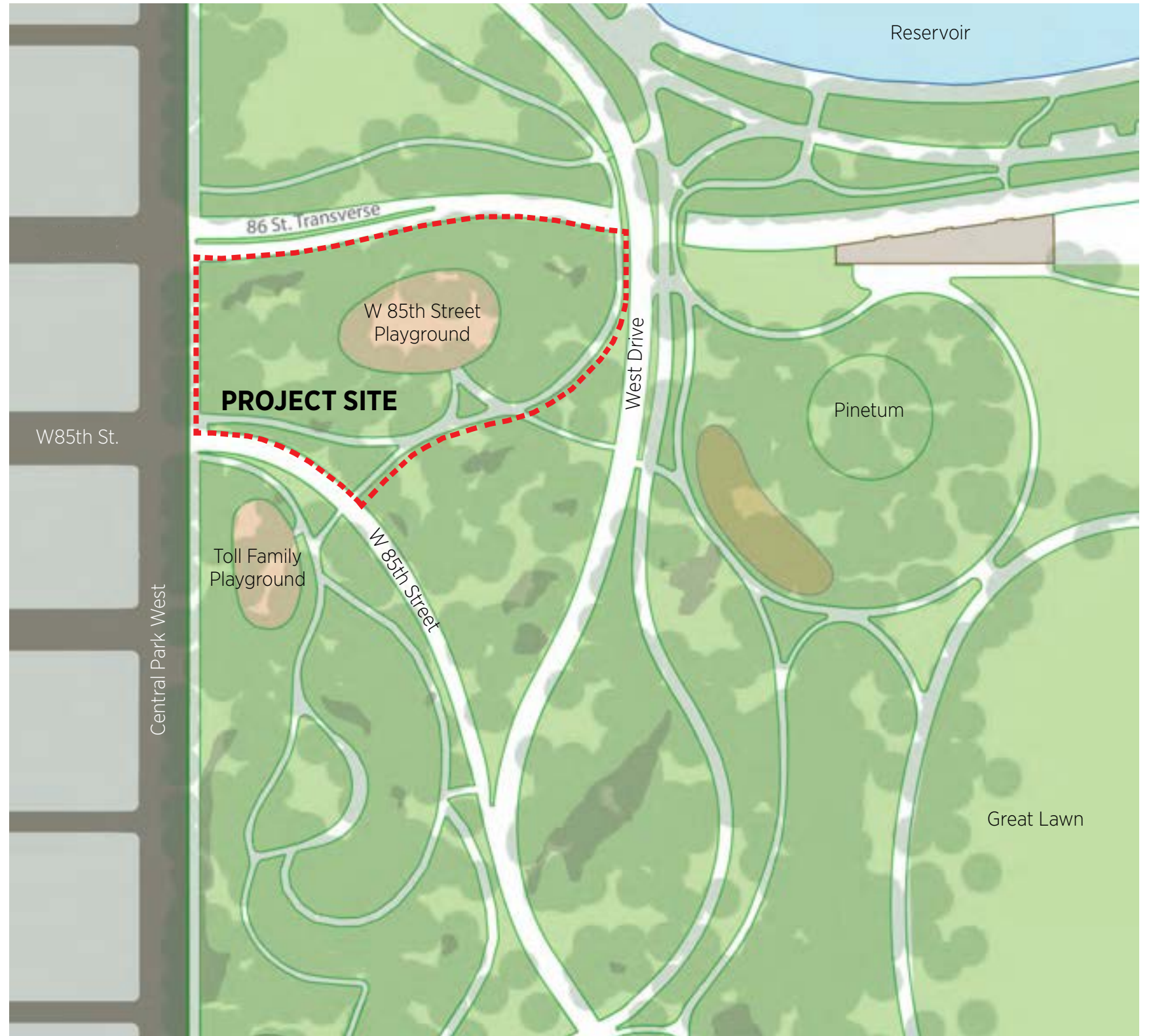
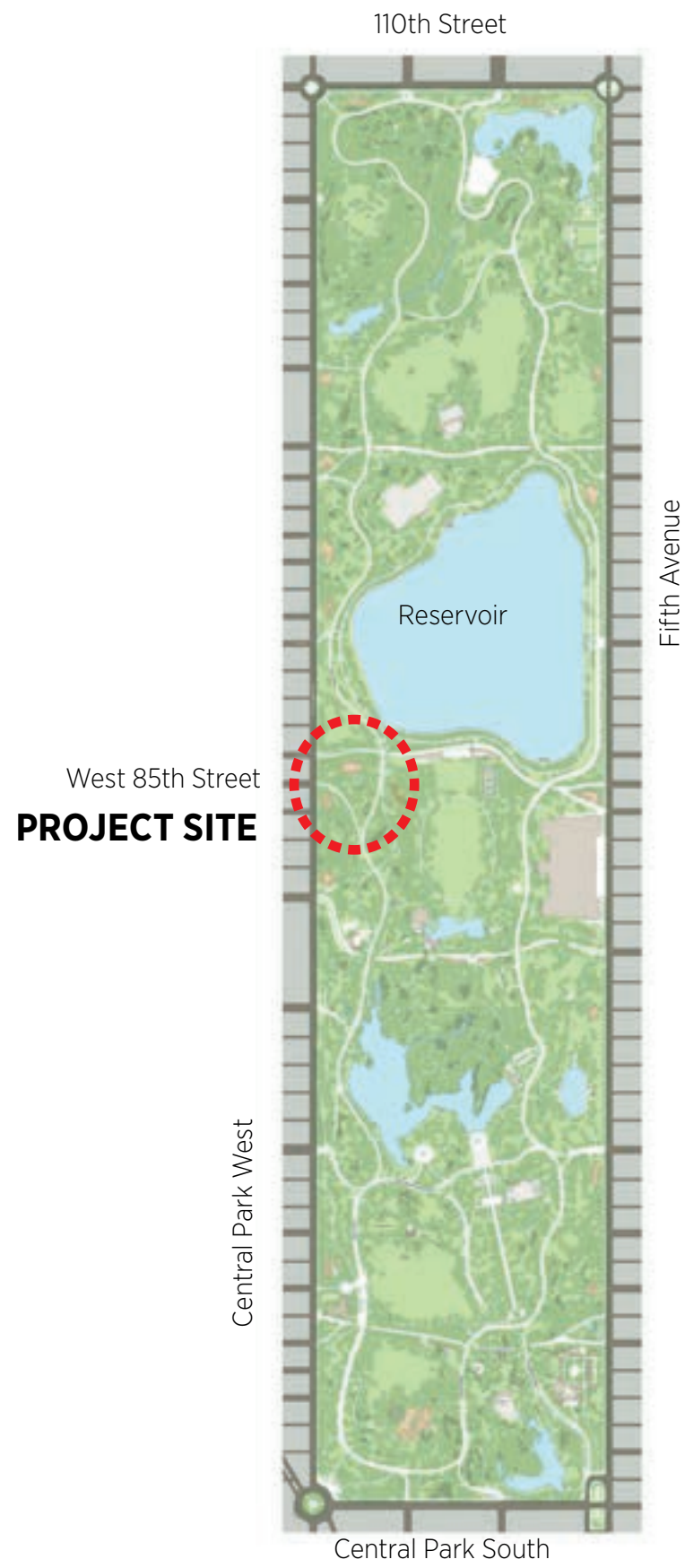


# THE RECONSTRUCTION OF WEST 85TH STREET PLAYGROUND

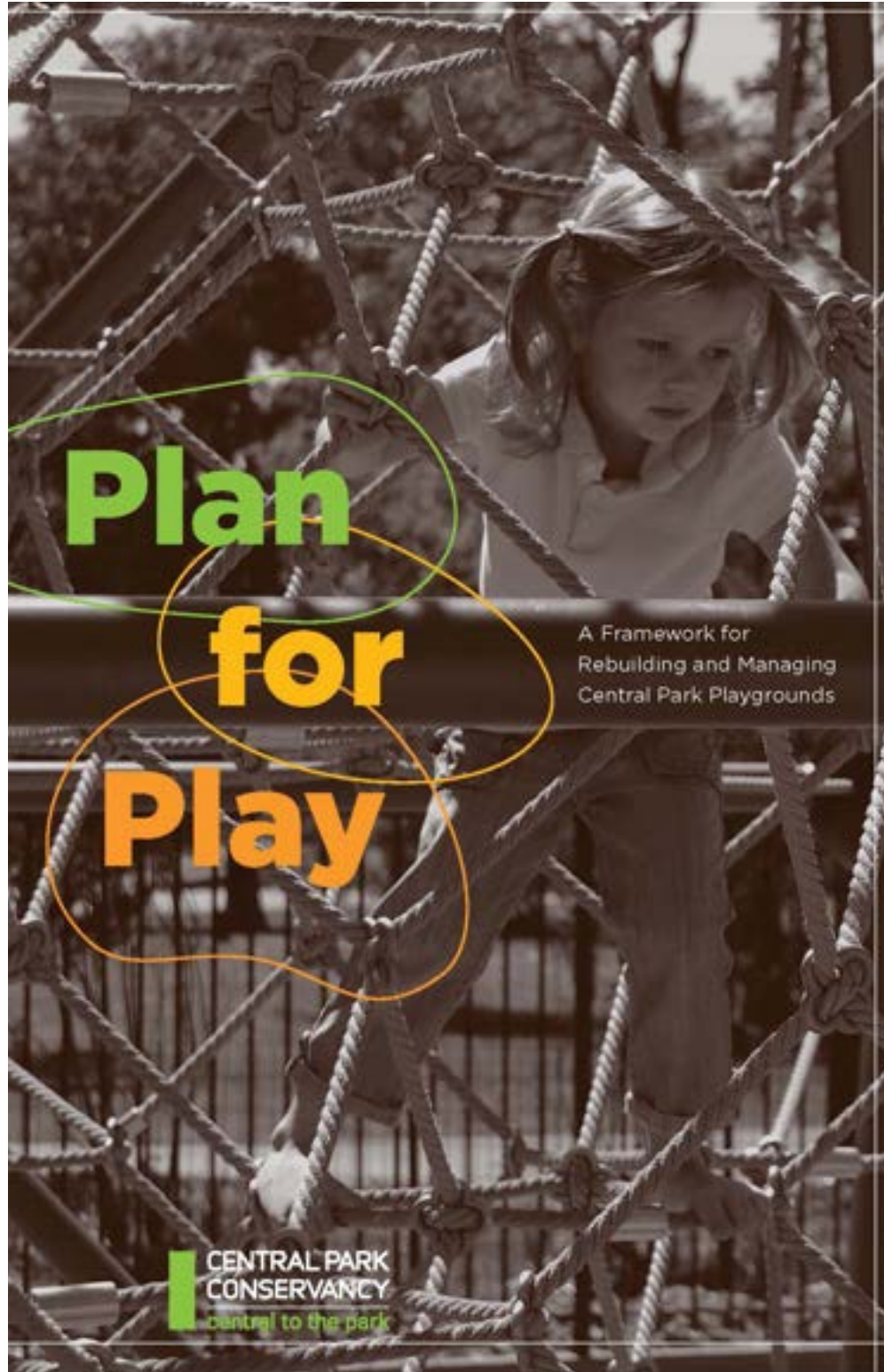








# PLAYGROUND RESTORATION GOALS



[www.planforplay.org](http://www.planforplay.org)

- Reflect the goals of the Plan for Play initiative to:
  - Improve relationship between the playgrounds and the Park.
  - Enhance the quality and variety of play experiences.
  - Maximize user accessibility.
  - Ensure compliance with current safety standards
  - Preserve unique and successful aspects of existing designs.
  - Practice sustainable design and construction.
  - Design innovative solutions.
- Acknowledge the prominence of this playground within the Seneca Village site and reenvision the playground as a play and family gathering space connected to the surrounding landscape.
- Enhance the distinctive topography and site features of the surrounding landscape.
- Create an accessible route from the west side and to W84th St Playground.















# Seneca Village Community

This kiosk marks the center of Seneca Village, a predominantly African-American community that existed from 1825-1857. The village originated when African Americans began buying property between 82nd and 85th Streets and Seventh and Eighth Avenues. Among the earliest purchasers was an important African-American church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, which initially acquired land for a burial ground. Members of the church purchased additional property and began to build houses. More African Americans joined the community in the 1830s, and in the following decade Irish immigrants also began to settle in the village. In the 1850s, the city used eminent domain to acquire the land as part of Central Park; by 1857, residents were required to leave and all structures were razed.

Researchers believe that African Americans may have begun to settle in the area to create an autonomous community far from downtown. Although New York State abolished slavery in 1827, African Americans still faced discrimination and threats of violence, among other grave obstacles to freedom and citizenship. Some established their own institutions — schools, churches, newspapers, and aid organizations — as well as separate neighborhoods where they could build community. In a sparsely-settled area, about three miles from the developed part of Manhattan, Seneca Village was a refuge from both the racist climate and the overcrowded and unhealthy conditions of the rapidly growing city.

Seneca Village was the most densely settled part of the 776 acres slated for Central Park, land that was home to approximately 1,000 people. By 1855, roughly 225 individuals lived in Seneca Village, which consisted of fifty-two houses, three churches, at least one school, and several burial grounds. Roughly two-thirds of Seneca Village residents were African-American, about half of whom owned their homes.

## The Significance of Seneca Village

The high rate of property ownership in Seneca Village made it an exceptional community for 19th-century New York. For African Americans, having property was not only a source of economic security, it was also a path to suffrage. Beginning in 1821, New York State required African-American men to own at least \$250 worth of property in order to vote, while European-American men were eligible to vote without having to own property. Some African Americans owned property in Seneca Village but did not actually live there, instead renting out their land or building it as an investment.



This map of Seneca Village, created by engineer Augustus H. H. H. in 1855, shows the layout of the community. The map is a detailed drawing of the village, showing the layout of the community, including the church, school, and other buildings. It is a valuable historical document that provides a visual representation of the village's structure and layout.

That many residents viewed their homes and lived in the village for a long time defies the typical 19th-century depiction of the community as a shantytown inhabited by destitute migrants. Park administrators and journalists, skewering the construction of the park often portrayed Seneca Village — along with other settlements and residents in the area — in very disparaging terms, highlighting contemporary racist attitudes towards African Americans and disdain for the poor.

Seneca Village was far from a shantytown — while some residents were poor and did live in buildings described as shacks, most lived in two-story homes. Also in defiance of stereotypes, most African-American residents were gainfully employed, typically as unskilled laborers or service workers. Among the occupations listed in the various records are cook, waiter, domestic, cake maker, grocer, preacher, and carpenter. Records also indicate that many children living in the village attended school, suggesting that families prioritized education. All of these factors have led researchers to characterize Seneca Village as a predominantly middle-class community, one that was more stable and prosperous than other African-American enclaves in the city at the time.

Seneca Village's three churches were another marker of a stable community, anchoring not only religious but also political and social life for African Americans. African Union Church built around 1843 and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (built 1850) were both crucial locations for churches based downtown. All Saints' Church built 1848 was established as a mission by St. Michael's Episcopal Church, a congregation on the Upper West Side, and was attended by both European Americans and African Americans.

## What happened to Seneca Village?

When the city began planning for Central Park it acquired land through eminent domain — the right of governments to take private land for public use. Those who owned property were compensated for its value but residents were required to leave, a long process that ended in the fall of 1857. The construction of Central Park began in 1858 with the clearing of the land, including the demolition of Park House in 1855 and the clearing of the burial grounds. Records show that

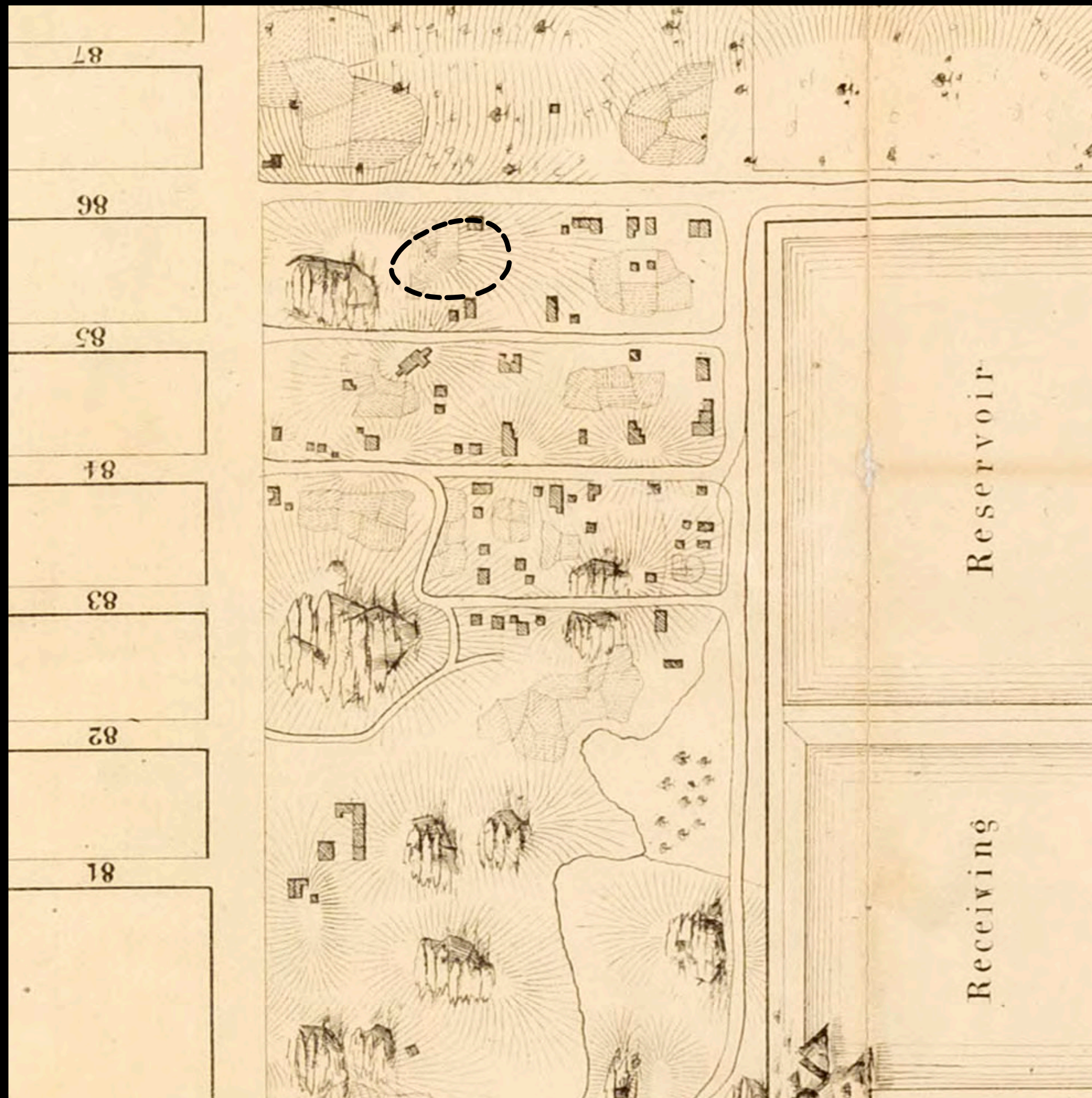
## Timeline

- 1815** Seneca Village is founded by African Americans who began buying property between 82nd and 85th Streets and Seventh and Eighth Avenues.
- 1817** St. Michael's Episcopal Church is founded in the village.
- 1821** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1824** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1825** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1827** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1830** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1832** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1834** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1836** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1838** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1840** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1842** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1844** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1845** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1849** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1850** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1853** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1855** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1857** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1858** The village is incorporated as a separate community.
- 1861** The village is incorporated as a separate community.

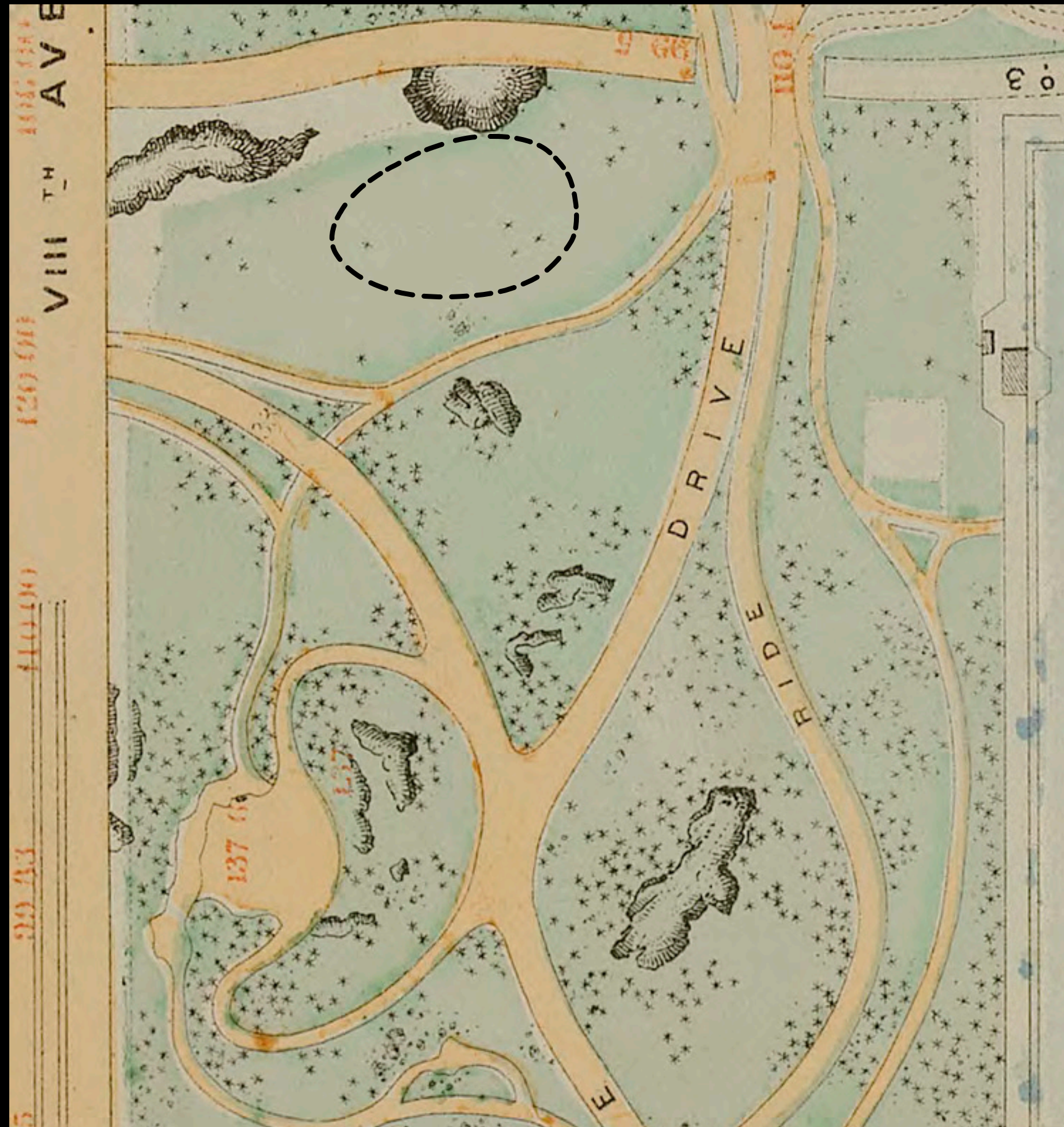








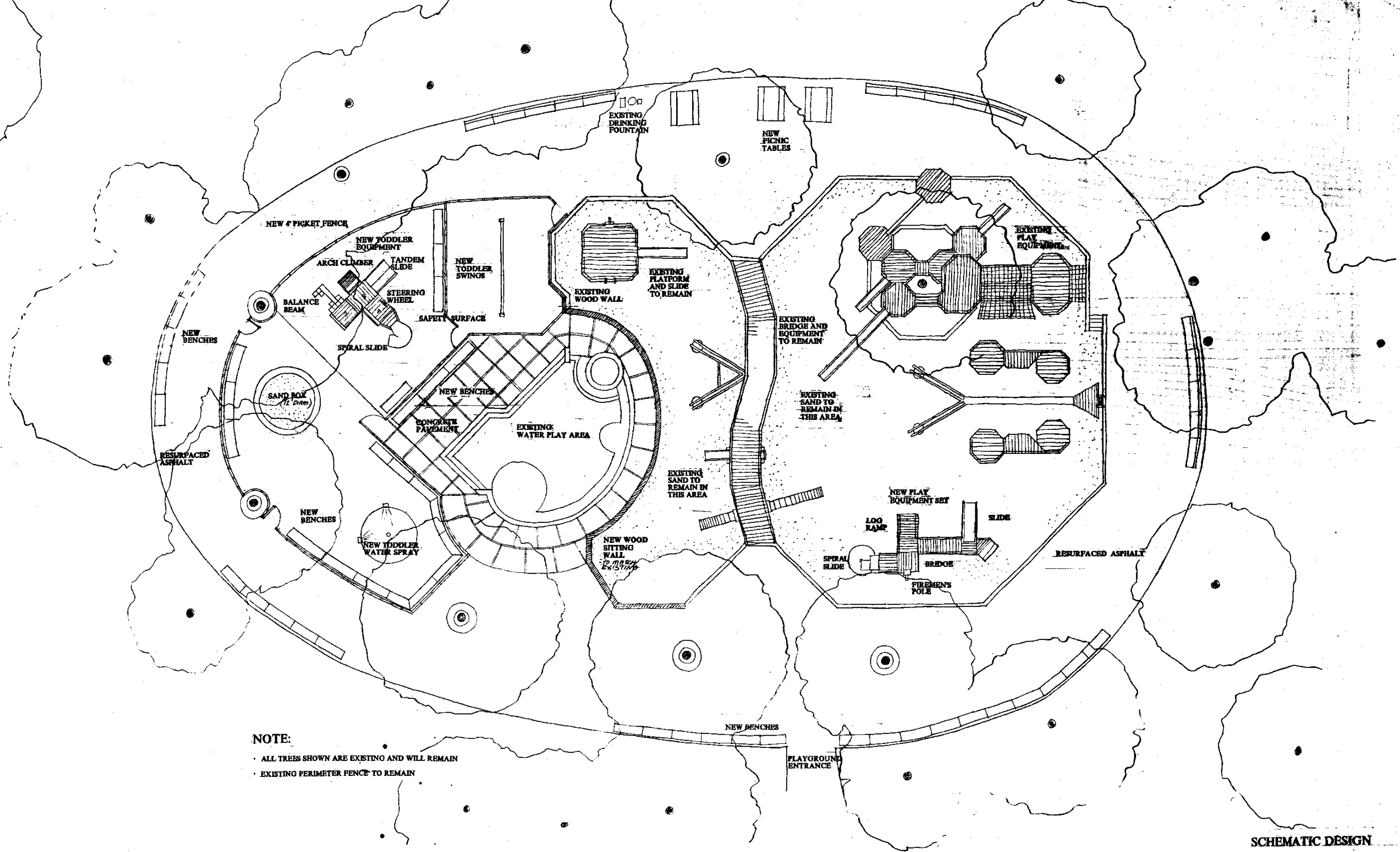












SCHEMATIC DESIGN





















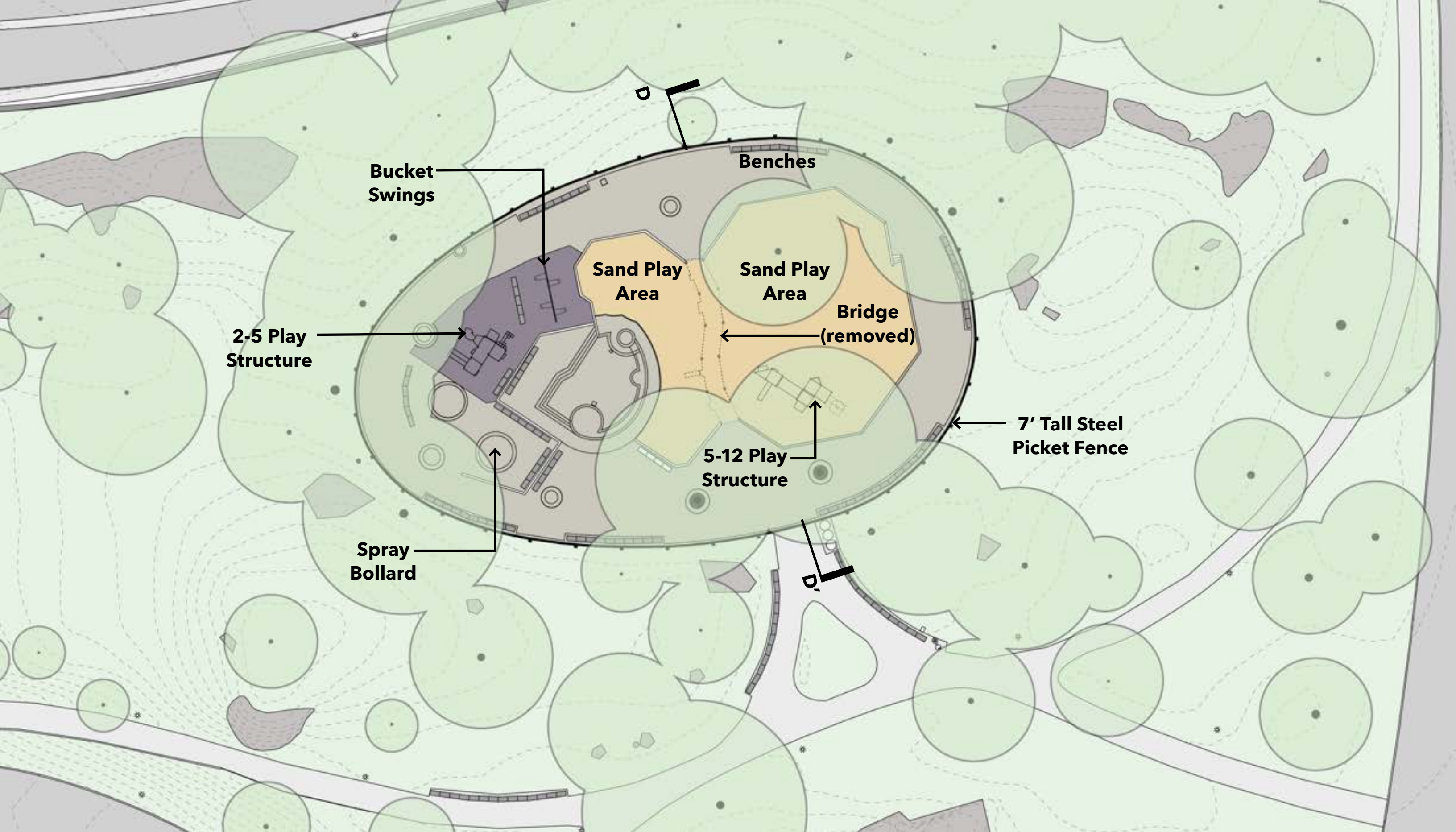




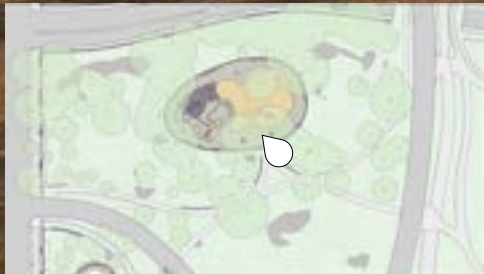
























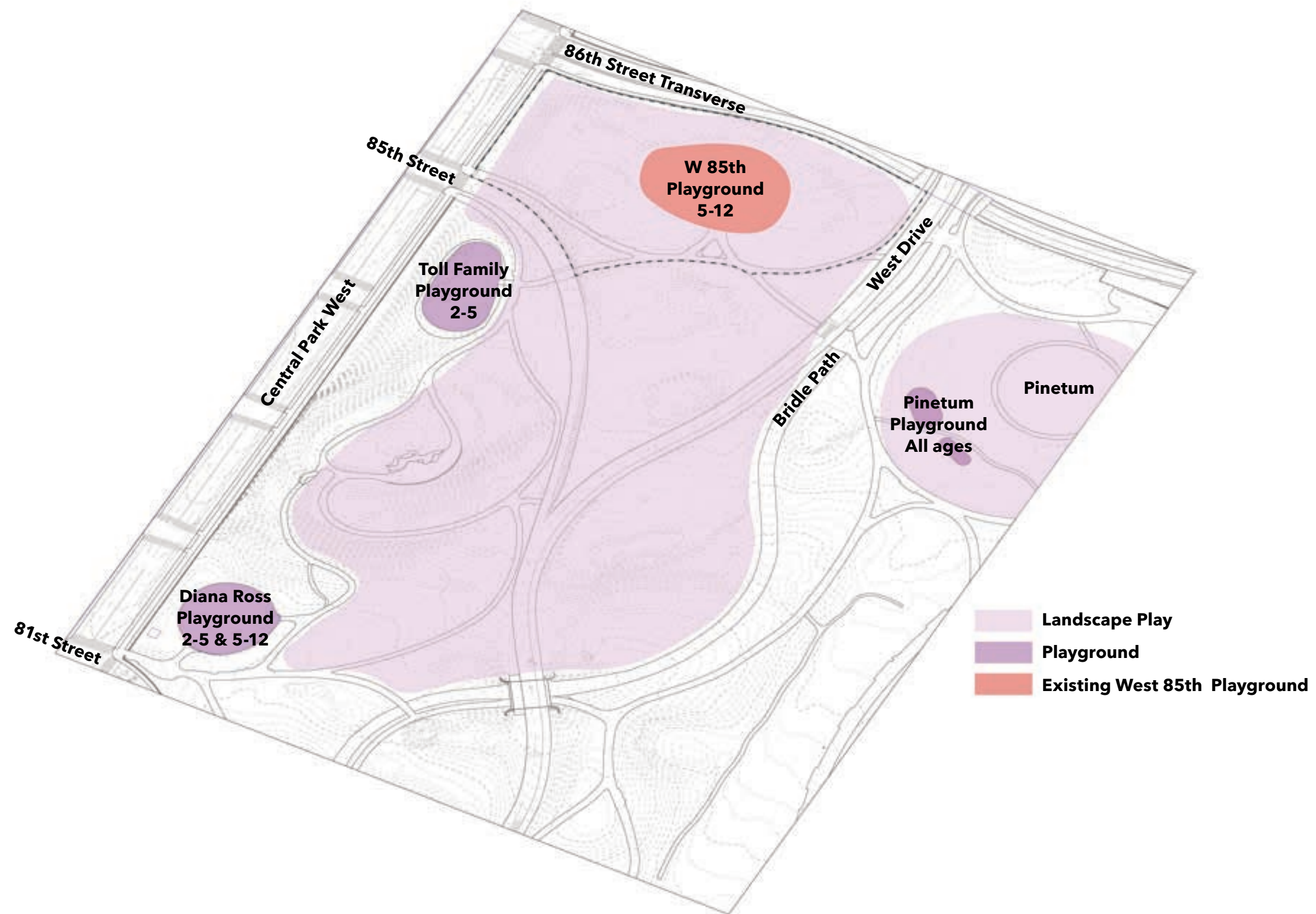








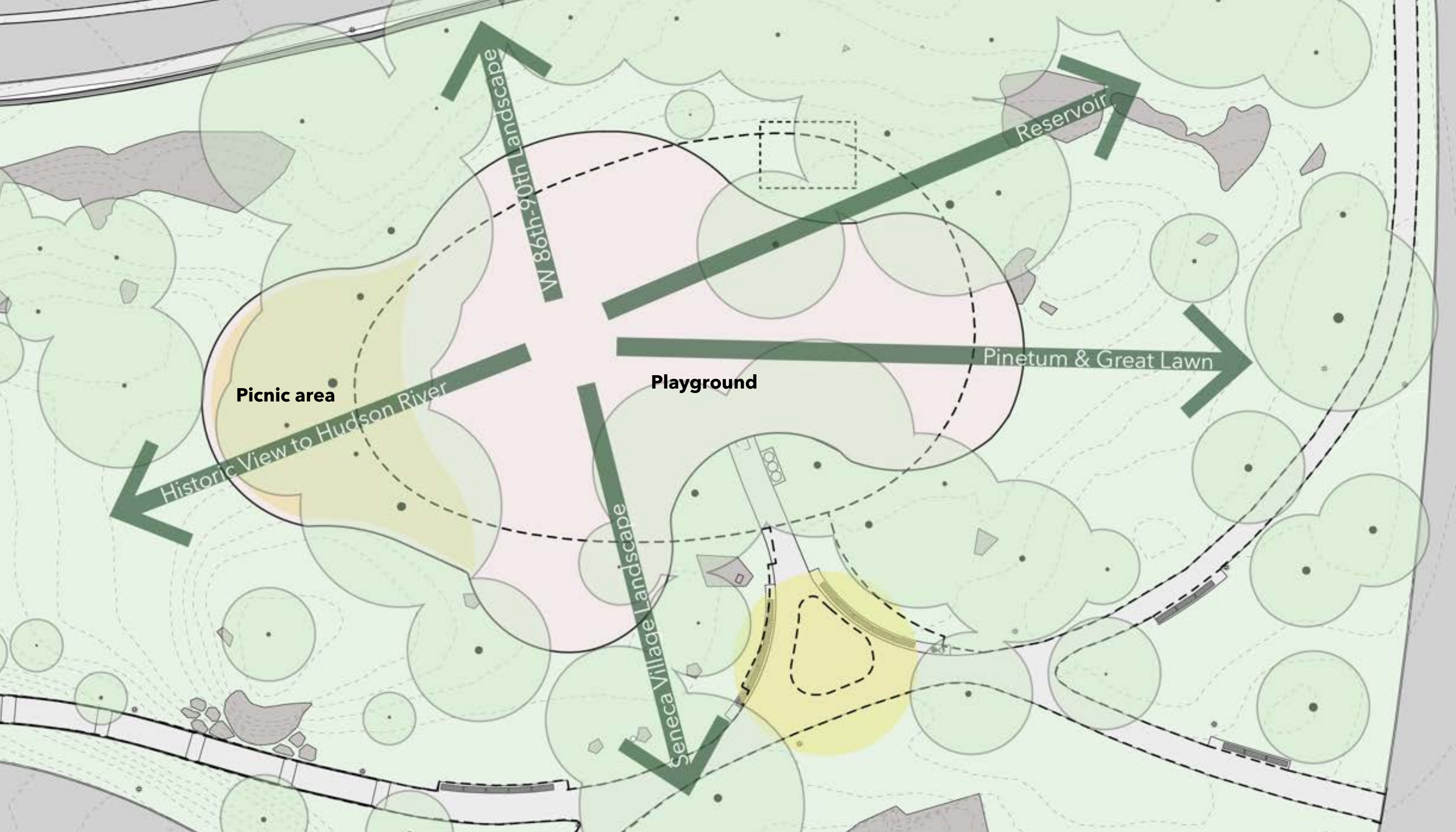














**Playground**

Existing Playground Footprint: 26,196 SF  
Proposed Playground Footprint: 24,455 SF  
6.6% decrease

Proposed Picnic Area: 6,336 SF  
Proposed PG Footprint + Picnic Area: 30,791 SF  
17.5% increase

**Paths**

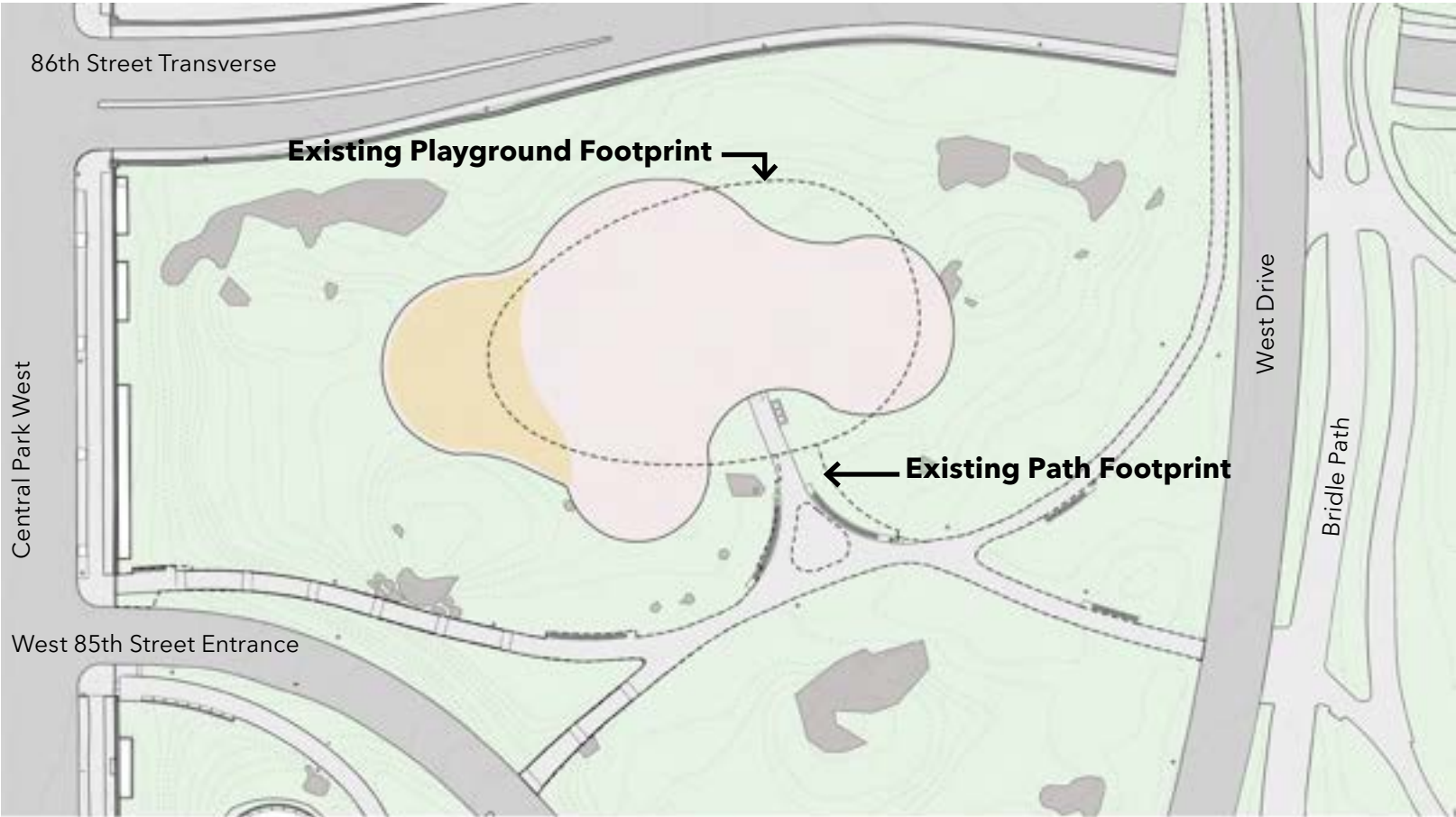
Existing Paths: 12,637 SF  
Proposed Paths: 13,256 SF  
4.9% increase

**Total**

Existing Playground + Existing Paths: 38,833 SF  
Proposed Playground + Proposed Paths: 37,711 SF  
2.9% decrease

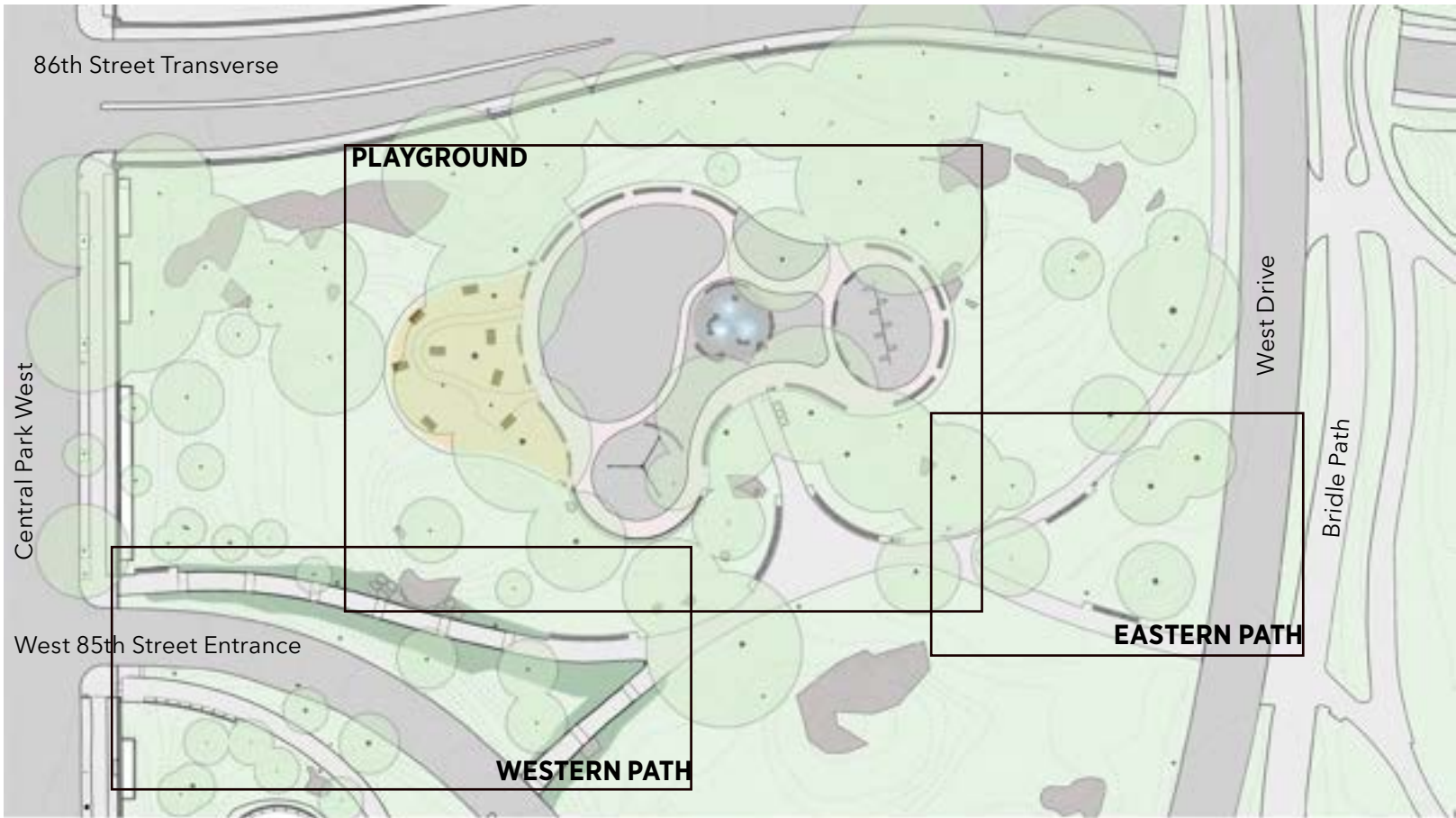
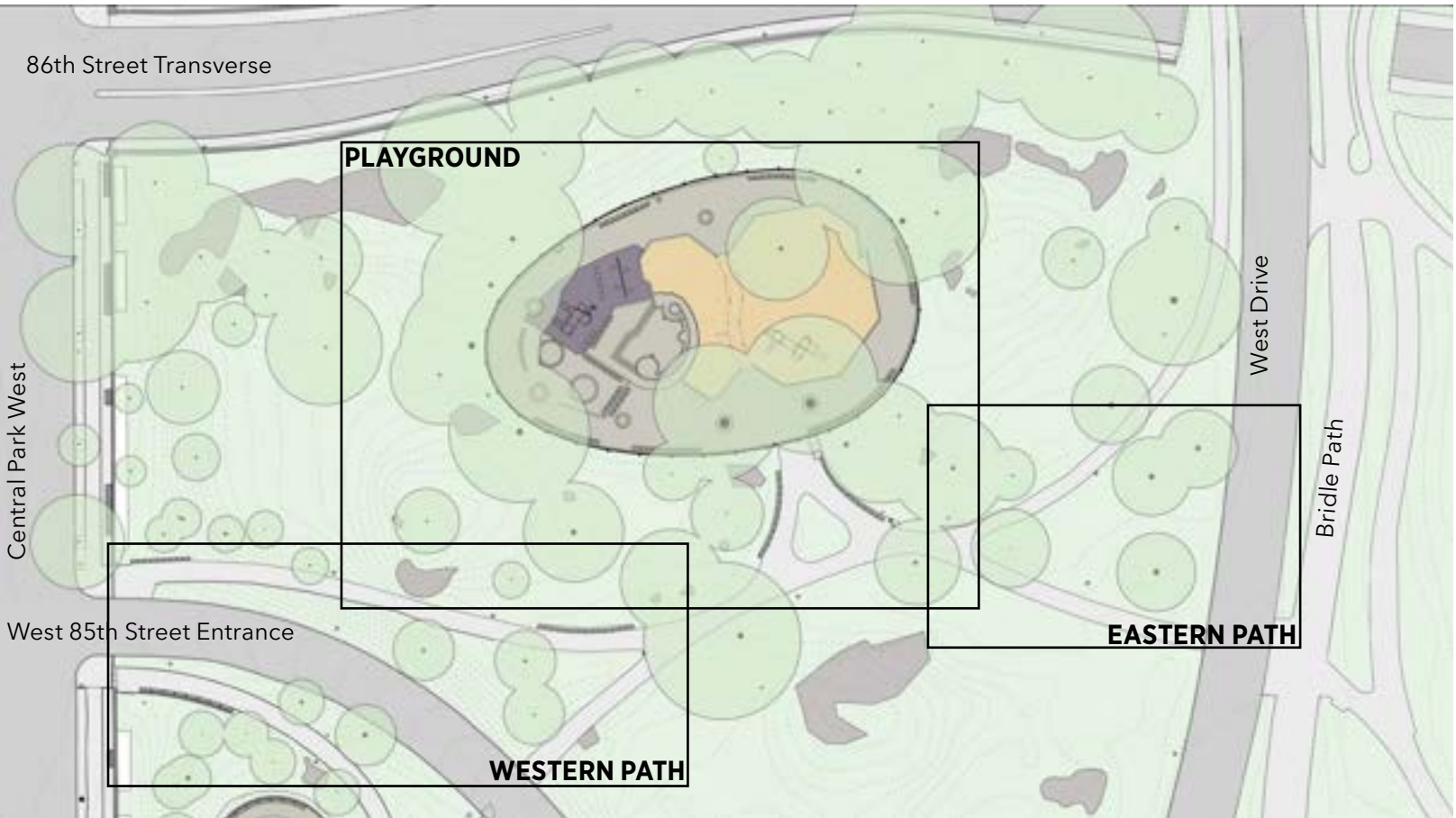
Proposed Playground + Picnic Area+ Proposed Paths: 44,047 SF  
13.4% increase

\* Picnic area ground plane material is bonded wood carpet which is a pervious material



**EXISTING AND PROPOSED OVERLAY**

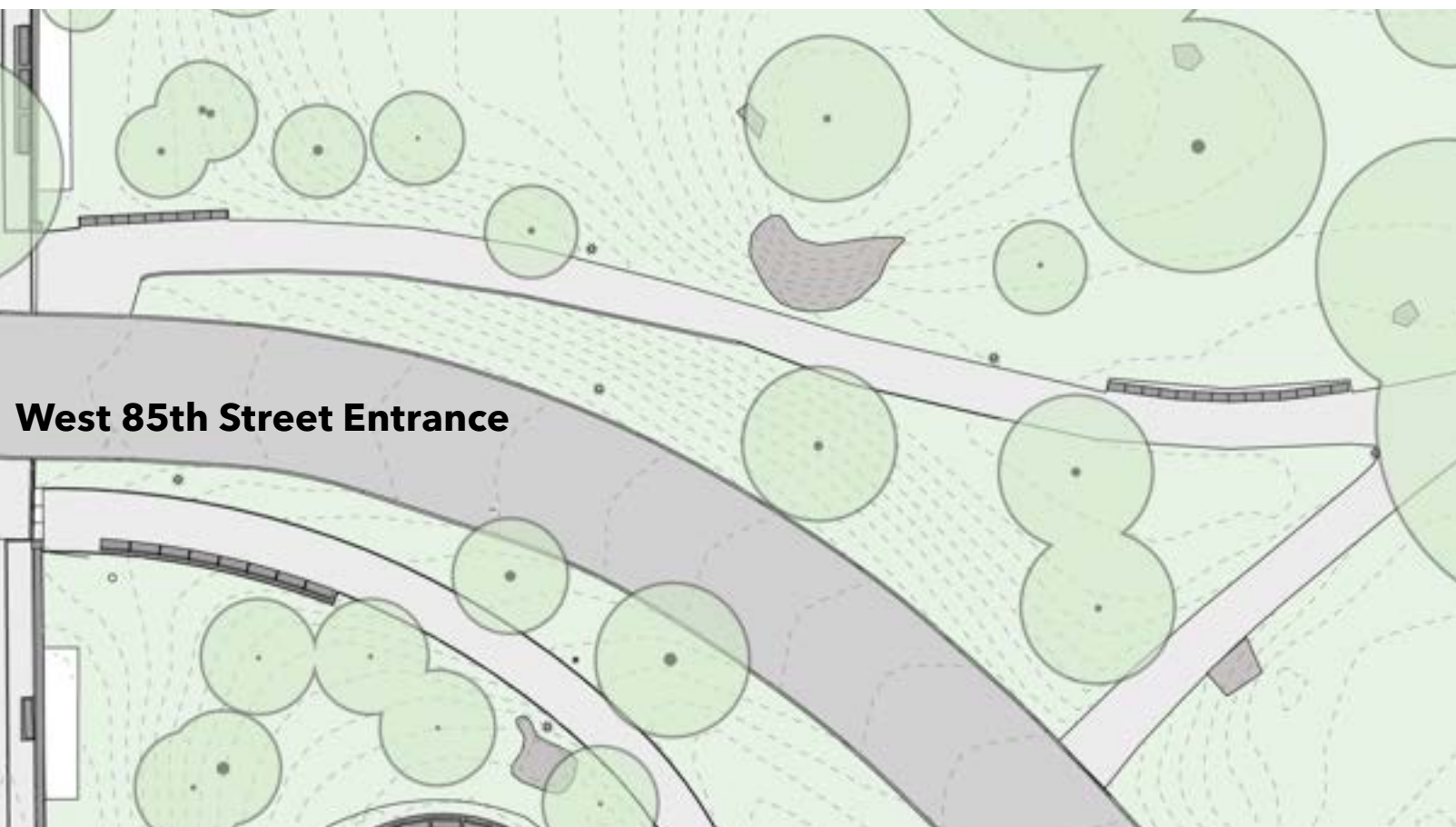




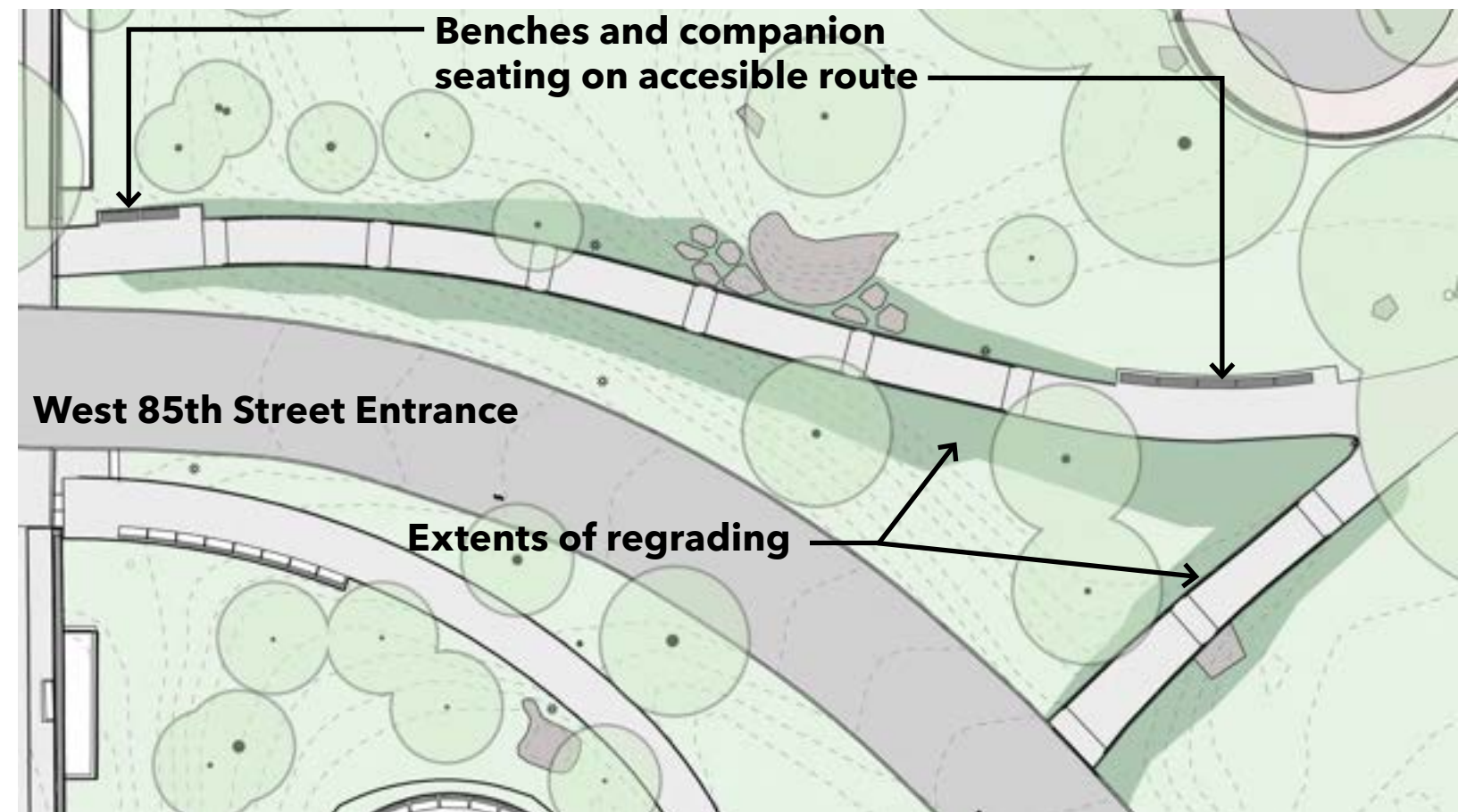
**EXISTING**

**PROPOSED**



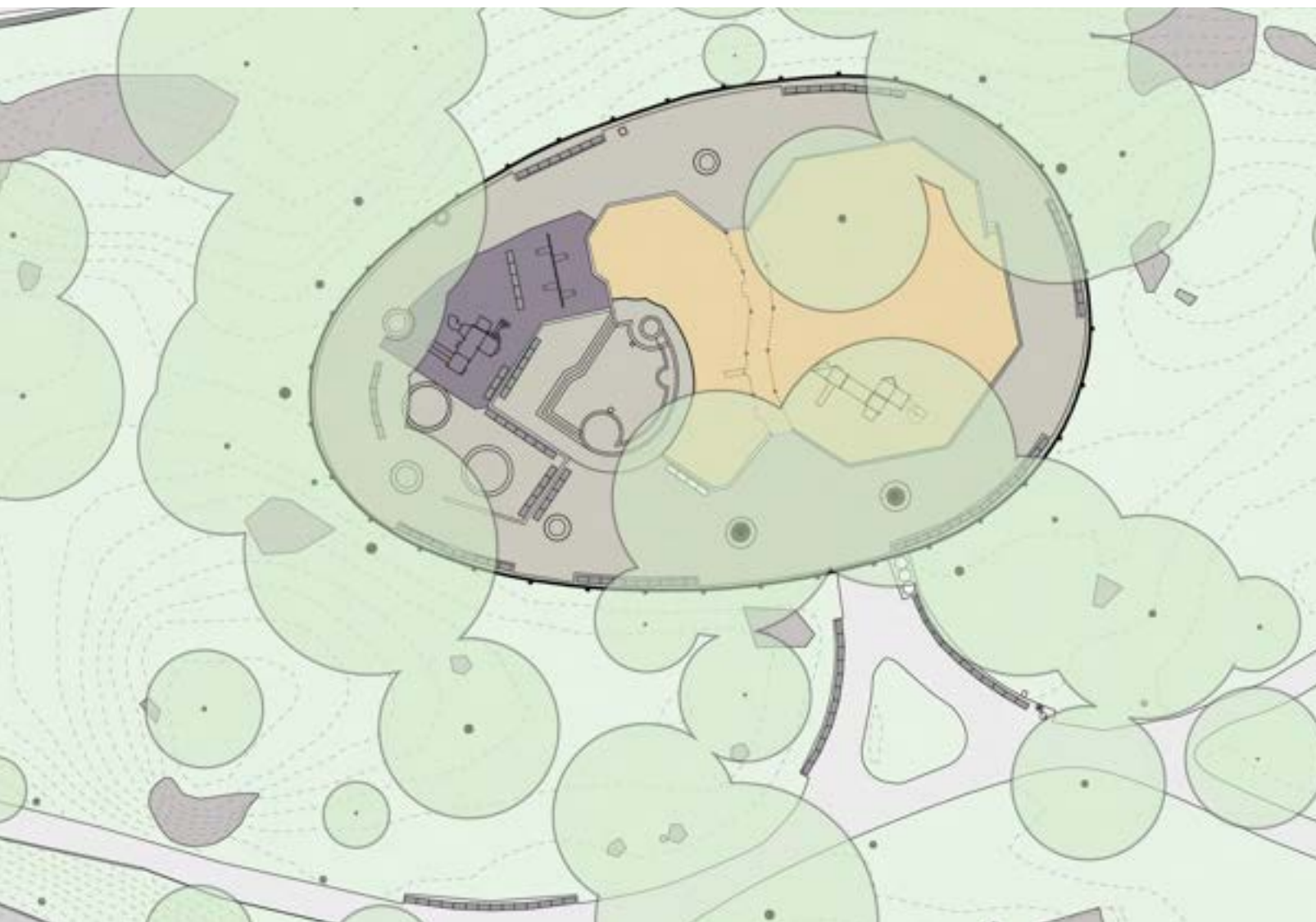


**EXISTING**



**PROPOSED**





**EXISTING**

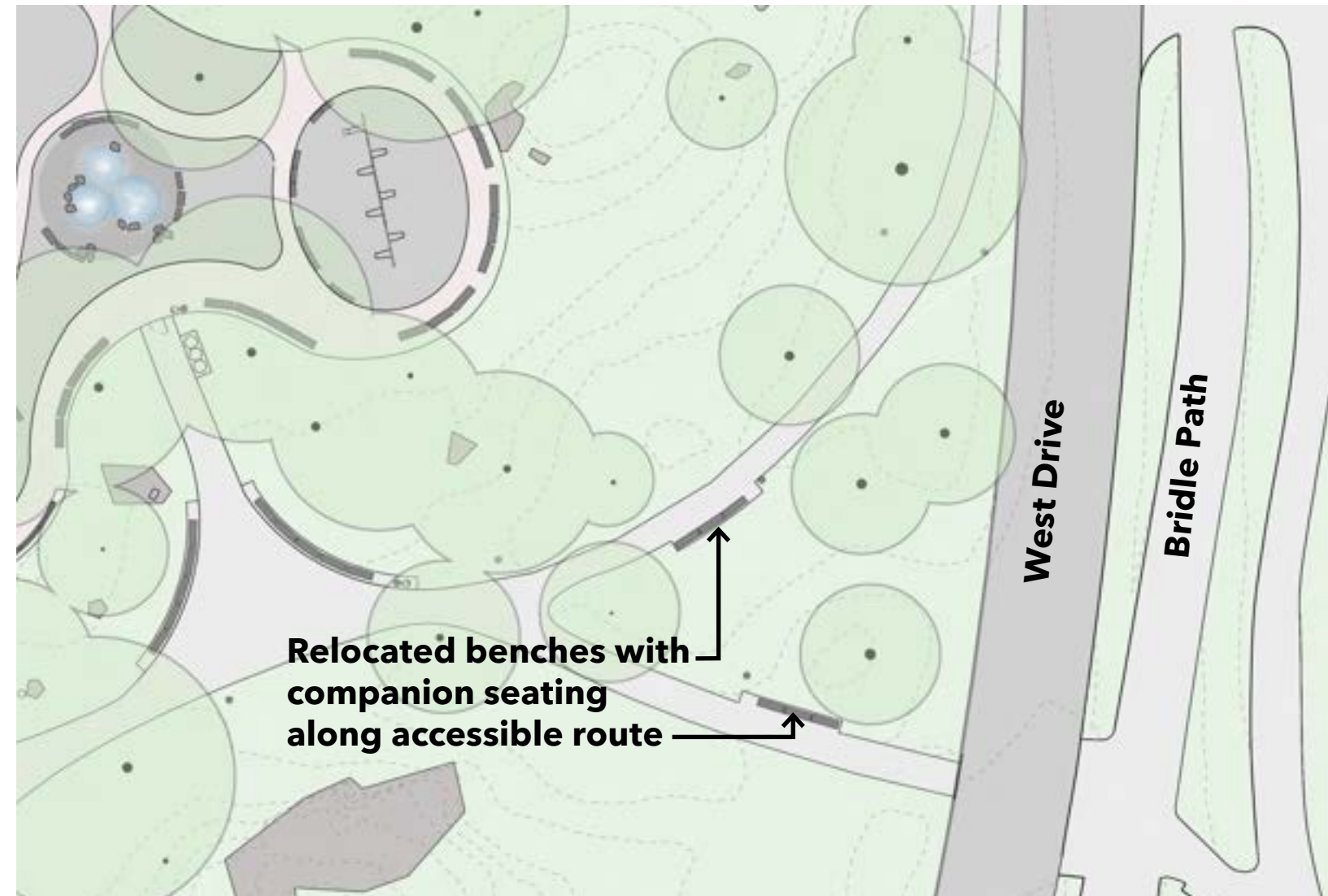


**PROPOSED**





**EXISTING**

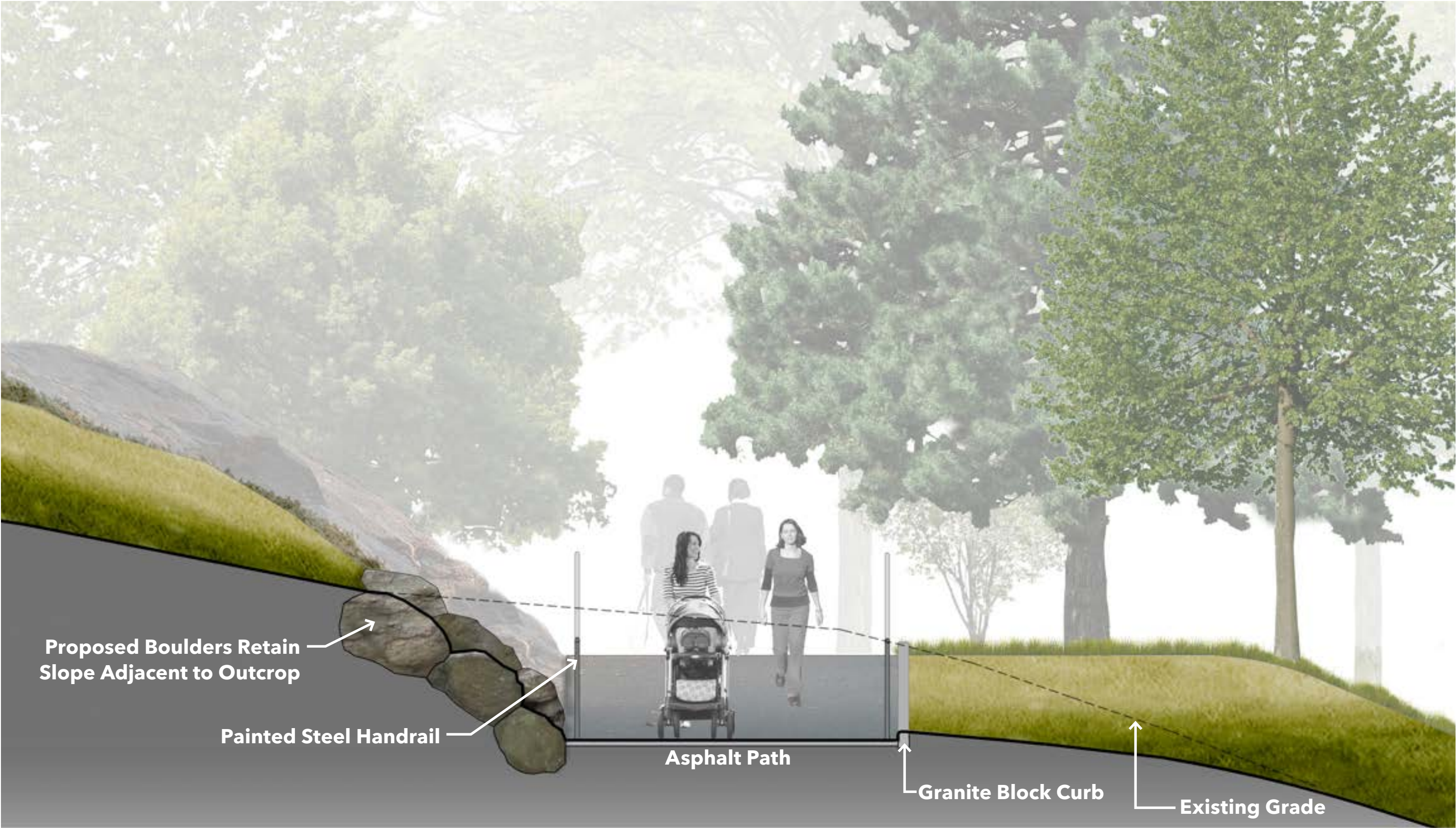


**PROPOSED**









Proposed Boulders Retain  
Slope Adjacent to Outcrop

Painted Steel Handrail

Asphalt Path

Granite Block Curb

Existing Grade





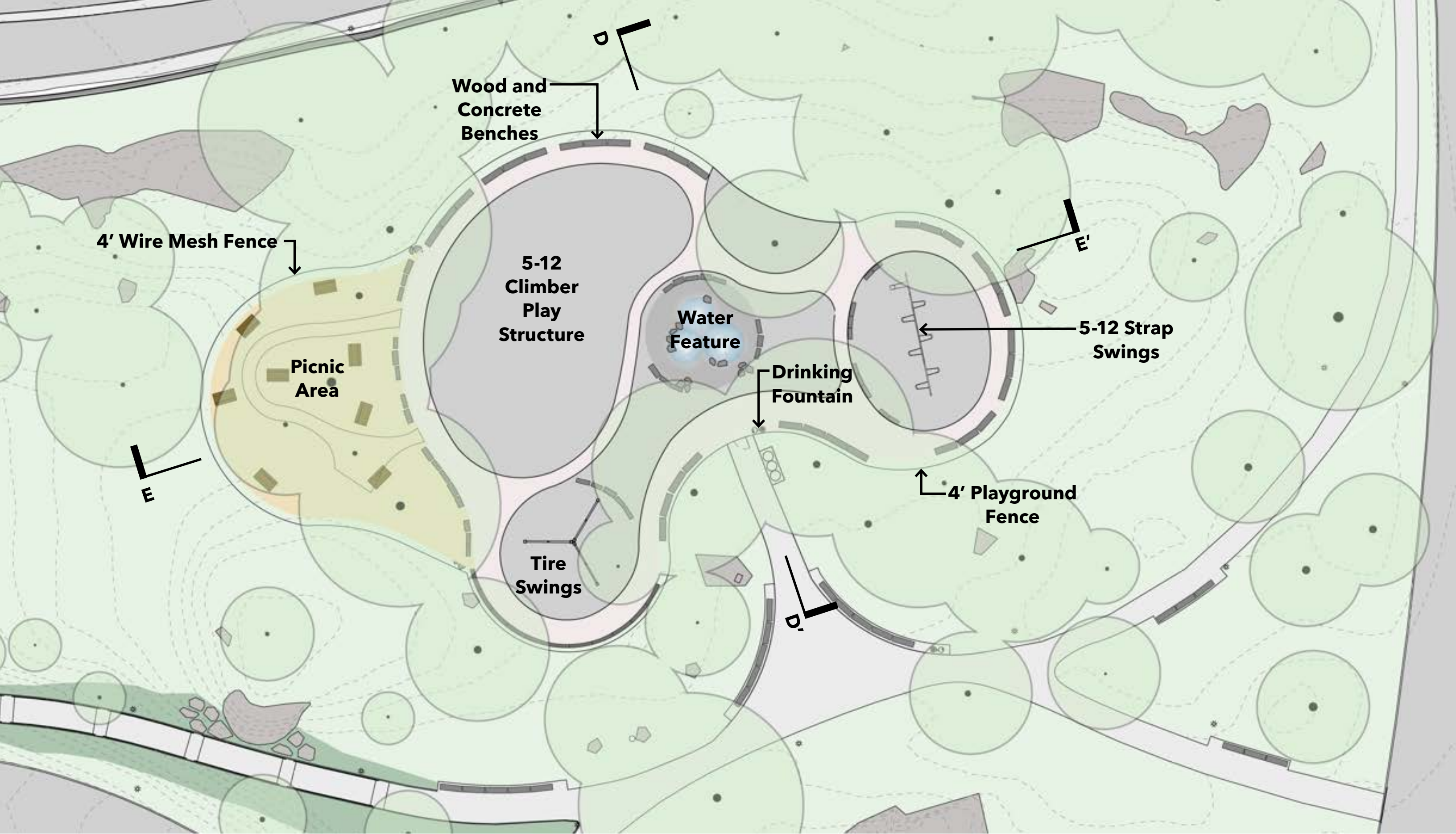














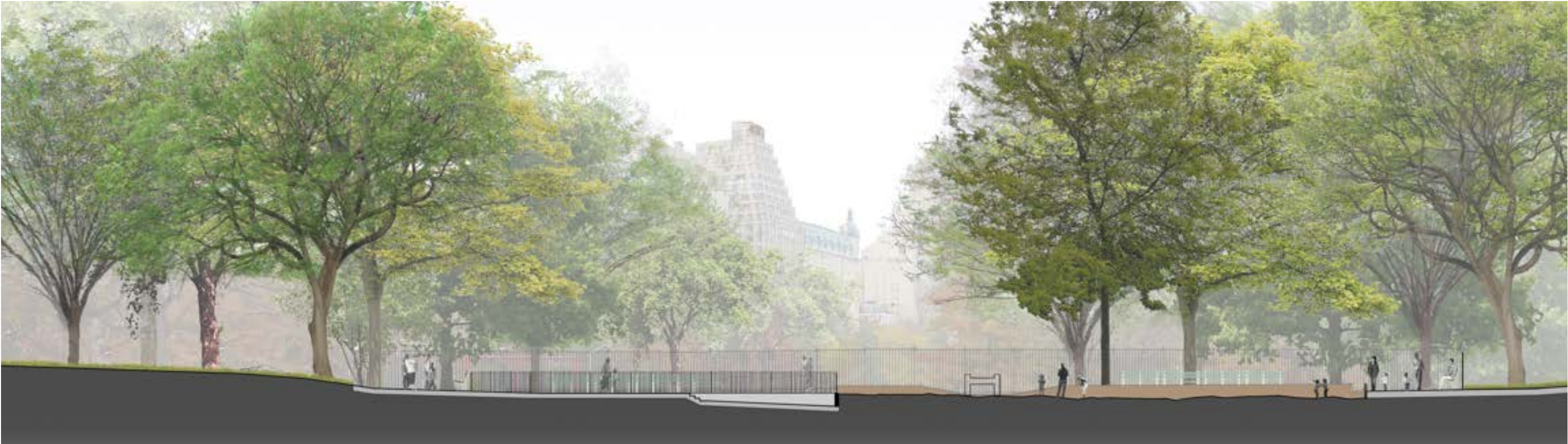


EXISTING SECTION ELEVATION



PROPOSED SECTION ELEVATION

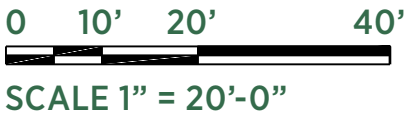




EXISTING SECTION ELEVATION




PROPOSED SECTION ELEVATION









 Wood and Concrete Bench  
Place with Added Space for Companion Seat



 Central Park Settee Bench  
Place with Added Space for Companion Seat



 Custom Stone Bench



 Custom Wood Bench




 Picnic Table

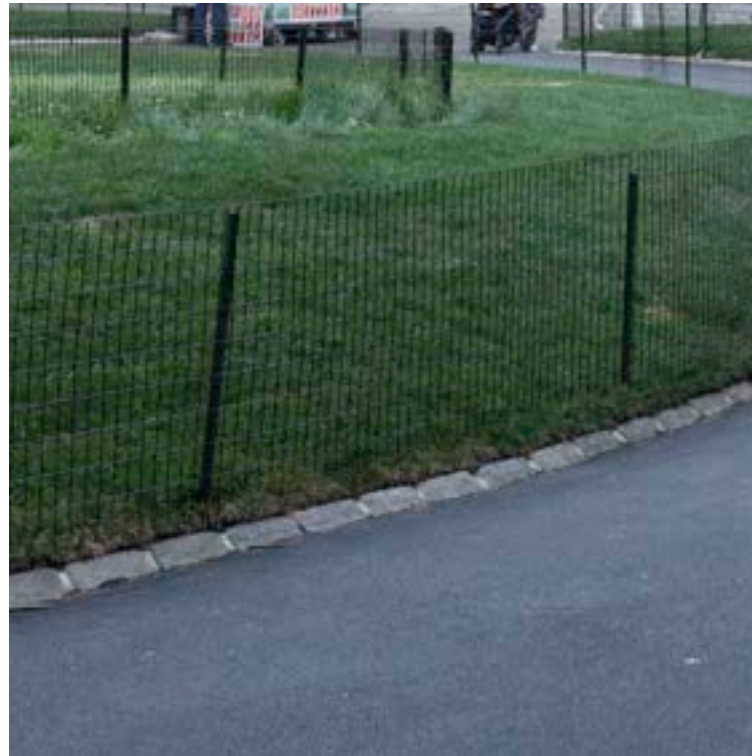


Key Plan





 Accessible Path - Rectangular Asphalt Block Paver Landings and Child Handrail (Round Steel, Painted Black Finish)




 Asphalt Paving with Sloping Granite Block Curb

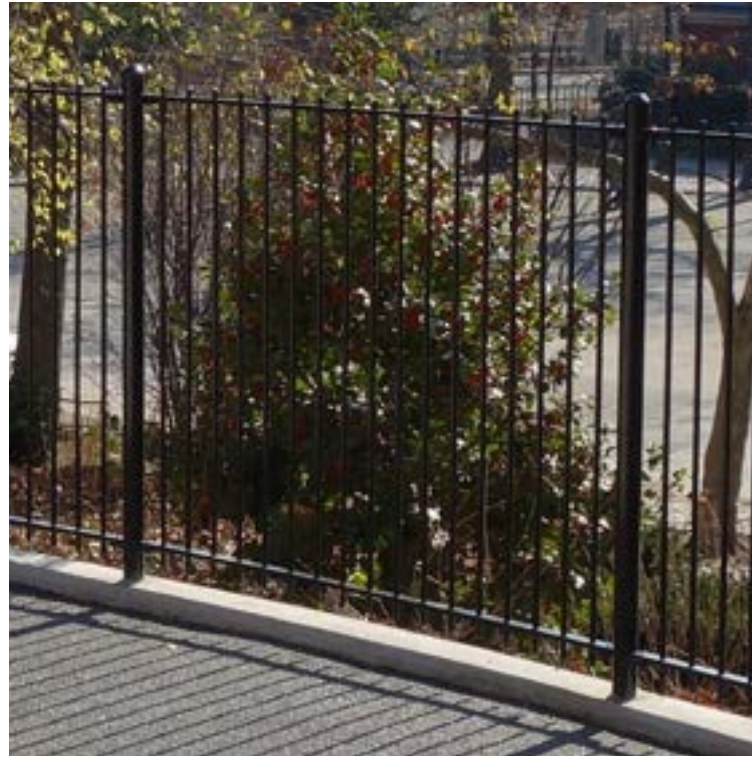



Key Plan





 4' Wire Mesh Fence at Picnic Area



 4' Steel Picket Fence Around Playground on 8" Concrete Curb (Safari Playground)

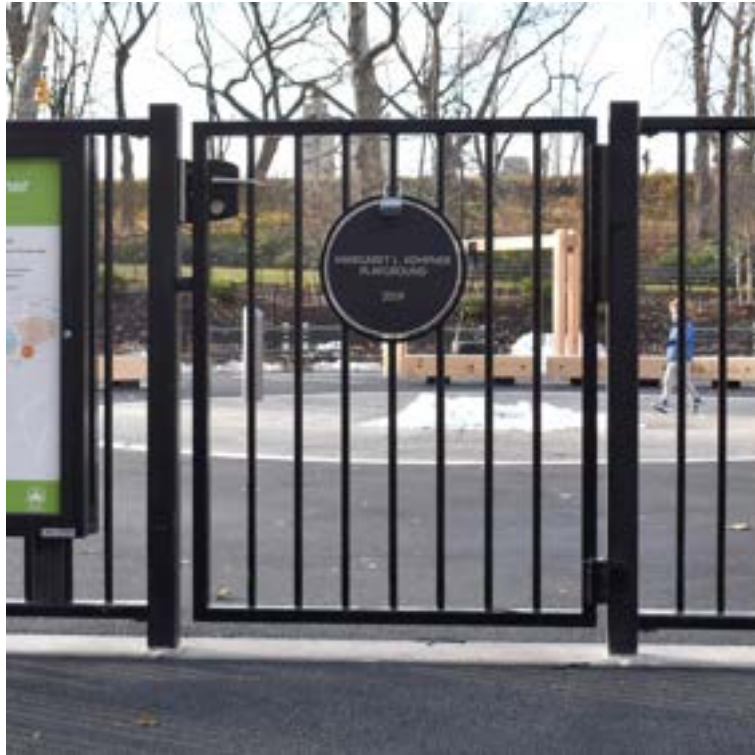


 Playground Gate



Key Plan





 Granite Threshold



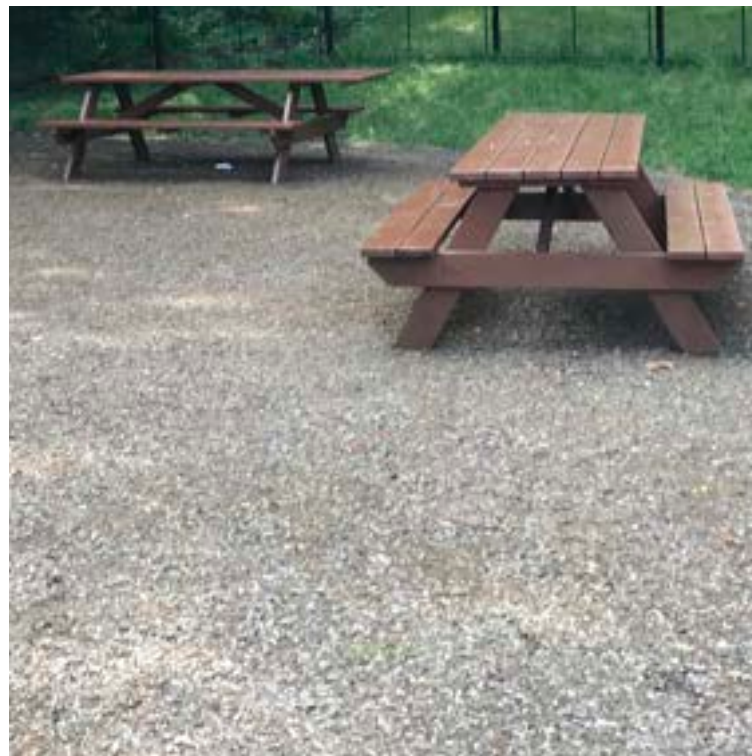
 Asphalt



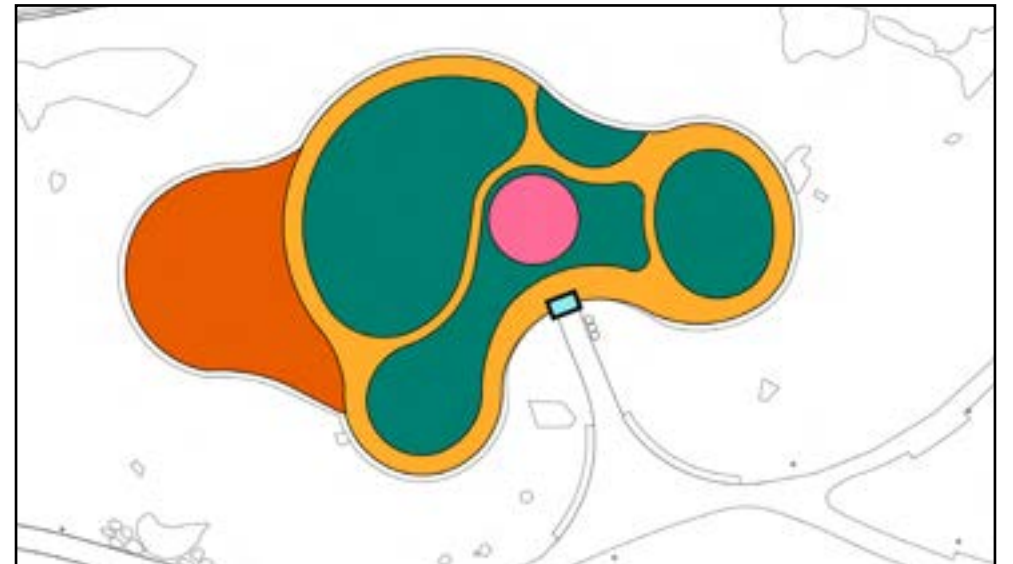
 Safety Surface - Gray



 Exposed Aggregate Concrete and Flush Concrete Border



 Bonded Wood Carpet



Key Plan







# APPENDIX



West 93rd Street Playground (Wild West) - 2015

East 110th Street Playground - 2013

East 79th Street Playground - 2014

Previous Footprint



Revised Footprint

