



# Mansfield Park

Conceptual Plan  
November 2007



**THE DRACHMAN INSTITUTE**  
COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA TUCSON, ARIZONA

# Mansfield Park

## Conceptual Plan

**The Drachman Institute  
College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture  
The University of Arizona**

**Community Outreach Partnership  
Planning and Design Center**

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and the Center for Applied Sociology.**

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**November 2007**

The Drachman Institute is the research and public service unit of the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at The University of Arizona, dedicated to the environmentally sensitive and resource-conscious development of neighborhoods and communities. The Drachman Institute dedicates its research and outreach activities to the proposition that housing is the building-block of neighborhoods, and neighborhoods are the building-blocks of communities.

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**This project was developed in cooperation with the City of Tucson Parks and Recreation Department, the staff of the Northwest Center and the Mansfield Park Neighbors Coalition.**

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# Executive Summary

Mansfield Park and the Northwest Center serve as a “front yard” to the communities of El Cortez Heights, Keeling and Northwest Neighborhoods. The Park and Center host sporting events, health and wellness programs, family events and provide social services and recreational programs to the community. They provide the community with viable alternatives to drugs, alcohol and crime by enhancing social opportunities, providing outlets for physical activity and access to nutritional skills. Ultimately, Mansfield Park fosters community interaction and integration.

The goal of this project is to develop a Conceptual Plan for Mansfield Park responding to the needs and desires of the Mansfield Park Neighbors Coalition, the adjacent property owners and neighbors as well as the City of Tucson Parks and Recreation Department. The redesign will enhance the existing features and add new activities to encourage higher patronage and lead to a healthier community.

The park’s 20.1 acres has a segmented feel with each of the four quadrants lacking integration and clear connection to the other. There are no formal paths that traverse the park, though there is a popular exercise circuit which circumnavigates the Park. There is a lack of trees and shade that leaves users exposed to Tucson’s harsh sun. Drainage problems create undesirable water retention in some areas and erosion in others. The Northwest Community Center is an excellent facility and well-used by the public. However, it lacks cohesion and integration into the whole of the Park.

The redesign creates new and innovative spaces while enhancing existing facilities. The result is a myriad of activities for diverse user groups in the community. Circulation is improved within the park and helps the park to function as a community circulatory element. The redesign is responsive to the desert environment by utilizing drainage as an important resource. New shade trees are native to the desert and will thrive in the park setting. By populating different areas of the park with new activities and enhancing old uses, safety is improved within the park as well as within the larger community. Physical connections between the neighborhoods and the park are strengthened, literally inviting neighbors in. The end result is a conceptual plan which can be used to strategically improve the park over time, consistent with the creative vision of the adjacent neighborhoods and Center staff.

A photograph of a park area. In the foreground, a purple-painted concrete ledge has the words "MANFIELD PARK" painted in white, serif, all-caps letters. Below the ledge are two concrete bollards. The background shows a gravel playground area with a tree, a building, and mountains in the distance under a clear blue sky.

MANFIELD PARK

# Introduction

# Introduction

The Mansfield Park Neighbors Coalition is a neighborhood organization made up of El Cortez Heights, Keeling and Northwest Neighborhood Associations, and adjacent property owners: Quatro Vest on the north side of the Park (student housing), and Parkside Terrace Apartments (a low income housing development) on the east side.

The Coalition approached the Drachman Institute (DI) for assistance with the development of a conceptual plan for the Park which would serve as the foundation for continued improvement of the park for area residents.

Simultaneously, DI was underway with a project entitled Building Healthy Neighborhoods (BHN), funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Goal of BHN is:

*To provide information and assistance and help to create plans, programs, and activities to support:*

*Healthy Neighborhoods*

*Healthy Housing*

*Healthy Lifestyles*

Out of the neighborhoods targeted as potential participants in BHN, Northwest Neighborhood and El Cortez Heights Neighborhood (two of the neighborhoods adjacent to Mansfield Park) were selected to receive assistance. Mansfield Park and Northwest Center are integral to the wellbeing of the communities, families and individuals in these neighborhoods. The conceptual plan for Mansfield Park is an important aspect of the BHN project in building and supporting Healthy Lifestyles.

The Mansfield Park Coalition presented DI with a wish list as well as concerns about safety, traffic, water management and the lack of integration of the amenities and park elements. Two community design workshops were publicly advertised and attended by neighborhoods, adjacent property owners, Northwest Center staff and City of Tucson Parks and Recreation representatives. In addition, the final conceptual plan was reviewed and accepted by the City of Tucson Parks and Recreation Capital Improvements Committee.



A hazy urban landscape with a parking lot in the foreground and a city skyline in the background. The scene is captured in a soft, overcast light, with a prominent white semi-transparent banner across the middle containing the text "Urban Context". The background features several tall buildings, including one with a distinctive dome, and a line of trees in the mid-ground. The foreground shows a paved parking lot with white lines.

# Urban Context

## Spatial Context:

Mansfield Park is located in central Tucson and has a view of the downtown skyline to the South as well as the Santa Catalina Mountains to the North.

Approximately two miles to the southeast of Mansfield Park is the University of Arizona.

Mansfield Park is bordered by El Cortez Heights Neighborhood to the east, Northwest Neighborhood to the south, an industrial area to the west and Keeling Neighborhood to the north.

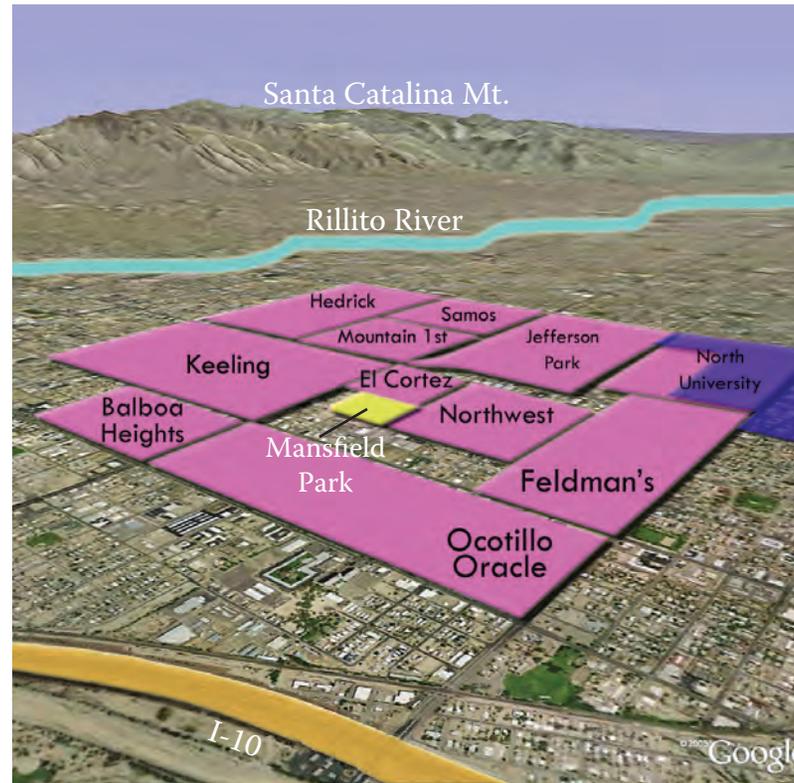
The park has amenities such as a pool complex, two sports fields, two uncovered and one covered basketball courts, three playgrounds and the Northwest Center which draws patrons from all of the neighborhoods identified on the map as well as other areas in Tucson. The most frequent users, however come from El Cortez, Keeling and Northwest neighborhoods.

## Connections:

There are several traffic signals at Grant Road, adjacent to the park, which provide safe pedestrian crossing between the neighborhoods across the major roadways.

The major north-south streets surrounding Mansfield Park are Euclid Avenue and Stone Avenue. The major east-west streets are Grant Road and Speedway Boulevard. These streets provide vehicular connections to every part of the city.

There is access to Interstate 10 from both Speedway Boulevard and Grant Road.



The neighborhoods surrounding Mansfield Park



Major roadways and traffic lights near Mansfield Park

## Circulation:

6th Avenue, 4th Avenue, East Sahara Street and a public alley directly border the park to the west, east, north and south, respectively. 6th and 4th Avenues are the primary access routes to the Park. Wide pavement and straight roadways encourage speeding along 6th and 4th Avenues. Traffic flow along Grant Road is heavy and constant throughout the day while 6th and 4th Avenues have periodic traffic surges, especially at rush-hour.

Bike routes run along Grant Road, 6th Avenue and 4th Avenue, and connect neighborhoods to the University of Arizona and Downtown. The stop light at Grant Road and 6th Avenue/Fontana provides an important bridge across the heavy arterial and connects the Park to Keeling and Amphi neighborhoods on the north.

SunTran (Tucson’s public bus system) has a stop on Grant Road and 6th Avenue, but neighbors complain that this does not adequately connect to Northwest Center, especially for elderly users.

## Demographics:

The area around Mansfield Park was once called “Sugar Hill”. Historically a center for African Americans in Tucson, today the area retains higher percentage of black residents as compared to the rest of Tucson.



Bike Paths and Bus routes adjacent to the park

Ethnicity	Neighborhoods surrounding Mansfield Park (%) Total Population - 1083	City of Tucson (%) Total Population - 486,699
White	51.52	70.20
<b>Black</b>	<b>20.41</b>	<b>4.30</b>
Native American	1.85	2.30
Asian	9.6	2.50
Hawaiian - Pacific Islander	0.37	0.20
Other	12.74	16.80
Multiple Races	3.51	3.80

Demographic information from the 2000 census



# Park Analysis

## A Visual Tour of Mansfield Park:

1. One of the multiple pieces of public art work, a mural on the western wall of the Northwest Center speaks to the ethnic heritage of the community.
2. The community pool which consists of a water slide, kiddie pool, diving pool, and lap pool.
3. The large sand filled playgrounds on the north side of the Northwest Center.
4. A fire pit for barbecues, a section of the fitness trail, a picnic table and the covered basketball court.
5. A covered picnic area with a grill and drinking fountain near a piece of public art that provides a meditative, quiet space on the southern side of the Mansfield Park.



1



2



3



4



5

## Park Use Zones:

Four distinct zones currently divide Mansfield Park:

1. North-west: A soccer field with irrigated turf.
2. North-east: The pool complex, an uncovered basketball court and a large parking lot.
3. South-east: A baseball field with irrigated turf.
4. South-west: The Northwest Center and the three children's playgrounds.

The central portion of the Park lacks definition and the parking lots further segment the park. Located on the east and west side, the parking lots serve their respective north-south zones, though nothing exists in the center to bring the two sides together. While parking is convenient, it also means that to go from one zone to another it is necessary to walk through a parking lot. These large swaths of asphalt are under-used for the majority of the time.

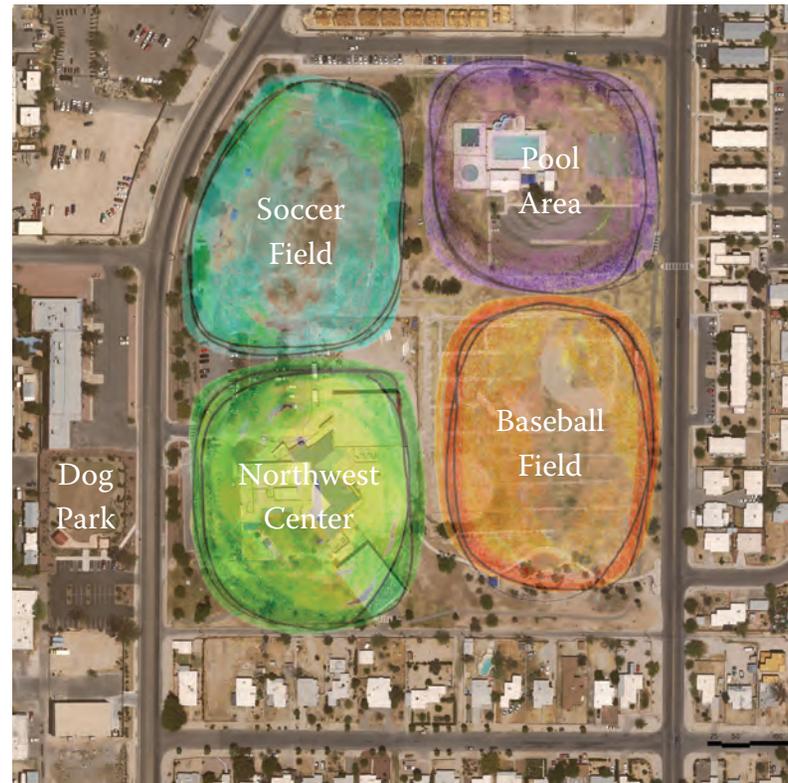
A popular walking path circumnavigates the exterior of the Park, shadowing the perimeter City streets and accessing the quadrants, however it does not penetrate into the park. Thus, a large portion of the park is under-used and there is no efficient path pedestrians and cyclists crossing the park.

## Drainage:

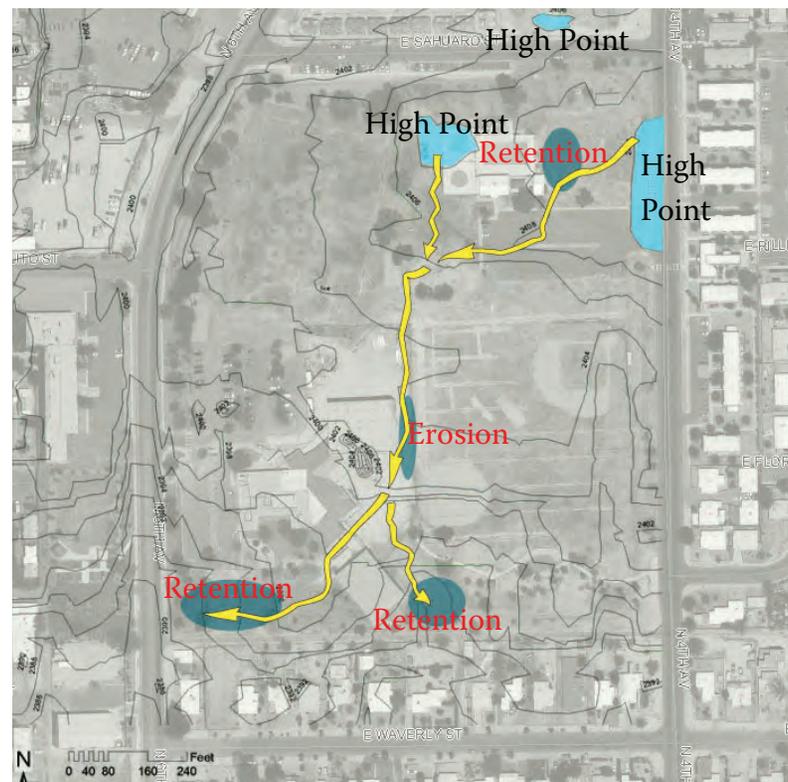
The topographical high point exists on the north-east side of the park.

Stormwater run-off is problematic during the monsoon season (July-September). Water runs south and west, creating drainage issues east of the pool house and along the southern edge of the park. The eastern edge of the Northwest Center also suffers from erosion.

A small playground has been built within a retention basin on the south-east side of the Northwest Center to reduce damage from stormwater run-off. Excess water is still a problem.



Zones designations illustrate the disjointedness of the Park



Drainage paths and areas of erosion and water retention

An aerial photograph of a residential area with several conceptual plan overlays. The overlays include: a large orange oval at the top center; a green circle at the top right; a blue and green shape in the middle; a purple oval with a cross symbol in the middle; a large yellow and orange shape at the bottom; and a green oval at the bottom left. A dashed line with arrows runs vertically through the center, and other arrows point to various features. A scale bar at the bottom right shows 25, 50, and 100 feet.

# Conceptual Plan

# Conceptual Plan

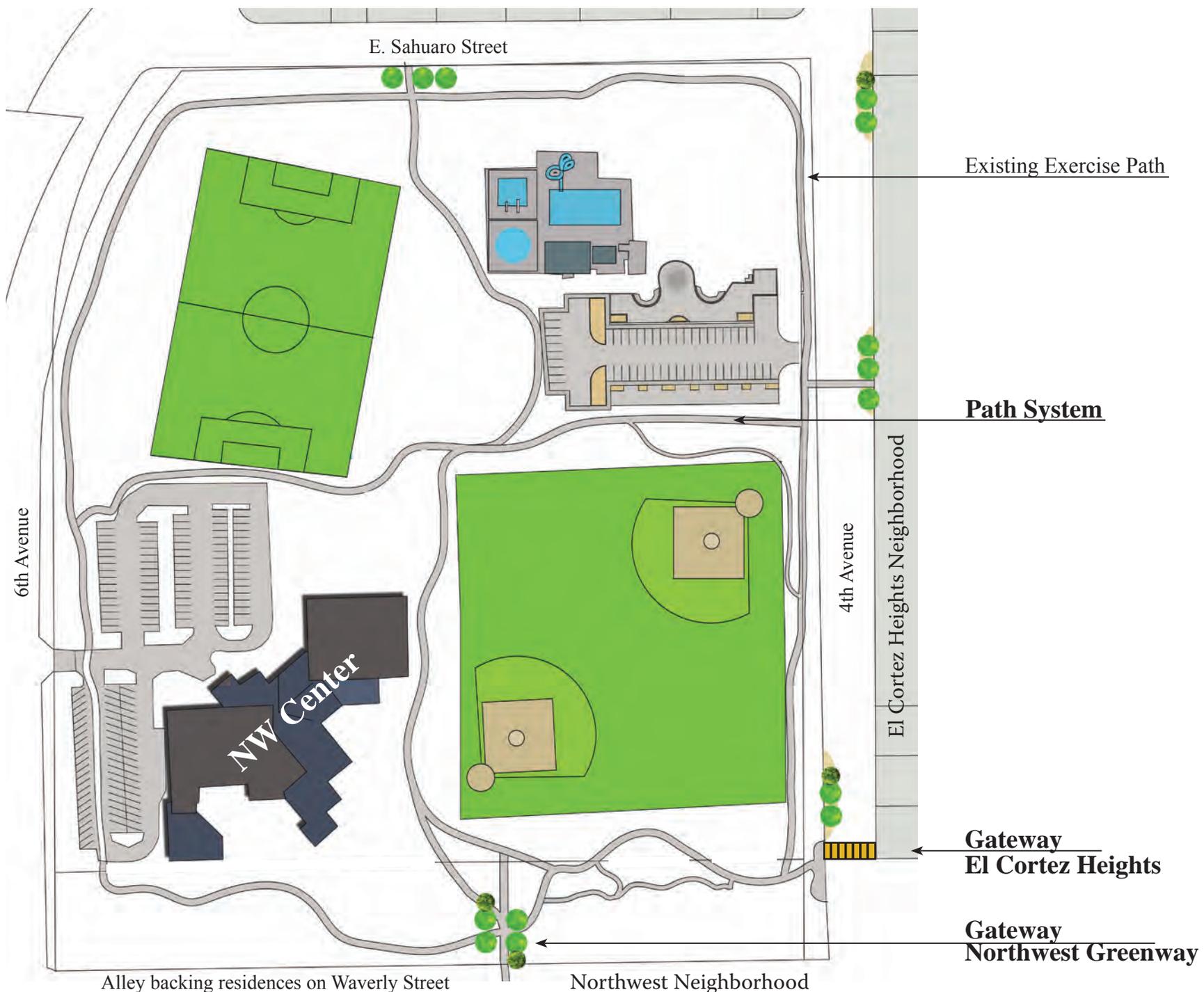
The conceptual Mansfield Park plan illustrates the circulatory system of green corridors for water, people and shade trees. A range of activities occur along the route. The concept emphasizes a center from which activity and circulation emanates. Open recreation space is preserved while a series of native tree groves along the drainage routes create an dense urban park in contrast to exposed urban streets. These groves provide shade, define circulation and manage storm water, demonstrating the value of water in the desert. Existing recreational uses are expanded *without* large infrastructure investments but often by simply improving/harnessing drainage and providing shade. This creates larger, passive recreation choices, giving existing spaces new and multiple uses rather than just one function.



# Conceptual Plan

## CIRCULATION

The addition of interior paths that intersect and radiate from the center of the park expand the options for travel within the park and increase the use of the interior of the park. This circulatory system becomes an enjoyable experience, uniting each of the parts of the park into a comprehensive whole. Strong connections are made to the adjacent neighborhoods, heralding residents to their community park. The Park is directly connected to the Northwest Neighborhood on the south via a proposed greenway, over the Bronx Wash and south on 5th Avenue. (The Northwest neighborhood association has received a Pima County Neighborhood Reinvestment grant to fund part of this project.) This connection into the fabric of the neighborhood encourages access to the park while promoting health, physical activity and establishes walking and bicycling as viable modes of transportation.

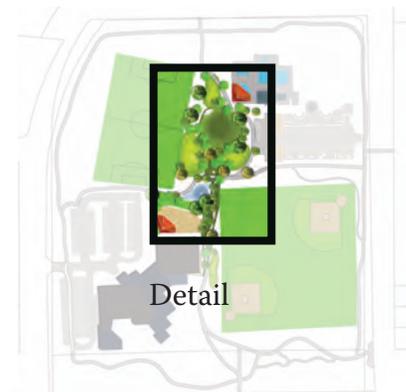


# Conceptual Plan

## CREATION OF CENTER

New circulation paths intersect the Park and connect to the perimeter exercise loop. The nexus of these paths creates a nucleus of activity. Parking is rationalized and more accessible. A large retention basin forms an amphitheater surrounded by large (existing and newly planted) trees and picnic tables. Apart from its function as a retention basin, the amphitheater also serves as a much needed performance or gathering area and a shaded picnic and play area.

The new “Green” serves both the splash park and the playground, providing visual access and a base for activities in both areas.



Detail



# Conceptual Plan

## MULTIPLICITY OF USES

Recreational opportunities are expanded by creating multifunctional spaces that are both efficient and resourceful. Parking lots are streamlined to better distribute users into adjacent facilities. Excess asphalt is converted to an urban skate park with a hip recycling center integrated into the design scheme. Hardtop game surfaces such as hopscotch and four-square will edge the parking lot. Permanent chess/checkers tables provide lunch spots and an overview of the baseball field. Retention basins serve as gathering spaces, play spaces and shade pathways. The baseball field is retrofitted to include a softball field and a second soccer field is overlaid for soccer tournaments. Vegetated curbs bump-out into 4th Avenue, defining street-side parking bays and reducing traffic speeds through narrower street-widths. These medians utilize stormwater run-off from the street, sustaining native shade trees that benefit pedestrians and parked cars, while softening the edge between the neighborhood and the park.



# Conceptual Plan

## VISTAS AND GROVES

Water and people flow through the park along a mutually beneficial route. Vegetation and tree canopies utilize the waterways and envelop the pedestrian routes with cool shade. This efficient sequence of movement hides and reveals Park elements creating nuance and interest along the routes. The green corridor directs water to places where people circulate and congregate. In addition, interpretive water cisterns collect water from the massive Northwest Center rooftop and provide a significant resource for landscape irrigation. These water management strategies are economical and appropriate to desert living.





## SKATE PARK

The east parking lot capacity was reduced from 100 to 51 parking spaces, consolidating the excess asphalt for recreational purposes. Overflow parking along adjacent streets would help reduce traffic speeds.

The skate park has a variety of elements so as to appeal to all levels of skateboarders:

- A sunken bowl
- Sloping areas with small hips
- Moguls
- Banks
- Curbs
- Rail slides ranging in height eight inches to four feet

Viewing platforms are provided under the shade trees on the north side of the skate park, and along the blue metal fence separating parked cars from skaters and skateboards on the south. The blue color is taken from the recycling bin and used on accents in the skate park.

The recycling bins remain in the parking lot but are integrated into the industrial feel of the skate park design by using similar blue metal in the skate park. Recycled construction materials could be integrated into skate park design elements.



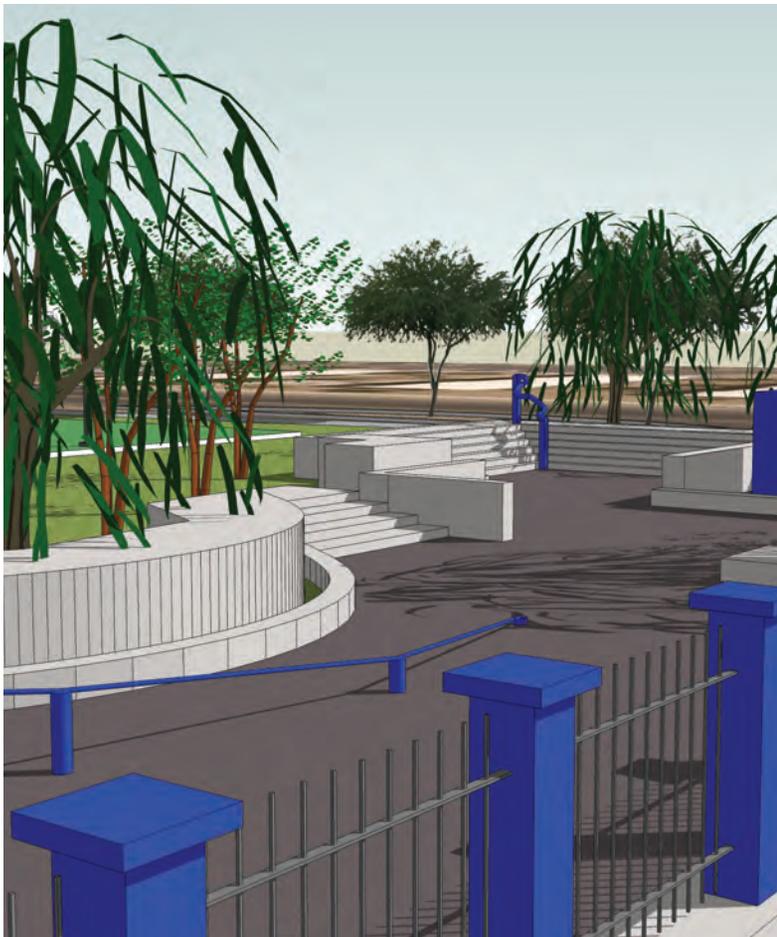
# Conceptual Plan

Upper left:

The Pool Complex is adjacent to the Skate Park. Increased activity and draw to this area off pool season would reduce the occurrence of reported illicit activity currently around this relatively isolated area.

Lower left and right:

A variety of skate features allows skaters of all abilities to skate at the same time. In the images below, the edge of the recycling bin is visible at left. The vibrant blue metal of these bins is repeated on other features such as the rails and fencing surrounding the Skate Park. Raised viewing platforms on the north side of the Skate Park are shaded by trees and permit safe observation by spectators.





Aerial view of multi-functional hardscape complex - looking north

## HARDSCAPE PLAY AREA WITH CHESS TABLES

A blacktop game space sits on the southern side of the east parking lot. This space can be both recreational and educational. Some painted patterns include:

- Hop scotch
- 4-square
- Map of the United States
- Map of the World

Shade trees are located to the south of this play surface so the shadows of the trees help to keep the asphalt cool.

Among the shade trees on an existing rise, checkers/chess tables are placed so they have a view to both the ballfield below and the play area to the North.



The chess tables and hopscotch as seen from the walkway



## AMPHITHEATER

Topography adds visual interest and creates interconnected niches within the Park.

The amphitheater basin naturally divides space while the swales and berms create viewing hills.

The amphitheater acts as a retention basin along the drainage path, collecting overflow storm water and creating a lush environment with minimal irrigation. The high moisture in this area irrigates the turf as well as the surrounding trees creating a central grove that provides shade for gatherings of all sizes.



A view looking to the north across the amphitheater



Aerial view of the amphitheater, looking south to splash park



The amphitheater as seen from the exercise trail, looking south

# Conceptual Plan



## SPLASH PARK AND “THE GREEN”

The splash park is situated centrally, with easy access from both parking lots, the Northwest Center, and adjacent to play equipment, playgrounds, picnic areas and the amphitheater. It is vibrant in both color and activity.

A splash park is potentially a year round amenity. It does not require a life guard so it does not require intensive staffing. The splash water is recirculated via drains and pumps. Back flow can be discarded effectively into adjacent drainageways.

A Green sits between the splash park and the existing playground, giving parents a shady place to watch their children.



A view from one of the picnic tables on the Green



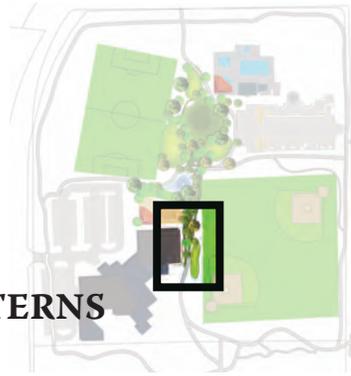
Aerial view of the splash park, the Green and playground



The splash park has elements for patrons of all ages

# Conceptual Plan

## WATER COLLECTING CISTERNS AND BOULDERING WALL

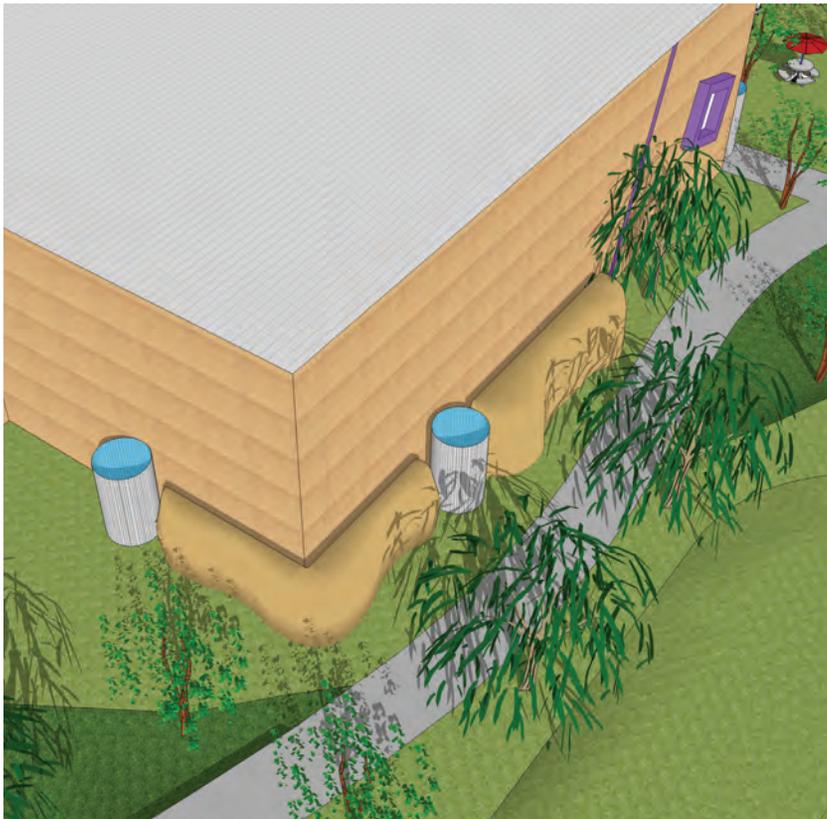


Cisterns are placed along the walls of the Northwest Center to collect rain water from the roof top. They interpret an essential natural function and act as a point of education while the harvested rainwater is used to encourage lush plantings around the bouldering wall and in the drainage greenway.

Bouldering is a sport related to rock climbing that involves maneuvering laterally along a low wall. It builds confidence as well as strength. The bouldering wall will only be 8' tall so that supervision and ropes are not required. Soft recycled materials (ex: rubber pellets or wood chips) will be applied along the base.



A path runs along the drainage greenway on the east side of Northwest Center, past the bouldering wall and cisterns.



Aerial view of the cisterns and bouldering wall



Trees shade the bouldering wall

# Conceptual Plan

## CONTEMPLATIVE SPACE

The contemplative space provides an enclosed space within Mansfield Park to hold more intimate gatherings and classes.

A “contemplative garden” is embraced on the north by an existing arced art wall. A bosque of honey mesquites provide southern shade. Underneath, a low level of chihuahuan rain sage allows for visual penetration but acts as a screen. Two entry points are emphasized by basin plantings of aromatic, desert plants that attract birds and butterflies. The northern edge is screened by cascading plants - willow acacias for shade and form and rosemary for aroma and form. All are drought tolerant.

### Entry plantings

- Eriogonum fasciculatum* Flat-top buckwheat
- Hyptis emoryi* Desert lavender
- Senna artemisioides* Feathery cassia
- Caliandra californica* Native Fairy Duster

### Basin plantings

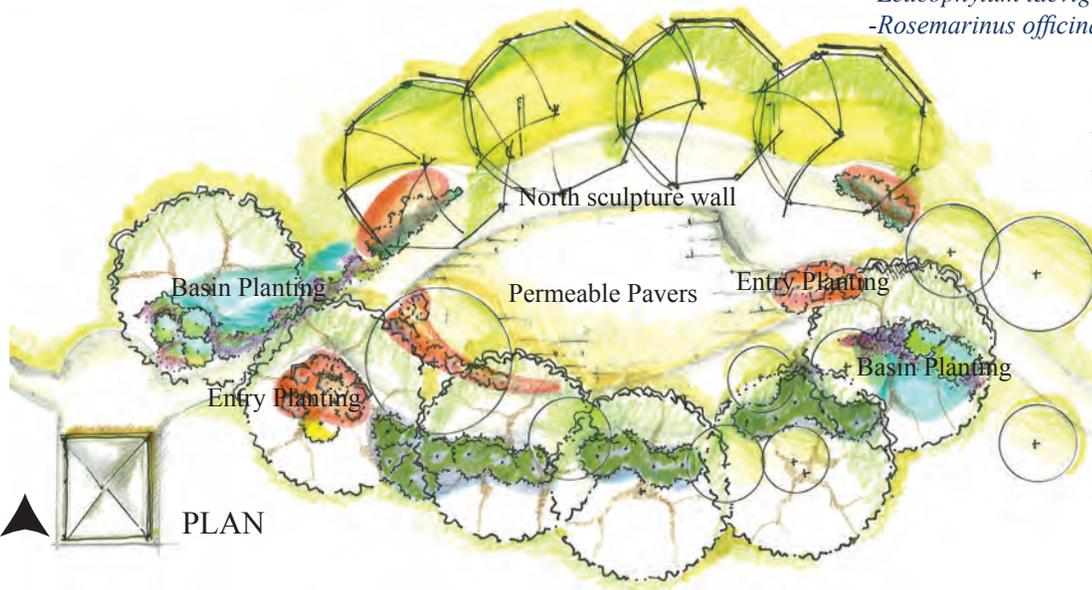
- Parkinsonia florida* Blue palo verde
- Dalea greggii* Trailing dalea
- Cassia artemisioides* feathery senna

### Shade (north and south)

- Acacia salicina* Willow Acacia (4)
- Prosopis glandulosa* Honey Mesquite

### Southern Screen and Northern Wall

- Leucophyllum laevigatum* Chihuahuan Rain Sage
- Rosemarinus officinalis* Rosemary



Small retaining walls, perpendicular to the sculpture wall lightly terrace the earth that slopes down to the contemplative space and hold water. Basins on either side of the wall also catch water and support blue palo verdes, trailing dalea and feathery senna, all of which are chosen for their soft form.

The central area is left open but framed by benches or swings. Resin pavement or permeable pavers are proposed for the ground plane to keep dust down while providing a patio space for use.

Texture, color and material separate this space from the concrete trail currently ringing the space.

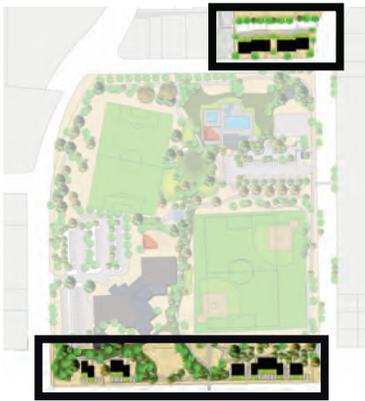


Current state of the sculpture wall and space, looking east



Proposed perspective of contemplative space, looking west

# Conceptual Plan



## HOUSING

The addition of housing to an under-utilized and, often, problematic edge of the Park provides an important housing resource to a targeted population group (such as elderly). Housing on the edge also creates a front yard on the park, a defined, attractive edge where previously there was only a collection of mismatching backyard fences. This places people and observation into the Park at all hours adds a high level of security to the area.

**SOUTH SIDE:** The southern edge of the park is currently bordered by an alley and the backside of houses. Turning the alley access into a primary access to homes and making the Park the “front yard” uses the alley space more efficiently and makes both the park and the alley a safer place.

The houses use the park for their public front yard and have an enclosed private backyard. They incorporate the same water harvesting features as the Park, retaining rain water from the roofs in cisterns for irrigation.



A view of proposed residential units from the ball field

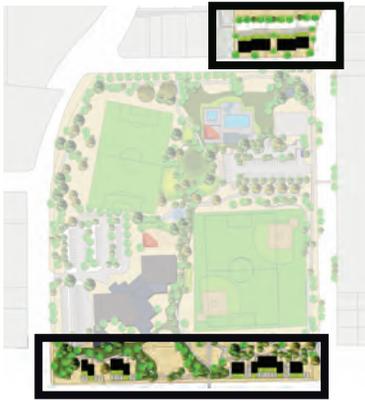


The housing is separated from the park by a public path



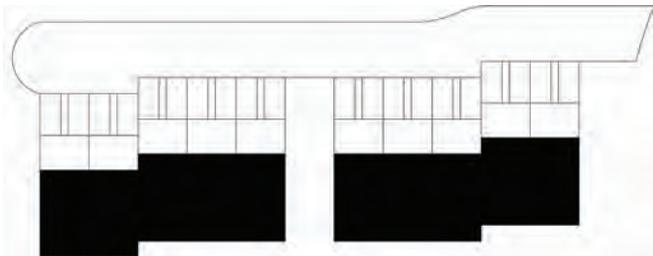
The residential units as seen from the alley

# Conceptual Plan

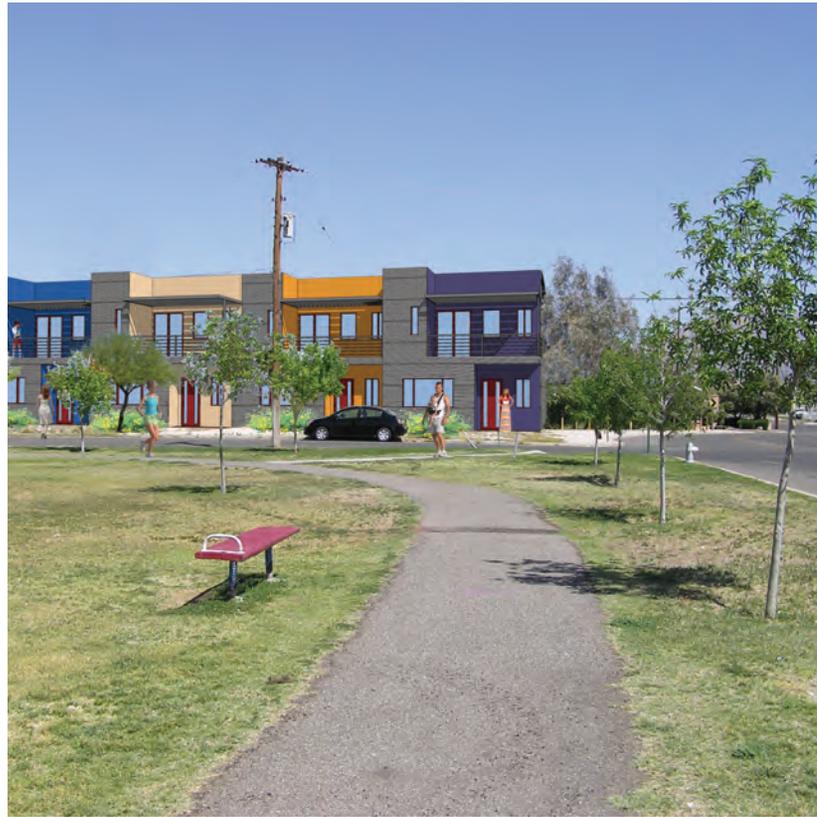


The buildings can be privately owned and sold as part of the City's affordable housing stock as long as the land is retained by the City or another public entity.

**NORTH SIDE:** Keeping homes around the Park maintains the community feeling and nature of Mansfield Park. More residents have Park frontage which encourages "ownership" and participation in the Park.



The corner of Sahuaro Street and 4th Avenue



The path that circumvents the Park passes the northeast edge



Looking north across Sahuaro Street to the residences



## ENTRY

The main entrance to Mansfield Park from El Cortez Heights is enhanced through the addition of vegetation and shade structure. The vegetation adds color and life to a currently abandoned corner.

A ramada provides shade for people to comfortably gather as well as symbolically reaching out to the neighborhood across the street. This new structure is made out of metal so it will last under the harsh summer sun and relate the existing sculpture.



The addition of shade and vegetation to entry



Aerial view of the entry

The accentuated entry can act as a gathering point



## CHICANES

The addition of Chicanes along 4th Ave not only reduces the speed of automobile traffic but also blends the park into the adjacent neighborhood. The trees planted in the right-of-way narrow the roadway. The effect is a curvilnear street form. In addition, the Chicanes act as a safety buffer between pedestrians and vehicles.

The added vegetation acts as an extension of the park into the roadway. The trees provide shade for a more pleasant pedestrian experience. The Chicanes can also provide a shady rest stop along an otherwise hot stretch of road and define shaded parking bays along the roadway.



The vegetation provides shade along the sidewalk



Plan view of the chicanes along 4th Ave



The roadway appears to follow a gently curving path now