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CHAPTER 1:

PROJECT BACKGRO



Pre-1800s

Indigenous Land

- Traditional territory of the Anishinaabe peoples of the Three Fires Council
- Characterized by hardwood forests, oak openings, and wetlands
- Ecological systems and land management operated in an interdependent and dynamic relationship

1820s

Early Settlement

- Founding of Ann Arbor in 1824 leads to land development
- Forests cleared for agriculture, including J.D. Baldwin's orchard
- Landscape shifts from an ecological system to productive land use





1890s

Fairgrounds Era

- Site used as the Washtenaw County Fairgrounds
- Included horse racing track, exhibition buildings, and agricultural events
- Established as a regional destination for community events

1910s

Public Park

- City approves purchase of the fairgrounds after use begins to decline
- Land transitions to public parkland
- Named after George Burns, a Univ. of Michigan botany professor/parks advocate





1920s

School Intro

- Western portion of park sold to public schools
- Tappan Junior High opens in 1925
- The enduring school-park relationship has now been established

1950s

Activ

- Burns replac Tappa
- Park of the
- More active space addit cente struct



CHAPTER 2:

ANALYSIS AND INV

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Burns Park is a highly used neighborhood park with a layered history that creates both design opportunities and design constraints. Its historic tree ring, legacy of the former horse track, Magic Mountain sled hill, and open lawn spaces are meaningful site elements that should remain central to the redesign, while the park's namesake and botanical history offer a strong foundation for strengthening the landscape's ecological and educational identity. At the same time, the park's heavy daily use, adjacency to the school, and existing circulation patterns require careful attention to safety, access, and program balance. The project, therefore, seeks to preserve the park's most valued features while improving resilience, accessibility, and long-term stewardship.

OPPORTUNITIES

Meaningful Elements:

Celebrate and enhance the interpretation of historic and iconic elements (adding seating, signage, programming) that are unique to Burns Park. This includes the tree ring planted along the old horse track providing a shady walkway, the Magic Mountain sled hill from excavated soil, and the winter ice rink that used to be a yearly tradition. The location of the warming hut on the site of the 1800s log cabin (parts of which were preserved) also offers a storytelling opportunity.

Existing Programming:

Strong foundation of active recreation programming means the design can build on well-liked uses. For example, courts can be resurfaced for additional sports and the open lawn can host events or field games. The senior center in the southeast corner (the former park caretaker's house) and Burns Park Elementary School along the west edge provide natural partnerships for programming and events.

Green Infrastructure:

Two existing rain gardens (one by the pétanque court and a larger one around the tennis courts) showcase the park's capacity for stormwater management. These can be expanded or connected into a larger system (bioswales, native plantings) to reduce runoff, improve habitat, and serve as outdoor learning. There is room to add native gardens or pollinator zones in low spots or unused margins to build on the park's tradition of natural elements. There is also an opportunity to slowly replace nonnative trees within the tree ring with native species.

Connectivity:

Sidewalks surround the park on all sides (streets of Wells, Baldwin, Granger, Olivia) and have nearby bus stops, making it highly walkable. There's an opportunity to knit together the park's

SOIL

Soils at Burns Park are typical sandy-loam outwash (fox sandy loam, till plain according to USGS) with good drainage. [3] These soils historically supported oak-savanna communities. A 2021 MSU Natural Features report notes that the pre-settlement vegetation here was an oak opening/prairie mosaic on outwash plains. [4] This implies the site is naturally suited to drought-tolerant, native prairie plants. However, much of the park is now turf. Restoring even small patches of native species (e.g. dry-mesic prairie and oak savanna forbs) would fit the soil type and greatly boost habitat. Notably, "Oak Opening" savanna is ranked G1/S1 (globally and state critically imperiled. Incorporating those plants (white oak, bur oak, native grasses and forbs) would preserve a fragment of this rare ecosystem. [4]

VEGETATION

The existing tree canopy mostly follows the old horse track and park perimeter. Mature little leaf lindens, Japanese zelkovas, and maples provide summer shade, but many interior areas receive full sun. City data show the park's rain gardens drain under light tree cover, meaning infiltration zones are only partially shaded. This allows an opportunity of planting additional shade trees along paths and seating areas to increase comfort (cooler microclimates) and reduce heat stress. Evergreen trees or structures placed on northern paths could also block winter winds and add year-round shelter. Currently, many tree roots are exposed on the compacted dirt path around the tree ring, causing trip hazards for people, while the compaction contributes to anaerobic conditions for the trees themselves. We will need to manage roots or use permeable pathways to avoid pedestrian hazards. Introducing new trees requires preserving sightlines for safety on sports fields.

TREE SURVEY

TREE KEY

- ABIES CONCOLOR (white fir)
- ACER NEGUNDO (boxelder maple)
- ACER PLATANOIDES (Norway maple)
- ACER RUBRUM (red maple)
- ACER SACCHARUM (sugar maple)
- AESCULUS GLABRA (Ohio buckye)
- AESCULUS HIPPOCASTRUM (European horse-chestnut)
- AMELANCHIER SPP. (serviceberry)
- CARPINUS CAROLINIANA (American hornbeam)
- CLADRASTIS KENTUKEA (American yellowwood)
- GLEDITSIA TRIACANTHOS (honeylocust)
- GLEDITSIA TRIACANTHOS INERMIS (thornless honeylocust)
- JUGLANS NIGRA (eastern black walnut)
- JUNIPERUS SPECIES
- MORUS ALBA (mulberry)
- PINUS NIGRA (black pine)
- PINUS STROBUS (eastern white pine)
- PINUS SYLVESTRIS (scotch pine)
- PICEA ABIES (Norway spruce)
- PICEA GLAUCA (white spruce)
- PICEA PUNGES (blue spruce)
- PRUNUS SPECIES
- PSEUDOTSUGA MENZIESII (douglas fir)
- QUERCUS MACROCARPA (bur oak)
- QUERCUS PALUSTRIS (swamp Spanish oak)
- QUERCUS RUBRA (red maple)
- THUJA OCCIDENTALIS (arborvitae)
- TILIA CORDATA (littleleaf linden)
- ULMUS AMERICANA (American elm)
- ZELKOVA SERRATA (Japanese zelkova)



OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING

The team divided the park into five zones. Each team member volunteered for a specific time frame and day of the week to visit each zone, allowing for a wide range of information. To streamline observations the team utilized a tool from the Ghel Institute People Moving Count to ensure observations could be compared and synthesized into realistic data points. [5]

Overall Patterns

The team observed that many visitors use Burns Park as a transitory space rather than for intense recreation. Passersby were often walking, jogging, biking, or walking pets across the park. Fewer people actively used the sports fields or playgrounds. In fact, caregivers tended to sit and converse or watch children, rather than engaging in the programming themselves. This mirrors research findings showing that the most common caregiver behavior in playgrounds is the "leisure parent" role, where use of the space is for rest or socializing. [6] In terms of design, this means the park should support passive uses by providing ample seating, shade, and open lawn.

Demographics

A lot of users were adults (caregivers, neighborhood residents) rather than children, even though the elementary school was adjacent to the park. Outside of school times, relatively few children were present during observations. We saw many adults with strollers or walking dogs, along with groups congregating on benches. These adults spend more time sitting or standing (passive supervision) than playing. Therefore, design should accommodate adult comfort and accessibility (wide, stroller-friendly paths and comfortable benches in shade) as much as child play areas. [7] Inclusive, intergenerational features could also engage these users.

Peak Periods

The team recorded the highest pedestrian and vehicular traffic during school arrival and dismissal. Parents and children crowded the park and school entrance, often leading to muddy and trampled paths. This suggests path improvements are needed near the school entry, such as widened or paved walkways and curb extensions to accommodate heavy flows. In other times during the day, the park was much quieter. These temporal patterns indicate that circulation design is a priority during school hours, whereas midday and evening can focus on recreation.

Spatial Use Patterns

Certain areas clearly emerged as gathering spots. For instance, the picnic shelter and the lawn by the warming hut were frequently used for passive recreation while some distant corners of the park were almost vacant. These desire line patterns coincide with ground conditions where the heavily used zones showed soil compaction and wear. Understanding this is key for programming. High-use areas may need durable surfaces or reinforced turf, while low-use areas can be rewilded or left natural.

Wildlife and Ecology

The team noted a handful of species of birds, including chimney swifts circling the school roof, and a number of squirrels running around. Insects were active under lights but overall wildlife was limited. This is unsurprising given the park's mostly turf and nonnative tree vegetation. It suggests an ecological opportunity where we can plant diverse native shrubs, wildflowers, and bird-friendly trees to increase habitat value. Burns Park could better showcase Michigan's natural heritage by incorporating native flowering meadows or butterfly gardens. Such additions would both enrich the park's ecosystem and provide educational and interpretive interest for users.

COMMUNITY INVENTORY

The team conducted a multi-faceted outreach effort (online survey, an April 2025 public workshop, social media, and school-based activities) to gather community input. Rather than list every comment, the BPRT organized feedback into core themes. Below are the dominant priorities and ideas voiced by the community.

SAFETY ANND MAINTENENCE

Residents consistently emphasized the importance of safety, visibility, and reliable maintenance across the park. Primary concerns included improving lighting conditions, maintaining clear sightlines, and addressing conflicts related to off-leash dogs. Seasonal conditions were also a recurring issue, with icy paths and winter maintenance identified as barriers to consistent park use. In addition, uneven pathways, muddy conditions during peak school hours, and localized drainage issues were noted as affecting both accessibility and user comfort. Collectively, this feedback highlights the need for a design approach that prioritizes safe and legible circulation, year-round usability, and proactive maintenance strategies. Enhancements such as improved lighting, durable and accessible path systems, and clear spatial organization can support a safer, more resilient park environment for all users.

AMENITIES AND COMFORT

Many comments called for enhanced comfort and accessibility. Popular requests included additional benches and shaded seating areas, year-round restrooms, and accessible water fountains. Caregivers emphasized ADA and stroller-friendly pathways. Upgraded playground equipment (with accessibility features and safer surfacing) and family picnic spaces were also brought up. Ensuring all-season access (winterized restrooms, cleared paths) was repeatedly mentioned as a way to make the park welcoming even in the winter.

PLAY AND RECREATION

The community showed great interest in expanding recreational opportunities. Ideas ranged from seasonal attractions (permanent splash pad or bringing back the ice skating facilities) to various play elements (slides, climbing, nature-play). People also suggested new gathering venues: a bandshell (since the one in West Park closed) or pavilion for concerts and events, and even a designated food truck area. These creative reccomendations reflect the community's desire for a more active, engaging park. They indicate that flexible use spaces could be implemented, supporting both structured events and informal play.

ECOLOGY AND CONNECTIVITY

Feedback highlighted a wish for more natural park character and better links to the neighborhood. Many respondents advocated for more native plantings, pollinator gardens, and shade trees to improve habitat and comfort. Stormwater management was another priority, with calls for rain gardens and improved drainage. Connectivity was stressed as well, where people pointed out an existing informal "secret" path from the adjacent Burns Park school yard, suggesting that safe, official connections between the park and surrounding areas (including bike lanes and wider trails) would benefit users.

CHAPTER 3:

CONCEPTUAL DES

FA

INCLUSIVITY





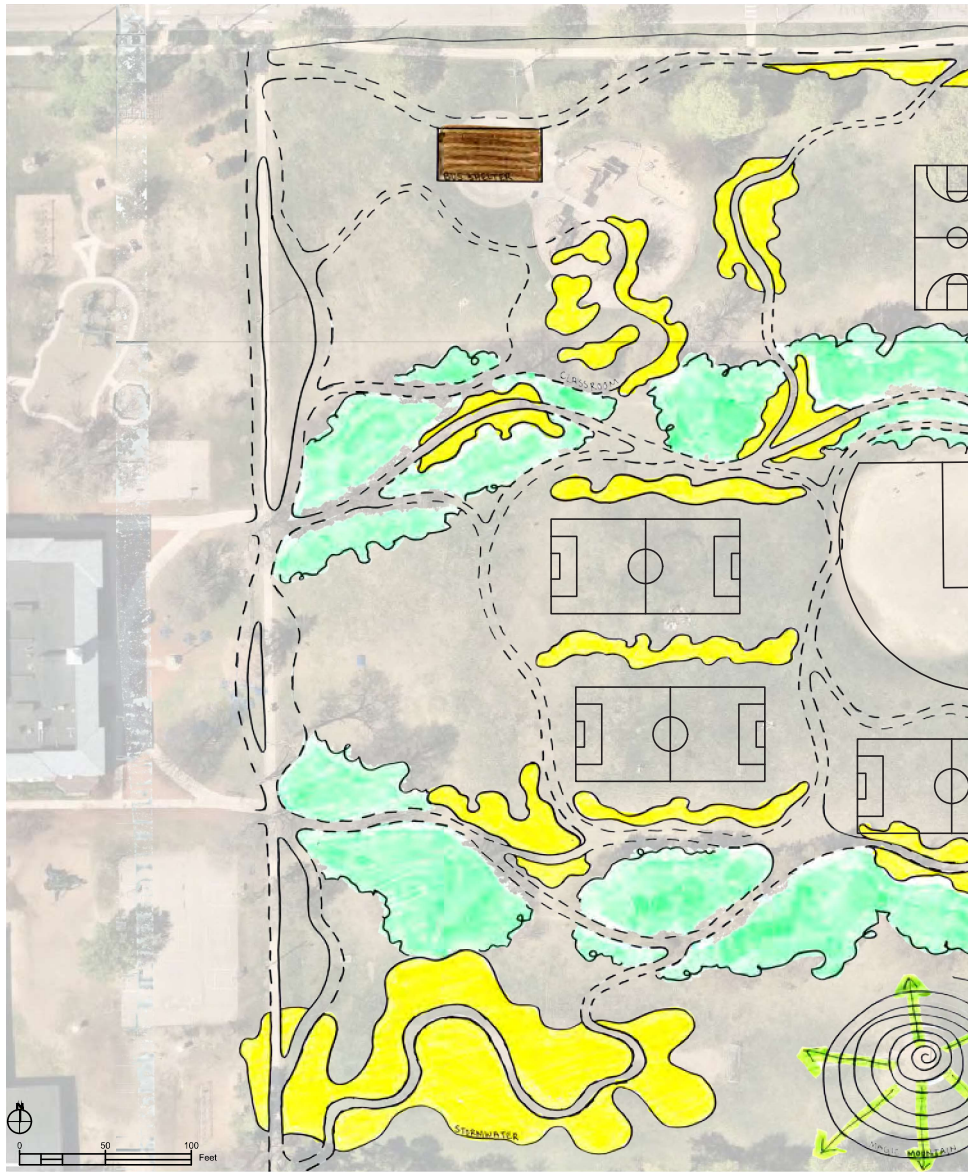
COMMUNIT





RIBBONS

The first concept used a ribbon-like spatial language to organize movement and connection across the site. Curvilinear forms were used to link major park elements, guide circulation, and create a more fluid relationship between active and passive spaces. This approach emphasized continuity and movement, weaving together play areas, gathering spaces, and ecological zones while reinforcing Burns Park as a connected public landscape. The ribbon concept also offered opportunities to introduce planting bands, interpretive elements, and physical elements to clearly emphasize the ribbon idea to park users, such as the inclusion of an ice ribbon for skating.



Aerial image from Nearmap

PRECEDENT IMAGES



THE GOLDEN RATIO

The third concept explored proportion, balance, and spatial rhythm through a composition informed by the golden ratio. This design approach emphasized visually pleasing relationships between built elements, open space, and planting areas, with a focus on choreographing movement through the park. The concept highlighted the value of focal points, framed views, and gradually unfolding experiences, while also reinforcing ecological function through thoughtful grading, planting, and water management. It created opportunities for areas of pause, reflection, and discovery within the larger park framework.



Aerial image from Nearmap

PRECEDENT IMAGES






BUS DROP-OFF
PLAYGROUND
BASKETBALL
HARDSCAPE
WELCOME CENTER
HARDSCAPE
STAGE
PAVILION
Baseball

CHAPTER 4:

Burns Park Realization Design

IMPLEMENTING NET ZERO PRACTICES

The Burns Park Realization Project is directly aligned with the planned net zero renovation of Burns Park Elementary School, positioning the park and school as a unified system that advances climate performance, education, and community resilience. Rather than functioning independently, the park is designed to extend the school's sustainability goals into the landscape, supporting reductions in operational emissions while improving ecological function and everyday user experience. In this context, a net zero park is understood as a landscape that minimizes environmental impact while producing value through renewable energy, stormwater management, and carbon sequestration, producing as much energy as it uses.

Design strategies focus on integrating climate-responsive systems throughout the site. Stormwater is captured and treated through rain gardens, bioswales, and bioretention areas, particularly at high-impact zones such as the bus drop-off and parking areas. Material selections (permeable crushed granite paths, hybrid turf systems, reclaimed wood elements) reduce embodied carbon while improving durability and performance. Native and prairie-based planting plans contribute to long-term carbon storage, habitat creation, and reduced maintenance inputs, while also mitigating urban heat island effects and improving seasonal comfort.

The project also addresses emissions through mobility and energy systems. Improved pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, along with a redesigned bus drop-off, supports reduced vehicle reliance and prepares the site for future electric transit infrastructure. Onsite renewable energy generation, including solar integration at the welcome center, contributes to offsetting operational energy demands. Together, these systems position the park as an extension of a low-carbon campus network.

Just as important is the role of the park as an educational platform. The design incorporates opportunities for hands-on learning through environmental monitoring, planting, and interpretive systems that



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

A pathway to accommodate diverse users while integrating historic wetland plants. It will address soil issues, improving safety, accessibility, and reducing current and future flooding.



BIOFILTRATION

Installing bioretention cells sized for low hydrocarbon loads treat parking and curb runoff, capturing sediments and light petroleum contaminants on site. When combined with simple pretreatment and engineered media, these cells prevent contaminants from spreading beyond the park boundary.



MATERIALITY

Use of low-impact materials. Compacted decomposed granite provides durable, permeable paths; hybrid turf boosts field performance while reducing water use, chemicals, and using recycled contents; reclaimed wood benches milled from trees removed on site offer durable, locally sourced seating.



TRANSIT

Safe, efficient bus drop-offs reduce parent car trips, idling, and local emissions, while encouraging walking, rolling, and shared transit. Integrating EV-ready infrastructure for future electric buses and way finding that links directly to school and park paths makes the drop-off a low-carbon, climate-resilient node.



ENERGY INPUTS

The pavilion is wrapped with solar windows and is topped with solar panels to allow for electric energy generation.

FOCUS AREAS

The Burns Park Realization Design envisions Burns Park as a vibrant, year-round community landscape that supports recreation, education, ecology, and stewardship. The design builds on community input and the park's historic character while advancing net zero goals, climate resilience, and improved access. Existing valued elements are preserved and strengthened, while underused areas are reimagined to support a wider range of users, activities, and seasonal programming.

1

Burns Prairie - A meandering path through a native prairie landscape invites exploration while restoring regional plant communities. Named in honor of Dr. George Burns, the park's namesake, this area emphasizes historically appropriate vegetation and provides critical habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.

2

New Parking Spaces - Located along the entry drive, these parallel spaces support convenient access for events, tournaments, and daily use, including electric vehicle charging. The area is designed to accommodate flexible programming such as community events, food trucks, and temporary installations like Park(ing) Day.

3

Puppy Park - A designated enclosed dog area provides a safe space for off-leash activity, addressing community safety concerns while supporting pet ownership. The space may also accommodate flexible uses such as educational programs, temporary animal-based stewardship initiatives, and secure holding areas during events.

4

Central Event Lawn - A flexible, gently sloping lawn supports a wide range of activities including performances, festivals, recreation

5

Athletic Courts and Fields - These amenities serve students and the broader community for structured and informal recreation. Designed for flexibility, the fields and courts support a variety of activities and encourage intergenerational use, from school programming to neighborhood play.

6

Child Play Area - An updated playground located near restrooms and amenities improves accessibility and convenience for caregivers. Equipment is designed for multiple age groups and incorporates impact-absorbing materials to enhance safety and inclusive play opportunities.

7

Transportation Station - A dedicated bus loop and drop-off area improves safety and circulation for school operations by shifting these activities off the main road. The space also functions as a flexible loading zone for events, accommodating service vehicles, food trucks, and community programming.

8

Playful Promenade - A widened, accessible primary pathway supports high pedestrian traffic and allows for emergency and maintenance vehicle access. Integrated snowmelt systems reduce winter maintenance needs and improve year-round usability. Seated planters are placed for shade and rest.

9

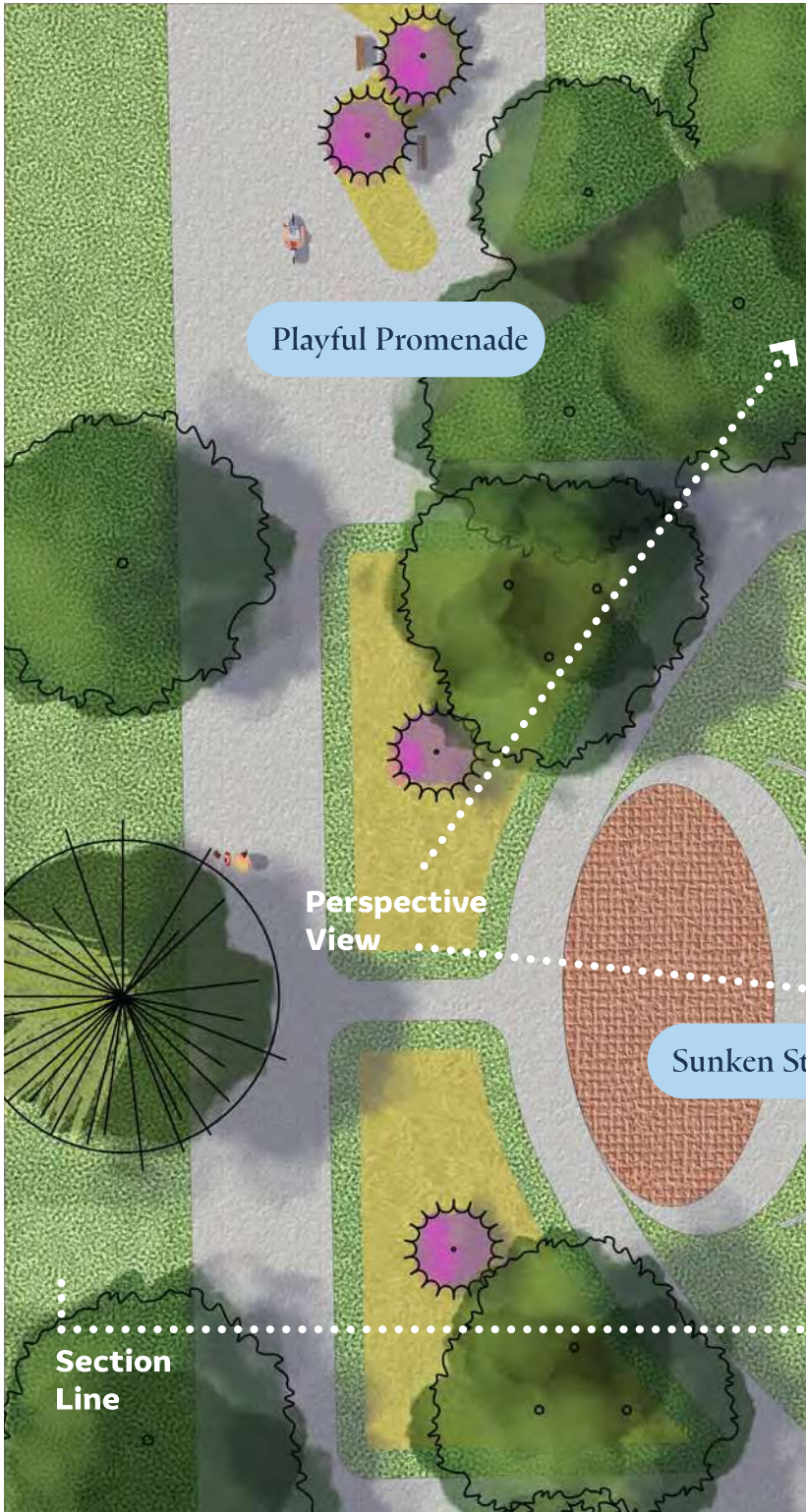
Natural Playground - A nature-based play area on part of Magic Mountain fosters creativity, exploration, and environmental learning. Incorporating elements such as logs, landforms, and adaptable structures, the space encourages unstructured play and evolving user interaction over time.

FEATURED AREA: PERFORMANCE PLAZA

This enlargement highlights the park's primary outdoor performance space, designed as a flexible amphitheater that supports school performances, community events, and informal gatherings. The layout preserves a strong visual connection to the surrounding park while creating a clear sense of enclosure and focus on the stage. Gentle slopes from the main path allow the space to remain ADA accessible, while planted embankments provide erosion control, carbon sequestration, and seasonal interest through native vegetation. The amphitheater tiers remain grassy rather than fully paved, allowing the space to retain the softer, more park-like character valued by users. The stage is designed for multiple performance sizes, with a smaller central area for intimate events and an expanded outer ring for larger audiences and productions.

Enlargement Area





FEATURED AREA: WELCOME CENTER

This enlargement illustrates the proposed welcome center as a central arrival point and shared gathering space at the northeast end of the park. Located near accessible parking, restrooms, and drinking water, the building creates a more welcoming transition from arrival to play, picnicking, and relaxation. Tree planters with built-in seating help soften the hardscape and provide shaded places to rest within the plaza. The surrounding layout supports everyday use by caregivers, students, and neighborhood residents, while also offering a more formal setting for picnics, casual meetings, and wayfinding into the broader park. Adjacent natural areas, sports fields, and the botanical landscape reinforce the welcome center's role as both a practical amenity and a gateway to Burns Park's ecological and recreational systems.

Enlargement Area



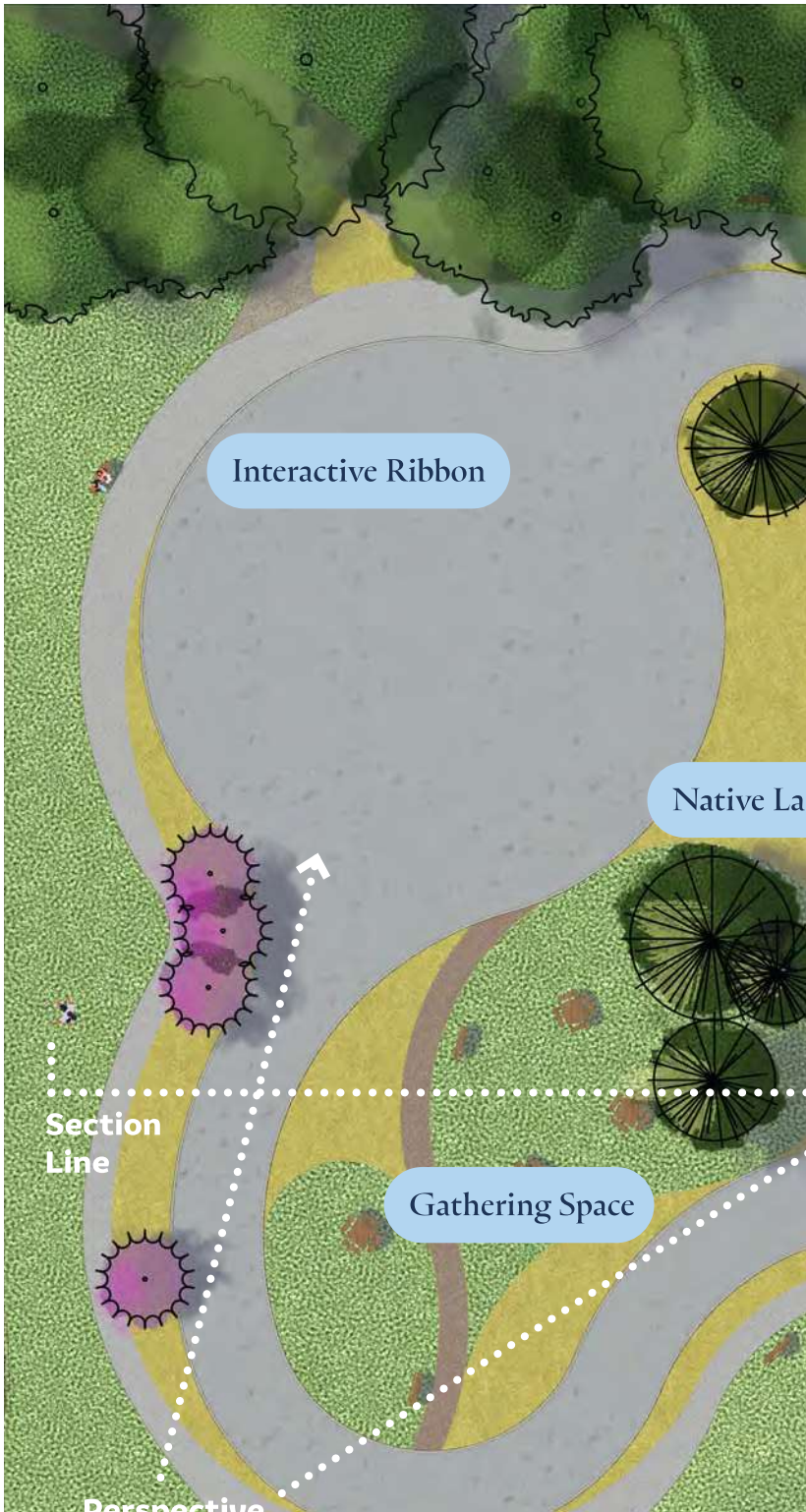


FEATURED AREA: INTERACTIVE RIBBON

This enlargement presents the interactive ribbon as a four-season landscape element that supports recreation, circulation, and community identity. During warmer months, the path functions as a multi-use route for walking, roller blading, and informal use, while in winter it can be transformed into an ice skating surface. The ribbon is framed by planting areas that provide structure, seasonal interest, and winter visibility, including conifers and other resilient species. Interior green pockets and nearby seating areas allow the space to shift between active and passive use across the year. The design builds on Burns Park's historic relationship to winter play while introducing a contemporary, climate-responsive amenity that activates the park in all seasons.

Enlargement Area



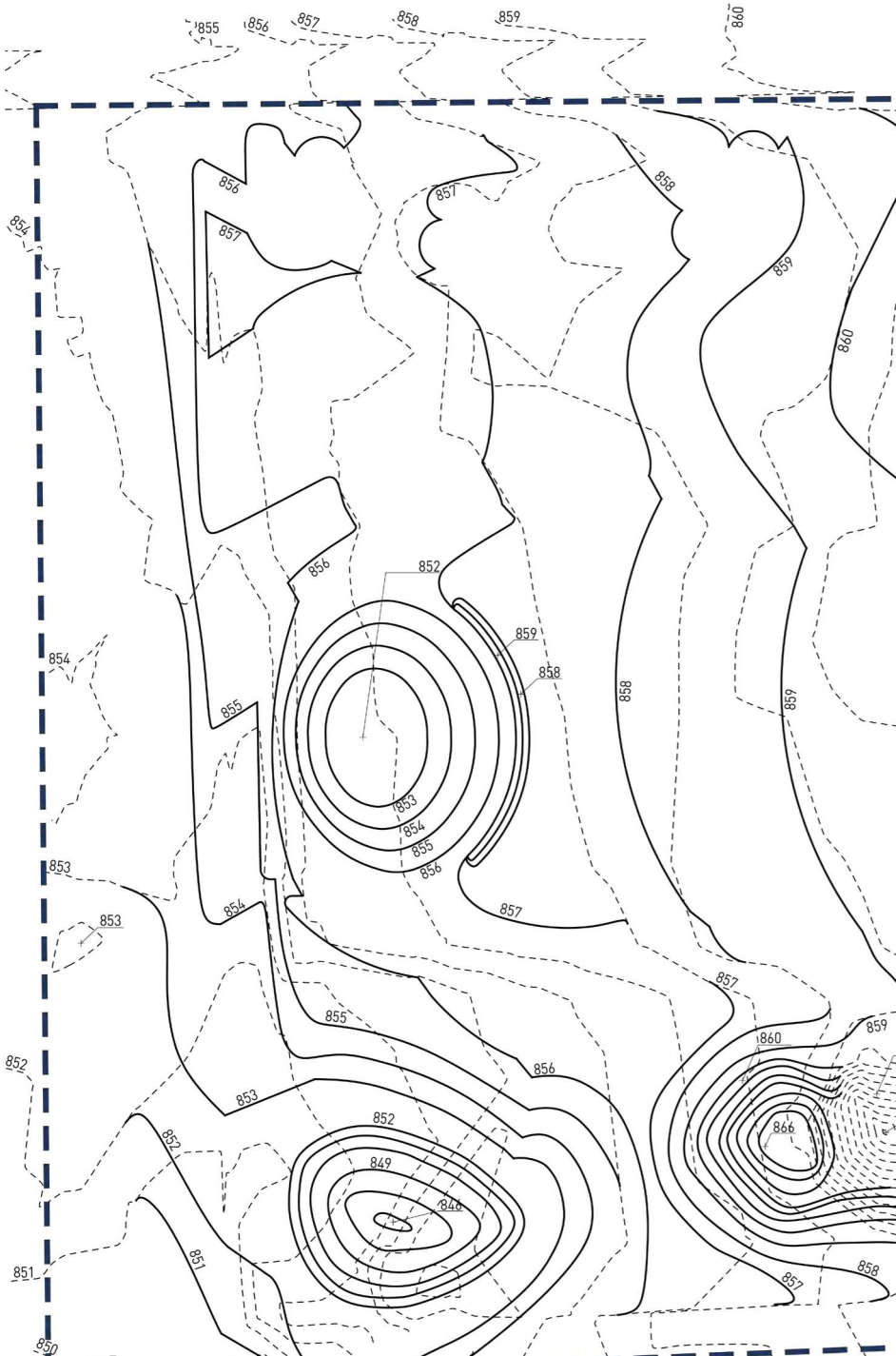


CHAPTER 5:

TECHNICAL DRAW
AND DOCUMENTS

GRADING PLAN

Ann Arbor's varied topography provides an opportunity to shape Burns Park with more intentional and engaging changes in grade. In this design, topographic variation is used to create safer and more interesting play and performance spaces while reducing exposure to hazards and supporting clearer site organization. The proposed grading also enhances the performance plaza and other programmed areas by adding spatial definition and visual interest. Burns Park's own history shows that earthwork has long been part of its identity, from glacial landforms to the historic horse track and the creation of Magic Mountain. This makes grading a context-sensitive and sustainable approach, particularly as the adjacent elementary school undergoes renovation.

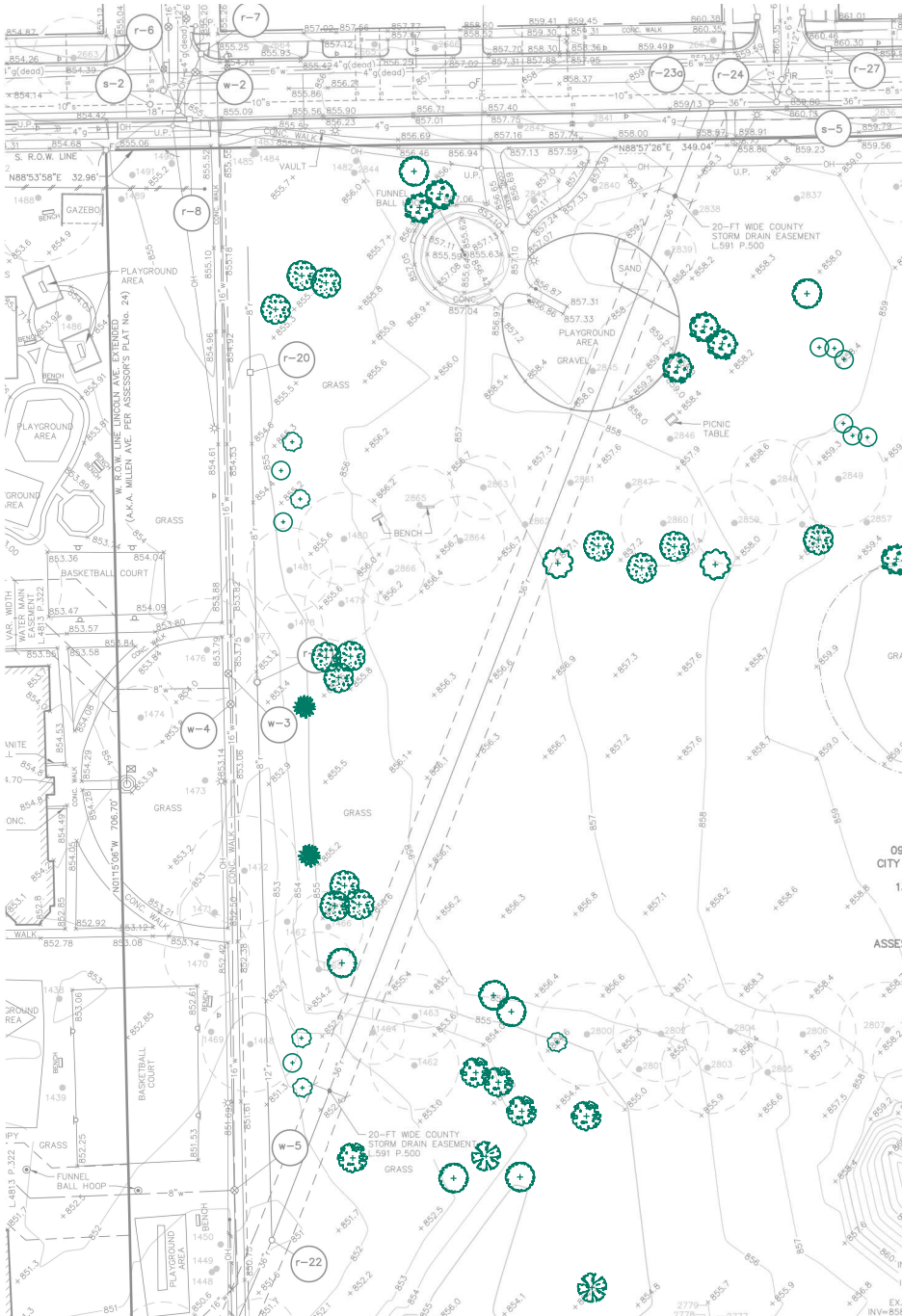


TREE REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT PLAN

The proposed tree removal and replacement strategy supports both the preservation of Burns Park's historic character and the long-term health of the landscape. In order to implement the design, a number of trees (both native and non-native) will need to be removed to accommodate new circulation, grading, and program elements. These removals are compensated by a comprehensive replanting approach that prioritizes species diversity, climate resilience, and long-term canopy health. New plantings will increase shade over hardscape and gathering areas, reduce heat gain, and improve air quality and habitat value. Additionally, a commemorative planting program could engage Burns Park Elementary students by planting a new tree within the ring each year, celebrating the graduation of fifth-grade classes while strengthening the species and age diversity of the tree ring over time.

Trees	Botanical/Common Name	Container	Caliper	Size	Quantity
	Acer rubrum 'Redpointe' Redpointe® Maple	B&B	2"	10-12'	19
	Amelanchier x grandiflora 'Autumn Brilliance' Autumn Brilliance® Serviceberry (Multi-stem)	B&B		6-8'	22
	Celtis occidentalis Common Hackberry	B&B	3"	8-10'	8
	Cercis canadensis Eastern Redbud	#10		6-8'	4
	Cornus kousa Kousa Dogwood	#10		6-8'	5
	Crataegus crus-galli var. *inermis* Thornless Cockspur Hawthorn	#15		8-10'	10
	Juniperus scopulorum 'Blue Arrow' Blue Arrow Juniper	#15		3-4'	5
	Nyssa sylvatica Black Gum	B&B	3"	12-14'	11
	Picea glauca White Spruce	B&B		6-8'	4
	Platanus occidentalis American Sycamore	B&B	2"	12-14'	9
	Quercus macrocarpa Bur Oak	B&B	3"	14-16'	7
	Sassafras albidum Sassafras	#15		6-8'	5

Replacement Plan



CHARACTER IMAGES - PRODUCT FURNISHINGS

The following products and images illustrate the role of site furnishings in shaping a park that is comfortable, legible, and well-supported over time. Elements such as seating, lighting, wayfinding, and other supportive infrastructure demonstrate how thoughtfully designed furnishings can enhance safety, accessibility, and day-to-day usability. These examples inform the Burns Park design approach by highlighting strategies for organizing movement, supporting gathering, and improving maintenance efficiency. Together, they represent a toolkit of solutions that guide how furnishings could be integrated throughout Burns Park to create a welcoming and functional public space for a wide range of users.



[16] Bench wr520-96 - DuMor

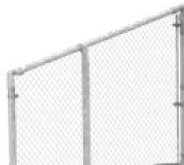


[17] Dynamite Orange Crushed Decomposed Granite



[19] String Lights - Shelly Lighting





CHARACTER IMAGES – AMENITIES AND EXPERIENTIAL ELEMENTS

These character images highlight a range of landscape amenities that contribute to a park's identity, performance, and user experience. From nature-based play and ecological planting to flexible recreation and circulation systems, the examples demonstrate how design elements can support multiple uses while responding to environmental conditions and seasonal change. They provide a reference for how Burns Park can balance recreation, ecology, and community programming through adaptable and experience-driven design. Collectively, these precedents inform the development of a cohesive landscape that encourages engagement, supports resilience, and reflects the values expressed through community input.



[33] Hybrid turf systems reinforce the natural grass with synthetic fibers to tolerate drought and heavy use - Act Global



[34] Roller skating on The Rib Metroparks Toledo



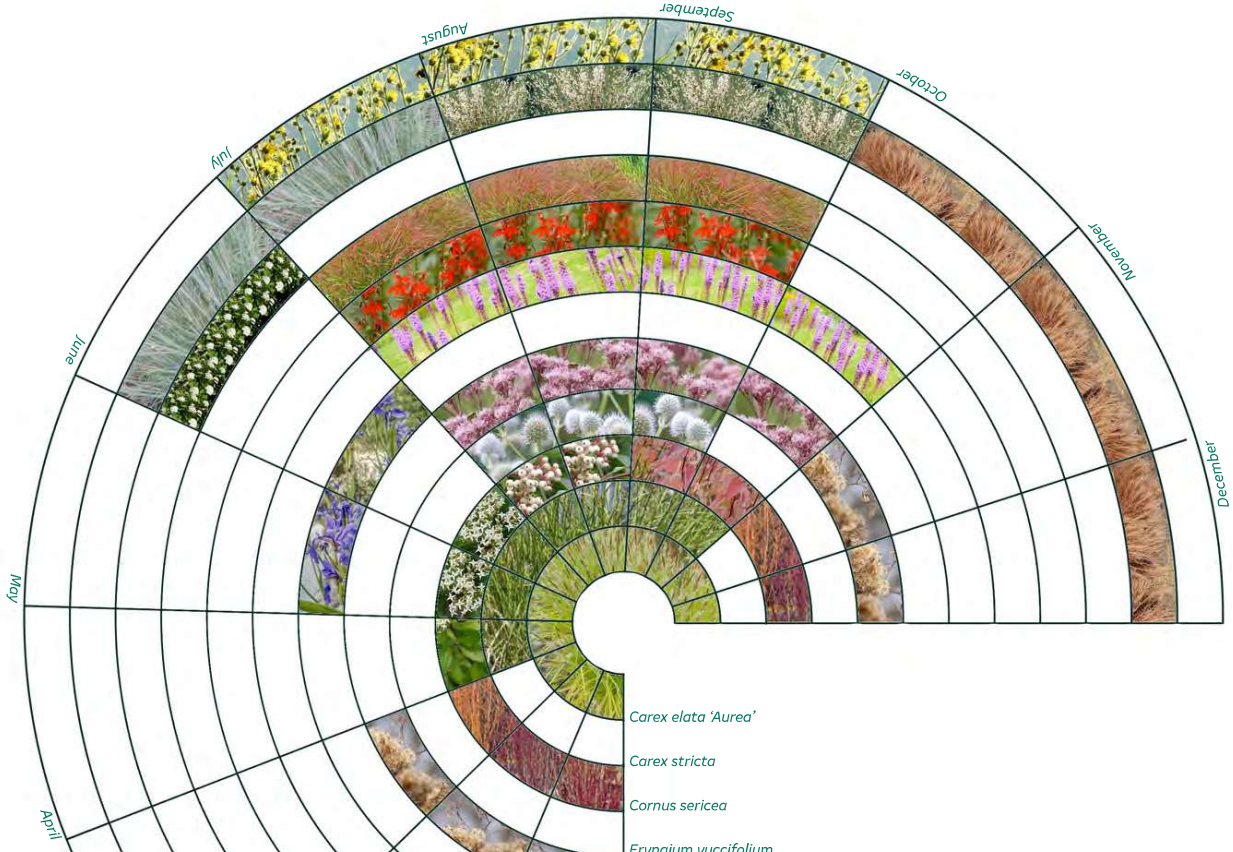
[36] Essex Park Mindful Mural Project, Portland, OR - Rather Severe Muralists





RAIN GARDEN PLANT PALETTE

The rain garden plant palette is designed to support both ecological performance and seasonal interest. Selected native species include plants that can tolerate periodic inundation during storm events, paired with drought-tolerant species that can withstand extended dry periods. This ensures resilience across fluctuating conditions in a fluctuating climate. The drought-tolerant species (Schizachyrium scoparium, Eryngium yuccifolium, etc.) are also incorporated throughout other areas of the park, creating a cohesive planting aesthetic while improving overall ecological performance and reducing maintenance demands. Together, the planting strategy enhances stormwater function, supports habitat, and provides opportunities for education through observation, signage, and engagement with native plant communities.





Carex elata 'Aurea'
Bowles' golden sedge

Sun: full sun/part sun
Moisture: high
Bloom color: semi-evergreen
Height: 1-2'
Spread: 2-3'
Spacing: 24-36"



Eupatorium maculatum
spotted Joe-pye weed

Sun: full sun/part sun
Moisture: average/high
Bloom color: rose purple
Height: 5-8'
Spread: 4-5'
Spacing: 48-72"



CONCLUSION

The Burns Park Realization Project presents a comprehensive vision for how a neighborhood park can evolve in tandem with a school renovation to better serve its community, ecology, and future users. Grounded in historical research, site analysis, community engagement, and conceptual design development, the project demonstrates that Burns Park is more than a local recreational landscape. More accurately, it is a shared civic space with the capacity to support climate resilience, environmental education, and daily life for multiple generations. By building on the park's history, preserving meaningful features, and responding directly to community priorities, the design process offers a framework that is both rooted in place and responsive to change.

This conceptual framework establishes a unifying vision for the park, strengthening connections between existing community spaces, circulation systems, and ecological networks within the Burns Park neighborhood. This report is intended as a guiding document for future implementation, recognizing that individual elements will continue to evolve through detailed design, engineering, and funding processes. Ongoing public engagement will remain essential as the project advances, ensuring that community voices continue to shape outcomes over time.

At this stage, the framework prioritizes the integration of neighborhood input with ecological design strategies to create a landscape that serves a diverse range of users while improving environmental performance. With the Burns Park Elementary School renovation anticipated to begin in the coming years, there is a timely opportunity to coordinate improvements to the park simultaneously, maximizing efficiencies and reinforcing the relationship between school and landscape. As implementation progresses, certain components will require further technical study to confirm feasibility and refine design solutions. Such examples include stormwater infrastructure integration within pathways, load requirements for emergency and service access, right-of-way and easement

While some elements of the framework will be phased as funding becomes available, early action on key priorities, particularly those related to stormwater management, circulation safety, and accessibility, can begin to address existing challenges and improve everyday user experience. Strategic early investments have the potential to reduce long-term maintenance issues, mitigate flooding concerns, and enhance safety for children and families who rely on the park daily.

Ultimately, the Burns Park Realization Project reflects the potential for landscape architecture to translate community input into meaningful, adaptable design. The report and accompanying proposals provide a strong foundation for continued collaboration among Ann Arbor Public Schools, Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation, and the Burns Park community. By aligning stewardship, education, and climate-responsive design, Burns Park is positioned to become a more resilient, inclusive, and enduring public landscape for years to come.

GRAPHIC REFERENCES:

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APPENDIX

Additional data and resources from the observational learning and community engagement activities of the BPRT:

The Activity Mix chart shows that Burns Park is used as more than a recreational area. It also functions as a mixed-use social landscape where movement, caregiving, socializing, and active play overlap across zones. Some areas support higher levels of active play and sports (Zone 1), while others are used more heavily for transit, supervision, and passive social interaction. This suggests that the park needs to accommodate both active and low-intensity uses.

The Radar chart shows that each zone offers a different environmental experience, with some areas reading as more visually active, socially dense, or movement-oriented than others. On the contrary, other zones feel quieter or more passive. Taken together, the charts indicate that Burns Park contains a range of distinct spatial conditions rather than a single uniform park experience. A design approach that preserves varied atmospheres for both active recreation and calmer, everyday use would be supported based on the data collected from the observational learning.

Additionally, further details on the results of the survey the BPRT sent out can be found at https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:671913a7-eba3-41fd-8733-f6dc0decb035. There were around 100 responses through sharing online and the canvassing event the team held at the park.

