



Parks Commissioners:

Emily Donaldson (2027)

Andrew Brewer (2028)

Kassia Randzio, Chair (2029)

Jessa Barnard (2030)

Rebecca Copans (2031)

Alec Ellsworth (Parks Director)

Parks Commission

Wednesday, August 5th, 2026 / 6:00 PM

Location: Walking Meeting. Meet at Summer St. Park

Mission: The Parks Commission advances a long-term vision to ensure that parks, gardens, greenways, and natural areas are vital to Montpelier's community identity and are forever available for the enjoyment of all.

Meeting Agenda

The August meeting is traditionally a walking meeting, and this year it will be held on **Wednesday, August 5th, from 6-7:30pm**. It will be a walking meeting to visit Summer Street Park, the new park at 127 Elm St., and Mill Pond Park.

Meet at Summer St. Park at 6pm to join. The goals of the meeting will be to review planned improvements for Summer Street Park, Mill Pond Park, and the new park at 127 Elm St. and get feedback from neighbors and those who use the park.

6:00 Commissioner Introductions

6:03 August 5th Agenda, June 15th Minutes

6:05 Public Comment for items not on the agenda

6:10 Walking meeting beginning at Summer St. Park, and visiting Mill Pond Park and 127 Elm St.

7:20 Agenda items, date, and location for next month's meeting.

Staff Update to the Parks Commission: August, 2026

Project Updates

- **Phase 1: Plan**
- **Phase 2: Prepare**
 - o Pump Track Expansion: MAMBA has been working on permitting with our Planning office.
- **Phase 3: Implement**
 - o Parks Connector Trail:
 - 50' boardwalk on Southern half of the trail is complete. That part of the trail is now officially open. We installed a rope chicane on the North end of 7 Fireplaces to make clear that part of the trail isn't open.
 - The MYCC crew is finishing up a railing on the 40' bridge on the North End.
 - MYCC Crew has begun construction of the 300' boardwalk off of North Park Drive.
 - o Park Expansion Walking Trail improvements
 - No updates
 - o New Shelter Accessible Outhouse
 - We've ordered the composting unit and have begun work on the remaining tasks to finish this project up.

Buildings & Grounds/General Updates:

- MYCC crews are in week 5 of 7. They have been getting a lot accomplished including:
 - o Finishing a 50' boardwalk on the Parks Connector Trail
 - o Finishing the railing on the 54' Gould Hill Bridge
 - o Helping with trail reroute on the Sparrow Farm Trail
 - o Finishing a railing on the 40' Parks Connector Trail Bridge
 - o Clearing numerous trees across trails
 - o Lots of work at the Feast Farm and the Tree Nursery
- Hubbard Park has been hosting numerous Summer camps throughout the Summer including a theater camp at the Old Shelter/Stage and a Nature Camp at the New Shelter.
- The Old Shelter sustained some major vandalism and the outhouse is currently under repair. It should hopefully be finished next week.
- East Montpelier Trails Initiative has wrapped up their rerouting work on the Sparrow Farm Trail for this year. We will support that effort with some finishing work later in the year, but it's mostly done.

City Council Report

- Council selected DEW as a development partner for the Country Club Rd. project. They are currently negotiating a development agreement.

Conservation Commission:

- They are continuing to make progress on the 4 signs along the Parks Connector Trail.

Budget/Fundraising

- No Updates

Other News:

- I met with a resident Zack Porter and the Fire Chief Derek Libby regarding recreational fires in Hubbard Park. Zack expressed concern about recreational fires in some areas where there isn't water or easy access if a fire were to spread. We talked about taking the following steps:
 - Parks Staff will take some easy actions like pruning low hanging branches above fire areas.
 - Parks Staff will rope off fire areas if fire risk gets to "Very High" in our area.
 - Chief Libby is going to look into getting us a large Fire Rating sign for the entrance of Hubbard Park similar to other towns and state parks.
 - Chief Libby shared the Montpelier Fire Department's operations plan for a fire in Hubbard Park or other wooded area.
 - Zack will look into State policies on recreational fires.
 - Alec will bring this issue to the Parks Commission in September for a closer look including:
 - Review an inventory of designated fire areas in Hubbard Park
 - Review the various rules and ordinances governing recreational fires in Parks.
 - Consider any rules and/or ordinance changes.
 - Consider removing/changing designated fire areas.

**Summer Street Park
Montpelier, VT**



**Conceptual Example
March 2025**

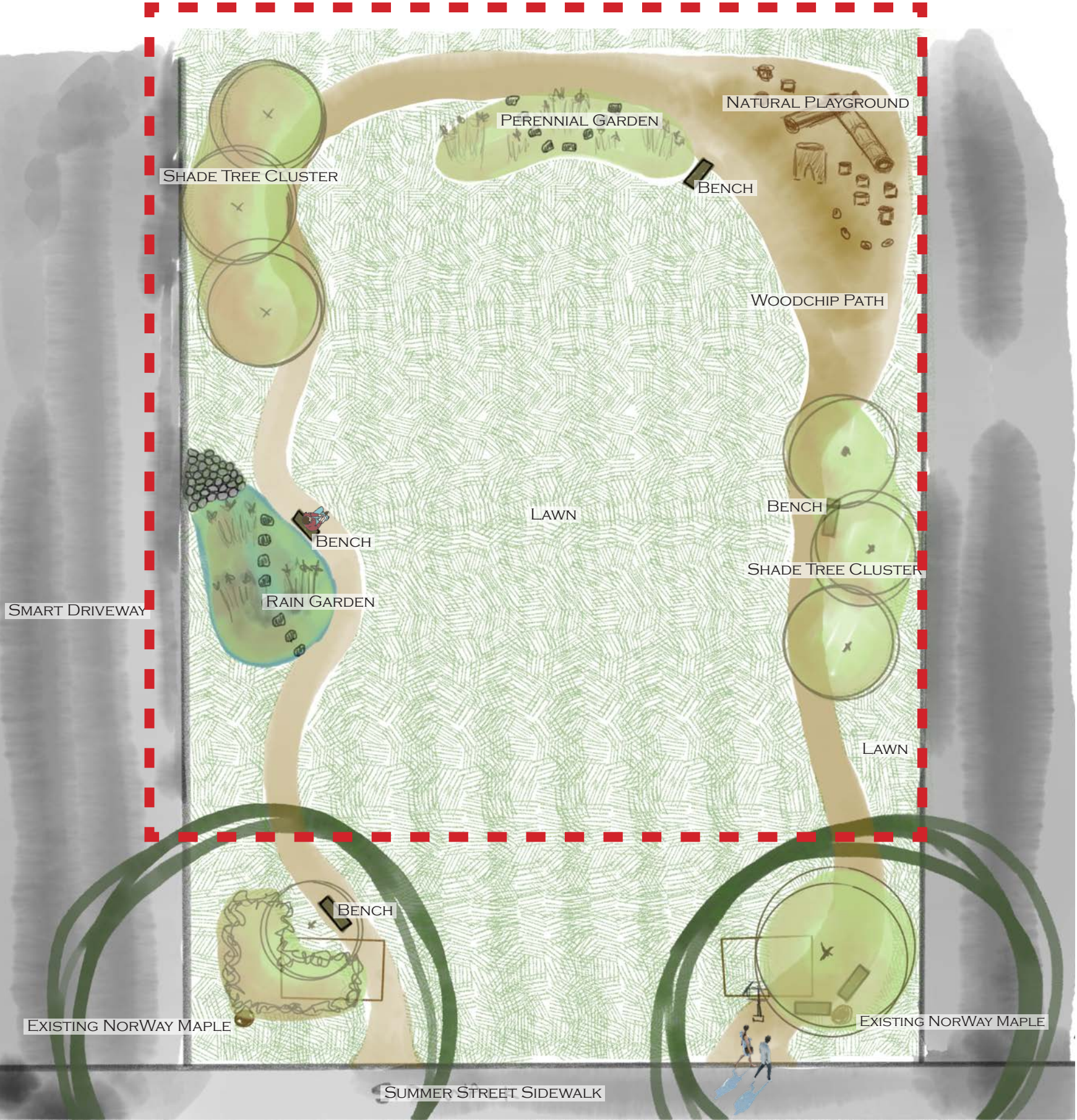
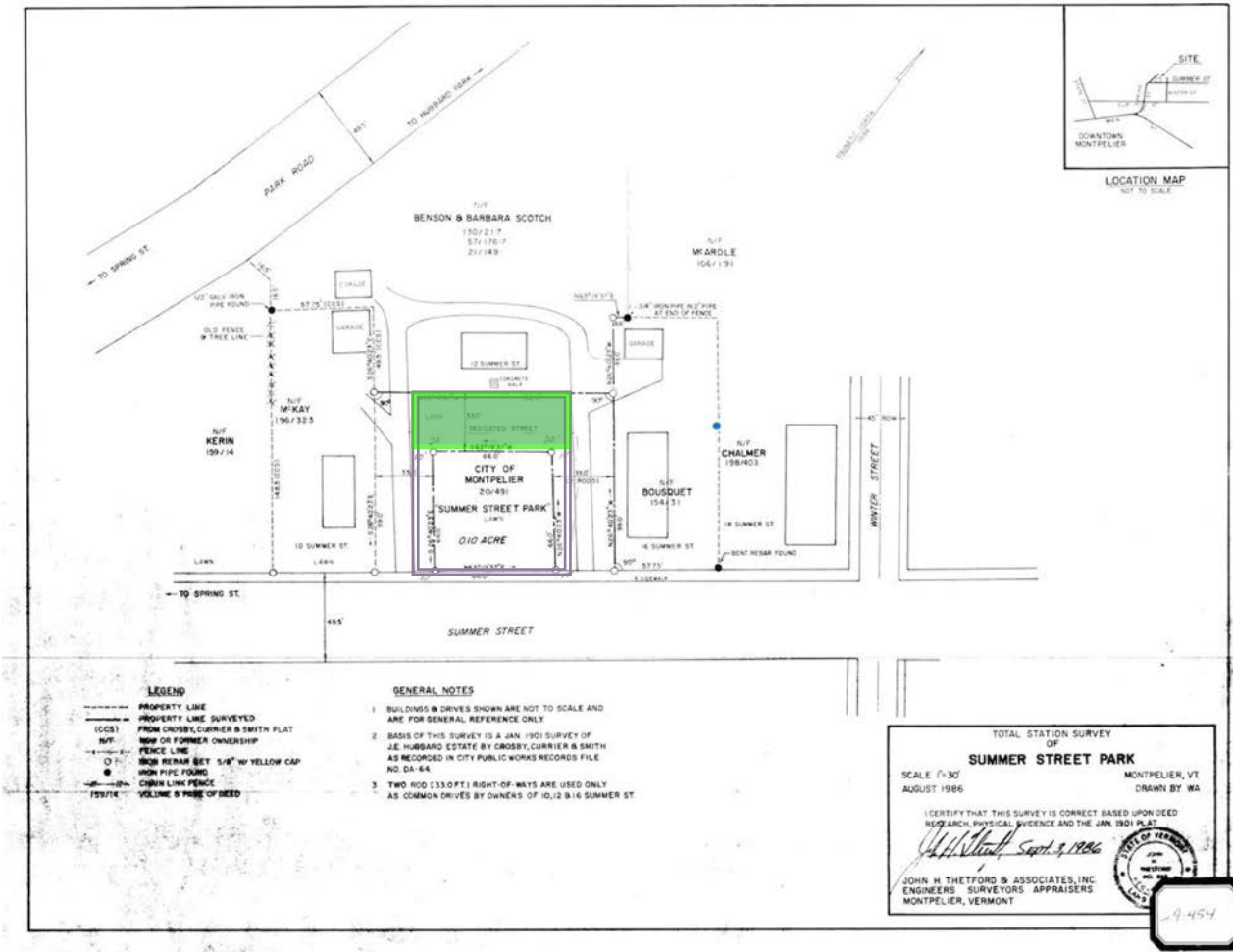
Stage I Concept Example

The following conceptual design has not taken into account site condition research or elevations. It is merely to generate ideas and give an example of how to arrange certain concepts, while keeping the priority of a large open lawn area for the block party and sports for all ages.

The only measurements taken (by hand) were of the distance along Summer Street sidewalk of the greenspace and existing large Norway maples, ~90' in length. The design also assumes that the “Dedicated Street” shown on the survey (below in green, purple is the entire green space) is property of the City and able to be used as the part of the park.

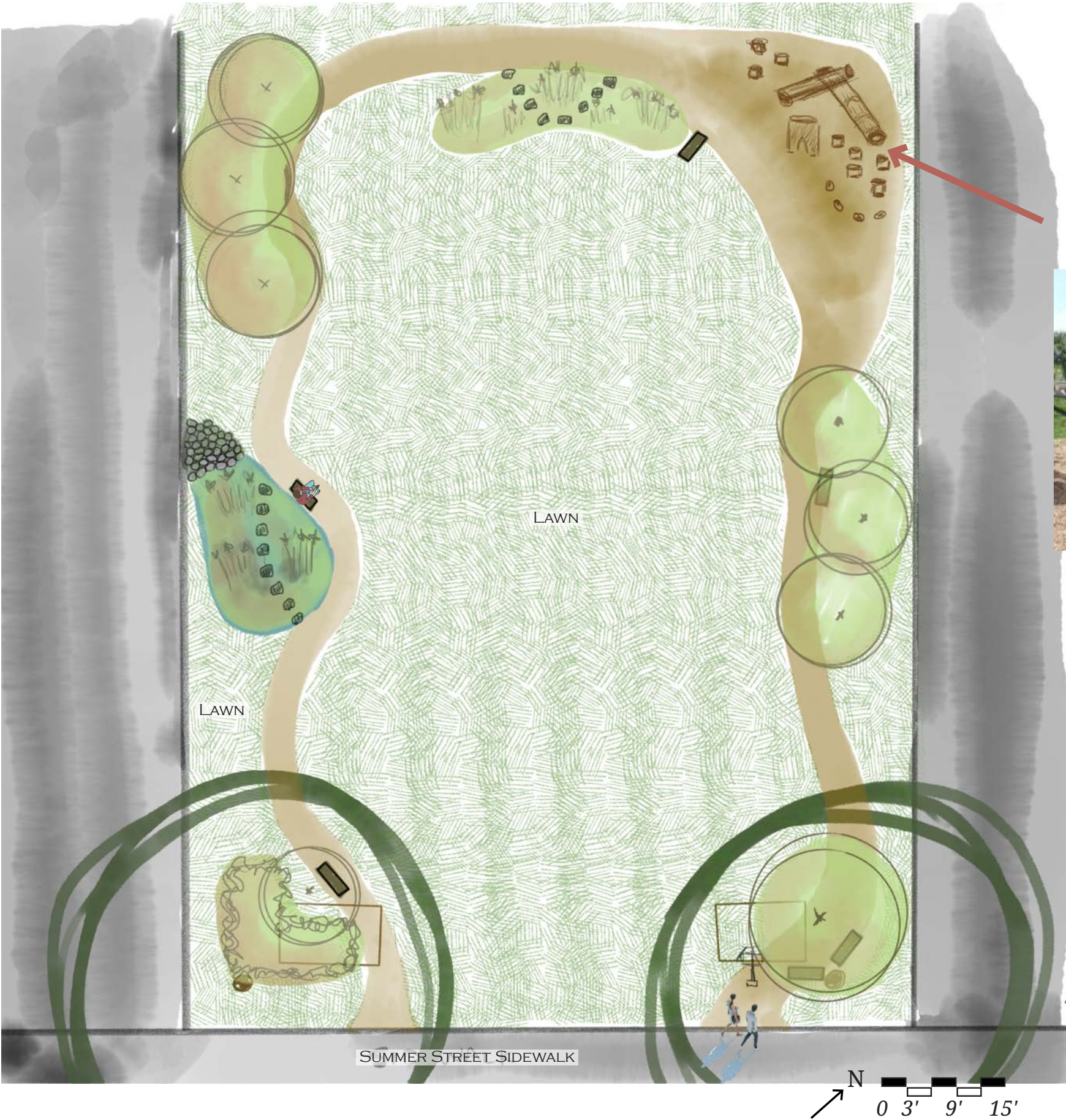
The area in red dashed lines to the right is recommended to be constructed/installed in Stage I. When the Norway maples along Summer Street are removed, construction of the ‘front’ of the park could happen in Stage II.

Stage I design shows elements including a rain garden with a bench and a stepping stone path, two clusters of three shade trees, a perennial garden (which could have edibles or be flowers only), a natural playground, a woodchip path, and multiple benches scatter along the path. The majority of the space remains open and mown inside the path and a mown outer edge gives the park a clean managed appearance.



Could the taken down trees be kept onsite and reused? Perhaps they could be repurposed as stumps/climbing logs, stepping wood trunks, etc. seen in the natural playground. Similarly, the woodchip path could be from the chipped trees (a more fine and uniform woodchip topping might be needed).

Stage I Concept Example - Precedents



Natural playground precedents



The rain garden shown in the design has not been placed according to where it would capture the most amount of stormwater. This requires site condition research and would also depend on the site work. The rain garden and perennial garden are the highest maintenance elements in the design, but could be low maintenance depending on the plants chosen and the construction. For example, the rain garden could be filled with shrubs and have a mown bern along the edges. The perennial garden could be perennials that are left a little more wild and mown down at the end of each year.

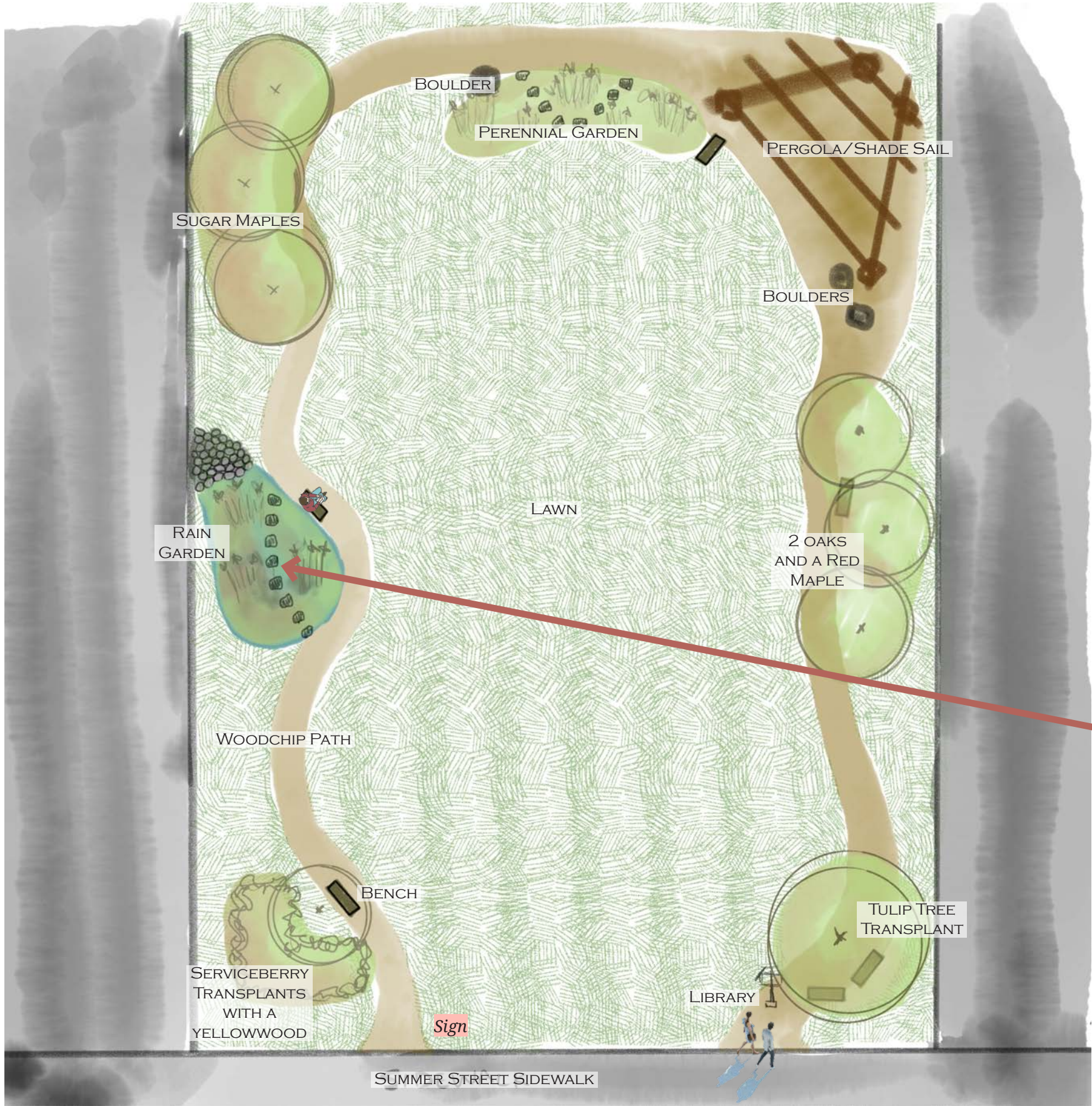
It may be worth asking Master Gardeners if they have any people doing the course that need to complete volunteer hours. A great way to get green thumb volunteers!

The existing Norway Maples are shown at the bottom of the design with large green circles. Small brown boxes show the rough existing sitting areas, which it is recommended are relocated once the maples are removed.



Woodchip path precedent

Stage II Concept Example With Precedents



Stage II of the design shows an alternative to the natural playground - a covered space, perhaps a pergola or a large lean-to type structure that could serve as a stage or protected meeting space. The roof could be impermeable or open with vines depending on the use.

The new shade trees are placed farther from Summer Street sidewalk and the driveways. Benches and a small library are open and welcoming on the eastern corner, while a cluster of shrubs gives a little more protection to the bench on the western side.

A park sign (shown in peach) could go on either side of the flared mulch paths.

Pergola and a shade sail (tent like covering) precedents



Rain garden precedents



Considerations

Pets



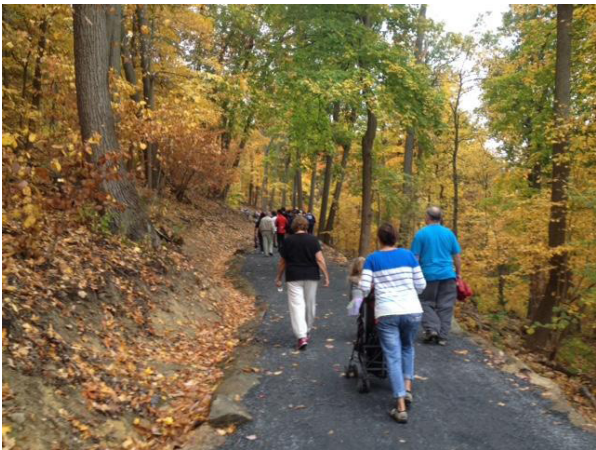
Are dogs allowed to poop here?
Do you need a sign?

Opening up the lawn area invites greater use by visitors.

While it is assumed that deer and other critters that can damage the park won't be encouraged in the park (deer fencing and trunk protection is recommended with all young trees/shrubs), should domesticated critters be allowed?

If so, does this park allow off leash pets or on leash only? Do you provide a trash can not only for pet waste but also for visitors or is it carry in/carry out?

ADA Compliant



Examples of ADA trails and benches

Lawn and woodchip paths are not ADA compliant. Consider whether the benches and little library closest to the sidewalk should be accessible to all. There may be funding in order to have these areas meet the sidewalk and be of materials that allow for wheelchairs, strollers, and those with mobility issues to easily use the space.

Going a step further, it is possible to have the entire loop by accessible, but would be an expense.

Some Shade Tree Favs



Quercus macrocarpa (bur oak)
70'-80' tall x 60'-80' spread
VT native, zone 3, full sun, tolerates a wild range of soils, slow growth, intermediate salt tolerance, 35' x 35' root area, excellent pollinator and wildlife provider



Quercus bicolor (swamp white oak)
40'-50' tall x 40'-50' spread
VT native, zone 4, full sun, drought and wet soil tolerant, yellow/red fall foliage, medium growth, deer resistant



Acer saccharum (sugar maple)
70' tall x 45' spread
VT native, zone 3, full sun to part shade, tolerant of compacted/poorly drained soils, intolerant of salt, deer resistant, medium growth rate, tapped for maple syrup



Acer x freemanii 'Sienna Glen' (Freeman maple)
40' tall x 40' spread
a cross of two VT natives, zone 4, deer resistant, rusty orange-burgundy fall color, medium - fast growth rate, clay tolerant



Tilia americana (basswood or American linden)
50'-80' tall x 30'-50' spread
VT native, zone 2, full sun to part sun, prefers moist soils, tolerant of clay/drought, intolerant of air pollution - urban conditions - salt, excellent bee pollinator



Cladastris kentukea 'Perkins Pink' (yellowwood)
30'-40' tall x 30'-50' spread
parent plant US native, zone 4, spring bloom, full sun to shade, yellow foliage

Prep Work and Maintenance



A rain garden installation

When the trees have been removed, it is important to have any regrading or soil additions done when access is open and the site is already under construction.

Prep work for each element - benches, library, rain garden, perennial garden, and pergola all require more than just plunking the element in the native soil (for long term success). Understanding the details of installation and follow-up care are important considerations.

North Branch River Access Park Proposal

Location: 127 Elm Street, Montpelier, VT 05602

Submitted by: Katie Swick

Submission Date: July 14, 2025

Introduction

The North Branch River Access Park is proposed for the .18-acre parcel at 127 Elm Street, which was severely impacted by flooding and is now designated as non-developable land per FEMA regulations. This unique parcel—adjacent to the North Branch River—is being transferred to city ownership and presents an opportunity for a flood-resilient public green space that centers equity, education, environmental stewardship, and community.

Vision and Purpose

The goal is to create a small, accessible, and inclusive community park that:

- Provides safe public access to the North Branch River—currently unavailable in the area.
 - Serves as an outdoor classroom for local elementary and middle school students.
 - Supports environmental education focused on flooding, watersheds, and river ecology.
 - Includes gardens that support food security, biodiversity, and sensory engagement.
 - Offers a gathering space for neighbors and families that fosters learning, play, and reflection.
-

Key Features

1. River Access

- **Ramp to the river** that is flood- and erosion-resilient, to allow all users—including those with mobility challenges—to safely reach the water.
- Natural plantings along the bank to prevent erosion and serve as soft barriers.

2. Outdoor Classroom & Community Circle

- A stone circle or amphitheater-style seating area for group gatherings and school use.
- Fully wheelchair-accessible paths and space within the circle.
- Artistic elements integrated to reflect the river's history, Indigenous land acknowledgment, and the story of flooding in Montpelier.

3. Garden Spaces

- **Raised, flood-resilient garden beds** for community use (through existing food-growing programs).
- **Pollinator and sensory gardens**, with native plants and plants selected for resilience to flood conditions.
- Accessible garden bed design for people with limited mobility.

4. Play and Exploration Area

- Natural play elements such as:
 - Sand play area with a watershed sand table.
 - Swings
 - Loose parts play with logs, stumps, and safe natural materials.
 - A **splash pad** that reuses water for gardens.

5. Reflection and Healing Space

- Space to honor the river, acknowledge trauma from flooding, and celebrate resilience.
- Plantings for shade and quiet.
- Interpretive signage about the river's role in the community and environment.

Accessibility and Inclusion

This park is designed with **universal access in mind**, to ensure everyone feels welcome. Some barriers and proposed solutions:

Barrier	Solution
Steep riverbank	Ramp with erosion-resistant materials; native plant buffer
Proximity to road	Plant buffer/hedge along sidewalk; potential natural fencing
Mobility/access within park	ADA-compliant pathways and surfaces
Safety near water	Clear signage; plant buffers; low fencing as needed
Small lot size	Efficient, multi-use design with careful layout planning
Garden accessibility	Raised beds at varied heights; space for wheelchair maneuverability
Lack of bathroom	Explore partnership with city or nearby businesses for shared access
Potential safety concerns with unhoused populations	Ongoing community stewardship and outreach; partnerships with service organizations

Community Engagement & Support

I have met with:

- City parks staff
- River advocates and protection groups
- Local educators from elementary and middle schools
- Community members and neighbors

There is significant interest and preliminary support for this initiative. Several community partners have offered materials (e.g., garden beds), and others have expressed interest in contributing labor, educational programming, and stewardship.

Next steps will include:

- Hosting community design sessions
- Coordinating with schools for curricular integration
- Partnering with local artists, historians, and environmental educators
- Seeking volunteers for building and planting days

Timeline (Initial Phase)

Date	Milestone
July 13–19	Submit proposal to City of Montpelier
August 2025	Community visioning and planning sessions
Fall 2025	Begin site prep and secure necessary permits
Winter 2025–2026	Fundraising, grant applications, material sourcing

Spring 2026 Begin construction, planting, installation

Summer 2026 Park opening celebration and launch of
programming

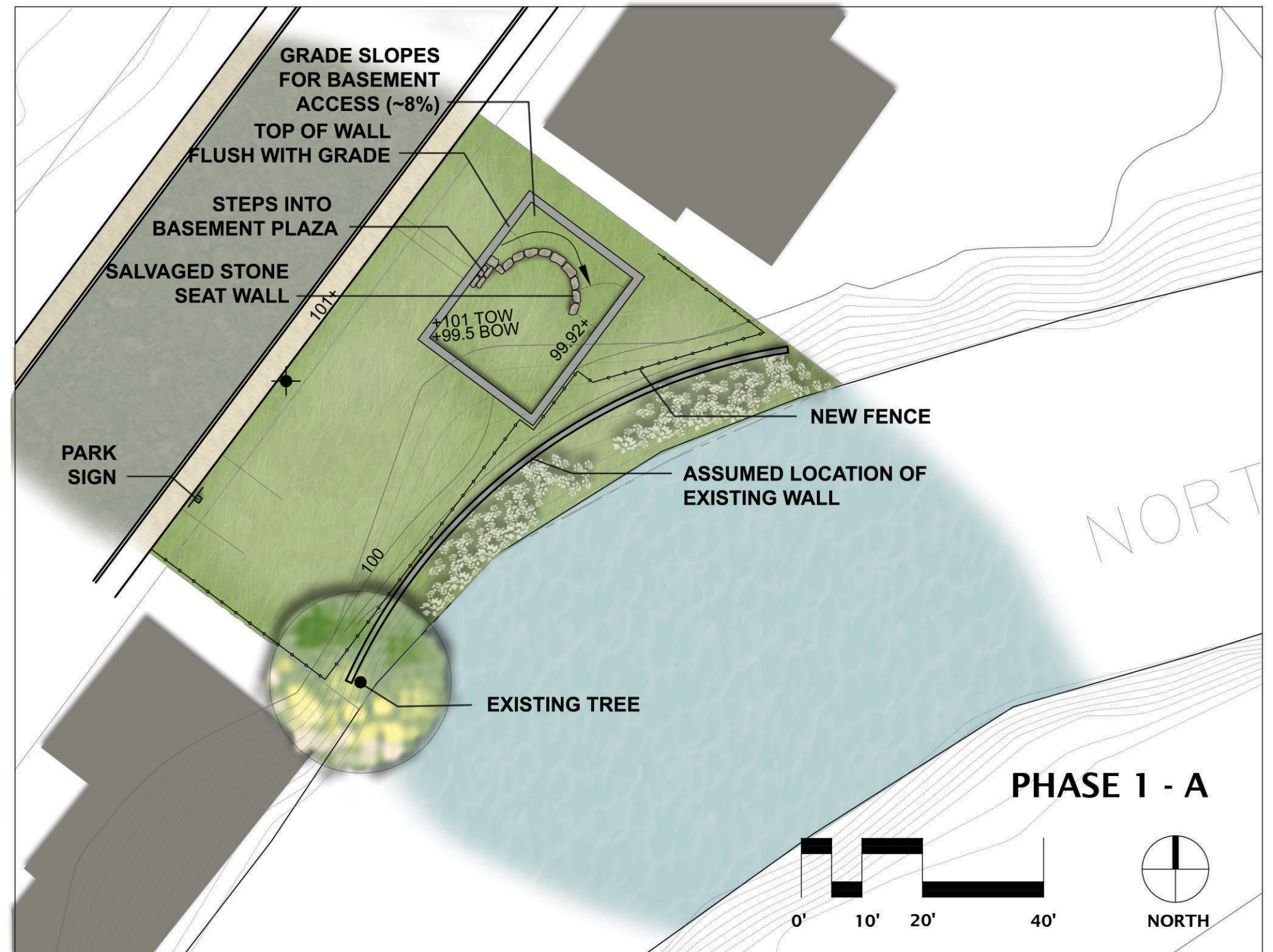
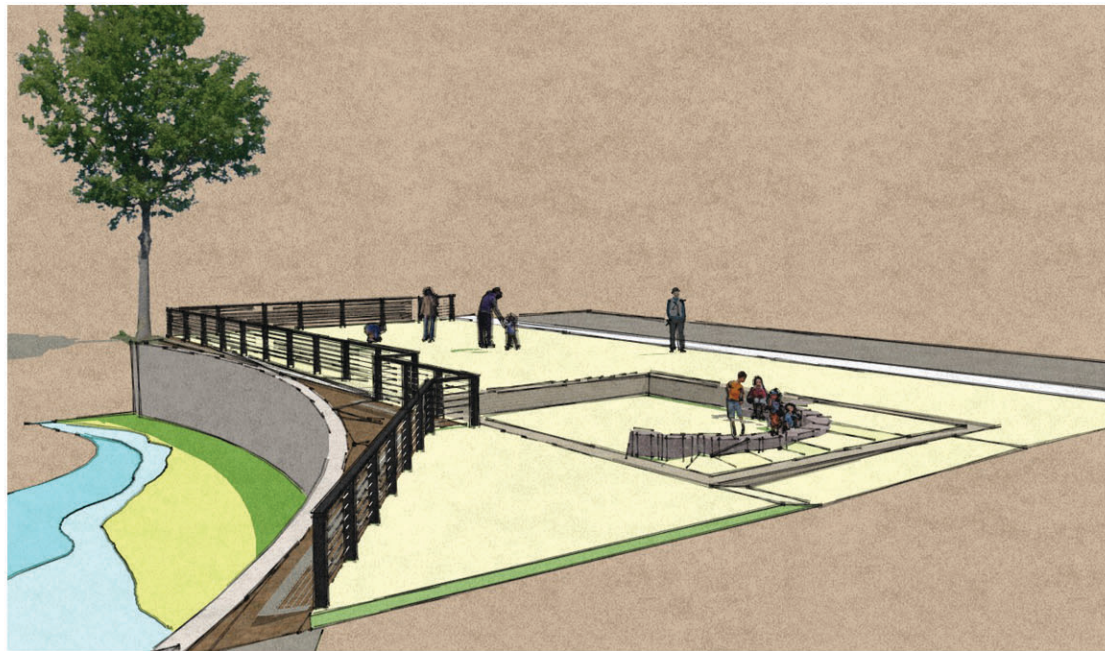
Support and Resources Needed

- City approval and guidance (especially regarding floodplain regulations)
 - Planning and permitting assistance
 - Equipment and labor for moving materials (e.g., granite)
 - Input from:
 - Landscape designers
 - Accessibility experts
 - Local historians, artists, and educators
 - Funding or grants (to be explored)
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Conclusion

This park will transform a flood-impacted, non-buildable lot into a vibrant, healing, and educational space that reconnects the community to the river. With collaboration, thoughtful planning, and continued community involvement, the North Branch River Access Park can serve as a model of flood-resilient, inclusive, small-scale urban park design.

Thank you for considering this proposal. I look forward to working with the City of Montpelier and the broader community to bring this vision to life.



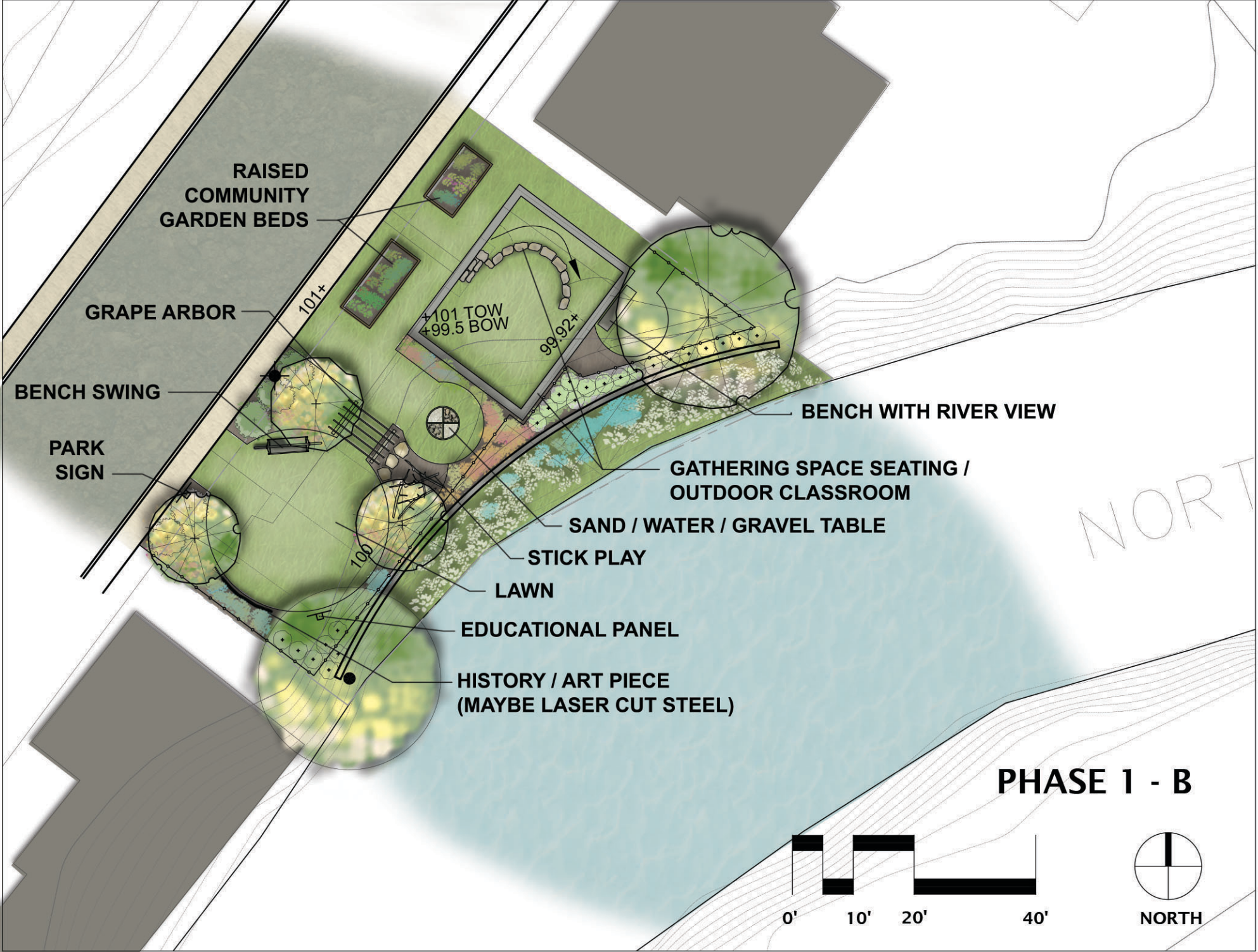
NPS-RTCA

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

Phase 1-A Post Demolition Use

Vermont Disaster Recovery Projects - MONTPELIER
127 Elm Street

December 1, 2025



NPS-RTCA

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

Phase 1-B Future Development with Wall Intact

Vermont Disaster Recovery Projects - MONTPELIER
127 Elm Street

December 1, 2025

Architectural feature from existing house

Example of an educational panel



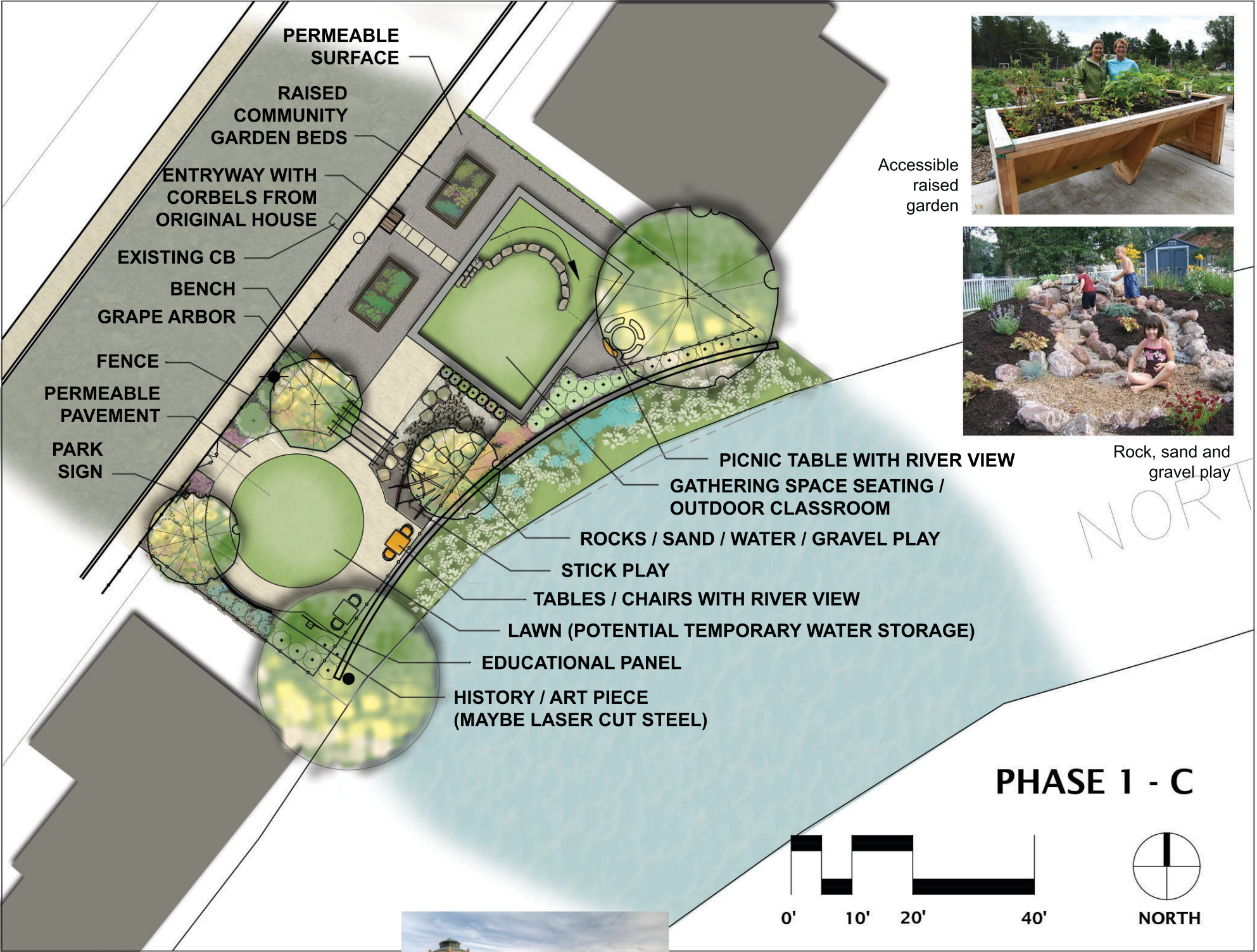
Pollinator gardens surround greenspace



Example of art cut from steel



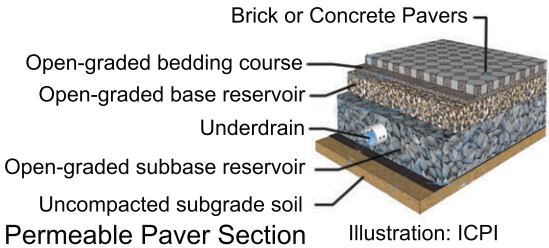
If the basement gathering space has a pergola, string lights would create an inviting evening setting



Accessible raised garden



Rock, sand and gravel play



Samples of permeable pavement types: interlocking pavers, spaced pavers and pavers with large voids for grass or gravel

127 Elm St. Design Concept



NPS-RTCA

Prepared with assistance from the
Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

127 Elm St. Design Concept Basic Components



1. North Entry
2. South Entry
3. Open Lawn
4. Nature Play
5. Outdoor Classroom
6. Community Gardens
-  Park Entry / Signage
-  Picnic Area
-  Public Art
-  Informational / Educational Panel
-  River View



1. North Entry

2. South Entry

3. Open Lawn

4. Nature Play

5. Outdoor Classroom

6. Community Gardens

1 & 2 North and South Entries

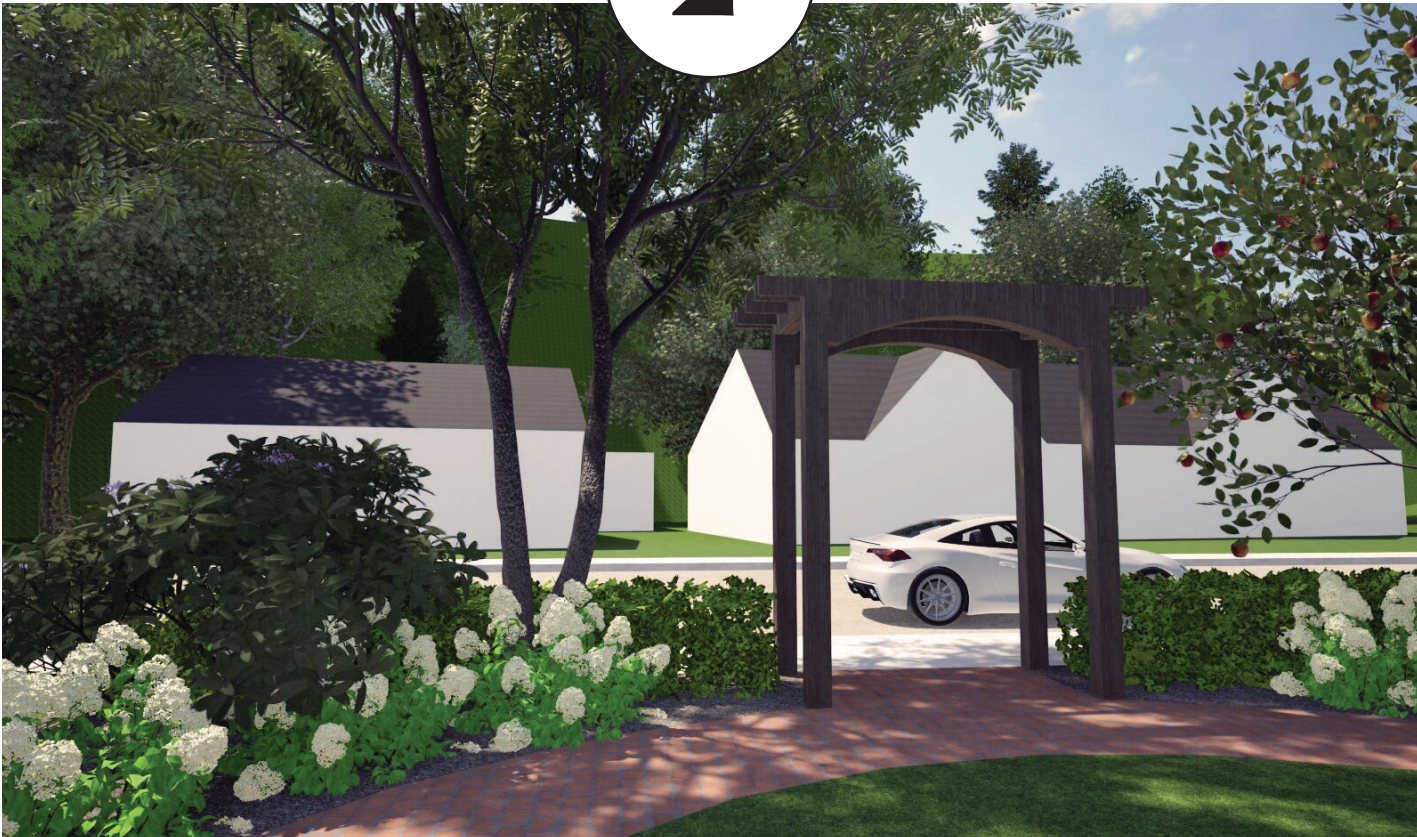


Distinct Entries

Entries approximate the former front door and garage house entries and are flanked by hedges to provide a safety barrier from the street

1 North Entry (facing east and west)

2 South Entry (facing east and west)



3 Open Lawn



4 Nature Play



Creative Space

- Riverside
- Movable rocks, sand, & sticks that kids can manipulate and use for building
- Separates use from classroom space
- Entry through hedge
- An area for a flower garden featuring annuals that students can replant each year

5 Outdoor Classroom



Gathering Space

- Re-uses original basement foundation
- Accessible entry
- Seating along stone walls
- Adjacent to Nature Play and Community Garden
- Potential to add shade structure
- River view
- Enhance evening experience with string lights under pergolas
- Lighting the rail along the river provides unity with the City's bridges that are lit at night

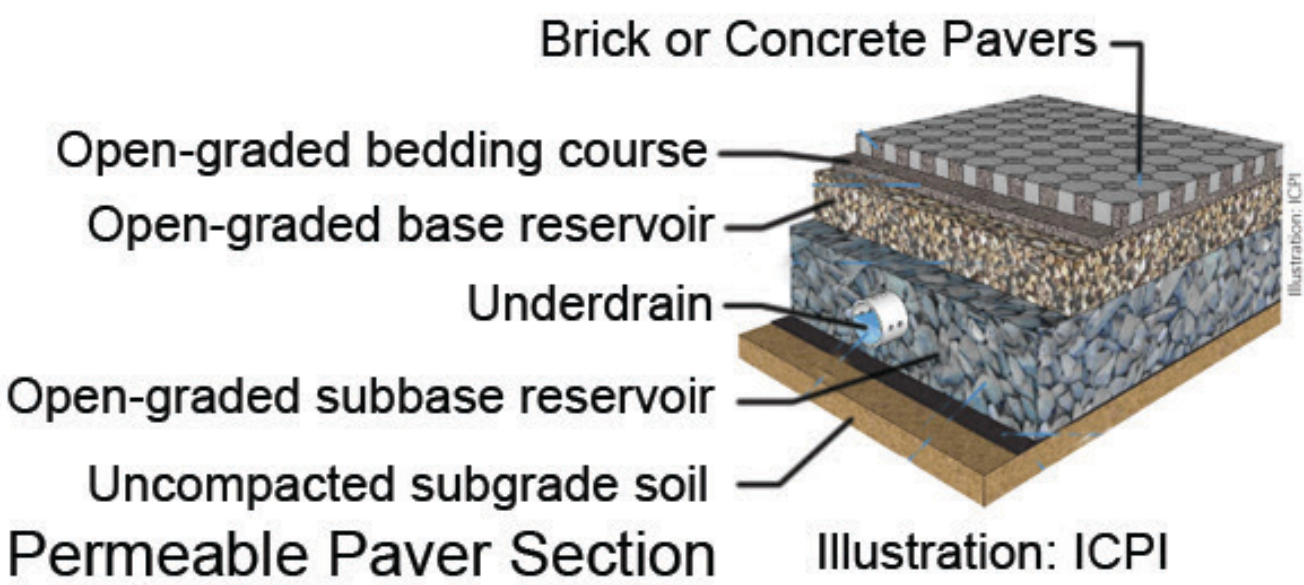
6 Community Garden



Working & Social Space

- Seating near gardens
- Raised for accessibility (will need to be approved by appropriate regulatory entity)
- Provides a food source for locals
- Provides a teaching opportunity for students

Other Features



Education, Culture, R&R

1. Riverside seating in a quiet setting
2. Educational / Informational Panels
3. Public Art becomes a focal point from the outdoor classroom
4. Park divided into a series of rooms through use of hedges and trees
5. Option for permeable pavement throughout park

127 Elm St. Design Concept







1



2



3& 4 Outdoor classroom & corner seating



5 Community garden beds



Seating & rain garden



Kiosk/ water collection & other ideas

