

Realizing Reggie Wong Park

Chinatown Community Workshop Report, August 2018
Community Assessment of Freeway Exposure and Health

On August 8, 2018, project team members from Olin College, Linnean Solutions, The Chinatown Community Land Trust, and Tufts University hosted a community workshop focused around potential improvements to Reggie Wong Memorial Park (RWP) in Boston, MA. The purpose of this workshop was to engage Chinatown community members with the results of recent research investigating local air pollution, near-highway community health impacts, and Chinatown-focused user-oriented design work. Outcomes of this event include prioritization of short- and long-term goals for community-driven improvements to Reggie Wong Park.

Context

Reggie Wong Memorial Park is a small but active community park in Boston's Chinatown neighborhood. The park measures approximately 0.35 acres and includes one volleyball court and two combination volleyball/basketball courts. During the day, the park goes relatively unused except as a gathering location for local people experiencing homelessness. In the evenings, the park becomes very active with basketball and nine-man volleyball players, serving as home court to the Boston Knights Chinese Athletic Club.

Functioning as the community's primary outdoor recreational site, RWP is located nearby the I-90 and I-93 interchange and sits along Kneeland Street between highway on and off ramps. Due to the potential for exposure to near-highway pollution, RWP became a study site as part of the Community Assessment of Freeway Exposure and Health (CAFEH) project led by Tufts University with partners from local communities, other universities, and municipal and regional agencies. Researchers from Tufts completed two rounds of local air quality monitoring in June of 2016 and April of 2018 through this grant-funded project.



In addition to the assessment of local air pollution conducted through Tufts University, project team members from Olin College of Engineering engaged Chinatown community members in a user-oriented design process. The purpose of this work was to further understand how the park is used and regarded by the community and how future changes to the park could integrate air quality and user health protection with community-based improvements. Through this process, researchers from Olin interacted with over 70 park users to understand the community's priorities and goals surrounding RWP and to develop a list of design requirements for future work.

DESIGN REQUIREMENTS 設計元素

■ in 1 category

■ 2

■ 3

Seating
Bathroom
Shade
Water Fountain
Trash Cans
Tables and Chairs

COMFORT

舒適

座椅
洗手間
樹蔭
飲水泉
垃圾桶
桌椅

Resurfaced Courts
Aligned Courts
Integrated Storage
New Hoops
Removed Curb
Seating
Lighting
Water Fountain

SPORTS

體育運動

重鋪球場
調準球場
綜合存物
新球架
拆除路邊圍石
座椅
照明
飲水泉

Pollution-Deflection Walls
Trash Cans
Vegetation
Removed Curb
Shade
Bathroom

HEALTH

健康

緩解污染
牆壁
垃圾桶
植物
拆除路邊圍石
遮蔭
洗手間

Vegetation
Shade
Artwork
Walls
Tables and Chairs

BEAUTY

美觀

植物
遮蔭
藝術
牆壁
桌椅

Workshop

In August of 2018, project team members hosted a local workshop to share the results of the air quality evaluation and user-oriented design process. The purpose of the workshop was to further define design priorities and to build the capacity of participants to advocate for health and community-driven improvements to the park.

Workshop participants were primarily members of the nine-man volleyball community, representing a highly active and invested park user-group. Participants engaged in individual and group activities to explore the identity of RWP in the context of four areas including comfort, sports, health, and beauty. These activities allowed for the development of both short-term, feasible design priorities as well as long-term, ideal park improvements.



Outcomes

The August 2018 workshop was an opportunity for in-depth engagement with several RWP users and allowed for the development of short-term, low budget priorities based on the results of wide-reaching community engagement and health-driven pollution assessment. The workshop activities also further defined the cultural pride of Boston’s Chinese-American community and explored how the Chinatown identity should be reflected in the RWP design.



Workshop results are presented by priority rankings within each of the four areas including comfort, sports, health, and beauty.

COMFORT	
<i>Priority Ranking</i>	<i>Workshop Details</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bathrooms 2. Trash cans 3. Seating 4. Water fountain 5. Shade 6. Tables and chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water fountain and bathroom could be together ○ Key to bathroom held by nine-man teams ○ Seating similar to bleachers, possibly collapsible ○ Two permanent trashcans at the ends of the courts ○ Improve park maintenance and security

SPORTS	
<i>Priority Ranking</i>	<i>Workshop Details</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resurface and align courts, remove curb 2. Higher fences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curb removal to avoid trip hazard ○ Higher fence by six feet to keep balls inside park

3. Lighting 4. Seating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low wall around the park perimeter for seating and to prevent trash, dust ○ Resurfacing of courts to include new post holes
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HEALTH	
<i>Priority Ranking</i>	<i>Workshop Details</i>
1. Walls for air pollution 2. Trash cans 3. Curb removal 4. Vegetation 5. Bathrooms 6. Shade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Green vegetation on walls

BEAUTY	
<i>Priority Ranking</i>	<i>Workshop Details</i>
1. Artwork 2. Vegetation and walls 3. Shade 4. Tables and chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High vegetative wall on the parking lot side ○ Tall shrubs to prevent dust, debris, provide shade ○ Decorative lighting for ambiance and cultural identity ○ Memorial artwork or plaque that honors Reggie Wong, nine-man volleyball, and Boston's Chinatown

Three sets of improvement strategies are presented in a phased approach based on community workshop results and project team research.

PHASE ONE

estimated \$100k

High-impact, short-term improvements for the park's core users, in order of priority

- **Resurface and realign courts, remove curb:** resurface playing area with new asphalt, realign courts so they are no longer staggered, rearrange volleyball courts to the interior of the park rather than roadside, and remove the curb to avoid tripping hazard.
- **Replace basketball hoops:** replace and re-install basketball hoops to be aligned with courts.
- **Increase fence height:** increase fence height by six feet to prevent loss of volleyballs into the street.

PHASE TWO

estimated \$200-400k (additional)

Supplementary actions to improve park aesthetic, improve accessibility, and highlight cultural significance, in order of priority

- **Install bathrooms and storage space:** if feasible, install bathroom facilities for park users and upgrade/integrate storage for volleyball equipment.
- **Build pollution-deflecting walls:** create a physical barrier along the southeast edges of the park to block prevailing winds and reduce exposure to air pollutants.

- **Install artwork, cultural markers:** add elements of beauty via plaques, murals, lighting (e.g. Chinese lanterns) which identify and celebrate the cultural history of Reggie Wong and the Chinatown neighborhood.
- **Plant vegetation:** increase the park's greenery, create shade, and improve air quality with thick vegetation in the form of ivy, shrubs, or more trees.
- **Install spectator seating:** create seating for recreational spectators, families, and other park users by installing bleachers, potentially a collapsible system for added space.
- **Install elements for inclusivity:** items may include small children's playground or elderly exercise equipment.

PHASE THREE

estimated \$++

Long-term, ideal improvements for RWP in the case of relocation, additional land acquisition, or significant funding, in no particular order

- **Increase number of courts:** allocate space for additional volleyball courts.
- **Improve diversity of uses:** encourage new park users and improve inclusivity by designing diverse spaces and equipment, examples include increased green space, children's play area or sprinkler system, stationary exercise equipment, additional seating areas, a walking track.

Next steps

The outcomes of the August 2018 RWP workshop provide guidelines for park improvements based on deep community interactions and health-focused air quality assessment. The results of this workshop can be useful for generating wide-spread support of park improvements and for aiding Chinatown community organizations as they seek funding opportunities, such as Boston's Community Preservation Act funds.

Next steps include the transfer of ownership of project results and materials to the Chinatown Community Land Trust and local community champions via a second workshop or targeted meeting. Project team members are committed to supporting Chinatown community partners as they continue to make progress towards a thriving, healthy Reggie Wong Park.

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