

YOU'RE INVITED:

**PEACE PARK
VIRTUAL
COMMUNITY
MEETING**

**JOIN US ON TUESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 22ND AT 6PM TO
"MEET" THE DESIGN TEAM!**

Peace Park

Community Meeting:

*Learn the mission &
meet the design team!*

SEPTEMBER 22, 2020 @ 6PM



Meeting Agenda

Please keep your mic muted throughout this meeting.

**Please note – this meeting will be recorded for community engagement purposes and to give our design team more data and insight on the community needs and desires for the park space.*

- The History of the Peace Park
 - Park Photos
- COGdesign Introduction
- COGdesign Mission
- Peace Park selected as 2020 Project
- Park Testimonials from Youth Volunteers
- Community Engagement
- June Community Survey
 - Re-Envisioning the Peace Park Survey Results
- Peace Park Designs
 - Peace Park Design Poll Results
- Questions?
- Want to be more involved?

*“Peace cannot be kept by force;
it can only be achieved by
understanding.”*

- ALBERT EINSTEIN

The History of the Peace Park

In 2018 and 2019, the many key stakeholders involved in the Coalition planned and applied for the City of Boston's *Love Your Block Grant* to revitalize an area in the community in need of love and rebirth. When researching locations in the community it was decided that an unkempt Mt Vernon Street Plaza, which is dedicated to the life of late Robert McGrath, a beloved Charlestown resident who was tragically a victim of community violence 30 years ago, was the perfect place. The idea was to brighten a dark and dreary section of the community with color and love and create a space where all residents could go to reflect, grieve, and celebrate the lives of those no longer with us; regardless of where they lived in the community, their race, socioeconomic status, religion, etcetera. If it's one thing we all have in common, it is that we all want to feel loved and welcomed in our own neighborhood and have safe spaces within.

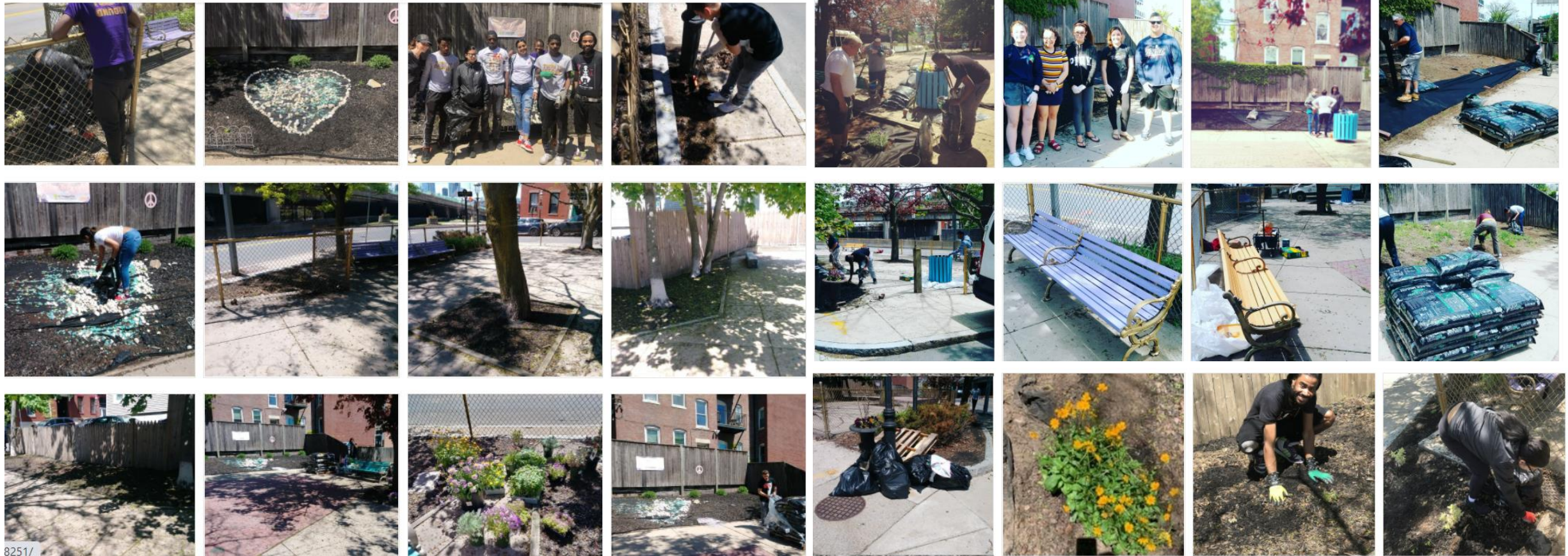
Unfortunately, the Peace Park became a topic of controversy as a few neighbors were actively resistant to the changes. Charlestown youth and residents, not unfamiliar with adversity, banded against the resistance and the Peace Park began receiving more and more support. Charlestown Coalition used the confrontation as an opportunity to share love and increase project inclusion. It became such a community interest that a Peace Walk formed in 2019 in which nearly 100 residents attended a ceremonial blessing of the park and then a community peace walk that passed many areas in the town where community violence had occurred bringing many unlikely neighbors together. Unfortunately, small group resistance to this park continued, ultimately resulting in unfortunate acts of destruction and vandalism. However, yet again, the resiliency and strength of the Charlestown community prevailed and we began rebuilding together almost immediately.

Since then we have had several unifying community events held at the Peace Park including a series of timely community police, race and equity dialogues. We are now in plans for a sustainable design plan which will likely be here for generations to come. It is often through conflict and adversity that transformation occurs and, in this situation, resistance to what began as a \$2,700 community service project is now uniting hundreds of residents and becoming more impactful than we ever would have imagined. This Peace Park journey has such a parallel process to the history and love and uniting power within the Charlestown Community and we look forward to rebuilding it with all of you! [PDF](#).

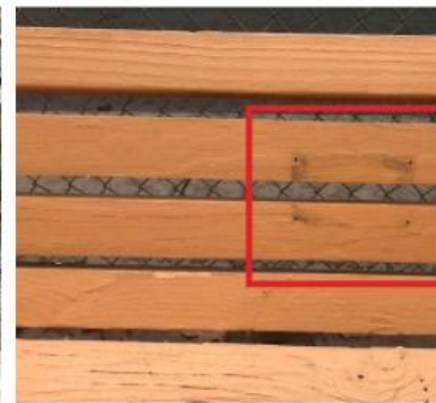
Park Revitalization Photos



Park Revitalization Photos



Vandalism Photos



Charlestown Peace Park Rebuilding Efforts

\$12,449

Total raised for Peace Park rebuilding efforts through GoFundMe & other donations

\$9,349

Raised through GoFundMe donations by 115 residents & local organizations

60% of those who donated were in amounts of \$40 and under

Residents and Local Organizations Continued Support

Residents, religious organizations, community/youth organizations such as the YMCA, Charlestown Boys and Girls Club, have all continued to be instrumental in the caring and maintaining for the Peace Park. Examples below.

- **First Church in Charlestown held a clean-up day** on Oct. 12th. More than 35 people came to help mulch (60 bags) and remove trash/weeds from the park. They also donated a 8 ft. Peace Park sign.
- **Starbucks Charlestown held a Kindness Rocks Event** as an outlet for folks to create another rock to be added into the park on Oct. 19th.
- On Oct. 23rd, **the Boys and Girls Club and Coalition staff** used powered tools, manual tools, brooms, shovels, etc. for **park maintenance and preps for HeART in the Park event**. More than 25 flowers were planted along with adding decorations.
- **Resident Joe Kelley took it upon himself to build a ~20 ft.** Peace Park fence to enclose our heart rock garden in hopes no one would take the rocks again.
- **Resident Noreen Ridings created wooden Peace signs** to be added in the park.
- **Barbara Kelly and Bill Kelly donated daffodils** to be planted.

Community Events



Starbucks held a Kindness Rocks event at their store, where residents were able to come in and paint rocks to be placed at the Peace Park-143 new rocks were painted that day.



Social Media Engagement

125

Residents changed their Facebook profile or cover picture to the park to show support

The Turn it Around Facebook had 10 posts in regards to the different park efforts

- An average of 253 people reached (i.e. shown in their personal feed) per post
- 485 total clicks
- 262 total reactions, comments, and shares

The Coalition Facebook had 8 posts in regards to the different park efforts

- An average of 267 people reached (i.e. shown in their personal feed) per post
- 104 total clicks
- 69 total reactions, comments, and shares

Articles/Op-eds

Click the text to be directed to each article.

- **"No Park, No Peace: Advocates Say They Will Rebuild Desecrated Peace Park"**-Charlestown Patriot-Bridge
- **A Joint Statement About the Peace Park from the Clergy of Charlestown "Guest Op-Ed: Continued Support for Peace Park"**-Charlestown Patriot-Bridge



COGdesign Introduction



The Community Outreach Group for Landscape Design ([COGdesign](#)) provides under-resourced community groups in greater Boston the opportunity to design open space in their communities at no cost. Landscape architects working pro bono help communities envision bringing neighborhood open space projects to fruition. After design plans are drawn community-initiated projects move forward with next steps: fundraising, construction drawings, project oversight and construction.

With twenty-two years of experience matching landscape designers with community groups to create design plans as those communities envision them, COGdesign focuses on facilitating community meetings where all voices can be heard. We accept on average eight projects a year based on need. The criteria for acceptance closely aligns with that for an 'environmental justice' community. At least one of the following is required: there is a high percentage of low-income residents, a large number of people of color and little English spoken among adults.

COGdesign Mission

COGdesign provides pro bono landscape design to under-resourced community groups in greater Boston with the goal to create together beautiful, resilient green space which meets neighborhood needs. COGdesign is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that —

- Connects community groups with accomplished landscape designers who respond to the community's needs
- Creates volunteer opportunities for anyone interested in strengthening communities by creating and improving neighborhood green spaces
- Generates meaningful professional experience for student and practicing landscape designers

COGdesign connects underserved communities with the technical design assistance they need to create design plans for new green space or for restoring/renovating an existing park, garden, yard or plaza.

COGDESIGN BY THE NUMBERS



127

Number
of
Projects



31

Number
of Towns
Served



21

Years of
Experience

Peace Park selected as 2020 Project

Charlestown Peace Park— revitalization of Mt. Vernon St. Plaza, Charlestown

Client: Charlestown Coalition

Free and open to all, parks are the quintessential expression of democracy. Parks are a place you can go alone or together, where you can sit quietly or join in a community event. A park is a place where ideally you can breathe fresh air thanks to surrounding plants, run and play, read a book or rub shoulders with neighbors you might not ordinarily meet. It is a place for introverts and extroverts. A place for all. The Charlestown Peace Park project represents an opportunity to foster connection in a community that has been racially and economically divided for too long.

This blighted 30-yr old park in the border land between vastly different neighborhoods is being re-purposed to honor local victims of gun violence and those who have lost their life to addiction. The design team will need to generate ideas for improvements to satisfy the program and both communities.

Active Youth Group from Charlestown Coalition called *Turn it Around* (40 teens from neighborhood) holds community events here and has spent many hours cleaning it up only to have it desecrated. (One neighbor charged with crime). Charlestown Coalition wants park renovation to give this youth group a sense of ownership and hope; to honor loved ones lost to overdose and violence; and to make the space inviting for all in the community for everyday use and neighborhood events.

Goals are to enhance community resilience, and to prevent and respond to traumatic situations that affect community.

Charlestown is 75% white, the Youth Group is primarily African American along with 11% of the population.

Park Testimonials from Youth Volunteers

From Fatima Fontes, Turn It Around & Charlestown High alumnus, currently a sophomore at B.U.

This park means to me more than anyone can imagine. This “Peace Park” is a place where any and every one can take their time to grieve their loved ones. This park is where the community comes together to help each other cope with the violence and drug abuse of the community. While my group and I, “Turn It Around” was cleaning up the park to make it what it is today, neighbors of the community was very against it because we weren’t their “kind.” The people in “Turn It Around” are mostly colored and from the BHA development so the residents who live near the park didn’t think we “belonged” there. The park was made to bring peace to the community and help one another grieve with their losses, not cause any type of controversial drama. This park is going to be brought back to life again and be better than EVER!

From Cristian Ruiz, 9th grader at Charlestown High.

This park brings back a lot of positive memories for me. A long time ago I used to play in that park when I was little. The park had swings and a slide. Once I got older the park started to get outdated and nobody really used it anymore. It made me happy when I got the chance to fix it back up so everyone could use it again. It took a lot of work to renovate the Peace Park, and unfortunately after all our hard work someone attempted to destroy it. So now we have even more community support from residents and Turn It Around to rebuild it and add even more to it.

Community Engagement

We have been strategic in creating an inclusive community project since COG's partnership.

- We have included Peace Park updates, including COG's involvement, volunteer events, survey and voting information in the local newspaper, our monthly newsletter, and online social media platforms to engage and inform residents of this project. We've also reached out to other community providers and organizations to help spread the word to increase and expand community involvement.
- The Charlestown Coalition and *Turn It Around* youth flyer the neighborhood on August 25th & 26th and hosted an in-person opportunity to vote on park designs and meet COG designer, Heather Hiemarck, at the Peace Park on both days as well.
- Another in-person voting opportunity was held on September 9th at the Charlestown Farmer's Market.
- The surrounding homes were flyer again on the 16th of September to inform resident's of tonight's meeting, on Tuesday September 22nd.

If you are not subscribed to our monthly newsletter and would like to be, please sign-up at CharlestownCoalition.org.

You can also follow us online at: Facebook.com (www.facebook.com/CharlestownCoalition & www.facebook.com/turnitaroundcharlestown) Instagram.com ([@Turnitaroundctn](https://www.instagram.com/Turnitaroundctn)) and Twitter.com ([@Turnitaroundctn](https://twitter.com/Turnitaroundctn))

June Community Survey

The Charlestown Peace Park has been selected by COGdesign, a pro bono landscape design service, to create a blueprint for sustainable, desired changes. They deliver final schematic drawings- a master plan, to clients along with a rough cost estimate of the project. Their goal is to create beautiful, resilient green spaces that meet neighborhood needs.

www.Surveymonkey.com/r/PeaceParkVision

Survey Deadline: June 18th, 2020

To learn more about the Charlestown Coalition, its mission, programs, projects and community partners, sign-up to receive our monthly newsletter at CharlestownCoalition.org



**Charlestown Peace Park
Community Survey**

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The Coalition's original plan included community meetings where residents could express their opinions and concerns and ask the design team questions in person. Now that we are unable to congregate in large groups due to COVID-19, we ask that community members take this online survey to have their thoughts, opinions and concerns heard.

www.Surveymonkey.com/r/PeaceParkVision
Survey Deadline: June 18th, 2020

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COGdesign
Charlestown Coalition
Advancing Communities • Transforming Lives
TURN IT AROUND

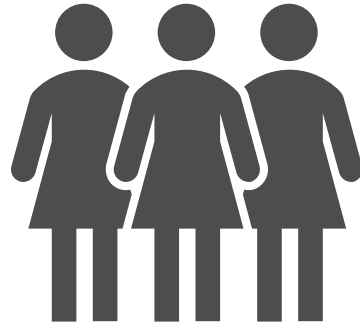
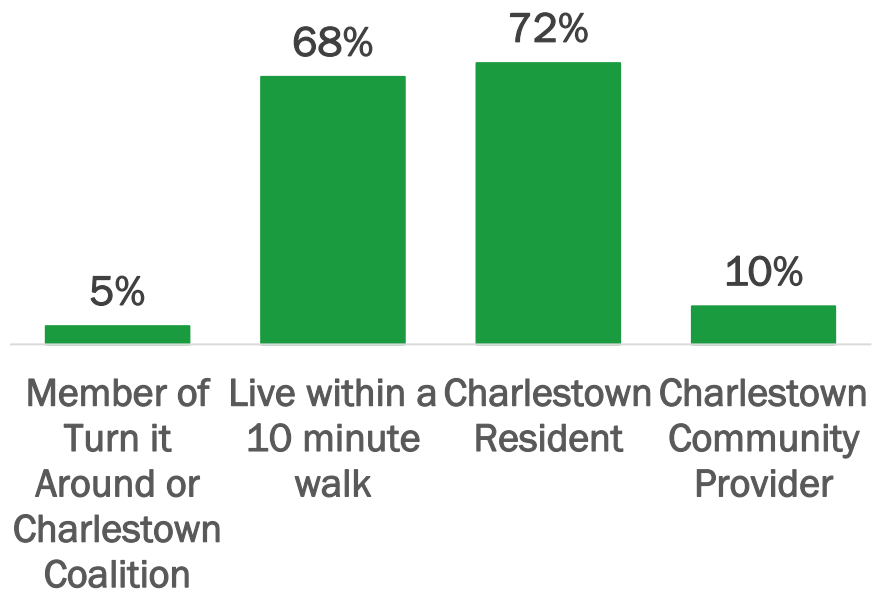
Re-Envisioning the Peace Park Survey Results

A total of 280 people completed the poll from June 3rd-June 21st



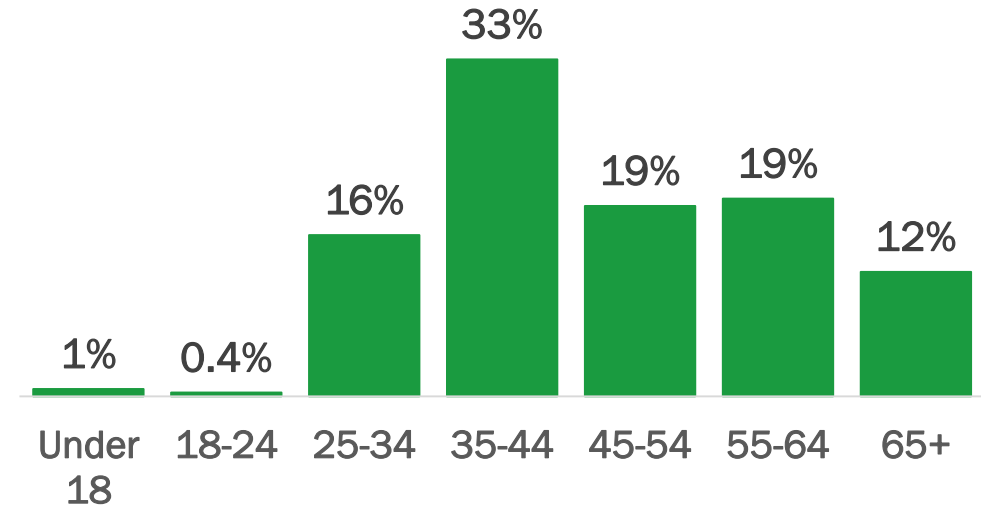
Who took the poll survey?

Peace Park Association



Age of Respondents

Almost 50% of the respondents were between 25-44 years old



*Respondents could select more than one response;
percentages will equal over 100%*

Ranking of Gathering Spaces

Respondents were asked to rank each element from 1=Don't want to 5=Must have. The table shows the average score, with the highest score being 5.

Gathering Space Elements	Score
Seating or tables	2.99
Paved open space for gatherings/events	3.16
Space for reflection/meditation	2.74
Lawn	2.96
Community garden	2.96

Ranking of Amenities

Respondents were asked to rank each element from 1=Don't want to 5=Must have. The table shows the average score, with the highest score being 5.

Amenity Elements	Score
Water feature	3.01
Green infrastructure (e.g. cistern, rain garden)	2.64
Exercise equipment	3.53
Children's play equipment	3.36
Memorial (e.g. plaque, statue, monument)	2.54

Ranking of Small-Scale Features

Respondents were asked to rank each element from 1=Don't want to 5=Must have. The table shows the average score, with the highest score being 5.

Small-Scale Elements	Score
Tress/shade	2.52
Hedges	3.08
Lighting	2.81
Phone chargers	3.68
Fences and gates	2.79



Additional Features to Include

- Trash cans
- Sustainable nature and greenery
- Native plants and those that support biodiversity
- Irrigation for plantings
- Barrier for bridge/tunnel noise
- Respondents both wanted dogs allowed and another respondents did not
- Water fountain
- Park benches
- Lighting
- Ongoing maintenance
- Simplicity
- Hidden sculptures such as City Square Park



What Respondents Liked About the Peace Park Currently

- The concept of the park to honor/remember loved ones
- New plantings
- Place for people to visit
- Open space
- Ability to host different events, such as youth art show
- Location
- Benches
- Close to community resources
- The potential of what the park can be
- Peaceful



What Respondents Currently Dislike about the Peace Park

- Park elements
 - Color scheme
 - Fence
 - Hay
 - Lack of seating
 - Lack of lighting
- Noise from bridge
- Not well maintained
- Lack of greenery and flowers that die quickly/hard to maintained
- No trash cans
- Too much cement
- Name of park

Words to Describe Ideal Future Peace Park

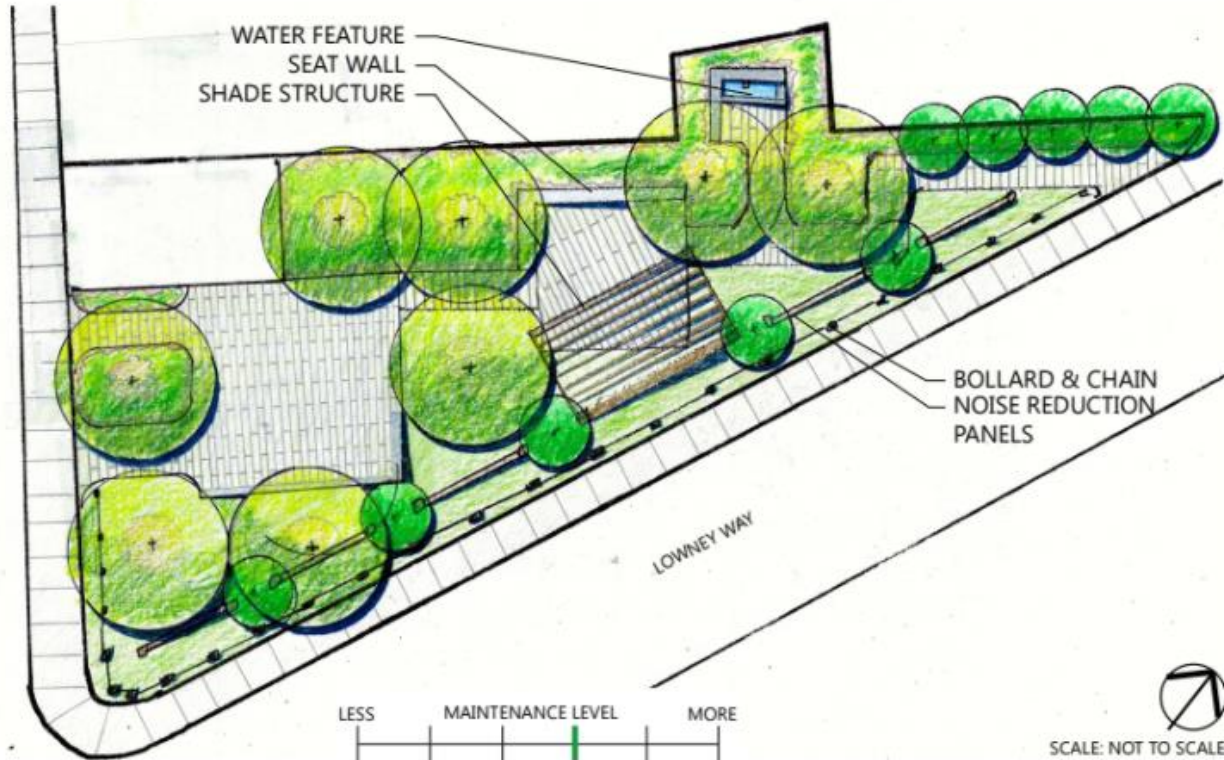
The larger the word, the more it was entered by respondents



serene
sustainability
welcome
flower filled
peaceful
attractive
open
green
active
vibrant
useful
safe
comfortable
pretty
love
trees
shaded
oasis
appealing
beautiful
bright
unifying
respected
clean
inviting
calm
maintained
colorful
quiet
tranquil
inclusive
community
peace
relax
seating
inspirational

Peace Park Designs

**Four designs based on June's Community Survey Results*



OPTION 1: SOLITUDE & SOLACE

Large and small gathering spaces are the primary organizational structure – big open areas connect directly to smaller spaces; within larger spaces there are places for individual meditation and connection. A water feature in the smallest space helps to block out the noise from the streets, while a large structure provide shade and seating. Traditional bollards and chains surround the park and panels suitable for hanging memorials or artwork provide additional noise reduction at the edge.



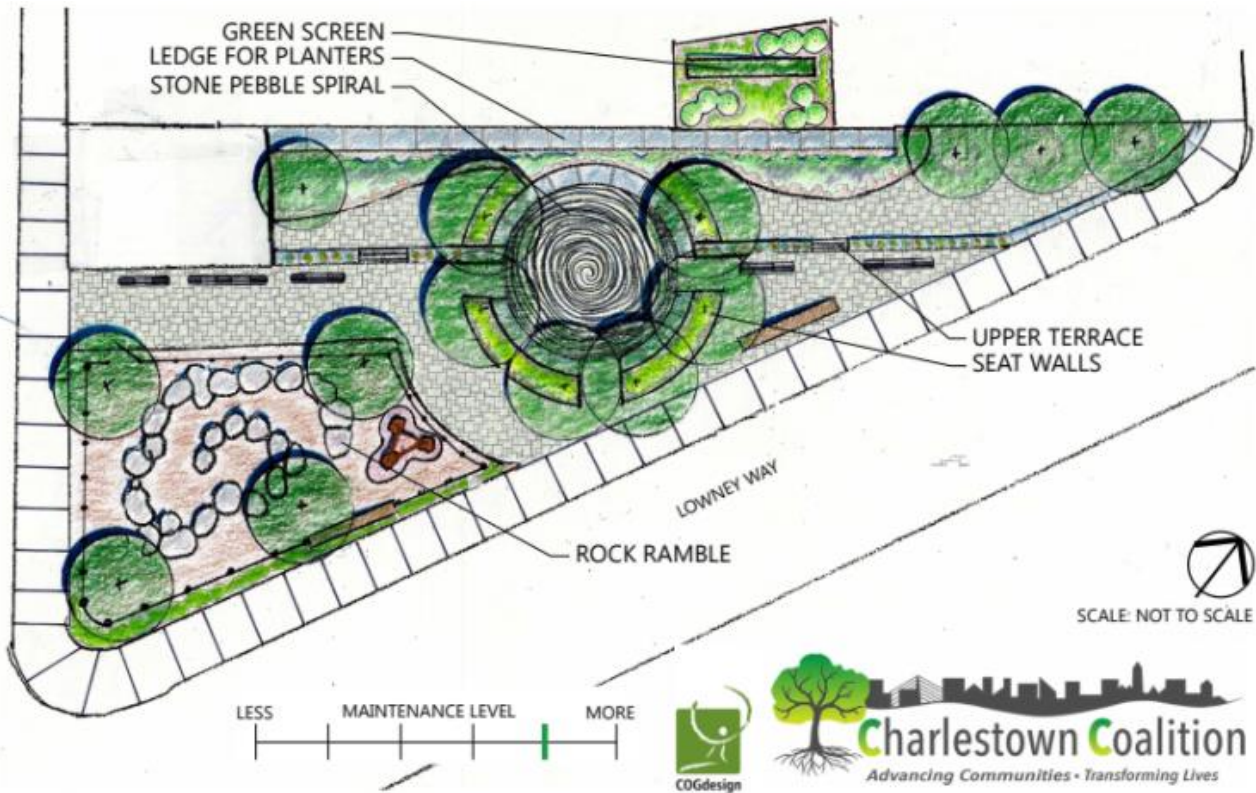
1. <https://www.interiordesign.net/>
2. <https://www.nmaarchitects.com/>
3. <https://museumandmemorial.sji.org/>

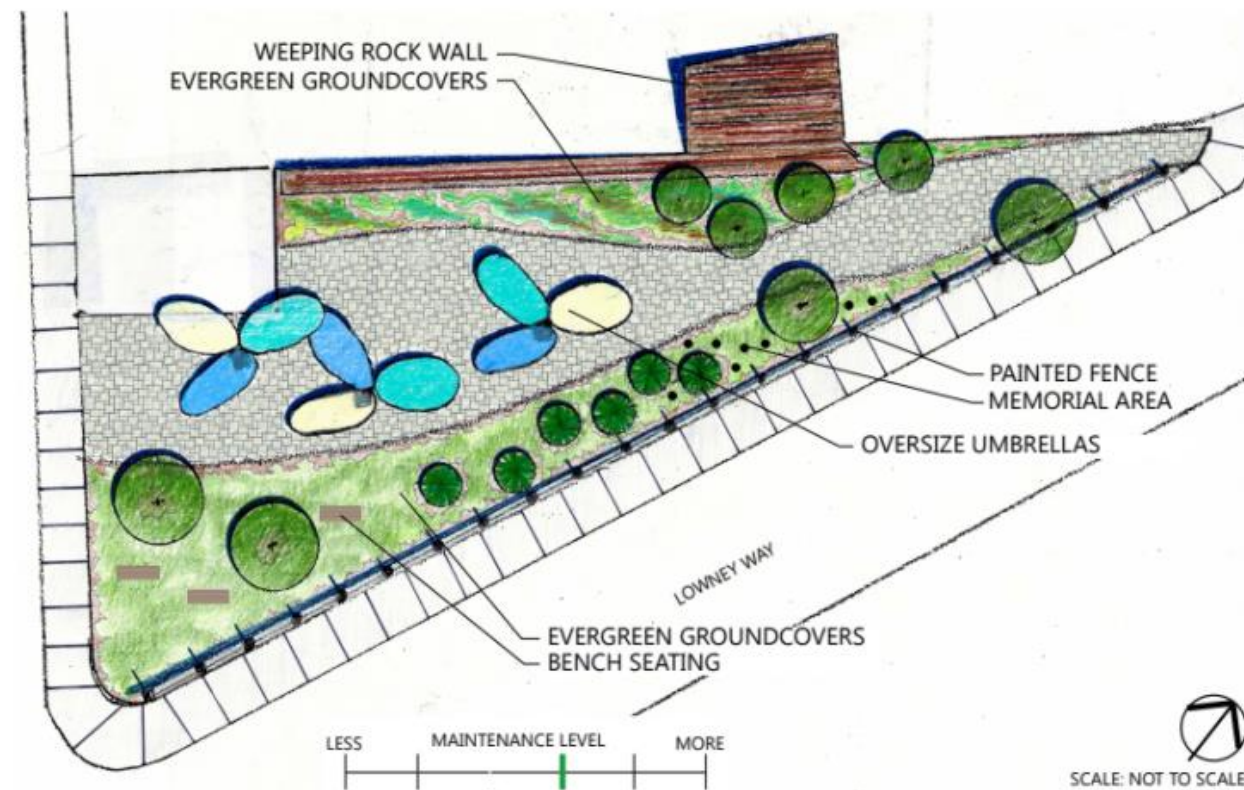
OPTION 2: TERRACED & SPIRALED

The central feature is made of river rocks of white, gray, and black in a spiral design. Surrounded by trees, the space will be shaded as the trees grow and create a natural canopy. The terraced area uses walls to provide a ledge for a long planter boxes and additional seating. Memorial Stones can be added along terrace where they help people remember those lost to violence or addiction. A green screen is added for vines to grow to screen neighbors and buffer noise. A rock ramble is designed for the corner of the park for children to explore and play. Large, irregular, stacked boulders create the feature, with one area where small ones can crawl to reach the spiral middle.



1. "Landscaping Ideas That Work" Julie Moir Messervy
2. <http://thelearninglandscape.blogspot.com/2011/06/this-whole-entire-thing-is-real.html>
3. <https://greenscreen.com/>





OPTION 3: CONTEMPLATE & CONGREGATE

Greenery is provided by various lush, ornamental evergreen and shade trees with ornamental groundcovers below. The main feature is a stone wall with water passing over it to cool the air and mask the noise. Modern style stone memorial plaques are set among groundcover, while small oval stones left by individuals can be placed among the memorial plaques. The memorial for Robert McGrath will be reinstalled. To shade and cool the center of the park are oversize umbrellas. The contemplative spaces are where a person can look out, or turn inward, with your own music and thoughts, ignoring foot traffic, enjoying the greenery.



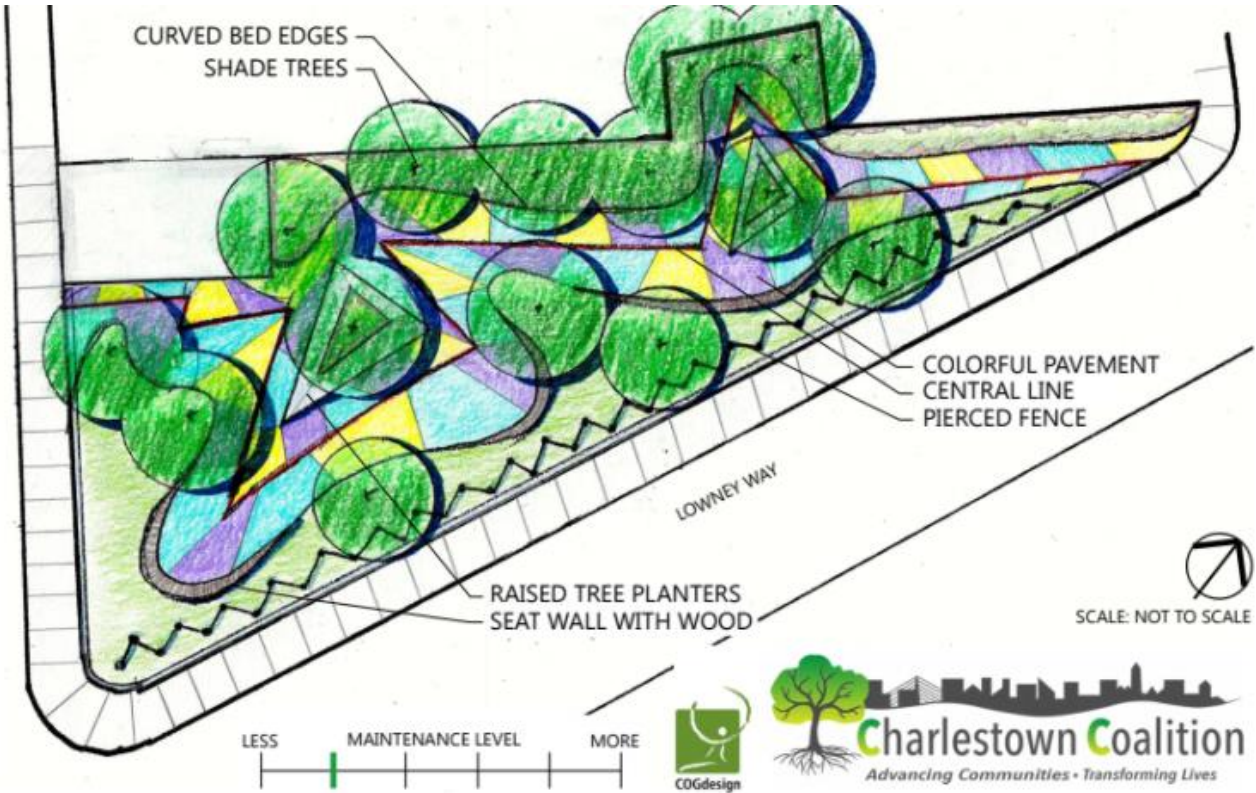
1. <https://espirozastone.com/landscaping-pool-stone/>
2. <https://davernfarm.wordpress.com/2013/09/16/the-overflowing-garden/>
3. <https://shadesysteminc.com/hall/>

OPTION 4: EMBRACE & REMEMBER

The organizing structure is a jagged line cutting through the center – invoking the history walks in Boston and Charlestown this line symbolizes the journey loved ones take through remembrance and grief. While often painful, life can still be joyful, happy, and colorful, reflected in the colors of the pavement. Centrally located raised tree planters double as seating, and seat walls with wood seats make for more comfortable lounging. The edges are deliberately loose to evoke the welcoming embrace of family and friends.



1. <https://www.forms-surfaces.com/image-galleries/vector-seating-system>
2. <https://www.archinfo.sk/kalendarium/ceska-cena-za-architekturu.html>
3. <https://www.extermalworksindia.co.uk/entry/121835/full-BASTYLE/Custom-concrete-tree-planters-St-Jans-Molenbeek-8/#description-block>

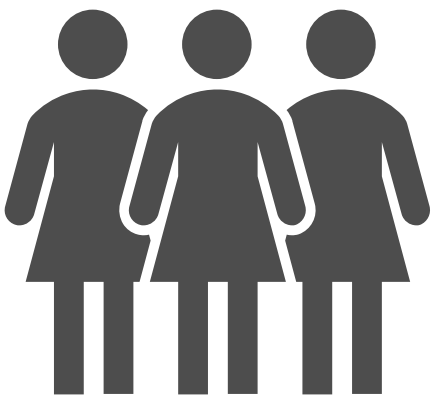
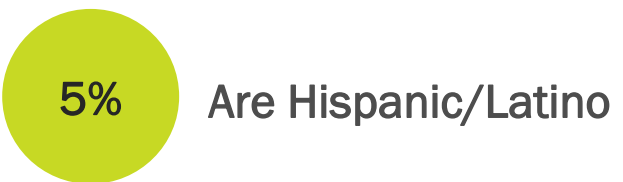


Peace Park Design Poll Results

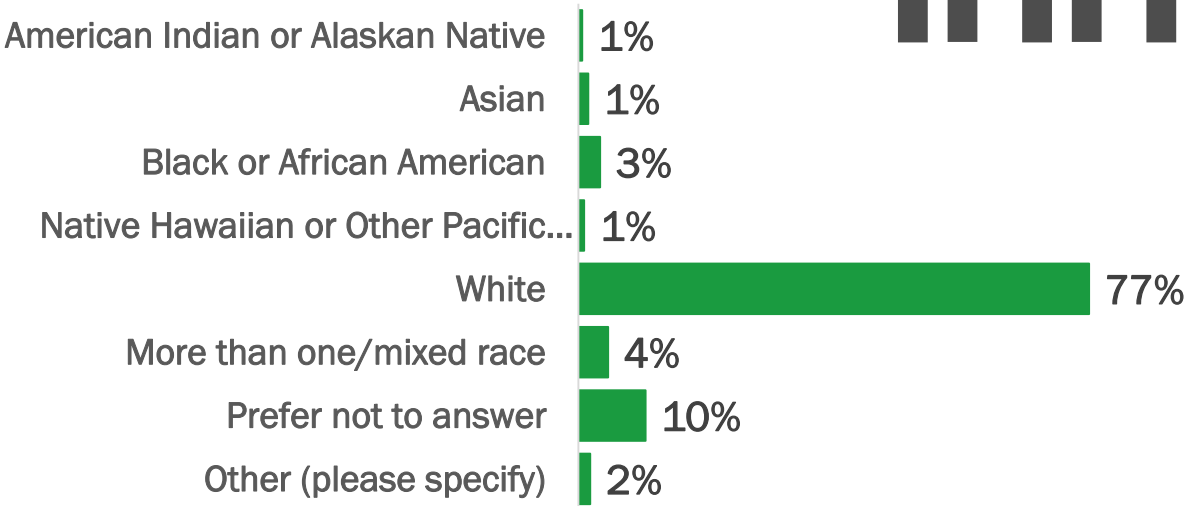
A total of 337 people completed the poll from August 25th-September 9th



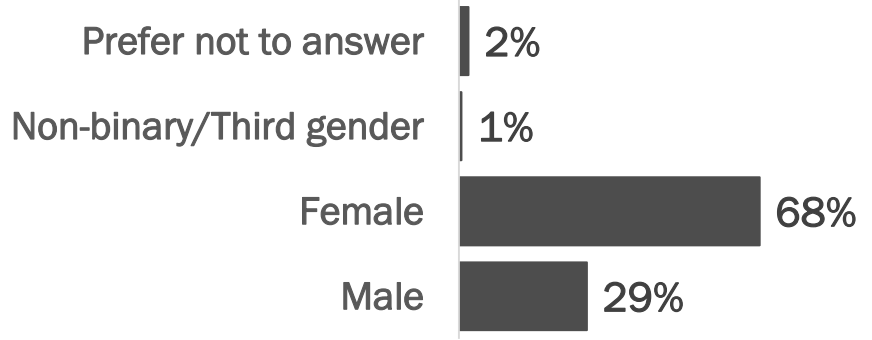
Who took the poll survey?



Race of Respondents

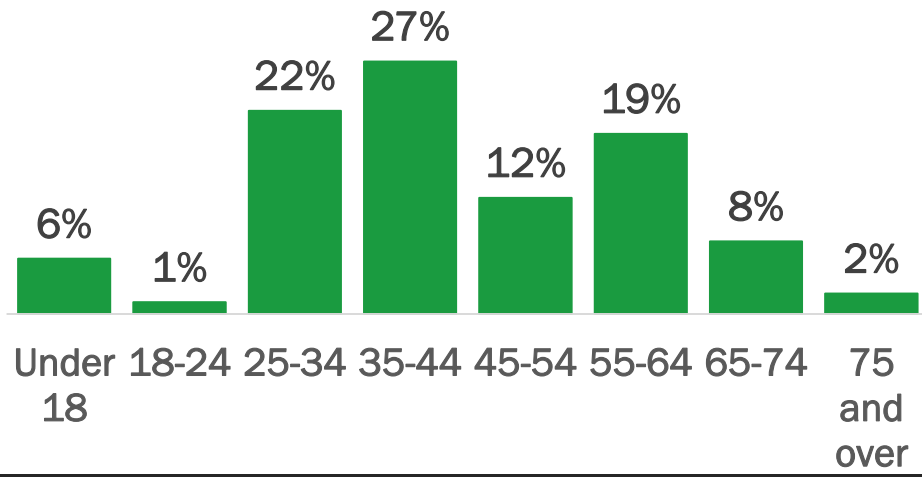


Gender of Respondents



Age of Respondents

Almost 50% of the respondents were between 25-44 years old



2.9% choose "Prefer not to answer"

Design Options Ranking Results

To see design options, click [HERE](#)

Fifty-three percent of the survey respondents chose "Solitude & Solace" as their first design choice

	1 st Choice % (N)	2 nd Choice % (N)	3 rd Choice % (N)	4 th Choice % (N)
Option 1-Solitude & Solace	53% (144)	23% (63)	11% (31)	12% (32)
Option 2-Terraced & Spiraled	23% (59)	24% (63)	35% (91)	17% (45)
Option 3-Contemplate & Congregate	12% (31)	29% (73)	36% (91)	22% (56)
Option 4-Embrace & Remember	17% (44)	20% (52)	15% (39)	47% (120)



What Respondents Liked About Designs

- Simplicity
- Focus on reflection & remembrance
- Low maintenance
- Shade
- Greenery
- Noise cancelling
- Sustainable
- Natural
- Seating
- Water feature
- Ability to congregate with others
- Shading
- Play areas for children



What Respondents Disliked or Had Concerns About Designs

- Elements that may get wear and tear and not withstand harsh weather, such as umbrellas
- High maintenance elements such as the spiral rocks
- Colors that don't blend into surroundings (e.g. colored pavement)
- Passive designs that wouldn't draw people to the park
- Concern around short and long-term maintenance of park
- Hanging space for artwork
- Need more emphasis on native plants
- Water features
- Concerned around safety
- Play areas for children



Additional Elements Respondents Would Like

- Gathering tables
- Waterfalls on a press basis
- Interactive memorial
- Children's elements
- Use of local plants and pollinators
- Barriers for road noise
- Drinking water fountain
- Prayer/meditation space
- More lighting
- Flowers
- More seating
- Trash cans
- Tie into the history of the neighborhood
- Maintenance plan

Questions?

In the interest of time, please remain muted and type your question in the “Chat” and we will answer them in the order received for as long as time permits.

If your question does not get answered during this meeting, or if you have a question once this meeting is over, please submit them to Ginaya Greene Murray at Ggreene-Murray@Partners.org



Want to be more involved?

Please contact Charlestown Coalition Director, *Sarah Coughlin*, to discuss how you can be more involved at SCoughlin1@Partners.org.

To stay informed with this process and receive Coalition updates, please subscribe to our monthly newsletter at **CharlestownCoalition.org**.

Thank you!

