

McKinley Park **COMMUNITY GROVE**

City of Pittsburgh Public Art & Civic Design Commission
Hearing & Action
November 2025

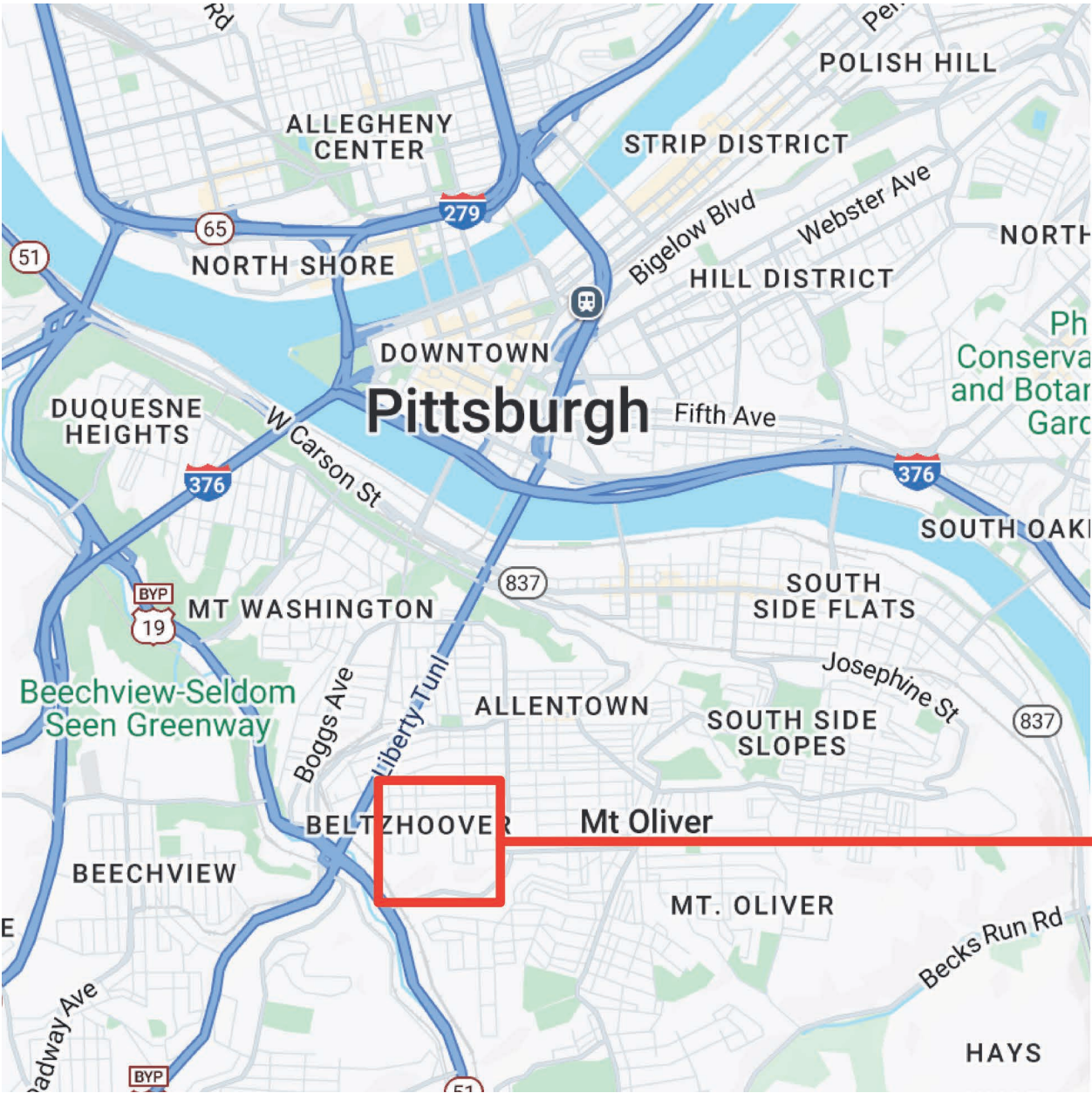


Pittsburgh
Parks
Conservancy

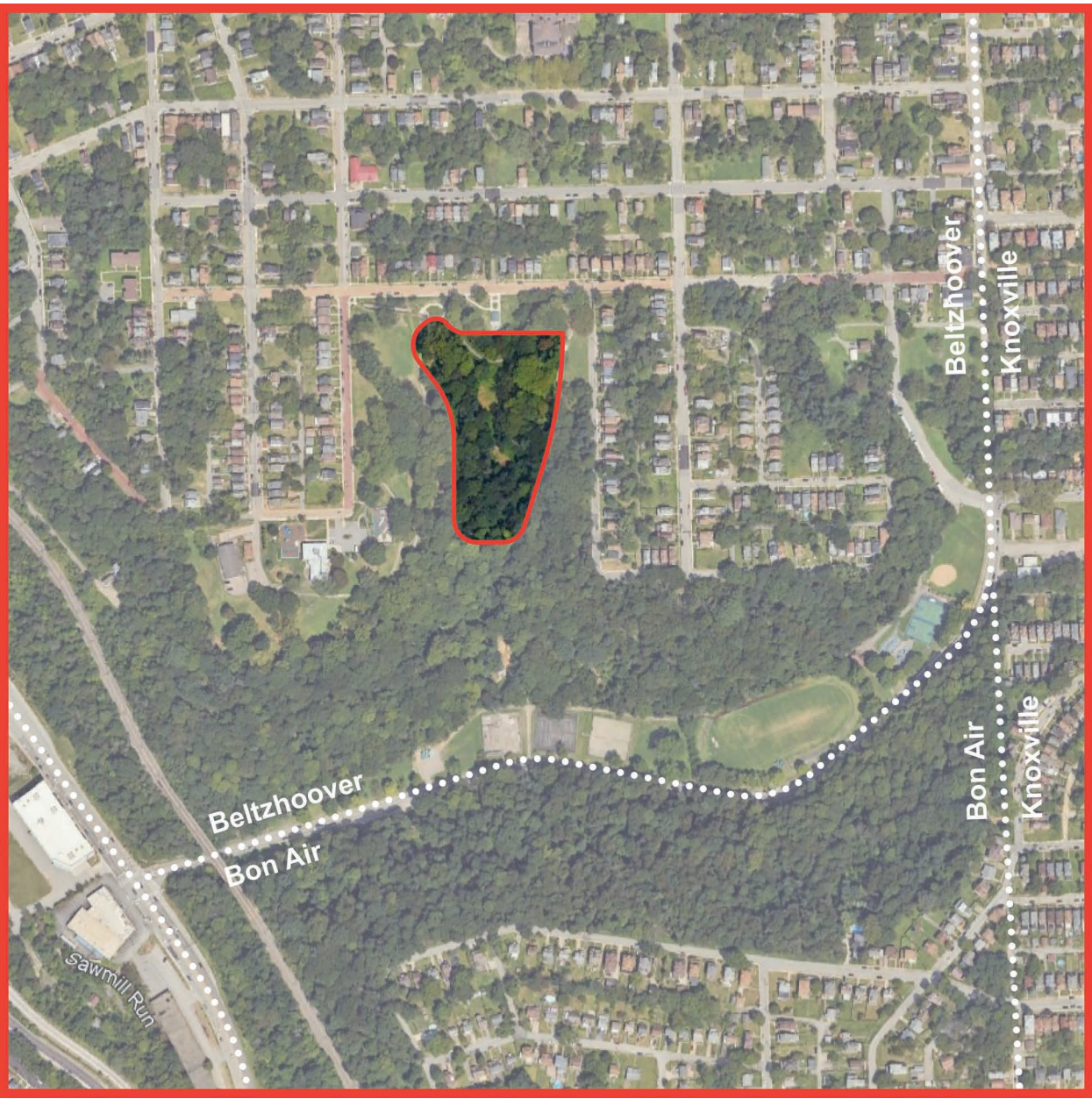


environmental
planning & design

PROJECT LOCATION



city-scale



neighborhood-scale

EXISTING CONDITIONS



central project area

on-going restoration efforts

chainlink backstop & posts

EXISTING CONDITIONS (cont.)



boardwalk + seating area

stair connection area

erosion issues

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy Investment in McKinley Park



2011

Shelter House
parking and
lighting project



2016

Completion of
McKinley Master
Plan



2022-2025

Earth Month at
McKinley Park



2021-2023

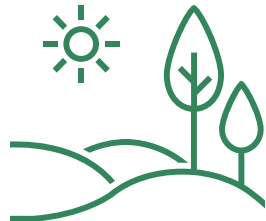
Chicken Hill
Green
Infrastructure



2024-Present

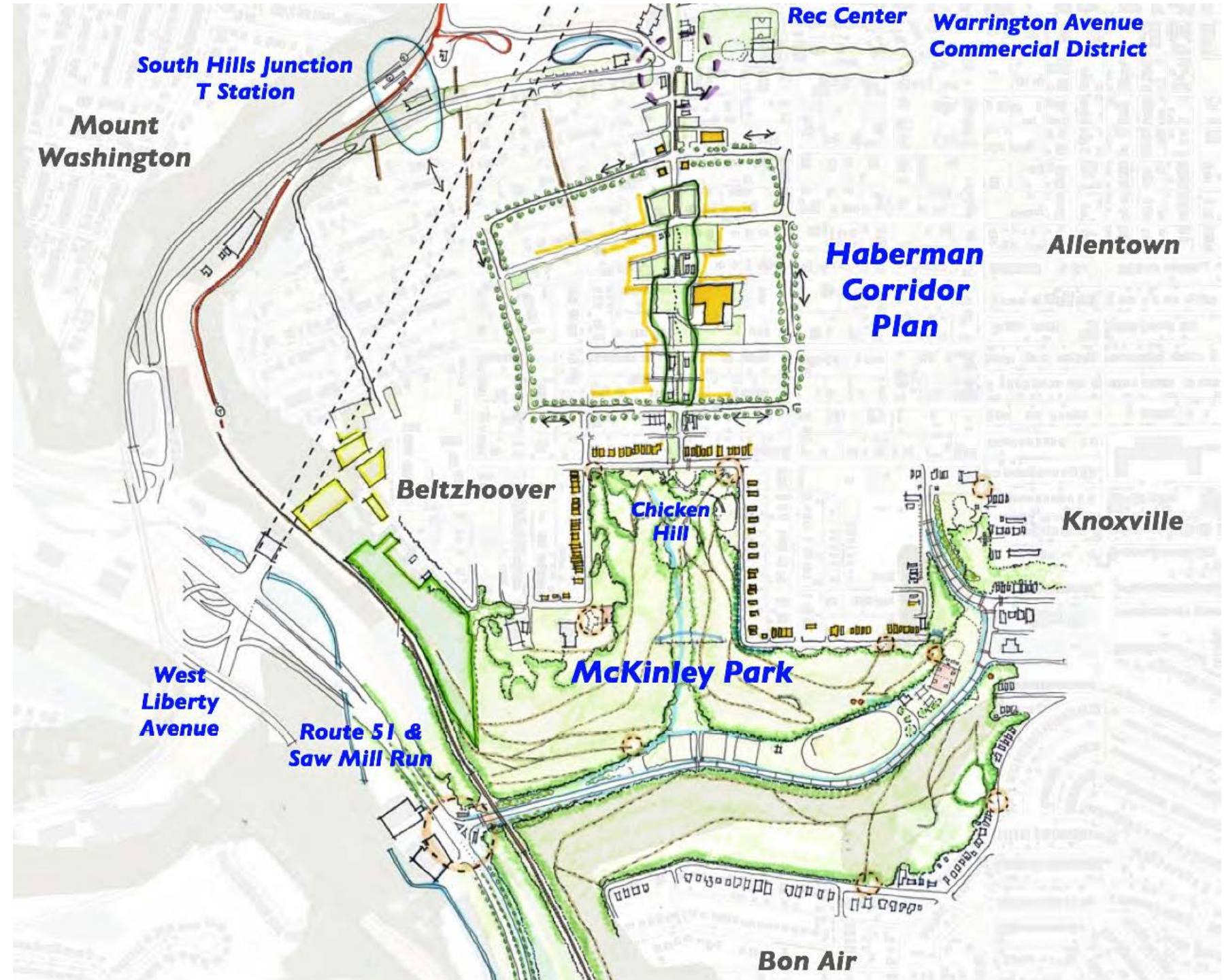
McKinley Park
“community
grove”

2017- Present



McKINLEY PARK MASTER PLAN

- A Framework for Transformation
- Community Engagement, Education Programs
- Lots of work yet to do!



PROJECT BACKGROUND

As one of the oldest parks in Pittsburgh, McKinley Park plays a vital role in providing recreational spaces to the hill-top neighborhoods of Beltzhoover, Allentown, Knoxville, Bon Air, and more. Until recently, the park experienced significant disinvestment. However, starting in 2016 with the McKinley Park Master Plan, projects have been undertaken to foster an improved and more cohesive park experience. This project, the McKinley Park Community Grove, is the next step in this process.

Sitting below Michigan Street, encompassed by mature trees and woodlands at the nexus of several key trail connections, the Community Grove provides an opportunity for a unique community space in the Chicken Hill section of McKinley Park. Once the site of a community baseball field built by neighborhood residents, the space evokes a strong sense of pride and nostalgia for residents and park users, and has the potential to serve as a vibrant community space once again.

The Conservancy has worked closely with neighborhood residents and stakeholders to create a vision for the Community Grove and to explore opportunities for the space, including programming support for youth-serving organizations, providing opportunities for nature-based education, potentially showcasing local art and community history, and generally serving as an informal gathering space for residents in a natural setting. The project will tie together recent park and trail improvements in the area and strengthen connections between the neighborhoods and McKinley Park.



PROJECT HISTORY

2024

March — **site walk** | community site walk (image 1)

April — **initial survey** | an initial project survey was conducted to collect feedback used to guide concept development

May

June — **community meeting 1** | shared design concepts and promoted project awareness and involvement (image 2)

July — **feedback survey** | survey feedback collected on conceptual design options

August

September

October — **community meeting 2** | shared updated design concepts incorporating feedback survey comments (image 3)

November

December

January

2025

February — **community meeting 3** | shared an updated preferred design option (image 4)

March — **site analysis & inventory** | analysis with inventory

April

May — **schematic plan development** | design development working off the community-chosen preferred plan

June — **30% construction documents**

July

— **60% construction documents**

August

September — **plan refinement and design visualization**

October — **Public Art + Civic Design Commission Preliminary Review**

November — **Development Activities Meeting** | October 16

— **Public Art + Civic Design Commission Hearing + Action Meeting** | November 19



1 March community site walk



2 June community meeting



3 October community meeting



4 Preferred plan at February community meeting

OVERVIEW



project goals

The intent of this project is to create an improved experience within McKinley Park by:

1. **enhancing recreational spaces** for active and passive activities through active lawn space, a shelter for small gatherings, an education space, improvements to an existing seating area, and improved trail connectivity to the rest of the park.
2. **improving mobility**, accessibility, and inner-park connectivity through the implementation of new trail connections and stairs to navigate steeper slopes.
3. **adjusting drainage patterns** to reduce erosion, trail washout, and over-saturated soils, further tying into previous green infrastructure projects addressing stormwater.
4. **reinforce ecological restoration** areas by protecting and expanding upon designated areas while increasing opportunity for engagement and potential for learning about their importance.

SITE PLAN



walkway | compacted trail surface aggregate paving; 8% max. w/ intermediate landings to sheet water off

seatwall | accommodates a more enclosed gathering space while providing additional seating

shelter | a smaller, more intimate counterpart to the existing shelter above; concrete paving fitted with picnic tables

lawn | a level space for active or passive activities; improved site drainage to reduce existing over-saturation.

existing trail connection | links the *Community Grove* to the rest of the park trail system.

new stair connection | improves access to the lower seating area.

existing chainlink backstop | potential to be repurposed as an art installation vetted by the community.

education space | concrete paving; a small space intended to be used for education and/or small gatherings.

lower seating | upgraded seating, reclaimed log seating.

seatwall | creates a more defined educational space while providing seating.

boulders | reinforces the edge b/w lawn and restoration areas; provides informal seating.

new stair connection | connects existing shelter and slide to lower trail system.

improved drainage patterns | regraded drainage swales to better manage stormwater.

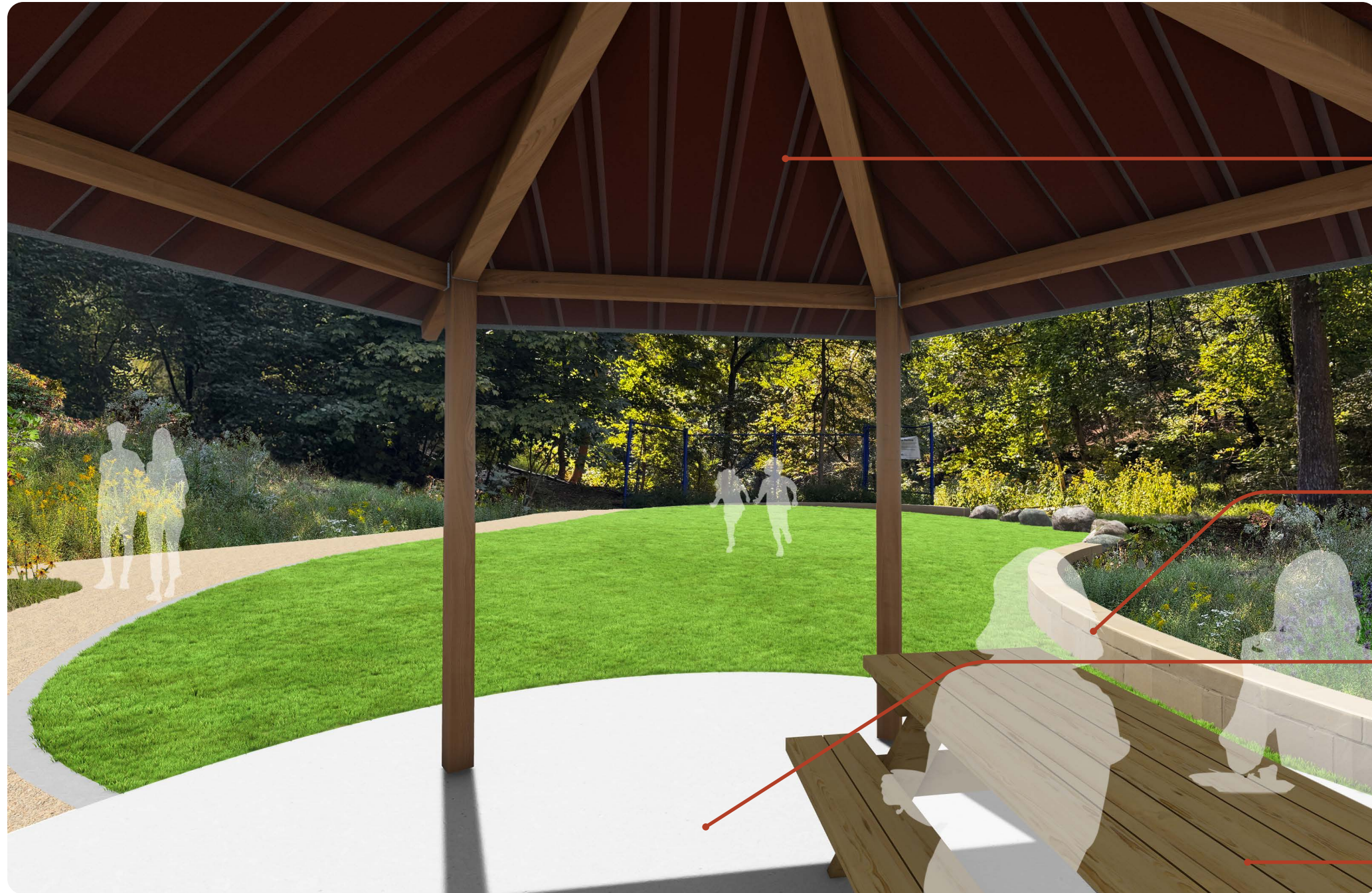
LAWN IMPROVEMENTS



improved drainage | reduces over-saturated soil while creating a smooth lawn for recreation.

defined edges | boulders are proposed to delineate lawn/restoration area edge with a concrete edging proposed between the lawn and trail surface aggregate to contain the trail surfacing.

NEW SHELTER



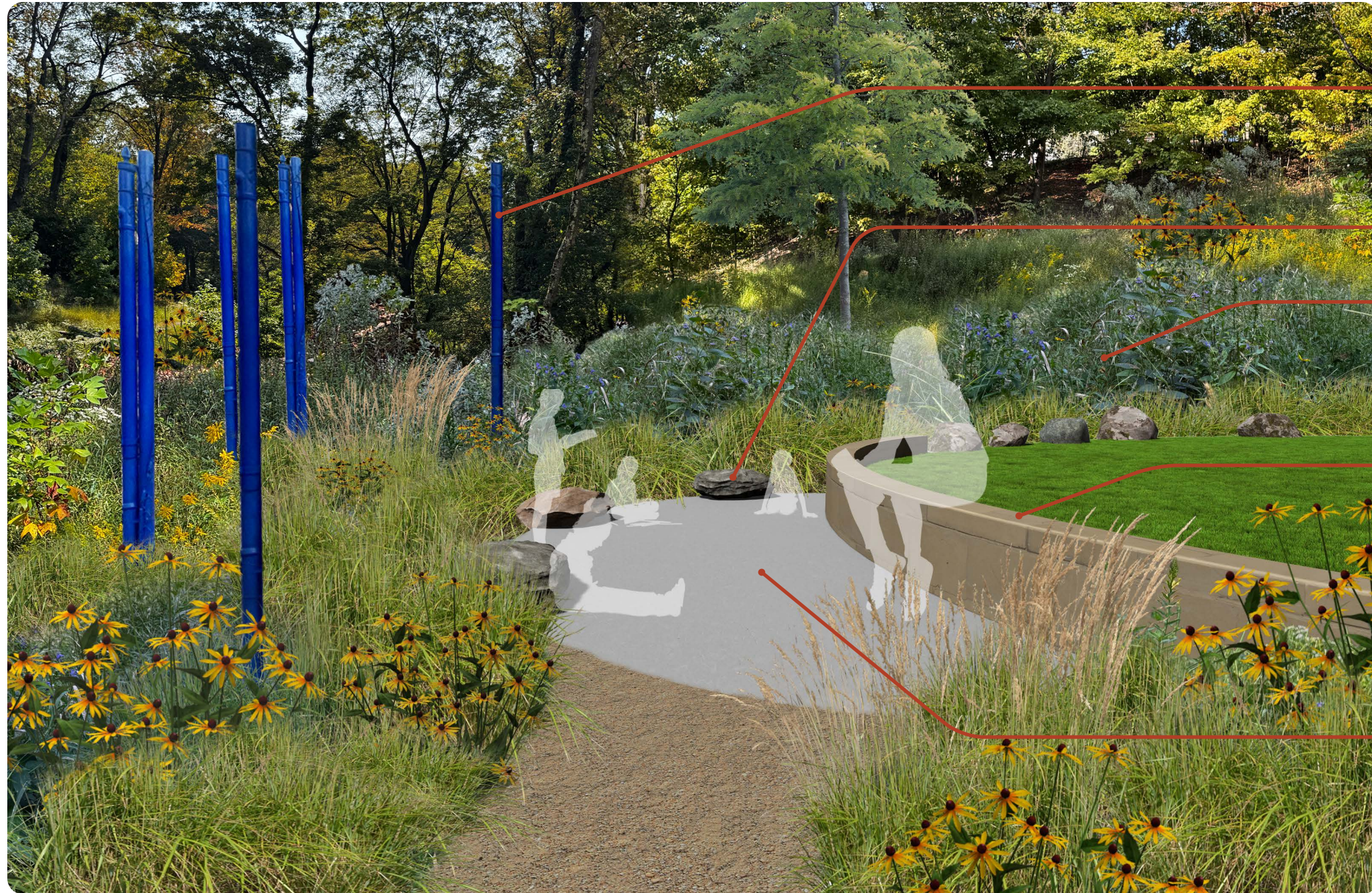
shelter | polygon 20' hexagonal wood shade structure (city standard).

seat wall | ~18" high seatwall encompassing the pavilion providing additional seating and an increased sense of enclosure; seatwall to match existing sandstone wall at site.

concrete surface | concrete surface at gathering area under proposed shelter.

picnic tables | 1-2 City of Pittsburgh parks standard tables proposed.

EDUCATIONAL SPACE



backstop posts | damaged fence fabric to be removed leaving backstop's posts to commemorate the significance of this park's history as a community baseball field; community to determine potential for use as a future art installation.

boulders | to define the space while providing seating options.

expanded restoration | expands upon the existing restoration area offering up-close interaction and potential to highlight methods and/or importance via signage or hands-on education.

seatwall | helps define the space while providing seating; seatwall to match existing sandstone wall at site.

learning space | a small, enclosed concrete paved space for educational activities and small groups.

LOWER SEATING AT OUTDOOR CLASSROOM



upgraded seating | new benches crafted from fallen trees.

PLANTING



PROPOSED PLANT LIST

Trees*

- Basswood | *Tilia americana*
- Pawpaw | *Asimina triloba*
- Yellow Birch | *Betula alleghaniensis*
- Pagoda Dogwood | *Cornus alterniflora*
- Black Willow | *Salix nigra*
- Elderberry | *Sambucus canadensis*

Shrubs

- Buttonbush | *Cephalanthus occidentalis*
- American Hazelnut | *Corylus americana*
- Chokecherry | *Prunus virginiana*
- Swamp Rose | *Rosa palustris*

*All selected trees have been chosen from the approved tree species for parks and open spaces and restoration developed by the City of Pittsburgh.

MATERIALS



trail surface aggregate | to be used for the walkways.



concrete | to be used for the gathering spaces.



reclaimed log benches | benches crafted from locally felled trees.



wood box steps | a proven stair method in the pittsburgh parks.



sandstone block wall | to match existing walls on site.



poligon wood shade structure | hexagon structure.