

DISCUSSION ON THE PLAYGROUND ON THE GARDINER COMMON

The decision on the future of the playground on the Common was one of the key issues that needed to be addressed in the Plan for the Common. This issue was noted as a controversial one as the planning process began, and there was a good amount of discussion and viewpoints shared throughout the process. There were several factors that helped shape the decision on the location of the playground:

- ◆ Interviews and discussions with community members
- ◆ Input from the “Citizens for the Common Good” group (including their community survey)
- ◆ Feedback and discussion during the initial public meeting and later public workshop, results of the workshop questionnaire (groups, individuals)
- ◆ Planning, landscape design, and historical considerations (by the consultant and other professionals)

Further, those who were lukewarm or perhaps opposed to retaining the playground on the Common were interested in the example shown from the Boston Common. In this example, the well-designed, fenced, small playground fits into the overall park layout, and is seen as a positive, attractive and appropriately designed playground for a historic park.

All of these inputs were weighed carefully to determine the most appropriate action to take on the future of the Common’s playground. Some of the specific feedback from public workshop and community surveys included:

- ◆ Results from the public workshop questionnaire (Feb. 25, 2008): on the question of whether or not to keep the playground on the Common, the workshop groups were split between keeping the playground on the Common and relocating it, and the individual responses indicated slightly more individuals wanting to keep it on Common; comments from the questionnaires tended to request that if the playground stayed it should be a smaller, fenced, natural-colored playground kept away from fountain.
- ◆ Results from a previous “Citizens for the Common Good” group survey: the survey indicated that: 80% of the respondents (around 300) use the playground (have kids), 95% support replacing the playground, and 85% want it kept in same place (vs. “different place” or “somewhere else in town”).

Below is a summary of some of the key “pros and cons” which were factored into the decision on the playground. Some of the pros and cons relate specifically to the option to consider relocating the playground to the adjacent O.C. Woodman site (city-owned).

Keeping the playground on the Common

Pros:	Cons:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Keeps more people coming to use the Common (many who use the Common come because the playground is there for kids)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Seen as a use not fitting with the original, historic, intended use of the park◆ Playground interferes visually with

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Maintains the desired use of the Common by families (as an identified user group)(consideration of encouraging/supporting “appropriate” users and a diversity of users) ◆ Playground can be “downsized” so not to interfere with the fountain (visually or mulch in fountain) ◆ Playground is used during events held on Common, and used by church-going families 	<p>fountain, mulch gets in fountain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Playground is abused/vandalized by teenagers
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Option to move playground to Woodman Site

<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No interference with fountain ◆ Keeps playground close to the Common ◆ Removes a use seen as not fitting with the original, historic, intended use of the Common 	<p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Though only across the street, seen as a more isolated location ◆ Families/parents don’t feel they could/would use the Common (walking/jogging paths, etc.), would have to stay with kids on playground (end up using Woodman site not Common); ultimately moving the playground to Woodman could reduce the use of the Common by families ◆ Woodman is seen by some as an appropriate location for more quiet, passive park use (walking, picnicking, etc.), rather than an active use such as a playground ◆ The playground here would be closer to residences who may be negatively affected by noise
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