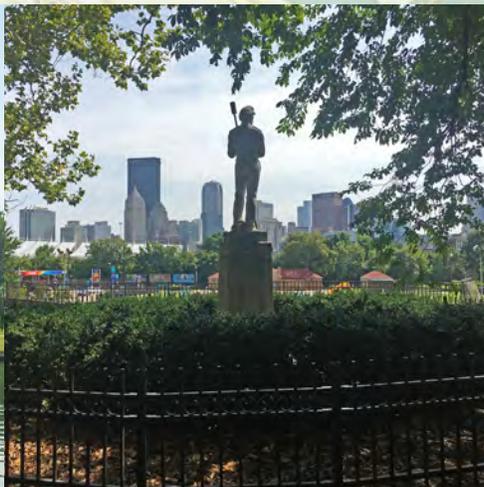
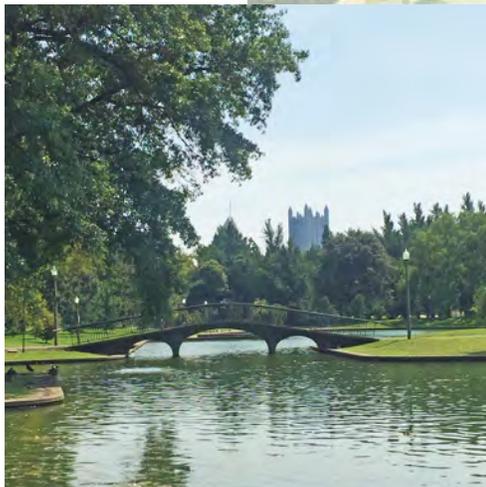




2018
ACTION PLAN



CELEBRATING 150 YEARS



2018 ACTION PLAN

This is your Action Plan to fulfill the acclaimed 2002 Allegheny Commons Master Plan and to increase the historic park's value to the community. Thanks to residents, stakeholder organizations, and park users working together, the plan represents a shared vision for comprehensively restoring the Commons as the premier public space of the Northside and a park of uncommon regional significance.

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Northside Leadership Conference
Allegheny Commons Initiative
Allegheny City Society
Allegheny City Central Association
The Allegheny Commons Apartments East
The Allegheny Senior Apartments
Allegheny West Civic Council
East Allegheny Community Council
Foster Square Apartments
Mexican War Streets Society
Northside Walk Ride

Local Organizations & Businesses

Allegheny Center Alliance Church
Allegheny General Hospital
Allegheny Universal Unitarian
Allegheny YMCA
Calvary Methodist Church
Carnegie Library – Allegheny Branch

PARTNERS



Children's Museum
City of Asylum
Community College of Allegheny County
Elks Lodge #339
Light of Life
National Aviary
New Hazlett Theatre
Northside Yoga
Nova Place
NRG
Urban Impact
Young Preservationists Association

Neighborhood Stakeholders

AGH/Highmark
Buhl Foundation
Community College of Allegheny County
Northside Leadership Conference
North Side Chamber of Commerce
The Priory Hospitality Group
Q_Development
Trek Development

Park User Groups

Allegheny Traditional Academy
Allegheny General Hospital
North Side Oldtimers
North Side Steelers
Off-Leash Exercise Area Users
Operation Safety Net

Pittsburgh King K-8
Urban Impact

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THIS WORK WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS:



OVERVIEW

An overview of our process, goals and objectives, design principles, and key areas of study

INTRODUCTION

Developing the plan for restoring and renewing Allegheny Commons required an extensive public process. Over the six months from August 2017 through February 2018, residents and key stakeholders discussed issues, constraints, and opportunities to arrive at a new vision for the park to serve future generations.

The process involved three public design work sessions that were organized around interviews and discussions with the Focus Groups on key subject areas – history, programming and use, ecology, external and internal influences, and economics. In addition, each work session allowed time for a collaborative dialogue and sharing of ideas resulting in physical drawings and illustrations to bring forth potential recommendations. At the end of each work session, recommendations were publicly presented for additional feedback.

Over the course of the public process, recommendations and ideas for physical improvements evolved as the consultant team and constituents developed design sketches to test the ideas. Discussions on each idea were weighed against the following factors:

- **Appropriateness and Compatibility:** New uses and programs should align with neighborhood desires and changing demographic.
- **Respect for Context:** Any new uses and improvements should be sensitive and thoughtful in regards to the park's historic landscape legacy.
- **Its Fit:** The size and scale of any proposed new use, activity or event should conform to the idea that the park primarily serves the daily needs of neighborhood residents.

These perspectives arose from the public process:

- Respect the 2002 Master Plan and its recommendations. This should be used as basis for all new proposed improvements.
- Although defined as a “signature” Community Park by the City's *Open Space, Parks and Recreation Plan*, the consensus is that it functions primarily as a neighborhood park and that “destination” uses should not be emphasized.
- Maintenance is a major issue. The park has a great landscape fabric and an upgrade of maintenance would go a long way to restoring the health and vitality, as well as the aesthetics of the park.
- What the park needs most is better and safer walkways, better drainage and lighting, improved signage, and more user

amenities – benches, litter receptacles, drinking fountains, and restrooms.

- New programs and uses are welcome to address a shifting population and the changing nature of recreation as long as they are compatible with existing uses in terms of size, scale, and they fit the landscape character of the park.
- Better management is needed to plan, finance, permit, and manage events.
- Added security by park rangers and police is critical to make park visitors feel safer.

The community's guidance was vital to forming the recommendations for Allegheny Commons. A full documentation of the various work sessions, interviews, and meetings are provided as part of the appendix to this report.

PROCESS

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Collection of the data in this report began during the summer of 2017 with meetings of focus groups, community members, city staff, as well as key stakeholders. Additionally, Pittsburgh's Northside population was targeted to participate in an online survey, which helped the team to understand use, participation, and interest in various recreation facilities and activities.

- **(15)** Focus Group Meetings
- **(5)** Steering Committee Meetings
- **(3)** Presentations at Allegheny Commons Initiative Meetings
- **(2)** Presentations at Northside Leadership Conference Meetings
- **(44)** Individual Stakeholder Meetings
- **(28)** Individual Neighborhood Meetings
- **(3)** Public Meetings, with **(125)** Participants

SURVEY

Listed are a few highlights from the online survey that played a key role in how the existing Allegheny Commons was assessed, and how the future park was designed:

- Distribution of e-blasts, social media, neighborhood newsletters, and in-person encounters in the park and off-leash dog area, at park events, with local businesses, and at community meetings.
- There were 481 respondents.
- 69% responded saying the #1 priority is improved pathways and additional/improved lighting park-wide.
- 59% responded saying general maintenance is the greatest concern about the park.

The entire Action Plan process was designed to be open and inclusive to achieve a plan accurately reflecting the specific needs of Northside groups and individual citizens. The goal of this process was to assure a plan that would serve both the existing resident population and contribute to the Northside as an active, vibrant, and exciting recreational destination to call home. A full survey can be found in the appendix of this Action Plan.

What changes would you most like to see in the park?



Sample Survey question and responses

APPROACH

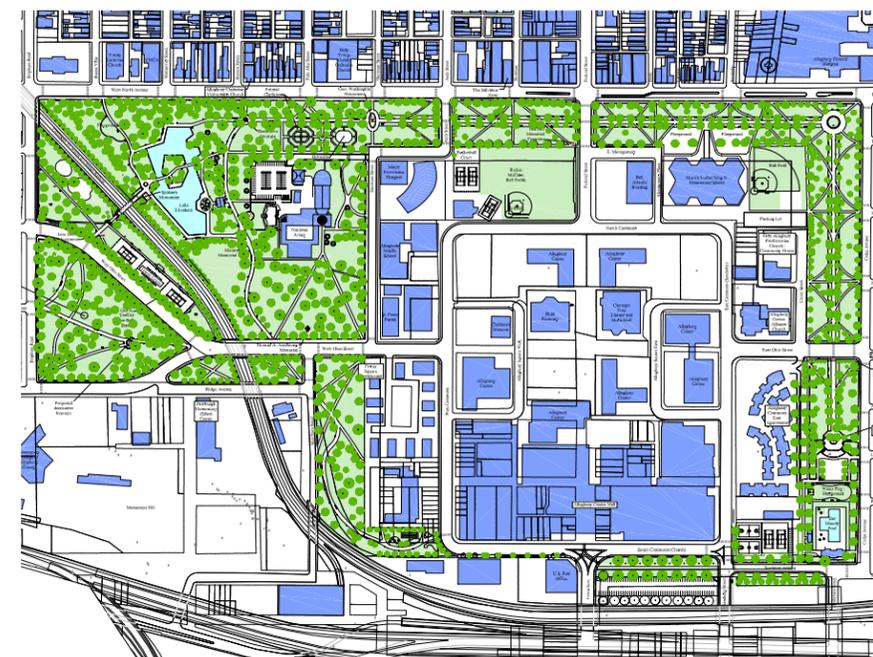
The recommendations that were outlined in the 2002 Master Plan prepared by *Pressley Associates* came out of a similar public process. The 2002 report was a benchmark to guide the thought process and evaluate recommendations. The original goals and objectives of the 2002 Master Plan were reinforced and enhanced by the Action Plan process. They are again embraced in this 2018 Action Plan.

The 2002 Master Plan Goals and Objectives:

- **PROMOTE** stewardship of Allegheny Commons.
- **PRESERVE & RESPECT** the historic landscape, as well as the continuum of that landscape.
- **ENHANCE** public safety, and **IMPROVE** universal accessibility and circulation.
- **MINIMIZE** alterations and additions to historic fabric while recognizing current community priorities and needs.
- **PROVIDE** a framework for ongoing management and maintenance.
- **ENHANCE** visitor services and use of the Commons.
- **RESPECT & ENHANCE** ecological vitality and integrity of the Commons.

One goal was to **NOMINATE** the Commons to the National Register of Historic Places. This was achieved with a listing in 2013.

Keeping these goals and objectives in mind, the 2018 plan provides recommendations that balance three key areas of study or influences – history, programming and use, and ecology.



2002 Master Plan by Pressley Associates

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Design principles based on the three key areas of study or influence were prepared to guide decision making. They are based on the premise of respecting the historic park landscape character while enhancing it and making it more diverse, providing new and improved programs and events that respect the scale and landscape setting, and enhancing the park's historic legacy with a renewed spirit.

HISTORY

The integrity of Allegheny Commons' historic landscape is a paramount concern.

All recommendations are evaluated first in terms of their sensitivity to the park's character-defining features. Because the park is a complex resource, designed, redesigned, and altered over 150 years, the approach affirms the 2002 Master Plan's combination of preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction treatments.

PROGRAMMING & USE

The 2002 Master Plan recommended expanding programming, and adapting recreational uses to contemporary interests. These are the basis of the recommendations in this 2018 Action Plan. *The focus is on the individual, and reinforces the historically tranquil, passive nature of Allegheny Commons. The growth in passive park use and the residents' desire to interact with the park in new ways prompted recommendations for more diverse, contemporary recreational activities in flexible settings and opportunities for social engagement.* The community was the source of ideas, expressing desire for a park that is better connected, safer, more comfortable, and well-maintained.

ECOLOGY

Recommendations for enhancing ecological functions within the park focus on benefits such as stormwater management, attraction of charismatic bird species, and general ecosystem enhancement. *In preparing these recommendations, we set the highest priority that each intervention maintain the historic character of the landscape setting and fit seamlessly within larger the landscape plan.*

Parks are dynamic and not static resources. These principles address this understanding and provide a framework for balancing the rich historic legacy of this park as an evolving landscape with the need to provide fresh amenities that capture the imagination and create future, cherished memories for a new generation of users.

HISTORY

Pittsburgh's Oldest Park - A 150 Year Legacy

Allegheny Commons is Pittsburgh's oldest park. Its rich and layered landscape has evolved over 150 years to meet the changing needs of the city. Today's park is a cultural continuum reflecting successive phases of historical development, each of which has left its imprint on the landscape:

PRE-PARK PERIOD 1788-1866

Before the design of the park in 1867, the Commons consisted of 102 acres set aside for public grazing in

the original plan for Allegheny City. During this period, the Commons took on such features as a Civil War soldiers' camp and training ground, the original Western State Penitentiary on the current site of the Aviary, and the railroad. As Allegheny urbanized in the 19th century, the Commons was used less and less for its original purpose, and public demand grew for improvement to this land.

VICTORIAN PERIOD 1867-1910

After the Civil War, inspired by New York's Central Park, the City of Allegheny appointed municipal engineer Charles Davis to oversee the transformation of the Commons into a public park. Davis hired Manhattan landscape architects Mitchell & Grant to prepare plans for an ornamental landscape characterized by symmetrical promenades, ornamental flower beds, monuments, and fountains. Lake



1867 Mitchell & Grant Plan



Early view of West Commons fountain with Western Penitentiary in background



Humboldt Fountain - a lost feature from the Victorian period



East Fountain is a Victorian feature that is being reconstructed in 2018

Elizabeth was established amid the more picturesque, pastoral landscape of West Commons. The Victorian-era park was larger than today, including land now occupied by the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) southwest of Ridge Avenue and Merchant Street.

**PROGRESSIVE PERIOD
1910-1945**

The early 20th century brought the annexation of Allegheny by the City of Pittsburgh and new pressures on parkland to accommodate facilities for active recreation such as swimming, skating, boating, ball courts, and playgrounds. During the 1930s, Pittsburgh Parks Superintendent Ralph Griswold—himself a noted landscape architect—emphasized outdoor play and efficiency in park improvements. Path alignments were streamlined and expensive-to-maintain fountains were removed. Also during this period, the railroad tracks through the park were sunk below grade (1912), the pool and pool house were built (ca. 1940), and Lake Elizabeth was drained (ca. 1945).

MODERN PERIOD 1945-1968

After World War II, cities contended with decades of deferred maintenance and competition from burgeoning suburbs. In response, planners undertook massive urban renewal projects. Such efforts on the Northside brought drastic changes to the neighborhoods around Allegheny

Commons, but fortunately the park was congruent with one of the primary goals of urban renewal, which was to enhance open space in dense, congested city neighborhoods. In the 1960s, landscape architects Simonds & Simonds reaffirmed West Commons' historically picturesque landscape, reintroducing Lake Elizabeth in modern materials and geometry. The Aviary was also constructed in the Commons during this period (1952).

1969-PRESENT

The late 20th and early 21st centuries have seen increased recognition of Allegheny Commons' history and planning for its future. In 1988, the City of Pittsburgh designated it as a City Historic Site. At around the same time, adjacent neighborhoods began to focus attention on the park. Ultimately, the Allegheny Commons Initiative and Northside Leadership Conference engaged Pressley Associates to produce a Master Plan for Allegheny Commons, published in 2002. Implementation of the plan began with a pilot project in East Common in 2005.

In fact, with the publication of the Allegheny Commons Master Plan, 2002 can be said to be another banner year in Allegheny Commons' history. Marion Pressley and the 2002 Master Plan Committee brought exceptional sensitivity to Allegheny Commons' historic value, not just as a Victorian park, but as a continuum of landscape design spanning from the 1860s to the 1960s. One of the most important

outcomes of the 2002 master planning process was its articulation of the importance of the 1960s Simonds & Simonds design features for West Commons. Acknowledgement of their significance marked a maturity of perception by stakeholders and a sea change from the attitude that Simonds & Simonds' work should be dismantled along with other evidence of urban renewal on the North Side.

A decade and a half later, the community continues to refer to the 2002 Master Plan as a valuable, consensus-based blueprint for preserving Allegheny Commons' historic character while adapting it to the changing needs of users and the evolving capacities of its stewards. In that spirit of adaptation, in 2017-2018, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and its partners - Allegheny Commons Initiative, Northside Leadership Conference, and the City of Pittsburgh - have renewed our commitment to preserving Allegheny Commons even as we revisited the Master Plan to examine how it might be updated to reflect current conditions. After all, history has no end point. Time is always moving forward, increasing our perspective on the past, and we are always learning. Since 2002, much has changed in and around Allegheny Commons, creating new opportunities and inspiring new ideas. For example:

- Planned improvements to the Allegheny Commons ring



Early view of the Western Penitentiary in background

road brings the opportunity for park upgrades to be built into transportation improvements, improving safety, connectivity, and functional park edges.

- New developments, such as Nova Place, bring new park neighbors and users, while existing historic neighborhoods around the park are being revitalized.
- Many initiatives of the Children's Museum have contributed to a changing context for the park, i.e. the transformation of Ober Park into Buhl Community Park and, coming soon, the conversion of the former Allegheny Library into a Children's Museum facility housing (among other things) a middle school.
- Meanwhile, the park's relationship with the Aviary—a tension which drove many of the recommendations of the 2002 Master Plan—has stabilized.
- Changing uses in the park offer opportunities to reconsider the function of areas such as the disused tennis courts behind the pool building, the Public Works maintenance facility, and the nearby section of Ridge Avenue which will be closed.
- The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy has embraced Allegheny Commons, bringing resources of professional expertise and advocacy.



Allegheny Commons is Pittsburgh's oldest public park. Over 150 years, it has evolved to meet the changing needs of the city



Historic view of the Promenade



Active recreation on Lake Elizabeth and previously existing pedestrian bridge in the early 20th century

- Even the implementation of the East Commons Phases 1 and 2 by the Allegheny Commons Initiative resulted in some small, iterative changes to the Master Plan, such as the decision to locate historic pipe-rail fencing only at certain places, not all around the entire park perimeter.

Since the publication of the 2002 Master Plan, the City has also issued its own Comprehensive Plan for Parks & Open Space. This plan outlines the City's intentions with regard to best park management practices and needs to be integrated with the Allegheny Commons plan. One issue the Comprehensive Plan foregrounds is stormwater

management. This is a critical challenge for our region, one that the 2002 Allegheny Commons plan acknowledged, but did not address in detail. Thus, an important component of this Action Plan has been to introduce discussion about ecological enhancements to the park landscape and how to implement them in ways that are compatible with Allegheny Commons' historic character.

In this plan, as in all of our recommendations, we are guided by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes. These are:

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE TREATMENT TYPES

PRESERVATION | Sustaining the integrity of historic character and materials

RESTORATION | Faithfully adhering to the design, materials, and workmanship of a particular period in time

RECONSTRUCTION | Replication of a non-surviving site, structure, or feature

REHABILITATION | Adapting for compatible new use while maintaining integrity of character-defining historic features

Throughout the 2002 Master Plan, Pressley Associates applied all of these approaches, as appropriate, to various park features. Restoration and reconstruction play limited roles. These treatments are technically demanding and can be expensive. Therefore, in the context of a historic park that must serve contemporary users and be maintained within the limitations of current crews and budgets, restoration and reconstruction are reserved for individual features with strong integrity and/or exceptional significance. More widely compatible with the principle of respecting the 150-year continuum of landscape history in Allegheny Commons are the approaches of preservation and rehabilitation.



Modern footbridges and Soldier's Monument on Lake Elizabeth

restored, but we have explored strategies to compensate for their loss through reference, physical connection, or both.



Urban renewal both preserved and altered West Commons

Preservation acknowledges the effects of the passage of time on a resource and that changes accumulated over time become a part of history made visible. Rehabilitation recognizes that uses themselves change with populations and eras, challenging planners and managers to adapt some aspects of a resource while maintaining the historic character of others.

There are few areas of the park in which the original Victorian design, materials, and workmanship remain, unaltered by later visions. In large part, we have collectively chosen to preserve the park's layers of history, rather than restore the original version. Some original features of Allegheny Commons, such as Monument Hill, can never be

Some sites offer the complex possibility of more than one solution. Lake Elizabeth is perhaps the area that throws this into sharpest relief. An original feature of the park, it was first a naturalistic pond with a rockery, or rock garden, at one shore; then edged in concrete with a boathouse and a sloped edge for putting-in; then drained, filled in, and planted over; and most recently, re-created as a reflecting pool with hard edges, islands, and footbridges. Like much in the park, Lake Elizabeth today shows inevitable "signs of age, change, abuse, benign neglect and deferred maintenance" (in Marion Pressley's own words from 2002). In revisiting the 2002 Master Plan's informed call for preserving Simonds and Simonds' Lake Elizabeth, we must grapple not only with its present condition, but with our responsibility, as planners in a time of ecological crisis, to conserve water and energy and to participate in stormwater solutions. What would Simonds and Simonds do? What should we?

The intersection of historic preservation and sustainability is one of the most exciting frontiers in both fields today, and we have begun to navigate it in this 2018 Action Plan for Allegheny Commons.

PROGRAMMING & USE

Meeting the Needs of a Modern Society

The 2002 Master Plan outlined approaches to programming facilities and uses that are still valid today. Its recommendations, as shown below, provide the fundamental program for the Action Plan.

- Define safe pathways.
- Accommodate new pedestrian routes to adjacent uses and align pathways for better pedestrian connections and maintenance access across intersections.
- Maintain existing recreation opportunities and keep the current ratio of active sport venues within the park.
- Allow for a broader mix of new and contemporary uses that interest current park users.
- Strike a balance between the passive user and the need to provide for more activity.
- Find new and appropriate spaces for events to protect the historic landscape framework of the park.
- Keep this a neighborhood-oriented park and make sure all programs and events are of a scale and character that respect the park's historic character and image.
- Provide for a more active Lake Elizabeth by bringing back boating, ice skating, and a new form of the boat house.
- Enhance the playground experiences.
- Remove and replace underutilized court game areas.

These approaches are just a few of the programming suggestions, which range from general to specific. They provided a framework for the updated recommendations related to programming and use. Programs attract and increase positive use of the park, reinforcing the interconnection between use and safety. The final recommendations in this Action Plan were built on consensus through dialogue with our workshop participants, testing of ideas and gaining feedback, and research into current park recreation trends.



These scenes from other places depict a range of ways that people enjoy their parks by design



Art and storytelling is a big part of creative play in Boston Commons

LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENTS & ECOLOGY

Diversity, Sustainability & Green Infrastructure



Trees, shrubs and groundcovers are the fabric of a park's beauty and can enrich our local ecology if well maintained, as these examples from other parks show.

In keeping with the City of Pittsburgh goals, enhancing ecological functions within the park became an important aspect of the Action Plan. The focus is on benefits such as stormwater management, attraction of charismatic bird species, and general ecosystem enhancement. The highest priority establishes that each intervention maintains the historic character of the landscape setting, and fits seamlessly within the larger landscape plan. The current ecological assets of the park need to be complemented by habitat offerings that will attract and sustain a diverse wildlife population and attract migrating birds seeking temporary refuge. This requires a broader range of foraging and nesting opportunities as well as diverse conditions to support the insects and soil biota that make up many

birds' diets. Also identified were some specific locations that could be more easily maintained by changing the planting regime. With great discretion, a set of treatments and locations for their application has been defined, including small pilot treatments that can be tested for community approval, as well as viability. The priority was to choose locations where treatments (1) would not alter historic character or limit park use, (2) would be done in a manner that makes sense within the larger park context, and (3) will require minimal maintenance. In some cases these treatments are paired with green stormwater management practices in order to address the urgent need to reduce stormwater contributions to the city's combined sewer system which overflows during nearly every rain event.

The treatments are as follows:

- Add flowering trees to create a healthy understory that provides refuge to birds that avoid the higher canopy.
- Convert some carefully selected lawn areas to a diverse flowering meadow with native plants selected for soil and light conditions. For example, wet meadow habitat is suggested for chronically wet areas.
- Alter the current mowing regime, and add a variety of ground-level flowering plants to create a more diverse lawn or "Greensward." Greensward is cut at four to six inches and is allowed to grow to 10 to 12 inches where lawn use is limited.
- Re-instate the practice of "bedding out" or creating formal perennial gardens where they were once part of the historic park design, employing plants with high habitat/stormwater value.
- Improve water quality in Lake Elizabeth by lowering the bottom of the lake and introducing filtration plantings, while fully preserving the features belonging to the Simonds & Simonds design.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Park-Wide Improvements

Action Plan Recommendations fall into three categories to ensure project implementation:

- **Operations, Management & Maintenance**
- **Capital Improvements**
- **Landscape Management Strategies**

All proposed program and physical improvements projects will be matched with an effective fundraising strategy that not only covers capital costs, but also aligns that project with an effective operations, management and maintenance plan.

OPERATIONS, MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

Parallel to the design recommendations for new capital projects, a matching operations, management and maintenance plan shall be completed during the design phase. This plan shall outline program, budget, funding, and long-term operations and maintenance costs to sustain the project for future generations. These plans will be developed during the design phase of each project and will be a collaboration between the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, the City of Pittsburgh and park stakeholders. Goals include:

- Boost security.
- Enhance maintenance of landscape and infrastructure.
- Expand park programs: information, exhibits, publications, education, tours, events, volunteers.
- Upgrade existing structures, and design appropriate new infrastructure to support programming.
- Accommodate new uses in flexible ways that do not contradict historic design intent.
- Foster park advocacy.
- Leverage capital outlays; explore public/private partnerships.



Allegheny Commons landscape character

PARK-WIDE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Neighborhood workshop discussions and the public survey identified the pressing need for a safer, better connected and more amenitized park. From this came the idea of creating a continuous circuit path that takes the usefulness and impact of the Promenade and extends it throughout the park as an organizing and unifying element.

The top priority project, the “Circuit” will provide a continuous loop around the entire Commons, including the long-lost South Commons. It will be well lit and well paved, with informative signs and comfortable amenities from benches to gardens, as the following key strategies outline:

- Improve the main pathways and their connections to intersections and across bisecting streets.
- Provide lighting consistent with the historic standard.
- Install historically appropriate directional, regulatory, and interpretive signage.
- Provide user amenities such as benches, litter receptacles, and drinking fountains.
- Employ pipe-rail and barrier plantings to better define off-leash areas.
- Enrich landscape character, reintroducing formal gardens at Southwest Commons, the George Washington Monument, and the Thomas Armstrong, using native plants that attract pollinators.
- Relocate Hartzell and World War II monuments, and create new entry feature at Federal Street and South Commons.

The above strategies will also be applied park-wide, plus:

- Enhance edge connections and gateways to the park.
- Restore monuments and their settings.
- Develop a tree preservation strategy for diverse species and life cycles.
- Bring back diverse lawn seed mix.
- Employ toolkit of ecological landscape enhancements to solve persistent stormwater problems in ways compatible with the historic park landscape setting.

The Action Plan recommends these guidelines for any new structures:

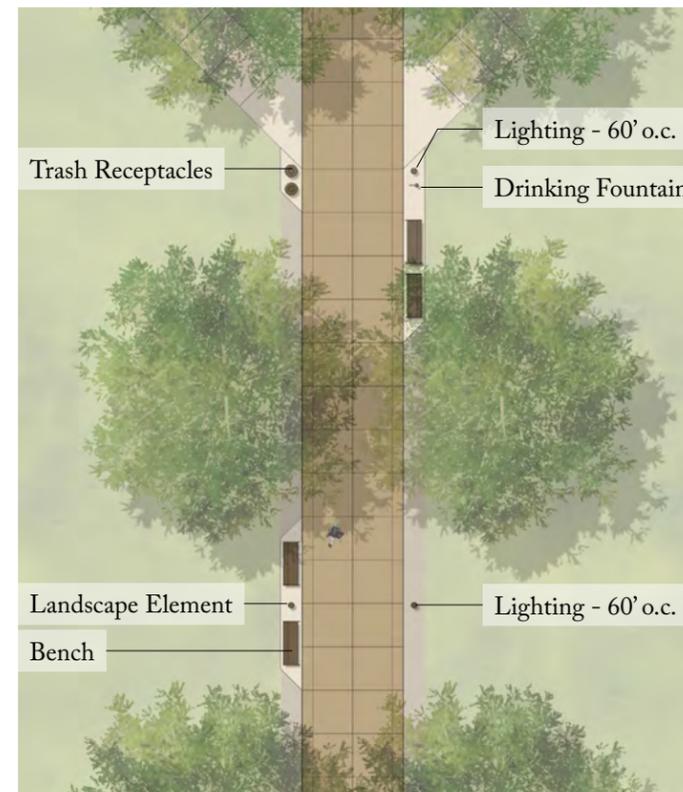
- Inside the park, new construction (e.g. Lake Elizabeth Pavilion) will be designed to minimize environmental impacts.
- Park structures will take design cues from their historic context and precedents.
- Adjacent to the park, new construction will be designed with doors, windows, and connections to park.



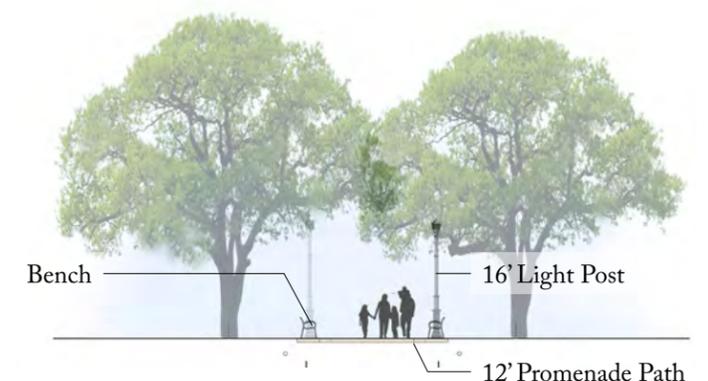
A view of the Promenade today



Artist rendering - 2018 Fountain Reconstruction

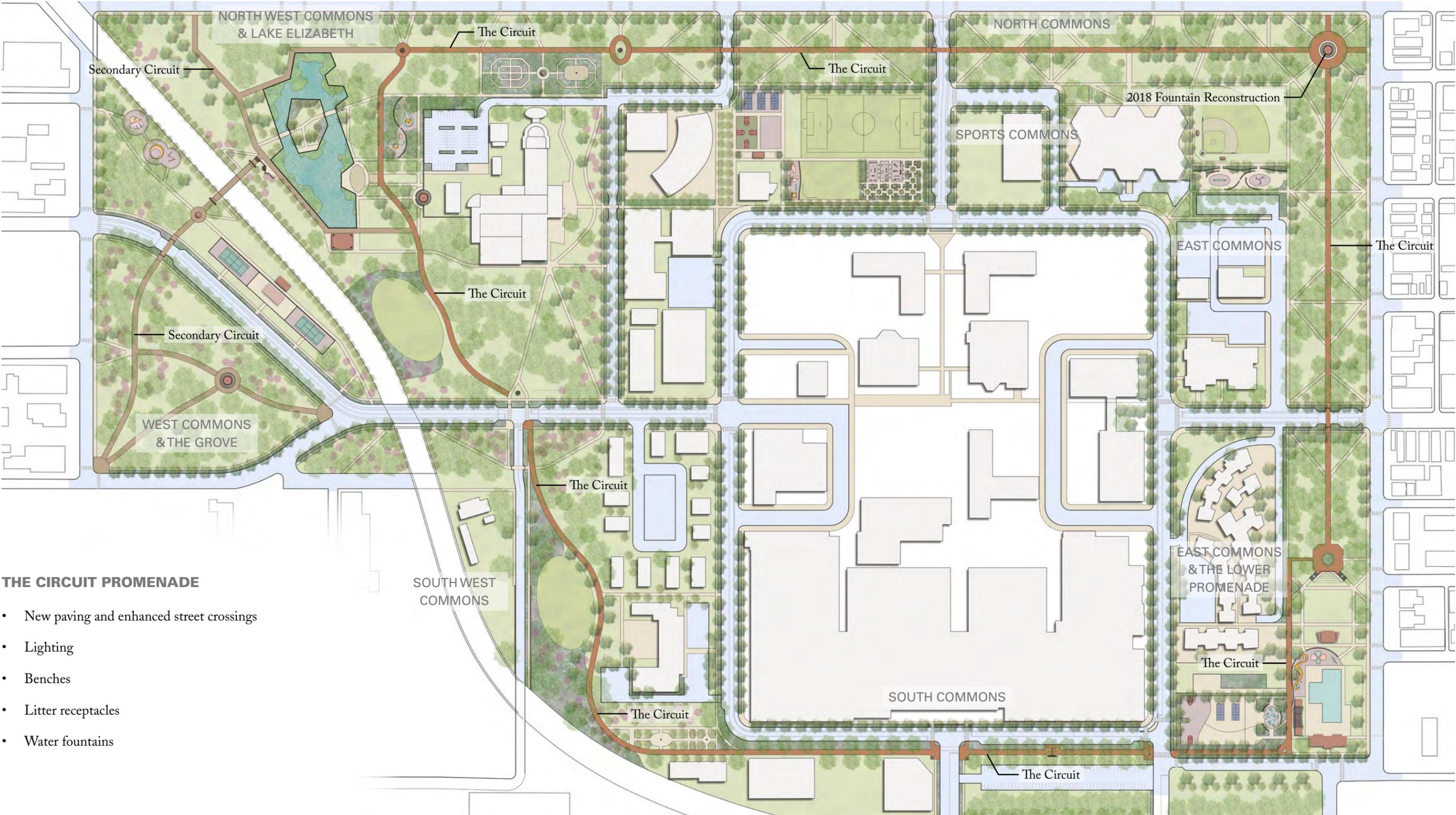


Typical plan



Typical section

OVERALL PARK PLAN & THE CIRCUIT



THE CIRCUIT PROMENADE

- New paving and enhanced street crossings
- Lighting
- Benches
- Litter receptacles
- Water fountains

Illustrative plan of Allegheny Commons and the Circuit Promenade

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvements by Park Area

INTRODUCTION

When the Circuit is achieved, Allegheny Commons will begin to feel like a cohesive and unified park. In addition to this major objective, recommendations for improvements by park area are also defined. The following pages illustrate these program and physical improvement projects.

PARK AREAS

AREA 1 | West Commons & the Grove

AREA 2 | North West Commons, Lake Elizabeth & South West Commons

AREA 3 | North Commons & East Commons

AREA 4 | East Commons & the Lower Promenade

AREA 5 | South Commons

AREA 6 | Sports Commons



Aerial illustration of proposed improvements to Lake Elizabeth looking north showing the new terrace and pavilion



Aerial illustration of East Commons and the Lower Promenade



The new South Commons Promenade



Lake Elizabeth's new terrace and pavilion

AREA 1 | WEST COMMONS & THE GROVE

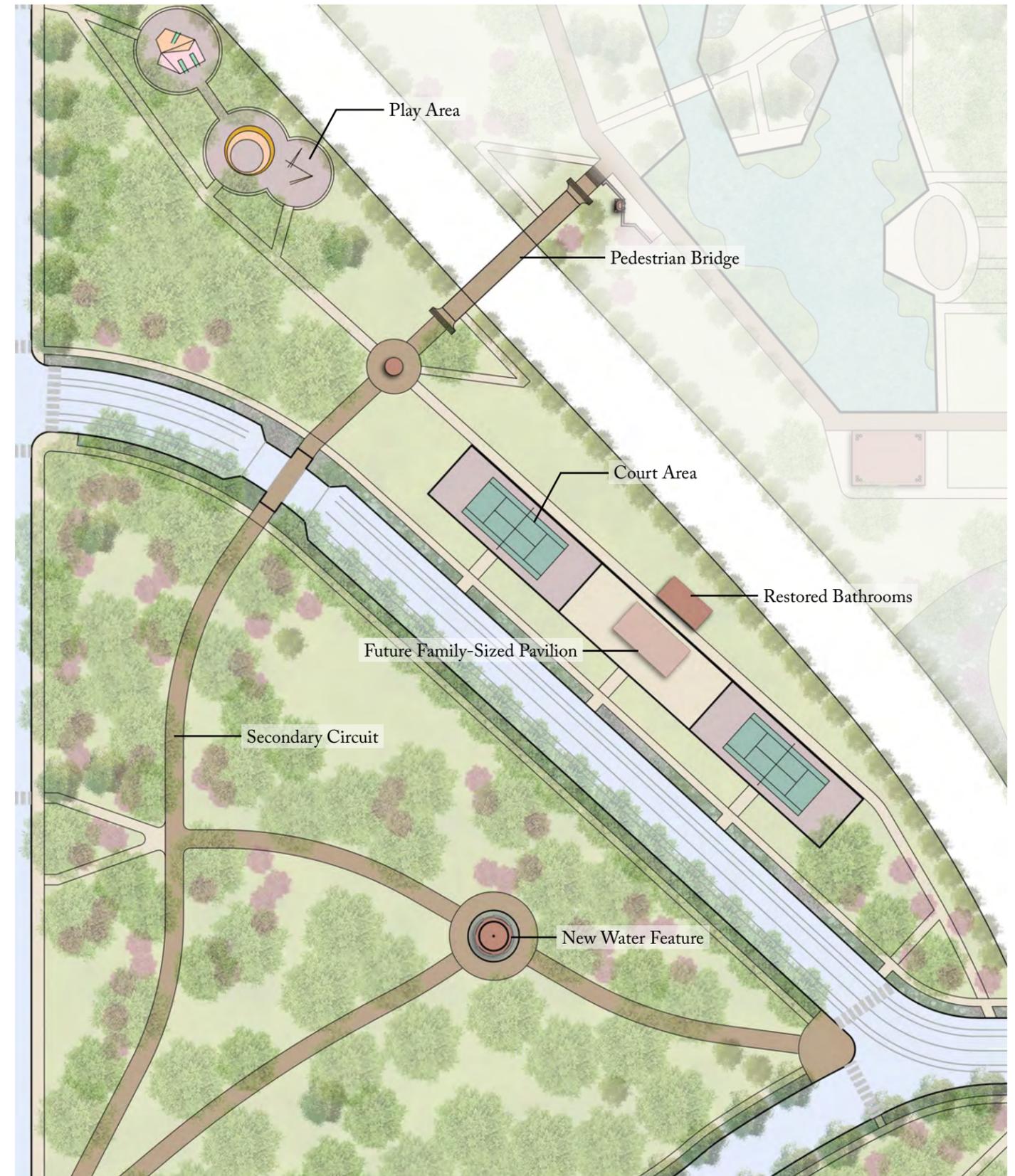
The Grove in West Commons offers unique opportunities. It is somewhat isolated from the more heavily used areas of the park, and its setting is more of a pastoral, greensward landscape of large canopy trees and lawn. Recommendations center on reinstating a water feature as well as diversifying the landscape character with understory trees and defined meadows. The area can also provide some flexibility in regard to park uses by omitting the center tennis court and using that space for flexible games and programs. The space can also accommodate a temporary event tent or family picnic shelter that is appropriately managed. If successful, this could be a precursor to a permanent shelter.

Specific recommendations include:

- Preserve pastoral character of historic landscape.
- Enhance the landscape setting by adding perimeter buffer of understory native plantings and flowering trees.
- Reintroduce water feature in historic location of West Commons fountain.
- Introduce meadow plantings to manage wet conditions in low lying areas.
- Rehabilitate 1930s restroom building and two tennis courts; central area to be flexible court; possible future family sized shelter.
- Enhance play value and inclusivity at existing play area; improve drainage.
- Install the planned footbridge to connect to Lake Elizabeth.



Proposed pedestrian bridge by Paul Tellers of WTW Architects



Illustrative plan of West Commons at the Grove

AREA 2 | NORTH WEST COMMONS & LAKE ELIZABETH



This area, perhaps the one that has seen the most transitions over the history of the park, is a place where use, history and the future intertwine. It is the ideal area to introduce new user amenities as well to as enhance the many layers of design history found here. Respecting the 1960s Simonds & Simonds modernistic geometry of Lake Elizabeth, one key recommendation is to further explore improving water quality and habitat within the lake. The lake then becomes what the Simonds' plan intended - the center of attention, the main refreshment. Centered on the lake edges are new gathering terraces and sitting areas, a modernistic pavilion, event space, a new play area, and an enhanced promenade experience. The formal planting beds are now expressed in a new way, using native plants to create a more ecological and sustainable garden.

Specific recommendations include:

- Honor continuum of historic landscape design from Mitchell & Grant to Simonds & Simonds.
- Rehabilitate Lake Elizabeth:
 - Preserve geometry and architecture of Simonds' design.
 - Improve water circulation and quality.
 - Add plantings to filter water and provide bird habitat; discourage large water fowl (For more detailed information, reference 2016 Lake Elizabeth Stormwater Management Plan in Appendix E).



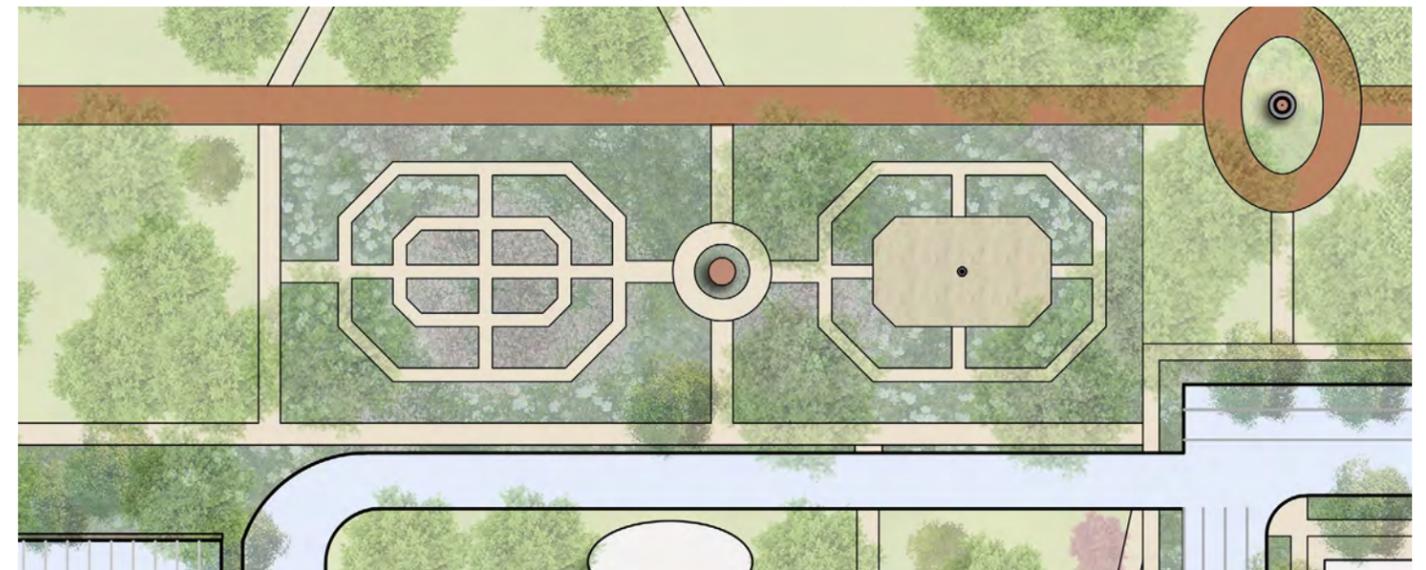
Illustrative plan of West Commons and Lake Elizabeth

Lake Elizabeth today



Aerial view looking north toward the proposed Lake Elizabeth pavilion and terrace

- Relocate Off-Leash Exercise Area (OLEA) further south to minimize user conflicts, with vegetative buffers and pipe rail detail to define boundary between OLEA and adjacent Circuit path.
 - Consider natural and historically-inspired features.
- Construct new Lake Elizabeth Pavilion with amenities such as food service, restrooms, and a terrace for events that can generate revenue to support park operations.
- Consolidate West Commons play areas near Lake Elizabeth Pavilion.
 - Design for multi-generational use.
- In front of Aviary, enrich bird habitat and modify pathways to improve pedestrian movement and Arch Street crossing.
- Reinstate a focal feature to commemorate Alexander von Humboldt as an ecological visionary at historic location of von Humboldt fountain.
- Reinterpret historic formal gardens using native plantings and pollinator plants.



Reinterpretation of historic gardens using native plantings and pollinator plants



View of the Aviary shortly after completion



A modernist pavilion as precedent



Two views of native plantings in formal setting





Looking south alongside Lake Elizabeth, with lake side terrace and pavilion beyond

AREA 2 | SOUTH WEST COMMONS



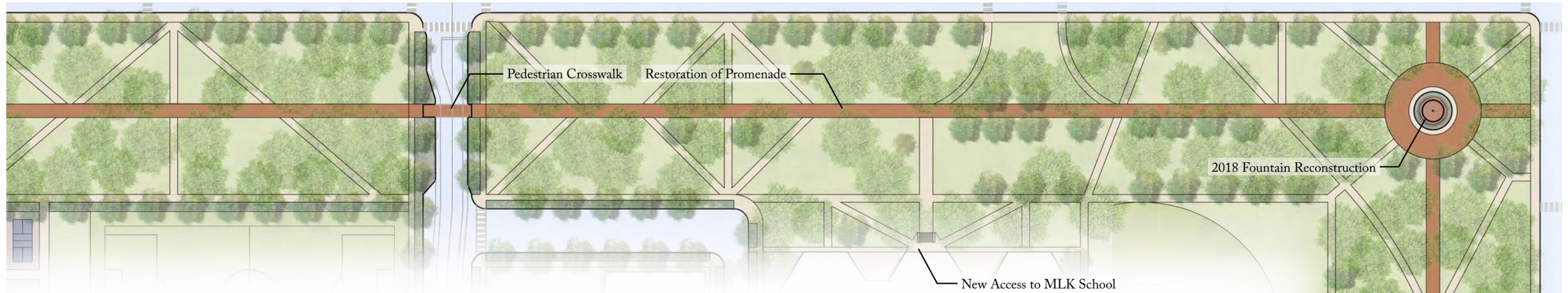
This area, south of East Ohio Street, is a continuation of the North West Commons. Here the pathway becomes part of the Circuit Promenade. Meadow buffers are proposed, and this area could serve as a rotating location for an OLEA.

Specific recommendations include:

- Improve pathway connections; realign paths toward adjacent housing.
- Improve landscape character to integrate this area with the park; buffer the railroad corridor with meadow and perimeter plantings.
- Capture segment of Ridge Avenue that is being vacated with the removal of the bridge, and tie it to the park landscape islands between Ridge Avenue and East Ohio Street for a more cohesive park setting.
- Explore future connection to Monument Hill and CCAC campus.
- Optimize use of park maintenance complex as it transitions from a regional facility to one dedicated to Allegheny Commons.
- Create a small garden setting at southwest corner near South Commons Drive.
- Develop 2nd OLEA for annual alternating use.

Illustrative plan of South West Commons

AREA 3 | NORTH COMMONS & EAST COMMONS

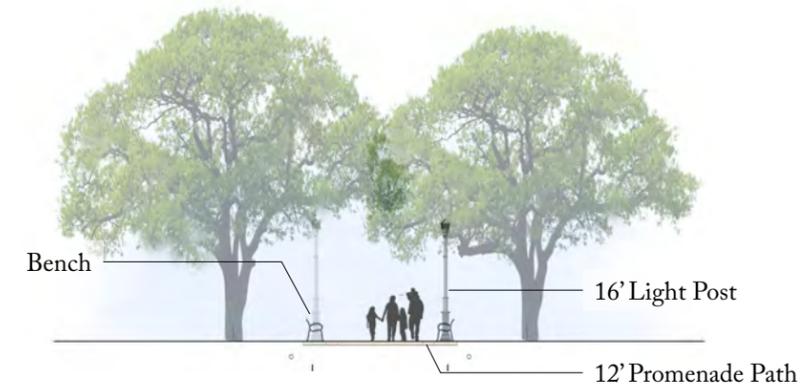


Illustrative plan of North Commons and East Commons

As the most formal area of the park, the main recommendation here is to enhance the Promenade’s landscape character and improve connectivity. This includes the implementation of the Circuit (refer to Park-Wide Improvements on page 23). In 2018, we will see the restoration of the historic Northeast Fountain at the park entrance surrounded by new gardens.

Specific recommendations include:

- Preserve historic Promenade and formal landscape setting.
- Reconstruct Northeast Fountain.
- Restore pathways, and reinforce connectivity to the intersections.
- Install safer, mid-block pedestrian crossings using curb bump-outs and raised crosswalks.
- Reclaim park encroachment at the MLK School, and re-establish the historic park edge and Promenade.
- Widen the North Avenue ROW sidewalk where possible to improve accessibility.
- Relocate Hartzell Memorial, “Man, Beast and Birds” monument near its original site along Federal Street.



Typical Promenade section



Artist rendering - 2018 Fountain Reconstruction

AREA 4 | EAST COMMONS & THE LOWER PROMENADE

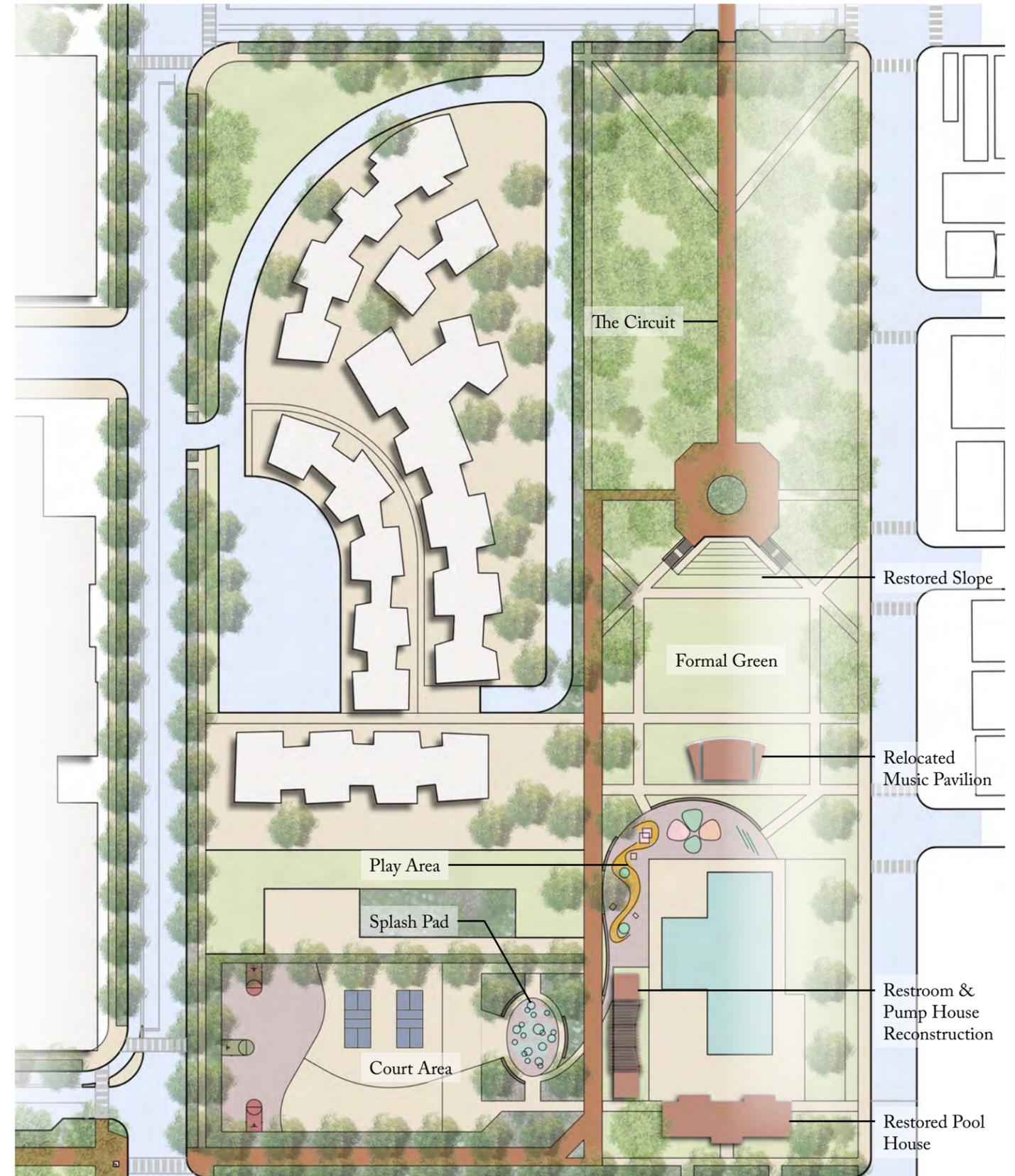
Perhaps one of the most worn areas of the park is the Lower Promenade below the Hampton Battery Memorial. The plan recommends extending the Promenade southward to Stockton Avenue and connecting it to South Commons, formalizing the lower terrace and building a new performance stage/pavilion. A new flexible court area and splash pad is recommended in place of the underutilized basketball and tennis courts. An experiential play area is also recommended.

Specific recommendations include:

- Restore formal terrace below Battery, and add new stage pavilion oriented to view of downtown.
- Relocate and redesign play area, possibly incorporating water play in reference to historic fountain in this location.
- Redesign existing court game area:
 - Accommodate flexible use.
 - Remove perimeter berm and enhance edge conditions to make court area safer.
 - Install tree pits to capture stormwater runoff.
 - Relocate World War II Memorial to South Commons Promenade.
- Restore pool bathhouse, and reimagine the pool as a water play zone with zero depth entry.
- Replace existing restroom and pump house buildings with new structures compatible with the historic character of the pool house; design restroom to serve all park users year-round.



These examples of flexible and active programming strategies can be applied to Allegheny Commons



Illustrative plan of East Commons and the Lower Promenade



Aerial illustration of improvements to the East Commons and the Lower Promenade

AREA 5 | SOUTH COMMONS

This lost piece of connective tissue is intended to enhance the current auto oriented streetscape into a lush, green park street with emphasis on pedestrian safety and mobility. A new gateway public art feature is envisioned at Federal Street as well.

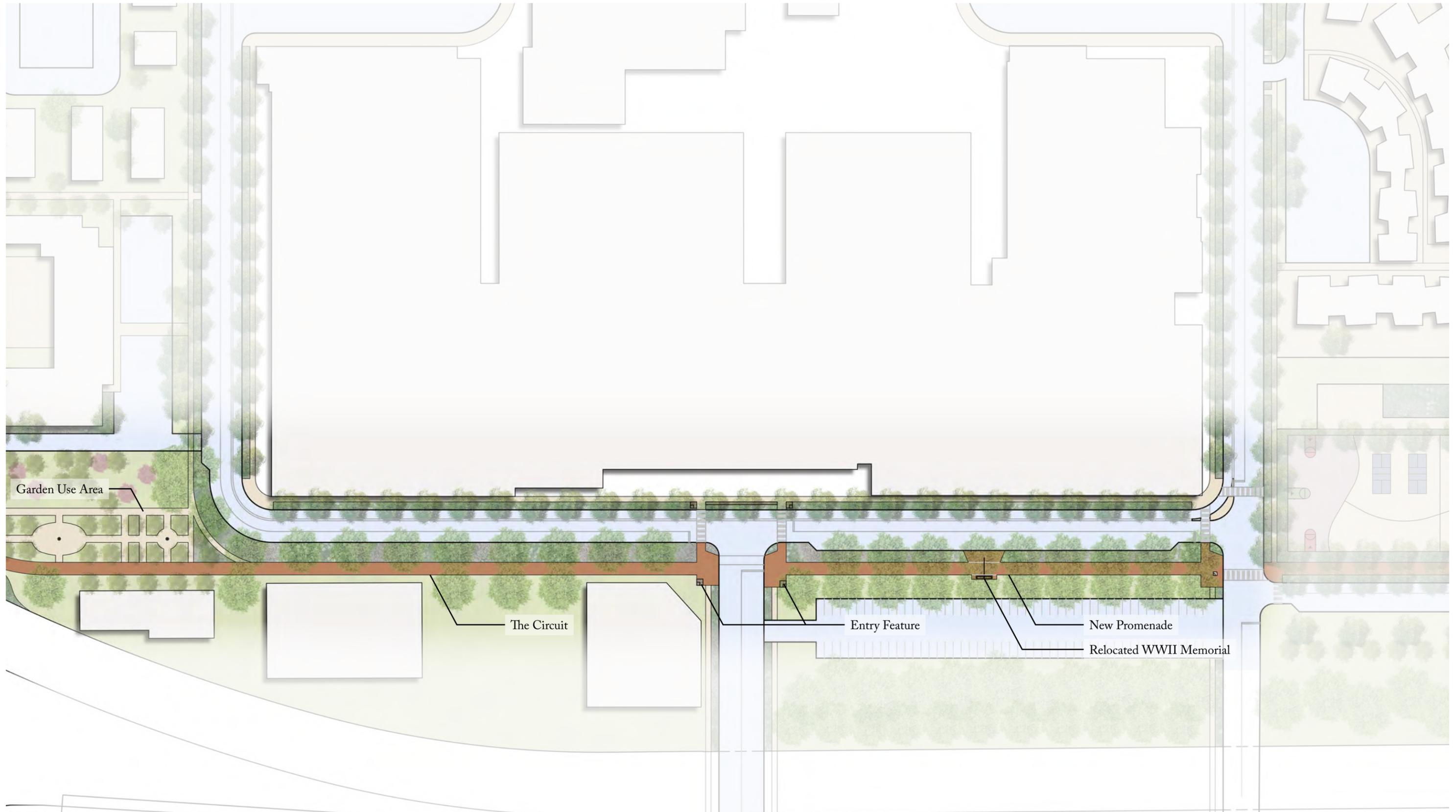
Specific recommendations include:

- Enhance connectivity and accessibility with a new Promenade walkway and tree allée.
- Establish park identity and enhance arrival experience through signage and/or public art at the Federal Street intersection.
- Work with adjacent property owners to enhance their property frontages along the sidewalks.
- Relocate World War II memorial along South Commons Promenade.



View of South Commons looking east

Proposed pedestrian promenade created by removing the parking lane



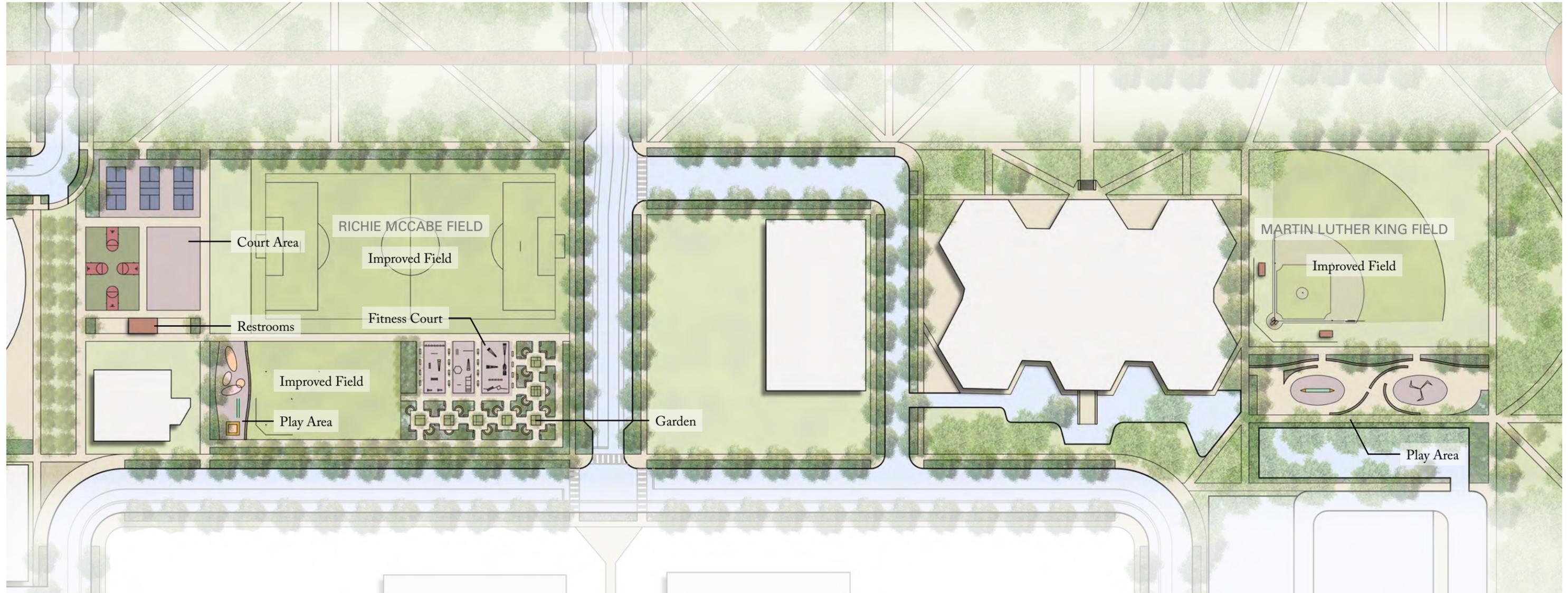
Illustrative plan of South Commons

AREA 6 | SPORTS COMMONS

Although not within the formal boundaries of historic Allegheny Commons, this adjacent parkland should be enhanced so that it appears consistent with the Commons' landscape character. Improved user amenities include upgraded sport fields, flexible court areas, an outdoor exercise area, restrooms, play areas, and gardens. New pathway connections and streetscapes will integrate this area into the fabric of Allegheny Commons Park.

Specific commendations include:

- Maintain and improve rectangular field at McCabe Field and ball diamond at Martin Luther King Field. Convert ball diamond at McCabe Field to multi-use green space.
- Add small restroom facility and space for concessions at McCabe Field.
- Improve the court game area at McCabe Field to accommodate more flexible use.
- Add new play areas west of Richie McCabe Field and south of Martin Luther King Field.
- Add an exercise equipment Fitness Court and Garden.



Illustrative plan of Sports Commons

RECOMMENDATIONS

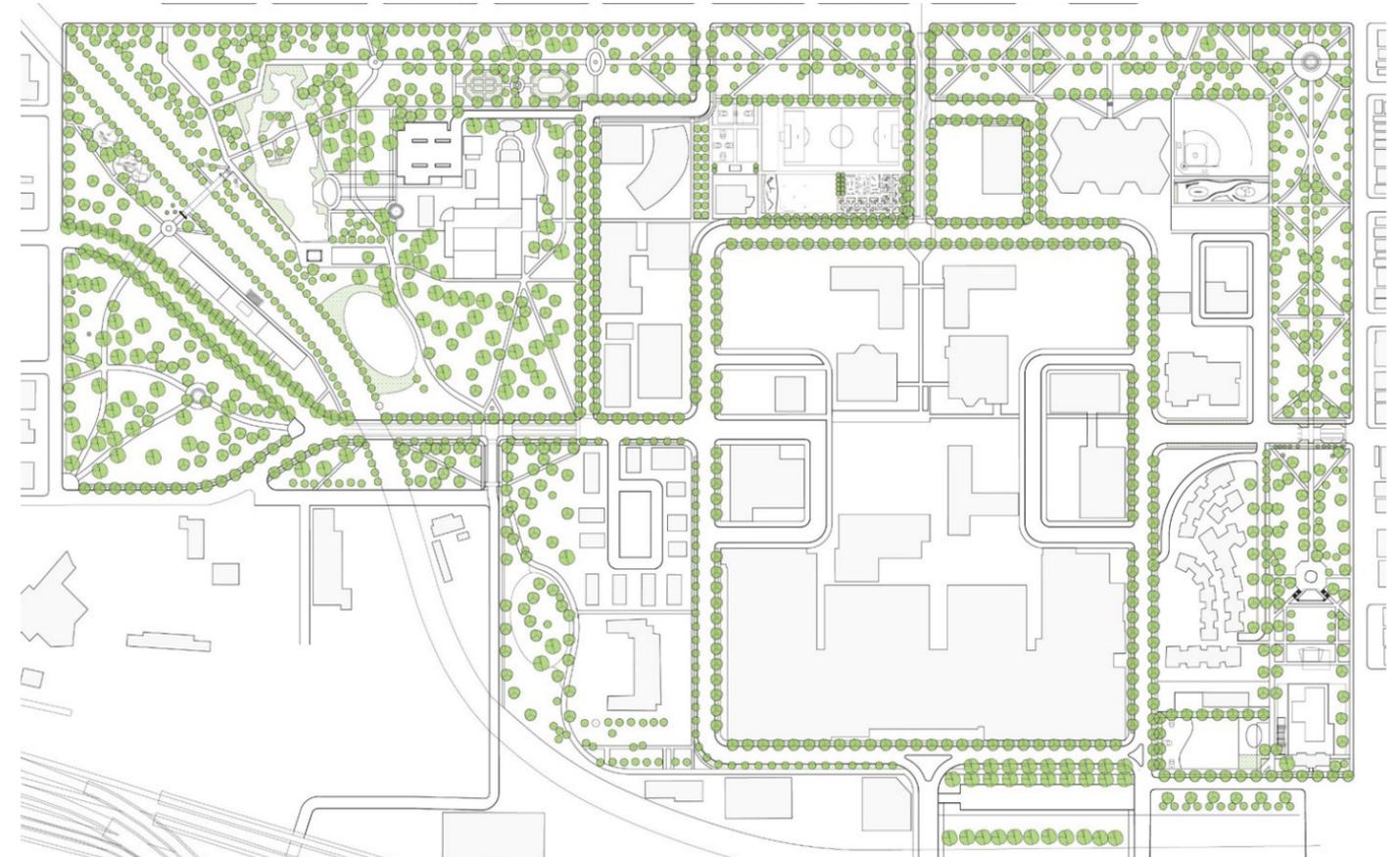
Landscape Management Strategies

Integrated in all of the proposed recommendations are park-wide improvements to the landscape character of the site. These recommendations are meant to ensure that one of the park's most tremendous assets, the existing tree canopy, is sustained and managed properly. In addition, strategies are recommended for improved stormwater catchment and treatments as well as programs to diversify the landscape plantings to create sustainable ecological habitats. All of this will create a more healthy and sustainable landscape and will be done with respect to the historic park setting that is Allegheny Commons.

TREE INVENTORY

A complete tree inventory will allow for the planning of obsolescence, as well as anticipation of future area changes, as new trees are planted to replace the old. This practice is essential for sustaining a healthy and diverse multi-generational canopy for years to come.

- Identify aging or diseased trees.
- Identify undesirable species.
- Select priority replacement species.
- Identify edge areas for modifications.
- Establish schedule and planting plan for replacement trees.
- Develop program for growth management in helicopter flight paths.



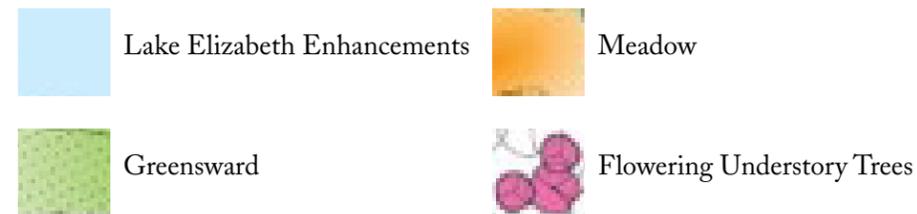
Illustrative plan of the tree canopy of Allegheny Commons

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

Allegheny Commons Park resides within a larger landscape. Ecological management should keep the potential for larger connections to the Allegheny River and Riverview Park in mind as longer-range goals.

After extensive community review, the design team has identified four types of enhancements to complement overall park ecology and widen the range of biota that visit and inhabit the park. Changes to park management practices will introduce new food sources and refuge for birds and pollinators. While these new practices require additional training of maintenance personnel, the maintenance regime for these areas is less taxing than regular mowing of traditional lawns.

At Lake Elizabeth, the team recommends advancing the 2016 plan to modify the lake by lowering the bottom level and introducing a range of wetland plantings along interior portions of the existing perimeter wall. Deeper water and filtering plants will improve water quality and attract migrating birds seeking food and respite. By lowering the water level, it becomes possible to direct runoff from adjacent areas for management within the lake.

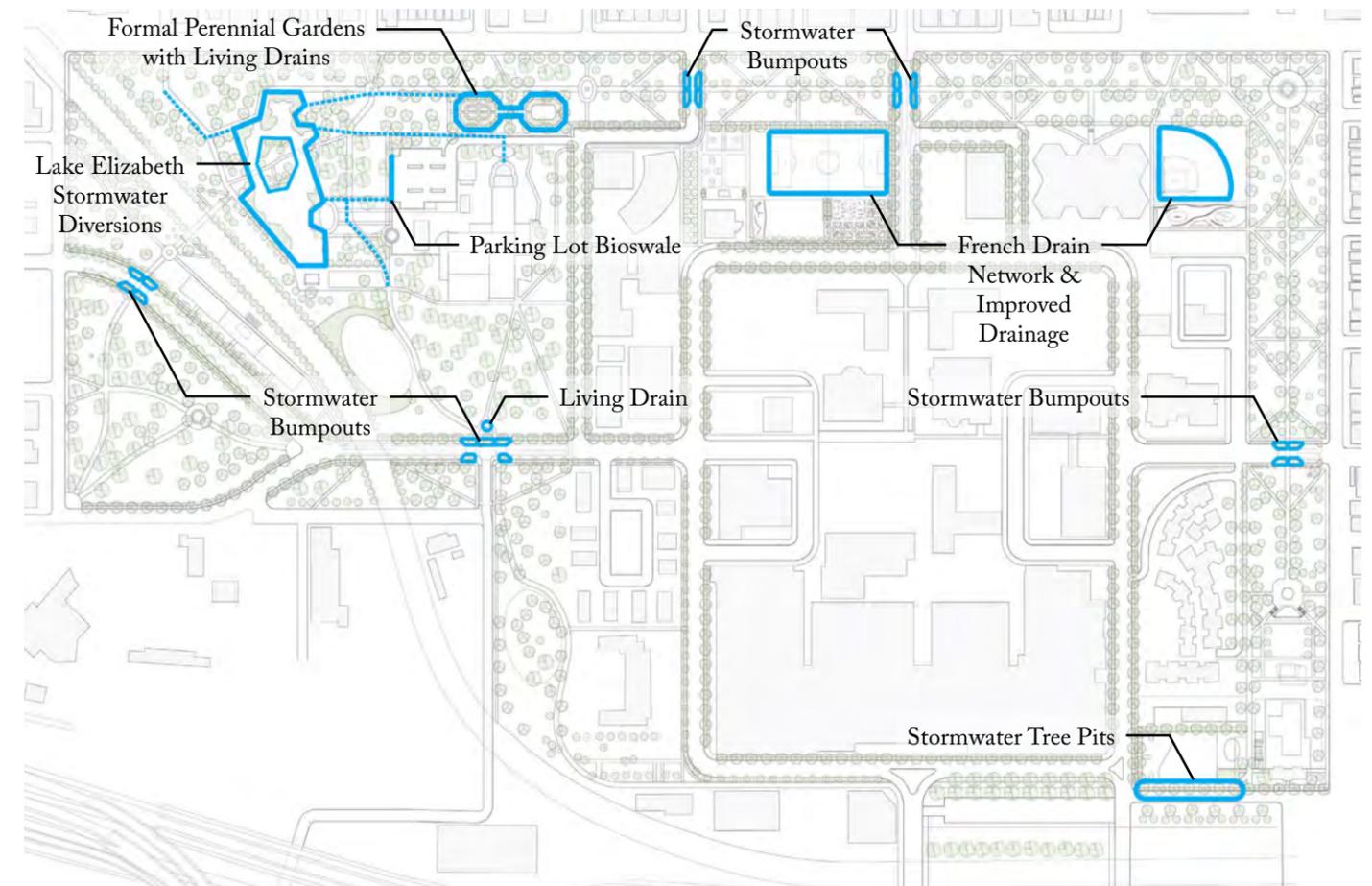


Illustrative plan of habitat improvements

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

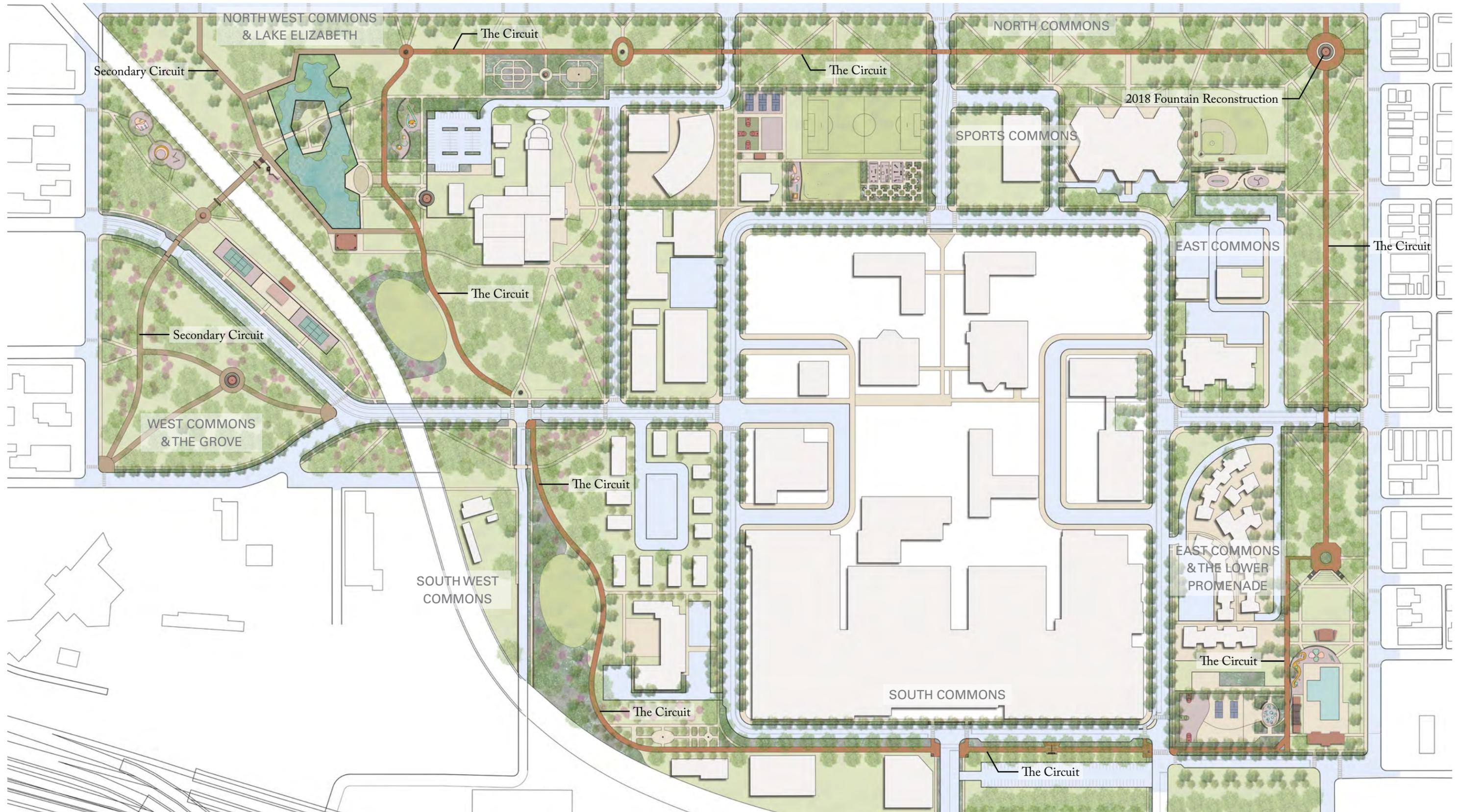
The team identified a variety of stormwater management features that will enhance park functions by enhancing street crossings, improving areas that are frequently saturated and diverting runoff toward green features that limit the volume of stormwater contributing to combined sewer overflows.

- Lake Elizabeth stormwater diversions
- Formal perennial garden living drains
- Parking lot bioswale
- Stormwater bumpouts
- French drain network and improved drainage
- Stormwater tree pits
- Living drain



Illustrative plan of proposed stormwater and green infrastructure

2018 ACTION PLAN - A COMPOSITION OF HISTORY, UPDATED USES & ENHANCED ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES



Illustrative plan of proposed improvements to Allegheny Commons

AREAS OF FURTHER STUDY

In developing the Action Plan, a number of adjacent and connected projects and initiatives were discussed. The following opportunities and challenges are important to extending the influence of the park as a unifying element for the entire neighborhood.

- North Avenue sidewalk improvements meeting guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act, while establishing a new setback for future tree replacements.
- Norfolk Southern double-stacked tracks & North Avenue - Brighton Road intersection. **It must be noted, per the Allegheny Commons Initiative, that trains should not be visible in the park. If double-stacked trains are to run on the Norfolk Southern line, then the railroad tracks should be lowered so as to preserve park sight lines.**
- Monument Hill connections that could create a new trail and overlook in collaboration with CCAC.
- Capturing land adjacent to park to make up for lost parkland.
- Stockton Avenue as pedestrian shared street.

NEXT STEPS

This Action Plan is only the beginning of a multi-year process to renew and enhance Allegheny Commons. As each recommended or capital improvement project is brought forward for implementation, it will embrace the following steps as it moves from vision to reality.

- Identification of community needs for prioritization of capital projects.
- Monitor and assess funding opportunities that match a project initiative to move it forward even if it is not a priority. Be opportunistic concerning grants and leveraging funding.
- For each project, a business plan, including fundraising and promotion strategies will be developed by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.
- Capital project implementation will include a public process to program and have input into the final, detailed design.
- Completion of construction drawings for any given capital project, along with construction budgets, as well as maintenance and management plans.
- Bidding and construction of any given capital project.
- Continue ongoing initiatives for advocacy, volunteer services, safety and enforcement, and other day to day park activities.



2018

ACTION PLAN

PREPARED BY

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Clio Consulting

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL LANDSCAPE CONSULTATION



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