



TOWN OF BROOKLINE

Massachusetts

March 12, 2021

Dear Parents, Teachers, Neighbors, and Friends of Cypress Field/Playground:

We are writing to share that after years of planning and anticipation, construction for the renovation of Cypress Field/Playground will begin in the coming weeks. This is an exciting, long-awaited project for the entire community. Given directives from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts issued on March 9th about requirements for in-person schooling, accommodations are being made for students and staff at BHS to provide outdoor space for lunch, classes, and taking breaks through the end of this school year. The School and Park Project Teams have worked to coordinate sequencing among the contractors and temporarily locate the construction fence line along the Greenough Street edge of the property to allow at least 4-5 large tents to be installed for school use this spring. Additional seating accommodations and break spaces will be provided for students in the Quad and greenspace pockets along Welland Road.

With or without a pandemic, we understand that this entire project, while exciting and visionary in the long term, is going to be disruptive to learning, neighbors, programming, and park use in the short term. The impacts are substantial, but the benefits following project completion will be as well. Many of you have waited a long time for this project, and we appreciate your patience! We recognize that in all construction projects of this scope, coordination, communication, and scheduling are paramount.

Some in the community have asked if the Cypress Field/Playground Renovation Project could be delayed until after this academic year. In fact, the project was already delayed and further delays would lead to prolonged construction impacts on the neighbors and school, missing the growing season for the natural grass field and significant additional costs (hundreds of thousands of dollars). The full renovation is a challenge now, but potentially less of a challenge given the temporarily-reduced student body.

The rest of this letter reviews the project history and context. You can follow the construction progress by visiting the Town's website <https://www.brooklinema.gov/1416/Cypress-PlaygroundAthletic-Field> where you can also sign up for email alerts as the project develops.

Project History and Vision

The Cypress Field/Playground Project has been closely coordinated with the High School Renovation and Expansion Project at all phases of design and planning. Project phasing was planned to minimize the overall duration of construction and impact to the neighborhood, High School, and all users of amenities within the civic campus. In addition, coordinated construction is essential as there are many areas where one portion of the project meets and overlaps with another phase of the project. We are phasing this work to provide a seamless result for the community.

The Cypress Field/Playground Renovation Project has been in the Town's Capital Improvement Plan for more than eight (8) years. The project scope was defined through three (3) public visioning sessions in 2017 and over seven (7) public meetings through the public design review process in 2019. The Design Review Process was led by four (4) members of the Park and Recreation Commission and three (3) members of the community with input from many stakeholders, including neighbors, community leaders, Town Meeting Members, parents, High School Athletics, the Recreation Department, daycare providers, and other park users. In addition, the design team held public meetings in the park to get input and insight from park and playground users, including students at the High School, through a transparent, inclusive process.

The extensive public process has resulted in a project supporting the Town's goals for a safe, inclusive, multi-generational, and accessible park design that will serve the community, the neighborhood, the High School student body, the High School Athletics, and the Recreation Department. Highlights of the project improvements include; a wonderful and inclusive new play area for all ages with a new water play area, renovated natural turf sports field with new drainage and LED sports lighting, new basketball court with LED sports lighting, a picnic grove, plaza, and pathway improvements, handicapped accessibility improvements, extensive stormwater management infrastructure, expanded areas for seating and gathering and numerous new plantings. Cypress Playground will be inviting for healthy outdoor recreation, socializing, and gathering for all ages and abilities. The ability to move through and access amenities within the park are significantly improved with this plan.

Demolition and Construction

After project and funding approval, the project was awarded and a contract executed with Heimlich Landscape and Construction. In preparation for construction, the team has begun to remove benches, trash receptacles, and other items to be repurposed elsewhere in the Town. Construction is scheduled to commence in mid-March 2021 and is anticipated to reach full completion (including establishing the new natural turf field) by September of 2022. As portions of the project are completed there will be a phased reopening of segments of the park. The intent is for all construction associated with the High School Renovation and Expansion to reach substantial completion around the same time. As planned all school and athletic activities that have historically used the park, including High School graduation, will be relocated until September 2022.

The next demolition phase of the project will include removal of fencing, backstops, lighting, play equipment, asphalt, soil and trees. The park is lined with trees along all four sides, with some internal trees at the end towards Cypress Street. During the design review process, the Town's Arborist performed numerous reviews of the trees through all seasons to ascertain their existing health and condition. As part of this project, sixteen (16) trees were identified as in poor condition and ten (10) in fair/declining condition that are recommended for removal. These include the small street trees on Greenough Street, select struggling trees along the park's perimeter and four (4) of the six (6) Linden Trees that have structural defects. One (1) tree in good condition had the top snap off in a wind storm and will be removed and replaced. There are two (2) good quality trees scheduled for removal to accommodate a new handicapped-accessible path into the park. Four (4) trees will be transplanted, and more than 52 new trees will be planted in this project to create the next generation of tree canopy for the site. Removal of the trees in poor and declining condition will ultimately allow the planting of new trees and a significant improvement in the park's overall tree health and canopy for the future.

Again, we understand the disruption that any construction project causes, and we thank you for your patience and cooperation during this time. If you have questions about the Cypress Field/Playground Project, please contact Scott Landgren, Landscape Architect, at slandgren@brooklinema.gov. If you have questions or comments about the BHS Construction Project, please contact Ray Masak, Building Project Manager, at rmasak@brooklinema.gov. If you have questions or comments about BHS programming and scheduling, please contact Anthony Meyer at anthony_meyer@psbma.org or Hal Mason at hal_mason@psbma.org. We look forward to seeing the improvements completed and having the park available for your enjoyment again.



Very truly yours,

Cypress Field/Playground Renovation Project
Erin Gallentine, Commissioner of Public Works

Brookline High School Construction Project
Jim Marini, Interim Superintendent of Schools