

# Improvements to Tadpole Playground

Landmarks Commission Design Review



October 6, 2025  
Boston Parks and Recreation



# AGENDA

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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

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- *Project Location, Team and Schedule*
- *Goals and Objectives*
  - *Boston Common*
  - *Playground*
- *Community and Student Input*
- *Site Analysis*
  - *Site History*
  - *Archaeology*
  - *Existing Topography*
  - *2023 Master Plan Site Plan*

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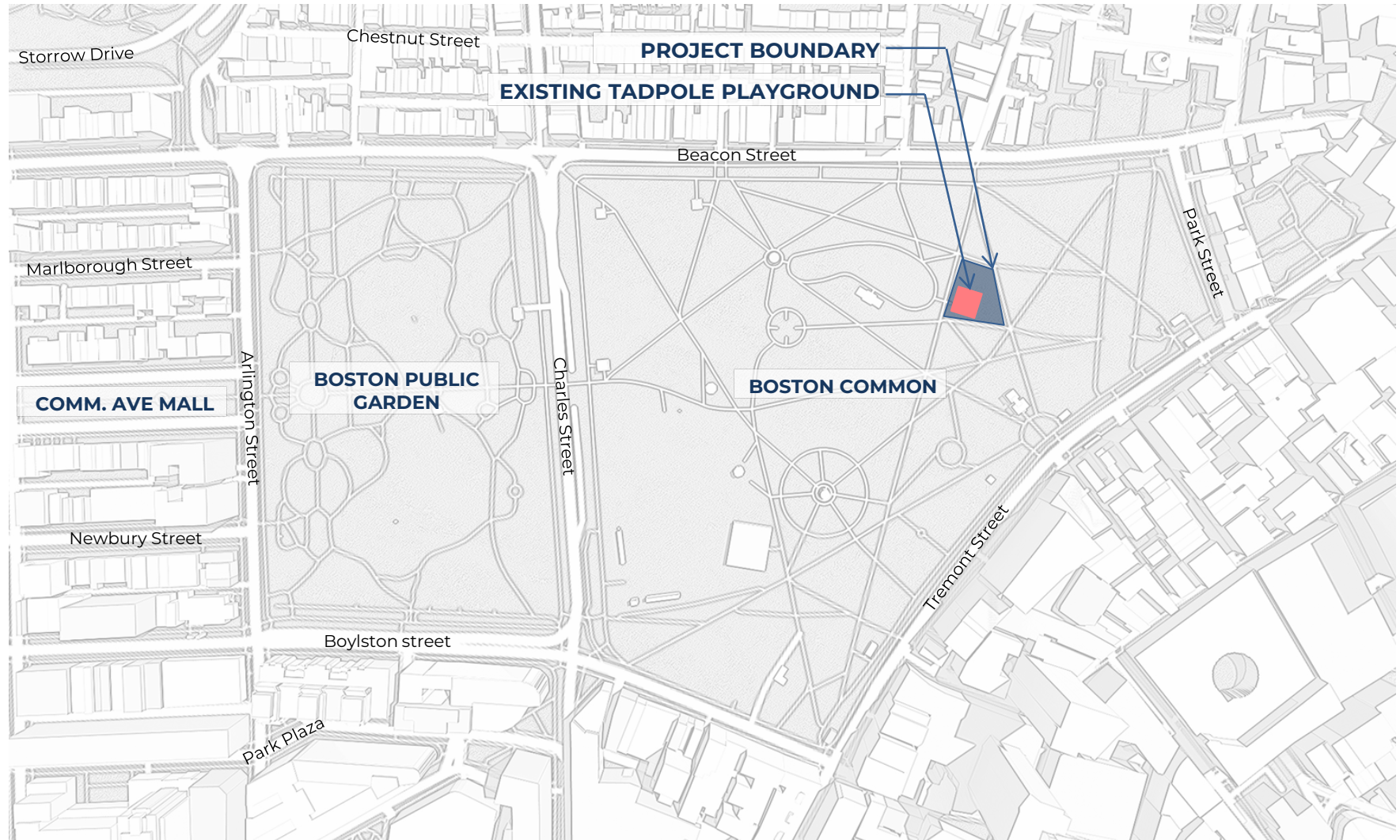
## PROPOSED DESIGN

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- *Site Plan*
- *Play Elements*
- *Story Circle*
- *Ball Run / Plant Protection*
- *Entry Concept*
- *Plant Palette*



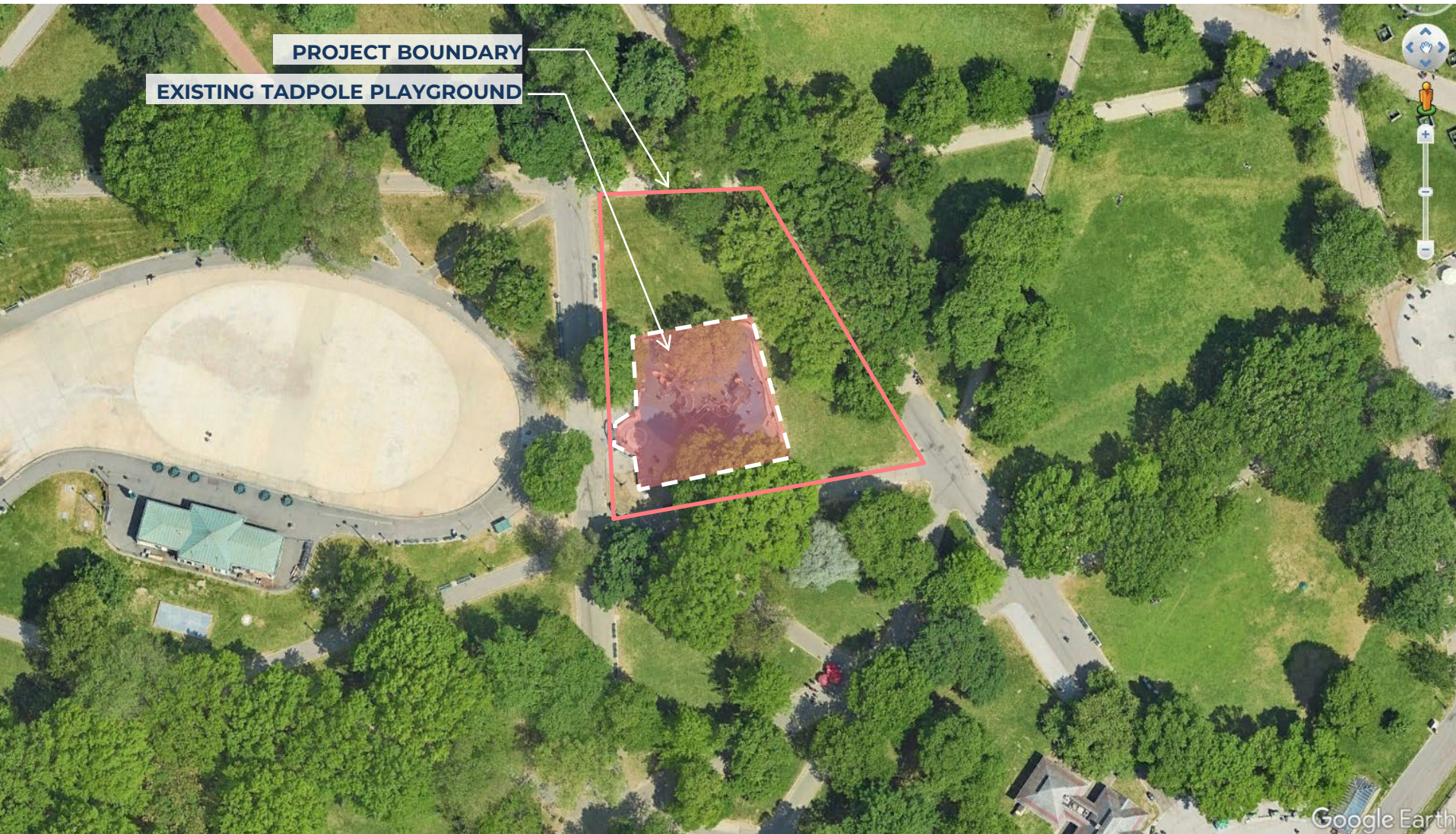
# PROJECT LOCATION





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# PROJECT TEAM

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## **Kevin Bogle**

Senior Project Manager  
Boston Parks and Recreation

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## **Rebecca McKevitz**

Director of Parks Care & Capital Projects  
Friends of the Public Garden

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## **Christopher Breen**

Deputy Director of Neighborhoods  
City of Boston

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## **Cassie Bethoney, RLA**

Team Leader, Landscape Architecture  
Weston & Sampson

## **Regan Andreola, RLA**

Senior Project Manager  
Weston & Sampson

## **Allison Gramolini, RLA**

Project Landscape Architect  
Weston & Sampson

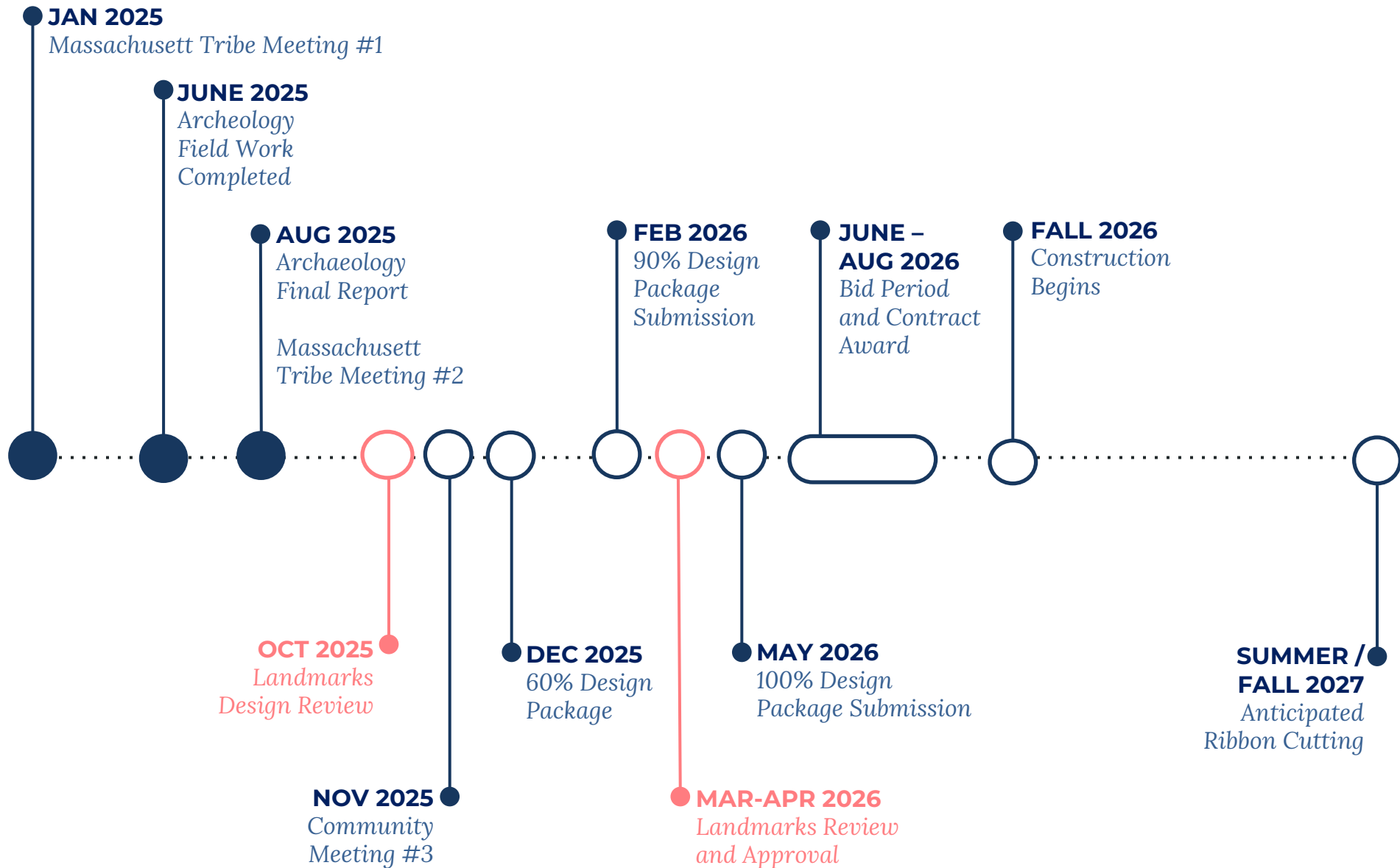
## **Ryan Morales**

Landscape Designer  
Weston & Sampson





# PROJECT SCHEDULE





# BOSTON COMMON MASTER PLAN GOALS & OBJECTIVES

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- *Support and sustain multi-functional park for the full diversity of users*
- *Strengthen the park's natural, historic, cultural, and visual landscape character*
- *Expand amenities to support park visitors*
- *Improve safety, maintenance, and management of the Common*
- *Improve the natural and physical infrastructure of the Common for quality and resilience*





# PLAYGROUND GOALS



Create **accessible entrances** (along Brimmer Path and between Brimmer and the existing entrance).



Add more and better site **amenities** – stroller parking areas, social seating for caregivers, etc.

Create new and different types of play, new accessible connections and more playground amenities by expanding the playground's footprint. Protect what makes Tadpole Playground great!



Incorporate a **vending spot** just outside the playground.



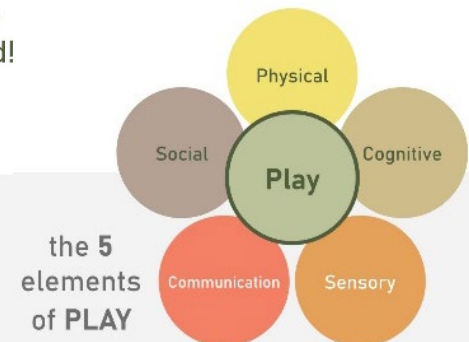
Introduce new **play equipment** that expands play value and entices a wide variety of age groups to play.



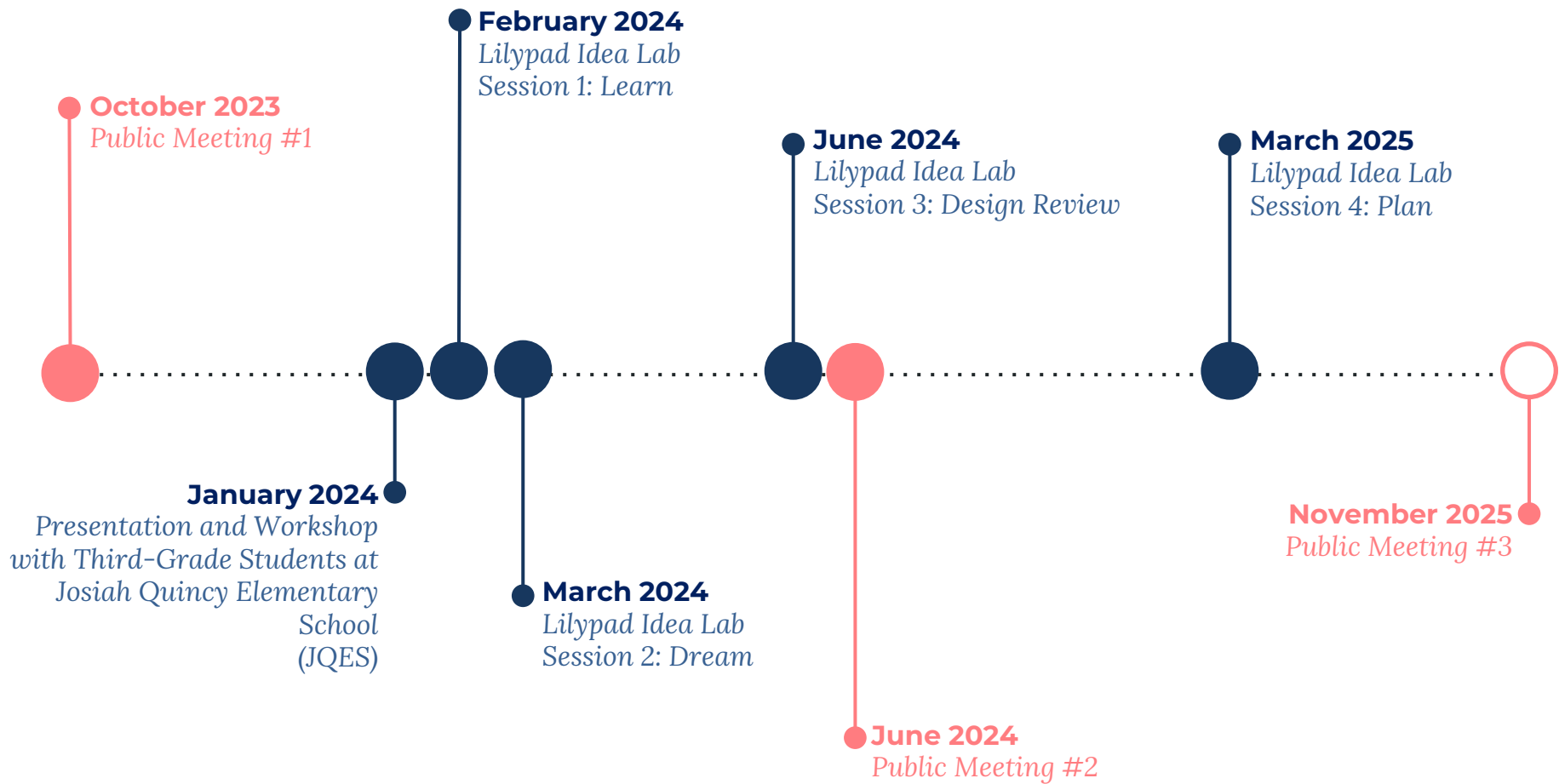
Protect the **trees**, especially the tree inside the playground!



Build **play value** into the panel's natural topography.



# COMMUNITY AND STUDENT INPUT





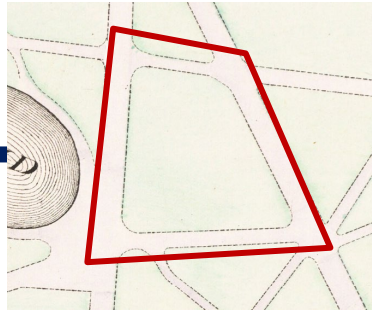
# SITE HISTORY

**6000-3000 BP**

Indigenous people  
lived seasonally on  
the lands of the  
Common

**1634**

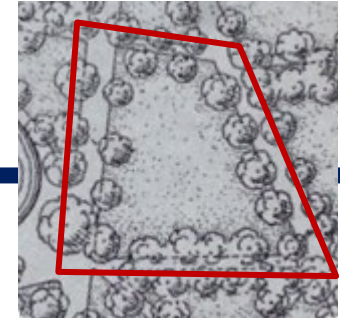
Boston Common  
officially established



**1888**



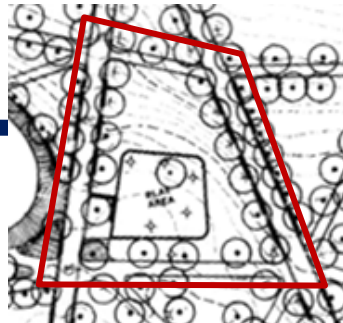
**1901**



**1925**



**1934**



**1970**

**1970s**  
Wooden  
playground  
built

**1987**  
Common listed  
as National  
Historic  
Landmark

**1977**  
Common  
designated a  
Boston Landmark



**1990**

**1990**  
Play area  
equipment  
replaced

**2002**  
Playground  
renovated  
with addition  
of frog  
sculptures

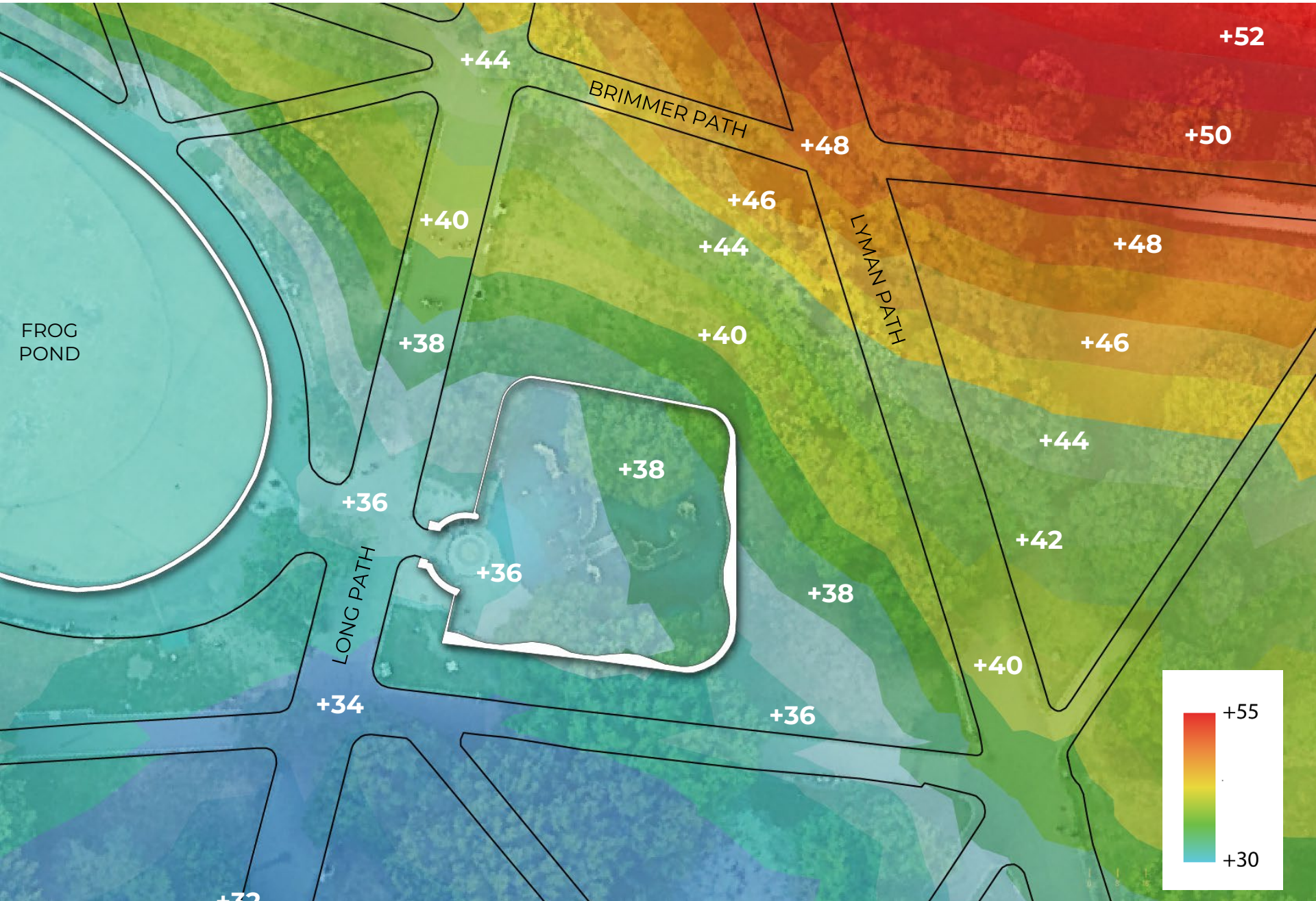
# ARCHAEOLOGY



- Spring 2025 archaeological dig by Heritage Consultants
  - 15 shovel test pits, two excavation units
  - Ground penetrating radar survey
- 3,786 artifacts recovered
- Ceramic shards, glass shards, brick fragments, coins
- 5 Native lithic artifacts
- All Native artifacts found in fill layers
  - Removed from original context → not archaeologically significant

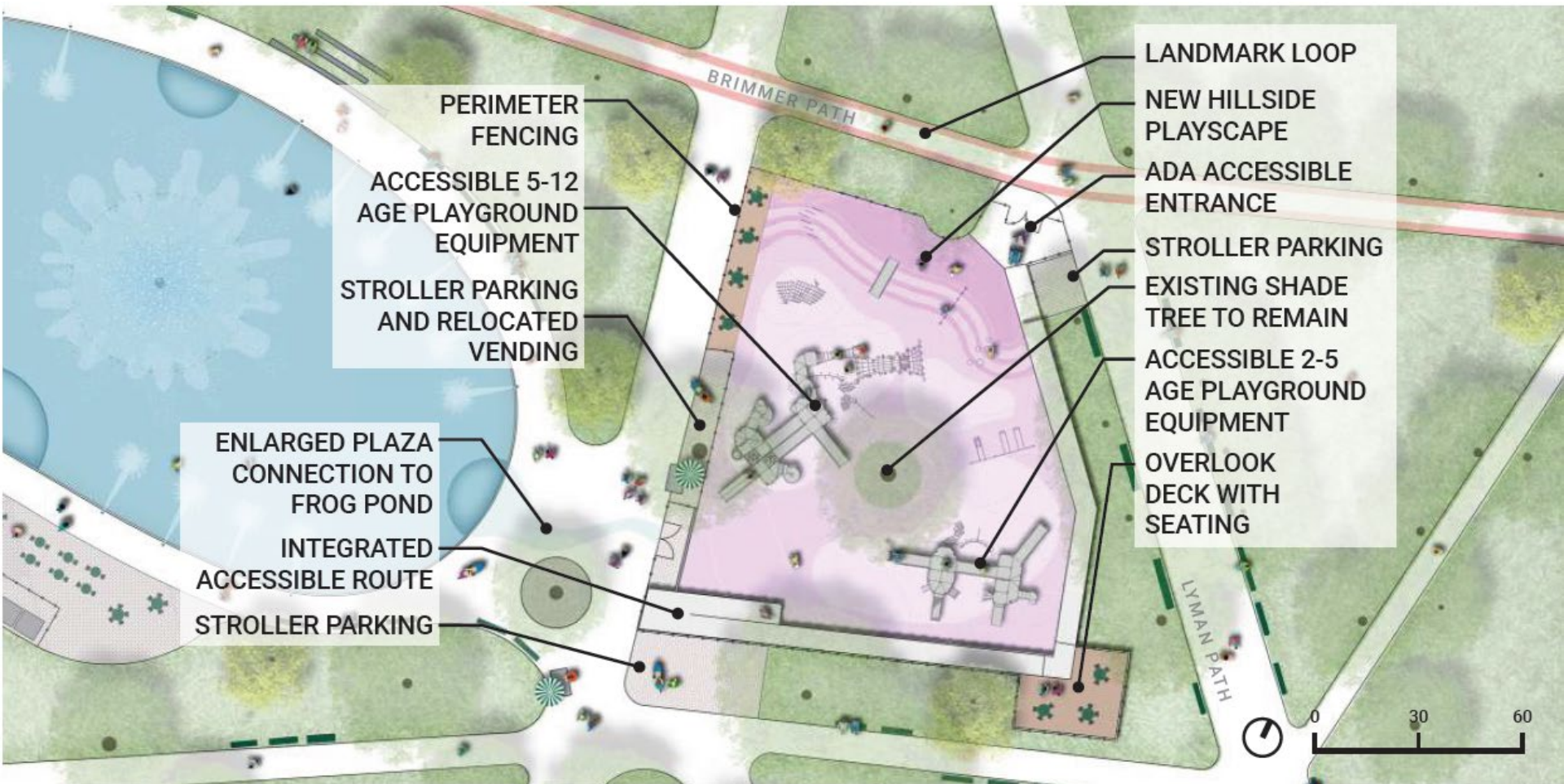


# EXISTING TOPOGRAPHY





# 2023 MASTER PLAN SITE PLAN





# PROPOSED SITE PLAN



# PLAY ELEMENTS: *Tree House Structure*





# PLAY ELEMENTS: Tree House Structure



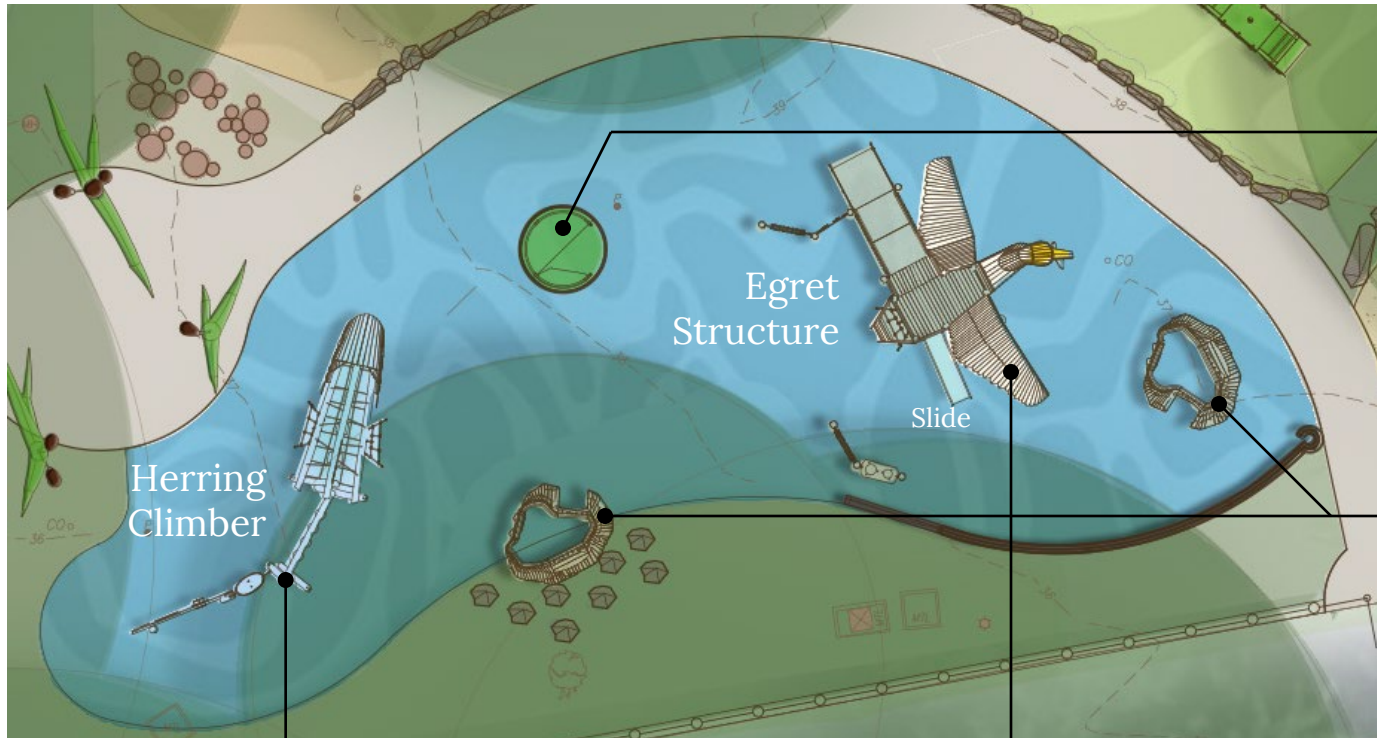
Existing Color Palette – Greens, Tans, Blues



Proposed Color Palette – Natural Tones



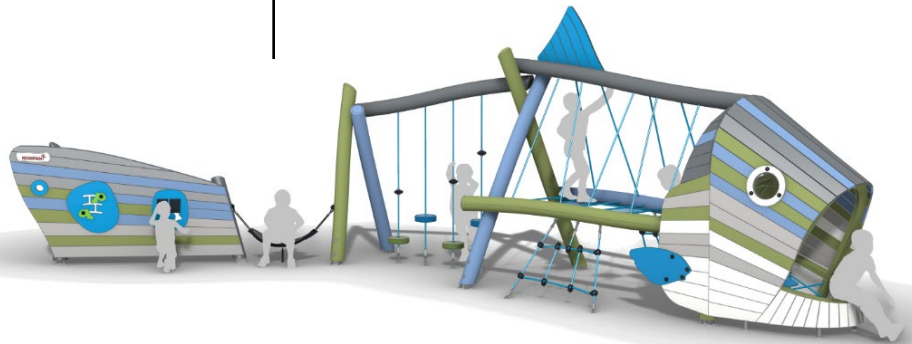
# PLAY ELEMENTS 2-5 Year Old Zone



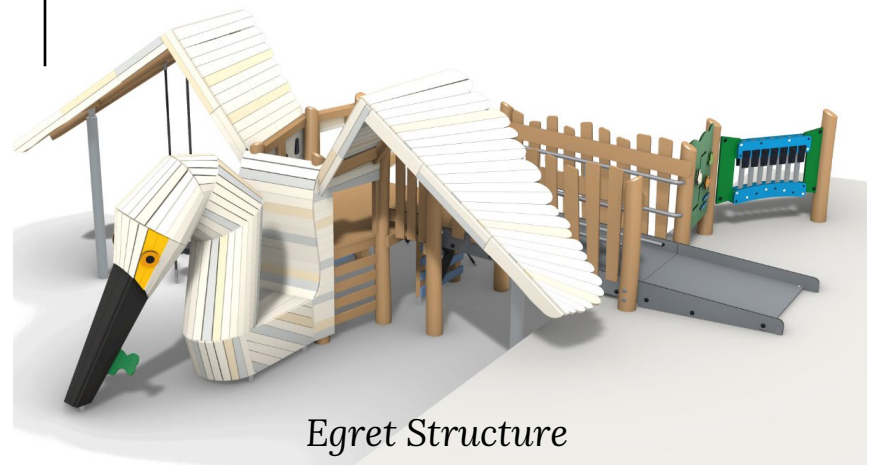
*Universal Carousel*



*Stump Playhouse (2)*



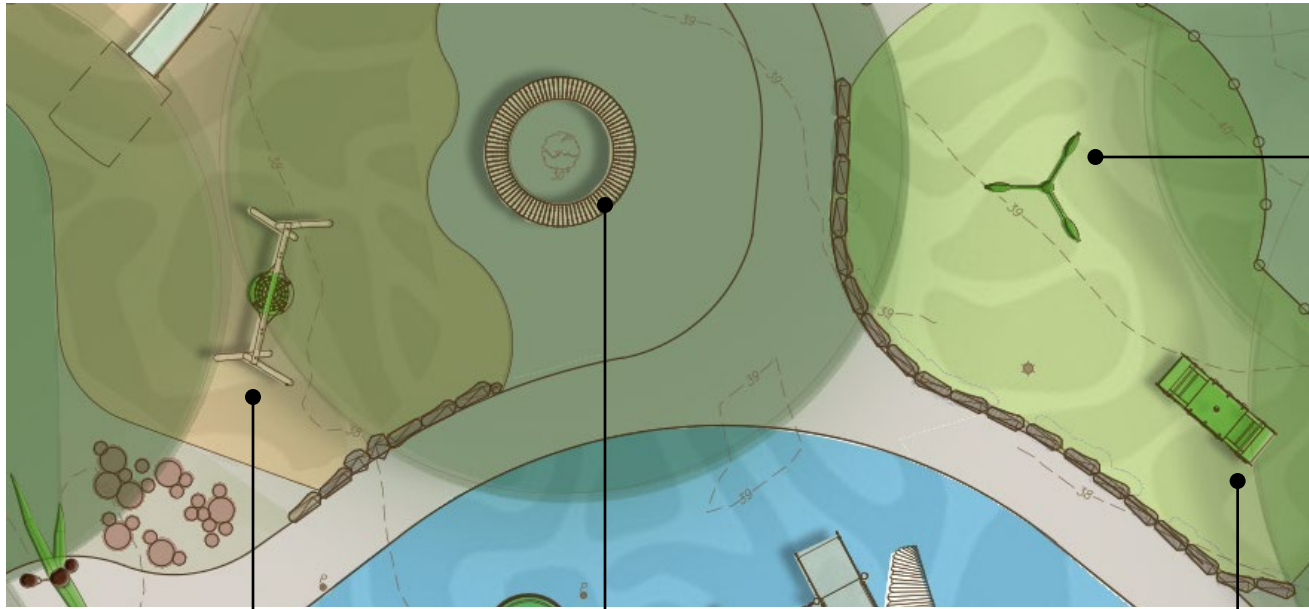
*Herring Climber*



*Egret Structure*



# PLAY ELEMENTS: *Freestanding Elements*



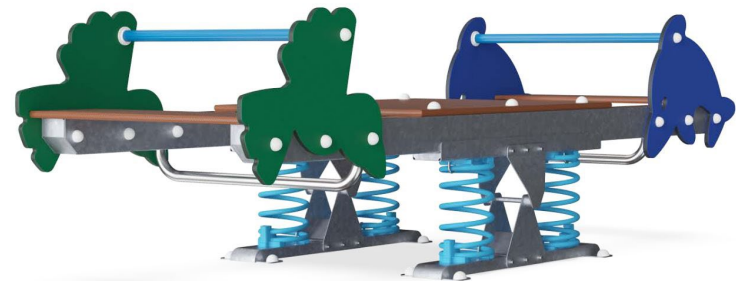
*3-Way Belt Swing / Spinner*



*Basket Swing*

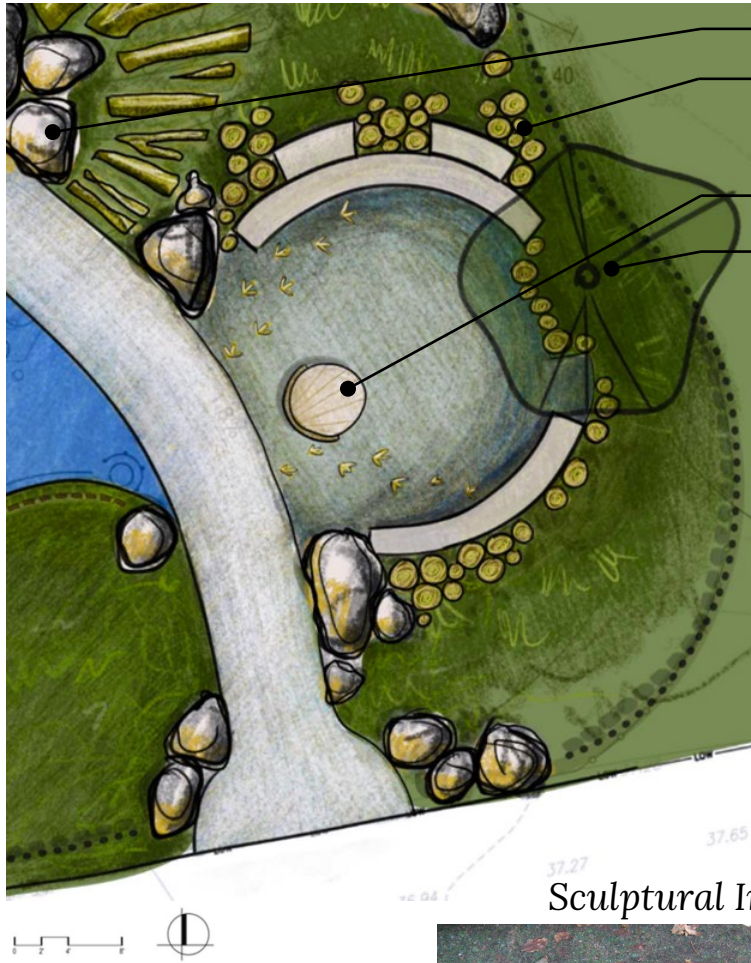


*Circular Bench*



*Group Seesaw*

# STORY CIRCLE



- Boulders
- Stepped Stumps
- Terraced Bench
- Seating
- Storytelling Seat
- Proposed Tree



Inspiration



Sculptural Inlays





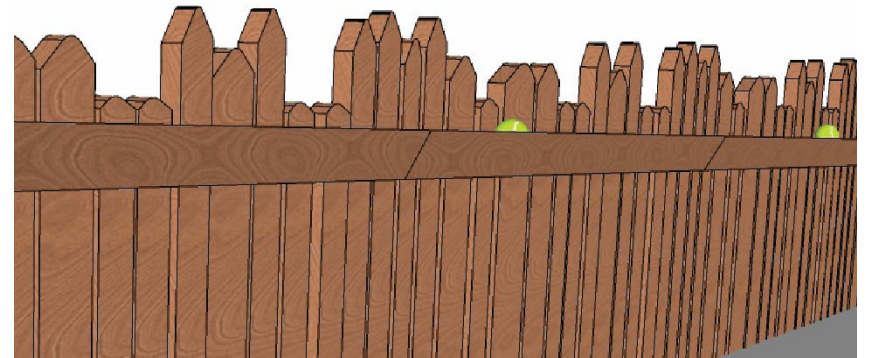
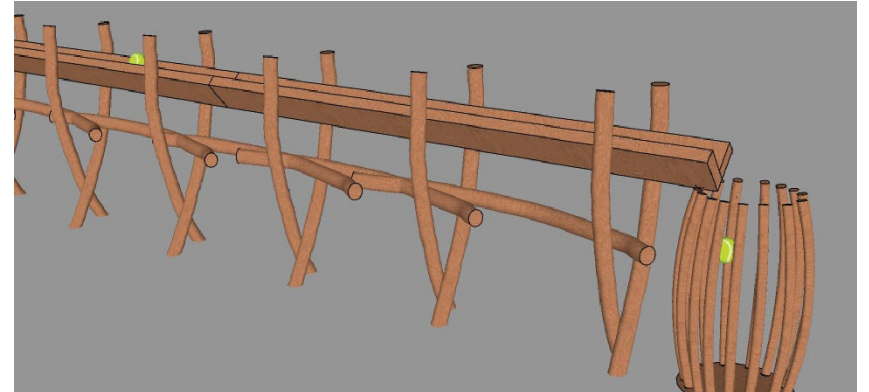
# BALL RUN / PLANT PROTECTION



Fish Weir Inspiration



Conceptual Development



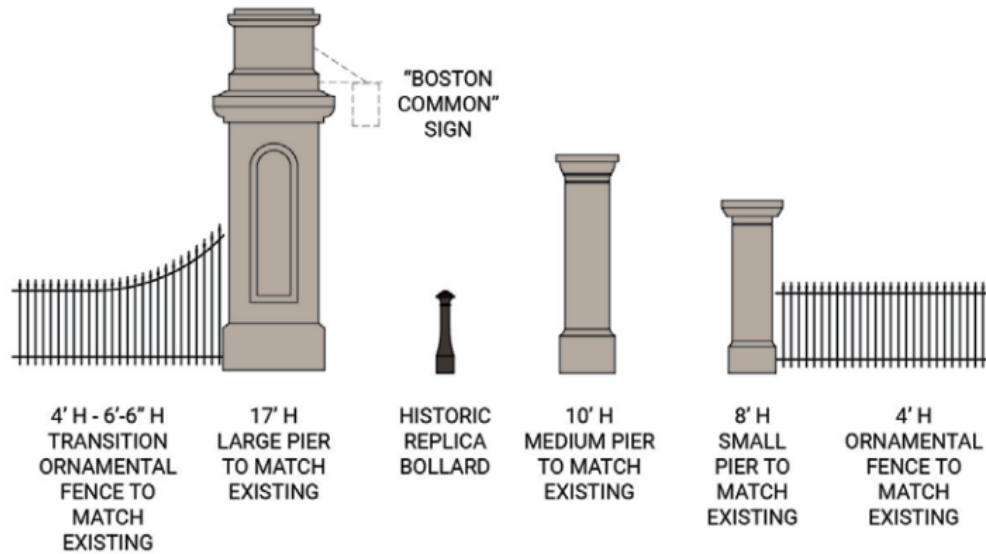


# ENTRY CONCEPT: Main Entrance





# ENTRY CONCEPT: Main Entrance



Precedent for  
Cattail Elements  
South Oxford  
Park, Brooklyn,  
NY



Boston Common Master Plan – Entryway Guidelines



Existing  
Sign at  
Tadpole  
Playground



# ENTRY CONCEPT: Secondary Entrances



Simple picket gate precedent at the Boston Common's Central Burying Ground (elements above the top rail would be removed for safety)



# PLANT PALETTE: 'Wetland'



**Redosier Dogwood\***  
*Cornus sericea*



**Shrubby Cinquefoil\***  
*Potentilla fruticosa*



**'Red October' Big Bluestem\***  
*Andropogon gerardii*



**Pink Muhly Grass\***  
*Muhlenbergia capillaris*



**Tufted Hairgrass\***  
*Deschampsia cespitosa*



**Prairie Goldenrod\***  
*Solidago nemoralis*



**Prairie Dropseed\***  
*Sporobolus heterolepsis*



**Cotton Grass\***  
*Eriophorum virginicum*



# PLANT PALETTE: 'Shrubland'



**Juniper**  
*Juniperis procumbens*



**Serviceberry\***  
*Amelanchier canadensis*



**Gro-Low Fragrant Sumac\***  
*Rhus aromatic 'Gro-Low'*



**Chokeberry\***  
*Aronia melanocarpa*



**New Jersey Tea\***  
*Ceanothus americanus*



**Little Bluestem\***  
*Schizachyrium scoparium*



**False Wild Indigo\***  
*Baptisia australis*



**Blue Star**  
*Amsonia hubrichtii*

\* Denotes native plant



# PLANT PALETTE: 'Forest'



**Witch Hazel\***  
*Hamamelis virginiana*



**Flowering Dogwood\***  
*Cornus florida*



**Nannyberry Viburnum\***  
*Viburnum lentago*



**Spring Beauty\***  
*Claytonia virginica*



**Bearberry\***  
*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*



**Foamflower\***  
*Tiarella cordifolia*



**Canada Anemone\***  
*Anemone canadensis*



**Hay-Scented Fern\***  
*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*





# THANK YOU!

Comments and questions?



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