

# **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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# 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 toolkit, a formalized process of how a few communities have bettered themselves through designing, building and maintaining their own park. As a working toolkit, it is a work in progress. It is not perfect, but it is a great start towards a complex issue distilled into a few chapters. This is the first of several versions that will be published. Behind the scenes many parks are being build, communities bettering themselves, and people reviewing this process. Each park built, each community meeting, and every trip to home depot - something is learned. All this knowledge gained contributes to this book continuously as a feedback loop. Also crucial to the next version is getting feedback from professionals, organizations, and most importantly, community members like you!





MELON STREET PLAT PARK  
Build Day  
Image: Matthew Tucker



# INTRODUCTION

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# 00

This Toolkit is a ‘do-it yourself’ instruction manual developed with community volunteers in mind. 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 process has two main components: The **Park in a Truck (PiaT) Toolkit** and a series of Workbooks. The **Toolkit** contains an overview about the benefits of parks, background on the PiaT program, and an outline of how to design build and maintain your park.

Every Toolkit chapter has a companion **Workbook** providing the step-by-step process of designing, building and maintaining the park. The workbooks are also printable, so you can take them to a community meeting or your park site. Essentially the workbooks serve as a ‘blueprint’ for each step! If you have questions along the way, please let us know. Contact information is on the inside cover of the document.

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



# 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 to design, build and maintain 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 create a connected network 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 that scientists say green spaces significantly improve our overall health. Research continues to show that simply living near a park makes you healthier. In addition, 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



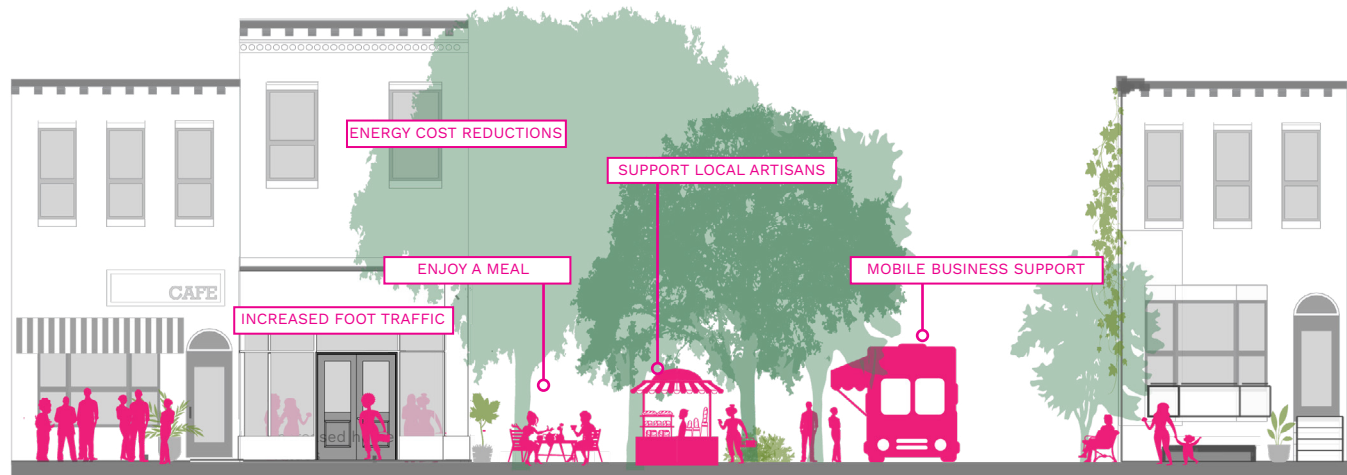
## SOCIAL BENEFITS

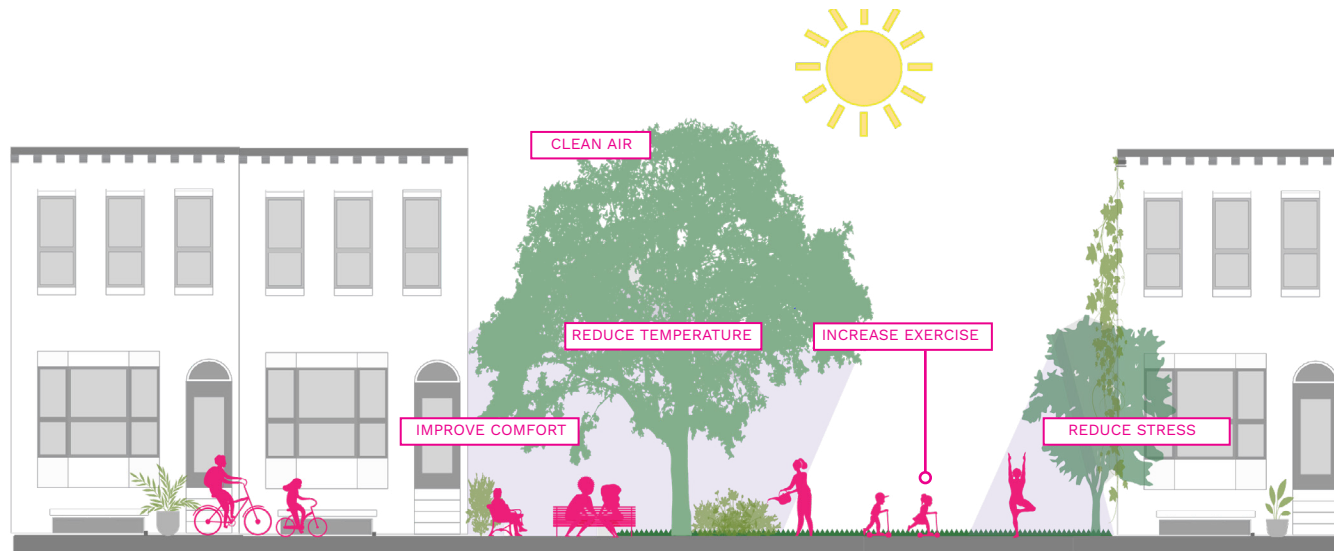
Parks get people out of their homes. They become neighborhood gathering places-sometimes to drink coffee or play chess-or for organized neighborhood events. The very act of building their park helps bring a community together. To share. To heal. To celebrate.



## ECONOMIC BENEFITS

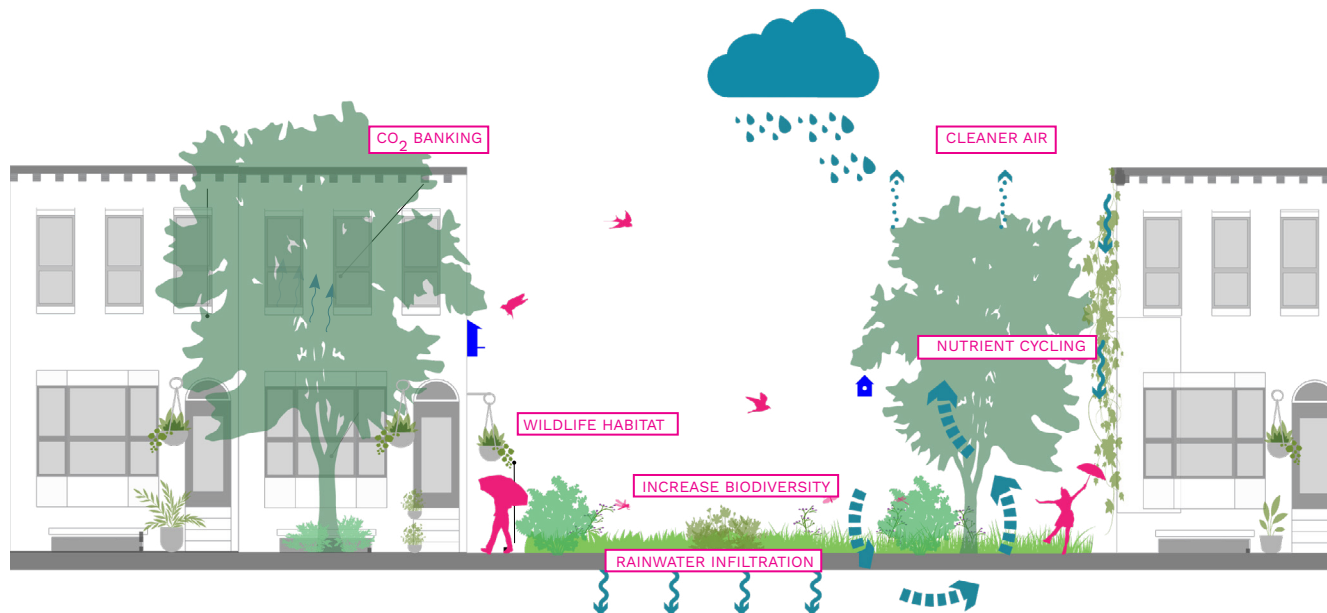
A park can help stimulate the local economy. Parks can become pop-up markets where residents can sell their crafts. Local businesses thrive when nearby parks attract visitors and customers. Parks also enhance property values, attracting families looking for a less congested neighborhood with more green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





## 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.



## ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS

Green spaces of every size provide important ecological services. 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.







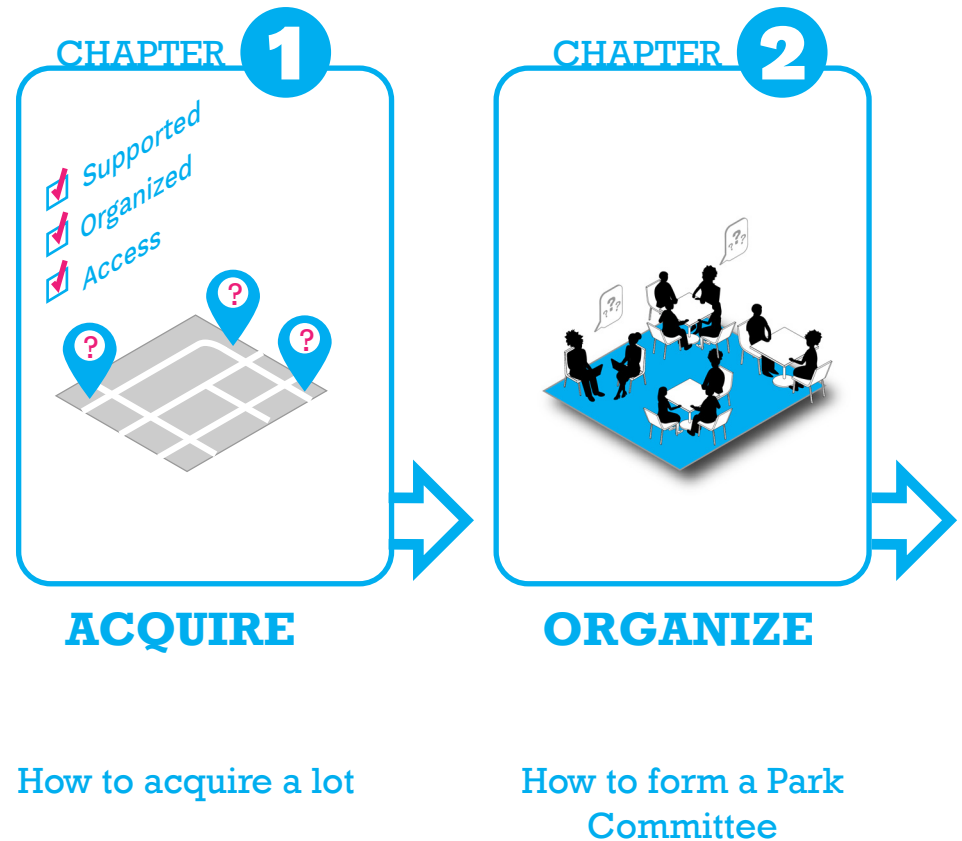


# PiaT Toolkit Steps

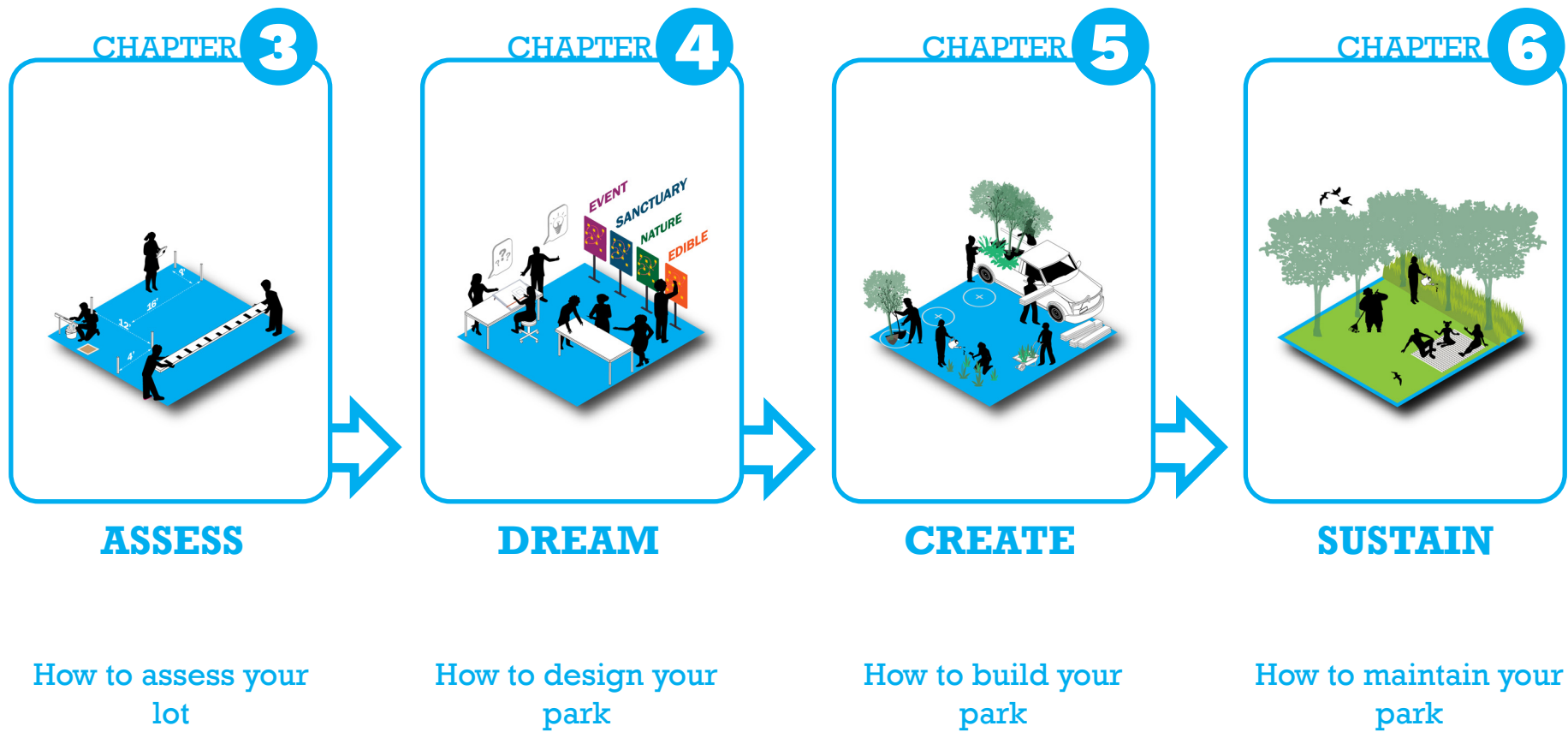
## SIX steps to realizing your community park

So how does a community come together and get a park built? One way might be to approach your councilperson and try to get the city to build a new park. 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 first, 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



# ACQUIRE

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# 01

This chapter assumes that you do not have permission to use an open lot to implement your idea. If you have legal access and entitlement to the lot(s), we invite you to skip to Chapter 2: Organize



For park-creators without legal access to land, the process is complicated by the need to seek the permission of 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 determine the best course of action to access your future park site!



# Find a Lot

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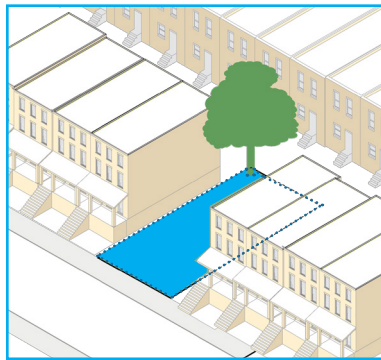
Large urban parks provide many social, ecological, and economic benefits to the residents of an entire city and its visitors. But unless the park is easy to get to, they may only be visited occasionally. Not everyone has access to a car or convenient public transportation, or can walk or bike long distances.

This 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.

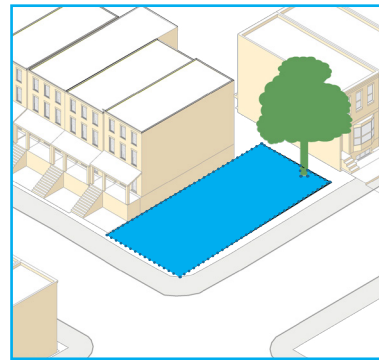
## WHICH LOT?

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



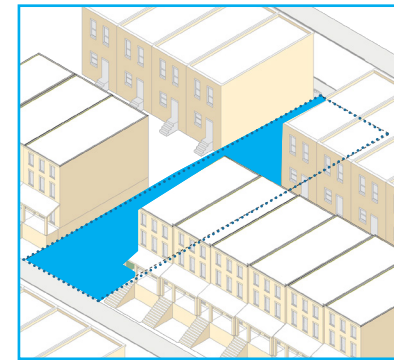
**MID-BLOCK LOT**  
VACANT LOT

Rectangular in shape and found in the middle of a residential block. May have buildings on each side and/or the end. The highest number of 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

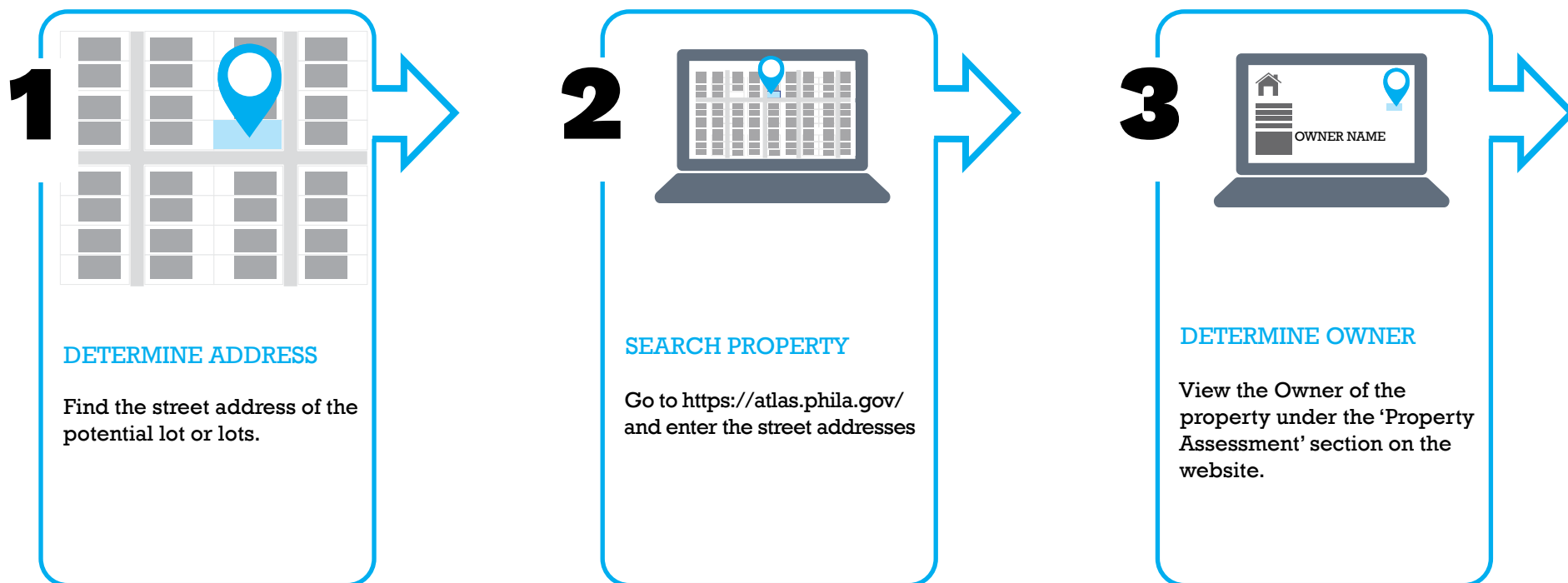
Identifiable by their long and very narrow shape, these locations often connect 'across' a block. Originally set aside for pedestrian connections between streets and/or utility easements.

# Determine Lot Ownership

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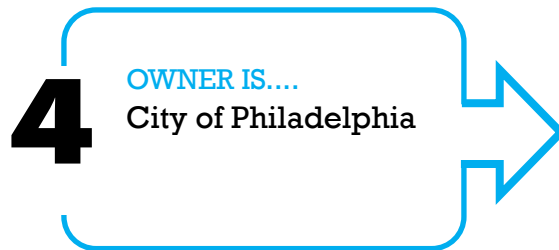
Once you have identified some potential underutilized properties for your new neighborhood park, the next step is to determine who owns the property. The owner could be an individual, business, or non-profit organization. The owner could also be the city. The most reliable way to see who owns a lot is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



OR



**POTENTIAL PURCHASE** Do a property search to find out if public land is available for purchase.

<https://phdcphila.org/land/buy-land/property-search-map/>

## PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

## PRIVATE OWNERSHIP



**POTENTIAL DONATION** Contact the landowner about permanently donating the property to the neighborhood for use as a park.



**POTENTIAL SALE** Watch for potential public sale listing or auction of property. In Philadelphia this may also include a Sheriff Sale.



**NEGOTIATE PURCHASE AGREEMENT** Contact the landowner and negotiate a sale of the underutilized property for neighborhood use.



**IN-KIND AGREEMENT** Contact the landowner and discuss the mutual benefits of granting the neighborhood an 'in-kind' use of the lot as a park, while the owner retains ownership.





**‘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



# ORGANIZE

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# 02

Parks don't just happen. They are a team effort, but the dividends are great. A community working together on a park project is building 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

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This step helps you develop organizational capacity to steer your park from an idea to reality. Your goal in this step is to form the ‘park committee’ that will 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 may be very good 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**  
<http://tupress.temple.edu/book/0872>

**Park Advocate Handbook**  
[https://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/Americas\\_Backyard/park-advocate-handbook-100711.pdf](https://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/Americas_Backyard/park-advocate-handbook-100711.pdf)







# Identify Neighborhood Assets

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

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### 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.





Park in a Truck Demonstration Park

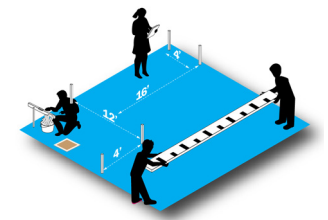


# ASSESS

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# 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.




# Evaluate the Park Site

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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.

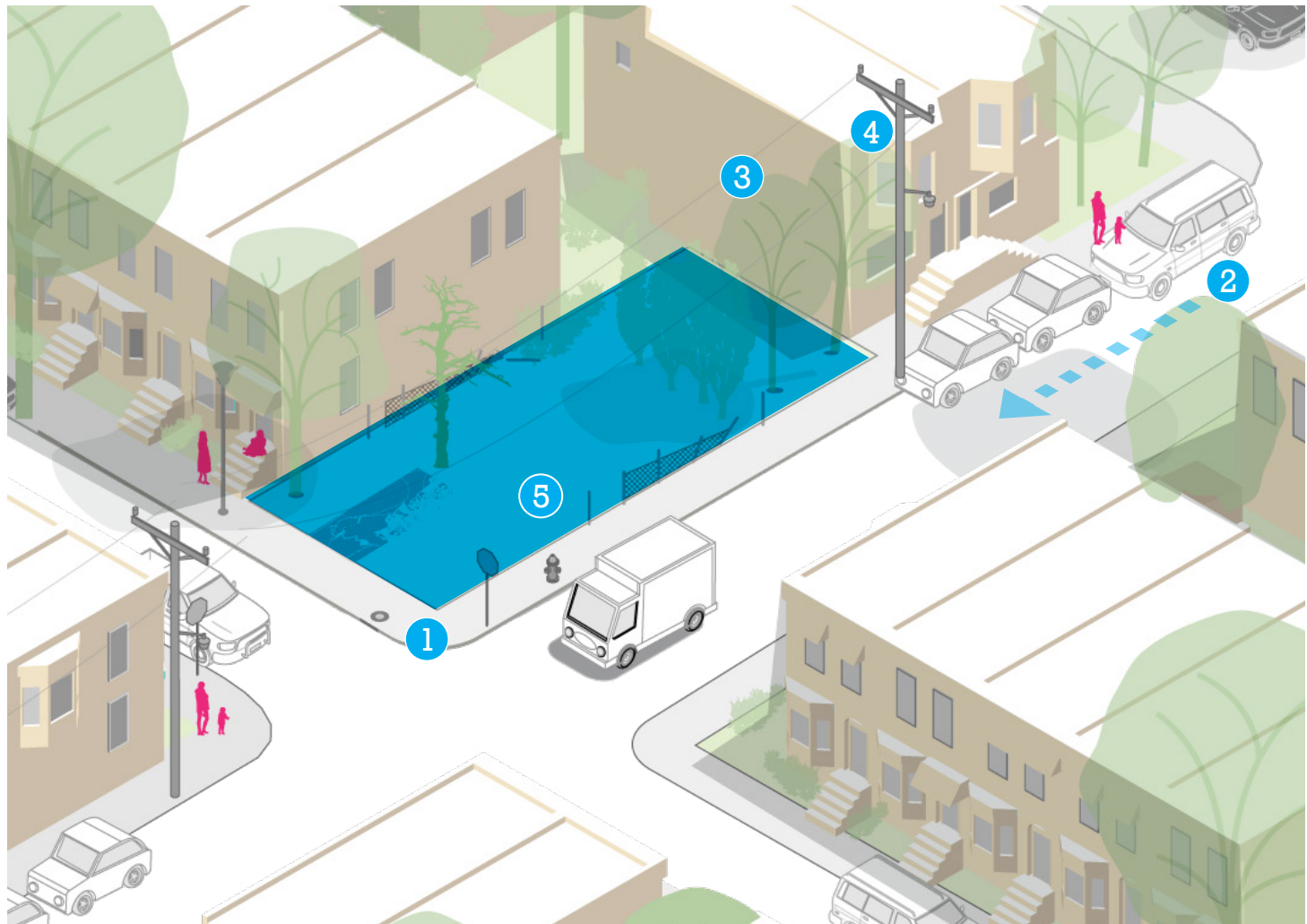
Visit your park site and carefully document what might affect your park's design. By evaluating the site characteristics before designing the park's features, you will make sure the park design is adapted to the site's unique conditions. You will document these assets in the Assess Workbook. An example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

 **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 stewards!**

MANTUA PiaT PARK GROUP  
Design Charette



# DREAM

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## 04

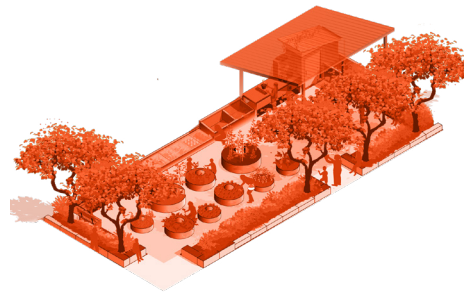
Now, the real fun begins—creating a vision for your park! This chapter will help translate your vision into your park design.



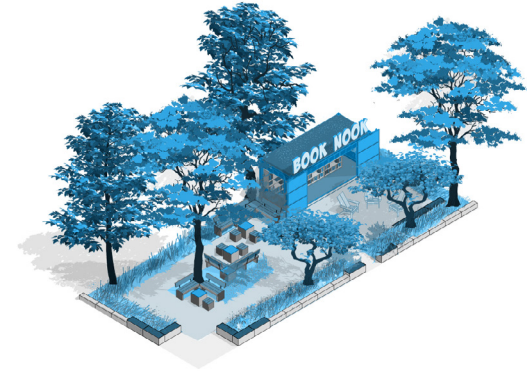


# You get to decide!

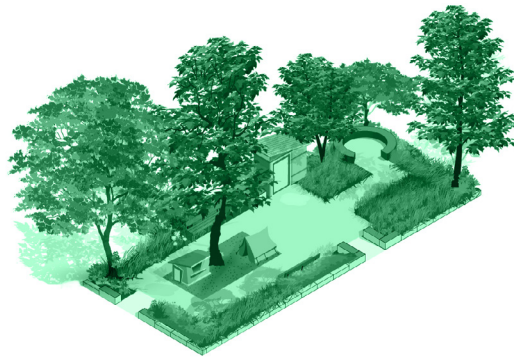
This step in the park-building process starts with choosing one of four different **‘THEMED DESIGNS’**. However, this is just the beginning. Each themed design includes a set of **‘MIX AND MATCH’ ‘PARK PIECES’** that allow you to create a **‘CUSTOM PARK’** best suited to your needs. This entire process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



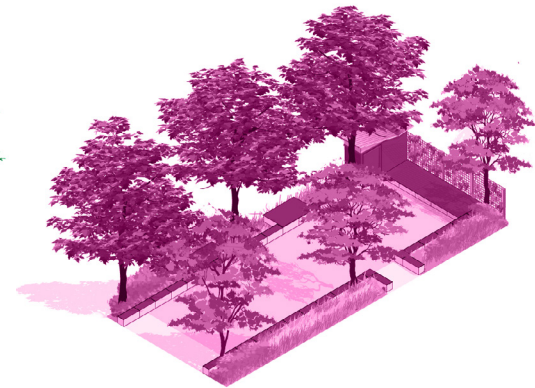
**EDIBLE THEME**



**SANCTUARY THEME**

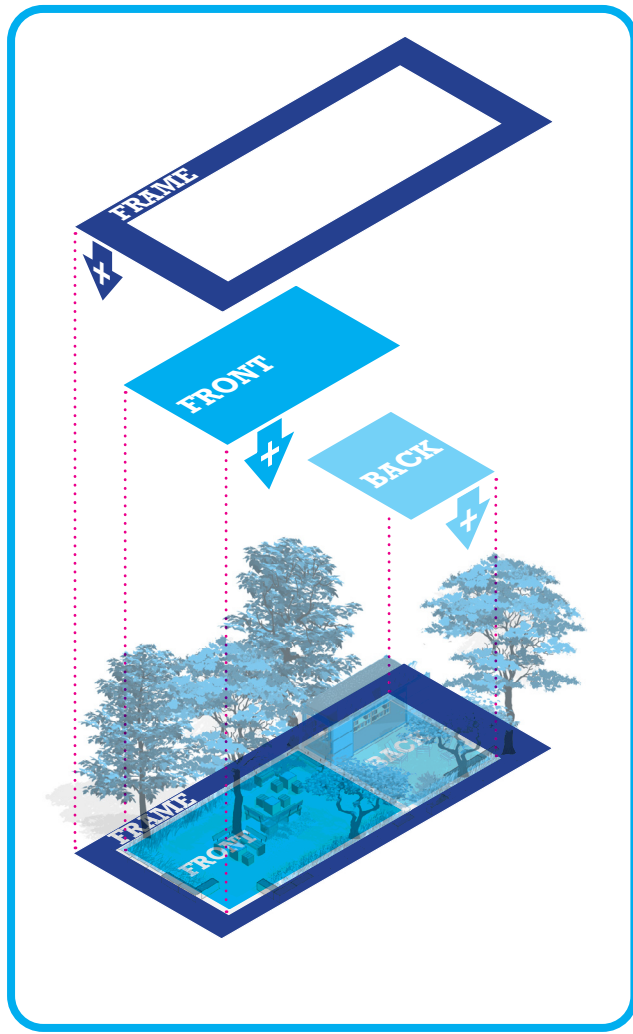


**NATURE THEME**

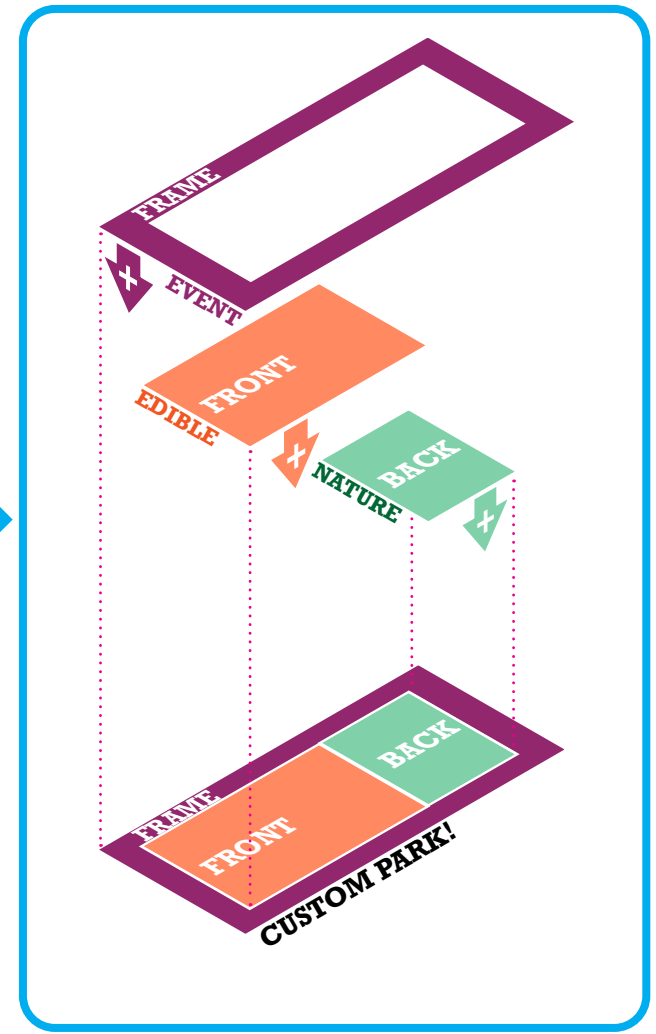
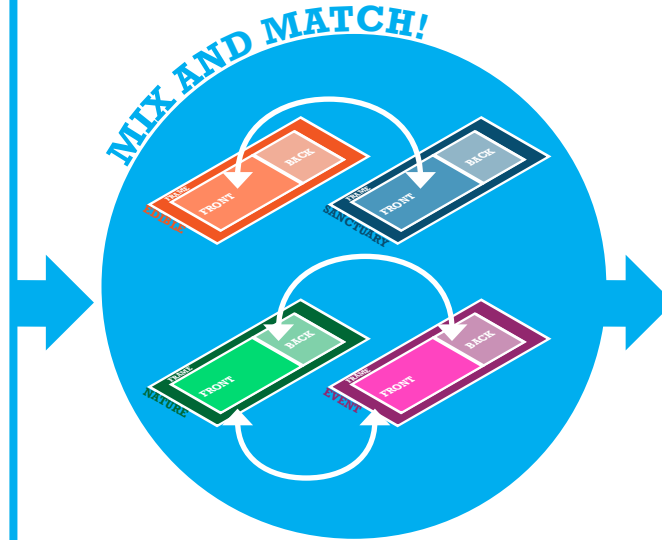


**EVENT THEME**

## **THEMED DESIGNS**



**PARK PIECES**



**CUSTOM PARK**



# Themed Designs

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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. 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.

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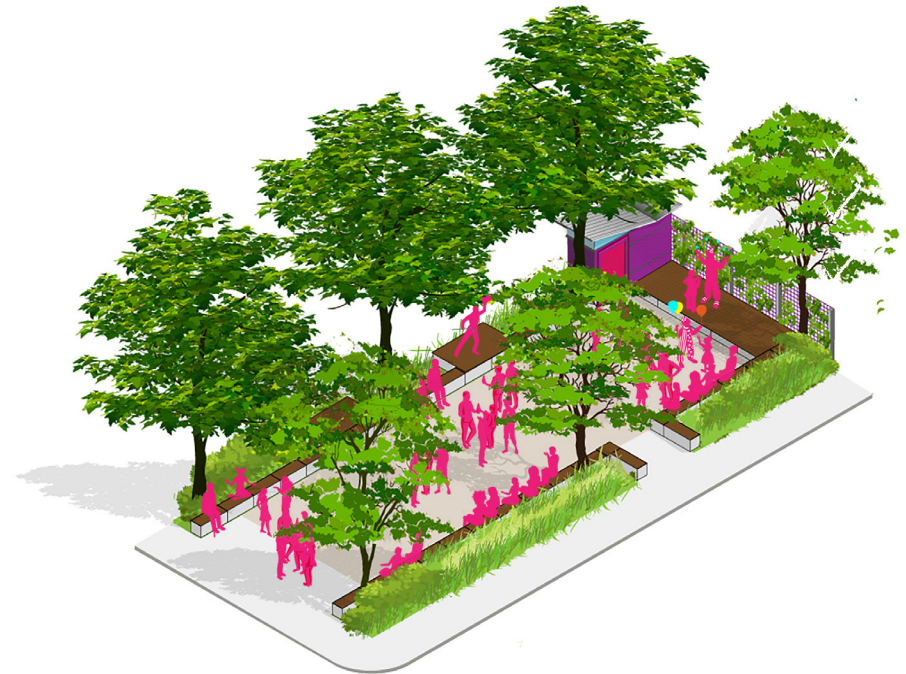
**EDIBLE THEME**



**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





# 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



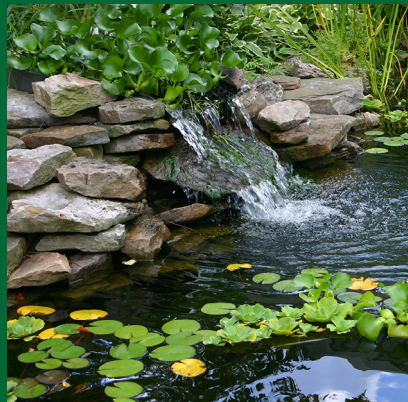


# NATURE THEME

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-based play is important with this theme, so many of the park elements are natural like stumps, logs, rocks or an oversized play 'nest.' The physical elements of this park are listed and shown on the opposite page.

## REQUIREMENTS

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



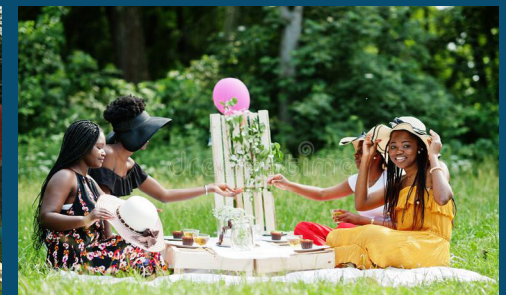
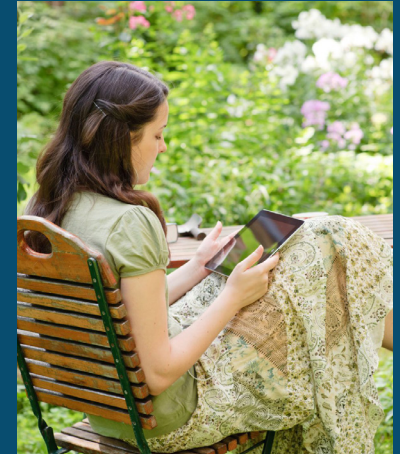


# SANCTUARY THEME

This is the most versatile of the park themes as it can accommodate a wide range of park use. 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 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

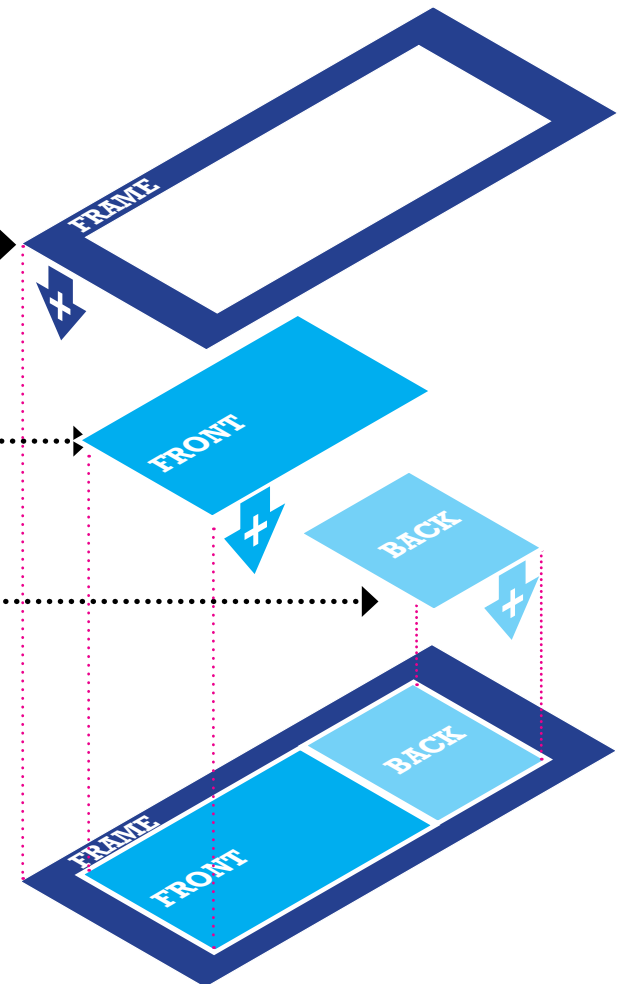
Like the frame around a family photo, the park 'frame' creates the border around the park's interior. This helps distinguish the park from adjacent properties and creates a welcoming location for park entrances, trees, and other features.

### 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

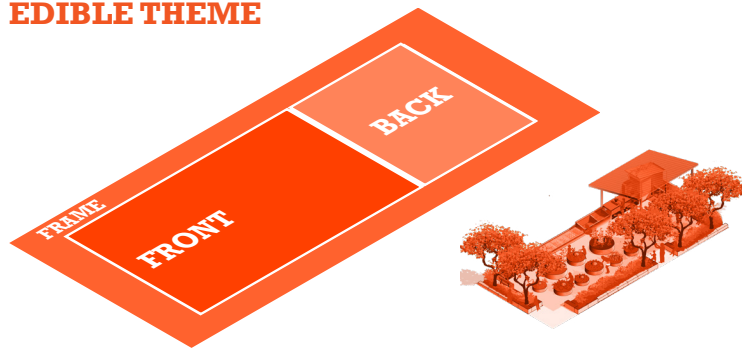
The other half of the park interior is the 'Back.' Compared to the 'Front' this area typically is open to provide more flexibility of park uses.



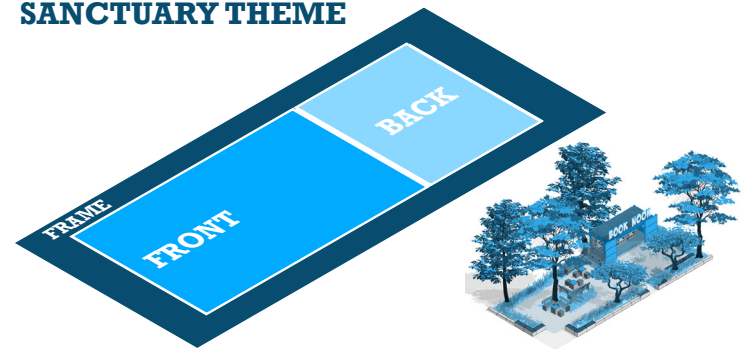
## FOUR THEMES ARE COLOR CODED

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!

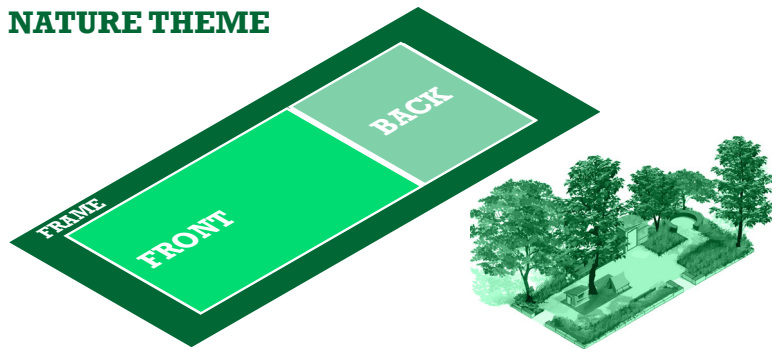
### EDIBLE THEME



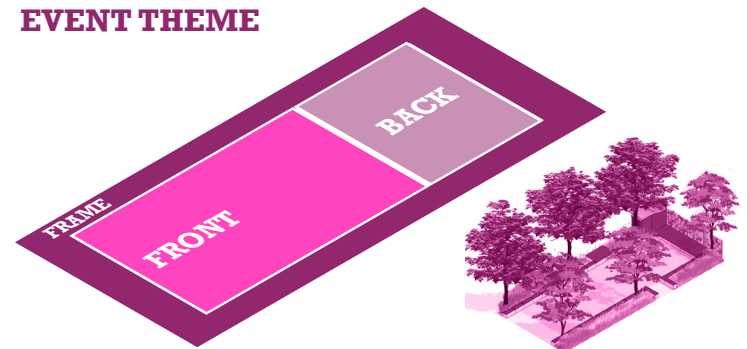
### SANCTUARY THEME



### NATURE THEME



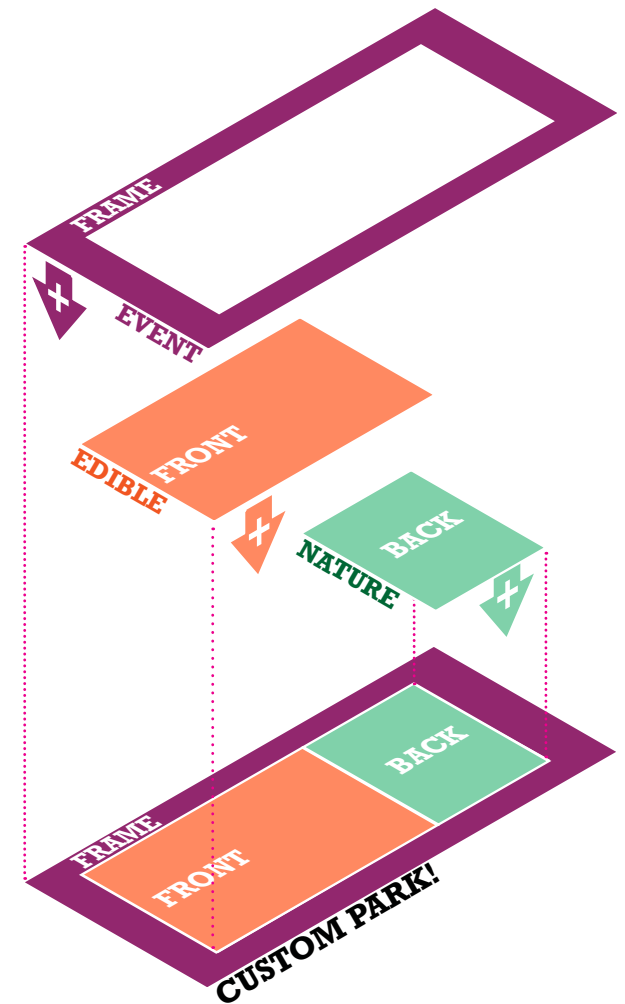
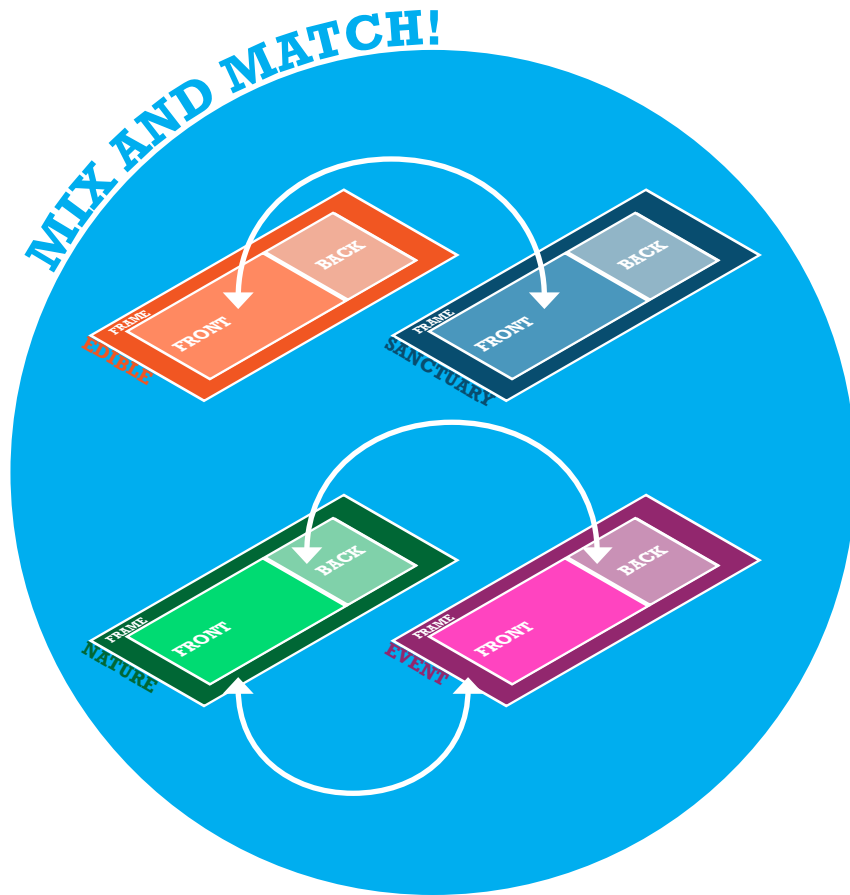
### EVENT THEME





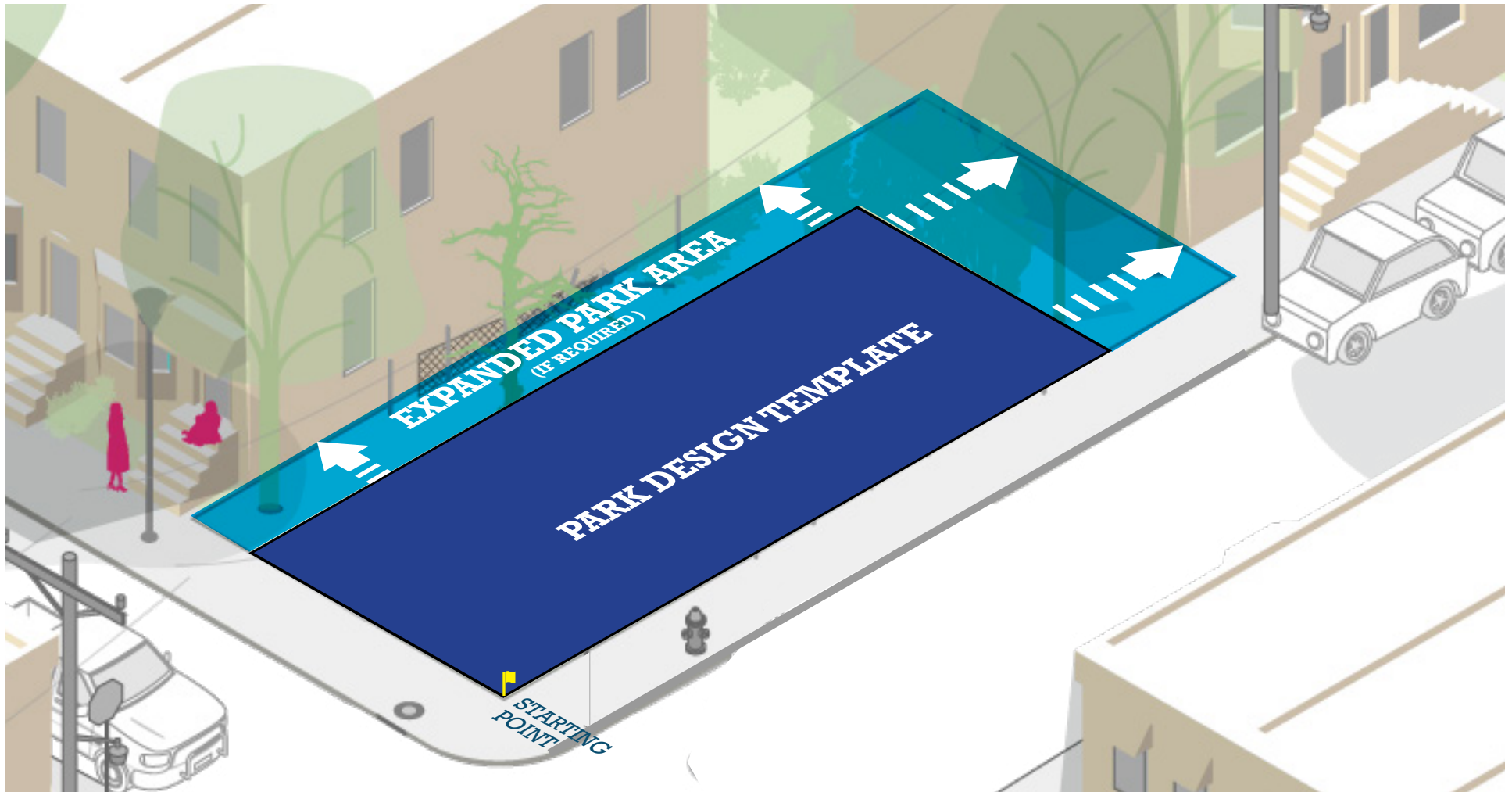
# Mix-and-Match!

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



# CREATE

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## 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, how to schedule for park construction, and help you define tasks for ordering, delivery and assembly of different park elements.

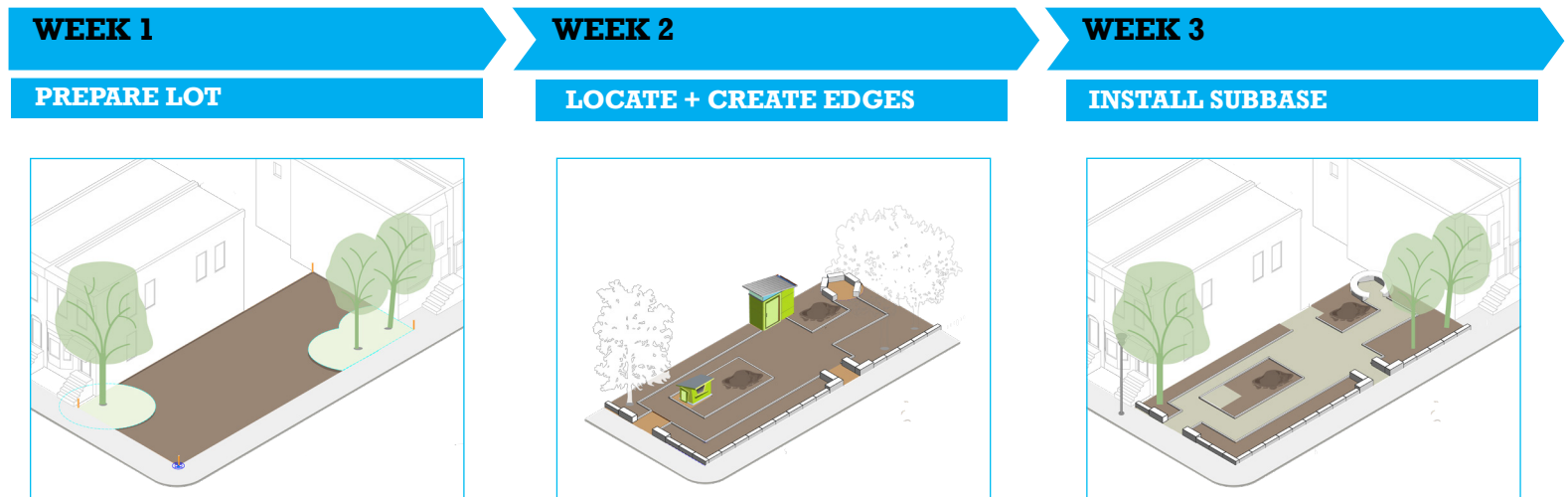




# Initial Park Construction

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 those skilled at organizing, encouraging, leading and other important team-building skills.

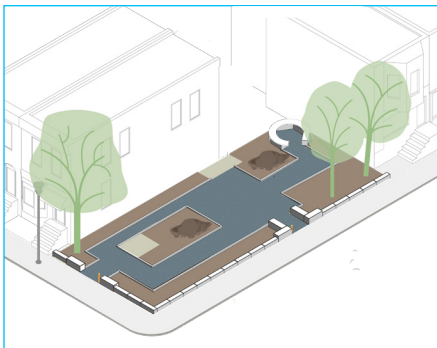
Like following a recipe, park building requires a step-wise sequence of steps. Below is an overview of the primary sequence of park building steps. The steps below are organized into weeks as most Park in a Truck parks can be built in about 6-8 weekends!





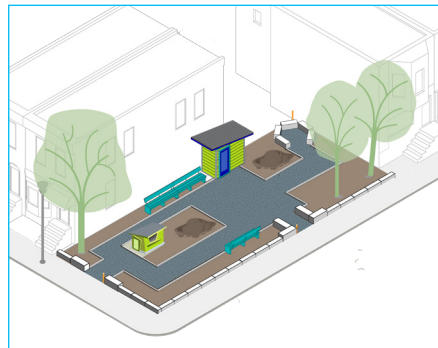
**WEEK 4**

**INSTALL AGGREGATE SURFACE**



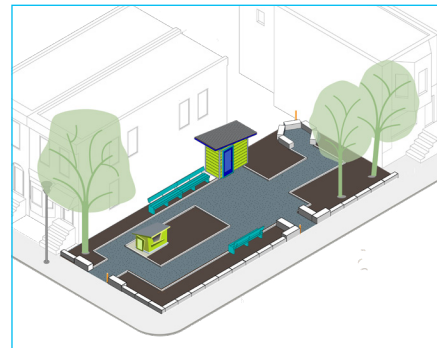
**WEEK 5**

**INSTALL PARK ELEMENTS**



**WEEK 6**

**PLACE TOPSOIL**



**WEEK 7**

**PLANT!**







West Kensington PiaT Park  
Build Day



# SUSTAIN

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## 06

Park in a Truck parks strive to be an urban oasis filled with plants and trees that nourish all who visit them. As you can imagine, these plants need your help to thrive. 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. The guidelines list the tasks to be completed each year, month, and/or season.

			WINTER			SPRING			SUMMER			FALL			
			DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	
PLANT	READ SEED CATALOGS									CUT BACK PERENNIALS					
				START SEEDS INSIDE									ORDER BULBS		
				BUYING PLANTS & SEEDS			MULCHING						PLANTING BULBS		
EVENT	PRUNE SHRUBS & DEAD BRANCHES									PLANT ANNUALS *IF WARM SPRING			PLANT ANNUALS		
				BIRD WATCHING EVENT						SUMMER NATURECAMP			RIBBON CUTTING		
	PARK INFORMATION MEETING						COMMUNITY CLEAN UP			EARTH DAY CELEBRATION					
STEWARDSHIP													PARK INFORMATION MEETING		
	WATERING														
	TRASH CLEAN-UP			✓			✓			✓			✓		
WEEDING															
INSPECT			With the Park Ambassador on a monthly basis.  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



## 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.



## 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.



## 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](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-landscaping/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 that it does not run off and long enough to penetrate soil to a depth of 6-8 inches in planting beds.
2. If the top 2 inches of soil are dry, it is time to water
3. Often 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.



# Park Stewardship

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



Park Ambassadors are local youth employed to :

- 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.





MANTUA PIAT PARK  
Build Day





# APPENDIX

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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/](http://naturesacred.org/)

### **Citizens Planing Institute**

**Greenfield Foundation** local non-profit who funded first Park in a Truck

### **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**

**Audubon Society**, Middle States

**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, OLIN, Adjunct Professor, Jefferson University

**Richard Newton**, RLA, ASLA, OLIN, 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

**Lamar Gore** and the John Heinz Wildlife Refuge

**Ted Behr** Southwest Globe Times

**Victoria Miles Chambliss**, Empowered Community Development Corporation  
**Community Members Like You!**

## PARK IN A TRUCK PARKS

### **Kingsessing Community Park**

Kingsessing Avenue and Cecil Street, Kingsessing

### **Park Planting Prototypes**

LandHealth Nursery, West Philadelphia

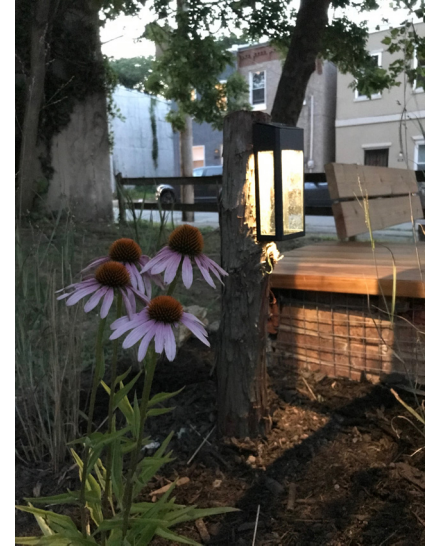
### **HYP Park**

North Phillips and West Dauphin Streets, West Kensington

### **Melon Street Park**

38th and Melon Streets, Mantua

### **More to Come!**







# Park in a Truck

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

