

# McMILLAN SAND FILTRATION SITE COMMUNITY CENTER & PARK

COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS STAFF REVIEW  
25 SEPTEMBER 2020









# U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

401 F STREET NW SUITE 312 WASHINGTON DC 20001-2728 202-504-2200 FAX 202-504-2195 WWW.CFA.GOV

25 June 2020

Dear Mr. Falcicchio:

In its public meeting of 18 June conducted by videoconference, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a final design submission for a new park and community center building on the southern portion of the historic McMillan Sand Filtration Site at North Capitol and Channing Streets, NW. The Commission approved the proposed landscape design, contingent on the resolution of the issues raised in its review; however, it did not take an action on the proposal for the community center building, requesting additional study and documentation of the design for this component of the project.

The Commission members expressed their continued enthusiasm for the adaptive reuse of this outstanding urban site and historic industrial relic, commenting that its redevelopment and interpretation has the potential to be significant, both locally and nationally. They expressed appreciation for the responsiveness of the new project team and endorsed the progress made on the landscape design since the project was last reviewed. However, while accepting the general concept and massing of the proposed building, they observed that it was not adequately documented in the presentation, and they requested the submission of additional drawings and renderings for review; specific items that should be documented include the proposed material palette, the projecting shade structures, and how the new interventions meet the existing historic elements of the site, such as at the earthen berm and at filter cell 28. In addition, they raised concern with the proposed arrangement of the building program and the resulting decision to locate the only building entrance on the upper level of the site at the South Court, which would isolate the building from its outdoor program spaces and the surrounding park. They advised that the project would benefit from the inclusion of entrances at the upper-level playground on the west and at the lower-level plaza on the east; this lower-level entrance would also facilitate more pedestrian movement between the street, the public plaza and water garden, and the building, making the relatively secluded plaza feel safer.

For the design of the site, the Commission members expressed strong support for the proposed revisions to the landscape, and they provided several suggestions for its refinement. Regarding the plaza, they recommended repositioning the bioretention areas outward, possibly integrating them with the tree planting beds and reducing the width of the outer walkway, in order to avoid subdividing the central space and to improve the relationship to the plaza's perimeter of stepped berms. Although they expressed some support for open, half-circular benches surrounding the trees, they also suggested substituting moveable seating for the circular benches to improve the function and clarity of the central space. They questioned the extensive use of concrete retaining walls and terracing that would support the earthen berm, particularly at the southern gateway along North Capitol Street, recommending instead the use of structural soil and geotextiles to bring the steep, simply planted slopes of the berm underneath the pedestrian bridge and into the site. For the planting palette, they suggested the reconsideration of the proposed lindens in the playground, as these trees tend to attract bees; while this is a desirable characteristic for promoting biodiversity, it may be inappropriate where children are playing. They also advised further study of the blooming patterns of the various small trees proposed along the Olmsted Walk to ensure that the resulting rhythm of color appears intentional; they recommended further study of the placement of the proposed exercise stations along the walk, commenting that using them may be challenging due to their close proximity to the narrow path.

The Commission commends this redevelopment project to create a public facility that supports its surrounding community and is an exemplary treatment of historic resources. To complete the final review of the community center building, the Commission looks forward to the review of an additional submission that provides comprehensive documentation and addresses its recommendations; please coordinate with the staff for the resolution of the comments regarding the landscape design. As always, the staff is available to assist you with the next submission.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA  
Secretary

John Falcicchio, Acting Deputy Mayor  
D.C. Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 317  
Washington, DC 20004

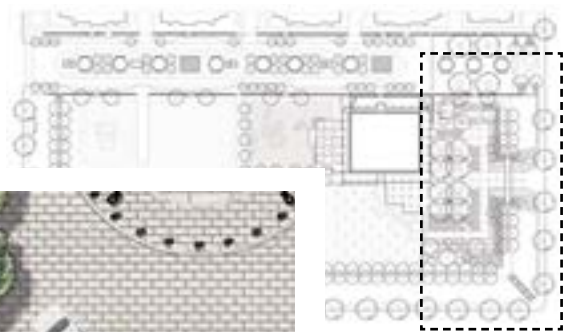
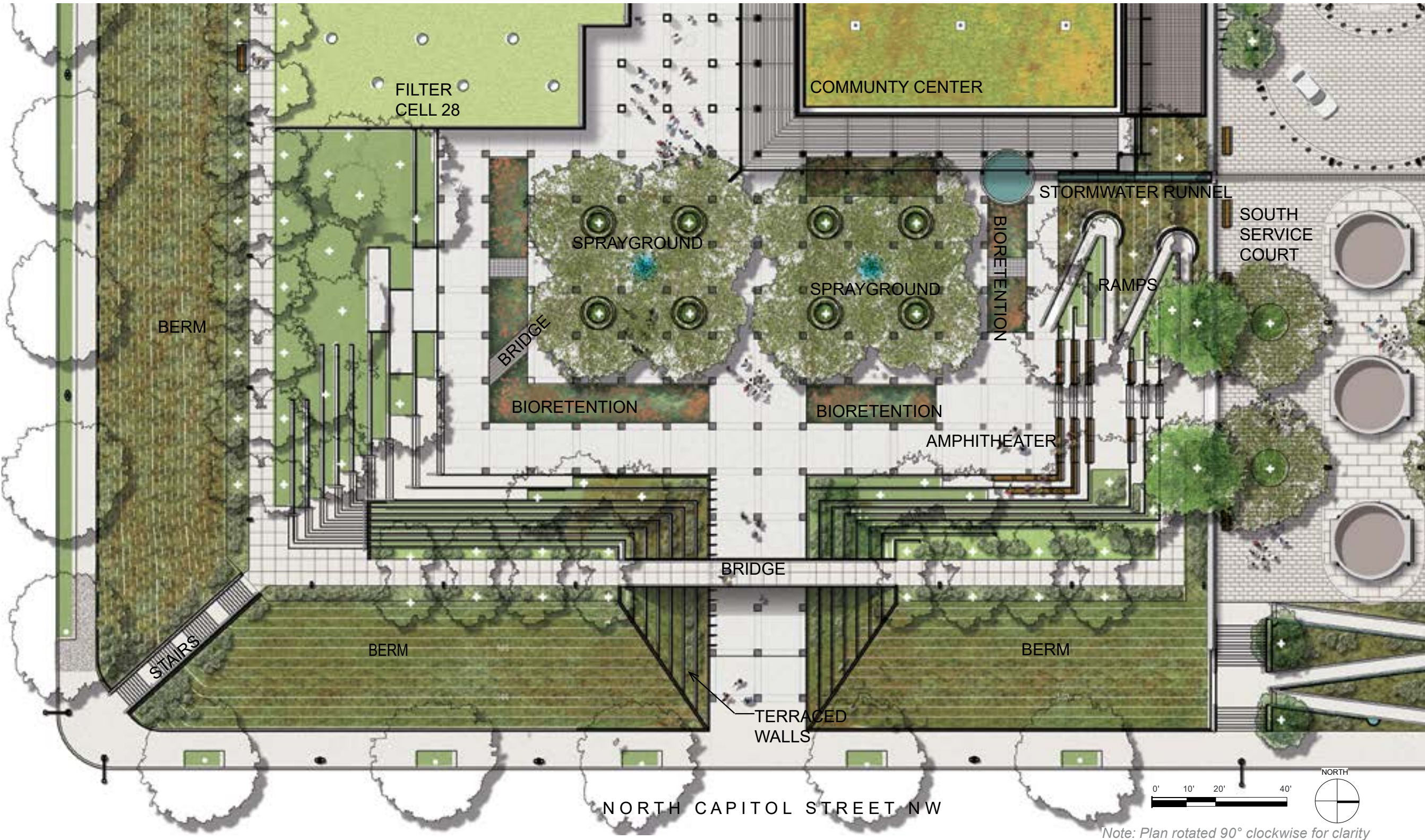
cc: Tom Jester, Quinn Evans Architects  
Elliot Rhodeside, Rhodeside & Harwell

## MEETING AGENDA | SEPTEMBER 25, 2020

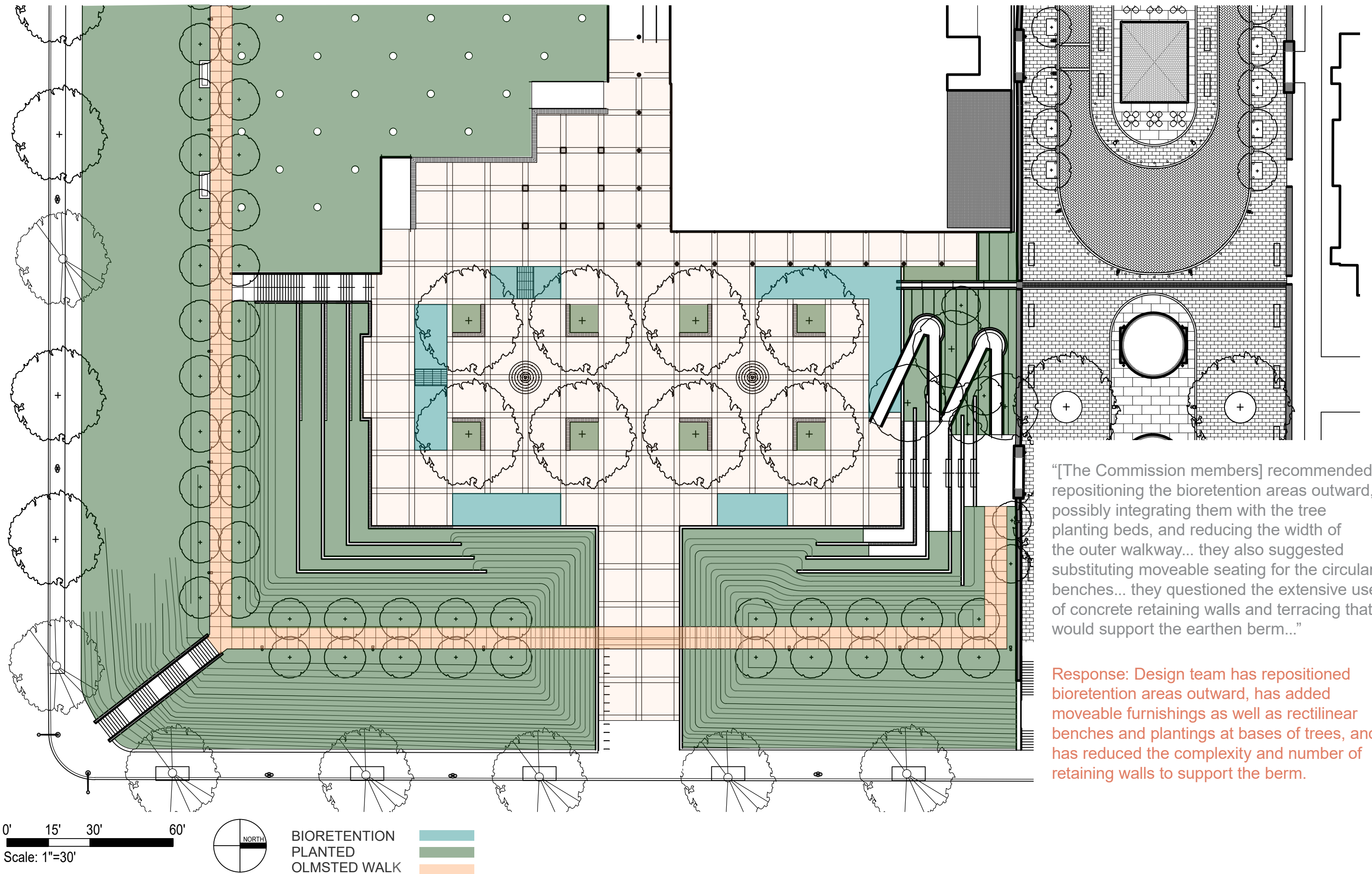
1. BIORETENTION AND PLAZA RELATIONSHIP TO BERMS
2. BENCHES AT TREES
3. CONCRETE RETAINING WALLS AND TERRACES
4. RECONSIDERATION OF LINDENS AT PLAYGROUND
5. OLMSTED WALK TREE RHYTHM
6. EXERCISE STATIONS



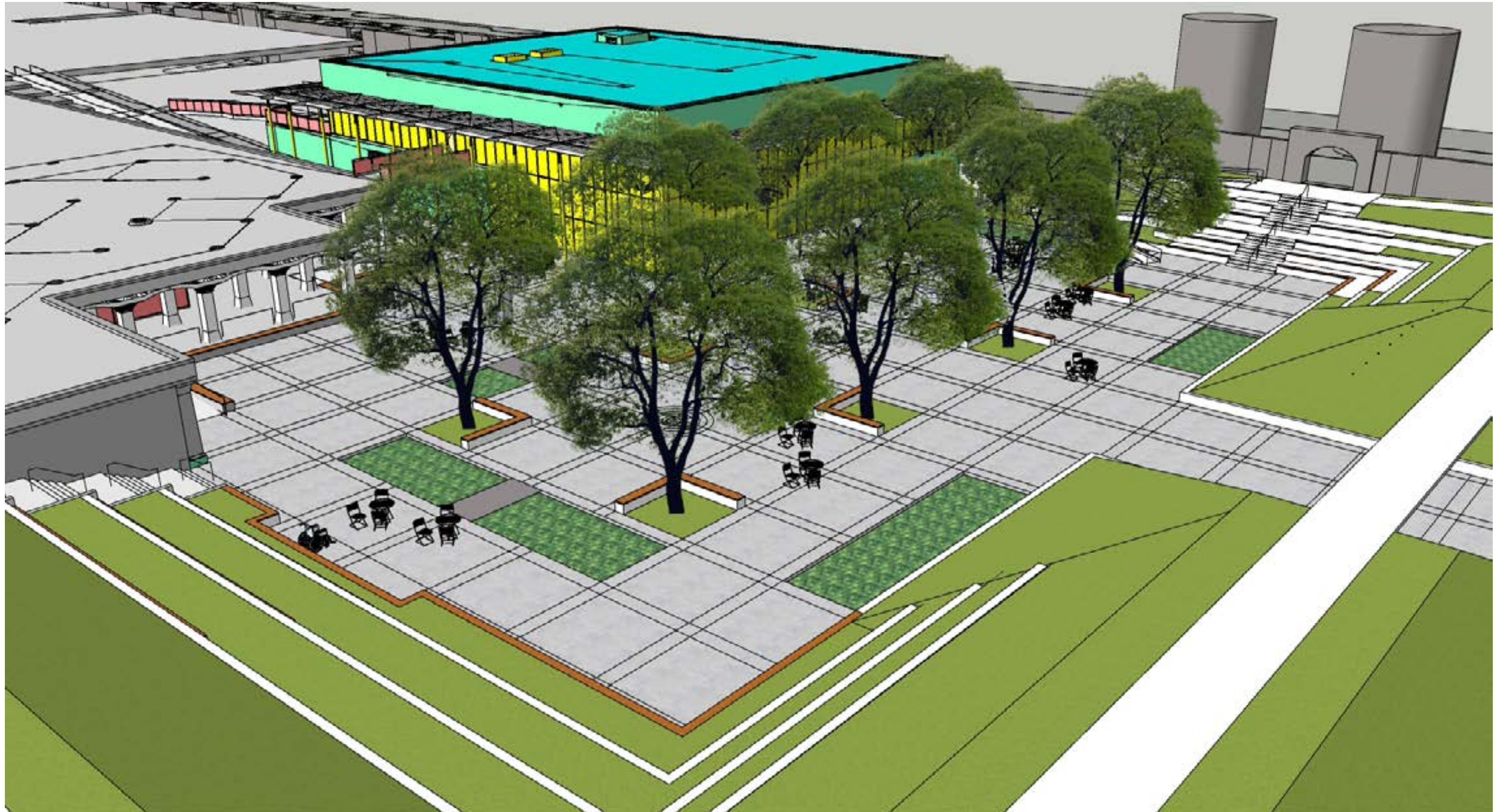
“[The Commission members] recommended repositioning the bioretention areas outward, possibly integrating them with the tree planting beds, and reducing the width of the outer walkway... they also suggested substituting moveable seating for the circular benches... they questioned the extensive use of concrete retaining walls and terracing that would support the earthen berm...”









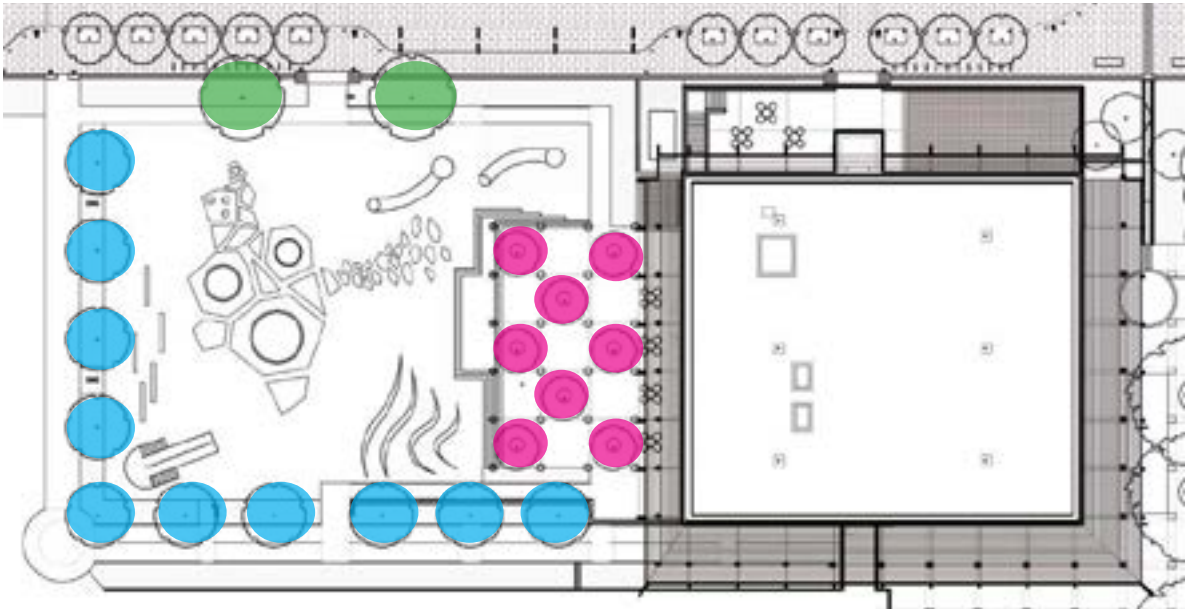




McMILLAN COMMUNITY CENTER, PARK & PLAZA

3.6 - RECREATION SPACE

“[The Commission members] suggested the reconsideration of the proposed lindens in the playground, as these trees tend to attract bees; while this may be a desirable characteristic for promoting biodiversity, it may be inappropriate where children are playing”



*Tilia americana*; American Linden



*Gymnocladus dioica*; Kentucky Coffeetree



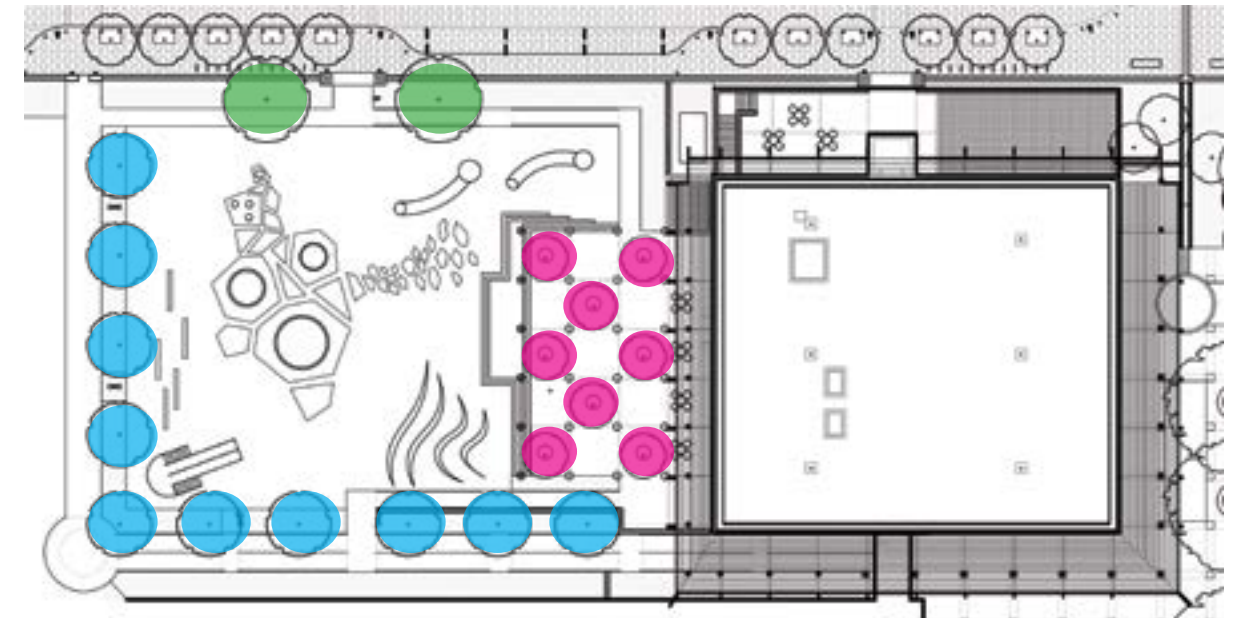
*Gleditsia triacanthos*; Honey Locust





“[The Commission members] suggested the reconsideration of the proposed lindens in the playground, as these trees tend to attract bees; while this may be a desirable characteristic for promoting biodiversity, it may be inappropriate where children are playing”

Response: Design team replaced proposed lindens with honey locust. The honey locust formerly proposed to enframe the playground have been changed to planetrees.



*Platanus x acerifolia* 'Bloodgood'; Bloodgood planetree



*Gymnocladus dioica*; Kentucky Coffeetree



*Gleditsia triacanthos*; Honey Locust





McMILLAN COMMUNITY CENTER, PARK & PLAZA

“[The Commission members] advised “further study of the blooming patterns of the various small trees proposed along the Olmsted Walk to ensure that the rhythm of colors appears intentional.”



*Chionanthus virginicus*; Fringetree



*Crataegus phaenopyrum*; Washington Hawthorn



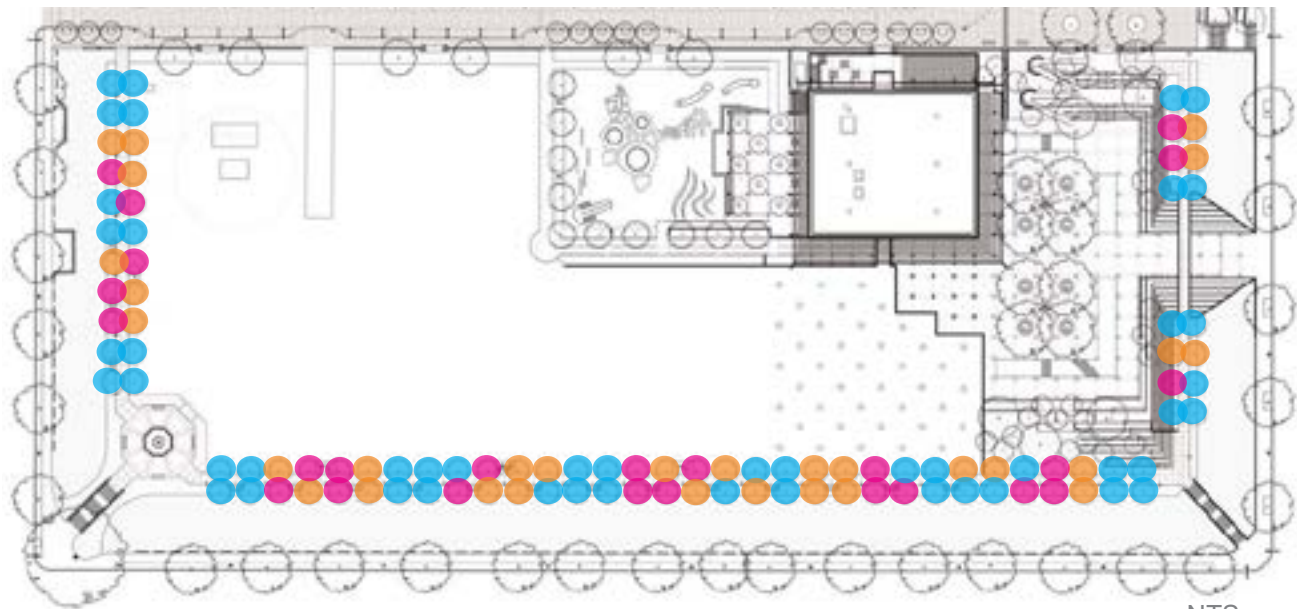
*Malus 'White Angel'*; White angel flowering crabapple



Character image of proposed understory at Olmsted Walk



Character image of proposed understory at Olmsted Walk



NTS





*Chionanthus virginicus*; Fringetree



*Crataegus viridis* 'Winter King'; Green Hawthorn



*Malus* 'Spring Snow'; Spring snow flowering crabapple



*Chionanthus virginicus*; Fringetree



Height & Spread: 15-20 ft; 12-18 ft.

Bloom Time: May to June

Bloom Description: Showy, fragrant, creamy white

Attracts: birds

Autumn Color: yellow



*Crataegus viridis* 'Winter King'; Green Hawthorn



Height & Spread: 20-25 ft; 20-25 ft.

Bloom Time: May

Bloom Description: Showy, fragrant, white

Attracts: Birds, butterflies

Autumn Color: orange-red



*Malus* 'Spring Snow'; Spring snow flowering crabapple



Height & Spread: 20-25 ft; 15-20 ft.

Bloom Time: April

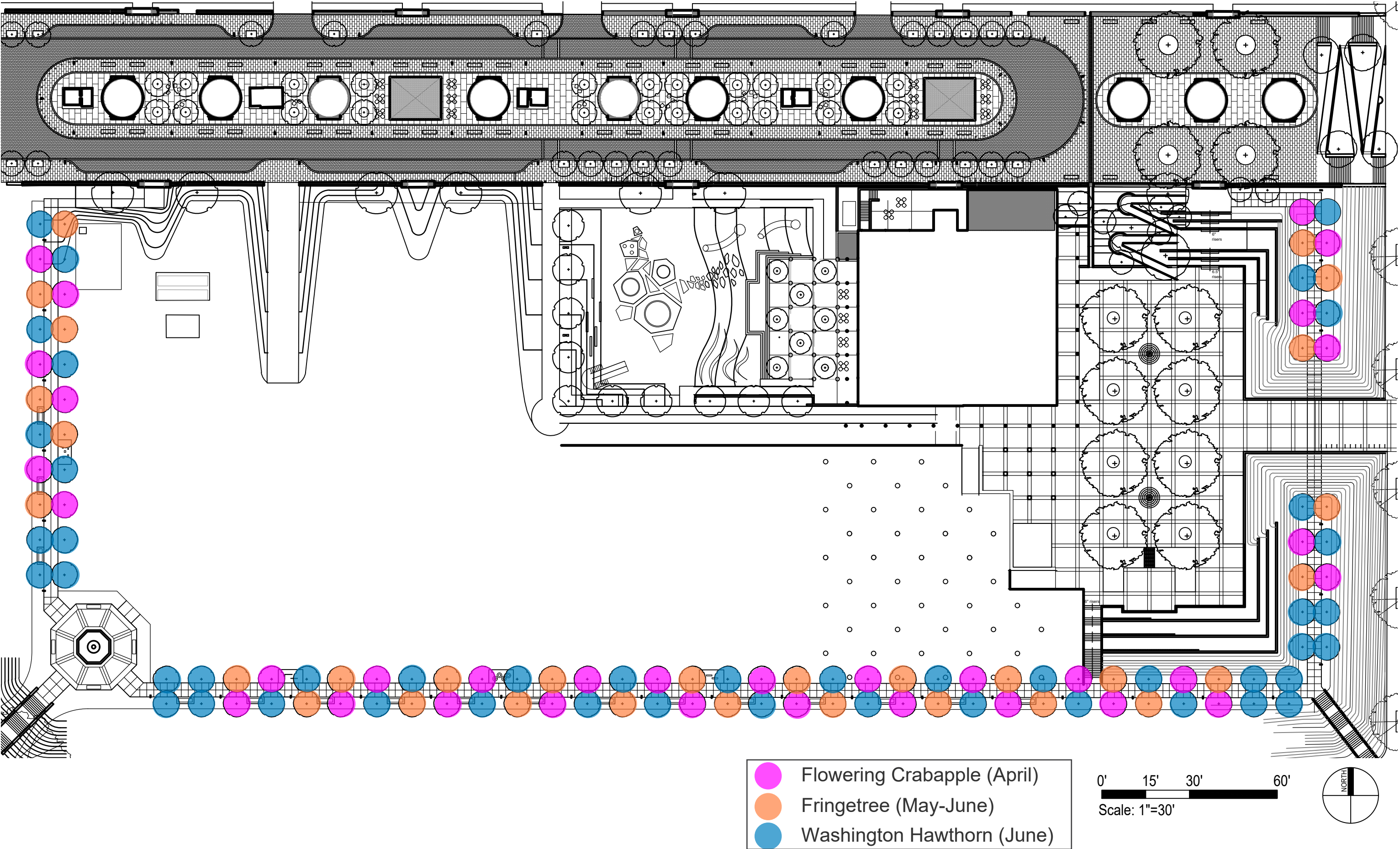
Bloom Description: Showy, fragrant, white

Attracts: Butterflies

Autumn Color: yellow



The design team has further studied the layout of the three species of tree along the Olmsted Walk and has devised a more intentional rhythm. Pairs of hawthorn frame the entries to the Walk from the southwest and southeast corners while flowering crab and fringetree alternate, with attention paid to the flowering times of all three species in the overall layout.





“[The Commission members] recommended further study of the placement of the proposed exercise stations along the walk, commenting that using them may be challenging due to their close proximity to the narrow path”

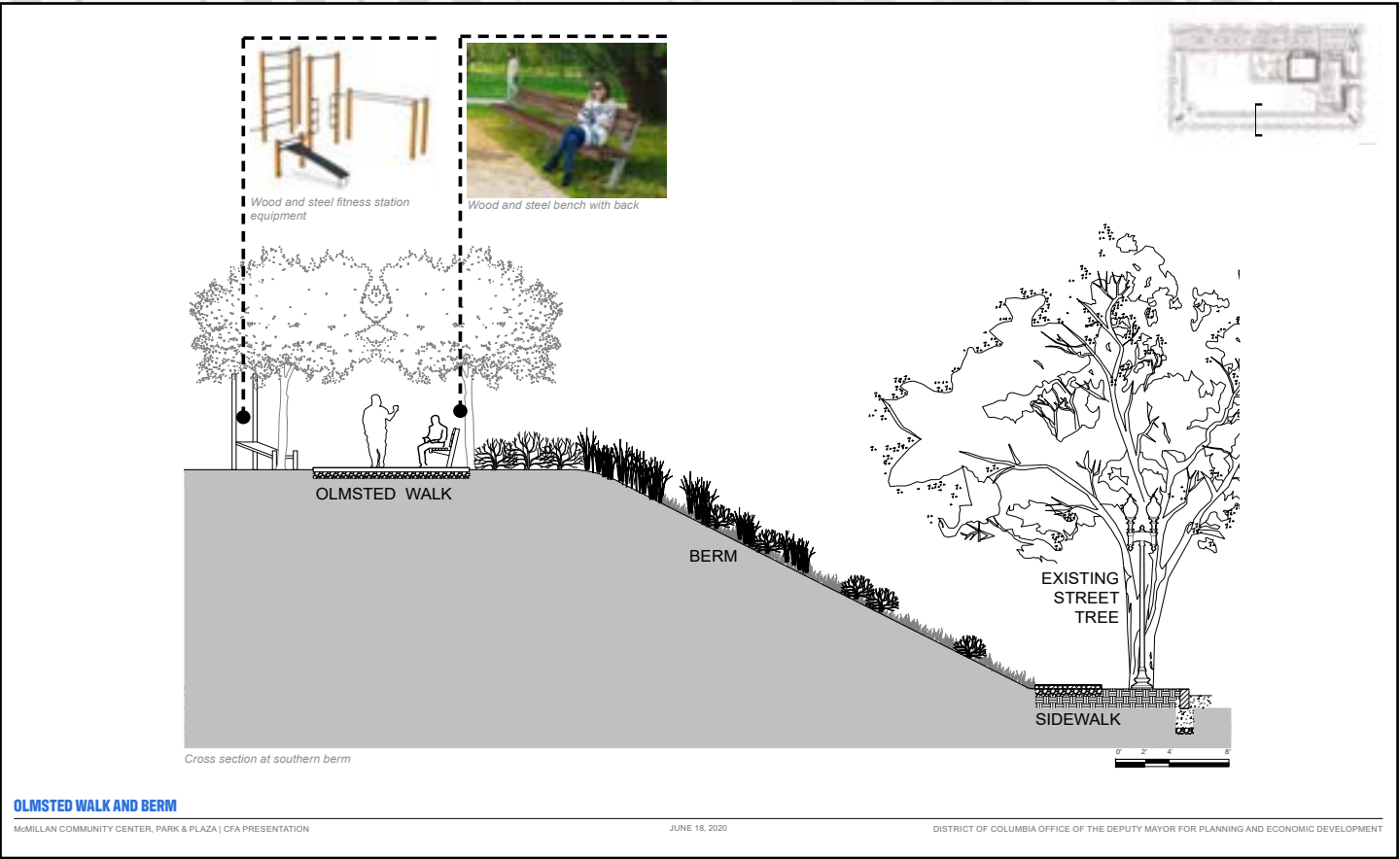
FIRST STREET NW

McMILLAN MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN

PLINTH

OLMSTED WALK

CHANNING STREET NW



OLMSTED WALK AND NORTH CAPITOL STREET ENTRY - ENLARGED SITE PLAN



“[The Commission members] recommended further study of the placement of the proposed exercise stations along the walk, commenting that using them may be challenging due to their close proximity to the narrow path”

Response: Design team is working closely with DPR on the selection of appropriate fitness equipment as well as on the preferred dimensions of the fitness areas with respect to the Olmsted Walk.

