

PARK in a TRUCK

TOOLKIT



A do-it-yourself toolkit for neighborhood parks

The Landscape Architecture Program +
The Lab for Social and Urban Innovation
Thomas Jefferson University
Philadelphia, PA USA





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Have Questions? Contact Us!
Kimberlee.Douglas@jefferson.edu
ParkinaTruck@jefferson.edu

CONTENTS

00	INTRODUCTION
01	ACQUIRE
02	ORGANIZE
03	ASSESS
04	DREAM
05	CREATE
06	SUSTAIN



Park in a Truck

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WORKING VERSION 1.0

PARK IN A TRUCK TOOLKIT - WORKING VERSION 1.0

This toolkit is a working document describing a formalized process for how a few communities bettered themselves by designing, building and maintaining their own parks. It is not perfect, but a work in progress and one of several versions that will be published. Behind the scenes, neighbors are building parks, communities are bettering themselves, and people are reviewing this process. Something is learned with every community meeting, every trip to Home Depot and every park built. All this knowledge gained contributes to future Toolkit editions. Crucial to the next version is getting feedback from professionals, organizations and, most importantly, community members like you! Please share your thoughts, questions, or ideas with us!

Kimberlee.Douglas@jefferson.edu
ParkinaTruck@jefferson.edu
[@ParkinaTruck](https://twitter.com/ParkinaTruck)



MELON STREET PiaT PARK
Build Day
Image: Matthew Tucker

INTRODUCTION 00

This Toolkit is a ‘do-it yourself’ instruction manual for community volunteers committed to bringing more nature into their neighborhoods. It doesn’t matter if the project is revitalizing a large vacant lot or a small patch of land in the front yard, this manual will guide you and your neighbors through the essential steps of visioning, designing, and building a neighborhood park.

The Park in a Truck system has two main components: This Park in a Truck (PiaT) Toolkit and a series of Workbooks. The Toolkit provides the big picture about the benefits of parks, background on the PiaT program, and a soup-to-nuts overview of a park project.

Now get reading and have fun!



‘Park in a truck allows communities to better themselves, and actually serves residents rather than displace them’

-DeWayne Drummond, Mantua Civic Association

Melon Street Park
Visioning workshop

The Park in a Truck Story

Park in a Truck is an initiative of Thomas Jefferson University’s Landscape Architecture Program and Laboratory for Urban and Social Innovation (LUSI).

OUR VISION: Cities where people create, build, and live in sustainable, equitable, healthy, and joyful communities.

OUR MISSION: Reimagining how cities’ social, ecological, and economic networks are designed, built, and maintained.

THE SOLUTION: A community-operated green network, established through low-cost, fast-turnaround renovations of vacant lots that:

- Improve environmental, social, and physical health in under-resourced neighborhoods
- Keep neighborhoods intact
- Helps residents lead revitalization and reinvestment efforts.

Park in a Truck (PiaT) brings nature back into everyday life by linking adjacent available lots to create block-by-block green networks—corridors of high-quality, outdoor spaces. This open space initiative builds upon many great organizations’ ongoing community development work by repurposing underutilized spaces to fill in the gaps. No one should ever be far from a safe, high-quality green space.

Building parks is an expensive and complicated undertaking often conducted without local engagement and support. PiaT takes a different approach:

COMMUNITY LED: Local residents do all phases of the planning, implementation, and ongoing maintenance of their park. This process is not only park creation—but community creation.

CUSTOMIZABLE: Through the toolkit, local residents have all the information necessary for their new park.

ENGAGING: PiaT gives young people an opportunity to direct their energies more positively.

COST-EFFICIENT: To keep costs down, communities select their desired components — chess tables, grilling areas, picnic tables, trees, flower beds, pathways for walking, playhouses, stages, a covered pavilion, logs to climb on, etc. — for simple installation. There are no expensive or specialized in-ground features or construction.

DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR: All of the essentials are loaded on a truck and delivered to the site where community volunteers build their park — barn-raising style.

PAY-IT-FORWARD: Success is contagious, and PiaT establishes a coalition of park-building veterans willing to pay it forward with those just beginning their park journey.

Guiding Principles + Goals

Re-imagining how social, ecological and economic networks in cities are designed, built and maintained

ACTIVATE EQUITY

through participation and access

_Disrupt the status quo of unjust decision making

_Provide positive avenues for youth

_Create places for new and existing social connections

_Beautify areas and build community pride in the neighborhood

_Create a neighborhood ‘hub’ through events, activities, and impromptu meet-ups.

CREATE EDUCATIONAL

opportunities for all

_Build leadership skills of high school students to be ‘park ambassadors’

_Encourage hands on learning through community gardening and events

_Partner with local schools and educational organizations for classes and workshops

_Teach real-world skills of construction for life and job training

RESPECT

and build upon existing community strengths, resources, and networks

_Welcome diverse types of community events and activities

_Provide access to all persons

_Cultivate social inclusion

_Foster inter-generational participation

_Honor the history of the neighborhood and local culture

STIMULATE

the local economy

_Use locally-sourced, long-lasting and non-toxic materials

_Increase property values and stimulate local economies.

_Activate under-utilized lots

FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

_Reduce urban heat island effects through tree plantings and increasing pollinator habitat

_Reduce stormwater/flooding impacts

_Create a network of parks to link islands of high-quality habitat.

_Provide local opportunities to connect with nature

_Use low-maintenance, high wildlife value native plants

_Use organic strategies to eliminate the use of chemical pesticides

_Collect and reuse rainwater

PROMOTE HEALTH

of communities

_Encourage physical activity

_Provide places to grow food and friendships that are shared within the community

_Nurture space for mental relaxation, joy and friendship

_Allow easy and safe access to outdoor environments

Why a Park?

Take a deep breath and imagine yourself in a garden or sitting beneath a leafy green tree rustling gently in the breeze. Birds are chirping, and you smell the sweet scent of spring flowers. Maybe, you hear the sound of children giggling with excitement as they jump from rock to rock or the quiet chatter of seniors gardening nearby. How do you feel?

We all know the joy and calm we feel when experiencing the natural world around us. So it should be no surprise scientific research confirms that simply living near a park makes you healthier and spending time in a park, whether walking, biking, or just relaxing, boosts your psychological and physical well-being. On the next page are four different ways one can experience the benefit of neighborhood parks.

‘Park in a Truck is a process that empowers communities to change their neighborhood one lot at a time.’

-PiaT Founder, Kim Douglas



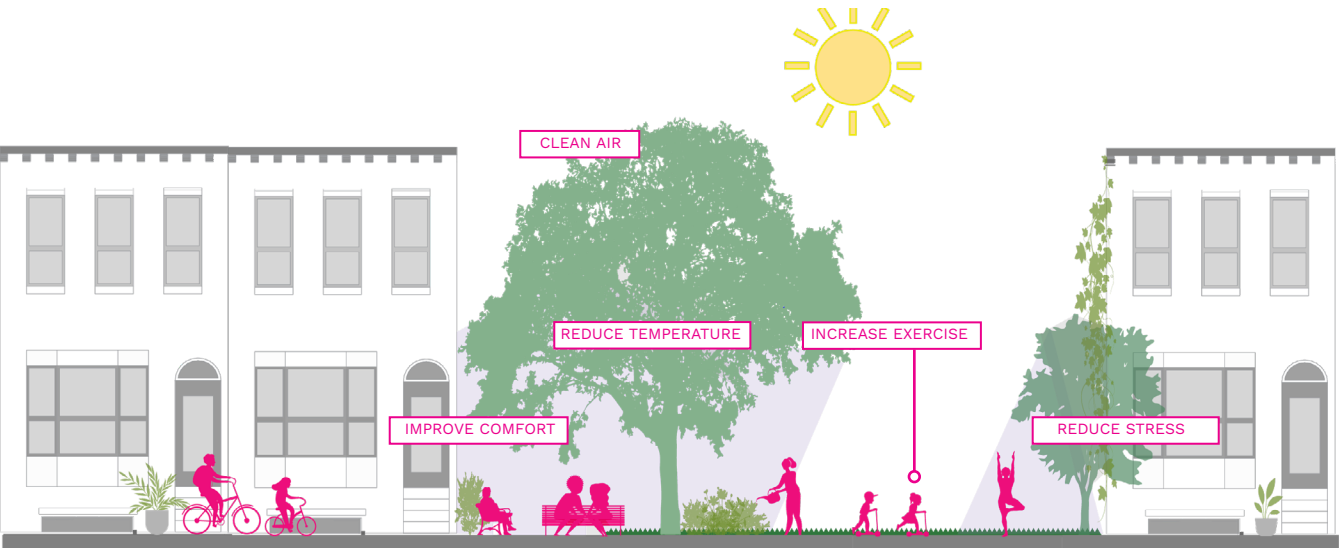
SOCIAL BENEFITS

Parks bring people out of their homes. They are convenient gathering places—to drink coffee or play chess or for organized neighborhood events. The very act of building their park helps bring a community together. To share. To heal. To celebrate.



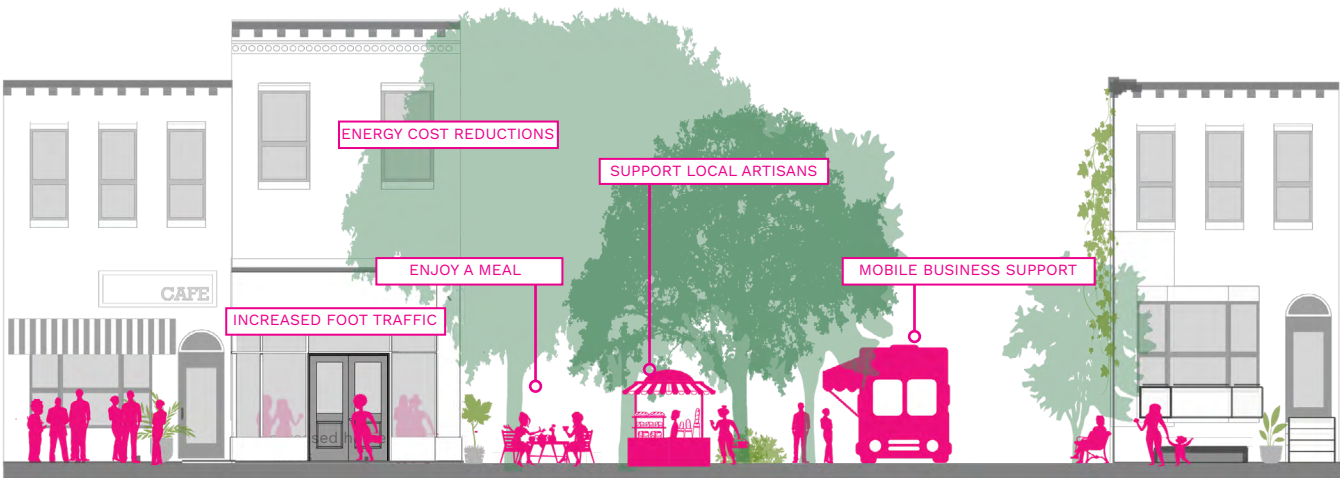
HEALTH BENEFITS

Exposure to green spaces boosts mental health and psychological well-being beyond the benefits of physical activity alone. Parks help reduce blood pressure, increase social well-being, and promote positive health behaviors. The benefits for low-income families are even greater. A park a day helps keep the doctor away.



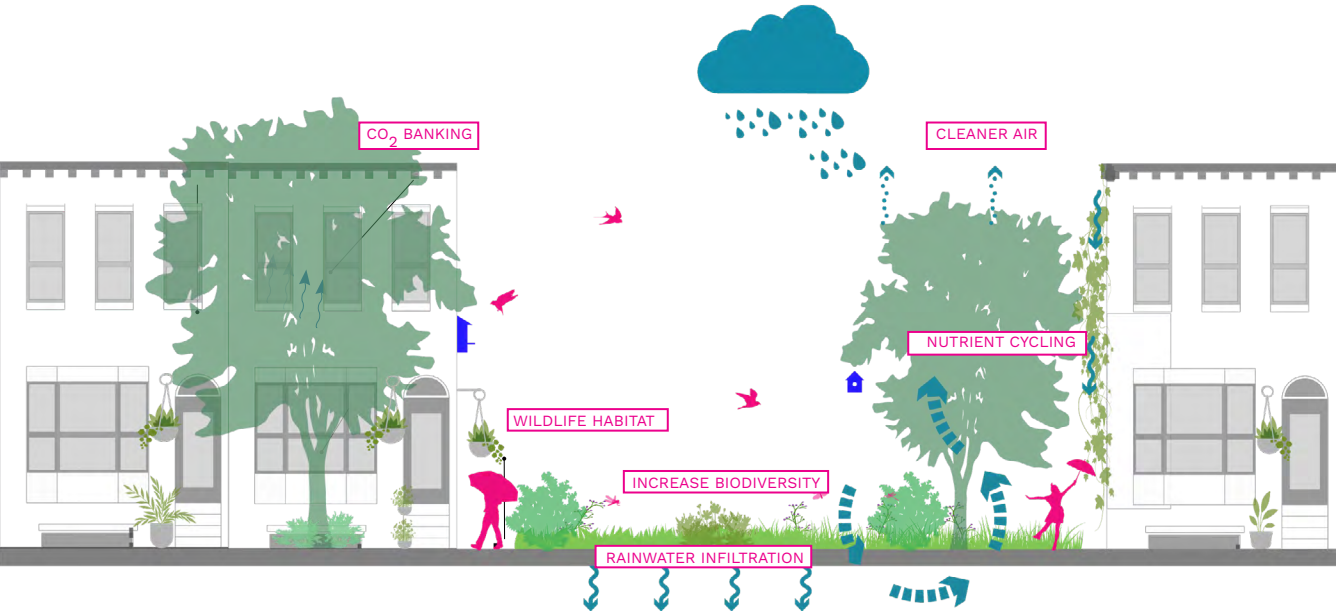
ECONOMIC BENEFITS

A park can help stimulate the local economy. Parks can become pop-up markets where residents sell their crafts. Local businesses thrive when nearby parks attract visitors and customers. Parks also enhance property values, attracting families looking for a less congested neighborhood with more green space and amenities.



ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS

Green spaces of any size provide important environmental benefits. Small parks can provide valuable habitat for local and migrating wildlife and serve as important areas for pollinator species. Green spaces are essential to absorbing water and decreasing urban flooding. All of these things help to mitigate climate change.



A ‘network’ of parks

Clean air, clean water, and the protection of limited green spaces is critical to healthy urban neighborhoods. Unfortunately, many urban areas have a long history of pollution, poor surface water management and neglected open space but lack the resources to remedy these problems. By tapping into the residents’ desire to change their neighborhoods, communities can play an important role in the creation of healthy urban environments that bring nature back into our cities. The Park in a Truck initiative has many goals, but one of the most important is to help communities build sustainable natural urban oases.

When integrated as a city-wide green network, a Park in a Truck-designed park creates wildlife habitat corridors and islands of green that lower high outdoor temperatures caused by the “urban heat island” effect. Community-led green initiatives are an important way to help create biologically diverse and more widely accessible parks that will help with the transition to a more sustainable, low-carbon society.

PiaT enables communities to create, build and live in sustainable, equitable, healthy and joyful communities.

A NETWORK OF PARKS
Illustration of a vision of a residential and commercial neighborhood with a network of PiaT parks on underutilized parcels.



What is a pollinator?

Pollination is important for a strong, healthy ecosystem. One in three bites of food you eat depends on pollinators. Apples, Almonds, Oranges, Avocados, Peaches, Pears, Plums, Cherries, Alfalfa, Blueberries, Vanilla, Cranberries, Tomatoes, Kiwi, Figs, Coffee, Strawberries, Blackberries, Raspberries, Lemons, Limes, Eggplants, Kumquats, Nectarines, Grapes, and Cacao (chocolate).

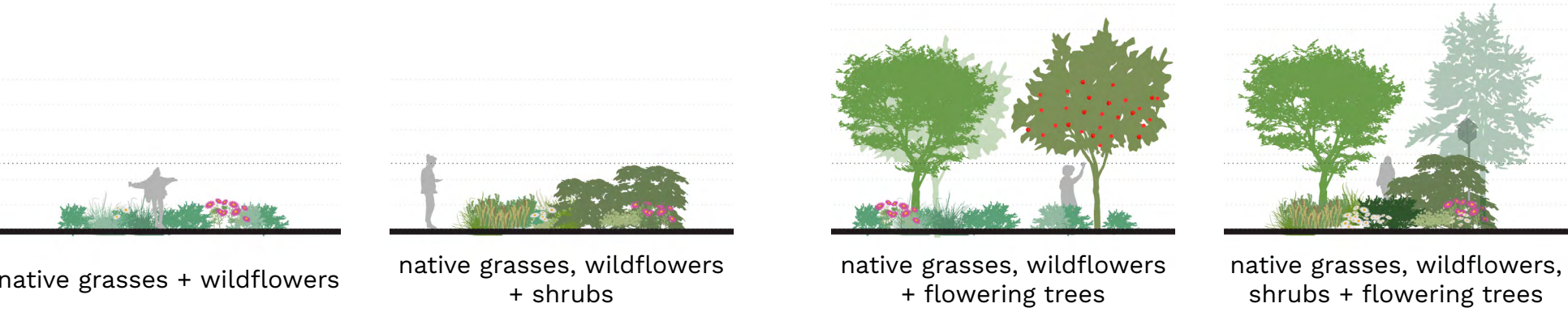
Pollinators are an essential and vital part of the pollination process. They are the animals and insects who help distribute the pollen to where it’s needed. Birds, bees, butterflies, bats and many other creatures are pollinators.

Pollination is an essential part of plant reproduction. Pollen from a flower’s anthers (the male part of the plant) rubs or drops onto a pollinator. The pollinator then takes this pollen to another flower, where the pollen sticks to the stigma (the female part). The fertilized flower later yields fruit and seeds.

Do you know why some bees buzz? Some plants like tomatoes and blueberries release their pollen through two tiny pores in each anther. Bees bite the anthers, hold tight, and buzz to shake the pollen out of the flowers.

Size doesn’t matter

You can add greenery regardless of how much space you have



Don’t get stuck on the idea that parks have to be big. Even the smallest patch of ground is a potential nature space—a place where birds, bees and other pollinators can find a delicious flower to do their thing. A 4x4 plot in the front yard or even a window box can provide many of the same benefits of larger park. We call these ‘Park Patches’.

Park Patches are like home gardens...but more. They are part of a community or city-wide park network that connect people and pollinators to improve the environment and everyone’s quality of life. Pollinators need food, water, cover...and each other. Park patches are the beginning of something bigger.

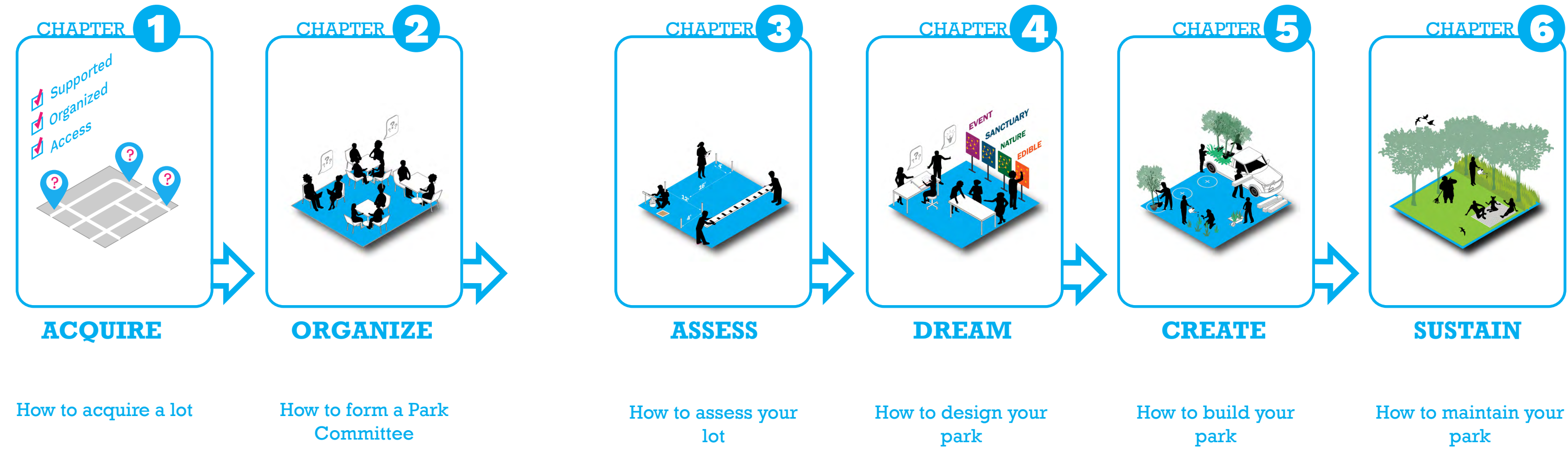
Park Patches are a great way to literally get your hands dirty. Develop your skills and inspire your neighbors—build a Park Patch! Check out the Park Patch Workbook.

PiaT Toolkit Steps

SIX steps to realizing your community park

So how does your community get a new park? One way might be to approach your councilperson and try to get the city to build you one. But that might take years of planning, and parks are expensive. Instead, what if a community could design and build its own park? That is precisely what Park in a Truck Toolkit will allow you to do. Research has shown that community-led park building projects promote community pride, empowerment, and safety.

This book describes the key steps to build your park in six chapters: **Acquire, Organize, Assess, Dream, Create, and Sustain**. Each chapter gives you an overall understanding of the step. Then, when you're ready to get going, go to that chapter's workbook to dive into the details. A link to the workbook is found at the beginning of each chapter. Read through the entire toolkit before going to the workbooks, so you have a greater understanding of the entire park-building process.



**“Vacant lots are great assets
and opportunities to build a
network of high quality parks”**

— Dr. Drew Harris

WEST KENSINGTON Plat PARK SITE

ACQUIRE

01

In this chapter, we assume that you don’t already have access to land for your project. If you have legal permission to use a specific lot(s), we invite you to skip to Chapter 2: Organize

For park-creators without legal access to land, the process is complicated by having to ask others to either sell or lease their lot(s). There is no such thing as a perfect process, no one way to proceed, and regrettably no guarantee of a predictable outcome. The following chapter provides an overview to the best course of action to access your future park site!



Find a Lot

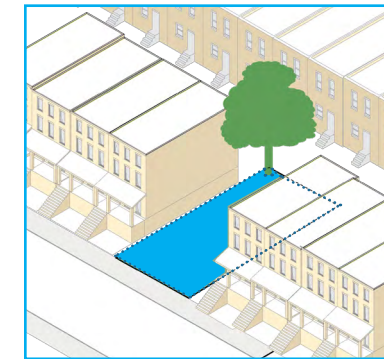
Large urban parks provide many social, ecological, and economic benefits to a city’s residents and visitors. But unless the park is easy to get to, they may only be visited occasionally. Not everyone has access to a car or convenient public transportation, or can walk or bike long distances.

This is why it’s important to find a nearby lot or space to turn into a small neighborhood park. They have many of the benefits of the big park AND their proximity allows for easy access. The more a neighborhood park is visited, the more familiar—and valued—the park becomes. Active park use helps these spaces become an essential hub of ‘social life’ that builds a neighborhood’s sense of community!

Are there unused lots in your neighborhood that are legally available, safe, and suitable for park use? Can you identify potential lots in your neighborhood where you’d like to see your park? On the next page are typical locations for under-utilized spaces that could become your neighborhood park.

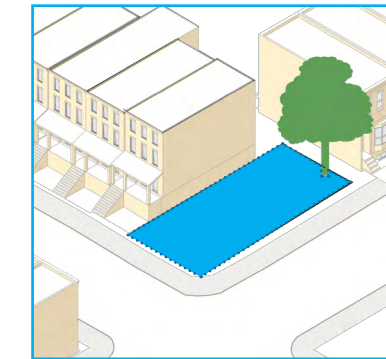
WHICH LOT?

Review the three different types of potential neighborhood park locations. Are there any of these in your neighborhood?



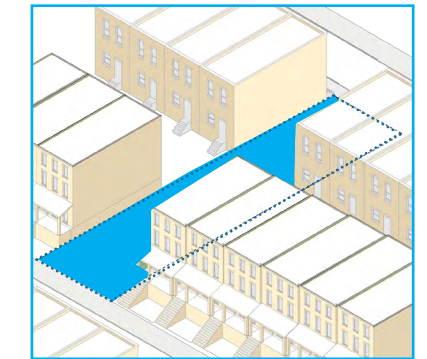
MID-BLOCK LOT
VACANT LOT

Rectangular in shape and found in the middle of a residential block. May have buildings on each side and/or the end. Most available ‘vacant’ lots in Philadelphia are this category. May have limitations for some park uses due to narrow width and/or lack of sunlight.



CORNER LOT
VACANT LOT

Rectangular in shape and found at the end of a residential block. May have buildings on the side and/or end. These lots offer high visibility and often have the most amount of sunlight.



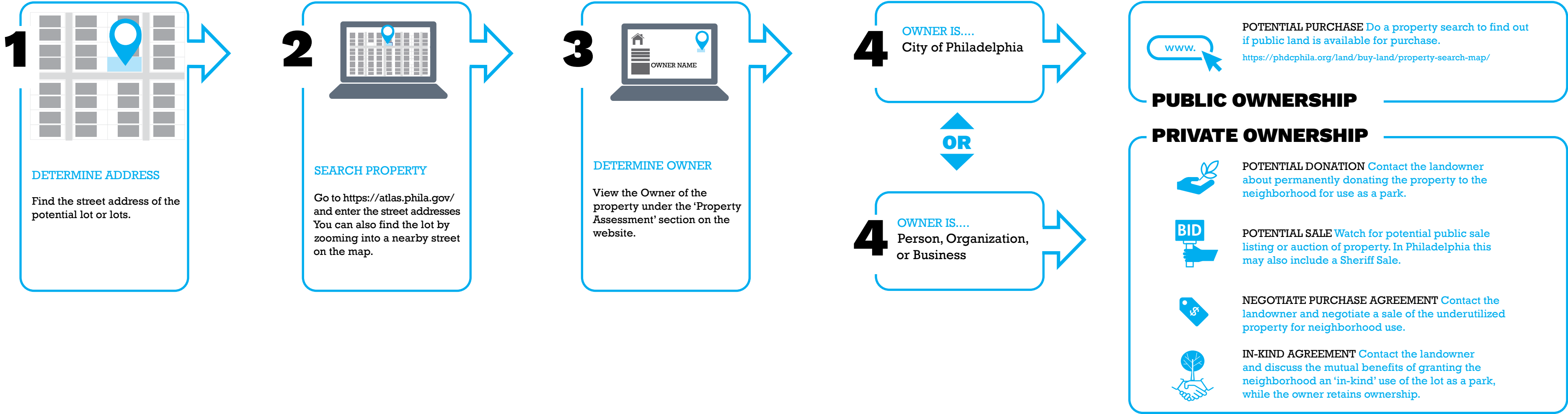
BREEZEWAY/ALLEY
EASEMENT

Identifiable by their long and very narrow shape, these locations often connect ‘across’ a block. Originally set aside for pedestrian connections between streets and/or utility easements.

Determine Lot Ownership

Once you have identified some potential underutilized properties for your new neighborhood park, the next step is to determine who owns the property. The owner could be an individual, business, or non-profit organization. The owner could also be the city. The most reliable way to see who owns a lot is to check the City of Philadelphia records.

This flowchart illustrates how to determine who owns a lot and the possible steps to acquire the necessary legal rights- or ‘entitlements’ to utilize the property as a neighborhood park.



See the [Acquire Workbook](#) for more information about how to secure rights to use the property for a park.

‘PiaT helps us plan events, and creates community – and even when you don’t own your own home, you feel connected to your community because you feel connected to the place.’

-Gwen Morris, Mantua Civic Association

WEST KENSINGTON PiaT MEETING

ORGANIZE

02

Parks don’t just happen. They are a team effort, with great dividends. A community working together on a park project builds more than a park—they’re building stronger community bonds, creating engaging employment opportunities for local youth, and making everyone proud. Park building brings people together around a common cause. And when it’s done, they will say, ‘we did it!’



Create a Park Committee

This step helps you develop organizational capacity to build your community park. First, you should form a ‘park committee’ to lead the park project. Your committee should include a ‘core’ group of neighborhood residents who have the shared interest, time and dedication to take the park from dream to reality. Ideally, committee members should have a variety of skills and experiences. For example, some committee members may have expertise in leading volunteer efforts. Some may be very good with social media and ‘spreading the word.’ Others shine at fundraising, accounting or building partnerships. Together, they can handle the many different organizational tasks in the park-creating project.

There are many effective techniques for creating strong neighborhood organizations and sustaining them. We recommend ‘The City Parks Handbook’ by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society for more information on organizing a community group. The Handbook focuses on the organizational structure and key steps in the community-building process. Another excellent resource is the ‘Park Advocate Handbook’ by the National Recreation and Park Association. Both handbooks provide valuable insights and guidance to get your organization’s efforts started.



RESOURCES:

The City Parks Handbook
tupress.temple.edu/book/0872

Park Advocate Handbook
nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/Americas_Backyard/park-advocate-handbook-100711.pdf



Identify Neighborhood Assets

A key step to your park process is identifying what is unique about your neighborhood and park site. If you stop and look at any neighborhood, you can see an abundance of clues that tell us how each is unique and special in its own way. The point is that all communities have inherent value based on its shared history and culture. If we can identify and utilize these assets and strengths, we can tap into them to help design and build the park.

So how do we identify assets and strengths? Think about your neighborhood, its people, its stories. What places are special and cherished? Where do people like to congregate? Which tales do they tell their children and grandchildren? And then think about the people in your community and their talents. Do they like to cook? Organize events? Garden? Love neighborhood research and history? These can translate into valuable and practical skills to help get the park designed, built, and maintained. You just need to list them to know who you might tap to help with different jobs in the park process! You will find a checklist in the Organize Workbook to help with this process. On the page to the right are some examples of neighborhood assets.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS + INSPIRATION

Ed Bradley Community Oasis
Former vacant lot turned into park, featuring large mural of Ed Bradley, who was raised in the Belmont neighborhood of Philadelphia.



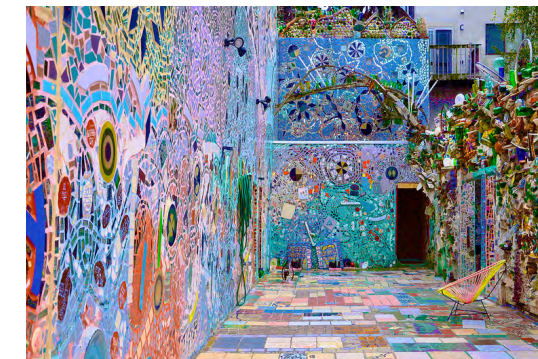
La Casita de Abuela
(The Grandmother's small house).
Former vacant lots turned into park and neighborhood garden space. Features a replica of a petite "house" reminiscent of rural Puerto Rico and the culture of Philadelphia's Norris Square neighborhood.

Clark Park
Features a busy schedule of constantly rotated events such as festivals, flea markets, theatrical performances, concerts and a year-round farmers' market. The park also offers playgrounds and basketball courts.



Philadelphia Peace Park
This is an open, charitable, intergenerational, neighborhood-managed ecology campus championing food, education and community.

Sankofa Community Farm
This is a community farm of 3.5 acres. It's roots are of the African Diaspora. It is a spiritually centered farm that prioritizes spirit, human beings, and relationships to beings beneath and above the soil



Philadelphia's Magic Gardens
A philadelphia artist, Isaiah Zagar, used handmade found items to chronicle his life and influences in this place. His art transformed a forgotten lot into a museum like park, and spread his art and murals to renovate derelict buildings, starting the "South Street Renaissance."



Park in a Truck Demonstration Park

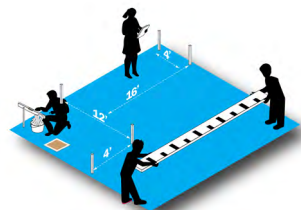
ASSESS

03



What makes your lot special and how can you best use these features? This chapter reviews how to evaluate your lot and ensure your park takes advantage of its site conditions.

A lot doesn't stand alone, it's part of your community. So, assessment needs to include your neighborhood. Is there a unique history or culture that should be reflected in the design. A park that pays homage to a community's sense of itself will feel more like an old neighbor rather than a newcomer.



Evaluate the Park Site

In this step, you will document the physical characteristics of the park site. Is the site sunny or shady? Flat or sloped with existing trees? Or is it across the street from a church? All of these characteristics will influence what you can do on the site. For example, suppose you want to grow tomatoes—your site will need to be sunny throughout the day.

Visit your park site and carefully document what might affect your park’s design. By evaluating the site characteristics before designing the park’s features, you will make sure the park design is adapted to the site’s unique conditions. You will document these assets in the Assess Workbook. An example of doing this is on the next page.

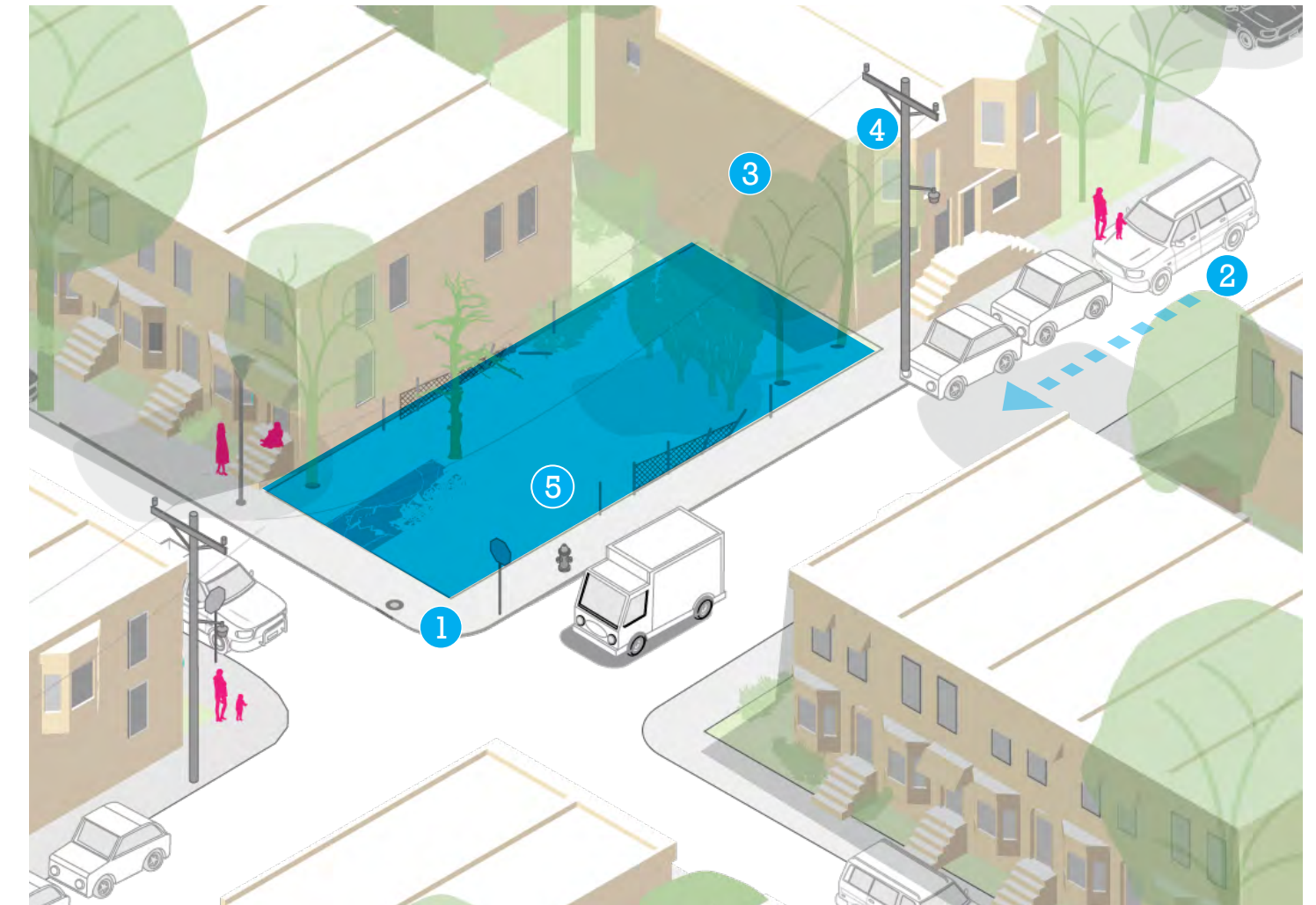
Document any cultural or historical features of the space and adjacent blocks. Did an interesting business once occupy the lot? Were there any historical events that occurred nearby? What did the space look like before there were buildings?

This is a great way to engage long-time residents—keepers of the neighborhood’s oral history and students who have the research skills to dive into city archives.

TIP
Make sure to download the Assess Workbook so you and your park-making friends can each do their own evaluation and then compare the results!

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The diagram below shows an example project site (in blue). There are several important characteristics that make this lot unique, including: 1) location on a busy corner, 2) on a bus route, 3) a building with large blank wall on the end, 4) utility lines along the street edge, 5) and a sunny area along the sidewalk





**The next PiaT
park!**

MANTUA PiaT PARK GROUP
Design Charette

DREAM

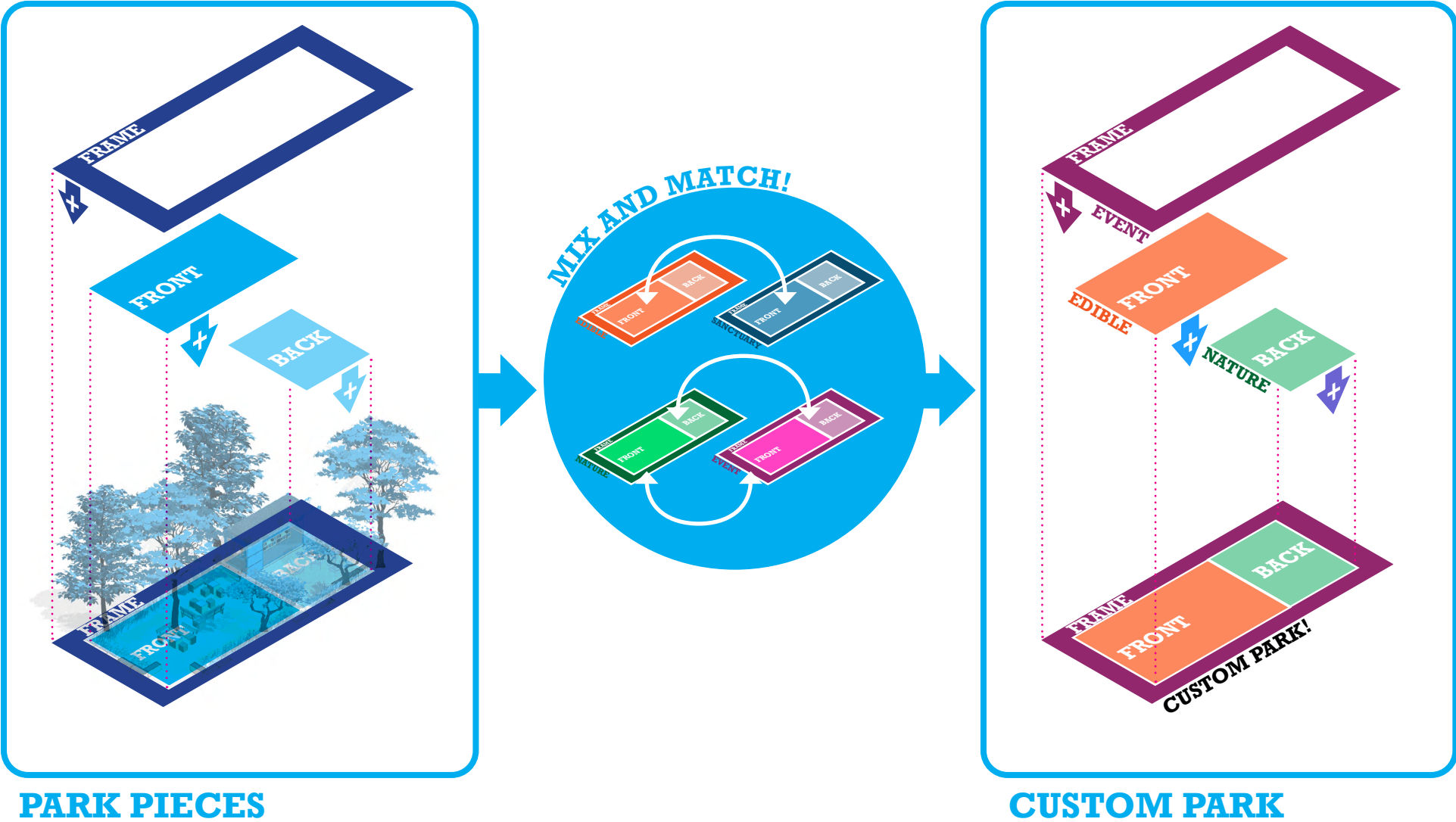
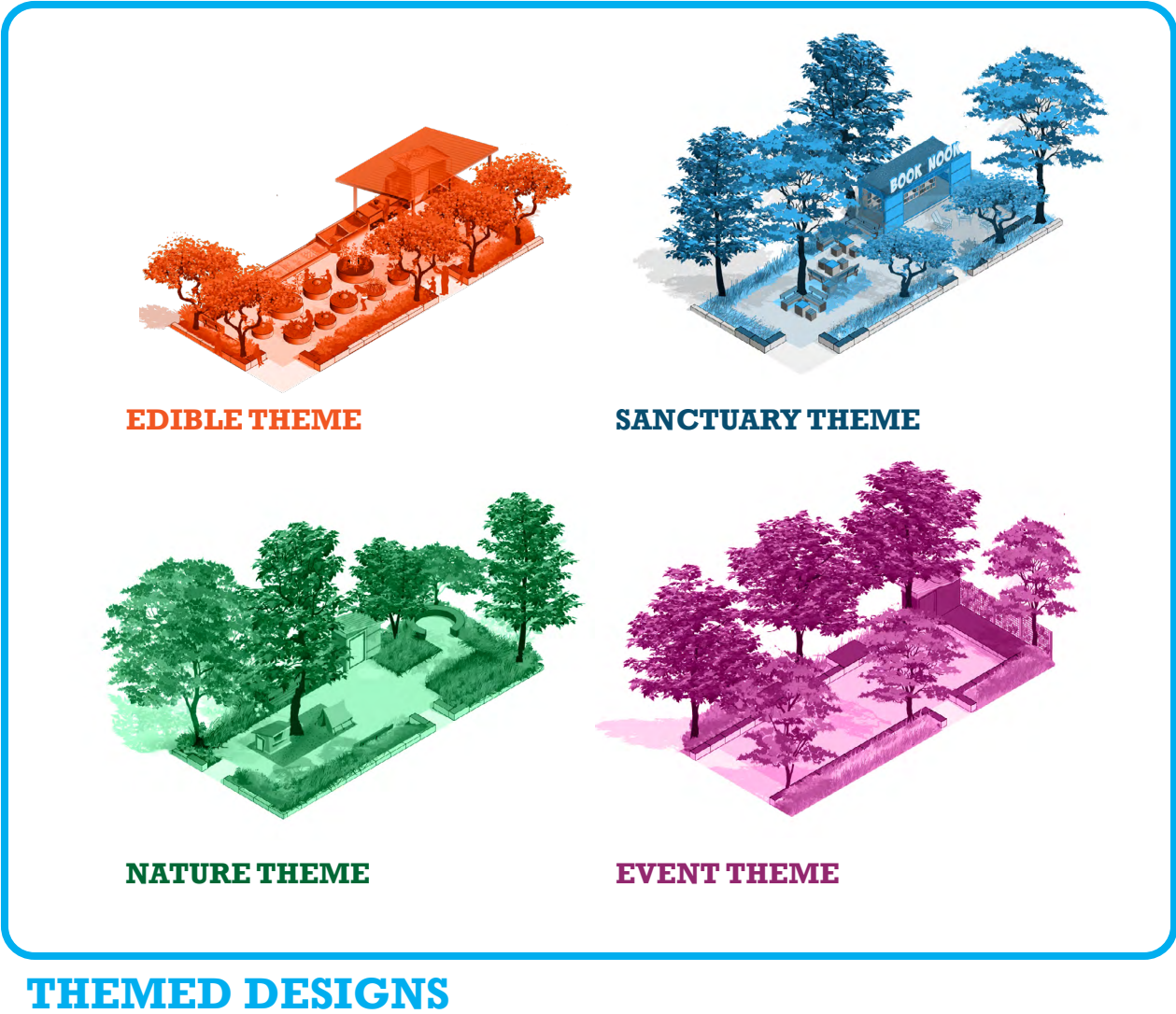
04

Now, the real fun begins—creating a vision for your park! This chapter will help translate your vision into your park design.



You get to decide!

This step in the park-building process starts with choosing one of four different ‘THEMED DESIGNS’. However, this is just the beginning. Each themed design includes a set of ‘MIX AND MATCH’ ‘PARK PIECES’ that allow you to create a ‘CUSTOM PARK’ best suited to your needs. This entire process is explained on the following few pages. When you are ready to design your park, download the Dream Workbook.



Themed Designs

As we explained earlier, the four different themes will help you design the best park for your community. They include:

Edible | **Sanctuary** | **Nature** | **Event**

Each theme is a different way to use your park. For example, some park themes are well suited for neighborhood gatherings while others are better for solitude. The interchangeable elements like benches, tables, or shelters included in each theme help customize the park's design (note how each theme and its related pieces are the same color). Consider which park theme(s) are best suited for your neighborhood park's vision.

In the Dream Workbook, you will mix and match the themes to get the perfect park for your neighborhood.

Park in a Truck has also recently teamed up with Playful Learning Landscapes, an initiative that combines the science of how children learn best with the design of everyday spaces. This collaboration integrates the joy of play with meaningful, interactive opportunities to support child development—transforming sidewalks, parks and community spaces into places where learning naturally unfolds. Grounded in developmental science, Playful Learning experiences are active, engaging, socially interactive and joyful.

Check out the appendix for more on this exciting addition!



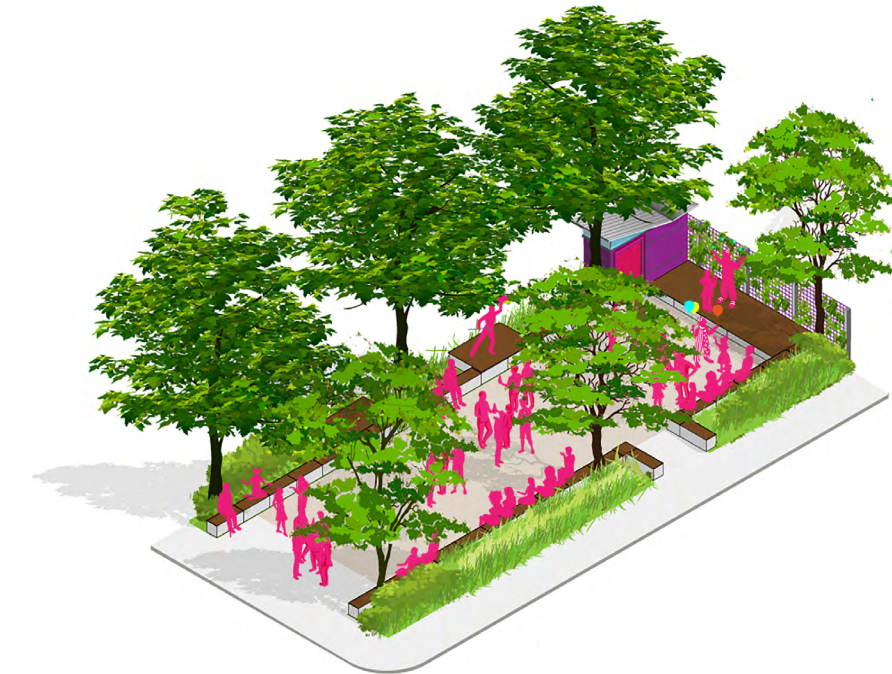
EDIBLE THEME



SANCTUARY THEME



NATURE THEME



EVENT THEME

EDIBLE THEME

This is a community space for sharing food and connecting with neighbors and even pollinators—insects and animals that pollinate flowering plants. Distinct features of this theme include shared fruit and vegetable gardens, preparing neighborhood meals, recipe swaps and even cooking classes!

REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ NO TREES or ONE OR TWO TREES
- ✓ FULL SUN ALL DAY or MOSTLY SUN
- ✓ WELL SUITED FOR CORNER LOT
- ✓ FREQUENT VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION



PARK FOR POLLINATORS + PEOPLE



FOOD
A place to be able to grow your own food



FRUIT TREES
Many pollinators are near-sighted, creating drifts of plantings help them find their food.



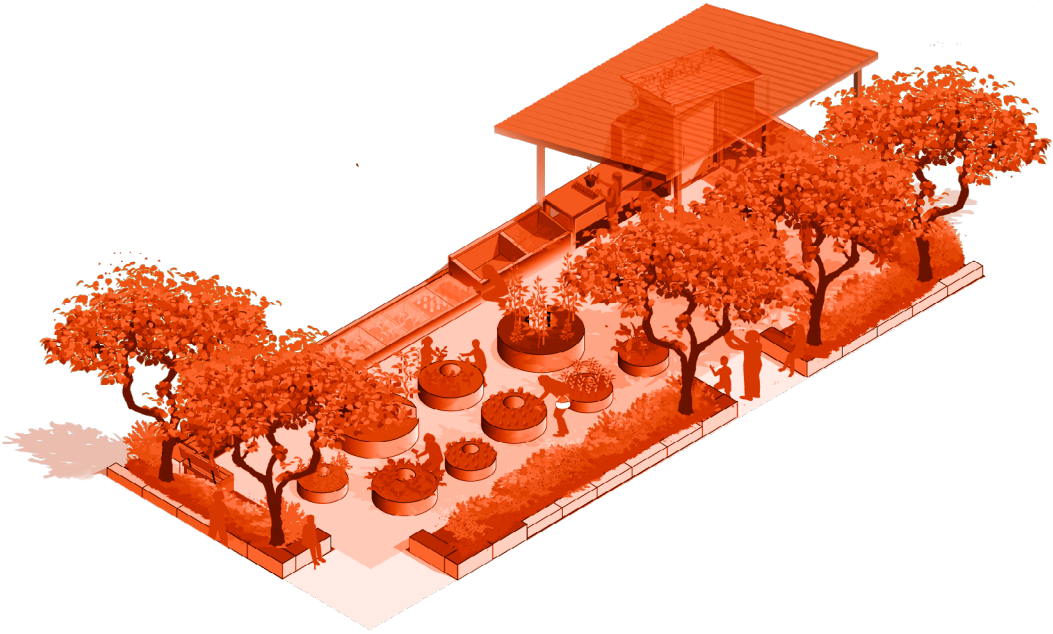
VISIBILITY
Trees attract pollinators by providing nutrient rich pollen and nectar



NO SPRAY
Avoid using pesticides to create a healthy environment for pollination



BIRDHOUSE
give pollinators a place to rest and raise their young



COMPOST
A natural fertilizer that ensures proper soil quality



COOK
A space for community members to cook together and share recipes.



SHELTER
Garden beds give bugs a place to live while they protect the garden from harmful insects



VARIETY
native plants give pollinators the food they need to thrive

EVENT THEME

Music in the park, a spring art fair, a monthly flea market, a Halloween haunted house. This theme is made for having all kinds of neighborhood events throughout the year. Distinct features include an open ‘floor plan’ for flexible set up for different events, a small platform for performances, and gallery spaces to display artwork or school projects.

REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ ONE/TWO TREES or SEVERAL TREES
- ✓ ANY AMOUNT OF SUN
- ✓ WELL SUITED FOR CORNER LOT
- ✓ MODERATE VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION



PARK FOR POLLINATORS + PEOPLE



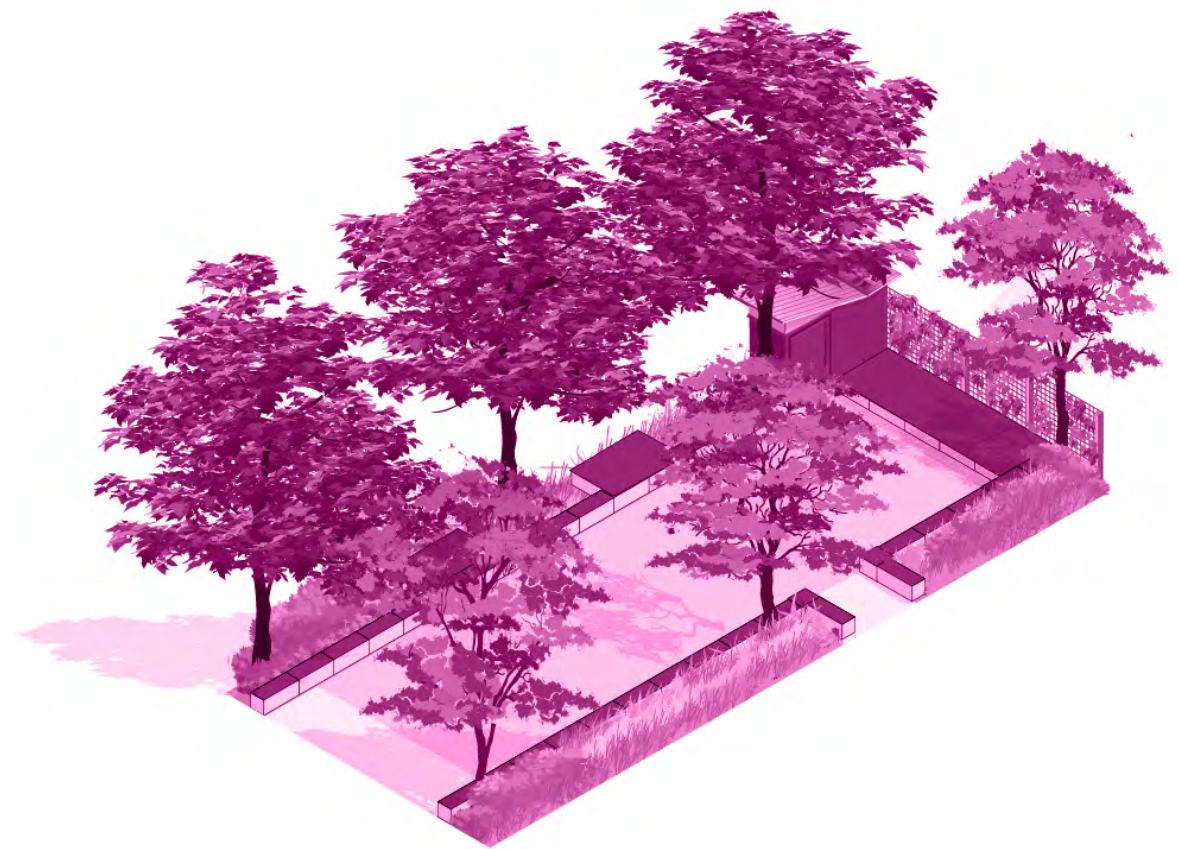
NATIVES
native plants give pollinators the food they need to thrive



HABITAT
Dense planting provides shelter, or a home, for many pollinators



BORDER
Using trees to border the park invites pollinators into the space



DISPLAY
A gallery wall for local art or community sharing



PERFORM
multi-use stage



GATHER
large, flexible event space for multiple activities



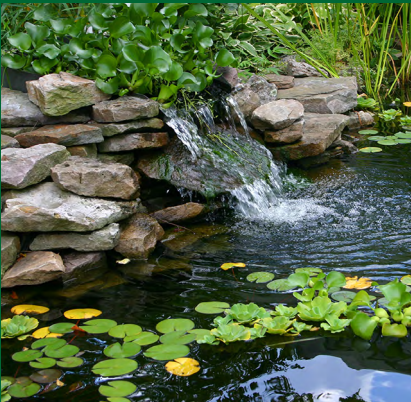
NO SPRAY
No pesticides allows for natural pollination to take place

NATURE THEME

A calming refuge of solitude in the city and a great place for smaller gatherings and outdoor workshops/classrooms. With the community circle area you can toast marshmallows or host a study group. Nature play includes natural park elements like stumps, logs, rocks or an oversized play ‘nest.’

REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ WELL SUITED FOR LOTS WITH TREES
- ✓ ANY AMOUNT OF SUN
- ✓ MIDBLOCK or CORNER LOT
- ✓ MINIMAL REQUIRED VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION



PARK FOR POLLINATORS + PEOPLE



HABITAT
Dense planting provides the perfect home for many pollinators



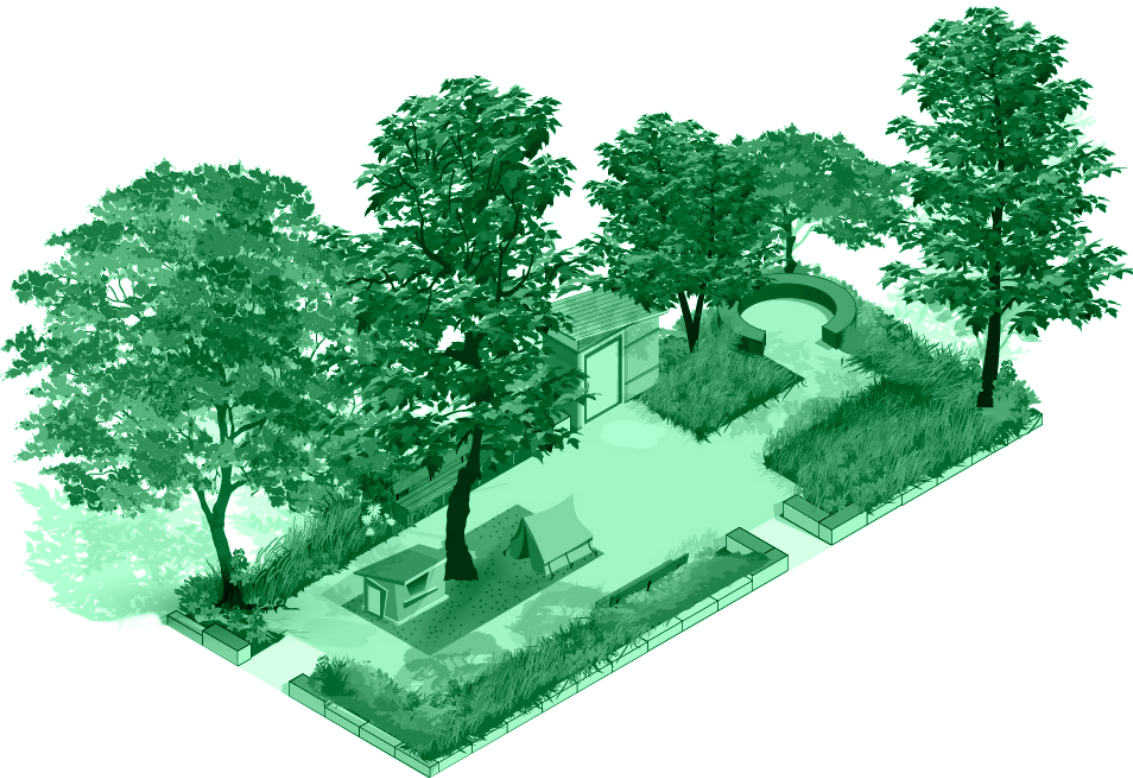
BORDER
Using trees to border the park invites pollinators into the space



NATIVES
A native palette gives the park the strongest chance to attract pollinators



MASSES
Planting masses allows pollinators quickly reach a large variety of plants



NO SPRAY
Avoid using pesticides to create a healthy environment for pollination



GATHER
Circular area for community to gather



PLAY
Nature-based play for kids



SEATING
Natural log seats



LEARN
Workshop space to learn from others

SANCTUARY THEME

This is the most versatile of the park themes as it can accommodate a wide range of park uses. This theme emphasizes small spaces to relax and read a book, take a class, play board games or talk with a neighbor. Distinct features include cozy seating, the calming sound of water, small event area for classes or individual meetings.

REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ ANY AMOUNT OF TREES
- ✓ ANY AMOUNT OF SUN
- ✓ MID-BLOCK or CORNER LOT
- ✓ MINIMAL VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION



PARK FOR POLLINATORS + PEOPLE



VARIETY

Sticking to a native palette gives the park the strongest chance to attract pollinators



HABITAT

Dense planting provides the perfect home for many pollinators



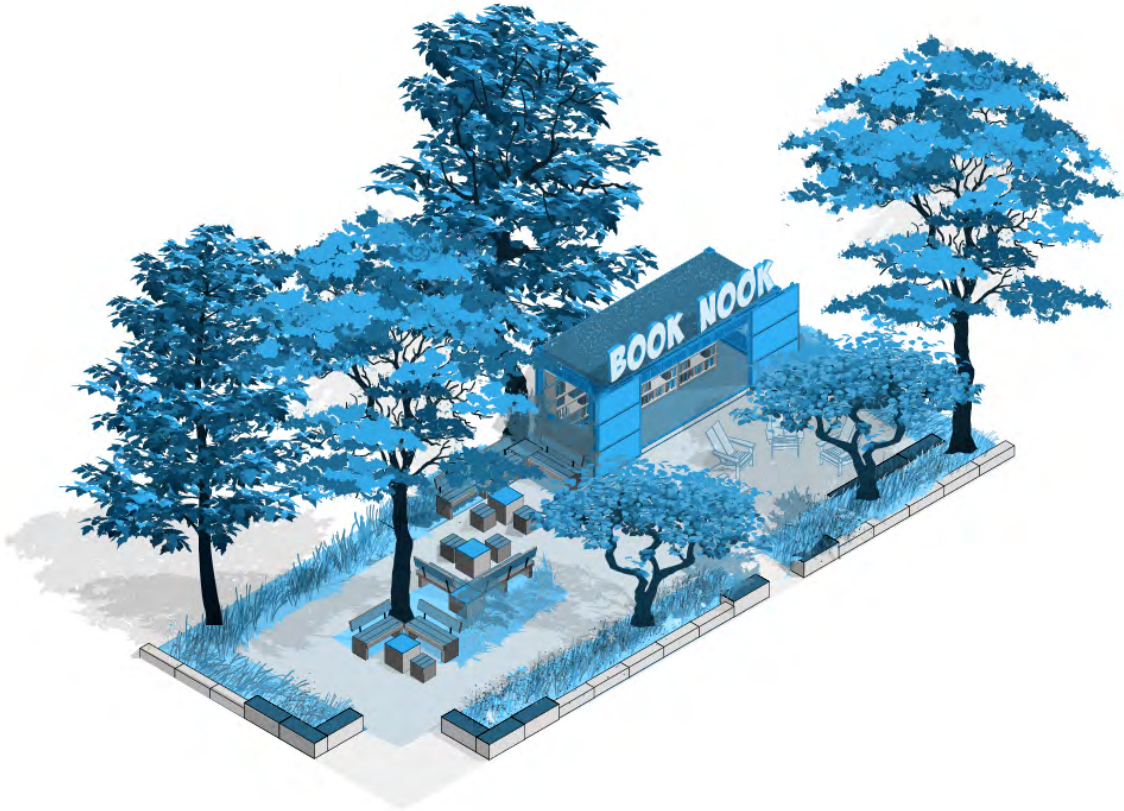
WATER

Water calms the mind and attracts pollinators to the site



MASSES

Planting masses allows pollinators quickly reach a large variety of plants



READ

Community members can read in peace



SEATING

Seating for small groups to converse



RELAX

Relaxing lounge style chairs



NO SPRAY

Avoid using pesticides to create a healthy environment for pollination

Park Pieces

Your park design template includes ‘park pieces.’ The park pieces correspond to each park theme (Edible, Event, Nature, Sanctuary)

PARK PIECES

The ‘park pieces’ include a front, back and frame. Each of these pieces are interchangeable and go together like a puzzle so you can mix and match the different themes.

FRAME

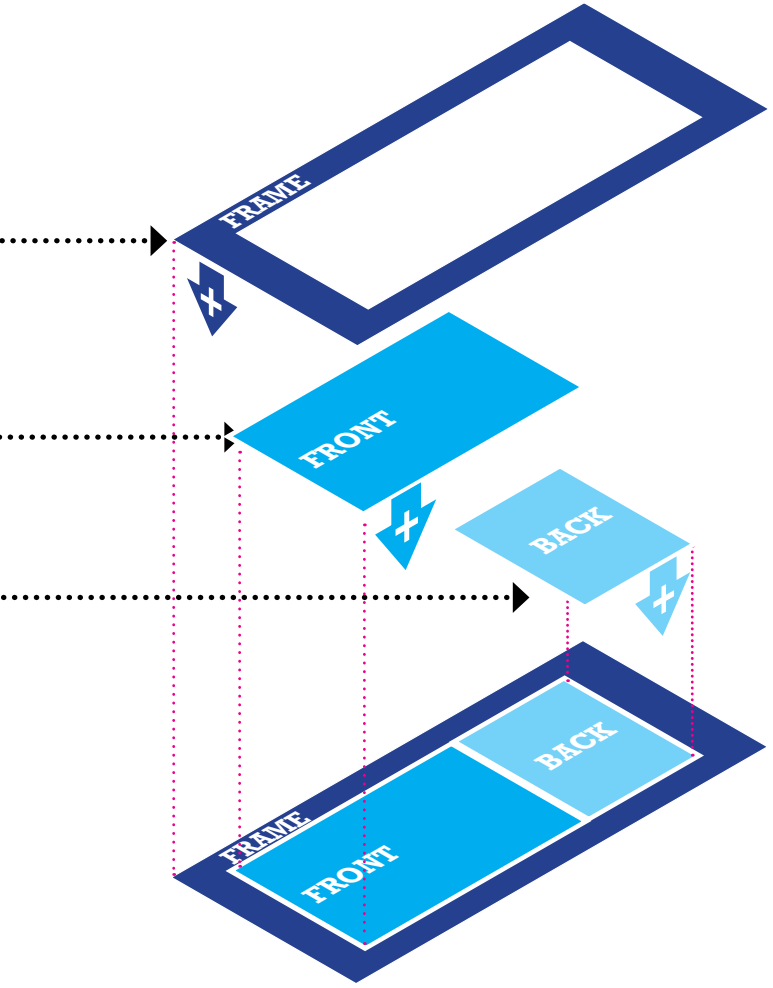
Like the frame around a family photo, the park ‘frame’ creates the border around the park’s interior. This helps distinguish the park from adjacent properties and creates a welcoming location for park entrances, trees, and other features.

FRONT

The interior of the park is divided into two parts, the ‘Front’ and the ‘Back.’ The front area is the location closest to the park entrance, and holds the major fixed elements.

BACK

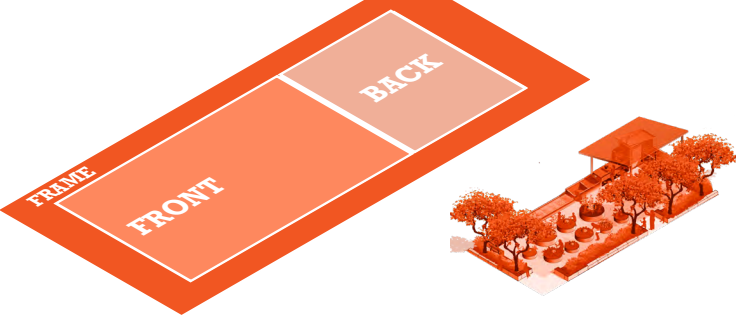
The other half of the park interior is the ‘Back.’ Compared to the ‘Front’ this area typically is open to provide more flexibility of park uses.



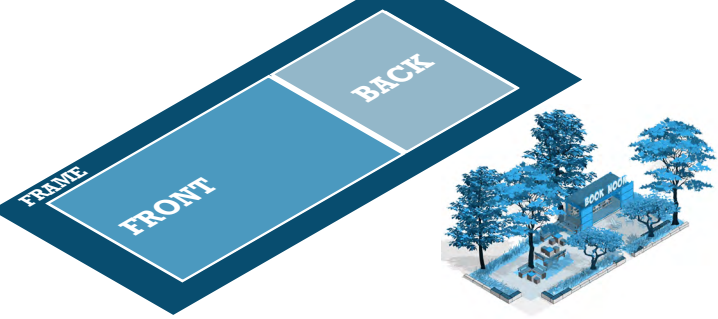
FOUR THEMES ARE COLOR CODED

Each theme has a color to remind you which theme is which. The next step is playing with the pieces to mix and match them (see the following page). Keep in mind which themes work best for your lot!

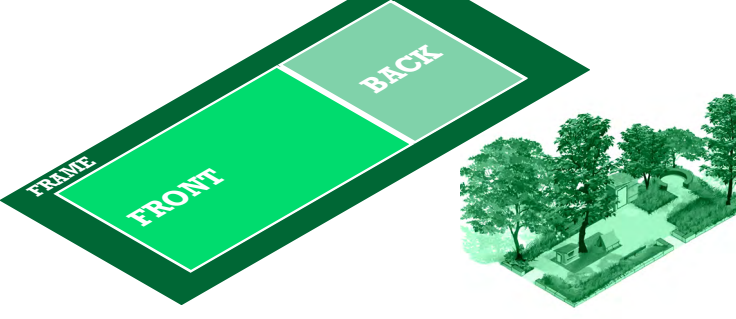
EDIBLE THEME



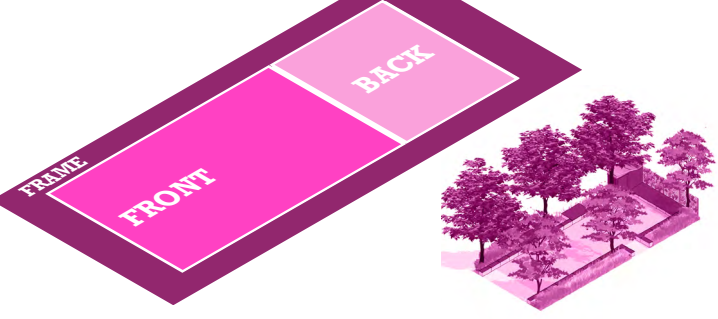
SANCTUARY THEME



NATURE THEME

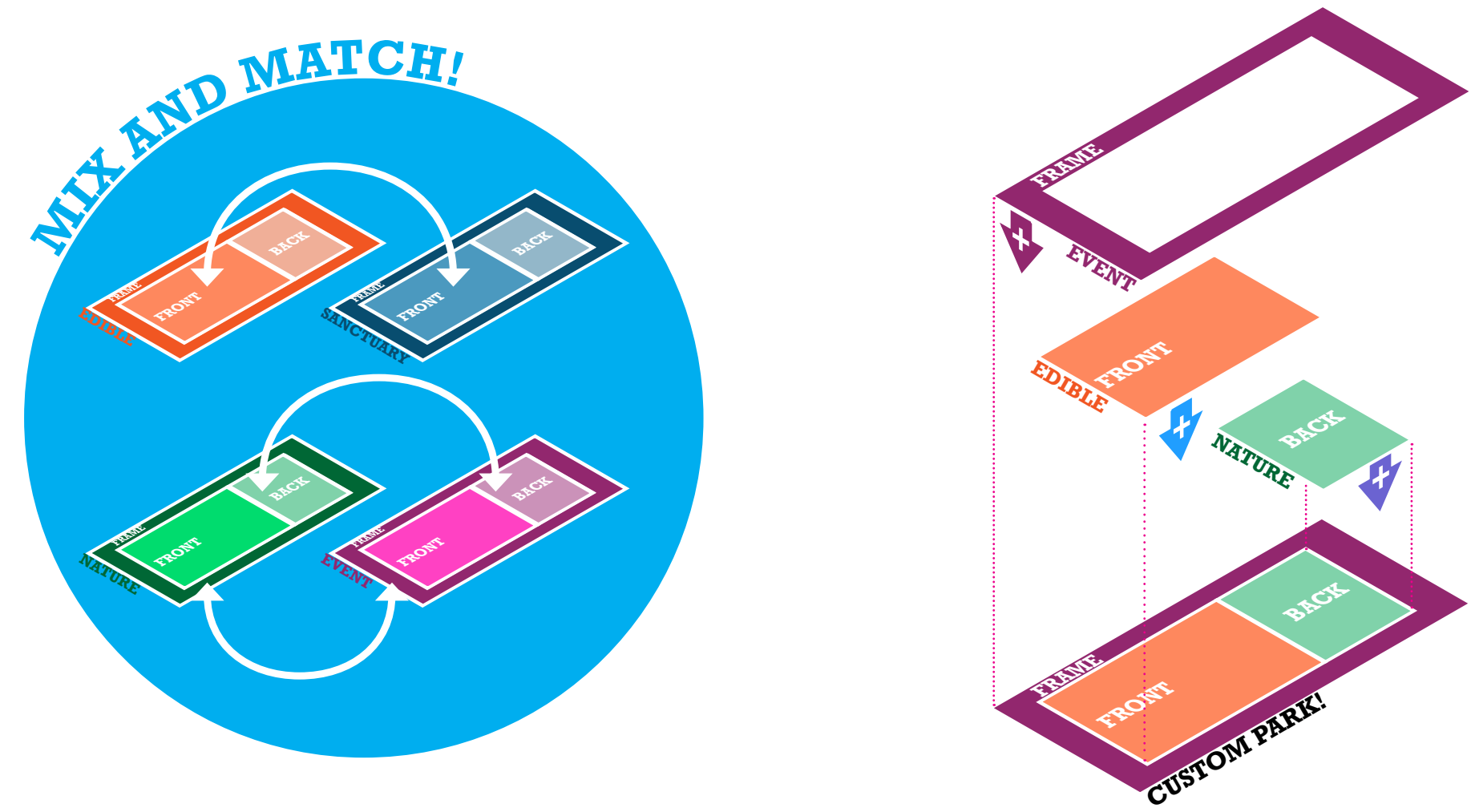


EVENT THEME



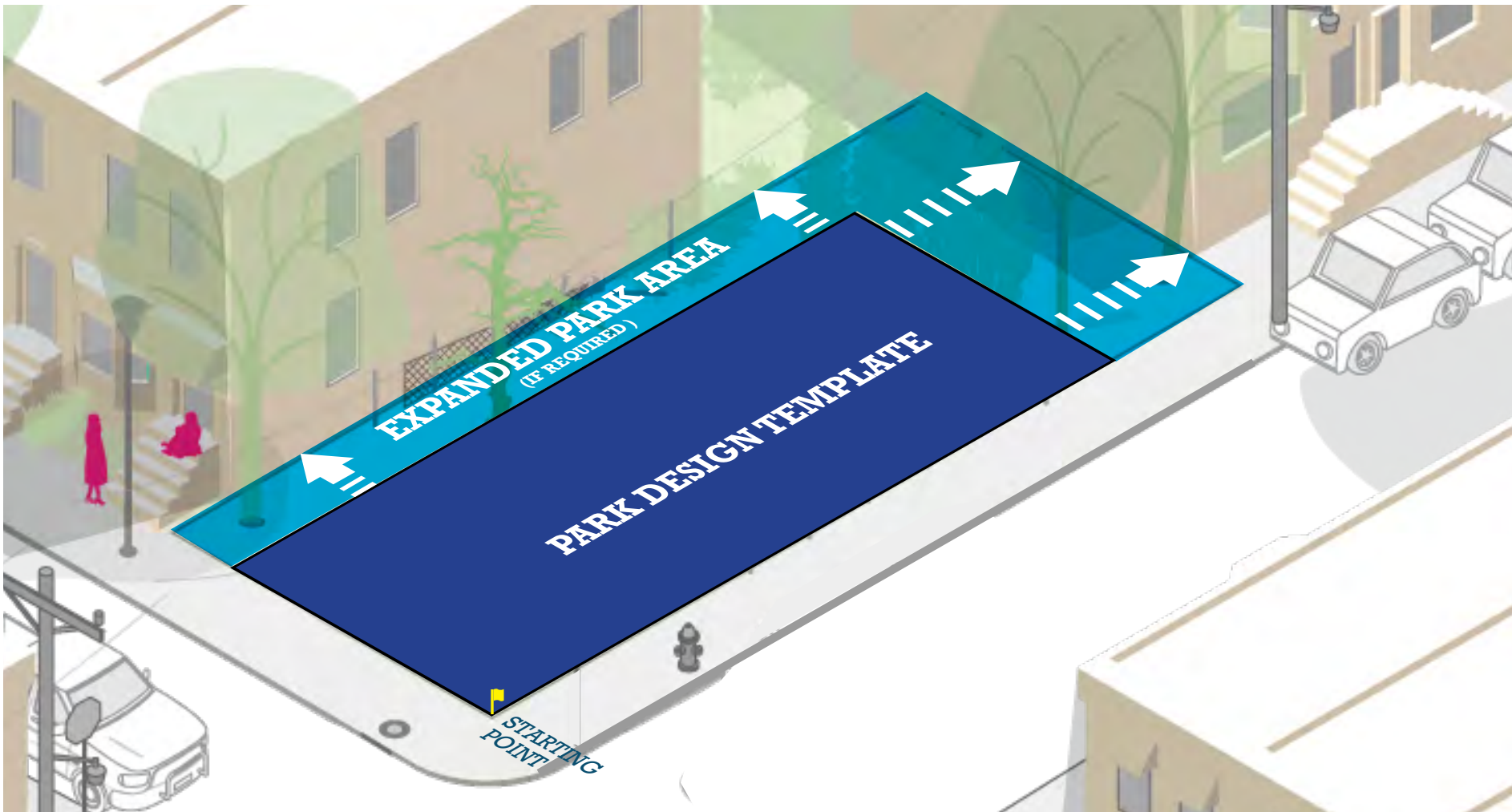
Mix-and-Match!

Perhaps you want cold frames in your park, but you also want an outdoor classroom and an open area for art shows. You would then select the park pieces that correspond to those uses. You will test various options to see the different possibilities in the Dream Workbook where you can download and play with the different park pieces.



ADJUST PARK DESIGN TO LOT

The park pieces you have downloaded thus far may not fit your lot size exactly. So the final step is to take your park pieces and 'right-size' the design to fit the dimensions of YOUR LOT! The diagram on this page gives you an idea of how to expand your lot as needed. Further instructions are in the Dream Workbook.



‘I have learned real world, on the job skills from building our park in a truck park’

-Community Member

West Kensington PiaT Park
Build Day

CREATE

05

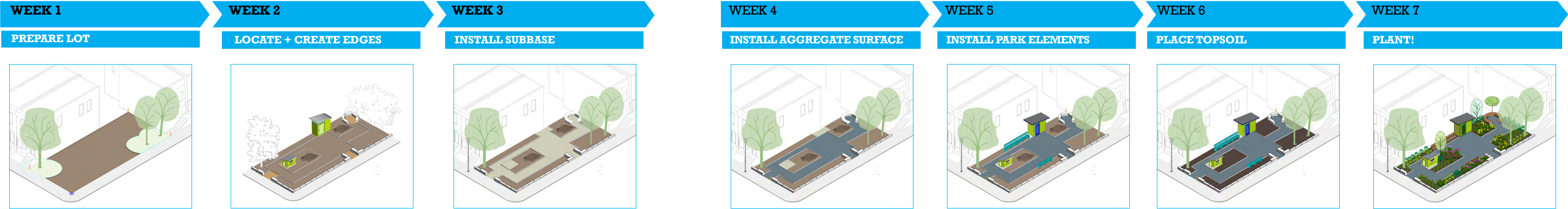
It is now time to move from the concept to building the real thing! This chapter walks you through the essential steps of building the park. In the Create Workbook, you will learn the steps to build the park and how to schedule park construction. It will also help you define tasks for ordering, delivery and assembly of different park elements.



Initial Park Construction

Building a park is a great way to connect neighbors, friends and others. The process requires dedicated volunteers who can give their time and energy, so the neighborhood can enjoy a new park space. Ideally, these volunteers will have a wide variety of skills and experience, including carpentry, landscaping, and include those skilled at organizing, encouraging, leading and other important team-building skills.

Like following a recipe, park building requires a step-wise sequence of steps. Below is an overview of the primary sequence of park-building steps. The steps below are organized into weeks as most Park in a Truck parks can be built in about 6-8 weekends!





West Kensington PiaT Park
Build Day

SUSTAIN

06

Park in a Truck parks strive to be an urban oasis filled with plants and trees that nourish all who visit them. These plants need your help to thrive. This includes the birds, bees, butterflies, bats and other pollinators who are essential to the plants' survival. The right plants support the pollinators and the pollinators, in turn, support the plants. Everyone benefits when our efforts ensure a thriving ecosystem.

While we have provided a list of urban tolerant and well-behaved plants, they will require continued maintenance. This chapter will give you an overview of how to care for your park.



PARK STEWARDSHIP ANNUAL WORKPLAN

The guidelines provided are a framework to assist in the ongoing seasonal maintenance of your park. These are the tasks you need to complete, by month, season and year.

WINTER			SPRING			SUMMER			FALL			
DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	
📖 READ SEED CATALOGS				✂️ CUT BACK PERENNIALS					💡 ORDER BULBS			
		🏠 START SEEDS INSIDE								🌱 PLANTING BULBS		
		🏠 BUYING PLANTS & SEEDS										
✂️ PRUNE SHRUBS & DEAD BRANCHES				🌳 PLANT ANNUALS *IF WARM SPRING		🌳 PLANT ANNUALS						
		🦋 BIRD WATCHING EVENT		🌍 EARTH DAY CELEBRATION		🦄 SUMMER NATURECAMP		✂️ RIBBON CUTTING				
👥 PARK INFORMATION MEETING				👥 PARK INFORMATION MEETING				👥 PARK INFORMATION MEETING		👥 PARK INFORMATION MEETING		
WATERING			✓									
TRASH CLEAN-UP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
WEEDING												
With the Park Ambassador on a monthly basis.												
INSPECT	LOOK FOR: Insect or disease infestation Evidence of weeds Condition of mulch Evidence of dead or dying plants Evidence of trash and debris Need for watering			KEEP TRACK OF: Success or failure of plantings Soil test and amendments incorporated Amount of rainfall-use a rainwater guide to keep track								

PARK STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

Park maintenance is essential for your park’s success. This is a long list of items you should do to ensure your community’s investment is well cared for. However, the most important things you need to do is weed and water your park!

SEEDS

1. Read seed catalogs to decide what you would like to grow and how to care for it.
2. Order seeds for veggies and annuals.
3. Start your seeds indoors for an edible garden.

WEEDING

Must be done weekly. Many weeds must be dug out with a trowel and is easier if the soil is moist. For common weeds see https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs142p2_017662. Also PlantSnap is a helpful app to identify plants and weeds.

PEST CONTROL

The Park has been designed to attract pollinators who will assist in pest control. For more information on disease and insects, see <https://extension.psu.edu/trees-lawns-and-land-scaping/home-gardening/pests-and-diseases>

WATERING

1. Pay careful attention to watering plants for the first two years. Use a rainwater guide to track rainfall. If you need to water, thoroughly soak planting area(s) by either turning on water for 3 hours using soaker hose or water by hand. Apply water slowly to avoid run off and long enough to penetrate planting bed soil to a depth of 6-8 inches.
2. If the top 2 inches of soil are dry, it is time to water
3. If plants reach the visible wilt point it’s time to water. If the soil is moist, there may be another issue.

MULCHING

1. Mulch all planting beds with leaf mold or mature, triple shredded hardwood mulch.
2. Maintain mulch throughout planting beds. Maintain mulch at a depth of 2 to 3 inches, being careful not to over-mulch.
3. Be especially careful when mulching around trees. The wrong way to apply mulch is to push it up onto the sides of the trunk like a mountain slope. The correct way is to make it look like a flat donut, where there is an inch or more of open space between the mulch and the tree trunk. If you do not leave a space between the mulch and the trunk the decomposing mulch can rot the bark and expose the tree to insect damage, disease and possible tree death.

PRUNING

1. Use hand-pruning tools for all shrub pruning. Don’t use power trimmers.
2. Prune shrubs only as necessary to guide future structural shape or to remove dead or diseased material.
3. Prune and trim tree branches to maintain a minimum head clearance of 7 feet along walks and 13 feet over roads and driveways.

BULBS

1. Order bulbs, store in cool & dry space.
2. Plant bulbs (between Halloween & Thanksgiving).
3. Fertilize 4-6 weeks before anticipated bloom.
4. Dead head flowers after bloom.
5. Wait for foliage to turn yellow; then remove.

PERENNIALS

1. Buy desired perennials.
2. Plant in early spring.
3. Cut back existing perennials or grasses.
4. Water as needed.
5. Be patient with late blooms. Do not disturb.
6. Manage pests, remove debris and thin out plants.

ANNUALS

1. Buy desired annual flowers.
2. If the spring is warm, plant in April. If cool, plant in June.
3. Keep well watered.
4. Monitor pests. If needed, remove infested foliage.

SHRUBS & TREES

1. Prune out dead or broken branches.
2. Prune flowering shrubs and trees after bloom.
3. Keep well-watered in the summer heat.
4. Monitor pests. If needed, remove infested foliage.
5. Collect and remove any debris, limbs & leaves from storms.
6. Water deeply before ground freezes.

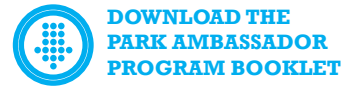
Park Stewardship

We highly recommend participating in the Park Ambassador program, which hires local youths to assist in maintaining and programming the park.

Park Ambassadors:

- Create a safe, clean and accessible park for everyone.
- Plan fun activities for community residents of all ages.
- Keep the park clean and neat.
- Make sure the park is a welcoming green oasis.

We have developed a Park Ambassador Handbook, a step-by-step guide to help Park Ambassador(s) maintain and program the new park. The Handbook lists everyday park tasks and is also a place to record what happens in the park. The ambassador youths will work closely with a community member, who will act as their mentor and guide through the entire process.





APPENDIX

There are many resources we didn't list in the toolkit. Our 'Toolkit Library' contains many resources and links to material you might find helpful. You can download this Toolkit Library below:



Park in a Truck Acknowledgments

PARK IN A TRUCK NATIONAL AND LOCAL PARTNERS

The following are a few partners that may be beneficial to your park building efforts.

Nature Sacred

In partnership with PiaT, they can expand the offerings of park designs. Read more about what they do and can offer at naturesacred.org/

Citizens Planing Institute

Greenfield Foundation

Local non-profit who funded first Park in a Truck park

West Philadelphia Real Estate

Philly local real estate brokerage company dedicated to providing quality real estate services to those interested in the West Philadelphia area.

Philadelphia Water Department

PWD will partner with PiaT in development of parks by adding green infrastructure. Contact them for help with decoupling downspouts in your park or adding a rain garden.

Neighborhood Gardens Trust

A leader in urban land preservation

CONTRIBUTORS TO DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOOLKIT

The Landscape Architecture Program + The Lab for Social and Urban Innovation, Thomas Jefferson University

The Audubon Society, Middle States

Lamar Gore and the John Heinz Wildlife Refuge

Kimberlee Douglas, Park in a Truck Founder, RLA ASLA, Director + Professor
Landscape Architecture Program, Jefferson University

Alexandra Zahn, RLA, ASLA, Park in a Truck VP, Adjunct Professor, Jefferson University

Darrell Campana, RLA, ASLA, Adjunct Professor, Jefferson University

Richard Newton, RLA, ASLA, Adjunct Professor, Jefferson University

Dr. Drew Harris Adjunct Professor, Jefferson University

Teddy Pickering, Jefferson Student

Hunter Dyson, Jefferson Student

Darby Mann, Jefferson Student

Ben Nardi, Jefferson Student

Ted Behr Southwest Globe Times

Victoria Miles Chambliss, Empowered Community Development Corporation

Community Members Like You!

PARK IN A TRUCK PARKS

Cecil Street Park

Kingsessing Avenue and Cecil Street, Kingsessing, Philadelphia

Park Planting Prototypes

LandHealth Nursery, West Philadelphia

HYP Park

North Phillips and West Dauphin Streets, West Kensington, Philadelphia

Melon Street Park

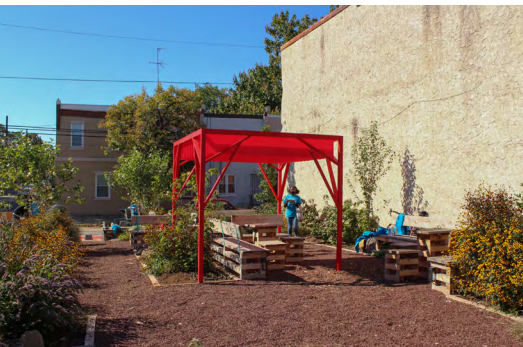
38th and Melon Streets, Mantua, Philadelphia

Glenda Anne Memorial Park

59th and Greenway Ave, Kingsessing, Philadelphia

60th and Greenway

60th and Greenway Ave Kingsessing, Philadelphia





Park in a Truck

The Landscape Architecture Program +
The Lab for Social and Urban Innovation
Thomas Jefferson University
Philadelphia, PA USA

