

City of Lowell



Open Space and Recreation Plan

3rd Public Meeting

September 2018

INTRODUCTION

On August 13, the City of Lowell hosted the 3rd Public Meeting for the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). After months of meetings, focus reports, and survey gathering Department of Planning and Development (DPD) staff used the meeting for residents to prioritize the information, suggestions, and action items we had collected. In the early stages of the planning process, staff asked residents to think big and imagine that there was no limit to what could be accomplished. Staff did not want to miss a creative idea because of real or perceived budget constraints. At this stage, we are determining specific priorities for the next five years and need to start accounting for what the City can realistically accomplish in that period. Attendees at the 3rd Public Meeting helped us set these priorities.

MEETING FORMAT

During the 3rd Public Meeting, participants received a sheet with the top 10 themes that we have heard throughout the public participation process. Participants ranked the themes from their highest to lowest priority and returned them to DPD staff. Residents then sat at tables and collaborated to negotiate and determine the rankings for the entire table. DPD staff used both ranking approaches to learn how people felt individually and to see whether those priorities shifted after discussions with their table mates. DPD staff also wanted to help attendees understand the difficulty inherent in translating the many themes into a clear set of priorities.

The activity generated a lot of discussion at each table, and showed the many ways people can negotiate. Some tables ranked items individually again and averaged the results. Other tables had open discussions, with residents advocating for why they preferred to rank items a certain way. DPD staff did not sit at the tables and instead allowed attendees to moderate their discussions and prioritization. Leaving the residents to discuss the themes on their own also avoided influencing the rankings.

After each table completed their prioritization, DPD staff shared a sheet with action items for each of the themes. Residents prioritized these action items in the order that they would like to see them accomplished. The City cannot accomplish the many action items identified by the public in one or two years, as such, understanding how residents would like to see the City prioritize this work is important. When writing the OSRP goals and action items for the 2018 plan, DPD staff must consider City capital planning priorities, available funding, pending projects, and a multitude of other competing issues. However, the voice of residents is essential to this process.

PRIORITIES

Staff distributed this sheet to attendees to rank the 10 themes.

Rank in order of priority from 1-10, with 1 being the highest and 10 being the lowest priority:

_____	Better Sidewalks and Crosswalks	Better Lighting	_____
_____	More Trees	Bike Lanes	_____
_____	Water-based recreation	Frequent Clean-up and maintenance	_____
_____	Clearer Signage	Events beyond downtown	_____
_____	Dog Parks	Activities for teens and kids	_____

PRIORITIES // WHAT WE HEARD

Individual Rankings of the 10 Themes								
Topic	Rank	Avg. Score	Count of Votes per Ranking					
			#1	1-3	1-5	6-10	8-10	#10
Bike lanes	1	3.3	11	16	17	5	4	1
Better sidewalks and crosswalks	2	3.5	4	15	17	6	1	0
Frequent cleanup and maintenance	3	4.2	4	11	16	6	2	0
More trees	4	5.2	2	7	11	12	6	1
Events beyond downtown	5	5.3	0	6	11	12	4	0
Activities for teens and kids	6	5.4	1	5	13	10	6	0
Better lighting	7	5.7	0	6	13	10	7	2
Clearer signage	8	6.0	1	1	9	13	6	1
Water-based recreation	9	7.3	0	2	5	18	13	4
Dog parks	10	9.0	0	0	1	21	18	13

According to the individual rankings, Bike Lanes are the clear priority, having received the best overall average score and most #1 rankings. Better Sidewalks and Crosswalks and Frequent Cleanup and Maintenance were ranked #2 and #3, respectively, with the second and third best overall average score and second and third most #1-3 votes. The rankings and count of votes per ranking diverge for #4 and #5, with some very low individual votes pushing Activities for Teens and Kids and Better Lighting to worse overall average scores despite having the fourth and fifth most votes ranging from #1-5.

The cells in shades of red indicate themes that received the worst individual rankings, i.e., #6-10. More Trees and Events Beyond Downtown are among the top-5 themes with the most of these low rankings, but these two themes are also ranked among the most preferred overall. This divergence is because relatively few people gave these two themes the worst votes, i.e., #8-10, while others ranked them far better, i.e., #1-3. The remaining low ranked themes are Clearer Signage, Water-Based Recreation, and Dog Parks. The overall lowest individual ranking is Dog Parks, with the worst overall average score and most #10 votes.

Table Rankings of the 10 Themes							
			Ranking by Table				
Topic	Rank	Avg. Score	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
Better sidewalks and crosswalks	1	2.6	2	2	2	6	1
Bike lanes	2	2.8	1	1	1	8	3
Frequent cleanup and maintenance	3	3.0	3	6	3	1	2
Activities for teens and kids	4	4.8	4	3	7	3	7
Clearer signage	5	5.2	5	5	6	4	6
Better lighting	6	5.4	9	8	4	2	4
Events beyond downtown	7	6.8	8	9	5	7	5
More trees	8	7.2	6	7	8	5	10
Water-based recreation	9	7.4	7	4	9	9	8
Dog parks	10	9.8	10	10	10	10	9

Compared to the individual rankings, the top-3 themes for the table rankings are the same, although not in the same order. Bike Lanes and Better Sidewalks and Crosswalks flipped, while Frequent Cleanup and Maintenance is third in both tables. Notably, three tables ranked Bike Lanes #1, but a #8 ranking from one table shifted the overall average score. The bottom two themes—Water-Based Recreation and Dog Parks—are both the same and in the same order. The rankings for Dog Parks were quite consistent, with each table scoring the theme at least #9.

Other than Better Lighting, which was #7 in the individual ranking and #6 in the table ranking, the remaining four themes are more than one ranking different between the individual and table scores. The largest move is More Trees, which individuals ranked as fourth overall. However, the theme dropped four spaces to eighth in the table rankings. Events Beyond Downtown also shifted to a lower ranking compared to the individual scores. Activities for Teens and Kids and Clearer Signage increased in ranking, earning fourth and fifth place, respectively, when ranked by the tables.

ACTION ITEMS

Staff distributed this sheet to attendees to rank the action items for each theme.

Cleanup/Maintenance

- Recycling at City parks
- Stewardship programs
- Launch education program regarding littering & recycling

Crosswalks/Sidewalks

- Artistic crosswalks/art on sidewalks
- Dedicated pedestrian crosswalk lights (Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB))
- Crosswalks at larger park locations, it seems in several locations that crosswalks are not placed where people actually cross. Why are drivers given the priority?

Better Lighting

- Lights at fields/Courts—should be open later
- Pocket parks are dark (Kerouac, Victorian Garden) can lights be added to create a better feeling of safety?

More trees

- City perform a tree inventory
- Protect trees by creating bump-outs on sidewalks instead of cutting down trees when they heave sidewalks
- Annual planning plan and goal

Water Based Recreation

- Ice skating
- More splash pads
- Access to public pools

Clearer Signage

- Comprehensive signage—cohesive look/brand for parks
- “You are here” maps
- Littering signage—Fines, Do not Litter, Pick up after your dog, etc.

Events Beyond Downtown

- Close downs neighborhoods from traffic...”block parties”
- More pop up events at parks—rotating at different parks across the city
- Could there be some kind of shuttle offered for neighborhood based events that could get people to them? (Sort of how we move people from train station/bus terminal to Downtown for Folk Fest)

Dog Parks

- Identify a new dog park location
- Create more than 1 Dog Park in the city
- Create a dog park that can accommodate small and large dogs in separate areas

Activities for Teens/Kids

- Playground equipment for older kids, i.e. Rock Walls
- Organized social opportunities. i.e. “drop in” style events
- Slides and an alternative to stairs

Bike Lanes

- Delineate “Bike loops,” connected trails are needed.
- Cycling education (for bikers and drivers)
- Bike infrastructure master plan

ACTION ITEMS // WHAT WE HEARD

These 10 tables list the overall table rankings and average score for each of the action items:

Clearer Signage		
Priority	Table Avg.	Action Items
1	1.6	"You are here" maps
2	1.8	Littering signage - Fines, Do not litter, Pick up after dog, etc.
3	2.6	Comprehensive Signage - cohesive look/brand for parks

Events Beyond Downtown		
Priority	Table Avg.	Action Items
1	1.4	More pop up events at parks - rotating at different parks across the City
2	2.0	Close down neighborhoods from traffic: "Block parties"
3	2.6	Shuttle offered for neighborhood based events

Dog Parks		
Priority	Table Avg.	Action Items
1	1.8	Identify a new dog park location
2	2.0	Create more than one dog park in the city
3	2.2	Create a dog park that can accommodate small and large dogs in separate areas

Activities for Teens/Kids		
Priority	Table Avg.	Action Items
1	1.8	Playground equipment for older kids, i.e. Rock Walls
1	1.8	Organized social opportunities
3	2.5	Slides and an alternative to stairs

Bike Lanes		
Priority	Table Avg.	Action Items
1	1.6	Bike infrastructure master plan
2	1.8	Delineate "bike loops," connected trails are needed
3	2.6	Cycling education (for bikers and drivers)

Cleanup/Maintenance		
Priority	Table Avg.	Action Items
1	1.4	Recycling at city parks
2	2.0	Launch education program regarding littering and recycling
3	2.6	Stewardship programs

Crosswalks/Sidewalks		
Priority	Table Avg.	Action Items
1	1.0	Crosswalks at larger park locations. It seems in several locations that crosswalks are not placed where people actually cross
2	2.2	Dedicated pedestrian crosswalk lights (Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon...RRFB)
3	2.8	Artistic crosswalks/art on sidewalks

Better Lighting		
Priority	Table Avg.	Action Items
1	1.4	Pocket parks are dark (Kerouac, Victorian Garden). Can lights be added to create a better feeling of safety?
2	1.6	Lights at fields/courts - should be open later

More Trees		
Priority	Table Avg.	Action Items
1	1.2	City perform a tree inventory
2	1.8	Annual planning plan and goal
3	3.0	Protect trees by creating bump-outs on sidewalks instead of cutting down trees when they heave sidewalks

Water Based Recreation		
Priority	Table Avg.	Action Items
1	1.6	More splash pads
2	2.2	Ice skating
2	2.2	Access to public pools

NEXT STEPS:

DPD staff is preparing a draft of the OSRP plan. We expect a draft plan to be ready for public review and comment in October, this draft will be submitted to the City of Lowell Conservation Commission, Planning Board and City Council for local approval. Staff will submit a revised plan to the State's Division of Conservation Services for final approval in December of 2018. Residents who are not already on the Open Space Plan email list should contact OpenSpace@LowellMA.gov to receive an alert when the draft plan is ready.

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