

Lake Minnetonka

Excelsior, MN

Adam Bishop | LA 572 Design Thesis | Dominic Fischer | Adobe CS3, Sketchup 10, AutoCAD 2012, Maxwell Render

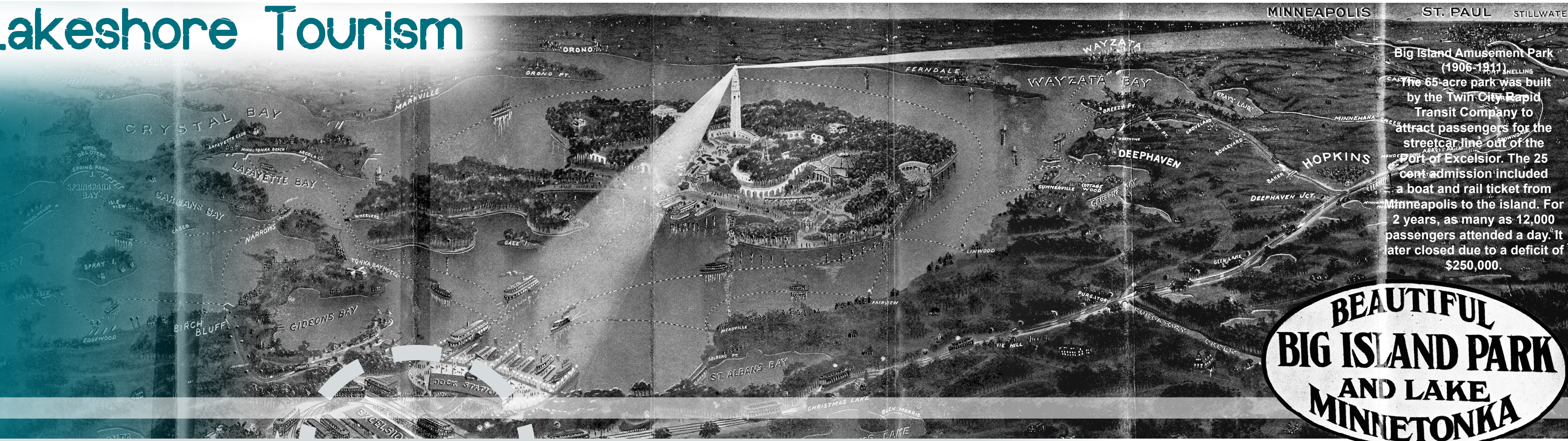
Revitalization of an Urban
Lakeshore Environment
with a Tourism Approach

Sustainable Lakeshore Tourism

Problem Statement

How can a waterfront design in a small, dense, urban city unify a fragmented pedestrian corridor?

How can this design move forward utilizing tourism practices to better support the interest of the community?

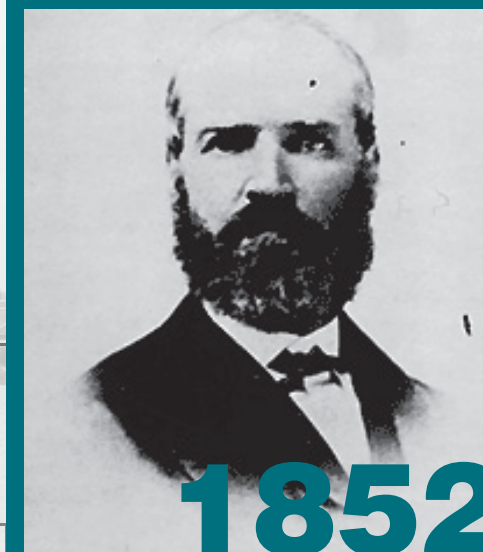


Big Island Amusement Park (1906-1911)
The 65-acre park was built by the Twin City Rapid Transit Company to attract passengers for the streetcar line out of the Port of Excelsior. The 25 cent admission included a boat and rail ticket from Minneapolis to the island. For 2 years, as many as 12,000 passengers attended a day. It later closed due to a deficit of \$250,000.

BEAUTIFUL
BIG ISLAND PARK
AND LAKE
MINNETONKA



History/Timeline



The Excelsior Pioneer Association," was formed in New York City on November 12, 1852 by a tailor know as George Betram. He arrived in South Lake Minnetonka to purchase and develop the fruitful land.

1852

In 1853 Bertram and builder Robert McGrath, began to construct homes and businesses in what is now the city of Excelsior. The origin of the city's name is thought to come either from Longfellow's popular poem "Excelsior," meaning "Ever Upward."



1878

Rev. Charles Galpin was the surveyor that ultimately layed out the townsite and set aside a strip known as the "Commons."

The city of Excelsior was incorporated as a village on June 14, 1878; the oldest of the Lake Minnetonka communities, it was settled in the early 1850s and platted in 1855; its post office began in 1854.

Hotel Donaldson:
Completed in 1885 on Corner/Lake Street by George H & L.B. Stetson.
1891 it became Hotel DeGroods
1896 Hotel Belle Alto
1908 Hotel Bay View
1910 Torn Down



1896

La Paul Hotel:
Completed in 1896 by Dr George LaPaul.
1918 it became the Goodrich house
1920 Excelsior Bay Hotel
1928 it Burned down.

1912

Sampson House:
Completed in 1885 by Leroy Sampson.
1893 it burned down
1895 it was Rebuilt thrifly using lumbar from an old barn in Wisconsin.
1960 it was closed and torn down. Attracted lots of sportsman and vacationers.

The White House:
Completed in 1912 by W.F. Sanderson Properties.

Was located on Lake/Water St. where Haskell's is currently.



1996

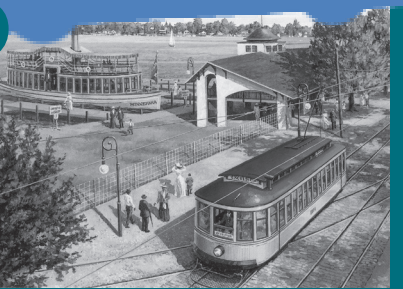
the Steamboat Minnehaha departs from the Excelsior Bay dock (in front of BayView Restaurant) in Excelsior.

First Public Cruise of Minnehaha Steamboat.
Basic Charter • \$500
-90 minute charter around Lake Minnetonka
- Up to 25 people
-Great for small events! See the lake in a whole new way!
Historical Charter • \$1,500
-2 hour charter around Lake
-Up to 75 people (additional fee for additional passengers)
-Narrated, historical tour of Lake Minnetonka

Big Island Amusement Park
1906-1911 The 65-acre park was built by the Twin City Rapid Transit Company to attract passangers for the streetcar line. (25 cent admision from Minneapolis. Express, Excursion, or Ferry boats carrying up to 1,000 passengers. For 2 years as many as 12,000 passengers a day. Deficit of \$250,000.

1906

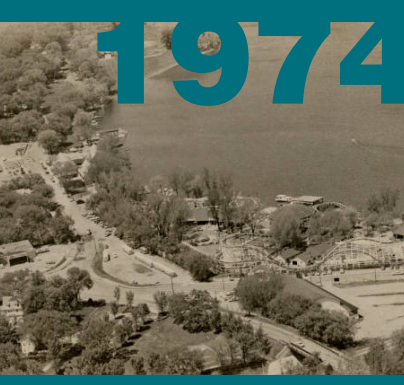
1926 Minnehaha and other 70-foot express boats "Yellow Jackets" were sunk.



1924

1925

Excelsior Amusement Park
Officially went into operation from 1924-1974
There was a Roller Coaster, Caterpillar, Tilt-a-worl, carousel, & Ferris Wheel.



1974

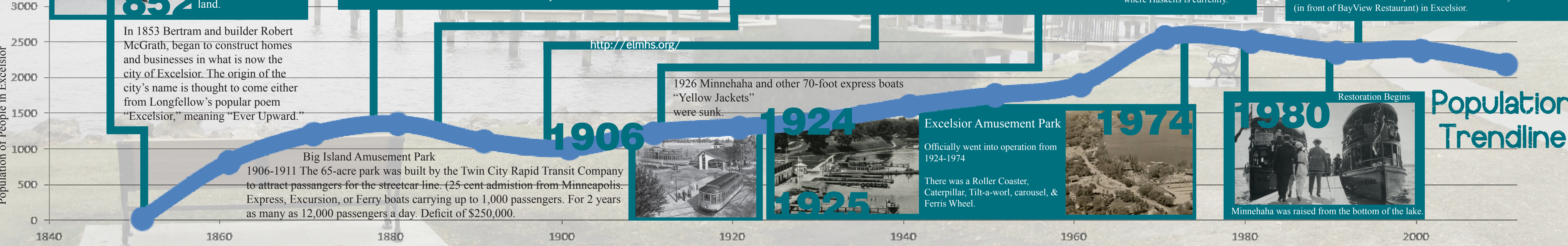


Minnehaha was raised from the bottom of the lake.

1980

Restoration Begins

Population Trendline

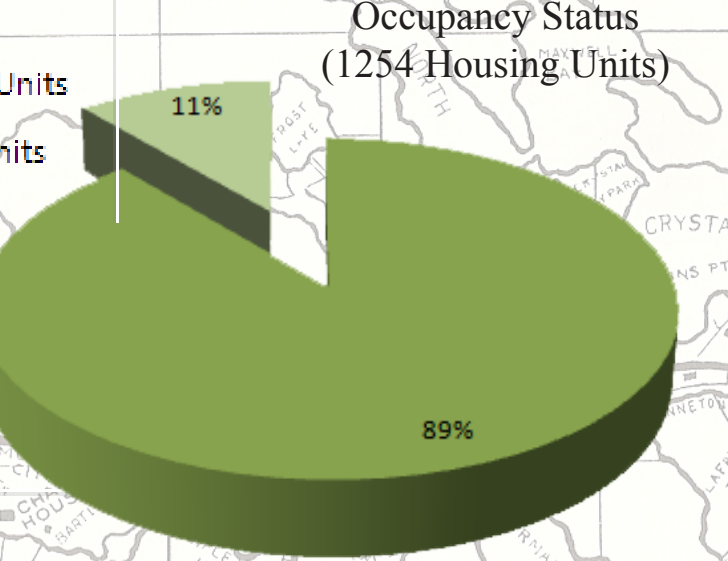


<http://elmhs.org/>

<http://www.steamboatminnehaha.org/>

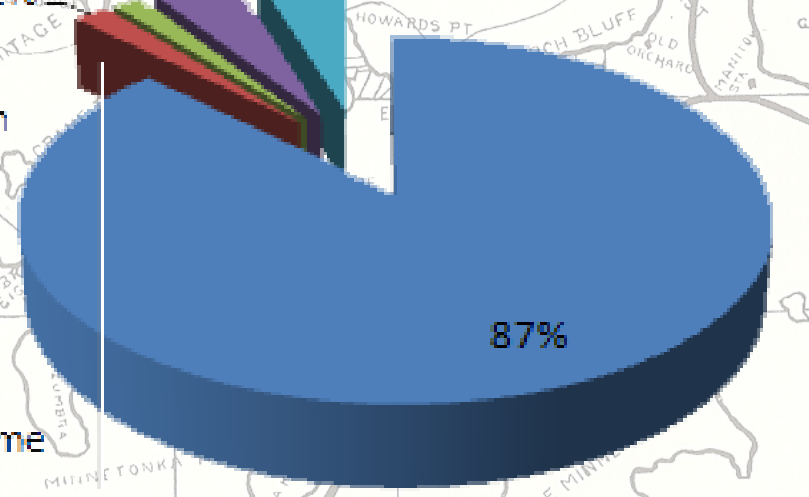
Demographics

Occupied Housing Units
Vaccant Housing Units



Commuting to Work (Average Commute is 25 mins)

- Car, Truck, Van: 87%
- Carpooled: 5%
- Public Transit: 4%
- Walked: 2%
- Worked at Home: 2%

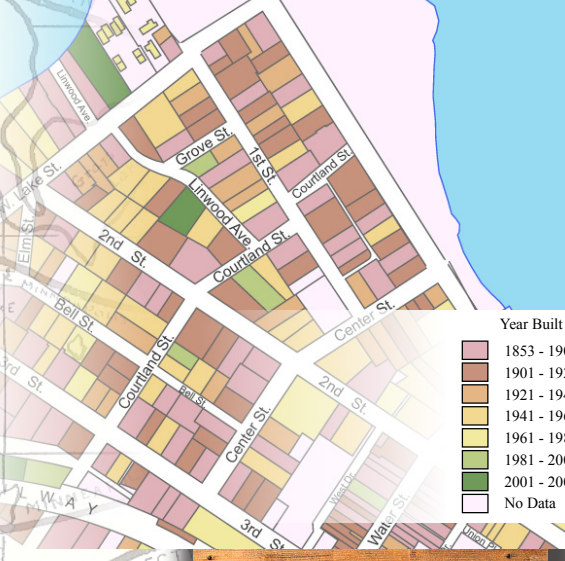


Since the majority of Excelsior's population travels to work toward the minneapolis area, there is an excessive consumption of fossil fuels. The possibility of implementing a mass transit system is not out of the question given that the former TCRT streetcar rail system emerged into what is now the Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail (LRT) which provides 27 miles of biking, walking, jogging, etc. Some of the former streetcar rails are now Highway 7. While the former corridor is now used for recreational purposes, the right-of-way could eventually be used for mass transit.

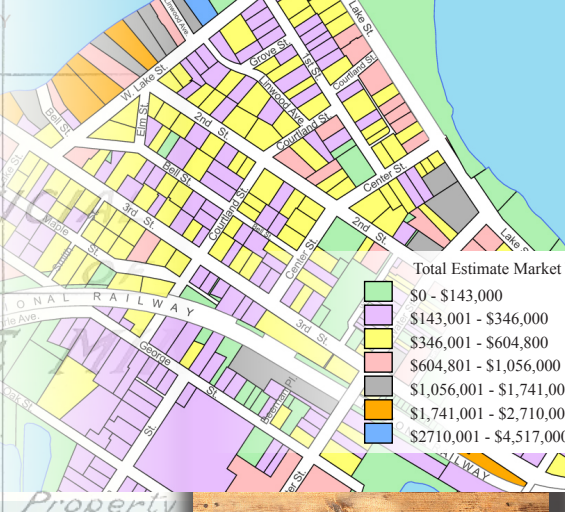
The Metro Transit also runs right along Water Street with two bus routes (670 and 671)

Graphs done in Excel
www.americanfactfinder.com

Inventory Map: Estimated Year Built



Inventory Map: Estimated Property Value



Problem Statement

How can a waterfront design in a small, dense, urban city unify a fragmented pedestrian corridor?
How can this design move forward utilizing tourism practices to better support the interest of the community?

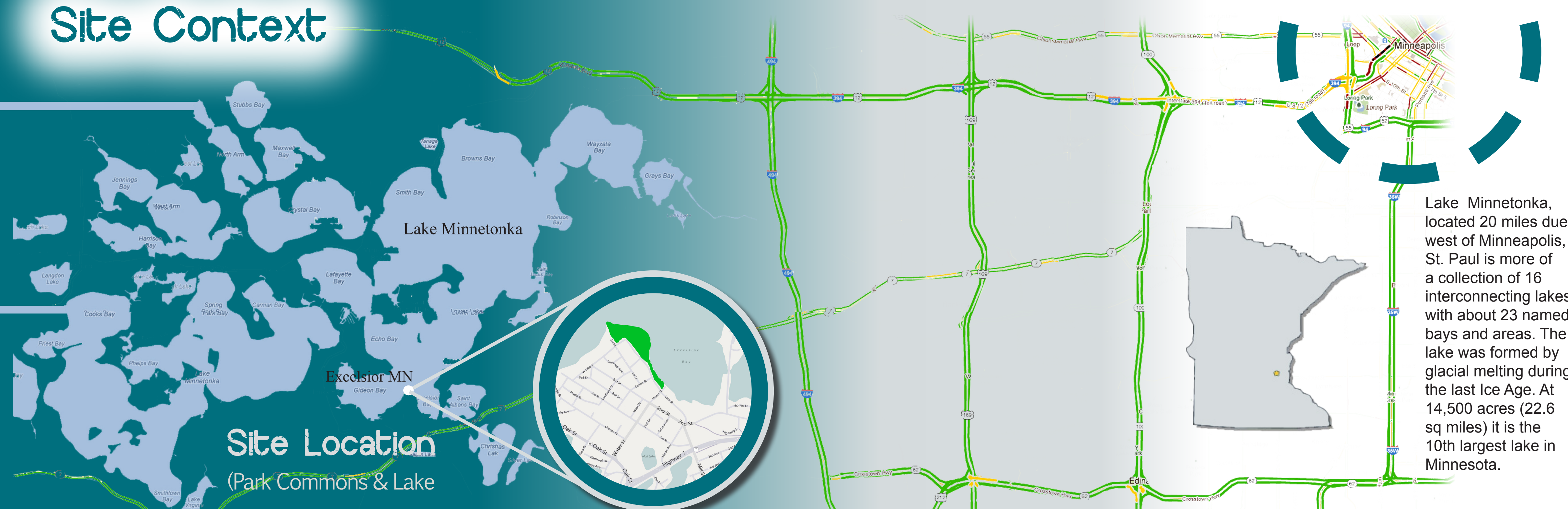
Claim

The analysis reveals a poor environmental interaction and design methodology used on valuable lakeshore land due to the heightened growth for prime real-estate and money-sucking structures like the neighboring community Wayzata. Sustainable design is an advanced approach to create a lasting environment or entity. It will prove to be the stability factor combining a tourism atmosphere as with high expense livability along these precious coastlines.

Excelsior is becoming more aware to sustainable design which is now a common initiative world-wide; however it has yet to become a common understanding, especially for developers and tourists. Sustainable planning will maximize social and economic benefits for the local community of Excelsior furthermore enhancing cultural heritage and reducing negative impacts on the precious coastal land directly relating to storm outfalls that drain into the lake.

Excelsior is just south of one of the most popular destination points by boat known as Big Island. Excelsior's population is estimated at 2,188 residents History is important to Excelsior. Colonists from New York founded the city in 1853 and It has served as the focal point of the South Lake Minnetonka area. The small downtown and historic ambiance sets Excelsior apart from other suburban communities given its vibrant atmosphere. Even a bit of that history is preserved in the recently restored steamboat, "The Minnehaha," which during the summer takes passengers round trip from Excelsior to Wayzata and back. There is also a restored streetcar and a museum, all preserving part of the city's history. Currently, the Excelsior parks and open space system is comprised of approximately 21.8 acres. In addition, 9.4 miles of sidewalks, walking and biking trails throughout the community are maintained by the City. The Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail also bisects the community for a 1.1 mile segment of its total 27 mile course.

Site Context



Site Location (Park Commons & Lake)

Lake Minnetonka, located 20 miles due west of Minneapolis, St. Paul is more of a collection of 16 interconnecting lakes with about 23 named bays and areas. The lake was formed by glacial melting during the last Ice Age. At 14,500 acres (22.6 sq miles) it is the 10th largest lake in Minnesota.

Area of Focus

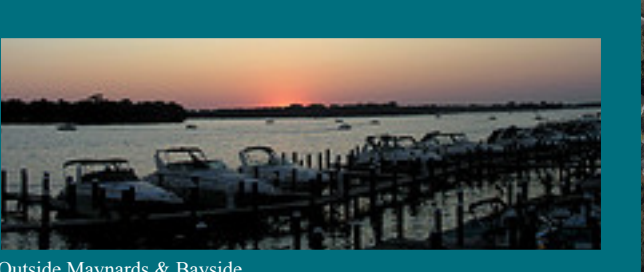
- Proposed Waterfront Connection
- Regional Railway Trail
- Collector Streets
- Arterial Road
- Restaurant



Existing kiosk and port entrance sign



July 4th fireworks near private docks



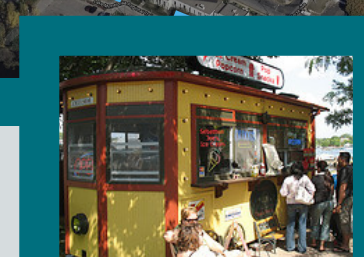
Outside Maynards & Bayside



One of the 1906 charter boats built by the Twin Cities Rapid Transit Co. It was refurbished in 1980 after being sunk.



Northern most point of 'Park Commons'



Trolley concession stand



Hot summer July day at the park.



A 5K race begins and ends in Excelsior.

Existing Site Views



Urban Runoff Erosion Control & Rip-Rap



Municipal Dock Parking



Regional Trail



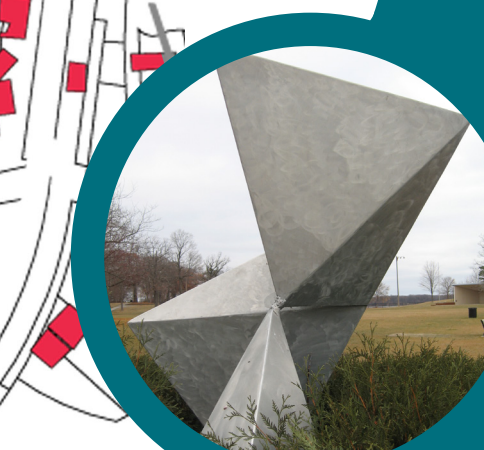
Schematic Plan

- Residential District
- Downtown Commercial District
- Commercial & Retail
- Condos & High-Density



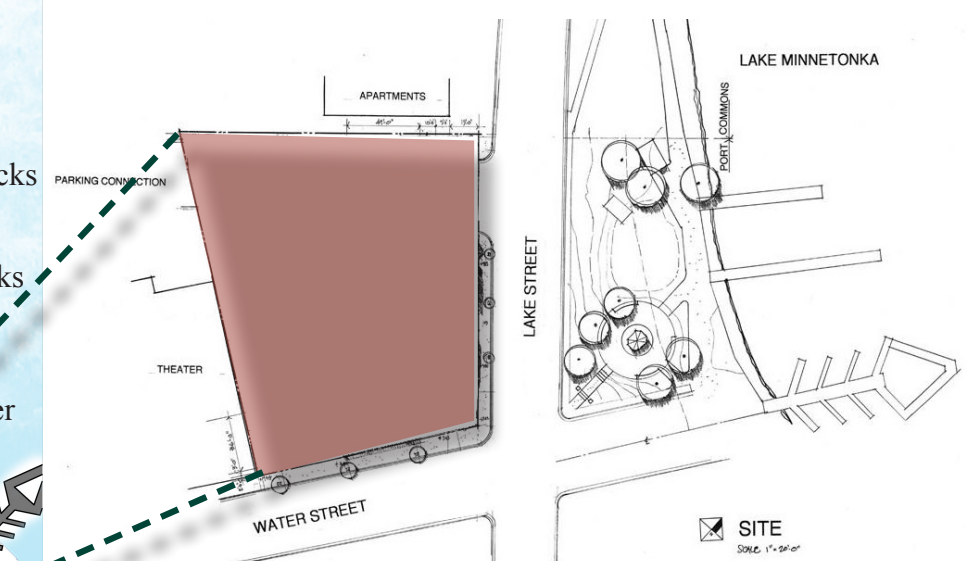
Vacant Lot on Lake & Water St. This property can potentially serve as a staple to the community due to its prominent location at a major node right on the corner of Lake and Water St. Being the first feature when boats dock at the pier, it should serve that greater purpose of an inviting focal landmark to excelsior.

EXCELSIOR BAY



Existing Conditions Inventory Map: Economic Vitality

This property can potentially serve as a staple to the community due to its prominent location at a major node right on the corner of Lake and Water St. Being the first feature when boats dock at the pier, it should serve that greater purpose of an inviting focal landmark to excelsior.



Land Use Issues

- Disconnection from downtown to waterfront and Municipal Charter docks
- Lack of waterfront trails and connection to existing trails
- Under utilized historic districts
- Lack of available boat and Park Commons PARKING (Parking ramp)
- Lost sense of place or identity. Need for preserving historic character of city
- Maximization of the amount of green space in development/redevelopment
- Control of mass, scale, and building height of structures

Transportation Issues

- Disconnect to water: Need for reactivation of waterfront
- Poor access to Excelsior Bay
- Traffic congestion throughout the City, Downtown in particular
- No clearly defined waterfront destinations except park beach
- There is a need for sidewalk trail linkages and connections
- Traffic speed
- Pedestrian/bicycle crossings on Water Street and throughout the community.
- Appearance of private/public parking lots
- Streetscape improvements Downtown
- Public dock space on Lake Minnetonka



Background Park Research



<http://www.ci.excelsior.mn.us/>

The Commons / Port of Excelsior

Park Facilities	Park Class	Total Acres	Archery	Baseball Field	Baseball Court	Biking/Walking Trails	Boat or Canoe Launch	Conservation Area	Cross Country Skiing	Equestrian Trails	Fishing	Flower Gardens	Football Field	Hockey Rink	Horseshoe Pit	Open Playfield	Park Building	Picnic Facilities	Picnic Shelter	Playground Equipment	Pleasure Skating	Restroom	Steeplechase	Skate Park	Snowmobile Trails	Soccer Fields	Softball Field	Swimming	Tennis Court	Volleyball Court
COMMUNITY PARK	CP	13.06		•	•	•	•				•					•	•	•	•	•	•									
The Commons	CP	13.06		•	•	•	•				•					•	•	•	•	•	•									
Total		13.06		•	•	•	•				•					•	•	•	•	•	•									



Park Classification: Community Park

Location: Northeast edge of Central Business District on a peninsula between Excelsior and Gideon Bays.

Size: 13.06 acres

Physical Features: The Commons' dominant physical characteristic is its extensive Lake Minnetonka shoreline, resulting in dynamic lake views and other beachfront areas. Topography varies from rolling hills to flat, shallow spaces. Spaces within the park vary from narrow shorelines along the southern leg to more generous, regular-shaped areas within the northern central area.

Vegetative Features: Mature canopy of trees are scattered throughout much of the park. These trees vary in their species and vitality.

Adjacent Land Use: Bordered by the Central Business District to the southeast, established residential neighborhoods to the south and west.

Notes and Comments: The Commons is the most heavily used park in Excelsior, providing two beaches, a playground, docks, and playfield, as well as space for a wide range of active and passive areas. It is the location of the Port of Excelsior and the site of special events such as the Fourth of July fireworks and Art in the Park. Events and the park's unique location draw many non-residents to The Commons. In this respect, it acts somewhat as a regional park as well as a community park.

Case Studies Town Green, Maple Grove, MN

What is the Town Green?
 A brand new urban park connected to the Hennepin County Library provides a distinctive community gathering place with it's sole purpose of entertainment and performing art shows. The iconic shelter drawing all the attention is an immaculately built bandshell with a dramatic wing-like canopy located on the water's edge.

The three pavilions include a concession space, rest rooms, and a rentable meeting room for small gatherings or parties.



<http://www.ci.maple-grove.mn.us/content/155/7397/7400.aspx>

About the Park

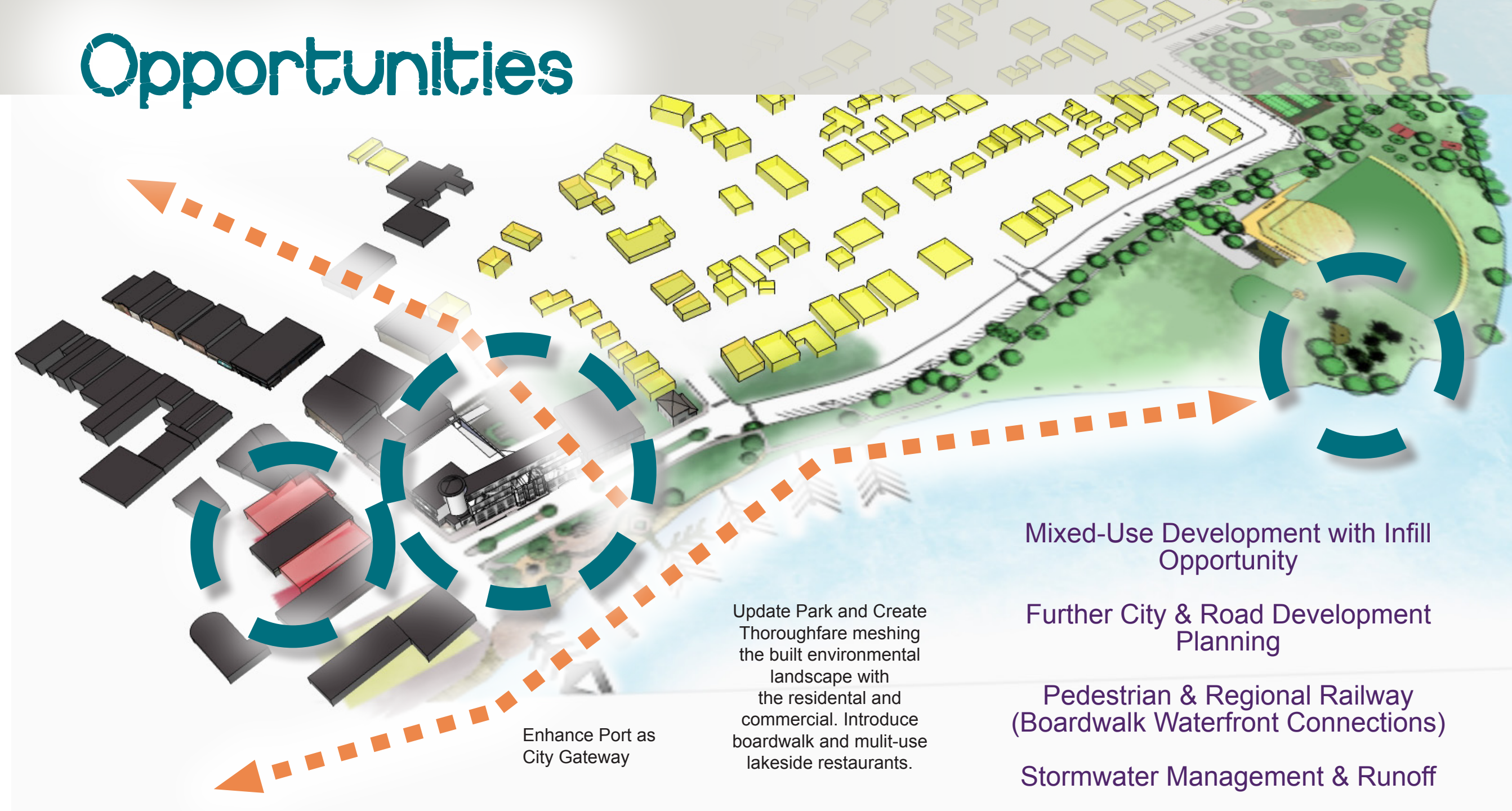
The Town Green plaza along Main Street will provide a relaxing setting for daily park activities. Another distinct feature of the park is the peninsula, which will be a great spot to experience the lake or host a small event.

The band shell went through an extensive design development process that included the study of various concepts and architectural styles. Through multiple revisions the design molded to a subtle and simple form. The architectural theme of the band shell canopy meeting the sky is meant to have multiple associations with nature: an abstract grove of trees, the delicate and curved maple seedpod, and clouds. The 105-foot wide white concrete canopy is supported on six narrow concrete columns and gently arcs toward the sky in an acoustically-formed shape. At night even, there are reflected lights on the underbelly of the canopy creating a very lively atmosphere when there are late movies or shows. Excelsior's 'Commons Park' can and should further develop some of their community gathering spaces. The current status of their bandshell is simply a 4 sided geometric wall that could possibly use some revamping after 15 years of usage.



©Paul Crosby 2010

Opportunities



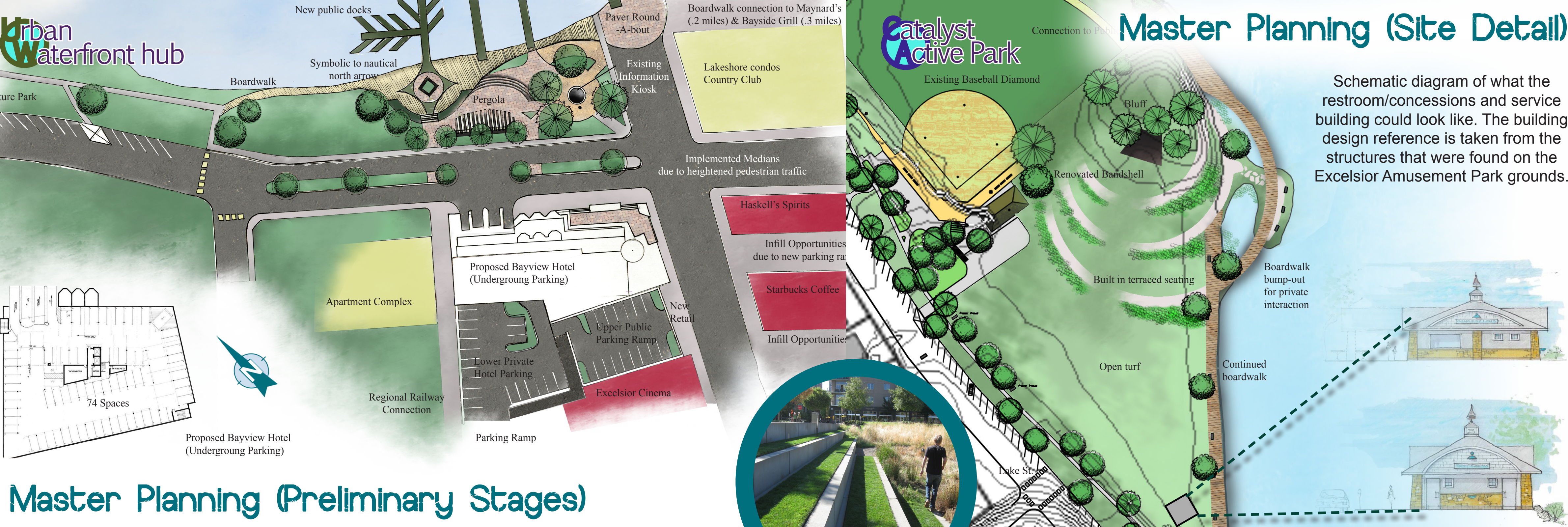
Mixed-Use Development with Infill Opportunity

Further City & Road Development Planning

Pedestrian & Regional Railway (Boardwalk Waterfront Connections)

Stormwater Management & Runoff

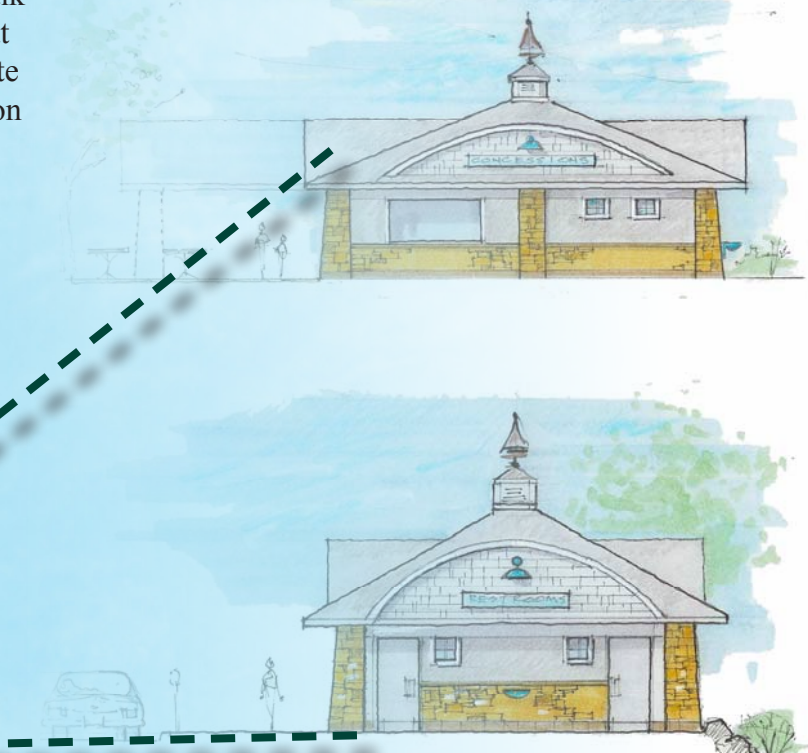
Park and Bandshell Renovations



Master Planning (Preliminary Stages)

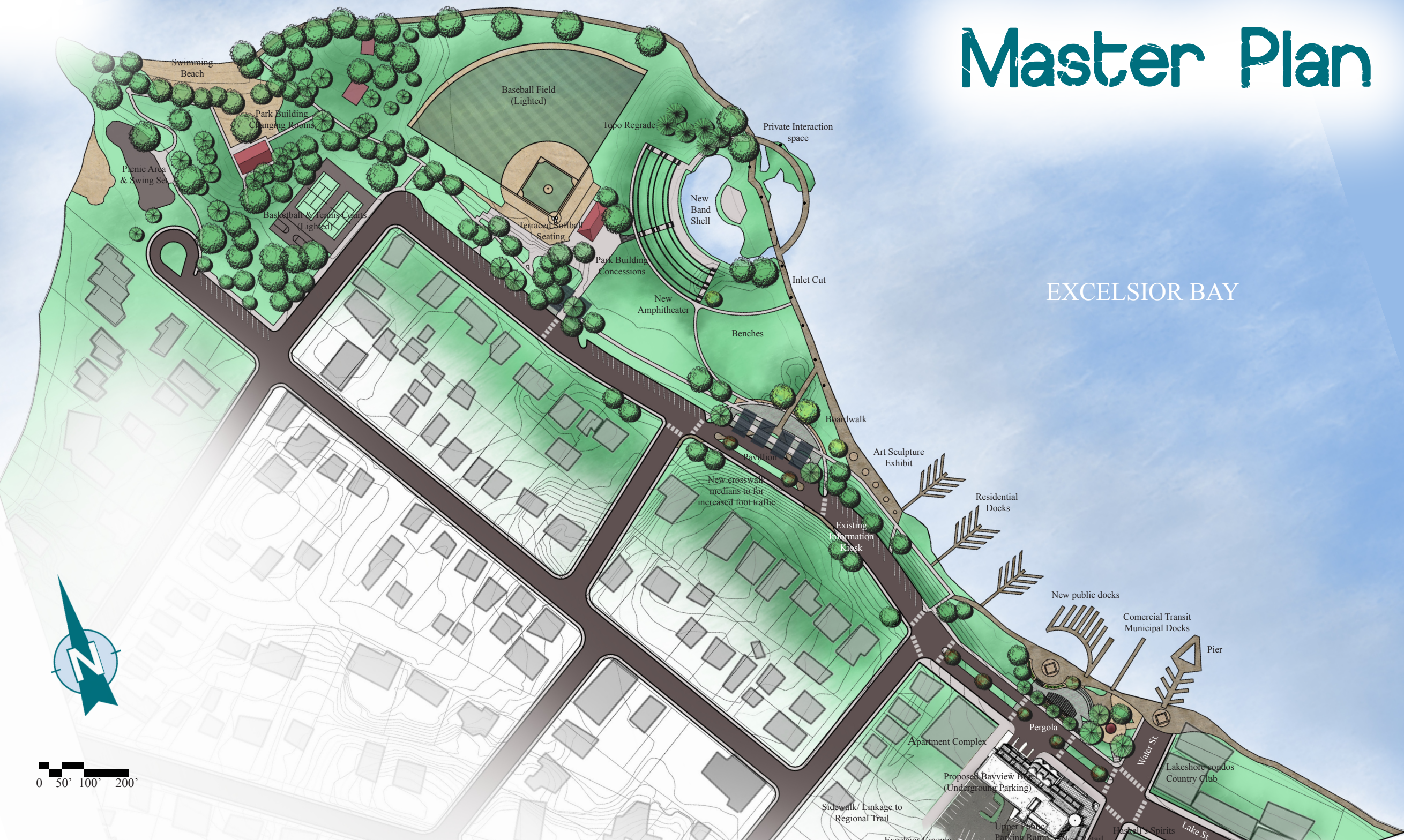
Master Planning (Site Detail)

Schematic diagram of what the restroom/concessions and service building could look like. The building design reference is taken from the structures that were found on the Excelsior Amusement Park grounds.



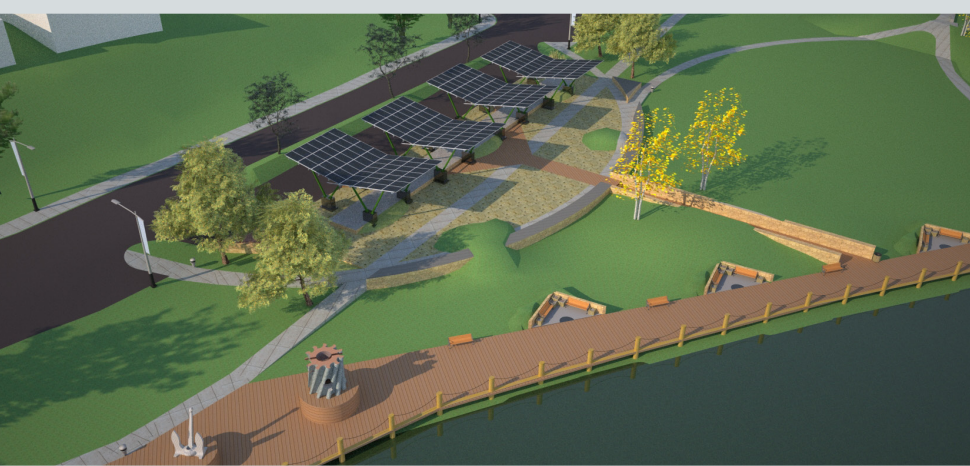
Master Plan

EXCELSIOR BAY



Urban Waterfront hub

- Plaza
- Pergola with harboring shade trees
- Terraced Patio with material studies
- Public event seating for lake charters
- Informational Kiosk
- Interpretive waterfront boardwalk
- Connection to Regional Trail
- Pedestrian friendly median implementation
- Streetscape redevelopment
- Mix-use Infrastructure (Hotel & Retail)



Market Pavilion

- Entry Pavilion Plaza into the park
- Public art display and Sculpture Park
- Opportunity for monthly or yearly gathering hub for farmers markets and events
- Relaxed earth mounded seating grouped with a knee wall fosters conversation and interaction
- New social epicenter for the public neighborhood
- A reestablished greenspace that was once under utilized



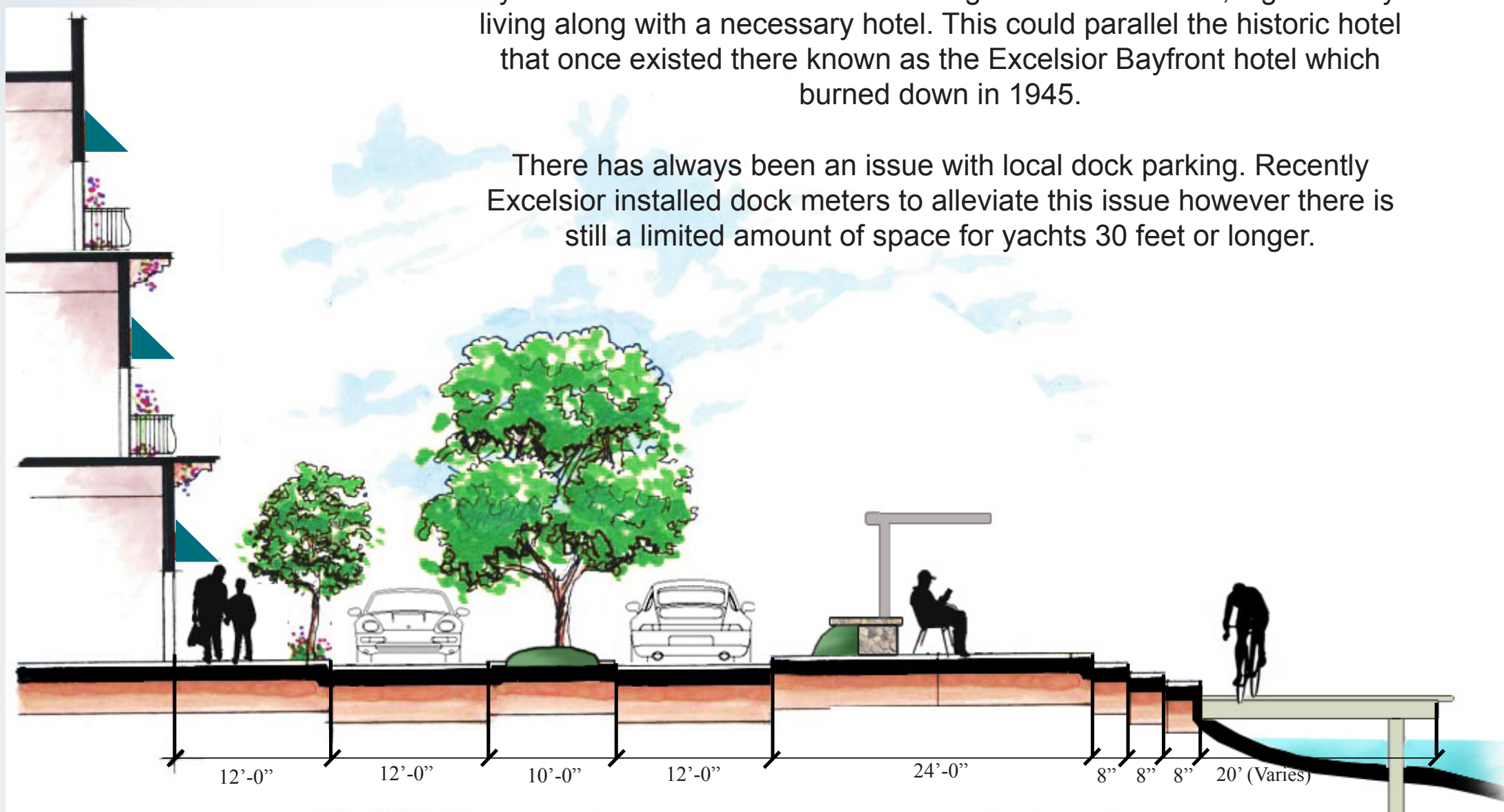
Catalyst Active Park

- New public dock access
- Integrated bandshell with boardwalk
- Amphitheater and terraced seating for events
- Secluded private lake connection space
- Interaction with water (Swim)
- Increase Habitat Diversity
- Revamp Park Commons community space

Design Concept

The design focus must extend beyond the park's boundaries and that is why a site analysis is necessary to be done before any design considerations are put into place. A few questions that one could ask are, will the proposed park development cause flooding? Will it cause traffic to back up into residential collector streets? Will the arrangement of new facilities (like the rundown bandshell) replace the pleasant view of undeveloped land?

This is where I ran into an instance that there was a large vacant lot in the works to be made into a possible hotel by the City of Excelsior. That being said, this changes the entire dynamic of the docks and port area. The rendering to the right shows the new development of the hotel along with green streets and a newly renovated patio and pergola waiting area for the charters. It is now a natural hub and this design should alleviate some of the poor traffic flow paired with some obvious downtown parking issues stated earlier.



Urban Plaza Section Elevation

Lake Street should be redesigned to allow for a more pedestrian friendly access path along the lake. It will further allow for the possibility of a widened boardwalk connecting to some multi-use, high-density living along with a necessary hotel. This could parallel the historic hotel that once existed there known as the Excelsior Bayfront hotel which burned down in 1945.

There has always been an issue with local dock parking. Recently Excelsior installed dock meters to alleviate this issue however there is still a limited amount of space for yachts 30 feet or longer.



Urban waterfront hub

- Plaza
- Pergola with harboring shade trees
- Terraced Patio with material studies
- Public event seating for lake charters
- Informational Kiosk
- Interpretive waterfront boardwalk
- Connection to Regional Trail
- Pedestrian friendly median implementation
- Streetscape redevelopment
- Mix-use Infrastructure (Hotel & Retail)



Design Concept

This rendering to the right simply shows the in-fill possibility present if the elevated parking structure is built on the vacant lot. The two red buildings are currently parking lots but could eventually close up the fragmented block. Above is the charter node along the boardwalk.



Perspective on the corner of Water Street and Lake Street looking NW

Downtown Water Street looking NW towards pier

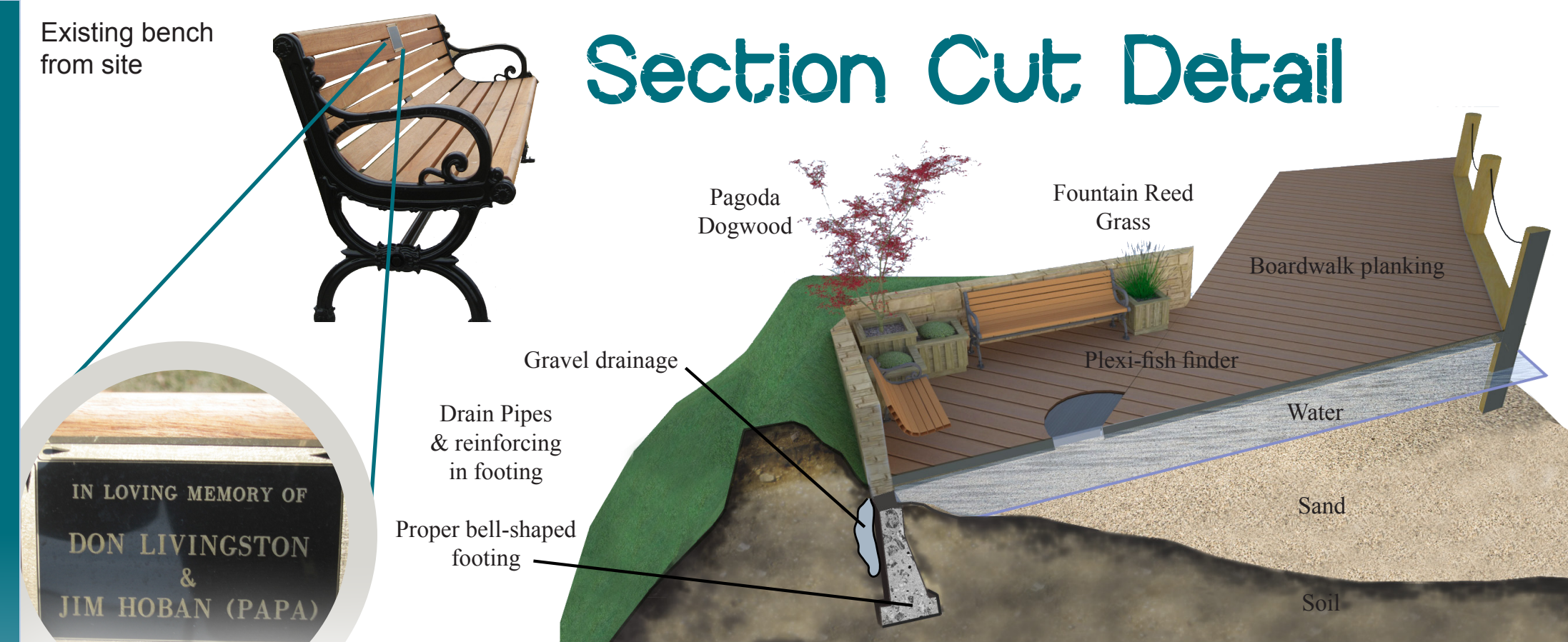


Perspective just off of Lake Street looking South East



Market Pavilion

- Entry Pavilion Plaza into the park
- Public art display and Sculpture Park
- Opportunity for monthly or yearly gathering hub for farmers markets and events
- Relaxed earth mounded seating grouped with a knee wall fosters conversation and interaction
- New social epicenter for the public neighborhood
- A reestablished greenspace that was once under utilized



Section Cut Detail

Design Concept

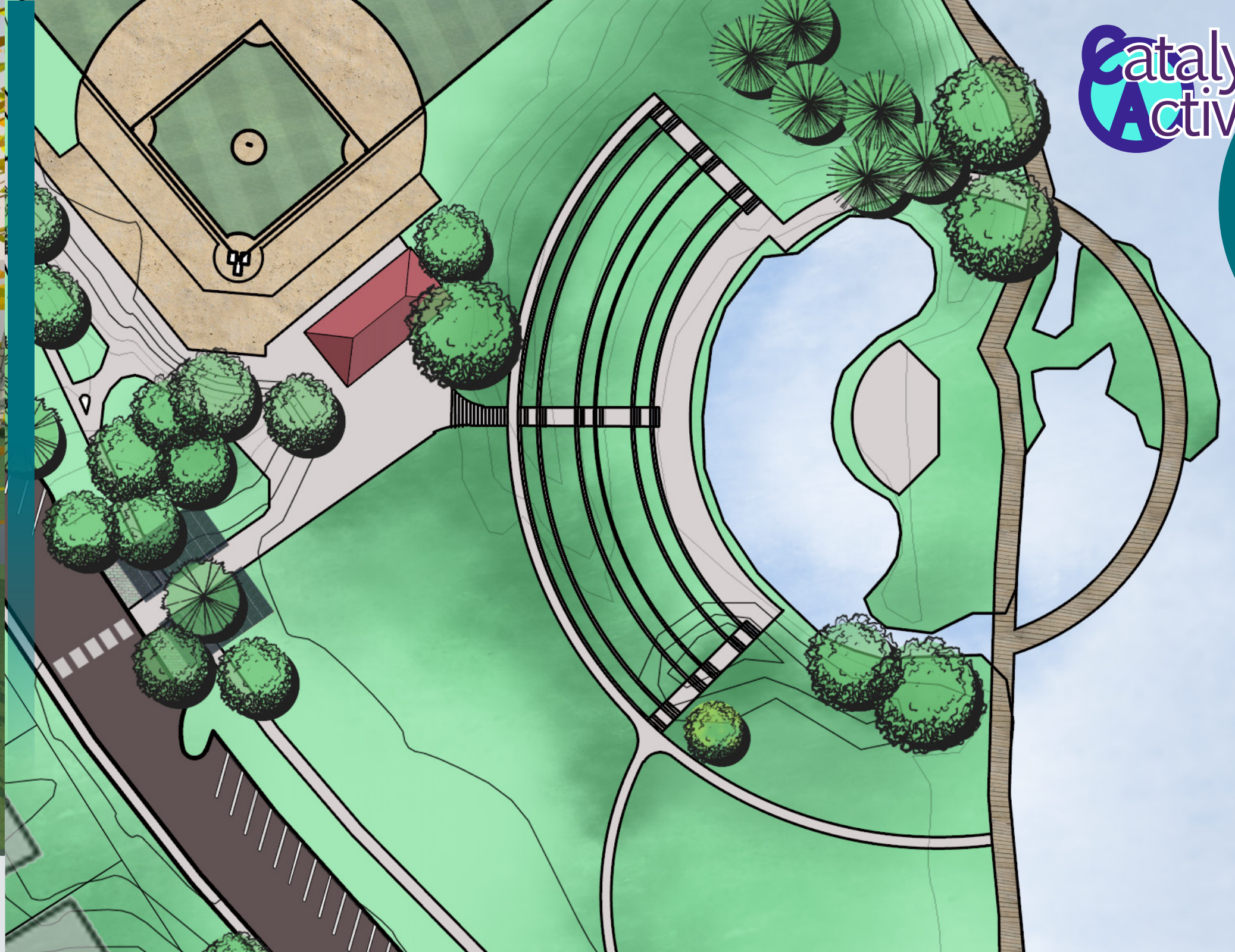
The key word to focus on is the 'establishment' of ideal relationships, which essentially is the only purpose of design in order to meet the public's needs. The rendering to the left simulates an entrance pavilion into the heart of the Park Commons. Not only does it provide an articulately chosen pallet of materials and textures meshed cohesively together, but it is a natural destination point to house smaller day trip visitor events such as Farmer's Markets or Socials.

People need visual refreshment and mental exercise when biking or driving, and the Park Commons is just that place that would catch anybody's attention. There are framing trees along the pavilion that create a natural line out towards the lake along with rolling bluffs or mounds that semi-mimic waves. The grassy protrusions provide the ideal place to grab a bite to eat and catch some rays before heading to the beach on the north side.





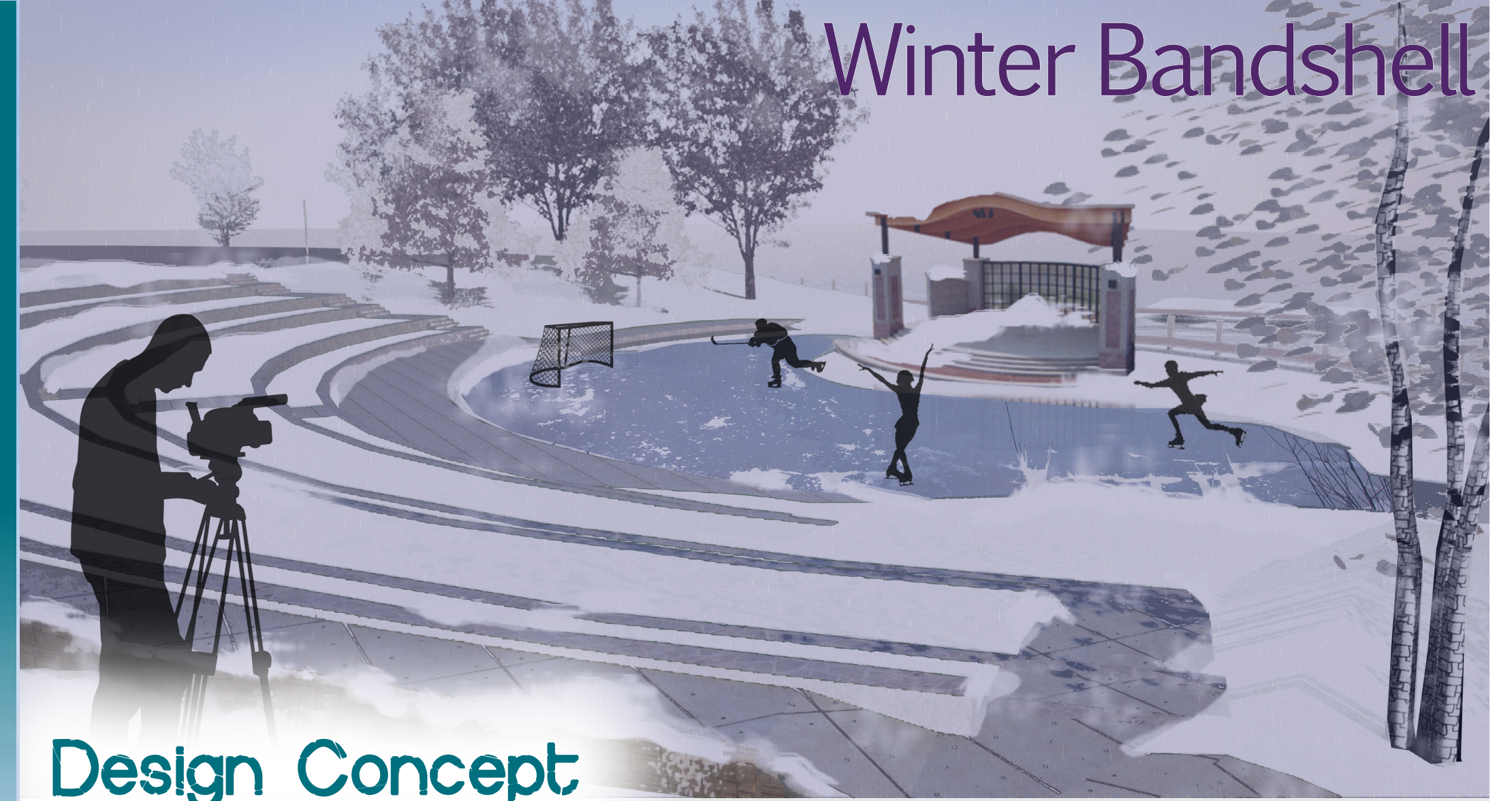
Summer Bandshell



Catalyst Active Park



- New public dock access
- Integrated bandshell with boardwalk
- Amphitheater and terraced seating for events
- Secluded private lake connection space
- Interaction with water (Swim)
- Increase Habitat Diversity
- Revamp Park Commons community space



Winter Bandshell

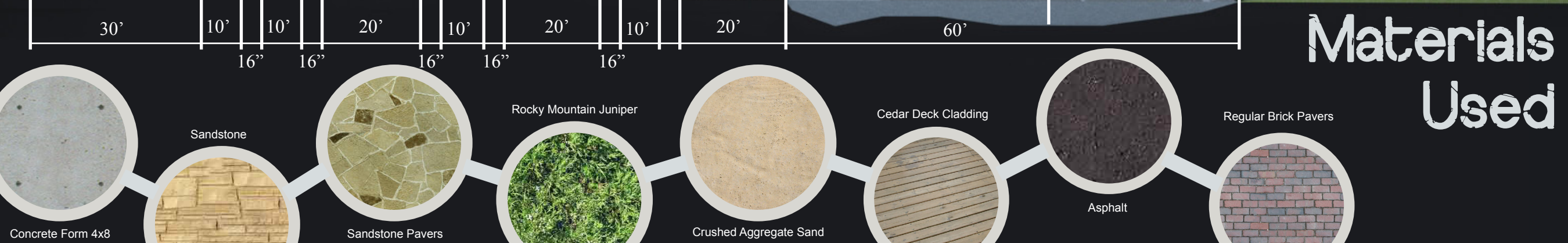
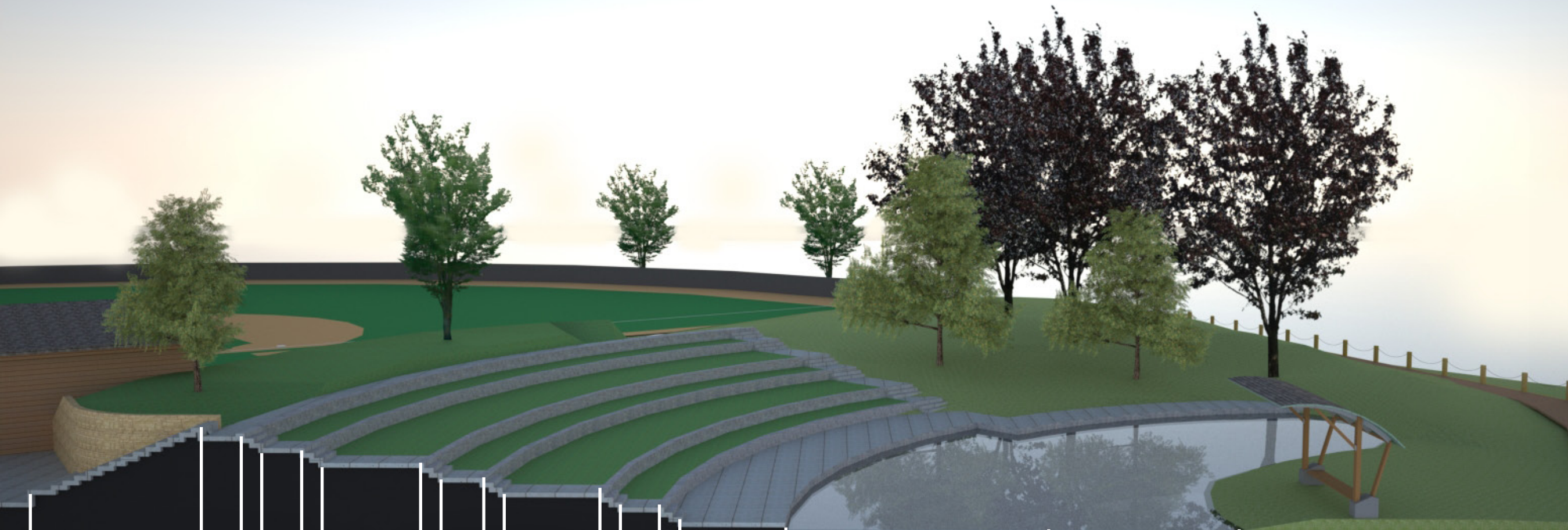
Design Concept

People are the benefactors of any park development, however some designs are evaluated by their successfulness in how well they meet the demands of machines and equipment.

To the right are two renderings showing possible seasonal activity. It is a very engineered amphitheater that would require weekly maintenance due to the shallow holding pond. The bandshell would again bring in large crowds during events like the 4th of July.



Ampitheater Section Cut



Questions??

