

Shoreview Commons

Shoreview, Minnesota

Entry Category: General Design

Abstract

Shoreview Commons Park Plan and Implementation transformed an aging, underutilized park into a shared space for all community members to gather and enjoy. With a wide range of amenities for all ages, including a destination playground, garden with fountain and skating pond, skatepark, trails, and event space, it is now a draw in all seasons. It also showcases many sustainable features, including stormwater basins integrated into the playground, a water reuse system that irrigates with water from the fountain pond, and pollinator-friendly plantings in the large gardens. The park opened in two phases with rave reviews from residents.

Project Narrative

Like many second-ring suburbs, Shoreview developed without a traditional downtown; there isn't a central square or shopping area that anchors the community. Instead, since acquiring the land in the early 1990s city leadership has been working to make Shoreview Commons into the city's civic gathering space, bringing together a diverse mix of residents for recreation and conversation. As the community's central park and the campus for its well-loved Community Center, regional library, and City Hall, it is uniquely positioned to serve this role, but needed a significant renovation to meet the needs of its changing community.

The city conducted several planning efforts for the park over the past thirty years, but after completing a recent renovation of the Community Center, they wanted to confirm their concept plan and develop a direction for a first phase of implementation. Shoreview asked the landscape architect to work with their Parks Commission and City Council, conducting a series of workshop-style meetings that resulted in strong support for an updated plan which offered recreational opportunities for an increasingly diverse community, while envisioning a sustainable future with efficient water and energy use and improved stormwater handling, and creating a clear approach to two phases of improvements.

Phase 1 included construction of a skatepark, neighborhood playground, gardens, trails, parking lot improvements, and the park's central feature, a fountain and skating pond. The fountain/skating pond complements rental spaces within the building, with beautiful gardens and an event lawn. In the winter, residents can enjoy skating, bringing winter interest to the space. But the pond is also a key part of the stormwater management system, collecting runoff and reusing the circulated water to irrigate the gardens and a large portion of the park.

The gardens are a unique feature of the park, featuring year-round color thanks to a variety of native and hardy adapted species. Plant selection focused on low maintenance plants with complementary scale, color and texture. As the gardens mature, they will provide a sense of enclosure and create rooms around the pond, with framed views and a variety of seating opportunities. The gardens also support pollinators, birds, and even turtles and frogs, acting as a demonstration space for visitors.

For Phase 2, the landscape architects again worked closely with City staff to design a unique destination playground that would draw users of all ages and showcase sustainable and accessible features. The process began with community engagement, using an interactive web-based mapping survey that allowed

community members to see different concepts, key points, and precedents images and make comments. The synthesis of this input, and feedback from the Parks Commission and City Council, directed the final concept.

Shoreview's destination playground unites the theme of forests and water, elements central to the city's identity, by integrating landscape as part of the overall experience. The playground is nestled within a stand of mature oaks and uses careful topographic insertions to enhance the play experience while maintaining accessibility. The landscape architect collaborated closely with a playground vendor on the equipment design to create a unique play experience that can be enjoyed by all ages and abilities. The multiple playground zones, representative of towering forests, winding rivers, and wetland marshes, are interspersed with seating and gathering spaces and accessed by pathways that guide users through native plantings creating rich spaces that are as comfortable and inviting as they are fun.

Much like Phase 1, stormwater management is a central feature to the overall design, with eight rain gardens populated with

native, drought-resistant species that serve to define the play and gathering spaces while managing the playground's acre of runoff. While complementary to the species and materials utilized through the larger Commons Campus, the destination playground incorporates a palette of plantings and site furnishings that aim to enhance the sense of fun. The planting beds' refined edges surround basins that are designed to grow increasingly wild over the years, lowering maintenance inputs while increasing the sense of discovery as users explore the playground. The flexible site furnishings respond to various user needs and group sizes, while providing pops of color in the landscape.

Phase 2 opened to the public in July 2022 and received rave reviews from residents. The project significantly increased the year-round functionality of the park, complementing the activities going on inside the community center and elevating the park to a community-wide attraction with a regional draw. Today, Shoreview Commons is just that—a shared space for all community members to gather and enjoy.



Shoreview Commons Park, during the grand opening of Phase 2 improvements, provides a revitalized civic gathering space for the Shoreview Community.



Project Components	Existing Features
A Fountain/Skating Pond	H Shoreview City Hall
B Skate Park	I Shoreview Community Center
C Destination Playground	J Mounds View Public School District Center
D Future Park Building	K Ramsey County Library
E Neighborhood Playground	L Haffeman Pavilion
F Future Trail Connection/Boardwalk	M Soccer Field
G Parking Lot Improvements	N Basketball & Tennis Courts

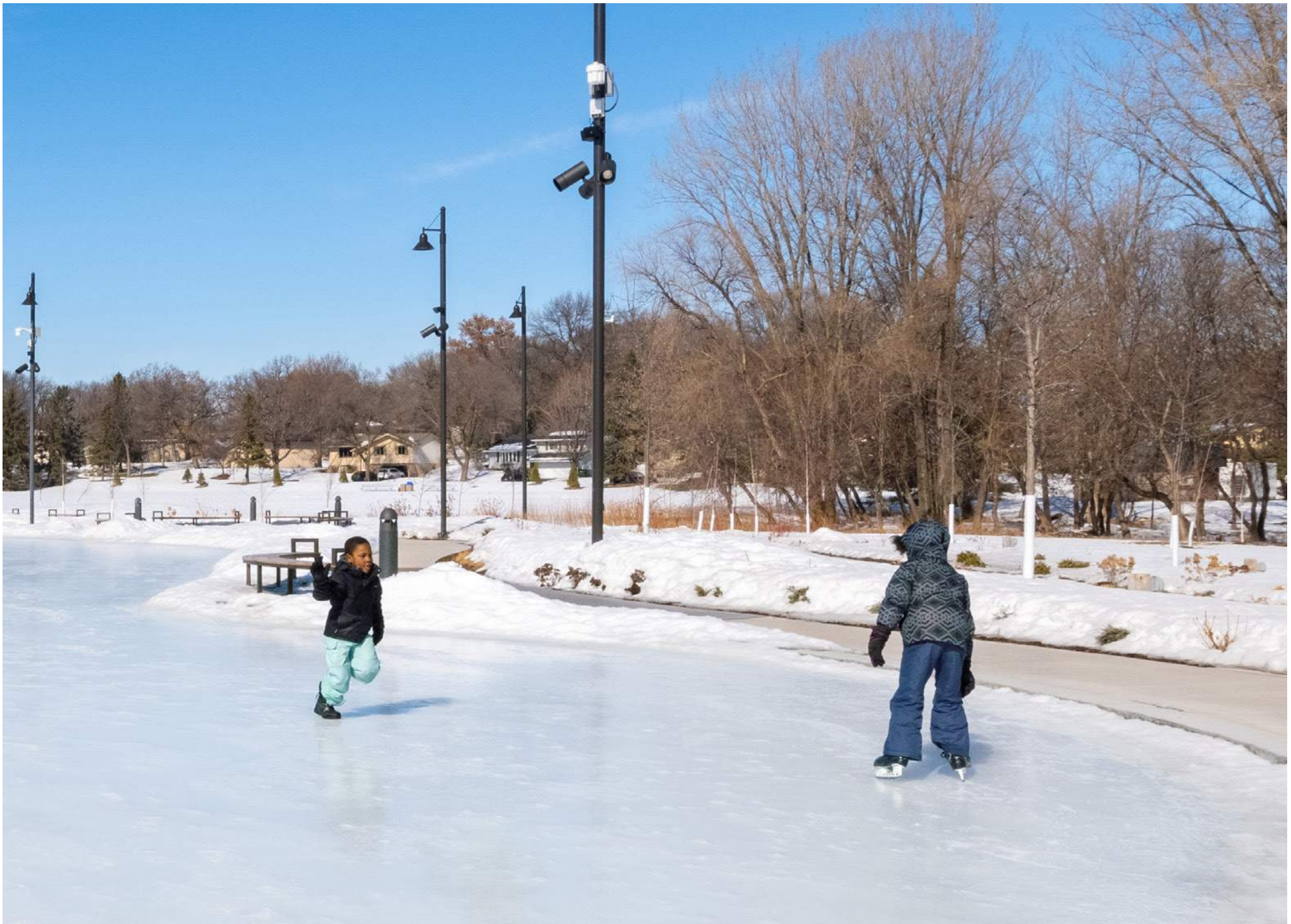
The updated plan for Shoreview Commons guided two phases of improvement.



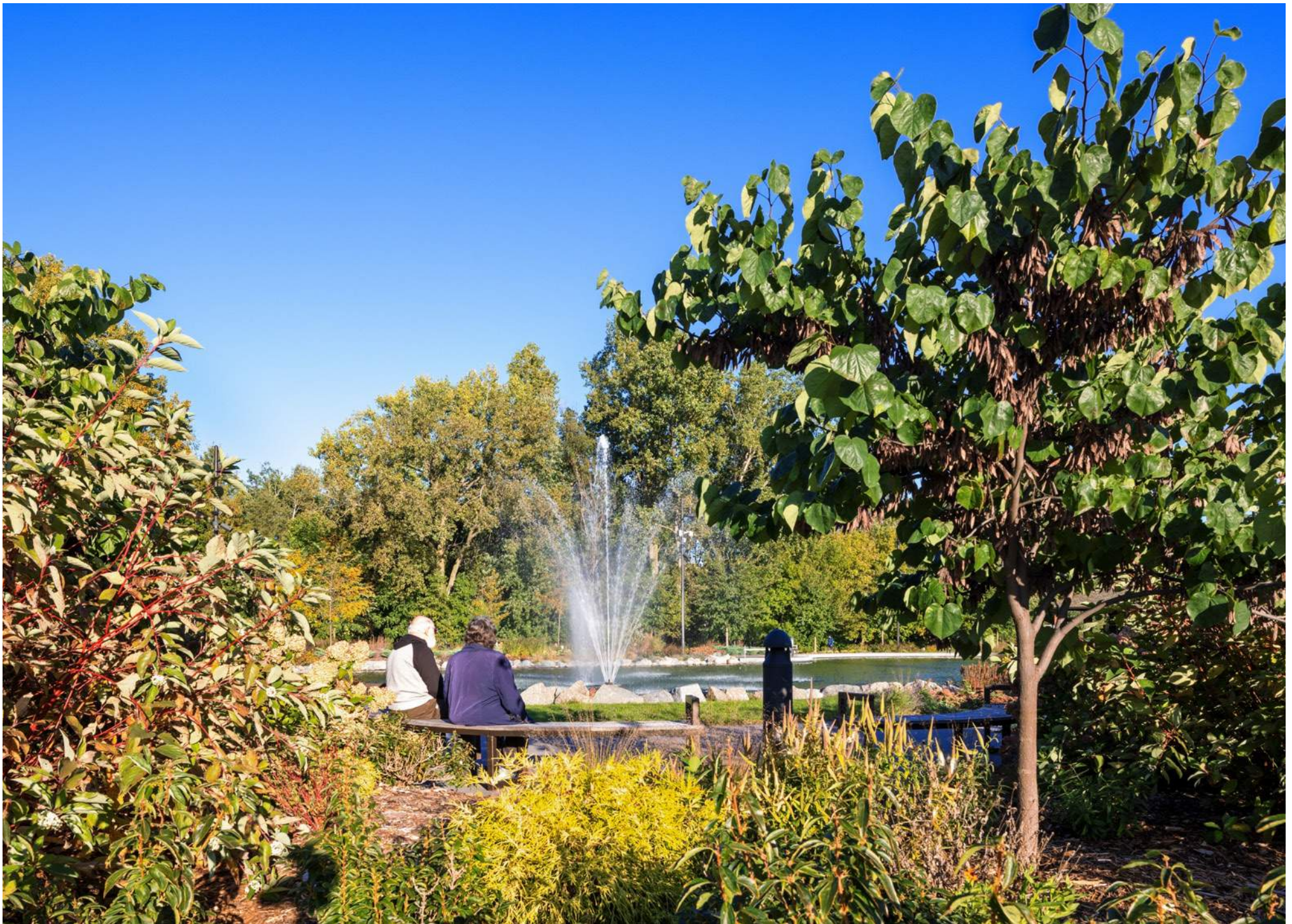
Phase 1 process images on the left show early concept sketches of the central fountain feature as compared to the images on the right as realized through implementation.



The central fountain feature is a key part of the stormwater management system, reusing water to irrigate the gardens and a large portion of the park. In this image, Phase 1 is complete in the foreground and Phase 2 is under construction in the background.



The central fountain feature transforms into a skating rink for residents to enjoy, bringing winter interest to the park.



The Phase 1 gardens feature year-round color and a variety of native species that provide animal habitat and support pollinators.



Phase 1 park improvements included a large central skatepark that attracts all ages and abilities and was the main regional draw to the park before the destination playground was completed. It continues to be very popular for skateboarding and all-wheel sports.



SHOREVIEW Drag to comment > Like This Ideas and Suggestions This Needs Work

Return Concept A

Concept A provides a whimsical take on Shoreview's forests and lakes and focuses on natural materials and colors.

- A Climbing Forest
- B Woodland Edge Play Features
- C Zipline
- D Winding "Stream" ADA Pathway
- E Picnic Shelter
- F Archway With Twinkling Lights
- G "Delta" Play Mounds
- H Wetland Playground
- I Treehouse Towers
- J Fitness/Ninja Route
- K Boulder Scramble/Hill Climb Area
- L Seating Areas

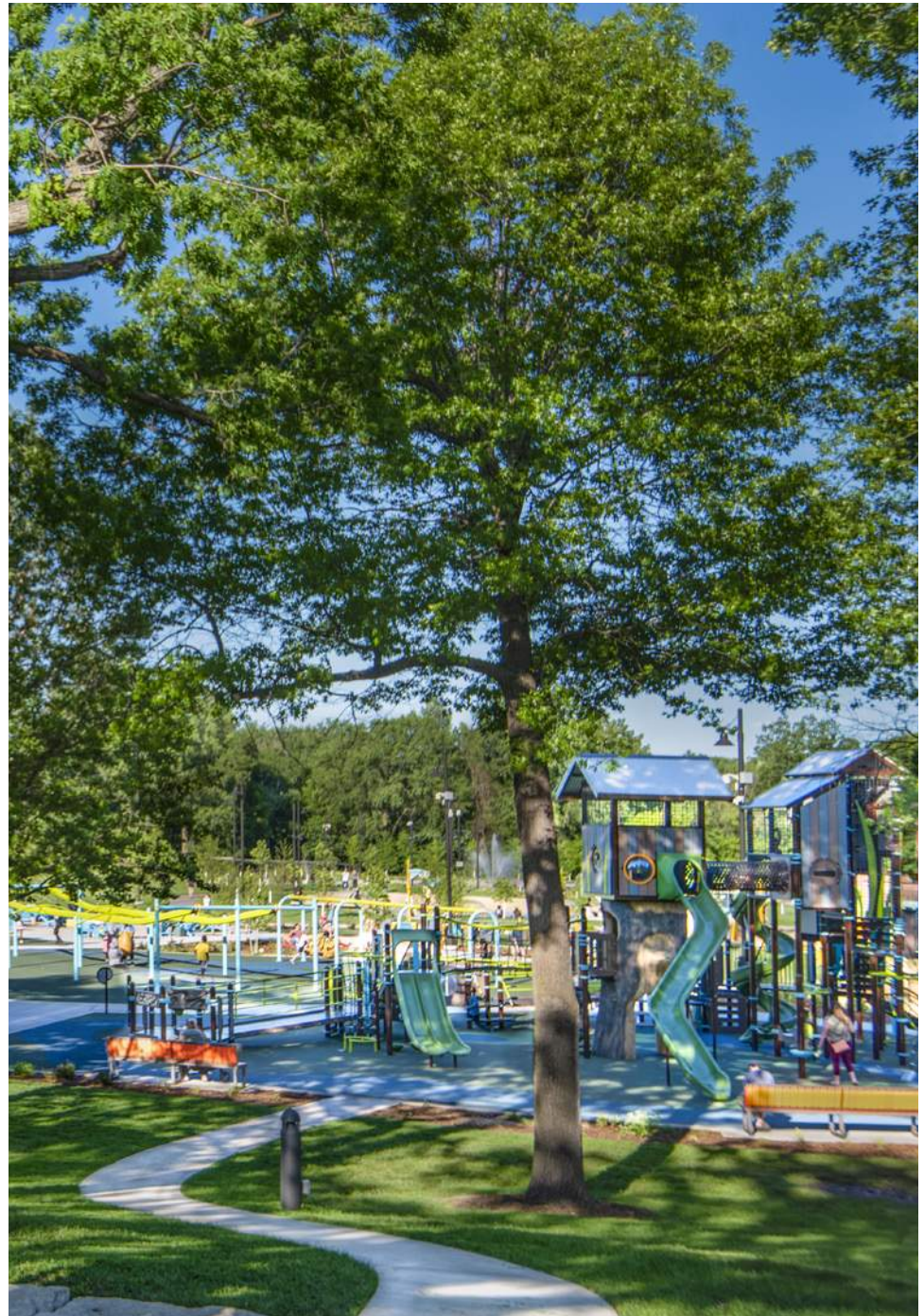
How to Leave Feedback:
Black markers have been placed to provide more detailed information about aspects of the design, while colorful markers are placed by you! Feel free to drag and drop the colorful markers in categories displayed along the top of the map and leave comments regarding your opinion of these concepts! You can also view and interact with comments left by others who have reviewed these plans.

Design A is really great! Love the various themes and areas for the kids, especially the ninja zone and zip line. I vote for design A! Well done engineers and planners!

Like (1) | Dislike | Street View | 4 months ago



The Phase 2 design process included multiple rounds of ideation sketching (top left) and community engagement (bottom left) to achieve the final vision for implementation (right). Landscape Architect led coordination with elected officials, city staff, the playground vendor and manufacturer, and contractor was critical to the success of the project.



The destination playground unites the theme of forests and water with curvilinear walks connecting multiple play experiences. The "Climbing Forest" (left), carefully inserted into a stand of mature oaks, overlooks the large "Treehouse Tower" and "The Marsh" beyond (right).



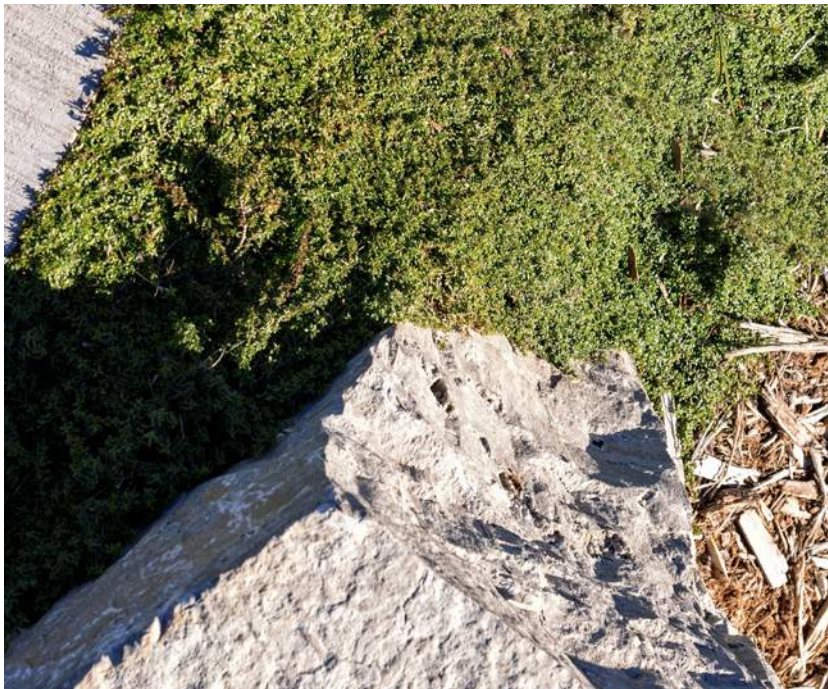
A permeable paver patio with structural soils supports a grove of honeylocusts and flexible site furnishings to provide a place to gather and connect adjacent to the play area. Picnic tables and a picnic shelter are just beyond, providing additional gathering spaces for variety of group sizes.



Interconnected raingardens and biofiltration basins manage stormwater for the destination playground and were used to define distinct play experiences and gathering areas.



The planting design for the raingardens utilized native grasses and native cultivar shrubs to provide a refined edge that frames native seeding and perennial plugs planted within the basin sides and bottom. Boulders were carefully interspersed at corners and “cut-through” areas to provide informal stepping stones and seating.



Native plantings extend beyond the raingarden basins to frame views, embrace seating areas, and even hug the ground to provide a richness of textures and inviting users of all ages to discover and play.

Playground Map

This playground captures rainwater & provides essential habitat for pollinators

Rain gardens are shallow gardens with native plants near sidewalks & driveways. Stormwater or snow melt flows into these gardens where plants absorb & filter it. This helps keep our community's beautiful lakes clean.

Rain gardens also provide great habitat for pollinators, like birds & butterflies. Pollinators are essential to the survival of 75% of flowering plants like fruits & vegetables.

Like what you see? Cost share funds & technical help are available to Ramsey County residents. Visit shoreviewmn.gov to learn how to build pollinator & rain gardens at your own home!

Shoreview Commons

The Shoreview Commons destination playground is dedicated to Terry Schwerm in honor of his service to the community as city manager for 28 years. Terry leaves a legacy of positive contributions that will benefit the community forever. He led with high principles, ethics, and conscientious stewardship. Most notably, his passion for enhancing our parks and facilities has provided greater opportunities for all people to socialize, recreate, and gather, especially at the Shoreview Community Center and Shoreview Commons.

On behalf of our community, we salute and recognize the dedicated public service and outstanding leadership of Terry Schwerm as city manager for the City of Shoreview from 1993 through 2021.

WELCOME!



The landscape architect developed the wayfinding signage for the destination playground to tell the story of the site and its stormwater in a playful manner. The three images show the signage design (top), a process rendering (bottom left), and the final installation (bottom right).



Shoreview Commons destination playground during its grand opening in July 2022, just two weeks after substantial completion. The landscape has continued to grow and thrive and the community keeps coming back to gather, connect, and have fun.