



March 7th, 2021

To: Members of the Ell Pond Feasibility Study Project Team

CC: Mayor Brodeur; Patrick Prendergast

Re: Ell Pond Park Feasibility Study

To Whom It May Concern:

We, the members of Zero Waste Melrose, understand that the City seeks community input on the potential redevelopment of the Ell Pond Park. Zero Waste Melrose (formerly the Melrose Recycling Committee) is an organization dedicated to reducing the generation of waste and advocating for responsible waste management. The irresponsible generation of waste and its disposal has a harmful effect on public health and the environment. We believe that when we address these issues, we achieve our ultimate goals of reducing our environmental impact, saving money, and keeping Melrose beautiful. Zero Waste Melrose works independently and in collaboration with the City to advocate for these goals.

We recommend that the Ell Pond Park redesign incorporate zero waste principles into the full lifecycle of the park, from construction, to active use, to end-of-life for the materials used in the park. Specific recommendations are:

1. Plan the park redesign and construction with a goal of zero/low waste. The project should minimize the materials sent to landfill/incineration during the construction process.
2. Use recycled materials wherever possible in the park. For example, source park benches and playground equipment that are made from recycled or reclaimed materials. Only use materials for which there is a known recycling/reuse option for end of life. (See below regarding synthetic turf fields).
3. Include park amenities that reduce waste generation. Specifically, the redesigned Ell Pond should include multiple water stations to allow park users to access water without the need for single-use plastic bottles. Plastic litter is a major problem in and around Ell Pond. The redesign should provide the opportunity to reduce usage of plastic bottles in the area. Water bubblers were once common in municipal parks in Melrose and the rest of the state, but they have been taken out over the years. Cities like Concord have shown that water bottle filling stations in outdoor recreational spaces increase public enjoyment and health and reduce the need for plastic water bottles. By selecting the right equipment and with proper maintenance, water bottle filling stations can function well for years in the outdoors.
4. Avoid the use of synthetic turf. Synthetic turf, typically made of shredded tires and other plastics, is essentially a carpet of plastic. Over years of active use and environmental exposure, the plastic turf breaks down and small plastic particles make their way into the surrounding environment and become permanent plastic pollution. While the manufacturers and installers claim these materials are recycled at end-of-life, multiple sources have disputed claims about the practical recyclability of synthetic turf fields. In addition, synthetic turf contains lead, mercury, cadmium and other toxic substances.

Unlike natural grass/turf, synthetic turf does not absorb heat or help to cool the environment. (Sources regarding synthetic turf fields concerns are: <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/12/artificial-turf-fields-are-piling-no-recycling-fix/603874/> and <https://www.safehealthyplayingfields.org/environmental-hazards>).

5. Make the strategic placement of a sufficient number of waste receptacles part of the plan design. While a small detail in the overall redesign, waste receptacles (preferably for trash, recyclables, and organic waste) are essential to capture waste and prevent littering in and around Ell Pond. The New York City Central Park Conservancy published a Trash Management and Recycling Handbook. The handbook discusses their strategies for capturing waste/litter in a high-usage urban park. While we recognize that Ell Pond is not Central Park, it is heavily used and will become more so in the years to come. [https://d17wymy1890hh0.cloudfront.net/new\\_images/report/CPC-Institute-Trash-Management-Recycling-Handbook.pdf?mtime=20190327134318](https://d17wymy1890hh0.cloudfront.net/new_images/report/CPC-Institute-Trash-Management-Recycling-Handbook.pdf?mtime=20190327134318) . Given the popularity of the Melrose Dog Park, dog waste composting should also be considered. Here is an example of an existing program: <https://www.cityoflafayette.com/dogwaste> .
6. Prevent litter from entering Ell Pond with the use of landscaping or other features. Zero Waste Melrose and other community groups participate in regular litter clean ups of the Ell Pond area. The amount of trash that enters the pond and can't be removed is significant and degrades the health of the pond ecosystem. Consider opportunities to use plants or fencing to screen the waterway from trash, yet still allow for the enjoyment of the pond.

Grant funding is available for many of these initiatives. For example, Keep America Beautiful has grant funding for trash and recycling receptacles and cigarette butt collection containers. Water filling stations have been funded by grants as well. RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts offers free consulting services and technical assistance for waste stream management. <https://recyclingworksma.com/about-recyclingworks/> Zero Waste Melrose can work with the City to identify relevant grants.

According to the Ell Pond Park Feasibility Study, the overarching goals of the project are to “Improve the performance of all site features and amenities” and “Strike a balance as we seek to improve both man-made and natural resources.” Our recommendations about waste reduction are consistent with the overall project goals, and also reflect the goals of our membership and many in the broader Melrose community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this planning process. Zero Waste Melrose is committed to collaborating with the City of Melrose on this project. We look forward to the next steps in the process.

Sincerely,

**ZERO WASTE MELROSE**  
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