



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: April 5, 2018

PROJECT RFK Campus Redevelopment - Multiuse Fields 2400 East Capitol Street, SE Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7972
SUBMITTED BY Events DC	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 8.40(38.00)44726
REVIEW AUTHORITY District Projects Outside the Central Area per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of preliminary site and building plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve preliminary site and building plans with comments
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Consent Calendar

PROJECT SUMMARY

Events DC has submitted for Commission review and approval site development plans for multiuse fields at the Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Campus in Washington, DC. This project is part of a larger redevelopment of the RFK Campus, which is currently held under a long-term lease agreement with the National Park Service (NPS) by Events DC, on behalf of the District government. The campus covers approximately 190 acres of contiguous land along the Anacostia River, and is prominently located at the eastern end of the city's east-west axis and monument corridor. Key landmarks along this access include the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, and U.S. Capitol Building. The RFK Memorial Stadium was built at this location in 1961, and has served as the home for several tenants since that time. The current tenant, DC United, will move to a new stadium this summer, and the on-site parking associated with the stadium use will no longer be needed.

Events DC began a strategic planning process in 2014 that explored options for repurposing the RFK stadium process, which resulted in a master plan that was presented to the community in 2017. The master plan includes a series of both short- and long-term projects that were intended to provide amenities for the residents of the immediate neighborhoods, residents across the District of Columbia, and visitors. The first phase of the short-term plan is the development of a new multipurpose field complex, which seeks to convert a large impervious asphalt parking lot to the northeast of RFK Memorial Stadium into useable green space that includes athletic and recreational facilities.

The multipurpose fields project consists of three synthetic turf fields made up of two soccer fields and one multipurpose field that includes baseball/softball diamonds, and is also striped for soccer/lacrosse. The project will also include two 600 square-foot visitor/support and maintenance/storage buildings, one 750 square-foot restroom building, a tensile structure/pavilion,

landscaping, park/green space, and walking/biking trails. A small triangle of asphalt will remain to accommodate 387 parking spaces, and an access road will be constructed along the perimeter to the south and west.

The project includes the following elements:

- Demolition of the existing parking lot lights and paving.
- Construction of three new artificial turf recreation fields and associated grading, fencing, lighting, and other associated elements related to the fields such as goals, backstops, etc.
- Construction of an at-grade concrete pavilion area with tensile structure and two, approximately 600 square-foot, storage structures.
- Approximately 780 square-foot restroom building on spread footings adjacent to the train tracks.
- Stormwater management and conveyance facilities.
- Playground, hiker and biker paths, and site landscaping.

Events DC has noted that the project proposal is consistent with the terms and conditions of the lease, which stipulates that the land is used for “stadium purposes; providing recreation facilities, open space, or public outdoor opportunities.”

KEY INFORMATION

- Events DC, on behalf of the District government, is undergoing a planning process to determine the future of the RFK Campus in Washington.
- The first project as part of the redevelopment effort is the development of three multiuse fields and associated facilities on an existing surface parking lot northeast of the stadium.
- The project will sit adjacent to the Anacostia River and Anacostia Riverwalk Trail system.
- Much of the site will be dedicated as green space, including landscaping, bio-retention areas, and an extensive stormwater management system.
- The project represents a major new recreational amenity for residents and visitors, and a substantial improvement to resource conditions in a sensitive natural area.
- The project proposes three structures of similar architectural style (wood panel and stone), and a celebratory tensile pavilion. As presented, staff believes that the pavilion design visually competes with the simplicity of the other adjacent structures.
- A new access road is proposed along the western edge of the site, which will avoid impacts to natural areas along the river, and allow for public access to the waterfront.
- Long-term plans indicate that the access road would continue under the East Capitol Street overpass to the south along the Anacostia River. Staff believes that alternative alignments are possible that would similarly avoid impacts and promote access.
- The project proposal aligns with an NCPC study that was completed for the site, which indicated active recreational uses at this specific location. The project also complies with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.
- The larger master plan for the site is still under development, and will be submitted for NCPC review before any future projects are submitted. Staff supports the review of this

project independent of the master plan because of its relatively small size, and because previous studies have support recreational uses at this location.

RECOMMENDATION

Approves the preliminary site and building plans for multiuse fields as part of the RFK Campus Redevelopment project.

Finds that the proposed project is consistent with the *RFK Stadium Site Redevelopment Study* developed by NCPC in 2006 and the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*, which support the development of recreational uses in this location for area residents and visitors, the improvement of natural conditions, and the creation of access to the Anacostia River shoreline and trail system.

Requests that Events DC simplify the design of the tensile pavilion to better relate to the proposed design of adjacent support structures, and better integrate with the surrounding context.

Supports the location of the new access road adjacent to the existing Metrorail line, which preserves the bluff and riverfront for improved natural habitat and enhanced public access.

Notes that, at the completion of the project, the proposed access road will terminate at the East Capitol Street overpass, and that longer-term plans show the road traveling adjacent to the Anacostia River. This proposed alignment could impact natural resources in the area and impede public access.

Encourages Events DC to explore alternative road alignments to the south as it develops the master plan that allow for uninterrupted public access to the waterfront and support the protection of natural habitat.

Notes that Events DC will submit a draft master plan for the RFK Campus to the Commission at a later date, which will be used as the basis for review of future projects on the campus.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	None
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– Approval of final site and building plans for multiuse fields at RFK Campus – Concept review of master plan for RFK Campus Redevelopment

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff has evaluated the submitted materials and finds that the proposed multiuse fields would establish new recreational uses in this area of the city, improve natural resource conditions, and enhance public access to the Anacostia River and adjacent trails. The modifications are a notable improvement from current conditions at the site, and represent a positive first step in the redevelopment of the RFK Campus overall. Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission **approves the preliminary site and building plans for multiuse fields as part of the RFK Campus Redevelopment project.**

Analysis

In the first of many planned projects for the RFK Campus, Events DC seeks to replace a large, unused parking lot with three new synthetic turf fields, support facilities, a playground, a celebratory pavilion, and recreational trails. The remainder of the site will be dedicated as green space, which will include landscaping, bio-retention areas, and an extensive stormwater management system that seeks to accommodate and retain stormwater on-site. Adjacent to the Anacostia River, which is quickly becoming a destination for outdoor recreation in the Washington region, the proposed project represents not only a major new recreational amenity for residents and visitors, but also a substantial improvement to resource conditions in a sensitive natural area.

Architecture and Design

As part of the project, the applicant is proposing the construction of four new structures to support the recreational uses, including a visitor/support building (600 square feet), a maintenance/storage building (600 square feet), a restroom facility (750 square feet), and a celebratory tensile pavilion. As proposed, the single-story visitor/support building and maintenance/storage building are nearly identical in design—both featuring exterior wood paneling and stone detailing, as well as a sloping roof with frosted glass and glass skylight panels. These facilities will sit at the west end of the site, flanking the tensile pavilion and adjacent to the parking lot. The restroom facility is similar in architectural style, though with a slightly larger footprint. While the submission materials indicate that there are two potential locations for the restroom—both adjacent to the north soccer field and across the Metrorail tracks—the applicant has since clarified that the location near the north soccer field is the preferred location. Staff supports this location, which is significantly closer to the primary users of the site, and supports the architectural style proposed for these facilities.

The final proposed structure is the celebratory tensile pavilion, which, as noted, would sit adjacent to the parking lot at the entrance to the site. The applicant has indicated that this facility would be a public gathering space that could support group celebrations or other events. The facility is currently proposed with a large tensile roof structure, which features several structural support

columns. While staff supports the general concept of a celebratory pavilion at this location, its proposed design visually competes with the simplicity of the adjacent support structures—in particular the relationship between the rounded pavilion and sloping roofs of the support structures. Given the surrounding natural context, a lighter design may be more appropriate. Accordingly, staff recommends that the Commission **requests that Events DC simplify the design of the tensile pavilion to better relate to the proposed design of adjacent support structures, and better integrate with the surrounding context.**

Access Road

All proposed development, including a small parking area that will be retained (approximately 357 spaces), is proposed towards the west end of the site, allowing public access to the Anacostia River and Riverwalk Trail. In particular, staff recognizes efforts to ensure that the access road is oriented along the western perimeter of fields and existing Metrorail track—running from the north side of the site to the East Capitol Street overpass at the south. This road alignment preserves both the high bluff overlooking the river and the riverfront itself, and eliminates both physical and psychological barriers to the trail network that runs along the river and continues onto Heritage Island Park via pedestrian bridge. New pedestrian facilities from the adjacent neighborhood, and to and across the fields further promote access. Accordingly, staff recommends that the Commission **supports the location of the new access road adjacent to the existing Metrorail line, which preserves the bluff and riverfront for improved natural habitat and enhanced public access.**

While staff supports the access road and alignment for this project, the submitted materials indicate that the longer-term plans for the site include extending the road to the south, under the East Capitol Street overpass, and along the Anacostia River adjacent to the southern parking lot. This proposed alignment could impact natural resources in the area and impede public access. Depending on the final proposed use and site layout, a range of alternative alignments are likely possible. Accordingly, staff recommends that the Commission **encourages Events DC to explore alternative road alignments to the south as it develops the master plan that allow for uninterrupted public access to the waterfront and support the protection of natural habitat.**

Related Plans and Studies

In 2006, NCPC conducted a study for the redevelopment of the stadium site, which noted its critical position in the L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington, and its prominence as the eastern gateway to the monumental core. Given its importance, staff sought to conduct an in-depth analysis of site opportunities and constraints, development of major planning principles, as well as an assessment of potential future uses. The study noted a lack of active recreation in this part of the city, and accordingly identified “active recreation” as the recommended use for this particular portion of the RFK Campus, suggesting uses like “permeable recreational surfaces such as soccerfields and ballfields...along the water’s edge.” The study also called for a pedestrian network to connect the recreational sites to the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail and other adjacent destinations. The current proposal is closely aligned with NCPC goals for the area as defined in the plan, including both the fields and enhanced pedestrian network.

The proposal also closely aligns with goals and policies described in the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, the Federal Environment element promotes the restoration of floodplains, the use of pervious surfaces and bio-retention facilities, and enhanced access to shorelines. Further, the Parks and Open Space element promotes recreational uses along the Anacostia River, as well as the promotion of public access along the region's waterfronts. Accordingly, staff recommends that the Commission **finds that the proposed project is consistent with the RFK Stadium Site Redevelopment Study developed by NCPC in 2006 and the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, which support the development of recreational uses in this location for area residents and visitors, the improvement of natural conditions, and the creation of access to the Anacostia River shoreline and trail system.**

RFK Campus Master Plan

It is important to note that, while this project is currently being reviewed as an individual project submission, it is ultimately part of a larger master plan that Events DC is developing for the site. The master plan was developed by the applicant and presented to the community in 2017. It includes a series of both short- and long-term projects that were intended to provide amenities for the residents of the immediate neighborhoods, residents across the District of Columbia, and visitors. This project is the first of many that will come to the Commission for review. The applicant has noted that the compliance process for the larger master plan is still underway. Because the multiuse fields project is a relatively small component of the larger master plan, staff has decided to allow for its review in advance of the master plan. However, before the Commission reviews any additional projects for the RFK Campus, Events DC will submit a master plan for review and comment. The final master plan will be used to guide NCPC review of all future projects.

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

As noted in the analysis above, NCPC staff has reviewed this proposal for compliance with relevant guidance and has determined that it is not inconsistent with the policies established in the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, the project is supported by policies in the Federal Environment and Parks and Open Space elements.

National Historic Preservation Act

As a District project on land leased from the federal government, the applicant is subject to both local and federal historic preservation laws. They have noted that all historic preservation reviews are currently underway, and that preliminary conversations with the DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) have indicated that adverse effects are unlikely given the site context. The site itself is not historic, and there are no historic properties in the immediate vicinity. Since NCPC is

advisory on federal land leased to the District, it does not have an independent responsibility to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The NPS will serve as the lead agency for NHPA compliance. NHPA compliance.

National Environmental Policy Act

As a District project on land leased from the federal government, the applicant is subject to both local and federal environmental protection laws. They have indicated that local environmental compliances processes have been followed, and that the project is likely eligible for a categorical exclusion under NPS law and policy. Since NCPC is advisory on federal land leased to the District, it does not have an independent responsibility to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NPS will serve as the lead agency for NEPA compliance, and will make the final determination regarding level of compliance required.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

Without objection, the Coordinating Committee forwarded the proposed final master plan to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The DC Office of Planning (DCOP) coordinated, but noted that there are ongoing conversations related to the application of zoning on the site. In particular, DCOP has expressed concerns related to the height of the tensile pavilion, though it noted that this will likely be resolved through a text amendment later in the process. They also noted inconsistencies in environmental compliance documentation. The DC Department of Energy and Environment indicated that the applicant is meeting all stormwater requirements for the site.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The project was intended to be reviewed at the March 15, 2018 meeting of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), though it decided to approve the concept without a formal presentation. Further, the Commission asked the applicant to consider ways in which it could better integrate bio-retention areas into the overall landscape, and how the landscape might be integrated with the riparian edge. CFA delegated final approval to Commission staff.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online:

- Project Synopsis
- Submission Materials

Prepared by John Gerbich
03/29/2018

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

NCPC File #: 7972
RFK Campus Redevelopment
Multiuse Fields

2400 East Capitol Street, SE
Washington, DC

Events DC

Preliminary Approval of Site and Building Plans

Commission meeting date: April 5, 2018

NCPC review authority: 40 U.S.C. 8722(b)(1)

Applicant request: Preliminary approval of site and building plans

Delegated / consent / open / executive session: Consent calendar

NCPC Review Officer: Gerbich

NCPC File number: 7972

Project summary:

Events DC has submitted for Commission review and approval site development plans for multiuse fields at the RFK Campus in Southeast Washington, DC. This project is part of a larger redevelopment of the RFK campus, which is currently held under a long-term lease agreement with the National Park Service by Events DC, on behalf of the District government. The campus covers approximately 190 acres of contiguous land along the Anacostia River, and is prominently located at the eastern end of the city's east-west axis and monument corridor. Key landmarks along this access include the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, and U.S. Capitol Building. The RFK Memorial Stadium was built at this location in 1961, and has served as the home for several tenants since that time. The current tenant, DC United, will move to a new stadium this summer, and the on-site parking associated with the stadium use will no longer be needed.

Events DC began a strategic planning process in 2014 that explored options for repurposing the RFK stadium process, which resulted in a master plan that was presented to the community in 2017. The master plan included a series of both short- and long-term projects that were intended to provide world-class amenities for the residents of the immediate neighborhoods, residents across the District of Columbia, and visitors. The first phase of the short-term plan is the development of a new multipurpose fields complex, which seeks to convert a large impervious asphalt parking lot to the northeast of RFK Memorial Stadium into useable green space that includes athletic and recreational facilities.

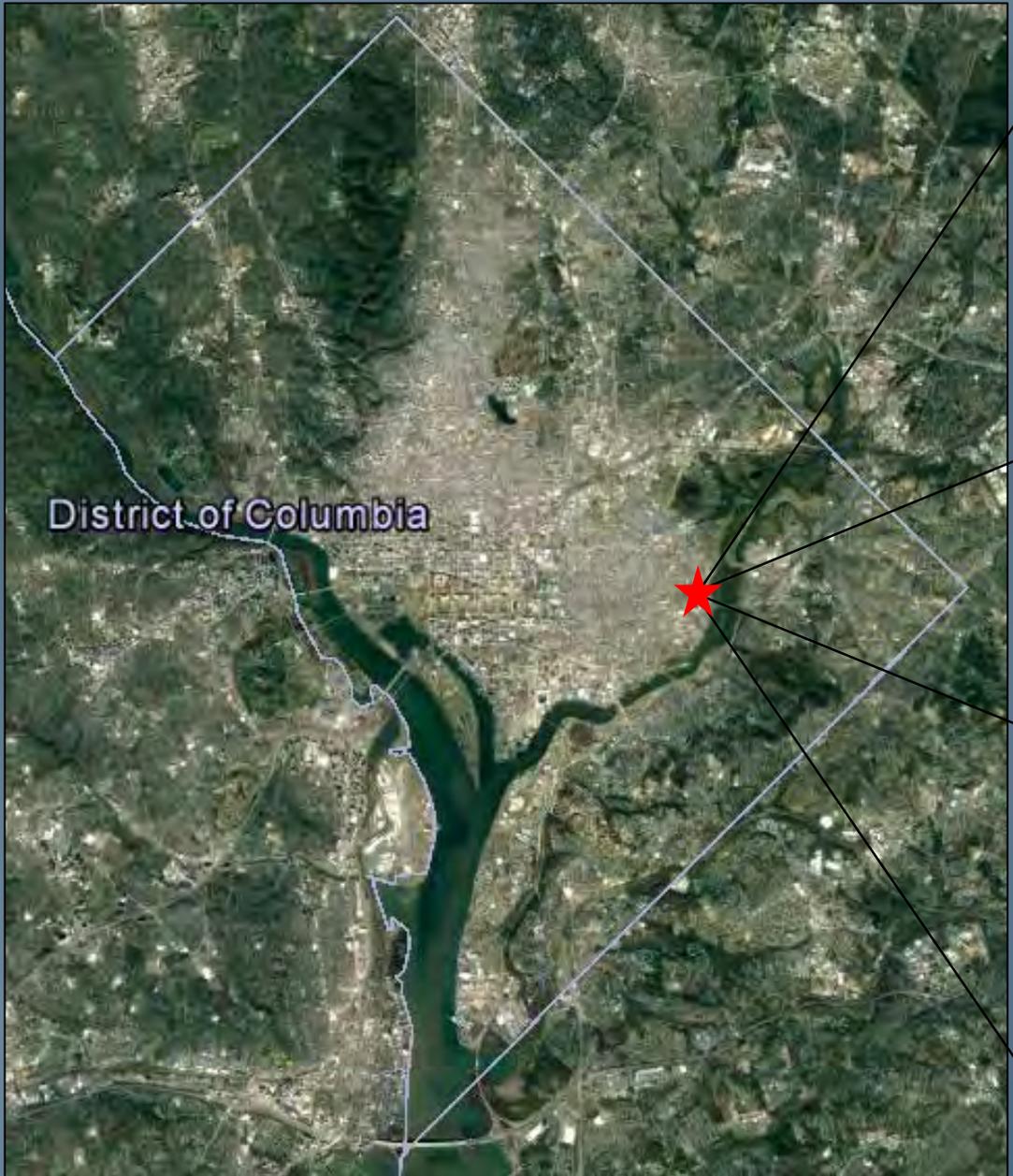
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Project summary, continued:

The project includes the following elements:

1. Demolition of the existing parking lot lights and paving.
2. Construction of three new artificial turf recreation fields and associated grading, fencing, lighting, and other associated elements related to the fields such as goals, backstops, etc.
3. Construction of an at-grade concrete pavilion area with tensile structure and two, approximately 600 square-foot, storage structures.
4. Approximately 780 square-foot restroom building on spread footings adjacent to the train tracks.
5. Stormwater management and conveyance facilities.
6. Playground, hiker, and biker paths, and site landscaping.

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View of parking lot and adjacent RFK Stadium



View of parking lot and adjacent wooded land along Kingman Lake



View of parking lot and adjacent WMATA tracks to the northwest



View of western boundary of the site



View of southeastern boundary of the site

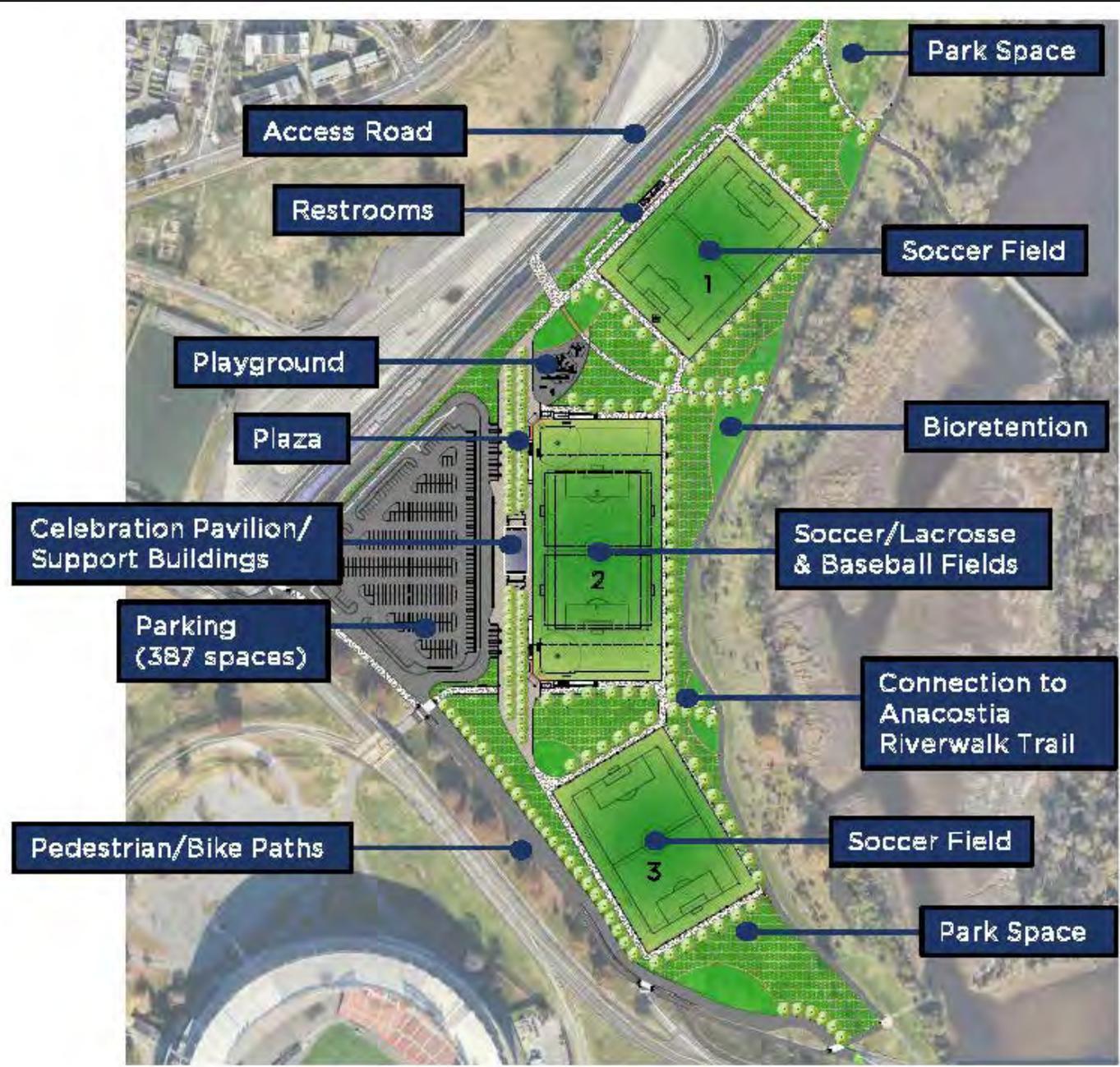


Existing Conditions



Project Concept







Visitor/Support Building (600 sf)



Maintenance/Storage Building (600 sf)



Restroom Concept (750 sf)



Tensile Pavilion Concept

