

# Franklin Park Action Plan Summary

In this document, the Franklin Park Coalition has summarized specific recommendations in the Action Plan for ease of review and reference by park users and stakeholders. Apologies in advance if we have missed some details.

While the FPC Board regards many of these recommendations favorably, this is just a summary of the Plan, not an endorsement. The Board has submitted comments on the Action Plan, including both endorsements and objections, to the Parks and Recreation Department in a separate document which will be made available on the [Franklin Park Coalition website](#).

- You can also [review the full Action Plan](#).
- **Offer your [comments and input](#) before March 3, 2023**
- [Register](#) for a virtual public meeting hosted by the Coalition about the Action Plan on Thursday, February 9, 2023 at 6:30pm.

## Recommendations by Park Locations

### **Seaver Street** - *increase access*

- Create new pedestrian entrances
  - At Parkview Street
  - Between Humboldt and Elm Hill at existing steps; add a path into the park
- Distinguish the existing Humboldt Avenue pedestrian entrance to draw visitors in:
  - Remove granite bollards; if barriers are necessary, replace with historic typology; add lighting and canopy tree planting along path
- Encourage the Zoo to update the outward appearance of their fence along the perimeter of the park to provide a more welcoming face to the community
- At Elm Hill Avenue add lighting along the path into the park.

### **Long Crouch Woods & Bear Dens**

- Transfer ownership of the Bear Dens and surrounding areas from the State to the City
- At the Bear Dens: restore character defining stone and metal work features; integrate new program components to accommodate flexible use; introduce shallow splash pads for water play that can be turned off; add temporary park furniture throughout; extend the canopy with new trees; install catenary lighting for evening events; establish views into the center for special activities.
- Create a nature play area in woodlands - utilizing puddingstone outcrops
- Create unique tree walks along improved and/or smaller paths with flowering trees and fruit trees and forest “rooms” for intergenerational use.
- Establish views for quiet moments - to the city skyline and down to the Playstead
- Reimagine the old racoon enclosure for play or another type of park feature

**Blue Hill Ave** - *Reinstate the historic pedestrian circulation and plant/maintain canopy trees to create a new Peabody Circle Plaza for events & programming*

- Establish a new pedestrian entrance separate from vehicle traffic at Peabody Circle
- Re-design vehicle circulation at Peabody Circle - consolidate to one entry/exit in front of the Zoo.
- Consolidate transit stops: remove idling inside the park, locate bus stops together in a visible and accessible location, restore stone bus shelters.
- At Glenway convert vehicle exit to pedestrian entrance in conjunction with Peabody Circle and Refectory Hill improvements, repair masonry, add lighting
- Between Columbia Rd and Glenway add new “front porch” pedestrian entrance by inserting steps into stone wall
- Refectory: between McLellan Street & Charlotte Street provide new path connections at existing Refectory step entrances; fill in the ‘pit’ condition with new perimeter wall between the steps, in line with the existing wall; relocate utilities and connect entrance pillars with a fieldstone wall to match existing stonework; create a new accessible path from Peabody Circle.
- Relocate parking from Peabody Circle to a new lot on Refectory Hill.
- Add a large sign to announce park’s main entrance at Blue Hill Ave/Columbia Rd that directs visitors to parking for Zoo, golf, Playstead.
- Take advantage of the break in the median at Esmond Street and add a new cross walk to improve connectivity with the Dorchester neighborhood
- **Create a new “Front Porch”** - transform a portion of the perimeter wall along Blue Hill Avenue into an outward-facing ‘Front Porch’ with long, wide steps, open views, and pedestrian access into the park.
  - Put shaded terrace at the top with flexible furnishings for eating lunch and watching street life
  - Advocate for a widened sidewalk of at least 12’ with street tree planting along Blue Hill Avenue
  - Replace the parking at Peabody Circle with a shaded pedestrian plaza, while maintaining space for convenient *accessible* parking
  - Design the flexible plaza so it functions for both day-to-day use, as well as larger gatherings like outdoor fitness classes, space for parade spectating, markets, festivals, and civic events
  - Add cafe tables and chairs for picnicking and BBQ
  - Collaborate with the Zoo and a local artist on a public art installation, such as bronze animal sculptures that greet visitors and make for an iconic meeting place
  - Create a stepped seating grove on the Refectory Hill slope for shared programming between the community and the Zoo
  - Add shade with new canopy trees around stone seating and steps

## **American Legion Highway**

- Establish a new pedestrian crossing at Angell Street, reset steps, remove granite bollards
- Provide ADA pedestrian connections through the Maintenance Yard to improve access for the Mattapan neighborhood.
- Create an outdoor classroom next to the wet meadow (adjacent to Mother's Rest)
- Add a splash pad at the playground
- Parkway Street, Franklin Hill Ave, Austin Street, Kingbird Road: improve ADA access, remove granite blocks and replace with painted metal bollard and chain, complete sidewalk connections, add lighting and canopy tree planting at main entry

## **Morton Street:** Present an Open Edge

- Add visible connections into the operations of the maintenance yard by removing vines and overgrown vegetation along the chain link fence, and reducing fencing where possible.
- Establish new critical connections at bus stops into the park at the Shattuck Campus and the maintenance yard.
- Extend a sidewalk along the cemetery side of the road and create a new cross walk at the existing entrance into the park
- Advocate for the Shattuck Redevelopment to include connections through the campus to the park beyond.
- In the future, study extending separated bike lanes from the Forest Hills T-Stop.

## **Scarboro Pond and Hill, Rock Morton & Rock Milton**

- Do vista clearing on hill
- Restore Scarboro Pond ecology and improve access to the water's edge
- Include a designated area for the Massachusetts Tribe ceremonial activities
- Provide platforms along the wetland edge for close up views

## **Shattuck Picnic Grove and Ellicottdale Ballfield Area**

- Restore the upper lawn with shaded picnic and BBQ areas
- Expand the number of tennis courts
- Provide public restrooms
- Restore the lower lawn around the ballfield for flexible use
- Provide a boardwalk and trails within the wet woodland
- Introduce a flowering tree walk along the path leading to Schoolmaster Hill

## **Schoolmaster Hill**

- Restore the pergola (trellis with vines)

### **Forest Hills Street / Williams St Entrance:** Remove Barriers

- Remove the chain link fence; maintain the historic perimeter wall along Forest Hills St
- Remove granite bollards and rebuild entrance to follow historic typologies; add lighting and canopy tree planting along path into the park

### **Walnut Ave:** Remove Barriers

- Assess the need for continuous vehicular controls along Walnut Avenue (granite blocks and bollards, which were once necessary to control vehicular access into the park), and pilot the removal of some sections.
- At Glen Road - provide sidewalk connection; remove granite blocks and replace the swing gate, rebuild entrance to follow historic typologies; support with lighting
- At Robeson Street - remove granite block to provide accessible clear opening between existing stone walls; amend existing path to provide accessible path into the park.
- At Park Lane - provide designated, accessible pedestrian path separate from the vehicular drive
- At School Street - remove granite blocks and bollards and replace with painted metal bollard and chain; support path with lighting and planting.

### **The Playstead**

- Upgrade the fields (including drainage/stormwater improvements)
- Create a tailgate edge with benches, canopy trees, and lighting
- Improve parking area
- Add picnic tables at the current picnic grove
- Extend the Playstead Loop path for bikes and pedestrians along southern edge of the Playstead separate from parking area for pedestrian safety (include seating, lighting, shade trees, and other planting)
- Provide public restrooms
- Use the Playstead or White Stadium for a temporary ice skating rink in the winter

### **White Stadium**

- Make improvements for shared community & Boston Public Schools use, including new parking.
- Remove fences, walls, and overgrown vegetation along southern edge to create open lawn on all sides - add an 8' metal picket fence at the current entrance that can be locked after hours
- Relocate basketball courts and remove excess paving
- Establish water and electricity connections for large events
- Plant canopy trees lining promenade entrance at northern edge of stadium to enhance main gate and draw attention to art deco features
- Path around the Stadium & Playstead: use consistent paving material, add lighting and canopy trees, separate walking/bicycling route from any parking

## **The Overlook & Playhouse**

- Restore The Overlook ruins and return the Elma Lewis Playhouse to its historic location with a new stage, restrooms, and seating.
- Design to protect essential elements like rock outcrops and mature canopy
- Re-establish historic vegetation patterns by opening up the ground plane and removing pioneer trees.
- Restore historic puddingstone masonry elements including walls, benches, and fountains; study the best treatment of the building-related puddingstone including the remaining stairs
- Reintroduce site specific architecture in the park with a stage; back-of-house storage, vending, restrooms, and potentially community space
- Restore views by selectively clearing overgrown vegetation and enabling sightline to the Playstead.
- Clarify pedestrian circulation, provide ADA access

## **The Steading**

- Build a woodland dog park in close proximity to the nearby neighborhood

# **Whole Park / Woodlands / Ecological Management**

## **Entrance Work**

- Work with the Boston Transportation Department to:
  - Widen park edge sidewalks for increased accessibility;
  - Ensure crosswalks are properly aligned with entrances and sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate necessary street lights and related infrastructure.
  - Add ADA accessibility at entrances and along paths
- Selectively clear understory vegetation along the park edge 15-20' in to increase porosity and views into the park.
- Inspect historic masonry and repair as needed
- Remove granite bollards and other barriers; if needed replace with consistent black metal bollards with connecting chains

## **Circuit Drive**

- Study traffic flow at Blue Hill Ave entrance and consolidate car lanes (see Blue Hill Ave/Peabody Circle outline for detailed recommendations)
- Create a dedicated bike lane
- Add/enhance pedestrian crossings: at bus stop across from shelter; at Valley Gates; at Golf Clubhouse and Sausage Lot; in front of Zoo.
- Widen narrow area of Circuit loop path adjacent to Circuit Drive near Schoolmaster Hill

- Study impact of a one-way car exit at Seaver St in conjunction with eliminating cut-through traffic on Circuit Drive
- Connect Circuit loop path with Stadium loop path at Valley Gates and make it safe for pedestrian and bicycle crossing

## Woodland Areas

- Remove invasives and work to encourage natural regeneration
- Improve trails and paths throughout
- Clear vistas where appropriate
- Add new planting of native trees and understory plants, especially: 1) along circulation routes to enhance visitor experience and habitat; and 2) to compete with invasives
- Target key pests and diseases to protect at-risk tree species
- Reconnect woodland cores to improve valuable habitat
- Re-forest decommissioned trails to increase plant diversity
- Establish a “carry in/carry out” trash policy for woodland areas
- Add trail markers and signage to encourage exploration

## Paths

- Remove duplicate and unnecessary security gates throughout the park
- Line walking paths and Circuit Drive with canopy trees
- Provide directional signage and lighting on interior paved paths to enhance visitor safety
- Open views throughout the park wherever possible
- Use gravel or mulch in ecologically sensitive areas; install boardwalks in wet habitat
- Simplify a secondary path network of smaller loops to follow topography moving between open views and enclosed environments for walking and exploration. Close desire lines or “cow paths.” Meet ADA standards and eliminate barriers where possible
- Clear more paths of snow to encourage winter use

## Bicycling

- Expand Blue Bike stations and lower age for teen access in the park
- Add bike parking, especially for large events, and a bike repair station
- Advocate for bike lanes on roads around the park
- Remove bollards that are a barrier to bicycle movement

## Parking Lots

- Make parking lots park spaces with shade for congregating, benches, and picnic tables
- Integrate green infrastructure to reduce and clean stormwater runoff
- Add lighting and emergency call boxes
- Locate park maps and directional signage near parking
- Make connections between parking lots and pedestrian walkways
- Redesign lots for greater efficiency and to fit more cars
- Proposal: parking to get people to magnet destinations?

## Signs and Park Information

- Establish an online go-to source for all park information, including events calendar, capital projects and ongoing improvements, hours and rules of use, maps
- Add simple signage at T / bus stops and along bike paths to lead people to the park
- Announce the main entrances at Blue Hill Ave and Forest Hills with signs for all forms of transportation and directing cars to parking locations and park destinations

## Lights

- Support evening gathering and events with lights at the Playstead, Shattuck tennis courts, Peabody Circle/Blue Hill Ave front porch, the Overlook, and the Bear Dens
- Select uniform light fixtures: historic 'acorn top' for entrances and main walking loops; others for special event areas like the Bear Dens or Overlook/Playhouse; special sports lighting for the courts and fields
- Control glare and brightness by following 'dark sky' best practices to reduce light pollution.
- Avoid high contrast between lit and unlit areas that can impair visibility and impact safety perceptions

# Action Plan Implementation

## *Projects, Ongoing Work, and Funding Source*

### EARLY ACTION WORK

- I. Maintenance and Management from City Operating Funds
  - A. Create & fill recommended Park Administrator position
  - B. Property transfer - Peabody Circle
  - C. Property transfer - Bear Dens
  - D. Develop the Natural Resources Crew
  - E. Develop the Power Corps Crew
  - F. Install, manage, & maintain 1 or 2 temporary restroom facilities
  - G. Develop & begin implementation of a Maintenance Plan
  
- II. First Year Work Plan for Franklin Park Trust Funds (\*annual, ongoing work)
  - A. Woodlands maintenance & invasive removal\*
  - B. Turf management\*
  - C. Litter & debris collection and removal / recycling\*
  - D. Swing gate management\*
  - E. Cobble gutter clearing & maintenance\*
  - F. Drain cleaning\*
  - G. Reset steps at The Overlook & associated masonry repair
  - H. Glen Road repaving

- III. Capital Projects using City Capital Budget & Winthrop Square Funds
  - A. Bear Dens Make Safe project
  - B. White Stadium surroundings improvements, including fence removal, clearing overgrown vegetation, and repainting & cleaning exterior walls (in coordination with other White Stadium projects by BPS / PFD)
  - C. Ellicott Arch lighting
  - D. Crack repair in tennis courts at Shattuck
  - E. Establish safe crossings along Circuit Drive (in coordination with BTM)
  - F. Develop a parkwide Ecological Management Plan that includes a tree care program and invasive species management
  
- IV. Studies & Plans to Advance Action Plan Recommendations using City Capital Budget & Winthrop Square Funds
  - A. Design for performance space at The Overlook
  - B. Franklin Park vicinity traffic analysis studies to inform multi-modal circulation improvements
  - C. Design studies for future activation & use of The Bear Dens (following the Make-Safe work)
  - D. Siting study for dog recreation space
  - E. Parkwide improvement strategies, including lighting, signage, and restrooms \*  
Indicates annual programs

## **MID-RANGE WORK**

- I. Management & Maintenance - City operating funds & Franklin Park Trust
  - A. Continue to build out park maintenance crews as FPAP projects are advanced
  - B. Refine the temporary restroom program into a permanent program that can be properly managed & maintained
  - C. Expand year-round programming in the park
  - D. Implement, assess, & refine the Parkwide Ecological Management and Maintenance Plans
  - E. Formalize partnership programs with key park partners and opportunities for continued youth engagement
  
- II. Ongoing Trust Fund Work
  - A. Continue to address deferred maintenance back-log
  - B. Adjust the annual work plans to respond to new park maintenance needs, adjustments in BPRD maintenance crew capacity, & input from park partners & park users
  - C. Reassess annual contracts to determine adjustments or updates each year
  
- III. Capital Investments from City Capital Budget and Winthrop Square Funds
  - A. Identify & address facility improvements according to life-cycle needs



- B. Continue community discussions through park partners to help evaluate recommended Action Plan projects
- C. Implementation of studies identified and completed in Early Action Work
- D. Advance projects over each of the 5 FPAP recommendation categories