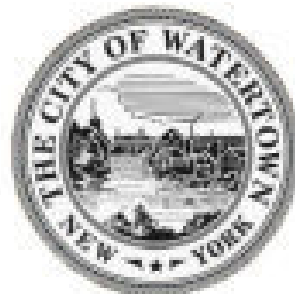


# THOMPSON PARK MASTER PLAN

Preliminary Draft

Watertown City Council Presentation

February 13, 2023



City of Watertown  
NEW YORK



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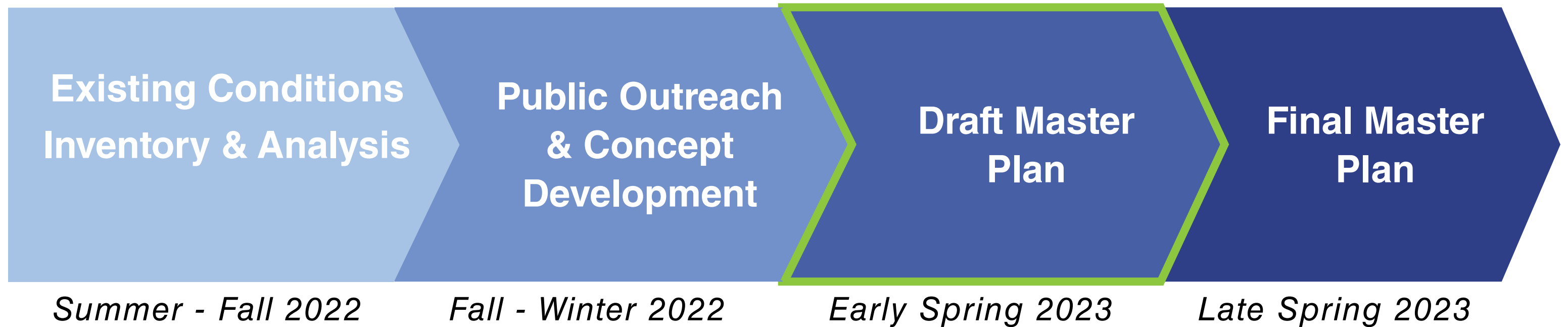
# 01 PROJECT BACKGROUND





# Master Plan Schedule

The Master Plan process includes four key phases: Site inventory, Outreach, Preliminary and Final Design. Public input and stakeholder engagement are key components of the process as is the partnership and collaboration with the Watertown Planning Department, elected officials, and local community organizations.





# Thompson Park Today

Nestled along the banks of the Black River and 5 miles from Lake Ontario in Jefferson County New York, Watertown offers the best aspects of a small city, with its historic downtown, leafy residential neighborhoods, strong public schools, and a 429 acre oasis that is Thompson Park.

The city's population of 25,000 people is roughly the same as when Thompson Park was established in 1899. Nearby Fort Drum adds another 13,000.

Today, the park is a vibrant destination for the residents of Watertown, adjacent Villages, families of Fort Drum, and visitors exploring sites within the North County from the Erie Canal to Thousand Islands in Canada. The Park commands spectacular views of downtown Watertown and offers locals and explorers alike a multitude of recreational experiences from scenic overlooks, picnic areas, a destination playground, indoor pool and outdoor splash pad,

recreational concessions run by the Watertown Golf Course and Zoo New York, to an emerging network of nature trails in mature woodlands.

This Master Plan draws inspiration from the original landscape design intent but is informed by our current environmental awareness and heightened understanding of how public landscapes are vital to the health of communities. The park is already well-used and well-loved, and will continue to serve the broadest possible population of all ages, origins and abilities.

The Master Plan explores the creation of a cohesive circulation system, improving access to existing uses, expansion of compatible park programming and better connections to the adjacent neighborhoods. The plan provides a framework to guide Park improvements into the 21st Century while respecting its historic roots.





# Master Plan Goals

The Master Plan will build on the historic Olmsted Brothers 1903 design, its relationship to the site and a sense of place in Watertown for the 21st Century. The following master plan goals were developed through a combination of research and stakeholder input.

- **INCREASE CONNECTIVITY**

Improve navigability of the site's dramatic topography, expand and unify the path system, increase accessibility, identify areas for new neighborhood amenities, preserve and enhance the emergent system of nature trails.

- **EXPAND PARK PROGRAMMING**

Introduce programming to activate under utilized areas while improving connections to existing park programs. Revive the park as a cultural and social destination with strengthened connections to Watertown and the region.

- **FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS**

Engage local stakeholders in the master plan development, new programming and long-term park stewardship. Work with the Friends of Thompson Park, local schools and recreational organizations.



*View out from the pinnacle*



# Master Plan Goals

Inspired by the pastoral gesture of the original design, the Master Plan acknowledges the topography, existing mature tree plantings and emergent ecologies of Thompson Park.

- **REVITALIZE HISTORIC STRUCTURES**

Restore and re-purpose historic structures. Consider the development of new park destinations and facilities within a general framework that connects to existing roads and utilities. Celebrate the parks history.

- **UPGRADE INFRASTRUCTURE**

Preserve and upgrade existing roads, walls, staircases, pathways and structures thereby protecting the historic character of Thompson Park. Add and upgrade essential park infrastructure such as the lighting, water features and paved areas.

- **REINFORCE PARK IDENTITY & EDGES**

Create a welcoming, accessible, and safe environment for people of all ages and abilities by bridging park entrances and neighborhood streets with reinforced planting, lighting and site furnishing schemes.

- **ENHANCE EMERGENT ECOLOGIES**

Enhance the park's ecological value, address overgrown vegetation, remain sensitive to historic viewsheds and landscape character. Introduce new tree plantings to define program areas. Create meadow habitats for pollinators and ground-nesting birds. Designate sensitive areas as nature preserves. Reinforce the tree canopy.



*View of an existing path through the wooded areas of the park.*





02 PARK EVOLUTION

#3994  
AUG. 7 - 1902



# Thompson Park Beginnings

J. C. Thompson was a prominent figure in Watertown, New York in the late 19th Century. His company, New York Air Brake Company, had amassed a healthy fortune and he wished to share in his prosperity by creating a park in Watertown as place of civic pride and respite.

Thompson acquired the land for the park that today bears his name and anonymously gifted that land to the City in 1917. In addition to donating the land, he sought the services of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and John C. Olmsted, known as the Olmsted Brothers, who created and implemented the design for the park in 1903. The firm was the continuation of the practice begun by Frederick Law Olmsted, the pre-eminent landscape architect of the time.

The farmland set aside for the new park was defined by rocky soils and rugged topography. While the design for Watertown Park, as it was then known, began in 1899, the final park plan evolved as the park was built and final rendition of the whole park

issued in 1903. Park construction took place in a phased manor over several years. The passing of J. C. Thompson in 1924 and financial pressures following World War limited further implementation of the park plan from the initial investments made in the northern portions of the park.

While the first 100 acres of the park were built, remaining natural areas, especially on the steeper slopes, have since remained relatively undeveloped. The time is long overdue to reclaim under utilized areas of the park and consider anew the value of the park to its citizens.

The Master Plan for Thompson park sets forth a vision for park restoration and enhancement, rooted in the Olmstedian belief of the social importance of parks in fostering community and a firm belief in the restorative power of being in nature. The park design must balance needs for increased access with those of landscape preservation.





View of the landscape adjacent to Thompson Park, 1902. Image Courtesy of the NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

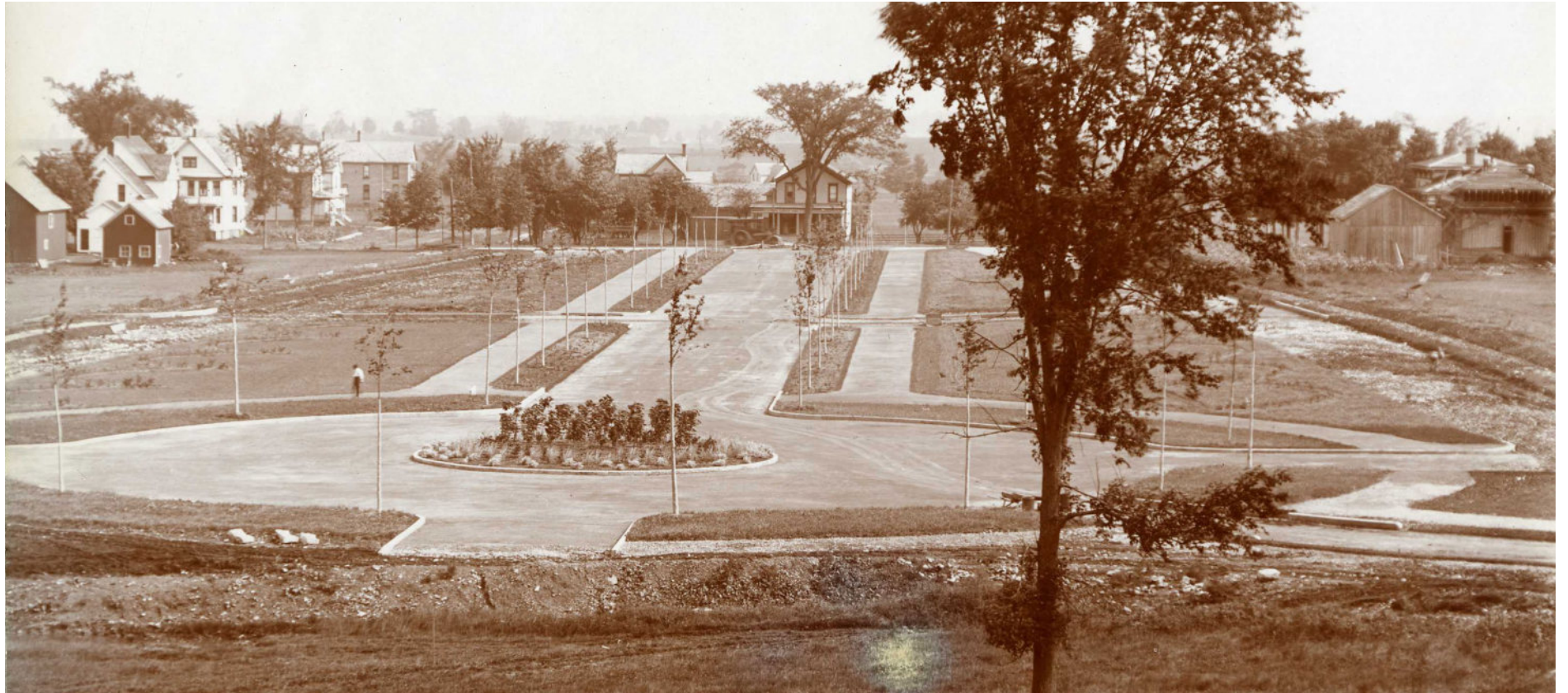


# Urban & Rural Context

## Thompson Park and Watertown

The 1903 Olmsted Brothers Plan envisioned connecting the new park to its immediate neighborhoods and to the historic center of Watertown with park entrances strategically located via tree lined corridors on Gotham, Franklin, and State Streets. These streets still function as important connections between the park and downtown Watertown today.

In the later 19th Century the park and immediate environs were farmland. The site of the park was mostly cleared of trees and scattered with small farm structures and low stone walls.



Academy Circle, 1903. Image Courtesy of the NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Downtown Watertown, c. 1900. Image Courtesy of the NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.





Plan of the City of Watertown, 1901. Image Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site





# Park Timeline

**1800** The first settlers arrive and the village of Watertown is named after the Black River; attracting mills and factories to utilize the river's hydro power.

**1816** Watertown is incorporated as a village. Due to its proximity to Lake Ontario, Watertown becomes a popular location for transporting supplies into Canada, attracting many entrepreneurs.

**1869** Watertown is incorporated as a city.

**1899** John C. Thompson, treasurer and secretary of New York Air Brake Company, hires the Olmsted Brothers firm to design a park as an anonymous gift to the city.

**1900** The Olmsted Brothers work on a majority of the park for the next 2 years. They plan boulevards, playgrounds, a wading pool, meadows, water tower and stone pavilion on top of Pinnacle Hill, which provides scenic vistas over Watertown and toward Lake Ontario.

**1917** Ownership and responsibility for maintenance of 191 acres of Thompson Park is transferred to the City of Watertown.

**1920** The Zoo Club builds a bear cage and Zoo New York expands from this point forward - to the 25 acres it is today.



*Park paths and drive under construction, 1902. Image Courtesy of the NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site*



*Construction team, 1902. Image Courtesy of the NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site*



# Park Timeline

**1926** The Watertown Golf Club establishes a 9-hole golf course and expands in 1964 when they lease the south east side of the park.

**1931** The idea of a picnic pavilion is introduced in 1931

**1978** The new water tower is built on the site of where the old wading pool existed 1970.

**1985** Master Plan for Improvements of Thompson Park is prepared by City Officials

**2015** The Friends of Thompson Park is founded. In 2018, they sponsor a new splash pad adjacent to the Pool, partially funded by the Rotary Club.

**2017** The wooden playground is replaced by an accessible playground made of contemporary materials. In July, the North Country Honors the Mountain monument is designed, honoring the 10th Mountain Divisions' Soldiers, their Family Members and the Fort Drum Civilian Force.

**2019** The City of Watertown Comprehensive Plan is adopted by City Council.

**2022** Thompson Park Master Plan commences. City votes to acquire the privately owned portion of Golf Course.



*View of the pinnacle from a vintage postcard, postmarked 1938*



*View of the bandshell, from a vintage postcard, postmarked 1935*



# Park Plan 1903

This comprehensive park plan prepared in 1903 reflects some of the earliest phases of the park that were built as well as proposed but not implemented entrance from Gotham Street.

This plan is integral to understanding the configuration of Thompson Park today. In total, approximately 100 acres of the park were realized, with development occurring predominantly in the northeast corner,

Notable features that weren't realized are two water bodies "Swan Lake" "Goose Pond". The road and path network from Academy Circle to the park's core and tower square closely resemble the original plan.



Park Plan, 1903. Image Courtesy of the NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



# Circulation

## Built & Unbuilt Overlay

The full park circulation system was never completed. Key to the original plan was a complete park loop.

The current golf course impedes a vehicular loop, but a continuous multi-use trail loop is possible. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation routes have since been added. Originally intended as maintenance roads, these additions break with the original Olmsted design.

### LEGEND

- Existing Park Boundary
- Vehicular - Existing Today
- - - Vehicular - Unbuilt
- Pedestrian - Existing Today
- - - Pedestrian - Unbuilt
- Proposed Tree Canopy
- Proposed Waterbodies



*Naming conventions according to the 1903 Olmsted Brothers park plan*



An aerial photograph showing a cityscape in the background, a large green field in the middle ground, and a road intersection in the foreground. The text "03 REGIONAL & LOCAL CONTEXT" is overlaid in white on the green field.






# 03 REGIONAL & LOCAL CONTEXT



# Regional Context

- As the largest city in New York State's North Country Region, Watertown is located in close proximity to several land and water resources, including Lake Ontario, St. Lawrence River, the Erie Canal, and the Empire State Trail.
- The history of the city is closely intertwined with the Black River, which was the main source of power for industrial activities during the first years of the settlement over two centuries ago.
- Another major economic generator for the region is Fort Drum, a 107,000+ acre US Army Military installation, which is only 5 miles away from the city.

## LEGEND

-  Black River Watershed
-  Water
-  Watertown
-  Thompson Park
-  Major Connections



Map Courtesy of City of Watertown, NYS GIS Clearinghouse













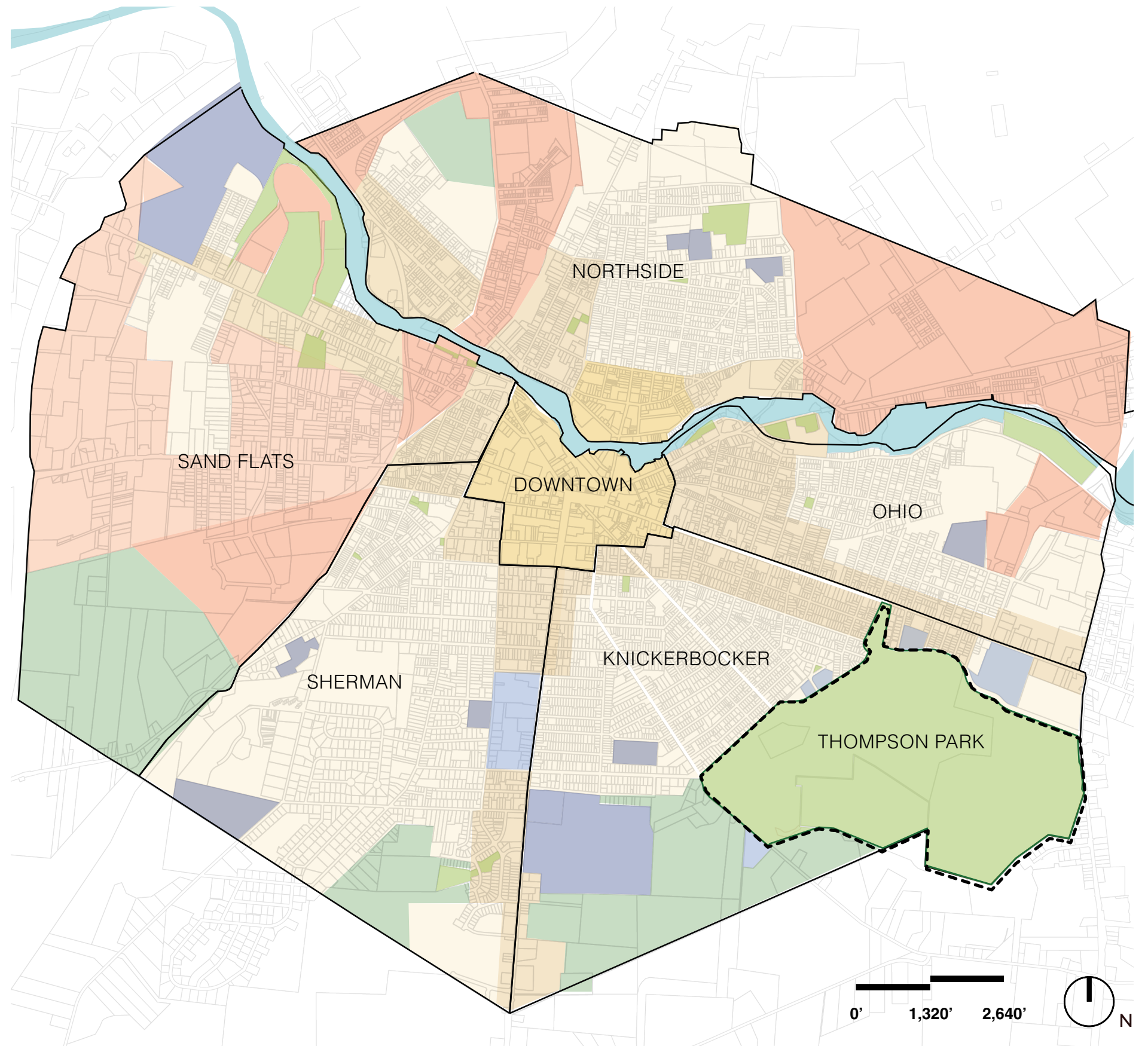
# Local Context

## Adjacent Land Use

- Current neighborhoods and associated land use from the 2019 city of Watertown Comprehensive Plan in relation to Thompson Park.
- Thompson Park is in a primarily residential neighborhood but is also directly adjacent to a commercial area to the north and within close proximity to the city's public high school, Watertown High, with over 1,000 students immediately to the south.

### LEGEND

-  Park
-  Open space-privately owned, undeveloped land
-  Community and public facilities
-  Educational institution
-  Residential- single-family house
-  Residential - mixed use
-  Residential - downtown
-  Commercial
-  Industrial
-  Black River



Map Courtesy of City of Watertown, Comprehensive Plan 2019



# Local Context

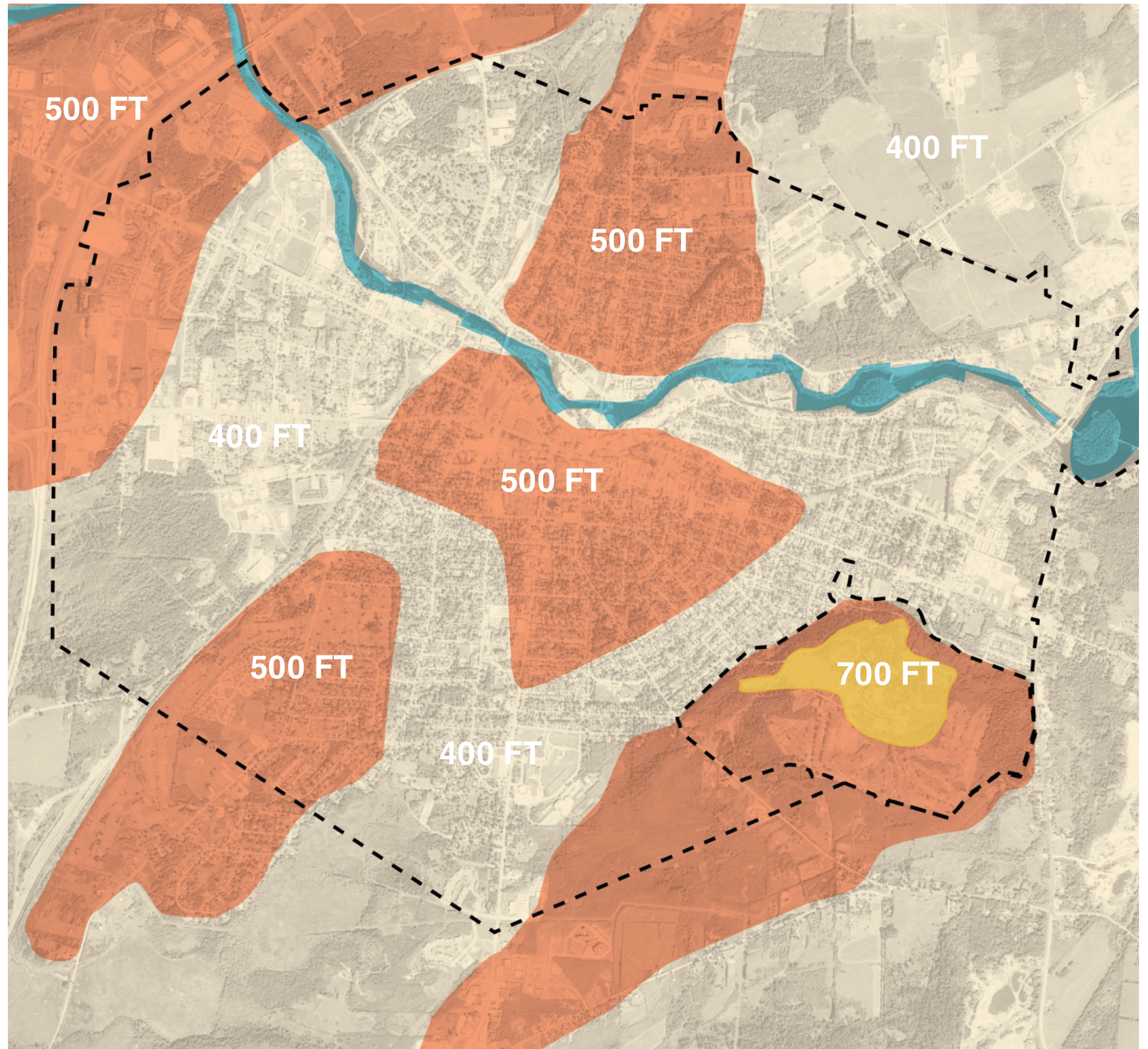
## Topography

Thompson Park is in the highest area of the city, possessing beautiful views of Watertown—a defining feature of the park and an asset that needs to be preserved and enhanced in the Master Plan.

The topography of the park also presents challenges in terms of universal accessibility, visibility, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to the immediate neighborhoods within which it sits.

### LEGEND

-  City Boundary
-  Park Boundary
-  River
-  High (700')
-  Medium (500')
-  Low (400')



Map Courtesy of City of Watertown, NYS GIS Clearinghouse






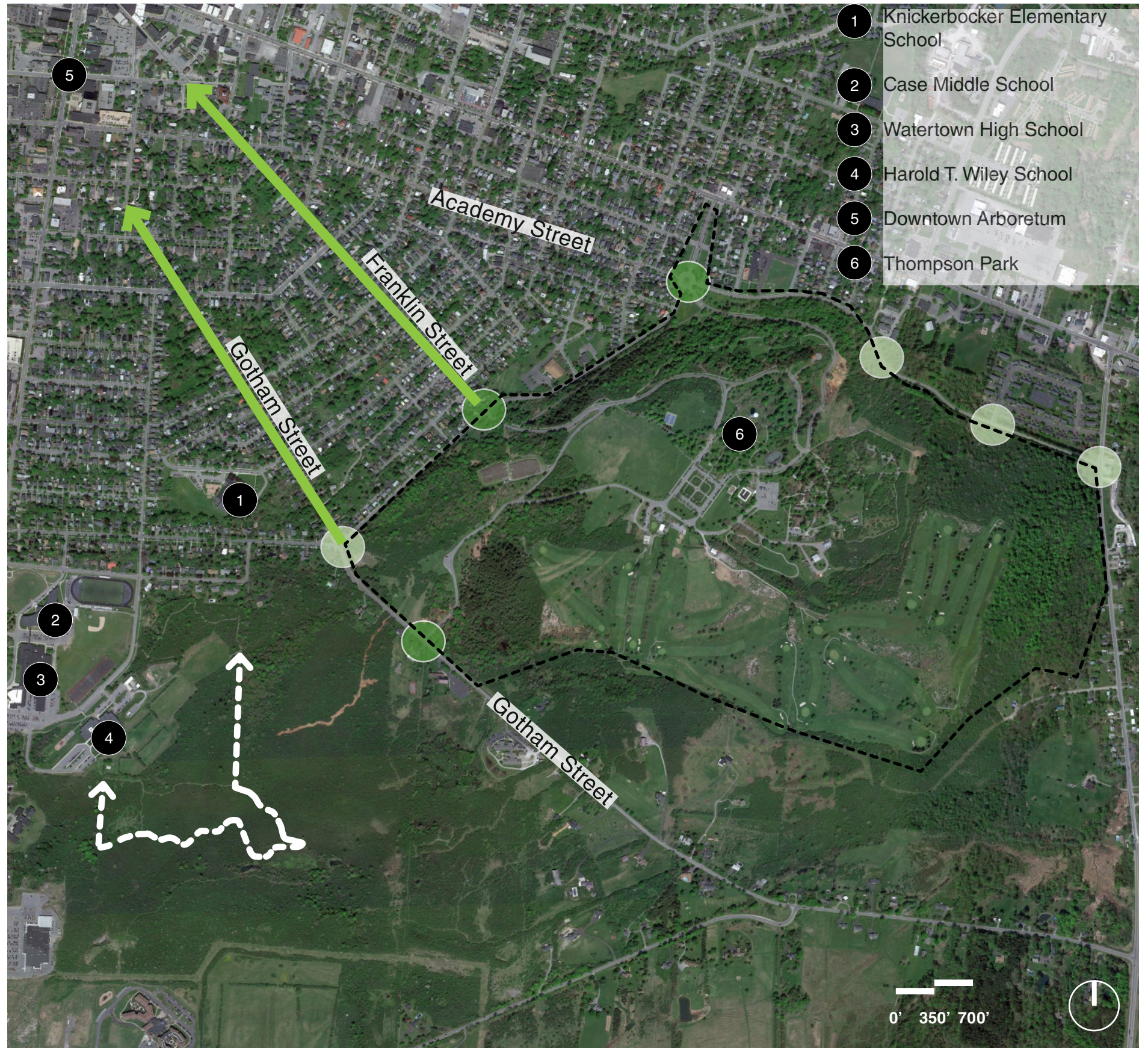
# Local Context

## Neighborhood Connections

- There are four schools within 2 miles of the park: Case Middle School, Watertown High School, Harold T. Wiley School and Knickerbocker Elementary School.
- The parks' natural areas to the east and west could support a competitive cross country course. Watertown's cross country track team could benefit from a direct trail connection to the park.
- Mountain bikers utilize informal entrances to the park from the outside to access trails in the western quadrant of the park
- Tree allees could serve as connections to Watertown's downtown arboretum located around Clinton and Washington Street.

### LEGEND

-  Improved Park Entrances - Informal Trail Access Points
-  Formal Park Entrances
-  Wiley School Trails - School Property
-  Key Connecting Corridors



Map Courtesy of Near Map, 2022



# 04 NATURAL RESOURCES





# Geology

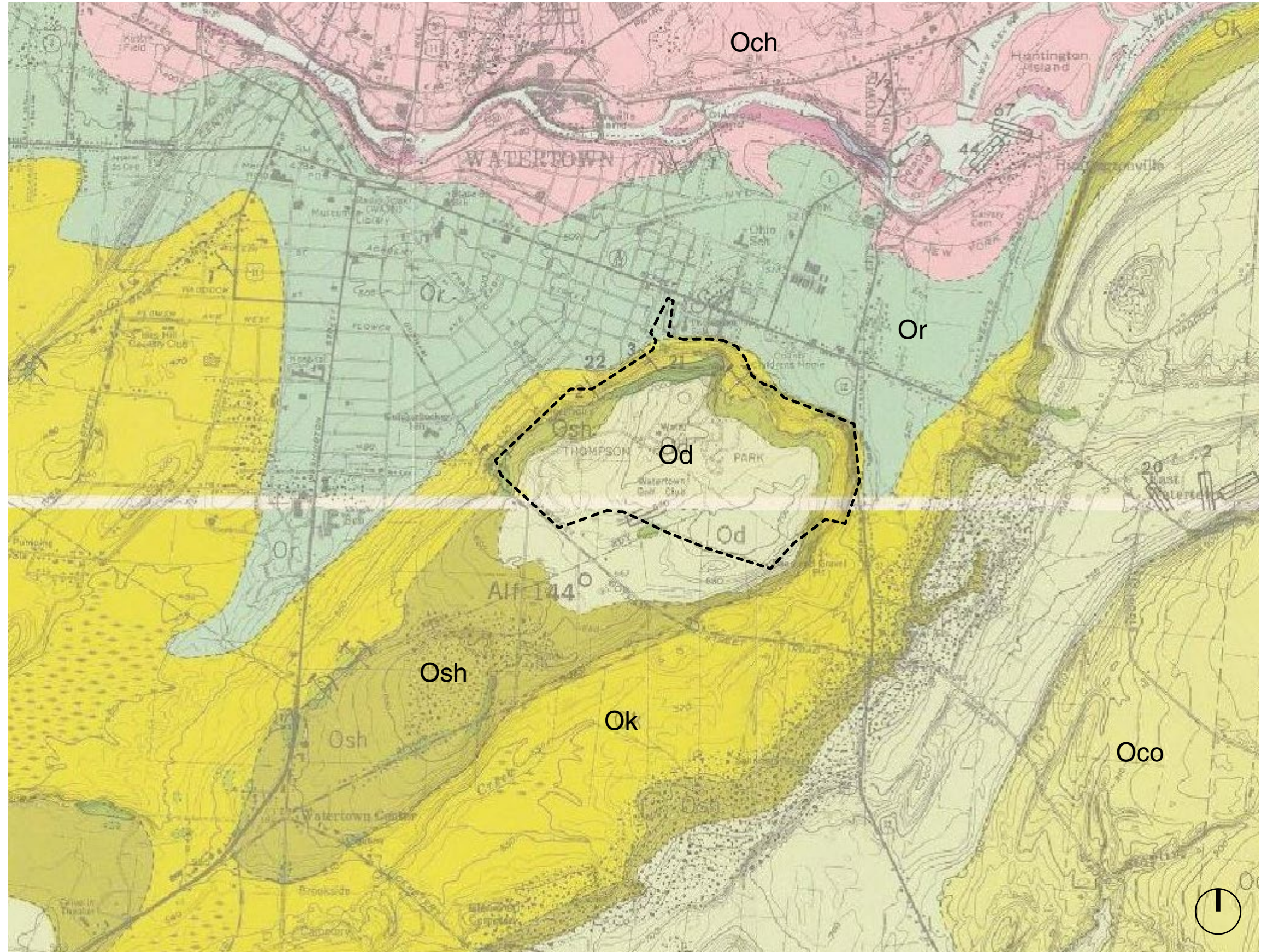
## Natural Resources

The park is defined by its steep slopes and rocky soils. The underlying limestone contributes to soils with elevated pH levels and high porosity.

### LEGEND

- Od - Denmark Limestone** - Thin to thick bedded, occasionally cross bedded, medium-to-medium-light gray, coarse textured fossiliferous limestone with shale partings
- Osh - Shoreham Limestone** - Irregular lensing, thin-to medium-bedded, medium gray, medium-to coarse-textured limestone, The coarser limestone beds have wavy surfaces producing an irregular lensing appearance.
- Ok - Kirkfield Limestone** - Medium-to thick-bedded, medium-to light gray, medium-to coarse textures limestone; abundantly fossiliferous with obvious echinoderm columnals; frequently cross bedded.
- Och - Chaumont Limestone** - Massive, medium to dark grey, fine textured cherty limestone, weathering light gray with silicified fossils and large cephalopods
- Or - Rockland Limestone** - Thin-bedded, somewhat argillaceous medium-to dark gray, fine-to medium-textured limestone with shale interbeds
- Oco - Cobourg Limestone** - Upper part (hillier) nodular and argillaceous medium-textured limestone, with interbeds of dark grey calcareous shale; lower part (Hallowell) thin-to thick bedded occasionally crossbedded, medium-to medium-light gray, coarse-textured fossiliferous limestone with shale partings

— — Park Boundary



Map Courtesy of <https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/mapview/?center=-75.876,43.943&zoom=12>














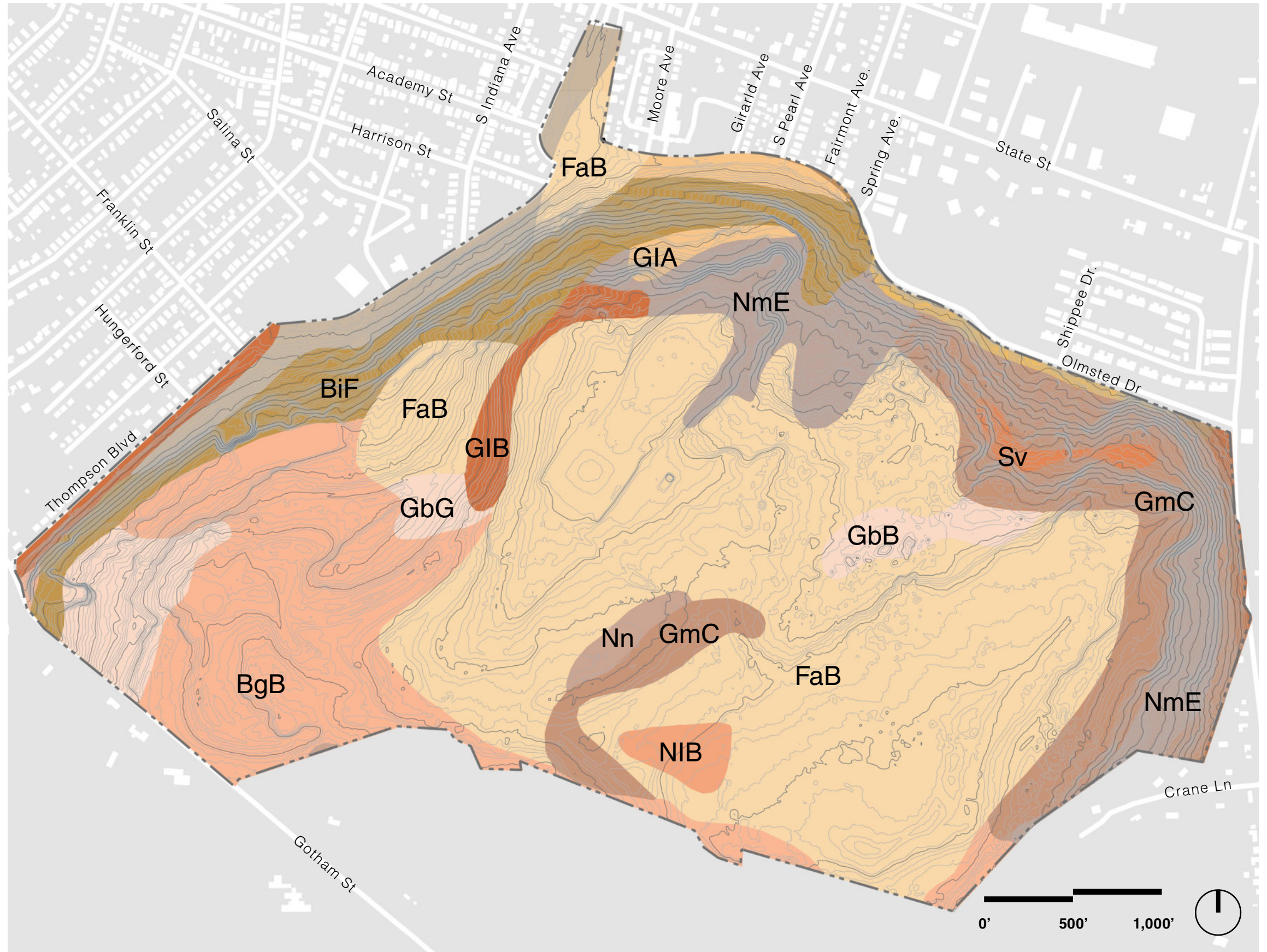
# Soils

## Natural Resources

Existing park soils as mapped by the US Natural Resource Conservation Service.

### LEGEND

-  Park Boundary
-  NmE - Nellis and Madrid Soils, 25 - 50% slopes
-  GmC - Galaway very stony silt loam, 0 - 15% slopes
-  Sv - Sun very stony silt loam
-  GbB - Galoo-Rock outcrop complex, 0 to 8 % slopes
-  FaB - Farmington loam, 0-8% slopes
-  NIB - Nellis loam, 3 - 8 % slopes
-  Nn - Newstead silt loam
-  GiA - Galaway silt loam, 0 - 3 % slopes
-  BfF - Benson channery silt loam, 25 - 50% slopes
-  BgB - Benson-Galoo complex, very rocky, 0-8% slopes



Map Courtesy of [www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/data-and-reports/web-soil-survey](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/data-and-reports/web-soil-survey)



# Topography

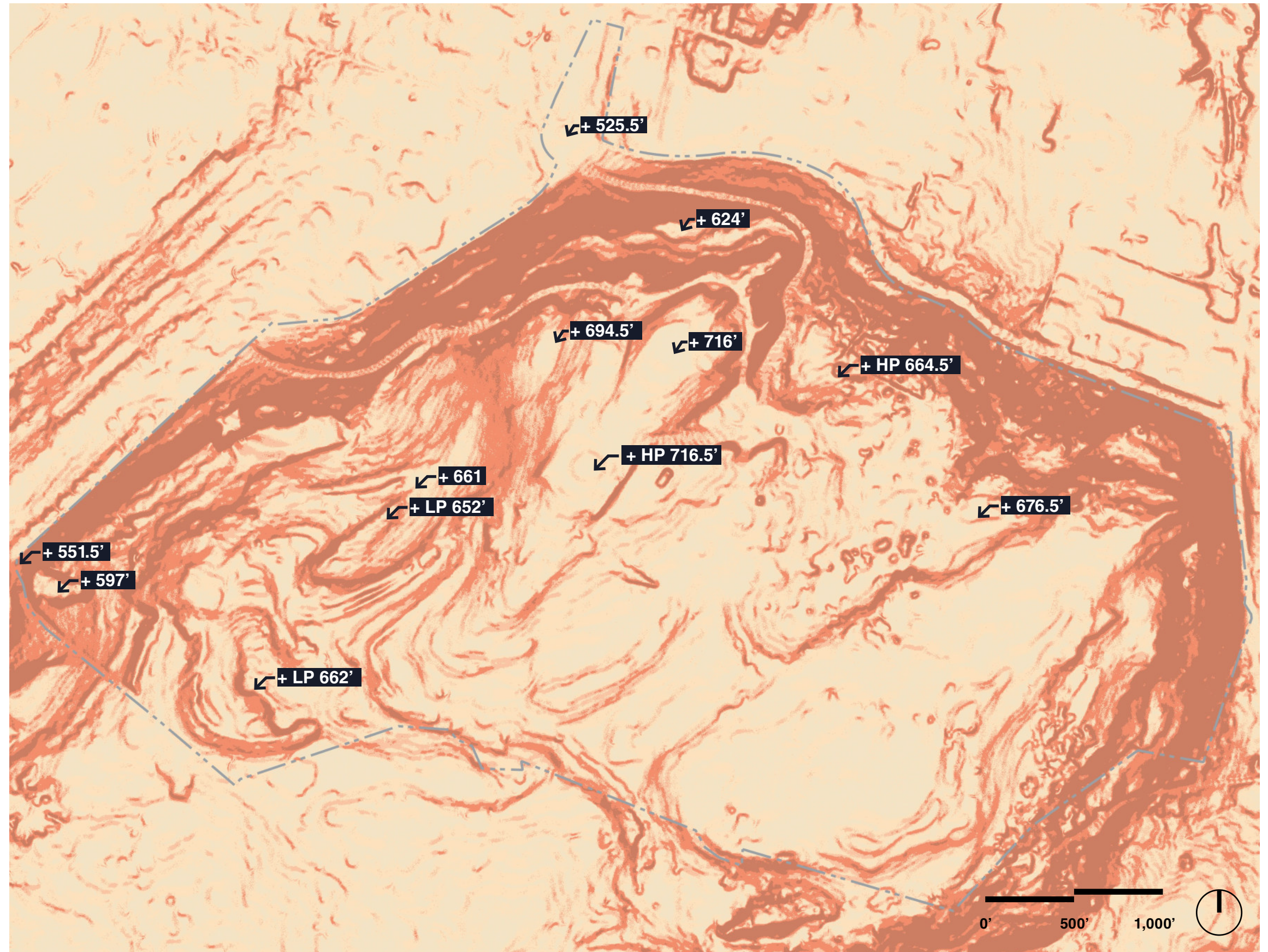
## Natural Resources

The northern portion of the park's edges have steep slopes with open drainage swales at the base. The park is characterized by high vantage points which contribute to park experience.

The southern portions of the park, particularly the golf course, are relatively flat, with the exception of some localized bedrock ridges.

### LEGEND

- 0 - 2%
- 2 - 5%
- 5 - 8%
- 8 - 15%
- 15 - 40%
- Park Boundary



Map Courtesy of City of Watertown, NYS GIS Clearinghouse

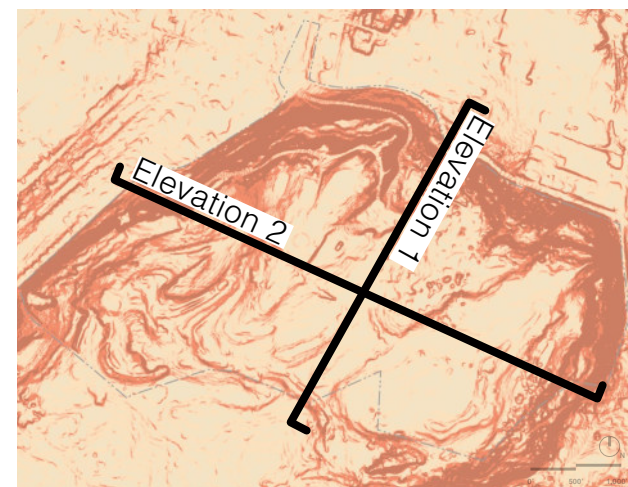


# Topographic Profile

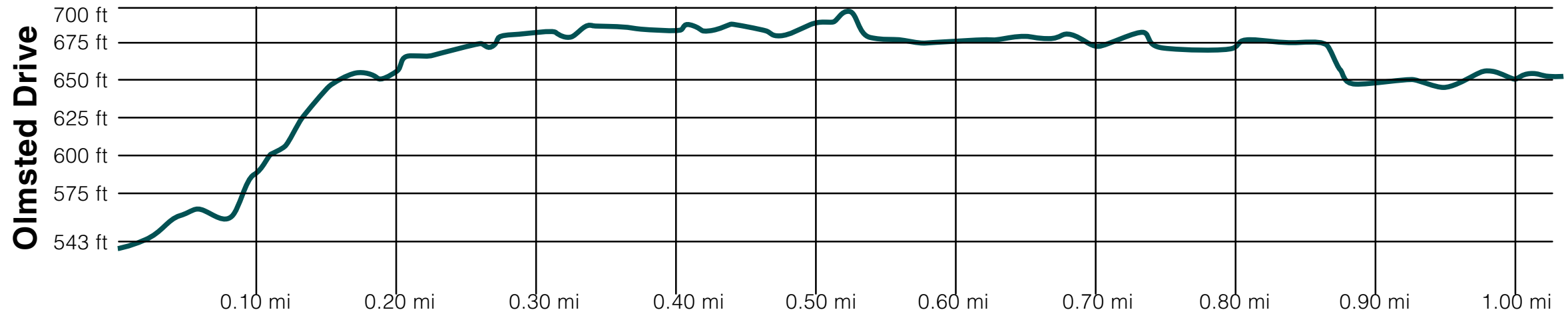
## Natural Resources

Cross sections through the park illustrate the extent of topographic change across the site, especially as it occurs along the park's neighborhood edges.

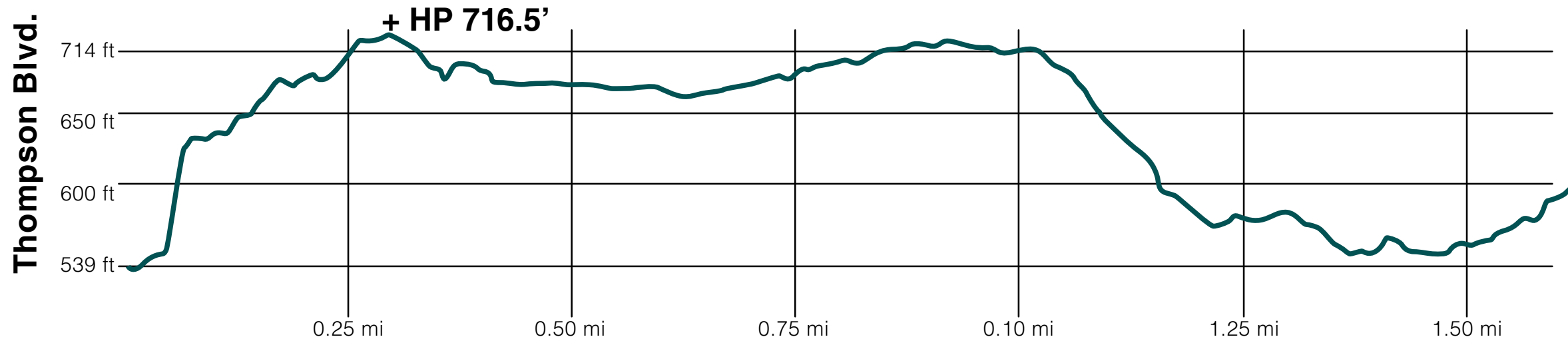
Pedestrian access to the park from the north and west must navigate some of the steepest slopes in the park.



Elevation 1



Elevation 2



Data Courtesy of Google Earth Pro



# Hydrology

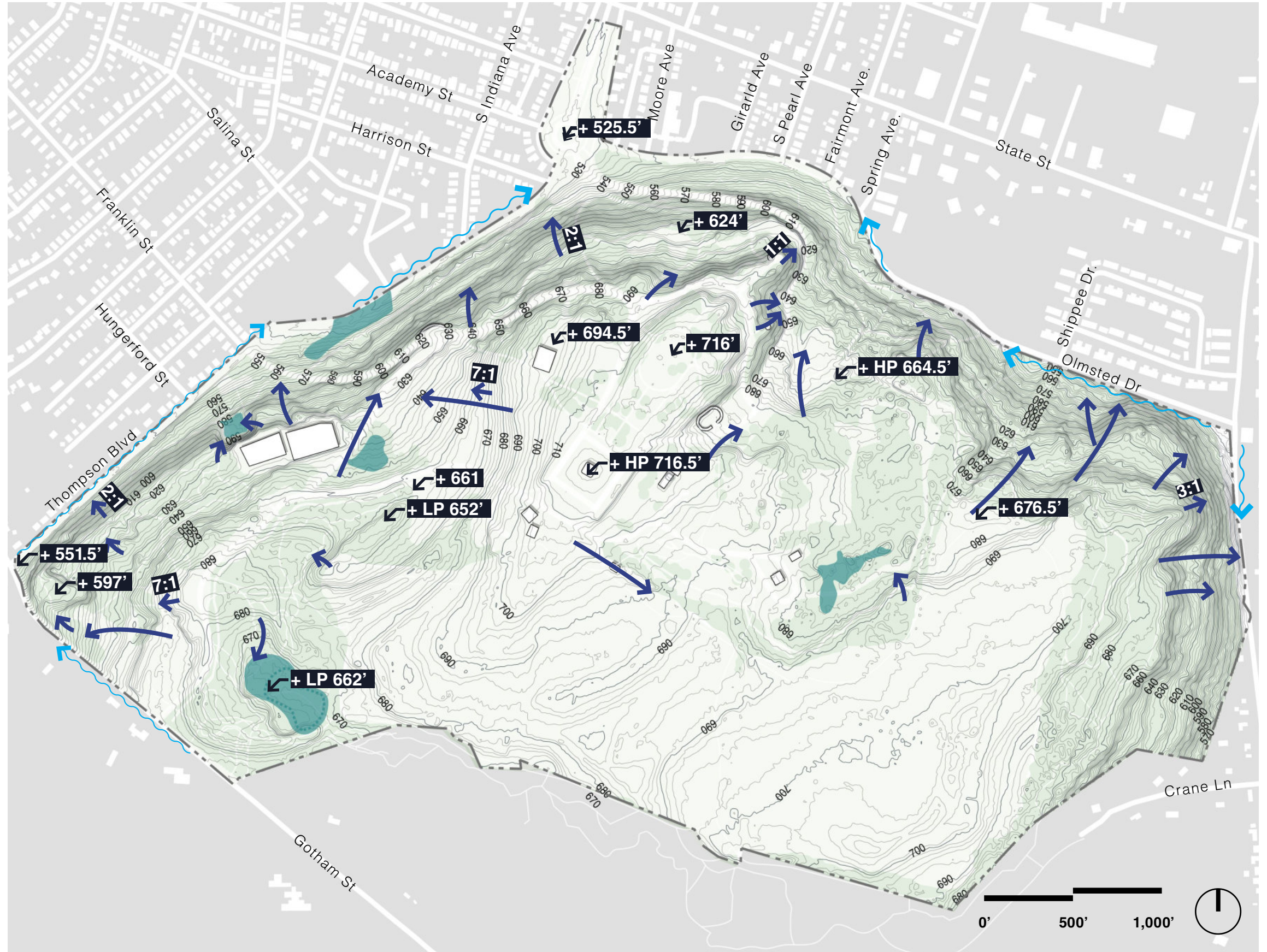
## Natural Resources

There are a number of wetlands within the park that serve as important habitat. There is also a natural occurring spring adjacent to the Park's reservoir.

Swales at the bottom of each slope on Thompson and Olmsted Drive present a proper sidewalk and streetscape that a more gradual transition to the street grid would allow.

### LEGEND

-  Water Flow
-  Wetlands
-  Zoo/Golf Boundary
-  Goose Pond
-  Canopy
-  Lawn
-  Bottom of Slope Swales





# Olmsted Brothers

## Field Notes

“...He seemed very anxious to have a pond somewhere in the park and I said the only place I could think of was on the Burn’s Property where there is now a pond in Winter and Spring which dries up in the Summer. I said it could be enlarged and kept full artificially if the City Water Board would arrange to give the necessary supply...”

September 9, 1899



*Ephemeral waterbody on the farmland pre-park construction, 1899. Image Courtesy of the NPS, FLO National Historic Site*



# Landscape

## Early Planting Typologies

A comprehensive planting plan for the park was prepared in the 1903 plan but never fully implemented. Key canopy trees planted were Maples, Lindens, Red Oaks and Catalpa Trees. Primarily native tree species still commonly planted today.

### LEGEND

- Lawn
- Pastoral
- Deciduous Woodland
- Coniferous Plantation
- Meadow
- Ornamental Planting
- Waterbodies
- Wetlands



Overall planting types as per the Olmsted Bros. Plan, Naming conventions according to 1903 Olmsted park plan



# Landscape

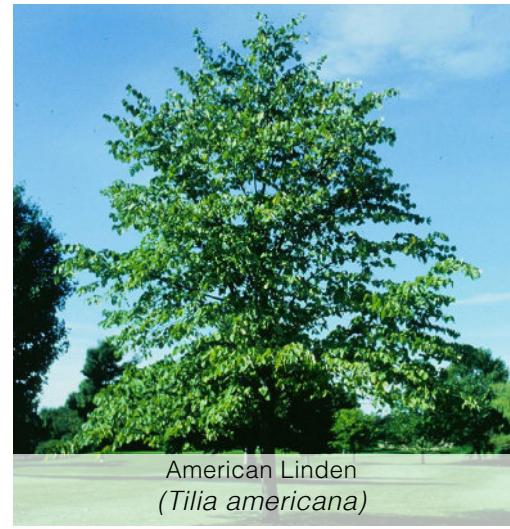
## Plant Palette, 1903 Plan

Park edges, neighborhood streets and park drives were proposed to be planted with a selection of large deciduous canopy trees as well as carefully placed clumps of ornamental woody shrubs such as Viburnum, Bayberry and Sumac.

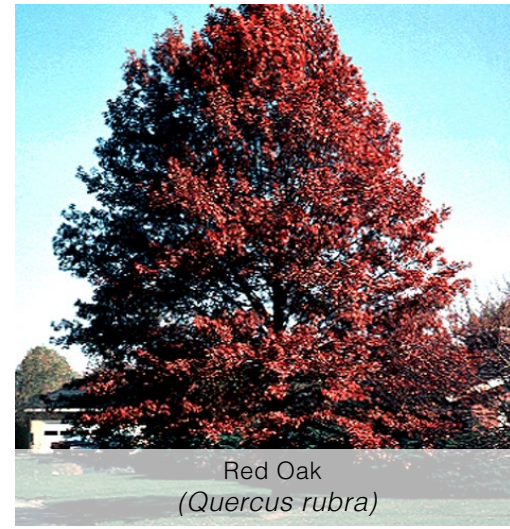
Tree Allée



Sugar Maple  
(*Acer saccharum*)



American Linden  
(*Tilia americana*)

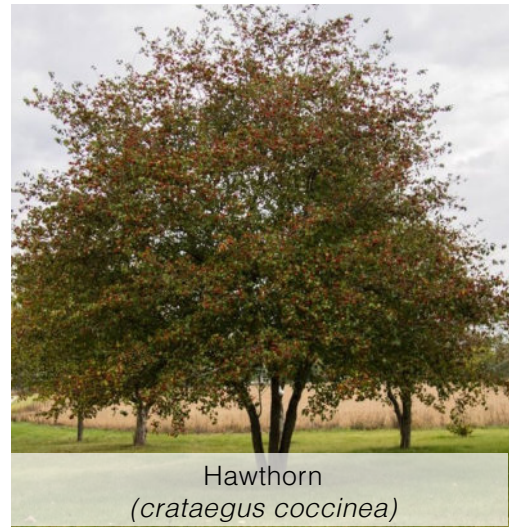


Red Oak  
(*Quercus rubra*)



Northern Catalpa  
(*Catalpa speciosa*)

Woodland



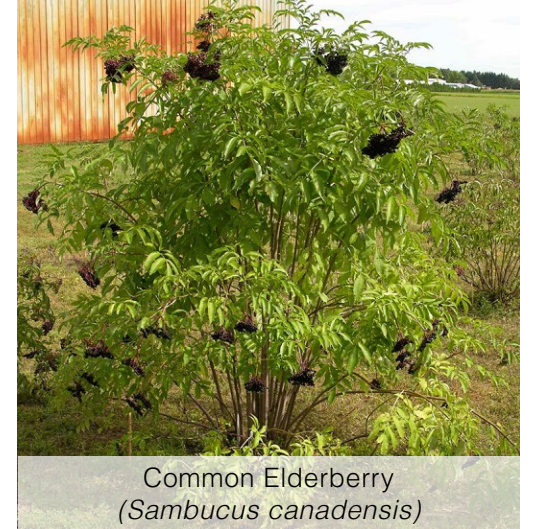
Hawthorn  
(*crataegus coccinea*)



American Hazelnut  
(*Corylus americana*)



Arrowwood  
(*Viburnum dentatum*)



Common Elderberry  
(*Sambucus canadensis*)

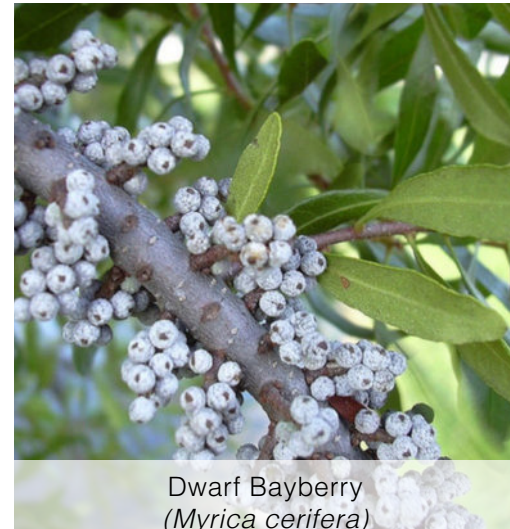
Ornamental Plantings



Blackcurrant  
(*Ribes nigrum*)



Wild Rose  
(*Rosa virginiana*)



Dwarf Bayberry  
(*Myrica cerifera*)



Staghorn Sumac  
(*Rhus typhina*)



# Landscape

## Existing Typologies

Over time the existing planted landscape has gathered additional layers both intentional and unintentional. The extension of the path system and introduction of new program areas opens the opportunity to curate a cohesive horticultural framework.

### LEGEND

- Open Lawns
- Pastoral (Canopy Tree Groves)
- Deciduous Woodland
- Coniferous Plantation
- Meadow-Previously Disturbed Areas
- Zoo New York
- Emergent Wetlands



Overall existing plant typologies which are a hybrid of the original plans, park plantings over time and spontaneous woodlands and meadows.



# Landscape

## Existing Typologies

The existing park landscape has a broad spectrum of landscape types from the open and manicured lawns of the Golf Course and Kite Hill to the strategic planting of tree groves in the 'Olmsted Acres'.

The steep fringes of the park are predominately spontaneous second growth deciduous woodlands, meadows and emergent wetlands.

Recent efforts to control the overgrowth of Buckthorn presents landscape opportunities for increased access as well as additional challenges for landscape management.



*Coniferous plantation (Planted in the 1930s)*



*Open Lawns*



*Deciduous Woodland*



# Landscape

## Existing Typologies

Meadow landscapes have gained increasing intention due to loss of the amount of naturally occurring grasslands across the state. Meadows serve as important habitat for ground nesting birds and pollinator species.

A simple change in mowing regimes along with some overseeding and control of woody plant succession can foster localized meadow areas which add both seasonal interest and ecological value.

Low lying areas of the park have emergent woodlands. Of note is the larger area once proposed to be Goose Pond. It currently supports a variety of woody native wetland species such as Red-Stemmed Dogwood.



*Emergent Wetlands at the proposed site of Goose Pond*



*Pastoral Areas - Canopy Tree Groves of Oak, Maple and Linden*



*Meadows - Spontaneous, minimally maintained*



# 05 SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS





*View of the existing historic stairs which lead to the core of the park, also known as the Olmsted Acres.*














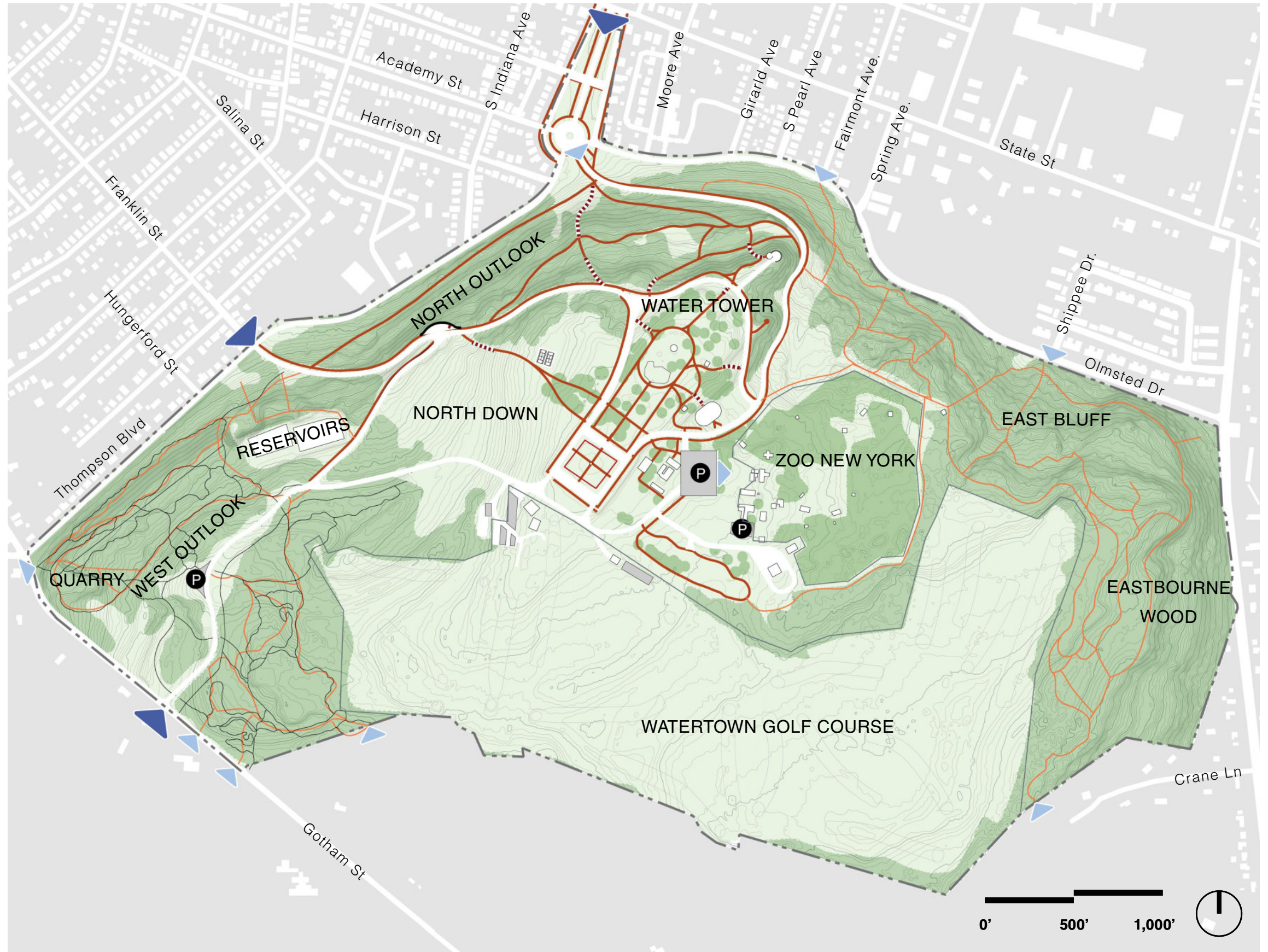
# Circulation

## Existing Paths, Roads & Parking

Existing circulation prioritizes access to program areas at center of the park in the “Olmsted Acres” which comprise approximately 100 acres of the 429 acre park. Numerous and sometimes redundant informal trails cut throughout the woodlands.

### LEGEND

-  Park Roads
-  Paved Paths
-  Soft Trails: Groomed
-  Soft Trails: Informal
-  Parking
-  Structures
-  Park Boundary
-  Vehicular Entrances
-  Pedestrian Entrances (Formal & Informal)
-  Staircases
-  Zoo Fence Line





# Circulation

## Existing Path Types

### PAVED PATHS

Most paved paths are made of asphalt or concrete, are 6'-10' in width, and found only in the most developed portions of the park. Not all paved areas meet current ADA standards due to the elevational changes in the park.

### SOFT TRAILS: GROOMED

There are a series of soft paths sometimes with wood chips, that run through wooded areas adjacent and along the steeper margins of the park.

### SOFT TRAILS: INFORMAL

Thinner soft paths that cut across more formal paths or into woodlands, are narrow and overgrown. In recently cleared areas the paths have yet to be defined and connected to a network.



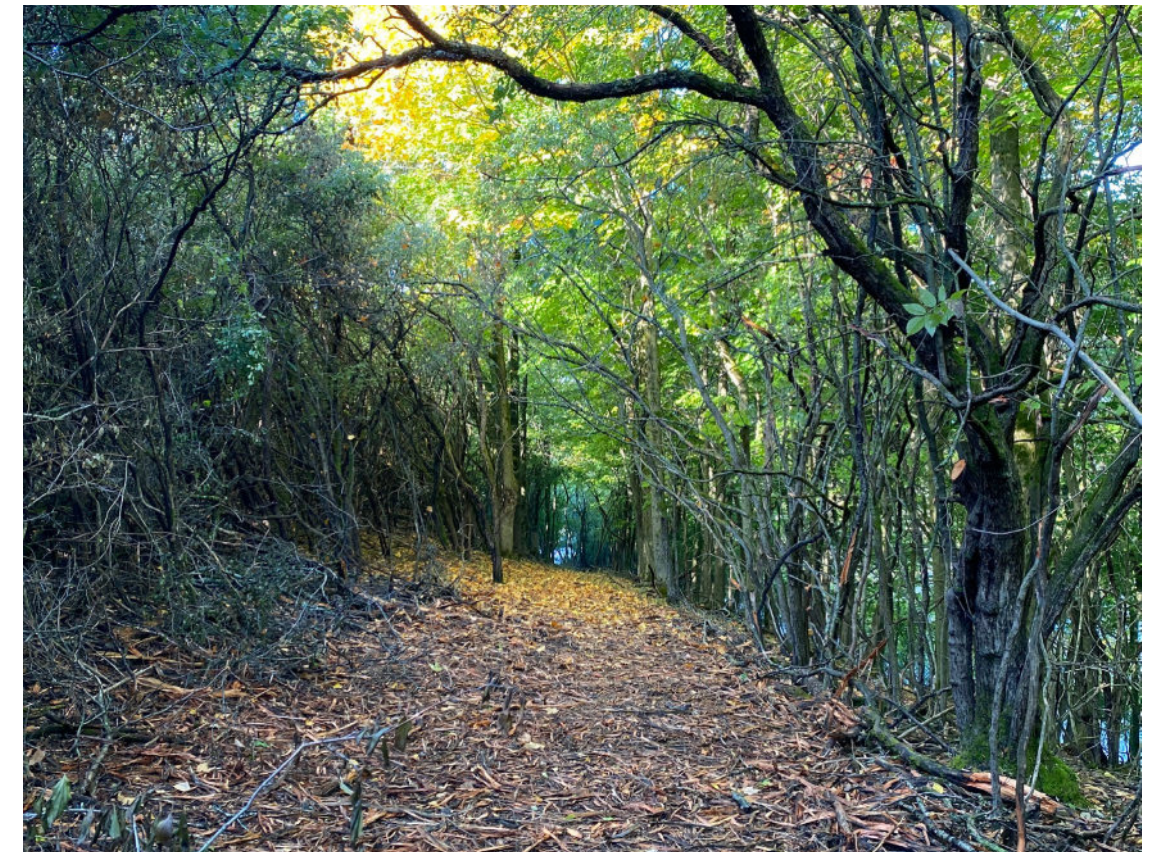
*Paved path system which runs parallel to the loop drive*



*Established network of paved paths - explored by foot or bike*



*A maintained hiking network runs throughout the park, but lacks overall connectivity.*



*Paths exist in addition to established system in newly cleared areas.*



# Circulation

## Existing Parking

Parking occurs haphazardly beyond the central parking lot, often compromising landscape areas.

The introduction of new programs will require the addition of smaller trailhead parking areas closer to the new destinations and expanded trail system.

Smaller, decentralized trailhead parking areas can relieve some of the pressures on the concentration of cars at the park center. Decentralized lots at different park elevations can also create universal access to program areas that would otherwise not be accessible without significant changes to the park circulation.



*Smaller trailhead lots could provide increased access to more areas of the park while controlling haphazard parking*



*Park destinations require improved parking access.*



*The Zoo parking can be expanded and improved with tree plantings.*



# Circulation

## Existing Accessibility

The steep topography of the park makes transitions from one program area to another challenging.

### LEGEND

- 0-5% Paved Pathways & Roadways
- 5-15% Paved Pathways & Roadways
- 15-40% Paved Pathways & Roadways
- Parking Areas
- Structures
- Canopy/Lawn Cover
- Park Boundary
- Vehicular Entrance
- Pedestrian Park Entrance
- Staircase
- Masonry Retaining Walls
- Masonry Wall





# Site Inventory

## Buildings & Park Infrastructure

The design team conducted a thorough inventory of all park infrastructure i.e. roads, paths, park structures, to determine the quantity and conditions across the park. This information can both guide ongoing upkeep of park amenities and shape the most feasible locations for new park program areas.

### **Historic & Contemporary Structures**

- 8 Historic Structures
- 7 Contemporary Buildings

### **Path System**

- 3.3 Miles of Paved Trails
- 3-9 Miles of Soft Trails, Semi-Maintained
- 2.78 Miles of Roads

### **Historic Walls and Stairs**

- Park Circle Stairs
- Pinnacle Stairs
- Park Core Staircases (7)

### **Underground Utilities**




- Electric, Gas, Water, Storm & Sanitary Sewer



# Site Inventory

## Existing Structures

### LEGEND

- 1 West Outlook
- 2 Reservoirs
- 3 Golf Club House
- 4 North Outlook
- 5 Tennis Courts
- 6 Honor the Mountain Monument
- 7 Bandstand
- 8 Bath House & Comfort Station
- 9 The Pinnacle Overlook
- 10 Water Tower
- 11 Former Horse Pavilion - Picnic Pavilion
- 12 M & O Thompson Park
- 13 Comfort Stations (Men's & Women's)
- 14 Maintenance Bldgs. - Golf
- 15 Former (Old) Bath House
-  Lawn | Tree Canopy
-  Park Drive
-  Pedestrian Path





# Site Inventory

## Existing Structures

There are 14 active structures and 1 inactive historic structures in need repair or restoration. There is the potential to increase programming and year round use with strategic restoration of existing structures and addition of smaller facilities in new program areas.



15 Old Bath House - currently closed and in need of rehabilitation.



9 Pinnacle Overlook road pavement and curb need alignment.



11 Interior pavement and event access to Picnic Pavilion need improvement.



11 Interior view of Picnic Pavilion





# Site Inventory

## Existing Structures

Some existing structures are new and good condition (Pool & Bath House) or recently renovated (Pavilion Roof).

Comfort Stations are in need of renovation and code upgrades.

The Old Pool Bath house is in need of renovation. The type of use will ultimately drive the type of restoration and new infrastructure required



7 Bandstand



8 Bath House



13 Comfort Station - Men's Restroom



13 Comfort Station - Women's Restroom



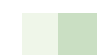







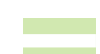
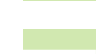




# Site Inventory

## Stone Walls & Gates

### LEGEND

-  Parking Areas
-  Structures
-  Canopy/Lawn Cover
-  Park Boundary
-  Vehicular Entrance
-  Pedestrian Entrance (Formal & Informal)
-  Staircase
-  Masonry Retaining Walls
-  Free Standing Masonry Wall
-  Stone Pillar
-  Pedestrian Path
-  Vehicular Drive





# Site Inventory

## Existing Stone Walls

Masonry walls will benefit from a multi-pronged maintenance plan. It is important that in this plan, the city focuses on maintaining the historic character of the walls, cap the walls, and prevent continued water damage.

Wall restoration should follow a set of standards based on their age and type of construction so repairs match the stone, grout and mortar of the historic walls.



1 Grout not consistently colored on masonry walls



2 Existing low dry-stacked stone walls (are they dry stacked?).



3 Existing retaining wall lighter portions exhibit calcium efflorescence



4 Existing masonry retaining walls could benefit from stone caps.





# Site Inventory

## Existing Stairs

There are 9 different sets of stairs in the park with the two main staircases being at the Steep Walk Stairs and the Pinnacle Stairs.

Each set of stairs is in need of maintenance and repair. There are a number of locations where the walls along the stairs have fallen away and are in need of repair, in some cases are in need of full reconstruction.



1 Existing stone stairs with monolithic stone treads.



2 Stair Condition 2



3 Stair Condition 3



4 Stair Condition 4





# Site Inventory

## Existing Pavements

The overall condition of the pavement surfaces within the park are in average to poor condition. A portion of Pinnacle Wood Drive has been repaved, but most areas have significant cracking and are showing signs of deterioration. Many areas have received overlays in the past, but are now in need of full-depth reconstruction. This should happen concurrent with any proposed utility work for new program areas.



*Parallel Roadway and pedestrian/bike path, margins showing multiple layers.*



*Pavement within the Picnic Pavilion*



*Intersection of pedestrian path and roadway with excess pavement.*












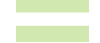

*Edge of road degraded by off road parking*



# Site Inventory

## Utilities

### LEGEND

-  Water Lines
-  Gas Lines
-  Sanitary Lines
-  Underground Communication
-  Catch Basins
-  Utility Pole (with or without overhead light fixture)
-  ST
-  SN
-  Lawn | Tree Canopy
-  Park Drive
-  Pedestrian Path





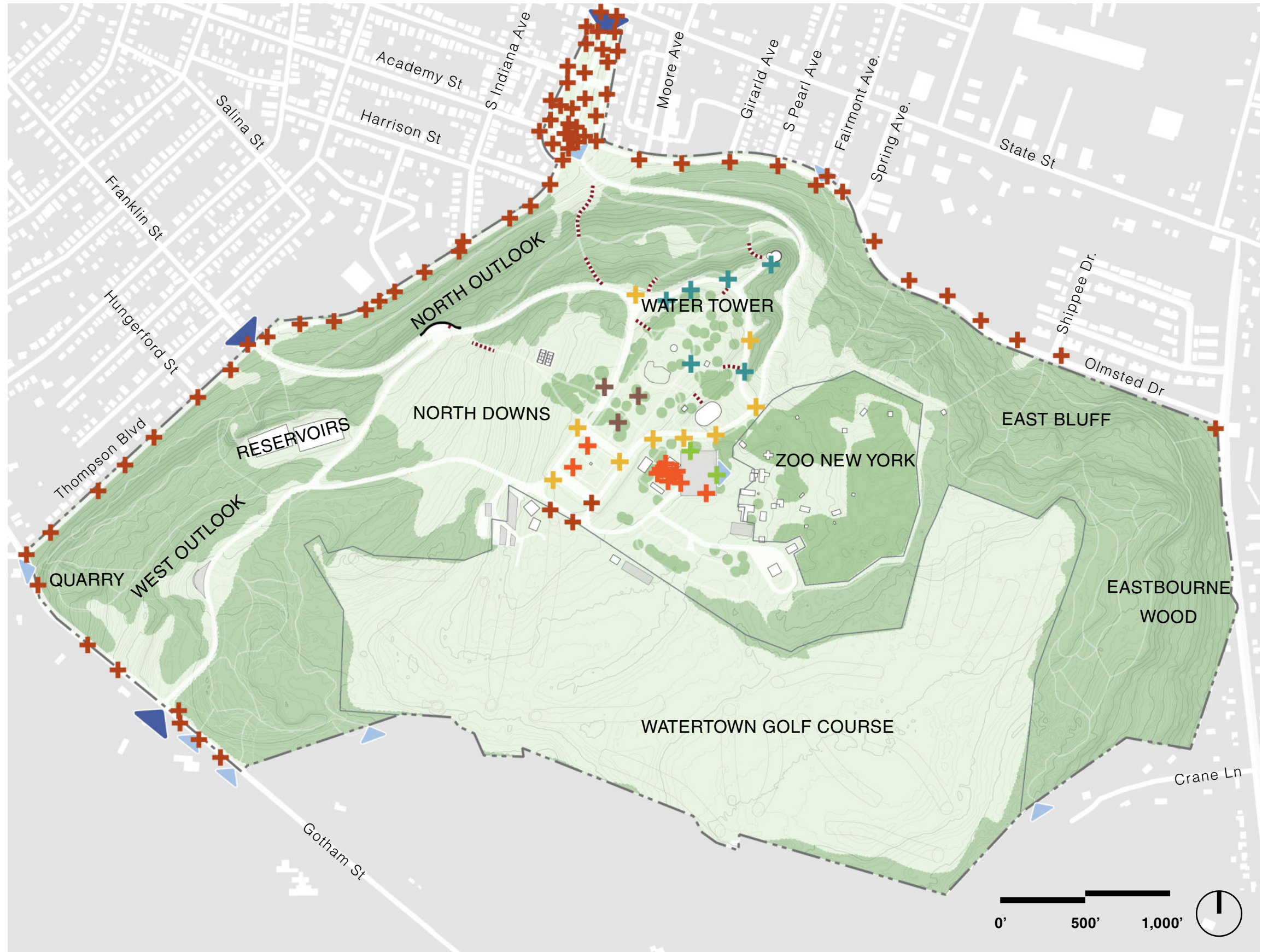
# Site Inventory

## Existing Lighting

The park has an array of light fixtures of differing materials and scales. The predominate fixtures are streetlights and do not contribute to the character of the park or quality of park experience at night. During the day the varying fixtures are visual clutter.

### LEGEND

- + LED - Monument & Pool
- + Streetlights
- + Metal - Medium Cobra
- + Wood - Medium Cobra
- + Ornate Gothic
- + Metal - Long Cobra
- Lawn | Canopy
- Vehicular Road
- Pedestrian Path





# Site Inventory

## Existing Fixtures

Lighting of the park perimeter and of main park roads should be balanced with pedestrian lighting to make connections to key program areas at dusk and after dark.

Nature trails and preserves should be kept free of lighting. Any new lighting should be dark sky compliant.



+ LED - Monument & Pool



+ Ornate Gothic



+ Metal - Medium Cobra

## LEGEND

- + LED - Monument & Pool
- + Streetlights
- + Metal - Medium Cobra
- + Wood - Medium Cobra
- + Ornate Gothic
- + Metal - Long Cobra



+ Metal - Long Cobra



+ Wood - Medium Cobra



+ Street Lights - Wooden Pole



# Site Inventory

## Park Furnishings

There are localized areas of the park with benches and picnic tables. The predominate bench has a precast concrete base and wood slats. Images from early park construction indicate a cast iron bench with wooden slats. Durability, comfort, aesthetic appropriateness and ease of maintenance are essential design criteria for site furnishings.



*Informal seating on rock outcrops*



*Wooden picnic tables - Watertown Standard, expand to accessibility*



*Unpainted bench with concrete base and wood slats*



*Painted bench with concrete base and wood slats-painted*



# Site Inventory

## Park Signage

While there is signage scattered throughout, the Park would benefit from a unified approach to signage in distinct areas to help patrons navigate the Park its destinations and trail system more easily.



Signage-Dog Station



Signage-Program Destination



# 06 COMMUNITY OUTREACH





# Community Outreach

## Strategic Overview

### 1 - TEAM SITE VISIT

The Friends of Thompson Park, City Staff, and the Design Team had a site visit at the park on Tuesday, September 20, 2022.

### 2 - HARVEST FESTIVAL

The Design team attended the annual Harvest Festival at Thompson Park hosted by Watertown Parks and Recreation on October 29, 2022. The Design Team had a booth set up at the Festival with boards explaining the project and welcomed attendees to provide feedback with sticky notes and markers.

### 3 - ONLINE OUTREACH SURVEY

The online survey was successful with 145 respondents. There were 20 questions in the survey and the majority of the questions were completed by all participants. Throughout the survey there was the option to skip questions or pick more than one answer.



Site Visit

## Help Improve Thompson Park

**MEET YOUR PARK PLANNERS**  
Saturday, October 29th, 2022  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Harvest Festival - Large Pavilion**  
Thompson Park  
Watertown, NY

The City of Watertown is looking for community feedback on future park enhancements. We need your input!

Stop by our booth at the Harvest Festival, meet your park planners and tell us how you envision the park and what you envision for its future.

Whether you can attend the Harvest Festival or not, **please take our survey** by scanning the QR code below!



QR Code

Harvest Festival Event Flyer



City of Watertown  
NEW YORK



### Thompson Park Master Plan | Watertown, NY Outreach Survey

The City of Watertown is working with the community to create a framework for future improvements to Thompson Park. The project goals are to enhance existing programming, introduce new programming, support local community use, add to the park's ecology, improve circulation, preserve the historic landscape and plan for a sustainable future. We value your feedback and thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey!

Online Survey



Harvest Festival





# Community Outreach

Harvest Fest - What We Presented

## TOPICS OF BOARDS

The Design Team presented four boards which covered a range of topics including:

- Park History
- Existing Park Programming
- Early Concepts of Design
- Existing and Future Landscape Character



### HISTORIC VIEWS



WATERTOWN VIEW WEST, 1902



PARK PATHS, PLANTINGS AND BENCHES, 1902



### PARK PLAN 1903



### SITE HISTORY

- 1800** The first settlers arrive and the village of Watertown is named after the Black River; attracting mills and factories to utilize the river's hydro power.
- 1816** Watertown is incorporated as a city. Due to its proximity to Lake Ontario, Watertown becomes a popular location for transporting supplies into Canada, attracting many entrepreneurs.
- 1899** John C. Thompson, treasurer and secretary of New York Air Brake Company, hires the Olmsted Brothers firm to design a park as an anonymous gift to the city.
- 1900** The Olmsted Brothers work on a majority of the park for the next 5 years. They plan boulevards, playgrounds, a wading pool, meadows, water tower and stone pavilion on top of Pinnacle Hill, which provides scenic vistas over Watertown and toward Lake Ontario.
- 1917** Ownership and responsibility for maintenance of Thompson Park is
- 1926** The Watertown Golf Club establishes a 9-hole golf course and expands in 1964 when they lease the south east side of the park.
- 1931** The idea of a picnic pavilion is introduced in a 1931 newspaper article.
- 1978** The new water tower is built on the site of where the old wading pool existed 1970.
- 1985** Master Plan for Improvements of John C. Thompson Park.
- 2015** The Friends of Thompson Park is founded. In 2018, they sponsor a new splash pad adjacent to the Pool, partially funded by the Rotary Club.
- 2017** The wooden playground is replaced by an accessible playground made of contemporary materials. In July, the North Country Mountain monument is designed, honoring the 10th Mountain Divisions' Soldiers, their Family Members and the



One of the four boards that were on public display at Harvest Festival



# Harvest Festival

## What We Heard I

### CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Invest in trail network by creating ADA access for people of all abilities and ages. Introduce traffic calming measures such as speed bumps for main roads to avoid conflicts between cars and pedestrians. Expand parking opportunities. Create more vegetated parking areas. People express and interest in the need for the creation of groomed trails for cross country skiing and running/hiking.

### VEGETATION AND ECOLOGY

Adopt animal husbandry as landscape management tool. Increase of pollinator gardens. Interest in a managed meadow, mainly perennials. Interest in turning the roof of the reservoir into a pollinator meadow. Opportunity for botanical garden at the Park like Downtown Arboretum in Watertown

### AMENITIES

Include a comfort station, informational kiosks . Equip park with the infrastructure to run larger events such as birthday parties.

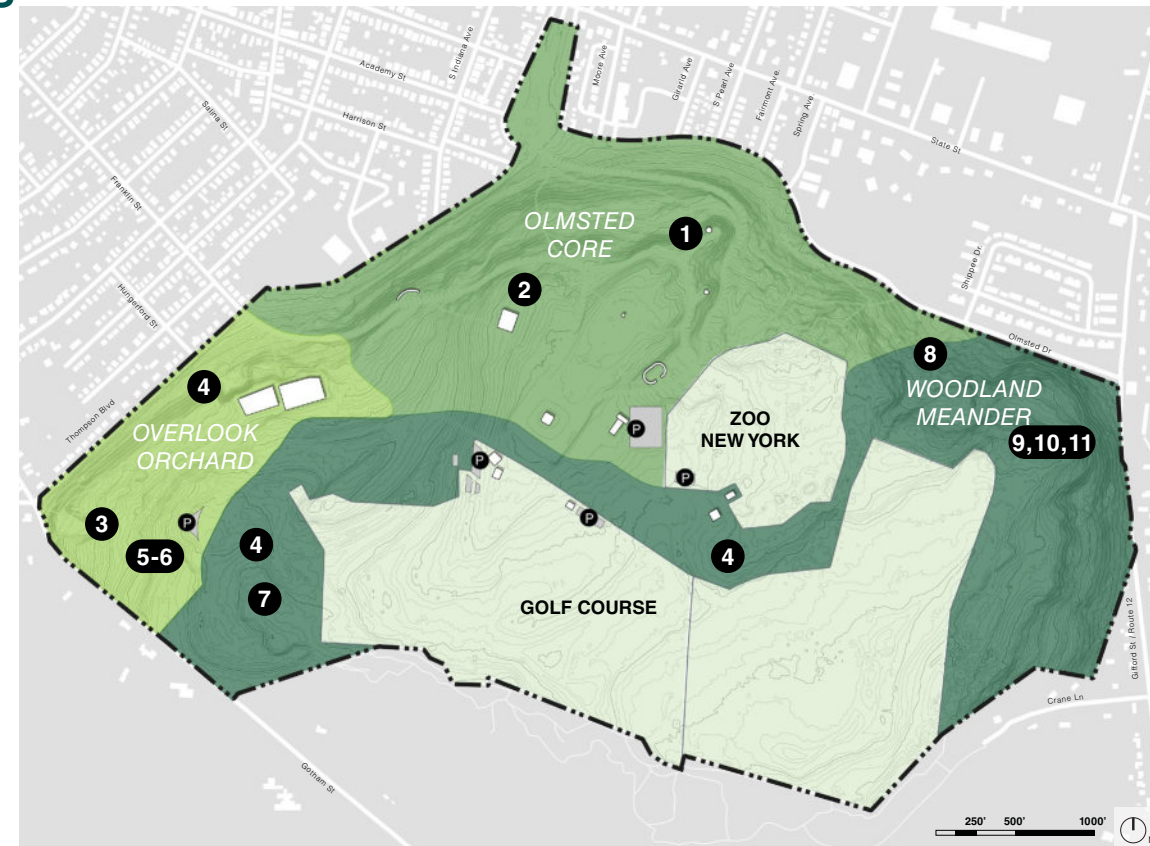
### LIGHTING

Increase lighting along main paths and roads



### EARLY CONCEPTS

The park is naturally defined by distinct programmatic zones which speak to the character of the landscape: The Olmsted Core, The Overlook Orchard and Woodland Meander



1 Restore Historic Park Features & Paths



2 Expand Active Recreation



3 Explore Nature Play/ Fitness Areas in Former Quarry



4 Create a Cross Country Trail Loop



5 Provide an Outdoor Theater-Small Concert Venue



6 Plant Orchard or Ornamental Grove Plantings



7 Implement Goose Pond as Natural Water Feature



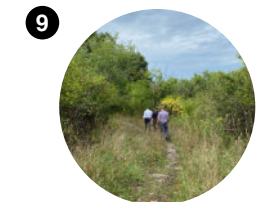
8 Coordinate Adventure Course with Zoo New York - Increase Zoo Connectivity



11 Multi-Use Trail System



10 Temporary Art Installations



9 Pollinator Meadows and Nature Trails

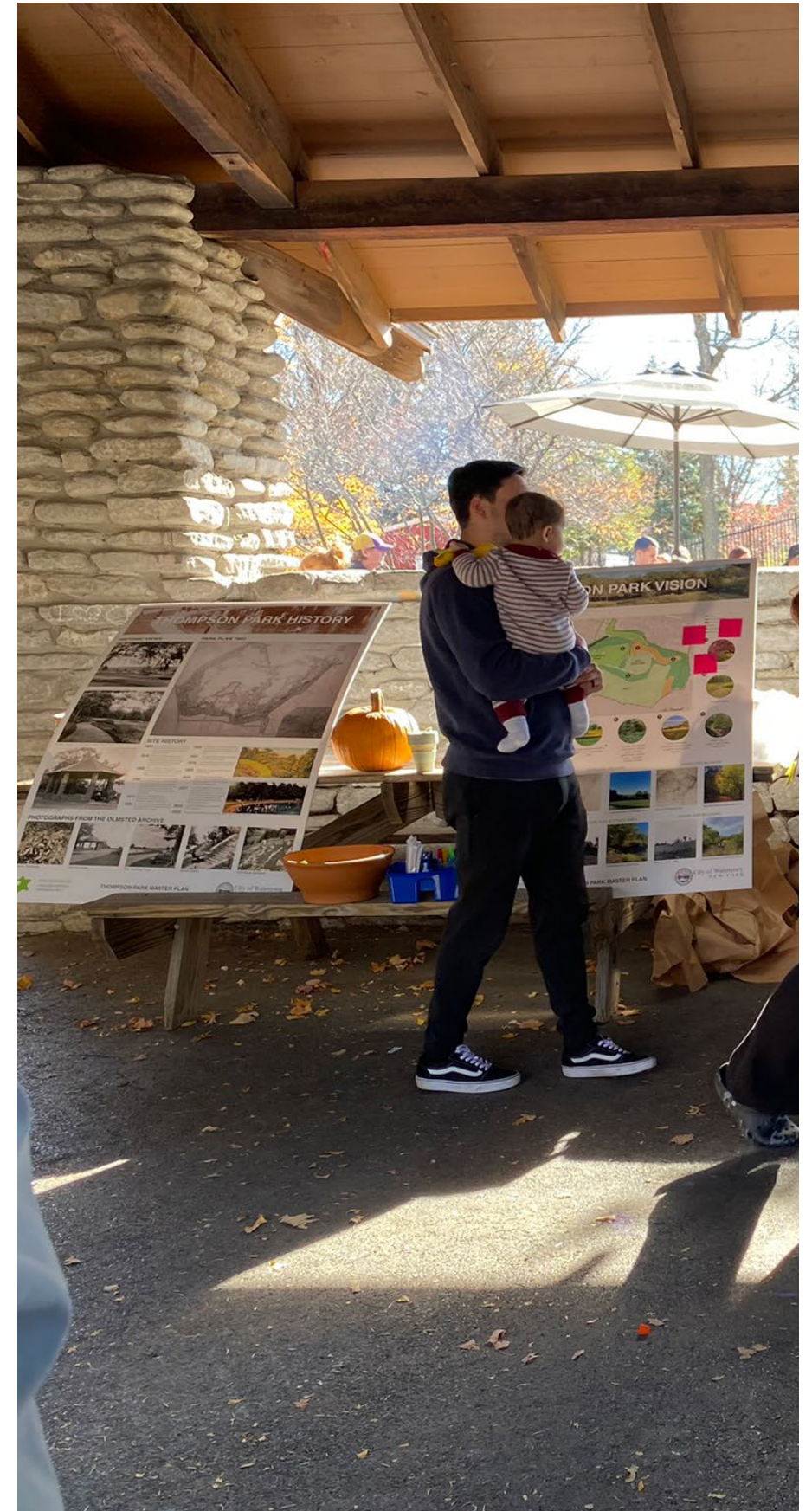
One of the four boards that were on public display at Harvest Festival



# Harvest Festival

## What We Heard II

- Geocaching
- Private events: birthday parties or harvest festival
- Designed slope for sledding
- Basketball courts
- Swimming pool
- Ice skating
- Fitness equipment
- Zip-line
- Activities for adults like walking trails, cross-country skiing, and an amphitheater
- Disc golf
- Dog park with washing station and water fountain
- Integrate Zoo and Golf Course into the park more





# Online Outreach Survey

## Survey Overview

The survey served as an alternative form of feedback. The data generated from the online survey allows the Design Team to verify what we heard at Harvest Festival through community conversations

### SURVEY DATES

The survey opened on October 14, 2022 and closed on November 6, 2022

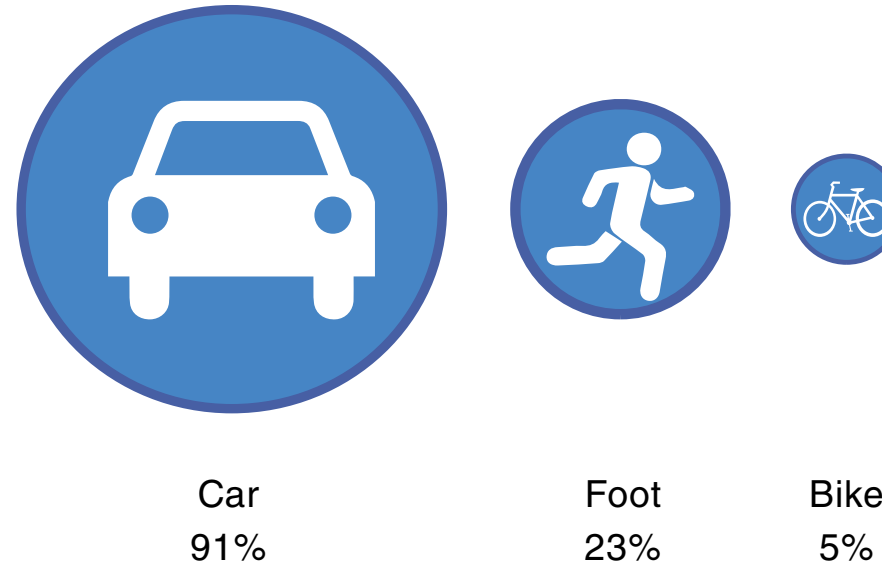
### RESPONSES AND TAKEAWAYS

145 people responded and the age of survey takers was evenly distributed between 31-45 (38%), 46-60 (25%), over 60 (21%) with the least amount of survey takers in the 18-30 range (16%).

96% of survey takers have visited Thompson Park in the past 12 months.

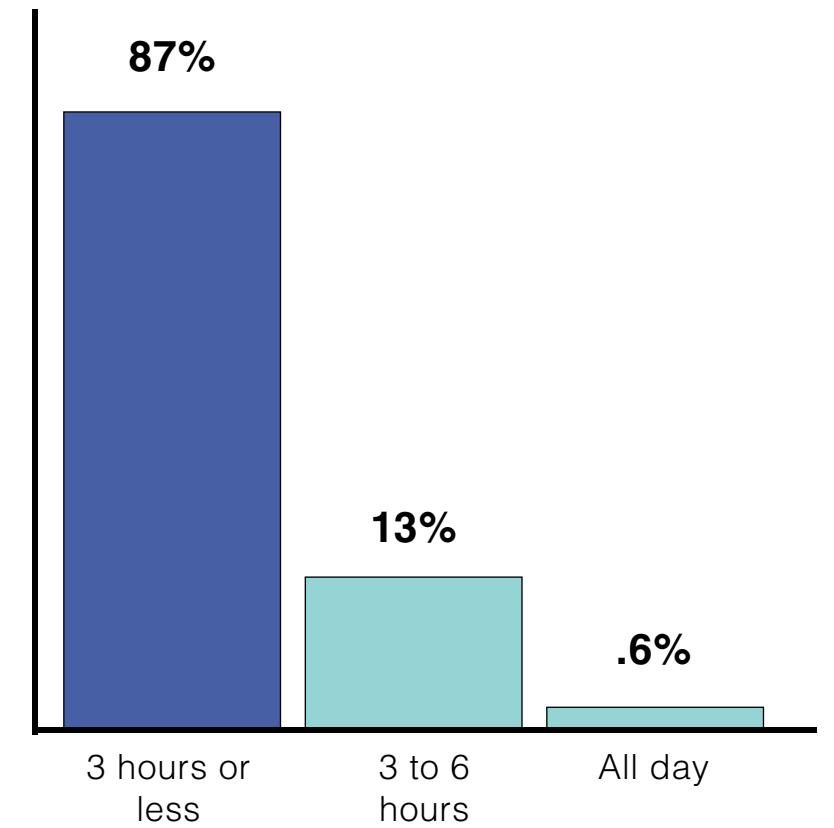
Park visitation by survey takers ranged from several times a week (23%) to once every few months (21%)

How do you travel to Thompson Park?

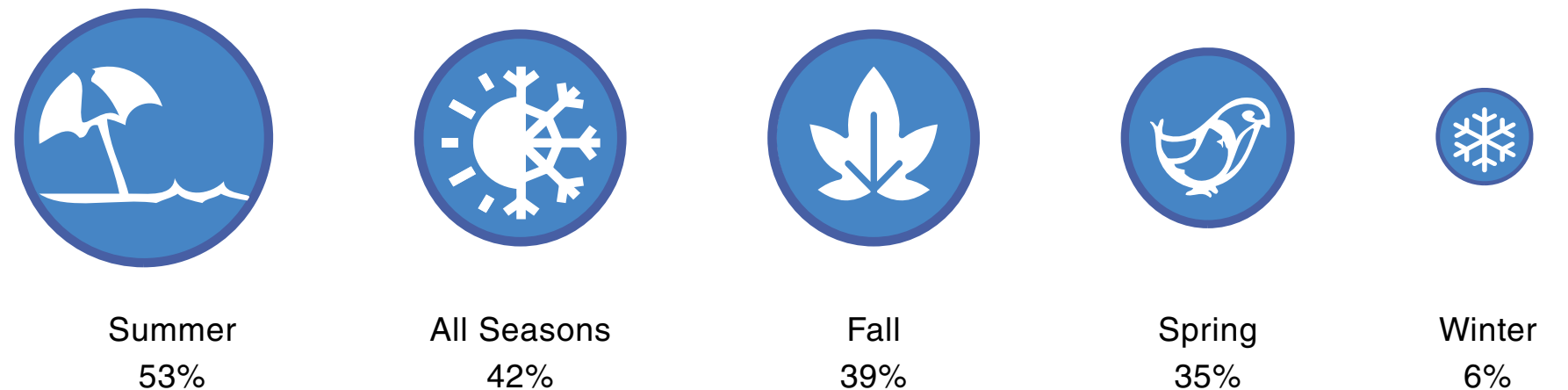


Other: bus, skateboard, run

How long do you stay at the Park?



What season do you visit?





# Online Outreach Survey

## What We Heard

### VISITING THE PARK

Respondents were asked where they typically enter the park and where they park.

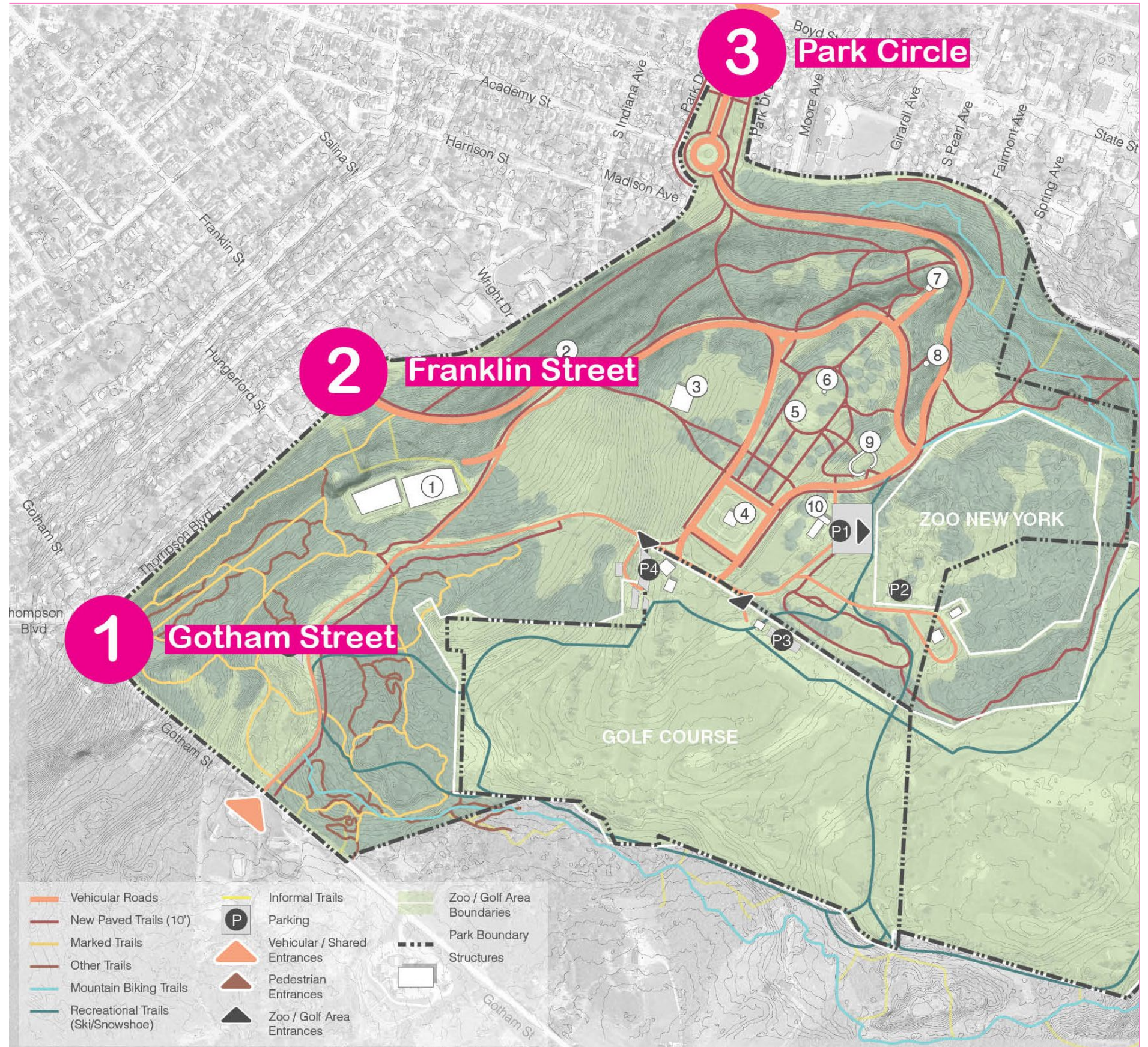
### KEY TAKEAWAYS

73% of survey takers park along the road followed by the parking lot (33%).

44% of survey takers enter the Park at Gotham Street followed by Park Circle (37%) and Franklin Street (36%)

### OTHER PARKING LOCATIONS

The Zoo and area around the monument.





# Online Outreach Survey

## Activities at the Park

### TOP 5 ACTIVITIES PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN AT THE PARK

- Walking 83%
- Playground/Splash Pad 46%
- Dog Walking 39%
- Hiking 38%
- Exercise/Fitness 31%

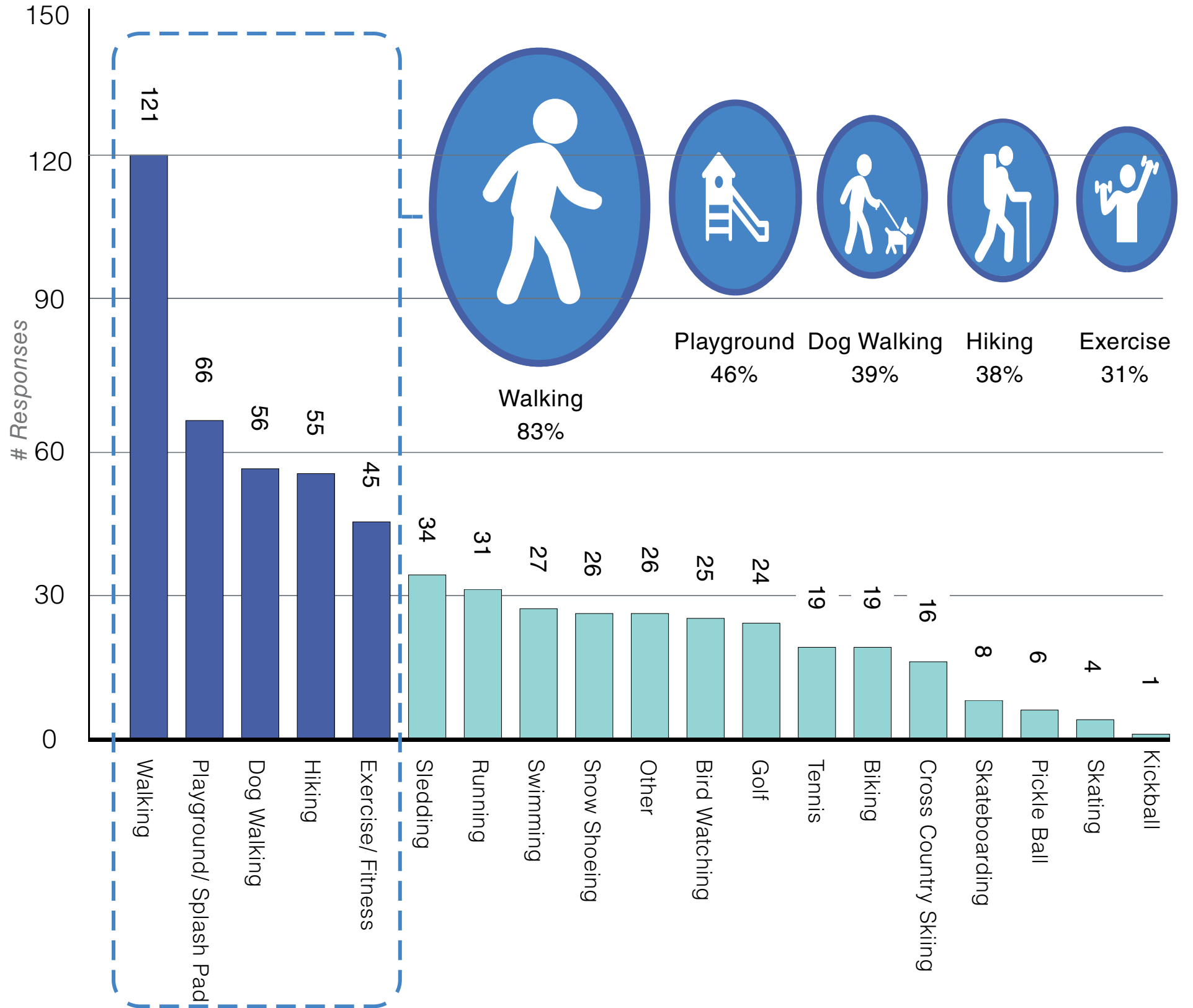
### OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT COULD BE ADDED TO SERVE PARK VISITORS

- More Trails
- Disc Golf
- Event Space/Concerts

#### LEGEND

- Very Important
- Important

Please tell us which Thompson Park activity you or your household participate in. Select all that apply.





# Online Outreach Survey

## Programming

### TOP 5 PROGRAMS PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN AT THE PARK

- Outdoor Concert 72%
- Fireworks 65%
- Seasonal Festivals 64%
- Zoo 63%
- Art Fairs/Exhibits 48%

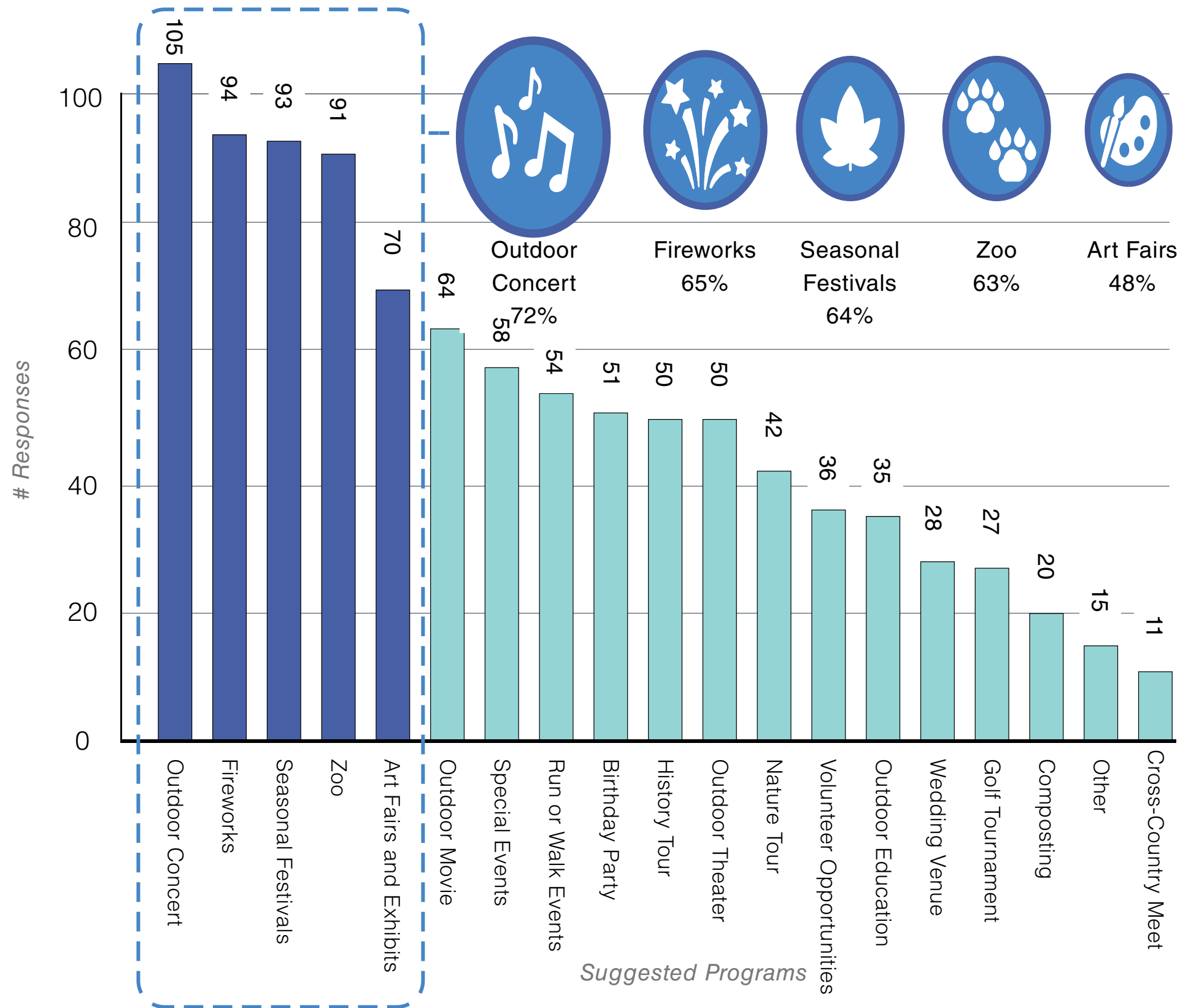
### OTHER PROGRAMS THAT COULD BE ADDED

- Tennis Tournament
- Community Gardens
- Kite Flying
- Disc Golf Events

### LEGEND

- Very Important
- Important

Please select each of the following existing and potential Thompson Park programs you or any member of your household enjoys participating in. Select all that apply.





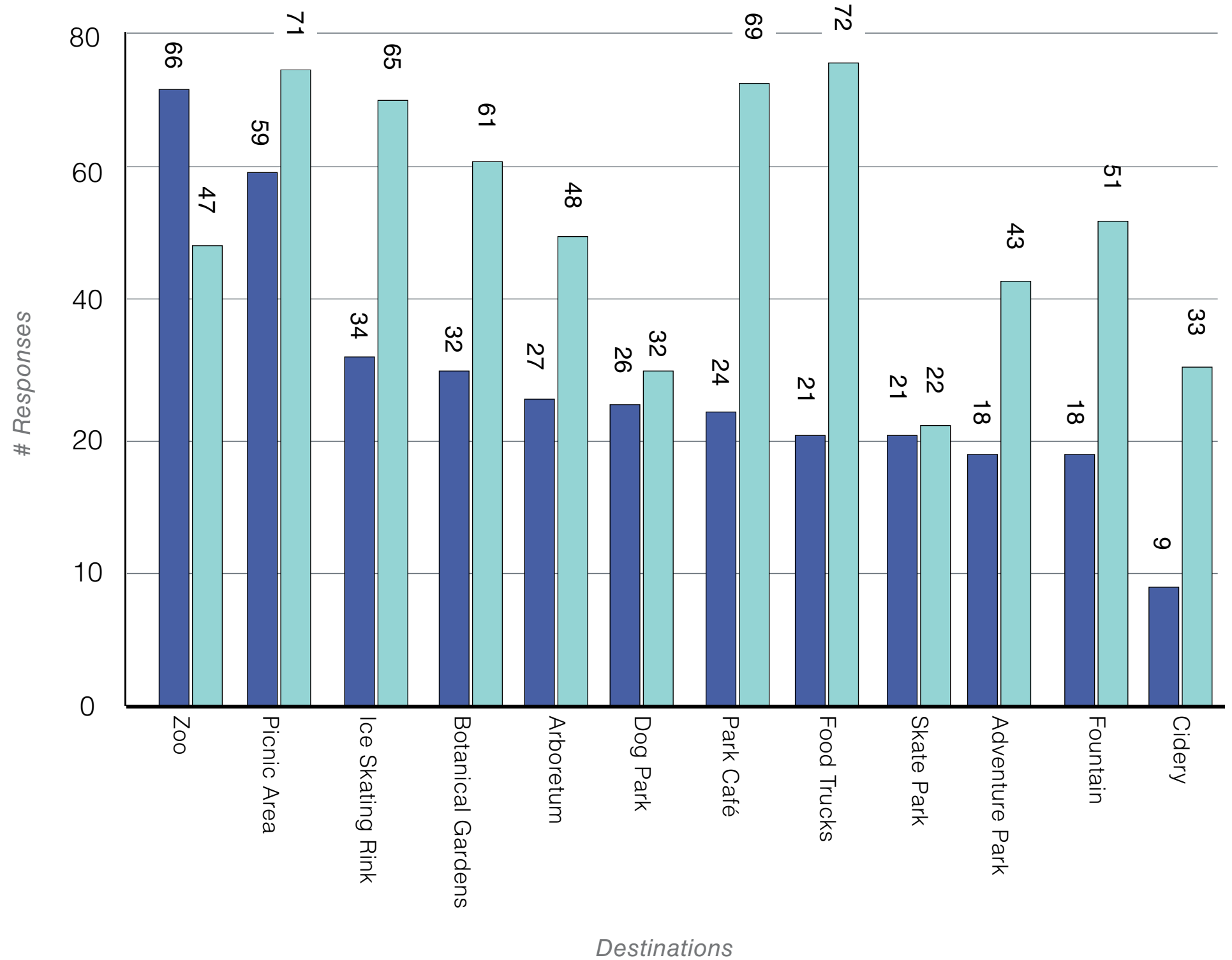
# Online Outreach Survey

## Destinations

### TOP DESTINATIONS (EXISTING AND POTENTIAL)

- Zoo 46%
- Picnic Area 42%
- Ice Skating Rink 24%
- Botanical Gardens 22%

Please prioritize the following existing and potential Thompson Park destinations in terms of how they serve you and your household.



### LEGEND

- Very Important
- Important





# Online Outreach Survey

## Amenities

### TOP 5 AMENITIES (EXISTING AND POTENTIAL)

- Restrooms 79%
- Drinking Fountain 48%
- Hiking Trail Network 42%
- Splash Pad 36%
- Pool 34%

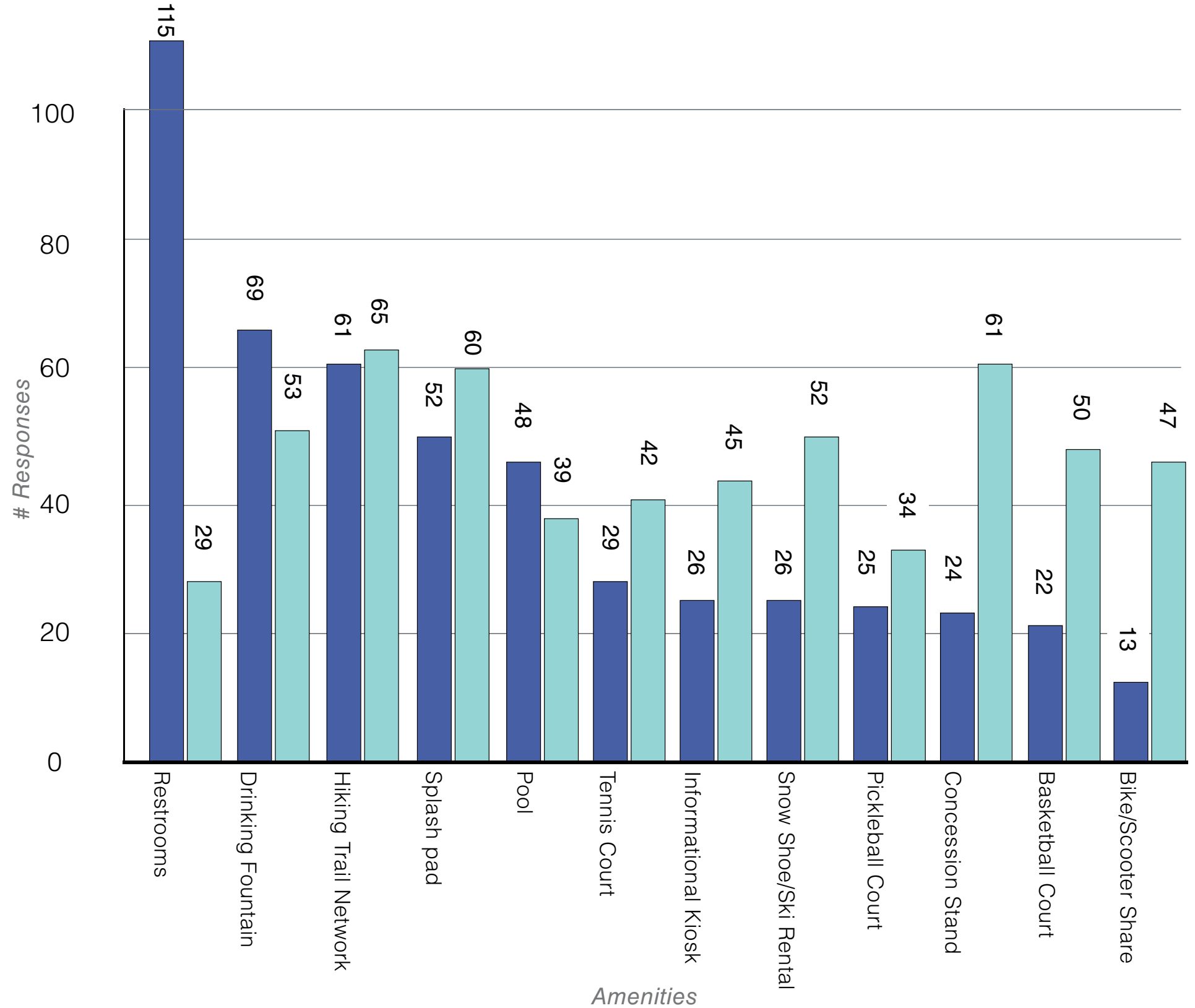
### ADDITIONAL AMENITIES

- Signage
- Outdoor ice rink
- Community garden
- Skate park and Dog Park

### LEGEND

- Very Important
- Important

Please prioritize the following existing and potential amenities in terms of how they serve you and your household.





# Online Outreach Survey

## Priorities for the Future

### WHY IS THOMPSON PARK IMPORTANT TO THE CITY

- Serves as a gathering place for friends and family
- Allows residents time to unplug and spend time walking in nature
- Historically significant

### TOP FUTURE PRIORITIES

- Trail preservation 75%
- Sustainable design 67%
- Revitalize historic park architecture 63%

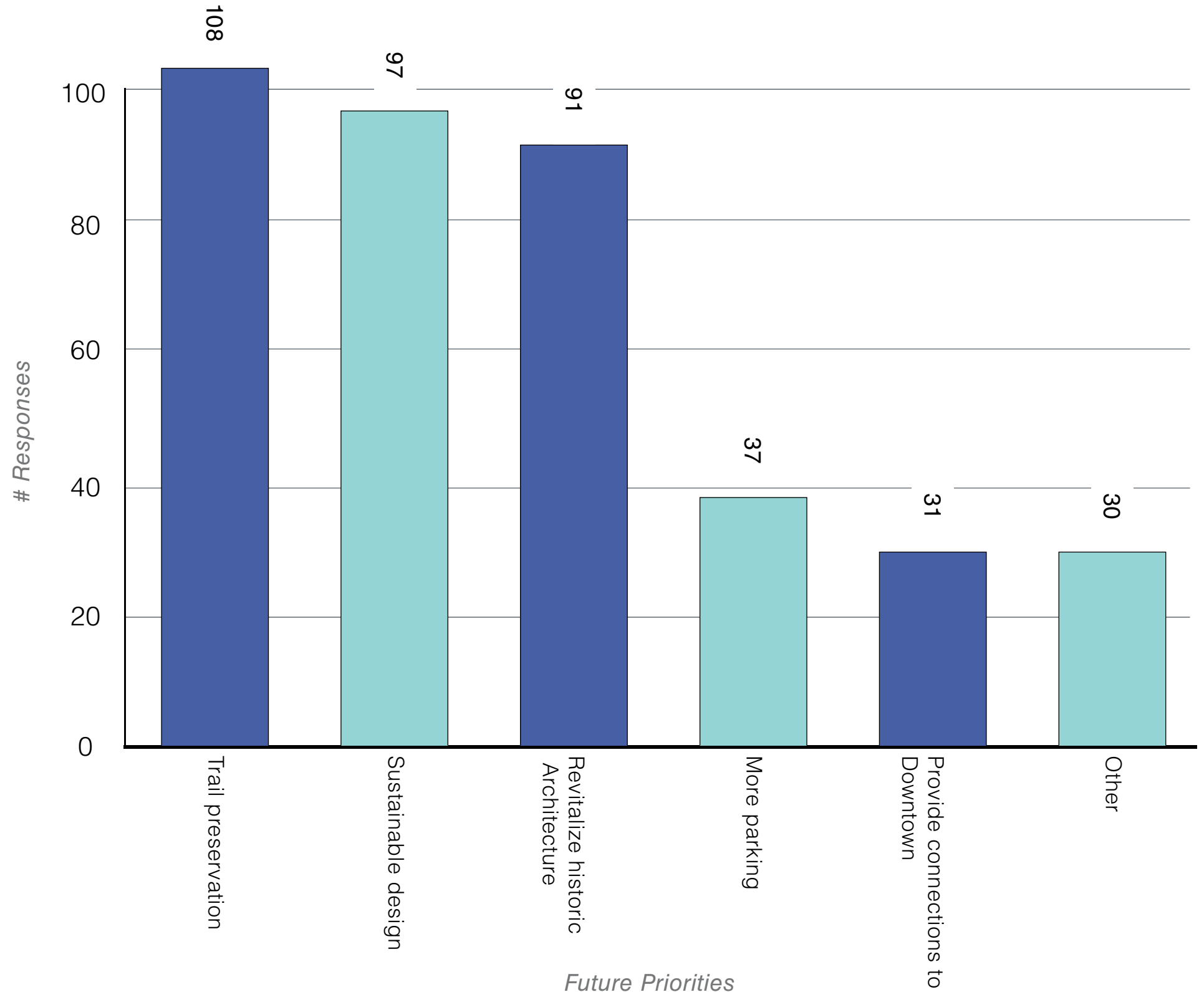
### OTHER PRIORITIES

- Improving the Zoo
- Landscaping and Trash Pickup

### LEGEND

- Very Important
- Important

What are your priorities for the future of Thompson Park? Select all that apply.





# Online Outreach Survey

## Concerns for the Future

### TOP CONCERNS

- Safety 67%
- Accessibility 44%
- Access to concession/food 30%

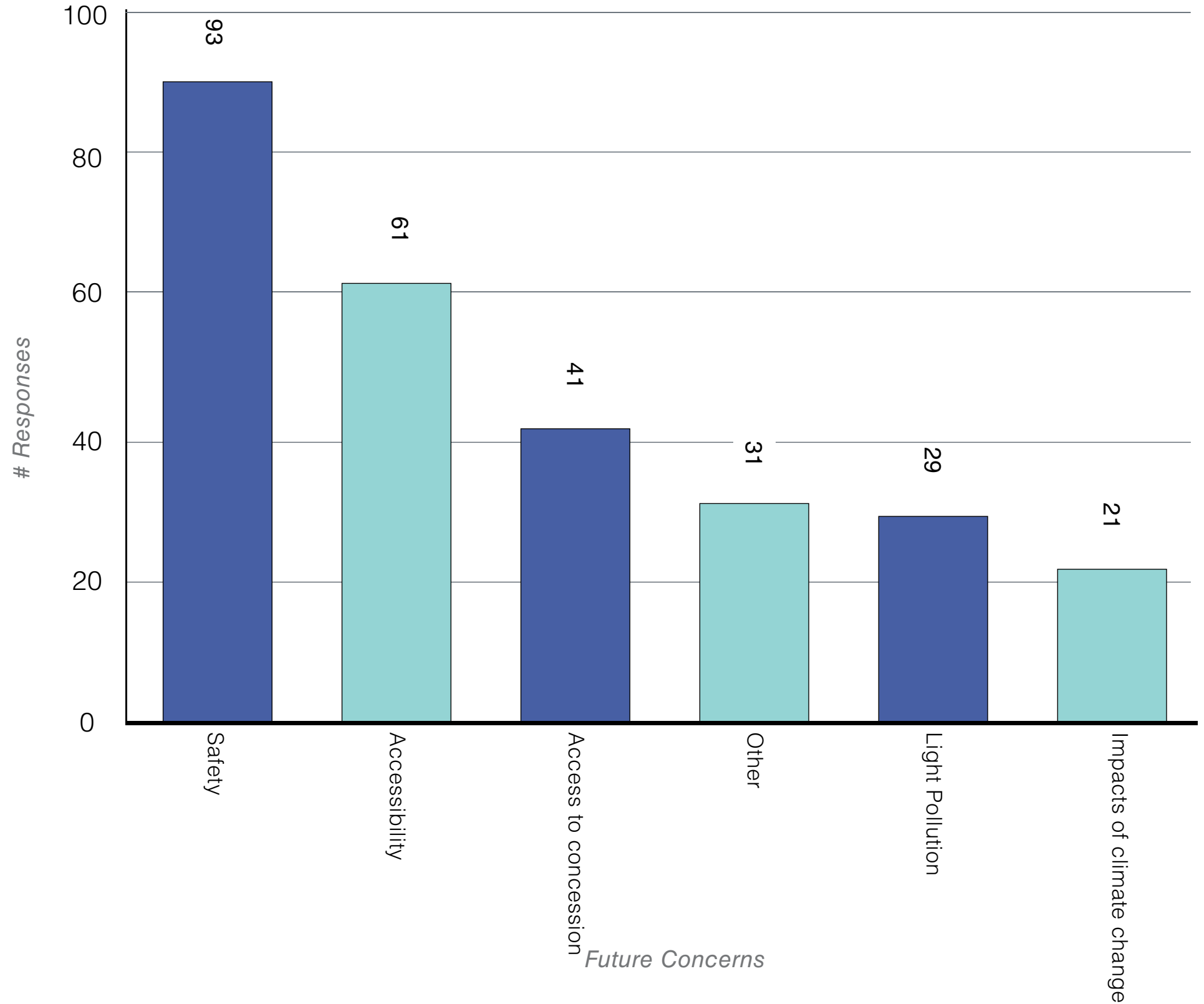
### OTHER CONCERNS

- Over development
- Invasive species
- Tree preservation
- Maintenance

### LEGEND

- Very Important
- Important

What are your concerns for the future of Thompson Park? Select all that apply.





# Online Outreach Survey

Is there anything else you'd like us to know as we help plan for the future of Thompson Park?

## GENERAL

*The park is more than just a city asset. It has regional impact and should be marketed/sold that way*

**Please consider keeping it a natural space.** *I'm concerned about over development and the views of the city and the surrounding areas are phenomenal! We really don't advertise that as a benefit of living in this city.*

## VEGETATION AND ECOLOGY

**Preserve the cultural aspects of this beautiful place.**

**Replant trees and control invasive species** and restore native plants

## AMENITIES

*Buy the golf club. We don't need a dog park / We need a dog park.*

**More food options of all sizes**

A **skate park** would be good for people on the other side of town from the fairgrounds. Also bring new generation of kids to the sport

## CIRCULATION AND LIGHTING

*Pedestrian crossing signs near trail heads (on roads coming from Franklin street and the traffic circle)*

*Absolutely need **traffic control officers for major events** held at the park. Getting in and out can be very difficult.*

*The **lighting** in the park could be upgraded to LED - it's quite dark on the walking paths on winter and fall nights*



# Site Inventory

Architecture - Built and Unbuilt

## LEGEND

- Historic Structures - Unbuilt
  - Historic Structures - Removed
  - Historic Structures - Still Existing
- 1 State St Entrance
  - 2 Vista Terrace Unbuilt
  - 3 North Outlook & Cliff Garden Gate
  - 4 Gate Lodge
  - 5 Reservoirs
  - 6 Quarry
  - 7 Overlook Terrace Allee Unbuilt
  - 8 Sheep Fold
  - 9 Water Tower Partially Built & Removed
  - 10 Gardens and Pool
  - 11 Horse Shed
  - 12 Sand Court Unbuilt
  - 13 Wading Pool
  - 14 Little Pinnacle
  - 15 The Pinnacle
  - 16 Cliff Garden



Historic structures and naming conventions as proposed in the 1903 Plan



A black and white photograph of a snowy park. In the foreground, a group of four people is gathered on the left, and a single person is walking away from the camera in the center. A small dog is walking near the group on the left. In the middle ground, two people are skiing down a slope, and another person is walking on the right. The background shows a snow-covered area with trees and a fence. The text "07 MASTER PLAN CONCEPTS" is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

07 MASTER PLAN CONCEPTS








# Programming

## Program Districts

The designation of distinct program zones provides a framework for park restoration and expansion that acknowledges the historic design intent while embracing the park's future as a community destination and nature preserve.

Program zones correlate to landscape character and help preserve the essential natural character of the park while protecting it from inappropriate development.

### LEGEND

-  Olmstedian Core
-  West Outlook
-  East-West Meander
-  The Green
-  Zoo New York





# Programming

## Existing & Proposed

### LEGEND

- Program Destination
- Passive Recreation
- Active Recreation
- Wooded Area
- Golf
- Outlook
- Proposed
- Existing
- 1 Picnic + Play
- 2 Outdoor Theater
- 3 Ornamental Tree Planting
- 4 Goose Pond Nature Preserve
- 5 Disc Golf, Running Trails
- 6 Fitness + Skating Area
- 7 Zoo Concession/Park Cafe
- 8 Zip line / Adventure Course
- 9 Thompson Park Museum & Gallery
- 10 All Season Lodge
- 11 Existing Destination Playground
- 12 Existing Tennis Courts (Expanded)
- 13 Existing Informal Mountain Biking
- 14 Existing Pool & Splash Pad





# Phased Implementation Strategies

## Continuous Improvements

- **Continue Invasive Plant Removal** Remove buckthorn and other invasives from wooded areas. Utilize downed trees and woodchips to define new path alignments. Install new tree plantings in groves with native saplings.
- **Cultivate Meadow Habitat** Alter mowing regimes where appropriate. Limit mown lawns to active recreational and event areas.
- **Curate a cohesive nature trail system** Continue to define hiking trails concurrent with clearing of invasive species. Ensure new trails connect to a larger network.
- **Expand low impact recreation** Work with local groups to install Disc Golf. Improve trails for cross-country training and meets as well as winter hiking and snowshoeing.
- **Develop a Parkwide Wayfinding System** Mark trail intersections and trailheads. Provide interpretative and directional signage as part of a curated signage system. Create a trail map with difficulty and distances. Install a “blaze” system to mark trail loops.

## Low Cost - High Impact (1-3 Years)

- **Expand & decentralize parking** Strategically create additional parking by making the loop road one way. Install small trailhead lots to improve access to nature trails and new program areas as they are implemented.
- **Create a phased lighting Plan** Explore a parkwide and park perimeter lighting plan. Quantify long terms savings with LED and timers.
- **Continue masonry restoration park wide** Restore the bandstand, par stairs and stairwells, retaining walls.
- **Develop a natural water feature.** Work with the existing topography and hydrology to foster wetland new and existing wetlands. Create a wetland area at the natural spring west of the north down, implement the creation of Goose Pond.
- **Nurture partnerships.** Continue to grow the partnership with the Friends of Thompson Park. Work with local schools and neighborhood groups.
- **Explore road closures.** Close the drive lane from the Golf Course to the main parking lot.





# Phased Implementation Strategies

## Long-Term Projects (4-10 Years)

















- **Restore the Bandshell.** Restore the stone masonry, curate the adjacent landscape and circulation network.
- **Extend the Perimeter Trail.** Extend the paved lower perimeter trail on Thompson Blvd as part of a larger effort to create a lower loop.
- **Strengthen and Improve Neighborhood Access points.** Cultivate connections to new program areas and destinations. *Create a formal and accessible entrance at Thompson Blvd. and Gotham Street.*
- **Remove the drive lane from the Golf Course to the main parking lot.** Restore with lawn and plants to reconnect landscape areas.
- **Create a dog park.** Explore an area for an enclosed dog park with space for little and big dogs. Support an informal group to site the run and agree upon operating needs.
- **Path Reconstruction.** Resurface existing path network, resurface and repave the Park Circle Drive & adjacent sidewalks.
- **Restore the Upper portion of Pinnacle Drive**
- **Create a Winter Village.** Construct an Ice Trail, sledding hills and outdoor gathering places. Expan access to year-round amenities
- **Build an All Season Lodge.** The would serve the winter villag- and The Green. Prove a permanent outdoor pavilion, parking and related amenities.
- **Renovate existing comfort stations.** Renovate the interiors of the two existing comfort stations.
- **Create a Thompson Park Museum & Gallery in a renovated Old Bath House**
- **Implement Natural Water Features.** Work with the existing natural topography and water sources to enhance wetlands and waterbodies.
- **Outdoor Theater.** Build a permanent outdoor theater for 250 seats, comfort station and parking.
- **Implement wayfinding.** Create a parkwide system of signage, consider digital companion map working with “All Trails”.



# Thompson Park Draft Master Plan

## Overall Park Plan

### LEGEND

-  Park Roads
-  Paved Paths
-  Soft Trails: Groomed
-  Soft Trails: Mountain Biking
-  Parking
-  Structures
-  Park Boundary
-  Zoo Fence Line
-  Lawn
-  Meadow
-  Deciduous Forest
-  Evergreen Forest
-  Existing Trees
-  Proposed Park Trees
-  Ornamental Trees
-  Wetland

Enhanced  
Pedestrian  
Entrance
















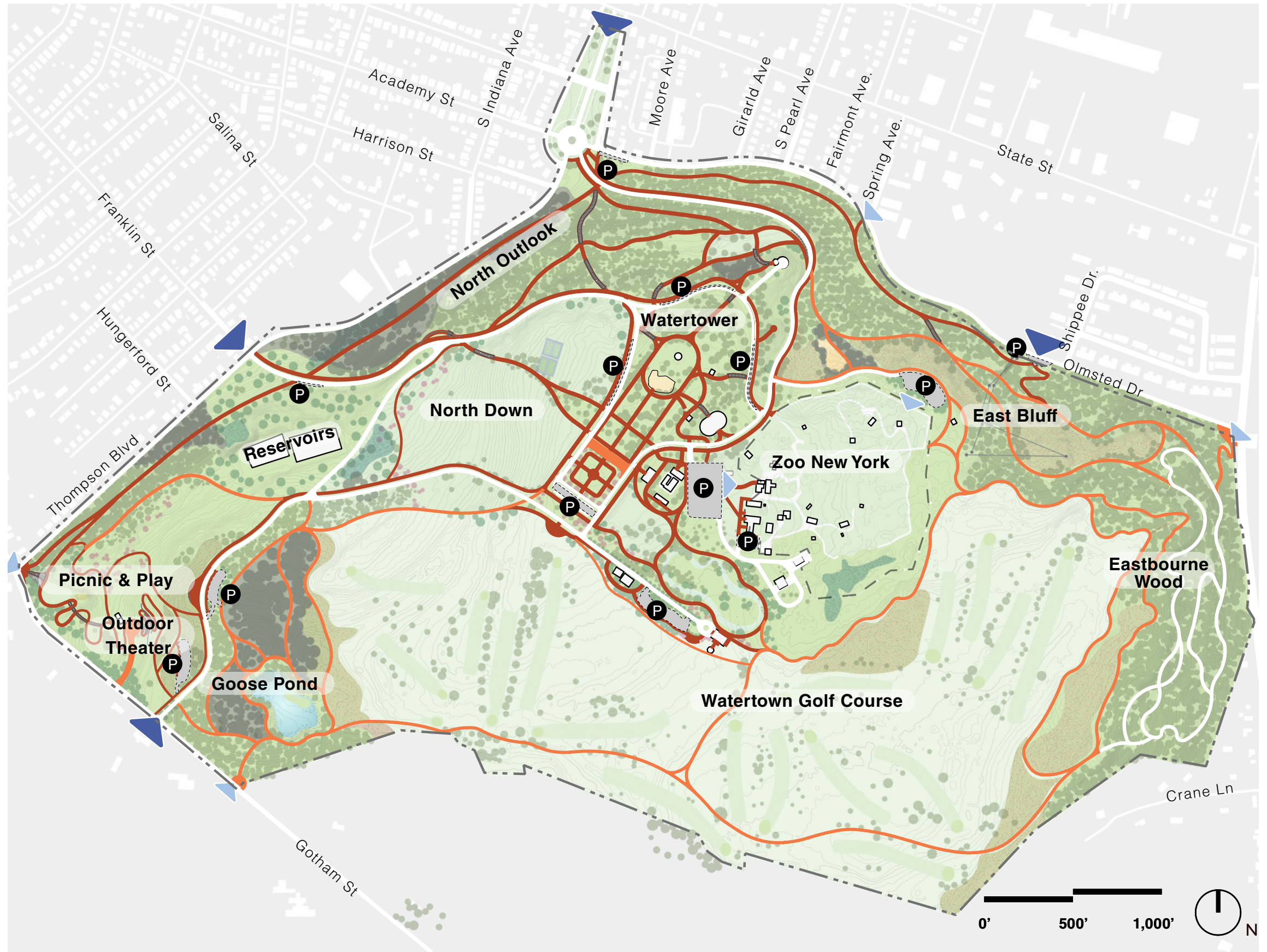
# Circulation

## Proposed

The proposed circulation network improves connectivity throughout the park and provides new path systems for proposed program areas beyond the original “Olmsted Acres” in keeping with the gesture of the original park.

### LEGEND

-  Park Roads
-  Paved Paths
-  Soft Trails: Groomed
-  Soft Trails: Mountain Biking
-  Parking
-  Structures
-  Park Boundary
-  Vehicular Entrances
-  Pedestrian Entrances
-  Staircases
-  Zoo Fence Line












# Circulation

## Recreational Loops

The topography and natural areas of the park are ideally suited for hiking, cross-country running, mountain biking and winter activities such as cross-country skiing and snow shoeing.

### LEGEND

-  Vehicular Roads
-  5K
-  3K
-  1K
-  Park Boundary
-  Nature Trail Access Points
-  Zoo Fence Line












# Circulation

## Vehicular Directionality

The plan explores a one-way system in a large portion of the Olmsted Core which would allow for parallel parking along a narrower park road.

### LEGEND

-  2 - Way Vehicular Access
-  1 - Way Vehicular Access
-  Parking
-  Structures
-  Park Boundary
-  Vehicular Entrances
-  Zoo Fence Line












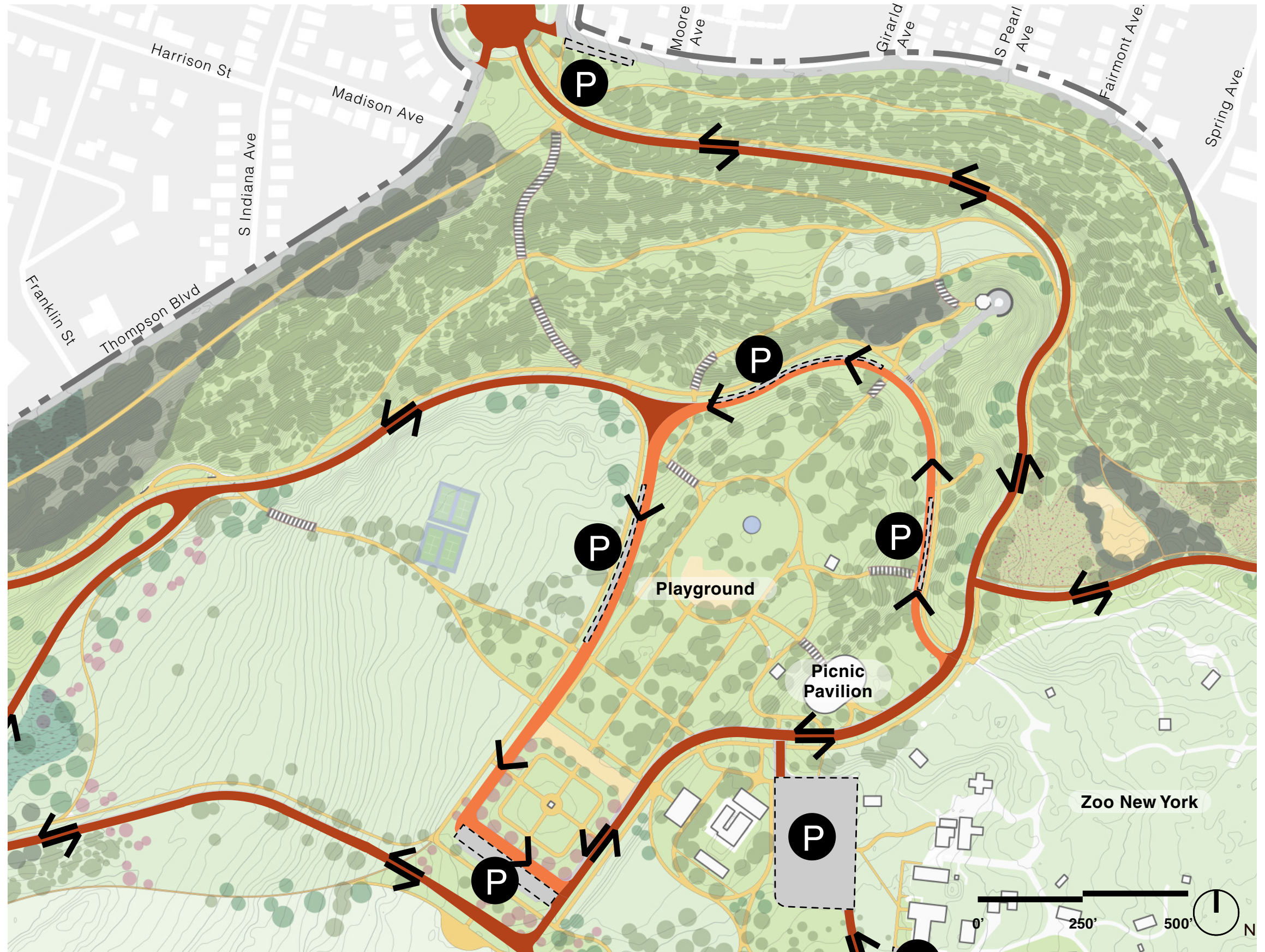
# Circulation

## Vehicular Directionality

Enlarged plan showing how the one-way loop would function in the park core. A system of signage and striping will be necessary to direct cars effectively. Granite curbs should be installed as roads are resurfaced to prevent the overlap of parking onto landscaped surfaces.

### LEGEND

-  2 - Way Vehicular Access
-  1 - Way Vehicular Access
-  Parking
-  Structures
-  Park Boundary
-  Vehicular Entrances
-  Zoo Fence Line



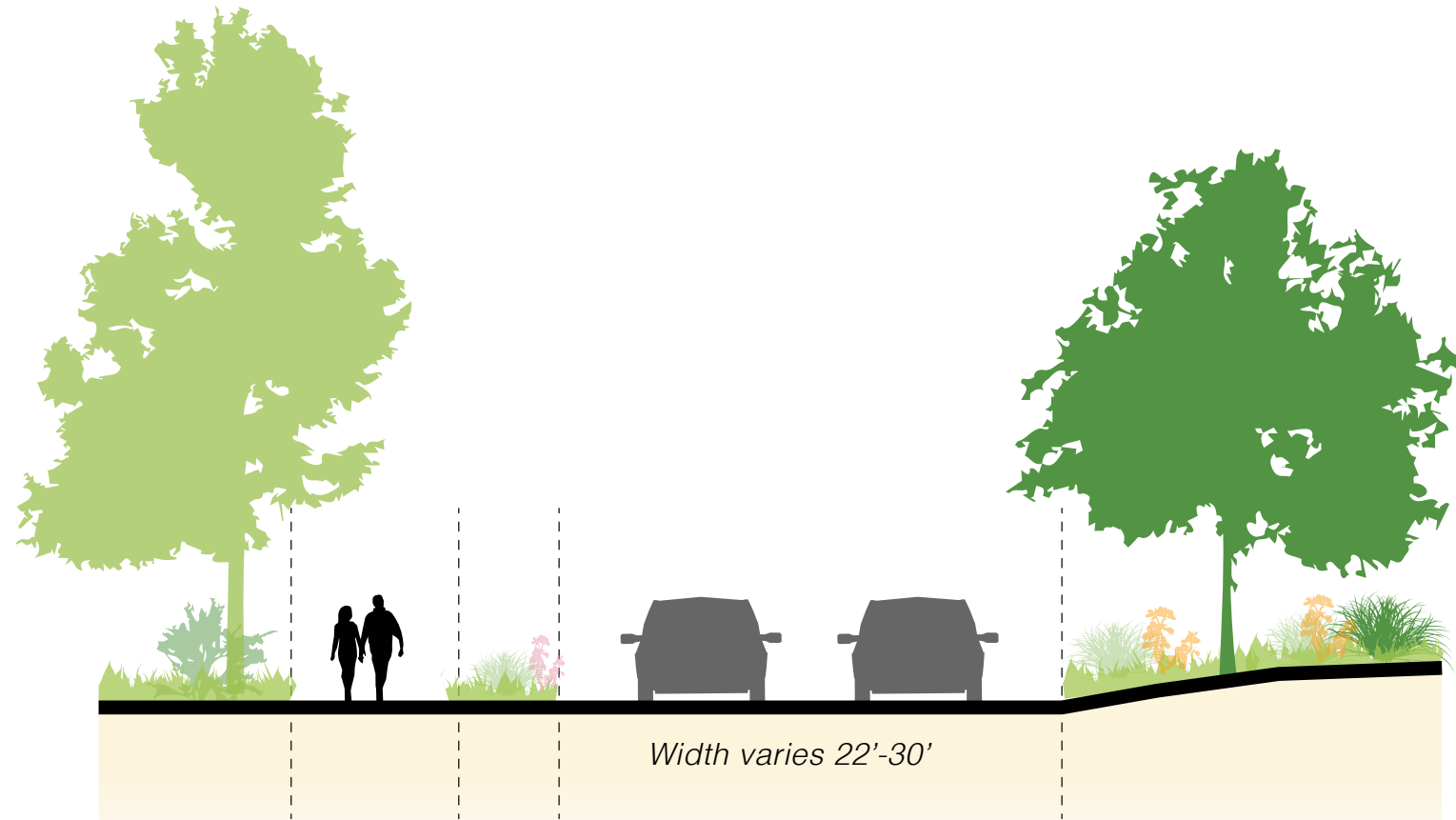
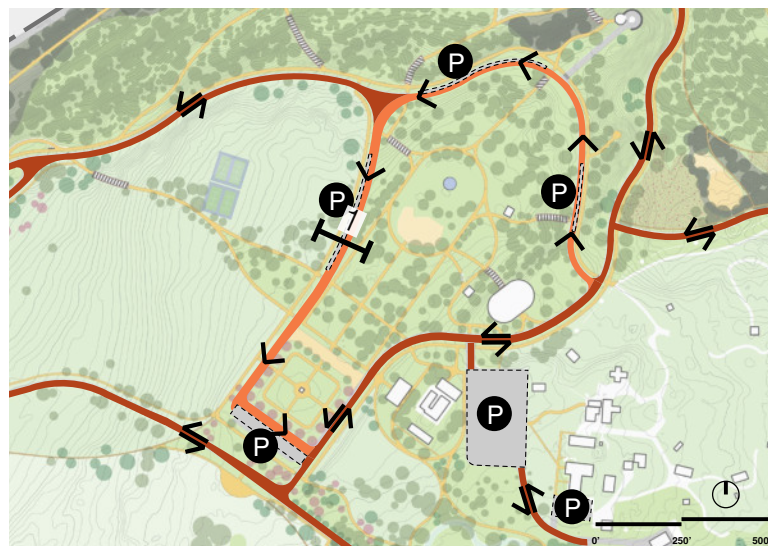


# Circulation

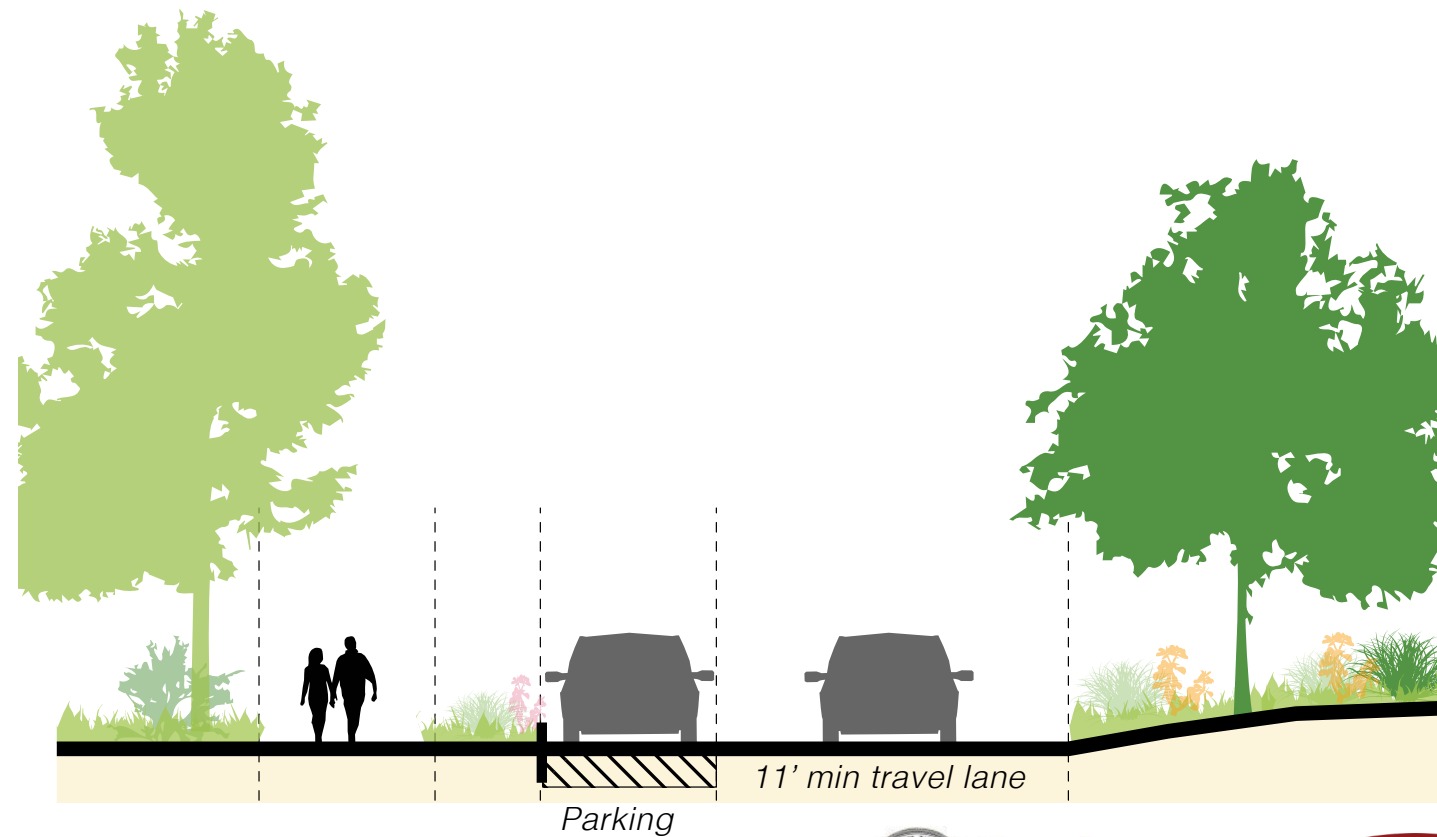
## Vehicular Directionality

The plan explores a one-way system in a large portion of the Olmsted Core which would allow for parallel parking along a narrower park road.

There is adequate space within the existing road bed to reserve one lane for travel and one lane for parking. The parking "lane" should be bracketed with landscape areas so there is a break at key vistas and access points.



Existing Conditions - Two Way Road











# Circulation

## Proposed Parking

Parking areas can expand and decentralize as new program areas are developed.

Even distribution along a Southwest / Northeast axis can help park users access every facet and level of the park.

### LEGEND

-  Park Drives
-  Parking
-  Structures
-  Park Boundary
-  Vehicular Entrances
-  Pedestrian Entrances





# 08 PARK PROGRAMMING





# Thompson Park Programming

Park programming can take a wide range of forms. From the park's inception the core of the park contained areas for early childhood recreation, gathering and meandering paths for Sunday promenades.

Formal programming such as the pool, sport courts and play areas is balanced by the essential access to paths and trails within the park's natural areas. A fundamental tenant of Olmstedian design approach is provide access to an unadorned experience in nature. This means an uninterrupted landscape without structures, ornaments and monuments. The park should provide a place of respite, free from the noise and clutter of urban grid. Park structures should be subordinate to landscape experience.

The sentiment of J.C. Thompson, quoted in the 1985 Master Plan, "a park appealed to me as something all the people of Watertown, men, women, and children, rich or poor, could and would enjoy; it

would inculcate civic pride, benefit the City as a place of residents, help make and keep people well..." holds true today. The importance of access to natural areas for mental and physical health as well as the role the park plays as a social commons are key tenants to quality of life in small cities.

The adaptation of areas currently under utilized for expanded programming should be done in a strategic fashion to not detract from the overarching character of the pastoral landscape.

The park should continue to accommodate events like the Concert in the Park and community festivals, without compromising the fabric of the historic circulation system and emergent ecologies. A quality neighborhood park provides measurable economic, environmental and social benefits. These benefits originate in the but extend far beyond its boundaries.





# Programming

## 1902 Active Recreation

The wading pool was one of the earliest active recreational features of the parkland was active until 1970.

In winter the park entrance circle doubled as a skating rink.

Today the park has a swimming pool which hosts classes and events, a state of the art splash pad and newly renovated playground.

These destinations draw families and visitors to the center to the park and provide an important social hub for Watertown.



Skating in Park Circle, Image Courtesy of the NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



View of Wading Pool 1902, Image Courtesy of the NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



# Programming

## Balancing Active & Passive Recreation

The need for structured open space for active recreation must be balanced with access to hiking trails and natural areas. Even in a town with ample backyards and schools with well-appointed sports fields, the benefit of being in close proximity hiking trails and natural areas provides immeasurable benefits to local residents.

Currently almost all activities are concentrated in the core of the park. The master plan recommends expansion of active recreation in close proximity to the core area of the park through the creation of a “Winter Village” south of Tower Square as well as the creation of a new park hub and neighborhood access point at the western edge of the park at Thompson Boulevard and Gotham Street.



*Hiking trails in areas recently cleared of invasive species, 2022.*



*Thompson Park Playground, 2022*



# Programming

## Accommodating Special Events



*The Concert in the Park, a yearly celebration of music and fireworks in the park.*



# Olmstedian Core

## Program Concepts

The acquisition of the Golf property presents the opportunity to better connect the diverse geographies of the park and create a more cohesive park.

The relocation of the current club house could improve the relationships between all quadrants of the park, especially the east-west connections. A new all-season lodge could accommodate a variety of events.

Both east and west areas have well-developed woodlands and the potential to be part of a park-wide system of hiking, biking and running trails.



Existing conditions at the center of the park. The landscape is defined by open lawns and mature canopy trees.



# Olmstedian Core

## Program Concepts



Restore historic park features such as walls, stairs, paths and structures



Protect and plant the next generation of canopy trees



Explore expansion of winter programming by creating an ice skating trail



Expand and increase active Recreation wherever appropriate



Increase connectivity to programmatic districts across the park



Update infrastructure and edges with lighting, paths, parking





# Olmstedian Core

## Plan Enlargement

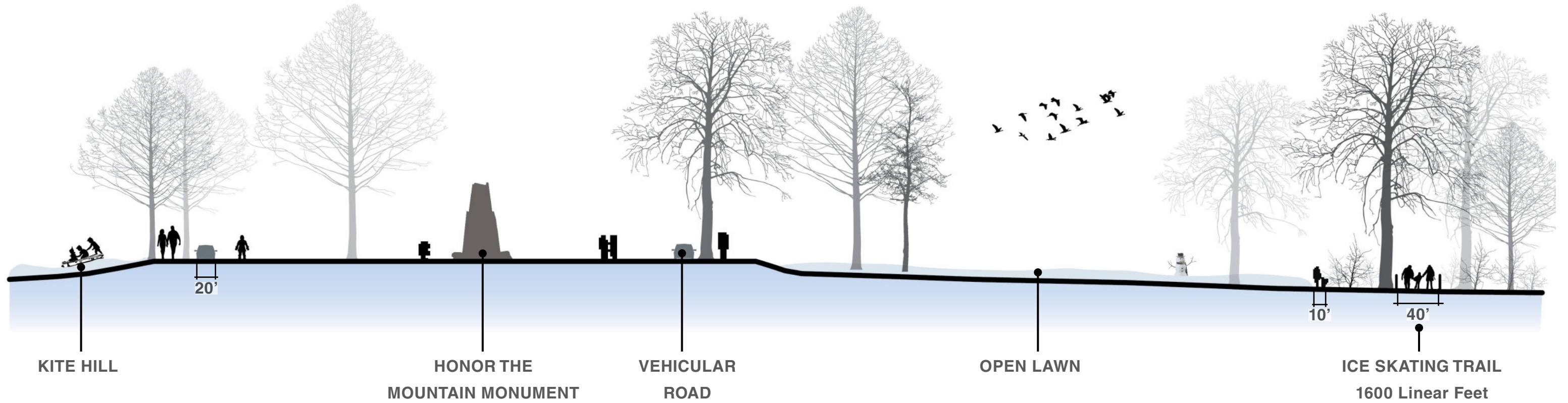
- Provides winter programming in the heart of the park by removing existing road (which bisects the open space) and extra fence in front of Zoo building which expands picnic area.
- New Lodge serves as a Winter Village hub and Summer Club House/Event Space
- Ice Skating Trail connects with cross country skiing, snow shoeing and outdoor gathering areas.





# Olmstedian Core

## Skating Trail Section





# West Outlook

## Program Concepts

Park visitors responded very positively to the notion of a new park entrance at the corner of Gotham and Thompson Streets, increased access to hiking trails, and implementing Goose Pond and dedicating that area as a nature preserve.

## Key Circulation Improvements

- New entrance at Gotham Street & Thompson Boulevard
- Accessible pathway network to new program areas

## Proposed Programming

- Nature Play & Picnic Area



Existing conditions at the West Outlook



# West Outlook

## Quarry Picnic and Play

### Gotham Street Entrance

The northwest corner of the park has a wealth of natural resources combined with a close relationship to the adjacent neighborhood and schools.

This portion of the park was never formally developed according to the early park plans and is primed for appropriate park development that balances natural resource protection and new program destinations.



*Proposed conditions at the location of the former quarry - the anticipated location of the nature play and picnic area*



# West Outlook

## Program Concepts



Create a new accessible park entrance at the corner of Gotham and Thompson Blvd.



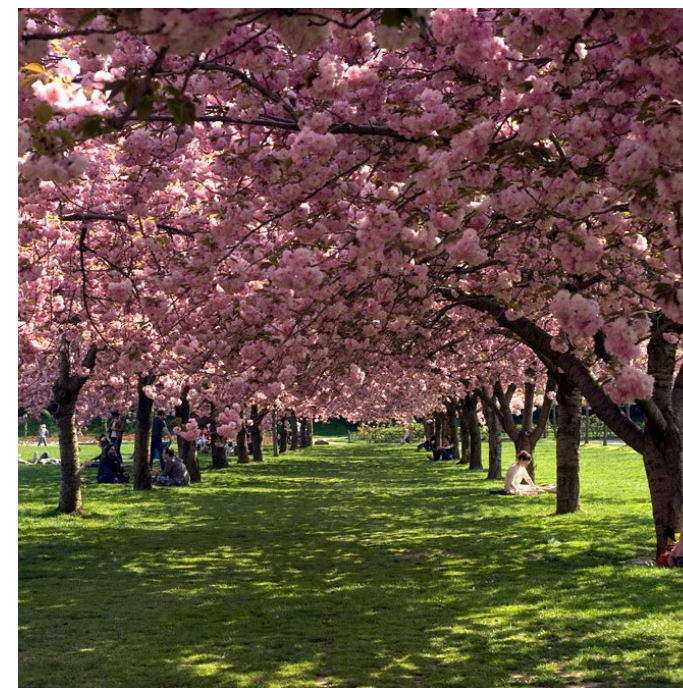
Create a nature-themed play and picnic area within the former quarry



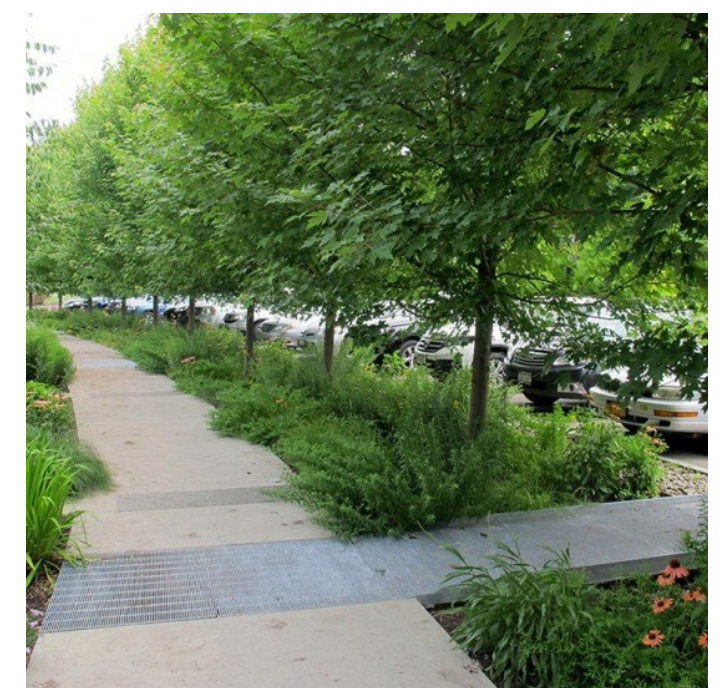
Implement a 250 Seat Outdoor Theatre with western views of Watertown



Provide a comfort station/ concession stand associated with the new outdoor theatre



Create a botanical destination



Provide access road and parking with plantings and green infrastructure



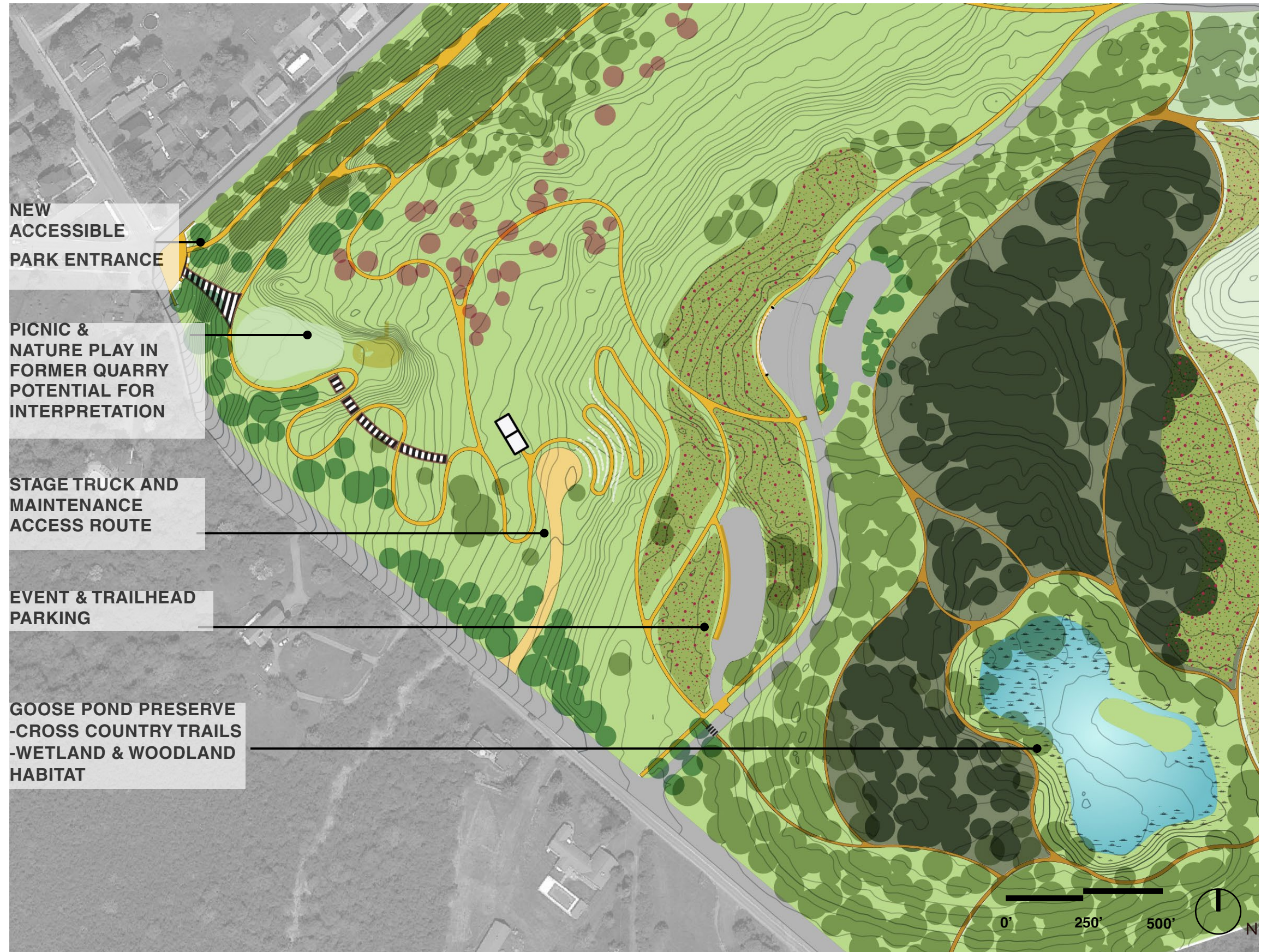
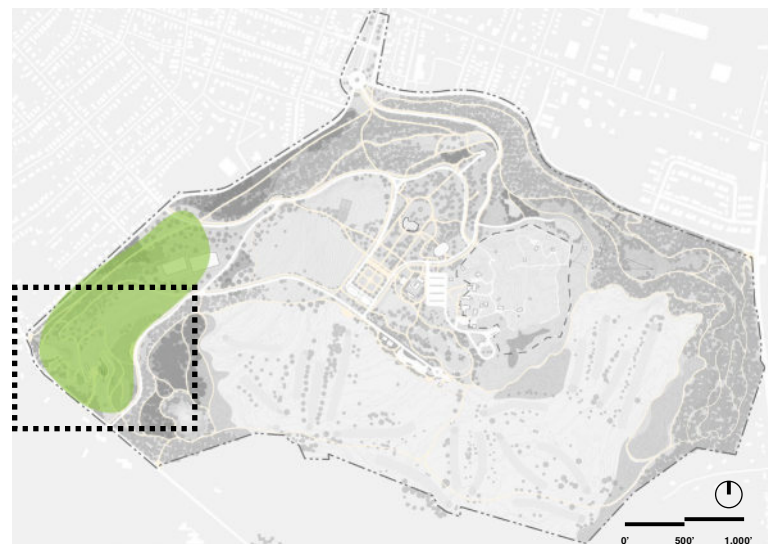


# West Outlook

## Plan Enlargement

The northwest corner of the park has a wealth of natural resources combined with a close relationship to the adjacent neighborhood and schools.

This portion of the park was never formally developed according to the early park plans and is primed for appropriate park development that balances natural resource protection and new program destinations.





# West Outlook

Summer Stage, Picnic & Play, Park Entrance at Gotham and Thompson

Provides new neighborhood access programming close to schools and eastern edge of the park





# East - West Meander

## Program Concepts

Increase park connectivity, path connections with new mixed-use hiking trails.

The east and west areas of the park have well developed woodlands and a series of informal trails. The trail system should be simplified and more clearly defined.

Recently areas cleared of buckthorn should have designated paths, localized tree plantings, managed pollinator meadows -defining and shaping the landscape experience.

Portions of the trail system can be programmed for hiking, cross-country running, winter snow-shoeing and in localized areas, mountain biking & Disc Golf.



Existing conditions in recently cleared areas.



# East-West Meander

## Program Concepts



Create nature trails in areas recently cleared of invasive Buckthorn, increasing connectivity to the rest of the park.



Foster woodland and meadow habitat



Increase habitat and create a natural destination by implementing Goose Pond



Explore creating a disc golf course within wooded areas



Work with local schools to plan regional cross-country course



Improve and designate area for mountain bike course





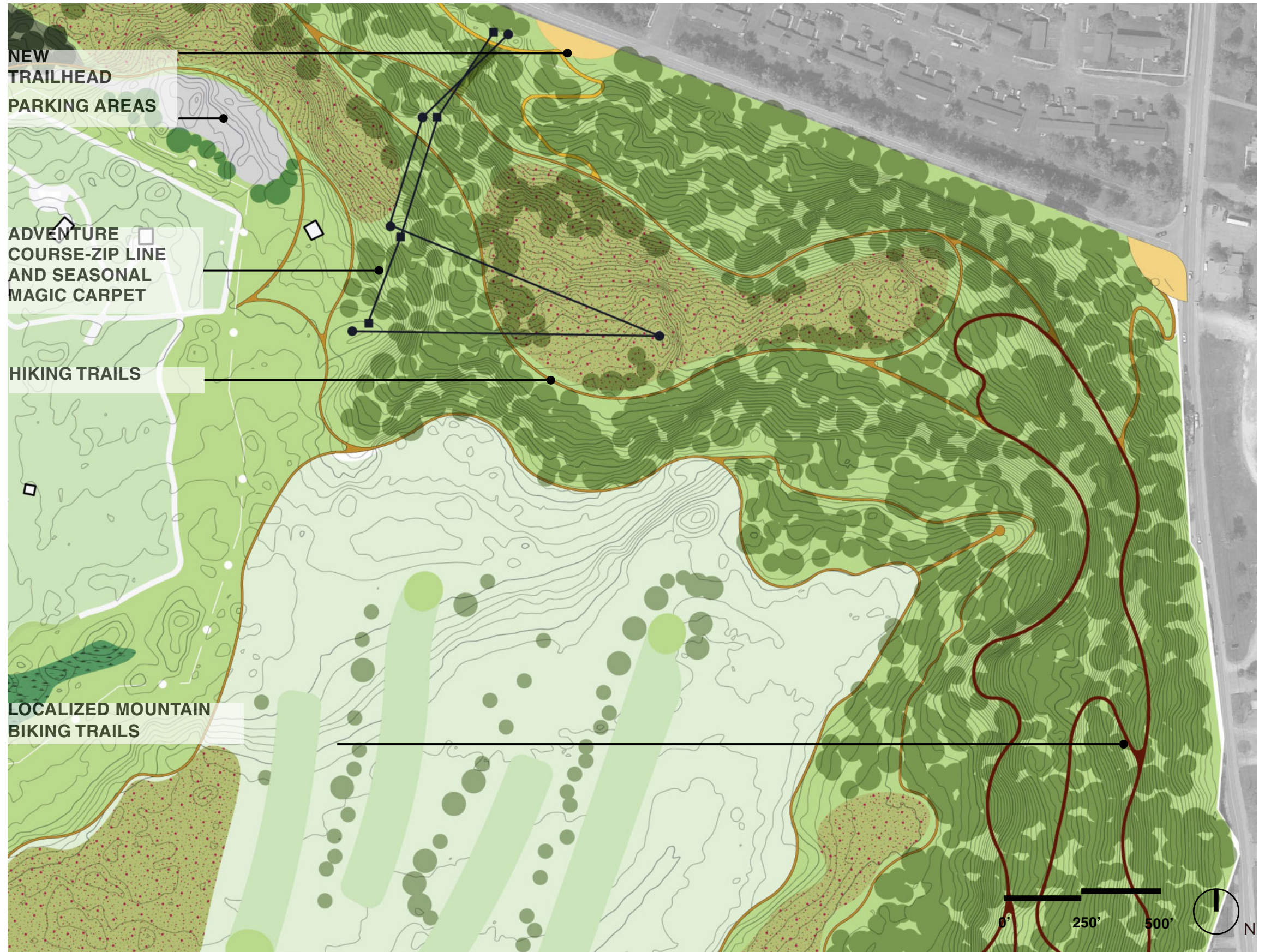
# Eastbourne Woods

## Plan Enlargement

The northeast corner of the park has some of the steepest terrain in the park.

New and existing programming include hiking trails, a localized mountain biking area and an adventure course which would be operated by Zoo New York.

The Master Plan acknowledges the key concepts in the proposed Zoo Master plan

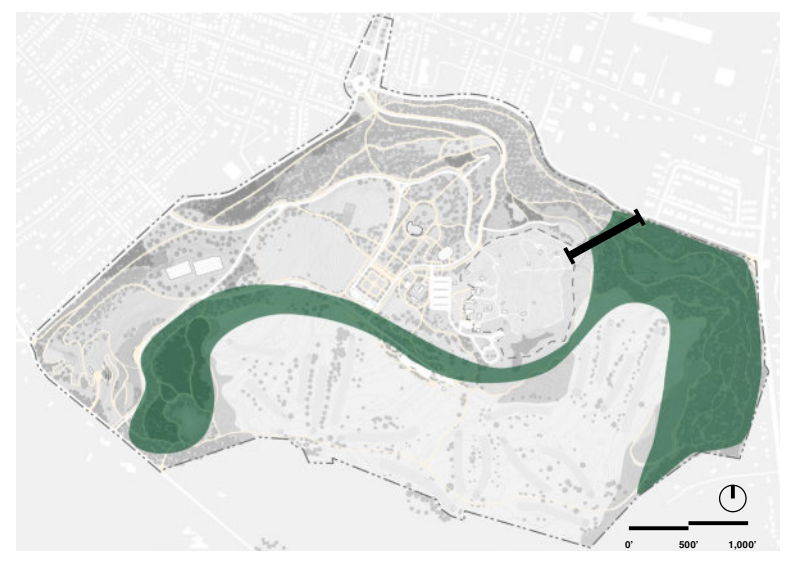
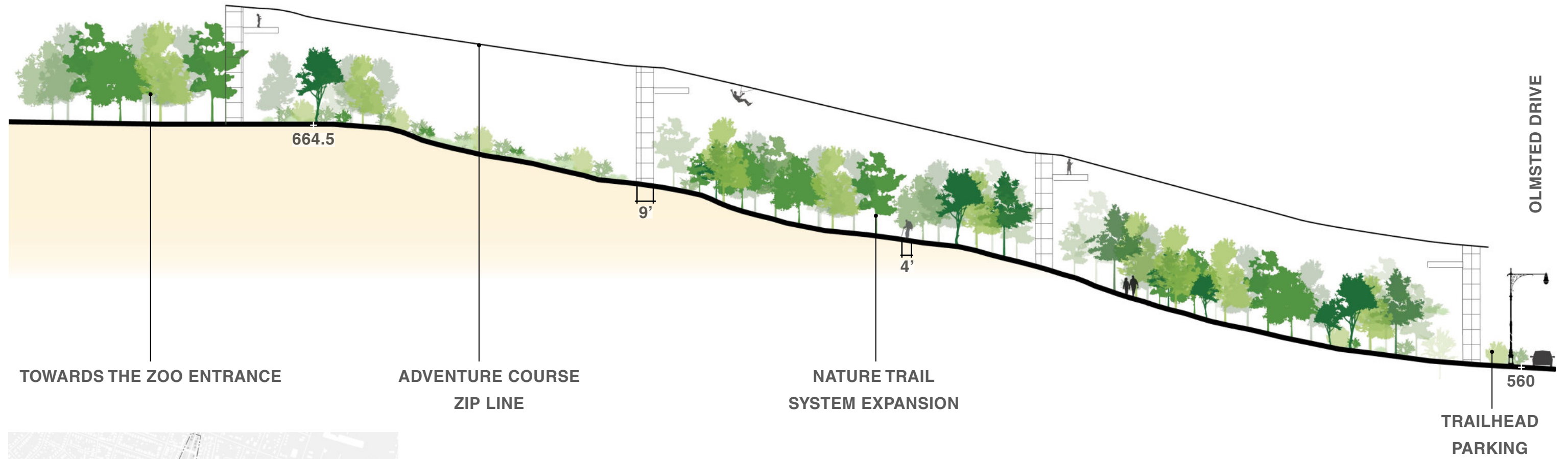




# Eastbourne Woods

## Program Concepts

### Nature Trails & Adventure Park





# The Green

## Program Concepts



Maintain the existing golf course as a municipal resource, forge better east-west connections along the edges.



Consider the planting of specimen trees in ornamental groves such as a pinetum, anticipate climate change



Build connections with hiking trails in other programmatic areas of the park



Expand cross-country trail system and opportunities for winter activities/ winter village



Foster meadow habitat for pollinators and ground nesting birds



Build a new all-season lodge



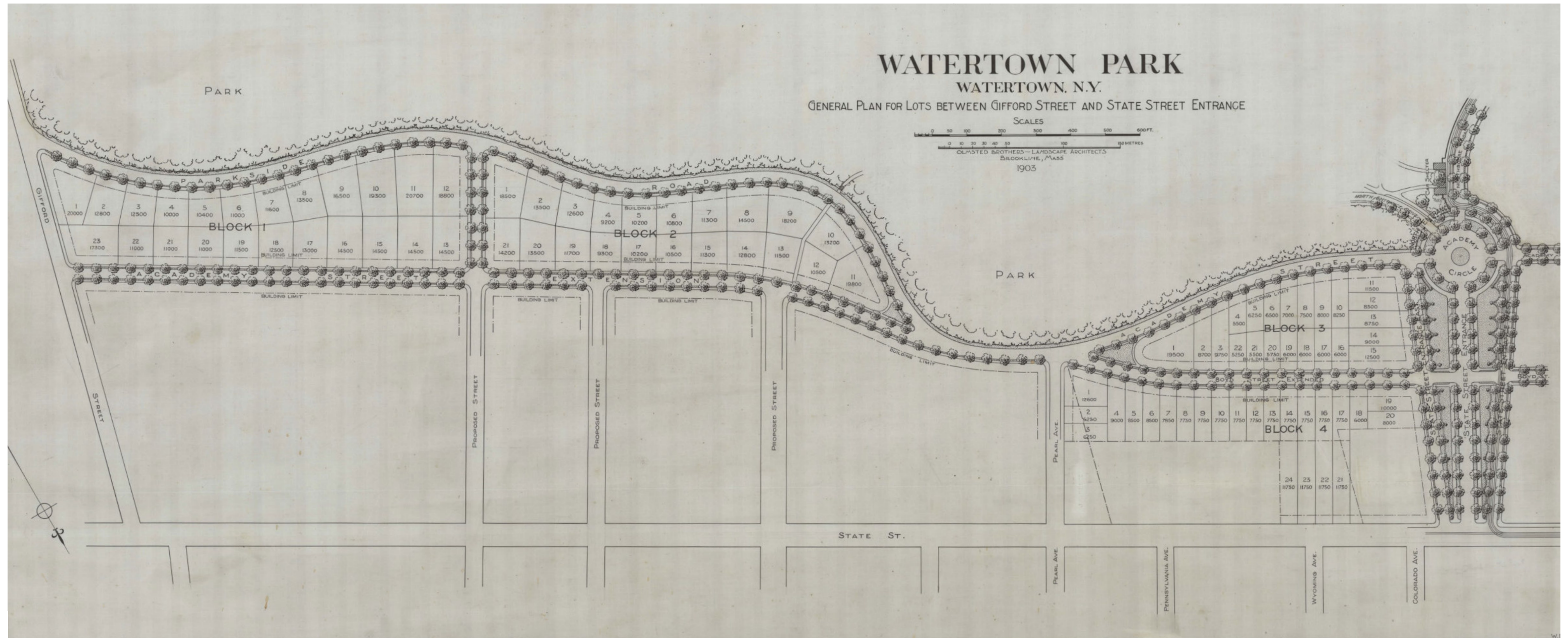
# 10 PARK IDENTITY AND EDGES

WELCOME  
HOME



# Park Identity & Edges

1903 Design for Academy Circle and Parkside Road



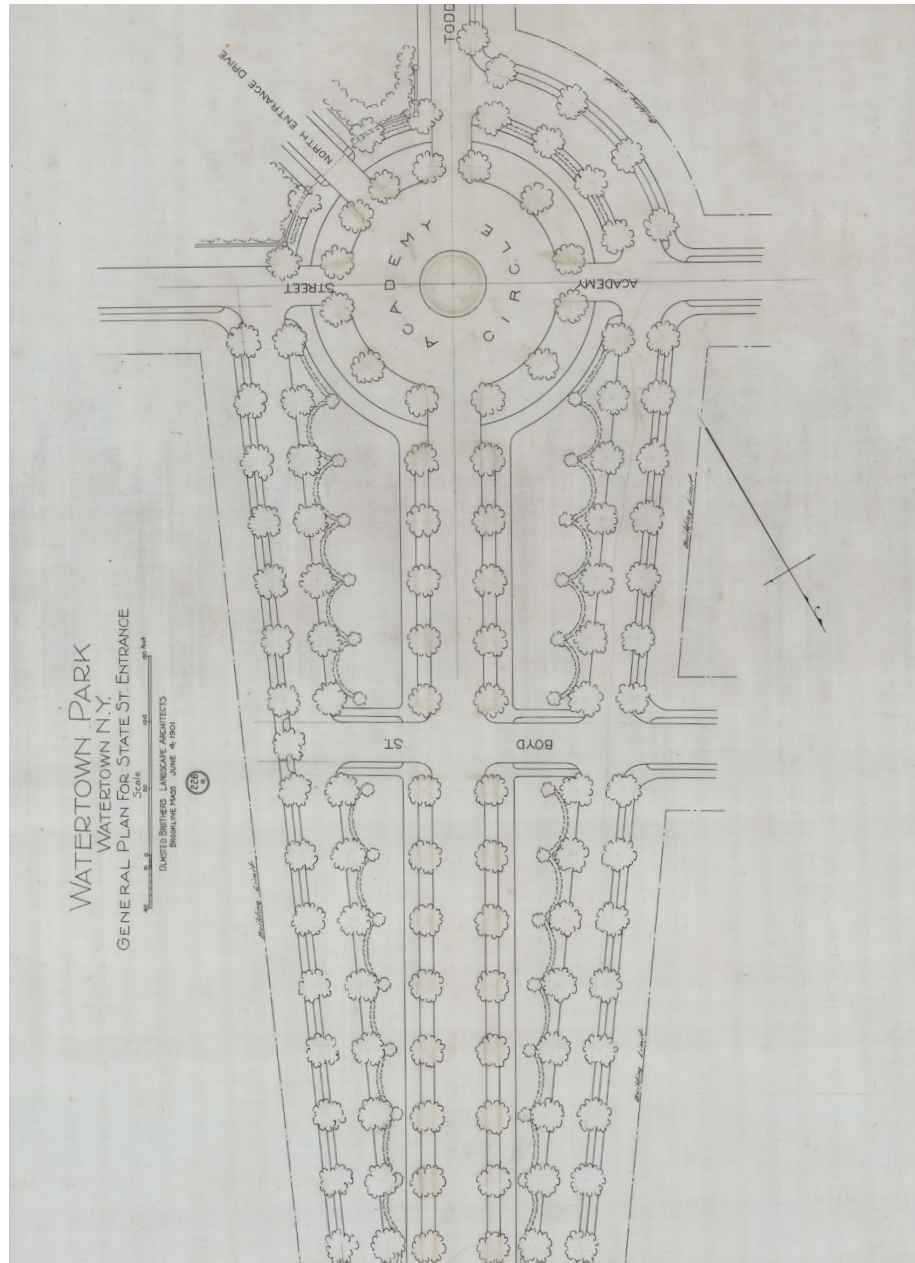
Plan for Olmsted Drive, then referred to as Parkside Road, 1903. Image Courtesy of the NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



# Park Identity & Edges

## Park Precedents

The original park plan, like many Olmsted Parks, had a defined edge which created a cohesive sense of place within the urban context.



View of tree allee on Academy Circle, shortly after installation, 1902



# Park Identity & Edges

## Park Precedents

A key feature of all Olmsted Parks is how the park interfaces with its urban context. The parks have clear entrances marked by stone gates or pillars, often with seating and framed by canopy trees. The edges are defined by low stone walls, tree plantings and special pavements all creating a somewhat formal, but green and welcoming edge. The proposed plans for Thompson Park were no exception. The entire perimeter of Central Park is bound by a low stone masonry wall, seating and street trees in continuous tree pits with granite block pavement.



*View along Central Park West, Fall 2022*



# Park Identity & Edges

## Park Precedents

Riverside Park is Flanked by Riverside Drive. The drive is flanked by a generous promenade with benches, lighting, canopy trees as well as a planted median.



*View along Riverside Drive, upper promenade, Winter 2022*



# Park Identity & Edges

## Existing Structures

The existing park perimeter varies from well-developed, such as the park entrance at Academy Circle, to less developed with remnants of previous landscaped edges built in the 1930's, to completely undeveloped, therefore in some cases, undefined and unwelcoming.

Curating the perimeter of the park with a simple set of common gestures including lighting, stone walls/pillars, planting and signage could strengthen the park's identity and sense of place within the urban fabric.



*View east along Gotham Street*



*View looking east along the Olmsted Drive*



*View north along Thompson Boulevard*



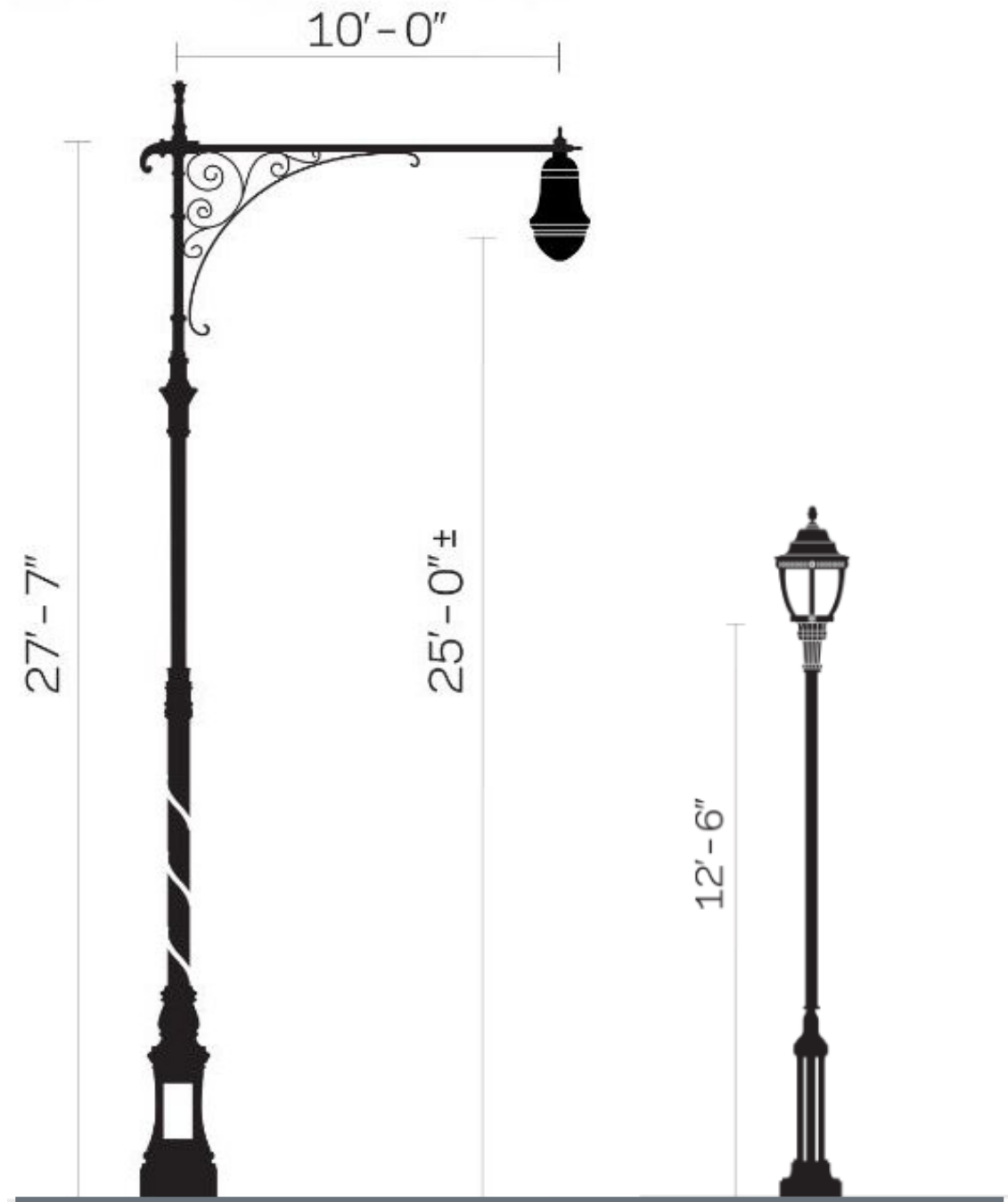
*View at the intersection of Thompson Boulevard and Gotham Street*



# Park Identity & Edges

## Lighting Options

- Install a uniform light fixture for the perimeter of the park and main park drives with a priority of installation Thompson Boulevard and Olmsted Drive.
- Consider a uniform pedestrian fixture within the Core of the park and along the same roadway fixtures for principal paved park paths
- Nature trails-nature preserves should remain unlit
- Consider providing some lighting at trail head parking areas. Solar alternatives are available.



*Type M Roadway Luminaire  
Once known as the "Mast-Arm"  
Fixture. Can have a pedestrian  
arm in addition to the roadway  
arm*

*Light: 150 W Maximum - LED  
Pole: Ductile Iron - Black*

*Type B Pedestrian Pole  
First used in 1911 along the  
Mall in Central Park, (Historic  
Park standard in NYC Parks)*

*Light: 76 W Maximum LED  
Riverside Luminaire  
Pole: Ductile Iron - Black*



*Type M Roadway Luminaire*



*Type B Pedestrian Pole*



# Park Identity & Edges

## Site Amenities - Stone Masonry Walls

Use localized masonry features such as walls, stairs and ramps to frame new entrances



*Frame edges and entrances with low masonry walls and piers.*



# Existing Edge Conditions

## Thompson Blvd.

The edge along Thompson Boulevard has a continuous swale at the bottom of the slope. The street lighting consists of wooden poles with cobra head lighting.

The landscape is overgrown and there is no clear siteline to park circulation and there is no formal park entrance at the intersection of Gotham Street and Thompson Boulevard



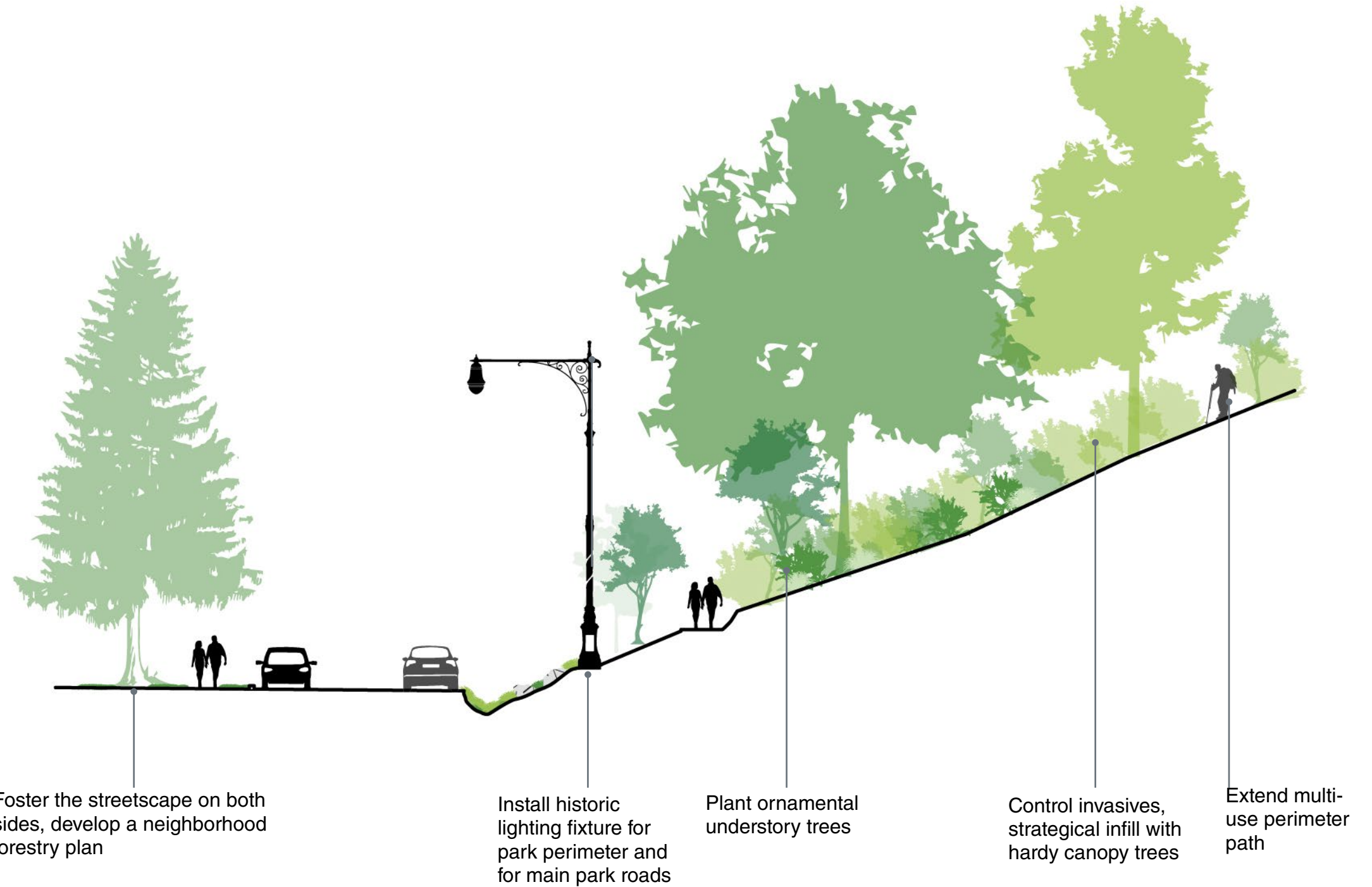
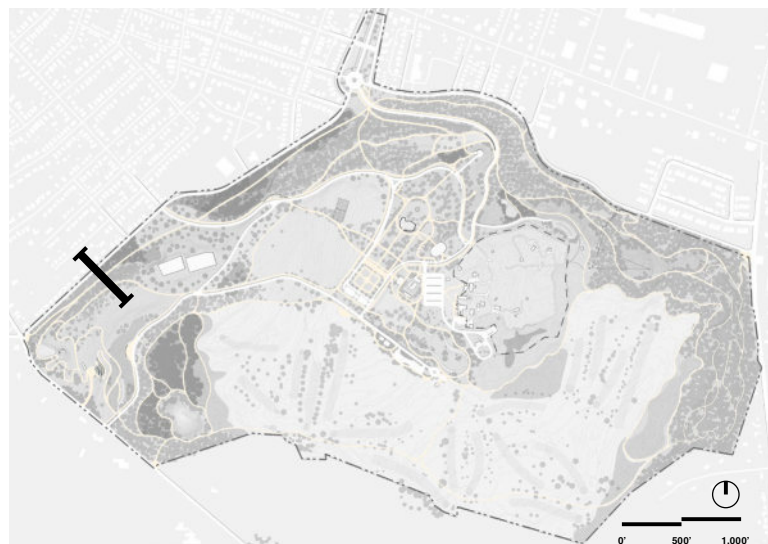
Existing conditions section along Thompson Boulevard looking North



# Proposed Edge Conditions

Thompson Blvd.

Key recommendations



*Proposed conditions section along Thompson Boulevard looking North*

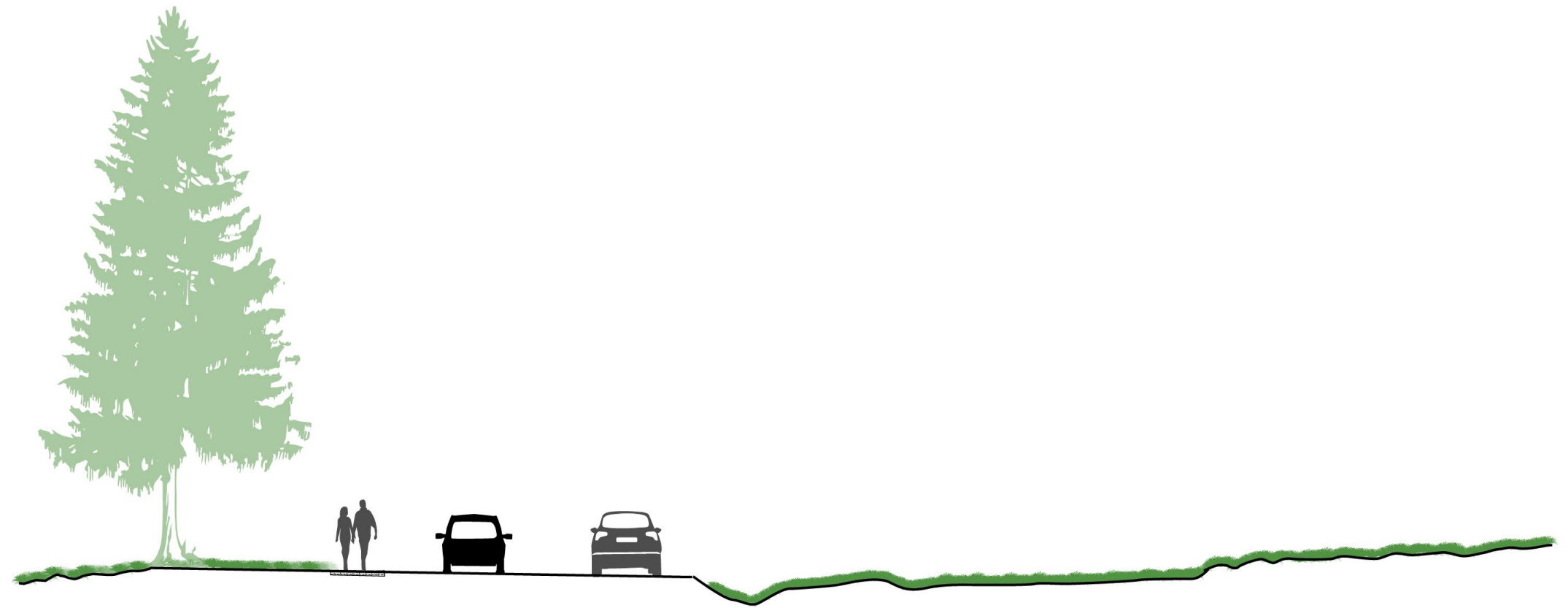


# Existing Edge Conditions

## Olmsted Drive

The edge along Olmsted Drive has a continuous swale at the bottom of the slope. The street lighting consists of metal poles with cobra head lighting.

The topography at the bottom of the slope has a few localized areas, ideal for trailhead parking and new secondary park access points



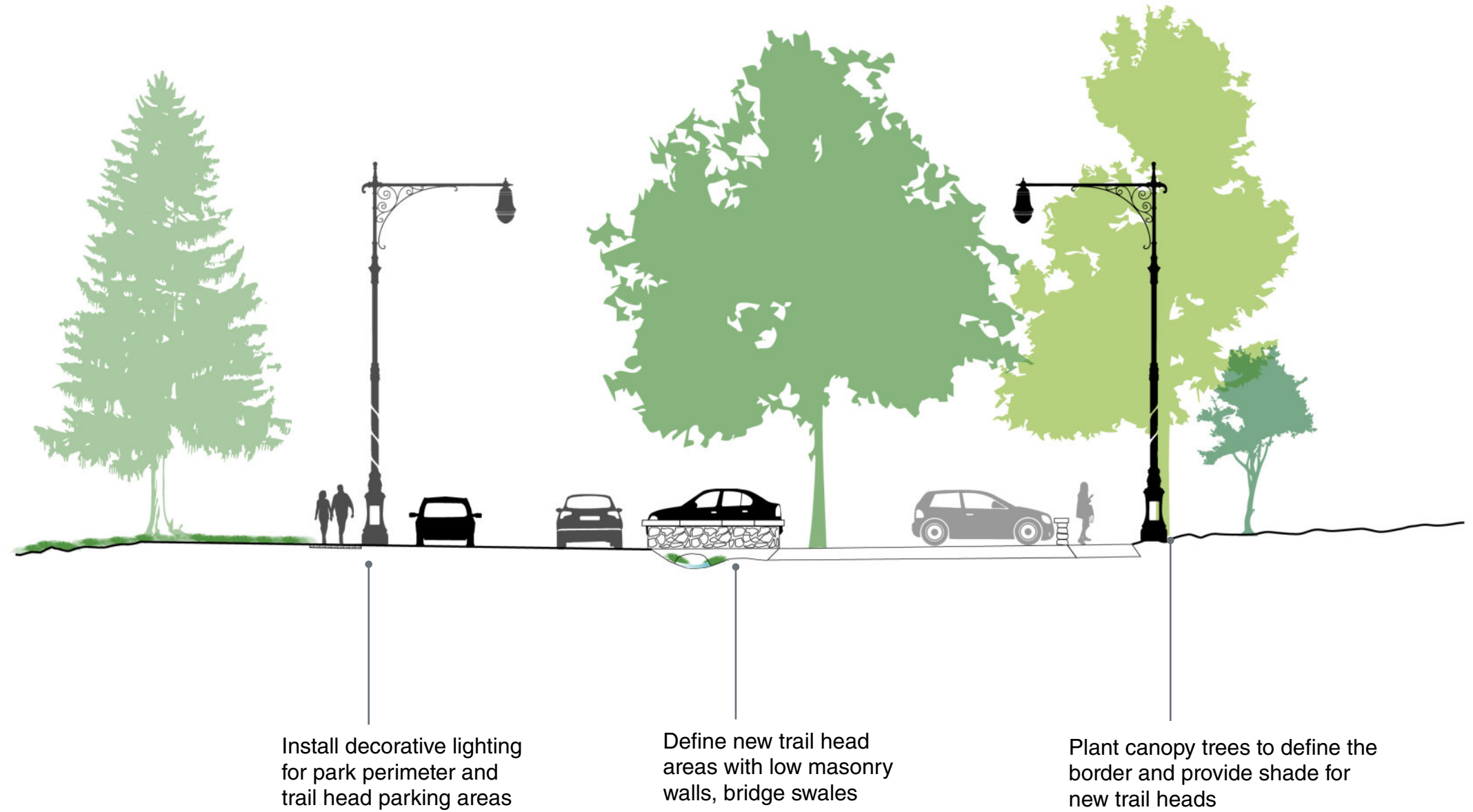
Existing conditions section along Olmsted Drive looking East



# Proposed Edge Conditions

Olmsted Drive

Key Recommendations



*Proposed conditions section along Olmsted Drive looking East*



# Park Identity

## Site Furnishings

It's useful to develop standards for site furnishings for many reasons. First, it helps to establish an identity for the park. The kit of parts works together in harmony to create a recognizable palette that works with the style of the park design. Second having key features be of consistent materials and types is easier to maintain over time.

### Key features include:

- Stone Masonry Walls and Gates
- Traditional Benches
- Picnic Tables & Chess Tables
- Bicycle Racks
- Trash Receptacles
- Lighting
- Bicycle Racks
- Wayfinding & Signage



Stone staircase and integrated seating nook, 1902. Image Courtesy of the NPS, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



# Park Identity

## Site Furnishings - Benches

- Install a standard bench throughout. The existing benches in good condition could remain, but all new program areas could return to the Central Park Sette Bench, original to the park.
- Replacement of existing benches could be phased in over time.
- New bench nooks should provide dedicated areas for companion seating.



Central Park Sette Bench



Central Park Sette Bench



# Park Identity

## Site Amenities

- Drinking Fountain - Historic but up to current ADA standards. Can also have double headed bowl (child bowl) and/or dog bowl
- Bicycle Racks
- Removable Bollards
- Chess Table and Bench Combinations
- Backless Bench



*Chess Table/Bench Combinations*



*Backless Bench*



*Cantebury drinking fountain*



*Bicycle Rack*



# Park Identity

## Canopy Trees & Ornamental Understory

- Build on the existing palette of Oaks, Maples and Sycamores
- Layer in ornamental plantings in groves in new program areas such as the skating area, goose pond preserve and amphitheater
- Strategically increase habitat value and tree cover in new program areas
- Consider the further development of an informal pinetum or arboretum



*The Arthur Ross Pinetum in Central Park is a popular destination in all seasons.*



# Park Identity

## Wayfinding and Interpretation

The story of Thompson Park is tied to the growth of Watertown and to events that shaped the country.

The park experience could be enhanced with the careful insertion and mapping of interpretive elements to tell the story of Watertown's History and the park's evolution.

A physical of the entire trail network should be available and strategic locations such as park entrances and trailhead parking areas. An interactive live map could be developed and placed on the city Website.



*Signage should be kept simple and not distract from the landscape experience*



*Park topography and boundaries visible in small gestures*



*Sharing and acknowledgment of the park beginnings is a powerful story.*



# Park Identity

## Landscape Management

The way a landscape is cared for is a powerful design tool.

Recently areas cleared of buckthorn should have designated paths, localized tree plantings and managed pollinator meadows to define and shape the landscape experience.

Portions of the trail system can be programmed for hiking, cross-country running, winter snow-shoeing and in localized areas, mountain biking.

Landscape management should balance day to day needs of safety and lawn management with more far reaching goals.

Define path connections by installing targeted landscape plantings and following maintenance regimes to control re-growth of the invasive Bukthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) which crowd out native species. Encourage a more diverse palette of plant species.

### References:

2020 New York State Pollinator Protection Plan

<https://www.nrpa.org/globalassets/research/parks-and-pollinators-resource.pdf>

<https://vtcostudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Danforth-Lab.-Creating-a->



*Existing conditions in a recently cleared area.*



# Funding Sources

## Capital Improvements

- **Complete Streets (Announced January 2023)**

Legislation (S.3897/A.8936-A) Provides Funding for “Complete Streets” Projects Inclusive of a Holistic Approach to Street Design.

- » Perimeter lighting & drainage
- » Pedestrian Safety Improvements-Internal & External
- » Bicycle Improvements & Amenities
- » Increased Accessibility-New Park Entrances

- **Environmental Protection Fund (EPF Grants administers through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA))**

Annual grant funding administered by ORPHP.

From NRDC: An important budget item in 2023 is the \$400 million expansion of the Environmental Protection Fund to include at least \$25 million for the Ocean and Great Lakes Program. This would enable New York to support and encourage the responsible growth of industries like fishing, *tourism, and recreation*, which continue to generate billions of dollars for the state.

- **The 2022 Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act**

Plan for issuing bonds has not yet been formulated. A competitive grant program will be developed that municipalities can apply. Applications will likely not be accepted until Fall 2023

- » Climate Change Mitigation, Green Jobs (Horticulture)
- » Wetland, floodplain and stream restoration
- » Open space preservation and conservation
- » Investments to reduce urban heat island, open space preservation, urban tree plantings

- **ARP (American Rescue Plan) Funding 2021**

Funds will be centrally managed by NYS DOB. Generally categories that could apply to Thompson Park include - *Public health, arts, culture and recreation*.

Projects to be funded in formation based on Statewide recovery plan.





# Thompson Park Draft Master Plan





THANK YOU!

