
HARVARD-ALLSTON PUBLIC REALM FLEX FUND

Spring 2024 Grant Application

JAMES H. ROBERTS MEMORIAL PLAYGROUND

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Proponent/Owner: Boston Parks and Recreation Department
1010 Massachusetts Ave
Boston, MA 02118

Background: Public Agency

Primary Contact: Priyanka Vankina
(617) 961-3028
Priyanka.Vankina@Boston.gov

Key Personnel: Priyanka Vankina, Project Manager for Boston Parks and Recreation

PROJECT INFORMATION

James H. Roberts Memorial Playground (Roberts Playground) is a one acre public park located at the terminus of Hooker Street in Lower Allston with additional entrances at W. Sorrento Street, Sorrento Street and Seattle Street. Roberts Playground was formerly named Hooker Street Playground and was formally renamed James H. Roberts Memorial Playground in 2021 to honor James H. Roberts, an Allston resident, a beloved city employee, WWII veteran and an active member of the NAACP. It is owned by the City of Boston and maintained by Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD). The park is an essential resource to the community providing recreation and cooling opportunities to neighborhood families and a community-owned toddler and pre-K summer camp, Harvard daycare centers at Western Ave and Soldiers Field Park and dog owners. The park is utilized as a walkway and bikeway connecting Seattle, Hopedale, Hooker and Sorrento Streets and provides access to a nearby bus stop.

The park currently contains two play spaces. One play has a play structure for ages 5-12 and the other has a play structure for ages 2-5 surrounded by a trike track; a centrally located splash pad; and two large passive recreation lawn areas. It is surrounded by residences and large shade trees, making it feel more like an intimate courtyard than a public park. The play equipment is old and in need of replacement, the safety surfacing has multiple repair patches and the splash pad is showing signs of settlement. In 2023, BPRD reset the pavers in the splash pad because over the years water had eroded the sand subbase, creating settlement and trip hazards.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project would create a Comprehensive Plan for Roberts Playground and develop the design for the entire site through Schematic Design. Phase 1 will be developed through construction documents and built as a part of this grant-funded effort.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

This project would follow the BPRD standard community engagement process which, minimally, includes three community meetings. Once a design firm is awarded a contract, they would conduct a thorough site analysis and present the results at the first community meeting. At this meeting the community would be asked to identify park uses and priorities for renovation of the entire site; these priorities would inform the basis of design going forward.

At the second community meeting, the designer would present several schematic designs based on the previously identified community priorities and ask the community to discuss priorities and preferences of the designs. A final consensus Comprehensive Plan will be created from the input of the community and presented at the third meeting.

The Comprehensive Plan would be a Schematic Design for the entire site to guide phased site plan development. It would identify community priorities for the park which are anticipated to be the renovation of the existing playground, safety surfacing, and splash pad, new site furnishing and plantings.

PHASE 1:

It is anticipated that Phase 1 Implementation would focus on the splash pad renovation because of the drainage infrastructure required and the current condition of the existing facility. Phase 1 Implementation would include arborist work, renovation of the splash pad, a new bottle filling station and drainage improvements as required for this renovation.

PHASE 2:

This project would need to seek additional funding for Phase 2 Implementation. Phase 2 would include definitive design and full renovation of the two play spaces including new play equipment, safety surfacing, site furnishings, and other priorities as identified on the Comprehensive Plan.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Renovation of the splash pad will provide significant public benefit to the Allston-Brighton community, which has seen a steady increase in the number of young families over the last 10 years. In addition to providing active recreation for young children, an improved splash pad will support the citywide goals to create a heat resilient city and respond to increasing Urban Heat Island Effects in Boston. The closest parks to this area with access to water play are Smith Playground, about ½ mile away, and Soldiers Field and Ringer Park which are both one mile away, not easily accessible to those residing in this park's vicinity.

FUNDING

The City of Boston Capital Improvement Fund provides funding for many of the projects that BPRD pursues, however sufficient funding doesn't always exist to cover all community needs. Funding is not available through the Capital Improvement Fund for this project. Therefore, this park design and renovation will be funded by external means only.

TIMELINE

If BPRD is able to secure the requested funding, this project will solicit a designer which can take about 3-5 months. After the contract is awarded to a design firm, the schematic design and community engagement processes begin and normally last about three (3) months. After that, the Construction Documentation phase will begin which typically lasts about six (6) months. Solicitation of bids for the construction of Phase 1 Splash Pad will likely occur in summer 2025 with construction beginning fall 2025.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS, PROTOCOLS, AND SOURCES

James H. Roberts Playground is maintained by BPRD. Maintenance costs are funded through the City of Boston's Operating Budget. The park will be designed in conformance with BPRD standard details. BPRD is always looking for opportunities to integrate best practices for stormwater management and energy efficiency into our park renovations projects.

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY AND LIFE SPAN

BPRD capital projects always strive to make best use of public funds by balancing cost and durability, with the goal of using materials that are sustainable for both these objectives. Specifically, play area and water spray area furnishings will have an anticipated lifespan of 15+ years.

ANTICIPATED REGULATORY REVIEW AND NECESSARY PERMITS

BWSC coordination will be required for the splash pad plumbing work as well as potentially extending the water service for the water bottle station. The construction of Roberts Playground would be subject to all Public Bid Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Boston Residents Jobs Policy of the City of Boston.

MATERIALS

BUDGET

Based on the area and program we estimate the renovation of the entire park to be \$2.5 to 3 million. We propose a comprehensive plan for a 2 phase project. Both Phase 1 and Phase 2 shall be developed through Schematic Design, and Phase 1 shall be carried through construction documentation and administration and constructed. The Comprehensive Plan and Phase 1 Implementation of this project would be fully funded by HAPRFF. BPRD will seek additional funding sources for Phase 2.

Funding Sources	
HAPRFF Comprehensive Plan Phase 1 & 2 Schematic Design Phase 1 Construction Documentation and Implementation	\$ 600,000
TBD Phase 2 Construction Documentation and Implementation	\$ 1,950,000

BPRD is requesting \$600,000.00 from the HAPRFF to provide funds for comprehensive design services and renovation of the splash pad to complete Phase 1 of this project.

Construction Estimates and Design Fees are described below:

Project Costs - COMPREHENSIVE PLAN & PHASE 1 IMPLEMENTATION	
Design Fees	
Site Analysis	\$ 11,000
Comprehensive Plan (Phase 1 & 2) Community Engagement Schematic Design	\$ 33,000
Definitive Drawings	\$ 38,000
Construction Administration	\$ 27,500
Supplemental Fee Survey, Testing, Subsurface Investigation, Additional Community Meetings, Changes, Misc.	\$ 10,000
Subtotal	\$ 120,000
Construction Estimate Splash pad, bottle filling station, drainage, arborist work	\$ 390,000
Contingency	\$ 90,000
TOTAL	\$ 600,000

Project Costs - PHASE 2 IMPLEMENTATION	
Design Fees Definitive Design, Construction Administration	\$ 95,000
Supplemental Fee Additional Testing	\$ 5,000
Construction Estimate Play areas, safety surfacing, pathways, site furnishings, and planting.	\$ 1,500,000
Contingency	\$ 340,000
TOTAL	\$ 1,950,000
TOTAL COMPLETE PROJECT RENOVATION	\$ 2,550,000



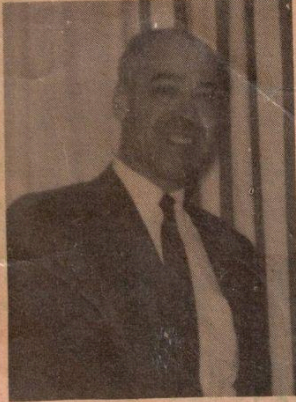
FIGURE 1: SITE FEATURES



FIGURE 2: SPLASH PAD

Playground to honor James H. Roberts

Boston City Council President Gerald F. O'Leary today announced that the Council had passed, at his request, a bill honoring the late James H. Roberts of Allston. Henceforth, the Sorrento Street Playground, located on Parker avenue, Brighton, is to be named the James H. Roberts Memorial Playground. Remarking on his action, Councillor O'Leary stated that "A man like Mr. Roberts, who had actively



James H. Roberts

served the commonwealth, his city, and the community so outstandingly for so long a time, deserves to be publicly commended and remembered by the city."

Mr. Roberts, who resided at 31 Seattle St., died on May 15, 1969. He worked for 23 years in the State Treasury Department. At the time of his death, he held the position of Director of the Vietnam Bonus. A veteran of the Massachusetts State Guard with service in the Burma-China-India campaign, Roberts was an active member

of the NAACP and the Allston Civic Association. He is survived by his wife Carolyn and two sons James F., 13 and William J., 12; and two daughters Eileen M., 9 and Carolyn M., 7.

In addition to his civic mindedness, he found time to work with the children and young people of his community. For many years he served in the Cub Scout program as Cubmaster and Committee Chairman of Cub Scout Pack One, sponsored by the Allston Congregational Church and as a youth advisor for the CYO of St. Richard's parish.

Plans for a public celebration to formally dedicate the playground are in progress and an announcement will be forthcoming from city hall. In the words of Councillor O'Leary: "Every city has its problems and we deal with them to the best of our abilities. It is concerned citizens, like Mr. Roberts, who make Boston the good city that it is — who are making it the better city..." Referring to the newly designated James H. Roberts Memorial Playground, O'Leary continued, "By honoring this individual, we honor the many fine people that James Roberts represents."

FIGURE 3: NEWS ARTICLE FOR RENAMING OF PLAYGROUND

Harvard-Allston Public Realm Flexible Fund

For Allston-Brighton

Application for Funding, 2024

Total Amount Requested \$ 600,000

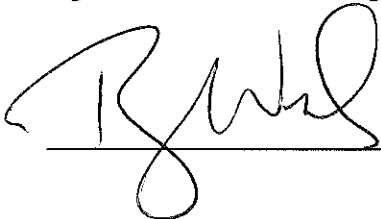
Applicant Organization Name:	Boston Parks and Recreation (BPRD)				
Organization Address:	1010 Massachusetts Ave, 3rd Floor	City:	Boston	Zip:	02118
Contact Person:	Priyanka Vankina				
Title:	Project Manager, BPRD				
Telephone Number:	617-961-3028				
E-Mail Address:	priyanka.vankina@boston.gov				

Application submission(s) must be authorized and signed by an authorized signatory of the Organization.

Name and title of Authorized Signatory:

Ryan Woods, Commissioner

Signature of Authorized Signatory:





Boston City Council

LIZ BREADON

Councilor – District 9

April 26, 2024

Christine Brandao
Community Engagement Manager
Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA)
One City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02201

TRANSMITTED VIA EMAIL

RE: Boston Parks and Recreation Department Roberts Playground Harvard-Allston Public Realm Flexible Fund Application

To the Harvard-Allston Public Realm Flexible Fund Executive Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the Boston Parks and Recreation Department's (the 'BPRD') application to the 2024 Harvard-Allston Public Realm Flexible Fund (the 'HAPRFF') for improvements to the James H. Roberts Memorial Playground in Allston.

James H. Roberts Memorial Playground is an approximately 1 acre park located in Lower Allston that offers passive recreation options to Allston residents. Formerly known as the Hooker Street Playground, the park was renamed in honor of John H. Roberts, an Allston resident, veteran, and long-time member of such organizations as the NAACP. The BPRD has proposed to improve this park, a project that will result in a completely renovated play area, picnic areas, and an improved splash pad.

The BPRD is applying to the HAPRFF for a grant that will support comprehensive design services and Phase I implementation of this project. Existing play equipment and safety surfacing exhibit wear and are in need of replacement; new inclusive play equipment must be included and the water play area is showing signs of settlement. A renovated splash pad will be a key piece in the City of Boston's effort to cool dense urban communities from impacts of climate change.

Please accept this letter as confirmation of my support for this application, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Liz Breadon
Boston City Councilor
District 9- Allston-Brighton

May 15, 2024

Christine Brandao
Community Engagement Manager
Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA)
One City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Support for James H. Roberts Memorial Playground
Harvard-Allston Public Realm Flex Fund (HAPRFF) Grant Application

Dear Executive Committee,

James H. Roberts was a longtime resident of Allston, Massachusetts. He entered World War II from 169 Cambridge Street, Allston, Massachusetts 02134. He served 2 years 3 months and 12 days. He was a veteran of the Burma-China-India campaign, attaining the rank of 1st Sergeant. After returning home from military service with the Army National Guard, Mr. Roberts was designated a 100% disabled veteran, having developed lung issues and asthma during the monsoons overseas. This never stopped Mr. Roberts from being a concerned productive community member.

Mr. Roberts became Chief Examiner for the state veterans bonus division, later becoming Director Of the Vietnam Bonus Division. He was also an active member of the NAACP and the Allston Civic Association. Additionally, he served as the Cubmaster and Committee Chairman of Cub Scout Pack One, sponsored by the Allston Congregational Church. He also served as a youth advisor for the CYO of St. Richards Parish in Roxbury, where he lived for a while.

Mr. Roberts had fond memories of the people he met from India, while stationed there in the military. He opened his home to patients and their parents, who were being treated at Boston Childrens Hospital.

We hope that you will support the efforts and consider this project for grant funding. This would make this giving and community minded man very proud of you.

Sincerely

James F. Roberts



Respecting the right of all community members to be informed, consulted,
involved and empowered

Mailing address: PO Box 822, Allston, MA. 02134

April 25, 2024

Ms. Christine Brandao
Harvard-Allston Public Realm Flex Fund Manager
Boston Planning and Development Agency
1 City Hall Square #9
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Support for James H. Roberts Memorial Playground Harvard-Allston Public
Realm Flex Fund (HAPRFF) Grant Application

Dear Executive Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the City of Boston's application for James H. Roberts Memorial Playground. This park is a one acre property located north of I-90 in Allston-Brighton and offers both active and passive recreation options to the community. In 2021, the community this close-knit community came together to rename the park from Hooker Street Playground to James H. Roberts Memorial Playground in memory of a beloved Allston resident. When completed, the project will provide a completely renovated play area, picnic areas and an improved splash pad.

This project is applying to the HAPRFF for a grant for the complete renovation of the park. The play equipment and safety surfacing are old and in need of replacement; new inclusive play equipment must be included and the spray area is showing signs of settlement. The City of Boston is seeking to protect dense urban communities from the impacts of climate change, a renovated splash pad will be a key piece of this effort at Roberts Park.

We hope that you will support our efforts and consider this project for grant funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony P. D'Isidoro". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Anthony P D'Isidoro
President

Ms. Christine Brandao
Harvard-Allston Public Realm Flex Fund Manager
BPDA
1 City Hall Square #9
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Support for James H. Roberts Memorial Playground Harvard-Allston Public Realm Flex Fund (HAPRFF) Grant Application

Dear Executive Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the Boston Parks and Recreation Department's application to the 2024 Harvard-Allston Public Realm Flex Fund (HAPRFF) for improvements to the James H. Roberts Memorial Playground in Allston.

This park is a one acre property located in Lower Allston and offers passive recreation options to the community, especially children, families, daycare centers, and pet owners. This park was formerly named Hooker Street Playground, in 2021 this close-knit community came together to rename the park James H. Roberts Memorial Playground in honor of a beloved Allston resident, veteran, and long-time member of organizations such as the NAACP.

The existing play equipment and safety surfacing exhibit wear and are in need of replacement; new inclusive play equipment must be included and the water play area is showing signs of settlement as well as outdated and inappropriate design. Health and safety should be addressed by creating a fenced in dog park and bringing the two playgrounds closer together (or integrated) for adequate supervision of multiple ages. Shade trees should be maintained and progressively planted to maintain shade for decades.

This project is applying to the HAPRFF for a grant for comprehensive design services and Phase I implementation of the project. Phase 1 will be the implementation of a renovated splash pad. An improved splash will be a key piece in the City of Boston's effort to cool dense urban communities from impacts of climate change. This project plans to apply for additional funds for future phases which will fund the renovation of the 2-5 and 5-12 play areas, addition of a picnic area and new site furnishings.

We hope that you will support our efforts and consider this project for grant funding.

Sincerely,
Priscilla Anderson

Jung Soo Kim
Bryan Chou
Marlene Scanlon
Colleen McGuire
Jessica Roberts
Cindy Marchando
Katherine Fox
Meredith Pestourie
Western Ave Children's Center
Lisa Kunze
Kate Chen