

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Together with the Brookline Recreation Department and the Brookline Parks and Open Space Division, Klopfer Martin Design Group (KMDG) and JLG Architects are pleased to present this **Brookline Preliminary Ice Rink Recreational Facility Feasibility Report**.

The Town of Brookline owns and operates Jack Kirrane Ice Rink, a seasonal outdoor skating rink at Larz Anderson Park. The rink has been in operation since 1958 and serves over 15,000 skating visits per season including public skate, youth, high school and adult hockey programs, skating lessons, School PTO and team/group rentals and private events. While this beloved community asset is a wonderful and unique recreational facility, it is vulnerable to the weather and inadequate for youth and adult ice hockey. Due to the short season and unpredictable conditions, the community has long discussed the need for an indoor or covered ice rink facility.

The 60+ year old rink has undergone various replacements, repairs, and updates since its opening, but has reached its end of its useful life. On November 28, 2019, the refrigeration system chiller, a critical component of the ice making process, experienced an internal failure. The system was repaired for a cost of \$65,000 which was funded through a Reserve Fund Transfer and allowed the season to continue without interruption.

Unfortunately, on April 29, 2020, following shut-down for the season, the refrigeration system experienced another, more damaging, failure. Emergency repair technicians found that the chiller had breached, causing the vessel to fill with brine. The breach was contained within the closed loop system; however, the chiller was permanently damaged. At that time, it was determined that any future operation of the rink would require a significant investment in capital dollars.

The Park and Recreation Commission understood that a long-term evaluation of the future of ice skating in Brookline needed to occur. In June 2020, the Park and Recreation Commission met and voted to appoint an *Ice Rink Task Force* who would hold public meetings to discuss the short and long-term future of the skating rink at Larz Anderson Park. Throughout 2020-2021, the Task Force worked collaboratively with the public, the Park and Recreation Commission and Town staff to achieve a variety of goals including the conversion of the existing Larz Anderson Mechanical Room to accommodate temporary refrigeration units in the winter, and a recommendation to commence a feasibility study to review the viability of a renovated or new ice skating rink in Brookline. These temporary refrigeration units have allowed the ice rink to open for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 winter seasons, but have come with an expensive price tag. At an additional cost of \$160,000 the initial year and a cost of \$112,000 in FY22, the Commission realizes this is a temporary and costly solution. These additional increases do not include the cost of electricity to run the temporary chillers, which is about \$45,000 annually. Over the last two seasons additional problems have also been identified with the secondary refrigeration and slab, which also have been corrected, but provides further proof that the overall facility has reached the end of its useful life.

The Town publicized a Request for Proposals (RFP) to study the feasibility of a new ice rink in April of 2021. Interviews were completed in late April 2021 through the Town's Purchasing Division, by a Selection Committee consisting of Parks and Recreation Staff, Commissioners and Ice Rink Task Force Members. The project was ultimately awarded to the team assembled by Klopfer Martin Design Group (KMDG). This team included JLG Architects, a nationally recognized architecture firm specializing in sports facilities, particularly

ice rinks, for both municipal and institutional sports clients. In addition, KMDG worked with McMahon Associates on preliminary transportation studies and Jennifer Schultz of Sullivan & Worcester regarding preliminary project permitting.

The following objectives for the Brookline Preliminary Ice Rink Feasibility Study were outlined in the RFP:

- Analyze the future of ice skating in Brookline
- Evaluate options for the Brookline Ice Rink, including siting, circulation, feasibility, impacts, and capital and operating costs
- Provide ideas to expand and adapt the facility to provide year-round recreational use
- Examine two separate in-town locations for the proposed ice rink recreational facility

The RFP included Larz Anderson Park as the first study site, but noted the second site was to be determined and studied as part of the feasibility study. Through a public process and a series of Ice Rink Task Force meetings, Putterham Woods, adjacent to the Robert T. Lynch Municipal Golf Course, was chosen as the second site. The design team presented two (2) initial options for the Putterham Woods site. There was notable community concern regarding this site choice and the two (2) initial options did not seem to offer significant increased value or benefit compared to the Larz Anderson site. The Ice Rink Task Force voted to pause the Putterham Woods studies and to not advance them for the purposes of the feasibility study. The Ice Rink Task Force voted to focus the preliminary options at the Larz Anderson site only. The results of those efforts looking at Putterham Woods are included in Chapter 4.

Based on the initial studies at Larz Anderson, the Ice Rink Task Force narrowed the two (2) Larz Anderson options to one preferred preliminary design option, coined the "Terrace" scheme, with two variations. The first variation is an open-air rink plus a covered rink. The second variation is an open-air rink plus an enclosed rink. The "Terrace" scheme was further advanced to explore preliminary parking and traffic impacts, year-round programming opportunities, rink conversions for off-season use, anticipated permitting, and anticipated construction and annual operations costs. Each of these topics are explored at a preliminary level throughout this report.

While this preliminary feasibility study has offered Brookline critical information to better understand how to address the ice rink facility needs in the Town, it is truly just the beginning of the process. Further analysis is required to fully understand potential programming and revenue opportunities, energy and sustainability modeling, geotechnical and soil conditions, as well as a detailed traffic assessment. Throughout this process, and especially for the Larz Anderson site, this document has assembled many historical resources from the creation of the original park, restrictions of the area on which the rink currently sits, to the various improvements over the decades to this location. This work has also uncovered the fact that there is significantly more work to be accomplished from an exploratory and permitting perspective, to fully uncover the implications of any new type of skating facility at the site. Furthermore, given the historic landscape at Larz Anderson Park, it is recommended that the Town pursue a Cultural Historic Landscape Inventory and Preservation Plan to protect and enhance the character and historical significance of Larz Anderson Park. To advance the preliminary designs any further, additional funding and public support will need to be identified for the short- and long-term recommendations outlined in this report.