Success Factors

Success would be measured by a large, centrally-located City park that is easier to access and enjoyed by all residents via pathways that complement its 19<sup>th</sup> century design. By bringing more people into the park we encourage healthy outdoor recreation as well as broaden the options for community gatherings.

7. Budget

Phase I: The total budget for this first phase is \$65,000. An estimated \$40,000 is the fee for a professional design consultant to provide an accessibility study of the entire park, a schematic plan of the pathway system and a cost estimate. In addition, it is expected that a requisite topographic survey performed by a registered land surveyor could cost \$25,000, depending on the level of detail needed.

Phase II: The Department would return to the CPC at a later time, outside the regular funding round, in order to fund the construction documents and construction.

8. Other Funding

The City has already committed \$17,500 for the Bowen Street pathway construction and the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities has expressed their willingness to donate funds toward the project. They have even suggested forming a subcommittee to help address the access issues.

9. Maintenance

In addition to accessibility, the standard for the pathway is to be one of durability and maintainability. The incorporation of access by maintenance, security and emergency vehicles is considered an important part of the design criteria for the park.

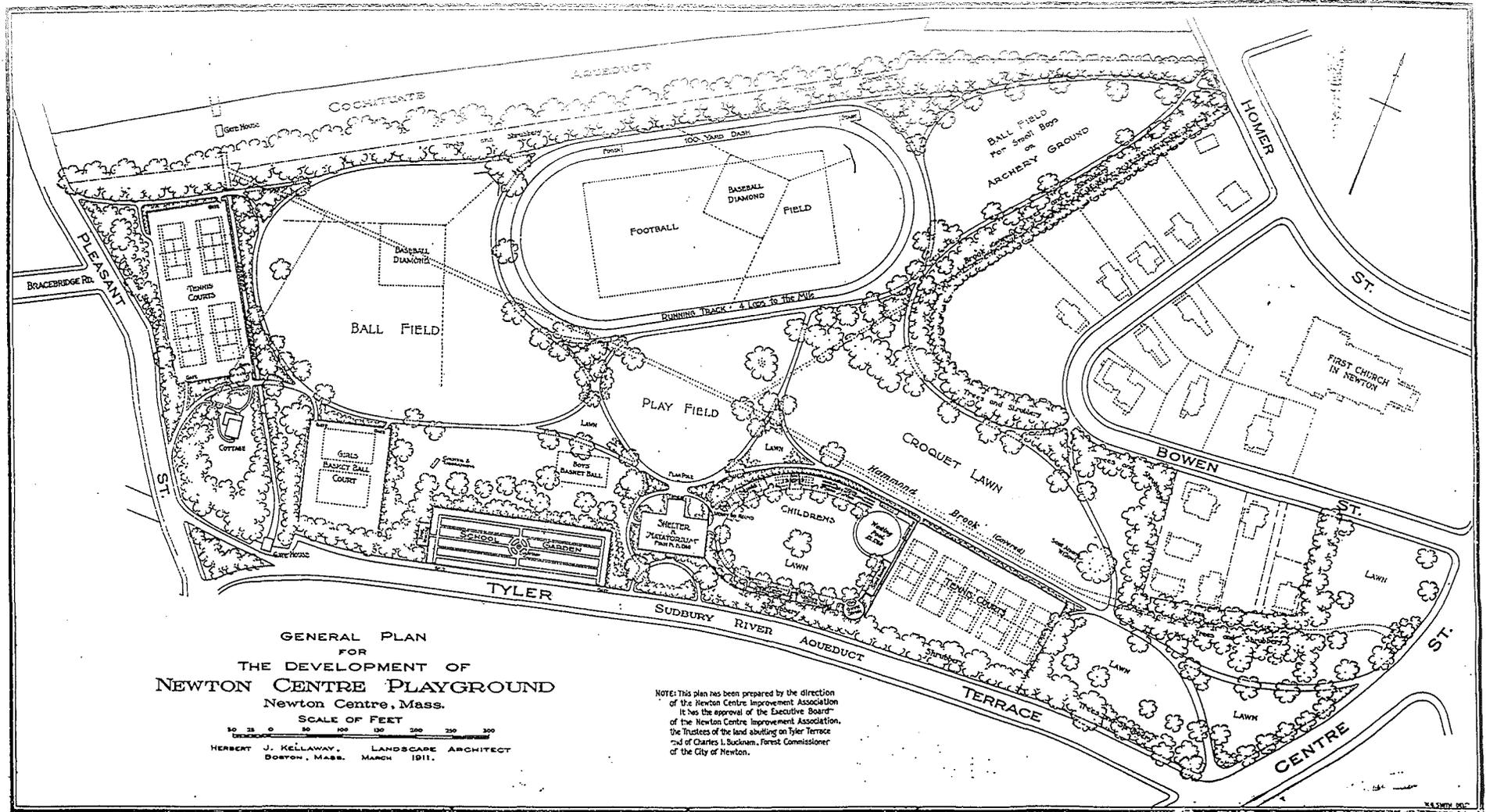
Items 10-16 are not applicable at this time.

Conclusion

In a side note to the 1891 preliminary plan for the park, the Olmsted Brothers firm explains the design intent:

*... From the straight walk shown on the drawing, following the line of the [Cochituate] aqueduct, an unobstructed view of the ball ground will be commanded. Other walks shown are designed to be used for rambling, but are so laid out as to serve as means of convenient communication between the entrances from public streets and different features of interest within the ground. Parts of the ground not needed for games and athletic exercises are to be treated with a view to securing as much beauty as practicable, of a natural character.*

Newton Centre Playground is as great a recreational resource today as it was over a hundred years ago. As stewards of the land, it is our obligation to carry through the long-range goal of restoring the "lungs and garden" of Newton Centre to its 19<sup>th</sup> century splendor. Within this historic context, the City can take an important rehabilitative step by ensuring that the park is available to residents of all ages and abilities.



20 years after Olmsted's preliminary plan for the park, Herbert Kellaway, landscape architect, developed a general plan for the park.

**Community Preservation Proposal  
 Accessibility Plan for Newton Centre Playground  
 Phase I Estimated Schedule and Cost**  
 Parks and Recreation Department  
 November 10, 2004

**Estimated Timeline: project start-up through schematic design - 3 months**

<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Design Fees</u>
<b><i>Inventory and Analysis (4-6 weeks)</i></b>	
Topographic survey (4-6 weeks, per engineers' estimate). . . . .	\$16,500
Historic research and documentation	
Existing conditions inventory and documentation	
Identify programming requirements	
Identify permitting requirements	
Meetings with City staff and other key stakeholders	
Meeting with Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities	
 <b><i>Preliminary Schematic Design Alternatives (4 weeks)</i></b>	
Coordination/progress meetings	
Public Meeting #1 – present inventory and analysis/receive public input	
Grading and drainage studies	
Develop schematic design alternatives	
Develop cost estimates	
 <b><i>Final Schematic Design (4 weeks)</i></b>	
Coordination/progress meeting	
Presentation to P&R Commission, ConComm	
Public Meeting #2 – present alternatives to the public	
Finalize schematic design	
Final cost estimate	
	<u>\$40,000</u>
<b>Estimated Total:</b>	<u><u>\$56,500</u></u>