



BLAKISTON BLARK PARK



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PRESENTED TO:
CITY OF CALGARY PARKS

PREPARED BY:
O2 PLANNING + DESIGN INC.

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1.1 CONTEXT AND STUDY AREA

Blakiston Park is located within the Brentwood community in the City of Calgary's Northwest quadrant. The Brentwood community benefits from a well-developed transportation network as well as great recreational facilities, and is an overall great place to live. It gained recognition for this high livability and quality of life in 2014, when the community was awarded third place in The Avenue's "Calgary's Best Neighbourhoods Survey".

Blakiston Park is a key destination for surrounding communities. A linear stretch of land 2.6 hectares in size, it is brimming with opportunities and constraints imposed by surrounding developments. The park is bounded by a heavily used road and single detached homes to the west and medium-density blocks to the north that have been forecasted in the Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) to increase in density. New developments have already begun to the southeast with University City introducing four towers and townhomes, while the Co-op is developing new plans for intensification to the immediate south of the park. The park is set in a well-developed community and part of a designated Transit Oriented Design (TOD). Blakiston Park is at an important crossroads where an effective design is needed to better support a range of uses, while anticipating more users from encroaching development and pressures from all sides.

The park currently serves several user groups and activities. Users have expressed using the park for the following reasons:

- exercise by jogging through or walking
- playground
- walk-through access to the Co-op and Brentwood LRT Station
- escape from the busy surroundings

In recent years, the Brentwood LRT Station, as well as the whole community, has seen a lot of change that will encourage a higher density of residential units around the park. With the ARP encouraging growth in the vicinity of this station, there is an expected increase in park usage. City of Calgary Parks has initiated this process to evaluate Blakiston Park's current status and propose a plan for the it's revitalization, with the goal to produce a Design Development Plan that addresses the concerns and ensures the long-term viability of the park.

1.0 INTRODUCTION



Map 1 - Blakiston Park Context & Location

1.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY

City of Calgary Parks is preparing a Design Development Plan for Blakiston Park in the intensifying community of Brentwood. Improvements to the park are needed to upgrade and rejuvenate the 2.6 ha site. The park is an important public space near the Brentwood Station and a link between shopping, transit and residential areas, but it is not utilized to its potential. The process for developing the Design Development Plan was designed to find out why, and to develop solutions to improve Blakiston Park.

The importance of Blakiston Park to the community of Brentwood was demonstrated by the strong interest in the park and public charrette process in 2009. The park is a key public amenity and its use and enjoyment by the surrounding communities will only increase as development in the area intensifies and the shopping centre is transformed into a Transit Oriented Development (TOD). The site is in close proximity to the University of Calgary, the University Research Park, the Brentwood C-Train station, and the community of Varsity. The Brentwood Station Area Redevelopment Plan (BSARP) of 2009, proposed increased residential density in the area and three residential and commercial towers have since been constructed adjacent to the park, with additional construction anticipated in the near future.

With intensifying use, many elements of the park need improvement. Spaces, uses, circulation, vegetation, materials, lighting and furnishings all need to reflect a rejuvenated urban context, while maintaining the unique qualities that residents currently value. The trees and topography of the park contribute to its defining character and it is expected that these elements will be respected in the transformation of the site. However, it is clear the park needs additional functionality and vitality that addresses the adjacency to a vibrant TOD as well as providing an interface between the TOD and the lower density residential nature of the adjacent community.

Throughout the development of this plan there was a strong emphasis on public participation in order to assist in identifying issues and receive feedback on potential solutions. This plan addresses the entirety of the park as well as adjacent developing lands. Coordination with the University City and Co-op development plans is crucial for the ongoing improvements and management of possible user conflicts and integration of the park with the community. The plan integrates the goals and objectives of area residents and numerous stakeholders, including the The Brentwood Station Area Redevelopment Plan, University City Development and the Urban Strategies Charrette.

1.3 PLANNING AND DESIGN PROCESS

The planning process for the Blakiston Design Development Plan was launched in the spring of 2014 and continued through to spring of 2015. The process is outlined in Figure 1. The process reflects the City of Calgary's commitment to an inclusive planning process and adheres to the guiding principles of 'Engage! Calgary'. The process included a high degree of public consultation and user dialogue throughout the entirety of the process. This was necessary to ensure that the plan responded to the needs and desires of the public.

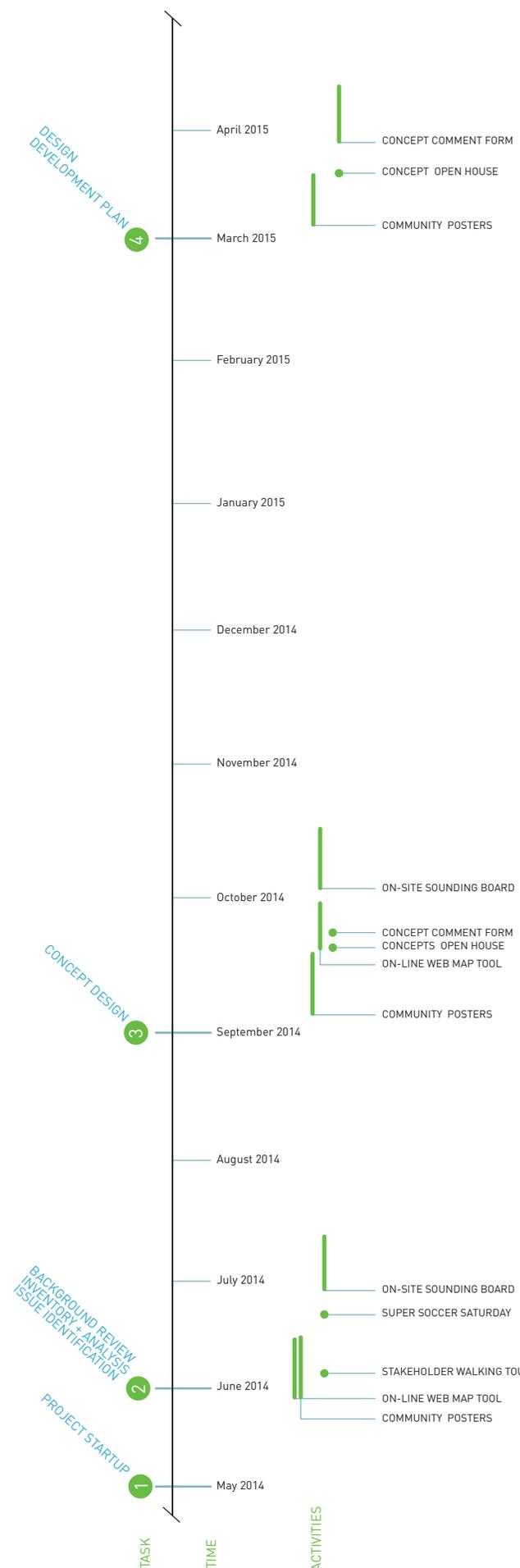


Figure 01 - Project Timeline

1.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS & STUDIES

1.4.1 BRENTWOOD STATION AREA REDEVELOPMENT PLAN (BSARP)

In 2009, the City of Calgary published the Brentwood Station Area Redevelopment Plan. The BSARP is a direct response to Calgary’s growing need for smart development and growth. With more people working downtown and moving closer to their workplace, there is a greater need for future growth to be accommodated in secondary hubs located in preferred locations along existing infrastructure. Brentwood Station is a highly used transit station with underutilized adjacent lands. This area has thus been deemed a priority for TOD design with great potential for a range of uses and focused development. Located adjacent to the Brentwood Station, Blakiston Park is a key connector between the community and station, as well as many other important bus routes and amenities. The implications of the BSARP are significant for the park; higher density development surrounding the park has been proposed and is being implemented, resulting in a significantly higher resident population and a corresponding increase in the use of the park, as well as changes in circulation patterns in and around the area. These changes have spurred the need to redefine and re-imagine the park within its new context.

1.4.2 UNIVERSITY CITY DEVELOPMENT

Dominating the southeast side of the park, the University City development was the first project to be built towards the creation of a Transit Oriented Design within Brentwood. These towers dominate the southeast boundary with 18-storey residential towers with commercial units on the main floor. With the addition of townhomes that front directly onto the park, the edge needs to be redefined to work in harmony with the new development. The increased residential population within the immediate area, as well as the inclusion of adjacent amenities help to activate this edge while bringing more people to the park. The Blakiston Park Plan works with this development by meeting grade changes and allowing residents of the towers to seamlessly interact with the park. An additional section of land was given to the park from the University City lands, enabling the creation of a more prominent urban front on the southeast edge.

1.4.3 URBAN STRATEGIES CHARRETTE

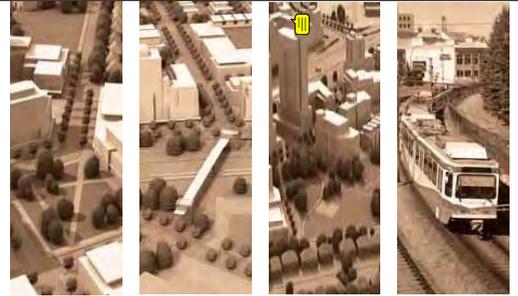
In response to the BSARP, a design charrette was spearheaded by Urban Strategies Inc., which kicked off the first ideas for the redevelopment of Blakiston Park. The goal was to discuss and gather ideas on ways in which the park can be rejuvenated and how its role could be improved as the largest green space within the Brentwood community. This information was assembled and design suggestions were incorporated in the preliminary designs for the park.



June 17-20, 2009

Blakiston Park Redesign Community Charette

URBAN STRATEGIES INC.



November 2009

Urban Strategies Inc.

Brentwood Station Area Redevelopment Plan

calgary.ca

call 3-1-1



2.1 SITE ELEMENTS

In its current condition, Blakiston Park has limited site elements and furnishings (Illustration 01). Several benches can be found scattered throughout the park, although many seem to go unnoticed as they are poorly located. All the benches within the park need to be replaced and located in more suitable locations. Like the benches, litter bins are also scattered throughout the park and are not located where they are needed. The lack of litter receptacles along the single path encourages littering.

There is no lighting within the park boundaries. The only light that the park receives comes from off site and is largely blocked by the vegetation massing found throughout the park. Residents have expressed their dislike of the park at night; lack of light creates a safety concern. In order to increase the perception of safety, measures have to be taken to not only allow light into the park from the surroundings, but to also to illuminate the primary path in the park.

The only formal activity equipment within the park is the modest playground. While residents love a place to bring their children, the existing playground is located in an undesirable location with little use and interest throughout most of the year. Winter activities can be found on an informal skating rink located along the north edge, adjacent to a neighbouring parking lot. The use of this space varies from year to year, but most users like the ability to easily set it up and utilize it at leisure.

2.2 CURRENT USES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Currently the park sees little use. The only programming offered within the park is the playground and intermittent skating rink during the winter. Most users have stated that they use the park to walk through and connect to the Brentwood LRT Station, and this is reflected in the many desire lines and informal pathways evident throughout the park. Users have also stated that they use the park to exercise or just stroll through, or as an escape from the busy surroundings. Large open spaces are utilized for informal sports. Undesirable uses have also been noted by nearby residents, including people sleeping in the park, littering, and in general creating an unsafe atmosphere for other users.

The majority of the park is vegetated with a single pathway that runs across the park. Most people do not use this pathway as it "leads to nowhere". Informal pathways are widely used, while existing infrastructure is under-utilized and under-managed during winter months.

2.3 TOPOGRAPHY AND HYDROLOGY

Blakiston Park is defined by undulating topography and an overall southeast to northwest slope. This topography poses some challenges for both circulation and safety, particularly along the south edge. The rolling hills found at the southeast entrance are a beautiful backdrop but also tend to impeded sightlines into the park. Gullies can also be found in this location, creating a barrier from the Co-op to the park and providing potential hiding spots and a perception of unsafety. Informal pathways cross steep slopes and are inconvenient for all users. The overall terrain slopes into the park, causing drainage problems as surface runoff from the surrounding hardscape drains into the park and onto the existing pathways. Drainage problems can be seen in the form of standing water throughout the park, with ice buildup on the pathways a significant safety concern.

2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

EDGE CONDITIONS + ACCESS

- future development
- steep slope
- CO-OP + parking lot
- municipal sidewalk
- lane + apartments
- fence + apartments
- high permeability
- moderate permeability
- low permeability

AMENITIES + SITE ELEMENTS

- playground
- benches
- light poles
- garbage receptacles

SURFACE TYPES

- softscape
- hardscape

TOPOGRAPHY

- contour interval [0.5 meters]
- 1108.50
- 1103.00

SERVICES

STORMWATER

- manhole
- catch basin
- storm line
- culvert

ELECTRICAL

- manhole
- catch basin
- electrical line

SANITARY

- manhole
- sanitary line

GENERAL

- utility ROW
- direction of flow

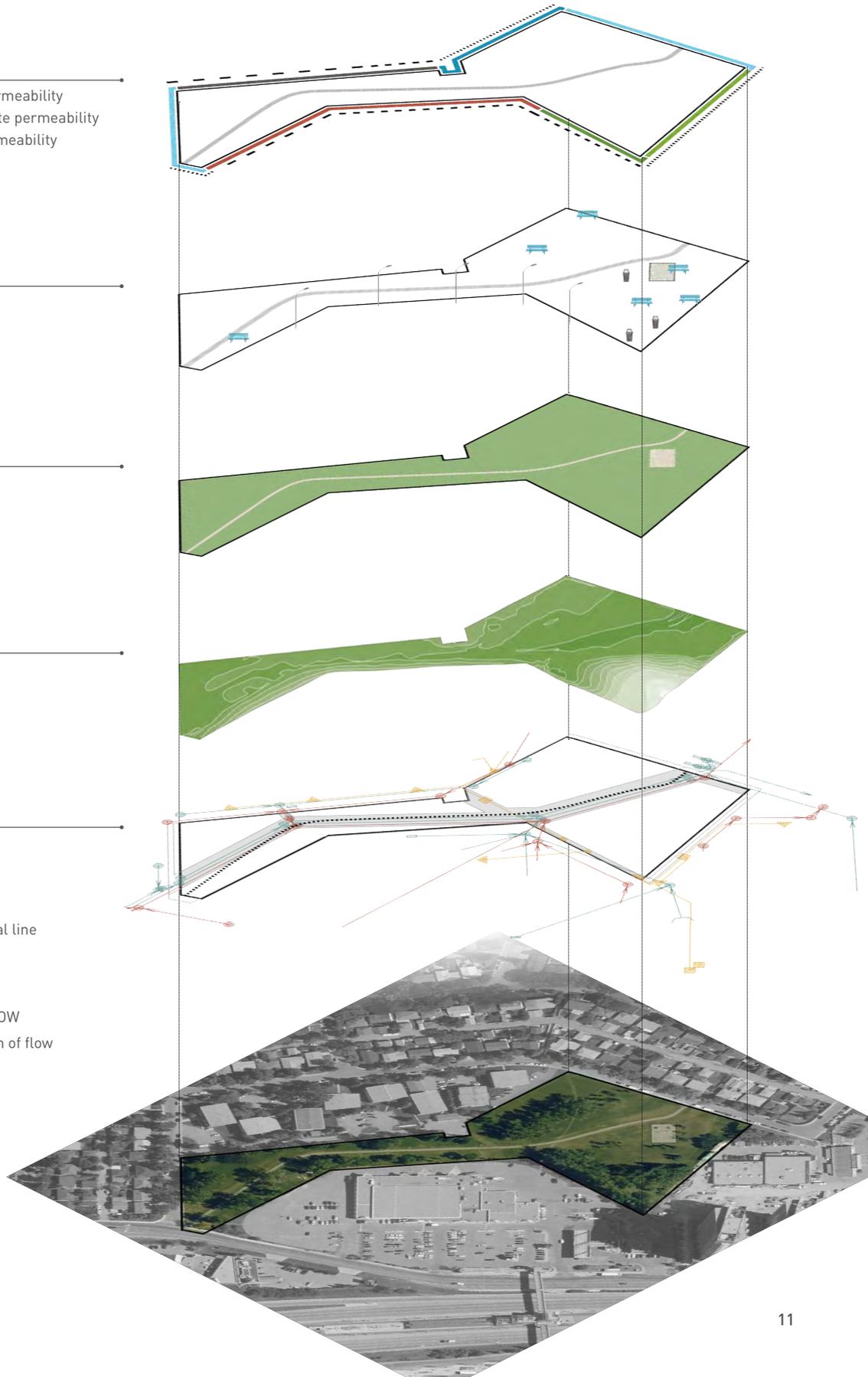


Illustration 01

2.4 VEGETATION

Large, mature trees can be found throughout the site. Most provide an attractive backdrop but a number of trees show signs of stress, most of which are located close to the street or are exposed to the elements adjacent to the Co-op. The ice storm in September of 2014 has damaged a number of trees. Many trees throughout the park will be retained or relocated to more strategic locations, but those that are in poor condition should be removed, with new replacement trees planted in strategic locations to provide screening, shade, and edge definition. A row of large poplars in the north end of the site provide an attractive place for users to sit and these will be retained. Large existing shrubs impede sightlines and reduce perceptions of safety. Ground cover throughout the site is made up of mowed and manicured lawn that appears to be in generally good condition, although informal pathways have started to appear throughout the park due to the lack of formal connections through the site, especially the pathway connecting the community on the north side of the park to the LRT station.

2.5 CIRCULATION

Currently the primary park use is to move through and connect to the Brentwood LRT Station, but there is only one pathway in the park and it does not lead to the station. Most circulation happens in the form of informal paths that reflect pedestrian desire lines. Most routes are dangerous to travel in the winter and covered with ice due to poor drainage. Informal pathways are not plowed, making it difficult to traverse in the winter months. Connections to the developing University City are not yet established and if left unresolved may become an obstacle and hindrance to move freely from park to building. Park entrances are not clearly defined and are not located in effective locations. Currently the only pathway in the park starts in the middle of the northeast edge and terminates in front of Rocky Mountain College. Neither entrance is marked, causing confusion about the identity of the park as well as the general purpose of this green space. Effective pathways, including well marked entry points, are a priority for the park's identity and usefulness.

2.6 VISUAL CHARACTER

The gently sloping hills and large mature trees are valued character defining elements of Blakiston Park, but there are many negative aspects that limit a strong positive identity for the park. Trees are too sparsely distributed, and many are in poor condition, which lends an air of poor maintenance and care. This is reinforced by the poor condition of the existing site furnishings. The sloping topography creates visual barriers and impedes sightlines into the park and limits accessibility.

In general, the park lacks an effective visual frontage and welcoming atmosphere. The most prominent site element is the path, which suggests that Blakiston Park is a through-way, while a lack of programmed activities and amenities result in a primarily vacant space for much of the day. Due to a lack of frontages on the busy streets as well as a lack of signage, most people pass by without knowing that the park even exists.



VEGETATION

-  coniferous trees
-  deciduous trees

CIRCULATION

-  primary circulation
-  desire lines
-  adjacent municipal sidewalk
-  formal entrance
-  informal entrance

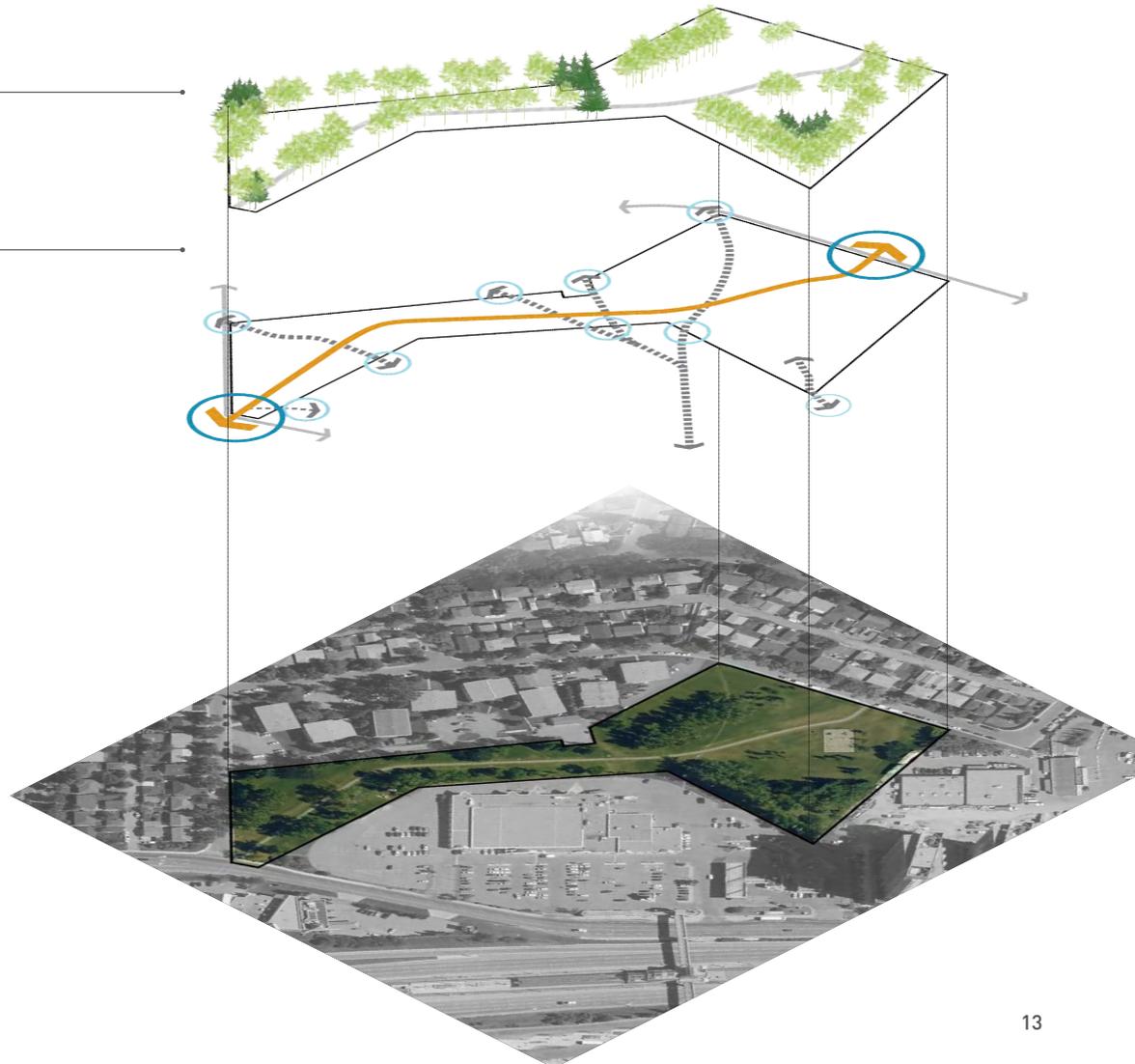


Illustration 02

There are a number of opportunities within Blakiston Park. With the anticipated increased density of the immediate surroundings, it is important to take advantage of all opportunities to integrate these developments in order to develop a comprehensive, long-term solution. The recent development of University City to the southeast has allowed the park to have an urban front where users can take advantage of the retail and commercial spaces that will be opening up to the park. This will increase the presence of people in the park and improve overall safety with more eyes on the park. Furthermore, the new townhomes will open up onto the park, further activating the eastern edge. Careful integration and planning with the University City development will be beneficial for the activation of the park.

Sloping hills throughout the park also offer unique opportunities for diverse activities in both winter and summer. Informal seating can also be easily incorporated on these slopes. In terms of sustainability and ecological benefits, the sloping terrain may become an important facilitator for runoff and managing the how water is received and stored within the park. Currently water moves off the adjacent parking lots and into the park, settling on pathways and creating hazards. Downhill slopes can be utilized as a conductor of water into designed bioswales. This low impact approach to stormwater management will allow pathways to remain dry throughout the year while storing and cleaning runoff before it has a chance to drain into catchbasins and entering city services.

Blakiston Park is home to many large, mature trees. Mature trees not only benefit the environment and ecology, they also benefit park users and provide a much needed relief from the surroundings. Users have responded that they utilize the park for escaping the busy city, sitting under the mature trees and enjoying a naturalized environment that is becoming less and less available in the inner city. This offers a number of opportunities for preserving healthy mature trees and designing a park in which users can find a place to get away from the hectic surroundings.

While new developments can provide opportunities for activating the park, the future development of Co-op may act as a barrier to pedestrian flows, constraining the effectiveness of the park as a public amenity space for the transit station and as pedestrian corridor. The anticipation of a large development with unknown frontages along a significant portion of the park's boundary may hinder planned connections to Brentwood LRT station as well as to other sections of the Co-op site. Connections across the park and into this site are crucial to the community and careful planning and coordination needs to happen in order to have a meaningful and successful pedestrian network.

Mature trees and sloping topography establish a unique character for the park, but also act as circulation and safety constraints. The vast majority of users have expressed that they use the park as a connection to Brentwood Station, and going up the existing hills is a tedious, unsafe task. It is important to reinforce these connections and grade these pathways in order to provide safe access for all users. A number of mature trees throughout the park have experienced heightened stress due to the recent ice storm (September 2014). Many are important to preserve, but a number of them pose safety concerns. Safety concerns have also arisen from overgrown trees and large shrubs that allow for hiding spots and dangerous conditions at night.

3.0 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Public engagement is critical to the success of any Design Development Plan. The purpose of the public engagement process for Blakiston Park was a focus on communication and connections, creating opportunities for people to share information and knowledge about the site and potential issues and building capacity to make transparent and defensible decisions. Engagement activities featured both centralized and decentralized engagement and communication techniques, recognizing that people will provide valuable information when given alternative ways to engage in planning and design processes. This process directly involved the client and citizens in the planning process by utilizing the following engagement activities:

- Stakeholder Walking Tour
- Community Promotion - Super Soccer Saturday
- Sounding Boards
- Online Web Map Tool
- Community Posters
- Comment Forms and Surveys
- Engagement Monitoring
- Open Houses

City of Calgary Parks and the consulting team led by O2 Planning + Design Inc. was committed to involving residents and neighbouring businesses in planning the future of their public space. Three distinct engagement phases were deployed in order to receive feedback for every milestone, to gauge success in interpreting the feedback, and to seek opportunities to improve the conceptual design.

4.1 PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT

In June and July 2014, the project team engaged area residents and businesses to share their thoughts and ideas about Blakiston Park. These ideas included things that respondents liked, didn't like, and wanted in the future.

There were numerous ways in which people could get involved in this phase. The engagement process began with a stakeholder walking tour which took place in early June. This involved the Brentwood Community Association, Calgary Police Services, the University City developer, O2 staff, and City of Calgary Parks staff. The tour allowed the project team to meet various stakeholder groups with an interest in park redevelopment. Issues and opportunities were discussed while walking through the park. The engagement process was also discussed, focusing on activities that would reach the diverse demographic groups that make up the Brentwood community. Community promotion was done through a Super Soccer Saturday later that month, which allowed the project team to engage with community members and promote awareness. Promoting awareness and receiving feedback was then done through the use of Sounding Boards, which allowed people to write down feedback about the park, and through an On-line web map tool. Both strategies gathered feedback on what people loved about the park, what they used the park for, and what their hopes were for the park's future. Community posters were distributed at key locations throughout the community in order to encourage use of the web tool and sounding boards, as well as alerting people to the upcoming open houses.

The Phase 1 engagement period attracted excellent levels of resident participation. Over 230 comments were gathered throughout Phase 1, providing insightful ideas on what should be celebrated and what could be improved. These comments were then grouped in five key themes. The following themes provided useful insights for the design team around identifying shared aspirations for park redevelopment, as well as highlighting points of tension to be reconciled through concept design:

4.0 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Let's make Blakiston Park better, together!

Get Involved
The City of Calgary Parks is looking to gather input and feedback from the public on a new design for Blakiston Park. Get involved by sharing your thoughts and ideas!

ONLINE
Visit www.calgary.ca/blakistonpark and click on the on-line mapping tool link.

IN THE PARK
Stop by the park to visit one of the on-site sounding boards!

IN PERSON
Watch for us at community events! Starting in September, we will be holding a number of information sessions to report back on the feedback we receive and present park concepts.

About the Project
The park's redevelopment is part of the Brentwood Station Area Redevelopment plan created by The City of Calgary that sets the vision for making Brentwood a more sustainable, vibrant and mixed-use urban community. Over the past few years, the community has seen a lot of growth and change. This means, the needs and desires for community amenities, like Blakiston Park, are changing too. The park is an important public space around the Brentwood Station and a link between shopping, transit and residential areas, but it isn't well utilized. We're looking to find out why. Public engagement over the summer and fall 2016 will build on the Blakiston Park Redesign Community Consultation, which was created in 2009, to ensure the new park design continues to meet the needs and desires of the community.

Key Dates
In June, we will ask you about what you like and don't like about the park. Your input will help generate design ideas.
In September, we will present different park concepts, and ask you to confirm an overall design direction.
In November, we will present a draft plan for the park, and check back to ensure the plan is consistent with what you told us in September.

Schedule

More than just a safe, community attraction that is fun to visit

Keep it green

More than just a space to walk through

For more information, visit calgary.ca/blakistonpark, email parks@calgary.ca or contact 311.

calgary | contact 311

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Let's make Blakiston Park better, together!

I use this park to...

My favourite thing about this park is...

I wish this park...

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calgary | contact 311

4.2 PHASE 1 COMMON THEMES

4.2.1 MAINTENANCE AND SAFETY

Maintenance and safety emerged as two critically linked elements. Many responses suggested that a lack of maintenance creates safety concerns. Overall, there was considerable agreement for this theme. Lack of lighting and maintenance in the winter came through as a major concern, as well as overgrown trees and shrubs that provided for blind corners and unsafe conditions. The overarching desires for this theme included the following:

- Better lighting
- Increased winter maintenance
- Recycling in the park
- Improved general cleanliness
- Increased maintenance of overgrown vegetation

4.2.2 VEGETATION AND OPEN SPACE

Vegetation and green space figure prominently as a favorite park feature, and as a key element for future park design. The open space and mature trees on the site currently contribute to a peaceful and enjoyable atmosphere. Given the input that vegetation and green space inject a feeling of nature into an otherwise urban environment, there is a desire for the park to retain its natural feel and improve the use of vegetation to screen parking lots from view. Feedback concerning this theme showed that users valued green space and mature trees, the 'forest' and 'prairie' feel and the separation the park provides from surrounding development. A common desire included more trees and shrubs, the need for the park to remain naturalistic and open, and increased screening of adjacent properties.

4.2.3 AMENITIES

Amenities include the activities, features and programming of the park. Currently, the most frequently used amenities are the playground and the open space for picnics, games and sports. Amenities also included the benches, as sitting and enjoying nature was another favoured activity of many users. Respondents provided a wealth of ideas for improving amenities within the park, reflecting the great desire for increased activity on the site. Many of these ideas focused on creating new, shared community spaces that promote interest and social interaction within the park. Several respondents highlight that the park used to be known as 'turtle park' and suggest public art or a climbable kids structure to reference this notion. Some of the suggested amenities were incompatible with one another (need for both formal activities and the retention of open space for informal play) or with site constraints. In cases such as these, amenities need to be balanced with other valued park elements. Current uses of the park include: play with children, play sports and games, have a picnic, and walk through. The uses are limited, which is a direct reflection of the currently available amenity spaces. Respondents told us that they wanted to use the park for the following: riding bikes, more children's play areas, water features, sports facilities, picnic tables, benches/seating, central gathering space and improved pathways.

4.2.4 ATMOSPHERE

Atmosphere relates to the general qualities of the park that people enjoy. Overall, many of these qualities are closely related to the experience of being in a green space, and the sense of peace and quiet the park provides. An emerging concern is the perception that transit-oriented development adjacent to the park, specifically new residential development that may introduce a student demographic to the area, will disrupt the current atmosphere. Respondents expressed concerns about the park spaces catering to the new tenants rather than the whole community, as well as increasing development encroaching on and taking over green space.

4.2.5 CIRCULATION & ACCESSIBILITY

Circulation and accessibility refers to the way people move around and through the park. Based on the feedback, the park's primary use is for access, both for commuting and for pleasure. Commuters use the park as a connector to access the Brentwood LRT Station, the Co-op or the Brentwood Mall area. Pleasure uses include strolling, biking and dog walking. Many respondents note that accessibility could be improved on the site, in particular by improving connections between the residential community and the emerging transit-oriented development around the Brentwood LRT Station. Several comments suggest that the park would see more use if it was part of the cycling network.

Concerns arose due to the condition of the single pathway in the winter months. Lack of maintenance and formal connections from the community to the Co-op were the two biggest complaints received, in addition to the pathways not being illuminated, making them unsafe to use at night or early evenings in the colder months of the year.



-  "My favorite thing about this park is how it is nice and open."
-  "I use this park to play sports and games in the open space"
-  "My favorite thing about this park is that it is a green space to separate Crowchild from the area of suburbs"
-  "I wish this park had less dandelions and better kept trees."
-  "This area of the park needs programming - no one makes use of it."



-  "I use this park to ride my bike along the pathway."
-  "I wish this path had better lighting and was safer at night."
-  "I wish this park was part of the regional bike path system."
-  "I wish the park had a focal entrance point to show that it is a park."
-  "I use this park to commute between my Brentwood home and the LRT"
-  "I wish this park had a paved access to the Co-op and C-Train."
-  "The park needs an official entrance here that is connected by a lit sidewalk across the Co-op parking lot that runs directly to the C-train stairs."

4.3 PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT

Phase 2 of the engagement focused on identifying a preferred design concept for the park. The design concept establishes the overall look and feel of the park, and sets the stage for unique features, amenities and programming elements. In September and October 2014, the project team presented two design concept options for public review and comment, based on a comprehensive review of the site and the input received in Phase 1.

One design option expressed a natural, passive approach while the other focused on formal activities and planting schemes. The goal was to provide two completely different approaches in order to clarify contradicting comments made in the first phase on what people would like for the park. By allowing users to visualize the park in two different and distinct ways, the design team was able to draw out what was most important and what people really wanted to see for the park. The full concept plans can be seen in Appendix B.

Option 1, as illustrated below, offers users a naturalized environment in which leisure activities are encouraged. Weaving paths and planting beds encourage strolling and passive use, while an abundance of space is available for unstructured, informal activities.



Illustration 03 - Concept Design Option 1



Illustration 04 - Concept Design Option 2

Option 2 offered users a more structured space that included formal courts and sport facilities, with the inclusion of a fitness area, an orchard, and pathways that were intended to move people through the park easily and efficiently.

This phased offered many ways to get involved and give input:

- Blakiston Park Concepts Open House
- Concept Comment Form
- On-Line Web Map Tool
- Sounding Boards

Feedback was received from September to mid October 2014. The engagement period attracted good levels of participation. For a project this size, the open house was well attended and served as a good discussion forum. Large concept maps were placed in the center of the room, and were the focus of discussion amongst attendees and project team members. Feedback from the open house emphasized that the concept designs reflected community input, and that the project team had addressed community needs and desires.

4.3 PHASE 2 COMMON THEMES

Throughout the second phase of engagement, feedback on the two different concept options was gathered in order to provide direction for a preferred overall concept for the park. Engagement focused on two broad questions:

- Which overall design concept is preferred, and why?
- Which specific features and amenities best meet your needs and desires for Blakiston Park?

The two different concept options show the trade-offs between level of activity, landscape features, and open space availability within the park. A summary of the feedback is presented below. Major themes are identified, based on levels of agreement and disagreement. This feedback was then used to generate the overall concept for the park, and as the basis for preparing the detailed design development plan.

There is no general agreement among respondents about the preferred concept option. Figure 2 shows that respondents were divided in their preferences, while a number of them liked elements from each design option. Figure 3 and 4 identifies specific elements that people preferred from both options.

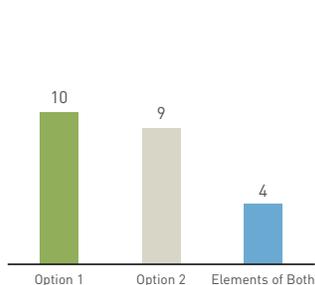


Figure 02 - Preferred Concept Option

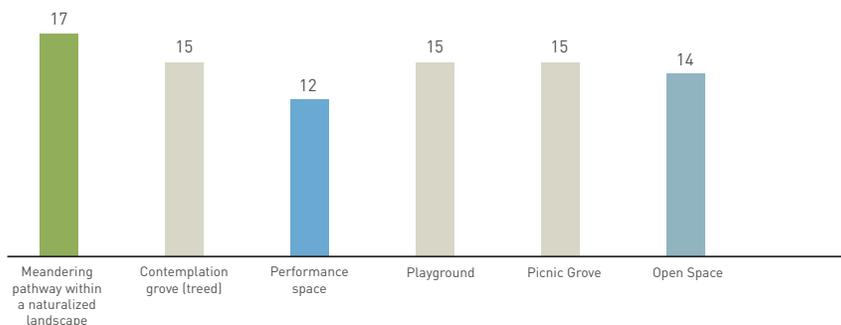


Figure 03 - Preferred Site Elements

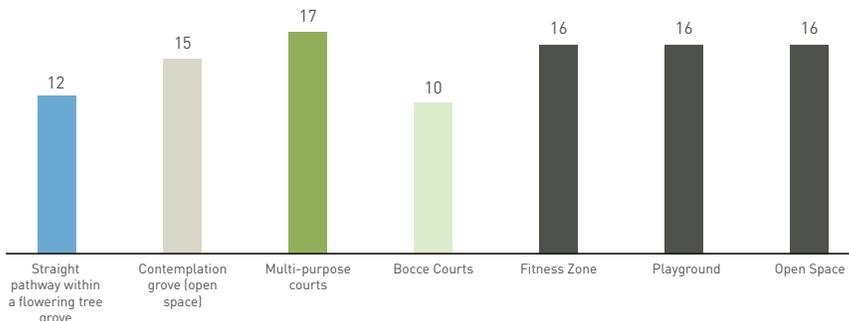


Figure 04 - Option 2 Preferred Site Elements

Although responses seem to be evenly distributed, there was a clear understanding about which elements of both options users agreed on. A full summary of user comments can be found in Appendix A. Areas of agreement and disagreement are evident for both options and were used to balance the refinement of a single concept for the park.

Agreement

- Connectivity to the commercial area / C-Train Station is important
- Ensuring safety and proper maintenance is essential
 - well lit pathways
 - natural sightlines
 - winter maintenance
- Trees, nature and open space are valued, and concrete surfaces should be minimized
- The park should be a well-used community amenity
- Preferred features include: playground, ecological design, buffer to Co-op, plaza, gateway / entry features

Disagreement

- No agreement on what type of design is best for creating community within the park (sport fields and courts, pavilion)
- Water feature / water park. While many respondents would like to see a seasonal water feature, there is concern regarding the maintenance.

4.3 PHASE 3 ENGAGEMENT

Phase 3 of the engagement process focused on presenting a preferred concept design to the public for approval and further discussion. The concept design established an overall look and feel for the park and feedback was sought from the public in order to understand the best phasing strategy.

Comments and suggestions from previous phases were synthesized and incorporated in a final plan that was presented on March 26, 2015. While this phase of the plan established a concrete plan for moving forward with the park’s redevelopment, there were still many ways to comment, allowing the design team to alter or adjust any outstanding elements.

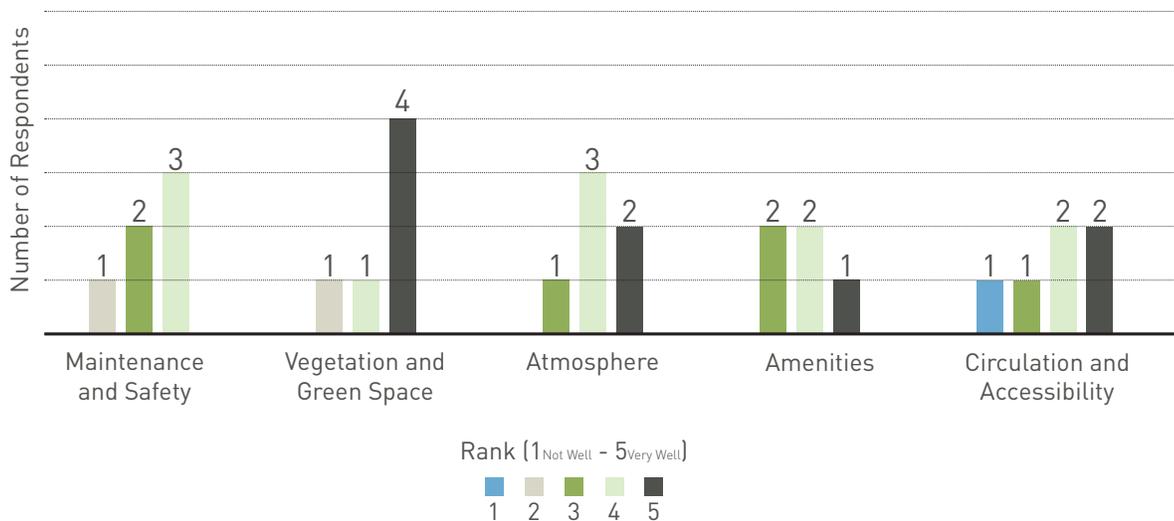
There were two key ways for people to get involved:

- Blakiston Park Design Development Open House
- Concept Comment Form

Overall responses at the open house were positive, with many respondents satisfied with the amount of vegetation and open space that the plan provided. While over 40 people were present at the open house, there was a limited number of comments, suggesting that the design team responded to previous comments in a positive way.

Responses on the comment form rated specific features and amenities in order to establish a phasing strategy. Figure 5 outlines these responses, and the number of people that rated the following elements from 1 to 5, based on their preference.

Figure 05 - Preferred Site Elements



The above figure illustrates responses to specific elements within the design. It shows that respondents believe the best addressed theme is Vegetation and Green Space, followed by Atmosphere, Circulation and Accessibility, Amenities and lastly, Maintenance and Safety.

5.1 VISION

Blakiston Park is a significant public amenity for the Brentwood Community and a transition area between an evolving higher-density, mixed-use transit-oriented development and an existing low-density residential community. The Park will connect these areas through a comprehensive accessible pathway network that is safe and inviting. It will provide a refuge of open space with areas for passive and active recreation. Most importantly, it will be a place for people of all ages and will support a variety of uses in all seasons.

5.2 DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

Design principles for the Blakiston Park Design Development Plan are informed by discussions with stakeholders and community members as well as a vigorous design process. They are as follows:

Provide the community with a space for activity and play

Blakiston Park serves as an important connection between the Brentwood community and the busy Brentwood Station. As such, the park is currently used as a through-way for commuters and offers little in terms of amenities and spaces for activity and program. The provision of amenities, unique spaces and formal activity areas is crucial to the success of this increasingly busy park.

Increase safety and maintenance

With overgrown trees and shrubs as well as a lack of light and eyes on the park, Blakiston Park has previously suffered from unsafe conditions. Improved lighting and proper maintenance of shrubs and trees will help to increase visibility and safety within the park.

Preserve natural feel and atmosphere of the park

The preservation of the large mature trees and green open spaces will continue to give users a place to escape from the inner city surroundings. As one of the largest green spaces within Brentwood, and the closest to a TOD site, it is important to allow the park to thrive as a green space where surrounding residents can continue to enjoy the natural environment.

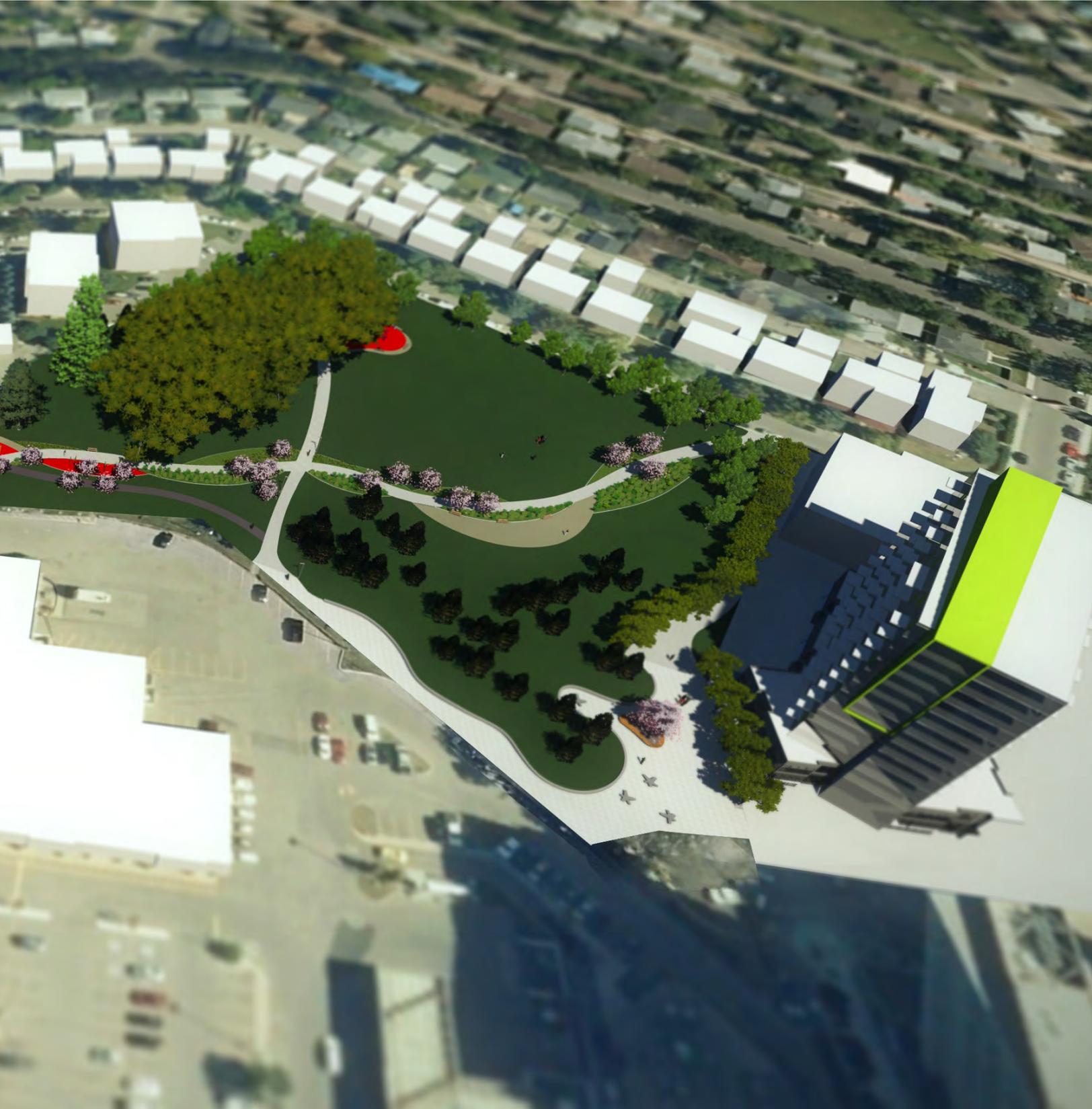
Improve circulation and ease of access through the site and beyond

Blakiston Park is an important connection to the Brentwood LRT Station. Providing accessible pathways for users to safely get across to the Co-op or the LRT station is very important. The provision of safe connecting routes will alleviate dangerous spots and conditions in all seasons.

5.0 A DESIGN FOR THE PARK



6.0 CONCEPT DESIGN



6.1 DESIGN INSPIRATION

The park is inspired by whimsical shapes and playful experiences. The meandering pathway allows for leisurely walks and quiet experiences, while active areas borrow from their surroundings and offer an urban front to compliment an increase in density and activity. Adjacent developments such as University City and the future development of the Co-op property allows the park to interact with these boundaries in a more active manner than what is offered in other parts of the park. Playful shapes can be found throughout, celebrating the unique character and place of Blakiston Park.

6.2 SITE PROGRAM

The surrounding community of Blakiston Park is undergoing significant change. The 2009 ARP proposed an increased density immediately to the south and southwest of the park. While this will see a heightened use of the park and enhanced safety through an increase in eyes on the park, it also poses a number of challenges with how to deal with these distinct edges, as well as how to accommodate a variety of activities within the park. The proposed design offers spaces for diverse activities to take place through thoughtful design that offers users space for both active and passive uses.

6.2.1 PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

The use of terrain and vegetation, as well as the natural shape of the park allows for both quiet and active uses. The south side of the park has already been experiencing changes through the introduction of University City's high-rise towers. This condition allows the park to become more urban on this side. Retail and commercial activity on the main floor will activate this edge, uses that will benefit from an urban plaza with seating and space for gathering, socializing, or relaxing.

Active uses also happen on this side of the park. A performance space is established alongside a natural amphitheater created by sloping terrain. The Lawn allows for active sports to take place while also offering mounds on the periphery for people to sit and enjoy the activity. Spots for picnic tables are made available under the existing mature poplar trees. This space also houses the new playgrounds, for both toddlers and more advanced playground users.

Winding paths and perennial beds then guide users through the narrow section of the park where fitness stations are located. This transitional space also boasts perennial planting and seating.

The western edge of the park is surrounded by residential units on its periphery and offers park users an area for rest and relaxation. This quiet area is well vegetated to block surrounding noises while allowing opportunities for sitting and open spaces for quiet contemplation.

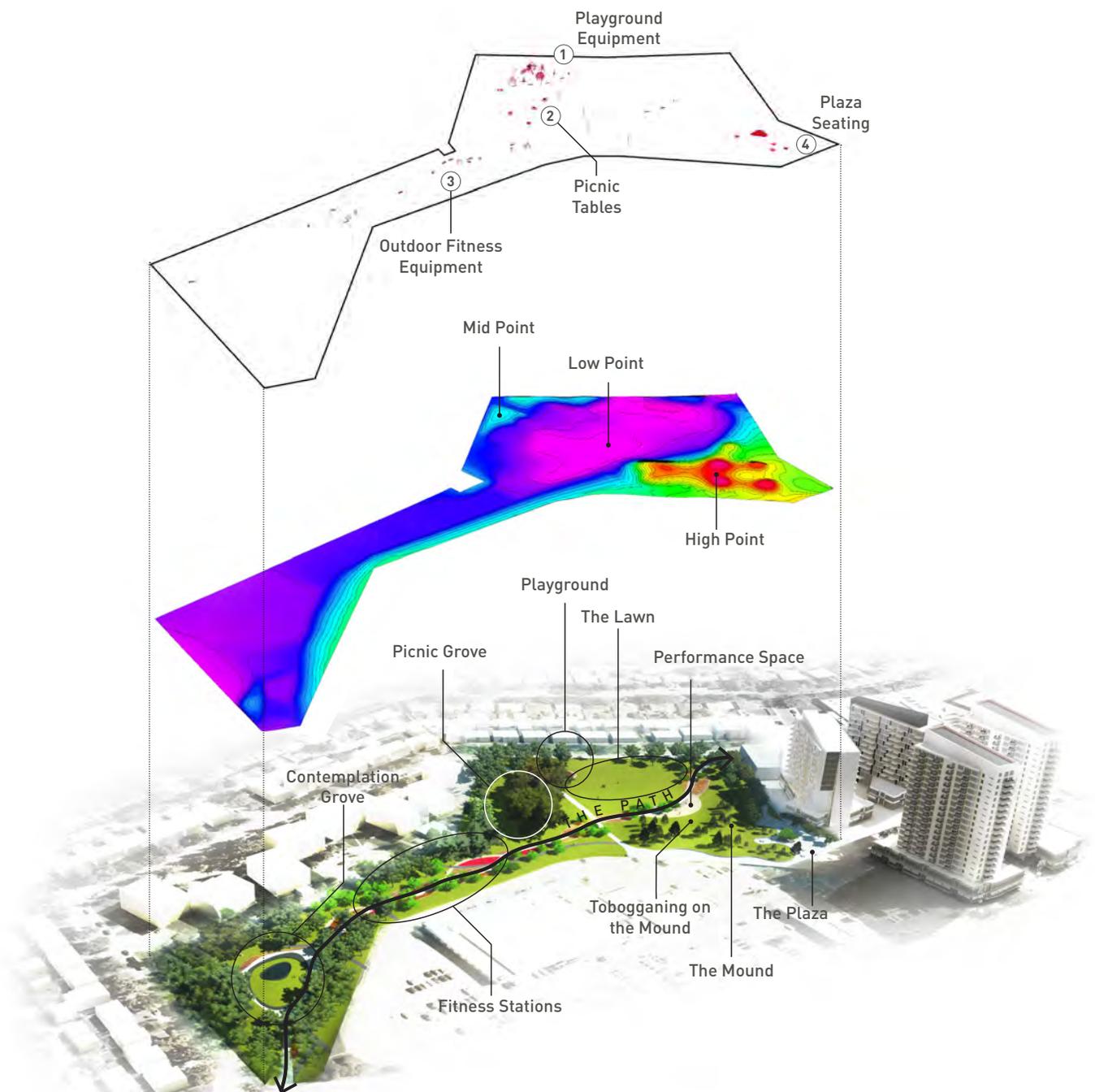


Illustration 05 - Design elements

6.2.2 SEASONAL USE

The park is designed to be used throughout the year. Winter activities such as tobogganing are accommodated on the sculpted mound. Currently, there is an informal rink set up by the residents that could also be accommodated on the large open field within the Lawn. One of the biggest concern posed by the residents was the ice build-up on the pathway due to poor drainage, combined with no maintenance on the pathways, especially the informal path that connects the community to the LRT station. This issue will be addressed by paving these pathways and encouraging maintenance. Water will also be captured in bioswales before they reach the main pathway system, reducing standing water and the buildup of ice. Park use will be encouraged throughout the seasons with planting that showcase a beautiful array of colour and texture throughout the year.

6.3 PARK SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety within the park has been long been a concern for users of the park. The lack of lighting and limited maintenance has created unsafe conditions throughout the park. The addition of lighting on the main path connecting the community to the LRT station, as well as planting small low maintenance shrubs and high-headed trees will heighten overall safety throughout the park.

6.3.1 LIGHTING

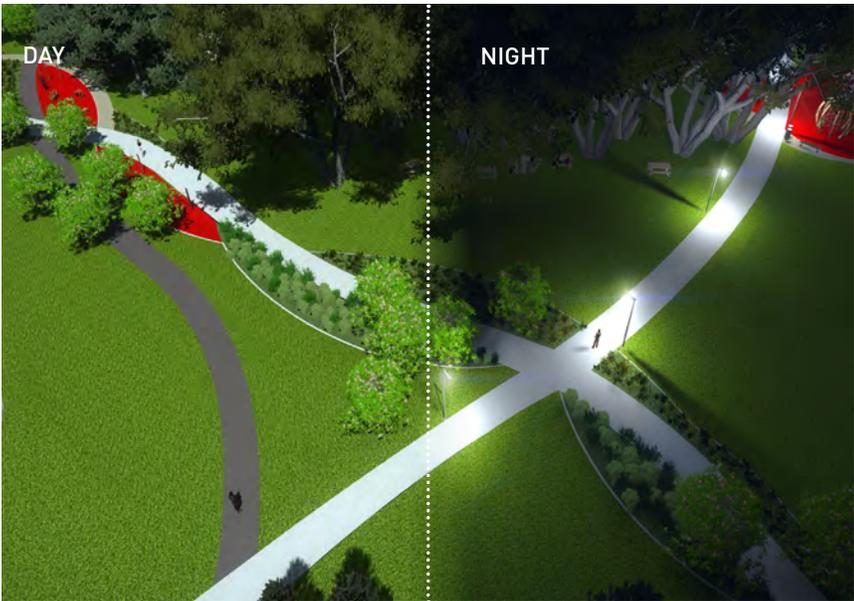
While the entirety of the park cannot be lit, the main commuter path connecting the community to the Brentwood LRT Station will have light poles lining the path. Up-lighting of the coniferous trees on top of the mound may also be implemented while the plaza may utilize inset rope lighting within its concrete seats as well as up-lighting the trees in the planter.

6.3.2 SIGHTLINES

Sightlines are improved throughout the park by reducing the number of overgrown shrubs and trees and establishing new high-headed trees that allow people to easily see in the park. Shrubs and perennial plantings will be kept low, and groupings of trees are strategically located, to reduce blind corners and maintain sightlines.

6.3.3 EYES ON THE PARK

Current conditions do not allow for the added safety of having eyes on the park. While the mid-rise blocks to the north and residential homes to the west do so, the west edge is dominated by the Co-op rear delivery lane. With the development of Co-op in the future, this constraint will be alleviated, allowing more eyes on the park from all sides. The University City development to the south of the park will substantially increase eyes on the park, from main floor commercial, townhomes, and higher level balconies, allowing residents to always have a visual connection with the park.



6.4 CIRCULATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

The paths through the park connect people and their destinations and provide unique experiences along the way. Important connections are made along the entirety of the park, an element that was deemed very important through the engagement process.

6.4.1 PATHWAYS

Two primary paths are proposed in order to connect the majority of the users to their intended destination (see facing illustration). The main east-west path is three meters wide and is the main pedestrian route through the park. This path is crossed by secondary paths which mainly run east to west and will connect the surrounding neighbourhood to the Co-op property. These paths are two meters wide and reflect existing desire lines. They are graded in order to make them accessible to all users. A secondary path is also designed along the edge of University City. The intent of this path is to ensure a smooth transition between University City and Blakiston Park, as well as providing people with an easy access to the plaza.

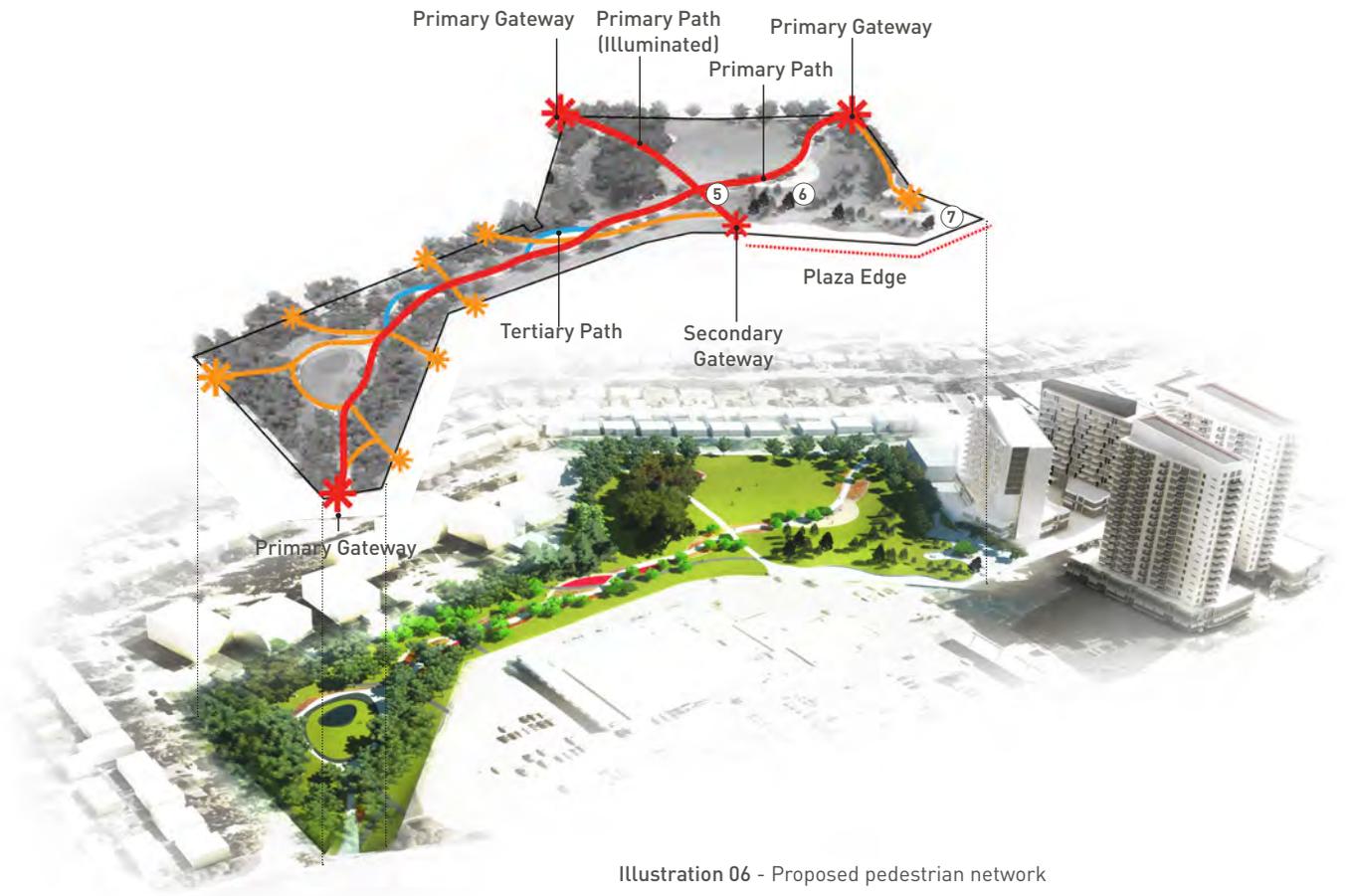
Tertiary paths can also be found in a couple of locations. They are small, gravel paths that allow park users to deviate from the main path. They are furnished with seating, giving users a place to rest and take in the activity surrounding them.

The most highly used and only illuminated path can be found connecting users from the community to the Brentwood Station. This path does not currently exist although it is highly used as an informal path. As a commuter route, it is also important to provide light for safe access through the park. It will also be properly graded in order to allow for accessibility.

6.4.2 GATEWAYS

Gateways at major entries are crucial to the success of the park. Currently there is no signage indicating arrival into the park. The incorporation of primary gateways at both ends of the east to west path may give users a sense of arrival and indicate the park's presence to passers-by (see illustration on facing page). A gateway feature will also be incorporated at the north entrance of the park, followed by a secondary gateway at the terminus of this illuminated path.

Proposed gateway features begin with the rough grading and sculpting of the earth around the entrance, leading users into the park. These small sculptural mounds will be lined with seat walls which in turn will exhibit park signage. High-headed trees will be planted on top of these small mounds which will help to give the gateways presence, provide shade and draw the eye into the park.



6.5 PARK FEATURES

Use of the park is maximized with the introduction of 7 distinct areas and features. These areas will allow for various uses throughout Blakiston Park while being seamlessly connected via well-designed pathways and other common elements.

6.5.1 CONTEMPLATION GROVE

At the northwest end of the park, the Contemplation Grove is a quiet area for relaxation and contemplation. Surrounded by a grove of poplar trees, a simple space is formed by a low seat wall that contains a grass area and an elegant reflecting pool or feature element. The simplicity of the form and materials set within the towering trees instills a wonderful sense of serenity and calm.

The large grove of trees surrounding the open space gives a sense of arrival and pause while allowing users to sit and tune out inner city sounds with the sound of water. The large poplar trees will become a buffer, blocking out unwanted noise from the adjacent busy intersection and highway.



6.5.2 PICNIC GROVE

A set of picnic benches are placed around the existing mature poplar trees. The location of these picnic benches takes advantage of the existing high-headed trees and shade they provide, while still being able to take in the activity of the lawn and playground. Families can take advantage of the proximity of the playground to keep an eye on their children. Similarly, the location of the lawn and the possibility of sports and informal activity within this open space will work well for picnicking family and friends. This central location will be an ideal spot to relax, picnic and take in the activity in this central location, while remaining a private and natural area.

6.5.3 THE PLAYGROUND

The new eastern gateway brings people through an imaginative new playground for all ages and abilities. Sculptural play features provide a variety of unique experiences for children in spaces designed around ages and abilities. The playground is nestled within low landforms which give way to low seat walls around the eastern periphery. Benches can be found along the southern edge of the playground, allowing families to sit and watch their children play.

The playground is divided into two sections by one of the primary pathways connecting people to the Brentwood LRT Station. This busy node will ensure a safe area for children to play, while having the benefit of being lit at night due to the proximity of the pathway lighting. The two separate areas of the playground will cater to two different user groups, one side will host equipment made for toddlers while the other will be catered to older, more experienced users.

The adjacency of the Picnic Grove and the Lawn will allow for extended play and eyes on the playground at all times. This whimsical area of the park will be an active spot while remaining safe and attractive for all users.



6.5.4 THE LAWN

Anchoring the park at the east end is the Great Lawn. A flexible open grass area, the Lawn can be a soccer pitch, a picnic spot, skating rink, or bocce court. It is there for everyone's use and enjoyment. Tree planting, subtle landforms, and seating along the Lawn's edges help to define the space and the park.



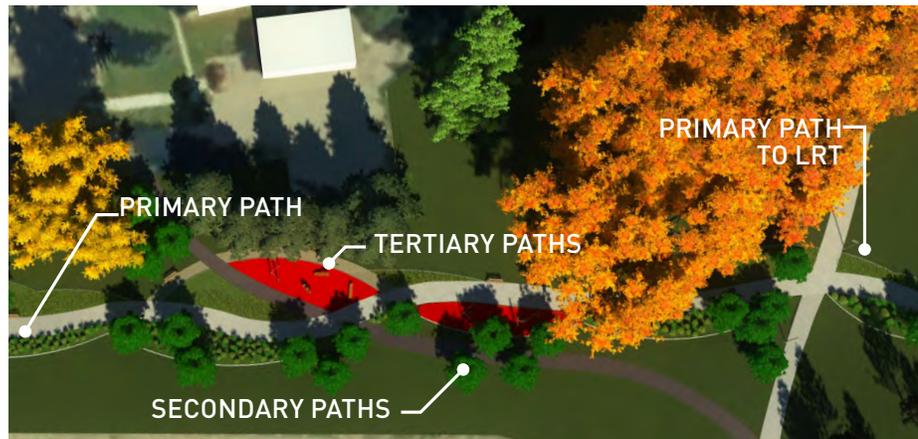
6.5.5 THE MOUND

The mound is an undulating sculpted terrain serving multiple purposes. It is a backdrop to the plaza and to the park, creating a connection between the green open space and the amenities surrounding Brentwood Station. It provides views and vistas into the park, a continuous bench for relaxing in the plaza, and grassy areas to sit in the shade. Its gentle slope into the park is an amphitheatre for small performances, a tobogganing hill, and a quiet perch overlooking the park. At night, the Mound becomes alive with up-lighting on the coniferous trees and discourages unwanted uses. The whimsical shape of the mound is mirrored throughout the park. The curves can be seen in the winding pathways, interwoven planting beds and creative playground.



6.5.6 THE PATHS

The Paths throughout the park intentionally weave people through the park. Directly connecting to the Plaza and the LRT beyond, a lit pathway follows the main desire line from the community. The main north-south pathway meanders through the entirety of the park, showcasing different attributes and areas of the park, while providing many opportunities for people to get off and explore further. This main pathway starts with a major gateway to the east and terminates at a second major gateway to the northwest. Set within flowering trees, a series of fitness stations promote health and wellness in a circuit of kinesiologist-designed stations. Lining the main path are planting beds of native shrubs and perennials providing seasonal interest and stormwater management.



6.5.7 THE PLAZA

Connected to University City and future development, the Plaza is an urban amenity. A generous open space with multiple subspaces, it invites people to linger with their coffee and lunches, groups to gather, and buskers to play. Sculptural benches and custom designs create numerous seating configurations, animating the space with a whimsical form. The Plaza clearly connects the Park and community to the LRT, safely and efficiently. At night, the Plaza becomes a unique spot with up-lit trees on the mound and within the planter, and seat wall inset lights.



6.6 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND RENEWAL

Blakiston Park is home to large, mature trees that contribute to the overall feel of a unique, natural environment. Some trees, especially the ones adjacent to the Co-op, have experienced stresses that have contributed to their decline and need to be removed and/or replaced. The recent ice storm of 2014 has also affected the condition of a number of trees, requiring maintenance and replanting.

6.6.1 PLANTING STRATEGY

The overall planting strategy involves the rejuvenation of existing mature trees as well as the addition of low-maintenance trees, shrubs and perennials. The Contemplation Grove will be planted with additional high-headed poplar trees to buffer the city noise, while the northeast edge will see increased planting on the periphery.

The sculpting of the mound will require the removal of many of the existing trees and shrubs, which will be replaced with new coniferous trees and high-headed deciduous trees to create a soft buffer between University City and the park. This is intended to create a separation between the development and the park, and to prevent the perception that the park is only intended for the residents of that development.

Small flowering trees will line the pathway leading from north to south while perennial plants and shrubs will be planted throughout. Perennial planting will be largely on the north side, while moisture-loving grasses and shrubs will dominate the southern planting beds. These grasses and shrubs will work to stop runoff from reaching the pathway.

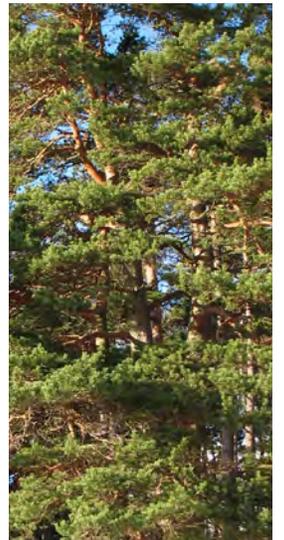
6.6.2 PLANT PALETTE

The planting palette is designed to have showy plants throughout the year. High-headed trees and low shrubs are selected to preserve sightlines. Showy perennials mixed with grasses dominate the palette.

BIOSWALE PLANTS	TREES	PERENNIAL BEDS
Red Gnome Dogwood Variegated Reed Grass Gold flame Spirea Variegated Moor Grass	Big Time Happy Daylily Indian Summer Black-Eyed Susan Tufted Hair Grass Gold Drop Potentilla	American Elm Hillside Upright spruce Dolgo Apple Poplar Scots Pine



Illustration 06 - Proposed vegetation scheme



6.7 INTEGRATION WITH ADJACENT DEVELOPMENT

The Brentwood Station Area Redevelopment Plan (BSARP) of 2009 proposes a higher density and greater variety of uses within the Brentwood Station area. University City, on the southern edge of the park, has already begun development and is almost complete. On the southwestern edge of the site, Co-op is working on redevelopment plans for the entire property, and to the northeast there has been talks of a new mid-rise development to replace the existing building blocks. These developments directly impact the design of the plan and need to be considered for a successful integration from the park to its surroundings. See images on facing page for reference.

6.7.1 CO-OP

Located along the entirety of the southwestern edge of the park, the Co-op development will have a significant impact for the design of Blakiston Park. Important connections made to the LRT station will have to be established through Co-op property and in order to properly grade this path, the land on Co-op property will need to be graded to meet the park. Currently, the majority of the nonconforming property lies on Co-op land. The success of the connecting path to the LRT also depends on the integration of an accessible way to access the current station through Co-op land. Connecting paths that follow existing desire lines will also depend on the result of the Co-op development. Strong connections need to be made and these secondary paths are only useful if they lead to somewhere that users will want to go.

6.7.2 UNIVERSITY CITY

University City was the first development to be constructed in response to the ARP. Strong connections to the retail shops and through the development were made in order to have a smooth transition between park and development. Located on the southwestern edge of Blakiston Park, University City provides a residential and commercial frontage to the park that benefits both park users and residents. In order to avoid the use of retaining walls and awkward connections, the park is designed in such a way that it seamlessly meets the grade of this development without any unwanted interruptions. It is also important to separate this development from the park enough to distinguish the difference in properties and not give the impression that Blakiston Park is for the residents of University City. While townhomes open up onto the park path and the plaza gives spaces to the commercial and retail spaces, there is a harmonious distinction between public park and private property.

6.7.2 NORTH WEST APARTMENTS

As part of the ARP, the apartments to the northeast of the site are to be redeveloped. These new apartment blocks will retain their height but will be repositioned in such a way that will include a greenspace which will make a connection to the park. The pathways reflected in the Design Development Plan anticipate this change. While this development is not yet planned, the connections are there to be made when and if the development is to take place.



Illustration 07 (top) - Adjacent development areas

Illustration 08 (bottom) - Conceptual future development in adjacent areas



7.1 IMPLEMENTATION

The Design Development process is scheduled to begin in August 2015, with construction to commence in early Summer 2016.

7.2 PRELIMINARY OPINION OF PROBABLE COST

The total cost for implementing the Blakiston Park Development Plan is approximately \$3,000,000. Note that this figure is an opinion of probable cost, not a guaranteed cost figure, and will be refined and adjusted as detailed designs are prepared. A breakdown of anticipated costs is provided for reference in Appendix B.

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION

A Public Engagement Process Reports

WHAT WE HEARD PHASE 1

WHAT WE HEARD PHASE 2

WHAT WE HEARD PHASE 3

B Blakiston Park Preliminary Concept Options

C Class 'C' Estimate of Probable Construction Costs

LIST OF APPENDICES