

## Riley, Kate

---

**From:** Amy Stein - [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, December 14, 2019 8:51 AM  
**To:** Riley, Kate  
**Subject:** Tobin redesign feedback

Dear Ms. Riley,

Regarding my response to the proposed school redesigns:

**SAVE Tobin Recreational Park!** It's a natural resource providing open green space, light, and expansive skyline in an increasingly dense urban setting.

In a time where there is growing awareness and advocacy for preservation of green space (including restoration of the tree-canopy) and increased recognition of the natural environment's role in mental, physical and emotional well-being, it is inconceivable that all three design proposals for the Tobin + Vassal Lane building **eliminate** the Tobin Park.

The existing school building, originally built to serve 800 students, occupies an approximate 1.5-acre footprint out of 9.11 acres total land. 3.4 acres comprise Tobin Recreational Park and the remaining 4 plus acreage includes basketball courts, playgrounds, City Sprout's gardens, front lawn, front entrance drive, and a parking lot.

The three design proposals **triple** the size of the building footprint, reducing the open space to a little over 5 acres - much of which is used for parking lots and drive ways. Two designs add a drive that connects Vassal Lane to Concord Ave, running along the adjoining backyards of Alpine Street homes. The largest open green space in the redesigns accommodate a baseball field and small soccer field that overlap about half of each other's area space - restricting the play to one game at one time.

Children today spend less time outdoors than any other generation, devoting only four to seven minutes to unstructured outdoor play per day while spending an average of seven and a half hours in front of electronic media. At a time when there is national concern about anxiety, depression, and obesity in children, it is more important than ever that they have access to the natural environment. The adjacent location of a park next to a school provides students with daily access and opportunity to run and play, before, during, and after school.

There are many examples of how we all benefit from time spent in the natural environment - or even adjacent to it. In a much cited study, published in 1984 in the journal *Science*, environmental psychologist Roger Ulrich and his team reviewed the medical records of people recovering from gallbladder surgery at a suburban Pennsylvania hospital. All other things being equal, patients with bedside windows looking out on leafy trees healed, on average, a day faster, needed significantly less pain medication and had fewer postsurgical complications than patients who instead saw a brick wall.

Dismissed as peripheral to medical treatment for much of the 20th century, gardens are now featured in the design of most new hospitals. In a recent survey of 100 directors and architects of assisted-living residences, 82 percent agreed that “the design of outdoor space should be one of the most important considerations in the design.” Shouldn’t these same values and considerations be applied to our schools?

There is more than adequate space to enlarge the school building without eliminating the Tobin Recreation Park. We owe it to our children and our community to preserve this valuable green space. Thank you.

Amy Stein

