

JACQUELINE M. CLEMENTS MEMORIAL PARK  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND  
COMPLETED JULY 2023  
PROJECT SIZE: 13,500 SQ FT  
BUDGET: \$360,000  
LEAD DESIGNER



Jacqueline M. Clements Memorial Park is a small neighborhood park in Upper South Providence that was dedicated in 2004 to a well-loved member of the community. The central fountain was almost immediately shut off due to design flaws and the park slowly deteriorated to a point where neighbors avoided the park during the day and wanted to lock it at night. Through a community-involved design process a comprehensive plan was developed to re-activate the park. An adult fitness area, central seating hub, and raingarden are some of the main features of the new design. The community engagement that started in the design process has continued through the re-opening of the park and it has become a neighborhood highlight instead of a neighborhood blight.

Jacqueline M. Clements Memorial Park is a small neighborhood park in Upper South Providence that was dedicated in 2004 to a well-loved member of the community. Its central feature, an ornate granite fountain adorned with heartfelt inscriptions honoring the neighborhood, the community, and water, had to be shut off due to excessive overspray mere weeks after the park's inauguration. Several years later, in an attempt to enhance security, the park's 4' wrought iron fence was extended to 6'. Paradoxically, this adjustment compounded the issue, creating a sense of confinement during the day and encouraging undesirable nighttime activities by limiting sightlines and creating a separation from the street. Frustrated neighbors then began locking the park after dark. For these reasons, most of the neighborhood felt unsafe and avoided using the park.

The Parks Department held community meetings in 2018-19 to discuss the future of the park, with the fence and safety being the two largest concerns. Many neighbors wanted to restrict access to the park by locking the gates, which went against the policy and mission of the Parks Department. Some neighbors suggested closing the park permanently and selling it for private housing and members of the Clements family were unhappy with the situation and discussed removing Jacqueline Clements' name from the park. Progress was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, with renewed interest in reinvigorating the park in 2021, which is when this design process began.

A visit to the site in the fall of 2021 revealed a park in dire need of improvement. The fountain and corresponding pump chamber dominated the small park and the heavy wrought iron fence and gates felt oppressive. The central path was 10' wide and led directly to a non-working fountain while another walkway ended at a neighbor's fence. Adjacent to the fountain there were two additional granite monuments for Neighborhood Heroes that were still awaiting their first names. There was too much paving for such a small space, ¼ of the park was hardscape. Apart from the trees (Ash and Crabapple), most of the planting from the original design was gone and the extensively planted berms had become lawn. The largest tree, a Sycamore Maple, was in an area outside the fence and did not feel like part of the park. Apart from the seating and mature trees, there wasn't much to draw users in. The imperative for a substantial park renovation was evident from the outset, with the goals of promoting safety and rekindling the neighborhood's love for the park.

The initial budget for the design was a modest \$100,000, with the potential for it to increase to \$250,000. As a result, two distinct concepts were developed to accommodate each budget. The lower-budget concept retained the existing path layout, as the majority of the funds were earmarked for removing the fountain and upgrading the fencing. In contrast, the higher-budget concept aimed for a comprehensive park redesign, preserving only the trees, the fountain's stones, and the back property line fence. Both designs were presented during a community meeting in January 2022. There was no Friends Group (a community coalition for advocating for and programming specific parks) for Jacqueline Clements Park, however, following the initial design review, an unofficial Friends Group emerged and actively contributed to the design's development. Ultimately, the higher-budget concept resonated with the community, and thanks to additional funding, a full redesign could proceed. Through an extensive process involving hundreds of emails and five community meetings over four months, the design was thoroughly vetted and refined, resulting in a solution that satisfied both the Providence Parks Department, the Friends Group and other community partners.

One of the most challenging aspects of the project was convincing the neighborhood to replace the imposing wrought iron fence with a lower and less visually intrusive barrier. Some residents insisted the fence was needed so they could lock the park at night, even though many felt trapped walking through the

park during the day. Fortunately, the district supervisor for the police department supported revising the fence and his support, along with the visual aid of 3D modeling and nearby parks as precedents won them over. The final choice was a granite bollard and chain fence that defines the edge of the park without imposing a rigid barrier. In order to further bolster user safety, several other considerations were integrated into the design based on community feedback:

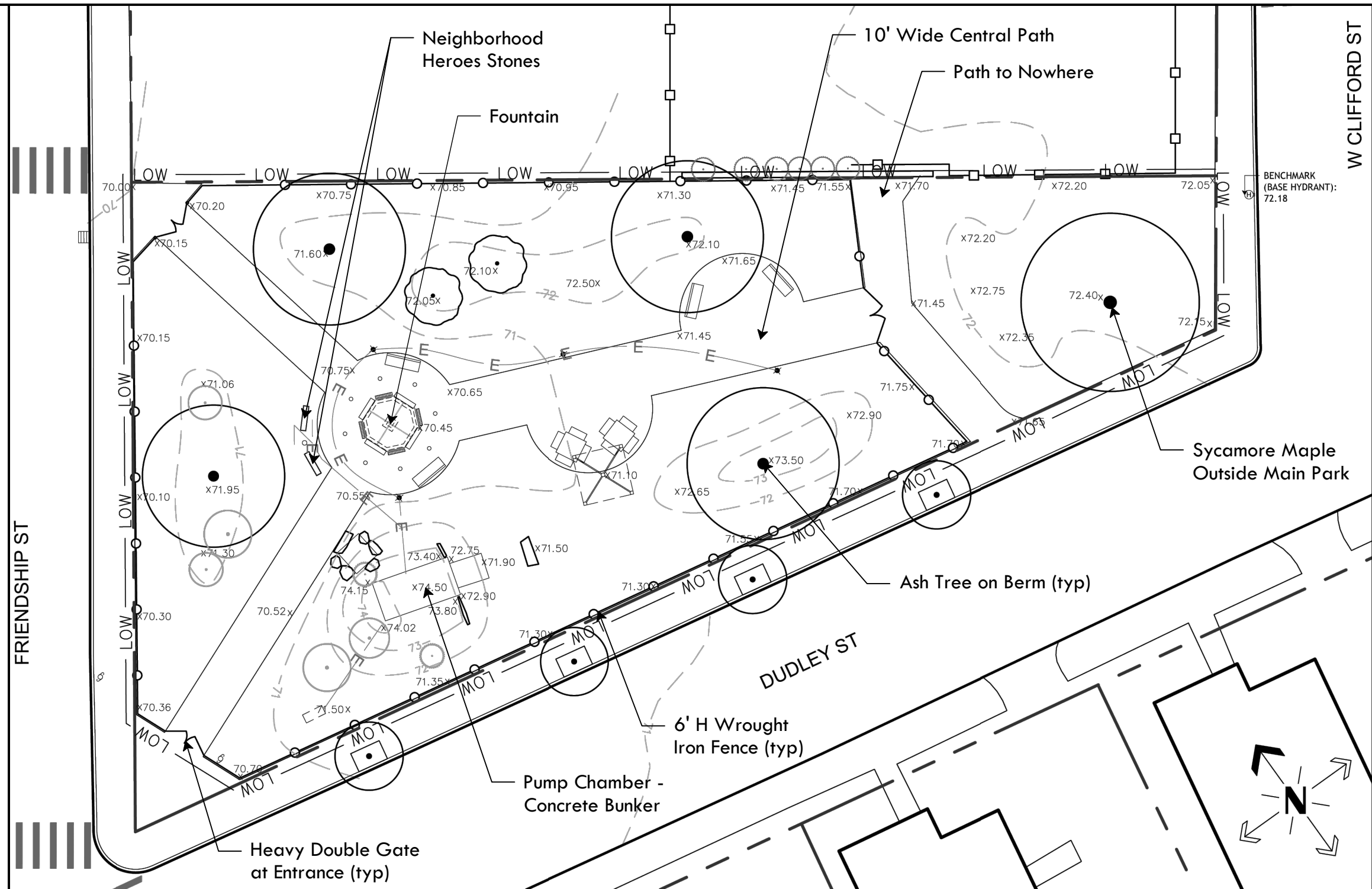
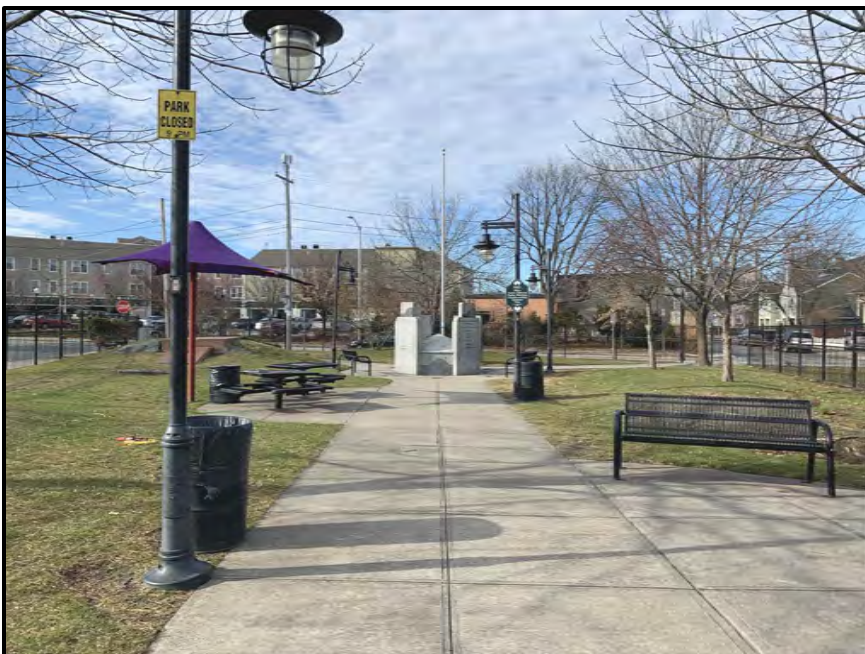
- The large plaza from the initial concept was reduced in size and shifted to the edge of the main pathway so that users have the option of bypassing it
- An emergency Blue Light phone, the first in the Providence Parks system was added
- A security camera mounted on a lamp-post to deter criminal activity
- For the safety of both park users and vehicles passing though the adjacent intersections, low vegetation was removed for clear sightlines into and through the park.

Beyond addressing safety concerns, the primary design goal was to transform the park into a dynamic and enduring neighborhood hub rather than merely a green space with benches. An Adult Fitness Area was introduced, featuring versatile equipment suitable for all ages and fitness levels and sheltered by a shade sail, enticing parkgoers to engage even during the hottest summer months.

The project also aimed to enhance shade and promote biodiversity within the site without obstructing sightlines. This was achieved by planting ten native trees from six different species. Given the area's susceptibility to flooding, managing stormwater on-site was a top priority. The transformation involved reducing overall hardscape from 24% to just 6% coverage, with concrete limited to pads beneath tables, benches, and trash receptacles. Additionally, the paths and landscape were regraded to divert 50% of on-site stormwater into a rain garden for infiltration. This marked a significant improvement from the previous design, which directed water towards the street or into storm sewers.

To continue honoring Jacqueline Clements' legacy the project repurposed the stones from the former fountain. Initially, they were to be positioned upright around the central plaza, but this obstructed sightlines. The next iteration placed them at an angle in the raised planting area, but some neighbors found this reminiscent of gravestones. Ultimately, they were used as paving stones at the path entrances, ensuring that visitors are greeted with the inspiring inscriptions as they enter the park. A "river" of exposed aggregate now connects the stone inscribed with "This Water..." to the rain garden, providing context that was missing without the fountain.

Due to an increase in costs following the pandemic, an additional \$110k of funding was obtained so the park could be installed as a complete design. The park's transformation began in December 2022 and was completed in July, 2023 marked by a soft opening for the Friends Group and other community partners to explore the revamped space. A grand opening block party in September, featuring music, food trucks, art, and more, drew a huge turnout, even in the face of unseasonable heat. The renewed enthusiasm for the park and a newfound sense of ownership and pride within the neighborhood would not have been possible without robust community engagement. The 'Neighborhood Heroes' stones, left blank since they were originally installed, should finally have some names inscribed.

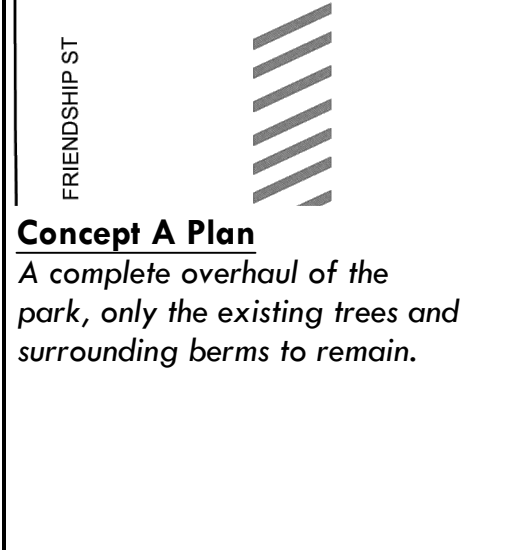


**Existing Conditions**

*The Fountain had been non-operational for almost 20 years but continued to dominate the park. The pump was held in an unsightly concrete bunker with a steel bulkhead door. 8 to 10' wide concrete paths were oversized in the small space. Heavy, rusting, black iron fencing enclosed a portion of the park, with a 2,000 sq ft area disconnected from the rest of the park. The seating was black metal as well, hot in the summer and cold the rest of the year. Photos: Looking down central path towards fountain; Fountain, showing 'This Neighborhood' inscription; Sycamore Maple outside fenced park, with path to nowhere and 1 of 3 gated entrances in background (top to bottom).*

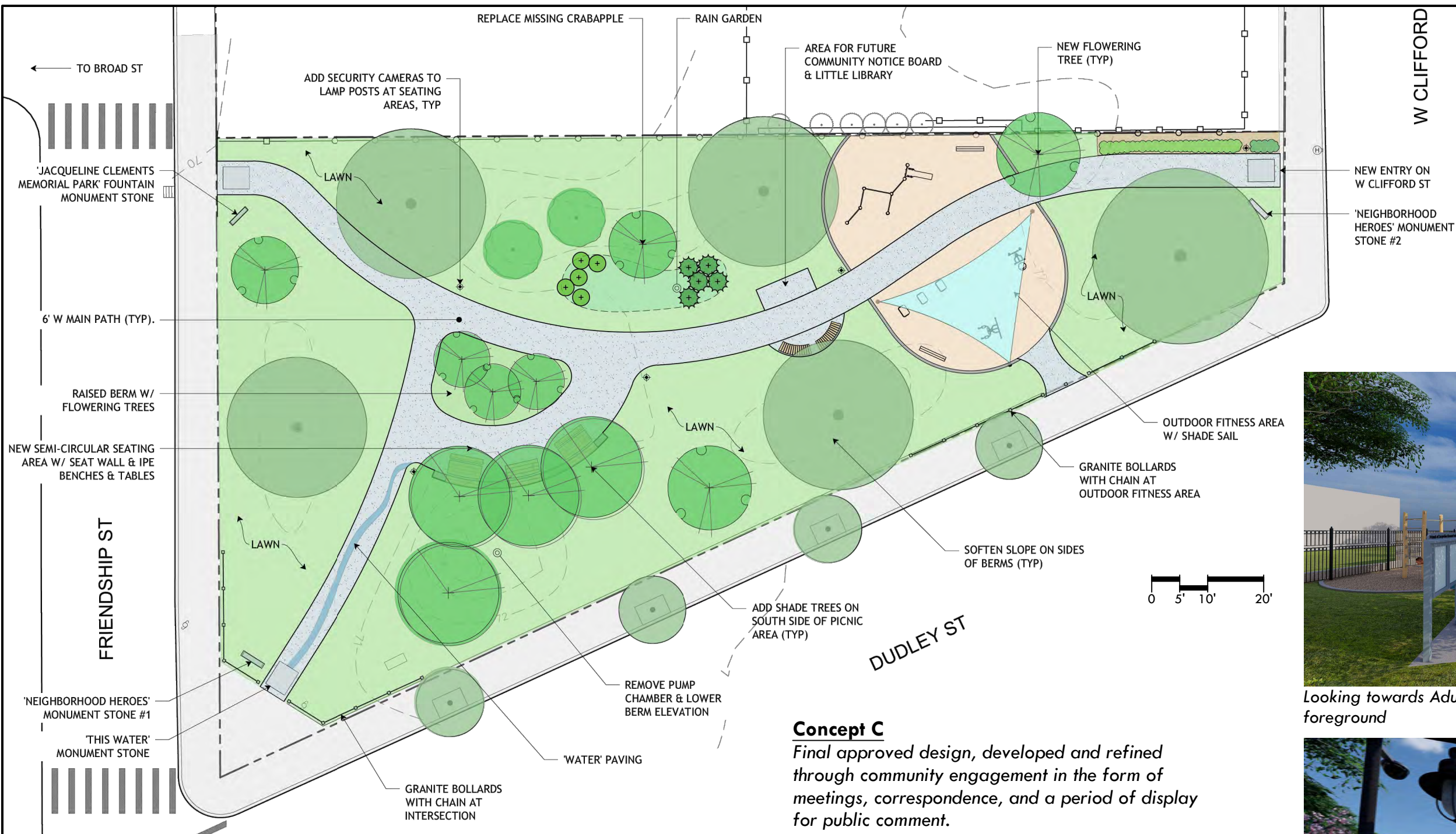


**Clifford St Entrance from Concept A**  
 This design removes the existing 6' high wrought iron fence and replaces it with the city-standard 4' high welded-wire mesh, surrounding the whole park, including previously unused space along Clifford St.

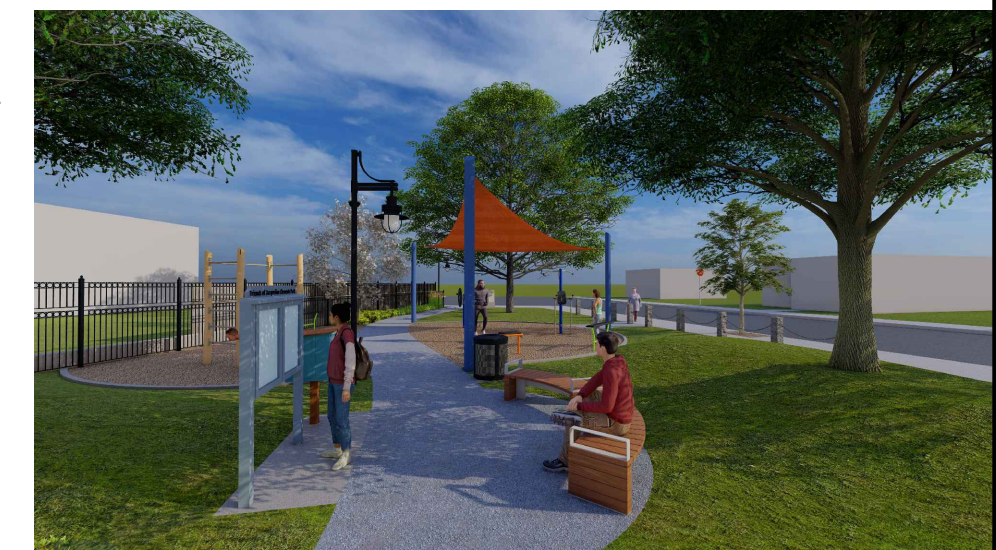


**Central Seating Area from Concept A**  
 Large circular seating node with picnic tables on a seatwall. The stones from the memorial fountain re-used as monuments and paving.

**Concept B Plan**  
 Lower budget/impact design utilizing existing path system



New W Clifford St entrance with granite fountain stone inset in semi-pervious stone dust paving



Looking towards Adult Fitness Area with community board and seating in foreground



Approaching Central 'Plaza' from the Friendship St Entrance

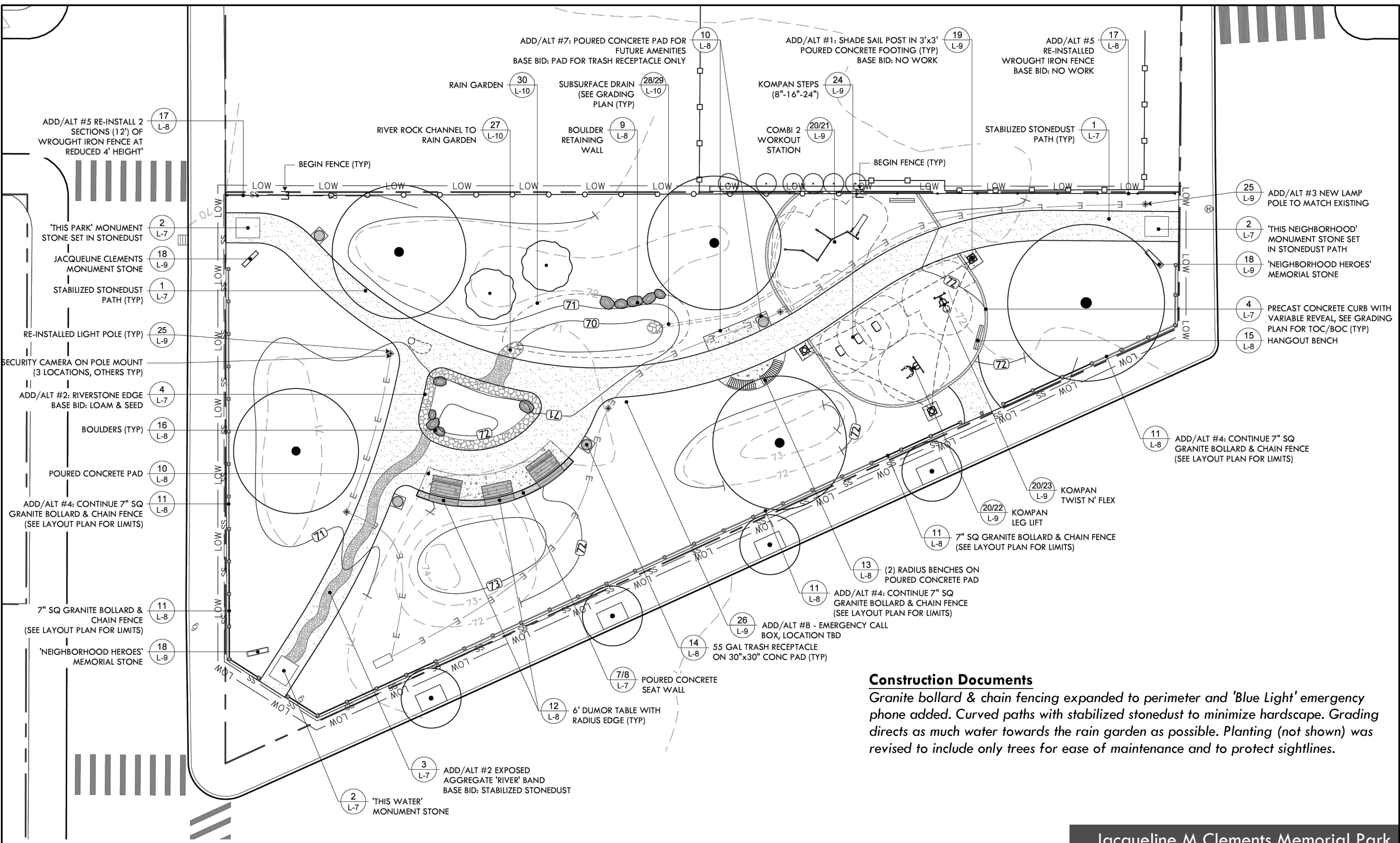
**Concept C**  
 Final approved design, developed and refined through community engagement in the form of meetings, correspondence, and a period of display for public comment.



Exposed aggregate 'stream' to represent water at Dudley/Friendship Corner

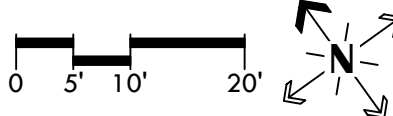


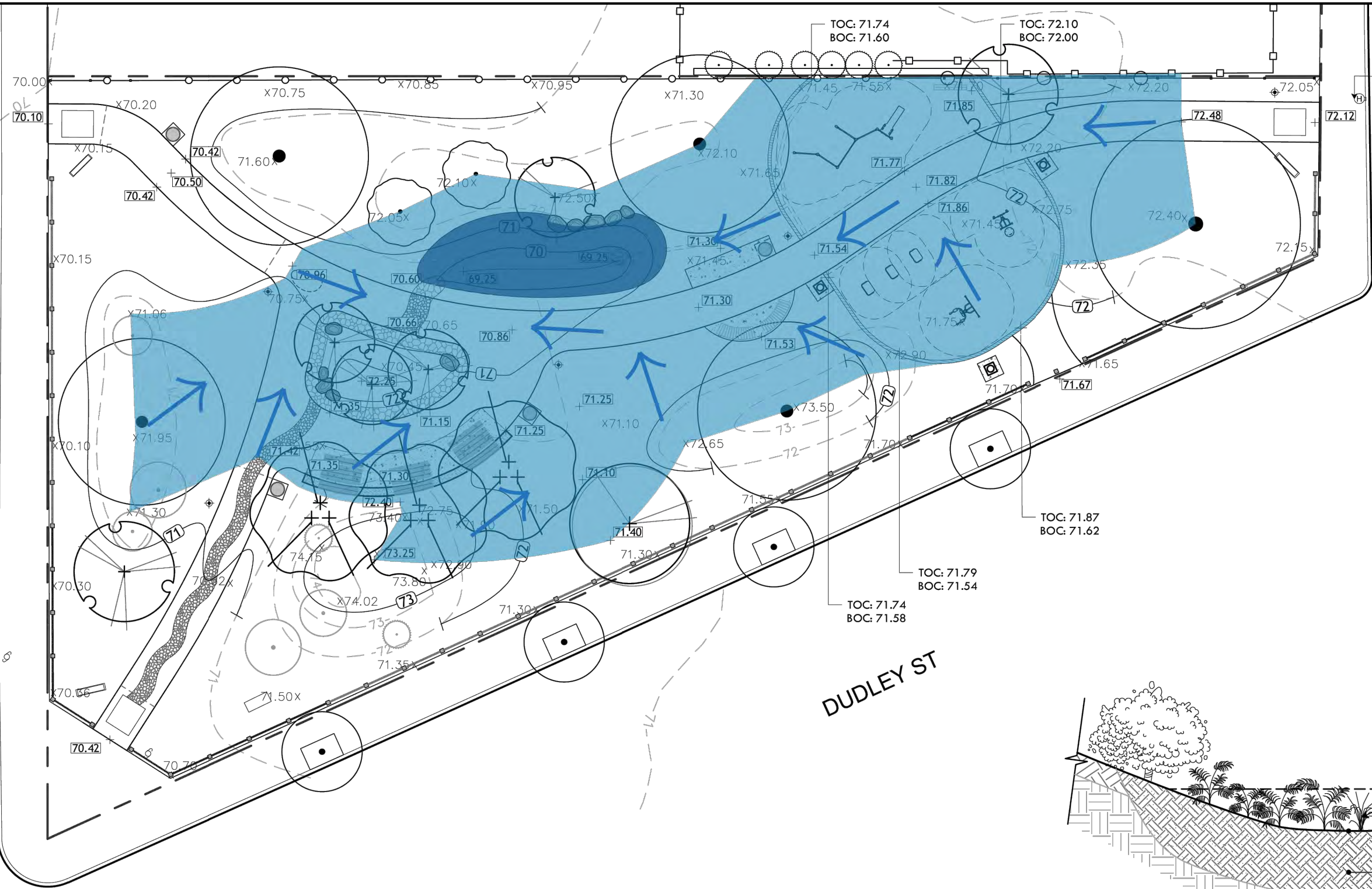
Central 'Plaza' with radius seat wall & custom picnic table & benches



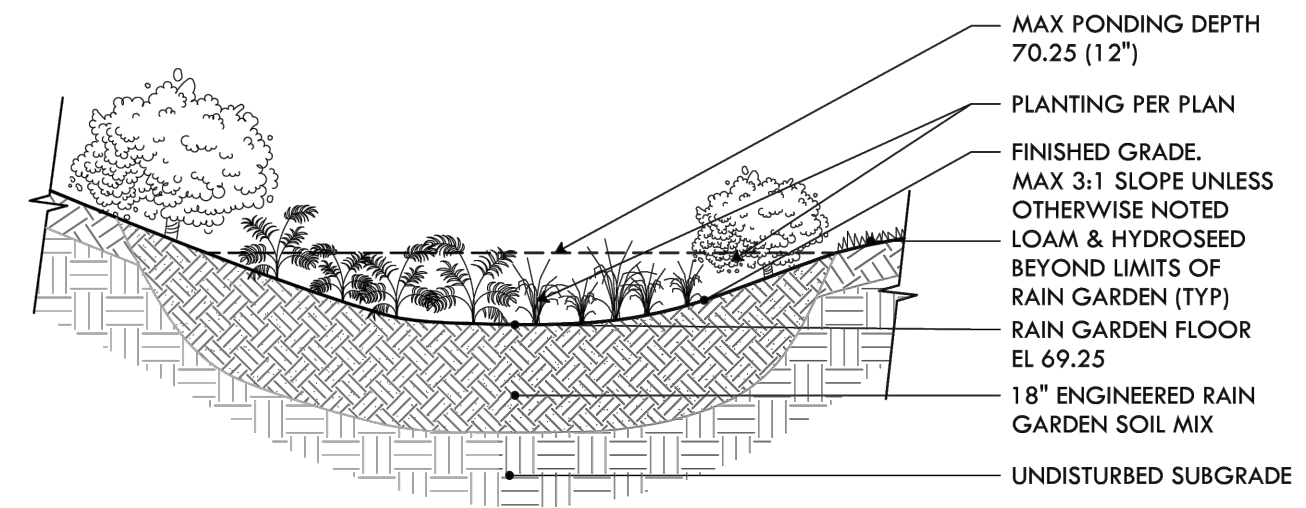
**Construction Documents**

Granite bollard & chain fencing expanded to perimeter and 'Blue Light' emergency phone added. Curved paths with stabilized stonedust to minimize hardscape. Grading directs as much water towards the rain garden as possible. Planting (not shown) was revised to include only trees for ease of maintenance and to protect sightlines.





Rain Garden Photo

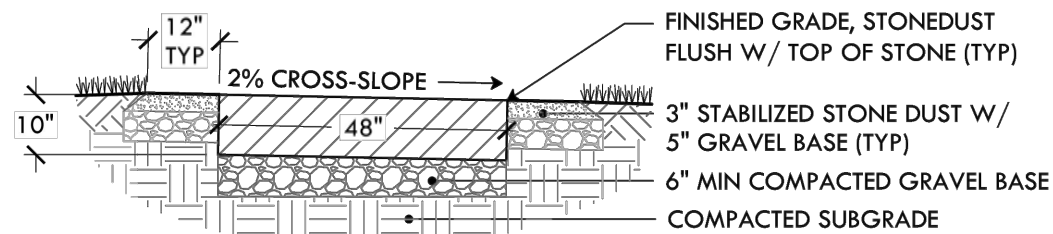


**Stormwater Control Measures**

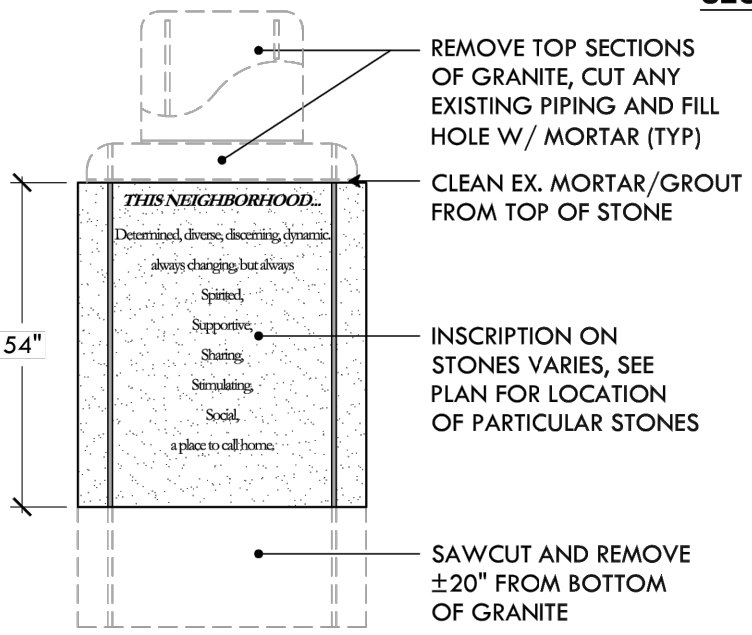
The primary goal of the grading plan, shown above with existing and proposed stormwater catchment areas was to contain as much stormwater on site as possible. The existing grading directed 65% of the rainwater falling on the park towards the street and the remaining water towards the trench drains around the fountain. These drains connected to an abandoned water recirculation chamber with an overflow pipe connected to the sewer. So apart from what was absorbed by the lawn, the majority of the stormwater flowed off-site into an already over-taxed system. South Providence is a generally flat neighborhood that is prone to localized flooding, especially with the rainfall events occurring recently. To alleviate this issue, the proposed grading contains 50% of the stormwater and directs it to a rain garden for groundwater infiltration. Additionally, the paths that do slope towards the street are crowned to direct water onto the lawn for further infiltration.

- NOTE:
1. RAIN GARDEN SOIL MIX TO CONSIST OF 65% LOAMY SAND BLENDED WITH 35% SCREENED, HIGH QUALITY COMPOST. OR APPROVED EQUAL PROPRIETARY BLEND.
  2. IF ADD ALT#6 - RAIN GARDEN PLANTING IS NOT ACCEPTED, SEED RAIN GARDEN WITH THE FOLLOWING MIX: RETENTION BASIN FLOOR MIX - LOW MAINTENANCE FROM ERNST SEED (ITEM #ERNMX-126)

Rain Garden Detail - even with the heavy rains in the Summer & Fall of 2023, the rain garden has not overflowed

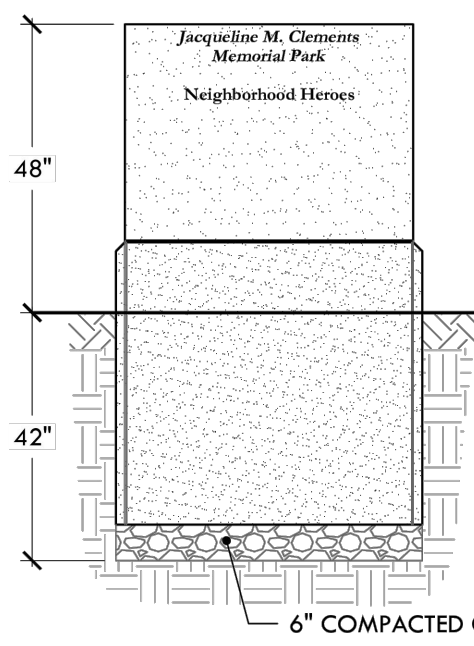


**SECTION**

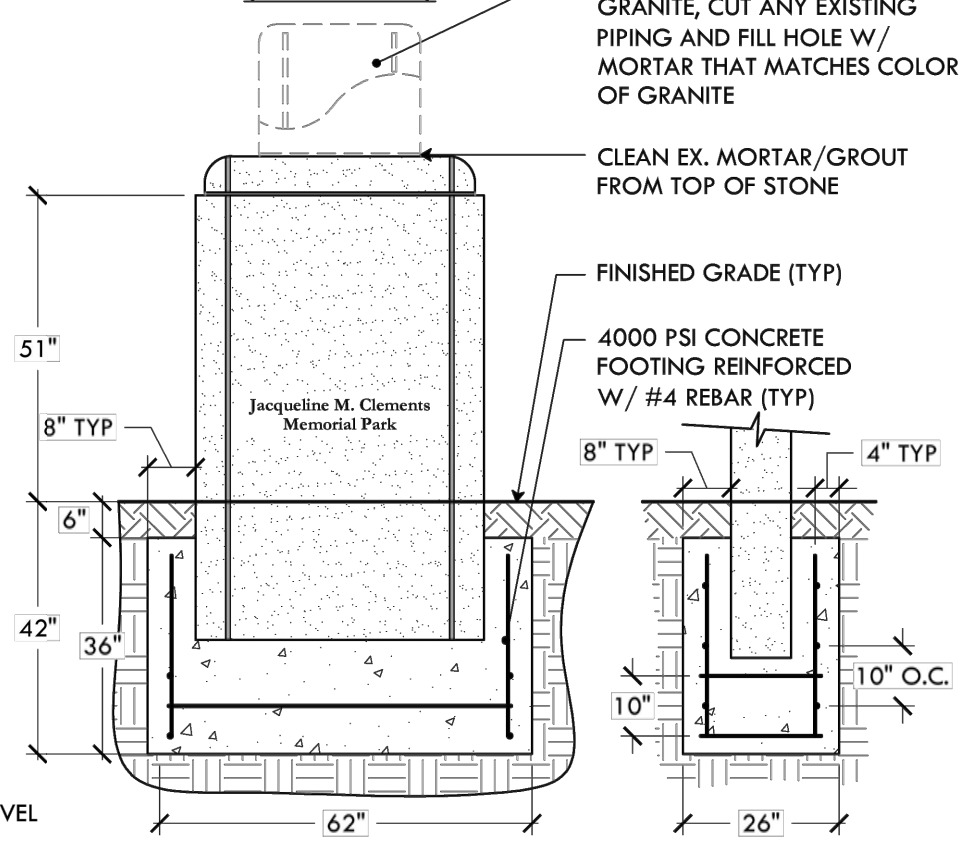


**STONE MODIFICATION**

**'NEIGHBORHOOD HEROES' STONE (2 LOCATIONS)**



**'FOUNTAIN' STONE (1 LOCATION)**

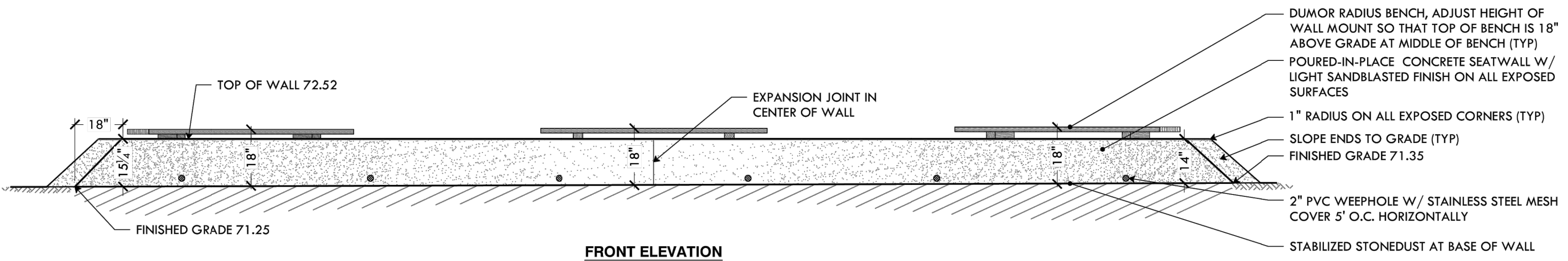


**FRONT SECTION ELEVATION**

**SIDE SECTION**

**Adaptive Re-Use**

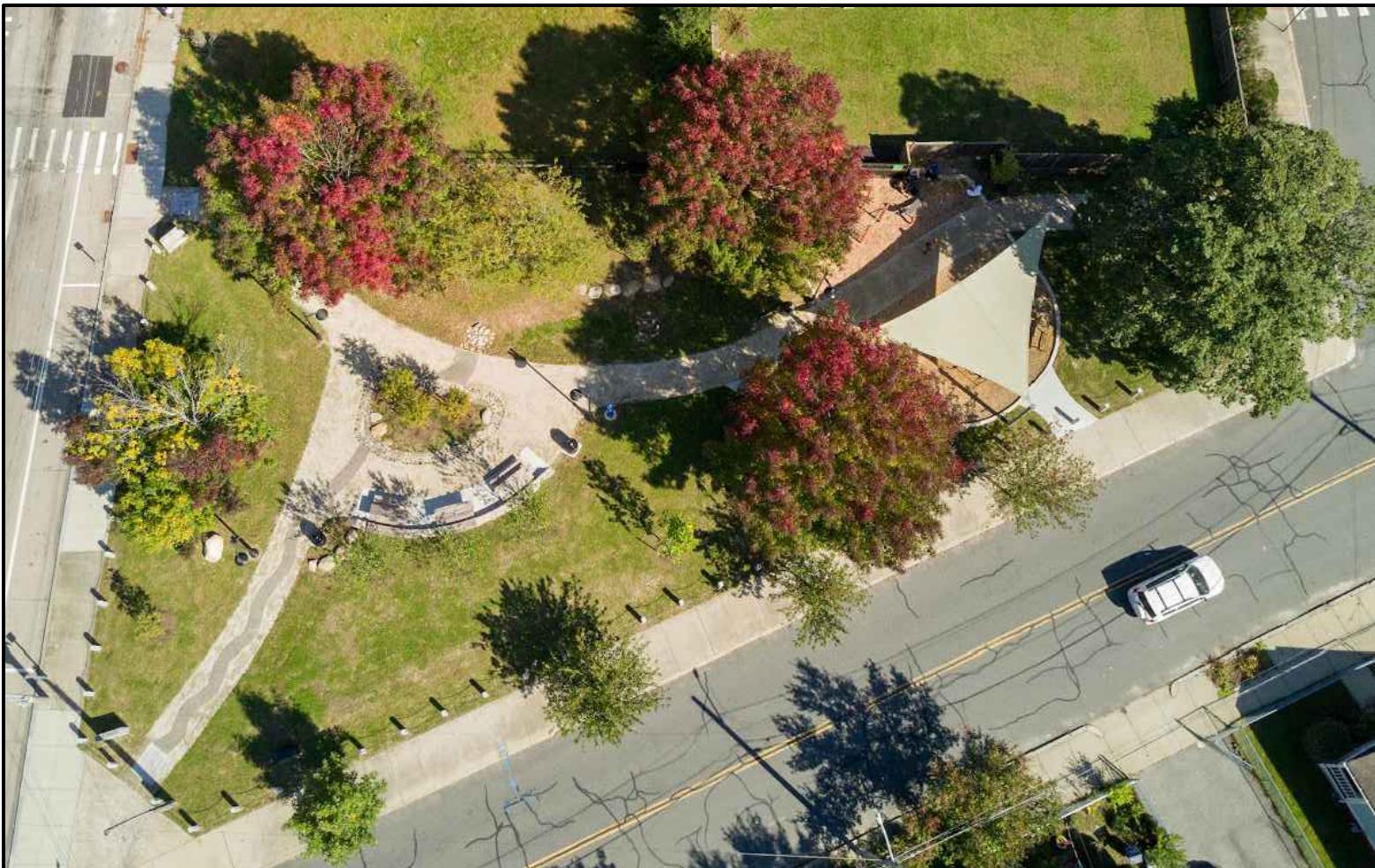
While the original fountain ultimately failed, the structure contained 4 large granite monument stones with meaningful inscriptions about the park and the neighborhood and were made to honor Jacqueline M Clements. It was important that these stones were preserved as a feature of the new park. Early designs placed them in the central area of the park but after feedback from the Friends Group it was decided that the stones with engraved passages would be inlaid into the stone dust at the 3 major park entrances and the the Jacqueline M Clements and Neighborhood Heroes stones would be shortened and placed upright at the entrances to act as park signs without impeding sight lines. The off-cuts and remaining granite from the fountain was stockpiled by the Parks Department for use in future projects



**FRONT ELEVATION**

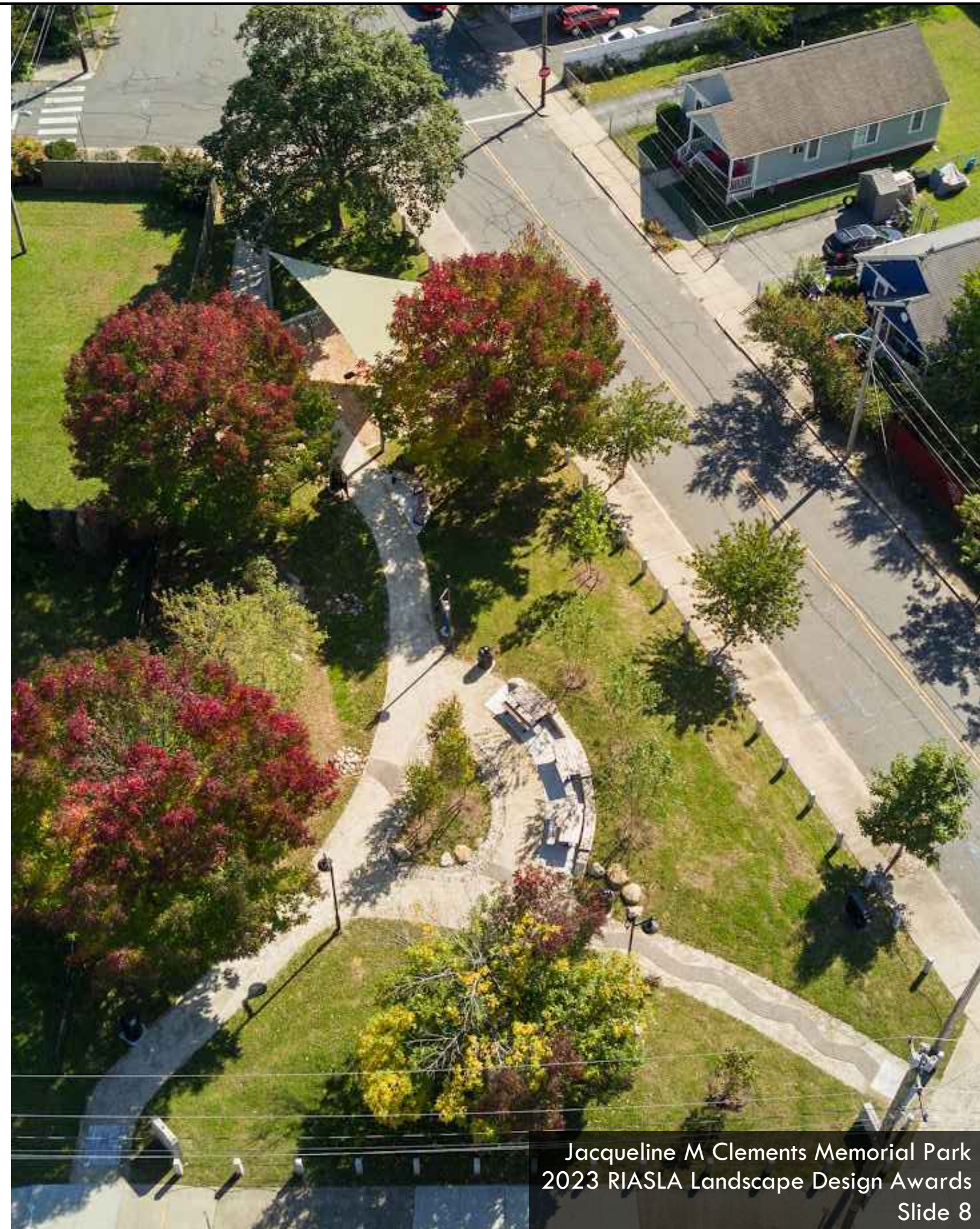
**Radial Seat Wall**

This radial seat/retaining wall was designed to help define the seating area. It holds back the berm created by the fountain pump chamber. A color additive, along with a sandblasted finish were specified so that wall would look like it had already been in the landscape for several years.



**Views from Above**

*Drone photographs of the completed park renovation in October 2023, 3 months after re-opening.*







*'THIS WATER' stone from the old fountain with exposed aggregate 'River' (above), looking back towards Dudley & Friendship intersection (below)*



*Central Plaza with radius seatwall and built-in picnic tables and benches (above and below)*





*'THIS PARK' stone from the old fountain at the Friendship St entrance(above),  
Central Plaza from behind Raingarden (below)*



*Cobblestone gutter around planting island with Amelanchier for Spring & Fall color (above),  
View towards Adult Fitness area with Raingarden and Bluelight phone in foreground (below)*





The Adult Fitness area features equipment suitable for ages 13+ and people of varying fitness levels. It has already proved to be a popular amenity. The shade sail and existing trees provide adequate shade (above & below)



The new entrance on West Clifford St with 'THIS NEIGHBORHOOD' fountain stone (above), View into the park from Dudley St with granite bollard & chain barrier that makes the park much more welcoming than the wrought iron fence (below)



Several Design Details: the exposed aggregate 'River' to represent water since it was not practical to make a new water feature, Cobblestone gutter made from locally-sourced rounded riverstones in mortar to collect water and direct it towards the Raingarden, the radius seatwall featuring a limestone coloring and a sandblasted finish with custom DuMor picnic tables that match the curve of the wall and benches that mount directly to the top of the wall (left to right)





The Park had two openings, a 'soft' opening in July for the neighbors, and a Ribbon Cutting Block Party in September that had a great turnout despite the 90-degree temperature! (all images on this page courtesy of Justincase Media)



The plyometric steps in the Adult Fitness area can double as a seat in a pinch.

