



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: December 3, 2015

PROJECT Franklin Park Rehabilitation 14th and I Streets, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7545
SUBMITTED BY National Park Service	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 21.00(70.00)44260
REVIEW AUTHORITY 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Preliminary approval of site and building plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve with comments
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Staff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS), in partnership with the Government of the District of Columbia (DC) and the DowntownDC Business Improvement District (BID), is proposing a revitalization of Franklin Park. Located in downtown Washington at 14th and I Streets, NW, the historic urban park occupies a 4.8-acre city block, and is the second largest NPS square in the central business district.

Providing an unique opportunity to serve the community and enhance urban living, the park is located in a thriving commercial district and growing residential area three blocks northeast of the White House and is served by Metro (McPherson Square), over two dozen Metrobus lines, two DC Circulator routes, and four Capital Bikeshare stations within two blocks. The District has experienced significant population growth downtown in recent years, resulting in a population nearing 10,000 residents and increased demand for high quality urban parks. These trends are important drivers for re-envisioning Franklin Park. Currently, the park does not meet today's diverse urban needs, but given its unique historic role as a natural respite place, there is strong potential to transform Franklin Park into one of the nation's premier urban parks. Improvements include:

- Multiple active and passive recreational opportunities, essential services such as restrooms, food and flexible seating, and actively managed daytime and evening events and programs.
- A celebration of and respect for the park's historic character and sense of place through restored historic resources, rich landscaping and seasonal plantings, and high quality site and building materials.
- Restoration of the fountain.
- A sustainable, maintainable, and ecologically sensitive design that serves a diverse group of users including young and old District residents, workers, and visitors.

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- An enhanced streetscape and public realm, integrated with multiple transportation modes, including Capital Bikeshare, Metrobus, DC Circulator, Metrorail, and the planned K Street streetcar.
 - A new public/private management structure to fund, program, maintain, and provide security for the park.

NPS, DC and the BID came together in 2012 to collaboratively plan and implement park improvements through a public-private partnership. Recognizing that downtown Washington parks serve national, regional, and local audiences, the agencies see the Franklin Park project as a model for new partnership structures to improve and manage urban parks. As part of the NPS Centennial in 2016, the NPS has focused its efforts on improving urban parks nation-wide, which comprise more than a third of all national park sites.

KEY INFORMATION

- The park is a contributing feature to the L'Enfant Plan; Congress set aside this park land to protect the site's natural springs, a primary water source for the White House.
 - The park's period of significance is from 1867 to 1936.
 - The collaborative partnership between NPS, the District and the DowntownDC BID to fund a capital and operational program for the park follows recommendations from the 2010 *CapitalSpace Plan*.
 - Downtown Washington has experienced a significant increase in residential population over the past ten years, and is now home to nearly 10,000 people. Residents are asking for more urban parks and recreational amenities in the area.
 - The new design was developed through concurrent NEPA Environmental Assessment and Section 106 processes conducted from September 2013 – June 2015.
 - The preferred alternative was selected because it strikes a balance between respecting the historic integrity of the park while modernizing the space for today's recreational needs, including a revenue-generating program for the park's long-term economic viability.
 - Key elements of the design include:
 - Upgrades to the center plaza, including updating the fountain with interactive features
 - A new children's play area
 - A new café with restrooms, a small office space and other basic amenities
 - A pedestrian plaza with outdoor seating and cultural/historic interpretive elements
 - Significant landscape improvements
 - A June 2015 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) requires additional design review to ensure adverse effects are minimized and impacts to the cultural landscape and/or archaeological resources are properly mitigated.
 - The new design includes the removal of 46 trees; 17 are due to poor health, and 29 are due to the redesign of the central fountain and plaza.
 - The new design will plant 43 trees, providing the space and care necessary to grow a healthy canopy for the park. Understory shrubs and perennials native to the mid-Atlantic region are also a part of the enhanced landscape plan.
 - Rehabilitation of Franklin Park supports the NPS' Urban Parks Agenda, one of the key components of its 2016 Centennial celebration.
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RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary site and building plans for the rehabilitation of Franklin Park, located in downtown Washington, DC.

Supports the development of an unique urban park accommodating both local and national interests in the heart of downtown Washington, DC.

Notes that Franklin Park is a significant feature of the L'Enfant Plan, and that it is distinctive from other historic downtown park squares and circles, such as McPherson Square, in both function and character.

- Historically, the park had an important ecological function, and was created to protect the White House's primary water source in the early 1800's.
- The park's historic pastoral design is also unique from the more formal, symmetrical designs of some of Washington's other downtown parks, and reinforces a natural aesthetic of asymmetrical pathways, a significant tree canopy, and naturalized understory plantings. And therefore:

Finds that the proposed design approach and vocabulary, which draws on natural influences, is appropriate for Franklin Park as a reference to its historic ecological function and character; and

Finds that the new programming, including a café and children's area, is an appropriate departure from existing open space uses that will help this park realize its potential as a respite and a public space in downtown Washington.

Notes that the National Park Service is working diligently with the Government of the District of Columbia and the DowntownDC BID to develop an innovative partnership that protects and enhances Franklin Park for the next generation of park users. A well-funded and staffed operations and maintenance plan is necessary to ensure the significant capital investment in the park is sustained for years to come.

Recommends the applicant consider the following comments prior to submitting for final review:

Café & Pedestrian Mall

- Provide further details regarding the design, materials, and construction of the café, including the green roof.
- Enhance visitor safety by providing restroom access directly from the interior of café.
- Per the MOA signed on June 3, 2015 pursuant to Section 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), integrate cultural and historic interpretive features on the history of Franklin Park within the pavement area of the pedestrian mall to engage visitors and activate the space.

- Provide further details regarding site programming and sustainable design features within the pedestrian mall.

Children's Garden

- Per the MOA signed on June 3, 2015 pursuant to Section 106 and 110 of the NHPA, incorporate the Potomac watershed theme throughout the design.
- Identify the type and location of specific play elements to be located within the Children's Garden.
- Consider use of the "living" fence as the preferred option to best integrate the protective measures necessary for a safe play space with the organic design of the park.

Central Plaza and Fountain

- Identify in greater detail those elements of the historic plaza and fountain that will be retained, reused, rehabilitated or replaced.

Recommends that additional details be submitted with the final design regarding the proposed sustainability elements, site grading, tree protection, lighting, site furnishings, and planting plan.

Requests a stormwater management plan, prepared in accordance with the Commission submission guidelines, that addresses compliance with the District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) and Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) regulations.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	N/A
Remaining actions (anticipated)	Final site and building plan review (mid-2016)

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff reviewed the project against the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. As noted below, the project is consistent with policies in the Preservation and Historic Features Element, the Visitors Element, and the Parks and Open Space Element. The project will improve Franklin Park's overall appearance, urban park amenities, and the functionality of this significant downtown park. The project promotes high quality design and sustainability principles while also preserving open space in downtown Washington and providing visitor amenities and educational opportunities.

Staff also reviewed the project against the 2010 *CapitalSpace* Plan. The project is consistent with policies related to Chapter Five, *Enhance Center City Parks*, including the accommodation of both local and national user groups, developing and operating new park amenities through public-private partnerships, and expanding recreational opportunities in downtown Washington.

Together, NPS and the District of Columbia are in the process of negotiating a Cooperative Management Agreement (CMA). The CMA provides the collaborative framework to explore opportunities to establish a governance structure and procedures that will allow Franklin Park to be operated and maintained by the partners as seamlessly as possible. Based on the execution of the CMA, the District will commit the capital funds necessary for the park construction, currently estimated at approximately \$18 million. It is expected that construction drawings will be completed in 2016; construction will begin in the fall of 2016; and the park will be completed by the fall of 2017.

Staff recommends that the Commission **approve the preliminary site and building plans for the rehabilitation of Franklin Park.**

Analysis

The project will rehabilitate Franklin Park from its current state into a modern urban park, meeting the needs of a growing downtown residential population, nearby employees, and visitors to Washington. The new design respects much of the existing historic park infrastructure, including the central fountain plaza, historically significant statue commemorating Commodore John Barry, and circulation system that enhances the existing asymmetrical pathways on an east-west axis with open turf areas throughout the park.

While this park is historic, its significance as a feature of the L'Enfant Plan is unique from other downtown park squares and circles such as McPherson, Farragut, or Dupont. Franklin is not located on a diagonal avenue, and lacks the significant viewshed and prominent location of other downtown parks. Instead, the park grew out of a need to protect the White House's primary water source, a spring that ran through this block of downtown Washington. Further emphasis was placed on the park's organic design, incorporating meandering pathways, a significant tree canopy, and understory plantings not seen in other parks. As such, its value as an open space is derived more

from its unique pastoral setting and break from the typical downtown park pattern established by the L'Enfant street grid. This idiosyncrasy is one of the key reasons the NPS, District of Columbia and DowntownDC BID chose to pursue a rehabilitation of this park that respects its historic importance while blending urban park uses that distinguish this site from its downtown neighbors.

The park's existing fabric is enhanced through the inclusion of three new elements: a small café (approximately 2,100 sf) and pedestrian mall, a children's garden, and an enhanced central plaza and fountain. A fourth element, restoration of the tree canopy and understory plantings, is also covered in this analysis.

The Café and Pedestrian Mall

At approximately 2,100 sf, the café is comparatively small to other local cafes such as the National Gallery of Art's Sculpture Garden (approximately 9,000 sf) and the café at Canal Park (approximately 3,500 sf). Precedent exists for a structure in Franklin Park; the 2005 Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI), updated in 2011, identifies plans from 1886 showing a lodge with restrooms located just west of the fountain, constructed around 1873. By 1913, that lodge was relocated to East Potomac Park, and a second lodge was constructed on the 13th Street side of the park. It was removed around 1974.

While the loss of open space is typically a key staff concern, the precedent of a lodge and need for comfort amenities in downtown Washington helps justify the inclusion of an appropriately situated, modest café. Locating the new café in the southwest corner will help draw visitors from points downtown, the McPherson Metro Station, and those waiting for buses along the heavily used I Street corridor. Amenities include a small interior café space, restrooms, and a modest office space for park staff. The office space will help ensure there are eyes on the park, an element that has been shown to improve safety in urban parks. Staff notes the inclusion of restrooms are a much-needed amenity for the park, but recommends accessing the restrooms through the interior café space to support safer use of the facilities.

A pedestrian mall is proposed just north of the café, running east-west between the existing pathways. The expanded area provides the opportunity for outdoor café seating, historic and cultural interpretive features, and a programmable space for special and recurring events such as a farmer's market or temporary exhibit space. A cistern is proposed under the mall to collect and reuse stormwater for irrigation and the café's grey water needs. Staff is generally supportive of this new element, but recommends including additional details related to sustainable design features, cultural interpretation, and potential site programming of this area for the final submission.

The Children's Garden

According to the 2005 Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI), updated in 2011, Franklin Park contained a play space for neighborhood children from the mid-19th to the early 20th century, including a sandbox, swings, and slides. The Franklin School, located just east of the park, used the open space for recess and community events. These uses faded as the park became heavily planted and fell into disrepair, and by the park's redesign in 1936, disappeared altogether.

The new rehabilitation design proposes an approximately 12,000 sf space to serve as a children's garden and play space. Taking its cues from the park's pastoral setting and ecological context as part of the Potomac watershed, many of the proposed elements embody a more natural approach to play than typically found in Washington playgrounds. Staff is supportive of this departure from the more traditional play space as it embodies the spirit of Franklin Park, which continues to serve as a respite from the urban activity of downtown Washington. As safety is of highest importance in a children's play area, staff recommends inclusion of additional design details on the play elements in the final submission, and also recommends use of the "living" fence identified in the preliminary design's fencing options (*please see slide 22 for options*).

The Central Plaza and Fountain

A broken fountain, overgrown tree canopy, safety concerns, and lack of comfortable seating contribute to the current underutilization of Franklin Park's central area. The rehabilitation plan proposes an overall reduction in the size of this area (from 120' x 175' to approximately 108' x 160'), but the space is opened up to additional sunlight, seating is provided, and the historic fountain is reimagined as a more interactive water feature. While much of the fountain's flagstone and coping has deteriorated, the overall shape and pieces that remain viable will be reused in the new design, which will raise the coping up to accommodate an informal seating area (approximately 30" tall). As with the other new elements analyzed on pages 5-7, staff recommends additional details on the plaza and fountain design as part of the final submission.

Tree Canopy and Understory Plantings

With its meandering paths and significant tree canopy, Franklin Park serves as an organic counterpoint to the more structured character of downtown Washington. The rehabilitation plan continues to respect the park's role, though this will require the removal of a significant amount of the landscape in order to ensure its long-term integrity. The plan calls for removal of 46 trees throughout the park, but the overall health of the tree canopy will be improved with the planting of 43 new trees. Staff notes that opening up the tree canopy and allowing natural light to filter into the park will provide a more pleasant and hospitable setting for visitors. It will also allow for the restoration and long-term maintenance of understory plantings and turf areas throughout the park. A well-funded and staffed operations and maintenance plan will be needed to ensure the long-term success of the landscape.

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

As noted in the Executive Summary, this projects meets basic goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

National Historic Preservation Act

As part of the Section 106 process, NCPC entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the National Park Service (NPS) and the DC State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO), dated

June 3, 2015, to outline mitigation measures, design evaluation, and protection of archeological resources. The MOA identifies specific mitigation measures to protect the park's cultural landscape and other features where feasible, including reuse of existing hardscape materials and furnishings, replanting of the historic landscape, and protection of the Commodore Barry Monument. It also provides the opportunity for additional design refinement as the plans are submitted for the US Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and NCPC approval.

National Environmental Policy Act

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NPS in cooperation with the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and working with the District and the DowntownBID, completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) in December 2014. Based on analysis of the EA and consideration of an extensive public comment process, NPS determined that the work in Franklin Park will not result in significant impacts to the environment. NCPC staff reviewed the EA and concurred with the selection of the preferred alternative. On June 22, 2015, NPS released a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the preferred alternative outlined in the EA. The impacts related to cultural and historic resources were mitigated through the implementation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between NPS, NCPC and the DC State Historic Preservation Officer, dated June 3, 2015.

NCPC staff has reviewed the EA and FONSI and determined that the information and analysis provided meets the standards for an adequate EA as set forth in NCPC's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures and that a FONSI is warranted based on the information contained in the EA. In November 2015, the NCPC Executive Director issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for Alternative 3, "The Edge" alternative.

CapitalSpace Plan

The rehabilitation of Franklin Park supports one of the six big ideas of the 2010 CapitalSpace Plan. This plan, developed in partnership between the National Park Service, National Capital Planning Commission, and District of Columbia, identified holistic planning strategies to create a more seamless and functional park system for Washington.

The 5th Big Idea, Enhance Center City parks, includes the following strategic policies:

- Meet Park and Open Space Demands (*CCP-1*): Increase capacity of existing parks by improving quality, diversity in amenities, programming, and access to green spaces.
- Build Stronger Partnerships and Resources (*CCP-2*): Building and strengthen community support through partnerships with businesses, residents, workers, and visitors.
- Utilize Placemaking and Programming to Expand Recreational Opportunities (*CCP-3*): Create unique places for neighborhoods, strengthen the overall identity of parks and open space, and identify strategies to expand programs and amenity options.

CONSULTATION

As part of the development of conceptual designs, NPS, DCOP and the DowntownDC BID formed a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of key stakeholders to provide guidance and refine the conceptual design work. NCPC participated in this group along with federal and local partners including the US Commission of Fine Arts, DC State Historic Preservation Office, District Department of the Environment and the District Department of Transportation. The TAG met in December 2013 and February 2014.

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its November 10, 2015 meeting. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that it has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

CFA reviewed the project at its July 17, 2014 meeting, and commented favorably on the preferred design.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online:

- Submission Package
- NEPA Environmental Assessment and FONSI
- Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement
- 2005 (updated in 2011) Cultural Landscape Inventory

Prepared by Sarah Ridgely
11/24/2015

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

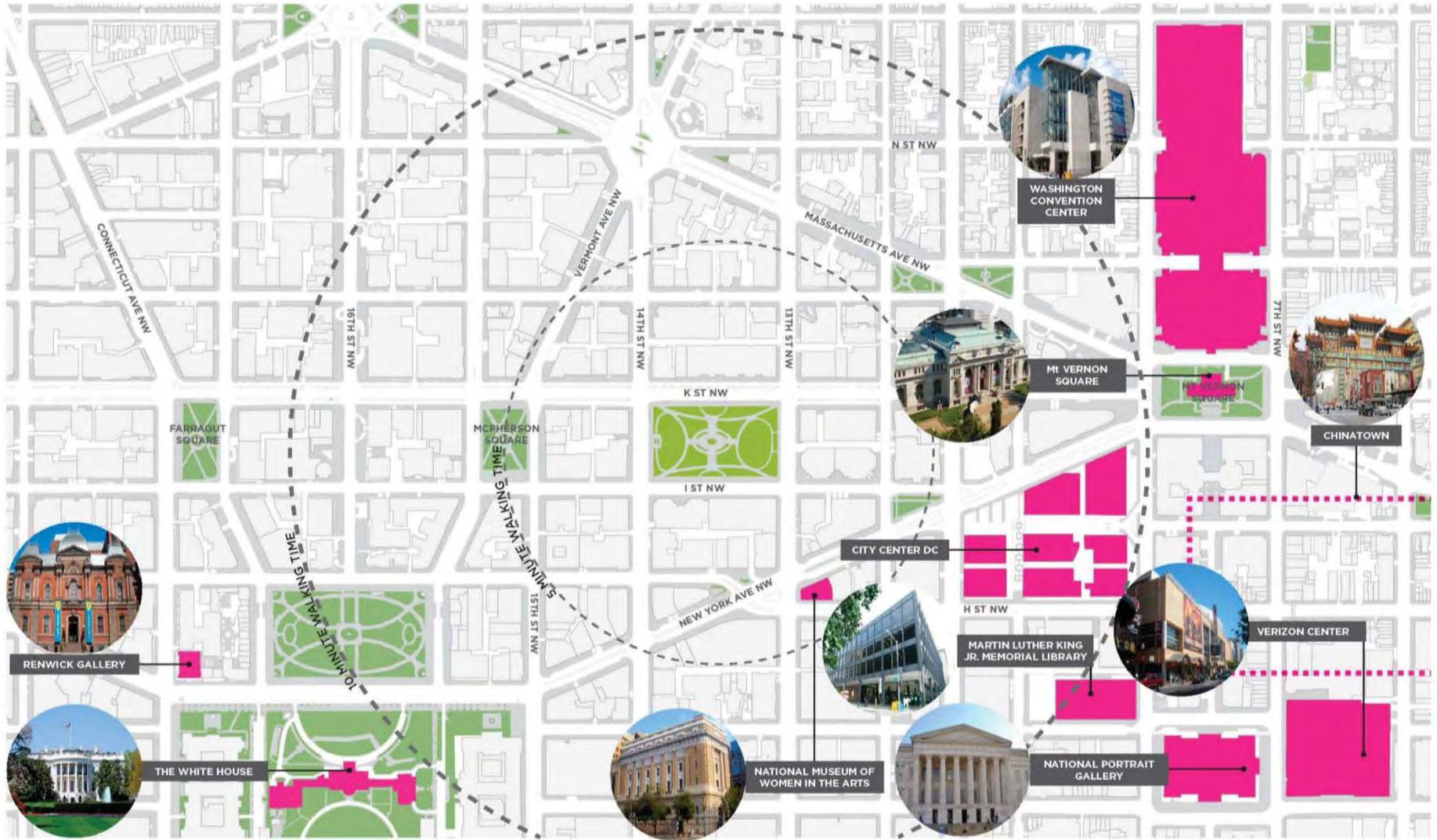
Franklin Park Rehabilitation

14th and I Streets, NW

Submitted by the National Park Service

Preliminary Review of Site and Building Plans

December 3, 2015



Franklin Park and Nearby Attractions



K Street

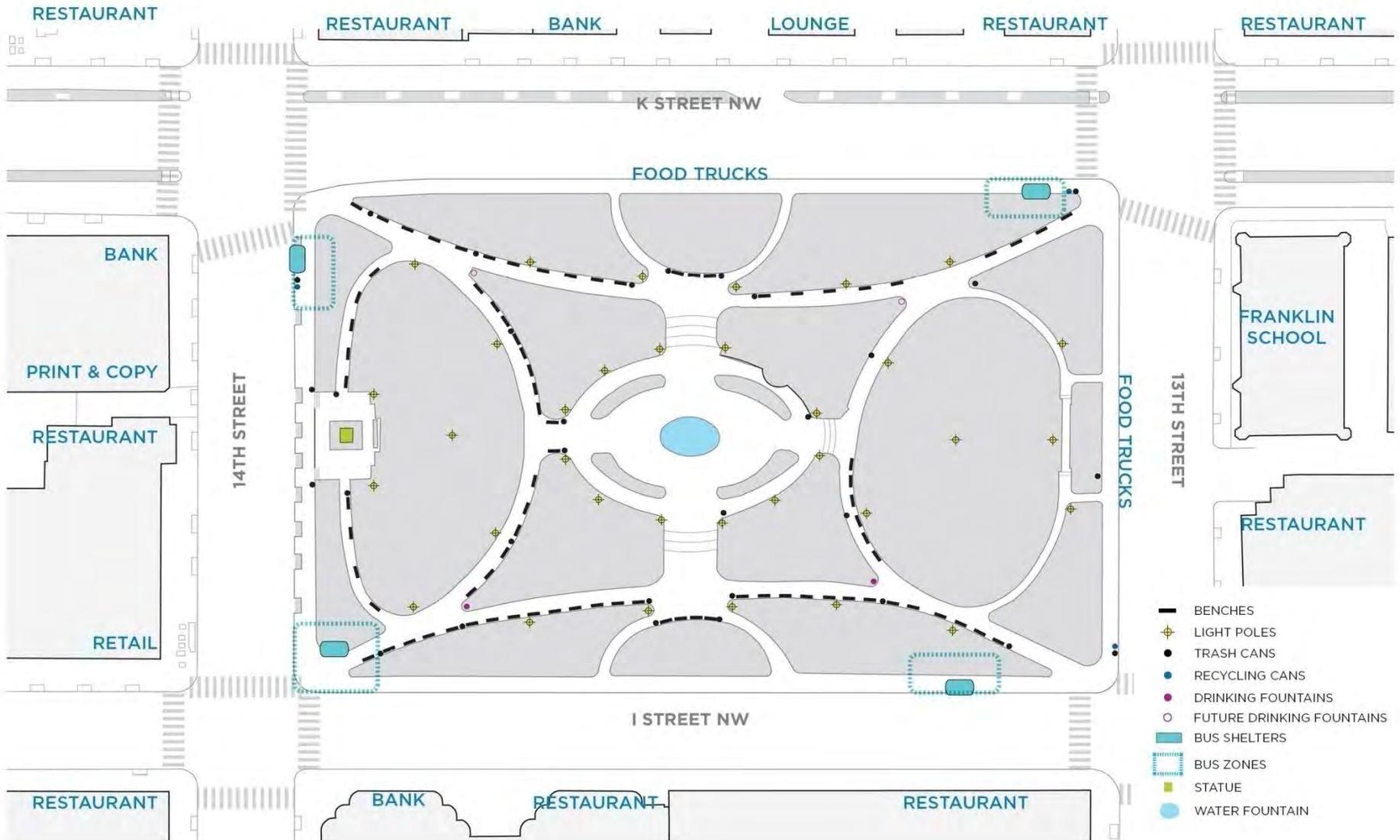
14th Street

13th Street

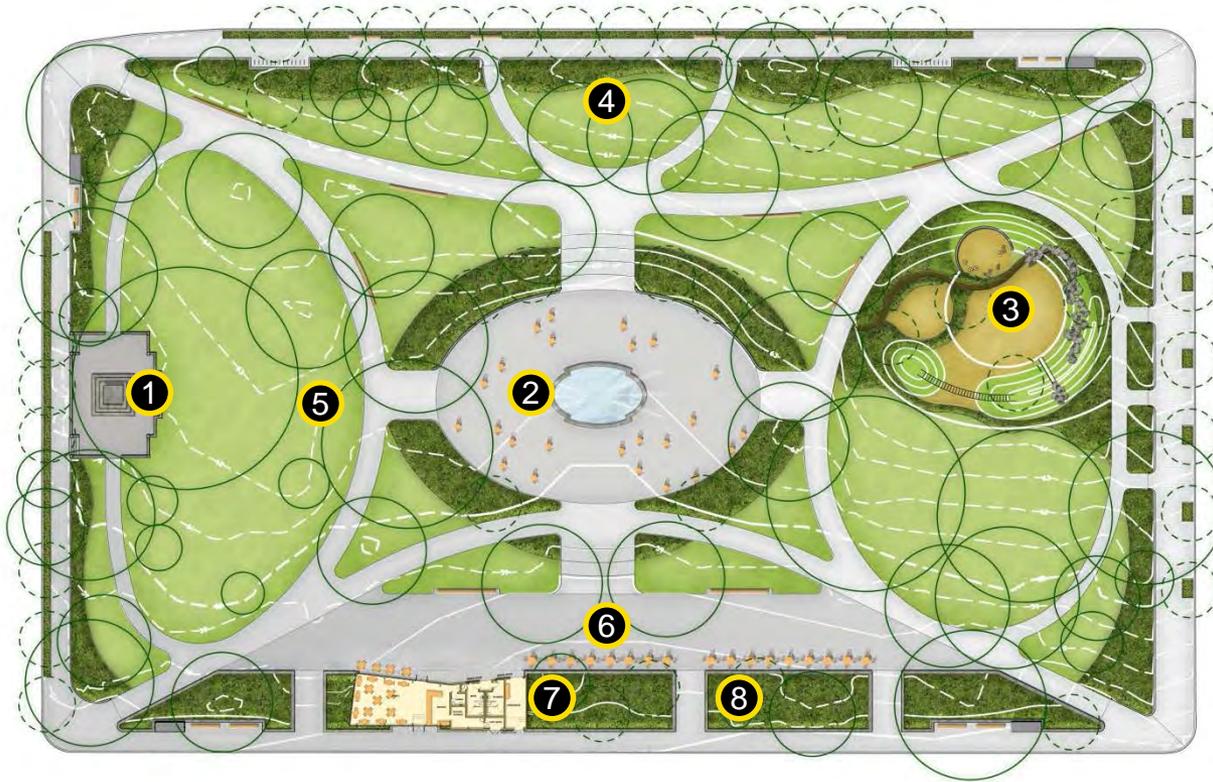
I Street







Preliminary Site Plan



- 1 Commodore Barry Statue
- 2 Central Fountain and Plaza
- 3 Children's Garden
- 4 Seasonal Planting
- 5 Lawn
- 6 Terrace
- 7 Café/ Bathrooms and Operations
- 8 Rain Garden

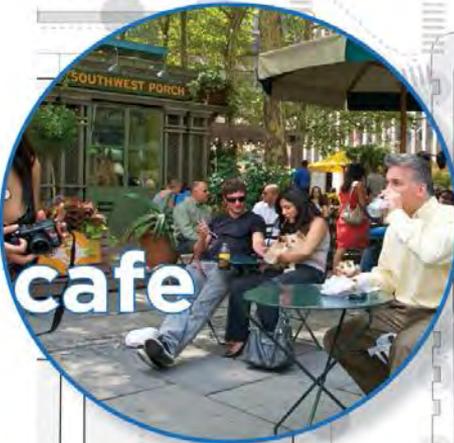
PROPOSED PROGRAM



seasonal
plantings



historic
interpretation



cafe



open lawn



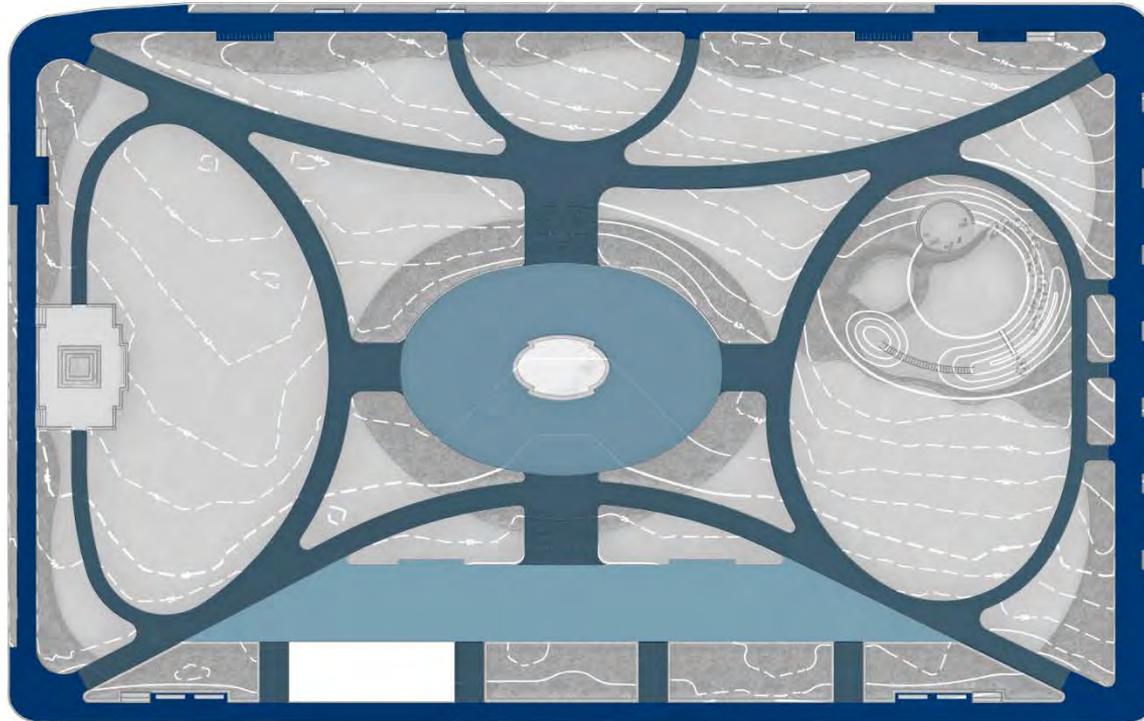
children's
play area



interactive
water feature



events



CONCRETE PAVER - DC STANDARD



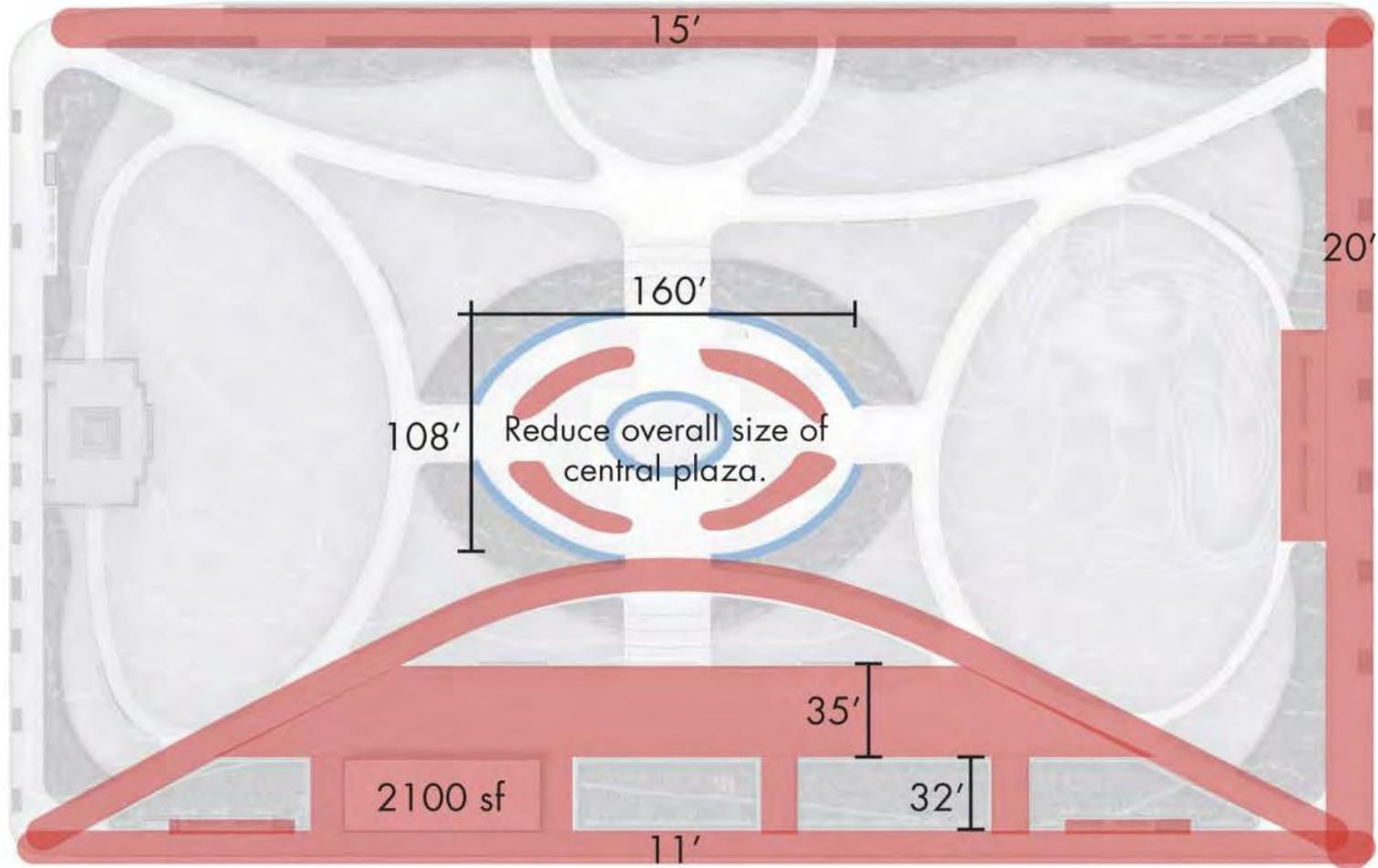
BLUE STONE



CONCRETE - EXPOSED AGGREGATE

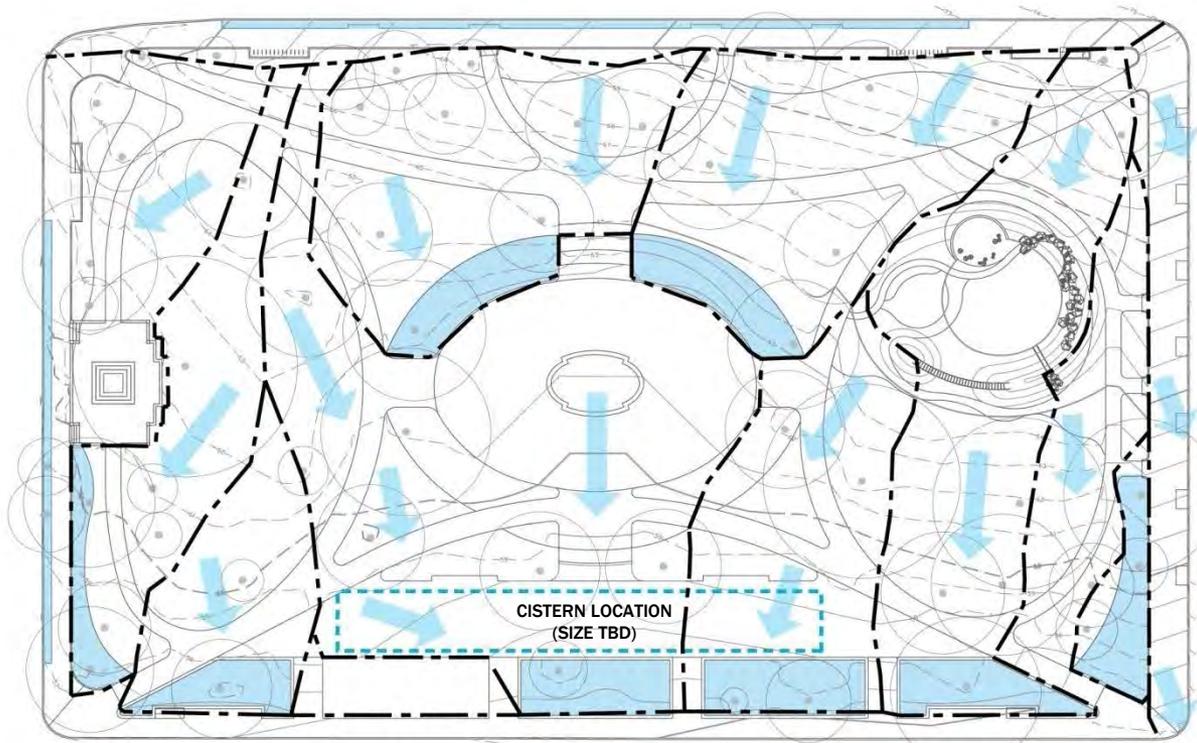


HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION - ENGRAVING



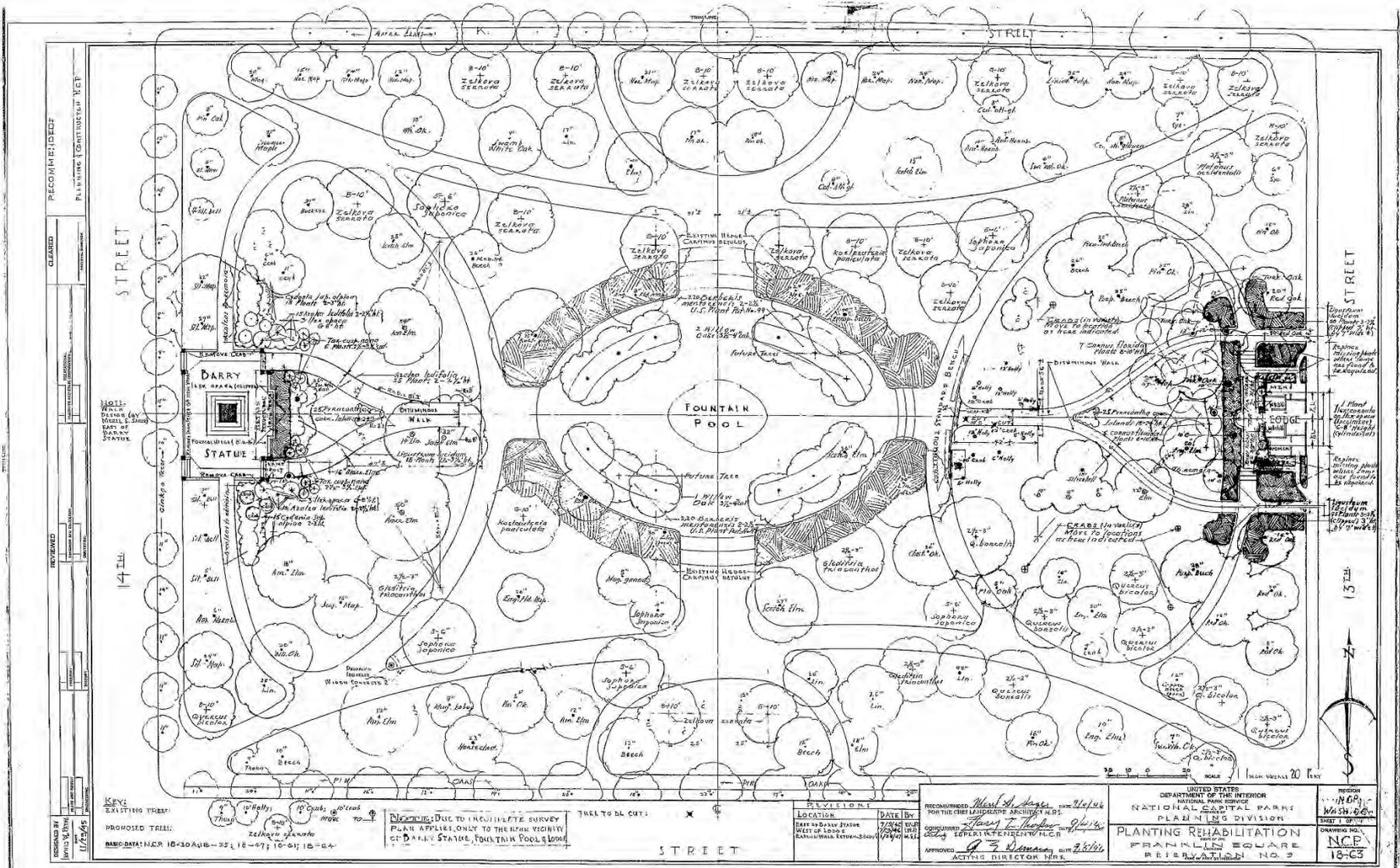
LEGEND

Proposed Areas of Expanded Hardscape



Note: DDOE requirements are achieved with design capacity of proposed rain gardens. Cistern is intended for stormwater capture, storage, and reuse for irrigation and café/restroom gray water.





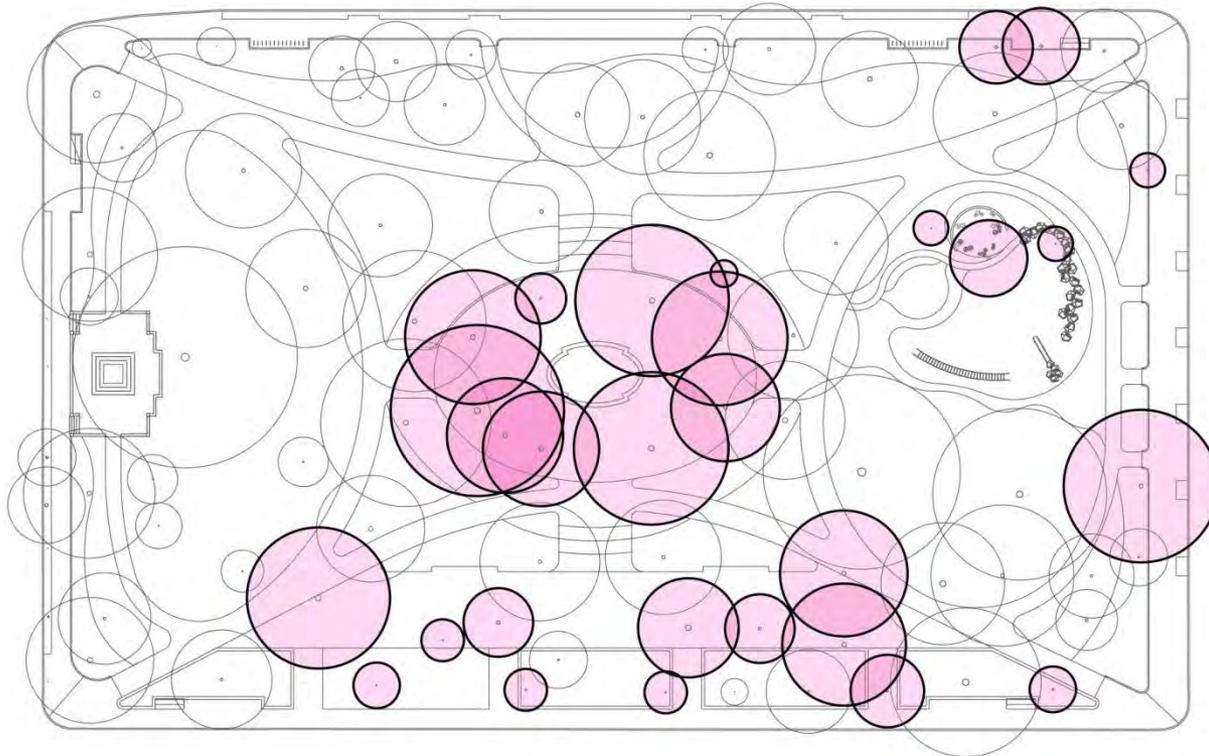
KEY:
 EXISTING TREES:
 PROPOSED TREES:
 REMOVED TREES:
 TRAIL TO DL CUT: X

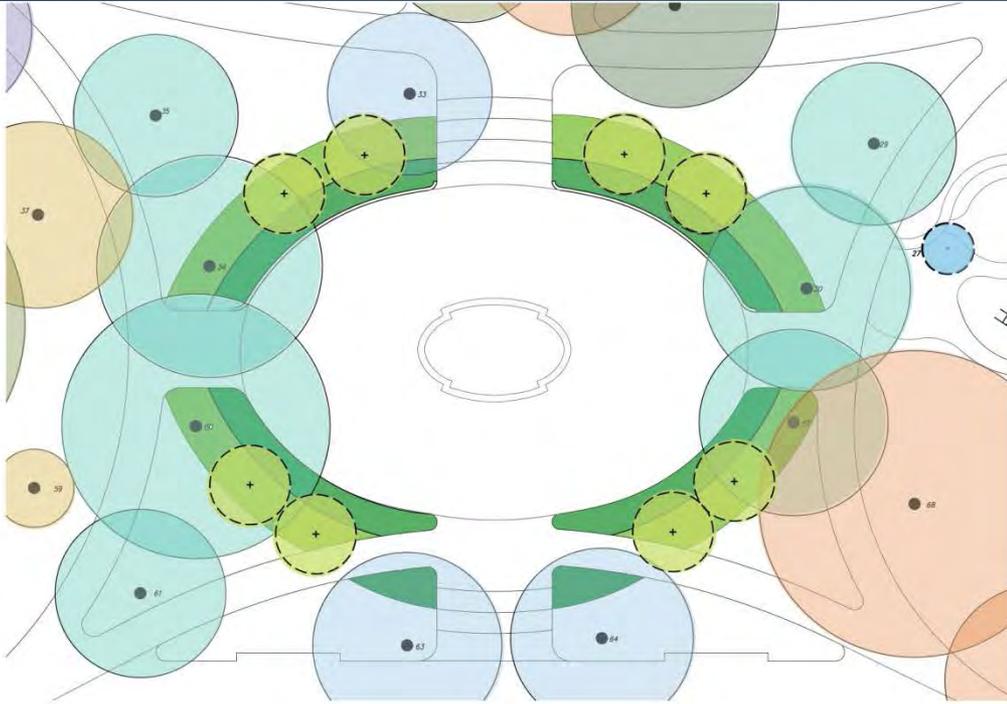
NOTE: DUE TO INCOMPLETE SURVEY PLAN APPLIES ONLY TO THE NEAR VICINITY OF DARRY STATUE, FOUNTAIN POOL & LOBBY

REVISION	DATE	BY
1	7/24/68	W.S. [Name]
2	7/24/68	[Name]
3	7/24/68	[Name]

RECOMMENDED: *West St. [Name]* DATE: *7/24/68*
 FOR THE CHIEF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: *[Signature]*
 CONSULTING: *[Name]* DATE: *7/24/68*
 CHECKED: *[Name]* DATE: *7/24/68*
 APPROVED: *[Signature]* DATE: *7/24/68*
 ACTING DIRECTOR NPS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS PLANNING DIVISION
PLANTING REHABILITATION
 FRANKLIN SQUARE
 REFR. PLAN NO. 3
 REGION 11
 WASH. DC
 SHEET 1 OF 1
 DRAWING NO. NCP-18-C3





SOPHORA JAPONICA - EXISTING



SOPHORA JAPONICA - FALL



PACHYSANDRA PROCUMBENS



ACER FREEMANII AUTUMN BLAZE- FALL



PHLOX STOLONIFERA



DAFFODIL 'ICE FOLLIES'



HELLEBORUS SPP.



CORNUS 'KELSYI', 24" - 30"



CORNUS KELSYY WITH CAREX



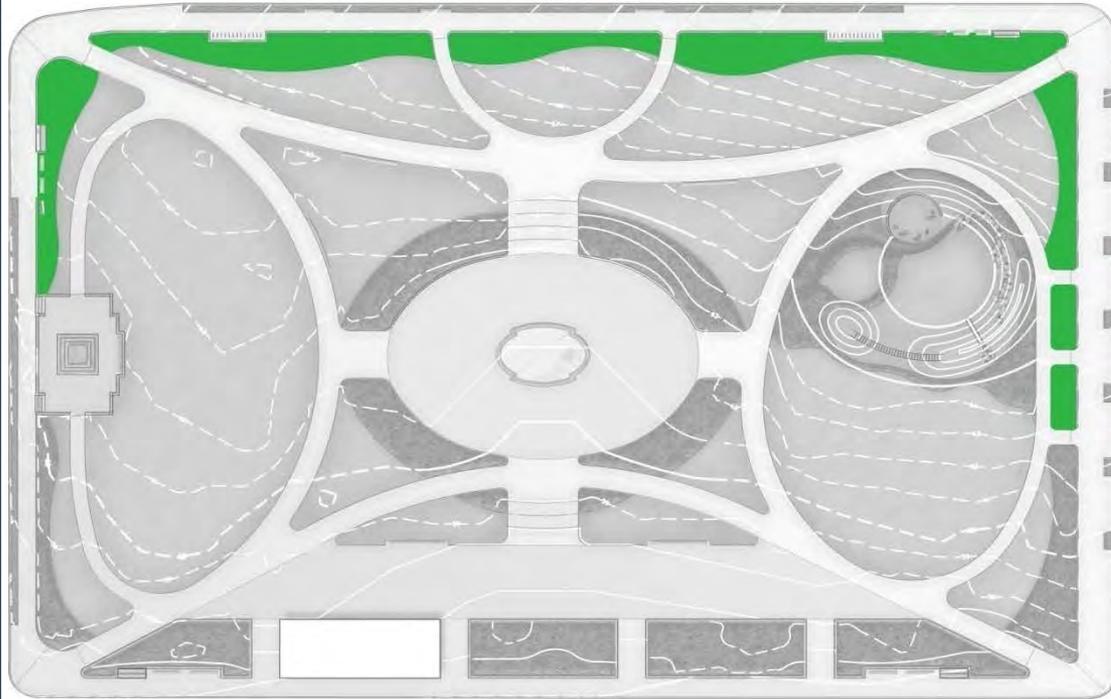
CAREX 'EVERGOLD'



TIARELLA SPP.



HOSTA SPP.



HELLEBORUS SPP.



EPIMEDIUM 'FRONLEITEN'



SALVIA SPP.



GERANIUM MACHRORHYZUM



DAFFODIL 'ICE FOLLIES'



HOSTA SPP.



VINCA MINOR



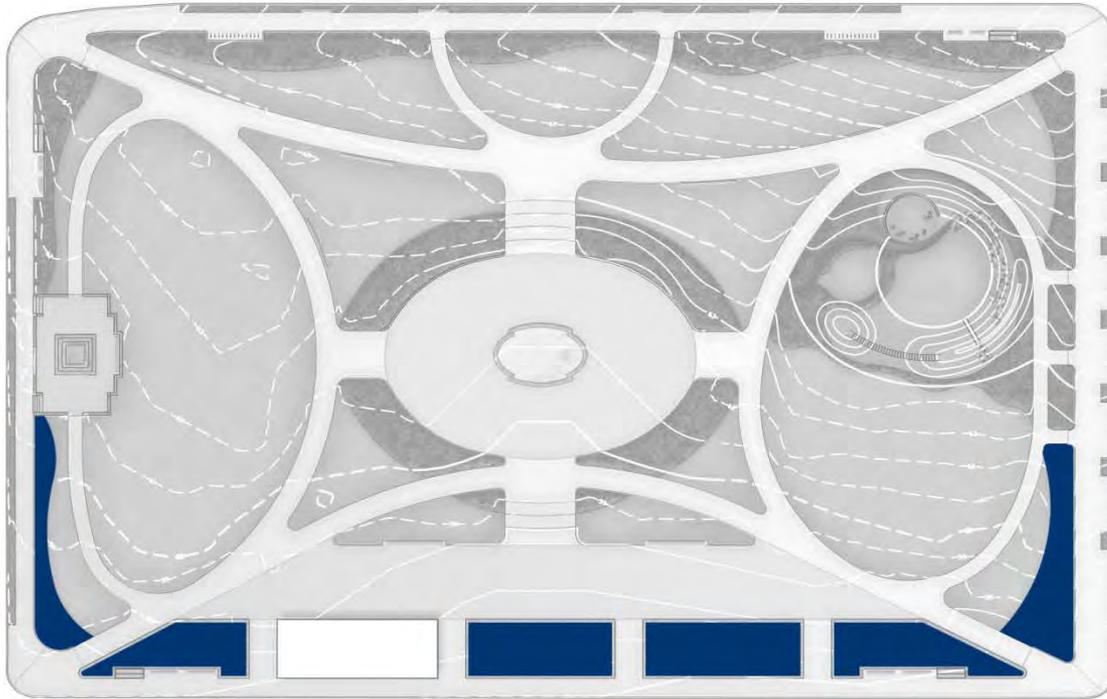
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TIARELLA SPP.



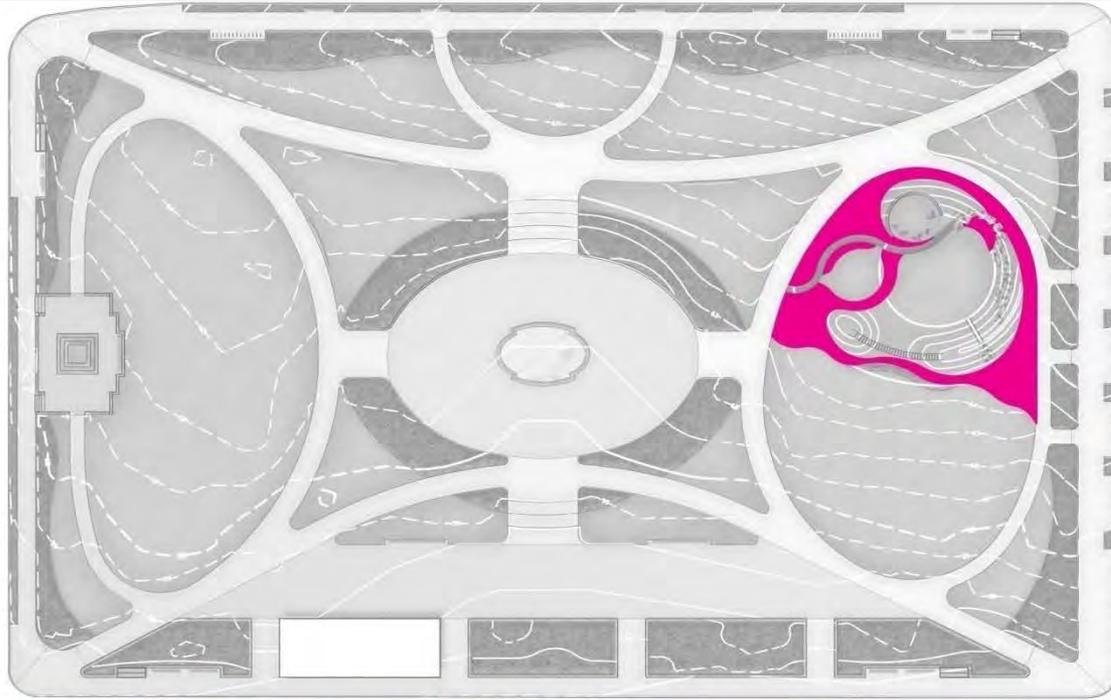
PHLOX STOLONIFERA



RHODODENDRON VICOSUM



FOTHERGILLA GARDENII



HALESIA CAROLINA



OSMANTHUS HETEROPHYLLUS 'ROTUNDFOLIOL'



AZALEA VASEYI - early bloom



NEPETA 'SIX HILLS GIANT'



COTONEASTER DAMMERI



HOSTA SPP.



HAKONECHLOA MACRA



STIPA TENUISSIMA



HYPERICUM CALYCYNUM



OSTRICH FERN



RHODODENDRON ALABAMENSE - mid-to-late bloom



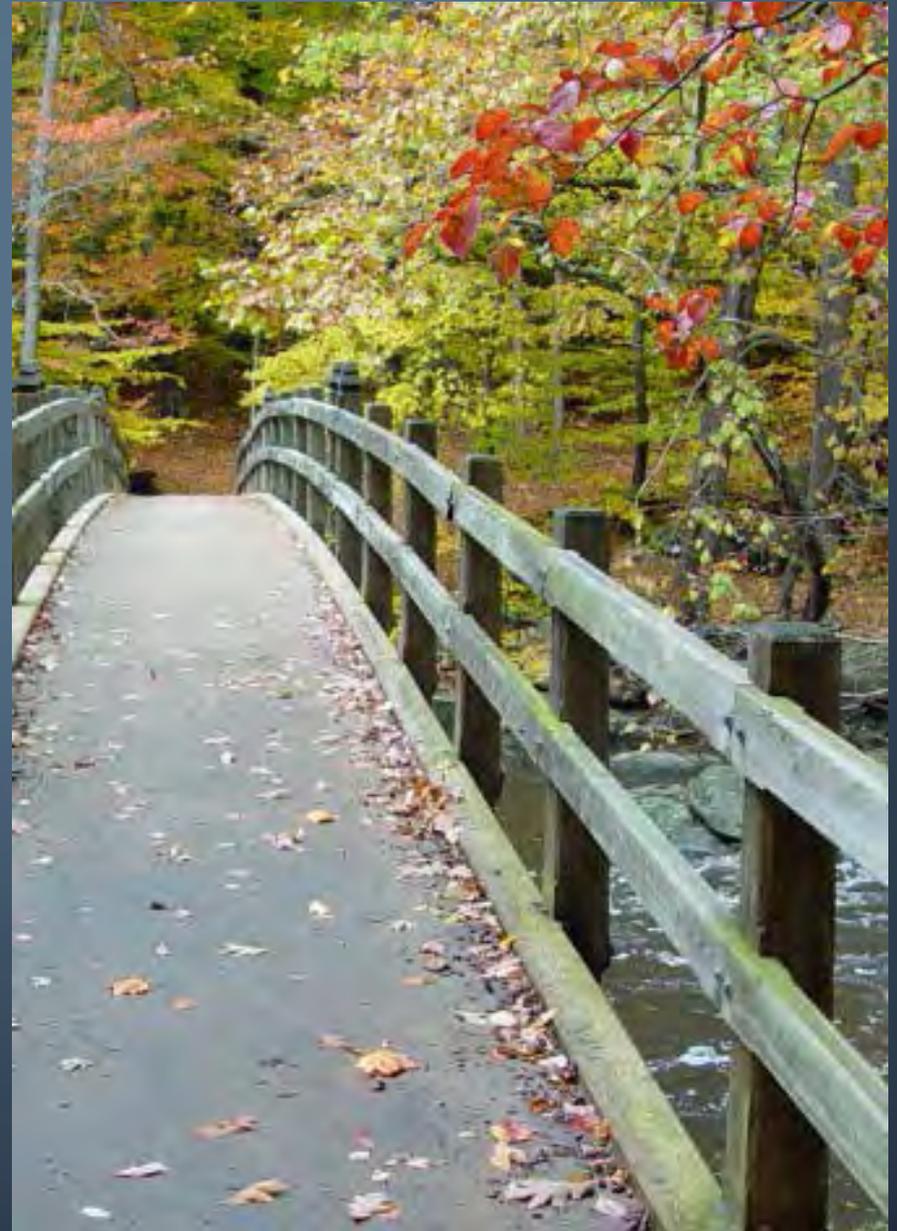
RHODODENDRON ARORESCENS - late bloom



ALLIUM & BLUE OAT GRASS

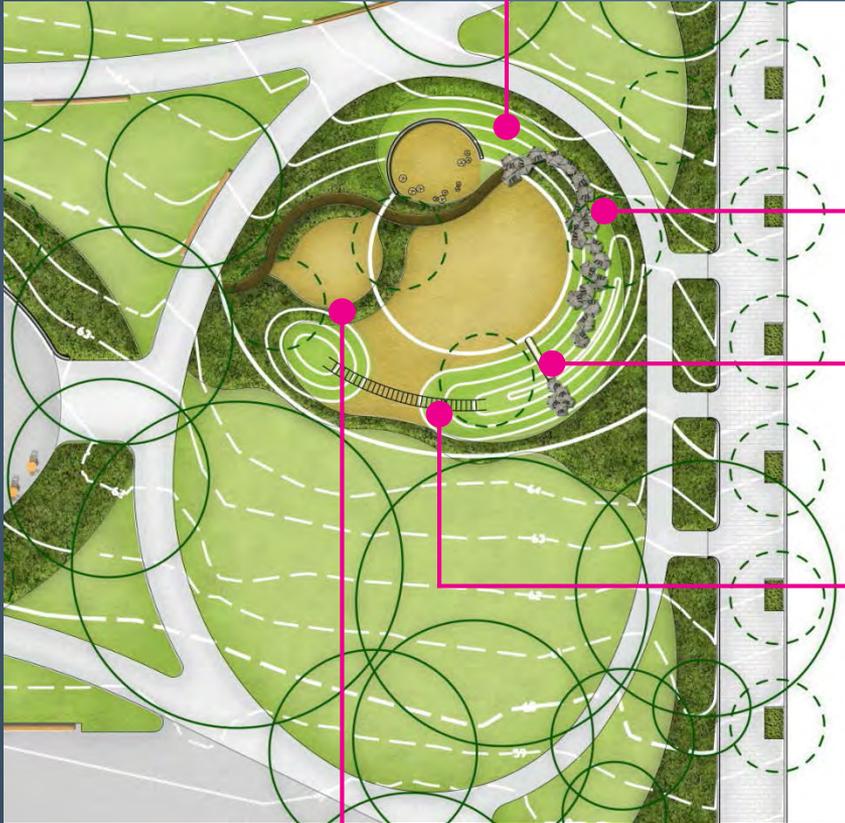


LIRIOPE MUSCARI





Proposed



BOULDERS



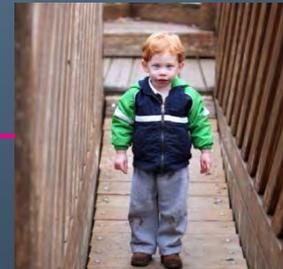
LANDFORM



SLIDE



ENCLOSURE - WALL



BRIDGE



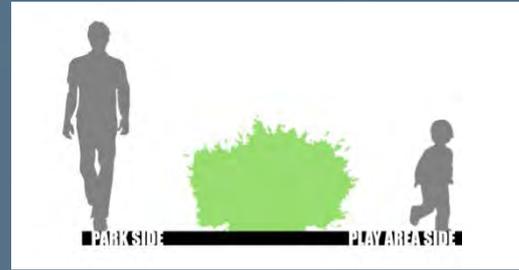
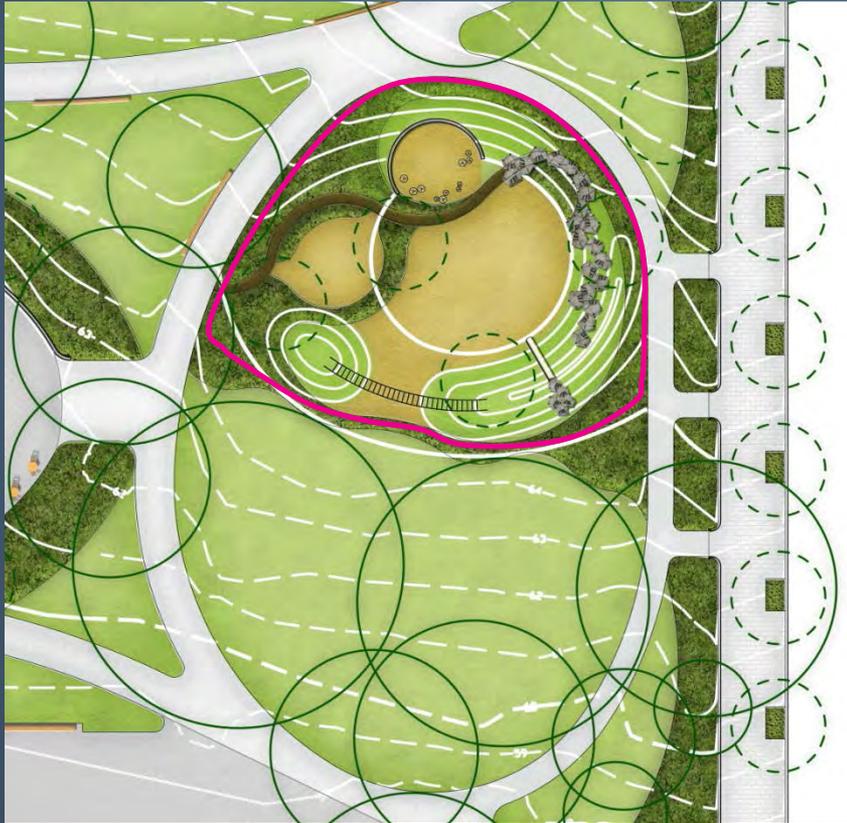
CLIMBING BARS



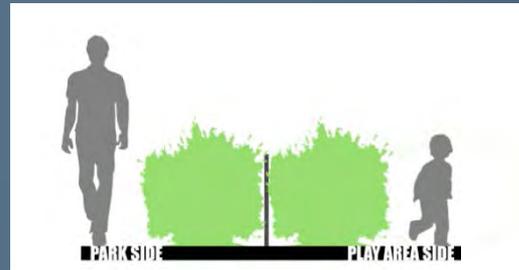
ENCLOSURE - PLANTING



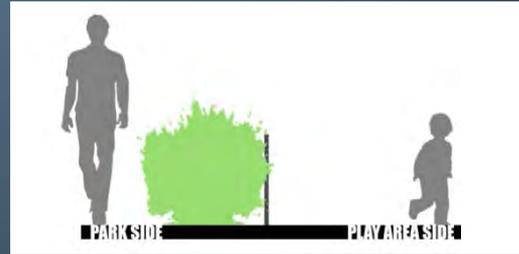
ENGINEERED WOOD FIBER



PLANTED BARRIER



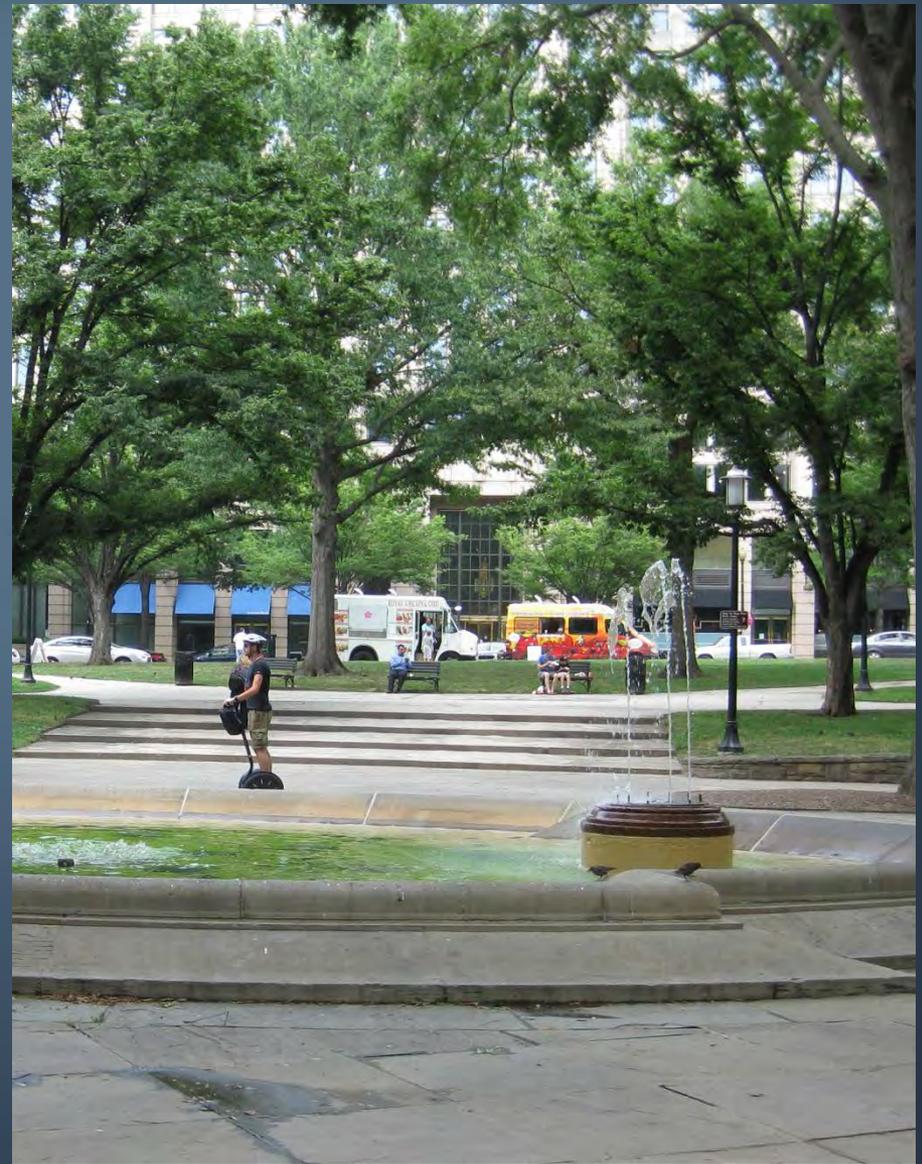
LIVING

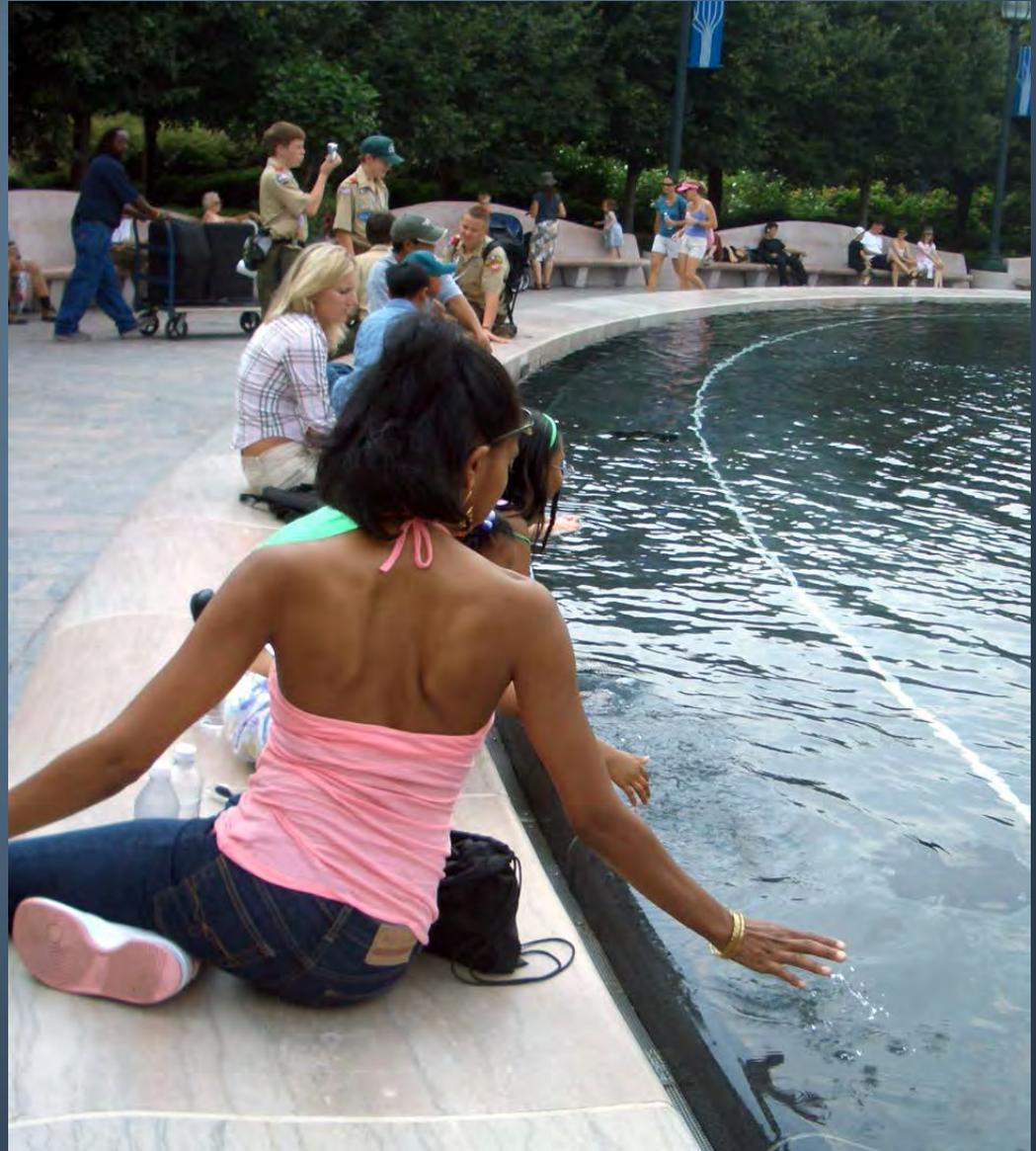


ABSTRACT



HISTORICAL FENCE







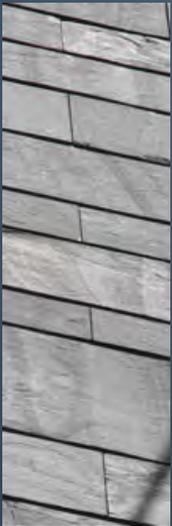
Existing

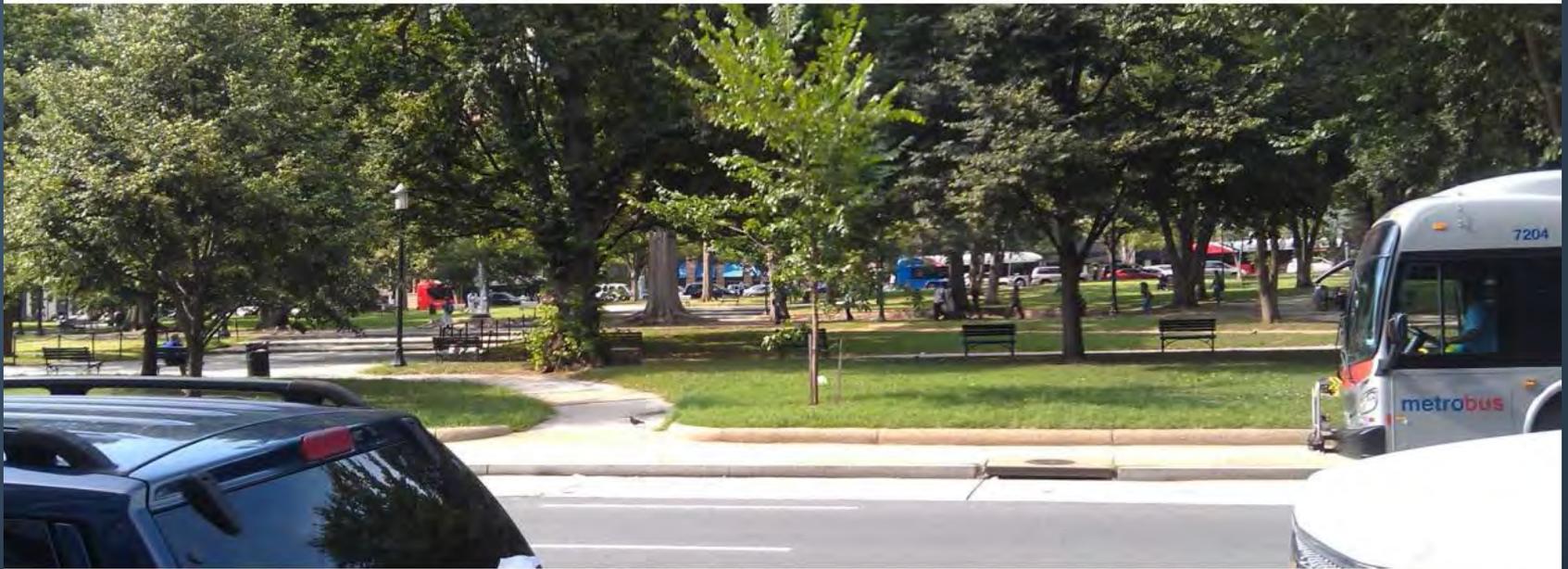


Proposed



Proposed

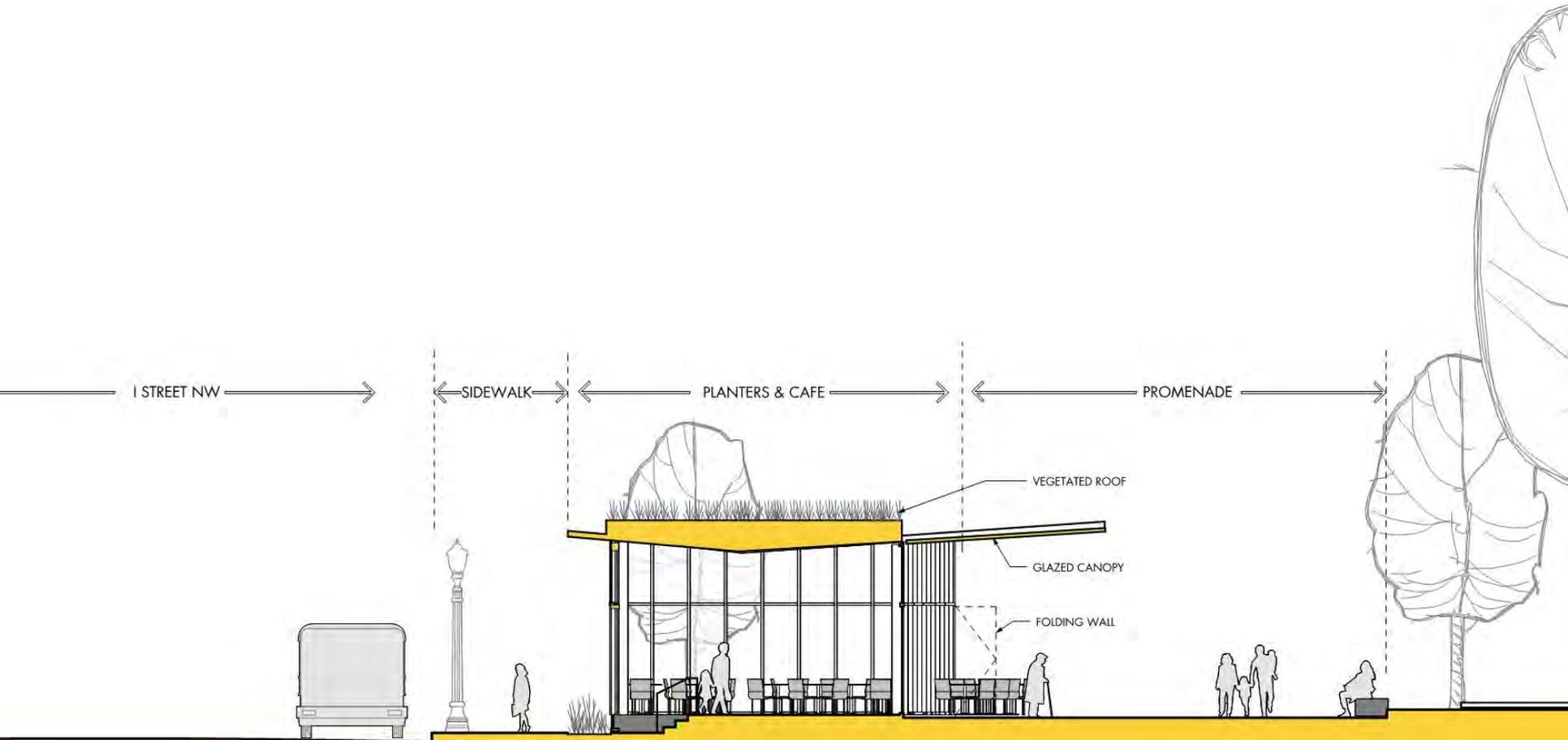




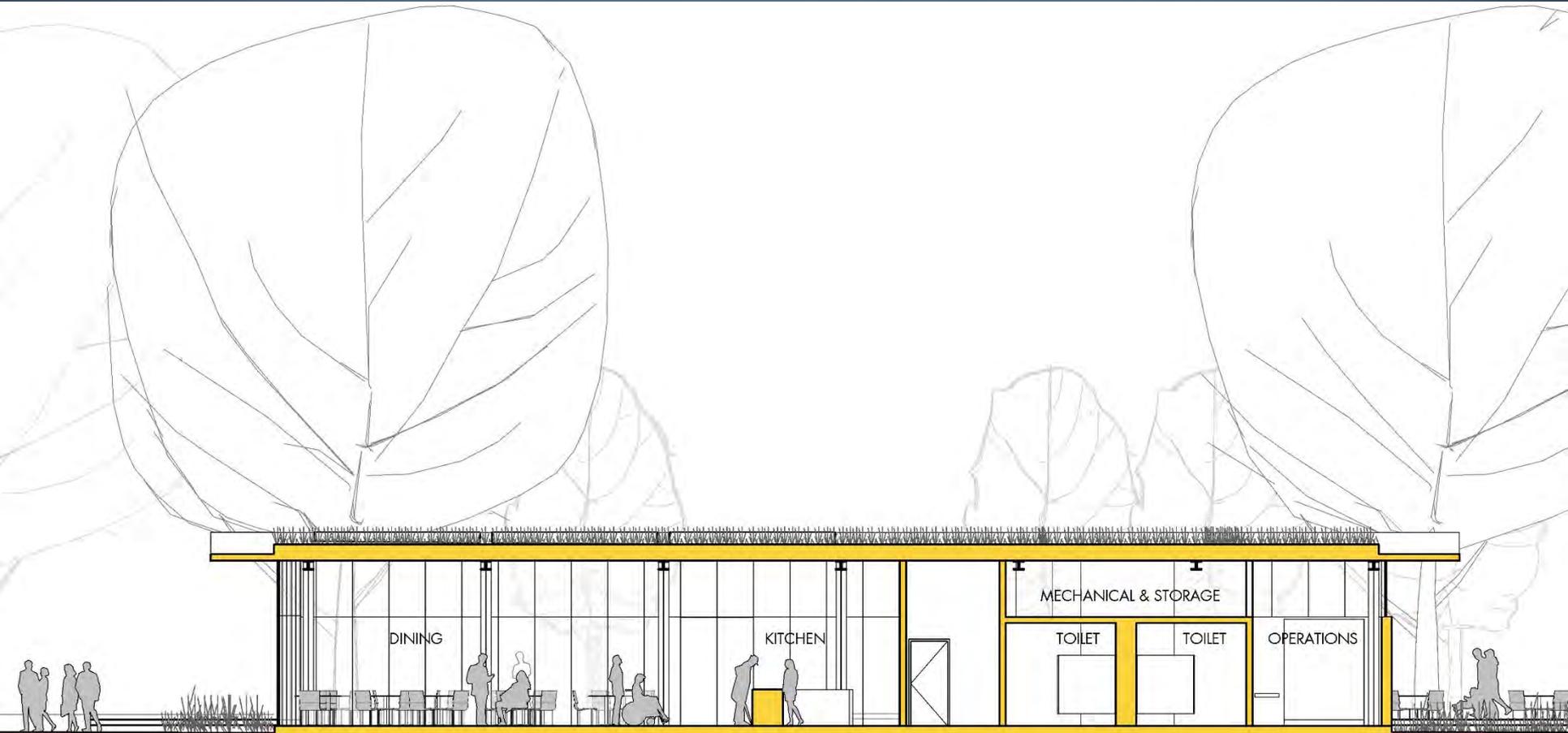


Looking north from I Street





Looking west towards 14th Street



Looking north from I Street



Proposed



Proposed