



# KESSLER PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN



**KANSAS CITY**  
**Parks & Recreation**

Approved by Park Board on July 23, 2024 by Resolution No. 32589

# Acknowledgments

Thanks to all who participated in this process to inform a future for this park that prioritizes the needs of nearby residents, enhances the resilience of its environmental resources, and attracts visitors to experience this inspiring public space in our great City. In addition to a rich public engagement process (see Appendix C for details), a big thank you goes to the committed members of the Advisory Committee shown below for their guidance throughout the planning process, as well as their assistance in communicating with their networks and communities to share information about the process and encourage public participation.

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Jared Campbell, Downtown Council/Greenline  
Jared Coleman, Park Ambassador  
Keith Schoen, Guadalupe Center High School  
Linda Lehrbaum, Bridging the Gap/Kansas City Wildlands  
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Throughout the planning process dozens of small group interviews with neighbors, user groups, and City Department staff were held to inform the plan with detailed input. These conversations also helped to identify ongoing community projects and opportunities to support these projects through documenting them in the concept design and connecting partners to increase their capacity.

### **TECHNICAL ADVISORS**

1% for Art program  
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Cliff Drive Corridor Committee  
Cliff Drive Project Status (Parks staff)  
Jerusalem Farm  
KC Museum  
KCATA  
KCMO Public Works  
MU Extension  
Our Town Grant - NE Arts Advisors  
RideKC Bike share administration

### **USER GROUPS**

Cultivate KC  
Giving Grove  
Heartland Conservation Alliance  
Jerusalem Farm (goat herd and orchard)  
KC Disc Golf  
KCU  
Local artists and art teachers  
Local community gardeners  
Local conservation efforts - Wil Oden  
Rock Climbing (ROKC)  
Urban Trail Company

### **GUADALUPE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Keith Schoen, a teacher from Guadalupe Academy High School served on the Advisory Committee and connected the Consultant Team with their Impact Academy students. Four high school students toured Kessler Park with the Consultant Team and KCMO Parks staff. The team met with the students biweekly to provide input on their planning process. The students presented their findings and proposal at the end of their semester (Fall 2022).

### **CONSULTANT TEAM**

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Biohabitats



SWT DESIGN

**HOXIE**  
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# Chapter 1: Executive Summary



Concourse Park, looking north

# Executive Summary

## Purpose

The 300-acre area known as Kessler Park is comprised of seven smaller park areas including Maple Park, the old municipal Reservoir area, North Terrace Lake, Concourse Park, Scarritt Point, Indian Mound, and the NE Athletic Fields. It also includes Cliff Drive, Reservoir Drive, and Gladstone Boulevard as Parks-maintained roads. This beautiful behemoth has grown to include additional public space since its original design by George Kessler, and in its current configuration, this is the first comprehensive improvement plan to assess priorities for the whole park. The Kessler Park Improvement Plan process was designed to meet the following goals:

- Create a coordinated, holistic, community-guided strategic capital improvement plan for the whole park
- Create a Connectivity Plan to improve access, safety, and programs between neighborhoods and amenities within the park
- Create an Operations and Maintenance Plan for improving capacity and consistency for parks maintenance
- Create a Conservation plan for improving health and resilience of natural resources in the park

## Process

The multidisciplinary consultant team intertwined community engagement throughout the analysis and design process. The Kessler Park Improvement Plan process employed a multi-layered community engagement approach that included establishing a diverse Advisory Committee representative of the communities and organizations connected to Kessler Park; a High School Mentorship initiative; Stakeholder Interviews; multi-lingual Focus Group meetings; Online Surveys; a Project Website, and three Public Meetings advertised city-wide. There were over 700 touchpoints across 60 events, surveys, and meetings.

The three-phase planning process began with establishing an understanding of historic and current conditions through data collection, field studies, Parks Department interviews, and community conversations. During phase two alternative concept designs were developed for each area of the park as well as an overall connectivity and environmental strategy for the full park based on the data collected and feedback received during phase one. Feedback on these options was gathered from the neighbors, user groups, and City Departments. During phase three the conceptual designs were refined and cost estimates were accomplished; the Parks-facing tools and deliverables (Operation and Maintenance plan, and Environmental Conservation Plan) were crafted.



## Outcomes

The planning process brought to light the Community Vision and Mission for Kessler Park along with priorities for improvements.

### Community Vision

Kessler Park is a regional destination that inspires visitors with immersive experiences in nature, supports the local communities' vibrant art and cultures, and holds the widest array of recreational amenities in the city.

### Community Mission

Kessler Park will become a safe place for all and will build on the improvement and maintenance of existing assets with beloved programs and partnerships. Strategic growth of facilities and programming are planned over time to enhance safety and environmental health while attracting more visitors and investment.

### Priority improvement categories

1. Safety
2. Maintenance
3. Environmental Conservation
4. Connectivity
5. Activation

In addition to the cost estimated design concepts for each of the seven parks within Kessler Park, projects and recommended initiatives have been organized based on the priority categories of improvement. Recommendations for strategic near term projects provide equitable community benefit, attract more park users, and build momentum for the next projects.

During the final phase of the planning process several members of the Advisory Committee opted to begin a volunteer Implementation Work Group to assist the Parks Department in moving the plan for their beloved Kessler Park forward with early wins, bolstered partnerships, and fundraising efforts. Please read on for more information about findings and outcomes from the committed Kansas City community dedicated to the improvement of Kessler Park.

# Chapter 2: A Beloved Park



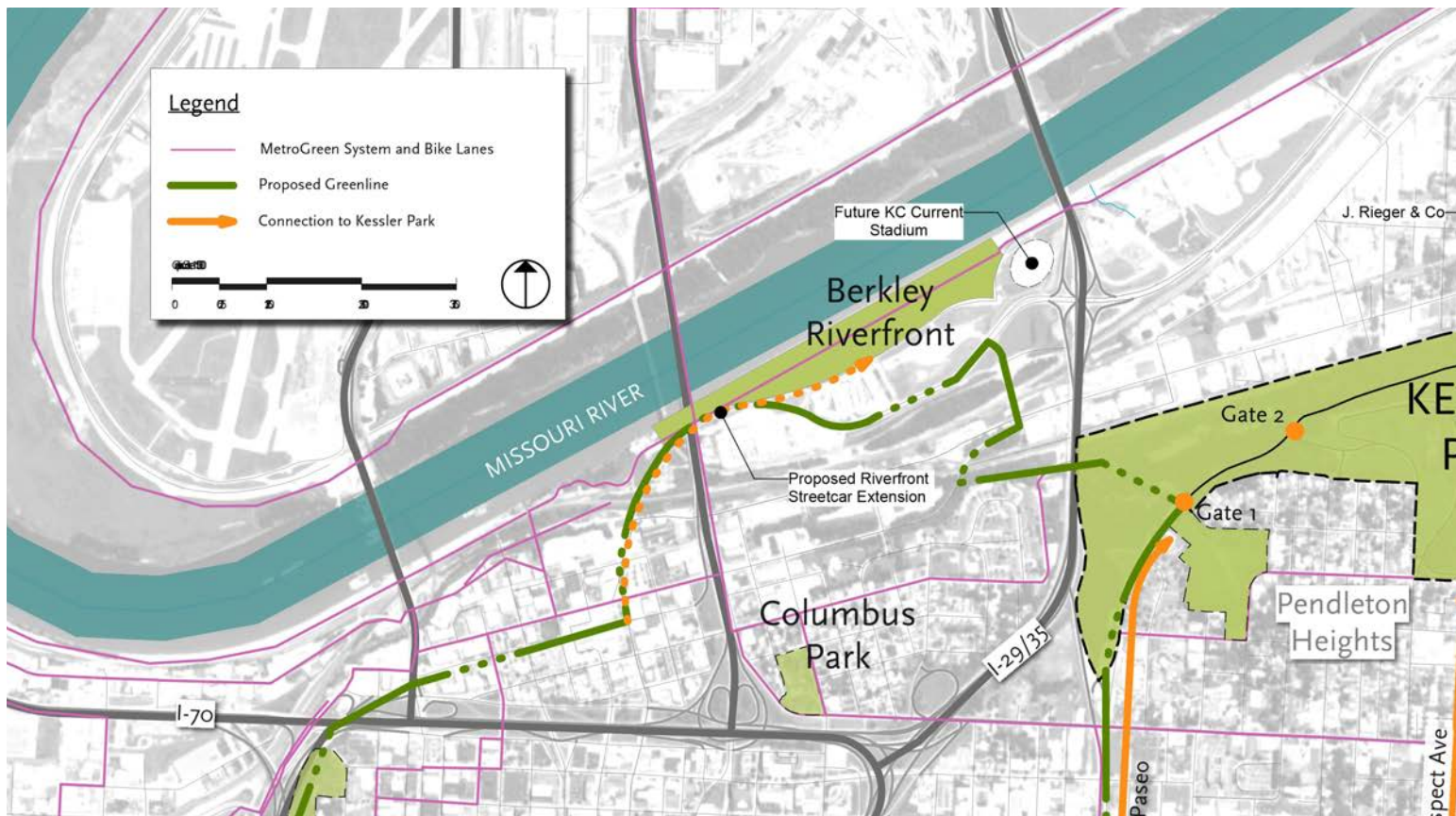
*North Terrace Lake, looking south*

## Purpose and Goals of the Planning Process

The mission of Kansas City Missouri Parks and Recreation Department (Parks Department) is to improve the quality of life, health, and wellness of our community by providing socially equitable, community-driven programming and environmentally sound natural resource management.

The Parks Department recently asked the KCMO voters to pass a bond to fund deferred maintenance and improvements throughout the parks system. The voters responded with a resounding "Yes!" They are also undertaking a system-wide asset evaluation and strategic planning process, an aquatics facility study, and several individual Park Improvement Plans. This funding, analysis, and community engagement set in motion a process to equitably and strategically address how the parks system can better meet the needs of Kansas City communities.

The 303-acre area known as Kessler Park is comprised of seven smaller park areas including Maple Park, the old municipal Reservoir area, North Terrace Lake, Concourse Park, KC Museum | Scarritt Point, Indian Mound, and the NE Athletic Fields. It also includes Cliff Drive, Reservoir Drive, and Gladstone Boulevard as Parks-maintained roads. This beautiful behemoth has grown to include additional public space since its original design by George Kessler, and in its current configuration, this is the first comprehensive improvement plan to assess priorities for the whole park. The process began in March of 2022 to meet the following goals as defined by the Parks Department.

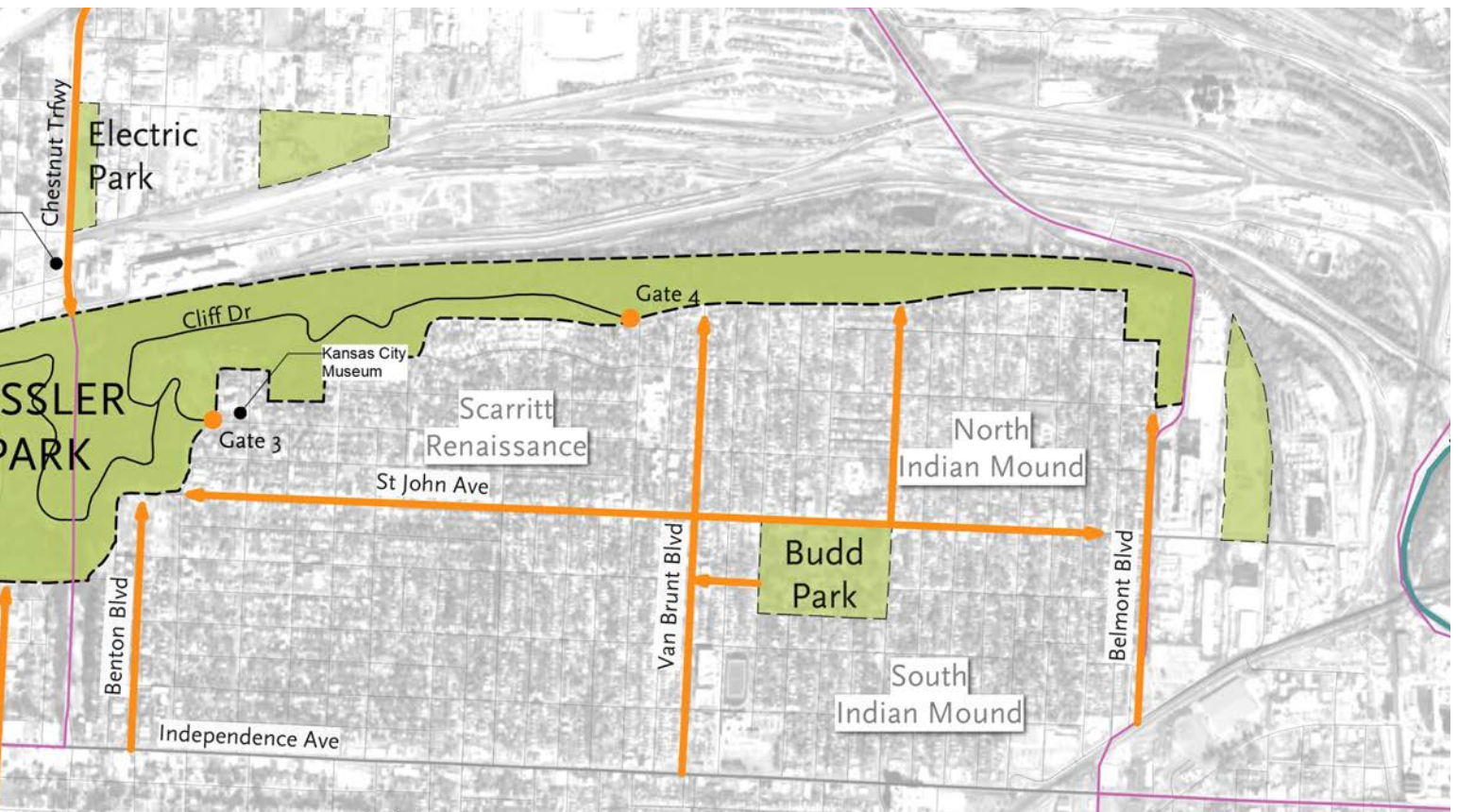


Kessler Park context map

The Kessler Park Improvement Plan is:

- A coordinated, holistic, community-guided strategic capital improvement plan for the whole park
- A Connectivity Plan to improve access, safety, and programs between neighborhoods and amenities within the park
- A Operations and Maintenance (O+M) Plan for improving capacity and consistency for parks maintenance
- A Conservation plan for improving health and resilience of natural resources in the park

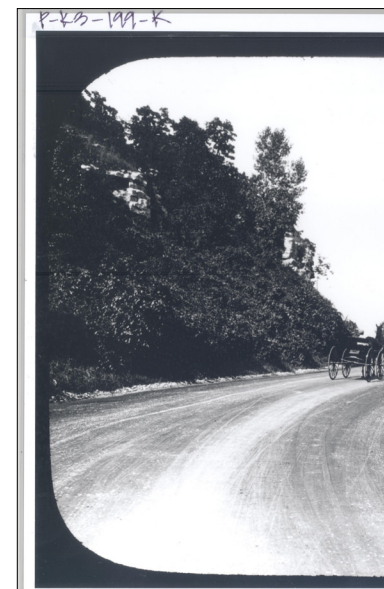
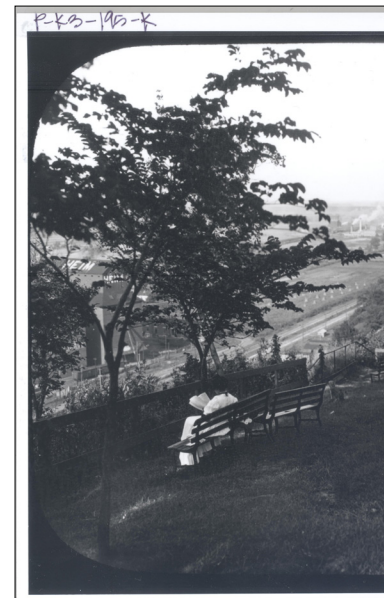
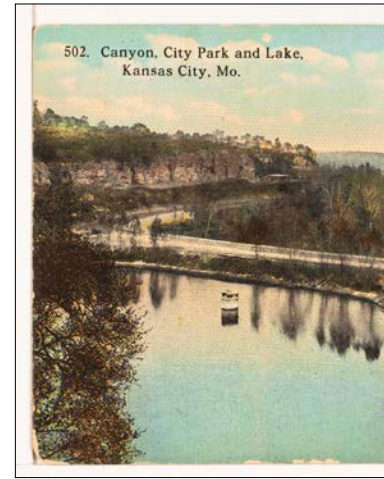
As soon as the planning project began, community input also began to inform the goals of the project. This park is a beloved place that serves many from all over the city who expressed their desire to see a plan that builds upon the natural beauty; takes better care of what we have; and supports local community programming with more accessibility, cleanliness, and connectedness. The multicultural communities that currently surround Kessler Park want safe, clean, and beautiful spaces to gather and play with their families and friends.

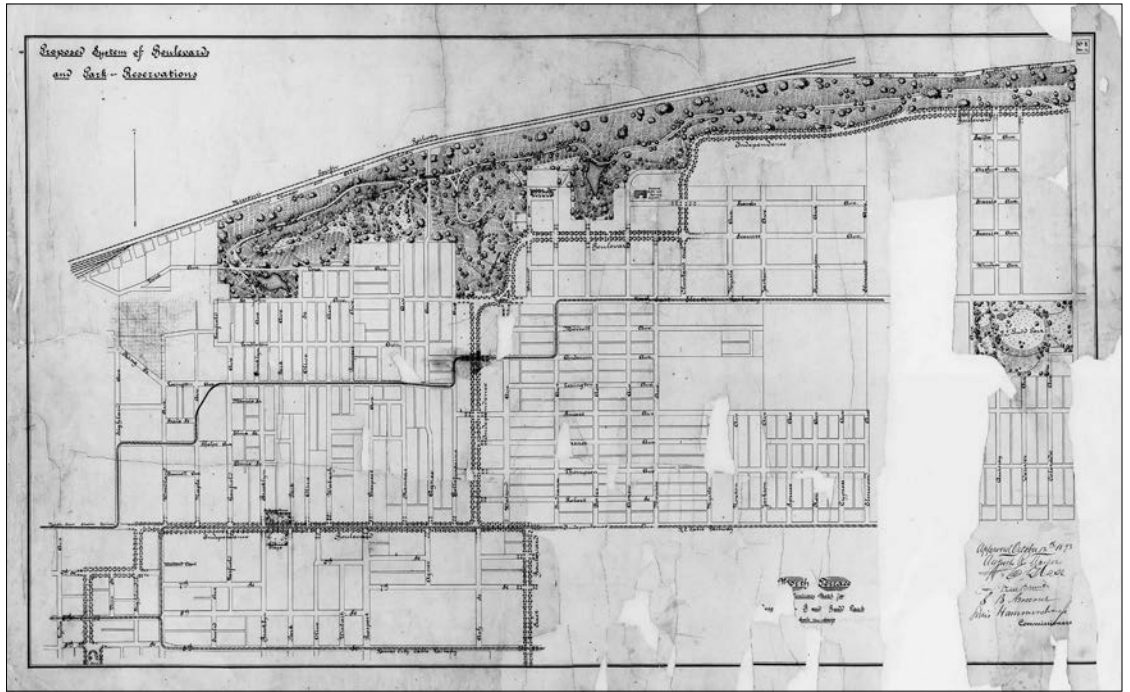
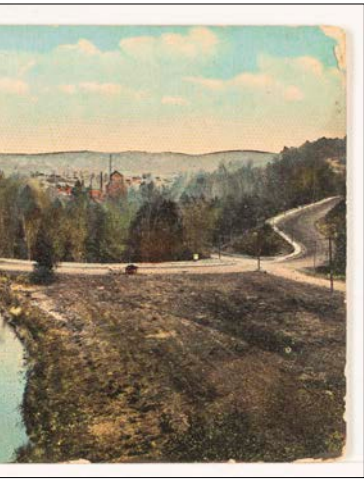


## Past and Present

Kessler Park is a 303-acre park located in the Historic Northeast area of Kansas City, Missouri. It contains steep bluffs overlooking the Missouri River that offer striking views of the river valley. Originally named North Terrace Park, this was the first park built in the Parks and Boulevard system designed by George Kessler in his 1893 plan for Kansas City to be a “city within a park.” North Terrace Park was an important anchor in this plan and was meant to stay “wild and rugged, handsome, beautiful and picturesque” with Cliff Drive as the signature feature to provide views of the surrounding landscape and connect the east and west park regions separated by steep hills.

Cliff Drive welcomed visitors with a grand opening in July 1905, and was designed for walks and carriage rides. Improvements to retaining walls and drainage were continued over time. A spring was converted to a public drinking fountain in 1906 (now the location of Carl DiCapo Fountain) and gas lights were installed in 1907 to light the way at night (updated to electric in 1920). As the auto became popular, safety enhancements including pavement, wider roadways, stone barricades, and pull-offs for sightseeing were added. Over the years the rules of the road have changed in attempts to increase safety and access, including designation of one-way traffic, designation of one lane for vehicles and one for bicyclists and pedestrians, and finally closure to vehicles due to deteriorating road conditions and illegal dumping. In 2000 the Parks Department and former state representative Ronnie DePasco succeeded in designating it a state Scenic Byway. This designation opened the way for state funding to help with road repairs and cleanups, and it was reopened in 2001. Additional work to repair staircases, overlooks, sidewalks, and install new information kiosks was accomplished in 2015. Cliff Drive is now closed to vehicles but open to pedestrians, bicyclists, and skateboarders.





Historic images from the Missouri Valley Collection and Kansas City Parks and Recreation Archive, Clockwise from upper left: Canyon, Early North Terrace Lake; 1892 Map of Park; Spring on Cliff Drive; Cliff Drive; Scarritt Point

## Past and Present

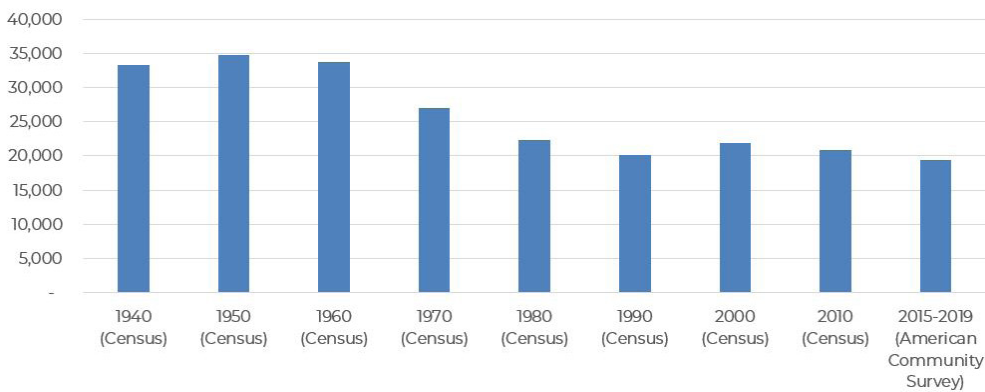
Over the last century, the changes that have occurred in Kessler Park can provide a view of social, economic, and environmental changes in the city and region. The park touches three Historic Northeast Neighborhoods (Pendleton Heights, Scarritt Renaissance and Indian Mound) and has a trail connection to the historic Columbus Park Neighborhood as well.

### Demographics

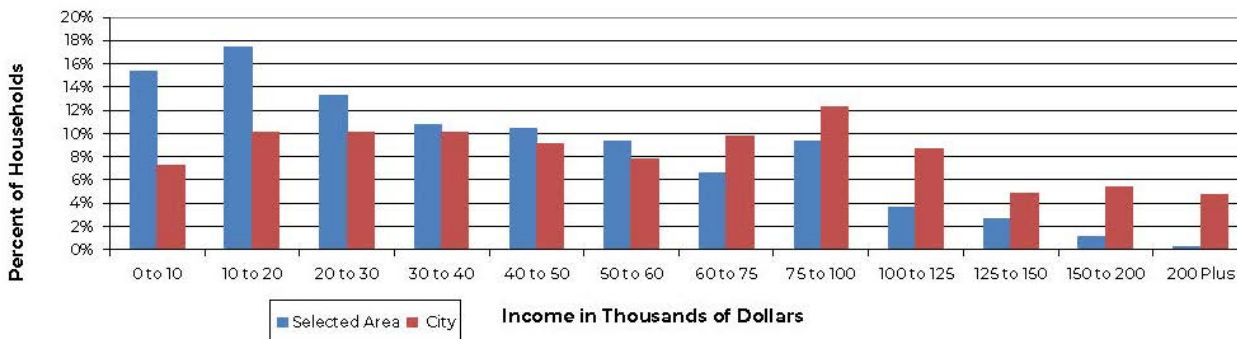
In the past 40 years, there has been a significant shift in the population of the Historic Northeast. Residents today have settled in this area from all around the world. From the 1980s to today, minority populations have increased by 350% percent (from 3,700 residents to just over 13,000 being nonwhite). Youth populations have also increased steadily over time. At the same time, median household income has been declining going from \$43,000 in today's dollars in the 1980s to about \$33,000 today.

Data Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey

### Population Change

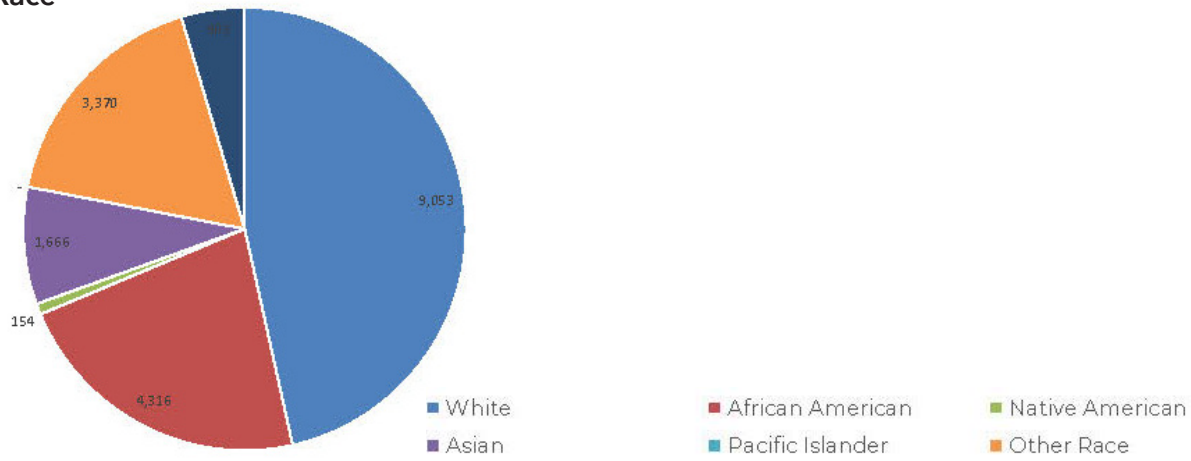


### Income of Households

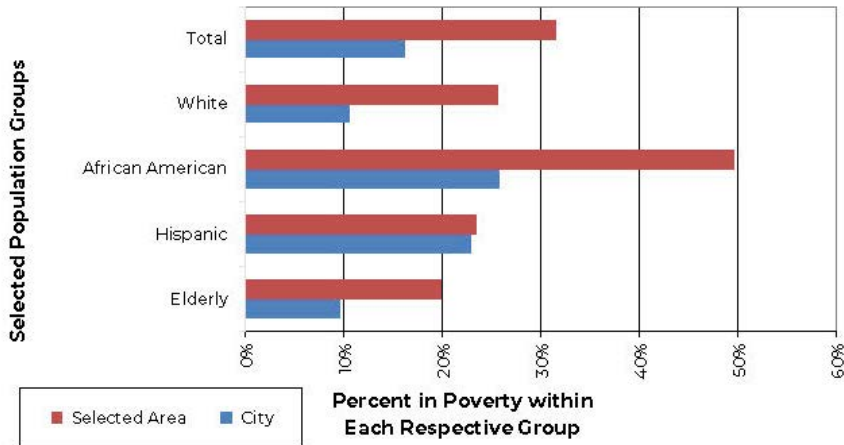




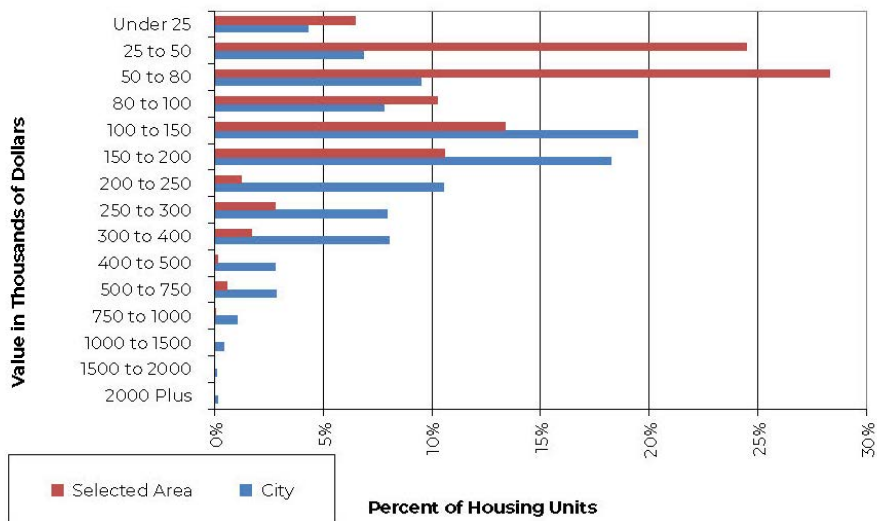
## Race



## Poverty Status



## Value of Owned Home



## Current Partners

A number of outdoor recreation organizations have formed agreements with the Parks Department to utilize this public land and also to assist in its maintenance.

The KC Disc Golf Club is an organization that has been working with the Parks Department in Kessler Park since 2004. They installed a challenging 18-hole course around the old municipal Reservoir and in the woods along Cliff Drive. The club manages classes, golf events, and updates to their equipment. Likewise, the Urban Trail Company has been working alongside the Parks Department to build and maintain 8 miles of single-track hiking, running and biking trails through the woodlands of Kessler Park. Both organizations also help with the clean-up of illegal dumping and removal of invasive plant species to keep their equipment and trails usable.

Additional organizations working with the Parks Department in Kessler Park include RoKC (rock climbing), Pendleton Heights Neighborhood Association (community orchard), MU Extension and Missouri Department of Conservation (North Terrace Lake stocking and improvements), Jerusalem Farm (planning a goat paddock for honeysuckle remediation, and orchard with Giving Grove), Wil Oden (a resident of Pendleton Heights who is clearing invasive plants and replanting native species near Cliff Drive gate 3), and dozens of community volunteers who organize through the Park Ambassadors program to care for the park.

Others show up regularly to longboard on Cliff Drive, explore the fascinating spaces of the old municipal Reservoir, and play Sepak Takraw, Futsal, and Soccer on the fields and courts of Maple Park and Concourse Park.

## Challenges

Like all urban parks, especially those with over a century of history, Kessler Park exists within constraints to its physical form and management. Its celebrated views are the result of steep cliffs that plunge to the river, making illegal dumping easy and maintenance difficult. Management challenges that

the Parks Department faces regarding the care and maintenance of Kessler Park include limited budget and personnel, increasing numbers of unhoused individuals living in the park without support services or waste management, illegal dumping, property vandalization, crime, and gunfire. Like many parks throughout the U.S, the ecological health of the park is also compromised by unmanaged proliferation of invasive plant species, pollutants in stormwater runoff, and erosion that requires additional ecological engineering to stabilize slopes and manage water flow. Its sprawling, complex footprint, with multiple entry points and roadways also makes it difficult for managers and the neighborhoods it touches to see Kessler Park as a single entity.

The public and private disinvestment in large areas of our city born of racist practices of redlining and blockbusting have resulted in decades of disinvestment and communities that suffer the impacts of inequitable service provision, pollution, access to quality education, jobs and quality affordable housing. (Source: [MARC History of Racial Discrimination in Housing Still Impacts the KC Region Today](#) - additional resources listed under link as well; [KC Community Health Improvement Plan](#) )

## Community Investment and Opportunities

Meanwhile, the central location and affordability of the Historic Northeast has attracted a diverse population of refugee and immigrant families, as well as Black, Brown, and Indigenous families where languages spoken and cultural traditions are diverse.

As improvements are made to Kessler Park it is important to create parallel programs and policies with community development organizations and neighborhoods to proactively protect the affordability of quality homes from market forces of speculative development around valued recreational resources, and prioritize access to amenities and programming by and for the local residents of diverse cultures who have invested in this area. This includes multilingual translation of communications and wayfinding for the park.



*Stair behind Colonnade at Concourse Park*

## The Intertwined Engagement, Analysis, and Design Process

This planning process for Kessler Park was designed to provide public-facing tools that document the rich community conversations and the resulting community-guided designs and priorities for connectivity and park amenities. The process also developed Parks Department-facing tools and documentation for their internal teams to use. (See Appendices A-D for the Conservation Plan, Operation and Maintenance Plan, Engagement Details, and Cost Estimate).

In accordance with the overarching goal of the Kessler Park Plan to create “a coordinated, holistic, community-guided strategic improvement plan for the whole park,” the plan is rooted in informed engagement with residents and park users about the value and needs of the park as well as creative solutions for its future state.

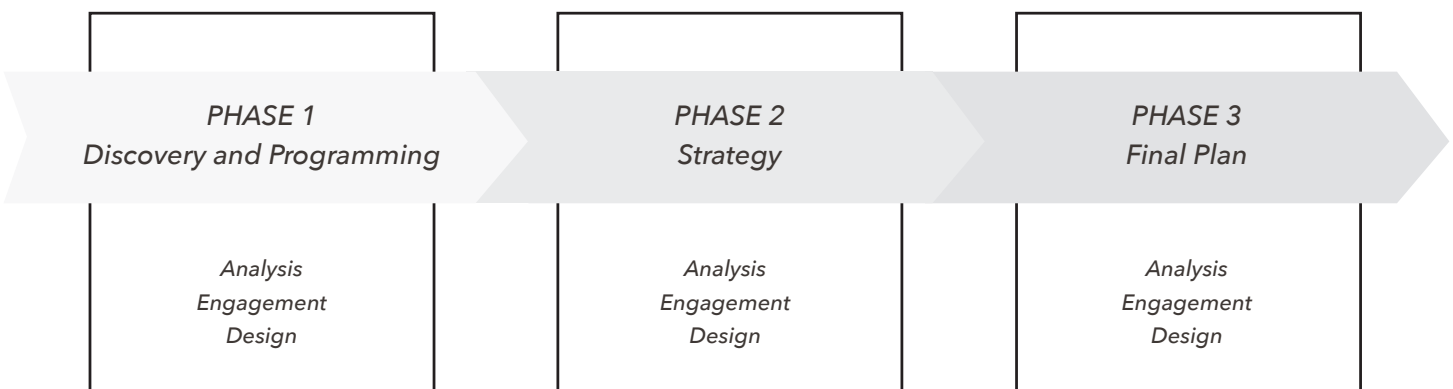
**The 10-month long planning process was organized in three phases:**

Phase 1 Discovery and Programming (4 months)

Phase 2: Strategy (3 months)

Phase 3: Final Plan (3 months)

Each phase included an iterative cycle of analysis, community engagement, design. The multidisciplinary consultant team worked closely with the Parks Department and provided expertise in urban planning, engagement, landscape architecture, green infrastructure, ecology, and conservation practices.



## Phase One

During phase one, the team collected data on history, existing park conditions, demographics, crime, infrastructure, traffic, circulation, drainage, natural resource assets and ecological threats. These elements are critical to developing a plan that is both aspirational and focused on attainable goals. During phase one, multi-layered community engagement began with establishing a diverse Advisory Committee to represent the communities and organizations connected to Kessler Park. This committee was comprised of 34 individuals including representatives from each of the Historic Northeast (HNE) neighborhoods, representatives from HNE schools, local environmental conservation, climbing, biking, and trails organizations, representatives from the disc golf community, City Departments, and representatives from major local institutions such as the KC Museum and Kansas City University. The purpose of this committee was to provide guidance at the milestones of the planning process and to advise on the larger community engagement process. As a body of community leaders, this committee also assisted with outreach on public meetings and providing information and surveys to their communities throughout the process.

Beginning in the first phase of the planning process, and continuing throughout all three phases, dozens of small group interviews with Stakeholder user groups and City Department staff were held to inform the planning process with detailed input on park use, programming, operations, and care modes for maintenance and conservation. These conversations also helped to identify ongoing community projects and opportunities to support and grow these projects through documenting them in the concept designs, connecting partners for increased capacity, and liaising relationships with the KCMO Parks Department. Information gathered from these conversations was integrated into the mapping of the park assets, infrastructure, challenges, and planned projects. The team also attended neighborhood association meetings to inform residents on the process, share the project website ([kesslerparkplankc.com](http://kesslerparkplankc.com)), and encourage participation in the upcoming focus groups, public meetings, and surveys.

At the first Advisory Committee meeting (5.17.22), the analysis of data was shared for feedback and goal setting. The original scope of the planning project was to focus on maintaining what existed in the park versus enhancements and bigger vision ideas. The Advisory Committee pushed back and requested enhancements and visioning be incorporated throughout the planning effort. The committee provided additional guidance on widening engagement, additional community partners needed, community concerns to address in this process, and how to differentiate this park as a community asset and a regional draw with arts and recreation opportunities provided in a unique urban park founded on conservation of natural resources.

The first public event was an outdoor Community Gathering at Concourse Park (6.25.22). This event was organized to include demonstrated activation of the park as well as community engagement with the planning process. Organized volunteers provided walking tours, guided bike rides, a pickup futsal game, a disc golf game, and the KC Symphony brought their Mobile Music Box to play two concerts during the event, with locally operated food trucks standing by to offer food and refreshment. All local neighborhood and user group organizations were invited to have information tables at the event. The planning team created a display to collect community feedback on types of uses and amenities desired in each area of the park. Public events were advertised with multi-lingual flyers, at neighborhood meetings, through social media, newsletters sent to the contact list growing from website interactions, through the KCMO Parks newsletter, and through podcasts and advertisements in the NE News. After this public event the Consultant Team created an online survey to receive additional input on the same materials and questions presented at the event.

## Phase Two

During phase two alternative concept designs were developed for each area of the park as well as an overall connectivity strategy for the full park based on the data collected and feedback received during phase one. During this time the Operation and Maintenance Strategy was drafted as well as the Conservation Plan for Parks Department feedback. The second Advisory Committee milestone meeting provided guidance on the concept designs for each area of the park as well as overall strategies for increasing safety, connectivity, and natural resource conservation to boost attendance and appreciation of the park thus paving the way for success of the larger longer-term projects.

After the Advisory Committee meeting, four multi-lingual focus group meetings were held to reach a wider audience. Interpreters for Spanish, Swahili, Somali, and Arabic languages were available to liaise conversations between the consultant team and community members about the design concepts for each area of the park. During this time, the second online survey (available in multiple languages) was launched to assure convenience and accessibility for wide community feedback on the design concepts. (150 responses)

The concept designs were refined based on community feedback and the preferred design for each area was presented at the second public event. This event was an Open House held at the KC Museum (9.24.22). Community members could come anytime between 11a and 3p to provide feedback to the Consultant Team about Design Concepts for each area of the park as well as connectivity strategies for the full park. Participants were also asked to vote on prioritized improvements. Environmental conservation improvements were the most highly prioritized.

## Phase Three

During phase three, the designs and cost estimates for each area of the park were refined including:

- Entries, road alignments, and parking
- Trail connections, and trailheads
- Passive and active recreation amenities
- Utilities and stormwater management
- Conservation strategies for woodland, savannah, and turf transition

Small group conversations with City Department staff and user groups and stakeholders were held to confirm alignments and costs. At this time, the final drafts of the Operation and Maintenance Plan and Conservation Plan were also provided to the Parks Department for review.

The final Advisory Committee meeting (11.17.22) provided input on the near-term priority projects for each area of the park as well as park-wide priorities to increase safety and connectivity. The group also discussed next steps for implementation of the plan, including funding sources and establishment of a Conservancy or Friends Group. A subset of the Advisory Committee expressed interest in continuing involvement to establish this implementation-focused group.

The third public event was an Open House held at the NE Chamber of Commerce Community Room (2.4.23). Community members could come anytime between 10a and 1p to provide feedback to the Consultant Team about the final design concepts, and near-term strategies to address community priorities of Safety, Environmental Conservation, Maintenance, Connectivity, and Activation.

Cost estimations as well as the draft Operations and Maintenance Plan were also available for review. More community members also signed up to be a part of the implementation-focused group.



Clockwise from upper left: Community Celebration at Concourse Park (6.25.22), Open House at KC Museum (9.24.22), Open House at KC Museum, Open House at NE Chamber of Commerce (2.4.23), Focus Group Meeting at Riverview Garden Apartments (9.7.22), Community Celebration at Concourse Park

# Chapter 3: Planning for Improvement





Reservoir Park, looking south

# The Future of Kessler Park

*As the analysis, design, and engagement progressed, the Community Vision and Mission for Kessler Park came into view along with the priorities for improvements.*

## Community Vision

Kessler Park is a regional destination that inspires visitors with immersive experiences in nature, supports the local communities' vibrant art and cultures, and holds the widest array of recreational amenities in the city.

## Community Mission

Kessler Park will become a safe place for all and will build on the improvement and maintenance of existing assets with beloved programs and partnerships. Strategic growth of facilities and programming are planned over time to enhance safety and environmental health while attracting more visitors and investment.

## Priority improvement categories:

1. Safety
2. Maintenance
3. Environmental Conservation
4. Connectivity
5. Activation

## Safety and Maintenance

Neighboring residents and regular users of the park agree that increasing safety is the first and most important concern for making sustainable improvements to Kessler Park. Areas near the Reservoir and along Cliff Drive suffer from undesirable and illegal activity affecting the quality of everyday life for nearby residents and limit the use of the park. With increased visibility, regular patrol and enforcement of park rules, as well as regular programming to activate all areas of the park, undesirable activity will decrease, and the park can be reclaimed for recreation, community events, and tourism that celebrate the neighborhoods and the natural resources. Safer traffic patterns between drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists are also important to the Park's safety and increased use.

With increased safety, security, and presence in the park, some of the current time-consuming maintenance tasks such as vandalism repairs, and illegal dumping cleanup will diminish. Also, with transition of standard mowing practices to natural resource conservation practices, Park staff time and contractor time can be reallocated to improved service levels on other maintenance tasks throughout the park including management of restrooms, drinking fountains, regular emptying of trash and recycling containers and cleaning and maintaining existing assets and new attractions. (See Appendix B: Operation and Maintenance Plan for baseline and improved service levels for asset management and regular tasks).

## Environmental Conservation

Poised at the rich natural interface of river and upland ecological systems, this wild and rugged park has provided respite and recreation for Kansas Citians since 1905. It also holds a recipe for environmental stewardship and climate resilience in its woodlands, waterways, and open meadows. In addition to the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department and the Parks Ambassadors, many are involved in the care of Kessler, including but not limited to: neighborhood residents, Park Stewards, Kansas City WildLands, the Urban Trail Company, University of Missouri Extension, Missouri Department of Conservation, Jerusalem Farm, Giving Grove, RoKC, and Kansas City Disc Golf. These individuals and organizations have assisted in maintaining trails, clearing invasive plant species, cleaning up litter, managing an orchard, stocking the lake with fish, installing recreational amenities, and organizing events to activate the park. The echoing cry from all involved is to repair its health, make it accessible to more people, and support those who are already involved in this work with more capacity and sustainable progress. Supported by conservation strategies for the most sensitive areas, healthy woodland, wetland, and savannah ecosystems can reduce heat island effect, improve air quality, and help to reduce erosion and waterway pollution. As this park is conserved, repaired, and beautified, it can be a living lesson in biology, history, humanities, and ecological engineering for students of all ages. See Appendix A Conservation Plan for more information on the conservation approach and strategies to repair the health of the natural resources of Kessler Park.

## Conservation Plan Map



This map shows the ecosystems of Kessler Park and the areas of focused conservation efforts. The concept designs for each area of the park (pp 36-62) include strategies to increase the health and resilience of the natural resources while providing benefits to the health and wellness of park users. See Appendix A Conservation Plan for more information on the conservation approach and strategies.



**Legend**



Woodland Area - Invasive Species Removal



Turf to Savannah Conversion Area



Wetland Restoration Area



Existing View



Proposed View to be Cleared



Existing Urban Trail Company (UTC) single track dirt trail



Proposed Widening of UTC Trail

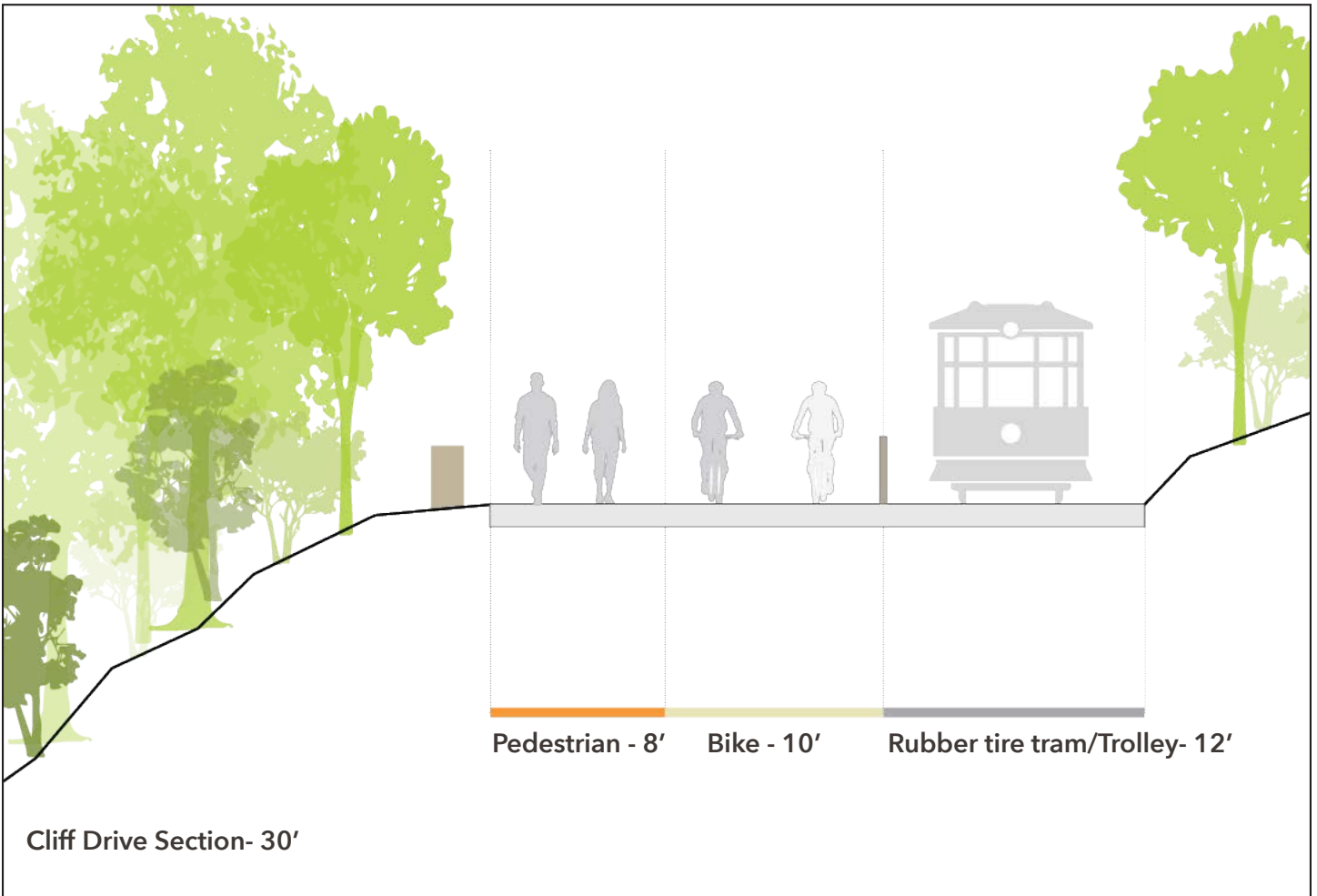
## Connectivity and Activation

Since Kessler Park spans 303 acres and over 3.5 miles, east to west, clear wayfinding and connected pathways to navigate the park on foot, bike, and car are essential to exploring its unique assets. The four Cliff Drive gates and Concourse Park are the best-known entrances to Kessler Park, however the connections between each of the smaller parks that make up the full park can be disconnected and difficult to navigate even for the most able bodied. In addition to full-park maps at the Cliff Drive gates and Concourse Park, geolocated mile markers throughout the park are recommended to provide visitors access to an online map to see all trails and key attractions. Each of the major roadways surrounding the Park are recommended to also have signage providing guidance to key attractions (Chestnut, Paseo, Independence, St. John, Lexington, and Gladstone). The planned future Community Center at the Concourse is recommended to become the primary place to get information on the park and check out equipment for fishing, disc golfing, mountain biking, or climbing. Mobility hubs are recommended to be located at key park nodes to rent e-bikes and scooters. Additional single-track trails are planned to expand access for all ages to mountain bike and hike in the woodlands of Kessler Park.

Connectivity also includes attention to public right of way improvements for slowing traffic, safe pedestrian crossing, separated bike facilities, and road reconfiguration at Maple Park, the Reservoir, and the Concourse to clarify vehicular access.

Long-term plans for a circulator trolley (rubber-wheeled) along Cliff Drive and Gladstone Boulevard are recommended to take park visitors to stops east-west throughout the park. This trolley is recommended to not only provide access to the park for all ages and abilities but to also address safety and visibility throughout the park with a consistent presence. The trolley drivers would be able to report on park conditions and address any challenges with support from security or maintenance staff immediately. Other improvements needed on Cliff Drive include bank stabilization, erosion repair, pavement and curb repair, streetlight upgrades, stormwater improvements, forestry maintenance, and invasive plant clearing.

Providing multiple types of recreation in each area of the Park will serve to draw a more diverse audience to the park. In Kansas City parks, walking trails with lighting have proven to be a very successful addition to activate parks and create a safer-feeling environment. In many areas of Kessler Park, community members and recreational enthusiasts are already using park amenities and have asked that popular facilities be expanded and improved (i.e. sports courts in Maple Park; disc golf near the Reservoir; mountain biking trails in the woodland along Cliff Drive). Additional park amenities that community members have described a need for include: a dog park, community agriculture and garden spaces, a clean lake for fishing, new playgrounds and splashpads, flexible shelters to gather, storage facilities to support programming activities, and restrooms in order to stay and enjoy the park longer with their families and friends. No public restrooms are currently available in the park.



Section along Cliff Drive showing protective barrier separating lane for dedicated rubber-wheeled trolley from bicycle, and pedestrian activities



Example of rubber-wheeled circulator trolley



## Kessler Park Connectivity













This map shows strategies to connect the entirety of Kessler Park through fully linked walking and biking paths on sidewalks and streets flanking the park, as well as an expanded network of hiking and mountain biking trails within the park. Each of the four gates to Cliff Drive are recommended for improvement as trailheads, with parking and wayfinding. Locations for additional wayfinding signage and e-bike rental (mobility hubs) are also noted on this map.





## Legend

- |   |  |   |                                |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------|
|  | Existing Shared Use Path               |  | Proposed Mobility Hub Location |
|  | Proposed Shared Use Path               |  | Proposed Entry Signage         |
|  | Existing In-Street Bike Infrastructure |  | Existing UTC Trail             |
|  | Proposed In-Street Bike Infrastructure |  | Proposed Widening of UTC Trail |
|   |  |  | Existing View                  |
|   |  |  | Proposed View to be Cleared    |

# Seven Parks of Kessler Park

The following concept designs for each of the parks within Kessler Park were refined by the consultant team based on their expertise, Advisory Committee input, Focus Group input from user groups and residents, Public Meeting input, and advice from the Parks Department, the Public Works Department.

Each recommended concept design provides increased access, safety, and programming opportunities between neighborhoods as well as desired amenities within each park.

The concept designs also include strategies to improve ease of park maintenance, and environmental conservation practices to increase the health and resilience of the park's natural resources.

See Appendix A: Conservation Plan, Appendix B: Operation and Maintenance Plan, and Appendix D: Cost Estimation for the details of each topic and a full listing of estimated costs.



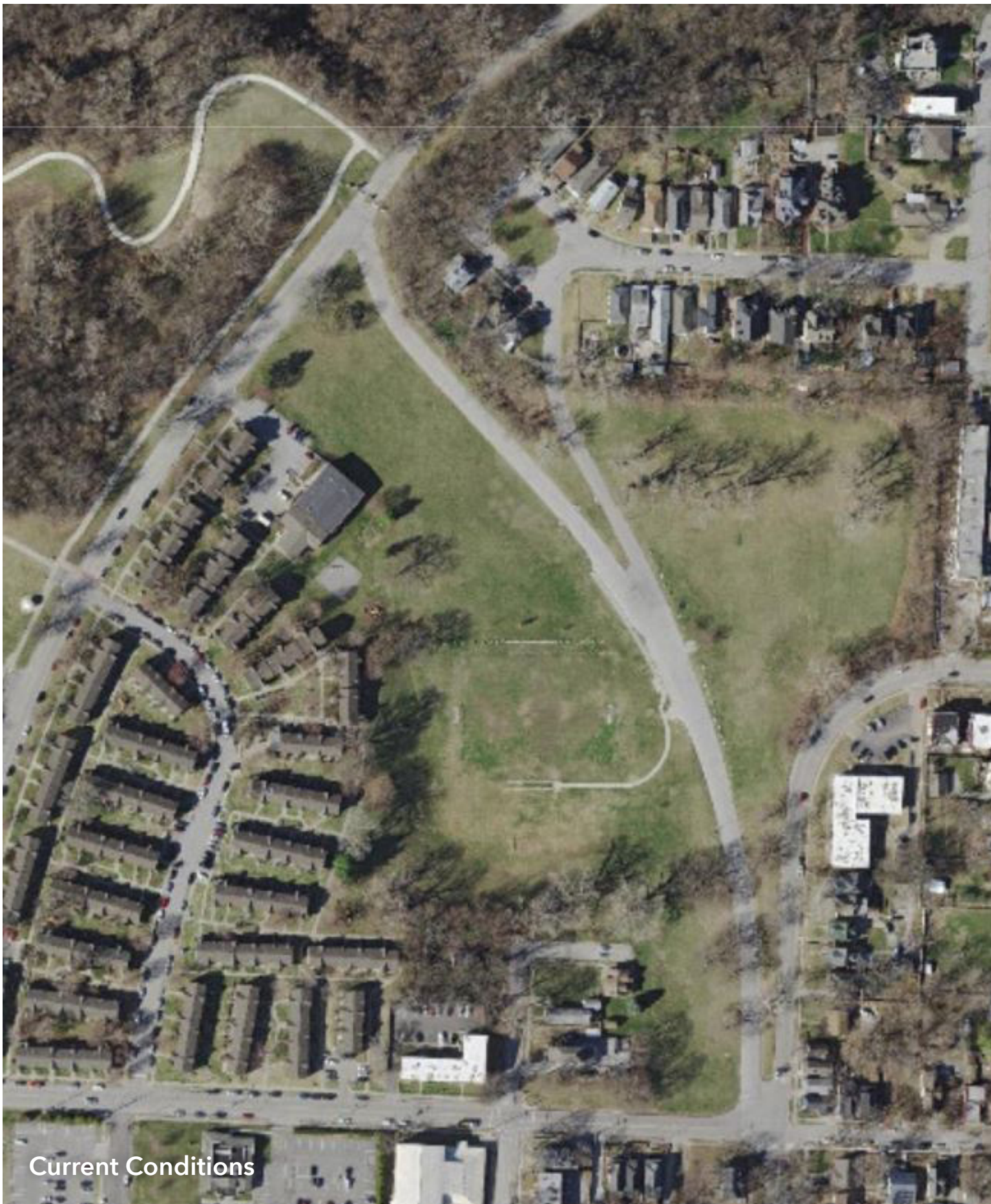
Orientation map to seven parks of Kessler Park



## Maple Park

Maple Park is a neighborhood park surrounded by the families of Riverview Garden Apartments as well as Pendleton Heights Neighborhood. There are many refugee immigrant families from Myanmar (Burma), Somalia, and Swahili-speaking countries of Southeast Africa (and many others) in the Historic Northeast NE neighborhoods. Local community members advocated for sports courts to play a popular Malaysian sport called Sepak Takraw (kick volleyball). One court was installed under the shade of a mature tree in the southwest area of Maple Park. On nice days large groups of adults gather to play the game while their children run and play on the soccer field nearby. When asked what they would like to see in Maple Park they said more courts, bleachers, picnic tables, and restrooms for the large family groups who gather here.

The Advisory Committee and Focus Group participants recommended prioritizing improvements in Maple Park and Concourse Park because of the high number of families with children near these parks. This also builds upon recent investments in the Paseo Gateway area (Choice Neighborhood Initiative). Priorities included safety, cleanliness, and peacefulness for gathering with family and friends. New amenities desired include more shade and seating, more activities for children, and restrooms. Continuous sidewalks, traffic calming and safe pedestrian crossing, walking trails, bike rental stations, and a fenced dog park on the east side of Lexington were also highly supported. Jerusalem Farm and Giving Grove have also proposed a large community orchard near Lexington and Paseo in partnership with Parks and the Riverview Gardens Apartments (Housing Authority of KCMO). The consultant team coordinated with KCMO Public Works on the improvements to traffic flow and incorporation of bike and pedestrian improvements. Additional community engagement and engineering studies are needed for a final solution of roadway improvement. See the following pages for the resulting concept design for Maple Park.



Current Conditions

# Maple Park Concept

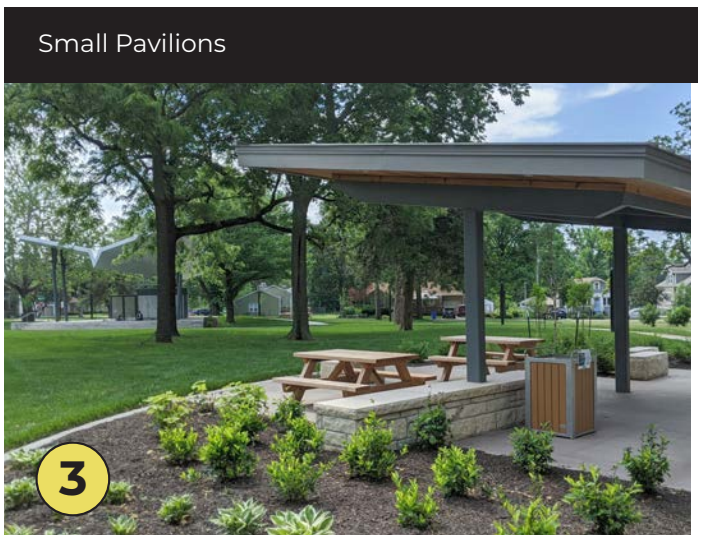
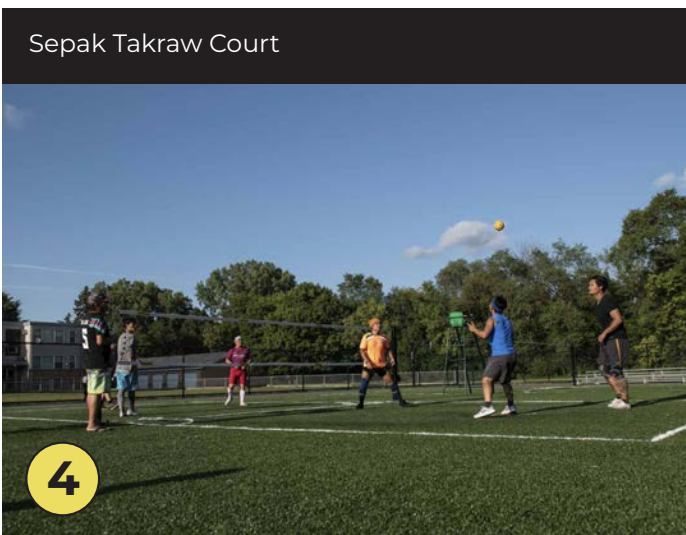
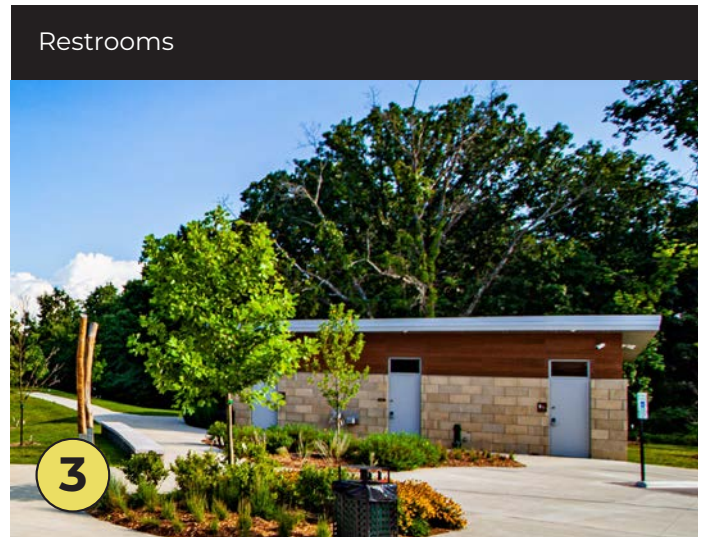
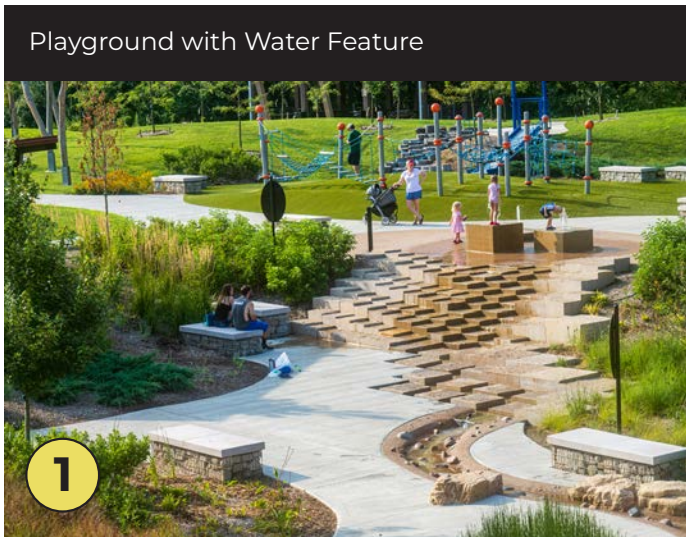
## Priority projects (in yellow):

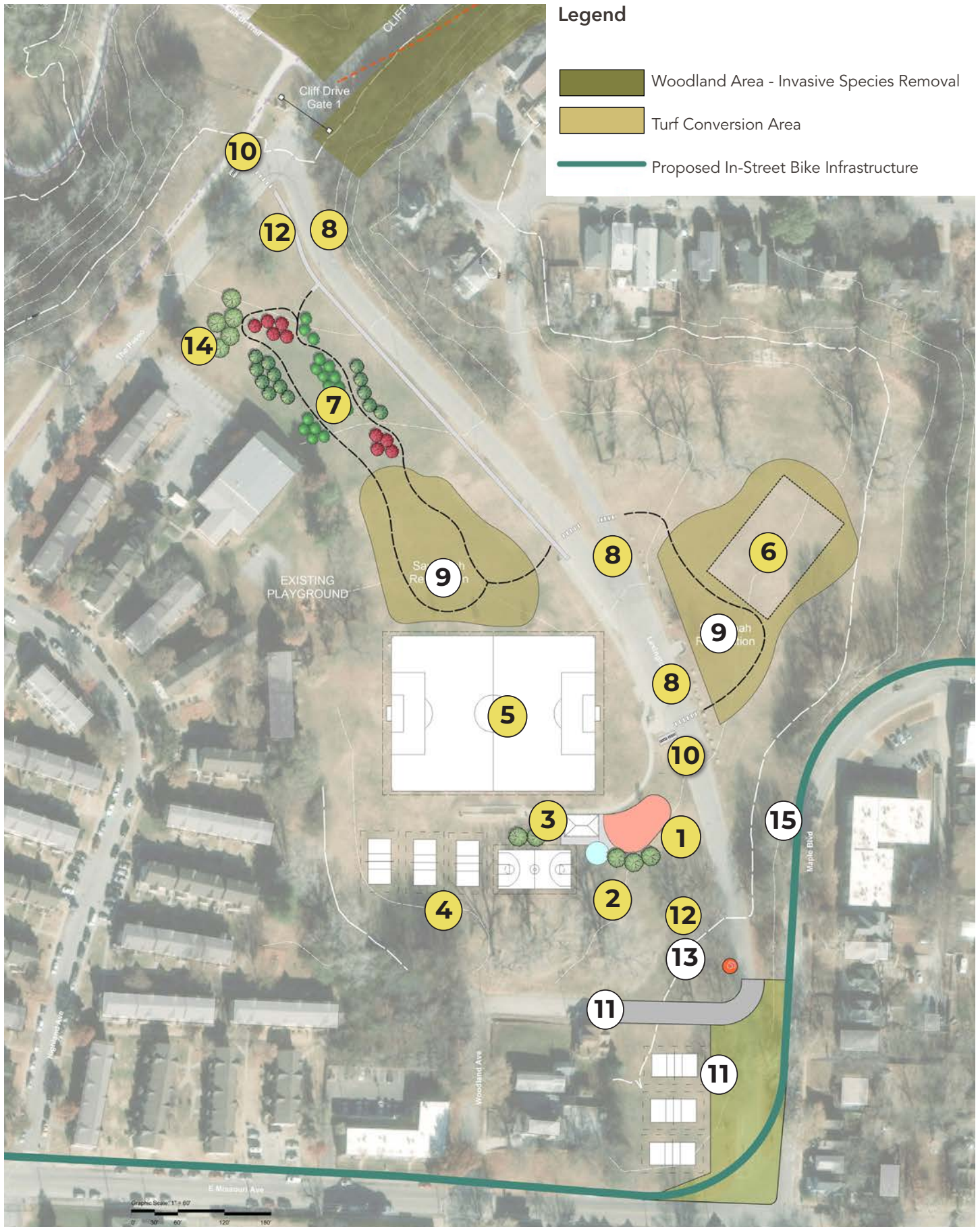
1. Playground
2. Small Splash Pad
3. Pavilion and Restroom
4. Sport Courts
5. Refreshed Sports Field
6. Dog Park
7. Paved Loop
8. Pedestrian Connectivity with Tree Plantings
10. Mobility hubs (Bike and scooter rental stations)
12. Park Signage
14. Giving Grove Orchard

## Future Additions (in white):

9. Turf to Prairie Conversion
11. Road reconfiguration
13. Public Art piece
15. Bikelane

## Example images of amenities approved by the community:





## Reservoir

The old municipal reservoir is an urban infrastructure relic that sits atop the highest point in the park. The useful life of this water supply for the East Bottoms was short lived (1921-1931). This concrete dish has a buttressed wall separating the two halves and two rusty overlook towers. Plants have sprung through the cracks in the concrete, and while most are low value weeds or invasive species, a plant inventory is recommended prior to any development plan for the area. Abandoned spaces like this often attract those who love history, exploring ruins, and finding the overgrown, beautiful spaces that feel secret or are less traveled and known. Many have added their art and marks to the concrete walls of this space, and some community members value this art as a part of the history of the space. The reactivation of this area of Kessler Park can celebrate the history of the park and its unique architecture while creating new amenities and uses.

The KC Disc Golf 18-hole course surrounds the Reservoir and follows the hill to the east along Cliff Drive. The partnership between KC Disc Golf and KCMO Parks has created an important amenity to the regional and national disc golf community that activates Kessler Park. It is recommended that this course is preserved, maintained, and improved with all additional improvements being integrated with the course.

The concept design for improvements includes reconfigurations to the roadways for traffic calming and additional parking to be added as new amenities and gathering spaces attract new park users. In addition to landscape restoration, shelters and overlooks that celebrate the views, additional amenities recommended for this area include a playground, skate park, sports courts, a pavilion and restrooms.

The Kansas City Design Center masters' students (Kansas State Architecture, landscape architecture, and planning) spent a yearlong design studio (2021-2022) studying this artifact, its impact on the surrounding community, and potential solutions to bring it back to life. Many community members participated in the students' visioning study and this planning process references their work for integration into the wider park plan. The Advisory Committee and community members gave feedback on next steps for the Reservoir Area and are in support of further refinement and implementation of the KCDC Preservation Scheme. Proposed improvements focused on activating the area surrounding the Reservoir for all ages as well as reducing pavement, adding parking, improving walkability, simplifying entry points, as well as enhancements within the reservoir proposed by KCDC.

First priorities for the Reservoir are to focus on safety and stabilization so that it can be accessible and reactivated. After stabilization the capital improvement projects supported by the community can be phased in. See the following pages for the resulting concept design for the Reservoir Area.





Current Conditions

## Reservoir Park Design

Maintain and improve existing disc golf course

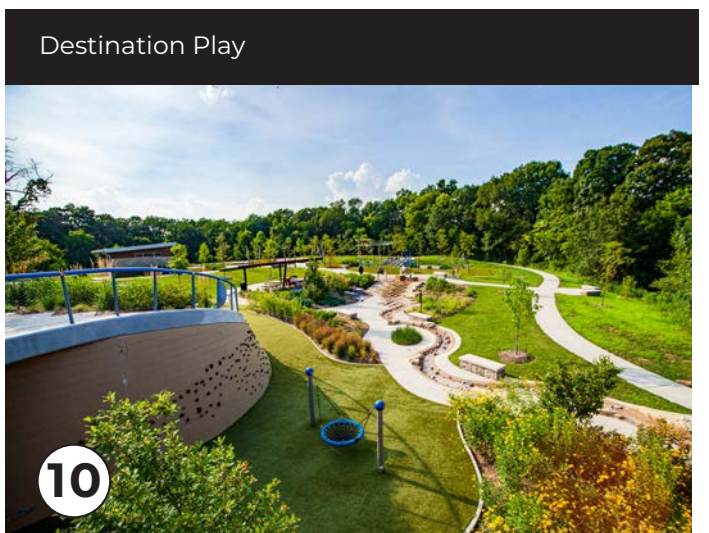
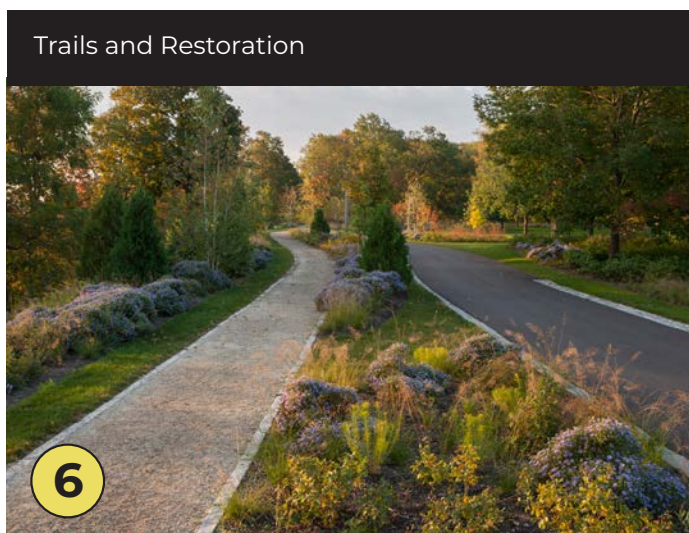
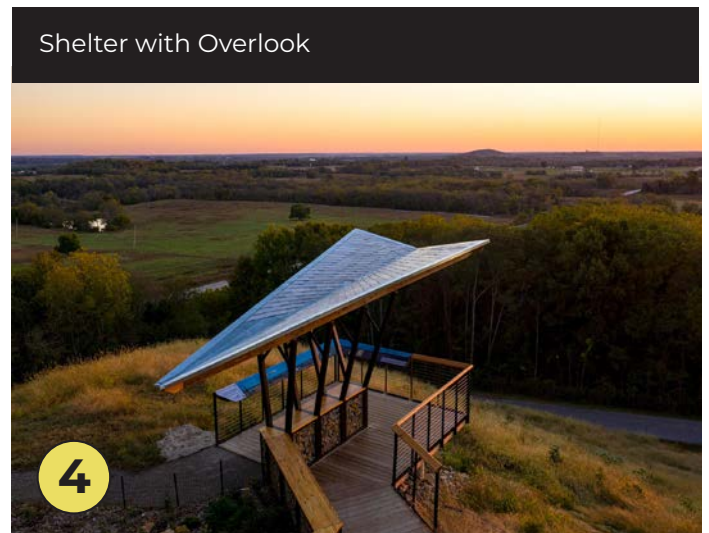
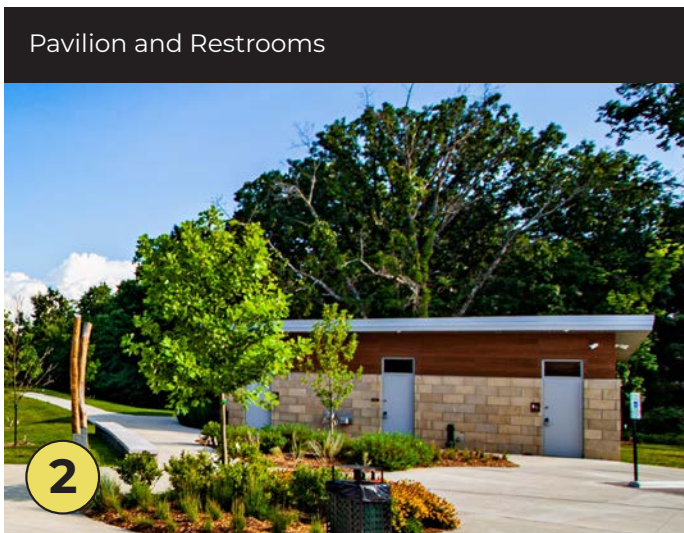
New Priority projects (in yellow):

1. Reservoir Improvements - Access and Stabilization
2. Pavilion and Restrooms
3. Skateboarding/ Rollerskating Area
4. Shelter with Overlook
5. Landscape and Restoration
6. Loop Trails and Walks
7. Reservoir Drive Parking
8. Reservoir Drive Resurfacing
14. Park Signage

Future Additions (in white):

1. Reservoir Improvements related to KCDC Preservation Scheme
9. Mobility hub (Bike and scooter rental station)
10. Playground
11. Sport Courts
12. Overlook
13. Road Reconfiguration
15. Public Art Piece

Example images of amenities approved by the community:

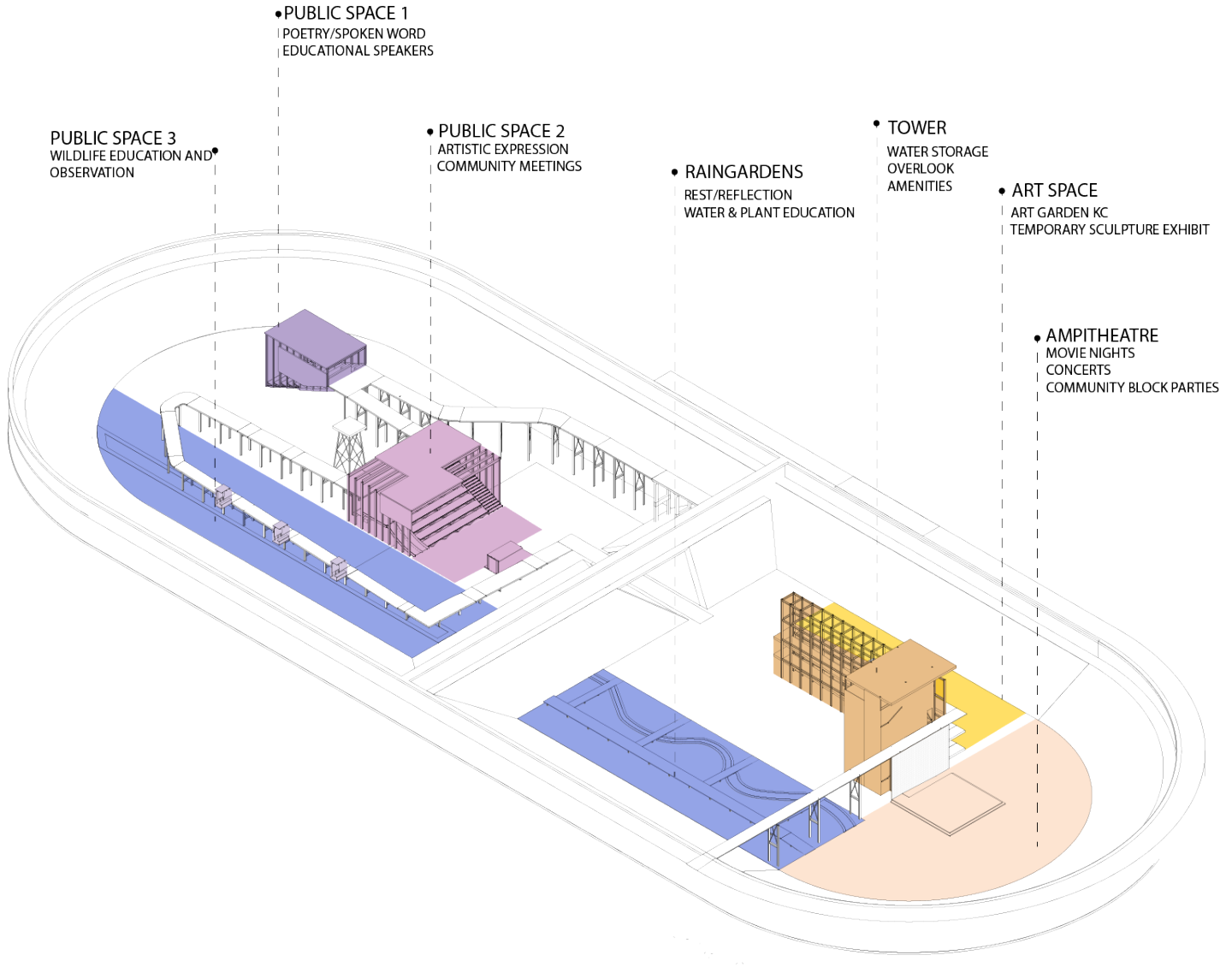


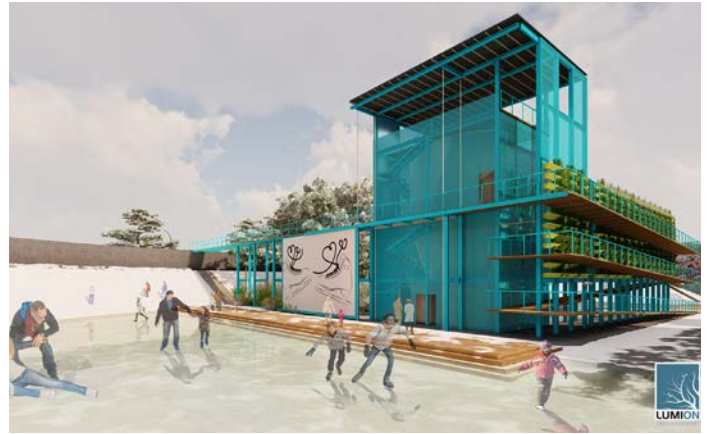
# Conservation Areas

- Woodland Area - Invasive Species Removal
- Turf Conversion Area



# Future Reservoir Improvements KCDC "Preservation" Reservoir Concept





KCDC Class of 2022 produced the work of this concept design and community engagement process. [See full report here.](#)

## North Terrace Lake

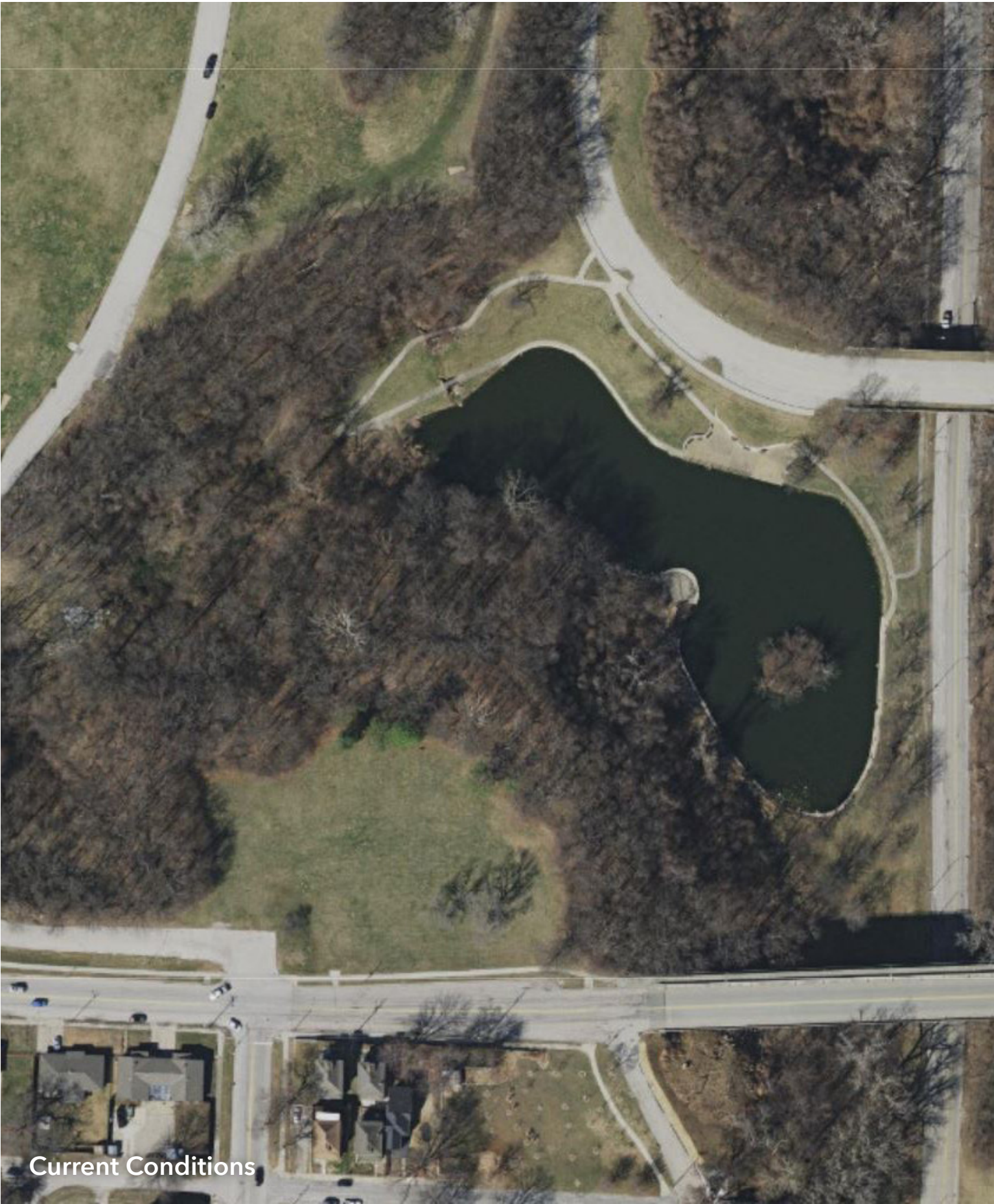
North Terrace Lake was one of the early developments in Kessler Park along with Cliff Drive. The Missouri Department of Conservation stocks this lake with fish, however the health of the lake is impaired from erosion and runoff that includes pollutants from roads, fertilizers from yards, and trash. The woodland area is overgrown with invasive plant species. Local residents and community volunteers have asked for the Lake to be restored to health as a place to fish and enjoy the peace of nature. The University of Missouri Extension has been working with community members as well as local and state conservation agencies to identify funding for solutions.

Planned improvements to the Lake include: vegetated forebays to stabilize hillsides, reduce erosion and capture sediment and pollutants before they enter the lake; a continuous accessible walking path and boardwalk around lake, fishing piers, and lake edge habitat restoration. In addition, clearing honeysuckle and other invasive plant species from the hillside will increase access to the existing disc golf course managed by KC Disc Golf, and single track dirt nature trail built by the Urban Trail Company for hiking and biking. Establishing improved environmental conservation practices for the emergent wetland to the southwest of the lake will also help to capture more stormwater runoff and keep the lake cleaner. The concept for improvements and reconfigurations to the roadways and parking around the Reservoir also include an area focused on green infrastructure solutions to capture and manage stormwater at the top of the hill to the west of the Lake, as part of the landscape restoration.

Additional planned improvements to the area include a parking lot off Chestnut, traffic calming, a bike rental station, and connecting hillside stair up to the Reservoir Area.

**See Appendix A: Conservation Plan** for more specific information about North Terrace Lake Recommendations, Erosion Control, Outfall Stabilization, and Water Management in Feeder Streams.

Other community conversations with Jerusalem Farm staff and Pendleton Heights Community Garden volunteers, made the planning team aware of community initiatives that could have a home in this area. Mary O’Connell (Jerusalem Farm) has researched using goat herds to manage invasive species and she put together a proposal and cost estimate to pilot this initiative in Kessler Park. The Parks Natural Resource Manager approved of this approach and has created an agreement for this to be implemented in several areas of Kessler Park. Likewise, Pendleton Heights community garden volunteers and urban agriculture experts, would like to have an expanded community garden across the street from their current community orchard on Lexington. See the following pages for the resulting concept design for North Terrace Lake.



Current Conditions

# North Terrace Lake Design

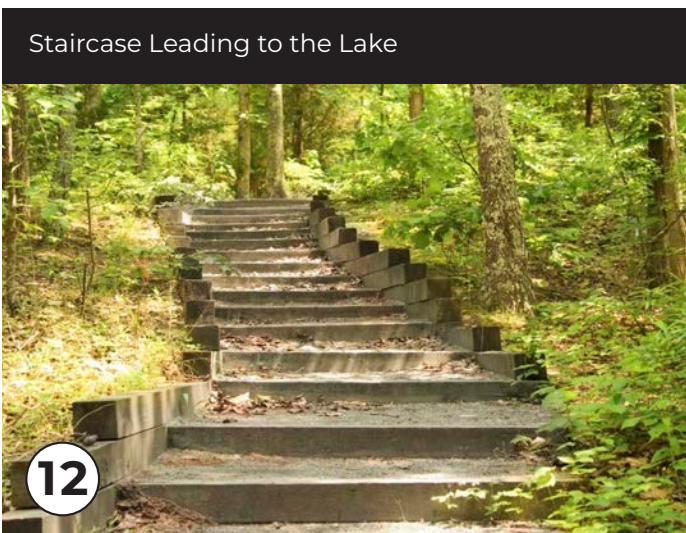
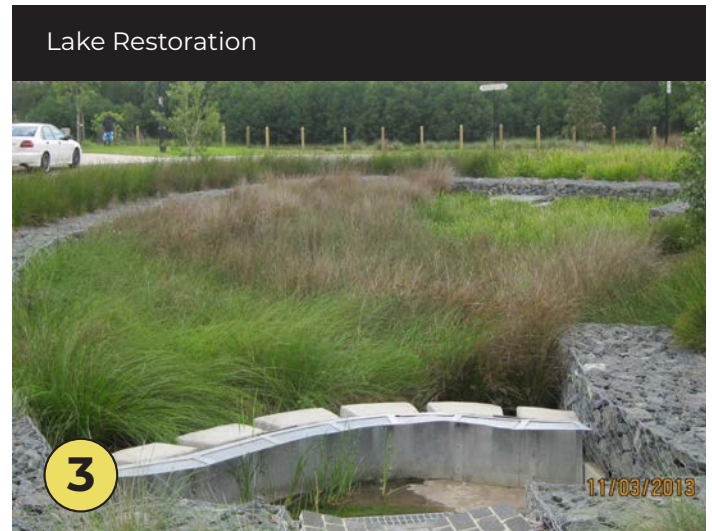
## Priority projects (in yellow):

- 1. Path and Boardwalk
- 2. Lake Edge Restoration
- 3. Forebay - North
- 4. Forebay - South
- 5. Urban Agriculture (with Pendleton Heights Neighborhood Community Garden partnership)
- 7. Parking
- 8. Nature Trail
- 9. Emergent Wetland Conservation
- 10. Park Signage

## Future Additions (in white):

- 6. Mobility hub (Bike and scooter rental station)
- 11. Public Art
- 12. Stair

## Example images of amenities approved by the community:





## Conservation Areas

- Woodland Area - Invasive Species Removal
- Green Infrastructure strategy at top of hill



## Concourse Park

Concourse Park was another early Kessler Park project along with Cliff Drive. Construction began on this park in 1896. Memorials to US Senator Thomas Hart Benton, President John F. Kennedy, and William Royster (prominent Historic Northeast resident and Councilman) are all located in this park. This park is the most popular civic gathering space in the park and has seen some new amenities and improvements in recent years including the Hillside, new playground equipment, and futsal courts. The Colonnade at the north end of Concourse Park is a historic Beaux Arts structure built in 1908 and is now being studied for repairs to stabilize and restore it.

The Advisory Committee and Focus Group participants recommended prioritizing improvements in Concourse Park and Maple Park because of the high number of families with children who use these parks. Prioritized improvements included traffic calming, intersection improvement, and closing Gladstone to become a pedestrian plaza. Community members acknowledged that this park is seen as the central destination of Kessler Park. So, creating an information hub here that gives clear information about the rest of Kessler Park was highly supported, as are additional picnic shelters, and an enhanced water feature (cooling plaza) designed for play. Renovating and reopening the restroom is also desired by the community, if a maintenance plan is in place.

A community building is considered a later phase project, but the community is supportive of a community building or nature center located here to share information about the park, rent equipment, and provide space for arts and community programming. Likewise, Treetop Destination Play is an amenity that community members are excited about and support for the future of the park, once safety and maintenance challenges of the park are managed. See the following pages for the resulting concept design for Concourse Park.



Current Conditions

# Concourse Park Design

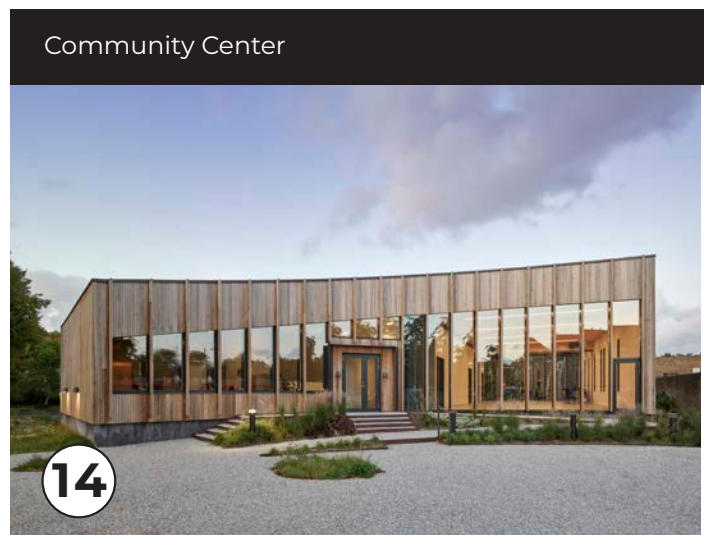
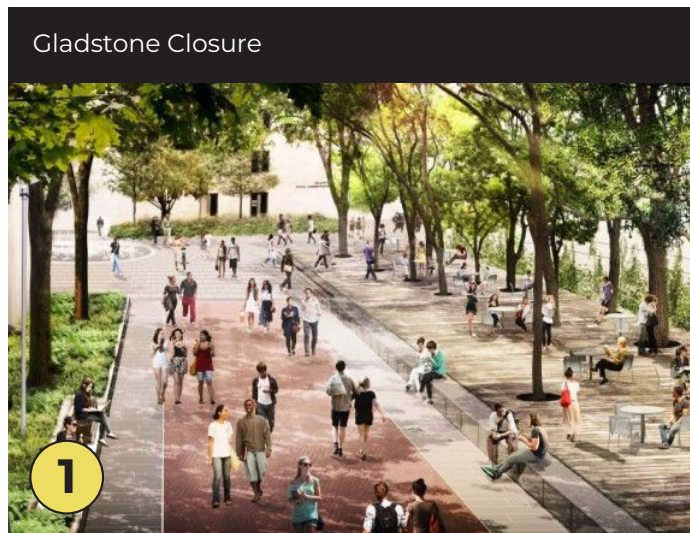
## Priority projects (in yellow):

1. Gladstone Closure
2. Landscape/Restoration
3. Cooling Plaza
4. Shelters
5. Existing Restroom refurbishment
6. 10' Shared use path
7. Mobility hubs (Bike and scooter rental stations)
8. Park Signage

## Future Additions (in white):

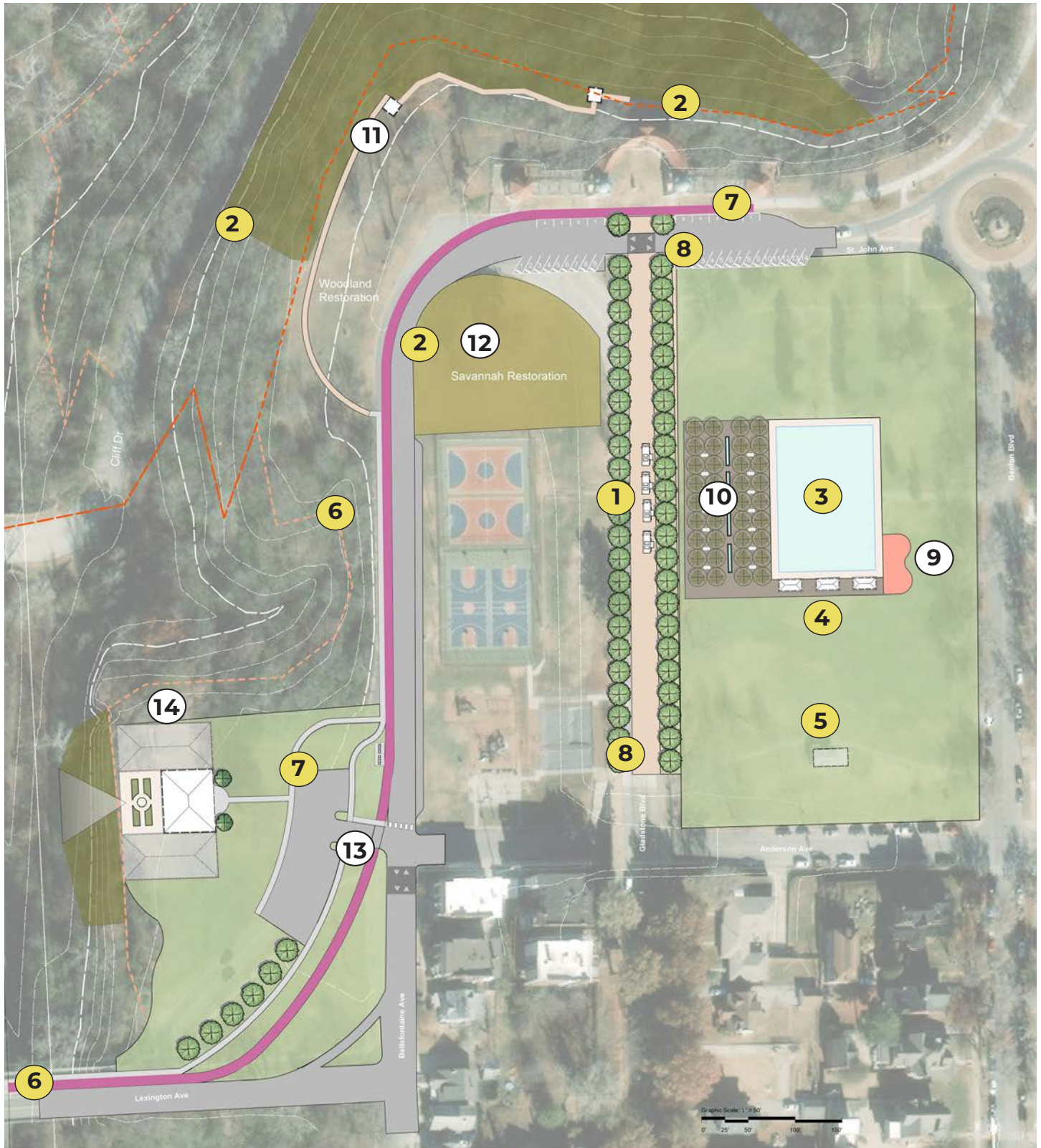
9. Playground
10. Shade Plaza
11. Treetop Destination Play
12. Public Art
13. Reconfigure Bellefontaine and parking
14. Community Center

## Example images of amenities approved by the community:



## Conservation and Maintenance Areas

- Woodland Area - Invasive Species Removal
- Turf Conversion Area
- Open Lawn - Regularly Mowed

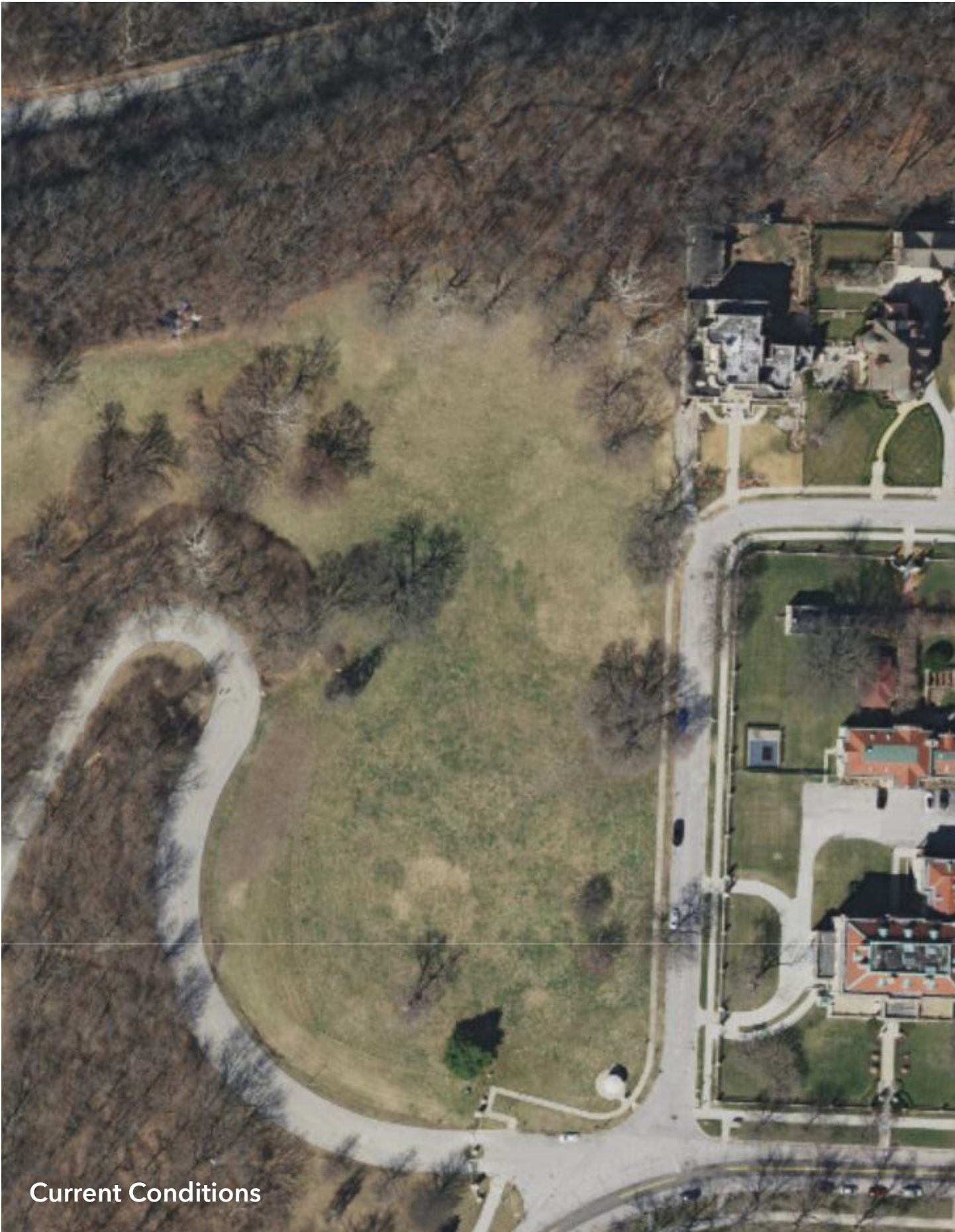


## KC Museum | Scarritt Point Area

This area of the park is a peaceful open space just north of Cliff Drive Gate 3 and is home to the Scarritt Point Memorial named for Nathan Scarritt (1821-1890) who owned a large amount of land in the Historic Northeast and was pivotal to the creation of Kessler Park. The openness of this area allows for scenic views to the west and holds a special place in the hearts of Kansas Citians and especially local residents.

Community supported improvements to this area include Woodland and Savannah habitat restoration and landscape design with an accessible walking loop and overlook. Advisory Members and community members are also interested in an art park in Kessler Park. The proximity to the KC Museum prompted suggestions of starting arts installations and programming in this area first, with growth over time to include installations and programming at each park area (as noted on each concept plan). Preliminary conversations with the KC Museum indicate interest in continuing this conversation with the community about arts programming and arts installations in Kessler Park. Art installations and the Artist's House, while supported, are seen as later phase projects once safety and maintenance challenges of the park are managed.

The walking trail and environmental restoration projects are seen as near-term priorities for the area along with improvements to Cliff Drive Gate 3 including wayfinding signage, bike and scooter rental, and a new parking area. These improvements can provide a new trailhead destination in close proximity to Cliff Drive and nearby mountain bike and hiking trails. Existing mountain bike trails in this area are for more advanced riders. The community supports new wider nature trails that connect all areas of Kessler Park for use by all ages and abilities. A new parking area here can also alleviate some of the on street parking pressures. This project can also address traffic safety improvements for all modes of travel at this intersection. Slowing vehicular traffic around the curve while providing clear crosswalks for pedestrians are two of the desired safety improvements. See the following pages for the resulting concept design for the Scarritt Point Area.



Current Conditions

# KC Museum | Scarritt Point Design

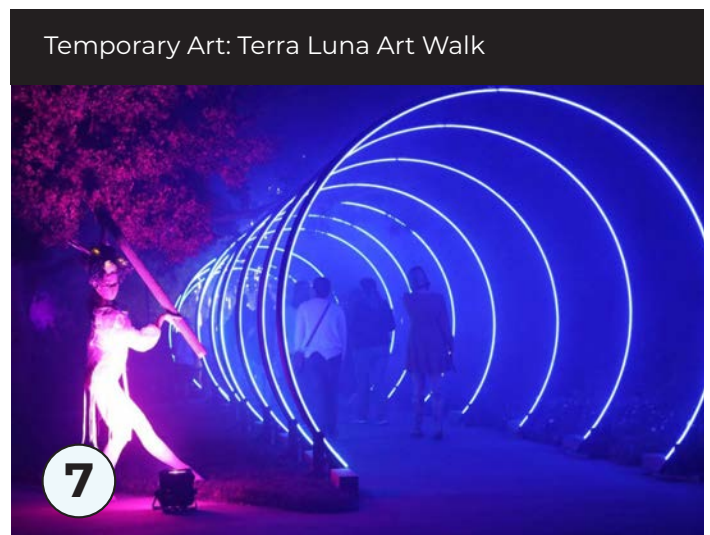
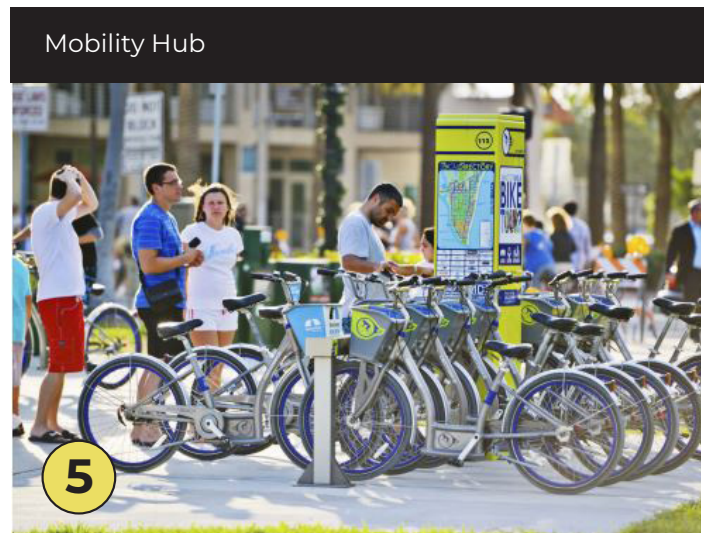
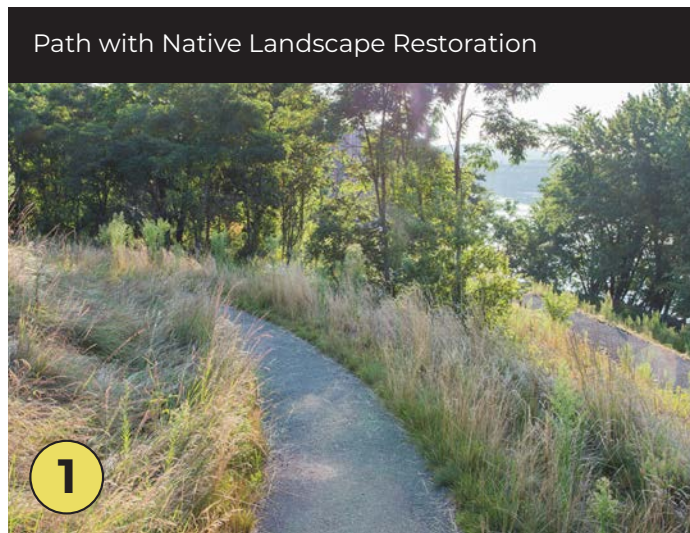
## Priority projects (in yellow):

1. Paths
2. Landscape/Restoration
3. Overlook
4. Gate 3 Parking
5. Mobility hub (Bike and scooter rental station)
6. Park Signage

## Future Additions (in white):

7. Public Art
8. Artists House/Residence

## Example images of amenities approved by the community:





# Conservation Areas

- Woodland Area - Invasive Species Removal
- Turf Conversion Area



## Indian Mound Park

Indian Mound Park is a small neighborhood park surrounded by single family residences on its south and west sides. There is an existing WWI memorial on the east side of the park. Some of the challenges neighbors see at this park are speeding traffic and four-wheelers damaging the mound. The community priority shared for this park is to partner with Indigenous community members to accurately reflect their history and values in this region. Additional outreach to the KC Indian Center and Haskell Indian Nations University is recommended. With the help of a local historian the consultant team was put in touch with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the MO Department of Natural Resources for archaeological records, and the KC Museum archivist to search for records on the site and earlier findings. There is not a clear record on past findings so it is recommended that the land owner (KCMO Parks) initiate a SHPO report and request archaeological records.

This park provides a great opportunity to convert mowed grass areas to native grasses and flowers. This area can be demonstration for homeowners who would like to convert their lawns to more environmentally friendly landscapes, while celebrating the regional plant species that the First Nations would have used in their foods, medicines, and ceremonies.

Protecting the mound from damage and creating art and gardens that celebrate Indigenous history on this land were highly supported, as were adding a walking loop, traffic calming, crosswalks, a picnic shelter for community gatherings, and enhancing the existing overlook of the Blue River Valley to the east. It is also recommended that the sidewalk that continues west to connect to Cliff Drive is improved and widened as a shared use path with additional signage, lighting, benches, and trash receptacles along the path, with a gathering area and shelter at the proposed cleared view. (see pages 32-33) See the following pages for the resulting concept design for Indian Mound Park.



Current Conditions

# Indian Mound Design

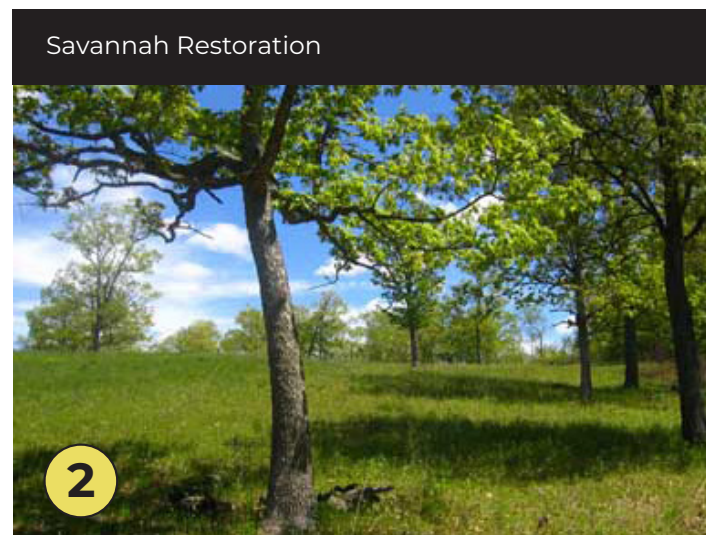
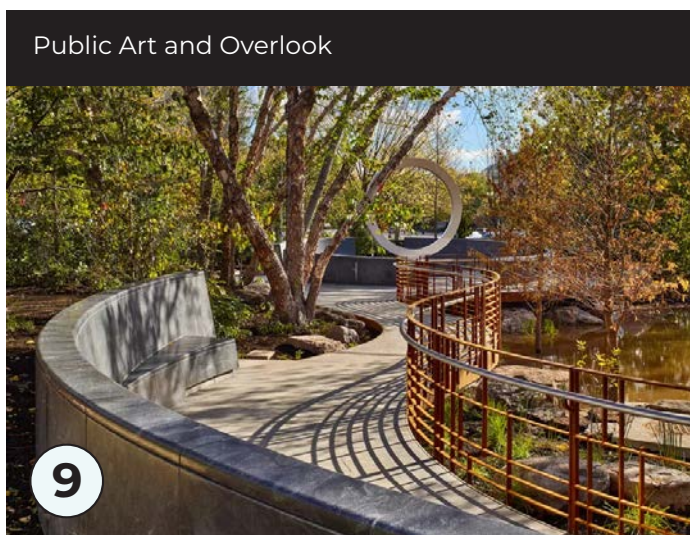
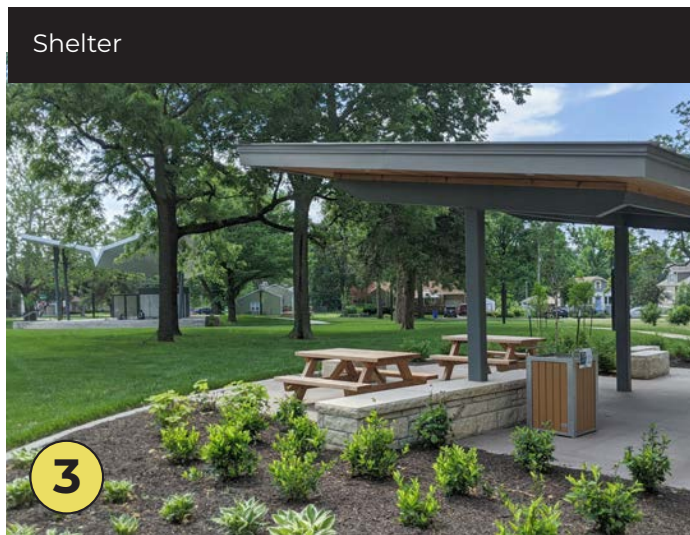
## Priority projects (in yellow):

- 1. Walking path - 1/4 mile loop
- 2. Landscape Restoration
- 3. Shelter
- 4. Low Stone Wall Surrounding Mound
- 8. Park Signage

## Future Additions (in white):

- 5. Overlook
- 6. WWI Interpretive Area
- 7. Mobility hub (Bike and scooter rental station)
- 9. Public Art- Indigenous Art and Native Plants

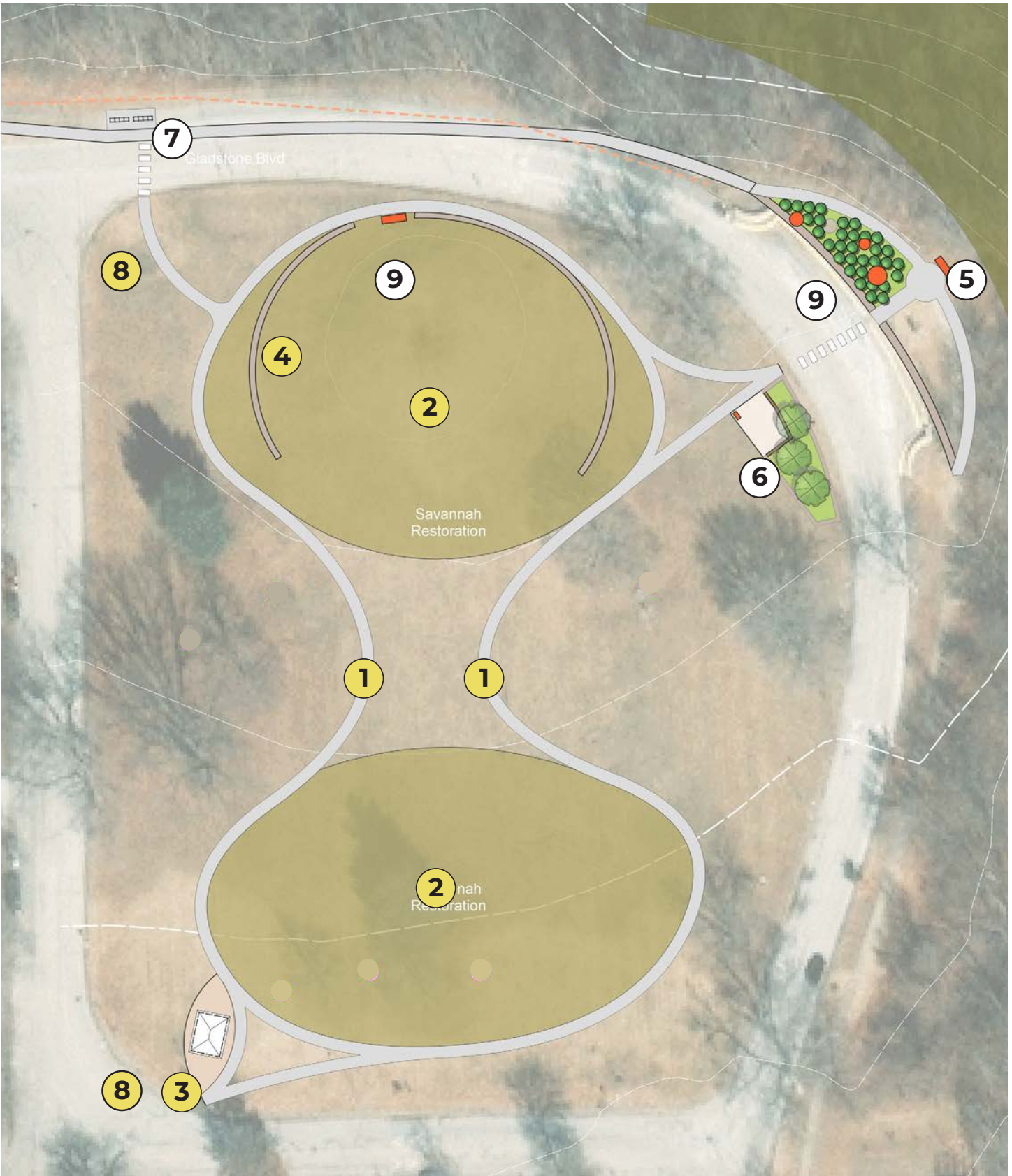
## Example images of amenities approved by the community:



# Legend

 Woodland Area - Invasive Species Removal

 Turf Conversion Area



## Northeast Athletic Fields

The baseball fields on this parkland have not been in use for quite some time. The wiring from the lighting has been stolen and the Park Ranger shared that the facility is difficult to keep secure. As the consultant team studied the location and received feedback on potential uses, it became clear that the Advisory Committee, stakeholders, and community members did not see this parkland as connected to Kessler Park or their communities. (See Appendix C: Engagement Process for concept options and community input.)

The physical separation, difficulty of access, and lack of natural resources set it apart from Kessler. It may have soil contamination from the industrial uses on its west side and railroad on its north and east sides, however there are no records of a Phase 1 environmental analysis. Before planning to reopen this parkland for recreation or other community use it is recommended that Environmental Analysis be done to document any contamination and appropriate remediation protocol.

Some potential uses that were explored if a pollution remediation endeavor could occur included:

- A large urban agriculture hub (Community supported, however no prospects for remediation and management)
- A soccer complex with green infrastructure for stormwater retention on the north side (Feedback from the community survey showed support for a soccer club managing the land.)



Northeast Athletic Fields, looking northeast

# Chapter 4: Implementing the Plan





Cliff Drive, just north of North Terrace Lake

# What Comes First?

Some projects related to the Kessler Park Plan are already underway at North Terrace Lake, and near the Reservoir Area (disc golf improvements), but you may wonder, “How long will it take to implement this plan?”

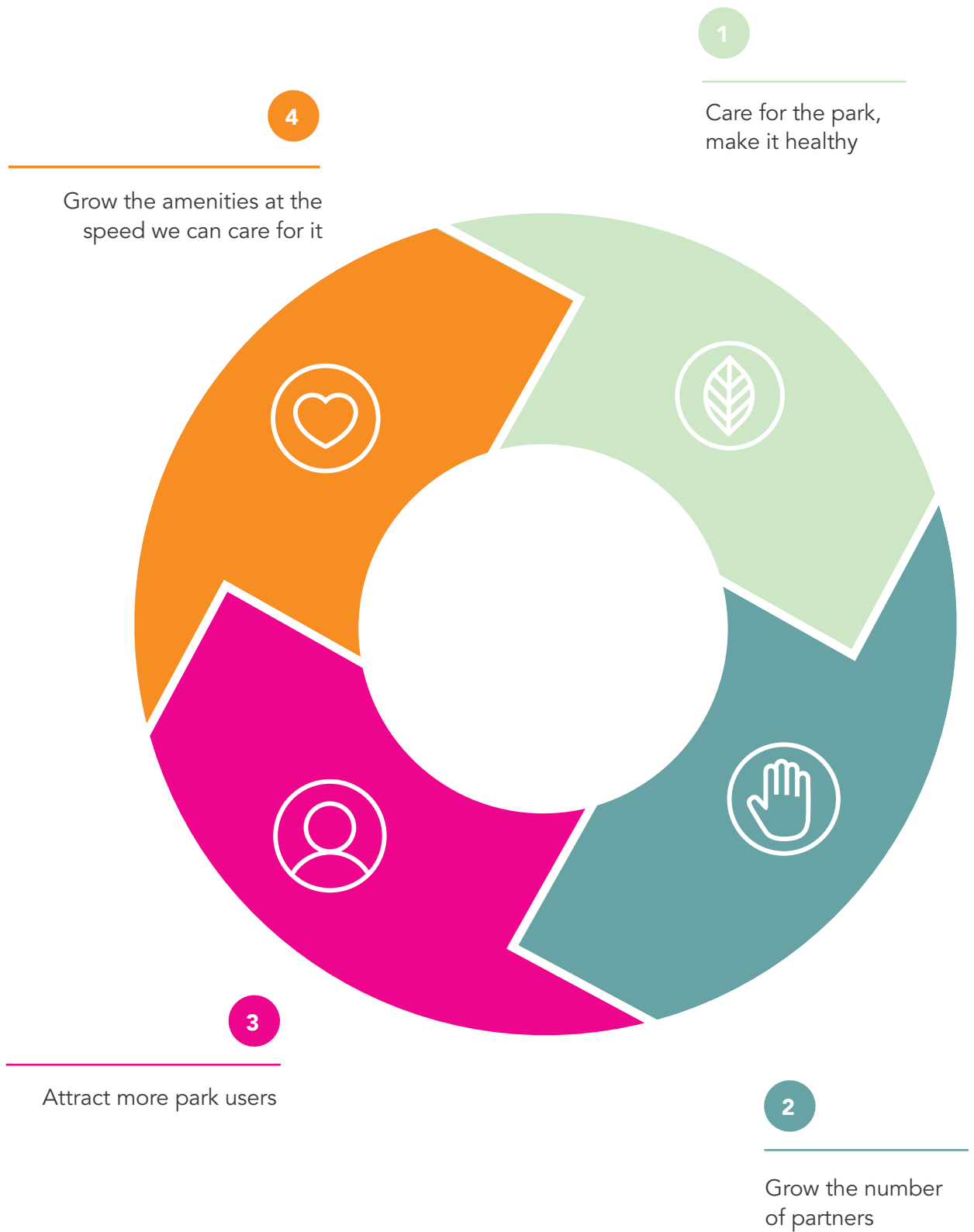
Most park plans take at least 10 years to fully implement, contingent upon funding availability, and Kessler is a large park, so it is reasonable to expect a longer time frame for complete implementation. Starting the implementation of a large urban park plan begins with a strategy that builds on community priorities and existing assets. Every step of the implementation process must involve the surrounding neighborhoods and stakeholders in their use of the spaces and growing the state of health and vibrancy of this park through their involvement.

Not only does ongoing engagement empower the community members and increase quality of life through greater use of these public spaces, but it also increases a sense of ownership, stewardship, and pride of place. The community members become partners with the Parks Department in making this the inspiring parkland they want it to be - Safe, Clean, Environmentally Healthy, Connected, and Active.

Each step forward, small or large, should show a clear connection to the big community vision for Kessler Park, and create growing momentum through involvement and investment.

As the community and partners think big, Kessler Park is also in a key location to connect to the Blue River Valley, East Bottoms, and Missouri Riverfront, so this plan to improve connectivity within the park could just be the beginning of a wider connectivity plan.

## Iterative Cycle of Implementation



# Park-Wide Near Term Recommended Initiatives

Based on the priority categories of improvement, following are strategic near term projects that can provide community benefit, attract more park users, and build momentum for the next projects. Projects are color coded by category. Items that cross multiple categories have multiple dots. Also see Appendix A for the Conservation Plan, Appendix B for the Operation and Maintenance Plan and Appendix D for the Cost

## #1 Kessler Park Partners Enhancement

*Formalize roles and partnerships to increase capacity for operations, maintenance, and capital improvements*

- ● ● Leverage existing Parks agreements with the KC Disc Golf club, Urban Trail Company, and Pendleton Heights Orchard to expand and improve facilities.

## #2 Increased Safety Initiatives

*Community presence, potentially security staff presence, posted and enforced park hours, cleared views, lighting*

- ● ● Install geolocated mile markers and park signage with QR code for park users and nearby residents to coordinate locations for 311 and 911 reports
- ● Clear invasive plant species to increase visibility
- Add or repair lighting first in areas that have the most reported concerns with crime or unsafe behavior.
- Enforcement of park hours - Regular presence of neighborhood watch, Parks maintenance staff, and Community Interaction Officers to address individual needs.



Safety



Environment



Maintenance



Connectivity



Activation

### #3 Environmental Clean Up and Conservation

*Increase the health of the ecosystem of the park*

- ● Implement an invasive plant species eradication strategy, start with key areas to increase views for safety and security - cut, treat and remove, seasonal burns to clear understory
- ● Coordinate strategic maintenance tasks with Park Ambassadors, Kessler Park partners (future), and CleanUp KC
- Create new agreements with Jerusalem Farm to begin the Giving Grove orchard in Maple Park and pilot a goat herd to graze honeysuckle.
- Create environmental education and advocacy programs
- Address depressions and erosion on Cliff Drive and near the Lake resulting from poor drainage. Identify near term green infrastructure opportunities to infiltrate and redirect stormwater
- Erosion control check dams at Lake and woodland revegetation to reduce erosion.

### #4 Wayfinding and Maintenance

*Install signage, more frequent trash removal, repairs, and cleaning*

- ● Enhance Cliff Drive Gateways - Name each gate, landscape the entrance, install a functional gate
- ● Coordinate strategic locations for transition from Facilities staff to Conservation Crew
- ● Add compost locations
- ● ● Install 2-3 small secure storage structures for Parks maintenance, programming supplies, and recreational supplies near Concourse Park and the Reservoir Area
- Relocation and addition of trash receptacles for easy regular access
- Input all park assets into existing Parks Cartegraph database with schedule for tasks

## Park-Wide Near Term Recommended Initiatives

### #5 Connected walking and biking path for full park (with lighting)

*Early projects to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety, accessibility, and connectivity prior to major capital improvement projects*

- Enhance Cliff Drive Gateways - Name each gate, landscape the entrance, install a functional gate
- Work with BikeWalkKC to install new bike share stations at Maple Park, Concourse Park and Scarritt Area first (matching funds required)
- Pilot closure of Gladstone Boulevard in Concourse Park
- Pilot rubber-wheeled trolley on Cliff Drive and Gladstone

### #6 Road reconfigurations

*Crosswalks and sidewalks for increased safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers*

- Traffic calming, accessible crosswalks, and bike infrastructure connecting six park areas
- Install traffic calming strategies and crosswalks at Maple Park, Concourse Park, and Indian Mound Park
- Pilot roadway reconfiguration at Reservoir Drive - temporary changes to test traffic direction and loop drive changes
- Add parking at Lake on Chestnut and calm traffic on Chestnut by reducing number of traffic lanes, increase connection to East Bottoms



Safety



Environment



Maintenance



Connectivity



Activation

## #7 Art programming and support spaces

*Support and space for local artists*

- Create new agreements with local artists for arts programming and potentially storage for program supplies throughout the Park
- Pilot art programming and temporary installations with KC Museum

## #8 Priority new amenities

*Community priorities from concept designs*

- Of the seven park areas, North Terrace Lake, Maple Park, and Concourse Park have the greatest community support for near term improvements (See Seven Park concepts and near term priorities pp 36-62.) Especially the dog park, sports courts, and pavilions at Maple Park. Other highly supported near term improvements include a walking trail at KC Museum | Scarritt Point Area and stability repairs and cleanup to the Reservoir for safe access.

## #9 Major capital projects and programs

*Expensive or maintenance intensive amenities or infrastructure from the concept designs to be phased in*

- Once safety, environmental conservation, and maintenance are improved the larger community-approved capital improvement projects should be phased in. (See Seven Park concepts and near term priorities pp 36-62.) Community members are especially eager to see progress on the park improvements around the reservoir site and nearby amenities, Restrooms, Play structures, Splash pads, Community/Nature Center building, Treetop play, Treehouses, and sculpture and art installations throughout park.

# Potential Funding Sources

Diverse funding sources are available for this work. Most are highly competitive and some require the City to create the application. However, quite a few could be written and applied for by a community non-profit working in close collaboration with the KCMO Parks Department to assure alignment and equitable distribution with the citywide Parks System. General Obligation Bond funds come through the Parks Department and must also be shared equitably across the city's park system.

## Federal and National Funding Sources

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (Dept of Interior, Land & Water Conservation Fund)

*Grant range:* \$300,000 - \$10,000,000

*Purpose:* Parks in urban and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods

*Potential uses:* Design & build of improvements in Maple Park, Concourse Park, or Reservoir area

Supporting Healthy Aging Through Parks and Recreation (National Recreation and Park Association + CDC)

*Potential uses:* Trails, benches, and e-bike share stations

Federal Transportation Alternatives Program (Set-aside of Federal-aid Highway Program)

*Purpose:* Recreational trails program - annual opportunity through MARC

*Potential uses:* Trails and traffic calming

## State Funding Sources

Missouri Department of Conservation Community Conservation and Forestry Cost-Share

*Purpose:* Environmental conservation

*Potential uses:* North Terrace Lake improvements and other conservation and restoration projects throughout the park including invasive species eradication and aquatic resource management

Missouri Section 319 non-point source subgrants (Dept of Natural Resources,)

*Purpose:* Planning, and implementation of practices that control, reduce or manage non-point source pollution

*Potential uses:* Design & build North Terrace Lake improvements and other woodland and wetland restoration projects along Cliff Drive

Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation

*Purpose:* Forest, fish and wildlife

*Potential uses:* North Terrace Lake improvements and other conservation and restoration projects throughout the park including invasive species eradication



# Philanthropic Funding Sources

## National:

### The Conservation Fund, "Parks with Purpose"

*Purpose:* Community-centered approach to working with residents to transform and restore blighted, inner city properties into vibrant new parks.

*Potential uses:* Improvements at Maple Park, Reservoir Area, or Indian Mound Park

### National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program

*Purpose:* Address water quality issues in priority watersheds, such as erosion due to unstable streambanks, pollution from stormwater runoff, and degraded shorelines caused by development.

### Andrew Mellon Foundation, Humanities in Place

*Purpose:* Supports projects and programs with a place-based focus that promote greater access, interaction, and exchange of stories and experiences toward a fuller appreciation and understanding of a wider variety of our histories, narratives, and expression.

*Potential uses:* Indian Mound, KC Museum | Scarritt Point Area, Concourse Park, or signage throughout Kessler Park (qualifying non profit organizations may submit inquiries)

### The Funders Network, Partners for Places & GREEN

*Purpose:* Enhances local capacity to build equitable and sustainable communities in the U.S.

*Potential uses:* Environmental conservation and climate change related strategies (50% match required)

### The Skatepark Project Grants

#### (Tony Hawk Foundation)

*Purpose:* Increase equity in underserved areas. Must have grassroots support and commitment  
Grant range: \$1,000 - \$300,000

*Potential uses:* Reservoir area skate park, potential for Columbus Park DIY group participation

## Local:

### Sunderland Family Foundation

*Purpose:* Supports organizations for capital-building projects as well as organizations that commit to building just and equitable communities

*Potential uses:* KCDC Reservoir concept and/or the Concourse Community Center building

### Kemper Foundation

*Purpose:* Supports causes and non-profit organizations advancing three focus areas: education, health, and community development.

*Potential uses:* Community Agriculture on Lexington (North Terrace Lake concept)

### Hall Family Foundation

*Purpose:* Supports programs that are innovative and strive to create systemic solutions to community needs. Specific impact areas include growing minds, KC spirit, and prospering communities. "Fortify Regional Assets organizations that profoundly shape the culture, economic opportunity, health, and vibrancy of the Greater Kansas City area for all people."

*Potential uses:* Cliff Drive improvements, KCDC concept, Connected walking and biking paths for full park

### Bloch Family Foundation

*Purpose:* Supports efforts in the areas of post-secondary business and entrepreneurship education, healthcare, social services, visual and performing arts, and the Jewish community.

*Potential uses:* Arts programming and installations at Scarritt Point; Youth arts programming.

# Why Create a Kessler Park Conservancy?

Accessing philanthropic and private funding sources for public parks is straightforward when there is a non-profit organization with clear responsibilities to improve or manage the park. In the past, Cliff Drive Corridor Management Committee played this role with a primary focus on the Scenic Byway and the clean up and connection of Cliff Drive and nature trails to the surrounding communities.

Many large urban parks across the country have established Parks Conservancies. The definition of a park conservancy is a private, non-profit, non-political organization that works in partnership with a local government to help improve and/or manage one or more parks in the community.

The Advisory Committee and local community members have discussed reactivating the Cliff Drive Corridor Management Committee's non-profit status with a revised mission to promote the big vision for the whole park. These stakeholders are interested in employing diverse approaches to fundraising and partnership with the KCMO Parks Department to accomplish strategic projects that help to grow a sustainable conservancy and park.

## **So far people from the following local organizations have committed to help:**

Guadalupe Centers Academy, Independence Plaza Neighborhood Council, Indian Mound Neighborhood Association, Jerusalem Farm, KC Crew, KC Disc Golf, KC Museum, KC Parks Ambassadors, KCDC, KCU, NEAT, NEKC Chamber of Commerce, Pendleton Heights Neighborhood Association, Scarritt Renaissance Neighborhood Association, and Urban Trail Company

**If you are interested in being a part of implementing the Kessler Park Improvement Plan, please contact:**

Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department  
Deputy Director  
(816) 513-7502  
KCPARKS.org

Your skills and passion in caring for this important Kansas City asset are needed.



Concourse Park