Boston’s Open Space Plan

2015-2021
AGENDA

What is the Open Space Plan?
What planning work has been done so far?
Survey Findings & Neighborhood Analysis to date
Goals & Objectives for the Open Space Plan
Remaining work & schedule
There are all kinds of open space
Open Space Plans are both a Requirement and an Opportunity

Massachusetts requires cities and towns to complete an Open Space Plan every 7 years to be eligible for state grants.
The Open Space Plan includes all Boston open space areas regardless of ownership. Boston Parks and Recreation is leading the development of the plan, but park lands owned by other entities, like the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation, are included.
The Open Space Plan is a guide for maintaining and enhancing the benefits of our open space system and protecting the green infrastructure of our city.
Open Space Plan Schedule

Spring - Summer 2013
- SURVEY made available May 2013
- 1st round of Community meetings city-wide

Fall - Winter 2013 - 2014
- SURVEY closed November 2013
- Draft Maps and Tables

Spring 2014
- Analyze Data and Public Input
- Draft text

June 2014
- Develop neighborhood based open space inventory and analysis

July - Aug 2014
- 2nd round of Community meetings city-wide

August - Sept 2014
- Finalize data and analysis
- Compile full document

Oct - Nov 2014
- Post draft Open Space Plan for public comment

Complete Document December 2014
What sort of questions were in the survey?

What ACTIVITIES do you like to do when you visit a park?

What FEATURES do you use? (Ballfields? Tot lots? Walking paths?)

What are your priorities for the SERVICES the Parks Department provides in maintaining and improving parks?

And a few questions about you and your neighborhood.
Key Findings from the Citywide Survey Results

Question: What ACTIVITIES do you like to do when you visit a park?
Question: What FEATURES do you use most when you visit a park?
Question:

What are your priorities for the SERVICES the Parks Department provides in maintaining and improving parks?
Demographics of the Citywide Survey Results

**Respondents' Communities of Residence**

- **Boston Non-Resident**
- **Jamaica Plain**
- **Dorchester**
- **Allston-Brighton**
- **Roslindale**
- **South End**
- **South Boston**
- **Charlestown**
- **Back Bay/Beacon Hill**
- **Mission Hill**
- **Central Boston**
- **West Roxbury**
- **Roxbury**
- **Hyde Park**
- **East Boston**
- **Fenway/Longwood**
- **Mattapan**

**Sample (%)**

**Boston (%)**
Key Findings from the Citywide Survey Results

• The survey data indicates that passive and natural areas in parks are highly valued and need to be considered as part of capital planning processes and maintenance protocols.

• The emphasis on these areas vs. more traditional park features may be due in part to the demographics of those who responded to the survey.

• Other sources of information – like permitting requests – demonstrate the heavy use and value of athletic facilities in parks.

• Baseline maintenance to keep parks clean, litter free and in good repair is highly valued.
Roxbury

Existing Open Space

- Parks
- Playgrounds
- Athletic Fields
- Parkways & Reservations
- Community Gardens
- Cemeteries
- Urban Wilds
- Conservation Lands
- Public Plazas and Squares
Roxbury

Population Density

Most dense

Least dense
Roxbury

Distribution of Park Facilities

- Park playlots (play structures)
- Water spray features
- Public School playlots

Note: Facilities data is still being updated, some facilities may not be represented
Roxbury

Distribution of Park Facilities

- Athletic Fields
- Basketball Courts
- Street Hockey Courts
- Tennis Courts

Note: Facilities data is still being updated, some facilities may not be represented.
Roxbury

Neighborhood Activity Areas

- City Community Centers
- Other Community Centers (Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA)
- Libraries
- Public Schools
- Non-Public Schools
Determining Park “Service Areas”

Park Categories:
- Pocket Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks

This analysis helps us understand where in the city people have good access to parks.

Big parks serve more people than small parks do.
Determining Park “Service Areas”

Park Categories:

- Pocket Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks

Pocket-parks: <0.25 acres

Usually these are squares and plazas.

Pocket-parks serve people who live within a couple of blocks (0.1 mile)
Determining Park “Service Areas”

Park Categories:
- Pocket Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks

Neighborhood Parks:
0.25 acres – 5 acres

Usually these parks include a mix of facilities.

Neighborhood parks serve people who live within a ¼ mile distance (5 minute walk).
Community Parks: > 5 acres

These are large properties with many features.

Community Parks serve people who live within a ½ mile walking distance (10 minute walk).

Many additional users of Community Parks drive or use transit for access.
Determining Park “Service Areas”

Park Categories:

- Pocket Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks

These park “Service Areas” can overlap which illustrates that some residents have access to more than one park within close walking distance.
Determining Park “Service Areas”

Park Categories:
- Pocket Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks

Most residents have at least one park within close walking distance but some do not.
Roxbury

Which areas in Roxbury are well-served by parks?

Areas with best park proximity

Areas with limited park proximity

Note: Parks outside of the City of Boston are not represented.
These maps represent where we are today. Now we need to look forward.

How do we take care of what we have?

What are we lacking and where?

What do we need to do better?

Each of these questions informs our Goals and Objectives for the future of our parks and open space system.
Framework Goals & Objectives for Open Space Planning, Design, and Maintenance 2015-2021

1. Be good stewards of the exceptional open space system we have inherited

2. Plan for our future park system

3. Be leaders in improving the urban environment
1. Be good stewards of the exceptional open space system we have inherited

- Create, restore and sustain maintainable, climate-prepared landscapes
- Value and protect our park system’s cultural and historic resources
- Renovate parks according to facility life cycles
- Look for ways to make the most of our existing park system
  - Multi-purpose facilities
  - Play Value
  - Community engagement
2. Plan for our future park system

- Expand and improve open space access for all (existing and projected) city residents (Access: ADA, Park Hours, Transit, Park Facilities)
  - Partnerships
  - Non-standard park spaces – School yards, Institutions etc.
  - Support community-led initiatives
  - Consider open space in all planning and development decisions
  - Acquisition / creation of new open spaces

- Support city-wide initiatives to enhance the public realm
  - Complete Streets – Boston Transportation Department
  - Green Links – Boston Transportation Department
  - Safe Routes to Parks – Public Works Department
  - BRA Zoning and Planning
  - Boston Bikes
3. Be leaders in improving the urban environment

- Implement and evaluate sustainable strategies for park design & maintenance
  - Maintenance needs and protocols
  - Energy efficiency and resource consumption
  - Shade / outdoor comfort

- Protect and enhance our natural resource areas
  - Facilitate public access
  - Promote ecological value

- Understand the importance of open space resources in mitigating climate change impacts and establish benchmark goals for making improvements
  - Tree canopy expansion
  - Stormwater management
  - Resilient landscapes & buffer landscapes
Framework Goals & Objectives for the Open Space Plan

Areas of ongoing attention:

• Developing & strengthening partnerships
• Dog concerns
• Recreation opportunities
• Management of natural resource areas
• Maintenance and operations challenges
• Park repairs and upgrades
• Constituent outreach and feedback

Our 7 Year Action Plan will work to address these issues within the framework of our Open Space Goals and Objectives
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For more information

If you have questions or comments about the Open Space Plan:
openspaceplan2015@cityofboston.gov

You can see this presentation again and share ideas through the City’s Greenovate Boston on-line engagement tool:
http://engage.greenovateboston.org

If you are interested in starting or joining a Friends group to support your neighborhood park:
parkpartners@boston.gov

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION
Park Line 617-635-PARK (7275)
Mayor’s Hotline 617-635-4500
THANK YOU!