



CEDAR RAPIDS

Westside Library Park

Conceptual Plan | 2023

**“a library in a
park and a park
in a library”**



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PROJECT TEAM

City of Cedar Rapids

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Mitch Ahrendsen | Parks Superintendent
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Noah Zeker | Planner II
Steve Krug | Landscape Architect
Dara Schmidt | Library Director

Genus Landscape Architects

Brett Douglas | ASLA, PLA | Principal
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ABOUT THE PROJECT

In 2022, the Cedar Rapids Library took a significant step towards a new permanent westside library location by purchasing land at the corner of Wiley Boulevard SW and 20th Avenue SW. The Library is working with the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department on integrating a public park into the site design with a vision for **“a park in a library and a library in a park.”**

Prepared by the City of Cedar Rapids Parks Department and Genus Landscape Architects, this collaborative effort represented an exciting opportunity to create **a vibrant, diverse green space that enhances the quality of life for community members.**

PROJECT GOALS

Early in the project, the City identified several goals to guide the planning process and design outcomes:

1. Raise the bar in terms of communication and collaboration
2. Build on past engagement efforts and continue to get the community involved in the planning and design process
3. Future-thinking; consider operation and maintenance costs for long term success and sustainability

CONTEXT



PLANNING PROCESS

During the five-month planning process, the project team led several community engagement sessions to gather community input and ideas. The team engaged over 800 people through 'Back to School' events, two open houses, and an online survey. Community feedback helped shape both the planning priorities and the design vision of the future Westside Library Park.

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

'BACK TO SCHOOL' EVENTS

In August 2023, the City participated in two 'Back to School' events at Cherry Hill Park and Delaney Park to gather input on desired park amenities. A voting activity revealed the top five desired park amenities. The graph to the right summarizes the results from both events.

► Top 5 Desired Park Amenities



28.9% Water Feature

12.6% Sport Fields/Courts

10.7% Hangout/Reading Spot

8.9% Ice Rink

8.2% Dog Park

1,891 total responses from park amenity voting at combined Back to School events

Additional Park Amenity Options

- Traffic Garden
- Fit Lot
- Skate Park/Pump Track
- Public Art
- Native/Natural Areas
- Community Garden
- Outdoor Classroom/Event Space

1 Water Feature



2 Sports Fields/Courts



3 Hangout/Reading Spot



4 Dog Park



5 Ice Rink



Figures 1-5. Top Five Programming Amenities

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

OPEN HOUSE

Building on prior planning and engagement efforts by the City, the project team held an open house on September 27, 2023 at the Ladd Library, less than a mile south of the project site. At the open house, the team presented an initial design concept alongside design character and precedent imagery. Community members provided feedback on their preferred precedent images in the form of sticky note comments and dot votes.

ONLINE SURVEY

The City received over 200 responses in the Westside Library Park online survey. Key themes expressed in responses were accessibility, inclusive design, multi-purpose spaces, multi-generational spaces (designated kid-friendly and adult spaces), unique playground design, open lawns, shade, natural areas, park restrooms, park maintenance, and trail connections.



FOUR CORE IDEAS

Community input was analyzed and translated into four core ideas. The following pages detail how each core idea was implemented throughout the plan.



support culturally relevant / responsive programming

Design spaces that reflect the cultural diversity of the community, provide opportunities for cultural events and activities, and allow for multi-cultural and inter-generational interaction.



promote learning, exploration & discovery for all

Design accessible and inclusive spaces that support a variety of learning styles and encourage self-guided/self-initiated exploration and discovery.



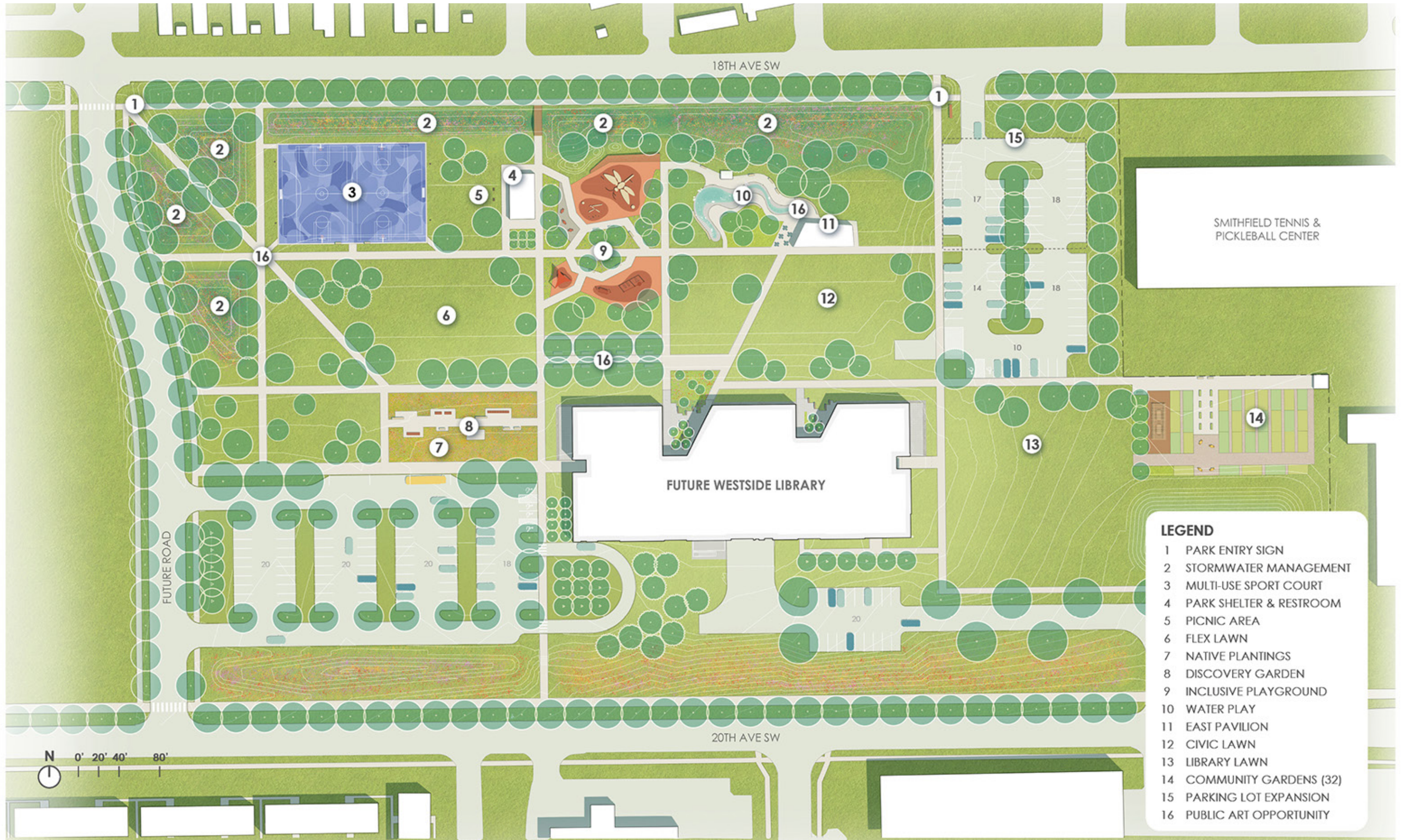
provide flexible, multi-functional spaces

Design open spaces that support multiple, diverse uses and can adapt with the community over time and through various seasons.

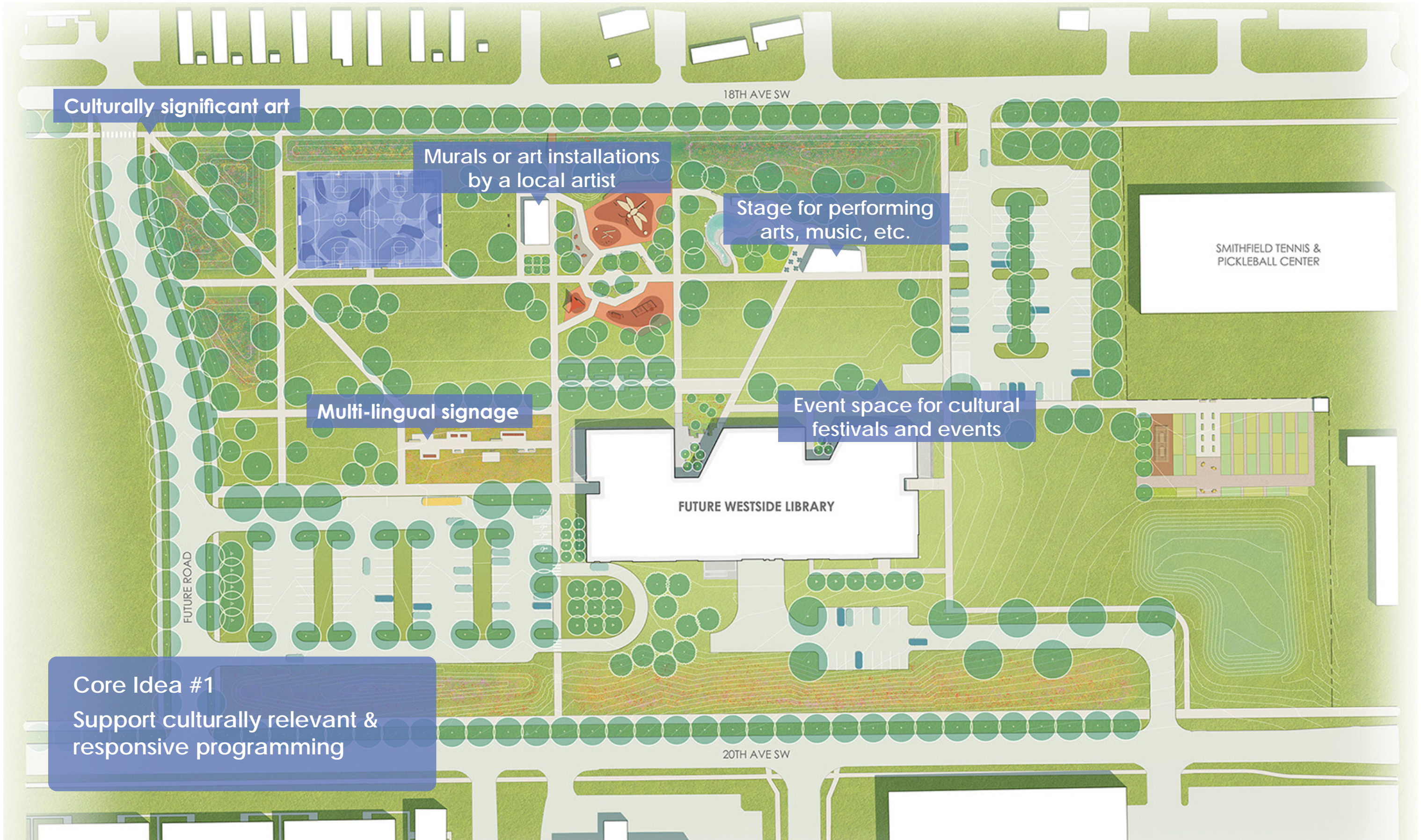


leave room for nature

Design spaces where nature can flourish and thrive.



WESTSIDE LIBRARY PARK PLAN



Culturally significant art

Murals or art installations by a local artist

Stage for performing arts, music, etc.

Multi-lingual signage

Event space for cultural festivals and events

FUTURE WESTSIDE LIBRARY

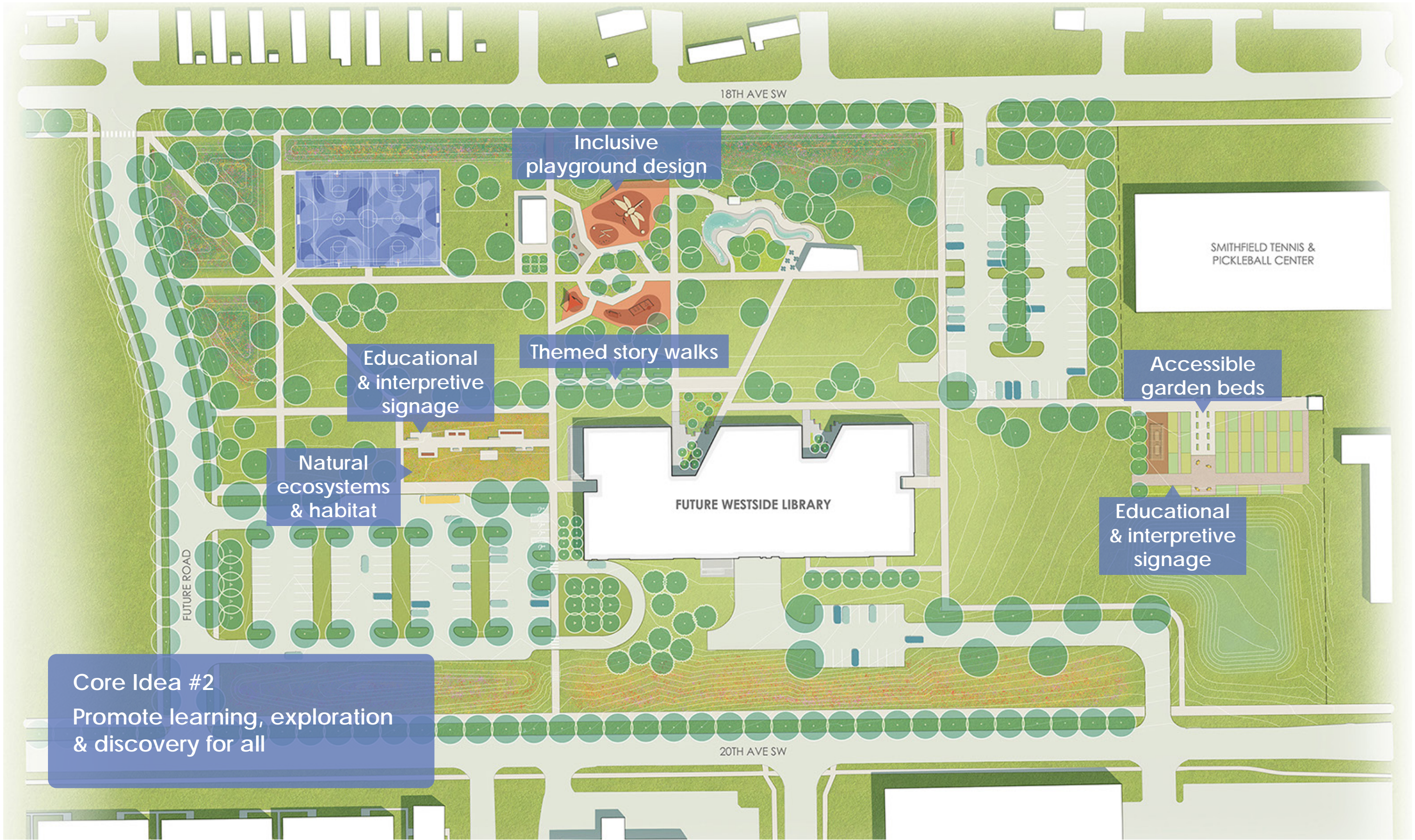
SMITHFIELD TENNIS & PICKLEBALL CENTER

18TH AVE SW

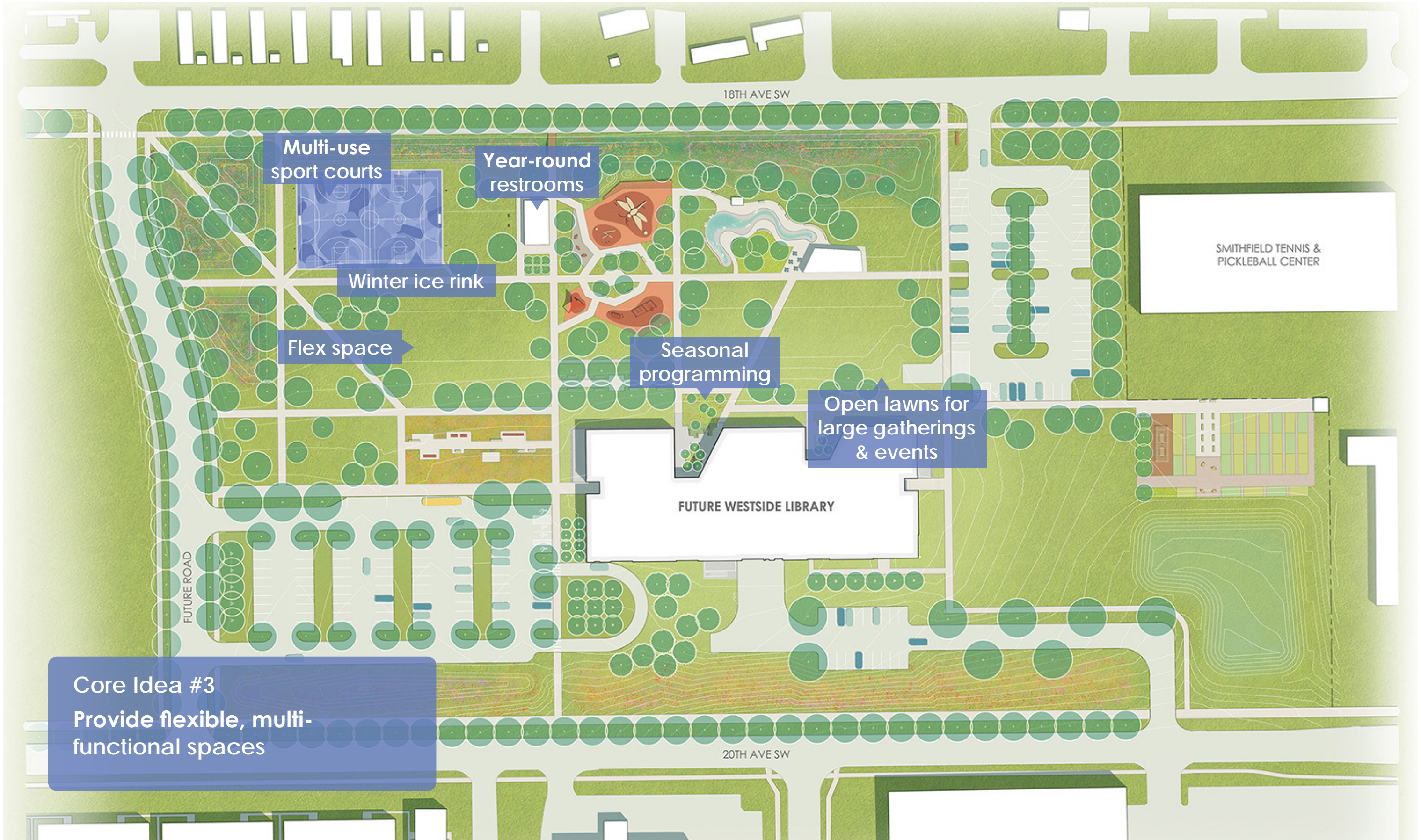
20TH AVE SW

FUTURE ROAD

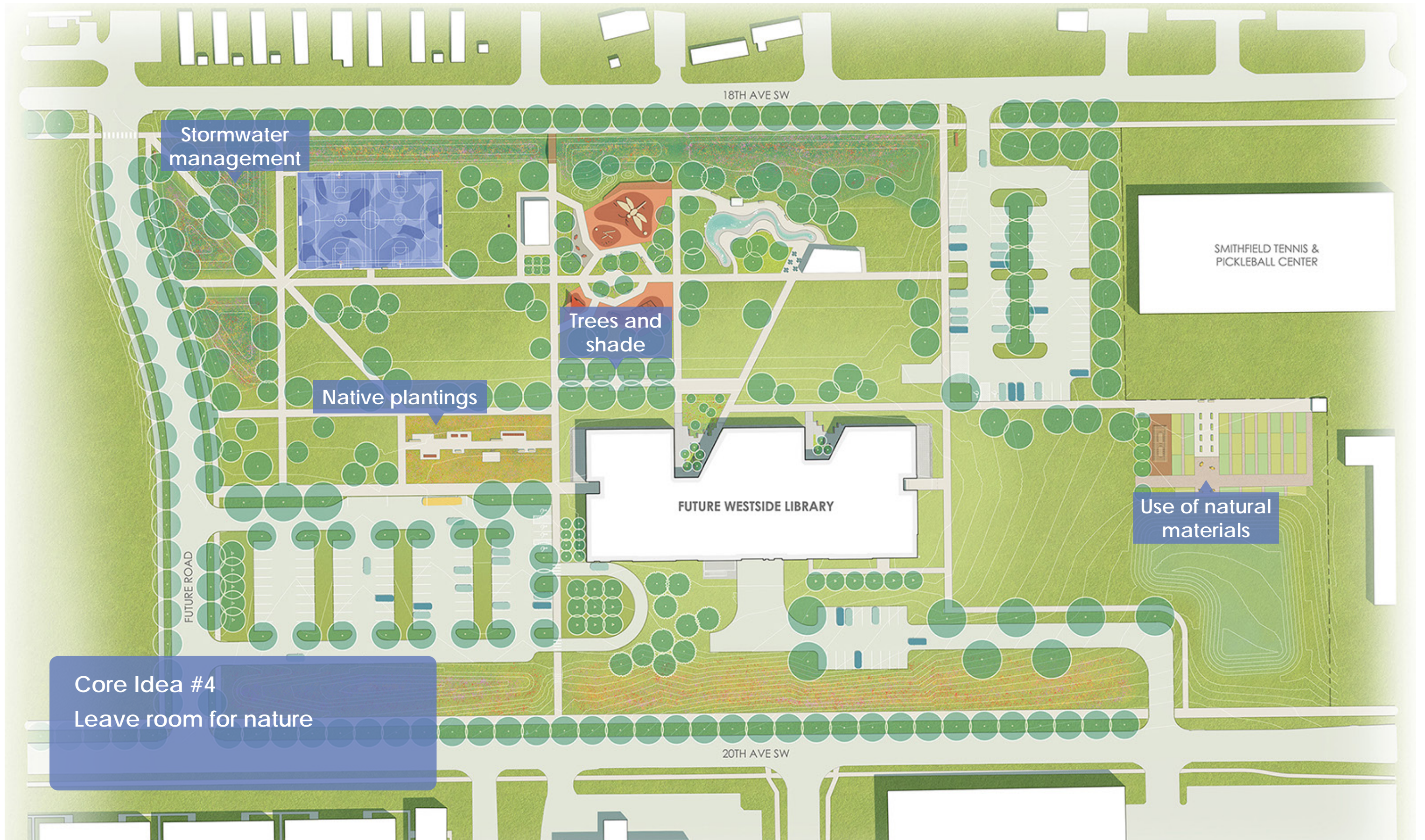
Core Idea #1
Support culturally relevant & responsive programming



Core Idea #2
Promote learning, exploration
& discovery for all



Core Idea #3
Provide flexible, multi-functional spaces





AERIAL VIEW LOOKING NORTHEAST

NATURAL PARK EDGE

Both aesthetic and functional, the natural park edge creates a welcoming entry into the park while providing much needed area for stormwater management and water quality. Reducing long term maintenance and supporting pollinators, these natural edges frame the park and provide visual contrast to adjacent lawn areas.

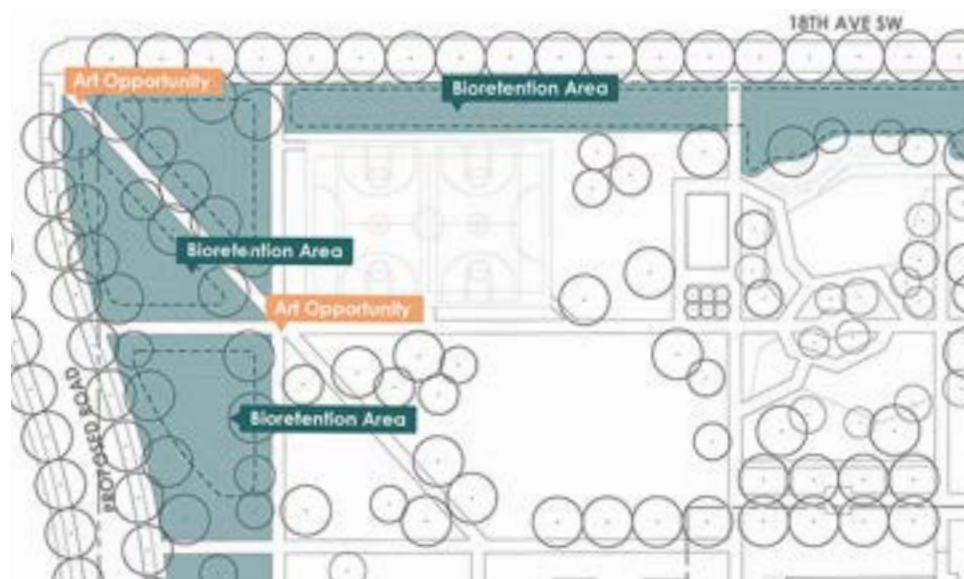


Figure 6. Park Wayfinding

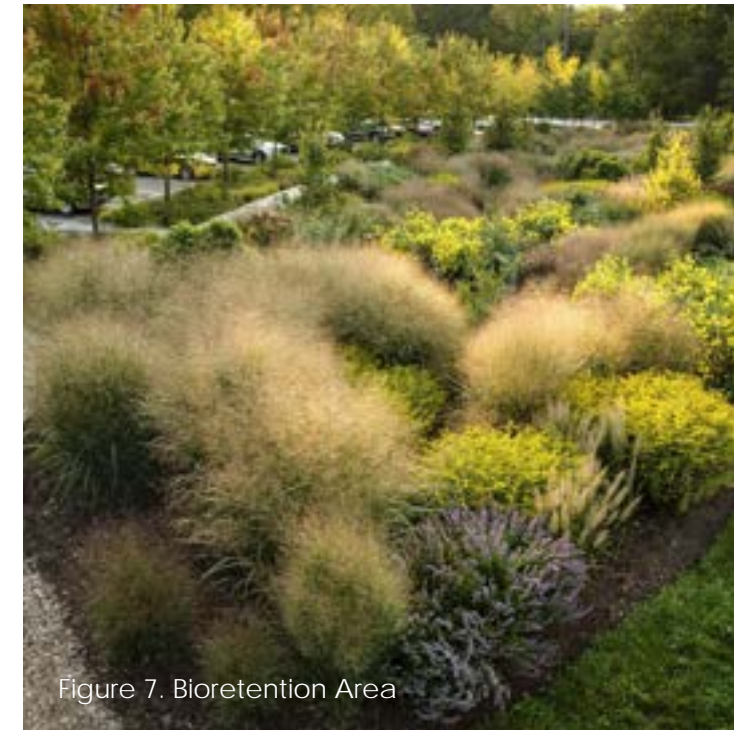


Figure 7. Bioretention Area

► Benefit of Bioswales

Bioswales around the perimeter of the site will help to manage stormwater and prevent excess runoff to the neighborhoods north of the site. Additionally, native plantings can help filter and clean stormwater runoff.



Figure 8. Shaded Park Lawn

DISCOVERY GARDEN

With a focus on exploration and education, the discovery garden immerses visitors in a prairie-like landscape. Along the discovery garden's linear path, there are several "rooms" that provide opportunities for self-guided learning and interacting with nature. Additionally, a variety of seating opportunities accommodate both large and small gatherings. Educational and interpretive signage throughout the discovery garden builds on themes of nature and discovery.

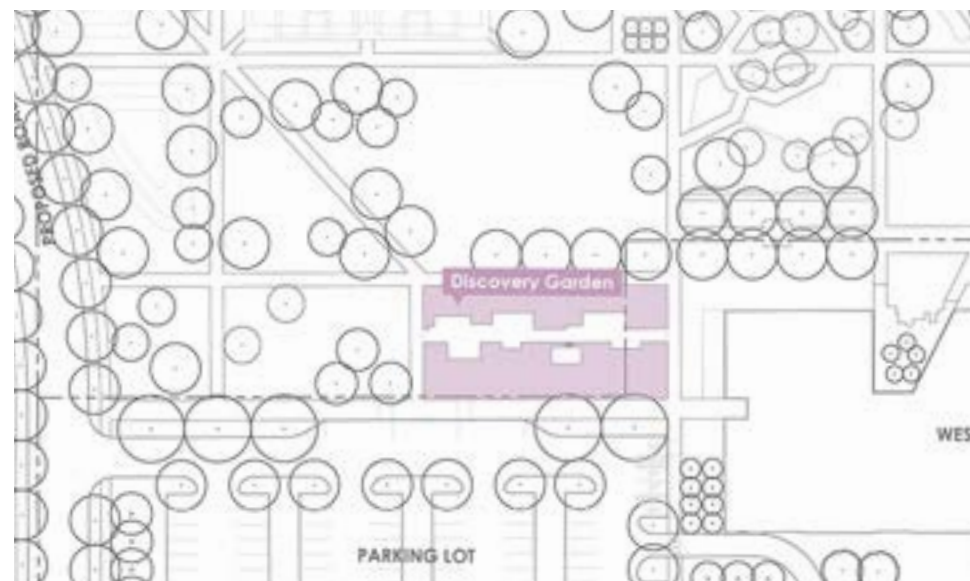


Figure 9. Native Plantings

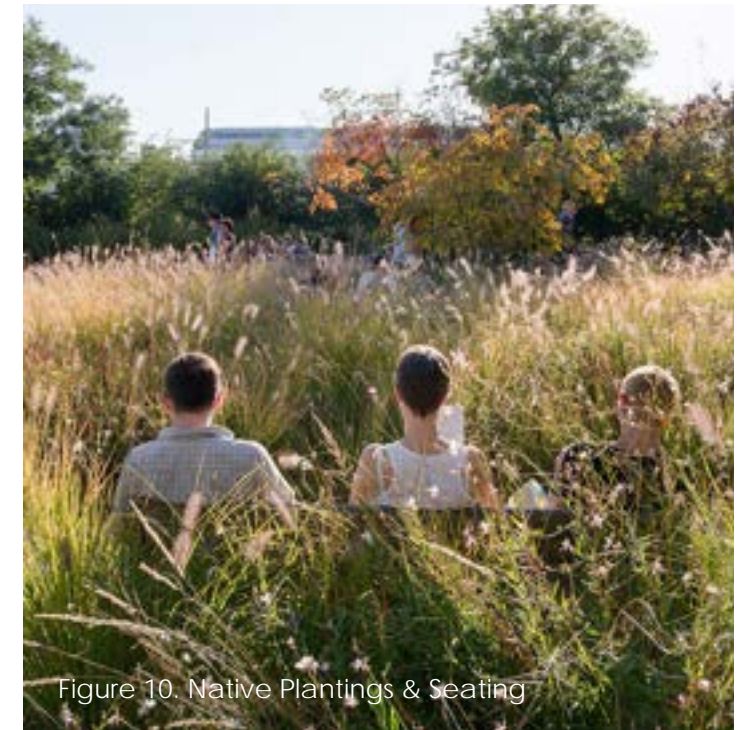


Figure 10. Native Plantings & Seating



Figure 11. Nature Play Elements



Figure 12. Linear Garden

► What is a Discovery Garden?

A discovery garden is a flexible space centered around education and discovery. It can include elements such as native plantings, interpretive signage, learning-based curriculum, intimate seating, outdoor classrooms, and artful/imaginative play. Below are ideas community members shared in the online survey:

“Discovery areas should be messy and musical! Kids need room to dig in when they explore!”

–Online Survey Response

“Maybe add nature educational sections for kids and have a space for the library to do small group teaching about nature in these areas.”

–Online Survey Response

“Place to explore and accessible for all.”

–Online Survey Response

I would want there to be a comfortable space to sit and read.”

–Online Survey Response

“It would be nice to have kid-specific spaces with...animal sculptures they could sit in and then other areas for adults.”

–Online Survey Response

“Less concrete. More natural material.”

–Online Survey Response



Figure 13. Play Feature



Figure 14. Native Plants Interpretive Signage



Figure 15. Music Play

SPORT COURTS & FLEX LAWN

Multifunctional sports courts serve as basketball and futsal courts in the warmer months and can be transformed into an ice rink in the colder months. The sports courts are buffered by bioswale plantings to the north and open up into a multi-purpose lawn to the south. A nearby park shelter and restroom provide space for seating, gathering, and events.

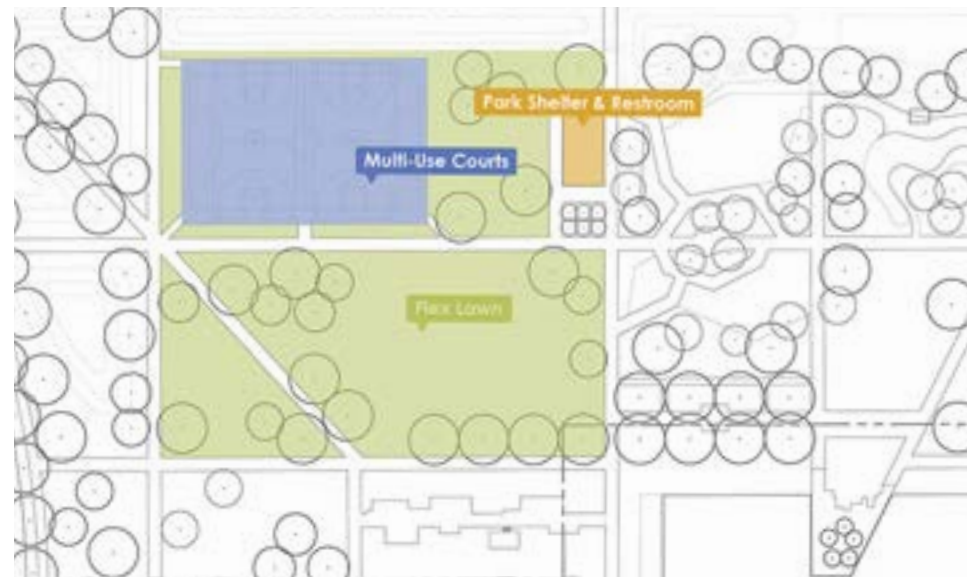


Figure 16. Colorful Basketball Court



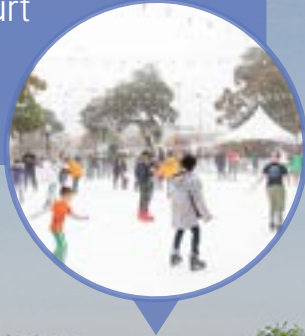
Figure 17. Multi-Use Sport Court



Figure 18. Open Lawn

► Fun in Every Season

In the winter, the sport court can be transformed into a temporary ice rink.



“We should have a dedicated green space for soccer, frisbee, or playing catch.”

—Online Survey Response



PLAYGROUND

Featuring 6 zones, the playground provides a variety of play types and caters towards a diverse range of users. A unique, custom play sculpture anchors the 5-12 years focal play zone. Additional inclusive play equipment includes opportunities for sensory play, music play, and nature play. Throughout the playground there are several shaded seating areas for parents and caregivers to watch children play.



Figure 19. Focal Play Feature



Figure 20. Play Mounds & Tunnels



Figure 21. Music Play



Figure 22. Nature Play

"Playgrounds that are inclusive are the most important."
-Online Survey Response

"I think having a playground that is more organic in style...could really inspire a lot of fantastic imagination."
-Open House Response

"Something we don't have at other parks."
-Open House Response

WATER PLAY

Inspired by nature, the water play area integrates misters and jets to create a dynamic space for children of all ages and abilities. Subtle grade changes along the path provide unique opportunities for experiential play. Perimeter plant material creates opportunities for shade, while the nearby plaza and park pavilion afford flexible space for both small gatherings and larger events.

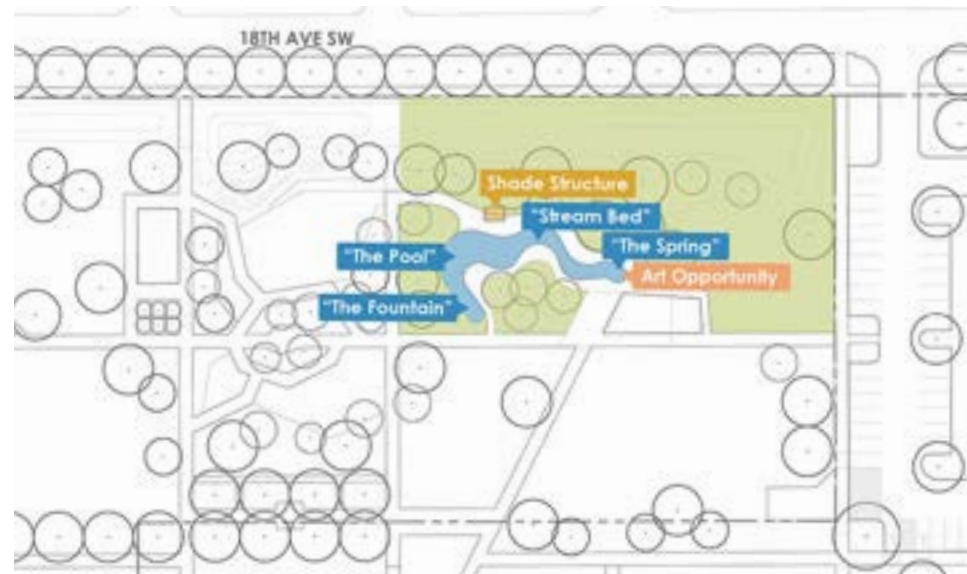


Figure 23. Natural Water Feature



Figure 24. Natural Splash Pad



"A natural-looking water feature would be so cool!"
-Online Survey Response

"I think it would be great to have unique play spaces for the southwest side! A community jewel!"
-Online Survey Response

CIVIC LAWN

Anchored by a 1,200 square foot park pavilion large enough for gatherings of 60 people and an adjacent plaza, the civic lawn provides a unique community space. The plaza features movable tables and chairs, ambient lighting, and a unique paving pattern. To the south, the civic plaza and pavilion opens up to a 0.5 acre, gently sloping lawn large enough for 500 people. When not being used during large events such as pop-up festivals, cultural events, or music performances, the lawn provides a multi-use green space perfect for relaxation or recreation.



COMMUNITY GARDENS

The community garden features raised, accessible garden beds on a concrete pad near the garden entry & ADA-accessible path and 32 10' x 20' in-ground plots surrounded by a crushed gravel path. Additional garden amenities include a communal dining gathering area, movable seating, a tool shed, compost and bulk storage area, and water hydrants. Interpretative signage throughout the garden teaches about pollinators, growing food, gardening techniques, sustainable practices, composting, and more.



Figure 25. Accessible Raised Garden Bed



Figure 26. Pollinator Interpretive Signage

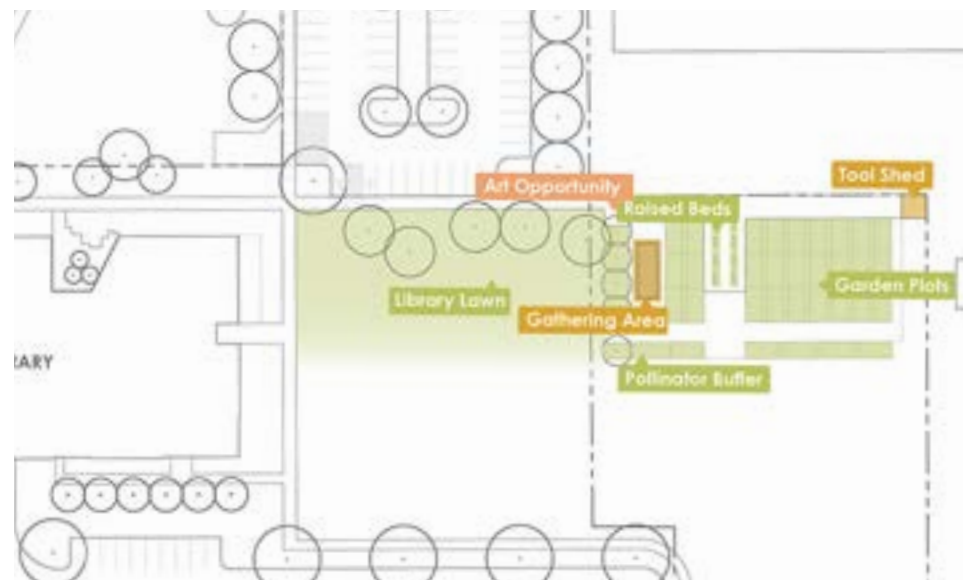


Figure 27. Garden Gathering and Dining Area

POSSIBLE CONSTRUCTION SEQUENCING | PHASING PLAN



Phase 1 | to be completed with library project

- Mass Grading of Park Site
- Seed Lawn



Phase 2 | \$200-350,000

- Stormwater Management Infrastructure
- (Completed with road project)



Phase 3A | \$4,400,000 – 5,400,000

- Playground
- Civic Lawn
- North Parking Lot Extension

Phase 3B | \$1,200,000 – 1,500,000

[Bid Alternate]

- East Pavilion
- Water Play Feature



Phase 4 | \$750,000 – 1,200,000

- Sport Courts & Lighting
- Park Shelter & Restrooms
- Community Garden

PROBABLE COST OPINION

Site Preparation	\$230,000
Earthwork	\$900,000
Site Utilities	\$50,000
General Park + Parking Lot	\$840,000
Landscape	\$685,000
Park Shelters	\$1,005,000
Playground	\$1,425,000
Water Play	\$625,000
Sport Courts	\$330,000
Community Garden	\$85,000
Discovery Garden	\$165,000
Subtotal	\$6,340,000
Design, Engineering, Geotech	\$758,000
Project Contingency [15%]	\$950,000
Total – Probable Project Cost	\$8,048,000*

*Escalation not included in total

SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS

In terms of next steps for the design process, a schematic design phase is recommended to prepare additional detail on the park program that would both advance the overall design and allow the consultant team to prepare more accurate cost opinions to aid fundraising, grant applications and City budgets.

Upon completion of the park planning process, the Parks Department will evaluate funding opportunities through a variety of sources to identify a feasible path forward.

A phased approach to construction is most likely, with initial infrastructure and grading taking place as part of the library project and/or adjacent road improvement projects in the short term. While there are several options for how construction of improvements could be sequenced, the previous diagrams identify general scope, site area and approximate budgets for a phased approach.



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PARKS BUILT ON

communication & collaboration

