

Dorothea Dix Park Plaza and Play Executive Summary

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Project Description

A new park is coming to Raleigh.

After many years of planning, the city's extraordinary opportunity to make Dorothea Dix Park one of the most spectacular public spaces of the country begins with the signature Plaza and Play as its new main entrance, inviting park edge, and first project of Phase 1 in the implementation of the Dix Park Master Plan.

In an area of 12.5 acres (roughly two times the size of Moore Square), the Dorothea Dix Park Plaza & Play aspires to be a clear, inviting, democratic, and inspiring civic jewel, with the introduction of world-class play spaces, gardens, gathering spaces, the sharing of site history through a rehabilitated building and cultural landscape, and the connection to various neighborhoods and transportation networks. The “Plaza & Play” will be the main civic entrance along Lake Wheeler Road for visitors travelling by foot, bike, car, scooter, or wheel-chair to and from Downtown. Its gently sloping pathways will bring visitors of all abilities, without the exertion required by hills or stairs, to the heart of the park. But it will do more than just announce arrival at the park. It will also be an active zone at the park’s edge. Water play in a civic fountain, swings, concessions, and cookout facilities aim to have universal appeal. Anyone who wants to access a play area without hiking far into the park, or who wants to meet a friend for a quick snack, can easily do so at the Plaza and Play.

A lot has been accomplished through the Master Plan process, and now as the Dix Park Plaza & Play project kicks off, we want to welcome everyone and hear from you!



Project Details

The Project design will rely upon and build from analyses, priorities, and recommendations as defined by the Dorothea Dix Park Master Plan, approved by the Raleigh City Council on February 19, 2019. As excerpted from MVVA’s RFQ submission dated December 16, 2019, the purpose of the Project is to “provide a highly visible public face for Dorothea Dix Park and help lay the foundation for implementing the full Master Plan [including] the creation of an entry to the park that is clear, inviting, democratic, and inspiring; the introduction of play spaces, gardens, gathering spaces, and cookout facilities; the sharing of site history through rehabilitated buildings and cultural landscapes; [and] the connection to various modes of transportation” as well as to Dix Hill, Fuller Heights, and downtown Raleigh.

Project Phases. The Project will be composed of four (4) Phases:

- Pre-Design Services
- Schematic Design (SD)
- Design Development (DD)
- Construction Documentation (CD)

Project Program. Program is the collection of activities that people do at the park. Planning and design for Plaza and Play program will be organized by the following themes as defined by the Master Plan: Wellness and Play, Arts and Culture, Food and Community, Gardens and Ecology, History and Reflection, and Park Support.

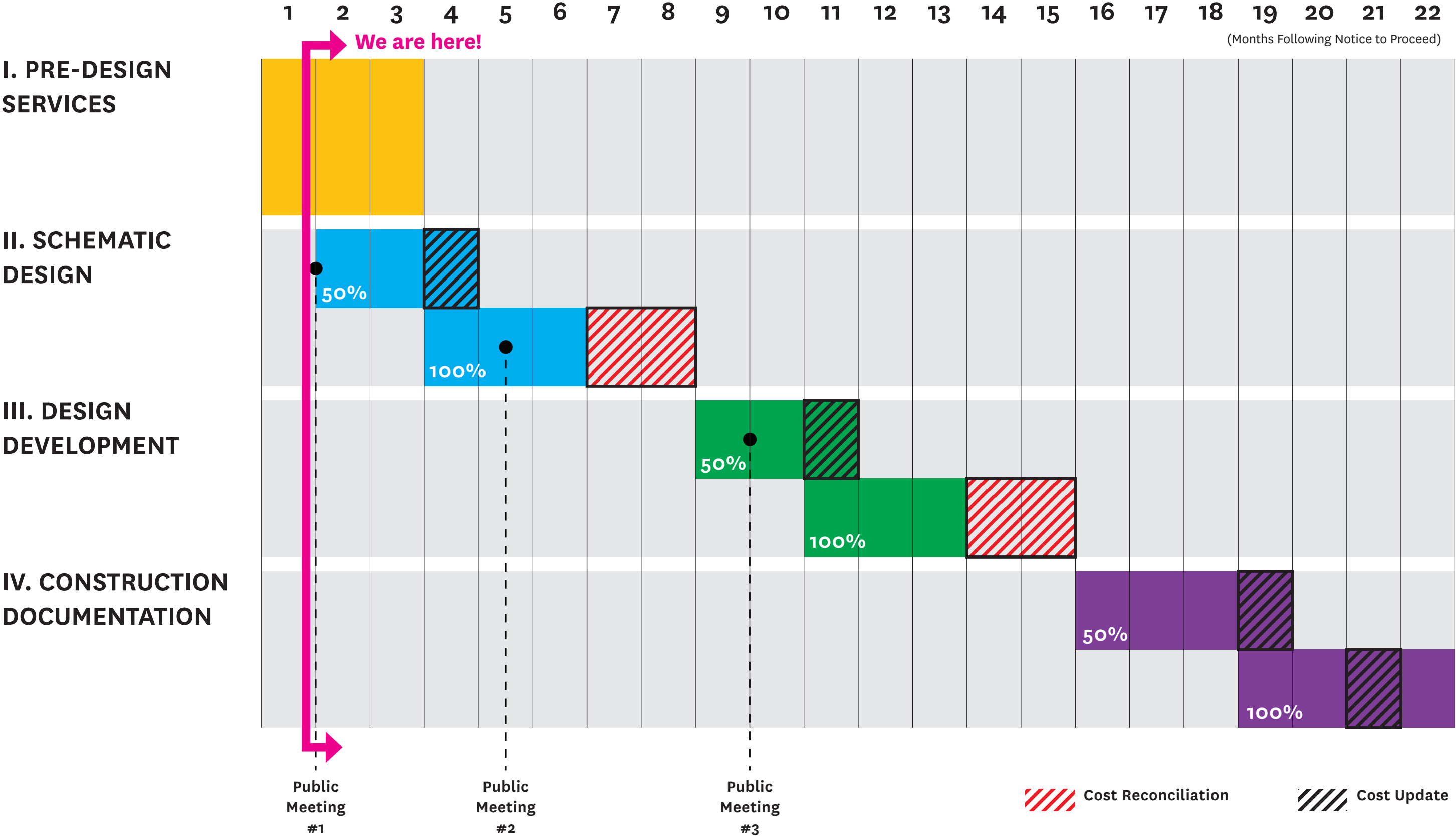
Existing Site Constraints/Opportunities. The Project’s existing characteristics include:

- A Chiller Plant building, understood to remain operational throughout the Project, and is currently in a leased area to NC Department of Health and Human Services
- Easements associated with major utilities
- Existing utilities associated with the Dorothea Dix Hospital campus
- A collection of mature canopy trees
- An at-grade (flat) connection between the park and the adjacent neighborhood is a unique condition not found anywhere else around Dix Park's perimeter
- Lake Wheeler Road does not provide space for pedestrians or bicyclists
- A temporary dog park operated by the City of Raleigh

Project Elements. The Project is anticipated to include the following elements:

- A primary, new entrance to Dorothea Dix Park
- Gathering space(s), such as civic plaza(s), cookout zones and supporting facilities, play area(s), and a water feature/fountain
- Pedestrian paths
- Planted areas such as gardens, lawns, and plant beds with irrigation
- Hardscape
- Furnishings such as lighting, seating, trash and recycling receptacles, bike share dock and bicycle racks, and fencing
- Signage and wayfinding
- Temporary parking area
- Bus stops/bus drop-offs
- Utilities to support the above elements
- A portion of the Multi-Use/Greenway Path
- Extension of Grissom and/or Daladams Streets
- Public art
- Programming and activation
- Maintenance and operations
- Donor recognition area(s)
- One (1) rehabilitated historic house (Buffaloe House)
- New architecture in support of park program such as a pavilion with bathrooms

Project Schedule



Project Partners

Design Team Consultants

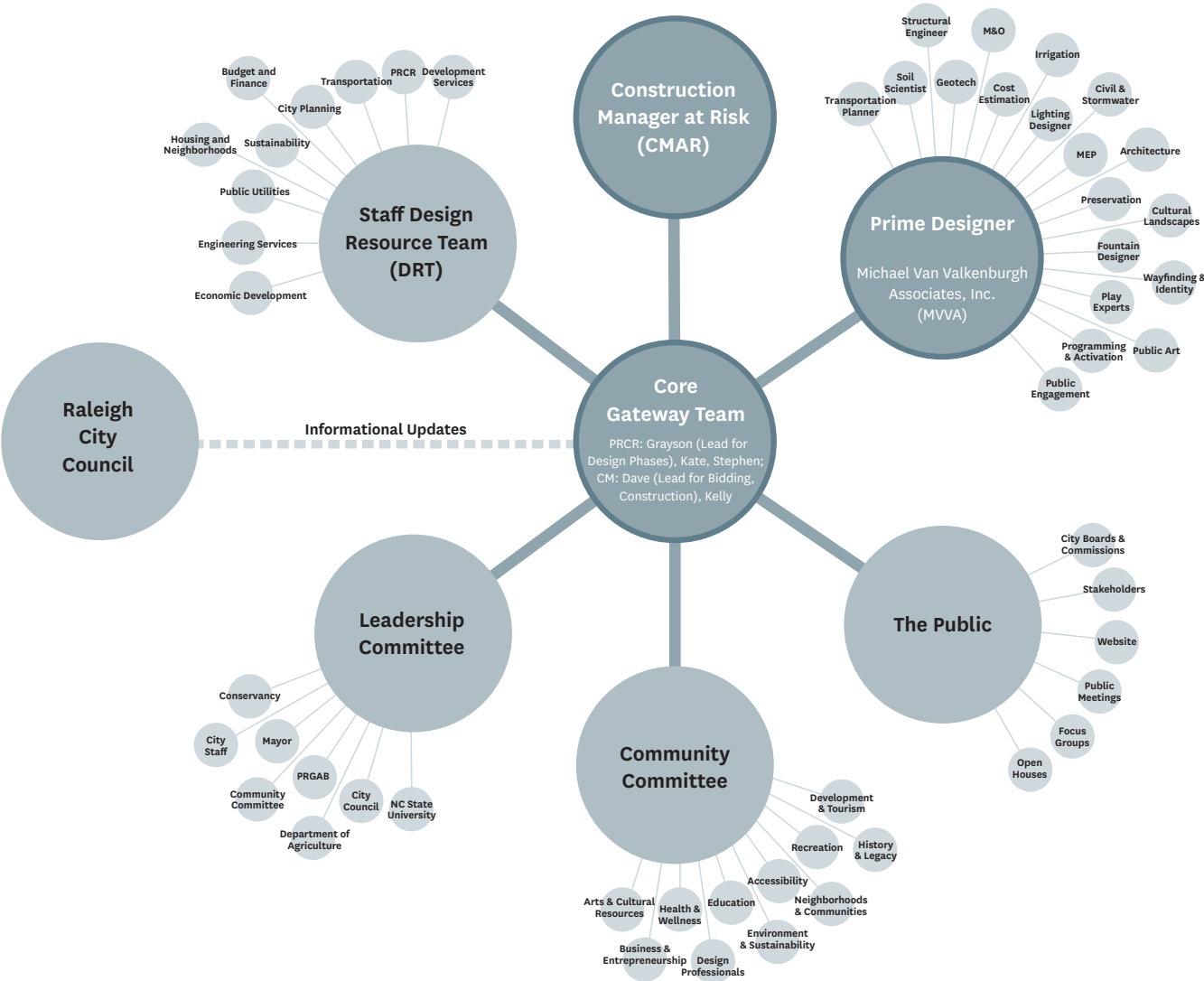
- Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. - Landscape Architecture and Design Team Lead
McAdams - Civil Engineering/Permitting/Stormwater/Infrastructure/Utilities (“Permitting Consultant”)
Vermeulens - Cost Estimation (“Cost Estimator Consultant”)
ETM Associates - Maintenance & Operations (“Maintenance and Operations Consultant”)
Open - Graphic Design/Signage/Wayfinding (“Graphic Design Consultant”)
S&ME - Geotechnical Engineering (“Geotechnical Engineer Consultant”)
313 Creative – Public Engagement (“Public Engagement Consultant”)
Natural Learning Initiative - Play Environment Experts
Abundant Playscapes - Playground Code
VHB - Transportation Planning
Joseph K Oppermann Architect - Preservation Architecture
Hobgood Architects - Architecture
Scalene Design - Structural Engineering
Engineered Designs - Mechanical Engineering
Olsson Associates - Soil Science
GPSI - Fountain Designer
Domingo Gonzalez Associates - Lighting Design
WC3 Design - Irrigation Designer
TWT - Professional Surveyor

Owner-Provided Consultants

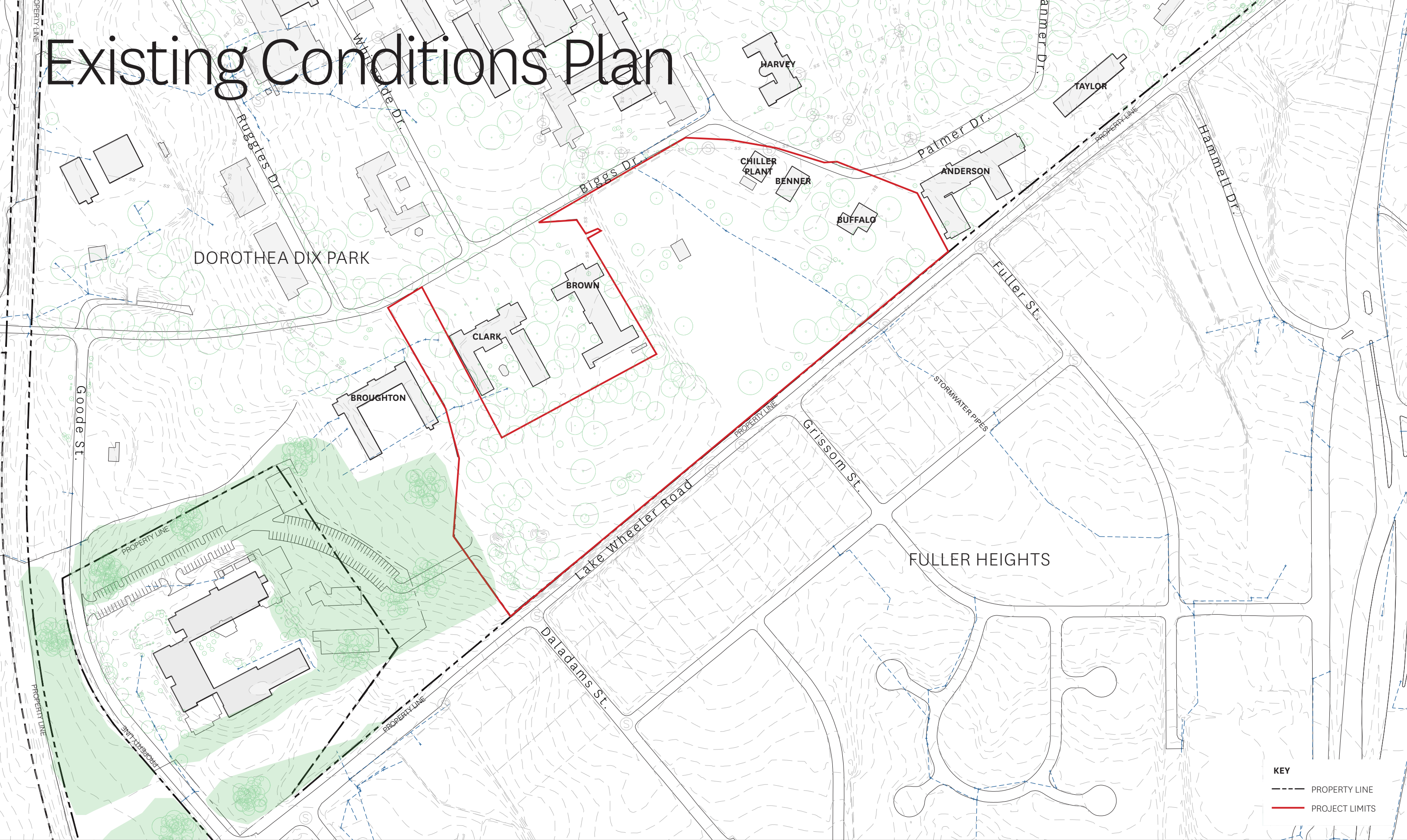
- TBD - Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR)
TBD - Third-Party Cost Estimator

Project Partners

The chart (at right) depicts the anticipated groups or entities with advisory roles - the ability to review and comment upon the progress of the Project, and the groups or entities with decision making roles shown with bold gray outlines. One individual from the Core Gateway Team will be the point of contact between the City and MVVA, and provide project direction to MVVA.



Existing Conditions Plan



Historic Architecture



Plan. Note: Existing Chiller Plant will remain. Benner House is slated to be demolished due to it's severely declined condition. Buffalo House will be historically rehabilitate as part of this project. The house may include art programs and concessions.



Also known as the House of Many Porches, the Buffalo House features myriad historical elements to be preserved.



The Buffalo House's southwest face and back yard.

Trees



Plan



Large existing Willow Oaks on the site are intended to remain and be protected.

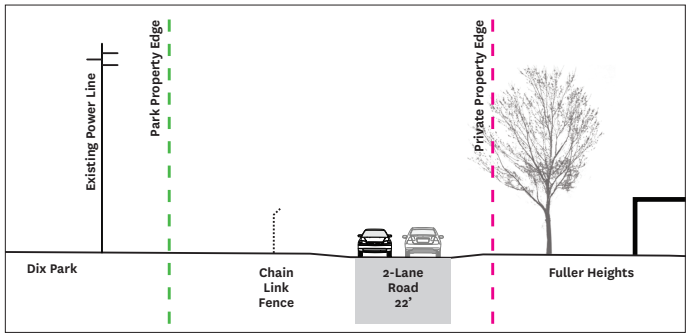


Most of the existing trees are located on the outside edges of the site.

Topography



Plan



Existing Lake Wheeler Rd. Section (Pictured at right)

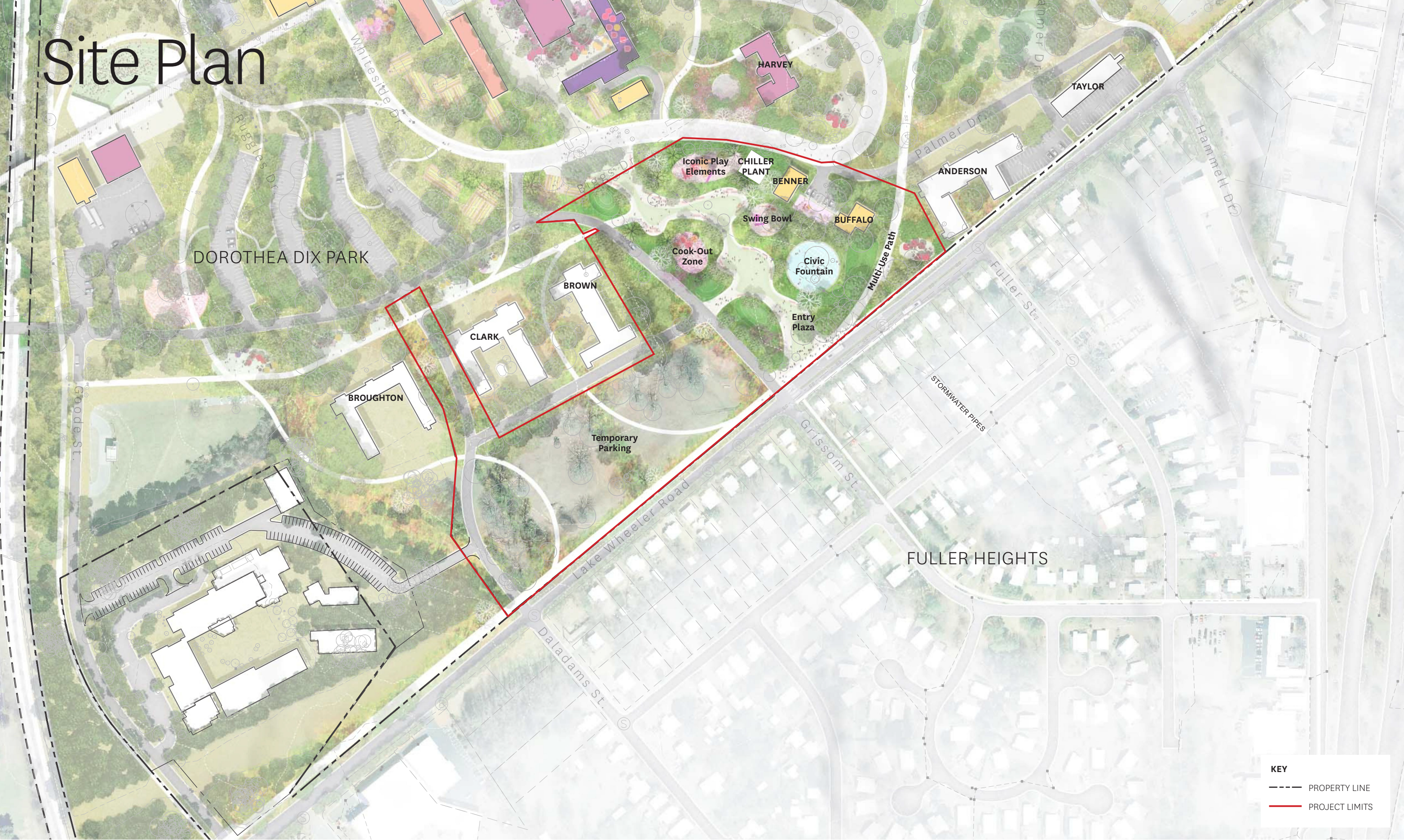


Steep inclines and level areas exist within the site's interior.

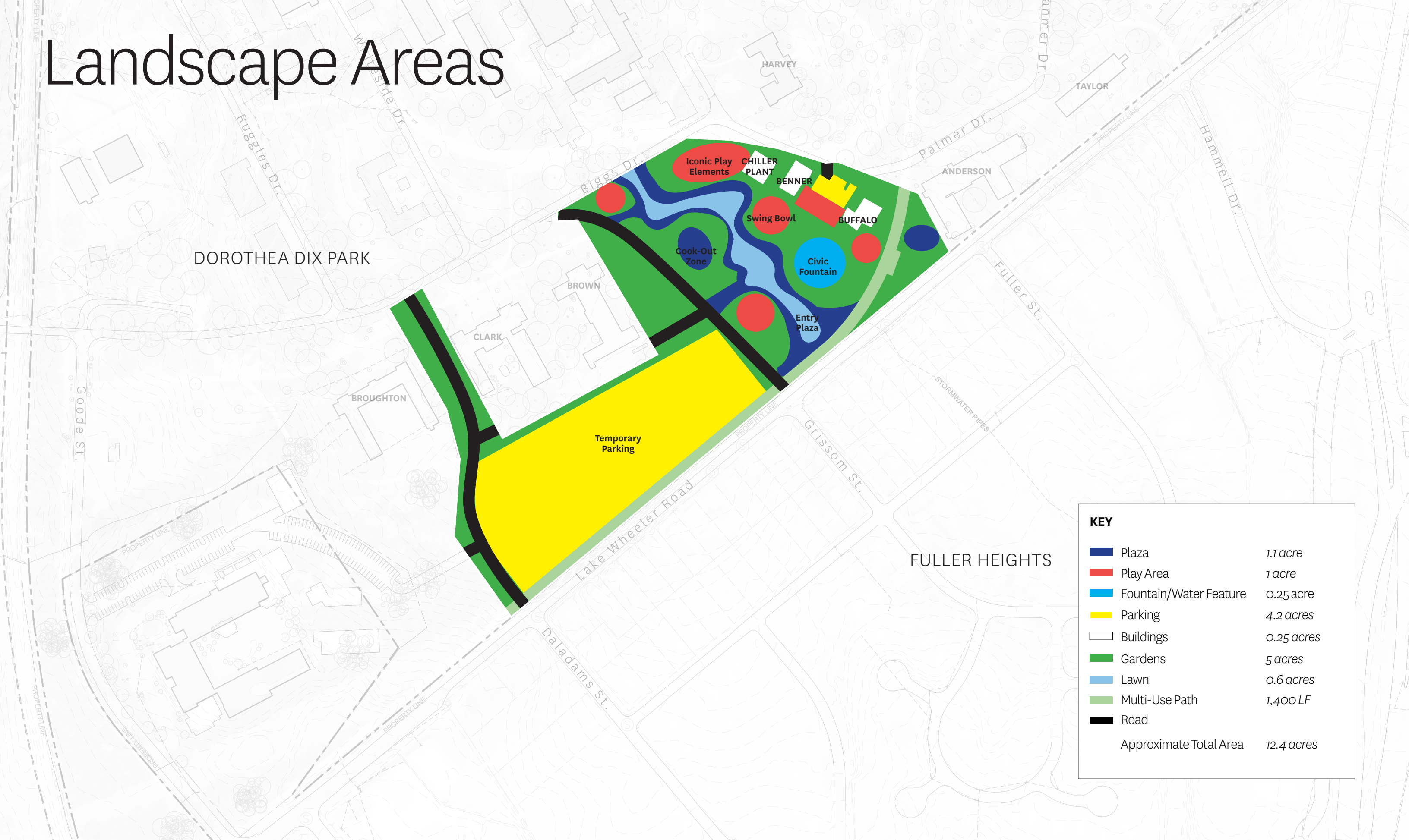


The site's edge and Lake Wheeler Rd. are level with each other.

Site Plan



Landscape Areas



Program Ideas



Civic Spaces for Play



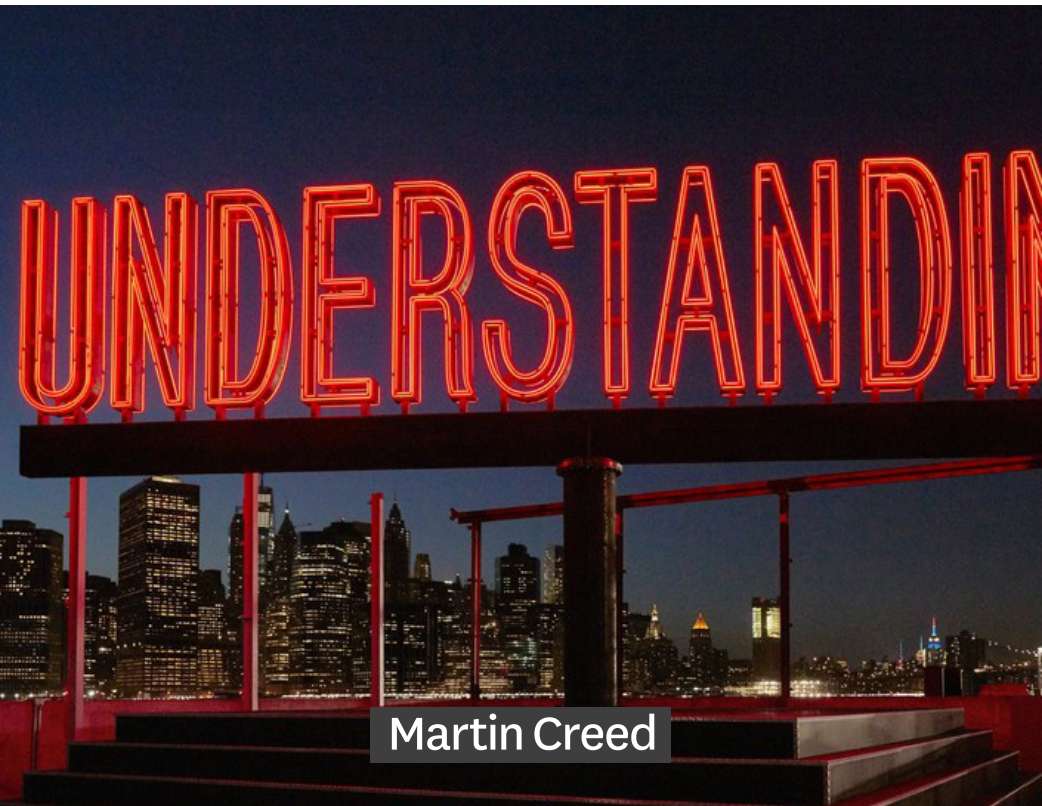
Precedent Examples from MVVA

NC Landscapes

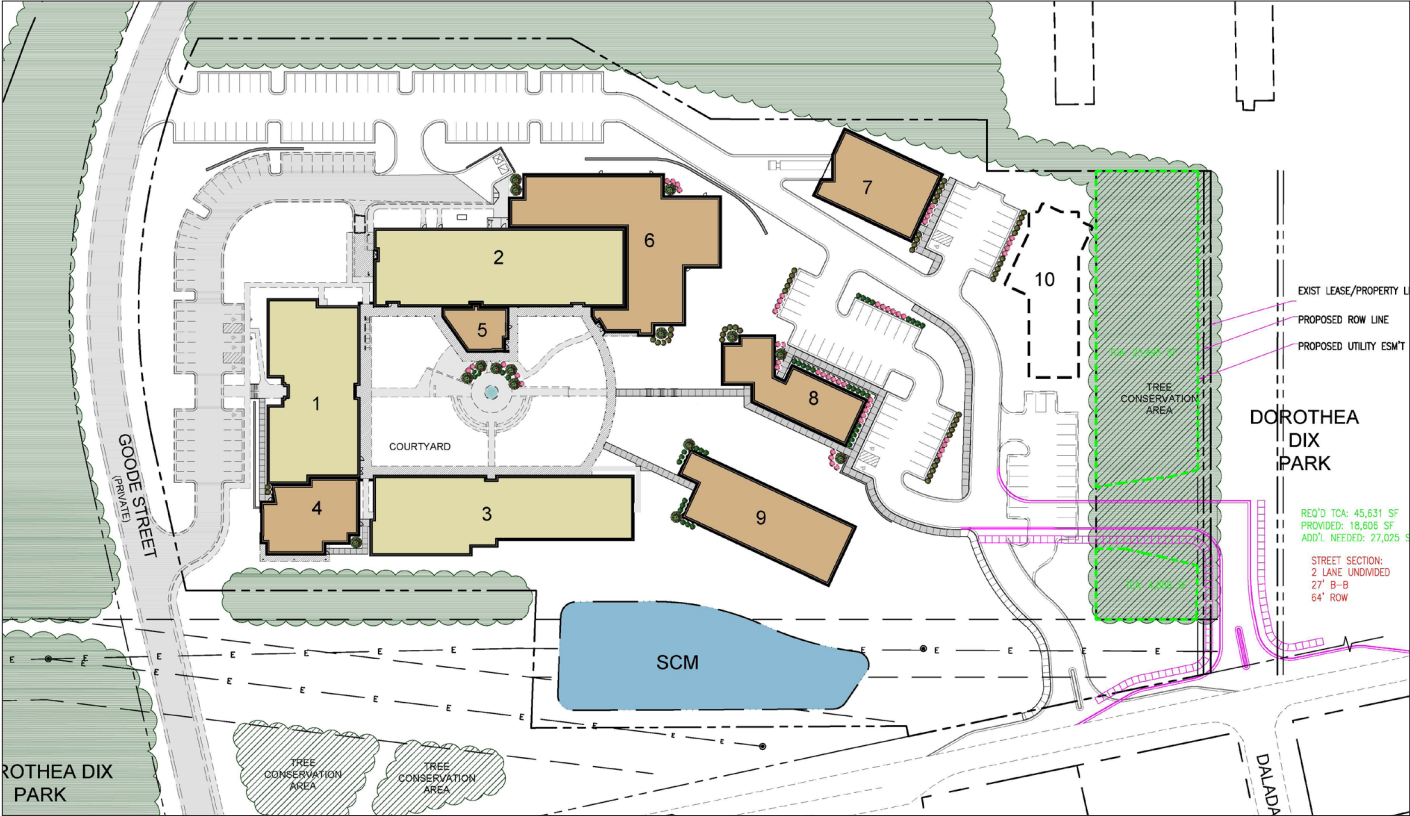


NC Landscapes Research Trip Photographs from MVVA

Artist Collaborations



Adjacent Projects



Healing Transitions Expansion



Fuller Heights Master Plan



Duke Energy Power Lines Reconsideration



State Farmers Market Master Plan

Key Connections



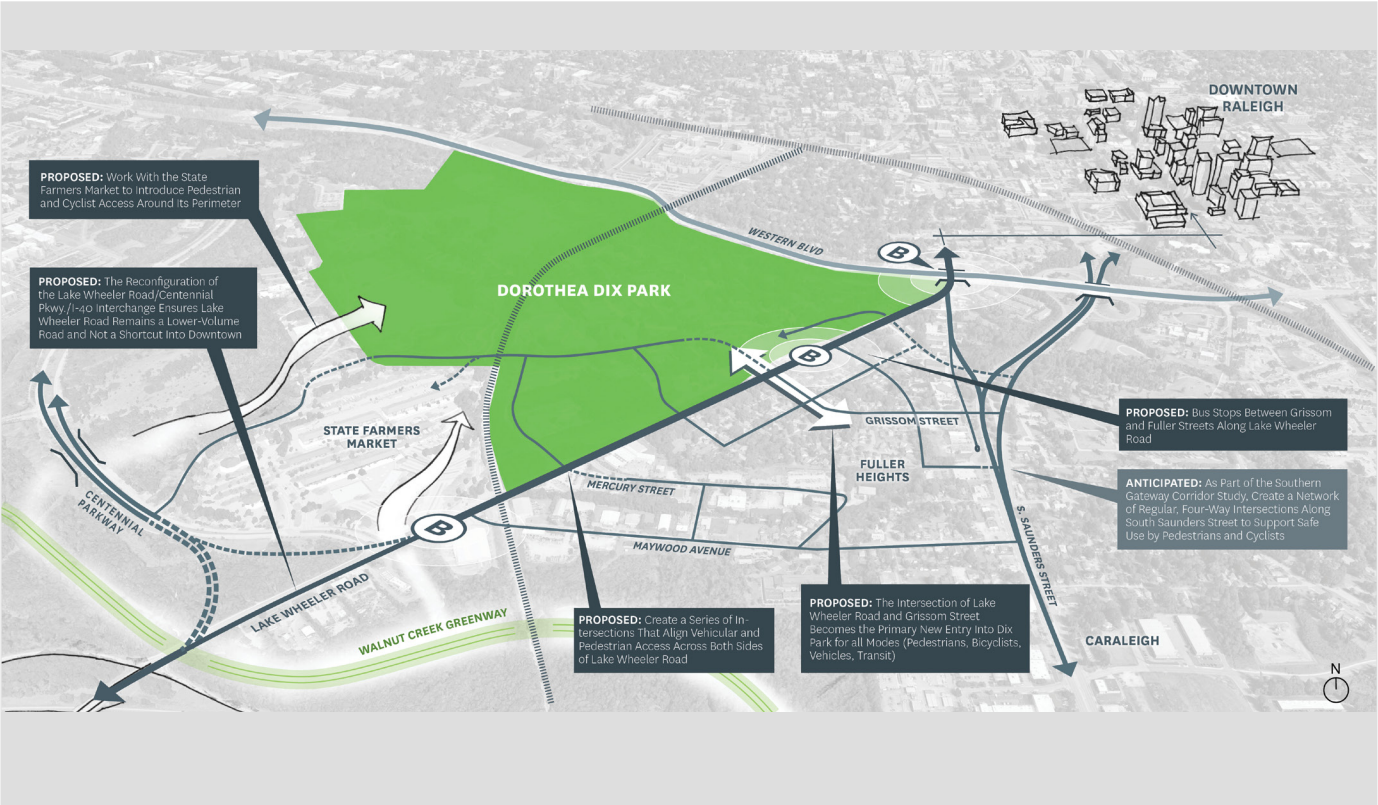
Existing Bus Lines and New Bus Stop



NCDHHS Roadway and Parking Needs



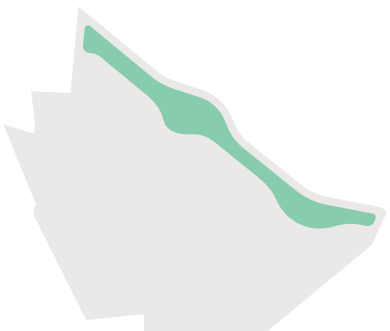
New Greenway Connection



New Traffic Intersections and Roadway Design

The Six Landscapes

Reflecting the range of landscape types throughout the region, the Master Plan proposed that Dix Park be transformed through six distinct landscapes. Each landscape type was informed by historical research, ecological analysis, and the potential of the land. Altogether, the six landscapes create a park poised to offer something for everyone. The Plaza and Play project site is part of **the Gateway**.



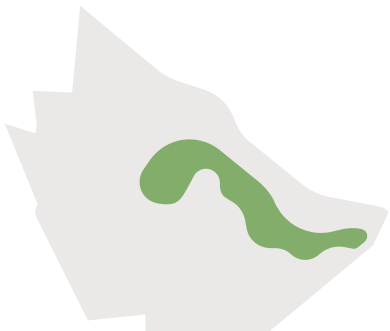
THE CREEK

After decades of neglect, Rocky Branch, one of the essential natural elements of the Dix Park site, should be restored. The Master Plan proposes widening the stream to restore habitat and improve ecological function. The Creek restoration can showcase the ecological diversity of the Piedmont’s wetlands while providing a natural-feeling area for visitors to enjoy proximity to water.



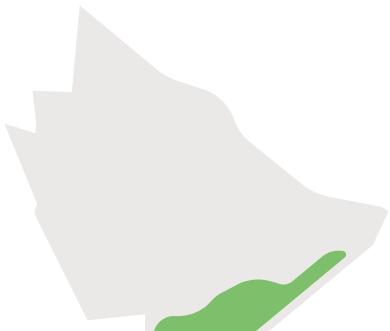
THE MEADOW

The Meadow is a proposed expansion of the much-loved Big Field into a boundless-feeling common ground for Raleigh. Locals, newcomers, and visitors will be able to meet and wander along this landscape, which will extend Raleigh’s park and greenway network through Dix Park and link Pullen Park to the State Farmers Market.



THE GROVE

The Master Plan proposes a series of strategies to restore an area of the historic grove. It complements the existing mature oak canopy with native understory plantings and shade gardens. The picturesque entry drive, today used mostly by vehicles, is reclaimed for pedestrians and bicyclists.



THE GATEWAY

Improvements to the Gateway landscape embody the core park principle of opening up and creating new connections. The Master Plan proposes that the Gateway include several important new civic entrances to the park from downtown and from the Fuller Heights Neighborhood. A plaza with playgrounds and concessions will welcome visitors to the park.



THE RIDGE

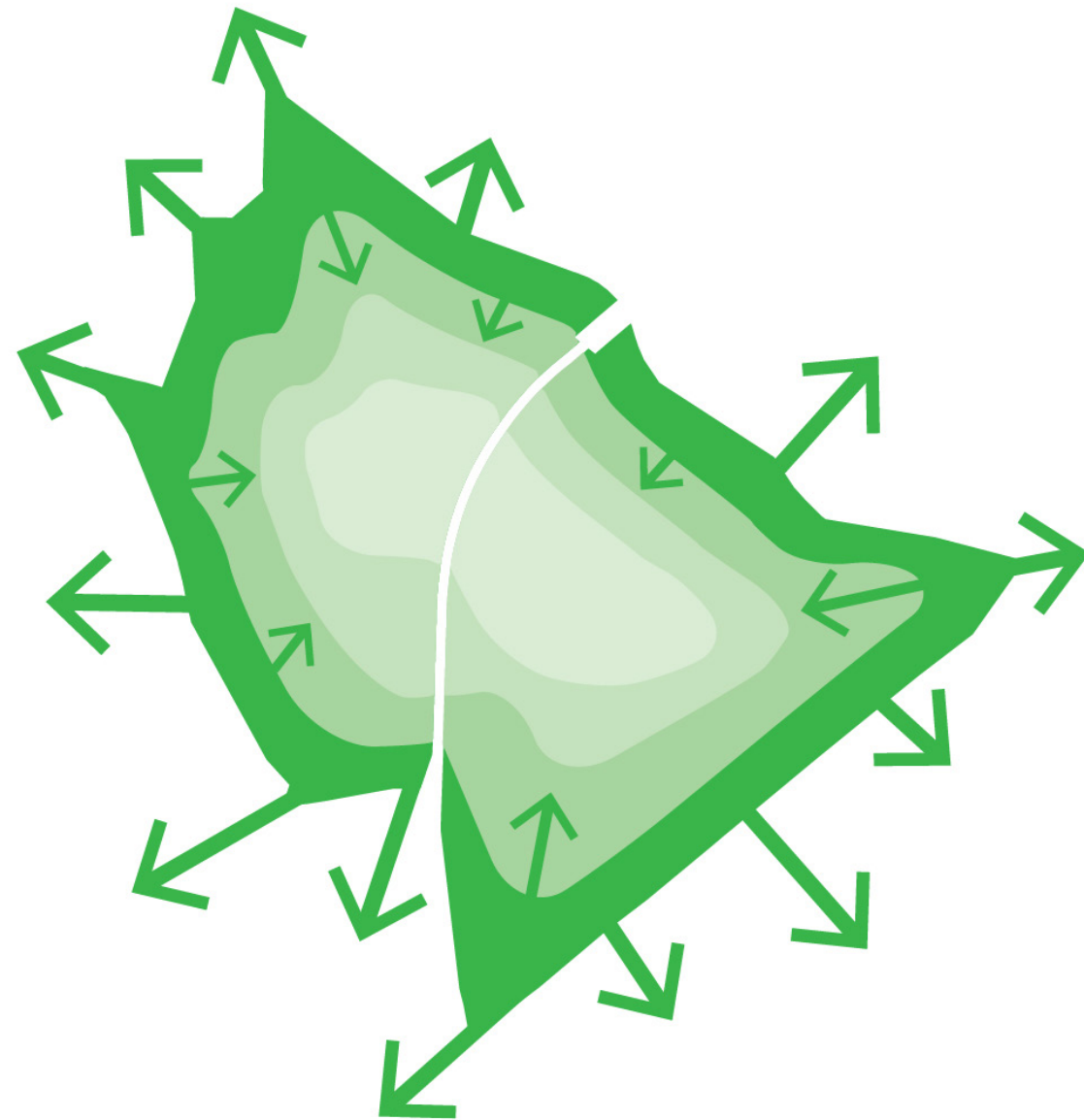
The historic center of the site, the Ridge, will be reinvented as the civic heart of the park. The Master Plan proposes the revitalization of some buildings and introduces cultural and social destinations united by the Loop. Some buildings will be removed to make space for the city’s new outdoor living room.



THE VALLEY

The Valley, a lowlying area where the service buildings are concentrated, is proposed to be repurposed as a venue for concerts and other large events. An elevated trestle walk will enable pedestrians to traverse the site from the Ridge to the proposed Water Garden in the Meadow.

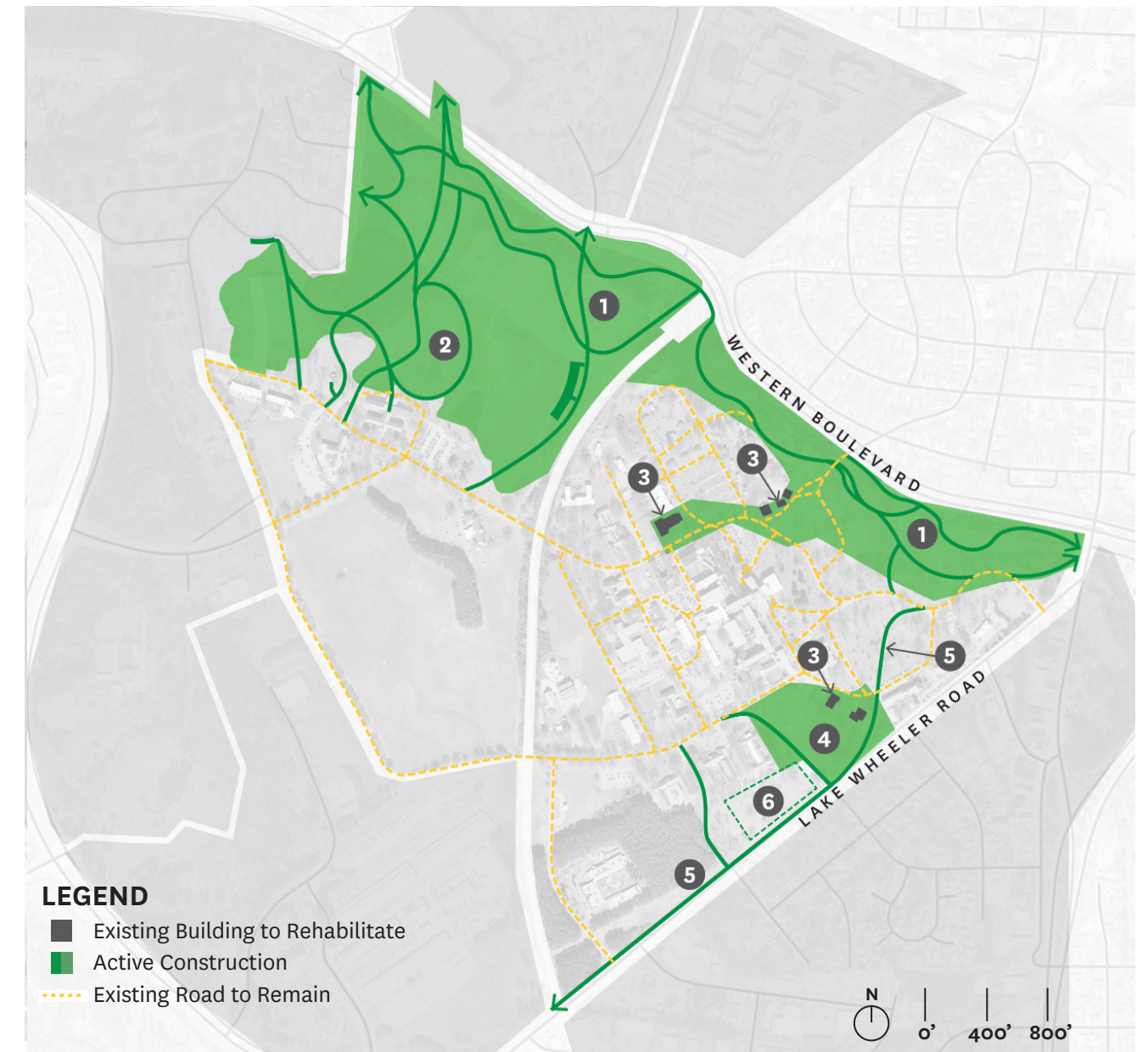
Implementation



The Master Plan is an early step in the site's transformation into a beloved public park. The Implementation chapter of the Master Plan suggests next steps and strategies to provide a framework to guide future decisions. Full build-out of the park is likely to take decades and will be part of a public process each step of the way. The Master Plan proposes 4 phases of implementation.

The projects of Phase 1 open up the park and connect Dix Park to its surroundings, a core principle of the Master Plan. Primarily on the edges of the park, the projects include a mixture of areas of pastoral escape and activated park.

Phase 1 (120 Acres) Welcoming Edges and Entries

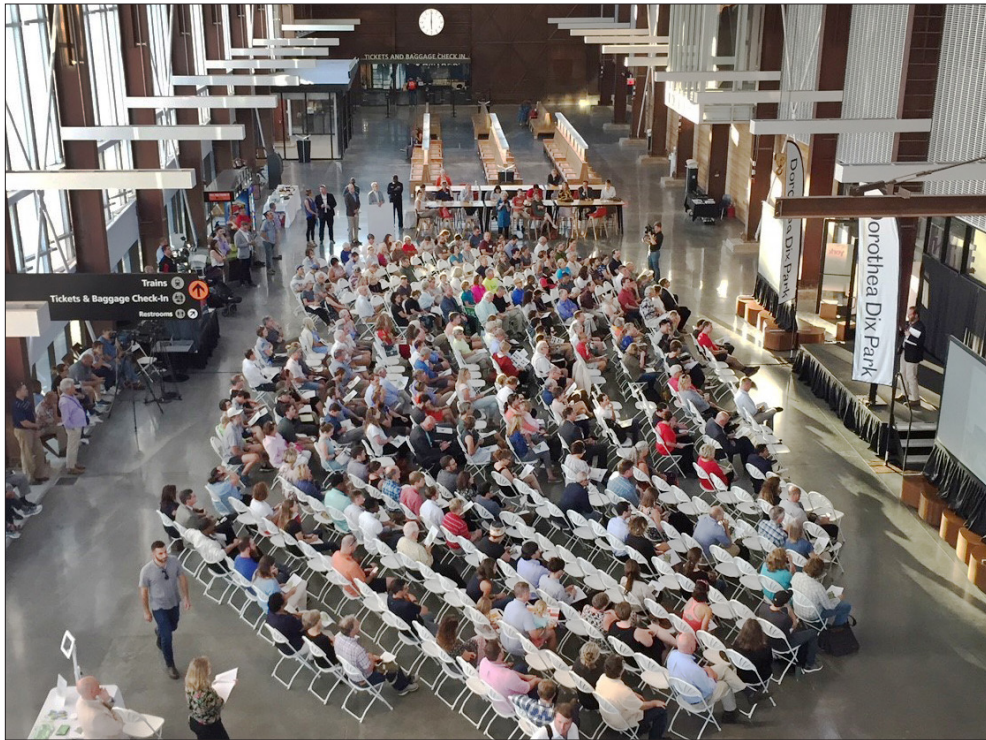


PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

- 1 Restore The Creek
- 2 Cemetery Enhancements
- 3 Rehabilitate early transfer buildings (Chapel, 3 Stone Houses, Buffaloe, Benner) and surrounding landscapes
- 4 Main Entry with plaza and play areas at Lake Wheeler Road and Grissom Street
- 5 Multi-use path along Lake Wheeler Road
- 6 Interim Parking

PROPOSED VIEW FROM LAKE WHEELER RD. TO TOP OF THE RIDGE

Public Engagement



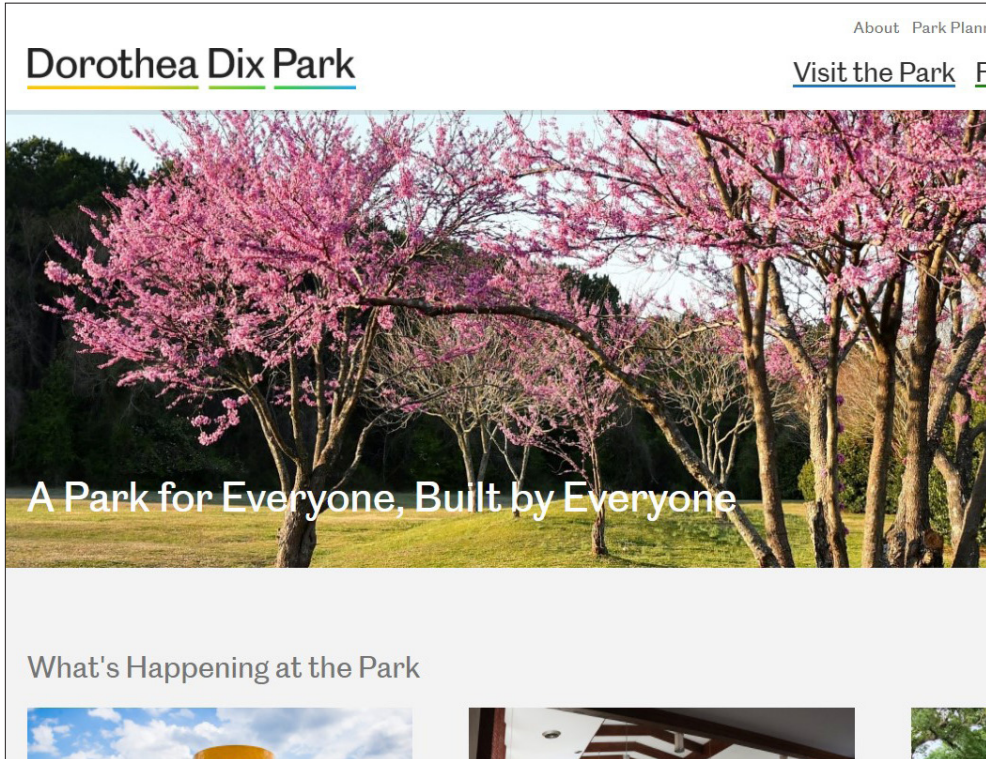
Planning Committees for Consensus Seeking



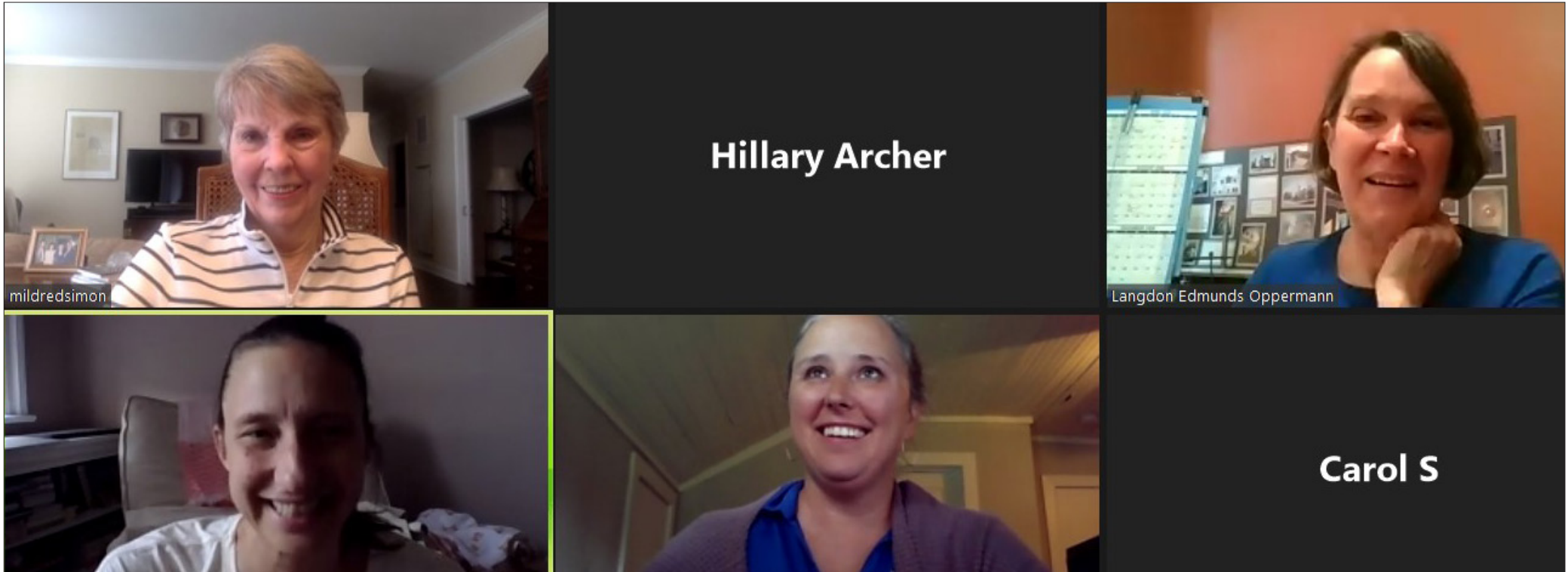
Public Meetings and Open Houses for Information Exchange



Public Meetings and Open Houses for Feedback and Consultation



Websites for Outreach



Virtual Zoom Calls for All of the Above

Focus Groups

Raleigh is growing, and Dix Park offers citizens a place for wellness, relaxation, civic participation, and natural discovery that will help unite the growing population through shared experiences and connections to the land.

The following six Focus Groups were convened by the City and MVVA as subsets of the Community Committee for the purposes of targeted feedback for the project. The groups are organized into themes that summarize thousands of public responses from past meetings during the Master Plan about the community’s desired uses, activities, and programmatic elements, while keeping in mind that the park will change over time to support the changing needs of the community. MVVA will meet a total of two times with Focus Groups during the design process.

The quality and character of how these themes and their mission statements materialize into the programmatic elements of each project will set Dix Park apart from other parks in and around Raleigh, and honor a commitment to the three guiding Core Principles of the Master Plan - Open Up and Connect, Build From What Is There, and Offer Something for Everyone.

The 6 Focus Groups and Their Mission Statements

- 1. **Wellness and Play:** Ensure that spaces at the park support physical, social, and mental well-being for everyone, with a focus on play.
- 2. **Gardens and Ecology:** Celebrate and restore the diversity and range of Piedmont landscapes, ecologies, and Triangle-region garden traditions at the park.
- 3. **History and Reflection:** Create spaces where education and critical conversations about the site’s history can occur.
- 4. **Arts and Culture:** Ensure that spaces at the park support and host art and cultural events and activities that bring a wide range of visitors to the park.
- 5. **Food and Commerce:** Ensure that spaces at the park support Raleigh’s food culture, with a focus on hosting shared meals at the park for groups and families, drawing new connections to the site’s agricultural history, and supporting locally owned businesses.
- 6. **Community Leadership/Stewardship:** Ensure that park spaces are inclusive and welcoming to visitors that represent a range of backgrounds, geographies, abilities, interests, and ages.

The Master Plan identifies three Core Principles to guide and shape every step of Dorothea Dix Park’s transformation, from planning, design, construction, and maintenance to future park uses.

I. Open Up and Connect

Opening up and connecting the park to the city, the region and the state requires improving access for all. That means creating physical links, via a range of transportation modes, as well as cultural and community links, such as broadening the types of groups and institutions that host events at the park.

II. Build From What Is There

The qualities and character of a great park grow out of the specifics of its site and context. Accordingly, the events and remnants of natural and human history found on the Dix Park site are not challenges to overcome or to erase. Rather, the site’s past includes important resources—the physical materials, stories, and experiences—to make and shape the future park.

III. Offer Something for Everyone

Dix Park will become a beloved destination for local residents and visitors from across the state and around the world as it celebrates diversity, hosts a distinct mix of activities, and includes bold, new features.



PLAZA AND PLAY SITE: EXISTING VIEW FROM LAKE WHEELER RD.



PLAZA AND PLAY SITE: PROPOSED VIEW FROM LAKE WHEELER RD. TO TOP OF THE RIDGE

“If successful, the resulting vision will be beloved by the community and inspire generations of stewards for the future of Dix Park.”

- Dorothea Dix Park Master Plan RFP, December 19, 2016



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