

# stossLANDSCAPEURBANISM

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## PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS

PROJECT: **Thoreau Path Improvements**  
STOSS PROJECT #: BRA0901

MEETING DATE: **17 February 2010**  
MEETING LOCATION: Amy Lowell House

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The meeting was held to present a revised concept design for the Thoreau Path Improvements project, in response to the public feedback to date. Chris Reed of Stoss presented the project and Josh Alston of Nitsch Engineering covered drainage issues. The presentation was followed by a question and answer period. The following is a summary of the comments made during the question and answer session.

### PROJECT PRIORITIES

- The path will be safe, durable and consistent;

### PATHWAY SURFACING

- The stamping of the surface will not affect the mobility of the pedestrian users;
- Stamping may be overlaid on top of surface with a possible aggregate finish. Consultant team is currently meeting with product manufacturers to explore possible surface finishes;
- The consultant team is currently investigating products and finish options for the surface;
- A surface that looks like the current surface at the bases of the buildings is not desired;
- A surface that looks like gravel is not desired;
- There will be installations of test panels for the surface finish; Consultant and BRA are exploring optimum locations for the test panels; Community members expressed a desire to see and review these panels;
- Some in attendance were in favor of stamping the surface to demarcate the 1630 river line; others were not; one historian mentioned that it would be an important place for tourists and could tie into historical tours;
- Some felt that the place for pavement differentiation is at the nodes;
- The proposed surface should be able to be plowed;
- Color of the proposed pavement should be compatible with all colors of the various adjacent buildings;
- Concern expressed for the cementitious polymer overlay by a structural engineer well-versed in concrete restoration work; be careful regarding expansion capabilities of the new material so that the cracks do not reappear after five years; be sure to get examples of product installations showing that the overlay can perform in similar situations;
- Consultant team is dedicated to finding the right solution that is well-tested and sure to perform when installed in this application;

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## BENCHES/SEATING AREAS

- The benches should be short and divided and not a continuous 6', in order to discourage sleeping and skateboarding;
- Perhaps look for a place for seating within the easement for parents to watch their children play on the playground in back of Whittier Place; It was later clarified that this is a fenced in play area and is for children 0-5 and that the parents are required to be there with them;
- It might be more appropriate to have benches with backs in front of Pace's and benches without backs along the path;
- Benches are too low for the orthopedically challenged; Bench design should consider all types of user abilities and needs;
- Make sure proposed benches are compatible with existing adjacent benches;
- Question as to who will maintain the seating area across from Pace's; If people are eating there, who will clean it up?
- Whittier Place residents expressed concern with the seating area abutting their new terrace; BRA will coordinate the new design with the Whittier management and trustees;

## SECURITY PHONES

- One phone should be located at the end of Emerson/Health Club area; a second at the tennis courts near Staniford Street;
- Phones located near residences should respect residences on lower floors; there should not be any noise or light nuisance;
- Consider adding a third blue phone to project to cover the entire pathway;
- The BRA and the consultant team will walk the site with the Boston Police Department in order to determine number and placement of blue phones;

## SIGNAGE/INFORMATION PANEL

- There will be a sign at either end of the pathway announcing the pathway as Thoreau Path; This will be incorporated with the way-finding signage system;
- People will cut through the nodes; Information panel will not block this; Design should accept inevitable desire lines;
- The area is extremely windy and the signage design and construction should account for the wind and not be susceptible to blowing over;

## PROPERTY OWNERSHIP/ABUTTERS

- Pace's will not necessarily always be a store or retail use; design should be flexible to all types of future use;
- Question as to whether Equity has met their obligations for damages to the path; BRA will meet with Equity but does not want to start assessing blame for past path damages but rather to focus efforts on fixing path to provide a safe, durable, consistent new surface;

## VEGETATION

- No trees will be cut down; there will be selective pruning for tree health reasons and where trees interfere with the existing lighting;
- Question as to who will maintain the plantings? BRA to coordinate this with the abutters; several property managers have already discussed an interest in doing this;
- All proposed plantings will be low maintenance, with weeding and mowing required only once or twice per season;
- There are a number of pitch pine trees along the site and the proposed vegetation needs to be compatible with this species;

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- Shrubs at Charles Street were added as a deterrent for trucks that were driving across the node; if the shrubs are removed, the proposed design should also deter vehicular traffic;

## DRAINAGE

- The proposed surface will be safer and drain better than the existing; there will be less places for ice to form in the winter;
- The project is committed to solving the path's long standing drainage issues;

## SCHEDULE + BUDGET

- As project has been simplified, will there be cost savings? Will this money be put back into the community? The answer is that all the funds allocated for the project will be used to improve the path and there will not be cost savings; there is \$1.5 million for design and construction, 20% of which is the design fee;
- If a continuous surface cannot be achieved with a concrete polymer product and the proposed budget, will additional funds be allocated?; BRA and consultant team will address this condition if it arises but there are no additional funds for the project;

## NEXT STEPS

- BRA will post meeting minutes to the project website;
- BRA and consultant team will work to refine the design and to produce construction bid documents;
- Barring unforeseen complications, the project will likely be bid in May with construction beginning in early summer;
- There will be information provided regarding the construction schedule and mitigation as parts of the path will be closed at certain times;
- The Children's festival will be accommodated as per discussions with the BRA and the festival organizers;
- BRA will continue to have meetings with abutters;

These Meeting Notes are submitted by STOSS. Please contact **Jill Desimini** with any corrections or additions. If no corrections or additions are received within (10) working days of distribution, the content will be assumed to be agreed upon by all parties.

## END OF MEETING SUMMARY