

City of Chicopee
Department of Planning & Development

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**City's Responses to Comments Received During the Public Comment Period Regarding the
Proposed Western Massachusetts Post-9/11 & Service Dog Memorial Park**

During the public comment period, from January 21, 2021 to February 26, 2021, the City received many comments from members of the public regarding the proposed Western Massachusetts Post-9/11 & Service Dog Memorial Park. The City sincerely thanks everyone for their thoughtful and constructive participation in the process. The City considered all comments carefully and has responded to each below.

SUPPORT COMMENTS

Comment:

Love that the City is effectively using green space and beautifying it for people to use across Western MA.

Response:

The City is very excited to continue to implement elements that were identified by residents in its Open Space and Recreation Plan. The planned Western Massachusetts Post-9/11 & Service Dog Memorial Park is particularly special because it is designed for both our Chicopee community, and with its connection to Westover and the broader Veteran family, its reach includes the entire region and a larger group of stakeholders.

Comment:

The proposed Post-9/11 & Service Dog Memorial Park is an excellent idea, and the concept and plans are also excellent. I have viewed the online photos and other information, and I believe it would be an excellent addition to Chicopee, at a location where a park is definitely needed. Of course Chicopee has other great parks, and this new park would enter as a welcome addition.

Best wishes for a successful project and completion by your proposed dates. I look forward to visiting this new park with my family.

Response:

Chicopee prides itself on the strength of its parks system. With the addition of the Western Massachusetts Post-9/11 & Service Dog Memorial Park the City will realize its first activated public park for the Westover neighborhood allowing the City to capitalize on this underutilized green space.

Comment:

I am reaching out to express my gratitude and appreciation for this project! As a homeowner in the City of Chicopee it makes me extremely proud and happy to see a dog park be dedicated to Veterans and their Service Dogs. The first of its kind to my knowledge in the area. With that said I would love to volunteer and help in any way I can with this project, if it is needed. I believe I have skills that would be of value and would love to be a part of such a wonderful addition to our city.

Response:

The City is very excited by the unique nature of this park and happy to provide a new asset and amenity to residents of and visitors to Chicopee. It is wonderful to hear your enthusiasm and your interest in getting involved! If you would like to get involved I welcome you to call the Planning Department at (413) 594-1516.

Comment:

I recently watched the online video about the plans for the new 9/11 Service Dog Memorial Park and I wanted to let you know that it sounds phenomenal! It's impressive the way the plans incorporate a variety of elements so that there's something for everyone to enjoy, and that accessibility & sustainability was factored in, but mostly I love that it honors our four-legged companions. This is something near and dear to my heart since my dad is a Korean War Veteran who loved animals – not to mention my own love of animals as well. If you need volunteers to help with anything, I would be thrilled to participate in this very exciting process.

Response:

This park has very intentionally attempted to create a space that will be inviting to everyone, with a particular focus on creating inter-generational interactions. Further, the Concept Plan capitalizes on the site's topography and natural features to harmoniously bring together the various park elements. It is wonderful to hear your enthusiasm and your interest in getting involved! If you would like to get involved I welcome you to call the Planning Department at (413) 594-1516.

Comment:

Interest in offering services to create statues for the project. Has professional experience in sculpture and is currently working on a similar project in Washington.

Response:

It is wonderful to hear your enthusiasm and your interest in getting involved! If you would like to get involved I welcome you to call the Planning Department at (413) 594-1516.

SITE LOCATION COMMENTS

Comment:

While I'm generally familiar with the neighborhood chosen, I couldn't help but think about the Uniroyal property and/or other remediated properties that run along the Chicopee River. Was this area considered? If feasible, it certainly would be an extension to beautifying the other end of downtown Chicopee? Would these properties also be appropriate for dog shows (bringing business to the city) by creating a dual purpose development? By the way - I know nothing about running dog shows. Certainly keeping with honoring Post 9/11, those who have given so much, and those who have served/serving.

Response:

Great to hear residents thinking about Uniroyal and its future creative reuse opportunities as well as the Delta Park location to the northwest of Chicopee Center. We are excited to see what the future holds for these two sites with incredible river access. However, Uniroyal and other river locations were not considered for this particular project as a link to Westover Air Reserve Base was desired. Further, there are guiding Vision Plans for Uniroyal's redevelopment and for other riverfront properties that are in earlier stages of implementation. The selected site for this project is on land that is owned by the City, and was given to the City by the federal government during the 1970s when Westover was downsizing. The location was determined to be an appropriate site for this park proposal.

The Western Massachusetts Post-9/11 & Service Dog Memorial Park will feature Chicopee's first off-leash dog park. The City is excited to offer this amenity to its residents. It's the first, but if successful, it won't be the last.

Comment:

On looks, there is a massive empty lot across Westover Road, electrical lines right along the viewpoint, a Chicopee Electric Light Department maintenance lot and a gas pipe access area. If money is going to be invested in this, more things need to be done than what was proposed.

Response:

While at a glance, elements of the neighboring properties may seem incompatible with the character and atmosphere of a park, this park's historic and contemporary surroundings are deeply woven into the spirit of the proposed Western Massachusetts Post-9/11 & Service Dog Memorial Park. As a place to celebrate Veterans military service, this beautiful untouched wooded parcel with varied slopes provides a peaceful spot within the former bounds of Westover Air Reserve Base for Veterans and residents alike to come together.

The City can also work with the Westover Metropolitan Development Corporation (WMDC) which owns the undeveloped parcel across Westover Road on the potential of screening that parcel with a tree line if and when it is developed.

Comment:

They say you can't fight City Hall. I would rather not have this built, but if it is, there should be more thought put into it. Possibly put in the lot across Westover Road? Turn that lot into parking and for

food trucks or a concert area? More signage, park patrols and fines that are enforced? Fences along Lynwood Drive to block people from walking out of the area and just wandering through?

Response:

While this park is meant to be a celebration of the successes of our service men and women, it is also a place of victorious reflection and honor. This park isn't intended to be used for large events or concerts that require more parking. The concept does take into consideration fencing along Lynwood Drive as well as a gated entrance for maintenance purposes from Lynwood Drive. The City does not own the vacant parcel across Westover Road while the selected site for the park is already part of the City's park system and was donated to the City for the purpose of public recreation.

Upon construction, the park will have similar rules and regulations as established for all other parks within the City's system.

Comment:

I think the concept of a 9/11 Memorial to Service Dogs is a great idea and I truly believe that nature and park spaces are very important to the health and well being of our residents, but I am very concerned about the proposal for this location and the negative effects it will have on our Doverbrook neighborhood.

Response:

Thought and care was made to place each park element in a location that was in benefit to the abutting neighbors and minimized conflicts with residential abutters. The main activity and parking areas are as far away from homes as possible. The dog park is tucked into a corner and designed with a noise barrier earthen berm and double hedge plantings to reduce any noise to the neighbors. All best practices for dog park design were also incorporated to reduce the potential for nuisance noise. These include: visual barriers between the separated small breed and large breed park areas, visual barriers between walking trails and all dog park fencing as much as possible, limiting the length of open "run" areas, and tucking more than half of the dog park into existing forest which helps cut down on noise as well.

Comment:

Reference made to the Buena Vista Lot – which may have a Conservation Easement. This lot was historically maintained by a previous Chair of the Conservation Commission. Wants to confirm if the park's location impacts the Buena Vista Lot.

Response:

After extensive research through historical records and documents with the Hampden County Registry of Deeds, the City was unable to locate an original map of the 'Buena Vista Lot' to determine the exact bounds of that parcel. The City did identify a recent survey that made reference to the 'Buena Vista Lot' – this can be found at the Hampden County Registry of Deeds at Book 355 Page 59. The land referenced as the 'Buena Vista Lot' on the said survey is not in the vicinity of the Post 9/11 and Service Dog Memorial Park. At present time, the Chair of the Conservation Commission does not maintain any lot referred to as the Buena Vista Lot.

PROJECT NAME COMMENTS

Comment:

My final thought is that I really think the name should be City of Chicopee Post 9/11 and Service Dog Memorial Park. We should be marketing our City with every opportunity we can as it reflects positively on Chicopee and that we are MOVERS & SHAKERS! Just like Chicopee's Downtown Get Down event. Let's put our City's name on it! I am going to shoot Mayor Vieau a note about this last one...as it's just too important, in my opinion.

Response:

The City is proud of the opportunity to host this important park. We understand that the naming of anything is important and engenders a sense of ownership. This park aims to attract visitors from the neighborhood as well as the greater region. For this reason, we hoped that the Western Massachusetts Post-9/11 & Service Dog Memorial Park would help those Veterans throughout the region connect and feel comfortable visiting no matter what community they call home. This project has also been a goal of a broad coalition of Veteran's Organizations who represent Veteran's from across the region and state. It felt important to honor that collaboration in the Park's official name.

FACILITIES, AMENITIES, AND MAINTENANCE COMMENTS

Comment:

Will there be restroom facilities in this park?

Response:

No restroom facilities are proposed at this park.

Comment:

Will there be a spray park?

Response:

A splash pad/sprayground is not proposed at this park.

Comment:

Will there be lighting along the trails?

Response:

No lighting is proposed at this park. Normal park hours will be sunrise to sunset, per current park rules and regulations. Existing lighting along Westover Road should be sufficient to light the parking area but this will be determined during the design and engineering process.

Comment:

Will there be some way to contact emergency services throughout the park in case they are needed?

Response:

A great idea and we will consider adding a blue light system in the park.

Comment:

With food insecurity so prevalent and the ability to access fresh produce is challenging for some, what do you think about a second community garden for the City in a different area than Lincoln Grove? Or using the parking area for another Farmer's Market? I know there's a Farmer's Market at the 391 Underpass but it might be nice to shop for fresh produce without the exhaust fumes.

Response:

At this time there is no plan to add a Farmer's Market or Community Garden to this park. However, food security is an important issue and if a group of committed residents was interested in establishing a Garden or a Farmer's Market, the City would be open to discussing such opportunities for collaboration. Currently, a second community garden location is being constructed in Rivers Park in the Willimansett neighborhood. This location will provide additional community garden plots beyond those available at Lincoln Grove.

Comment:

I am also worried about the dogs. There isn't anything stopping people from walking their dogs throughout the residential area. Dogs are not allowed in the area because of feces issues. Will there be anything to stop that?

Response:

The dog park is fully fenced and the edge of Lynwood Drive is also fenced. Any gateway entrances/exits can post signage regarding that issue for park users. With a formal parking area at the main entrance off Westover Road, there will be no reason for park visitors to park on Lynwood Drive to access the dog park.

Comment:

Residents on Lynnwood Drive will be directly facing the proposed park. What protections will be installed to buffer noise (especially from barking dogs) coming from the park for these residents? Will there be any lighting that may be overpowering to these close residents? At this time, we already have cars that park on Lynnwood Drive during lunch hours. I believe these folks come from the surrounding industries. They leave a lot of trash from local fast food restaurants while parked there.

Response:

The dog park is tucked into a corner and designed with a noise barrier earthen berm and double hedge plantings to reduce any noise to the neighbors. All best practices for dog park design were also incorporated to reduce barking as well. These include; visual barriers between the small breed and large breed dog parks, visual barriers between walking trails and all dog park fencing as much as possible, limiting the length of open "run" areas, and tucking more than half of the dog park into an existing forest which helps cut down on noise as well. No lighting is proposed at this time and therefore will not impact Doverbrook neighbors. Hopefully, with a formal parking area (and trash receptacles) at the main entrance off Westover Road, this will discourage park users from parking on Lynwood Drive.

Comment:

Will there be any security cameras in the park?

Response:

This is something that will be considered in key locations in partnership with the Chicopee Police Department and/or Westover Air Reserve Base at a later date.

Comment:

I have seen many trash barrels overflowing in our City parks in the past. I'm concerned that the Chicopee Parks Department does not have the manpower or resources to maintain the sanitation of this park. I would hope that visitors would clean up after their dogs and these barrels would need to be emptied in a timely fashion to control the odors.

Response:

Thought and care will be used to locate trash receptacles and dog waste stations in the most appropriate area. Rules can be added to signage throughout the trail's entrances. This park will also benefit from a variety of stakeholder groups that will likely be donating time to assist with maintenance.

The Parks Department is also planning to add increased services to this park for when it is constructed. The Parks Department will be well prepared for these increased needs when the time arises.

Comment:

Would it be possible to put the dog park and the nature play and fitness areas at the other end of the property away from the residents of Doverbrook?

Response:

This area was considered during the initial concept design; however, the current location was determined to be the ideal layout for the entire park.

Comment:

The plans I've seen do not show bathrooms. Assuming they are included, they will require replenishment of toilet paper and paper towels, as well as cleaning, on a frequent basis. The cost of supplies and the manpower needed to accomplish this, as well as trash disposal throughout the park, means a long term commitment of resources by the City with a benefit limited to only a small portion of city residents. Such expenditure of funds are better committed to areas such as homelessness and public safety.

Response:

No restroom facilities are proposed at this park.

Comment:

Access via walking paths to Lynwood Drive. The project plans suggest two (2) access paths onto Lynwood Drive. It is our hope and current understanding that these walks/paths will be gated and for emergency access only. Is this correct?

Response:

Yes, this is correct. The entrances off Lynnwood Drive are for Doverbrook residents. It is intended that with a formal parking area and clear trail entrances off Westover Road, that park users will be deterred from using Lynnwood Drive as an area to park.

Comment:

Security and aesthetic surety. What is the City's plan to assure residents in the area that the park will be maintained aesthetically (i.e. trash removal, regular landscaping, maintenance of equipment) and more importantly provide security, enforcement of after-hours trespassing and to deter any unlawful, criminal and/or dangerous behavior/activity both within the park as well as its neighboring community?

Response:

The Western Massachusetts Post-9/11 & Service Dog Memorial Park will become the newest addition to the Chicopee Parks System. The Parks & Recreation Department will assume responsibility for the maintenance of this park. The park will have posted signage alerting residents and visitors of the park's normal hours of operation from sunrise to sunset. The inclusion of any cameras on site will be considered in partnership with the Chicopee Police Department and/or Westover Air Reserve Base at a later date.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMENTS**Comment:**

Being along a road where people speed at least 40mph is just not safe for multiple cars and foot traffic. We are also in an industrial area, where massive trucks regularly come down the road. It is hard to get into the residential area as it is. The roads around here that people will use to get here aren't built for this kind of traffic. People will come down Pendleton Avenue and cut through the Doverbrook condo area and cause safety issues for pedestrians, drivers and parked cars.

Response:

The parking lot and main entrances to the trails and the dog park are off Westover Road and should discourage drivers from using this arterial road to access the park.

Comment:

The streets are narrow enough as it is with people parking on one side of the street, essentially making streets one-way through most of the area. The proposed parking lot isn't big enough and will lead to people parking on the street, more than likely throughout the condo area and on the wrong sides of the street, causing safety issues again for residents.

Response:

The current paved parking lot shown on the concept plan includes thirty-three (33) parking spaces. What may not have been clear is the additional overflow parking on the grass-paving shown behind the guardrail along Westover Road will provide approximately thirty (30) additional parking spaces. This volume of parking has been determined to be adequate during normal operations and during any special events that may happen at the park.

Comment:

The intersection of Honeysuckle Drive and Westover Road has a history of numerous accidents, at least one which was fatal. This park will bring even more traffic to this intersection. Is there any thought of installing a traffic light at this intersection? We already have a lot of traffic cutting through our neighborhood as many use Pendleton Avenue and Honeysuckle Drive as a cut-through to reach Westover Road from Memorial Drive. This park will definitely increase this traffic coming through our neighborhood and also down the surrounding streets right outside of Doverbrook (Casey Drive and Bostwick Lane)

Response:

The park's parking area has been designed as a one-way loop. Meaning, park visitors will enter the parking lot at the eastern end of the lot (closest to Lynwood Drive) and exit at the western end of the lot (towards Memorial Drive). With the primary access to the park being from Memorial Drive to Westover Road, the design has minimized any need for visitors leaving the park driving towards the Honeysuckle Drive intersection.

We will refer this question to the Department of Public Works and the Engineering Department and request an opinion regarding this intersection. However, if these Departments make a determination that improvements are needed at this intersection, such improvements would be made through a separate project and not the park project.

Comment:

What will prevent visitors to the park from parking on Doverbrook streets, especially if the proposed parking lot on Westover Road is full?

Response:

The current paved parking lot shown on the proposed plans includes thirty-three (33) parking spaces. What may not have been clear is the additional overflow parking on the grass-paving shown behind the guardrail along Westover Road will provide approximately thirty (30) additional parking spaces. This total number of parking spaces will be sufficient to support normal park operations and any special events that may occur in the park.

Comment:

A large portion of the proposed parks abuts Doverbrook Estates Condominiums, in which dog ownership is restricted. The park would not be used by local residents. Most users would arrive/depart by car.

Response:

The fenced, off-leash dog park area of this larger park project represents only one element of the park's design. There are many elements/amenities included in the Concept Plan that will be of interest to users not utilizing the dog park, including Doverbrook residents. These amenities including walking trails, gathering spaces, and playgrounds designed specifically for this park.

Comment:

Increased traffic at the intersection of Westover Road, Honeysuckle Drive and Padgette Street. This area is already prone to automobile accidents, at least one of which resulted in an unfortunate fatality. Is there any consideration of the installation of a traffic signal at this location?

Response:

The park's parking area has been designed as a one-way loop. Meaning, park visitors will enter the parking lot at the eastern end of the lot (closest to Lynwood Drive) and exit at the western end of the lot (towards Memorial Drive). With the primary access to the park being from Memorial Drive to Westover Road, the design has minimized any need for visitors leaving the park driving towards the Honeysuckle Drive intersection.

We will refer this question to the Department of Public Works and the Engineering Department and request an opinion regarding this intersection. However, if these Departments make a determination that improvements are needed at this intersection, such improvements would be made through a separate project and not the park project.

Comment:

The traffic on Westover Road and Honeysuckle Drive (and adjacent streets) will increase, adding to noise and an increase in through traffic in a residential area.

Response:

Careful consideration for Doverbrook residents has heavily influenced the overall park and each element's location within the park.

The dog park is tucked into a corner and designed with a noise barrier earthen berm and double hedge plantings to reduce any noise to the neighbors. All best practices for dog park design were also incorporated to reduce barking as well. These include; visual barriers between the small breed and large breed dog parks, visual barriers between walking trails and all dog park fencing as much as possible, limiting the length of open "run" areas, and tucking more than half of the dog park into an existing forest which helps cut down on noise as well.

Additionally, The Park's parking area has been designed as a one-way loop. Meaning, park visitors will enter the parking lot at the eastern end of the lot (closest to Lynwood Drive) and exit at the western end of the lot (towards Memorial Drive). With the primary access to the park being from Memorial Drive to Westover Road, the design has minimized any need for visitors leaving the park driving towards the Honeysuckle Drive intersection.

NOISE COMMENTS

Comment:

The increase noise created by dogs barking and voice (or whistle) controls by owners will increase the ambient noise level to the detriment of nearby residences.

Response:

Careful consideration for the wellbeing of Doverbrook residents has heavily influenced the park's design and layout. The dog park is tucked into a corner and designed with a noise barrier berm and double hedge plantings to reduce any noise to the neighbors. All best practices for dog park design were also incorporated to reduce barking as well. These include; visual barriers between small and large dog park, visual barriers between walking trails and all dog park fencing as much as possible, limiting the length of open "run" areas, and tucking more than half of the dog park into an existing forest which helps cut down on noise as well.

Comment:

Increased noise and visual buffers along Lynwood Drive. What is being done/considered to minimize noise and nuisance to residents on Lynwood Drive?

Response:

Careful consideration for the wellbeing of Doverbrook residents has heavily influenced the park's design and layout. The dog park is tucked into a corner and designed with a noise barrier berm and double hedge plantings to reduce any noise to the neighbors. All best practices for dog park design were also incorporated to reduce barking as well. These include; visual barriers between the small breed and large breed dog parks, visual barriers between walking trails and all dog park fencing as much as possible, limiting the length of open "run" areas, and tucking more than half of the dog park into an existing forest which helps cut down on noise as well.

TRANSPARENCY COMMENTS**Comment:**

I am hoping there is an ability to possibly have a meeting and zoom call with residents who want to bring input into this.

Response:

Multiple community meeting were held to provide the Design Team with community input to inform the project concept plans – these were held at Westover Metropolitan Airport (7/9/19), American Legion Post 452 (7/15/19), and the Doverbrook Estates (8/13/19)

This Request for Comment coincided with the release of a video presentation on January 1, 2021. The Video presentation is available on the Planning Department's webpage which is still available at the following link: <https://www.chicopeema.gov/895/Post-911-Service-Dog-Memorial>. Following the release of this report, the City Team will work with the design team to incorporate feedback provided in this report into the concept plan. Following that effort, the concept plan will move into the design development stage with the development of engineering documents for construction plans. An update on this process will be provided in the future.

Comment:

The park plans indicate walking access from Catherine Drive, but without any designated parking. This will increase traffic in a residential area and lead to an increase of on street parking (which will amplify the congestion) on a road that only permits parking on one side.

Response:

This comment might be in reference to a different project in the City - Catherine Street is located in the Willimansett neighborhood and is not located near this park project's location. If this comment is referring to Casey Drive, there is no walking access from Casey Drive to the park proposed as part of this project.