

City of Southfield

Beech Woods Park Master Plan

June 2021



Acknowledgments

The City of Southfield



**Parks and
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PROJECTS *and* **PEOPLE**

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Section One

Project Overview

Project Background

Guiding Principles

Project Process

Project Overview

Project Background

Beech Woods Park is an 83-acre community park located in the Southwest corner of the City of Southfield. The majority of the park is occupied by a 9-hole golf course.

In 2019, the Parks and Recreation Department commissioned an assessment of the course by the National Golf Foundation, which found that the course required \$2.4 Million in initial cost to bring the course up to modern standards, and necessitated \$485,000 in ongoing operations and maintenance cost.

This prompted the Parks and Recreation Department to undertake this master planning project in order to bring the park in line with the current desires of residents and update the park to a modern standard.



Location Map



Project Overview

Guiding Principles

From the project outset, a series of guiding principles were established to guide proposed improvements. These principles focus on prioritizing the needs of Southfield residents alongside the maintenance and operations capacity of the Parks and Recreation Department.



Reflective of Community Desires Promote and integrate community feedback. Use transparency in project to establish realistic expectations



Connected Connect and integrate into surrounding context for elevated impact



Site-Specific Capitalize on unique elements of the park, and build on park opportunities



Sustainable Not just in environmental impact, but also in terms of maintenance and operations cost

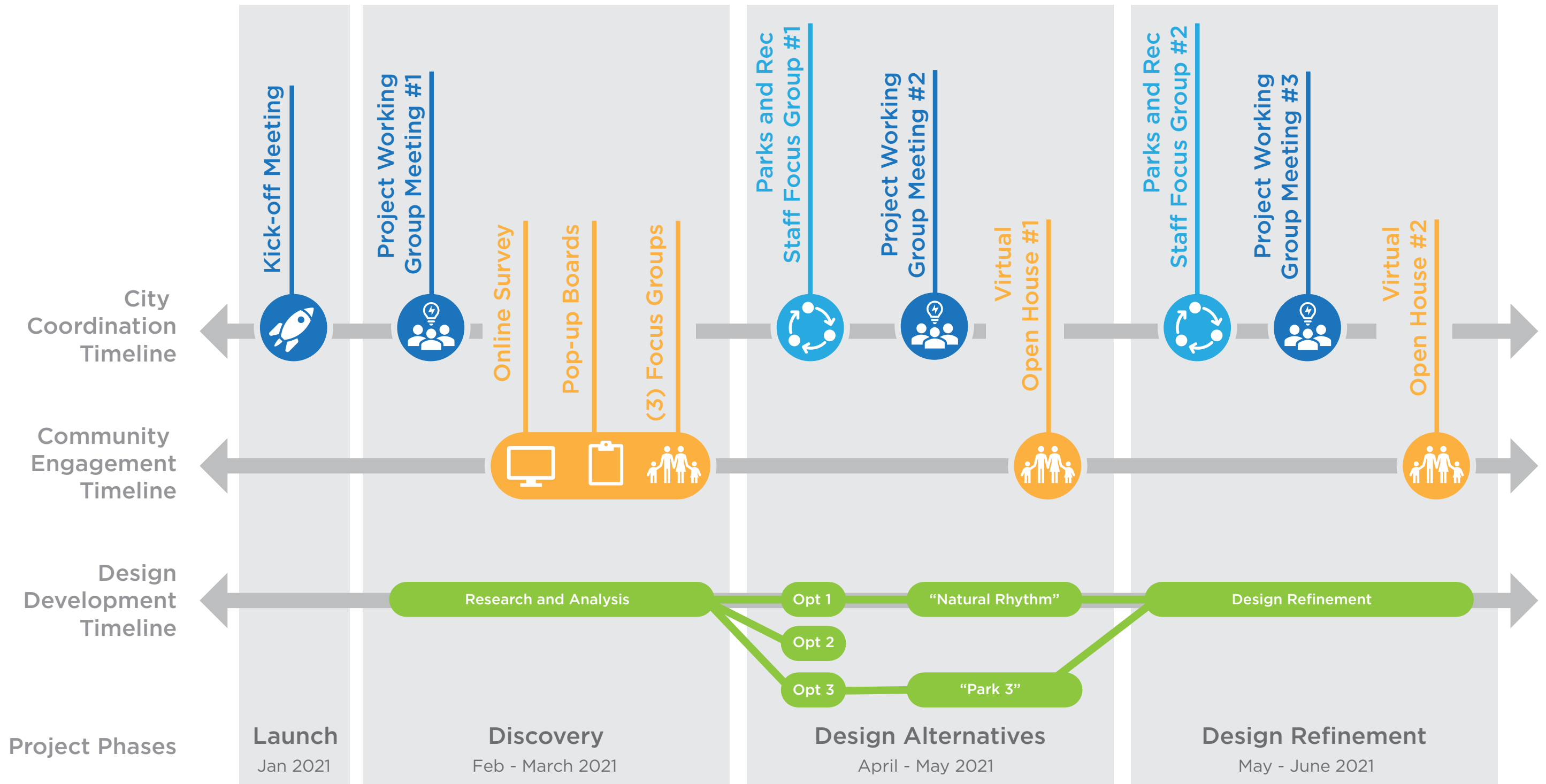


Exciting and Innovative Develop energy and excitement that extends into the “South by 8 Mile” area



Safe Ensure plan promotes a real and perceived safety

Project Overview | Process and Timeline



Section Two

Community Engagement

Discovery Phase and Outcomes

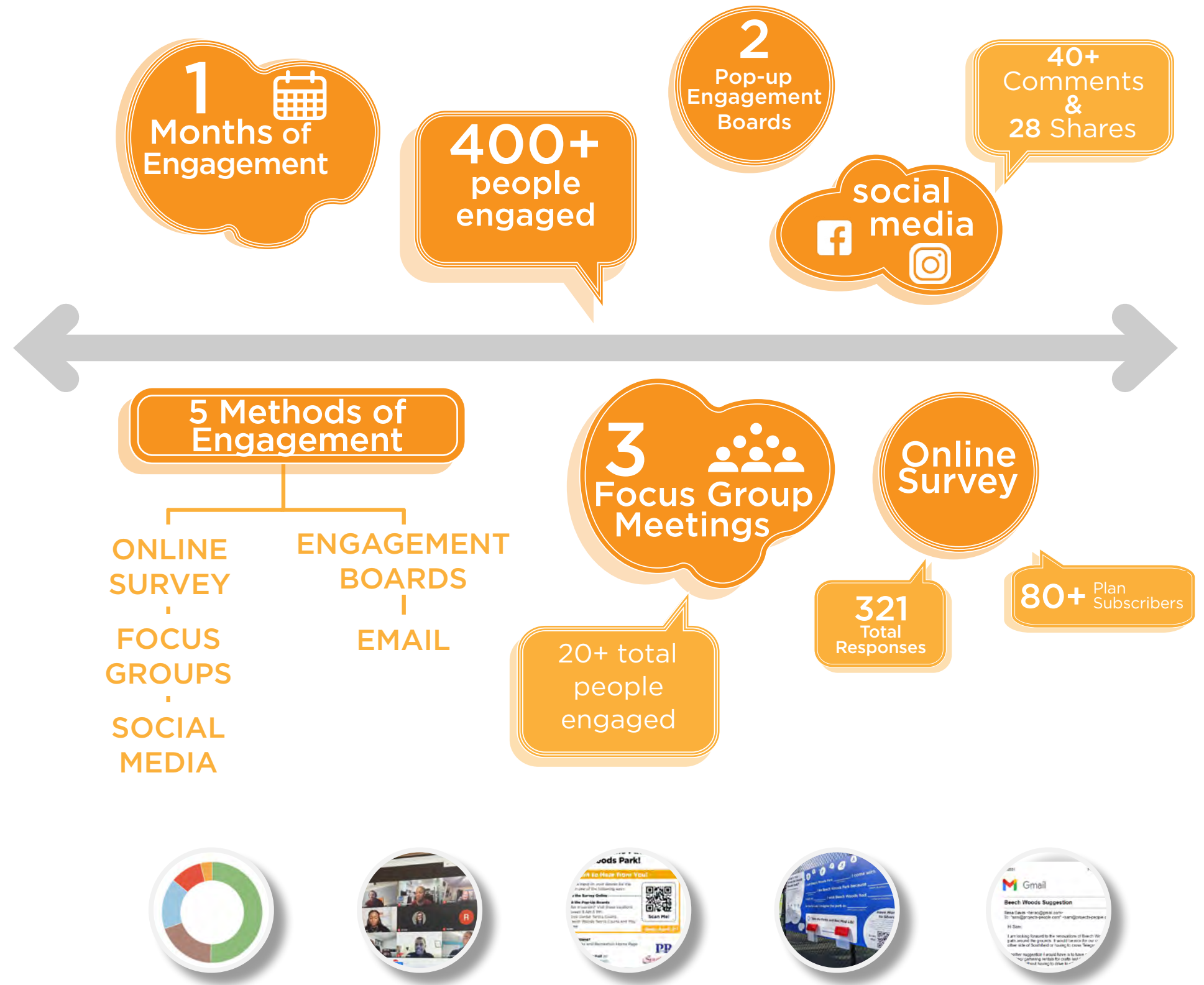
Design Alternatives and Finalization Phases and Findings

Community Engagement

Discovery Phase Engagement

The Discovery phase marked the beginning of outreach, engagement and discussion with residents to understand community desires and aspirations for the park. Because this engagement occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, a multi-tiered strategy was employed to overcome restrictions on gathering and reach the broadest possible audience.

This initial engagement occurred through the course of a month, and included synchronous and asynchronous engagement tactics (scheduled group gatherings vs at the convenience of the individual) as well as digital and socially-distanced in-person strategies.



Community Engagement

Discovery Outcomes

Input provided by residents formulated the basis for design development.

In general, residents appreciate the natural setting of Beech Woods Park, however desired more opportunities for gathering and activity. Residents expressed a strong desire for multi-generational opportunities, catering to youth, middle-aged and senior populations.

It was discovered many residents leave the city to frequent parks in other communities because the destination programs are not offered within Southfield.

In the future I imagine the park as... underdeveloped and natural as possible, multi-use, beautiful park indoors and outdoors, a family park

I would recommend staging some “city sponsored” events at all the parks, which may attract more people...

1 IN 2 PEOPLE VISIT PARKS OUTSIDE SOUTHFIELD AT LEAST A FEW TIMES PER MONTH



Top Community Desires for Beech Woods Park

- **Nature Trails and Walking Facilities**
- **Golf Facilities**
- **Splash Pad**
- **Family + Kid Friendly Spaces/ Amenities**
- **Dog Park**

Connections to a network of continuous sidewalks and bike lanes along all major roads that would make this ... accessible by means other than vehicular transportation

We pay a lot in taxes ... I think we should have a lot more to show by way of family entertainment and activities

Engagement Overview

Virtual Open House #1

Using the outcomes from the Discovery Phase, the design team conducted two plan review virtual open houses which were open to the public. Two design alternatives were developed in coordination with City staff and were shared with the community during Virtual Open House #1. Attendees reflected and provided feedback and a majority consensus was reached during the discussion with support for one option.



RESIDENTS SELECTED
ONE SCHEME WITH 85%
SUPPORT FROM MEETING
ATTENDEES

Having ample parking is important especially if you want to rent out spaces for events such as art fairs, music events or even things like weddings and graduation parties.

Definitely like that they are incorporating safe walking, biking areas/pathways. . This services and protects children, seniors, and pets.

Section Three

Site Analysis and Research

Southfield Park Network

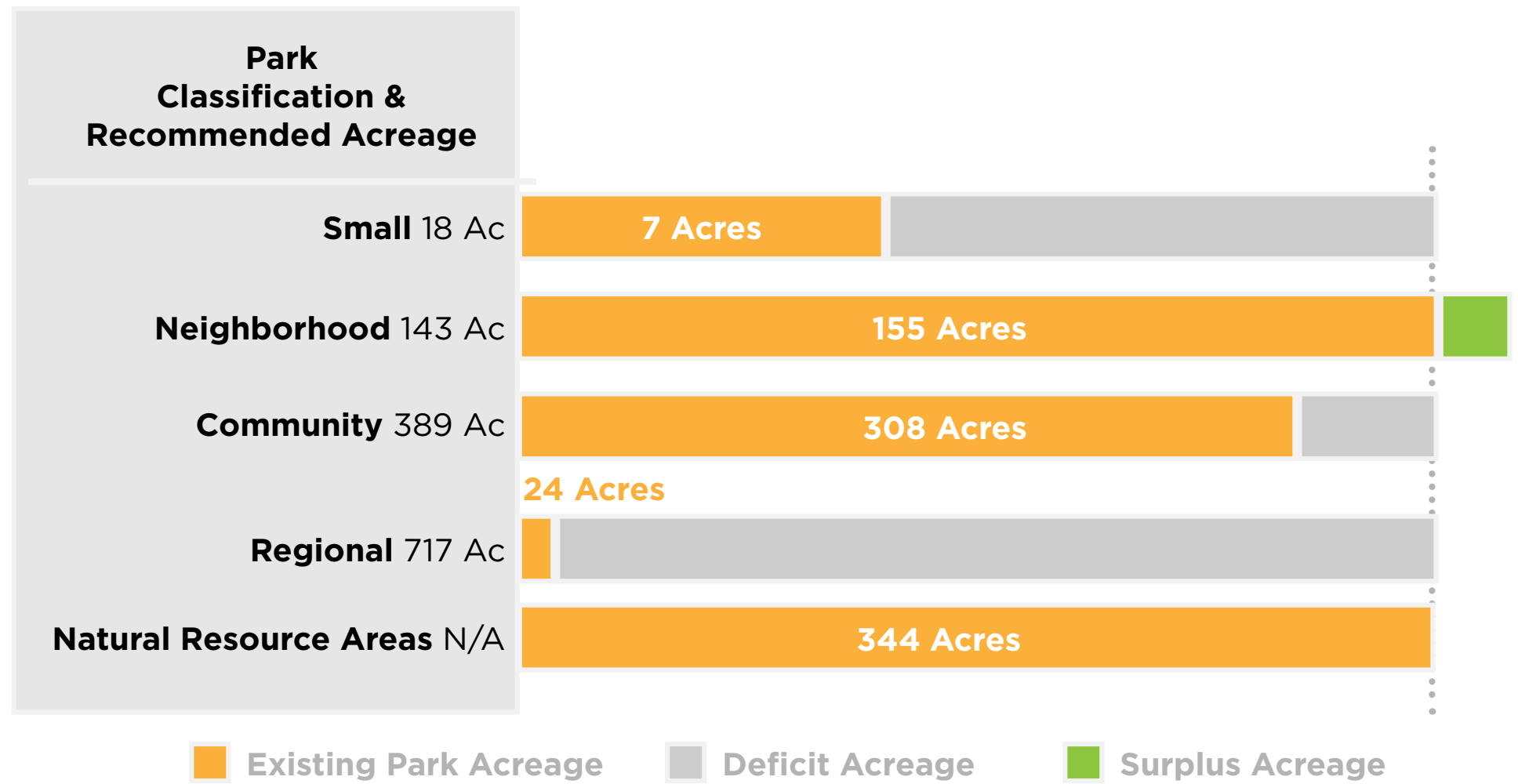
Park Trends

Site Challenges and Opportunities

Site Analysis and Research

Southfield Park Network

Southfield's parks and recreation network was compared against park acreages recommended by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). It was found that regional scale parks were below the recommended level and presented an opportunity to introduce key programs and facilities that would serve Southfield residents and contribute to economic development efforts.



**Compared against MDNR recommendations*

Site Analysis and Research

Park Trends

The project was conducted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, which posed new challenges and perspectives to public spaces. Mobility data made available by Google reveals that Oakland County experienced a significant uptick of parks during the pandemic. While these metrics may not constitute long-term trends, they illustrate the importance of a flexible and functional park system to respond to a changing world.

Additionally, Parks and Recreation trends were reviewed. It was found that recreation centers are increasingly becoming trusted community gathering places and should seek to expand their role to provide interconnected social, health and counseling services; access to healthcare providers; food and nutrition assistance; educational opportunities and other public services all in one center. Formal agreements among agencies would unify work of providers to achieve a partnership that serves the needs of the entire community (*NRPA Top Trends in Parks and Recreation, 2020*).

Physical Therapy



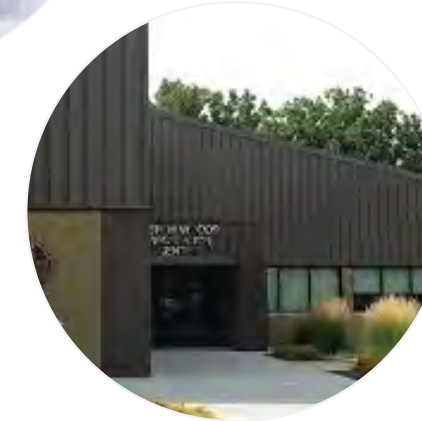
Mentorship



Exercise



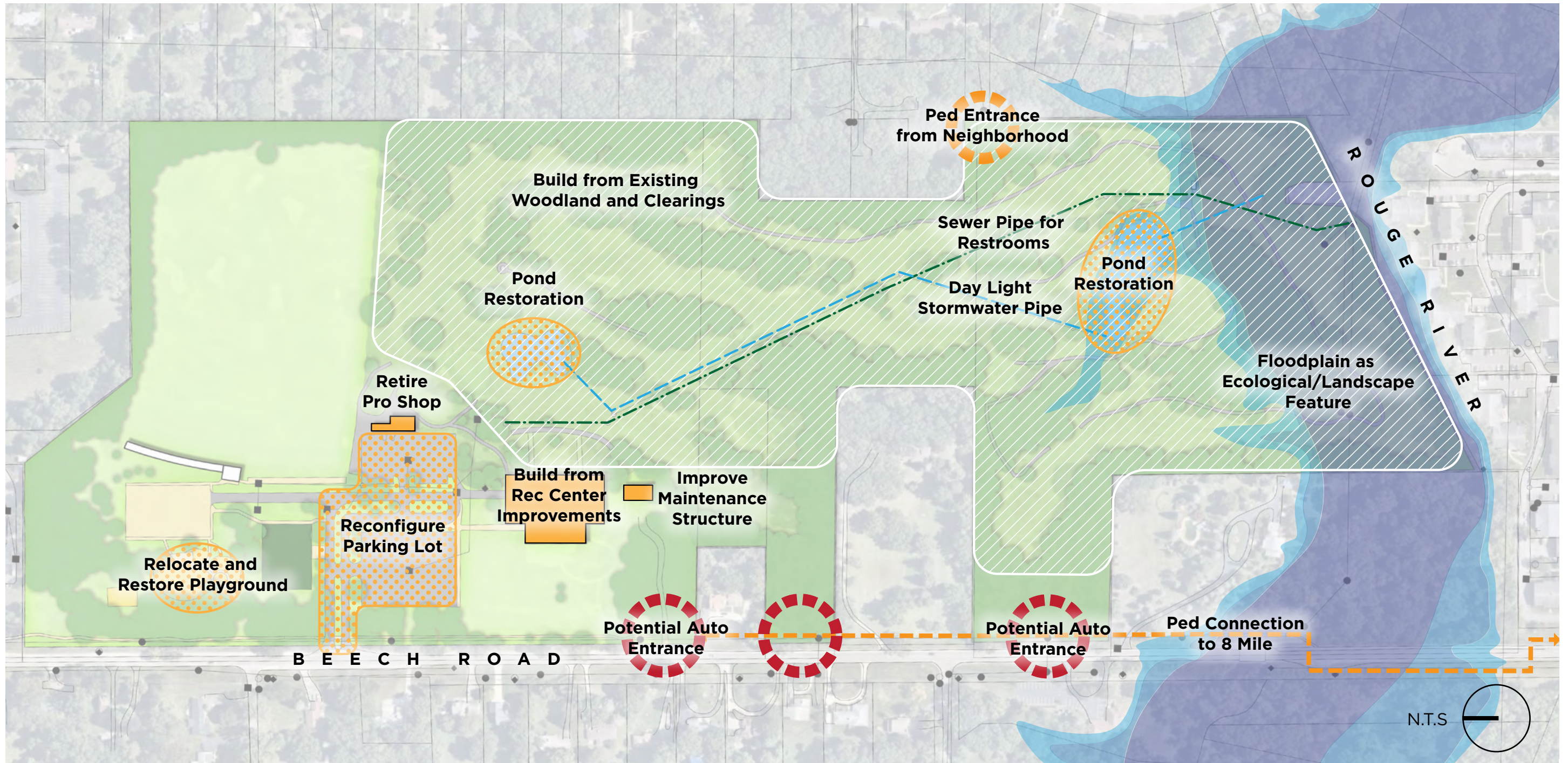
Nutrition Assistance



Wellness Hub

Site Analysis and Research

Site Challenges and Opportunities



Section Four

Master Plan

Concept Overview

Master Plan Overview

Master Plan Components

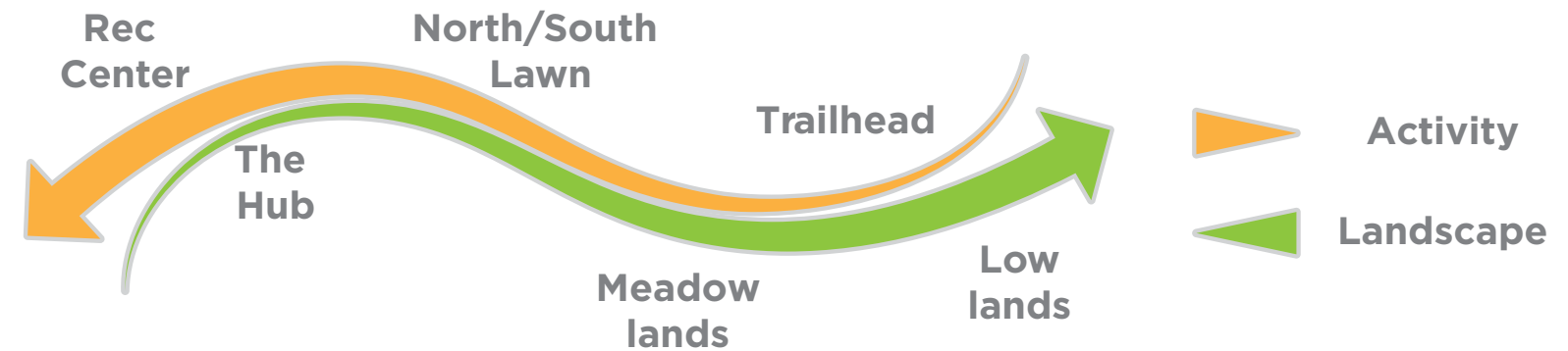
Master Plan

Concept Overview

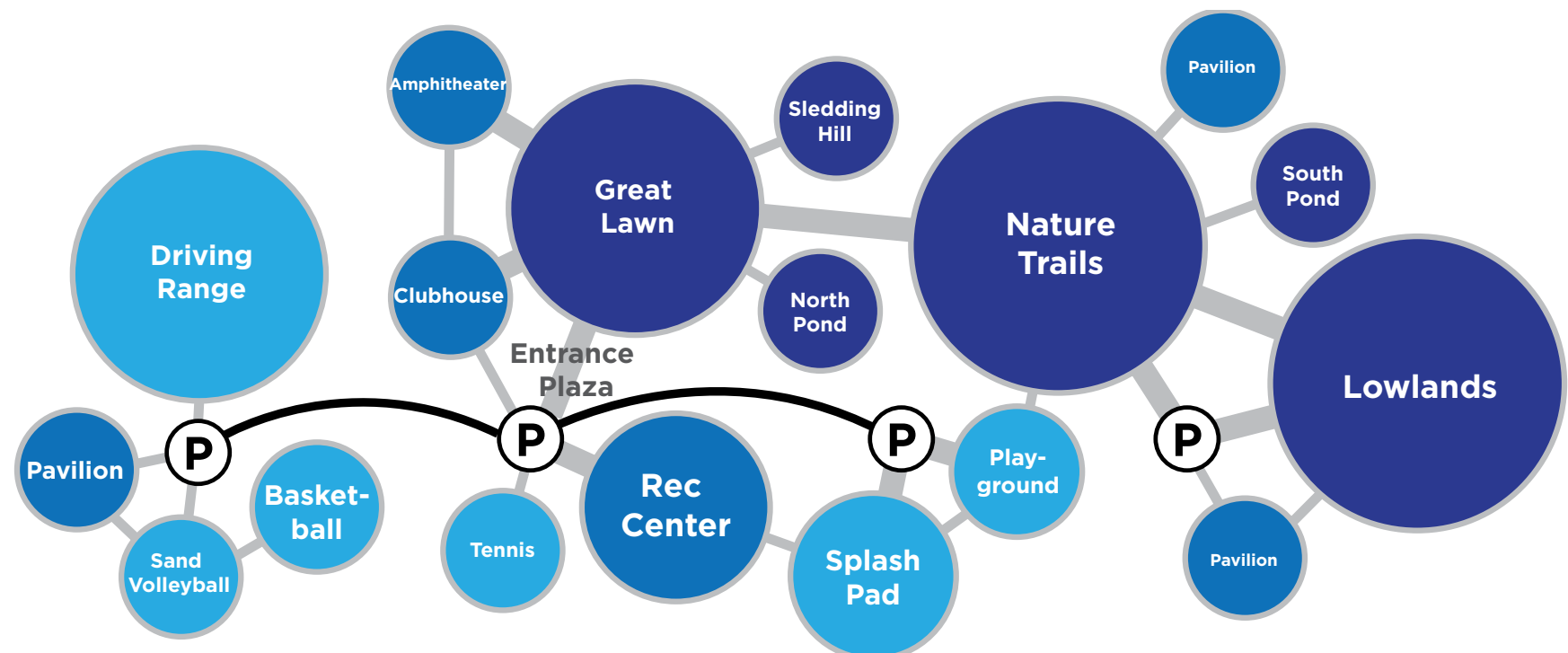
Beech Woods Park occupies a unique social and environmental crossroads and the master plan seeks to strike a balance which benefits all users.

Capitalizing on Beech Woods Park's active uses to the north and landscape to the south, the master plan design seeks harmony between these two characters by weaving them together throughout the park. This will create a multi-generational destination which attracts daily community use as well as regional users who visit for key programs and facilities.

Concept Diagram



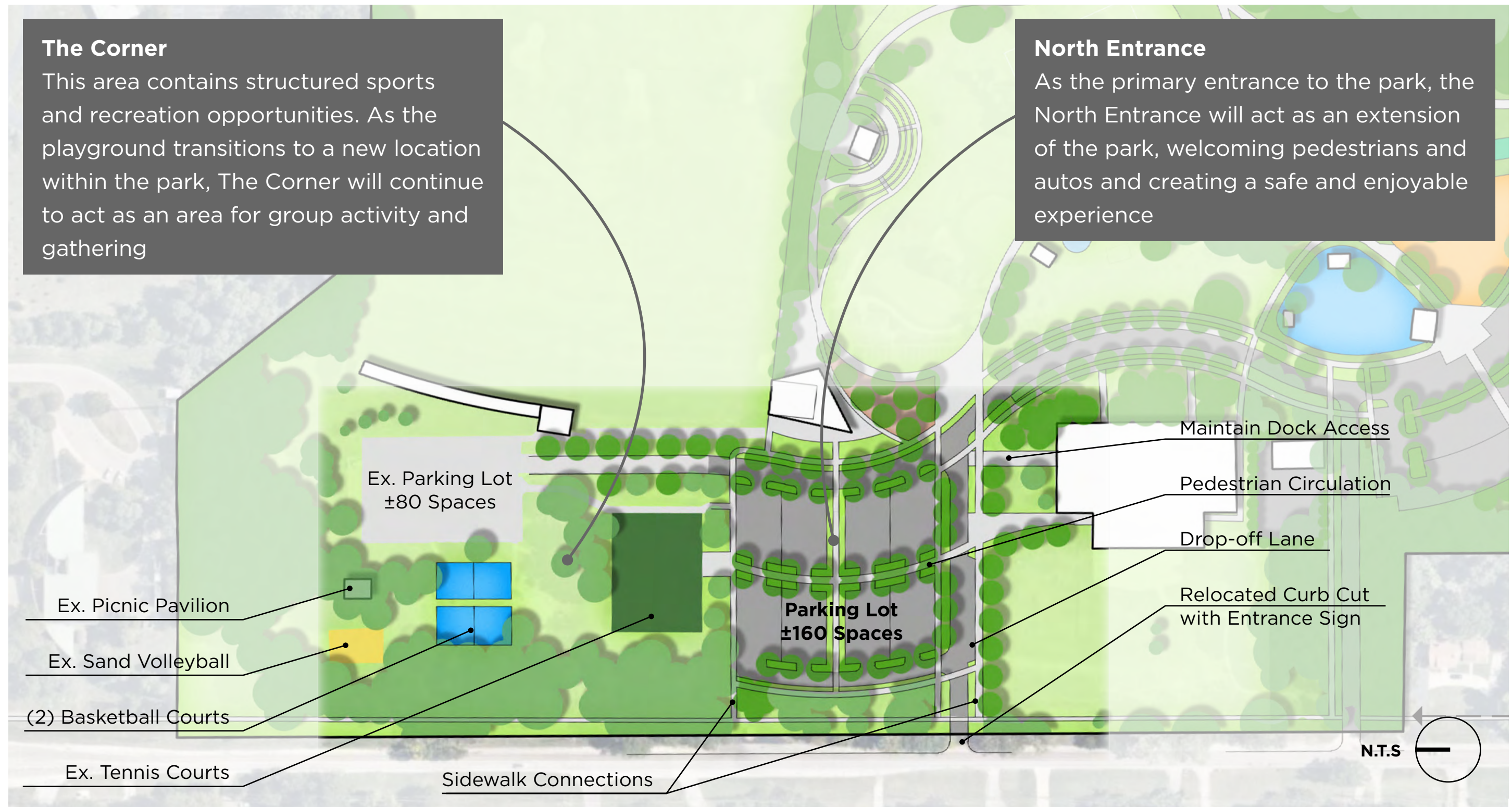
Programming Relationships Diagrams



Master Plan | Plan Overview



Master Plan | North Entrance and The Corner



Master Plan | North Entrance and The Corner

Parking Lots and Access Drives

Many users visiting Beech Woods Park will be arriving by car and the parking lots and access drives are extensions of the park experience. Accordingly, the design of parking lots should seek to provide greenery and accessibility for park patrons.

The design of these elements should include shade trees to reduce direct sun on pavement, as well as access walks to provide legible and safe routes for pedestrians. Where feasible, parking lots should utilize green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) to improve water quality, reduce peak flow volumes and reduce annual flow into the City's municipal system.

All parking areas and drives should be lit at night to provide easier monitoring and security.

With multiple park entrances, it will be important to implement a complete signage and wayfinding system. This should begin at the parking lot and thematically continue throughout the site.



Master Plan | Great Lawn and Entrance Plaza



Master Plan | Great Lawn and Entrance Plaza

Entrance Plaza

This area will be the primary park entrance from the north and will create a viewshed aligned with the North Entrance drive. The design of this area will incorporate sculpture placemaking elements which mark the entrance threshold, decorative hardscape and landscape elements.

Design of this space should seek to incorporate creative and artistic elements which reflect the culture of Southfield. Opportunities may exist to partner with local artists and artisans to create a truly unique space.



Master Plan | Great Lawn and Entrance Plaza

Clubhouse

This signature building will act as an extension to the flexibility of the Great Lawn. This structure will incorporate a number of facilities and will serve multiple functions throughout the year. This building will include the following:

- **Indoor/Outdoor Gathering Space** - Roll-up doors and movable furniture allow for both indoor and outdoor dining, gathering or events
- **Service Counter and Small Kitchen** - This building will offer food options that are above typical concessions. There may be opportunities to partner with local organizations to create a food business incubator
- **Restrooms** - The building will house restrooms sufficient to serve events on the Great Lawn
- **Driving Range Point of Sale** - With the removal of the Pro Shop, this building will house the point of sale for patrons using the driving range
- **Storage** - This will house general storage to support events on the Great Lawn

It is estimated the square footage of the building will be ±3,500 SF, with generous overhangs for outdoor gathering.



Master Plan | Great Lawn and Entrance Plaza

Amphitheater

The inclusion of an amphitheater will introduce an opportunity for events and group gathering at a scale not available in the park previously. Because this will be permanent, there is an opportunity for the design to overcome the challenges performances are faced with at the Civic Center Front Lawn (Access control, set-up/breakdown costs and time requirements).

It is envisioned that grass seating terraces will be embedded into the Great Lawn with seating for ± 500 , with plentiful lawn for additional audience members to set out blankets and lawn chairs. The architecture of the stage should be consistent with other new structures on site (Multi-Use Building, Picnic Pavilions) and incorporate a high level of flexibility for a variety of event types. The stage, lower seating and upper seating terraces should be made accessible through integrated ramps.



Master Plan | The Hub & Central Entrance



Master Plan | The Hub & Central Entrance

Splash Pad

This will be the first facility of its kind within Southfield, and was one of the top requested elements during engagement.

The pad is suggested to be $\pm 7,500$ SF to align with industry recommendations for a community of Southfield's size. This will allow for between 300 and 500 splash pad users during peak usage, and pedestrian access and parking availability have been sized appropriately.

Final design should consider color and theming of splash pad components to create a unique character. Facility cost may be offset by charging for use, and the design should allow for a controlled perimeter. In addition to the pad itself, this component will require:

- **Entrance Building** - $\pm 1,000$ SF, housing the main entrance, restrooms/changing rooms, concessions and mechanical equipment
- **(2) Picnic Shelters** - ± 25 person capacity, for small group rental
- **Site Amenities and Landscaping** - Benches, group seating, umbrellas, trash receptacles etc. for comfort as well as landscape beds and shade trees to soften hard surfaces



Master Plan | The Hub & Central Entrance

Playground

The playground is located adjacent the splash pad to create a key concentration of youth programming within *The Hub*.

Given the scale of the Splash Pad, the Playground should incorporate consistent and commensurate signature elements. This may include a custom playground with coloring and theming which is consistent with the splash pad and other park elements.

Accessible play, or play opportunities for children with disabilities, was identified as a focus area within engagement. Playground design should seek to incorporate accessible play components with poured surfacing access to these facilities. Because the cost of this surfacing is high, the playground design may need to creatively incorporate accessible paths within areas with lower cost and less accessible surfacing. An existing accessible play structure is located on site and was donated in 2016 and may be relocated to the new playground location.



Master Plan | Uplands



Master Plan | Uplands

Nature Trails

A network of paved and unpaved trails will make up one of the key elements which will stitch together the northern and southern halves of Beech Woods Park. This will provide an opportunity to experience the variety of landscape types present within the park, including ponds, wetlands, meadows and woodlands.

Path design should be 10' wide to allow for ample space for wheelchairs to pass and allow groups to walk together. The perimeters of the path should include a 2' mown strip to keep plantings from limiting path usage.

Paved paths should be reviewed for accessibility, ensuring running slope does not exceed 5% and cross slope does not exceed 2%. Amenities, such as benches, trash receptacles and signage, should be located along trails to offer comfort and respite.



Master Plan | Uplands

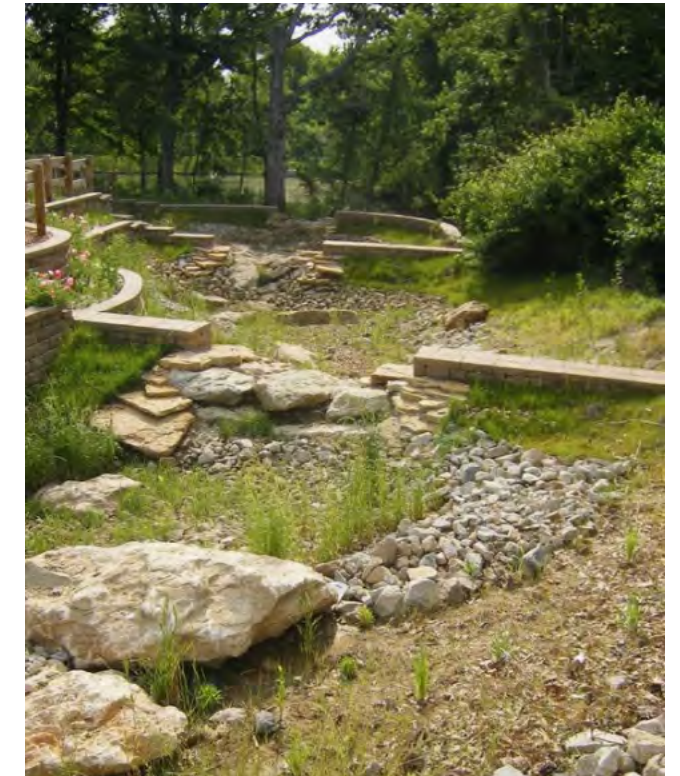
Stormwater Management

Well-functioning landscape systems are capable of managing stormwater generated on-site to the benefit of suitable plant communities. The park design seeks to not only utilize this capability, but to feature it as a unique experiential and educational opportunity.

The stormwater management system includes existing ponds, a proposed network of bioswales, and constructed wetlands in the Lowlands. Ponds should be restored to remove invasive species, repair erosion and mitigate algal blooms through native plantings and water aeration systems.

The network of bioswales will fluctuate with rain events, but in general should remain dry. These channels can be articulated with native plantings, rip-rap/cobble and check dams located throughout the swale. This will create a unique landscape ripe for exploring.

All systems should integrate native plantings, be sized in accordance with stormwater management need, and be monitored two to three times annually for plant establishment and invasive species control.



Master Plan | Uplands

Outdoor Pods

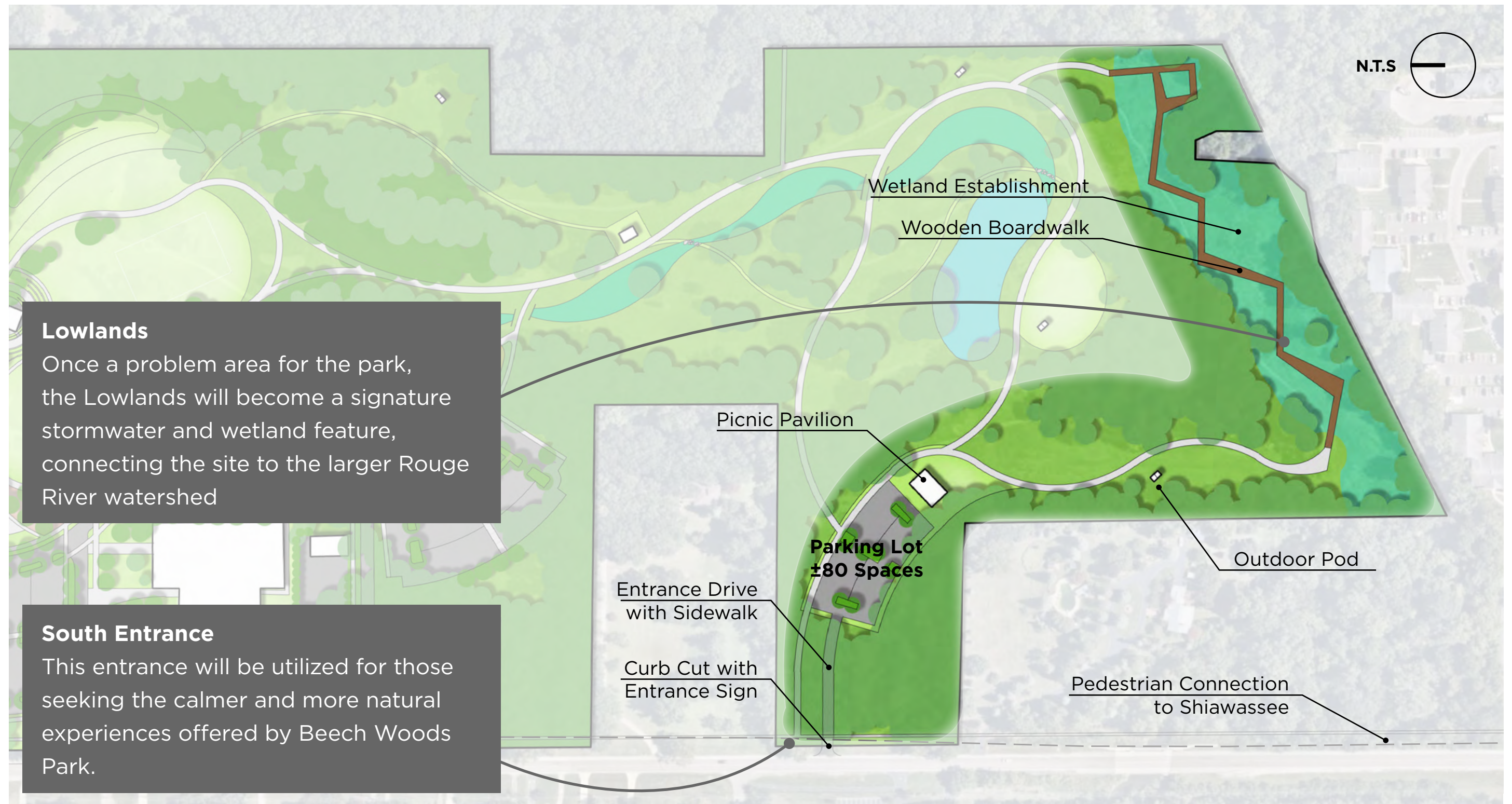
The COVID-19 pandemic challenged daily life and the use of everyday spaces. While the pandemic will pass, it illuminated the importance of outdoor spaces' ability to remain flexible and adaptable.

Outdoor pods will be located throughout the site. These will be small shelters with room for individuals or small groups, and include site power and wireless internet. These are spaces that students, professionals or residents can visit to utilize digital technology, while having access to the natural landscape.

Design of these shelters should be refined to meet the capacity and long-term maintenance capacity of the City.



Master Plan | South Entrance and Lowlands



Master Plan | South Entrance and Lowlands

Boardwalk and Nature Education

The southern edge of Beech Woods Park has always been challenged by the fluctuations of the Rouge River. Because this portion of the site is within a regulated floodplain, earthwork options are severely limited.

What was once a challenge is transformed into a unique opportunity for Beech Woods Park. This area will be reformed to create a series of wetlands which act as extensions to the natural function of the Rouge River. A wooden boardwalk will provide visitors the opportunity to pass through and pause within the wetland landscape. Signage can provide educational and interpretive opportunities along the boardwalk.

The design of the boardwalk should be wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass, and should meander to focus views on different aspects of the wetland landscape.



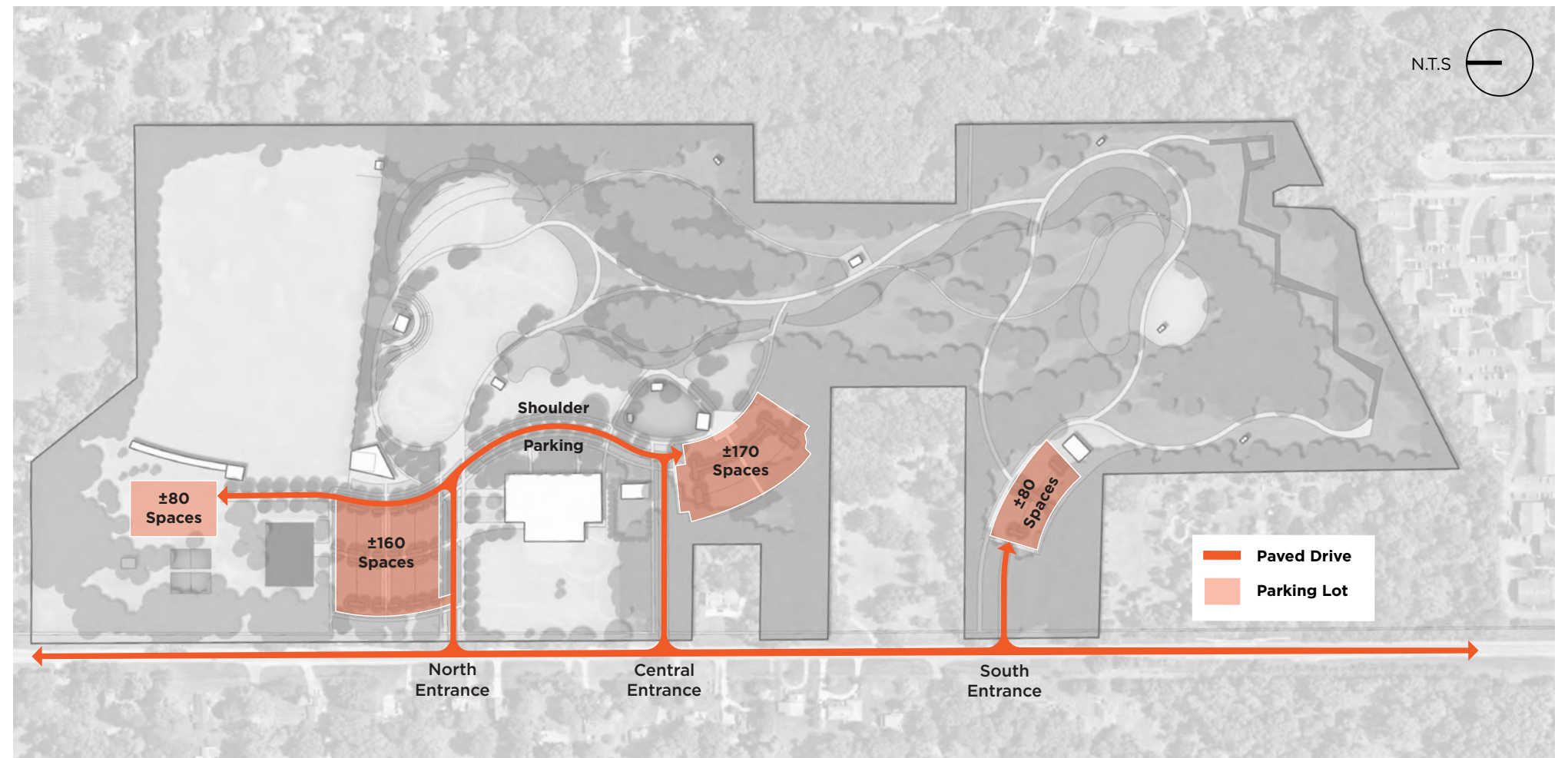
Master Plan

Site Access and Parking

The drives and parking lots are extensions of the park experience and road alignments and parking areas are located to take advantage of the site's unique characteristics.

The three entrance drives each have a unique character and serve the needs of different aspects of the park. The North Entrance caters to a passive/active use and event use. The Central Entrance focuses on serving the Hub and youth-centric activities. And the South Entrance is primarily passive and environmental in character.

Because new facilities are introduced, parking will need to meet new demand. Prior, the total site parking was ± 280 spaces. The master plan proposes ± 410 parking spaces at the North and Central Entrances, and 80 spaces at the South Entrance. This achieves a total parking count of 490 spaces, increasing the on-site parking by nearly 60%.



Master Plan

Trails and Pedestrian Circulation

A robust and varied network of trails will connect site programs and facilities, and offer an opportunity for passive recreation for a multitude of users. The primary trail system is a 10' wide path, and boardwalk, comprising over 1 mile of trail length.

In addition, a network of secondary trails will offer further recreation opportunities, and provide critical connectivity to site elements and the surrounding neighborhood.

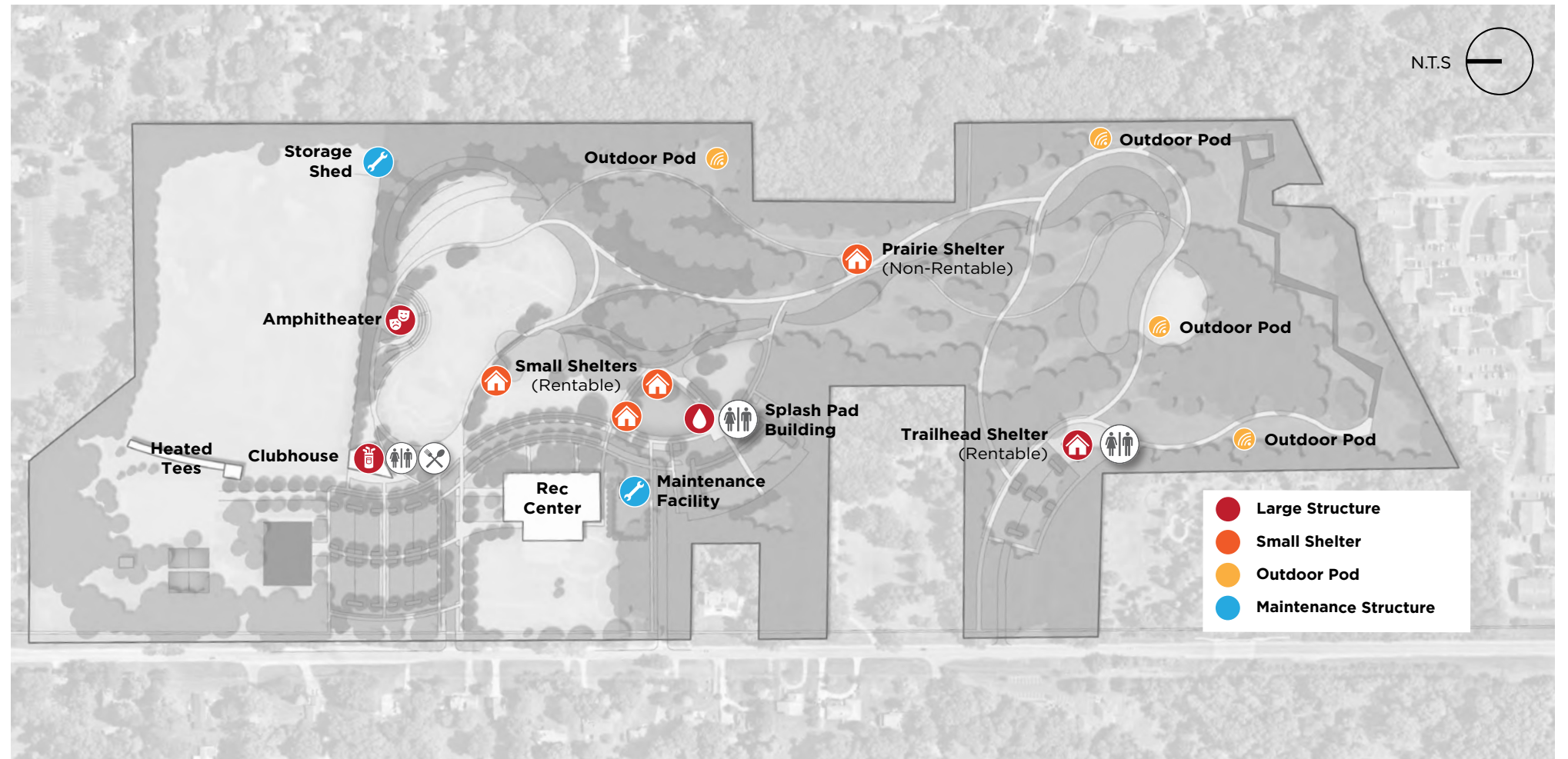
Currently, an off-street pedestrian connection to Shiawassee Road does not exist. The City should pool efforts between departments to undertake this necessary project.



Master Plan

Structures

The master plan includes a number of new structures which will add both programming and revenue generation opportunities to the park. Details about individual structures are included within the master plan section.



Section Five

Implementation and Funding

Project Phasing

Opinion of Probable Cost

Funding Sources

Implementation and Funding

Phasing

Realizing the full scope of improvements for Beech Woods Park may require phasing improvements. The diagram to the right illustrates a proposed plan for phasing construction.

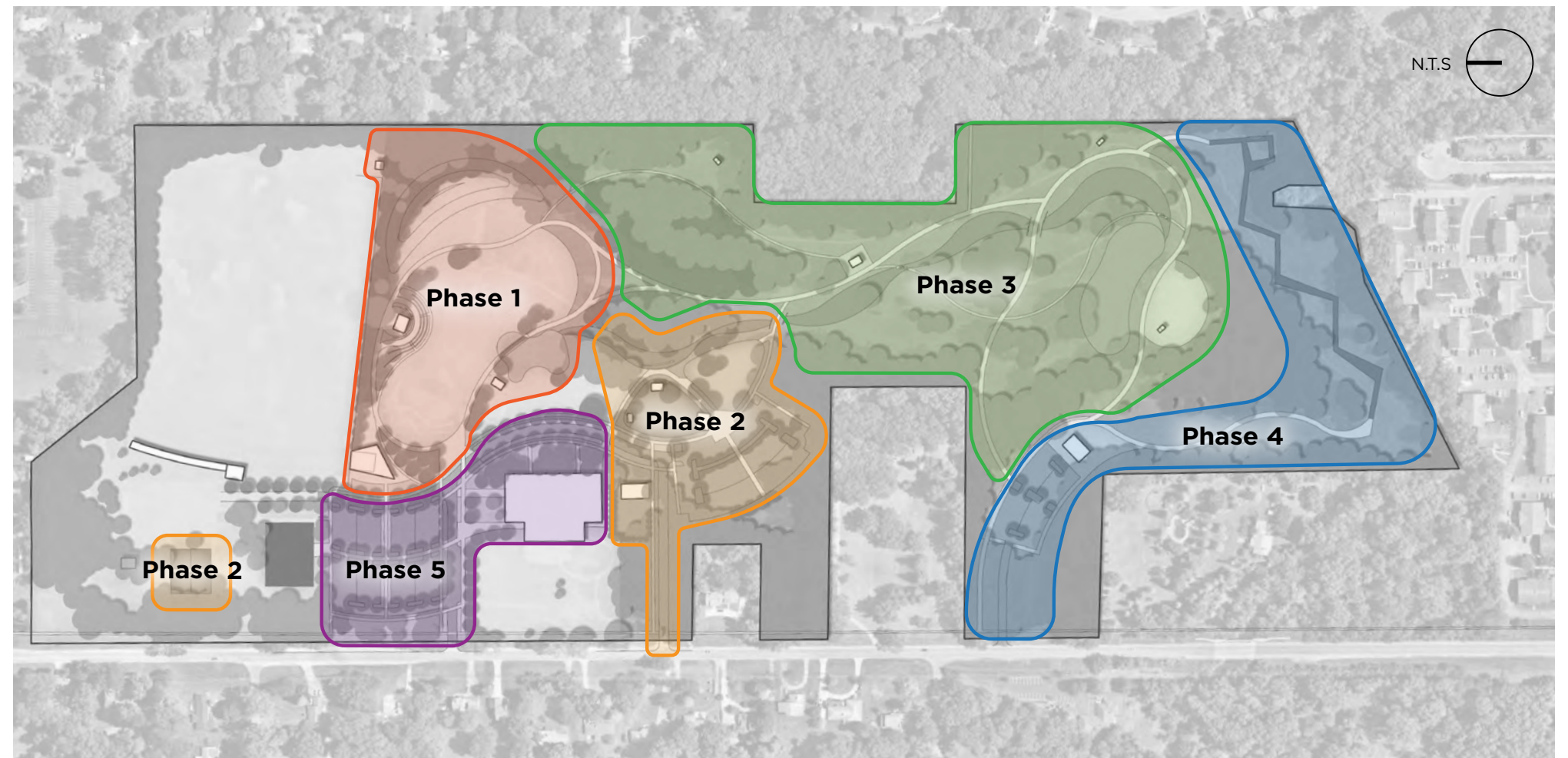
The Great Lawn and Entrance Plaza have been identified as providing immediate improvements for a large and diverse group of users and is considered Phase 1.

Phase 2 includes the Splash Pad and Playground, which will provide an immediate and unique opportunity for Southfield youth.

Phases 3 and 4 may be interchangeable and available grant funds may dictate phasing, however final construction of the South Entrance and parking lot should be grouped in the later of the two phases.

The North Entrance is identified as the final phase to ensure construction work of elements within the park do not damage the final paving of the parking lot.

All phases may be adjusted at the discretion of the City and based off available funding.



Implementation and Funding

Opinion of Cost

The cost opinion provided is an estimate of probable cost based off available information and current market trends. Final pricing will be dictated by the Contractor.

Market conditions at the time of this master plan are inflated due to material shortage and labor availability. Costs may vary depending on market conditions.

| Phase and Item | Est. Cost |
|--|----------------------|
| Phase 1 | |
| Entrance Plaza | \$ 350,000 |
| Great Lawn and Amphitheater | \$ 1,400,000 |
| North Pond Restoration | \$ 285,000 |
| The Clubhouse | \$ 1,200,000 |
| <i>Construction Contingency</i> | \$ 750,000 |
| Phase Total | \$ 3,985,000 |
| Phase 2 | |
| Central Entrance | \$ 800,000 |
| Splash Pad | \$ 1,750,000 |
| Playground | \$ 750,000 |
| The Corner | \$ 100,000 |
| <i>Construction Contingency</i> | \$ 850,000 |
| Phase Total | \$ 4,250,000 |
| Phase 3 | |
| Uplands | \$ 1,000,000 |
| <i>Construction Contingency</i> | \$ 250,000 |
| Phase Total | \$ 1,250,000 |
| Phase 4 | |
| South Entrance | \$ 500,000 |
| Lowlands | \$ 1,750,000 |
| <i>Construction Contingency</i> | \$ 550,000 |
| Phase Total | \$ 2,800,000 |
| Phase 5 | |
| North Entrance | \$ 1,000,000 |
| <i>Construction Contingency</i> | \$ 250,000 |
| Phase Total | \$ 1,250,000 |
| Un-Phased (Can Occur in Any Phase) | |
| Ped Connection to Shiawasee | \$ 225,000 |
| Maintenance Facility Improvements | \$ 250,000 |
| <i>Construction Contingency</i> | \$ 100,000 |
| Total | \$ 325,000 |
| Phases 1 Through 5 and Unphased Total | \$ 13,860,000 |

Implementation and Funding

Grant Resources

The Master Plan for Beech Woods Park includes a variety of facilities and programs. This opens the project up to a variety of granting sources targeted at specific components of the project. The list provided is a non-exhaustive list of resources that may be worth pursuing.

| Granting Agency | Grant Name | Potential Grant Amount | Eligible Plan Components | Grant Cycle |
|--|---|------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan | Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Funds | Varies | Recreational Enhancements Within the Park | Proposal due NOV |
| MDNR | Trust Fund and Passport Grant | \$50,000-\$300,000 | Recreational Enhancements or Infrastructure Updates Within the Park | Proposal due APR |
| MDNR | Land Water Conservation Fund | Varies | A project that enhanced recreation along the river while restoring the river's edge would qualify. | Proposal due APR |
| MDOT | TAP and Safe Routes to Schools (if applicable) | 200k - 700k | Non-motorized connections to park | Quarterly |
| MEDC | Varies, based on the type of economic development and accessibility to recreation for the lower income with the City. | Varies | It is economic development so there must be a money/economic partnership to apply like vendors or showing a need for lower income families | Varies |
| Ralph Wilson Foundation | Active Lifestyles Grant, Youth Sports & Recreation; Parks, Trails & Green Design | Varies | Recreation Trails, Green Stormwater Infrastructure | Varies |
| The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) | Sustain Our Great Lakes Program | 100k - 1 Million | Wetlands and Habitat Restoration; Green Stormwater Infrastructure | Pre-proposal due FEB |
| The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) | Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund | 100k - 300k | Green Stormwater Infrastructure, Habitat restoration in Public Space | Proposal due NOV |
| USDA-USFS | Cooperative Weed Management Areas | Varies | Invasive species control, Watershed stability, biological diversity | Proposal due FALL |
| USDA-USFS | Tree Planting and Forest Health Improvement in the Great Lakes Basin | Varies | Forest Insect and Disease Mitigation, Green Infrastructure, Resilient Riparian Forest Restoration | Proposal due SPRING |
| USEPA-GLNPO | USEPA GLRI Action Plan Grants | Varies | Green Infrastructure and Monitoring | Varies |