

Upgrades and Renovations: Coming to A Park Near You!

Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn

In Medford, we have more than 390 acres of parks and open spaces for residents of all ages to enjoy, whether for passive use like walking, meeting up with friends, or enjoying a good book, or for more active use like team sports or tot lots. Making sure that each of these spaces is accessible for *all* residents, and that residents of all ages, abilities, and interests have recreational spaces to utilize is important to the quality of life for our residents, and something I committed to early on in my administration.

Over the last 18 months we have identified funding sources, conducted park audits, and worked across departments to identify projects – both large and small – and prioritize renovations and upgrades in as many parks as possible. In 2020 we secured funding through the Community Preservation Act and Community Development Block Grants for renovations to more than a dozen of our parks. As of this summer, I am so proud to report that we now have more than 30 parks either ready to break ground or in the procurement phase to identify funding and design timelines.

From painting new Pickleball lines and adding new nets and materials at various courts, to adding accessible benches, tables, and other areas, to full-scale redesign, we have many plans in place and even more to come.

For parks and projects with more extensive renovations we want to capture community input in as many ways as possible. An inter-departmental team including myself and staff from the Office of Planning, Development and Sustainability, the Department of Public Works, Procurement and Finance, and the Recreation Department have been collaborating to identify necessary and/or hopeful upgrades and renovations, and to be creative about the kind of work and the funding sources to make these projects a reality. Already underway or completed this year we have made a number of accessibility improvements at Tufts Pool, added accessible picnic tables and updated walkways at Wright's Pond, started playground resurfacing at Capen, Cummings, and Tufts Parks, and added new murals at the Condon Shell and Tufts Pool.

Within the next few months we'll break ground on projects including resurfacing basketball courts at Barry Park and Playstead Park, and reconstructing the tennis courts and adding Pickleball lines at Dugger Park. And within the next year, additional projects and improvements will include beginning a Master Plan processes for full renovations at Carr Park and Gillis Park, beginning construction on the Clippership Connector, completing the Riverbend Park Labyrinth, adding a new tot lot play structure and upgrading fencing and dugouts at Morrison Park, adding public art at LoConte Rink, and planting new trees in parks throughout the city.

For a full list of all planned projects, status updates, and more, visit <https://tinyurl.com/MedfordParks>.

Earlier this year we published the City's first ever Capital Improvement Plan, which proposes a 6-year investment plan for prioritizing roadway quality, parks and open spaces, fleet and infrastructure investments and management, and modern water and wastewater infrastructure. The CIP lays out our strategic plans for investing in and protecting our infrastructure and capital needs and creating a framework for achieving major development and infrastructure goals, including prioritizing major parks and open space projects. Failure to plan strategically for such investments will mean more expensive emergency expenditures down the road, which will ultimately impact our City's financial stability and bond ratings.

In addition to what is already included in that plan, we can and should also be creative about ways to make progress on other upgrades to our open spaces to enhance accessibility, to make minor but necessary repairs, and for preventative maintenance purposes. This means taking advantage of available Community Preservation Funding, for example, something that past City administrations have not traditionally utilized to make these upgrades. For projects that fall outside of CPA eligibility, there are additional funding sources that we can and have tapped into to alleviate the burden on taxpayers while maximizing our ability to get these projects done, and in a timely manner.

I am committed to renovating or upgrading elements at as many parks as possible, so our work will continue. For those larger projects I encourage everyone to stay tuned and stay involved to help us determine the best paths forward for these parks and open spaces so that we can best meet the needs of *everyone* in our community. If you have questions or suggestions, you can send them directly to ocd@medford-ma.gov.

And in the meantime – get out and enjoy our open spaces!