

# MEETING MINUTES

## Spears Park On-site Community Meeting Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture October 18, 2022 6:00PM-7:30PM

### 1. Presentation of preferred plan

Luis Perez Demorizi (Director of Parks & Open Space) welcomed community members, introduced the meeting, and the project team.

Cassie Bethoney, Project Manager at Weston & Sampson, shared updates to the proposed site plan for Spears Park. The updates made incorporated feedback received at previous community meetings.

### 2. Open Discussion and questions:

- Nahanton Park is an example of what we do not want to see here.
- What's the number of garden beds?
  - o 33 beds
- Will there be 33 people or more gardening here?
  - o There will be 33 garden beds. 1 garden bed per household. Though it is possible for all 33 plots to be worked on at the same time, observations at Nahanton and other gardens reveal that gardeners are not typically working all at the same time.
- Traffic/parking are an issue in this neighborhood.
  - o The project team will consult Jason Sobel on previous traffic studies conducted along Walnut Park.
- Will a tree assessment take place? Some trees on-site are not in great shape.
  - o The city's Urban Forestry will assess conditions of trees and prune as needed.
- Will users be regularly pulling tracks into the drive to drop-off material?
- The drive will have a gate and be locked. Only City trucks will be allowed to use it. The current design might allow parking in the drive leading up to the gate. We don't want that.
  - o The design can be adjusted to disallow parking in the drive.
- Use pollinator species within the buffer planting.
- Noise and air pollution are an issue here.
- Can anyone access the benches/picnic tables?
  - o Yes, that's the intent to have a community gathering space outside of the community garden.
- Traffic is an issue, when the school is in session, the neighborhood is congested.
- We love the existing open space.
- Will community garden beds be allocated to neighbors?
  - o Community garden beds will be leased to neighbors and other folks in Newton interested in having plot here
- Has the City investigated the legal issue/deed on the property?

- o Yes, legal department has reviewed. The deed does not limit the city from improving this parcel into a community garden space. The deed is available online to access.
- How did the City select this location?
  - o The location is based on an assessment of facilities completed during Newton's Open Space and Recreation Plan, completed in 2020. This parcel help fill gaps in open space resources in the city. This project in particular addresses gaps in community gardens on park lands north of the Mass Pike.
- Abutter communication was lacking.
  - o We are meeting with abutters to improve on the design.
  - o Abutter notifications were sent for this and the previous community meeting. However, there is always room to improve outreach.
- Will there be accessible garden beds?
  - o Yes, a percentage of the garden beds will be accessible.
  - o The aisle width also complies with ADA access requirements.
- Can garden beds be for neighborhood residents only?
- Will there be trash receptacles?
  - o Yes, we will include trash receptacles. If it becomes necessary, we can add a dog trash receptacle in the future, if needed.
- Has the City considered sustainable materials for the garden beds?
  - o Yes, we are thinking of recycled plastic as an alternative material for the garden beds
- Will the soil be tested?
  - o The soil will be tested. In addition, we will use fresh soil as a growing medium within the garden beds.
- Where will water be connected from?
  - o We will connect to the water main on Washington Street and add a backflow preventor on site. The water will be shut off and winterized during the off season.
- How will we ensure plot sizes do not change?
  - o That can be incorporated in the community garden policy.
- Pests are an issue in the area.
  - o Compost bins will be elevated.
  - o Fence will extend underground to disallow burrowing.
- What is the cost for this design?
  - o The next step is to go to the Parks and Recreation Commission for endorsement. Then we will develop a cost estimate.
- It is nice to have the open space as is!
- Neighbors have concern with people congregating. Can there be less furniture to encourage that?
- We want a community space for people to gather.
- Add low planting along the seating area along Walnut Park.
- Keep sight lines open into the space.
- Can there be regular neighborhood meetings to discuss how the space is used?
- Can we use plants that contribute to phytoremediation?
  - o Yes, we want to use native plants first and foremost, we can look at appropriate plants that are native and can contribute to phytoremediation.
- Support for people who bring their dogs. Perhaps include a dog waste receptacle.

- By-laws for cleanliness and maintenance.
- Can there be a public picnic table and a community garden picnic table?
  - o Yes, we can look at balancing picnic tables inside and outside of the enclosed garden area.
- Concern for longevity of use. What happens if the community gardens are not being used?
  - o Use is not projected to dwindle. We currently have 20-30 people on the waitlist at the Nahanton Park Community Gardens.
- Can the abutters review the by-laws and weigh in on that process.
  - o The abutters are welcome to be involved in the drafting of the Spears community gardens policy.
- Will a traffic study be conducted specifically for this project?
  - o There are a number of traffic studies that are being/have been conducted in the area. We will look at them for guidance.
- What are next steps?
  - o The goal is to adjust the plan based on feedback from tonight and bring it to the Parks and Recreation Commission on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Then we will work on an estimate.
- Where is funding coming from?
  - o There will be multiple funding sources for this project.
- One neighbor noted he is not against gardens, but against the garden being here.