

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – June 10, 2026 - 5:30 - 7 pm

Hybrid Meeting via Zoom & at DPW - 147 Hampshire Street

Attendance (* indicates virtual attendance)

CPP Members: Carrie Burke, Chantal Eide, Christina Mann, Cynthia Smith, Eva Tine, Maggie Booz, Paola Massari, Rob Vandenabeele, Robb Johnson, Sara Cohen, Sophia Emperador. Members not in attendance: Cindy Carpenter, Gretchen Friesinger, Tracey Orr

DPW/City of Cambridge: Kevin Beuttell*, David Lefcourt, Cortney Kirk (CDD) Not in attendance: Abby Bentley, Andrew Putnam, Kristen Keller

Guests & members of the public: Aunnesha Bhowmick, Director of Youth Programs, Green Cambridge, Heather Hoffman*, Luke Smith*

Meeting notes submitted by: Christina Mann

Agenda Items

- Review agenda
- Review May 2026 meeting minutes
- Review updates from Urban Forest Team
- Review updates from CDD - City Parks Projects
- Review sub-committee update
- Additional topics

1. Review agenda and prior meeting minutes

Sophia Emperador reviewed the meeting agenda.

Maggie Booz motioned to approve the May 2026 meeting minutes, Sophia seconded this motion. Meeting minutes were approved with corrections to a typo and a phrase.

2. Updates from Urban Forest team (David Lefcourt)

Urban Forestry / Tree Planting Update

David reported that there was some storm damage throughout the past month, a few trees were lost, but mostly only large leaders and small branches. He attributes the low losses to regular careful pruning.

There have been approximately 150 trees planted this spring. Tobin School and various other sites have new trees, but it is a struggle to find new spaces to plant at this point. Was there a goal for the number of trees? Not specifically.

Paola asked if trees on River Street have been included, but they will not be counted until September.

Maggie suggested looking at streets with no parking that may have contiguous spaces for depaving and tree planting. She also asked if there has been any word on possible new tree planting on the Star Market end of Mount Auburn Street. Several years ago there had been work done on the bus power lines and the traffic intersection but no tree planting action was taken by Mass DOT. She also asked about a tree near the Haggerty School that was knocked loose by a storm, David indicated that he straightened it back up.

Rob V. asked about the pruning schedule for young trees; David replied that the first pruning is 2 years from the planting date for newly planted trees.

Maggie commented that Cathie Zusy had contacted her about better defining the terms 'significant' and 'exceptional' tree.

A policy order was discussed at the recent City Council meeting. The new policy order language says that if a private tree is on the other side of a property line where construction work is being done then it is also protected by the TPO (Tree Protection Ordinance). A rider was attached to this order by Marc McGovern that noted 'unless it was about housing'.

There was group wide discussion about how to talk to city councilors to get the CPP message across in a spirit of collaboration in order to change hearts and minds. The goal should be to build in a way that will nourish the people and wildlife that live in a place. This might be a good approach to our upcoming subcommittee work.

Maggie gave the example of the park near her in Strawberry Hill (Glacken Park) that is carefully planted and enjoyed by all.

The Health and Environment Committee will hold a public hearing to review and discuss the 5-year update to the Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) including recommendations from the analysis and evaluation and feedback from community meetings. This will be held Monday, June 22, 11am, @ Sullivan Chamber (In-person & virtual)

Tree removal Hearing - current case updates

101 Pleasant Street - the City Manager followed David's recommendation to deny the tree removal and affirmed that the tree under debate is to stay put. There will be a workaround to arrange for the new infrastructure.

15 Mount Auburn Street (Harvard) - this tree is still under discussion by the City Manager.

Arbor Day Walk updates

The rescheduled date for the Arbor Day walk is tentatively July 15, 2026.

CPP July mtg - walk/field trip options

Sophia and Maggie offered ideas for the upcoming July CPP meeting.

Maybe Fresh Pond? Visiting the tree nursery, meeting with the Fresh Pond Masterplan Group and taking a tour, and walking the Greenway to Watertown from the south side of Fresh Pond.

Rob V. agreed that meeting with the Masterplan Group would be a great idea.

Sophia will research options and send out an email with further info before the July meeting.

Fresh Pond Day is Saturday, June 13, 2026. Sophia will table and would appreciate some helpers. She will send an invite.

3. Updates on City Parks Projects / CDD (Cortney Kirk & Kevin Beuttell CDD) **Gold Star Mothers Park design update**

Cortney shared the presentation of the most recent Community Meeting #3 on June 9, 2026 about the early stage of the design work.

As previously determined and reported, the soil is contaminated and needs to be cleaned up (2 feet down), liners put in place, and new soil installed. This was previously the site of a pork processing plant that had lots of lead paint issues, vehicle activity compaction as well as a fire.

In addition to the soil issues, the presentation discussed the following:

- Urban tree canopy preservation
- Site character and programming, Social gathering
- Strengthening the site circulation
- Playground strategy (concepts A, B, C)
- Integration of public art
- Places to sit, Picnic tables, community nodes
- Natural turf grass
- Asphalt walkways
- Concrete sitting areas
- Resilient surfacing (pressured-in-place rubber)
- Brick pavers and columns
- Basketball court with artwork
- Appeal to teens and older adults
- Multi-use path widening
- Programming sports + recreation
- Granite block seating + lawn

Feedback is being collected and will be reported on in the fall.

There isn't a plant list of all existing and planned trees at this point.

Please consult the project website for more information.

Maggie commented that it is important to be thoughtful about how designers and the City talk about green space. For example, if residents say they want more picnic tables or more social spaces, that often means more hardscaping for accessibility. CDD should be clear and upfront about the amount of paving that requires, and what the percentages of permeable spaces are.

Cynthia asked for a few descriptions of the new park and Courtney replied that she thinks it will be a really special place. The playground will be set a little higher under trees, and she has been happy that so many of the older local population are eager to have more interaction with the green space, and look forward to bringing their grandchildren there.

4. Sub-committee update (Maggie Booz)

Urban Forestry Planning and Policy

Community Outreach and Engagement

Due to scheduling and administrative issues, it was decided that the sub-committee meetings and discussions would be set for September 22, 2026. Going forward, please hold the 4th Tuesday morning of the month at 8:30 am for a virtual meeting.

Details will be sent out later in the summer.

5. Other Business

Aunnesha Bhowmick, Director of Youth Programs, Green Cambridge

Aunnesha introduced herself and spoke about the Canopy Crew, which is a group run by Green Cambridge that trains and sponsors a team of high school students who plant free trees on private property.

She is eager to spread the word about their programs to others, as well as to the Cambridge Housing Authority.

She asked about when the current CPP applications would be answered, as she knows of an East Cambridge resident who is interested in becoming a member of the CPP, as well as Sarah Adkins, the Executive Director of Green Cambridge.

Someone from Green Cambridge will attend each CPP meeting and update us on their work.

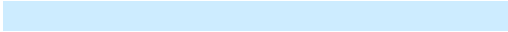
Green Cambridge is hosting a community picnic (free and open to all ages) to celebrate their teen cohort after a successful year of planting trees across Cambridge, partner organizations, volunteers and involved residents, and their new environmental education programming in the Alewife Brook Reservation. Wednesday, June 24, 3:00pm--5:00pm @ Sennot Park

Next meeting: Our next meeting will be held on July 8, 2026 at 5:30pm at a location TBA. This will be advertised to the public in advance.

NOTE: The foregoing represents our understanding of the discussions and decisions made during this meeting. The CPP requests permission to quote or reference these notes.

Attachments:

1) Gold Star Mothers Memorial Park Remediation and Improvements Project - Design Update, June 10, 2026 (Cortney Kirk & Kevin Beuttell- CDD)



City of Cambridge

Public Planting Committee

**Gold Star Mothers Memorial Park
Remediation and Improvements Project**

Design Update

June 10, 2026

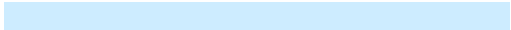


**CITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

DPW
Public
Works

CDD
Community
Development

DHSP
Recreation



Excerpts from June 09, 2026

Community Meeting #3 Presentation

Project Team

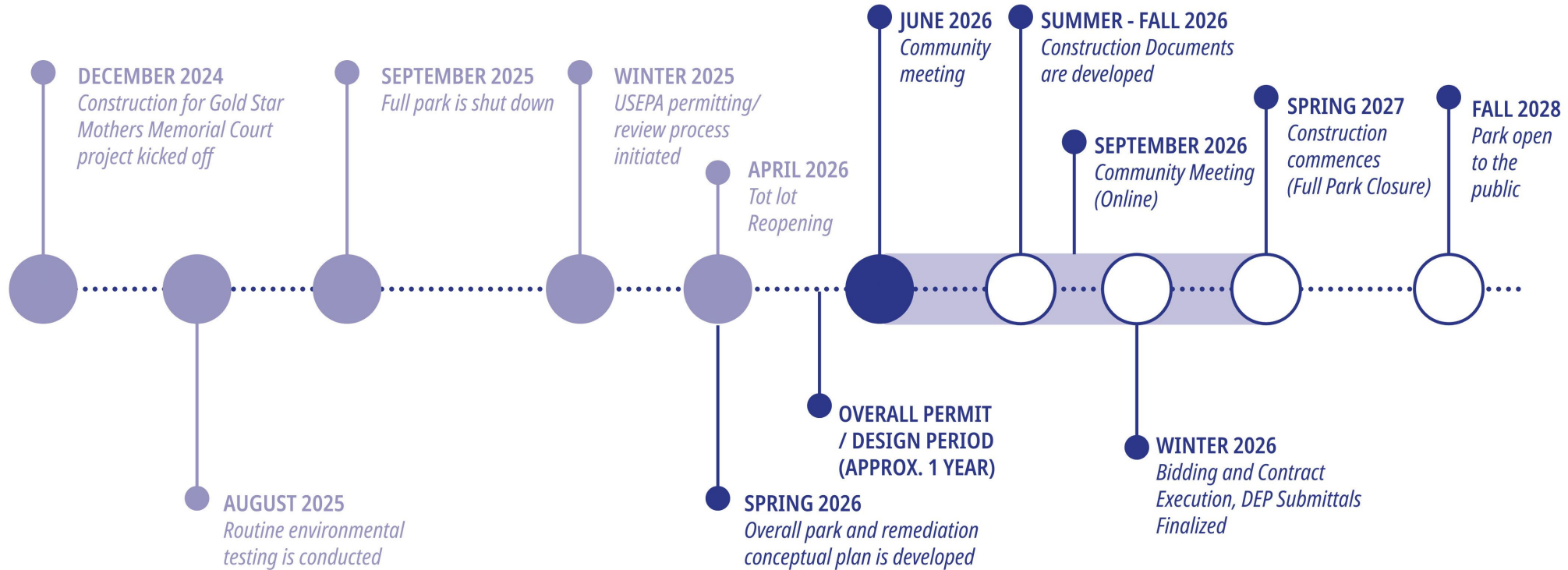
City of Cambridge	
John Nardone	Public Works, Commissioner
Jim Wilcox	City Engineer
Jennifer Letourneau	Senior Engineer and Conservation Commission Director
Kristin Kelleher	Community Relations Manager
Sam Lipson	Senior Director of Environmental Health
Kevin Beutell	Supervising Landscape Architect, Public Works
Gary Chan	Neighborhood Planner
Cortney Kirk	Landscape Architect
Adam Corbeil	Division Head, Recreation
David Webster	Superintendent O f Park
Dave Lefcourt	City Arborist
Lillian Hsu	Director of Public Art
Hilary Zelson	Public Art Administrator
Weston & Sampson	
Cassie Bethoney	Practice Leader Landscape Architect
Farah Dakkak	Project Manager Landscape Architect
Lee Koska	Environmental Engineer
Anastasia Sotos	Landscape Designer

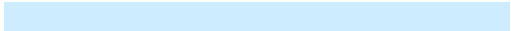
Project Goals

- Complete a comprehensive clean up of the soil contamination
- Manage the urban tree canopy
- Maintain and enhance the overall site character and programming
- Increase social gathering spaces
- Strengthen site circulation and access
- Develop a play strategy that responds to neighborhood and broader city needs
- Integrate public art throughout site

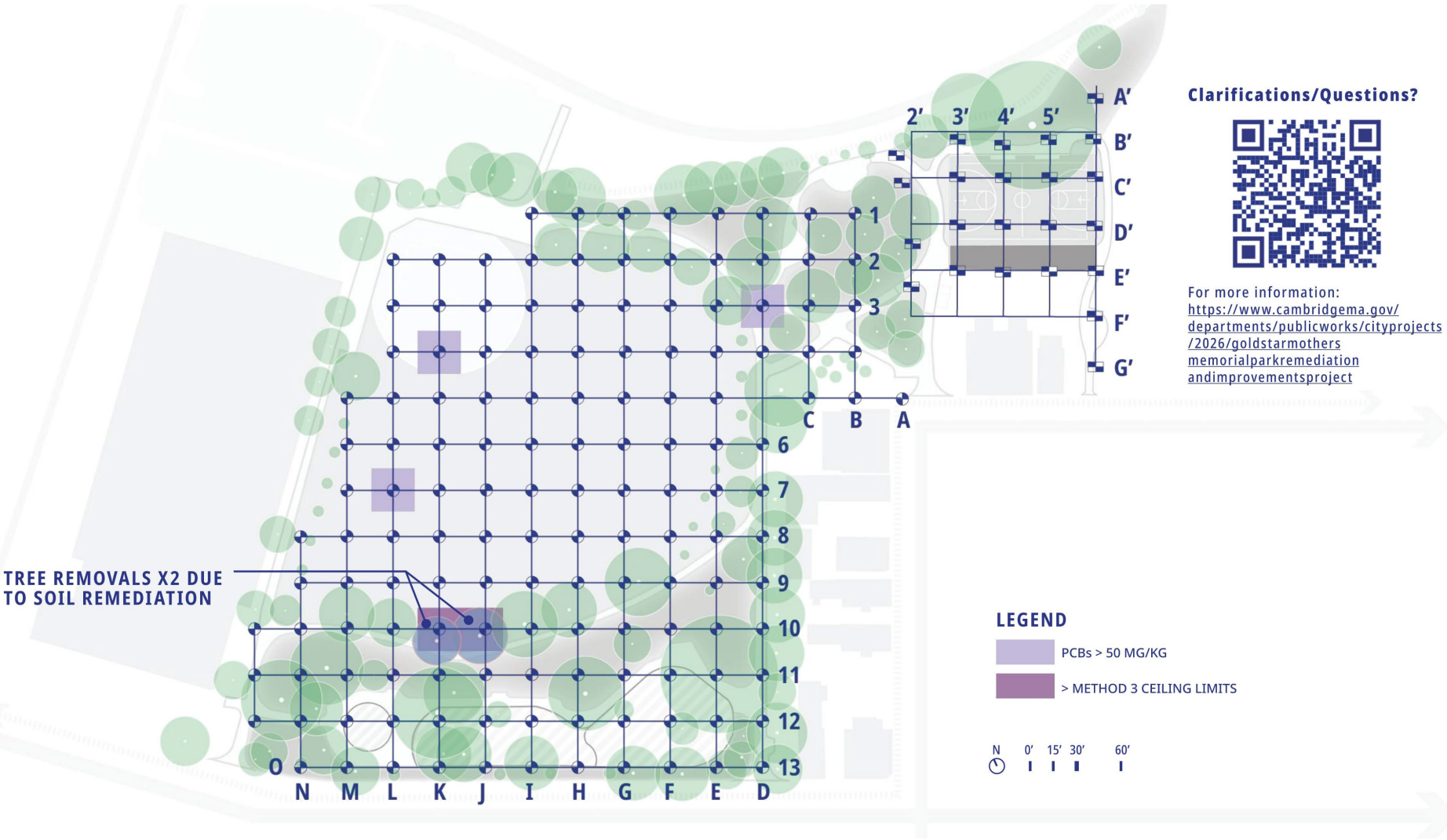
Project Schedule

Community Engagement has been and will be ongoing throughout this process





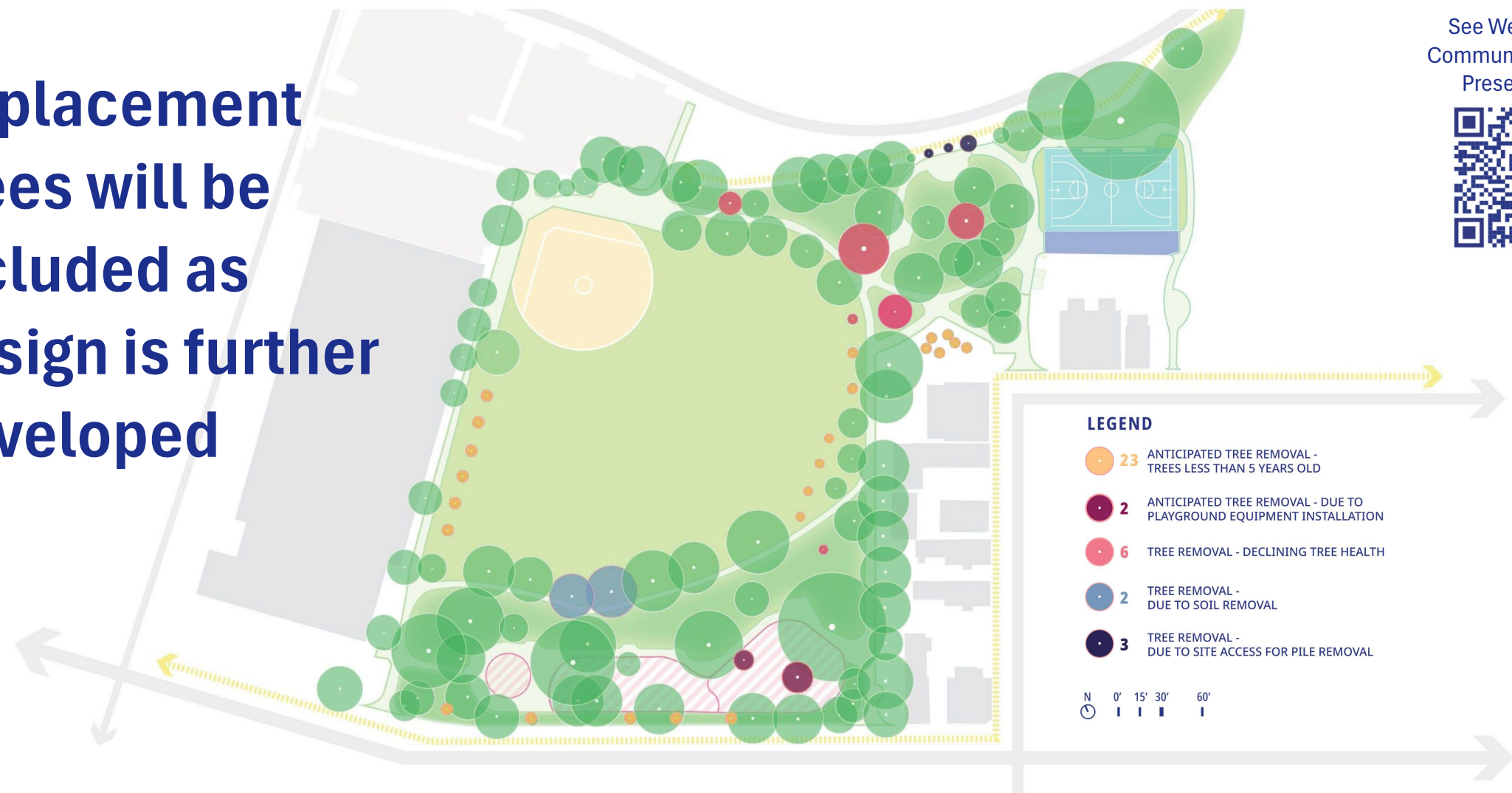
Soil Removals



Tree Canopy Preservation & Anticipated Removal

Replacement
Trees will be
included as
design is further
developed

See Website for
Community Meeting
Presentation



Park Overview



2003

Gold Star Park Concept Plan



2024

Construction for Gold Star Mother's Memorial Court project kicked off.



2026

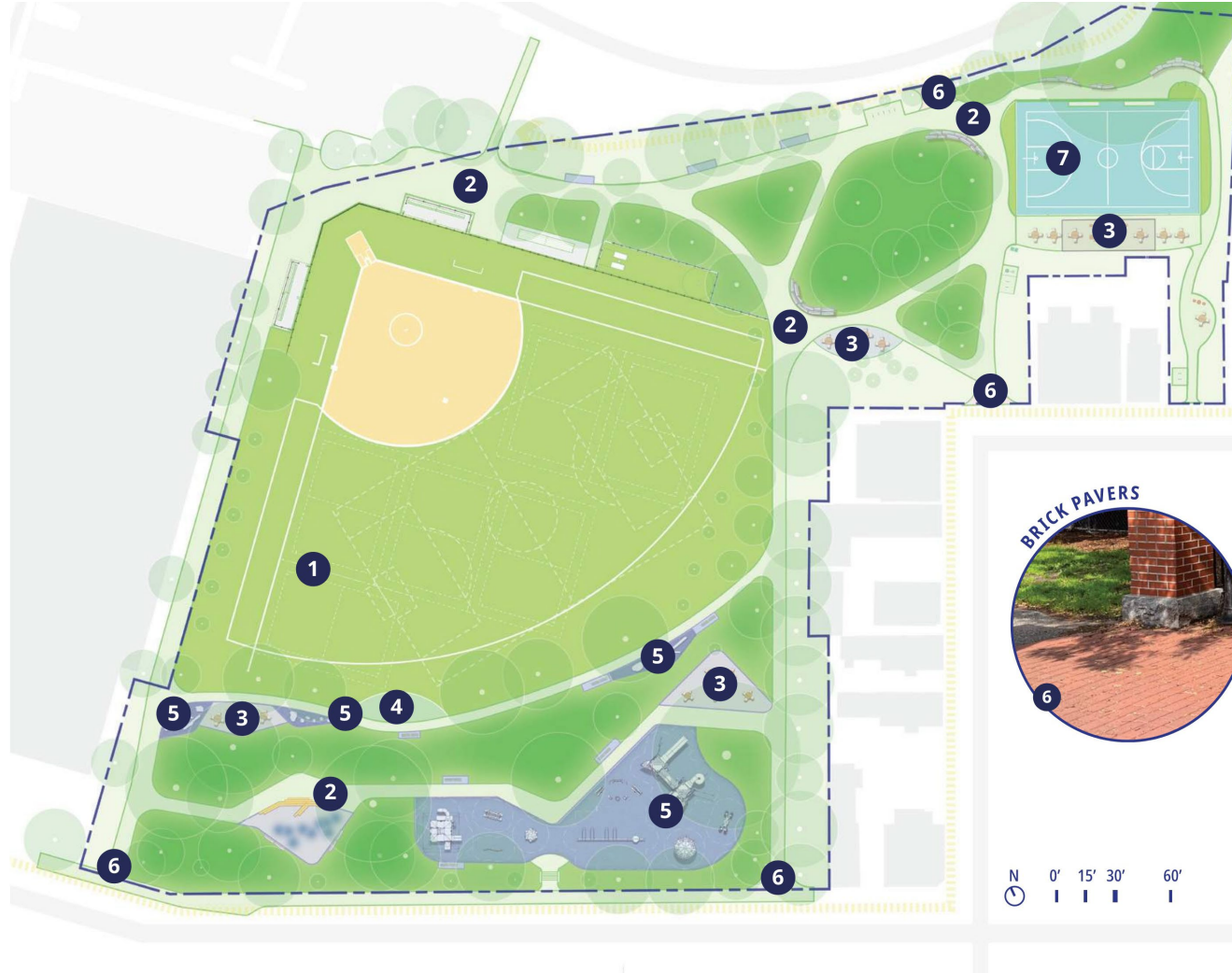
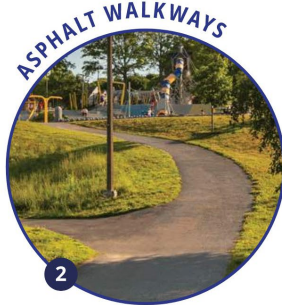
Overall park and remediation conceptual plan is developed.

June 10, 2026

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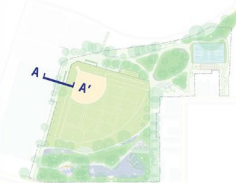
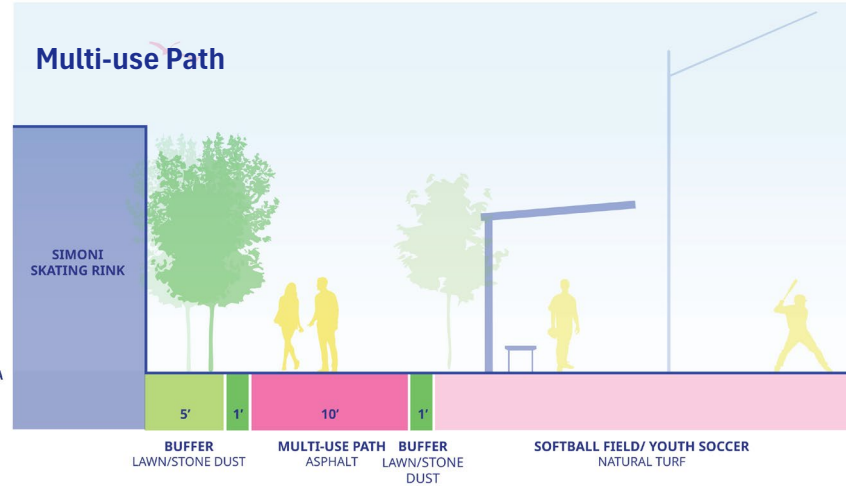
Proposed Improvement Ideas

See Website for
Community Meeting
Presentation



Proposed Improvement Ideas

See Website for
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Presentation



1 DUGOUT



2 SEATING AREA NEAR SPORTS FACILITIES



SITE PLAN

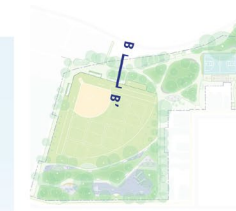
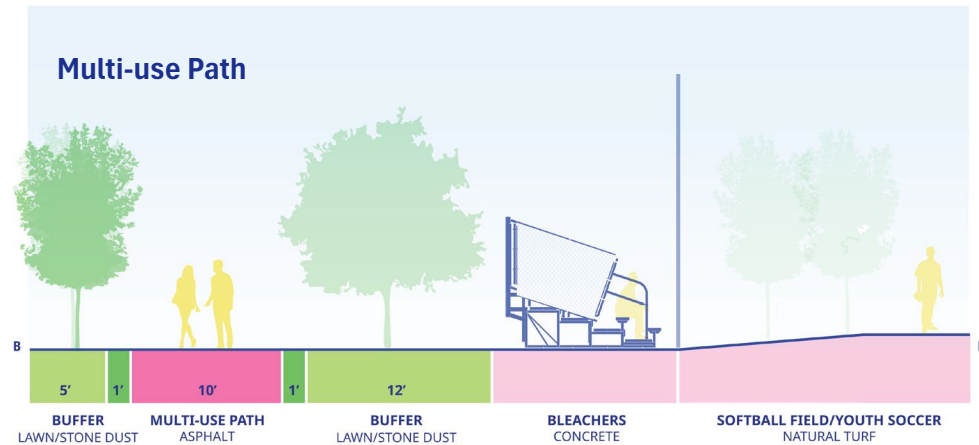


3 BATTING CAGE



4 ADULT FITNESS EQUIPMENT

SPORTS & RECREATION



PARK PATHWAYS



GRANITE BLOCK SEATING & LAWN



ENLARGEMENT PLAN



SOCIAL GATHERING SPACE



MULTI-USE PATH ADJACENT TO SEATING AREA

GATHERING

Proposed Layout & Playground Ideas

See Website for
Community Meeting
Presentation



**LITTLE LEAGUE
SOFTBALL AND YOUTH
SOCCER FIELD**
Little League Softball
(210')
6v6 Soccer
(150' by 105')

**EXERCISE NODE
SEATING AREA &
PLAY MOMENT**

SPLASH PAD

PARK ENTRY

**BASKETBALL COURT
(48' X 84')**

SHADE STRUCTURE

PLAY MOMENT

SEATING AREA

PLAYGROUND

**PLAY CONCEPT A SHOWN FOR
EFFICIENCY – FEEDBACK IS
STILL BEING COLLECTED**



PLAY CONCEPT A



PLAY CONCEPT B



PLAY CONCEPT C

Discussion

Conceptual Design Open House

Join City staff and the project team to review the concepts and share your feedback. Help shape the park's renovation.

Project webpage:

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/departments/publicworks/cityprojects/2026/goldstarmothersmemorialparkremediationandimprovementsproject>



If you have questions or would like additional information, contact:
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Kristin Kelleher, Community Relations Manager
kkelleher@cambridgema.gov | 617-349-4825



COMMUNITY MEETING 3 | 9 JUNE 2026
GOLD STAR MOTHERS MEMORIAL PARK

