

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting  
Meeting Minutes - March 12, 2025, from 5:30-7 pm  
Hybrid Meeting via zoom & in person at DPW, 147 Hampshire St

**Attendance** (\* indicates virtual attendance)

CPP members: \*Ahron Lerman, \*Chantal Eide, Cindy Carpenter, Cynthia Smith, \*Gretchen Friesinger, Robb Johnson, \*Sandra Fairbank, \*Sara Cohen, Sophia Emperador

Absent: Archana Venkataraman, Maggie Booz, Ray Fahrner, Ruth Loetterle, Tracey Orr

DPW/City of Cambridge: David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Ellen Coppinger, Kevin Beuttell, Cortney Kirk (CDD)

Absent: Kristen Kelleher

Guests and members of the public: Rob Vandenabeele.

Meeting notes submitted by Gretchen Friesinger

**Agenda Items:**

- 1 Review agenda (Cindy)-5 min
- 2 Review and approve February meeting minutes (Cindy/all)-5 min
- 3 Updates from City Arborist (David, Andrew, Kristen)-25 min
  - Update on consultant for UFMP five-year review and next steps (Andrew)
  - Update on MOU with DCR and plan for Cambridge to plant trees on DCR land (Andrew)
  - Update on spring tree planting on Cambridge-owned land (David)
  - Arbor Week plans and CPP sign-ups (David & Cindy)
- 4 Discuss CPP website feedback and next steps (CPP with Kristen)-10 min
- 5 Design reviews: Danehy Park Improvement Master Plan (Kevin)-25 min
- 6 Discuss PB "Improve parks with shade structures" (Maggie)-10 min
- 7 Other business and announcements-5 min
- 8 Public comments-5 min

**2) Review and approve minutes**

Sophia moved, Cynthia seconded. Unanimously approved.

**3) Updates from City Arborist (David, Andrew, Kristen) - 25 min**

-- Update on consultant for UFMP five-year update and next steps

Andrew reported that awarding the contract had been delayed because the House Doctors' contracts were being renewed. He expects the city will have chosen a consultant by the April meeting. Cynthia asked if CPP can have access to the RFP. Andrew said the proposal was submitted to House Doctors and not typical, but he would see if a copy could be made available to CPP. He also confirmed that the CPP would be part of the review process, and likely have a couple meetings with the consultants.

**-- Update on MOU with DCR and plan for Cambridge to plant trees on DCR land**

Andrew said there had been a lot of “back and forth” about the plan for planting trees on DCR land. The good news is that DCR will not require an MOU and the work can be done with only a construction permit, a short document that includes specific planting locations and the city’s 5-year care agreement. The precedent for this process was established with the plantings at Magazine Beach. Andrew and Jen Letourneau plan to submit the permit next week.

UF hopes to plant 165 trees on DCR property this year. City staff will meet next week to finalize locations for spring planting. DCR Operations must sign off on planting locations: “Mowing patterns are important.” David said some 60 trees will be planted in spring, but most will be planted in fall.

Cindy noted that the Fresh Pond Parkway/Mall area needs trees—can trees go there? She also asked if UF can tag the trees planted on DCR land with the Forest Friends tag. AP said yes.

#### **--Update on spring tree planting on Cambridge-owned land**

David will go to New Jersey next week to inspect and tag 300 trees for spring planting, and the planting location list will be available then. He typically goes earlier, but this year the trip was delayed by ice and snow. “Mother Nature did not cooperate. It’s been a long time since we weren’t able to inspect sidewalks in the second week of March.”

#### **--Arbor Week plans and CPP sign-ups**

CPP Arbor Week activities include tabling outside City Hall on Tuesday 4/29 from 9:30-12:30; an evening tree walk in Cambridgeport on Wednesday 4/30 at 5:30; and tabling at the Main Library on Thursday 5/1 from 9:30-5:30. Cindy will post a sign-up sheet soon. David will post hand-outs that will be available at events.

The tentative route for the Tree Walk starts in Alberico Park and goes up River St and Western Ave, and possibly to Riverside Press Park. David’s idea is to highlight the “before and after” views of River and Western. Cynthia noted that the new Riverside Park shows “how big trees can get if you have good soil.”

#### **4) Discuss CPP website feedback and next steps (CPP with Kristen)-10 min**

Many compliments for the new CPP webpage. Cindy said it was “accessible and easy to find things” and appreciated that Forest Friends is featured prominently. She suggested it would be nice to have buttons/links to more info, for instance “plant a tree” with link to Green Cambridge or a link to “learn about public parks.” For the list of CPP members, Cynthia suggested their neighborhoods.

Sophia commented that it’s still a bit complicated to find meeting minutes. The Minutes link goes to the city’s Publications page, which requires sorting through the depository. She likes the Recycling Committee’s format for posting minutes, right on the committee’s home page. Andrew suggested that “maybe the minutes can live in both places.” A suggestion was made to

look at other committees' pages. Cynthia mentioned adding "fun facts" or "by the number" or "Did you know that?" items.

Cindy asked members to think about how we help "galvanize the public," one of the UFMP action items, and suggested that we think about land beyond city land and other things besides trees. Robb mentioned SeeClickFix as an option for requesting a tree. David commented that using SeeClickFix is good because requests are easy to track that way.

Robb also asked about the project for nominating Heritage Trees. David said the plan is to launch it during Arbor Week, though this might not be great timing for people to take pictures. UF will keep the program rolling as an experiment to see what kind of response it gets and how manageable it is.

**Additional business:**

The Office of Sustainability has put out a flyer encouraging people to "Become a Cambridge Climate Action Leader," by gathering friends and hosting a conversation about climate change in Cambridge. There is a \$200 stipend. Application deadline is March 17.

**5) Update on Danehy Park Improvement Master Plan (Kevin)**

The Danehy Park Improvement Master Plan will guide the development of the park over the next 10-15 years and be used to inform capital funding requests. The park's needs include addressing drainage and irrigation issues, making accessibility improvements, improving entrances, landscaping/soil issues, etc. Work will be done in phases.

One of the city's largest parks (50 acres), Danehy has playing fields (soccer, hardball, softball, basketball, track); playgrounds, including the DePasquale Universal Playground; art installations; a sledding hill; a dog park; the Miyawaki forest; and protected wetlands. It hosts the citywide Jazz Festival and Danehy Day. Built on a former clay pit which then became a city landfill, it's now 35 years old.

Kevin is primary manager on the project, with a team from DPW, CDD, and Human Services, as well as Weston & Sampson and Civic Space Collaborative. Kevin noted he was doing a fast, high-level review because this is a "big sprawling project." He presented on near-term potential projects and aspirational ones for the longer term. One important project under consideration is the Main Street Promenade, an idea to upgrade and widen Danehy's main path as a way to address the need for major utility improvements (irrigation, electrical, data). See slides referenced below for more info.

Kevin noted that Danehy's history limits some of what's possible and also drives up the costs of doing work. Existing conditions include very poor soil, in most places only about 3" of loam and always less than 5." This spring's plantings will be opportunity to start improving the landscaping, including planting more trees and native groundcovers on the gentle slopes.

Thinking about park improvements, Kevin said, “There’s a lot of work that needs to happen in the park, but one thing we heard was that Danehy largely works well as it is. We’re thinking about what we want to do, and also what we don’t want to do. We don’t want to spoil the vista. We don’t want to clutter up or over-program the space.”

Preliminary project ideas have emerged for seven sites within Danehy. Some examples are below, with more info available in attached ppt.

--**Main Street Promenade** (slide #30): Establish and upgrade this path as the main utility corridor, create multigenerational gathering spaces...

--**Sherman Street Play, Splash and Gather** (#33): Pedestrian entry plaza and main gateway, renovate the playground and splash pad, upgrade water service, improve drainage...

--**Upper Softball and Large Event Lawn**: (#36): Passive rec space with better infrastructure support...

--**Greenway Loop, Connections and Entrances** (#37): Use existing vent trench for new perimeter loop, new pollinator and rain gardens, consistent signage for multiple entrances...

--**Turf Field, Sunset Overlook & Teen Hub** (#39): Multifunctional teen hang-out space, parkour/pump track/skate garden (with plantings), sunset spectacular seating...

--**Dinosaur Playground** and Courts (St Peter’s Field) (#43): Renovate the playground, restore artwork, add shaded gathering space...

--**Floodplain Grove** (#44): Passive gathering space, habitat and planting enhancements, new Forestry planting location...

City staff hope to finish a draft of the Master Plan in the next few months.

**CPP Comments:** Ahron said the “‘what works well’ approach is right on the money. And it would be great to look for opportunity to add dense greenery.” He has worked with Weston and Sampson and thinks they are good. Cindy asked for some historical markers-- “For instance, information about the brick workers who lived in the little houses in North Cambridge.” Sandra, who worked on a house on Bellis Circle, said that street has a “beautiful view of Danehy. Residents feel like they live by Hampstead Heath. Keep that view and make it better.” Cynthia asked Kevin if CPP can see draft report. Kevin said yes.

## **6. DISCUSSION of PB budget item “Improve parks with shade structures”**

Cindy spoke in support of shade structures, even if they require an asphalt platform: “The city can justify more paving because getting people into parks is the start of getting them to appreciate trees and the importance of nature.” Sophia does not support such structures unless additional language is added, for instance, erecting shade structures “where planting a tree is not possible.” Robb suggested that CPP continue generating ideas for the next PB cycle.

Gretchen said she’d submitted a PB idea for funding substantial edging for tree wells on the main corridors. That idea didn’t make the final PB ballot. Would there be some other way to fund it? Ellen noted where such edging has been installed, such as Mass Ave at Shepard St, it was very expensive.



**8) Public Comment.**

Rob Vandenabeele said he liked the idea of sturdy edging to protect tree wells. He is also a proponent of the large Flower Baskets that the city sometimes installs in wells. He noted that we are still in a drought and asked if residents should start watering them trees now? Andrew said yes, watering can start now. Be sure to flush the well, since salt has likely accumulated there. About shade structures, Rob said he agreed with including language to say those structures are for places “where trees are not possible. We need to emphasize nature-based solutions for addressing climate change.”

**9) Next meeting:** Our next meeting will be on April 9, 2025, at 5:30 and will be advertised to the public in advance.

Note: The foregoing represents our understanding of the discussions and decisions made during this meeting. The CPP requests permission to quote or reference these notes.

**Attachments:**

- Danehy Park Improvement Master Plan slides
- flyer from Sustainability Office inviting residents to host a climate conversations



# DANEHY PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN



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design studio





# AGENDA

01

**Project Team**

02

**Project Introduction**

03

**Project Schedule**

04

**Community Involvement**

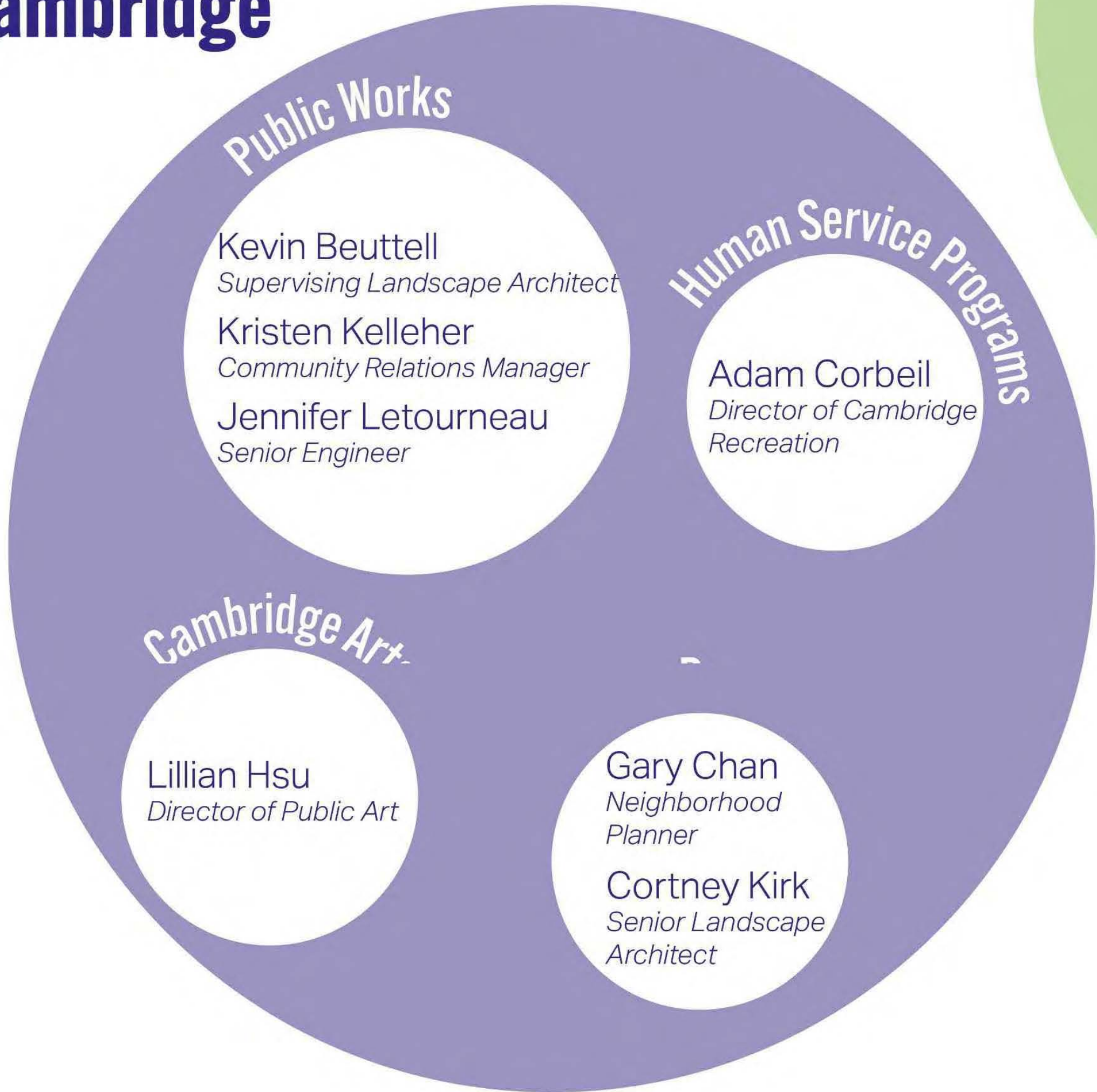
05

**Emerging Themes**

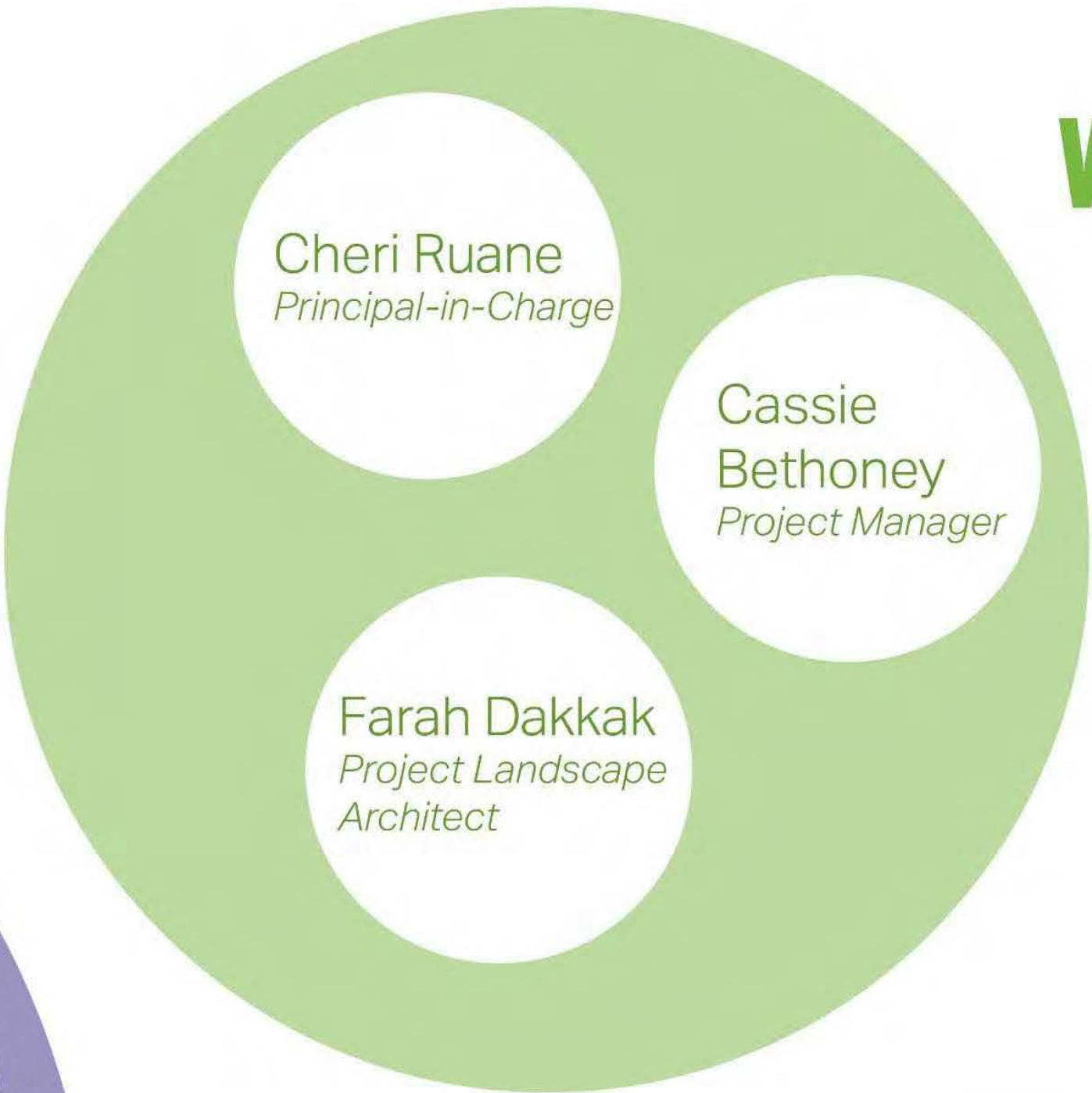


# PROJECT TEAM

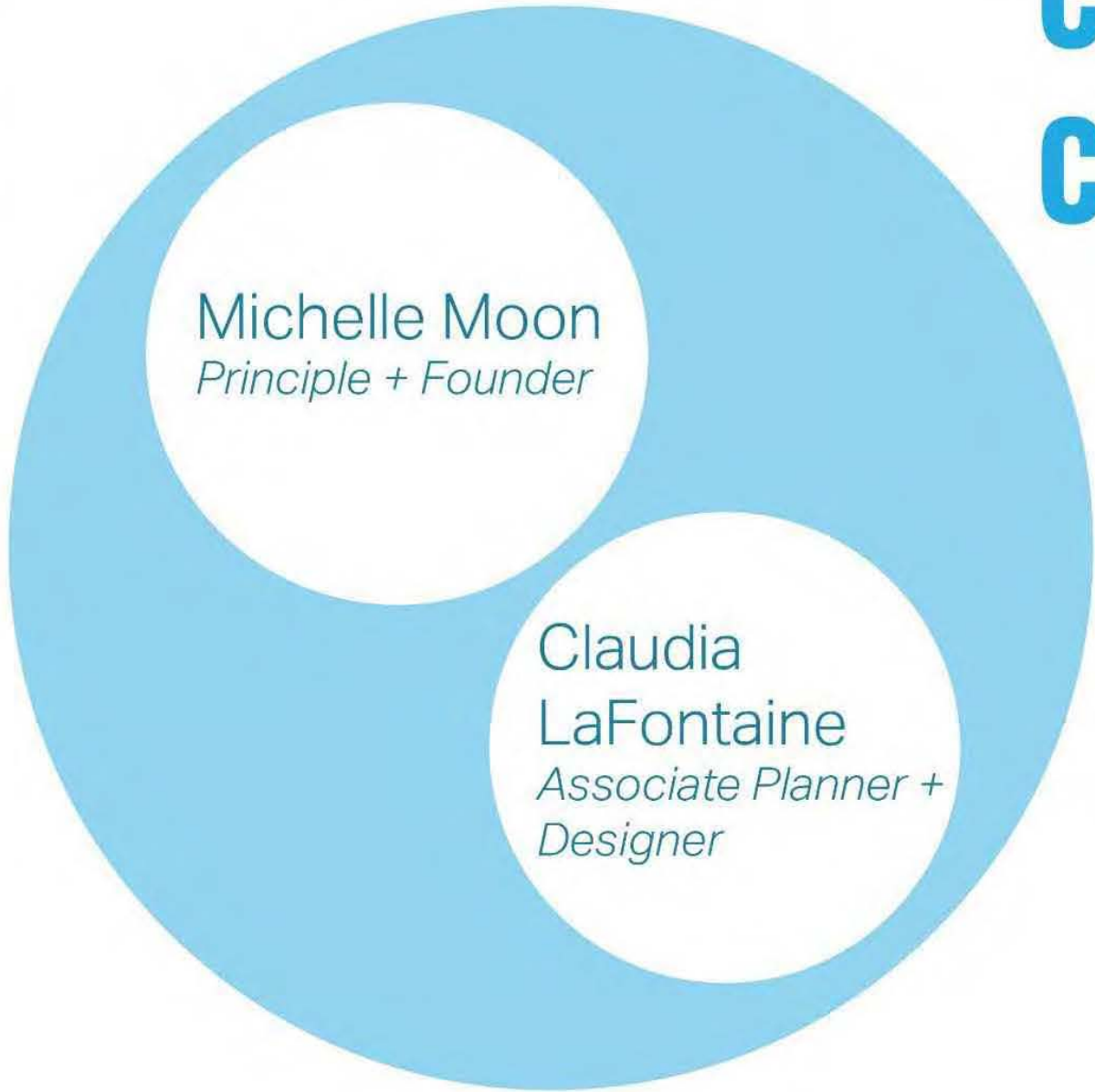
## City of Cambridge



## Weston & Sampson



## Civic Space Collaborative





# PROJECT INTRODUCTION

# DRAFT DANEHY PROJECT GOALS



## CAMBRIDGE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE GOALS:

- Providing environmental benefits in our urban context
- Expanding and enhancing park access for all
- Enhancing and improving design, operations, and management
- Activating and enhancing spaces



### A CONNECTION TO NATURE

Protect and improve Danehy's open spaces and wildlife.



### A WELCOMING AND SAFE PLACE

Make Danehy Park more welcoming. Create flexible spaces for new uses. Ensure safe access to and through the park.



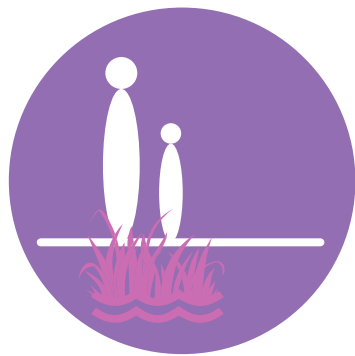
### A STRONG FOUNDATION

Improve Danehy's infrastructure. It must endure and bounce back from both everyday use and big events.



### A CULTURE OF CREATIVE PARK USES

Improve how people play and watch sports. Create more chances for casual gatherings and free play. Grow the park's art, events, and education programs.



### PASSIVE RECREATION



### ACTIVE RECREATION



### PUBLIC ART & EVENTS





## DANEHY PARK IS A...

Neighborhood park for “everyday”  
needs, as well as a venue for  
“big day” annual events.









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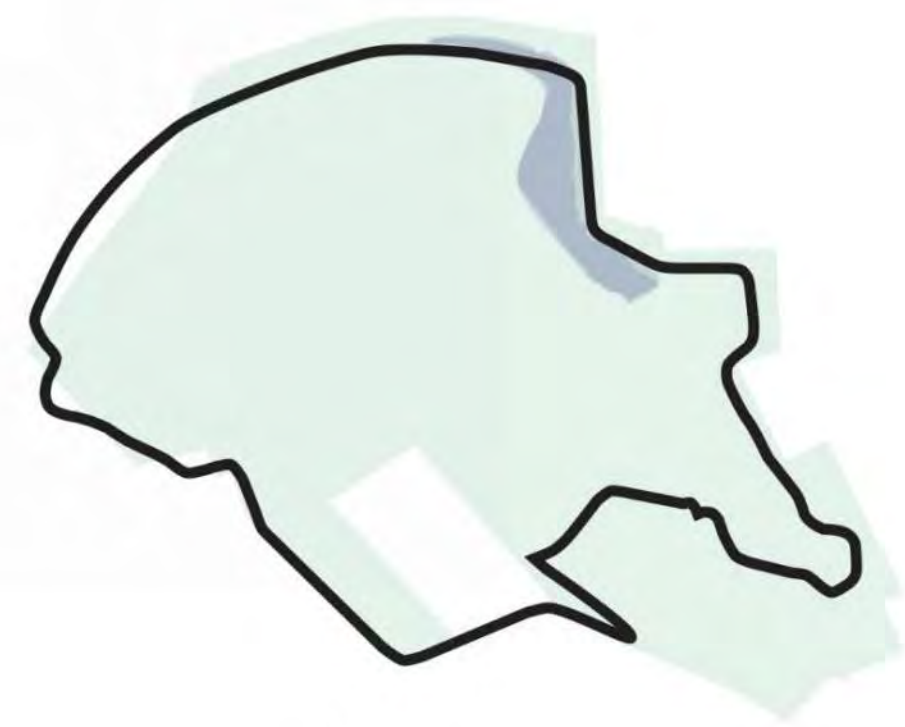




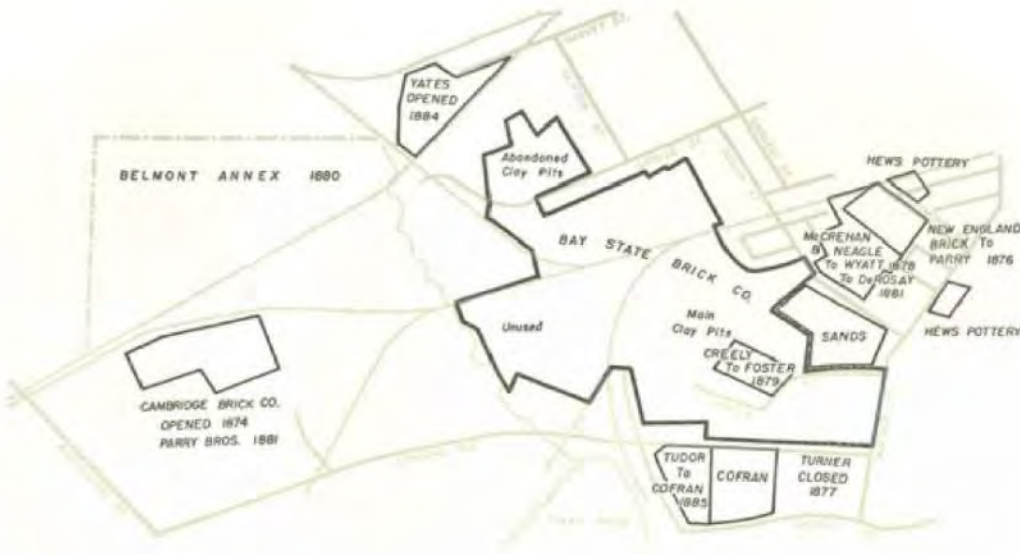




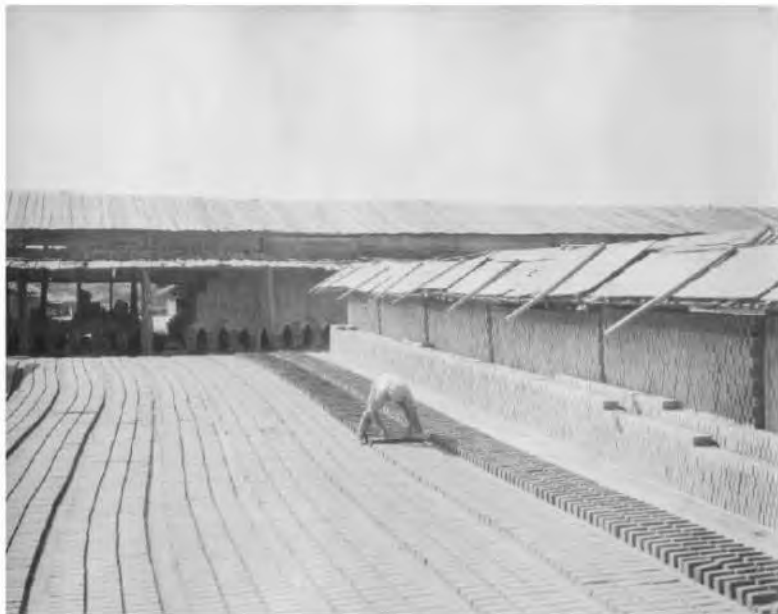
# SITE HISTORY



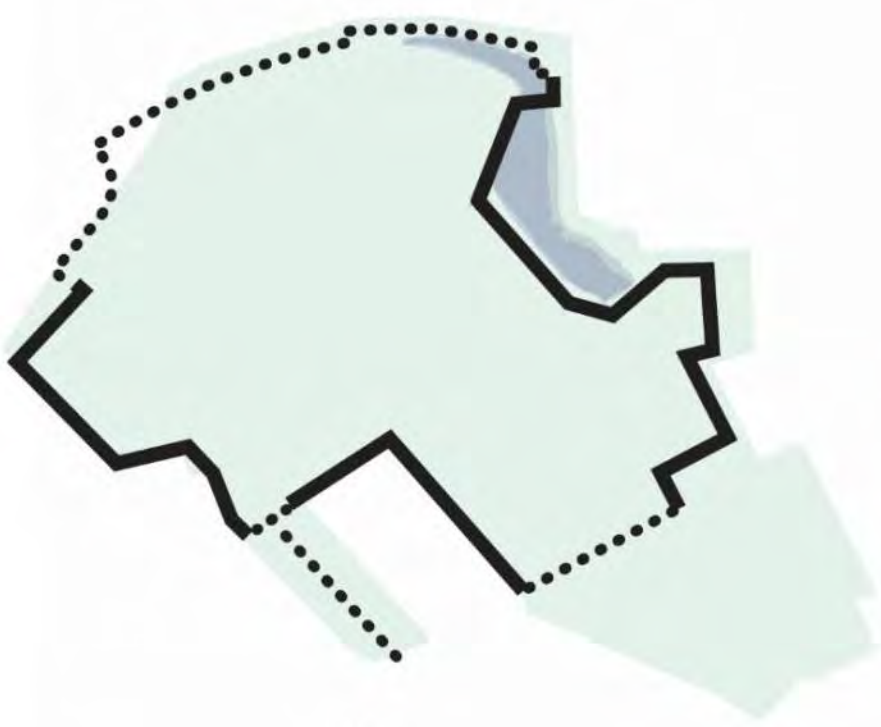
**1847-1952** *Brick Making*



CAMBRIDGE BRICKYARDS AND CLAY PITS, 1854-1916  
Compiled from maps of the Cambridge Historical Commission  
by Charles W. Eliot, and (1991)



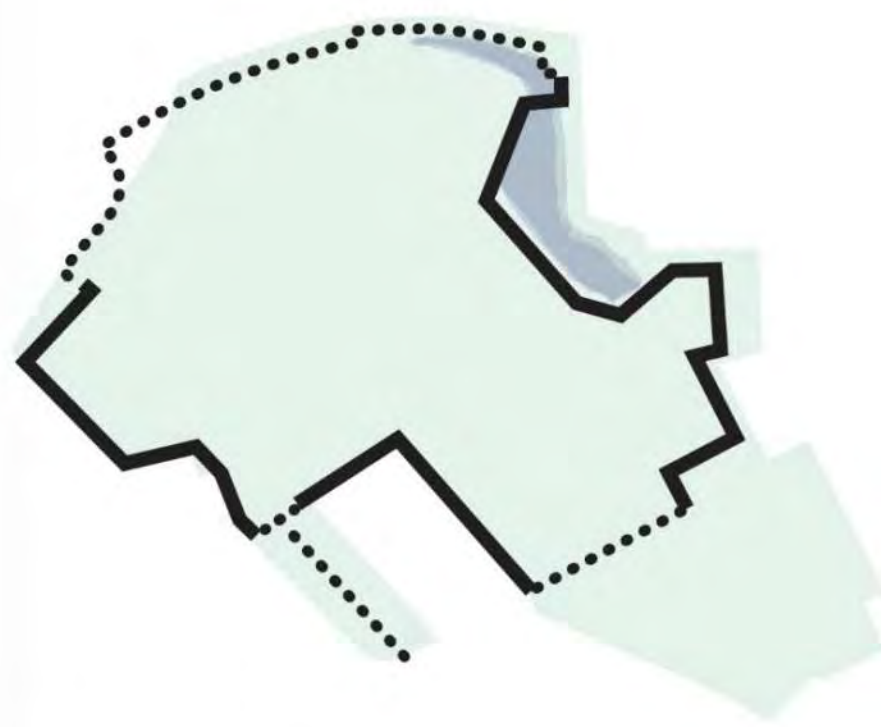
*New England Brick Company, Cambridge, MA* (source:  
<https://historycambridge.org/articles/the-romance-of-brick/>)



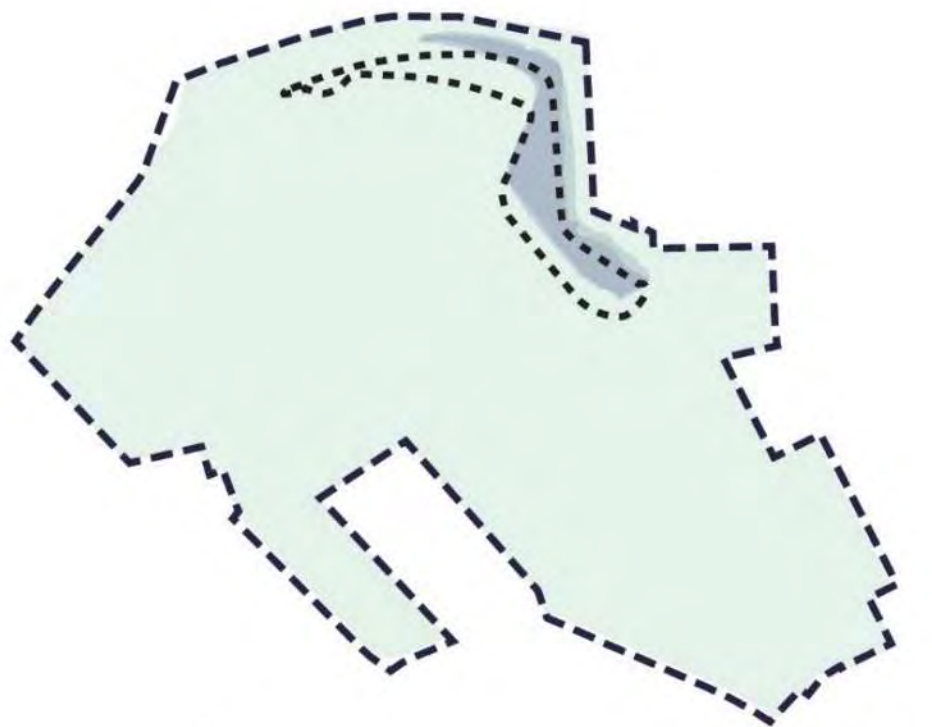
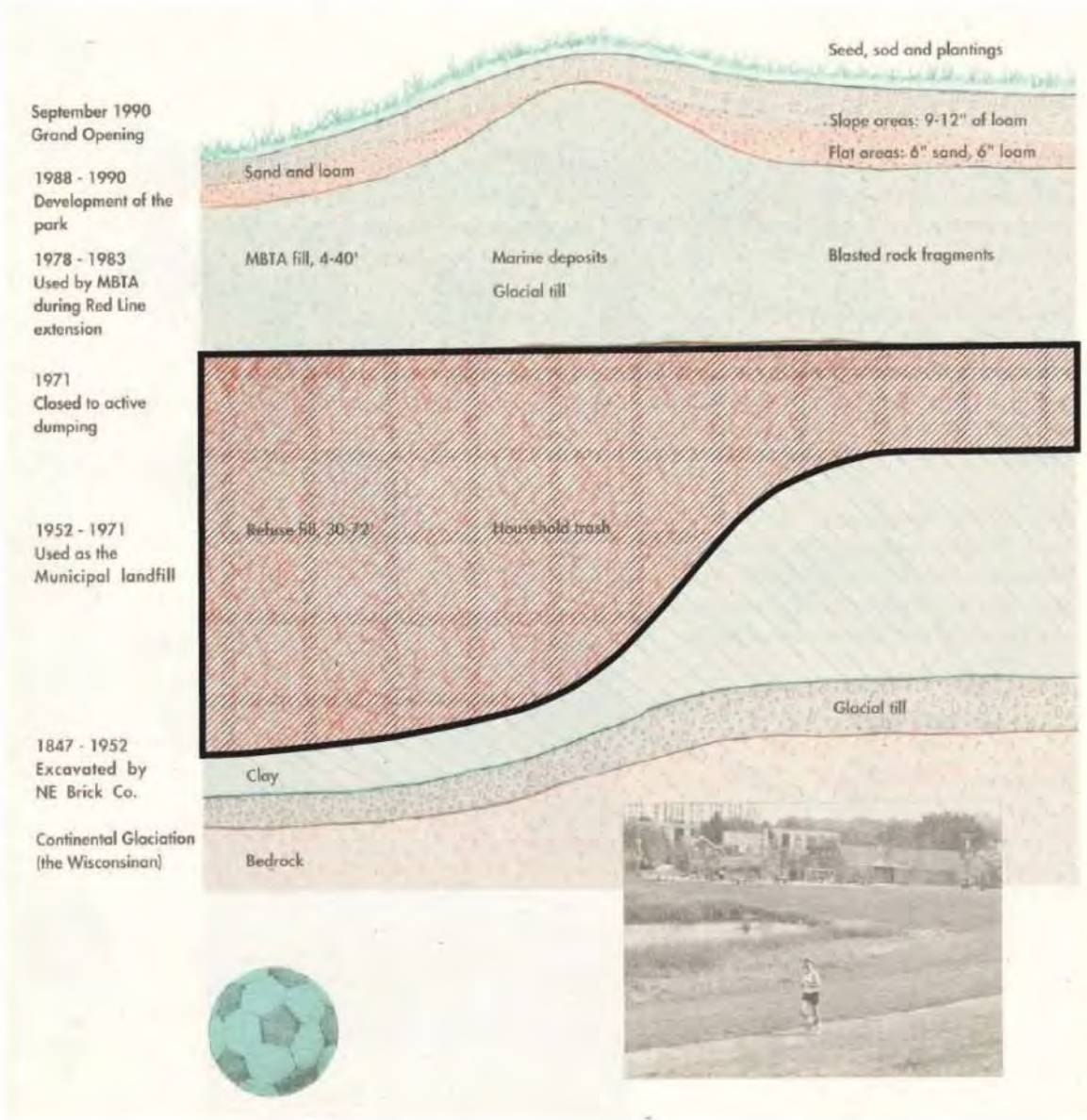
**1952-1971** *Landfill*



*Former Cambridge City Dump, MA* (source: <https://historycambridge.org/articles/the-downside-of-progress/>)



**1970s - 1980s** *MBTA Red-line  
Soils Disposal*



**1990- Present**



*Danehy Park Improvements - September 1987*



*Overlooking Danehy's Jurisdictional Wetland* (source:  
<https://topbrunchspots.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AF1QipM-sYZ2P4HL3oAetwpgtIm1DN-FCFXMeSsVGkRw1600-h1000-k-no-1024x576.jpeg>)



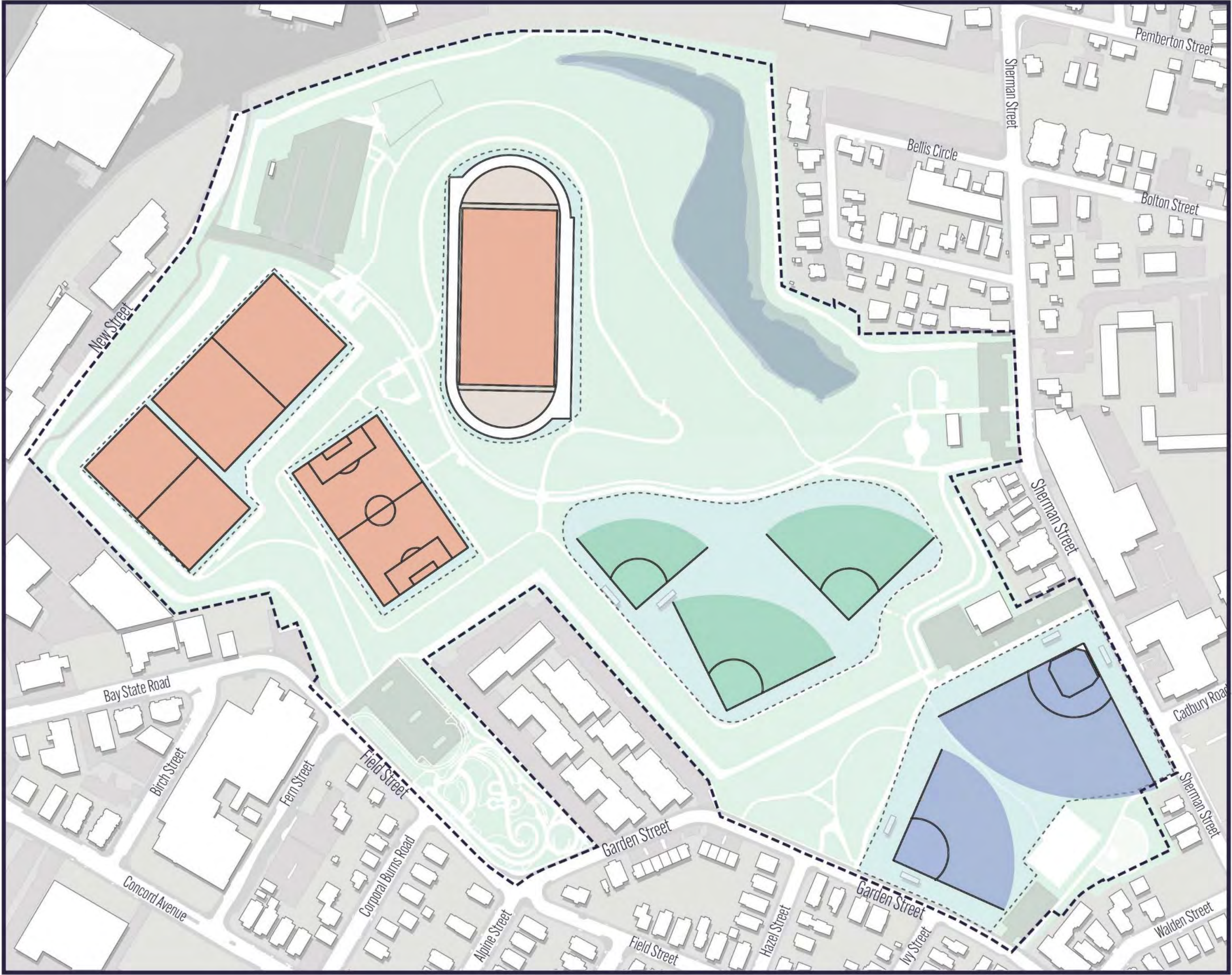
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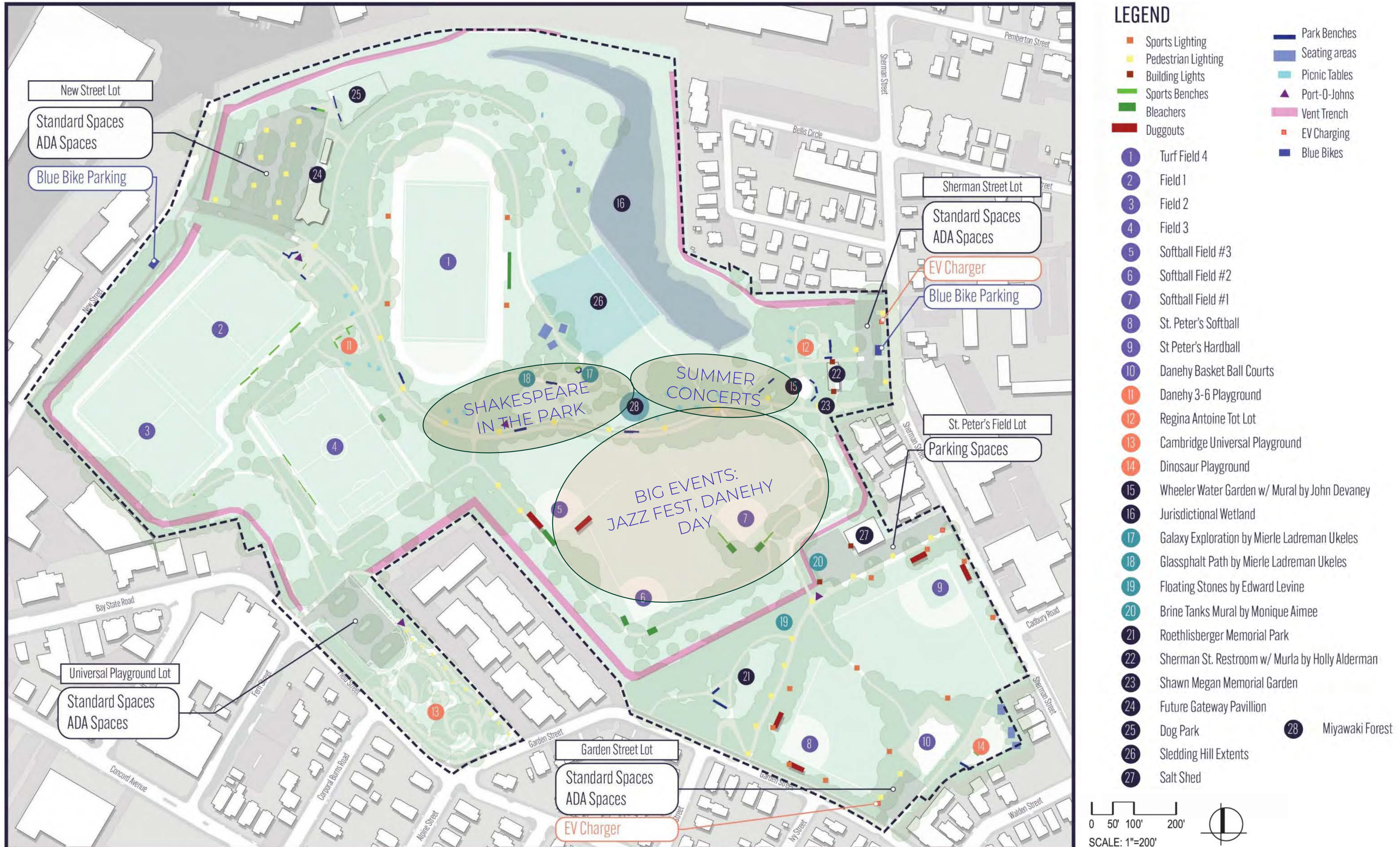
# SITE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS- SPORTS FIELDS

Athletic fields to remain in current locations.





# DANEHY PARK AMENITIES AND EVENT AREAS





# SITE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS – TREE CANOPY AND WETLANDS


Impact to the wetland, and removal of trees to be kept to an absolute minimum.





# OVERALL SITE NEEDS - DRAINAGE



LEGEND:  
 Drainage Issues





# OVERALL SITE NEEDS – ACCESSIBILITY



LEGEND:



In-accessible path  
(ada/maab)





# PROJECTS IN PLANNING / DESIGN

- A** Salt Shed
- B** Gateway Pavilion
- C** Fitchburg Crossing
- D** New Street Bike Path
- E** Prefabricated Restroom
- F** EV Parking Upgrades: at Field Street and Salt Shed Parking Lots





# PROJECT SCHEDULE

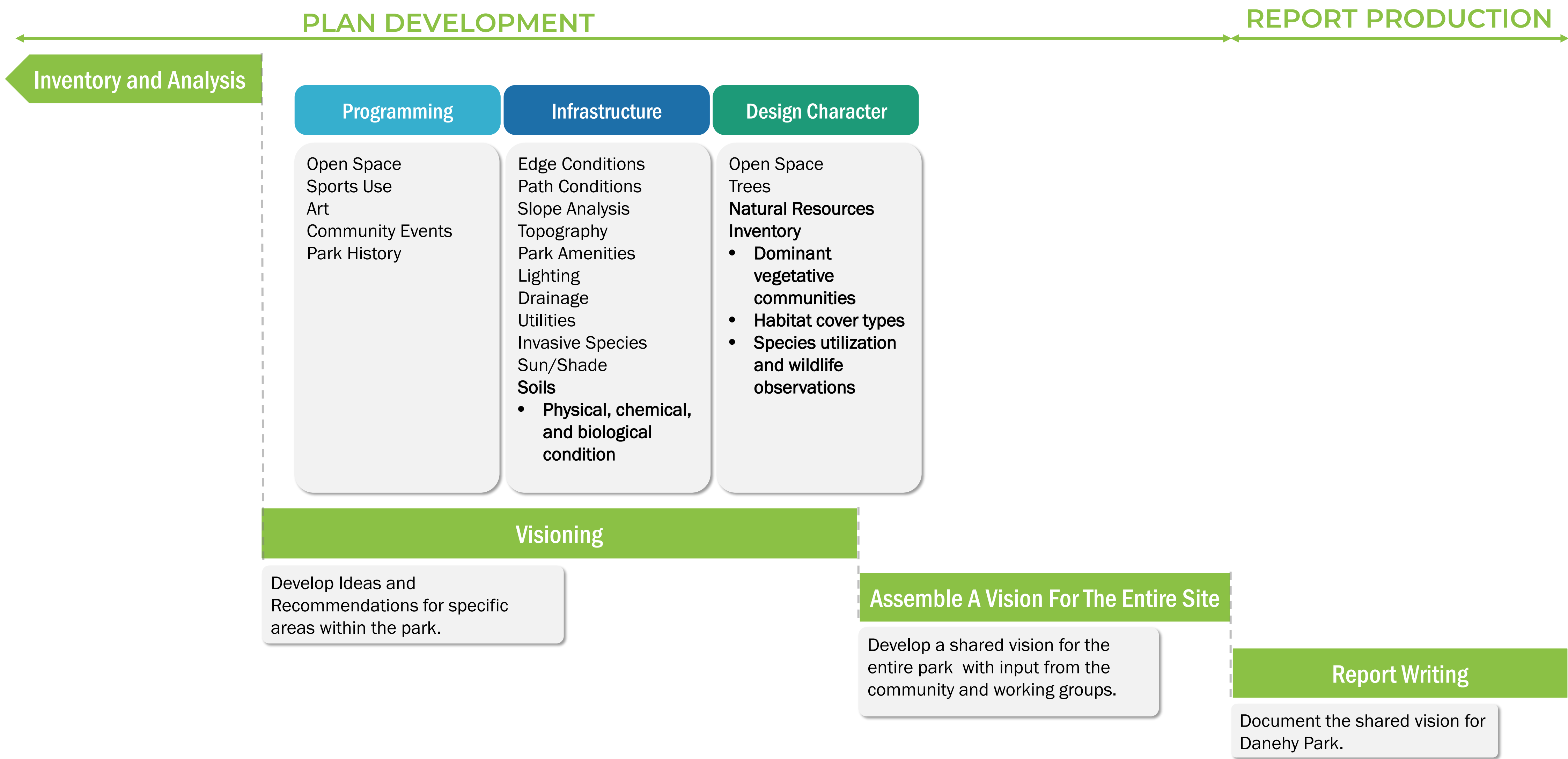


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# PROJECT SCHEDULE – PLAN DEVELOPMENT





# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



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# HOW WE ARE ENGAGING

## 2 PUBLIC MEETINGS

Meeting # 1  
27 June 2024

Meeting # 2  
5 December 2024

Future Meetings  
2025

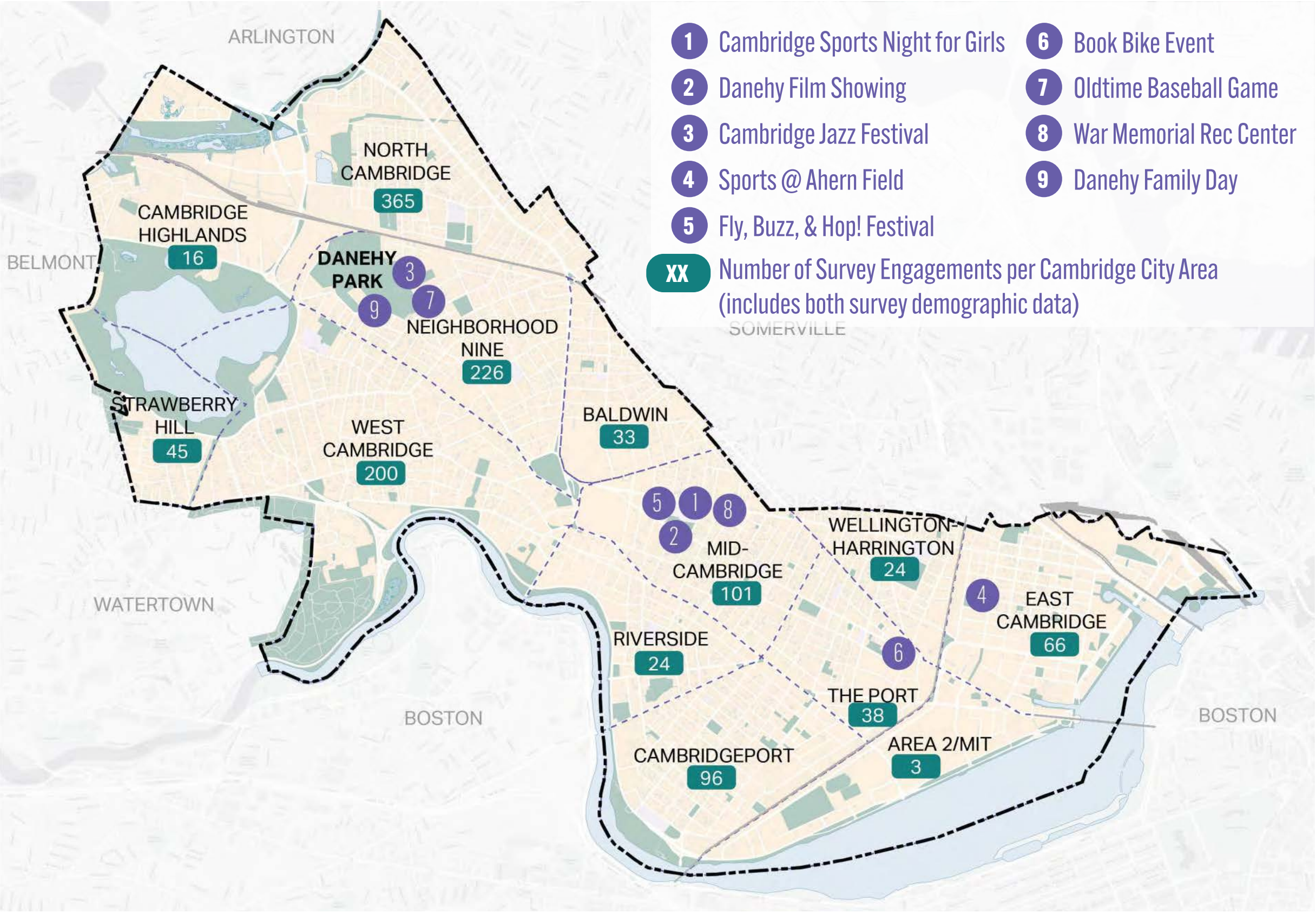
## 2 ONLINE SURVEYS

General Survey  
Spring 2024 - Fall 2024

Athletics Survey  
October - November 2024

Future Surveys  
2025

## 9 POP-UP EVENTS JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2024



## FOCUS MEETINGS ON SPECIFIC TOPICS OR AREAS OF THE PARK

Cambridge Athletics	Dog Park Users	Assisted Living	Daycares	Teachers Associations / Schools
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# ENGAGEMENT STATS



spoke with **800**  
individual community members  
at all pop-up events



**930** general survey  
responses



**422** athletic survey  
responses



**20** yard signs at  
Danehy Park



# WHAT WE'VE HEARD SO FAR – IN PERSON ENGAGEMENT

Cambridge Sports Night for Girls – January 2024  
Open Space Film Showing – March 2024

“Plant trees in  
the dog park and  
put in a dog  
friendly surface”

"It is great as is"

“More native plantings”

“There  
seem to be  
drainage  
issues”

“re-wild portions of the park”

“Add a  
parkour park”

“Add benches and/or places for spectators in inclement weather.”

“improve  
the track”

“would be  
awesome to not  
sled into the reeds”

“More signage to show a map of the paths and the distance of each”

“take better care of the walk  
that hugs the fence”





# EMERGING THEMES



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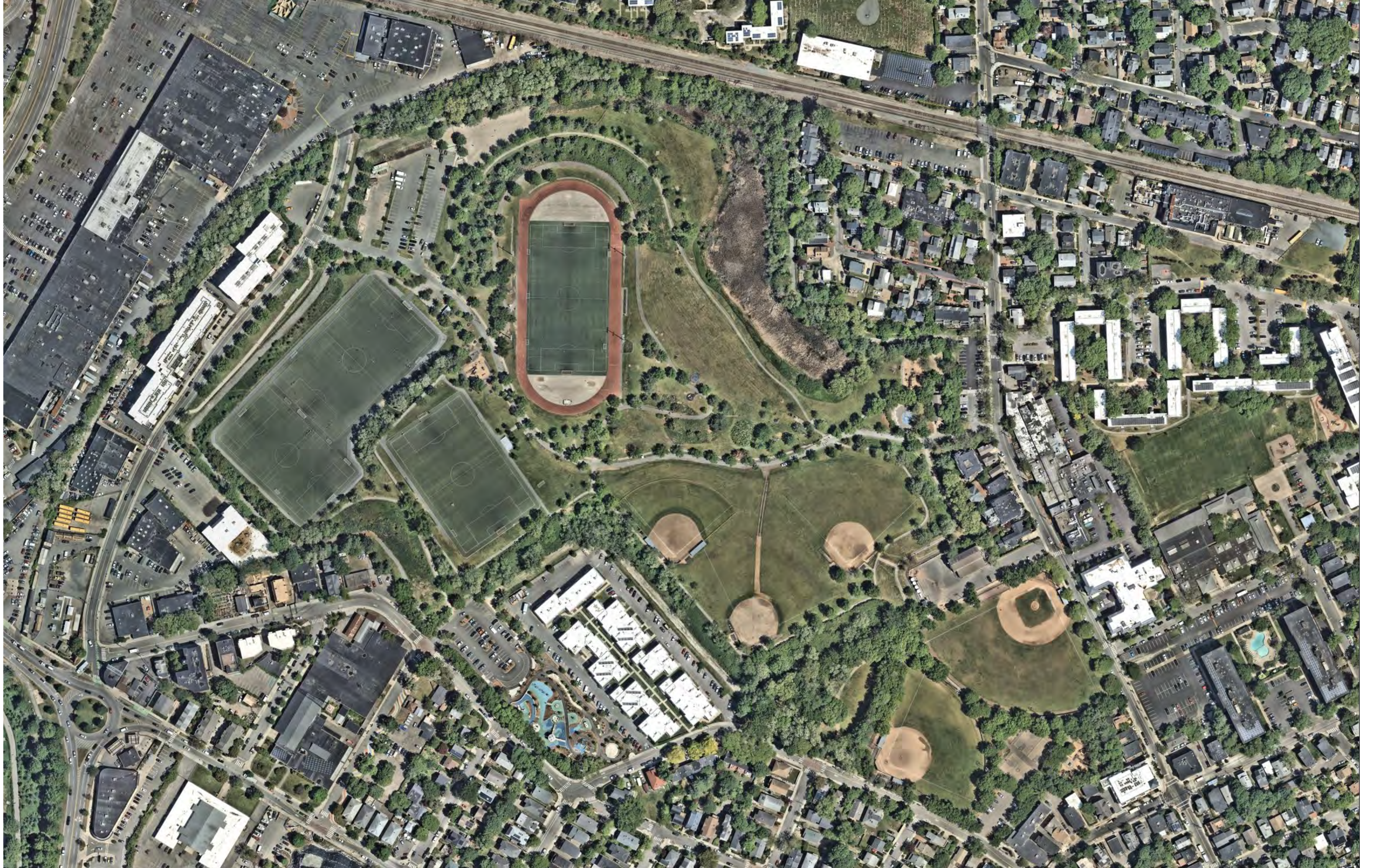
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# DANEHY LARGELY WORKS WELL AS IT IS









# LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENTS ARE NEEDED

Soil Quality is Poor

Plant on Slopes and in 'Floodplain'

Enhance Habitat

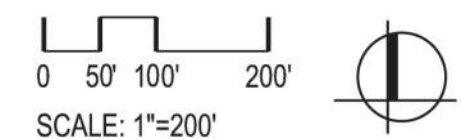
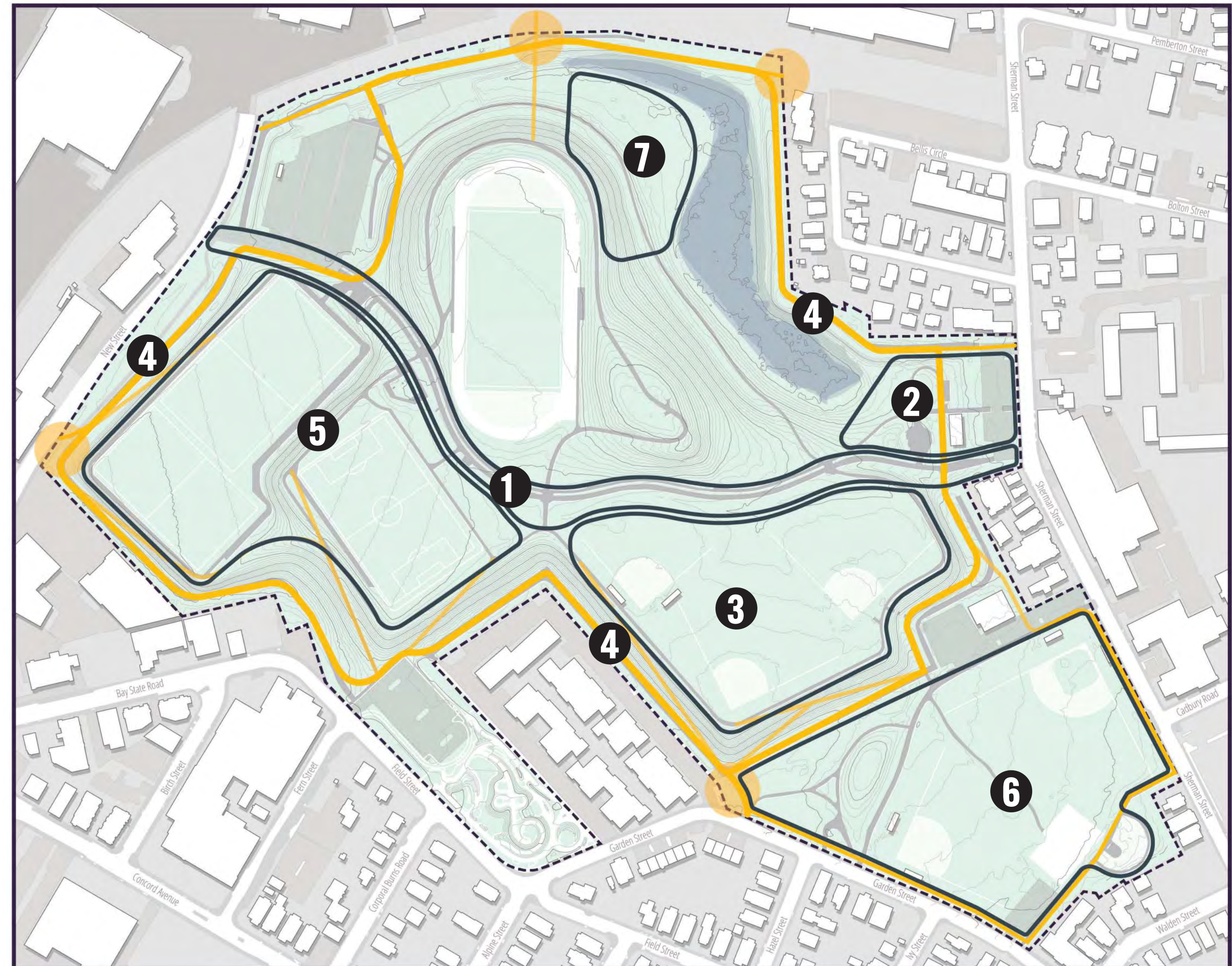
Make Entrances More Attractive and Inviting





# PRELIMINARY PROJECT IDEAS

1. 'Main Street' Promenade
2. Sherman Street Play, Splash and Gather
3. Upper Softball and Large Event Lawn
4. Greenway Loop, Connections & Entrances
5. Turf Field, Sunset Overlook & Teen Hub
6. Dinosaur Playground & Courts
7. Floodplain Grove





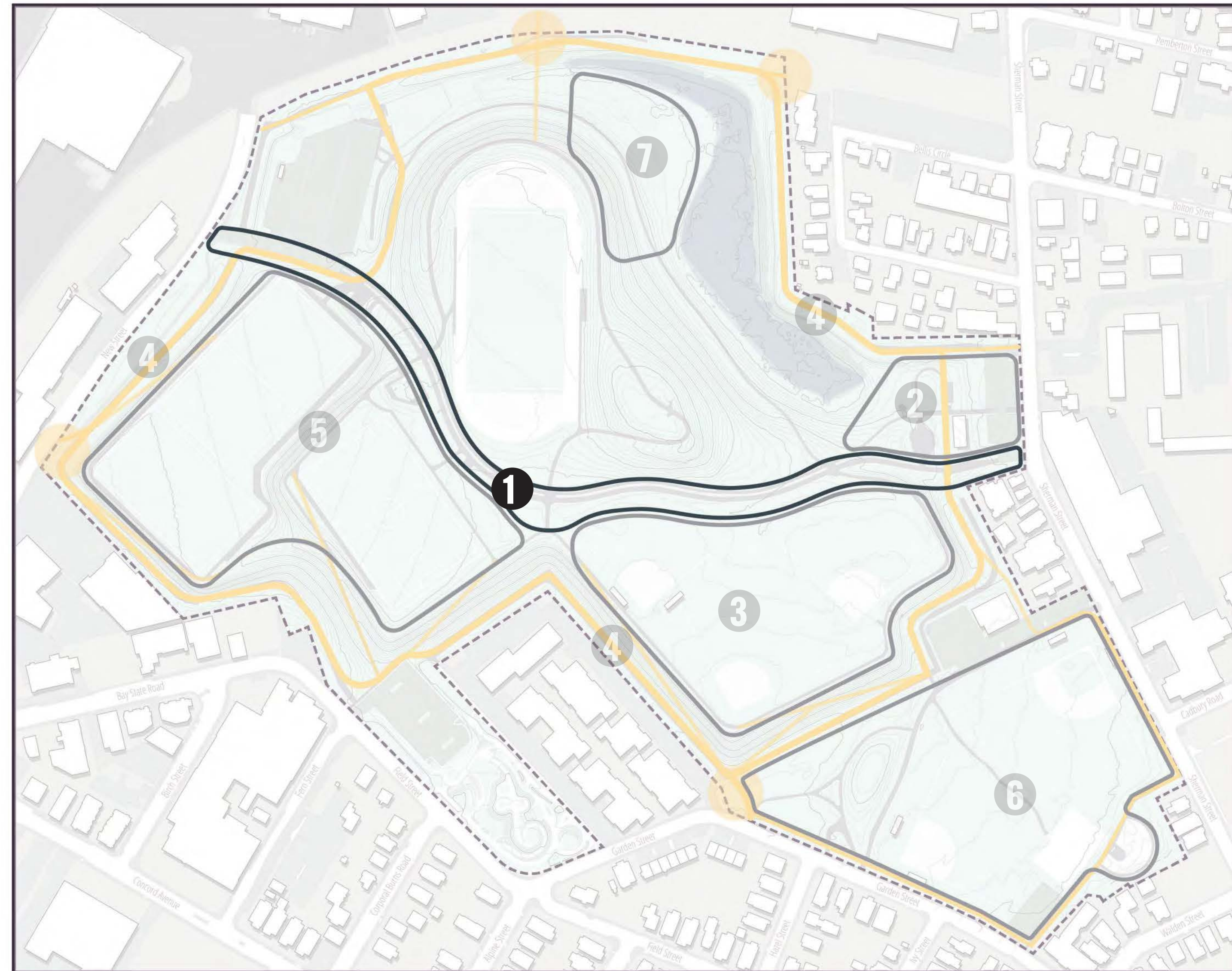
# PRELIMINARY PROJECT IDEAS

## 1. 'Main Street' Promenade

- Establish and upgrade this path as the main utility corridor (water main and electrical upgrades, add communication and stormwater)
- Multigenerational gathering spaces, play and active use nodes
- Shade / cooling spots
- Tree removal and replanting, with soil improvements
- Drainage Improvements
- Phasing considerations

### POTENTIAL EARLY WIN:

Opportunity to leverage utility work to advance other park goals such as soil amendments, planting, and social spaces.

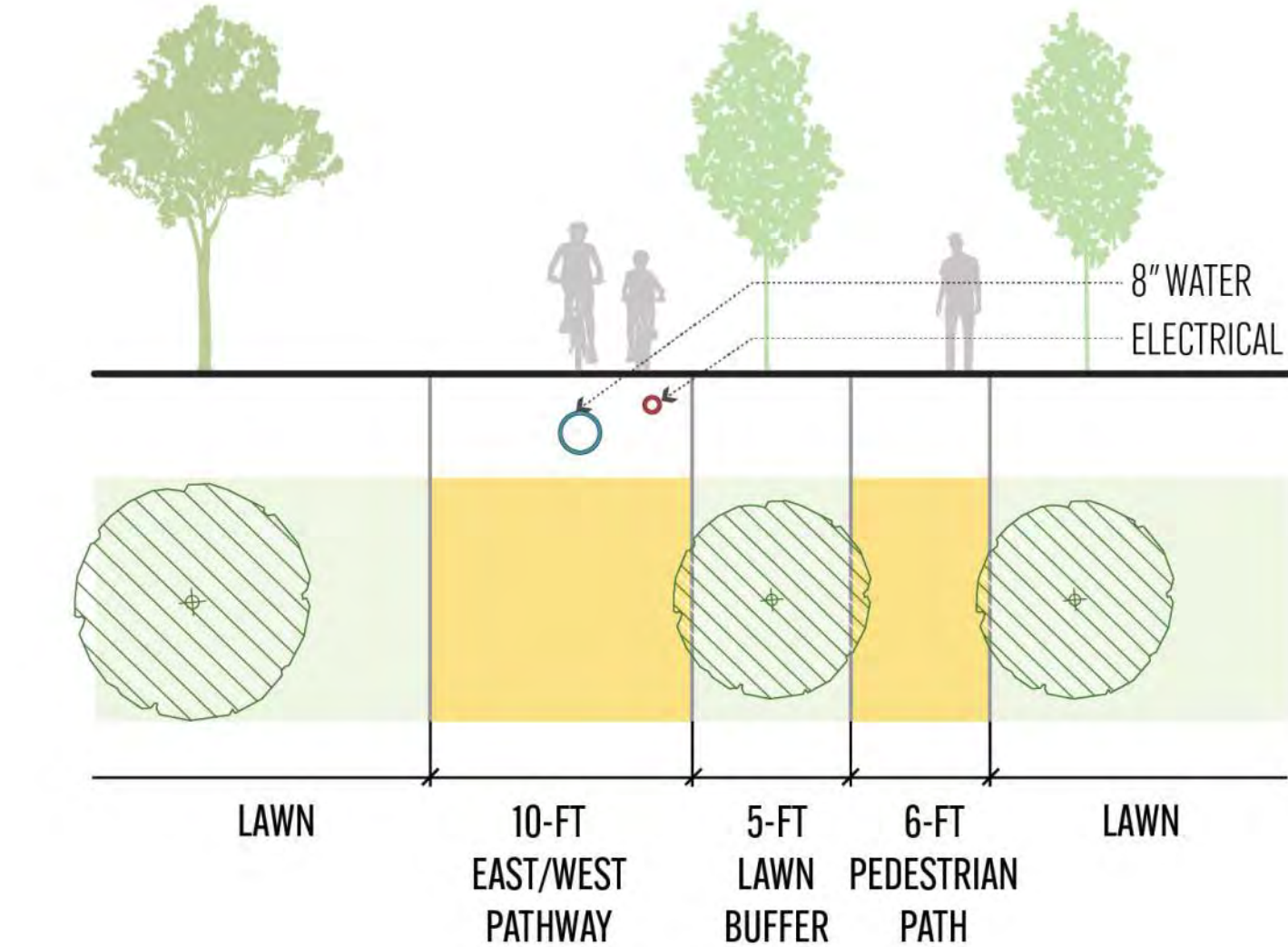




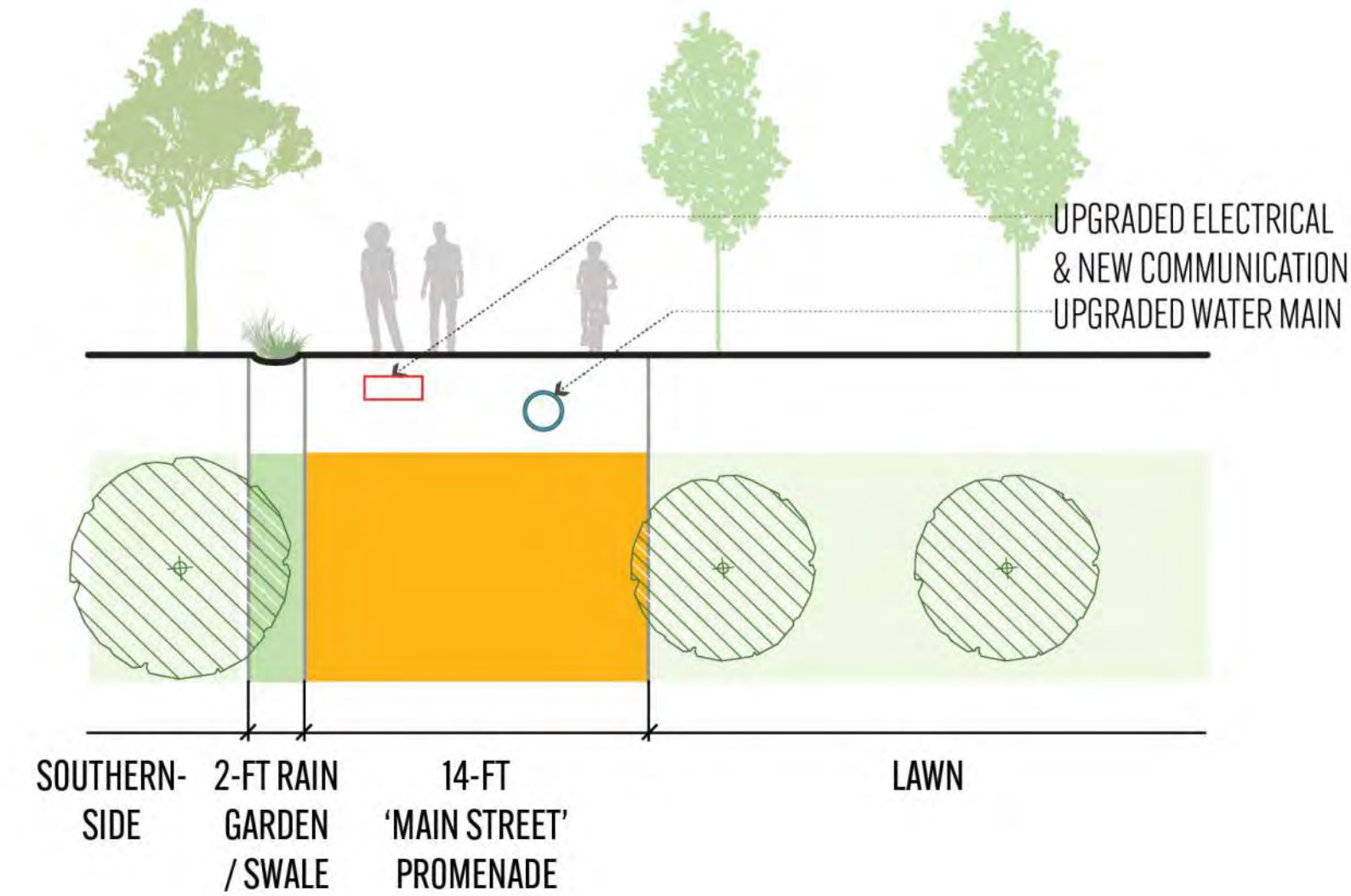
# 'MAIN STREET' PROMENADE



Existing Path, Typical Section



Proposed Shared Use Path, Typical Section





# ‘MAIN STREET’ PROMENADE

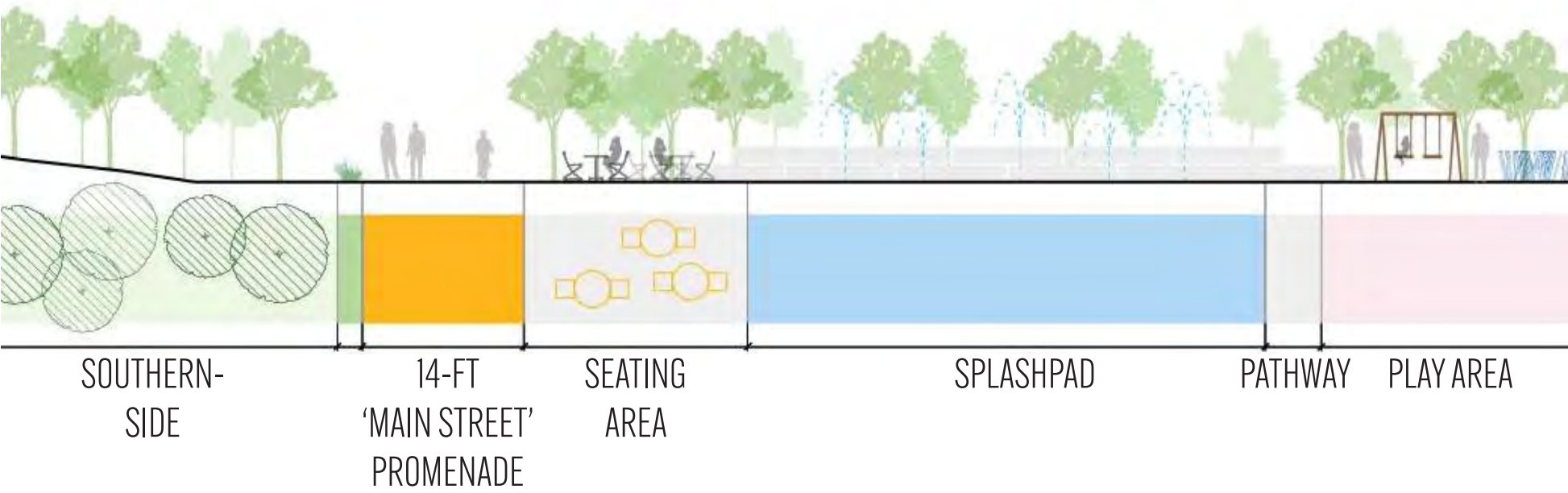


Shared Use, Bench Seating

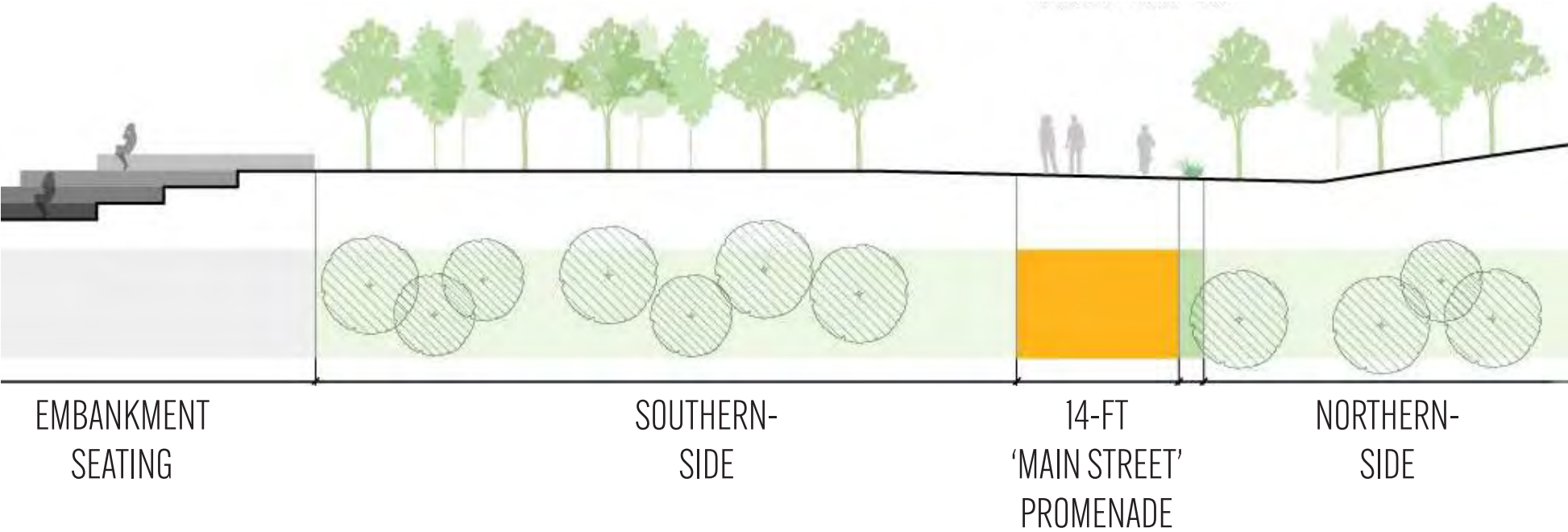


Open Play Ribbon

Path at Splashpad/Playground, Section A



Path along Embankment Seating, Section B



Special Paving at New Street and Sherman Street Entrances



Gathering nodes and Play Opportunities



Infrastructure Utility Enhancements





# PRELIMINARY PROJECT IDEAS

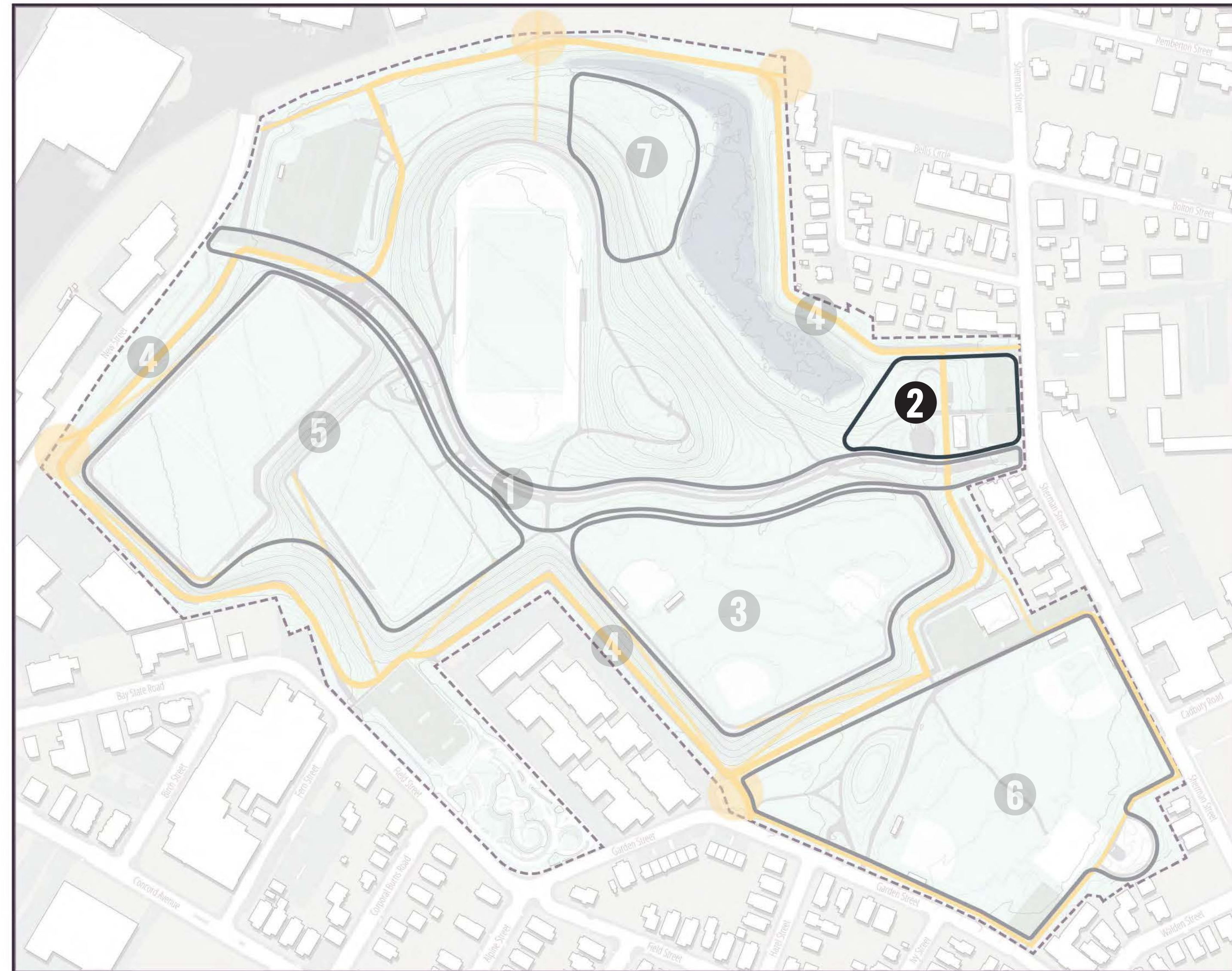
## 1. 'Main Street' Promenade

## 2. Sherman Street Play, Splash and Gather

- Pedestrian entry plaza and main gateway into the park
- Clear overgrown vegetation
- Full playground renovation
- Splash pad renovation and water service upgrades
- Small events space separated from the 'Main Street' Promenade
- Memorial garden
- Greenway loop connection
- Drainage improvements
- Comfort building upgrades

### POTENTIAL EARLY WIN:

Create a more inviting and pedestrian-friendly park entrance, and regrade the lawn to better accommodate small events.



0 50' 100' 200'  
SCALE: 1"=200'





# SHERMAN STREET PLAY, SPLASH & GATHER - EXISTING



Wheeler Water Garden



Sherman Street Main Entry



Sherman Street Secondary Entry



Sherman Street Secondary Entrance

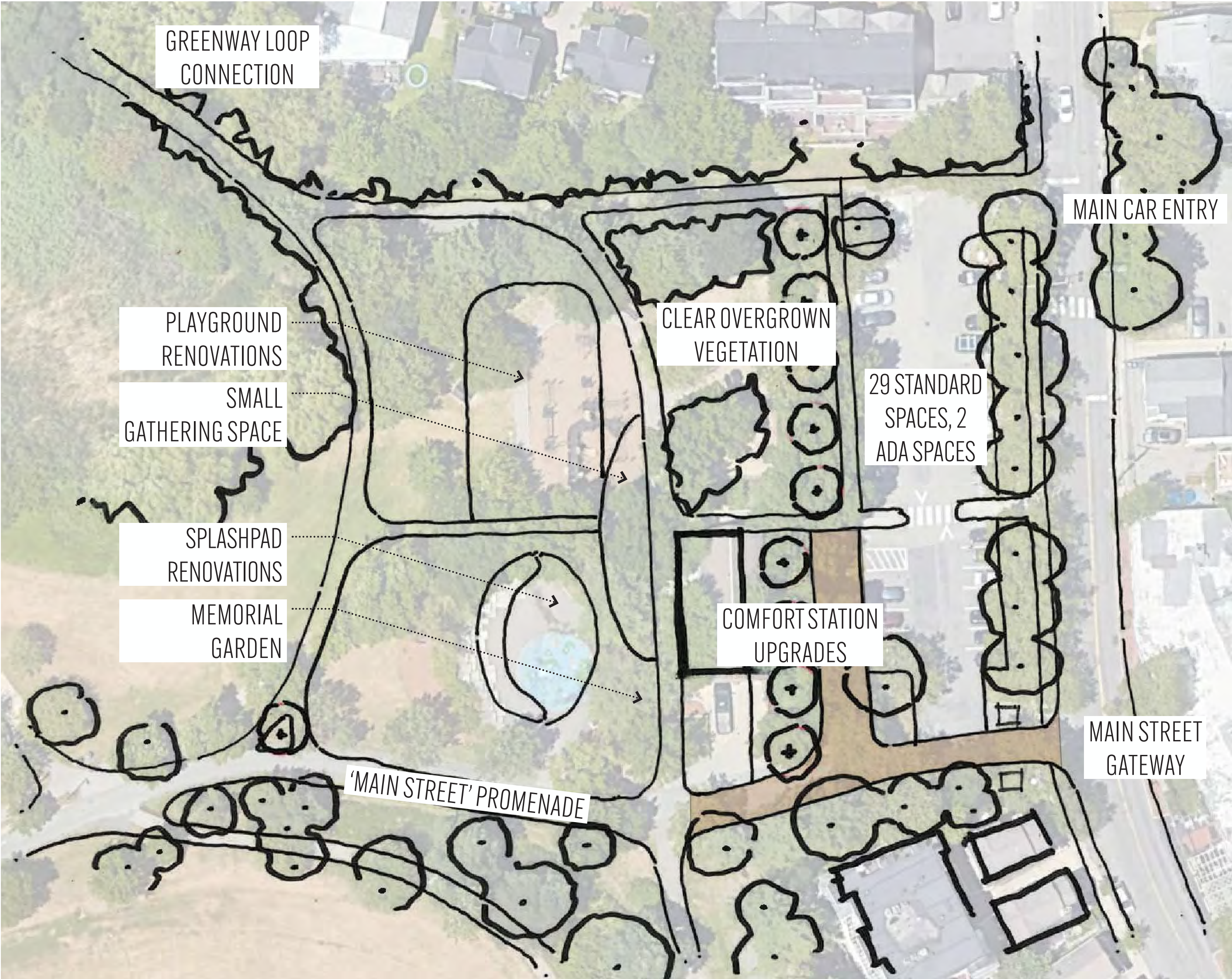


Regina Antoine Tot Lot





# SHERMAN STREET PLAY, SPLASH & GATHER



Memorial Garden



Ecological Spine



Pedestrian Entry Plaza



Picnic / Community Shelter



Main Street Gateway





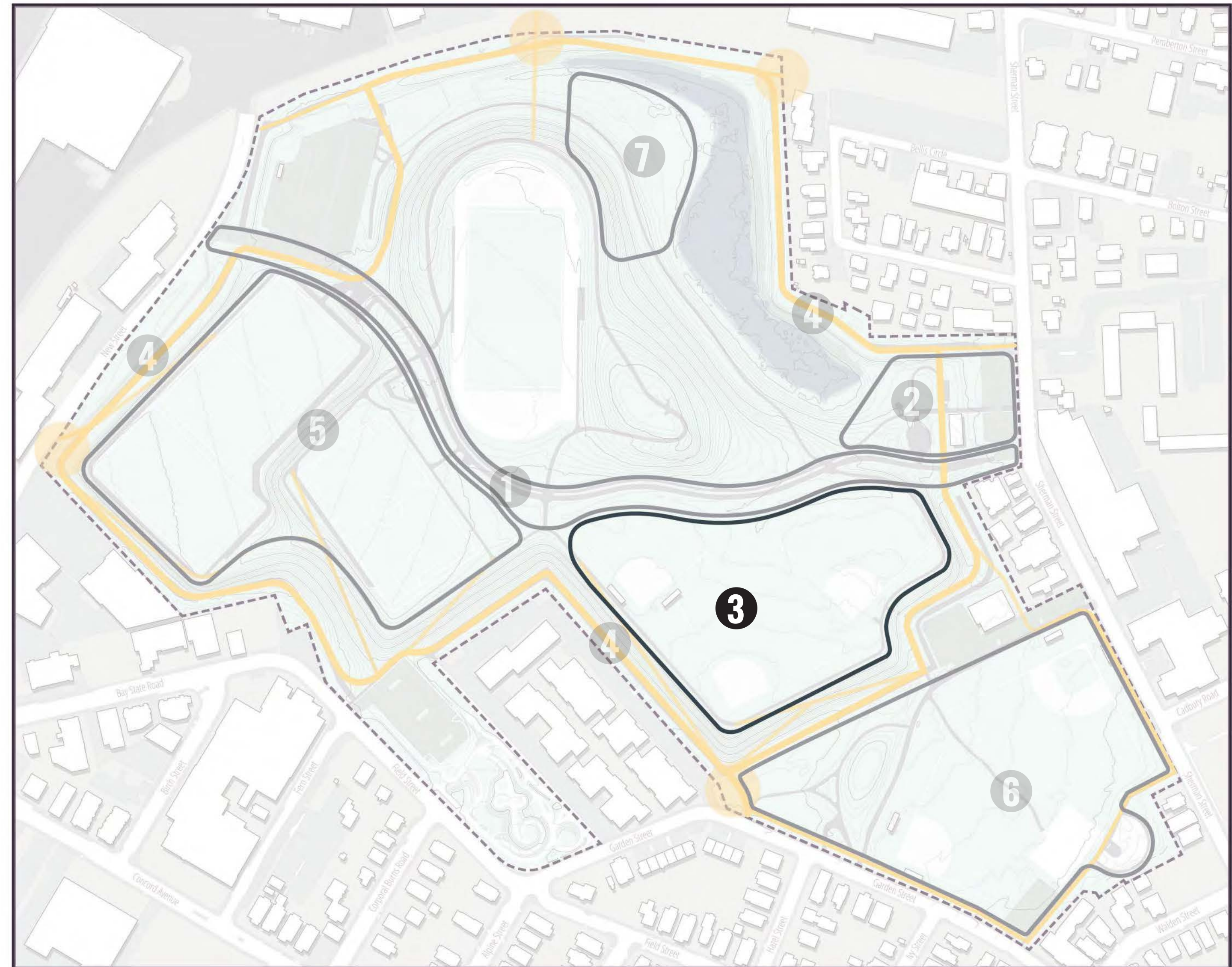
# PRELIMINARY PROJECT IDEAS

## 1. 'Main Street' Promenade

## 2. Sherman Street Play, Splash and Gather

## 3. Upper Softball and Large Event Lawn

- Consider two softball fields as an alternative concept
- Reconfigured area to add a new active recreation not currently programed at Danehy (e.g. cricket pitch, volleyball)
- Dedicated batting tunnel for softball
- Large event lawn / passive rec space with better support infrastructure including service pathways



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SCALE: 1"=200'

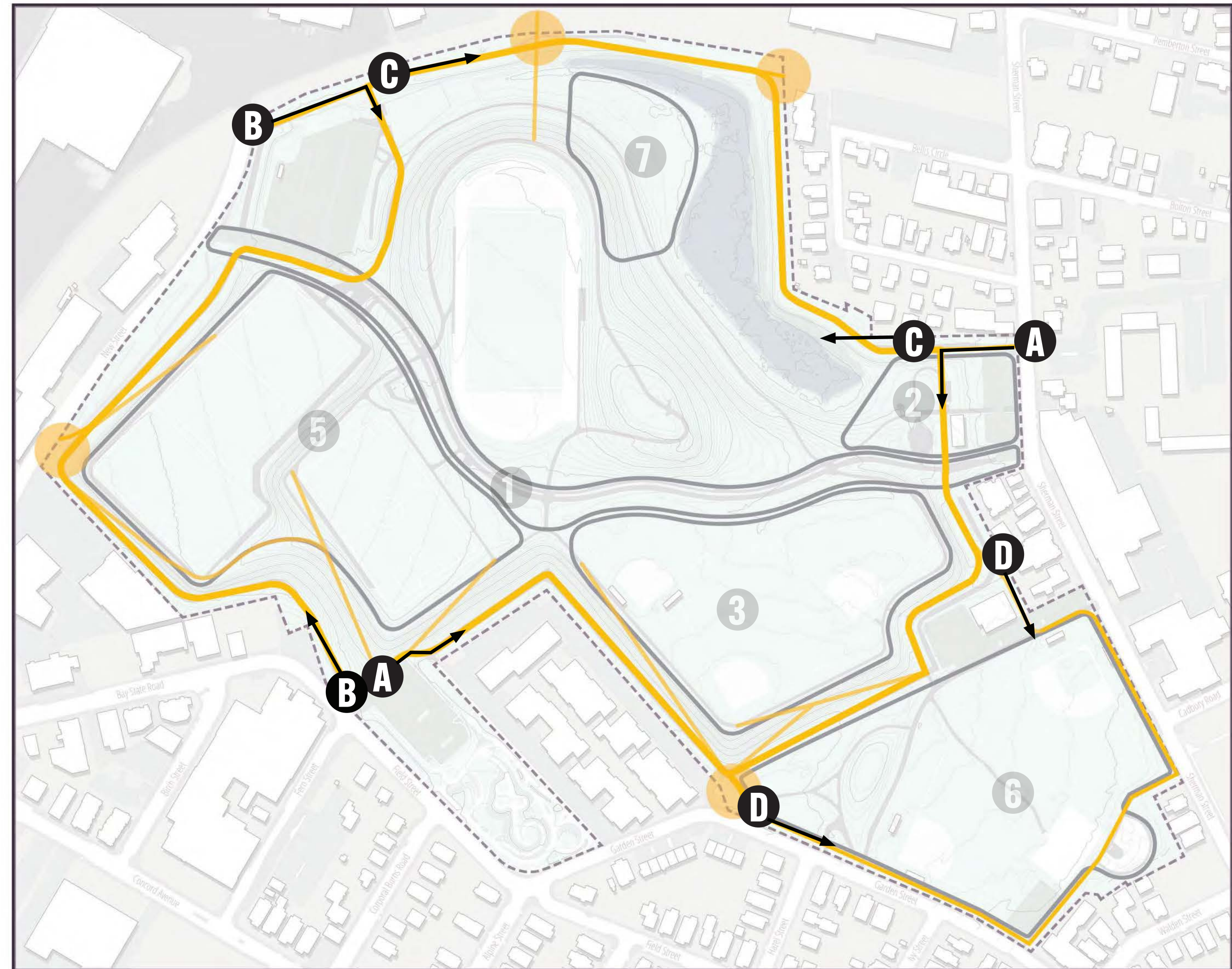




# PRELIMINARY PROJECT IDEAS

1. 'Main Street' Promenade
2. Sherman Street Play, Splash and Gather
3. Upper Softball and Large Event Lawn
- 4. Greenway Loop, Connections & Entrances**

- Use the existing vent trench as the location for new perimeter path loop.
- New pollinator and rain gardens can grow the park's ecological impact.
- Connect to other park paths with sloping pathways for full inclusivity.
- Establish a consistent feel for park entrances through select materials and clear signage.
- Phased approach



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SCALE: 1"=200'





# GREENWAY LOOP, CONNECTION & ENTRANCES

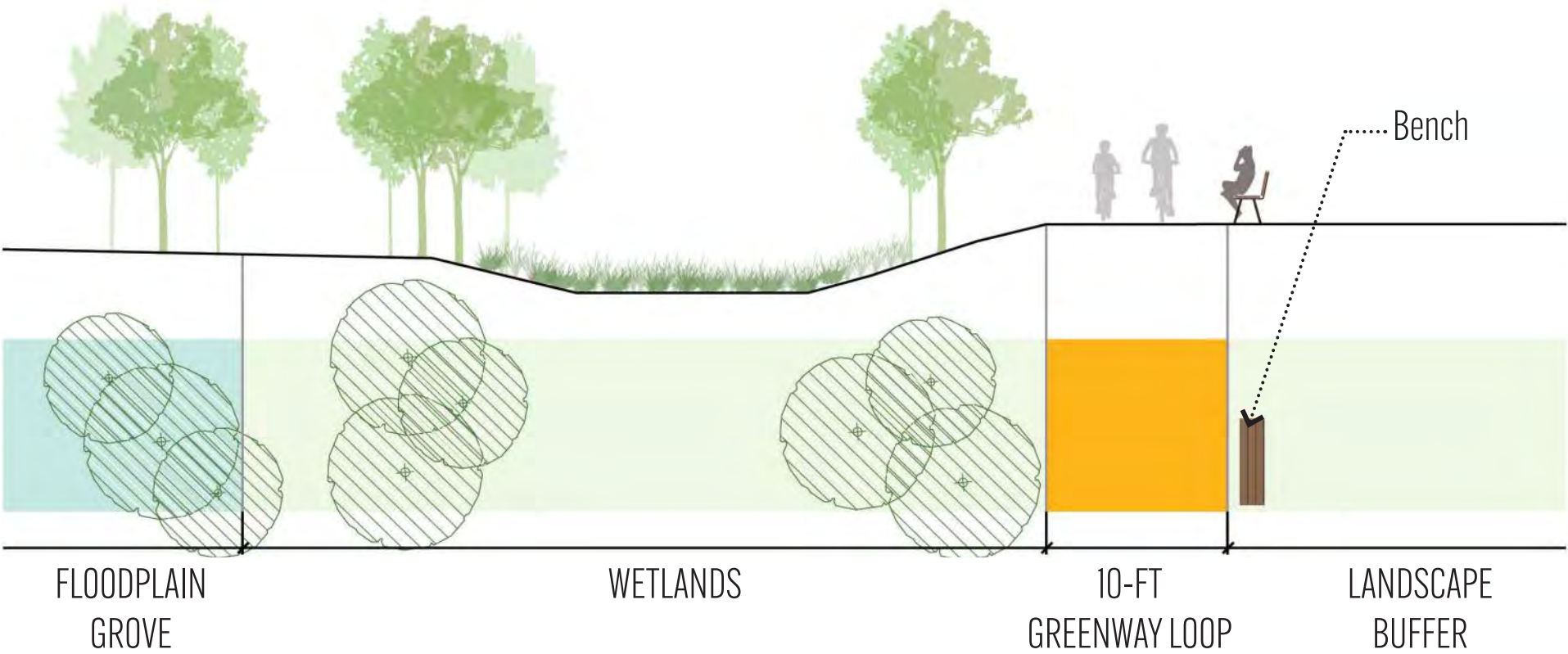


Sloped Pollinator Meadows



Greenway Loop and Path Connections

Proposed Shared Use Path, Typical Section

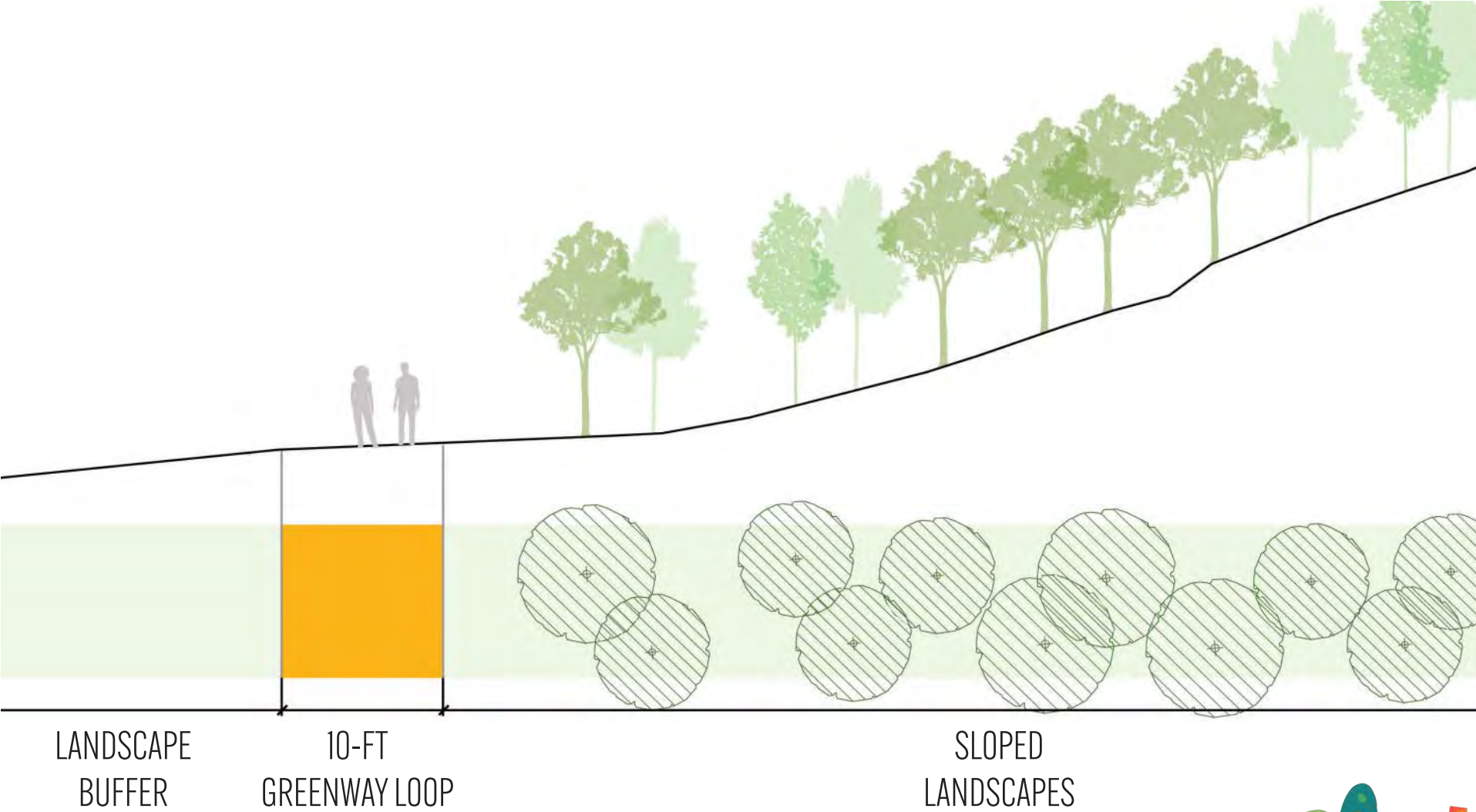


Main Entrance Upgrades & Wayfinding



Sloping Pathways/Ramps for full inclusivity

Proposed Shared Use Path, Typical Section



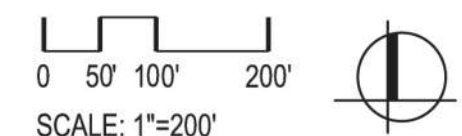
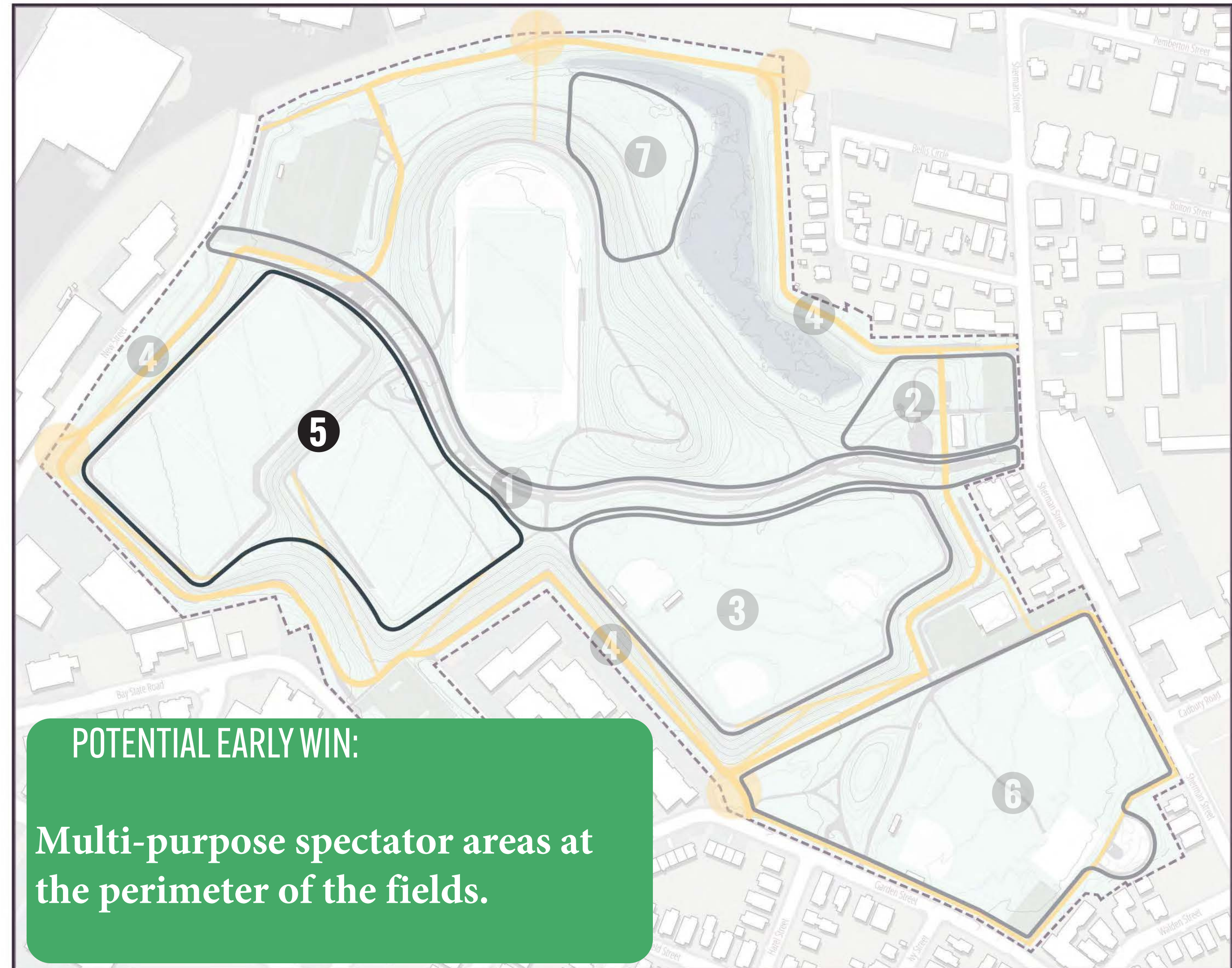


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2. Sherman Street Play, Splash and Gather
3. Upper Softball and Large Event Lawn
4. Greenway Loop, Connections & Entrances

**5. Turf Field, Sunset Overlook & Teen Hub**

- Multiuse Field – consider adding softball?
- Athletic Lighting
- Sunset spectator seating/viewing area
- Equipment storage, training space, and other amenities for athletes
- Improved entrance onto the fields
- Sloped connection from the Field Street Parking Lot
- Multifunctional teen hanging out space
- Consider parkour, pump track and skate concepts that weave in planting (i.e. 'skate garden')
- Node off Main Street and proximity to the athletic fields





# TURF FIELD, SUNSET OVERLOOK & PLAYGROUND - EXISTING



From Slope Above Turf Field 1

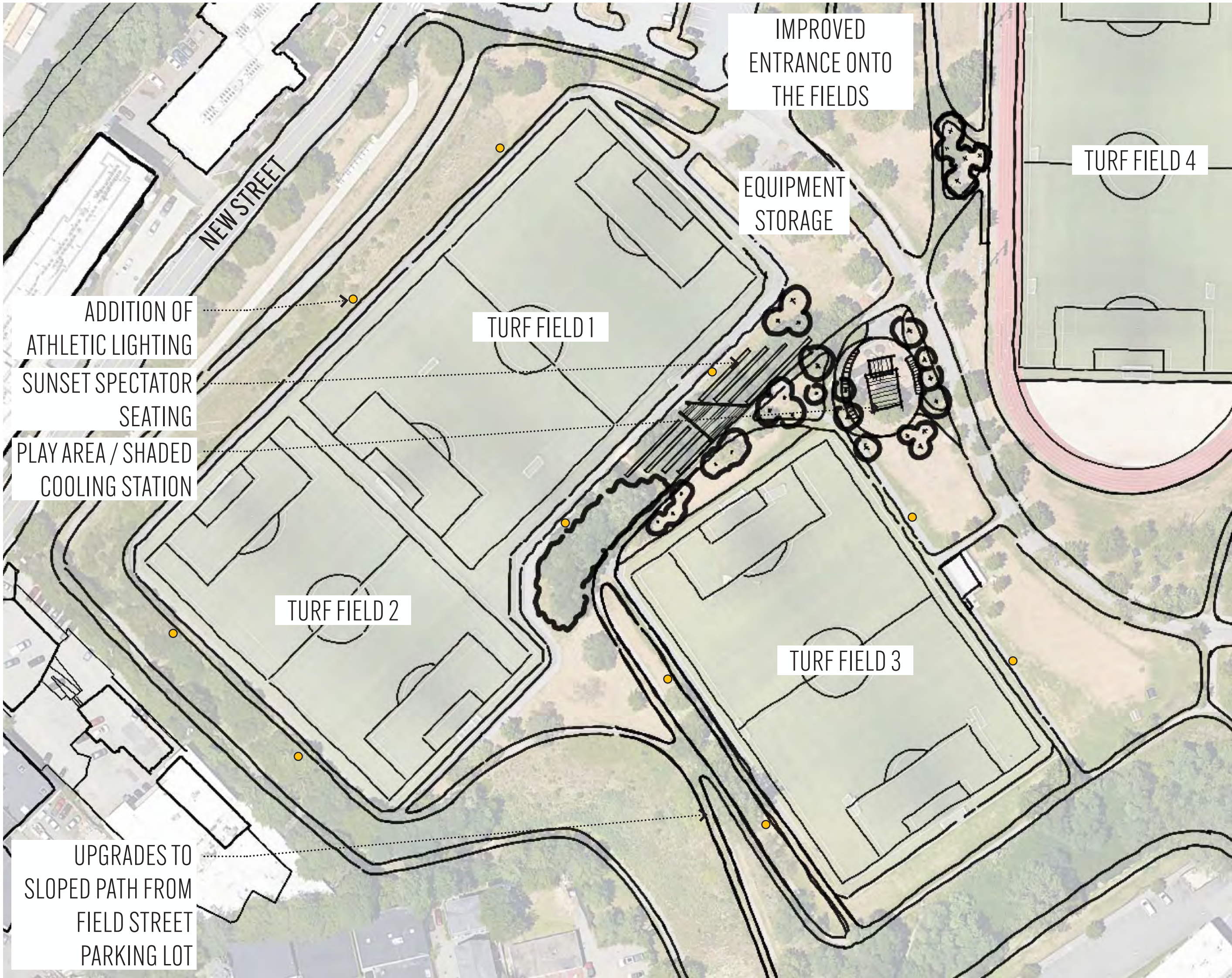


Turf Fields 1 & 2





# TURF FIELD, SUNSET OVERLOOK & TEEN HUB - CONCEPT A



Shaded Cooling Station



Sensory/Artful Play



Better Sports Amenities

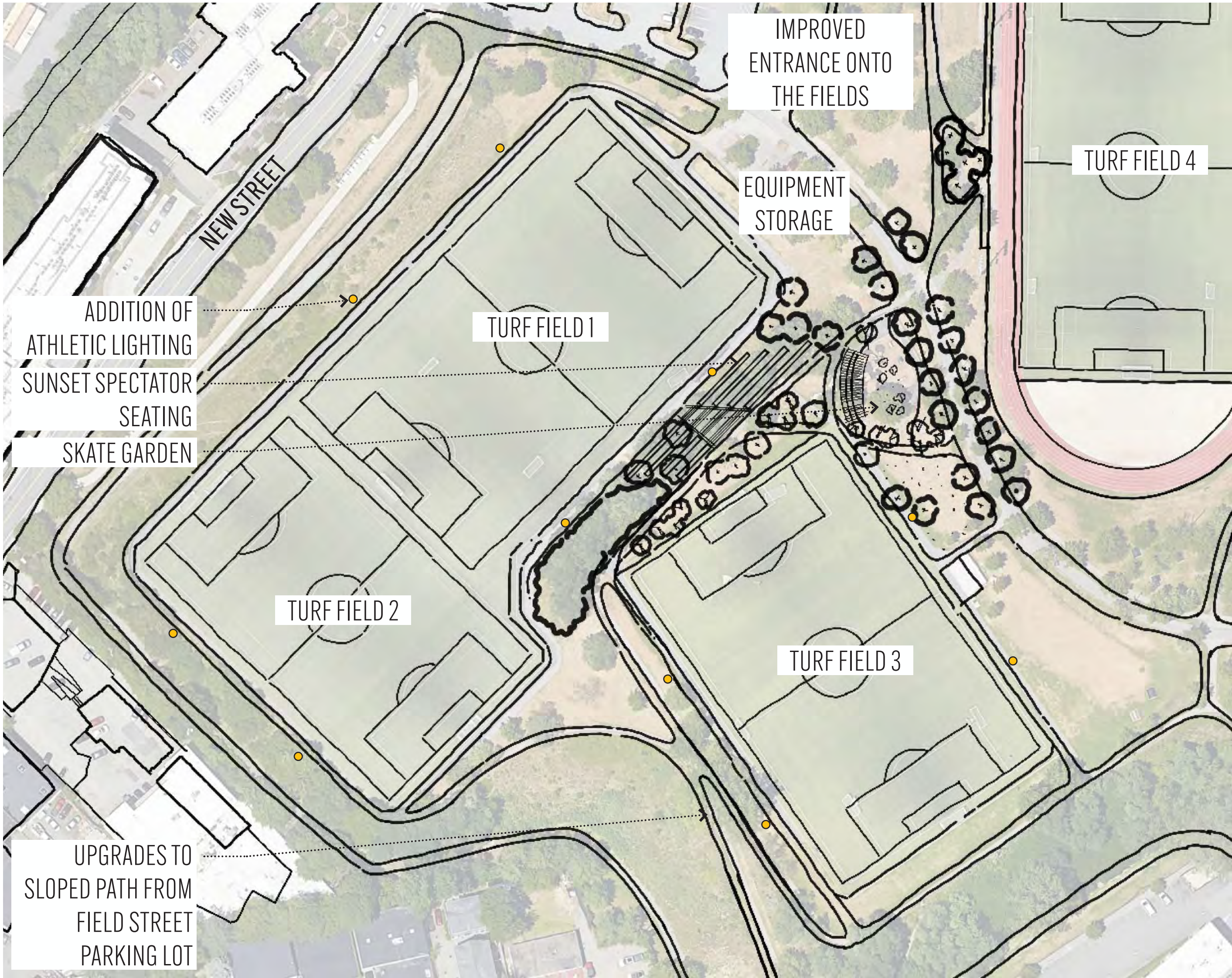


Hillside Seating





# TURF FIELD, SUNSET OVERLOOK & TEEN HUB - CONCEPT B



Skate Garden



Play Zone with Boulders/Cooling Area



Quiet Spots for Relaxation, Yet Iconic and Artful



Open Play - Freerunning, Table Sports, Etc.

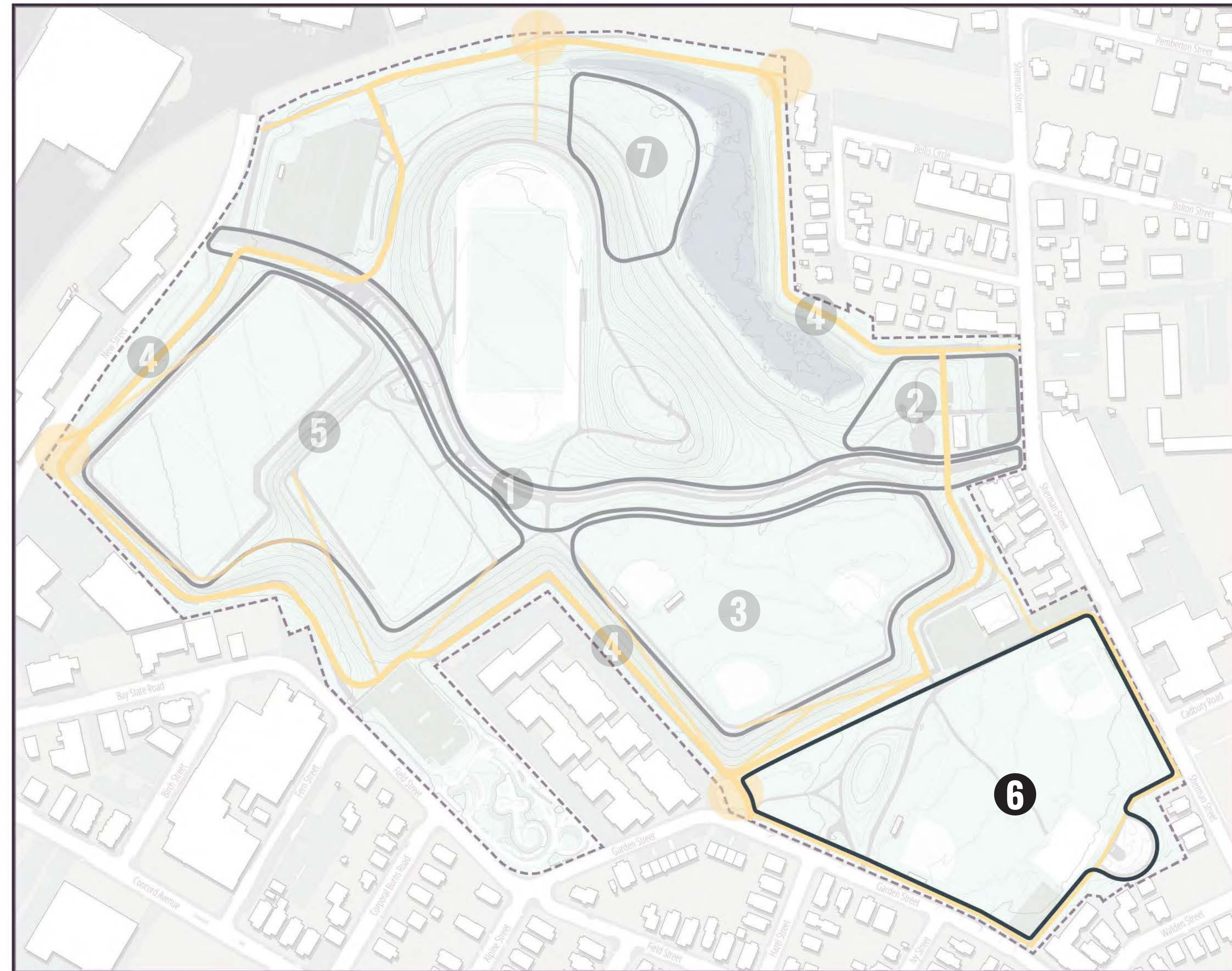




# PRELIMINARY PROJECT IDEAS

1. 'Main Street' Promenade
2. Sherman Street Play, Splash and Gather
3. Upper Softball and Large Event Lawn
4. Greenway Loop, Connections & Entrances
5. Turf Field, Sunset Overlook & Teen Hub
- 6. Dinosaur Playground & Courts**

- Incorporate the Perimeter path interior to the park to the greatest extent possible
- Restore Public Art (Floating Stones)
- Relocated entrance at Briston Arms and the Garden St bend with sloped pathways to upper softball
- Basketball court diet or multi-use courts
- Post-tension concrete (lower maintenance)
- Full playground renovation
- Add shaded picnic and small gathering space



0 50' 100' 200'  
SCALE: 1"=200'



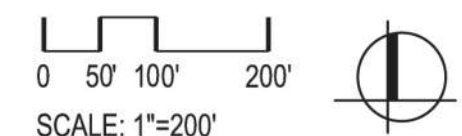
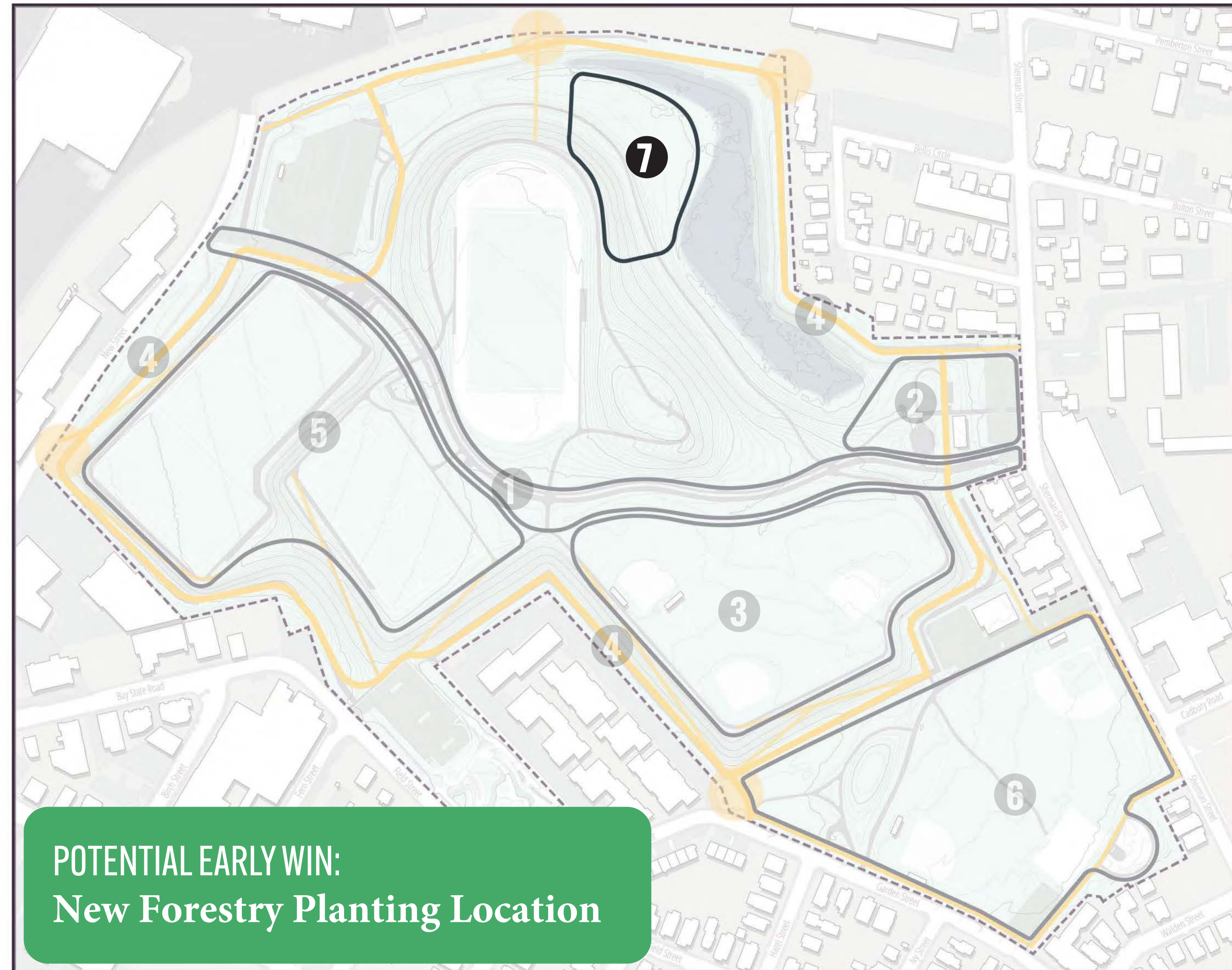


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## 7. Floodplain Grove

- New program now that the area is no longer needed for H.S. athletics
- Regular flooding takes place now. It sits within a 100yr wetland flood basin.
- Passive gathering space
- Accessible picnic tables and benches
- Habitat and planting enhancements
- Eco trail tie in to the Greenway Loop?





# FLOODPLAIN GROVE - EXISTING



View towards wetlands



Walkway along wetland





# Thoughts? Questions?



## **DANEHY PARK** IMPROVEMENTS PLAN





# Become a **CAMBRIDGE CLIMATE ACTION LEADER**

**Gather a group of friends and host a conversation about  
climate change in Cambridge!**

## **Cambridge Climate Leaders:**

- Learn about climate change in Cambridge
- Discover City resources for residents
- Practice having conversations about climate change
- If accepted to the program, receive support to host an event, including a \$200 stipend

## **Requirements:**

- Apply by **March 17, 2025**
- Information session on **March 24, 2025**
- Training session in **April**
- Host a Climate Conversation between **April and June 2025**

**For more information and to apply**



*Scan the QR code with your  
phone camera to apply or  
email the following address*

**climateactionleaders  
@cambridgema.gov**

