

3.3 | Building Improvements and New Facilities

Proposed Artesani Aquatics Facility

The Artesani Playground Wading Pool and Spray Deck offers a vibrant, family-oriented water park activity area at the heart of Herter Park. Renovated in 2018 and staffed during the summer months by a team of DCR lifeguards, the Wading Pool and Spray Deck are very popular gathering spots for families with young children, especially on hot days. The recent pool renovation scope of work did not include improvements to support facilities for the lifeguard staff, who currently operate out of two, single-story, prefabricated wood storage “sheds” located on a patch of lawn between the Wading Pool and the existing comfort station (public restrooms facility). The sheds do currently accommodate a small lifeguard break room, a behind the scenes work area and a small space for general storage, but they are undersized and do not address the full needs of the lifeguard staff, nor the full program of lifeguard operations. Moreover, the sheds do not meet code-life safety and accessibility requirements, nor do they provide for proper air ventilation and air conditioning. In short, the sheds were clearly installed as a temporary measure to “get by” for a time, but have proven to be inadequate as a long term solution.

Adding to the need for a new solution to existing lifeguard operations is the current, problematic location of the two existing sheds. Both sheds impact sight lines between the Wading Pool and the Telford Street pedestrian bridge crossing, thereby diminishing the visitor experience in terms of visibility and safety at this important crossing. This Master Plan recommends the removal of the two existing sheds and their replacement with a permanent, right-sized and code-compliant Aquatics Facility in a new location closer to the existing comfort station. The Aquatics Facility’s new location will effectively consolidate all built structures within Artesani Playground and, by extension, will open up views and access to promote better connections to/from the adjacent Allston neighborhood.



Figure 3-12. Existing Comfort Station with the two temporary sheds serving lifeguard operations at the Artesani Playground Wading Pool and Spray Deck

Artesani Aquatics Facility Program Requirements

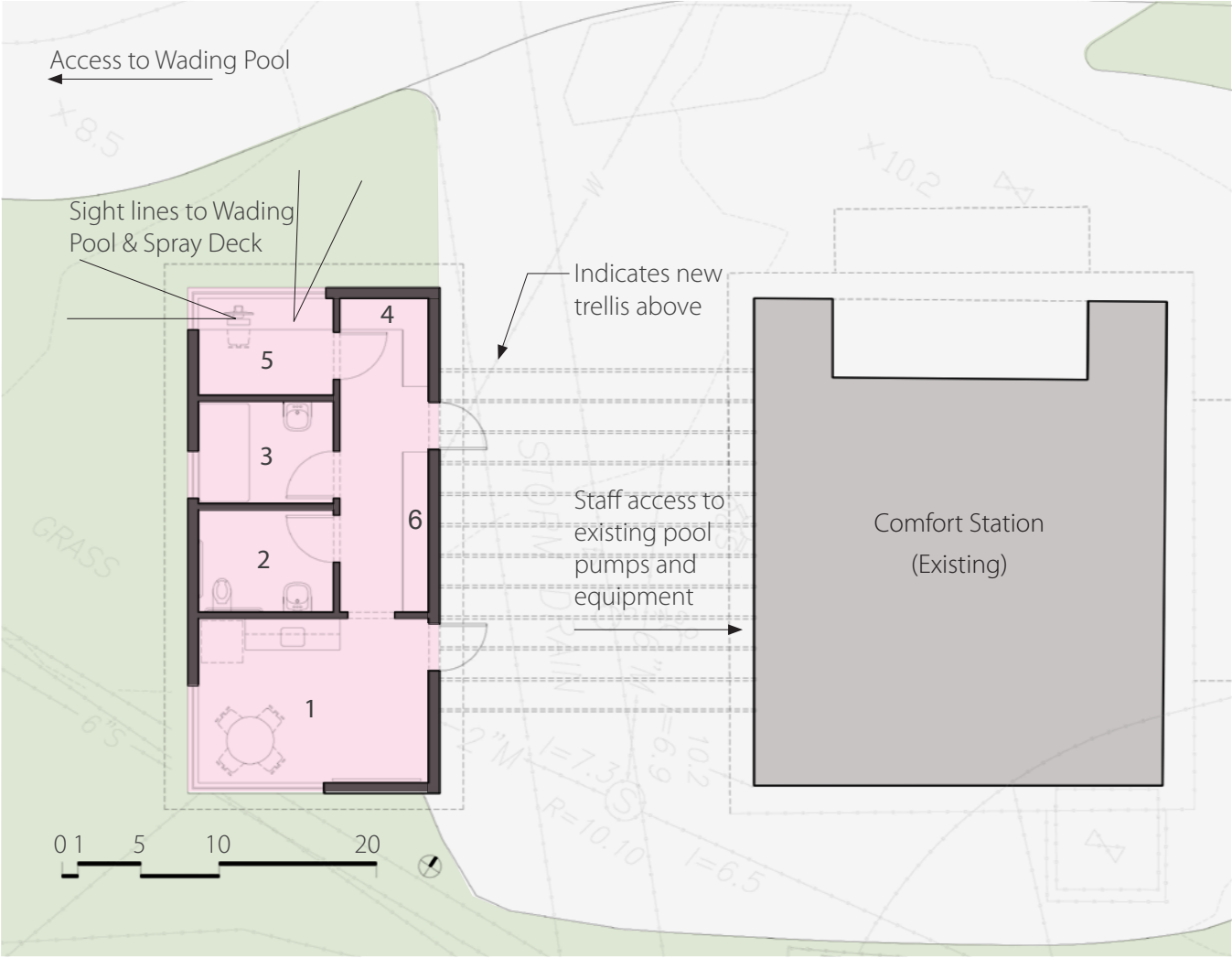
As part of the Herter Park master plan effort, a meeting was held with DCR staff during the summer of 2021 to establish a working program for the new Artesani Aquatics Facility. The program was established as part of a discussion about current lifeguard operations within the sheds, as well as critical needs. Common themes during the discussion included a lack of space for current or missing program elements, as well as a lack of privacy for manager operations. The following program elements were determined to be most critical to a future facility:

- **Lifeguard Break Room** to include a table, refrigerator, sink and lockers.
- **First Aid Station** to include a cot and (ideally) a sink and/or water source.
- **Manager’s Office** or work station to provide a space for manager operations.
- **Storage Room** for brooms, mops, cleaning supplies, hand towels, extra toilet paper, five-gallon water bottles, etc.
- **Accessible Staff Restroom**

In addition to the new Aquatics Facility, it was determined that a new shade structure and guard booth at the Wading Pool’s entry gate would be helpful to protect patrons from the sun while waiting in line to enter the pool area (shade trellis is indicated in image below as the dashed element adjacent to circular Wading Pool).



Figure 3-13. Artesani Playground showing location of new Aquatics Office.



Aquatics Facility - Proposed Floor Plan

Legend

1. Lifeguard Break Room	153 NSF*
2. Accessible Restroom	56 NSF
3. First Aid Station	56 NSF
4. Storage	17 NSF
5. Manager's Office	53 NSF
6. Lockers	17 NSF

Total Lifeguard Station Area: 514 GSF**

*Net Square Feet (NSF)
 **Gross Square Feet (GSF)

Existing Sheds (for reference)

13'-10" x 10'-2" 140 GSF
13'-10" x 10'-2" 140 GSF

Total Existing Area: 280 GSF

Figure 3-14. Aquatics Facility Proposed Floor Plan

Artesani Aquatics Facility Recommendations

Master Plan Recommendations:

- Remove existing temporary sheds
- Replace sheds with a permanent, ≈550 SF Aquatics Facility based on the master plan program requirements and that is code-compliant and fully accessible.
- Position the Aquatics Facility near the existing comfort station (public restrooms) facility, to provide some needed separation away from the action of the Wading Pool and Spray Deck areas, to consolidate built structures within the Artesani Playground Area and to provide easy staff access to existing pool pump and equipment located within the existing comfort station.
- Add a new shade trellis and guard booth (seasonal or permanent) at the entry into the Wading Pool area to provide much needed protection from the sun for lifeguard staff and waiting pool patrons.



Figure 3-15. Conceptual Rendering of Proposed Artesani Aquatics Office

The Herter Center

The Herter Center is a gem-like building with great potential. While currently vacant and falling into a state of disrepair, it remains an architecturally significant building occupying a strategic location within Herter Park. The existing two-story, 5,900 square-foot structure stands as a unique park pavilion along the Charles River and is well-positioned to be re-purposed for public use. At over fifty years old, the mid-century modern building is also eligible for recognition as an historic property by the Boston Landmarks Commission and Massachusetts Historical Commission.

For brief history of the building see *Chapter 2.1: Park History*.



Figure 3-16. The existing Herter Center showing its bridge-like span across the existing moat and floor-to-ceiling windows at the second floor overlooking the Charles River to the north.

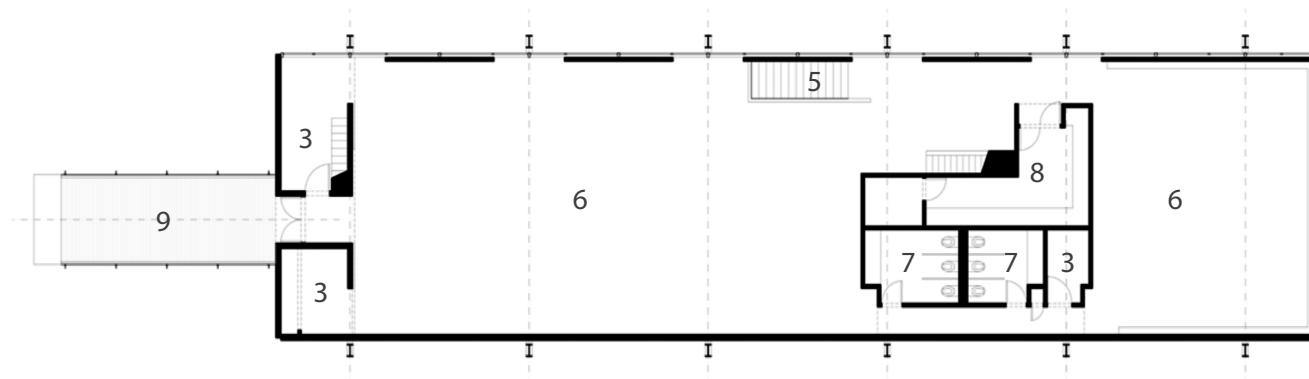
Herter Center Facilities Condition Assessment

The Herter Center currently suffers from years of deferred maintenance. The Center’s renovation and rehabilitation, no matter the program it houses, will require hazardous materials assessment and abatement, building envelope improvements, a replacement of all of its building systems, and necessary code / life-safety and accessibility upgrades, including new accessible restrooms and a new elevator between the Center’s two floor levels. Prioritizing green building technologies will also influence a range of design decisions, including building enclosure material choices and window replacement specifications and details, consideration of all-electric, non-fossil fuel-based mechanical systems and the potential introduction of roof-mounted photovoltaic panels (solar) for production of on-site renewable energy.

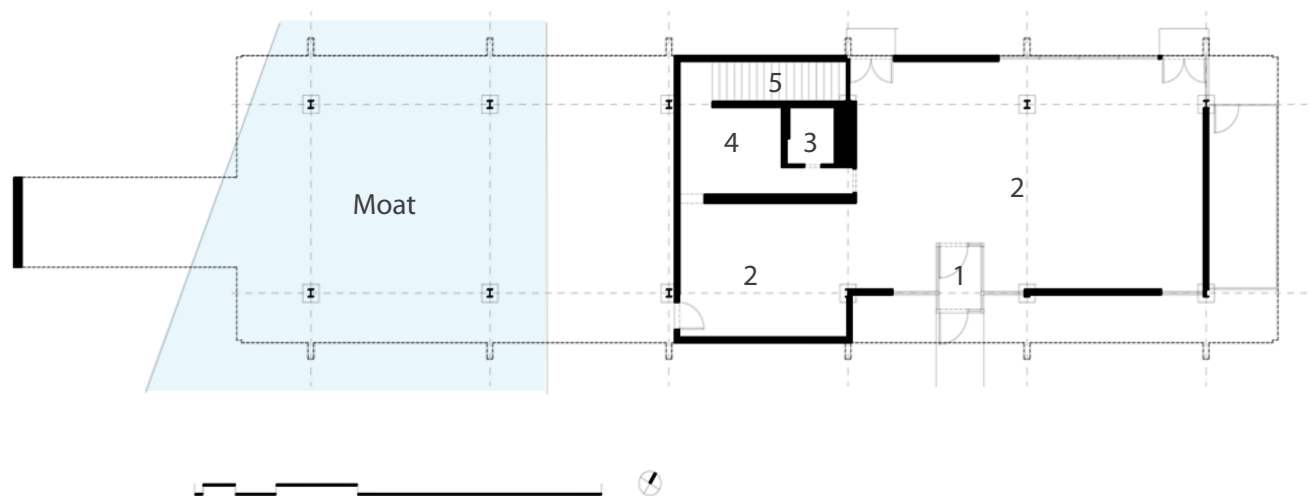
Given the Herter Center’s historical and architectural significance, all building improvements will need to carefully consider impacts to the legibility of the building’s character-defining features, especially if historic listing with the Boston Landmarks Commission and/or Massachusetts Historical Commission is pursued.



Figure 3-17. Evidence of the Herter Center’s current disrepair given its years of inactivity and lack of upkeep.



Upper Floor Level (≈ 4,000 gross square feet (GSF))



Ground Floor Level (≈1,875 gross square feet (GSF))

Legend:

- 0 1 5 10 20 50
- 1. Entry Vestibule
- 2. Welcome Area
- 3. Storage
- 4. Mechanical
- 5. Stair to Upper Floor Level
- 6. Exhibit Hall
- 7. Restroom
- 8. Office
- 9. Bridge to Amphitheater

Figure 3-18. Herter Center Existing Condition Floor Plans

Adaptive Reuse of the Herter Center

The Master Plan process for the Herter Center was comprised of a high-level facilities condition assessment of the Herter Center (summarized on the preceding pages), followed by an analysis of its potential use and a series of community meetings to vet potential uses. Potential uses that were explored and/or discussed with the community included:

- **Curatorship Programs** such as a restaurant, snack bar, or beer hall.
- **Support and staging space for the Herter Amphitheater**
- **Flexible multi-purpose activity space** for events, public gatherings, school groups, etc.
- **A new headquarters for the Head of the Charles Regatta** (previously studied in past years)
- **A new home for high school rowing** to replace the existing garage facility being used further upriver.

Initial stakeholder and community meetings led to consensus around the idea of re-purposing the Herter Center as a new high school rowing center. To confirm the viability of this idea, a preliminary study was carried out at the mid-point of the Master Plan process to identify high school rowing needs. Space needs assumptions were based on 1) an analysis of the current high school rowing operations occupying the existing garage adjacent to the Northeastern University's Henderson Boathouse; 2) a precedent study to determine a right size for boat storage facilities; and 3) program "test fits" using the Herter Center and the land area immediately east of the Herter Center as a potential site (see aerial view of study area below).



Figure 3-19. Aerial view of study area

Site Study Options 1 and 2

The Herter Center’s narrow footprint and required stair and elevator core elements pose considerable challenges to the storage of large crew boats (specifically four-person and eight-person rowing shells). The test fit process confirmed the need for additional square footage outside of the Herter Center to house these larger boats in one or more stand-alone boat storage structures.

Site study Alternative 1 (below left) explores the idea of a single, large boat storage hall running perpendicular to the river’s edge. The north-south orientation facilitates boat transport between parking/drop-off, the boat storage hall and the new dock at the river’s edge. Site study Alternative 2 proposes two, smaller boat storage structures, oriented east-west parallel to the Herter Center. The smaller structures are deferential in scale to the Herter Center and are positioned to form a communal courtyard between buildings. While both alternatives include similar features, such as new landscaping, dock infrastructure and permeable paths and terraces connecting the new and existing buildings to parking/drop-off areas and dock elements, community meetings confirmed strong support for the campus-like feel of Alternative 2.

Future development of this concept needs to include a more comprehensive review of high school rowing programming needs and should also consider rotating the two buildings perpendicular to the shoreline to facilitate boat transport and water access, as shown in Alternative 1.

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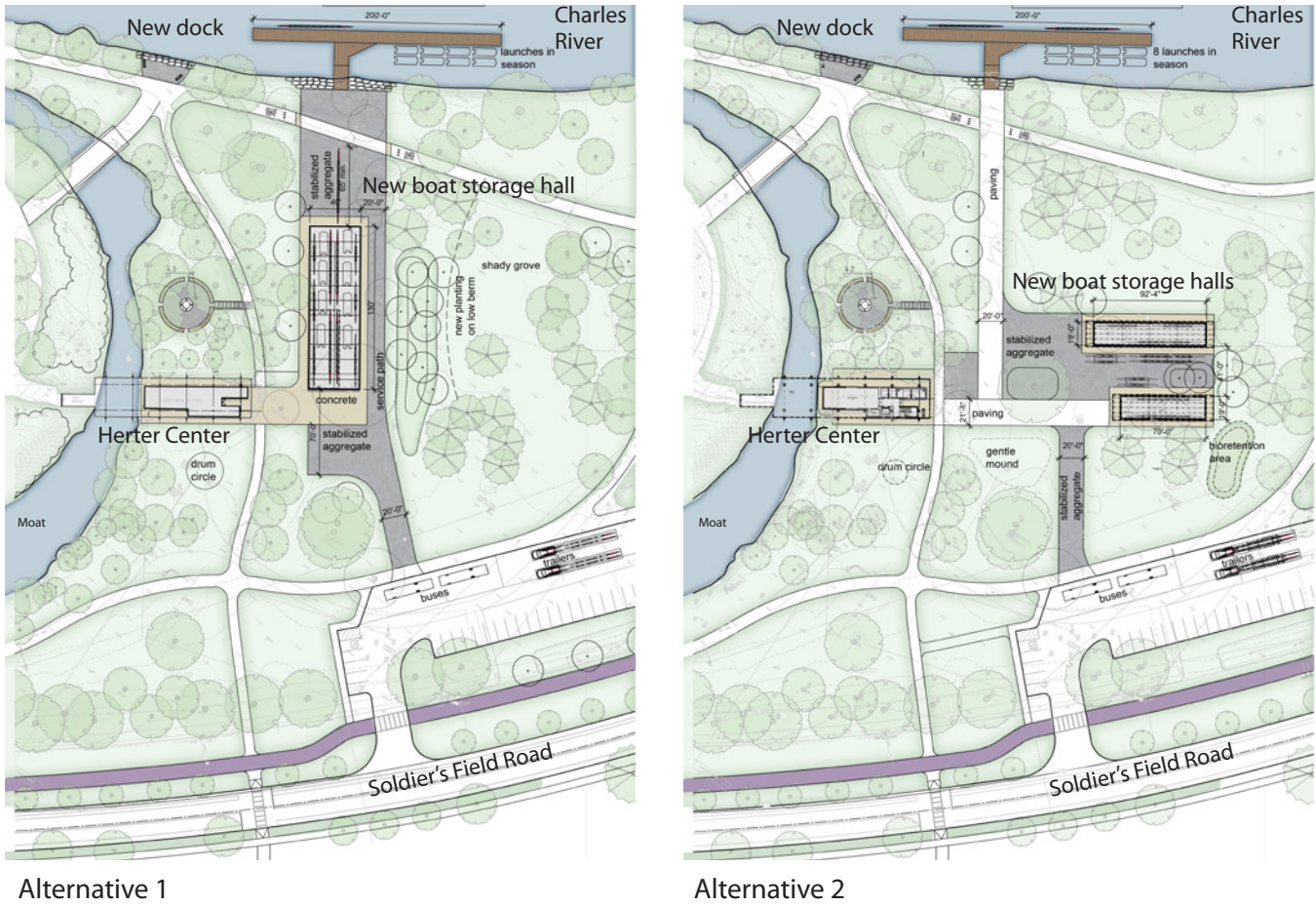
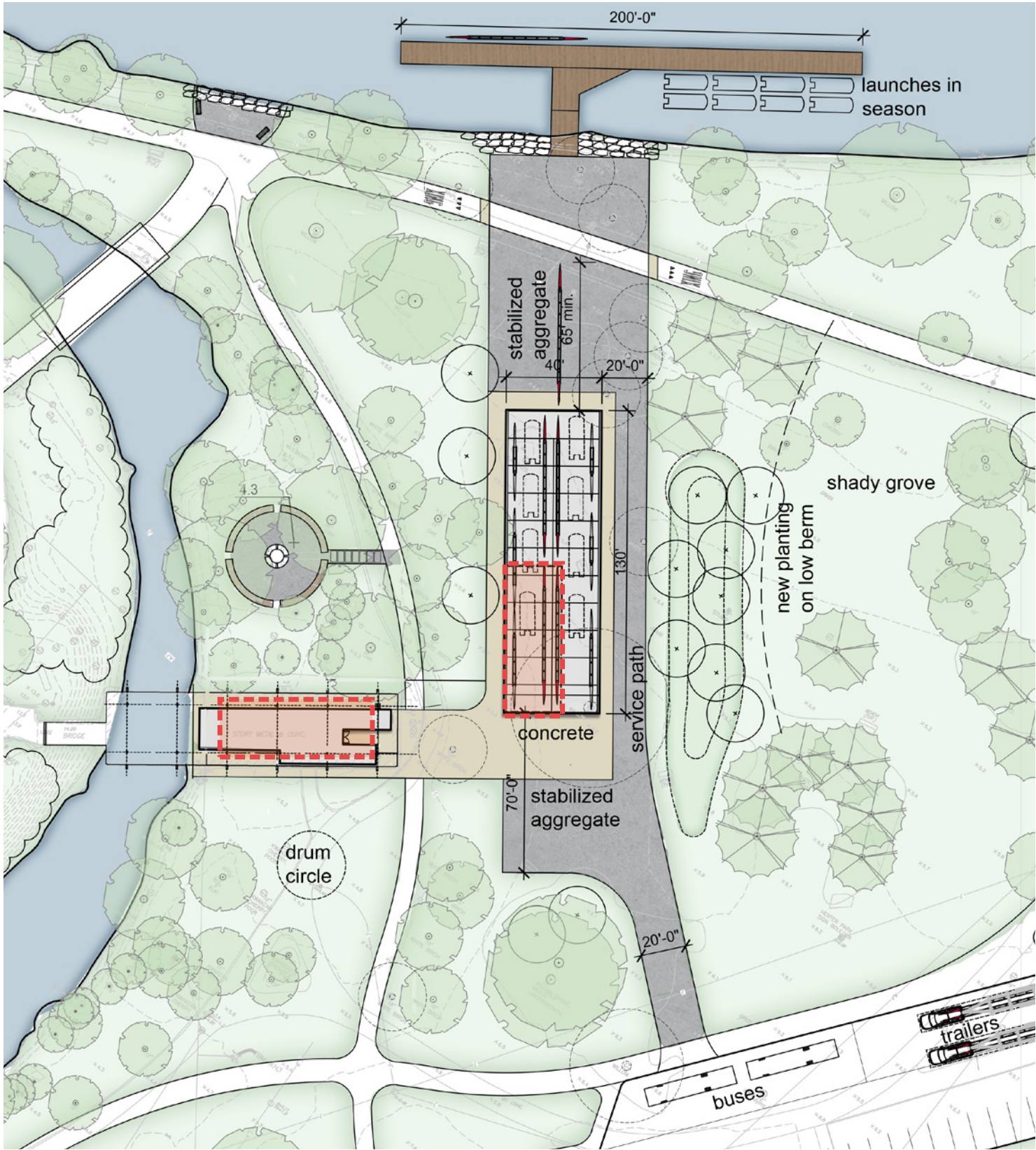


Figure 3-20. At left: High School Rowing Program Alternative 1, showing a single boat storage structure east of the Herter Center and pathways leading to a new dock. At Right: Alternative 2, showing two smaller boat storage structures and a courtyard. Enlargement plans and three-dimensional massing studies of the two site alternatives are found on the following pages.

Herter Center Adaptive Reuse: High School Rowing Alternative 1

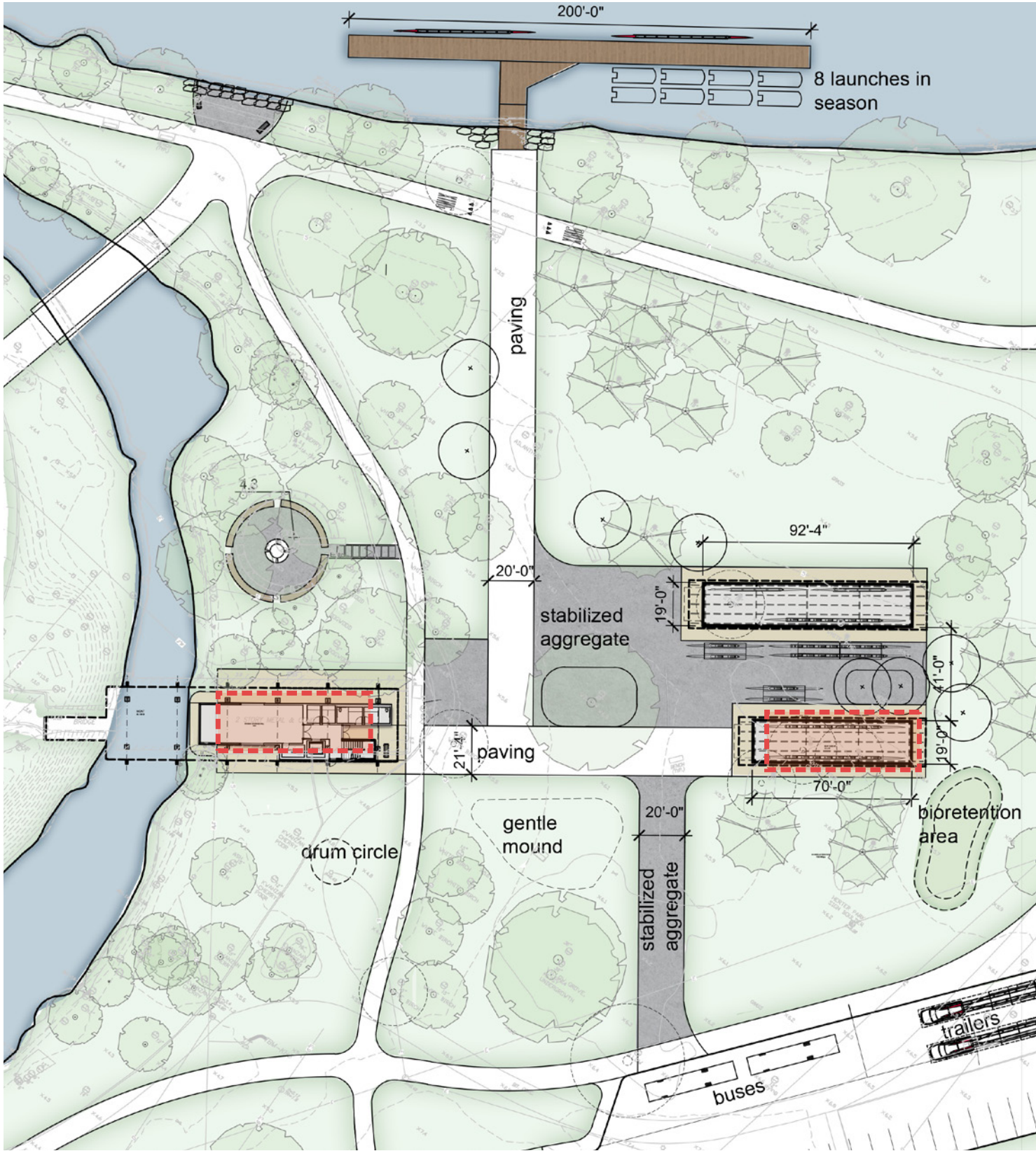


Assumption: 7 boat vertical per rack		
28 @ 8-seat	Current	
21 @ 4-seat	22 @ 8 seat	18 @ 4-seat boats
28 @ 2-seat	20 @-2-seat boats	

Existing "garage"
HS storage facility

Figure 3-21. Herter Center Adaptive Reuse: High School Rowing Alternative 1.

Herter Center Adaptive Reuse: High School Rowing Alternative 2

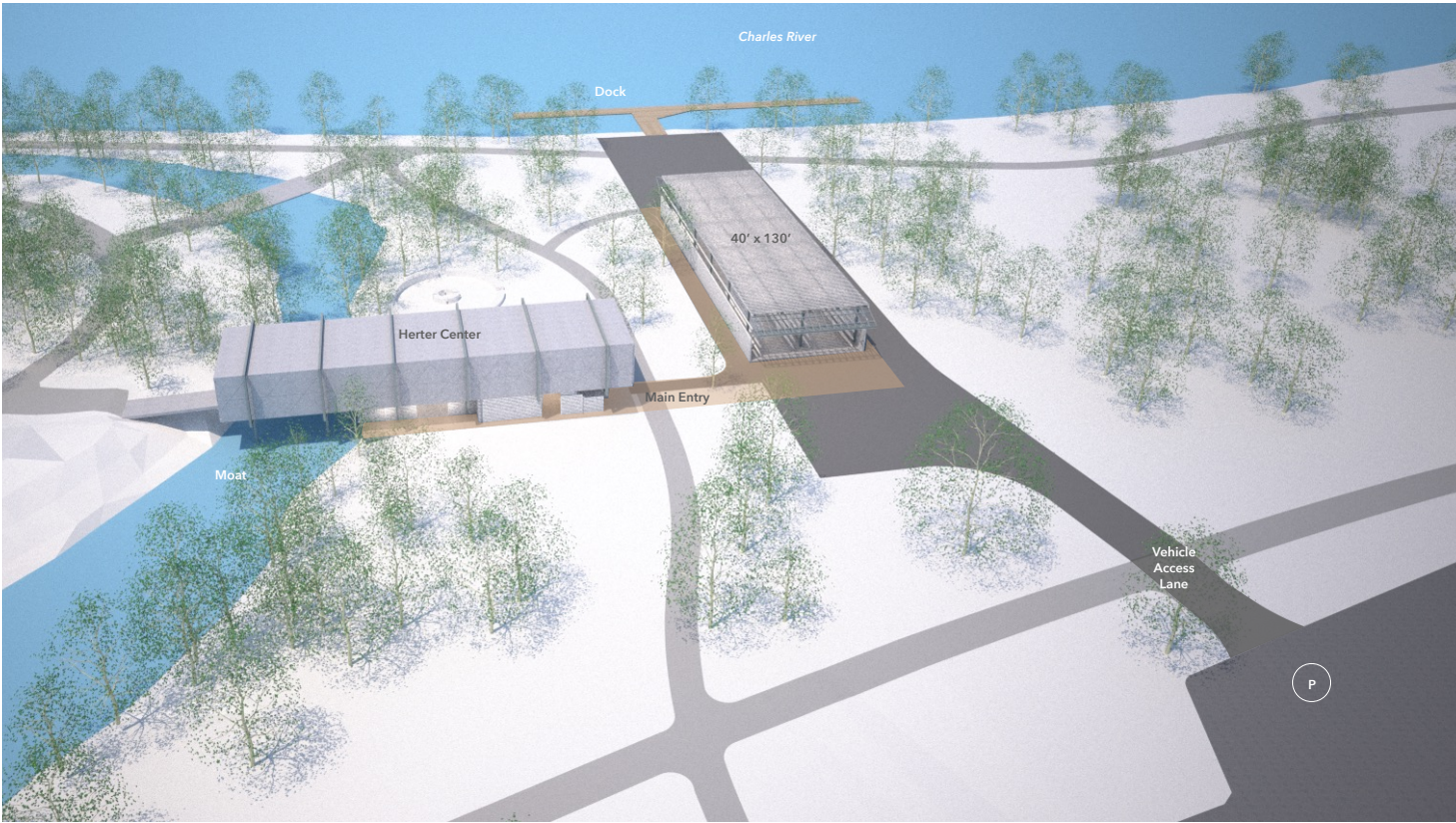


Assumption: 7 boat vertical per rack	
21 @ 8-seat	Current 22 @ 8 seat
14 @ 4-seat	18 @ 4-seat boats
extra boats on site	20 @ -2-seat boats

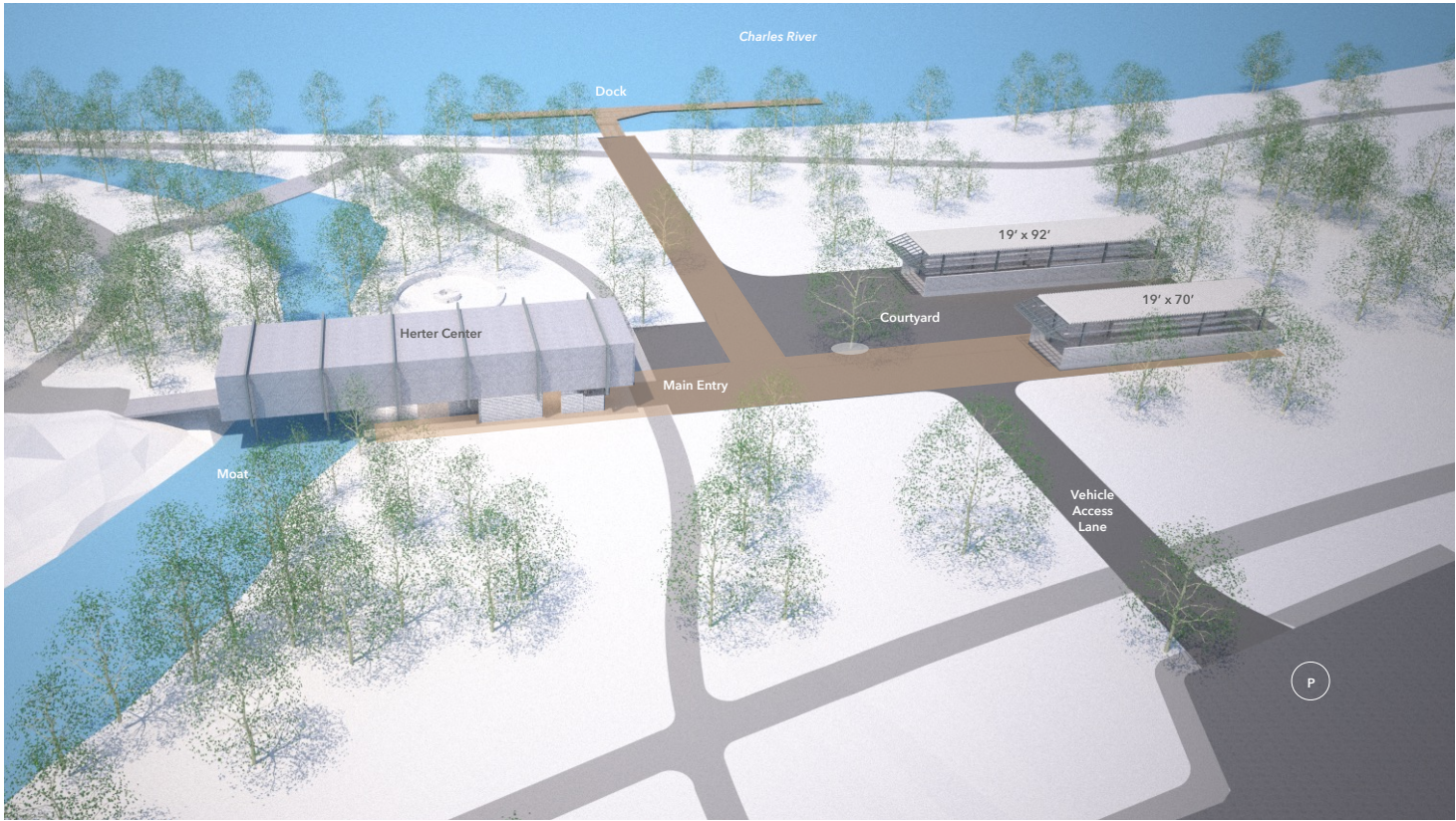
Existing "garage"
HS storage facility

Figure 3-22. Herter Center Adaptive Reuse: High School Rowing Alternative 2.

Herter Center Adaptive Reuse: Aerial Views of Alternatives 1 and 2



Alternative 1



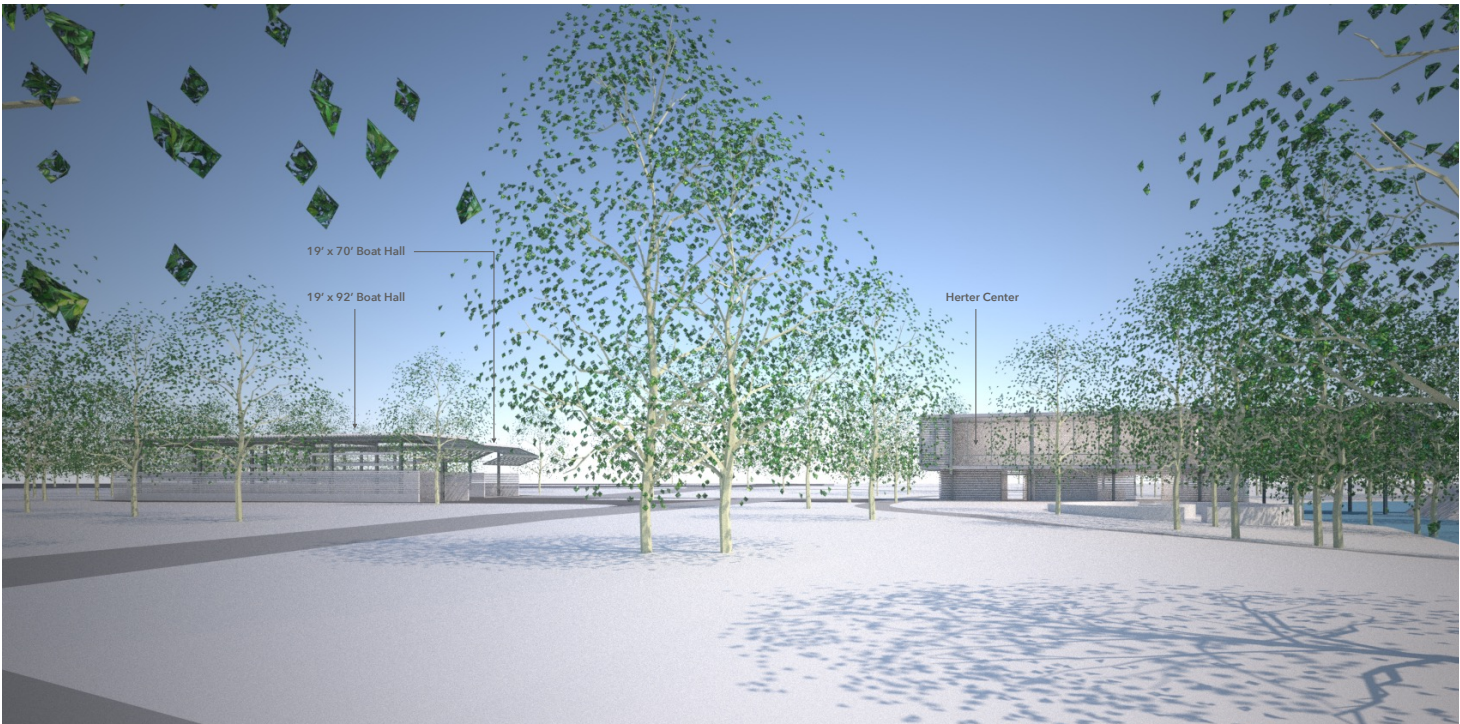
Alternative 2

Figure 3-23. Herter Center Adaptive Reuse: Aerial Views of Alternatives 1 and 2.

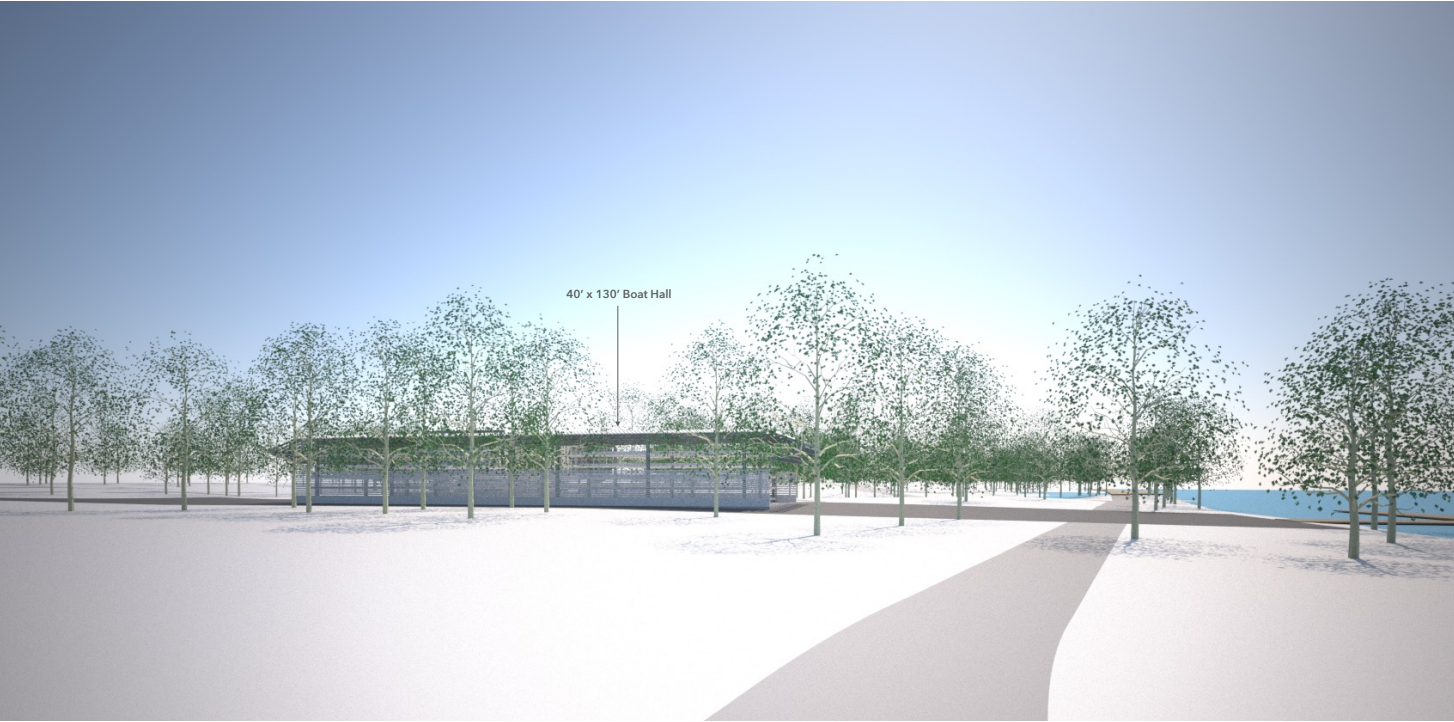
Herter Center Adaptive Reuse: Perspective Views



Alternative 1 Looking South



Alternative 2 Looking South



Alternative 1 Looking West



Alternative 2 Looking West

Figure 3-24. Herter Center Adaptive Reuse: Perspective Views

Herter Center Preferred Concept: Program Support Space for High School Rowing and Herter Amphitheater

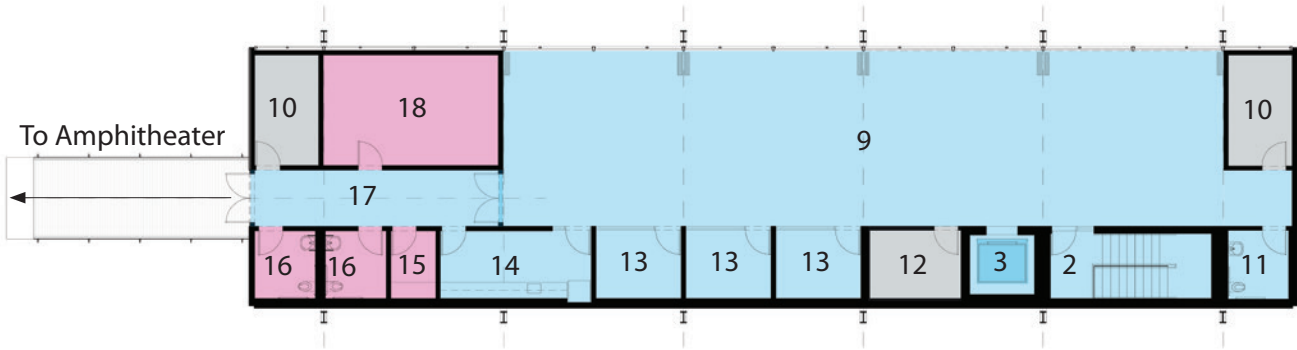
Using site study Alternative 2 as a preferred concept “road map” for the new center for high school rowing, further planning study explored the Herter Center’s ability to accommodate supplemental high school rowing program elements, such as restrooms, changing rooms, office space and general rowing storage, as well as Herter Amphitheater program support spaces.

Preliminary floor plan diagrams (on following pages) propose dedicated accessible restrooms, a changing room / locker area and storage and office space for the high school rowing program on the ground floor level. Additional ground floor level program elements include two fully accessible, gender-neutral public restrooms, as well as a new code-compliant elevator and stair core serving the upper floor level.

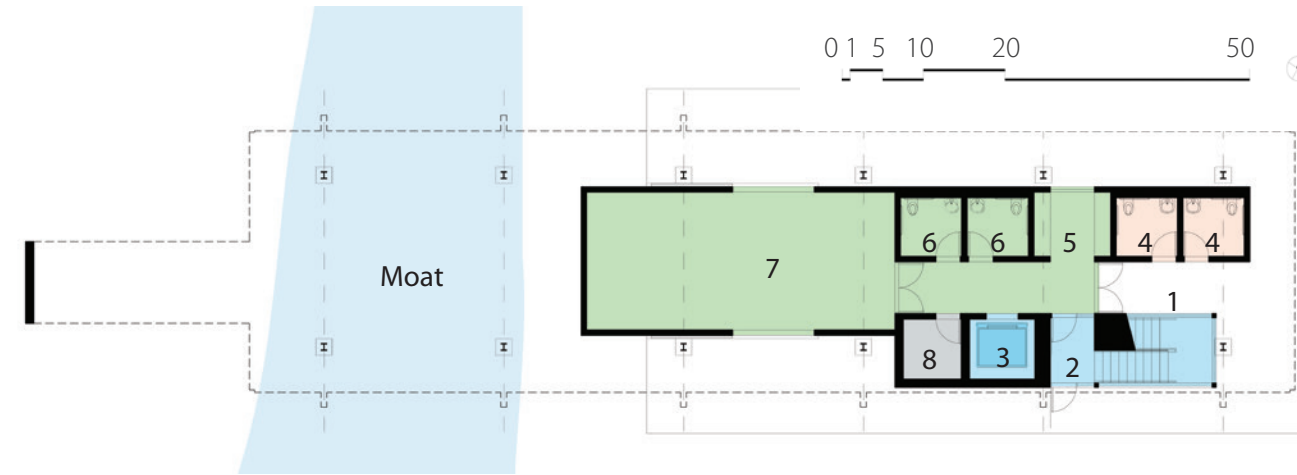
The upper level features a large, flexible multi-purpose space that can be accessed independently and used for a variety of public events and activities, as well as supplemental program space for high school rowing and Herter Amphitheater. Additional dedicated Herter Amphitheater support spaces are shown adjacent to the multi-purpose space including a large staging / storage room for Amphitheater productions, two accessible gender-neutral restrooms, a changing room and a warming kitchen that functions as a shared space for both the Herter Amphitheater programs and the multi-purpose space. The upper level’s existing bridge connection to the Herter Amphitheater offers an accessible at-grade connection between the theater proper and supports spaces within the Herter Center.



Figure 3-25. Proposed site for boathouse as seen from Soldiers Field Road, looking North. The large willow tree in the center would be preserved along with other trees to help blend the new structures into the landscape.



Upper Floor Level



Ground Floor Level

Proposed Herter Center Program Legend

(refer to floor plans):

- 1. Covered Entry Porch
- 2. Vestibule and Stair to Upper Floor Level
- 3. Elevator
- 4. Accessible Restrooms (Public Access)
- 5. High School Rowing - Changing Area / Lockers
- 6. High School Rowing - Dedicated Accessible Restrooms
- 7. High School Rowing - Offices and General Storage
- 8. Water Service Room
- 9. Multi-Purpose Space (≈1,900 square feet)
- 10. Mechanical / Electrical Room
- 11. Accessible Restroom
- 12. Elevator Machine Room
- 13. Office / small meeting room
- 14. Warming Kitchen
- 15. Herter Amphitheater - Changing Room
- 16. Herter Amphitheater - Dedicated Accessible Restrooms
- 17. Shared egress corridor
- 18. Herter Amphitheater - Staging / Storage Room

Figure 3-26. Herter Center Proposed Floor Plans

Herter Amphitheater Improvements

The Herter Park island is a unique feature with cultural significance as a centerpiece of the 1960 park design, and a place with long history as an open air theater in a beautiful, yet not easily discovered setting in the heart of Herter Park. The present amphitheater facilities, dating to the late 1970s or early 1980s, need to be updated in order to meet the needs of visitors and performers and to better integrate the island with the rest of the park, so that the public could enjoy it not only as a performance venue but as an everyday destination. The enhanced amphitheater will allow running a performing arts program as a cultural asset for the park and the community. It is assumed that the theater programming will be operated by a partner organization, such as the Friends of Herter Park.

General Recommendations

- Access and Visibility: Increase the visibility of the largely hidden island so that all visitors who walk, bike, or drive by the park can discover it. Enhance the access on and off the island so that all park visitors feel welcome and safe. Encourage the free flow of park users to and through the island to help activate the space.
- Character: Maintain the island’s open and sculptural landscape and its maturing tree cover. Any future structures should relate to and reinforce this open landscape. Enhance the visibility of the amphitheater and views from the amphitheater to the water by selective pruning.
- Facilities: Create a functional performance space which can attract top performers and serve diverse audiences. Integrate the island with the park, ensuring that it flexibly serves a range of uses and park visitors.

Island Access and Visibility Improvements

The heavily wooded island and secluded amphitheater are largely invisible to park visitors, which is a liability for a public performance venue seeking to attract audience. Focus should be on announcing and leading visitors to the venue, while preserving its landscape character. The locations of the following improvements are illustrated on the Herter Island and Amphitheater Improvements plan on the following pages.

1. Welcome Sign / Kiosk: Announcing and celebrating the programming can be done with a larger display / kiosk located near the parking / arrival. Additionally, the venue operator could consider a changing signs or banners to announce a coming performance.

2. Path Accessibility Improvements: The reconfigured Artesani parking will locate accessible parking spaces closer and more convenient to the island. Regrading the path from the bridge to the amphitheater plaza can achieve an accessible route to both the top and the bottom of the amphitheater viewing area and stage.

3. New Bridge with Security Gate: Access to the island is currently limited to one vehicular bridge. Locating a new pedestrian bridge on the east side of the island will provide the second means of egress for safety and efficient movement of audiences in and out of the amphitheater. The bridge access can be controlled during performances, but at other times, it will allow easy circulation through the island and allow the amphitheater to be discovered by many more people as they use the park. Both bridges should be equipped with lockable gates for use during performances and to protect vulnerable equipment at night.

4. Plaza With Portable Concessions: The small landscape island right after the main bridge could be reconfigured as a small plateau for a focal point element that would draw visual attention to the island. This could be a public art sculpture, or a cluster of flags / banners. Concessions vendors could set up portable stations on the plaza at the top of the amphitheater, and in an area to the west of the perimeter path.

Amphitheater Front and Back of House

5. Seating: The existing stadium seating and wooden benches on the slope are on a steep paved slope which is unattractive, difficult to access, and inflexible. Replacing the paved slope with stepped grass terraces will create an attractive park feature that fits into the landscape better. The terraces provide day-to-day informal seating on the terraced edges/ seatwalls and on the lawns, or could be fitted with portable chairs for events. Provide accessibility to the top and the bottom of the terraced amphitheater areas and the stage.

7. Accessible Stage with Canopy and Truss-Mounted Stage Lighting: The existing stage is quite large, tall, and not accessible; and the stage lighting is a dated and inflexible setup mounted on wood poles in an around the viewing area. The new stage is envisioned as a more flexible lower platform with an accessible ramp. Its edges could be stepped or at a seat-height so that people can sit there and look back towards the amphitheater. A permanent covering over the stage will provide the basic level of protection from the elements for performers and sound equipment which is particularly at risk from even the lightest rain. The canopy should be equipped with a truss structure for state-of-the-art stage lighting. It is desirable that the canopy structure is transparent to preserve views and light. A weather protected control booth should be considered.

8. Performer’s Green Room, Dressing Room, and Toilets: Currently the amphitheater has no dressing rooms or shelter for performances between acts. In the past, productions such as the Brown Box Theatre Project had to bring their own trailer for this purpose, as well as shipping storage containers that were placed behind the stage and visually intrusive. These essential support structures for performers and equipment need to be located near the stage yet screened from view; Herter Center is not suitable because it is too far from the stage. A suitable location for the performers pavilion is a flat area near the new bridge, to include: dressing rooms and bathroom, a green room, stage management functions, and equipment storage.

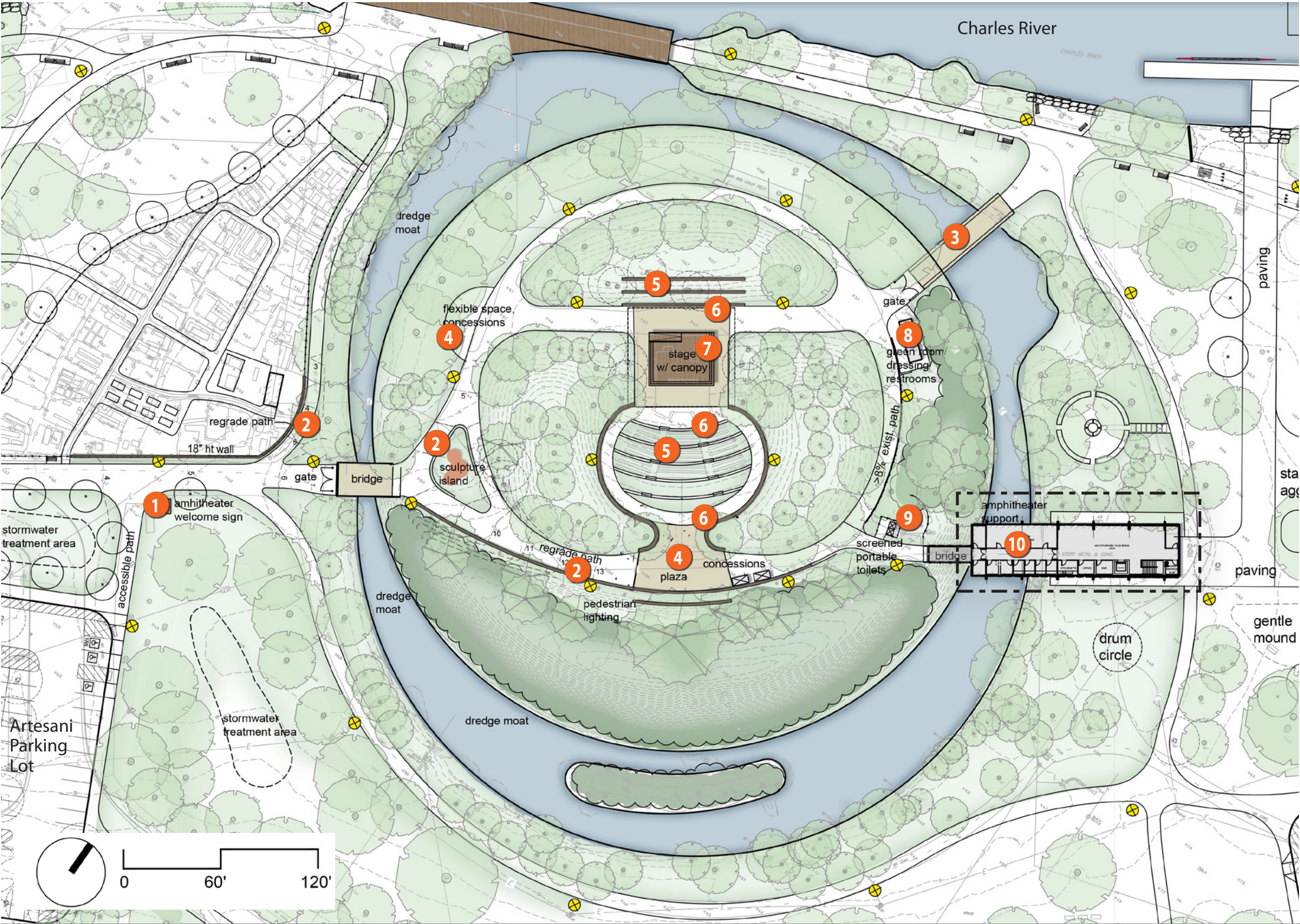
9. Public Bathrooms: The Herter Center upper floor will provide restroom facilities for the staff. For visitors, portable toilets can be provided near the entrance to Herter Center. These could be screened from direct view with an attractive screen structure.

10. Amphitheater Support Functions in Herter Center: The upper level of Herter Center will provide much needed support space for the Amphitheater operator, including: office, bathrooms, and kitchenette. Additionally, the multi-purpose room can be used for special events, potentially providing additional revenue stream. This multi-purpose space will be also used by the high school rowing but during a different season of the year, so there will not be much overlap with the competing Amphitheater use.

Additional Recommendations

- The moat and the island are unique character-defining features of Herter Park. Dredging the moat to its original depth and maintaining the water system moving and aerated will allow a healthier aquatic environment and reduce the mosquito nuisance to Amphitheater and other park users
- Vegetation: The banks and steep rear slope of the island are crowded with invasive plants, and the views to the moat and river have overgrown. Selective pruning for views, and control of invasive species, are recommended to enhance the landscape experience and create better visual connections to the river.
- Lighting: Suitable illumination of the approaches to the amphitheater, the back of house elements and Herter Center are important for safety and comfort of the audience. Visual intrusions such as the utility pole behind the stage and the dated light poles should be removed.

Herter Island and Amphitheater Improvements



- KEY IMPROVEMENTS**
- 1. Welcome Sign / Kiosk
 - 2. Path accessibility improvements
 - 3. New pedestrian bridge with security gate
 - 4. Plaza with portable concessions
 - 5. Terraced slope
 - 6. Accessible seating
 - 7. Accessible stage with canopy and truss-mounted stage lighting
 - 8. Performer's green room / dressing room and toilets
 - 9. Visitor's screened portable toilets
 - 10. Amphitheater support functions in Herter Center