

**SOUTH COMMON
LOWELL, MA**

MASTER PLAN



Prepared by
Brown, Richardson & Rowe, Inc.
Landscape Architects and Planners

*Project funded by the Executive Office of Energy and
Environmental Affairs*

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Introduction

The master planning process for South Common was initiated in July 2009 to help the City of Lowell develop a long range vision for the park based on desired uses and activities generated from a series of public meetings held between September and December 2009.

The Preferred Alternative developed during the master planning process reflects an overall design concept that can be used a framework for the development of a more detailed park design. In other words, the Preferred Alternative is not meant to be the final park design. Several proposed improvements shown in the Preferred Alternative can be modified or relocated as long as they remain consistent with the goals of the master plan.

General goals include:

- Restore Historic Character
- Improve Park Safety
- Improve Existing Park Uses
- Increase Park Usage
- Improve Pedestrian Circulation within the Park
- Improve Streetscape adjacent to the Park
- Accommodate the National Park Service's trolley route through the Park

The master planning project was made possible through a Gateway City Parks Program grant from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

Park History

The City of Lowell acquired South Common in 1845. Early photographs show large expanses of lawn with big shade trees and walking paths that cross to neighboring streets, features typically found in other town commons of the era. The Common's focal point was granite-faced oval pond, encircled by large trees and a walking path with bench seating.



Early photograph of South Common

Over time, the passive character of South Common has changed to a more recreationally-focused park. The Common's character began changing around 1904-1905 when the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted drafted plans for adding a baseball field and "gymnasium ground" in South Common¹. In 1905, a running track and baseball diamond were installed².

In 1962, the Edith Nourse Rogers School was built on roughly half the site, although in a location that had been occupied by a school since the 1830's³. The sloping topography was modified with concrete retaining walls and new parking lots associated with the school. Photos of that era show that the oval pond and associated structure remained but most of the trees that were present in early photographs had been removed. Recreational facilities included a baseball diamond with bleachers, tennis courts, basketball court and playground.



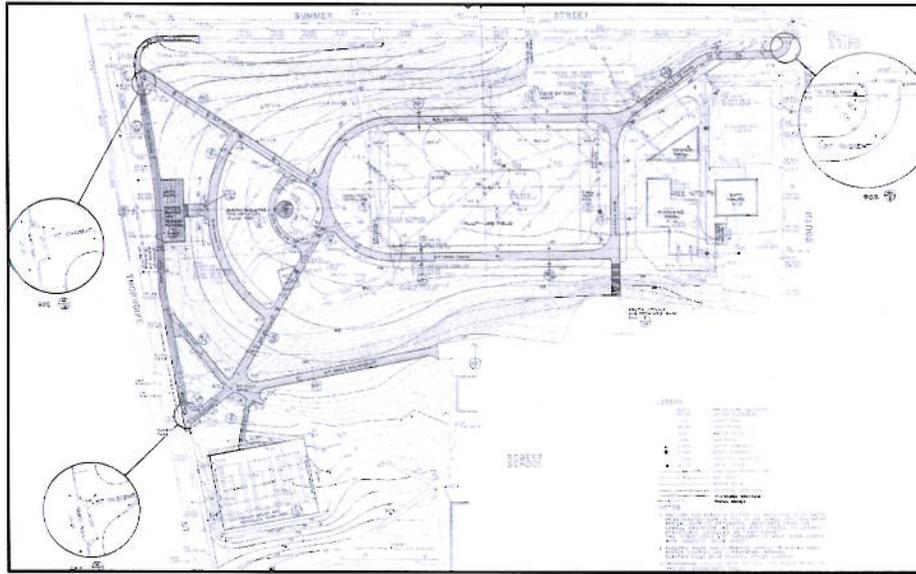
Photograph of South Common and Edith Nourse Rogers School

¹ Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site. February 2010, < <http://ww2.rediscov.com/olmsted/>>.

² Stowell, Stephen. *South Common Historic District Brochure*, 1996.

³ Ibid

In 1975, plans were developed that added more recreational uses to the Common. Tennis courts were expanded and a swimming pool with a concrete bath house, a multi-use sports field, outdoor amphitheater and modern-style plaza along Thorndike Street were constructed. The oval pond and structure were removed and walking paths reworked to accommodate the Common's new program.



South Common Layout Plan, Paul C. K. Lu & Associates, 11-28-1975

Little has changed since then. A children's play area with swings and play structures was added near Rogers School and one tennis court was converted to a basketball court. The multi-use sports field has become a popular, heavily-used soccer field. Today, South Common no longer resembles a traditional New England town common.



South Common Birds Eye View, courtesy of Bing.Com

South Common is part of Lowell's South Common Historic District. The District was as added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. In 2005, the South Common Neighborhood District was created by the Lowell City Council as part of eight new neighborhood districts under the jurisdiction of the Lowell Historic Board (LHB). The district follows the boundaries of the previously established National Register of Historic Places district for South Common, excluding those areas already included in the Downtown Lowell Historic District.

At a meeting with Stephen Stowell, of the Lowell Historic Board, his feeling was that a historic restoration was not possible with all the changes that have been made to the park over the years. However, it is important to acknowledge the park's history and its location within an historic district and to restore some of the spirit of a New England town common to this park.

Current Uses, Issues and Constraints

Current uses are primarily recreational in nature. Current uses and activities include:

- Soccer
- Walking
- Running
- Swimming Pool with Bath House
- Basketball (1 Court)
- Tennis (2 Courts)
- Volleyball
- Playground
- Sledding (winter)
- Parking Lots and Service Roads

The soccer field, walking track and swimming pool are the most heavily used facilities. The tennis and basketball courts are also well used. Although there is no formal volleyball court, people bring their own volleyball nets and place them on posts located in the lawn at the western end of the soccer field. In the winter, the steep slopes are popular for sledding.

The surface of the soccer field is compacted, almost completely barren of grass and suffers from poor drainage. In addition, the DPW dumps snow, which may be contaminated with de-icing chemicals, on the field.

Many people do not feel safe in the park. Reduced visibility, both into and out of the park, contributes to a feeling of isolation and is caused by mature vegetation, built structures that block views and the lack of adequate lighting. In addition, windows in the Rogers School that face the park have clouded over so that the room occupants cannot see out the windows and provide informal surveillance of park activities.

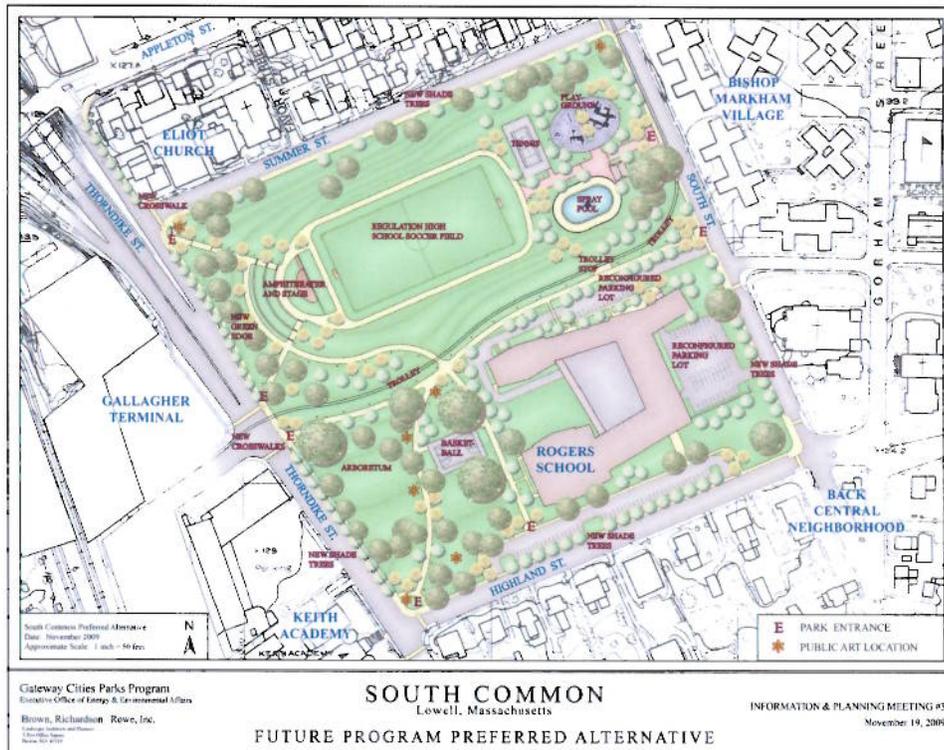
Anticipated Future Uses

At the public meetings, there was general agreement that the existing functions and uses of the Common are all valuable, and needed, but their locations could be changed. Based on public input from the September and October meetings, the following additional features and activities are desired for South Common:

- Activities for different ages,
- Festival events,
- Outdoor movies,
- Farmers' markets,
- Cultural festivals,
- Public art with a theme and
- The National Park Service's trolley route through the park to Gallagher Terminal.

Community members also expressed interest in changing the industrial feel of the Common, especially along the park edges. There is an opportunity to do this by reducing the amount of asphalt and structures at the edges and restoring a landscape of grass and trees. Relocating built items such as the pool, pool house, parking lots, tennis and basketball courts further into the park will help people see the park as a welcoming, green oasis.

The feeling of safety for park users will increase through the removal or reduction of physical barriers, pruning and/or thinning out trees, appropriate lighting and carefully locating built structures. Aggregating activities will also improve the feeling of safety and help make the park more fun for families with kids of different ages.



Features of the Preferred Alternative presented at the November meeting include:

- Greening of park edges,
- Creating welcoming park entrances.
- Pruning or removal of existing mature trees to allow views into and out of the park.
- Opportunities for the display of public art within the park.
- Incorporating new historic-style lighting along park walkways.
- Removing the existing amphitheater and modern plaza to create a new stone seating terraces built into the slope to provide comfortable seating for people to use during events. The amphitheater could be used for outdoor movies, festivals and small entertainment events.
- Creating two pedestrian walkways to the proposed amphitheatre from Thorndike Street, near Gallagher Terminal and from Summer Street, near Eliot Church. Because of the existing steep slope, steps may be needed on these walkways down to the amphitheatre. However, other accessible paths would provide access to the amphitheatre for disabled park users.
- Upgrading paths to meet ADA accessibility guidelines, which were developed after the park was built.
- Preserving the sledding area on the slope in front of Eliot Church.
- Developing the South Street side of the Common as the main park entrance and “heart of the park” with activities for all ages. A main park entrance, framed with new trees, would extend from South Street to the soccer field. Located here are:
 - * ADA compliant playground with equipment for both 2-5 year olds and 5-10 year olds,
 - * New tennis court (which could instead be a volleyball court), and
 - * A new spray pool (which could instead be a swimming pool. The pool equipment would be concealed in a smaller structure located further away from South Street. There would be bathroom facilities in the pool house as well.
- Enlarging the existing soccer field to meet regulation high school soccer field requirements. In public meetings, people expressed a desire to have an artificial turf field.
- Adding a new loop path around the soccer field that would have distances measured for general jogging, walking and exercise.
- Relocating the basketball court closer to the gym in Rogers School, away from Thorndike Street. This location would not require fencing around the court.

- Developing the southwest corner of the Common as an arboretum, building on the great trees that are already there and adding new ones.
- Expanding the parking lot on the east side of Rogers School by re-grading and adding an attractive landscape wall to screen the view of the parking from Highland Street. Parking spaces would be properly marked to maximize the number of parking spaces.
- Reconfiguring the parking lot on the north side of Rogers School. In public meetings, people reported that the existing second level of parking is unsafe and therefore, rarely used. In the Preferred Alternative, this lower level has been eliminated and the parking lot is now shown on one level.
- Adding signage to indicate clearly where and when the public is allowed to park.
- Providing the National Parks trolley track running east-west through the park with an accessible trolley stop near South Street and Rogers School. The tracks could be set in grass within the park, with an accompanying walking path parallel to the tracks. The sloping topography in this area presents grading challenges, but appears to be able to be manipulated to bring the trolley through the park as shown.

Summary

As previously noted, the Preferred Alternative is not meant to be the final park design. Several proposed improvements shown in the Preferred Alternative can be modified or relocated as long as they remain consistent with the goals of the master plan. However, because recreational facilities require relatively level ground, their locations will be constrained by the steeply sloping topography that covers much of the site. Because of the steep slopes, a topographic survey is needed to serve as the basis for future detailed design efforts.

During the course of the public process, conflicting views from some community members were expressed for some of the proposed improvements and park features. Some items that appear to be open for further discussion or need further study include:

- A full-size swimming pool instead of, or in addition to, a spray pool
- Incorporating community gardens within the park
- Volleyball court instead of, or in addition to, a tennis court
- Conducting a parking study to determine parking needs for park visitors, Rogers School, Bishop Markham Village (BMV) and other residents abutting the park.
- Many BMV residents opposed having the playground located near their residences because they felt it would be too noisy.

Continued community participation and consultation with key stakeholders such as the Lowell Historic Board, Parks & Recreation Department, Planning & Development Department and Lowell Public School Administrators will be necessary as the detailed park design progresses.

Appendix A

Estimate of Probable Construction Cost

South Common Future Program Preferred Alternative
November 19, 2009

**ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE COSTS
SUMMARY**

SOUTH COMMON FUTURE PROGRAM PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Lowell, Massachusetts

19-Nov-09

Item - Description	Amount
Site Demolition and Removals:	\$632,450.00
Site Improvements:	\$5,457,053.00
Subtotal:	\$6,089,503.00
Contingency (25%):	\$1,522,375.75
Grand Total:	\$7,611,878.75

Notes:

1. Estimates do not include any costs associated with the Trolley Line.
2. Estimates do not include any costs associated with hazardous materials.
3. Estimates are based on fair market value and do not attempt to replicate the lowest bid.
3. Estimates are in current dollars and do not include escalation.
4. Estimates do not soft costs for consultant fees, project management and other owner costs.

**ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE COSTS
SITE MOBILIZATION, DEMOLITION AND REMOVALS COST BREAKDOWN**

SOUTH COMMON FUTURE PROGRAM PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Lowell, Massachusetts

19-Nov-09

Item - Description	Amount
1 Mobilization	\$10,000.00
2 Site Paving and Base Materials, Removed and Disposed: Bituminous Concrete - Walkways, Driveways, Courts	\$150,150.00
Safety Surfacing @ Tot Lot	
Concrete Stair and Railings	
Circular Amphitheater Plaza	
3 Site Walls and Fencing, Removed and Disposed: Concrete Retaining Walls (incl footings) 8' Ht Chain Link Fencing (incl footings)	\$17,825.00
4 Site Furnishings: Wood Benches and Footings, Removed and Disposed	\$10,000.00
5 Fields/Courts/Play Area: Play Equipment and Footings, Removed and Disposed (2 structure + 1 swing + 2 spring toy Soccer Goals @ Field, Removed and Stockpiled Tennis Nets @ Courts (incl footings) Basketball Hoop @ Courts (incl footings)	\$7,100.00
6 Utilities: Field Lighting, Removed and Disposed	\$3,000.00
7 Swimming Pool: Pool House, Demolished (incl utility work) Swimming Pool, Demolished (incl utility work) Concrete Paving @ Pool	\$220,750.00
8 Tree Removed	\$60,000.00
9 Tree Protection Fencing	\$30,000.00
10 Tree Pruning	\$18,000.00
11 Tree Root Pruning in Excavated Areas	\$10,000.00
12 Topsoil Excavated, Rehandled and Spread	\$95,625.00
Total, Site Demolition and Removals	\$632,450.00

**ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE COSTS
SITE IMPROVEMENTS COST BREAKDOWN**

SOUTH COMMON FUTURE PROGRAM PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Lowell, Massachusetts

19-Nov-09

Item - Description	Amount
Site Improvements	
1 Grading, Fine Grading and Compaction	\$70,830.00
2 Paving, Curbing and Stairs	\$1,260,568.00
Concrete paving - at Rogers School, includes base materials	
Bituminous walkway paving - includes base materials	
Bituminous vehicular paving - includes base materials	
Bituminous vehicular paving - resurface existing	
Specialty granite paving - at Amphitheater & Main Entry, includes base materials	
Granite Stairs - at Amphitheater	
Granite Curbing - at Parking	
3 Streetscape Improvements	\$299,525.00
Concrete paving - at Sidewalks and "Bump Outs"	
Crosswalk thermoplastic striping	
Deciduous shade trees (3" - 3 1/2" caliper)	
4 Sports Fields and Courts	\$1,085,655.00
Soccer Field - Artificial Turf	
Soccer Field - Irrigation	
Bituminous concrete court paving	
Court striping	
Basketball standards, hoops and backboard	
Tennis nets and 2 posts	
8' Ht black chain link fence @ Tennis Court	
5 Play Area	\$574,000.00
Play Equipment (small kids) - Structure, Playhouse, Swings, Spring Toys	
Play Equipment (school age kids) - Structure	
Playground safety surfacing - rubberized	
Fencing - 5' Ht Ornamental Metal with Gate	

**ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE COSTS
SITE IMPROVEMENTS COST BREAKDOWN**

SOUTH COMMON FUTURE PROGRAM PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Lowell, Massachusetts

19-Nov-09

6	Spray Pool and Pool House/Comfort Station	\$573,400.00
	Pool House/Comfort Station	
	Specialty Paving - Granite	
	Granite Edge - 9" Wide	
	Fountain Equipment/Mechanicals	
7	Site Furnishings	\$128,500.00
	Benches	
	Picnic Tables	
	Park Signs	
	Amphitheater Stage with Accessible Ramp	
8	Site Walls	\$354,475.00
	Retaining Walls - Stone faced concrete	
	Seat Walls - Granite on concrete footing	
9	Planting	\$504,100.00
	Planting soil at lawn areas and new trees	
	Shredded pine bark mulch (3" depth)	
	Deciduous shade trees (3" - 3 1/2" caliper)	
	Seeding	
10	Lighting	\$450,000.00
	Pedestrian Lighting - fixtures, poles and footings	
	Soccer Field Lighting - fixtures, poles and footings	
11	Site Utilities	\$156,000.00
	Site Water - to pool, comfort station	
	Site Electric - for lights, pool equipment, amphitheater stage	
	Site Storm Drainage	
	Security cameras	
	Total, Site Improvements	\$5,457,053.00

Appendix B

Public Meeting #1

September 23, 2009

**Please join us for a public meeting to help plan the
future of South Common.**



On Wednesday evening, September 23rd from 7 pm to 8:30 pm

The meeting will be held at the:

**Pollard Memorial Library (next to City Hall)
401 Merrimack Street
Lowell, MA 01852**

Sponsored by the City of Lowell Division of Planning & Development and
the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs,
Gateway City Parks Program

For more information, please contact Diane Tradd, Chief Design Planner at
978-466-7200



OUTDOOR MOVIES
Manchester, NH



CULTURAL FESTIVAL
Newark, NJ



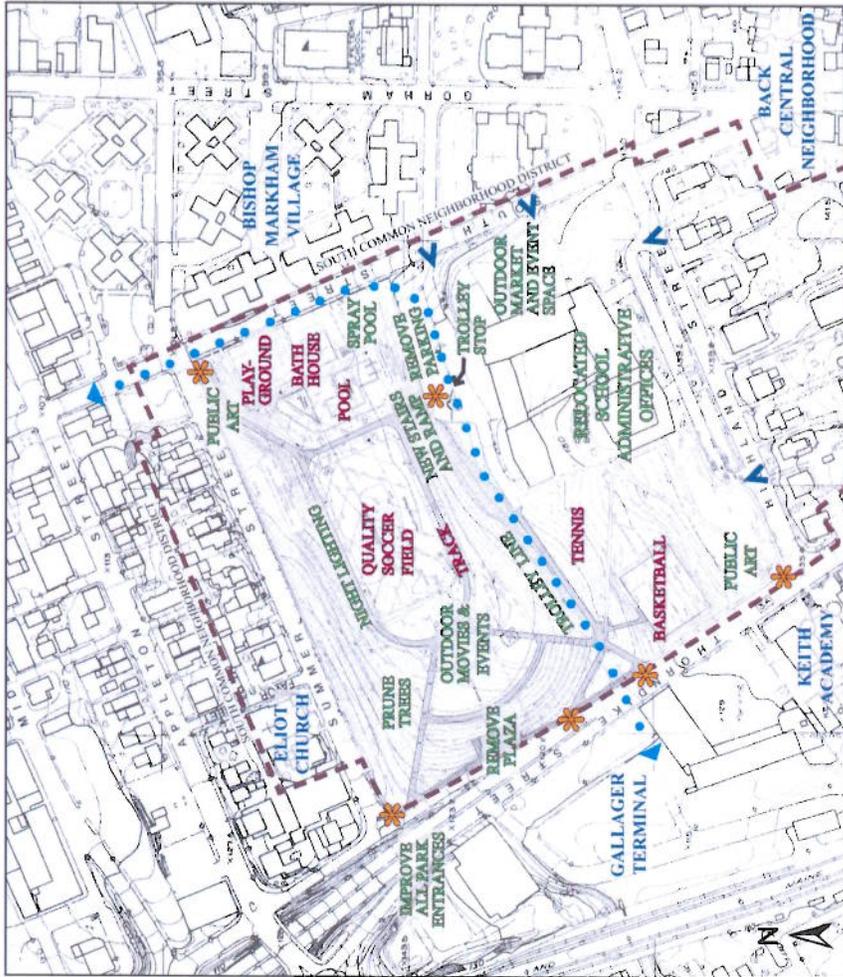
URBAN DELIGHTS YOUTH FARM STAND
Syracuse, NY



SOUTH COMMON HISTORIC POND
Lowell, MA



KENOSHA STREETCAR
Kenosha, Wisconsin



South Common Plan
Date: November 1975
Approximate Scale: 1 inch = 100 feet



SPRAY POOL
Boston, MA



TROLLEY CATENARY LINES
BOARDING HOUSE PARK
Lowell, MA



PUBLIC ART
Lowell, MA

Future Program Ideas

SOUTH COMMON

Lowell, Massachusetts

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xxx

GATEWAY CITY PARKS PROGRAM

**Re: Public Meeting #1, Existing Conditions, Site Analysis and Program,
South Common, Lowell, MA**

Date: September 29, 2009

To: Kurt Gaertner, Dorrie Pizzella, EEA

By: Nina Brown, Brown, Richardson & Rowe, Inc.

CC: Clarissa Rowe, Mary Baker, Diane Tradd

Attendees: Diane Tradd, Chief Design Planner, Aaron Clausen, Planner; Nina Brown, Brown, Richardson & Rowe, Inc.; Joseph Smith, George Russell, Rosemary Noon, Jane Calvin, Mark E. Goldman, Matt Robbins and Josh.

1) Introduction – Nina Brown

Nina Brown began by explaining that Brown, Richardson & Rowe, Inc. (BRR) is assisting the city with preparing a master plan for the South Common with funding provided by the Gateway City Parks Program of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. There will be three public meetings covering the following topics:

- a) **Meeting #1 – September 23rd at 7 pm**
 - i) Present site analysis plan,
 - ii) Discuss program,
 - iii) Solicit ideas from community participants

- b) **Meeting #2 – October 28th at 7 pm**
 - i) Present two master plan alternatives
 - ii) Present draft program,
 - iii) Solicit ideas from community participants

- c) **Meeting #3 – November 19th**
 - i) Present master plan
 - ii) Present revised program

2) Other Lowell Planning Initiatives – Aaron Clausen

Aaron Clausen explained that Lowell planners have conducted a series of workshops with residents of different city neighborhoods to get their input about future initiatives for the

City. The South Common has emerged as a park that needs attention.

1. Pedestrian Connection

In 2005, the City submitted a grant to the state's Executive Office of Transportation for pedestrian improvements between the Gallagher Terminal and future development in the JAM area (now the Hamilton Canal District). The City was awarded \$500,000 to do improvements. Construction will begin in spring of 2010, and be completed by the end of 2010. Plans include:

- New crosswalk from the LRTA driveway across Thorndike Street, with a new 'walk' signal on the light. The crosswalk will be relocated to the other side of the LRTA driveway (away from the Comfort Furniture building, closer to the entrance to the Commuter Rail station).
- Removal and replacement of sidewalk along Thorndike Street from the new Crosswalk, up the Lord Overpass to Summer Street. For this stretch, there will be a raised tree way between the sidewalk and the street, to provide some buffer between people walking and cars.
- Pedestrian improvements continue along the side of the overpass up to the corner of Middlesex Street. From there, Hamilton Canal District and Courthouse projects will do further sidewalk improvements as they are built
- It does not fund any changes to the 'overlook', but we hope to address that as a part of the master plan
- It does not impact the actual South Common in any way, but provides a better entrance to it, and better sidewalk along it.

2. Trolley Project

The City and National Park Service have spent over seven years looking at expanding their historic downtown 'tourist trolley' into a full transit system. The goal is to have the system provide transportation between the bus/rail connections at Gallagher and various amenities downtown, including the Hamilton Canal District, the downtown businesses, the Arena, the Ballpark and the University. Further links could connect the system into the neighborhoods.

- Trolley would run year-round at 10 minute intervals during peak travel times.
- National Park is working with "The Lowell Plan" to develop a new 'feasibility level' document that will address the route, stops, schedule, construction cost, and operations cost. Operating costs are the greatest challenge in this plan, but they are working on it. The Lowell Plan has hired 'TranSystems' from Pennsylvania to work with on this project. They have done similar trolley projects in Kenosha Wisconsin and Little Rock, Arkansas.
- The greatest challenge to the route is the connection between Hamilton Canal and the Gallagher Terminal. Earlier plans showed the trolley following our proposed pedestrian connection, or crossing above Thorndike Street on an overpass to get into the terminal. Both of these plans have a number of problems (they intersect poorly with traffic, they are too expensive, they have

too many sharp turns, they don't necessarily get people right in front of the rail terminal.

- A new idea, proposed in the 2008 MIT student study of the Back Central neighborhood was to run the trolley through the South Common park behind the Rogers School, then up South Street to Middlesex Street and into the Hamilton Canal District via Revere Street. TranSystems is reviewing the idea of putting the Trolley through the park. A walking path along that route would enable people to cross easily through the park. This trolley route would connect the Back Central neighborhood better into the trolley.
- The planning is still in early phases - if it is to get done it will probably be built after the park improvements. The plan would be to leave a space where it could happen.

3) Site Analysis and Program ideas – Nina Brown

BRR has prepared a site analysis, has looked at the existing program and has begun to think about possible program elements for the future. Nina showed the boards summarizing this information and talked about the existing uses, soccer, track, tennis courts, basketball courts, play equipment and a swimming pool. Much of the soccer field is bare, compacted soil. The park facilities are isolated from each other. The grade change between the adjacent street and the soccer field and track isolates those facilities from the street. The park has safety and cleanliness issues. People sleep in the park during the day. Pruning the pines would open up the view from Thorndike Street.

She also discussed the need to attract people of all ages to the park and opportunities to aggregate compatible uses in one area such as play equipment near the pool near a spray pool.

The Superintendent of the Lowell Public Schools is moving into the building this fall. All the windows facing the park have clouded over so that the room occupants cannot see out the windows unless they open their windows.

There are **Early Childhood** classrooms in the building now. The **Kitchen** staff prepares food for the seven Lowell Public Schools. Three vans pick up the food at the loading dock that faces the park and distribute the prepared food to the seven schools. The **Cafeteria** and food services are open to the public. It is within the realm of possibility that the Kindergarten through fourth graders from one elementary school may be moved to Rogers for the 2010-2011 school year to satisfy that condition.

The Lowell Police Department will have a **Police Precinct Office** on the first floor to the left of the entrance to the Gym. The **Gym** will continue to be used as a gym. It is rented out non-stop both to Lowell High School and the Parks and Recreation Department.

4) Discussion

Mark Goldman hoped that the school would not expand further into the park. The park is really important to the neighborhood. Rosemary would like welcoming connections to be created between the school and the park. Jane Calvin asked whether the school is seen as part of the park. Nina Brown said that, at present, the school does not use the park. The pre-school uses the building's courtyard.

The YMCA uses it in the summer, but is concerned about safety. If the park improves, the YMCA would use the park. The YMCA serves food on Saturday morning. People from the shelter cross the park on the way to the YMCA and are sometimes aggressive.

Rosemary Noon lives on Highland Street. She said that the park is heavily used by soccer players, joggers, Bishop Markham dog walkers, swimming pool users in the summer, and sledders in the winter. People don't feel safe in the park because people sleep there during the day. Additional programmed activities are needed for all ages. New play equipment and a spray pool would be good for small children. Jane Calvin said that spray pools are being installed in other parks in the city and asked whether a spray pool was needed in South Common as well. Jane would rather have a decent pool.

Josh, a resident of Keith Academy asked whether the renovation would cover the park grounds and the school grounds.

Jane Calvin would like to limit the use of chain link fence in the park. She would like to see improved maintenance of the park by the city and reduced vandalism.

Soccer

Serious adult soccer players use the soccer field. The turf is in poor condition. The city needs to develop and implement a maintenance plan for the turf.

Track

Josh would like the track to be retained and improved. The Middle School has tack meets here.

Volley Ball

People bring their own volleyball nets and place them on the posts and play volleyball.

Tennis Courts and Basketball Court

Mark Goldman would like the City to refurbish the tennis courts. Josh said the tennis courts are so close to the road that balls could roll into the street. Rosemary said there are not many public tennis courts left in the city, but one court would probably be ok instead of two. The basketball hoops on the tennis courts are used. The basketball nets get stolen. The residents of Bishop Markham oppose the relocation of the basketball to their side of the park.

Swimming Pool

Aaron Clausen has received feedback saying the pool is heavily used. The pool attracts

residents from the Back Central neighborhood to the park.

Parking

Could there be fewer parking spaces when there is public transportation to the park? It is not clear which parking lots are for school personnel and which parking lots are for park users. Signs are needed. Commuters park all day in free on-street parking spots and prevent park users from using these spots. It would be good to post these spaces as two hours spots. Jane did not want to reduce the spaces dedicated to park use.

Lighting

Mark Goldman said the lights are not working. New lights are needed.

History

Jane Calvin would like to retain some of Olmsted's original design. Nina commented that we could re-create the "Common Character" of grass and trees by removing asphalt and hardscape areas at the park's edges and replace with grass and trees. Josh said that right now the edges of the park look like an industrial parking lot. Joseph Smith said that the chain link fences destroy the park character.

Park Entrances and paths

Jane Calvin said that park entrances are not welcoming. Street crossings are dangerous. The circulation needs to be looked at holistically.

Art

Jane Calvin would like to something creative at the corner of Highland and Thorndike. Rosemary Noon and Aaron Clausen would like to see public art in the park.

Trees and Planting

Jane suggested an arboretum with a diversity of trees in the park such as Beech trees, Ginkgoes, Tulip Trees and Oaks and smaller interesting ornamental trees. She said she has money for trees. Jane would like to see a wider tree belt along Rogers School on Highland Street and also at the corner of Highland Street and South Street. George Russell suggested new trees along Thorndike Street. Rosemary said the white pines are overgrown. She would like to see the dead tree removed and other pines limbed up to allow views into the park

David Koch would like to see fruit trees in the park.

Drainage

Rosemary Noon said that after a rain storm, there is standing water at the end of the track for a long time.

Community Gardens

Maria Dickinson suggested community gardens in the park.

Park Programs

Mark Goldman would like to see a Farmers' Market and festivals in South Common. A Farmers' market would compliment the Hamilton canal development. The folk festival used to be in South Common. Rosemary liked the idea of movies and cultural festivals in the park. Jane Calvin said that Elliott Church has great programs.

Aaron Clausen said that people in the recent planning workshops suggested a flea market, an arts fair, an event space for films or musical performance.

Jane Calvin requested that representatives from the park commission and the park staff attend the meeting on October 28th.

Note: If you find any information in these meeting minutes that is incorrect, Please contact Nina Brown at BRR.

Appendix C

Public Meeting #2

October 28, 2009

**Please join us for a public meeting to view two
design alternatives and to help plan for
the future of South Common.**



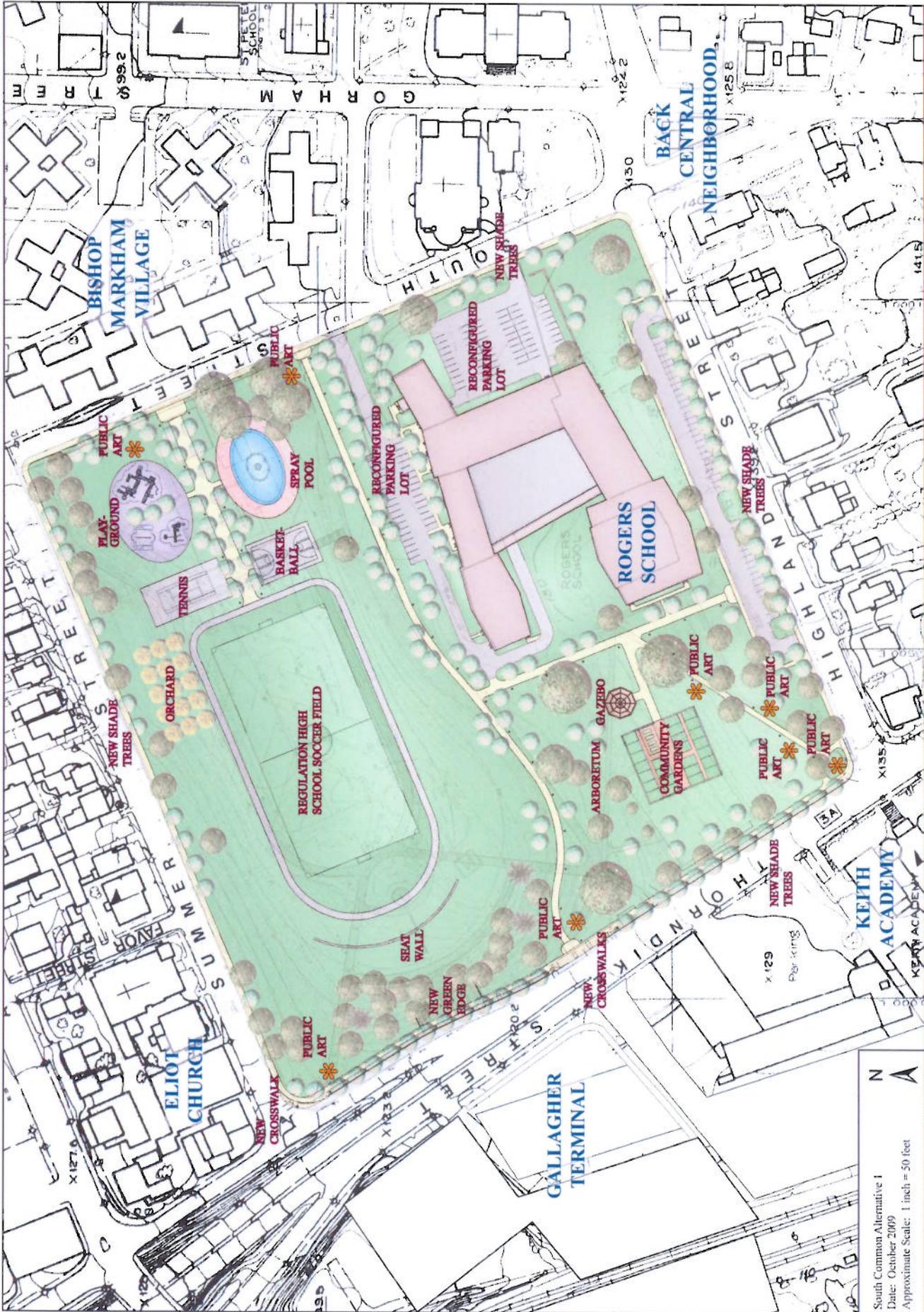
**On Wednesday evening, October 28th
from 7 pm to 8:30 pm**

The meeting will be held at the:

**Pollard Memorial Library (next to City Hall)
401 Merrimack Street
Lowell, MA 01852**

Sponsored by the City of Lowell Division of Planning & Development and
the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs,
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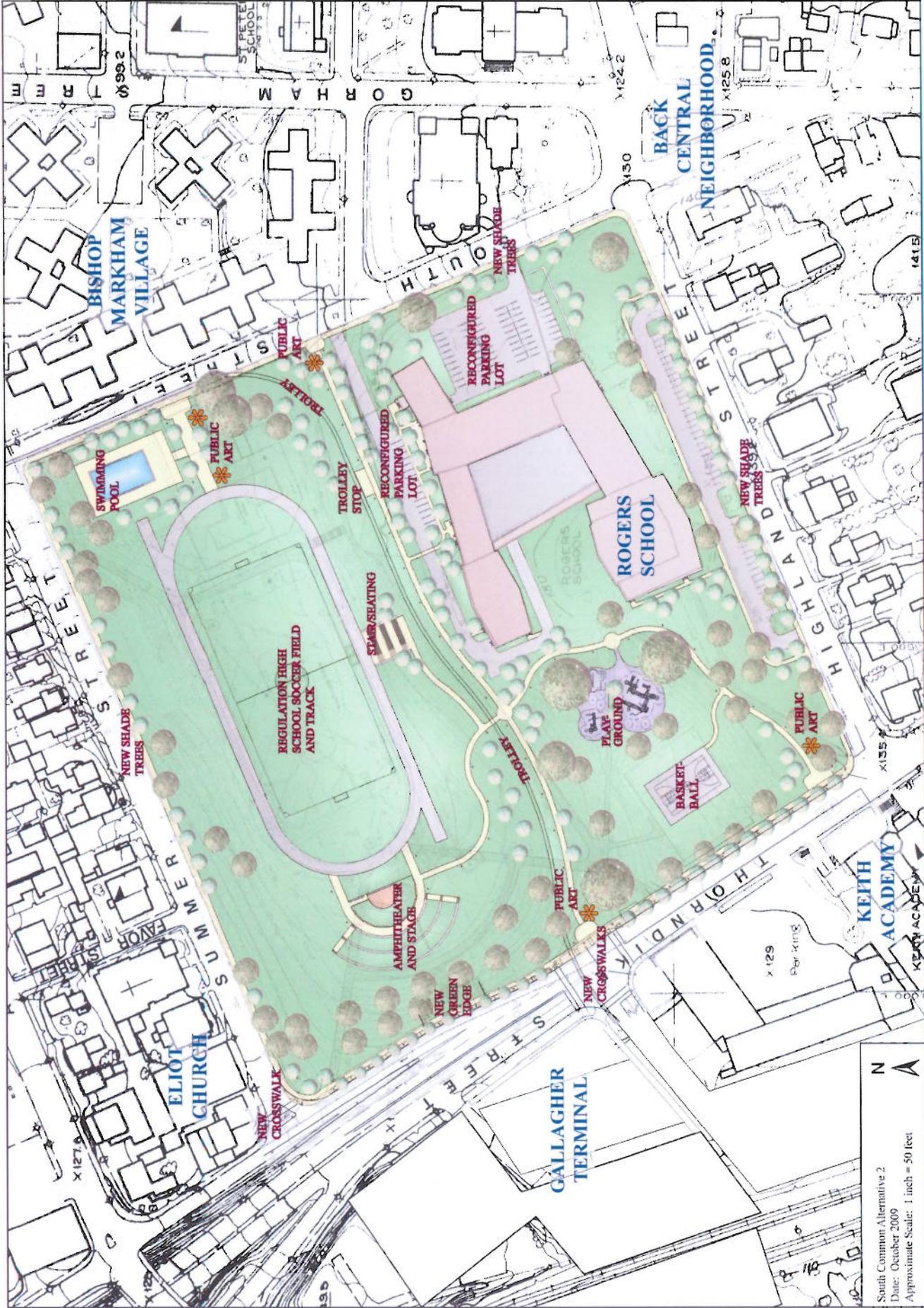
South Common Alternative 1
 Date: October, 2009
 Approximate Scale: 1 inch = 50 feet

Gateway Cities Parks Program
 Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
 Brown, Richardson Rowe, Inc.
 Landscape Architects and Planners
 Boston, MA, ©2010

SOUTH COMMON

Lowell, Massachusetts

FUTURE PROGRAM ALTERNATIVE 1



South Common Alternative 2
 Date: October 2009
 Approximate Scale: 1 inch = 50 feet



Gateway Cities Parks Program
 Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
 Brown, Richardson Rowe, Inc.
 Landscape Architects and Planners
 11000 Old Orchard Road
 Boston, MA 02116

SOUTH COMMON

Lowell, Massachusetts

FUTURE PROGRAM ALTERNATIVE 2

INFORMATION & PLANNING MEETING #2
 October 28, 2009



City of Lowell

Division of Planning & Development

South Common Master Plan Review October 28, 2009 at 7 p.m. Pollard Library, Meeting Room

Presenting:

Nina Brown
Brown Richardson & Rowe
Landscape Architects and Planners

Others:

Diane Tradd, Chief Design Planner
Rachel Kisker, Design Planner

Public Attendees:

George Russell, NMCOG	grussell@nmcog.org
Joe Smith	jpdmSmith@aol.com
Jane Calvin, LPCT	jcalvin@lowelllandtrust.org
Mary Rogers, Eliot Church	coolmary2@comcast.net
Jack Kelley	

Meeting Minutes

Nina Brown presented as follows:

Introduction:

South Common is one of the first two parks in Lowell. Town commons in New England are characterized by their simplicity. Large lawns with big shade trees and paths that cross to the neighboring streets are the norm. Ornamental shrubs and flower beds are usually not found in commons. Over time, South Common has changed dramatically. The Rogers School was built on almost half the site. The sloping topography was modified with retaining walls and new parking lots associated with the school. The paths were changed and, in some case interrupted. The route from Gallagher Terminal to South Street is very well-used and right now the path ends abruptly at the school parking lot. A swimming pool, a playground, tennis and basketball courts were built. In addition, the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed. The existing paths are almost all steeper than 5% .

South Common no longer looks like a traditional Common. Parking lots, structured sports and buildings have replaced grass and trees on Thorndike, Highland and South Streets. The soccer field, an informal track and pool are popular and well used. The rehabilitation of this historic park should result in a safer park that is a city-wide resource.

At a recent meeting with Stephen Stowell, of the Lowell Historic Board, his feeling was that with all the changes that have been made to the park over the years a restoration was not possible. It is important to acknowledge the park's history and its location within an historic district and to restore some of the spirit of a common to this park.

At the September meeting, the public expressed interest in changing the industrial feel of the space, especially along the edges. The South Street end of the park has many parking lots and structures blocking the park view. The specific functions of the site are all useful, but their locations could be changed.

There is an opportunity to do this by restoring three of the four edges to a landscape of grass and trees and to reduce the amount of blacktop at park edges. The parking lots can be moved. Thorndike Street already has a streetscape design in process. Large-framed shade trees can be planted in front of the Rogers School on Highland Street. Both alternatives illustrate ways to relocate intrusive built items such as the pool, pool house, parking lots, tennis and basketball courts further into the park so that people see the park as a green oasis, not a quasi industrial public facility. Solving the drainage problems and improving the quality of the turf are important priorities. Aggregating activities will make the park more fun for families with kids of different ages.

Two new Alternatives were on display - "Alternative #1" and "Alternative #2."

Alternative 1 showed the following:

On South Street

- a major park entrance, highlighted as a "celebration" of the park
- parking lot near the pool relocated and replaced with trees and lawn,
 - a level parking lot up by the school to eliminate hiding places. This lot can be used users on weekends,
 - a "heart of the park" with activities for all ages. Also, the entrance to the park,
- a playground either next to the existing pool or next to a new spray pool similar in form to the wading pool that used to be in South Common.
- New tennis and basketball between the soccer field and the play area. This consolidation of activities will make it easier for parents of kids of different ages to watch their children playing, soccer or basketball and playing in the spray pool or on the play equipment.
- Removal of inaccessible paths and a new accessible path along the desire line between Thorndike and South Streets that extends the full length of the park, from the proposed new crosswalk at Thorndike Street to South Street.
- Orchard,
- Deciduous trees between the park and the school to soften the view from the park to the school,
- New street trees,
- School parking lot shifted back from the street to allow room for grass and trees. Parking lot is a good size for a farmer's market or flea market on weekends.

Thorndike Street

- Removal of trees that block the view down from Thorndike Street,
 - Slope is left open for winter sledding, another popular activity on the site,
- New street trees,
- New seat wall that looks over the soccer field,
- Conversion of basketball tennis area to lawn and trees,
- Community gardens surrounded by ornamental fence and hedge,
- Arboretum,
- Accessible path to park.

Alternative 2 showed the following:

South Street

- Parking lot near the pool relocated and replaced with trees and lawn,
- Parking lot up by the school reduced in size to allow for construction of National Parks trolley line,
- New pool next to track.
- Inaccessible paths removed and new accessible path along desire line parallel to trolley tracks,
- New deciduous trees between park and school to soften view from park to school,
- New street trees,
- School parking lot shifted back from street to allow for grass and trees along street. This parking lot is a good size for a farmer's market or flea markets on the weekends.

Thorndike Street

- Removal of either tennis or basketball. New single court further in from Thorndike Street to allow for lawn, new trees and preservation of specimen trees,
- New street trees,
- New playground for children of different ages surrounded by low fence to keep children from running into street,
- New accessible path from Thorndike Street to track, soccer field and amphitheatre,
- New lighting throughout,
- New amphitheatre that looks over soccer field for movie nights, performances and folk festival

Preferred Alternative for November 19th meeting

Based on the feedback from tonight's discussion, an updated plan will be produced for the November meeting based on the comments on each of the two alternatives.

Questions and Comments from the Audience and Discussion:

- Community gardens and a tree arboretum shown on the Thorndike/ Highland corner. Community gardens can be controversial, but they work well if there is framework designed around them (with fencing, arbors, etc.) and the neighbors are fully involved. Community gardens should be at other end of park, near South Street, to engage the surrounding residents, but only if they are eager to have them. It is unclear whether or nor the interest exists. Perhaps when the Hamilton Canal residents arrive there will be more need for community gardens. The Arboretum is a good idea.
- The basketball courts in Alternative #1 are approximately 200 feet from South Street, which should be enough distance to control the noise. The Bishop Markham's residents had the original basketball courts on South Street removed because they didn't like the noise.
- David Koch requested that an orchard is placed on the slope along Summer Street. A concern was raised about the necessity of spraying fruit trees.

- Will South Common be an active-use park or not? If a full track and playing field are added it will give the appearance that the South Common athletic fields are associated with the school and lose its historic park character. Does the city need athletic fields and a track? A preference was expressed for a loop path similar to the existing one that indicates the distances for joggers and walkers rather than a regulation track.
- Has any thought been given to artificial turf? The addition of artificial turf depends on what type of park South Common will be.
- Trolley from the National Parks will be included in the Preferred Alternative.
- There once was a pool, as shown in the historic postcard. The natural drainage of the site sends water to this location.
- It was reported that the city dumps salty snow in the center of the park during snow removals.
- The playground and spray pool areas were very well-received. Someone commented that the one at Shedd Park is very successful. Someone asked whether the pool could be relocated to the outer courtyard of the school so that it would be close to the gym and the cafeteria.
- Has anyone approached the Bishop Markham's neighbors? They should be approached and included in the discussion of these master plans. The staff members there are on the email list for these meetings.
- The Eliot Church community likes the idea of using the park more. It is unclear why the church doesn't use it more now. Perhaps it is the steep slope that prevents them from moving their activities to the park.
- The sidewalk along Summer Street is very narrow. In the future, the city could study the street if there is enough capacity to widen the sidewalks. Widening and improving this edge would encourage the church to use the park for more events.
- Where will people park to use the park? Can the school parking lot be used during non-business hours? Signs are needed to establish the parking regulations that allow parking for the park afterschool administration work hours and on weekends.
- Much of the park design and the location of sports spaces depend on the function of the school building. Will the school ever be used as a school again? There are currently pre-school classes there now in addition to the administrative offices. The small children are best kept in the interior courtyard for safety. The gym is heavily used.
- Many people agreed that the Southwest corner at Thorndike and Highland should be kept passive and retain the character of the original common. This also seems to be an ideal location for public art as it is a very visible area.
- However, it was also mentioned that the basketball courts should be kept where they are at the corner of Thorndike and Highland. They function well in this location and are very popular.

- Can public art in the park be themed and/or temporary in nature?
- Something could be done to improve the exterior of the school.
- Why do basketball courts always have high unattractive fences? If they are located on the interior of the park as in Alt. #2, fences would not be needed. A preference was expressed for leaving the basketball court at the upper elevation near the school and relocating the tennis court down below.
- Everyone liked the idea of lots of bulbs. Daffodils planted on the slopes would be great. The public and church could get involved with the planting and maintenance.
- There needs to be access from Summer Street, even though there is a steep slope. In fact, both corners on the west side should have paths down to the park as they did in the historic common design. With steps, these paths could work. Nina Brown will look into incorporating these paths into the preferred alternative and ADA compliance for the park.
- Everyone liked the idea of a new outdoor theater. Movies, church services, etc. could take place there in the summer. With a new outdoor theater, the Folk Festival could be lured back to South Common.
- The retaining wall at the school parking lot is very unattractive, but the new configuration should not give up any green space on that corner if possible.
- The number of parking spaces will be indicated on the preferred alternative for review and comparison.
- The National Parks Trolley would run year-round and be placed on a grass track. Would this work okay in the winter? Or would the grass get ruined? The track could be combined with a walkway to conserve space.
- Can ice skating be added to the center field in the winter? Installing and maintaining an outdoor skating rink are expensive. Frog Pond on Boston Common is privately funded.
- Festivals, farmers markets, and flea markets are all good uses of the space and should be encouraged.
- Where are the bathrooms? Will park visitors be able to use school facilities? If there is a pool or spray pool there will need to be associated bathrooms that the public can use.

Q & A

Sign-in sheet

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>e-mail</u>
George Russell	NACOG	grussell@nacog.org
Joe Smith	SELF	JPDMSmith@aol.com
JANE CALVIN	LPCI	
Diane Trout	DDP	Dtrout@LawMma.gov
Mary Rogers	Eliot Church	coolmary2@comcast.net
SPER KELLEBY	SELF	NACOG

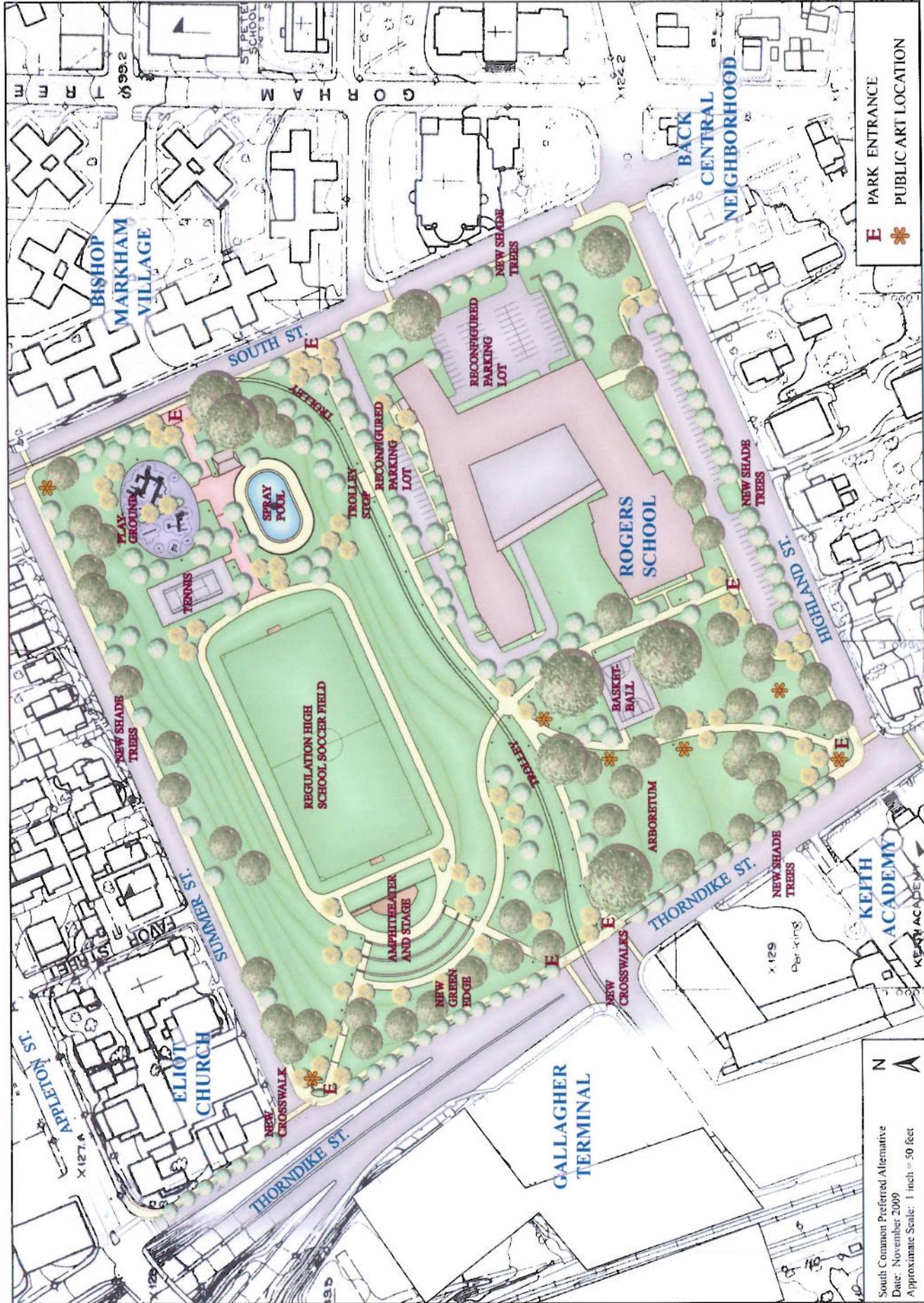
South Common Mtg 7 pm 10/28/09

Pollard library

Appendix D

Public Meeting #3

November 19, 2009



South Common Preferred Alternative
 Date: November 2009
 Approximate Scale: 1 inch = 50 feet



E PARK ENTRANCE
 PUBLIC ART LOCATION

INFORMATION & PLANNING MEETING #3
 November 19, 2009

SOUTH COMMON

Lowell, Massachusetts

FUTURE PROGRAM PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Gateway Cities Parks Program
 Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
 Brown, Richardson Rowe, Inc.
 Landscape Architects and Planners
 Boston, MA 02110



City of Lowell

Division of Planning & Development

**South Common Master Plan Review
November 19, 2009 at 7 p.m.
Pollard Library, Meeting Room**

**MEETING MINUTES
South Common Review of Preferred Alternative
November 19, 2009 at 7 p.m.
Pollard Library, Meeting Room**

Presenting:

Nina Brown
Brown Richardson & Rowe
Landscape Architects and Planners

Others:

Diane Tradd, Chief Design Planner
Rachel Kisker, Design Planner
Jeffrey Gomes, Transportation Engineer

Public Attendees:

See sign-in sheet attached.

Nina Brown presented as follows:

Introduction

After finding out what projects were of interest to Lowell, the Gateway Cities Grant Program of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts funded a vision and master plan process with a cost estimate for South Common. So far there have been two public meetings, one in September and October, which resulted in the development of the Preferred Alternative, which will be presented here tonight.

The City of Lowell will submit the Preferred Alternative with a cost estimate in an application for a PARC grant next year. Lowell is a very good candidate for a PARC grant. In the next step, there will be additional public meetings and time to finalize the details of the park design. Construction phasing would probably be necessary to implement all the contemplated improvements and additions.

South Common

- When the Rogers School was added to South Common, much of the Olmsted design was lost. Simple paths and grass could be reinstated in part of the park to re-capture some of the Olmsted character and strengthen the “common” aesthetic. Commons are special New England landscapes. By restoring the landscape of the Common to simple grass and trees, the city will also

be improving visibility into the park and improving safety. Safety is an important issue in this park.

- The pool is very popular.
- The gym in the school is very well-used.
- The windows in the school are clouded over and obscure views into the park.
- There is a new police precinct office in the gym now.
- There is a pre-school in the school building.
- Based on public input from the September and October meetings, the following features are desired for South Common:
 - Activities for different ages,
 - Festival events,
 - Outdoor movies,
 - Farmers' markets,
 - Cultural festivals,
 - Spray pool instead of a pool,
 - Public art with a theme and
 - The National Park Service's trolley route through the park to Gallagher Terminal.

In October, the public reviewed two master plan alternatives. Elements from these two plans that were previously presented have been combined into one Preferred Alternative for the public's review and comment. After tonight, a master plan summary and a cost estimate will be prepared that the city can use to apply for a PARC grant.

Preferred Alternative:

- VHB prepared a design and improvement plan for the South Common frontage along Thorndike Street. The design includes a new sidewalk, shade trees and new cross walks. This work has funding.
- The large existing trees are shown on the plan, as well as new proposed trees.
- The white pines around the existing amphitheatre would be pruned or removed to allow views into the park.
- The basketball court would be relocated closer to the gym, away from Thorndike Street to a location where it would not require a fence.
- The south corner of the site would be developed as an arboretum, starting with the great trees that are already there and adding new ones.
- There would be two new pedestrian walkways with stairs to the proposed amphitheatre from both corners at Thorndike Street and Summer Street. Due to ADA guidelines, which were developed after this park was built, most of the paths within the park need to be upgraded to be accessible. Steps would be needed on the paths down the steep slope from these two street corners. Other accessible paths would provide access to the amphitheatre.
- The amphitheatre has stone seating terraces built into the slope similar to those at Boarding House Park to provide comfortable seating for people to use during events.
- The National Parks trolley layout is shown on the plan. The tracks could be set in grass within the park, with an accompanying walking path parallel to the tracks. There would be an accessible trolley stop near Bishop Markham Village and the Rogers School with a beautiful view of Eliot Church. The sloping topography presents grading challenges, but appears to be able to be manipulated to bring the trolley through the park as shown. A new topographic survey is needed to serve as the basis for future detailed design efforts.
- The parking lot on the north side of Rogers School has been reconfigured. In previous public meetings, people reported that the existing second level of parking is unsafe and therefore, rarely

used. In the master plan, this lower level has been eliminated and the parking lot is now shown here on one level.

- Parking is a very important feature to park visitors.
- Currently, there is no “heart of the park”. The South Street end is the most level entrance into the park, but the pool house blocks the view.
- The South Street end on the Preferred Alternative would be developed as the main entrance and heart of the park with activities for all ages. There would be a playground with equipment for both 2-5 year olds and 5-10 year olds. A major park entrance, framed with new trees, would extend from South Street to the soccer field. There would also be a new spray pool and a tennis court. The spray pool (which could be a swimming pool instead depending on the public’s input), and its accompanying equipment would be concealed in a smaller structure. There would be bathroom facilities in the pool house as well.
- The main center field would be enlarged somewhat to become a regulation high school soccer field.
- The idea of a regulation-size track around the soccer field was rejected at the last meeting. It was decided that having a full track around the soccer field would change South Common’s character as a primarily passive park and cause it to be viewed as an athletic facility for Rogers School.
- There would be a new loop path around the soccer field that would have distances measured for general jogging, walking and exercise.
- The basketball court would be located in front of the Rogers School, but would be moved away from Thorndike Street. Having the basketball court further away from the street, with park space around it, would eliminate the need for a fence.
- The parking lot on the east side of the school would be expanded by re-grading and adding an attractive landscape wall to screen the view of the parking from Highland Street. Parking spaces would be properly marked to maximize the number of parking spaces.
- Signage would be posted to indicate clearly where and when the public is allowed to park.

Questions and Comments from the Audience and Discussion:

The discussion was opened to questions and comments from the audience. Nina Brown’s responses are listed in italics:

- The plan is lovely, but the park should not be used as a venue for entertainment. There is already so much entertainment in the city.
- Our future is leaning towards the green movement, community gardens, rose gardens, etc. Gardens should be on this site.
- Perhaps people from the neighboring homeless shelter could grow food here in community gardens.
 - *Community Gardens can certainly be mentioned in the master plan summary. We do not show any here due to the comments at the October Public meeting. They were included in an earlier alternative.*
- The idea of a farmers market was well-received.
- What is a community garden? Would they be fenced?
 - *Described East Boston’s gardens and the “friendly” 3’ – 6” ornamental ironwork fence surrounding them bordered by fruit bearing shrubs.*
- The Preferred Alternative was well-received by many attendees. Some mentioned liking the 1st Alternative as well.
- Public art is a good idea. The art could describe the history of this area of Lowell and the South Common.
- Lighting is important - can the big overhead lights be on more often to light up the park and make it safe?

- *Agreed, lighting is very important. The dots on the plan along the paths indicate pedestrian scale lights.*
- There is an incredible tradition of growing community gardens in other Lowell neighborhoods that could be carried through to South Common.
- If you had raised gardens, you could double your square footage if they were terraced and oriented towards the residents.
- Idea of community gardens was popular with many attendees.
- Some neighbors liked the idea of outdoor movies.
- Many of the Bishop Markham Village (BMV) residents are shut-in and need to be able to go across the street to an event or outdoor movie. These activities would be great for them.
- The spray pool would prevent adults from using it, and some BMV residents currently use the pool for physical therapy.
 - *The spray pool could be a pool. And if there was a spray feature in addition to the swimming pool, it could be small and subtle, without flashy pipe sprays.*
- The walking path is important. Many neighbors use it.
- There is flooding right now on the amphitheater end of the park.
- Vehicle control is an issue - some people drive right through the park to avoid traffic on Thorndike Street.
- Get rid of the Rogers School. Level it.
- An unmarked police cruiser is parked at the Rogers School every day.
- Any new sidewalks should be designed to have plenty of space for the winter snow ploughs.
- Do not put basketball near Bishop Markham Village. Keep noise away from BMV.
- For outdoor movies, use the wall of Rogers School that faces the park. Paint it white and project movies on it.
- Put security cameras everywhere.
- Why are the gardens in front (near Thorndike Street)? Put them in the back (near South Street) where they belong.
- Does anybody use the tennis courts? Tennis used to be very popular. Some people do still use the courts. One court should be sufficient.
- What is the plan for the new soccer field? Artificial or natural turf? In another project, the sprinklers were busted, did not work, the lawn died before it had a chance to get established.
- The DPW dumps snow in the center of the field in the winter, which presumably is filled with salt and adds to the lawn problems.
- Is there any regrading planned? There are drainage problems that need to be fixed.
 - *Regrading and sub-drainage would be part of the improvements. The soil is also compacted. The soil should be tested.*
- What is the plan for park maintenance? A maintenance plan is needed.
 - *The contract will include a specification on the maintenance procedures to be followed. The Contractor would be responsible for maintaining the park for the first two years after construction is completed. The two year period would give the new plants and lawn time to get established. The maintenance would then be passed on to the City. The City would continue to maintain the park based on the maintenance specifications.*
- There are not enough playgrounds in the area. This playground is very important and will be well-used.
 - *The playground area would be designed to include equipment for different ages.*
- Another attendee expressed approval of the Preferred Alternative plan.
- Security at South Common is a big problem. Even the bike cops are hesitant to go to South Common. The lighting is terrible.

- *There would be a lot of new lighting on all the walkways. The path parallel to the trolley track would be wide enough to accommodate emergency vehicles and police cruisers traveling through the park.*
- Could permission be granted to certain entities (BMV and Eliot Church) to drive within the park in order to bring elderly and handicapped people to park events? They have permission now, but sometimes the City does not unlock the gates for them to drive through.
 - *Another idea that was brought up at the last meeting is the idea of widening the sidewalk on Summer Street.*
- The sledding area on the slope in front of Eliot Church must be preserved as it is extremely popular. There is a terrible drain at the bottom of the sledding hill. Does the walking track as shown in the Preferred Alternative interfere with the sledding area? The space needs to remain as it is now so the sledding can continue unencumbered.
- Another attendee voiced the opinion that there should be a drivable path for HC people.
- Can you talk about flowers? This is an opportunity to showcase this park, like English landscapes.
 - *The plant palette includes trees, flowering trees, and bulbs. Shrubs can be a security issue, providing hiding places and shadows next to walkways. At the last meeting, everyone loved the idea of bulbs planted on the slopes.*
- Can you plant flowers around the trees?
 - *Bulbs could be intermingled with the trees. Blue scilla planted around the roots of a Beech tree would be beautiful, such as the ones at the base of the large Beech at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C.*
- Picnic tables would be nice.
- Will there be any improvements for pedestrian crossing at the intersection leading to Gallagher Terminal?
 - *Yes, there is a separate design already in the works to improve Thorndike Street and update the cross walks, traffic lights, etc.*
- There is always a police cruiser by the intersection on Thorndike. The buzzer there for the walk signal is not loud enough. The feature that displays how many seconds you have to cross the street should be added.
- The kids from the YMCA are always crossing Thorndike Street.
- Will the amphitheatre be improved?
 - *The outdoor amphitheater would be new, with a better layout and seating. The pines would be thinned out and some of them would be removed.*
- Tables with chess & checker boards on them should be added.
- We need a fountain.
- Where will the trolley end? What is the rest of the route? Does it go down New Revere Street?
 - *The alternatives from the National Parks Service showed different routes. Putting the trolley through South Common was the idea of MIT students.*
- A new bus stop is needed by Rogers School on Highland Street.
- Where is the parking for all the park visitors? Maybe you could get the owner of the space next to the insurance business (old church site) to sell it and parking could be added there.
- People can use the Gallagher garage to park.
- A strobe light should be added at Thorndike crossings to alert drivers when pedestrians are crossing.
- Many attendees preferred artificial turf for the soccer field.
- Parking is an issue. Another park recently built in Lowell has a lot of parking. Seems unfair to take away the little lot on South Street away from the BMV residents who are allowed to use it for visitors.
 - *A thorough parking study needs to be conducted as a next step for this project.*

- The parking lot shown on the Preferred Alternative is too big. Eliminate a portion of it.
- We are creating a destination so we need parking.
- South Common is heavily vandalized, the homeless hang out there, people urinate, take over enclosed play structures and alcoves.
- No one likes parking garages.
- Security cameras are key features.
- Another attendee said that the track is heavily used by walkers.
- Just because some people felt the existing lower parking lot by the school is unsafe doesn't mean we have to eliminate it.
 - *Now the trolley path is in the place of that parking lot.*
- The on street parking in the entire area should be changed to a "2 hour" maximum so that people don't park there all day while they take the train out of the city.

Sign-in Sheet

Meeting: South Common Master Plan Review

Date: November 19, 2009

Time: 7- 8:30 PM

Location: Pollard Library, Lowell, MA

Name	Organization	Phone #	E-mail
JOSEPH F. BRANCO	N/A	N/A	N/A
Paul Belley	P.C.C.	978-454-0680 sp.	Capt. Paul Belley
George Russell	NACOG	978-441-8021	grussell@nacog.org
JACK KELLEY	SELF	978-453-0980	
Roxana Hirmer	(advisor) Me	978-441-9396	
Joseph Smith	SELF	978-454-4252	JPSmith@pol.com
John McDonough	Lincoln High School	978-808-8200	lowellmp@ad.c ✓
Paul Marion	44 Highland St		paul_marion@ uml.edu
Jeffrey R. Gomez	DPD	978-446-7100	jjames@lowell.org
WILLIAM L. CROFTS	43 SUMMIT ST.	978 325-8779	

Sign-in Sheet

Meeting: South Common Master Plan Review

Date: November 19, 2009

Time: 7- 8:30 PM

Location: Pollard Library, Lowell, MA

Name	Organization	Phone #	E-mail
Susan Jones	Eliot Presbyterian Church		
Rachel Edlund	Eliot Church/Lowell Historic Board		edlund5@comcast.net
Don Jones	Eliot Presbyterian Church		(PLEASE EMAIL ME PREFERABLE PLAN) dsacardowd@6.itspice.co
DAVID FIELDSEND	BACK CENTRAL RESIDENT		(PLEASE EMAIL ME THE PLANS THANKS.) contactdavidf@gmail.com
Thomasson Julien	Eliot Church	978.458.3394	
Kevin Fahy	Bishop Marilene Village Resident		kevinpfahy@yahoo.com
Mark E. Goldman	58 Oakland St. Lowell, MA JAMBRA	978-995-7224	
Greg Marshall - Jack Dupon	139 Summer St #3		gregmarpene@yahoo.com
<p>Minutes</p>			

Appendix E

Meeting with residents of Bishop Markam Village

December 16, 2009



Adam Baacke
Assistant City Manager/ DPD Director

MEMORANDUM

From: Rachel Kisker
To: Nina Brown, Diane Tradd
Date: December 16, 2009
Re: South Common, "Preferred Alternative"- Meeting Minutes
Location: 198 South Street, Bishop Markham Common Room
Attending: Rachel Kisker, DPD
Michele McEnany, BMV Tenant Council
Sarita Berrios, Property Manager
BMV residents (sign-in sheet to follow)

I explained the PARC grant process and presented the Site Analysis and the Preferred Alternative. I stated that the importance of the Preferred Alternative drawing was to have enough information to apply for the grant. If we receive the grant then design will begin this summer and the community process will continue. Using my notes from our last public meeting at the library, I reviewed the history of the site, the ideas that arose at previous public meetings, and the main features of the Preferred Alternative drawing. The residents were eager to voice their opinions, so I opened it up to questions and comments:

- All of the BMV residents in attendance were strongly against eliminating the parking lot on the corner of Summer and South Street. Although it was built for park and pool users, the BMV residents use it for visitors and extra parking. I told them that in the plan, the Roger's School lot has been expanded. The residents said that elderly or disabled people cannot go up the hill to the Roger's School lot. They have nurses that come during the day, etc. that need a place to park. Everyone stressed numerous times that this parking area was important and they did not want to lose it. I explained that the parking lot was intended for park users, and it is taking up ideal space at the most level access to the park, but I understood that parking is an important issue.
- Some residents proposed other parking locations, such as widening South Street in order to have diagonal parking next to the park. Or close off South Street to traffic and use the entire street for parking. Underground parking, like below Boston Common, was also suggested. One resident said that there is actually an existing tunnel under South Common that was used to transport prisoners from the jail to the courthouse.
- I pointed out the Trolley track and explained that this would be implemented by the National Parks Service and we were simply showing the proposed route in our plan for South Common. Many people liked the idea of the trolley and having free (for seniors) transportation downtown.



Adam Baacke
Assistant City Manager/ DPD Director

However, they noticed that the trolley line would further alter their parking situation, which they did not like.

- Most residents asked us to keep a full-sized pool, not a spray pool. It's the only pool in the city that is handicap accessible. Many BMV residents and other neighbors use it, both for recreation and physical therapy. However, the pool should have a longer season, longer hours, and a daily schedule with times for adult swim only. The season is currently very short because they use students for lifeguards and they leave before the summer ends. And there is no time to go and swim without being splashed by lots of children.
- One BMV resident suggested monkey bars.
- Questions and comments arose regarding the soccer field. What will be the surface of the soccer field? It's heavily used and will just turn into a dust bowl. Some of the residents expressed that they enjoy watching the games there. I explained that we were considering artificial turf to solve the problem of the grass getting trampled.
- Everyone loved the idea of outdoor movies, festivals, flea markets, and farmer's markets. They liked the updated outdoor amphitheater. They did not want big carnivals set up and I agreed that we were not proposing such large scale commercial events for South Common, just smaller, community sponsored sales and celebrations.
- Many residents expressed the need for increased safety. The park is currently very dangerous and misused. There have been shootings in the park. Homeless people sleep there. There are people doing drugs there as well. The people from the homeless shelter on Middlesex Street are often in the park. It is currently unsafe to walk through, even in the middle of the afternoon. There are junkies hanging out nearby at Middlesex and Appleton Streets. It's like "musical junkies over there all the time". These people drift into the park and make it unsafe.
- One person mentioned that the nets on the tennis courts need to be maintained.
- Perhaps there could be seating with canopies, so even if it was very sunny or raining, there would be a place for park visitors to sit.
- Many residents opposed the playground being located at the BMV end of the site. They said that there aren't any children around and it would be noisy. They suggested moving the playground next to Roger's school, at the corner of Highland Street.



Adam Baacke
Assistant City Manager/ DPD Director

- Some people agreed with the plan overall, but the activities are in the wrong places. One person suggested locating the arboretum at the BMV end of the park and put “all the noisy stuff” at the Thorndike side.
- All of the BMV residents support the plan and the proposed changes in general. They agree that improvements are definitely needed for South Common. One resident said that it would be great to take her grandchildren to the park without “being ashamed”.
- In conclusion, I explained that I would pass their feedback along to the landscape architect. Although not all of their proposed changes will be incorporated into the master plan submitted with the PARC grant, it is not a final design. The community process will continue if we get the PARC grant and move forward with design. Issues such as parking, safety, lighting, etc. will be studied more closely and developed through the design process that would begin this summer.

