PIERS PARK III DESIGN: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK







Designing a park that meets the needs of the community requires inviting extensive, early input from a wide variety of stakeholders. Since publicly announcing the Piers Park III project in the fall of 2020, the Boston Waterfront Initiative team has attended local neighborhood meetings, hosted community focused design sessions, and participated in and organized events and activities, all with the goal of engaging as many participants as possible in our community design survey.

This 25-question survey gave future parkgoers the ability to provide in-depth feedback to the Piers Park III design team. Responses were gathered online and in-person, in both English and Spanish. To date, over 1000 responses have been received with 20% of them coming from Spanish speakers.

Why it matters

In the spring of 2021, the Trustees joined forces with 47 other Boston-based nonprofit organizations to form the Coalition for a Resilient and Inclusive Waterfront. The coalition is focused on bringing the pressing issues facing Boston's harbor and rivers to the forefront of public conversation, particularly among candidates running for Mayor.

One of the first actions the Coalition took was to conduct a formal poll of likely Boston voters to better understand their attitudes towards our waterfront. The poll included oversamples to specifically understand how Boston's Black, Latino and Asian populations viewed waterfront issues. (bit.ly/OpenHarbor)

We were not surprised to see that "keeping parks and open spaces for everyone to use" and "keeping the waterfront open to everyone" were the top two priorities identified for the next Mayor at 85% and 83%.

Differences began to emerge when considering other priorities like creating events and programs that reflect the city's diversity, the need for affordable food options for families along the waterfront, and the desire to see more jobs for local residents.



Q: Should each of the following be a major priority, a minor priority, or not a priority for the next mayor when it comes to the Boston waterfront?

	Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Keeping parks and open spaces for everyone to use	85%	85%	89%	85%	80%
Keeping the waterfront open to everyone	83%	81%	88%	89%	80%
Maintaining the waterfront's natural beauty	81%	81%	80%	92%	73%
Creating jobs for local residents	78%	71%	90%	89%	80%
Creating events and programs that reflect the city's diversity	67%	58%	82%	82%	67%
Supporting the seafood and fishing industries in the area	66%	62%	73%	75%	61%
Developing public restrooms for visitors	66%	62%	67%	80%	73%
Making sure that there are affordable food options for families along the waterfront	65%	57%	78%	82%	68%
Encouraging development of hotels, restaurants, and attractions	31%	26%	35%	51%	34%

This data helps put into context some of the results we are seeing from our own survey.

Piers Park III design survey: Who is responding?

Piers Park III design survey respondents were asked to voluntarily provide demographic data to help identify who was – and who wasn't – taking part. Responses came from 11 different Boston neighborhoods, with 66% of English-speaking respondents from East Boston.



Over 77% of the Spanish-speaking respondents came from East Boston, with significant participation also from Chelsea, Revere and Winthrop. The self-identified ethnicity of English-speaking respondents were 69% Caucasian, with 15% Latino, 7% African American and 5% Asian or Pacific Islander. The Spanish-speaking respondents identified as 91% Latino, 4% Caucasian, and 25 each for African American and Asian or Pacific Islander. Languages spoken at home besides English and Spanish include Arabic, Russian, Cantonese and Mandarin. This paints a picture of strong participation among English-speaking Caucasians and Spanish-speaking Latinos, which is reflective of the population of East Boston. However, it also indicates a need for additional focused outreach to both Black and Asian Bostonians as the process advances.

See what BOSTONIANS are saying

An online survey gathering public input on the Piers Park III design has achieved over 1000 responses. With feedback in both English and Spanish, the survey seeks to understand how often respondents visit parks, what activities they enjoy doing outdoors, how they currently interact with the Boston waterfront, and what features they would like to see at the future Piers Park III. Below, find a sampling of some of the insights gathered thus far:

How often do you visit public parks in your neighborhood?

OPEN, OUTDOOR SPACE IS IMPORTANT TO BOSTON RESIDENTS: More than twothirds of respondents (70.5%) said they visited parks daily or a few times a week.



What types of programming would attract you to Piers Park III?

FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY: Cultural events and nature play topped the list of programming, with frequent "other" write-in responses including music, concerts, and boating.

Cooking & food Educational-kids itness Cultural Nature play Educational-adults

How do you typically engage with Boston Harbor?

AN AREA OF OPPORTUNITY: Though many write-ins requested swimming, kayaking, and sailing when asked about programming in the future park, the overwhelming majority (91%) of respondents currently interact with the harbor in only a passive manner, or don't engage with it at all.



What are your top 3 most important design aspects for Piers Park III?

RESIDENTS VALUE THE POSSIBILITIES THAT THE SITE PROVIDES: The unique location of the future waterfront park offers many opportunities to enjoy the space, which respondents recognize—with a nearly 7-way tie in top responses.



Open Ended Responses

Over half of the survey questions were open-ended. The following are a sampling of just some of the replies we received.

Piers Park III will be a year-round destination. Describe your ideal spring, summer, fall, and/or winter activities that might be specific to a particular time of year.

"**Summer swimming** would be amazing! Or even **kayaking classes**. A harvest festival type of event would be really cool in Fall."

"Ample lighting during evening hours for workout classes - it is pretty dark (even with the light) near the workout space in Piers Park in the fall/winter when the sun sets earlier. **A sledding hill** for winter would be amazing."

"Have **a small festival to celebrate each season** so we can showcase the history of our city with local products specific to each season."

"Summer: **access to the water to cool off**. Lots of trees to have a picnic in the shade with harbor breezes. Fall: changing leaves, areas to explore Winter: playing in the snow. Perhaps even **introduce snowshoeing for kids** if the space is large enough Spring: blossoms and **seeing nesting animals and birds**"

What makes East Boston unique within the greater Boston area? How might these qualities inform the design for Piers Park III?

"It's a tight knit community. The people are diverse and wonderful. I continue to learn so much from them. I love the parks, community gardens, and The Watershed in our working shipyard."

"East Boston has a rich, multicultural history and has always been family oriented and neighborly. Growing up here was like growing up in a small town in the middle of a big city. The waterfront, and city parks have inspired a lot of my poetry since I was young."

"Proximity to the harbor is what makes it unique. I **think many of us would like to be able to interact with the water more**, but right now the only option is sailing, which is great, but fairly expensive and not an everyday thing for most of us. I'd love to have a tidal pool area for wading, an area for swimming, maybe an area for kayaking and space in which to store or rent kayaks."

What new or growing needs do you think your community will have in the short and mid-term that this park can help address?

"Families need free entertainment for their families. **It is beautiful to see weddings and birthdays celebrated at Piers Park**. My school had its graduation ceremony there. It can be the place where we build love and understanding for one another."

"Welcoming places on the waterfront"

"As a healthcare worker, I have done research on access to care and outcomes for folks who may not have the best healthcare habits. **Having a place that adults could use for outdoor activities/exercise** that could encourage increased activity would be beneficial to the community."

As the Piers Park III design and construction process moves forward, what are you most looking forward to? What are you most concerned about?

"I look forward to the **further revitalization of the waterfront**. I am concerned about the noise and traffic."

"I most looking forward to **more green space where families can gather**. I'm afraid that you're going to make this another gentrification project that ignores the rich cultural diversity, people, families, and small businesses that have been here."

"I am most looking forward to more greenspace and **a waterfront that's resilient to climate change**. I also look forward to public programming and adult education programs. I am concerned that the park will further the gentrification and housing inequality in East Boston."

NEXT STEPS: The Boston Waterfront Initiative team will continue community outreach throughout 2021. Working with world renowned landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc., feedback gathered thus far will be integrated into the next design of Piers Park III, in an ongoing, iterative community driven process.



EAST BOSTON DOCKS FROM MARGINAL STREET TO SOUTH BOSTON DOCKS, FORT POINT CHANNEL

The Piers Park III site in this ca. 1955-1964 photo is to the left of the white building with the Boston skyline beyond.



The Trustees 200 High Street, 4th Floor Boston, MA 02110 617.542.7696 onewaterfront@thetrustees.org thetrustees.org/onewaterfront

