

**Minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting
Bronx Community Board 8
Monday, September 29, 2025 at 7:00pm
Board Office – 5676 Riverdale Ave, Suite 100, Bronx, NY 10471**

Attendees

Committee:

Present: Bob Bender, Carol Blake, Miriam Filer, Debra Travis (Chair)

Absent: None

Other Board:

Sebastian Chittilappilly, Althea Eboh, Daniel Nunez, Julie Reyes (Board Chair), Laura Spalter

Elected Officials:

State Senator Gustavo Rivera, Flavia Salazar (Senator Rivera's Office)

Department of Parks and Recreation:

Valerie Davis-O'Neal (Special Assistant to the Bronx Borough Commissioner), Katerine Borrome (Director of Capital Projects), Stephanie Ehrlich (Van Cortlandt Park Administrator)

Fort Four Playground and Restroom Reconstruction Team (Parks):

Julie Fisher, Tara Valenta, Diana Phillips, Tom Balsley, Paul Rube, Hsiao-Ying Yang

The meeting commenced at 7:02pm

1. Welcome and Introduction of Committee Members and Guests

2. Approval of the April 23, 2025 Minutes

The meeting minutes were approved unanimously

3. Chair's Report

None

4. Presentation: New York City Parks Department – Fort Independence Playground & Public Restroom Building Design

Presentation attached. Tom Balsley presented his design for the reconstruction of Fort Independence Playground. The main changes would be:

- Complete reconfiguration of the play areas
- Replacement of the restroom and moving it near the entrance gate for the park
- Restricting the flow of the playground to one 10' pathway
- Removal of many areas of Belgian block and replacing them with permeable perennial beds
- Installation of 3' fences along the running track to prevent children from running out of the playground without supervision
- Integration of the adjacent hill with the play areas
- Integration of seating and spray shower with the hill

- Replacing the historic plaques at the entrance to the park
- Replacing the restroom with a larger, 720 square foot building with more bathroom stalls, more sinks and a larger storage area for Parks tools. The restroom would have a green roof.
- Re-grading the park to prevent water runoff
- Five trees would be removed due to poor condition

The design of the project is expected to be completed by next summer. They anticipate one year for procurement and two years for construction. Expected completion by Summer 2029.

Overall, there was appreciation for the upgrades to the park. Concerns were:

- The position of the restroom blocks view into the playground from the street
- The area currently covered with Belgian block which would be converted to large perennial beds is heavily used for birthday parties. This functionality would be lost.
- 1' fencing near some playground areas may be a trip hazard
- Kousa dogwood near the playground would leave natural debris on the play surface
- The entrance walkway to the playground is only 10' and would also serve as the only point of access for the restrooms. It seems too narrow.
- There would only be one pathway into the playground which make access harder from the Gouverneur entrance
- The plant list has many shrubs that are non-native including barberry which is considered invasive
- The park would not be accessible from this end during the two-year construction project

There was a request to also consider removing the gravel running track and integrate that space into the playground. Parks stated that the track is not in scope and it would not be practical to partially remove it.

The Parks Department requested a resolution of support from the committee for the designs to proceed. A vote on the resolution was deferred by the chair to the October 22nd committee meeting in order to allow the public time to review the design.

5. Presentation: North Riverdale Baseball and Softball League request for lighting in Sid Augarten Ballfield

The North Riverdale Baseball and Softball League presented their request for lights to be installed on the Sid Augarten Ballfield (AKA Sid Ballfield). Presentation attached. North Riverdale Baseball and Softball League is a nonprofit baseball league that enables elementary, middle school and high school student to play baseball and softball without the high cost of participating in for-profit travel leagues. They currently play at Sid Field, Caryl Field and Kelly Field, but are at capacity given the number of games they need to play to accommodate demand and the amount of sunlight during after-school hours and on the weekend. Their games begin at 5:30pm due to parent schedules which prevents them from adjusting their playing schedule to accommodate the early sunset. Sid Field is the primary location for their little league games and is the most impacted by the sunlight issue because of the high demand for little league. North Riverdale Baseball and Softball League is the incumbent renewing permit holder for Sid Field which means they are the sole permit holder and care for the field which is locked when they are not playing. In the spring, they had 36 teams and in

the fall could only field 22 teams due to limited sunlight during late October and November, particularly after Daylight Savings Time ends. During the spring, from April through June, they play on weekends and during the week after school. During the fall, from September through November, they play only on weekends. Games generally last an hour and a half to two hours. Their weeknight games generally go until 8:30pm. They have no amplified sound. Approximately 50 people attend each game including players, coaches and parents.

They have requested funding from New York State Senator Gustavo Rivera to run power to the ballpark from Vinmont Veterans Park which is adjacent to the field. The little league says they also have the support of Council Member Eric Dinowitz. The Parks Department has requested a letter of support from the community board before they will assemble the cost estimate. The league need the lighting in order to provide enough teams for everyone who would like to play little league to be able to play. They have already collected 489 signatures in support of the lighting and have letters of support from local businesses like Earlybird and from the Riverdale Neighborhood House. Ideally, they would like to be able to play from Mid-March to Mid-November on weekends and during the week until 8:30pm.

Twenty-three residents who live across the street or nearby signed a petition opposing lights on Sid Field and several of them attended the meeting to speak in opposition. Their concerns are:

- Double parking on Mosholu Avenue from the games would block traffic
- High speed driving on Mosholu Avenue is dangerous for children
- The money would be better spent on fields that are high school/adult league size
- Glare from the lights would will be visible in their homes at night

Questions raised:

Are there other ballfields in our district that have lighting? – Cooney Grauer field is the only ballfield that has lighting.

How much would this cost and what are our options for lighting? Katherine Borrone could not provide estimates or options without more study. There are lighting units now for this purpose that are very focused and have less glare than past models, however, it was unclear if Parks is able to acquire these units or has experience with them.

The chair deferred a vote in order to research the issues that were raised. The committee will have the office research the following concerns:

- Discuss with Parks if the lights can be programmed to only be on when games are happening and to turn off at 9pm
- The league already plays until 8:30pm in the spring. Have there been any issues?
- What options does the community have for lights?
- Does Parks have any similar lighting anywhere else and what has been their experience with it?
- Are there other little leagues that are having the same capacity issues and also need lights or field improvements?

Further discussion will occur at the October 22, 2025 Parks Committee meeting

6. Discussion: FY27 and FY28 Budget Priorities

Chair discussed the budget process for the committee with new members. The chair invites all members of the community to attend the January committee meeting with suggestions of park initiatives that need funding. The committee budget priorities for FY27 are attached.

6. Old Business

Park Pathway South of Palisade Pumping Station – the horticultural work around the new pumping station at Palisade Avenue is complete. As part of this work, they replaced the split rail fence and rebuilt the walking path along Palisade Avenue. David Gellman asked if reconstruction of this path could continue further south on Palisade Avenue as much of it is washed out. The board office will investigate which agency would be responsible for this and if it would be a capital or expense priority.

Wave Hill Water Management At Palisade Avenue/Spaulding Lane – the cobblestone swale along the Wave Hill property is in poor condition. When Wave Hill attended the Parks Committee meeting last spring, they said they were reviewing this as part of their water runoff management planning. Do they have a plan to address this issue yet? Chair will have the office reach out.

Palisade Avenue at Half Moon Overlook – Planting bed is in poor condition. Is it DOT property? Can it be adopted by Parks? Parks does not generally take on new property and do not have gardeners. We believe this property is owned by DOT and that gardens on it are being managed by volunteers.

Henry Hudson Park Vandalism – trees are still being damaged by individuals who live in the area. Friends of Spuyten Duyvil are working with the city agencies, but the requirements before agencies will write a violation are ineffective and frustrating.

Friends of Spuyten Duyvil Upcoming Events – City of Forest Day, October 4th. Events in Henry Hudson Park 10-noon; Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park 1-3pm; Spuyten Duyvil Library 10am-5pm; Kappock Street Garden 10-5pm.

Riverdale Farmers Market Alternative Sites – The Riverdale Farmers Market is looking for alternate sites. Daniel Nunez asked about the process for holding a farmers market in Marble Hill Playground. Information on acquiring the necessary permits can be found here:
<https://www.nycgovparks.org/permits/farmers-market>

7. New Business

The committee agreed to take up reviewing the Parks Resource Guide which hasn't been updated since 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 10:24pm

Minutes submitted by Deb Travis

Recording Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqdaCtLJ1io>

Attachments

Fort Four Playground Reconstruction Design

Fort Four Restroom Design

North Riverdale Baseball and Softball League Presentation

FY27 Parks Committee Budget Priorities



Parks

Fort Independence Playground

Community Parks Initiative

Located on Sedgwick Avenue at W 238th Street,
in the Borough of Bronx

Community Board
September 29, 2025
SWA/Balsley

Total Budget: \$6,572,000
Mayor, Eric Adams - \$6.572m

Project Size: 0.87 ac



Bronx

City



Kingsbridge Heights

Neighborhood



Fort Independence Playground

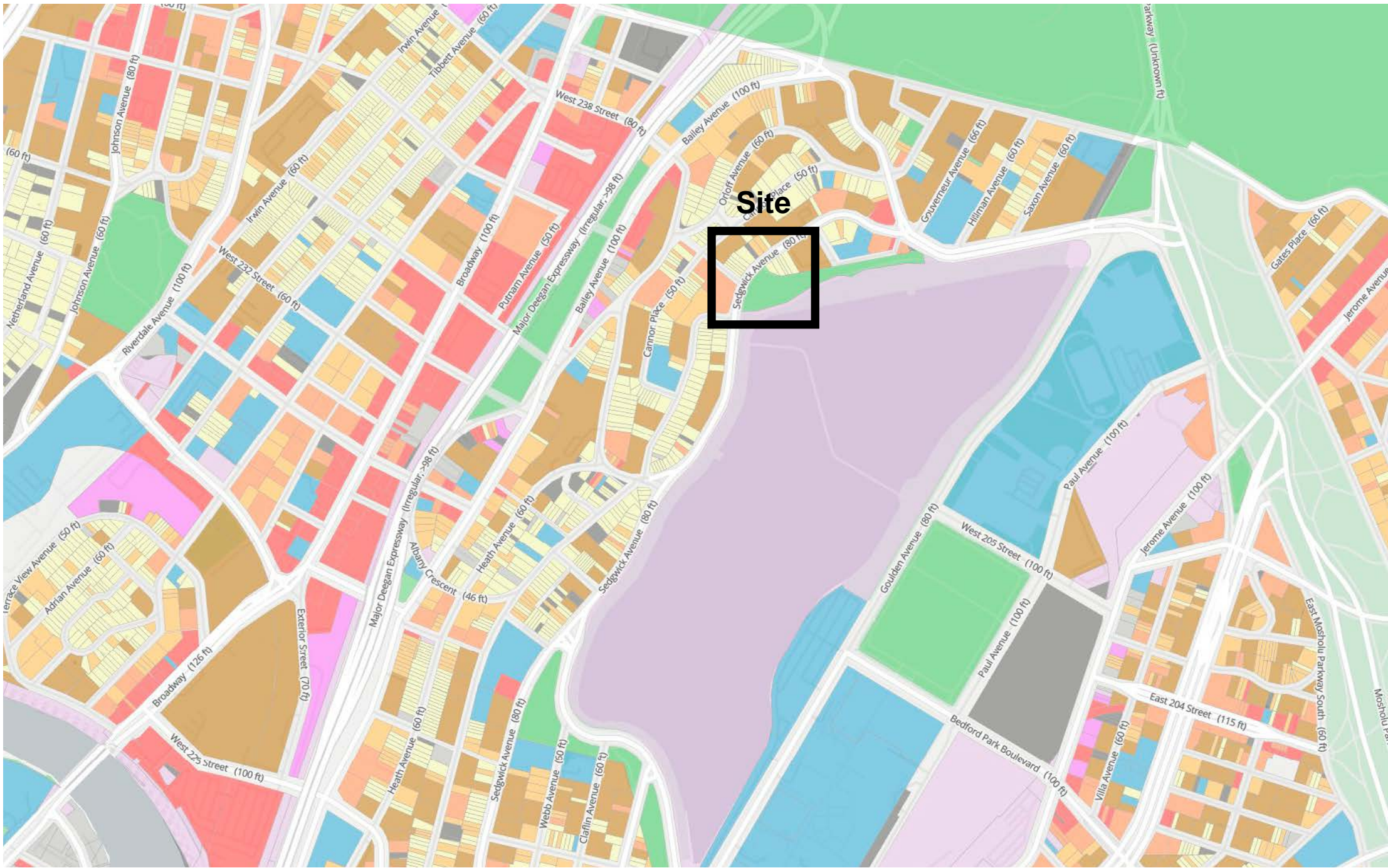
Site



NYC Parks

Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground | Project Location





Land Use Categories

- 1 And 2 Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential (Walkup)
- Multi-Family Residential (Elevator)
- Mixed Use
- Commercial & Office
- Industrial & Manufacturing
- Transportation / Utilities
- Public Facilities & Institutional
- Open Space And Outdoor Recreation
- Parking
- Vacant Land
- Other



NYC Parks

Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground | Surrounding Land Use





Community Parks Initiative

Fort Independence Playground | Neighborhood Parks Context





- Legend**
- Project Limit
 - ↔ Park Entrance
 - .-.- Park Property



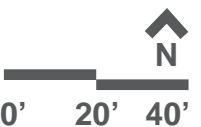
Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground | Site Context

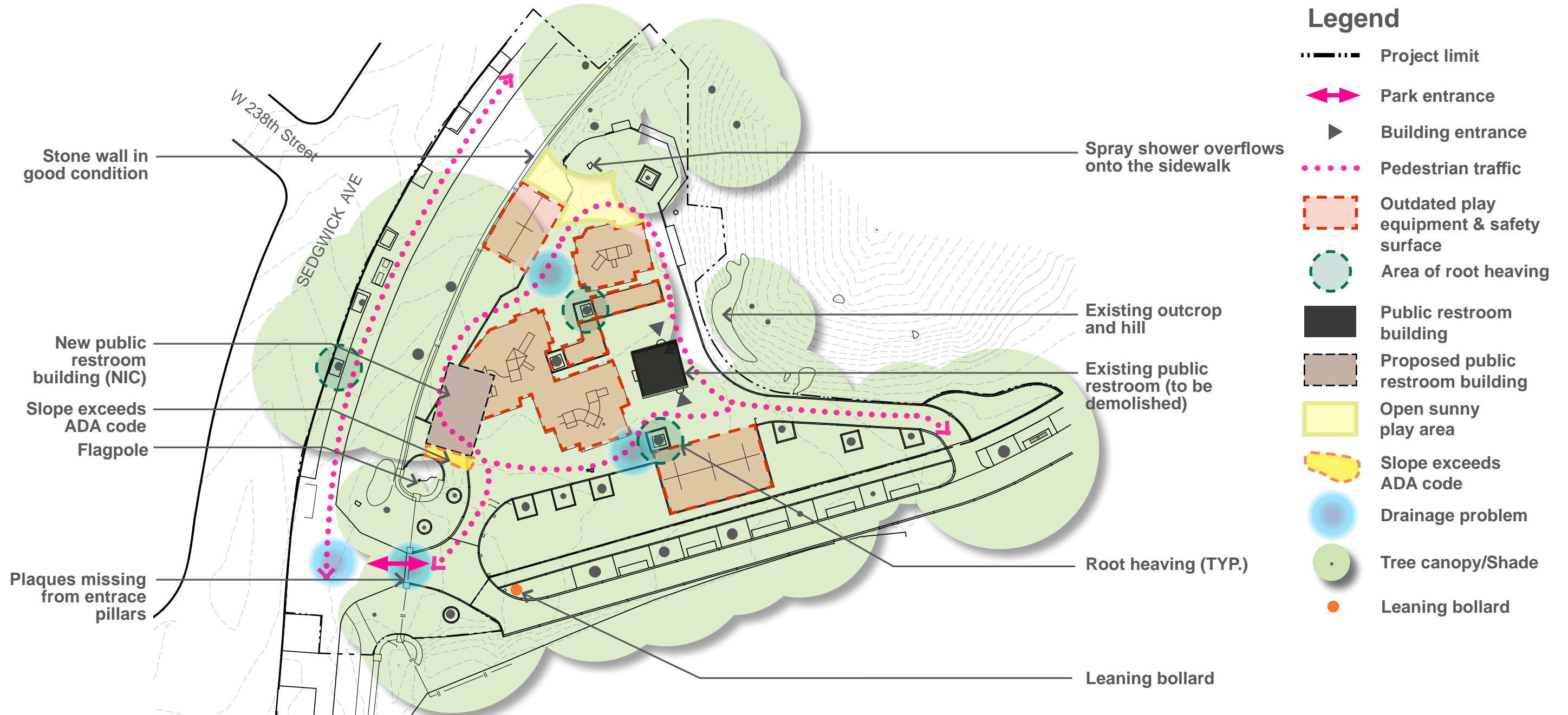




Community Parks Initiative

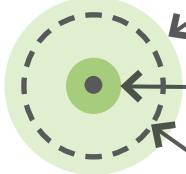





Fort Independence Playground | Existing Conditions Diagram







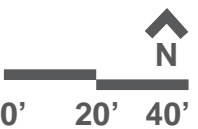
Legend

-  Canopy
-  Structural Root Zone
-  Critical Root Zone
-  Stump Removal
-  Tree Removal due to poor condition
-  Project limit



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Community Parks Initiative Fort Independence Playground | Tree Inventory

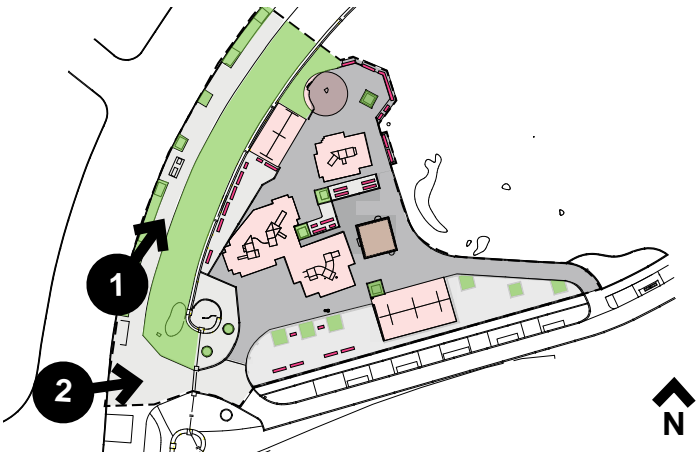




1 - Sidewalk and perimeter retaining wall along Sedgwick Avenue



2 - Park entrance with missing plaques

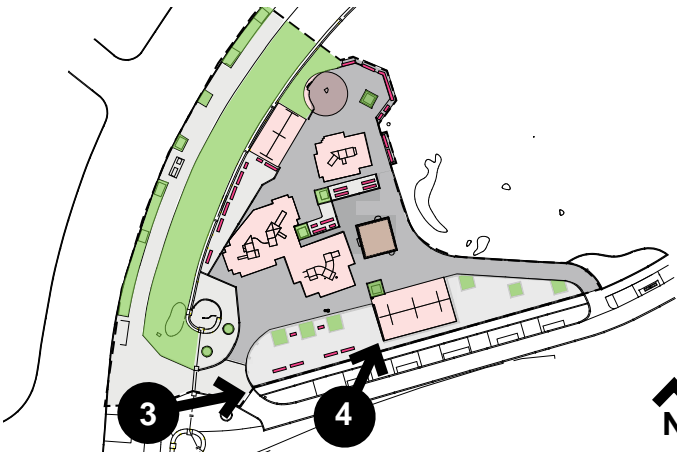




3 - Jogging path along Jerome Park Reservoir



4 - Swing set

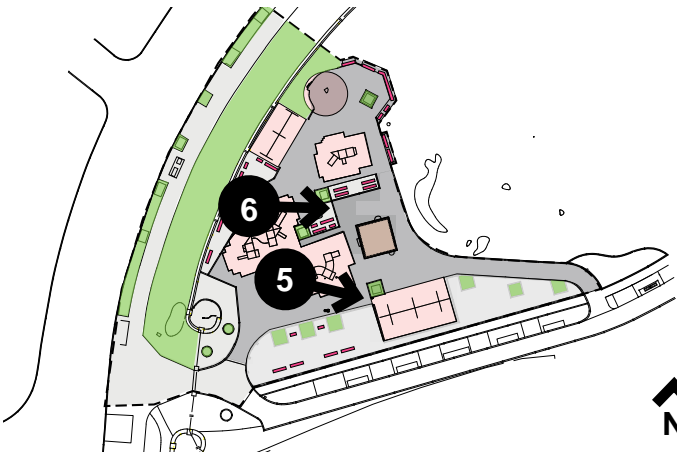




5 - Tree pit with granite block



6 - Public restroom building

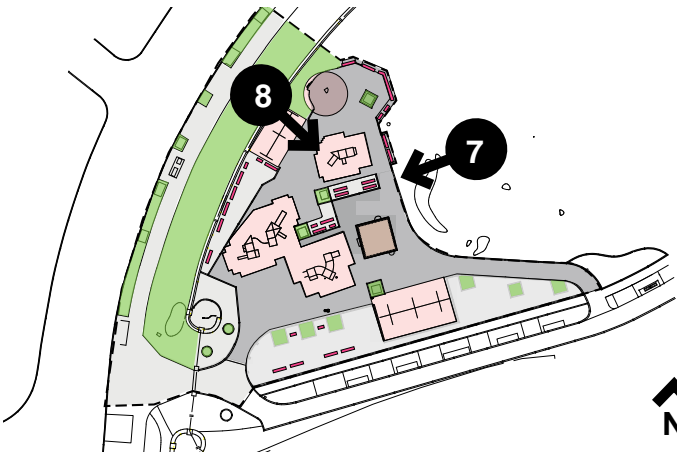




7 - Seating area in shade



8 - 2-5 Play unit

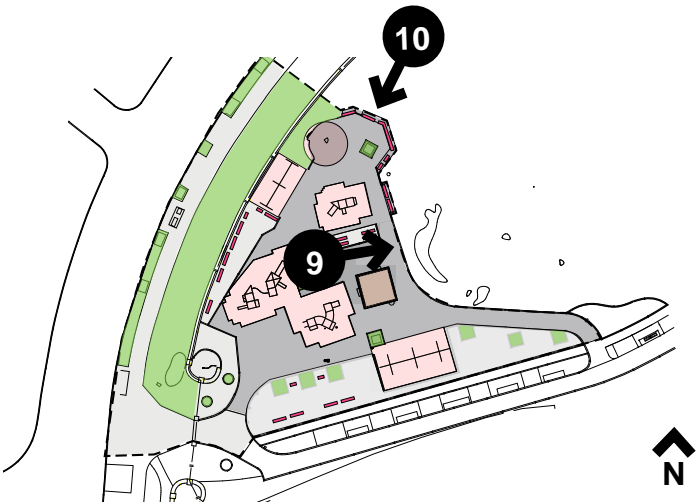




9 - Outcrop in the hillside



10 - Seating area with spray shower



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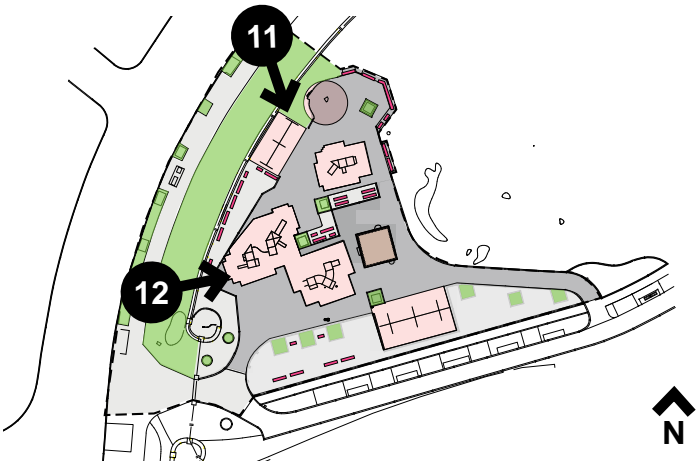
11 - K-Swing



12 - 2-5 Play unit (front), 5-12 play unit (background)



NYC Parks





13 - Overlook with flagpole

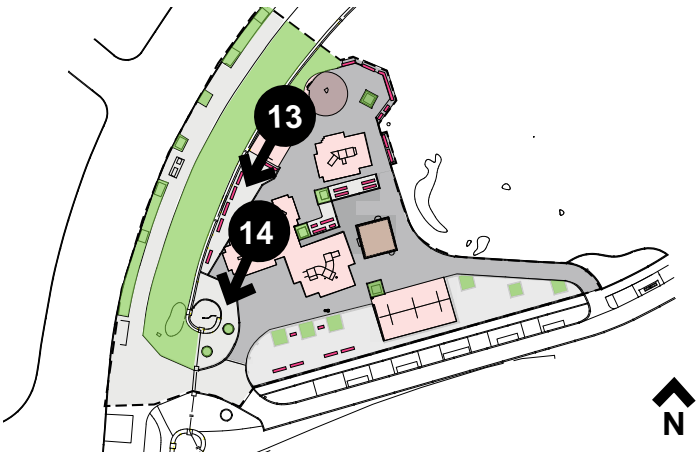


14 - View towards entrance



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Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground | Existing Conditions Photos



Community Priorities

Play

Variety of play experiences, Improve play opportunities for all ages, Increase the number of swings

Seating

Increase diversity of seating options, Improve seating location, Provide Tables

Water

Locate waterplay in a better location, Provide play experiences for children of all ages and abilities

Green

Preserve existing trees, Provide additional planting opportunities



Legend

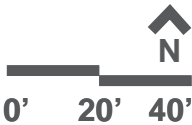
- Color seal
- Safety surface
- Project Limit



NYC Parks

Community Parks Initiative

Fort Independence Playground | Schematic Design



Legend

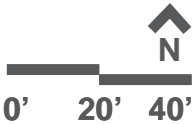
- Color seal
- Safety surface
- Project Limit



NYC Parks

Community Parks Initiative

Fort Independence Playground | Schematic Design without Tree Canopies





Legend

 GATE OR PORTAL

 EXISTING

 x' STEEL

 LOW: 3' - 0" HT.

 x' STEEL

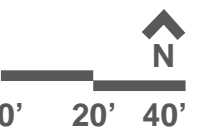
 LOW PLANT RAIL: 1' - 0" HT.

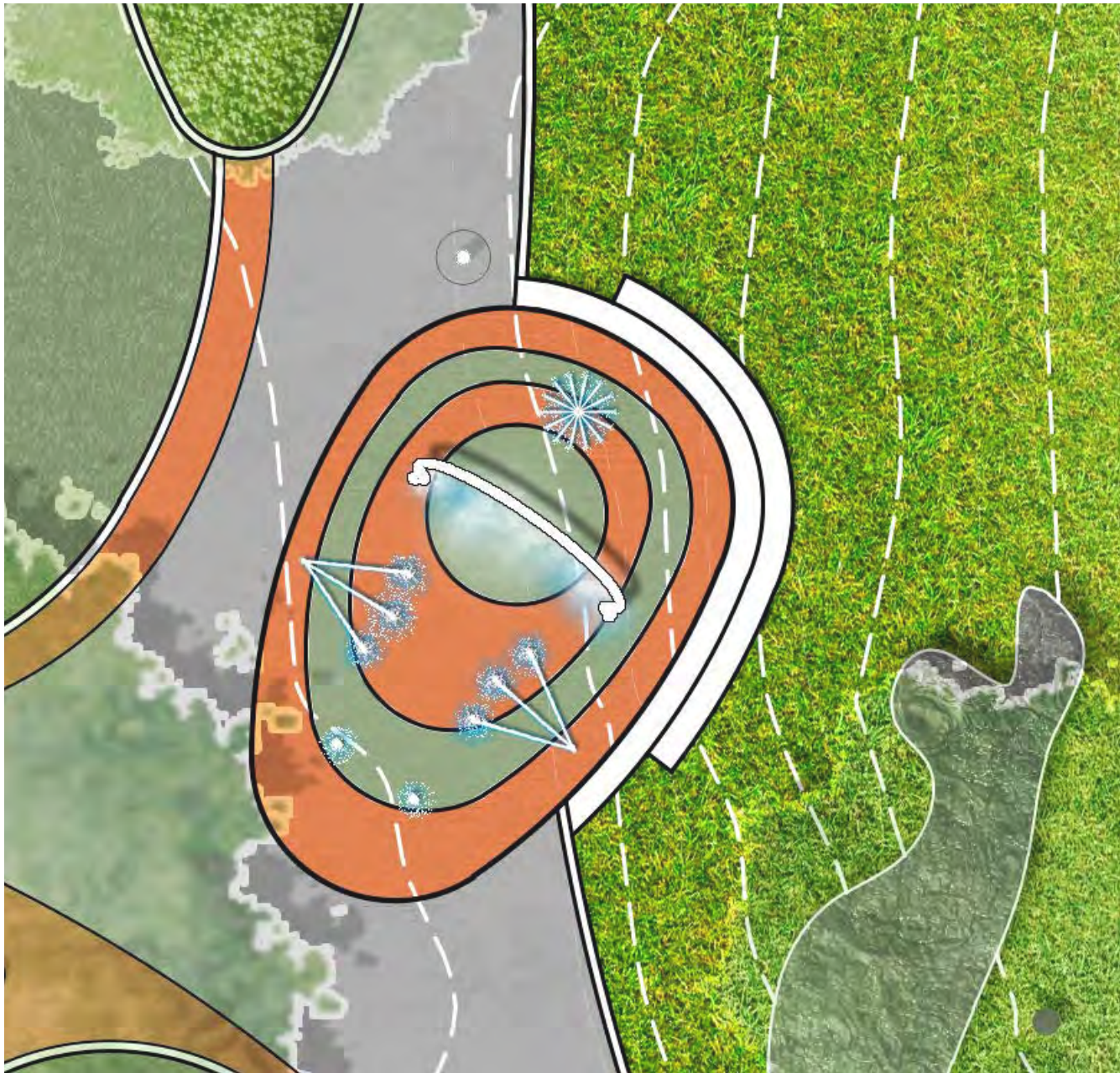
 x' STEEL



Community Parks Initiative

Fort Independence Playground | Proposed Fence Diagram





Spray Shower Enlargement



Color Concrete



Junior Water Jewel



Steam Jet



Triple Arch Jet



RippleRun





Enlargement Plan (5 - 12 Play)



5-12 play equipment

Safety Surface (color mixed)



20%	40%
RH11 Bright Green	RH10 Standard Green
20%	20%
RH12 Dark Green	RH50 Orange

Color Seal



Equipment

 PROSHIELD™/POST TANGERINE
 PRIMARY POLYETHYLENE LIMON
 PROSHIELD™ COMPONENT METALLIC SILVER





Enlargement Plan (2 - 5 Play)

Safety Surface (color mixed)



20%
RH11
Bright Green



40%
RH10
Standard Green



20%
RH12
Dark Green



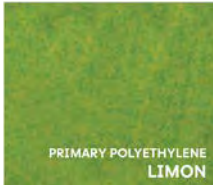
20%
RH50
Orange

Color Seal



2-5 play equipment

Equipment



NYC Parks

Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground | Play Equipment - Ages 2-5



Enlargement Plan (Toddler Play)



Nook



Tot Tables

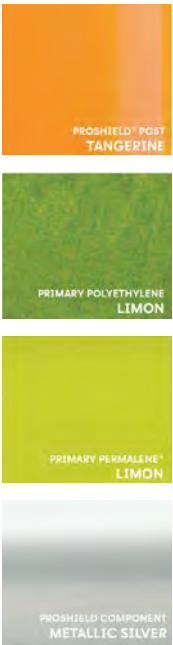


Talk Tubes

Color Seal



Equipment





Swing Enlargement

Safety Surface (color mixed)



RH11
Bright Green



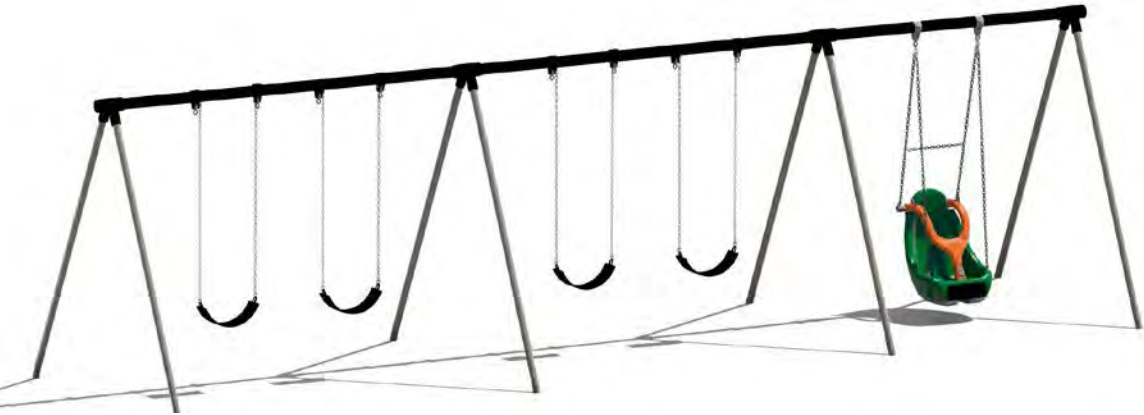
RH10
Standard Green



RH12
Dark Green



RH50
Orange



Swing Set



NYC Parks

Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground



Steel Table Set



Decorative Bins



Trash Enclosure



Drinking Fountain - Type E Hi-Lo



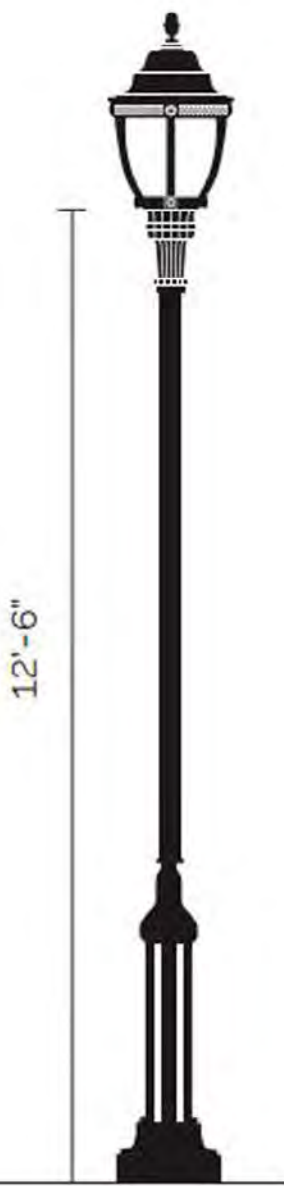
1939 World's Fair Bench



3' Height Steel Bar

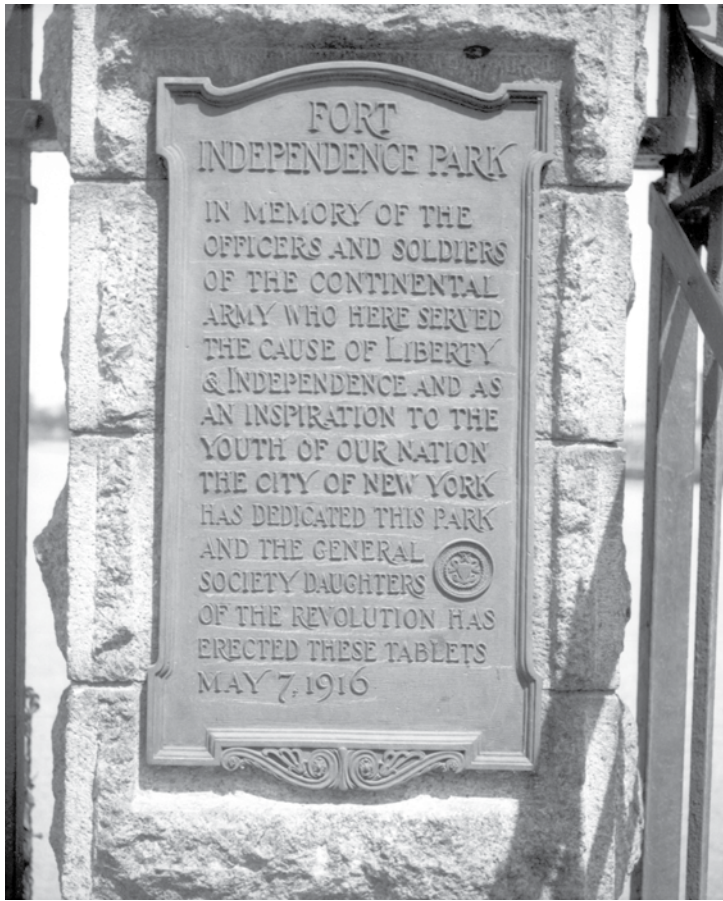


1' Height Plant Rail

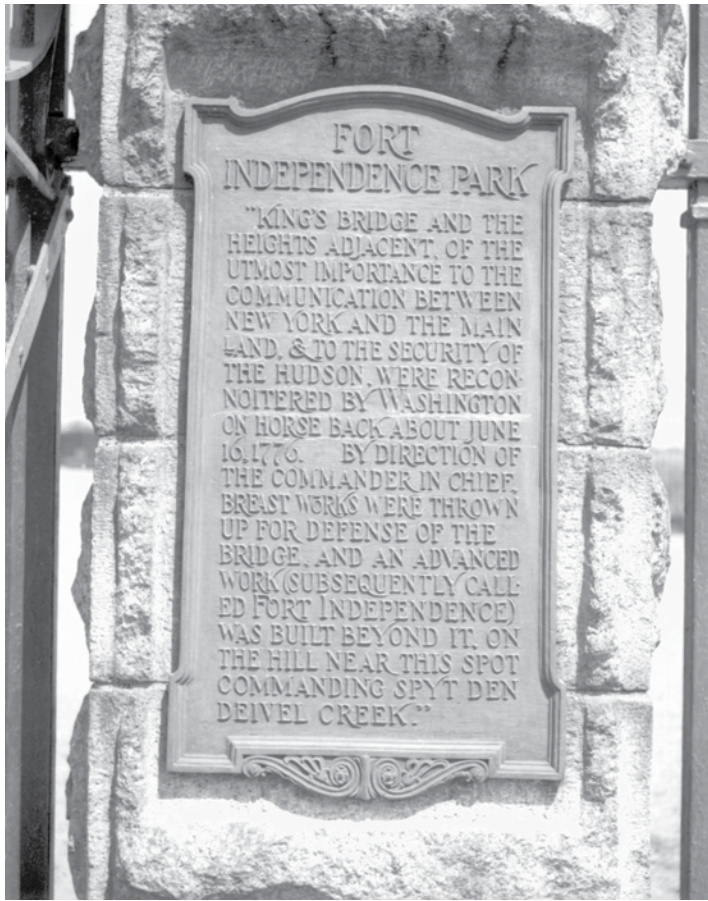


Type B Luminaire and Pole

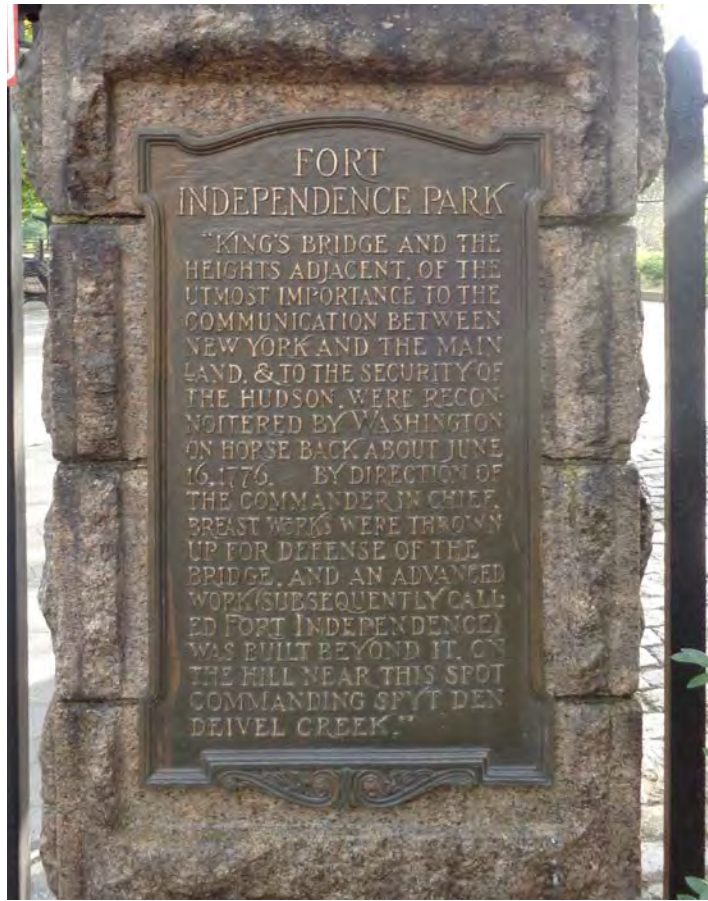




North Pillar, 1936



South Pillar, 1936



South Pillar, 2018

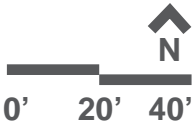


South Pillar, 2025





- Legend**
- Project Limit
 - Low Shrubs
 - Lawn
 - Mulch
 - Proposed Tree
Accent Flowering Tree





Eastern Redbud (Native)
Cercis canadensis



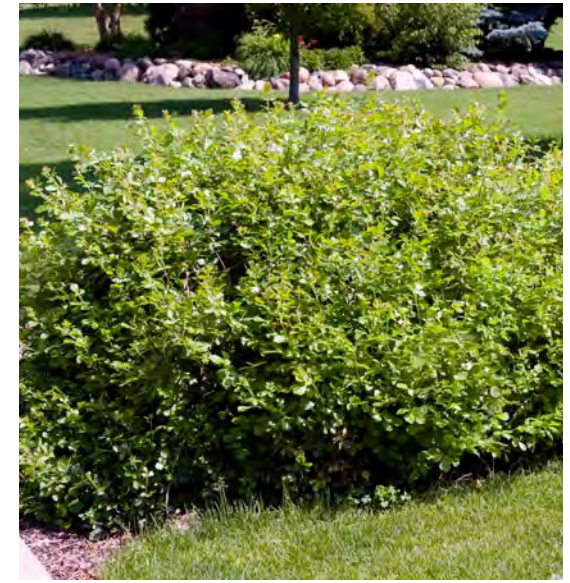
Kousa Dogwood
Cornus kousa



Flowering Dogwood (Native)
Cornus florida



Hydrangea Endless Summer
Hydrangea macrophylla 'Bailmer'



Fragrant Sumac (Native)
Rhus aromatica "Gro-Low"



Shamrock Inkberry (Native)
Ilex glabra 'Shamrock'



Cherry Laurel
Prunus laurocerasus 'Otto Luyken'



Japanese Spirea
Spiraea japonica 'Anthony Waterer'



Dwarf Forsythia
Forsythia "Arnold Dwarf"

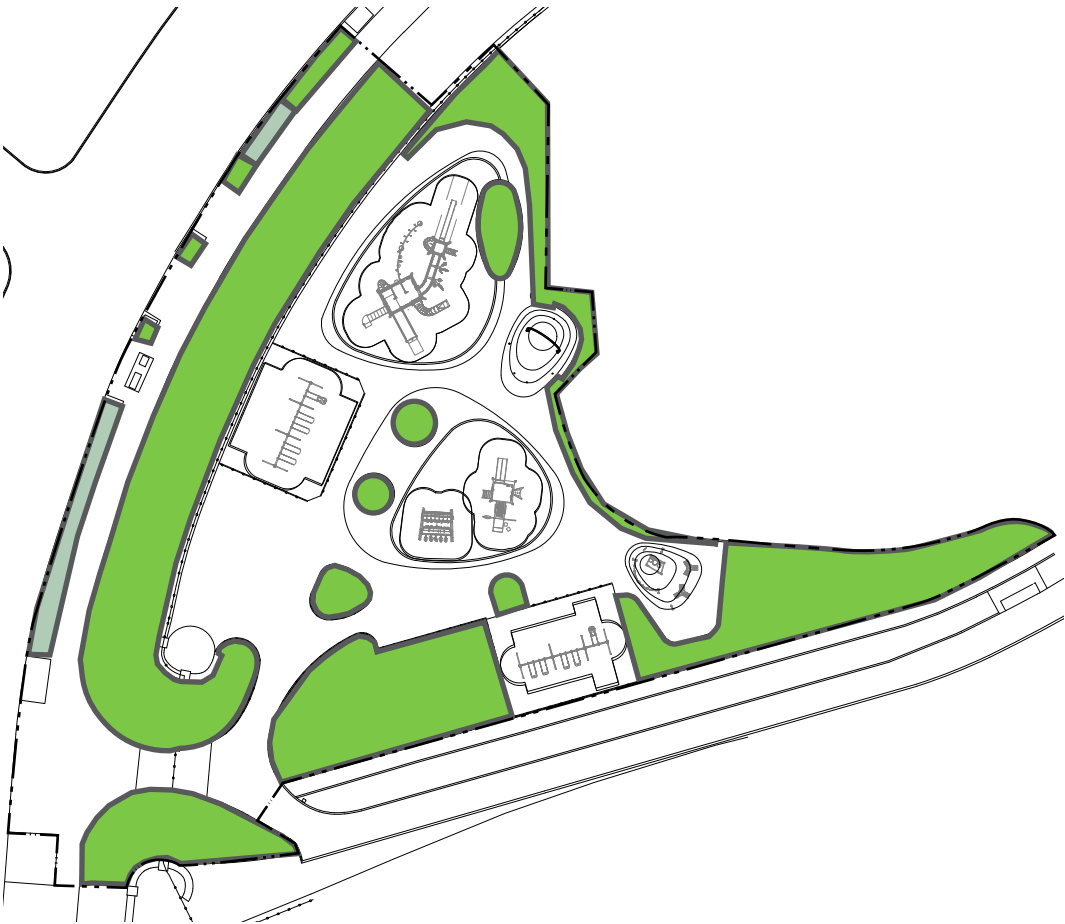


Dwarf Barberry Yellow Green
Berberis thunbergii 'Aurea nana'

Total Project Area: 37,930 SF





Existing Permeability: 31% (11,721 SF)



Proposed Permeability: 46% (17,303 SF)

Legend

-  PLANTED/ NATURAL TURF AREA (13,654 SF)
-  PERMEABLE PAVEMENT (775 SF)

SF of areas noted above are for proposed conditions.

Sustainable Practices

- Reduce storm water runoff with Rain Gardens
- Balance cut and fill
- Use recycled content material
- Improve tree health and growing conditions
- Use site appropriate resilient plant material

DEP Unified Stormwater Rule (USWR) Requirement

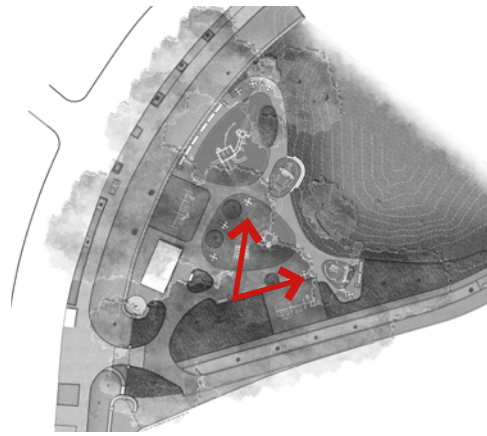
USWR stormwater management and permitting is required for this project. USWR is required because more than 20,000 SF is being disturbed.



NYC Parks



Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground | Perspective Rendering



Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground | Perspective Rendering



Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground | Perspective Rendering



Parks

Fort Independence Playground New Public Restroom Building Community Parks Initiative

Located at the intersection of Sedgwick Avenue and Giles Place
in the Borough of Bronx.

Community Board 08
September 29th, 2025
Diana Phillips, NYC Parks

Project Size: 720 SF (20' x 36')



Legend

- Project Limits of
LA Contract**
To be reconstructed in
separate contract
- ↔ **Park Entrance**
- Building or Structure**
- ▶ **Building Entrance**
- ← **Traffic**
- Tree**





1 - North Elevation



2 - East Elevation





1 - South Elevation



2 - West Elevation



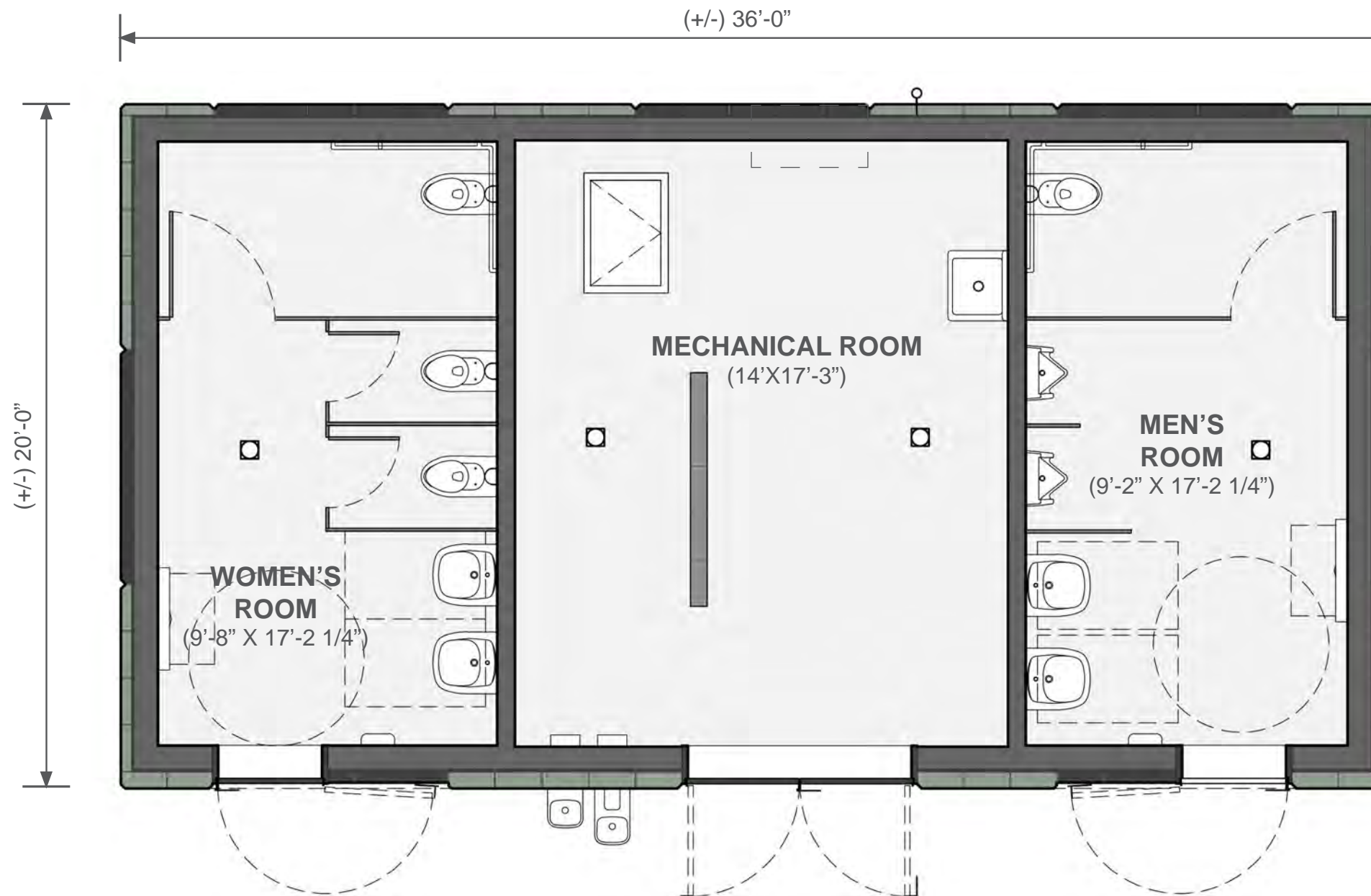
Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground PRB | Existing Conditions Photos

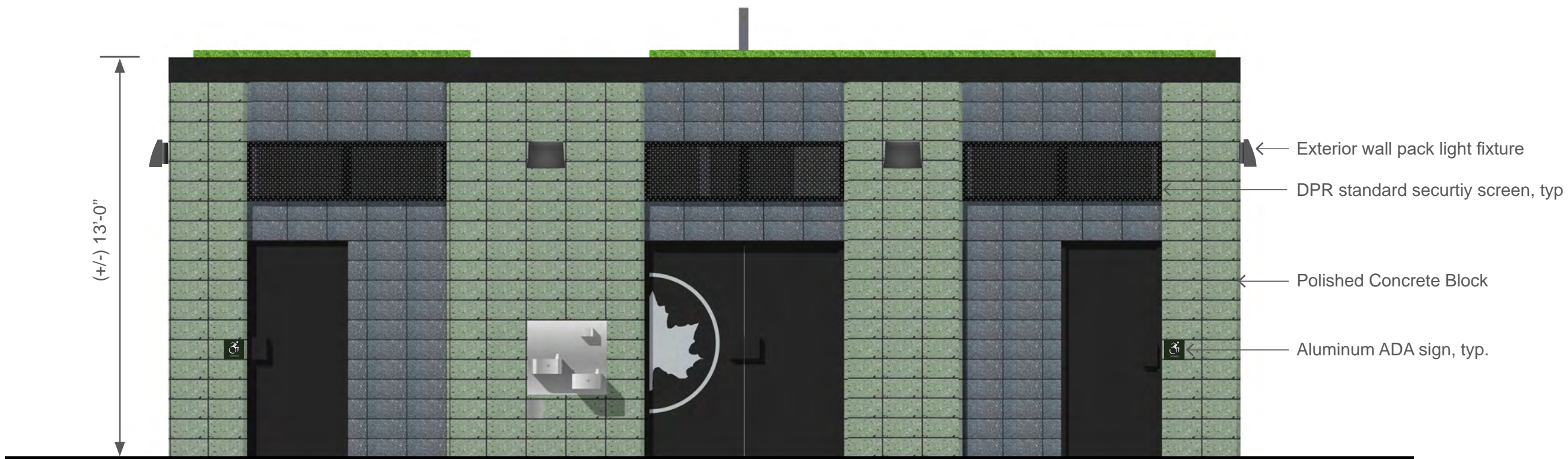




- ### Legend
- Project Limit of LA Contract**
To be reconstructed in separate contract
 - Park Entrance**
 - Building or Structure**
 - Building Entrance**
 - Traffic**

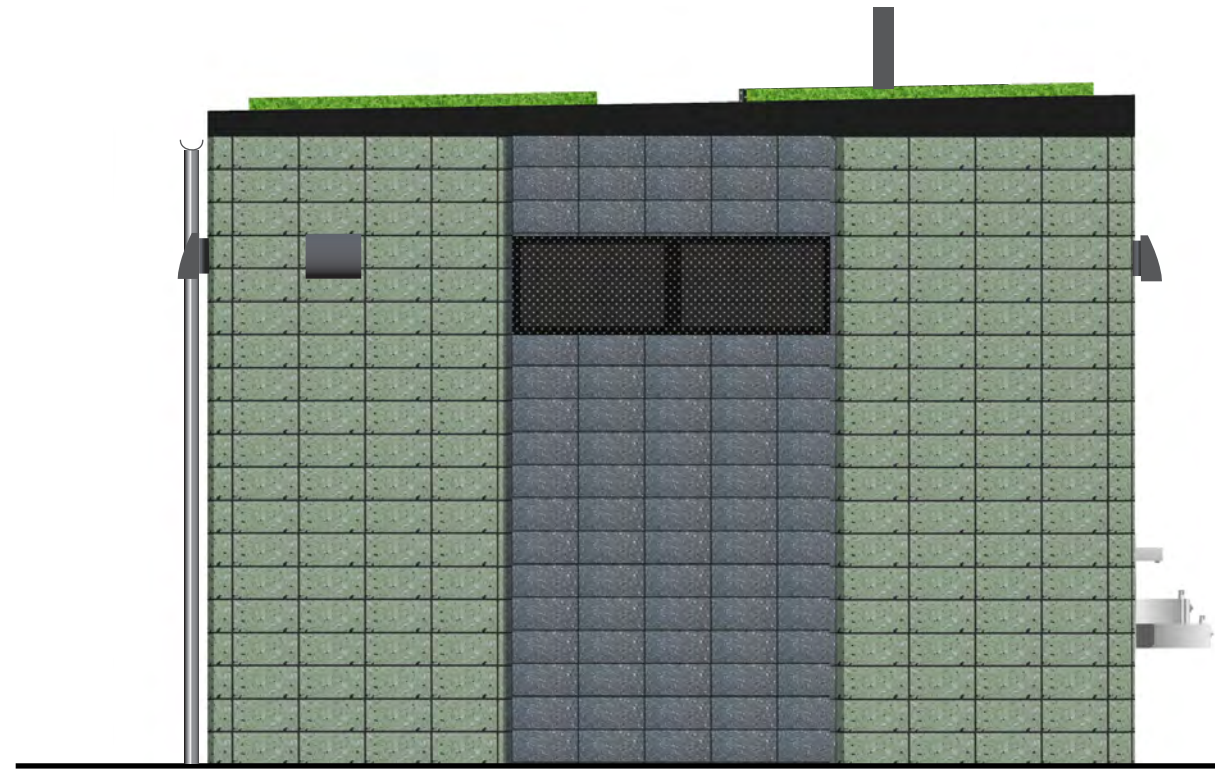




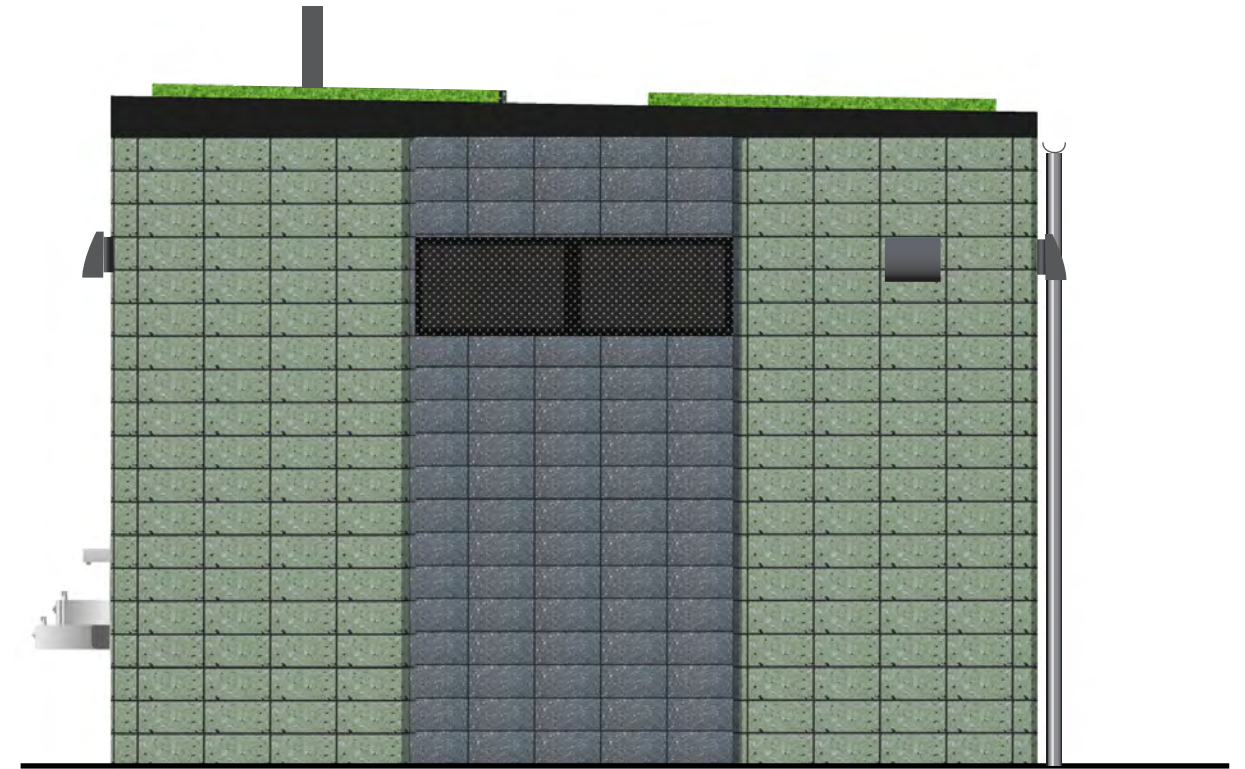


1 - Front Elevation (East)





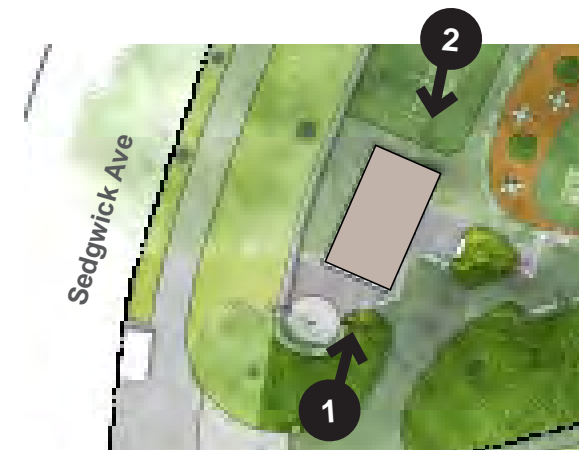
1 - Side Elevation (South)



2 - Side Elevation (North)



Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground PRB | Proposed Exterior Elevations

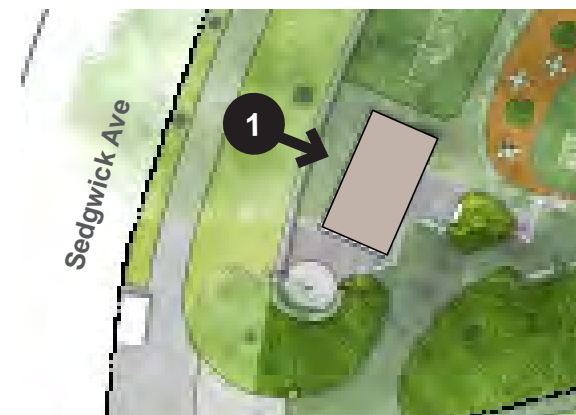


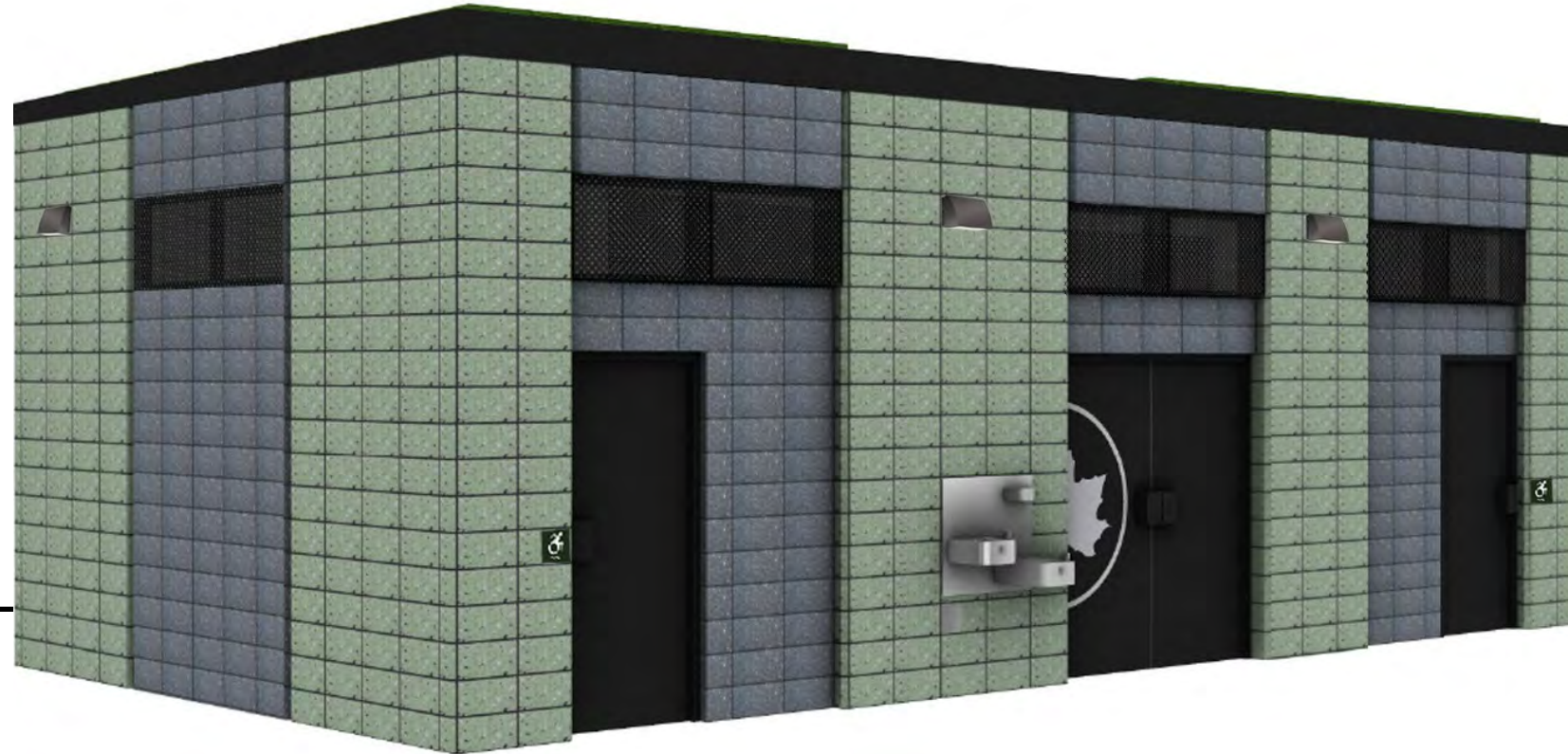


1 - Rear Elevation (West)

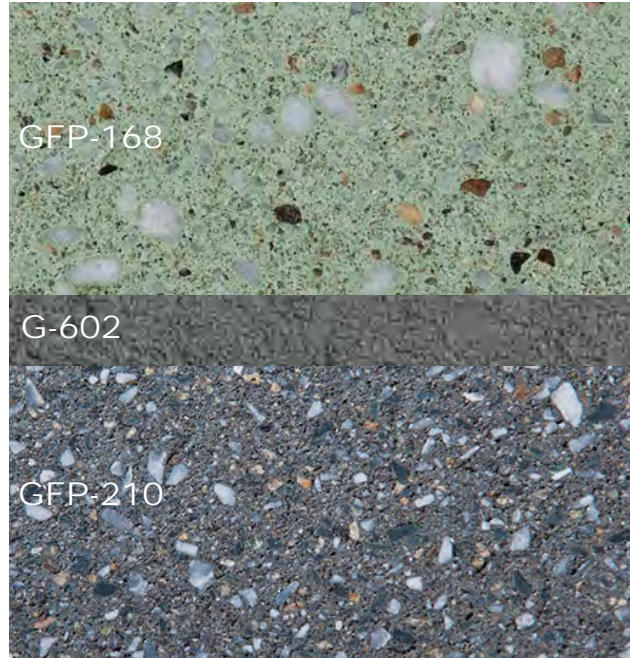


Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground PRB | Proposed Exterior Elevation





EXTERIOR WALLS



GROUND FACE POLISHED CONCRETE BLOCK MASONRY

-WESTBROOK CONCRETE BLOCK GFP - 168

-WESTBROOK CONCRETE BLOCK GFP - 210
(CONNECTICUT)

MORTAR JOINTS

-GLEN-GERY MORTAR COLOR G-602



GREEN ROOF - XEROFLOR XF300



HOLLOW METAL DOORS AND FRAMES, WINDOWS, LINTELS, AND SHEET METAL FLASHING, ROOF FASCIA -COLOR BLACK



SECURITY SCREENS -KANE SECURITY SCREENS COLOR BLACK, PERFORATED SCREENS, 16GA MILL GALV. 63% OPEN AREA



ALUMINUM ADA SIGN -PARKS GREEN BACKGROUND, NATURAL METAL PICTOGRAM AND LETTERS



EXTERIOR WALL PACK LIGHTING FIXTURE -RAB LIGHTING MODEL SLIM57



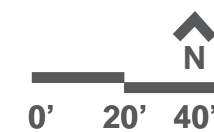
ARCHITECTURE GRILLE -ALUMINUM COLOR BLACK



DRINKING FOUNTAIN WITH BOTTLE FILLER -HAWS MODEL 1119FR WITH 1920FR



Community Parks Initiative
Fort Independence Playground | Schematic Design





NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE

CB8 Parks Committee Presentation



**Play More Ball:
Lighting Sid Field**





NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE

About the League

NRBL was founded in 1954





NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE

About the League



Has been serving the local community, with baseball and softball for boys and girls, ages 4 to 16, for over 70 years



NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE

About the League



The league is active and Sid Field is in constant use nearly every day mid-Mar thru mid-Nov



NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE



Sid Field within the CB8 area



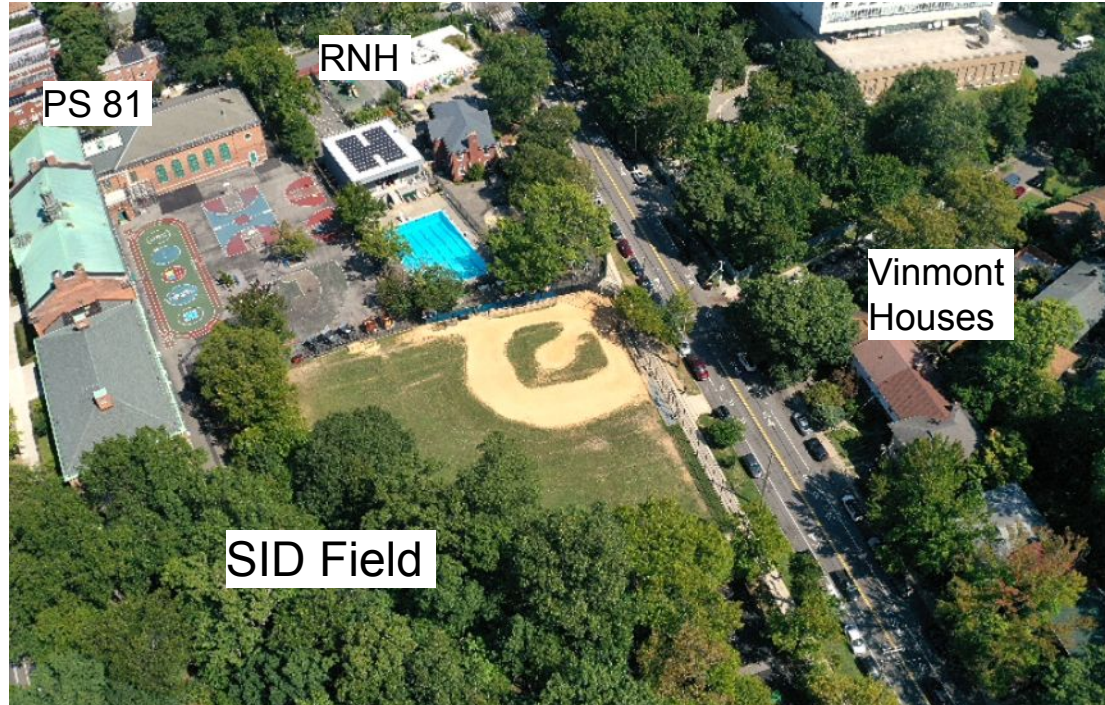
NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE



Fairly green area bounded by Mosholu Ave to the East, Riverdale Ave to the West, W 256 to the North and W 254 to the South.



NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE



Block consists of primarily community spaces: Sid Field & Vinmont Park, Riverdale Neighborhood House, a branch of the NY public library, and plenty of wooded area. The sole exception being several houses, labeled here as the Vinmont houses.

SPORTS

Little League baseball faces declining participation



RIVER
OFTBA

Hartford Courant

Connecticut Little Leagues forced to adjust...

SPORTS > MLB

Connecticut Little Leagues forced to adjust amid youth participation decline



by TANDY LAU

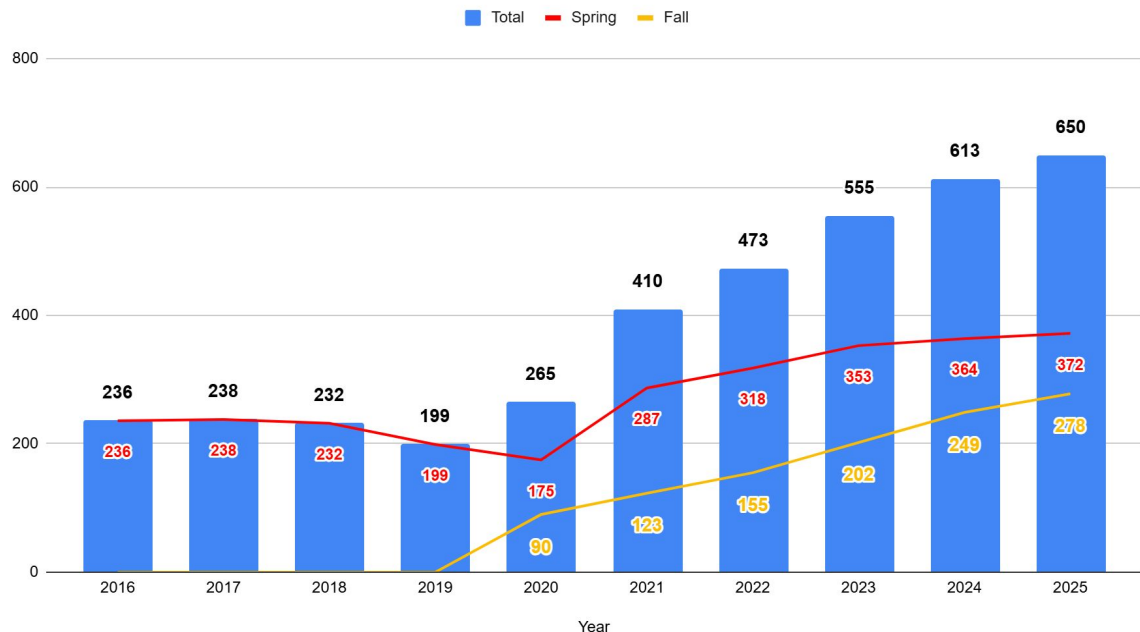
February 8, 2024





NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE

Registration 2016 to Present



NRBL has seen consistent YOY growth in registration since before COVID, including the rebirth of its softball program and the introduction of Fall Baseball for the first time in NRBL's 70+ year history

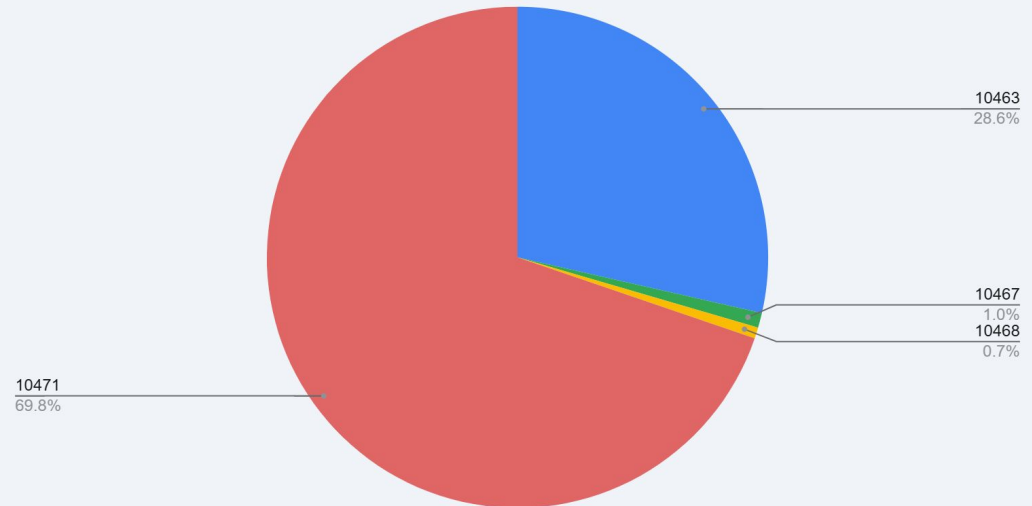


NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE

Community Support

- 572+ Folks signed our petition
- 489+ From CB8 Catchment Area
- Several from Vinmont houses
- Riverdale Neighborhood House
- Local businesses (including nearby earlybird)

Percentage of Petition Signers by Zip Code
(In CB8 Catchment Area)





NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE

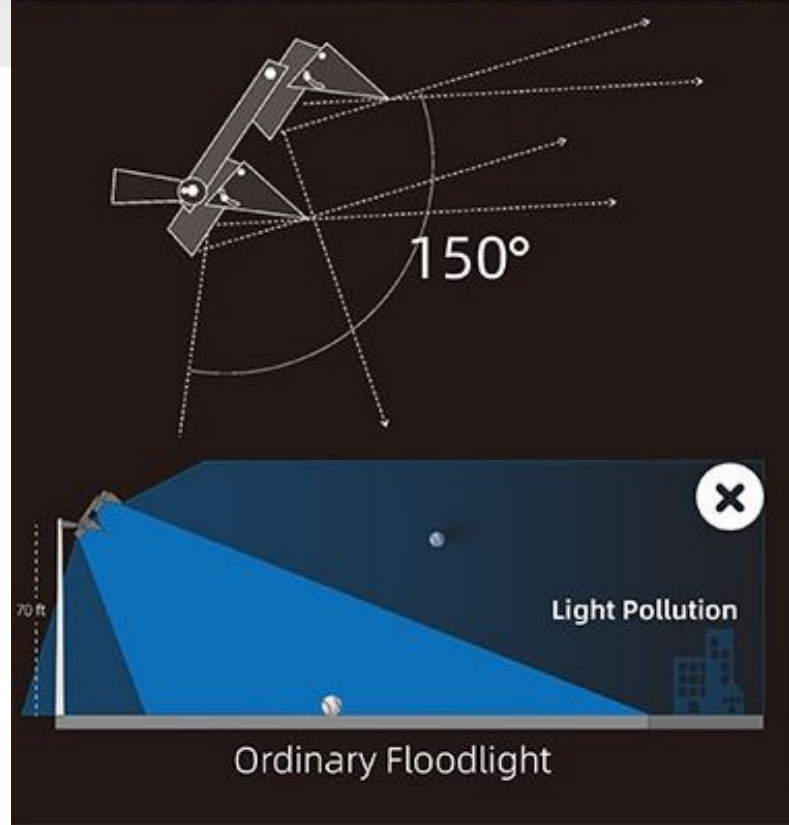
Being Good Neighbors

- Lights out Curfew
- Critical Mass of Kids
- No history of parking issues
- Technological Advances in Lights



NORTH RIVERDALE AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE

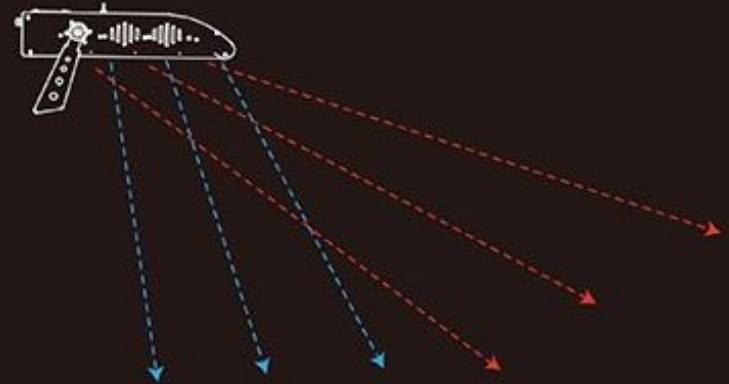
Old Technology





NORTH RIVERDALE AND SOFTBALL L

New Technology





NORTH RIVERDALE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUE

I'm asking for your support and your vote on this project, not just as Bronx residents, or Community Board members ... but as good neighbors.

Final Capital Budget Priorities for FY27

FY 2027 Ranking		FY 2026 Ranking
1	<p><u>PARKS – DPR - Redesign and reconstruction of Bailey Playground</u> Reconstruction of play equipment, safety surfacing and fencing along the Major Deegan. Incorporate adjacent Tibbett's Tail area into an expanded Bailey Playground. Reduce asphalt and add green space. Add space for District 8 operations</p>	1
2	<p><u>PARKS – DPR - Reconstruction of Old Fort Four Park</u> Reconstruction of Old Fort Four Park including replacing existing playground equipment, spray area, benches and fencing, repairing the stone walls, updating the greenspace and improving lighting for the basketball courts (current capital improvement includes construction of restroom, replacing the swing sets and resurfacing basketball courts). <i>This neighborhood does not have a dog run within a 10 minute walk and so this park should be considered for this amenity.</i></p>	2
3	<p><u>PARKS – DPR - Restoration of Lower Brust Park Staircase</u> Restoration of flagstone, pavers, steps and handrails</p>	4
4	<p><u>PARKS – DPR - Marble Hill Playground Lighting</u> Install park lighting to light the pathways and activity areas within the interior of Marble Hill Playground</p>	3
5	<p><u>PARKS – DPR - Equipment for Litter Collection</u> Additional mini-packer vehicle to reach remote areas for litter collection in Van Cortlandt Park and one packer vehicle to be assigned in District 8</p>	5

Final Expense Budget Priorities for FY27

FY 2027 Ranking		FY 2026 Ranking
1	<p><u>PARKS – DPR - Parks Enforcement Patrol Command within Van Cortlandt Park</u> Create a new Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) command and station it in Van Cortlandt Park sufficient to properly enforce DPR regulations so that public safety and order is maintained and to enable regular and consistent patrolling of Van Cortlandt Park and other Community District 7, 8 and 12 parks</p>	1
2	<p><u>PARKS – DPR - Swimming Lessons For Children</u> To support swimming lessons for children at Van Cortlandt Park Pool and/or at other New York City owned pools.</p>	New
3	<p><u>PARKS – DPR - Replacement Gator-Type Utility Vehicles for Landscape Management, Maintenance and Operations Staff Within Van Cortlandt Park</u> Replace three existing utility gator-type vehicles due to age and maintenance issues</p>	4
4	<p><u>PARKS – DPR/DEP - Repair Bruckner Box Connection in Upper Henry Hudson Park</u> Connect the Bruckner Box Connection in Upper Henry Hudson Park to the main sewer and install an RPZ (DEP) to complete the water connection</p>	2
5	<p><u>PARKS – DPR - Crushed Stone and Boulders for Maintenance</u> Crushed stone and boulders to enable repairs of tracks, walkways and dog runs within District 8 and Van Cortlandt Park</p>	3