

2023 AIA | DC Chapter Design Awards

Project Title: Franklin Park

Location: Washington, DC

Date of Completion: September 2021

Project Statement (150 words max):

The revitalization of Franklin Park, a 200-year-old, five-acre, historic city block in downtown Washington DC, is a first-of-its-kind federal-municipal-private partnership for the funding, redevelopment and maintenance of a National Park. Purchased by Congress in 1832 to supply the White House with its natural well water, the park has evolved from a protected wellspring, to a military encampment, then a picturesque park and now into a bustling commuter hub. This new design is driven by ecology, economy and equity. The park is repositioned and restored from a decaying urban icon into an active and inclusive neighborhood-serving park that honors its rich and diverse legacy through a celebration of water.

Design Narrative: How does this project address Design for Integration, Wellbeing, and Discovery? (150 words max)

The thoughtful regrading of surfaces and walkways promote inclusion and accessibility, extending an invitation to participate to all visitors, irrespective of physical or economic abilities. This renovation looks to position the park for sustainable use for the next 100 years of use through its innovative Federal-local-private partnership.

Water is integral to the park's history and the new design. In lieu of a timeline, water-themed poetry written by diverse authors - spanning two centuries - are engraved along the perimeter of the central fountain plaza.

Franklin Park was once the wellspring for the White House; now, it is a wellspring for community activity. Through its accessibility and programming, the new design affords opportunities for all ages of play, recreation, engagement, and socialization. The interactive fountains and children's garden - designed for all ages - offer equitable, healthy, joyful spaces.

Community Engagement: How does this project address Design for Equitable Communities and Economy? (150 words max)

Every design decision focused on removing barriers. A continuous community outreach process, involving residents, office workers, building operators, government stakeholders, business owners, and the un-homed defined how success would be measured. The new accessible paths interlink the central fountain plaza to all four corners of the park; the pavilion's inviting, naturally lit gender-neutral communal restroom accommodates visitors from the full breadth of constituencies; the extra-wide slide allows play for all ages.

As part of the collaboration between federal, municipal, and private entities, Franklin Park is designed to fund its own operations and maintenance through revenue generated by the pavilion café tenant as well as private and community events. Early planning established infrastructure for various sized special gatherings that would keep the greater park open to the public during any events.

Sustainability and Resilience: How does this project address Design for Ecosystems, Water, Energy, Resources, and Change? (150 words max)

Franklin Park exemplifies of how the region can address urban forest and soil ecosystem health. The restoration worked to restore the park after decades of heavy use and neglect with many of its trees diseased and slated for removal. Extensive analysis of the remaining trees led to a succession plan for a healthy urban forest.

Efficient water use starts with the raingarden stormwater management system, which captures 100 percent of the rainfall and stormwater on site. The renovated fountains have been upgraded to a fully sanitized recirculated water system.

Material selection focused around resilience, longevity, and maintainability, and the majority the high-quality metal castings and stone on site were re-purposed.

Would you like this project to be considered for a Jury Citation in any of the following categories? (For more information on the 10 Measures from the Framework for Design Excellence, please [click here.](#))

- Integration
- Equitable Communities
- Ecosystems
- Water
- Economy
- Energy
- Well-being
- Resources
- Change
- Discovery

FRANKLIN PARK URBAN DESIGN

WASHINGTON, DC



PROJECT STATEMENT

The revitalization of Franklin Park, a 200-year-old, five-acre, historic city block in downtown Washington DC is a first-of-its-kind federal-municipal-private partnership for the funding, redevelopment and maintenance of a National Park. Purchased by Congress in 1832 to supply the White House with its natural well water, the park has evolved from a protected wellspring, to a military encampment, then a picturesque park and now into a bustling commuter hub. This new design is driven by ecology, economy and equity. The park is repositioned and restored from a decaying urban icon into an active and inclusive neighborhood-serving park that honors its rich and diverse legacy through a celebration of water.





K ST NW

METROBUS
16E S9 10 D6 S2

METROBUS
16E S2 S4 S5 S9

14TH ST NW

13TH ST NW

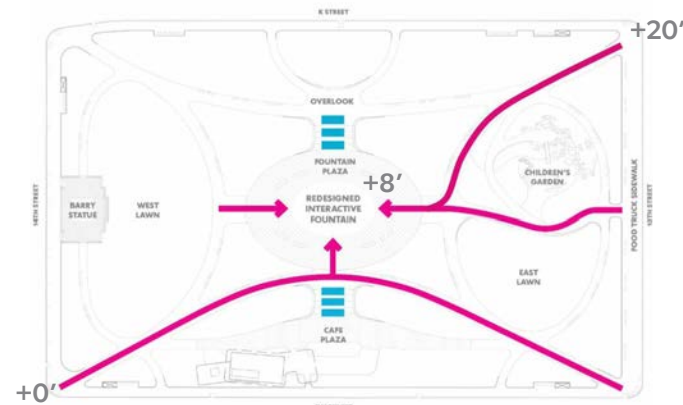
CIRCULATOR
WP-AM

METROBUS
80 D6 G8 S2 S9 X2

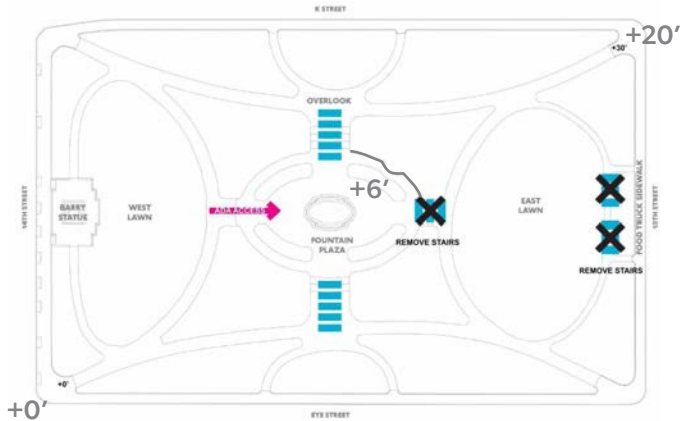
EYE ST NW

**MCPHERSON SQUARE
METRO RAIL STATION**
BLUE SILVER ORANGE





AFTER RENOVATION
BARRIERS REMOVED

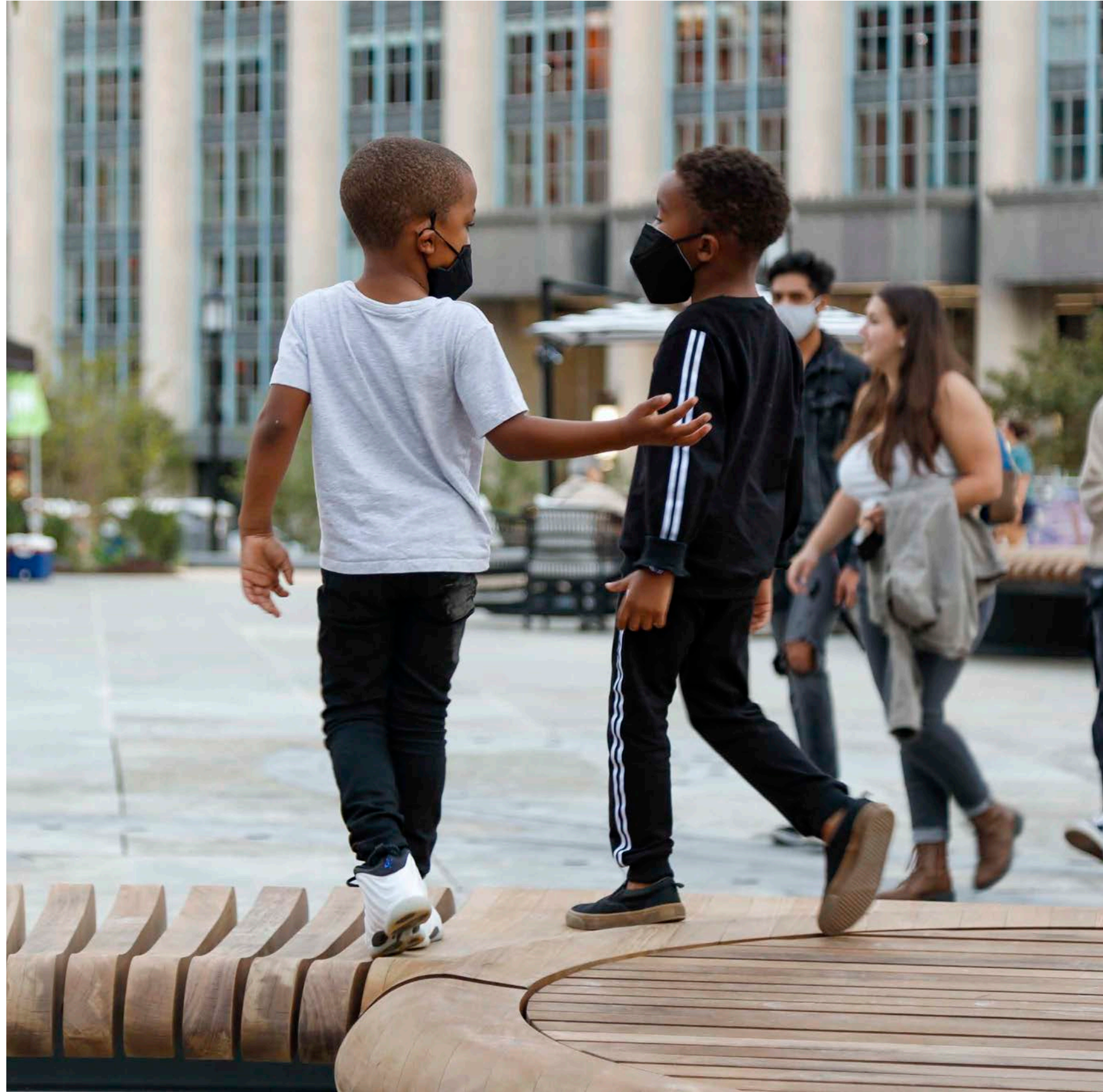


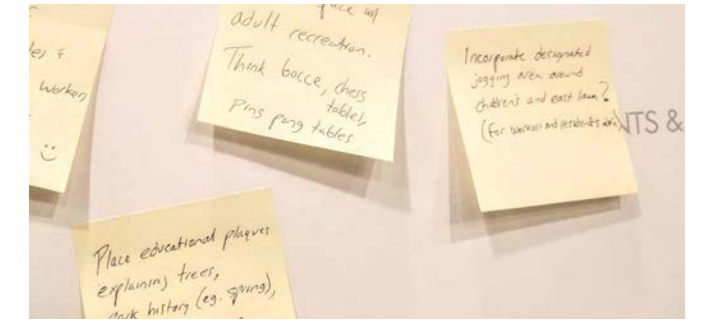
BEFORE RENOVATION
STAIRS AND SITE WALLS TO
MANAGE TOPOGRAPHY



DESIGNED FOR INTEGRATION
RESTORED FOR INCLUSION

The renovation of Franklin Park creates an inclusive public space through the celebration of the site's history with water. The thoughtful regrading of surfaces and walkways promote inclusion and accessibility, extending an invitation to participate to all who visit, irrespective of physical or economic abilities. In lieu of a reductive historical timeline, water-themed poetry written by diverse authors - spanning two centuries - are engraved along the perimeter of the central fountain plaza at the heart of the park. This renovation looks to position the park for sustainable use for the next 100 years through its innovative federal-local-private partnership, reinvigorated diverse urban forest, passive stormwater management, and funding through flexible, varied event spaces and its new pavilion.





DESIGNED FOR COMMUNITY

Every design decision focused on removing barriers. A continuous community outreach process, involving residents, office workers, building operators, government stakeholders, business owners, and the un-homed defined how success would be measured. The new accessible paths interlink the central fountain plaza to all four corners of the park; the pavilion's inviting, naturally lit gender-neutral communal restroom accommodates visitors from the full breadth of constituencies; the extra-wide slide allows play for all ages within the children's garden. Ground-cover restoration creates myriad programming opportunities for the park's guests, from movie nights to farmer's markets and dance classes.

Redeveloping a major park that served as an informal service distribution point for the un-homed was thoughtfully considered and communicated through the stakeholder partnership, and culminated in services for individuals experiencing homelessness during construction being provided by the Downtown Day Services Center, whose information was posted in multiple locations along the construction fence, as well as shared by Downtown BID ambassadors.



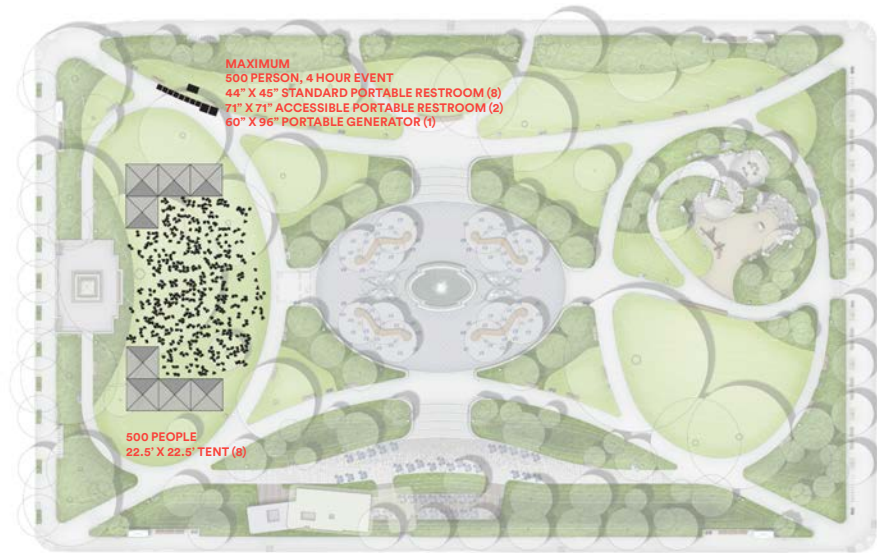
Pavilion program test fits for restaurant, banquet, cafe and retail uses.

DESIGNED FOR **ECONOMY**

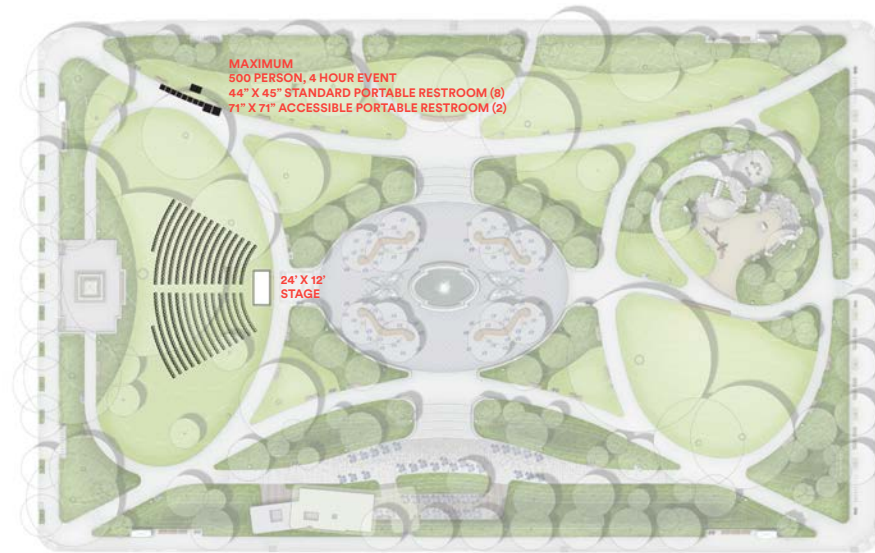
As part of the collaboration between federal, municipal, and private entities, Franklin Park is designed to fund its own operations and maintenance through revenue generated by the pavilion cafe tenant as well as private and community events. Early planning established infrastructure for various sized special gatherings that would keep the greater park open to the public during any events.

Planning for the pavilion cafe established similar flexibility to accommodate different future uses over time. With the day-one tenant fitting out a restaurant, planning accommodates a future catering space, event hall, or other use that will best serve the park and its users. The 100-year renovation goal put life-cycle resilience at the center of the economic conversation for every material choice and reuse, while an overhaul of the arboreal canopy and site grading adds to the site's passive resilience.

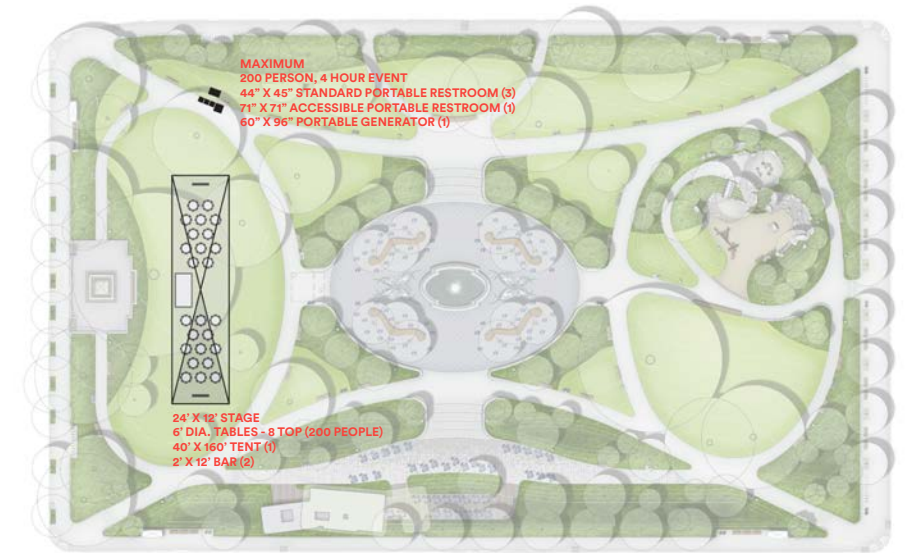




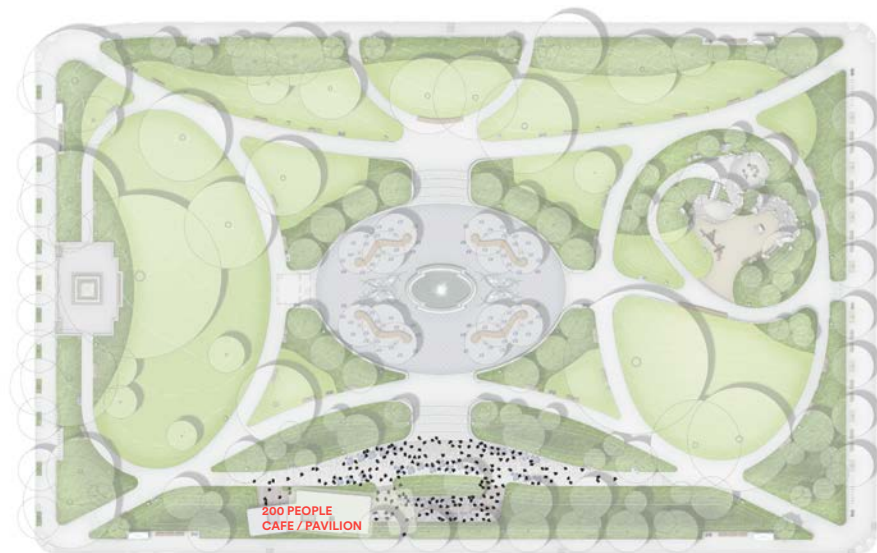
PROGRAM STUDY - 500 PERSON EVENT



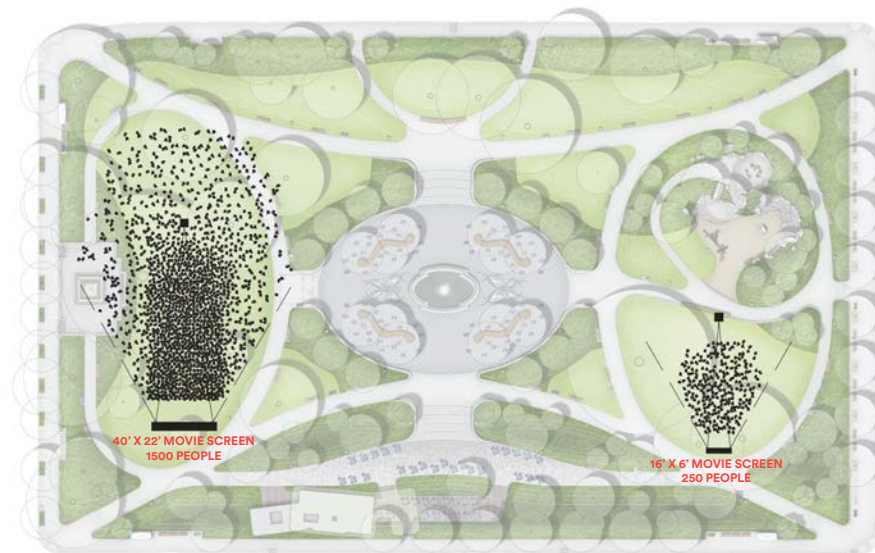
PROGRAM STUDY - 500 PERSON CEREMONY



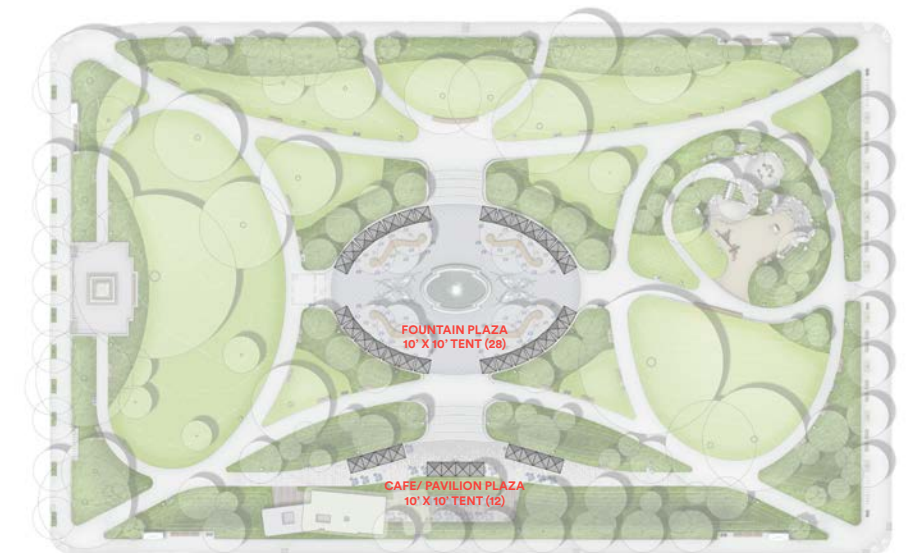
PROGRAM STUDY - 200 PERSON EVENT WITH MEGA-TENT



PROGRAM STUDY - 200 PERSON EVENT



PROGRAM STUDY - MOVIE NIGHT



PROGRAM STUDY - MARKET FESTIVALS





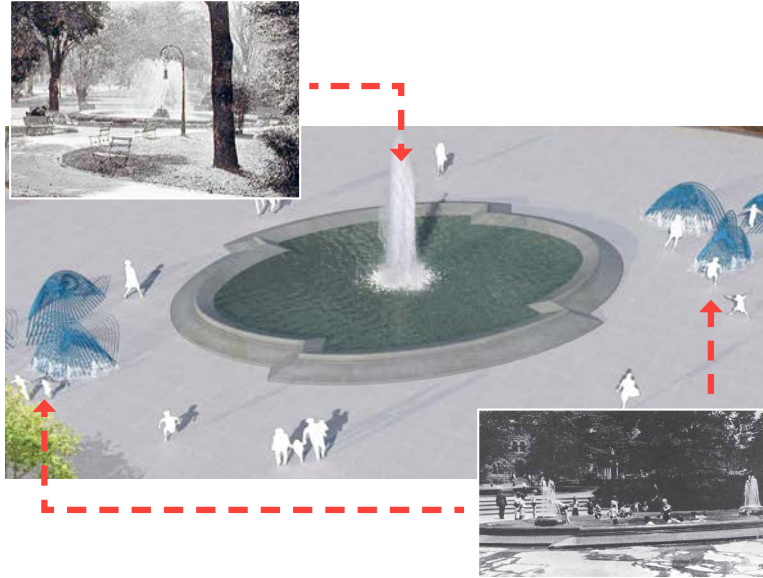
In collaboration with the Planet Word museum across 13th street, movement words are embedded into the path leading up to the slide in the Children's Garden, encouraging activity and joy in the park.

DESIGNED FOR **WELL-BEING**

Franklin Park was once the wellspring for the White House; now, it is a wellspring for community activity. Through its accessibility and programming, the new design affords opportunities for all ages of play, recreation, engagement, and socialization. The interactive fountains and children's garden - designed for all ages - offer equitable, healthy, joyful spaces, while the flexibility of the new lawns offer opportunities for events. The restoration of a vigorous urban forest canopy will ensure natural health for the park while the inclusive restrooms create a comfortable, inclusive, and safe washroom for all visitors.



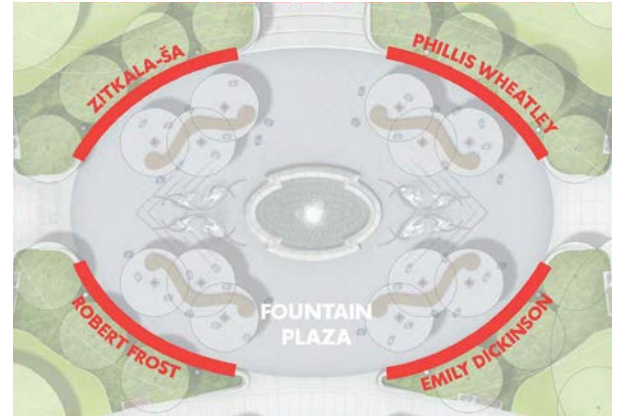
FIRST 100 YEARS
1851 - 1933



DESIGNED FOR **WATER**

Water is integral to the park's history and the new design. The restored central fountain celebrates the park's historic continuity with exciting moments such as DC's first celebration of Emancipation Day, while the interactive fountains pays tribute to the original White House well-spring. Fluid forms are pervasive through the park's stonework, paths, and pavilion. Even the paving pattern north of the pavilion is a pixelated abstraction of water sheeting across the ground surface. Efficient water use starts with the rain garden stormwater management system, which captures 100 percent of the rainfall and stormwater on site. Additionally, the renovated fountains have been upgraded to a fully sanitized and closed-loop recirculated water system.





A wee child toddling in a wonder world,
I prefer to their dogma
my excursions into the natural gardens
where the voice of the Great Spirit is heard
in the twittering of birds, the rippling
of mighty waters, and the sweet breathing
of flowers. If this is Paganism,
then at present, at least, I am a Pagan.

— Zitkala-Ša



Others taunt me with having knelt at well-curbs
Always wrong to the light, so never seeing
Deeper down in the well than where the water
Gives me back in a shining surface picture
Me myself in the summer heaven, godlike,
Looking out of a wreath of fern and cloud puffs.

— Robert Frost



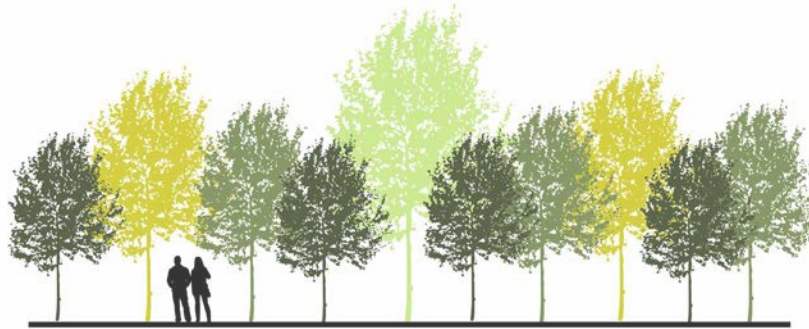
Though *Winter* frowns to *Fancy's* raptur'd eyes
The fields may flourish, and gay scenes arise;
The frozen deeps may break their iron bands,
And bid their waters murmur o'er the sands.

— Phillis Wheatley



Water, is taught by thirst.
Land—by the Oceans passed.
Transport — by throe —
Peace, by its battles told—
Love, by memorial mold—
Birds, by the snow.

— Emily Dickinson

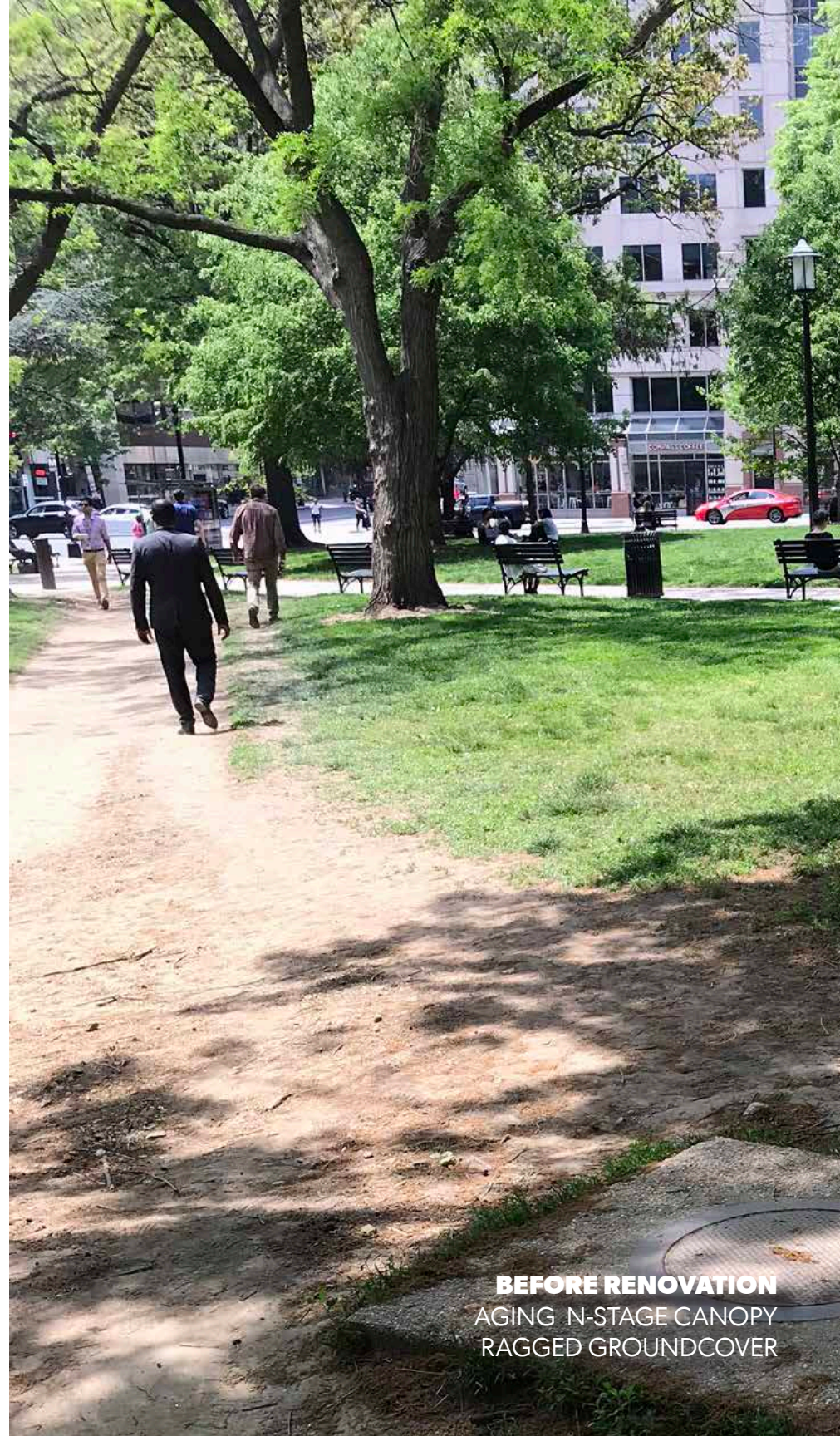


- APPROX. 15 YRS OR YOUNGER: 40%
- APPROX. 20 YRS: 30%
- APPROX. 50 YRS+: 20%
- APPROX. 75+ YRS: 10%

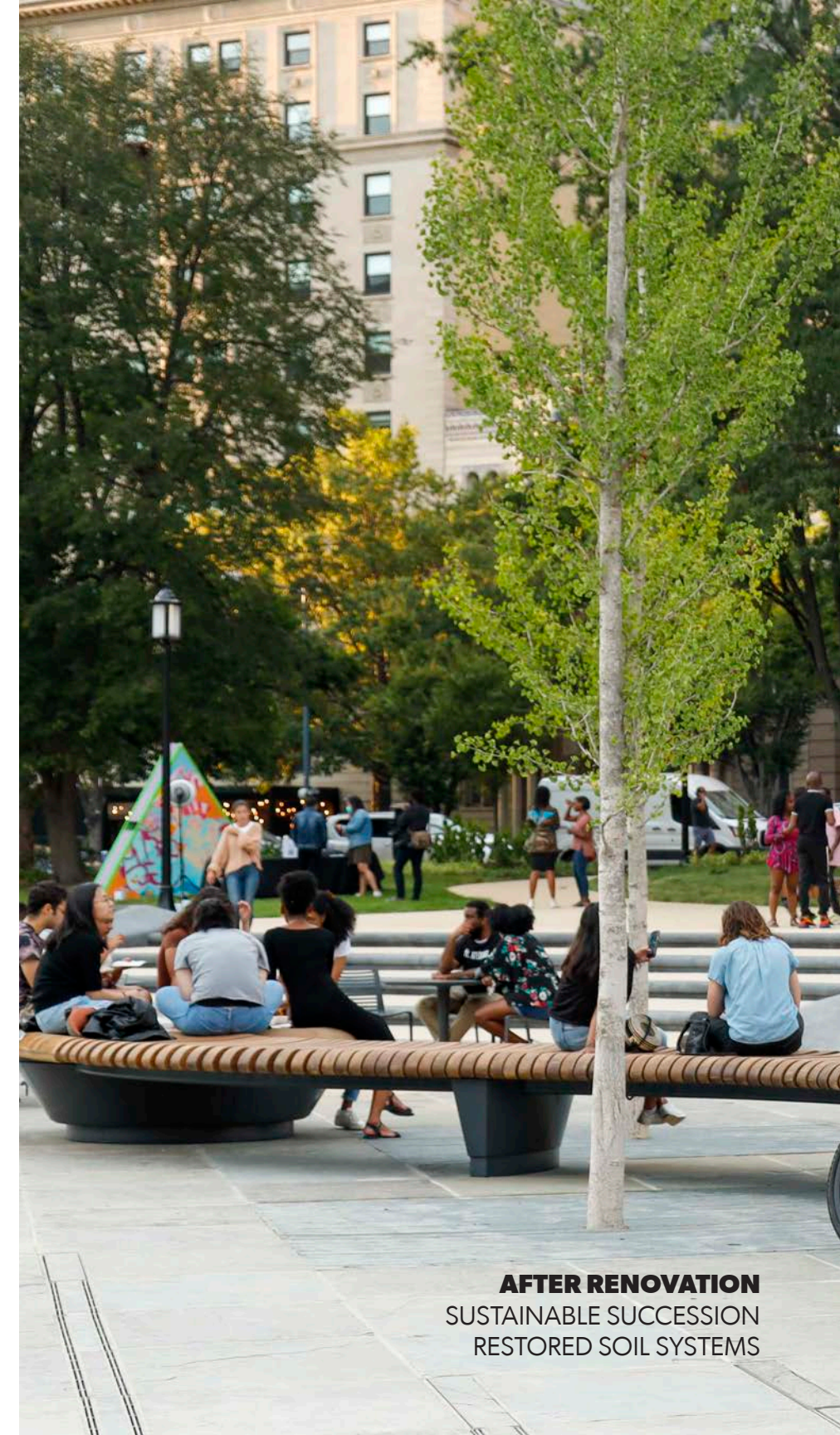
SUCCESSION DIAGRAM - DIVERSITY OF AGE AND SPECIES

**DESIGNED FOR ECOSYSTEMS
RESTORED FOR SUSTAINABLE SUCCESSION**

Franklin Park exemplifies how the region can address urban forest and soil ecosystem health. The restoration worked to restore the park after decades of heavy use and neglect, with many of its trees diseased and slated for removal. Extensive analysis of the remaining trees led to a succession plan for a healthy urban forest. Native flora well adapted to the climate ensure some part of the park will always attract attention, whether by smell, color, or texture. The plantings represent the region's ecosystems, while the pathways and hardscape reinforce the park as a place to experience the calming joy of nature.



BEFORE RENOVATION
AGING N-STAGE CANOPY
RAGGED GROUNDCOVER



AFTER RENOVATION
SUSTAINABLE SUCCESSION
RESTORED SOIL SYSTEMS



The Pavilion's inviting, naturally lit gender-neutral communal restroom beautifully accommodates visitors from the full breadth of constituencies.

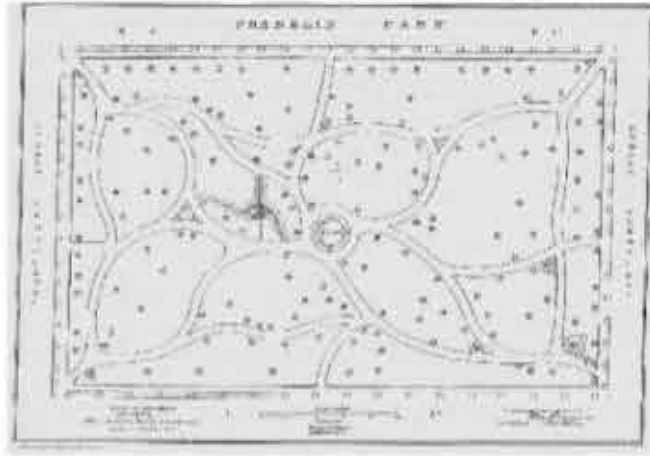
DESIGNED FOR RESOURCES DESIGNED FOR ENERGY

Material selection at Franklin park focused around resilience, longevity, and maintainability. Additionally, the majority the high quality metal castings and stone on site were re-purposed. The Pavilion's energy model presented savings of 37% over baseline and cost savings of 35%. Most impactfully, new native plantings, proper stormwater catchment, a restored urban forest and the durable paving will significantly reduce landscape and park maintenance energy and costs over the next century.

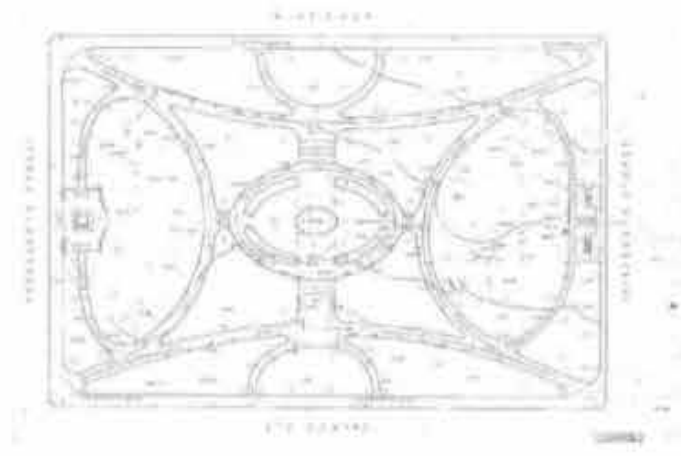
PORT ROYAL - BEFORE THE PARK



FIRST 100 YEARS.



PAST 100 YEARS



NEXT 100 YEARS.
DESIGNED FOR CHANGE



Franklin Park is two hundred years old, and is now positioned for its next century of public life. We do not know what the future holds, but with its rich history preserved and celebrated, its new design prepares the Park to be a healthy, equitable, and sustainable urban park for whatever is next for Washington DC.