



Commissioner Christopher Cook
Boston Parks and Recreation Department
1010 Massachusetts Avenue, 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02118

Re: Parks and Open Space Plan 2015-2021

August 22, 2014

Dear Commissioner Cook:

Fenway Civic Association (FCA) is the Fenway's oldest all-volunteer organization, dedicated to sustaining a vital, livable neighborhood. Our neighborhood has grown substantially since the most recent Plan was issued- our open space has not. We advocate for efforts that maintain, restore, and improve much-needed open space in the Fenway, and have been grateful for a long history of working with your department to promote parks and programming. We are happy to submit our comments in response to invitations for input on the City's upcoming Open Space plan for 2015-2021:

Parks Maintenance: FCA has been a vocal advocate for maintenance funding of city parks. Hosting the oldest and one of the most highly-used portions of the Emerald Necklace parks system, we see the direct impact that deferred maintenance has on our limited open space. From invasives management to pathway and turf restoration, the care provided by your department on a regular basis is what keeps these spaces usable to residents.

We ask that evaluation of maintenance needs, particularly in the Back Bay Fens, be assessed for adequacy, with any restoration or upgrades inserted into capital planning for the upcoming plan.

In addition, we would ask that special attention be given to improvements in street tree maintenance for new plantings, tree guard programs that could be developed to protect and enhance tree health, and horticultural practices provided to the Kelleher Rose Garden.

Parks Restoration: We applaud the work being performed under the Muddy River Restoration Project, and ask that Phase II work be supported and developed in accordance to the Restoration Plan. Additionally, we ask for ongoing commitments to removal of invasive phragmites and Japanese knotweed, especially in the areas that have been designated for interim cuttings- the back pathway of the Fenway Victory Gardens and the upland area of Agassiz Road. The damage caused to valuable trees by annual fires and the crimes hidden by tall cover is unacceptable to have occurring so regularly in such a highly used park system.

We thank the Parks Department for their support of the community-driven restoration of Symphony Park, the improvements at Edgerly Road playground, and the continued partnership support for Ramler Park. We believe these improvements will lead to significant enhancement of quality of life issues for our neighborhood.

Capital Project Investment: As a capital project request, we ask for capital repairs for the parkland surrounding the Johnson Memorial Gates, bounding Westland Avenue and the Fenway. With pathways in need of repair, trees in rapid decline, and soil that has compacted, we believe this historic gateway to the Back Bay Fens should be supported for restoration.

Park Safety: FCA has long championed both the the mounted Park Ranger and Mounted Police patrols and supports the strengthening of both units in the city parks system. Additionally, we ask for police and ranger details and support, especially within the Back Bay Fens and Victory Gardens, but additionally at our passive pocket parks and playgrounds, including Ramler Park and Edgerly Road playground, to assure that these spaces are safe for the public.

Parks Programming: We thank the City and ParkArts for their support of arts and active programming with our organization and in our neighborhood parks. As one of the fastest-growing neighborhoods in the city with among the lowest percentage of open space, we see the necessity of assuring that these opportunities continue to be offered and expanded. Our annual Swingin' concert brings hundreds of attendees to Ramler Park, and our senior programs allow elderly Fenway residents to enjoy healthy movement opportunities at Symphony Park.

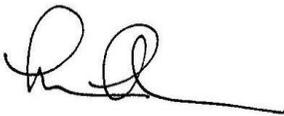
Park use and access: The past years have held mixed progress for our parks. We appreciate the improvements to stonedust pathways in the Back Bay Fens, the return of land to the Parks Department from Forsyth, and the progress with the Muddy River Project; we were disappointed by the decision to implement synthetic turf at Clemente Field in exchange for preferential permitting of public parkland to its funders, and think this sets a bad precedent for maintaining responsibility for our public assets.

We ask for continued protection of remaining parkland for passive use, and particular focus on:

- The implementation of improved pedestrian crossings into the park, including the use of raised crosswalks.
- The continued advocacy of the remaining Back Bay Fens space for passive use with no further restrictive use agreements.
- Annual evaluation of accessibility of pathways in the Back Bay Fens, including the pathways bounding the Muddy River behind the Victory Gardens. These pathways are used not only by cyclists and pedestrians, but by arborists, fire, and police patrols needed to assure ongoing safety to the public.
- Support for ongoing evaluation of Duck House restoration and improvements to conditions along Agassiz Road.

We thank you for this opportunity to comment, and offer our ongoing commitment to support parks and open space initiatives in our neighborhood and in the city.

Sincerely,



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