

Riverside Open Space Walking Tour
June 25, 2005
Summarized notes

On Saturday June 25, 2005, city staff and approximately 15 Riverside neighborhood residents participated on a walking tour of open space in the neighborhood, in anticipation of a new public park, which will be built on the site of the former Mahoney's Garden Center, at the corner of Memorial Drive and Western Avenue. The purpose of the walking tour was to help begin to think about what kinds of open space facilities and features would be appropriate in the future park, based on the existing open space in the neighborhood, as well as any spatial limitations. The parks included as part of the tour were Corporal Burns Park, King School Playground, Hoyt Field, and Riverside Press Park.

Passive features

While it was observed that there seemed to be a lack of **un-programmed open space for children aged 10-12 years old** (a place to just play catch etc.), there was a general interest in passive features among participants on the tour. It was noted that **passive park features** had multiple qualities and could accommodate less formal park enjoyment for varied users of any age, at the same time. Several residents also pointed out that the neighborhood parks already seem to have many active features. Further, the area seemed to lack **contemplative space** or passive **space for elderly citizens**. There was an interest in **natural beauty**, and plantings that can provide **year round color**. The path at Hoyt Field was noted as being unattractive, while a path similar to the one at Corporal Burns seemed more favorable.

Other ideas included:

- **Shaded areas to sit**
- **Surprising areas of plantings** that were distinctive
- **A scent garden** for the blind with Braille and English descriptive markers explaining the scents
- **A raised flowerbed** (circular or a circle divided by an undulating line, with small rounded pebbles as the walking surface around and through it)

Community space

Participants also noted an interest in some kind of **community gathering space**, such as a **gazebo** or a covered area for performances or community events. Also mentioned, **tables and chairs that are grouped together**, tables for **playing cards or board games** such as chess or checkers, **benches with tables**, and **benches that faced each other**. Some residents liked the concept of a raised area in parks, but there were mixed opinions on the raised sculpture garden at Riverside Press Park. Someone pointed out that **overhead water play** features are more appropriate, because ground based ones are harder to share and are often monopolized by kids. There were a few suggestions for a **skating pond** or refrigerated rink area similar to one located at the Charles Hotel, as well as a **refreshment stand** that sells snacks, and **public bathrooms**.

Shade

Shade was noted as an important feature in parks. It was inquired if **mature trees** could be planted in the new park. There was a suggestion for **circular benches around trees**, which would allow more people to take advantage of the shade provided. Several people noted that **tree canopies that formed some kind of archway** over walkways and seating areas were nice open space features.

Other issues

The current transition between Riverside Press Park and the Mahoney's site along Memorial Drive is very unattractive and not well maintained. There is a concern that if Harvard charges a fee for parking in the new garage that is too expensive, students and affiliates will park on the street next to the new park and in the neighborhood. There were some questions about the construction schedule for the garage and housing as well as the new park.