

Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture Department

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RUTHANNE FULLER
MAYOR
ROBERT J. DERUBEIS
COMMISSIONER

September 16, 2019

Honorable City Council
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Council Members,

As part of the mitigation for the Northland project, there is a proposal to build a city-wide spray/splash pad at the site. There has been a trend in many communities across the Commonwealth to add spray/splash pads to their park inventories. There are many benefits to splash pads. They are a great tool in aiding in the sensory development of a young child. The themes associated with the way sites are configured also give the children an opportunity for creative play and increased social interaction.

In terms of safety there is no standing water and it eliminates the need of lifeguards as you would be required to have at wading pools. The rubberized surface that forms the landscape of the pad creates a stable safe surface for the children to traverse. Do to the fact that children are often moving between elements, they tend to get more exercise than they would from a wading pool. It is less labor intensive to operate a spray pad than it is a pool, thus lending itself to extended seasons.

We currently have two pads, one at Burr Park and another behind Family Access. These are both limited and can only handle a very small number of children. The one that is proposed for Northland would be approximately 11,000 square feet with 25-30 spray heads.

The initial proposal that was presented to Northland was a combined spray pad/skating rink, sharing the same surface. After researching this possibility, it was determined that the skating rink was cost prohibitive. It required significant maintenance, supervision and the construction of an out-building which lead us to eliminate the dual use.

We see the trend in two neighboring communities. Waltham has 9 spray pads and Brookline has 14 spray pads, with a fifteenth under construction. Several residents have inquired over the last couple of years as to when Newton was going to invest in a citywide spray pad.

I firmly endorse this proposal and feel that it would be widely accepted by the citizens of Newton.

Sincerely,

Robert J. DeRubeis
Parks, Recreation & Culture Commissioner

cc: Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer
Barney Heath, Director, Planning & Development

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