

Infirmary Mound Park Nature Playscape

Proposed Design



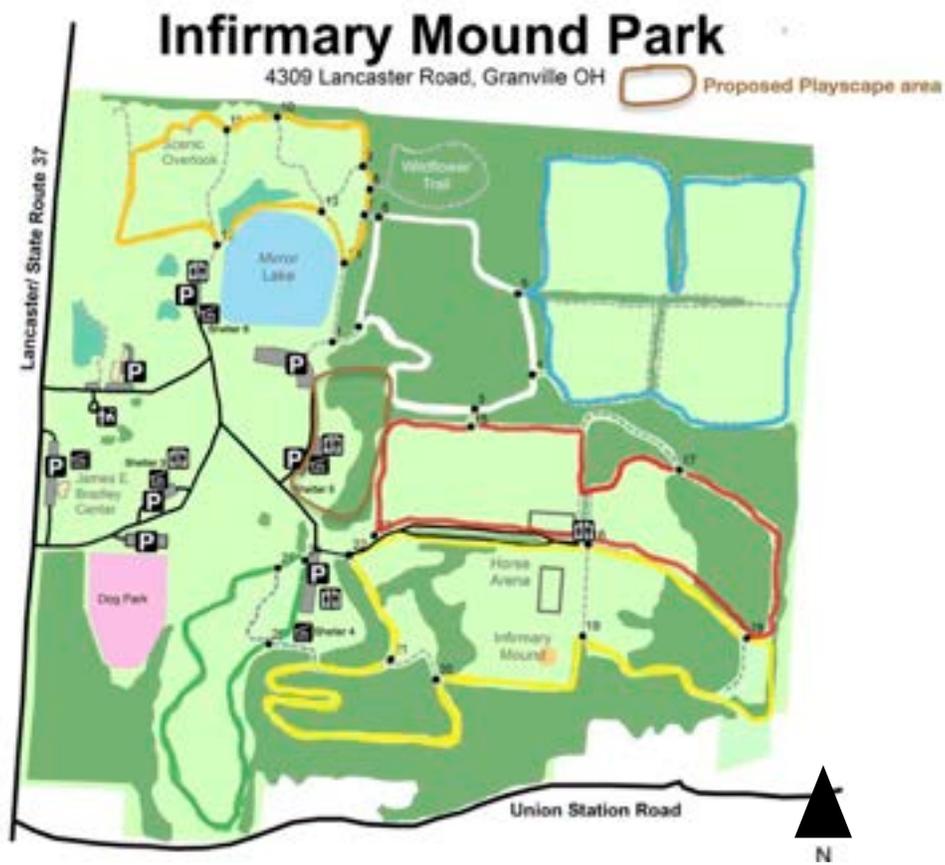
Playscape Purpose

Nature Playscapes are play environments built primarily of natural materials where children engage in 'unstructured' outdoor play. Research has found that when children go to traditional playgrounds, they can get bored quickly, as the prescribed structures put limitations on a child's creativity and challenge. In today's age of Minecraft and TikTok, children spend anywhere from 4 to 9 hours a day on a screen and are increasingly disconnected from the natural world. Playscapes 'fight fire with fire' by providing children alluring, planned places to play in nature where they are in charge.

The intention of the Nature Playscape at Infirmary Mound Park is to be a regional destination for caregivers to bring their children. Here children can explore this ancient yet somehow 'new' and healthier type of play. Nature playscapes elsewhere in Ohio have become popular destinations, including at Cincinnati Nature Center, AHA Children's Museum in Lancaster, Franklin Park Conservatory in Columbus, and at Sharon Woods Metro Park in Westerville. Given the high visitor attendance of the Fairy Trail at Infirmary Mound Park and the awareness and desire for nature playscapes in general, Licking Park District can expect the Nature Playscape at Infirmary Mound Park to be well known and attended.

This report summarizes the proposed playscape site, design, elements and probable costs for budgeting purposes.

Playscape Site



Overall Summary - Playscape Design

Dimensions: 800 ft long x 200 ft wide encompassing 3.7 acres

The playscape design considers the specific hillside and streamside woods on the site and honors the cultural history of the Native Americans and Settlers that previously inhabited our lands. Granville's Alligator Effigy mound built by the Fort Ancient peoples is the inspiration for the layout of the playscape.

Like the mound, the playscape layout is long and narrow, with a head, four limbs, and a long curving tail. Connected by a trail sited on contour the length of the creature's spine and tail, 10 playscape elements are destinations to be discovered at the head, along the torso, at each limb and at the tail. The elements become more adventurous the further a visitor explores. Elements off the trail can be added over time as budget allows.

Alligator Effigy is a misnomer, as archeologists now believe it to represent a supernatural underwater panther, called Mishipeshu. Fittingly, the Infirmary Mound Playscape will be both super and natural.

Playscape infrastructure and Elements include:

Infrastructure and Amenities: Trail, Footbridge, Benches, Signage

Element 1 - Hill

Element 2 - Willow

Element 3 - Sand

Element 4 - Meadow

Element 5 - Water

Element 6 - Slide

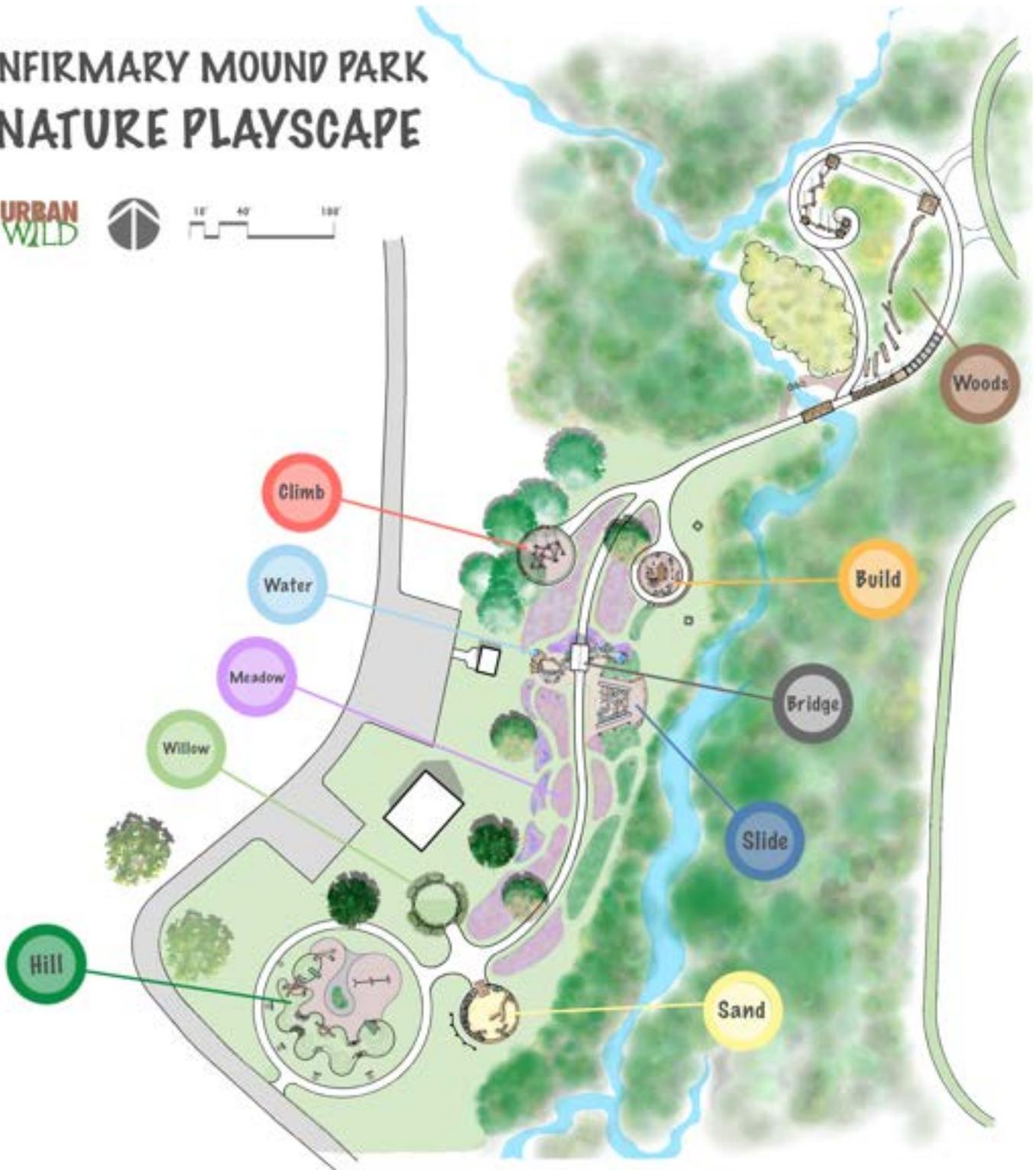
Element 7 - Bridge

Element 8 - Climb

Element 9 - Build

Element 10 - Woods

INFIRMARY MOUND PARK NATURE PLAYSCAPE



Infrastructure and Amenities

Trail: A 6 foot wide aggregate trail connects all playscape elements.

A compacted aggregate trail constructed of 4" base #57 gravel and 3" compacted #411 is be the lowest cost option for safe walking and wheelchair accessibility. Add a culvert for stormwater runoff conveyance, and construct over non-woven geotextile for stability in wet seasons.

Foot Bridge: 22 ft. bridge to span 14 ft of stream bank to woodlands.

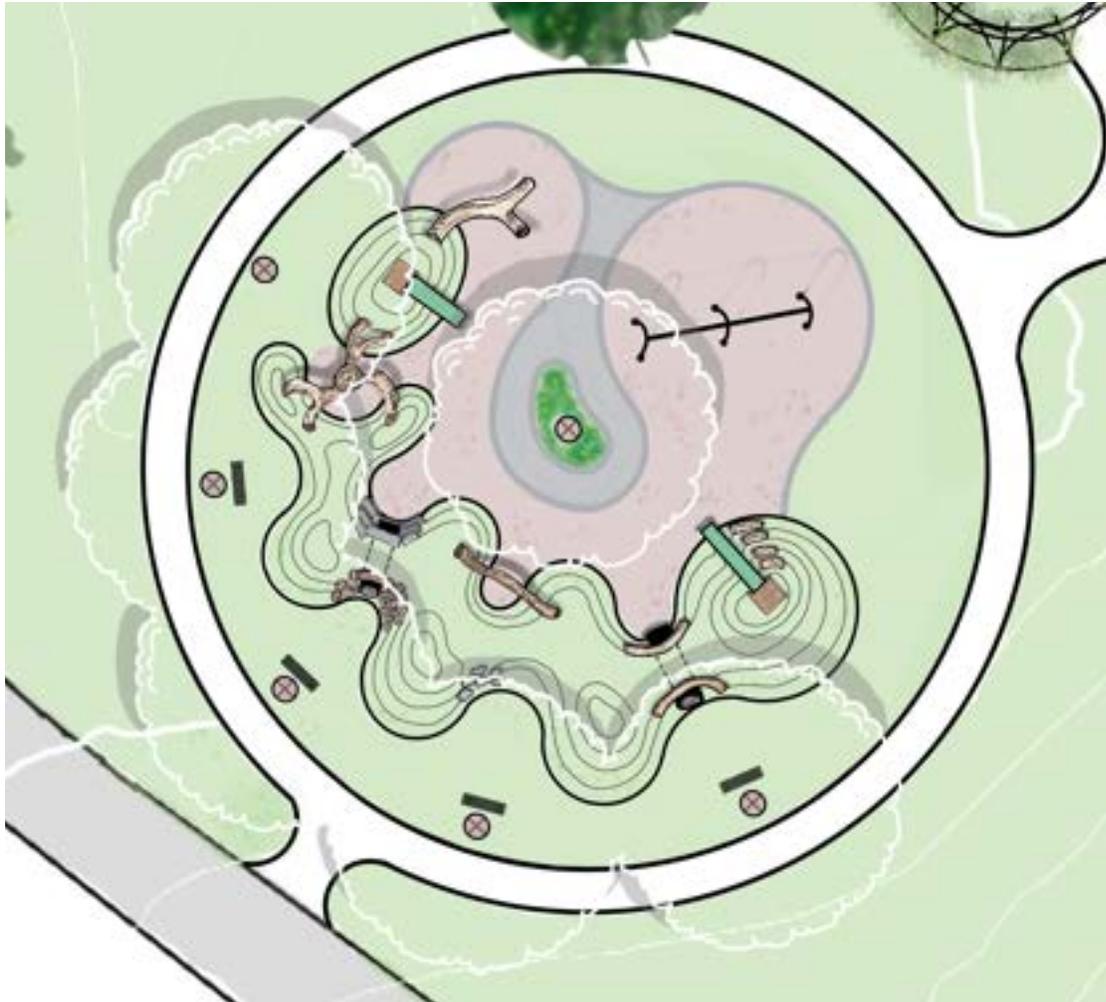
A low cost foot bridge design, using entirely 2x6 treated lumber for supports, can be built by volunteers, or a contractor.



Benches: Four 6 ft benches for caregiver supervision in the Hill play area. Three more benches or gliders within the Willow hut. Built by volunteers or purchased.

Signage - Locational and Educational Signage design and cost estimates are to be determined by others.

Element 1: Hill 9,160 sf



Inspired by the ancient Serpent Mound (the only other animal effigy mound in Ohio besides the Alligator Effigy mound), this serpentine hill is 130 ft long from head to tail. Kids can run along its spine, climb, crawl through tunnels, slide, balance, jump, and sink into cozy coves created by the curvy valleys and an inverted tree. Trees on the west and south will provide eventual shade. The landform varies in height from 2.5ft-5ft tall. A cement patio and cement curb contain mulch within the fall zones. The existing swing set will remain in this area. This is the first playscape feature visitors see when driving up the access road, and can be the first and keystone playscape element constructed.

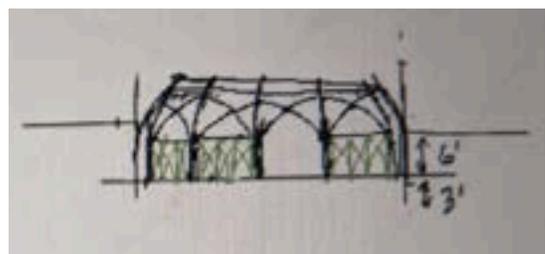
Element 2: Willow 1,257 sf



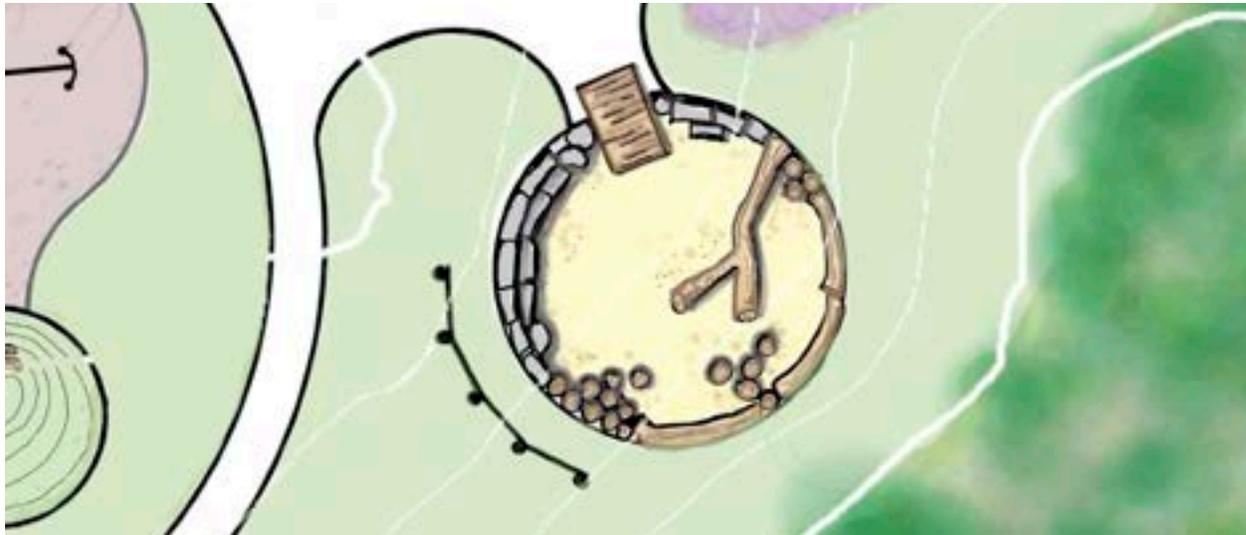
This is 40ft diameter gathering-space will be a living willow hut over time. A proposed superstructure made from bent and woven rebar will provide immediacy and support for sandbar willow shrubs planted and woven along its edge. The particular location is often oversaturated by water, so is ideal for the sandbar willow, which will manage water through evapotranspiration.



Recently sheared sandbar willow tunnel, and woven rebar concept sketch at right.



Element 3: Sand 1,257 sf



A 40 foot diameter sand play area will entertain children for hours and hours. Constructed into the hillside, salvaged stone at the park will be used to retain the land on the uphill side and function both as steps down into the sand and as a seating wall.

Rot resistant logs and stumps are used as retaining and play surfaces. An entry ramp with long lasting Robinia decking will allow assisted wheelchair entry into the area. Low dust professional volleyball sand is suggested. Shade panels to the west have colored plexiglass insets, so the western sun will shine through the panels projecting colors onto the surface of the sand. The sand may be enhanced with archeological artifacts.



Element 4: Meadow



Filling in the 'torso' of the playscape on the hillside, the meadow spans about 11,000 square feet, and will be filled with criss crossing mowed-grass paths to encourage exploration. The meadow contains three different ecosystems. The majority will be seeded with a native grass seed blend. Areas visible from the parking lot and picnic shelter will be seeded with a seed mix high in forbs for pollinators. Plugs or container plants may be used for immediacy if budget allows. The

section closest to the existing woodland will be a no-mow successional woodland area, with bare root and container trees planted to speed reforestation.



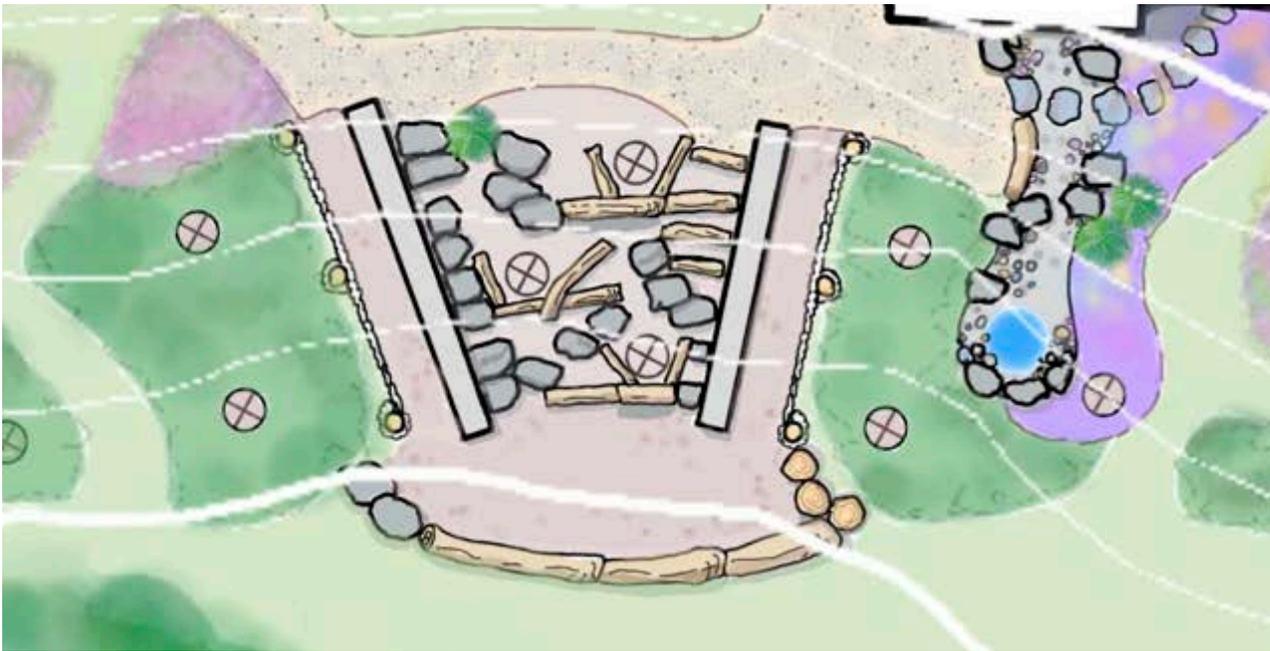
Element 5: Water



The water play area near an existing non-potable water source features wooden sluices that pay homage to the tub-mills built by early settlers in the county. An elevated corrugated metal rain tank will allow for a controlled daily quantity of gravity fed water for play. Children may manipulate water through dams and chutes. Excess water will travel down a streambed located below the trail to be absorbed by sycamore and birch trees.



Element 6: Slide 1,440 sf

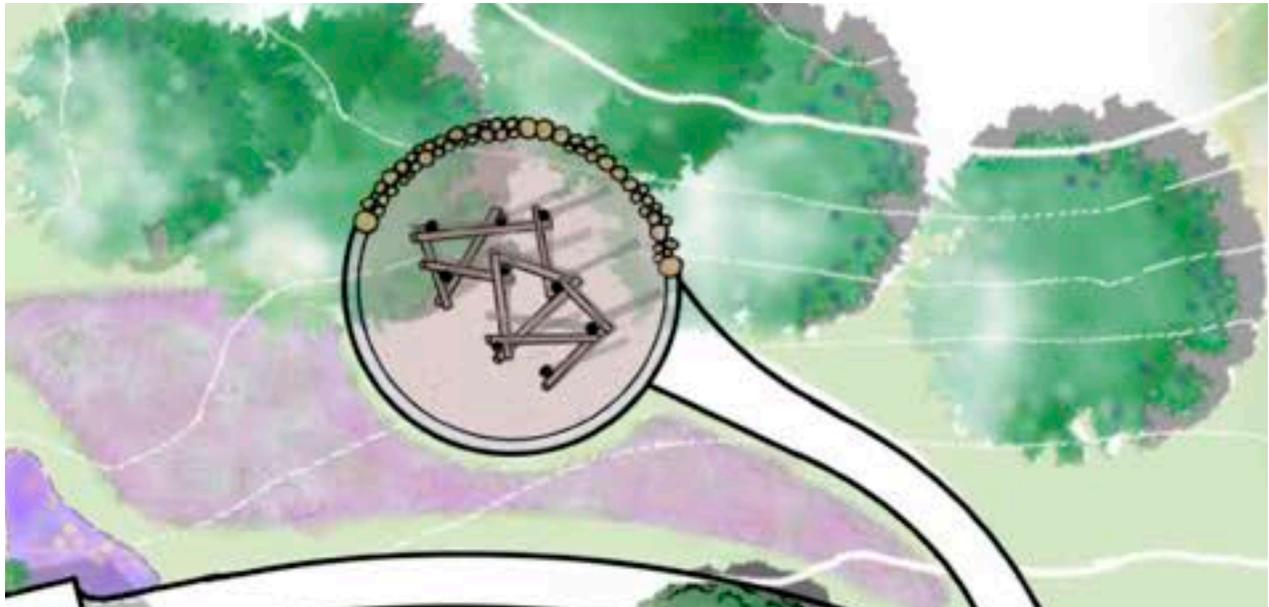


The slide area takes advantage of 10-12 foot of elevation change on a steep hillside, and is inspired by the hillside slides at Governor's Island in New York. Either pricey metal slides, or two economical culvert-pipe slides will provide an exciting ride down the hill. To climb back up the hill, visitors can choose from a simple climb with the assist of a rope railing, or a challenging scramble up a



hillside peppered with boulders and logs. Large muscle motor skills will be brought in to play. Birch trees on the hill will quickly provide dappled shade.

Element 8: Climb 1,257 sf

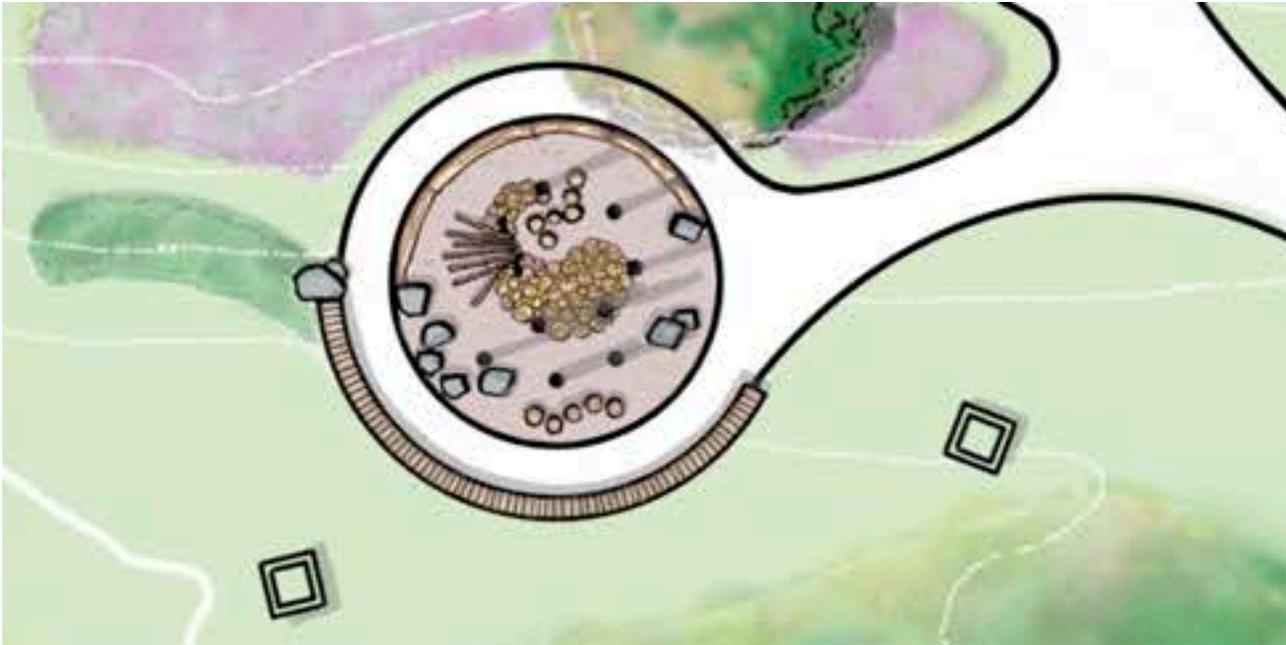


Nestled into the hillside below an existing grove of black cherry trees, an adventurous climbing structure will give kids a chance to balance, climb, and test their limits on a variety of low and high level Robinia log beams.



The 40ft diameter circular area is contained on the uphill side by a 2 to 4 foot tall retaining/seating wall constructed of rot-resistant wooden stumps of varying heights. The downhill side is contained by a wide concrete (or stone) border.

Element 9: Build 1,257 sf



Loose parts play is imaginative and industrious play for children. The loose parts building area is leveled into the side of the hill. Permanent structures include a tree cookie patio, Robinia poles, logs, and boulders.

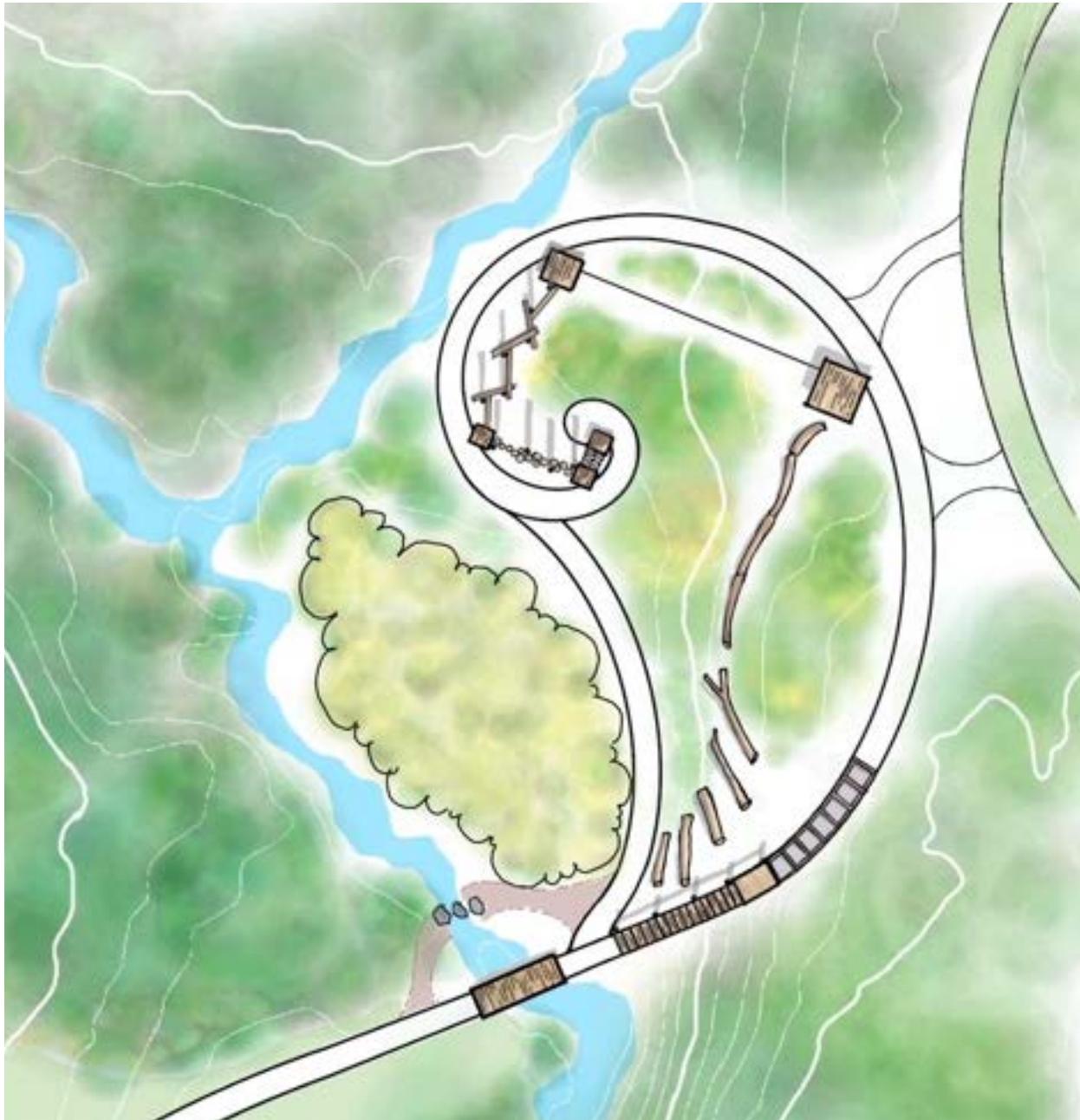


Moveable limbs and stumps are always present for imaginative fort building. Props like rope, PVC pipes and tarps may be provided to enrich the constructive play.

The grade is contained by a gabion seating wall on the downhill side, to allow percolation of hillside water runoff, and a place for caregivers to rest and watch.



Element 10: Woods



Across a foot bridge, or a stone hop over the stream, a woodland adventure course awaits the adventurous. A hillside scramble, zip-line, elevated planks, undulating balance stumps, and a rope bridge provide physical challenges.

The walking trail is mathematically laid out in curves of increasing radius using the Fibonacci sequence, or 'golden ratio'. Platforms linking the adventures nicely fit on the inside of curves at the tangents. Visitors have the option of taking the the stairs and walking trail, or climbing the hillside slope and staying on the 'wild side'.

Care is taken to protect ecologically sensitive areas, like the stream and a big Paw-Paw patch, by delineating the trail-way around them. The Woods trail connects to the existing park White Trail.



