



. c o m m o n w e a l t h .

the city of bexley, ohio  
commonwealth park master planning | 2017-2018



JONES



## COMMONWEALTH PARK MASTER PLAN

We would like to thank all of our contributors who assisted in the planning process.

### PREPARED FOR:

#### The City of Bexley

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Commonwealth Park is an open and spacious green space that is approximately 8 acres in size. This subtle landscape references a long history of community gathering and activity. The park sits within a framework of single family residences, a city-wide arboretum, and is located next to Jeffrey Mansion and Park.

Open space within the City of Bexley is a valuable amenity and programmed sports space is limited. The Commonwealth Park Master Plan is an effort to fulfill the City's promise of a more beautiful, maintained, programmed, and defined park space for Bexley's residents.

The Commonwealth Park Master Plan builds upon strong associations with the City's Recreation and Parks Department, the Tree and Public Garden Commission, Bexley City Schools, Commonwealth area residents, resident park users, local businesses, and community groups.

The final master plan will continue to maintain current patterns of use, but will define a more deliberate landscape vernacular that aligns with the City and the surrounding park network.

The park is defined by its two distinct parcels [east + west] that are separated by North Columbia Avenue. The rectangular shape of the parcels create the opportunity to unify the two sides with a cohesive landscape palette, while allowing separate and active sports fields in the center. The park also has a connection to the west in Jeffrey Mansion. The crossing will link the two parks and help identify both local landmarks with 'iconic' architectural placement.



After eight months of effort, the City of Bexley's Recreation and Parks Department, The Jones Studio, and the Public Steering Committee are recommending their final master plan to the City of Bexley and it's residents. This document serves as a template for the future development standards of Commonwealth Park. Completion of this master planning exercise allows opportunities to pursue funding options to further implement the considerations outlined herein.





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COMMONWEALTH PARK



## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### Purpose of the Master Plan

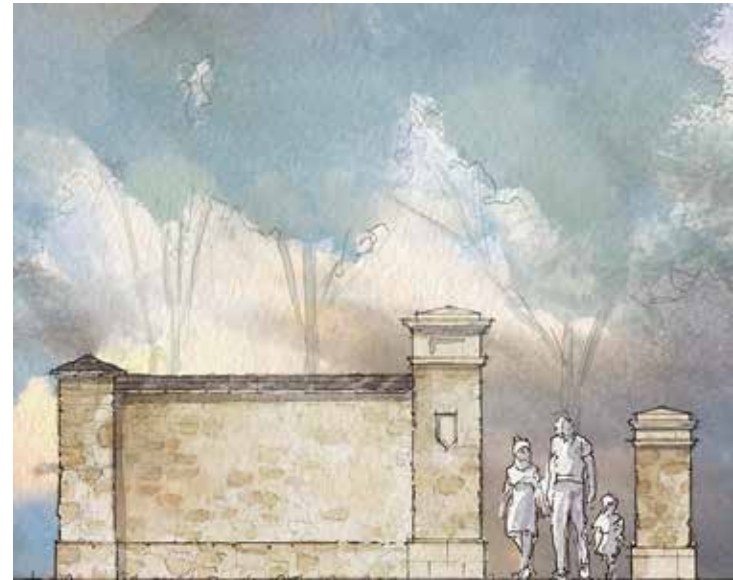
The purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual master plan for the City of Bexley's Commonwealth Park, an existing 8 acre park located between North Parkview Avenue and North Drexel Avenue. The master plan was developed with community involvement to ensure that it reflects community needs and values. This document provides a summary of the planning process, the visioning and goals for the park, and sets a standard for design relating to all future development of the park.

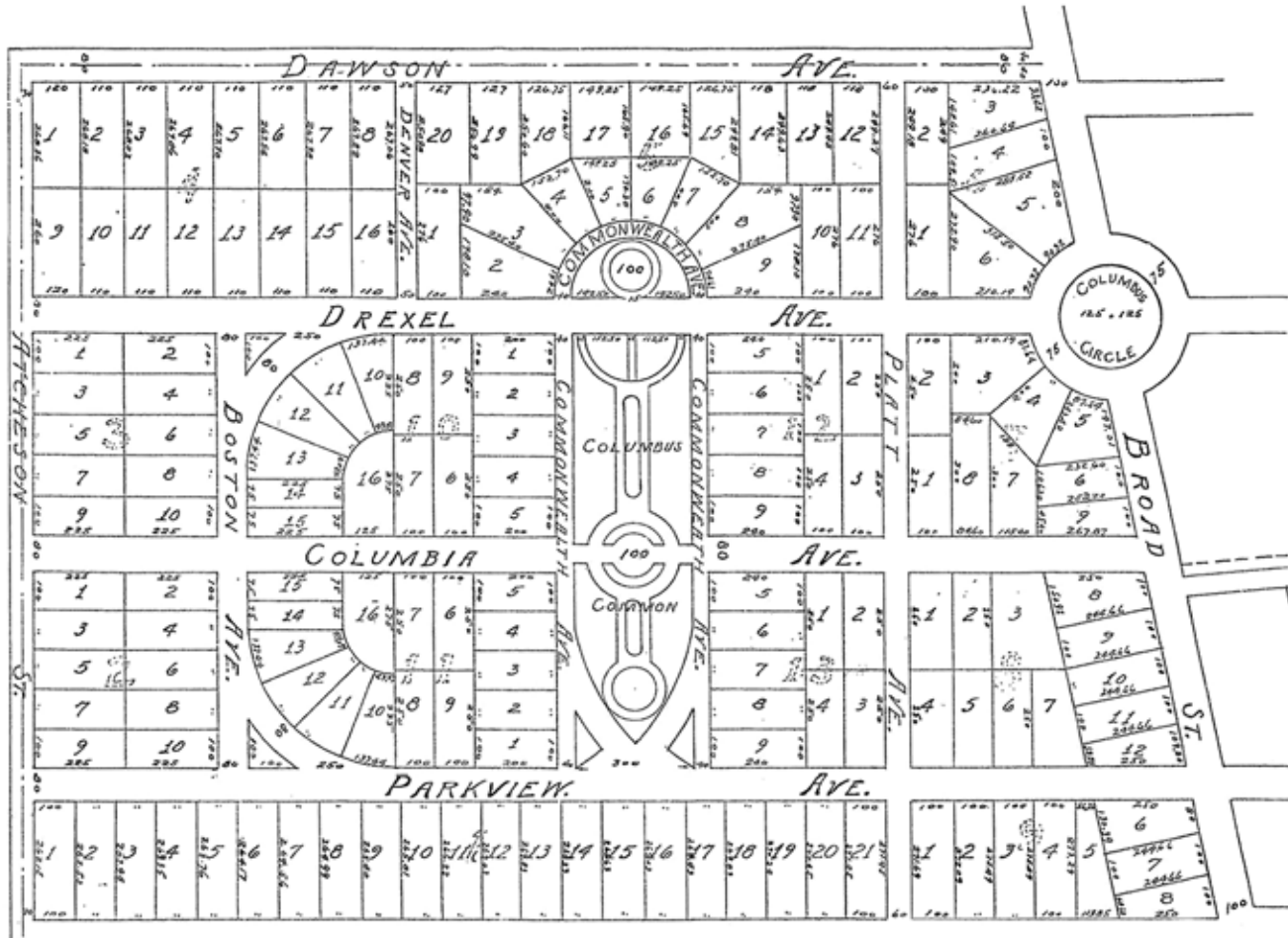
### Public Involvement

Planning for this master plan was an open and iterative process. It took place over 8 months between April and January 2017-2018. Throughout this time, The Jones Studio and the City of Bexley's Recreation and Parks Department met regularly with the Steering Committee in open and interactive public meetings.

Two public open house events were also held, both at Bexley City Hall. These events provided an opportunity to present alternative park plans and gather input from community stakeholders, residents, and neighbors about community desires, needs, preferences, and concerns regarding the re-development of Commonwealth Park. Public comments, along with input from both the committee and city staff, are what guided the final master plan.

*Left: The City of Bexley's park network diagram.*





Above: The City of Bexley's 1891 Original Plat.



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Commonwealth's Past

Within the city limits of today's north Bexley neighborhood are lots of all sizes, from prominent park-front, to street corner transitions, and most notably, the 'Columbus Common' park plat. An interesting aspect of the plat shows that it is contiguous in plan. The largest of the parcels, [between Drexel | Columbia, and Columbia | Parkview] are the most recognizable to residents, and has set up today's larger Commonwealth Park neighborhood.

The formal notion of the park [plan] puts emphasis on the importance of a central green space. This ideology suggests a 'continuation' of park space across both lots and streets.

### Commonwealth Today

Site observations today indicate that the quality of landscape, infrastructure, and amenities have deteriorated over the years. 'Left over' landscapes, outdated fitness equipment, power lines, portable restrooms, and youth sports equipment counter the park's delightful and passive origin.

Although improvements have been made in the past, they have not addressed the entire perimeter, connections to the neighborhood, or the overall future visioning of the park. The park's passive, green appearance is one of the largest assets to the City of Bexley, but current maintenance protocols and current edge conditions show that the park is in decline and losing its identity.

*Right and following: The City of Bexley's Commonwealth Park.  
[Existing park conditions November 2017.]*









Above: Commonwealth Park site aerial [2017]













*Above: Commonwealth Park site aerial looking west [2017.]  
Previous: Commonwealth Park site aerial looking south [2017.]*



*Above: Commonwealth Park site aerial looking east [2017.]*

**MISSION  
STATEMENT**  
COMMONWEALTH PARK MASTER PLANNING

The mission of the Commonwealth Park Master Plan is to:

**Define** a long-term vision for Commonwealth Park.

**Preserve | enhance** the timeless and historic park atmosphere.

**Develop** the park as the centerpiece within the City of Bexley's arboretum.

**Create** a clearly defined park that incorporates the aesthetic guidelines which define the City of Bexley's civic spaces, while preserving programmed athletic uses.

**Respect** the desires of the individual residences surrounding the park, while balancing the uses of the entire community.

SIDEWALKS AND  
TREE LAWN

1 ■

- tree lawns, curbs, and street
- sidewalk details
- tree specifications
- fencing, hedging, and gutters
- 'entry' landscape spaces

ARBORETUM AND  
GARDENS

2 ■

- diligent inventory of existing material
- passive domesticated spaces
- diversification of natural landscapes
- remediation of invasive species
- seasonal gardens

ARCHITECTURE AND  
SITE FURNISHINGS

3 ■

- pavilions and event terraces
- outdoor art and sculpture
- benches and seating
- water features
- piers and walls

FITNESS AND ATHLETICS

4 ■

- fitness circuit through park
- equipment replacement and storage
- active sports 'containment'
- field improvements
- life safety amenities

UNIFICATION

5 ■

- site crossing conditions
- homogeneous site infrastructure
- street tree consistency
- edge condition typology
- utility management

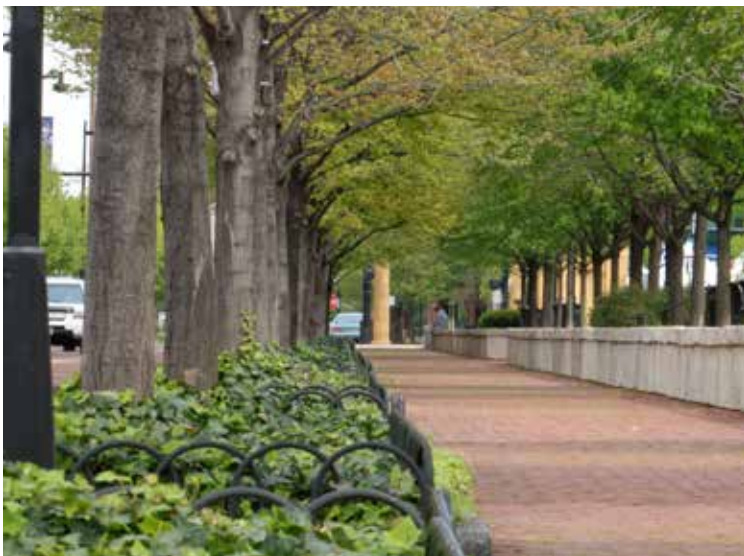
TRAFFIC, PARKING, AND INTERSECTIONS

6 ■

- parking delineation and identification
- street speed calming
- crossing 'zones'
- pavement changes
- street sign additions

The master plan process focused on the design principles above:

























The Commonwealth Park Master Plan calls for the park to be completely defined by an 'edge' condition outlined in landscape, lawn, hedges, curbs, paving, and appropriately defined infrastructure. The design looks to connect with Jeffrey Mansion and make it safer for park users and neighborhood residents with the addition of several crosswalks.

Corner entrances and path 'outlets' are designed to accommodate a free flow of pedestrian movement in and out of the park. Architectural icons, walls, and piers mark entry points and help in hiding both public facilities [2] and outdoor sports equipment.

The addition of arboretum-type garden spaces, open air pavilions, and wrought iron street medians help characterize the classic landscape vernacular of the past, while providing modern amenities to suit the uses of current visitors and residents.

## COMPONENTS

- 1 ARBORETUM: Arrival and connection to Jeffrey Mansion.
- 2 WOODLAND GARDEN: Naturalized, passive garden spaces.
- 3 SPORTS FIELDS: Turf, drainage, and irrigation improvements.
- 4 ENTRY: Columns, walls, equipment storage, and restrooms.
- 5 BOULEVARD: Pedestrian crossing zones and traffic calming.
- 6 STRUCTURE: Open air pavilions as gathering spaces.
- 7 STREETScape: Street tree consistency, defined edge typology.
- 8 FITNESS: [4] Updated stations hidden and located off of paths.
- 9 PATHS: Decomposed stone walks with seating areas.
- 10 FORMAL GARDENS: Landscape and art installation locations.





COMMONWEALTH PARK NORTH

NORTH PARKVIEW AVENUE

NORTH COLIMPTA AVENUE

1

2

3

5



NORTH COLUMBIA AVENUE



COMMONWEALTH PARK SOUTH

NORTH DREXEL AVENUE

6

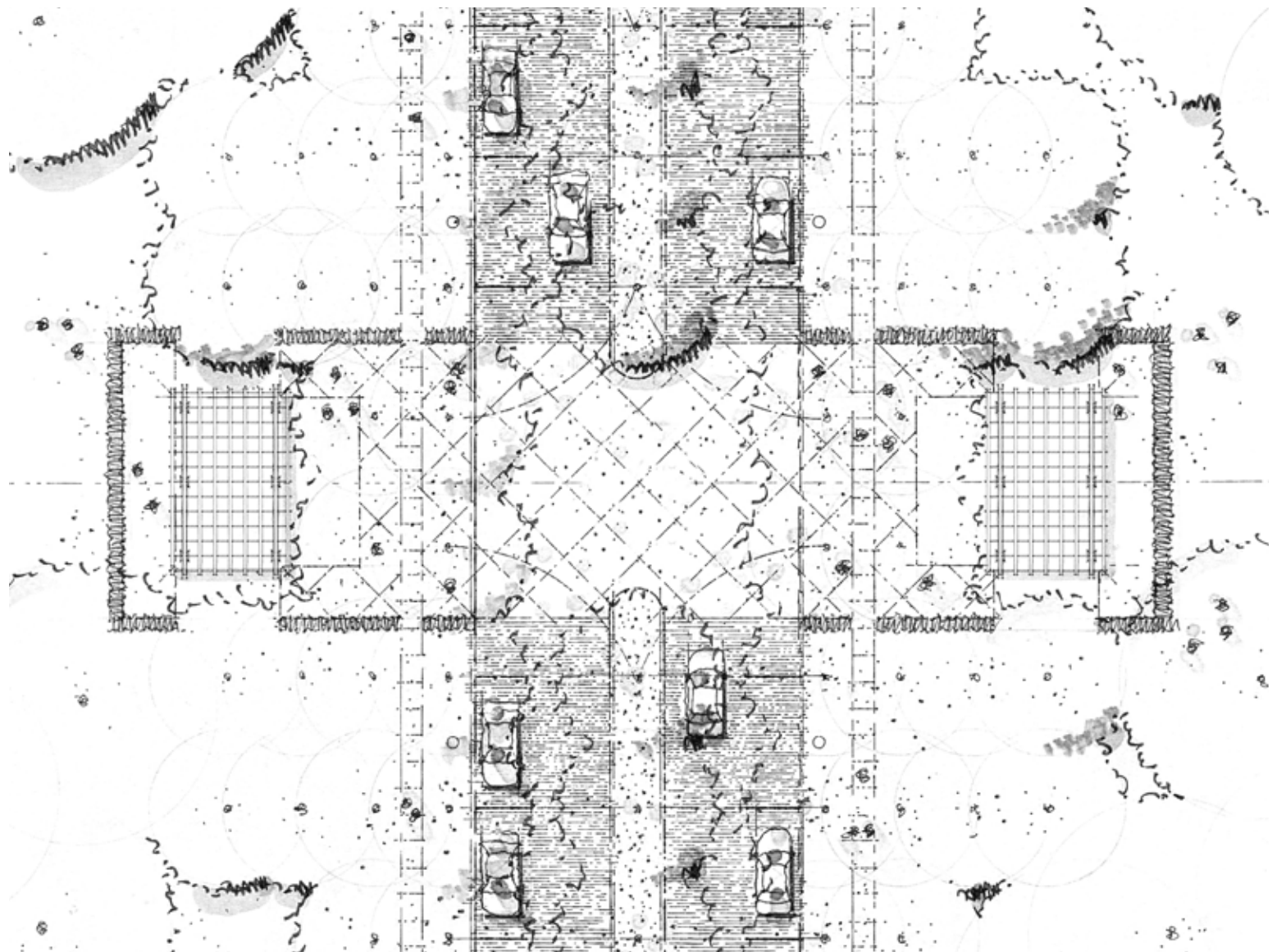
7

8

9

10





**Central medians:** This allows pedestrians to cross one direction of traffic at a time.

**Pavement changes:** Changes in the observed paving mark the 'crossing zone,' and limit the movement to one, centralized area.

**Open air structures:** Pergolas act as a gathering spot for passive park users or sports teams before and after games.

**Street parking:** Parking within the boulevard slows down through traffic and shortens crossing distances while increasing pedestrian visibility.

**Crosswalks:** Well lit, marked crossing zones at the edges of the park keep pedestrians together, where motorists will be alerted with the appropriate crossing signs.

*Left: Original conceptual crossing studies along Columbia Ave.*



1



## ARBORETUM

### Promotion

The City of Bexley is an arboretum. These park spaces serve to protect, enhance, and showcase the existing park inventory. Large growth trees will be treated, assessed, and removed [only when in decline.] Tree tags and seasonal gardens will invite and teach park users about these 'landscape exhibits.'

### Removals and clean up

Removal of invasive species helps infer a transition to something 'softer,' more naturalized, and beautiful.

The park will also consider a higher level of maintenance, at an arboretum level, to achieve the look of other civic landscape across the city.











# 2



## WOODLAND GARDEN

### Density

The interior of the park is loosely planted with trees. The majority, large-growth mature oaks and maples, among others, cast their presence over the corners of the park. The plan proposes to clean, 'limb up,' and supplement with the appropriate species to accommodate woodland gardens, and facilitate a comfortable transition from sidewalks and street trees to 'central green.'

### Vegetation

Understory trees, shade loving perennials, and flowering shrub masses create these covered garden 'rooms.' connected by subtle, decomposed stone paths.





### 3

#### SPORTS FIELDS

##### Programmed sports

The fields within Commonwealth Park accommodate a range of youth sports activities. The proposed master plan will neither increase nor decrease this programmed space. Field layout and orientation is open. Current mature trees only allow field orientation as it is [north+south,] on Commonwealth West. The plan looks to maximize central field space for overall aesthetic and safety, in the event that there is ever a large tree removed due to decline. Rotating the west field will allow goal areas to be internal and not face the sidewalks and streets.

##### Grading, drainage, landscape, and irrigation

Grading and drainage has been inadequate in most of the park. Over-used fields, poor soil conditions, and lack of irrigation leave the field with burned out spots in the summer, and standing 'ponds' in the spring. Infrastructure upgrades are a priority moving forward so that the park can be as functional as it is beautiful.











4



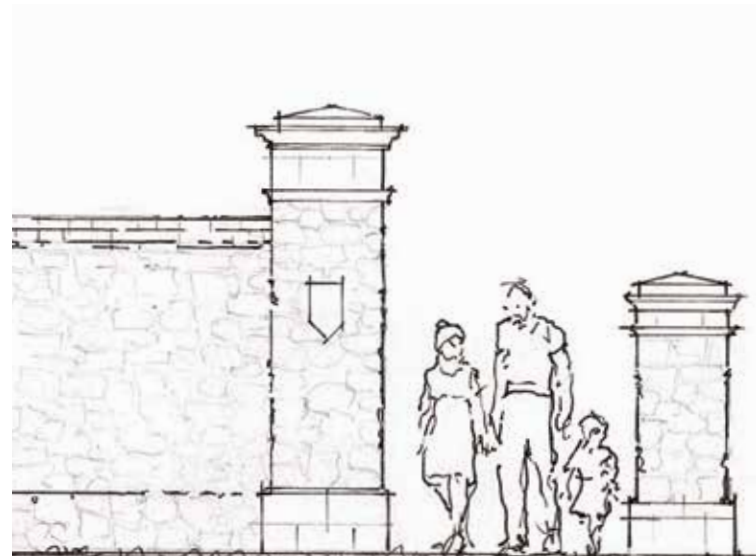
## ENTRY

### Architecture

Main entrances to the park will set up an architectural pedagogy that gets reflected across the master plan and the City of Bexley. Stone piers mimic those around the city.

### Restrooms and storage

Hidden restrooms make their way to the back side of the large entry piers. These can be locked at the appropriate times and provide the convenience and safety of an on-site bathroom, while out of view from the street and residents. Sports equipment can be moved from the open fields to behind the controlled, upright, evergreen hedges that frame the sides of the piers. These too will be hidden from park users and residents outside of programmed times.





5



## BOULEVARD

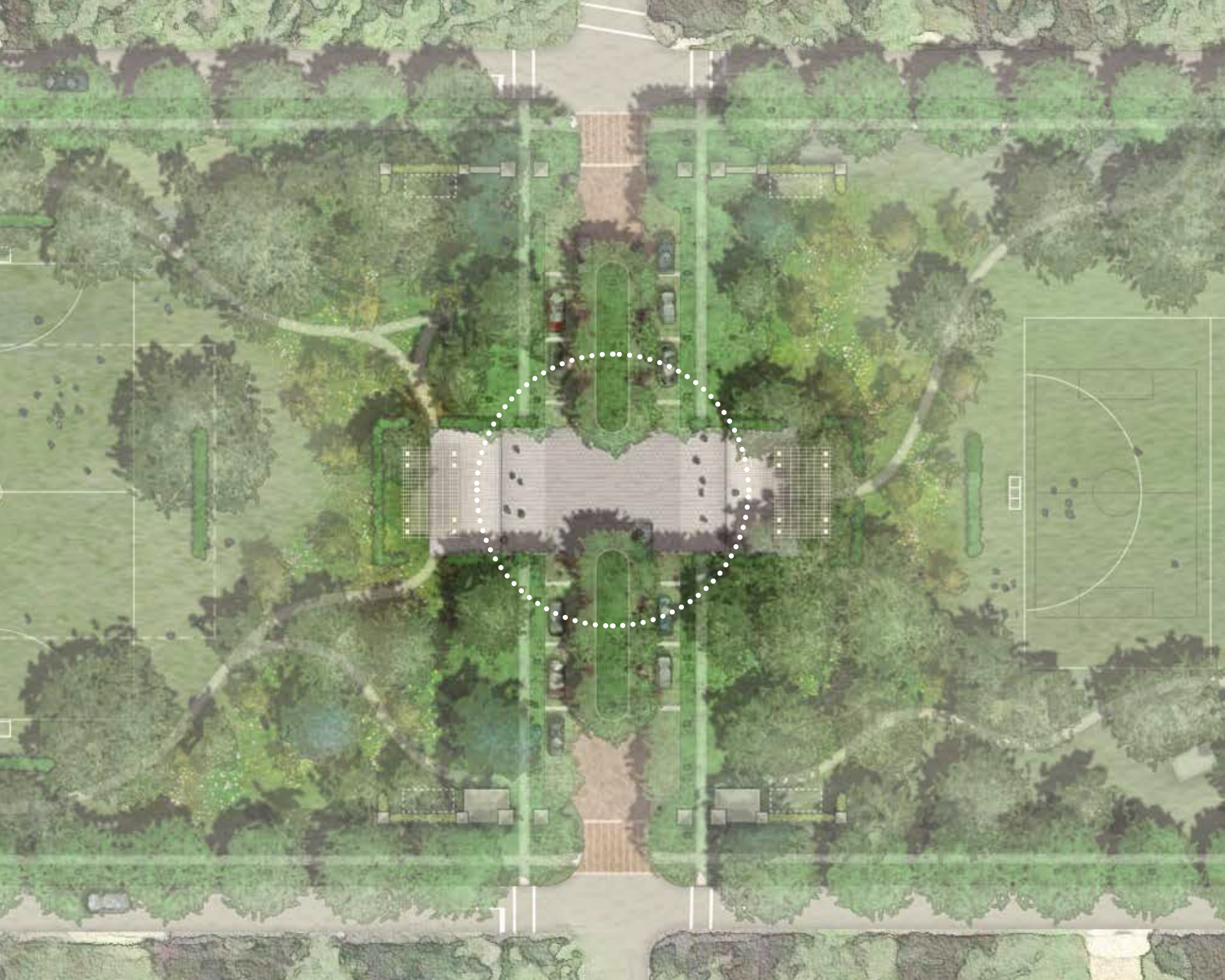
### Landscape

The central median will contain deciduous shade trees to complement the park street tree condition. A vertical component will control the monolithic ground cover that will stand tall over the stone walls.

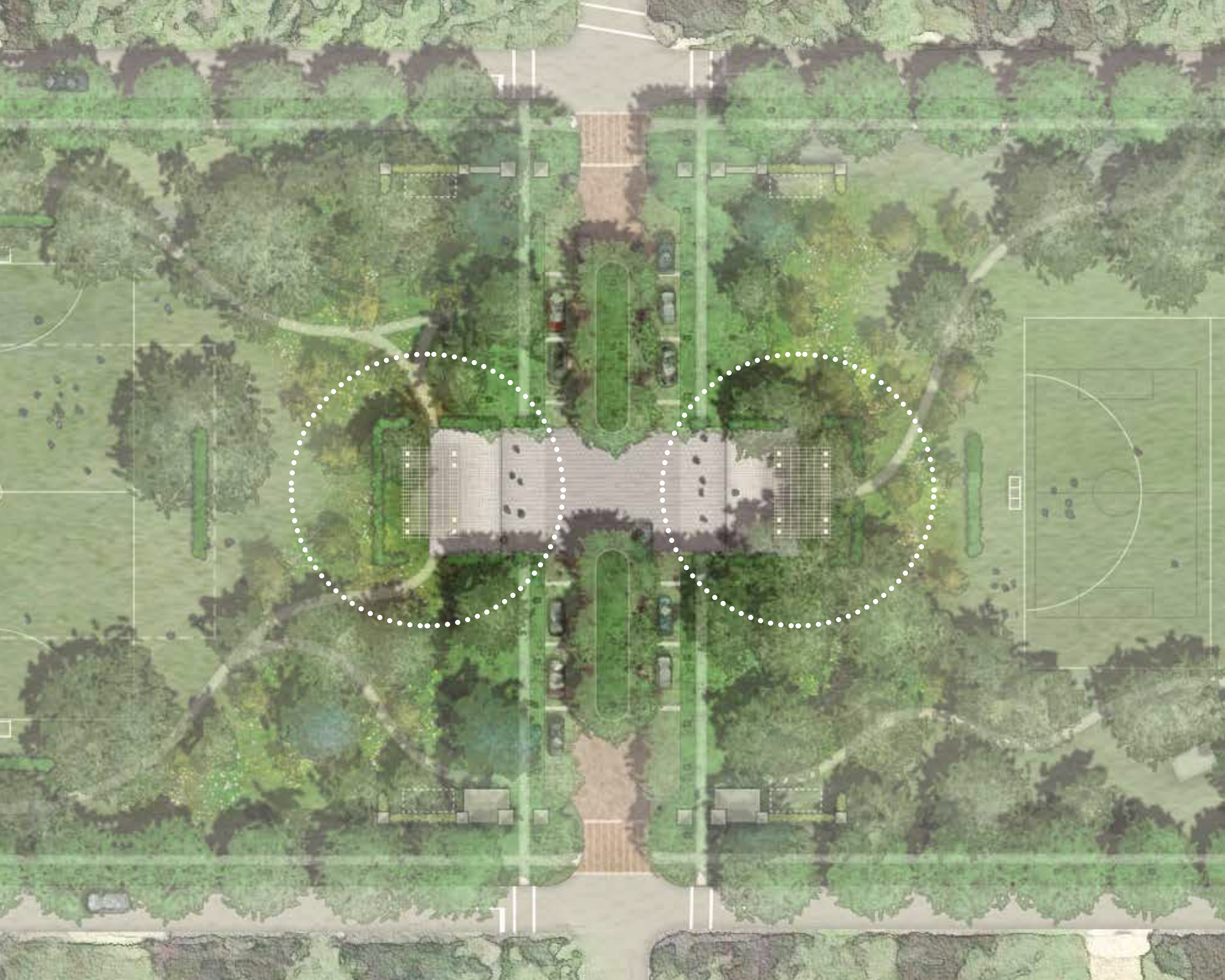
### Safety

Crossing the street and drop-offs have been a major concern. Columbia's curbs 'tighten' at the north + south crosswalks and relieve vehicular traffic once inside. Raised pavement [a speed table] at the center crossing zone keeps the pedestrians at the same pavement level, while forcing cars to slow down as they ride over.









6



## STRUCTURE

### Materials

The cedar and stone pergolas lend themselves to the stone piers typology. Combining the two elements keeps in line with the park aesthetic and allows for them to disappear within the landscape.

### Program

These structures can be used by passive park users as a resting or relaxation zone, while functioning as a staging area for anxious young athletes before and after games.





7



## STREETScape

### Softscape

Consistent street tree patterns emerge over simple hedges and ground covers. Tree lawns separate vehicular and pedestrian movement. The street landscape stays humble, clearly defining the park's edge.

### Hardscape

Curbing, stone pavement, wrought iron, and garden walls [where appropriate] outline the internal garden spaces.











## FITNESS

### Locations

To preserve the character of this park one must understand that this is a passive neighborhood park, to which fitness stations will be located off the paths under mature trees. The plan proposes [2] stations on each side of the park [or 4 total.] Users can get through the circuit by following the paths around the park.

### Materials

Keeping with proposed park specifications, polished metals and cedar will compose the fitness stations and will allow them to 'tuck away' into the surrounding landscape.







9



## PATHS | PAVEMENT

### Materials

Decomposed stone paths throughout the park will 'blend in' by minimizing their presence through natural color. They will be outlined in an edge that will help contain the transition from turf to stone. Paths within the park complete a circuit, while providing mid-block access inside the park from the sidewalks and neighboring homes.











10



## FORMAL GARDENS

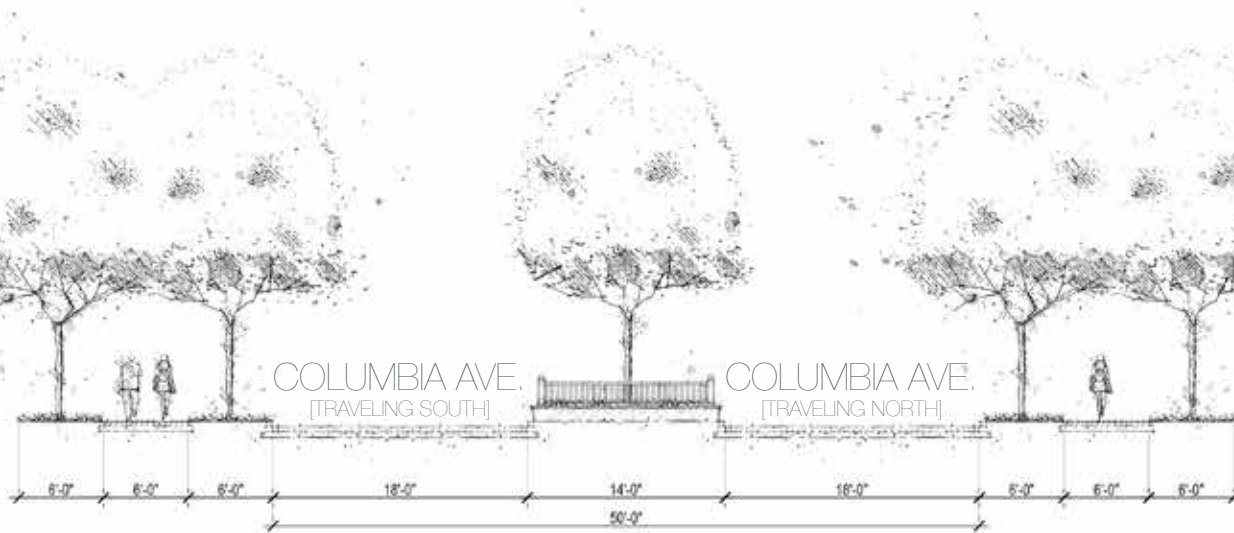
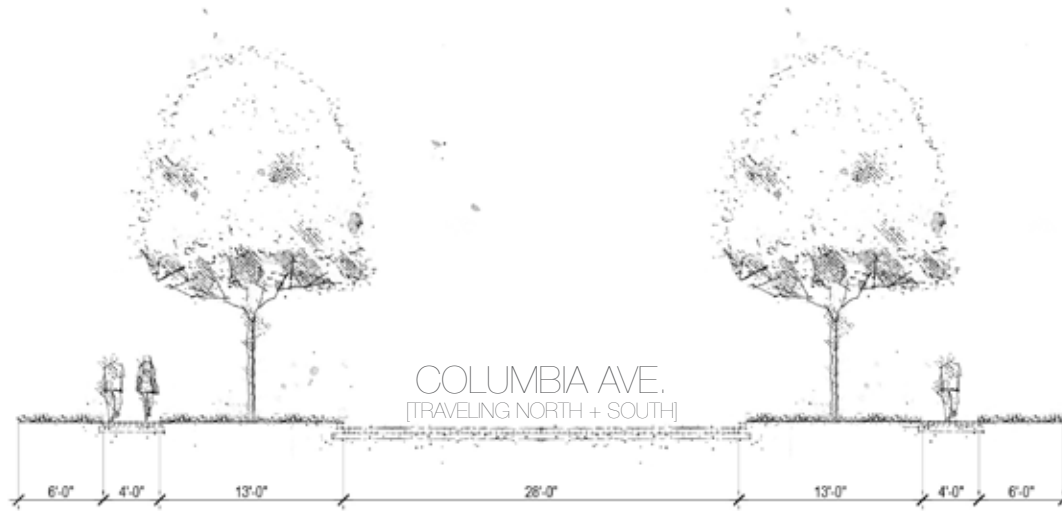
### Vegetation

Formal hedges set the stage for large, colorful garden spaces that attract wildlife and visitors at this east entrance. This area can accommodate outdoor art, sculpture, and water elements.

### Entrance

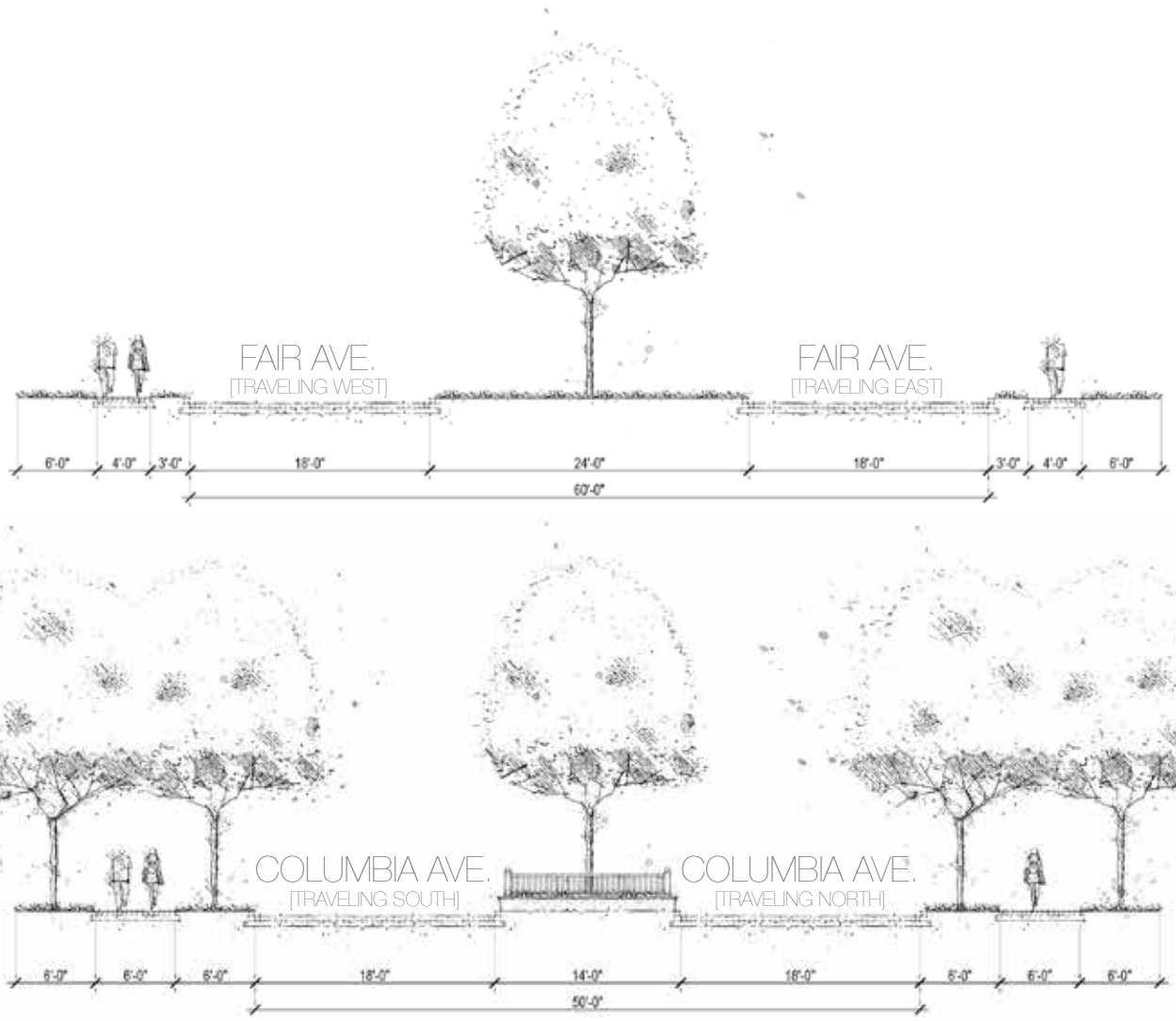
This ingredient serves as the east entrance to the park, inviting the neighborhood in off of the street landscape.





Above: [Existing vs. proposed] boulevard section study looking north on Columbia Ave.





Above: [Proposed] boulevard section in comparison to local street for scale reference.





## PARK INGREDIENTS

The park relies on its 'parts kit' to complete the master plan. A refined collection of landscape architectural components complete the flexible, future vision for Bexley, as it knits itself into the existing parks and landscape network.

### Signage

Signage will help to improve the consistency, way-finding, placement, and connectivity of the park to the City of Bexley's overall signage strategy for other green and civic spaces.

### Architecture

Implementation of stone piers, walls, and caps at park boundaries will help furnish entry points. Entrance piers will house restrooms permanently while hiding them from neighboring views.

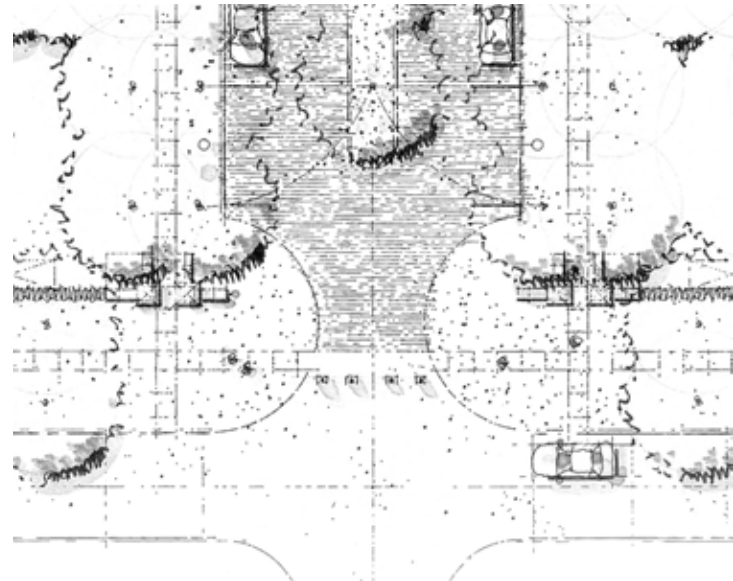
### Site Furnishings

Conveniently located trash receptacles, light posts, signs, and benches will fall within the same 'wrought iron' aesthetic.

### Landscape

Formal street tree planting and specification, along with simple ground covers and hedges in all formalized landscape zones, are 'softened' by the naturalized woodland garden and arboretum type spaces.

*Left: Aerial view of Jeffrey Mansion and Park.  
[Existing park conditions November 2017.]  
Right: Conceptual entry studies at Columbia Ave.*









*Conceptual wall and pier typology studies for Commonwealth Park.*













**Public Workshop and Presentation**

Summary of meeting dates, observations, concerns, and critique throughout the design process.

**Master Planning Studies**

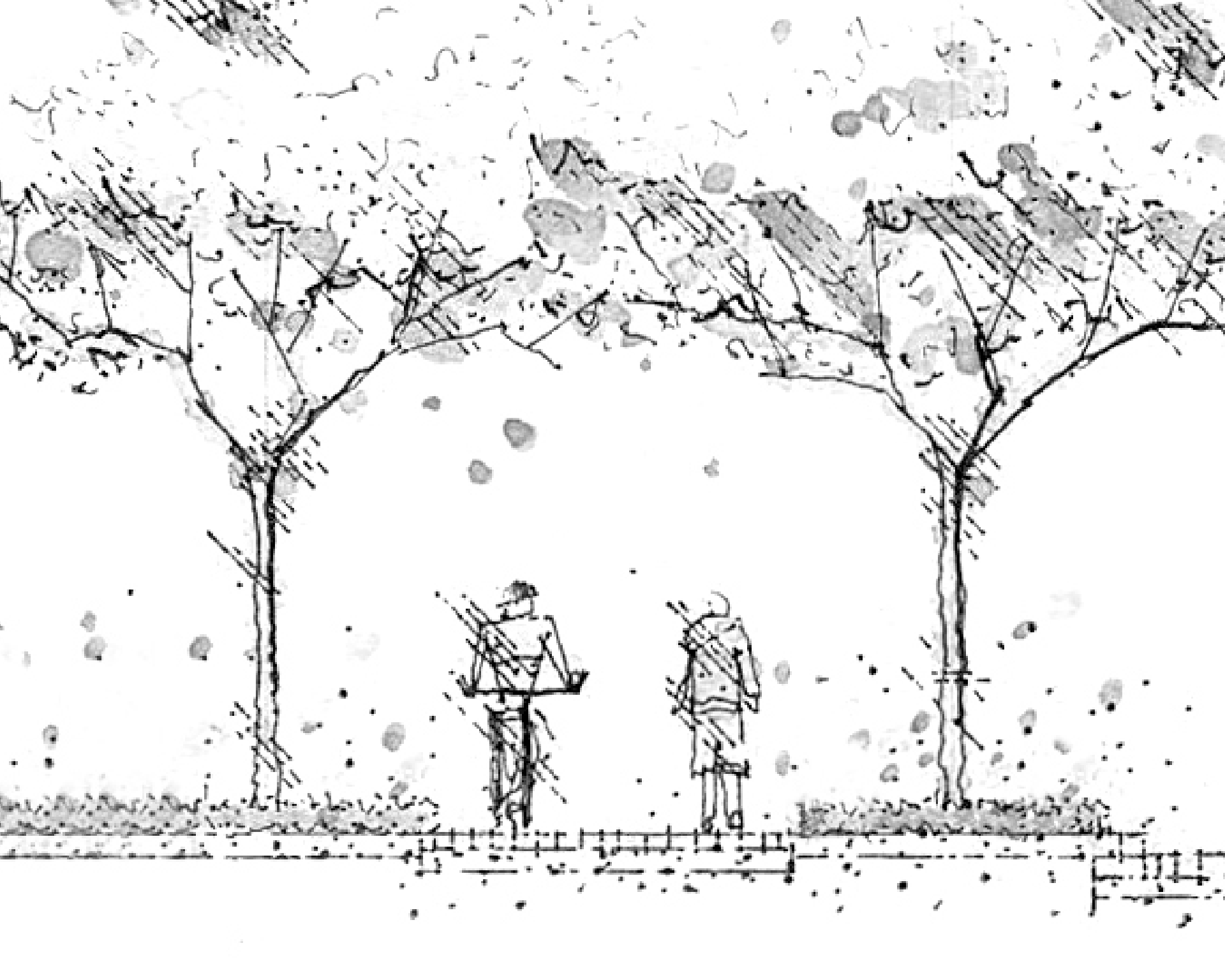
The three concepts studies leading to the final master plan.

**Supporting Diagrams, Inventory, and Signage**

Parking studies, signage typologies and existing inventory.

**Inspiration Imagery**

Images used for influence and explanation throughout the design process.





# PROCESS

## **Public Steering Committee [04.24.2017:]**

Historical context and existing conditions of the park; current park users and program. What are the future uses?

## **Public Steering Committee [05.15.2017:]**

Discussion related to the opportunities and limitations of Commonwealth Park today. The Steering Committee defines it's 'Guiding Principles.'

## **Public Steering Committee [06.19.2017:]**

Active vs. passive zones defining the park. Traffic and street input on the current and future uses of Columbia from committee.

## **Public Steering Committee [07.26.2017:]**

Neighboring [Columbus] precedent studies, Schiller + Goodale Park. Describe our [6] principles. How do we want to structure the public presentations and workshops?

## **Public Steering Committee [08.21.2017:]**

This park is a 'kit of parts.' How do these elements come together? The Committee expresses a need for 'granularity' in the final plan.

## **Public Presentation + Workshop [09.25.2017:]**

The Jones Studio introduces contextual work in The City. The committee presents 4 park plans [1 existing + 3 park strategies] and allows the public to critique and ask questions about the planning directions. The public also votes on favorite elements and 'parts' in the master plan.

## **Public Steering Committee [10.16.2017:]**

Public presentation data is gathered, assembled, and presented to the Committee for critique and assessment. The master plan considers public and committee input.

## **Public Steering Committee [11.16.2017 + 11.30.2017:]**

Committee discussion about master planning edits for final public presentation.

## **Public Presentation [12.11.2017:]**

The updated plans are presented for explanation and walk through. Character and inspiration imagery local contexts set scale.

## **Public Steering Committee [01.31.2018:]**

Committee votes and endorses The Commonwealth Park Master Plan; to be presented to the appropriate City Councils for approval.

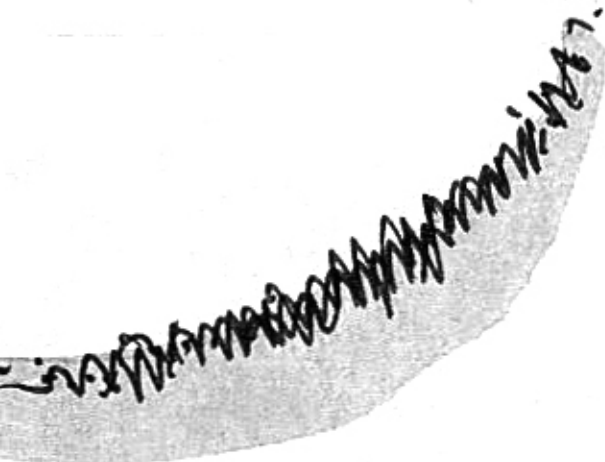






Ornamental trim hodge.

C f v r f



Handwritten notes and sketches at the bottom of the page, including a curved line with small dots and some illegible scribbles.



# DESIGN

## Study 1:

The first, a simple 'infrastructural upgrade' that sets up a street tree pattern, and investigates signage and architectural placement. Landscape gestures control sidewalk spaces and frame programmed sports fields.

## Study 2:

The second, a boulevard, aims to slow traffic and connect both sides of the park, while allowing traffic to flow north and south. A 'centralized' pedestrian street creates a safe crossing zone and builds upon the original studies upgrades. This plan was eventually endorsed and studied further.

## Study 3:

Finally, the third strategy aims to create one contiguous park. This approach, the most bold, was a more structured design, with outdoor art areas and strict tree plantings. The center of the park revolves around a large water feature and formal gardens.















2









3





Welcome to Bexley — West Gateway.



18 April 2017.



# COLLECT

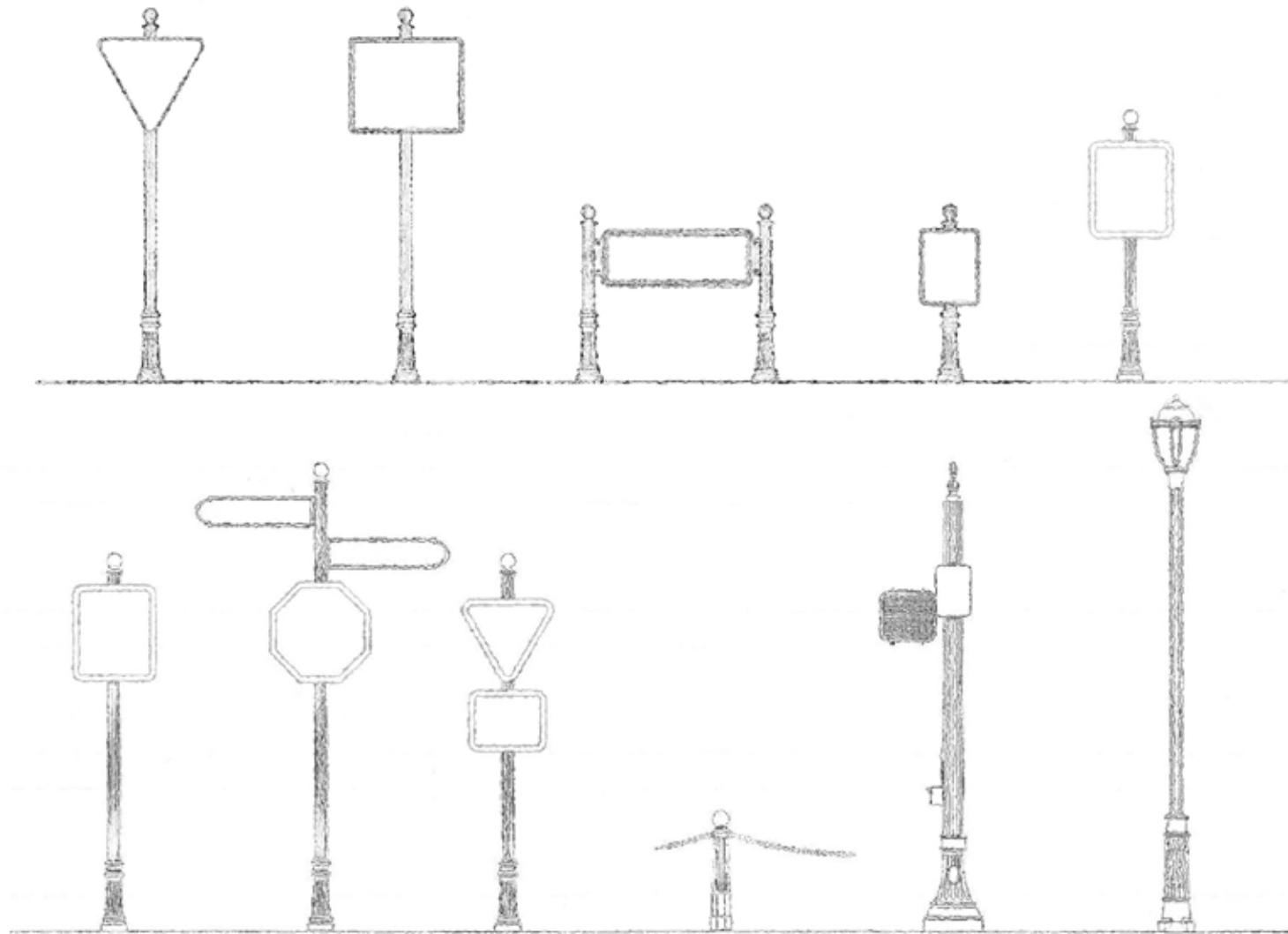
## Signage:

Conceptual signage typologies further characterize the existing Bexley dialect. Street and median signs to bollards and lamp posts will now match all areas of the city.

## Parking:

The diagrams show the differences between the existing and proposed parking scenarios. The existing condition allows for parking on most sides of the park. The exception, the southwest side, has parking on the resident side.

To contrast, the proposed strategy only allows parking on the park side. This will help from a safety standpoint, allowing drop-offs to be on the same side as the park.



Above: Conceptual signage typology studies for the City of Bexley and Commonwealth Park.  
Right: [Existing] city signage as of November 2017.]







EXISTING PARKING DIAGRAM





PROPOSED PARKING DIAGRAM  
 [PARKING LIMITED TO PARK SIDE ONLY]

*\*\*Note: Diagrams are approximate, conceptual studies only.*





# STUDY

## Inspiration:

The images collected are intended to visually describe the elements proposed in the master vision. Simple landscape palettes, vertical, cedar, stone architectural elements, naturalized park gardens, specified pavements, and a clean edge typology are just the beginning.









































