

28 October 2025

Mr. William Burke, Director
Philadelphia Art Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: Improvements to Playground at Franklin Square

Dear Mr. Burke:

On behalf of Historic Philadelphia, Inc. (HPI), we submit the following letter, and documents, for your consideration as we request Philadelphia Art Commission approval for improvements to the playground at Franklin Square in Center City Philadelphia.

Building on the success of HPI's programming leadership as long-term lessee of the park they have identified the need to increase the range of experiences for play and to diversify the types of play activities available. Based on observations, user surveys, and analysis done by HPI and Playful Learning Landscapes in 2023-2024, the playground is working well for younger children, but with limited variety of play options. Slightly older children could be better engaged with more opportunities for hiding, climbing, and perching. The proposed improvements add these types of play as well as water play and more seating for caregivers.

Existing Conditions

The existing playground is approximately 13,000 SF enclosed by a fence and bordered by an open lawn with mature London planetrees. The playground safety surface is aged and worn, though some of the existing equipment is in decent condition. Existing trees within the space will be protected and are to remain.

Proposed Design

The proposed improvements will expand the enclosure to the north to accommodate additional play features. New play experiences include swings and slides for young children, a low mound that includes water play and musical instruments a group swing and a zipline. A high climbing tower includes additional slides and swings and exhibits that reflect on Benjamin Franklin's inventions and discoveries.

The nature-based playground will include boulder scrambles and will be heavily planted with trees, shrubs and perennials. A small amphitheater will provide a space for visiting day cares to gather children for snacks, lessons, or story-time.

The main path loops through the site and will be constructed of exposed aggregate concrete. Safety surfaces are planned to be a monolithic cork material.

Thank you for considering our application. I look forward to presenting to you and the Commission at your public meeting on November 12, 2026.

The person who should receive the decision:

Bryan Hanes, Principal
bhanes@studiobryanhane.com
Studio Bryan Hanes
340 N. 12th Street, Suite 415
Philadelphia, PA 19107

The person who can answer questions about the application:

Eduardo Martinez
emartinez@studiobryanhane.com
215-923-2858

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'Bryan Hanes', followed by a horizontal line.

Bryan Hanes, ASLA, LEED
Principal
STUDIO|BRYAN HANES

DESIGN REVIEW FOR

FRANKLIN SQUARE PLAYGROUND

SUBMITTED TO THE PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION

NOVEMBER 12TH, 2025



28 October 2025

Mr. William Burke, Director
Philadelphia Art Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: Improvements to Playground at Franklin Square

Dear Mr. Burke:

On behalf of Historic Philadelphia, Inc. (HPI), we submit the following letter, and documents, for your consideration as we request Philadelphia Art Commission approval for improvements to the playground at Franklin Square in Center City Philadelphia.

Building on the success of HPI's programming leadership as long-term lessee of the park they have identified the need to increase the range of experiences for play and to diversify the types of play activities available. Based on observations, user surveys, and analysis done by HPI and Playful Learning Landscapes in 2023-2024, the playground is working well for younger children, but with limited variety of play options. Slightly older children could be better engaged with more opportunities for hiding, climbing, and perching. The proposed improvements add these types of play as well as water play and more seating for caregivers.

Existing Conditions

The existing playground is approximately 13,000 SF enclosed by a fence and bordered by an open lawn with mature London planetrees. The playground safety surface is aged and worn, though some of the existing equipment is in decent condition. Existing trees within the space will be protected and are to remain.

Proposed Design

The proposed improvements will expand the enclosure to the north to accommodate additional play features. New play experiences include swings and slides for young children, a low mound that includes water play and musical instruments a group swing and a zipline. A high climbing tower includes additional slides and swings and exhibits that reflect on Benjamin Franklin's inventions and discoveries.

The nature-based playground will include boulder scrambles and will be heavily planted with trees, shrubs and perennials. A small amphitheater will provide a space for visiting day cares to gather children for snacks, lessons, or story-time.

The main path loops through the site and will be constructed of exposed aggregate concrete. Safety surfaces are planned to be a monolithic cork material.

Thank you for considering our application. I look forward to presenting to you and the Commission at your public meeting on November 12, 2026.

The person who should receive the decision:

Bryan Hanes, Principal
bhanes@studiobryanhanes.com
Studio Bryan Hanes
340 N. 12th Street, Suite 415
Philadelphia, PA 19107

The person who can answer questions about the application:

Eduardo Martinez
emartinez@studiobryanhanes.com
215-923-2858

Sincerely,



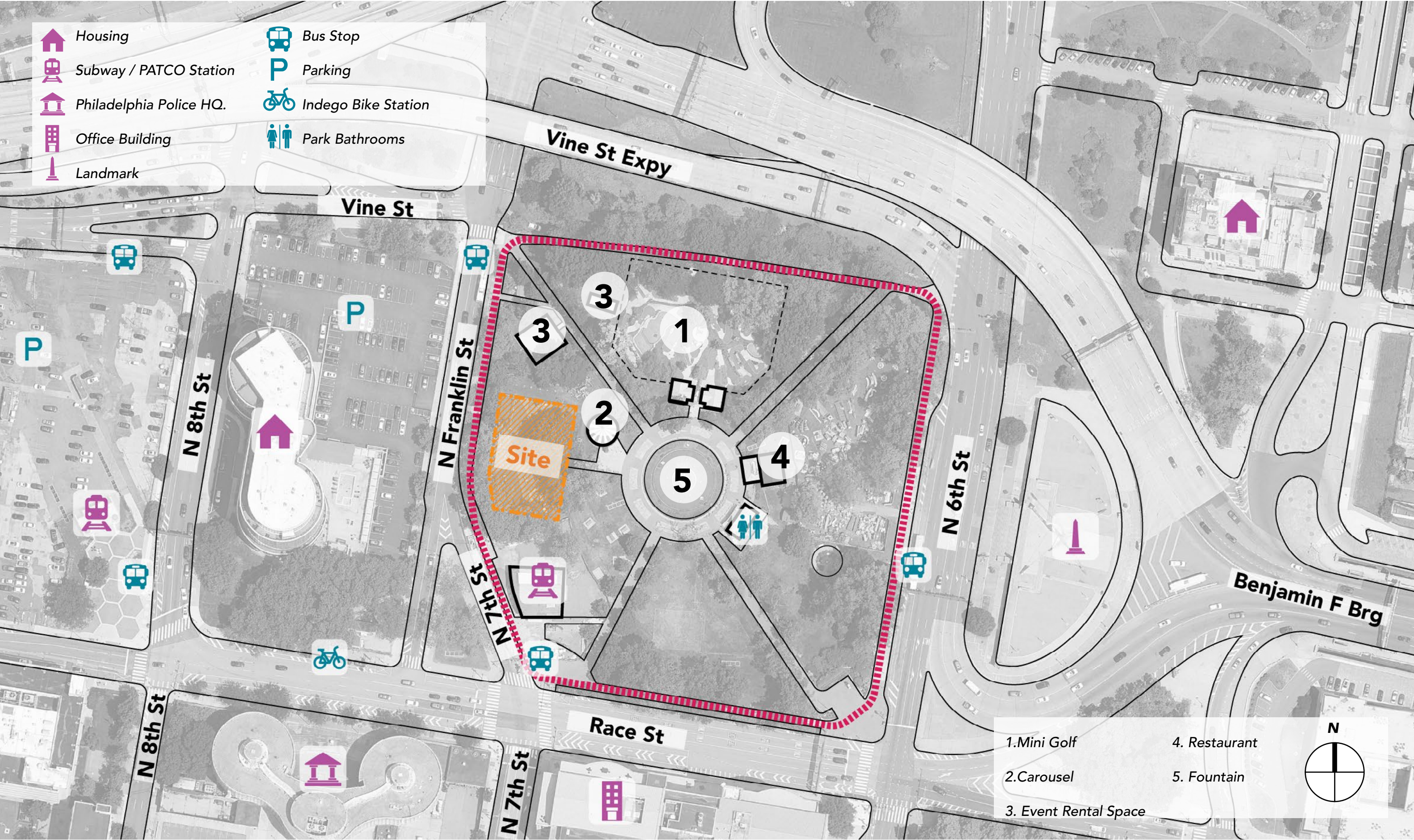
Bryan Hanes, ASLA, LEED
Principal
STUDIO|BRYAN HANES



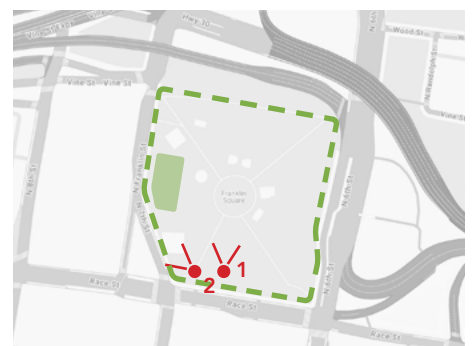
Historic Philadelphia, Inc. (HPI) completely renovated Franklin Square in 2006. Since that time HPI has continued to raise funds to improve the quality of life in Franklin Square. In 2025 HPI built a new public restroom facility and continues to maintain and make improvements to the Square.

The Franklin Square Playground is the most used space in Franklin Square and has been enjoyed by millions of children over the last 19 years. In addition to serving families living in the neighborhoods surrounding Franklin Square, the playground also serves the schools and daycare centers in Chinatown, and Northern Liberties.

The playground is a safe and accessible community asset providing families, children and teachers with a place to gather and enjoy physical, healthy play opportunities within walking distance of their homes and schools.



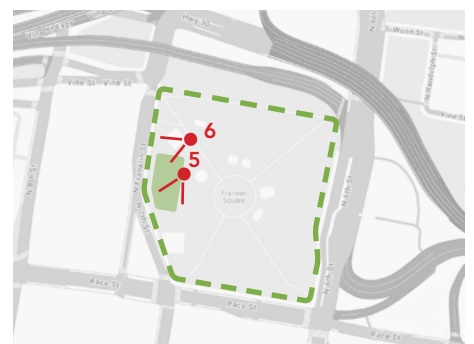
SITE MAP



CURRENT SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



CURRENT SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



CURRENT SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



=



PROJECT CONCEPT

- 1. Entrance
- 2. Existing Tree
- 3. Music Area
- 4. Seating Steps
- 5. Tower Area
- 6. Swings Area

- 7. Slides Area
- 8. Giant Swing Area
- 9. Loop Path
- 10. Exploration Stations
- 11. Zip Line
- 12. Seating

N Franklin St

N 7th St

< Franklin Sq Station



Wheelchair accessible slide



Regular slide



2 Regular swings
1 Tot swing
1 All user swing



Giant swing (x1)



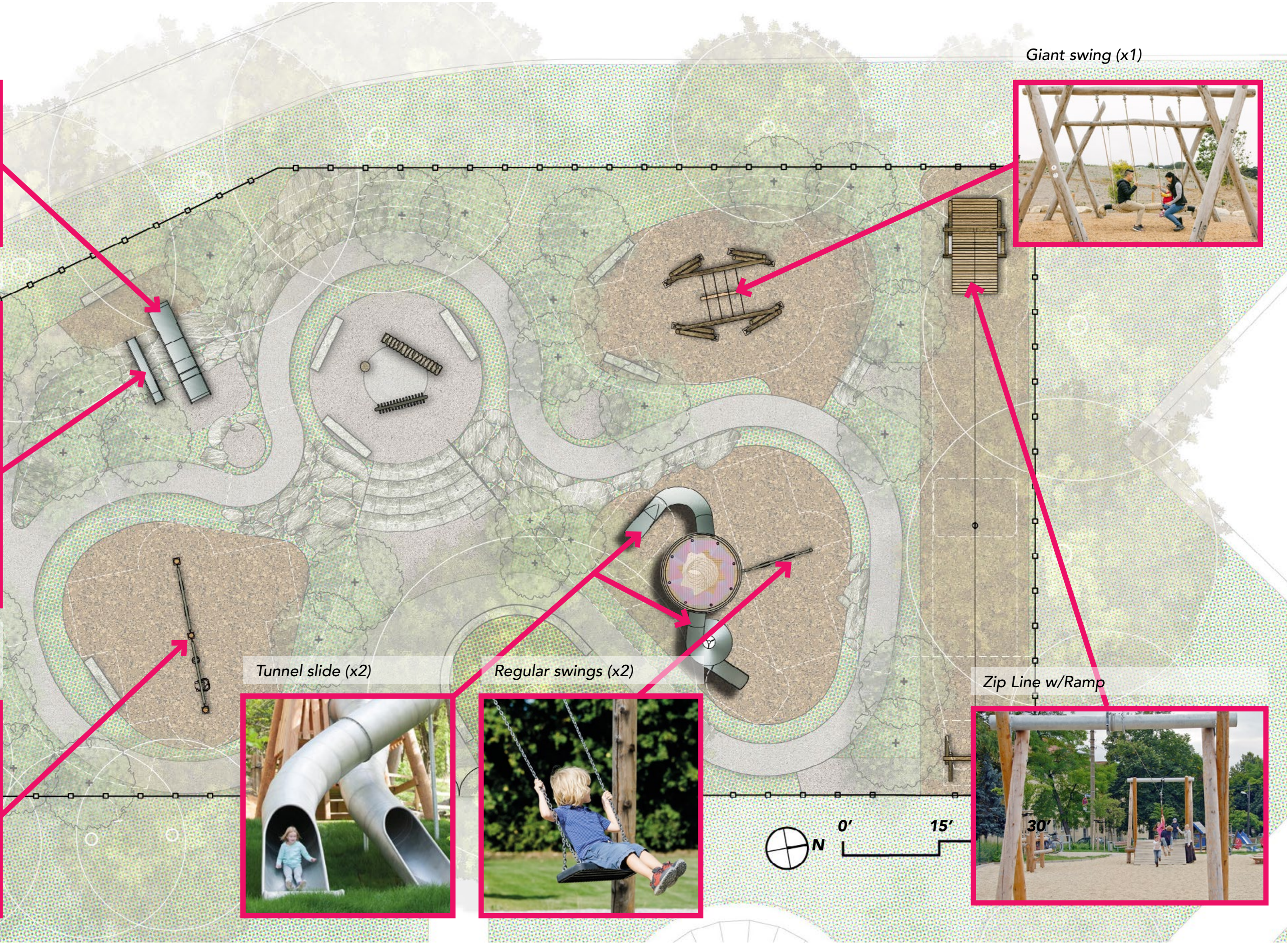
Tunnel slide (x2)



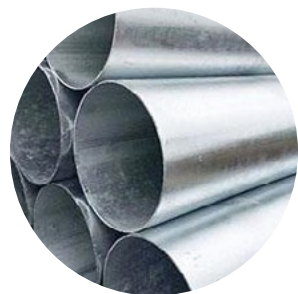
Regular swings (x2)



Zip Line w/Ramp



Structure Materials:



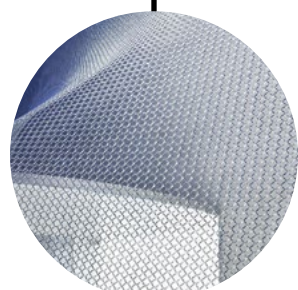
Galvanized Steel



Wood Deck



No-Climb Collar



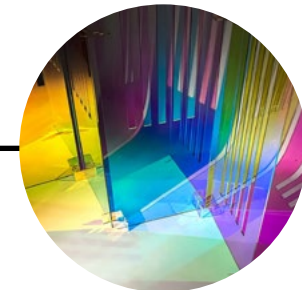
Cable Mesh Enclosure



Climbing Net

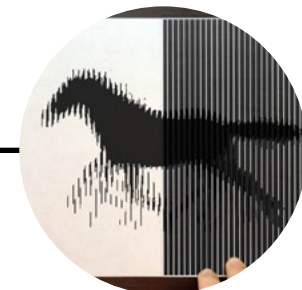
Safety measures

Tower Features:



Level 4

Kaleidoscope:
Dichroic panels



Level 3

Scanimation
sliding-panel



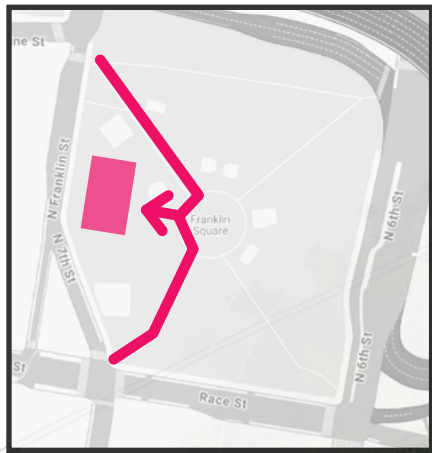
Level 2

Fun House Mirrors



Level 1

Invisibility Panels:
Lenticular plastic



Path to slides:
5% slope

Loop path:
slope between 3.3% - 5%

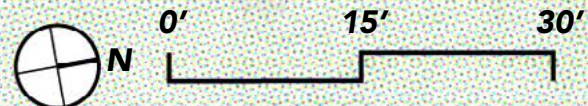
Space for wheelchair
parking

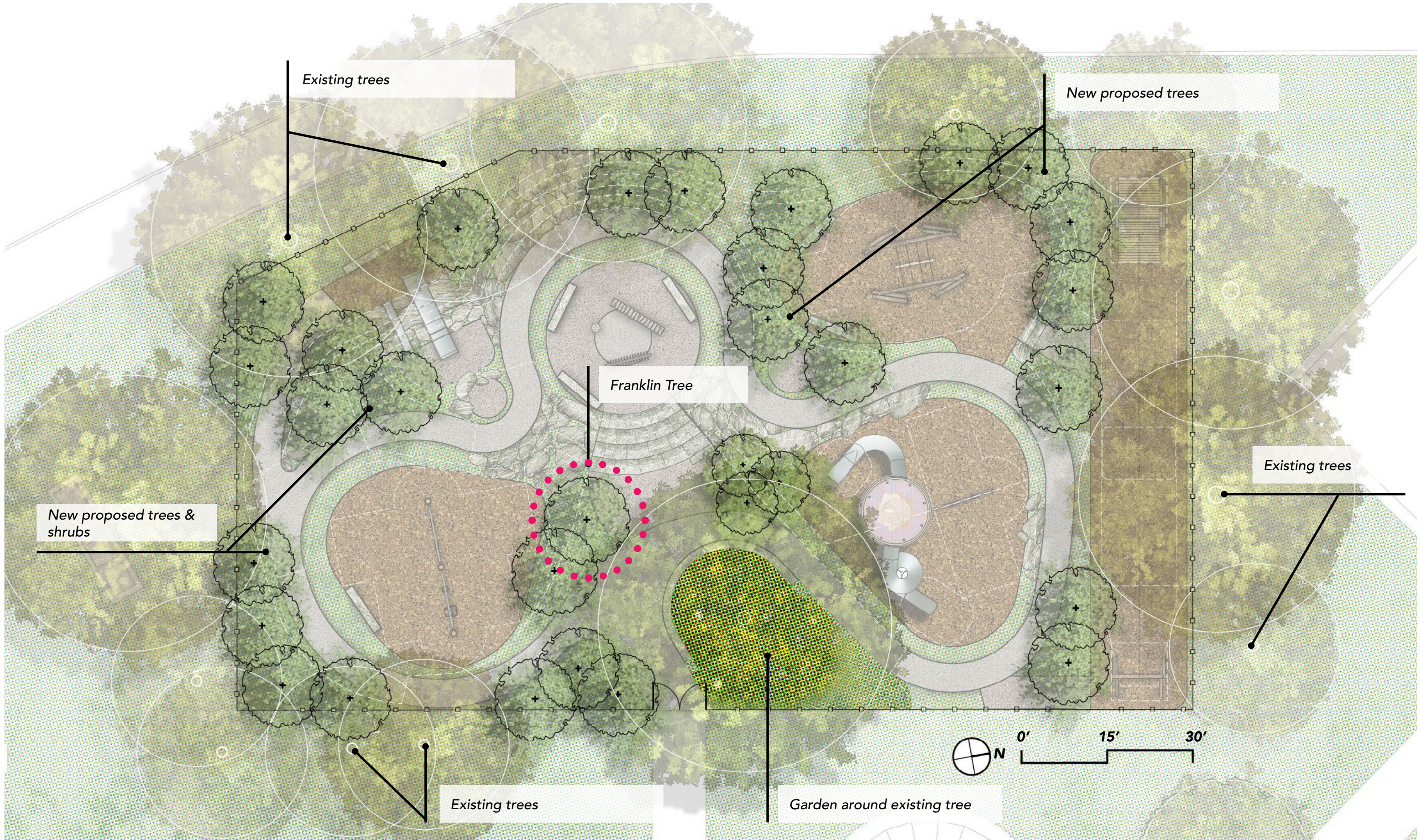
ADA compliant safety
surface

Fence around the
playground

Project grading is gentle
yet interesting for kids to
move around

Main access from the park





PLANTING

TREES: CANOPY



Franklin Tree
Franklinia alatamaha



River Birch 'Duraheat'
Betula nigra



Tulip Tree
Liriodendron tulipifera



American Hornbeam
Carpinus caroliniana



Sweetbay Magnolia
Magnolia virginiana



Flowering Dogwood
Cornus florida

SHRUBS



Spicebush
Lindera benzoin



Arrow wood viburnum
Viburnum dentatum



Virginia Sweetspire
Itea virginica



American Holly
Ilex opaca

PLANTING



Music Area



Loop Path



Tower Area

RENDERINGS

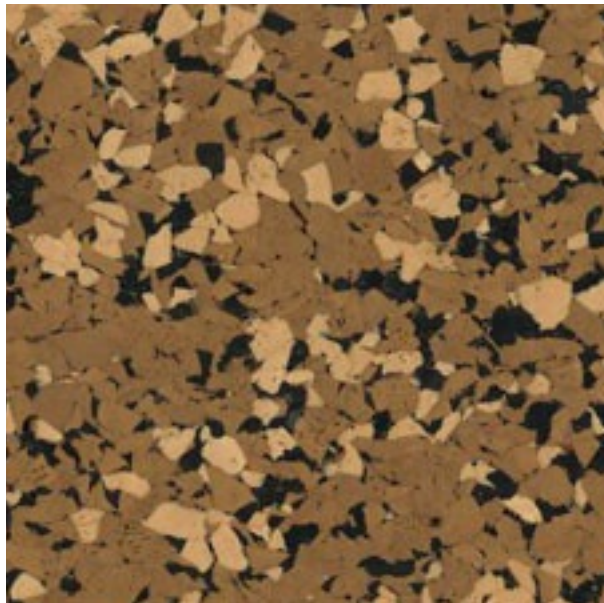


Seating Steps



Slides Area

Rubber Safety Surface



Concrete



Boulders

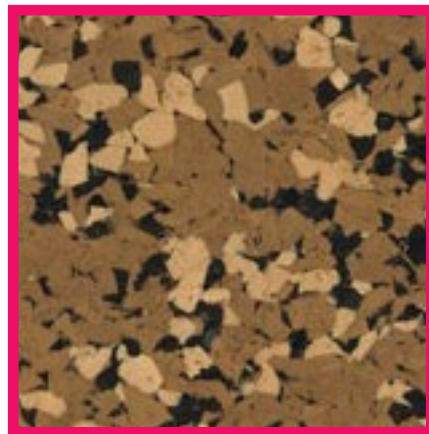


Cable Mesh



Galvanized Steel





HOURS OF OPERATION:

Once the playground is rebuilt it will continue to be accessible 365 days a year from 6am to 9pm unless the park hours are extended.

INCLUSIVITY:

The new playground will have enhanced amenities to fit the needs of the diverse populations that utilize the Square. To be inclusive of our audiences, signage will be translated into Spanish and Mandarin.

Universal design elements will be included, not only for individuals with physical challenges but also for children of various ages and developmental abilities.

SAFETY & SECURITY:

The Franklin Square playground will continue to be monitored 24 hours a day via security cameras. During operating hours Franklin Square staff regularly monitor the playground for trash and cleanliness and for any damaged equipment.

MAINTENANCE:

Philadelphia’s Department of Parks and Recreation checks equipment as part of their rounds throughout the city. HPI will continue to purchase replacement parts for damaged or worn equipment while the Parks & Recreation Department installs them in accordance to manufacturer’s standards.

ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST:

\$3,593,000.00

FUNDING SOURCES:

William Penn Foundation	\$1,100,000.00
PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources	\$100,000.00
Board of City Trusts	\$500,000.00
City of Philadelphia Impr. to Existing Facilities Fund	\$300,000.00
City of Philadelphia Capital Funds	\$750,000.00
Individuals	\$11,050.00
TOTAL:	\$2,761,050.00

