



Conceptual Design Report for 'Oxford Park'

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SUBMITTED TO:

City of Berkley Michigan
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1. Introduction

This report outlines the concepts created by Landon Landscape Architecture, LLC (LLA) for Oxford Park, and the process that guided their development. The primary goal of this project was to solicit the wants, needs, and goals of the citizens of the City of Berkley (the City) for Oxford Park, and organize these elements in creative, functional, and unique ways to help the City and its citizens visualize the great potential of this park space, and to guide future planning efforts.

Three different concepts were developed based on the input acquired through our community outreach and information gathering efforts. These concepts offer different variations of space organization, form, site development, and program elements, while concentrating on the elements that were consistently the most desired by the community. The objective of this exercise is to display options for development, therefore, the three concepts intentionally show different orientations, treatments, and scales of various program elements to achieve this objective. It is important to note that any program element, or style of program element, can be swapped out into our out of any concept and these plans should be reviewed with an a-la-cart mentality. This process will lead to one final design emerging from the three presented in this report, and Oxford park becoming established as an invaluable community asset in Berkley.

2. Community Outreach & Public Participation

2.1 OUTREACH METHODS

The success of any community-focused project cannot be realized without properly, and effectively understating all of the wants, needs, and desires of the citizens whom that project is meant to benefit. LLA worked with the City to gather information from citizens in a variety of different methods to ensure we were reaching as many people as possible.

To start off with we sent an online survey to residents to try and gather information from as many people as possible, particularly those who wouldn't be able to attend the community

meetings. The survey aimed to see what the park was currently being used for, what is currently working and not working, what do you want to do at the park, and what program elements people are interested in seeing implemented at the park. This information was then compiled and shared with the City and residents at the community meetings.

We scheduled two community meetings, one in the morning and one in the evening, to try and accommodate residents with different work schedules. The findings from the survey were presented to the citizens, and the survey results were expanded upon and discussed. After the presentation, we had an open discussion, followed by a breakout session where residents got in smaller groups to discuss the project in a more intimate setting. Each group received a packet with discussion-inducing photos of various park program elements, where the groups took notes on their likes and dislikes.

We also met with the parks advisory board during the afternoon on the same day as the community meetings and solicited their input on the future of Oxford Park.

These efforts let do a comprehensive and thorough list of potential program elements for Oxford Park, with a clear consensus on the highest priority items.

2.2 FINDINGS

The community outreach efforts were very successful and we found that the community largely had a clear and unified vision for the park. Interests focused on passive recreation, and developing a traditional, but unique, park space that was accessible, well-organized, and provided passive recreation opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. The highest priority items based on the survey and feedback at the community meetings were: updated playground equipment, a splash pad, bathrooms, and a pavilion, followed closely by benches/tables, paths, drinking fountains, trash cans, and many other traditional park amenities.

Some of the program elements and activities that were near the bottom of the priority list for the park were those that focused on active recreation and sports.

These findings helped support the narrative that this park could serve a much bigger portion of Berkley than it currently is by providing amenities that would help define it as an inviting and engaging park space, and that the citizens are united behind these potential changes. Some of the existing site can be reprogrammed to replace some of the current active recreation areas with activities that more accurately represent the wants of the citizens.

3. Conceptual Park Design

3.1 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

The proposed Oxford Park site is an approximately 3-acre parcel west of Merchants Park that contains some dilapidated playground equipment, mature trees, football practice equipment and an athletic trailer, soil that does not drain well and is consistently soggy days after rain, a wooden fence along the entire eastern edge of the park, a chain link fence along portions of the western edge of the park which serves as the limits of the adjacent softball fields, and frontage on both Oxford Road and Cambridge Road.

There are many opportunities and constraints for the park, some of which are both as is usually the case. The primary constraints for the park are the size and layout of the park, the poorly draining soil, and the mature trees.

The park itself is long and relatively narrow, making the planning of some programming elements and flow of the site potentially difficult due to the lack of space available. This is one reason why the mature trees are listed as a constraint. Every effort should be taken to preserve the mature trees on-site, therefore they may impact development of some areas. Mature trees are a great asset on any project, and this is especially true on a park development project.

The poorly draining soil prevents users from utilizing the available park space, and prevents the park from attracting more people, which limits its potential. Drainage issues can be a major problem, and a large cost for traditional park spaces, but also present opportunities when looked at in the proper light.

In Oxford Park, the opportunities vastly outweigh the constraints. The park space is largely undeveloped, providing a relatively clean-slate for park planning; there is an actively used park (Merchant's Park) in the same park 'complex', which is already attracting people to the area; there is a great opportunity for expanding the park space and unifying Oxford Park and Merchants Park into one cohesive design; there is an easy way to add more parking along the southeast corner of the site; and there is an opportunity to incorporate a wide variety of native plants which like wetter conditions by implementing native design strategies and green infrastructure to address some of the soil and drainage issues.

The most significant opportunity described above is the ability to expand the project footprint and unify Oxford Park and Merchants park. Discussions with the City uncovered the fact that the current chain link fence which forms the outer boundary of the softball fields can potentially be eliminated through the installation of permanent, regulation distance home-run fencing. This would eliminate the barrier between Oxford Park and Merchants Park and allow these areas to come together in one cohesive design. It was determined through our discussions with the City that this opportunity was so advantageous that we should officially plan for this scenario and include the re-oriented fencing layout and newly available land in the proposed concepts.

3.2 DESIGN CONCEPTS

The three concepts that were developed for Oxford Park all focused on the highest priority items from our community outreach efforts, which primarily focused on passive recreation activities, and making Oxford Park a unique, high-quality park space. All of the concepts contain upgraded playground equipment, a splash pad, a pavilion, and restroom facilities. All of the splash pads also double as plaza spaces and do not contain large colorful play equipment, an instead feature hardscape materials with jets that shoot water through them in varying ways. Each plan also includes green infrastructure techniques, and native design, which is aimed incorporating strategies that help address the drainage issues, while connecting residents with nature and providing educational opportunities. The plans also all include upgraded park features, such as accessible paths, lighting, benches, bike racks, trash and recycling, and other features typical of a beautiful and functional park setting. All mature trees were preserved, and no mature trees are planned for removal.

The concepts differ in form, style, layout, and certain program elements to display options for developing the park, and options for ways to implement the desired program elements. The main features of the concepts are discussed below, but not all features may be mentioned. The plans have been provided with this report for reference.

3.2.01 CONCEPT A

Concept A features a strong radial design where all of the features of the site focus on the central splash pad / plaza, and spiral off from there. Three main paths draw users in to the central plaza that has a splash pad in the center and is surrounded by an exterior path for users to pass through when the splash pad is operating. On the western half of the central plaza is a passive lawn area which is buffered by a bioswale and native vegetation buffer to help bring down the scale of the site and enclose the plaza area.

On the eastern half of the plaza is a covered pavilion which has a raised stage area to facilitate small concerts and events. To the south of the pavilion is an upgraded playground space which has intentional connectivity to the plaza / splash pad area, but is buffered as well to provide safety and order within these spaces. Covered arbors are provided adjacent to the pavilion and

along the playground area to provide filtered shade for users. Along the back side of the playground and pavilion are rolling, naturally-vegetated, berms to help define these spaces, promote safety, and act as a visual screen to the adjacent homeowners.

To the north of the pavilion is a naturalized area with native vegetation, lots of tree cover, accessible crushed stone paths, benches, and quiet, intimate settings for peaceful relaxation. These areas also contain both berms and bioswales to provide functionality and visual interest in the landscape.

All of the entrances on site have been enhanced and expanded for safety and orientation for users when they arrive on-site. 'Vegetative gateways' have been established at all of the entrances, by buffering the areas directly adjacent to the roadways with vegetation, to provide a sense of entry, and enhance the safety of the site by controlling entry points and reducing potential pedestrian / vehicle conflicts.

The parking along Cambridge Road has been extended to the property limits to the east and approximately 9 additional regular parking stalls have been added, and one handicap accessible stall has been added.

The existing concession stand has been re-designed, updated, and now includes bathrooms and drinking fountains which facilitate the entire park.

Concept A preserves much of the existing open space on the north and south ends of the property as active lawns for flexible park space use. Many trees, shrubs, and native vegetation are also proposed to help define space, add shade, and create habitat on-site.

Several features of concept A, such as the extra parking, increased tree plantings, 'vegetated gateways', and other features have been implemented in Concepts B & C in some capacity as well, and won't necessarily be repeated in their descriptions unless necessary.

3.2.02 CONCEPT B

Concept B utilizes naturalistic, organic forms to create a design which flows naturally through the site in an effortless, elegant manner. The focal point of this design is the central 'tear-shaped' form which contains the playground, passive lawn, plaza space with pavilion and restroom facility, and the splash pad.

The playground is in a central location, surrounded by the main site circulation paths, but is adequately buffered, and quite safe and functional for children and adults. Surrounding the playground area are planting beds, and a seating wall which also functions as a retaining wall in some areas. This feature allows the playground to be contained, and the plantings bring the scale of the site down, creating an intimate setting in one of the most central locations in the park. On the southern end of the playground the seating wall doubles as a retaining wall, and

the earth begins to slope upward to form a raised berm. The berm both helps to further enclose and buffer the playground, and provides an informal amphitheater by gradually sloping back down to the plaza.

The pavilion is a covered structure with restroom facilities directly adjacent to a smaller splash pad. The splash pad is buffered from the adjacent path by a rolling berm which keeps playing children out of the exterior circulation patterns.

To the northeast of the playground is the natural area with intimate relaxation opportunities, and access to natural areas. These areas are surrounded by berms and bioswales which provide interest and functionality. Concept B capitalizes on landform opportunities the most out of the three plans, using berms and bioswales to define space and create massive interest in the site. Berms are provided along both home-run fences to provide passive seating opportunities for spectators.

Concept B has a larger areas left open for active lawns on the north and south ends of the property than Concept A.

The concession stand in this concept has been upgraded.

3.2.03 CONCEPT C

Concept C has a mix of strong formal lines and organic shapes and lines, and splits the site between active and passive recreation. The wide plaza space that runs east-west and splits the site in half acts as a pedestrian boulevard and acts as a flexible breakout space for events and small gatherings. This plaza widens out on the eastern edge of the site and features a covered pavilion and splash pad. The splash pad has a seating wall surrounding it on the north side which contains the area and allows parents a place to sit. The linear plaza space has trees planted directly within it at regular intervals to strengthen the power of this form, which acts to divide the site into the passive recreation area to the north, and active recreation to the south.

The active recreation area features a multiple use turf field which can be used for a variety of activities, a basketball court, restroom facilities, and an adult workout station at the very southern end. A half-mile walking / running loop goes around the exterior of the eastern half of the site, which connects to several other areas throughout the park.

The passive recreation area to the north features an interactive 'natural' climbing playground, natural areas, crushed stone paths with access to intimate areas, and passive lawn areas. There are also a variety of berms and bioswales for interest, function, and to define spaces in a unique way. The passive recreation area preserves some of the existing open lawn areas on the interior of the passive recreation areas and concentrates new native plantings along the walking path to buffer this area further.

The 'natural' climbing playground is one of the most unique features of this concept. This is not a traditional playground, as it is made up of rolling playscapes that children can climb, roll,

tumble, and crawl over. There are varying areas of difficulty for a variety of ages. Slides are along slopes and not elevated directly off the ground to enhance safety. Tubes go right through small hills, and rock climbing walls are provided for older children. The whole area is created through engineered fill, and covered with a playscape material. Castle-like structures are located on the top of the peaks of the playground, and kids can literally take wooden bridges through the tree tops. The playscape also goes around existing trees, allowing them to be saved, and these natural areas within the playground to become stunning features.

The concession stand in this concept does not change.

3.3 LAND REPORTS

The land reports needed for this project will vary depending on the program elements, and level of development desired for the park. Most of these land reports, such as grading, drainage, storm water systems, irrigation, soil modifications, and others, will vary greatly depending upon the final design. This is due to the fact that depending on the strategy involved you may be using pipe and drain tile to drain lawn areas, then pipe the water away, or you may feed these areas into bioswales which will reduce pipe costs, but will increase earthwork costs.

One report that will be essential to creating and implementing an accurate site plan is a topographic site survey. The topographic site survey will provide an accurate elevation layout of the site, and important site features with accurate locations, such as trees, light poles, utilities, fences, etc. The survey will become the foundation upon which the plan is built, and it will be used to determine all material quantities for determining probable construction costs. A topographic site survey will cost approximately \$4,500-\$5,500 for a project in similar size and scope to the combined Oxford and Merchants Park areas.

Due to the drainage issues on-site, any structures planned for the park will need to be adequately supported with a properly engineered foundation per the specifications of the structure. Simply put, this process would involve removing any unsuitable foundation material, and replacing it with a structurally sound material of a proper thickness to support the proposed structure. To determine the suitability of the material on-site, and the extent to which it may need to be removed or modified, the city would need to get soil borings for the park and a geotechnical report would need to be developed. Since major excavation is not proposed on this site the borings would not need to be more than 10 feet, which would save on cost. Enough would need to be provided to get an accurate representation of the project site. Soil borings and a geotechnical report may cost between \$3,500 and \$7,000.

*Costs listed are approximations and are not a guarantee of probable cost, or a limit of what the probable cost may be.

4. Financing Options

The primary financing options for funding park improvement projects are through grants, crowdfunding, and tax-based programs such as a park millage. The park plans provided may vary from around \$900,000 at the high end, to \$350,000 at the low end based on approximate costs of construction.

The following are various grants that the Oxford Park project may qualify for. Some of these grants can only be acquired by incorporating a qualifying design element into the project, such as shade structures, and providing educational opportunities.

GRANTS

Michigan DNR:

- **Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program:** The purpose of this program is to fund public outdoor recreation and planning projects in urban areas. In Michigan, this program is jointly administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the NPS. http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225_68786---,00.html
- **Recreation Passport Grants:** One of the DNR department's biggest priorities is to get more people outside more often, enjoying the many natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities available in Michigan. Through the Recreation Passport grant, they're able to help make some good things happen at the local level - and, for many folks, that means wider accessibility to better resources right in their own neighborhoods. http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225_58701---,00.html
- **Natural Resource Trust Fund Grants:** Over 35 years, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) has served as a key funding source for Michigan's parks and recreation providers, allocating more than \$1 billion to protect our state's natural resources and to develop outdoor recreation opportunities for residents. http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225_58301---,00.html

Miracle's Grants for America's Children:

- Up to \$5 million in grant money is available to schools and parks around the country who want to purchase new playground equipment through Miracle's Grants for America's Children program. Miracle, a playground manufacturer for over 80 years, awards grants for purchase of equipment based on an assessment of the current playground equipment proposal, size of project, and amount of grant funding available.

KaBOOM!:

- Dr. Pepper Snapple & KaBOOM! offer \$15,000 grants to qualifying U.S.-based organizations to be used toward the purchase of playground equipment that will be built using the KaBOOM! community-build model. These partners also offer \$750 grants to communities who want to make their playgrounds cleaner, safer, and more inviting. In addition, KaBOOM! And Dr. Pepper Snapple offer joint-use grants for communities who partner with schools to open recreation

facilities to the public during non-school hours. These grants are solely for the expansion or creation of joint use agreements. There is a rolling deadline for this set of grants.

<https://kaboom.org/grants>

Shade Structure Grant Program:

- The American Academy of Dermatology's Shade Structure Grant Program awards grants to public schools and non-profit organizations for installing permanent shade structures for outdoor locations that are not protected from the sun, such as playgrounds. Each grant is valued at up to \$8,000, which includes the structure and installation.

<https://www.aad.org/members/awards>

National Park Service Land & Water Conservation Fund:

- States and local governments are eligible to apply for matching grants to fund public outdoor recreation and areas and facilities. O'Fallon, Illinois used a \$750,000 LWCF grant to acquire land for a variety of playing fields for baseball, softball, soccer, football, and more.

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/index.htm>

KidsGardening.org:

- The National Gardening Association has sponsored this grant for four years, aiming to support community organizations with child-centered garden programs. Priority is given to programs that have these components: educational focus or curricular/program, integration to reinforce academics, life skills, instruction, (e.g. nutrition, growing one's own food, learning to be responsible) developing environmental stewardship, and encouraging students to make positive choices for themselves and the planet. As the title implies, grants are available to states in the Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. <http://www.kidsgardening.org/open-grants/>

Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program:

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sponsors the state-administered Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Grants from this program are used to acquire real estate property for public use, demolish blighted structures, and construct and renovate public service facilities, recreational facilities, and public and private buildings. Funds are also used to support economic development activities including assisting micro-enterprises. Grants are administered by states to cities and counties with fewer than 50,000 and 200,000 residents respectively. Up to 3 percent of the grant can be allocated to cover technical assistance and administrative expense.

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs

Play & Park Structures grant opportunities list:

- <https://www.playandpark.com/funding/grant-opportunities>

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA):

- <http://www.nrpa.org/partnerships/>

Grants to Southeast MI government agencies in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Monroe, Washtenaw, St. Clair, and Livingston counties for a variety of programs:

- <https://www.grantwatch.com/grant/172576/grants-to-southeast-michigan-nonprofits-for-arts-culture-environment-health-and-human-needs.html>

Grants to USA Local Governments and Nonprofits for Integrating the Arts into Community Revitalization:

- Grants starting at \$25,000 to USA and territories tribal and local governments and nonprofits for arts and culture initiatives that improve the community and enhance livability.
<https://michigan.grantwatch.com/grant/172668/grants-to-usa-local-governments-and-nonprofits-for-integrating-the-arts-into-community-revitalization.html>

Grants to USA Nonprofits, Agencies, Schools and Hospitals to Help People with Disabilities:

Grants of up to \$25,000 to USA nonprofits, government agencies, school districts, tribal organizations, community organizations and hospitals for projects that assist people with disabilities.

<https://michigan.grantwatch.com/grant/174047/grants-to-usa-nonprofits-agencies-schools-and-hospitals-to-help-people-with-disabilities.html>

CROWDFUNDING

A new program designed by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) in collaboration with the Michigan Municipal League, allows you to collaborate and fund your project with maximum results! This reward crowdfunding initiative provides matching grants for crowdfunded public space projects through Patronicity, an online, crowdfunding platform.

Patronicity.com

PARKS MILLAGE

A dedicated voter-approved Parks millage by the City of Berkley would provide funding for the proposed Oxford Park improvements for several years. The millage would be specifically allocated to the Oxford Park improvements, and could be used as matching funds for other grants. The millage would help to ignite investment in the City's public places, and transform Oxford Park into a cherished community asset.

5. Recommendations

This report and the park concept plans have provided the City of Berkley and its citizens with a lot to review, discuss, and consider in preparation for developing the Oxford Park site. These documents were meant to address the wants and needs of the community, but also to challenge your thinking about what is possible, and achievable in a city like Berkley. We think Berkley has the opportunity to develop a unique, and truly incredible park that will be a source of pride within the community. All good things do, however, take time and planning, and a park like this will not be developed in a year. Careful planning, investment, and a hard-working, creative team is key to the success of such a project, and it's well worth the wait.

LLA recommends taking some time as a community and reviewing this report, and the concepts, and coming to a consensus about what it is Berkley really wants. What do you have to have in the plan, what features do you really love, and what scale and level of development are you thinking? Focus your efforts on what you want, and do not eliminate ideas right off the bat because they may be too costly. Develop your list, then use this to create your funding goals. Then, start fundraising! The amount you need may vary significantly, and early on in the development it's going to fall within a range, so set your range and shoot for the high end of it. And once you get the funding you can start to develop the park plans accordingly.