

Downtown Cary Park

Cary, NC

Showcasing the extraordinary natural beauty native to North Carolina and the Piedmont, this downtown park balances active programming with a unique botanical experience. Shade gardens, perennial gardens, wetland and aquatic plantings, pollinator gardens, native meadows, and many more plant communities are on display throughout the seasons.

The Town of Cary has grown tremendously over the past thirty years. With an expanding community, there has been a refocus of energy within Cary's downtown core. The Town wants to promote local businesses, artistry and craft in the downtown neighborhood, and ultimately create a destination for Cary residents and the surrounding region to enjoy. In order to guide the vision of the park, The Town of Cary recognized the need to develop a master plan that sets forth a vision for the downtown park with consideration of neighborhood needs, recreation, historic and cultural identity, circulation, design of open space, maintenance, public engagement, and sustainability. The Town selected OJB Landscape Architecture to create the master plan that addresses these issues.

OJB and the Town of Cary together navigated the community engagement process to gauge the Town's interest in various park programming opportunities. OJB then utilized findings to develop a Master Plan for the new Downtown Cary Park. The plan was approved by Cary's Town Council in March 2019.

A series of outdoor rooms are knit together by multi-dimensional vantage points, including elevated walkways, meandering paths and water features that take advantage of the change in grade across the site. The diverse programmed "rooms" were derived from an extensive community engagement planning process.

Key areas include a plaza that marries a pavilion with marketplace and restrooms with an interactive water feature; a children's experiential and inclusive play environment that creates opportunities for non-prescriptive play; the great lawn, a flexible gathering place for large community events and concerts; and the gathering house and garden for both special events and quiet contemplation. Active and social recreation areas and courts are placed adjacent to the Bark Bar, a restaurant within the dog park.

Client

Town of Cary

Dates

2018 - 2023

Size

7 acres

Team

Machado Silvetti Architects
Withers Ravenel
SGH
Cosentini
Irrigation Consulting Inc
Fluidity Design Consultants
RSM Design

Awards

AN Best Of Design Awards, Honorable Mention, 2020







Community Workshop Program

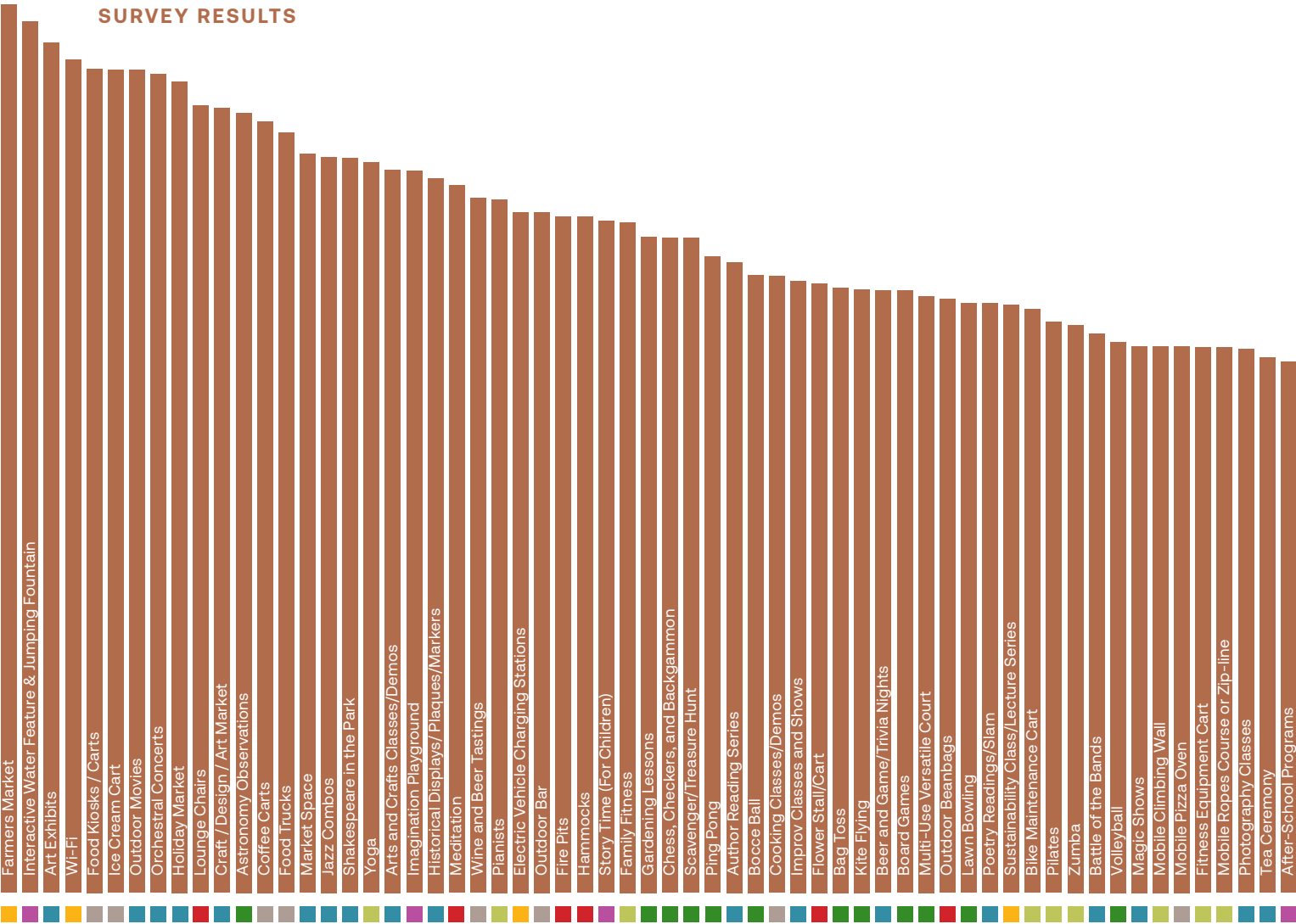
Vision for Downtown Cary Park has been tried and tested through the community engagement process. Community input is vital in the creation of any urban space to ensure that it serves its immediate constituents. The Community Workshop Program for Downtown Cary Park consisted of three major components: **program boards**, **program survey**, and **discussion groups**.

MULTIPLE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS AND INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE INFORMED THE FINAL DESIGN AND PROGRAMMING DECISIONS. THIS LED TO AN HISTORIC 86% BOND APPROVAL VOTE.

PROGRAM CATEGORIES

- GAMES + HOBBIES
- FOOD + BEVERAGE
- FITNESS + WELLNESS
- CHILDREN + FAMILIES
- LEISURE
- TECHNOLOGY + EDUCATION
- ARTS, MUSIC + CULTURE

SURVEY RESULTS



PROGRAM BOARDS

The images displayed were meant to evoke responses from the community as to what the park might include. Constituents expressed their opinions about which ideas were attractive, and which were not.



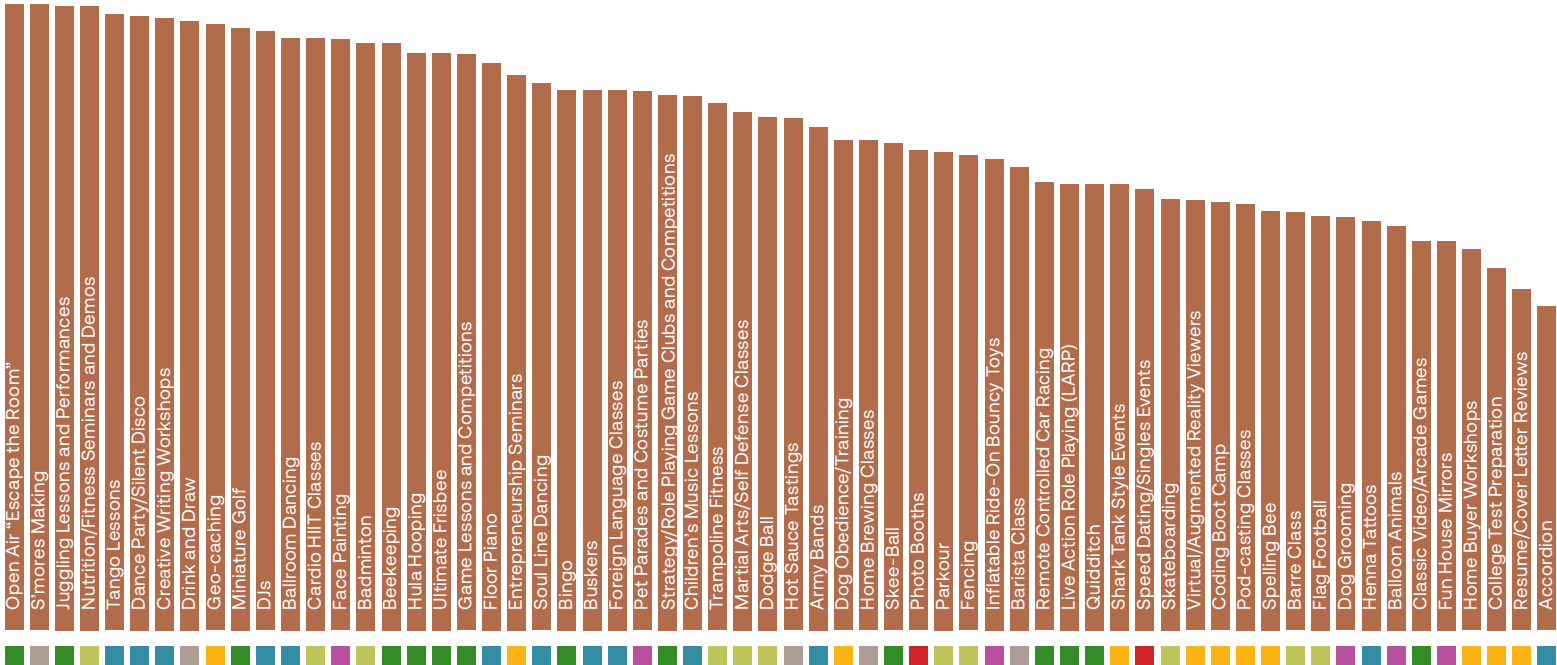
PROGRAM SURVEY

Community members were asked to rank an extensive list of program activities between 5 (very interested) and 1 (not interested).



DISCUSSION GROUPS

Round table discussion groups with guided questionnaires allowed community members to connect with consultant team members.



Stormwater Management

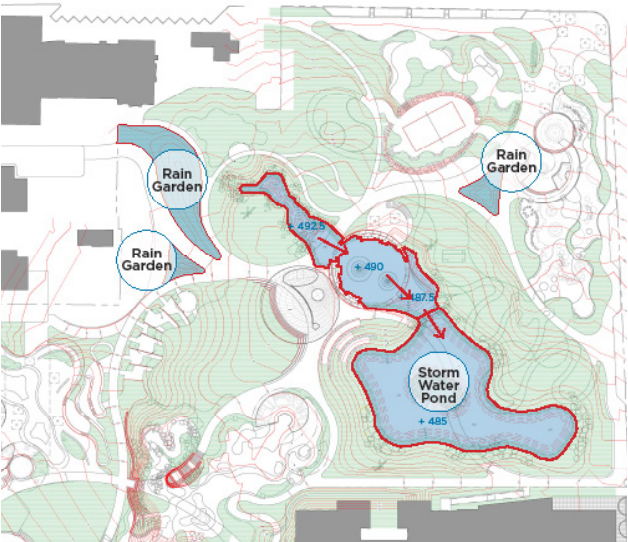
During the Master Planning process, it was clear that a stormwater strategy was essential for this fine grain residential neighborhood. The sitewide stormwater strategy combines both stormwater retention ponds for storage and a series of rain gardens and subsurface drainage systems to help absorb and delay excess water throughout the site and across the neighborhood.

Green infrastructure design solutions includes several rain gardens, planted with native and adaptive species. These water features throughout the site offer an

opportunity to educate visitors on the value of these best management practices. Finally, drain systems throughout the site help move rainwater to the stormwater pond.

THIS PROJECT WILL REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THE FLOOD RISK FOR THOUSANDS OF RESIDENTS DOWNSTREAM.

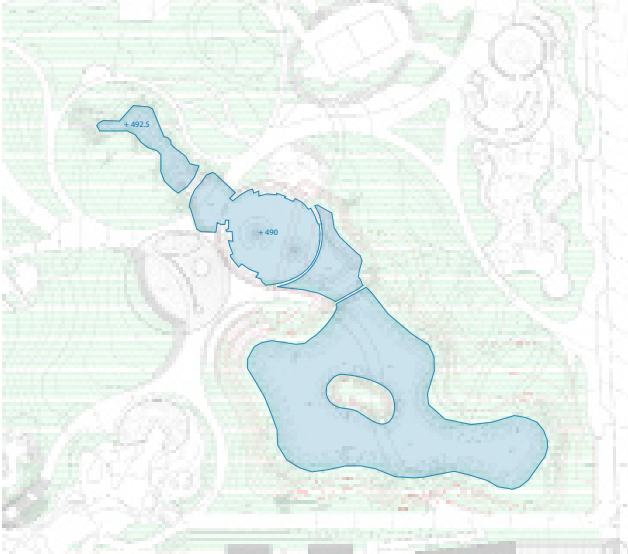
PARK-WIDE STRATEGY



SYSTEM CONNECTIONS



NORMAL POND ELEVATION



500 YEAR STORM ELEVATION



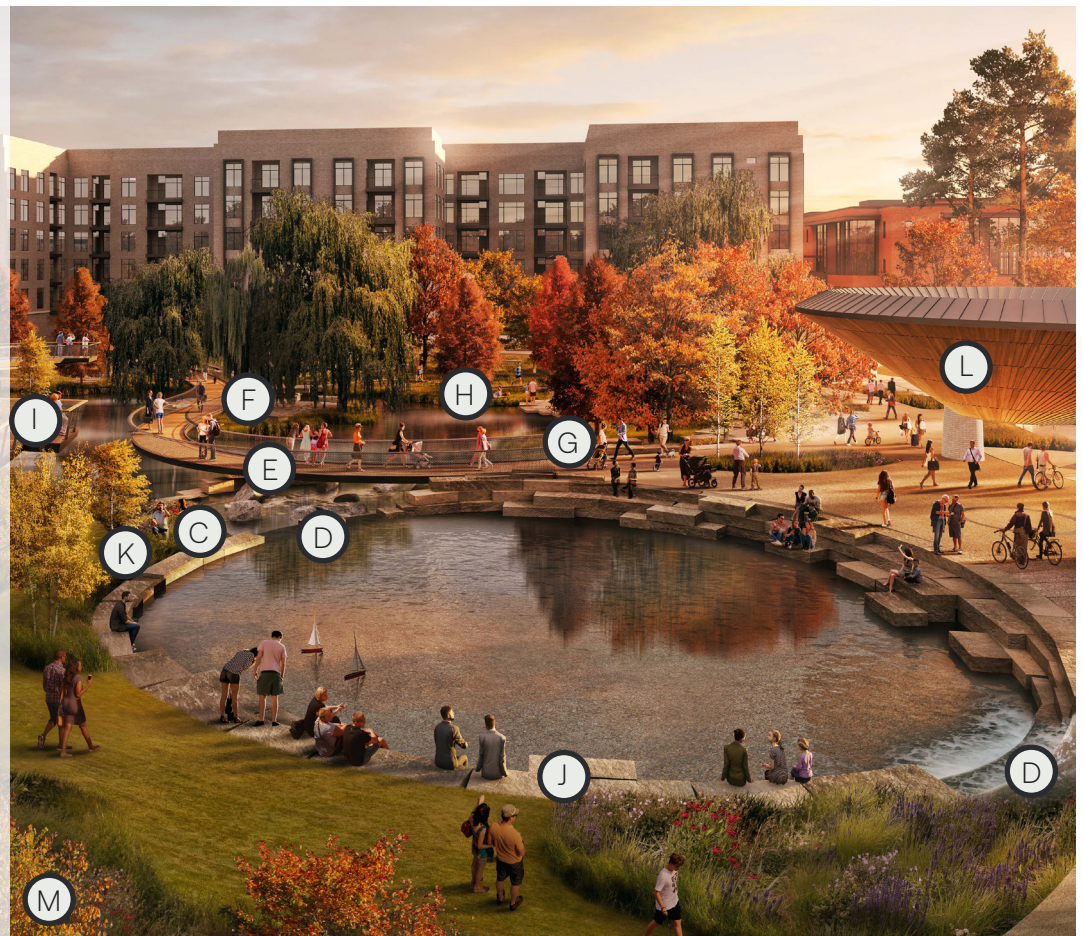
ECOLOGICAL LAYERS

- (A) SPRING
- (B) BABBLING BROOK
- (C) AQUATIC PLANTING
- (D) WEIR
- (E) BOARDWALK
- (F) GROVE ISLE
- (G) WATERSIDE LOUNGE
- (H) WATER WALK
- (I) RETAINING WALL
- (J) OVERLOOKS
- (K) CANOPY WALK
- (L) QUARRY CUT STONE
- (M) RAIN GARDEN



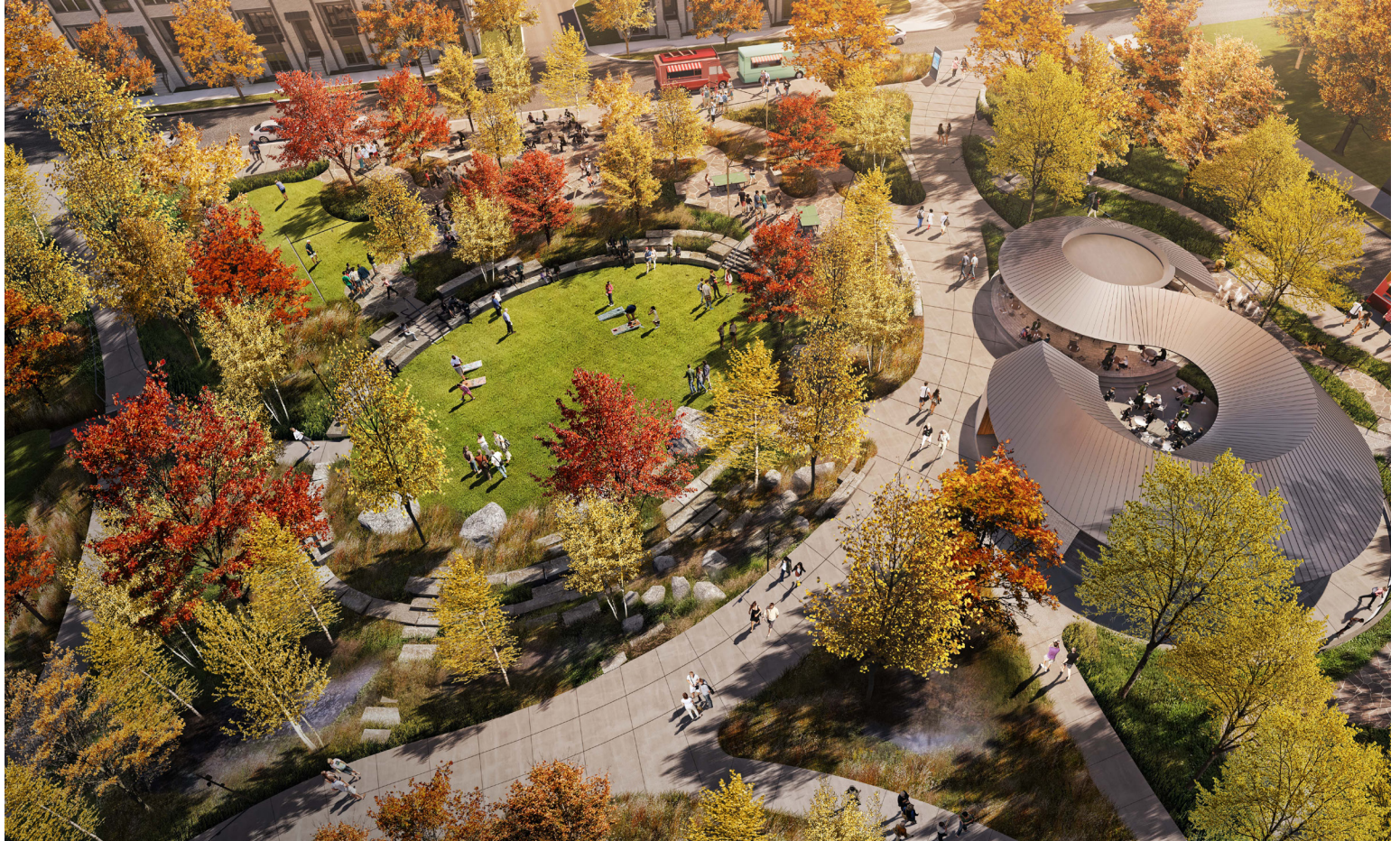
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- (J) QUARRY CUT STONE
- (K) RAIN GARDEN
- (L) GREAT LAWN PAVILION
- (M) BOTANICAL GARDEN





While active programming is a defining feature of the park, the design team planned for extensive passive landscape spaces where residents and visitors can be immersed in nature in the heart of the city.





ECOLOGICAL LAYERS

- (A) WOOD BIRD PLAY STRUCTURE
- (B) PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
- (C) RECLAIMED WOOD CLIMBERS
- (D) NEST WOOD PLAY STRUCTURE
- (E) SENSORY CHIMES
- (F) NATIVE PLANTS
- (G) CLIMBING SLOPE
- (H) STONE WATER FEATURE
- (I) EXISTING GROVE
- (J) STONE CLIMBERS
- (K) ACCESSIBLE WALKWAY

ACADEMY STREET

- Food Trucks

GATHERING GARDEN + PAVILION

- Native gardens
- Private & Public Events
- Pavilion
- Flexible Lawn
- Movable Furniture
- Restrooms

15,334
sq.ft

GREAT LAWN

- Flexible Lawn
- Performance Pavilion
- Flexible Plaza / Stage
- Native Gardens
- Lawn Games
- Lawn Furniture

HILLSIDE GROVES

- Fire Pit
- S'Mores

2,227
sq.ft

ACADEMY PLAZA & PAVILION

- Interactive Water Feature
- Flexible Plaza
- Indoor Market
- Farmers Market
- Event Space
- Native Planting
- Movable Furniture
- Restrooms

31,020
sq.ft

TOWN SQUARE

- Art Exhibits
- Games
- Movable Furniture
- Lawn Furniture
- Flexible Lawn
- Community Events

17,095
sq.ft

CHILDREN'S BLUFFS

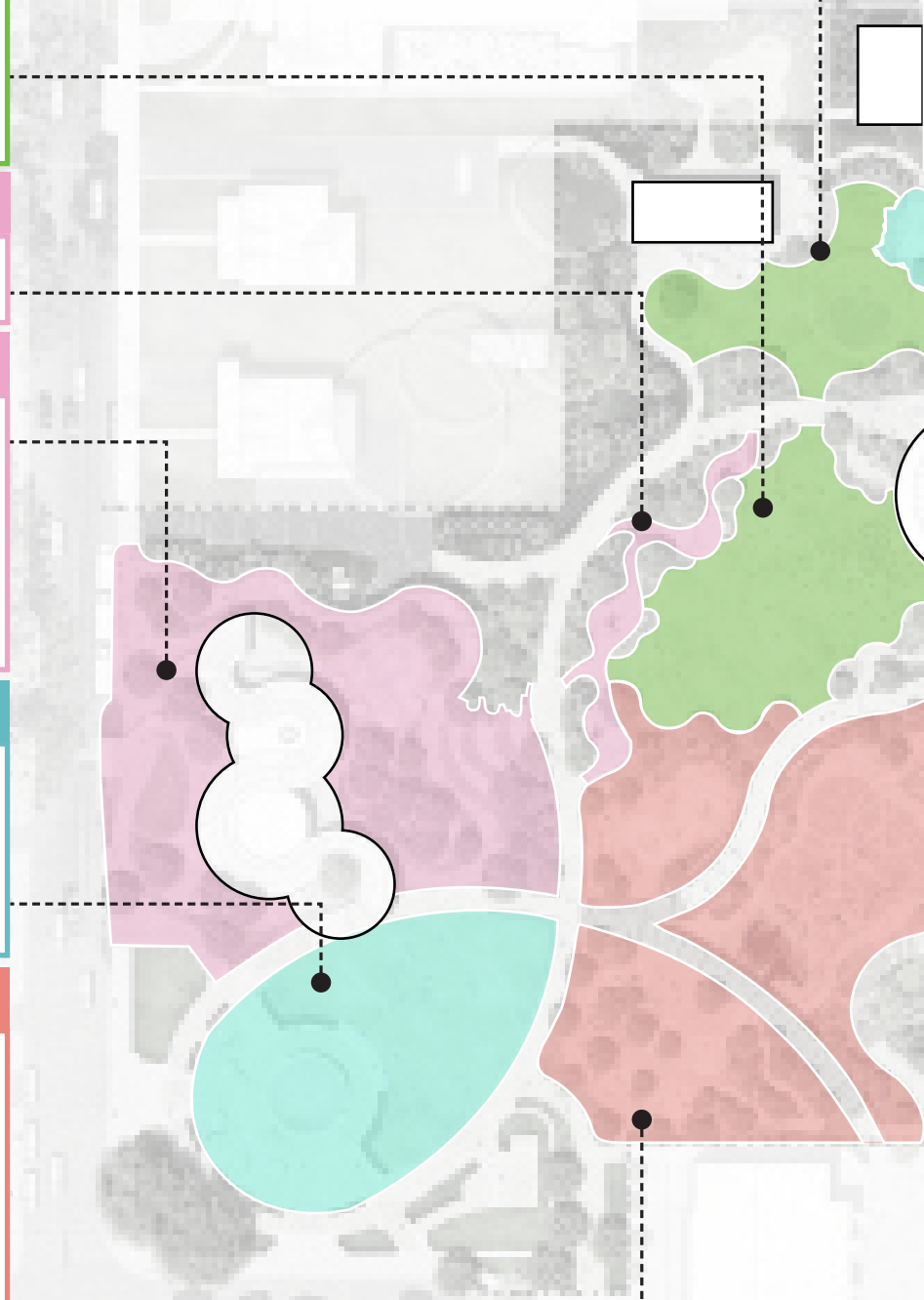
- Face Painting
- Family Fitness
- Floor Piano
- Ice Cream Cart
- Imagination Playground
- Inflatable Bouncy Toys
- Magic Shows
- Storytime

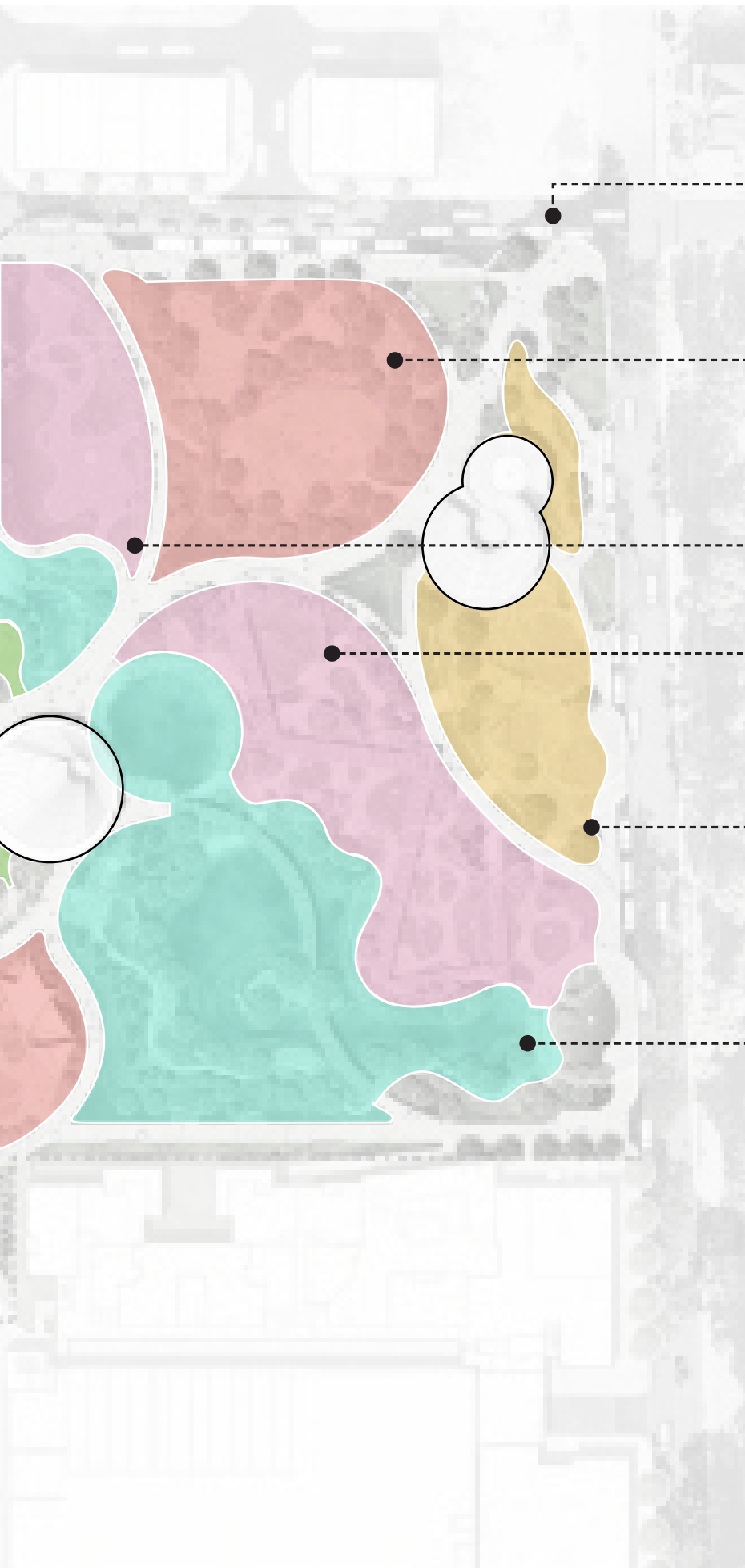
31,496
sq.ft

Program Distribution

The community expressed its priorities throughout the planning and design process which resulted in a highly tailored program to the community. Additionally, ecological and topographical site conditions determined how the program could be laid out across the site.

OJB WORKED TIRELESSLY WITH THE COMMUNITY TO ESTABLISH AN INITIAL PROGRAM THAT MEETS THE CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.





PARK STREET

- Food Trucks

PARK ST. COURT

- Flexible Lawn Arena
- Quarry stone seat-walls
- Plaza
- Movable Furniture
- Games
- Mini-Golf
- Swale & Rain Garden
- Native Gardens
- Seasonal Events

25,113
sq.ft

BOTANICAL GARDENS

- Native Gardens
- Hammocks & Lounge Furniture
- Art Exhibit
- Canopy Walk
- Access to water

DOG PLAY

- Big & Small Dogs Play Area
- Bark Bar
- Dog Climbing Features
- Water Play Features

18,581
sq.ft

STORM WATER POND

- Grove Isle
- Art Exhibit
- Boardwalk
- Waterside Lounge
- Waterside Path
- Native Gardens
- Rain Gardens
- Aquatic Planting
- Quarry Stone Seat-Walls



Sustainability

Controlling the flow of water within this important urban watershed is achieved with a green infrastructure solution. A series of water features, swales, and rain gardens are high performance, and highly accessible. Visitors can enjoy and interact with water throughout the park.



WATER

High efficiency irrigation controls and distribution design is at the core of the overall system, ensuring the calculated water use is optimized. Weather sensors, hydrozones, and drip irrigation are just a few of these components that provide the high efficiency.

Along with rain gardens and bio-retention areas, the on-site water detention pond collects site runoff and assists in alleviating downstream capacity stresses. The pond itself provides capacities that detain to 500-year levels in peak demand condition and protect floodplain functions. The natural pond replaces the concrete culverts previously on site that captured stormwater and sent immediately offsite. A wall is also built at the south side of the pond provide additional resiliency to the south of the site. The stormwater features throughout the space are intended to be incorporated elements that elevate the enjoyment and experience of the park.

The pond is on a recirculating system with filtration and natural movement. This decreases the turbidity of the storm water captured while reducing stagnation of the ponds surface.



LAND

Erosion control measures are utilized during the construction of the park. Plant species and selections were chosen in potential erosion zones for their root stability.

Areas throughout the park are thoughtfully considered in their materiality. Many areas utilize permeable surface materials like aggregates or stabilized stone dust that decrease the surface runoff of the site.



PLANTING

Focus on native planting with reduced water requirements. Planting design strategies focused on microclimate adaption for selected species and areas throughout the park.

The park has a strong focus on native planting species, bio-diversity and fostering habitat creation. The project conserves/ provides habitats for threatened and endangered species and helps to restore ecological conditions. The use of natives and specific species choices are intended to minimize the use of pesticide and fertilizer in ongoing maintenance of the park.



SOCIAL

The project includes new and improved public sidewalks and street lighting along Park Street and Walker Street. This includes a new pedestrian mid-block connection/ crosswalk at Walker Street, a new pedestrian mid-block connection/crosswalk at Park Street, and improved pedestrian connections at intersection of Walker and Park streets.

Downtown Park will be an amazing amenity in an already incredible catalogue of community open spaces throughout Cary. The Park will be a unique fixture in this catalogue, by nature of its more urban context and program offerings.

The park itself will provide increased visitorship to the downtown core, providing increased population within the downtown, visible to surrounding retail and business entities. Further development potential and real estate increases are synonymous with a community amenity like the Downtown Park.

*The tree average for water interception is 500 gallons. American's use an average of 100 gallons of water per day (EPA's water trivia facts).

**120 pounds of CO2 per tree annually (This number is based on an average from the National Tree Benefits Calculator) One car produces an average of 8,320 pounds of CO2 per year (The Code of Federal Regulations - 40 CFR 600.113).