

A photograph of a park path with people walking and running, surrounded by lush green trees and tall grasses. The scene is captured in bright, natural light, likely during the day. The path is paved and runs horizontally across the lower third of the image. On the left, three people are walking towards the right. On the right, a person is running towards the left. The background is filled with dense, vibrant green foliage, including tall grasses and large trees. The overall atmosphere is one of a healthy, active park environment.

Franklin Park Action Plan

Boston Parks & Recreation Department | 2022

2023 ASLA Award of Excellence | Analysis & Planning



**Franklin
Park
Action
Plan**

CITY *of* **BOSTON**



REED-HILDERBRAND Agency MASS.

2022

**Boston Parks &
Recreation Department**

Reverend Mariama White-Hammond, *Chief of Environment, Energy, and Open Space*
Ryan Woods, *Commissioner*

**Reed Hilderbrand
Agency Landscape + Planning
MASS Design Group**

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How to Use the Action Plan Document Organization Overview

ANALYSIS

The Analysis & Synthesis summaries are broken into four chapters:

To understand a park, you have to understand its **History**

01 | Park Evolution & Identity
One of America's Great Large Parks

Franklin Park was conceived in response to a moment of change and parallel crisis in the history of American cities... In Boston, the system was defined by Frederick Law Olmsted's design for the Emerald Necklace... The design for the Emerald Necklace, with Franklin Park as its jewel, is woven around the event.

Franklin Park has been described as a "cultural ground" - a place where all sorts of people bring the benefits of recreation and education... In response to the city's diverse history, the park has engaged the diverse community, bringing its own unique character to the Emerald Necklace. The design addressed the design - the cultural significance of the site, the right of access to public open space, and the ability to provide a public space - as well as the fact that the park has changed, the power of its landscape remains and continues to provide a stage for communities to make their own.

To understand a park, you have to understand its **Communities**

04 | People & Program
At Heart, A Neighborhood Park

Great parks are vibrant, able to meet the changing needs of their communities... Understanding community perspectives is critical to addressing future opportunities, challenges, and health and safety. Franklin Park has been a well-used and beloved resource for its community, but digital development is needed if it is to meet the contemporary needs of its communities. Despite its size and central location, the park is still "left the street" with many surrounding Franklin Park only with the city. Other uses through the park include the surrounding the street. With how they have been neglected in some capacity, sometimes remain unaware of its offerings. Encouraging and celebrating all continues to build the strong park users and important stakeholders and partners.

To understand a park, you have to understand its **Connections**

02 | Access & Movement
Assets Become Barriers

Concepts of urban design that include both solid and a strong emphasis of pedestrian safety, vegetation, and topography to fashion an intentional public escape from the crowded conditions of the urban center only as a community's connection to green and park amenities, have made our difficult landscape development, further separating the park from its neighbors. In the park, Olmsted did become a significant leader, their pedestrian circulation model, and control of each element identified. These conditions combined to limit the free flow of movement. Better connections to the neighborhood and the wide range of users, closer and better connected to park circulation and consistent signage would do a lot to reconnect with the park with its neighbors, welcome visitors from near and far, and restore the park's substance.

To understand a park, you have to understand its **Land**

03 | Ecologists
Diversity Enhances Experience

The park is a mosaic of different ecosystems, using multiple habitat types and water management to create not only an ecologically diverse landscape, but also a place of great recreational value... The park's early development, a early community celebration at the Prospect, or a young place with family and friends in the shade of Franklin Park's old trees. The park's early development was a response to an emerging environmental concern and park users, direct and indirect impacts to one part of the system affect the others. Management to monitor and actively repair the landscape with support of those who care about it, continue to provide that many ecological and health benefits - if this can be done, it will show for visitors and friends to make connections for park to come.

Each spread is set up for a 'quick read' to understand the main idea, or a 'deep dive' for those who want to know more detail:

Topic →

Contextual Information →

The Big Takeaway →

Detailed & Supporting Information →


Image Credit Reference Number →

Quick Reference Color Bars Indicate Key Overview Pages Throughout the Document

Gathering Place for All
A New Idea for a Changing City

In the mid-19th century, influenced by scenes from England and France and the civilized living their large urban parks represented, American cities began to pursue significant open space systems of their own. Burgeoning urban populations and increased global travel, advancements in approaches to agriculture and urban development, and growing interests in natural science and technology all had profound effects on attitudes about healthy urban environments and conservation ideals.


"What is the special purpose of a large park in distinction from the purposes that may be served by such smaller grounds as Boston is provided with?"
Over 100 years ago, Franklin Park was conceived of as the jewel of Boston's Emerald Necklace. Today, it is still Boston's largest park by far, serving some of the city's most dense and diverse neighborhoods.



A Growing City
In industrializing societies across America, including Boston, rapid city expansion was fueled by large-scale immigration and migration of the working classes from rural areas. Dense living and working environments led to significant public health challenges. Improvements came as cities implemented innovations in sanitation and drainage infrastructure. Still, residential squares within the city provided little green space and were often gated with limited entry. Expanded public transportation lines provided access to public parks - an escape for growing urban populations.

More Than A Breathing Place
Spearheaded by active Bostonians on both sides of the political divide, the city engaged Frederick Law Olmsted to select a site for a large public park. Chosen for qualities "complementary to the town" and with a design developed in contrast to other public spaces available within the confines of the city at the time, the park was intended to provide public access to nature and its restorative benefits - for the purpose of "delighting in nature and one's common humanity".


Developing a System
With the construction of New York's Central Park and Brooklyn's Prospect Park complete, Olmsted expanded his thinking about the role of landscapes in cities beyond what parks could provide independently. He considered how open space could function as a linked system, with canopied streets as extensions of park cartways and residential communities. His lecture on Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns, articulated the future growth of urban centers, like Boston, and the need for park systems to support public health and well-being. The Emerald Necklace, a 1,000-acre park system spanning across the city, was designed by Olmsted in 1858, with Franklin Park at its center.



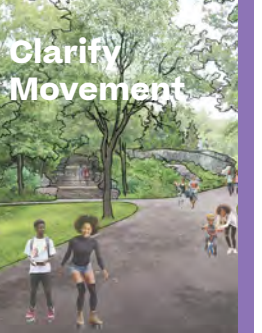
RECOMMENDATIONS

The Action Plan proposals are organized into five primary recommendations chapters:


Make Connections & Activate Edges




Clarify Movement



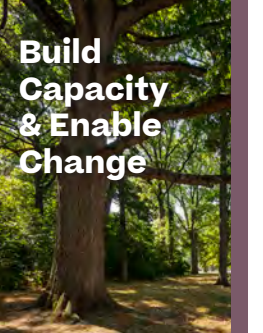
Amplify Magnet Destinations



Unify the Park



Build Capacity & Enable Change



Each chapter is organized by overarching proposals and supporting pages with more detailed recommendations:

Big Picture Recommendation →

Contextual Information →

Key Challenges Being Addressed →

Supporting Recommendations Outlined in More Detail on the Following Pages →

Image Credit Reference Number →

Quick Reference Color Bars Indicate Key Overview Pages Throughout the Document

Renew the Resource
Regenerate the Woodlands

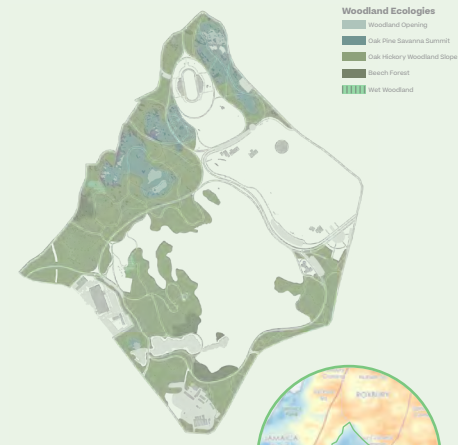
Established woodlands have a major presence in the mosaic of park's ecosystems, covering about half of the overall footprint. If not carefully calibrated, programmatic uses can negatively impact these significant habitats. Innovative management and restoration strategies must be employed to balance community use and enjoyment with the long-term health and resilience of the ecosystem.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Climate Change & Adaptation
- Pests & Disease
- Invasive Species
- Single-Age Canopy & Lack of Species Diversity

RESTORATION & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Protect Tree Species at Risk by Targeting Key Pests & Diseases
- Kick-Start Natural Regeneration by Removing Invasive Species
- Improve Valuable Habitat by Reconnecting Woodland Cores
- Increase Diversity by Reforesting Decommissioned Trails
- Enhance Experience & Habitat by Planting Along Circulation



Woodland Ecologies

- Woodland Opening
- Oak Pine Savanna Standoff
- Oak Hickory Woodland Slope
- Decid Forest
- Wet Woodland

Cooling Effects of the Urban Canopy
Due to its hundreds of acres of woodlands and open space, Franklin Park, provides a cooling effect on nearby blocks, reducing temperatures by 3.7°F. As you move further out into the neighborhood, places like Roxbury experience elevated temperatures. Woodlands also serve as an important shaded escape from neighborhoods that lack sufficient canopy cover, like those to the east.

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Franklin Park Action Plan

Introduction

5



City of Boston, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor
Michelle Wu

Dear Friends,

The Franklin Park Action Plan is the result of a community-based effort coordinated by the Boston Parks and Recreation Department in partnership with the Franklin Park Coalition and a design team led by Reed Hilderbrand in collaboration with Agency Landscape + Planning and MASS Design Group.

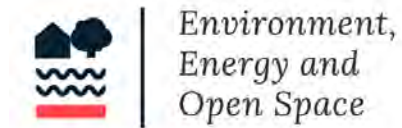
The Action Plan creates a strategic vision for the future of Franklin Park that advocates for thoughtfully guided, community-driven improvements grounded in a deep understanding of its historic fabric and ecological systems and implemented through ongoing, committed investment so that the park may continue to do what it already does, but better.

To achieve this, the Action Plan's goals are forward-looking and visionary; based on practical and action-oriented recommendations that can be put into practice right away. The park must first and foremost adhere to its founding ideals as realized by Frederick Law Olmsted, which were to connect people with the landscape and to foster experiences of natural phenomena, open space, and outdoor recreation in the belief that doing so elevates daily life, promotes public health, and strengthens civic dialogue.

The Action Plan does not aim to alter the park's purpose, character, or design. Instead, it offers suggestions for the renewed care and ongoing development of this priceless resource using an analysis of the park's history, communities, and ecologies. Its proposals respond to the changes that have taken place over its 120+ year history and seek to meet this moment in time while creating a blueprint for its future.

In service,

Michelle Wu
Mayor of Boston



Hello, neighbor:

As a Roxbury native and the City of Boston's Chief of Environment, Energy, and Open Space, Franklin Park has been a central place for me throughout my life. From Boston Public Schools athletes to jazz devotees to friends meandering along a walking loop, the park is a space of revelry, respite, and recreation for so many Bostonians. At 527 acres, Franklin Park is our city's largest park accommodating large festivals and protests, and featuring a golf course and the zoo that attracts visitors from all over the city and region.

A vibrant hub of activity in Boston's geographic center, Franklin Park has a legacy of underinvestment. Advocates have been calling for years for improved maintenance, more programming, and large-scale capital improvements. Upgrades to Franklin Park were listed as priorities in Imagine Boston 2030, the City's overarching planning document. \$28 million from the sale of a parking garage in downtown Boston was earmarked for upgrades to Franklin Park, representing the largest investment since the park was designed and built in the late 1800s. With this money we're able to abandon the piecemeal approach and make a real difference for the park and the people who love it.

Our goal throughout the process has been to understand past planning efforts, learn what is (and isn't) working in the park, and what park users would like to see in the future. We heard from over 8,000 individuals and reached out to over 150 community-based organizations through flyers in the community, signage in the park, email, direct mail, popup events, community workshops, and one-on-one conversations.

The Franklin Park Action Plan connects the dots between the park's infrastructure, amenities, gathering spaces, active and passive recreational areas, ecology, and the surrounding communities. It's an ambitious plan, spanning a large space, and flexible enough to adapt to our City's needs. The document that follows is just the beginning of the dialogue. We look forward to continuing to work with the community to identify priorities for implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mariama White-Hammond".

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond
Chief of Environment, Energy, and Open Space

CITY of BOSTON

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Land Acknowledgment

Franklin Park is sited on the traditional and unceded lands of the indigenous Neponset / Massa-adchu-es-et (Massachusetts Tribe). These lands have been, and continue to be, taken and colonized. Despite this, Indigenous peoples have stewarded the land throughout generations, and we dedicate this space to pay respect to them and their Elders past and present and emerging. We acknowledge this history in order to think critically about our place on these lands and to recognize and reject the perpetuation of Indigenous erasure.

Stewardship Acknowledgment

We recognize that Franklin Park has been the beneficiary of decades-long commitment from local activists and community stewards who stepped forward to protect it when government resources were absent. Largely self-organized, these individuals and organizations maintained facilities, managed crime, developed programming, and engaged youth in paid training programs. Their advocacy and stewardship has ensured that Franklin Park continues to reflect and serve the full diversity of its surrounding communities. Their contributions will continue to ground and guide the park and its future.











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Stadium light fixture

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WELCOME TO BOSTON LIGHTS









Executive Summary

What is the Action Plan?

INTENT

Franklin Park is deeply loved by the communities it serves.

This Plan does not seek to reinvent the park, to transform its design, character or intent. Instead, it advocates for thoughtfully guided, community-driven improvements that are grounded in a deep understanding of its historic fabric and ecological systems and implemented through continued, dedicated investment so that the park can do what it does now, only better.

The Action Plan recognizes that Franklin Park is a living thing, as are the communities surrounding it. Its proposals respond to the changes that have taken place over its 120+ year history and seek to meet this moment in time. To this end, the Plan aspirations are forward-looking and visionary, but are based in practical and action-oriented recommendations.

First and foremost, the park must return to its original principles: linking people and landscape, and cultivating access to natural open space and outdoor recreation in the belief that this enhances our daily lives, improves public health, and promotes civic discourse.

This report leverages an analysis of the park's history, communities, and land to put forward five primary recommendations for the renewed stewardship and continued evolution of this treasured resource:

Make Connections & Activate Edges

Clarify Movement

Amplify Magnet Destinations

Unify the Park

Build Capacity & Enable Change

BACKGROUND

In 2019, following the recommendation of Imagine Boston 2030 and the opportunity for significant dedicated funding from the sale of the Winthrop Square garage, the Boston Parks and Recreation Department engaged Reed Hilderbrand, in partnership with Agency Landscape + Planning and MASS Design Group, to lead a team of 14 consultants in the creation of the Franklin Park Action Plan – the first comprehensive plan in nearly 30 years.

The Action Plan has been undertaken in a period of great turbulence and uncertainty. Issues of race, equity, public health and a warming climate have quite rightly risen to the top of public discourse and have forced an even more urgent recognition that large parks are not just desirable public amenities but are essential elements of cultural, social, environmental and public health infrastructure foundational to the well-being of our communities. As such, they must be invested in appropriately. The Action Plan recognizes that this investment is even more critical within the communities of color that neighbor the park today.

The recommendations of this plan are the result of years of research and consultation with the community and park stakeholders, including the Franklin Park Coalition and the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, and are built upon a united understanding that Franklin Park is a landmark American public space – a landscape of cultural, social, and ecological significance. The interrelationship of these various dimensions is crucial to envisioning how the park can continue to evolve its legacy and better serve the Boston community.

To that end, the following tenets serve as the basis for the Action Plan proposals:

HISTORY

Great public landscapes are never finished.

They are living things whose cultural (and practical) significance is altered by each generation that engages with them. They require re-evaluation and change to best serve their communities. But that change must be guided by a careful understanding of the history of the place, including its natural, cultural and designed systems.

The most well-known history of the park may be its origin in Frederick Law Olmsted's design. The power of that design (and the extent to which it is still legible today despite long-term disinvestment) should not be underestimated. The choreographed interplay of diverse and dynamic natural systems, the way circulation engages topography, the use

of materials that tie the design and experience of place to the geology of the site and the park's focus on offering visitors a deep connection to a "rural" landscape are all known and valued by the park's users. These elements, and the extent to which they represent the park's "DNA," must be understood and respected. The Action Plan recommendations strive to uncover, recover, and clarify historically significant built elements of this landscape, not just because they are historic, but also because they can serve the contemporary park and its communities and reinforce the characteristics that make this place unique.

However, the evolution of an urban park is inevitable, and with an increasingly diverse community at its edges and a changing city beyond, the park must also remain flexible enough to allow for adaptation including the careful insertion of new uses that make it present and meaningful to those for whom it is a neighborhood resource. As changes are planned, where preservation or restoration is not the goal, the impact to the historic built fabric (and the intent and expression of the original design) should be carefully evaluated and advocated for. New uses should be thoughtfully integrated into the existing patterns of the larger landscape so that they remain deeply rooted in the character of the park and qualities of play, joy, and mental and physical refreshment that the historic design provided.

The history and power of the Olmsted design is, of course, built on many that came before, including hundreds of years of Indigenous habitation with the land and stewardship of its water, plant and animal systems. It is also overwritten by the generations of people who have used, cared for and made memories in the park since it opened. The history of the park and its land is deeply layered and those layers must continue to be carefully considered before change is enacted.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION & HUMAN EXPERIENCE

We are at a pivotal moment in the ecological life of the park; its management and maintenance must improve and adapt or it will not survive as we know it.

Issues of aging infrastructure, decreasing plant diversity and animal habitat, and the pressures of a warming climate threaten this resource. Important components of healthy ecologies have been lost over time, and others are aging without a reliable way to renew. With 8 distinct ecological typologies, the park is a rare urban habitat for both plants and animals. With 527 acres overall and half of that dominated by tree canopy, it is also critical infrastructure for climate change readiness with the power to contribute to both flood

management and water quality benefits and to combat the urban heat island effect.

Again and again, the community has identified that the ability to immerse oneself in a landscape of this size and character, to be in “nature”, as one of the most valued aspects of the park and that investment in improving the ecological systems is a priority. The Action Plan recognizes that management of the park’s ecological resources is not only essential to the longevity and resilience of the park itself, but will allow the park to provide benefits felt far beyond its bounds.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The park is critical public health infrastructure.

The quality of our environment is directly expressed in our mental and physical health. The park encourages activity and exercise, reduces stress and depression, improves physical health outcomes, and fosters a sense of community and belonging.

While the communities around the park are some of the city’s most vibrant and diverse, their residents are disproportionately impacted by factors such as excessive heat and noise, overcrowding, poor air quality and generational trauma. These conditions impact health outcomes, including high rates of chronic illness, asthma, and increased emergency room visits.

Supporting the resilience of the resource is foundational to maintaining its role within all of the communities it serves. Targeting existing conditions that threaten public safety, increasing programming that fosters better physical and mental health outcomes and partnering with community health institutions and advocates are all ways the plan proposes the park can do even more.

EQUITY

The park’s success lies in its diversity and ability to reflect its communities and our cultures. Shared experience and engagement among our communities builds strength and vitality for our civil society.

Once on the periphery of the Shawmut Peninsula, Franklin Park is now the geographic center of the 21st century Boston and serves some of its most demographically, culturally and socioeconomically diverse residents. It is a park for the people and should bring

neighbors together in a place that inspires and engages, educates and enlightens, and welcomes and accepts. It must support recreation, learning, and discovery and foster cultural expression, belonging, and community health.

It is also a cherished resource for neighboring Black and brown communities – a place where everyone feels not just comfortable, but ownership of the park’s spaces. Investments must support the continued expression of communities of color and look for opportunities to create a symbiotic relationship between the park and the neighborhoods with investments moving in both directions.

BEAUTY

Olmsted’s design for the park engaged and intensified the character of the land and its natural systems. It is still a powerfully felt part of the park’s experience today.

Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but despite visible impacts of a lack of sufficient care over time, Franklin Park is an objectively beautiful place. Puddingstone outcrops, 100-year old canopy trees, play of light on the water of the pond, long views to big sky – all of these continue to draw visitors.

Landscapes like this are powerful cultural repositories and important ecological and infrastructural performers, but they are also places of wonder and delight that inspire the imagination and tie us to something greater than ourselves. The somewhat rough beauty of the park is a unique expression of place, reflecting the movements of geological and annual time cycles and allowing visitors to access an immersive experience of “nature” within dense neighborhoods. While this plan argues for significantly increased levels of investment, management and maintenance, those efforts should be directed at supporting the park’s unique character, including its wild beauty.

GOVERNANCE

Large parks are civic experiments and as such are dynamic partnerships between government and its citizens.

The primary responsibility for the park lies, and should continue to lie, with the City. However, the plan recognizes the City’s desire to develop stronger partnerships with advocacy groups and in-park and neighborhood stakeholders – and the opportunity that future investments offer for building them.

Implementation of the plan recommendations can build local capacity to make change, returning value not just to the park, but emanating that value back out to its adjacent communities in real ways. This requires buy-in, advocacy, and coordinated support across City agencies. It requires thinking holistically about the park and the communities that surround it.

The governance of the park is poised to evolve to more fully and powerfully engage community stakeholders to support successful long-term investment in the park. The time for establishing the appropriate governance structures to facilitate this collaboration is now.

(RE)INVESTMENT

Franklin Park has been subject to under-investment for far too long and significant investment is needed now to protect and sustain this critical resource and beloved public space.

The twenty-first century ushered in a new understanding of the ways parks and open spaces provide and create economic value. As a result, much discussion now centers around gentrification and the potential unintended consequences of such value creation.

Seizing on both the great power and responsibility of this knowledge, a broad range of city agencies must take proactive measures to protect and sustain the park's surrounding neighborhoods, and ensure that outcomes of park improvements are mutually-beneficial for existing neighbors. Making a visible commitment to and building trust with the surrounding communities is the most important first step. This risk and responsibility does not however signal a delay in improvements.

The proposals in this document reflect Franklin Park's unique character, its role in the city, and the voices of the community it serves. Engagement throughout the plan development set an important foundation for ongoing conversations. Though more discussion, even debate, is needed before implementation of some recommendations, the proposals are well positioned to both guide investment and inspire stewardship for the next decades of Franklin Park's life.

Franklin Park

Past, Present, Future

OLMSTED'S GENERAL PLAN OF FRANKLIN PARK (1896)

Frederick Law Olmsted designed the Emerald Necklace with Franklin Park as its crown jewel. His immersive park plan centered on an expansive experience of the New England landscape and conceived of Franklin Park as a common ground - a place where all were welcome to enjoy the benefits of recreation and refreshment, to experience nature within the city.



1

FRANKLIN PARK PRESENT (2022)

Incremental changes over time have obscured the reading of original design and split the park into pieces. But many of the important structuring elements and the powerful natural features that led the city to select this site for its first large park remain, ready to be re-revealed.



FRANKLIN PARK FUTURE

Franklin Park is a living thing, as are the communities surrounding it. The Action Plan proposals respond to the changes that have taken place over the park's 120+ year history and seek to meet this moment in time. It advocates for thoughtfully guided, community-driven improvements that are grounded in a deep understanding of its historic fabric and ecological systems and implemented through continued, dedicated investment so that the park can do what it does now, only better.

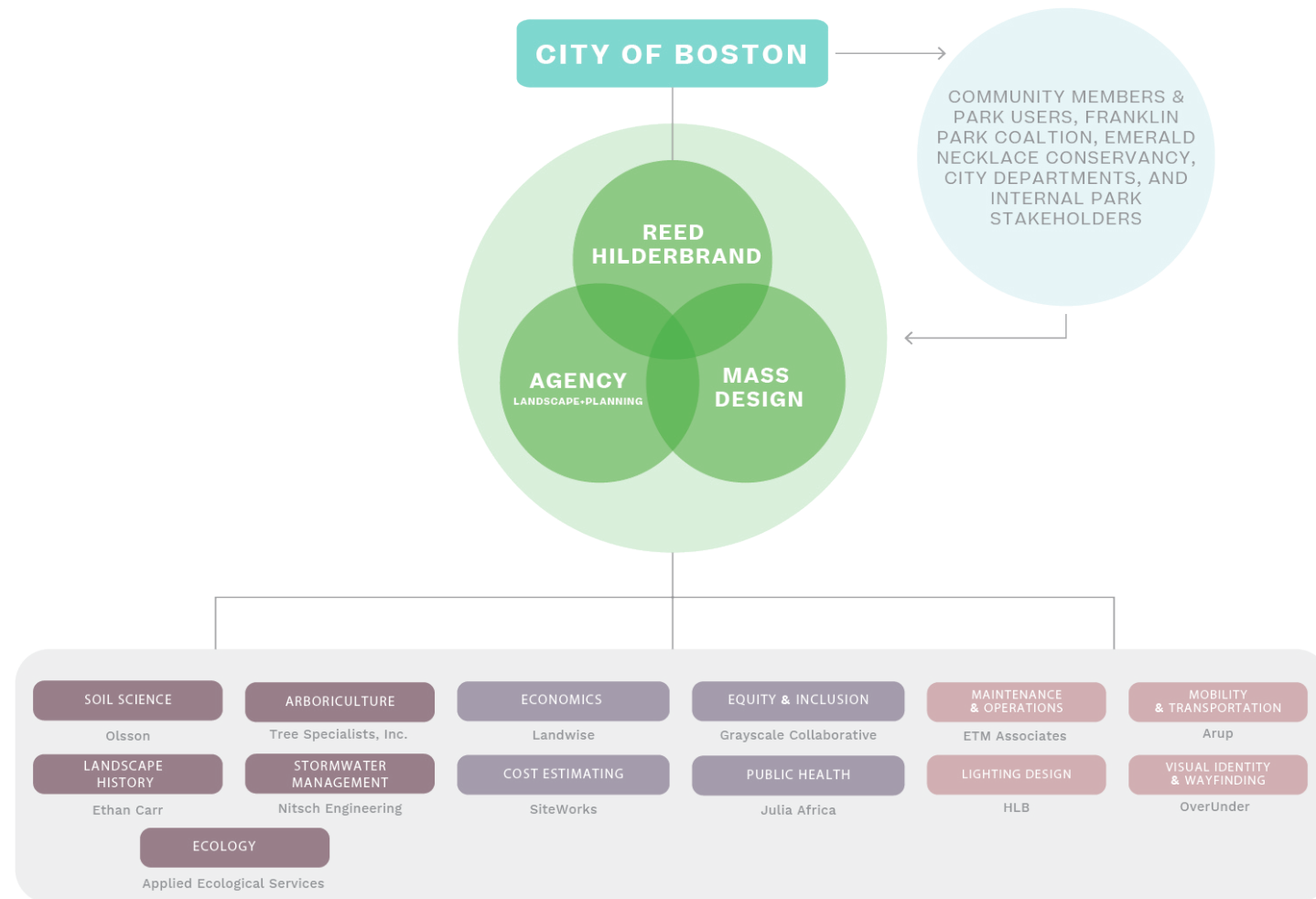


Project Team & Process

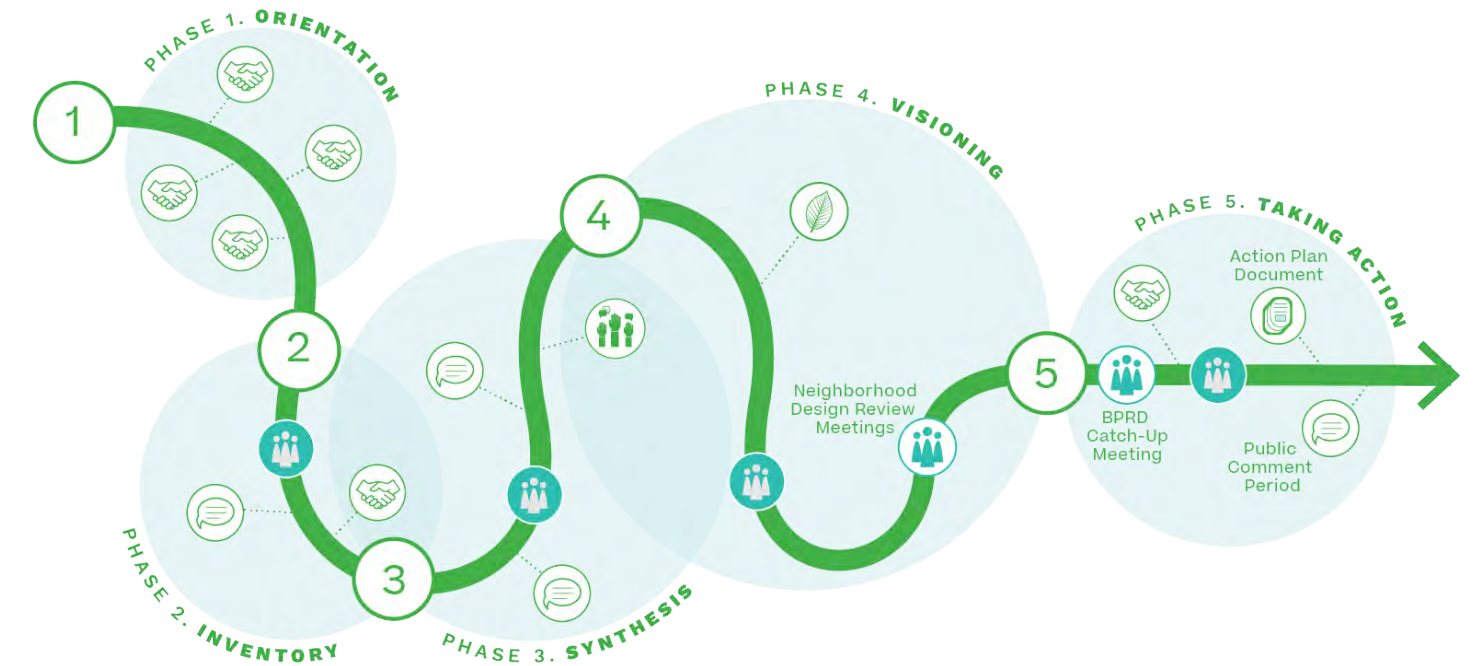
Working with the Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD) and in close collaboration with the Franklin Park Coalition (FPC), other park stakeholders, and the local community, the core design team of Reed Hilderbrand, Agency Landscape and Planning, and MASS Design Group joined together to produce a strategic vision to guide investment in Franklin Park over the next 20-30 years. Together, the team generated comprehensive and actionable recommendations that honor the park's design heritage, expand and engage its users, and will strengthen the connection of the park to the city and the community.

THE DESIGN TEAM

The collective experience of the core design team was supported by the expertise of a team of specialists, who investigated and advised on an array of cultural, environmental, and economic topics to ensure that a broad range of community voices were heard and that all aspects of the park's future were thoughtfully considered.



ACTION PLAN PROCESS



- User Survey & Mini Polls**
Share your feedback
- Pop-Up Events**
Speak with the team during an event in your community
- The Wonder Walk**
Participate in a self-guided scavenger hunt to learn more about the park's history, ecology, and features & share feedback
- Community Workshops & City-Led Meetings**
Identify priorities and understand next steps with the Action Plan team & BPRD
- Themed Discussion Groups**
Deep dive discussions with the Action Plan team
- Action Plan Document**
See the vision for the future of Franklin Park and discover how the plan can be put into action

- 1 Orientation**
Understood the park as a historically and culturally significant landscape, reviewed past and ongoing planning efforts, began an open conversation with the community and other stakeholders, and defined shared goals.
- 2 Inventory**
Surveyed park users' priorities and built an understanding of historic and current park conditions, including built and natural systems.
- 3 Synthesis**
Defined opportunities and challenges that guided design proposals based on analysis and public outreach findings.
- 4 Visioning**
Connected ideas and conversations to establish specific strategies for protecting the park's unique qualities, while proposing important changes.
- 5 Taking Action**
Developed a framework that foregrounded strategies that reflect community priorities to direct future funding.

Building on Past Efforts Citywide and Local Plans

Aligning the Action Plan with the goals established in related city and neighborhood studies will ensure that it is building on past efforts. Considering potential changes in neighborhood and housing development, transit access, and environmental initiatives allows recommendations to contribute to collective future progress.

IMAGINE BOSTON 2030 | OPEN SPACE

Invest in Boston's Largest Park

- The Imagine Boston 2030 plan recognized Franklin Park as the city's foremost opportunity to invest in open space that strengthens the city's physical and social fabric: "Enhance Franklin Park as a keystone park in the geographical heart of the city. Sitting at the nexus of Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, Roslindale, and Jamaica Plain, Franklin Park will grow in its role as a destination for visitors citywide and an asset for surrounding communities... The continued enjoyment of the park by future generations of Bostonians and visitors from around the world requires a major restoration effort, informed by a comprehensive plan for Franklin Park."

2030 Aspirations for Franklin Park

- Invest in world class programming
- Showcase beauty and tranquility
- Improve access to the park
- Prioritize safety
- Provide best-in-class operations and management
- Respect the historic and ecological environment
- Improve signs in the park
- Foster healthy communities
- Create an inclusive gathering place



RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS



Listening to the Community Engagement Strategy

The primary goal of the engagement strategy is to facilitate an equitable and inclusive planning and decision-making process that cultivates a shared vision for the future of Franklin Park. The relationship with the park's neighbors is built on listening, learning, and gathering and integrating feedback throughout the planning process. In order to facilitate conversations, BPRD and the design team both hosted Action Plan meetings and events, and attended neighborhood association meetings and community events to meet people where they were.

ENGAGEMENT GOALS



Keep it Fun!

Make participation in the engagement process an enjoyable activity.



Broaden and Diversify Input

Obtain feedback from all communities who currently enjoy Franklin Park and who could in the future. Special efforts, including neighborhood canvassing, language translation of outreach and meeting materials, and outreach activities geared towards kids, were made to engage historically under-represented communities who live next to the park, such as: lower-income residents, non-English speaking residents, and local youth.



Educate & Inspire

Promote a greater understanding of Franklin Park at a local and city-wide level.



Grow Stewardship

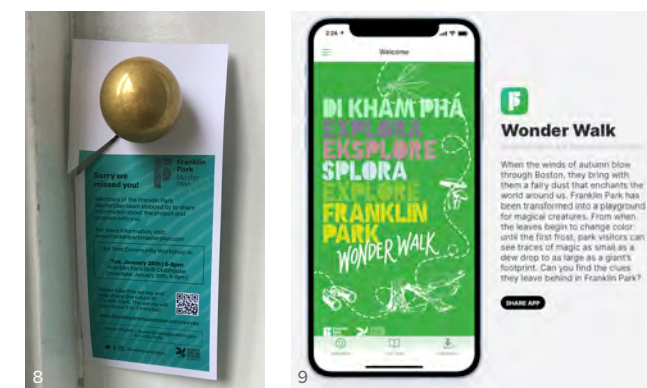
Build a community of civically engaged residents for the long-term success of Franklin Park.

IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

After a number of successful initial planning conversations with residents, including the first public workshop, a series of pop-up events, and neighborhood canvassing, the COVID-19 Pandemic forced the trajectory of the project to change course and to adopt new ways of engagement in order to reach out to residents safely.

The remaining community workshops were hosted online through video conferencing, and the FPAP website continued to provide a dynamic communication platform to share past meeting notes, data findings, and keep the public updated on future meetings and provide information on upcoming events.

These virtual meetings allowed participation to continue when meeting in person was not possible. Afternoon and evening meetings gave participants an option of when to attend that was most convenient. All plan updates continued to be advertised through a variety of methods, though in response to the pandemic, the project introduced the use of project mailers to adjacent residences and an email newsletter to share information more broadly. Virtual meetings were recorded and posted to the project website to provide a way for those that could not attend the meeting to stay connected and involved.



Engagement in Action

Participation by the Numbers

The Action Plan implemented a multi-pronged and layered approach to community engagement. The engagement process emphasized meeting residents where they are, uncovering rich and detailed information about the past and present of the park, and working with local community groups. Throughout the planning process, the project team has engaged residents, community organizations, and various local stakeholder groups alike in the adjacent neighborhoods of Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Roslindale, and Roxbury.

ENGAGEMENT BY PHASE

1 Orientation | August 2019 to January 2020
The project team collected information from residents and park users through **canvassing** and **pop-up events**. The team was able to reach approximately 2,900 households through its canvassing efforts, engage more than 6,000 people through the **online survey**, and connect with over 26,000 different people through the **website** (26,000 unique visits and 33,000 visits total). In addition, BPRD called and/or emailed over 150 organizations to **initiate potential partnerships and raise awareness** of ongoing engagement efforts.

2 Inventory | January 2020 to May 2020
Following several fall and winter engagement efforts including Turkey Trot, Enchanted Trolley Tour, and Canvassing, the **first community workshop** was held in January. The purpose of the meeting was to share the team's initial analysis of the park and ask questions about how the ~300 meeting attendees use the park today in order to uncover patterns and challenges that visitors experience in and around the park. Following the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team halted in-person engagement and updated the project website with details on how to continue to be involved while staying safe. The deadline to respond to the **community survey** was extended until mid-April to collect additional feedback for a total of 6,135 survey responses.

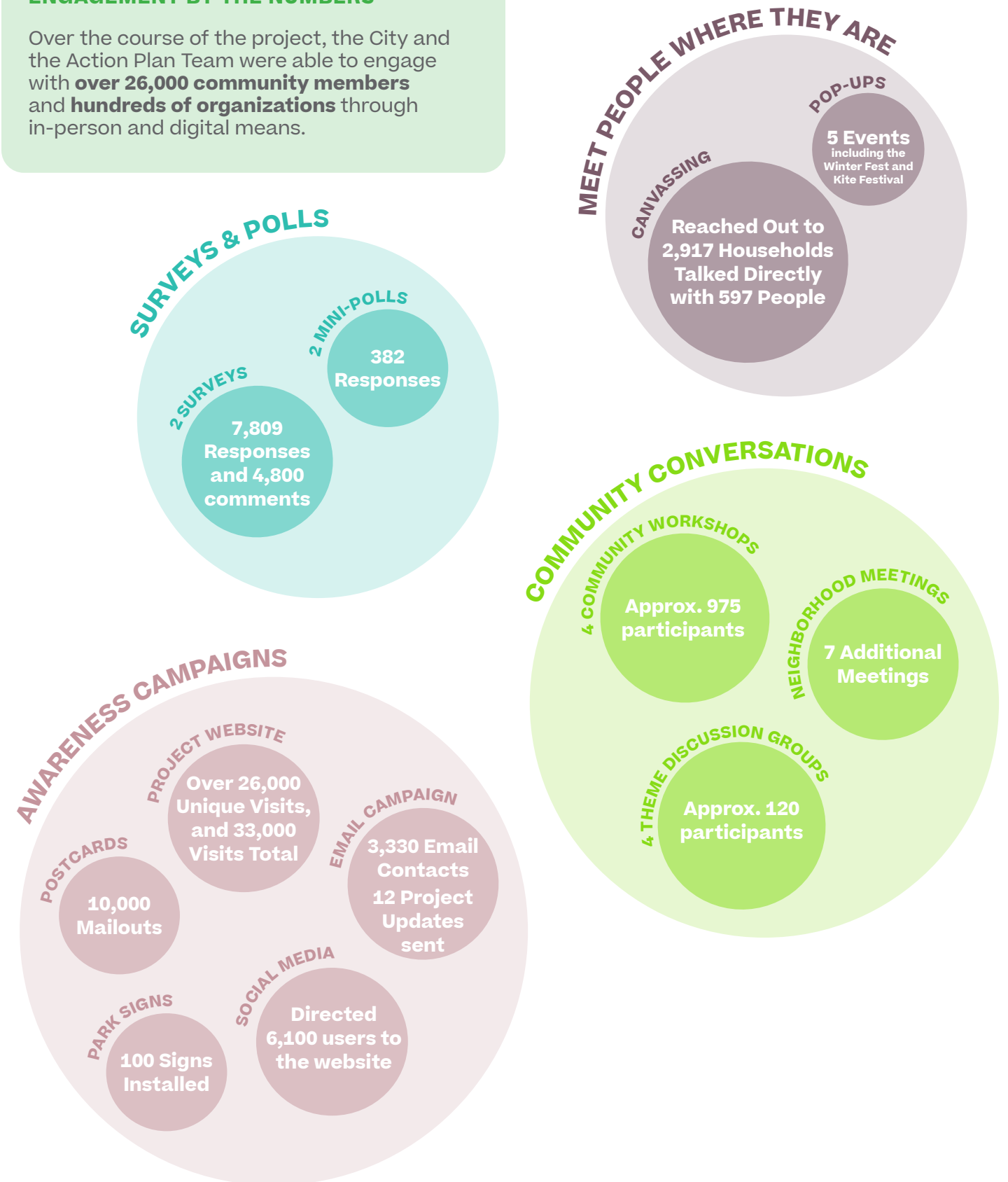
3 Synthesis | June 2020 to December 2020
In the summer of 2020, the City and design team stayed engaged with residents through **mini-polls** to gather additional information about how use of the park may have changed during COVID-19, and by sharing the results of the community survey. This phase also invited residents to dive deeper into the themes and values that unify the plan. In July, the **second community workshop** and a series of **themed discussion groups** provided participants with the opportunity to further understand and discuss how these themes and principles intersect and reinforce one another, totaling six project-led meetings. Following those discussion groups, the draft **Action Plan Principles** were shared via the website and in an online poll.

4 Visioning | January 2021 to March 2022
The project team developed initial recommendations based on synthesized analysis and inputs from the community. At the **third community workshop**, the team shared the 'Four Big Ideas' — the initial design proposals — and how community feedback informed the strategic design and planning approach to the project. Additional **surveys and community conversations** were held to gain feedback on and refine the initial design recommendations.

5 Taking Action | March 2022 to September 2022
The City of Boston held an initial **Taking Action meeting** focused on the implementation of the plan, with a refresher on project progress up until that point. They also provided an overview of project funding streams and the Franklin Park Trust Endowment. The **fourth and final community workshop** was held to glean responses to proposed improvements to the park and to understand the community's top priorities for which recommendations get implemented first.

ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

Over the course of the project, the City and the Action Plan Team were able to engage with **over 26,000 community members** and **hundreds of organizations** through in-person and digital means.



Action Plan Principles

Guiding Current & Future Work

Over-arching priorities were identified through the community survey feedback and the design team's park analysis. Draft principles were shared with the community at Workshop #2 and public comments were collected through a subsequent 'mini-poll', and used to refine and strengthen them. These principles guided the design phases of the Action Plan, ensuring that the proposals are rooted in shared values. They will continue to guide work as the Action Plan moves into implementation.

RECOGNIZE HISTORY, BROADEN POTENTIAL

- Protect, reveal and reinforce essential components of the site's historic fabric, while accommodating contemporary ecological, maintenance, and programming priorities.
- Celebrate the unique and character-defining qualities of the park.
- Provide interpretation of park histories that includes expanded narratives of BIPOC residents and park users.

REACH OUT, WELCOME IN

- Improve the park's connections by advocating for safe crossings and sidewalks, ensuring that views, entrances, and edges are clear and inviting. Add new entrances where needed.
- Create welcoming spaces for everyone to enjoy. Ensure they reflect the needs and goals of the park's neighbors.
- Improve signage and lighting to clarify wayfinding and communicate what the park has to offer; indicate routes to the park from public transit.

BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO PROMOTE A UNIFIED EXPERIENCE

- Ensure the remaining park fabric stays truly public and accessible to all.
- Expand relationships with the zoo, golf course, and hospital by looking for opportunities for shared seasonal use and cross programming. Where necessary fixed boundaries exist, embed them within the park fabric or look for ways to project a message of welcome.
- Clarify park circulation by simplifying paths, and minimizing uninviting barriers, like fences, walls, and bollards, while still keeping vehicles out of areas where they don't belong.
- Rethink the design and functionality of Circuit Drive to prioritize the pedestrian and promote larger park connections.

ENHANCE DIVERSITY TO SUPPORT LONGEVITY

- Pair strategic short-term interventions with long-term management approaches to establish sustainable systems and durable solutions for the eight ecotypes within the park.
- Integrate green infrastructure strategies to improve drainage and water quality, and reduce down-stream impacts.
- Protect heritage trees by addressing pests, setting standards for pruning and tree care, and establishing a new generation of canopy.
- Ensure that forward planning anticipates the impacts of climate change.

SUPPORT EXISTING ASSETS AND EXPAND PARK OFFERINGS

- Provide parkwide amenities (restrooms, water fountains, well maintained paths) to support park use and visitation.
- Transform single-use spaces to be flexible for year-round programming that can serve a variety of groups.
- Strike a balance between prescriptive and flexible programming, ensuring that there are safe and engaging opportunities for exploration, immersion, and learning.
- Embed new interventions in the larger landscape fabric.

GUIDE RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT TO CATALYZE LONG-TERM BENEFIT

- Establish a vision for the future and a 'roadmap' for decision making that is reflective of the needs of the Franklin Park community.
- Align resources with ambition: recognize and balance the impact that new improvements and expanded programming will have on park maintenance requirements.
- Expand capacity and elevate maintenance practices to meet current demands and support new use.
- Build partnerships with neighbors and local talent, community organizations, and surrounding businesses to maximize the impact of improvements for shared benefit between the park and its communities.

What We Heard

Community Priorities Overview

Over the course of the engagement process, thousands of community members and park stakeholders identified a long list of needs and wishes for the park. In conjunction with the design team's analysis, themes and priorities were identified and structured by four overarching 'Big Ideas'. These ideas were further developed and refined into five primary Action Plan recommendations for the future of Franklin Park.



FOUR BIG IDEAS → FIVE PRIMARY PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT WE HEARD:

- **Improve and clarify entrances** with new paths and signage and managed vegetation
- **Enhance activities at the edge** of the park, close to the neighborhoods



MAKE CONNECTIONS & ACTIVATE THE EDGES

- Provide a continuous bike & pedestrian **Circuit Loop**
- **Improve paths** or trails and directional **signage**



CLARIFY MOVEMENT

- **Address basic needs** like restrooms, lighting, water fountains, and directional and informational signs
- Renewal of **The Overlook** and the **Elma Lewis Playhouse**
- Renewal of the park's main entrance at **Peabody Circle**
- Future use for **The Bear Dens**



AMPLIFY MAGNET DESTINATIONS

- Apply a **consistent standard of care** across the park that maintains the park's varied landscapes at a high level for safe and sustained use and **ecological health**
- Better incorporate adjacent facilities, like White Stadium, by **rethinking fences, barriers, removing dense vegetation** or seeking collaborative programs
- Increase **habitat and diversity** throughout the park



UNIFY THE PARK

+



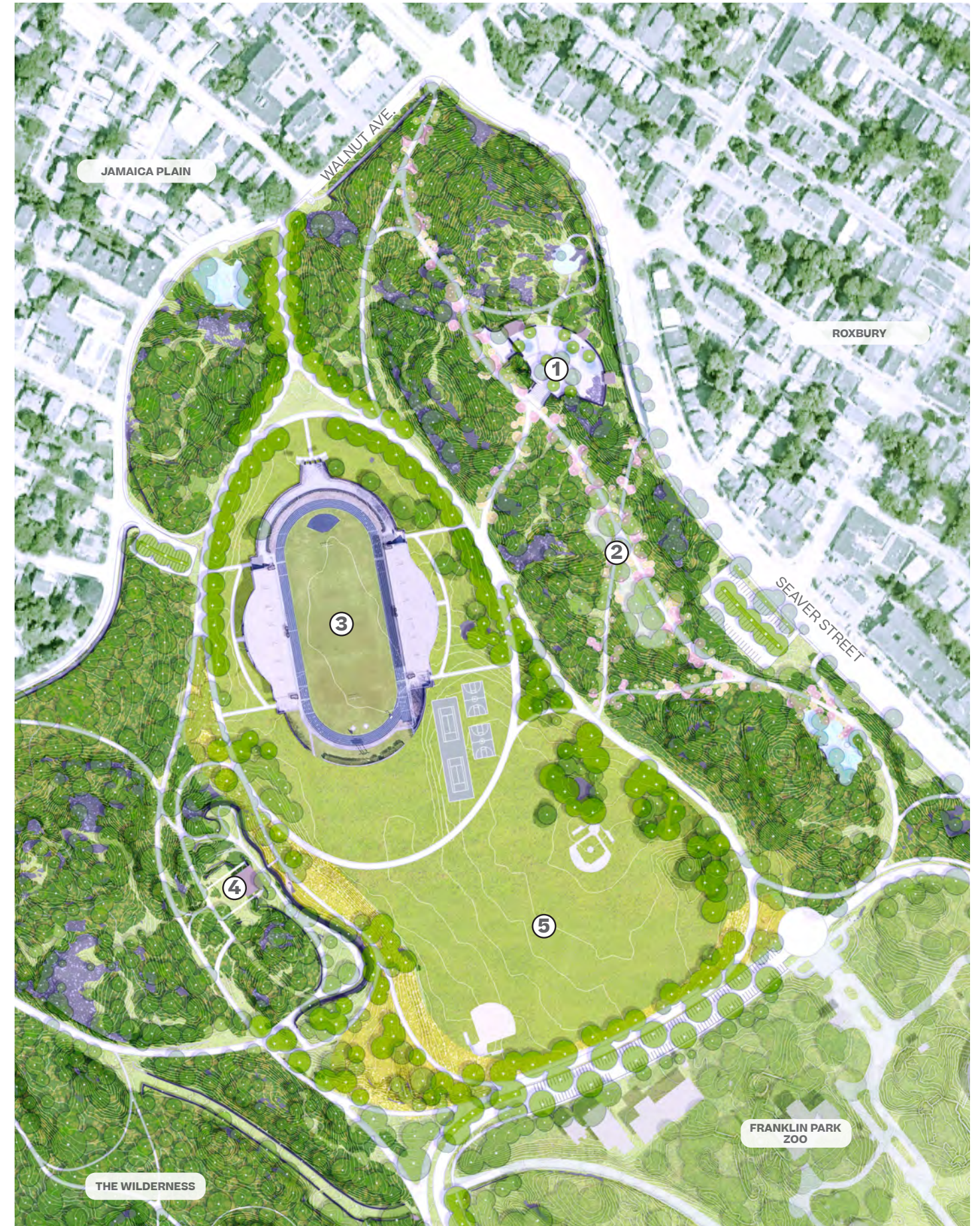
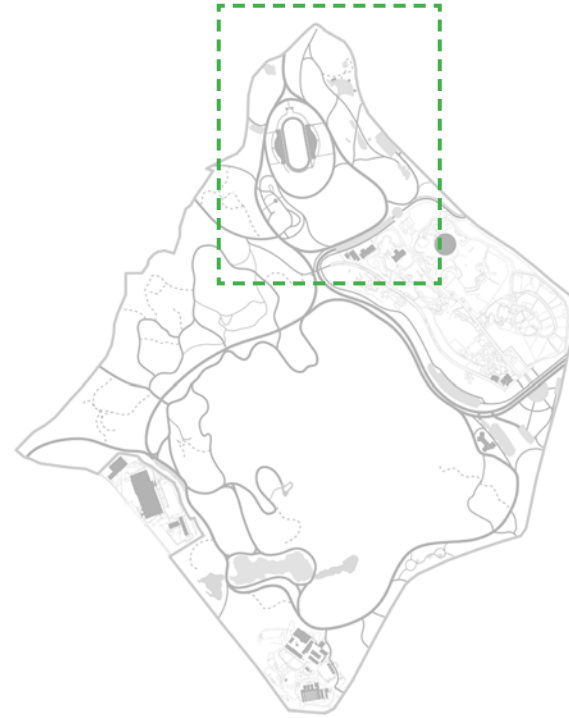
BUILD CAPACITY & ENABLE CHANGE

Key Improvement Projects by Area

The Playstead & Long Crouch Woods

The Playstead

1. *The Bear Dens* (pg. 308-309)
 - Restore the Bear Dens for multi-purpose use.
2. *Long Crouch Woods* (pg. 306-307)
 - Perform invasive removals & add new planting, improved trails, & new nature play areas.
3. *White Stadium* (pg. 312-313)
 - Make improvements for shared community & Boston Public Schools use, including new parking.
4. *The Overlook* (pg. 302-305)
 - Restore The Overlook ruins and return The Elma Lewis Playhouse to its historic location with a new stage, restrooms, and seating.
5. *The Playstead* (pg. 310-315)
 - Upgrade the fields (including drainage/stormwater improvements), create the tailgate edge & improve parking, and establish a new Playstead Loop path for bikes and pedestrians (including seating, lighting, and planting).



Key Improvement Projects by Area

Peabody Circle, American Legion & Scarboro Pond

Peabody Circle & Refectory Hill

1. *The Front Porch* (pg. 288-297)
 - Establish a new 'front porch' pedestrian entrance and terrace along Blue Hill Avenue.
2. *Peabody Circle* (pg. 288-297)
 - Reinststate the historic pedestrian circulation and expand tree planting to create a new Peabody Circle Plaza for events & programming.
3. *Stepped Seating Grove* (pg. 288-297)
 - Create terraced outdoor seating with new canopy trees for outdoor education and programming.
4. *Refectory Hill Parking* (pg. 288-297, 246-249)
 - Integrate a new parking lot on Refectory Hill.

American Legion

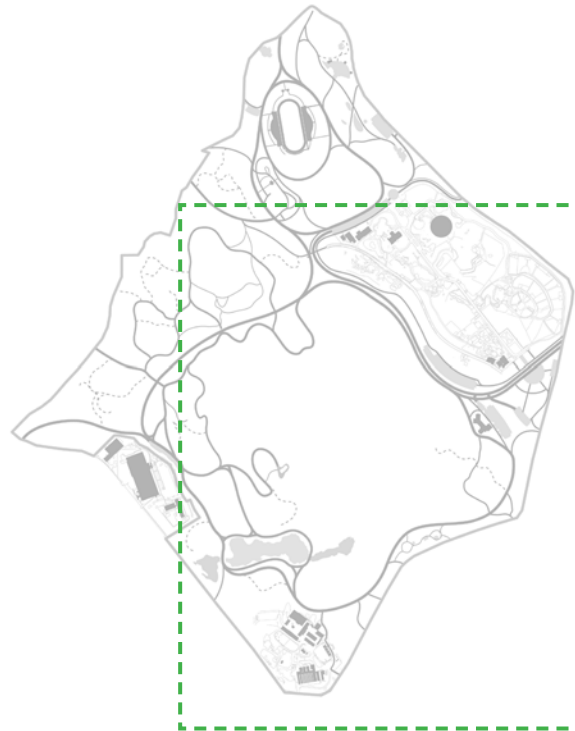
5. *Abbottswood* (pg. 330-331, 250-259)
 - Perform invasive removals & add new planting; introduce new trails.
6. *Outdoor Classroom* (pg. 288-297)
 - Integrate a new outdoor classroom adjacent to the wet meadow.
7. *American Legion Playground* (pg. 288-297)
 - Make playground improvements, including a new splashpad.

The Yard

8. *Park Access* (pg. 214-215, 218-219)
 - Provide a public pedestrian path to access the park.
9. *Future Improvements* (pg. 324-327)
 - Improve The Yard to serve both public uses and BPRD maintenance functions.

Scarboro Pond & Hill

10. *Rock Morton & Rock Milton* (pg. 250-259, 330-331)
 - Perform invasive removals & improve trails.
11. *Scarboro Pond* (pg. 356-359, 392-397)
 - Restore Scarboro Pond ecology and improve access to the water's edge.
12. *Scarboro Hill* (pg. 348-371, 250-259, 392-397)
 - Perform invasive removals & vista clearing, add new planting, and make path improvements throughout.
 - Include a designated area for the Massachusetts Tribe ceremonial activities.



Key Improvement Projects by Area

Ellicottdale & The Wilderness

Ellicottdale & Schoolmaster Hill

1. *Upper Lawn* (pg. 316-323)
 - Restore the upper lawn with shaded picnic and BBQ areas, expand the tennis courts, and provide restrooms.
2. *Lower Lawn* (pg. 316-323)
 - Restore the lower lawn for flexible use, and provide a boardwalk and trails within the wet woodland.
3. *Ellicott Arch* (pg. 316-323, 268-269)
 - Restore the arch, and add lighting & new planting.
4. *Schoolmaster Hill* (pg. 332-333)
 - Restore the Schoolmaster Hill ruins & pergola, and introduce a flowering tree walk along the path leading from Ellicottdale.



The Wilderness

5. *The Wilderness Ecological Restoration* (pg. 348-361)
 - Perform invasive removals, add new planting, and make trail and wayfinding improvements.



Key Improvement Projects by Area

Circuit Loop & Circuit Drive

Circuit Drive & The Valley Gates

1. *Circuit Loop* (pg. 236-243)
 - Reconfigure vehicular circulation to provide a safe multi-modal circuit throughout the park.
2. *The Circuit Drive Parking Lot* (pg. 246-249)
 - Improve and expand the parking lot with canopy trees and stormwater management
3. *The Valley Gates* (pg. 220-223)
 - Clarify circulation & restore the Valley Gate headhouses.

