

From: Claire Greene
Sent: Sunday, February 20, 2022 1:15 PM
To: Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee
Subject: Junction Park

To: The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

My husband and I have been supporters of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail for many years. We have walked and biked the trail. Working with members of the WCGT, we have also spent many, many hours maintaining the gardens at Junction Park. For the last two years, I have served as West Concord Green Thumbs co-chair for that garden.

First, I commend the many members of the BFRT committee who worked tirelessly to make the rail trail a reality. I applaud the efforts of the WCGT which played an instrumental role in the renovation process at JP that took place several years ago. I thank the advisory committee for its clear presentation and the opportunity to express my views on Junction Park. (I did participate in the zoom meeting held on February 16 but lost the connection after about an hour. My husband and I also completed the survey.)

As we all know, creating a path for the bike trail through the center of West Concord was extraordinarily difficult. Signage was a problem right from the start. For years, one sign telling bikers to walk their bikes was on the edge of the bio-retention area and faced the 7/11. I do not believe we should have any signs in the park. They should be on the entrances of the park, on posts, preferably not too high, on bollards, or pavement. Adding tables and benches in many areas along the trail also seems like a good idea.

In 2020, the park was used by a large number of people. This situation was not surprising since many residents worked from home and schools were closed. Golf clubs and bike trails did well during the difficult months of the pandemic. During that year and the following one, I never saw any accidents or close encounters. I estimate that about 25% of the bikers do not dismount.

Years ago, when I attended meetings in town about Junction Park, some residents wanted the park to be designed so that there could be events like farmers' markets and concerts there. These proposals would have increased the amount of space covered by pavers and reduced the garden space. I believe then and still do that this small space cannot satisfy everyone. Pavers are not the best surface for anyone using walkers or other equipment. The surface in JP is not the best one for residents of Concord Park but getting from that facility to Junction Park is perhaps even more dangerous. (A relative of mine, who lives in an assisted-living facility, uses a walker but is able to walk on paved paths that wind through gardens to a gazebo. She does not need an aide to assist her. Does Concord Park have any plans to create safe walkways on its property for its residents?)

I do not favor any drastic changes to the park. It is a small, much –needed green space in a busy intersection in West Concord. Many people enjoy the gardens. Thoreau urged citizens to preserve and protect the wild places in nature, but I strongly believe we should also protect these small places and believe he would favor that course. Junction Park is a green jewel. We should be looking for other ways to create inviting green spaces, preferably shady ones, in West Concord. (e.g., The area in front of the shopping plaza in West Concord could be much more attractive and appealing.)

There are no easy solutions here. We need to make some improvements but make no drastic changes to the size of the park. We do not want to do more harm than good in an effort to achieve what we all know is not possible in the real world: a perfect solution.

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