

MEETING NOTES / 5 PAGES / SENT BY EMAIL

Project: Children's Wharf Park
Phase: Schematic Design

Meeting Date: 11 April 2016
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Members of the Community

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The following is a summary of discussions during the second Community Meeting that was held on April 11, 2016 at the Boston Children's Museum. This meeting addressed the project schedule, goals, aspirations and initial site impressions from the design team and community members present. The design team presented a conceptual plan for Children's Wharf that has been developed based on the feedback from the first Community Meeting, held on February 10, 2016.

Item No. Issue

I.00 Project Schedule

- 1.1** The proposed project schedule was presented, highlighting a fast-paced design and construction process. The team anticipates a one-year construction period: Fall 2016 through Fall 2017.
- 1.2** During the first Community Meeting, a request was made by a member of the community to follow up after the Final Design phase and share the final park design with the community. This meeting has not yet been scheduled, but it is expected that this meeting will take place sometime in June of 2016 so that the design team may take the feedback from this second meeting and roll it into the design for Children's Wharf over the next few months.

2.00 Review of Project Goals & Design Approach

2.1 The design team reviewed preliminary and underlining goals for the project and process. These goals include:

- Inclusive play
- Mixed recreation
- Improve Sleeper Street experience
- Improve pedestrian circulation and safety
- Enhance Harborwalk experience
- Collaborative design process

2.2 The design team represented an approach to Children’s Wharf, developed around the ideas and aspirations heard from the community during the first community meeting in February. The overall concept for the park was described as:

- Inclusive: safe, engaging, inviting, and accessible to children, parents, and all visitors
- Civic: a neighborhood park that celebrates the community, the city, and offers a welcoming landscape experience
- Natural: a robust experience of plants and other natural materials within an otherwise urban environment
- Urban: embrace city skyline views, cultural context of the site, and address a large number of users

3.00 Review of Existing Site Challenges

The design team reviewed observed challenges with the existing site conditions. These recorded challenges include:

- Small site – just over one acre
- Great potential for large numbers of visitors and activity
- A need to maintain safe and efficient area for large groups arriving at the park and adjacent Boston Children’s Museum(BCM) at the existing bus drop-off
- A desire to enhance the Sleeper Street experience, especially the relationship between the road, neighbors, and existing BCM parking and service lot
- Adjacent car traffic on Seaport Boulevard and Sleeper Street being a potential safety concern for a future playground

4.00 Review of Existing Site Assets

The design team reviewed existing assets and opportunities with the existing site conditions. The intent of the team is to take advantage of these existing assets and integrate their presence in the design of the park. These recorded assets include:

- City views across the harbor
- Adjacency to Fort Point Channel: the site’s position allows for a borrowed landscape experience of the entire Watersheet, nearby cultural institutions, and activity
- Adjacency to the Boston Children’s Museum: great potential for collaboration and extension of the BCM’s programming, education, and exploration

- Harborwalk: the public corridor potentially brings additional users to the park, connects it to the surrounding neighborhood, and permits passive engagement with the waterfront.
- Growing Seaport District and Fort Point Neighborhoods: as a neighborhood park, the design process should engage the community's aspirations and foster a sense of ownership of the place once completed

5.00 Community Input From Community Meeting #1

The design team reviewed ideas and concerns put forth during the first community meeting, held on February 10, 2016. These ideas are part of the developing design and include:

- Need for more playgrounds in Fort Point. Children's Wharf should focus on inclusive play, rather than passive parkland.
- Need for safely lighted paths throughout the park
- Ample shade in play areas and areas where people might sit
- Comfortable seating throughout the park
- Potential for re-use of large stones currently on site
- Need for an improved Sleeper Street experience and screening of BCM service lot – explore ideas for expanding the site boundary to include this area in the design of the park.

6.00 Design Concept

The Design team presented an initial concept design for the park, including the following basic ideas for Children's Wharf:

6.1 Expanded Site Boundary & Improved Sleeper Street Experience

- The Boston Children's Museum has agreed to share the area of their property currently used for parking, service, and storage. The design team has proposed a single story structure over part of this area, allowing for more parkland, greater range of activities and experience, and increased accessibility and play value.
- Planted slopes framing the public walkway toward the Harborwalk roll up and over the structure, embedding it in the experience of the park.
- A mixed-use zone adjacent to Sleeper Street would serve as an event space for the park and occasional service or loading for the Boston Children's Museum. This area is currently a fenced parking lot on the existing site.
- Street trees have been proposed along the Sleeper Street edge of the mixed-use zone, extending the park experience out to the curb line.

6.2 A Neighborhood Park

- The design allows for public passage through the park without ever walking through a gate or playground. A generous central path will be lined with comfortable seating and planted with shade trees, providing a small public park experience and access to the Harborwalk.

- The design activates the Harborwalk with additional furniture – specifically accessible furnishings different from those currently on the Harborwalk. Comfortable seating along the park edge, shade trees, and planted slopes provide areas for sitting and enjoying the skyline views across Fort Point Channel.

6.3 Range of Inclusive and Accessible Play

- The playground is generally arranged into 2 distinct areas. One side is generally geared toward older kids with opportunities for climbing, slides, swings, and other active play experience. The other geared to imaginative/adventure play and an area for younger children – ages 2-5.
- The two areas of the playground will be linked by a bridge over the public walkway through the center of the park – allowing for children to go from one area to another without passing through a gate. The proposed is designed to fit within the idea of a robustly natural park – seemingly carved out of a single fallen tree.
- The specifics of the play equipment have not yet been defined, but it is anticipated that there may be a climbing structure of some kind with multiple slides, a wooden ship which provides a range of imaginative play experiences, and many smaller pieces of equipment throughout the park, encouraging exploration of the many accessible paths and environments.
- The park is designed to have a natural planted frame, enclosing the play areas, providing shade, and providing an attractive neighborhood amenity to local residents.

7.00 Community Input and Response to the Design Concept

Reactions to the design concept were generally positive and well received by members of the community present. As the design concept is refined and finalized, aspects of the design will be studied in response to the community’s suggestions, outlined below:

- Water Play – it was suggested that the design team consider some form of water play, noting successful examples in other local parks and other cities. Design Team to study.
- Sand Play – consider some form of water play, noting successful examples in other cities. BPRD noted a concern about maintenance and public health associated with sand play. Design Team to study ways of minimizing these concerns and/or alternatives that might provide a similarly tactile experience.
- Comfortable and functional play equipment – examples of not-so-great play equipment were discussed. The design team was encouraged to think about types of equipment that is easy to use, safe, and inviting – both for groups and for solo play. The design team will study this and show proposed play equipment at the next Community Meeting.
- Bridge – positive feedback on the log bridge presented, but encouraged to also consider alternatives relative to the City’s history
- Adjacency to Boston Children’s Museum plaza – consider ways to integrate this existing plaza and group entrance to the Museum into the design. The design team acknowledges that this has not yet been addressed completely, and will study this relationship.

- Bus drop-off – consider the high volume of kids unloading from buses and the adjacency to Sleeper Street and Seaport Boulevard. This area may benefit from additional containment for child safety. Design team to study.
- Consider integration of art into the design of the park.
- Sleeper Street Experience – generally well received in concept. Some uncertainty about the relationship between the new structure over the parking lot and its relationship to sleeper Street. The design team will study this relationship and the appearance of that structure. BPRD to follow up on questions regarding the designation of that parcel, currently owned by the Boston Children’s Museum.

8.00 Next Steps

The design team will be working toward a final design to present at the next community meeting, and anticipates that this meeting will take place in June of 2016. At this point, the design will be near 100% completion, with an anticipated ground breaking in Fall of 2016.

These meeting notes are recorded as understood. Please contact Chris Donohue (cdonohue@mrvainc.com) with any comments or changes by telephone at 617.864.2076 or by facsimile at 617.492.3128 within 10 days of distribution.
