



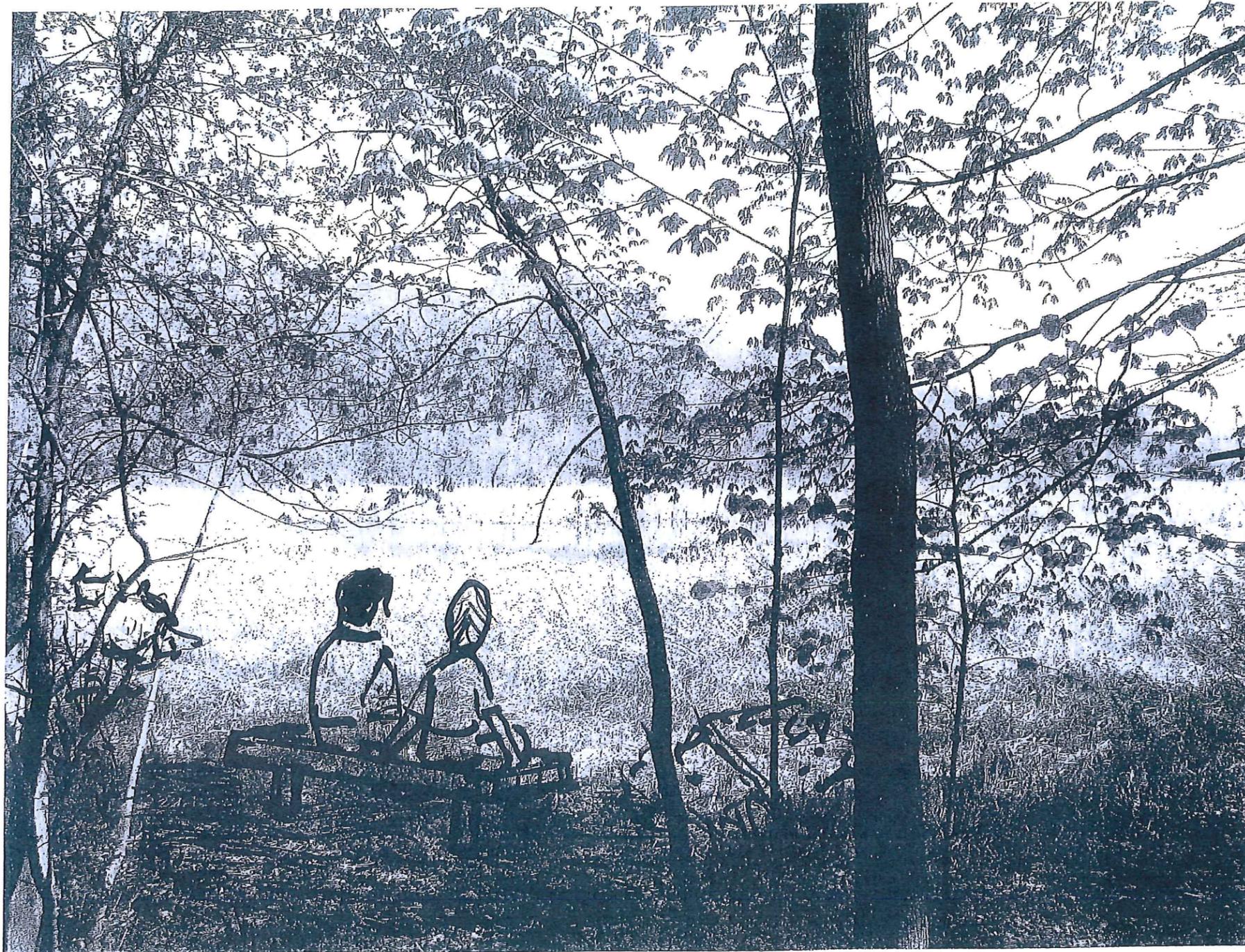
WEKOTA PARK

Tonka Bay Minnesota

Katherine Schneider Coward

LA 5110 Thesis Project

“It’s not just the lake.”

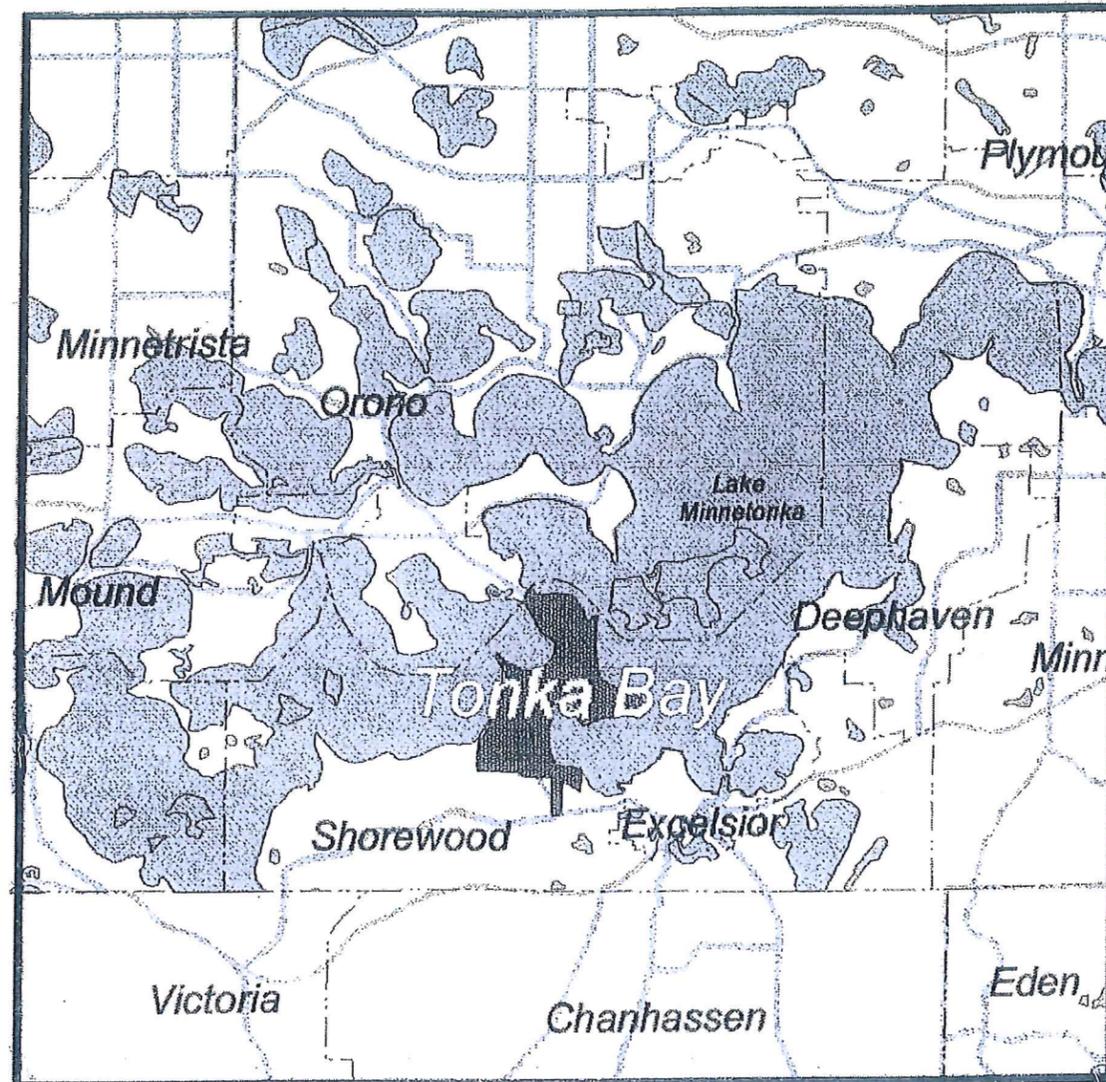


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It's Not Just the Lake

**Wekota Park
Site Design 2012
Echo Bay, City of Tonka Bay, MN**



BACKGROUND

This project focuses on Wekota Park, an 8.1 acre lake-side community park on Echo Bay in the City of Tonka Bay, MN. The park is generally bordered on the east by Lake Minnetonka, on the south-east by a marina, on the south and west by mixed residential, and on the north by additional City owned marshland.

Tonka Bay comprises roughly the entire southern peninsula of land that, together with an almost contiguous northern peninsula, divides the Upper and Lower Lakes of Lake Minnetonka, the largest lake in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. With 1,547 residents and a total land area of approximately 640 acres, Tonka Bay is one of the smallest cities on the Lake but proportionately has the most shoreline. One half of the City's 651 homes have lakeshore.

The land form was created circa 10,000 B.C. during the recession of the last glaciation. By the time of early settlement in the mid-1800's, Tonka Bay's vegetation was about one half "big woods" (generally south & west) and one half prairie/wetland (generally north & east). **Wekota Park** is situated at the convergence of these two areas and this project addresses the problems and opportunities of this interesting location.

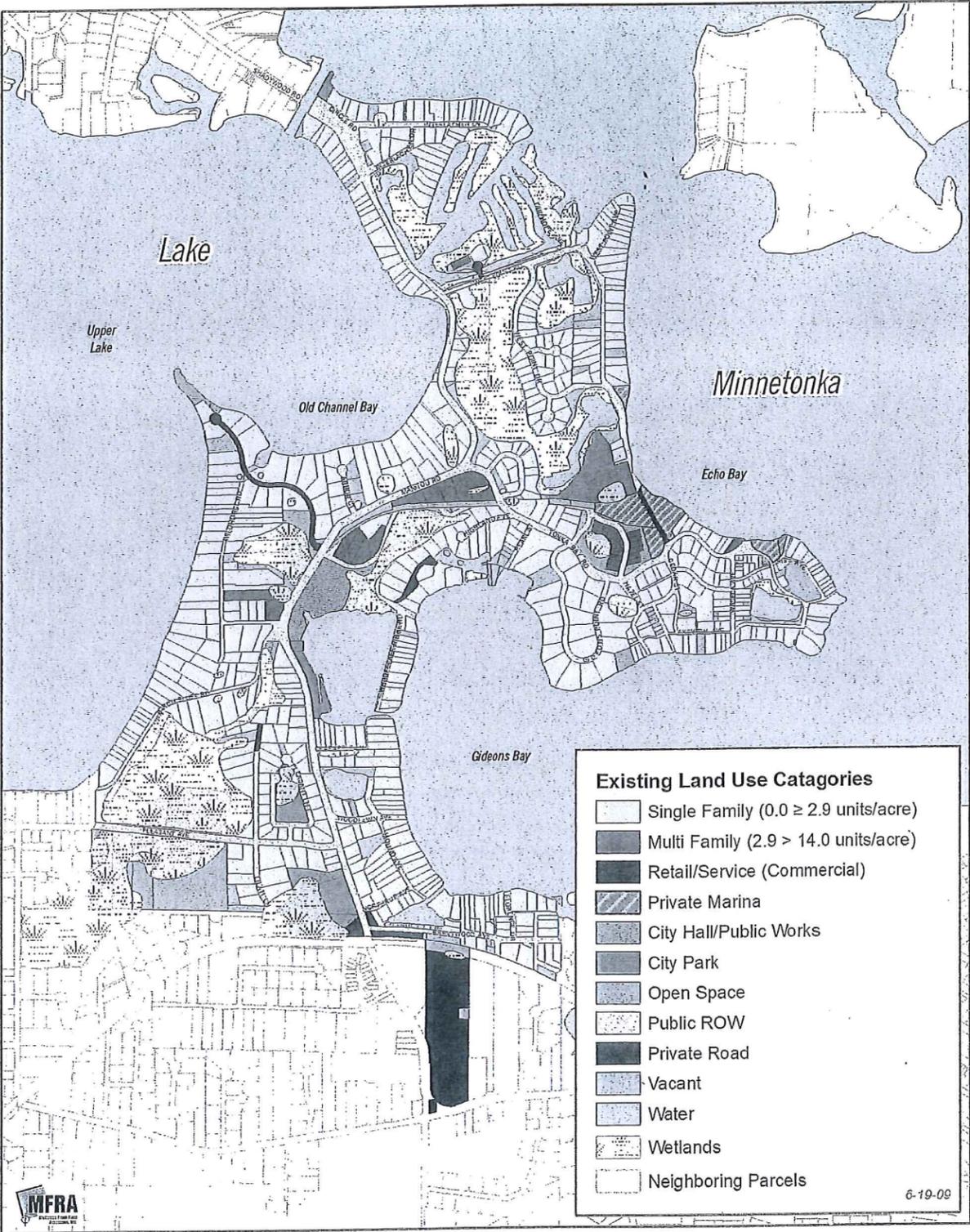
Figure 2: Existing Land Use 2008

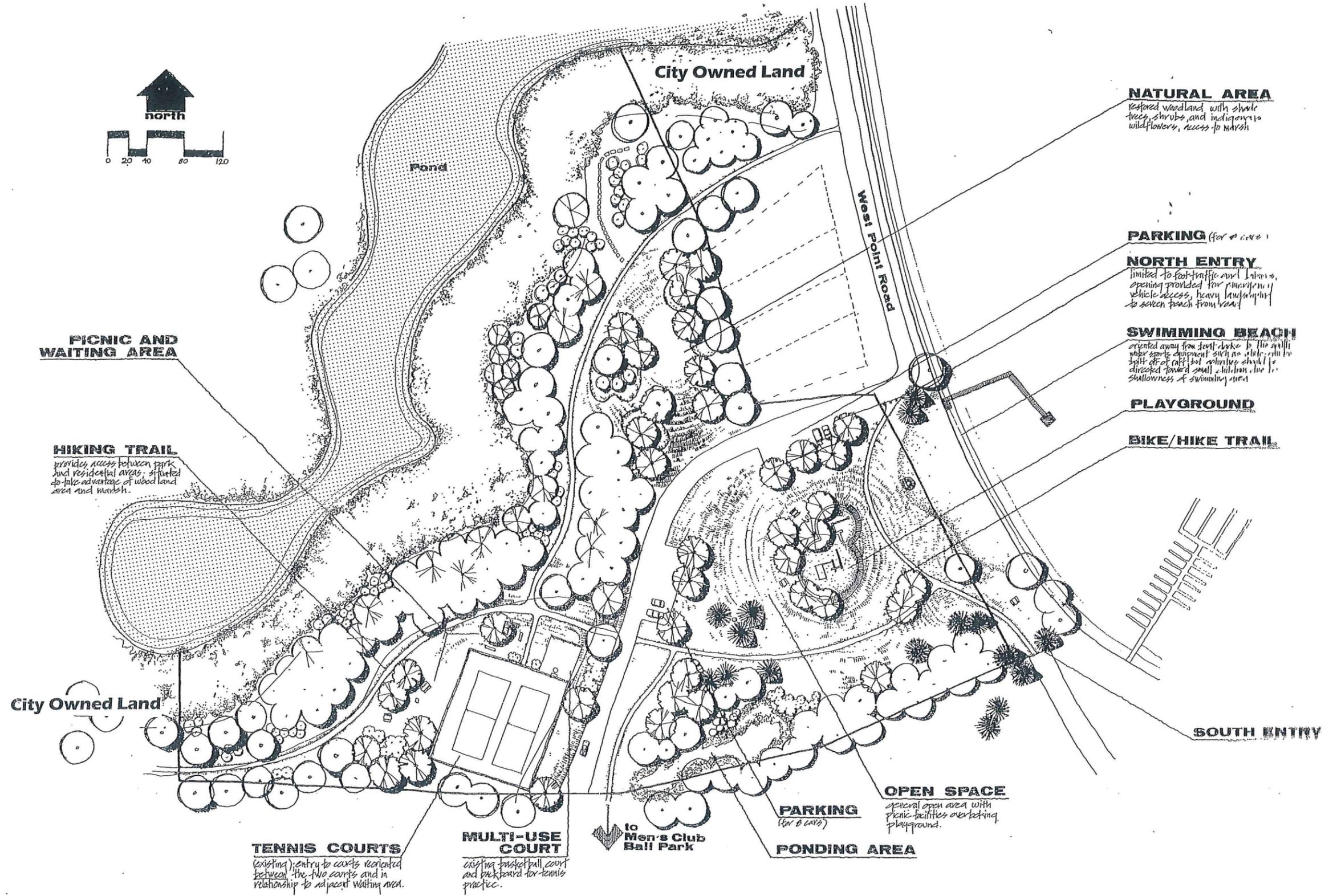
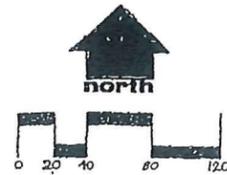
Tonka Bay Parks

Historically, given that Tonka Bay is surrounded by a very popular and accessible recreational lake, that half the residential lots border the lake, and that until the 1950's and 1960's many residents were seasonal, there was little community interest in land use planning or park development. In fact, after the Chautauqua Assembly's vision in 1879, there was little land use planning in the City of any kind for approximately 100 years.

Nevertheless, ironically and fortunately, Tonka Bay's wetlands and land otherwise unsuitable for building preserved for the City approximately 44 acres of undeveloped land. This "leftover" land left the City with a high proportion of open, public-use land. Today, Tonka Bay land uses are residential (48%), parks and open space (32%), and all other (marina, shopping center, roads, etc. 20%). This proportion of parks and open space far exceeds modern common rule-of-thumb planning standards of 10% public land or ten gross acres per 1,000 residents. Five of these "leftover" areas are now parks of various sizes:

Name	Size (acres)	Use
Manitou Park	8.8	Sports/picnic
Wekota Park	8.1	Beach/picnic/tennis/play
Pleasant Park	2.8	Swinging/general
Old Orchard Park	2.2	Boating/picnic/play/fishing
Crescent Beach Park	.4	Swimming/sunbathing





NATURAL AREA
restored woodland with shrub trees, shrubs, and indigenous wildflowers, access to marsh

PARKING (for 20 cars)

NORTH ENTRY
limited to foot-traffic and tables, opening provided for emergency vehicle access, heavy landscaping to screen bench from road

SWIMMING BEACH
oriented away from foot-traffic to the south water sports equipment such as table can be kept off of road, but activities should be directed toward small children due to shallowness of swimming area

PLAYGROUND

BIKE/HIKE TRAIL

PICNIC AND WAITING AREA

HIKING TRAIL
provides access between park and residential areas; situated to take advantage of wood land area and marsh

City Owned Land

TENNIS COURTS
existing entry to courts reoriented between the two courts and in relationship to adjacent waiting area.

MULTI-USE COURT
existing basketball court and backboard for tennis practice.

to Men's Club Ball Park

PARKING (for 8 cars)

PONDING AREA

OPEN SPACE
general open area with picnic facilities overlooking playground.

SOUTH ENTRY

MASTER PLAN CONCEPT (1978)

Project Purpose

For over 35 years Wekota Park has provided Tonka Bay residents with an accessible recreation area and easy connection to Lake Minnetonka. In fact, due to the City's size and shape, a majority of the City's households are within walking or biking distance of the park. Residents actively use the park's existing facilities and features, particularly the playground and beach areas.

However, Wekota Park's full potential has not been developed. Use is restricted to the beachfront and adjoining playground open space and a nearby tennis and basket ball court on West Point Road. The lack of attention to landscaping and esthetics and development along the park's borders has diminished the feeling of this site as a natural and attractive space.

The community has also been at a loss for years of what to do to the adjoining forest and wetland to the northwest. In 1976 Kathy Coward conducted a parks and recreation survey of the Tonka Bay residents that indicated a desire for more passive recreational activities. Twenty three years later, the Tonka Bay Comprehensive Plan enthusiastically embraced passive recreation and called for enhancing and expanding this section of the park by 2030.

The purpose of this project is to create a spatial design that will maximize the use and enjoyment of the entire park property. The Wekota Park site is unique because, although small, it has diverse landforms and land cover which have great potential for increased access and aesthetic development. This plan will open the northwest section of the park to uses appropriate to their natural environment, improve existing recreational areas of the park, and create a sense of place and aesthetic pride.

Wekota Park holds the promise of a bigger experience for more people and sooner than 2030. **It's not just about the lake. It's also about the land.**

Project Goals

➤ **Social/Recreational Needs**

Provide Tonka Bay residents with a mix of passive and active outdoor recreational activities to suit all ages and interests.

➤ **Aesthetic**

Make enjoyment of the land as important as creating/enhancing active recreational facilities many of which are focus on the lake. Use the existing mix of diverse and interesting natural resources (lake, beach, hardwood forest, marsh and pond) as the "stage"; minimally define entry points within a neighborhood context (you are entering a park, but the park is contiguous to the surrounding neighborhoods); maintain the natural and cultural history of place.

➤ **Access**

Establish a network of trails that both connects the major use areas within the park and will connect to future City and regional pathways envisioned in Tonka Bay's Comprehensive Plan.

➤ **Environmental**

Preserve the existing four major habitat areas (the lake, wetlands/marsh, upland forest, lowland forest). Restore remnant Maple Basswood forest and promote/use native plants. Protect the natural drainage system.

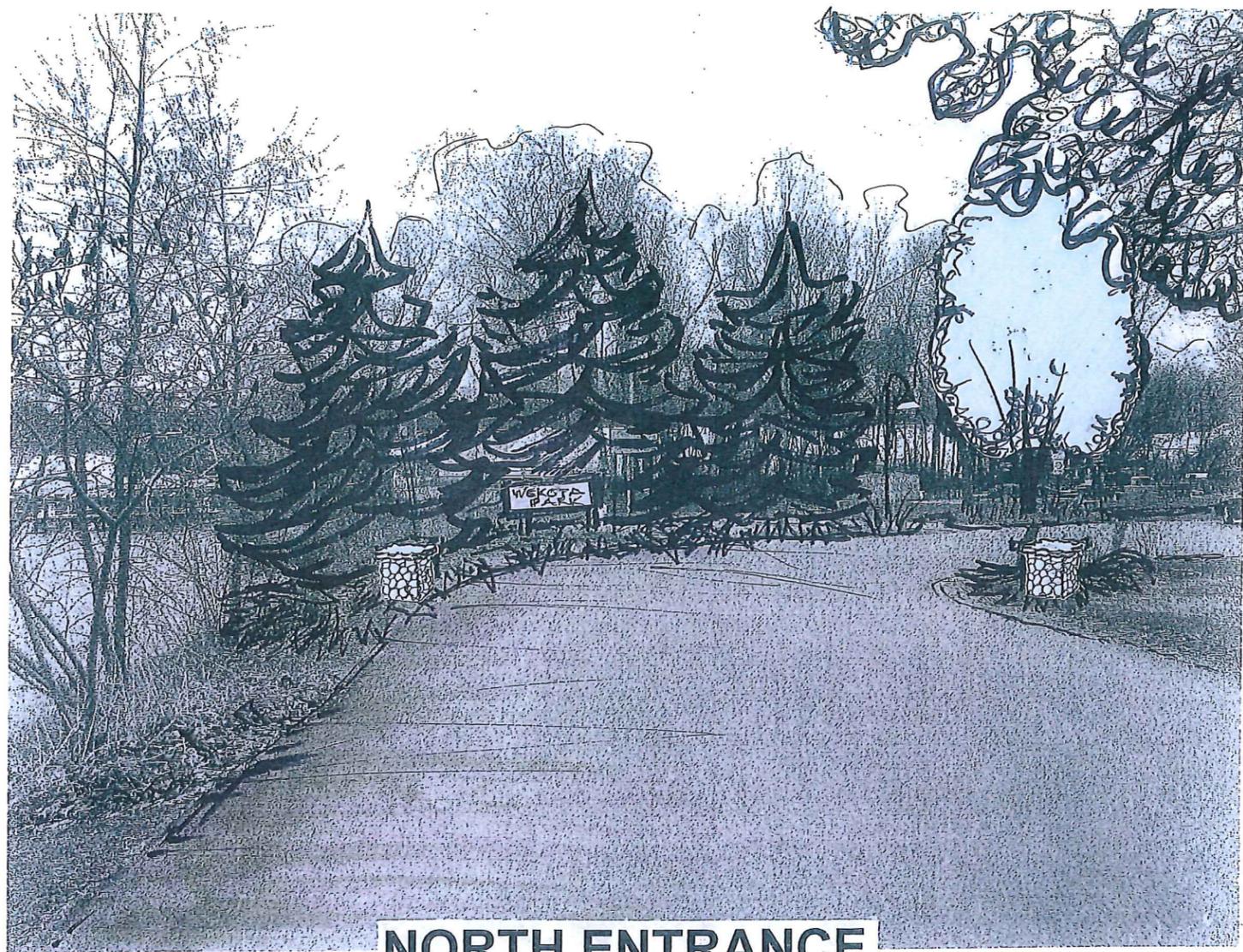
➤ **Financial**

Recognize restrictive budgetary constraints by a site plan that uses low cost but appropriate materials, calls for minimal grading or other landform changes, and specs design features which require minimal increase in maintenance and can be easily installed in segments to match annual City budget.

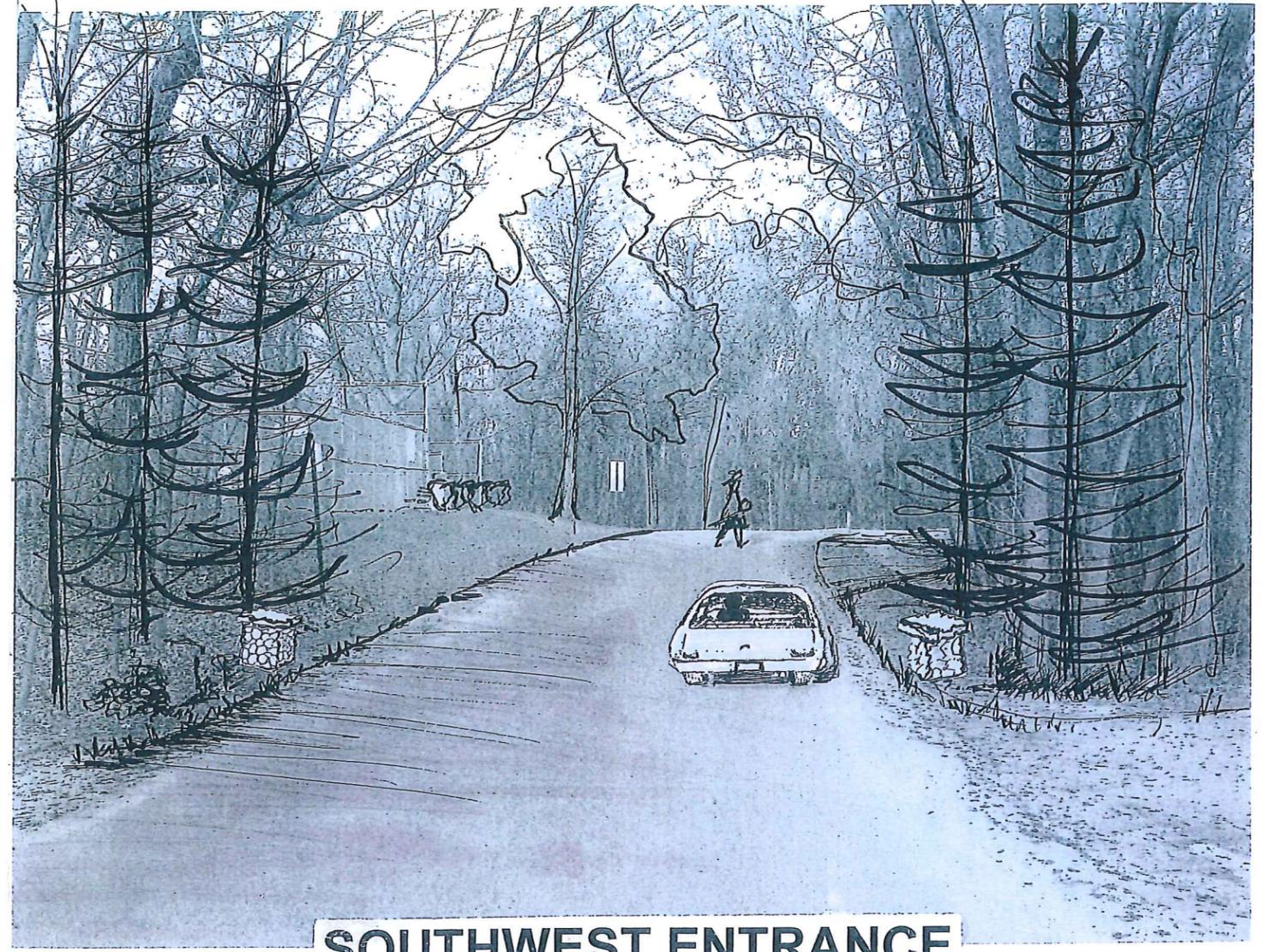
➤ **Community Involvement**

Create an exciting but simple plan that will attract citizen involvement. Tonka Bay is a small community and Wekota Park is a small neighborhood park. Historically it has taken many years for the City to make even small changes to this park and often decisions have been based on maintenance or insurance costs. If the City is to expand this park (as defined in its Comprehensive Plan 2009), the time and money of its citizens will be essential.

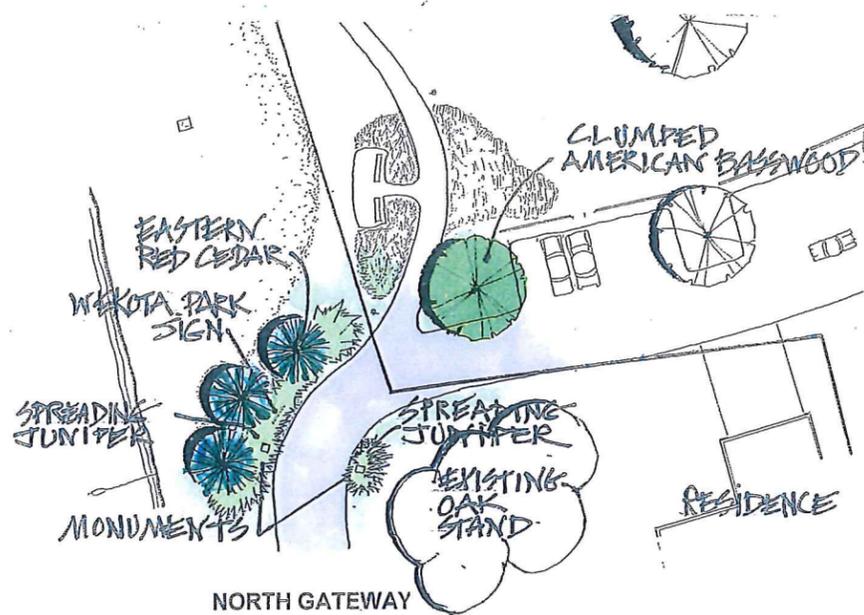




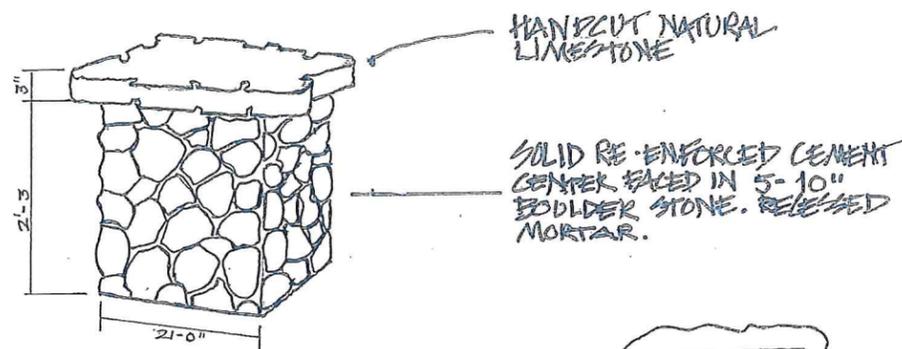
NORTH ENTRANCE



SOUTHWEST ENTRANCE

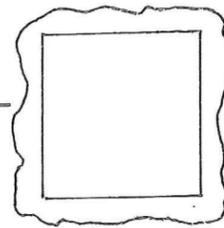


PLANTING

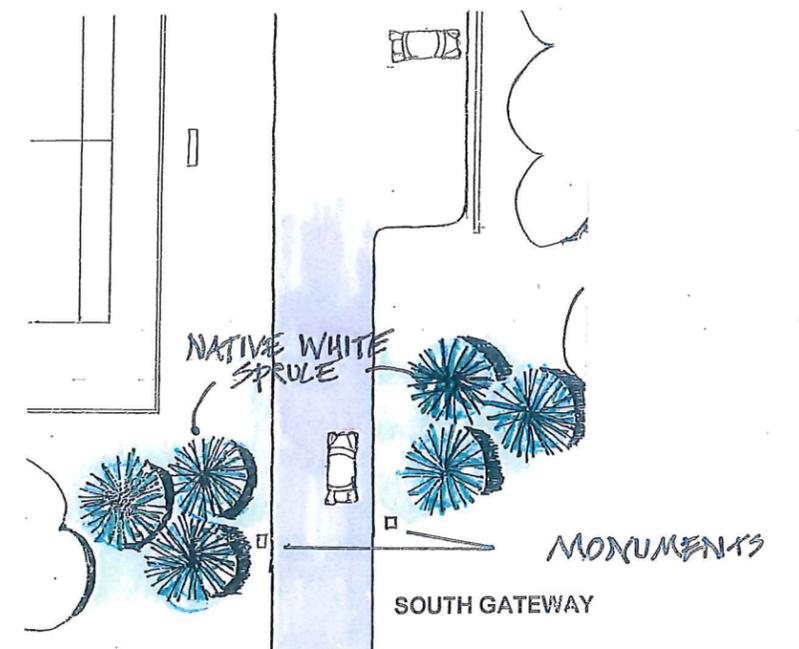


STONE MONUMENT
Scale 1"= 2'

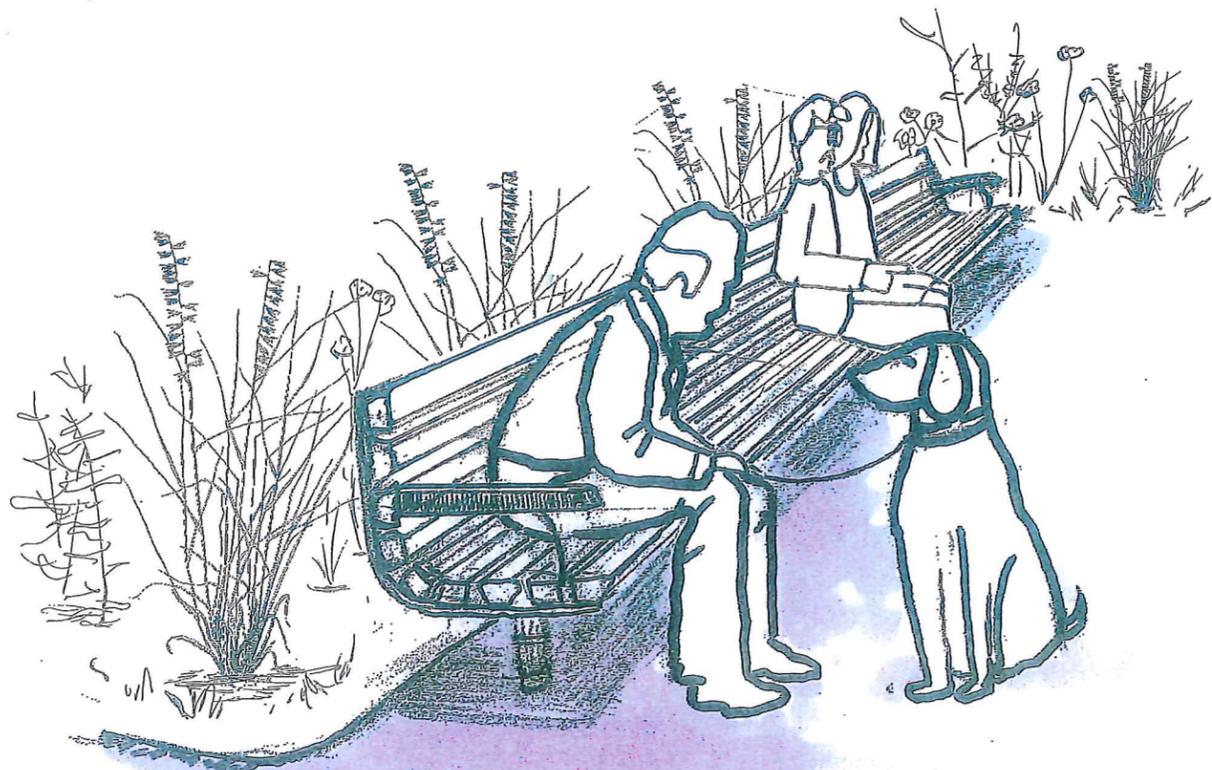
ROCKED EDGES
2-4" OVERLAP



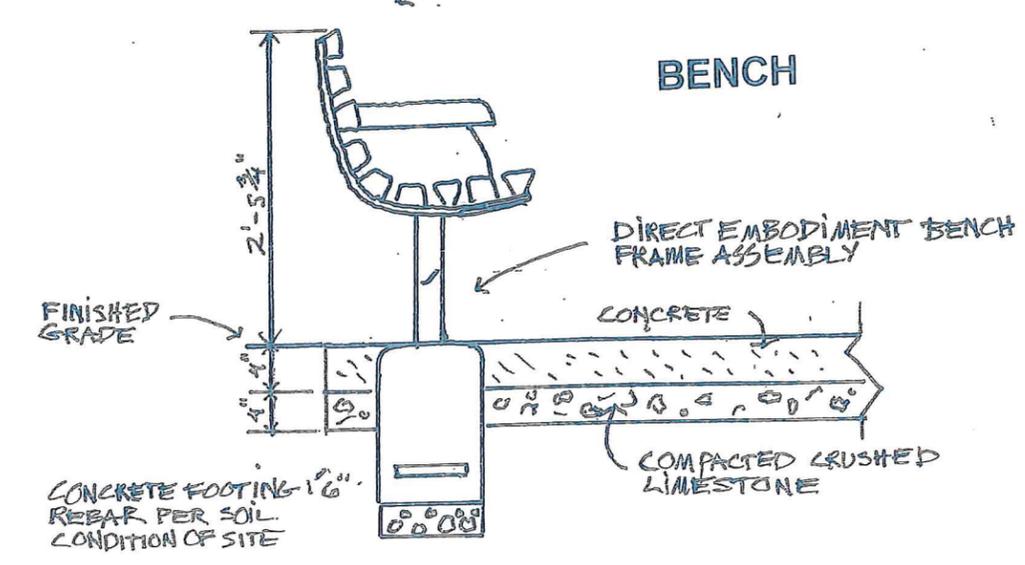
TOP VIEW



PLANTING

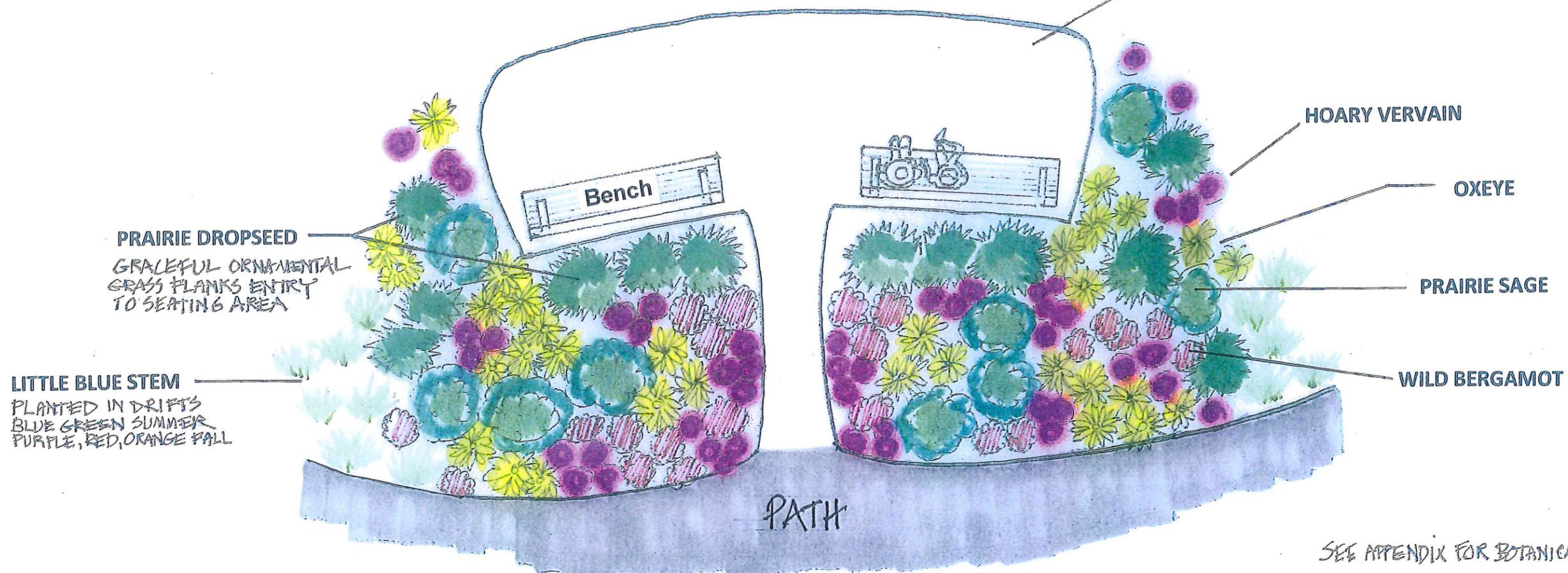


8' CONTOUR BENCH WITH ARMRESTS
RECYCLED PLASTIC SLATS IN COFFEE
TAN COLOR

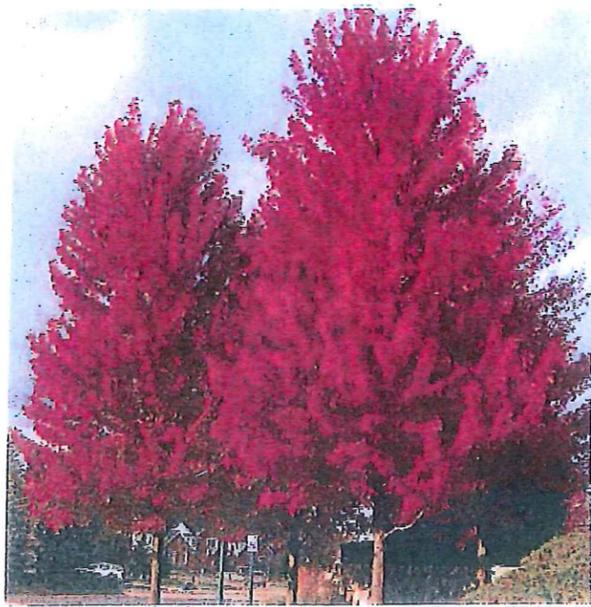


SEATING AREA

8' x 24' pink concrete floor enclosed
on three sides by unmowed meadow
of wildflowers and ornamental grasses.



SEE APPENDIX FOR BOTANICAL NAMES.



FREEMAN MAPLE
FALL COLOR



EXISTING PLAYGROUND

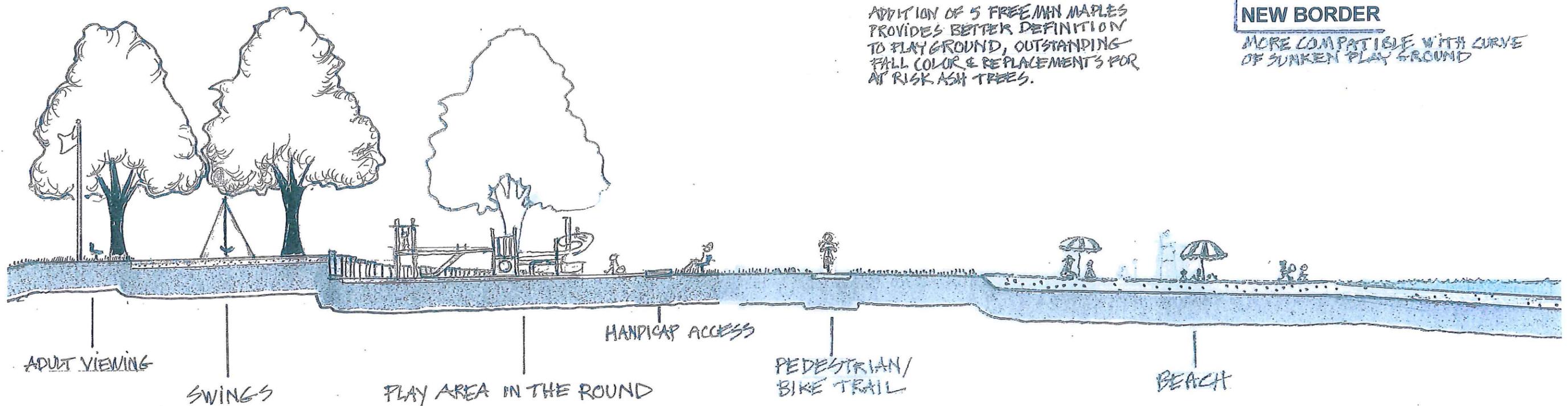


NEW TREES

NEW BORDER

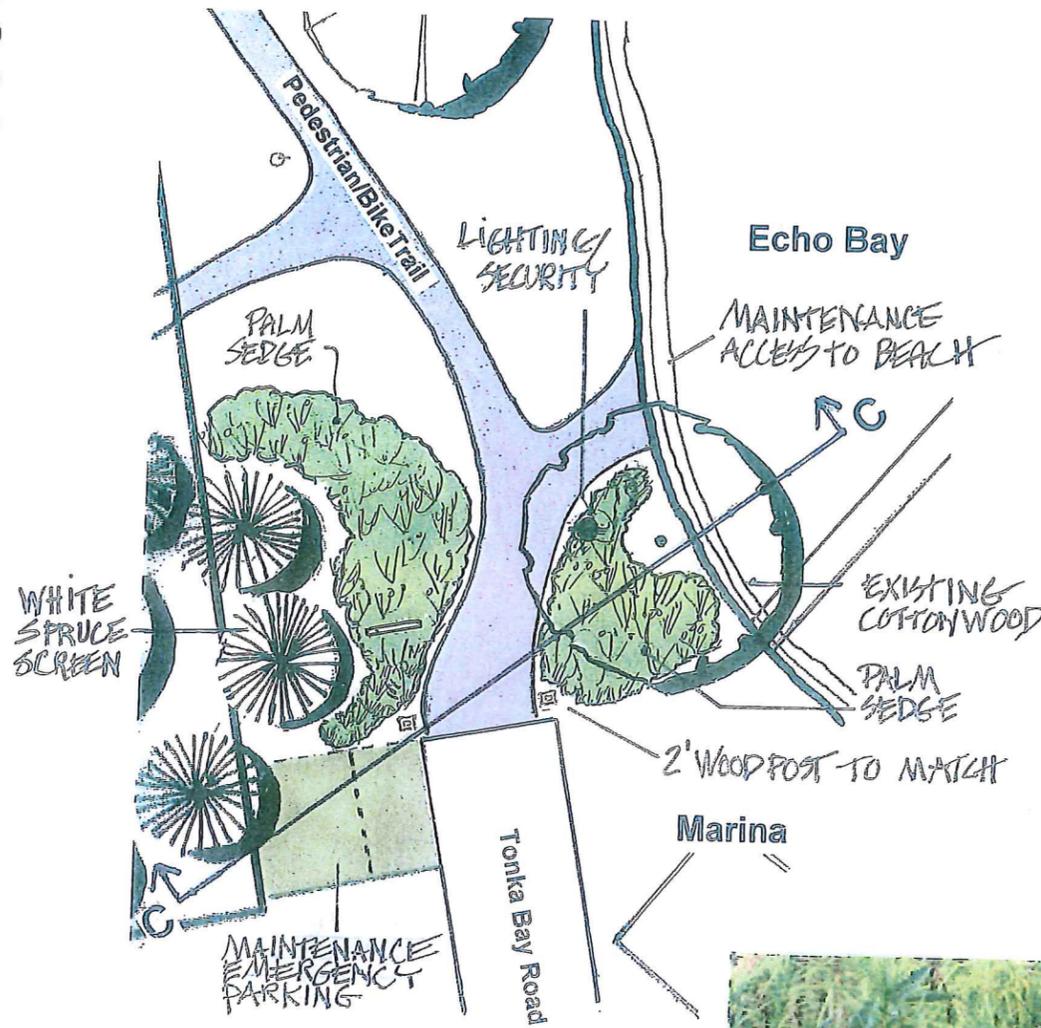
ADDITION OF 5 FREEMAN MAPLES PROVIDES BETTER DEFINITION TO PLAYGROUND, OUTSTANDING FALL COLOR & REPLACEMENTS FOR AT RISK ASH TREES.

MORE COMPATIBLE WITH CURVE OF SUNKEN PLAY GROUND



Section B-B

1/2" = 10'



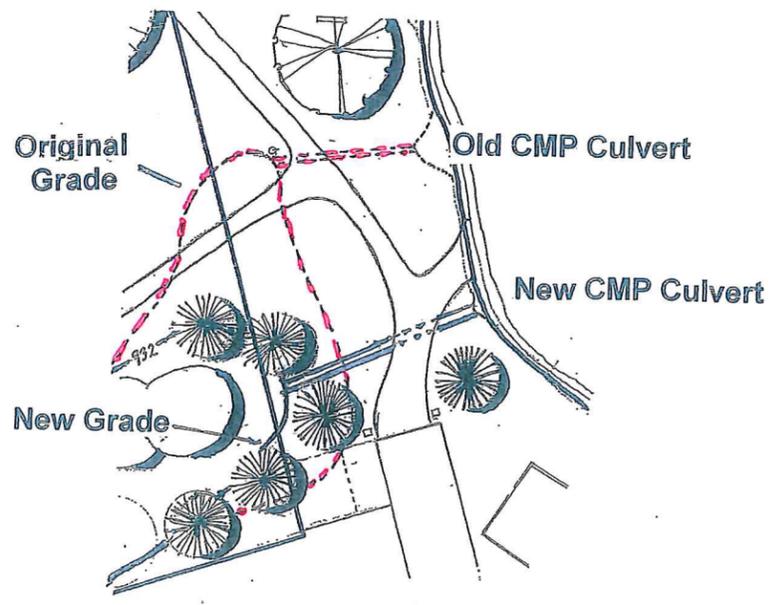
PLAN VIEW

3/8" = 10'

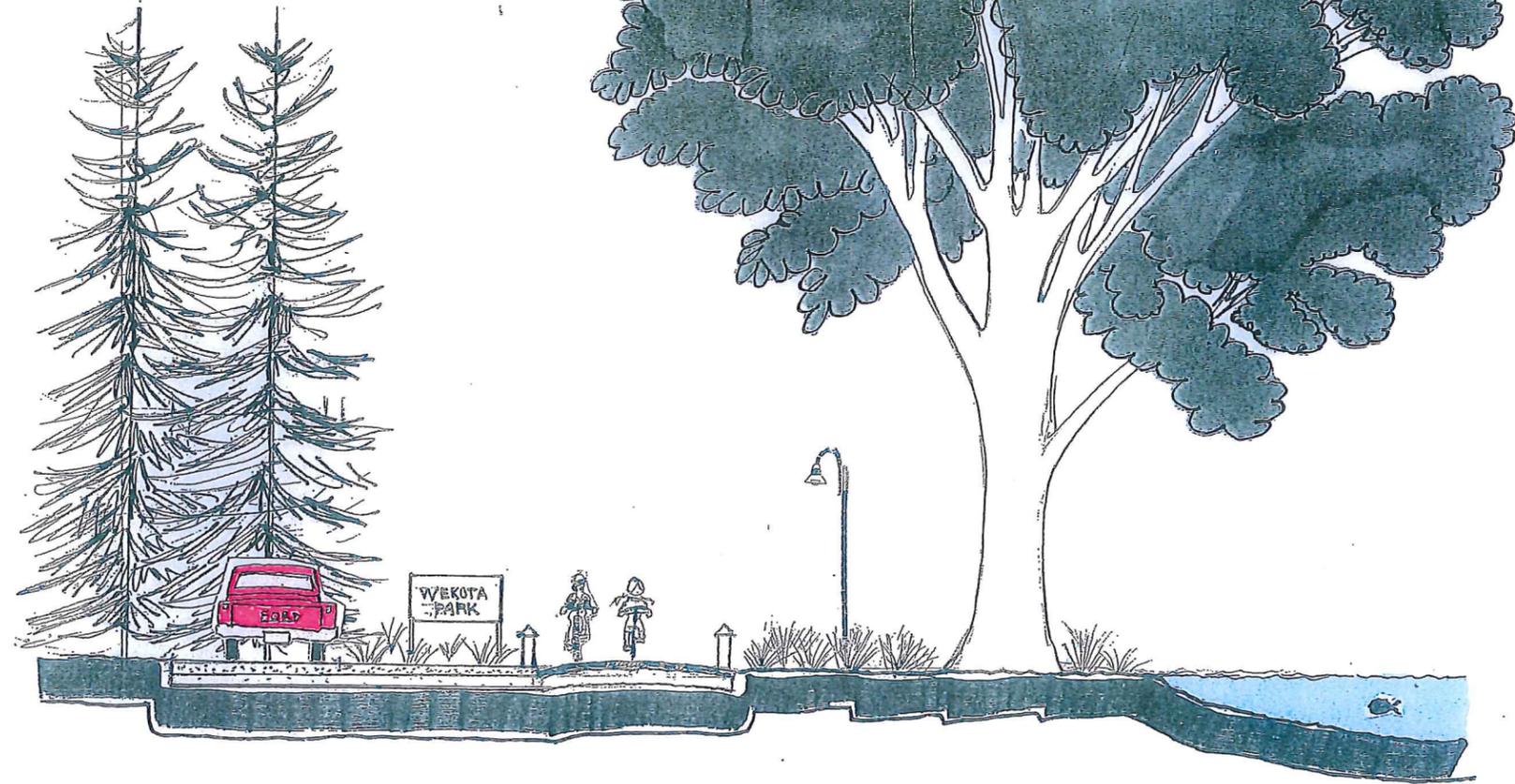
CHOSEN FOR SHADE TOLERANCE, PALM SEDGE PROVIDES SEASONAL BEAUTY & INTEREST. SOFTENS TRANSITION TO BEACH & PLAY GROUND. DARK GREEN IN THE SHADE, CHARTREUSE IN THE SUN.



**PALM SEDGE
ORNAMENTAL GRASS**

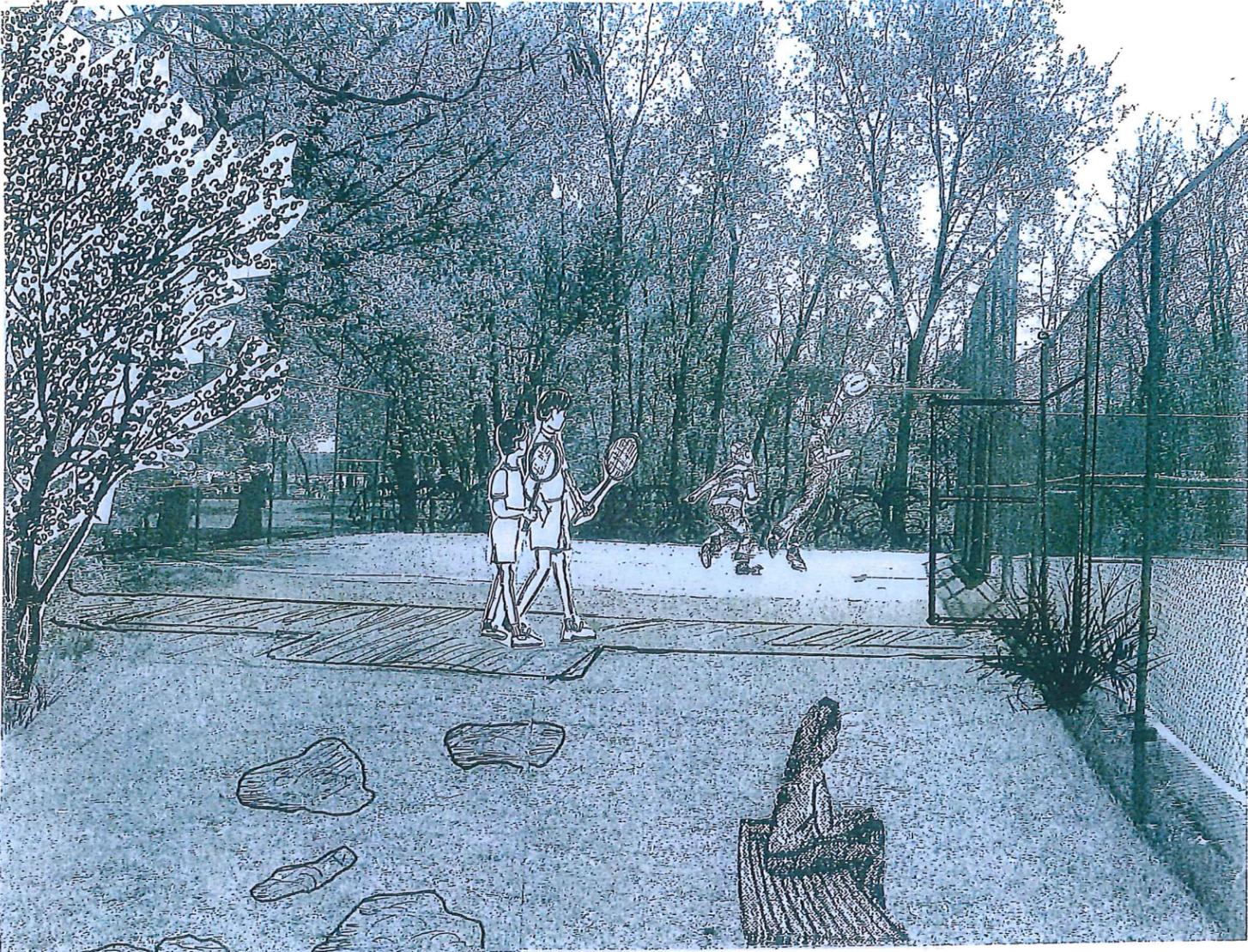


REGRADING

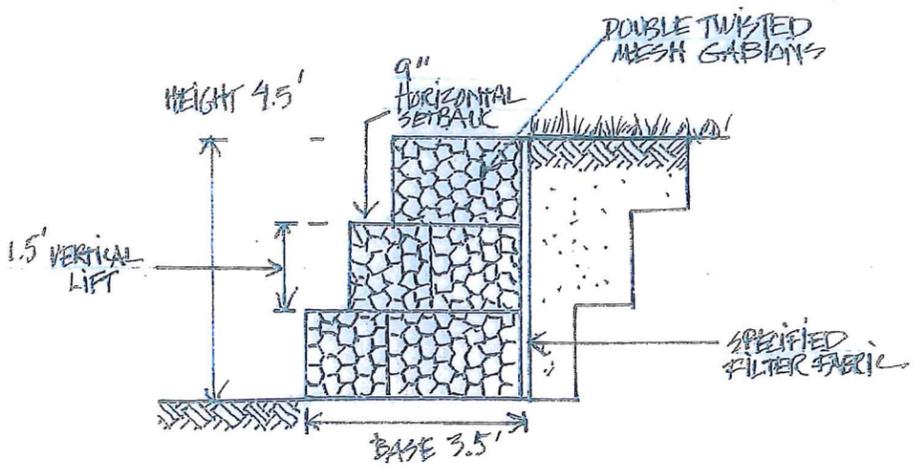


Section C-C

1" = 10'



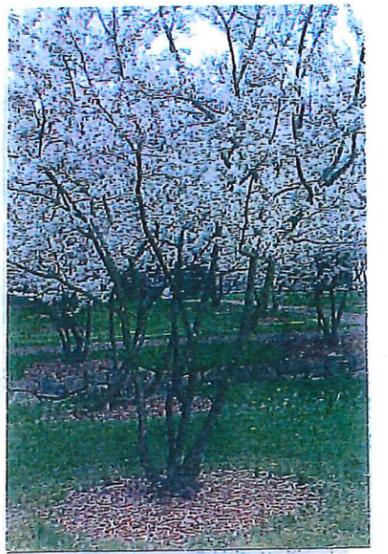
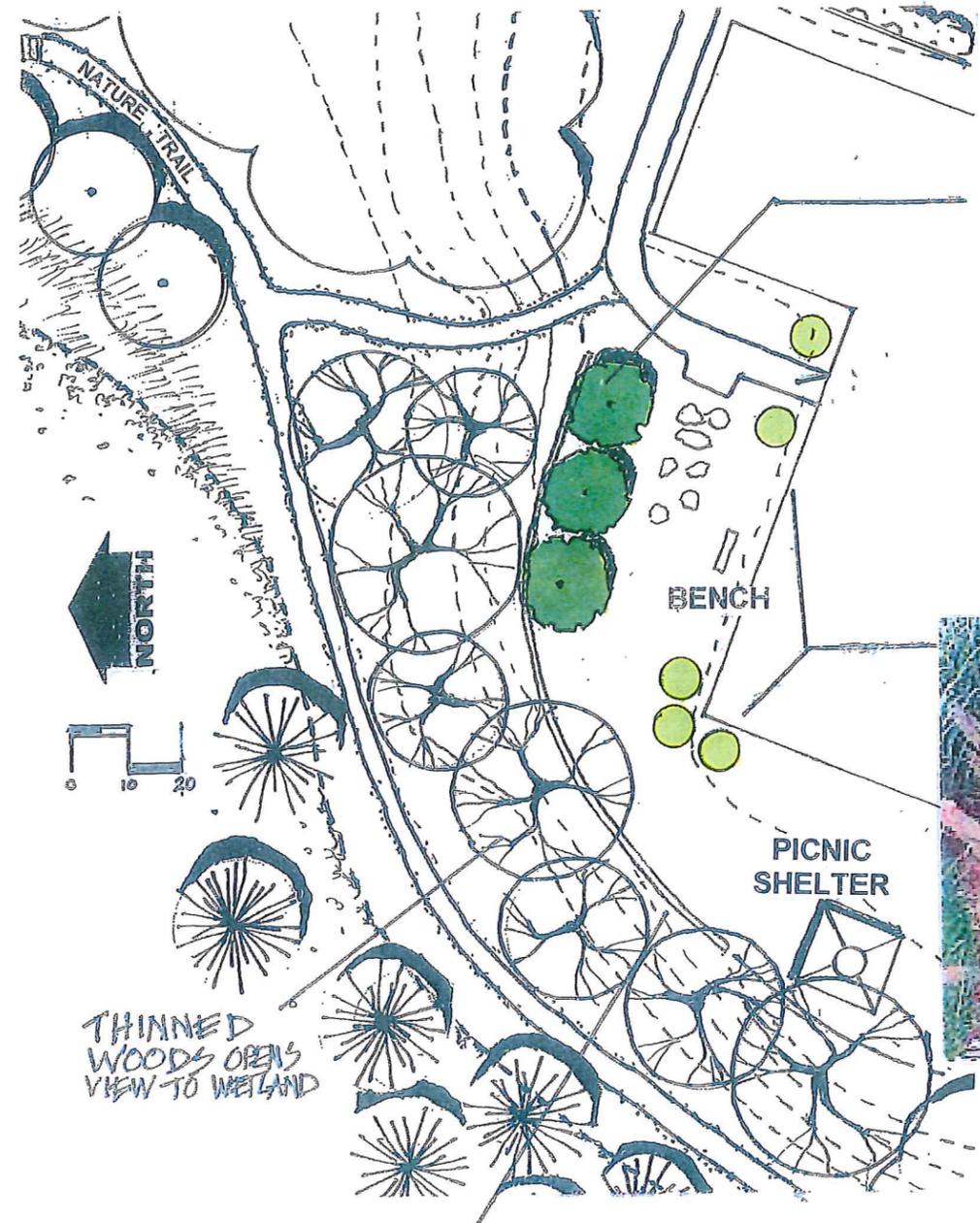
ENTRY & WAITING AREA



**GABION RETAINING WALL
DETAIL**



TRANSITION TO PICNIC AREA



SERVICEBERRY

LOW MAINTENANCE, SMALL TREE THAT PROVIDES EDGE TO WAITING AREA. SHOWY WHITE SPRING FLOWERS, BRICK RED IN FALL.



**FALL BLOOMING
REED GRASS**

SIGNALS ENTRY AND SOFTENS CORNER OF TENNIS COURT.

WALL 100' LONG, MIDDLE PORTION 30' LONG & 4' HIGH. REMAINING 70' TAPERS TO 2' TO EACH END. GABION RETAINING WALL SYSTEM FLEXIBLE, FREE DRAINING & ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE. EASILY ASSEMBLED BY CITIZEN VOLUNTEERS.

Nature Trail

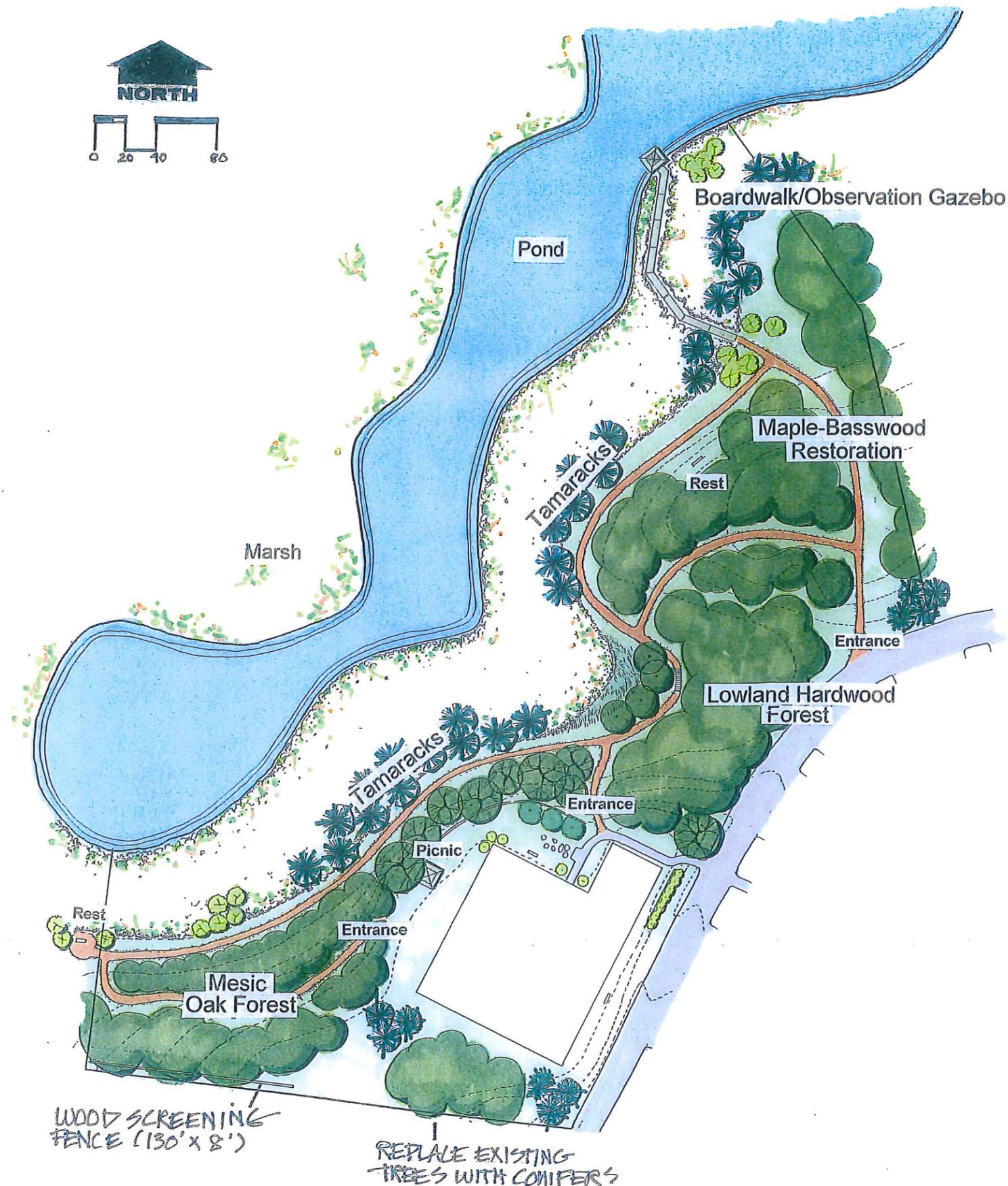
SUMMARY

Goal

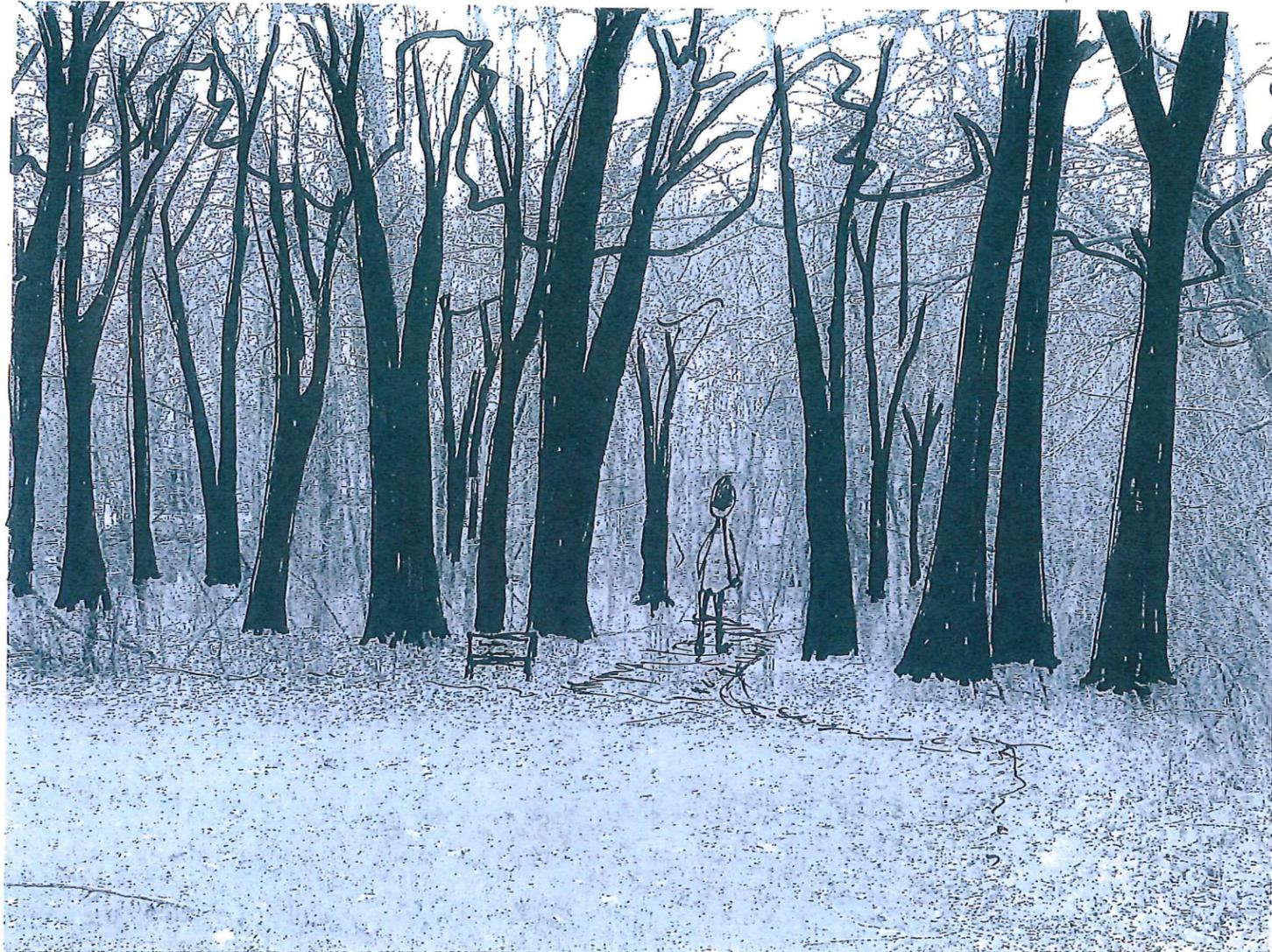
To create a nature trail that is a true "land for people" experience – offering the user the opportunity to visit and enjoy multiple forest habitat and wetland areas in a relatively small area.

Solution

- Lay out wood chip trail which leads people through alternating forest and wetland areas, taking advantage of views as much as possible. Create three entrances, thereby providing the added interest, sense of adventure, and change in perspective which result from a choice of pathways.
- Build cedar wood boardwalk to Observation Deck located at edge of pond.
- Enhance the wetland by planting additional willows (lucida), redosier dogwoods and other native plant materials and by adding three stands of tamarack trees to create a "Tamarack Walk" along the wetland border. As budget permits, recommend restoring native cattails to marsh.
- Provide four rest/view areas: a picnic shelter, an observation deck, and bench seating at the north and south ends of the trail.
- Recommend community project to restore and preserve Maple Basswood Forest by planting appropriate young trees.
- Promote unity for this diverse natural area by using common architectural features for the observation deck and picnic shelter, consistent with other park features (gateway monuments Keep architectural features of observation deck and picnic shelter consistent with each other and other architectural details of the park (e.g., gateway monuments and parking area fence).
- Plant new trees (east side) and install screening fence (south side) to increase visual buffer between trail and adjacent homes.



Mesic Oak Forest

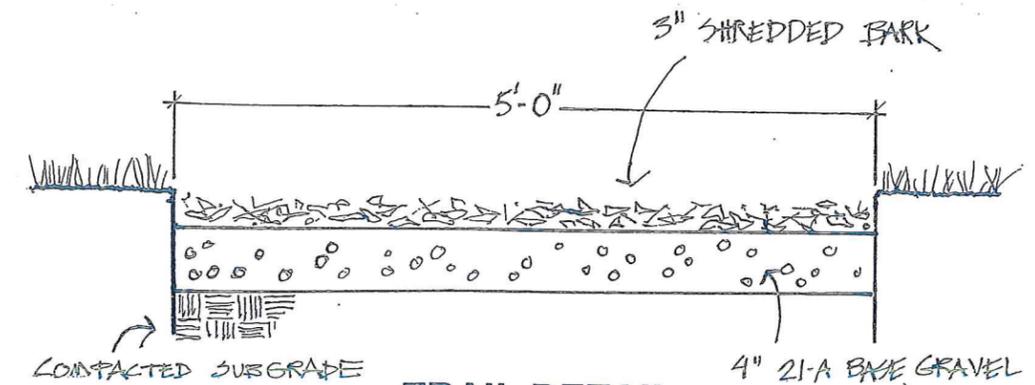


1 TRAIL ENTRANCE



2 DESCENT WEST TO WETLAND

Natural stands of **mesic** (balanced water supply) **oak forest** are rare in Minnesota and grow where there have been few severe fires. This stand of mesic oak is the most interesting and majestic of the native forest areas found on the Wekota Nature Trail. Tall northern red oak, pin oak, white oak, and bur oak as well as an understory of basswood, butternuts, and sugar maple and a prominent subcanopy of ironwood can all be found here.



TRAIL DETAIL

Cardinal Red-Osier Dogwood



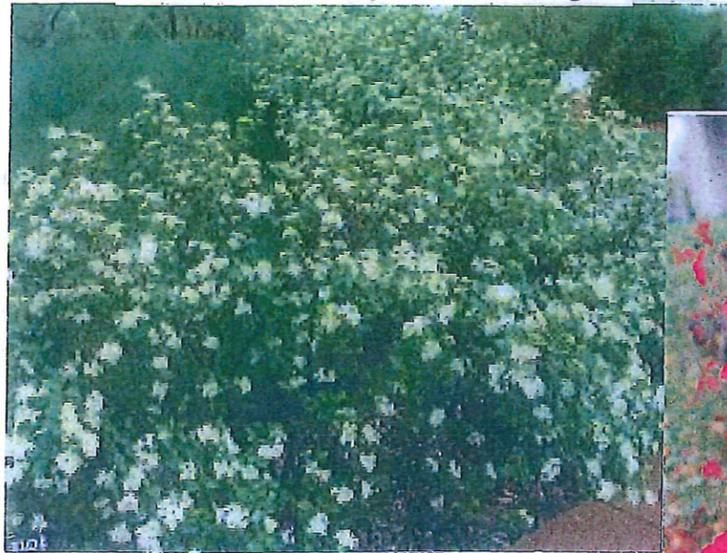
Winter



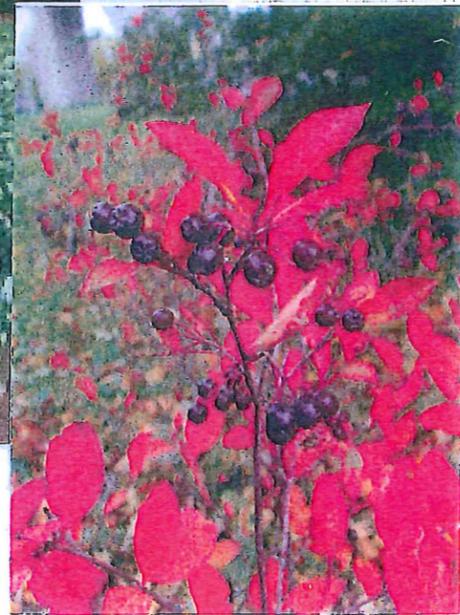
Summer

A MASS OF CARDINAL RED-OSIER DOGWOOD (6'-8' TALL) PROVIDES YEAR-ROUND INTEREST FOR USERS OF THE NATURE TRAIL. THE SHRUB CAN BE FOUND AGAIN AT THE NORTH END OF THE TRAIL FLANKING THE APPROACH TO THE BOARDWALK.

Black Chokeberry 'Autumn Magic'

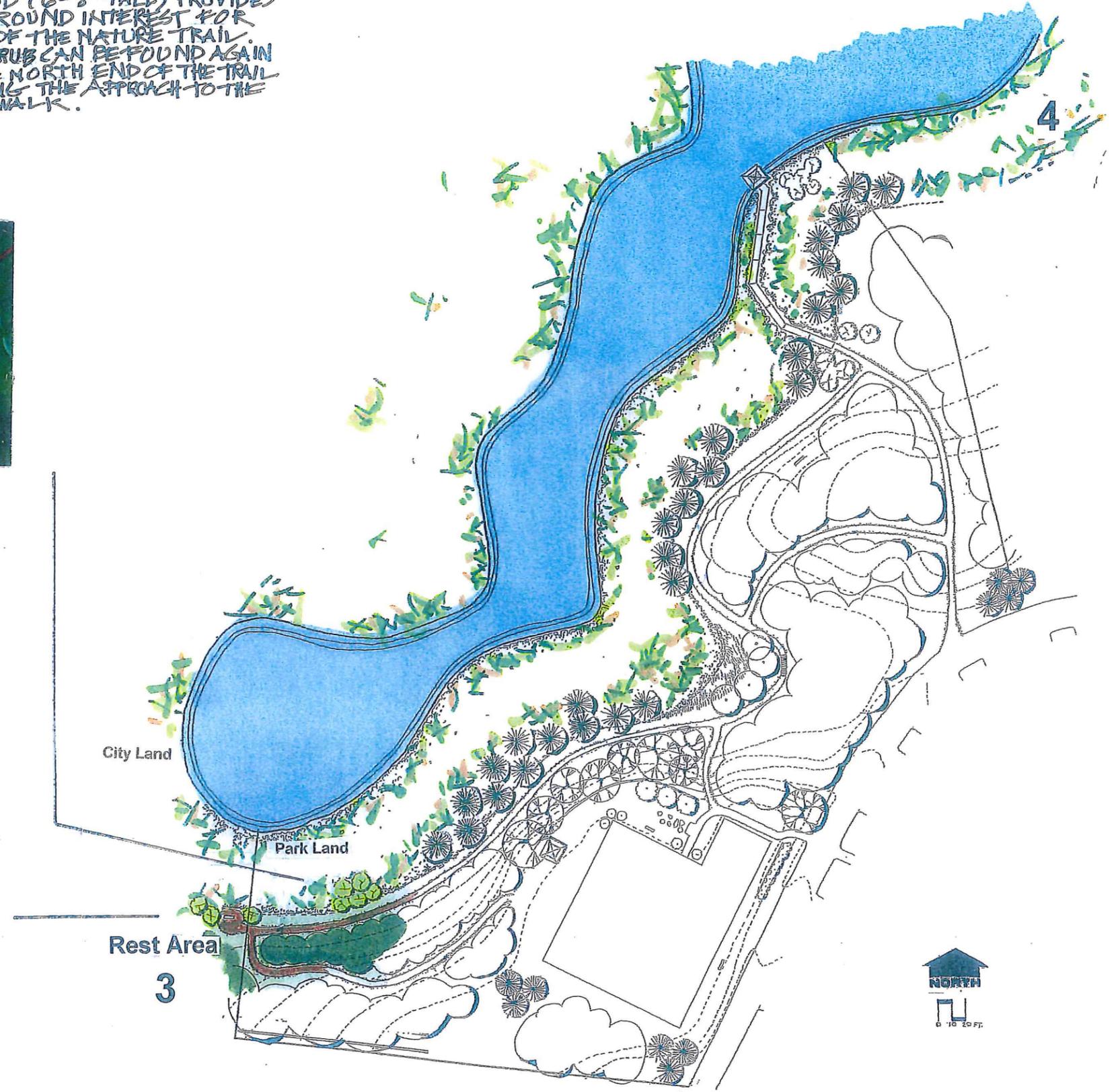


May flowering



Fall color

REST AREA SPACE IS ENCLOSED BY A GROUPING OF BLACK CHOKEBERRY 'AUTUMN MAGIC'. THIS UPRIGHT, MOUNDED SHRUB FOUND IN SWAMPS & LOW AREAS GROWS TO 5 FEET AND HAS DARK GREEN, BLOSSY FOLIAGE IN THE SUMMER AND BEAUTIFUL RED IN THE FALL.



Wetland



3 REST AREA AT SOUTH END OF WETLAND

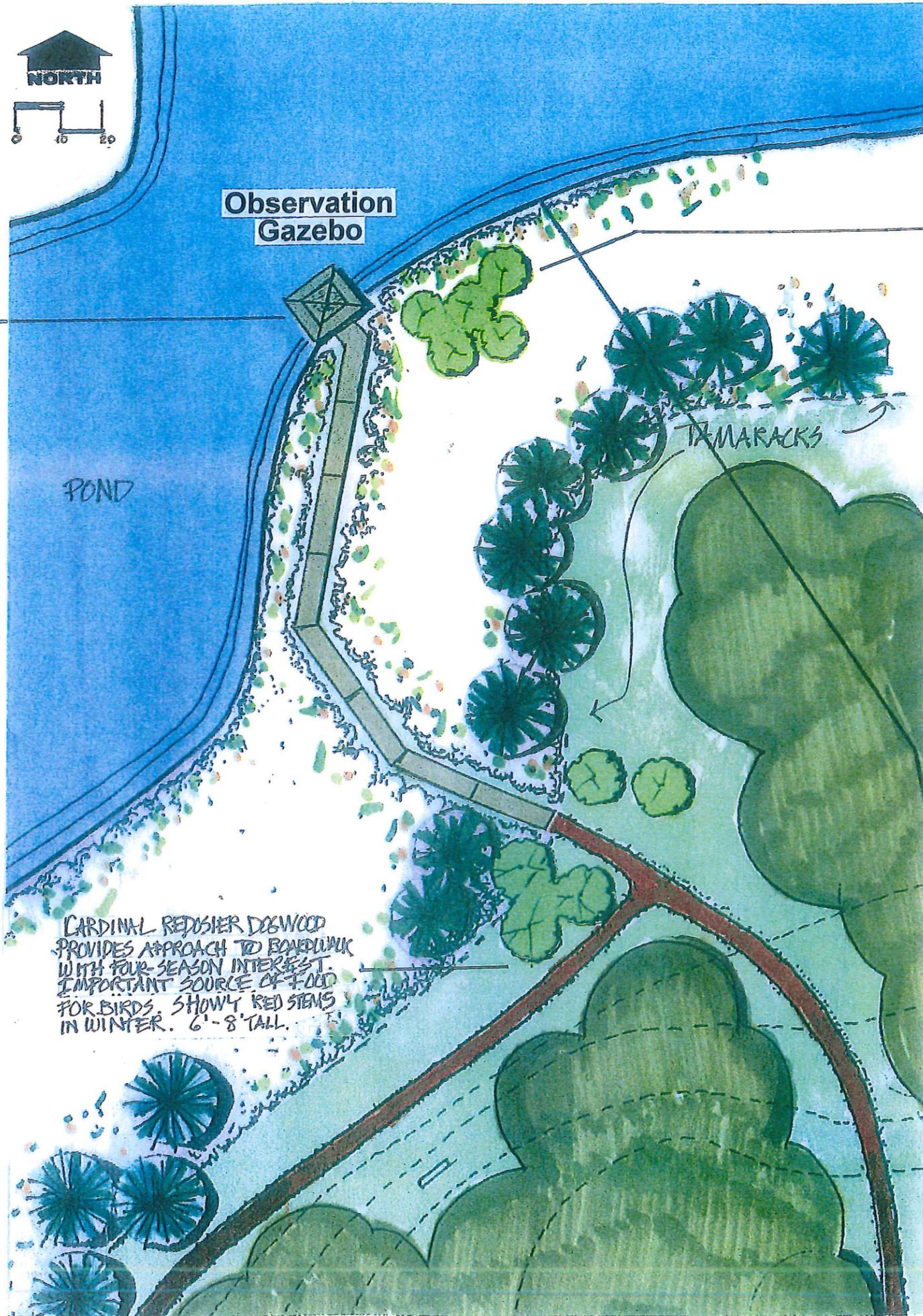


4 VIEW OF WETLAND LOOKING WEST



Observation Gazebo

GAZEBO'S LOCATION PROVIDES 360° PANORAMIC VIEW OF WETLAND, LAKE MINNETONKA, POND & TAMARACKS TO SOUTHEAST.

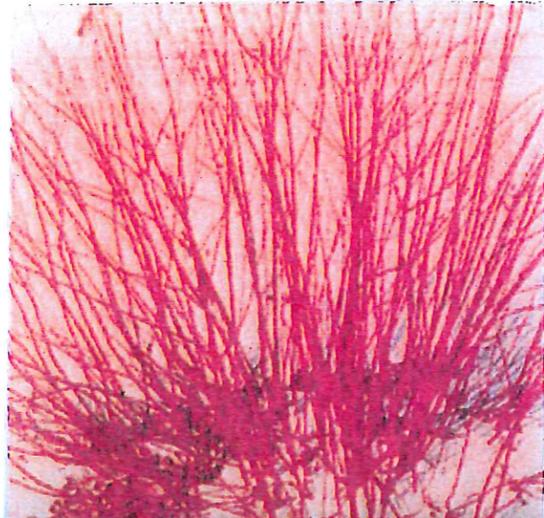


SHINING WILLOW, 12'-18' TALL, EDIBLE, GLOSSY YELLOW GREEN LEAVES. HIGH WILDLIFE VALUE AND ENTERTAINMENT.

Shining Willow

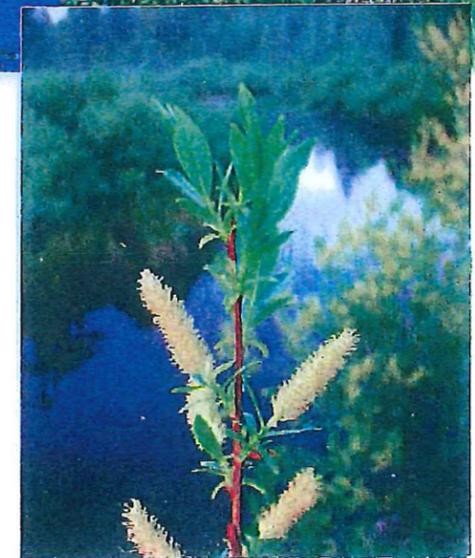


Cardinal Red-Osier Dogwood



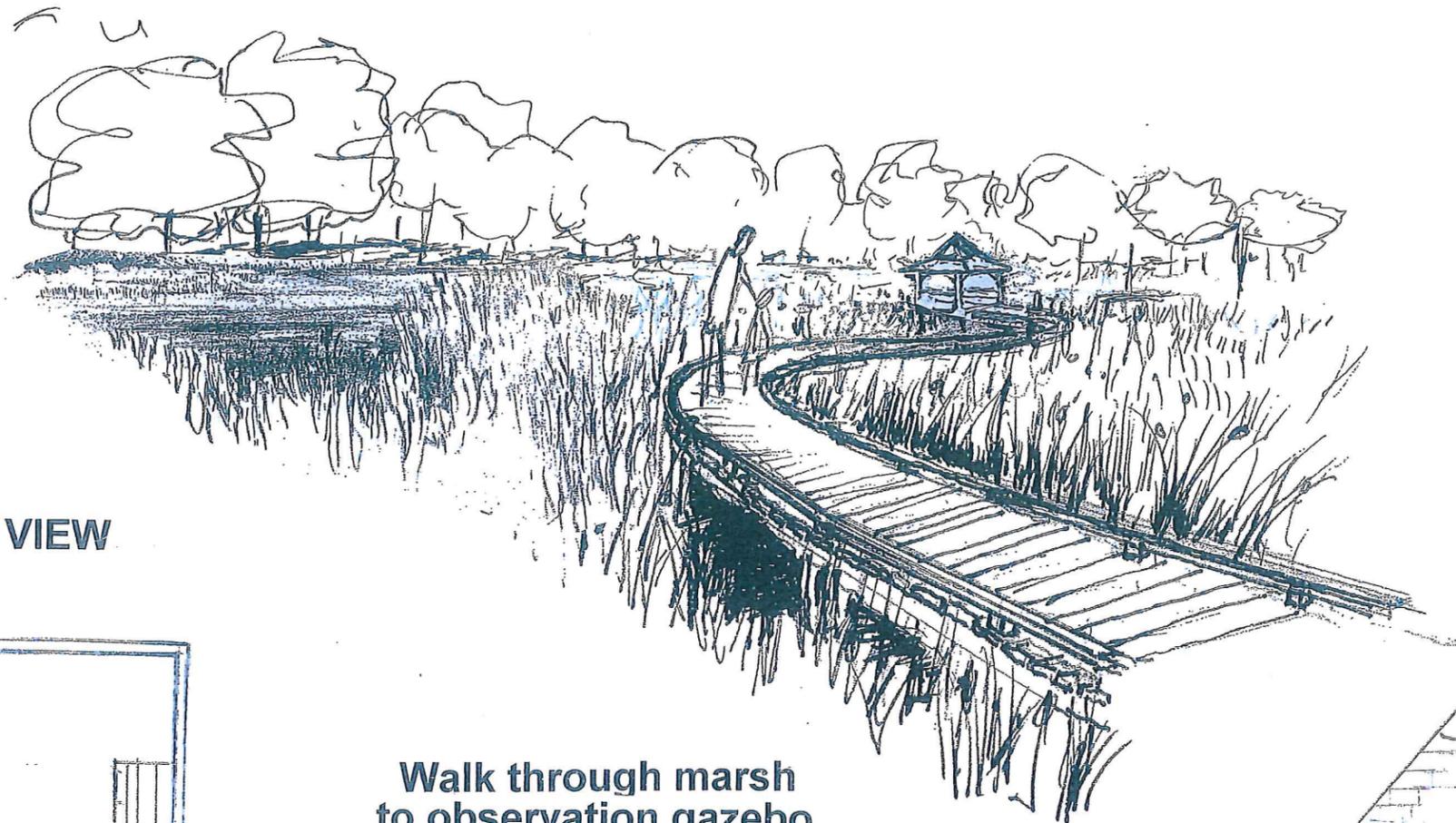
Winter (above) Summer (below)

CARDINAL REDOSIER DOGWOOD PROVIDES APPROACH TO BOARDWALK WITH FOUR-SEASON INTEREST. IMPORTANT SOURCE OF FOOD FOR BIRDS. SHOWY RED STEMS IN WINTER. 6'-8' TALL.

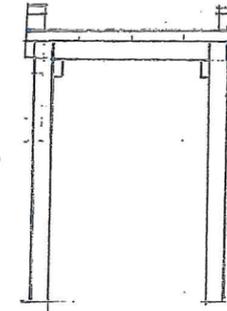


Spring catkins

Boardwalk & Observation Gazebo



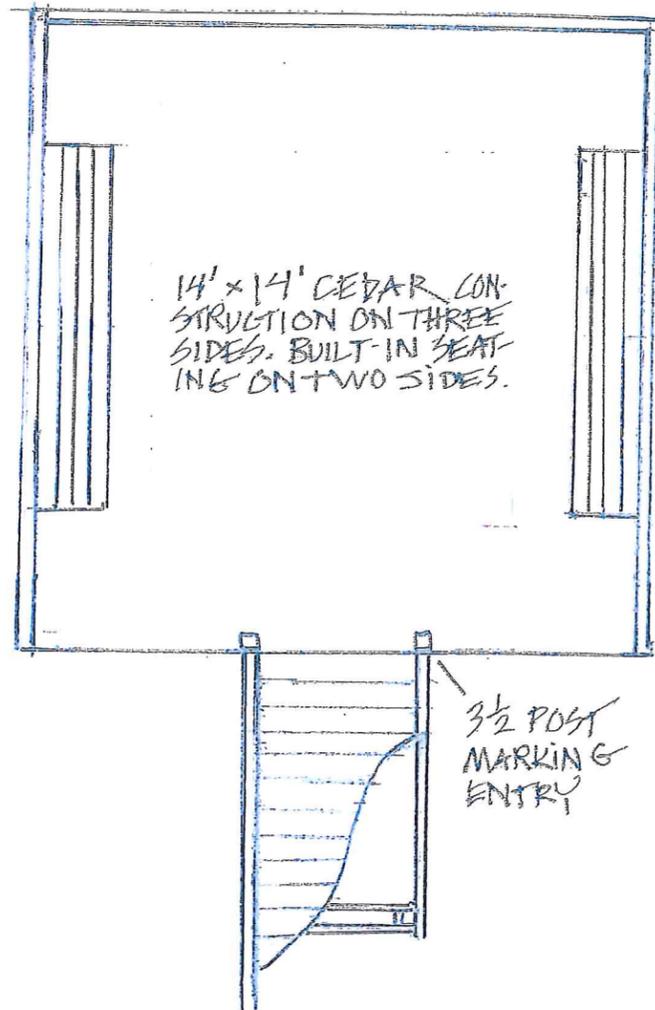
BOARDWALK SECTION
1/4" = 1'



- 4' WIDE PRESURE TREATED BOARDWALK
- 8 FOOT SECTIONS USING 4'x4' PILING
- 2'x8' RAFTERS; 2'x8' DECKING
- 2'x4' RIM ALONG EDGE

GAZEBO PLAN VIEW

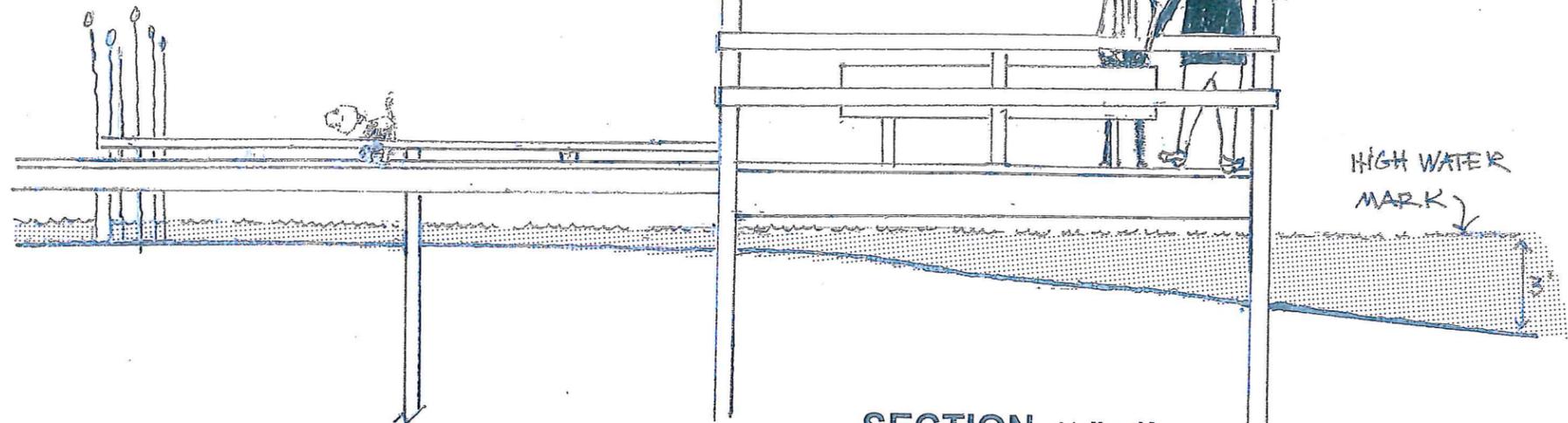
1/4" = 1'



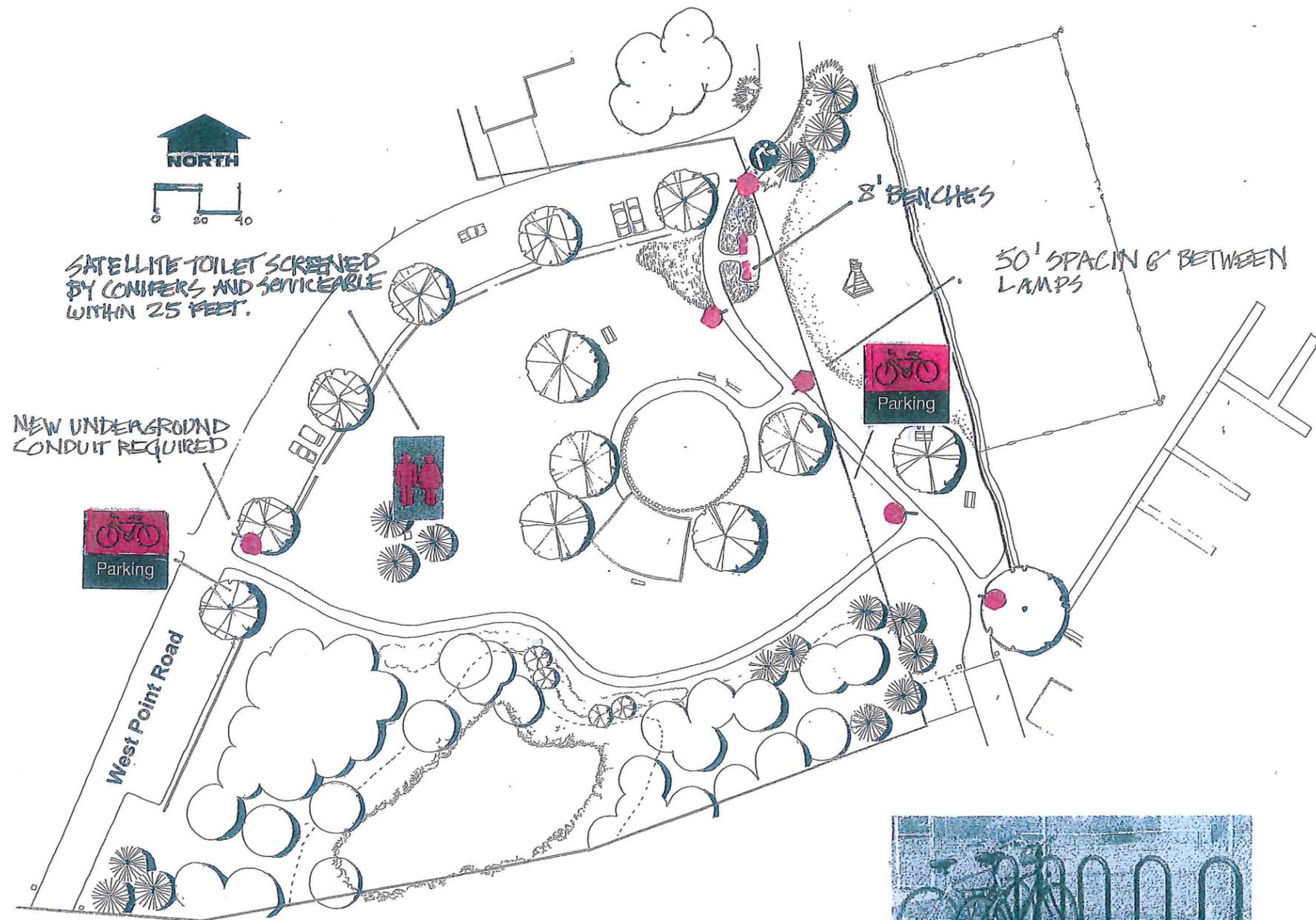
14' x 14' CEDAR CONSTRUCTION ON THREE SIDES. BUILT-IN SEATING ON TWO SIDES.

Walk through marsh to observation gazebo

OPPORTUNITY TO SEE WOODDUCKS, MALLARDS, RED-TIPPED BLACKBIRDS, TURTLES, DEER, PHEASANT AND OTHER WILDLIFE.



SECTION 1/4" = 1'



NEW UNDERGROUND CONDUIT REQUIRED

SATELLITE TOILET SCREENED BY CONIFERS AND SERVICEABLE WITHIN 25 FEET.

8' BENCHES

50' SPACING BETWEEN LAMPS

Parking

Parking

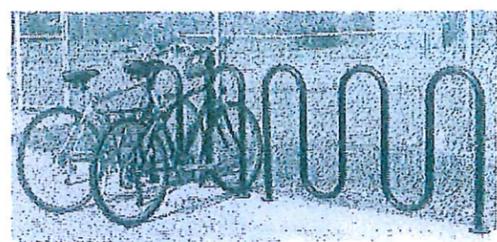
West Point Road

NEW

-  Lamp
-  Bike Rack
-  Bench
-  Satellite Toilet

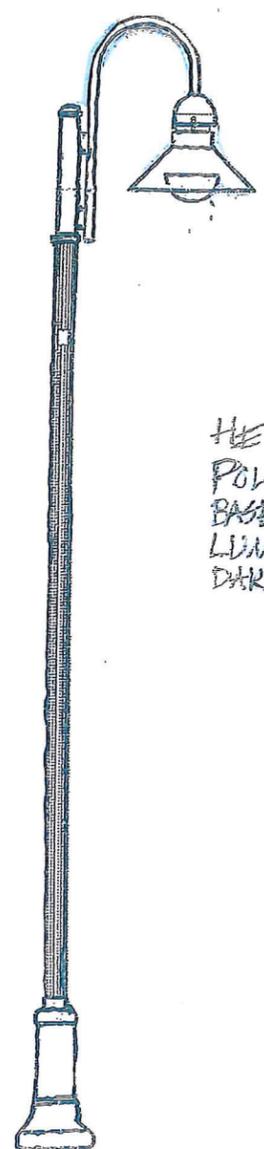
EXISTING

-  Lifeguard Chair
-  Bench
-  Picnic Table
-  Drinking Fountain



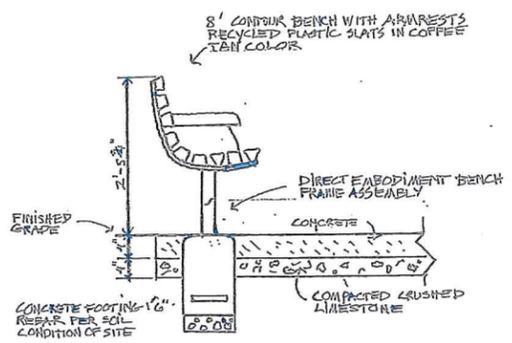
BIKE RACK

WAVE BIKE STORAGE RACK MOUNTED IN GROUND, 7 or 9 BIKES, DARK GREEN.



LAMP

HEIGHT: 12', FLUTED ALUMINUM POLE, HEXAGONAL ALUMINUM BASE WITH PENDANT MOUNTED LUMINAIRE, FACTORY APPLIED DARK GREEN OVERCOAT.



BENCH