



Friday, April 18, 2025

CPA Full Grant Application FY25

Project Information

Project Name: Kennedy Schoolyard Renovation

Project Location: 5 Cherry Street

Please indicate the primary category that applies to this project: Open Space/Recreation

CPA Funding Request 300,000

Total Budget for Project 300,000

Please select the description that best matches your request: This application requests additional money to complete a scope of work that was previously awarded CPA funds.

Applicant Information

Is the City of Somerville the primary applicant? Yes

Is this application for a property or asset owned by the City of Somerville? Yes

Which department will have primary responsibility for managing this project? PSUF

Does another organization or entity own the property or hold an interest in the property? (Including a condominium association) No

Primary Contact Person: Jon Bronenkant

Email JBronenkant@somervilleMA.gov

Narrative Questions

Please respond thoroughly to each of the questions below

Description:

We present an updated proposal for the redevelopment of the front playground at the John F. Kennedy School, located at the corner of Sartwell and Cherry Streets. Our goal is to create a multifunctional outdoor space that meets the needs of both the school and the surrounding community, with a focus on green space, gender equity, creative and inclusive play, and safety.

In 2019, the City requested and was awarded \$65,000 from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to initiate the design of the Kennedy School Playground. We later returned to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) to request an additional \$35,000, bringing the total awarded to \$100,000. These funds are the foundation of us being able to put a Request for Proposal out to begin design development and engage the community in a visioning process.

As we sat down with Infrastructure Asset Management, the School, Mobility and Engineering department, it became clear the larger ask that was needed for this space. Our goals for the project expanded, and instead of doing our projects piecemeal and independently, we are trying to accomplish everything under this one umbrella. We are now seeking an additional \$200,000 in CPA funding to complete this funding gap in the design and pre-construction phases of this project. This request reflects a combination of factors:

1. **Rising Costs:** The cost of professional design services, engineering, surveying, and environmental assessment (including Licensed Site Professional services, if required) has increased significantly since the initial estimate.

2. **Enhanced Design Goals:** We are committed to raising the standard of schoolyard design to create more dynamic, inclusive, and accessible play environments. As with the CPA-funded Healy School playground renovation, we aim to deliver a space that fosters creativity, promotes equity, and supports a broader range of physical and social development for all students.

3. **Expand Project Limits:** to ensure the best design possible the City needs to think about the Kennedy School as a whole and not just the existing playground. We included the redesign of the parking lot and bus drop-off in the scope because we think that we could expand the playground (and ultimately expand the acres of open space in the city) by 1/4th of its existing size. This would allow us to have more bike parking, more trees, and a larger play area with more play features.

The existing Kennedy Schoolyard is among the most underdeveloped in the city. It consists mostly of cracked asphalt with minimal recreational features, lacking vegetation, shade, and age-appropriate play structures. Currently, it only supports limited physical activity, such as basketball and simple court games, and does not adequately serve the diverse needs of students in grades 3–8 who use the space daily.

In line with the CPC's priority to improve and expand the city's most lacking recreational facilities, this project seeks to transform the schoolyard into a vibrant, inclusive public space. The redesigned playground will serve not only the Kennedy School's students during the school day but also the broader community during evenings, weekends, and summer months.

Community feedback has consistently emphasized the importance of safety, accessibility, green space, and inclusive play opportunities. Stakeholders have voiced concerns about gender equity and the limited functionality of the current space, where only a portion of the student population feels welcomed or engaged. The updated design will retain essential features such as basketball courts and open recreation space, while incorporating elements such as:

- Age-appropriate and inclusive play structures
- Natural elements and tree plantings
- Outdoor classrooms and quiet zones
- Universally accessible pathways and equipment
- Flexible use zones that support both organized and unstructured play

This project is a critical step toward addressing long-standing inequities in public school play spaces and will serve as a model for future schoolyard improvements across the city.

Status:

The Public Space and Urban Forestry department has released an RFQ and received five applications. From those five applications the City interviewed two preferred applicants, and would like to make an offer to one of the firms. We have a gap in funding the design of this project and are now in a holding pattern until we fill that missing gap. Contracts cannot advance until this has been resolved, so this is my main goal with the project currently. Once contracted the firm will begin site analysis and community

engagement as quickly as the contracting period will allow.

Project Scope:

The City of Somerville has initiated a redesign of the front playground at the John F. Kennedy School, located at 5 Cherry Street at the corner of Sartwell Street and Cherry Street. To support this effort, the City is seeking a qualified Landscape Architectural Consultant to provide comprehensive landscape architecture and engineering services. The selected Consultant will be responsible for assembling a multidisciplinary team capable of addressing all aspects of the project from initial analysis through construction.

The project scope includes the completion of a full design process, culminating in a stamped set of construction documents to be used for public bidding.

The design process will be carried out in the following four phases:

- Site Analysis and Schematic Design – Evaluate existing site conditions and develop initial design concepts.
- Design Development and Construction Documents – Refine the chosen design and produce detailed, permit-ready construction drawings.
- Bid and Negotiation – Assist with the public bidding process and contractor selection.
- Construction Administration – Provide oversight and support during the construction phase to ensure design intent is realized.

Cost Estimate:

o We received a project proposal that we are interested in moving forward with. The initial proposal was approximately \$275,000, so we requested \$300,000 to include a contingency for this work. We are currently in active negotiations with the firm to refine the scope and reduce overall project costs, with the goal of lowering the proposed fees.

Funding Sources:

o The Community Preservation Act (CPA) has allocated \$100,000 to support the design phase of this project, making CPA the primary source of funding for this portion of the work. Securing additional external funding for school playground projects is particularly challenging, as many grant programs require the City to commit the land for recreational use in perpetuity. Unfortunately, we are unable to make such a commitment due to the potential need for future school needs on this site. As a result, CPA funding plays a critical role in advancing the project while allowing the City to maintain flexibility in long-term planning for school facilities.

Anticipated Future Funding:

o We have submitted a funding request of \$2,600,000 through the City's Capital Investment Plan, primarily to support construction of the Kennedy School playground project. A portion of the request also includes additional funds for design-related needs. We are currently awaiting a decision from the Finance Committee, City Council, and City Finance staff.

Timeline:

o Schematic design and community engagement will begin as soon as funding is secured, and a contract is awarded. This initial phase is expected to take approximately 4 to 6 months, depending on the availability of school staff and community members—particularly during the summer months. Following schematic design, the project team will develop a preferred design, which will be refined and finalized in coordination with the school and broader community. A final public presentation will be held to confirm that project goals have been met. Once the final design is approved, the team will begin preparing construction documentation, including a complete bid set of drawings and technical specifications. If full construction funding is in place at that point, the project will move into the bidding phase. To accommodate long lead times for ordering playground equipment and to minimize disruption to school operations, construction is planned to occur primarily during the summer months when school is not in session.

Project Feasibility:

While we are awaiting the formal start of the playground and parking area design, we have already initiated

important preliminary steps to ensure the project’s feasibility and long-term success. A topographic survey of the site is currently underway, which will provide critical data on site conditions, grading, and drainage patterns. In addition, we are conducting soil testing in coordination with a Licensed Site Professional (LSP) to assess subsurface conditions and identify any environmental considerations that may impact design and construction. These foundational activities are essential to inform the design process and help avoid unforeseen issues later in the project.

Once design funding is fully secured, we will begin the schematic design phase, including a robust and inclusive community engagement process. We are committed to creating a playground that reflects the needs and priorities of all stakeholders—students, school staff, parents, and local residents. To achieve this, we will take the necessary time to engage a wide range of voices through meetings, workshops, and targeted outreach, with special attention to equity and accessibility in participation.

As we await a decision on our \$2.6 million construction funding request through the Capital Investment Plan (CIP), we are also actively exploring additional funding opportunities. We remain mindful, however, of the limitations associated with certain grant programs—particularly those requiring long-term land use commitments, which are often not feasible for school properties that may be needed for future expansion.

Despite these challenges, we are making steady progress on all early feasibility steps and are confident in our ability to move forward efficiently once full funding is secured.

Somerville Community Preservation Act Grant Application Budget Form

Project Name: Kennedy Schoolyard Renovation

Applicant: City of Somerville, PSUF - Jon Bronenkant

Please list your sources of funding for this project

SOURCES OF INCOME

Source	Amount	Secured? (Yes/No)	Status of Funding Source
Original CPA Award	\$100,000.00	Yes	Secured and ready to spend.
New CPA Request	\$200,000.00	No	Awaiting CPC Reivew
TOTAL	\$300,000.00		

Please explain your project costs and explain where CPA grant funds will be used

USES / EXPENSES*

	CPA Grant Funds Budget	Non-CPA-Funded Project Costs	Total Project Costs	Section Total
Soft costs line items (design and non-construction costs)				
Site Analysis and Schematic Design	\$50,000		\$50,000	\$50,000
Design Development and Construction Documents	\$125,000		\$125,000	\$125,000
Bid and Negotiation	\$5,000		\$5,000	\$5,000
Construction Administration	\$95,000		\$95,000	\$95,000
<i>Project Management (May not exceed 15% of grant award.)</i>				
Subtotal				\$275,000
Building/Construction line items				
N/a				
Subtotal				\$0
Other				
Design Contingency	\$25,000		\$25,000	\$25,000.00
Subtotal				\$25,000
TOTAL	\$300,000.00	\$0.00	\$300,000.00	