

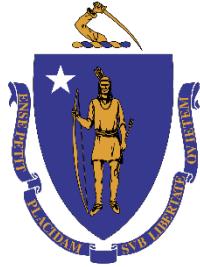


MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF  
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

# Leo M. Birmingham Park Renovation

CHARLES RIVER RESERVATION  
Brighton, Massachusetts

**Virtual Public Listening Session**  
**December 4, 2025**



# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Governor

**Maura T. Healey**

Lieutenant Governor

**Kimberley Driscoll**

Energy and Environmental Secretary

**Rebecca L. Tepper**

Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner

**Nicole LaChapelle**



## DCR Mission Statement

*To protect, promote, and enhance our  
common wealth of natural, cultural  
and recreational resources  
for the well-being of all.*

# DCR Core Principles



## Our Core Principles:

Provide access to a diversity of outdoor recreational experiences & unique landscapes

that is equitable, inclusive, and welcoming



### Conserve lands, water, and forests

by integrating science, research, and technical expertise into the management of our natural resources



### Advance climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts

by implementing sustainable practices & advancing resiliency across our infrastructure, assets, & resources



### Support healthy communities

by providing places for people to connect with nature and each other



### Inspire generations of stewards

by recognizing and honoring our legacy through partnerships, public engagement, and education

# Meeting Logistics

- Two ways to ask questions during the meeting
  - Use the Q&A feature – comments go to the moderator
  - Raise your hand: Click “Reaction”, then click “Raise Hand” , and you will be given permission to unmute and speak.
- You will have the opportunity to submit comments over the course of the next two weeks at:
  - DCR Public Comments  
<https://www.mass.gov/forms/dcr-public-comments>
- *Please note that this public listening session will be recorded; the recording will be a public record.*

# Agenda

- Team Introductions
- Project Scope
- Site Location & Existing Conditions
- Concept Design Alternatives
- Schedule
- Q&A Discussion
- Additional Information

# Project Team

## **Department of Conservation and Recreation**

- Ruth Helfeld, Director, Landscape Architecture Section
- Cass Chroust, Landscape Architect, Design and Project Management

## **Shadley Associates, P.C. (Landscape Architecture)**

- Pam Shadley, Principal
- Skyler Chick, Project Manager

## **Subconsultants**

- Nitsch Engineering – Civil Engineering & Surveying
- Davey Resource Group – Arborist & Invasive Species Specialist
- Public Archaeology Laboratory – Archaeologist
- Pine & Swallow – Soils Specialist

# Project Scope

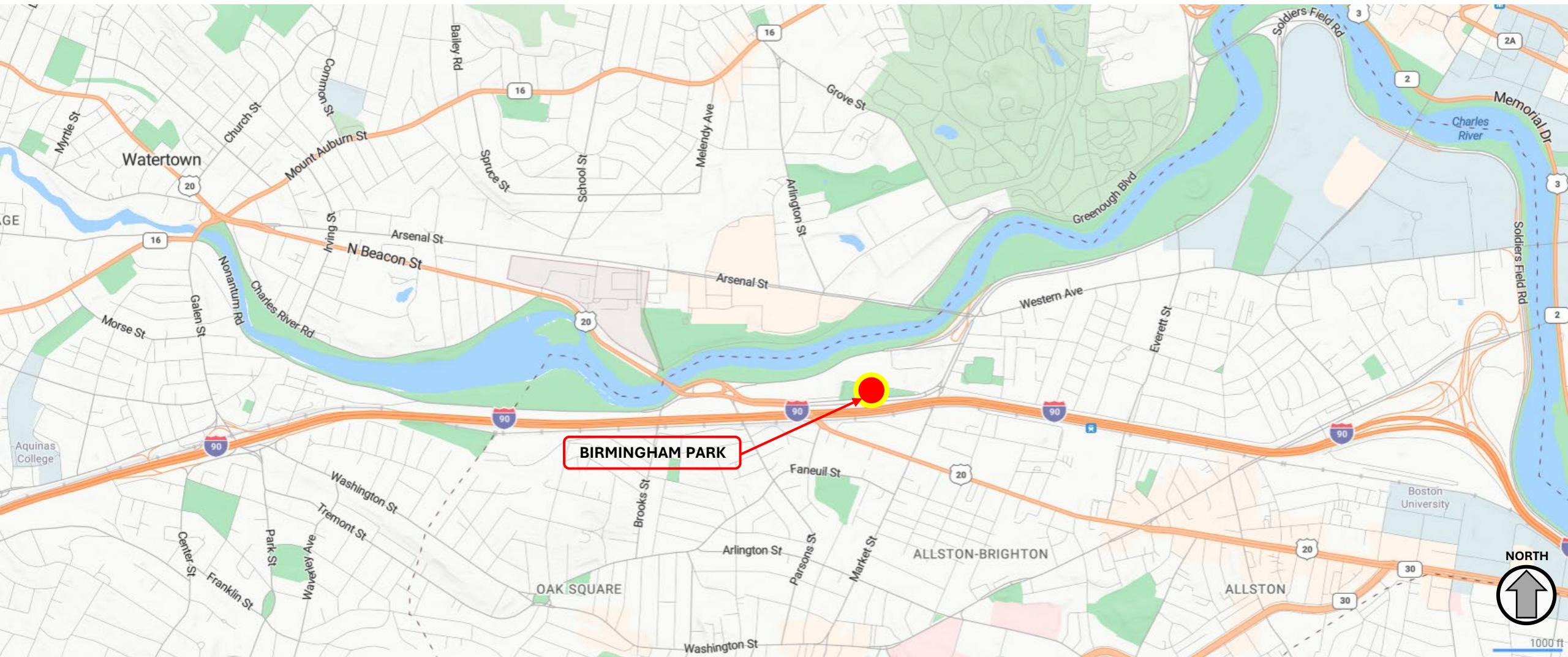
## **Goals:**

- Establish and restore a safe and welcoming park
- Ensure universal accessibility for all park features
- Promote recreational activities for different age groups and abilities
- Be environmentally and historically sensitive

## **Objectives:**

- Fully reconstruct the park with accessible walkways, new site amenities, and restore the degraded landscape
- Upgrade the existing bocce courts
- Add seating, bicycle parking, shade shelter, horseshoe pits & water bottle filler
- Improve stormwater management onsite
- Tie the park to the new shared-use path and reconstructed Birmingham Parkway

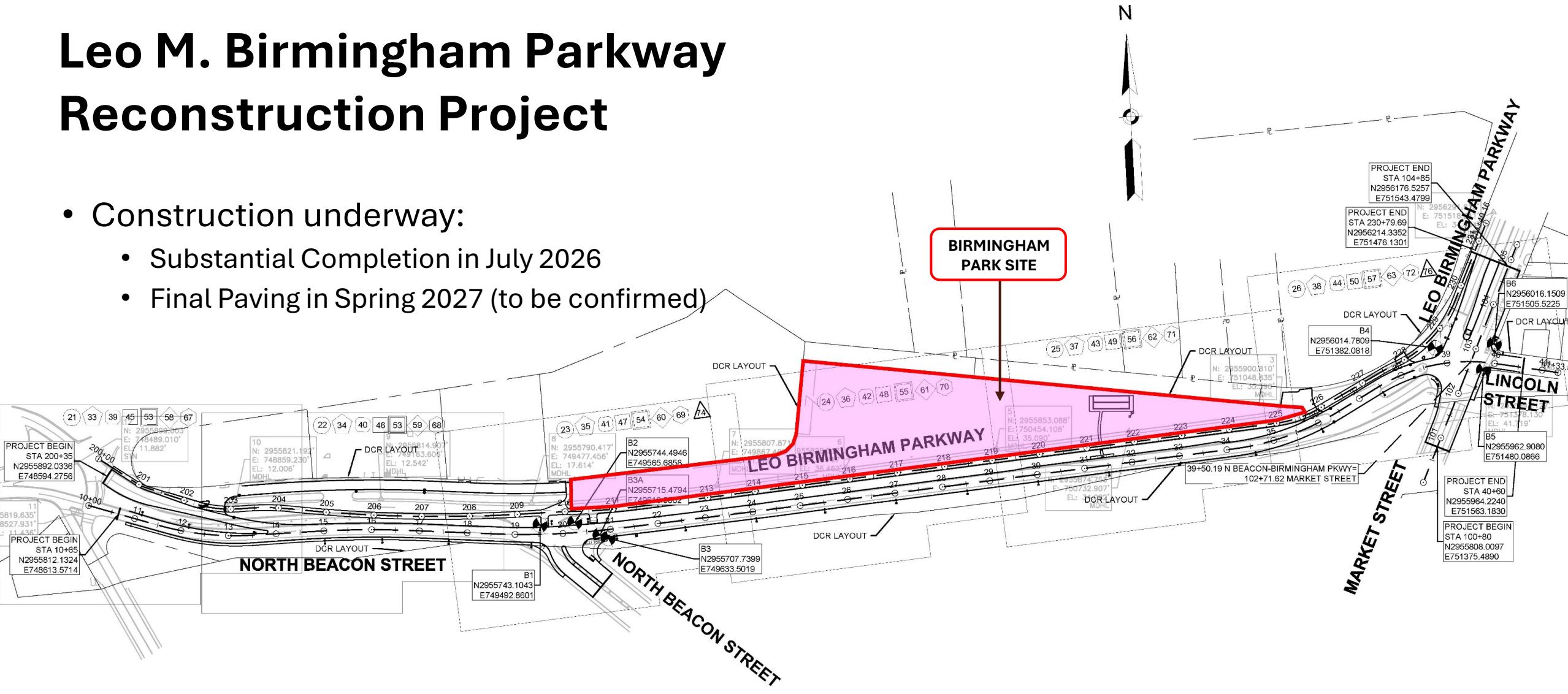
# Site Location





# **Leo M. Birmingham Parkway Reconstruction Project**

- Construction underway:
  - Substantial Completion in July 2026
  - Final Paving in Spring 2027 (to be confirmed)

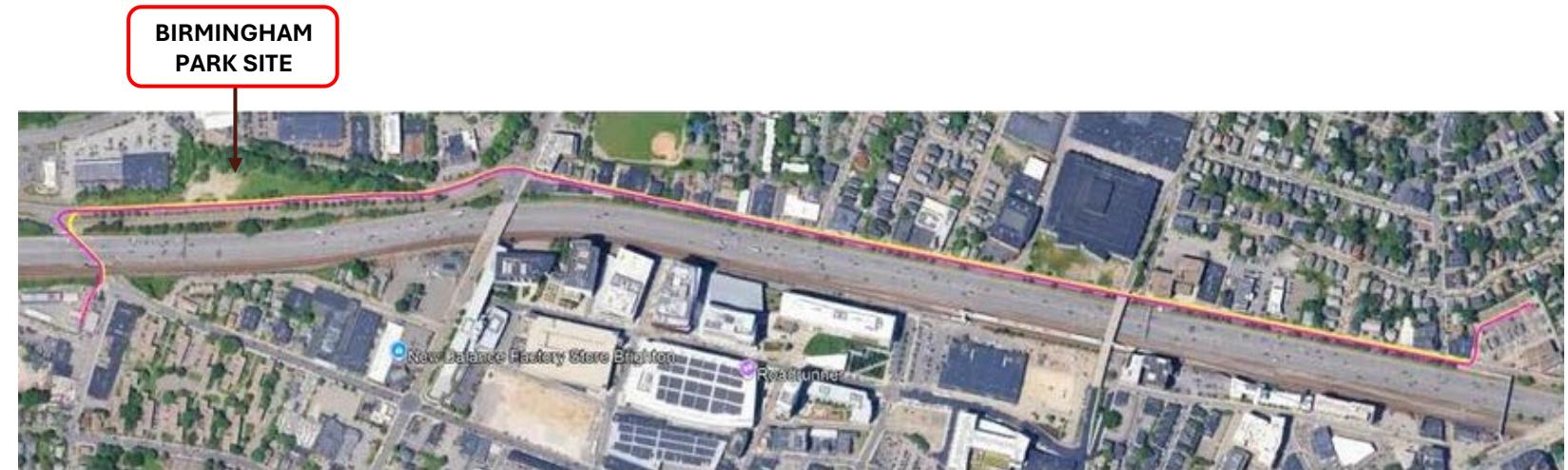


# Leo M. Birmingham Parkway Reconstruction Project

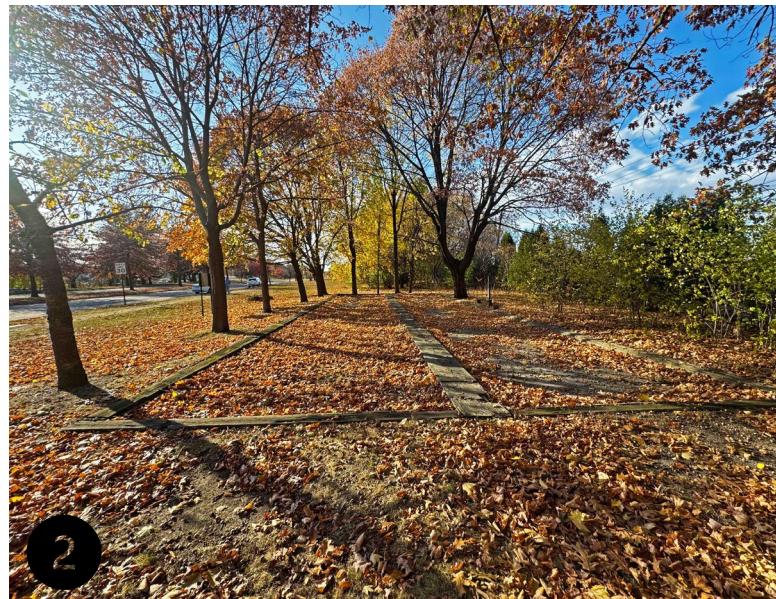


# Eversource Project

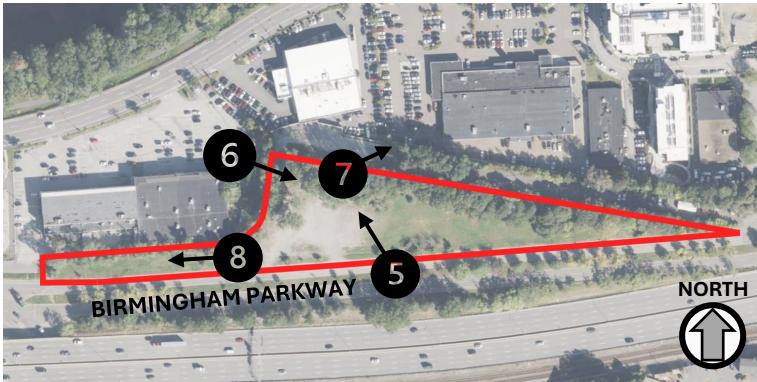
- Continuation of electrical transmission line replacement
- Work expected in late 2026  
*(DCR has regular coordination meetings)*



# Existing Conditions



# Existing Conditions



# Tree Inventory

- All existing trees  $\geq 2"$  caliper were documented (329 trees total)
- Evaluated for condition – Excellent (1%), Good (27%), Fair (46%), Poor (20%), Critical (2%), Dead (3%)
- Arborist recommendations for maintenance
- Removal Recommendations:
  - Dead or poor
  - Elevated risk to the public
  - Invasive species unless it is non-aggressive and not a public hazard

Species (Botanical)	Species (Common)	Count	Percent
<i>Acer platanoides</i> *	Norway maple*	103	31%
<i>Prunus serotina</i>	black cherry	39	12%
<i>Ailanthus altissima</i> *	tree of heaven*	25	8%
<i>Acer negundo</i>	boxelder	20	6%
<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i> *	common buckthorn*	20	6%
<i>Rhus</i>	sumac	19	6%
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> *	black locust*	18	5%
<i>Quercus palustris</i>	pin oak	14	4%
<i>Morus alba</i>	white mulberry	13	4%
<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	green ash	12	4%
<i>Acer saccharum</i>	sugar maple	8	2%
<i>Malus</i>	crabapple	7	2%
<i>Quercus rubra</i>	northern red oak	7	2%
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	red maple	4	1%
<i>Fraxinus americana</i>	white ash	4	1%
<i>Tilia cordata</i>	littleleaf linden	4	1%
<i>Ulmus americana</i>	American elm	3	1%
<i>Picea pungens</i>	blue spruce	2	1%
<i>Platanus hybrida</i>	London planetree	2	1%
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> *	sycamore maple*	1	0%
<i>Chionanthus retusus</i>	Chinese fringetree	1	0%
<i>Pinus strobus</i>	eastern white pine	1	0%
<i>Prunus</i>	ornamental cherry	1	0%
<i>Pyrus calleryana</i> *	Callery pear*	1	0%
Stump	stump	1	0%

Trees marked with an \* are listed as invasive or likely invasive in Massachusetts by the Massachusetts Invasive Plants Advisory Group

# Invasive Species Documentation

- Documented 15 invasive plant species
- Categorized into threat levels of concern (High, Moderate, Low)
- Management Recommendations:
  - Mechanical Removal – Recommended for most species
  - Chemical Treatment – Only recommended for most aggressive species

## TREES & SHRUBS

Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)  
Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)  
Mulberry (*Morus alba*)  
Boxelder (*Acer negundo*)  
Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)  
Sycamore Maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)  
Glossy Buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*)  
Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)  
Border Privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*)

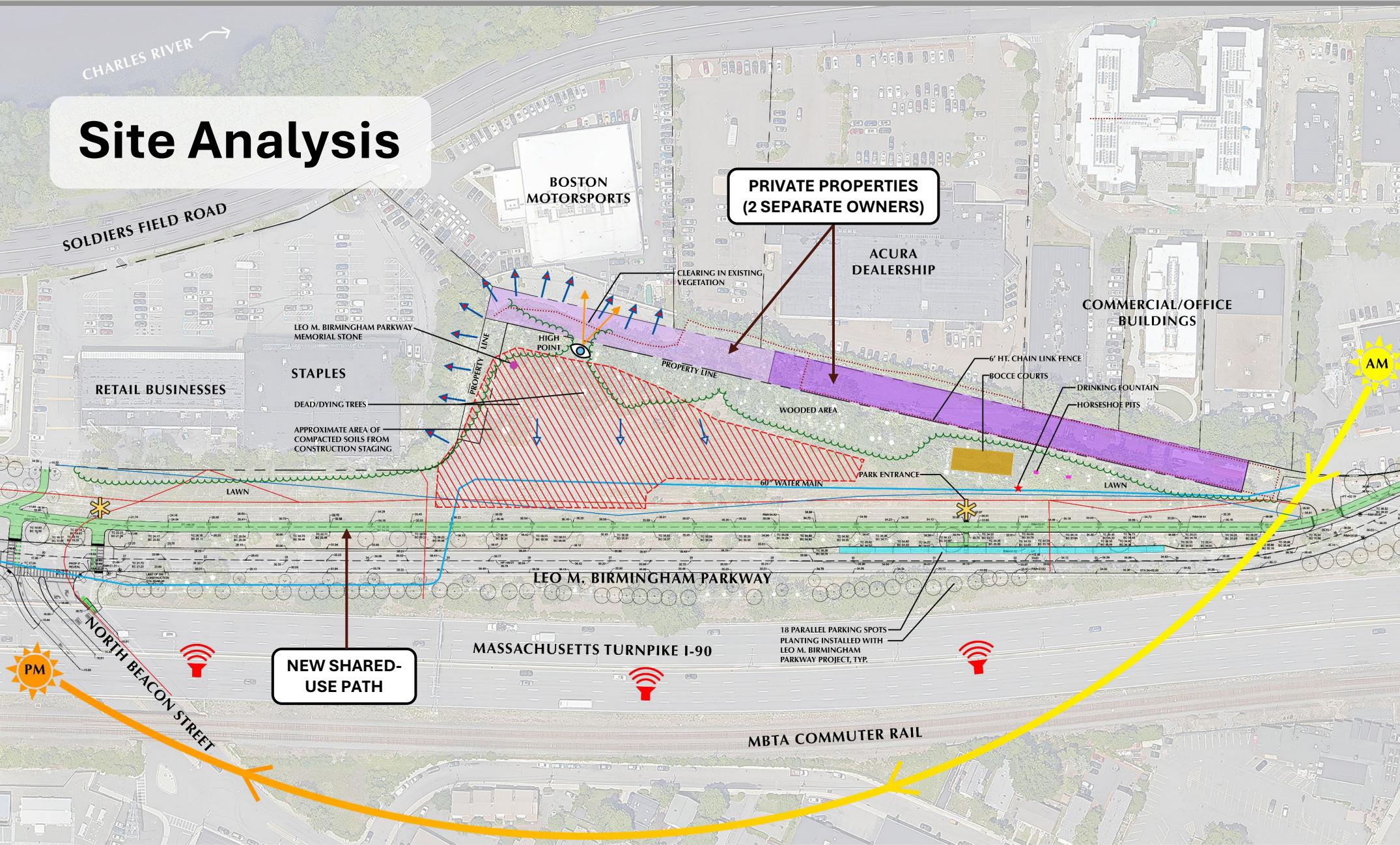
## HERBACEOUS PLANTS

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)  
Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*)  
Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*)  
Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*)

## VINES

Black Swallow-wort (*Cynanchum louiseae*)  
Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

# Site Analysis



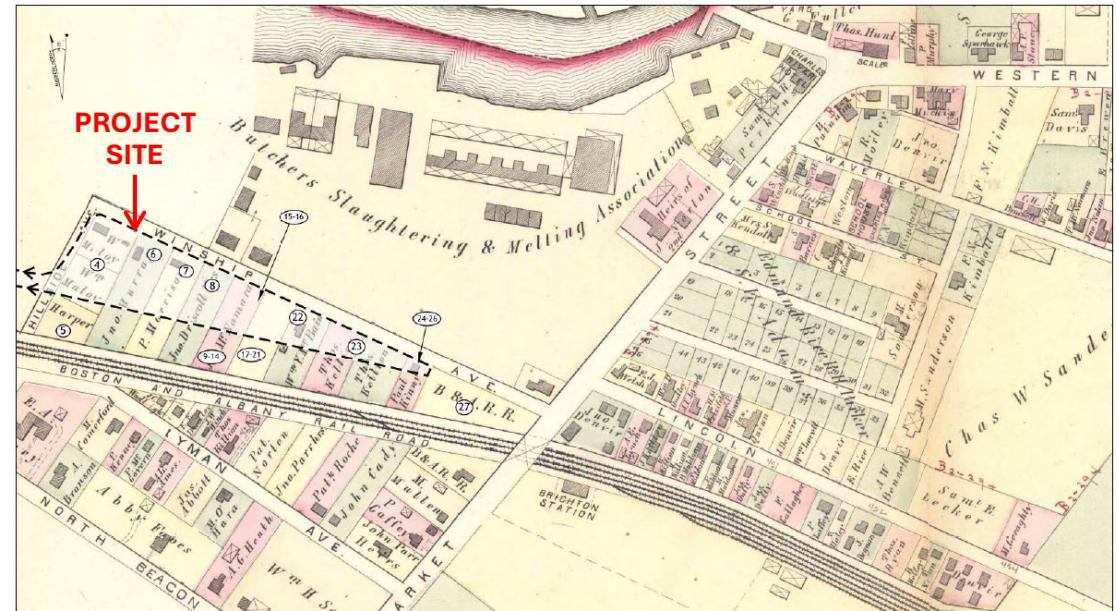
# Archaeological Investigation

## Work Included:

- Background research
- Walkover survey & technical report
- 34 test pits (hand dug)

## Historical Background:

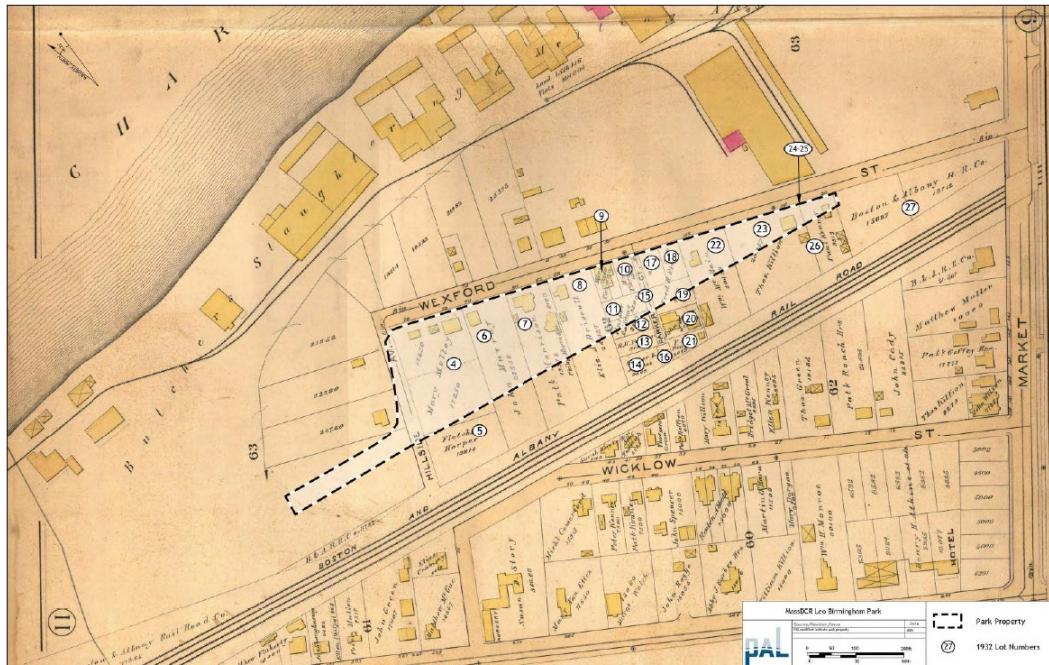
- In the 1800s, the park was a neighborhood with 20 house lots
- Bordered the Brighton Slaughterhouse property to the north
- Bound by Wexford Street (formerly Winship Ave) to the north, Hillside Ave on the west, and the Boston & Albany Railroad on the south
- In 1932, the DCR acquired the entire neighborhood and built Birmingham Parkway and the existing park
- Soldiers Field Road was later constructed when the state acquired the slaughterhouse property.



Map circa 1875

# Archaeological Investigation

- 34 test pits revealed 78 artifacts from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries
- Artifacts include ceramics and bottle/jar glass, smoking and clothing related items, and architectural debris



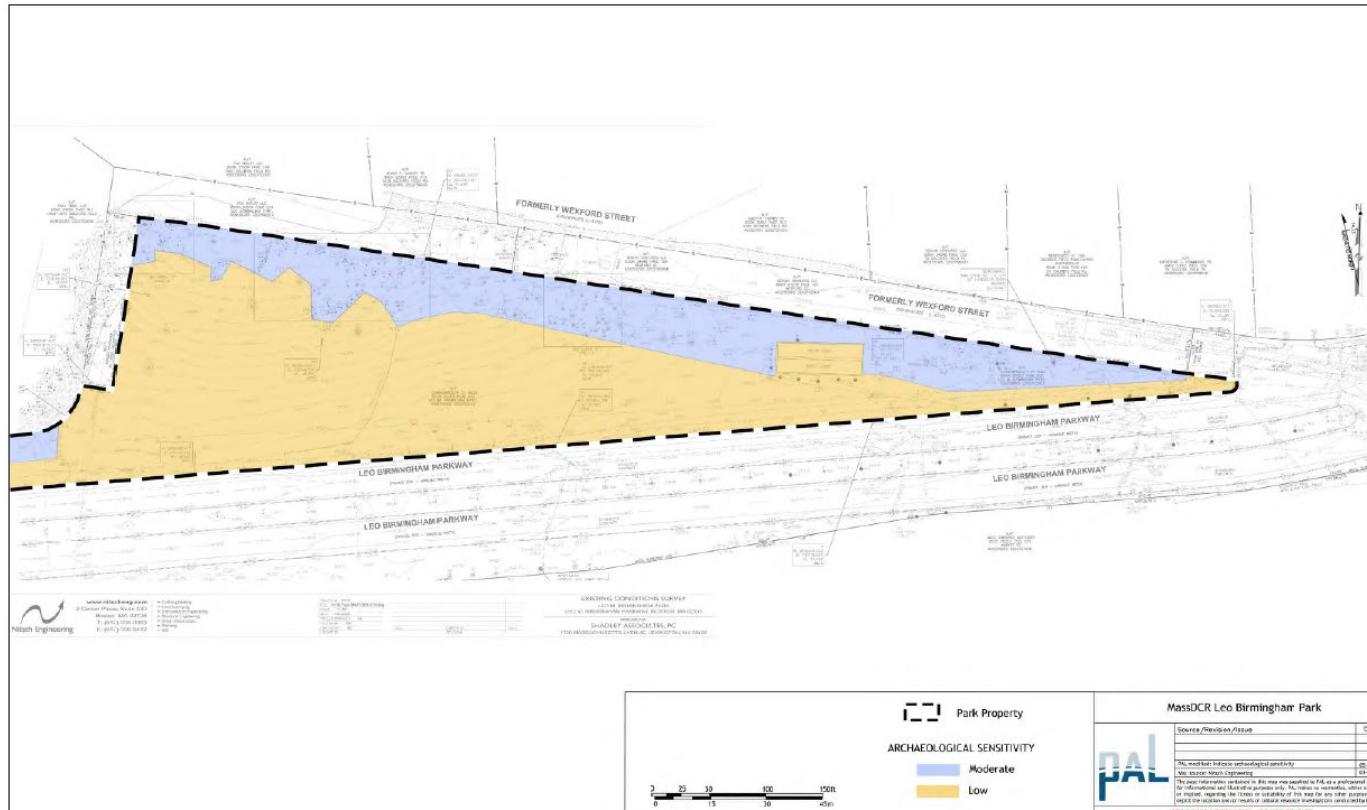
Map circa 1890

Photos circa 1932



# Archaeological Investigation

- Recommendation is for park improvements to avoid deep excavation in the “Moderate Sensitivity” area where the former houses were mainly located



Area of Low Sensitivity

Area of Moderate Sensitivity

# Concept Design Alternatives

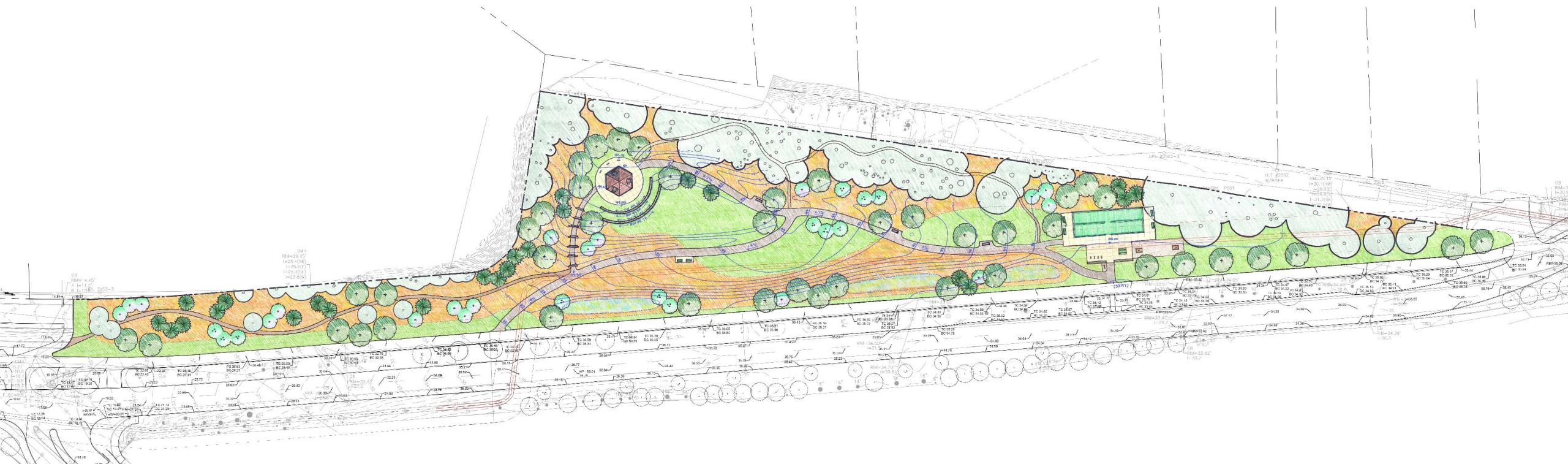
## **Summary:**

- Two alternatives with different layouts, amenities, and materials
- Elements of both alternatives can be combined
- The goal is to find consensus, so a Preferred Concept Design emerges

## **Program:**

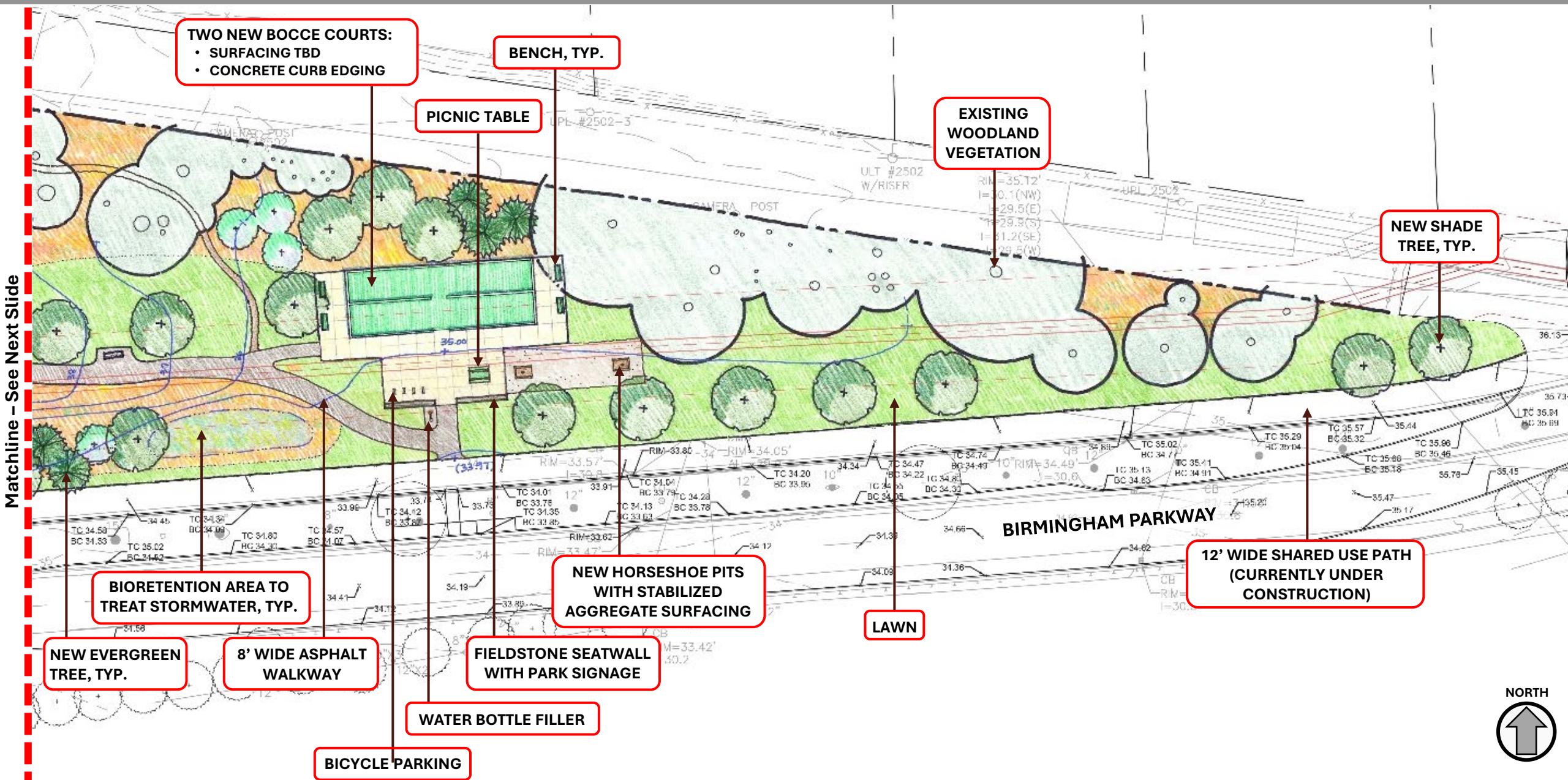
- Two bocce courts & horseshoe pits
- Water bottle filler
- Accessible walkways with seating
- Shade shelter
- New landscaping

# Proposed Concept A



**NORTH**





# Proposed Site Features



Shurcliff Bench



Bicycle Parking



Bocce Courts



Picnic Table



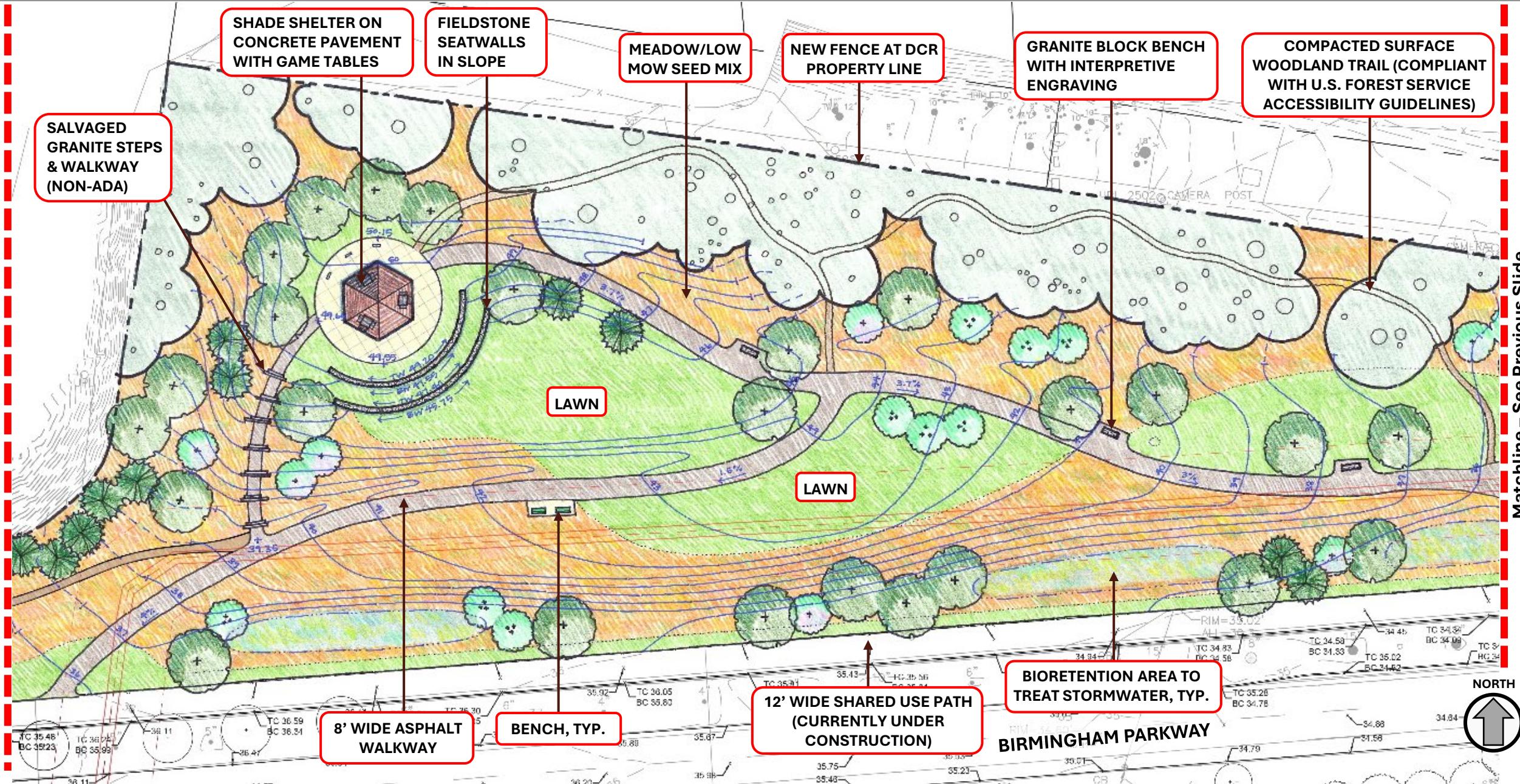
Water Bottle Filler



Bioretention Area



Horseshoe Pits



# Proposed Site Features



Shade Shelter



Fieldstone Retaining Seatwalls



Salvaged Granite Steps

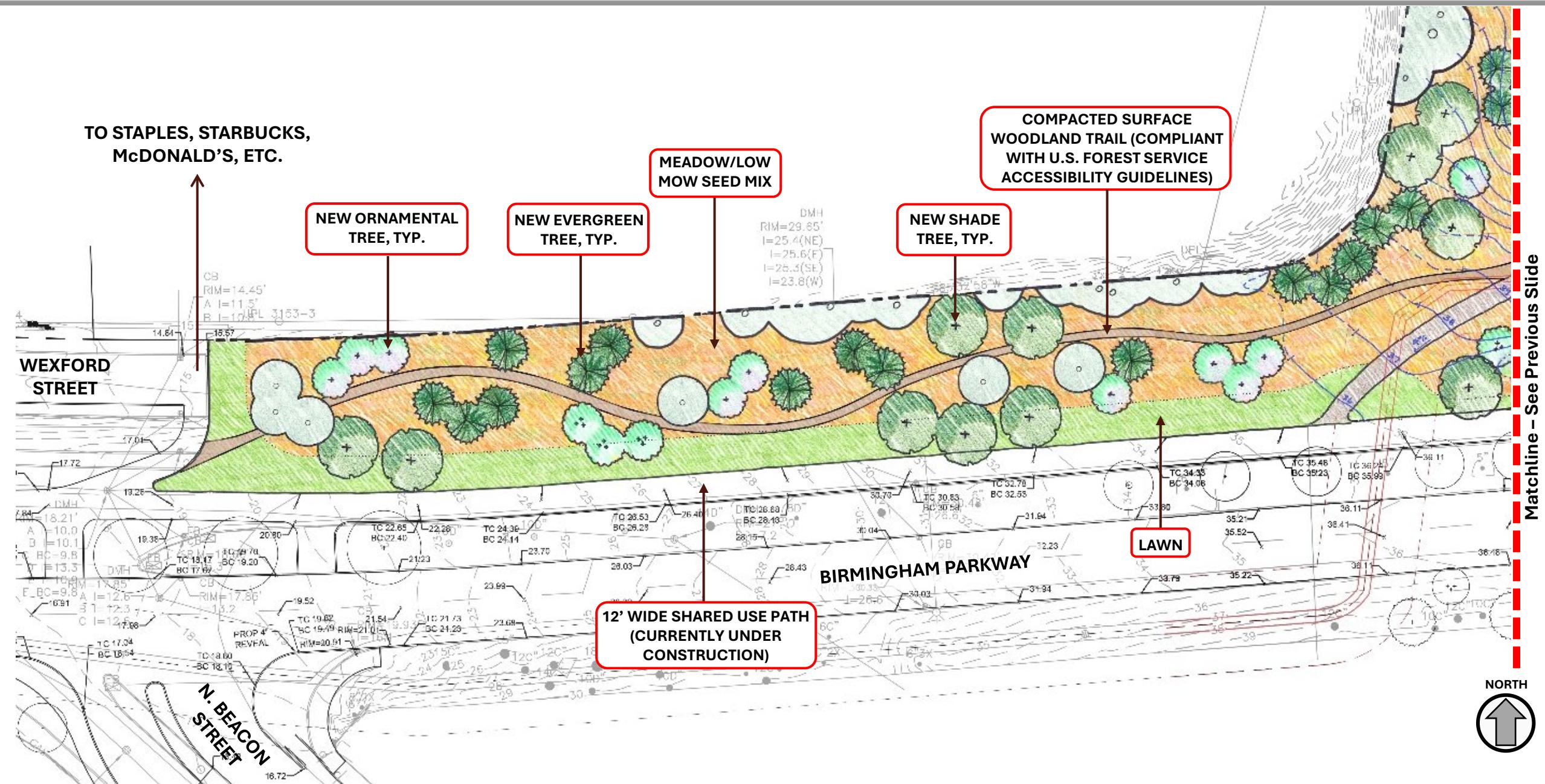


Game Table



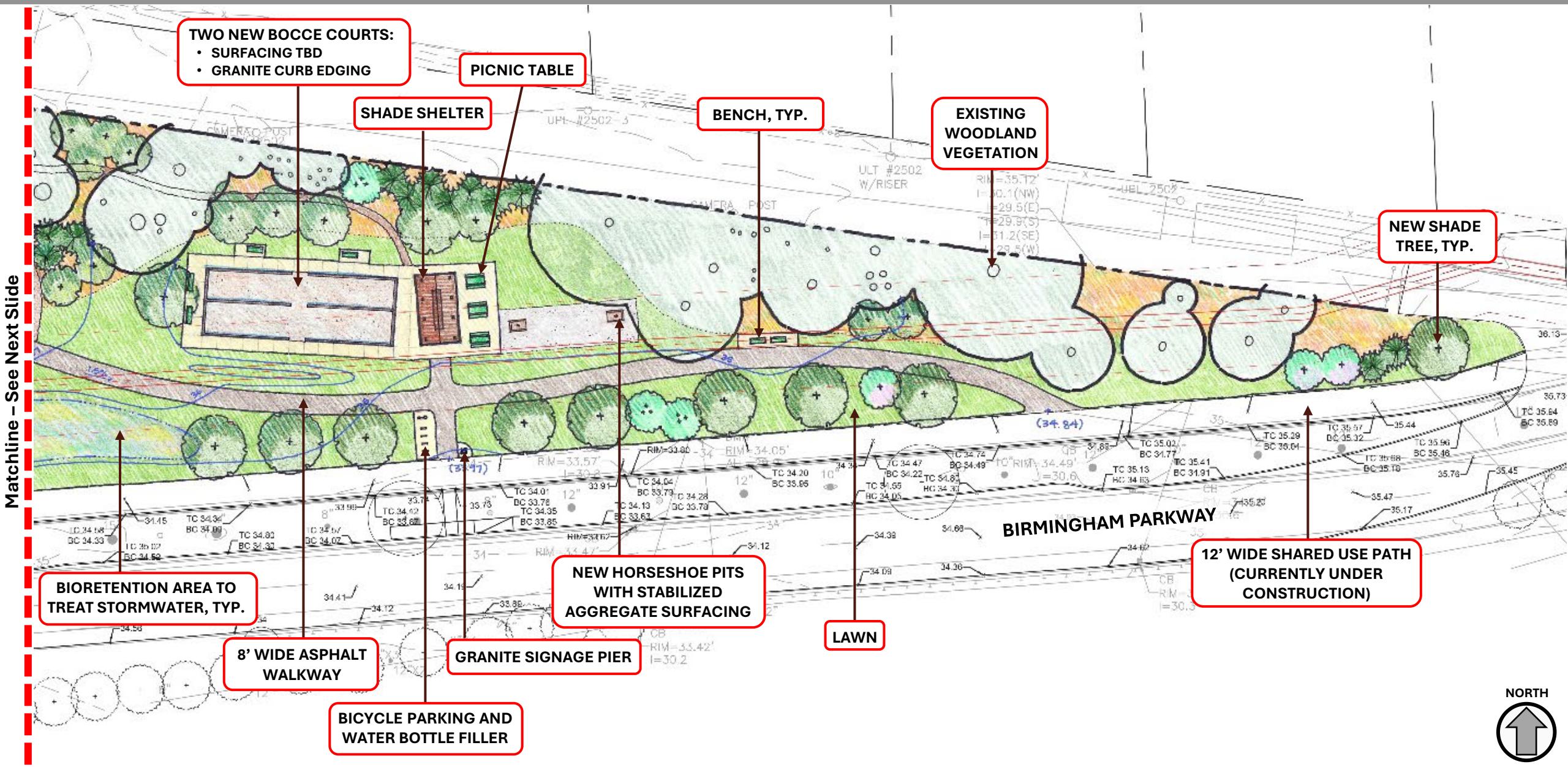
Granite Block Benches (with examples of interpretive engraving)





# Proposed Concept B





# Proposed Site Features



Shurcliff Bench



Bicycle Parking



Bocce Courts



Picnic Table



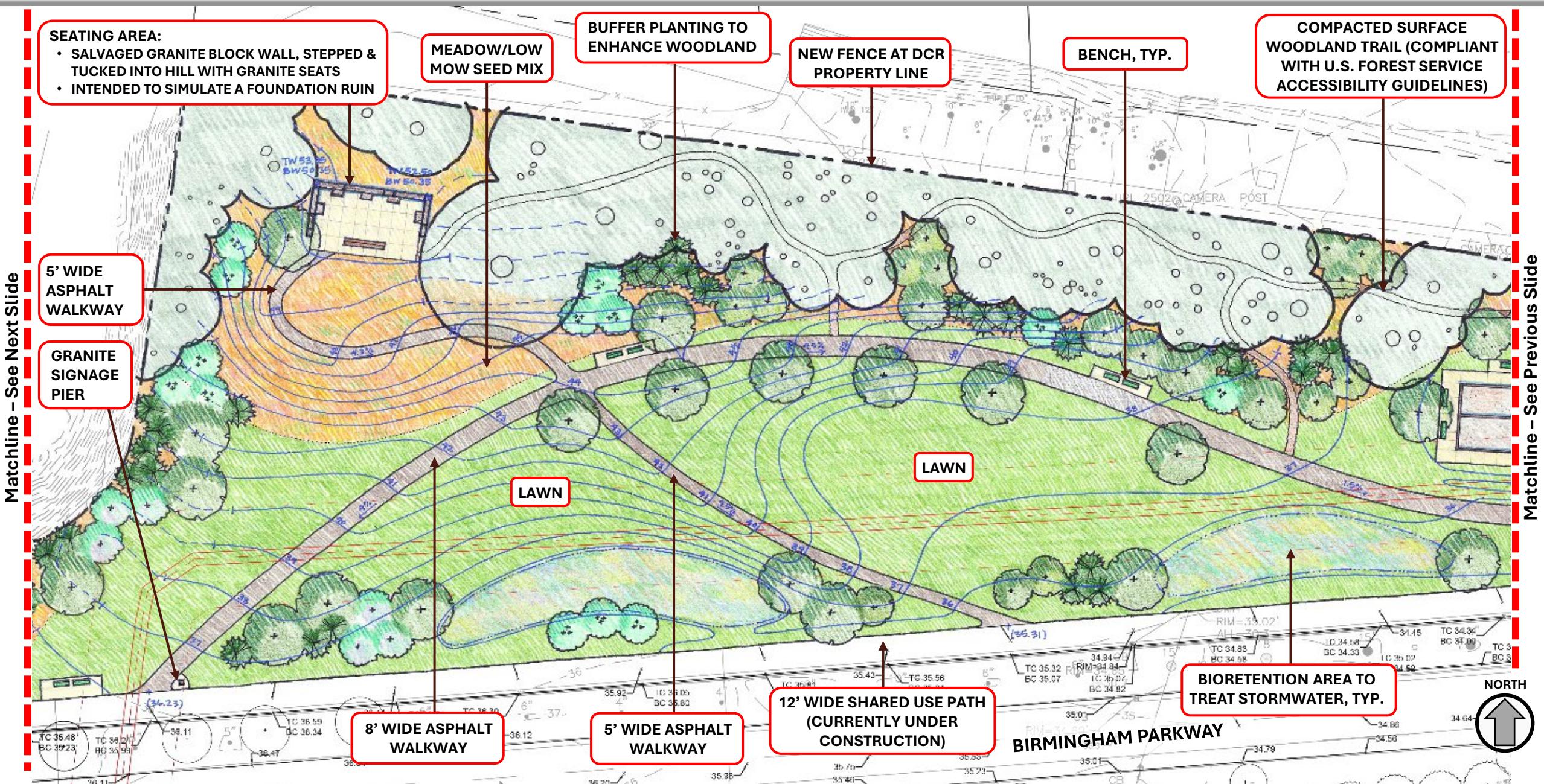
Water Bottle Filler



Shade Shelter



Horseshoe Pits



# Proposed Site Features



Timber-Style Bench



Granite Block Bench



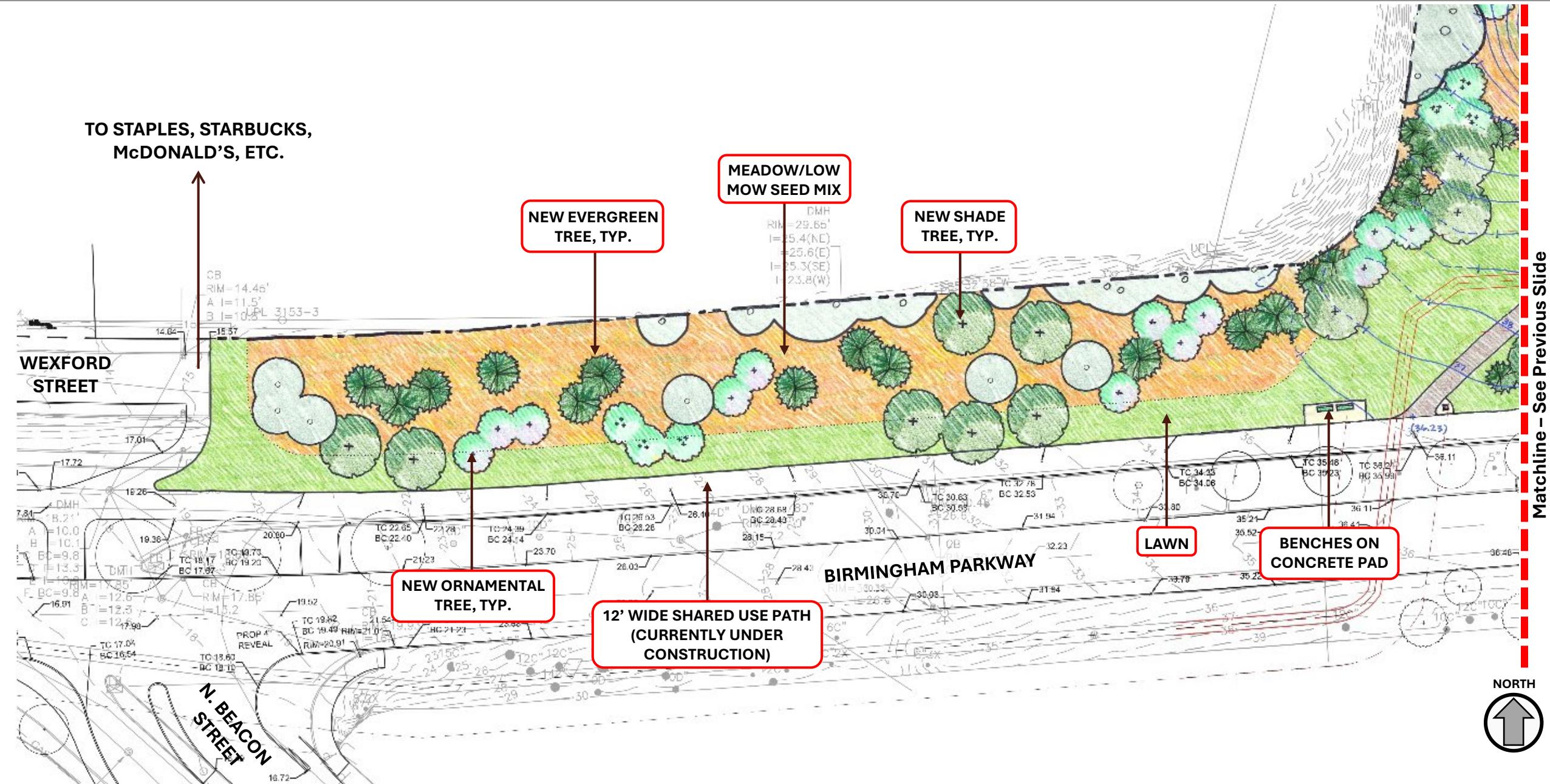
Granite Signage Pier



Bioretention Area



Salvaged Granite Stacked Walls (to simulate foundation ruins)



## Schedule

Schematic Design (25%) & Public Meeting #2	December 2025 – April 2026
Design Development (50%) & Public Meeting #3	May – August 2026
75% Construction Documents	September – October 2026
90% Construction Documents	November – December 2026
100% Construction Documents, Public Meeting #4 and Final Bid Set	January – March 2027
Bidding & Construction	<i>Upon approval of construction funding and after completion of Parkway and Eversource projects.</i>

# Comments & Questions

Concept Plan A



- Which concept do you prefer?
- Which site elements would you like in the new park?



Concept Plan B

# Additional Information

- Recording and tonight's slide deck will be available at:
  - [www.mass.gov/dcr/past-public-meetings](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/past-public-meetings)
- If you have comments on this project:
  - *Submit online:* [www.mass.gov/dcr/public-comment](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/public-comment)
  - *Deadline:* **Thursday, December 18, 2025**  
*Please note: the contents of comments submitted to DCR, including your name, town and zip code, will be posted on DCR's website. Additional contact information provided, notably email address, will only be used for outreach on future updates to the subject project or property.*
- If you wish to subscribe to a DCR general information or project-related listserv: contact DCR's Office of Community Relations via email at [mass.parks@mass.gov](mailto:mass.parks@mass.gov)



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF  
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION



**Thank You!**

**Leo M. Birmingham Park  
Renovation**