



Cover Letter

Re: 2733 2nd Avenue - Cass Park - HDC2025-00575 **Project Revisions for Consideration**

September 26, 2025

The General Services Department's Landscape Design Team has updated the Cass Park renovation proposal based on feedback from the Historic Advisory Commission hearing on August 13, 2025. The below summarizes the changes made to the proposal and where those revisions are located within the application package.

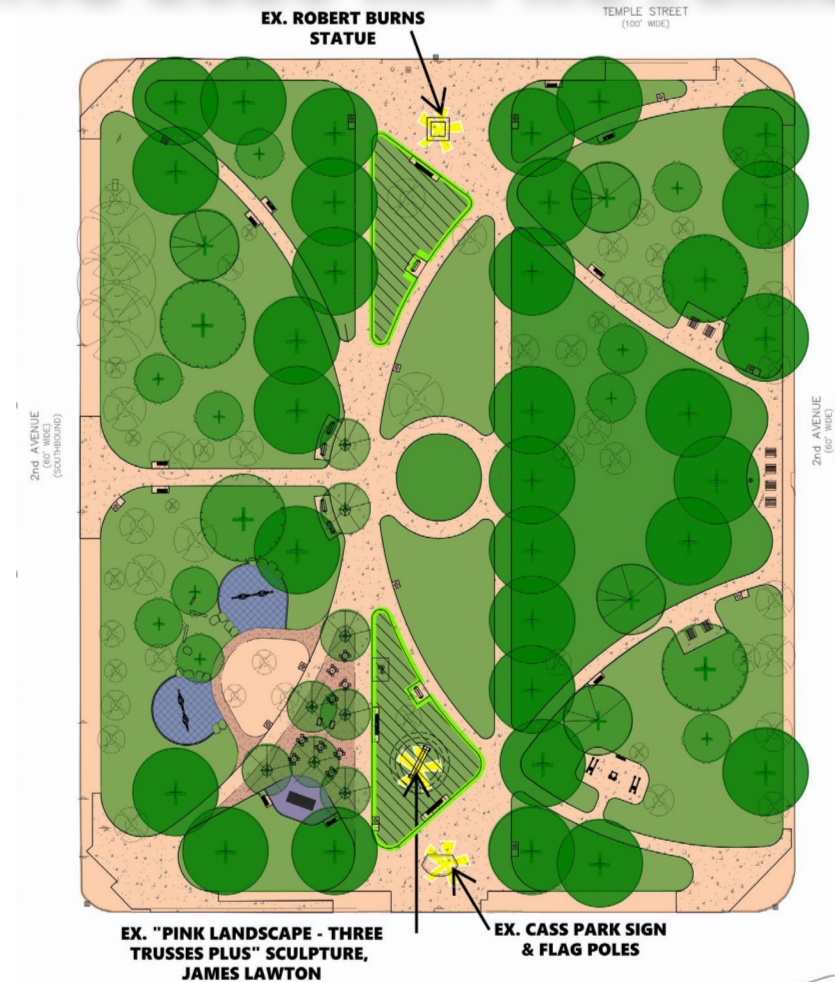
- Instead of one primary off-center pathway, the proposal now includes two symmetrical pathways that extend from 2nd Avenue through the park (pages A-10 and A-14).
- An avenue of trees that flanks the two symmetrical pathways through the park was enhanced, to emphasize the view down 2nd Avenue through the park, which was referenced in the historic significance considerations (page A-23).
- The large lawn space was reduced to accommodate the symmetrical paths (page A-15). To maximize the remaining lawn space for programming the mid-block plaza off east 2nd Ave was condensed, while retaining the function needed for the food service program (pages A-16 and A-20).
- A central focal point was added that is in the exact center of the park, referencing the historic fountain area, and connecting the park's pathways (page A-16).

We appreciate your continued consideration of the attached proposal, and area available for any questions.

CASS PARK

(2733 2ND AVE)

SPRING 2026 IMPROVEMENTS



HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
OCTOBER 8, 2025



GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Parks & Recreation
Division

TABLE OF CONTENTS

• Historic Significance Considerations	3	• Proposed Gathering Area	A-16
• Project Description	4	• Proposed Chill Zone - Plaza Seating	17
• Cass Park Community Engagement	5	• Proposed Chill Zone - Play	18
• Cass Park 1860 Historical Plan	6	• Proposed Fitness Equipment	19
• Cass Park 1934 Historical Plan	7	• Proposed Seating	20
• Cass Park 1978 Historical Plan	8	• Proposed Seating	A-20
• Existing Park Conditions	9	• Proposed Drinking Fountain	21
• Cass Park 2025 Proposed Entries and Paths	10	• Cass Park Arborist Tree Survey	22
• Cass Park 2025 Proposed Entries and Paths	A-10	• Proposed Trees and Landscaping	23
• Cass Park 2025 Proposed Plan	11	• Proposed Trees and Landscaping	A-23
• Cass Park 2025 Proposed Plan	A-11	• Proposed Tree Selection	24
• Cass Park Historical Features	12	• Proposed Landscaping Selection	25
• Cass Park Historical Lighting	13	• Proposed Tree Grates	26
• Proposed Entries and Paths	14	• Park Signage	27
• Proposed Entries and Paths	A-14	• Cass Park 2025 Proposed Plan	28
• Proposed Green Space	15	• Scope of Work and Cut Sheet	29
• Proposed Green Space	A-15		
• Proposed Gathering Area	16		

**Red striked-through text indicate revisions from previous submission*

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Cass Park Local Historic District (Sec. 21-2-233.)

"Cass Park bisects Second Avenue and provides a vista that is visible from a great distance to the north."

In this plan the vista along Second Avenue through the park retained with walkway and landscaping.

"Cass Park is highly symmetrical in nature with eight entries converging on the center of the park from each corner and from the center of each of its four sides: this relationship is considered a significant feature of the park."

The symmetry is retained along one axis, as well as retaining eight entrances that converge in the center of the park, although slightly shifted to the west to allow for larger green space to improve park usability. This is in keeping with the incremental movements away from perfect symmetry started in 1934 and continued into the 1970s.

"Mature trees along the perimeter of Cass Park that provide a sense of enclosure within the park."

This plan replaces damaged/unhealthy/invasive trees along the perimeter and throughout the park.

"Buildings flanking Cass Park create a sense of enclosure and contribute greatly to the integrity of feeling and setting within the park."

No longer applicable.

"The statue of Robert Burns sits on the northern edge of Cass Park, centered on its block face, and faces north along Second Avenue."

The statue of Robert Burns remains in the same prominent location in the northern edge of the park, with minor repairs to the base.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The land now known as Cass Park was deeded to the City of Detroit by General Lewis Cass in 1860 while Michigan was still a US Territory; designated as “forever parkland” the property was intended to remain for the use and enjoyment of the public in perpetuity.

Cass Park was lighted in 1896, enhancing its appeal as a community place. In 1921, a statue honoring the Scottish poet Robert Burns was installed, adding a cultural landmark to the park. Significant renovations occurred in the 1960s using Urban Beatification funding. Additional art was added in the 1970s such as the James Lawon Sculpture that remains today.

The proposed improvements to Cass Park are intended to enhance the existing use of the park and provide more opportunities for play, enjoyment, and social interaction in the park. These improvements include replacing the old deteriorated walks, removal of invasive trees and plant additional trees, add some play elements that once existed, install benches and picnic tables that currently don’t exist, and replacing the old fitness equipment.

The redesign of Cass 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 as well as ensuring it meets modern needs.

CASS PARK COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY OUTREACH SCHEDULE

- General Stakeholder Meeting - October 18, 2024
- Community Meeting #1 - November 14, 2024
- Stakeholder Meeting with Robert Burns Club - January 29, 2025
- Student Survey - March through April 2025
- Stakeholder Meeting with Food Distribution Group - March 17, 2025
- Stakeholder Meeting with Cass Tech PTSA - March 20, 2025
- Community Meeting #2 - March 26, 2025

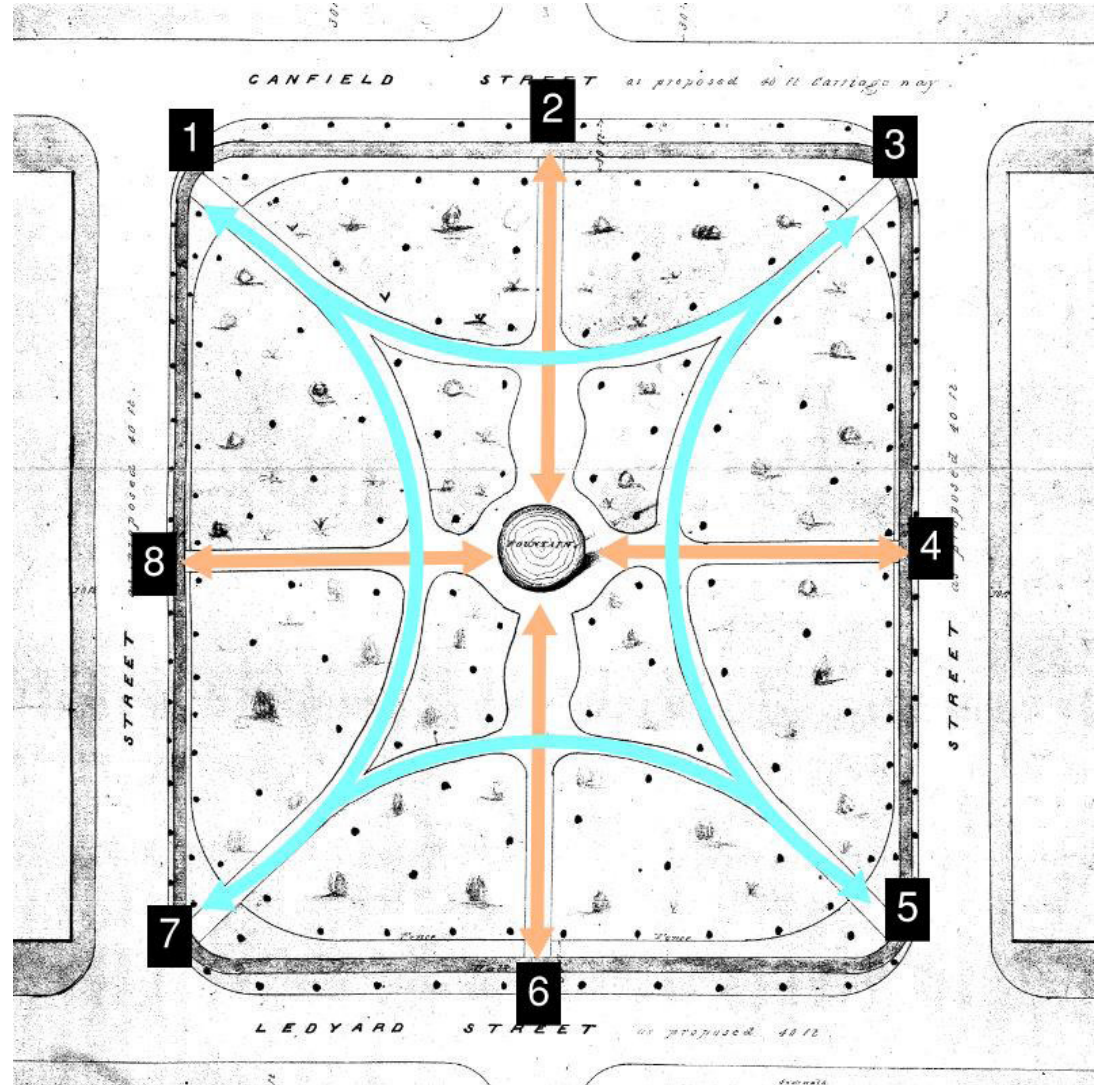
ENGAGED STAKEHOLDERS

- The Masonic Temple
- Mariners Inn
- Cass Tech Leadership, PSTA
- Chinatown Vision Committee
- Olympia
- Residents (from prev. community benefits group)
- Robert Burns Club
- Residents that live on the park (2714 Second)
- Park Users
- Food Distribution Group
- Cass Tech Students

HISTORIC PLANS: CASS PARK 1860

Park Design Details:

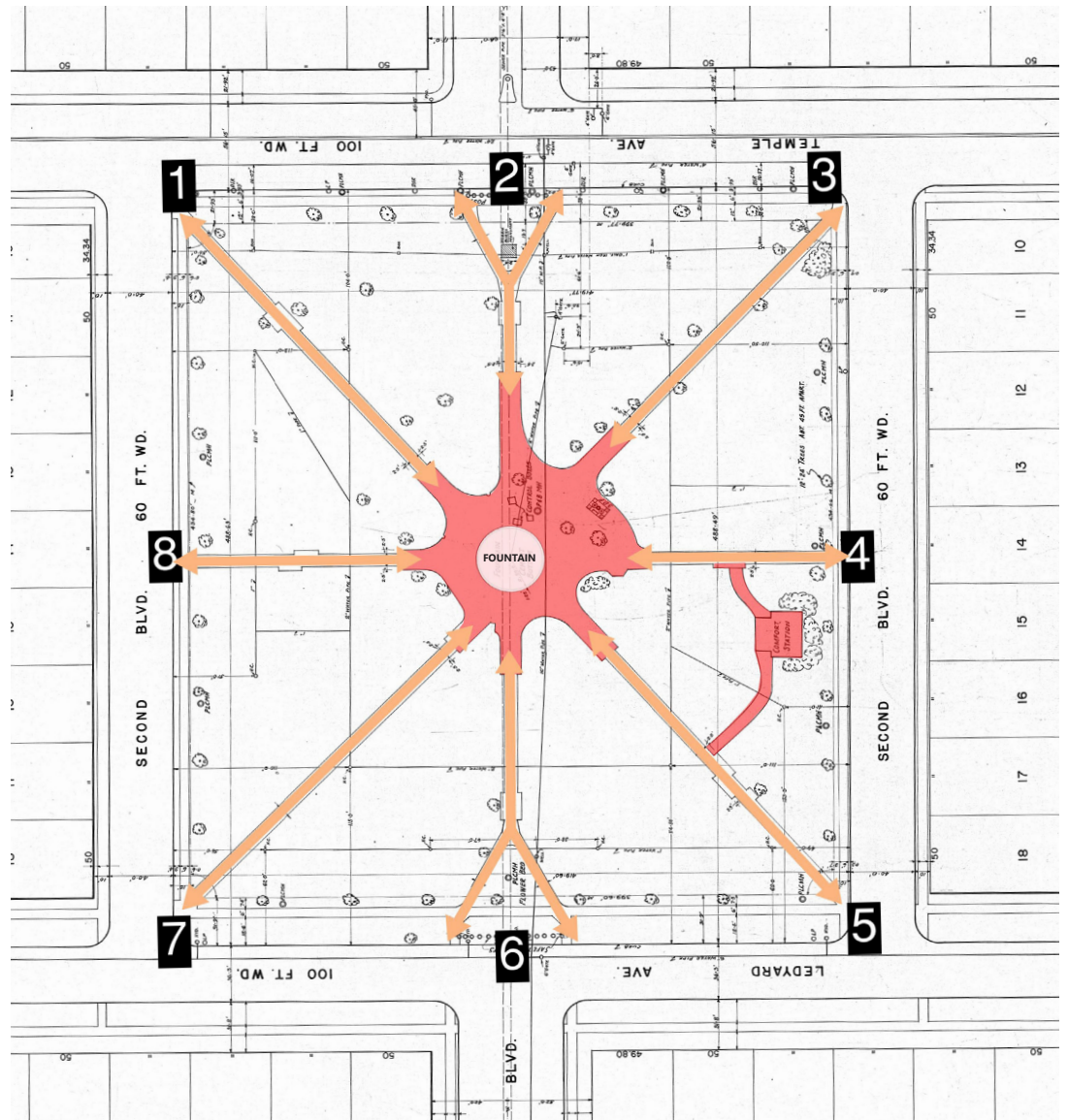
- 8 Entries
- Symmetrical design
- No sidewalk connections across Temple and Ledyard Streets
- Curvilinear/radiating pathways
- Central focal point



HISTORIC PLANS: CASS PARK 1934

Park Design Details:

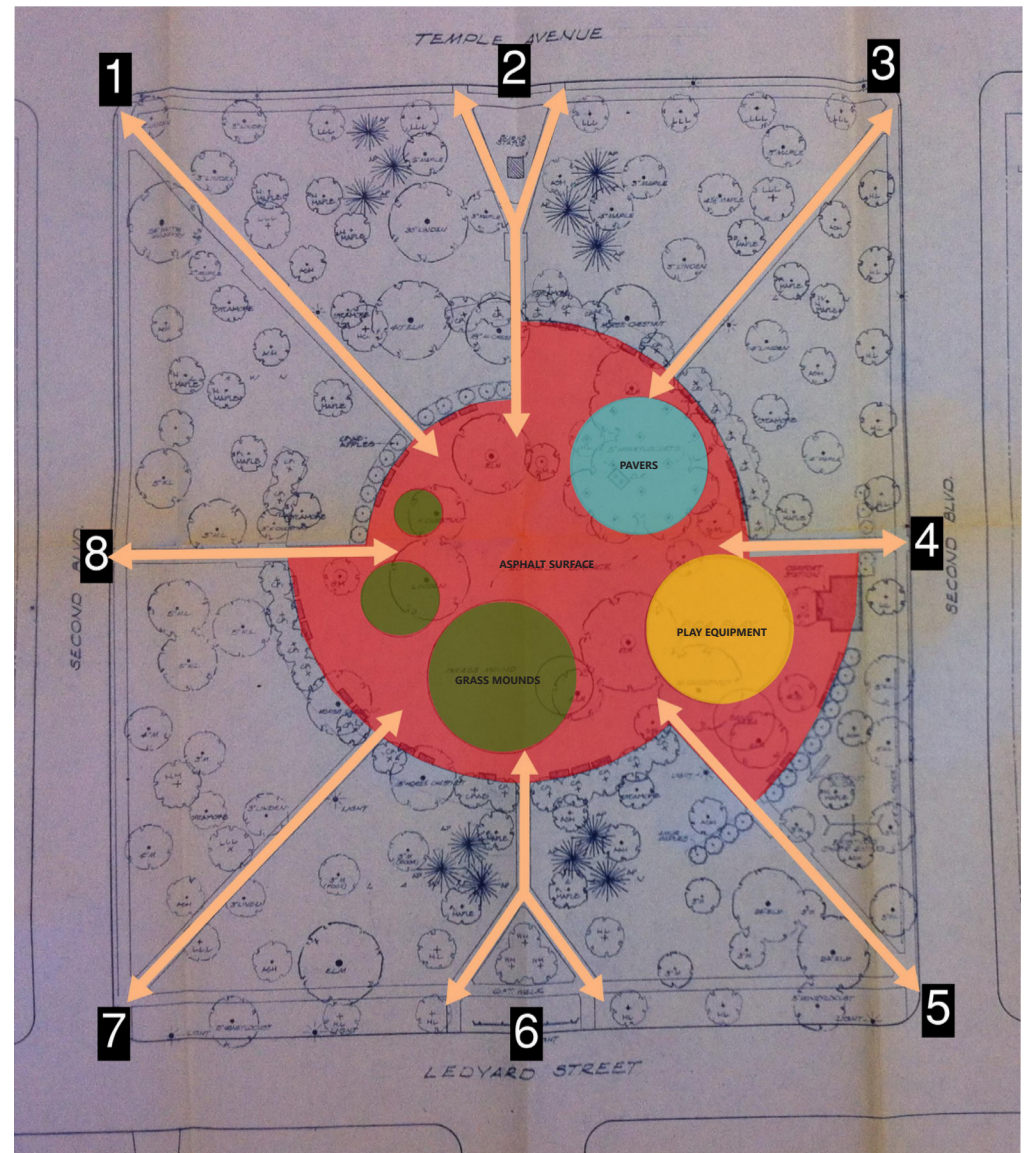
- 8 Entries
- Asymmetrical center and pathways introduced
- Split entry responding to sidewalks across Temple and Ledyard Streets
- Central focal point



HISTORIC PLANS: CASS PARK 1978

Park Design Details:

- 8 Entries
- Center and pathways become more asymmetrical
- Adventure pathway and meandering center introduced
- Straight pathways with varying lengths
- No central focal point
- Different surface materials introduced
- Structural elevations introduced; mounds and playground



EXISTING PARK CONDITIONS

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

- Deteriorated surfaces
- Scarce amenities (non-park standard benches and picnic tables)
- Lack of ADA accessibility to picnic area(s)
- Dense trees
- Sculptural features



Not to scale

ROBERT BURNS STATUE

FITNESS EQUIPMENT

JAMES LAWTON
SCULPTURE

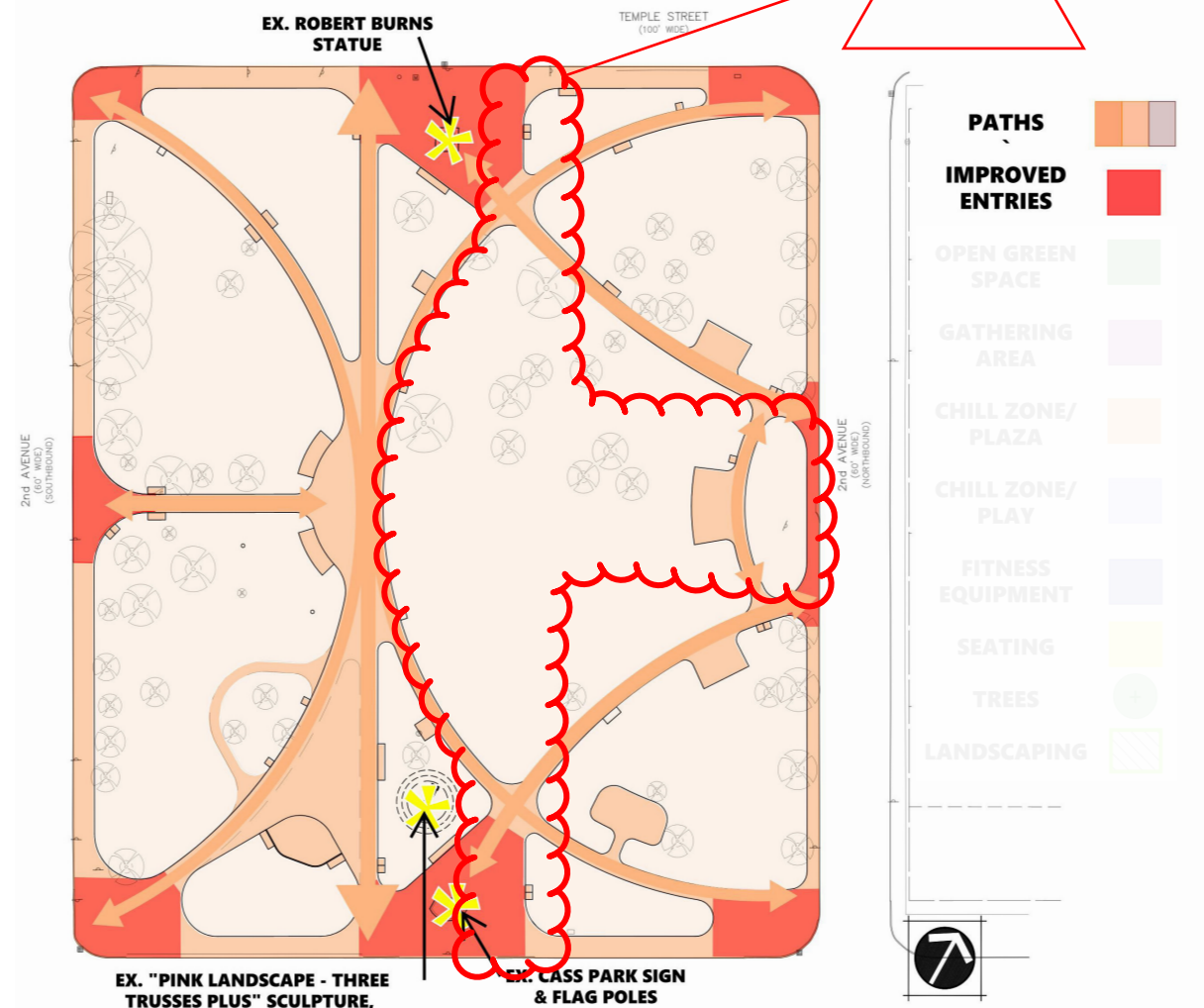
CASS PARK SIGN AND
FLAG POLES



CASS PARK 2025 PROPOSED ENTRIES AND PATHS

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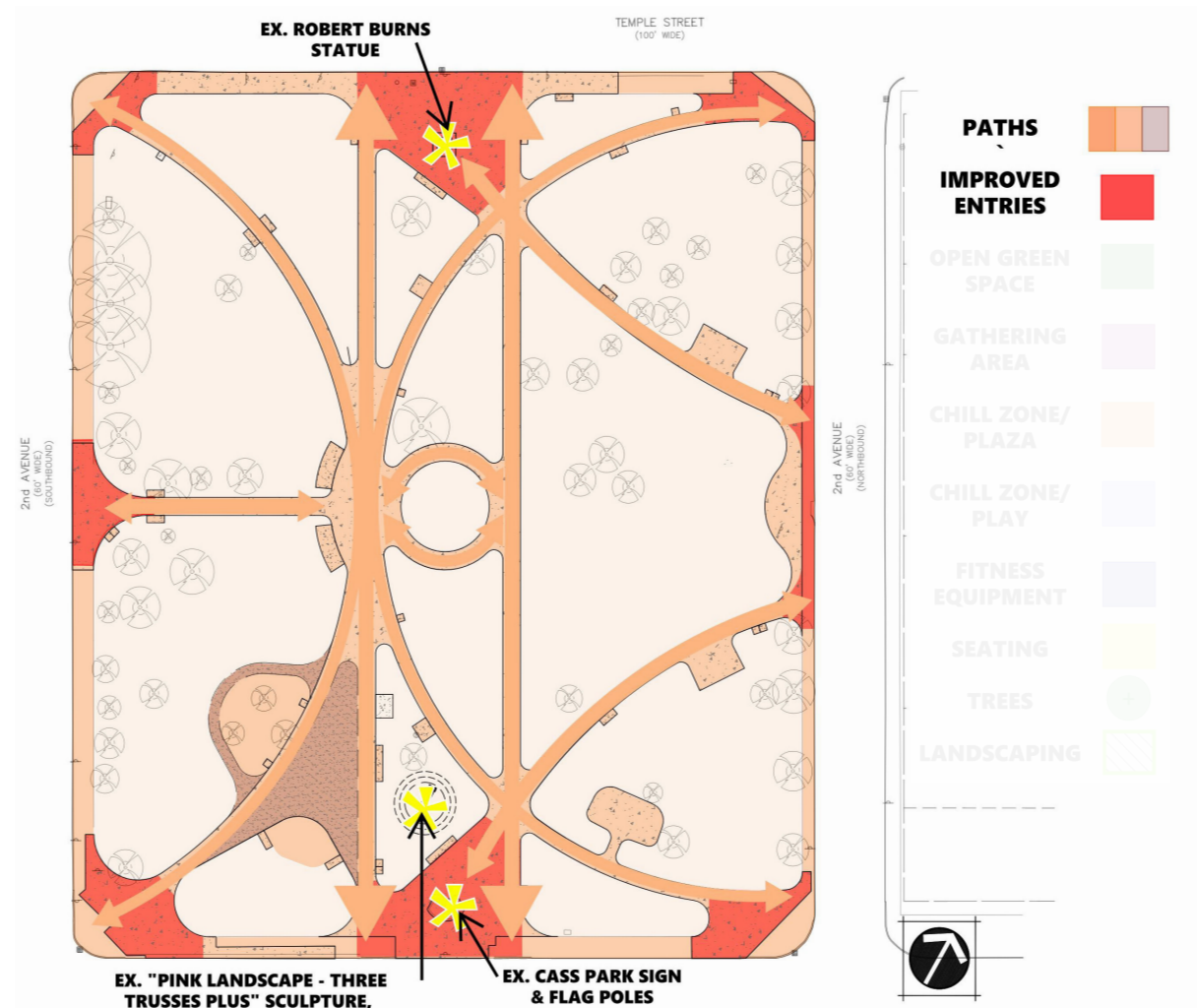
- 8 Entries
- More formalized design
- Refines the symmetry of all designs and balances the park across the x and y axis
- Refines pathway systems and balances curvilinear and straight circulation
- Improves hardscape materials
- Central focal point nod to 1860 plan
- Provides programmed and unprogrammed spaces that respond to today's needs, while respecting the park's relationship towards the historical park designs
- 40,000+ square foot lawn space is required to allow for medium sized events (using city event capacity policy of 30 sf/person)



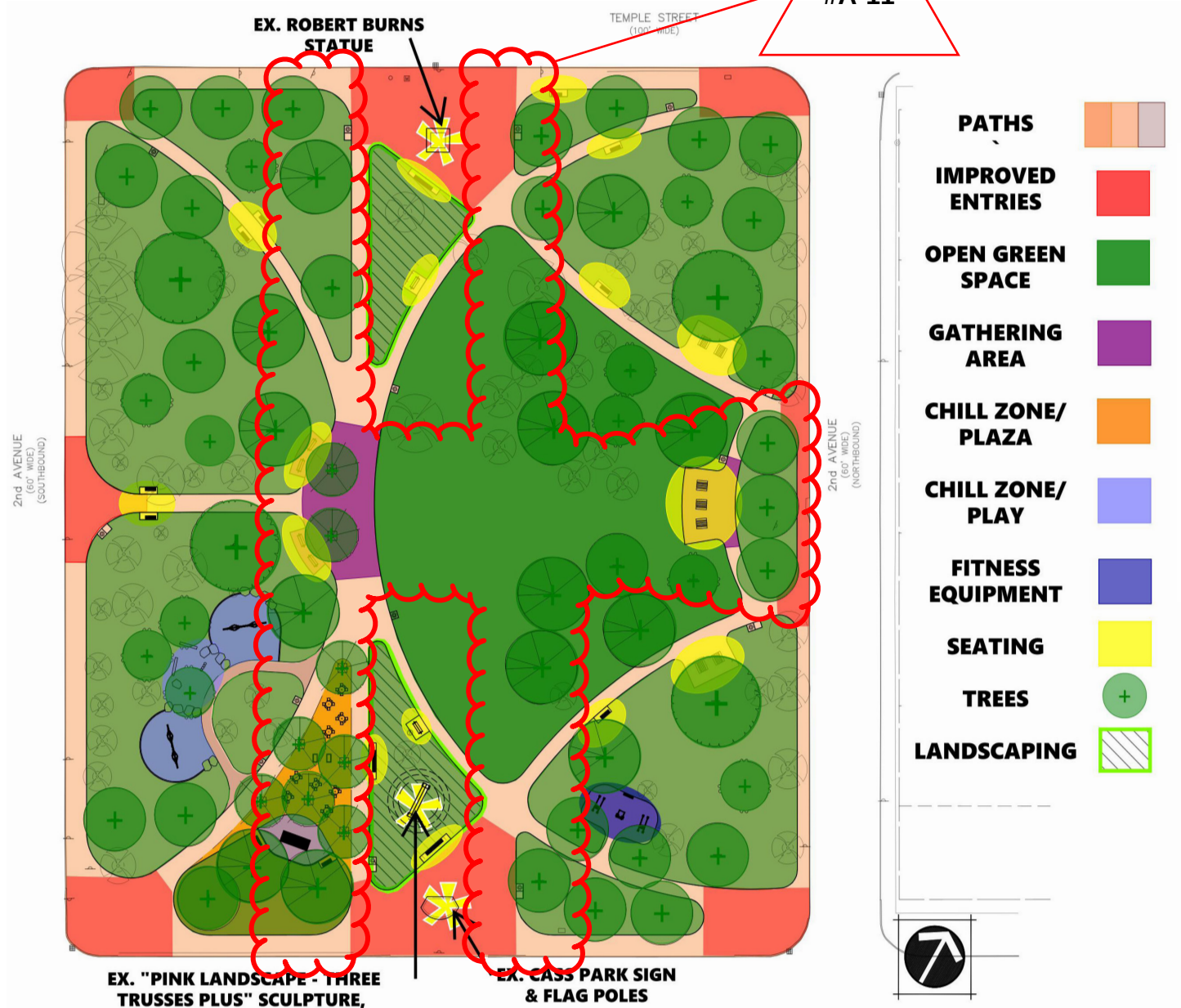
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CASS PARK 2025 PROPOSED PLAN



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CASS PARK HISTORICAL FEATURES

HISTORICAL FEATURES IMPROVEMENTS:

The Robert Burns Statue will remain in its existing location (north entrance) with a repaired base and restoration. The James Lawton sculpture will be restored to the original pink color and relocated slight south of it's current location to the more prominent entrance and will be on a landscaped area, as originally intended by the artist. South entrance will also include the restored Cass park sign and flag poles.



Restore Robert Burns Statue



Relocate and restore the James Lawton Sculpture, "Pink Landscape - Three Trusses Plus"



Restore Cass Park Sign and Flag Poles

CASS PARK HISTORICAL LIGHTING

HISTORICAL FEATURES IMPROVEMENTS:

Mismatched modern light fixtures will be replaced 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



Historic Park Lighting

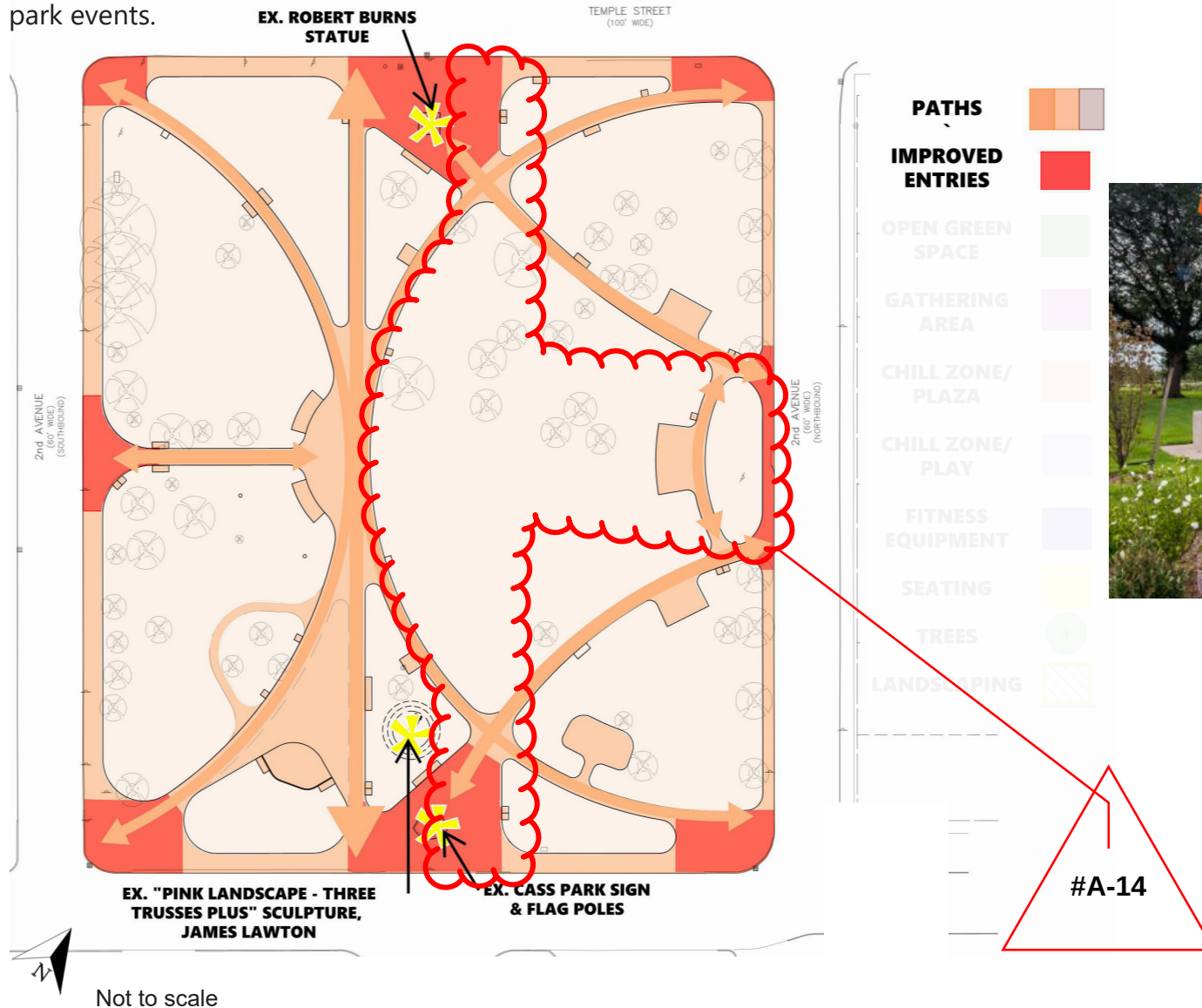


Historic Park Lighting



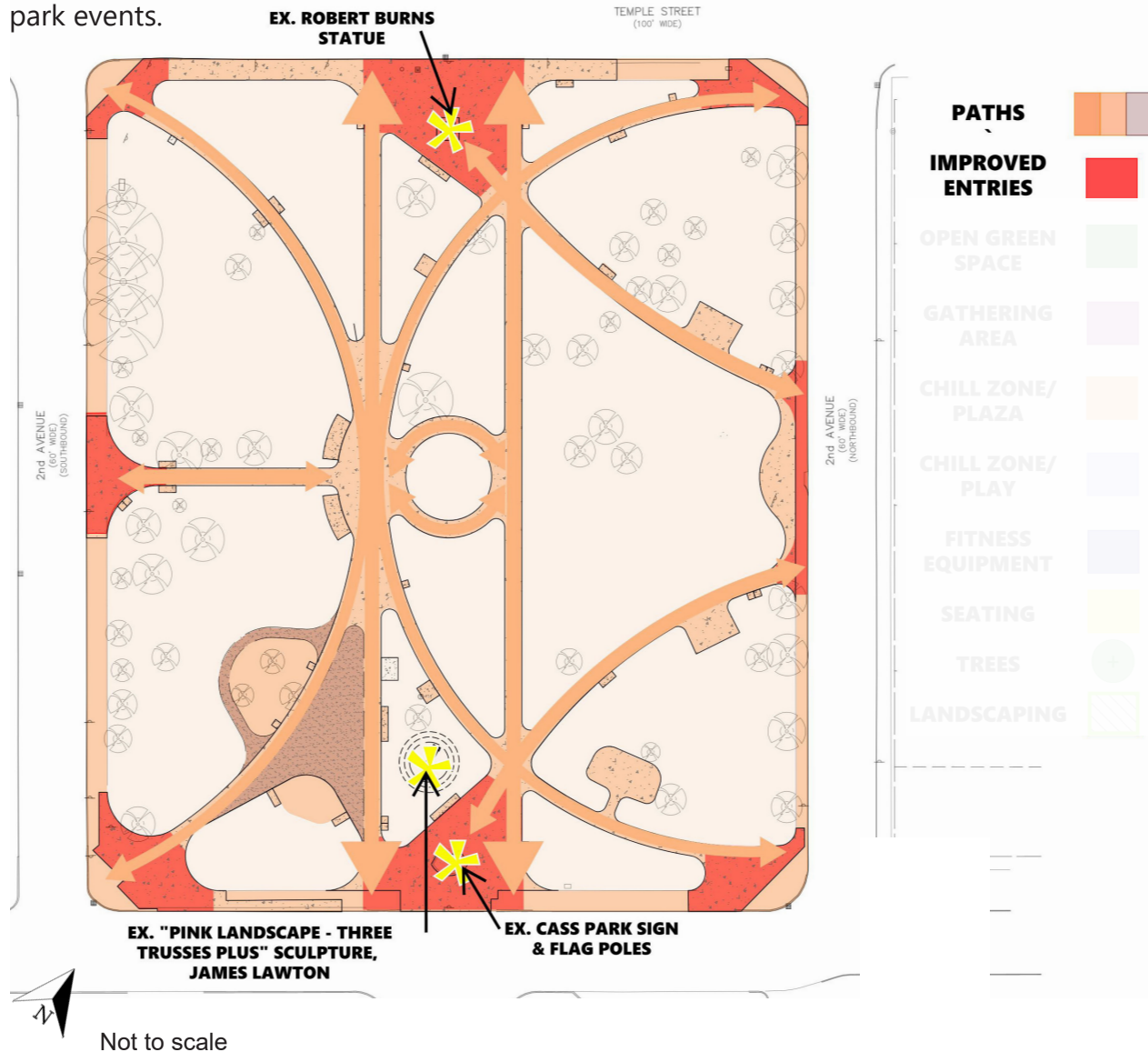
PROPOSED ENTRIES AND PATHS

The entries will be improved, enhancing direct access to park amenities and surrounding places. The north-south promenade will be emphasized and shifted slightly west to accommodate more green space necessary for park programming. The southwest edge of the park is designed to accommodate the students that gather there from Cass Tech High school. The pathways on the east side were designed to accommodate the monthly food distribution group that has been operating in the park for over 25 years as well as other park events.



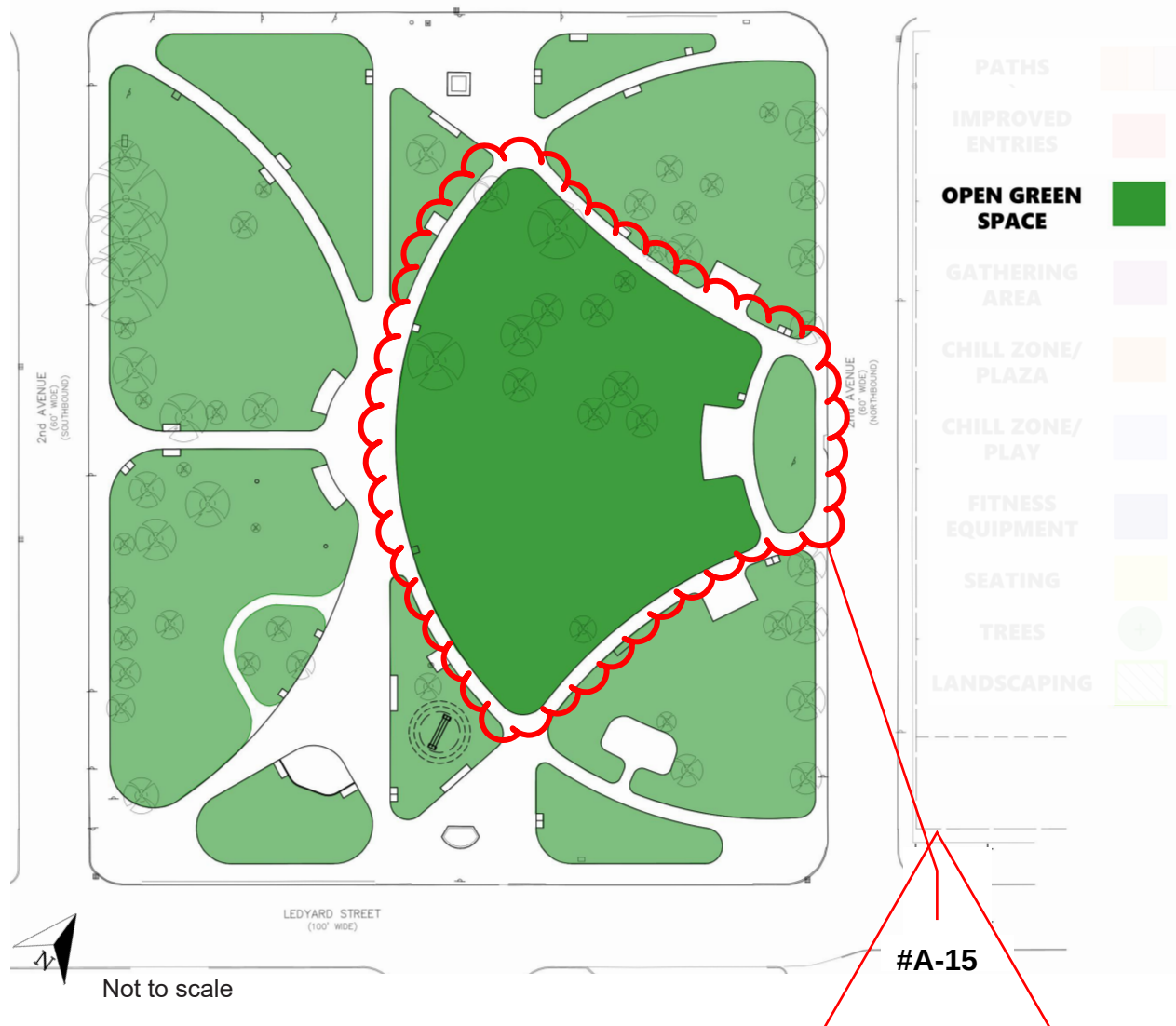
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PROPOSED OPEN GREEN SPACE

One of the main changes community members asked for was to increase useable green space in the park. The various proposed greenspaces will allow for quieter as well as more active areas for activities such as relaxing, reading, playing, or exercising as well opportunities for community gatherings. To be able to accommodate medium-sized events, such as movie nights, student concerts and seasonal celebrations at least 40,000 SF of contiguous greenspace is needed, which resulted in the proposed lawn area, while still retaining the historic park symmetry along one axis and the vista down 2nd Ave.



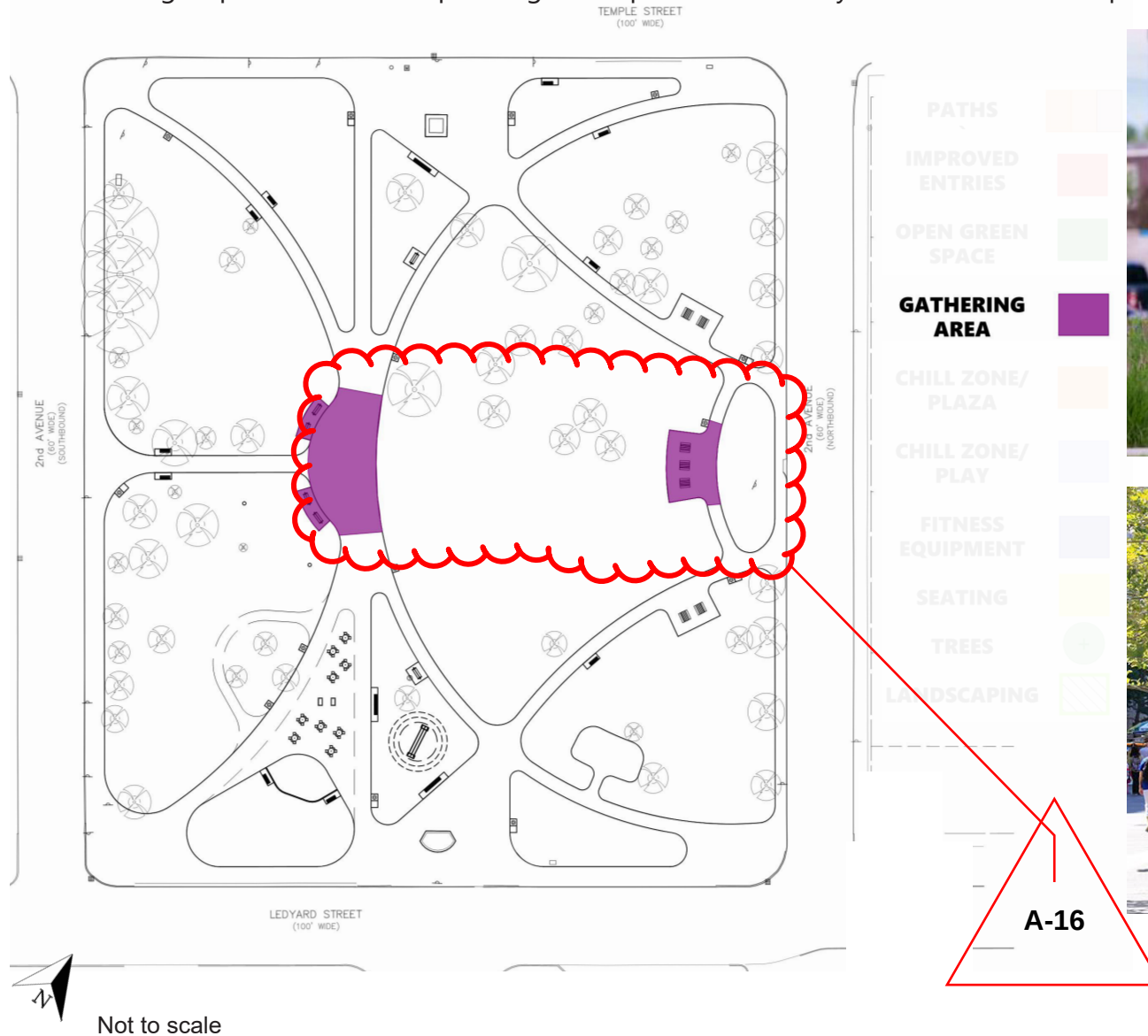
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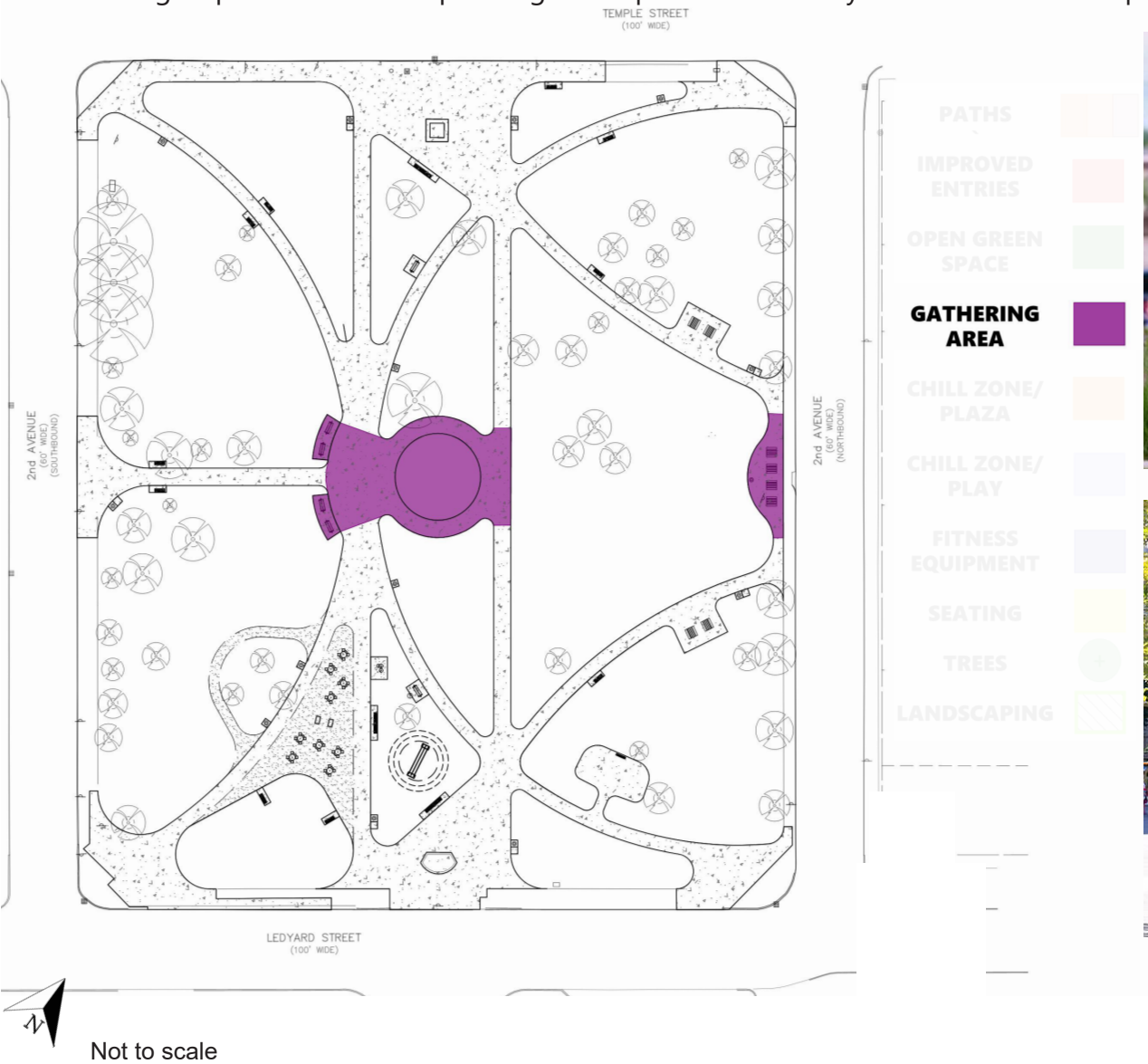
PROPOSED GATHERING AREA

The central gathering area will serve as hardscape meetup space with swinging benches overlooking the open green space, as a reference to the past historic park plans with a more centralized focal point. In addition, the eastern gathering area accommodates the monthly food distribution group that has been operating in the park for over 25 years as well as other park events.



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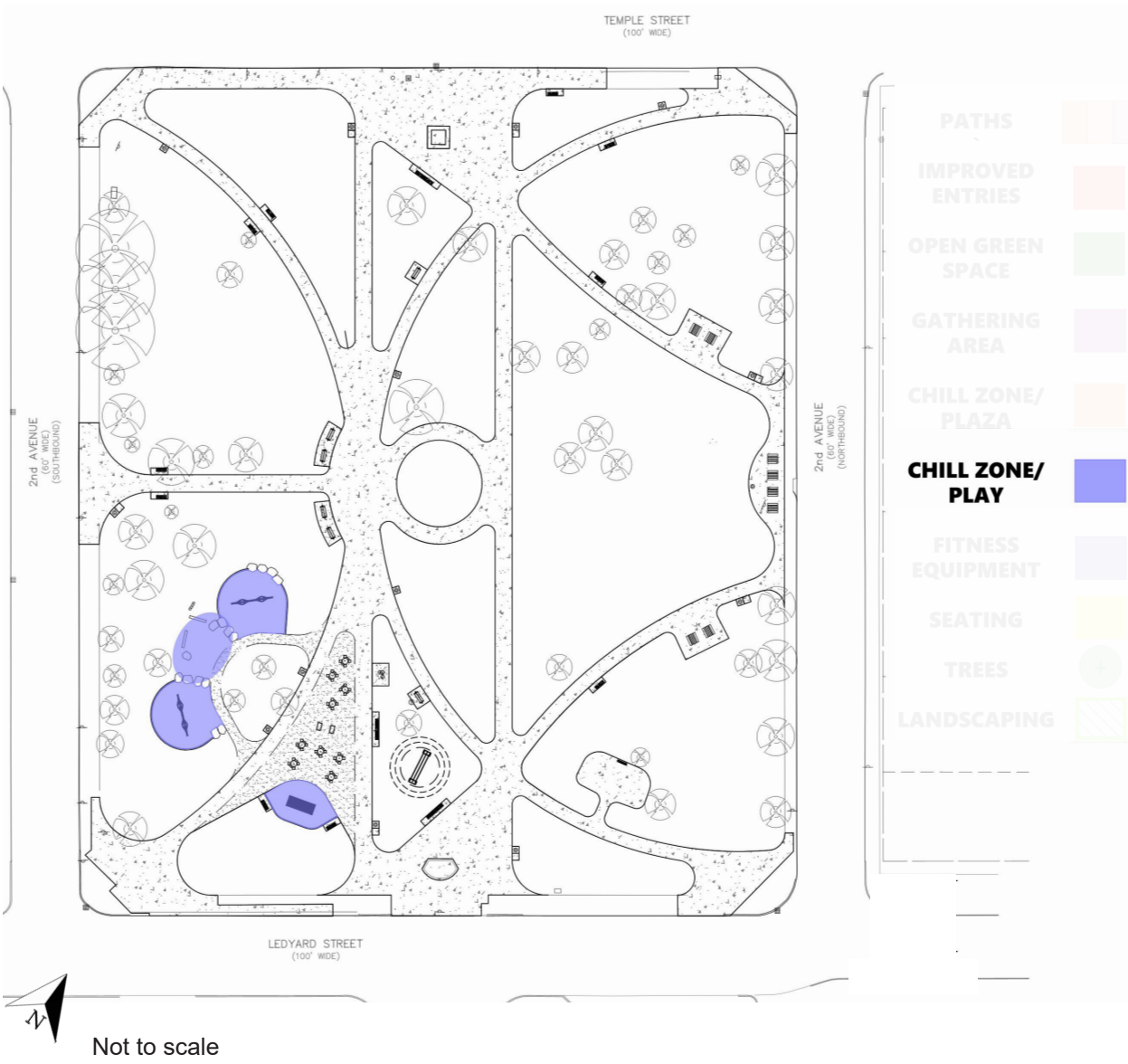
PROPOSED CHILL ZONE - PLAZA SEATING

The proposed plaza will be located across from Cass Tech High school, and will be a more active space, including cafe seating tables. The seating amenities will be City Standards, items are standardized through various parks in the city for ease of maintenance. All amenity materials will have a black powder coated finish.



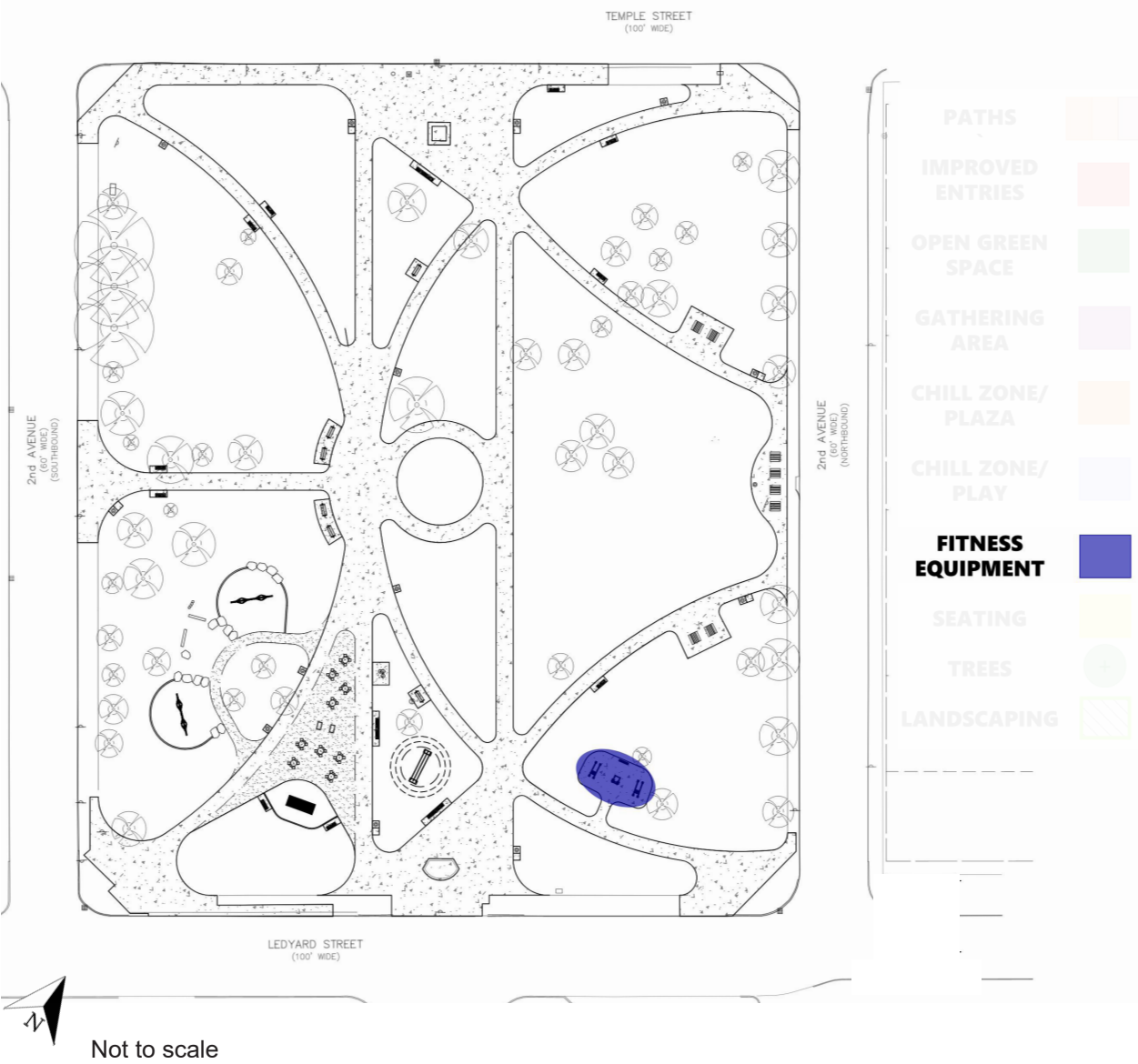
PROPOSED CHILL ZONE - PLAY

The proposed play elements are intended for people of all ages to have the opportunity to play and socialize. The selected colors comply with the elements of design in the ordinance: the swing posts will be black and the standing seesaw will be finished wood, as shown.



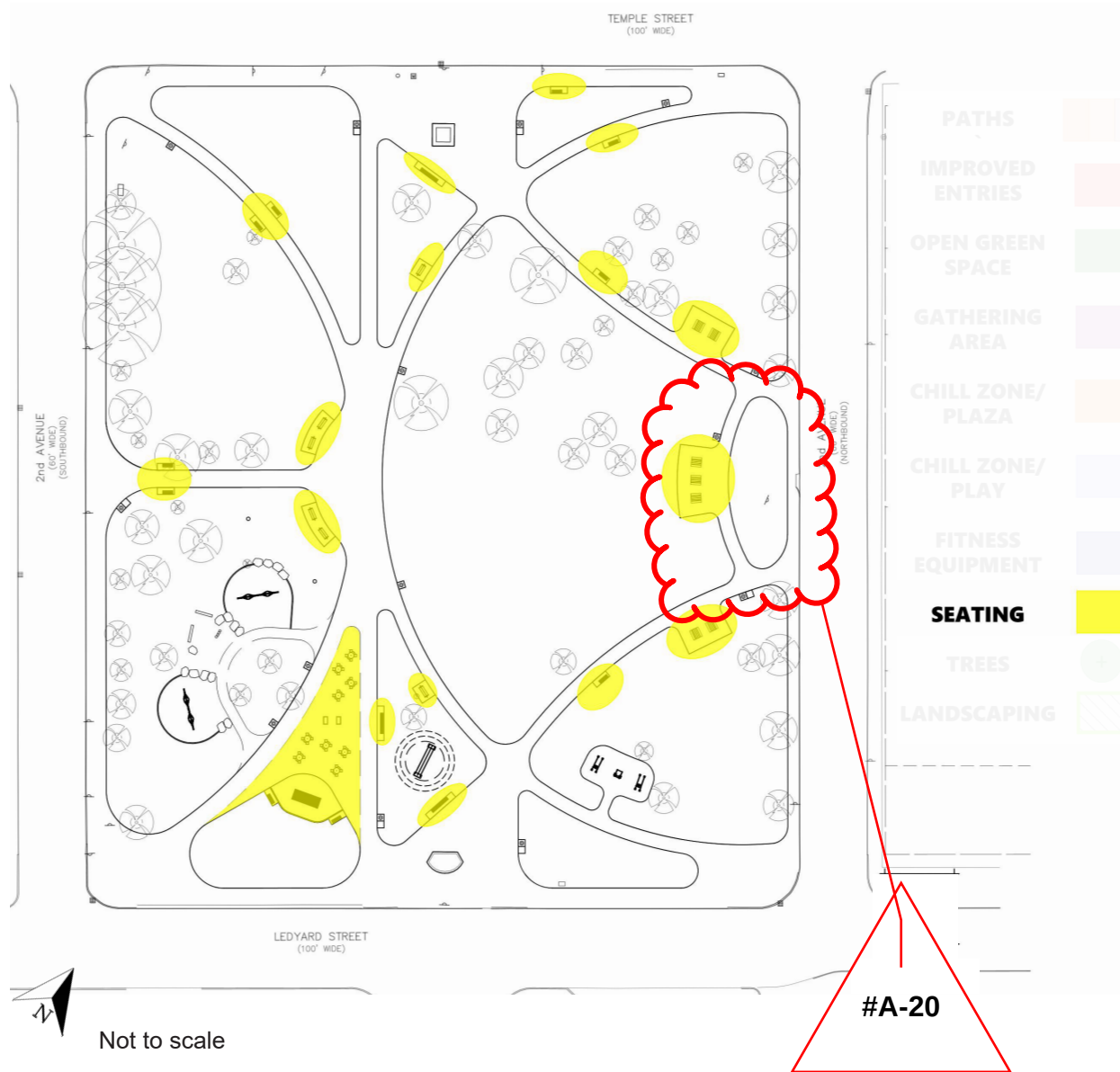
PROPOSED FITNESS EQUIPMENT

The proposed fitness equipment will replace the current, dilapidated equipment, and be relocated southern portion of the park closer to the active part of the park near Cass Tech High school. The color palette will be silver and black, as is City Standard for ease of maintenance as well as to ensure it blends into the background of the park scenery.



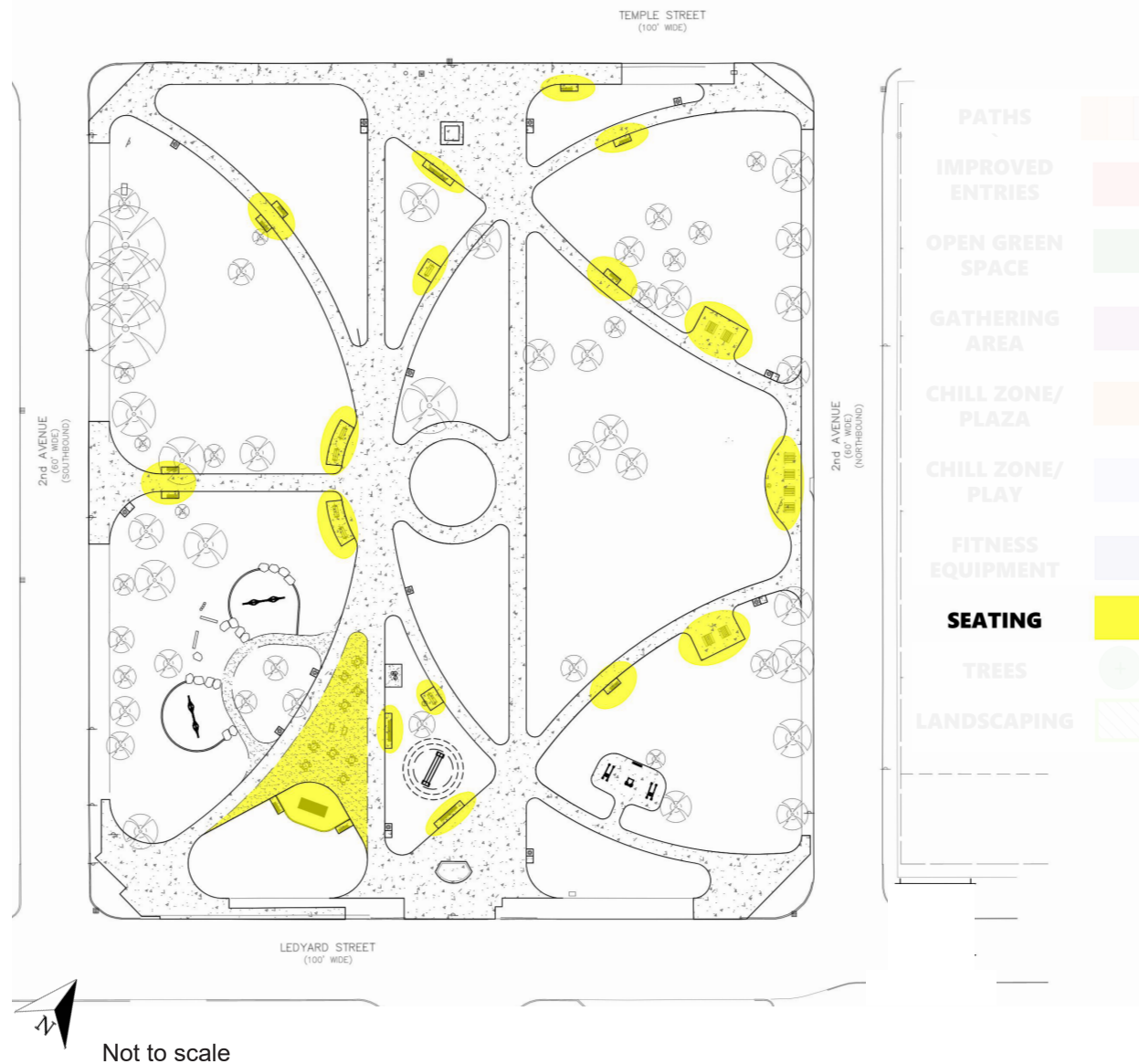
PROPOSED SEATING

There are various proposed seating types throughout the park: cafe tables, swinging benches, park benches, and picnic tables. All items are City Standards and found in various parks across the city for ease of maintenance. All seating amenities will have black powder-coated finish.



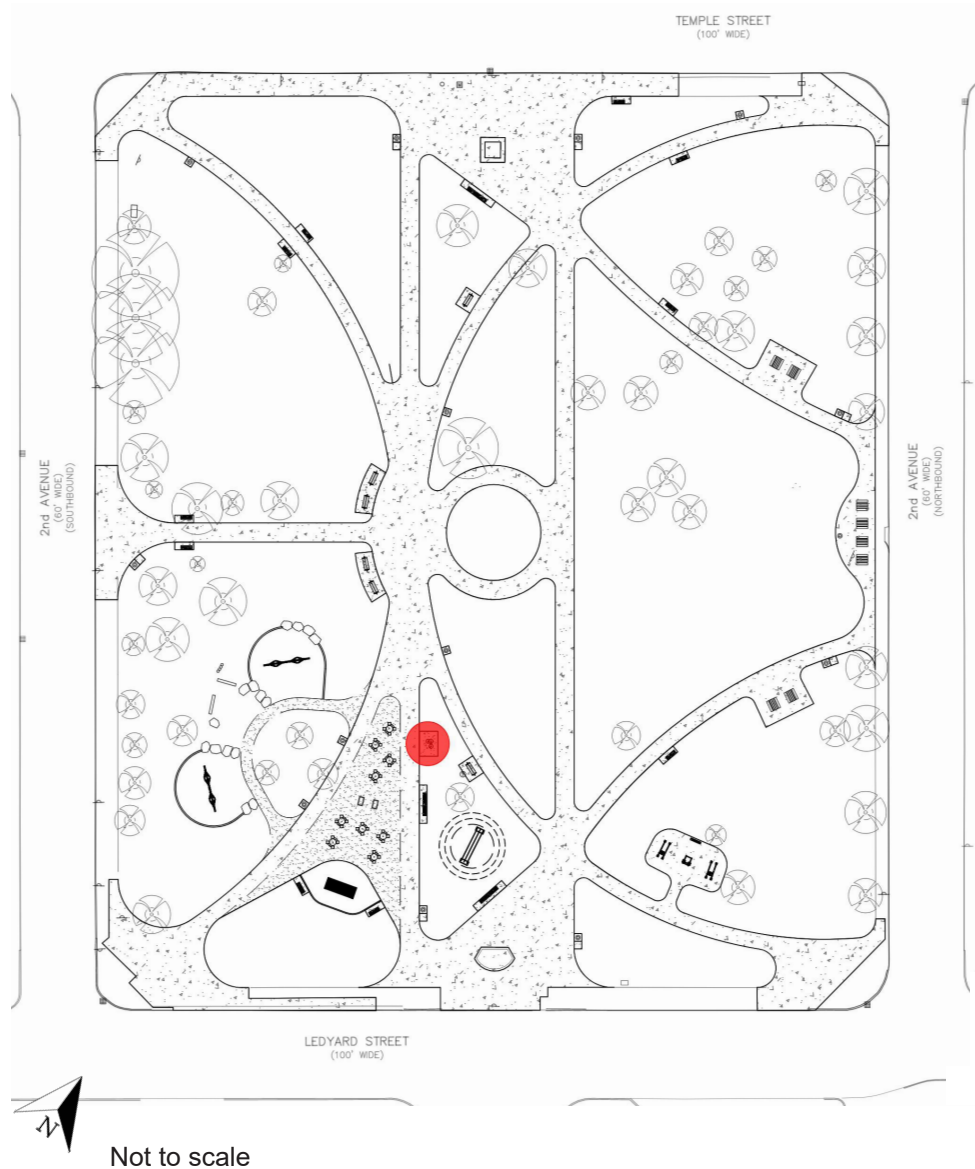
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PROPOSED DRINKING FOUNTAIN

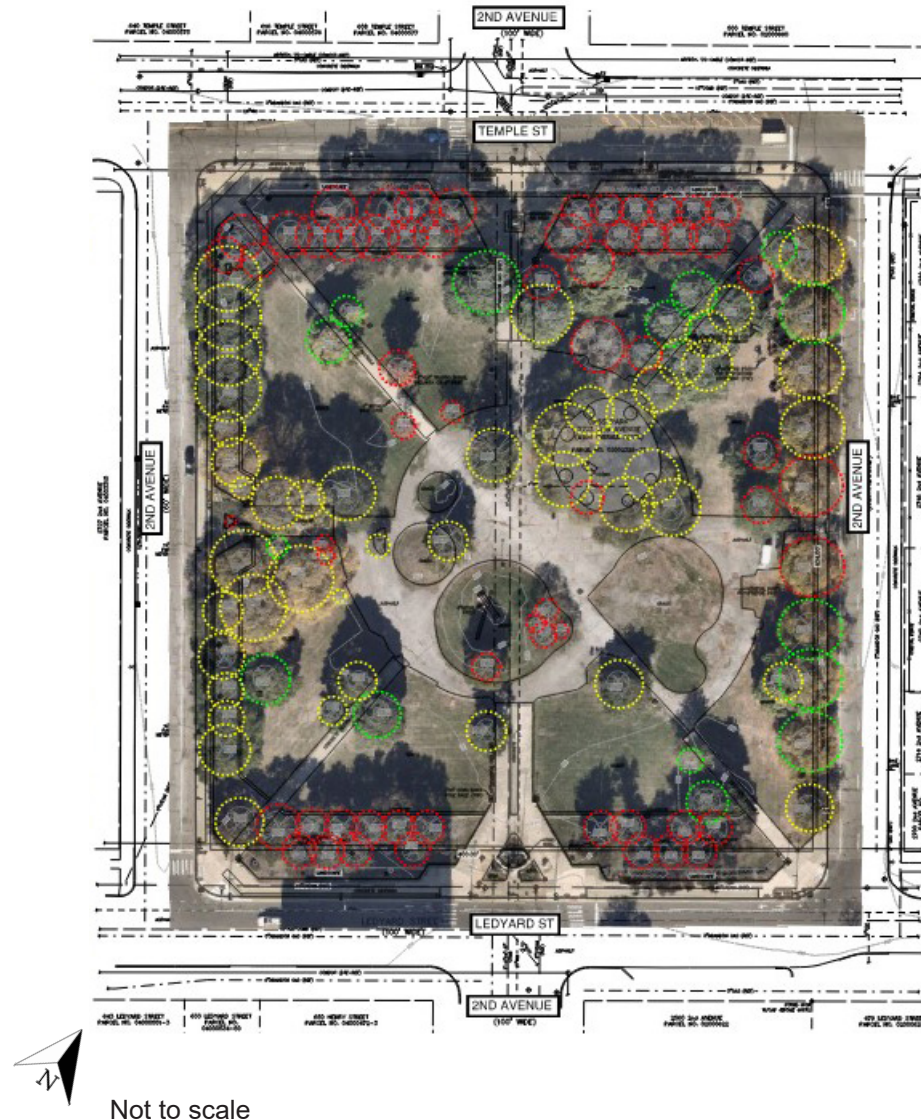
The proposed drinking fountain is another improvement in reimagining the historic presence of the park. The drinking fountain will be accessible to all and include a pet fountain; amenity will have black powder-coated finish.



CASS PARK ARBORIST TREE SURVEY

EXISTING TREES:

The majority of the trees in Cass Park either have trunk damage, are dead (poor condition), or need pruning (fair). Most of the proposed tree removals are Bradford trees which are invasive as well as being in poor condition, they are along the northern and southern edges of the park and will be replaced with healthier spacing and native and non-invasive varieties.



-  TREE, POOR CONDITION (-59)
-  TREE, FAIR CONDITION (46 TO REMAIN)
-  TREE, GOOD CONDITION (16 TO REMAIN)

NOTE: PROPOSE PLANTING OF 60+ NEWER TREES



INVASIVE BRADFORD PEAR

PROPOSED TREES AND LANDSCAPING

For every tree removed in the park it will be replaced, with improved spacing for tree health as well as non-invasive and 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 pathways and two, loose lines of trees to retain the vista down 2nd Avenue through the park. Garden beds will be added to enhance this 2nd Ave entries and vista as well.



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PROPOSED TREE SELECTION



'OCTOBER GLORY' RED
MAPLE



'AUTUMN GLORY'
MAIDENHAIR TREE



'EXPRESSO' KENTUCKY
COFFEE TREE



'PRINCETON' ELM



SWAMP WHITE OAK

PROPOSED LANDSCAPING SELECTION



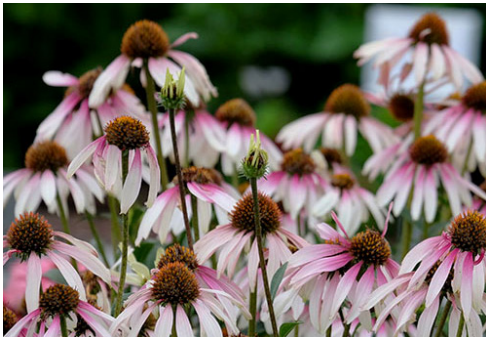
HYDRANGEA PANICULATA



FILIPENDULA RUBRA



VERONICASTRUM VIRGINICUM



ECHINCEA PURPUREA



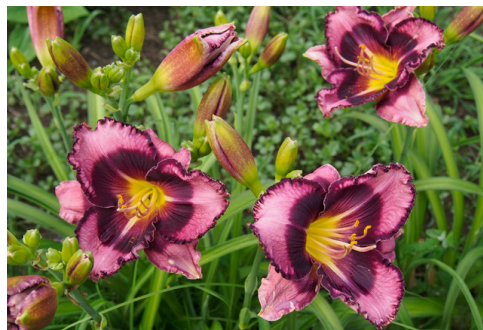
PHLOX PANICULATA



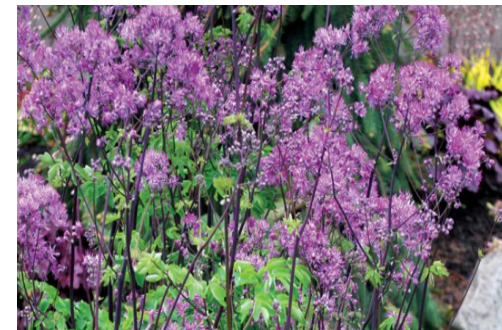
RUSSIAN SAGE



'ENDLESS HEART' DAYLILY



'STORM SHELTER' DAYLILY



THALICTRUM AGUILEGIFOLIUM

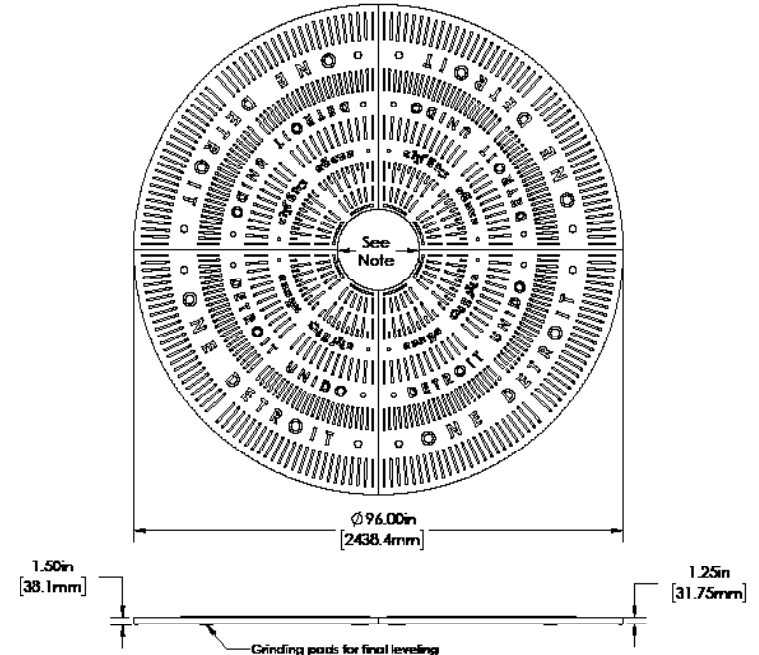
PROPOSED TREE GRATES - GATHERING SPACE AND CHILL ZONE/PLAZA

PROPOSED TREE GRATES

The tree grates will be located in the gathering and chill zone/plaza space as shown on the map in shaded areas, to accommodate trees within the gathering areas, to help retain the symmetry of the green spaces in the park and canopy.



TREE GRATE DETAIL



PARK SIGNAGE

EXISTING PARK SIGN:

Currently the only sign in Cass Park is a engraved concrete pillar, as shown below and in the adjacent park site plan. The sign is currently located in a raised planter bed center in the park along Ledyard St and 2nd Ave.



EXISTING PARK SIGN TO REMAIN

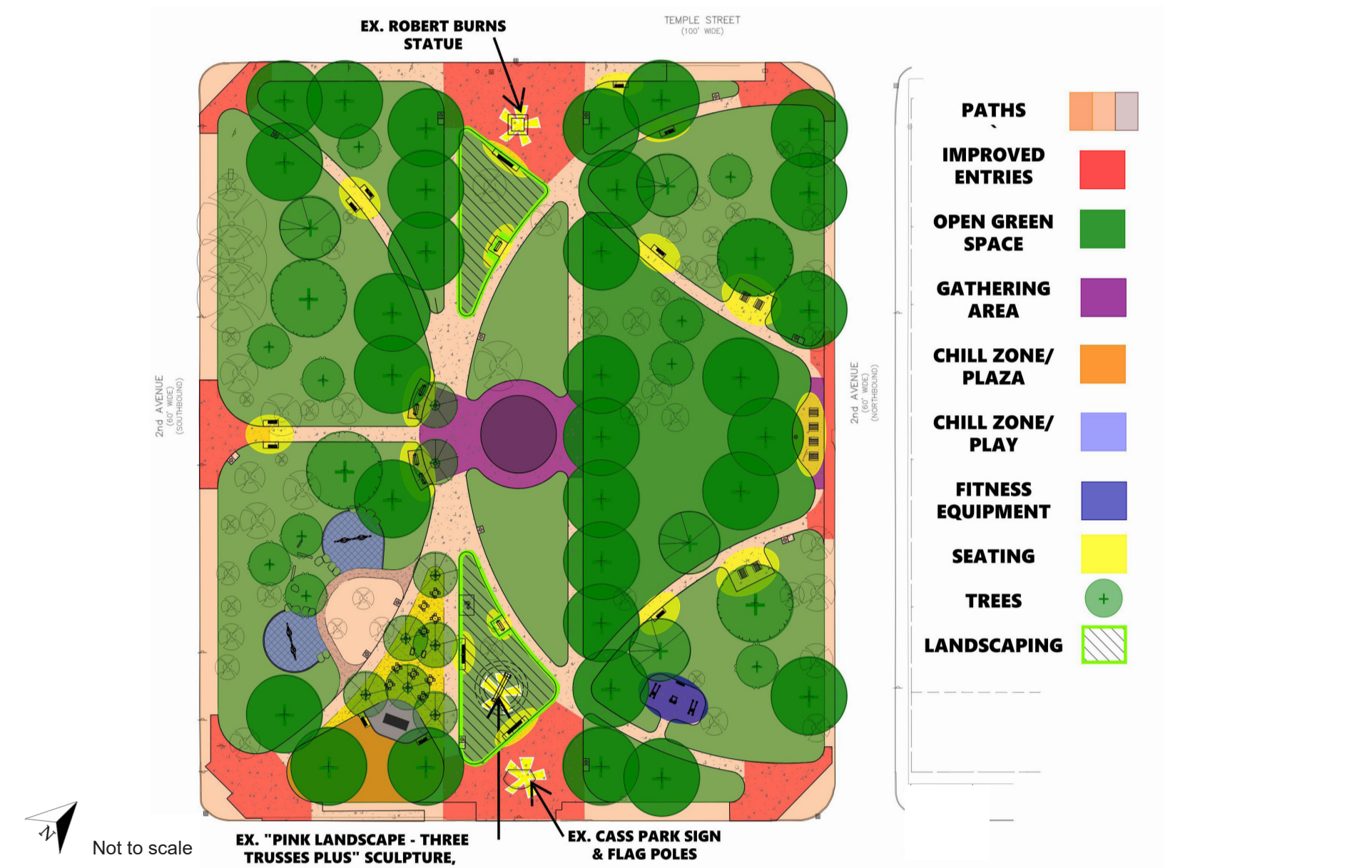
PROPOSED ADDITIONAL PARK SIGNS:

The proposed design will place one standard park sign with city branding at north park entrance, as shown on the adjacent site plan. The park sign will identify the site as a City park as well as post park hours.



PROPOSED PARK SIGN

CASS PARK 2025 PROPOSED PLAN



SCOPE OF WORK AND CUT SHEETS ATTACHED

CASS PARK

SPRING 2026 DESIGN



GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Parks & Recreation
Division