

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION NOTICE OF DENIAL

City of Detroit - Planning & Development Department
2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 808
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Notification Date: 11/18/25

Application Number: HDC2025-00589

APPLICANT & PROPERTY INFORMATION

NAME: City of Detroit - General Services Department		COMPANY NAME: City of Detroit	
ADDRESS: 115 Erskine	CITY: Detroit	STATE: MI	ZIP: 48201
PROJECT ADDRESS: 2585 - 2603 W. Grand Blvd.			
HISTORIC DISTRICT: West Grand Boulevard African American Arts and Business Historic District			

SCOPE:

Expand, alter and rehabilitate park

DENY

At the Regular Meeting that was held on 11/12/25, the Detroit Historic District Commission ("DHDC") reviewed the above-referenced application. Pursuant to Section 5(1) and 9(1) of the Michigan Local Historic District Act, as amended, being MCL 399.205 (1), MCL 399.209 (9) and Sections 21-2-78 and 21-2-80 of the 2019 Detroit City Code; the DHDC hereby issues a Denial for the following work, effective on 11/18/25, as it will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the district's Elements of Design:

REASONS FOR DENIAL:

- Elements of Design #13 identifies the concrete and brick surface, raised planters, trees and bushes as distinctive and character-defining features.
 - o The park was designed with landscape, hardscape (paths, walls), and sculptural forms in an abstract, asymmetrical style; therefore, all the historic elements within the park are distinctive character-defining features. The individual and collective components generated a spatial composition and the sense of an outdoor room, and created intentional movement through the space, offering numerous expansive views and controlled vistas.
 - o This park retains almost all of the original materials, physical features (including its siting and setting), and decorative details; all of which combine to create its historic character and appearance. Therefore, this property meets the seven aspects of integrity (as characterized by the National Park Service): location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association
 - o The historic materials are not deteriorated beyond repair, and the applicant didn't offer an assessment for the repair or in-kind replacement of the broken or missing pavers which is required by Standard Six. It has not been demonstrated that the existing park surfaces can be retained and repaired as needed in conjunction with the park's proposed expansion to the north and east. Additionally, the proposed park surfaces of crushed limestone and gray monolithic concrete does not match the existing in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.
 - o The replacement of missing features, such as the light posts, should be compatible with the park's massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
 - o The landscape plan is not clearly defined. It doesn't specify the groundcover proposed for the landscape beds nor its arrangement/placement. Many of the existing trees are likely from the initial park planting and a tree survey has not been submitted to substantiate the condition of the trees proposed for removal and/or replacement. Conversely, the historic tree arrangement within the central space between the fountain and sculpture platform, is dense. The original plan included 11 graced trees; the current grate openings are 10 (with nine having trees) and the proposed tree count at this area is four. The loss of so many trees will disrupt the organic flow of this space and the strong landscape connection placed between the organic forms of the water fountain and sculpture platform, thus alter the features and spaces that characterize the property.

FAILURE TO MEET STANDARDS:

The Standards for Rehabilitation (codified in 36 CFR 67 for use in the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program) address the most prevalent treatment. "Rehabilitation" is defined as "the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values."

As stated in the definition, the treatment "rehabilitation" assumes that at least some repair or alteration of the historic building will be needed in order to provide for an efficient contemporary use; however, these repairs and alterations must not damage or destroy materials, features or finishes that are important in defining the building's historic character.

The Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

Failure to meet standards: 2, 5, 6, 9, 10

Corresponding Standard numbered below:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

FAILURE TO MEET ELEMENTS OF DESIGN:

Failure to meet Elements of Design: 13

Corresponding design element numbered below:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Height. | 12. Walls of continuity. |
| 2. Proportion of building's front façades. | 13. Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments. |
| 3. Proportion of openings within the façade. | 14. Relationship of open space to structures. |
| 4. Rhythm of solids to voids in front façade. | 15. Scale of façade and façade elements. |
| 5. Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets. | 16. Directional expression of front elevations. |
| 6. Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections. | 17. Rhythm of building setbacks. |
| 7. Relationship of materials. | 18. Relationship of lot coverages. |
| 8. Relationship of textures. | 19. Degree of complexity within the façade. |
| 9. Relationship of colors. | 20. Orientation, vistas, overviews. |
| 10. Relationship of architectural details. | 21. Symmetric or asymmetric appearance. |
| 11. Relationship of roof shapes. | 22. General environmental character. |

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact staff at 313-224-1762 or hdc@detroitmi.gov.

For the Commission:



Garrick Landsberg
Director of Staff, Historic District Commission

PSR: Audra

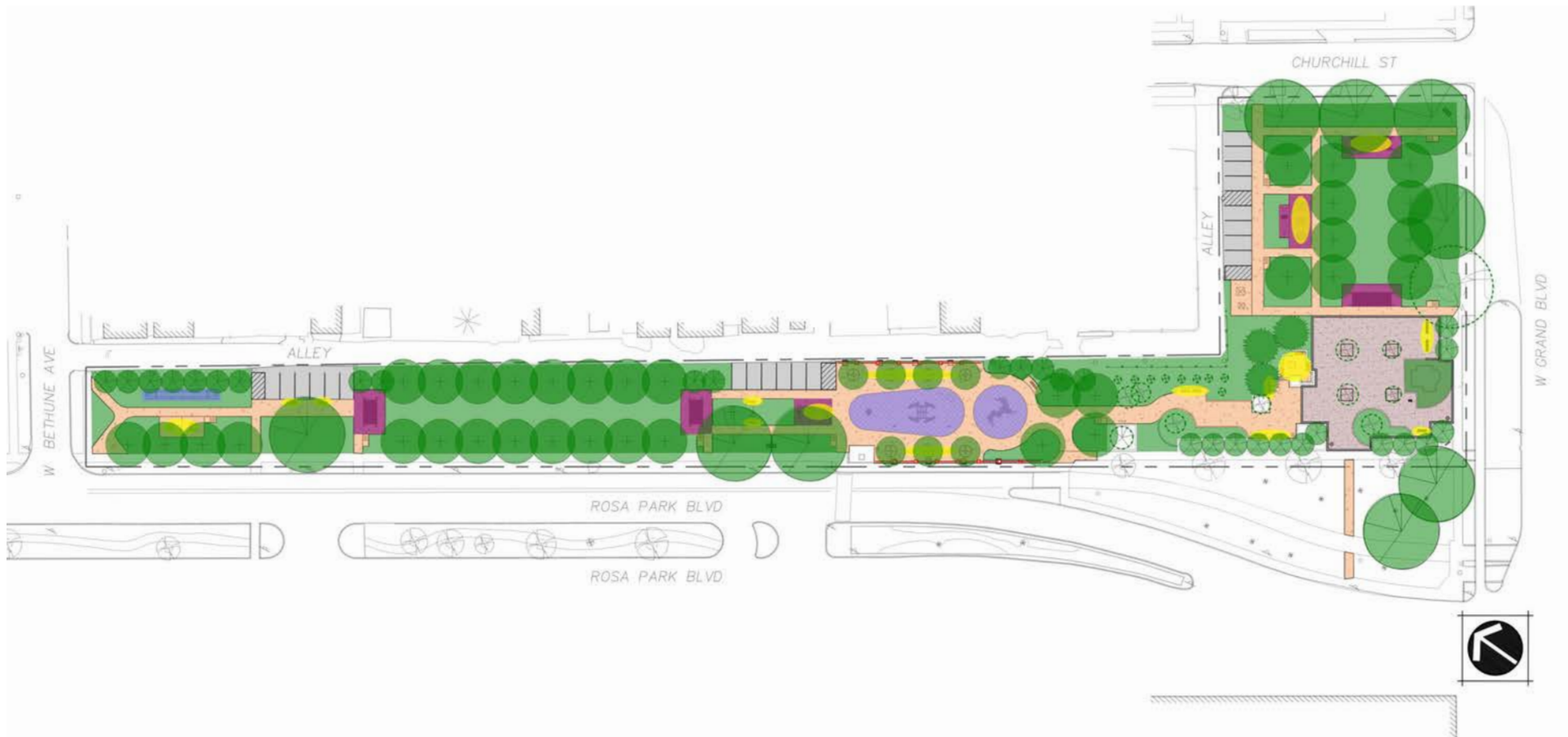
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APPEALS PROCESS

The application may be resubmitted for the Historic District Commission's review when suggested changes have been made that address the cited reasons for denial, if applicable. Please be advised that, in accordance with MCL 399. 211 and Section 21-2-81 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, an applicant aggrieved by a decision of the DHDC may file an appeal with the State Historic Preservation Review Board. Within sixty (60) days of your receipt of this notice, an appeal may be filed with:

Jon Stuckey, Michigan Department of Attorney General
2nd Floor, G. Mennen Williams Building
525 West Ottawa Street, P.O. Box 30754, Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: 517-335-0665 E-mail: stuckeyj@michigan.gov

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. MEMORIAL PARK (2589 W GRAND BLVD) SPRING 2026 IMPROVEMENTS



HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
November 12, 2025



GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
**Parks & Recreation
Division**

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Memorial Plaza was a small project within the larger Virginia Park Urban Rehabilitation Project A-4-2. This federal project was planned and executed to impact the entire Virginia Park neighborhood.

MLK Plaza was referred to as South entrance Park “P” within the project as shown below.

This project began in the 1970s - 1982 with oversight by the Detroit Housing Commission and the now defunct Community Economic Development Department (CEDD).

Parcels for the plaza site were acquired by the City in the summer of 1975 and assigned to the Detroit Housing Commission. A plaza dedication ceremony occurred on November 8, 1980 and the Martin Luther King Jr. Bust was created by Detroit artist Oscar Graves in 1982.

The proposed improvements to Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial (MLK) Park are intended to enhance the existing use of the park by providing social interaction and enjoyment. Additionally, several vacant lots have been acquired for more opportunities for enjoyment and play. These improvements include replacing the old deteriorated walks, removal of invasive trees and plant additional trees, install benches and picnic tables that currently don't exist, and add some play elements that are inspired by Martin Luther King Jr. speech delivered here in Detroit in 1963.

The redesign of MLK Park involved extensive community engagement. Stakeholders and residents expressed what they would like to see in the park and the proposed design reflects that input.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY OUTREACH SCHEDULE

- Community Meeting #1 - March 21, 2024
- Community Meeting #2 - June 18, 2024

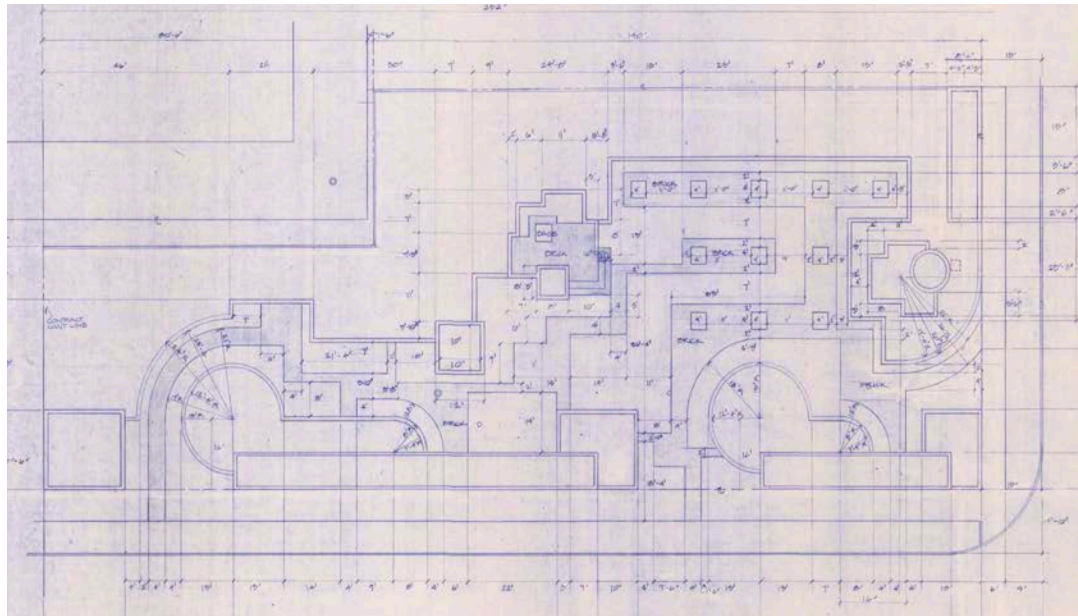
ENGAGED STAKEHOLDERS

- Churchill Block Club
- LaSalle Garden Block Club

MLK MEMORIAL PARK 1977 HISTORICAL PLAN

Park Design Details:

- 3 Main Entries
- Different surface material introduced (brick pavers and exposed aggregate finish)
- Raised Planter Boxes
- Focal Points, MLK Bust and Fountain



MLK MEMORIAL PARK LAYOUT

EXISTING PARK CONDITIONS

The most recent aerial from 2025 displays the existing conditions of the park. Currently, MLK Memorial Park offers majority of passive activities to the surrounding urban environment.

- Deteriorated surfaces
- Scarce amenities (benches and tables)
- Lack of ADA accessibility
- Dense trees
- Park features (MLK Bust and Water Fountain)

- SITE BOUNDARY
- MLK MEMORIAL PARK
- HISTORIC DISTRICT



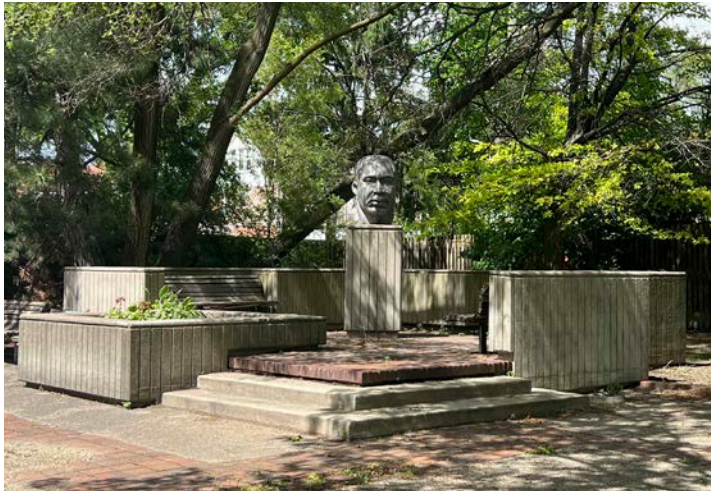
Not to scale

MLK BUST WATER FOUNTAIN

MLK MEMORIAL PARK HISTORICAL FEATURES

HISTORICAL FEATURES IMPROVEMENTS:

The Martin Luther King Bust will remain in its existing location in the plaza with restoration and the water fountain will be restored to be operational.



Replace brick surfacing of raised platform and raised planter bed to remain



MLK Bust Restoration

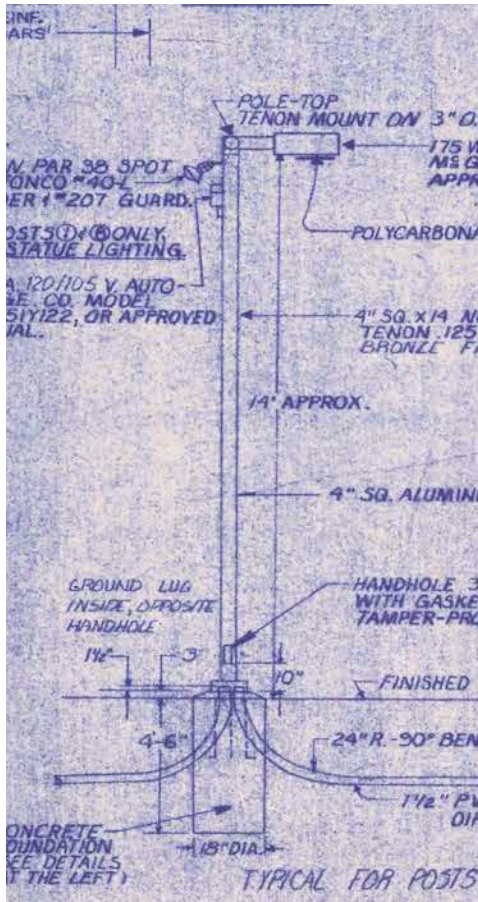


Water Fountain Restoration

MLK MEMORIAL PARK HISTORICAL LIGHTING

HISTORICAL FEATURES IMPROVEMENTS:

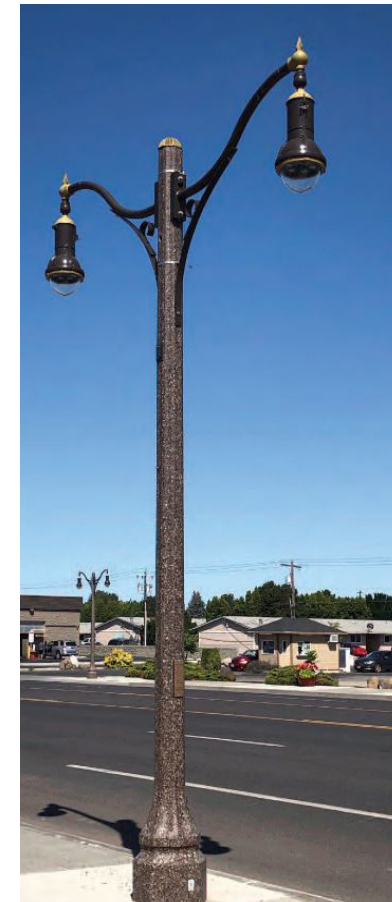
Current lighting system is nonexistent; damaged conduit and poles gone. Proposal is to replace with the standard light poles used in the right-of-way in other historic neighborhoods throughout the City. Using this standard will help with future maintenance and replacements.



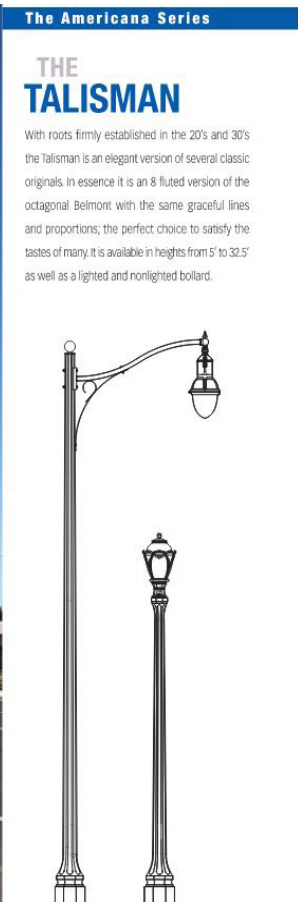
Current Park Lighting, Damaged



Historic Park Lighting

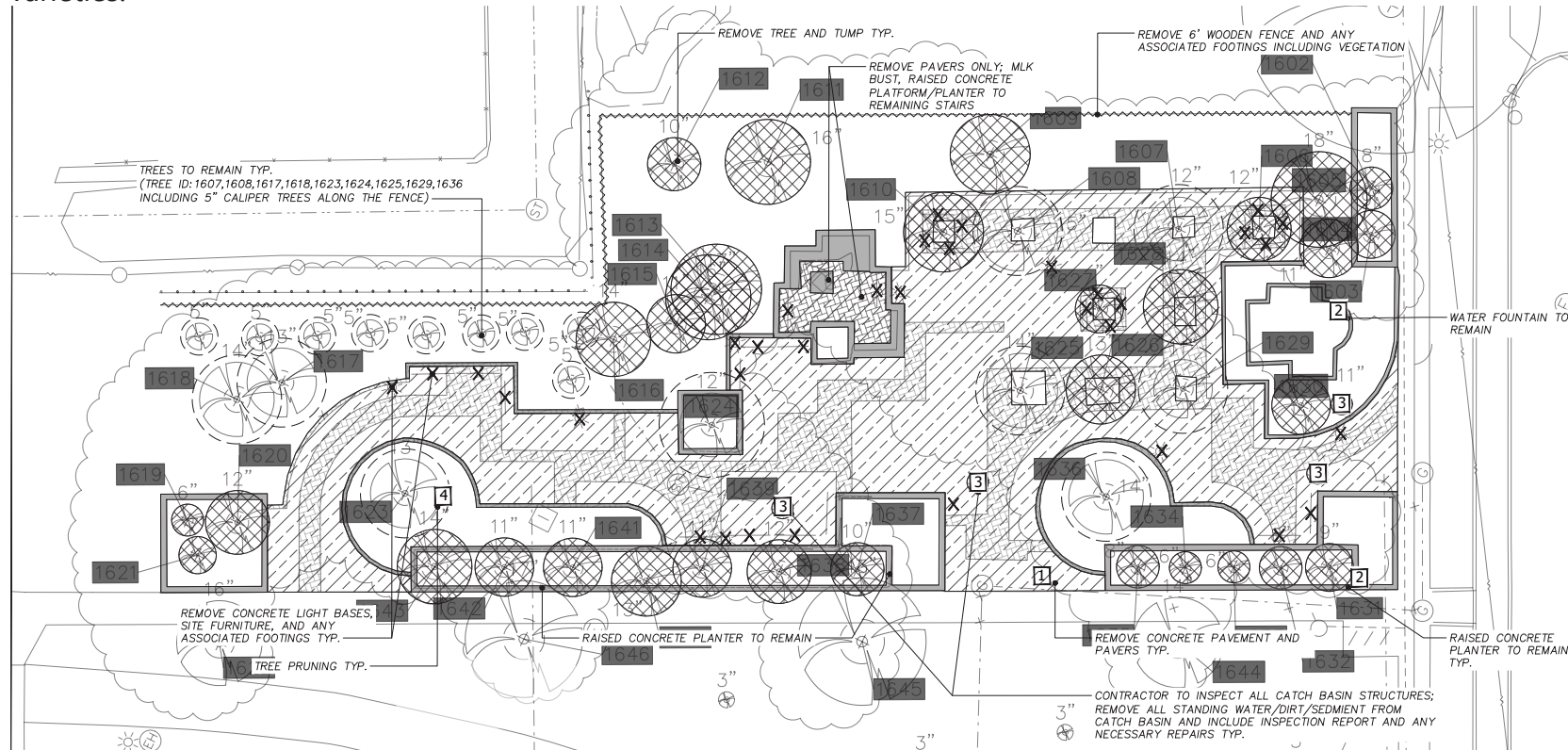


Historic Park Lighting



MLK MEMORIAL PARK DEMOLITION PLAN

All concrete and pavers will be removed and replaced with compacted crushed limestone, all raised concrete planters will remain, most of the brick edging will remain intact, and due to the proposed park layout selective trees will remain. The majority of the trees along the perimeter of the park are invasive trees (Bradford Pear), which will be replaced with healthier spacing and native and non-invasive varieties.



DEMOLITION NOTES:

		QUANTITIES		NOTES
SYMBOL	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL	UNIT	
	FENCE REMOVAL	260	LF	REMOVAL TO INCLUDE FOOTINGS AND ANY ASSOCIATED VEGETATION; PROPERLY DISPOSE
	TREE REMOVAL 6"-18" DBH	32	EA	TREE ID: 1602, 1603, 1604, 1605, 1606, 1609, 1610, 1611, 1612, 1613, 1614, 1615, 1616, 1619, 1620, 1621, 1626, 1627, 1628, 1629, 1630, 1631, 1632, 1633, 1634, 1635, 1637, 1638, 1639, 1640, 1641, 1642, 1643; TREE REMOVALS TO INCLUDE STUMP AND PROPERLY DISPOSE
	CONCRETE AND PAVER REMOVAL	7500	SF	REMOVE ALL PAVEMENT MATERIAL AND PROPERLY DISPOSE
	RAISED CONCRETE PLANTERS, BRICK EDGE, MLK BUST, FOUNTAIN TO REMAIN			THESE ITEMS TO BE KEPT IN STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY AND TO REMAIN INTACT
	LIGHT BASE REMOVAL AND SITE FURNITURE	33	EA	EX. LIGHTS ARE DISCONNECTED; REMOVAL TO INCLUDE ANY ASSOCIATED FOOTINGS AND PROPOSEDLY DISPOSE ITEMS

	CATCH BASIN CLEAN UP AND INSPECTION	4	EA	CONTRACTOR TO REMOVE ALL ACCUMULATED SEDIMENT/DIRT/WATER FROM CATCH BASIN; VISUALLY INSPECT STRUCTURES FOR DEFECTS AND PROVIDE CONDITION REPORT; RESTORE EACH CATCH BASIN TO FULL OPERATIONAL CAPACITY, ENSURING PROPER WATER FLOW
	TREES TO REMAIN AND PRUNE	18	EA	CONTRACTOR TO ASSESS TREE HEALTH AND SAFETY, REMOVING DEAD OR HAZARDOUS BRANCHES AND SHAPING THE TREE FOR AESTHETIC OR STRUCTURAL REASONS; PRUNE TREES IN APPROPRIATE SEASON
	PRESSURE WASH RAISED CONCRETE PLANTER FACE	560	LF	APPLY A CONCRETE SAFE, BIODEGRADABLE CLEANING SOLUTION AND CLEAN THE CONCRETE FACE USING A PRESSURE WASHER AT APPROPRIATE PSI; ALL RESIDUE TO BE REMOVED; AVOID ETCHING OR DAMAGING THE CONCRETE SURFACE

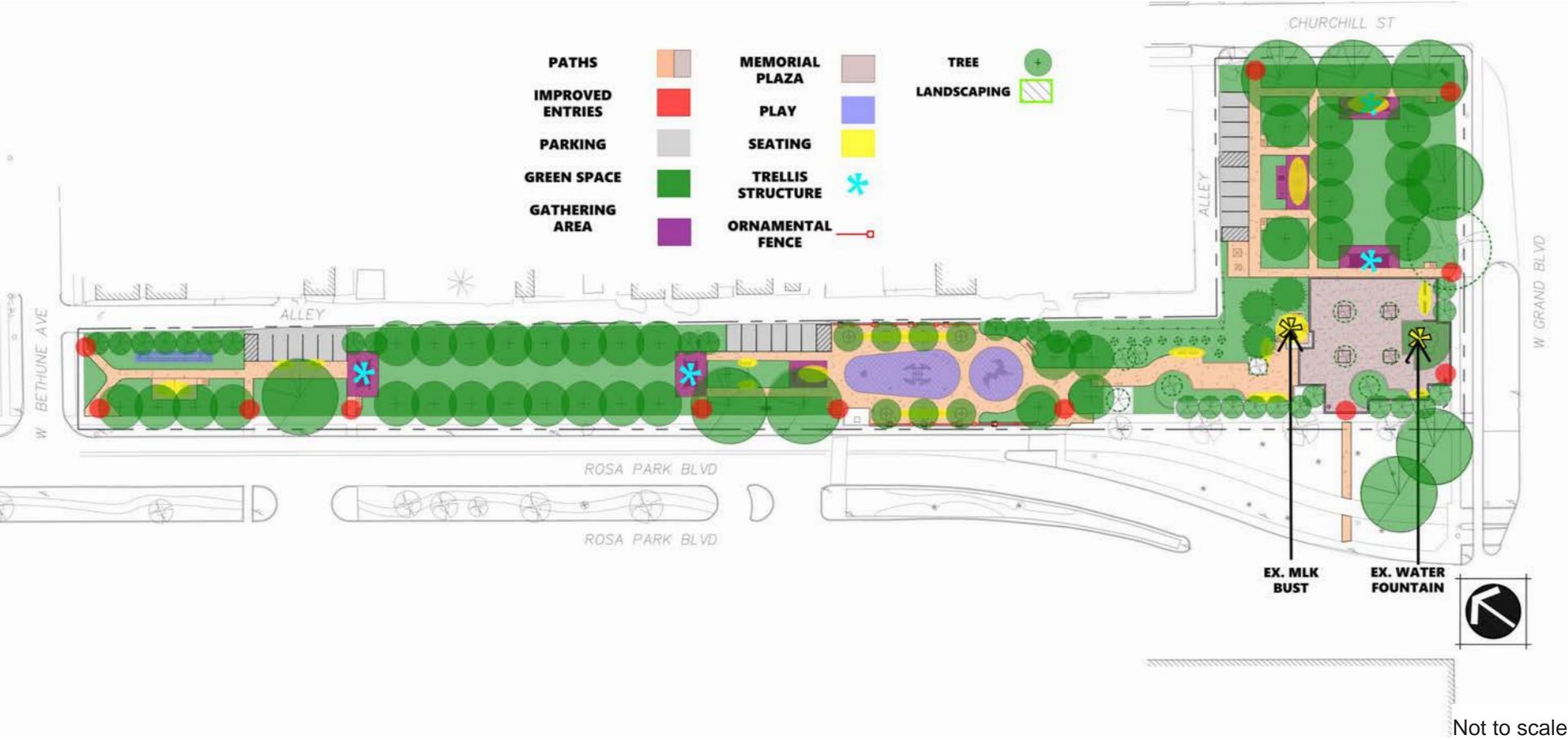
GENERAL NOTES

- THE CONTRACTOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR VISITING THE SITE TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF THE WORK DEMOLITION AND CONSTRUCTION (WHETHER SHOWN ON THE DRAWINGS OR NOT).
- EXISTING MATERIALS/ITEMS TO BE SALVAGE BY CONTRACTOR SHALL BE STOCKPILED OR STORED IN APPROVED LOCATIONS BY CITY REPRESENTATIVE AND RELOCATED. CONTRACTOR TO PROTECT ALL MATERIALS DESIGNATED TO REMAIN AND SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR REPLACEMENT OF ANY MATERIALS THAT BECOME DAMAGED DURING CONSTRUCTION. THE EXTENT OF REPLACEMENT/REPAIR OF DAMAGED MATERIALS/ITEMS SHALL BE DETERMINED BY CITY REPRESENTATIVE.
- THE CONTRACTOR SHALL REMOVE AND CLEAR DEBRIS FROM OFFSITE IN A LEGAL MANNER.
- CONTACT MISS DIG 72 HOURS PRIOR TO ANY DEMOLITION.



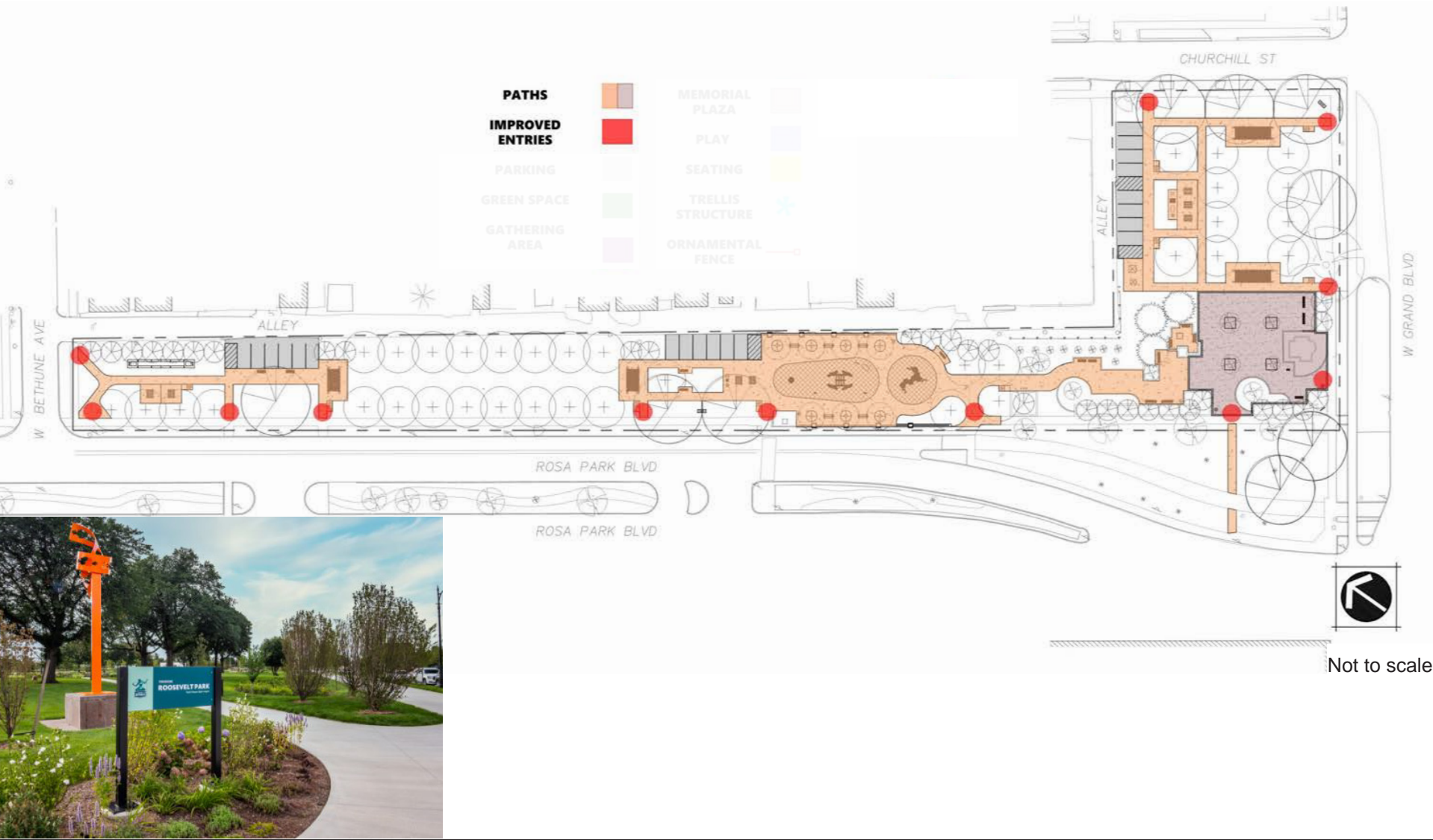
Not to scale

MLK MEMORIAL PARK PROPOSED PLAN



PROPOSED ENTRIES, PATHS, AND PARKING

The entries will be improved, enhancing direct access to park amenities and surrounding places. Currently, there are no nearby parking spaces and park users use the alley to park.



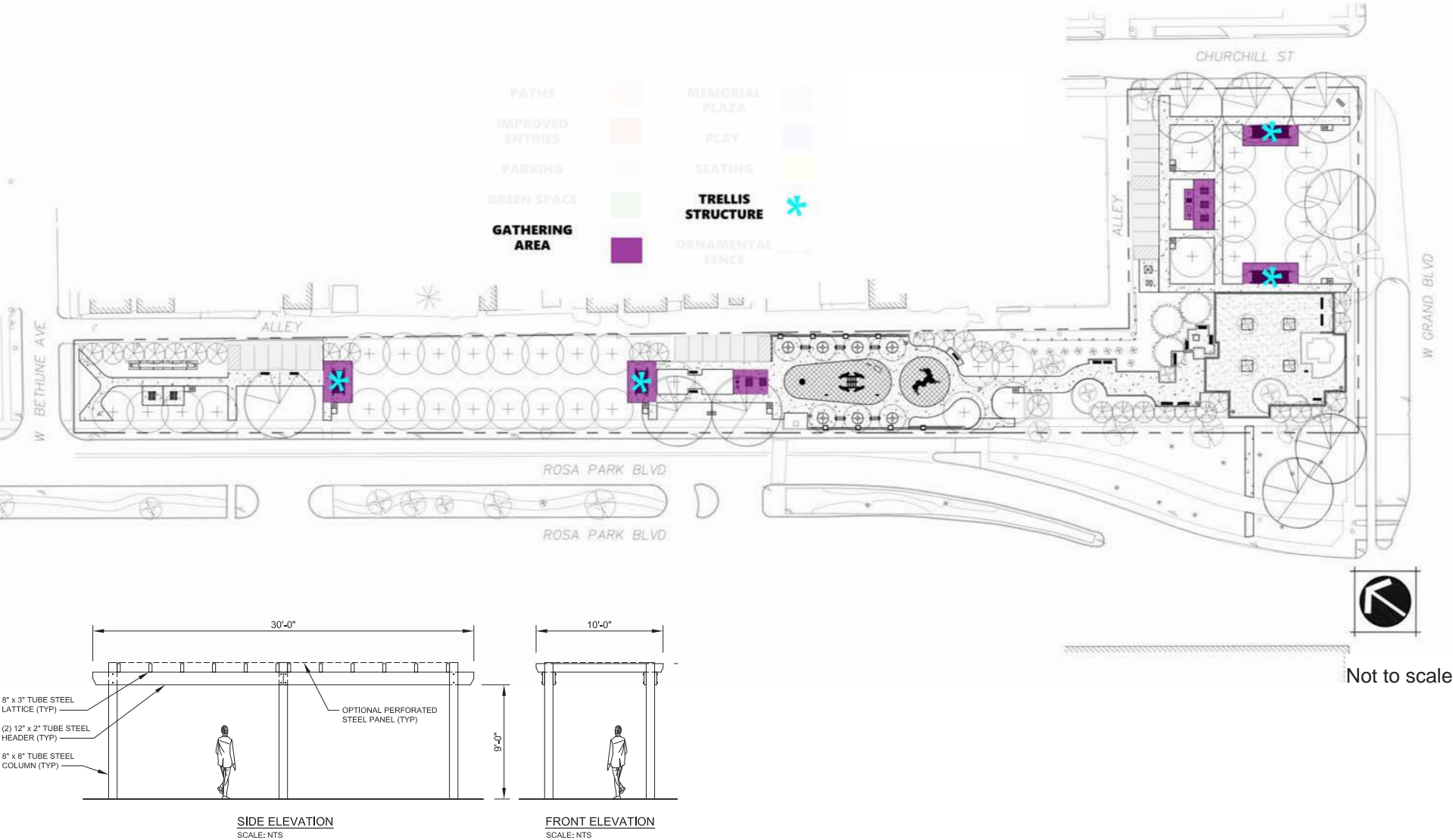
PROPOSED OPEN GREEN SPACE

The proposed greenspaces will allow passive activities such as relaxing, as well opportunities for community gatherings. Some of the green spaces will be able to accommodate small-sized events.



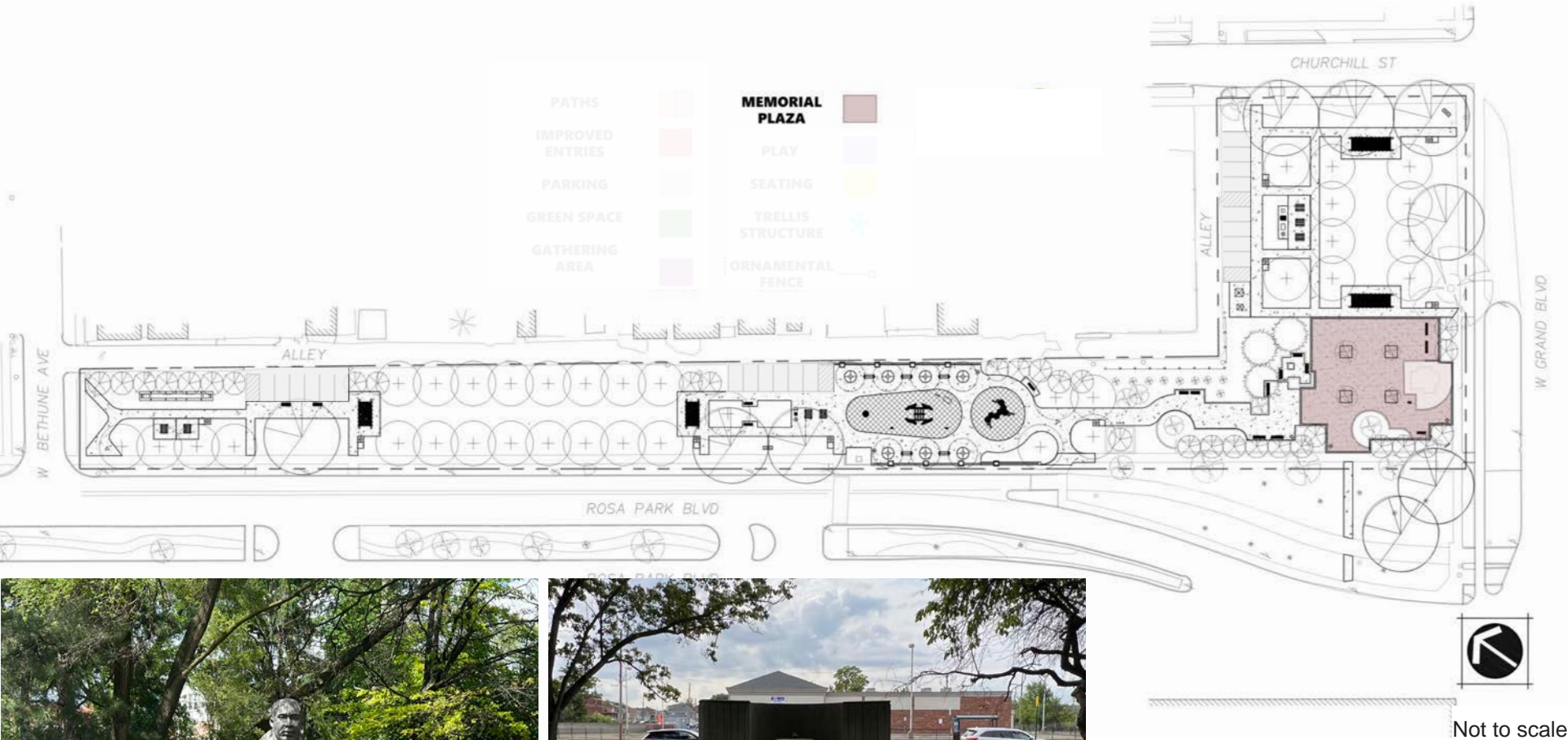
PROPOSED GATHERING AREA/TRELLIS STRUCTURE

The proposed gathering areas will serve as a meet up space with picnic tables and there are trellis structures anchoring each passive and active space overlooking green spacing. The trellis structures will be a steel frame material in the color black.



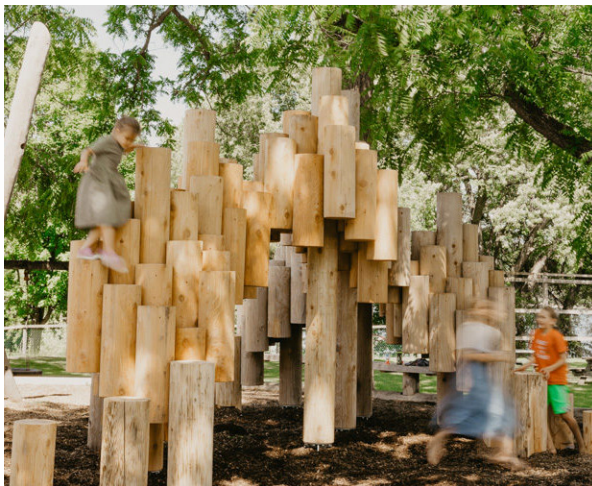
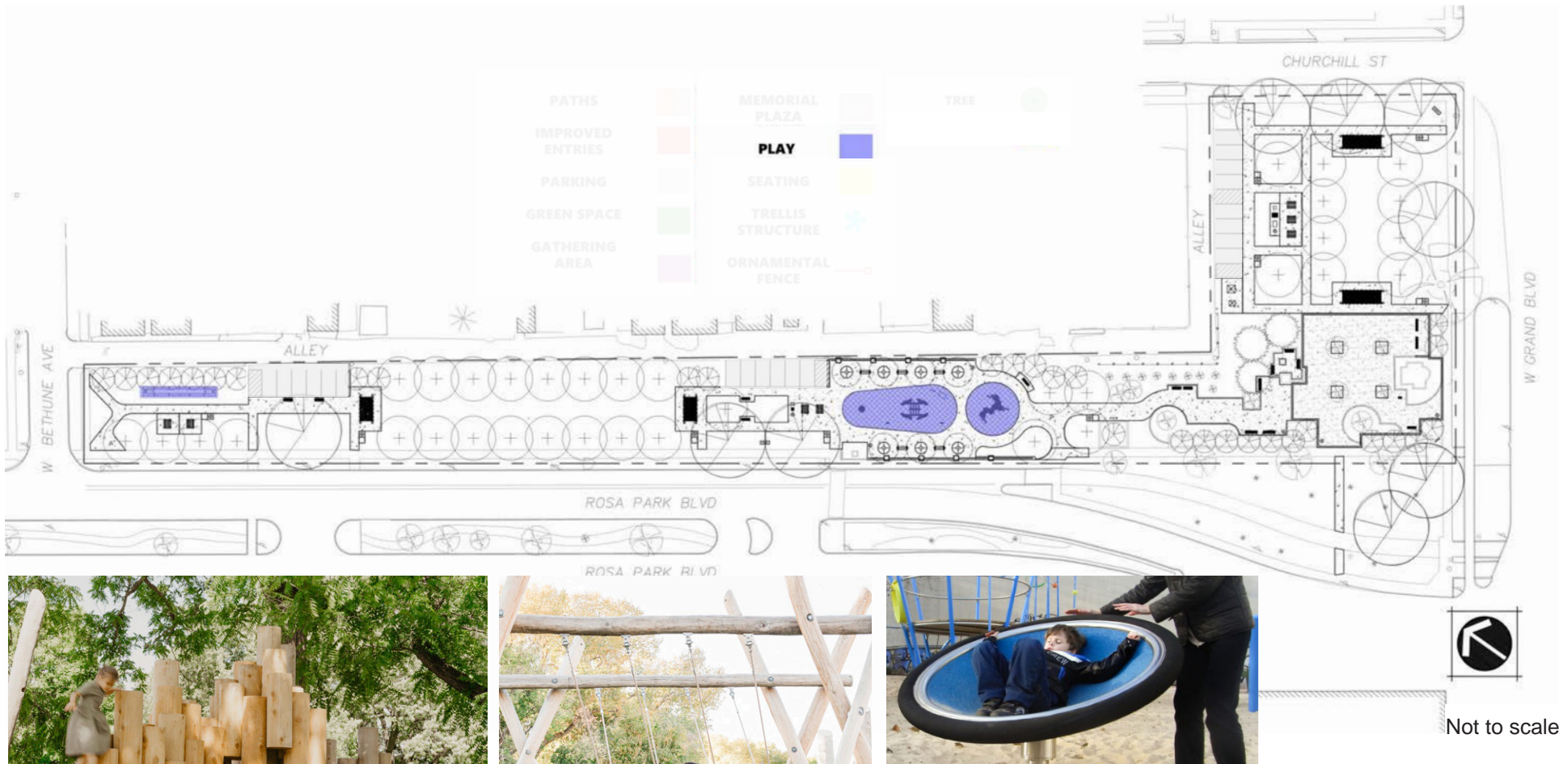
PROPOSED MLK MEMORIAL PLAZA IMPROVEMENTS

The proposed plaza will replace all deteriorated pavers and concrete surface with a compacted crushed limestone finish. Proposal plans to restore both the Martin Luther King Jr. bust and water fountain that will enhance the plaza as focal points. This improvement helps reimaging the historic presence of the park.



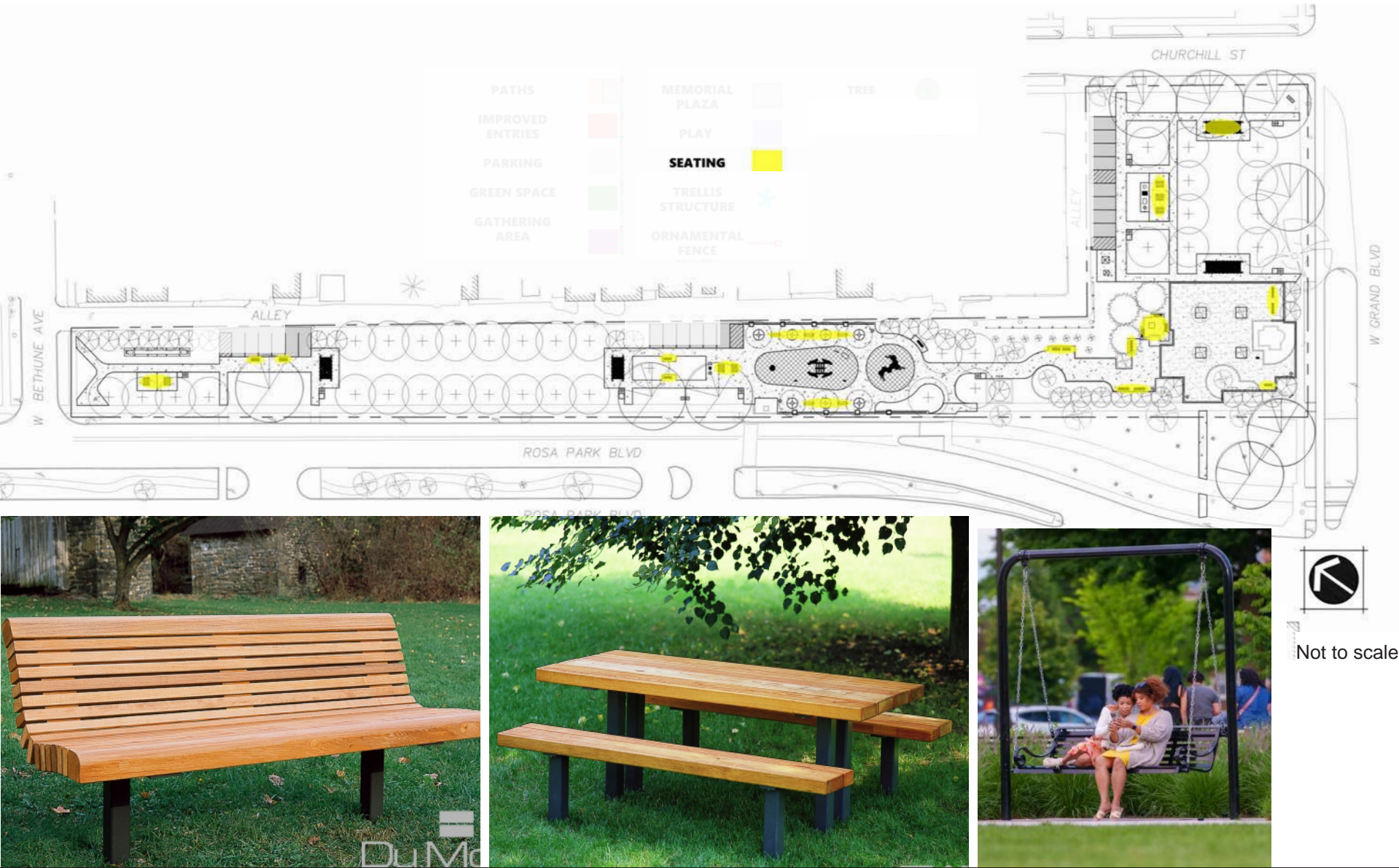
PROPOSED PLAY ELEMENTS

The proposed play elements are intended for people of all ages to have the opportunity to play and socialize. The swing posts and climbers are robinia wood. The spinner will be a element to influence people to play together. In addition, the horseshoe court will be located at Bethune Ave and Rosa Parks Blvd where residents currently bring their own to play.



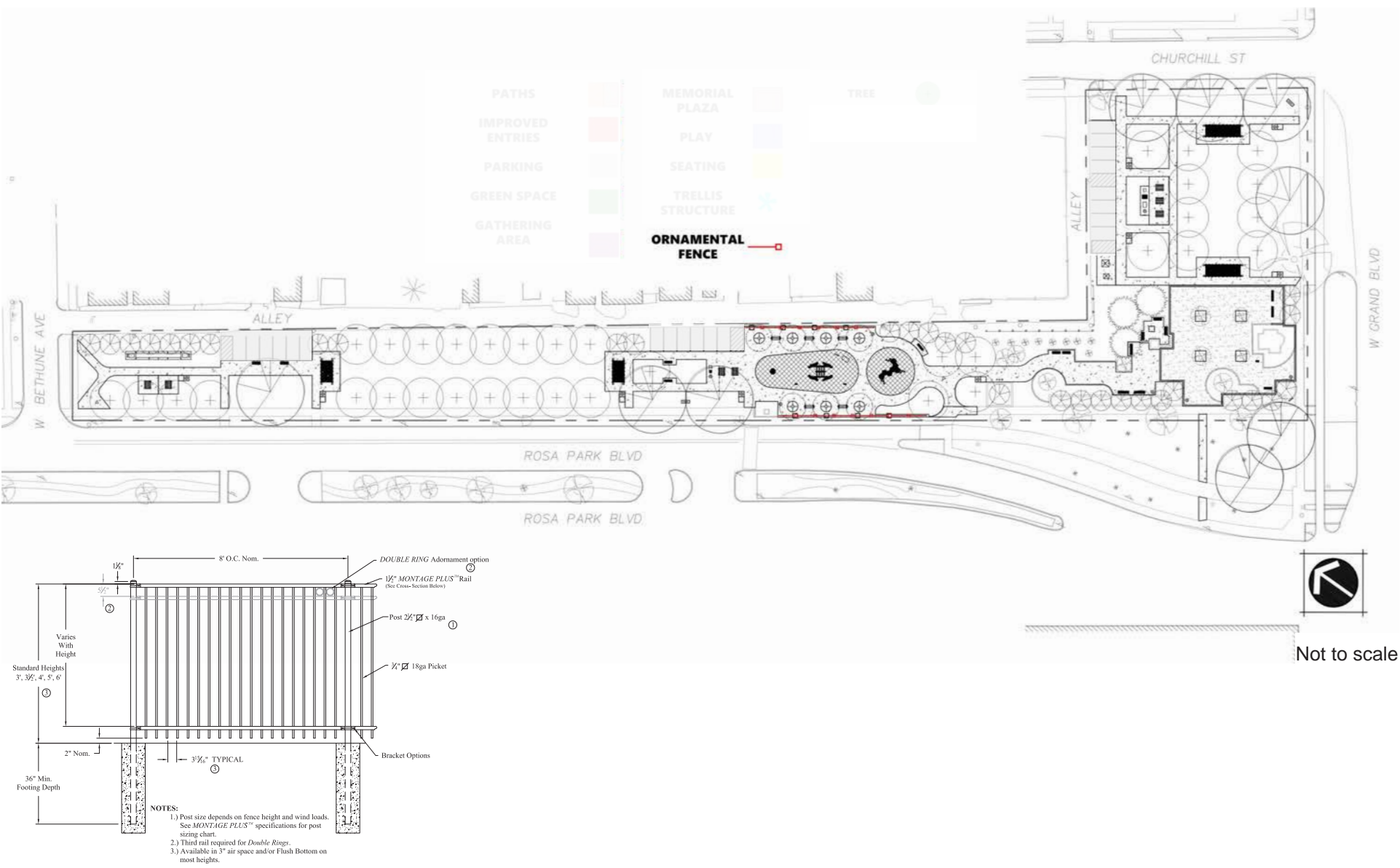
PROPOSED SEATING

There are various proposed seating types throughout the park: park benches, swinging benches, and picnic tables. All items are City Standards and found in various parks across the city for ease of maintenance. Benches and tables will be douglas fir wood with metal frames much like what use to be in the park. Swinging benches will be steel with a black powder coated finish.



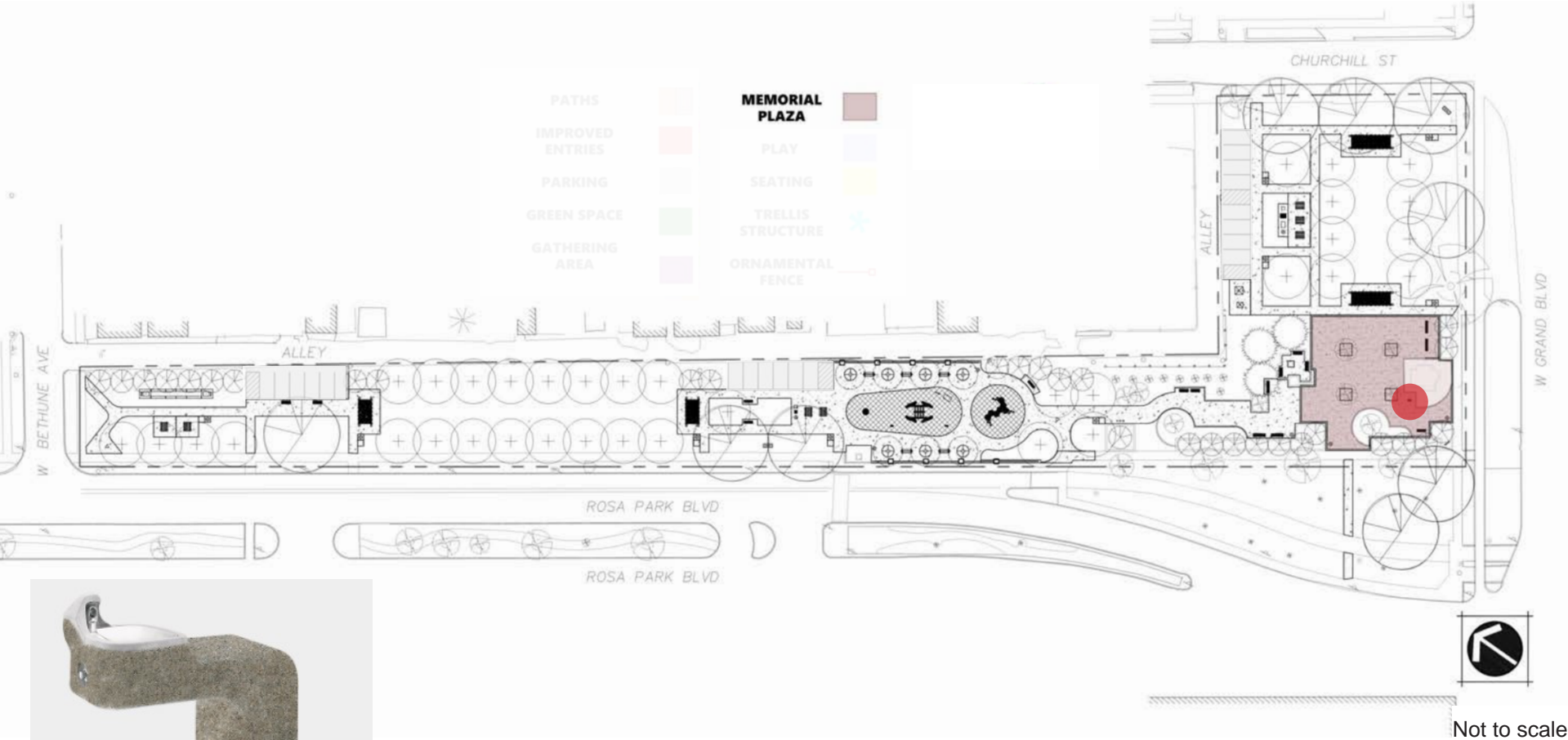
PROPOSED ORNAMNETAL FENCE

The four foot ornamental fence is being proposed along Rosa Park Blvd and along the alley. The intent is to protect park users using the play area and those who are sitting nearby.



PROPOSED DRINKING FOUNTAIN

The proposed drinking fountain is another improvement in reimaging the historic presence of the park. The drinking fountain will be accessible to all. The fountain will be located in the same location as the historic drinking fountain and be the same similar material as shown in the shaded area on the plan below.



PROPOSED TREES

For every tree removed in the park it will be replaced with native varieties. Any gaps in the perimeter planting will be replaced to ensure the sense of enclosure that the park historically has had is retained. There will also be shade trees planted along both sides of pathways creating an allee of trees



PROPOSED TREE SELECTION



EASTERN REDBUD



CORNELIAN CHERRY
DOGWOOD



'BLOODGOOD' LONDON
PLANE



'PRINCETON' ELM



NORWAY SPRUCE

PROPOSED TREE GRATES - GATHERING AREA AND PLAY AREA

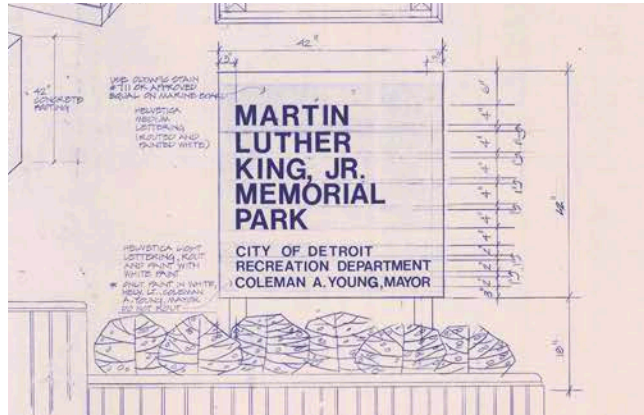
The tree grates will be located in the gathering and play area as shown on the map in shaded areas, providing shade in the active space. The surrounding green spaces with trees will also provide canopy shade.



PARK SIGNAGE

EXISTING PARK SIGN:

Currently, there are no park signs. Shown below is a drawing of the park sign that once existed. This park sign was implemented in the raised planter boxes visible from W Grand Blvd and Rosa Parks Blvd.



PARK SIGN, NONEXISTENT

PROPOSED PARK SIGNS:

The proposed design will place various standard park signs with city branding at all park main entrances. The park sign will identify the site as a City park as well as post park hours.



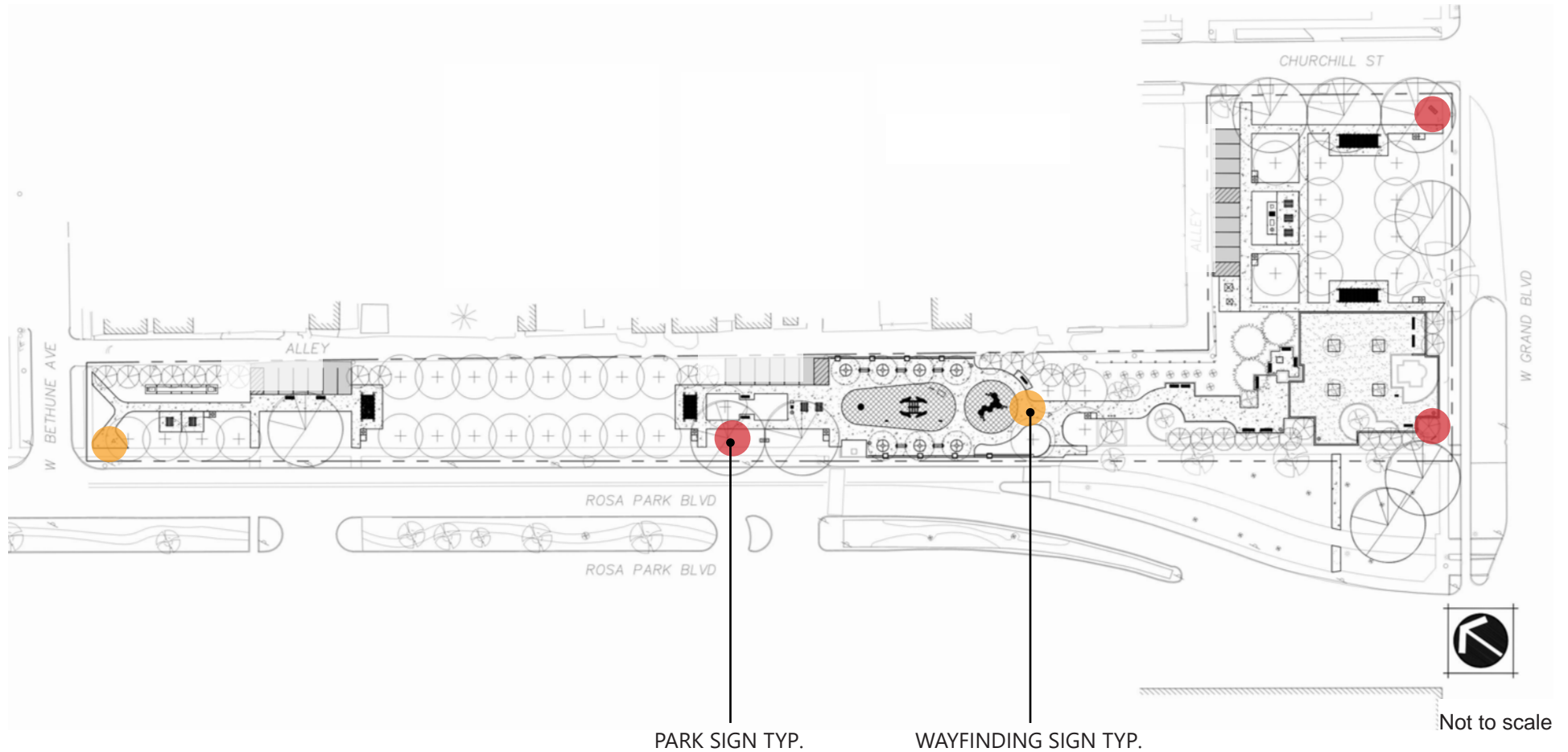
PROPOSED PARK SIGN



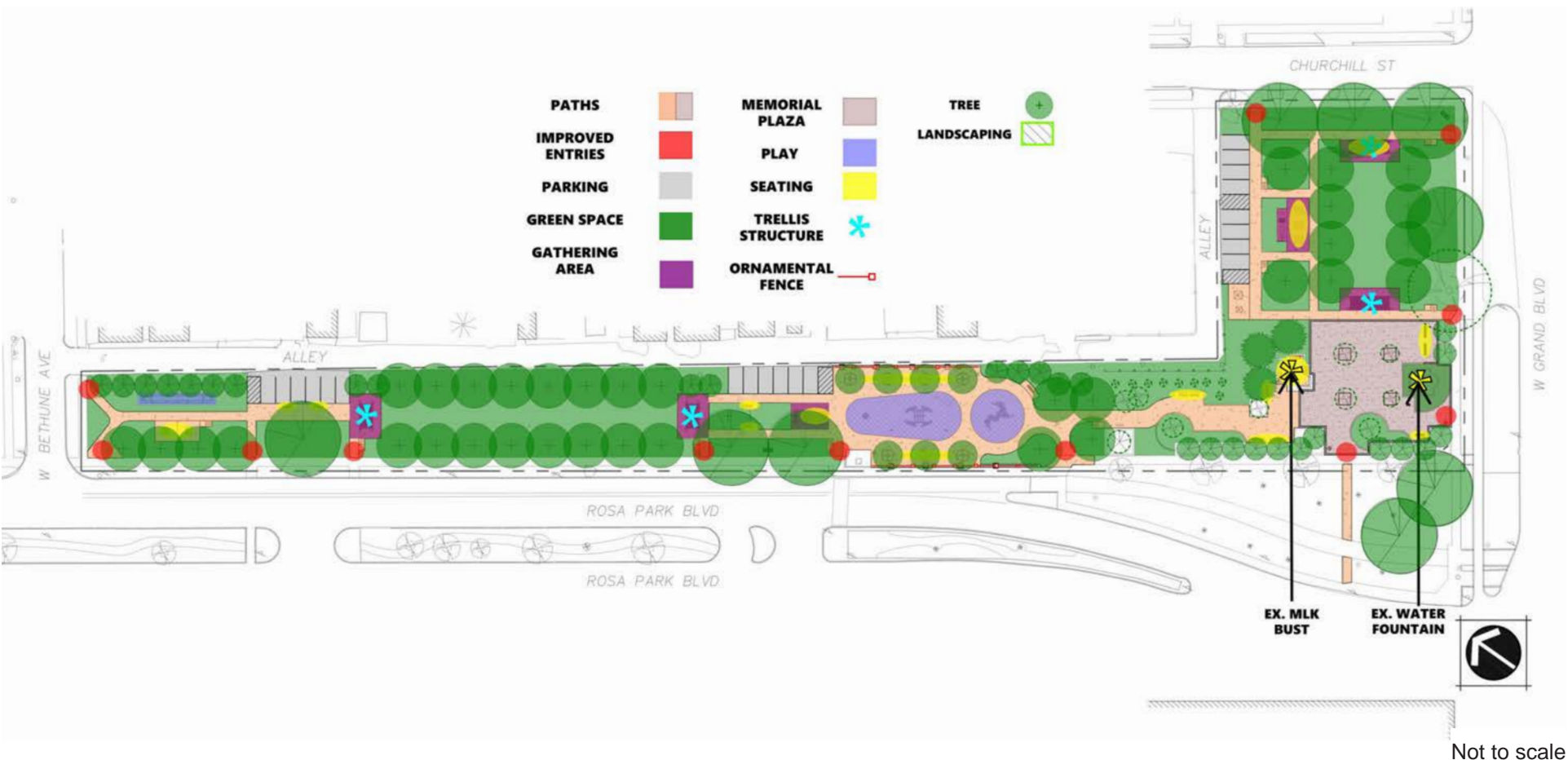
PROPOSED WAYFINDING SIGN

PROPOSED PARK AND WAYFINDING SIGN LOCATIONS

The proposed drinking fountain is another improvement in reimagining the historic presence of the park. The drinking fountain will be accessible to all and include a pet fountain; amenity will have black powder-coated finish. The fountain will be located in the shaded red area shown on the plan below.



MLK MEMORIAL PARK PROPOSED PLAN



CUT SHEETS ATTACHED

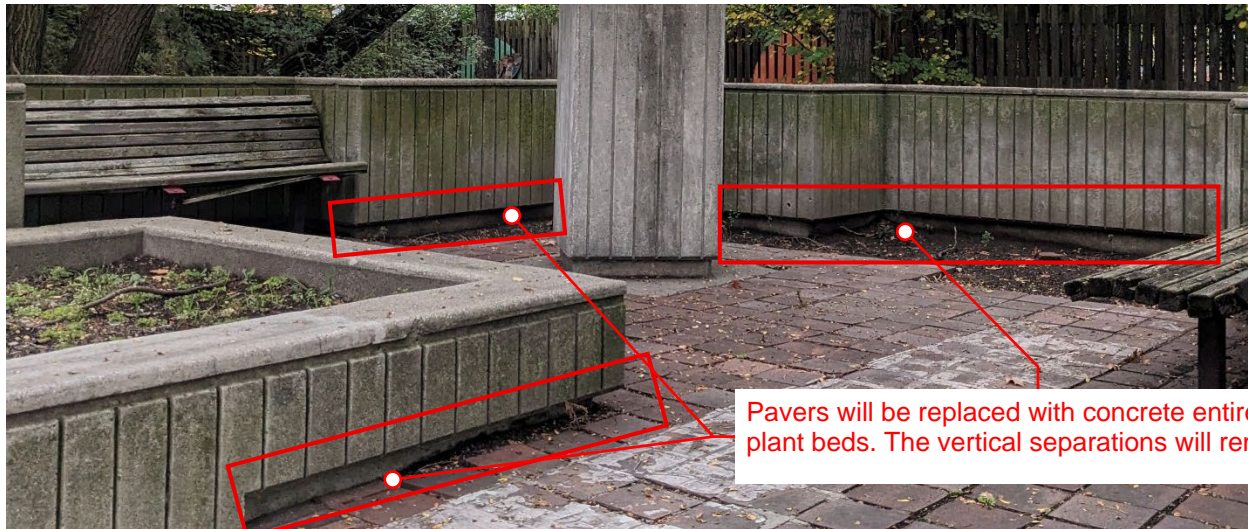
MLK MEMORIAL PARK

SUMMER 2025 DESIGN



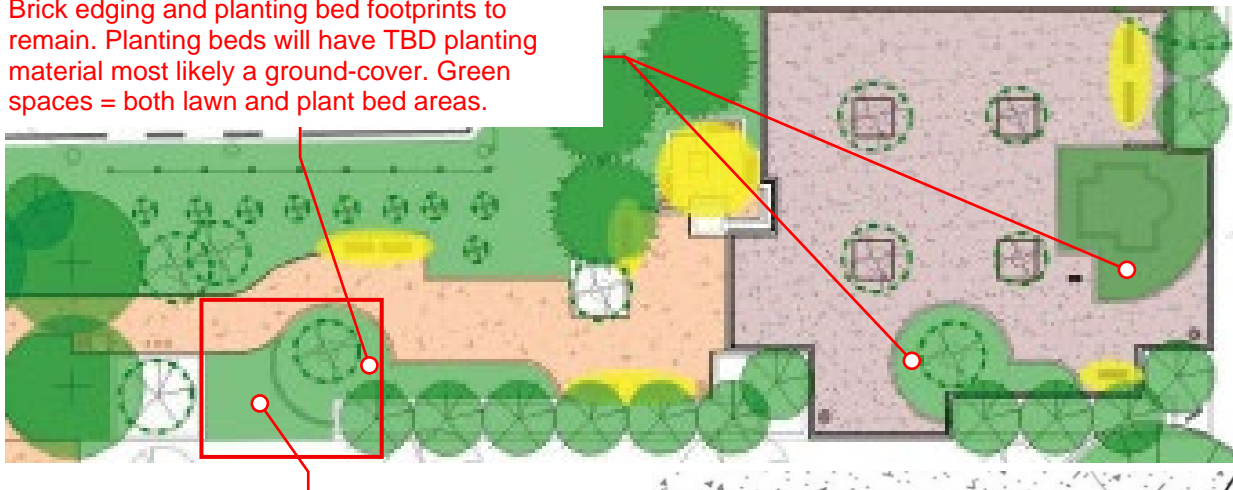
GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Parks & Recreation
Division

At the bust, will the platform retain its footprint once the brick pavers are replaced with concrete? There is currently a separation between the vertical concrete elements, and the floor surface, giving a sort of floating illusion. Can you confirm that this feature will remain?



I saw that you highlighted the areas with brick edging as proposed greenspace. Does this imply the brick will be surrounded by grass? How will this be maintained over time?

Brick edging and planting bed footprints to remain. Planting beds will have TBD planting material most likely a ground-cover. Green spaces = both lawn and plant bed areas.

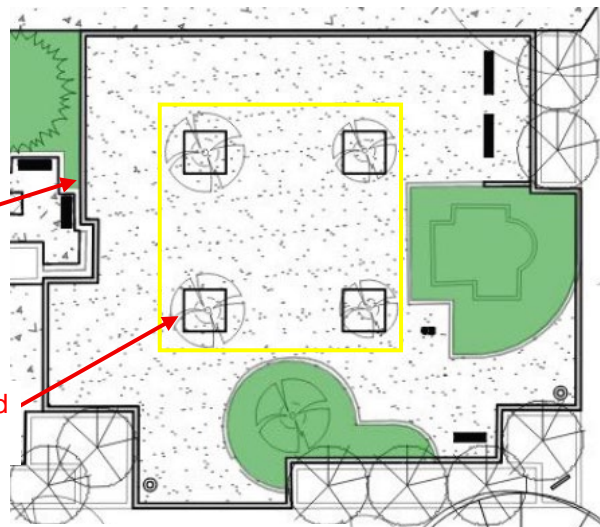


What do these lines imply? Please specify the material. 1' wide brushed concrete edge

Please reconfirm material designated for the main ground surface, as well as the material for the continued pathway: Plaza area is a compacted crushed limestone surface and oth

Please confirm materiality of all borders, including these tree openings

The lines bordering the trees are a drawing error; the plaza will be a compacted crushed limestone surface bordered by brushed concrete edge as specified in package and remaining surfaces in the park will be concrete



MLK MEMORIAL PARK DEMOLITION PLAN

STAFF DID NOT USE CORRECT DEMO PLAN

32 REMOVED (21 in poor or fair condition and/or considered invasive species).

16 NEW PLANTED - 18 REMAINING

All concrete and pavers will be removed and replaced with compacted crushed limestone, all raised concrete planters will remain, most of the brick edging will remain intact, and due to the proposed park layout selective trees will remain. The majority of the trees along the perimeter of the park are invasive trees (Bradford Pear), which will be replaced with healthier spacing and native and non-invasive varieties.

CURB REMOVAL TO ACCOMMODATE CONNECTION TO PARK EXPANSION OUTSIDE OF HISTORIC ZONE

