

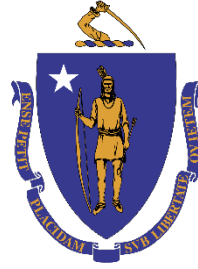


MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF  
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

# 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





## 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:

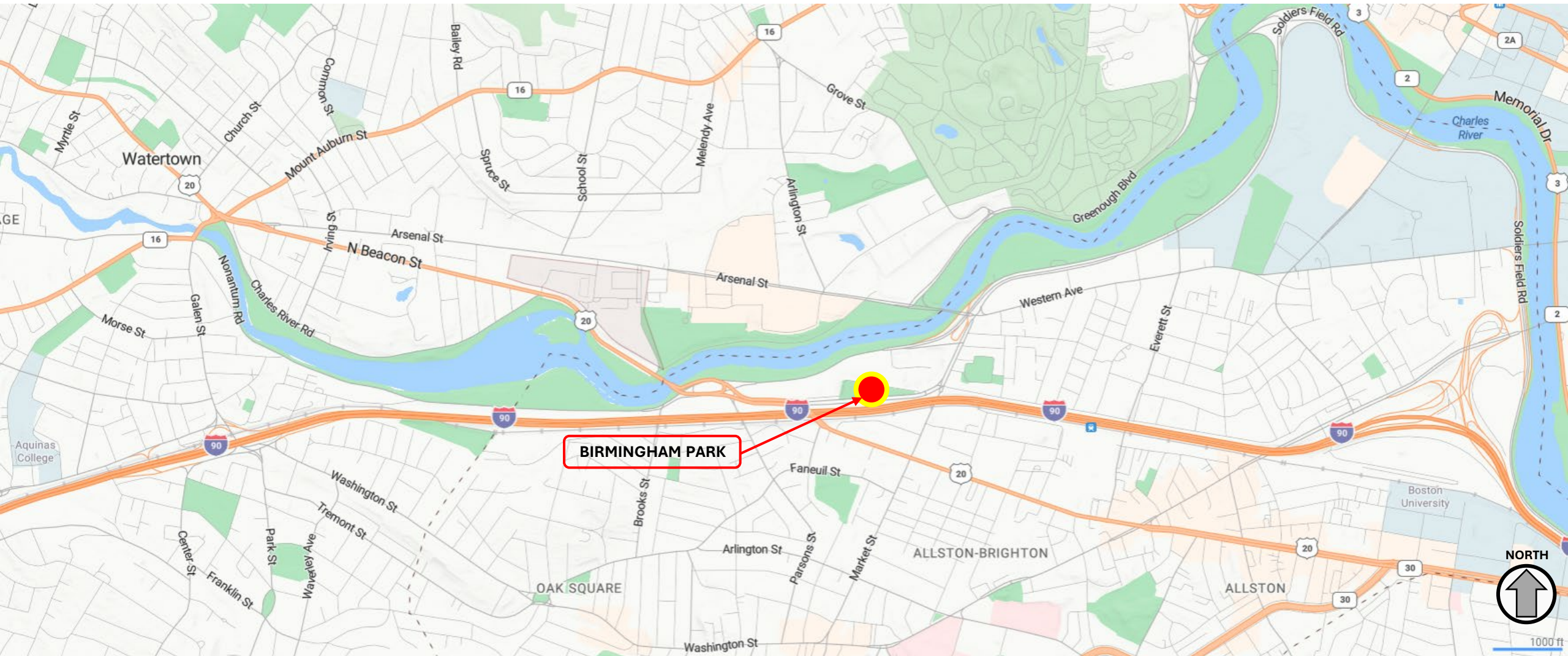
- Establish and restore a safe and welcoming park
- Ensure universal accessibility for all park features
- Promote recreational activities for different age groups and abilities
- Be environmentally and historically sensitive

## 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





CHARLES RIVER

## Site Context

BOSTON  
MOTORSPORTS

ACURA OF BOSTON

1550 ON THE CHARLES  
APARTMENTS

SOLDIERS FIELD PLACE

SOLDIERS FIELD ROAD

EXISTING  
BOCCE  
COURTS

STARBUCKS

STAPLES

CURRENT CONSTRUCTION  
STAGING AREA FOR  
PARKWAY IMPROVEMENTS

BIRMINGHAM PARKWAY

PROJECT AREA

NEW SHARED USE PATH (UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION AS PART OF THE  
PARKWAY PROJECT)

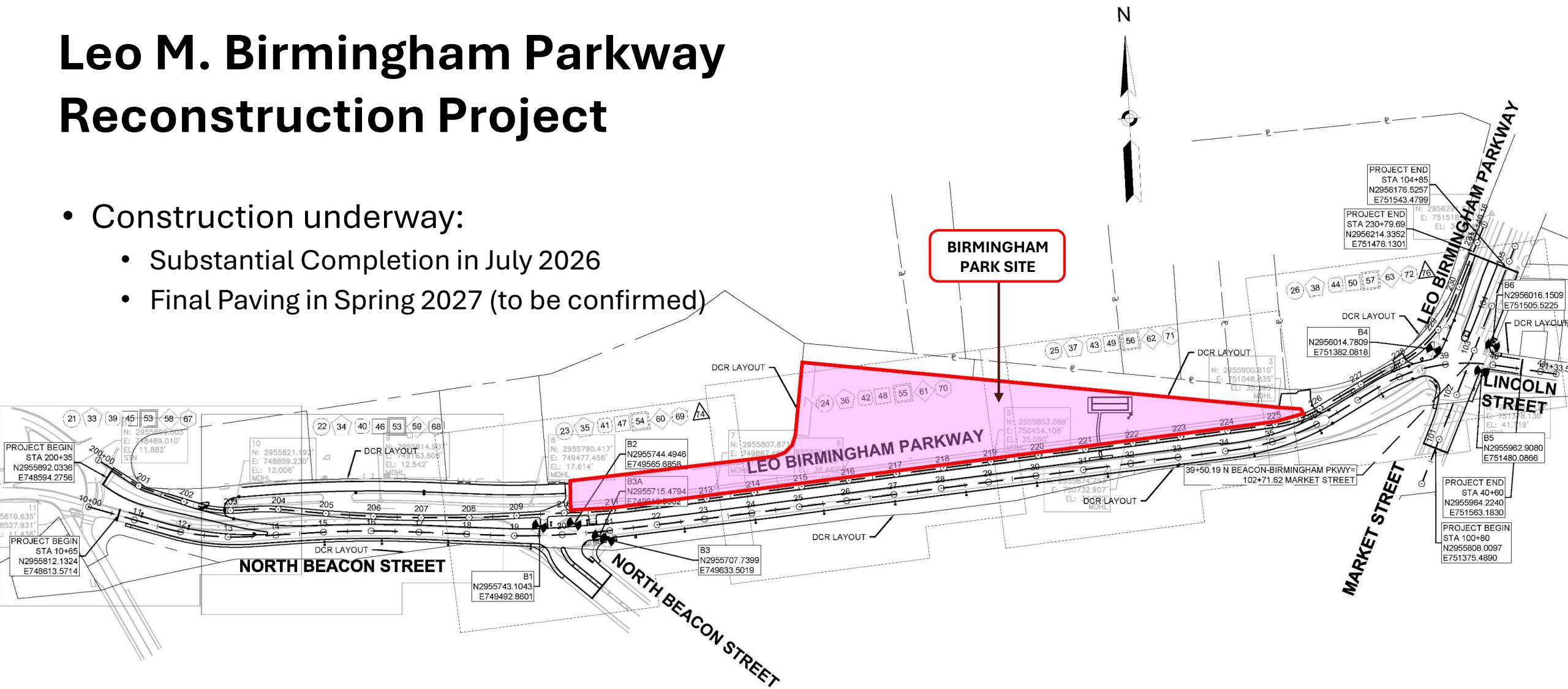
MASSACHUSETTS TURNPIKE I-90

NORTH





- 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*)



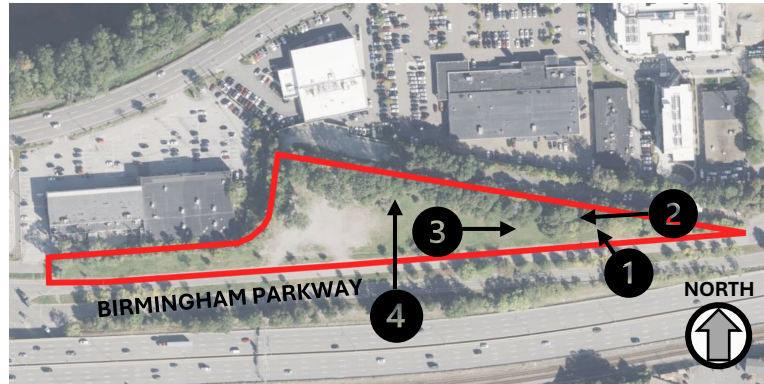
**Complete Route = 1.33 miles**



**Leo Birmingham Parkway = 2000' or 0.4 miles**

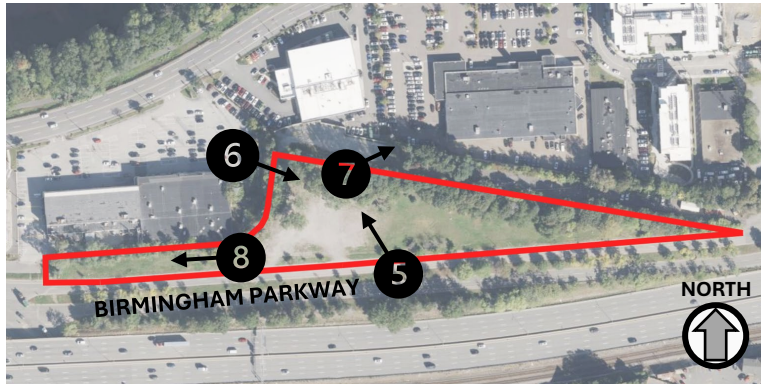


# Existing Conditions





## 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<br>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

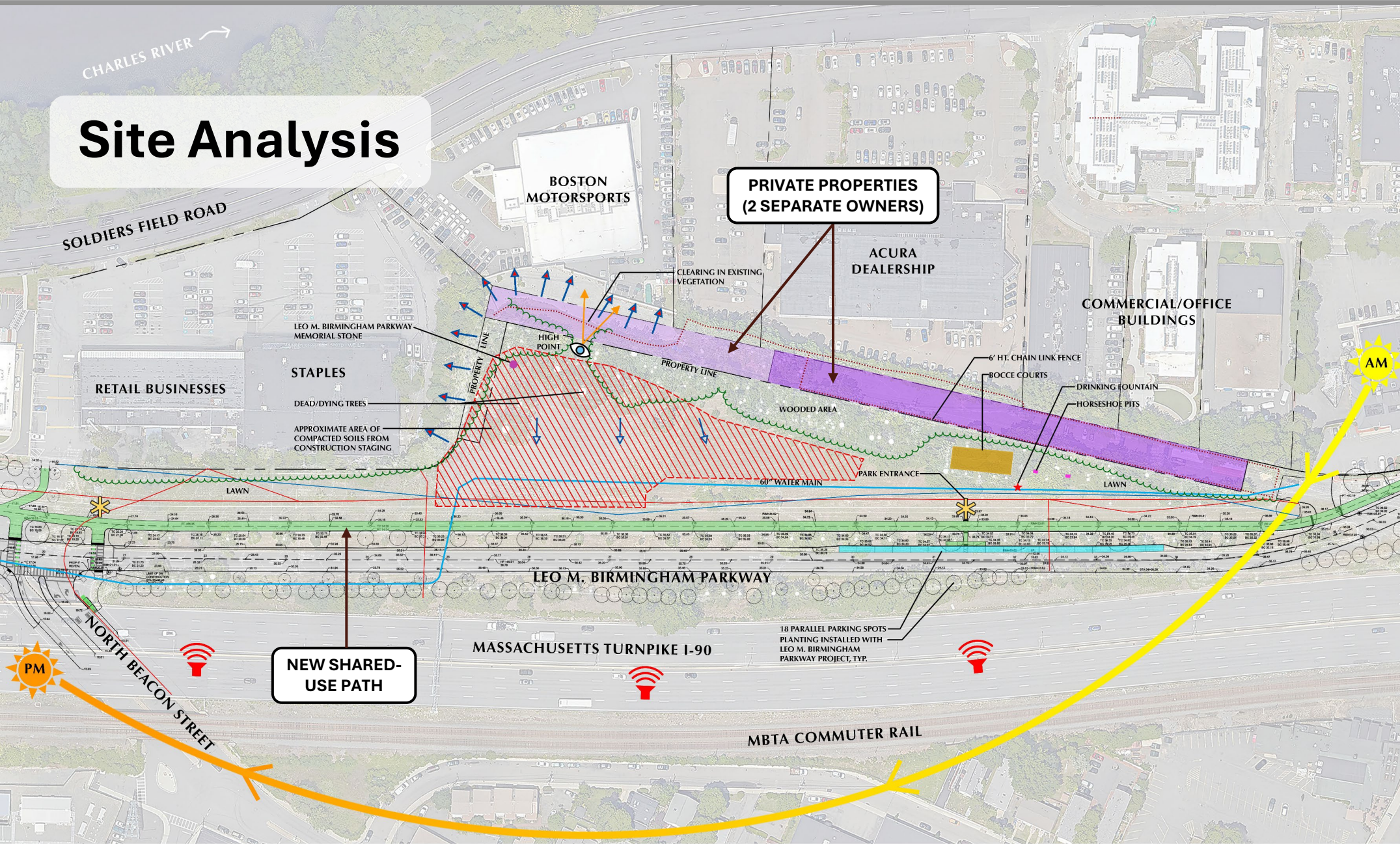
Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)  
Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*)  
Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*)  
Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*)

## VINES

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



# Site Analysis



- Legend**
- Accessible Route (Shared-Use-Path)
  - Parking
  - Park Entrance
  - Bocce Court
  - Horseshoe Pits
  - Water Fountain
  - Chain Link Fence
  - Existing Vegetation
  - Area of Compacted Soil / Existing Staging Area
  - Noise Source
  - Steep Slope
  - Non-traversable Slope
  - View
  - 60" Water Main
  - Waterline
  - Underground Electric





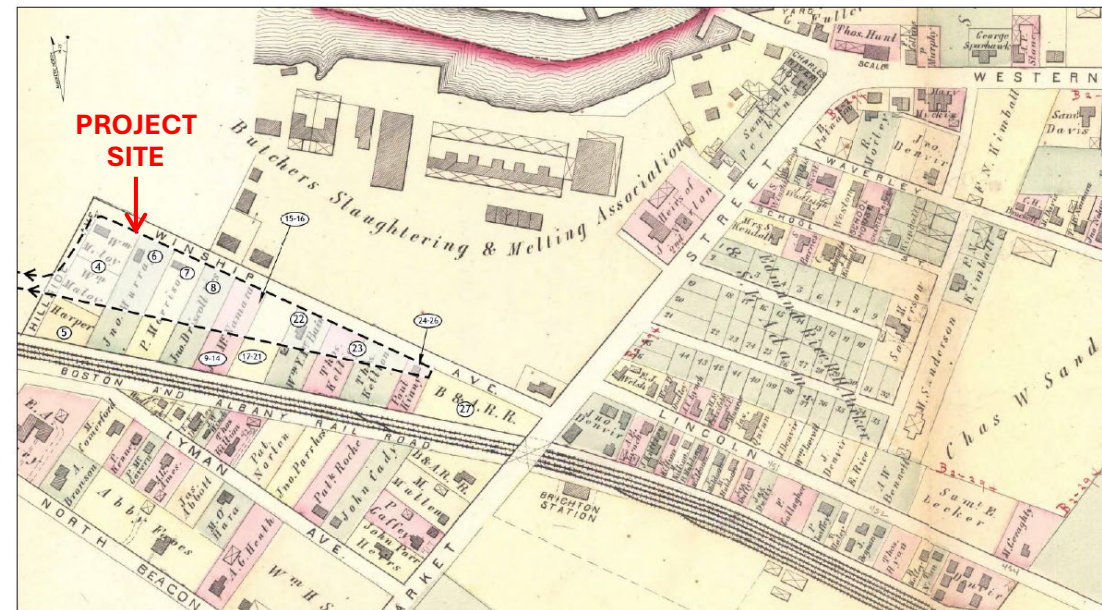
# Archaeological Investigation

## Work Included:

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

## Historical Background:

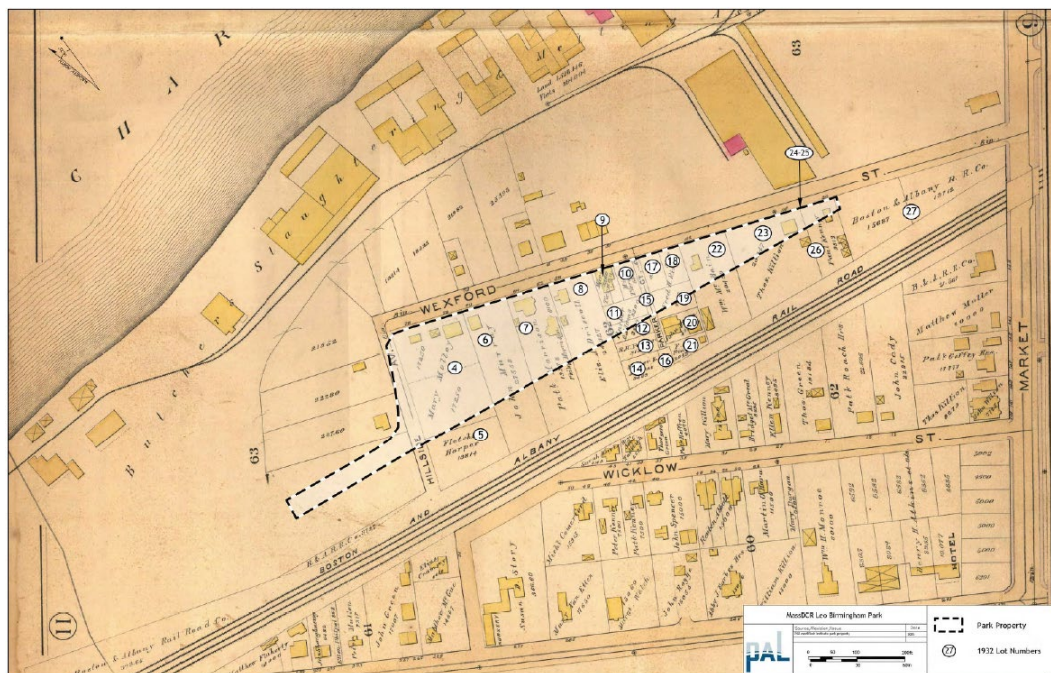
- In the 1800s, the park was a neighborhood with 20 house lots
- Bordered the Brighton Slaughterhouse property to the north
- Bound by Wexford Street (formerly Winship Ave) to the north, Hillside Ave on the west, and the Boston & Albany Railroad on the south
- In 1932, the DCR acquired the entire neighborhood 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

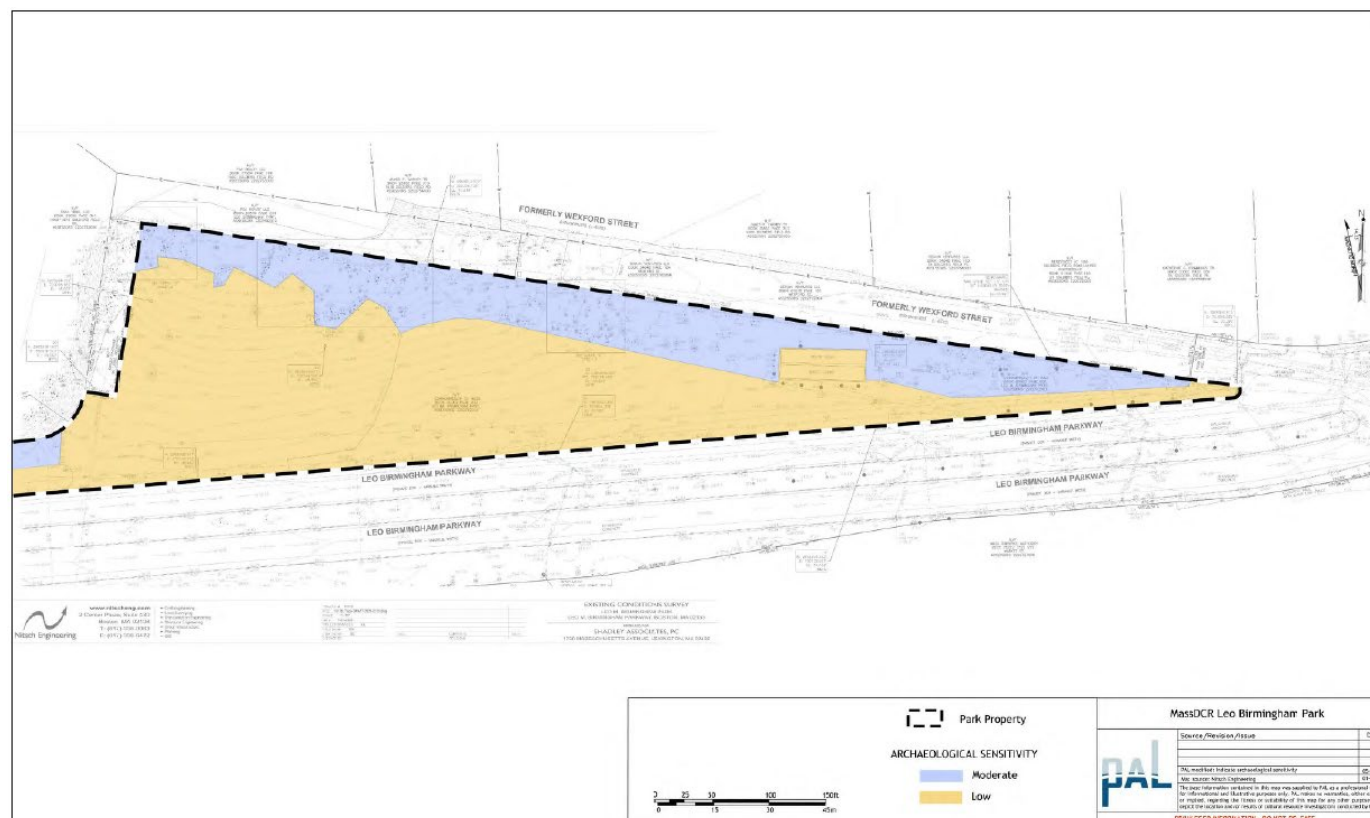


Photos circa 1932



# 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:**

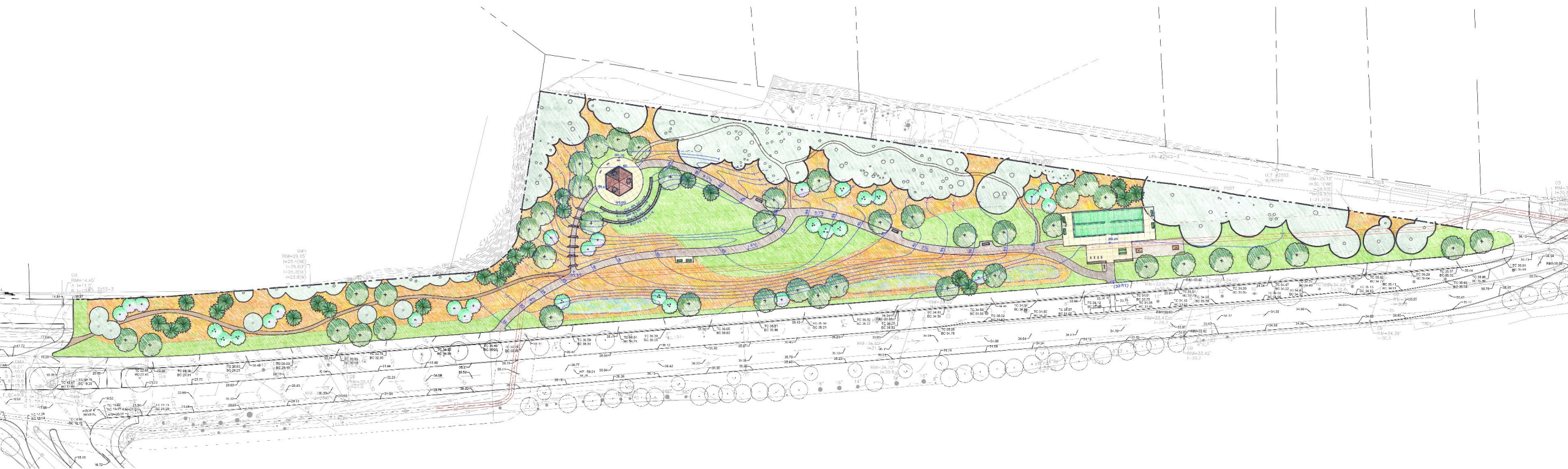
- Two alternatives with different layouts, amenities, and materials
- Elements of both alternatives can be combined
- The goal is to find consensus, so a Preferred Concept Design emerges

## **Program:**

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



# Proposed Concept A





**TWO NEW BOCCE COURTS:**

- SURFACING TBD
- CONCRETE CURB EDGING

**BENCH, TYP.**

**PICNIC TABLE**

**EXISTING  
WOODLAND  
VEGETATION**

**NEW SHADE  
TREE, TYP.**

**BIORETENTION AREA TO  
TREAT STORMWATER, TYP.**

**NEW EVERGREEN  
TREE, TYP.**

**8' WIDE ASPHALT  
WALKWAY**

**FIELDSTONE SEATWALL  
WITH PARK SIGNAGE**

**WATER BOTTLE FILLER**

**BICYCLE PARKING**

**NEW HORSESHOE PITS  
WITH STABILIZED  
AGGREGATE SURFACING**

**LAWN**

**12' WIDE SHARED USE PATH  
(CURRENTLY UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION)**

**BIRMINGHAM PARKWAY**





## Proposed Site Features



Shurcliff Bench



Bicycle Parking



Bocce Courts



Picnic Table



Water Bottle Filler



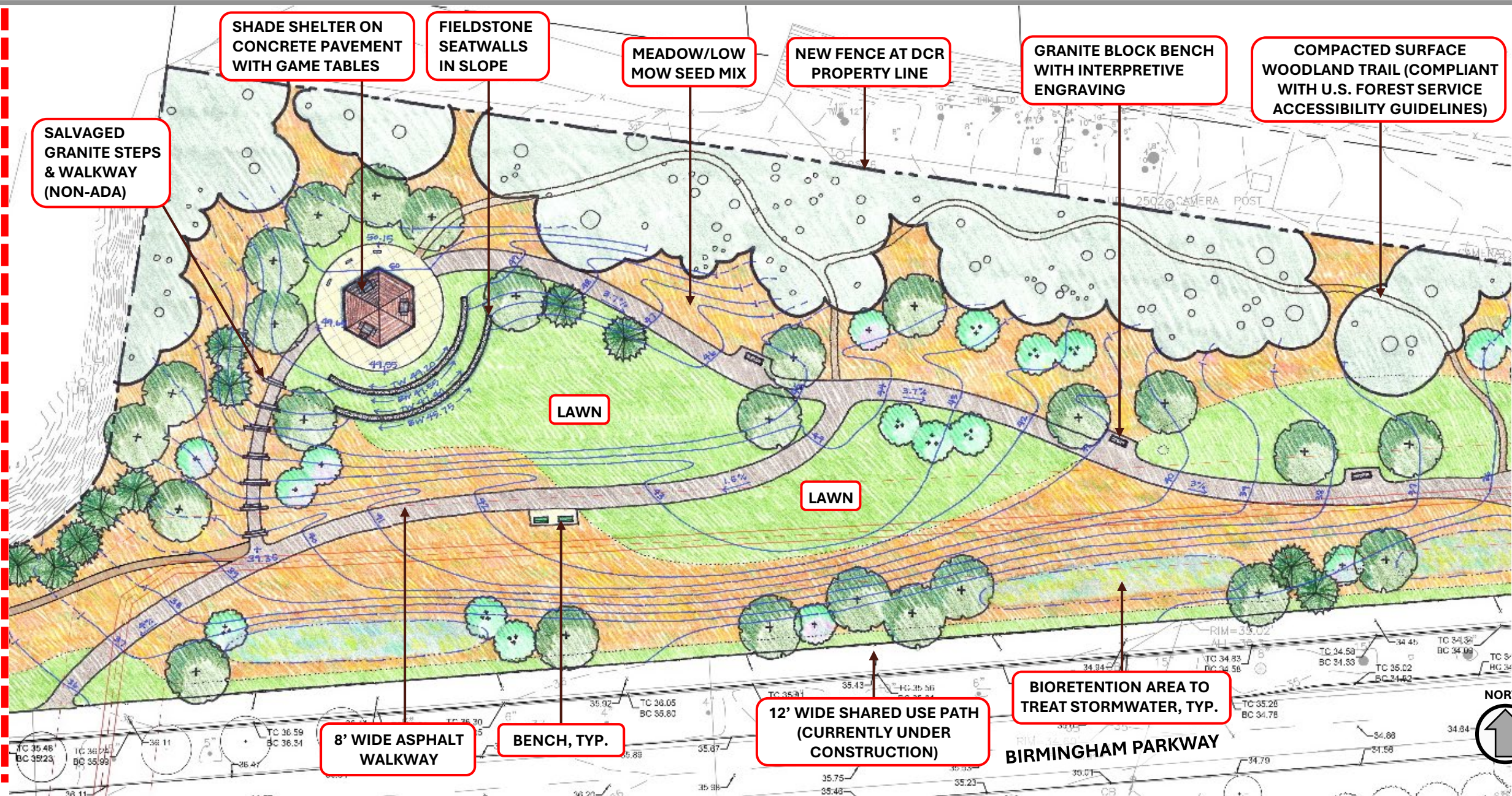
Bioretention Area



Horseshoe Pits



Matchline - See Next Slide



Matchline - See Previous Slide



# Proposed Site Features



Shade Shelter



Fieldstone Retaining Seatwalls



Salvaged Granite Steps



Game Table



Granite Block Benches (with examples of  
interpretive engraving)







TO STAPLES, STARBUCKS,  
McDONALD'S, ETC.

NEW ORNAMENTAL  
TREE, TYP.

NEW EVERGREEN  
TREE, TYP.

MEADOW/LOW  
MOW SEED MIX

NEW SHADE  
TREE, TYP.

COMPACTED SURFACE  
WOODLAND TRAIL (COMPLIANT  
WITH U.S. FOREST SERVICE  
ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES)

LAWN

12' WIDE SHARED USE PATH  
(CURRENTLY UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION)

BIRMINGHAM PARKWAY

N. BEACON  
STREET

Matchline - See Previous Slide





# Proposed Concept B





**TWO NEW BOCCE COURTS:**

- SURFACING TBD
- GRANITE CURB EDGING

**PICNIC TABLE**

**SHADE SHELTER**

**BENCH, TYP.**

**EXISTING  
WOODLAND  
VEGETATION**

**NEW SHADE  
TREE, TYP.**

**BIORETENTION AREA TO  
TREAT STORMWATER, TYP.**

**8' WIDE ASPHALT  
WALKWAY**

**BICYCLE PARKING AND  
WATER BOTTLE FILLER**

**GRANITE SIGNAGE PIER**

**NEW HORSESHOE PITS  
WITH STABILIZED  
AGGREGATE SURFACING**

**LAWN**

**12' WIDE SHARED USE PATH  
(CURRENTLY UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION)**

**BIRMINGHAM PARKWAY**





## Proposed Site Features



Shurcliff Bench



Bicycle Parking



Bocce Courts



Picnic Table



Water Bottle Filler

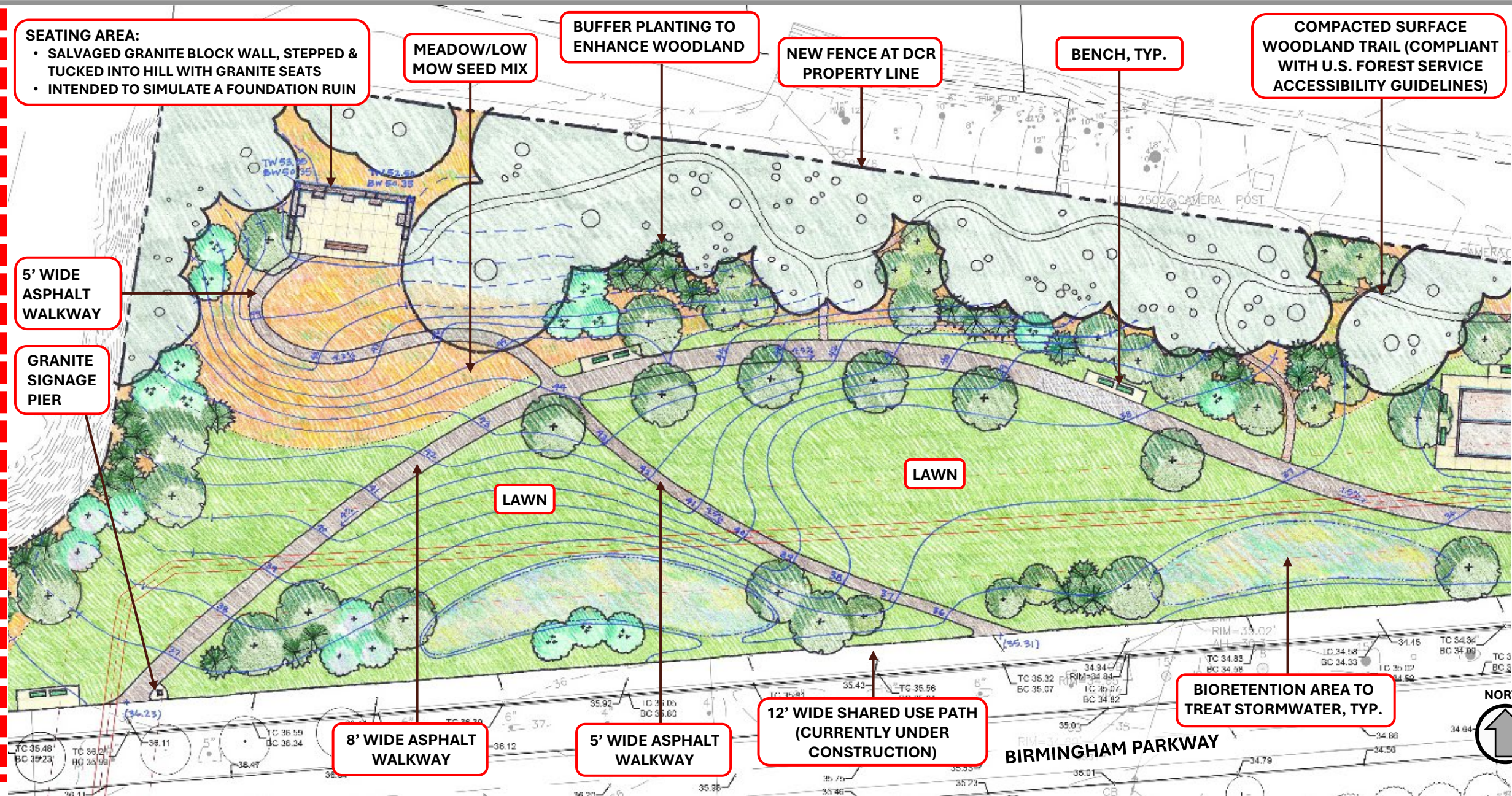


Shade Shelter



Horseshoe Pits







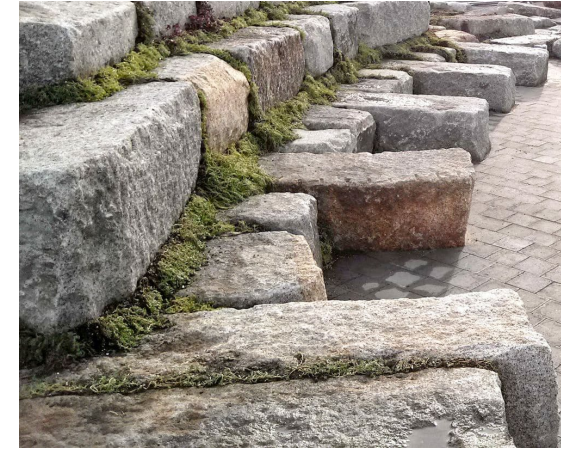
# Proposed Site Features



Timber-Style Bench



Granite Block Bench



Granite Signage Pier



Bioretention Area



Salvaged Granite Stacked Walls (to simulate foundation ruins)



TO STAPLES, STARBUCKS,  
McDONALD'S, ETC.

MEADOW/LOW  
MOW SEED MIX

NEW EVERGREEN  
TREE, TYP.

NEW SHADE  
TREE, TYP.

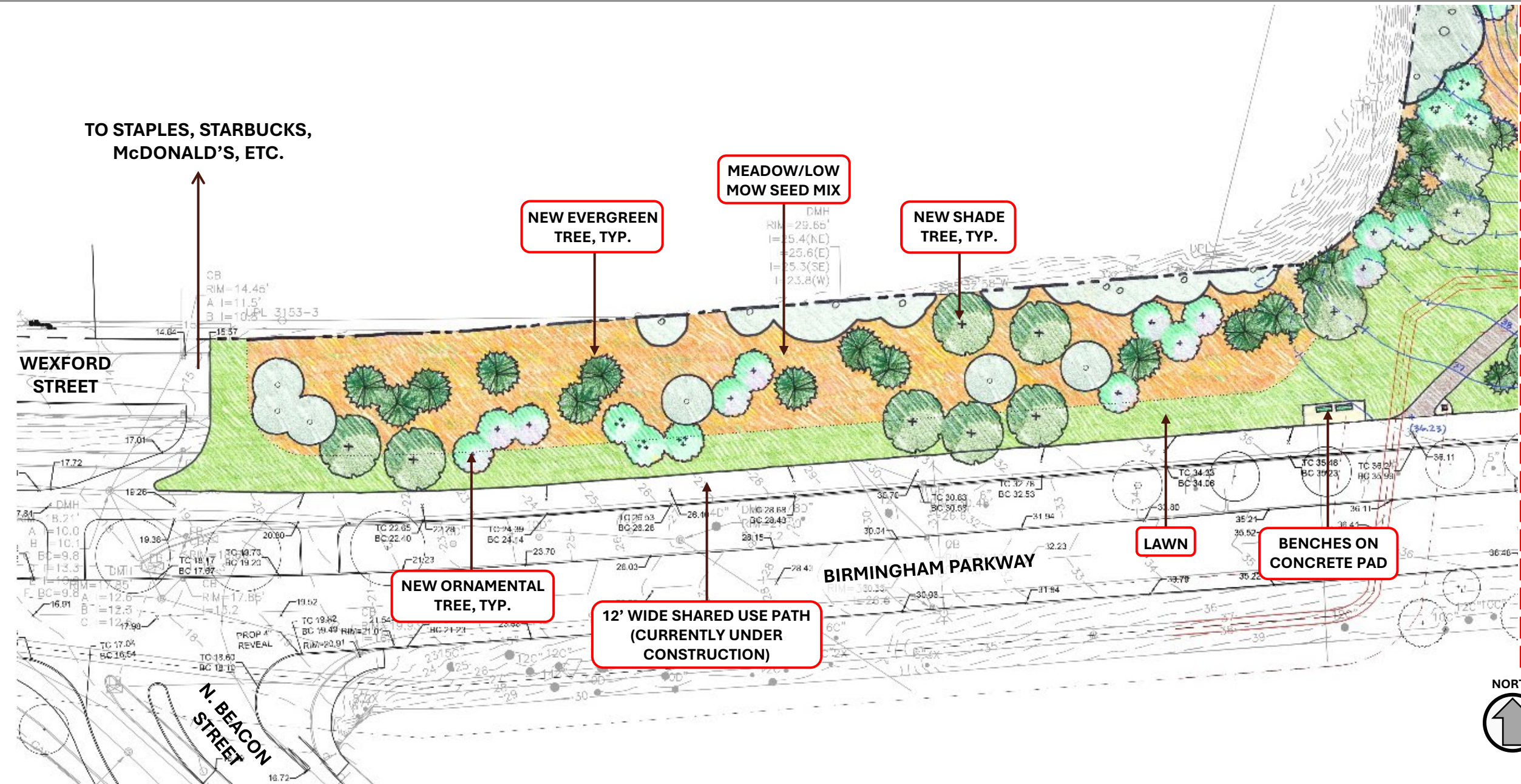
NEW ORNAMENTAL  
TREE, TYP.

12' WIDE SHARED USE PATH  
(CURRENTLY UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION)

LAWN

BENCHES ON  
CONCRETE PAD

Matchline - See Previous Slide





## 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<br>and Final Bid Set | January – March 2027  |
| Bidding & Construction  | <i>Upon approval of construction funding and after<br/>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**