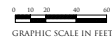
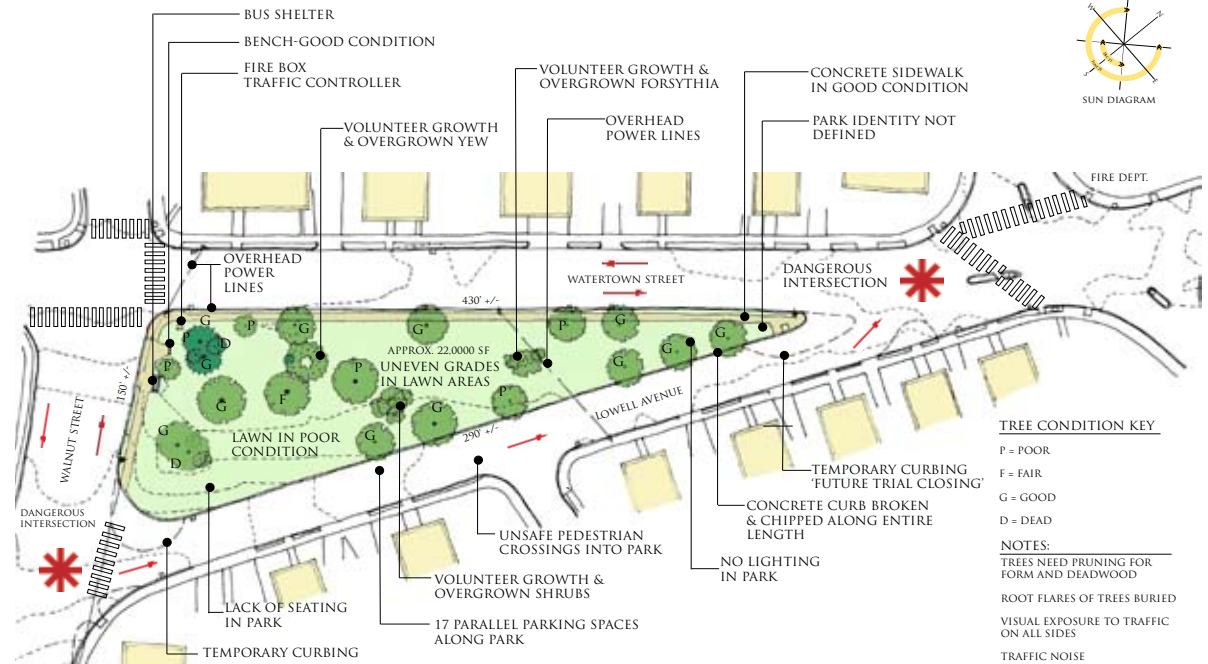


LOWELL PARK MASTER PLAN [revised] March 11, 2011

This report summarizes the design process leading to the accepted Master Plan for Lowell Park. The design process included meetings with the City of Newton Planning Department, the Parks and Recreation Department and the Community. The Community participated in the design process by providing their input in a series of four public meetings.

The goal of the Lowell Park Master Plan is to provide recommendations that can be used for short and long term planning and improvements. Each component of the Master Plan is presented in two parts, issues and recommendations. The issues were compiled from observations taken from the site and the Community's comments.

Lowell Park is a triangular-shaped park bounded by Watertown Street to the North, Walnut Street to the West and Lowell Avenue to the South. The park is approximately one half acre. The park is bounded by residences. The character of the park is an open lawn with many mature trees and volunteer growth. Recent traffic improvements have slightly increased the size of the southwest corner of the park as well as modified curb locations and pedestrian access.



CITY OF NEWTON
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SITE ANALYSIS
LOWELL PARK
NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

RAY DUNETZ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
APRIL 3, 2008

TOPOGRAPHY

Issues

The park is generally flat with the exception of the southern corner which gently slopes several feet. The existing lawn contains some depressions.

Recommendations

The site should be graded to a minimum of 2% to pitch water to the curb line. Depressions should be filled so the lawn area is a smooth grade. New paving should be graded to be in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act [ADA]

regulations.

ACCESSIBILITY

Issues

Access to the park is unclear. There are perimeter bituminous concrete sidewalks that run along Walnut and Watertown Streets, but there are not any accessible paths that draw people into the park. The new traffic improvements have provided a crosswalk across Lowell Avenue and an accessible ramp.

Recommendations

We recommend the creation of four entrances into the park; one at the corner of Walnut Street and Lowell Avenue, one on axis with Prescott Street at Lowell Avenue, one at the corner of Watertown and Walnut Streets and one in the middle of the Watertown Street block. These entrances would be connected by a six foot wide strolling path. An additional crosswalk is recommended from Prescott Avenue across Lowell Avenue to improve street crossing safety.

FENCING

Issues

There are currently no fences in the park.

Recommendations

No fences are recommended.

PAVING and CURBING

Issues

Traffic improvements have been implemented by the City, including the creation of new curb extensions at the corners of Walnut and Lowell Ave and the corner of Watertown and Lowell Ave and at the terminus of Lowell Avenue at Watertown Street. Existing precast concrete curbing at Lowell Avenue is broken and chipped and in poor condition. There are no paved paths



existing concrete curb at Lowell Avenue



in the park.

Recommendations

A six foot wide curved path that connects the parks access locations should be paved with a material that is in compliance with ADA regulations. Our recommendation is that the path be constructed with asphalt.

SITE AMENITIES

Issues

There is a general lack of seating in the park with the exception of a wood bench located near the existing bus stop on Walnut Street. The park lacks any signage to provide identity. There are no trash receptacles located in the park. A MBTA bus shelter is located near the corner of the Walnut and Watertown Streets.

Recommendations

We recommend four six-foot length benches be situated along the curved strolling path. One trash receptacle is proposed at the Walnut/Lowell corner. The existing bench at the bus stop is in good condition but could be replaced to match the other benches. A park identity sign should be provided to match the City's standards.

VEGETATION

Issues

Trees

There are a number of trees in this park of various ages and condition. The street trees along the perimeter are predominantly Norway Maples ranging in size from 12"-18" caliper with a sampling of Oak and evergreen. Most root flares



historic fountain [unknown date]

are buried and there is damage at the base of the trunks from mower and weed whip abrasion.

The lawn is in poor condition. It suffers from a lack of maintenance, fertilization and irrigation. The lawn surface is uneven with numerous depressions.

Recommendations

Trees in poor condition or dead should be removed. Volunteer growth should be removed. We recommend removing all the trees in the central lawn space to create more room for play. Trees located where new improvements are occurring should be removed or transplanted elsewhere.

A variety of tree species should be planted along the curved path to create additional shade in the park. Flowering trees should be planted at the park entrances to attract visitors into the park and to provide seasonal interest.

The lawn area bordered by the strolling path should be regraded with additional topsoil and seeded. We recommend seeding the new lawn with a drought tolerant turf able to withstand play. It is unlikely that the City will install irrigation unless the Community pays for it.

UTILITIES

Issues

There is an existing overhead wire that traverses the park. Other utility wires run along the Watertown Street sidewalk. There is no lighting in the park, but the streets are lit providing ambient light in the park.



volunteer growth breaks up the central lawn area

Recommendations

We do not recommend relocating the overhead wires at this time.

ITEM	QTY	UNIT	UNIT PRICE	SUBTOTAL	TOTAL
Site Preparation					
Remove ex. conc. curb	10	LF	5	50	
Remove ex. trees, volunteer growth and stumps	1	LS	7,500	7,500	
Tree protection fence	500	LF	1	500	8,050
Earthwork					
Strip and Stockpile ex. Topsoil	185	CY	10	1,852	
Cut and Fill	650	CY	10	6,500	8,352
Paving And Surfacing					
Concrete Walk	150	SF	5	750	
Bituminous Concrete Walk	2,875	SF	3.00	8,625	9,375
Site Improvements					
New benches	4	EA	1,200	4,800	
New trash receptacle	1	EA	1,200	1,200	
New sign	1	EA	1,200	1,200	7,200
Lawns and Planting					
Prepare new flower bed	1	LS	300	300	
New Shade Trees (@ 3.5-4" cal)	7	EA	900	6,300	
New Flowering Trees (@ 3" cal)	3	EA	650	1,950	
Transplant Existing Tree	1	EA	500	500	
New Topsoil at Lawn	220	CY	35	7,700	
Spread Ex. Topsoil	150	CY	10	1,500	
New Seeded Lawn	20,000	SF	0.10	2,000	20,250
			Subtotal		53,227
			General Conditions 10%		5,323
			Subtotal		58,550
			Contingency 10%		5,855
			Total		64,404
New Bus Stop and Bench By Others					
New Bike Rack by Others					
Flowers by Others					

Lowell Park Planning Meeting #1
Thursday, April 3, 2008
6:30pm
Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street

Nine residents, plus Ray Dunetz of Ray Dunetz Landscape Architecture (RDLA) and three City of Newton staff (Danielle Bailey, Planning Department; Carol Schein, Parks & Recreation; and Frank Nichols, Engineering), attended the first of several park planning meetings for Lowell Park. Danielle Bailey opened the meeting by providing a background on the project, showing the Newtonville target area, and introducing the Newtonville Advisory Committee (NAC). The NAC is a resident-based group that provides guidance for the expenditure of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in this area. Staff also explained that this project has two components: 1) addressing the traffic issues around Lowell Park, and 2) preparing a master plan for the park and later improving it. The NAC first aims to make the park safe to get to. Another park planning meeting will occur in 3-4 weeks time, at which several options will be presented for the community to review.

Staff then introduced Ray Dunetz of RDLA who led the meeting by sharing the current conditions of the park and then took comments and suggestions from the residents.

Ray started by providing a site analysis of Lowell Park. The park is approximately 22,000 sq. feet or about .5 acre. There are not many local parks nearby. Albemarle Park is not far but it serves a much larger population and is often busy with organized sports events. The site analysis revealed an unsightly and aging bus stop, a good amount of overhead power lines crossing the park, many trees in poor condition, numerous

overgrown shrubs, and a lack of seating options (just 1 bench near the bus stop). There is a sidewalk next to the park on the Watertown Street and Walnut Street edges. The curbing on the Lowell side is crumbling or missing in sections. The park lawn is uneven. There is no park signage or lighting in the park.

RDLA assessed all the trees on site and found many to be fair, poor, or even dead. RDLA and staff will work with the City's tree warden to determine what can be done with these trees to make way for new uses.

RDLA estimated that 17 cars could parallel park adjacent to the park on the Lowell Avenue side.

Issues to consider when preparing a master plan for this park are determining pedestrian travel to the park (should be improved with upcoming traffic trial), creating a new identity for the park as it currently lacks identity, and deciding on the best use of the space. Other issues include looking at lessening the traffic noise and creating a better sense of containment as it is presently very open on all sides.

PARK USAGE COMMENTS

- Many area residents bring their dogs here. At one point a question was asked "Who has a dog?". Four of 7 residents had dogs.
- School children use the park to cut through to the neighborhoods on Prescott Street and Central Avenue.
- The demographics of the neighborhood fluctuate and consequently so does the park usership. Currently there seem to be more junior school aged children in the vicinity.
- Not many people bring their own chairs to the park, except during parade times.
- There is currently no nighttime use of the park.

PARK IDEA COMMENTS

- The idea of a dog park was supported by many in attendance. They viewed it as an amenity. They would want the dog park fenced given the close proximity to and volume of the traffic. Some even volunteered to help maintain a dog park here.
- Staff read an excerpt from the City Ordinance Sec. 3-30 Dogs Off-Leash Pilot Program so that the role of the community was understood as well as the limited role of the City:
The advisory committee shall consider only those proposed sites for which a local resident group will sponsor the site; will designate a person to serve as liaison with the city; will agree to mitigate dog-related impact on the site; and will agree to such other terms and conditions as the advisory committee and the custodial agency may deem appropriate for that site.
- Because the area is surrounded by schools, there was a concern that the park should not have nighttime activity and that there should be good visibility throughout the park- i.e. no dark hiding areas for kids to congregate.
- There was a concern that even with changes in the traffic patterns, that the area's traffic is still too heavy and it might not be the best place to create a park.
- A request for trash cans and recycle bins was made.
- A nicer area around the bus shelter was preferred, possibly even a new shelter.
- Simply upgrading the space that is there now (trees, benches, etc.) would be nice.
- A ring of trees around the perimeter and clearing some of the trees and shrubs internally for other uses could be a possibility.

Lowell Park Planning Meeting #2
Thursday, May 8, 2008
6:30pm
Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street

Thirteen residents, plus Ray Dunetz of Ray Dunetz Landscape Architecture (RDLA) and three City of Newton staff (Amy Yuhasz, Planning Department; Carol Schein, Parks & Recreation; and Frank Nichols, Engineering), attended the second of several park planning meetings for Lowell Park. Amy Yuhasz opened the meeting and introduced Ray Dunetz of RDLA who led the meeting by unveiling three alternative plans for the park.

Alternative A focused on maintaining and renovating the lawn, providing a passive seating area and a historic replica fountain. The existing interior trees were taken out and more street trees were added. A crosswalk on Lowell Avenue across the street from the fountain provided a vista into the park. New curbing and signage were also included in the plan.

Alternative B provided a path along the Lowell Avenue side of the park with benches nearby. Flowering plants were added to the park entrances. Additional street trees were added with interior trees removed, and signage was proposed.

Alternative C provided a dog area along Walnut Street at the widest end of the park. Ray stressed that they would need community buy-in to maintain the area. Ornamental fencing was proposed for the dog area. Shrubs were proposed to screen the dog area from the street and more street trees were proposed. As with the other alternatives, signage and the removal of interior trees were proposed.

COMMENTS ON THE THREE ALTERNATIVES

- Many residents commented that they liked a combination of the three alternatives.
- A fountain in the middle may eliminate the use of a certain section of the park.
- Several people commented that they liked different entry points into the park.
- People liked the removal of trees from the center of the park to create a small place for ball playing.
- One person commented that there Prescott Street, but there is good access from Walnut Street.
- It was suggested that some of the trees could be replaced with large shrubs to better screen park users from the street. Parks and Recreation staff pointed out that large shrubs are not recommended because they create a safety issue (people can hide behind them) and make it hard for the police to see what is happening in the park.
- A fence along Watertown Street was suggested to keep children from the highly trafficked Watertown Street.
- Alternative 3 needs more than one entrance.
- Defined entryways are important (possibly with the use of bollards) and plantings need to be where they will not get trampled.
- Bringing water to the park is a priority. Washington Park was mentioned as a place where the neighbors paid for the irrigation system and the City pays for the water.
- The park is a gateway into the historic district and that should be a focus of the design. It should also be a welcoming point.
- The existing MBTA-owned bus stop should be replaced.
- Many people said they love the idea of having a fountain.
- People asked about the type of street trees being proposed. Ray responded that they would be big shade trees that are salt tolerant. He showed the audience the direction of the sun across the park and where there would be shade during the day.
- Many expressed a preference for non-linear trees plantings.
- Many liked the fountain and the path and would like to see both incorporated into the final master plan.
- It was suggested that the Boy Scouts could be contacted to make the signs. They have provided signs for several parks as part of Eagle Scout projects.
- It was suggested that some type of water reclamation devise could be installed to water plants that they community would like to plant and for use in the fountain.
- The widest end of the park should be kept clear for play.
- Many of the people present did not favor the installation of a dog park. Parks and Recreation staff provided information on what dog parks ultimately end up looking like – no grass, holes in the ground, unhealthy/dead trees.
- One individual said that he did not think a dog park would need to be very big and that he would be willing to pay for some of the installation expense and would help to maintain it.

The meeting ended with those present reaching a consensus that they would like the master plan to include a path, replica fountain and flowering trees. If possible, a way to reclaim water is desired.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Walking down Lowell Avenue (the section closed by the traffic trial) is a totally different experience in an positive sense.
- The landscaping company that mowed and cleaned-up the park recently did a great job.

The meeting adjourned around 8:00pm. Ray Dunetz will be back for one final meeting to present the master plan.

Lowell Park Planning Meeting #3
Wednesday, July 9, 2008
6:30pm
Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street

Nine residents, including Alderman Stephen Linsky, Ray Dunetz of Ray Dunetz Landscape Architecture (RDLA), and three City of Newton staff (Amy Yuhasz, Planning Department; Carol Schein, Parks & Recreation; and Frank Nichols, Engineering), attended the third planning meeting for Lowell Park. Amy Yuhasz opened the meeting and introduced Ray Dunetz of RDLA who led the meeting by unveiling the final park master plan.

The final plan incorporates the most popular features of the three alternative plans that were presented at the last meeting. Some key features included maintaining and renovating the lawn, providing a passive seating area along a new pathway and installation of a historic replica fountain. The existing interior trees would be removed and more street trees would be added. A crosswalk on Lowell Avenue across the street from the fountain provides a vista into the park. New curbing and signage were also included in the plan.

COMMENTS ON THE FINAL PLAN

- Some people thought the open space in the middle of the park, if used for ball throwing, could be a hazard to nearby traffic.
- Many people expressed that they would like more of a variety of plantings, not just shade trees – shrubs, flowers, etc. to take a botanical approach. It would be nice to have something in flower during every season.
- People liked the path, but they would like to see it constructed out of something other than asphalt – possibly stone dust or chip seal.
- People like the fountain, but some wondered if it would be better positioned in one of

the corners of the park so it would be more visible from Walnut or Watertown St – to create a visual entrance into Newtonville.

- Another suggestion for the walkway was to sell bricks with people's names in them.

Phasing of the plan was discussed. Currently there is \$132,915 in CDBG funds available for this project and the traffic improvements around the park. It was suggested that the project be phased, since there is currently not enough money to do the whole thing. The first phase could include removal of bad trees and regarding and cleaning up the lawn. Staff mentioned a new type of fescue grass that is available that only needs to be mowed about once a month and is very hardy.

The meeting adjourned around 8:30 p.m.

Lowell Park Planning Meeting #4
Tuesday, February 15, 2011
6:30pm
Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street

Seven residents, plus Ray Dunetz of Ray Dunetz Landscape Architecture (RDLA) and two City of Newton staff (Danielle Bailey, Planning Department; and Carol Schein, Parks & Recreation), attended the final session of four park planning meetings for Lowell Park. Danielle Bailey opened the meeting and reported where the park planning efforts left off. In December 2008, the master plan was reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Commission held the item until the plan could be revised to address the concerns of some residents that the 2008 plan was not inclusive of the northern neighbors.

For this final meeting, staff sent notices to the Newtonville Advisory Committee (NVAC), 35 Interested Citizens, 599 abutters, and the Newtonville Historic Commission. The notice, which was also posted on the City's website, included a link so that people could view the revised park plans online in advance of the meeting. Staff welcomed back Ray Dunetz of RDLA who presented four revised concepts which have improved access to the park from more angles as well as more sensitive to limited funding resources.

Alternative A features a new U-shaped concrete walkway with three entrance nodes, benches dotted along the walkway, new shade and flowering trees, and an in-ground ornamental granite marker which could include information on the area's history.

Alternative A-1 is a more scaled-back version of Alternative A. The entrance nodes are smaller and the main walkway only stretches from Watertown Street to Prescott Street. (Alternative A shows the walkway sweeping back up to Watertown Street.)

This plan most accurately reflects the existing conditions on the northwest corner of Watertown Street and Walnut Street where there are a fire box and an electrical box which would be too difficult and costly to relocate. This plan also shows a new park sign on the southwest corner.

Alternative B maximizes the park's open space by confining the walkway to the west side of the park. This concept shows a brick walkway with two entrance nodes and a central gathering point that features a fountain and benches. The rest of the park would remain open and a few trees would be planted along the perimeter.

Alternative C shows three short walkways connecting to a centralized plaza in the center of the park surrounded by benches. Trees would be planted along all the edges. The benefit of this option is that it maximizes the largest plot of open space which could be used for light recreation.

COMMENTS ON THE FOUR ALTERNATIVES

- Many attendees preferred the concepts of Alternatives A and A-1 as they integrate the neighborhood the best.
- Given that the site is so small, attendees wanted the hardscaped areas so be as minimal as possible. Some preferred stone dust or chip seal paths instead of concrete or asphalt paths. Staff replied that ADA compliance is important and stone dust is difficult to maintain and that chip seal is not allowed for walkways.
- In lieu of a fountain, an historic marker or a flower planter could be substituted.
- One attendee recommended a "botanical garden" feel to the park with a variety of interesting and indigenous trees and shrubs.
- In an effort to reduce hardscape, the attendees preferred seeing a triangular grassy area or a planting bed at the convergence of the three paths in

Alternatives A and A-1. This focal area could serve as an opportunity for the community to take ownership in the park and create seasonal interest. The group would also like to see an edge to this planting area, which could even double as a seat wall.

- The master plan should include regrading, loaming and seeding of the all the grassy sections as the current lawn is very uneven.
- One attendee thought a row of trees on Watertown Street seems like a wall and that there should be some gaps in order to improve the views into the park. A few others preferred a more staggered, natural approach to the placement of the trees versus aligned in a row. One suggestion was to plant flowering, smaller trees on Watertown Street and larger shade trees along Lowell Avenue.
- The park should include signage not only for the park name but also some information introducing and educating people on the Newtonville Historic District.
- Long-term maintenance costs must be considered before plan implementation. CDBG funds cannot be used for maintenance.
- Using drought-resistant grass was discussed but this park may not be a good place for it due to the potential park usage for light recreation.
- Establishing a Friends of Lowell Park would help ensure the long-term success of the park as the City does not possess enough resources to do special plantings or extensive clean ups. One attendee expressed interest in setting up a volunteer event for NewtonSERVES day in the spring.
- Staff shared a few emailed comments from residents who could not be present at the meeting.
 - 1) Snow removal must be incorporated into the design of the park. With the closure of Lowell Avenue, a good amount of snow was pushed into the park.

- 2) The existing bus shelter should be better integrated into the park since some people may walk through the park to get to the bus shelter.
- The group went back and forth about the pathway layout in Alternatives A and A-1. Some liked that the pathway went all the way back up to Watertown Street but others felt like the pathway dominated the landscape. The committee agreed to show the full walkway layout in the master plan and would debate it more when it came down to the construction documents.
 - Cost was a big factor in the decision making of the attendees. Some cost savings measures were mentioned including bench and tree donations, having asphalt paths versus concrete, and asking the Boy Scouts to make the park sign.
 - The NVAC voted on a final plan that was most like Alternative A-1 but that the final plan should also show the additional pathway leg up to Watertown Street. Concrete/ asphalt areas should be minimized as much as possible. The center of plaza at the convergence of the walkways should be a grassy area or a planting bed with some sort of edging. The quantity of trees should be reduced and staggered where possible for a more natural look. The entire lawn area should be regraded. The NVAC voted unanimously to approve the motion.

The next steps are for RDLA to prepare the final master plan, report, and cost estimate. These documents will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission at the earliest available time for formal adoption. If approved, the City can begin drafting the construction documents with the goal of a Fall 2011 project start.